

Tag your homework correctly on Ed. We will deduct points if not.

Extra credit for helping others on Ed

Plan project teams / idea / datasets

See FAQ online

(if you're unsure about fit to course, talk to us)

(teams of three/four highly recommended; will all be graded the same)

**Due Thu:** Tell us about your project using the Team Signup Sheet on our website

Office hours: Tim's are best for lecture questions, logistics, projects, accommodations;  
TA office hours are best for HW and colab questions (+project if TA assigned to you)

# Clustering

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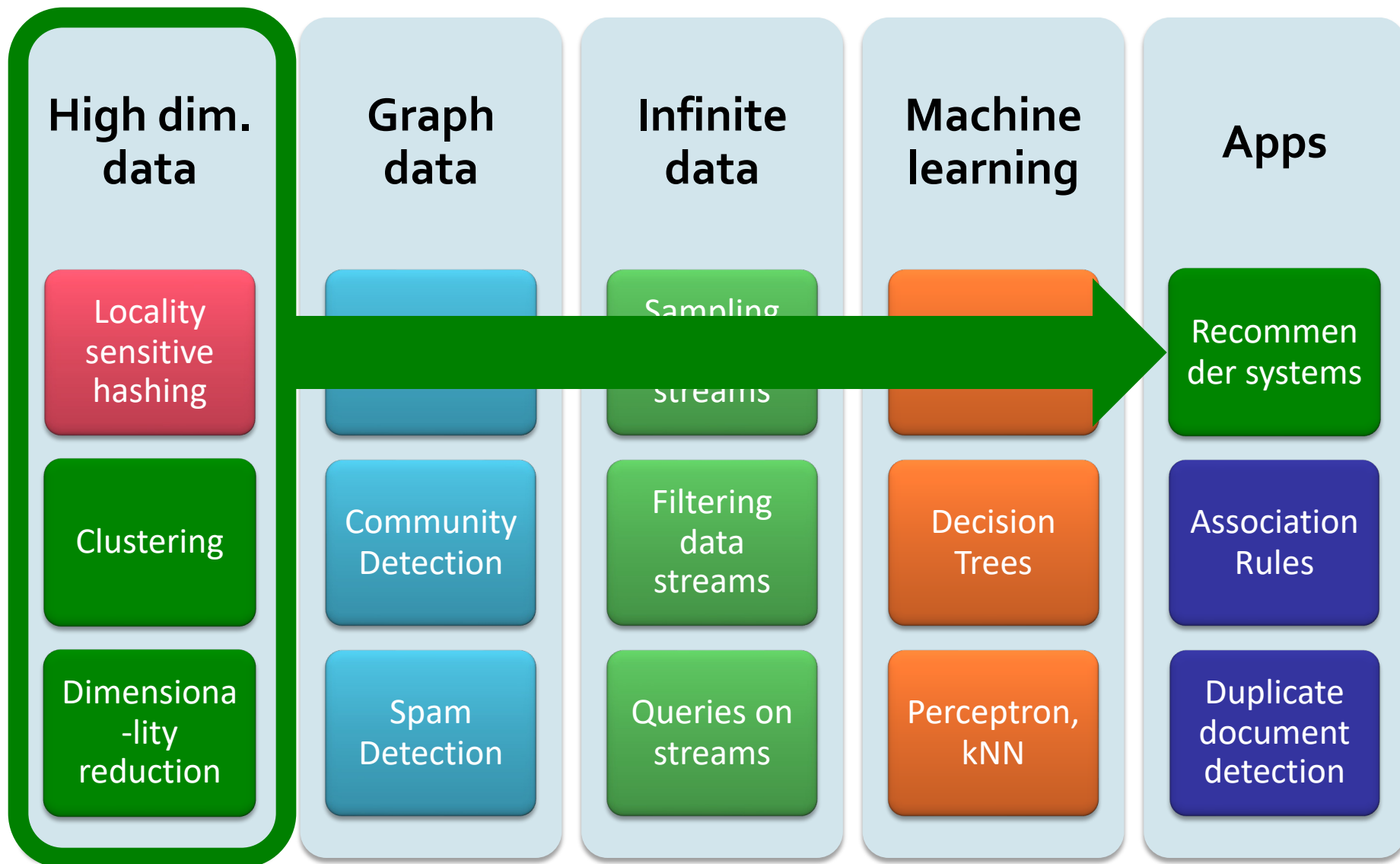
CS547 Machine Learning for Big Data

Tim Althoff



PAUL G. ALLEN SCHOOL  
OF COMPUTER SCIENCE & ENGINEERING

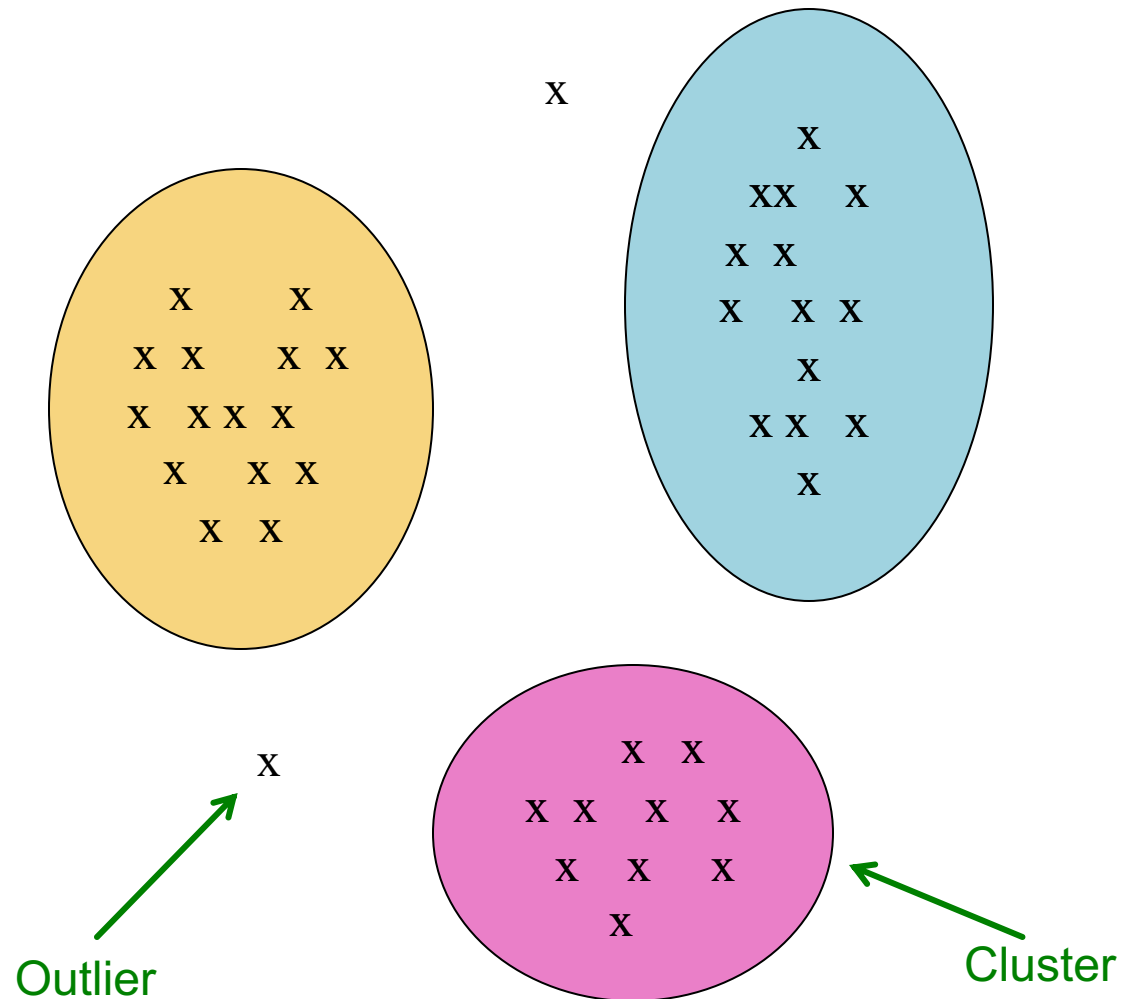
# High Dimensional Data



# The Problem of Clustering

- Given a **set of points**, with a notion of **distance** between points, **group the points** into some number of *clusters*, so that
  - Members of a cluster are close/similar to each other
  - Members of different clusters are dissimilar
- **Usually:**
  - Points are in a high-dimensional space
  - Similarity is defined using a distance measure/metric
    - Euclidean, Cosine, Jaccard, edit distance, ...

# Example: Clusters & Outliers



# Clustering Problem: Galaxies

- A catalog of 2 billion “sky objects” represents objects by their radiation in 7 dimensions (frequency bands)
- **Problem:** Cluster similar objects, e.g., galaxies, nearby stars, quasars, etc.
- Sloan Digital Sky Survey



# Clustering Problem: Music Album

- **Intuitively:** Music can be divided into categories, and customers prefer a few genres
  - But what are categories really?
- Represent an Album by a set of customers who bought it
- Similar Albums have similar sets of customers, and vice-versa

# Clustering Problem: Music Album

## Space of all Albums:

- Think of a space with one dim. for each customer
  - Values in a dimension may be 0 or 1 only
  - An Album is a “point” in this space  $(x_1, x_2, \dots, x_k)$ , where  $x_i = 1$  iff the  $i^{\text{th}}$  customer bought the Album
- For Amazon, the dimension is 100 million plus
- **Task:** Find clusters of similar Albums

# Clustering Problem: Documents

## Finding topics:

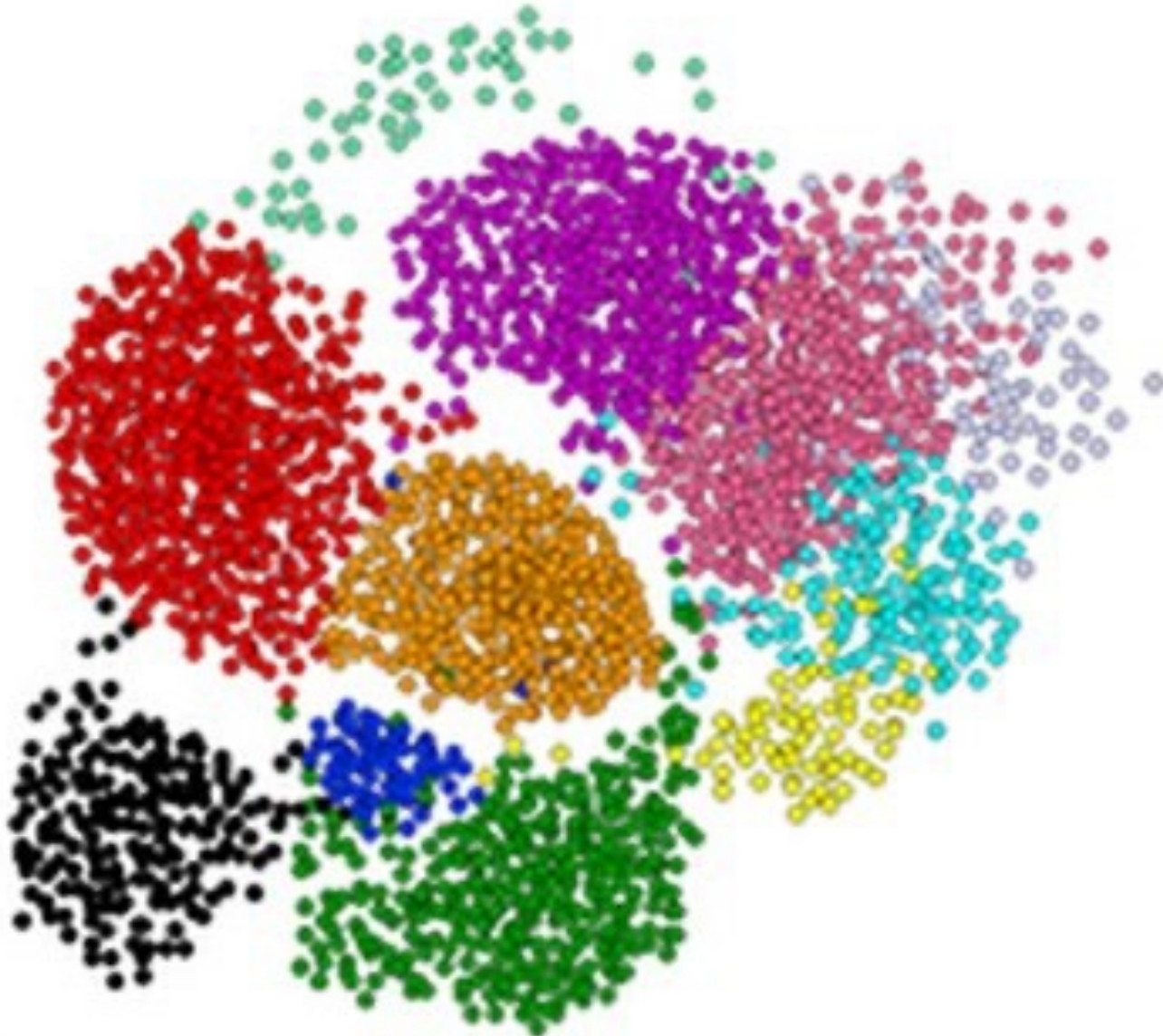
- Represent a document by a vector  $(x_1, x_2, \dots, x_k)$ , where  $x_i = 1$  iff the  $i^{\text{th}}$  word (in some order) appears in the document
- **Documents with similar sets of words may be about the same topic**



# Cosine, Jaccard, and Euclidean

- **We have a choice when we think of documents as sets of words or shingles:**
  - **Sets as vectors:** Measure similarity by the **cosine distance**
  - **Sets as sets:** Measure similarity by the **Jaccard distance**
  - **Sets as points:** Measure similarity by **Euclidean distance**

