#### Solving Problems: Blind Search

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The primary source of these notes are the slides of Professor Hwee Tou Ng from Singapore. I sincerely thank him for this.

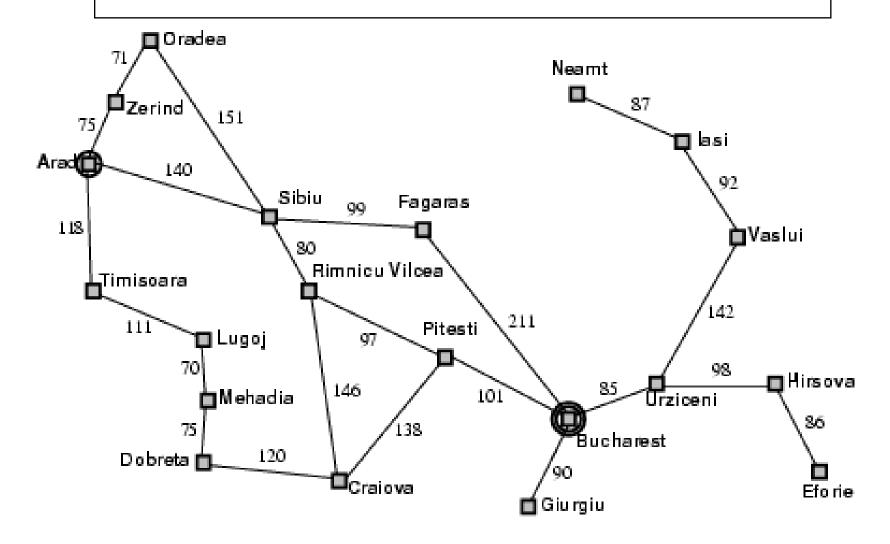
## Problem Solving Agents

```
function SIMPLE-PROBLEM-SOLVING-AGENT (percept) returns an action
   static: seq, an action sequence, initially empty
            state, some description of the current world state
            goal, a goal, initially null
            problem, a problem formulation
   state \leftarrow \text{Update-State}(state, percept)
   if seq is empty then do
        goal \leftarrow FORMULATE-GOAL(state)
        problem \leftarrow Formulate-Problem(state, goal)
        seq \leftarrow Search(problem)
   action \leftarrow First(seq)
   seq \leftarrow Rest(seq)
   return action
```

### Example: Travel in Romania

- On holiday in Romania; currently in Arad.
- Flight leaves tomorrow from Bucharest
- Formulate goal:
  - Be in Bucharest
- Formulate problem:
  - States: Various cities
  - Actions: Drive between cities
- Find solution:
  - Sequence of cities, e.g., Arad, Sibiu, Fagaras, Bucharest

# Example: Travel in Romania

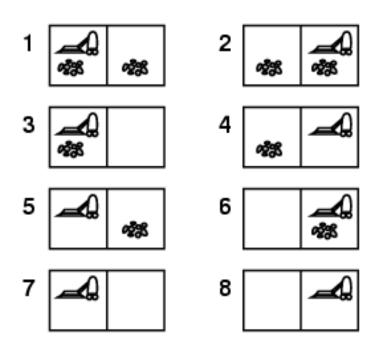


# **Problem Types**

- Deterministic, fully observable → Single-state problem
  - Agent knows exactly which state it will be in: Solution is a sequence
- Non-observable → Sensorless problem (Conformant problem)
  - Agent may have no idea where it is: Solution is a sequence
- Nondeterministic and/or partially observable → Contingency problem
  - Percepts provide new information about current state
  - Often interleave: Search, execution
- Unknown state space → Exploration problem

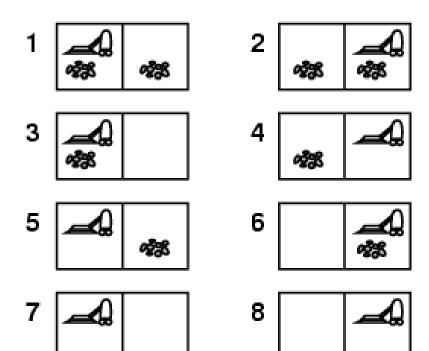
# **Example: Vacuum World**

Single-state; Start in #5.Solution?



## Example: Vacuum World

- Single-stateStart in #5.Solution? [Right, Suck]
- Sensorless
   Start in {1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8}
   Right goes to {2,4,6,8}
   Solution?
- Now more information



# Example: Vacuum World

#### Sensorless

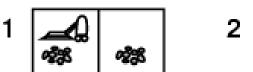
Start in {1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8} *Right* goes to {2,4,6,8} **Solution?**[Right,Suck,Left,Suck]

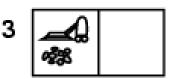
#### Contingency

- Nondeterministic:
   Suck may dirty a clean carpet
- Partially observable
   Location, dirt at current location.
- Percept: [L, Clean],Start in #5 or #7

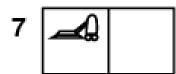
#### Solution?

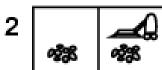
[Right, if dirt then Suck]

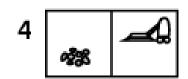


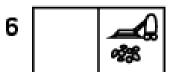














#### Single-state Problem Formulation

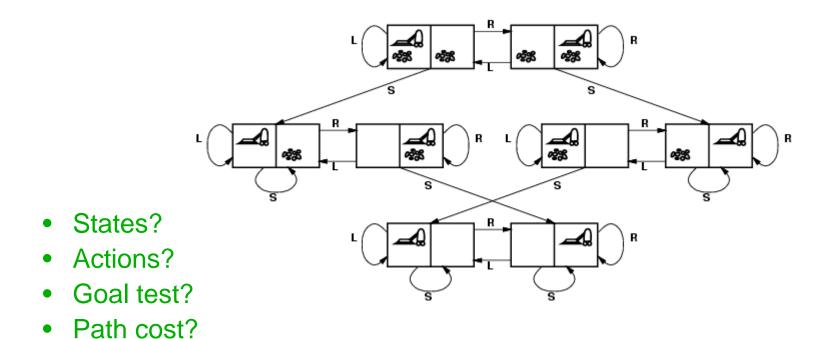
#### A problem is defined by four items:

