

Chapter 11

Minimum Spanning Tree Recitation.

11.1 The Spanning Tree Problem.

Definition 11.1.1. A spanning tree T of a graph $G = (V, E)$ is a subset of edges in E such that T is a tree (having no cycles), and the graph (V, T) is connected.

Problem 11.1.1 (MST). Let $G = (V, E)$ be a weighted graph with weight function $w : E \rightarrow \mathbb{R}$. We extend the weight function to subsets of E by defining the weight of $X \subset E$ to be $w(X) = \sum_{e \in X} w(e)$. The minimum spanning tree (MST) of G is the spanning tree of G that has the minimal weight according to w . Note that in general, there might be more than one MST for G .

Definition 11.1.2. Let $U \subset V$. We define the cut associated with U as the set of outer edges of U , namely all the edges $(u, v) \in E$ such that $u \in U$ and $v \notin U$. We use the notation $X = (U, \bar{U})$ to represent the cut. We say that $E' \subset E$ respects the cut if $E' \cap X = \emptyset$.

Lemma 11.1.1 (The Cut-Lemma). *Let T be an MST of G . Consider a forest $F \subset T$ and a cut X that respects X (i.e. $F \cap X = \emptyset$). Then $F \cup \arg \min_e w(e)$ is also contained in some MST. Note that it does not necessarily have to be the same tree T .*

Proof. If $e \in T$, then $F \cup \{e\} \subset T$ and we are done. Otherwise, consider the second case where $e \notin T$. This means that $T \cup \{e\}$ has $|V|$ edges and therefore must have a cycle. Let $\Gamma = T \cup \{e\}$. Let x and y be the endpoints of e (namely $e = (x, y)$). Denote the subset of vertices defining the cut X by U . Without loss of generality, let's assume $x \in U$ and $y \in \bar{U}$.

Since T is connected, there is a path $x \rightsquigarrow y$ in T , denote it by \mathcal{P} . Additionally, because $e \notin T$, we have that $e \notin \mathcal{P}$. This means that there must be another edge in \mathcal{P} connecting a vertex in U to a vertex in \bar{U} ¹. Let e' be that edge, we have:

1. Both $e', e \in X$ So $w(e) \leq w(e')$.
2. $e \cup \mathcal{P}$ is a cycle in Γ .

¹Otherwise, walking along \mathcal{P} cannot take one out of U , leading to a contradiction as \mathcal{P} leads to y .

By using the fact that subtracting an edge from a cycle doesn't harm connectivity (see Claim 11.1.1), we can conclude that $\Gamma/\{e'\}$ is connected. Since it has $|V| - 1$ edges, it must be a spanning tree. On the other hand, by:

$$w(\Gamma/\{e'\}) = w(T) + \overbrace{w(e) - w(e')}^{\leq 0} \leq w(T)$$

So $\Gamma/\{e'\}$ is an MST. □

In the lecture, you have seen the Kruskal algorithm for finding an MST. This algorithm constructs the MST iteratively, where in each step it holds a forest F contained in the MST and then looks for the minimal edge in a cut that it respects. Note that since F has no cycles, any edge $e \in E$ that does not close a cycle in F must belong to some cut X that is respected by F . By enforcing the order of edges being examined to be increasing in weight, it follows that the first edge that does not close a cycle is also the one with the minimum weight among them. Therefore, by Lemma 11.1.1, we can conclude that the forest obtained by adding e into F is contained in the MST, and we can continue with it.

Result: Returns MST of given $G = (V, E, w)$

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1 sorts the  $E$  according to  $w$ 
2 define  $F_0 = \emptyset$  and  $i \leftarrow 0$ 
3 for  $e \in E$  in sorted order do
4   if  $F_i \cup \{e\}$  has no cycle then
5      $F_{i+1} \leftarrow F_i \cup \{e\}$ 
6      $i \leftarrow i + 1$ 
7   end
8 end
9 return  $F_i$ 
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Algorithm 1: Kruskal alg.

Claim 11.1.1. Let G be a connected graph containing a cycle C . Then the subtraction of any an edge in C gives a connected graph.

Proof. Assume, by contradiction, that a graph $G' = G/\{e\}$, where $e \in C$, is not connected. This means that there are two vertices u and v that have a path between them in G , but no such path exists in G' . Denote this path by \mathcal{P} and observe that $e \in \mathcal{P}$, otherwise, \mathcal{P} would also be a path from u to v in G' .

Denote the ends of e by $(x, y) = e$. Also, denote C by $\langle x_0, x_1, \dots, x_i, x, y, y_0, \dots, y_j \rangle$, where $y_j = x_0$ and there is an inequality for any other pair of vertices (we used the cycle definition). Then, there is a path $x \rightsquigarrow y$ in C , defined by

$$\langle x_i, x_{i-1}, \dots, x_1, x_0, y_{j-1}, y_{j-2}, \dots, y_0, y \rangle$$

We denote this path by \mathcal{P}' . By replacing e in \mathcal{P} with \mathcal{P}' , we obtain a path $u \rightsquigarrow x \rightsquigarrow^{\mathcal{P}'} y \rightsquigarrow v$, which is a path between u and v that does not contain e . This contradicts the assumption that there is no path between u and v in G' . □