Perspectives on Perfect and Practical Play of Pig

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tinyurl.com/piggame

Sow What's This All About?

- Introduction to the Dice Game "Pig"
- Odds and Ends: Playing to Score
- Perfect Play: Playing to Win
  - "Piglet" example
  - Value Iteration
- Practical Play: How we can play well

The Game of Pig

- The first player to reach 100 points wins.
- On a turn, a player rolls a die repeatedly until:
  - the player holds, scoring the sum of the rolls ("turn total"), or
  - a 1 ("pig") is rolled, and there is no score change.
- Example turns:
  - roll 4, roll 5, roll 2, hold → add 4 + 5 + 2 = 11 to score
  - roll 3, roll 6, roll 6, roll 1 → score remains the same

Pig Preliminaries

- Player's decision is always to *roll*/*hold*
  - *Roll* – possibly increase turn total, or lose it
  - *Hold* – definitely score current turn total
  - Pig is the simplest of a class of *jeopardy dice games*; ancestor of *Pass the Pigs*
- Hold at 20 - a simple policy that maximizes expected points per turn

Playing to Score

- Simple odds argument
  - Roll until you risk more than you stand to gain.
  - “Hold at 20”
    - 1/6 of time: -20 → -20/6
    - 5/6 of time: +4 (avg. of 2,3,4,5,6) → +20/6

Hold at 20?

- Is there a situation in which you wouldn’t want to hold at 20?
  - Your score: 99; you roll 2
  - Case scenario
    - you: 79 opponent: 99
    - Your turn total stands at 20

What's Wrong With Playing to Score?

- It's mathematically optimal!
- But what are we optimizing?
- Playing to score $\neq$ Playing to win
- Optimizing score gain per turn $\neq$ Optimizing probability of a win

Piglet

- Simpler version of Pig with a coin
- Object: First to score 10 points
- On your turn, flip until:
  - You flip tails, and score NOTHING.
  - You hold, and KEEP the # of heads.
- Even simpler: play to 2 points

Essential Information

- What is the information I need to make a fully informed decision?
  - My score
  - The opponent’s score
  - My “turn total”

A Little Notation

- $P_{i,j,k}$ – probability of a win if
  i = my score
  j = the opponent's score
  k = my turn total
- Hold: $P_{i,j,k} = 1 - P_{j,i+k,0}$
- Flip: $P_{i,j,k} = ½(1 - P_{j,i,0}) + ½ P_{i,j,k+1}$

Assume Rationality

- To make a smart player, assume a smart opponent.
- (To make a smarter player, know your opponent.)
- $P_{i,j,k} = \max(1 - P_{j,i+k,0}, ½(1 - P_{j,i,0} + P_{i,j,k+1}))$
- Probability of win based on best decisions in any state

The Whole Story

$$P_{0,0,0} = \max(1 - P_{0,0,0}, \tfrac{1}{2}(1 - P_{0,0,0} + P_{0,0,1}))$$
$$P_{0,0,1} = \max(1 - P_{0,1,0}, \tfrac{1}{2}(1 - P_{0,0,0} + P_{0,0,2}))$$
$$P_{0,1,0} = \max(1 - P_{1,0,0}, \tfrac{1}{2}(1 - P_{1,0,0} + P_{0,1,1}))$$
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The Whole Story

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$$P_{1,1,0} = \max(1 - P_{1,1,0}, \tfrac{1}{2}(1 - P_{1,1,0} + P_{1,1,1}))$$

These are winning states!

The Whole Story

$P_{0,0,0} = \max(1 - P_{0,0,0}, ½(1 - P_{0,0,0} + P_{0,0,1}))$

$P_{0,0,1} = \max(1 - P_{0,1,0}, ½(1 - P_{0,0,0} + 1))$

$P_{0,1,0} = \max(1 - P_{1,0,0}, ½(1 - P_{1,0,0} + P_{0,1,1}))$

$P_{0,1,1} = \max(1 - P_{1,1,0}, ½(1 - P_{1,0,0} + 1))$

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Simplified…

The Whole Story

$P_{0,0,0} = \max(1 - P_{0,0,0}, ½(1 - P_{0,0,0} + P_{0,0,1}))$
$P_{0,0,1} = \max(1 - P_{0,1,0}, ½(2 - P_{0,0,0}))$
$P_{0,1,0} = \max(1 - P_{1,0,0}, ½(1 - P_{1,0,0} + P_{0,1,1}))$
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$P_{1,0,0} = \max(1 - P_{0,1,0}, ½(2 - P_{0,1,0}))$
$P_{1,1,0} = \max(1 - P_{1,1,0}, ½(2 - P_{1,1,0}))$

And simplified more into a hamsome set of equations…

How to Solve It?