# Clustering is a hard problem!



# Why is it hard?

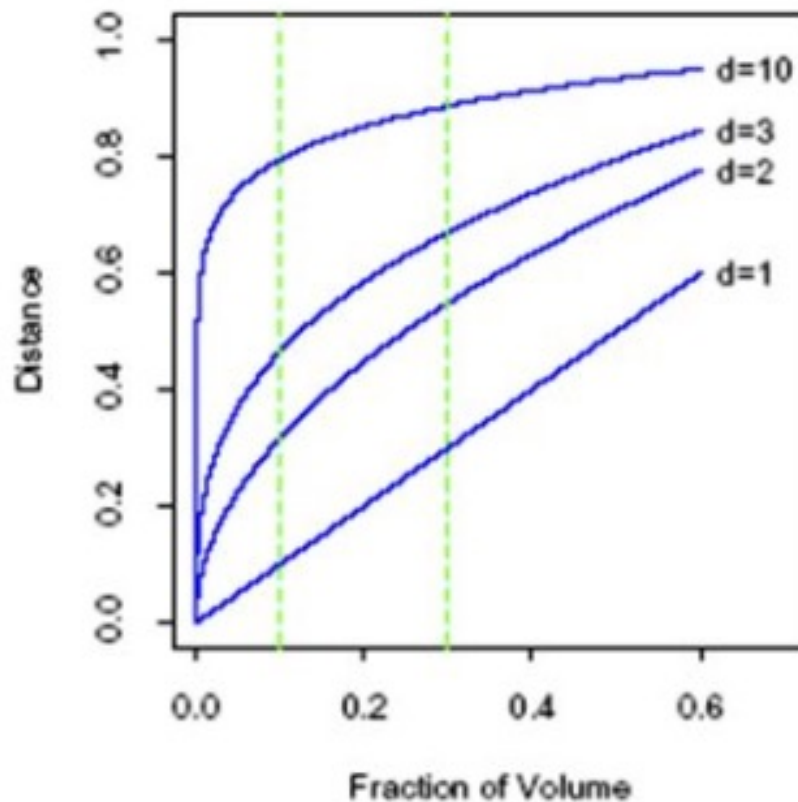
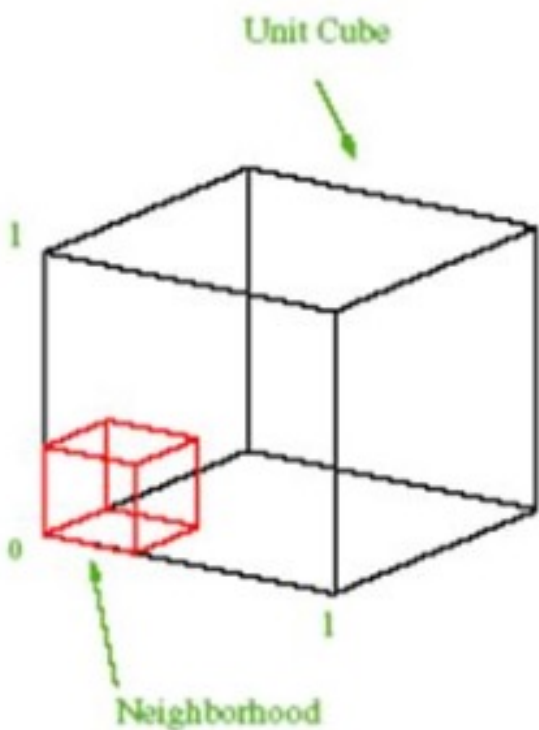
- Clustering in two dimensions looks easy
- Clustering small amounts of data looks easy
- And in most cases, looks are **not** deceiving
  
- Many applications involve not 2, but 10 or 10,000 dimensions
- **High-dimensional spaces “look different”:**  
Almost all pairs of points are very far from each other --> **The Curse of Dimensionality**

# Example: Curse of Dimensionality

- Take 10,000 uniform random points on  $[0,1]$  line. Assume query point is at the origin (0).
- To get 10 nearest neighbors we must go to distance  $10/10,000=0.001$  on average
- In 2-dim we must go  $\sqrt{0.001}=0.032$  to get a square that contains 0.001 volume
- In  $d$ -dim we must go  $(0.001)^{\frac{1}{d}}$
- So, in 10-dim to capture 0.1% of the data we need 50% of the range.

# Example: Curse of Dimensionality

**Curse of Dimensionality:** All points are very far from each other



# Overview: Methods of Clustering

## ■ Hierarchical:

### ■ Agglomerative (bottom up):

- Initially, each point is a cluster
- Repeatedly combine the two “nearest” clusters into one

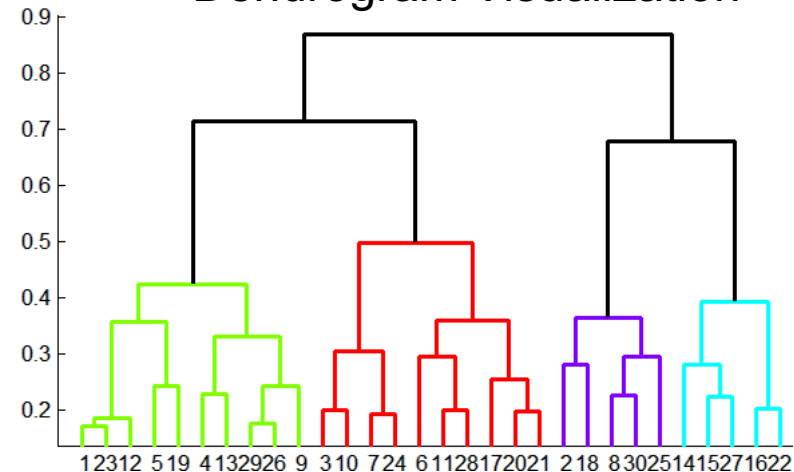
### ■ Divisive (top down):

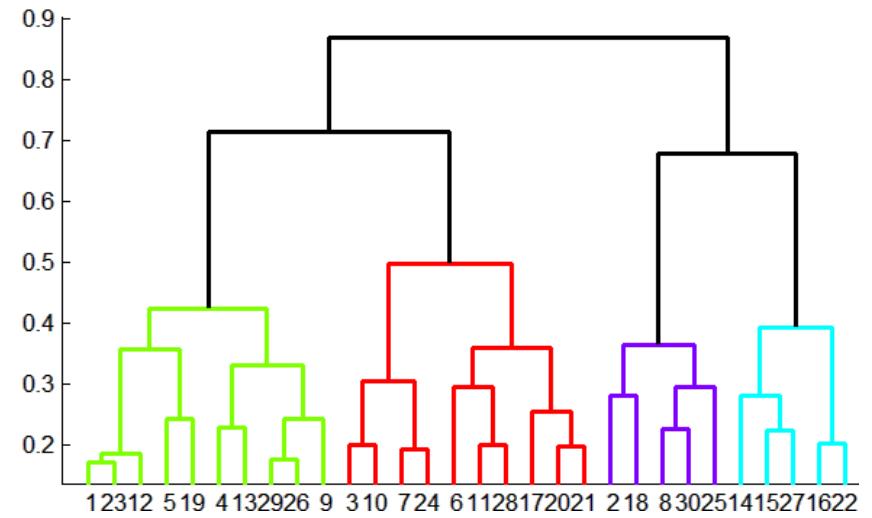
- Start with one cluster and recursively split it

## ■ Point assignment:

- Maintain a set of clusters
- Points belong to the “nearest” cluster

Dendrogram Visualization



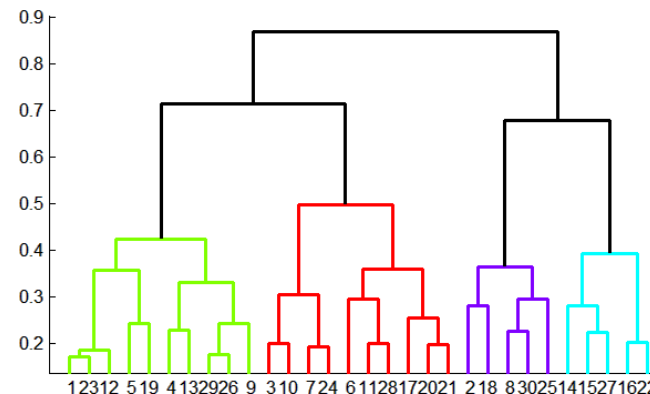


# Hierarchical Clustering

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# Hierarchical Clustering

- **Key operation:**  
**Repeatedly combine  
two nearest clusters**

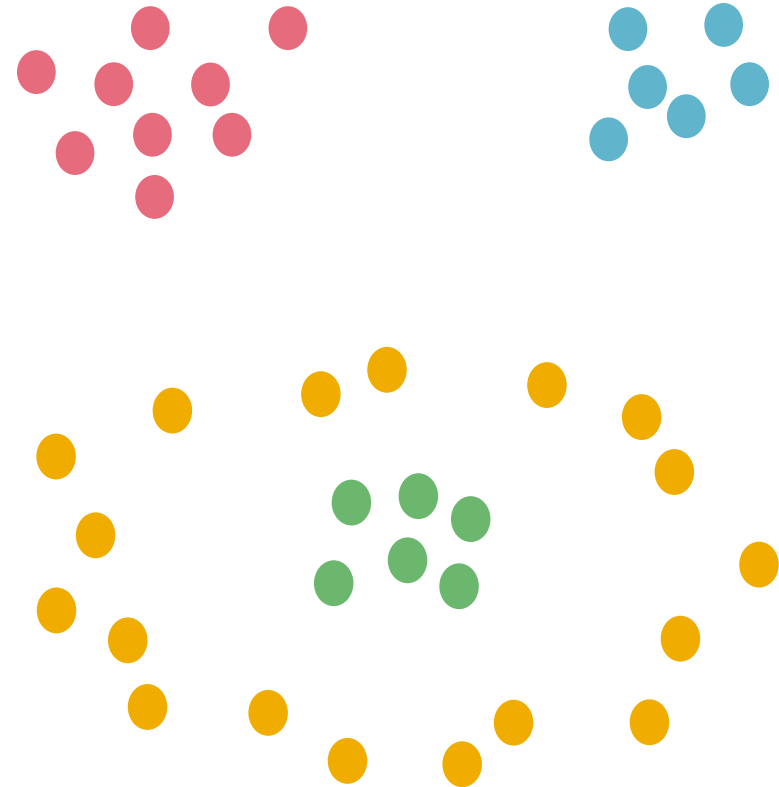


- **Three important questions:**
  - **1)** How do you represent a cluster of more than one point?
  - **2)** How do you determine the “nearness” of clusters?
  - **3)** When to stop combining clusters?



# Which is Better?

- Point assignment good when clusters are nice, convex shapes:
- Hierarchical can win when shapes are weird:
  - Note both clusters have essentially the same centroid.

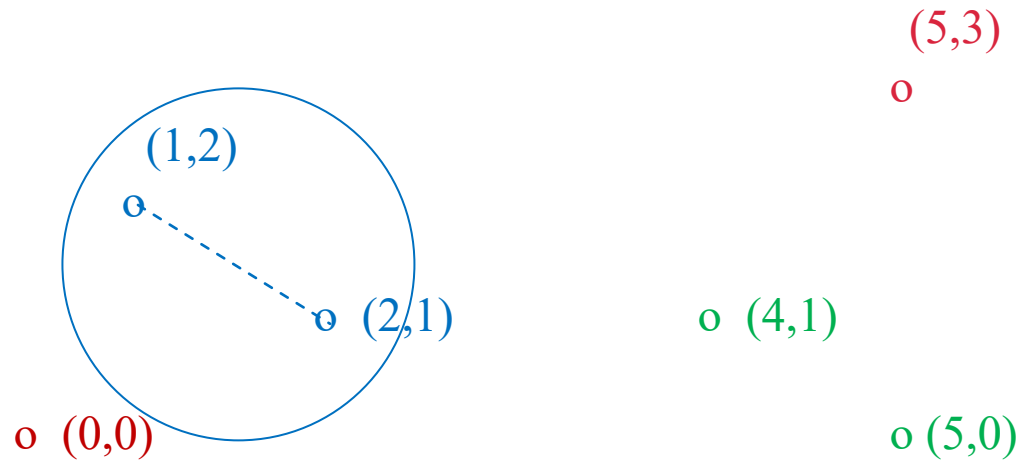


**Note:** if you realized you had concentric clusters, you could map points based on distance from center, and turn the problem into a simple, one-dimensional case.

# Hierarchical Clustering

- **Key operation:** Repeatedly combine two nearest clusters
- **(1) How to represent a cluster of many points?**
  - **Key problem:** As you merge clusters, how do you represent the “location” of each cluster, to tell which pair of clusters is closest?
- **Euclidean case:** each cluster has a **centroid** = average of its (data)points
- **(2) How to determine “nearness” of clusters?**
  - Measure cluster distances by distances of centroids

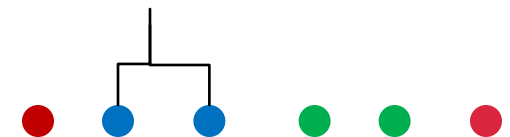
# Example: Hierarchical clustering



**Data:**

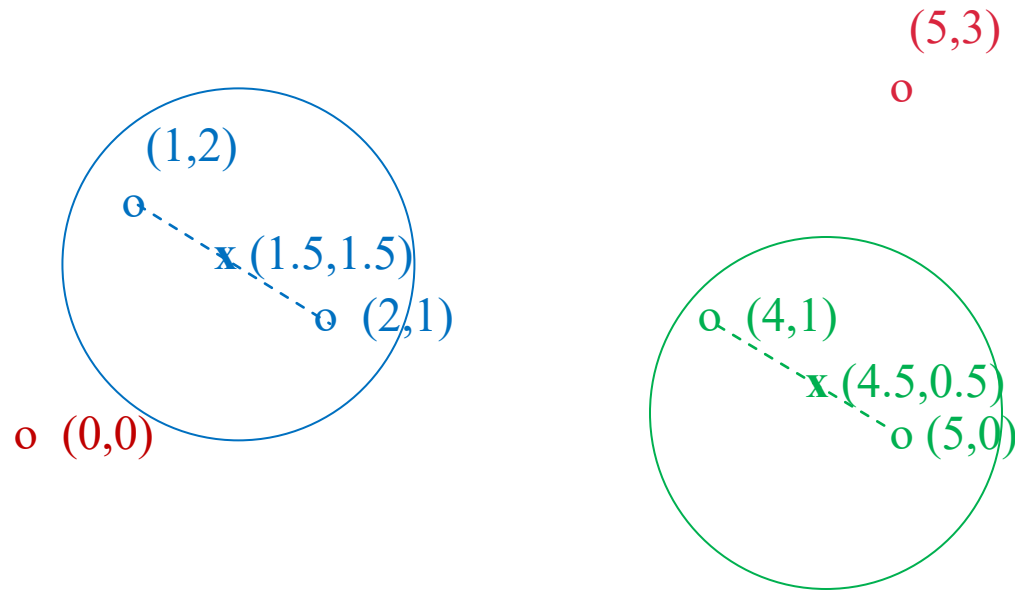
o ... data point

x ... centroid



**Dendrogram**

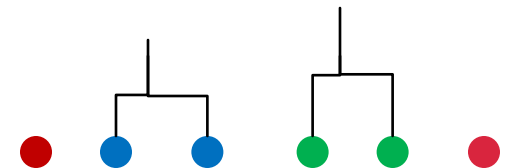
# Example: Hierarchical clustering



**Data:**

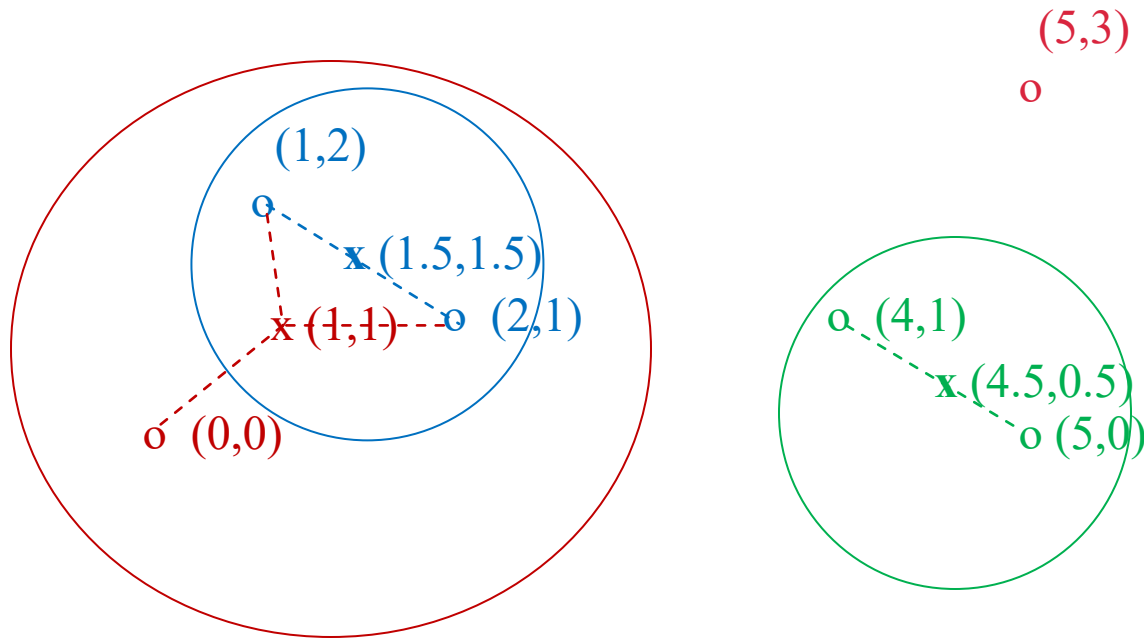
o ... data point

x ... centroid



**Dendrogram**

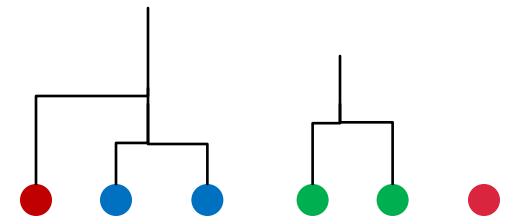
# Example: Hierarchical clustering



**Data:**

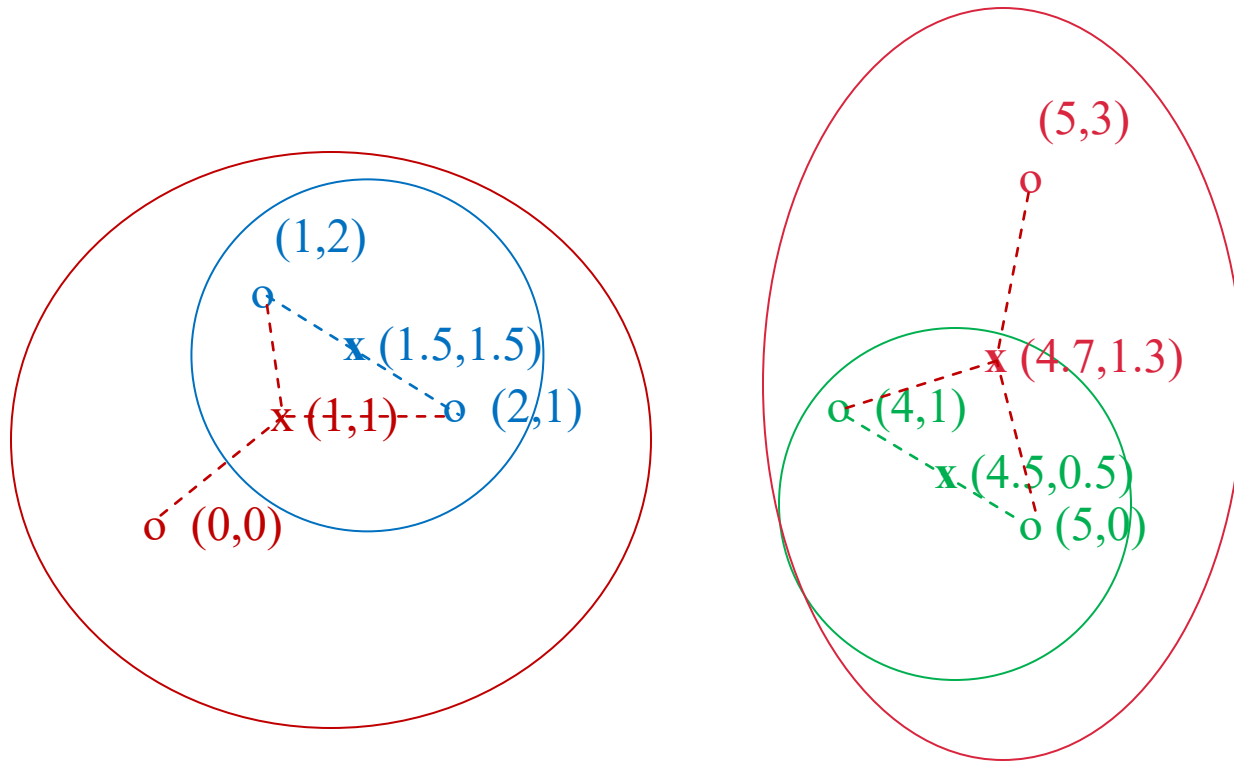
$\circ$  ... data point

$\bar{x}$  ... centroid



**Dendrogram**

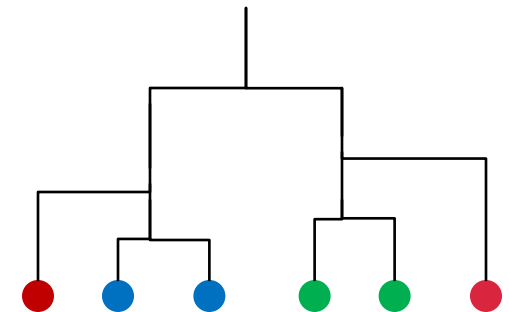
# Example: Hierarchical clustering



**Data:**

$\circ$  ... data point

$\bar{x}$  ... centroid



**Dendrogram**

# And in the Non-Euclidean Case?

## What about the Non-Euclidean case?

- The only “locations” we can talk about are the points themselves
  - i.e., there is no “average” of two points (e.g. sets)
- **Approach 1:**
  - **(1.1) How to represent a cluster of many points?**  
*clustroid* = (data)point “closest” to other points
  - **(1.2) How do you determine the “nearness” of clusters?** Treat clustroid as if it were centroid, when computing inter-cluster distances

# “Closest” Point?

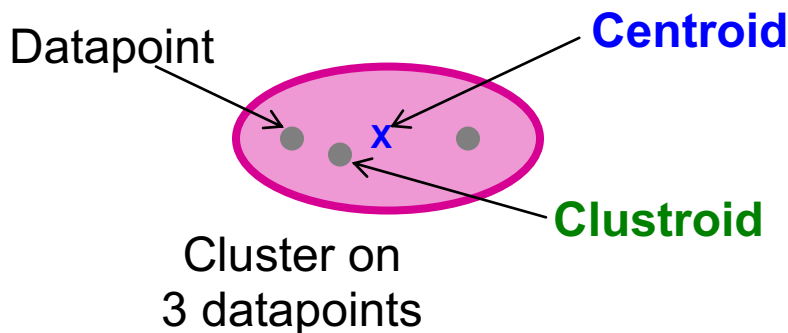
## (1.1) How to represent a cluster of many points?

**clustroid** = point “closest” to other points

### ■ Possible meanings of “closest”:

- Smallest maximum distance to other points
- Smallest average distance to other points
- Smallest sum of squares of distances to other points
  - For distance metric  $d$  clustroid  $c$  of cluster  $C$  is

$$\arg \min_c \sum_{x \in C} d(x, c)^2$$



**Centroid** is the avg. of all (data)points in the cluster. This means centroid is an “artificial” point.

**Clustroid** is an **existing** (data)point that is “closest” to all other points in the cluster.



# Defining “Nearness” of Clusters

**(1.2) How do you determine the “nearness” of clusters?** Treat clustroid as if it were centroid, when computing intercluster distances.

**Approach 2:** No centroid, just define distance directly between clusters

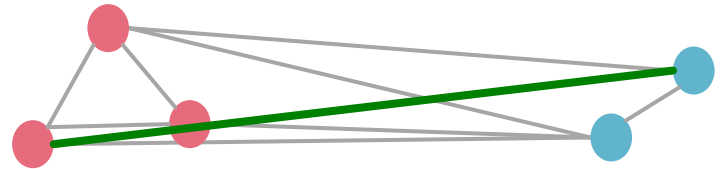
**Intercluster distance** = minimum of the distances between any two points, one from each cluster

# Cohesion

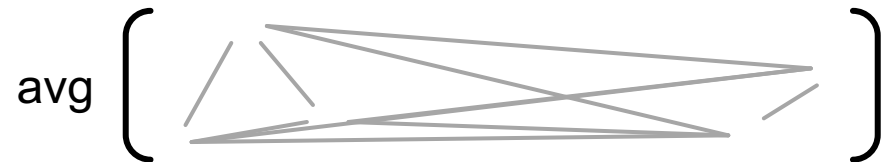
**Approach 3:** Pick a notion of **cohesion** of clusters

- Merge clusters whose *union* is most cohesive

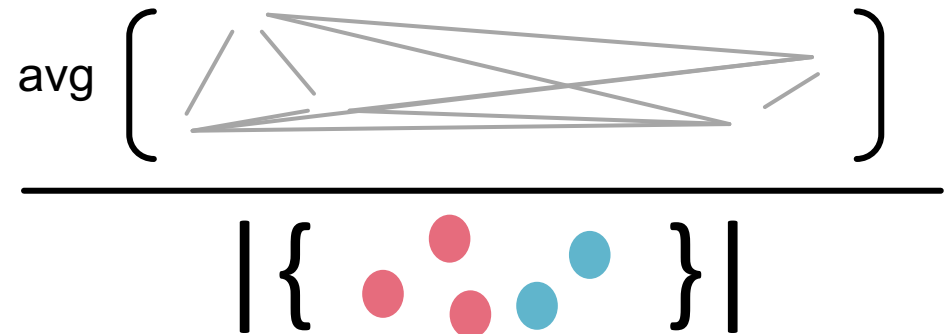
**3.1: diameter** of the merged cluster = maximum distance between points in the cluster



**3.2: average distance** between points in the cluster



**3.3: density-based approach**  
Take the diameter or avg. distance, and divide by the number of points in the cluster



# When to stop?

## When do we stop merging clusters?

- When some number  $k$  of clusters are found (assumes we know the number of clusters)
- When stopping criterion is met
  - Stop if diameter exceeds threshold
  - Stop if density is below some threshold
  - Stop if merging clusters yields a bad cluster
    - E.g., diameter suddenly jumps
- Keep merging until there is only 1 cluster left

# Which is Best?

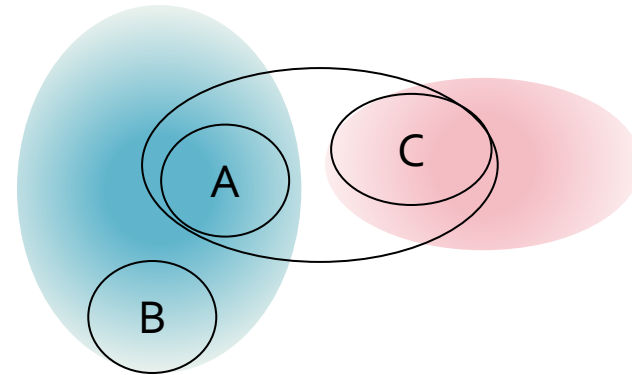
- It really depends on the shape of clusters.
  - Which you may not know in advance.

# Which is Best?

- It really depends on the shape of clusters.
  - Which you may not know in advance.
- **Example:** We'll compare two approaches:
  1. Merge clusters with smallest distance between centroids (or clustroids for non-Euclidean)
  2. Merge clusters with the smallest distance between two points, one from each cluster

# Case 1: Convex Clusters

- Centroid-based merging works well.
- But merger based on closest members might accidentally merge incorrectly.

