http://www.cs.unh.edu/~ruml/cs758
Greedy Algorithms
Greedy

Make best *local* choice, then solve remaining subproblem.

Eg, optimal solution uses the greedy choice + optimal solution to remaining subproblem.

Unlike DP, haven’t already solved subproblems, don’t need to pick ‘best’ subsolution to use.
Activity Selection

Given $n$ activities, $\{1, 2, \ldots, n\}$; the $i$th activity corresponding to an interval starting at $s(i)$ and finishing at $f(i)$, find a compatible set with maximum size.
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**Make a choice:** at each step, select the next activity to include in the set.

**Is there a rule?**
“Rules” for Activity Selection

- Earliest start time
- Earliest finish time
- Smallest interval
- Least conflicts

Try to make a decision that is good locally, before solving subproblems.

Is best decision independent of subproblem solution?
“Rules” for Activity Selection

- Earliest start time
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Try to make a decision that is good locally, before solving subproblems.

Is best decision independent of subproblem solution?
Make greedy choice, then solve remaining subproblem:

1. $R \leftarrow \text{all activities}$
2. $A \leftarrow \{\}$
3. while $R \neq \{\}$
4. let $t = \text{activity in } R \text{ with earliest finish time}$
5. $R \leftarrow R \setminus \{s : s \text{ conflicts with } t\}$
6. $A \leftarrow A \cup \{t\}$
7. return $A$

Is this optimal?
Proving Greedy Optimal

Need to show:

1. greedy choice is optimal: there exists an optimal solution that uses it
2. optimal substructure: the remaining subproblem can be solved the same way
The Greedy Choice Property

Prove that first choice in optimal solution can be make greedily:

- Let \( \langle a_1, a_2, \ldots, a_i \rangle \) be an optimal schedule.
- If \( a_1 \) is the activity with the earliest finish time then the greedy choice is within some optimal solution.
- If \( a_1 \) is not the activity with the earliest finish time then there must exist an activity \( b \) with an earlier finish time \( (f(b) < f(a_1)) \).
- \( b \) will be compatible with \( a_2 \), so \( \langle b, a_2, \ldots, a_i \rangle \) is also an optimal solution.

This applies recursively to the subproblems:
Recall that \( \langle a_2, \ldots, a_i \rangle \) is an optimal sub-solution.
Prove that optimal solution contains optimal solution to remaining subproblem after greedy choice:

- Let \( \langle a_1, a_2, \ldots, a_i \rangle \) be an optimal schedule.
- For the sake of contradiction, assume \( \langle a_k, \ldots, a_i \rangle \) is a suboptimal sub-schedule for the time after activity \( a_{k-1} \).
- So, there exists a sequence \( \langle b_1, \ldots, b_j \rangle \) that is a better schedule for this time interval \( (j > i - k) \).
- Then, \( \langle a_1, \ldots, a_{k-1}, b_1, \ldots, b_j \rangle \) must be a better schedule.
- Then, our optimal schedule was suboptimal: contradiction!
- So our assumption must not hold. Sub-sechedule must be optimal.
Summary of Greedy Algorithms

Make best *local* choice, then solve remaining subproblem.

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1. prove greedy choice is safe (an optimal solution uses that choice): substitute greedy choice in optimal solution
2. prove optimal substructure (optimal solution uses optimal solutions of subproblems): assume suboptimal, then derive contradiction
- asst 7 due Mar 21
- midterm on Thur
- National Survey of Student Engagement
Huffman Coding
Given a table of character frequencies, find a set of prefix-free codewords that minimizes encoding length:

$$B(T) = \sum_{c \in C} f(c) \cdot d_T(c)$$

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(c)</th>
<th>(f(c))</th>
<th>code</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>01</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a a a b a b a c ⇒ 1 1 1 00 1 00 1 01

regular ASCII: 8 bytes = 64 bits ⇒ 11 bits (≈83% smaller)
fixed size: 8 × 2 bits = 16 bits ⇒ 11 bits (≈31% smaller)
frequent characters will have shorter codes

every node in the optimal code tree has two children
Distinguish elements by penalizing the two least frequent:

1. $C \leftarrow$ characters $c$ tagged by frequency $f(c)$
2. $Q \leftarrow$ MAKE-MIN-HEAP($C$)
3. for $i = 1$ to $|C| - 1$ do
4. let $z$ be a new tree node
5. $z.left \leftarrow$ EXTRACT-MIN($Q$)
6. $z.right \leftarrow$ EXTRACT-MIN($Q$)
7. $f(z) \leftarrow f(z.left) + f(z.right)$
8. HEAP-INSERT($Q, z$)
9. return EXTRACT-MIN($Q$)

What’s the worst-case time complexity?
Show that

1. we can convert optimal solution to one that takes greedy choice.
2. the optimal solution to a subproblem can be extended by the greedy choice into the optimal solution for the larger problem
Any code without greedy choice can be improved by it:

Let \( x \) and \( y \) be the least frequent and \( a \) and \( b \) be siblings at the deepest depth in \( T \). If they are not the same, we can improve the code by swapping \( x \) and \( y \) for \( a \) and \( b \).

Proof: Consider swapping \( x \) and \( a \) to get \( T' \).

\[
B(T) - B(T') = \sum_{c \in C} f(c) \cdot d_T(c) - \sum_{c \in C} f(c) \cdot d_{T'}(c)
\]

\[
= f(a) \cdot d_T(a) + f(x) \cdot d_T(x) - f(a) \cdot d_{T'}(a) - f(x) \cdot d_{T'}(x)
\]

\[
= f(a) \cdot d_T(a) + f(x) \cdot d_T(x) - f(a) \cdot d_T(x) - f(x) \cdot d_T(a)
\]

\[
= (f(a) - f(x))(d_T(a) - d_T(x))
\]

\[
\geq 0
\]
Show that the optimal solution to the subproblem remaining after the greedy choice has been made can be extended by the greedy choice into the optimal solution.

Combine least frequent characters $x$ and $y$ in $C$ into $z$ with $f(z) = f(x) + f(y)$. Let $T_R$ be the optimal code tree for this reduced set $C_R$. Now expand leaf for $z$ in $T_R$ into branch for leaves $x$ and $y$. Prove this expanded tree $T$ is optimal for $C$. 
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First, compare encoding costs where $T$ and $T_R$ differ:

$$f(x) \cdot d_T(x) + f(y) \cdot d_T(y) = (f(x) + f(y))(d_{T_R}(z) + 1)$$

$$= f(z) \cdot d_{T_R}(z) + (f(x) + f(y))$$

Rest of the trees are the same, so:

$$B(T) = B(T_R) + f(x) + f(y)$$

$$B(T_R) = B(T) - f(x) - f(y)$$
Combine least frequent characters $x$ and $y$ in $C$ into $z$ with $f(z) = f(x) + f(y)$. Let $T_R$ be the optimal code tree for this reduced set $C_R$. Now expand leaf for $z$ in $T_R$ into branch for leaves $x$ and $y$. Prove this expanded tree $T$ is optimal for $C$.

We just proved $B(T_R) = B(T) - f(x) - f(y)$.

Now, assume $T$ non-optimal for $C$ but tree $O$ is. Note $x$ and $y$ are siblings in $O$ by greedy choice property. Form $O_R$ by replacing them with $z$. Encoding cost:

$$B(O_R) = B(O) - f(x) - f(y) \text{ by prev argument}$$
$$< B(T) - f(x) - f(y) \text{ by assumption about } O$$
$$< B(T_R)$$

But $T_R$ was optimal for $C_R$ — contradiction!
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For example:

- What’s still confusing?
- What question didn’t you get to ask today?
- What would you like to hear more about?

Please write down your most pressing question about algorithms and put it in the box on your way out.

Thanks!