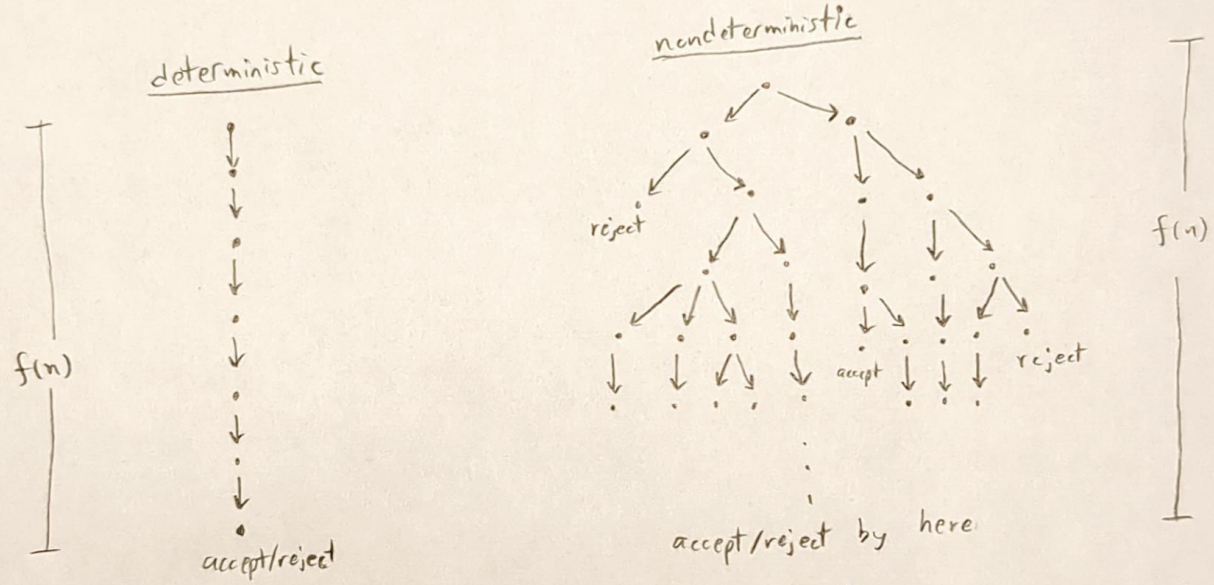
With P, we worked with TIME, which required there to be a deterministic decider for languages in the class. We can define a similar class of languages for nondeterministic deciders.

Let $t: \mathbb{N} \to \mathbb{N}$ be a function. The nondeterministic time complexity class

$NTIME(t(n)) = \{L \mid L$ is a language decided by an $O(t(n))$ time nondeterministic TM$\}$.

Note that the running time of a NTM $N$ (that is a decider) is a function $f: \mathbb{N} \to \mathbb{N}$, where $f(n)$ is the maximum number of steps $N$ takes on any branch of its computation on any input of length $n$.

Ex)




We define now the nondeterministic version of P.

$$NP = \bigcup_{k \in \mathbb{N}} NTIME(n^k)$$

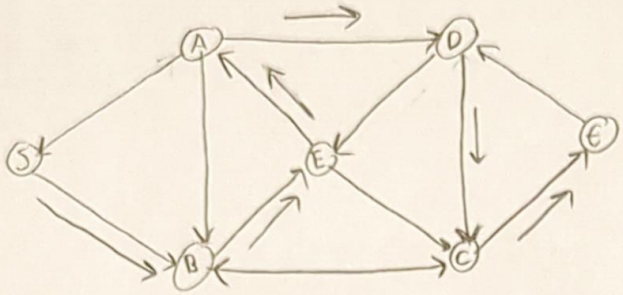
NP is a less wieldy class than P as it stands. NTMs are somewhat difficult to work with. Fortunately, there's an equivalent class that is way easier to use.

A <u>verifier</u> for a language A is a deterministic decider V where

$$A = \{w \in \Sigma^* \mid \exists c \in \Sigma^* : \langle w, c\rangle \in L(V)\}.$$

In this definition, c is a <u>certificate</u>. Another way to phrase this definition is that, given a solution, a certificate, a witness, etc, V can verify if w is an instance of A.

Ex) HAMPATH = $\{\langle G, s, t\rangle \mid G$ is a directed graph with a Hamiltonian path (a path that visits each vertex exactly once) from s to t$\}$.




sBEADCE is a Hamiltonian path

Determining if there is a Ham path in a graph is <u>hard</u>. However, if we're given a path, it's <u>easy</u> to determine if it's a Ham path of the graph. Just check that it hits every vertex once and the edges are all valid.

The fact that verification is easy is actually a defining feature of NP. We'll define the class PV to be

$$PV = \{A \mid \text{there is a poly time verifier for } A\}.$$

Note that we measure the runtime of verifiers only in terms of the length of w. So if c has length $|w|^2$ and the verifier scans all of c, it runs in time $\Omega(w^2)$.

Ex) Let V be a verifier such that

V = "On input $\langle G=(V,E), s, t, c\rangle$,
1) Check that c visits each $v \in V$
2) Check that c starts at s and ends at t
3) Check that each $e \in c$ is in E
4) Reject if either is not true
5) Accept"

This verifier runs in poly time, clearly, so HAMPATH $\in$ PV.

Alternatively, we can write down an NTM for HAMPATH.

Ex) N = "On input $\langle G=(V,E), s, t\rangle$,

1) Write $|V|$ numbers $p_1, \ldots, p_{|V|}$ between 1 and $|V|$ out, each number determined nondeterministically
2) Check that $p_1, \ldots, p_{|V|}$ has no repeats and reject if so
3) Check that $p_1 = s$ and $p_{|V|} = t$ and reject if not
4) For $i = 1$ to $|V|-1$
   a) Check that $(p_i, p_{i+1}) \in E$ and reject if not
5) Accept"

This shows that HAMPATH $\in$ NP.

From these examples, it should not surprise that PV = NP.

Thm) PV = NP

Pf) It suffices to show $PV \subseteq NP$ and $NP \subseteq PV$.

Suppose $A \in NP$. Then there is an NTM M that on input $w$, there exists some branch of computation that accepts $w$ iff $w \in A$. In either case, it must finish in time $p(w)$ for some polynomial $p$ on all inputs $w$. If we record a branch of computation as a sequence of states $c$, then $|c| \leq p(w)$. Then we can construct a poly time verifier that simulates M along $c$ in poly time and accepts iff M accepts. So $A \in PV$.

In the opposite direction, assume $A \in PV$. Then there is a poly time verifier V for A that runs in time $O(n^k)$. We can construct a NTM N for A as follows.

N = "On input $w$,
1) Nondeterministically select a string $c$ of length $O(w^k)$
2) Run $V(\langle w, c\rangle)$ and accept if it does
3) Reject"

If $w \in A$, then there is some certificate $c$ of length $O(w^k)$ such that $V(\langle w,c\rangle)$ accepts. Moreover, if $w \notin A$, then there is no such $c$. Together, we get $L(N) = A$ and $N$ runs in poly time.

□