- 1. Initial state e.g., "at Arad"
- 2. Actions or successor function S(x) = set of action—state pairs
  - e.g.,  $S(Arad) = \{ \langle Arad \rangle \}$  Zerind, Zerind>, ... \}
- Goal test. This can be
  - Explicit, e.g., x = "at Bucharest"
  - Implicit, e.g., Checkmate(x)
- 4. Path cost (additive)
  - e.g., sum of distances, number of actions executed, etc.
  - c(x,a,y) is the step cost, assumed to be  $\geq 0$
- Solution is a sequence of actions leading from the *initial* to a *goal* state

## Selecting a State Space

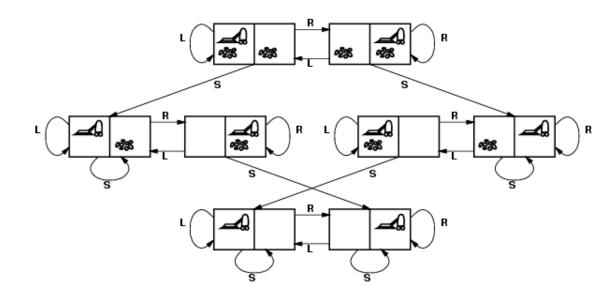
- Real world is absurdly complex
  - State space must be abstracted for problem solving
- (Abstract) state = Set of real states
- (Abstract) action = Complex combination of real actions
  - e.g., "Arad → Zerind": Complex set of possible routes, detours, rest stops, etc.
- For guaranteed realizability, any real state "in Arad" must get to some real state "in Zerind"
- (Abstract) solution:
  - Set of real paths that are solutions in the real world
- Each abstract action should be "easier" than the original problem

#### Vacuum World: State Space Graph



#### Vacuum World: State Space Graph

- States?Integer dirt/robot locations
- Actions?Left, Right, Suck
- Goal test?
   No dirt at all locations
- Path cost?1 per action



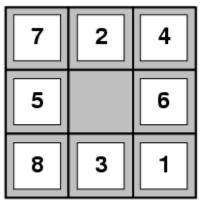
### Example: The 8-puzzle

- States?
  - Locations of tiles
- Actions?
   Move blank L/R/U/D
- Goal test?
   Goal state (Given: InOrder)
- Path cost?
  - 1 per move; Length of Path
- Complexity of the problem 8-puzzle

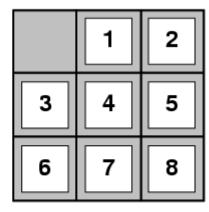
9! = 362,880 different states

15-puzzle:

16! =20,922,789,888,000 10<sup>13</sup> different states



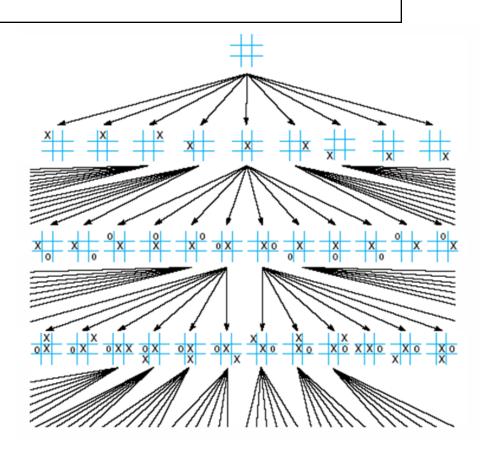
Start State



Goal State

### Example: Tic-Tac-Toe

- States?
   Locations of tiles
- Actions?
   Draw X in the blank state
- Goal test?
  Have three X's in a row, column and diagonal
- Path cost?
   The path from the Start state to a Goal state gives the series of moves in a winning game
- Complexity of the problem 9! = 362,880 different states
- Peculiarity of the problem
   Graph: Directed Acyclic Graph
   Impossible to go back up the structure once a state is reached.

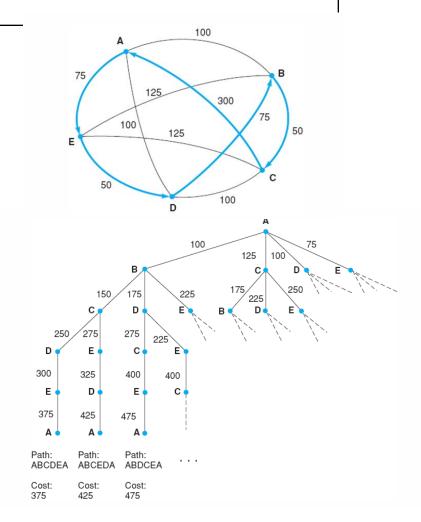


# Example: Travelling Salesman

#### Problem

Salesperson has to visit 5 cities Must return home afterwards

- States?Possible paths???
- Actions?Which city to travel next
- Goal test?
   Find shortest path for travel
   Minimize cost and/or time of travel
- Path cost?
   Nodes represent cities and the
   Weighted arcs represent travel cost
   Simplification
   Lives in city A and will return there.
- Complexity of the problem
   (N 1)! with N the number of cities



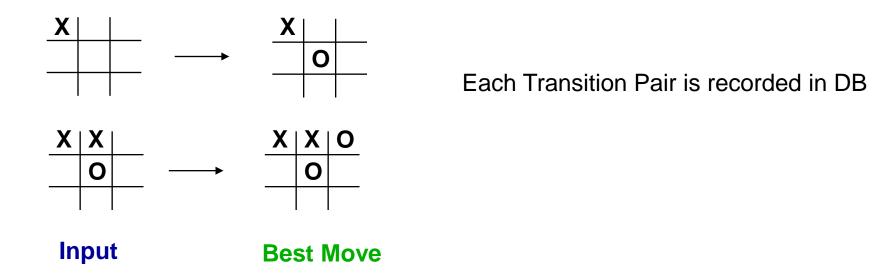
#### State Space

- Many possible ways of representing a problem
- State Space is a natural representation scheme
- A State Space consists of a set of "states"
- Can be thought of as a snapshot of a problem
  - All relevant variables are represented in the state
  - Each variable holds a legal value
- Examples from the Missionary and Cannibals problem (What is missing?)

