Planning by Dynamic Programming

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Outline

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What is Dynamic Programming?

Dynamic sequential or temporal component to the problem

Programming optimizing a "program", i.e. a policy

- c.f. linear programming

- A method for solving complex problem
- By breaking them down into subproblems
  - Solve the subproblems
  - Combine solutions to subproblems

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Requirements for Dynamic Programming

Dynamic Programming is a very general solution method for problems which have two properties:

- Optimal substructure
  - Principle of optimality applies
  - Optimal solution can be decomposed into subproblems
- Overlapping subproblems
  - Subproblems recur many times
  - Solutions can be cached and reused
- Markov decision process satisfy both properties
  - Bellman equation gives recursive decomposition
  - Value function stores and reuses solutions

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Planning by Dynamic Programming

- Dynamic programming assumes full knowledge of the MDP
- It is used for planning in an MDP
- For prediction (policy evaluation):
  - Input: MDP $\langle \mathcal{S}, \mathcal{A}, \mathcal{P}, \mathcal{R}, \gamma \rangle$ and policy π
  - or: MRP $\langle \mathcal{S}, \mathcal{P}^{\pi}, \mathcal{R}^{\pi}, \gamma \rangle$
  - Output: value function v_{π}
- Or for control:
  - Input: MDP $\langle \mathcal{S}, \mathcal{A}, \mathcal{P}, \mathcal{R}, \gamma \rangle$
  - Output: optimal value function v_{*} and optimal policy π_{*}

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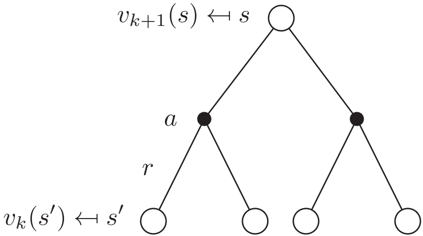
Iterative Policy Evaluation

- Problem: evaluate a given policy π
- Solution: iterative application of Bellman expectation backup
- $v_1 \rightarrow v_2 \rightarrow \cdots \rightarrow v_\pi$
- Using *synchronous* backups,
  - At each iteration $k+1$
  - For all states $s \in \mathcal{S}$
  - Update $v_{k+1}(s)$ from $v_k(s')$
  - where s' is a successor state of s
- We will discuss *asynchronous* backups later
- Convergence to v_π will be proven at the end of the lecture

Iterative Policy Evaluation (2)



$$v_{k+1}(s) = \sum_{a \in \mathcal{A}} \pi(a|s) \left(\mathcal{R}_s^a + \gamma \sum_{s' \in \mathcal{S}} \mathcal{P}_{ss'}^a v_k(s') \right)$$

$$\mathbf{v}^{k+1} = \boldsymbol{\mathcal{R}}^{\pi} + \gamma \boldsymbol{\mathcal{P}}^{\pi} \mathbf{v}^k$$

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Iterative Policy Evaluation (3)

Iterative Policy Evaluation, for estimating $V \approx v_\pi$

Input π, the policy to be evaluated
Algorithm parameter: a small threshold $\theta > 0$ determining accuracy of estimation
Initialize $V(s)$, for all $s \in \mathcal{S}^+$, arbitrarily except that $V(\mathit{terminal}) = 0$

Loop:
    $\Delta \leftarrow 0$
    Loop for each $s \in \mathcal{S}$:
        $v \leftarrow V(s)$
        $V(s) \leftarrow \sum_a \pi(a|s) \sum_{s',r} p(s', r \,|\, s, a)\big[r + \gamma V(s')\big]$
        $\Delta \leftarrow \max(\Delta, |v - V(s)|)$
until $\Delta < \theta$

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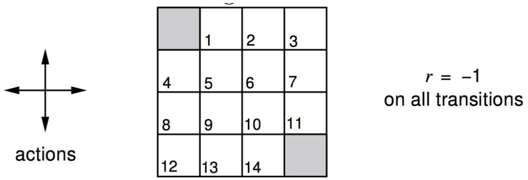
Example: Evaluating a Random Policy in the Small Gridworld



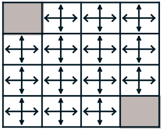
- Undiscounted episodic MDP ($\gamma = 1$)
- Nonterminal states $1, \cdots, 14$
- One terminal state (shown twice as shaded squares)
- Actions leading out of the grid leave state unchanged
- Reward is -1 until the terminal state is reached
- Agent follows uniform random policy
  $\pi(n|\cdot) = \pi(e|\cdot) = \pi(s|\cdot) = \pi(w|\cdot) = 0.25$

