

CSE 417 Algorithms Winter 2007

Huffman Codes: An Optimal Data Compression Method

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Compression Example

a	45%
b	13%
c	12%
d	16%
e	9%
f	5%

100k file, 6 letter alphabet:

File Size:

ASCII, 8 bits/char: 800kbits

$2^3 > 6$; 3 bits/char: 300kbits

Why?

Storage, transmission vs 1Ghz cpu

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Compression Example

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100k file, 6 letter alphabet:

File Size:

ASCII, 8 bits/char: 800kbits

$2^3 > 6$; 3 bits/char: 300kbits

better: \longrightarrow
2.52 bits/char $74\% \cdot 2 + 26\% \cdot 4$: 252kbits
Optimal!

	E.g.:	Why not:
a	00	00
b	01	01
d	10	10
c	1100	110
e	1101	1101
f	1110	1110

1101110 = cf or ec? ₃

Data Compression

Binary character code ("code")

each k-bit source string maps to unique code word (e.g. k=8)

"compression" alg: concatenate code words for successive k-bit "characters" of source

Fixed/variable length codes

all code words equal length?

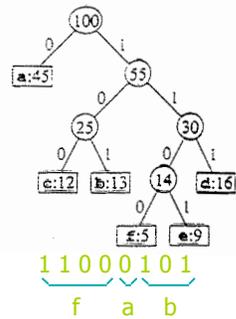
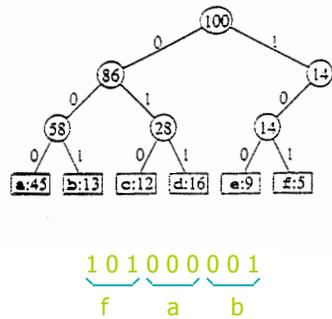
Prefix codes

no code word is prefix of another (unique decoding)

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Prefix Codes = Trees

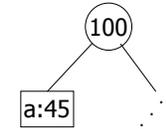
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Greedy Idea #1

a	45%
b	13%
c	12%
d	16%
e	9%
f	5%

Put most frequent under root, then recurse ...



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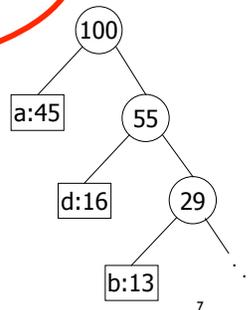
Greedy Idea #1

a	45%
b	13%
c	12%
d	16%
e	9%
f	5%

Put most frequent under root, then recurse

Too greedy:
unbalanced tree

$.45 \cdot 1 + .16 \cdot 2 + .13 \cdot 3 \dots = 2.34$
not too bad, but imagine if all
freqs were $\sim 1/6$:
 $(1+2+3+4+5+5)/6 = 3.33$



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Greedy Idea #2

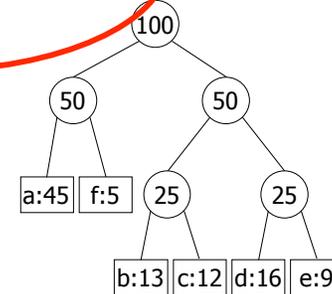
a	45%
b	13%
c	12%
d	16%
e	9%
f	5%

Divide letters into 2
groups, with $\sim 50\%$
weight in each;

recurse
(Shannon-Fano code)

Again, not terrible
 $2 \cdot .5 + 3 \cdot .5 = 2.5$

But this tree
can easily be
improved! (How?)

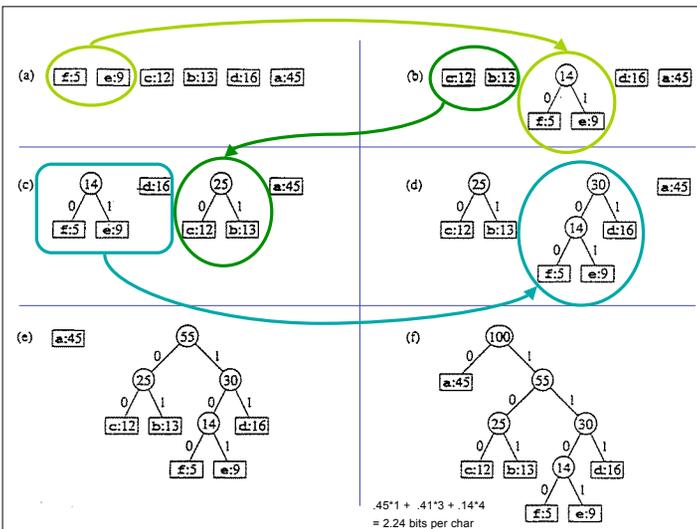
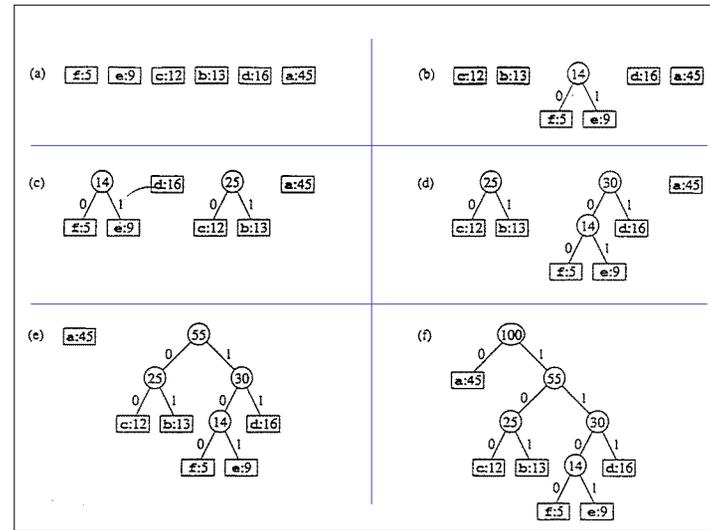
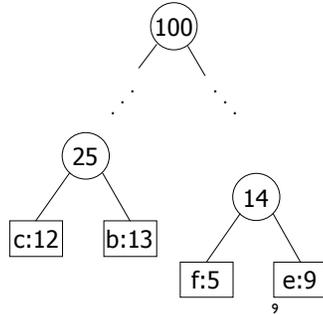