MMCC MC	MMC MCC	MMMCCC	MMMCCC
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### Counter Example: Don't Use State Space

- Solving Tic Tac Toe using a DB look up for best moves
- e.g. Computer is 'O'



- Simple but
- Unfortunately most problems have exponential No. of rules

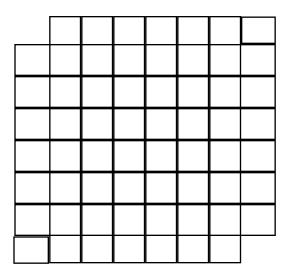
#### Knowledge in Representation

- Representation of state-space can affect the amount of search needed
- Problem with comparisons between search techniques
   IF representation not the same
- When comparing search techniques:

Assume representation is the same

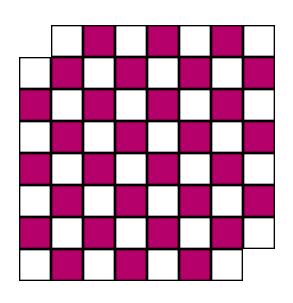
#### Representation Example

- Mutilated chess board
  - Corners removed
  - From top left and bottom right
- Can you tile this board?
  - With dominoes that cover two squares?



Representation 1

#### Representation Example: Continued



Number of White Squares= 32

Number of Black Squares= 30

Representation 2

Representation 3

### **Production Systems**

- A set of rules of the form pattern → action
  - The pattern matches a state
  - The action changes the state to another state
- A task specific DB
  - Of current knowledge about the system (current state)
- A control strategy that
  - Specifies the order in which the rules will be compared to DB
  - What to do for conflict resolution

# State Space as a Graph

- Each node in the graph is a possible state
- Each edge is a legal transition
- Transforms the current state into the next state



Problem solution: A search through the state space

#### Goal of Search

- Sometimes solution is some final state
- Other times the solution is a path to that end state

#### Solution as End State:

- Traveling Salesman Problem
- Chess
- Graph Colouring
- Tic-Tac-Toe
- N Queens

#### Solution as Path:

- Missionaries and Cannibals
- 8 puzzle
- Towers of Hanoi

### Tree Search Algorithms

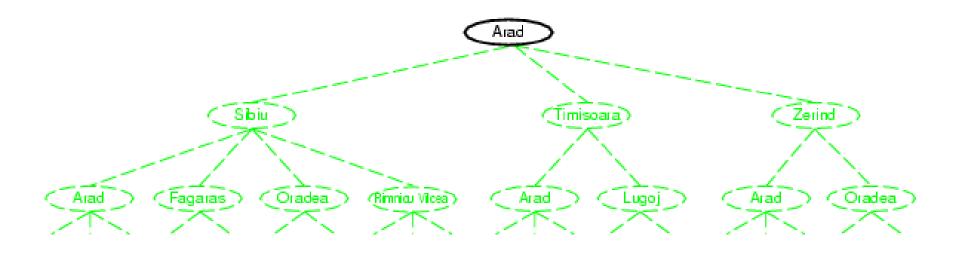
#### Basic Idea

- Offline, simulated exploration of state space
- Generate successors of already-explored states
- a.k.a. Expanding states

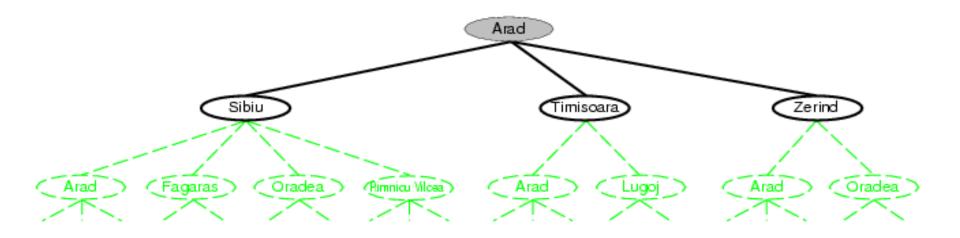
function TREE-SEARCH(problem, strategy) returns a solution, or failure initialize the search tree using the initial state of problem loop do

if there are no candidates for expansion then return failure choose a leaf node for expansion according to *strategy* if the node contains a goal state then return the corresponding solution else expand the node and add the resulting nodes to the search tree

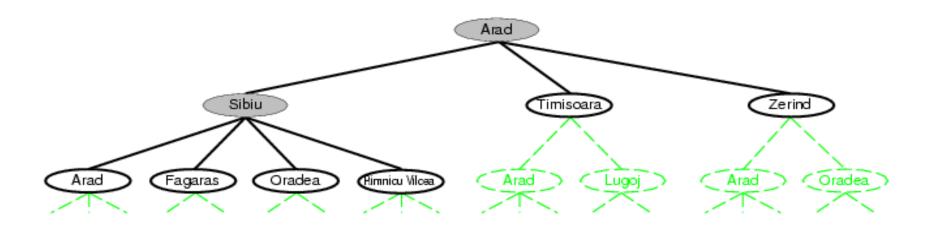
# **Example: Tree Search**



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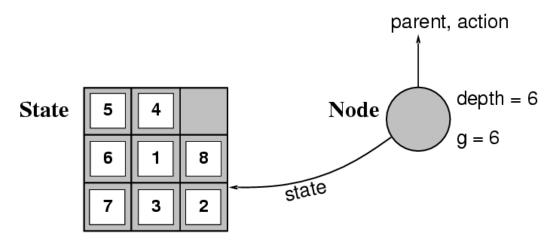


