Chapter 4: Greedy Algorithms
Greed is good. Greed is right. Greed works. Greed clarifies, cuts through, and captures the essence of the evolutionary spirit.

- Gordon Gecko (Michael Douglas)
Intro: Coin Changing
Coin Changing

**Goal.** Given currency denominations: 1, 5, 10, 25, 100, give change to customer using *fewest* number of coins.

Ex: 34¢

**Cashier's algorithm.** At each step, give the *largest* coin valued $\leq$ the amount to be paid.

Ex: $2.89
Observation. Greedy is sub-optimal for US *postal* denominations: 1, 10, 21, 34, 70, 100, 350, 1225, 1500.

Counterexample. 140¢.
- Greedy: 100, 34, 1, 1, 1, 1, 1, 1.
- Optimal: 70, 70.

Algorithm is “Greedy”, but also short-sighted – attractive choice now may lead to dead ends later.

Correctness is key!
Outline & Goals

“Greedy Algorithms”
what they are

Pros
intuitive
often simple
often fast

Cons
often incorrect!

Proofs are crucial. 3 (of many) techniques:
stay ahead
structural
exchange arguments
4.1 Interval Scheduling

Proof Technique 1: “greedy stays ahead”
Interval scheduling.
- Job $j$ starts at $s_j$ and finishes at $f_j$.
- Two jobs compatible if they don’t overlap.
- Goal: find maximum subset of mutually compatible jobs.
Interval Scheduling: Greedy Algorithms

Greedy template. Consider jobs in some order. Take each job provided it's compatible with the ones already taken.

- What order?
- Does that give best answer?
- Why or why not?
- Does it help to be greedy about order?
Interval Scheduling: Greedy Algorithms

**Greedy template.** Consider jobs in some order. Take each job provided it's compatible with the ones already taken.

**[Earliest start time]** Order jobs by ascending start time \( s_j \)

**[Earliest finish time]** Order jobs by ascending finish time \( f_j \)

**[Shortest interval]** Order jobs by ascending interval length \( f_j - s_j \)

**[Longest Interval]** Reverse of the above

**[Fewest conflicts]** For each job \( j \), let \( c_j \) be the count the number of jobs in conflict with \( j \). Order jobs by ascending \( c_j \)
Can You Find Counterexamples?

E.g., Longest Interval:

Others?:
Greedy template. Consider jobs in some order. Take each job provided it's compatible with the ones already taken.

- Breaks earliest start time
- Breaks shortest interval
- Breaks fewest conflicts
Greedy algorithm. Consider jobs in increasing order of finish time. Take each job provided it’s compatible with the ones already taken.

```
Sort jobs by finish times so that 
f_1 \leq f_2 \leq \ldots \leq f_n.

// jobs selected
A \leftarrow \emptyset
for j = 1 to n {
    if (job j compatible with A)
        A \leftarrow A \cup \{j\}
}
return A
```

Implementation. \(O(n \log n)\).
- Remember job \(j^*\) that was added last to \(A\).
- Job \(j\) is compatible with \(A\) if \(s_j \geq f_{j^*}\).
Interval Scheduling

The diagram illustrates the concept of interval scheduling. Each task is represented by a colored bar on the timeline. The tasks are ordered and scheduled in a way that minimizes conflicts and maximizes efficiency. The tasks are labeled A, B, C, D, E, F, G, and H, and they are arranged along the timeline to show their start and end times.
Interval Scheduling

Time

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11

A B C D E F G H
Interval Scheduling

Time

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11

B
C
A
E
D
F
G
H

B A

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11
Interval Scheduling
Interval Scheduling

The diagram illustrates the concept of interval scheduling with tasks represented by horizontal bars on a time axis. Each task is associated with a specific time interval. The tasks are labeled A, B, C, D, E, F, G, and H. The timeline is divided into intervals from 0 to 11, with each interval marked at 0, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, and 11.
Interval Scheduling

- A
- B
- C
- D
- E
- F
- G
- H

Time

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11
Theorem. *Earliest Finish First* Greedy algorithm is optimal.

**Pf.** ("greedy stays ahead")

Let $g_1, \ldots, g_k$ be greedy’s job picks, $j_1, \ldots, j_m$ those in some optimal solution. Show $f(g_r) \leq f(j_r)$ by induction on $r$.

- **Basis:** $g_1$ chosen to have min finish time, so $f(g_1) \leq f(j_1)$
- **Ind:** $f(g_r) \leq f(j_r) \leq s(j_{r+1})$, so $j_{r+1}$ is among the candidates considered by greedy when it picked $g_{r+1}$, & it picks min finish, so $f(g_{r+1}) \leq f(j_{r+1})$

Similarly, $k \geq m$, else $j_{k+1}$ is among (nonempty) set of candidates for $g_{k+1}$.
4.1 Interval Partitioning

Proof Technique 2: “Structural”
Interval Partitioning

Interval partitioning.
- Lecture $j$ starts at $s_j$ and finishes at $f_j$.
- Goal: find minimum number of classrooms to schedule all lectures so that no two occur at the same time in the same room.

Ex: This schedule uses 4 classrooms to schedule 10 lectures.
Interval Partitioning as Interval Graph Coloring

Vertices = classes; edges = conflicting class pairs; different colors = different assigned rooms

Note: graph coloring is very hard in general, but graphs corresponding to interval intersections are a much simpler special case.
Interval Partitioning

Interval partitioning.
- Lecture j starts at $s_j$ and finishes at $f_j$.
- Goal: find minimum number of classrooms to schedule all lectures so that no two occur at the same time in the same room.

Ex: Same classes, but this schedule uses only 3 rooms.
Interval Partitioning: A “Structural” Lower Bound on Optimal Solution

**Def.** The **depth** of a set of open intervals is the maximum number that contain any given time.

**Key observation.** Number of classrooms needed $\geq$ depth.

**Ex:** Depth of schedule below $= 3 \implies$ schedule is optimal.

**Q.** Does a schedule equal to depth of intervals always exist?
Interval Partitioning: Earliest Start First Greedy Algorithm

**Greedy algorithm.** Consider lectures in increasing order of start time: assign lecture to any compatible classroom.

```plaintext
Sort intervals by start time so \( s_1 \leq s_2 \leq \ldots \leq s_n \).

\( d \leftarrow 0 \leftarrow \text{number of allocated classrooms} \)

for \( j = 1 \) to \( n \) {
    if (lect \( j \) is compatible with some room \( k, 1 \leq k \leq d \))
        schedule lecture \( j \) in classroom \( k \)
    else
        allocate a new classroom \( d + 1 \)
        schedule lecture \( j \) in classroom \( d + 1 \)
        \( d \leftarrow d + 1 \)
}
```

Implementation? Run-time?

Exercises
Observation. Earliest Start First Greedy algorithm never schedules two incompatible lectures in the same classroom.

Theorem. Earliest Start First Greedy algorithm is optimal.

Pf (exploit structural property).
- Let $d =$ number of rooms the greedy algorithm allocates.
- Classroom $d$ is opened because we needed to schedule a job, say $j$, that is incompatible with all $d-1$ previously used classrooms.
- Since we sorted by start time, all these incompatibilities are caused by lectures that start no later than $s_j$.
- Thus, $d$ lectures overlap at time $s_j + \varepsilon$, i.e. depth $\geq d$.
- “Key observation” on earlier slide $\Rightarrow$ all schedules use $\geq$ depth rooms, so $d = \text{depth and greedy is optimal}$
4.2 Scheduling to Minimize Lateness

Proof Technique 3: “Exchange” Arguments
Minimizing lateness problem.
- Single resource processes one job at a time.
- Job $j$ requires $t_j$ units of processing time & is due at time $d_j$.
- If $j$ starts at time $s_j$, it finishes at time $f_j = s_j + t_j$.
- Lateness: $\ell_j = \max \{ 0, f_j - d_j \}$.
- Goal: schedule all to minimize $\max$ lateness $L = \max \ell_j$.

Ex:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>$i$</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$t_j$</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$d_j$</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

lateness = 2
lateness = 0
max lateness = 6
Minimizing Lateness: Greedy Algorithms

Greedy template. Consider jobs in some order.

[Shortest processing time first]
Consider jobs in ascending order of processing time $t_j$.

[Earliest deadline first]
Consider jobs in ascending order of deadline $d_j$.

[Smallest slack]
Consider jobs in ascending order of slack $d_j - t_j$. 
Minimizing Lateness: Greedy Algorithms

Greedy template. Consider jobs in some order.

[Shortest processing time first] Consider in ascending order of processing time $t_j$.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$t_j$</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$d_j$</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

[Smallest slack] Consider in ascending order of slack $d_j - t_j$.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$t_j$</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$d_j$</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

counterexample
Minimizing Lateness: Greedy Algorithm

Greedy algorithm. Earliest deadline first.

Sort n jobs by deadline so that \( d_1 \leq d_2 \leq \cdots \leq d_n \)

\[
\begin{align*}
t &\leftarrow 0 \\
&\text{for } j = 1 \text{ to } n \\
&\quad \text{// Assign job } j \text{ to interval } [t, t + t_j]: \\
&\quad s_j \leftarrow t, \quad f_j \leftarrow t + t_j \\
&\quad t \leftarrow t + t_j \\
&\text{output intervals } [s_j, f_j]
\end{align*}
\]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>d_1 = 6</th>
<th>d_2 = 8</th>
<th>d_3 = 9</th>
<th>d_4 = 9</th>
<th>d_5 = 14</th>
<th>d_6 = 15</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>t_j</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d_j</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

max lateness = 1
Proof Strategy

A schedule is an ordered list of jobs

Suppose \( S_1 \) is any schedule

Let \( G \) be the/a schedule produced by the greedy algorithm

To show: \( \text{Lateness}(S_1) \geq \text{Lateness}(G) \)

Idea: find a series of simple changes that successively transform \( S_1 \) into other schedules that are more and more like \( G \), each better than the last, until we reach \( G \). I.e.

\[
\text{Lateness}(S_1) \geq \text{Lateness}(S_2) \geq \text{Lateness}(S_3) \geq \ldots \geq \text{Lateness}(G)
\]

If it works for any starting \( S_1 \), it will work for an optimal \( S_1 \), so \( G \) is optimal

HOW?: exchange pairs of jobs
Minimizing Lateness: No Idle Time

Notes:

1. There is an optimal schedule with no idle time.

2. The greedy schedule has no idle time.
**Def.** An *inversion* in schedule S is a pair of jobs i and j s.t.: deadline i < deadline j but j scheduled before i.

- Greedy schedule has no inversions.
- Claim: If a schedule has an inversion, it has an adjacent inversion, i.e., a pair of inverted jobs scheduled consecutively.
  
  (Pf: If j & i aren’t consecutive, then look at the job k scheduled right after j. If $d_k < d_j$, then (j,k) is a consecutive inversion; if not, then (k,i) is an inversion, & nearer to each other - repeat.)
Minimizing Lateness: Inversions

Def. An inversion in schedule S is a pair of jobs i and j s.t.: deadline i < deadline j but j scheduled before i.

• Claim: Swapping an adjacent inversion reduces # inversions by 1 (exactly)

Pf: Let i,j be an adjacent inversion. For any pair (p,q), inversion status of (p,q) is unchanged by i↔j swap unless \{p, q\} = \{i, j\}, and the i,j inversion is removed by that swap.
Minimizing Lateness: Inversions

Def. An inversion in schedule $S$ is a pair of jobs $i$ and $j$ s.t.: deadline $i < j$ but $j$ scheduled before $i$.

Claim. Swapping two adjacent, inverted jobs does not increase the max lateness.

Pf. Let $\ell / \ell'$ be the lateness before / after swap, resp.
- $\ell'_k = \ell_k$ for all $k \neq i, j$
- $\ell'_i \leq \ell_i$
- If job $j$ is now late:
  \[
  \ell'_j = f'_j - d_j \quad \text{(definition)}
  = f_i - d_j \quad \text{($j$ finishes at time $f_i$)}
  \leq f_i - d_i \quad \text{($d_i \leq d_j$)}
  = \ell_i \quad \text{(definition)}
  \]
Claim. All idle-free, inversion-free schedules S have the same max lateness.

Pf. If S has no inversions, then deadlines of scheduled jobs are monotonically nondecreasing (i.e., increase or stay the same) as we walk through the schedule from left to right. Two such schedules can differ only in the order of jobs with the same deadlines. Within a group of jobs with the same deadline, the max lateness is the lateness of the last job in the group - order within the group doesn’t matter.
Theorem. Greedy schedule $S$ is optimal

Pf. Let $S^*$ be an optimal schedule with the fewest number of inversions among all optimal schedules.
   Can assume $S^*$ has no idle time.
   If $S^*$ has an inversion, let $i-j$ be an adjacent inversion.
   Swapping $i$ and $j$ does not increase the maximum lateness and strictly decreases the number of inversions.
   This contradicts definition of $S^*$.
   So, $S^*$ has no inversions. Hence $\text{Lateness}(S) = \text{Lateness}(S^*)$.
Greedy Analysis Strategies

**Greedy algorithm stays ahead.** Show that after each step of the greedy algorithm, its solution is at least as “good” as any other algorithm's. (Part of the cleverness is deciding what’s “good.”)

**Structural.** Discover a simple "structural" bound asserting that every possible solution must have a certain value. Then show that your algorithm always achieves this bound. (Cleverness here is usually in finding a useful structural characteristic.)

**Exchange argument.** Gradually transform any solution to the one found by the greedy algorithm without hurting its quality. (Cleverness usually in choosing which pair to swap.)

(In all 3 cases, proving these claims may require cleverness.)
You’ve seen this in prerequisite courses, so this section and next two on min spanning tree are review. I won’t lecture on them, but you should review the material. Both, but especially shortest paths, are common problems, having many applications.
Shortest Path Problem

Shortest path network.
- Directed graph $G = (V, E)$.
- Source $s$, destination $t$.
- Length $\ell_e = \text{length of edge } e$.

**Shortest path problem:** find shortest directed path from $s$ to $t$.

Cost of path = sum of edge costs in path

Cost of path $s$-2-3-5-$t$

$= 9 + 23 + 2 + 16$

$= 48$. 
Dijkstra's Algorithm

Dijkstra's algorithm.
- Maintain a set of explored nodes $S$ for which we have determined the shortest path distance $d(u)$ from $s$ to $u$.
- Initialize $S = \{ s \}$, $d(s) = 0$.
- Repeatedly choose unexplored node $v$ which minimizes

$$\pi(v) = \min_{e = (u, v): u \in S} d(u) + \ell_e,$$

add $v$ to $S$, and set $d(v) = \pi(v)$. 

A shortest path to some $u$ in explored part, followed by a single edge $(u, v)$.
Dijkstra's Algorithm

Dijkstra's algorithm.

- Maintain a set of explored nodes $S$ for which we have determined the shortest path distance $d(u)$ from $s$ to $u$.
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\[ \pi(v) = \min_{e = (u, v) : u \in S} d(u) + \ell_e, \]

add $v$ to $S$, and set $d(v) = \pi(v)$.