Introduction to Logic Programming in Prolog
Outline

Programming paradigms

Logic programming basics
  Introduction to Prolog
  Predicates, queries, and rules

Understanding the query engine
  Goal search and unification
  Structuring recursive rules

Complex terms, numbers, and lists

Cuts and negation
What is a programming paradigm?

**Paradigm** *adapted from Oxford American*
A conceptual model underlying the theories and practice of a scientific subject

**scientific subject = programming**

**Programming paradigm**
A conceptual model underlying the theories and practice of programming
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Paradigm</th>
<th>View of computation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>imperative</td>
<td>sequence of state transformations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>object-oriented</td>
<td>simulation of interacting objects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>functional</td>
<td>function mapping input to output</td>
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<tr>
<td>logic</td>
<td>queries over logical relations</td>
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What is Prolog?

- an **untyped logic** programming language
- programs are **rules** that define **relations** on values
- run a program by formulating a **goal** or **query**
- result of a program: a true/false answer and a **binding of free variables**
Logic: a tool for reasoning

**Syllogism** (logical argument) – Aristotle, 350 BCE

Every human is mortal.
Socrates is human.
Therefore, Socrates is mortal.

**First-order logic** – Gottlob Frege, 1879 *Begriffsschrift*

\( \forall x. \text{Human}(x) \rightarrow \text{Mortal}(x) \)

\( \text{Human}(\text{Socrates}) \)

\( \therefore \text{Mortal}(\text{Socrates}) \)
Logic and programming

rule  $\forall x. \text{Human}(x) \rightarrow \text{Mortal}(x)$

fact  $\text{Human}(\text{Socrates})$

goal/query  $\therefore \text{Mortal}(\text{Socrates})$

Prolog program

mortal(X) :- human(X).
human(socrates).

Prolog query (interactive)

?- mortal(socrates).
true.
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SWI-Prolog logistics

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Predicate</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[myfile].</td>
<td>load definitions from “myfile.pl”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>listing(P).</td>
<td>lists facts and rules related to predicate P</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>trace.</td>
<td>turn on tracing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nodebug.</td>
<td>turn off tracing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>help.</td>
<td>view documentation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>halt.</td>
<td>quit</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All of these except `help` also work in GNU Prolog!
Atoms

An **atom** is just a primitive value

- string of characters, numbers, underscores starting with a lowercase letter:
  - hello, socrates, sUp3r_At0m

- any single quoted string of characters:
  - 'Hello world!', 'Socrates'

- numeric literals: 123, -345

- empty list: []
A **variable** can be used in rules and queries

- string of characters, numbers, underscores starting with an **uppercase letter** or an **underscore**
  - X, SomeHuman, _g_123

- special variable: _ (just an underscore)
  - unifies with anything – “don’t care”
Basic entity in Prolog is a predicate 

Unary predicate

hobbit(bilbo).
hobbit(frodo).
hobbit(sam).

hobbit = \{bilbo, frodo, sam\}

Binary predicate

likes(bilbo, frodo).
likes(frodo, bilbo).
likes(sam, frodo).
likes(frodo, ring).

likes = \{(bilbo, frodo), (frodo, bilbo), (sam, frodo), (frodo, ring)\}
Simple goals and queries

Predicates are:

- defined in a file the program
- queried in the REPL running the program

Response to a query is a true/false answer (or yes/no) when true, provides a binding for each variable in the query.

Is sam a hobbit?
?- hobbit(sam).
true.

Is gimli a hobbit?
?- hobbit(gimli).
false.

Who is a hobbit?
?- hobbit(X).
X = bilbo ;
X = frodo ;
X = sam .

Type ; after each response to search for another
Querying relations

You can query any argument of a predicate

• this is fundamentally different from passing arguments to functions!

```
?- likes(frodo,Y).
Y = bilbo ;
Y = ring .

?- likes(X,frodo).
X = bilbo ;
X = sam .

?- likes(X,Y).
X = bilbo,
Y = bilbo ;
X = bilbo,
Y = frodo ;
X = frodo,
Y = frodo ;
X = frodo,
Y = ring .

Definition

likes(bilbo, frodo).
likes(frodo, bilbo).
likes(sam, frodo).
likes(frodo, ring).
```
Overloading predicate names

Predicates with the **same name** but **different arities** are **different predicates**!

**hobbit/1**
- hobbit(bilbo).
- hobbit(frodo).
- hobbit(sam).

**hobbit/2**
- hobbit(bilbo, rivendell).
- hobbit(frodo, hobbiton).
- hobbit(sam, hobbiton).
- hobbit(merry, buckland).
- hobbit(pippin, tookland).

?- hobbit(X).
  X = bilbo ;
  X = frodo ;
  X = sam.

?- hobbit(X,_).
  ...
  X = merry ;
  X = pippin .
Conjunction

Comma (,) denotes **logical and** of two predicates

Do **sam** and **frodo** like each other?