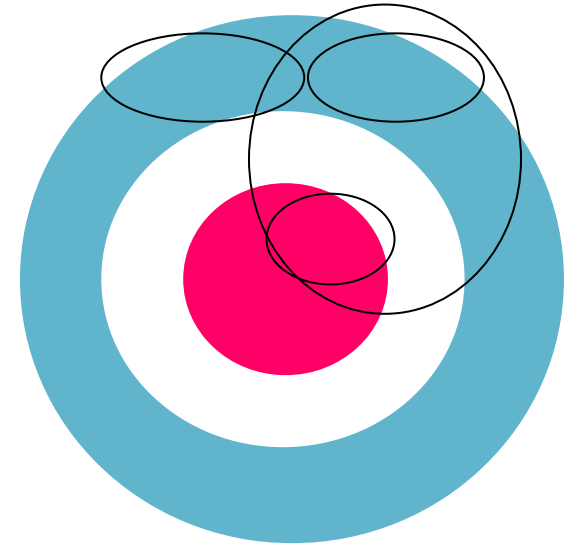


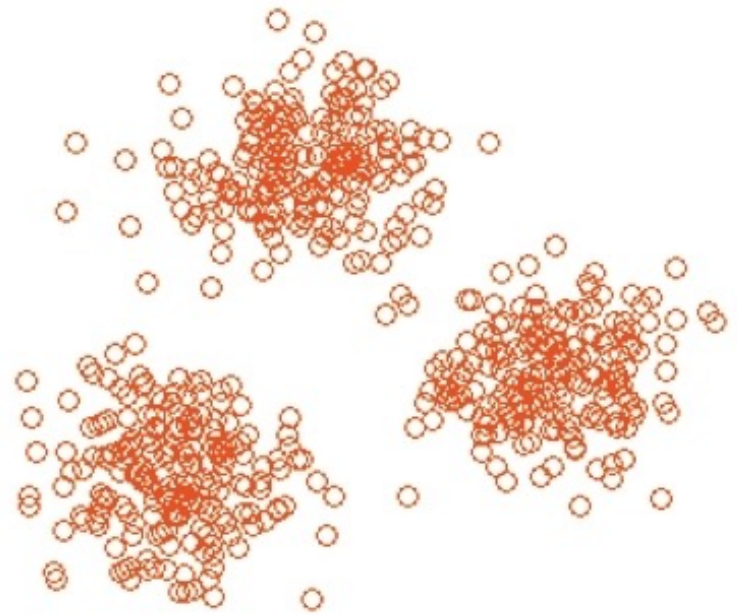
A and B have closer centroids than A and C, but closest points are from A and C.

 Data density

# Case 2: Concentric Clusters

- Linking based on closest members works well
- But Centroid-based linking might cause errors





# *k*-means clustering

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# $k$ -means Algorithm(s)

- Assumes Euclidean space/distance
- Start by picking  $k$ , the number of clusters
- Initialize clusters by picking one point per cluster
  - **Example:** Pick one point at random, then  $k-1$  other points, each as far away as possible from the previous points
    - OK, as long as there are no *outliers* (points that are far from any reasonable cluster)

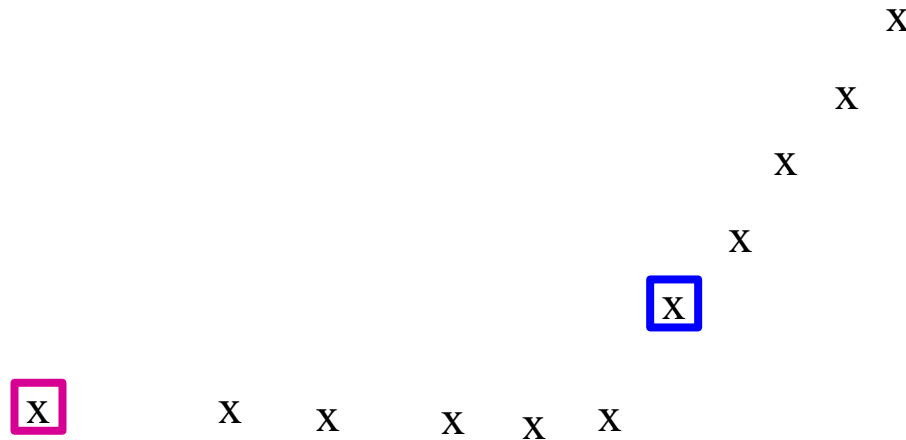
# k-Means++

- **Basic idea:** Pick a small sample of points  $S$ , cluster them by any algorithm, and use the centroids as a seed
- In **k-means++**, sample size  $|S| = k$  times a factor that is logarithmic in the total number of points
- **How to pick sample points:** Visit points in random order, but the probability of adding a point  $p$  to the sample is proportional to  $D(p)^2$ .
  - $D(p)$  = distance between  $p$  and the nearest picked point.

# Populating Clusters

- **1)** For each point, place it in the cluster whose current centroid it is nearest
- **2)** After all points are assigned, update the locations of centroids of the  $k$  clusters
- **3)** Reassign all points to their closest centroid
  - Sometimes moves points between clusters
- **Repeat 2 and 3 until convergence**
  - **Convergence:** Points don't move between clusters and centroids stabilize

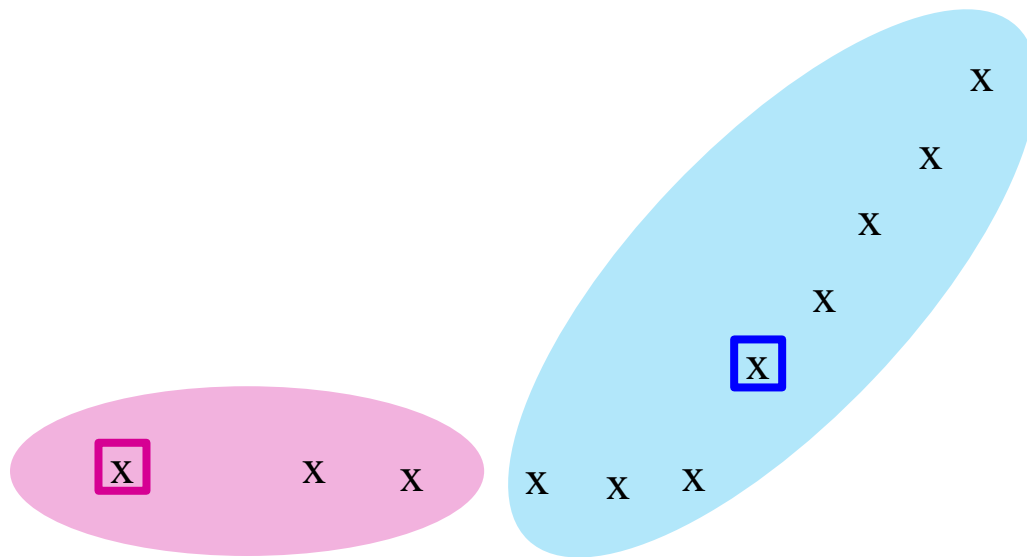
# Example: Assigning Clusters



x ... data point  
□ ... centroid

**Clusters after round 1**

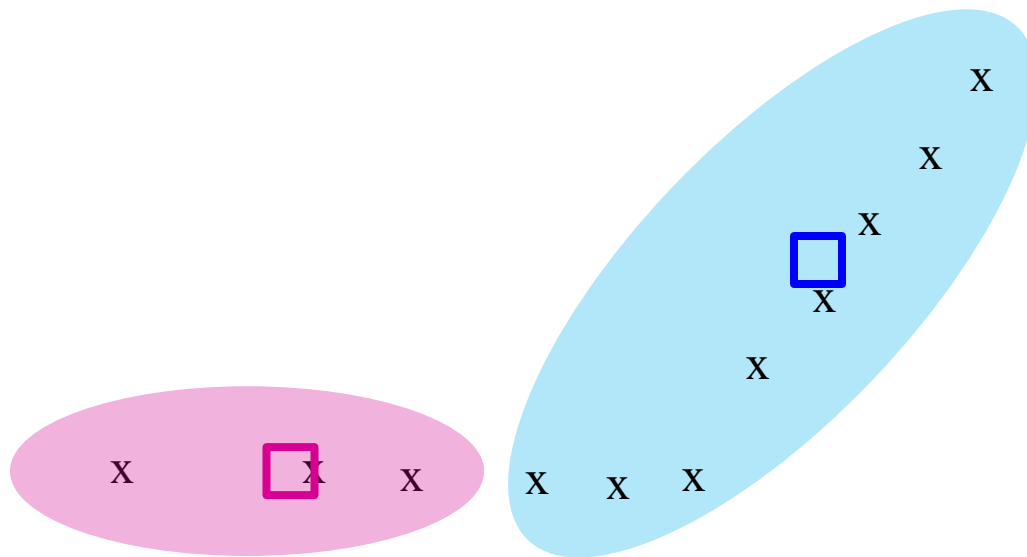
# Example: Assigning Clusters



x ... data point  
□ ... centroid

**Clusters after round 1**

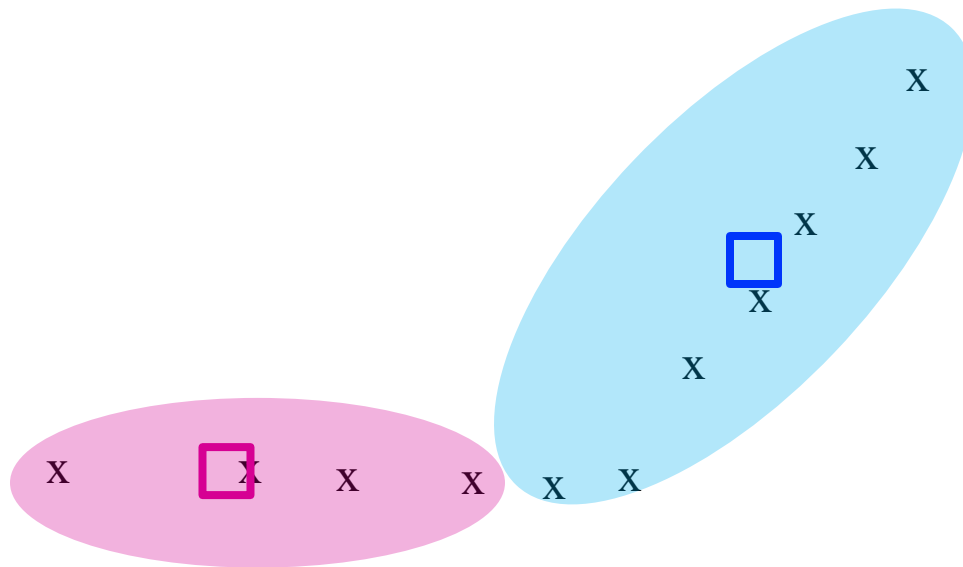
# Example: Assigning Clusters



x ... data point  
□ ... centroid

**Clusters after round 2**

# Example: Assigning Clusters



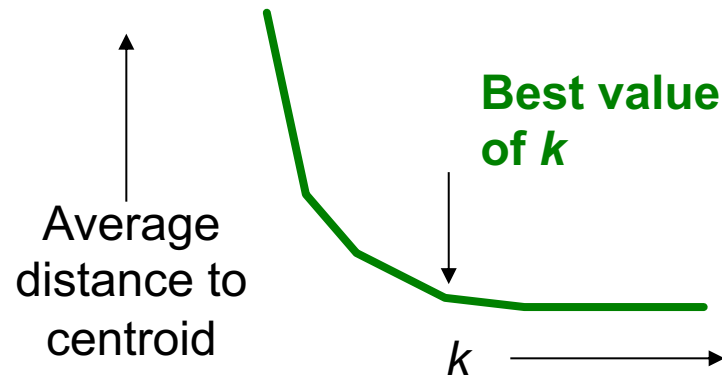
x ... data point  
□ ... centroid

**Clusters after round 2**

# Getting the $k$ right

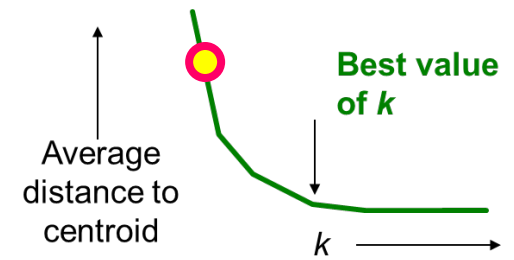
## How to select $k$ ?

