

Foundations of Artificial Intelligence

15. State-Space Search: Best-first Graph Search

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State-Space Search: Overview

Chapter overview: state-space search

- 5.–7. Foundations
- 8.–12. Basic Algorithms
- 13.–19. Heuristic Algorithms
 - 13. Heuristics
 - 14. Analysis of Heuristics
 - 15. Best-first Graph Search
 - 16. Greedy Best-first Search, A^* , Weighted A^*
 - 17. IDA *
 - 18. Properties of A^* , Part I
 - 19. Properties of A^* , Part II

Introduction

Heuristic Search Algorithms

Heuristic Search Algorithms

Heuristic search algorithms use **heuristic functions** to (partially or fully) determine the order of node expansion.

German: heuristische Suchalgorithmen

- **this chapter:** short introduction
- **next chapters:** more thorough analysis

Best-first Search

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- decision which node is most promising **uses heuristics**...
- ...but **not necessarily exclusively**.

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Best-first Search

A **best-first search** is a heuristic search algorithm that evaluates search nodes with an **evaluation function f** and always expands a node n with minimal $f(n)$ value.

German: Bestensuche, Bewertungsfunktion

- implementation essentially like **uniform cost search**
- different choices of $f \rightsquigarrow$ different search algorithms

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- $f(n) = g(n) + w \cdot h(n.state)$: weighted A^*
 $w \in \mathbb{R}_0^+$ is a parameter
 $\rightsquigarrow$ interpolates between greedy best-first search and A^*

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$\rightsquigarrow$ properties: next chapters

What do we obtain with $f(n) := g(n)$?

Best-first Search: Graph Search or Tree Search?

Best-first search can be **graph search** or **tree search**.

- **now: graph search** (i.e., with duplicate elimination), which is the more common case
- **Chapter 17:** a tree search variant

Algorithm Details

Reminder: Uniform Cost Search

reminder: uniform cost search

Uniform Cost Search

```
open := new MinHeap ordered by g
open.insert(make_root_node())
closed := new HashSet
while not open.is_empty():
    n := open.pop_min()
    if n.state ∉ closed:
        closed.insert(n)
        if is_goal(n.state):
            return extract_path(n)
        for each ⟨a, s'⟩ ∈ succ(n.state):
            n' := make_node(n, a, s')
            open.insert(n')
return unsolvable
```


Best-first Search without Reopening (1st Attempt)

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        for each  $\langle a, s' \rangle \in \text{succ}(n.\text{state})$ :
            n' := make_node(n, a, s')
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return unsolvable
```

Best-first Search w/o Reopening (1st Attempt): Discussion

Discussion:

This is already an acceptable implementation of best-first search.

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two useful improvements:

- **discard states** considered **unsolvable** by the heuristic
 $\rightsquigarrow$ saves memory in *open*
- if multiple search nodes have identical f values,
 use h to break ties (preferring low h)
 - not always a good idea, but often
 - obviously unnecessary if $f = h$ (greedy best-first search)

Best-first Search without Reopening (Final Version)

Best-first Search without Reopening

```
open := new MinHeap ordered by  $\langle f, h \rangle$ 
if  $h(\text{init}()) < \infty$ :
    open.insert(make_root_node())
closed := new HashSet
while not open.is_empty():
    n := open.pop_min()
    if n.state  $\notin$  closed:
        closed.insert(n)
        if is_goal(n.state):
            return extract_path(n)
        for each  $\langle a, s' \rangle \in \text{succ}(n.\text{state})$ :
            if  $h(s') < \infty$ :
                n' := make_node(n, a, s')
                open.insert(n')
return unsolvable
```

Best-first Search: Properties

properties:

- **complete** if h is safe (**Why?**)
- **optimality** depends on $f \rightsquigarrow$ next chapters

Reopening

Reopening

- **reminder:** uniform cost search expands nodes in order of increasing g values
- ↪ guarantees that **cheapest path** to state of a node has been found when the node is expanded
- with arbitrary evaluation functions f in best-first search this does **not** hold in general
- ↪ in order to find solutions of low cost, we may want to **expand duplicate nodes** when cheaper paths to their states are found (**reopening**)

German: Reopening

Best-first Search with Reopening

Best-first Search with Reopening

```
open := new MinHeap ordered by  $\langle f, h \rangle$ 
if  $h(\text{init}()) < \infty$ :
    open.insert(make_root_node())
distances := new HashTable
while not open.is_empty():
    n := open.pop_min()
    if distances.lookup(n.state) = none or  $g(n) < \text{distances}[n.state]$ :
        distances[n.state] :=  $g(n)$ 
        if is_goal(n.state):
            return extract_path(n)
        for each  $\langle a, s' \rangle \in \text{succ}(n.state)$ :
            if  $h(s') < \infty$ :
                 $n' := \text{make\_node}(n, a, s')$ 
                open.insert( $n'$ )
return unsolvable
```

$\rightsquigarrow$ *distances* controls reopening and replaces *closed*

Summary

Summary

- **best-first search:** expand node with minimal value of **evaluation function f**
 - $f = h$: **greedy best-first search**
 - $f = g + h$: **A^***
 - $f = g + w \cdot h$ with parameter $w \in \mathbb{R}_0^+$: **weighted A^***
- **here:** best-first search as a graph search
- **reopening:** expand duplicates with lower path costs to find cheaper solutions