

# Bellman-Ford Algorithm For Solving the Single Source Shortest Path Problem

<https://cs.pomona.edu/classes/cs140/>

# Outline

## Topics and Learning Objectives

- Discuss and analyze the Bellman-Ford Algorithm

## Exercise

- Bellman-Ford Walk-through

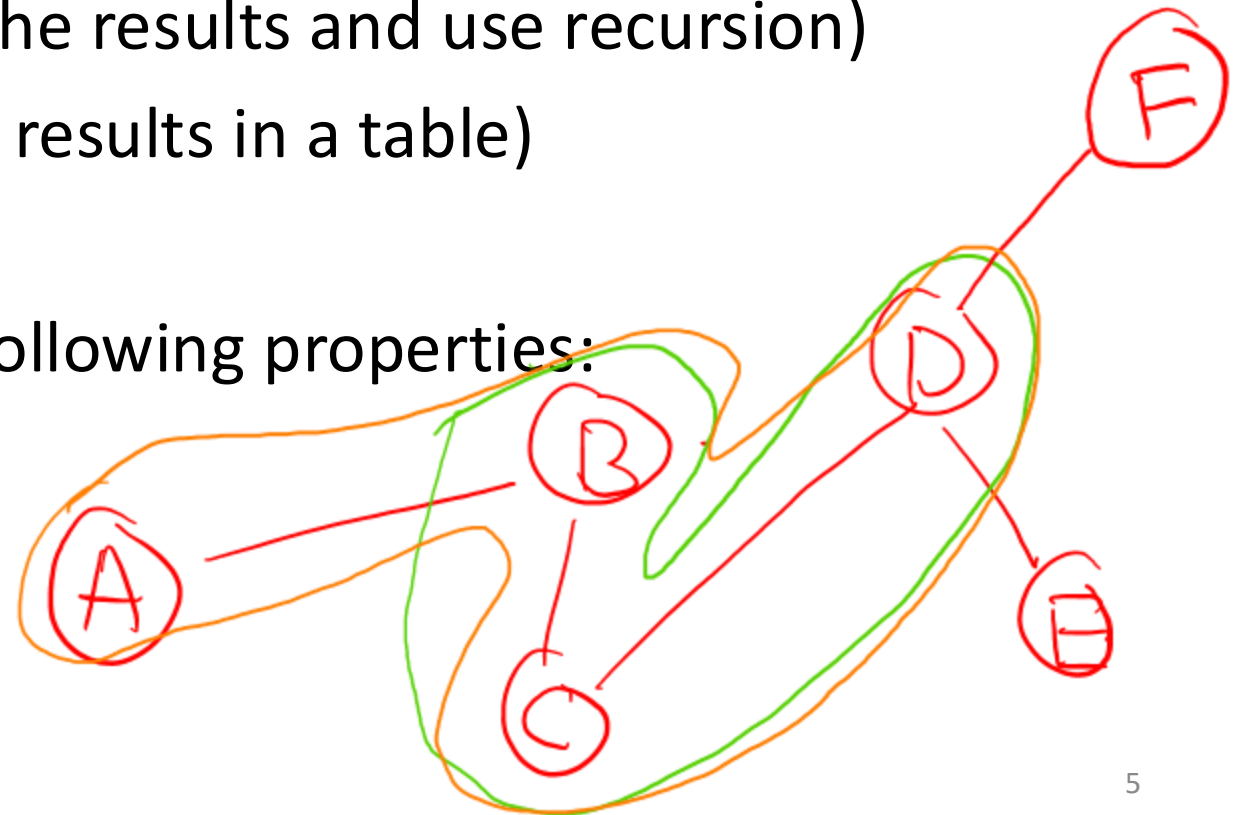
# Dynamic Programming

An algorithm design technique/paradigm that typically takes one of the following forms:

1. Top-Down (memoization—cache results and use recursion)
2. Bottom-Up (tabulation—store results in a table)

Used to solve problems with the following properties:

- Overlapping subproblems and
- Optimal substructure



# The Bellman-Ford Algorithm

Key Idea: leverage  
overlapping subproblems  
and optimal substructure.

A dynamic programming solution to the  
**Single-Source** Shortest Path problem (same problem solved by Dijkstra's)

Input:

- a **weighted** graph  $G = (V, E)$  where each edge has a length  $c_e$  and
- a source vertex  $s$

Output:

- The length of the shortest path from  $s$  to all other vertices, **or**
- We output that we detected a **negative cycle** (invalid path lengths)

# Question

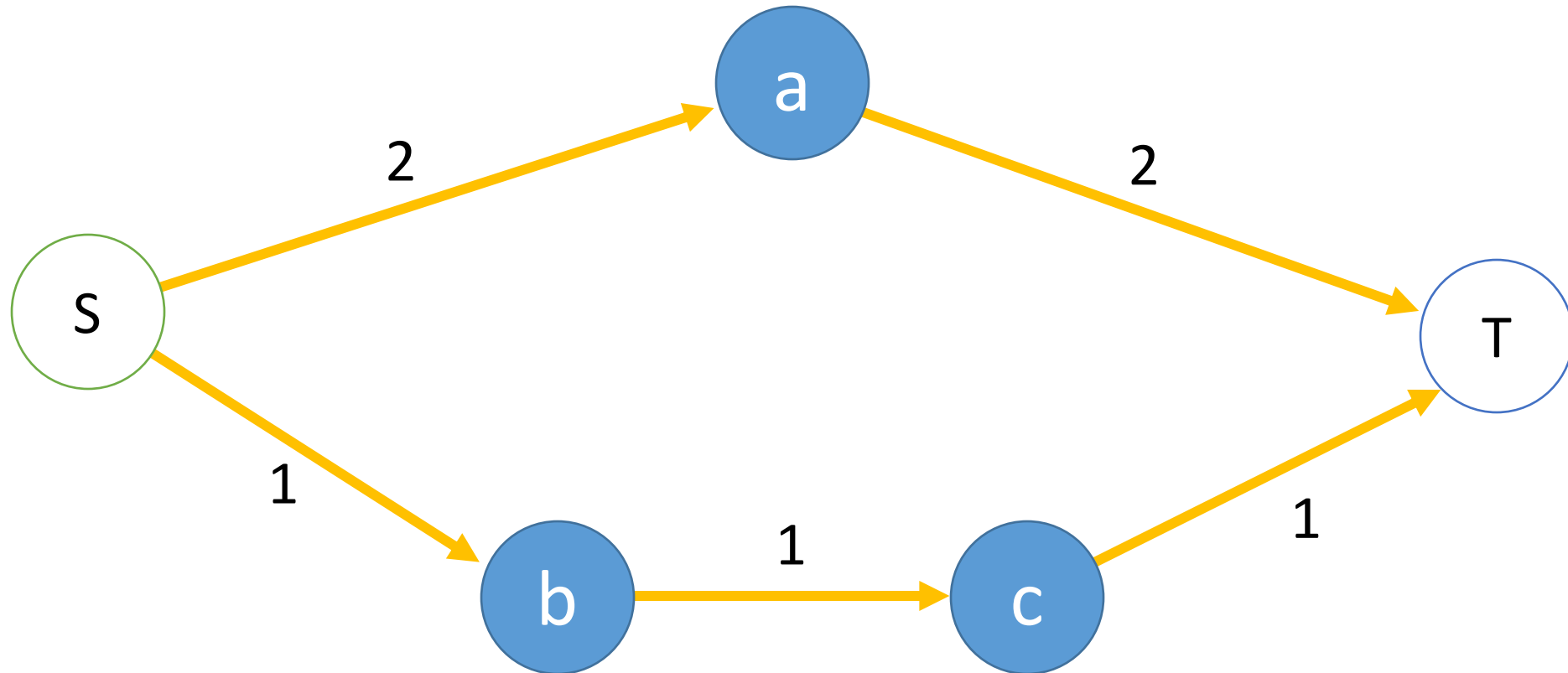
All-Pairs Shortest Path

	Sparse Graphs	Dense Graphs
Dijkstra's $n$ times	$O(n^2 \lg n)$	$O(n^3 \lg n)$
Bellman-Ford $n$ times	$O(n^3)$	$O(n^4)$
Floyd-Warshall	$O(n^3)$	$O(n^3)$

- What algorithm would you choose for sparse graphs?
  - Dijkstra's  $n$  times if there are no negative edges, Floyd-Warshall otherwise
- What algorithm would you choose for dense graphs?
  - Always Floyd-Warshall

# Example 1

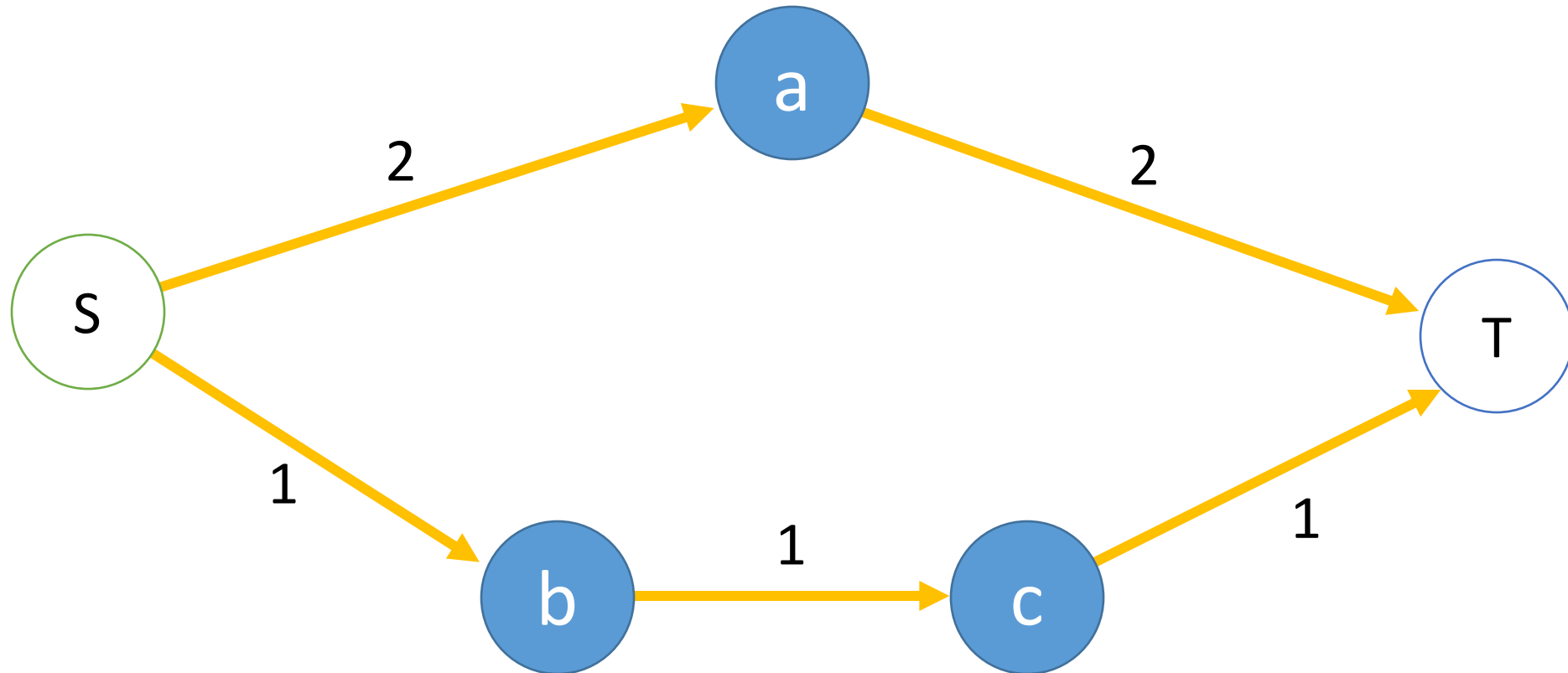
What is the shortest path from S to T using 0 edges?



Subproblem: consider only a subset of the possible paths.

# Example 1

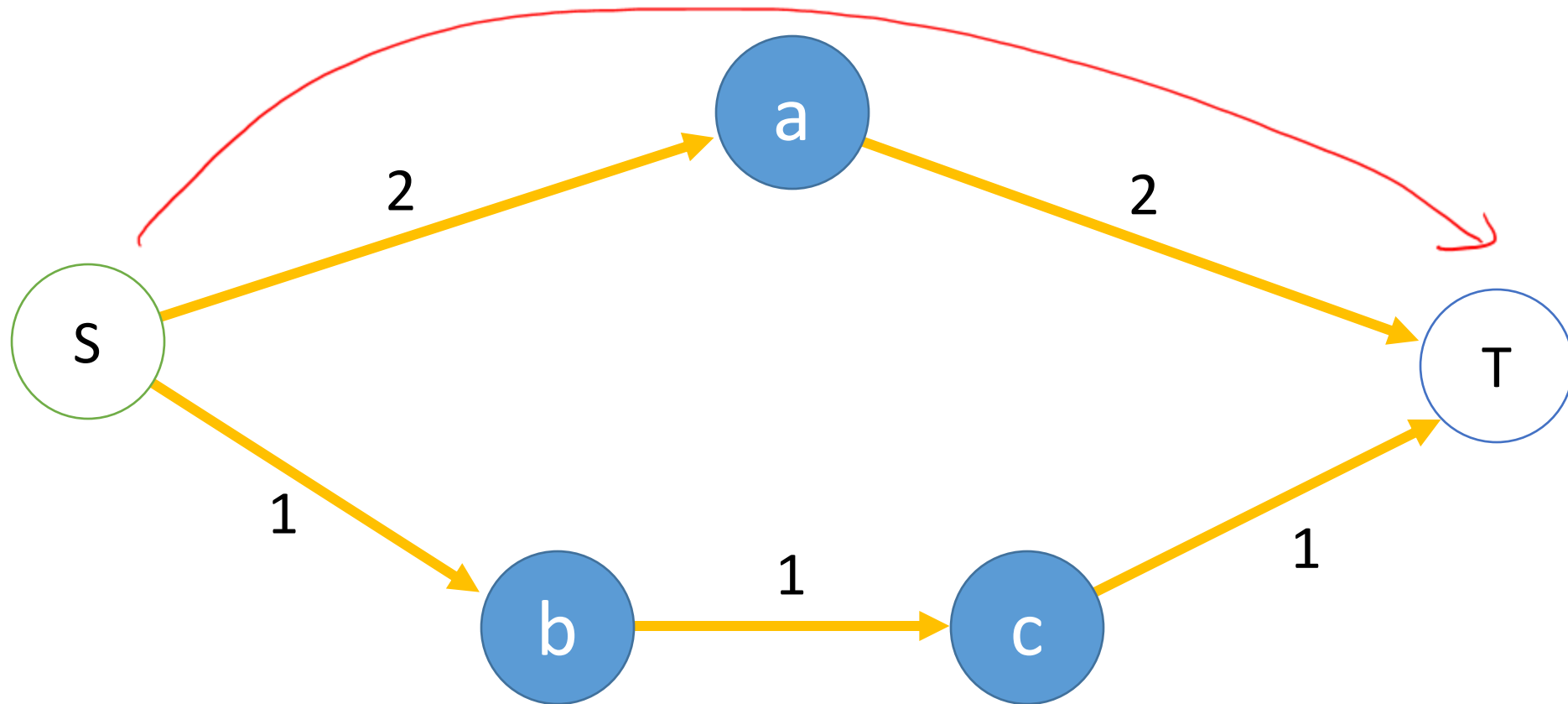
What is the shortest path from S to T using 1 edge?