- Try different  $k$ , looking at the change in the average distance to centroid as  $k$  increases
- Average falls rapidly until right  $k$ , then changes little

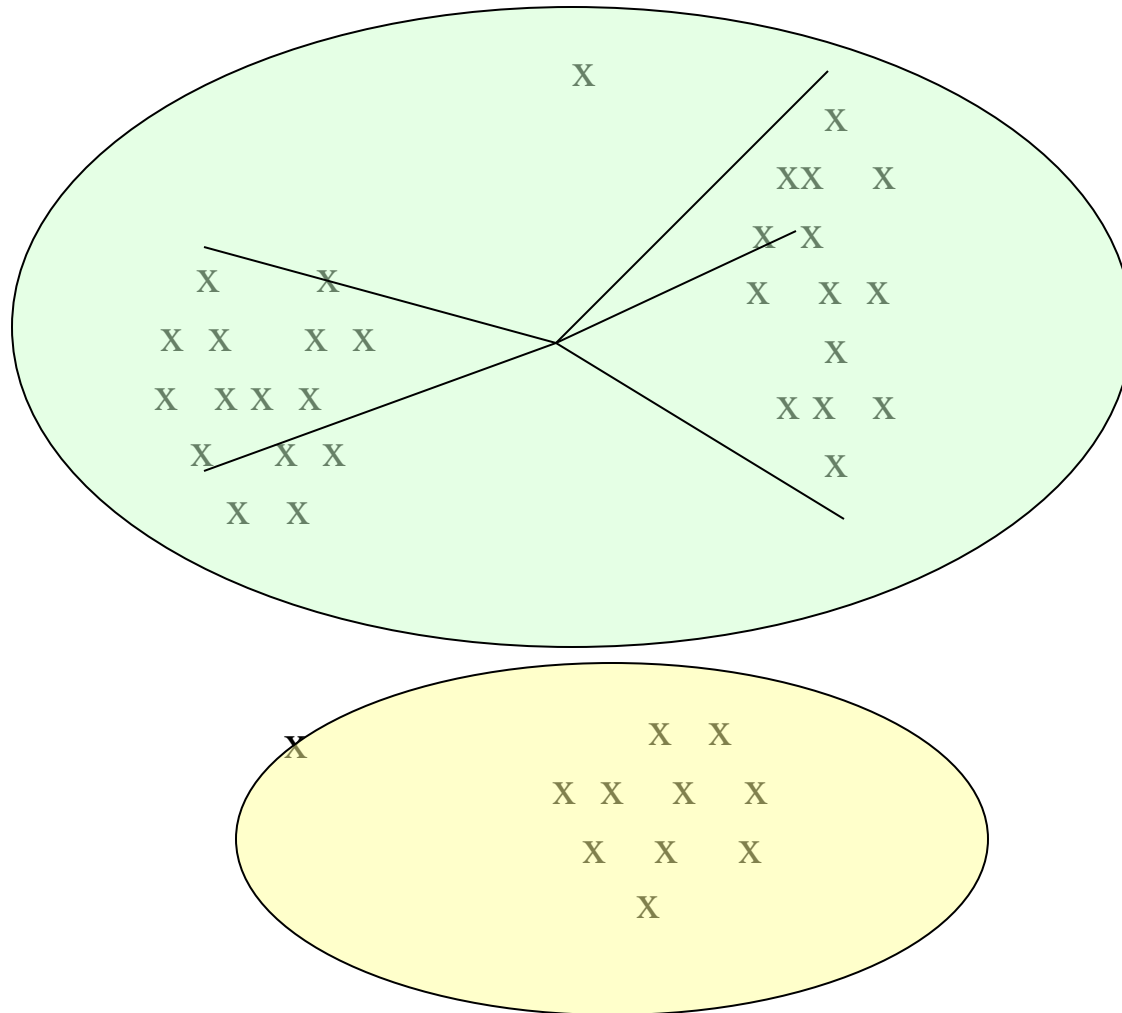




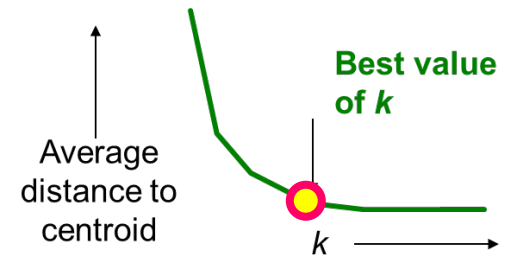
# Example: Picking $k$



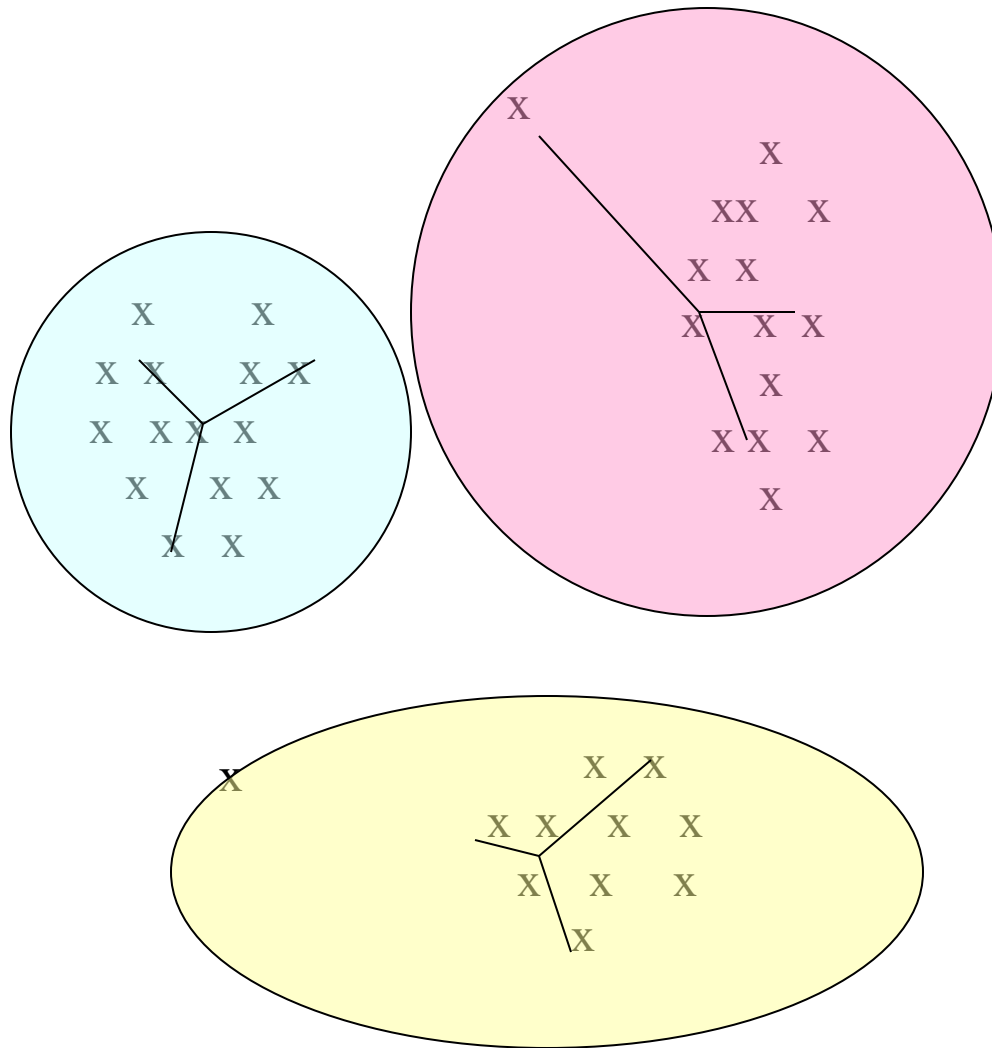
Too few;  
many long  
distances  
to centroid



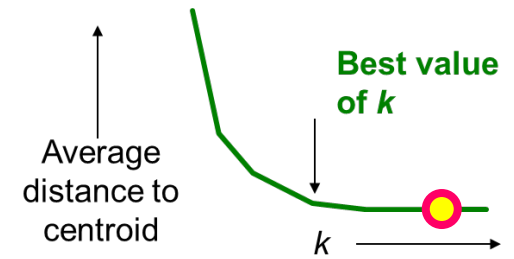
# Example: Picking $k$



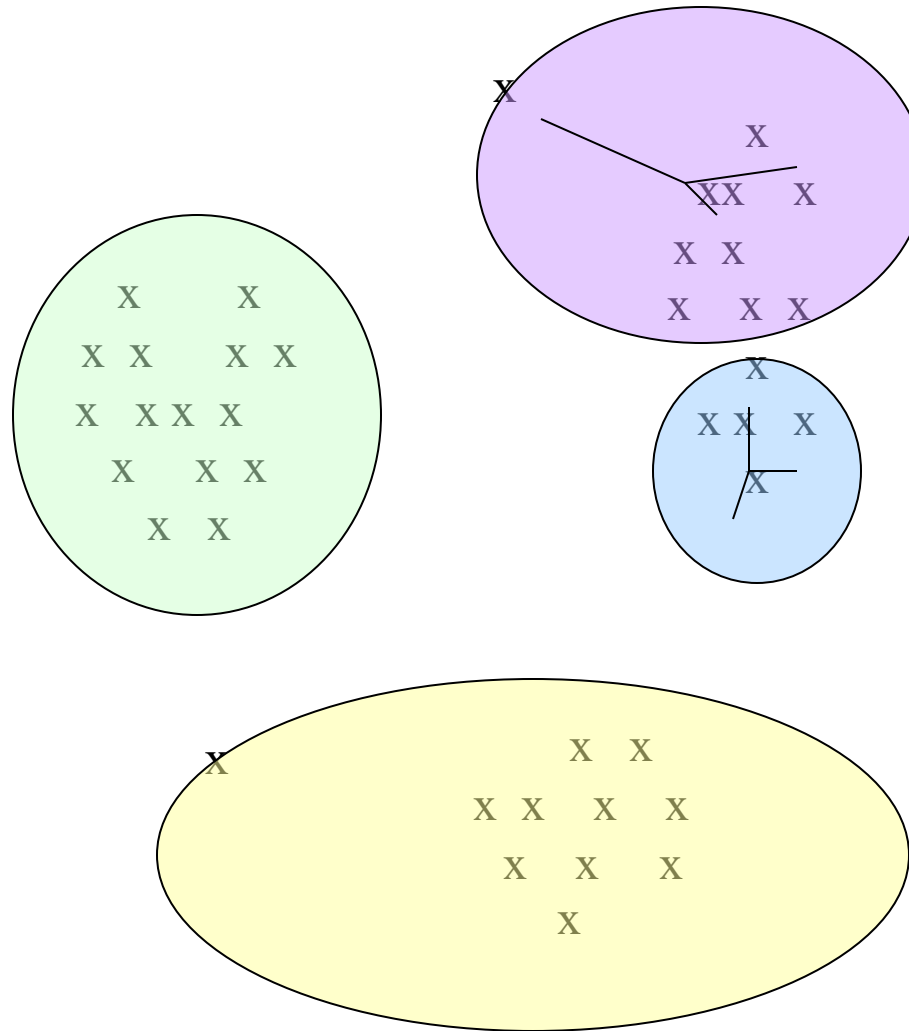
Just right;  
distances  
rather short



# Example: Picking $k$



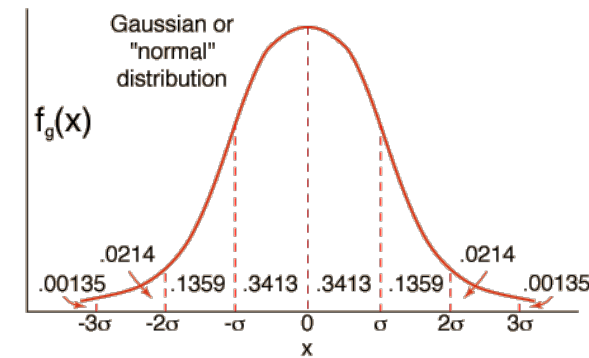
Too many;  
little improvement  
in average  
distance



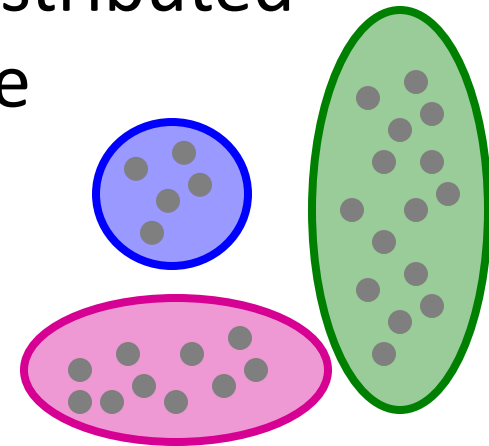
# The BFR Algorithm

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# BFR Algorithm



- **BFR** [Bradley-Fayyad-Reina] is a variant of  $k$ -means designed to handle **very large** (disk-resident) data sets
- **Assumes** that clusters are normally distributed around a centroid in a Euclidean space
  - Standard deviations in different dimensions may vary
    - Clusters are axis-aligned ellipses
- Goal is to find cluster centroids; point assignment can be done in a second pass through the data.



# BFR Overview

- **Efficient way to summarize clusters:** Want memory required  $O(\text{clusters})$  and not  $O(\text{data})$
- **IDEA: Rather than keeping points, BFR keeps summary statistics of groups of points**
  - **3 sets: Cluster summaries, Outliers, Points to be clustered**
- **Overview of the algorithm:**
  - **1.** Initialize  $K$  clusters/centroids
  - **2.** Load in a bag of points from disk
  - **3.** Assign new points to one of the  $K$  original clusters, if they are within some distance threshold of the cluster
  - **4.** Cluster the remaining points, and create new clusters
  - **5.** Try to merge new clusters from step 4 with any of the existing clusters
  - **6.** Repeat steps 2-5 until all points are examined

# BFR Algorithm

- **Points are read from disk one main-memory-full at a time**
- **Most points from previous memory loads are summarized by simple statistics**
- **Step 1)** From the initial load we select the initial  $k$  centroids by some sensible approach:
  - Take  $k$  random points
  - Take a small random sample and cluster optimally
  - Take a sample; pick a random point, and then  $k-1$  more points, each as far from the previously selected points as possible

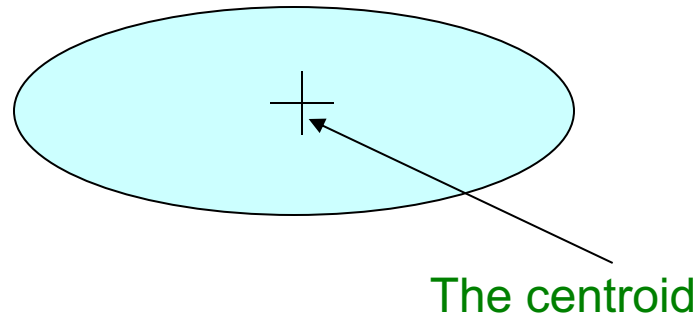
# Three Classes of Points

## 3 sets of points which we keep track of:

- **Discard set (DS):**
  - Points close enough to a centroid to be summarized
- **Compression set (CS):**
  - Groups of points that are close together but not close to any existing centroid
  - These points are summarized, but not assigned to a cluster
- **Retained set (RS):**
  - Isolated points waiting to be assigned to a compression set