$P_{0,0,0} = \max(1 - P_{0,0,0}, \tfrac{1}{2}(1 - P_{0,0,0} + P_{0,0,1}))$

$P_{0,0,1} = \max(1 - P_{0,1,0}, \tfrac{1}{2}(2 - P_{0,0,0}))$

$P_{0,1,0} = \max(1 - P_{1,0,0}, \tfrac{1}{2}(1 - P_{1,0,0} + P_{0,1,1}))$

$P_{0,1,1} = \max(1 - P_{1,1,0}, \tfrac{1}{2}(2 - P_{1,0,0}))$

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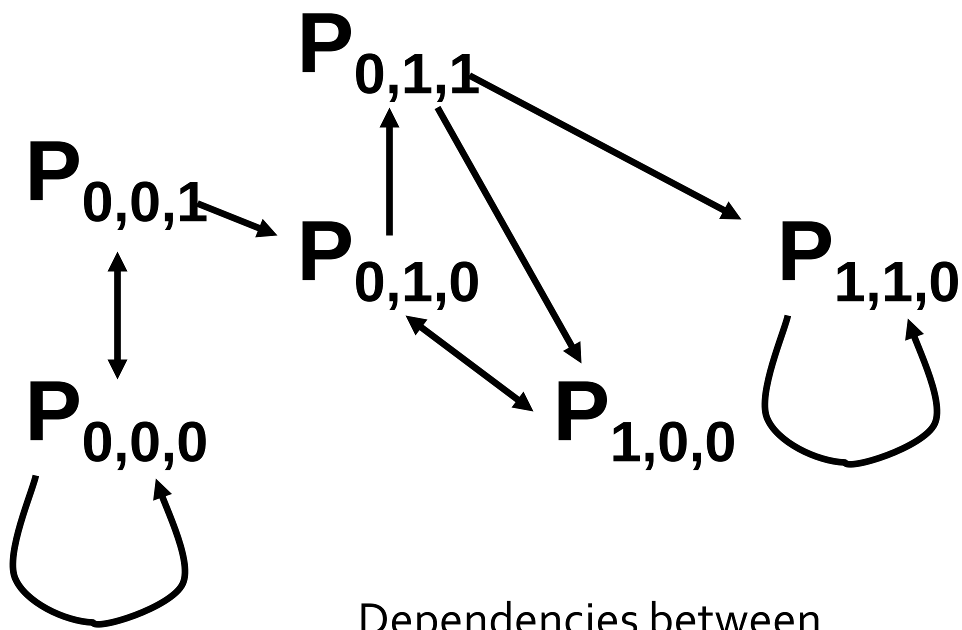
$P_{0,0,0}$ depends on $P_{0,0,1}$ depends on $P_{0,1,0}$ depends on $P_{0,1,1}$ depends on $P_{1,0,0}$ depends on $P_{0,1,0}$ depends on …

A System of Pigquations



Dependencies between
non-winning states

How Bad Is It?

- The intersection of a set of bent hyperplanes in a hypercube
- In the general case, no known method (read: PhD research)
- Is there a method that works (without being guaranteed to work in general)?
  - Yes! Value Iteration!

Value Iteration

- Start out with some values (0’s, 1’s, random #’s)
- Do the following until the values converge (stop changing):
  - Plug the values into the RHS’s
  - Recompute the LHS values
- That’s easy. Let’s do it!

Value Iteration

$$P_{0,0,0} = \max(1 - P_{0,0,0}, \tfrac{1}{2}(1 - P_{0,0,0} + P_{0,0,1}))$$
$$P_{0,0,1} = \max(1 - P_{0,1,0}, \tfrac{1}{2}(2 - P_{0,0,0}))$$
$$P_{0,1,0} = \max(1 - P_{1,0,0}, \tfrac{1}{2}(1 - P_{1,0,0} + P_{0,1,1}))$$
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- Assume $P_{i,j,k}$ is 0 unless it's a win
- Repeat: Compute RHS's, assign to LHS's

