Introduction to Algorithms

Greedy Algorithms

Greedy Algorithms

Greedy Strategy

Goal: Given currency denominations: 1, 5, 10, 25, 100, give change to customer using *fewest* number of coins.

Ex: 34¢.

Cashier's algorithm: At each iteration, give the *largest* coin valued ≤ the amount to be paid.

Ex: $2.89.

Greedy is not always Optimal

Observation: Greedy algorithm is sub-optimal for US postal denominations: 1, 10, 21, 34, 70, 100, 350, 1225, 1500.

Counterexample. 140¢.

Greedy: 100, 34, 1, 1, 1, 1, 1, 1.

Optimal: 70, 70.

Lesson: Greedy is short-sighted. Always chooses the most attractive choice at the moment. But this may lead to a dead-end later.

Greedy Algorithms Outline

Pros

- Intuitive
- Often simple to design (and to implement)
- Often fast

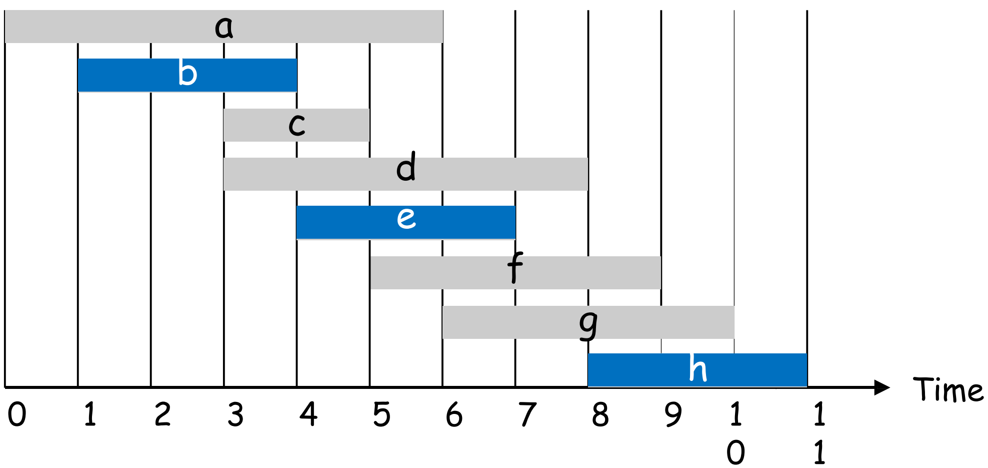
Cons

- Often incorrect!

Proof techniques:

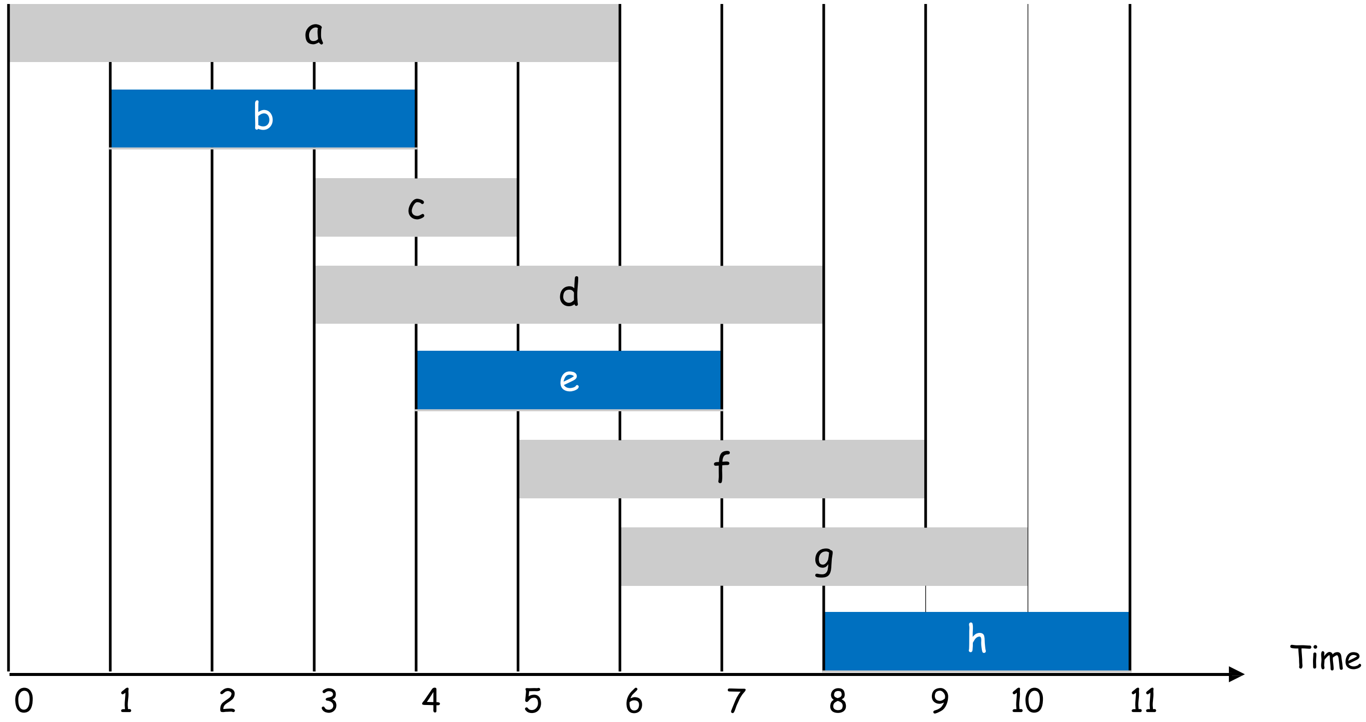
- Stay ahead
- Structural
- Exchange arguments

Interval Scheduling



Interval Scheduling

- Job j starts at s(j) and finishes at f(j).
- Two jobs compatible if they don't overlap.
- Goal: find maximum subset of mutually compatible jobs.



Greedy Strategy

Sort the jobs in some order. Go over the jobs and take as much as possible provided it is compatible with the jobs already taken.

Main question:

- What order?
- Does it give the Optimum answer?
- Why?

Possible Approaches for Inter Sched

Sort the jobs in some order. Go over the jobs and take as much as possible provided it is compatible with the jobs already taken.

[Earliest start time] Consider jobs in ascending order of start time s_j.

[Earliest finish time] Consider jobs in ascending order of finish time f_j.

[Shortest interval] Consider jobs in ascending order of interval length $f_j - s_j$.

[Fewest conflicts] For each job, count the number of conflicting jobs c_j. Schedule in ascending order of conflicts c_j.

Greedy Alg: Earliest Finish Time

Consider jobs in increasing order of finish time. Take each job provided it's compatible with the ones already taken.

