

CSCI-1200 Data Structures — Fall 2013

Homework 6 — Ricochet Robots Recursion

Your task for this homework is to solve robot movement puzzles using the technique of recursion. This homework is inspired by the board game “Ricochet Robots”:

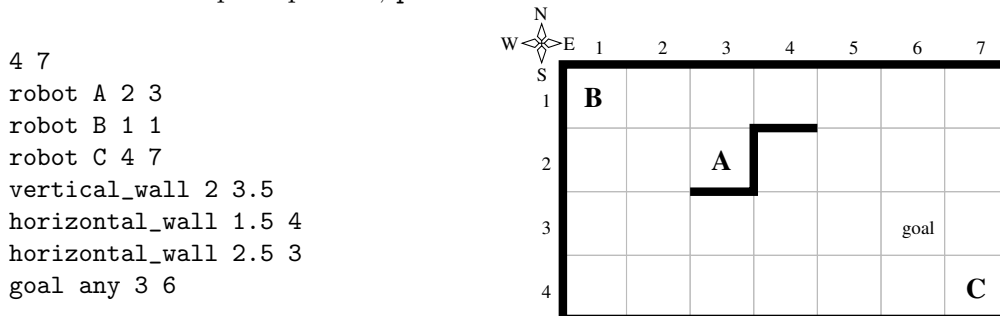
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ricochet_Robot
<http://riograndegames.com/Game/163-Ricochet-Robots>

Understanding the non-linear word search program from Lecture 12 will be helpful in thinking about how you will solve this type of problem. We strongly urge you to study and play with that program, including tracing through its behavior using a debugger or cout statements or both.

You will be given a two-dimensional play space and one or more robots that move around within the space. Each robot has a starting position on the board and moves by sliding in the 4 primary directions: north, east, south, or west. The goal will be to navigate one of the robots to the target position in the fewest total moves. The catch is that when a robot is directed to move, it *continues to slide until it bumps into either a wall or another robot*. To solve the puzzle, the robot *must come to rest on the goal position*. It does not count as a solution if the robot simply slides over and past the goal location. The input file will specify that either a specific robot must reach the goal, or that the puzzle is solved if *any* robot reaches the goal.

Please carefully read the entire assignment and study the provided code before beginning your implementation.

First, let’s look at a sample input file, `puzzle1.txt`.



First note that grid locations begin with (1,1) in the upper left corner. The input file specifies the overall size of the grid. The grid is always bounded by walls (thick black lines in the diagram above) on the outer edges of the grid. Interior horizontal and vertical walls are specified with half grid cell coordinates. The goal of this particular puzzle is to navigate *any* robot to the specified goal location at row=3, column=6.

Your program should expect one or more command line arguments:

```
richochet_robots puzzle1.txt -max_moves <#> -visualize_accessibility
richochet_robots puzzle1.txt -max_moves <#>
richochet_robots puzzle1.txt -max_moves <#> -all_solutions
richochet_robots puzzle1.txt -all_solutions
```

The first argument specifies the name of the input puzzle file. To begin, we recommend that you use the optional argument `-max_moves`, which places a cap on the maximum number of moves that will be searched to find solutions. We also recommend that you first work on a visualization of the accessibility — the possible places a robot could land in less than or equal to the specified number of moves. For example, if we run the command:

```
richochet_robots puzzle1.txt -max_moves 3 -visualize_accessibility
```

The program will output this accessibility data:

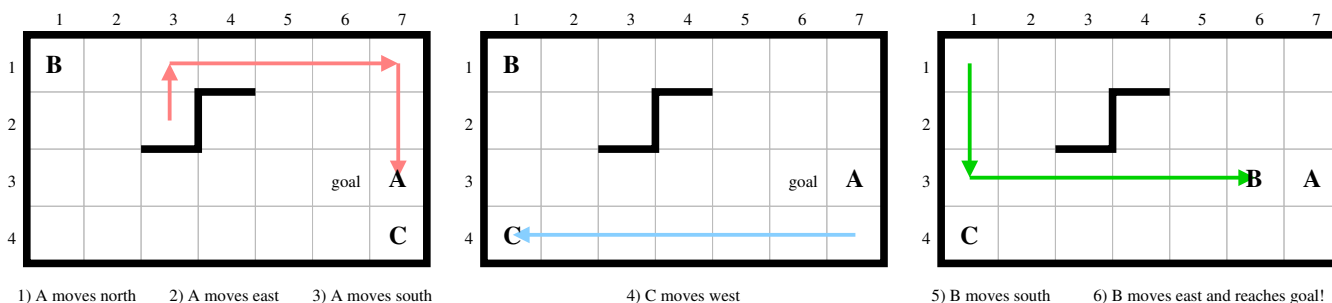
```

0  2  1  3  .  2  1
1  3  0  3  .  .  2
2  .  .  .  .  .  2
1  2  .  .  .  2  0

```

The starting point of each robot is labeled 0, because no moves are necessary to position a robot at this location. All locations that can be accessed with just one robot move are labeled 1, all locations that can be reached in 2 moves (by the same or different robots) are labeled 2, etc. If the location cannot be reached within the specified number of moves, the period character is placed at that location.

When your visualization is working, the next step is to search for the one or more solutions to the puzzle. The sample puzzle shown earlier can be solved in 6 moves:



There are actually 24 different 6 move solutions to this puzzle, and there are no solutions with fewer than 6 moves. When the `-all_solutions` command line argument *is not* specified, any of the shortest legal solutions may be output, and the board should be printed after each move. When the `-all_solutions` command line argument *is* specified, the number of solutions is output, and then all of the shortest solutions should be output, in any order. The intermediate board states are not printed when all solutions are output.

All program output should be sent to `std::cout`. If the puzzle is impossible your program should output “no solutions with XX or fewer moves”, where XX is the specified maximum number of moves to be searched, or “no solutions”, if a maximum number of moves was not specified. Please match the sample output formatting exactly (except for choice of single output solution and order of all solutions).

Provided Code and Homework Submission

We have provided the `Board` class, and code to parse the command line arguments and load the puzzle input file. You may use or modify any or all of the provided code in your solution.

You must use recursion in a non-trivial way in your solution to this homework. As always, we recommend you work on this program in logical steps. Partial credit will be awarded for each component of the assignment, first for the visualization of accessibility, then for finding a correct solution (even if it is not the shortest), and a bit more if that solution is one of the shortest solutions. Finding *all* unique shortest solutions is worth nearly full credit, and finding all of the shortest solutions when the maximum number of moves is *not* specified is worth full credit. **IMPORTANT NOTE:** This problem is computationally expensive, even for medium-sized puzzles with a few robots!

Once you have finished your implementation, analyze the performance of your algorithm using order notation. What important variables control the complexity of a particular problem? The dimensions of the board (i and j), the number of robots on the board (r), the number of interior walls (w), the maximum total number of moves allowed (m)? In your `README.txt` file write a concise paragraph (< 200 words) justifying your answer. Also include a summary of the running time and success of your program on each of the provided examples.

All students are required to submit their program to the Homework 6 contest (see below). Extra credit will be awarded for programs that have a strong performance in the contest.

Ricochet Robots Contest Rules

- Contest submissions are a separate homework submission. Contest submissions are due Saturday October 26th at 11:59pm. You may not use late days for the contest. (The regular homework deadline is Thursday October 24th at 11:59pm and late days are allowed for the regular homework submissions).
- You may submit the same code for both the regular homework submission and the contest. Or you may make a small or significant change for the contest.
- Contest submissions *do not* need to use recursion.
- Contest submissions must follow the output specifications and match the formatting of the examples posted on the course webpage.
- We will recompile (`g++ -O3 *.cpp`) and run all submitted entries on one of our machines. Programs that do not compile, or do not complete the basic tests in a reasonable amount of time with correct output, will not receive extra credit.
- Programs must be single-threaded and single-process.
- We will run your program by *redirecting* `std::cout` to a file and measure performance with the UNIX `time` command. For example:

```
time ricochet_robots puzzle1.txt -max_moves 10 -all_solutions > output.txt
```

- You may want to use a *C++ code profiler* to measure the efficiency of your program and identify the portions of your code that consume most of the running time. A profiler can confirm your suspicions about what is slow, uncover unexpected problems, and focus your optimization efforts on the most inefficient portions of the code.
- We will be testing with and without the optional command line arguments `-max_moves`, `-visualize_accessibility` and `-all_solutions` and recognize the most correct and the fastest programs for each of the different tasks.
- You may submit up to two interesting new test cases for possible inclusion in the contest. Name these tests `smithj_1.txt` and `smithj_2.txt` (where `smithj` is your RCS username). Extra credit will be awarded for interesting test cases that are used in the contest. Caution: Don't make the test cases so difficult that your program cannot solve them in a reasonable amount of time!
- In your `README_contest.txt` file, describe the optimizations you implemented for the contest, describe your new test cases, and summarize the performance of your program on all test cases.
- Extra credit will be awarded based on overall performance in the contest.