Reinforcement *Learning*

Model Free

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Last time Recap.

- Markov Processes
- Markov Reward Processes (MRPs)
 - Compute Value Function
- Markov Decision Processes (MDPs)
 - Evaluate a Policy
- Compute the Optimal Policy in MDP

Outline

- Estimating the expected return of a particular policy if don't have access to true MDP models
 - Dynamic programming
 - Monte Carlo policy evaluation
 - Policy evaluation when don't have a model of how the world work;
 - Given on-policy samples;

Return & Value Function

- Definition of Return, G_t (for a MRP):
 - Discounted sum of rewards from time step t to horizon

$$G_t = r_t + \gamma r_{t+1} + \gamma^2 r_{t+1} + \gamma^3 r_{t+3} + \cdots$$

- Definition of State Value Function, V(s) (for a MRP)
 - Expected return from starting in state s under policy π

$$V^{\pi}(s) = \mathbb{E}_{\pi}[G_t \mid s_t = s] = \mathbb{E}_{\pi}[r_t + \gamma r_{t+1} + \gamma^2 r_{t+1} + \gamma^3 r_{t+3} + \dots \mid s_t = s]$$

- Definition of the State-action value function:
 - Expected return from starting in state s, taking action a and then following policy π

$$Q^{\pi}(s, a) = R(s, a) + \gamma \sum_{s' \in S} P(s'|s, a) V^{\pi}(s')$$

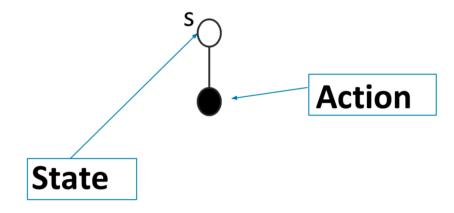
- The Dynamic Programming (Iterative);
- Initialize $V_0^{\pi}(s) = 0 \ \forall \ s \in S$;
- For k = 1 until **convergence**:
 - ∀s ∈ S

$$V_k^{\pi}(s) = R(s, \pi(s)) + \gamma \sum_{\{s' \in S\}} P(s'|s, \pi(s)) V_{k-1}^{\pi}(s')$$

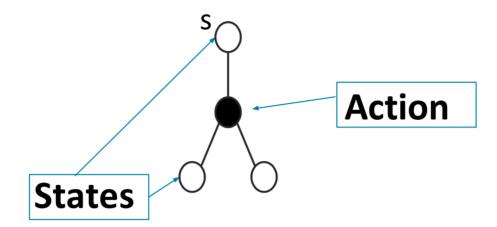
- $V_k^{\pi}(s)$ is exact value of k-horizon value of state s under policy π
- $V_k^{\pi}(s)$ is an estimate of infinite horizon value of state s under policy π :

$$V^{\pi}(s) = \mathbb{E}_{\pi}[G_t \mid s_t = s] \approx \mathbb{E}_{\pi}[r_t + \gamma V_{k-1} \mid s_t = s]$$

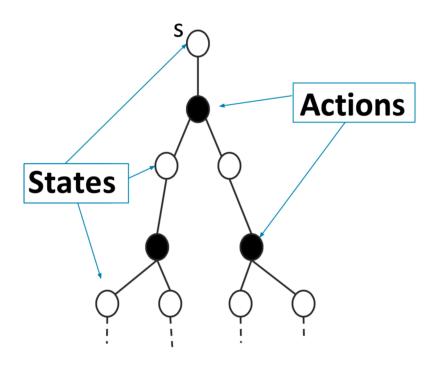
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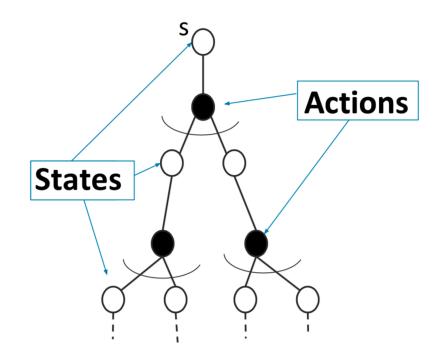
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$$V^{\pi}(s) = \mathbb{E}_{\pi}[G_t \mid s_t = s] \approx \mathbb{E}_{\pi}[r_t + \gamma V_{k-1} \mid s_t = s]$$



