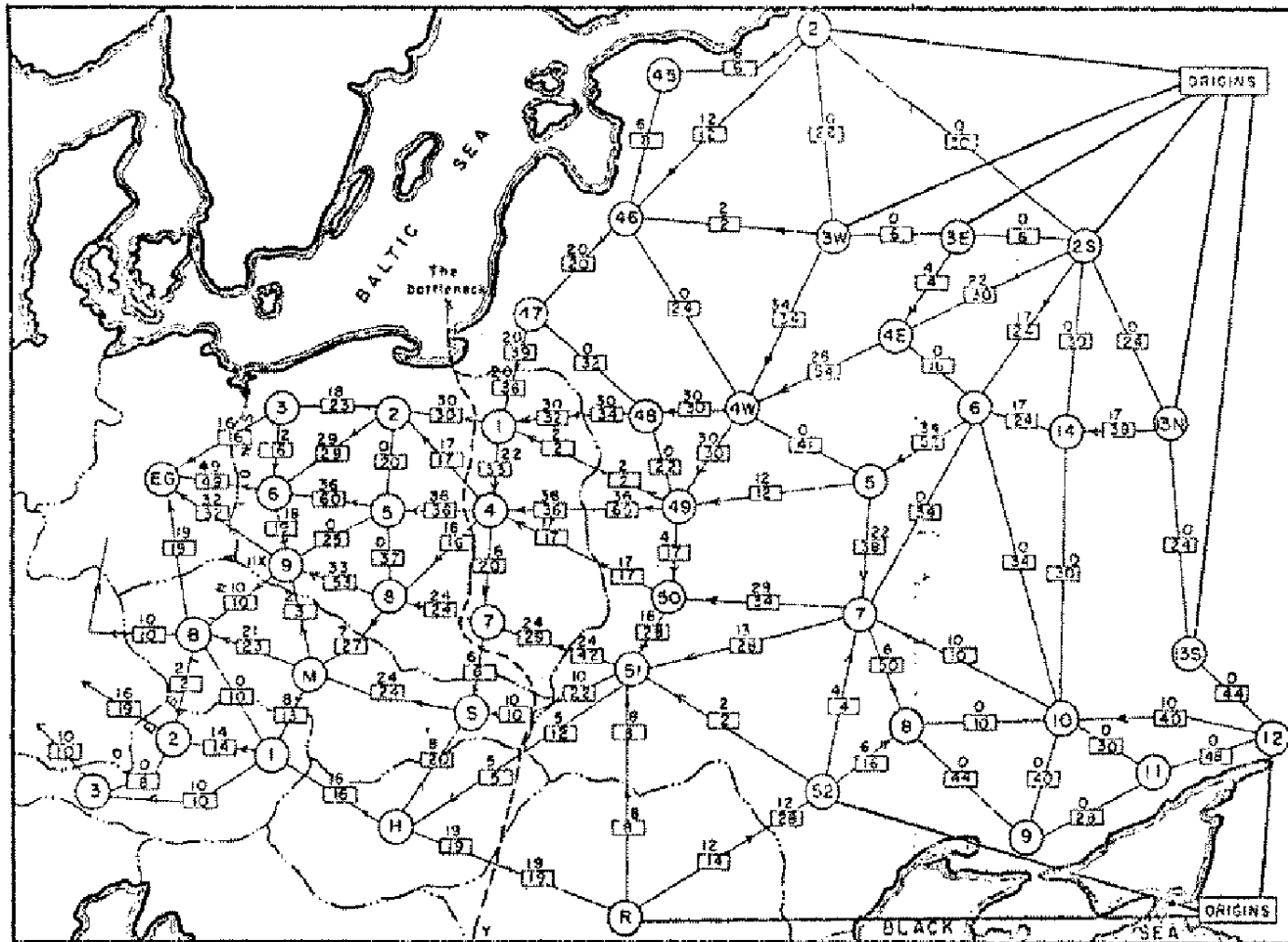




# Network Flows

# Soviet Rail Network, 1955



Reference: On the history of the transportation and maximum flow problems.  
Alexander Schrijver in Math Programming, 91: 3, 2002.

# Maximum Flow and Minimum Cut

## Max flow and min cut.

- Two very rich algorithmic problems.
- Cornerstone problems in combinatorial optimization.
- Beautiful mathematical duality.

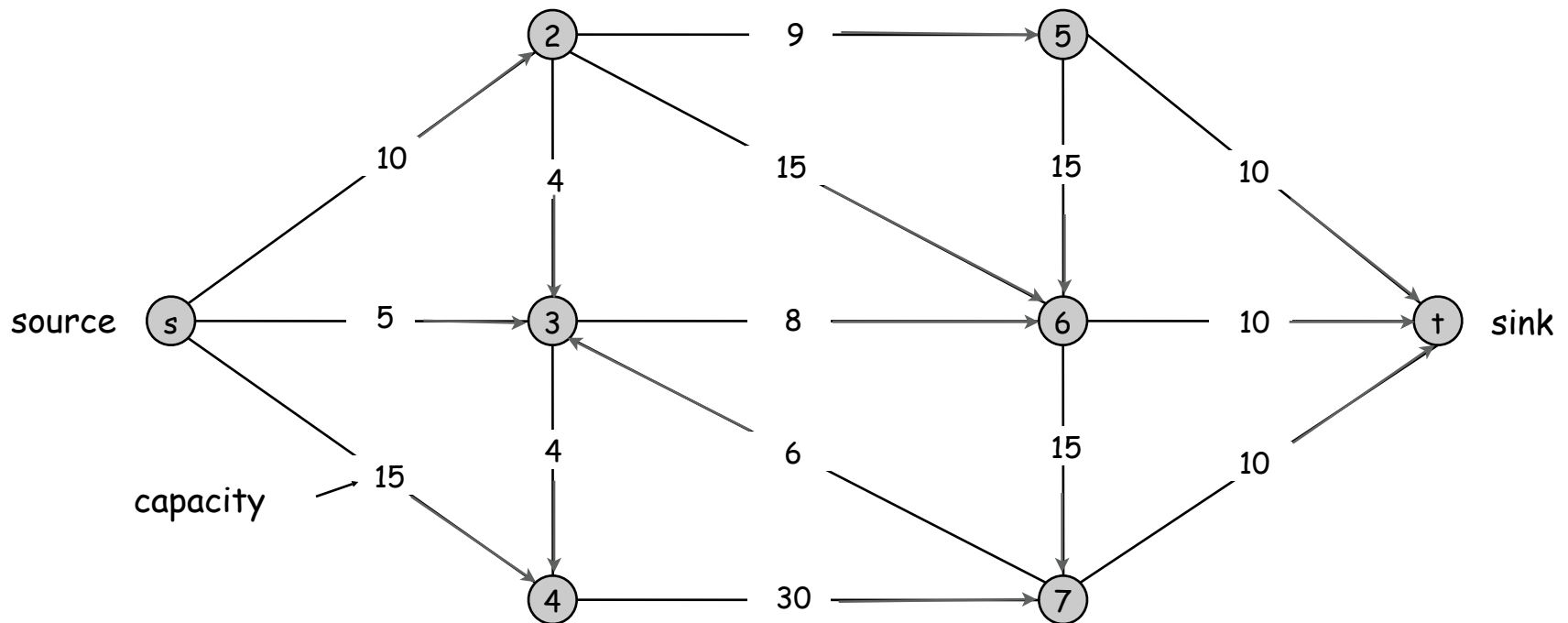
## Nontrivial applications / reductions.

- Data mining.
- Open-pit mining.
- Project selection.
- Airline scheduling.
- Bipartite matching.
- Baseball elimination.
- Image segmentation.
- Network connectivity.
- Network reliability.
- Distributed computing.
- Egalitarian stable matching.
- Security of statistical data.
- Network intrusion detection.
- Multi-camera scene reconstruction.
- Many many more . . .

# Minimum Cut Problem

## Flow network.

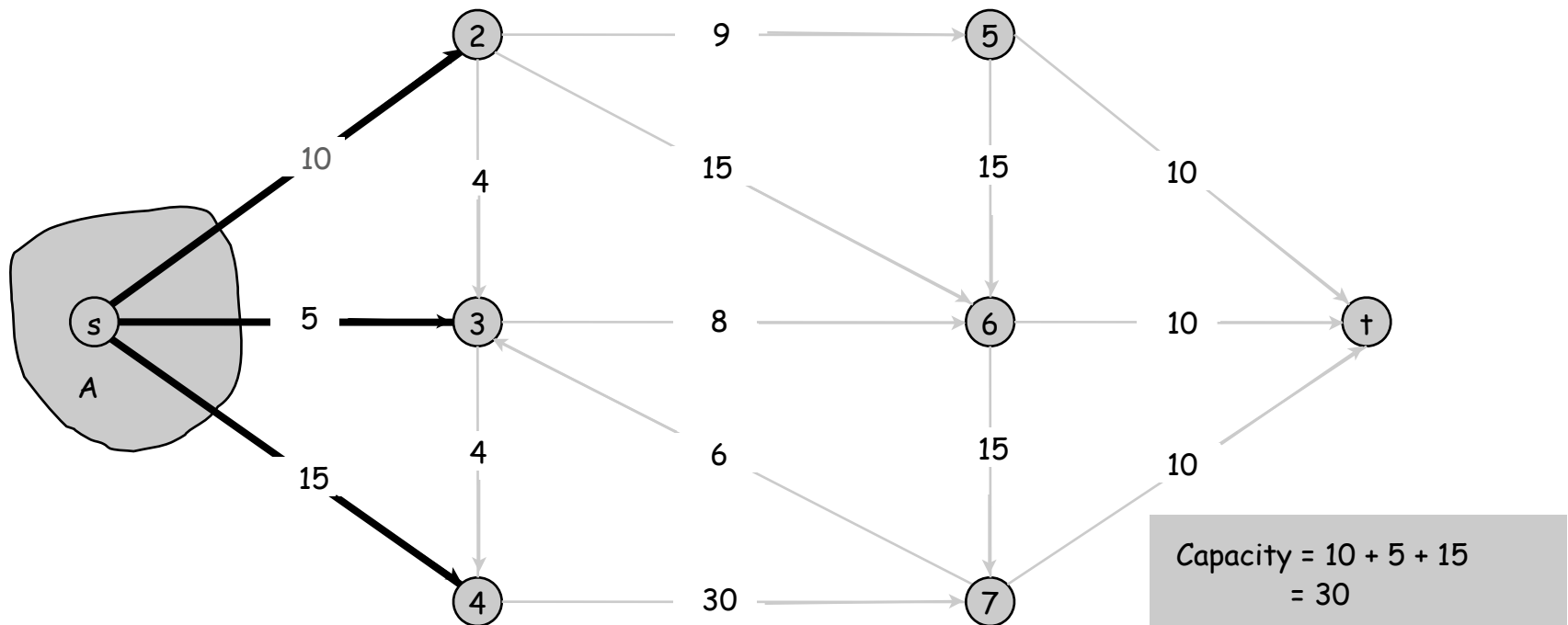
- Abstraction for material **flowing** through the edges.
- $G = (V, E)$  = directed graph, no parallel edges.
- Two distinguished nodes:  $s$  = source,  $t$  = sink.
- $c(e)$  = capacity of edge  $e$ .



# Cuts

Def. An **s-t cut** is a partition  $(A, B)$  of  $V$  with  $s \in A$  and  $t \in B$ .