#### Implementation: General Tree Search

```
function TREE-SEARCH(problem, fringe) returns a solution, or failure
   fringe \leftarrow Insert(Make-Node(Initial-State[problem]), fringe)
   loop do
       if fringe is empty then return failure
       node \leftarrow Remove-Front(fringe)
       if Goal-Test[problem](State[node]) then return Solution(node)
       fringe \leftarrow InsertAll(Expand(node, problem), fringe)
function Expand (node, problem) returns a set of nodes
   successors \leftarrow the empty set
   for each action, result in Successor-Fn[problem](State[node]) do
       s \leftarrow a \text{ new NODE}
       PARENT-NODE[s] \leftarrow node; ACTION[s] \leftarrow action; STATE[s] \leftarrow result
       PATH-COST[s] \leftarrow PATH-COST[node] + STEP-COST(node, action, s)
       Depth[s] \leftarrow Depth[node] + 1
       add s to successors
   return successors
```

#### Implementation: States vs. Nodes

- A state is a (representation of) a physical configuration
- A node is a data structure constituting part of a search tree
- Includes state, parent node, action, path cost g(x), depth



- Expand function creates new nodes, filling in the various fields
- SuccessorFn of the problem creates the corresponding states.

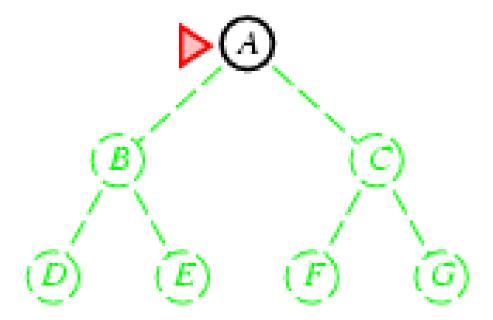
## Search Strategies

- Search strategy: Defined by picking the order of node expansion
- Strategies are evaluated along the following dimensions:
  - Completeness: Does it always find a solution if one exists?
  - Time complexity: Number of nodes generated
  - Space complexity: Maximum number of nodes in memory
  - Optimality: Does it always find a least-cost solution?
- Time and space complexity are measured in terms of:
  - b: maximum branching factor of the search tree
  - d: depth of the least-cost solution
  - m: maximum depth of the state space (may be ∞)

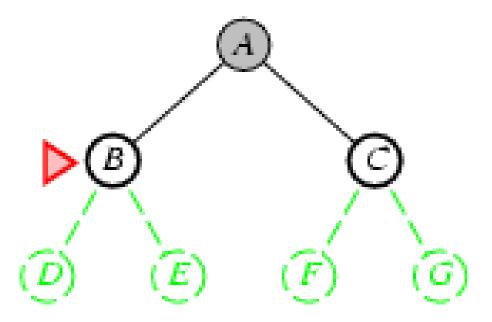
### Uninformed Search Strategies

- Uninformed search strategies
  - Use only information available in problem definition
- Breadth-first search
- Depth-first search
- Backtracking search
- Uniform-cost search
- Depth-limited search
- Iterative deepening search

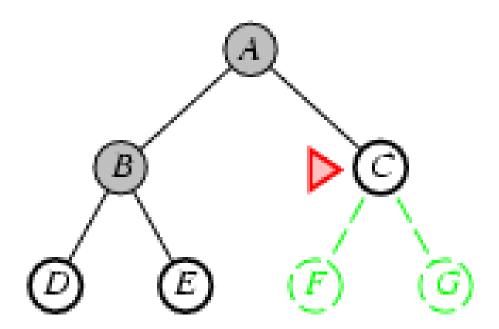
- Expand shallowest unexpanded node
- Implementation:
  - fringe is a FIFO queue, i.e., new successors go at end



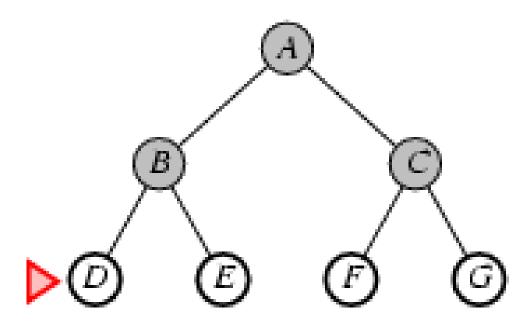
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#### **BFS (S):**

- Create a variable called NODE-LIST and set it to S
- 2. Until a Goal state is found or NODE-LIST is empty do:
  - Remove the first element from NODE-LIST and call it E;
     If NODE-LIST was empty: Quit
  - For each way that each rule can match the state E do:
    - > Apply the rule to generate a new state
    - ➤ If new state is a Goal state: Quit and return this state
    - > Else add the new state to the end of NODE-LIST

#### Properties of Breadth-first Search

#### • Complete?

Yes (if b is finite)

#### Time?

$$-1+b+b^2+b^3+...+b^d+b(b^d-1)=O(b^{d+1})$$

#### • Space?

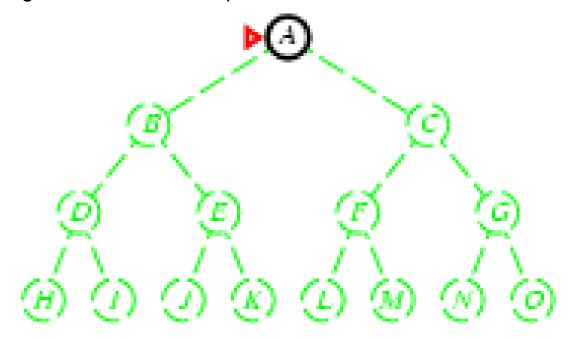
 $-O(b^{d+1})$  (keeps every node in memory)