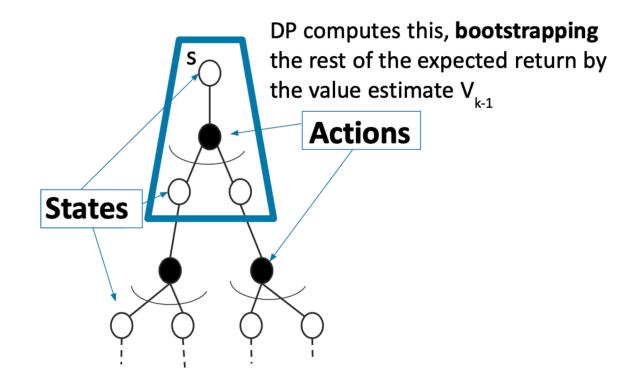
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$$V^{\pi}(s) = \mathbb{E}_{\pi}[G_t \mid s_t = s] \approx \mathbb{E}_{\pi}[r_t + \gamma V_{k-1} \mid s_t = s]$$



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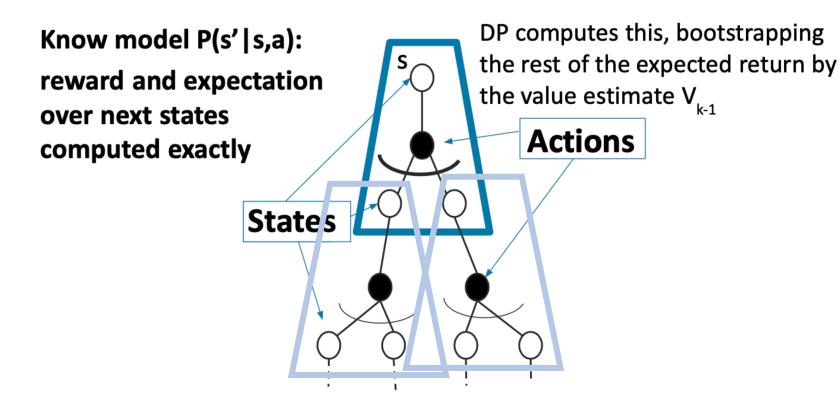


•
$$V^{\pi}(s) = \mathbb{E}_{\pi}[G_t \mid s_t = s] \approx \mathbb{E}_{\pi}[r_t + \gamma V_{k-1} \mid s_t = s]$$



= Expectation

•
$$V^{\pi}(s) = \mathbb{E}_{\pi}[G_t \mid s_t = s] \approx \mathbb{E}_{\pi}[r_t + \gamma V_{k-1} \mid s_t = s]$$



= Expectation

Policy Evaluation

- $G_t = r_t + \gamma r_{t+1} + \gamma^2 r_{t+1} + \gamma^3 r_{t+3} + \cdots$
- Dynamic Programming:

•
$$V^{\pi}(s) = \mathbb{E}_{\pi}[r_t + \gamma V_{k-1} | s_t = s]$$

- Requires model of MDP M
- Bootstraps future return using value estimate;
- Requires Markov assumption: bootstrapping regardless of history;

What if don't know dynamics model P and/ or reward model R?