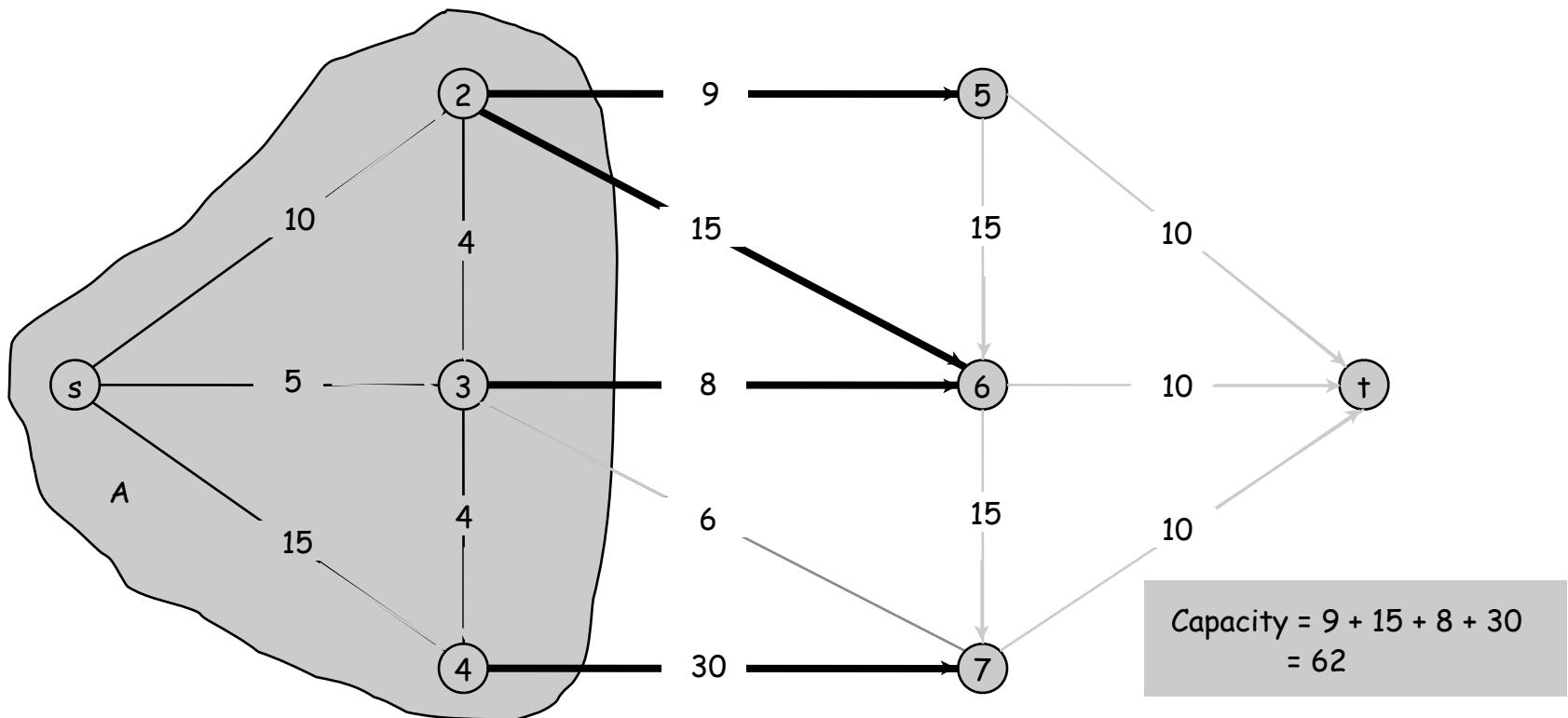
Def. The **capacity** of a cut  $(A, B)$  is:  $cap(A, B) = \sum_{e \text{ out of } A} c(e)$



# Cuts

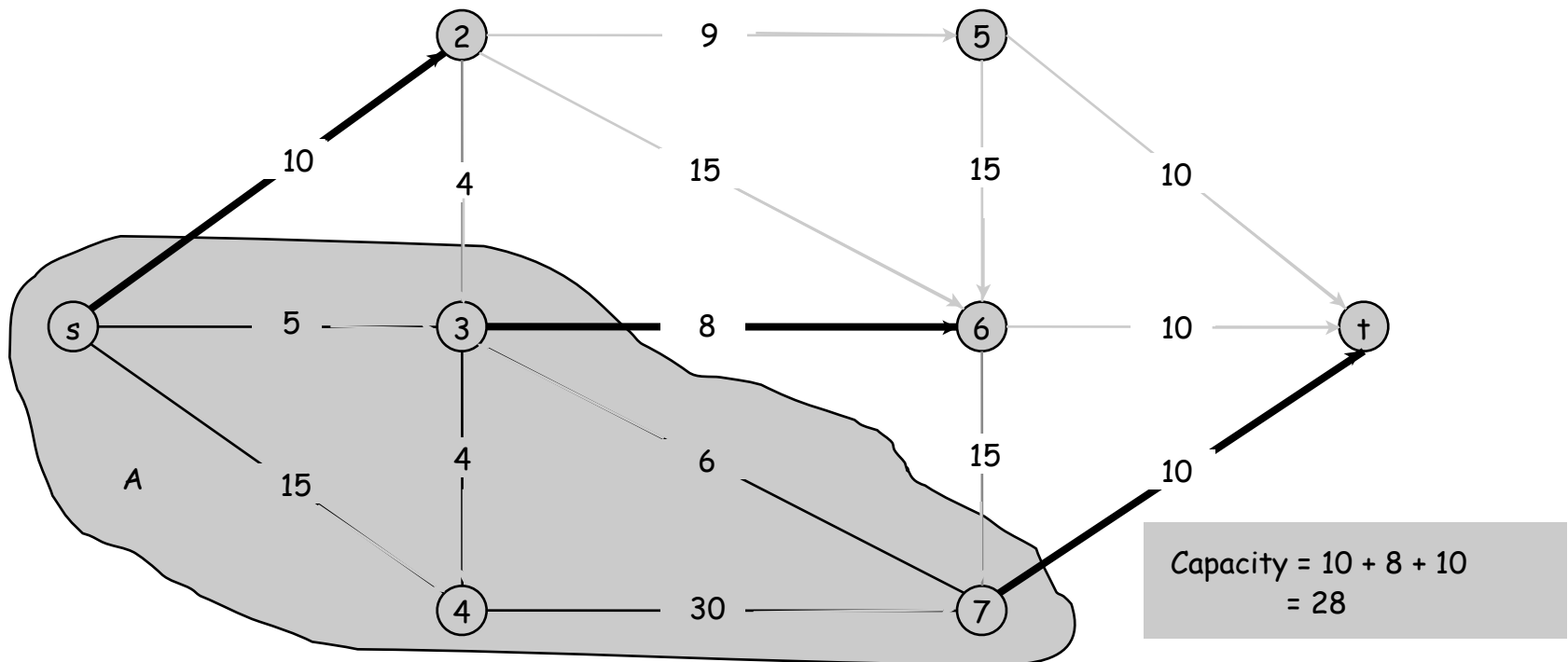
Def. An **s-t cut** is a partition  $(A, B)$  of  $V$  with  $s \in A$  and  $t \in B$ .

Def. The **capacity** of a cut  $(A, B)$  is:  $cap(A, B) = \sum_{e \text{ out of } A} c(e)$



# Minimum Cut Problem

Min s-t cut problem. Find an s-t cut of minimum capacity.

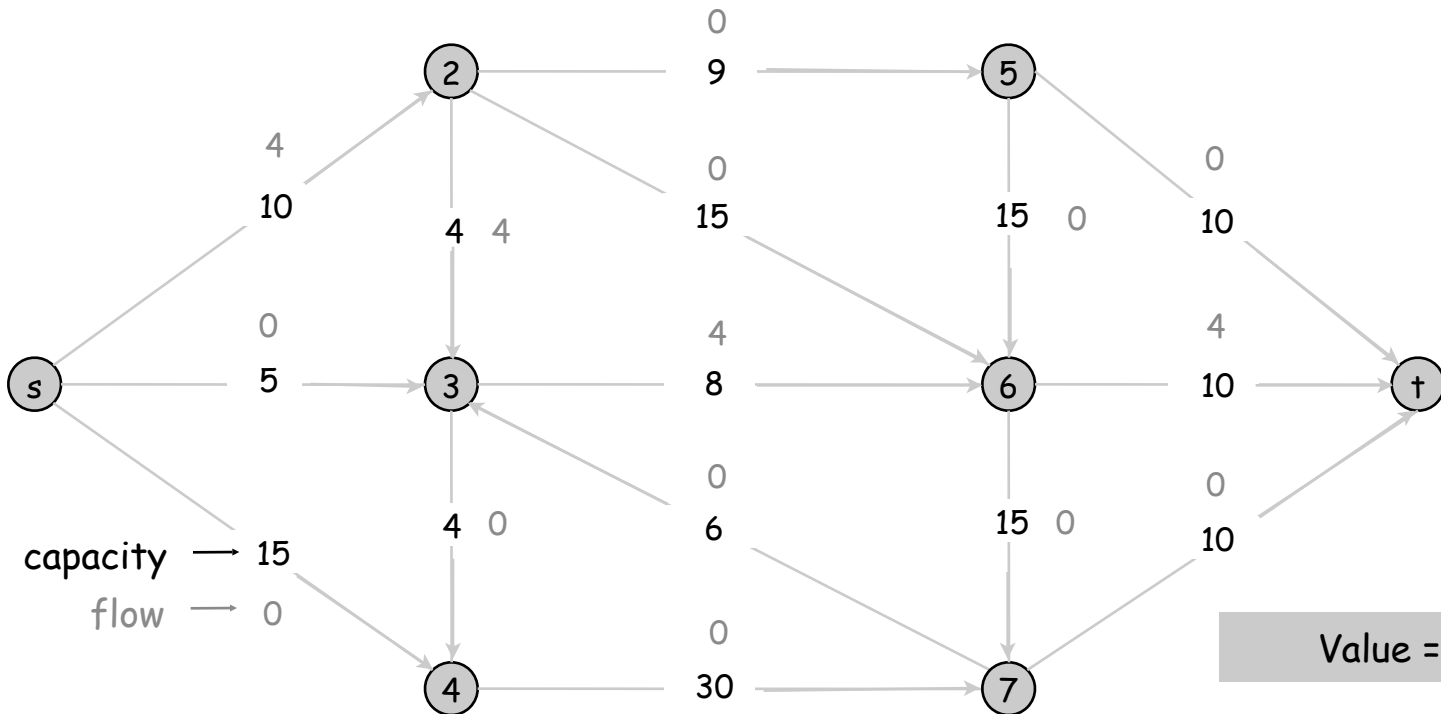


# Flows

**Def.** An **s-t flow** is a function that satisfies:

- For each  $e \in E$ :  $0 \leq f(e) \leq c(e)$  (capacity)
- For each  $v \in V - \{s, t\}$ :  $\sum_{e \text{ in to } v} f(e) = \sum_{e \text{ out of } v} f(e)$  (conservation)

**Def.** The **value** of a flow  $f$  is:  $v(f) = \sum_{e \text{ out of } s} f(e)$ .



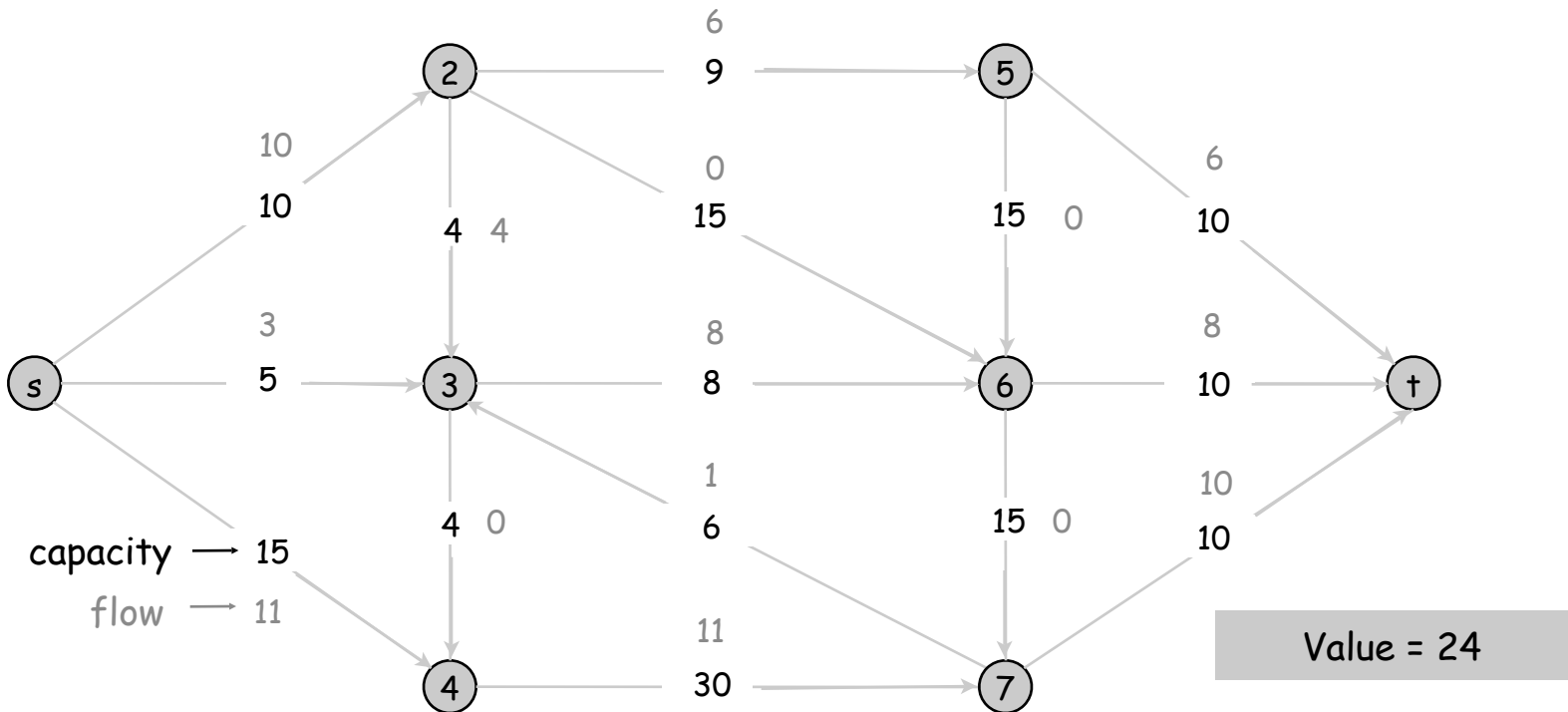


# Flows

Def. An **s-t flow** is a function that satisfies:

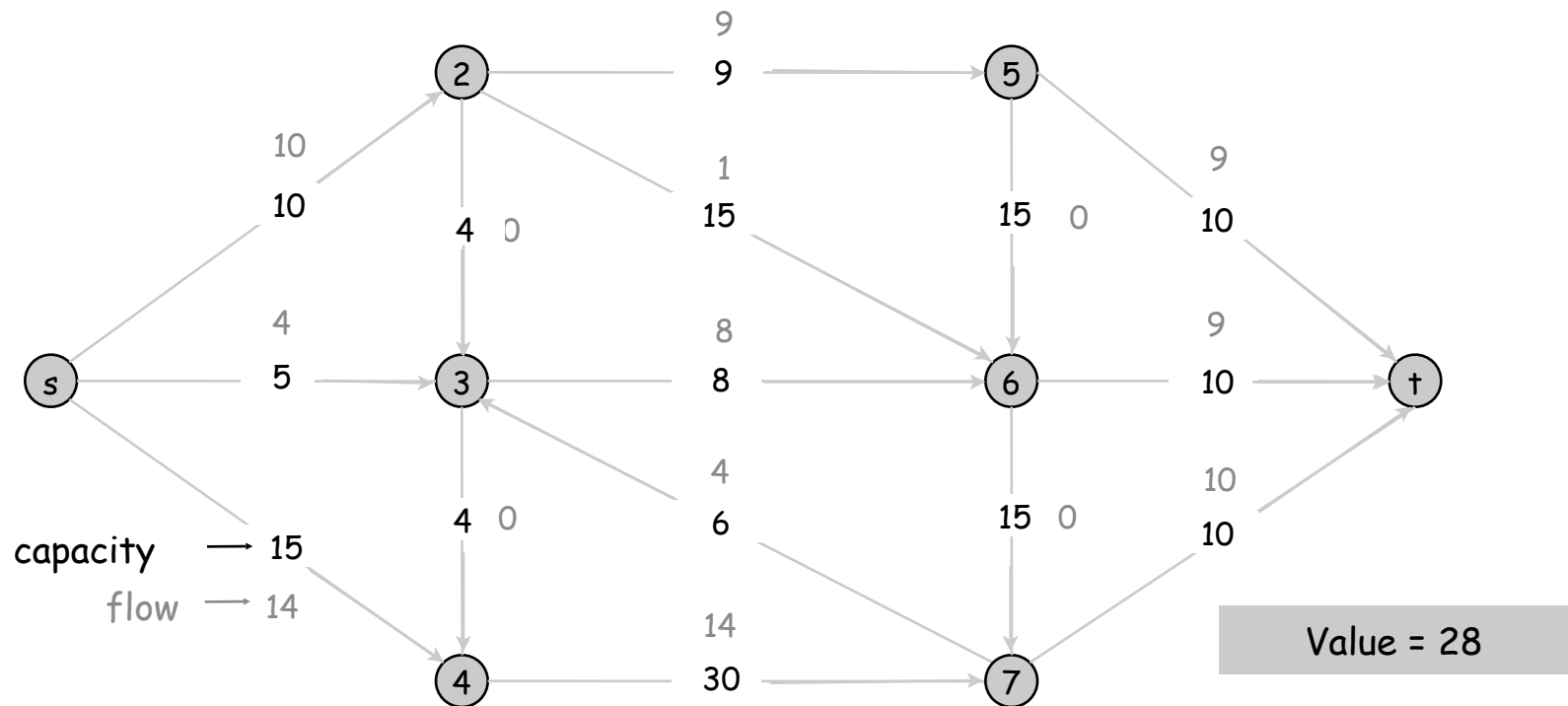
- For each  $e \in E$ :  $0 \leq f(e) \leq c(e)$  (capacity)
- For each  $v \in V - \{s, t\}$ :  $\sum_{e \text{ in to } v} f(e) = \sum_{e \text{ out of } v} f(e)$  (conservation)

Def. The **value** of a flow  $f$  is:  $v(f) = \sum_{e \text{ out of } s} f(e)$ .



# Maximum Flow Problem

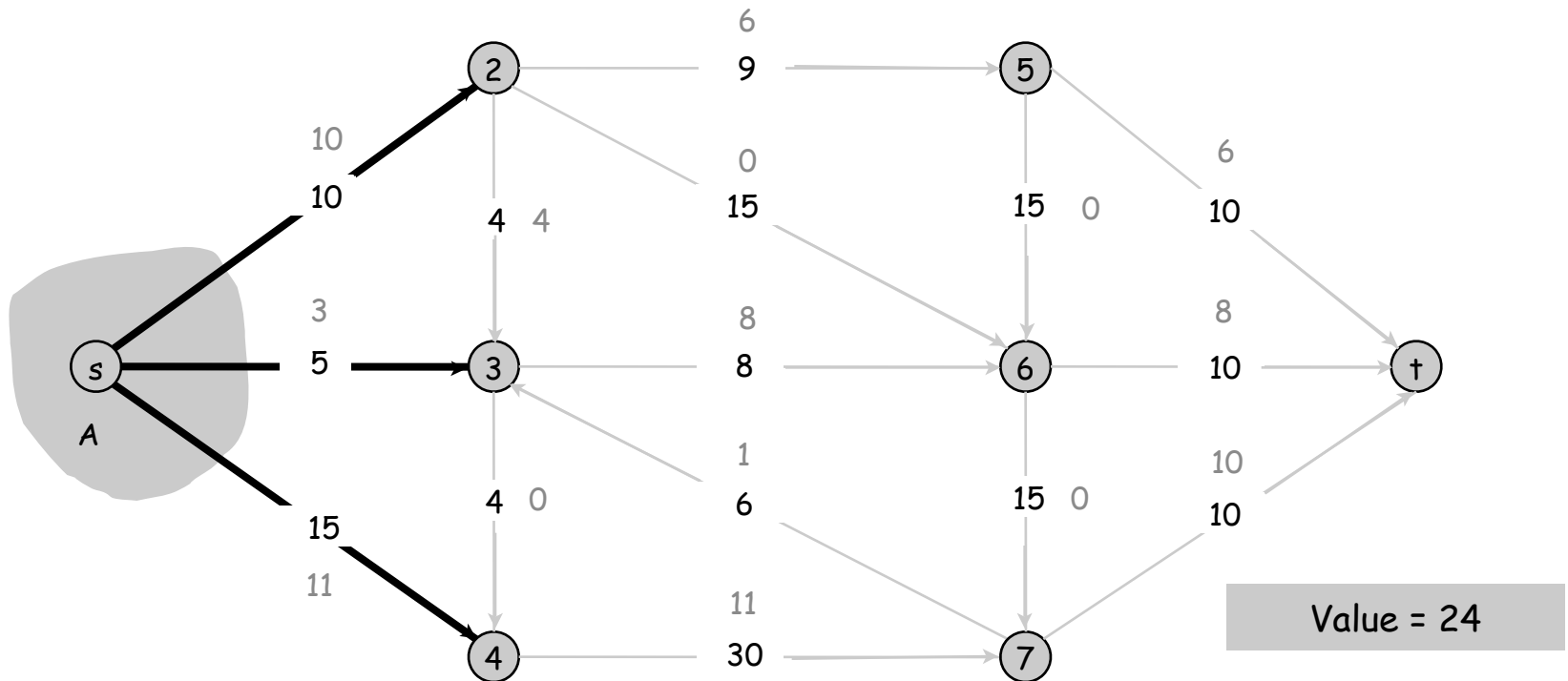
Max flow problem. Find s-t flow of maximum value.



# Flows and Cuts

**Flow value lemma.** Let  $f$  be any flow, and let  $(A, B)$  be any  $s$ - $t$  cut. Then, the net flow sent across the cut is equal to the amount leaving  $s$ .

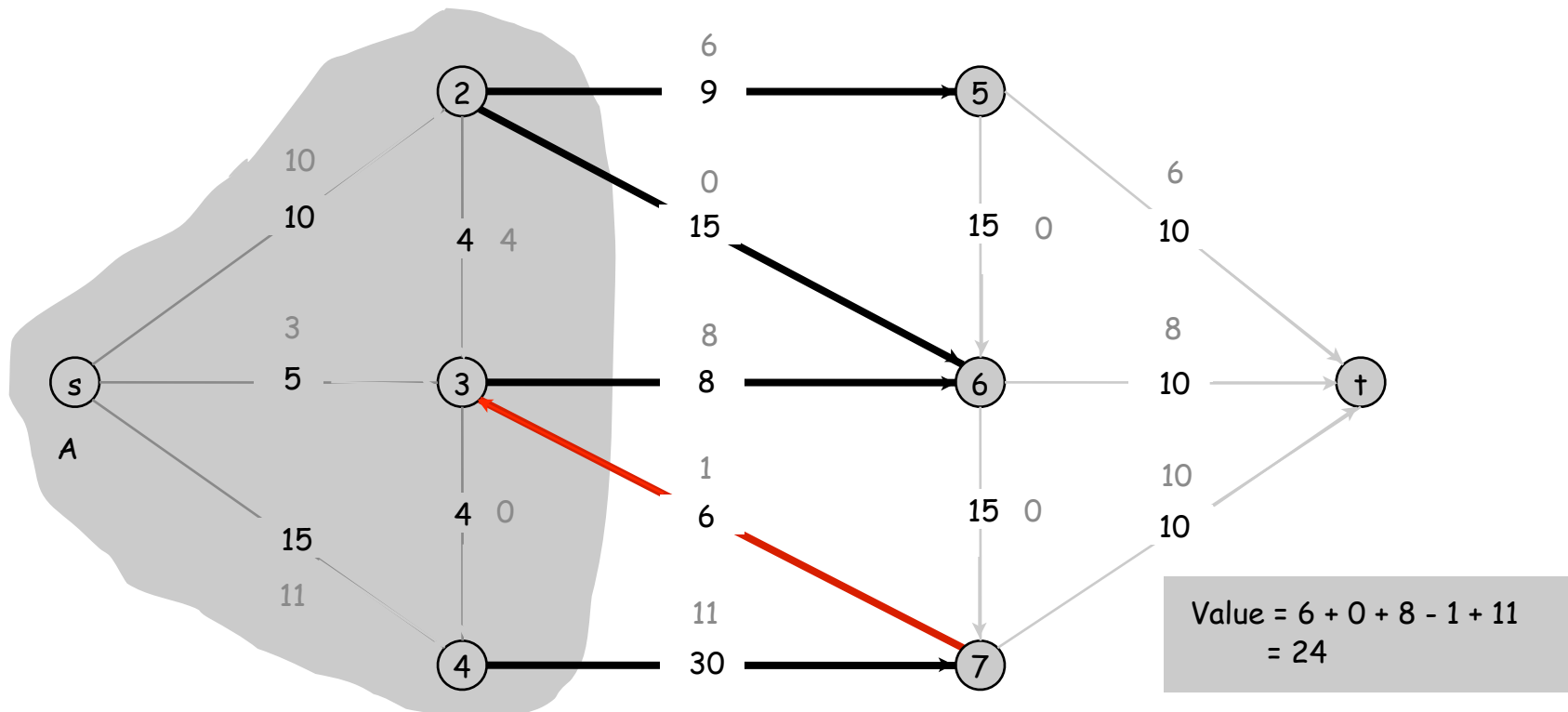
$$\sum_{e \text{ out of } A} f(e) - \sum_{e \text{ in to } A} f(e) = v(f)$$



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**Flow value lemma.** Let  $f$  be any flow, and let  $(A, B)$  be any  $s$ - $t$  cut. Then, the net flow sent across the cut is equal to the amount leaving  $s$ .

