

# Planning

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- Planning with Plan-Space Search
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  - SatPlan

Material from  
Russell & Norvig,  
chapters 10.3. and 11

Slides based on Slides  
by Lise Getoor  
and Tom Lenaerts

# Planning problem

- Planning is the task of coming up with a sequence of actions that will achieve a goal starting from an initial state
  - many search-based problem-solving agents are special cases
- **Given:**
  - a set of **action descriptions** (defining the possible primitive actions by the agent),
  - an initial **state description**, and
  - a **goal state description** or predicate,
- **Find** a plan, which is
  - a **sequence of action** instances, such that executing them in the initial state will change the world to a state satisfying the goal-state description.
- Goals are usually specified as a conjunction of subgoals to be achieved

**Key Novelty:**  
Actions and States are described with properties

# Application Scenario

- Classical planning environment
  - fully observable, deterministic, finite, static, discrete
- Practical Applications
  - design and manufacturing
  - military operations
  - games
  - space exploration

# Planning vs. Problem Solving

- Planning and problem solving methods can often solve the same sorts of problems
- Planning is more powerful because of the representations and methods used
  - States, goals, and actions are decomposed into sets of sentences (usually in first-order logic)
- Planning can analyze the effects of actions
  - The **successor function** is a **black box**: it must be “applied” to a state to know which actions are possible in that state and what are the effects of each one
  - An explicit representation of the possible actions and their effects would help the problem solver
- **Subgoals** can often be planned independently, reducing the complexity of the planning problem
- Search may be through **plan space** rather than **state space**

# Key Problems

- Which actions are relevant?
  - Example: Goal is **have (milk)**
    - the agent may have billions of possible actions
      - e.g., one **buy**-action for each possible product in a store
    - an intelligent planner will know that **buy (X)** will cause **have (X)**, and only consider the action **buy (milk)**
- What is a good heuristic functions?
  - Problem:
    - states are domain-specific data structures, and new heuristics must be supplied for each new problem
  - Example: Goal is buying  $n$  different items
    - Number of plans grows exponentially with  $n$
  - Problem-independent heuristics are needed
    - e.g., number of subgoals that have already been reached
- How to decompose a problem?

# Decomposable Problems

- Goals are often given as a conjunction of subgoals
  - e.g., **have (milk) & have (bread)**
  - each subgoal can be solved independently

Other problems can be decomposed into subproblems:

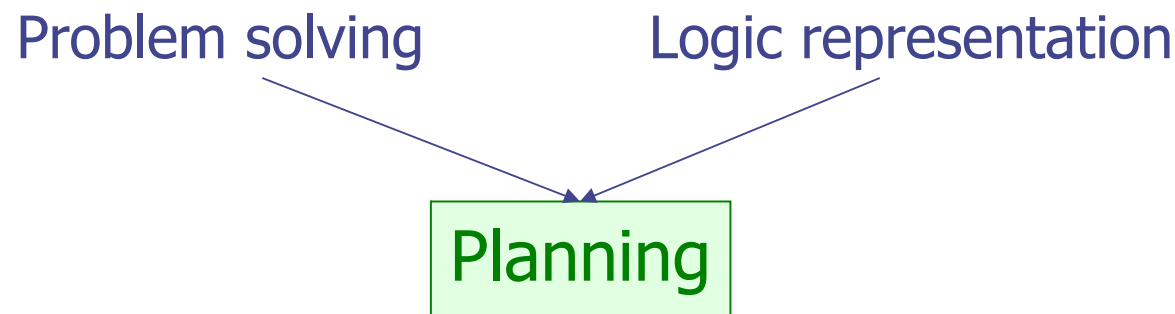
- Example: overnight delivery of a set of packages
  - Planning a complete route for all packages at once is very expensive ( $O(n!)$  different routes)  
→ Better decompose the problem:
  - First distribute the packages according to nearest airport to destination
  - Then plan to distribute the package from each airport separately  
→  $O(k \cdot (n/k)!)$  different routes (much less than  $O(n!)$ )

# Nearly Decomposable Problems

- Completely decomposable problems are rare
  - typically there are interactions between subgoals
- Nearly decomposable problems
  - planning for subgoals is possible
  - but additional work may be required to bring the partial results together
- Example:
  - Independent plans for **have (milk)** and **have (bread)** may have the result that two different super-markets are visited

# Representation in Planning

- In **Problem Solving**, actions, states, and goals are **black boxes**
  - each problem has its own representation
  - agent does not understand the representations of actions, states, and goals
  - cannot exploit relations between them
- **Planning** works with **explicit representations** of actions, states, and goals
  - typically in some form of logical calculus





# Major Approaches to Planning

- Situation calculus
- State space planning
- Partial order planning
- Planning graphs
- Planning with Propositional Logic
- Hierarchical decomposition (HTN planning)
- Reactive planning

# Planning in First-Order Logic

## Principal Idea:

- Formulate planning problem in First-Order Logic (FOL)
  - states (and goals) are conjunctions of literals
  - actions are logical rules
- Use theorem prover to find a proof for the goal
  - the actions used in this proof are the plan
  - e.g., use PROLOG

## Key Problem:

- How to represent change?
  - a) add and delete sentences from the KB to reflect changes
  - b) all facts are indexed by a situation variable → situation calculus

# PROLOG-like Logical Notation

- **Constant:** represents some objects
  - starts with a number or a lower-case letter
    - e.g., `pam`, `bob`, `liz`, `1`, `pi`, `true`, etc.
  - functions are like constants, but complex expressions
- **Variable:** denotes some unknown object/constant
  - starts with an upper-case letter or an underscore
    - e.g. `X`, `Person`, `Nummer`, `_42`, etc.
  - within a conjunction of literals, same variables refer to same objects
  - but may be different objects in different conjunctions / rules
- **Predicate:** denotes a relation between two objects
  - starts with a lower-case letter
    - e.g., `parent`, `male`, `female`
- **Literal:** a predicate symbol with some arguments
  - e.g., `parent(pam,bob)`, `at(pam,X)`, `airport(X)`
- **Rule:** an implication, typically written `Head :- Cond1, Cond2, ....`
  - e.g., `grandparent(X,Y) :- parent(X,Z), parent(Z,Y).`

# Situation Calculus

- A **situation** is a snapshot of the world at some instant in time
- Every true or false statement is made with respect to a particular situation
  - Add situation variables to every predicate.
  - $\text{at}(\text{agent}, 1, 1)$  becomes  $\text{at}(\text{agent}, 1, 1, s_0)$ :  
 $\text{at}(\text{agent}, 1, 1)$  is true in situation (i.e., state)  $s_0$ .
- Add a new function,  $\text{result}(a, s)$ , that maps a situation  $s$  into a new situation as a result of performing action  $a$ .
  - For example,  $\text{result}(\text{forward}, s)$  is a function that returns the successor state (situation) to  $s$  after performing action  $a$
  - Note that this is just notation!
    - Logical functions are not implemented or evaluated!
    - They are used in pattern matching

# Situation Calculus

- **Actions** can be respresented as logical rules that describe which states can be valid
- **Example:**
  - The action *agent-walks-to-location-y* could be represented by the PROLOG rule

`at(A, Y, result(walk(Y), S)) :- at(A, X, S) .`

agent A is now at location Y in state `result(walk(Y), S)`  
if it was at location X in state S and performed action `walk(Y)`

- **Action sequences** are also useful: `results(l, s)` is the result of executing the list of actions `l` starting in `s`:
  - corresponding rules could be included as **short-hand notation** into inference engine

`results([], S) = S`

`results([A|P], S) = results(P, result(A, S))`

# Situation Calculus Planning

- **Initial state**

- a logical sentence that describes current situation  $S_0$

```
at(home, s0), not(have(milk, s0)), not(have(bread, s0)),
not(have(drill, s0))
```

- **Goal state**

- a logical sentence that describes the goal state

```
at(home, G), have(milk, G), have(bread, G), have(drill, G)
```

- **Actions (Operators)**

- logical rules that describe the effects of actions

```
have(milk, result(A, S)) :- at(grocery, S),
                             A = buy(milk).
```

```
have(milk, result(A, S)) :- have(milk, S),
                             A != drop(milk).
```

etc.

# Situation Calculus Planning

## ■ Solution

- A sequence of actions  $P$  (a plan) that, when applied to the initial state, yields a situation satisfying the goal query

`at(home, G), have(milk, G), have(bread, G), have(drill, G)`

with

`G = results(P, s0)`

- $P$  could, for example, be something like

`P = [go(grocery), buy(milk), buy(bread),  
go(hardwareStore), buy(drill), go(home)]`

## ■ Projection

- determine the effect of a sequence of actions

## ■ Planning

- find the sequence of action with the desired effect

# The Frame Problem

- the action rules only specify what aspects change when an action is performed

$$\text{have}(\text{milk}, \text{result}(A, S)) \text{ :- } \text{at}(\text{grocery}, S), \\ A = \text{buy}(\text{milk}).$$

- we also need rules that describe what does *not* change!

$$\text{at}(\text{grocery}, \text{result}(A, S)) \text{ :- } \text{at}(\text{grocery}, S), \\ A = \text{buy}(\text{milk}).$$

If we are in a grocery store and buy milk, we remain in the grocery store.

- such **frame axioms** are necessary for all possible combination of state predicates and actions
- representational frame problem:**
  - we do not want to represent each such possible combination
- inferential frame problem:**
  - most of the work will be spent in deriving that nothing changes



# SC Planning: More Problems

- **Qualification problem:**
  - difficulty in specifying all the conditions that must hold in order for an action to work
  - e.g., `go` action might fail for various reasons (locked doors, hit by a truck while crossing the street, ...)
- **Ramification problem:**
  - difficulty in specifying all of the effects that will hold after an action is taken
  - e.g., if the agent carries something, a `go` action will move that thing too...
- **Complexity:**
  - problem solving (search) is exponential in the worst case
- **Optimality:**
  - resolution theorem proving can only find a proof (plan), not necessarily a *good* plan

# Representation Languages for Planning

- Some of the afore-mentioned problems can be solved by better knowledge representation
  - some of them will necessarily remain (e.g., qualification and ramification problems)
- **Alternative approach**
  - we restrict the language
  - use a special-purpose algorithm (a planner) rather than general theorem prover
- Criteria for a **good representation language**
  - **Expressive** enough to describe a wide variety of problems
  - Restrictive enough to allow **efficient** algorithm
  - Planning algorithm should be able to take advantage of the logical **structure** of the problem.

# The STRIPS Language

- **STRIPS** (**ST**anford **R**esearch **I**nstitute **P**roblem **S**olver)
  - classical planning system (Fikes & Nilsson, 1971)
  - representation of states and actions quite influential

# STRIPS: Representation of States

- Decompose the world in logical conditions and represent a state as a conjunction of positive literals.
  - Propositional literals
    - e.g., `poor`  $\wedge$  `unknown`
  - First-Order literals
    - e.g., `at(plane1, melbourne)`  $\wedge$  `at(plane2, sydney)`
    - grounded (contain no variables)
    - function-free (contain no function symbols)
- Closed world assumption
  - what is not known to be true, is assumed to be false

# STRIPS: Representation of Goals

- like any other state, a goal is a conjunction of positive ground literals
  - e.g. `rich`  $\wedge$  `famous`
- may be partially instantiated:
  - e.g., `at(P, paris)`  $\wedge$  `plane(P)`  
(some plane should be in Paris)
- A **goal is satisfied** if the state contains all literals in goal
  - e.g. `rich`  $\wedge$  `famous`  $\wedge$  `miserable` satisfies goal
- In the case of partially instantiated first-order predicates, the state must contain some instantiation of the literals
  - e.g., `at(spirit_of_st_louis, paris)`  $\wedge$   
`plane(spirit_of_st_louis)`  
satisfies the goal with the substitution  
 $\theta = \{P/\text{spirit\_of\_st\_louis}\}$

# STRIPS: Representation of Actions

**Preconditions:** determine the applicability of an action

- conjunction of function-free literals
- all variables that occur here, must also occur in the effects
- the action is applicable if the preconditions match the current state (similar to goals)

**Effects:** describe the state change after executing an action

- conjunction of function-free literals
- typically divided into:
  - **ADD**-list:
    - facts that become true after executing the action
  - **DELETE**-list
    - facts that become false after executing the action

```
Action( fly(P, From, To) ,  
PRECOND: at(P,From) ,  
         plane(P) ,  
         airport(From) ,  
         airport(To)  
ADD:    at(P,To)  
DELETE: at(P,From)  
)
```

# Semantics of the STRIPS Language

- What actions are applicable in a state?
  - An action is applicable in any state that satisfies the precondition.
  - For First-Order action schema applicability involves a substitution  $\theta$  for the variables in the **PRECOND**.

- **Example:**

```
at(p1,jfk), at(p2,sfo), plane(p1), plane(p2),
airport(jfk), airport(sfo)
```

**satisfies**

```
at(P,From), plane(P), airport(From), airport(To)
```

**with**

$$\theta = \{P/p1, From/jfk, To/sfo\}$$

- Thus the action `fly(P, From, To)` is applicable.

# Semantics of the STRIPS Language

- What effects do the actions have?
  - The result of executing action  $a$  in state  $s$  is the state  $t$
  - $t$  is same as  $s$  except
    - Any literal  $P$  in the **ADD**-list is added
    - Any literal  $P$  in the **DELETE**-list is removed

- Example

**ADD:**         $at(P, To)$   
**DELETE:**     $at(P, From)$

with substitution  $\theta = \{P/p1, From/jfk, To/sfo\}$  results in state

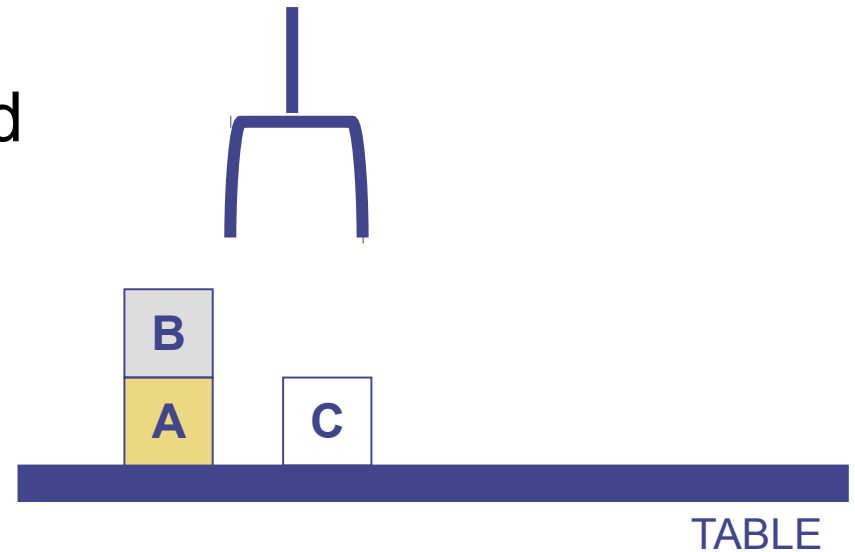
$at(p1, sfo), at(p2, sfo), plane(p1), plane(p2),$   
 $airport(jfk), airport(sfo)$

- STRIPS assumption**
  - every literal NOT in the effect remains unchanged
  - avoids representational frame problem

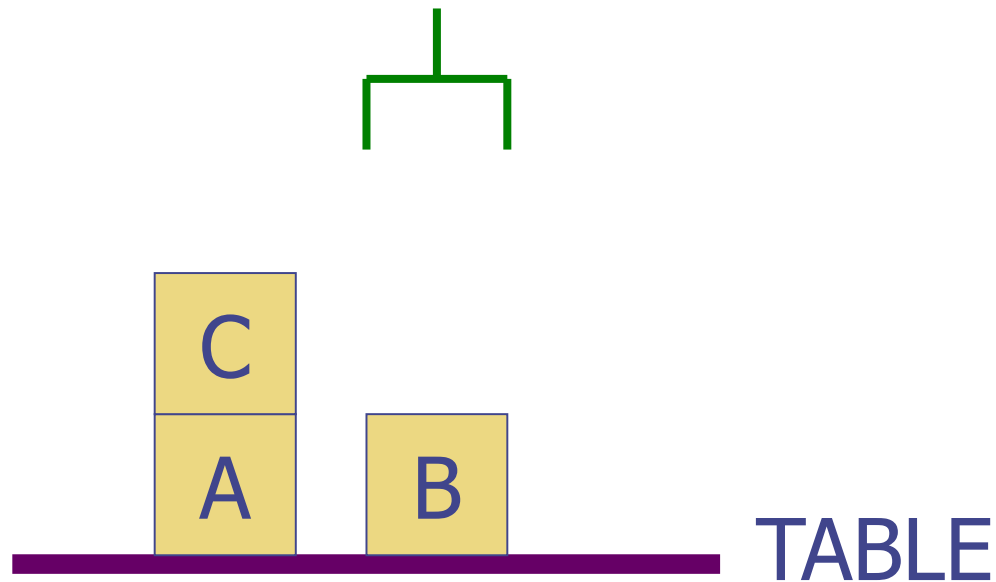


# Example: Blocks World

- Very famous AI toy domain
- The blocks world is a micro-world that consists of
  - a table
  - a set of blocks
  - a robot hand
- Operation
  - The robot hand can grasp a single block
  - The robot hand can move over the table (with or without a block)
  - The robot hand can release a block it is holding
  - Blocks can be stacked on top of each other if the top is clear
  - Any number of blocks can be on the table
  - The hand can only hold one block

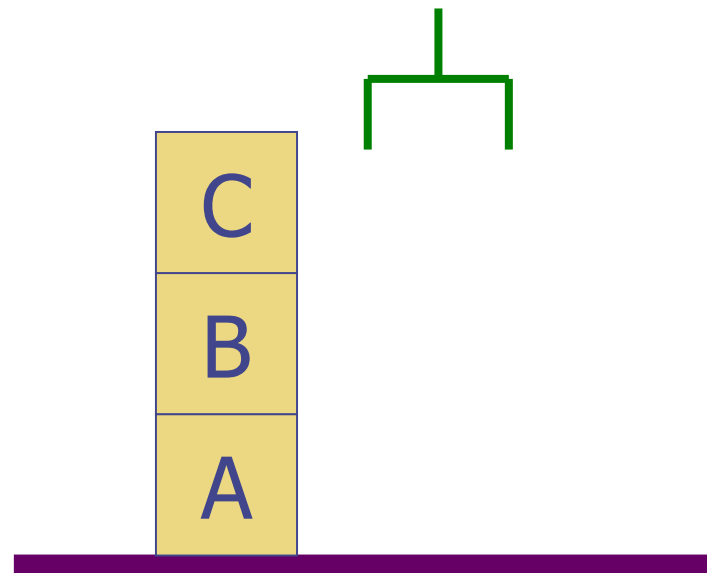


# State Representation



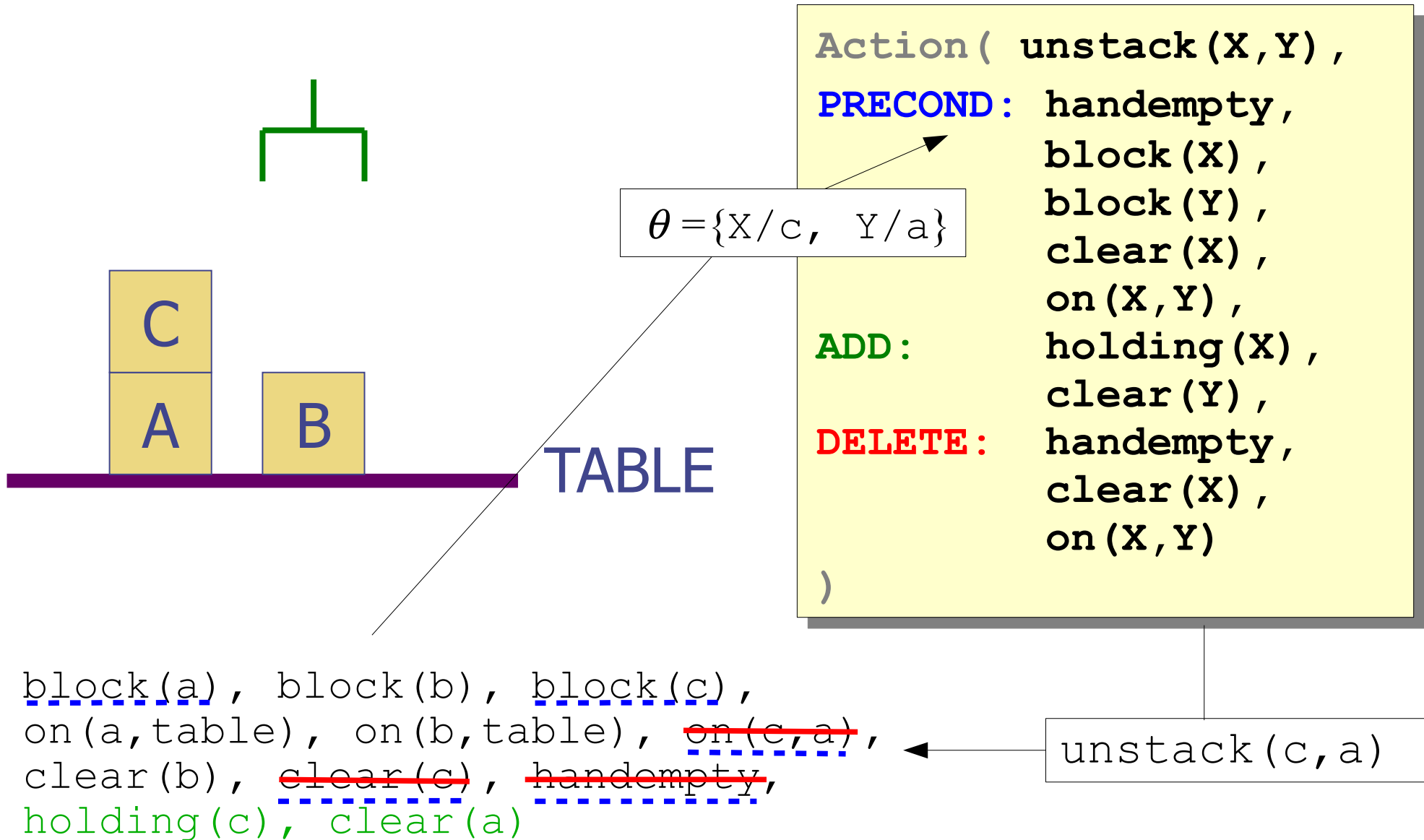
```
block(a), block(b), block(c),  
on(a,table), on(b,table), on(c,a),  
clear(b), clear(c), handempty
```

# Goal Representation

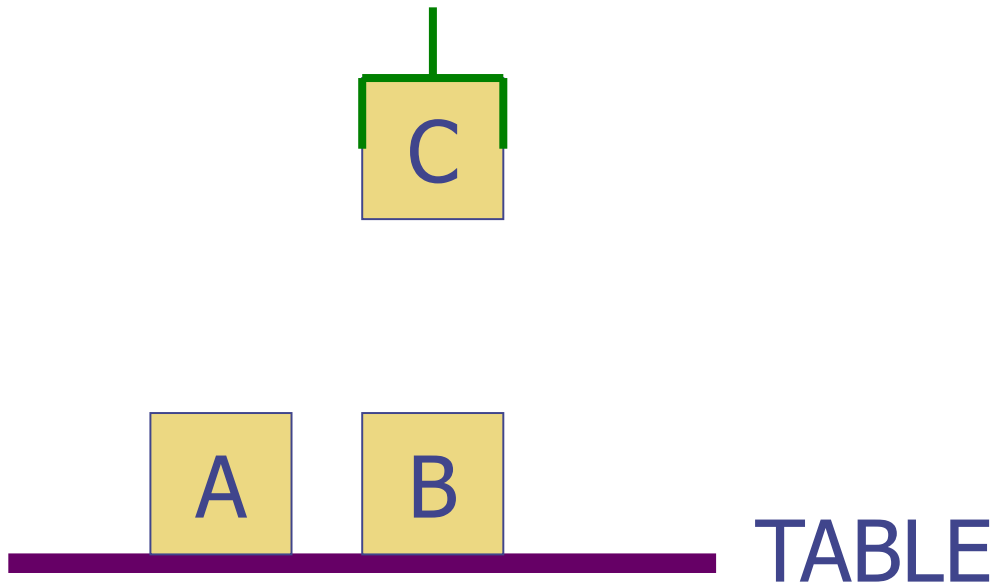


`on(a, table), on(b, a), on(c, b)`

# Action Application



# Action Application

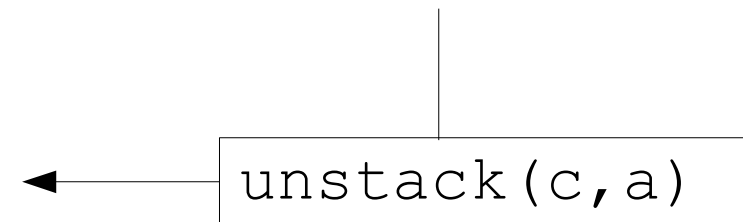


```

Action( unstack(X,Y) ,
PRECOND: handempty,
        block(X) ,
        block(Y) ,
        clear(X) ,
        on(X,Y) ,
ADD:    holding(X) ,
        clear(Y) ,
DELETE: handempty,
        clear(X) ,
        on(X,Y)
)
  
```

```

block(a) , block(b) , block(c) ,
on(a,table) , on(b,table) ,
clear(b) ,
holding(c) , clear(a)
  
```



# More Blocks-World Actions

```

Action( stack(X,Y) ,
PRECOND: holding(X) ,
        block(X) ,
        block(Y) ,
        clear(Y)
ADD:    handempty ,
        clear(X) ,
        on(X,Y) ,
DELETE: holding(X) ,
        clear(Y)
)

```

```

Action( pickup(X) ,
PRECOND: handempty ,
        block(X) ,
        clear(X) ,
        on(X,table) ,
ADD:    holding(X) ,
DELETE: handempty ,
        clear(X) ,
        on(X,table)
)

```

```

Action( putdown(X) ,
PRECOND: holding(X)
ADD:    handempty ,
        clear(X) ,
        on(X,table)
DELETE: holding(X)
)

```

# Example: Air Cargo Transport

- Initial state:

```
at(c1,sfo), at(c2,jfk), at(p1,sfo),
at(p2,sfo), cargo(c1), cargo(c2),
plane(p1), plane(p2), airport(jfk),
airport(sfo)
```

- Goal state:

```
at(c1,jfk), at(c2,sfo)
```

```
Action(unload(C,P,A),
PRECOND: in(C,P),
          at(P,A),
          cargo(C),
          plane(P),
          airport(A)
ADD:     at(C,A)
DELETE:  in(C,P)
)
```

```
Action(fly(P,From,To),
PRECOND: at(P,From),
          plane(P),
          airport(From),
          airport(To)
ADD:     at(P,To)
DELETE:  at(P,From)
)
```

```
Action(load(C,P,A),
PRECOND: at(C,A),
          at(P,A),
          cargo(C),
          plane(P),
          airport(A)
ADD:     in(C,P)
DELETE:  at(C,A)
)
```

# Expressiveness and Extensions

- The STRIPS language is a very simple subset of FOL
  - Important **limitation**: function-free literals
    - All such problems can be represented in propositional logic
      - use one proposition for each possible combination of predicate symbol and arguments
    - Function symbols lead to infinitely many states and actions
      - infinitely many arguments can be constructed with function symbols, hence propositionalization is not possible
- Various **extensions** have been proposed:
  - **Action Description language (ADL)**
    - recent extension to STRIPS language
    - allows for types, explicit negation (no CWA), relations and conditions in goals, equality predicate built in, ...
  - **Planning domain definition language (PDDL)**
    - standardization of various AI planning formalisms



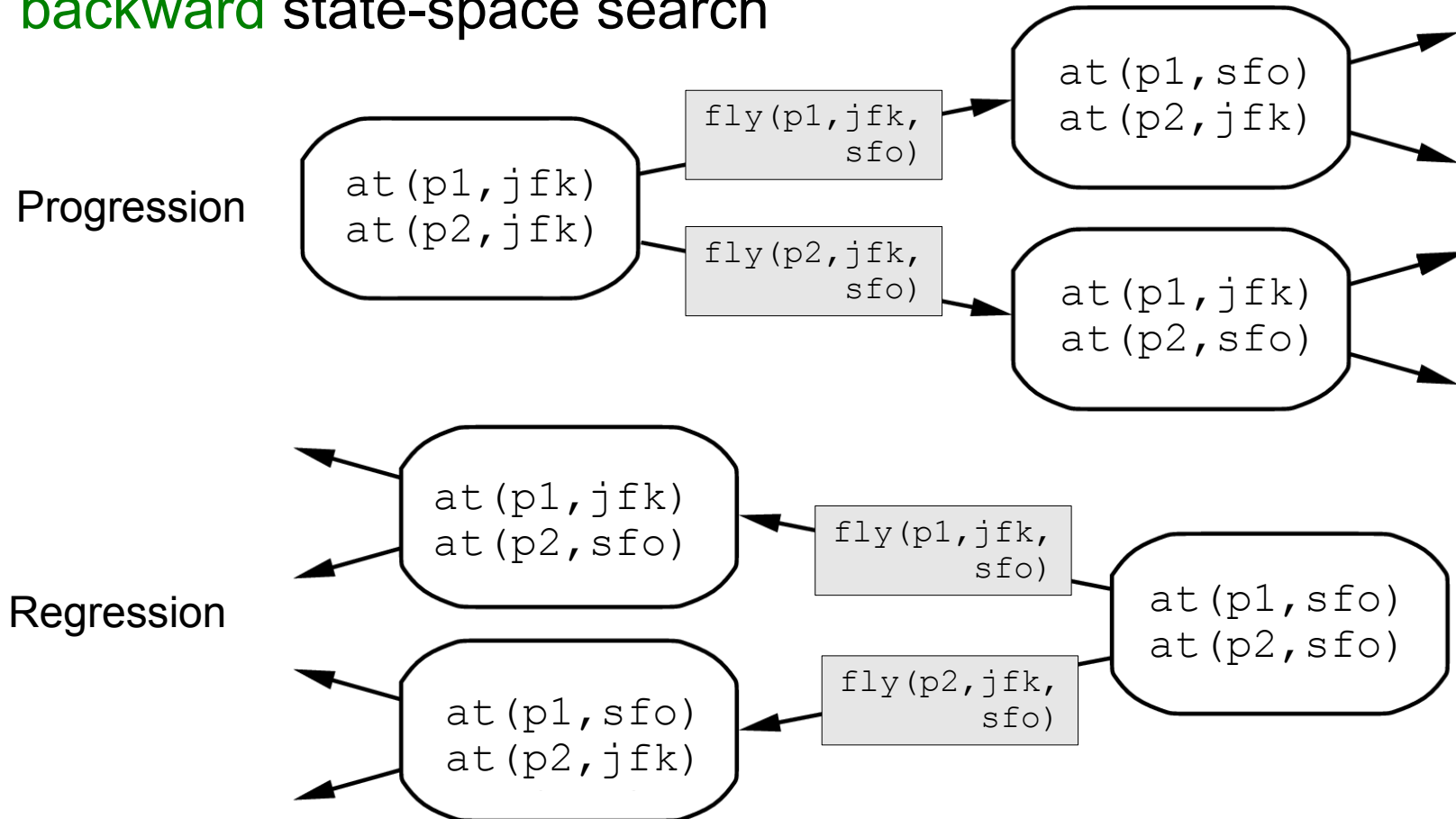
# Comparison STRIPS-ADL

STRIPS Language	ADL Language
Only positive literals in states: <i>Poor</i> $\wedge$ <i>Unknown</i>	Positive and negative literals in states: $\neg$ <i>Rich</i> $\wedge$ $\neg$ <i>Famous</i>
Closed World Assumption: Unmentioned literals are false.	Open World Assumption: Unmentioned literals are unknown.
Effect $P \wedge \neg Q$ means add $P$ and delete $Q$ .	Effect $P \wedge \neg Q$ means add $P$ and $\neg Q$ and delete $\neg P$ and $Q$ .
Only ground literals in goals: <i>Rich</i> $\wedge$ <i>Famous</i>	Quantified variables in goals: $\exists x At(P_1, x) \wedge At(P_2, x)$ is the goal of having $P_1$ and $P_2$ in the same place.
Goals are conjunctions: <i>Rich</i> $\wedge$ <i>Famous</i>	Goals allow conjunction and disjunction: $\neg$ <i>Poor</i> $\wedge$ ( <i>Famous</i> $\vee$ <i>Smart</i> )
Effects are conjunctions.	Conditional effects allowed: <b>when</b> $P: E$ means $E$ is an effect only if $P$ is satisfied.
No support for equality.	Equality predicate ( $x = y$ ) is built in.
No support for types.	Variables can have types, as in ( $p : Plane$ ).

**Figure 11.1** Comparison of STRIPS and ADL languages for representing planning problems. In both cases, goals behave as the preconditions of an action with no parameters.

# Planning with State-Space Search

- Progression planners
  - forward state-space search
- Regression planners
  - backward state-space search



# Progression Algorithm

Formulation as state-space search problem:

- **Initial state** = initial state of the planning problem
  - Literals not appearing are false
- **Actions** = those whose preconditions are satisfied
  - Add positive effects, delete negative
- **Goal test** = does the state satisfy the goal
- **Step cost** = each action costs 1
  - could be changed if necessary

## Search Algorithms

- function-free  $\rightarrow$  finite  $\rightarrow$  any complete graph search algorithm will yield a complete planner
- Efficiency is a problem
  - irrelevant action problem
  - good heuristic required for efficient search

# Regression Algorithm

- In order to be able to use a backward search, we must be able to apply the STRIPS operators backwards
  - **Relevant actions**
    - actions that achieve one of the subgoals
      - i.e., the subgoal is on the actions' ADD-list
    - Example:
      - Goal state:
 
$$\text{at}(c1, a), \text{at}(c2, a), \dots, \text{at}(c20, a)$$
      - Relevant action for first conjunct:  $\text{unload}(c1, P, a)$
  - **Consistent actions**
    - Actions must not undo subgoals that are already achieved
    - Example:
      - $\text{load}(c1, p)$  will never appear in a plan for the above task because it will delete the subgoal  $\text{at}(c1, a)$  which has been achieved with the first action
- How can an action be applied backwards?

# Inverse Action Application

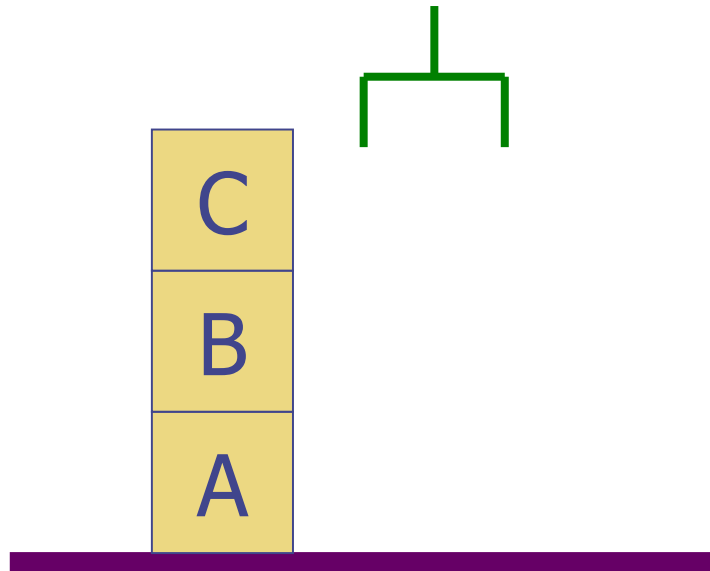
## General process for predecessor construction

- Given a goal description G
- Let A be an action that is relevant and consistent
- The predecessor state is determined as follows:
  - **Positive effects** of A that appear in G are **deleted**.
    - because they are assumed to have been added by A (otherwise we do not need A in the plan)
  - **Each precondition literal** of A is **added** (unless it already appears)
    - because in order to apply A, we must now make find actions that enable the preconditions.

$$\rightarrow \text{New Goal} = \text{Old Goal} - \text{ADD}(A) + \text{PRECOND}(A)$$

# Inverse Action Application

- Goal:



```

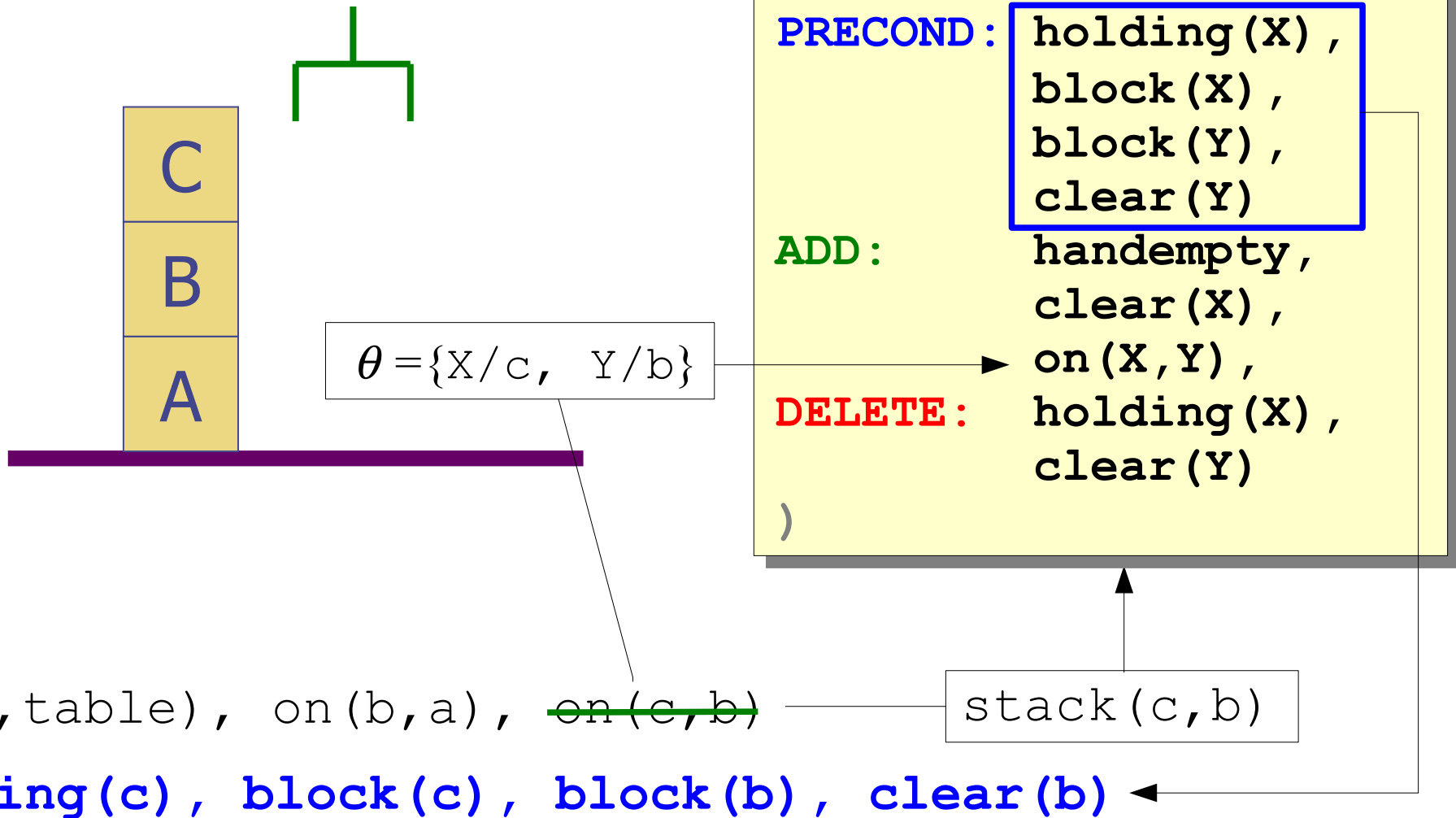
Action( stack(X,Y) ,
  PRECOND: holding(X) ,
           block(X) ,
           block(Y) ,
           clear(Y)
  ADD:    handempty ,
           clear(X) ,
           on(X,Y) ,
  DELETE: holding(X) ,
           clear(Y)
)

```

`on(a, table) , on(b, a) , on(c, b)`

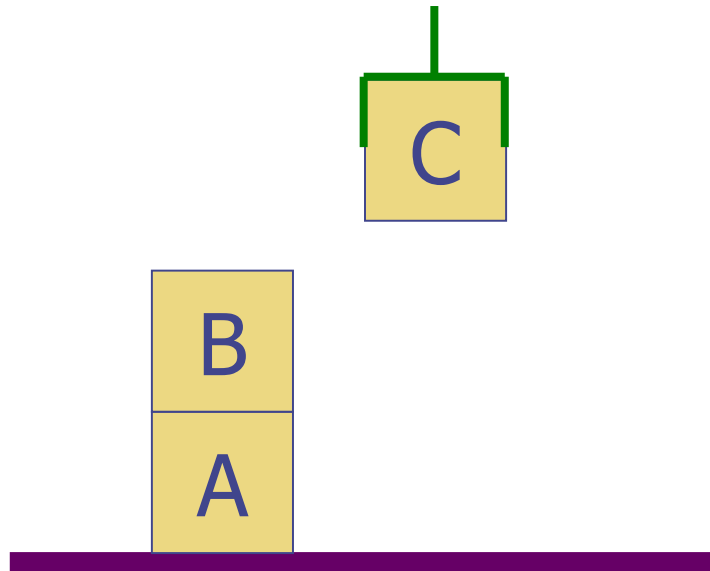
# Inverse Action Application

- Goal:



# Inverse Action Application

- New Goal:



```

Action( stack(X,Y) ,
  PRECOND: holding(X) ,
           block(X) ,
           block(Y) ,
           clear(Y)
  ADD:    handempty ,
           clear(X) ,
           on(X,Y) ,
  DELETE: holding(X) ,
           clear(Y)
)

```

```

on(a,table) , on(b,a) ,
holding(c) , block(c) , block(b) , clear(b)

```



# Regression Algorithm

Formulation as state-space search problem:

- **Initial state** = goal state of the planning problem
  - Literals not appearing may be true or false
- **Actions** = those whose add-list satisfy the current state
  - delete positive effects, add preconditions
- **Goal test** = is the current state satisfied in the initial state of the planning problem?
- **Step cost** = each action costs 1
  - could be changed if necessary

Search algorithm

- again, any standard algorithm can perform the search
- **Main Advantage of Regression Planning**
  - only relevant actions are considered
  - often much lower branching factor than for forward search

# Heuristics for State-Space Search

- Even for regression **we need good heuristics**
  - How many actions are needed to achieve the goal?
  - Exact solution is NP hard, find a good estimate

**Two approaches** to find an admissible search heuristic:

- The optimal solution to a **relaxed problem**
  - remove all preconditions from actions
    - almost identical to the number of open subgoals
  - remove only the delete-list and find a (minimal) set of actions that collectively achieve the goals
    - problem: finding a minimal set cover is NP-hard, and relaxing the constraint loses admissibility of heuristic
- The **subgoal independence** assumption:
  - The cost of solving a conjunction of subgoals is approximated by the sum of the costs of solving them independently
  - is only admissible if co-ordination causes additional complexity (not admissible for the `have (milk) & have (bread)` plan)