- Policy evaluation without a model:
 - Given data and/or ability to interact in the environment
 - Efficiently compute a good estimate of a policy π

Monte Carlo (MC) Policy Evaluation

- in MDP M under policy π :
 - $G_t = r_t + \gamma r_{t+1} + \gamma^2 r_{t+1} + \gamma^3 r_{t+3} + \cdots$
- Dynamic Programming:
 - $V^{\pi}(s) = \mathbb{E}_{T \sim \pi}[G_t | s_t = s]$
 - Expectation over all trajectories T generated by following π according to the transition model P

Idea: Value = Mean of the return

- If all trajectories are finite:
 - sample a set of trajectories;
 - average returns;

Monte Carlo (MC) Policy Evaluation - PRO

- If trajectories are *all* finite:
 - sample set of trajectories;
 - average returns;
- Does not require MDP dynamics/rewards;
- Does not assume state is Markov;
- No bootstrapping;
- Can only be applied to episodic MDPs:
 - Averaging over returns from a complete episode
 - Requires each episode to terminate

Atari Games – 2015 DeepMind



https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V1eYniJ0Rnk

Monte Carlo (MC) Policy Evaluation

- Aim: estimate $V_{\pi}(s)$ given episodes generated under policy π (actions are **sampled** from) π :
 - $s_1, a_1, r_1, s_2, a_2, r_2, \dots$
- in MDP M under policy π :

•
$$G_t = r_t + \gamma r_{t+1} + \gamma^2 r_{t+1} + \gamma^3 r_{t+3} + \cdots$$

- $V^{\pi}(s) = \mathbb{E}_{\pi}[G_t|s_t = s]$
- Monte Carlo computes empirical mean return
- Often do this in an incremental fashion:
 - after each episode, update estimate of V_{π}

First-Visit Monte Carlo (MC) On-Policy Evaluation

- Sample episode $i = s_{i,1}, a_{i,1}, r_{i,1}, s_{i,2}, a_{i,2}, r_{i,2}, \dots, s_{i,T_i}$
- Define the return of the i^{th} episode from time step t onwards:
 - $G_{i,t} = r_{i,t} + \gamma r_{i,t+1} + \gamma^2 r_{i,t+2} + \dots + \gamma^{T_i-1} r_{i,T_i}$
- For each state *s* visited in episode *i*:
 - For **first** time t that state s is visited in episode i:
 - Increment counter of total first visits: N(s) = N(s) + 1
 - Increment total return $G(s) = G(s) + G_{i,t}$
 - Update estimate $V^{\pi}(s) = G(s)/N(s)$

Bias, Variance and MSE

- Consider a statistical model that is parameterized by θ which determines a probability distribution over observed data $P(x|\theta)$;
- Consider a statistic $\hat{\theta}$ that provides an estimate of θ and is a function of observed data x:
 - E.g. for a Gaussian distribution with known variance, the average of a set of i.i.d data points is an estimate of the mean of the Gaussian;
- Definition: the **bias** of an estimator $\hat{\theta}$ is:

$$Bias_{\theta}(\hat{\theta}) = E_{x|\theta}[\hat{\theta}] - \theta$$

• Definition: the **variance** of an estimator $\hat{\theta}$ is:

$$Var_{\theta}(\hat{\theta}) = E_{x|\theta}[\hat{\theta} - E_{x|\theta}[\hat{\theta}]^2]$$

• Definition: **mean squared error (MSE)** of an estimator $\widehat{\theta}$ is:

$$MSE(\hat{\theta}) = Bias_{\theta}(\hat{\theta})^{2} + Var_{\theta}(\hat{\theta})$$

First-Visit Monte Carlo (MC) On-Policy Evaluation

- Sample episode $i = s_{i,1}, a_{i,1}, r_{i,1}, s_{i,2}, a_{i,2}, r_{i,2}, \dots, s_{i,T_i}$
- Define the return of the i^{th} episode from time step t onwards:

•
$$G_{i,t} = r_{i,t} + \gamma r_{i,t+1} + \gamma^2 r_{i,t+2} + \dots + \gamma^{T_i-1} r_{i,T_i}$$

- For each state *s* visited in episode *i*:
 - For first time t that state s is visited in episode i:
 - Increment counter of total first visits: N(s) = N(s) + 1
 - Increment total return $G(s) = G(s) + G_{i,t}$
 - Update estimate $V^{\pi}(s) = \frac{G(s)}{N(s)}$
- Properties:
 - V^{π} estimator is **unbiased** estimator of true $\mathbb{E}_{\pi}[G_t|s_t=s]$
 - By law of large numbers, as $N(s) \to \infty$, $V^{\pi}(s) \to E_{\pi}[G_t | s_t = s]$ (consistent);

