

Lecture 22

Strategic AI

Role of AI in Games

- **Autonomous Characters** (NPCs)
 - Mimics the “personality” of the character
 - May be opponent or support character
- **Strategic Opponents**
 - AI at the “player level”
 - Closest to classical AI
- **Character Dialog**
 - Intelligent commentary
 - Narrative management (e.g. Façade)

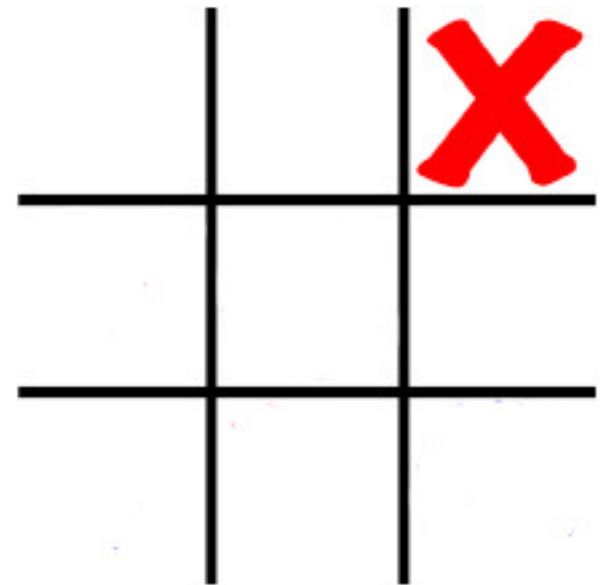
Recall: Rule-Based AI

If ***X*** is true, Then do ***Y***

- **Thinking:** Provide a list of several rules
 - But what happens if there is more than one rule?
 - Which rule do we choose?

Example: Tic-Tac-Toe

- Next move for player O?
 - If have a winning move, make it
 - If opponent can win, block it
 - If the center is available, take it
 - Corners are better than edges
- Very easy to program
 - Just check the board state
 - Tricky part is prioritization



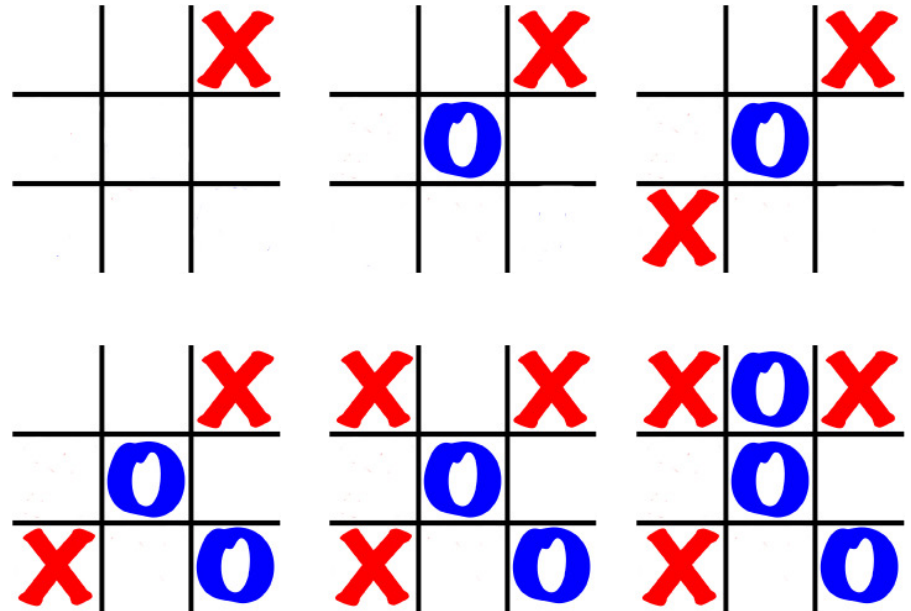
Example: Microsoft's *Age of Kings*

; The AI will attack once at 1100 seconds and then again
; every 1400 sec, provided it has enough defense soldiers.

```
(defrule
  (game-time > 1100)
  =>
  (attack-now)
  (enable-timer ? 1100))
)
(defrule
  (timer-triggered ?) (defend-soldier-count >= 12)
  =>
  (attack-now)
  (disable-timer ?)
  (enable-timer ? 1400)
)
```

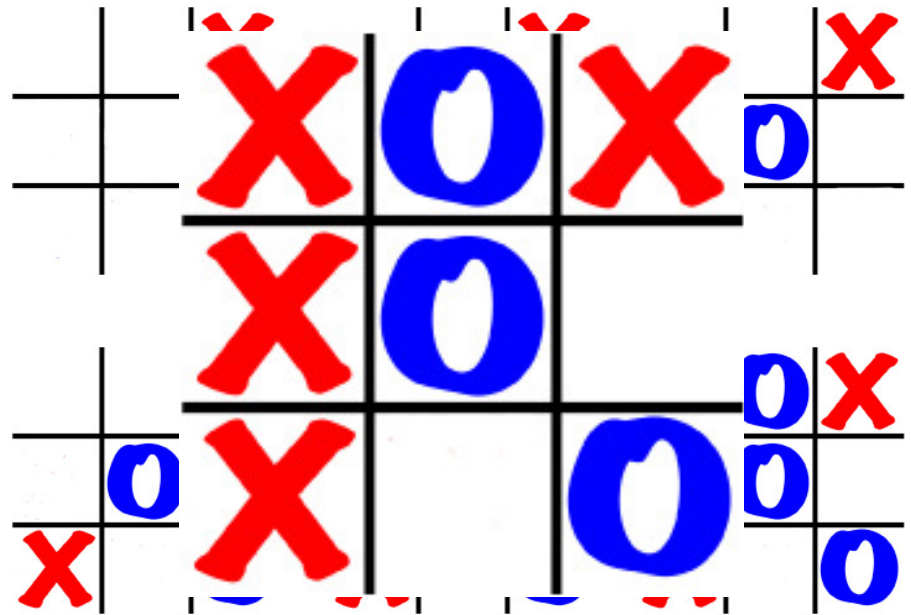
The Problems with Rules

- Rules only do one step
 - May not be best move
 - Could lose long term
- Next move for player O?
 - If can win, then do it
 - If X can win, then block it
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 - Corners > edges
- Need to **look ahead**



