

# Artificial Intelligence

# Learning Goals

- Recognize how AIs attempt to achieve goals by using a perception, reason, and action cycle
- Build game decision trees to represent the possible moves of a game
- Use the minimax algorithm to determine an AI's best next move in a game
- Design potential heuristics that can support 'good-enough' search for an AI

# Perception, Reason, and Action

# What is Artificial Intelligence?

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is a branch of computer science that studies techniques which allow computers to do things that, when humans do them, are considered evidence of intelligence.

However, it's extremely hard to build a machine with general intelligence--that is, a machine that can do everything a human can do. We're still far away from this goal, as it includes many difficult tasks (visual and auditory perception, language understanding, reasoning, planning, and more).

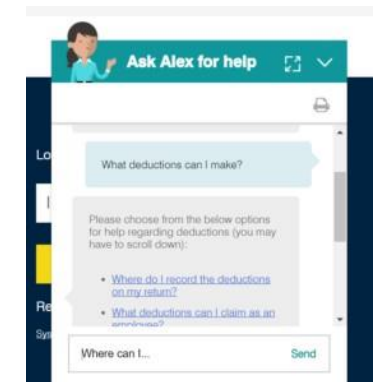
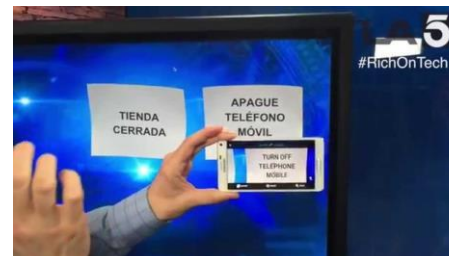
Most modern AI applications are specialized; they do one specific task, and they do it very well. We call an AI application trained for a specific task an agent.

# Examples of AI Agents

We've built AI agents that can play games, run robots, and win at Jeopardy.

AI is also used to translate text, predict what you'll type, and answer questions on websites.

What do these agents have in common? Each agent we build has a specific goal, the thing it is trying to do.



# Perception, Reason, and Action

An AI agent attempts to reach its goal by cycling through three steps: perceive information, reason about it, then act on it.

This is similar to how humans and animals work! We constantly take in information from our senses, process it, and decide what to do (consciously or unconsciously) based on that 'data'.

An agent's main task is to determine a series of actions that can be taken to accomplish its goal.

# Perception: What Data Can Be Gathered?

First, the agent needs to perceive information about the state of the problem its solving.

This can range from data inputted directly by the user to contextual information about other actions the user has taken. For example, an autocomplete AI agent might use data both about what the user is currently typing and about what they've typed before.

Agents that interact with the real world can perceive information through sensors, pieces of hardware that collect data and send it to the agent.



# Reason: What Should be Done Next?

Second, the AI agent needs to reason about the data it has collected, to decide what should be done next to move closer to the goal.

Reasoning uses algorithms, as we've discussed this whole semester. The agent often creates a model representation of the world based on the task it needs to solve and the data its collected so far. It can then search through all the possible actions it can take to inform its decision.

A general goal of reasoning is to make decisions quickly, so that tasks can be accomplished efficiently. You don't want a self-driving car to take long to decide whether or not to stop!





# Action: Here's What to Do

Finally, the AI agent needs to act, to produce a change in the state of the problem. All actions should lead the agent closer to its goal.

Actions don't need to reach the goal immediately, and often can't. As long as some progress is made, the agent can continue cycling through perceiving, reasoning, and acting until the goal is reached.

Agents that interface with the real world (robots) use actuators to make changes. This can be complicated (moving a robot arm) or simple (turning up the heat on the thermostat).



# Example: IBM Watson

IBM's AI agent Watson was designed to play (and win!) the game Jeopardy!. Its goal was to answer Jeopardy problems with a question. How did it work?

Watson perceived the questions by receiving them as text, then breaking them down into keywords using natural language processing.