Example: Iterative Policy Evaluation in Small Gridworld

v_k for the Random Policy | Greedy Policy w.r.t. v_k

$k = 0$

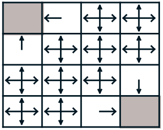
0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0



random policy

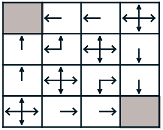
$k = 1$

0.0	-1.0	-1.0	-1.0
-1.0	-1.0	-1.0	-1.0
-1.0	-1.0	-1.0	-1.0
-1.0	-1.0	-1.0	0.0



$k = 2$

0.0	-1.7	-2.0	-2.0
-1.7	-2.0	-2.0	-2.0
-2.0	-2.0	-2.0	-1.7
-2.0	-2.0	-1.7	0.0



Example: Iterative Policy Evaluation in Small Gridworld (2)

$k = 3$

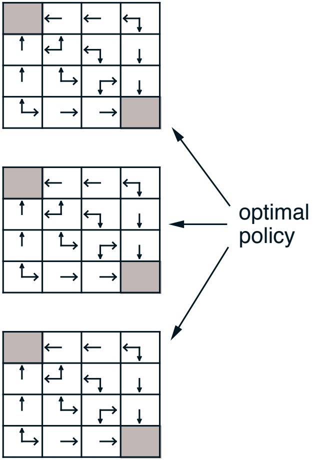
0.0	-2.4	-2.9	-3.0
-2.4	-2.9	-3.0	-2.9
-2.9	-3.0	-2.9	-2.4
-3.0	-2.9	-2.4	0.0

$k = 10$

0.0	-6.1	-8.4	-9.0
-6.1	-7.7	-8.4	-8.4
-8.4	-8.4	-7.7	-6.1
-9.0	-8.4	-6.1	0.0

$k = \infty$

0.0	-14.	-20.	-22.
-14.	-18.	-20.	-20.
-20.	-20.	-18.	-14.
-22.	-20.	-14.	0.0



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Policy Improvement

- Consider a deterministic policy, $a = \pi(s)$
- We can *improve* the policy by acting greedily

$$\pi^{'}(s) = \arg\max_{a \in \mathcal{A}} q_\pi(s, a)$$

- This improves the value from any state s over one step,

$$v_{\pi'} = q_\pi(s, \pi^{'}(s)) = \max_{a \in \mathcal{A}} q_\pi(s, a) \geq q_\pi(s, \pi(s)) = v_\pi(s)$$

- It therefore improves the value function, $v_{\pi'} \geq v_\pi(s)$

$$\begin{aligned} v_\pi(s) &\leq q_\pi(s, \pi^{'}(s)) = \mathbb{E}_{\pi'}[R_{t+1} + \gamma v_\pi(S_{t+1}) | S_t = s] \\ &\leq \mathbb{E}_{\pi'}[R_{t+1} + \gamma q_\pi(S_{t+1}, \pi^{'}(S_{t+1})) | S_t = s] \\ &\leq \mathbb{E}_{\pi'}[R_{t+1} + \gamma R_{t+2} + \gamma^2 q_\pi(S_{t+2}, \pi^{'}(S_{t+2})) | S_t = s] \\ &\leq \mathbb{E}_{\pi'}[R_{t+1} + \gamma R_{t+2} + \cdots | S_t = s] = v_{\pi'}(s) \end{aligned}$$

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Policy Improvement (2)

- If improvements stop,

$$q_\pi(s, \pi'(s)) = \max_{a \in \mathcal{A}} q_\pi(s, a) = q_\pi(s, \pi(s)) = v_\pi(s)$$

- Then the Bellman optimality equation has been satisfied

$$v_\pi(s) = \max_{a \in \mathcal{A}} q_\pi(s, a)$$

- Therefore $v_\pi(s) = v_*(s)$, $\forall s \in \mathcal{S}$
- So π is an optimal policy

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How to Improve a Policy

- Given a policy π
  - Evaluation the policy π

$$v_\pi(s) = \mathbb{E}[R_{t+1} + \gamma R_{t+2} + \cdots | S_t = s]$$

  - Improvement the policy by acting greedily with respect to v_π

$$\pi^{'} = \mathrm{greedy}(v_\pi)$$

- In Small Gridworld improved policy was optimal, $\pi^{'} = \pi^*$
- In general, need more iterations of improvement / evaluation
- But this process of policy iteration always converges to π^*

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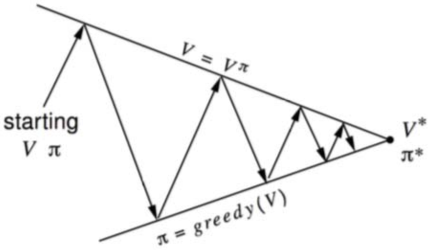
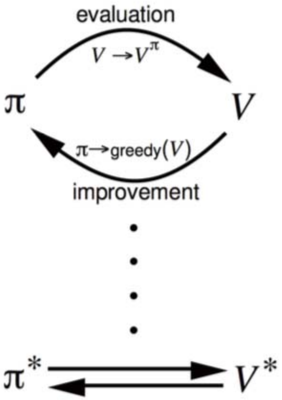
Policy Iteration

$$\pi_0 \xrightarrow{\text{E}} v_{\pi_0} \xrightarrow{\text{I}} \pi_1 \xrightarrow{\text{E}} v_{\pi_1} \xrightarrow{\text{I}} \pi_2 \xrightarrow{\text{E}} \cdots \xrightarrow{\text{I}} \pi_* \xrightarrow{\text{E}} v_*.$$