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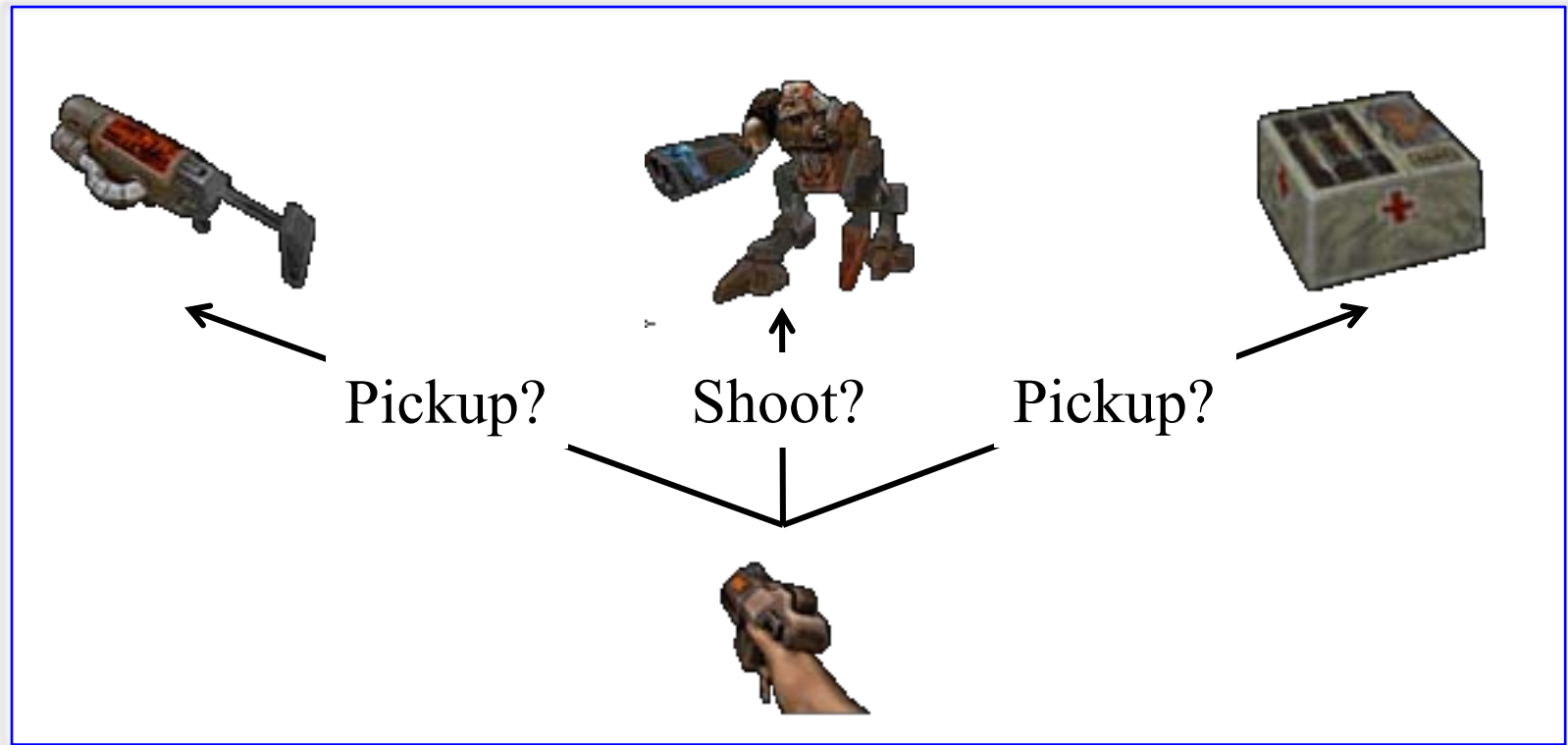


Multiple Steps: Planning

- **Plan: actions** necessary to reach a **goal**
 - Goal is a (pseudo) specific game state
 - Actions change game state (e.g. verbs)
- **Planning:** steps to generate a plan
 - **Initial State:** state the game is currently in
 - **Goal Test:** determines if state meets goal
 - **Operators:** action the NPC can perform

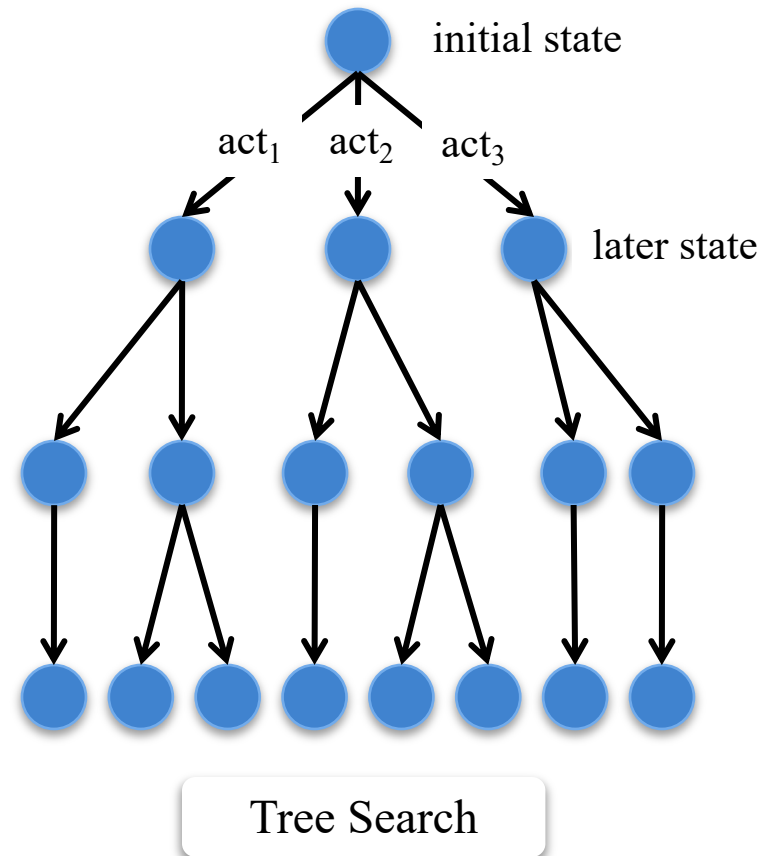
What Should We Do?

Slide courtesy of John Laird



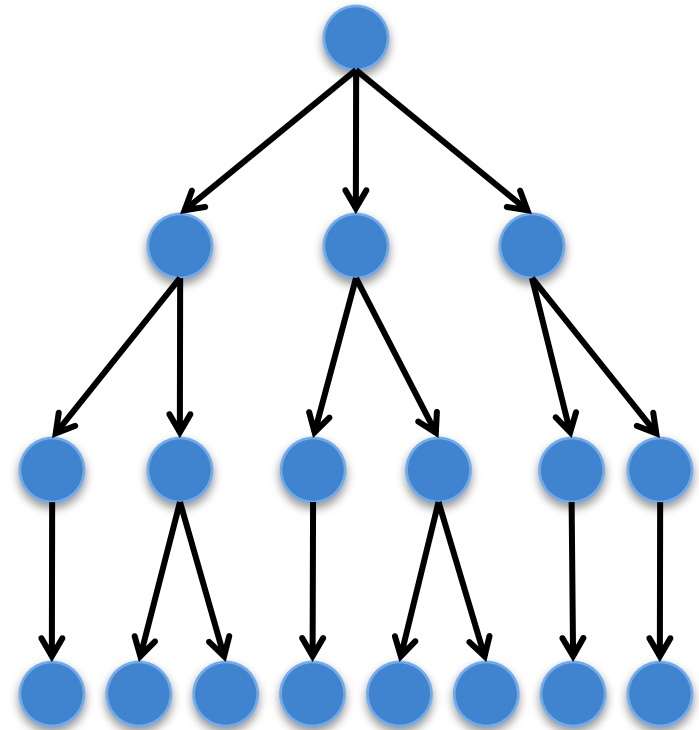
Simplification: No Opponent

- Identify desired goal
 - **Ex:** Kill enemy, get gold
 - Design appropriate test
- List all relevant actions
 - **Ex:** Build, send troops
- **Look-ahead Search**
 - Start with initial state
 - Try all actions (look-ahead)
 - Stop if reached goal
 - Continue if not at goal



