Chapter 3 Solving Problems By Searching
3.1 –3.4 Uninformed search strategies

CS4811 - Artificial Intelligence

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Outline

Problem-solving agents

Problem formulation

Basic search algorithms
  Tree search
  Graph search

Evaluating search strategies

Uninformed search strategies
  Breadth-first search
  Uniform-cost search
  Depth-first search
  Depth-limited search
  Iterative deepening search
  Bidirectional search
Problem-solving agents

**function** SIMPLE-PROBLEM-SOLVING-AGENT (*percept*)
**returns** an action

**inputs:** *percept*, a percept

**private:**
- `seq`, an action sequence, initially empty
- `state`, some description of the current world state
- `goal`, a goal, initially null
- `problem`, a problem formulation

\[
\text{state} \leftarrow \text{UPDATE-STATE}\ (\text{state}, \text{percept}) \\
\text{if seq is empty then} \\
\quad \text{goal} \leftarrow \text{FORMULATE-GOAL}\ (\text{state}) \\
\quad \text{problem} \leftarrow \text{FORMULATE-PROBLEM}\ (\text{state, goal}) \\
\quad \text{seq} \leftarrow \text{SEARCH}\ (\text{problem}) \\
\text{if seq = failure then return a null action} \\
\text{action} \leftarrow \text{FIRST}\ (\text{seq}) \\
\text{seq} \leftarrow \text{REST}\ (\text{seq}) \\
\text{return action} \]
Assumptions

- **Static**: The world does not change unless the agent changes it.
- **Observable**: Every aspect of the world state can be seen.
- **Discrete**: Has distinct states as opposed to continuously flowing time.
- **Deterministic**: There is no element of chance.

This is a restricted form of a general agent called offline problem solving. The solution is executed “eyes closed.”

**Online** problem solving involves acting without complete knowledge
Example: Traveling 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
  (any solution or optimal solution?)
Distances between cities in Romania
Infrastructure for search algorithms

- A **problem** is defined by five components:
  - **initial state** e.g., “In(Arad)”
  - **actions**, ACTIONS(s) returns the actions applicable in s.
    e.g., In Arad, the applicable actions are {Go(Sibiu), Go(Timisoara), Go(Zerind)}
  - **transition model**, RESULT(s, a) returns the state that results from executing action a in state s
    e.g., RESULT(In(Arad), Go(Zerind)) = In(Zerind).
  - **goal test**, can be
    - *explicit*, e.g., \( x = \text{“In Bucharest”} \)
    - *implicit*, e.g., \( x = \text{“In a city with an international airport”} \)
  - **path cost** (additive)
    e.g., sum of distances, number of actions executed, etc.
    \( c(x, a, y) \) is the **step cost** of executing action a in state x and arriving at state y, assumed to be \( \geq 0 \)

- A **solution** is a sequence of actions leading from the initial state to a goal state
Selecting a state space

- The 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” represents a 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!
- Find an abstraction that is *valid* and *useful*. 
Example: The 8-puzzle
Example: The 8-puzzle (cont’d)

- **states**: integer locations of tiles (ignore intermediate positions)
- **actions**: move blank left, right, up, down (ignore unjamming etc.)
- **goal test**: = goal state (given)
- **path cost**: 1 per move
- Note that the optimal solution of \( n \)-Puzzle family is NP-hard
Basic idea:
offline, simulated exploration of state space
by generating successors of the states that haven’t been explored
(a.k.a. expanding states)
function Tree-Search (problem, strategy)
returns a solution, or failure

initialize the frontier using the initial state of problem

loop do
  if the frontier is empty then return failure
  choose a leaf node and remove it from the frontier
  if the node contains a goal state
    then return the corresponding solution
  expand the chosen node and add the resulting nodes to the frontier
end
Tree search example
Tree search example
Tree search example
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
- A node includes: *parent, children, depth, path cost* $g(x)$.
- States do not have parents, children, depth, or path cost!
- The **Expand** function creates new nodes, filling in the various fields and using the **SuccessorFn** of the problem to create the corresponding states.
Repeated states

Failure to detect repeated states can turn a linear problem into an exponential one!
Graph search algorithms