# Example 1

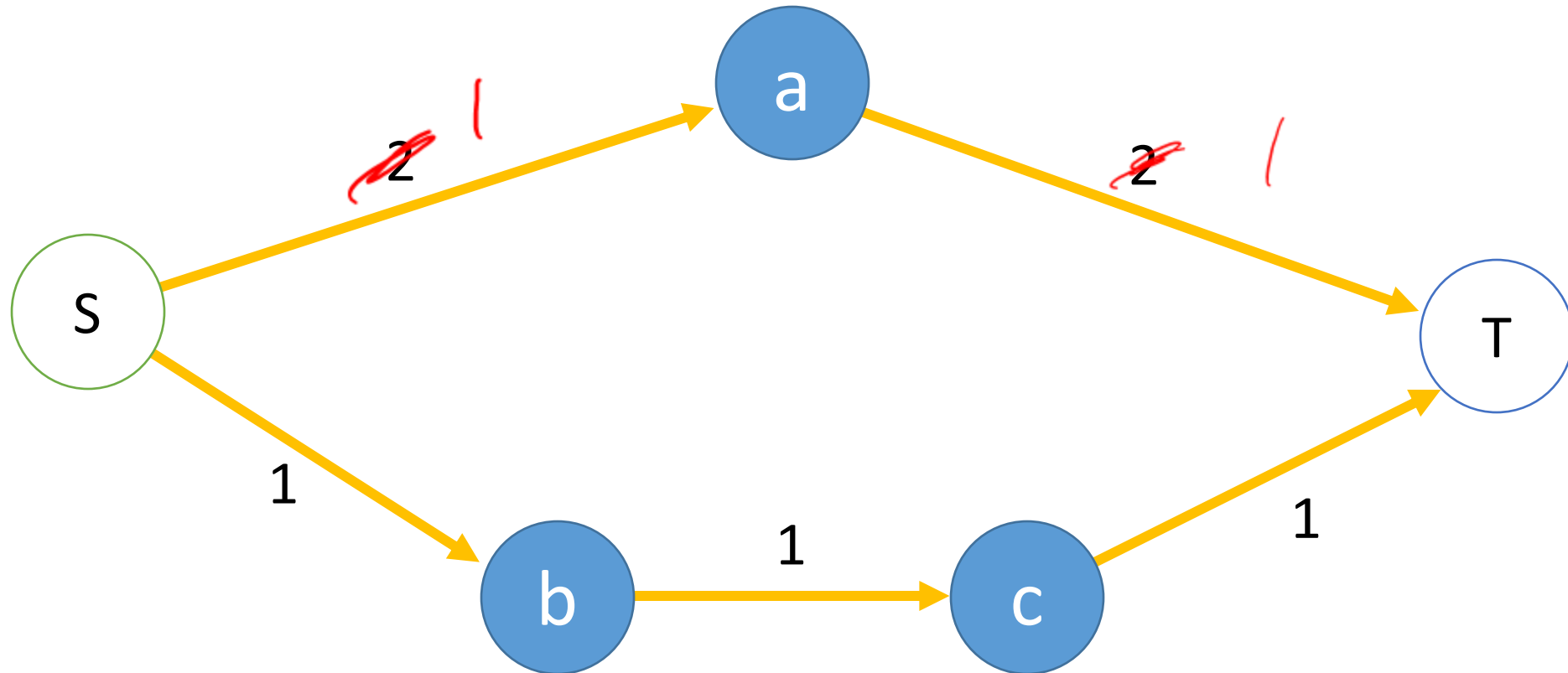
What is the shortest path using **2 edges**?



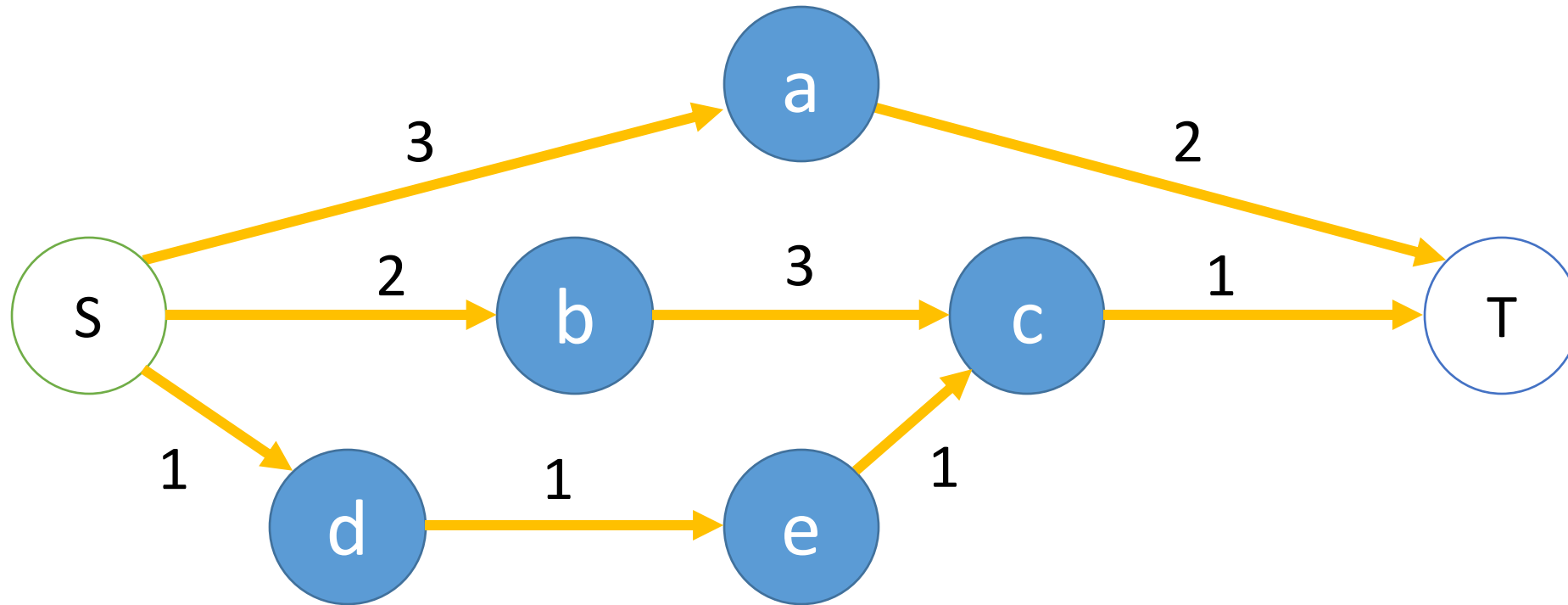
# Example 1

What is the shortest path using 3 edges?

What is the shortest path using 2 edges?

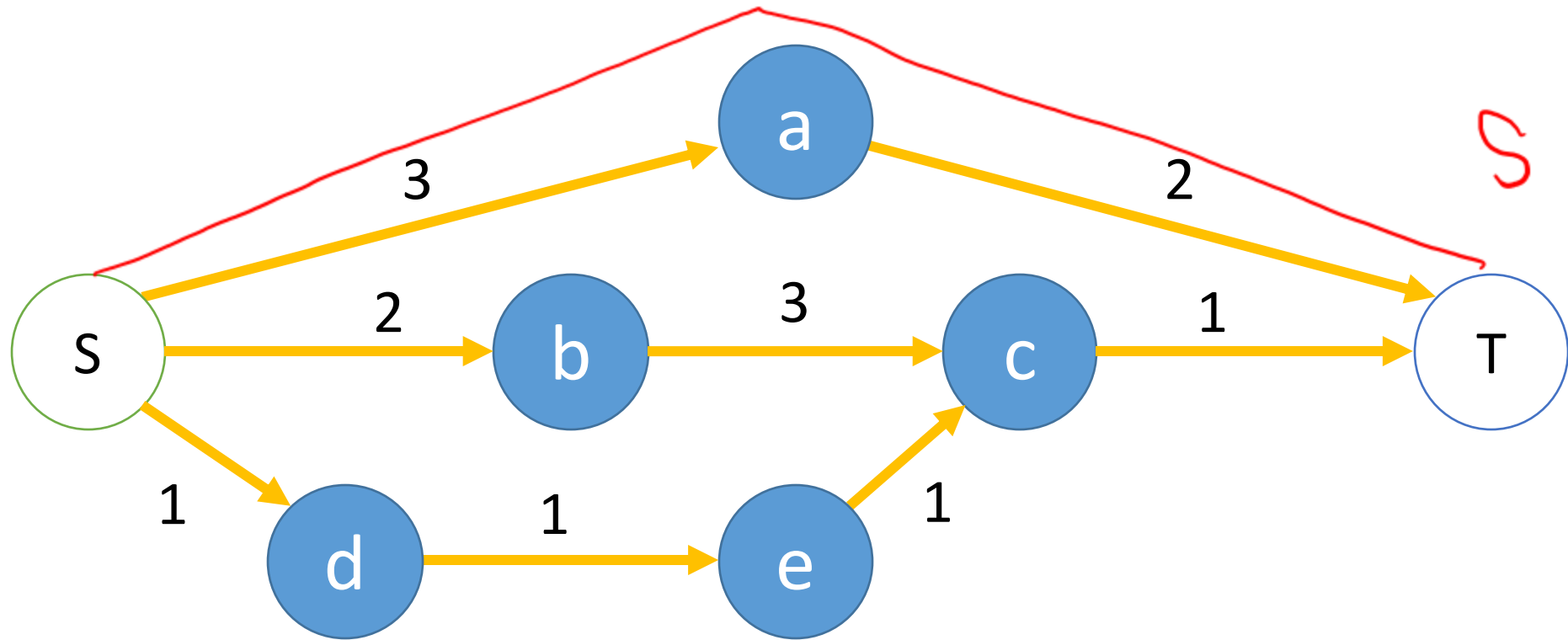


## Example 2



What is the shortest path with  
at most 1 edge?

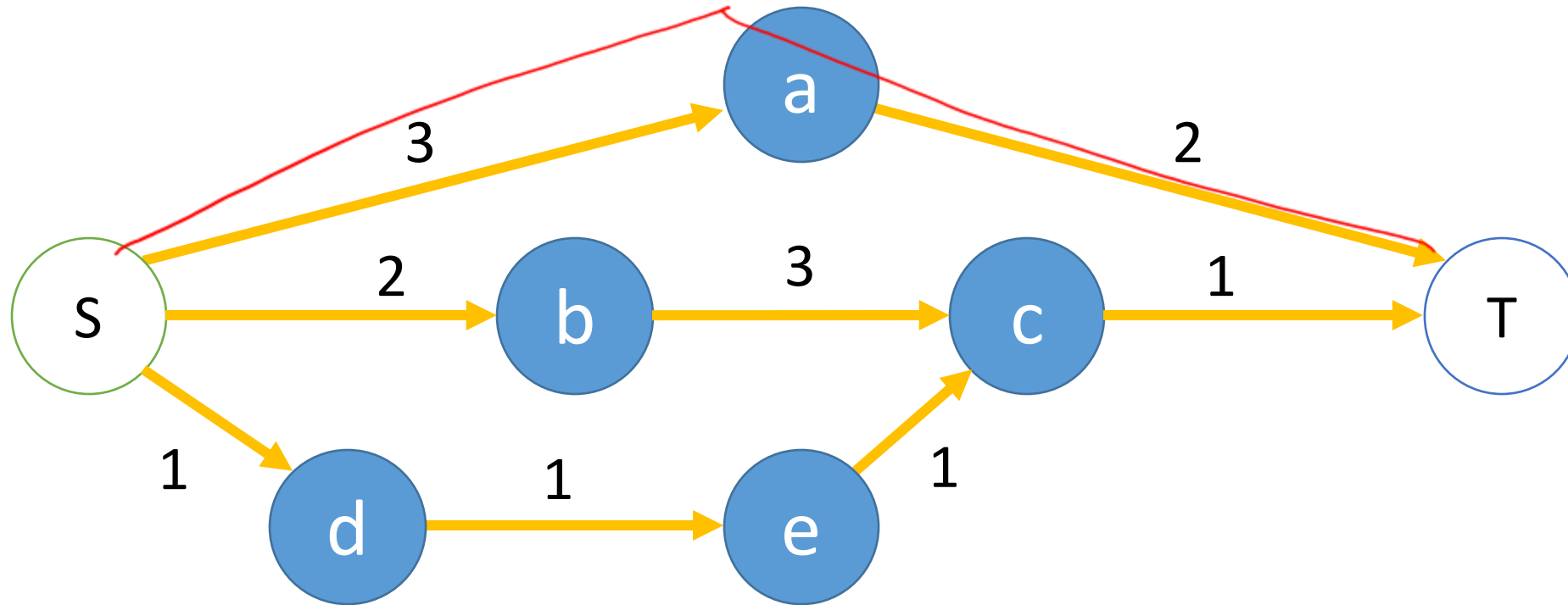
## Example 2



Shortest path with  
at most 2 edges

## Example 2

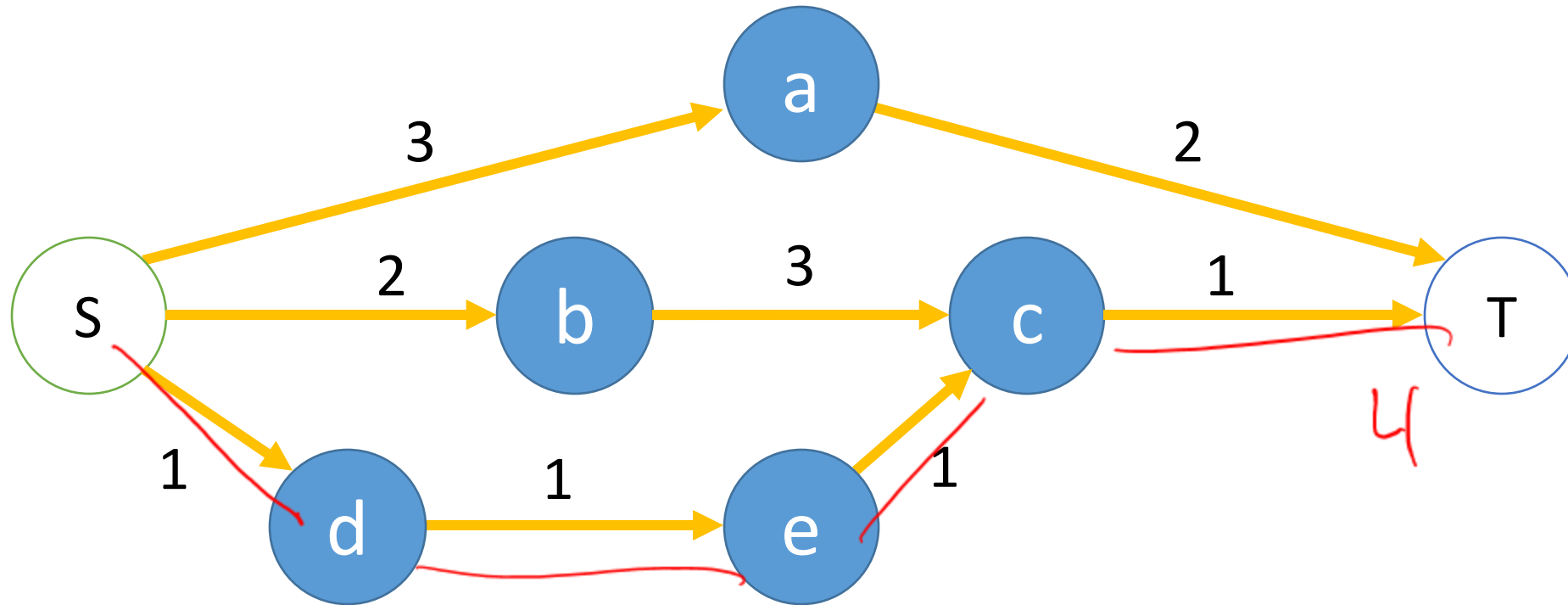
We didn't gain anything by adding the edge



Shortest path with at most 2 edges

Shortest path with at most 3 edges

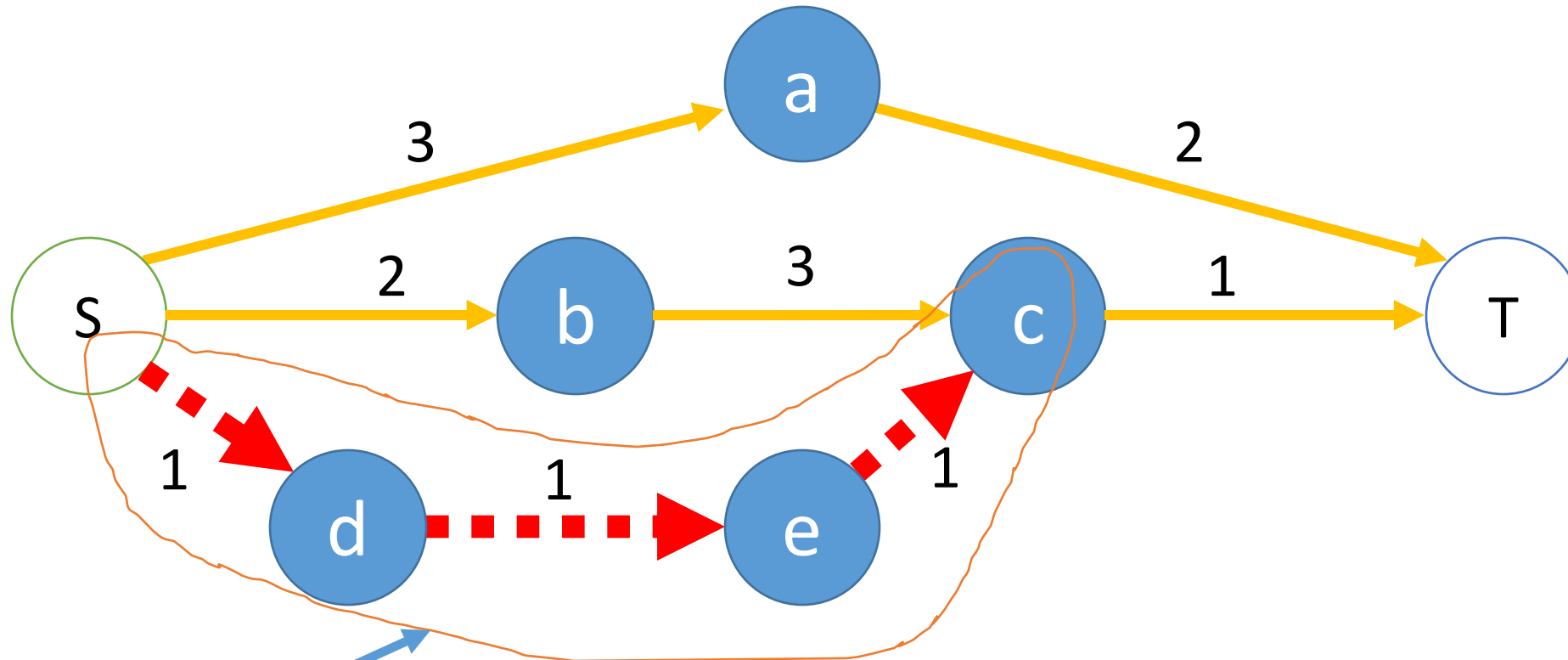
## Example 2



Shortest path with at most 4 edges

# Example 2

If the path is the shortest path from S to T using at most 4 edges, then the red dashed line must be the shortest path from S to C using at most 3 edges.



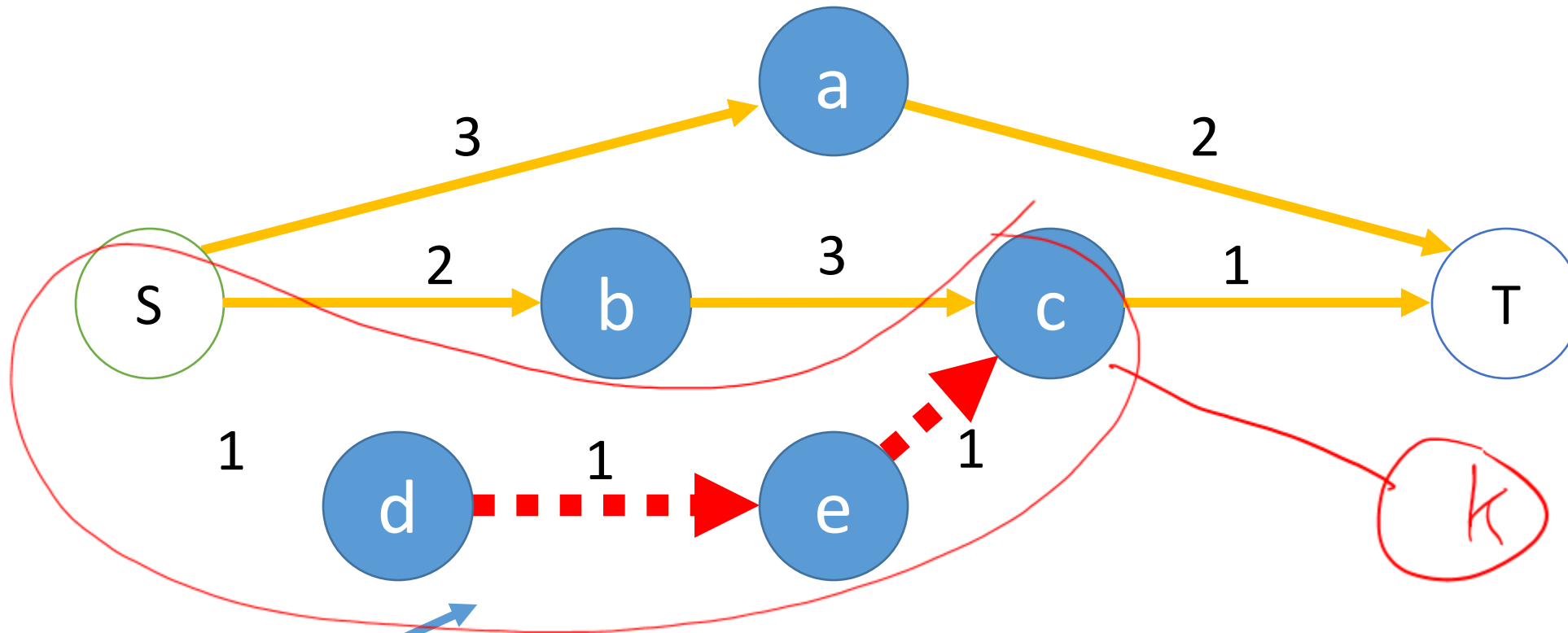
**Optimal Substructure**

This must be shortest path from S to C with at most 3 edges!

Shortest path with at most 4 edges

## Example 2

The path from D to C is used as part of the shortest path from S to T. And as part of the shortest path from S to C.

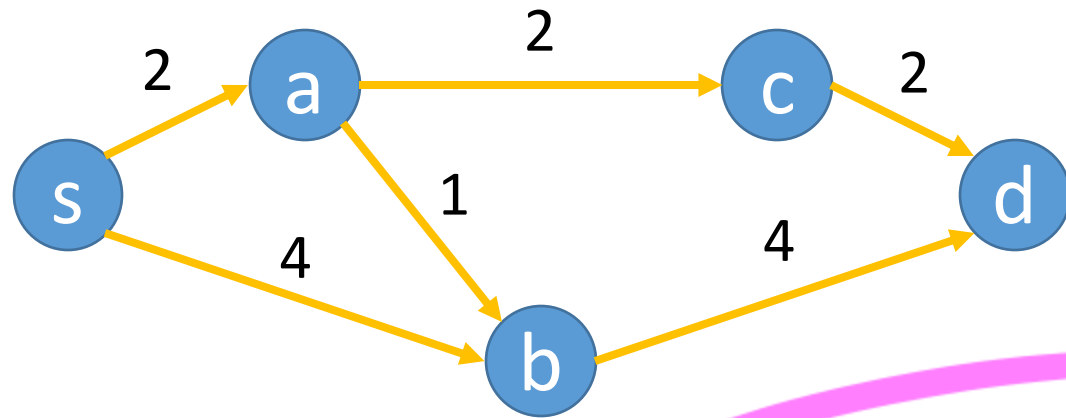


**Overlapping Subproblems**

The path from D to C is used as part of the shortest path from S to T and from D to T (and ...)

Shortest path with at most 4 edges





Here's the table

*n-1*

Max Number Of Edges On Path

i	4					
	3					
	2					
	1					
	0					
		s	a	b	c	d
		v				
		End Vertex				

```
FUNCTION BellmanFord(G, start_vertex)
```

```
    n = G.vertices.length
```

```
    path_lengths = [[INFINITY FOR v IN G.vertices] FOR _ IN [0 ..< n]]
```

```
    path_lengths[0, start_vertex] = 0
```

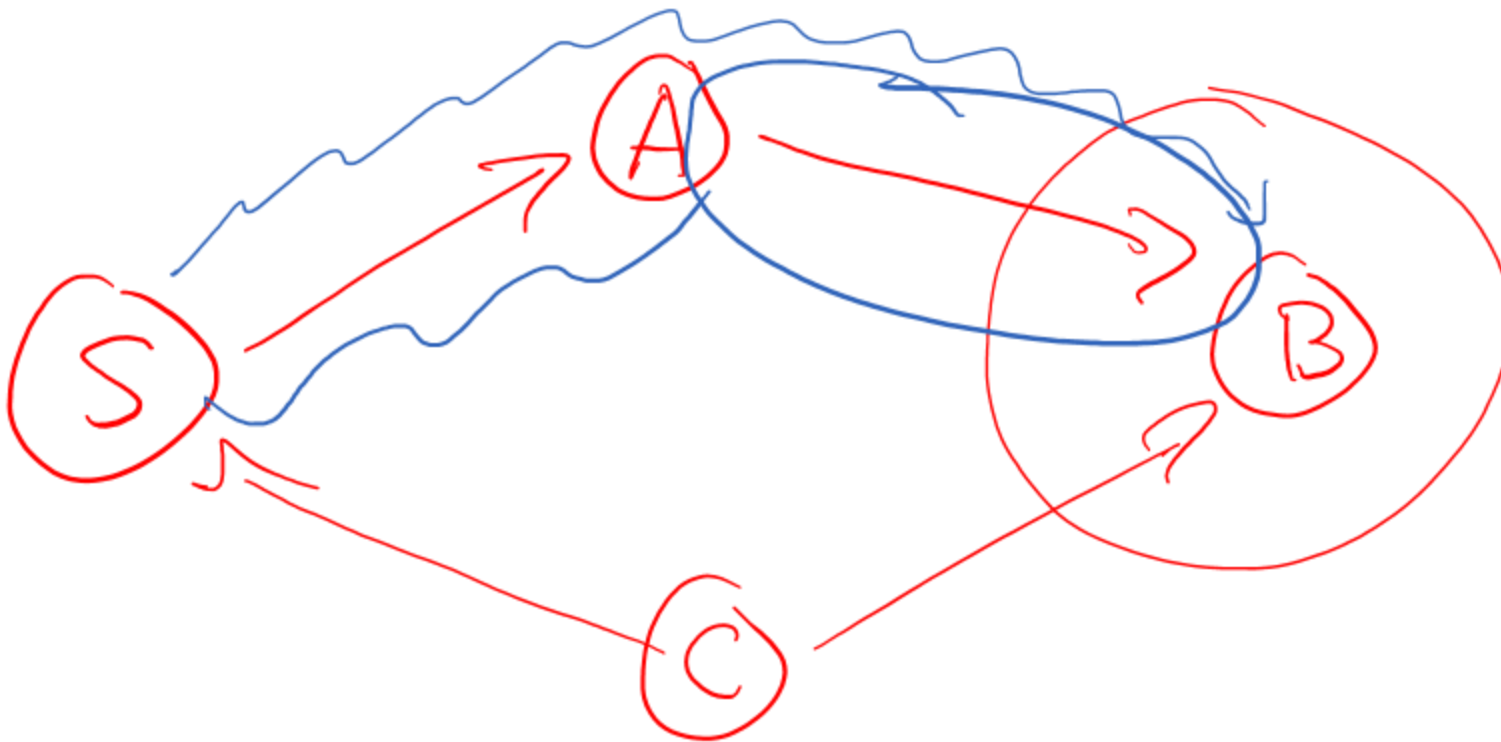
**FUNCTION** BellmanFord( $G$ , start\_vertex)

$n = G.vertices.length$

$path\_lengths = [[INFINITY \text{ FOR } v \text{ IN } G.vertices] \text{ FOR } \_ \text{ IN } [0 \dots n]]$

$path\_lengths[0, start\_vertex] = 0$

**FOR** num\_edges **IN**  $[1 \dots n]$  Why won't we need more than  $n-1$  edges?



**FUNCTION** BellmanFord(*G*, start\_vertex)

*n* = *G*.vertices.length

path\_lengths = [[INFINITY FOR *v* IN *G*.vertices] FOR *i* IN [0 ..< *n*]]

path\_lengths[0, start\_vertex] = 0

FOR num\_edges IN [1 ..< *n*]

Why won't we need more than *n*-1 edges?

FOR *v* IN *G*.vertices

min\_len = INFINITY

All incoming edges into *v*

FOR (*v*From, *v*) IN *G*.edges

Cost to get to *v*From using at most *i*-1 edges

len = path\_lengths[num\_edges - 1, *v*From] + *G*.edges[*v*From, *v*].cost

IF len < min\_len

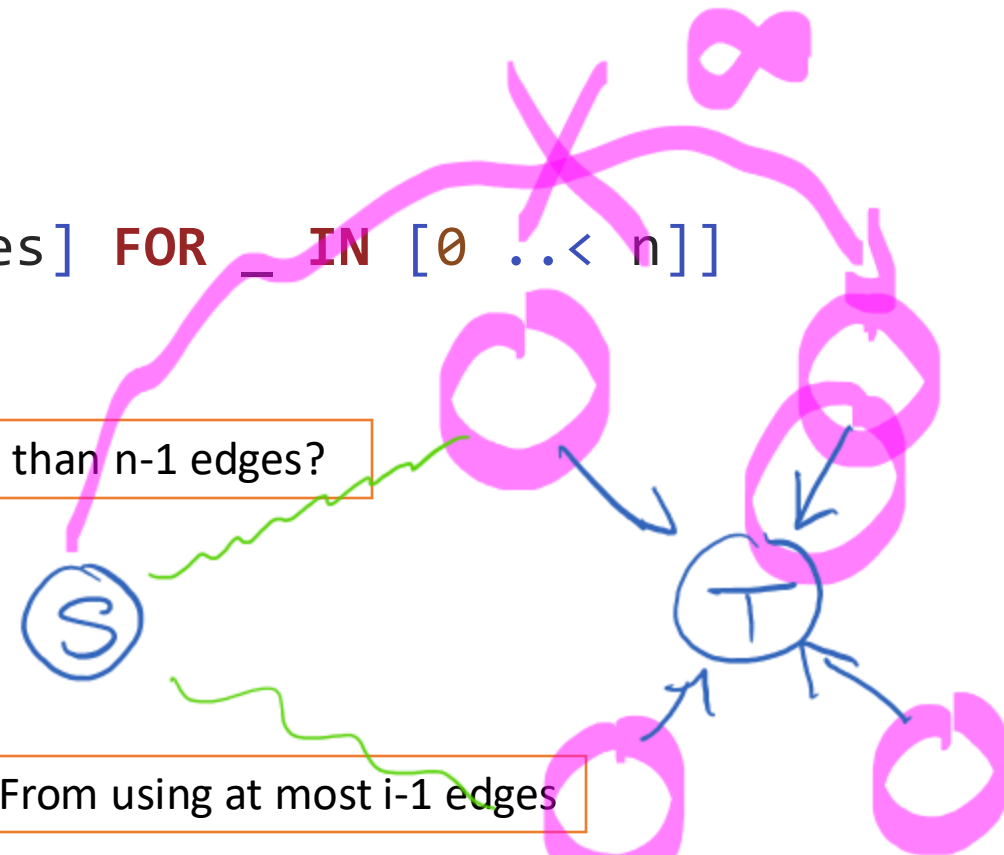
min\_len = len

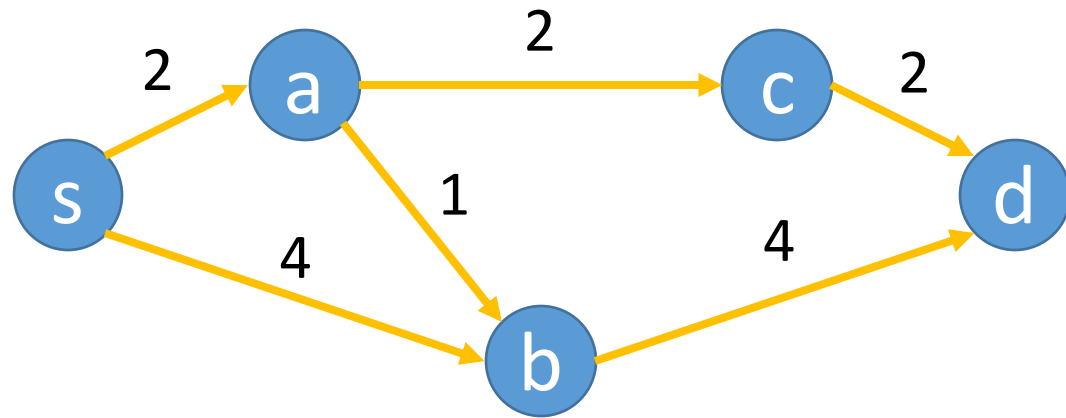
Cost using at most num\_edges-1 edges

path\_lengths[num\_edges, *v*] = min(path\_lengths[num\_edges - 1, *v*],

min\_len)

Cost using at most num\_edges





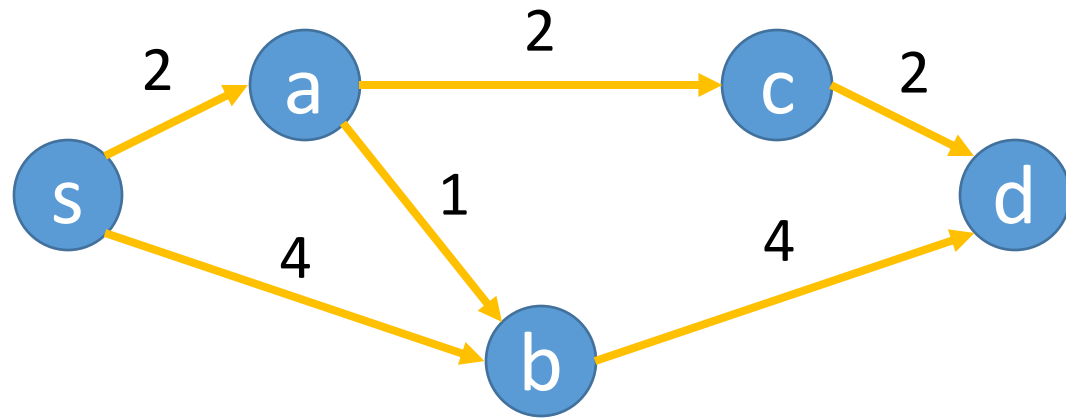
```

FOR num_edges IN [1 ..< n]
  FOR v IN G.vertices
    min_len = INFINITY
    FOR (vFrom, v) IN G.edges
      len = lens[num_edges - 1, vFrom] + c
      IF len < min_len
        min_len = len
    lens[num_edges, v] = min(
      lens[num_edges - 1, v], min_len)
  
```

Max Number  
Of Edges  
On Path

i	4					
	3					
	2					
	1					
	0					
		s	a	b	c	d
		v				

End Vertex

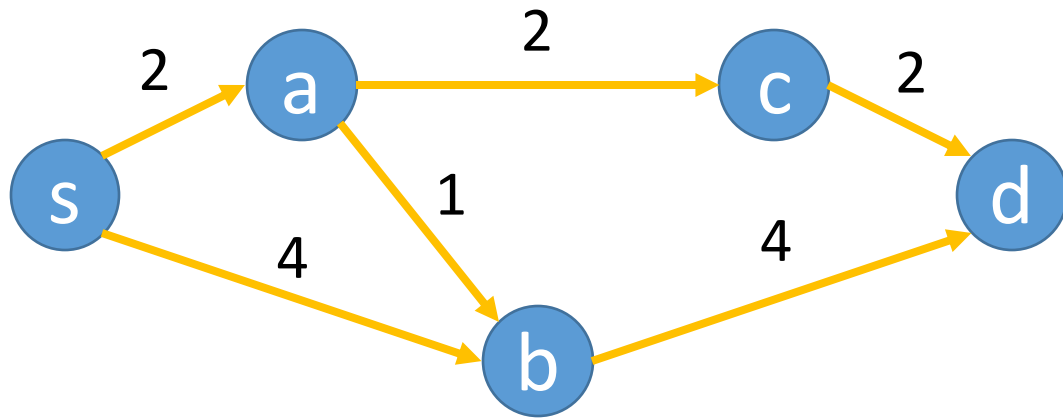


```

FOR num_edges IN [1 ..< n]
  FOR v IN G.vertices
    min_len = INFINITY
    FOR (vFrom, v) IN G.edges
      len = lens[num_edges - 1, vFrom] + c
      IF len < min_len
        min_len = len
    lens[num_edges, v] = min(
      lens[num_edges - 1, v], min_len)
  
```

What does  
a single cell  
denote?

i	4					
	3					
	2					
	1					
	0					
		s	a	b	c	d
		v				



```

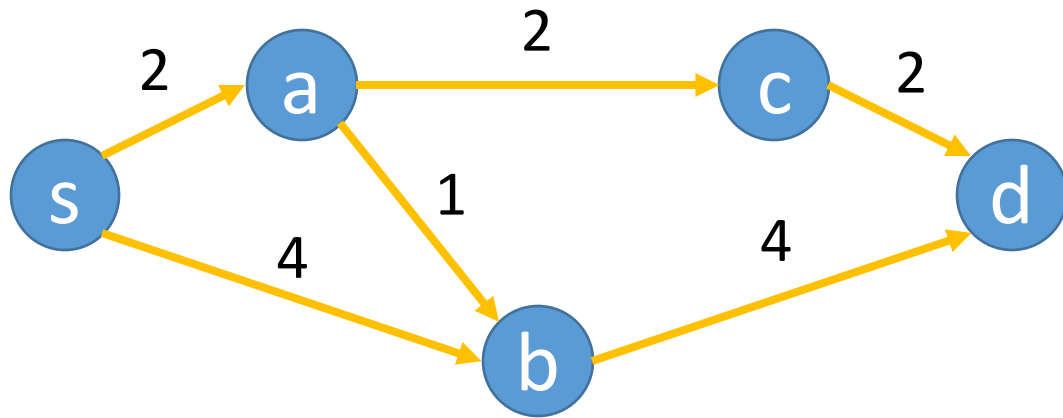
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  FOR v IN G.vertices
    min_len = INFINITY
    FOR (vFrom, v) IN G.edges
      len = lens[num_edges - 1, vFrom] + c
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        min_len = len
    lens[num_edges, v] = min(
      lens[num_edges - 1, v], min_len)
  
```

```

path_lengths = [[INFINITY FOR v IN G.vertices] FOR _ IN [0 ..< n]]
path_lengths[0, start_vertex] = 0
  
```

Initialize first row  
Lengths of paths from s to  
all other vertices using zero  
edges

i	3					
	2					
	1					
	0					
		s	a	b	c	d
		v				



```

FOR num_edges IN [1 ..< n]
  FOR v IN G.vertices
    min_len = INFINITY
    FOR (vFrom, v) IN G.edges
      len = lens[num_edges - 1, vFrom] + c
      IF len < min_len
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    lens[num_edges, v] = min(
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```

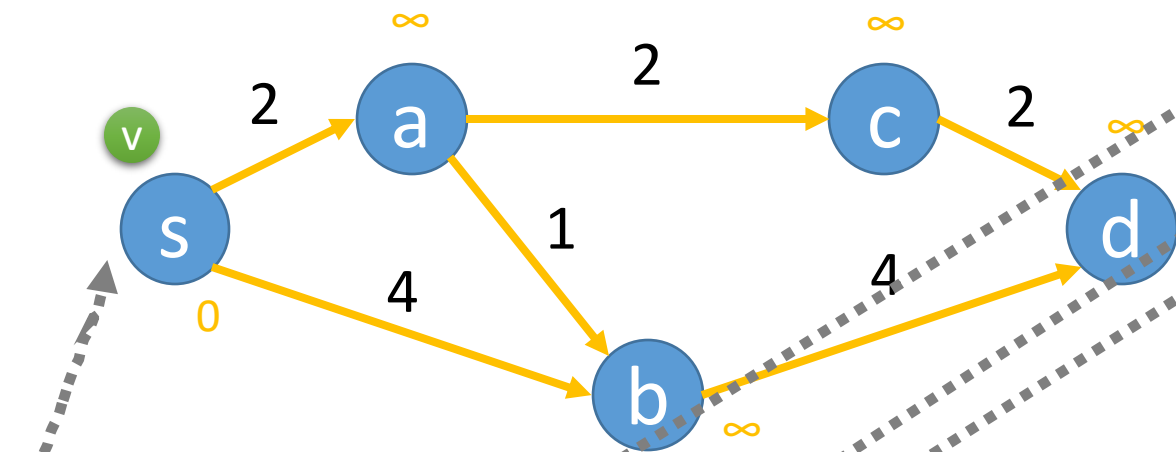
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path_lengths = [[INFINITY FOR v IN G.vertices] FOR _ IN [0 ..< n]]
path_lengths[0, start_vertex] = 0
  
```

Initialize first row  
Lengths of paths from s to  
all other vertices using zero  
edges

i	3					
	2					
	1					
	0	0	$\infty$	$\infty$	$\infty$	$\infty$
		s	a	b	c	d
		v				





```
FOR num_edges IN [1 ..< n]
```

```
FOR v IN G.vertices
```

```
min_len = INFINITY
```

```
FOR (vFrom, v) IN G.edges
```

```
len = lens[num_edges - 1, vFrom] + c
```

```
IF len < min_len
```

```
min_len = len
```

```
lens[num_edges, v] = min(  
lens[num_edges - 1, v], min_len)
```

*skip*

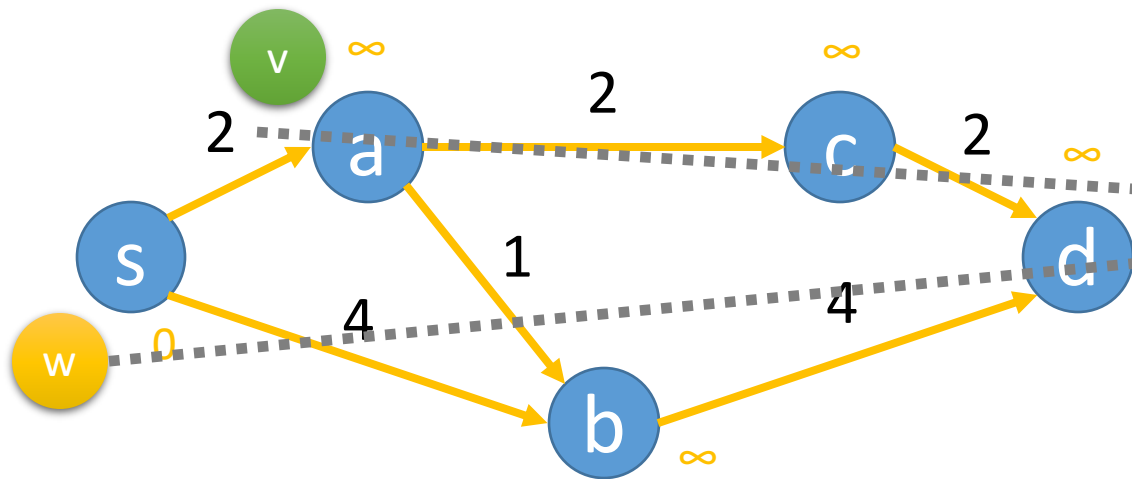
num\_edges = 1

v = s

minW = inf

Nothing to loop  
over

i	4					
	3					
	2					
	1					
	0	0	$\infty$	$\infty$	$\infty$	$\infty$
		s	a	b	c	d
		v				



```

FOR num_edges IN [1 ..< n]
  FOR v IN G.vertices
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      len = lens[num_edges - 1, vFrom] → c
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```

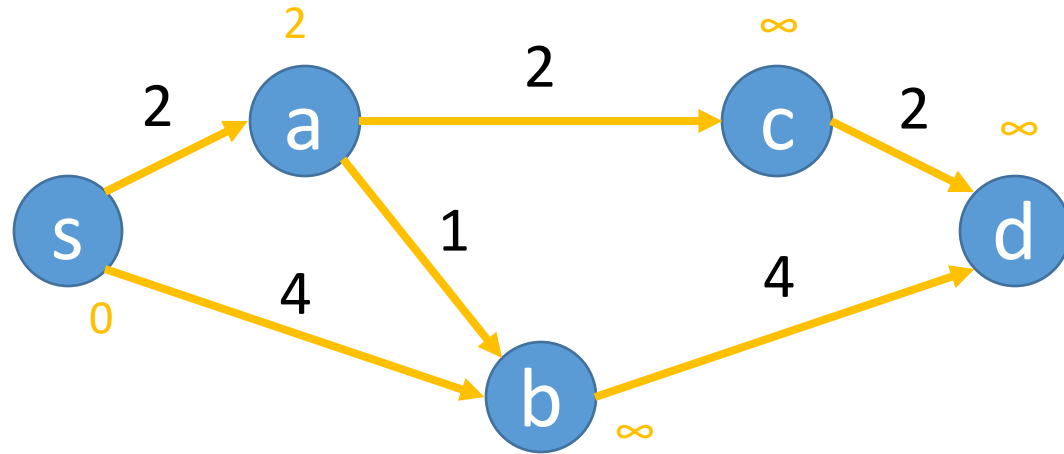
num\_edges = 1

v = a

minW = inf

minW = 2

i	4					
	3					
	2					
	1	0				
	0	0	∞	∞	∞	∞
		s	a	b	c	d
		v				

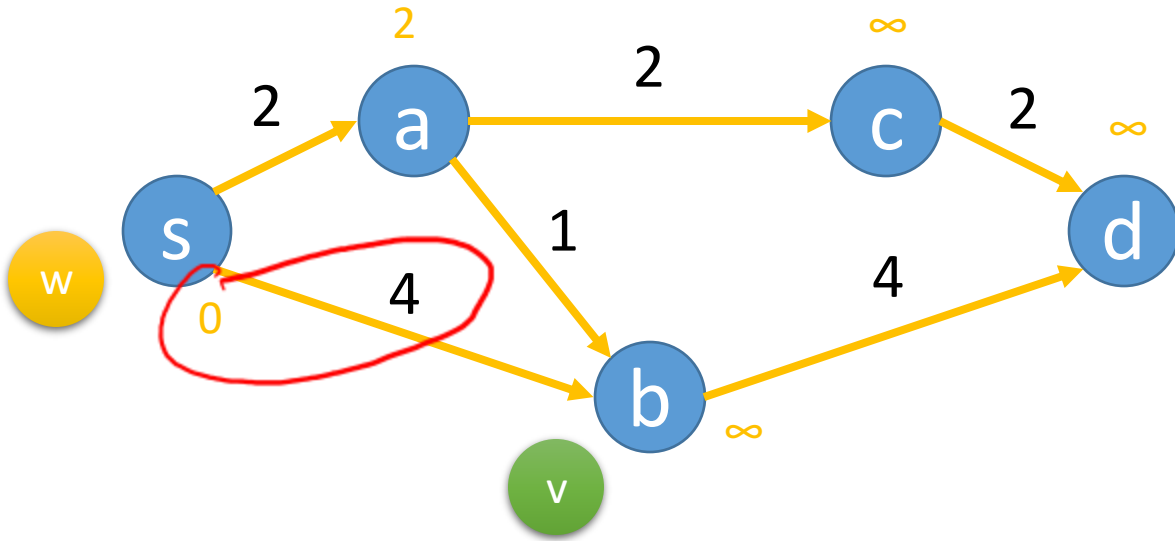


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      lens[num_edges - 1, v], min_len)
  
```

num\_edges = 1  
 v = a  
 minW = inf  
 minW = 2

i	4					
	3					
	2					
	1	0	2			
	0	0	∞	∞	∞	∞
		s	a	b	c	d
		v				



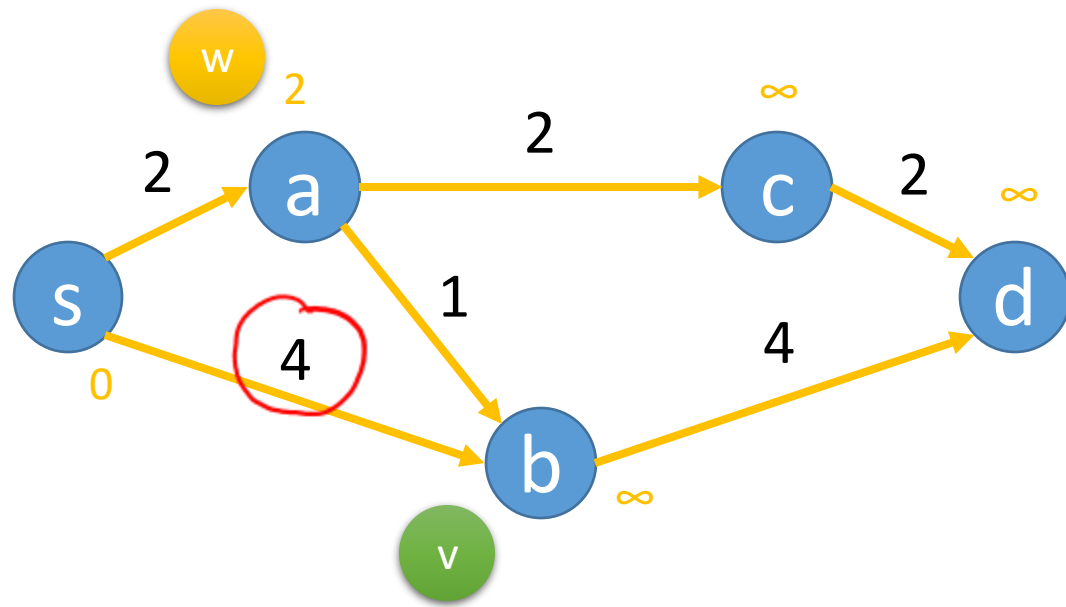
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      IF len < min_len
        min_len = len
    lens[num_edges, v] = min(
      lens[num_edges - 1, v], min_len)

```

num\_edges = 1  
 v = b  
 minW = inf  
 minW = 4

i	4					
	3					
	2					
	1	0	2			
	0	0	∞	∞	∞	∞
		s	a	b	c	d
		v				



```

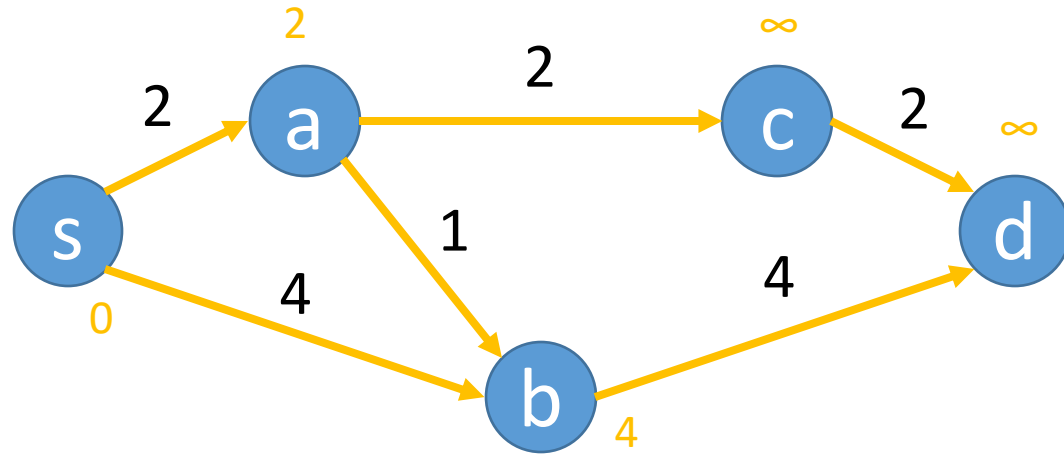
FOR num_edges IN [1 ..< n]
  FOR v IN G.vertices
    min_len = INFINITY
    FOR (vFrom, v) IN G.edges
      len = lens[num_edges - 1, vFrom] + c
      IF len < min_len
        min_len = len
    lens[num_edges, v] = min(
      lens[num_edges - 1, v], min_len)

```

num\_edges = 1  
 v = b  
 minW = inf  
 minW = 4

i	4					
	3					
	2					
	1	0	2			
	0	0	$\infty$	$\infty$	$\infty$	$\infty$
		s	a	b	c	d
		v				

(1) 3  
 (2)  $\infty$

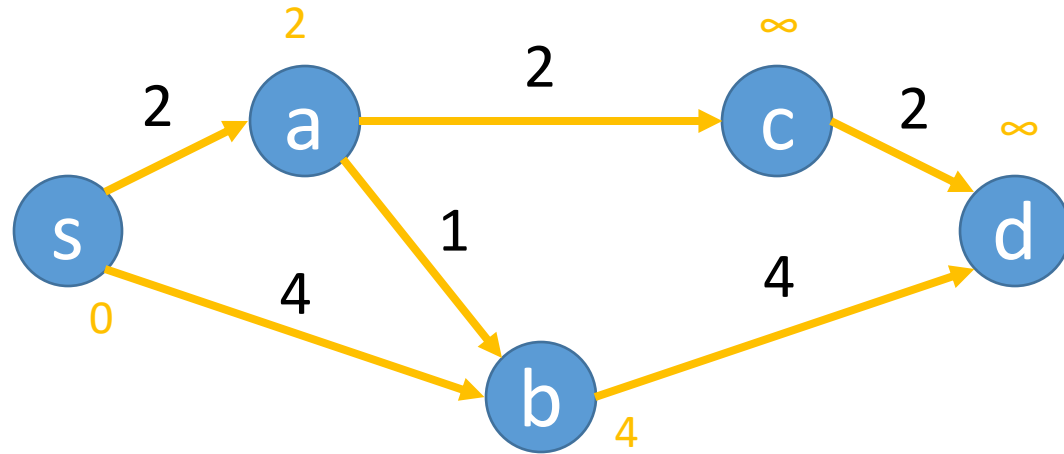


```

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      IF len < min_len
        min_len = len
    lens[num_edges, v] = min(
      lens[num_edges - 1, v], min_len)
  
```

num\_edges = 1  
 v = b  
 minW = inf  
 minW = 4

i	4					
	3					
	2					
	1	0	2	4		
	0	0	∞	∞	∞	∞
		s	a	b	c	d
		v				



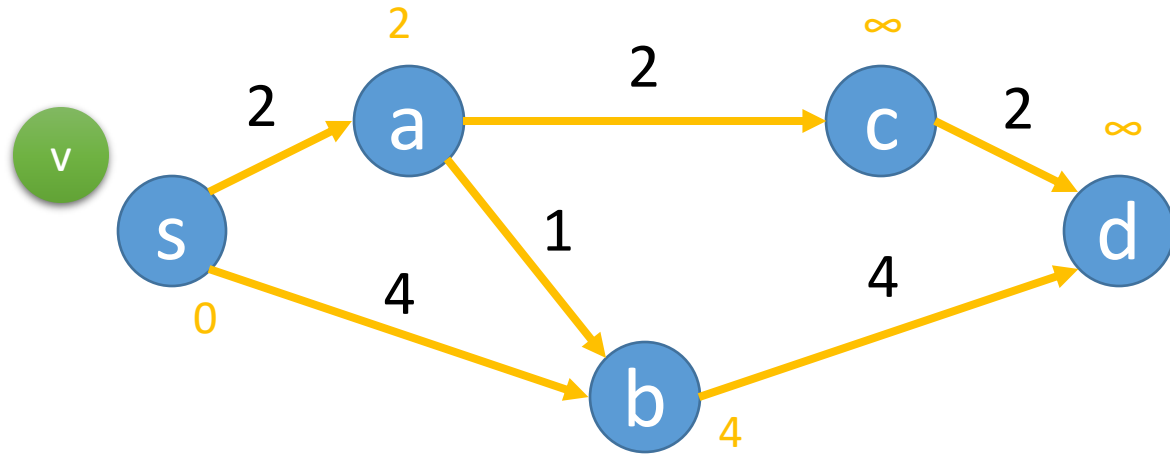
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  FOR v IN G.vertices
    min_len = INFINITY
    FOR (vFrom, v) IN G.edges
      len = lens[num_edges - 1, vFrom] + c
      IF len < min_len
        min_len = len
    lens[num_edges, v] = min(
      lens[num_edges - 1, v], min_len)

```

There are not any  
paths of length 1  
from **s** to **c** or **d**

i	4					
	3					
	2					
	1	0	2	4	∞	∞
	0	0	∞	∞	∞	∞
		s	a	b	c	d
		v				



```

FOR num_edges IN [1 ..< n]
  FOR v IN G.vertices
    min_len = INFINITY
    FOR (vFrom, v) IN G.edges
      len = lens[num_edges - 1, vFrom] + c
      IF len < min_len
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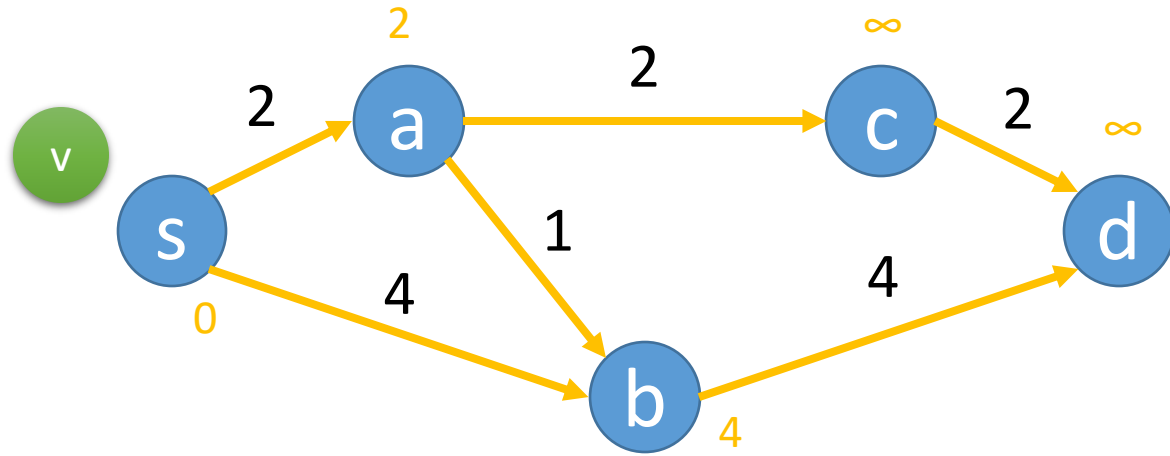
num\_edges = 2

v = s

minW = inf

i	4					
	3					
	2					
	1	0	2	4	∞	∞
	0	0	∞	∞	∞	∞
		s	a	b	c	d
v						





```

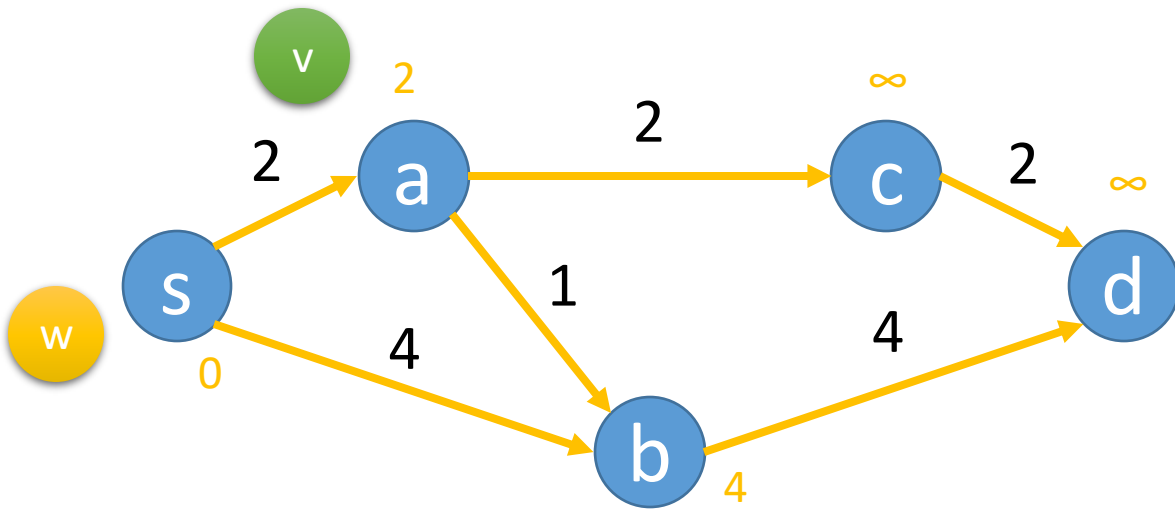
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  FOR v IN G.vertices
    min_len = INFINITY
    FOR (vFrom, v) IN G.edges
      len = lens[num_edges - 1, vFrom] + c
      IF len < min_len
        min_len = len
    lens[num_edges, v] = min(
      lens[num_edges - 1, v], min_len)
  
```

num\_edges = 2

v = s

minW = inf

i	4					
	3					
	2	0				
	1	0	2	4	∞	∞
	0	0	∞	∞	∞	∞
		s	a	b	c	d
v						



```

FOR num_edges IN [1 ..< n]
  FOR v IN G.vertices
    min_len = INFINITY
    FOR (vFrom, v) IN G.edges
      len = lens[num_edges - 1, vFrom] + c
      IF len < min_len
        min_len = len
    lens[num_edges, v] = min(
      lens[num_edges - 1, v], min_len)

```

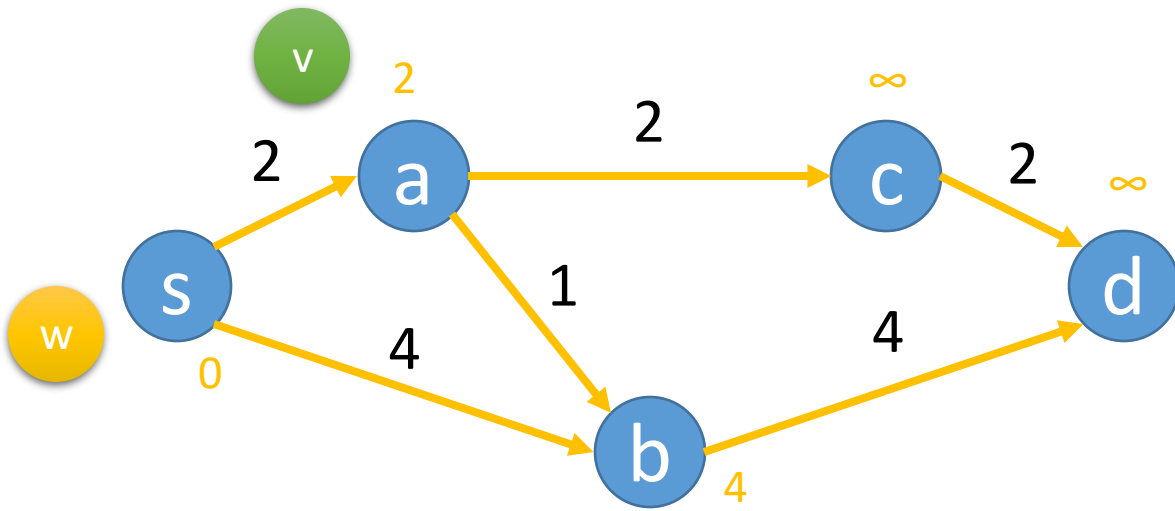
num\_edges = 2

v = a

minW = inf

minW = 2

i	4					
	3					
	2	0				
	1	0	2	4	∞	∞
	0	0	∞	∞	∞	∞
		s	a	b	c	d
v						



```

FOR num_edges IN [1 ..< n]
  FOR v IN G.vertices
    min_len = INFINITY
    FOR (vFrom, v) IN G.edges
      len = lens[num_edges - 1, vFrom] + c
      IF len < min_len
        min_len = len
    lens[num_edges, v] = min(
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```

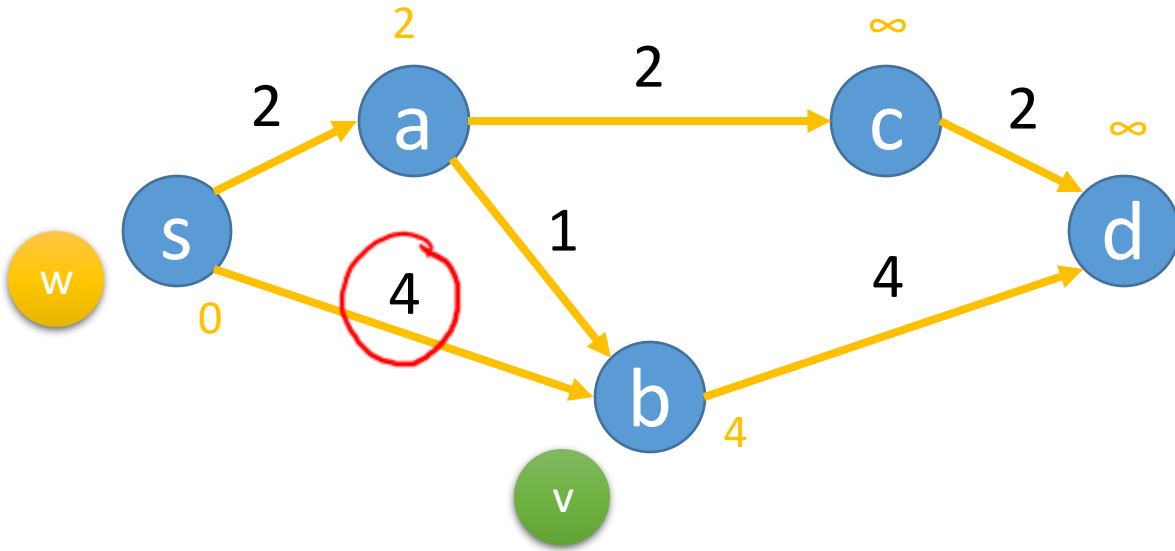
num\_edges = 2

v = a

minW = inf

minW = 2

i	4					
	3					
	2	0	2			
	1	0	2	4	∞	∞
	0	0	∞	∞	∞	∞
		s	a	b	c	d
v						



```

FOR num_edges IN [1 ..< n]
  FOR v IN G.vertices
    min_len = INFINITY
    FOR (vFrom, v) IN G.edges
      len = lens[num_edges - 1, vFrom] + c
      IF len < min_len
        min_len = len
    lens[num_edges, v] = min(
      lens[num_edges - 1, v], min_len)

```

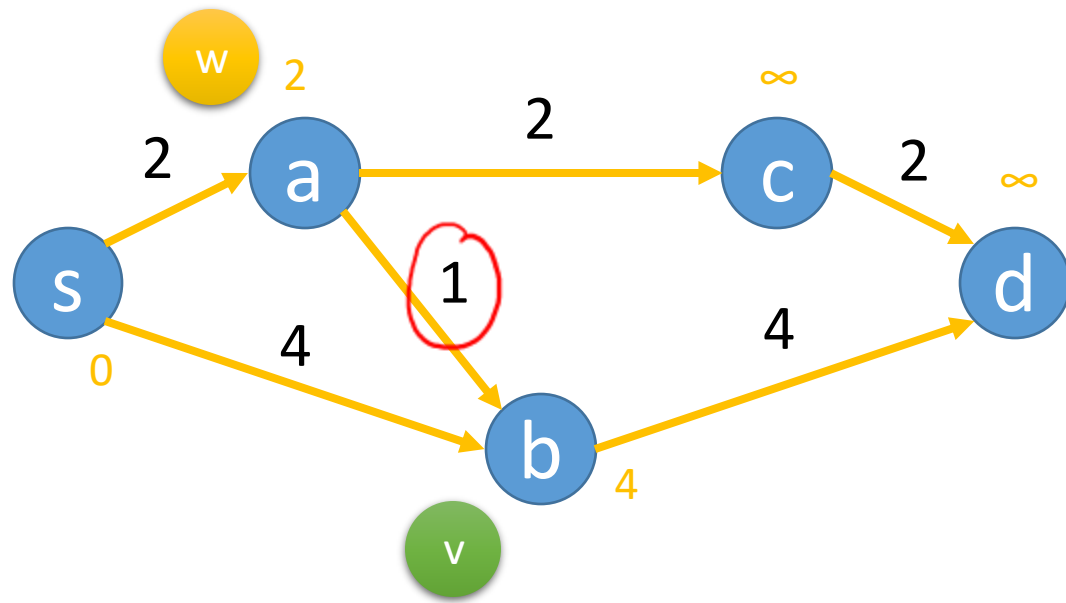
num\_edges = 2

v = b

minW = inf

minW = 4

i	4					
	3					
	2	0	2			
	1	0	2	4	∞	∞
	0	0	∞	∞	∞	∞
		s	a	b	c	d
		v				



```

FOR num_edges IN [1 ..< n]
  FOR v IN G.vertices
    min_len = INFINITY
    FOR (vFrom, v) IN G.edges
      len = lens[num_edges - 1, vFrom] + c
      IF len < min_len
        min_len = len
    lens[num_edges, v] = min(
      lens[num_edges - 1, v], min_len)

```

num\_edges = 2

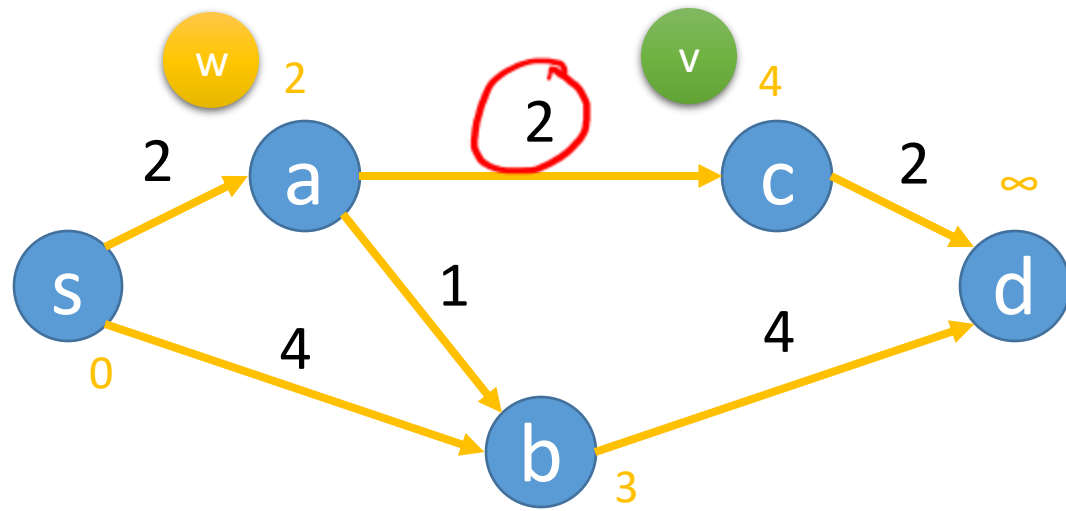
v = b

minW = inf

minW = 4

minW = 3

i	4					
	3					
	2	0	2			
	1	0	2	4	∞	∞
	0	0	∞	∞	∞	∞
		s	a	b	c	d
		v				



```

FOR num_edges IN [1 ..< n]
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```

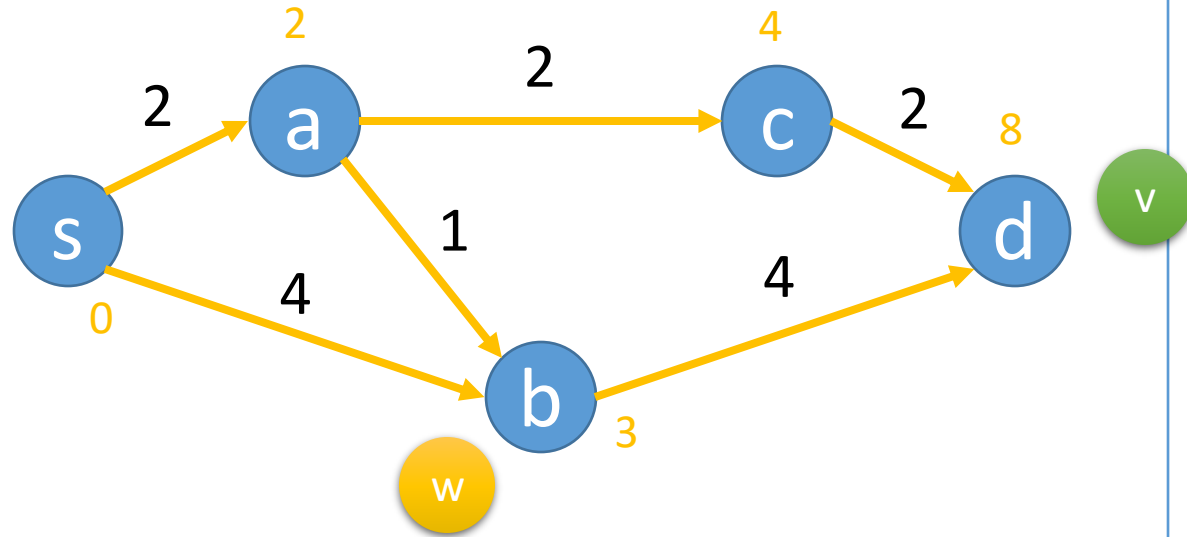
num\_edges = 2

v = c

minW = inf

minW = 4

i	4					
	3					
	2	0	2	3	4	
	1	0	2	4	∞	∞
	0	0	∞	∞	∞	∞
		s	a	b	c	d
v						



```

FOR num_edges IN [1 ..< n]
  FOR v IN G.vertices
    min_len = INFINITY
    FOR (vFrom, v) IN G.edges
      len = lens[num_edges - 1, vFrom] + c
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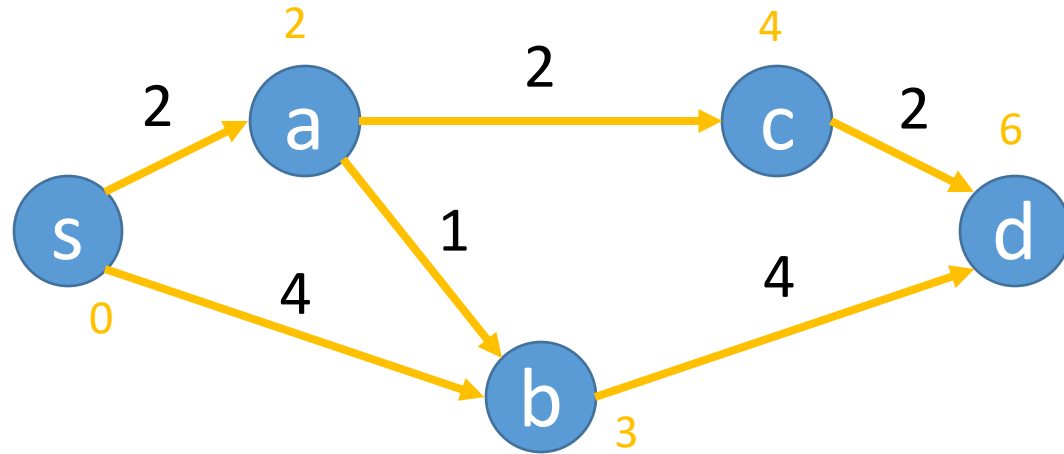
num\_edges = 2

v = d

minW = inf

minW = 8

i	4					
	3					
	2	0	2	3	4	8
	1	0	2	4	∞	∞
	0	0	∞	∞	∞	∞
		s	a	b	c	d
v						



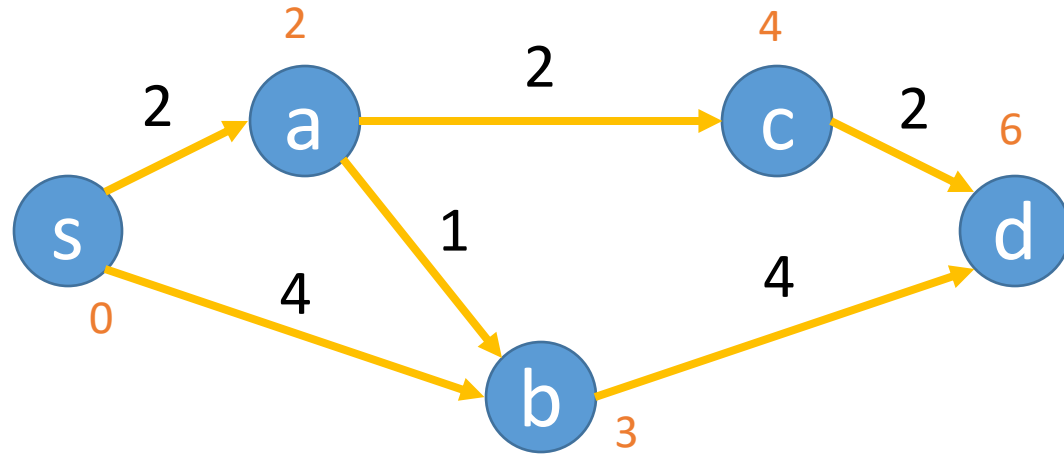
```

FOR num_edges IN [1 ..< n]
  FOR v IN G.vertices
    min_len = INFINITY
    FOR (vFrom, v) IN G.edges
      len = lens[num_edges - 1, vFrom] + c
      IF len < min_len
        min_len = len
    lens[num_edges, v] = min(
      lens[num_edges - 1, v], min_len)
  
```

What is our output?

i	4	0	2	3	4	6
	3	0	2	3	4	6
	2	0	2	3	4	8
	1	0	2	4	∞	∞
	0	0	∞	∞	∞	∞
		s	a	b	c	d
		v				





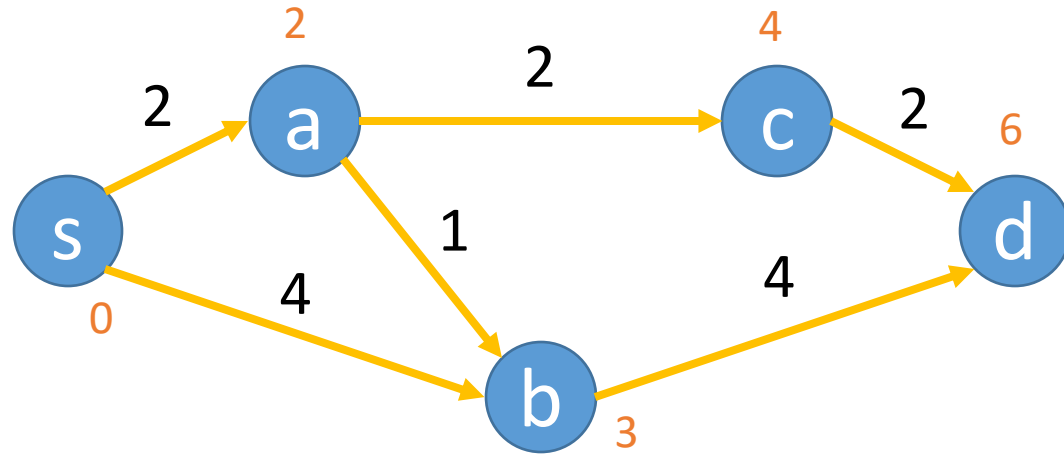
```

FOR num_edges IN [1 ..< n]
  FOR v IN G.vertices
    min_len = INFINITY
    FOR (vFrom, v) IN G.edges
      len = lens[num_edges - 1, vFrom] + c
      IF len < min_len
        min_len = len
    lens[num_edges, v] = min(
      lens[num_edges - 1, v], min_len)
  
```

What is our output?

We output the  
shortest paths  
from s to all other  
vertices

i	4	0	2	3	4	6
	3	0	2	3	4	6
	2	0	2	3	4	8
	1	0	2	4	∞	∞
	0	0	∞	∞	∞	∞
		s	a	b	c	d
		v				



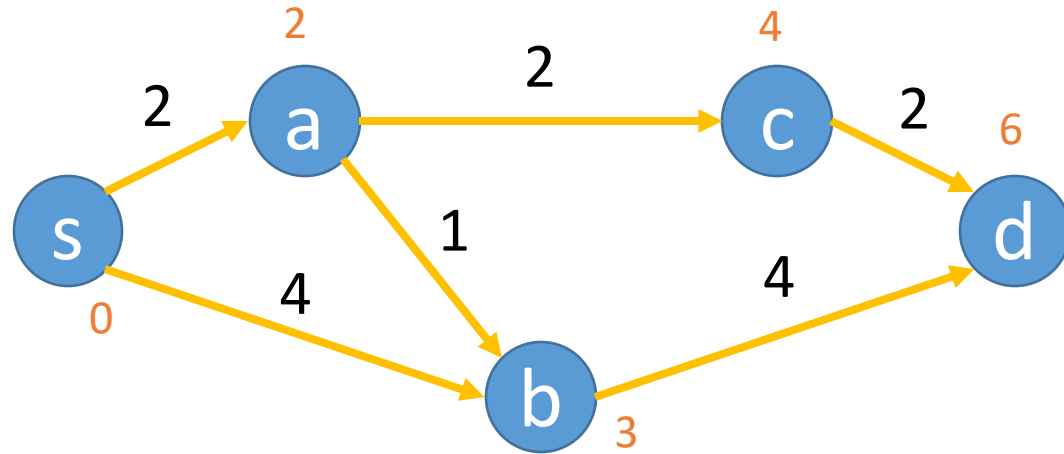
```

FOR num_edges IN [1 ..< n]
  FOR v IN G.vertices
    min_len = INFINITY
    FOR (vFrom, v) IN G.edges
      len = lens[num_edges - 1, vFrom] + c
      IF len < min_len
        min_len = len
    lens[num_edges, v] = min(
      lens[num_edges - 1, v], min_len)
  
```

What is our output?

Do we need the other rows of the table?

i	4	0	2	3	4	6
	3	0	2	3	4	6
	2	0	2	3	4	8
	1	0	2	4	∞	∞
	0	0	∞	∞	∞	∞
		s	a	b	c	d
		v				



```

FOR num_edges IN [1 ..< n]
  FOR v IN G.vertices
    min_len = INFINITY
    FOR (vFrom, v) IN G.edges
      len = lens[num_edges - 1, vFrom] + c
      IF len < min_len
        min_len = len
    lens[num_edges, v] = min(
      lens[num_edges - 1, v], min_len)
  
```

What is our output?

Do we need the other rows of the table?

i	4	0	2	3	4	6
	3	0	2	3	4	6
	2	0	2	3	4	8
	1	0	2	4	$\infty$	$\infty$
	0	0	$\infty$	$\infty$	$\infty$	$\infty$
		s	a	b	c	d
		v				

$O(n^2)$   
 $O(n)$

# Running Time of Bellman-Ford Algorithm?

```
FOR num_edges IN [1 ..< n]
```

```
FOR v IN G.vertices
```

```
min_len = INFINITY
```

```
FOR (vFrom, v) IN G.edges
```

```
len = lens[num_edges - 1, vFrom] + c
```

```
IF len < min_len
```

```
min_len = len
```

```
lens[num_edges, v] = min(lens[num_edges - 1, v], min_len)
```