Planning Issues

- **Exponential** choices
 - Search action *sequences*
 - How far are we searching?
 - Cannot do this in real life!
- Game state is **complex**
 - Do we look at entire state?
 - Faster to “do” than to plan
- Must **limit** search
 - Reduce actions examined
 - Simplify game state



Internal State Representation

Simplified World Model

- Includes primary resources
 - **Example:** ammo, health
- Rough notion of position
 - **Example:** in/outside room
 - Both characters and items
- Game mechanic details
 - **Example:** respawn rate
 - Allows tactical decisions

Uses of Internal State

- Notice changes
 - Health is dropping
 - Enemy must be nearby
- Remember recent events
 - Enemy has left the room
 - Chase after fleeing enemy
- Remember older events
 - Picked up health 30 sec ago

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Similar to Non-Digital Prototype

Internal State and Memory

- Each NPC has own state
 - Represents NPC *memory*
 - Might not be consistent
- Useful for character AI
 - Models sensory data
 - Models communication
- Isolates planning
 - Each NPC plans separately
 - Coordinate planning with a *strategic manager*



Strategy versus Tactics

Slide courtesy of Dave Mark



Internal State for Quake II

- Self
 - Current-health
 - Last-health
 - Current-weapon
 - Ammo-left
 - Current-room
 - Last-room
 - Current-armor
 - Last-armor
 - Available-weapons
- Enemy
 - Current-weapon
 - Current-room
 - Last-seen-time
 - Estimated-health
- Current-time
- Random-number
- Powerup
 - Type
 - Room
 - Available
 - Estimated-spawn-time
- Map
 - Rooms
 - Halls
 - Paths
- Parameters
 - Full-health
 - Health-powerup-amount
 - Ammo-powerup-amount
 - Respawn-rate

Internal Action Representation

Simplified Action Model

- Internal Actions = *operators*
 - Just mathematical functions
 - Operators alter internal state
- **Pre-conditions**
 - What is required for action
 - Often resource requirement
- **Effects**
 - How action changes state
 - Both global and for NPC

Designing Actions

- Extrapolate from gameplay
 - Start with an internal state
 - Pick “canonical” game state
 - Apply game action to state
 - Back to internal state
- Remove any uncertainty
 - Deterministic NPC behavior
 - “Average” random results
 - Or pick worse case scenario

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 - ... te
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Like Gameplay Specification,
but actions, interactions combined

Example: Pick-Up Health Op

- **Preconditions:**

- $\text{Self.current-room} = \text{Powerup.current-room}$
- $\text{Self.current-health} < \text{full-health}$
- $\text{Powerup.type} = \text{health}$
- $\text{Powerup.available} = \text{yes}$

- **Effects:**

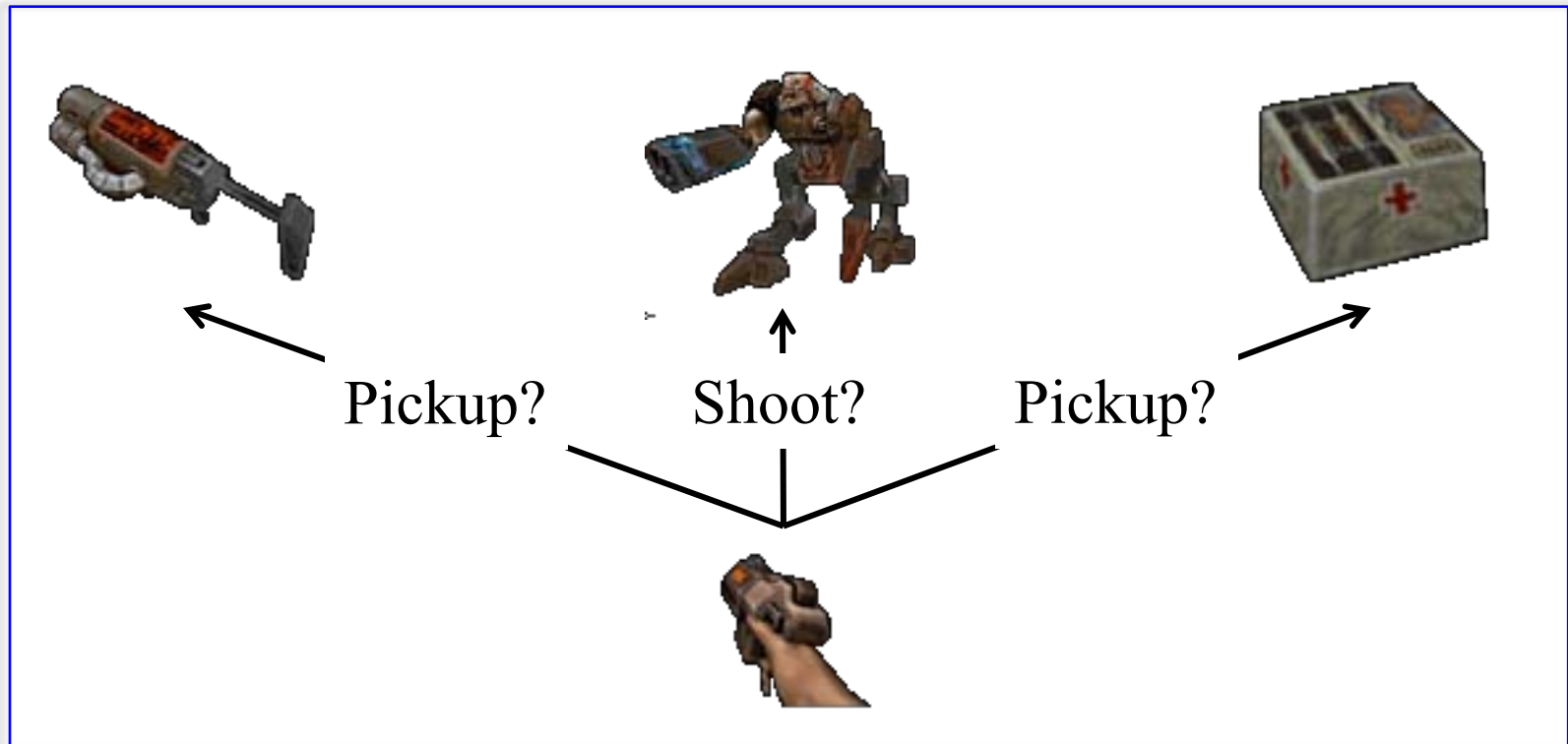
- $\text{Self.last-health} = \text{self.current-health}$
- $\text{Self.current-health} = \text{current-health} + \text{health-powerup-amount}$
- $\text{Powerup.available} = \text{no}$
- $\text{Powerup.estimated-spawn-time} = \text{current-time} + \text{respawn-rate}$

Building Internal Models

- Planning is only as accurate as model
 - Bad models → bad plans
 - But complex models → slow planning
- Look at your nondigital prototype!
 - Heavily simplified for playability
 - Resources determine internal state
 - Nondigital verbs are internal actions
- One of many reasons for this exercise

What Should We Do?

