

Project#1

Languages accepted: C++, Java, Python

In this project, you will get hands on experience about the (possibly) wisest search algorithm: **A* search**! In particular, you will write a program that solves the **eight-puzzle**. You will solve it using

- 1) **Uniform Cost Search¹**
- 2) **A* with the Misplaced Tile heuristic.**
- 3) **A* with the Euclidian Distance heuristic.**

Notes about the algorithms: Complementary reading material on these algorithms are posted on iLearn. **Please read it carefully to learn about the correct time for applying a goal test.** remember that A* search doesn't stop after finding the first goal! Maybe there is a cheaper way to get to the goal state through one of the remaining nodes in the frontier. (check the Romania problem we solved with A* to see an example)

Also, note that the Uniform cost search does **not** apply the goal test right after generating a node (because maybe we can create better nodes by expanding the remaining siblings in the frontier). Rather, it applies the goal test after removing a node from the frontier for expansion (now we are sure that this is the cheapest option among all other nodes in the frontier—that's why we removed it first) (All of these can be found in more detail in the reading material)

Format: Your code should have an **object-orientated** design, as it **makes coding much easier** for you. In addition, it makes your code **simple and understandable** for yourself, for the TA and for the instructor.

If you don't know Object-Oriented coding, let me know.

Before starting to code, please take some time to design. Whatever classes and methods you choose, make sure that your main “driver” code is general enough to look like the graph search algorithm pseudo code on the next page (and on the slides and reading material):

To do this, you might want to implement a class called Problem, which might have instance variables like `initial_state`, `goal_state`, `operators` (a list of operators), etc. We later create instances of this class and give it to the search algorithm as the input parameter.

Optional: You might also want to implement a Tree class and a Node class. Each node object has a pointer to its parent node. We use the pointers to parent nodes in order to create the final solution (by following the parents of the goal node all the way up to the root of the tree). **Returning a final solution (i.e., the sequence of actions that actually led to the goal) is optional and has extra points.**

Important: Please choose **meaningful names** for your classes, methods, parameters, objects, and functions. This makes coding and understanding the code much much easier. Please use comments as much as you can.

¹ Note that Uniform Cost Search is just A* with $h(n)$ hardcoded to equal zero.

Important: The code should be kept **as general as possible**. In other words, your code should require only a modicum of effort to change to solve the 15-puzzle, or the 25-puzzle etc.

```

function GRAPH-SEARCH(problem) returns a solution, or failure
  initialize the frontier using the initial state of problem
  initialize the explored set to be empty
  loop do
    if the frontier is empty then return failure
    choose a leaf node and remove it from the frontier
    if the node contains a goal state then return the corresponding solution
    add the node to the explored set
    expand the chosen node, adding the resulting nodes to the frontier
    only if not in the frontier or explored set

```

* Of course, for the frontier you can use the pre-existing data structures like priority queue, etc.

Initial State: You can hardcode an initial state for testing purposes. But I want to be able to enter an arbitrary initial state. So sometime along the lines of the interface at the end of this document would be nice.

Using other sources: You may use some predefined utility routines, for example sorting routines or as said above, data structures like queue, list, etc. However **I expect all the major code to be original.**

You must document any book, webpage, person or other resources you consult in doing this project (see the syllabus).

You may consult colleagues at a high level, discussing ways to implement the tree data structure for example. But **you may NOT share code**. At most, you might illustrate something to a colleague with **pseudocode**.

What you show to the TAs:

You will need to demonstrate your code to the TA(s) and they can ask questions about any part of the code. As stated above, TA(s) should be able to enter arbitrary initial states and run the code with those states. It is a good idea to have a hard coded default initial state in your code too.

What you submit on iLearn:

- 1) Your code
- 2) A trace of the Euclidian distance A* on the following problem.

As noted above, finding/printing the correct sequence of actions/operators has extra points. This is different from the trace here and needs keeping pointers to parent nodes.

```

1 * 3
4 2 6
7 5 8

```

- 3) A two-page report which summaries your findings. You might want to compare the algorithms on several random puzzles, summarize the results with graphs and make comments on the utility of the different heuristics etc. The only meaningful comparisons for the algorithms are time (number of nodes expanded) and space (the maximum size of the queue).

You must keep the evolving versions of your code, so that, if necessary you can demonstrate to the course staff how you went about solving this problem (in other words, we may ask you to prove that you did the work, rather than copy it from somewhere).

You can use a simple text line interface or a more sophisticated GUI (but don't waste time making it pretty unless you are sure it works and you have lots free time). However your program should generate a trace like the one below, so that it can be tested.

Welcome to XXX (change this to your student ID) 8 puzzle solver.
Type "1" to use a default puzzle, or "2" to enter your own puzzle.

2

Enter your puzzle, use a zero to represent the blank

Enter the first row, use space or tabs between numbers

1 2 3

Enter the second row, use space or tabs between numbers

4 8 0

Enter the third row, use space or tabs between numbers

7 6 5

Enter your choice of algorithm

Uniform Cost Search

A* with the Misplaced Tile heuristic.

A* with the Euclidian distance heuristic.

3

Expanding state

1 2 3

4 8 b

7 6 5

The best state to expand with $g(n) = 1$ and $h(n) = 4$ is...

1 2 3

4 8 5

7 6 b Expanding this node...

The best state to expand with $g(n) = 2$ and $h(n) = 3$ is...

1 2 3

4 8 5

7 b 6 Expanding this node...

.

. steps omitted here

.

The best state to expand with $g(n) = 4$ and $h(n) = 1$ is...

1 2 3

4 5 6

7 b 8 Expanding this node...

Goal!!!

To solve this problem the search algorithm expanded a total of XXX (*correct numbers should appear here*) nodes.

The maximum number of nodes in the queue at any one time: YYY.

The depth of the goal node was ZZZ.