

Comparison of sequences



INDRAPRASTHA INSTITUTE *of*
INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY **DELHI**

Dr. Jaspreet Kaur Dhanjal

Assistant Professor, Center for Computational Biology

Email ID: jaspreet@iiitd.ac.in

August 18, 2025

What and Why?

ACCGGTATCCTAGGAC

||| ||| |||||

ACC--TATCTTAGGAC

- Are these two sequences related?
- How similar (or dissimilar) are they?
- Matching the two sequences as closely as possible = alignment
- Comparing alignment needs a score

- DNA and Proteins are based on linear sequences
- Homology based gene prediction
- Similar sequence have similar structure & function
- Protein function annotation
- Protein structure modeling
- Assembly of genomes
- Searching for mutations or polymorphism
- Phylogenetic analysis

Pairwise sequence alignment

Types of alignment

Global alignment

To compare sequences of similar sizes

- Compare closely related genes
- Search for mutations or polymorphisms in a sequence compared to a reference.

```
ACCGGTATCCTAGGAC
||||| ||||| |||||
ACCG-TATCTTAGGAC
```

Local alignment

To find shared subsequences

- Search for protein domains
- Find gene regulatory elements
- Locate a similar gene in a genome sequence.

```
ATGCGCTACCGTATCCTAGGAC
||||||| ||
-----ACCGTATC-TA-----
```

End free alignment

To find joins/overlaps

- Align the sequences from adjacent sequencing primers

```
CGCTACC      TCCTAGGAC
   |||       ||||
   ACCGTATCCT
           ↓
CGCTACCGTATCCTAGGAC
```

DOT PLOT

Dot plot is a graphical method that allows the comparison of two biological sequences and identify regions of close similarity between them.

Seq1: TWILIGHTZONE

Seq2: MIDNIGHTZONE

Put a dot, or 1,
where ever there is identity

	T	W	I	L	I	G	H	T	Z	O	N	E
M												
I												
D												
N												
I												
G												
H												
T												
Z												
O												
N												
E												

	T	W	I	L	I	G	H	T	Z	O	N	E
M												
I			•		•							
D												
N											•	
I			•		•							
G						•						
H							•					
T	•							•				
Z									•			
O										•		
N											•	
E												•

DOT PLOT

	G	A	T	A	C	T	G	C	G	A	T	A	C	T	G	C	G	C	A
G	1						1		1						1	1			
A		1		1						1		1							1
T			1			1					1			1			1		
A				1						1		1							1
C					1			1					1			1	1		
T						1					1			1			1		
G							1		1						1	1			
C								1					1			1	1		
G									1						1	1			
A										1		1							1
T											1			1					
A												1							
C													1			1	1		
T														1					
G															1	1			
C																1	1		
G																	1		
C																		1	
A																			1

Noisy

Word size: size of sequence block used for comparison. Here, the window size is 1.

Stringency: Number of matches required to score positive. In this example stringency is 1 (requires exact match).

