Greedy Algorithms

CLRS, Chapter 16.1-16.3

Selecting gas stations

- Road trip from Fort Collins to New York on a given route with length L, and fuel stations at positions \( b_i \).
- Fuel capacity = \( C \) miles.
- Goal: make as few refueling stops as possible.
Selecting gas stations

- Road trip from Fort Collins to New York on a given route with length $L$, and fuel stations at positions $b_i$.
- Fuel capacity = $C$.
- Goal: makes as few refueling stops as possible.

**Greedy algorithm.** Go as far as you can before refueling. In general: determine a global optimum via a number of locally optimal choices.

![Diagram showing fuel stations along a route from Fort Collins to New York.]

**Selecting gas stations: Greedy Algorithm**

The road trip algorithm.

1. Sort stations so that: $0 = b_0 < b_1 < b_2 < \ldots < b_n = L$
2. $S \leftarrow \{0\}$ ← stations selected, we fuel up at home
3. $x \leftarrow 0$ ← current distance
4. **while** ($x \neq b_n$)
   - let $p$ be largest integer such that $b_p \leq x + C$
   - **if** ($b_p = x$)
     - return "no solution"
   - $x \leftarrow b_p$
   - $S \leftarrow S \cup \{p\}$
5. **return** $S$
Interval Scheduling

- Also called activity selection, or job scheduling...
- Job \( j \) starts at \( s_j \) and finishes at \( f_j \).
- Two jobs compatible if they don't overlap.
- Goal: find maximum size subset of compatible jobs.

Interval Scheduling: Greedy Algorithms

**Greedy template.** Consider jobs in some natural order. Take each job provided it’s compatible with the ones already taken. Possible orders:

- [Earliest start time] Consider jobs in ascending order of \( s_j \).
- [Earliest finish time] Consider jobs in ascending order of \( f_j \).
- [Shortest interval] Consider jobs in ascending order of \( f_j - s_j \).
- [Fewest conflicts] For each job \( j \), count the number of conflicting jobs \( c_j \). Schedule in ascending order of \( c_j \).

*Which of these surely don’t work? (hint: find a counter example)*
**Interval Scheduling: Greedy Algorithms**

**Greedy template.** Consider jobs in some natural order. Take each job provided it’s compatible with the ones already taken.

- counterexample for earliest start time
- counterexample for shortest interval
- counterexample for fewest conflicts

---

**Greedy algorithm.** Consider jobs in increasing order of finish time. Take each job provided it’s compatible with the ones already taken.

```plaintext
Sort jobs by finish times so that \( f_1 \leq f_2 \leq \ldots \leq f_n \).

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{set of jobs selected} \\
A &\leftarrow \emptyset \\
\text{for } j = 1 \text{ to } n \{ \\
\text{if } (\text{job } j \text{ compatible with } A) \\
A &\leftarrow A \cup \{j\} \\
\} \\
\text{return } A
\end{align*}
\]
```

**Implementation.**
- When is job \( j \) compatible with \( A \)?
Interval Scheduling: Greedy Algorithm

**Greedy algorithm.** Consider jobs in increasing order of finish time. Take each job provided it’s compatible with the ones already taken.

Sort jobs by finish times so that \( f_1 \leq f_2 \leq \ldots \leq f_n \).

\[
\begin{align*}
A & \leftarrow \{1\} \\
j & = 1 \\
\text{for } i & = 2 \text{ to } n \{ \\
\text{if } S_i & < F_j \\
A & \leftarrow A \cup \{i\} \\
j & \leftarrow i \\
\} \\
\text{return } A
\end{align*}
\]

**Implementation.** \( O(n \log n) \).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
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<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
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<th>10</th>
<th>11</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<tr>
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<td>11</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>14</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Eg

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
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<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>3</td>
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<td>$F_i$</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

$A = \{1,4,8,11\}$

Greedy algorithms determine a **globally optimum solution** by a series of **locally optimal choices**.

Greedy solution is not the only optimal one:

$A' = \{2,4,9,11\}$

**Greedy works for Activity Selection = Interval Scheduling**

Proof by induction

**BASE:** There is an optimal solution that contains greedy activity 1 as first activity. Let $A$ be an optimal solution with activity $k \neq 1$ as first activity.

Then we can replace activity $k$ (which has $F_k \geq F_1$) by activity 1.

So, picking the first element in a greedy fashion works.

**STEP:** After the first choice is made, remove all activities that are incompatible with the first chosen activity and recursively define a new problem consisting of the remaining activities. The first activity for this reduced problem can be made in a greedy fashion by the base principle.