Basic idea:
similar to tree-search
keep a separate list of “explored” states
Graph search algorithms (cont’d)

function Graph-Search (problem)
returns a solution, or failure

initialize the frontier using the initial state of problem
→ initialize the explored set to be empty
loop do
  if the frontier is empty then return failure
  choose a leaf node and remove it from the frontier
  if the node contains a goal state
    then return the corresponding solution
  → add the node to the explored set
  expand the chosen node and add the resulting nodes to the frontier
  → only if not in the frontier or explored set
end

Note: A → shows the lines that are added to the tree search algorithm.
Evaluating search strategies

- A strategy is 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/expanded
  - *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 $\infty$)
Uninformed search strategies

*Uninformed* strategies use only the information available in the problem definition:

- Breadth-first search
- Uniform-cost search
- Depth-first search
- Depth-limited search
- Iterative deepening search
- Bidirectional search
Breadth-first search

- Expand the shallowest unexpanded node
- Implementation: *frontier* is a FIFO queue, i.e., new successors go at end
Progress of breadth-first search

Breadth-first search on a simple binary tree. At each stage, the node to be expanded next is indicated by a marker. The nodes that are already explored are gray. The nodes with dashed lines are not generated yet.
Progress of breadth-first search

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Properties of breadth-first search

- **Complete:** Yes (if $b$ is finite)
- **Time:** $b + b^2 + b^3 + \ldots + b^d + b(b^d - 1) = O(b^{d+1})$, i.e., number of nodes generated is exponential in $d$
- **Space:** $O(b^{d+1})$ (keeps every node in memory)
- **Optimal:** Yes (if cost = 1 per step)

Space is the big problem; can easily generate nodes at 100MB/sec so 24hrs = 8604GB.
Breadth-first search algorithm

function Breadth-First-Search (problem)
returns a solution, or failure
    node ← a node with State=problem.Initial-State, Path-Cost = 0
    if problem.Goal-Test(node.State) then return Solution(node)
    frontier ← a FIFO queue with node as the only element
    explored ← an empty set
loop do
    if Empty?(frontier) then return failure
    node ← pop(frontier) /* chooses the shallowest node in frontier */
    add node.State to explored
    for each action in problem.Actions(node.State) do
        child ← Child-Node (problem,node, action)
        if child.State is not in explored or frontier then
            if problem.Goal-Test (child.State) then
                return Solution(child)
        frontier ← Insert (child, frontier)
Uniform-cost search

- Expand the least-cost unexpanded node
- Implementation: *frontier* is a queue ordered by path cost
- Equivalent to breadth-first if step costs are all equal
Properties of uniform-cost search

- **Complete:** Yes, if step cost $\geq \epsilon$

- **Time:** \# of nodes with $g \leq$ cost of optimal solution, \(O(b^{1+\lceil C^*/\epsilon \rceil})\)
  where $C^*$ is the cost of the optimal solution

- **Space:** \# of nodes with $g \leq$ cost of optimal solution, \(O(b^{1+\lceil C^*/\epsilon \rceil})\)

- **Optimal:** Yes—nodes expanded in increasing order of $g(n)$
Uniform-cost search algorithm

function Uniform-Cost-Search (problem)
returns a solution, or failure
    node ← a node with State=problem.Initial-State, Path-Cost = 0
    if problem.Goal-Test(node.State) then return Solution(node)
    frontier ← a priority ordered by Path-Cost, with node as the only element
    explored ← an empty set
loop do
    if EMPTY?(frontier) then return failure
    node ← POP(frontier) /* chooses the lowest-cost node in frontier */
    add node.State to explored
    for each action in problem.Actions(node.State) do
        child ← Child-Node (problem,node, action)
        if child.State is not in explored or frontier then
            frontier ← INSERT (child, frontier)
        else if child.State is in frontier with higher Path-Cost then
            replace that frontier node with child
Depth-first search

- Expand deepest unexpanded node
- Implementation: `frontier` is a LIFO queue, i.e., put successors at front
Progress of depth-first search
Progress of depth-first search

A

B

C

D

E

F

G

H

I

J

K

L

M

N

O
Progress of depth-first search
Progress of depth-first search
Progress of depth-first search
Progress of depth-first search
Progress of depth-first search
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Progress of depth-first search
Progress of depth-first search
Progress of depth-first search
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 $d$
  but if solutions are dense, may be much faster than breadth-first

- **Space**: $O(bm)$, i.e., linear space!

