

Durrett Probability: Problems

Youngduck Choi *

Abstract

This work contains solutions to some exercises from Durrett's probability text.

1 Chapter 6: Markov Chains

Question 6.3.3.

6.3.3. First entrance decomposition. Let $T_y = \inf\{n \geq 1 : X_n = y\}$. Show that

$$p^n(x, y) = \sum_{m=1}^n P_x(T_y = m) p^{n-m}(y, y)$$

Solution.

Here we assume countable state space. Observe that

$$\begin{aligned} p^n(x, y) &= P_x(X_n = y) = P_x\left(\bigcup_{m=1}^n \{T_y = m; X_n = y\}\right) \\ &= E_x(1_{\{X_{n-T_y}=y\}} \circ \theta_{T_y}; T_y \leq n) = E_x(E_x(1_{\{X_{n-T_y}=y\}} \circ \theta_{T_y} | \mathcal{F}_{T_y}); T_y \leq n) \quad (1) \\ &= E_x(E_{X_{T_y}}(1_{\{X_{n-T_y}=y\}}; T_y \leq n) = E_x(E_y(1_{\{X_{n-T_y}=y\}}); T_y \leq n) \quad (2) \\ &= \sum_{m=1}^n P_x(T_y = m) E_y(1_{\{X_{n-m}=y\}}) = \sum_{m=1}^n P_x(T_y = m) p^{n-m}(y, y) \end{aligned}$$

where (1) holds by definition of conditional expectation and (2) holds by the strong Markov property.

*Department of Mathematics,

Question 6.3.4.

6.3.4. Show that $\sum_{m=0}^n P_x(X_m = x) \geq \sum_{m=k}^{n+k} P_x(X_m = x)$.

Solution.

Question 6.3.5.

6.3.5. Suppose that $S - C$ is finite and for each $x \in S - C$ $P_x(\tau_C < \infty) > 0$. Then there is an $N < \infty$ and $\epsilon > 0$ so that $P_y(\tau_C > kN) \leq (1 - \epsilon)^k$.

Solution.

We assume countable state space. Observe that, for any $x \in S \setminus C$, we can choose $n(x) \in \mathbb{N}$ such that

$$P_x(\tau_C \leq n) > 0.$$

Otherwise, for some $x \in S \setminus C$, by continuity of probability,

$$P_x(\tau_C < \infty) = \lim_{k \rightarrow \infty} P_x(\tau_C \leq k) = 0,$$

which is a contradiction. Now, let

$$N = \max_{z \in S \setminus C} n(z). \text{ and } \epsilon = \min_{z \in S \setminus C} P_z(\tau_C \leq N).$$

Trivially,

$$P_y(\tau_C > kN) = 0$$

for any $k \in \mathbb{N}$, and $y \in C$, since $y \in C$ implies $\tau_C = 0$ by definition. Therefore, it suffices to show

$$P_y(\tau_C > kN) \leq (1 - \epsilon)^k \tag{3}$$

for all $k \in \mathbb{N}$ and $y \in S \setminus C$. Fix $y \in S \setminus C$. Then,

$$P_y(\tau_C \leq N) \geq \epsilon.$$

and hence

$$P_y(\tau_C > N) \leq (1 - \epsilon)$$

Now, we proceed by induction to prove (3). Suppose, for some $k \in \mathbb{N}$ such that $k \geq 2$,

$$P_y(\tau_C > kN) \leq (1 - \epsilon)^k.$$

We compute

$$\begin{aligned} P_y(\tau_C > (k+1)N) &= E_y(1_{\{\tau_C > kN\}} \circ \theta_N; \tau_C > N) \\ &= E_y(E_y(1_{\{\tau_C > kN\}} \circ \theta_N | \mathcal{F}_N); \tau_C > N) \\ &= E_y(E_{X_N}(1_{\{\tau_C > kN\}}); \tau_C > N) \\ &\leq E_y(\sup_{z \in S} P_z(\tau_C > kN); \tau_C > N) \\ &\leq (1 - \epsilon)^k E_y(1; \tau_C > N) = (1 - \epsilon)^{k+1} \end{aligned} \tag{4}$$

where (4) holds by Markov Property, which completes the proof. \square

Question 6.3.6.

6.3.6. Let $h(x) = P_x(\tau_A < \tau_B)$. Suppose $A \cap B = \emptyset$, $S - (A \cup B)$ is finite, and $P_x(\tau_{A \cup B} < \infty) > 0$ for all $x \in S - (A \cup B)$. (i) Show that

$$(*) \quad h(x) = \sum_y p(x, y)h(y) \quad \text{for } x \notin A \cup B$$

(ii) Show that if h satisfies $(*)$ then $h(X(n \wedge \tau_{A \cup B}))$ is a martingale. (iii) Use this and Exercise 6.3.5 to conclude that $h(x) = P_x(\tau_A < \tau_B)$ is the only solution of $(*)$ that is 1 on A and 0 on B .