Every-Visit MC On-Policy Evaluation

- Sample episode $i = s_{i,1}, a_{i,1}, r_{i,1}, s_{i,2}, a_{i,2}, r_{i,2}, \dots, s_{i,T_i}$
- Define the return of the i^{th} episode from time step t onwards:

•
$$G_{i,t} = r_{i,t} + \gamma r_{i,t+1} + \gamma^2 r_{i,t+2} + \dots + \gamma^{T_i-1} r_{i,T_i}$$

- For each state s visited in episode i:
 - For every time t that state s is visited in episode i:
 - Increment counter of total visits: N(s) = N(s) + 1
 - Increment total return $G(s) = G(s) + G_{i,t}$
 - Update estimate $V^{\pi}(s) = \frac{G(s)}{N(s)}$

Every-Visit MC On-Policy Evaluation

- Sample episode $i = s_{i,1}, a_{i,1}, r_{i,1}, s_{i,2}, a_{i,2}, r_{i,2}, \dots, s_{i,T_i}$
- Define the return of the i^{th} episode from time step t onwards:

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$$G_{i,t} = r_{i,t} + \gamma r_{i,t+1} + \gamma^2 r_{i,t+2} + \dots + \gamma^{T_i-1} r_{i,T_i}$$

- For each state s visited in episode i:
 - For every time t that state s is visited in episode i:
 - Increment counter of total visits: N(s) = N(s) + 1
 - Increment total return $G(s) = G(s) + G_{i,t}$
 - Update estimate $V^{\pi}(s) = \frac{G(s)}{N(s)}$
- Properties:
 - V^{π} estimator is a **biased** estimator of true $\mathbb{E}_{\pi}[G_t|s_t=s]$
 - But consistent estimator and often has better MSE (< variance);

Incremental (MC) On Policy Evaluation

- Sample episode $i = s_{i,1}, a_{i,1}, r_{i,1}, s_{i,2}, a_{i,2}, r_{i,2}, \dots, s_{i,T_i}$
- Define the return of the i^{th} episode from time step t onwards:

•
$$G_{i,t} = r_{i,t} + \gamma r_{i,t+1} + \gamma^2 r_{i,t+2} + \dots + \gamma^{T_i-1} r_{i,T_i}$$

- For each state *s* visited in episode *i* at time *t*:
 - Increment counter of total first visits: N(s) = N(s) + 1
 - Increment total return $G(s) = G(s) + G_{i,t}$
 - Update estimate:

$$V_{k}^{\pi}(s) = V_{k-1}^{\pi}(s) \frac{N(s)-1}{N(s)} + \frac{G_{i,t}}{N(s)} = V_{k-1}^{\pi}(s) \frac{N(s)}{N(s)} - \frac{V_{k-1}^{\pi}(s)}{N(s)} + \frac{G_{i,t}}{N(s)} = V_{k-1}^{\pi}(s) + \frac{1}{N(s)} \left(G_{i,t} - V_{k-1}^{\pi}(s) \right) = V_{k-1}^{\pi}(s) + \alpha \left(G_{i,t} - V_{k-1}^{\pi}(s) \right)$$

- $\alpha = \frac{1}{N(s)}$: identical to the every visit behaviour
- $\alpha > \frac{1}{N(s)}$: forget older data (can be helpful for non-stationary domains);

Monte Carlo (MC) Policy Evaluation Limitations

- Generally high variance estimator:
 - Reducing variance can require a lot of data;
- Requires episodic settings:
 - to update the value function the episode must end before data from that episode can be used;