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Greedy idea #3

a	45%
b	13%
c	12%
d	16%
e	9%
f	5%

Group least frequent letters near bottom



Huffman's Algorithm (1952)

Algorithm:

- insert node for each letter into priority queue by freq
- while queue length > 1 do
- remove smallest 2; call them x, y
- make new node z from them, with $f(z) = f(x) + f(y)$
- insert z into queue

Analysis: $O(n)$ heap ops: $O(n \log n)$

Goal: Minimize $B(T) = \sum_{c \in C} \text{freq}(c) * \text{depth}(c)$

Correctness: ???

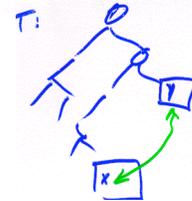
Correctness Strategy

Optimal solution may not be unique, so cannot prove that greedy gives the only possible answer.

Instead, show that greedy's solution is as good as any.

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Defn: A pair of leaves is an inversion if
 $\text{depth}(x) \geq \text{depth}(y)$
 and
 $\text{freq}(x) \geq \text{freq}(y)$



Claim: If we flip an inversion, cost never increases.

Why? All other things being equal, better to give more frequent letter the shorter code.

$$\begin{aligned} & \underbrace{(d(x)*f(x) + d(y)*f(y))}_{\text{before}} - \underbrace{(d(x)*f(y) + d(y)*f(x))}_{\text{after}} = \\ & (d(x) - d(y)) * (f(x) - f(y)) \geq 0 \end{aligned}$$

i.e. non-negative cost savings.

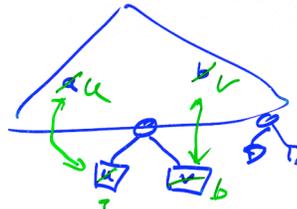
Lemma 1: “Greedy Choice Property”

The 2 least frequent letters might as well be siblings at deepest level

Let a be least freq, b 2nd

Let u, v be siblings at max depth, $f(u) \leq f(v)$
 (why must they exist?)

Then (a,u) and (b,v) are inversions. Swap them.



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Lemma 2

Let (C, f) be a problem instance: C an n-letter alphabet with letter frequencies $f(c)$ for c in C.

For any x, y in C, let C' be the $(n-1)$ letter alphabet $C - \{x,y\} \cup \{z\}$ and for all c in C' define

$$f'(c) = \begin{cases} f(c), & \text{if } c \neq x, y, z \\ f(x) + f(y), & \text{if } c = z \end{cases}$$

Let T' be an optimal tree for (C', f') .

Then



is optimal for (C, f) among all trees having x, y as siblings

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Proof:

$$\begin{aligned} B(T) &= \sum_{c \in C} d_T(c) \cdot f(c) \\ B(T) - B(T') &= d_{T'}(x) \cdot (f(x) + f(y)) - d_{T'}(z) \cdot f'(z) \\ &= (d_{T'}(z) + 1) \cdot f'(z) - d_{T'}(z) \cdot f'(z) \\ &= f'(z) \end{aligned}$$

Suppose \hat{T} (having x & y as siblings) is better than T , i.e.

$B(\hat{T}) < B(T)$. Collapse x & y to z , forming \hat{T}' ; as above:

$$B(\hat{T}) - B(\hat{T}') = f'(z)$$

Then:

$$B(\hat{T}') = B(\hat{T}) - f'(z) < B(T) - f'(z) = B(T')$$

Contradicting optimality of T'

Theorem:

Huffman gives optimal codes

Proof: induction on $|C|$

Basis: $n=1,2$ – immediate

Induction: $n>2$

Let x, y be least frequent

Form $C', f',$ & z , as above

By induction, T' is opt for (C', f')

By lemma 2, $T' \rightarrow T$ is opt for (C, f) among trees with x, y as siblings

By lemma 1, some opt tree has x, y as siblings

Therefore, T is optimal.

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Data Compression

Huffman is optimal.

BUT still might do better!

Huffman encodes fixed length blocks. What if we vary them?

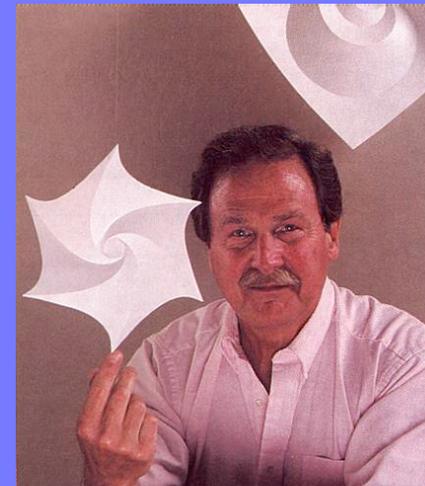
Huffman uses one encoding throughout a file. What if characteristics change?

What if data has structure? E.g. raster images, video,...

Huffman is lossless. Necessary?

LZW, MPEG, ...

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David A. Huffman, 1925-1999

