Lecture 3: Model-based RL

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Outline

- Introduction to dynamic programming
- Policy Evaluation
- Policy Iteration
- Value Iteration
- Extensions

(Readings: Chapter 4 in RL-CPS book)

*Materials are modified from David Silver's RL lecture notes

What is dynamic programming

- DP refers to a collection of algorithms that can be used to compute optimal policies given a ***perfect*** model of the environment as a MDP
- Classical DP algorithms are of limited utility in RL. Why?
  - Need perfect model
  - Great computational expense
- Still important theoretically
- For now, assume finite MDP only. DP ideas can be applied to problems with continuous state and action spaces, exact solutions are possible only in special cases.

Dynamic Programming

- For prediction:

  Input: MDP $\langle \mathcal{S}, \mathcal{A}, \mathcal{P}, \mathcal{R}, \gamma \rangle$ and policy π

  or: MRP $\langle \mathcal{S}, \mathcal{P}^{\pi}, \mathcal{R}^{\pi}, \gamma \rangle$

  Output: value function v_{π}

- Or for control:

  Input: MDP $\langle \mathcal{S}, \mathcal{A}, \mathcal{P}, \mathcal{R}, \gamma \rangle$

  Output: optimal value function v_{*}

  and: optimal policy π_{*}

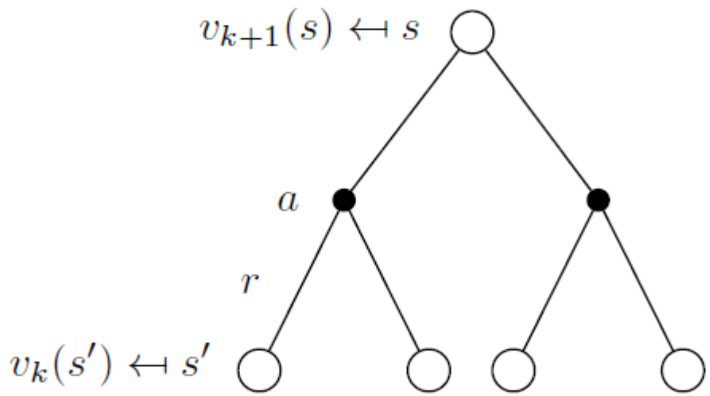
Policy Evaluation

- Problem: evaluate a given policy π
- Solution: iterative application of Bellman expectation backup

  $v_1 \rightarrow v_2 \rightarrow \ldots \rightarrow v_\pi$
- Using *synchronous* backups,

  At each iteration $k+1$
  For all states $s \in \mathcal{S}$
  Update $v_{k+1}(s)$ from $v_k(s')$
  where s' is a successor state of s
- We will discuss *asynchronous* backups later

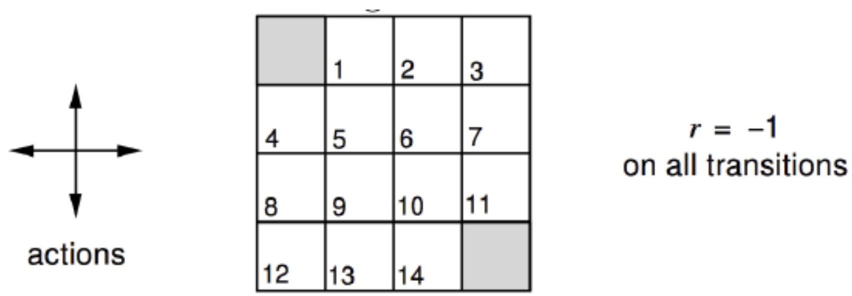
Policy Evaluation



$$v_{k+1}(s) = \sum_{a \in \mathcal{A}} \pi(a|s) \left(\mathcal{R}_s^a + \gamma \sum_{s' \in \mathcal{S}} \mathcal{P}_{ss'}^a v_k(s') \right)$$

$$\mathbf{v}^{k+1} = \boldsymbol{\mathcal{R}}^{\boldsymbol{\pi}} + \gamma \boldsymbol{\mathcal{P}}^{\boldsymbol{\pi}} \mathbf{v}^k$$

Example: Small Grid world



- Undiscounted episodic MDP ($\gamma = 1$)
- Nonterminal states $1, \ldots, 14$
- One terminal state (shown twice as shaded squares)
- Actions leading out of the grid leave state unchanged
- Reward is -1 until the terminal state is reached
- Agent follows uniform random policy

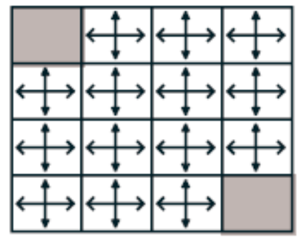
$$\pi(n|\cdot) = \pi(e|\cdot) = \pi(s|\cdot) = \pi(w|\cdot) = 0.25$$