Word size= 4; Stringency= 2

GATCGTACCATGGAATCGTCCAGATCA

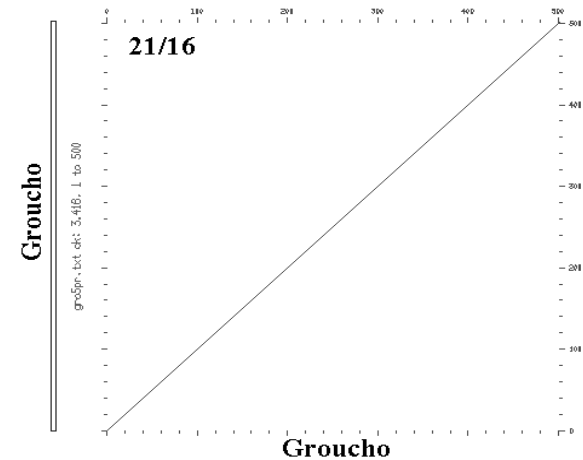
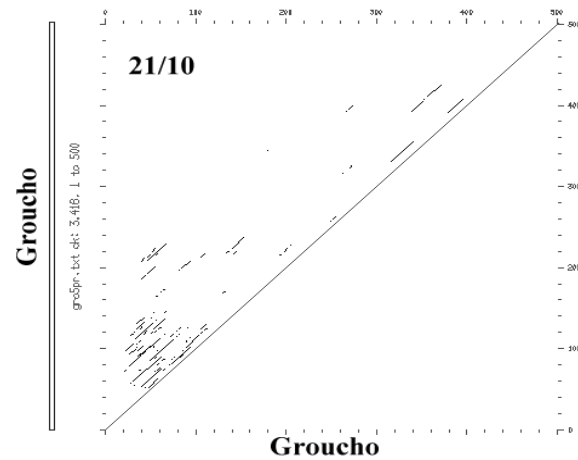
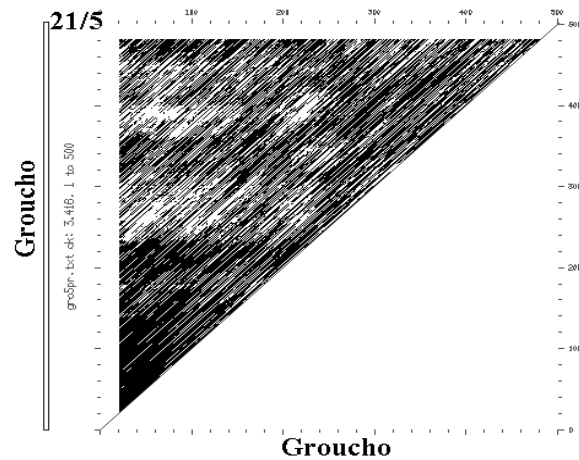
GATC + (4/4)

GATC - (0/4)

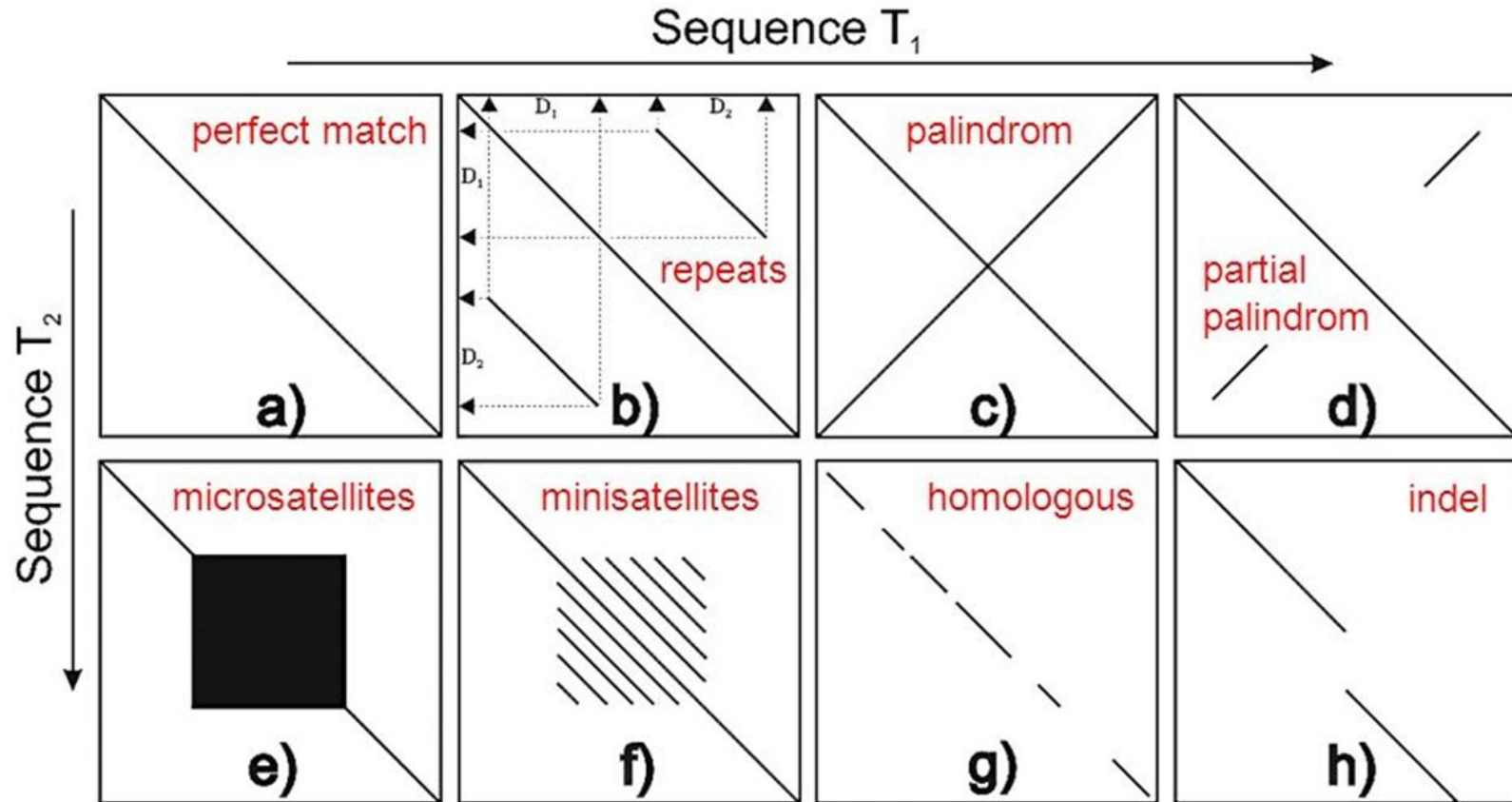
GATC - (0/4)