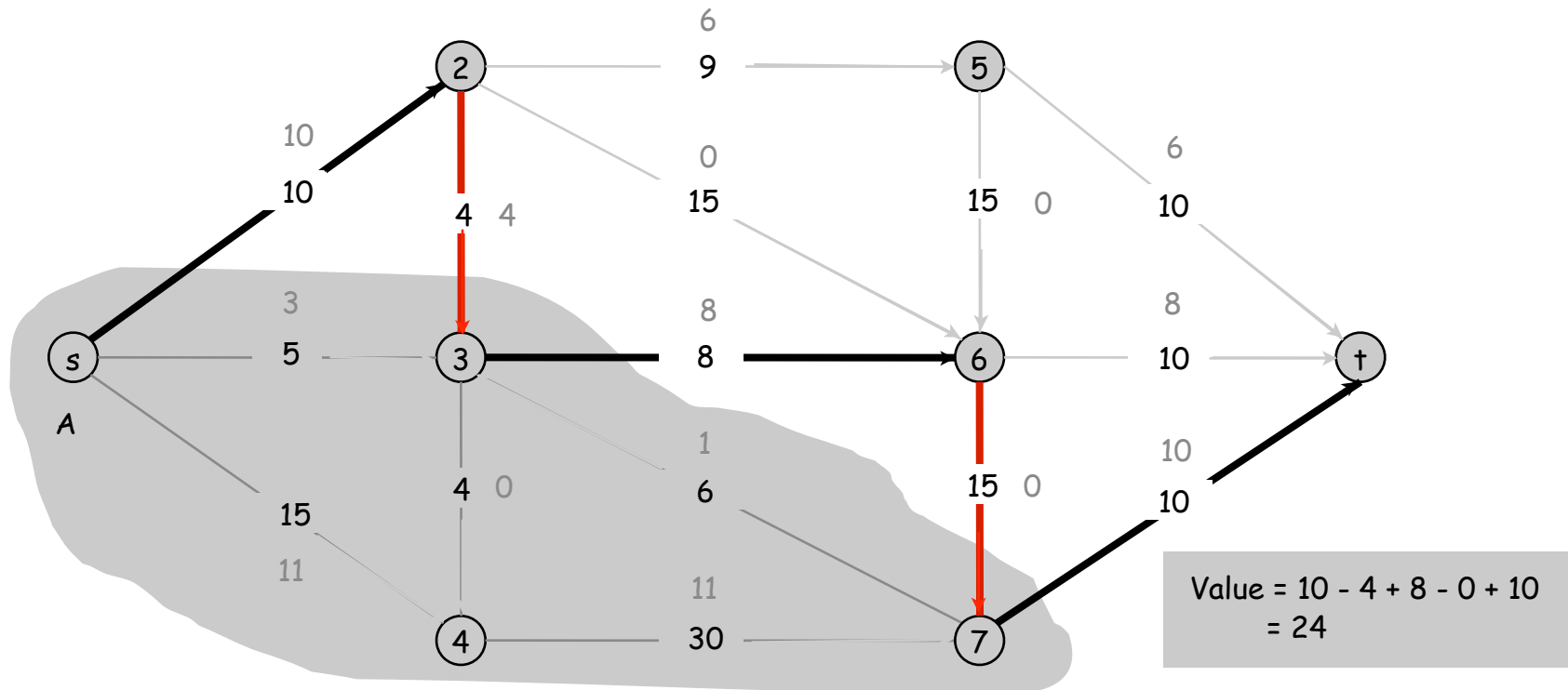
$$\sum_{e \text{ out of } A} f(e) - \sum_{e \text{ in to } A} f(e) = v(f)$$



# Flows and Cuts

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# Flows and Cuts

**Flow value lemma.** Let  $f$  be any flow, and let  $(A, B)$  be any  $s$ - $t$  cut. Then

$$\sum_{e \text{ out of } A} f(e) - \sum_{e \text{ in to } A} f(e) = v(f).$$

**Pf.**

$$v(f) = \sum_{e \text{ out of } s} f(e)$$

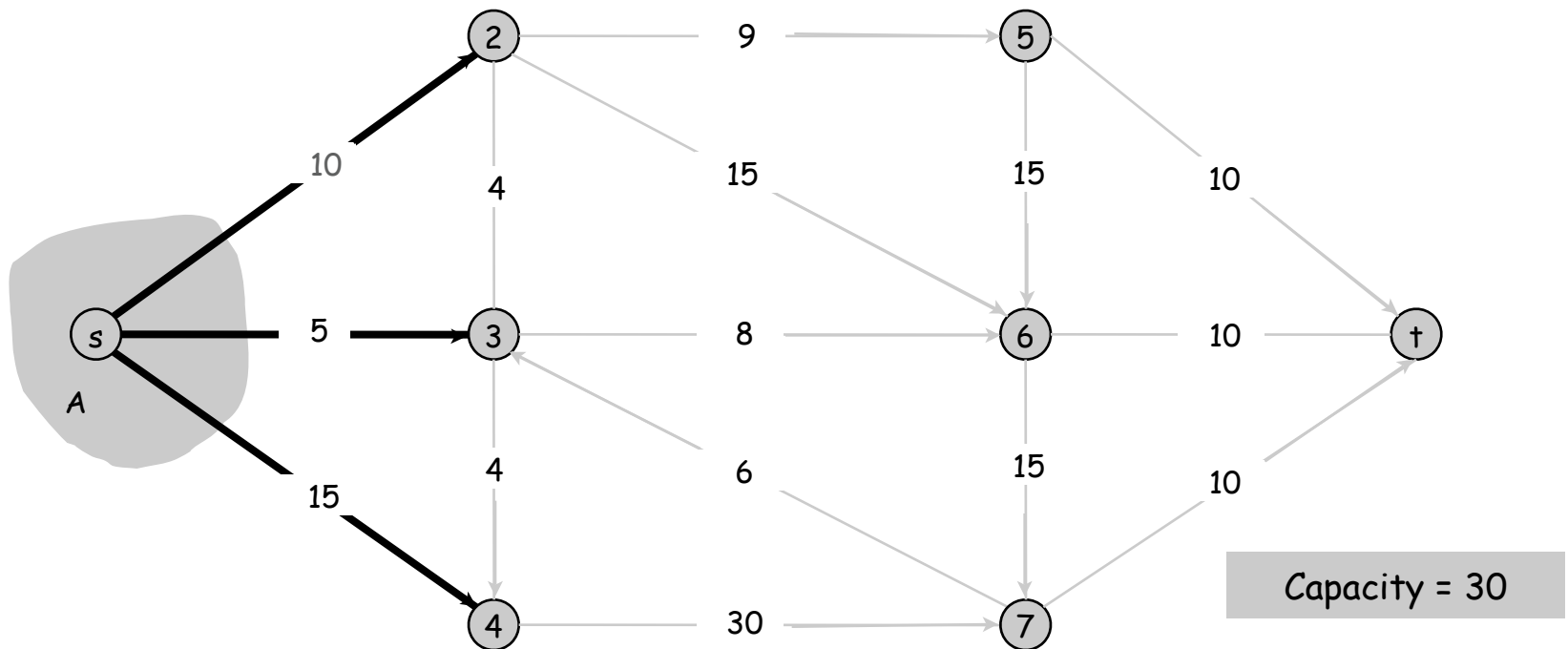
$$\begin{array}{l} \text{by flow conservation, all terms} \\ \text{except } v = s \text{ are } 0 \end{array} \longrightarrow = \sum_{v \in A} \left( \sum_{e \text{ out of } v} f(e) - \sum_{e \text{ in to } v} f(e) \right)$$

$$= \sum_{e \text{ out of } A} f(e) - \sum_{e \text{ in to } A} f(e).$$

# Flows and Cuts

**Weak duality.** Let  $f$  be any flow, and let  $(A, B)$  be any  $s$ - $t$  cut. Then the value of the flow is at most the capacity of the cut.

Cut capacity = 30  $\Rightarrow$  Flow value  $\leq$  30

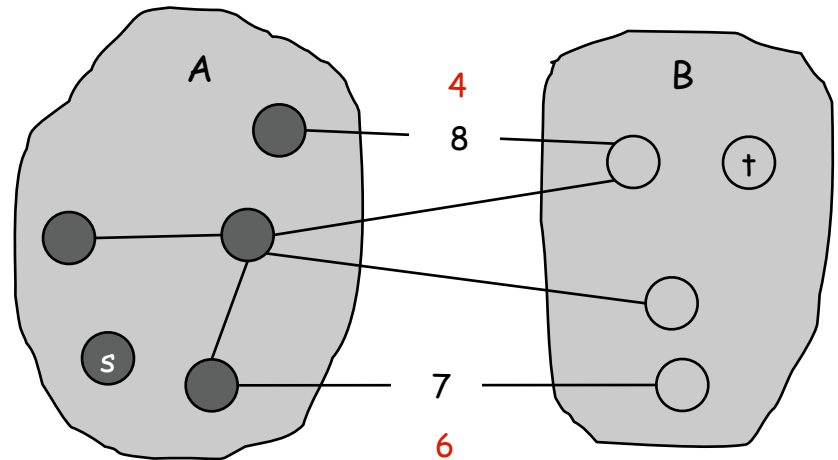


# Flows and Cuts

**Weak duality.** Let  $f$  be any flow. Then, for **any**  $s$ - $t$  cut  $(A, B)$  we have  $v(f) \leq \text{cap}(A, B)$ .

**Pf.**

$$\begin{aligned} v(f) &= \sum_{e \text{ out of } A} f(e) - \sum_{e \text{ in to } A} f(e) \\ &\leq \sum_{e \text{ out of } A} f(e) \\ &\leq \sum_{e \text{ out of } A} c(e) \\ &= \text{cap}(A, B) \quad \blacksquare \end{aligned}$$



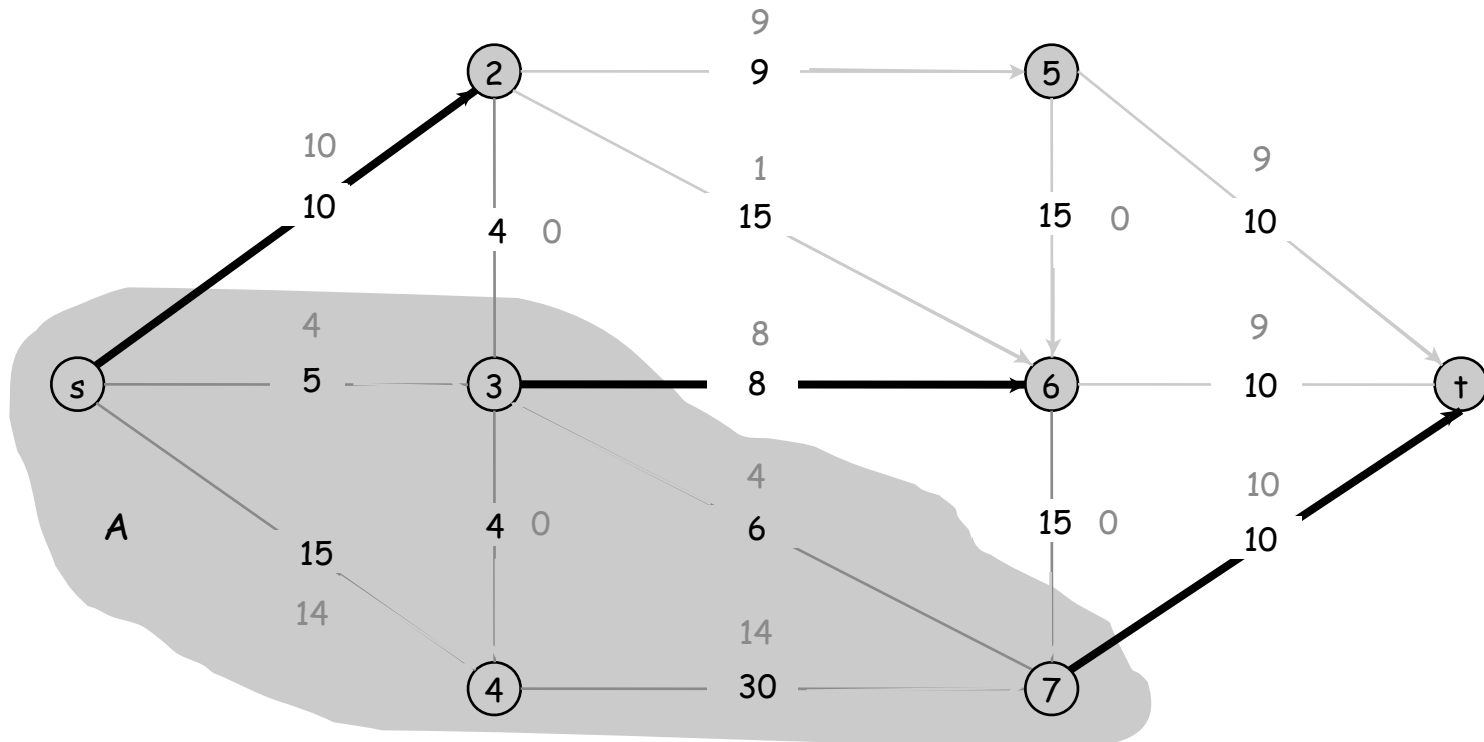


# Certificate of Optimality

**Corollary.** Let  $f$  be any flow, and let  $(A, B)$  be any cut. If  $v(f) = \text{cap}(A, B)$ , then  $f$  is a max flow and  $(A, B)$  is a min cut.