Monte Carlo (MC) Policy Evaluation Summary

- Aim: estimate $V_{\pi}(s)$ given episodes generated under policy π (actions are sampled from) π :
 - $S_1, a_1, r_1, S_2, a_2, r_2, \dots$
- in MDP *M* under policy π :
 - $G_t = r_t + \gamma r_{t+1} + \gamma^2 r_{t+1} + \gamma^3 r_{t+3} + \cdots$
 - $V^{\pi}(s) = \mathbb{E}_{\pi}[G_t|s_t = s]$
- Simple:
 - Given episodes sampled from policy of interest:
 - Estimates expectation by empirical average
 - or reweighted empirical average (importance sampling);
- Updates value estimate by using a sample of return to approximate the expectation;
- No bootstrapping
- Converges to true value under some (generally mild) assumptions

Reinforcement Learning

Model Free Control

by

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Outline Last/Today

- Last time: Estimating the expected return of a particular policy if don't have access to true MDP models:
 - Monte Carlo policy evaluation
 - Policy evaluation when don't have a model of how the world work;

 Today: Control (making decisions) without a model of how the world works. how can we learn a good policy?

Recall RL Involves

- Optimization
- Delayed consequences
- Exploration
- Generalization

Today: Learning to Control Involves

- Optimization: Goal is to identify a policy with high expected rewards (similar to computing an optimal policy given decision process models)
- Delayed consequences: May take many time steps to evaluate whether an earlier decision was good or not
- Exploration: Necessary to try different actions to learn what actions can lead to high rewards

Today: Model-free Control

- Generalized policy improvement
- Importance of exploration
- Monte Carlo control

Why Model-free Control?

- Many applications can be modeled as a MDP
 - Backgammon, Go, Robot locomotion, Helicopter flight, Robocup soccer, Autonomous driving, Customer ad selection, Invasive species management, Patient treatment;
- For many of these and other problems either:
 - MDP model is unknown but can be sampled
 - MDP model is known but it is computationally infeasible to use directly, except through sampling

On and Off-Policy Learning

On-policy learning:

- Direct experience
- Learn to estimate and evaluate a policy from experience obtained from following that policy;

Off-policy learning:

 Learn to estimate and evaluate a policy using experience gathered from following certain different policy;

Recall Policy Iteration

- Initialize policy π
- Repeat:
 - Policy evaluation: compute V^{π}
 - Policy improvement: update π

$$\pi_{i+1}(S) = \arg\max_{a} Q^{\pi_i}(s, a) =$$

$$\arg\max_{a} R(s, a) + \gamma \sum_{s' \in S} P(s'|s, a) V^{\pi}(s')$$

- Now we need to do the above two steps without access to the true dynamics and reward models
- Last lecture introduced methods for model-free policy evaluation

Model Free Policy Iteration

We can perform policy iteration but how to improve the policy?

- Initialize policy π
- Repeat:
 - Policy evaluation: compute V^{π}
 - Policy improvement: update π

Incremental (MC) On Policy Evaluation

- Sample episode $i = s_{i,1}, a_{i,1}, r_{i,1}, s_{i,2}, a_{i,2}, r_{i,2}, \dots, s_{i,T_i}$
- Define the return of the i^{th} episode from time step t onwards:

•
$$G_{i,t} = r_{i,t} + \gamma r_{i,t+1} + \gamma^2 r_{i,t+2} + \dots + \gamma^{T_i-1} r_{i,T_i}$$

- For each state s visited in episode i at time t:
 - Increment counter of total first visits: N(s) = N(s) + 1
 - Update estimate:

$$V_k^{\pi}(s) = V_{k-1}^{\pi}(s) + \alpha \left(G_{i,t} - V_{k-1}^{\pi}(s)\right)$$

- $\alpha = \frac{1}{N(s)}$: identical to the every visit behaviour
- $\alpha > \frac{1}{N(s)}$: forget older data (can be helpful for non-stationary domains);

MC for On Policy Q Evaluation

Initialize
$$N(s,a) = 0$$
, $G(s,a) = 0$, $Q^{\pi}(s,a) = 0$, $\forall s \in S$, $\forall A$

