

IT3105: Project 1 – Using Minimax with Alpha-Beta pruning to play Quarto

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Lecturer: Keith Downing

Pablo Liste Garcia & Dominik Horb

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1 General Setup

The first decision our team made after we initially heard of the assignment task, was to use Java as our programming language. This decision was made mainly out of familiarity with the language and because we couldn't find any caveats that would complicate fulfilling the assignment.

We also chose to share our code through a Git repository, which you can access through:

- <https://github.com/dom2503/Quarto>

We also wanted to start out with a basic command line interface as it was shown during the lecture and create a graphical interface maybe later on, if there would be time left.

You can see an example of the interface we created in ??.

```
Please enter the x-coordinate for your move:
2
Please enter the y-coordinate for your move:
a

y\x  1      2      3      4
A     _____ (r ) (R ) _____
B     _____ _____ _____
C     _____ _____ _____
D     _____ _____ _____

Player1 please select a piece to give to Player2.
These are the available pieces:
1.[R*] 2.(R*) 3.[R ] 4.[r*] 5.(r*) 6.[r ] 7.[B*] 8.(B*) 9.[B ] 10.(B ) 11.[b*] 12.(b*) 13.[b ] 14.(b )
6
Player1 selected [r ]

Player2 please make your move.
y\x  1      2      3      4
A     _____ (r ) (R ) _____
B     _____ _____ _____
C     _____ _____ _____
D     _____ _____ _____
I made my move to 1c
y\x  1      2      3      4
A     _____ (r ) (R ) _____
B     _____ _____ _____
C     [r ] _____ _____
D     _____ _____ _____

Player2 please select a piece to give to Player1.
Player2 selected [B ]

Player1 please make your move.
y\x  1      2      3      4
A     _____ (r ) (R ) _____
B     _____ _____ _____
C     [r ] _____ _____
D     _____ _____ _____
Please enter the x-coordinate for your move:
```

Figure 1: Basic interface of our Quarto game.

The general structure of our code is pretty simple. The main class of the application is *QuartoGame*, which contains the game loop and almost all setup and command line interface parts. The actual game is put together through the *Board* and *Piece* classes and some additional enums for the properties of the pieces.

All the different players that we were supposed to write just needed to be able to pick a next piece and to make a move with the piece that was given to them, as can be seen in

the shortened version of our *Player* interface below.

```
1 public interface Player {  
2     public String makeMove();  
3     public Piece selectPieceForOpponent();  
4     public void setGivenPiece(Piece givenPiece);  
5 }
```

Listing 1: Player interface

2 Evaluation Function

We first started out thinking about the actual evaluation function for the states of the Quarto game, after we finished the main game logic, the random and the human player. As the main focus was to get the Minimax algorithm working, we wrote a very basic dummy version that just returned a random double value in the beginning.

```
1 public double evaluateBoard(Board board) {  
2     return rand.nextDouble();  
3 }
```

Listing 2: Dummy evaluation function

In the real version later on it should evaluate, whether the current state of the board is good for the last player that made a move though. A positive value meaning that this is the case and a negative one meaning that the opponent has an advantage.

The state of the game as we look at it at this point, is just the board and the pieces that were already placed.

After our implementation had developed into a more mature state we added the two distinctive finishing states of the Quarto game: a draw and the win of the player that set the last piece. As you can see below, we were returning positive infinity for a win, because it is the best outcome that can be reached and 0.0 for a draw, because no player has an advantage there.

```
1 public double evaluateBoard(Board board) {
2     double result;
3     if(board.gameWasWon()) {
4         result = Double.POSITIVE_INFINITY;
5     } else if(board.isDraw()) {
6         result = 0.0;
7     } else {
8         result = rand.nextDouble();
9     }
10
11     return result;
12 }
```

Listing 3: Very basic evaluation function

Figuring out the next evolutionary step of the evaluation process proofed to be a bit more difficult though. What we somehow concluded was, that leaving a lot of nearly completed rows, that contained three pieces with one or two identical properties for the next player is somehow a bad decision.

3 Novice vs. Random

4 Novice vs. Minimax-3

5 Minimax-3 vs. Minimax-4

Runs	Minimax-3	Minimax-4	Draws
20	6	4	0

6 Tournament experiences