

Project Proposal: 3D Connect4 Game

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1. Description

The name of this project is 3D Connect4, but this may be changed later in the term project season. 3D Connect4 is essentially a multi-mode Connect4 game created in 2.5D isometric, with a human-human mode and a human-computer player mode. The human-human mode will feature a 2-player game that will allow two unique players to play Connect4 via the application, while the human-computer mode will feature an AI player that will compete against a singular human player

2. Similar Projects

Connect4 has been designed before, and there are many algorithms online that will allow me to create a 2D Connect4 game. These 2D games consist of a simplistic, 2D grid that doesn't demonstrate the way in which pieces fall into the grid and other such realistic features. They simply involve placing the pieces in specific areas in the grid, which doesn't provide an engaging experience for users. Connect4 also exists as a game in real life (not virtually), which people can readily find in stores.

My project will be different in the sense that it will provide a realistic game experience when users play Connect4. Specifically, it will feature a 3D model of the Connect4 game and piece features. Moreover, in the human-computer portion of the game, it will use the minimax algorithm, which has been utilized in Connect4 games previously, but on top of this, it will use alpha-beta pruning to refine the current AI model for players.

3. Structural Plan

The final project will be split into different functions, and the code will be modularized, such that:

- Script for 3D Connect4 board
- Script for 3D game pieces (both red and yellow coins)
- Functions for human-human player in the Connect4 game, and algorithm to process the pieces placed into the board [mode 1]
- Functions for human-AI player in the Connect4 game [mode2]
 - Algorithm for AI player using minimax algorithm
 - Refinement of AI player using alpha-beta pruning algorithm
- Main function to piece all scripts and functions together

4. Algorithmic Plan

The portions of my project that are most difficult algorithmically is the human-AI player portion of the game. Specifically, I want to create an AI player that will be able to play Connect4 alongside a human player and be able to respond to the human player's moves.

In order to solve this problem, I plan to implement the minimax algorithm, which is a recursive algorithm that uses backtracking to choose the next specific move for a multi-player game. Since recursion and backtracking has been covered in 15-112 lectures and recitations, this can be implemented. However, minimax has been applied to Connect4 in the past multiple times, so in order to improve existing solutions, I plan to implement alpha-beta pruning, which is a specific search algorithm. Here, the nodes that have already been established in the search tree are removed, which provides a more efficient minimax algorithm.

These features can both be implemented relatively easily using Python. Minimax is implemented using recursion and backtracking, and alpha-beta pruning is an optimization to the existing minimax algorithm.

5. Timeline Plan

My current timeline is as follows:

1. Finish 2D Connect4 model by TP1 deadline, including minimax algorithm and algorithm for the high-level Connect4 game (Nov 20)
2. Create 3D Connect4 pieces by (Nov 23)
3. Create 3D Connect4 board (Nov 27)
4. Put all the pieces together, resolve bugs, have production-ready code (Nov 30)

Thus, all work should be finished by the TP2 deadline.

6. Version Control Plan