Loop

- Using policy π sampling $i = s_{i,1}, a_{i,1}, r_{i,1}, s_{i,2}, a_{i,2}, r_{i,2}, \dots, s_{i,T_i}$
- $G_{i,t} = r_{i,t} + \gamma r_{i,t+1} + \gamma^2 r_{i,t+2} + \dots + \gamma^{T_i-1} r_{i,T_i}$
- For each **state** s and **action** a (s, a) visited in episode i at time t:
 - $N(s,a) = N(s,a) + 1, G(s,a) = G(s,a) + G_{i,t}$
 - Update estimate $Q^{\pi}(s, a) = G(s, a)/N(s, a)$

Model-free Generalized Policy Improvement

- Given an estimate $Q^{\pi_i}(s,a) \forall s,a$
- Update new policy

$$\pi_{i+1}(s) = \arg \max_{a} Q^{\pi_i}(s, a)$$

Model-free Policy Iteration (issue)

- Initialize policy π
- Repeat:
 - Policy evaluation: compute Q^{π}
 - Policy improvement: update π given Q^{π}

- May need to modify policy evaluation:
 - If π is **deterministic**, can't compute Q(s, a) for any $a \neq \pi(s)$
- How to interleave policy evaluation and improvement?
 - Policy improvement is now using an estimated Q

So?

Policy Evaluation with Exploration

- Want to compute a model-free estimate of Q^{π}
- In general seems subtle:
 - Need to try all (s, a) pairs but then follow π
 - Want to ensure resulting estimate Q^{π} is good enough so that policy improvement is a monotonic operator
- For certain classes of policies can ensure all (s,a) pairs are tried such that asymptotically Q^{π} converges to the true value;

ε-greedy Policies

- Simple idea to balance exploration and exploitation:
- Let |A| be the number of actions
- Then an ε -greedy policy w.r.t. a state-action value Q(s,a) is: $\pi(a|s) = [\arg\max_a Q(s,a), \ w.prob \ 1 \epsilon; a \ w.prob \ \frac{\epsilon}{|A|}]$
 - With prob. $\frac{\epsilon}{|A|}$ we action a; // New Action
 - With prob. 1ϵ we use $\underset{a}{arg \ max} \ Q(s,a) // \textit{Old Policy}$

Check Your Understanding: MC for On Policy Q Evaluation

Initialize $N(s,a)=0,\ G(s,a)=0, Q^\pi(s,a)=0, \forall s\in S, \forall A$ Loop

- Using policy π sampling $i = s_{i,1}, a_{i,1}, r_{i,1}, s_{i,2}, a_{i,2}, r_{i,2}, \dots, s_{i,T_i}$
- $G_{i,t} = r_{i,t} + \gamma r_{i,t+1} + \gamma^2 r_{i,t+2} + \dots + \gamma^{T_i-1} r_{i,T_i}$
- For each **state** s and **action** a(s, a) visited in episode i at time t:
 - $N(s,a) = N(s,a) + 1, G(s,a) = G(s,a) + G_{i,t}$
 - Update estimate $Q^{\pi}(s,a) = G(s,a)/N(s,a)$
- Mars rover with two actions:
 - $r(-,a_1) = [100000+10], r(-,a_2) = [000000+5], \gamma = 1.$
- Assume current greedy $\pi(s) = a1 \ \forall s$,
- $\varepsilon = 0.5$
- Sample trajectory from ε -greedy policy
- Trajectory = $(s_3, a_1, 0; s_2, a_2, 0; s_3, a_1, 0; s_2, a_2, 0; s_1, a_1, 1; terminal)$
- Compute the first visit MC estimate of Q of each (s, a) pair?

$$Q^{\epsilon-\pi}(-, a_1) = [_, _, _, _, _, _, _]$$

 $Q^{\epsilon-\pi}(-, a_2) = [_, _, _, _, _, _]$

Check Your Understanding: MC for On Policy Q Evaluation

Initialize
$$N(s,a)=0,\ G(s,a)=0, Q^\pi(s,a)=0, \forall s\in S, \forall A$$
 Loop