Example: Small Grid world

v_k for the Random Policy | Greedy Policy w.r.t. v_k

$k = 0$

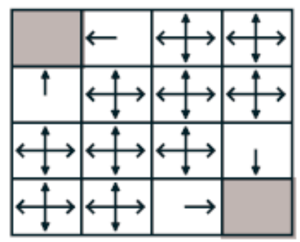
0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0



random policy

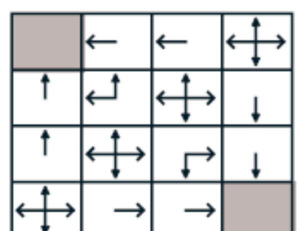
$k = 1$

0.0	-1.0	-1.0	-1.0
-1.0	-1.0	-1.0	-1.0
-1.0	-1.0	-1.0	-1.0
-1.0	-1.0	-1.0	0.0



$k = 2$

0.0	-1.7	-2.0	-2.0
-1.7	-2.0	-2.0	-2.0
-2.0	-2.0	-2.0	-1.7
-2.0	-2.0	-1.7	0.0



Example: Small Grid world

$k = 3$

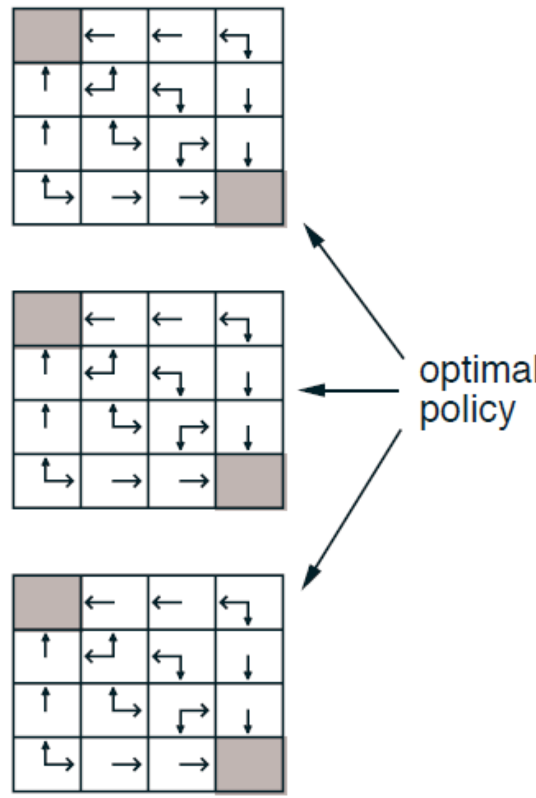
0.0	-2.4	-2.9	-3.0
-2.4	-2.9	-3.0	-2.9
-2.9	-3.0	-2.9	-2.4
-3.0	-2.9	-2.4	0.0

$k = 10$

0.0	-6.1	-8.4	-9.0
-6.1	-7.7	-8.4	-8.4
-8.4	-8.4	-7.7	-6.1
-9.0	-8.4	-6.1	0.0

$k = \infty$

0.0	-14.	-20.	-22.
-14.	-18.	-20.	-20.
-20.	-20.	-18.	-14.
-22.	-20.	-14.	0.0



How to improve a policy?

- Given a policy π
  - Evaluate the policy π

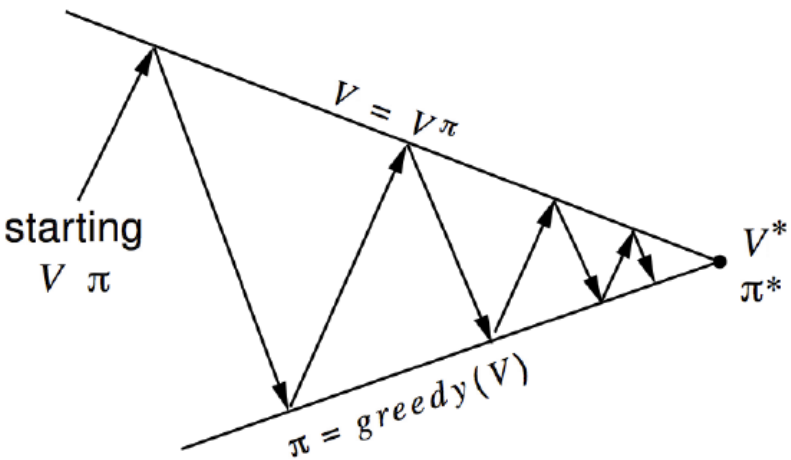
$$v_\pi(s) = \mathbb{E}\left[R_{t+1} + \gamma R_{t+2} + ...|S_t = s\right]$$