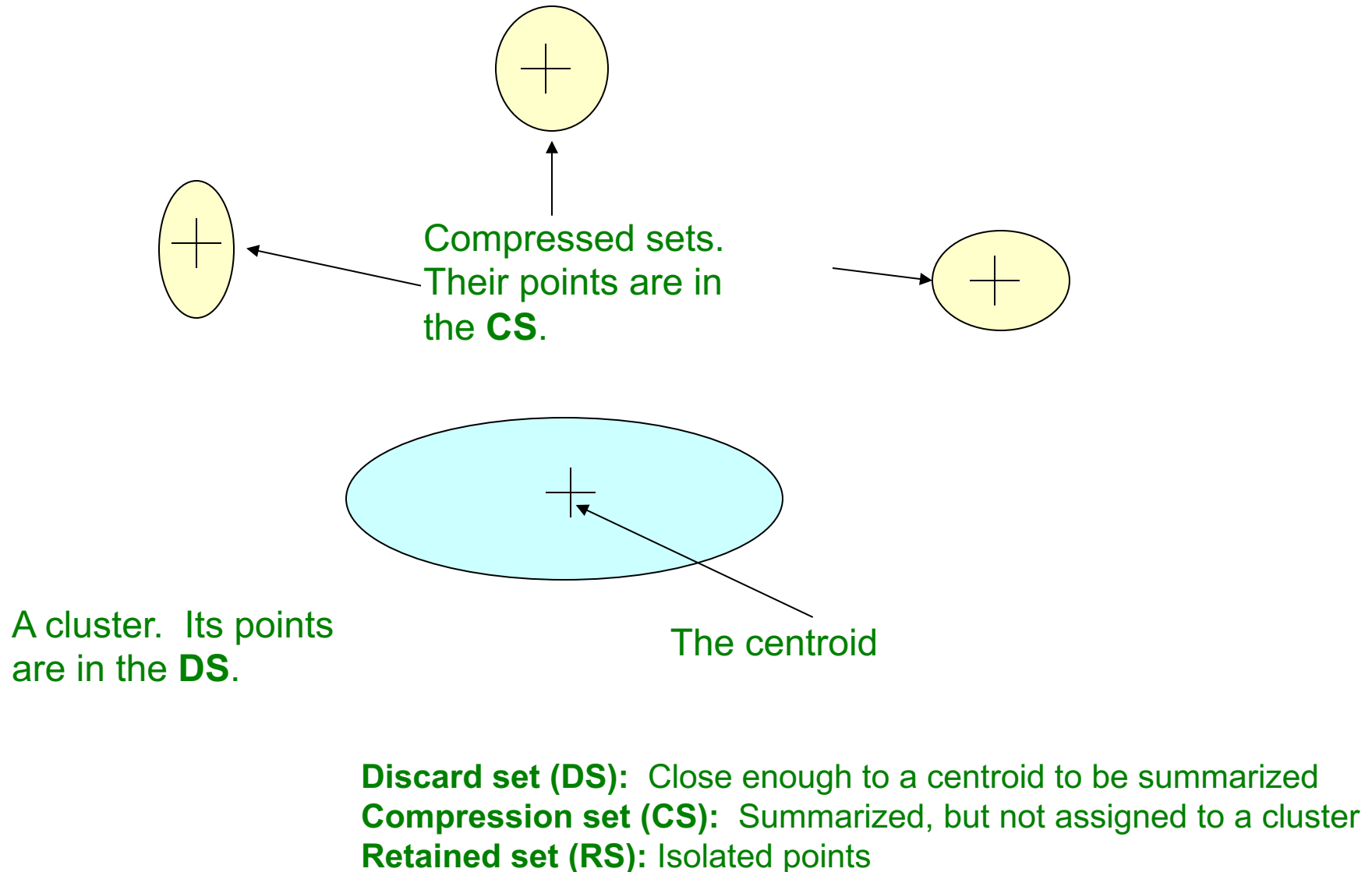
# BFR: “Galaxies” Picture



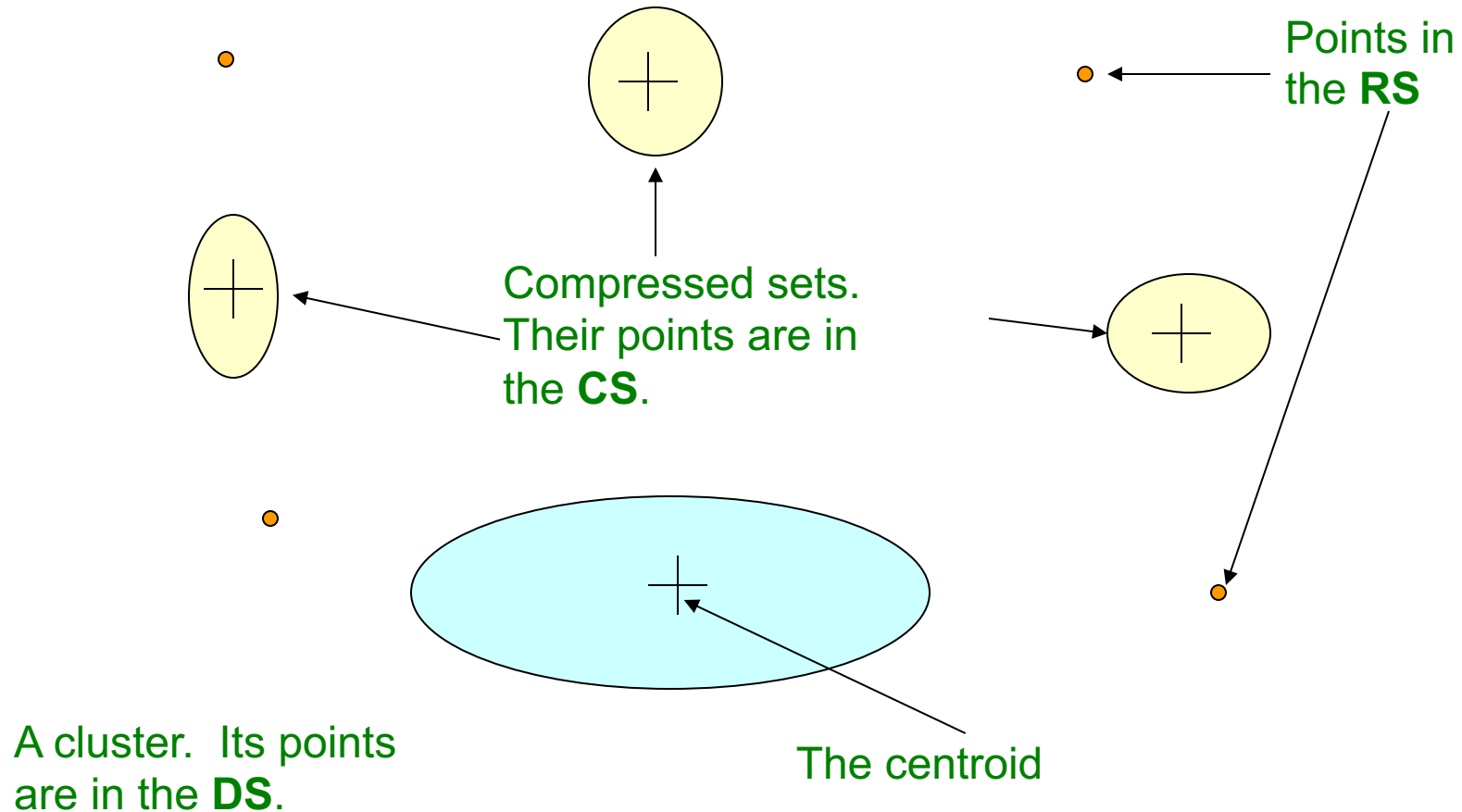
A cluster. Its points are in the **DS**.

**Discard set (DS):** Close enough to a centroid to be summarized  
**Compression set (CS):** Summarized, but not assigned to a cluster  
**Retained set (RS):** Isolated points

# BFR: “Galaxies” Picture



# BFR: "Galaxies" Picture

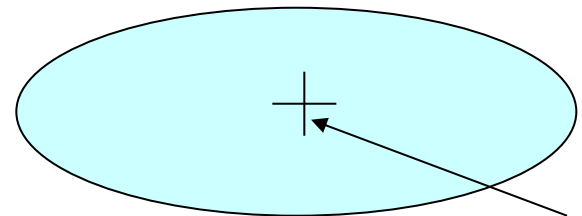


**Discard set (DS):** Close enough to a centroid to be summarized  
**Compression set (CS):** Summarized, but not assigned to a cluster  
**Retained set (RS):** Isolated points

# Summarizing Sets of Points

For each cluster, the discard set (DS) is summarized by:

- The number of points,  $N$
- The vector  $SUM$ , whose  $i^{\text{th}}$  component is the sum of the coordinates of the points in the  $i^{\text{th}}$  dimension
- The vector  $SUMSQ$ :  $i^{\text{th}}$  component = sum of squares of coordinates in  $i^{\text{th}}$  dimension



A cluster.

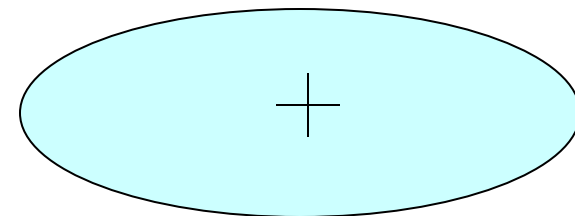
All its points are in the **DS**.

The centroid

# Summarizing Points: Comments

- $2d + 1$  values represent any size cluster
  - $d$  = number of dimensions
- Average in **each dimension** (**the centroid**) can be calculated as  $\text{SUM}_i / N$ 
  - $\text{SUM}_i = i^{\text{th}}$  component of SUM
- Variance of a cluster's discard set in dimension  $i$  is:  $(\text{SUMSQ}_i / N) - (\text{SUM}_i / N)^2$ 
  - And standard deviation is the square root of that
- **Next step: Actual clustering**

**Note:** Dropping the “axis-aligned” clusters assumption would require storing full covariance matrix to summarize the cluster. So, instead of **SUMSQ** being a  $d$ -dim vector, it would be a  $d \times d$  matrix, which is too big!



# The “Memory-Load” of Points

## Steps 3-5) Processing “Memory-Load” of points:

- **Step 3)** Find those points that are “**sufficiently close**” to a cluster centroid and add those points to that cluster and the **DS**
  - These points are so close to the centroid that they can be summarized and then discarded
- **Step 4)** Use any in-memory clustering algorithm to cluster the remaining points and the old **RS**
  - Clusters go to the **CS**; outlying points to the **RS**

**Discard set (DS):** Close enough to a centroid to be summarized.

**Compression set (CS):** Summarized, but not assigned to a cluster

**Retained set (RS):** Isolated points

# The “Memory-Load” of Points

## Steps 3-5) Processing “Memory-Load” of points:

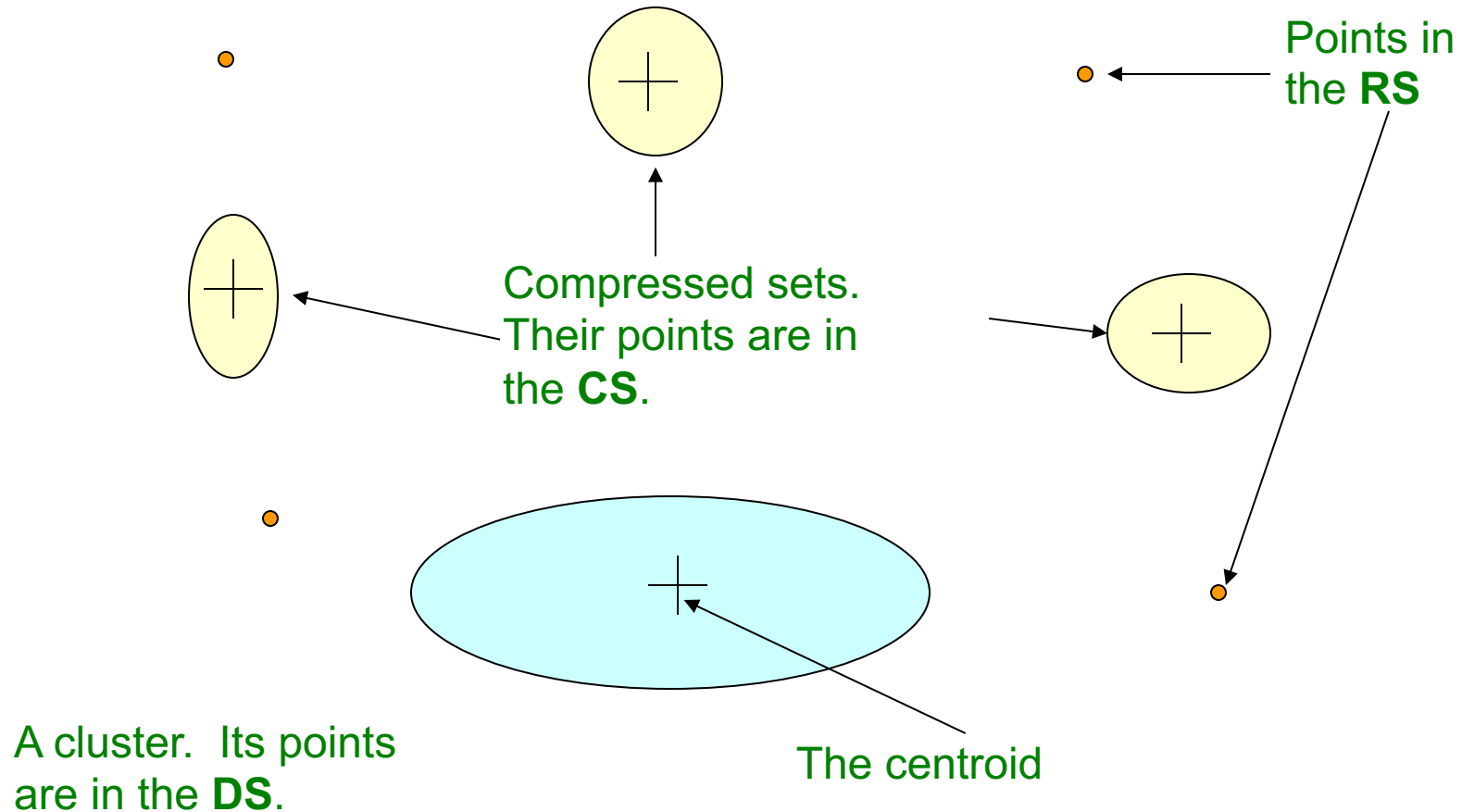
- **Step 5) DS set:** Adjust statistics of the clusters to account for the new points
  - Add  $N_s$ ,  $SUM_s$ ,  $SUMSQ_s$
  - Consider merging compressed sets in the **CS**
- **If this is the last round**, merge all compressed sets in the **CS** and all **RS** points into their nearest cluster

**Discard set (DS):** Close enough to a centroid to be summarized.

**Compression set (CS):** Summarized, but not assigned to a cluster

**Retained set (RS):** Isolated points

# BFR: "Galaxies" Picture



**Discard set (DS):** Close enough to a centroid to be summarized  
**Compression set (CS):** Summarized, but not assigned to a cluster  
**Retained set (RS):** Isolated points

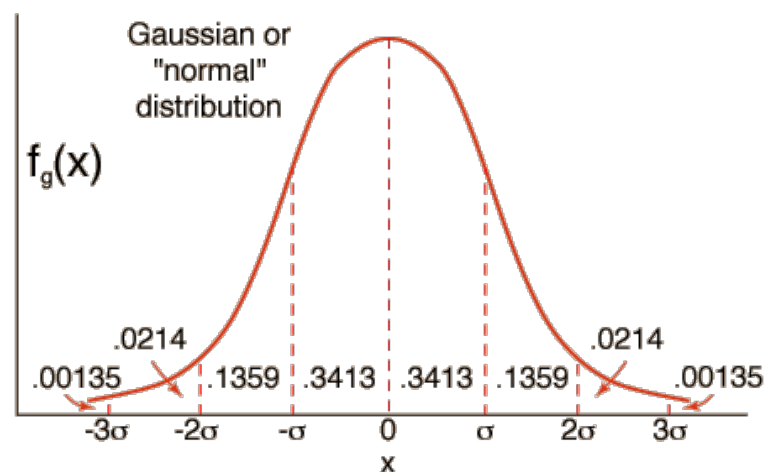


# A Few Details...

- **Q1)** How do we decide if a point is “close enough” to a cluster that we will add the point to that cluster?
- **Q2)** How do we decide whether two compressed sets (CS) deserve to be combined into one?