Policy evaluation Estimate v_π
Iterative policy evaluation

Policy improvement Generate $\pi' \geq \pi$
Greedy policy improvement

Policy Iteration (2)

Policy Iteration (using iterative policy evaluation) for estimating $\pi \approx \pi_*$

1. Initialization
   $V(s) \in \mathbb{R}$ and $\pi(s) \in \mathcal{A}(s)$ arbitrarily for all $s \in \mathcal{S}$

2. Policy Evaluation
   Loop:
   $\Delta \leftarrow 0$
   Loop for each $s \in \mathcal{S}$:
   $v \leftarrow V(s)$
   $V(s) \leftarrow \sum_{s',r} p(s', r | s, \pi(s)) \big[r + \gamma V(s')\big]$
   $\Delta \leftarrow \max(\Delta, |v - V(s)|)$
   until $\Delta < \theta$ (a small positive number determining the accuracy of estimation)

3. Policy Improvement
   policy-stable $\leftarrow$ *true*
   For each $s \in \mathcal{S}$:
   old-action $\leftarrow \pi(s)$
   $\pi(s) \leftarrow \arg\max_a \sum_{s',r} p(s', r | s, a) \big[r + \gamma V(s')\big]$
   If *old-action* $\neq \pi(s)$, then *policy-stable* $\leftarrow$ *false*
   If *policy-stable*, then stop and return $V \approx v_*$ and $\pi \approx \pi_*$; else go to 2

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Jack's Car Rental

- States: Car numbers in two locations, maximum of 20 cars each
- Actions: Move up to 5 car between locations overnight
- Reward: \$10 for each car rented (must be available)
- Transitions: Cars returned and requested randomly
  - Poisson distribution, n returns/ requests with prob $\frac{\lambda^n}{n!}e^{-\lambda}$
  - 1st location: average requests $= 3$, average returns $= 3$
  - 2nd location: average requests $= 4$, average returns $= 2$
- Discount rate: $\gamma = 0.9$
- Question: What is π^* and V^*?

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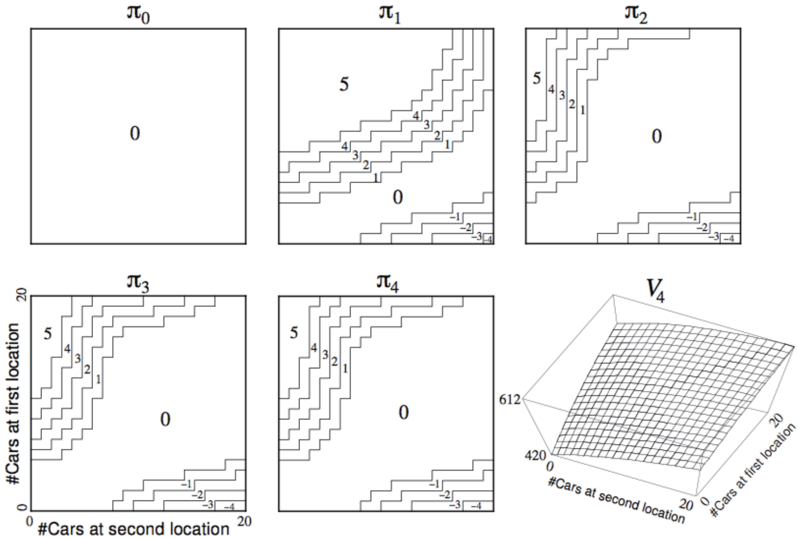
Policy Iteration in Jack's Car Rental



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Modified Policy Iteration

- Does policy evaluation need to converge to v_π ?
- Or should we introduce a stopping condition
  - e.g. ϵ-convergence of value function
- Or simple stop after k iterations of iterative policy evaluation?
- For example, in the small gridworld $k = 3$ was sufficient to achieve optimal policy
- Why not update policy every iteration? i.e. stop after $k = 1$
  - This is equivalent to value *iteration* (next section)

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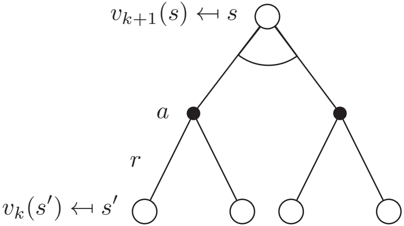
Value Iteration