#### • Optimal?

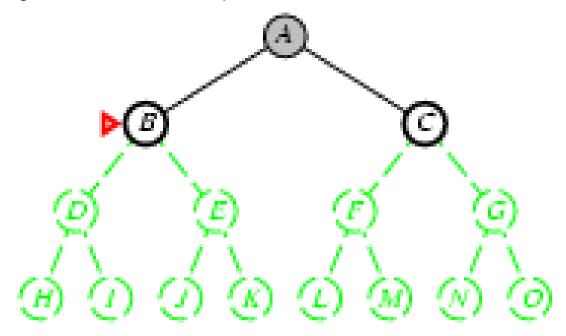
– Yes (if cost = 1 per step)

Space is the bigger problem (more than time)

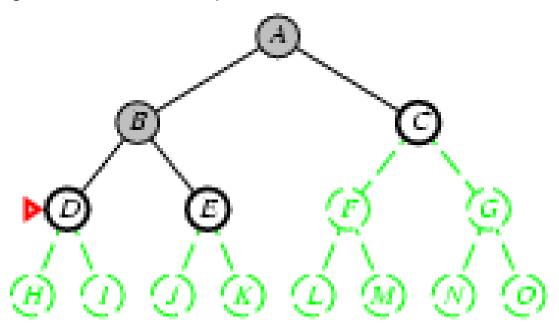
- Expand deepest unexpanded node
- Implementation:
  - fringe = LIFO stack, i.e., put successors at front



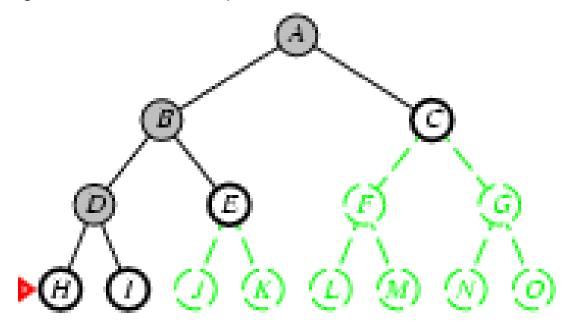
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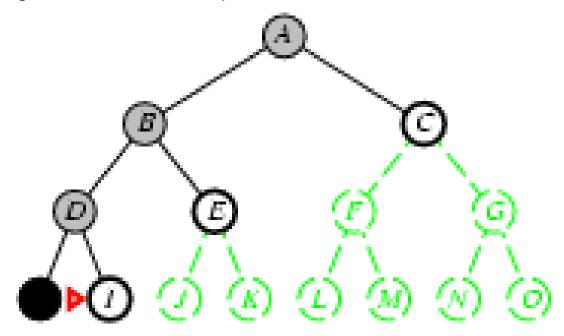
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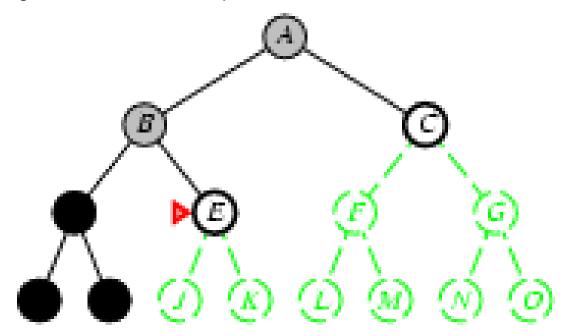
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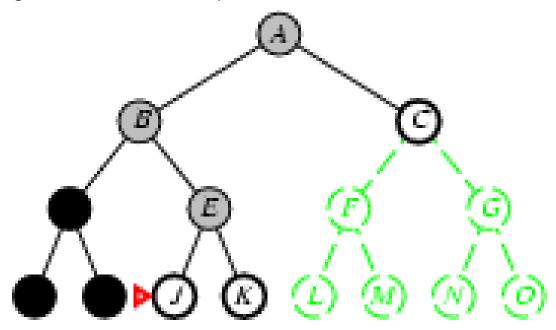
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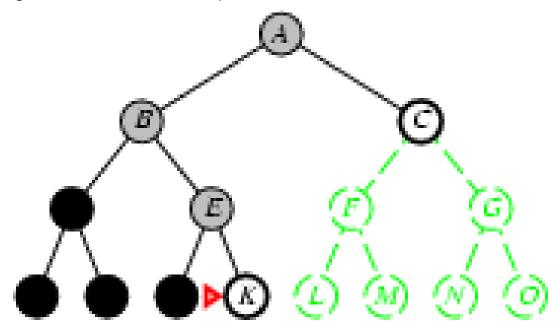
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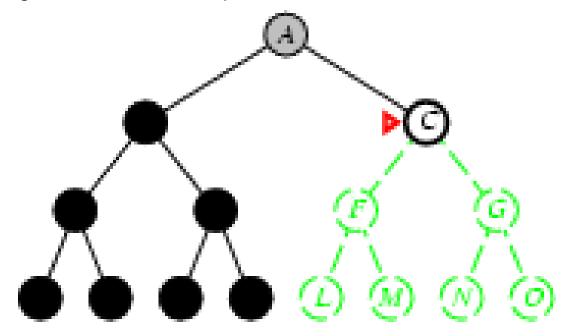
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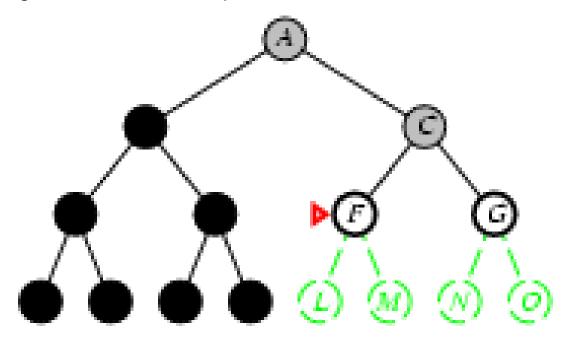
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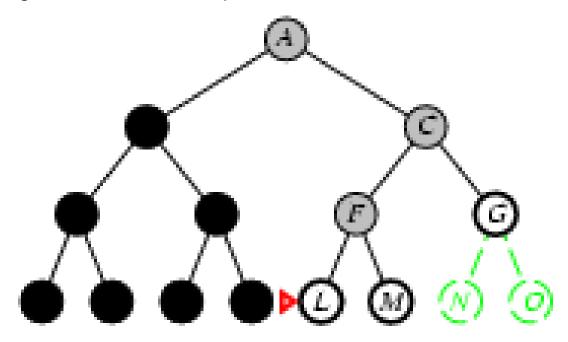
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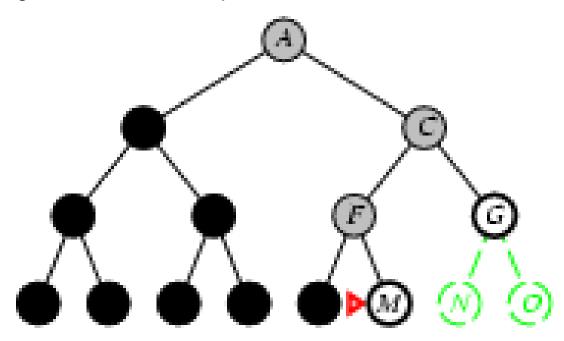
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#### DFS (S):