# How Close is Close Enough?

- **Q1)** We need a way to decide whether to put a new point into a cluster (and discard)
- **BFR** suggests two ways:
  - The **Mahalanobis distance** is less than a threshold
  - High likelihood of the point belonging to currently nearest centroid



# Mahalanobis Distance

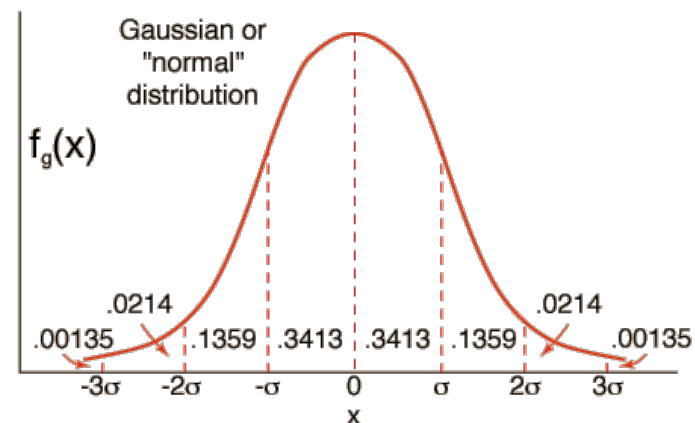
- **Normalized Euclidean distance from centroid**
- For point  $(x_1, \dots, x_d)$  and centroid  $(c_1, \dots, c_d)$ 
  1. Normalize in each dimension:  $y_i = (x_i - c_i) / \sigma_i$
  2. Take sum of the squares of the  $y_i$
  3. Take the square root

$$d(x, c) = \sqrt{\sum_{i=1}^d \left( \frac{x_i - c_i}{\sigma_i} \right)^2}$$

$\sigma_i$  ... standard deviation of points in the cluster in the  $i^{\text{th}}$  dimension

# Mahalanobis Distance

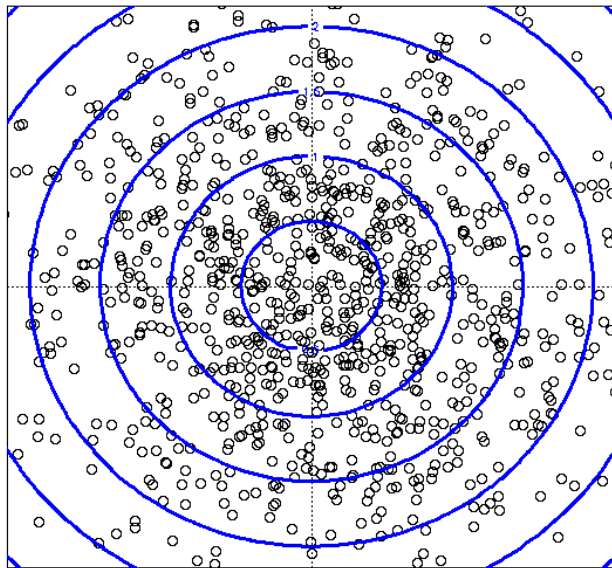
- If clusters are normally distributed in  $d$  dimensions, then after transformation, one standard deviation  $\Rightarrow$  Distance  $\sqrt{d}$ 
  - i.e., 68% of the points of the cluster will have a Mahalanobis distance  $< \sqrt{d}$
- Accept a point for a cluster if its M.D. is  $<$  some threshold, e.g. **2** standard deviations



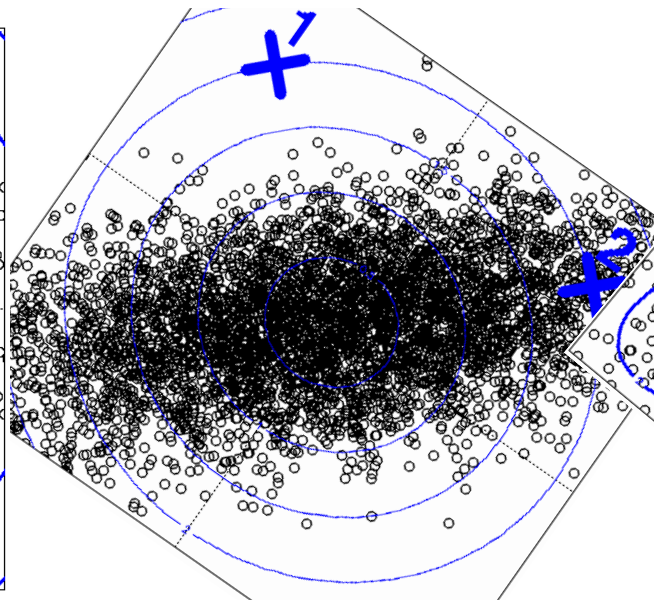
# Picture: Equal M.D. Regions

- **Euclidean vs. Mahalanobis distance**

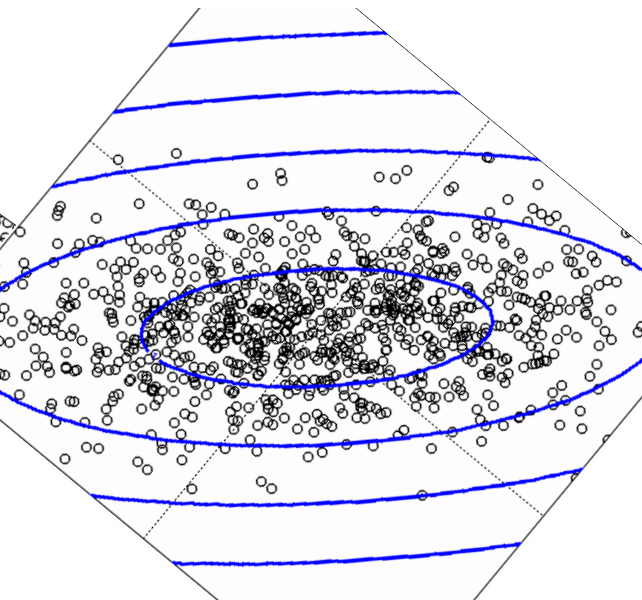
**Contours of equidistant points from the origin**



**Uniformly distributed points,  
Euclidean distance**



**Normally distributed points,  
Euclidean distance**

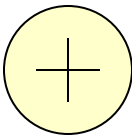
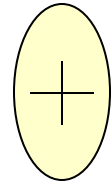


**Normally distributed points,  
Mahalanobis distance**

# Should 2 CS clusters be combined?

## Q2) Should 2 CS clusters be combined?

- Compute the variance of the combined subcluster
  - $N$ ,  $SUM$ , and  $SUMSQ$  allow us to make that calculation quickly
- Combine if the combined variance is below some threshold
- **Many alternatives:** Treat dimensions differently, consider density



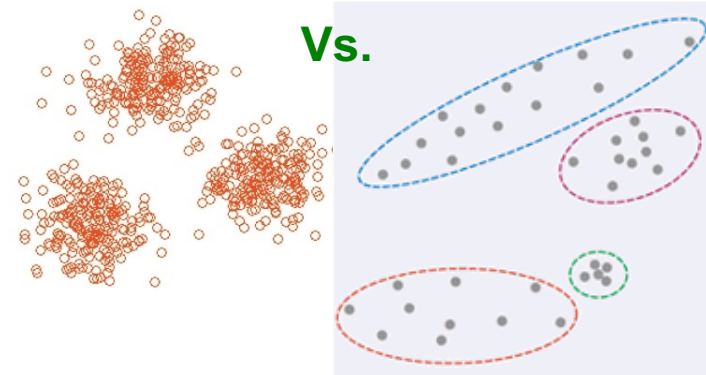
# The CURE Algorithm

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# The CURE Algorithm

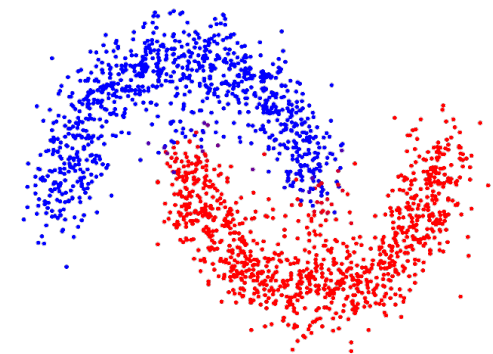
- **Problem with BFR/*k*-means:**

- Assumes clusters are normally distributed in each dimension
- And axes are fixed – ellipses at an angle are *not OK*



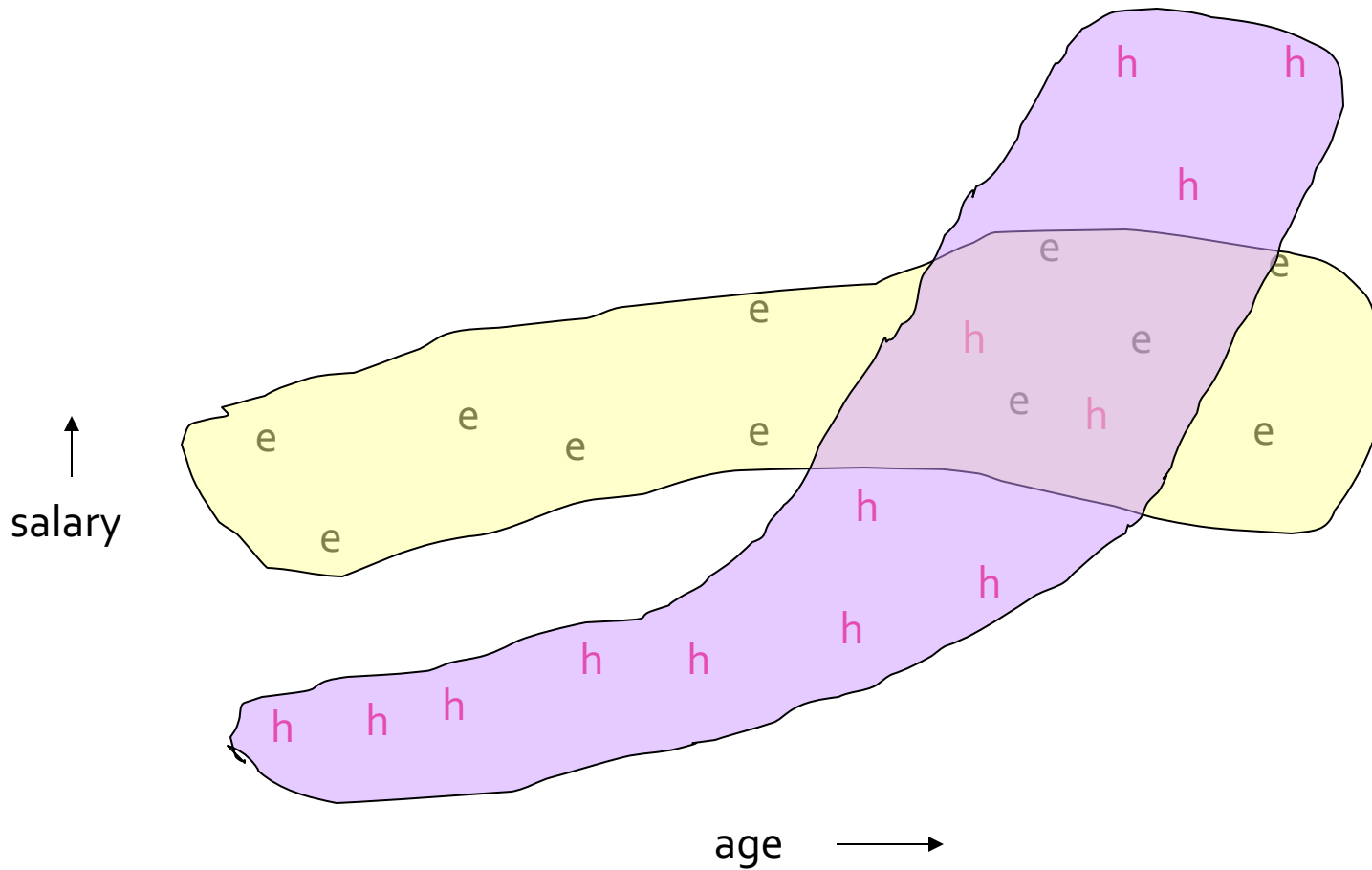
- **CURE (Clustering Using REpresentatives):**

