Solving Problems: Blind Search

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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 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 \text{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





Problem Types

- Deterministic, fully observable → Single-state problem
 - Agent knows exactly which state it will be in: Solution is a sequence
- Non-observable \rightarrow 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-state
 Start 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., $S(Arad) = \{ < Arad \rightarrow Zerind, Zerind >, ... \}$
- 3. 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 ≥ 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 \rightarrow 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



- States?
- Actions?
- Goal test?
- Path cost?

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

10¹³ different states

7	2	4
5		6
8	3	1



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	ммс мсс	мммссс	MMMCCC

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 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 \rightarrow 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



Example: Tree Search



Example: Tree Search



Implementation: General Tree Search

```
function TREE-SEARCH( problem, fringe) returns a solution, or failure
   fringe \leftarrow \text{INSERT}(\text{MAKE-NODE}(\text{INITIAL-STATE}[problem]), fringe)
   loop do
        if fringe is empty then return failure
        node \leftarrow \text{REMOVE-FRONT}(fringe)
        if GOAL-TEST[problem](STATE[node]) then return SOLUTION(node)
        fringe \leftarrow \text{INSERTALL}(\text{EXPAND}(node, problem), fringe)
function EXPAND( node, problem) returns a set of nodes
   successors \leftarrow \text{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)
        \text{DEPTH}[s] \leftarrow \text{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):

- 1. 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?

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

- 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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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
- 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

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

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

function GRAPH-SEARCH(problem, fringe) returns a solution, or failure

 $closed \leftarrow$ an empty set $fringe \leftarrow INSERT(MAKE-NODE(INITIAL-STATE[problem]), fringe)$ loop do if fringe is empty then return failure $node \leftarrow REMOVE-FRONT(fringe)$ if GOAL-TEST[problem](STATE[node]) then return SOLUTION(node) if STATE[node] is not in closed then add STATE[node] to closed $fringe \leftarrow INSERTALL(EXPAND(node, problem), fringe)$

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^{10} ancestors.
- Data-Directed search space
 - If average of 3 children per family
 - The search space: Order of 3¹⁰ 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 $\geq \epsilon$
- Time?
 - No. of nodes with $g \leq \cos t$ of optimal solution
 - $O(b^{\operatorname{ceiling}(C^*/\varepsilon)})$ where C^* is the cost of the optimal solution
- Space?
 - No. of nodes with $g \le \text{cost}$ of optimal solution, $O(b^{\text{ceiling}(C^*/\varepsilon)})$
- 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)
 - \succ 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 NSL ≠ [] do
                                             % while there are states to be tried
    begin
      if CS = goal (or meets goal description)
                                     % on success, return list of states in path.
        then return SL:
      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	А	[A]	[A]	[]
1	В	[B A]	[B C D A]	[]
2	Е	[E B A]	[E F B C D A]	[]
3	н	[H E B A]	[H I E F B C D A]	[]
4	I	[I E B A]	[I E F B C D A]	[H]
5	F	[F B A]	[F B C D A]	[E I H]
6	J	[J F B A]	[J F B C D A]	[E I H]
7	С	[C A]	[C D A]	[B F J E I H]
8	G	[G C A]	[G C D A]	[B F J E I H]
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? ← 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 ← RECURSIVE-DLS(successor, problem, limit)
if result = cutoff then cutoff-occurred? ← true
else if result ≠ failure then return result
if cutoff-occurred? then return cutoff else return failure
```

Iterative Deepening Search

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.

Iterative Deepening Search

```
function ITERATIVE-DEEPENING-SEARCH( problem) returns a solution, or failure
```

inputs: problem, a problem

for $depth \leftarrow 0$ to ∞ do $result \leftarrow DEPTH-LIMITED-SEARCH(problem, depth)$ if $result \neq$ cutoff then return result

Iterative Deepening Search L = 0

Limit = 0

▶Ø









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.
 - $(d+1)b^{0} + d b^{1} + (d-1)b^{2} + \dots + b^{d} = O(b^{d})$
- 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)b⁰ + d b¹ + (d-1)b² + ... + 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_{IDS} = 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	$O(b^{d+1})$	$O(b^{\lceil C^*/\epsilon \rceil})$	$O(b^m)$	$O(b^l)$	$O(b^d)$
Space	$O(b^{d+1})$	$O(b^{\lceil C^*/\epsilon \rceil})$	O(bm)	O(bl)	O(bd)
Optimal?	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes