Problem solving and search

Chapter 3; 1– 4

Outline

- ♢ Problem-solving agents
- ♢ Problem types
- ♢ Problem formulation
- ♢ Example problems
- ♢ Basic search algorithms

Problem-solving agents

Restricted form of general agent:

function SIMPLE-PROBLEM-SOLVING-AGENT(*percept*) **returns** an action
  static: *seq*, an action sequence, initially empty
    state, some description of the current world state
    goal, a goal, initially null
    problem, a problem formulation

  state ← UPDATE-STATE(*state*, *percept*)
  if *seq* is empty **then**
    goal ← FORMULATE-GOAL(*state*)
    problem ← FORMULATE-PROBLEM(*state*, *goal*)
    seq ← SEARCH(*problem*)
  action ← RECOMMENDATION(*seq*, *state*)
  seq ← REMAINDER(*seq*, *state*)
  return *action*

Note: this is offline problem solving; solution executed "eyes closed."
Online problem solving involves acting without complete knowledge.

Example: Romania

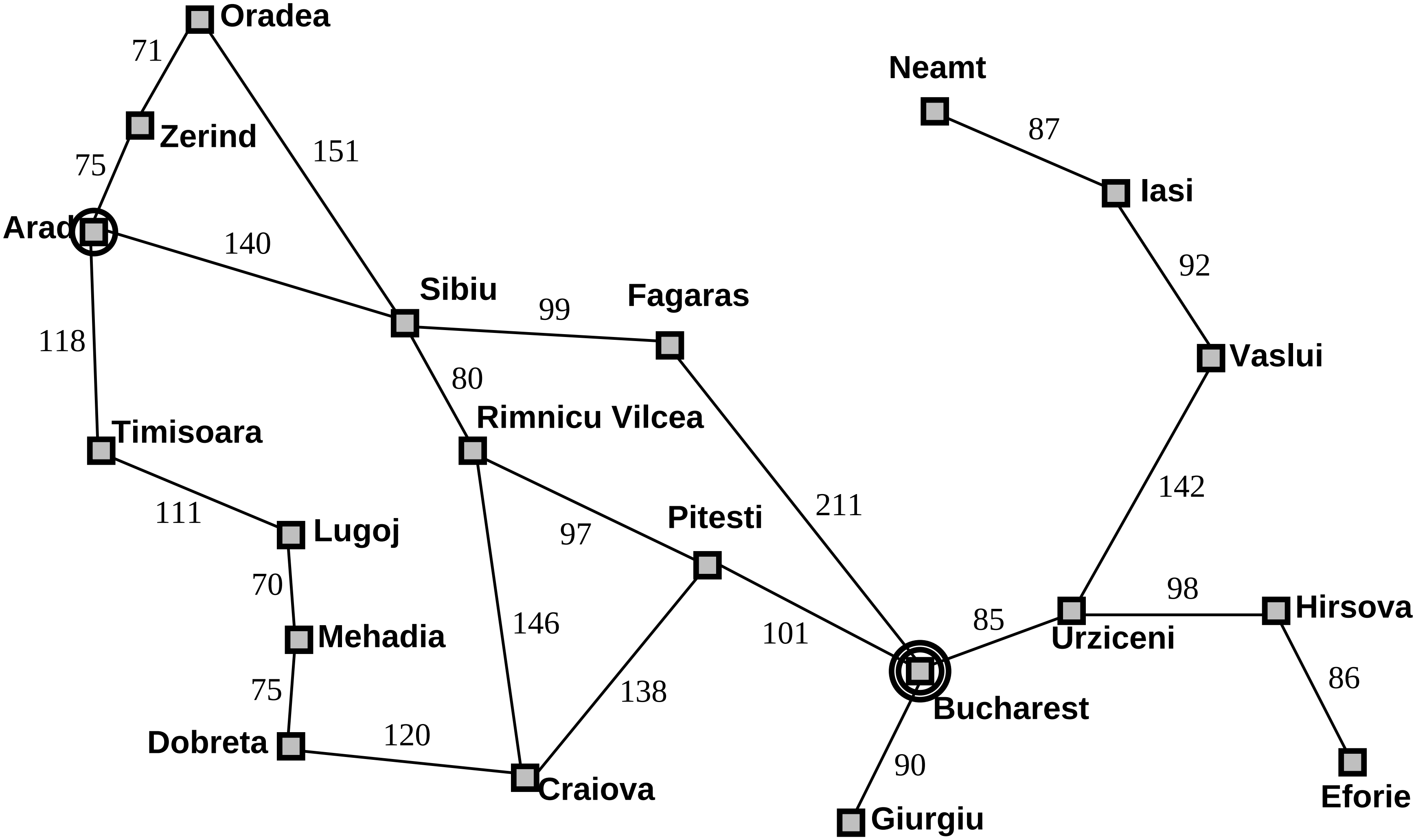
On holiday in Romania; currently in Arad.
Flight leaves tomorrow from Bucharest

Formulate goal:
    be in Bucharest

Formulate problem:
    states: various cities
    actions: drive between cities

Find solution:
    sequence of cities, e.g., Arad, Sibiu, Fagaras, Bucharest

Example: Romania



Single-state problem formulation

A problem is defined by four items:

initial state   e.g., "at Arad"

successor function $S(x)$ = set of action–state pairs
e.g., $S(Arad) = \{\langle Arad \rightarrow Zerind, Zerind\rangle, \ldots\}$

goal test, can be
explicit, e.g., x = "at Bucharest"
implicit, e.g., $NoDirt(x)$

path cost (additive)
e.g., sum of distances, number of actions executed, etc.
$c(x, a, y)$ is the step cost, assumed to be ≥ 0

A solution is a sequence of actions
leading from the initial state to a goal state

Selecting a state space

Real world is absurdly complex

$\Rightarrow$ state space must be **abstracted** for problem solving

(Abstract) state = set of real states

(Abstract) action = complex combination of real actions

e.g., "Arad $\rightarrow$ Zerind" represents a complex set of possible routes, detours, rest stops, etc.

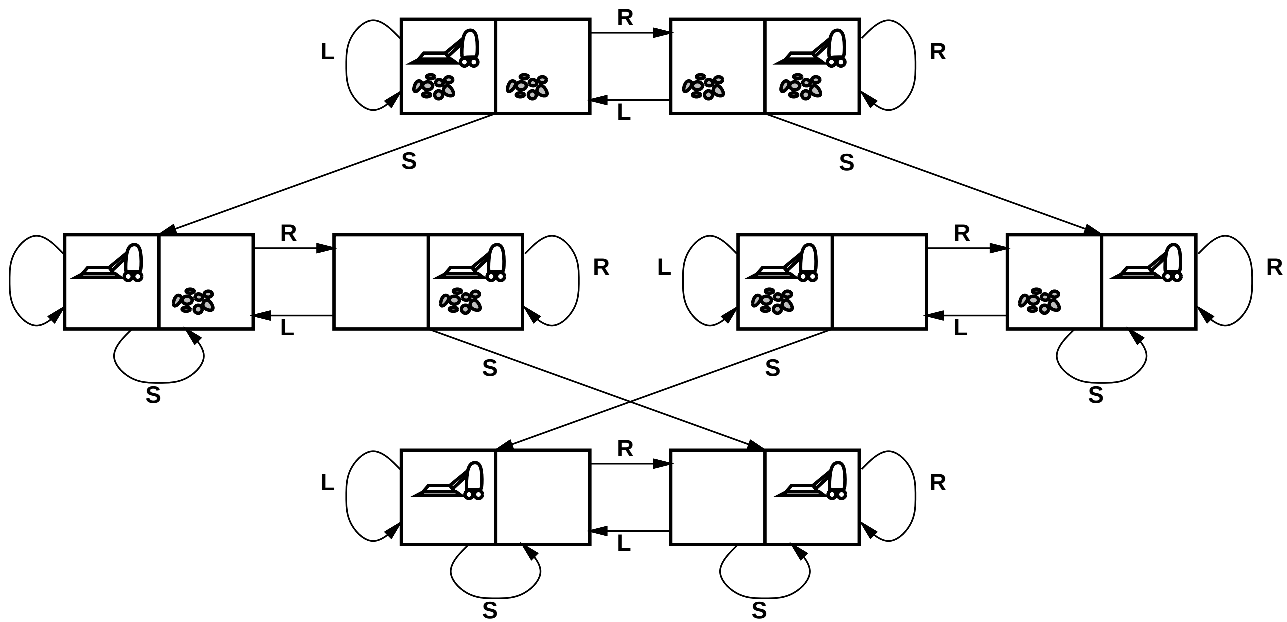
For guaranteed realizability, **any** real state "in Arad" must get to *some* real state "in Zerind"

(Abstract) solution =

set of real paths that are solutions in the real world

Each abstract action should be "easier" than the original problem!

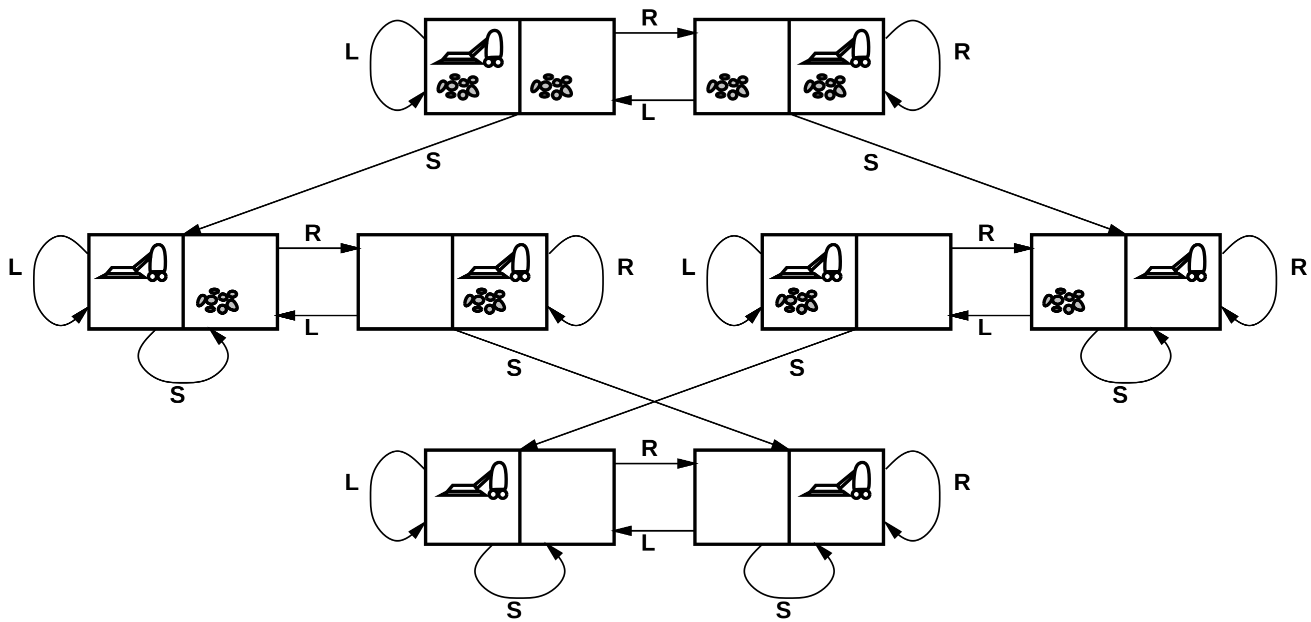
Example: vacuum world state space graph



Links denote actions: L = Left, R = Right, S = Suck

states??
actions??
goal test??
path cost??

Example: vacuum world state space graph



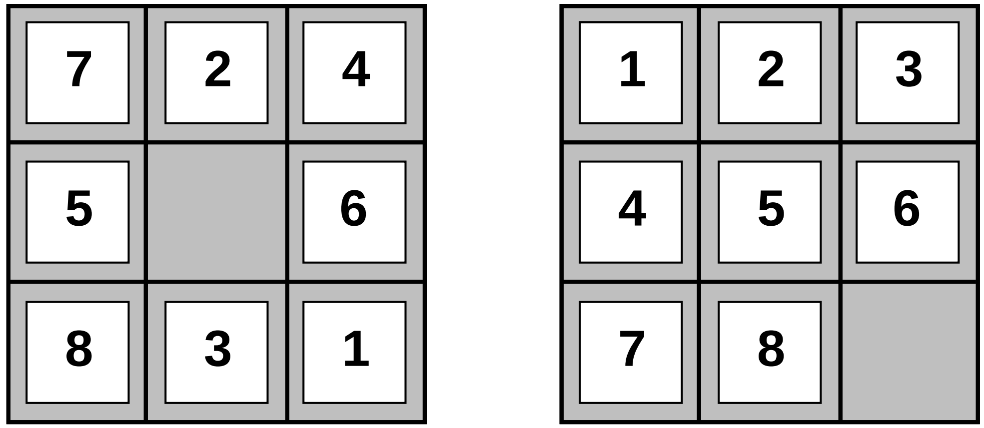
states??: integer dirt and robot locations (ignore dirt amounts etc.)

actions??: $Left$, $Right$, $Suck$, $NoOp$

goal test??: no dirt

path cost??: 1 per action (0 for $NoOp$)

Example: The 8-puzzle



Start State Goal State

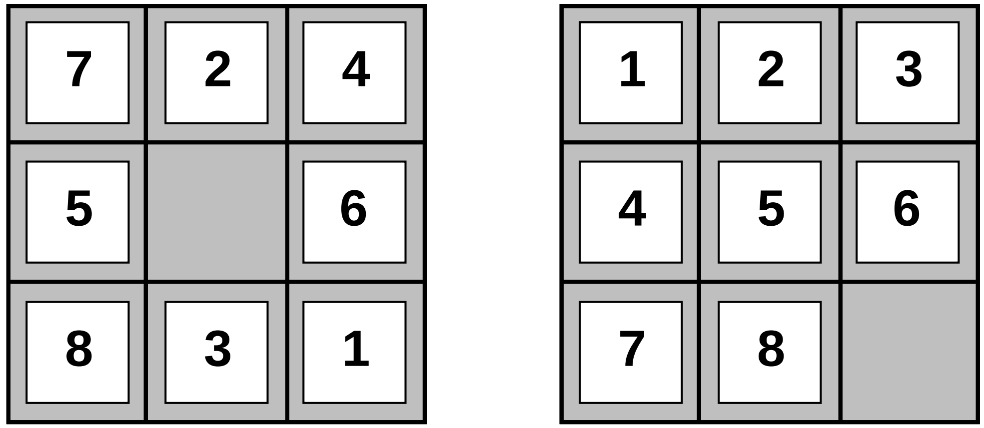
states??

actions??

goal test??

path cost??

Example: The 8-puzzle



Start State **Goal State**

states??: integer locations of tiles (ignore intermediate positions)
actions??: move blank left, right, up, down (ignore unjamming etc.)
goal test??: = goal state (given)
path cost??: 1 per move

[Note: optimal solution of n-Puzzle family is NP-hard]

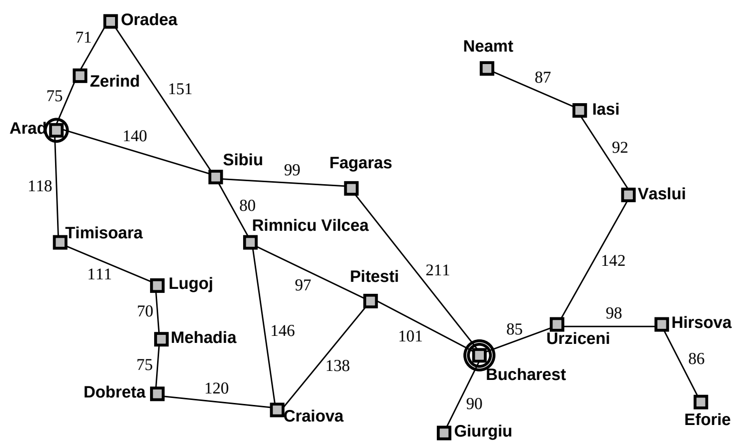
Tree search algorithms

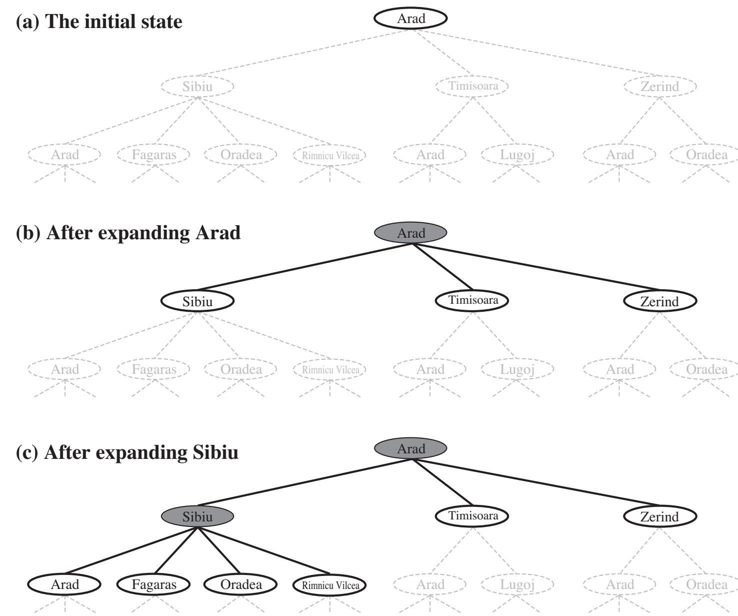
Basic idea:

offline, simulated exploration of state space
by generating successors of already-explored states
(a.k.a. expanding states)

function TREE-SEARCH(*problem*, *strategy*) **returns** a solution, or failure
  initialize the search tree using the initial state of *problem*
  loop do
    if there are no candidates for expansion **then return** failure
    choose a leaf node for expansion according to *strategy*
    if the node contains a goal state **then return** the corresponding solution
    else expand the node and add the resulting nodes to the search tree
  end

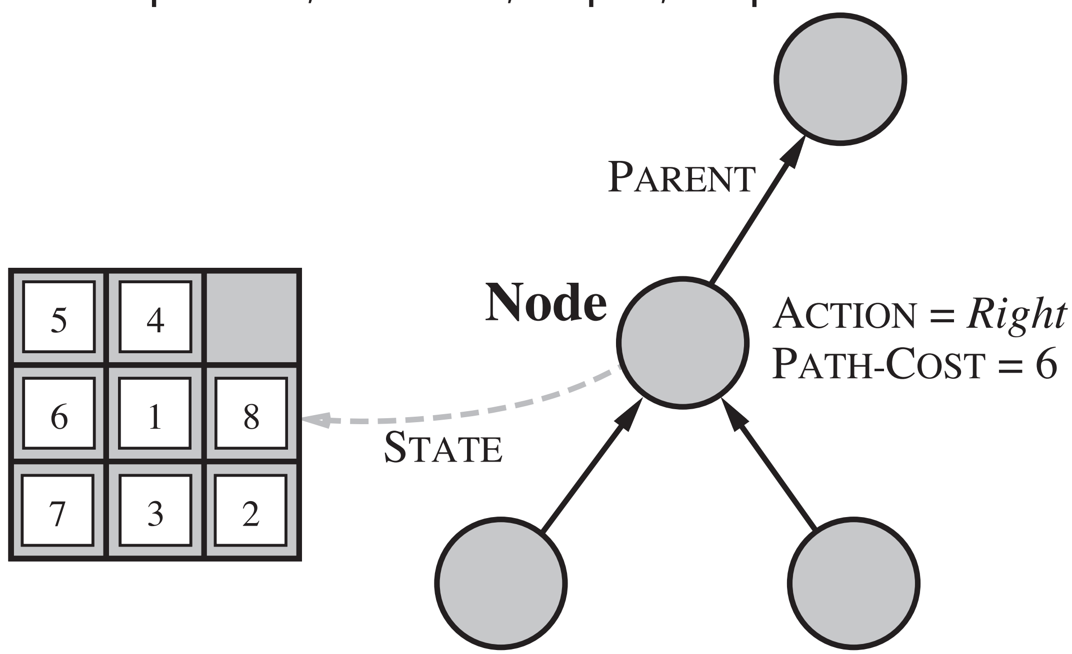
Tree search example





Implementation: states vs. nodes

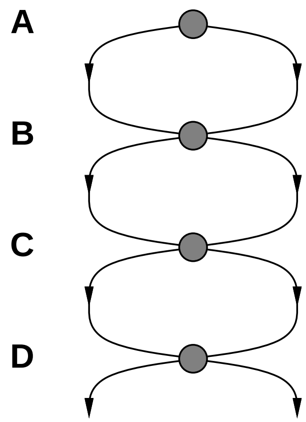
A state is a (representation of) a physical configuration
A node is a data structure constituting part of a search tree
includes parent, children, depth, path cost $g(x)$
States do not have parents, children, depth, or path cost!

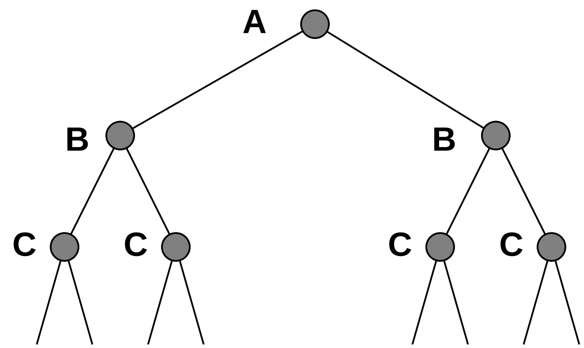


The EXPAND function creates new nodes, filling in the various fields and using the SUCCESSORFN of the problem to create the corresponding states.

Repeated states

Failure to detect repeated states can turn a linear problem into an exponential one!





Implementation: general tree search

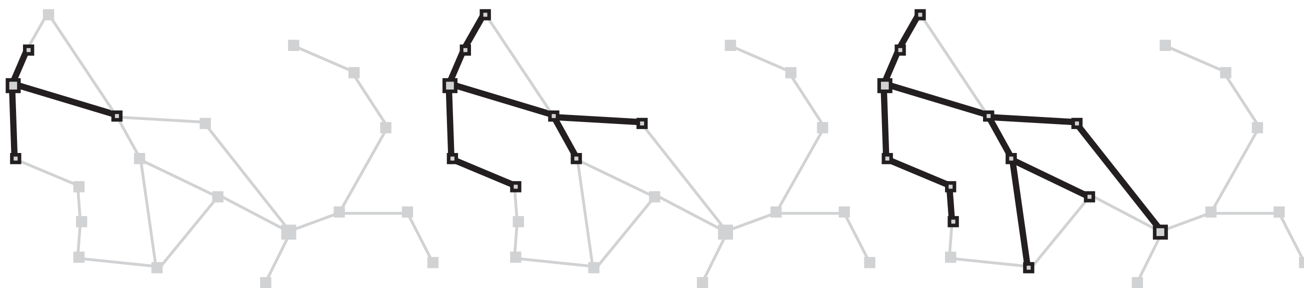
function TREE-SEARCH(*problem*) **returns** a solution, or failure
  initialize the frontier using the initial state of *problem*
  loop do
    if the frontier is empty **then return** failure
    choose a leaf node and remove it from the frontier
    if the node contains a goal state **then return** the corresponding solution
    expand the chosen node, adding the resulting nodes to the frontier

---

function GRAPH-SEARCH(*problem*) **returns** a solution, or failure
  initialize the frontier using the initial state of *problem*
  initialize the explored set to be empty
  loop do
    if the frontier is empty **then return** failure
    choose a leaf node and remove it from the frontier
    if the node contains a goal state **then return** the corresponding solution
    add the node to the explored set
    expand the chosen node, adding the resulting nodes to the frontier
      only if not in the frontier or explored set

Figure 3.7 An informal description of the general tree-search and graph-search algorithms. The parts of GRAPH-SEARCH marked in bold italic are the additions needed to handle repeated states.

Graph search example



Search strategies

A strategy is defined by picking the **order of node expansion**

Strategies are evaluated along the following dimensions:

- completeness—does it always find a solution if one exists?
- time complexity—number of nodes generated/expanded
- space complexity—maximum number of nodes in memory
- optimality—does it always find a least-cost solution?

Time and space complexity are measured in terms of

- b—maximum branching factor of the search tree
- d—depth of the least-cost solution
- m—maximum depth of the state space (may be ∞)

Uninformed search strategies

Uninformed strategies use only the information available in the problem definition

Breadth-first search

Uniform-cost search

Depth-first search

Depth-limited search

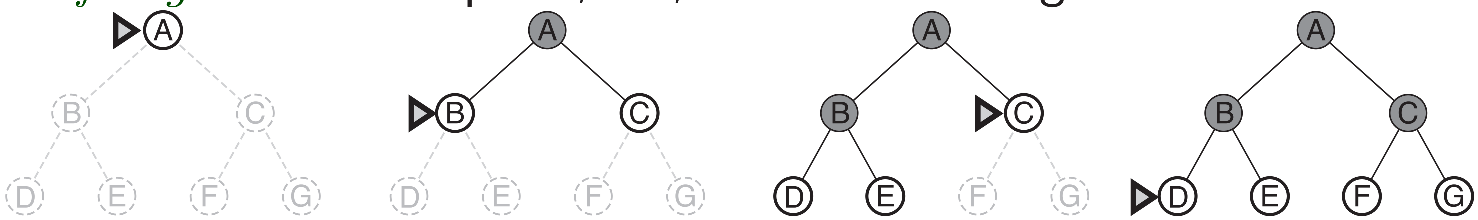
Iterative deepening search

Breadth-first search

Expand shallowest unexpanded node

Implementation:

fringe is a FIFO queue, i.e., new successors go at end



Properties of breadth-first search

Complete?? Yes (if b is finite)

Time?? $1 + b + b^2 + b^3 + \ldots + b^d + b(b^d - 1) = O(b^{d+1})$, i.e., exp. in d

Space?? $O(b^{d+1})$ (keeps every node in memory)

Optimal?? Yes (if cost = 1 per step); not optimal in general

Space is the big problem; can easily generate nodes at 100MB/sec
so 24hrs = 8640GB.

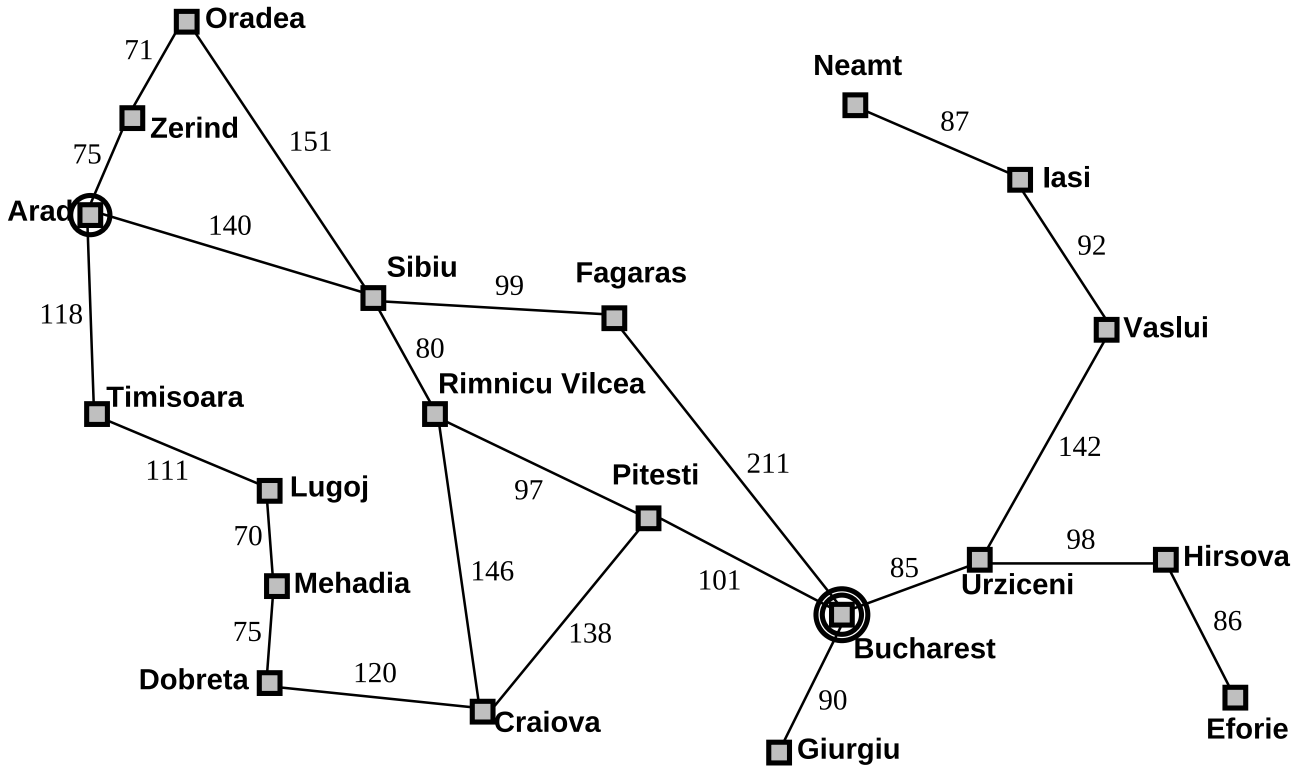
Uniform-cost search

Expand least-cost unexpanded node

Implementation:

$fringe$ = queue ordered by path cost, lowest first

Equivalent to breadth-first if step costs all equal


Oradea
71
Zerind
75
151
Neamt
87
Iasi
Arad
140
92
Sibiu
99
Fagaras
118
Vaslui
80
Rimnicu Vilcea
Timisoara
211
142
111
Lugoj
97
Pitesti
70
98
Hirsova
85
146
Mehadia
101
Urziceni
86
Bucharest
75
138
Dobreta
120
90
Craiova
Eforie
Giurgiu

Uniform-cost search

Complete?? Yes, if step cost $\geq \epsilon$

Time?? # of nodes with $g \leq$ cost of optimal solution, $O(b^{\lceil C^*/\epsilon \rceil})$
where C^* is the cost of the optimal solution

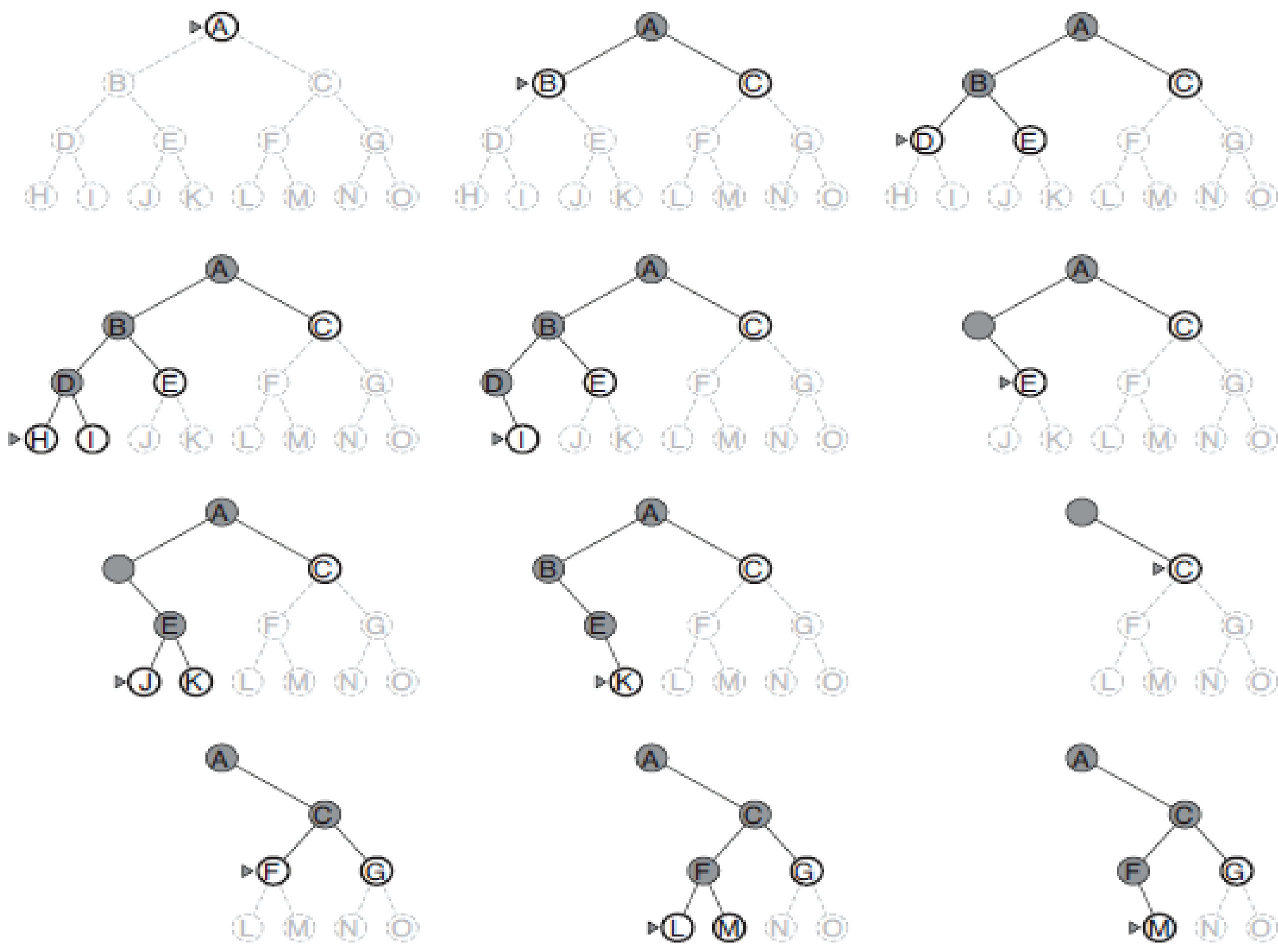
Space?? # of nodes with $g \leq$ cost of optimal solution, $O(b^{\lceil C^*/\epsilon \rceil})$

Optimal?? Yes—nodes expanded in increasing order of $g(n)$

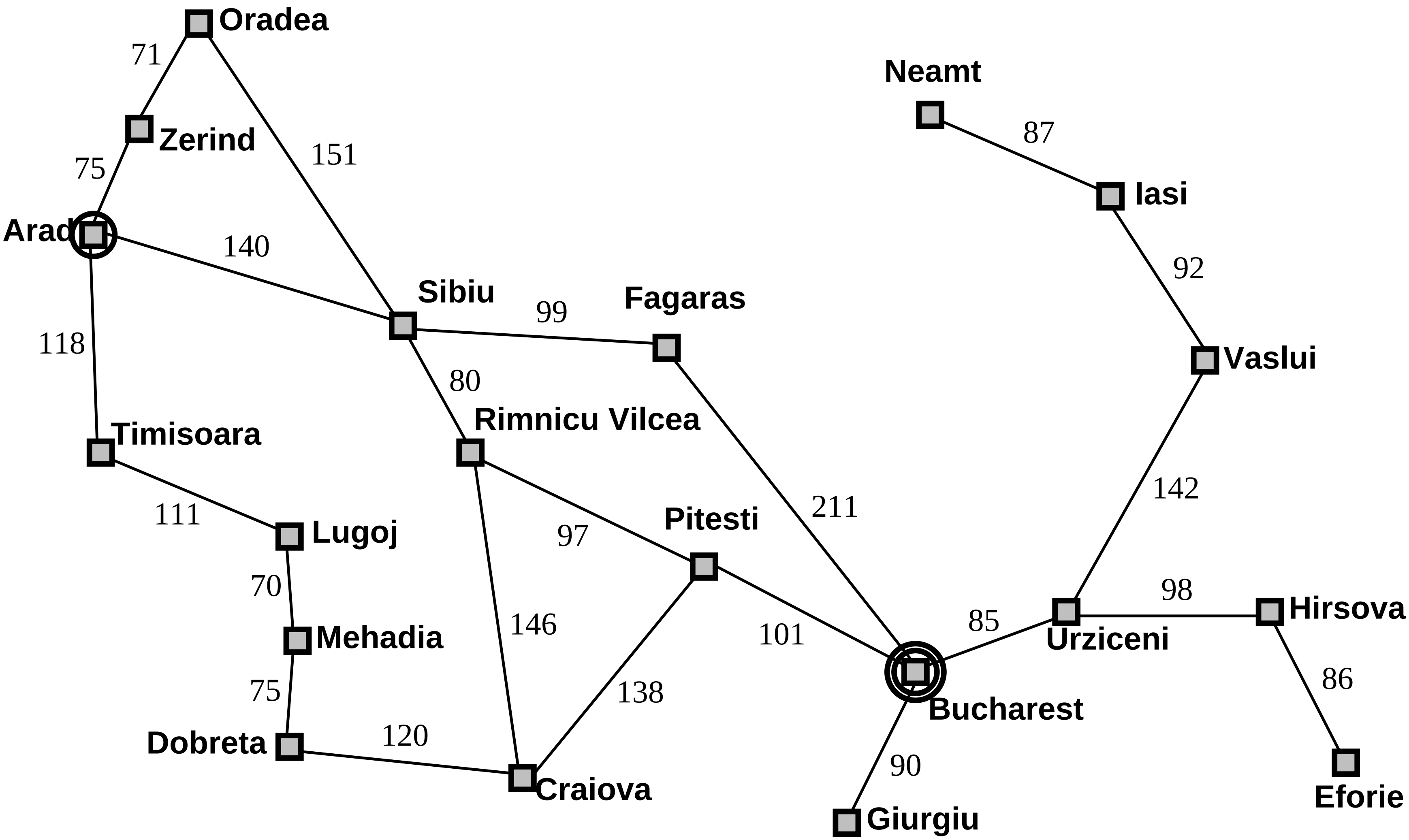
Depth-first search

Expand deepest unexpanded node

Implementation : = LIFO queue, i.e., put successors at front



Depth-first search



Properties of depth-first search

Complete?? No: fails in infinite-depth spaces, spaces with loops
Modify to avoid repeated states along path
$\Rightarrow$ complete in finite spaces

Time?? $O(b^m)$: terrible if m is much larger than d
but if solutions are dense, may be much faster than breadth-first

Space?? $O(bm)$, i.e., linear space!

Optimal?? No

Depth-limited search

= depth-first search with depth limit l,
i.e., nodes at depth l have no successors

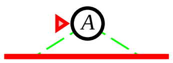
Recursive implementation:

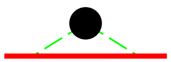
```
function Depth-Limited-Search( problem, limit) returns soln/fail/cutoff
   Recursive-DLS(Make-Node(Initial-State[problem]), problem, limit)

function Recursive-DLS(node, problem, limit) returns soln/fail/cutoff
   cutoff-occurred? ← false
   if Goal-Test(problem, State[node]) then return node
   else if Depth[node] = limit then return cutoff
   else for each successor in Expand(node, problem) do
        result ← Recursive-DLS(successor, problem, limit)
        if result = cutoff then cutoff-occurred? ← true
        else if result ≠ failure then return result
   if cutoff-occurred? then return cutoff else return failure
```

Iterative deepening search

```
function ITERATIVE-DEEPENING-SEARCH( problem) returns a solution
    inputs: problem, a problem

    for depth ← 0 to ∞ do
        result ← DEPTH-LIMITED-SEARCH( problem, depth)
        if result ≠ cutoff then return result
    end
```

Iterative deepening search $l = 0$

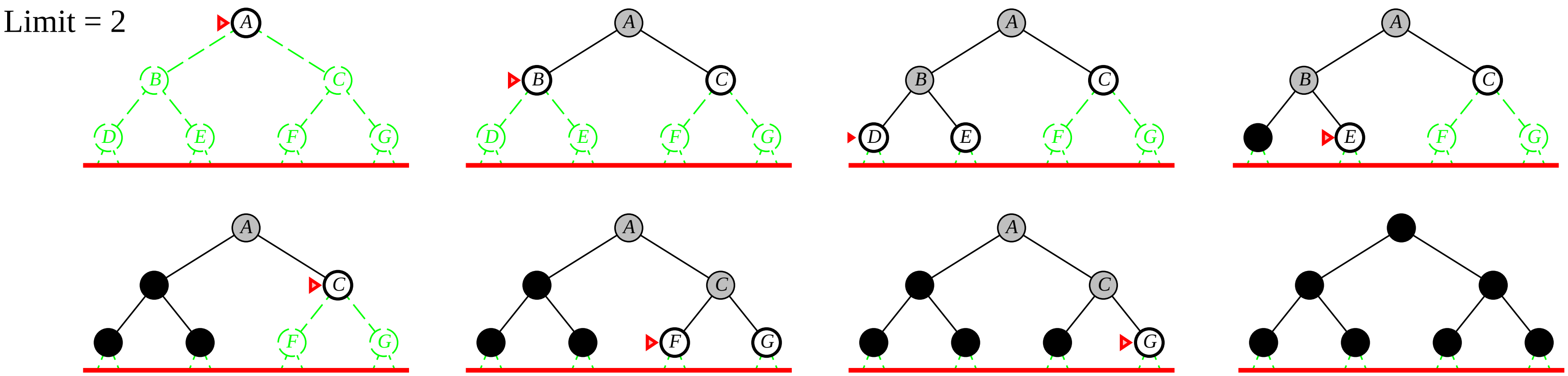
Limit = 0 



Iterative deepening search $l = 1$

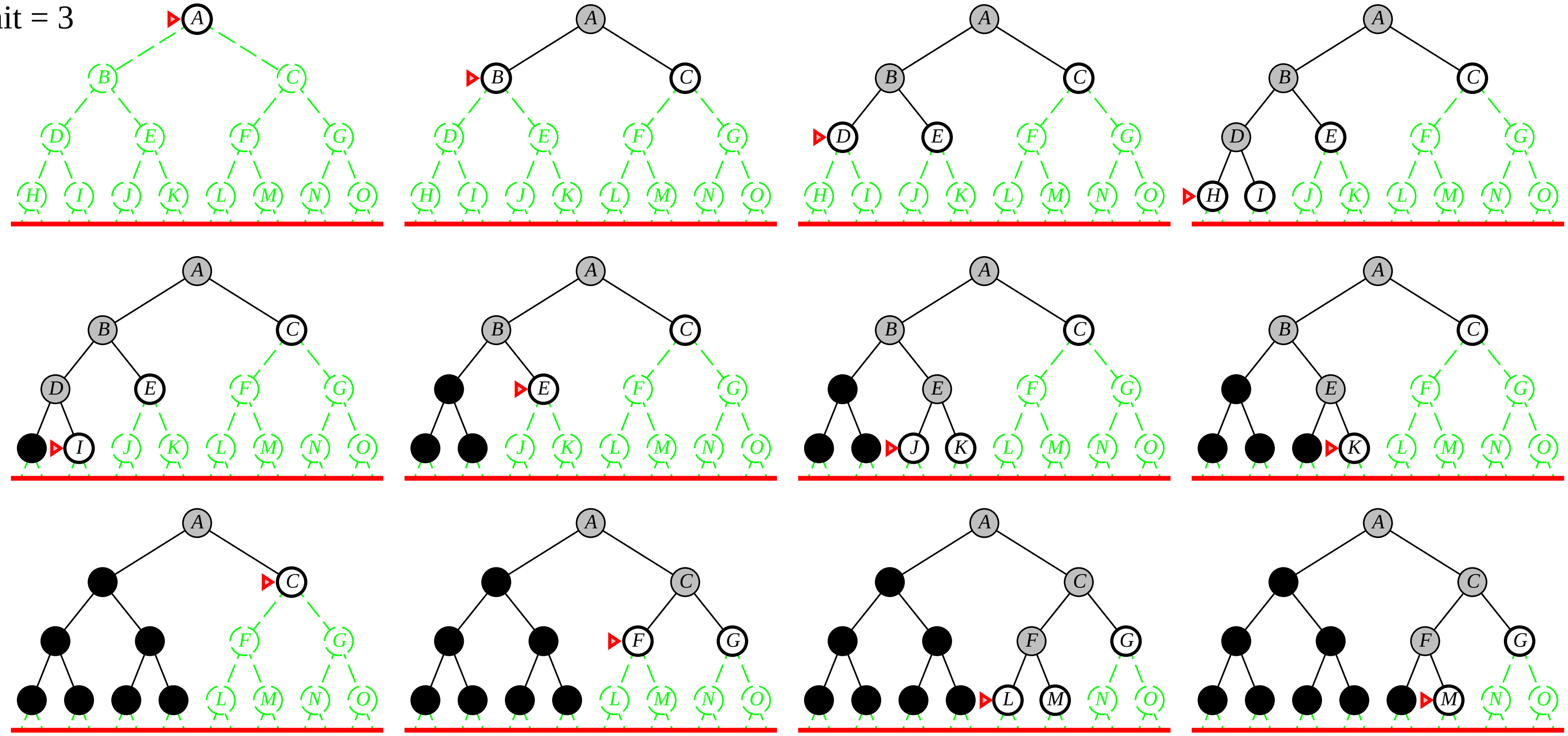
Limit = 1

Iterative deepening search $l = 2$



Iterative deepening search $l = 3$

Limit = 3



Properties of iterative deepening search

Complete?? Yes

Time?? $(d+1)b^0 + db^1 + (d-1)b^2 + \ldots + b^d = O(b^d)$

Space?? $O(bd)$

Optimal?? Yes, if step cost $= 1$
Can be modified to explore uniform-cost tree

IDS does better because other nodes at depth d are not expanded

BFS can be modified to apply goal test when a node is **generated**

Summary of algorithms

Criterion	Breadth-First	Uniform-Cost	Depth-First	Depth-Limited	Iterative Deepening
Complete?	Yes*	Yes*	No	Yes, if $l \geq d$	Yes
Time	b^{d+1}	$b^{\lceil C^*/\epsilon \rceil}$	b^m	b^l	b^d
Space	b^{d+1}	$b^{\lceil C^*/\epsilon \rceil}$	bm	bl	bd
Optimal?	Yes*	Yes	No	No	Yes*

Summary

Problem formulation usually requires abstracting away real-world details to define a state space that can feasibly be explored

Variety of uninformed search strategies

Iterative deepening search uses only linear space
and not much more time than other uninformed algorithms

Graph search can be exponentially more efficient than tree search