GATC - (1/4)

DOT PLOT



Interpretation of DOT PLOT



Limitations of DOT PLOT

- Rely on visual analysis
- Difficult to find optimal alignments
- Difficult to estimate significance of alignments
- Insensitive to conserved substitutions (e.g. L \leftrightarrow I or S \leftrightarrow T)
- Compares only two sequences (vs. multiple alignment)
- Time consuming (1,000 bp vs. 1,000 bp = 10^6 operations,
1,000,000 bp vs. 1,000,000 bp = 10^{12} operations)

Simple Alignment

ACCGGTATCCTAGGAC
ACCTATCTTAGGAC →
 ||| ||| |||||
ACC--TATCTTAGGAC

Score: a match (+1), a mismatch (-1), a gap (-1)

ACCGGTATCCTAGGAC
||| ||| |||||
ACC--TATCTTAGGAC

Total Score: (13x1) + (1x-1) + (2x-1) = 10

Limitation: number of alignments between two sequences is exponential
very slow algorithm

Solution: Dynamic programming

Optimal alignment

The optimal alignment of two similar sequences usually

- maximizes the number of matches and
- minimizes the number of gaps.

Permitting the insertion of arbitrarily many gaps might lead to high scoring alignments of non-homologous sequences.

Penalizing gaps forces alignments to have relatively few gaps.

Gap penalties increase the quality of an alignment – non-homologous sequences are not aligned.

Global Alignment

- To compare sequences of similar sizes
- Gaps are inserted into, or at the ends of each sequence
- The sequence length (bases+gaps) are identical for each sequence
- Every base or gap in each sequence is aligned with a base or a gap in the other sequence

```
ACCGGTATCCTAGGAC
|||  |||  |||||
ACC--TATCTTAGGAC
```

Let's start by trying out a simple example of alignment:

S = ACCGGTAT

T = ACCTATC

Simple scoring scheme (2 for match, -1 for mismatch, -1 for gap)

Substitution/Match matrix for a simple alignment

An alignment between base i in S and base j in T is represented: (S_i, T_j)

The score for this occurring is represented: $\sigma(S_i, T_j)$

Global Alignment

Length of $S = m = 8$

Length of $T = n = 7$

OK for Global alignment

	A	C	C	G	G	T	A	T	(S)
A									
C									
C									
T									
A									
T									
C									
(T)									