Iteration 1

Initially, $P_{i,j,k} = 0$

$P_{0,0,0} = \max(1 - P_{0,0,0}, ½(1 - P_{0,0,0} + P_{0,0,1}))$

$P_{0,0,1} = \max(1 - P_{0,1,0}, ½(2 - P_{0,0,0}))$

$P_{0,1,0} = \max(1 - P_{1,0,0}, ½(1 - P_{1,0,0} + P_{0,1,1}))$

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Iteration 1

Initially, $P_{i,j,k} = 0$

$P_{0,0,0} = \max(1 - 0, ½(1 - 0 + 0))$

$P_{0,0,1} = \max(1 - 0, ½(2 - 0))$

$P_{0,1,0} = \max(1 - 0, ½(1 - 0 + 0))$

$P_{0,1,1} = \max(1 - 0, ½(2 - 0))$

$P_{1,0,0} = \max(1 - 0, ½(2 - 0))$

$P_{1,1,0} = \max(1 - 0, ½(2 - 0))$

Iteration 1

Initially, $P_{i,j,k} = 0$

$P_{0,0,0} = \max(1, ½) = 1$

$P_{0,0,1} = \max(1, 1) = 1$

$P_{0,1,0} = \max(1, ½) = 1$

$P_{0,1,1} = \max(1, 1) = 1$

$P_{1,0,0} = \max(1, 1) = 1$

$P_{1,1,0} = \max(1, 1) = 1$

Iteration 2

Next, $P_{i,j,k} = 1$

$P_{0,0,0} = \max(1 - P_{0,0,0}, \frac{1}{2}(1 - P_{0,0,0} + P_{0,0,1}))$

$P_{0,0,1} = \max(1 - P_{0,1,0}, \frac{1}{2}(2 - P_{0,0,0}))$

$P_{0,1,0} = \max(1 - P_{1,0,0}, \frac{1}{2}(1 - P_{1,0,0} + P_{0,1,1}))$

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$P_{1,1,0} = \max(1 - P_{1,1,0}, \frac{1}{2}(2 - P_{1,1,0}))$

Iteration 2

Next, $P_{i,j,k} = 1$

$P_{0,0,0} = \max(1 – 1, ½(1 – 1 + 1))$

$P_{0,0,1} = \max(1 – 1, ½(2 – 1))$

$P_{0,1,0} = \max(1 – 1, ½(1 – 1 + 1))$

$P_{0,1,1} = \max(1 – 1, ½(2 – 1))$

$P_{1,0,0} = \max(1 – 1, ½(2 – 1))$

$P_{1,1,0} = \max(1 – 1, ½(2 – 1))$

Iteration 2

Next, $P_{i,j,k} = 1$

$P_{0,0,0} =$ max(0, ½) = ½

$P_{0,0,1} =$ max(0, ½) = ½

$P_{0,1,0} =$ max(0, ½) = ½

$P_{0,1,1} =$ max(0, ½) = ½

$P_{1,0,0} =$ max(0, ½) = ½

$P_{1,1,0} =$ max(0, ½) = ½

Iteration 3

Next, $P_{i,j,k} = ½$

$P_{0,0,0} = \max(1 – P_{0,0,0}, ½(1 – P_{0,0,0} + P_{0,0,1}))$

$P_{0,0,1} = \max(1 – P_{0,1,0}, ½(2 – P_{0,0,0}))$

$P_{0,1,0} = \max(1 – P_{1,0,0}, ½(1 – P_{1,0,0} + P_{0,1,1}))$

$P_{0,1,1} = \max(1 – P_{1,1,0}, ½(2 – P_{1,0,0}))$

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$P_{1,1,0} = \max(1 – P_{1,1,0}, ½(2 – P_{1,1,0}))$

Iteration 3

Next, $P_{i,j,k} = ½$

$P_{0,0,0} = \max(1 – ½, ½(1 – ½ + ½))$

$P_{0,0,1} = \max(1 – ½, ½(2 – ½))$

$P_{0,1,0} = \max(1 – ½, ½(1 – ½ + ½))$

$P_{0,1,1} = \max(1 – ½, ½(2 – ½))$

$P_{1,0,0} = \max(1 – ½, ½(2 – ½))$

$P_{1,1,0} = \max(1 – ½, ½(2 – ½))$

Iteration 3

Next, $P_{i,j,k} = ½$

$P_{0,0,0} =$ max(½, ½) = ½

$P_{0,0,1} =$ max(½, ¾) = ¾

$P_{0,1,0} =$ max(½, ½) = ½

$P_{0,1,1} =$ max(½, ¾) = ¾

$P_{1,0,0} =$ max(½, ¾) = ¾

$P_{1,1,0} =$ max(½, ¾) = ¾

This continues until values converge…

But That's GRUNT Work!

