

# Shortest Path Algorithms

## Dijkstra's algorithm

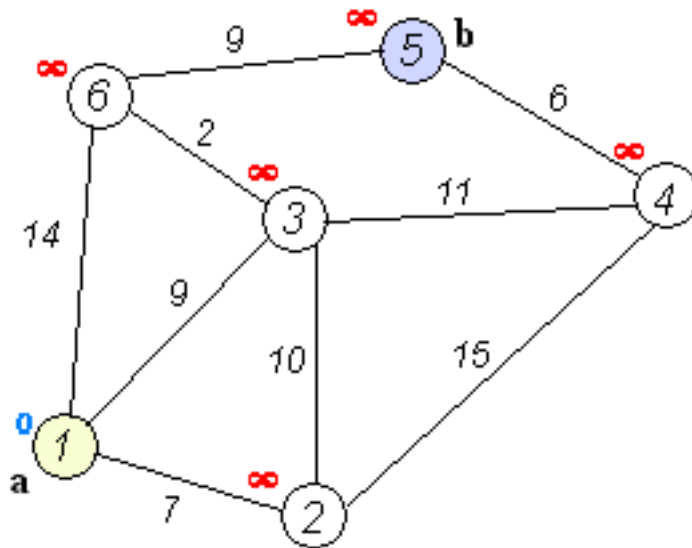
Dijkstra's original variant finds the shortest path between two nodes.

A more common variant fixes a single node as the "source" node and finds shortest paths from the source to all other nodes in the graph, producing a shortest-path tree.

### Assumptions & properties:

- \* Works for both directed and undirected graphs
- \* All edges must have nonnegative weights.
- \* Graph must be connected.

### Example:



$(1) \rightarrow (2) \rightarrow (3) \rightarrow (6) \rightarrow (5)$

The closest distance from node (1) to (3) is 9. (another option could be 7+10 going through node 2)

The closest distance from node (3) to (6) is 2. (another option could be 14)

The closest distance from node (6) to (5) is 9.

The total distance from *a* to *b* is therefore  $9 + 2 + 9 = \underline{20}$

### Extra information:

A node should contain an ID and index.

Has to examine the whole graph, before we can determine what the shortest path is.

Use backtracking to find the path taken. Keep note of what vertex the next vertex came from.

### Dijkstra's algorithm written in C++:

<http://www.reviewmylife.co.uk/blog/2008/07/15/dijkstras-algorithm-code-in-c/>

<http://www.geeksforgeeks.org/greedy-algorithms-set-6-dijkstras-shortest-path-algorithm/>

## Bellman-Ford algorithm

Like Dijkstra's Algorithm, Bellman-Ford is based on the principle of relaxation, in which an approximation to the correct distance is gradually replaced by more accurate values until eventually reaching the optimum solution.

### Assumptions & properties:

- \* Works for negative weights
- \* Detects a negative cycle if any exist
- \* Finds shortest simple path if no negative cycle exists.

If a graph contains negative-weight cycle, then some shortest paths may not exist.

For the bachelor project, we don't need to think about negative edges.

## A\* search algorithm

A\* was developed in 1968 to combine heuristic approaches like Greedy Best-First-Search and formal approaches like Dijkstra's algorithm.

A\* is almost exactly like Dijkstra's Algorithm, except we add in a heuristic. A\* is built on top of the heuristic, and although the heuristic itself does not give you a guarantee, A\* can guarantee a shortest path.

It combines the pieces of information that Dijkstra's algorithm uses (favoring vertices that are close to the starting point) and information that Greedy Best-First-Search uses (favoring vertices that are close to the goal).

A\* can only take non-negative edges; therefore an edge can be examined only once.

### Functions used:

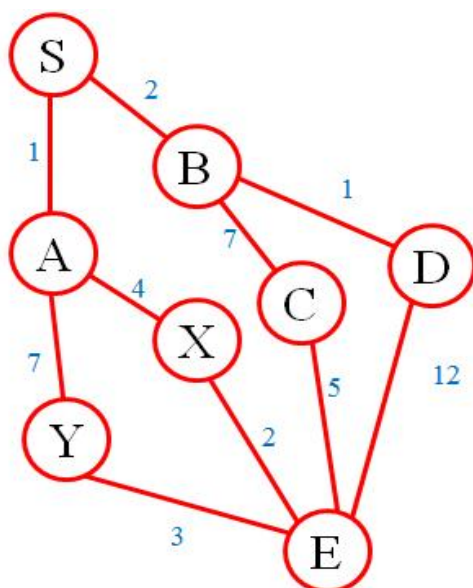
$g(n)$  represents the exact cost of the path from the starting point to any vertex  $n$ .