Global Alignment

Represent scores for gaps in row/col 0

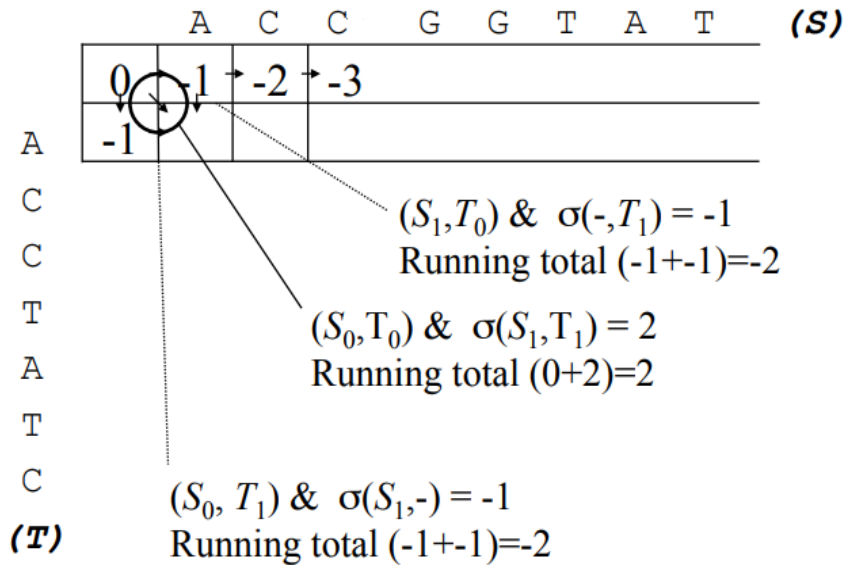
		A	C	C	G	G	T	A	T	(S)
	0	-1	-2	-3	-4	-5	-6	-7	-8	
A	↓									
C	↓									
C	↓									
T	↓									
A	↓									
T	↓									
C	↓									
(T)										

For each cell consider the 'best' path

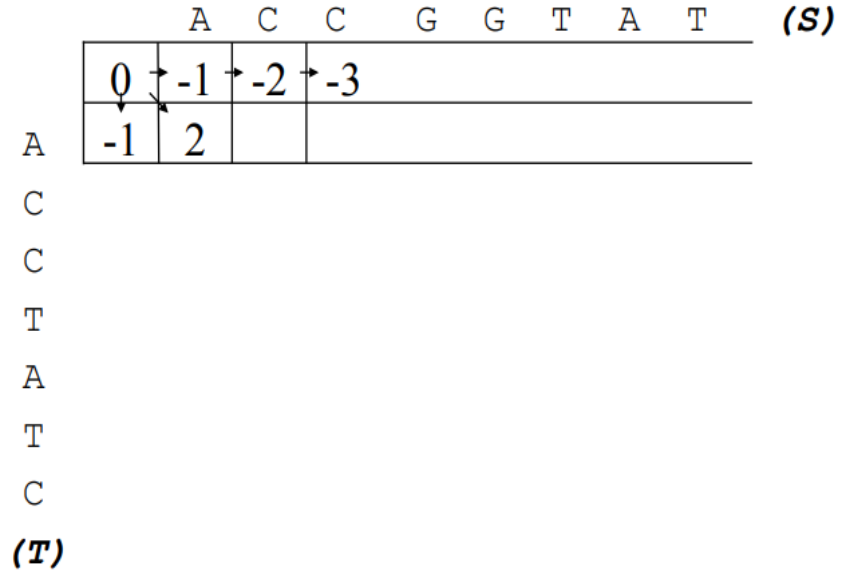
		A	C	C	G	G	T	A	T	(S)
	0	-1	-2	-3	-4	-5	-6	-7	-8	
A	↓									
C	↓									
C	↓									
T	↓									
A	↓									
T	↓									
C	↓									
(T)										