- **Optimal**: No
Depth-limited search

- It is equivalent to depth-first search with depth limit $l$, i.e., nodes at depth $l$ have no successors.
- Implementation: a recursive implementation is shown on the next page.
Properties of depth-limited search

- **Complete**: No (similar to DFS)
- **Time**: $O(b^l)$, where $l$ is the depth-limit
- **Space**: $O(bl)$, i.e., linear space (similar to DFS)
- **Optimal**: No
Depth-limited search

function Depth-Limited-Search (problem, limit)
returns a solution, or failure/cutoff
return Recursive-DLS(Make-Node( problem.Initial-State), problem, limit)

function Recursive-DLS (node, problem, limit)
returns a solution, or failure/cutoff
  if problem.Goal-Test(node.State) then return Solution(node)
  else if limit = 0 then return cutoff
  else
cutoff-occurred? ← false
  for each action in problem.Actions(node.State) do
    child ← Child-Node (problem,node, action)
    result ← Recursive-DLS (child, problem,limit-1)
    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

▶ Do iterations of depth-limited search starting with a limit of 0. If you fail to find a goal with a particular depth limit, increment it and continue with the iterations.
▶ Terminate when a solution is found or if the depth-limited search returns failure, meaning that no solution exists.
▶ Combines the linear space complexity of DFS with the completeness property of BFS.
Iterative deepening search ($l = 0$)
Iterative deepening search ($l = 1$)
Iterative deepening search \((l = 2)\)
Iterative deepening search \((l = 3)\)
Properties of iterative deepening search

- **Complete**: Yes
- **Time**: \( db^1 + (d - 1)b^2 + \ldots + b^d = O(b^d) \)
- **Space**: \( O(bd) \)
- **Optimal**: Yes, if step cost = 1
  - Can be modified to explore uniform-cost tree
Iterative deepening search

function Iterative-Deepening-Search(problem)
returns a solution, or failure
  for depth ← 0 to ∞ do
    result ← Depth-Limited-Search (problem, depth)
    if result ≠ cutoff then return result
Numerical comparison of the number of nodes generated for $b = 10$ and $d = 5$, solution at the far right leaf:

\[ N(\text{IDS}) = 50 + 400 + 3,000 + 20,000 + 100,000 \]
\[ = 123,450 \]
\[ N(\text{BFS}) = 10 + 100 + 1,000 + 10,000 + 100,000 + 999,990 \]
\[ = 1,111,100 \]

IDS does better because other nodes at depth $d$ are not expanded. BFS can be modified to apply the goal test when a node is generated (rather than expanded).
## Summary of algorithms

<table>
<thead>
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<th></th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Complete?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td>$O(b^{d+1})$</td>
<td>$O(b^{1+\lceil C^*/\epsilon \rceil})$</td>
<td>$O(b^m)$</td>
<td>$O(b^l)$</td>
<td>$O(b^d)$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Space</td>
<td>$O(b^{d+1})$</td>
<td>$O(b^{1+\lceil C^*/\epsilon \rceil})$</td>
<td>$O(bm)$</td>
<td>$O(bl)$</td>
<td>$O(bd)$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Optimal?</td>
<td>Yes*</td>
<td>Yes*</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Bidirectional search

- Run two simultaneous states:
  - one forward from the initial state
  - one backward from the goal state
- Motivation: $b^{(\frac{d}{2})} + b^{\frac{d}{2}}$ is much less than $b^d$
- Implementation: Replace the goal check with a check to see whether the frontiers of the searches intersect
Summary

- Problem formulation usually requires abstracting away real-world details to define a state space that can feasibly be explored.
- There are a variety of uninformed search strategies available.
- Iterative deepening search uses only linear space and not much more time than other uninformed algorithms.
Sources for the slides

- AIMA textbook (3rd edition)
- AIMA slides (http://aima.cs.berkeley.edu/)