Slide courtesy of John Laird



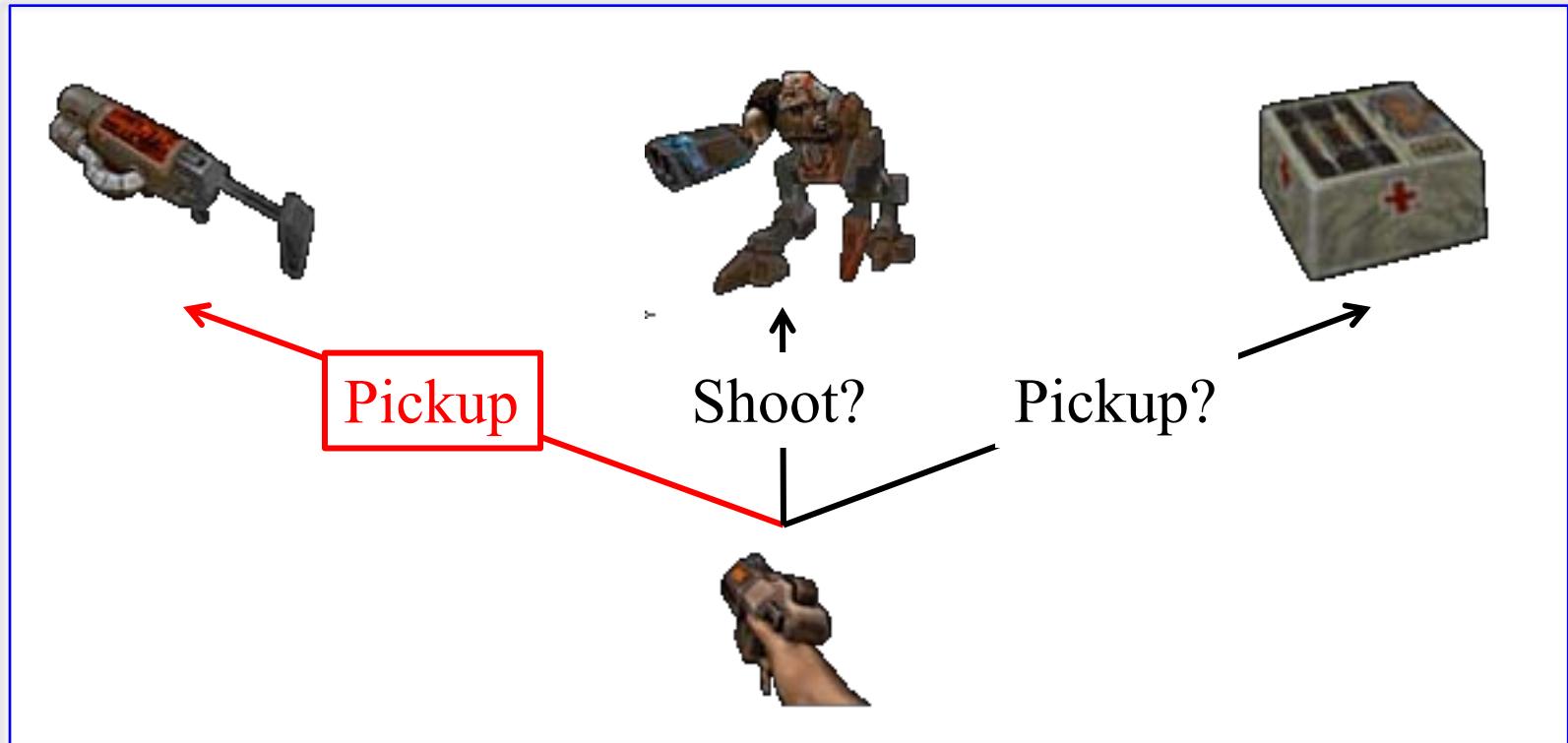
Self.current-health = 20
Self.current-weapon = blaster

Enemy.estimated-health = 50

Powerup.type = health-pak
Powerup.available = yes
Powerup.type = Railgun
Powerup.available = yes

One Step: Pick-up Railgun

Slide courtesy of John Laird



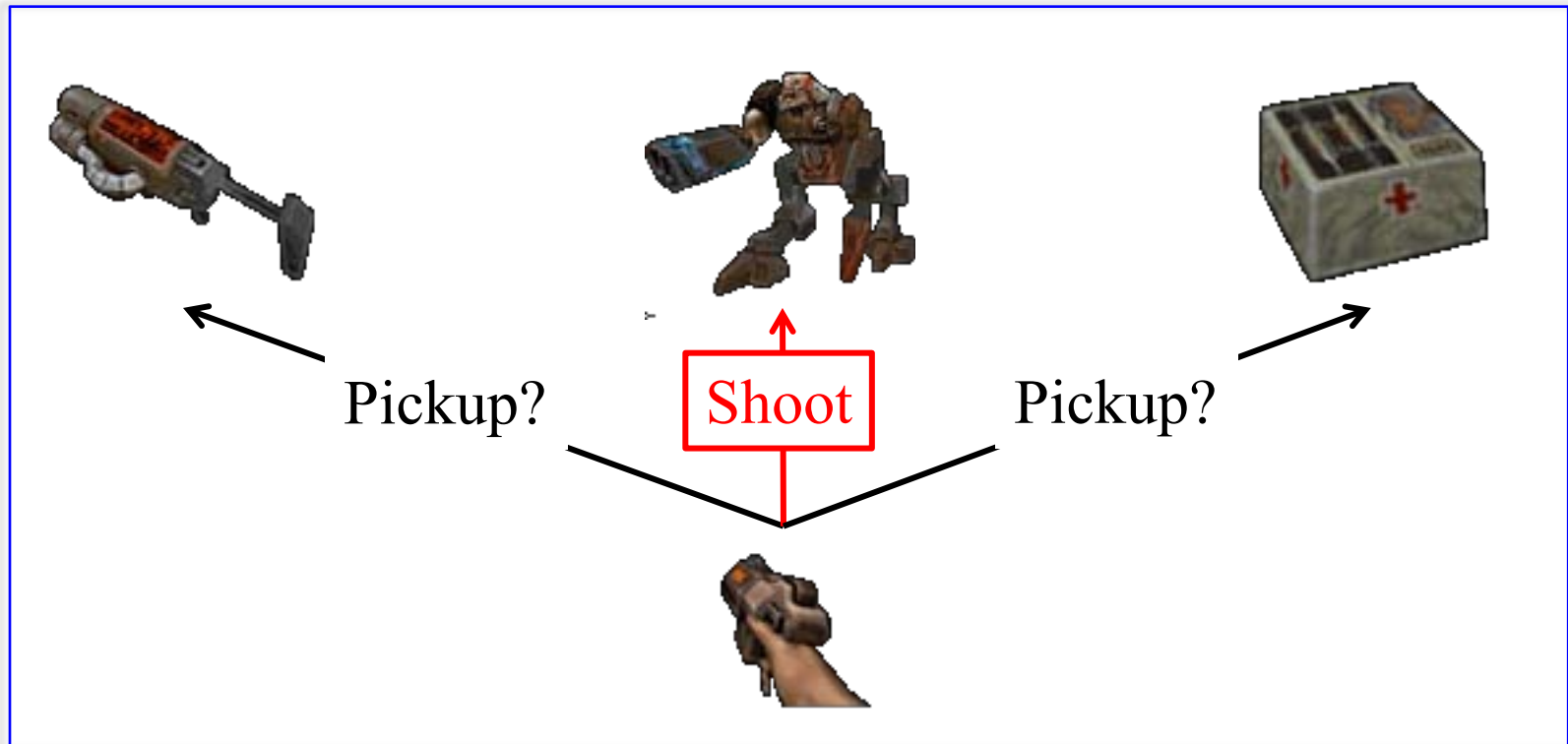
Self.current-health = 10
Self.current-weapon = railgun