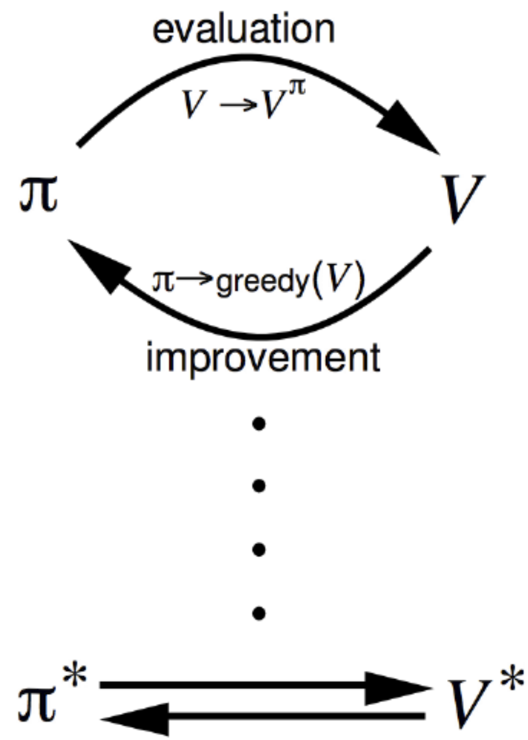
  - Improve the policy by acting greedily with respect to v_π

$$\pi' = \text{greedy}(v_\pi)$$

- In Small Gridworld improved policy was optimal, $\pi' = \pi^*$
- In general, need more iterations of improvement / evaluation
- But this process of policy iteration always converges to $\pi*$

Policy Iteration





Policy evaluation Estimate v_π

Iterative policy evaluation

Policy improvement Generate $\pi' \geq \pi$

Greedy policy improvement

Policy Iteration - Algorithm

1. Initialization
   $v(s) \in \mathbb{R}$ and $\pi(s) \in \mathcal{A}(s)$ arbitrarily for all $s \in \mathcal{S}$

2. Policy Evaluation
   Repeat
   $\quad \Delta \leftarrow 0$
   $\quad$ For each $s \in \mathcal{S}$:
   $\quad\quad temp \leftarrow v(s)$
   $\quad\quad v(s) \leftarrow \sum_{s'} p(s'|s,\pi(s))\Big[r(s,\pi(s),s') + \gamma v(s')\Big]$
   $\quad\quad \Delta \leftarrow \max(\Delta, |temp - v(s)|)$
   until $\Delta < \theta$ (a small positive number)

3. Policy Improvement
   $policy\text{-}stable \leftarrow true$
   For each $s \in \mathcal{S}$:
   $\quad temp \leftarrow \pi(s)$
   $\quad \pi(s) \leftarrow \arg\max_a \sum_{s'} p(s'|s,a)\Big[r(s,a,s') + \gamma v(s')\Big]$
   $\quad$ If $temp \neq \pi(s)$, then $policy\text{-}stable \leftarrow false$
   If $policy\text{-}stable$, then stop and return v and π; else go to 2

Notations: Sutton's book (2nd Edition)

Proof of Policy Improvement

- Consider a deterministic policy, $a = \pi(s)$
- We can *improve* the policy by acting greedily

$$\pi'(s) = \underset{a \in \mathcal{A}}{\operatorname{argmax}}\, q_\pi(s, a)$$

- This improves the value from any state s over one step,

$$q_\pi(s, \pi'(s)) = \max_{a \in \mathcal{A}} q_\pi(s, a) \geq q_\pi(s, \pi(s)) = v_\pi(s)$$

- It therefore improves the value function, $v_{\pi'}(s) \geq v_\pi(s)$

$$\begin{aligned}
v_\pi(s) \leq q_\pi(s, \pi'(s)) &= \mathbb{E}_{\pi'}\left[R_{t+1} + \gamma v_\pi(S_{t+1}) \mid S_t = s\right] \\
&\leq \mathbb{E}_{\pi'}\left[R_{t+1} + \gamma q_\pi(S_{t+1}, \pi'(S_{t+1})) \mid S_t = s\right] \\
&\leq \mathbb{E}_{\pi'}\left[R_{t+1} + \gamma R_{t+2} + \gamma^2 q_\pi(S_{t+2}, \pi'(S_{t+2})) \mid S_t = s\right] \\
&\leq \mathbb{E}_{\pi'}\left[R_{t+1} + \gamma R_{t+2} + \ldots \mid S_t = s\right] = v_{\pi'}(s)
\end{aligned}$$