Global Alignment

For each cell consider the 'best' path

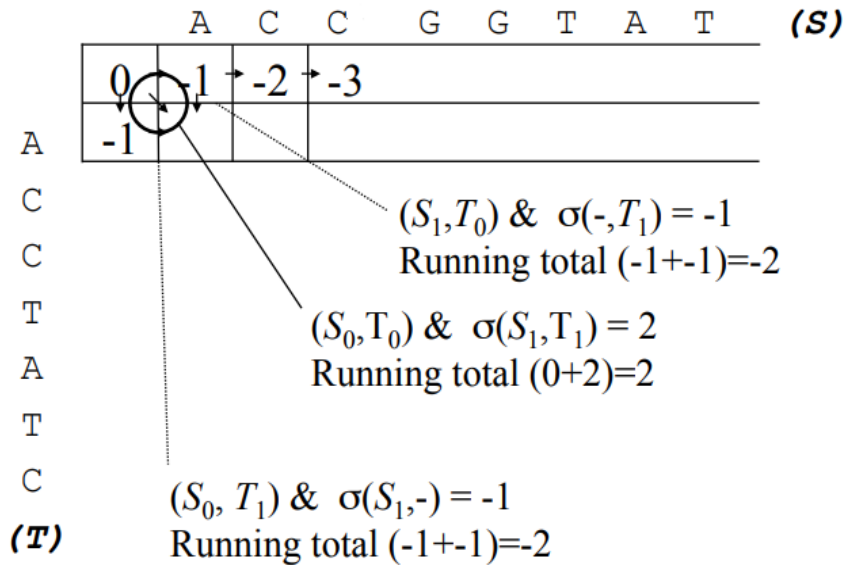


Record the 'best' path

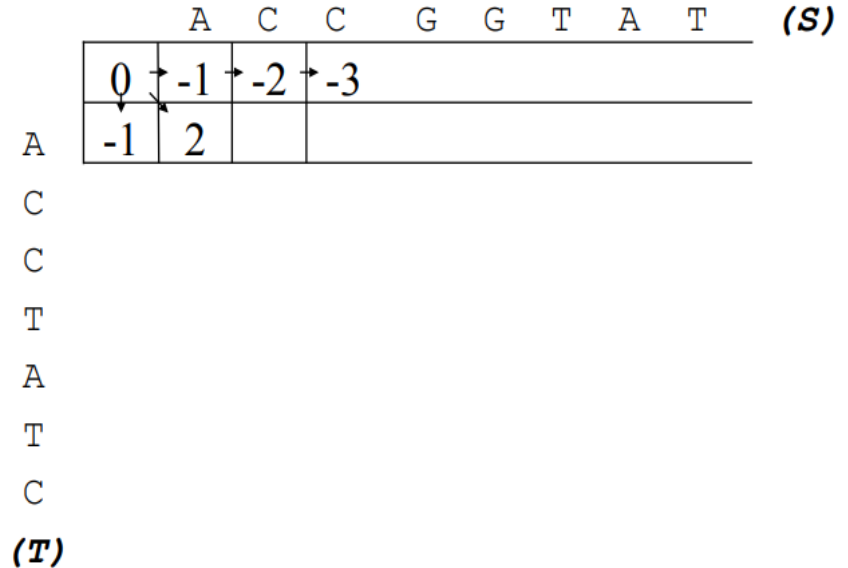


Global Alignment

For each cell consider the 'best' path



Record the 'best' path



Global Alignment

For each cell consider the 'best' path

	A	C	C	G	G	T	A	T	(S)
A	0	-1	-2	-3					
C	-1	2	1						
C									
T									
A									
T									
C									
(T)									

(S_2, T_0) & $\sigma(-, T_1)$
 Running total $(-2 + -1) = -3$

(S_1, T_0) & $\sigma(S_2, T_1)$
 Running total $(-1 + -1) = -2$

(S_1, T_1) & $\sigma(S_2, -)$
 Running total $(2 + -1) = 1$

Final Matrix

	A	C	C	G	G	T	A	T	(S)
A	0	-1	-2	-3	-4	-5	-6	-7	-8
C	-1	2	1	0	-1	-2	-3	-4	-5
C	-2	1	4	3	2	1	0	-1	-2
T	-3	0	3	6	5	4	3	2	1
T	-4	-1	2	5	5	4	6	5	4
A	-5	-2	1	4	4	4	5	8	7
T	-6	-3	0	3	3	3	6	7	10
C	-7	-4	-1	2	2	2	5	6	9
(T)									

= Score

Global Alignment

For each cell consider the 'best' path

	A	C	C	G	G	T	A	T	(S)
A	0	-1	-2	-3					
C	-1	2	1						
C									
T									
A									
T									
C									
(T)									

$(S_2, T_0) \& \sigma(-, T_1)$
 Running total $(-2 + -1) = -3$

$(S_1, T_0) \& \sigma(S_2, T_1)$
 Running total $(-1 + -1) = -2$

$(S_1, T_1) \& \sigma(S_2, -)$
 Running total $(2 + -1) = 1$

Final Matrix

	A	C						A	T	(S)
A	0	-1	-2					-7	-8	
C	-1	2	1					-4	-5	
C	-2	1	4					-1	-2	
C	-3	0	3							
T	-4	-1	2							
A	-5	-2	1							
T	-6	-3	0	3	3	3	6	7	10	
C	-7	-4	-1	2	2	2	5	6	9	= Score
(T)										