Enemy.estimated-health = 50

Powerup.type = health-pak
Powerup.available = yes
Powerup.type = Railgun
Powerup.available = no

One Step: Shoot Enemy

Slide courtesy of John Laird



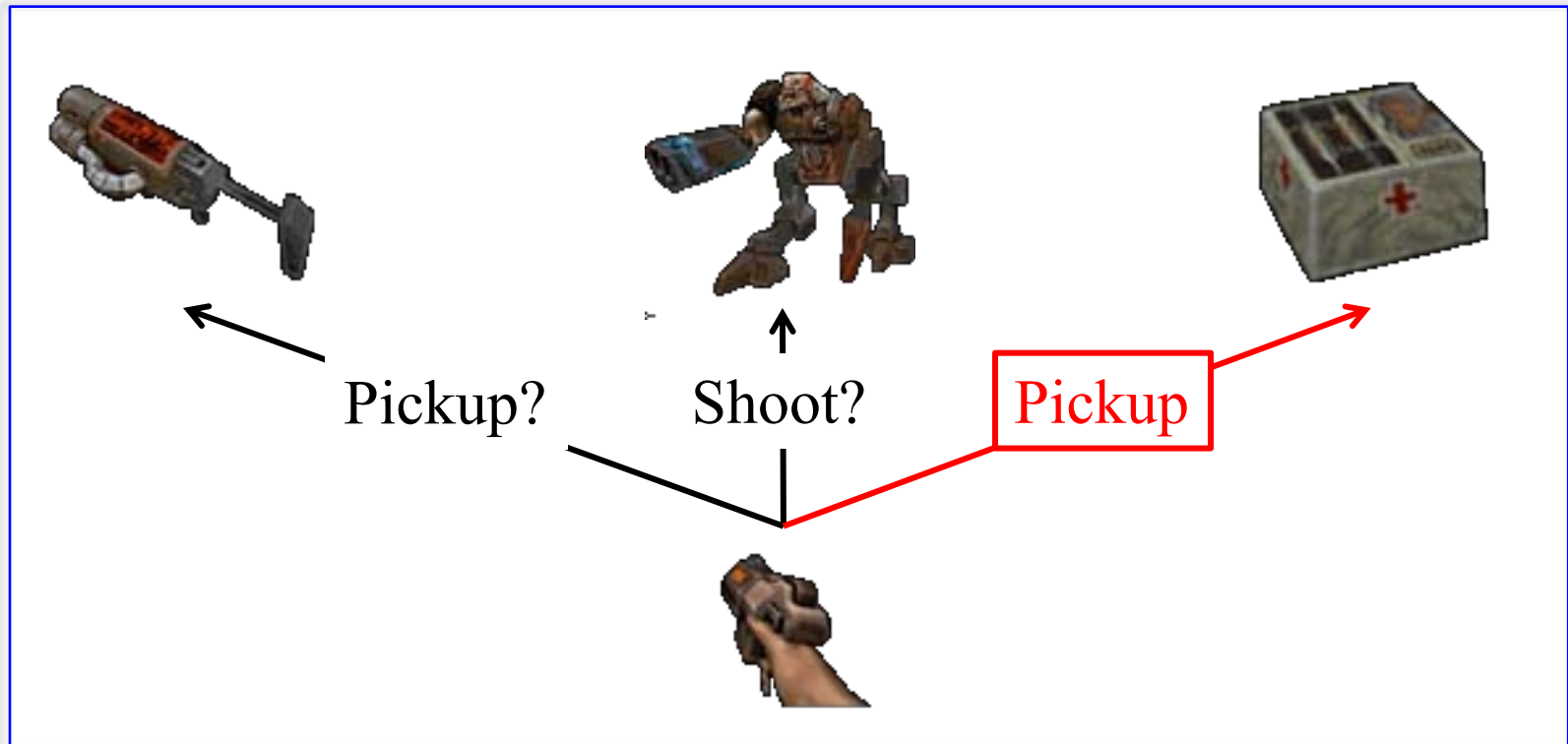
Self.current-health = 10
Self.current-weapon = blaster

Enemy.estimated-health = 40

Powerup.type = health-pak
Powerup.available = yes
Powerup.type = Railgun
Powerup.available = yes

One Step: Pick-up Health-Pak

Slide courtesy of John Laird



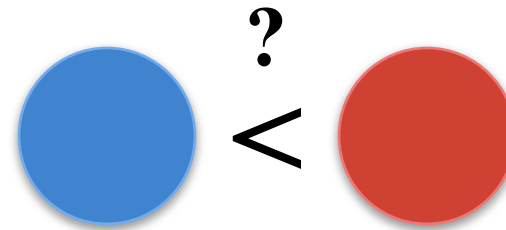
Self.current-health = 90
Self.current-weapon = blaster

Enemy.estimated-health = 50

Powerup.type = health-pak
Powerup.available = no
Powerup.type = Railgun
Powerup.available = yes

State Evaluation Function

- Need to **compare** states
 - Is either state better?
 - How far away is goal?
- Might be **partial order**
 - Some states incomparable
 - If not goal, just continue
- Purpose of planning
 - Find good states
 - Avoid bad states



State Evaluation: Quake II

- **Example 1:** Prefer higher self.current-health
 - Always pick up health powerup
 - **Counter example:**
 - Self.current-health = 99%
 - Enemy.current-health = 1%
- **Example 2:** Prefer lower enemy.current-health
 - Always shoot enemy
 - **Counter example:**
 - Self.current-health = 1%
 - Enemy.current-health = 99%

State Evaluation: Quake II

- **Example 3:** Prefer higher self.health – enemy.health
 - Shoot enemy if I have health to spare
 - Otherwise pick up a health pack
 - Counter examples?
- Examples of more complex evaluations
 - If self.health > 50% prefer lower enemy.health
 - Otherwise, want higher self.health
 - If self.health > **low-health** prefer lower enemy.health
 - Otherwise, want higher self.health

Two Step Look-Ahead

Slide courtesy of John Laird



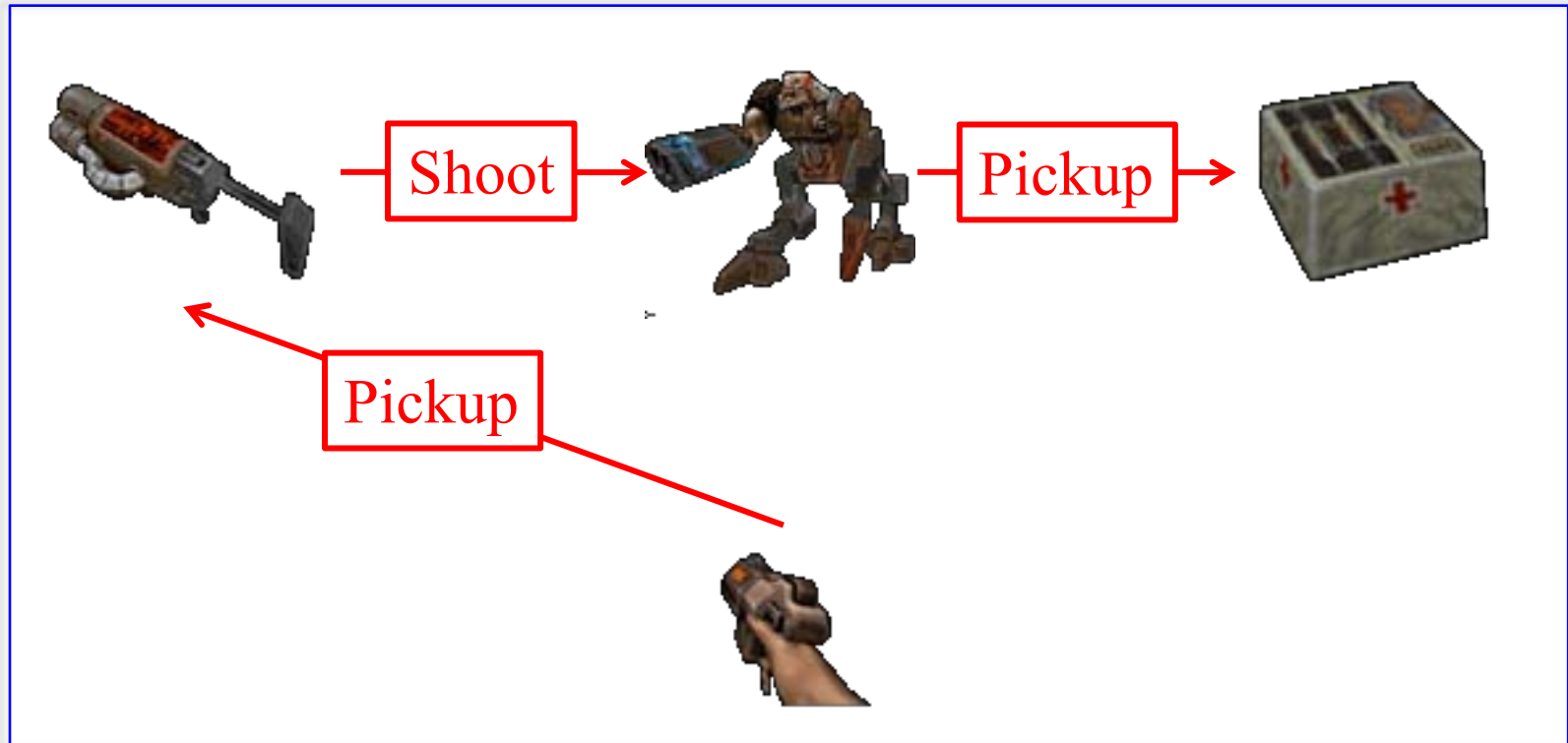
Self.current-health = 80
Self.current-weapon = blaster

Enemy.estimated-health = 40

Powerup.type = health-pak
Powerup.available = no
Powerup.type = Railgun
Powerup.available = yes

Three Step Look-Ahead

Slide courtesy of John Laird



Self.current-health = 100
Self.current-weapon = railgun

Enemy.estimated-health = 0

Powerup.type = health-pak
Powerup.available = no
Powerup.type = Railgun
Powerup.available = no

Look-Ahead Search

One-Step Lookahead

```
op pickBest(state) {  
    foreach op satisfying precondition {  
        newstate = op(state)  
        evaluate newstate  
    }  
    return op with best evaluation  
}
```

Multistep Tree Search

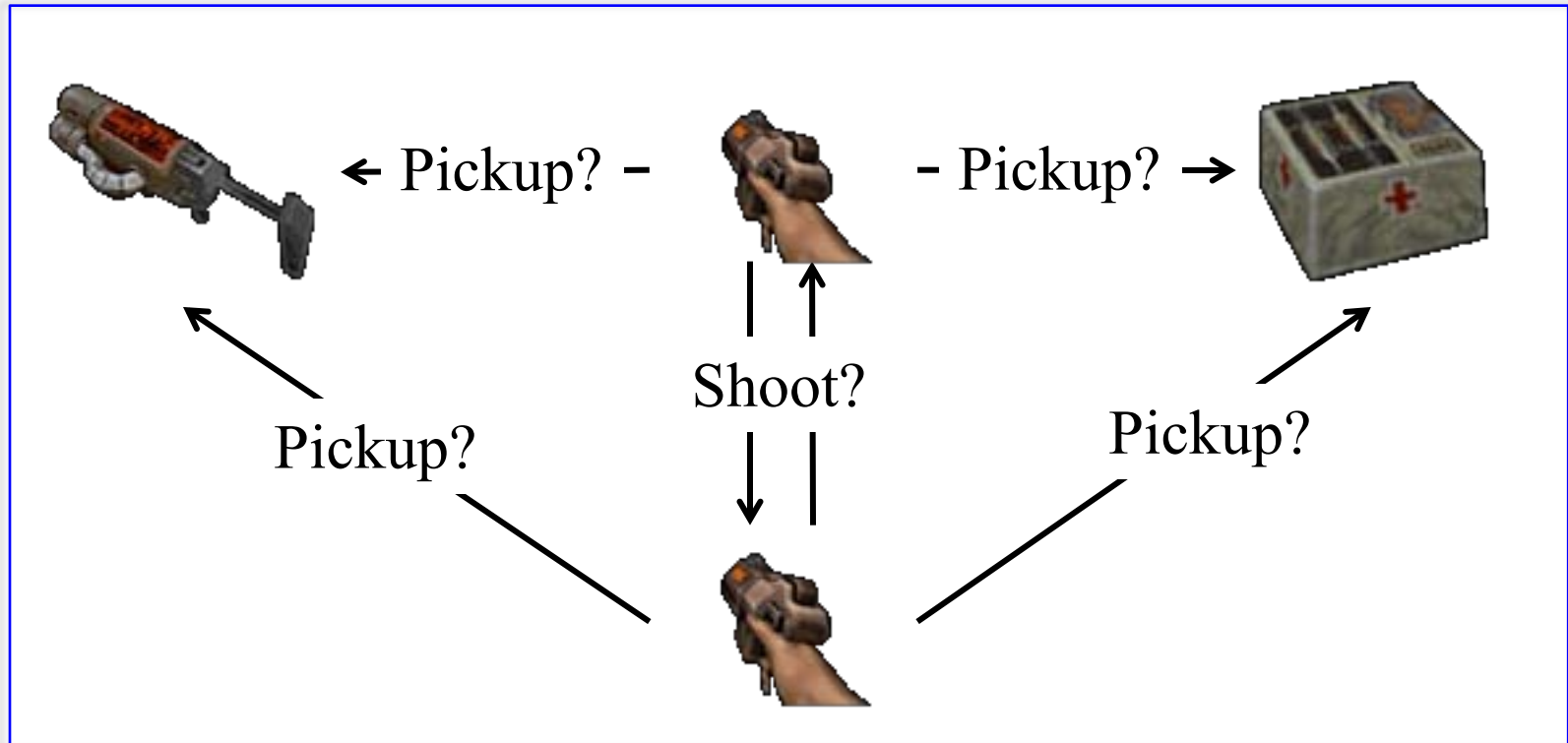
```
[op] bestPath(&state,depth) {  
    if depth == 0 { return [] }  
    foreach op satisfying precondition {  
        newstate = op(state)  
        [nop]=bestPath(newstate,depth-1)  
        evaluate newstate  
    }  
    pick op+[nop] with best state  
    modify state to reflect op+[nop]  
    return op+[nop]  
}
```