$h(n)$  represents the heuristic estimated cost from vertex  $n$  to the goal.

Each time through the main loop, it examines the vertex  $n$  that has the lowest

$f(n) = g(n) + h(n)$ .

### Example:



### Values for $h$ :

A:5, B:6, C:4, D:15, X:5, Y:8

### Expand S

$\{S,A\} f=1+5=6$

$\{S,B\} f=2+6=8$

### Expand A

$\{S,B\} f=2+6=8$

$\{S,A,X\} f=(1+4)+5=10$

$\{S,A,Y\} f=(1+7)+8=16$

### Expand B

$\{S,A,X\} f=(1+4)+5=10$

$\{S,B,C\} f=(2+7)+4=13$

$\{S,A,Y\} f=(1+7)+8=16$

$\{S,B,D\} f=(2+1)+15=18$

### Expand X

$\{S,A,X,E\}$  is the best path... (costing 7)

## Heuristics

### What is a heuristic?

An algorithm contains a heuristic function if it has some estimate of how far from the goal any vertex is.

A heuristic is a technique designed for solving a problem more quickly when classic methods are too slow, or for finding an approximate solution when classic methods fail to find any exact solution.

This is achieved

by trading optimality, completeness, accuracy, or precision for speed. In a way, it can be considered a shortcut.

The goal of a heuristic search is to reduce the number of nodes searched in seeking a goal ([https://en.wikibooks.org/wiki/Artificial\\_Intelligence/Search/Heuristic\\_search/Astar\\_Search](https://en.wikibooks.org/wiki/Artificial_Intelligence/Search/Heuristic_search/Astar_Search))

### ▼ **A\*'s use of the Heuristic**

<http://theory.stanford.edu/~amitp/GameProgramming/Heuristics.html>

<http://www.redblobgames.com/pathfinding/a-star/introduction.html>

A\* is guaranteed to find the shortest path if the heuristic is never larger than the true distance. As the heuristic becomes smaller, A\* turns into Dijkstra's Algorithm. As the heuristic becomes larger, A\* turns into Greedy Best First Search.

### ▼ **Speed or accuracy?**

To get something quicker, we have to give up ideal paths.

If we want to switch between speed and accuracy, we can build a heuristic function that assumes the minimum cost to travel one grid space is 1 and then build a cost function that scales:

$$g'(n) = 1 + \alpha \cdot (g(n) - 1)$$

$\alpha = 0$  :

Very fast, but accuracy suffers.

$\alpha = 1$  :

The shortest path will be found but with slow speed.

(We can set  $\alpha$  anywhere in between)

## ▼ **Implementation**

**Notes about performance, set representation, etc:**

<http://theory.stanford.edu/~amitp/GameProgramming/ImplementationNotes.html>

**Implementation in C++:**

<http://www.redblobgames.com/pathfinding/a-star/implementation.html#cplusplus>

## ▼ **Sources**

### **About Dijkstra's algorithm:**

▼ **General theory + some lemmas + proof of correctness:**

<http://math.mit.edu/~rothvoss/18.304.3PM/Presentations/1-Melissa.pdf>

### **About A\* Search algorithm:**

▼ **Introduction + comparison to Dijkstra's and Greedy Best-First-Search:**

<http://theory.stanford.edu/~amitp/GameProgramming/AStarComparison.html>

### **Books/links we may find useful:**

\* <https://scholar.google.dk/>

\* "Encyclopedia of Artificial Intelligence"

Stuart C. Shapiro, ed. (see articles on “Search” and “A\* Search”)

- \* "The Handbook of Artificial Intelligence, vol. 1"  
Barr and Feigenbaum, eds. (chapter 2 is on search)
- \* "Principles of Artificial Intelligence"  
Nils J. Nilsson (a bit dated, but good discussion of A\*).
- \* "A\* algorithm optimality proof when heuristic is always underestimating"  
<http://stackoverflow.com/questions/10195780/a-algorithm-optimality-proof-when-always-underestimating>
- \* "Easy C++ benchmarking"  
<https://bruun.co/2012/02/07/easy-cpp-benchmarking>
- \* Long pdf with theory about shortest paths:  
<http://people.mpi-inf.mpg.de/~mehlhorn/ftp/Toolbox/ShortestPaths.pdf>

### Manhattan distance?

A\* -> noget med at man har nogle stjerner (punkter) tæt på destination  $t$ .

Ud fra den stjerne der er tættest på, kan A\* dermed vide hvilken retning den skal bevæge sig imod.

### ▼ Extra notes

**Complete search algorithm:** a search algorithm that is guaranteed to find a solution if there is one.