Exercice 1.

Approximation algorithms for BP

We start with a simple greedy algorithm in which we select objects in a random order, and, at each step, we place the object either in the last used bin where it fits (next-fit algorithm) or in the first used bin where it fits (first-fit algorithm); otherwise (i.e., the object is not fitting in any used bin), we create a new bin and place the object in this new bin.

We prove below that next-fit (and, hence, first-fit) is a 2-approximation algorithm for the BP problem.

1. Prove that Next-fit is a 2-approximation algorithm for BP.

2. Show this approximation ratio is tight.

The previous algorithms can be qualified as online algorithms because no sorting is done on the objects, and we can pack them in the bins when they arrive, on the fly. If we have the knowledge of all objects before executing the algorithm, we can refine the algorithm by sorting the objects beforehand. Such algorithms are called offline algorithms. The first-fit-dec algorithm sorts the objects by nonincreasing size (dec stands for decreasing), and then it applies the first-fit rule: The object is placed in the first used bin in which it fits; otherwise, a new bin is created.

3. Prove that $C_{\text{first-fit-dec}} \leq \frac{3}{2} C_{\text{opt}} + 1$, where $C_{\text{first-fit-dec}}$ is the cost returned by the first-fit-dec algorithm, and $C_{\text{opt}}$ is the optimal cost. To do so, you can split the $a_i$ into categories according to their value, and examine how they form bins.

Note that this is not an approximation algorithm as defined in the course, because of the “+1” in the expression, which corresponds to one extra bin that the first-fit-dec algorithm may use. This is rather an asymptotic approximation algorithm, which is similar to an A(F)PTAS scheme. Indeed, the constant 1 is independent of the problem size, and the algorithm is asymptotically a $\frac{3}{2}$-approximation.

Note: It is also possible to prove that $C_{\text{first-fit-dec}} \leq \frac{11}{7} C_{\text{opt}} + 1$. The idea of the proof is similar, but the algorithm turns out to be much more complex.

Without allowing an extra bin, we can finally prove that first-fit-dec is a $\frac{3}{2}$-approximation algorithm.

4. Show that First-fit-dec is a $\frac{3}{2}$-approximation algorithm for the bin packing problem. To do so, you can examine the content of the bin created $\frac{3}{2}$ along the way.

Exercice 2.

On considère $n$ points dans un espace métrique (les distances entre les points satisfont l’inégalité triangulaire). On veut partitionner les points en $k$ groupes de manière à minimiser le plus grand diamètre d’un groupe. Le diamètre d’un groupe est la distance maximale entre deux points de ce groupe. Noter que $n$ et $k$ sont fixés dans l’énoncé du problème.

1. On suppose que le diamètre optimal $d$ est connu. Trouver une 2-approximation pour le problème.

2. On considère l’algorithme qui, $k$ fois, choisit comme “centre” le point à distance maximale de tous les centres déjà choisis, puis alloue chaque point au centre le plus proche. En faisant le lien avec la question précédente, montrer que cet algorithm est une 2-approximation pour le problème.