Value of flow = 28

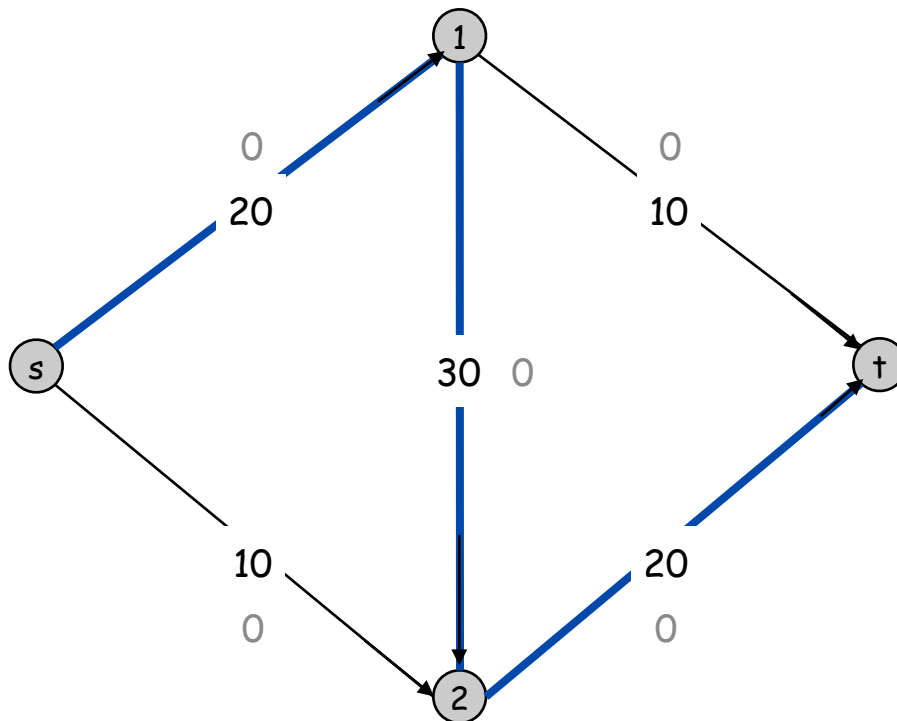
Cut capacity = 28  $\Rightarrow$  Flow value  $\leq 28$



# Towards a Max Flow Algorithm

## Greedy algorithm.

- Start with  $f(e) = 0$  for all edges  $e \in E$ .
- Find an s-t path  $P$  where each edge has  $f(e) < c(e)$ .
- Augment flow along path  $P$ .
- Repeat until you get stuck.

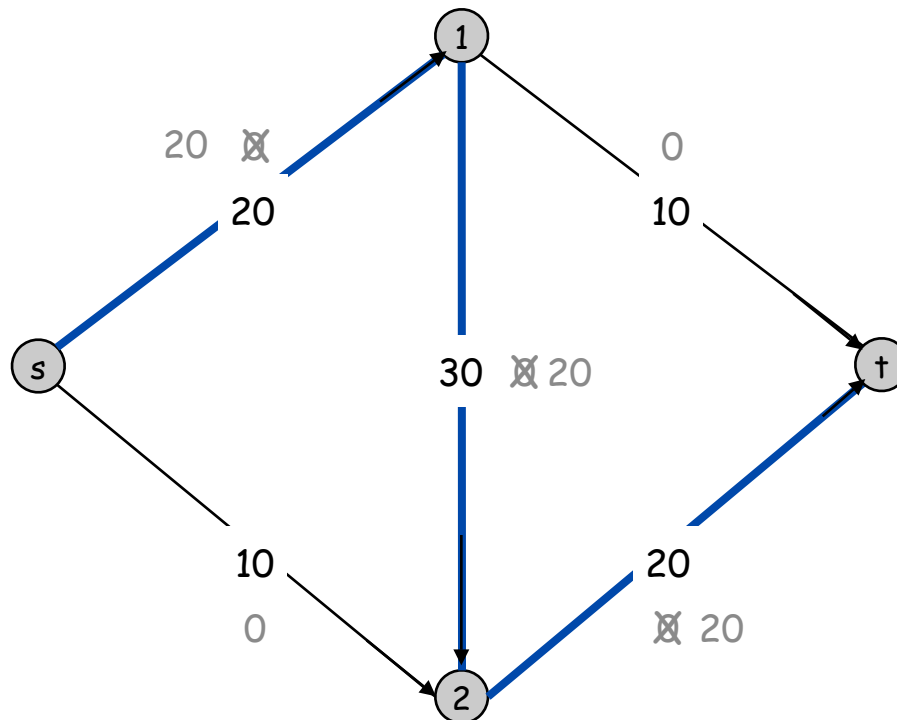


Flow value = 0

# Towards a Max Flow Algorithm

## Greedy algorithm.

- Start with  $f(e) = 0$  for all edge  $e \in E$ .
- Find an s-t path  $P$  where each edge has  $f(e) < c(e)$ .
- Augment flow along path  $P$ .
- Repeat until you get stuck.

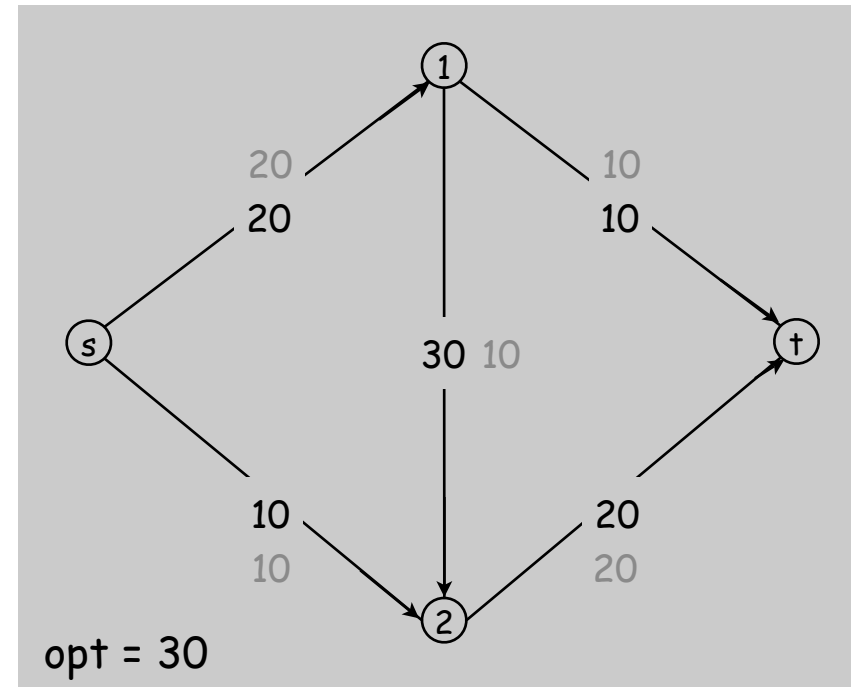
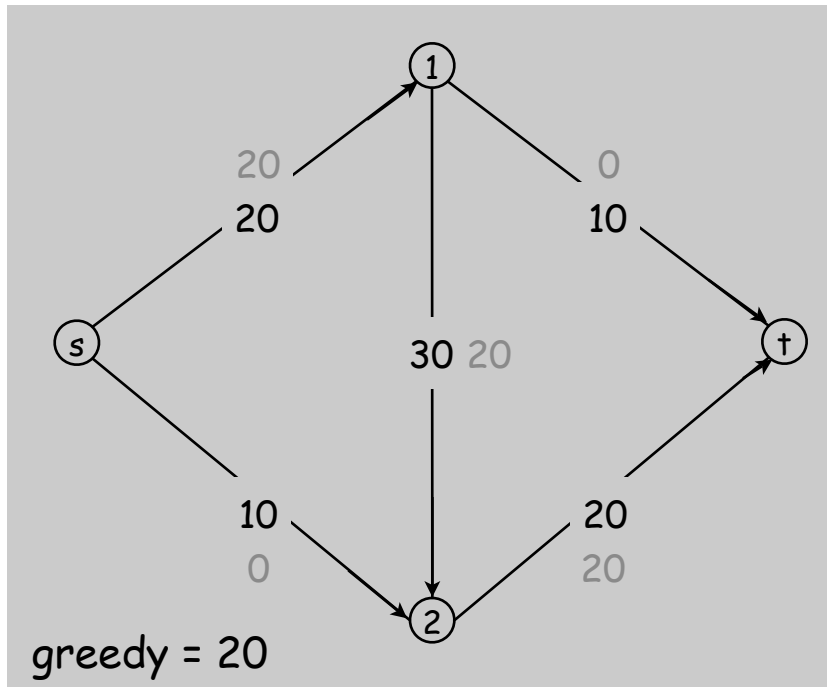


Flow value = 20

# Towards a Max Flow Algorithm

## Greedy algorithm.

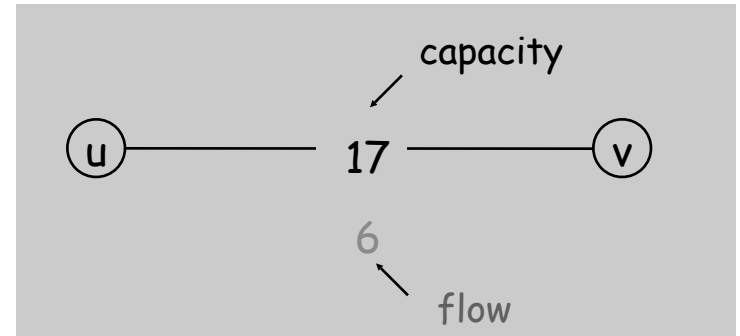
- Start with  $f(e) = 0$  for all edge  $e \in E$ .
  - Find an s-t path  $P$  where each edge has  $f(e) < c(e)$ .
  - Augment flow along path  $P$ .
  - Repeat until you get **stuck**.
- ↙ locally optimality  $\nRightarrow$  global optimality



# Residual Graph

Original edge:  $e = (u, v) \in E$ .

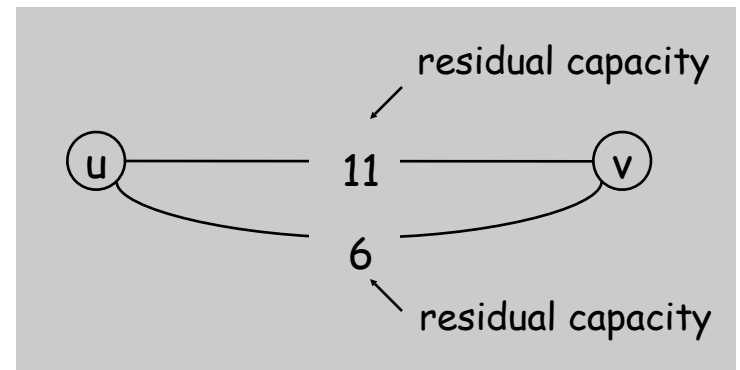
- Flow  $f(e)$ , capacity  $c(e)$ .



Residual edge.

- "Undo" flow sent.
- $e = (u, v)$  and  $e^R = (v, u)$ .
- Residual capacity:

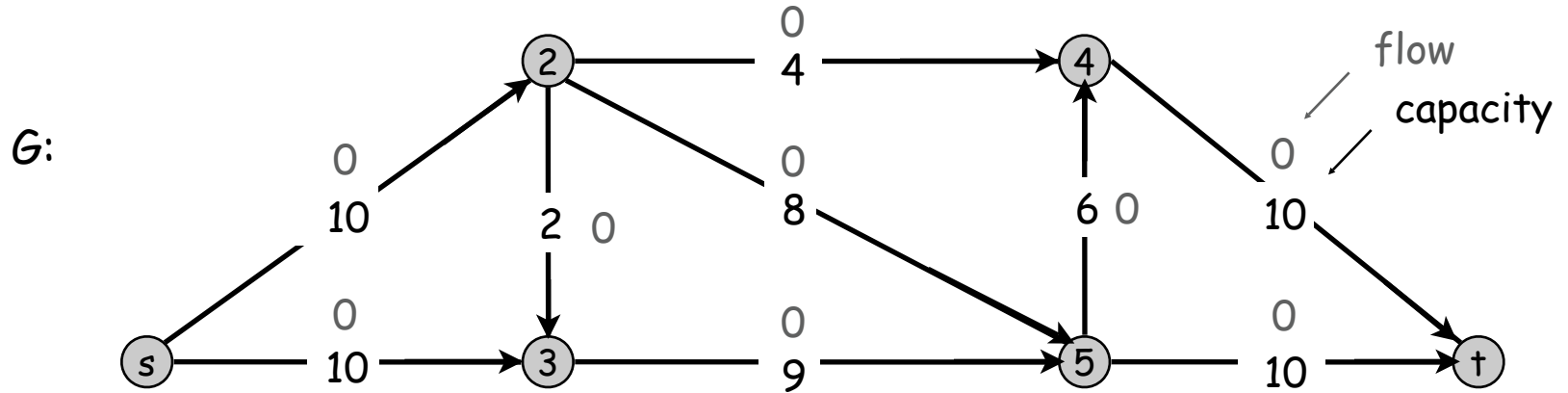
$$c_f(e) = \begin{cases} c(e) - f(e) & \text{if } e \in E \\ f(e) & \text{if } e^R \in E \end{cases}$$



Residual graph:  $G_f = (V, E_f)$ .