- So have a computer do it, slacker!
- Not difficult – end of CS1 level
- Fast! Don't blink – you'll miss it
- Optimal play:
  - Compute the probabilities
  - Determine flip/hold from RHS max's
  - (For our equations, always FLIP)

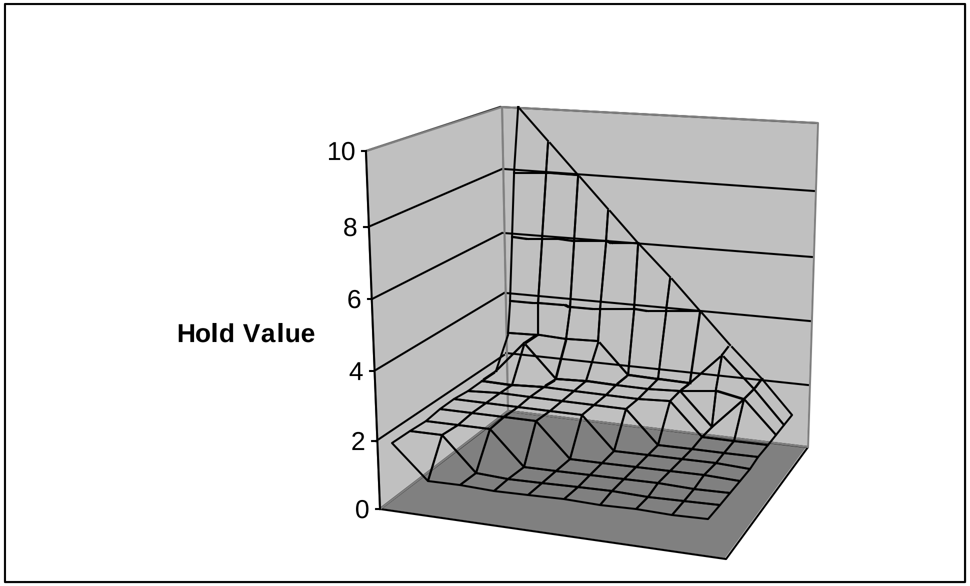
Piglet Solved

- Game to 10
- Play to Score: “Hold at 1”
- Play to Win:

Opponent

You

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



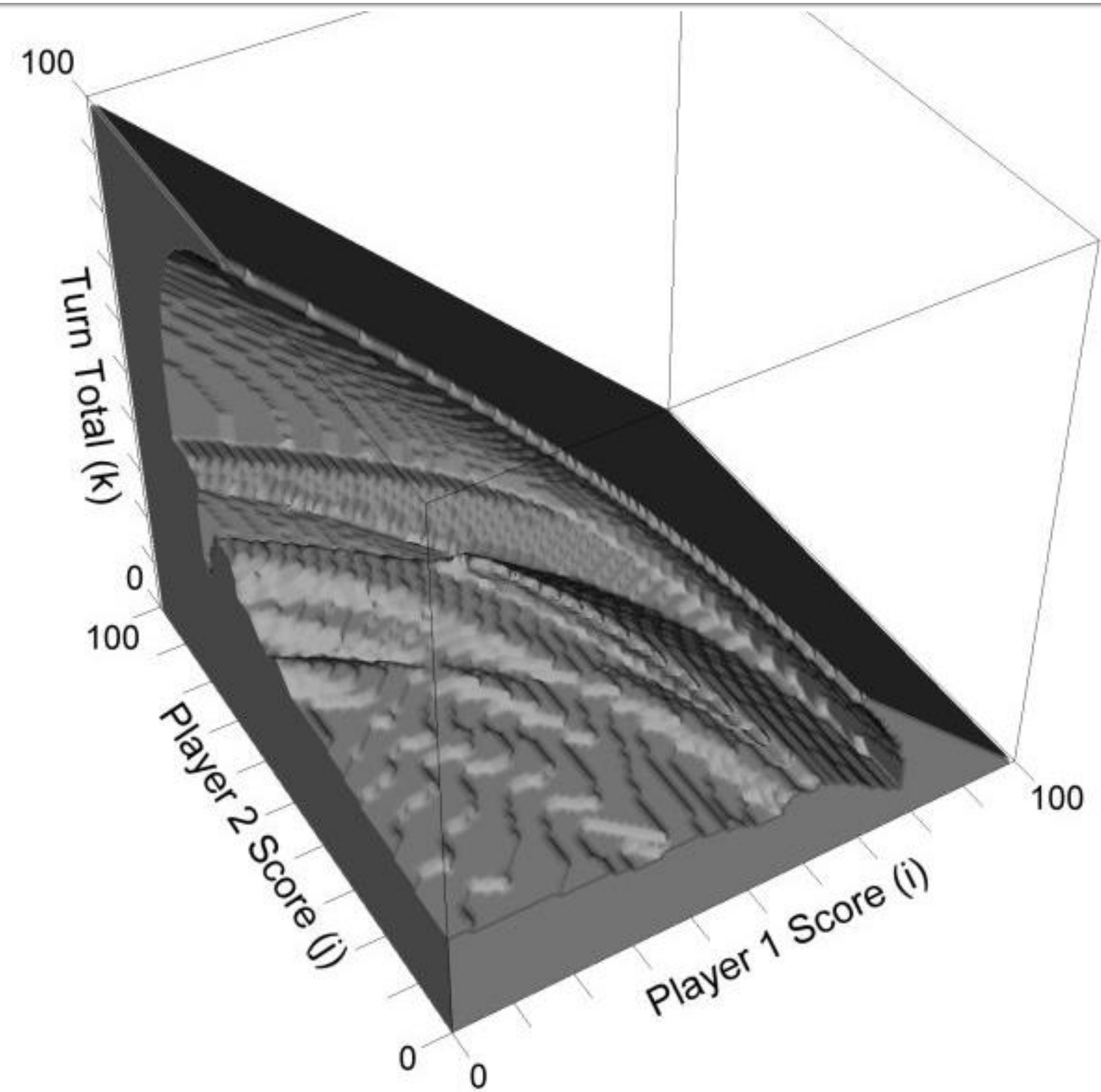
Pig Probabilities

- Just like Piglet, but more possible outcomes
- $P_{i,j,k} =$
  $\max(1 - P_{j,i+k,0},$
  $\quad 1/6((1 - P_{j,i,0}) + P_{i,j,k+2} + P_{i,j,k+3}$
  $\quad\quad + P_{i,j,k+4} + P_{i,j,k+5} + P_{i,j,k+6}))$

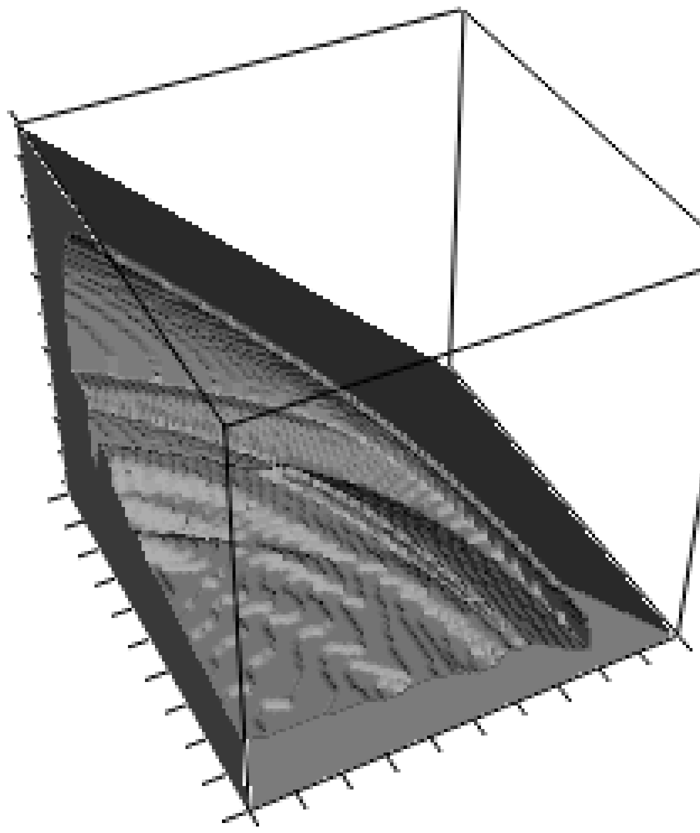
Solving Pig

- 505,000 such equations
- Same simple solution method (value iteration)
- Potential Speedup: Solve groups of interdependent probabilities from game end backward
- So what does optimal play look like?