$V(i, 0) = \sum_{k=0}^i \sigma(S_k, -)$
 $V(0, j) = \sum_{k=0}^j \sigma(-, T_k)$
 $V(i, j) = \max \begin{cases} V(i-1, j-1) + \sigma(S_i, T_j) \\ V(i-1, j) + \sigma(S_i, -) \\ V(i, j-1) + \sigma(-, T_j) \end{cases}$

Global Alignment

Recreate the alignment by following the pointers back through the array to the origin

6 matches = 12 points, 3 gaps = -3 points

Score = 9 confirmed

– (S)

C (T)

	A	C	C	G	G	T	A	T	(S)
A	0	-1	-2	-3	-4	-5	-6	-7	-8
C	-1	2	1	0	-1	-2	-3	-4	-5
C	-2	1	4	3	2	1	0	-1	-2
T	-3	0	3	6	5	4	3	2	1
A	-4	-1	2	5	5	4	6	5	4
T	-5	-2	1	4	4	4	5	8	7
C	-6	-3	0	3	3	3	6	7	10
(T)	-7	-4	-1	2	2	2	5	6	9

Global Alignment

Recreate the alignment by following the pointers back through the array to the origin

6 matches = 12 points, 3 gaps = -3 points
Score = 9 confirmed

T - (S)
|
T C (T)

		A	C	C	G	G	T	A	T	(S)
	0	0	-1	-2	-3	-4	-5	-6	-7	-8
A	-1 A	-1	2	1	0	-1	-2	-3	-4	-5
C	-2 C	-2	1	4	3	2	1	0	-1	-2
C	-3 C	-3	0	3	6	5	4	3	2	1
T	-4 T	-4	-1	2	5	5	4	6	5	4
A	-5 A	-5	-2	1	4	4	4	5	8	7
T	-6 T	-6	-3	0	3	3	3	6	7	10
C	-7 C	-7	-4	-1	2	2	2	5	6	9
(T)	(T)									

Global Alignment

Recreate the alignment by following the pointers back through the array to the origin

6 matches = 12 points, 3 gaps = -3 points
Score = 9 confirmed

A T - (S)

| |

A T C (T)

			A	C	C	G	G	T	A	T	(S)
	0	(	0	-1	-2	-3	-4	-5	-6	-7	-8
A	-1	A	-1	2	1	0	-1	-2	-3	-4	-5
C	-2	C	-2	1	4	3	2	1	0	-1	-2
C	-3	C	-3	0	3	6	5	4	3	2	1
T	-4	T	-4	-1	2	5	5	4	6	5	4
A	-5	A	-5	-2	1	4	4	4	5	8	7
T	-6	T	-6	-3	0	3	3	3	6	7	10
C	-7	C	-7	-4	-1	2	2	2	5	6	9
(T)	(T)	(T)									

Global Alignment

Recreate the alignment by following the pointers back through the array to the origin

6 matches = 12 points, 3 gaps = -3 points
Score = 9 confirmed

T A T - (S)
| | |
T A T C (T)

				A	C	C	G	G	T	A	T	(S)
	0	(	(	0	-1	-2	-3	-4	-5	-6	-7	-8
A	-1 A	- A	- A	-1	2	1	0	-1	-2	-3	-4	-5
C	-2 C	- C	- C	-2	1	4	3	2	1	0	-1	-2
C	-3 C	- C	- C	-3	0	3	6	5	4	3	2	1
T	-4 T	- T	- T	-4	-1	2	5	5	4	6	5	4
A	-5 A	- A	- A	-5	-2	1	4	4	4	5	8	7
T	-6 T	- T	- T	-6	-3	0	3	3	3	6	7	10
C	-7 C	- C	- C	-7	-4	-1	2	2	2	5	6	9
(T)	(T)	(T)	(T)									

Global Alignment

Recreate the alignment by following the pointers back through the array to the origin

6 matches = 12 points, 3 gaps = -3 points
Score = 9 confirmed

G T A T - (S)
| | |
- T A T C (T)