It used that information to search documents in its database, looking for the most relevant information. With that information, Watson used reasoning to determine how confident it was that the answer it found was correct.

If Watson decided to answer, it would act by organizing the information into a sentence, then pressing the buzzer with a robotic 'finger'.



# Search Supports Artificial Intelligence

In Watson (and many other artificial intelligence applications), the key to being able to perceive and act quickly lies in fast search algorithms.

Being able to search quickly makes it possible for an AI agent to look through hundreds of thousands of possible actions to find which action will work best. This is what makes it possible for Watson to find a correct answer so quickly, or for a self-driving car to identify when it needs to stop immediately.

We've discussed many data structures and algorithms to support search already. We'll now introduce three final ideas used by AI agents to support fast search—game trees, minimax, and heuristics.

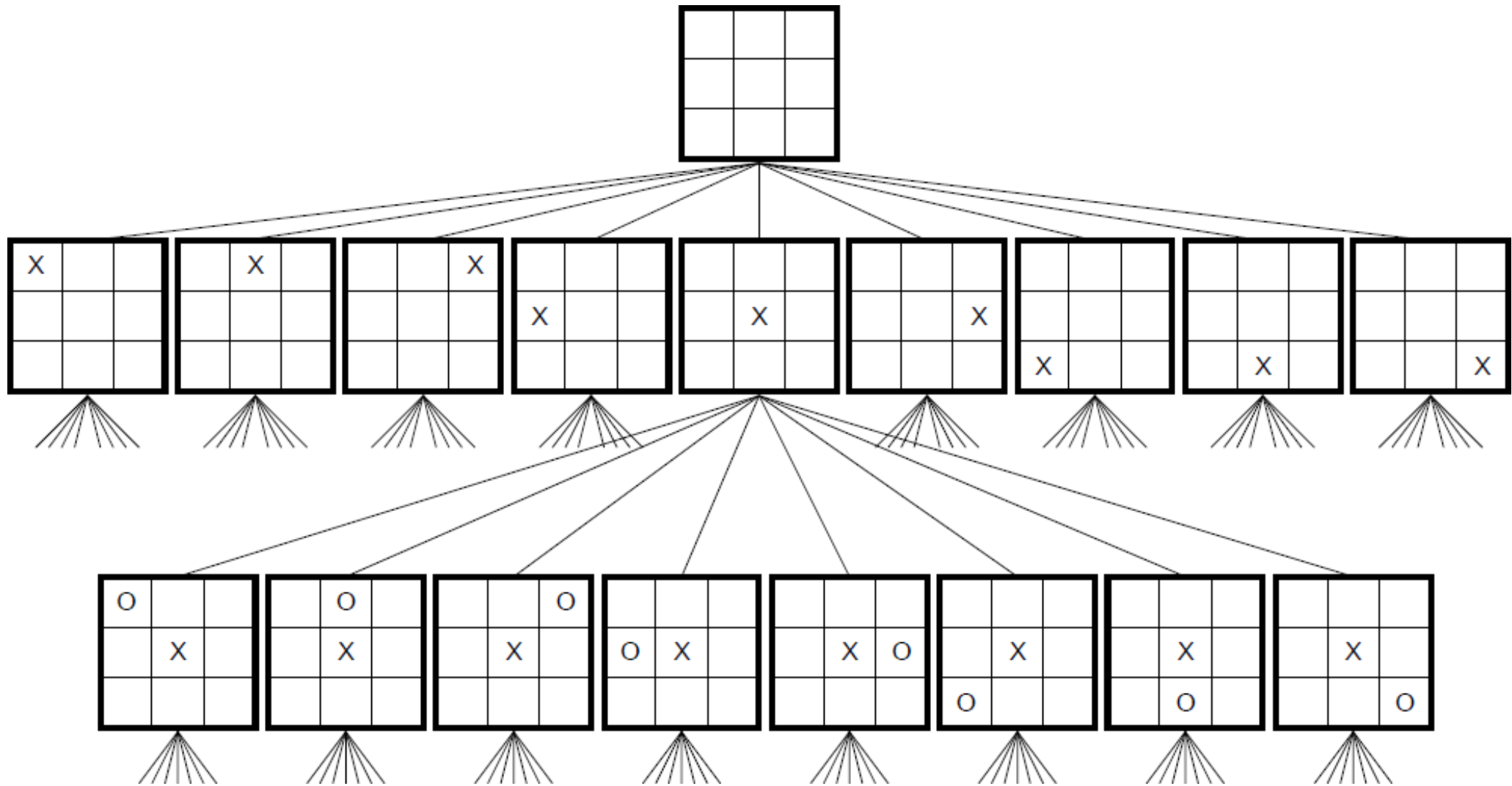
# Game Trees and Minimax

# Game Trees Represent Possible World States

To search data about possible actions and results quickly, an AI agent first needs to organize that data in a sensible way. Let's focus on a simple example: a two-player game between an AI agent and a human.

A game tree is a tree where the nodes are game states and the edges are actions made by the agent or the opposing player. Game trees let the agent represent all the possible outcomes of a game.

For example, the game tree for Tic-Tac-Toe looks like this...



Full board here: <https://xkcd.com/832/>

# Reading a Game Tree

The root of a game tree is the current state of the game. That can be the start state (as in the previous example), or it can be a game state after some moves have been made.

The leaves of the tree are the final states of the game, when the AI agent wins, loses, or ties.

The edges between the root and the first set of children are the possible moves the agent can make. Then the next set of edges (from the first level of children to the second) are the moves the opponent can make. These alternate all the way down the tree.

# Game Trees are Big

How many possible outcomes are there in a game of Tic-Tac-Toe?

Let's assume that all nine positions are filled. That means the depth of the tree is 10 (there are nine moves, so the root + 9 results of actions). There are 9 options for the first move, 8 for the second, 7 for the third, etc... that's  $9!$ , which is 362,880.

This number is a bit larger than the real set of possibilities (some games end early), but it's a good approximation.