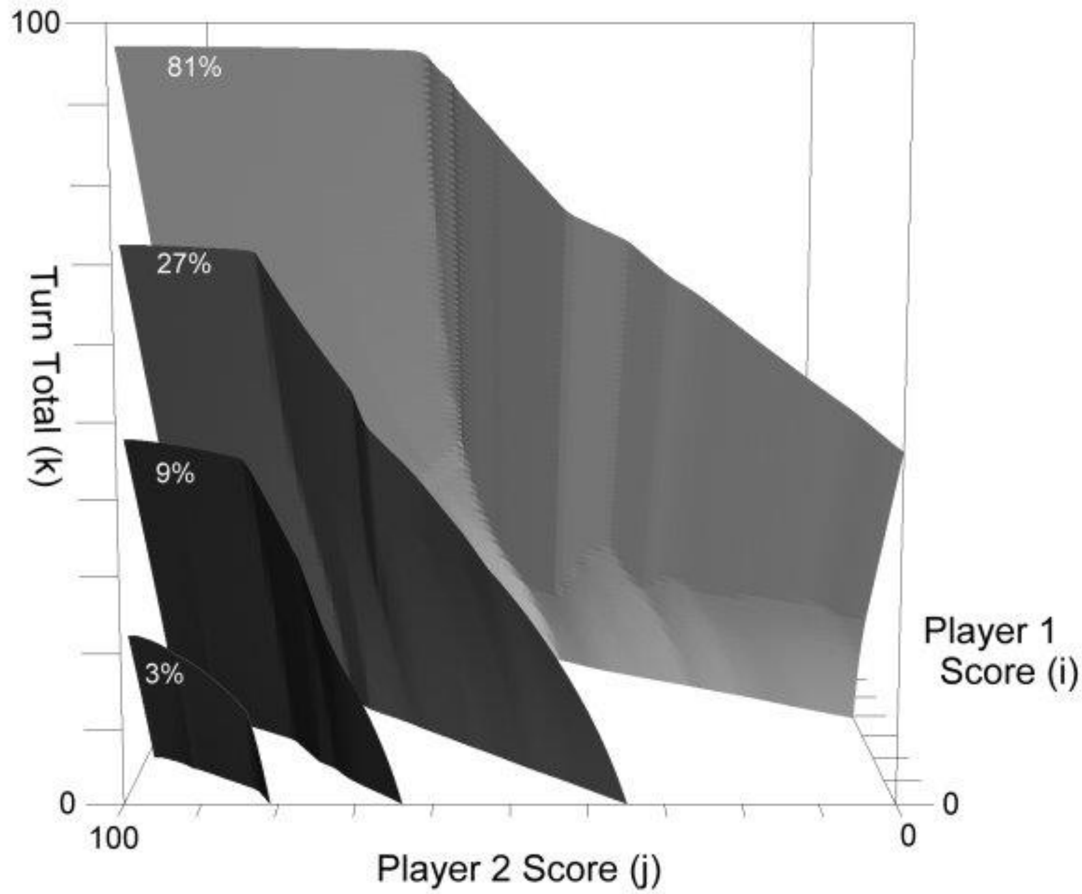
Pig Sow-lution



Pig Sow-lution

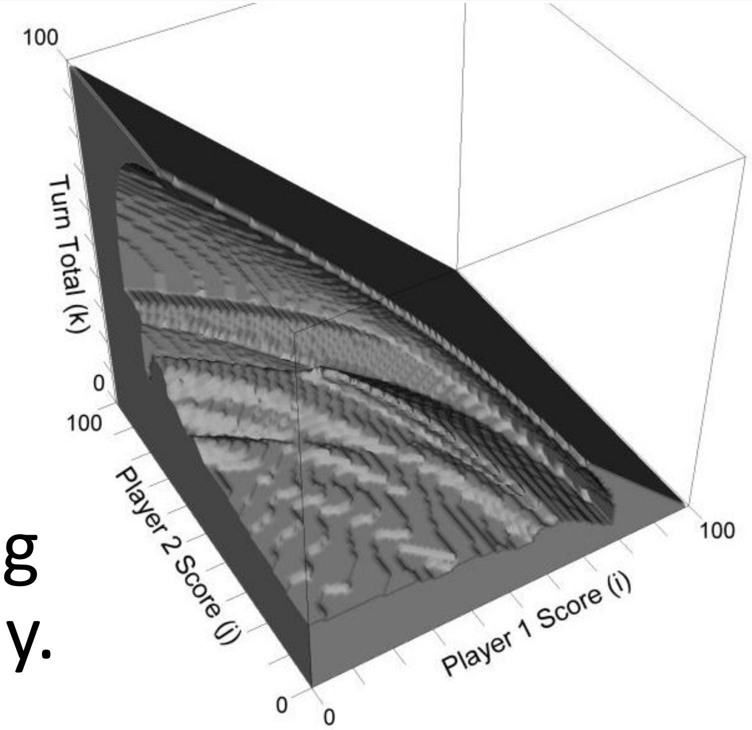


Probability Contours



Practical Play of Pig

- Whoa! That's some funky alien landscape on that optimal policy!
- (scratches head) So I'm supposed to memorize that?
- Computing optimal play of Pig didn't make *me* play optimally.
- How does one come up with practical policies for unaided human play?



Approximating Optimality

- KISS Principle: "Keep It Simple and Stupid."
- Often, much learning benefit comes from attention to few, simple features.
- Observe the optimal policy and look for significant features of the roll/hold boundary.
- Try, try again.
- How does one evaluate simple policy ideas?

