# Informed Search

**Yingyu Liang**

yliang@cs.wisc.edu

**Computer Sciences Department**

**University of Wisconsin, Madison**

[Based on slides from Jerry Zhu, Andrew Moore http://www.cs.cmu.edu/~awm/tutorials ]

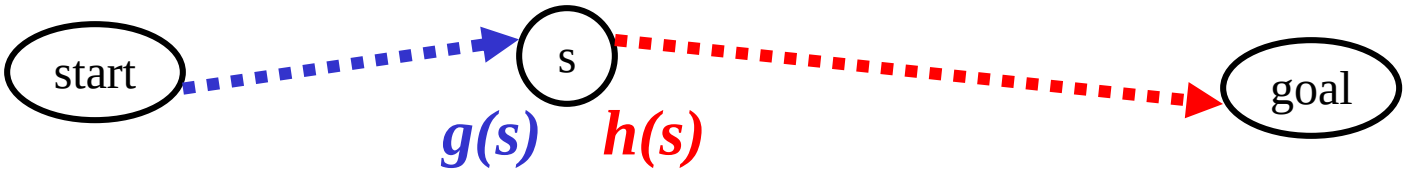
# Main messages

- A*.  Always be optimistic.

# Uninformed vs. informed search

- **Uninformed search** (BFS, uniform-cost, DFS, ID etc.)
  - Knows the actual path cost ***g(s)*** from start to a node ***s*** in the fringe, but that's it.

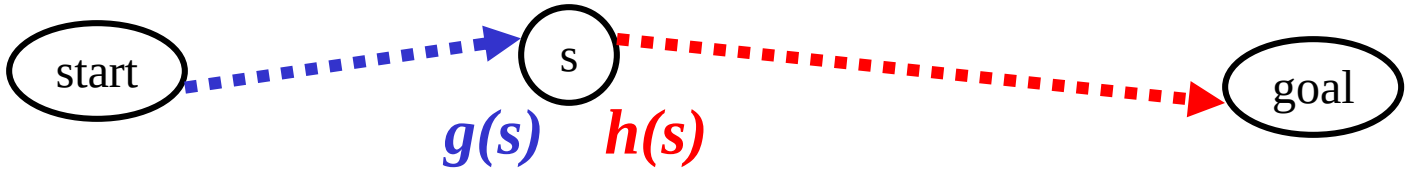

- **Informed search**




  - also has a heuristic ***h(s)*** of the cost from ***s*** to goal. ('h'= heuristic, non-negative)
  - Can be much faster than uninformed search.

# Recall: Uniform-cost search

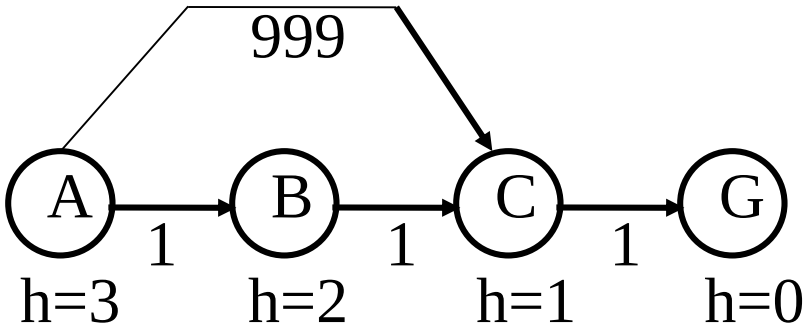
- Uniform-cost search: uninformed search when edge costs are not the same.
- Complete (will find a goal). Optimal (will find the least-cost goal).
- Always expand the node with the least $g(s)$
  - Use a priority queue:
    - Push in states with their first-half-cost $g(s)$
    - Pop out the state with the least $g(s)$ first.
- Now we have an estimate of the second-half-cost $h(s)$, how to use it?



# First attempt: Best-first greedy search

- Idea 1: use ***h(s)*** instead of ***g(s)***
- Always expand the node with the least ***h(s)***
  - Use a priority queue:
    - Push in states with their second-half-cost ***h(s)***
    - Pop out the state with the least ***h(s)*** first.
- Known as “best first greedy” search
- How’s this idea?