					A	C	C	G	G	T	A	T	(S)
	0	(	(	0	0	-1	-2	-3	-4	-5	-6	-7	-8
A	-1 A	- A	- A	- A	-1	2	1	0	-1	-2	-3	-4	-5
C	-2 C	- C	- C	- C	-2	1	4	3	2	1	0	-1	-2
C	-3 C	- C	- C	- C	-3	0	3	6	5	4	3	2	1
T	-4 T	- T	- T	- T	-4	-1	2	5	5	4	6	5	4
A	-5 A	- A	- A	- A	-5	-2	1	4	4	4	5	8	7
T	-6 T	- T	- T	- T	-6	-3	0	3	3	3	6	7	10
C	-7 C	- C	- C	- C	-7	-4	-1	2	2	2	5	6	9
(T)	(T)	(T)	(T)	(T)									

Global Alignment

Recreate the alignment by following the pointers back through the array to the origin

6 matches = 12 points, 3 gaps = -3 points
Score = 9 confirmed

G G T A T - (S)
| | |
- - T A T C (T)

						A	C	C	G	G	T	A	T	(S)	
						0	-1	-2	-3	-4	-5	-6	-7	-8	
A	-1	A	-	A	-	A	-1	2	1	0	-1	-2	-3	-4	-5
C	-2	C	-	C	-	C	-2	1	4	3	2	1	0	-1	-2
C	-3	C	-	C	-	C	-3	0	3	6	5	4	3	2	1
T	-4	T	-	T	-	T	-4	-1	2	5	5	4	6	5	4
A	-5	A	-	A	-	A	-5	-2	1	4	4	4	5	8	7
T	-6	T	-	T	-	T	-6	-3	0	3	3	3	6	7	10
C	-7	C	-	C	-	C	-7	-4	-1	2	2	2	5	6	9
(T)	(T)	(T)	(T)	(T)	(T)	(T)									

Global Alignment

Recreate the alignment by following the pointers back through the array to the origin

6 matches = 12 points, 3 gaps = -3 points
Score = 9 confirmed

C G G T A T - (S)
| | | |
C - - T A T C (T)

								A	C	C	G	G	T	A	T	(S)	
	0	(	(	(	0	(	(	0	-1	-2	-3	-4	-5	-6	-7	-8	
A	-1	A	-	A	-1	A	-	A	-1	2	1	0	-1	-2	-3	-4	-5
C	-2	C	-	C	-2	C	-	C	-2	1	4	3	2	1	0	-1	-2
C	-3	C	-	C	-3	C	-	C	-3	0	3	6	5	4	3	2	1
T	-4	T	-	T	-4	T	-	T	-4	-1	2	5	5	4	6	5	4
A	-5	A	-	A	-5	A	-	A	-5	-2	1	4	4	4	5	8	7
T	-6	T	-	T	-6	T	-	T	-6	-3	0	3	3	3	6	7	10
C	-7	C	-	C	-7	C	-	C	-7	-4	-1	2	2	2	5	6	9
(T)	(T)	(T)	(T)	(T)	(T)	(T)	(T)										

Global Alignment

Recreate the alignment by following the pointers back through the array to the origin

6 matches = 12 points, 3 gaps = -3 points
Score = 9 confirmed

C C G G T A T - (S)
| | | | |
C C - - T A T C (T)

		A	C	C	G	G	T	A	T	(S)
	0	-1	-2	-3	-4	-5	-6	-7	-8	
A	-1	2	1	0	-1	-2	-3	-4	-5	
C	-2	1	4	3	2	1	0	-1	-2	
C	-3	0	3	6	5	4	3	2	1	
T	-4	-1	2	5	5	4	6	5	4	
A	-5	-2	1	4	4	4	5	8	7	
T	-6	-3	0	3	3	3	6	7	10	
C	-7	-4	-1	2	2	2	5	6	9	

Global Alignment

Recreate the alignment by following the pointers back through the array to the origin

6 matches = 12 points, 3 gaps = -3 points
Score = 9 confirmed

A C C G G T A T - (S)
| | | | | |
A C C - - T A T C (T)

		A C C G G T A T (S)								
		0	-1	-2	-3	-4	-5	-6	-7	-8
A	(T)	-1	2	1	0	-1	-2	-3	-4	-5
C	(T)	-2	1	4	3	2	1	0	-1	-2
C	(T)	-3	0	3	6	5	4	3	2	1
T	(T)	-4	-1	2	5	5	4	6	5	4
A	(T)	-5	-2	1	4	4	4	5	8	7
T	(T)	-6	-3	0	3	3	3	6	7	10
C	(T)	-7	-4	-1	2	2	2	5	6	9

This is also known as **Needleman-Wunsch algorithm**