Evaluating Policies

- Given two policies (yours and optimal):
  - set up a system of equations describing play,
  - compute the probability of your winning going first/second, and
  - average the win probabilities

Policy Comparison

Algorithm 1 Policy Comparison

For each $(i,j,k) \in \mathcal{S}$, initialize $P^A_{i,j,k}$ and $P^B_{i,j,k}$ arbitrarily.

Repeat

$\Delta \leftarrow 0$

For each $(i,j,k) \in \mathcal{S}$,

$$p1 \leftarrow \begin{cases} \frac{1}{6}\left[(1 - P^B_{j,i,0}) + \sum_{r\in[2,6]} P^A_{i,j,k+r}\right], & \text{if } Roll^A_{i,j,k}; \\ 1 - P^B_{j,i+k,0}, & \text{otherwise.} \end{cases}$$

$$p2 \leftarrow \begin{cases} \frac{1}{6}\left[(1 - P^A_{j,i,0}) + \sum_{r\in[2,6]} P^B_{i,j,k+r}\right], & \text{if } Roll^B_{i,j,k}; \\ 1 - P^A_{j,i+k,0}, & \text{otherwise.} \end{cases}$$

$$\Delta \leftarrow \max\left\{\Delta,\ \left|p1 - P^A_{i,j,k}\right|,\ \left|p2 - P^B_{i,j,k}\right|\right\}$$

$P^A_{i,j,k} \leftarrow p1$

$P^B_{i,j,k} \leftarrow p2$

until $\Delta < \epsilon$

return $\left[P^A_{0,0,0} + (1 - P^B_{0,0,0})\right]/2$

Hold at *n* (or goal)

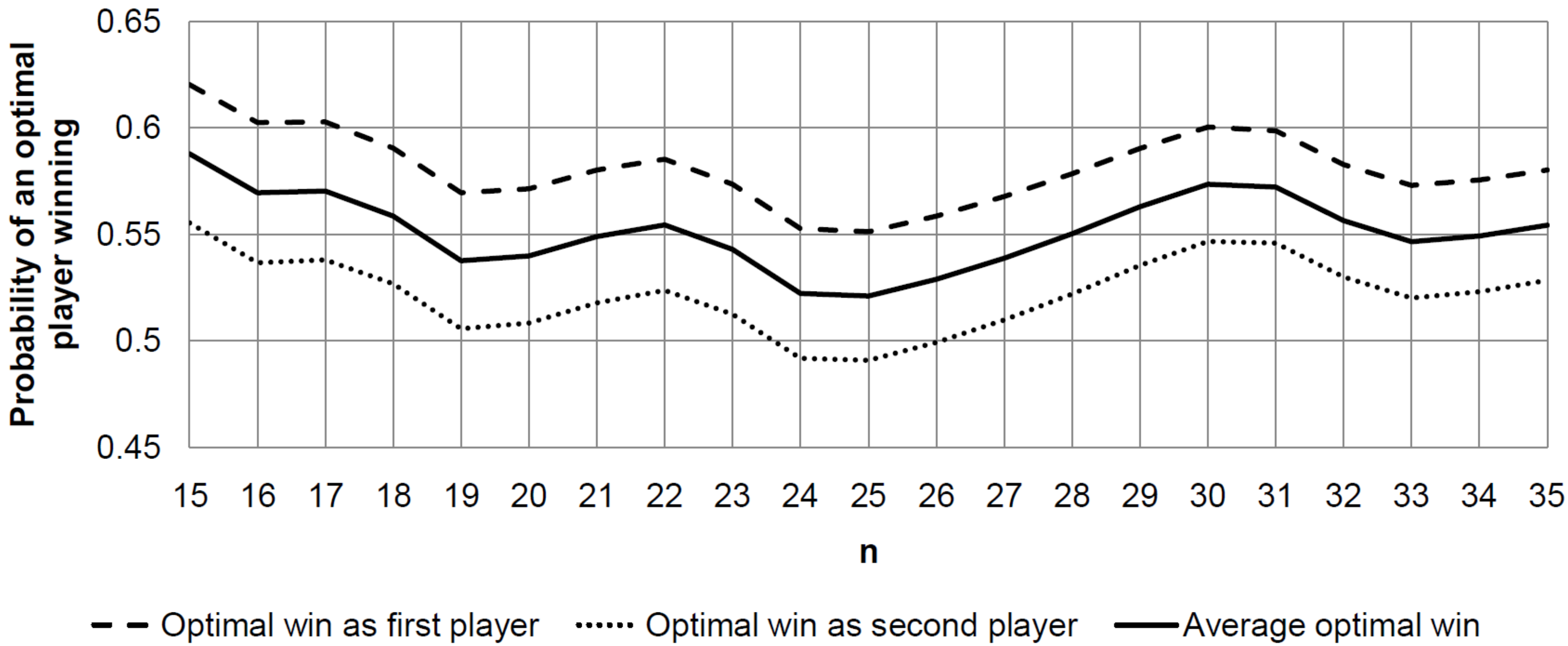


Figure 2. Probability of an optimal player winning against a player using the “hold at n” policy

n = 25 → optimal advantage = 4.2%; n = 20 → optimal advantage = 8.0%

t Scoring Turns

- Hold value: $$h(i, t_s) = \left\lfloor \frac{100 - i}{t - t_s} \right\rfloor$$

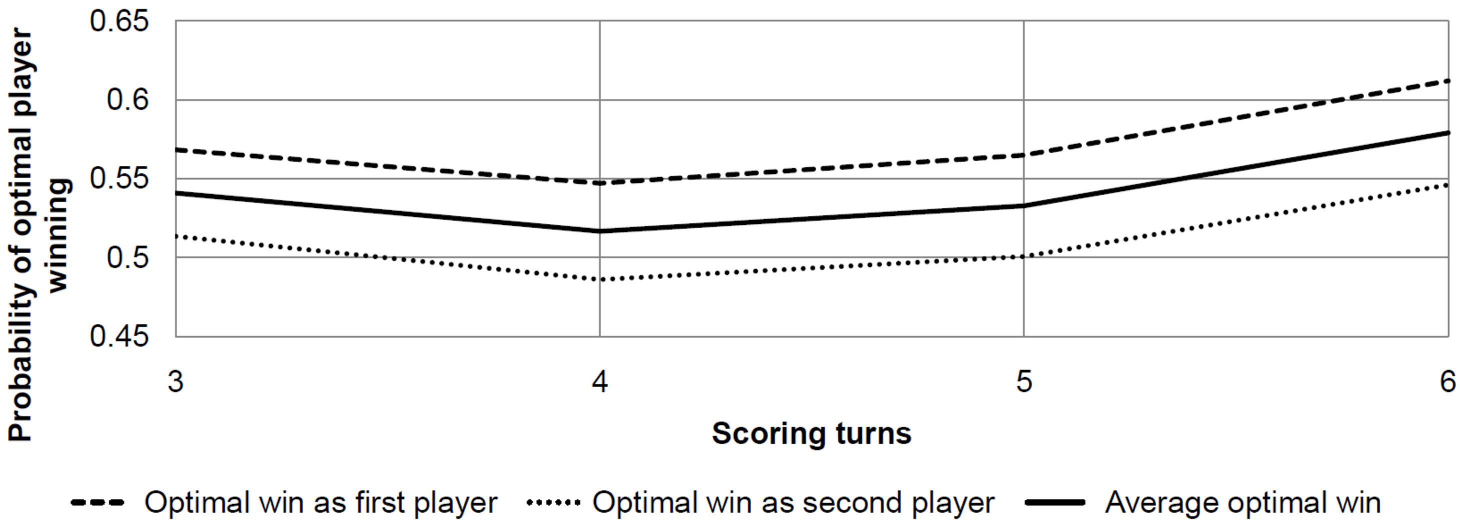


Figure 4. The probability of an optimal player winning against a player using the "*t* scoring turns" policy for different values of *t*.

t = 4 → optimal advantage = 3.3%

Score Base, Keep Pace, End Race

- Roll if:
  - $k < b$ (you must score at least base value b),
  - $i + k < j - p$ (you must get within p of j), or
  - either $i \geq 100 - e$ or else $j \geq 100 - e$ (you roll to win when someone is within e of the goal).
- Optimizing parameters, $b = 19$, $p = 14$, and $e = 31$ → optimal advantage = 1.9%

Keep Pace and End Race

- Roll if:
  - either $i \geq 100 - e$ or else $j \geq 100 - e$, or
  - $k < c + (j - i)/d$.
- Optimizing $c = 21$, $d = 8$, $e = 29$, and rounding division for hold value → optimal advantage = **0.922%**
- So, if either player's score is 71 or higher, roll for the goal. Otherwise, subtract your score from your opponent's and let *m* be the closest multiple of 8. (Choose the greater multiple if halfway between multiples.) Then hold at 21 + m/8.

Summary

- What we've learned:
  - Playing to score is not necessarily playing to win.
  - Simple rules do not imply simple perfect play.
  - Making a guess at a solution and iteratively improving that guess can be a useful method.
  - Similar iterative techniques can help us capture the simple essence of good play.
  - The computer is an exciting power tool for the mind!

Related Resources

The Game of Pig page:

http://cs.gettysburg.edu/projects/pig

Pig CS teaching resources:

http://cs.gettysburg.edu/~tneller/resources/pig