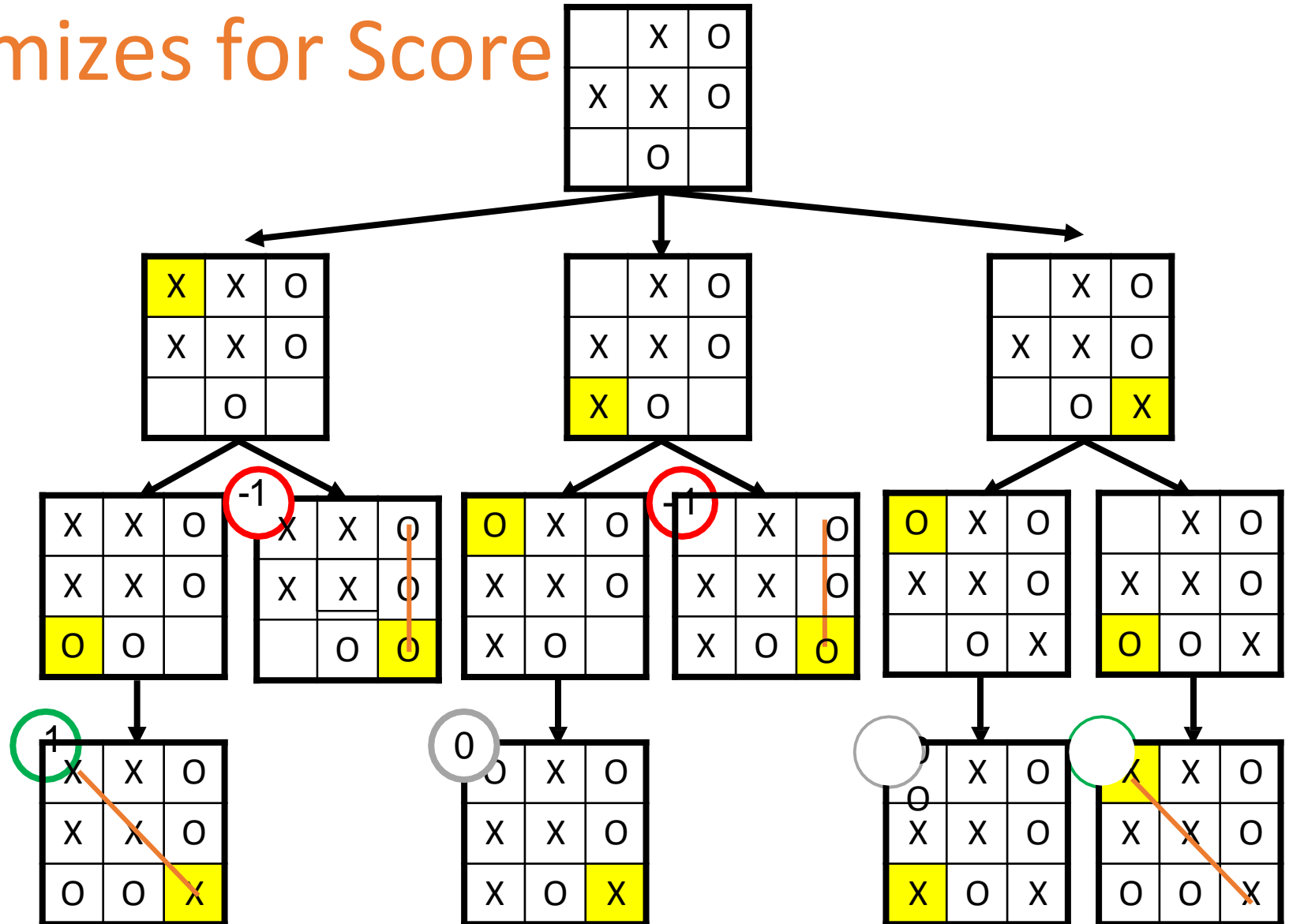
How can the agent choose the best set of moves to make out of all these options?



# Minimax Optimizes for Score

The minimax algorithm can be used to maximize the final 'score' of a game for an AI agent.

In Tic-Tac-Toe, we'll say that the score is 1 if the computer wins, 0 if there's a tie, and -1 if the human wins.