Proof of Policy Improvement

- If improvements stop,

$$q_\pi(s, \pi'(s)) = \max_{a \in \mathcal{A}} q_\pi(s, a) = q_\pi(s, \pi(s)) = v_\pi(s)$$

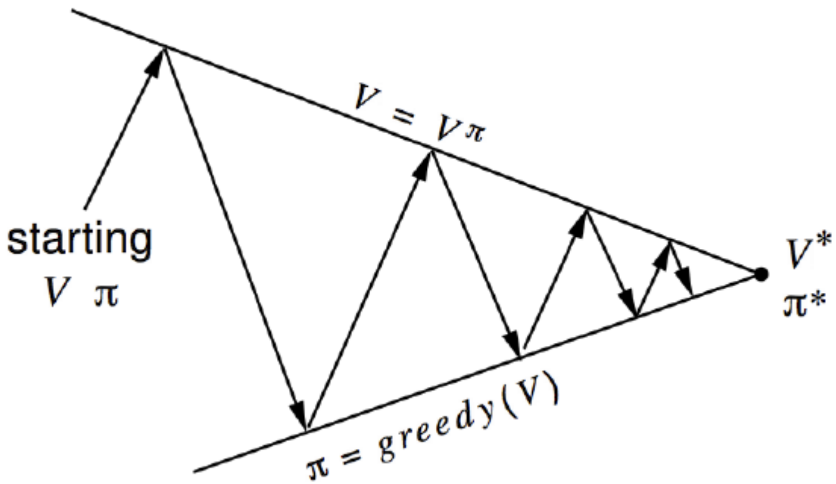
- Then the Bellman optimality equation has been satisfied

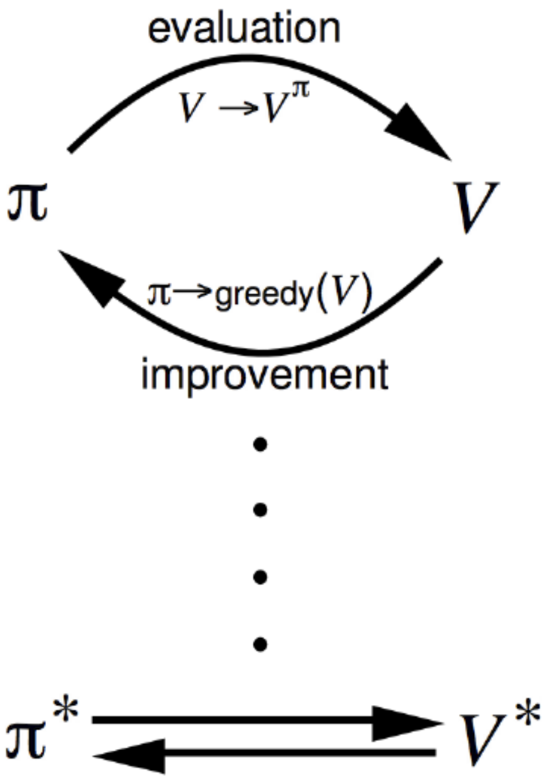
$$v_\pi(s) = \max_{a \in \mathcal{A}} q_\pi(s, a)$$

- Therefore $v_\pi(s) = v_*(s)$ for all $s \in \mathcal{S}$

  so π is an optimal policy

Generalized Policy Iteration





Policy evaluation Estimate v_π

Any policy evaluation algorithm

Policy improvement Generate $\pi' \geq \pi$

Any policy improvement algorithm

Value Iteration

- One drawback of policy iteration: each of its iterations involves policy evaluation, which itself is an iterative computation through the state set

2. Policy Evaluation
   Repeat
   $\quad \Delta \leftarrow 0$
   $\quad$ For each $s \in \mathcal{S}$:
   $\quad\quad temp \leftarrow v(s)$
   $\quad\quad v(s) \leftarrow \sum_{s'} p(s'|s,\pi(s)) \Big[r(s,\pi(s),s') + \gamma v(s') \Big]$
   $\quad\quad \Delta \leftarrow \max(\Delta, |temp - v(s)|)$
   until $\Delta < \theta$ (a small positive number)

Truncate this policy evaluation by stopping after just one state sweep

3. Policy Improvement
   $policy\text{-}stable \leftarrow true$
   For each $s \in \mathcal{S}$:
   $\quad temp \leftarrow \pi(s)$
   $\quad \pi(s) \leftarrow \arg\max_a \sum_{s'} p(s'|s,a) \Big[r(s,a,s') + \gamma v(s') \Big]$
   $\quad$ If $temp \neq \pi(s)$, then $policy\text{-}stable \leftarrow false$
   If *policy-stable*, then stop and return v and π; else go to 2