Solution.

(i) Let $x \in S \setminus (A \cup B)$. Then,

$$1_{\{\tau_A < \tau_B\}} = 1_{\{\tau_A < \tau_B\}} \circ \theta_1.$$

It follows that

$$\begin{aligned} h(x) &= P_x(\tau_A < \tau_B) = E_x(1_{\{\tau_A < \tau_B\}}) = E_x(1_{\{\tau_A < \tau_B\}} \circ \theta_1) \\ &= E_x(E_x(1_{\{\tau_A < \tau_B\}} \circ \theta_1 | \mathcal{F}_1)) = E_x(E_{X_1}(1_{\{\tau_A < \tau_B\}})) \\ &= \sum_y P(X_1 = y)P_y(\tau_A < \tau_B) = \sum_y p(x, y)P_y(\tau_A < \tau_B) \end{aligned} \tag{5}$$

where (5) holds by Markov property.

(ii)

(iii)

Question 6.3.7.

6.3.7. Let X_n be a Markov chain with $S = \{0, 1, \dots, N\}$ and suppose that X_n is a martingale and $P_x(\tau_0 \wedge \tau_N < \infty) > 0$ for all x . (i) Show that 0 and N are absorbing states, i.e., $p(0, 0) = p(N, N) = 1$. (ii) Show $P_x(\tau_N < \tau_0) = x/N$.

Solution.

Question 6.4.4.

Exercise 6.4.4. Use the strong Markov property to show that $\rho_{xz} \geq \rho_{xy}\rho_{yz}$.

Solution.

The key insight in this problem is that if you shift the chain by a stopping time of one variable, then the probability of the chain coming back to another fixed variable decreases. This relation allows one to estimate p_{xz} from below using strong Markov.

Let $x, y, z \in S$. Then,

$$\begin{aligned} p_{xz} &= P_x(T_z < \infty) = E_x(1_{\{T_z < \infty\}}) \geq E_x(1_{\{T_z < \infty\}} \circ \theta_{T_y}) \\ &= E_x(E_x(1_{\{T_z < \infty\}} \circ \theta_{T_y} | \mathcal{F}_{T_y}); T_y < \infty) \end{aligned} \tag{6}$$

$$\begin{aligned} &= E_x(E_{X_{T_y}}(1_{\{T_z < \infty\}}; T_y < \infty) = E_x(E_{X_y}(1_{\{T_z < \infty\}}; T_y < \infty)) \\ &= E_x(P_y(T_z < \infty); T_y < \infty) = P_y(T_z < \infty)P_x(T_y < \infty) = p_{xy}p_{yz} \end{aligned} \tag{7}$$

where (6) holds by definition of conditional expectation, and (7) holds by strong Markov. \square

2 Chapter 2: Law of Large Numbers

3 Chapter 5: Martingales

Question 5.2.1.

Exercise 5.2.1. Suppose X_n is a martingale w.r.t. \mathcal{G}_n and let $\mathcal{F}_n = \sigma(X_1, \dots, X_n)$. Then $\mathcal{G}_n \supset \mathcal{F}_n$ and X_n is a martingale w.r.t. \mathcal{F}_n .

Solution.

Various properties of conditional expectations are used.

We compute

$$E[X_{n+1}|\mathcal{F}_n] = E[X_{n+1}|\mathcal{G}_n|\mathcal{F}_n] \tag{8}$$

$$= E[X_n|\mathcal{F}_n] \tag{9}$$

$$= X_n \tag{10}$$

for all $n \in \mathbb{N}$, where (8) holds by the Tower property, (9) holds by Martingale property of $\{G_n\}$ and (10) holds by measurability of X_n w.r.t \mathcal{F}_n for all $n \in \mathbb{N}$. \square

Question 5.2.2.

Exercise 5.2.2. Suppose f is superharmonic on \mathbf{R}^d . Let ξ_1, ξ_2, \dots be i.i.d. uniform on $B(0, 1)$, and define S_n by $S_n = S_{n-1} + \xi_n$ for $n \geq 1$ and $S_0 = x$. Show that $X_n = f(S_n)$ is a supermartingale.

Solution.

Question 5.2.3.

Exercise 5.2.3. Give an example of a submartingale X_n so that X_n^2 is a supermartingale. Hint: X_n does not have to be random.

Solution.