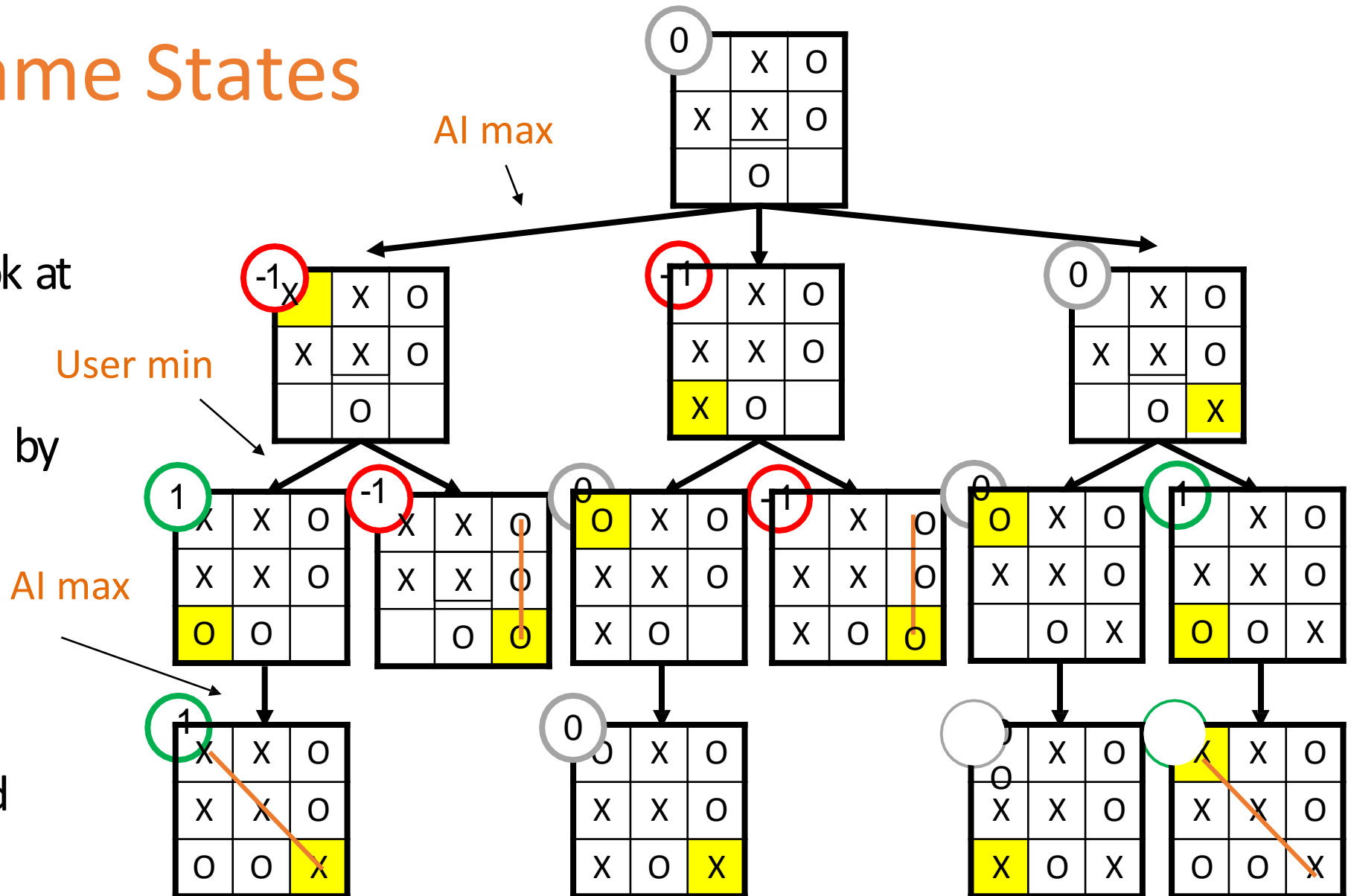
# Scoring Game States

How do we score the intermediate states? Look at the scores of the state's children.

If the next move is made by the agent, take the maximum of the scores.

If it's made by the opponent, take the minimum.

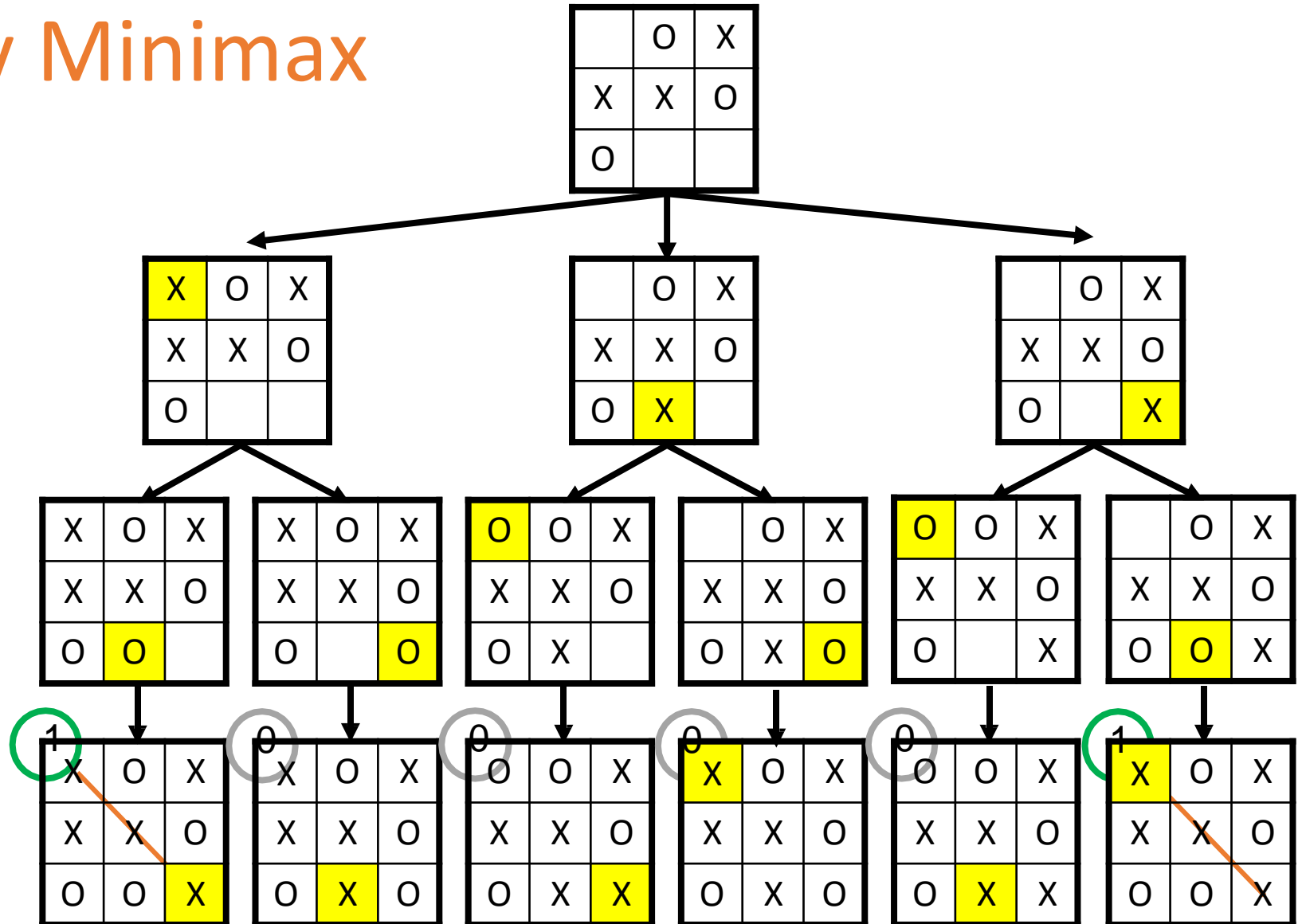
Start from the leaves and build up to the root.



## Activity: Apply Minimax

You do: given the tree to the right, apply minimax to find the score of the root node.

Note that the first action is taken by the AI agent.



# Minimax Algorithm

```
# Need to use a general tree- "children" instead of "left" and "right"
def minimax(tree, isMyTurn):
    if len(tree["children"]) == 0:
        return score(tree["value"]) # base case: score of the leaf
    else:
        results = [] # recursive case: get scores of all children for child in tree["children"]:
            # switch whose turn it will be for the children
            results.append(minimax(child, not isMyTurn)) if isMyTurn ==
True:
    return max(results) # my turn? maximize!
else:
    return min(results) # opponent's turn? minimize!

def score(state):
    ??? # this depends on the agent's goal
```

# Complexity of Minimax

How efficient is minimax? It needs to visit every node of the tree, so if the tree has  $n$  nodes, it runs in  $O(n)$  time.

Complete game trees are huge; more complex games have much larger trees. For example, in Chess there's an average of 35 possible next moves per turn, with an average of 100 turns per game. That means there are  $35^{100}$  possible states to check – way too many!!

We'll need a way to constrain the size of the game tree. We'll do that using heuristics.

# Heuristics

# Heuristics Provide Approximate Answers

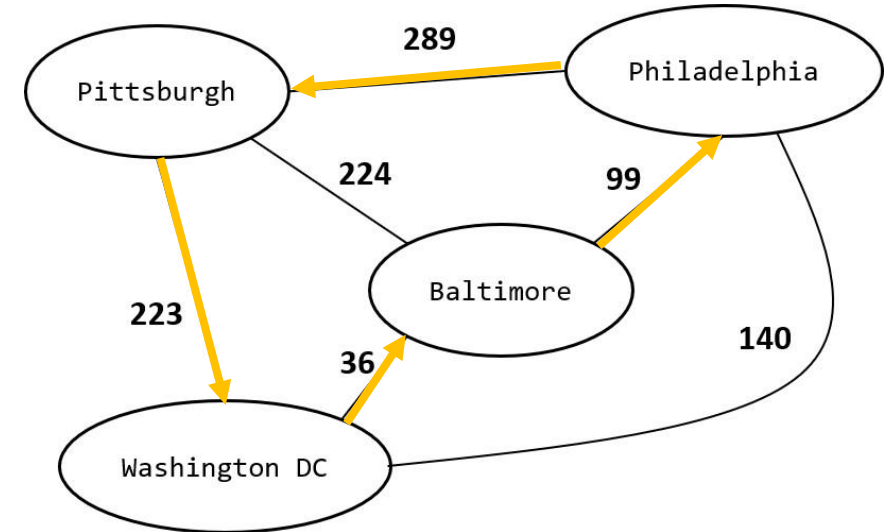
A heuristic is a technique used by an algorithm to find a good-enough solution to a problem. Heuristics are typically used because they're faster than brute-force algorithms, and because they often achieve good results.

Example: we can create a search heuristic for a graph search that ranks possible next steps. The AI agent can then try the highest-ranked next step instead of looking at all possible options and save a lot of time.

# Heuristics Example: Travelling Salesperson

Think back to the Travelling Salesperson problem. A heuristic for this problem would be to rank paths based on their length. The algorithm can always choose the next city to visit by trying the shorter paths first.

Heuristics are fast, but they also have drawbacks. If we use the Travelling Salesperson heuristic, we lose optimality; the path we find will be good, but it might not be the best possible path.



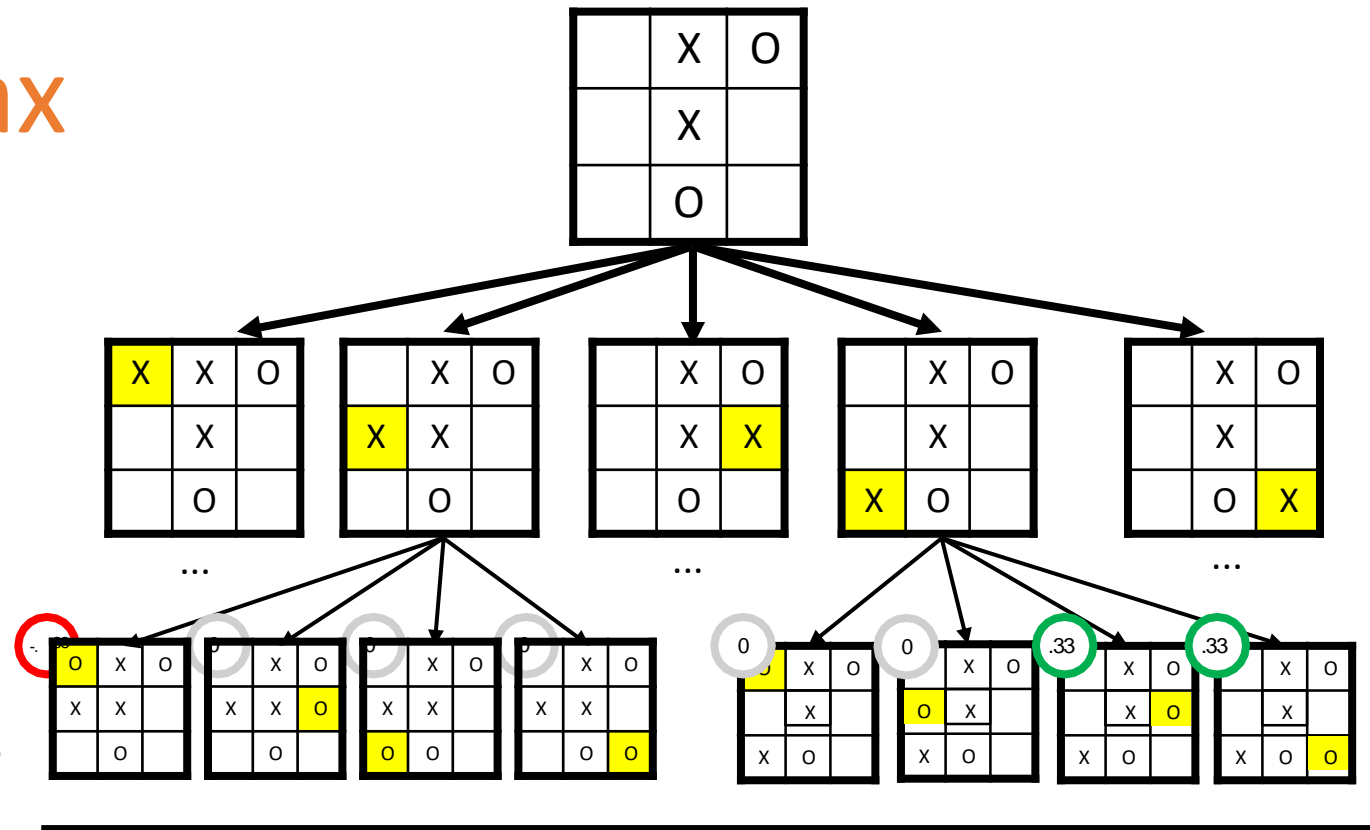


# Heuristics in Minimax

The main flaw in minimax is the size of the game tree. We can address this by having the computer move down a set number of levels in the game tree, then stop, even if it has not reached an end state.

For states that are not leaves, use a heuristic to score the state based on the current setup of the game. Then the agent can use minimax to find the next- best move based on the heuristic scores.

If the heuristic is well-designed, its score should approximate the real result and minimax should still produce a good result!



stop here

$$\text{Heuristic:} \\ \frac{(\text{number of possible Xwins} - \text{number of possible Owins})}{\text{total number of non-tie results}}$$

# Design Heuristics to Score Possibilities

In both of our previous examples, the heuristic let us score the possible choices so that we could compare them directly.

This approach only works if we design the heuristic well. The score that the algorithm assigns must be a good representation of the probability that the state is the best choice to make.

How can we design heuristics well? Try to map all the information contained in the state to a number- the larger, the better!

# Example: AI for Connect Four

Consider the game Connect Four. Players alternate in placing discs in the bottom-most open position in one of the columns. The first player to get four in a row-horizontally, vertically, or diagonally- wins.

If we developed an AI agent to play Connect Four, it might create a game tree to decide its next move. It will have 7 choices for which column to place a disc in each turn (or fewer if one of the columns is full), and there are  $7 * 6 = 42$  total moves. That's approximately  $7^{42}$  different end states- too big! A heuristic will help here.



# Activity: Heuristic for Connect Four

Let's design a heuristic to assess a game state of Connect Four together.

A state where the AI has four in a row scores a 1. A state where the user has four in a row scores a -1. A state where every slot has been filled and no one won scores a 0.

You do: what other features should we assess?

## Sidebar: Game AIs

Algorithms like minimax and the use of heuristics have made it possible for AI agents to beat world champions at games like Chess, Go, and Poker.

Why did it take 19 years to get from Chess to Go? Go has many more next moves than Chess, so it needed more advanced algorithms (including Monte Carlo randomization and machine learning!).

These AI agents will keep improving as computers grow more powerful and we design better algorithms.



DeepBlue beat chess grandmaster Garry Kasparov in 1997



AlphaGo beat 9-dan ranked Go champion Lee Sedol in 2016