- 1. If S is a Goal state: Quit and return success
- 2. Otherwise, do until *success* or *failure* is signaled:
  - Generate state E, a successor of S. If no more successors signal failure
  - Call DFS (E)

- Almost the same as a depth first tree traversal except
  - All nodes generated on the fly by production system
  - Algorithm halts when solution found
- DFS assumes tree structure of search space; may not be true
  - If not, can get caught in cycles
  - Thus in these cases, DFS must then be modified
     e.g. Each state has a Flag that is raised when node is *visited*

#### Properties of Depth-first Search

#### Complete?

- No. Fails in infinite-depth spaces, spaces with loops
- Modify to avoid repeated states along path
- Complete in finite spaces

#### Time?

- $-O(b^m)$ : Terrible if m is much larger than d
- If solutions are dense, may be much faster than breadth-first

#### Space?

O(bm), i.e., linear space!

#### Optimal?

- No

#### Differences: DFS and BFS

- DFS and BFS wrt ordering nodes in open list:
  - DFS uses a stack: Nodes are added on the top of the list
  - BFS uses a queue: Nodes are added at the end of the list
- DFS and BFS wrt examination process:
  - DFS examines all the node's children and their descendent before the node's siblings
  - BFS examines all the node's siblings and their children
- DFS and BFS wrt completeness:
  - DFS is not complete (it may be stuck in an infinite branch)
  - BFS is complete (it always finds a solution if it exists)

#### Differences: DFS and BFS

#### DFS and BFS wrt optimality:

- DFS is not optimal: (it will not find the shortest path)
- BFS is optimal: (it always finds shortest path)

#### DFS and BFS wt memory:

- DFS requires less memory (only memory for states of one path needed)
- BFS requires exponential space for states required

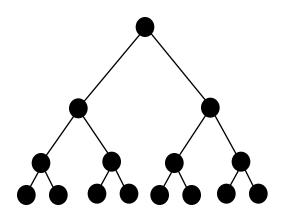
#### DFS and BFS wrt efficiency:

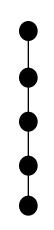
- DFS is efficient if solution path is known to be long
- BFS is inefficient if branching factor B is very high

#### What to Choose: DFS and BFS

- The choice of the *DFS* or *BFS* 
  - Depends on the problem being solved
  - Importance of finding the shortest path
  - The branching factor of the space
  - The available compute time and space resources
  - The average length of paths to a goal node
  - Whether we are looking for all solutions or the first one

#### BFS vs. DFS





- BFS expensive wrt space
  - Linear in # of nodes

- BFS constant memory needed
- DFS linear in # of nodes

- DFS
  - Only stores a max of log of the No. of nodes
- Time to find soln depends on where the soln is in the tree
- DFS may find a longer path than BFS when multiple solns exist
- BFS guaranteed minimum path solution

# Changing a Cyclic Graph Into a Tree

- Most production systems include cycles
- Cycles must be broken to turn graph into a tree
- Then use the above tree searching techniques
- Can't "mark" nodes they are generated dynamically
- Therefore: Keep a list of all visited states ("Closed")
- Check each state examined if it is in "Closed"
- If it is in "Closed": Ignore it and examine the next...

# Algorithm to Break Cycles

- When a node is examined
  - ; Check node to see if it is in "Closed" list
  - If node is in the "Closed" list
    - > Ignore it
  - Else
    - > Add node to "Closed" list
    - > Process node

# Graph Search

# Example: DFS with Cycle Cutting

Initializations: S = first\_state, CLOSED = Empty\_List

```
DFS (S):

If S is in CLOSED

Return Failure

Else

Place S in CLOSED

If S is a Goal state, Return Success
```

Loop

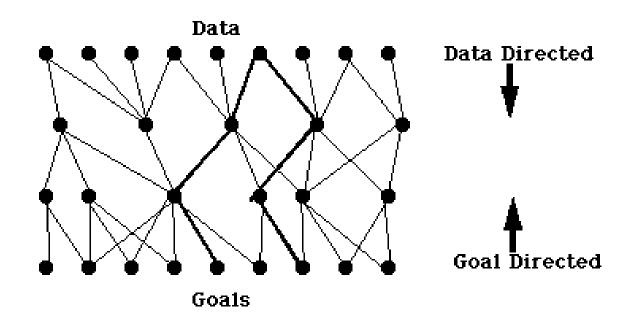
- Generate state E, a successor of S.
  - If no more successors return Failure
- Result = DFS (E)
- If Result = Success Return Success