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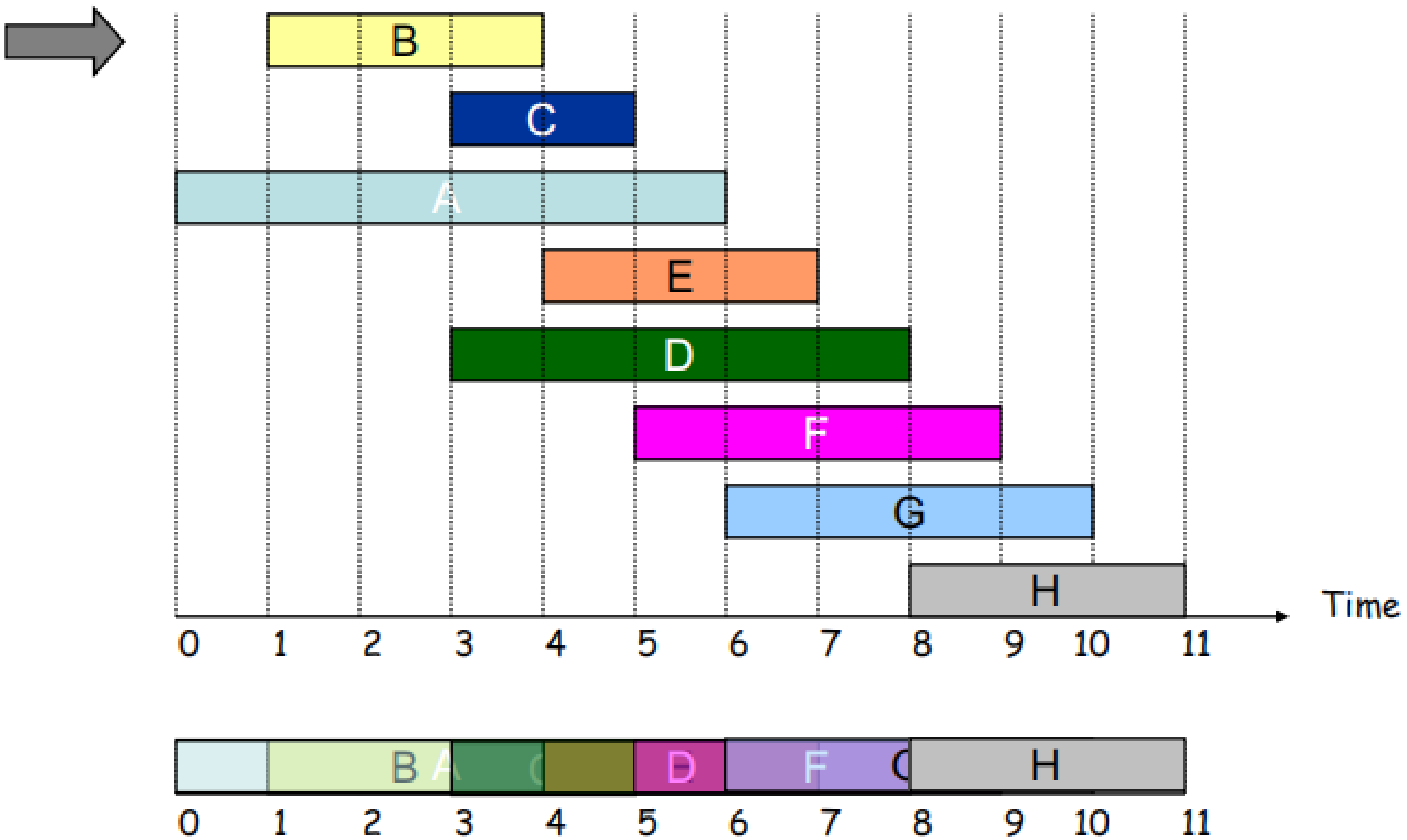
Sort jobs by finish times so that f(1) ≤ f(2) ≤ ... ≤ f(n).
A ← ∅
for j = 1 to n {
   if (job j compatible with A)
      A ← A ∪ {j}.
}
return A
```

Implementation. O(n log n).

- Remember job j* that was added last to A.
- Job j is compatible with A if s(j)>=f(j*)

Greedy Alg: Example



Correctness

Theorem: Greedy algorithm is optimal.

Pf: (technique: "Greedy stays ahead")

Let $i_1, i_2, \ldots i_k$ be jobs picked by greedy, $j_1, j_2, \ldots j_m$ those in some optimal solution in order.

We show $f(i_r) \leq f(j_r)$ for all r, by induction on r.

Base Case: i_1 chosen to have min finish time, so $f(i_1) \leq f(j_1)$.

IH: $f(i_r) \leq f(j_r)$ for some r

IS: Since $f(i_r) \leqslant f(j_r) \leq s(j_{r+1})$, j_{r+1} is among the candidates considered by greedy when it picked i_{r+1}, & it picks min finish, so $f(i_{r+1}) \leq f(j_{r+1})$

Observe that we must have $k \geqslant m$, else j_{k+1} is among (nonempty) set of candidates for i_{k+1}