Look-Ahead Search

- Are more steps better?
 - Longer, more elaborate plans
 - More time & space consuming
 - Opponent or environment can mess up plan
 - Simplicity of internal model causes problems
- In this class, limit three or four steps
 - Anything more, and AI is too complicated
 - **Purpose is to be challenging, not to win**

Opponent: New Problems

Slide courtesy of John Laird



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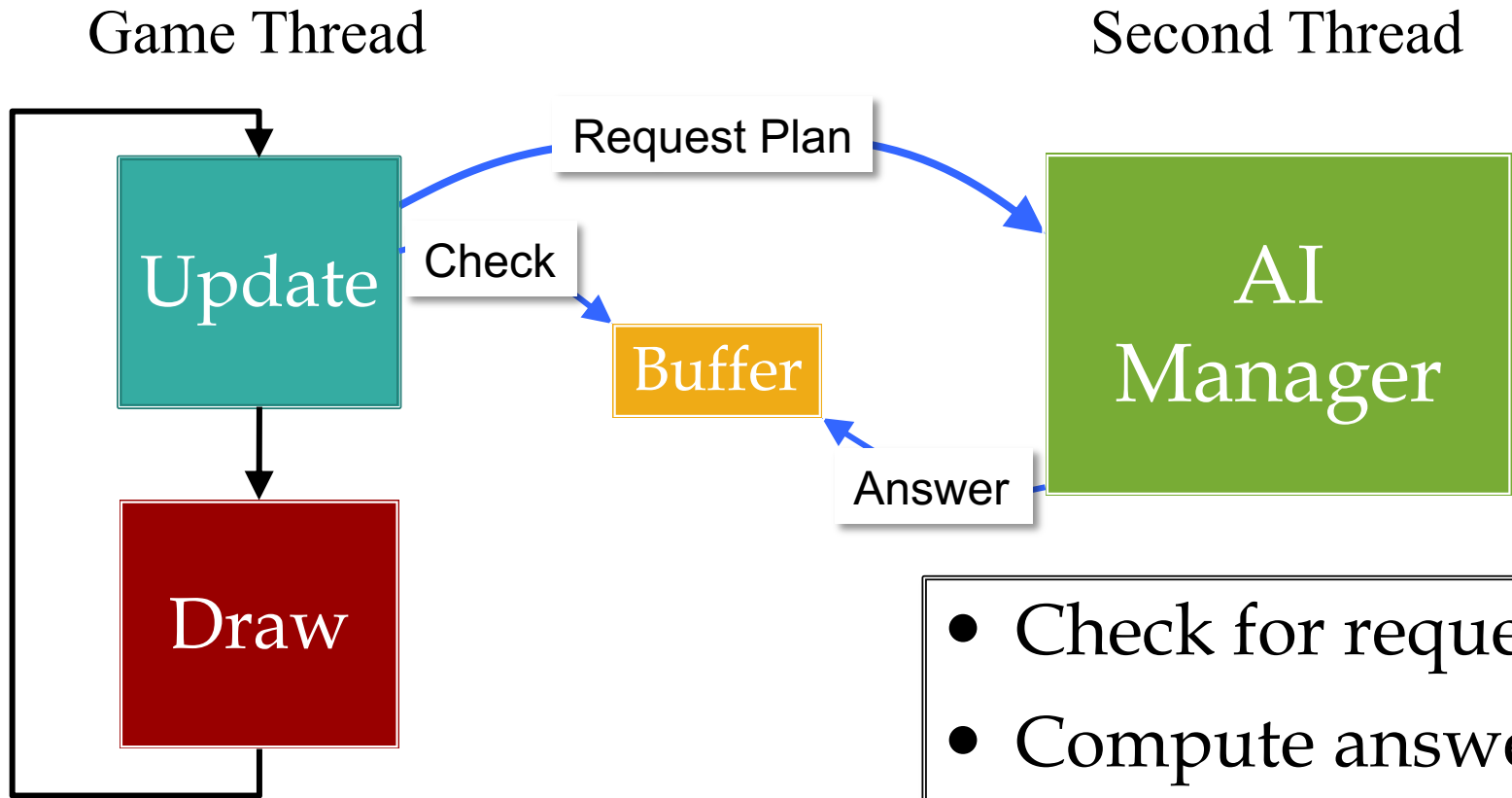
Opponent Model

- **Solution 1:** Assume the worst
 - Opponent does what would be worst for you
 - Full game tree search; exponential
- **Solution 2:** What would I do?
 - Opponent does what you would in same situation
- **Solution 3:** Internal opponent model
 - Remember what did last time
 - Or remember what they like to do

Opponent Interference

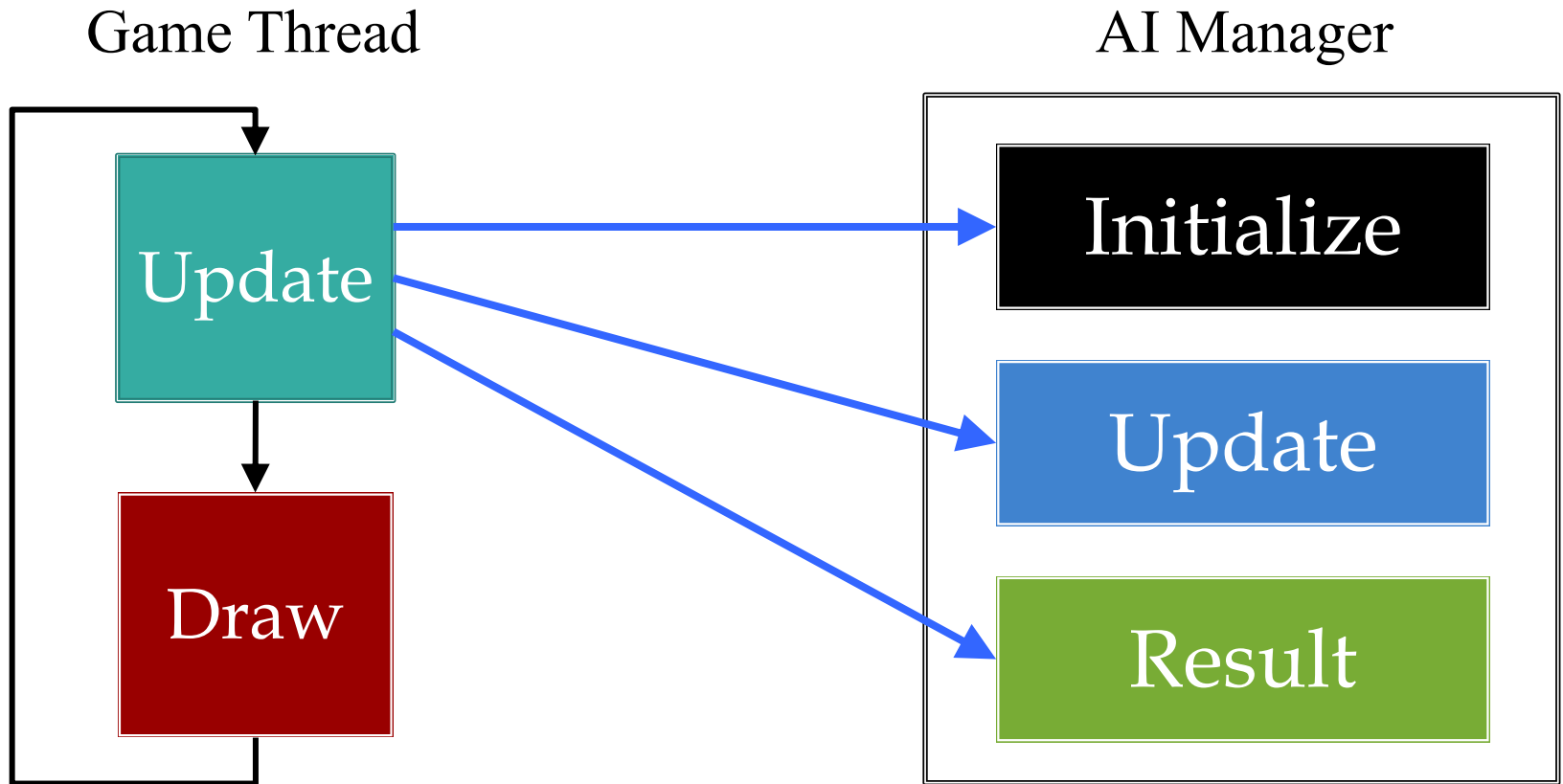
- Opponent actions may prevent yours
 - **Example:** Opponent grabs railgun first
 - Need to take into account in your plan
- **Solution:** Iteration
 - Plan once with no interference
 - Run again, assuming best plans of the opponent
 - Keep iterating until happy (or run out of time)
- Planning is very *expensive!*