- Assumes a Euclidean distance
- Allows clusters to assume any shape
- **Uses a collection of representative points to represent clusters**





# Example: University Salaries

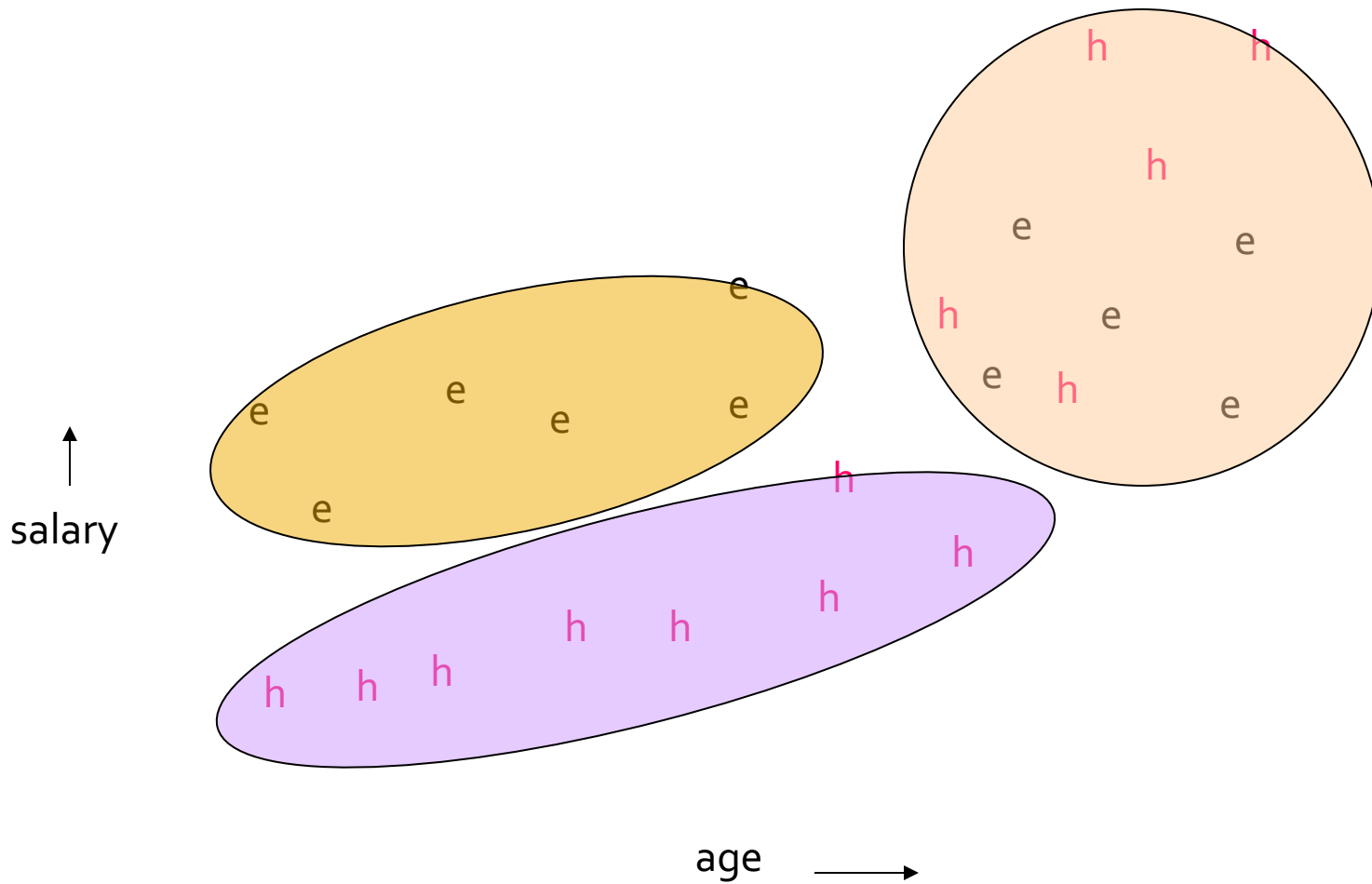


# Starting CURE

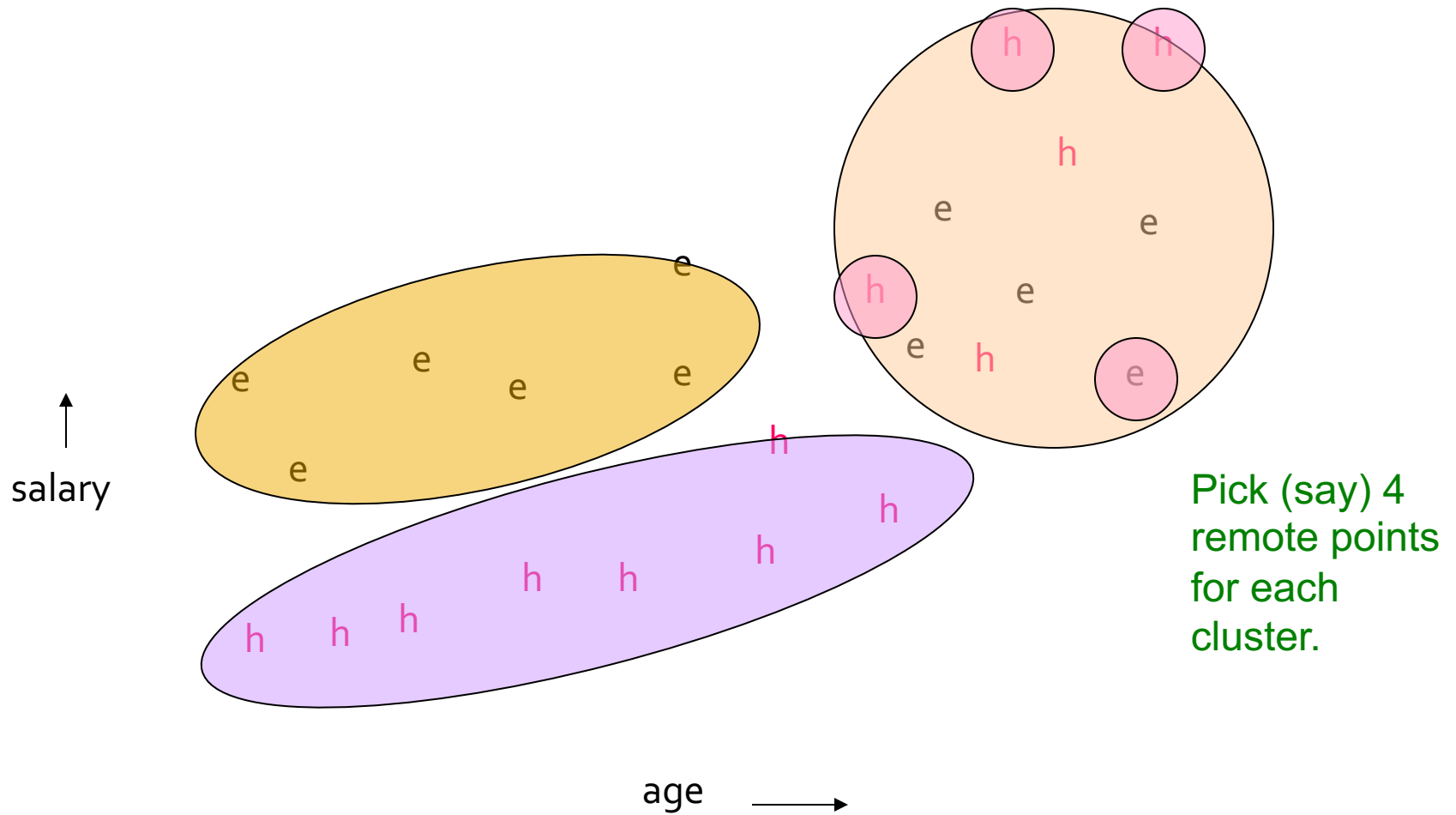
## 2 Pass algorithm. Pass 1:

- **0) Pick a random sample of points that fit in main memory**
- **1) Initial clusters:**
  - Cluster these points hierarchically – group nearest points/clusters
- **2) Pick representative points:**
  - For each cluster, pick a sample of points, as dispersed as possible
  - From the sample, pick representatives by moving them (say) 20% toward the centroid of the cluster

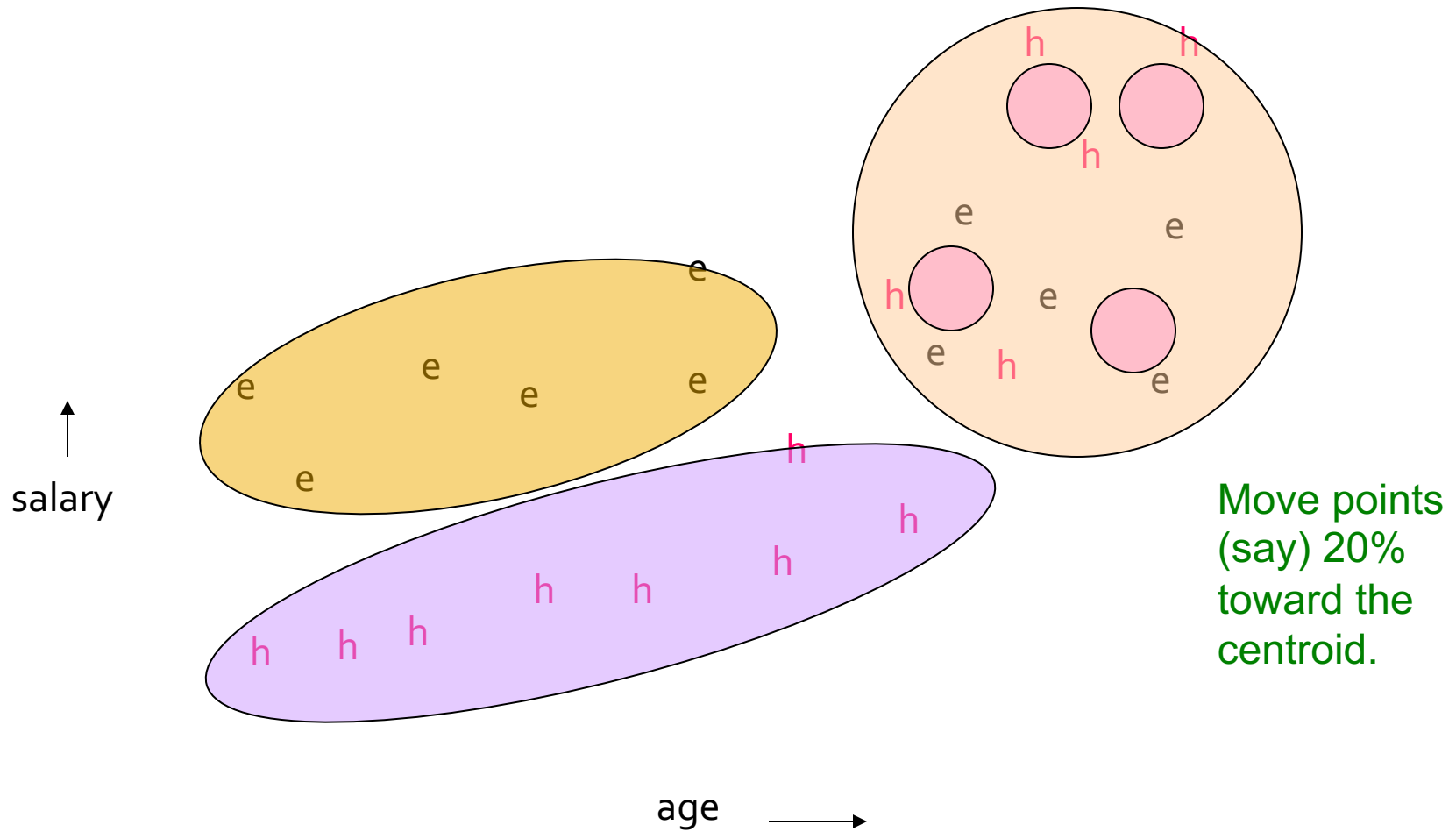
# Example: Initial Clusters



# Example: Pick Dispersed Points



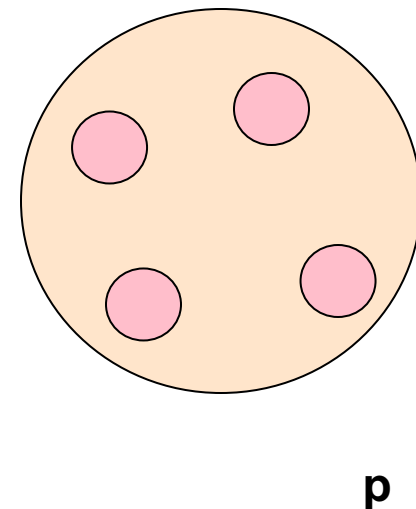
# Example: Pick Dispersed Points



# Finishing CURE

## Pass 2:

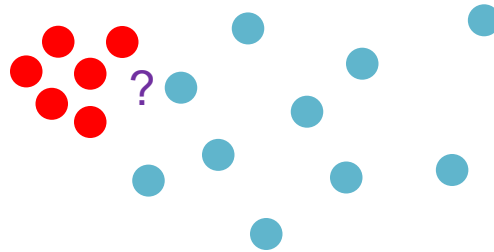
- Now, rescan the whole dataset and visit each point  $p$  in the data set
- Place it in the “closest cluster”
  - Normal definition of “closest”:  
Find the closest representative point to  $p$  and assign it to representative’s cluster



# Why the 20% Move Inward?

## Intuition:

- A large, dispersed cluster will have large moves from its boundary
- A small, dense cluster will have little move.
- Favors a small, dense cluster that is near a larger dispersed cluster



# Summary

- **Clustering:** Given a **set of points**, with a notion of **distance** between points, **group the points** into some number of *clusters*
- **Algorithms:**
  - Agglomerative **hierarchical clustering:**
    - Centroid and clustroid
  - **k-means:**
    - Initialization, picking  $k$
  - **BFR**
  - **CURE**



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