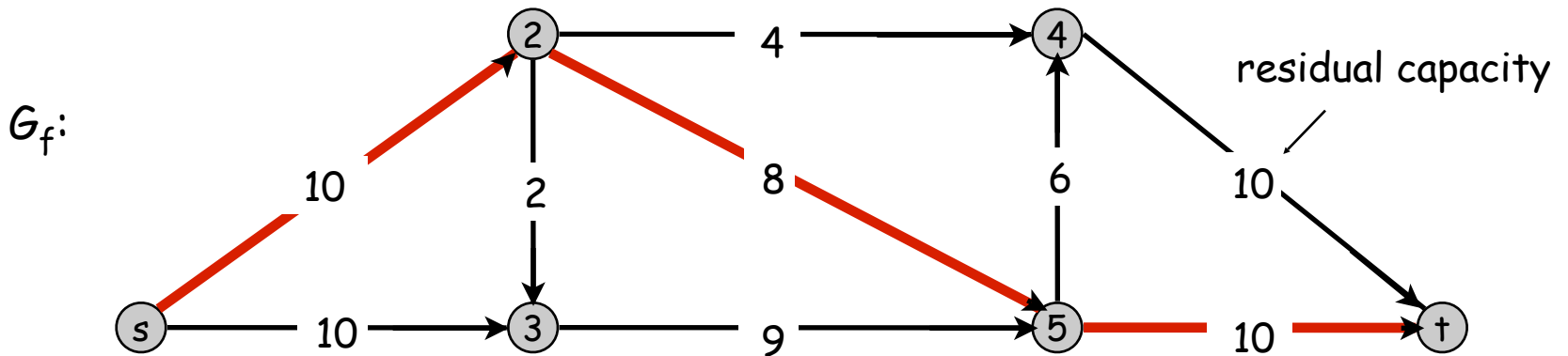
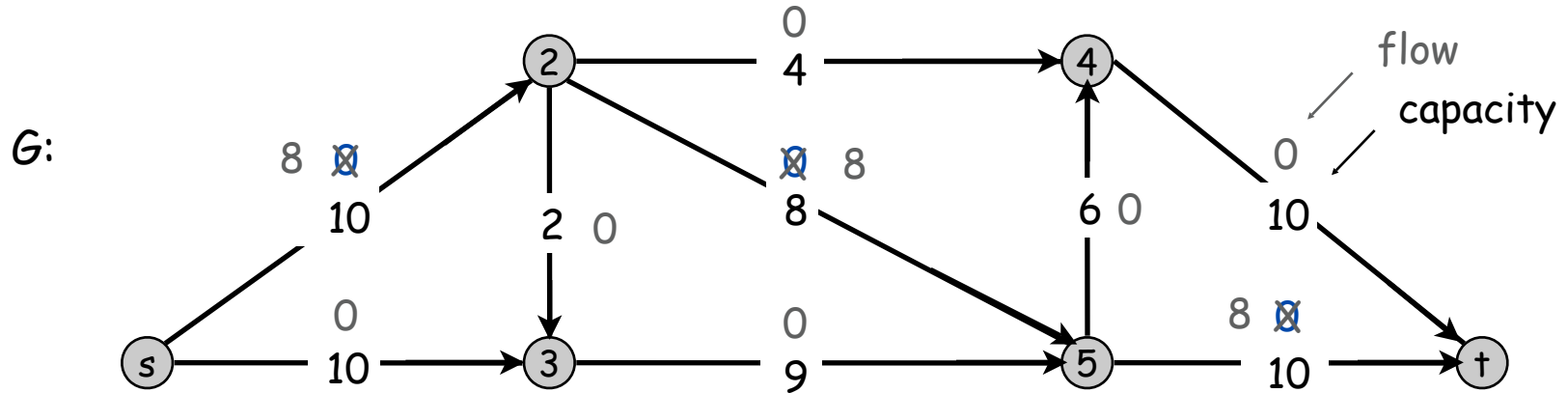
- Residual edges with positive residual capacity.
- $E_f = \{e : f(e) < c(e)\} \cup \{e^R : c(e) > 0\}$ .