### Strategies for State Space Search

- Data-Directed vs. Goal-Directed search
  - Data driven (forward chaining)
  - Goal driven (backward chaining)
- Data-Directed (Forward Chaining)
  - Start from available data
  - Search for goal
- Goal-Directed (Backward Chaining)
  - Start from goal, generate sub-goals
  - Until arriving at initial state.
- Best strategy depends on problem

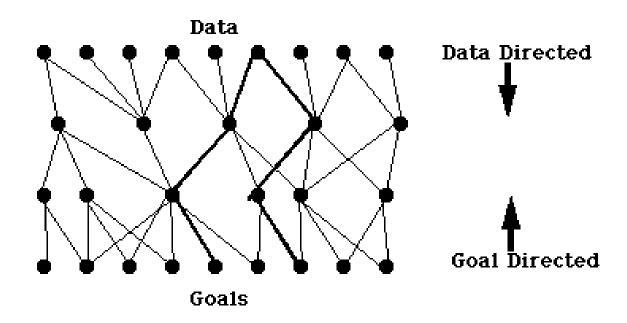
#### Strategies for State Space Search

- Data-Directed Search (Forward Chaining)
  - Start from available data
  - Search for goal



#### Strategies for State Space Search

- Goal-Directed (Backward Chaining)
  - Start from goal, generate sub-goals
  - Until you arrive at initial state.



# Forward/Backward Chaining

- Verify: I am a descendant of Thomas Jefferson
  - Start with yourself (goal) until Jefferson (data) is reache
  - Start with Jefferson (data) until you reach yourself (goal).
- Assume the following:
  - Jefferson was born 250 years ago.
  - 25 years per generation: Length of path is 10.
- Goal-Directed search space
  - Since each person has 2 parents
  - The search space: Order of 2<sup>10</sup> ancestors.
- Data-Directed search space
  - If average of 3 children per family
  - The search space: Order of 3<sup>10</sup> descendents
- So Goal-Directed (backward chaining) is better.
- But both directions yield exponential complexity

## Forward/Backward Chaining

#### Use the Goal-Directed approach when:

- Goal or hypothesis is given in the problem statement
- Or these can easily be formulated
- There are a large number of rules that match the facts of the problem
- Thus produce an increasing number of conclusions or goals
- Problem data are not given but must be acquired by the solver

#### Use the Data-Directed approach when:

- All or most of the data are given in the initial problem statement.
- There are a large number of potential goals
- But there are only a few ways to use the facts and given information of a particular problem instance
- It is difficult to form a goal or hypothesis

#### Uniform-cost search

- Expand least-cost unexpanded node
- Implementation:
  - fringe = queue ordered by path cost
- Equivalent to breadth-first if step costs all equal
- Complete?
  - Yes, if step cost ≥ ε
- Time?
  - No. of nodes with g ≤ cost of optimal solution
  - $O(b^{ceiling(C^*/\varepsilon)})$  where  $C^*$  is the cost of the optimal solution
- Space?
  - − No. of nodes with  $g \le cost$  of optimal solution,  $O(b^{ceiling(C^*/ε)})$
- Optimal?
  - Yes nodes expanded in increasing order of g(n)

# **Backtracking Search**

- A method to search the "tree"
- Systematically tries all paths through state space
- In addition: Does not get stuck in cycles

# Backtracking Search: Idea

#### Principle

- Keep track of visited nodes
- Apply recursion to get out of dead ends

#### Termination

- If it finds a goal: Quit and return the solution path
- Also Quit if state space is exhausted

#### Backtracking

- If it reaches a dead end, it backtracks
- It does this to the most recent node on the path having unexamined siblings and continues down one of these branches
- It requires stack oriented recursive environment

### Backtracking Search: Idea

#### Details of Backtracking

- SL (State List):
  - > States in current path being tried
  - ➤ If Goal is found, SL contains ordered list of states on solution path
- NSL (New State List)
  - Nodes awaiting evaluation.
  - Nodes: Descendants have not been generated and searched
- DE (Dead Ends)
  - States whose descendants failed to contain a goal node.
  - ➤ If encountered again: Recognized and eliminated from search

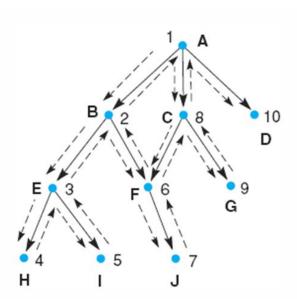
## Backtracking Search: Idea

- Backtrack is a Data-Directed search
  - Because it starts from the root
  - Then evaluates its descendent children to search for the goal
- Backtrack can be viewed as a Goal-Directed
  - Let the goal be a root of the graph
  - Evaluate descendent back in attempting to find the start (i.e., "root")
- Backtrack prevents looping by explicit check in NSL

## The Backtrack Algorithms

```
function backtrack:
begin
  SL := [Start]; NSL := [Start]; DE := []; CS := Start;
                                                                    % initialize:
                                             % while there are states to be tried
  while NSL ≠ [] do
    begin
      if CS = goal (or meets goal description)
        then return SL;
                                     % on success, return list of states in path.
      if CS has no children (excluding nodes already on DE, SL, and NSL)
        then begin
          while SL is not empty and CS = the first element of SL do
            begin
              add CS to DE;
                                                    % record state as dead end
              remove first element from SL:
                                                                    %backtrack
              remove first element from NSL;
              CS := first element of NSL;
            end
          add CS to SL:
        end
        else begin
          place children of CS (except nodes already on DE, SL, or NSL) on NSL;
          CS := first element of NSL;
          add CS to SL
        end
    end:
    return FAIL;
end.
```

# Trace: Backtracking Algorithms



Initialize: SL = [A]; NSL = [A]; DE = []; CS = A;