Notations: Sutton's book (2nd Edition)

Value Iteration - Algorithm

Initialize array v arbitrarily (e.g., $v(s) = 0$ for all $s \in \mathcal{S}^+$)

Repeat
$\quad \Delta \leftarrow 0$
$\quad$ For each $s \in \mathcal{S}$:
$\quad\quad temp \leftarrow v(s)$
$\quad\quad v(s) \leftarrow \max_a \sum_{s'} p(s'|s,a)[r(s,a,s') + \gamma v(s')]$
$\quad\quad \Delta \leftarrow \max(\Delta, |temp - v(s)|)$
until $\Delta < \theta$ (a small positive number)

Output a deterministic policy, π, such that
$\quad \pi(s) = \arg\max_a \sum_{s'} p(s'|s,a)\Big[r(s,a,s') + \gamma v(s')\Big]$

Bellman Optimality Equation

$$v_*(s) = \max_a \mathcal{R}_s^a + \gamma \sum_{s' \in \mathcal{S}} \mathcal{P}_{ss'}^a v_*(s')$$

Example: Shortest Path

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Problem

0	0	0	0
0	0	0	0
0	0	0	0
0	0	0	0

V_1

0	-1	-1	-1
-1	-1	-1	-1
-1	-1	-1	-1
-1	-1	-1	-1

V_2

0	-1	-2	-2
-1	-2	-2	-2
-2	-2	-2	-2
-2	-2	-2	-2

V_3

0	-1	-2	-3
-1	-2	-3	-3
-2	-3	-3	-3
-3	-3	-3	-3

V_4

0	-1	-2	-3
-1	-2	-3	-4
-2	-3	-4	-4
-3	-4	-4	-4

V_5

0	-1	-2	-3
-1	-2	-3	-4
-2	-3	-4	-5
-3	-4	-5	-5

V_6

0	-1	-2	-3
-1	-2	-3	-4
-2	-3	-4	-5
-3	-4	-5	-6

V_7

Summary: Synchronous DP

Problem	Bellman Equation	Algorithm
Prediction	Bellman Expectation Equation	Iterative Policy Evaluation
Control	Bellman Expectation Equation + Greedy Policy Improvement	Policy Iteration
Control	Bellman Optimality Equation	Value Iteration

- Major drawback: involve operations over the entire state set of the MDP
- The game of backgammon has over 10^20 states
- Asynchronous DP can help !

Asynchronous DP

- Three simple ideas for asynchronous DP
    - In-place DP
    - Prioritized sweeping
    - Real-time dynamic programming
- To guarantee convergence, need continue to backup the values of all the states
- Avoiding sweeps does not necessarily mean that we can get away with less computation. It just means that an algorithm does not need to get locked into any hopelessly long sweep before it can make progress improving a policy.

In-place DP

- Synchronous value iteration stores two copies of value function

  for all s in $\mathcal{S}$

$$v_{new}(s) \leftarrow \max_{a \in \mathcal{A}} \left(\mathcal{R}_s^a + \gamma \sum_{s' \in \mathcal{S}} \mathcal{P}_{ss'}^a v_{old}(s') \right)$$

  $v_{old} \leftarrow v_{new}$

- In-place value iteration only stores one copy of value function

  for all s in $\mathcal{S}$

$$v(s) \leftarrow \max_{a \in \mathcal{A}} \left(\mathcal{R}_s^a + \gamma \sum_{s' \in \mathcal{S}} \mathcal{P}_{ss'}^a v(s') \right)$$

- How to select the “in-place” state?

Prioritized Sweeping DP

- Use magnitude of Bellman error to guide state selection, e.g.

$$\left| \max_{a \in \mathcal{A}} \left(\mathcal{R}_s^a + \gamma \sum_{s' \in \mathcal{S}} \mathcal{P}_{ss'}^a v(s') \right) - v(s) \right|$$

- Backup the state with the largest remaining Bellman error
- Update Bellman error of affected states after each backup
- Requires knowledge of reverse dynamics (predecessor states)
- Can be implemented efficiently by maintaining a priority queue

Real-time DP

- Idea: only states that are relevant to agent
- Use agent's experience to guide the selection of states
- After each time-step S_t, A_t, R_{t+1}
- Backup the state S_t

$$v(S_t) \leftarrow \max_{a \in \mathcal{A}} \left(\mathcal{R}^a_{S_t} + \gamma \sum_{s' \in \mathcal{S}} \mathcal{P}^a_{S_t s'} v(s') \right)$$