# Ford-Fulkerson Algorithm

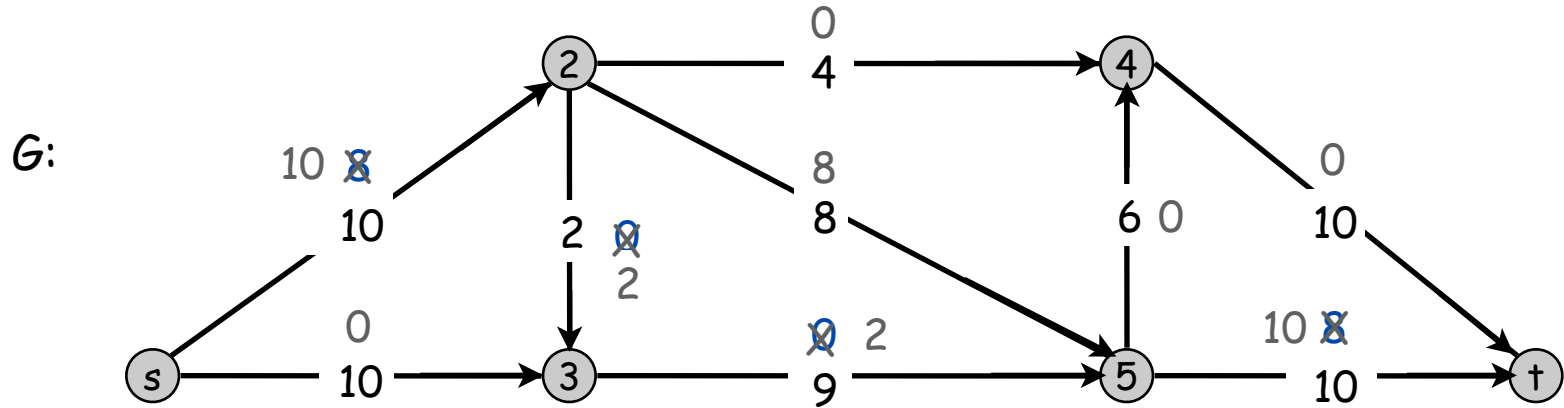


Flow value = 0

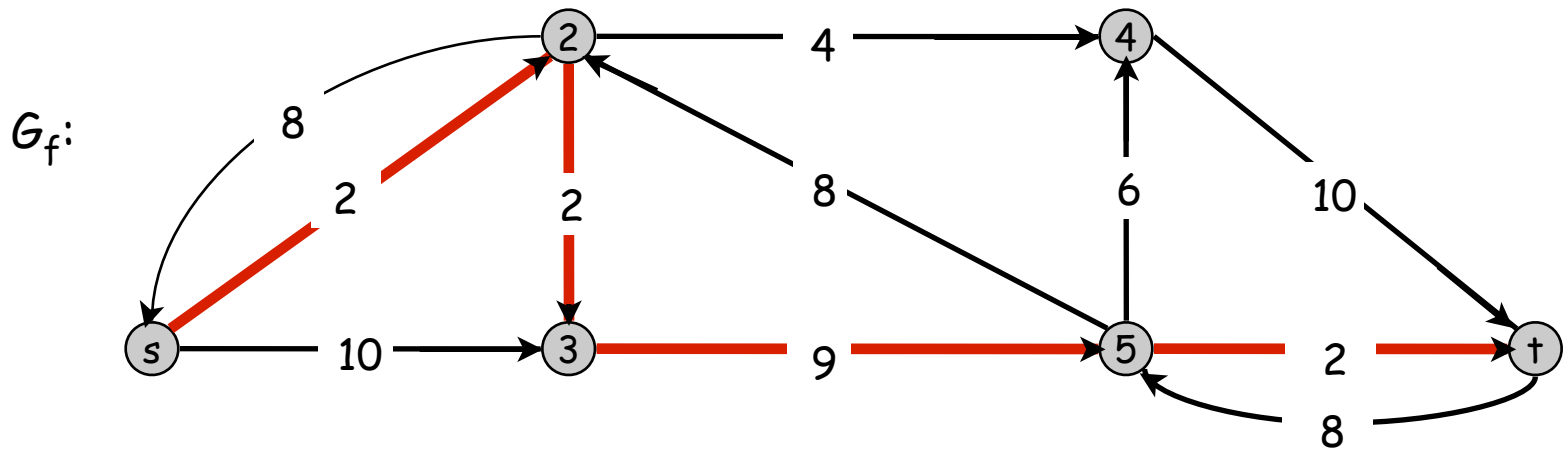
# Ford-Fulkerson Algorithm



# Ford-Fulkerson Algorithm

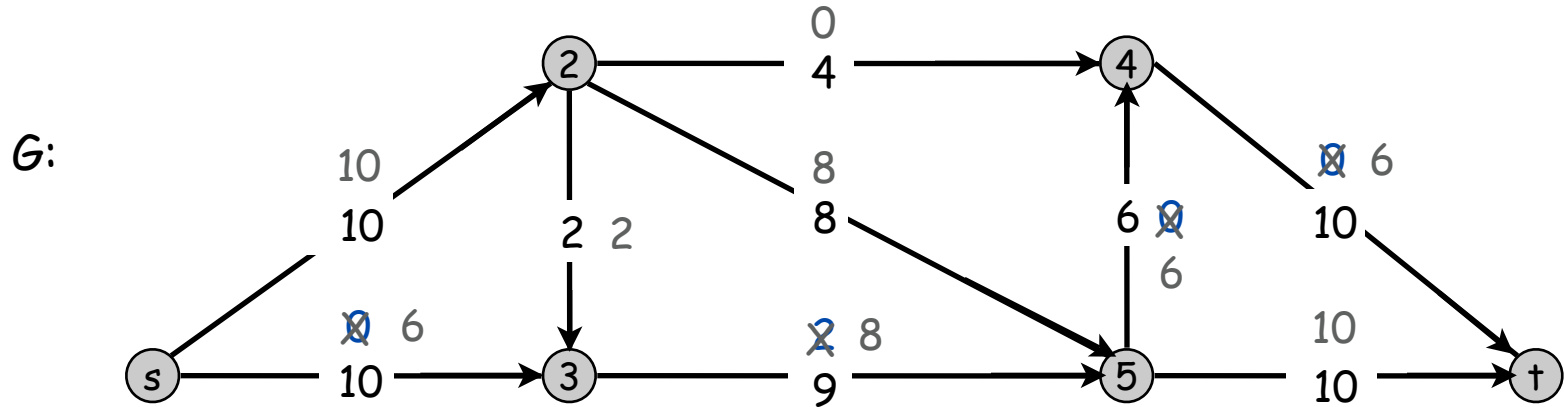


Flow value = 8

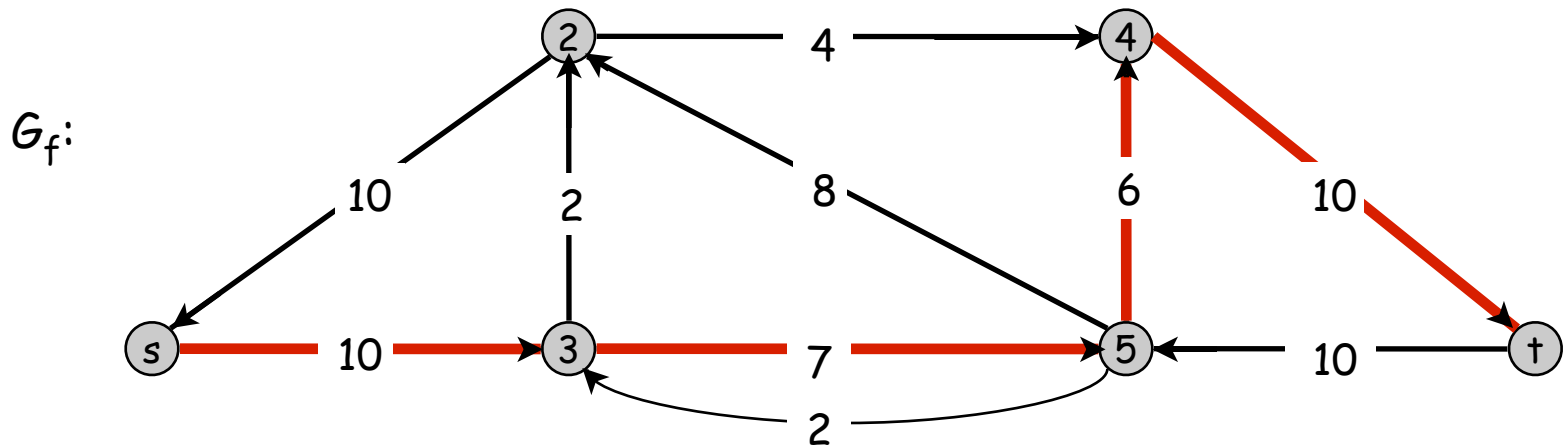




# Ford-Fulkerson Algorithm

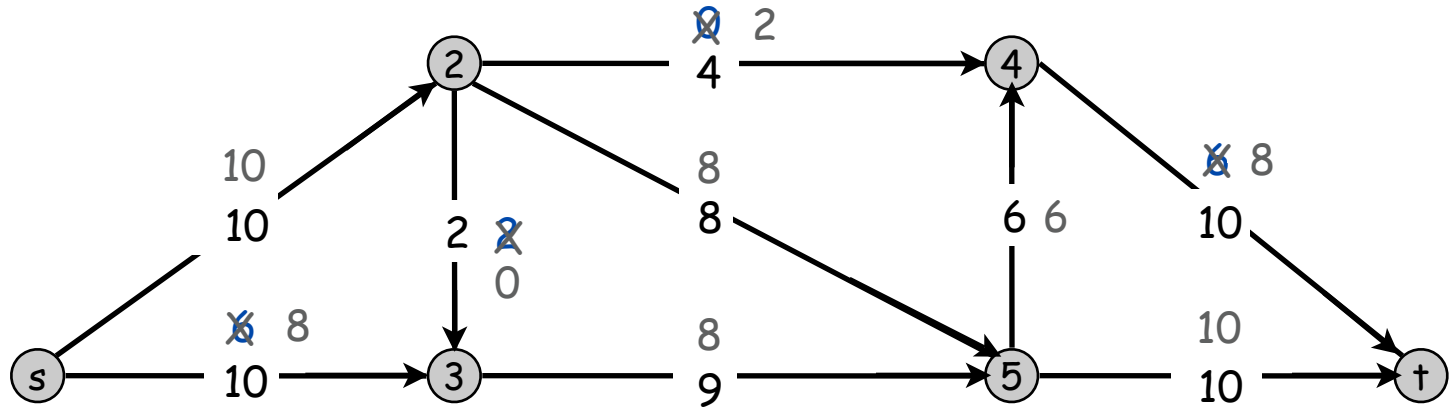


Flow value = 10



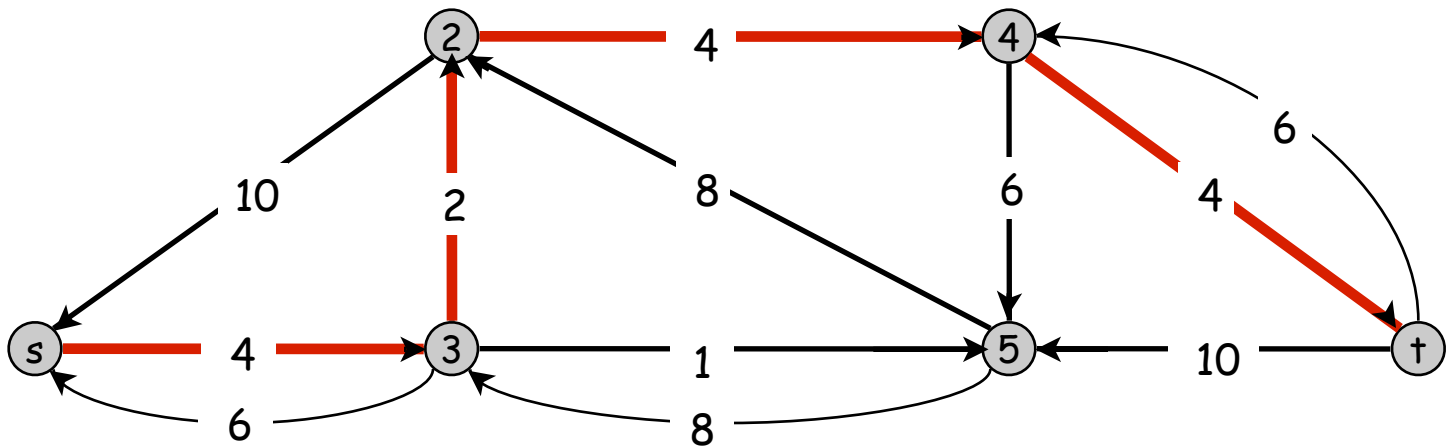
# Ford-Fulkerson Algorithm

$G$ :



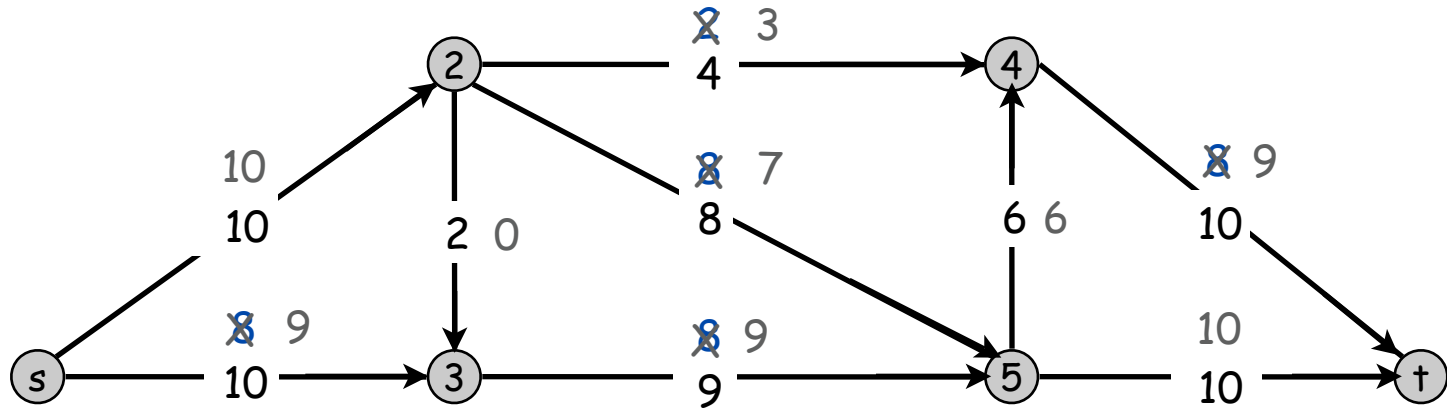
Flow value = 16

$G_f$ :



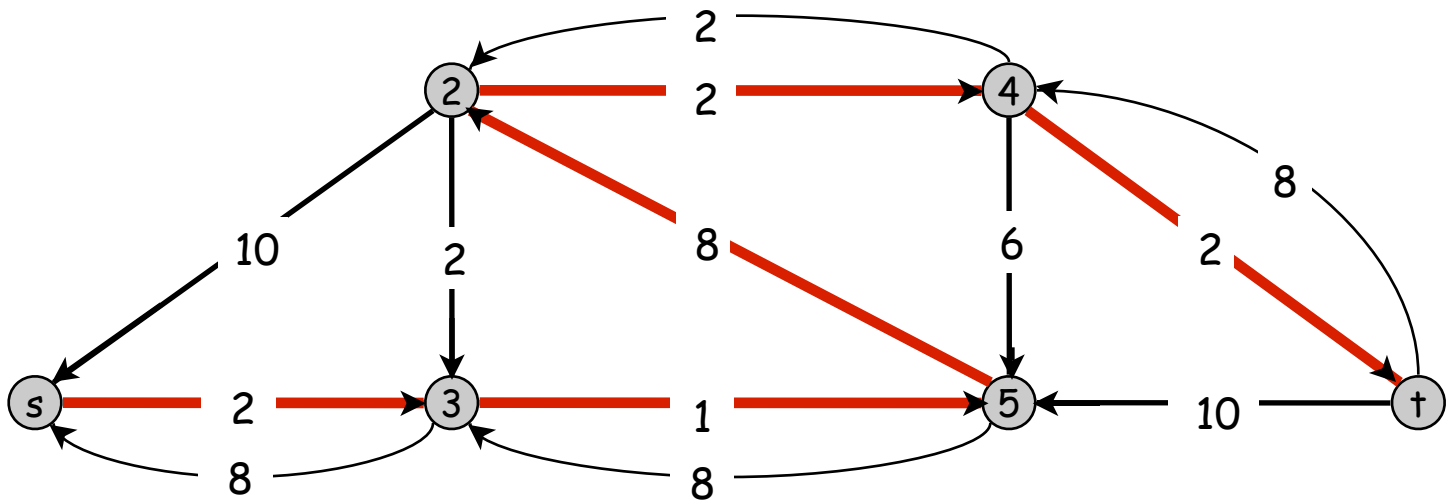
# Ford-Fulkerson Algorithm

$G$ :



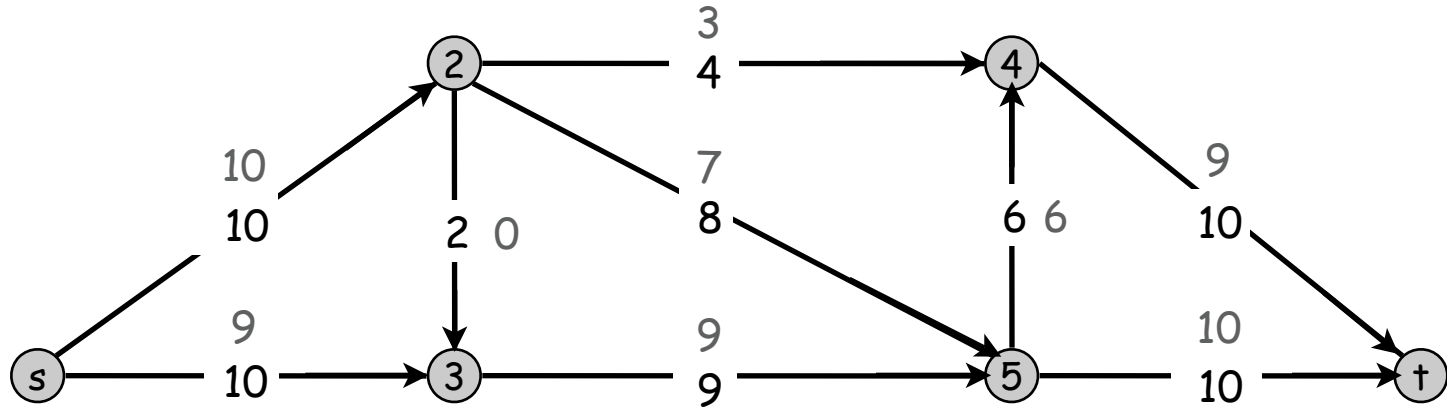
Flow value = 18

$G_f$ :



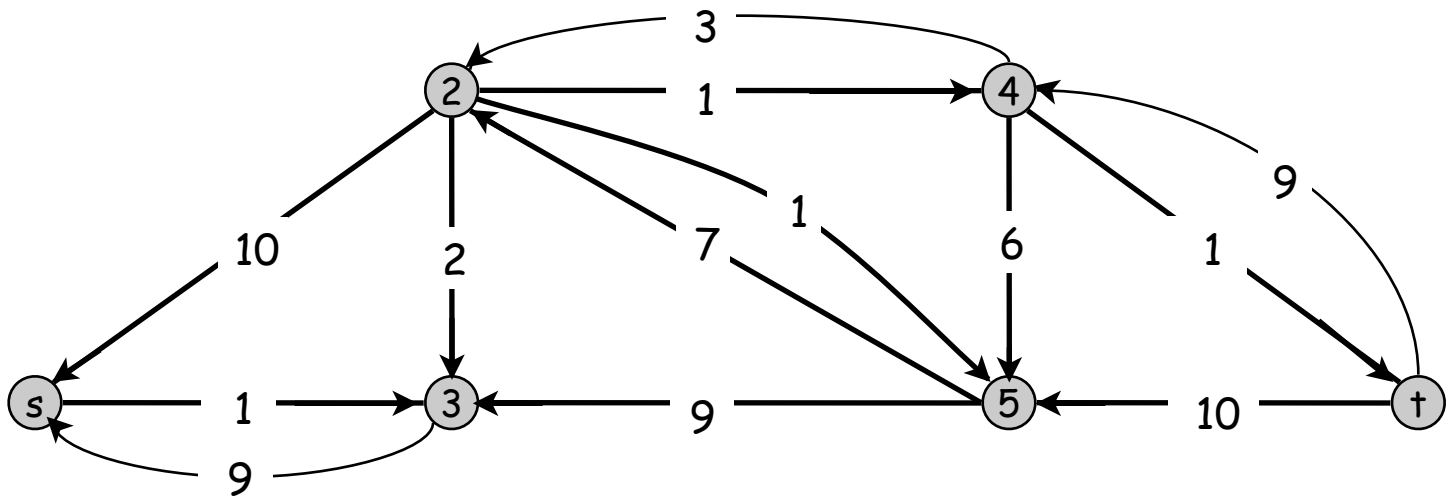
# Ford-Fulkerson Algorithm

$G$ :