By induction, Greedy is optimal.
What did we do?

We assumed there was another, non greedy, optimal solution, then we stepwise morphed this solution into a greedy optimal solution, thereby showing that the greedy solution works in the first place.

This is called the exchange argument:

Assume there is another optimal solution, then I show my greedy solution is at least as good. Therefore, there is no better solution than the greedy solution.

Scheduling all intervals

- Lecture j starts at $s_j$ and finishes at $f_j$.
- **Goal**: find minimum number of classrooms to schedule all lectures so that no two occur at the same time in the same room.

This schedule uses 4 classrooms to schedule 10 lectures:

Can we do better?
Scheduling all intervals

- Eg, lecture \( j \) starts at \( s_j \) and finishes at \( f_j \).
- **Goal**: find minimum number of classrooms to schedule all lectures so that no two occur at the same time in the same room.

This schedule uses 3:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>9:00</th>
<th>9:30</th>
<th>10:00</th>
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<th>12:30</th>
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<td>f</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>a</td>
<td>e</td>
<td></td>
<td>h</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Interval Scheduling: Lower Bound**

**Key observation.** Number of classrooms needed \( \geq \) depth (maximum number of intervals at a time point).

**Example:** Depth of schedule below = 3 \( \Rightarrow \) schedule is optimal. We cannot do it with 2.

**Q.** Does there always exist a schedule equal to depth of intervals?

(hint: greedily label the intervals with their resource)
Interval Scheduling: Greedy Algorithm

Greedy algorithm.

allocate d labels (d = depth)
sort the intervals by starting time: I₁, I₂, ..., Iₙ
for j = 1 to n
    for each interval Iᵢ that precedes and overlaps with Iⱼ, exclude its label for Iⱼ
    pick a remaining label for Iⱼ

Greedy works

allocate d labels (d = depth)
sort the intervals by starting time: I₁, I₂, ..., Iₙ
for j = 1 to n
    for each interval Iᵢ that precedes and overlaps with Iⱼ, exclude its label for Iⱼ
    pick a remaining label for Iⱼ

Observations:

- There is always a label for Iⱼ
  assume t intervals overlap with Iⱼ; Iⱼ and these pass over a common point, so t < d, so there is one of the d labels available for Iⱼ
- No overlapping intervals get the same label
  by the nature of the algorithm
Huffman Code Compression

Huffman codes

Say I have a code consisting of the letters a, b, c, d, e, f with frequencies (x1000) 45, 13, 12, 16, 9, 5
What would a fixed length binary encoding look like?

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{a} & \rightarrow 000 \\
\text{b} & \rightarrow 001 \\
\text{c} & \rightarrow 010 \\
\text{d} & \rightarrow 011 \\
\text{e} & \rightarrow 100 \\
\text{f} & \rightarrow 101
\end{align*}
\]

What would the total encoding length be?

\[100,000 \times 3 = 300,000\]
### Fixed vs. Variable encoding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>a</th>
<th>b</th>
<th>c</th>
<th>d</th>
<th>e</th>
<th>f</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>frequency(x1000)</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fixed encoding</td>
<td>000</td>
<td>001</td>
<td>010</td>
<td>011</td>
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<tr>
<td>variable encoding</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>1101</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

100,000 characters
Fixed: 300,000 bits
Variable?

\[(1 \times 45 + 3 \times 13 + 3 \times 12 + 3 \times 16 + 4 \times 9 + 4 \times 5) \times 1000 = 224,000 \text{ bits}\]

> 25% saving

### Variable prefix encoding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>a</th>
<th>b</th>
<th>c</th>
<th>d</th>
<th>e</th>
<th>f</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>frequency(x1000)</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fixed encoding</td>
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<td>001</td>
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<tr>
<td>variable encoding</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>1101</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

what is special about our encoding?
no code is a prefix of another.
why does it matter?

We can concatenate the codes without ambiguities

001011101 = aabe
Two characters, frequencies, encodings

- Say we have two characters a and b,
  - a with frequency $f_a$ and b with frequency $f_b$
  - e.g. a has frequency 70, b has frequency 30
- Say we have two encodings for these,
  - one with length $l_1$, one with length $l_2$
  - e.g. '101', $l_1=3$, '11100', $l_2=5$

Which encoding would we chose for a and which for b?

- if we assign a = '101' and b = '11100'
  - what will the total number of bits be? $70*3 + 30*5 = 360$
- if we assign a = '11100' and b = '101'
  - what will the total number of bits be? $70*5 + 30*3 = 440$

Can you relate the difference to frequency and encoding length?