- Problem: find optimal policy π
- Solution: iterative application of Bellman optimality backup
- $v_1 \rightarrow v_2 \rightarrow \cdots \rightarrow v_*$
- Using synchronous backups
  - At each iteration $k+1$
  - For all states $s \in \mathcal{S}$
  - Update $v_{k+1}(s)$ from $v_k(s')$
- Convergence to v_* will be proven later
- Unlike policy iteration, there is no explicit policy
- intermediate value functions may not correspond to any policy

Value Iteration (2)



$$v_{k+1}(s) = \max_{a \in \mathcal{A}} \left(\mathcal{R}_s^a + \gamma \sum_{s' \in \mathcal{S}} \mathcal{P}_{ss'}^a v_k(s') \right)$$

$$\mathbf{v}_{k+1} = \max_{a \in \mathcal{A}} \boldsymbol{\mathcal{R}}^{\boldsymbol{a}} + \gamma \boldsymbol{\mathcal{P}}^{\boldsymbol{a}} \mathbf{v}_k$$

Value Iteration (3)

Value Iteration, for estimating $\pi \approx \pi_*$

Algorithm parameter: a small threshold $\theta > 0$ determining accuracy of estimation
Initialize $V(s)$, for all $s \in \mathcal{S}^+$, arbitrarily except that $V(\mathit{terminal}) = 0$

Loop:
| $\Delta \leftarrow 0$
| Loop for each $s \in \mathcal{S}$:
| $v \leftarrow V(s)$
| $V(s) \leftarrow \max_a \sum_{s',r} p(s',r|s,a)\big[r + \gamma V(s')\big]$
| $\Delta \leftarrow \max(\Delta, |v - V(s)|)$
until $\Delta < \theta$

Output a deterministic policy, $\pi \approx \pi_*$, such that
$\pi(s) = \arg\max_a \sum_{s',r} p(s',r|s,a)\big[r + \gamma V(s')\big]$

Synchronous Dynamic Programming Algorithms

Problem	Bellman Equation	Algorithm
Prediction	Bellman Expectation Equation	Iterative Policy Evaluation
Control	Bellman Expectation Equation + Greedy Policy Improvement	Policy Iteration
Control	Bellman Optimality Equation	Value Iteration

- Algorithms are based on state-value function $v_\pi(s)$ or $v_*(s)$
- Complexity $O(mn^2)$ per iteration, for m actions and n states
- Could also apply to action-value function $q_\pi(s, a)$ or $q_*(s, a)$
- Complexity $O(m^2n^2)$ per iteration

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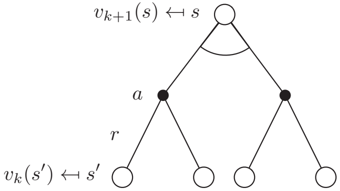
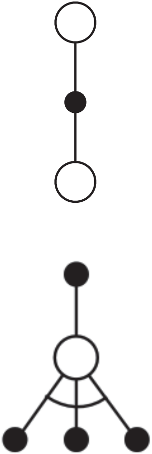
Full-Width Backups

- DP uses *full-width* backups
- For each backup (sync or asy)
  - Every successor state and action is considered
  - Using knowledge of the MDP transitions and reward function



- DP is effective for medium-sized problems (millions of states)
- For large problems DP suffers Bellman's *curse of dimensionality*
  - Number of state/action spaces grows exponentially
- Even one backup can be too expensive

Sample Backups



- Using sample rewards and sample transitions $\langle S, A, R, S' \rangle$
- Instead of reward function $\mathcal{R}$ and transition dynamic $\mathcal{P}$
- Advantages:
  - Model-free: no advance knowledge of MDP required
  - Breaks the curse of dimensionality through sampling
  - Cost of backup is constant, independent of $n = |\mathcal{S}|$

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Approximate Dynamic Programming

- Approximate the value function
- Using a *function approximator* $\hat{v}(s, \mathbf{w})$
- Apply dynamic programming to $\hat{v}(\cdot, \mathbf{w})$
- e.g. Fitted Value Iteration repeats at each iteration k
  - Sample states $\widetilde{\mathcal{S}} \subseteq \mathcal{S}$
  - For each state $s \in \widetilde{\mathcal{S}}$, estimate target value using Bellman optimality equation,

$$\tilde{v}_k(s) = \max_{a \in \mathcal{A}} \left(\mathcal{R}_s^a + \gamma \sum_{s' \in \mathcal{S}} \mathcal{P}_{ss'}^a \hat{v}(s', \mathbf{w_k}) \right)$$

  - Train next value function $\hat{v}(\cdot, \mathbf{w_{k+1}})$ using targets $\langle s, \tilde{v}_k(s) \rangle$

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