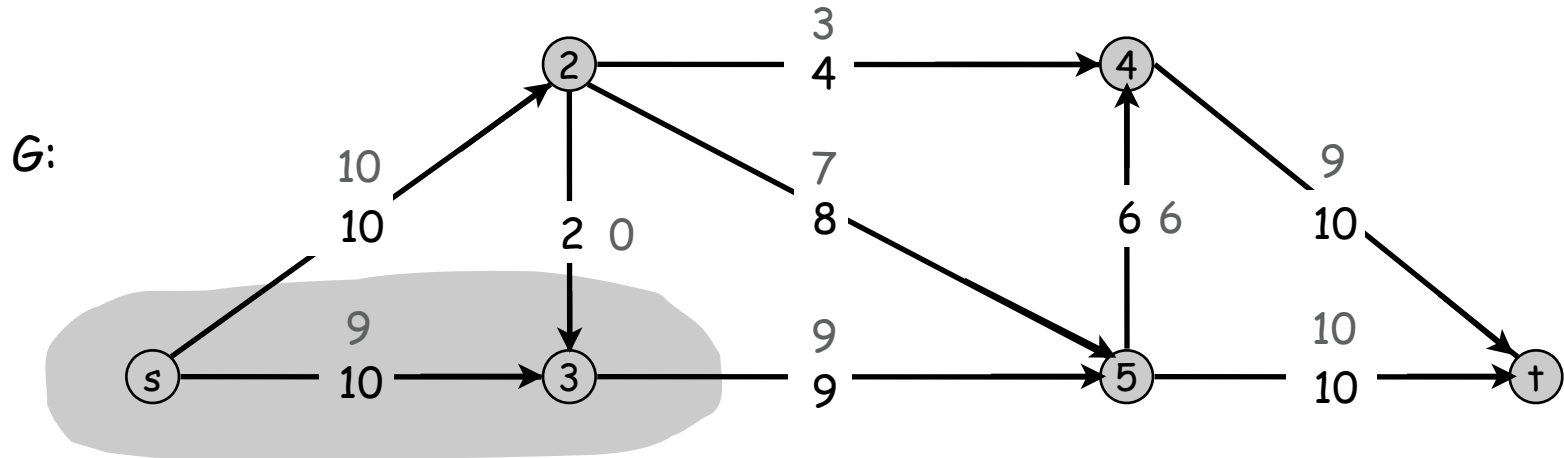


Flow value = 19

$G_f$ :

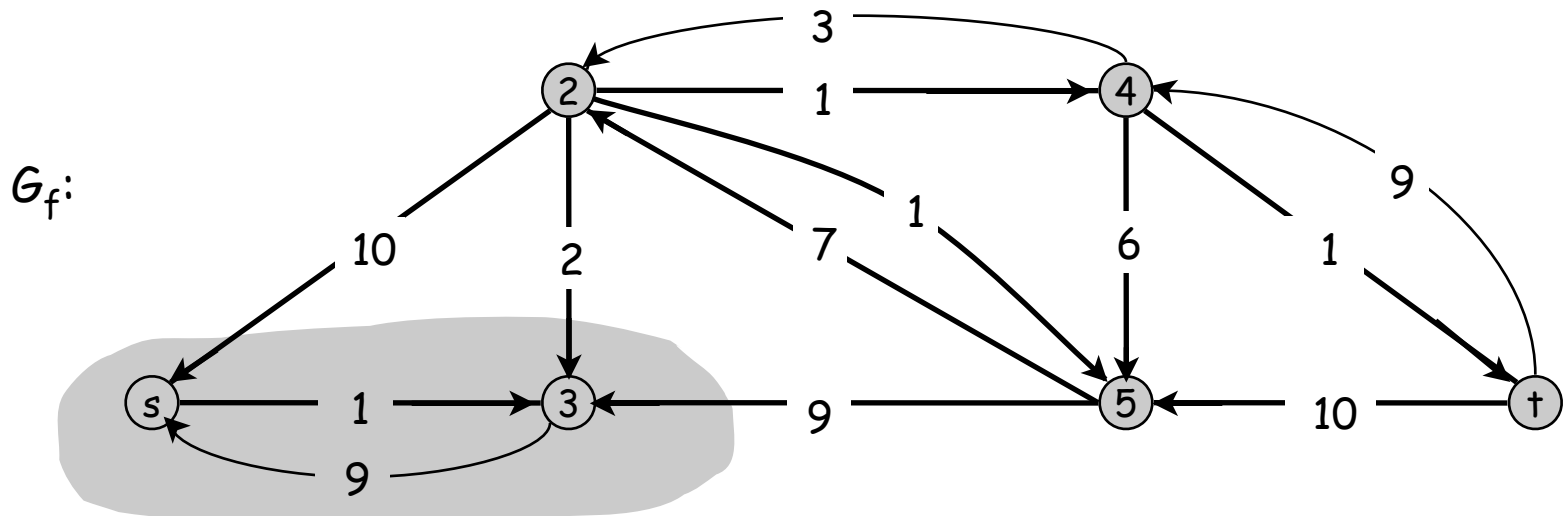


# Ford-Fulkerson Algorithm



Cut capacity = 19

Flow value = 19



# Augmenting Path Algorithm

```
Augment(f, c, P) {  
    b ← bottleneck(P)  
    foreach e ∈ P {  
        if (e ∈ E) f(e) ← f(e) + b  
        else      f(eR) ← f(e) - b  
    }  
    return f  
}
```

forward edge  
reverse edge

```
Ford-Fulkerson(G, s, t, c) {  
    foreach e ∈ E f(e) ← 0  
    Gf ← residual graph  
  
    while (there exists augmenting path P) {  
        f ← Augment(f, c, P)  
        update Gf  
    }  
    return f  
}
```

# Max-Flow Min-Cut Theorem

**Augmenting path theorem.** Flow  $f$  is a max flow iff there are no augmenting paths.

**Max-flow min-cut theorem.** [Ford-Fulkerson 1956] The value of the max flow is equal to the value of the min cut.

**Proof strategy.** We prove both simultaneously by showing the TFAE:

- (i) There exists a cut  $(A, B)$  such that  $v(f) = \text{cap}(A, B)$ .
- (ii) Flow  $f$  is a max flow.
- (iii) There is no augmenting path relative to  $f$ .

(i)  $\Rightarrow$  (ii) This was the corollary to weak duality lemma.

(ii)  $\Rightarrow$  (iii) We show contrapositive.

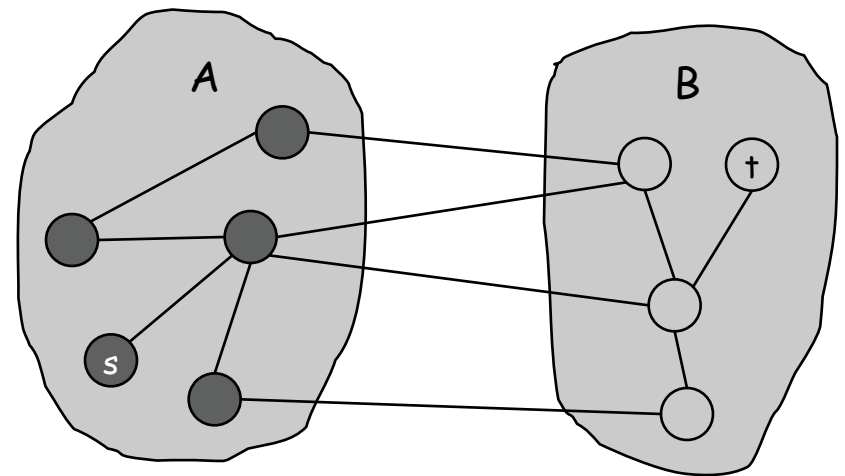
- Let  $f$  be a flow. If there exists an augmenting path, then we can improve  $f$  by sending flow along path.

# Proof of Max-Flow Min-Cut Theorem

(iii)  $\Rightarrow$  (i)

- Let  $f$  be a flow with no augmenting paths.
- Let  $A$  be set of vertices reachable from  $s$  in residual graph.
- By definition of  $A$ ,  $s \in A$ .
- By definition of  $f$ ,  $t \notin A$ .

$$\begin{aligned} v(f) &= \sum_{e \text{ out of } A} f(e) - \sum_{e \text{ in to } A} f(e) \\ &= \sum_{e \text{ out of } A} c(e) \\ &= \text{cap}(A, B) \quad \blacksquare \end{aligned}$$



original network



## Running Time

**Assumption.** All capacities are integers between 1 and  $C$ .

**Invariant.** Every flow value  $f(e)$  and every residual capacities  $c_f(e)$  remains an integer throughout the algorithm.

**Theorem.** The algorithm terminates in at most  $v(f^*) \leq nC$  iterations.

**Pf.** Each augmentation increase value by at least 1. ■

**Corollary.** If  $C = 1$ , Ford-Fulkerson runs in  $O(mn)$  time.

**Integrality theorem.** If all capacities are integers, then there exists a max flow  $f$  for which every flow value  $f(e)$  is an integer.

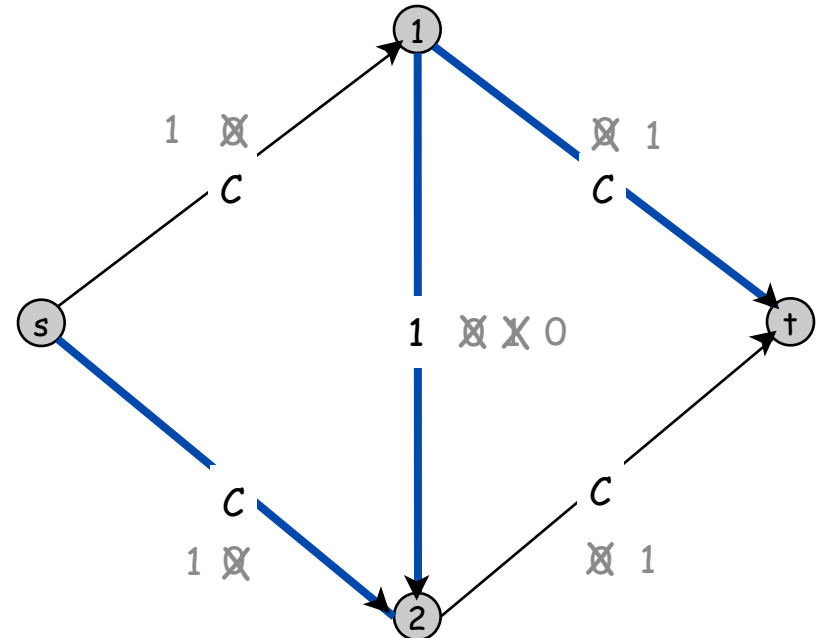
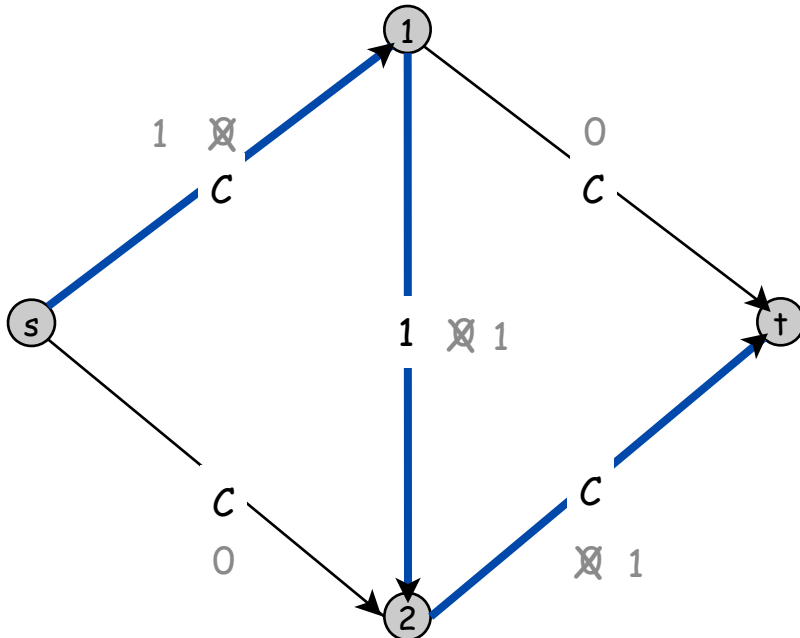
**Pf.** Since algorithm terminates, theorem follows from invariant. ■

# Ford-Fulkerson: Exponential Number of Augmentations

Q. Is generic Ford-Fulkerson algorithm polynomial in input size?

$m, n,$  and  $\log C$   $\nearrow$

A. No. If max capacity is  $C$ , then algorithm can take  $C$  iterations.



# Choosing Good Augmenting Paths

Use care when selecting augmenting paths.

- Some choices lead to exponential algorithms.
- Clever choices lead to polynomial algorithms.
- If capacities are irrational, algorithm not guaranteed to terminate!

Goal: choose augmenting paths so that:

- Can find augmenting paths efficiently.
- Few iterations.

Choose augmenting paths with: [Edmonds-Karp 1972, Dinitz 1970]

- Max bottleneck capacity.
- Sufficiently large bottleneck capacity.
- Fewest number of edges.