- Using policy π sampling $i = s_{i,1}, a_{i,1}, r_{i,1}, s_{i,2}, a_{i,2}, r_{i,2}, \dots, s_{i,T_i}$
- $G_{i,t} = r_{i,t} + \gamma r_{i,t+1} + \gamma^2 r_{i,t+2} + \dots + \gamma^{T_i-1} r_{i,T_i}$
- For each **state** s and **action** a(s, a) visited in episode i at time t:
 - $N(s,a) = N(s,a) + 1, G(s,a) = G(s,a) + G_{i,t}$
 - Update estimate $Q^{\pi}(s, a) = G(s, a)/N(s, a)$
- Mars rover with two actions:
 - $r(-,a_1) = [100000+10], r(-,a_2) = [000000+5], \gamma = 1.$
- Assume current greedy $\pi(s) = a_1 \ \forall s$,
- $\varepsilon = 0.5$
- Sample trajectory from ε -greedy policy
- Trajectory = $(s_3, a_1, 0; s_2, a_2, 0; s_3, a_1, 0; s_2, a_2, 0; s_1, a_1, 1; terminal)$ Type equation here.
- Compute the first visit MC estimate of Q of each (s, a) pair?

$$Q^{\epsilon-\pi}(-, a_1) = [1, 0, 1, 0, 0, 0, 0]$$

 $Q^{\epsilon-\pi}(-, a_2) = [0, 1, 0, 0, 0, 0, 0]$

Subtleties of Policy Improvement

- Note that when we first introduced policy improvement with a given MDP dynamics and reward model, policy evaluation was computed exactly;
- In this case monotonic improvement was guaranteed for each policy improvement step;
- In this lecture we will often be considering computing a Q using samples gathered from many policies;
- Beautifully, generalized policy iteration using MC and TD methods still converge under some mild conditions;
- For more technical details, proofs of the convergence of Q-learning for different scenarios can be found here:
 - Q-Learning. Watkins and Dayan;
 - Machine Learning. 1992;
 - Asynchronous Stochastic Approximation and Q-Learning;
 Tsitsiklis. Machine Learning. 1994

Greedy in the Limit of Infinite Exploration (GLIE)

• Definition of **GLIE**:

- All state-action pairs are visited an infinite number of times $\lim_{i\to\infty}N_i(s,a)\to\infty$
- Behaviour of the policy converges to the greedy policy one: $\lim_{i\to\infty}\pi(a|s)\to arg\max_a Q(s,a)$ with probabilty 1

NOTE: A ε -greedy where $\varepsilon \to 0$ is **GLIE**:

• Typically with the following rate: $\varepsilon_i = \frac{1}{i}$

Monte Carlo Online Control / On Policy Improvement

```
Initialize Q(s,a) = 0, N(s,a) \forall (s,a), set \epsilon = 1, k = 1
    \pi_k = \varepsilon-greedy(Q) // Create initial \varepsilon-greedy policy
    loop
3.
           Sample k^{th} episode (s_{k,1}, a_{k,1}, r_{k,1}, s_{k,2}, a_{k,2}, r_{k,2}, ..., s_{k,T}) given \pi_k
4.
           G_{k,t} = r_{k,t} + \gamma r_{k,t+1} + \gamma^2 r_{k,t+2} + \dots + \gamma^{T_k-1} r_{k,T_k}
5.
           for t = 1, \dots, T do
6.
                if First visit to (s, a) in episode k then:
7.
                    N(s,a) = N(s,a) + 1
8.
                    Q'(s_t, a_t) = Q(s_t, a_t) + \frac{1}{N(s_t, a_t)} (G_{k,t} - Q(s_t, a_t))
9.
10.
                end if
11.
           end for
           k = k + 1, \epsilon = \frac{1}{k}
12.
           \pi_k = \varepsilon-greedy(Q) // Policy improvement
13.
14. End loop
```

Summary

- Generalized policy improvement
- Importance of exploration
- Monte Carlo control

AlphaGo - The Movie | Full Documentary



https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WXuK6gekU1Y