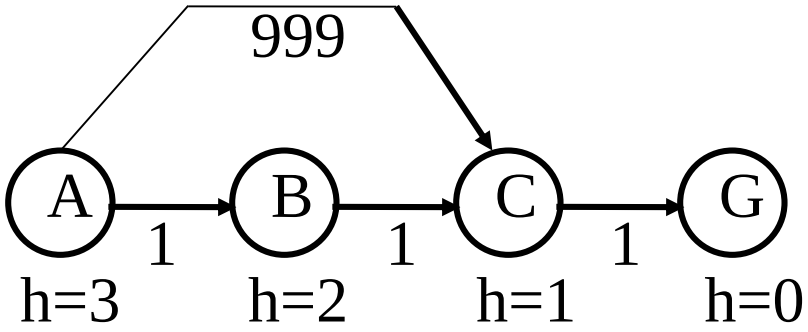
# Best-first greedy search looking stupid




- It will follow the path *A*→*C*→*G* (why?)
- Obviously not optimal

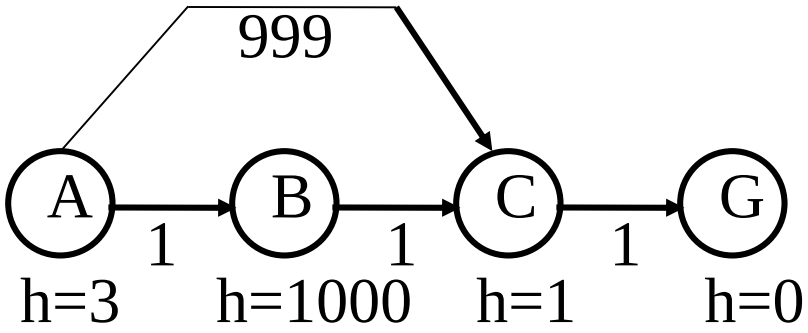
# Second attempt: A search

- Idea 2: use $g(s)+h(s)$
- Always expand the node with the least $g(s)+h(s)$
  - Use a priority queue:
    - Push in states with their first-half-cost $g(s)+h(s)$
    - Pop out the state with the least $g(s)+h(s)$ first.
- Known as “A” search
- How’s this idea?




- Works for this example

# A search still not quite right




- A search is not optimal.

# Third attempt: A* search

- Same as A search, but the heuristic function ***h()*** has to satisfy ***h(s)*** $\leq$ *h*(s)*, where *h*(s)* is the true cost from node *s* to the goal.
- Such heuristic function ***h()*** is called admissible.
  - An admissible heuristic never over-estimates

It is always optimistic

- A search with admissible ***h()*** is called A* search.

# Admissible heuristic functions *h*

- 8-puzzle example

Example State

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | | 5 |
| 2 | 6 | 3 |
| 7 | 4 | 8 |

Goal State

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 7 | 8 | |

- Which of the following are admissible heuristics?
  - h(n)=number of tiles in wrong position
  - h(n)=0
  - h(n)=1
  - h(n)=sum of Manhattan distance between each tile and its goal location

# Admissible heuristic functions *h*

- In general, which of the following are admissible heuristics? h*(n) is the true optimal cost from n to goal.
  - h(n)=h*(n)
  - h(n)=max(2,h*(n))
  - h(n)=min(2,h*(n))
  - h(n)=h*(n)-2
  - h(n)=sqrt(h*(n))

# Heuristics for Admissible heuristics

- How to construct heuristic functions?

Example State

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | | 5 |
| 2 | 6 | 3 |
| 7 | 4 | 8 |

Goal State

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 7 | 8 | |

- Often by relaxing the constraints
  - •h(n)=number of tiles in wrong position
    Allow tiles to fly to their destination in one step
  - •h(n)=sum of Manhattan distance between each tile and its goal location
    Allow tiles to move on top of other tiles

# “my heuristic is better than yours”

- A heuristic function h2 **dominates** h1 if for all s

  $h1(s) \leq h2(s) \leq h^*(s)$

- We prefer heuristic functions as close to h* as possible, but not over h*.

**But**

- Good heuristic function might need complex computation
- Time may be better spent, if we use a faster, simpler heuristic function and expand more nodes