$\text{(5-3)(70-30)} = 80$

---

Frequency and encoding length

Two characters, a and b, with frequencies $f_1$ and $f_2$
- two encodings 1 and 2 with length $l_1$ and $l_2$

- $f_1 > f_2$ and $l_1 > l_2$

I: a encoding 1, b encoding 2: $f_1*l_1 + f_2*l_2$
II: a encoding 2, b encoding 1: $f_1*l_2 + f_2*l_1$

Difference: $(f_1*l_1 + f_2*l_2) - (f_1*l_2 + f_2*l_1) = f_1*(l_1-l_2) + f_2*(l_2-l_1) = f_1*(l_1-l_2) - f_2*(l_1-l_2) = (f_1-f_2)*(l_1-l_2)$

So, for optimal encoding:
  - the higher the frequency, the shorter the encoding length
Cost of encoding a file: ABL

For each character \( c \) in \( C \), \( f(c) \) is its frequency and \( d(c) \) is the number of bits it takes to encode \( c \).

So the number of bits to encode the file is

\[
\sum_{c \text{ in } C} f(c)d(c)
\]

The Average Bit Length of an encoding \( E \):

\[
ABL(E) = \frac{1}{n} \sum_{c \text{ in } C} f(c)d(c)
\]

where \( n \) is the number of characters in the file

---

Huffman code

An optimal encoding of a file has a minimal cost
- i.e., minimal ABL.

Huffman invented a greedy algorithm to construct an optimal prefix code called the Huffman code.

An encoding is represented by a binary prefix tree:
- intermediate nodes contain frequencies
  - the sum frequencies of their children
- leaves are the characters + their frequencies
- paths to the leaves are the codes

the length of the encoding of a character \( c \) is the length of the path to \( c : f_c \)
Prefix tree for variable encoding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Symbol</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Encoding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Optimal prefix trees are full

- The frequencies of the internal nodes are the sums of the frequencies of their children.
- A binary tree is **full** if all its internal nodes have two children.
- If the prefix tree is not full, it is not optimal. Why?

If a tree is not full it has an internal node with one child labeled with a redundant bit.

Check the fixed encoding:

- a:000 b:001 c:010 d:011 e:100 f:101
Huffman algorithm

- Create $|C|$ leaves, one for each character
- Perform $|C|-1$ merge operations, each creating a new node, with children the nodes with least two frequencies and with frequency the sum of these two frequencies.
- By using a heap for the collection of intermediate trees this algorithm takes $O(n \log n)$ time.
Huffman is optimal

Base step of inductive approach:

Let x and y be the two characters with the minimal frequencies, then there is a minimal cost encoding tree with x and y of equal and highest depth (see e and f in our example above).

How?

The proof technique is the same exchange argument have we have used before:

If the greedy choice is not taken then we show that by taking the greedy choice we get a solution that is as good or better.
Exchange argument

Let leaves $x, y$ have the lowest frequencies.
Assume that two other characters $a$ and $b$
with higher frequencies are siblings at the
lowest level of the tree $T$

Since the frequencies of $x$ and $y$ are lowest, the cost can only improve if we swap $y$ and $a$, and $x$ and $b$:

why?

Proof of exchange argument

Since the frequencies of $x$ and $y$ are lowest, the cost can only improve if we swap $y$ and $a$, and $x$ and $b$. We prove, using the same subtract argument we used in slide 24 (frequency and encoding length): \( \text{cost left tree} > \text{cost right tree} \)

(a, $y$ part of) cost of left tree: \( d_1f_y + d_2f_a \), of right tree: \( d_1f_a + d_2f_y \)
\( d_1f_y + d_2f_a - d_1f_a - d_2f_y = d_1(f_y - f_a) + d_2(f_a - f_y) = (d_2 - d_1)(f_a - f_y) > 0 \)

same for $x$ and $b$
### Greedy Huffman

We have shown that putting the lowest two frequency characters lowest in the tree is a good greedy starting point for our algorithm.

Now we create an alphabet $C' = C$ with $x$ and $y$ replaced by a new character $z$ with frequency $f(z) = f(x) + f(y)$ and repeat the process.

### Conclusion: Greedy Algorithms

At every step, Greedy makes the locally optimal choice, "without worrying about the future".

**Greedy stays ahead.** Show that after each step of the greedy algorithm, its solution is at least as good as any other.

Show Greedy works by exchange / morphing argument. Incrementally transform any optimal solution to the greedy one without worsening its quality.

**Not all problems have a greedy solution.** None of the NP problems (eg TSP) allow a greedy solution.