Asynchronous AI

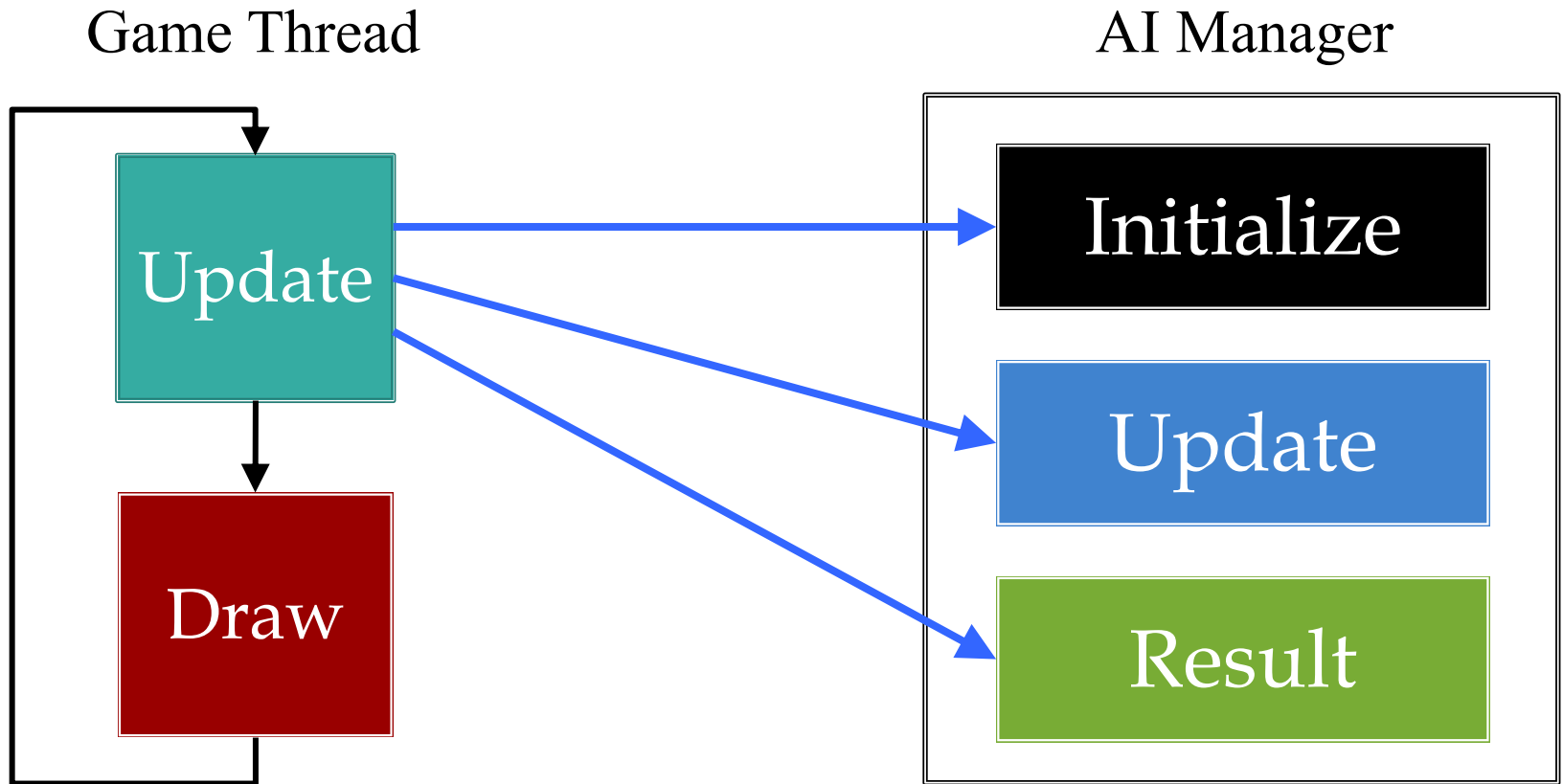


- Check for request
- Compute answer
- Store in buffer

Alternative: Iterative AI



Alternative: Iterative AI



Looks like asset management

Using Asynchronous AI

- Give AI a **time budget**
 - If planning takes too long, abort it
 - Use counter in update loop to track time
- Beware of **stale plans**
 - Actual game state has probably changed
 - When find a plan, make sure it is still good
 - Evaluate (quickly) with new internal state
 - Make sure result is “close” to what thought

Planning: Optimization

- **Backwards Planning**
 - **Idea:** few operators achieve goal conditions
 - **Implementation:**
 - For each operator, reverse the effect
 - Check reversed effect satisfies pre-conditions
- Possible to use backwards **and** forwards
 - Start on each end, and check for meets
 - Does not work well with numerical resources

To Plan or Not to Plan

- **Advantages**

- Less predictable behavior
- Can handle unexpected situations
- More accurate than rule-based AI

- **Disadvantages**

- Less predictable behavior (harder to debug)
- Planning takes a lot of processor time
- Planning takes memory
- Need simple but accurate internal representations

Other Possibilities

- There are many more options available
 - Neural nets
 - Decision trees
 - General machine learning
 - Take **CS 4700** if want to learn more
- Quality is a matter of heated debate
 - Better to spend time on internal state design
 - Most AI is focused on perception modeling

Summary

- Rule-based AI is simplest form of strategic AI
 - Only limited to one-step at a time
 - Can easily make decisions that lose in long term
- More complicated behavior requires **planning**
 - Simplify the game to turn-based format
 - Use classic AI search techniques
- Planning has advantages and disadvantages
 - Remember, the desire is to **challenge**, not to **win**