AFTER ITERATION	CS	SL	NSL	DE
0	Α	[A]	[A]	[]
1	В	[B A]	[B C D A]	[]
2	E	[E B A]	[EFBCDA]	[]
3	Н	[H E B A]	[HIEFBCDA]	[]
4	I	[I E B A]	[IEFBCDA]	[H]
5	F	[F B A]	[FBCDA]	[E   H]
6	J	[JFBA]	[JFBCDA]	[E I H]
7	С	[C A]	[C D A]	[BFJEIH]
8	G	[G C A]	[G C D A]	[BFJEIH]

### Depth-limited Search

This is the Depth-first search with depth limit *L*, i.e., nodes at depth *L* have no successors

Recursive implementation:

```
function Depth-Limited-Search (problem, limit) returns soln/fail/cutoff Recursive-DLS (Make-Node (Initial-State [problem]), problem, limit) function Recursive-DLS (node, problem, limit) returns soln/fail/cutoff cutoff-occurred? \leftarrow false if Goal-Test[problem] (State [node]) then return Solution (node) else if Depth[node] = limit then return cutoff else for each successor in Expand (node, problem) do result \leftarrow Recursive-DLS (successor, problem, limit) if result = cutoff then cutoff-occurred? \leftarrow true else if result \neq failure then return result if cutoff-occurred? then return cutoff else return failure
```

- Iterative deepening depth-first search (IDDFS)
- A depth-limited search is run repeatedly,
- Depth limit increased with each iteration until it reaches d, the depth of the shallowest goal state.
- On each iteration, IDDFS:
  - Visits the nodes in the search in the same order as the DFS.
  - The cumulative order in which nodes are first visited, with no pruning, is effectively BFS.
  - SO: If there is an optimal solution at a lower depth, it finds it.

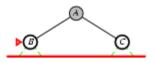
```
function Iterative-Deepening-Search (problem) returns a solution, or failure inputs: problem, a problem  \begin{array}{l} \text{for } depth \leftarrow 0 \text{ to } \infty \text{ do} \\ result \leftarrow \text{Depth-Limited-Search} (problem, depth) \\ \text{if } result \neq \text{cutoff then return } result \end{array}
```

Limit=0

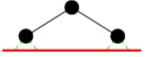


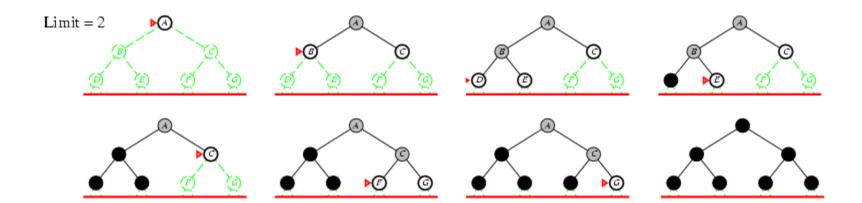


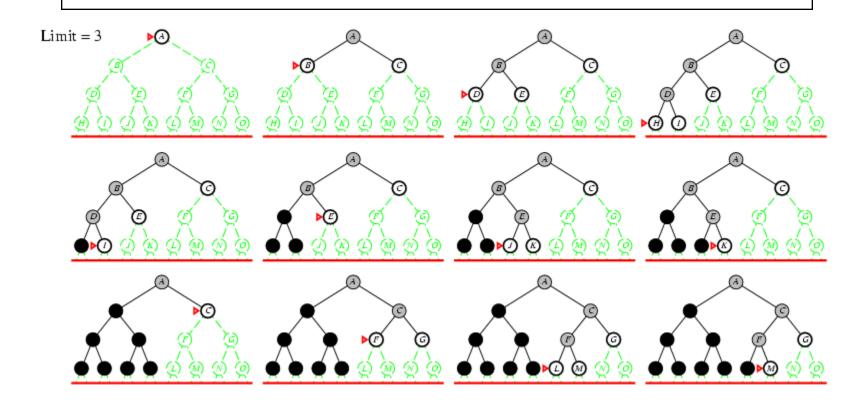












# Iterative Deepening Search Properties

#### Complete?

Yes

#### • Time?

- Nodes on the bottom level are expanded once
- Those on the next to bottom level are expanded twice, etc.
- Up to the root of the search tree, which is expanded d + 1 times.
- $(d+1)b^0 + db^1 + (d-1)b^2 + \dots + b^d = O(b^d)$

#### Space?

O(bd)

#### Optimal?

- Yes, if step cost = 1

# Depth-limited vs. Iterative Deepening Search

 Number of nodes generated in a Depth-limited Search to depth d with branching factor b:

$$N_{DLS} = b^0 + b^1 + b^2 + \dots + b^{d-2} + b^{d-1} + b^d$$

 Number of nodes generated in an Iterative Deepening Search to depth d with branching factor b:

$$N_{IDS} = (d+1)b^0 + db^1 + (d-1)b^2 + ... + 3b^{d-2} + 2b^{d-1} + 1b^d$$

- For b = 10, d = 5
  - $-N_{DLS} = 1 + 10 + 100 + 1,000 + 10,000 + 100,000 = 111,111$
  - N<sub>IDS</sub> = 6 + 50 + 400 + 3,000 + 20,000 + 100,000 = 123,456
- Overhead = (123,456 111,111)/111,111 = 11%

# **Summary of Algorithms**

Criterion	Breadth-	Uniform-	Depth-	Depth-	Iterative
	First	Cost	First	Limited	Deepening
Complete?	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes
Time	$O(b^{d+1})$	$O(b^{\lceil C^*/\epsilon  ceil})$	$O(b^m)$	$O(b^l)$	$O(b^d)$
Space	$O(b^{d+1})$	$O(b^{\lceil C^*/\epsilon  ceil})$	O(bm)	O(bl)	O(bd)
Optimal?	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes