

# Optimizing Trafic Light algorithms in Urban Street Grids

Introduction to Computational Science

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## Abstract

*Abstract*



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# 1 Introduction

Waiting is never fun, especially if you have to get somewhere by car and you are encountering a red traffic light. Sometimes traffic lights work well, but sometimes it yields a green light for an empty lane, while another lane is packed with cars. Some research on this topic has been done into simulating and using machine learning techniques for determining the best possible algorithms. Instead of using a complex algorithm, we try to evaluate the performance of regular time-based approaches and simple loop detection.

## Outline of this report

Section 2 discusses the use of reinforcement learning for traffic light algorithms. Section 3 describes the concept of our simulation. Section 4 goes into implementation details of the concept. Section 5 describes the testing set-up used and shows the experimental results. Section 6 discusses the results and Section 7 concludes.

## 2 Related work

Wiering [1]

## 3 Concept

Instead of complex adaptive learning algorithms, a simple approach is used. The simulation will abstract from the reality to simplify the calculations. The simulation will only consider cars, there are no biking lanes or pedestrian lights. In the simulation cars will be considered all equal. There is no difference between a large truck and small car. Cars do not have complex behavior, they just drive forward and choose randomly which lane to pick when entering an intersection. The roads will be considered a grid, in which each car takes up exactly one grid space. Time will be discretized by allowing cars one action per time step:

- If not in front of light: move forward one space in the current grid if the next grid space is empty, otherwise wait.
- If in front of light: move to the next grid space when the light is green, otherwise wait

### 3.1 Grid of intersections

The real world is broken down to intersection. Each intersection consists of a number of lanes for each direction. For each lane a destination direction is set. When a car passes the traffic light, it passes on to the next intersection.

This is done by keeping track of a grid of intersections. Each direction of an intersection is connected to another intersection. This way a car can navigate from one intersection to another. Complex graph like structures can be created this way, depending on the number of directions.

Each intersection has 2 traffic lights per incoming direction. One for turning left and one for turning right or going straight ahead. We do not allow for states at which collisions between cars can happen. So there are two possible algorithms for the traffic lights.

### 3.2 Algorithms

For this assignment two different algorithms will be used. There will also be a version of both algorithms with loop detection. A time stamp will be used as an input for each of the algorithms, along with a variable for setting the amount of time steps for a light to switch.

#### Simple

The simple algorithm is based on old-fashioned traffic handling by a human in the center of the intersection pointing at the lane which may move. At each time step, one of the four directions will get the green light and cars can move. After a given amount of time steps, the next direction will be set to green and the current direction set to red. In pseudo code:

```

1 SET direction TO (time stamp DIV switch time) MOD number of
   directions
2 SET lights of lanes in direction TO green

```

#### Two Sided

The two sided algorithm uses the fact that two opposing lanes can move at the same time. Cars moving straight forward or turning right can move at the same time as the cars on the opposing lane moving forward and right. The same is true for the lane turning left. In pseudo code:

```

1 SET direction TO (time stamp DIV switch time) MOD number of
   directions
2 SET light of the lane in the direction TO green
3 SET the light in the opposing lane TO green

```

#### Loop detection

The loop detection can be applied to both of the previous algorithms. For this, each traffic light need to keep track of which lanes currently have green light and at what time stamp the last change happened. It also needs to keep track of the front of each lane and whether a car is present in it. It will only set lights to green if the next lanes according to the algorithm are not

empty. If it encounters an empty lane, it will look for the next lane. If the next lane is not empty, set those lights to green. If all lanes are empty, keep all lights red and wait for a car to appear. If the change time has not yet expired, check if there are still cars present. If not, schedule a new change.

In pseudo code:

```

1 SET direction TO stored direction
2 IF time stamp - last change time >= switch time THEN
3   SET direction TO direction from algorithm
4   IF front of lanes are filled THEN
5     SET lights of the lanes from the algorithm TO green
6     SET last change time TO time stamp
7     SET stored direction TO direction
8   ELSE
9     FOREACH other direction
10    IF front of other lanes in direction is filled THEN
11      SET lights of that direction TO green
12      SET last change time TO time stamp
13      SET stored direction TO direction
14    END LOOP
15 ELSE
16   IF front of lanes in direction are empty THEN
17     SET last change time TO time stamp - switch time

```

## 4 Implementation

The grid of intersections consists of 9 intersections. Each intersection is connected to 4 others: top, left bottom and right. For boundary intersections, a periodic boundary condition is in place where cars moving out of the grid will reappear on the opposing side of the grid. The grid layout can be seen in Figure 1.

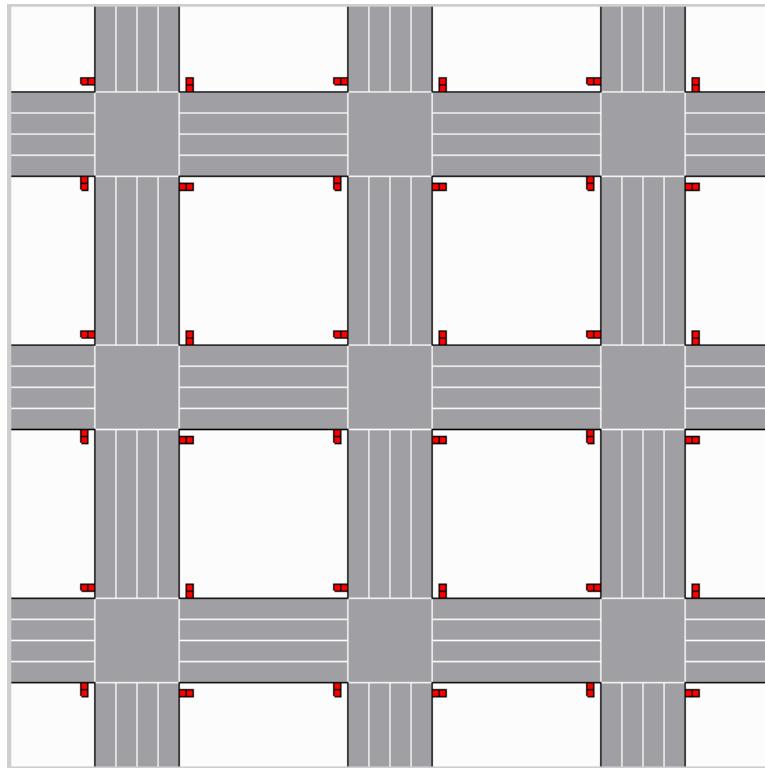


Figure 1: The empty intersection grid with all lights red.

## 5 Results

The simulations varied by using different number of cars: 50, 100 and 200, resembling different traffic loads. The different switch times used were: 2, 4, 8, 16, 32. These were chosen since they were either a  $\frac{1}{4}$

## 6 Evaluation

## 7 Conclusion

### 7.1 Future work

- Setting chance choosing between the left lane or the other independently. Now all is equal
- Giving cars incentive to drive to a certain destination
- Make the amount of cars change over time (rush hour effect)

## **References**

- [1] WIERING, M. Multi-agent reinforcement learning for traffic light control, 2000.