?- likes(sam, frodo), likes(frodo, sam).
true.

Do **merry** and **pippin** live in the same place?

?- hobbit(merry, X), hobbit(pippin, X).
false.

Do any hobbits live in the same place?

?- hobbit(H1, X), hobbit(H2, X), H1 \= H2.
H1 = frodo, X = hobbiton, H2 = sam.

H1 and H2 must be different!
Rule: head :- body

The head is true if the body is true

Examples
likes(X,beer) :- hobbit(X,_).
likes(X,boats) :- hobbit(X,buckland).
danger(X) :- likes(X,ring).
danger(X) :- likes(X,boats), likes(X,beer).

Note that disjunction is described by multiple rules
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How does prolog solve queries?

Basic algorithm for solving a (sub)goal

1. Linearly **search** database for candidate facts/rules
2. Attempt to **unify** candidate with goal
   - If unification is **successful**:  
     - if a **fact** – we’re done with this goal!  
     - if a **rule** – add body of rule as new subgoals
   - If unification is **unsuccessful**: keep searching
3. Backtrack if we reach the end of the database
1. Search the database for candidate matches

What is a candidate fact/rule?

- **fact**: predicate matches the goal
- **rule**: predicate of its **head** matches the goal

Example goal: \textit{likes(merry,Y)}

**Candidates**

- \texttt{likes(sam,frodo)}.
- \texttt{likes(merry,pippin)}.
- \texttt{likes(X,beer) :- hobbit(X)}.

**Not candidates**

- \texttt{hobbit(merry,buckland)}.
- \texttt{danger(X) :- likes(X,ring)}.
- \texttt{likes(merry,pippin,mushrooms)}. 

Understanding the query engine
2. Attempt to unify candidate and goal

**Unification**

Find an *assignment of variables* that makes its arguments *syntactically equal*

Prolog: $A = B$ means attempt to *unify* $A$ and $B$

?- likes(merry,Y) = likes(sam,frodo).  
false.

?- likes(merry,Y) = likes(merry,pippin).  
Y = pippin .

?- likes(merry,Y) = likes(X,beer).  
X = merry ; Y = beer .

2a. if *fail*, try next candidate

2b. if *success*, add new subgoals
Tracking subgoals

Deriving solutions through rules

1. Maintain a list of goals that need to be solved
   • when this list is empty, we’re done!
2. If current goal unifies with a rule **head**, add **body** as subgoals to the list
3. After each unification, substitute variables in all goals in the list!

Database

1. \texttt{lt(one,two)}.
2. \texttt{lt(two,three)}.
3. \texttt{lt(three,four)}.
4. \texttt{lt(X,Z) :- lt(X,Y), lt(Y,Z)}.

Sequence of goals for \texttt{lt(one,four)}

1. \texttt{Y1=two} \quad \texttt{lt(two,four)}
2. \texttt{Y2=three} \quad \texttt{lt(three,four)}
3. \texttt{true} \quad \texttt{done!}
4. \texttt{X=one,Z=four} \quad \texttt{lt(one,Y1), lt(Y1,four)}
3. Backtracking

For each subgoal, Prolog maintains:

- the **search state** (goals + assignments) before it was produced
- a **pointer** to the rule that produced it

When a **subgoal fails**:  
- **restore** the previous state  
- **resume** search for previous goal from the pointer

When the **initial goal fails**: return **false**
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Potential for infinite search

Why care about how goal search works?

One reason: to write **recursive rules** that don’t loop!

**Bad example: symmetry**

married(abe, mona).
moved(clancy, jackie).
moved(homer, marge).
moved(X, Y) :- moved(Y, X).

?- moved(jackie, abe).
ERROR: Out of local stack

**Bad example: transitivity**

lt(one, two).
l(two, three).
l(two, four).
l(X, Z) :- lt(X, Y), lt(Y, Z).

?- lt(three, one).
ERROR: Out of local stack
Strategies for writing recursive rules

How to avoid infinite search

1. Always list **non-recursive cases first** (in database and rule bodies)
2. Use helper predicates to **enforce progress** during search

Example: symmetry

married_(abe, mona).
marged_(clancy, jackie).
marged_(homer, marge).
marged(X, Y) :- married_(X, Y).
marged(X, Y) :- married_(Y, X).

?- married(jackie, abe).
false.

Example 2: transitivity

lt_(one, two).
l_{(two, three).
l_{(three, four).
l_{(X, Y) :- lt_(X, Y).
l_{(X, Z) :- lt_(X, Y), lt(Y, Z).

?- lt(three, one).
false.
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Can represent structured data by **nested predicates**

**Example database**

- `drives(bart, skateboard(green)).`
- `drives(bart, bike(blue)).`
- `drives(lisa, bike(pink)).`
- `drives(homer, car(pink)).`

?- `drives(lisa, X).
X = bike(pink) .`

?- `drives(X, bike(Y)).
X = bart, Y = blue ;
X = lisa, Y = pink .`

Variables can’t be used for predicates:

?- `drives(X, Y(pink)). ← illegal!`
### Relationship to Haskell data types

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Haskell data type</th>
<th>Prolog predicate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><code>data Expr = Lit Int</code></td>
<td><code>expr(N) :- number(N).</code></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>`</td>
<td>Neg Expr`</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>`</td>
<td>Add Expr Expr`</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>`</td>
<td>Mul Expr Expr`</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Add** `(Neg (Lit 3))`  
`(Mul (Lit 4) (Lit 5))`

- build values w/ data constructors
- data types statically define valid combinations

**add**(neg(3), mul(4,5))

- build values w/ predicates
- use rules to dynamically identify or enumerate valid combinations
Lists are structured data with special syntax

- similar basic structure to Haskell
- but can be heterogeneous

\[ [3,4] \equiv '[|]'(3, '[|]'(4, [])) \]

\[ ['hi', [atom, p(x)], 6] \]
List patterns

\[ [X|Y] \]

**Database**

\[
\text{story([3,little,pigs]).}
\]

?- \text{story([X|Y]).}
X = 3,
Y = [little, pigs].

?- \text{story([X,Y|Z]).}
X = 3,
Y = little,
Z = [pigs].

?- \text{story([X,Y,Z|V]).}
X = 3,
Y = little,
Z = pigs,
V = [].

?- \text{story([X,Y,Z,V]).}
X = 3,
Y = little,
Z = pigs,
V = [].
false.
Arithmetic in Prolog

Arithmetic expressions are also structured data (nested predicates)

- special syntax: can be written infix, standard operator precedence
- can be evaluated:
  - `X is expr` evaluate `expr` and bind to `X`
  - `expr =:= expr` evaluate expressions and check if equal

```
3*4+5*6 ≡ +(*(3, 4), *(5, 6))
```

```
?- X is 3*4+5*6.
X = 42.

?- 8 is X*2.
ERROR: is/2: Arguments are not sufficiently instantiated
```
Using arithmetic in rules

Example database

```prolog
fac(1,1).
fac(N,M) :- K is N-1, fac(K,L), M is L*N.
```

?- fac(5, M).
M = 120.

?- fac(N, 6).
ERROR: fac/2: Arguments are not sufficiently instantiated
Unification vs. arithmetic equality

**Unification:** \( A = B \)

Find an assignment of variables that makes its arguments syntactically equal

**Arithmetic equality:** \( A =:= B \)

Evaluate terms as arithmetic expressions and check if numerically equal

?- \( X = 3*5. \)
\( X = 3*5. \)

?- \( 8 = X*2. \)
\( \text{false.} \)

?- \( 4*2 = X*2. \)
\( X = 4. \)

?- \( X \text{ is } 3*5. \)
\( X = 15. \)

?- \( 8 \text{ is } X*2. \)
ERROR: is/2: Arguments are not sufficiently instantiated
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How cut works

**Cut** is a special atom used to prevent backtracking

When encountered as a subgoal it:

- always succeeds
- commits the current goal search to the matches and assignments made so far

Database without cut

foo(1). foo(2).
bar(X,Y) :- foo(X), foo(Y).
bar(3,3).

?- bar(A,B).
A = 1, B = 1 ; A = 1, B = 2 ;
A = 2, B = 1 ; A = 2, B = 2 ;
A = 3, B = 3.

Database with cut

foo(1). foo(2).
bar(X,Y) :- foo(X), !, foo(Y).
bar(3,3).

?- bar(A,B).
A = 1, B = 1 ;
A = 1, B = 2.
Green cuts vs. red cuts

A **green cut**: doesn’t affect the members of a predicate
- only cuts paths that would have failed anyway
- the cut is used purely for efficiency

A **red cut**: any cut that isn’t green
- if removed, meaning of the predicate changes
- the cut is part of the “logic” of the predicate

max(X,Y,Y) :- X < Y, !.
max(X,Y,X) :- X >= Y.
find(X,[X|_]) :- !.
find(X,[_|L]) :- find(X,L).
Negation as failure

Negation predicate

\[ \text{not}(P) :- P, !, \text{fail}. \]
\[ \text{not}(P). \]

if \( P \) is true, commit that \( \text{not}(P) \) is false
otherwise, \( \text{not}(P) \) is true

Database

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{hobbit}(frodo). \\
\text{hobbit}(bilbo). \\
\text{likes}(X, \text{beer}) & :- \text{hobbit}(X).
\end{align*}
\]

?- \text{not}(\text{likes}(frodo, \text{beer})). \\
false.

?- \text{not}(\text{likes}(\text{gimli}, \text{beer})). \\
true.

?- \text{not}(\text{likes}(\text{bilbo}, X)). \\
false.

?- \text{not}(\text{likes}(X, \text{pizza})). \\
true.

“frodo doesn’t like beer”

“gimli doesn’t like beer”

“bilbo doesn’t like anything”

“nobody likes pizza”