$O(n)$

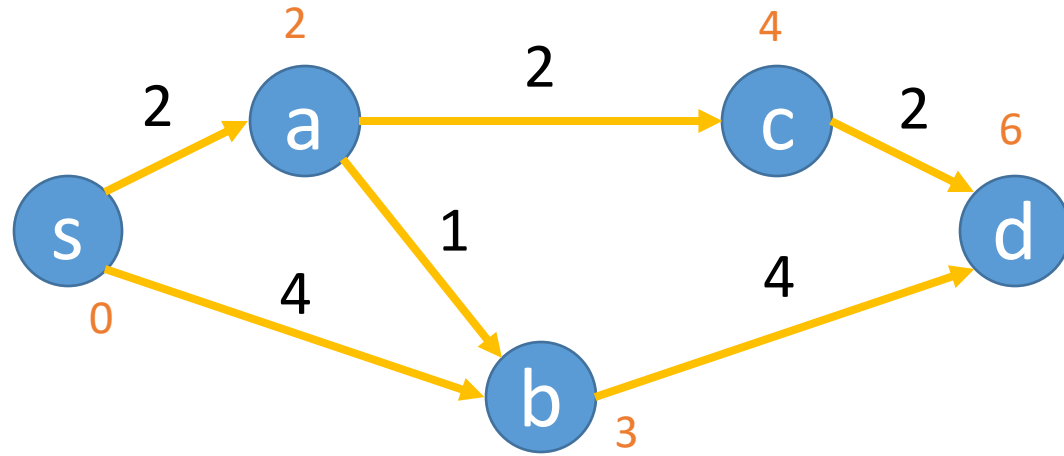
$O(m)$

Not all edges for every  $v$ , but every edge just ordered by  $v$

The inner two loops go through every edge once, ordered by the vertices

$O(n^2) < O(mn) < O(n^3)$        $O(m^2)$

In general



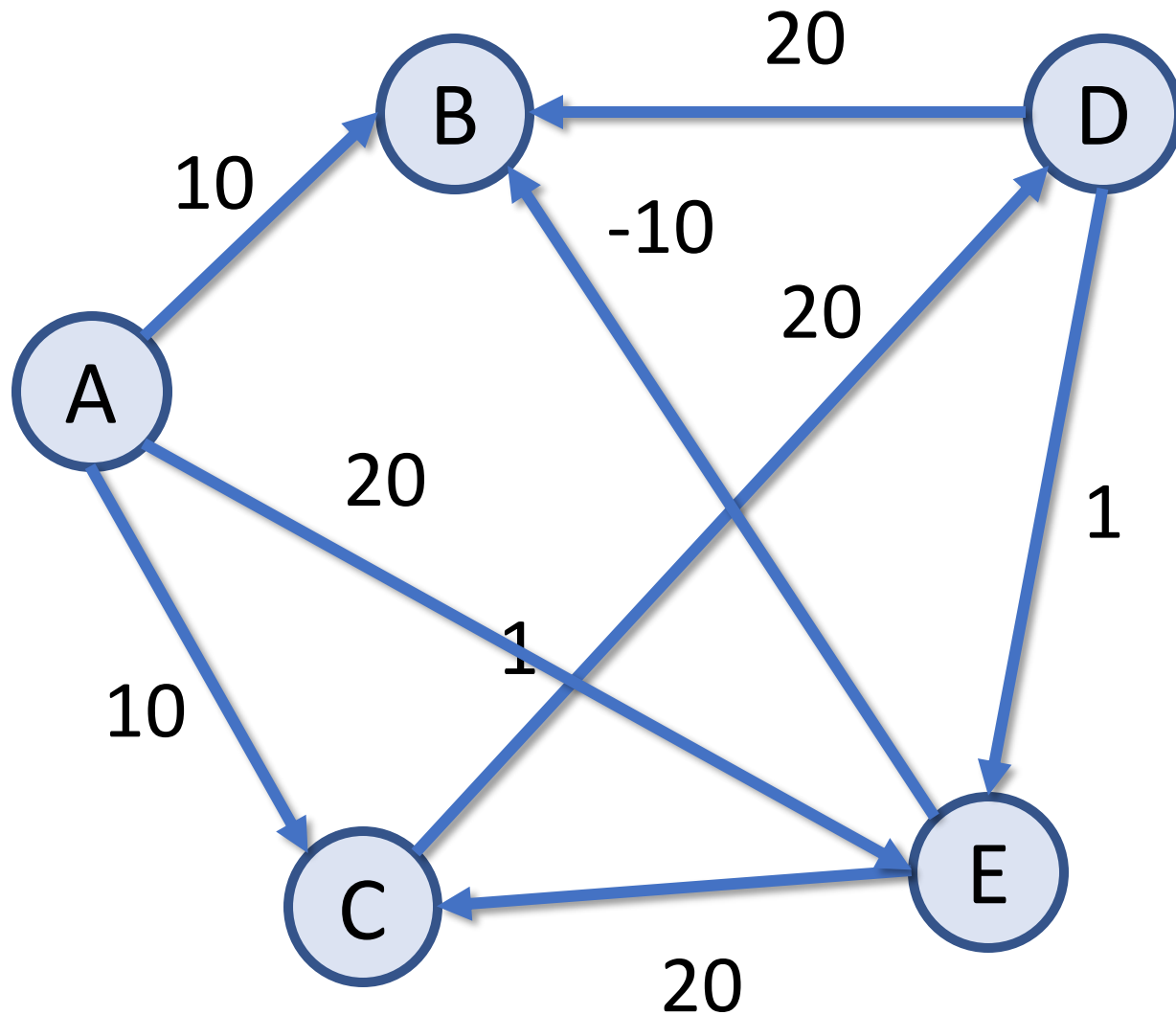
```

FOR num_edges IN [1 ..< n]
  FOR v IN G.vertices
    min_len = INFINITY
    FOR (vFrom, v) IN G.edges
      len = lens[num_edges - 1, vFrom] + c
      IF len < min_len
        min_len = len
    lens[num_edges, v] = min(
      lens[num_edges - 1, v], min_len)
  
```

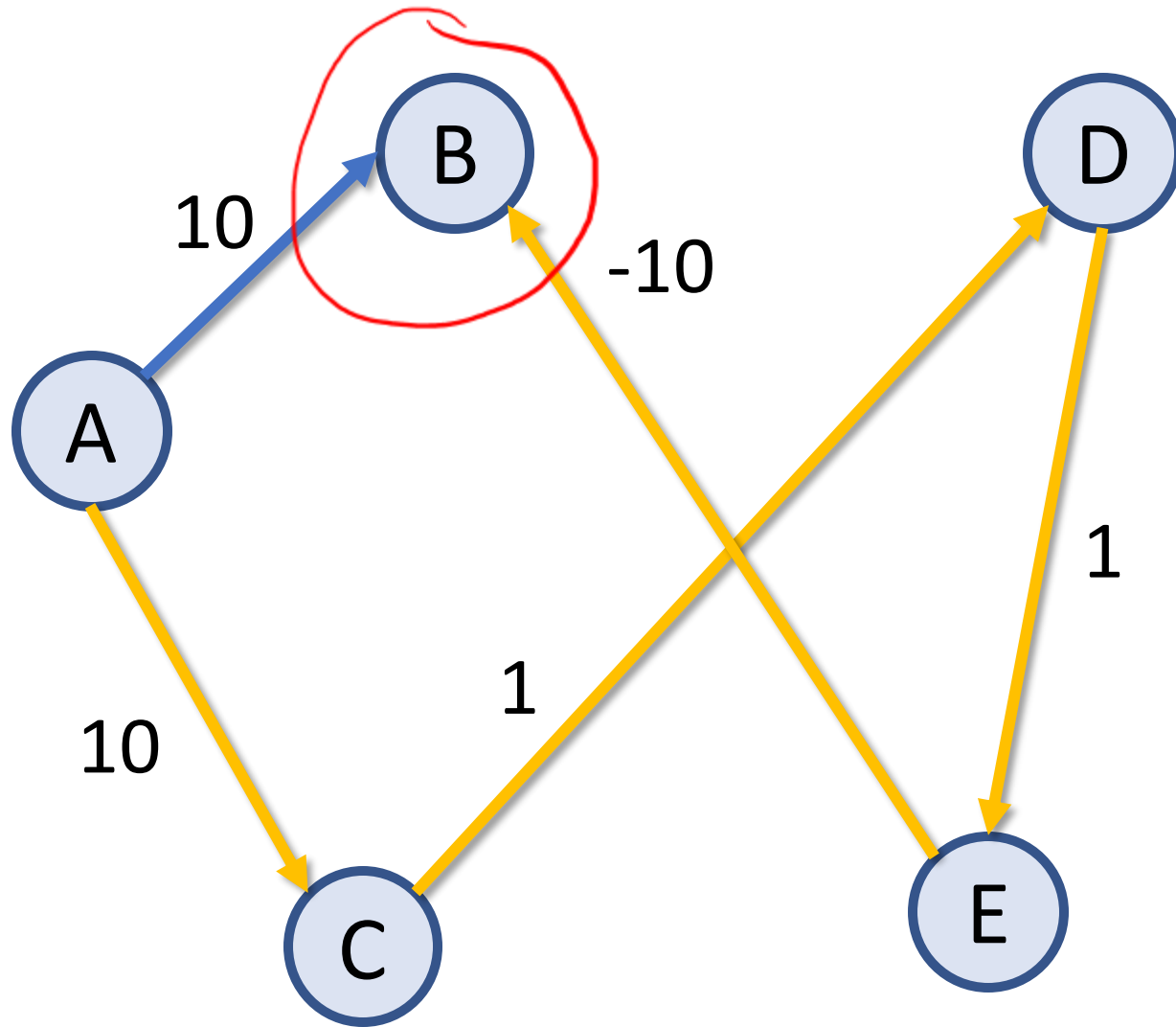
What about  
negative edges?

*Yes it works  
because all  
BF considers  
paths*

i	4	0	2	3	4	6
	3	0	2	3	4	6
	2	0	2	3	4	8
	1	0	2	4	$\infty$	$\infty$
	0	0	$\infty$	$\infty$	$\infty$	$\infty$
		s	a	b	c	d
		v				



What is the maximum number of edges on any real (not negative infinity) **shortest** path?



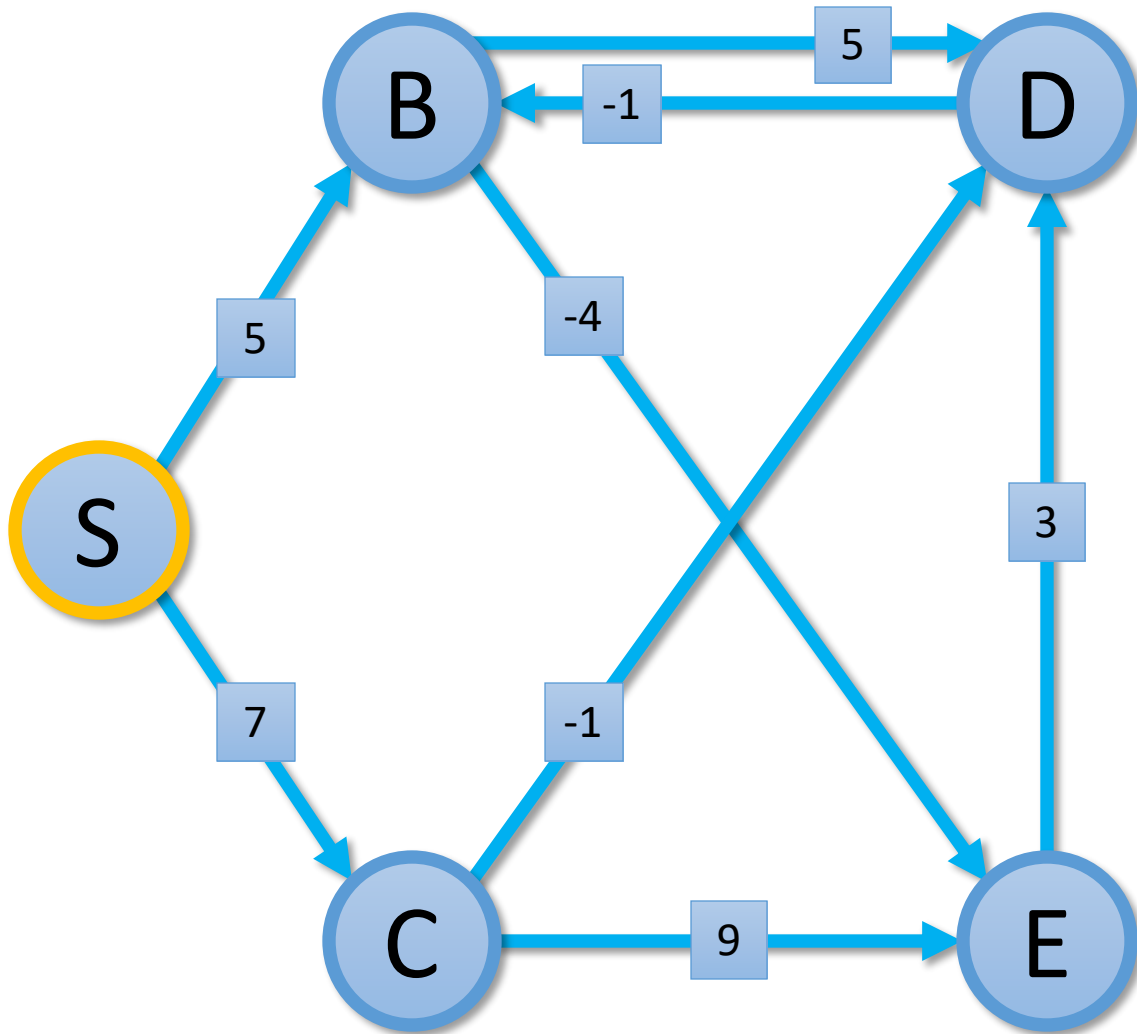
What is the maximum number of edges on any real (not negative infinity) **shortest** path?

Any additional edges will increase the path length, or otherwise must be part of a negative cycle

# Exercise



What is the shortest path from S to B?

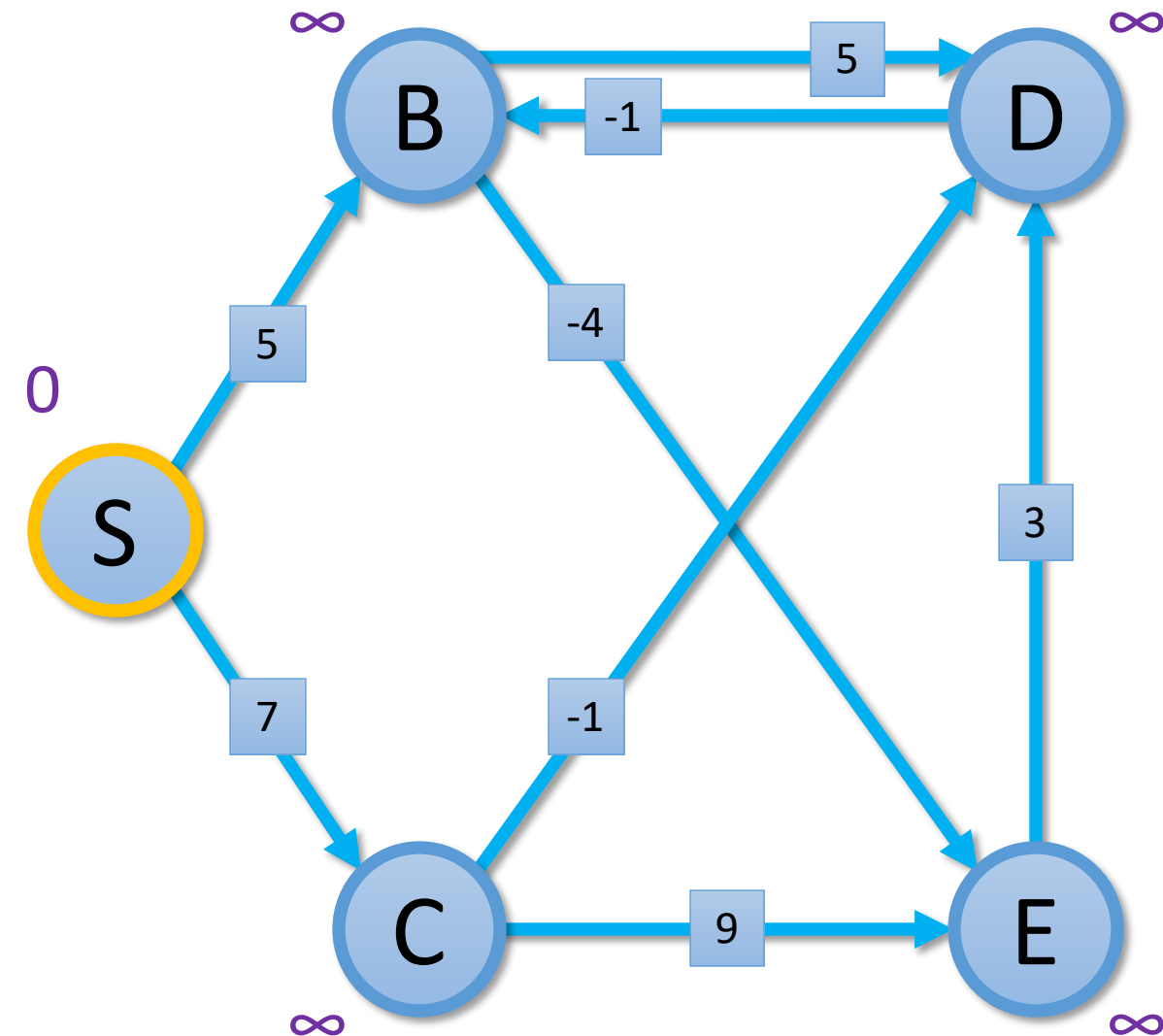


Initialization

Vertex	Predecessor	$i - 1$	$i$
S			
B			
C			
D			
E			

Table is rotated when compared to previous example  
(easier to fit on the slide)

What is the shortest path from S to B?

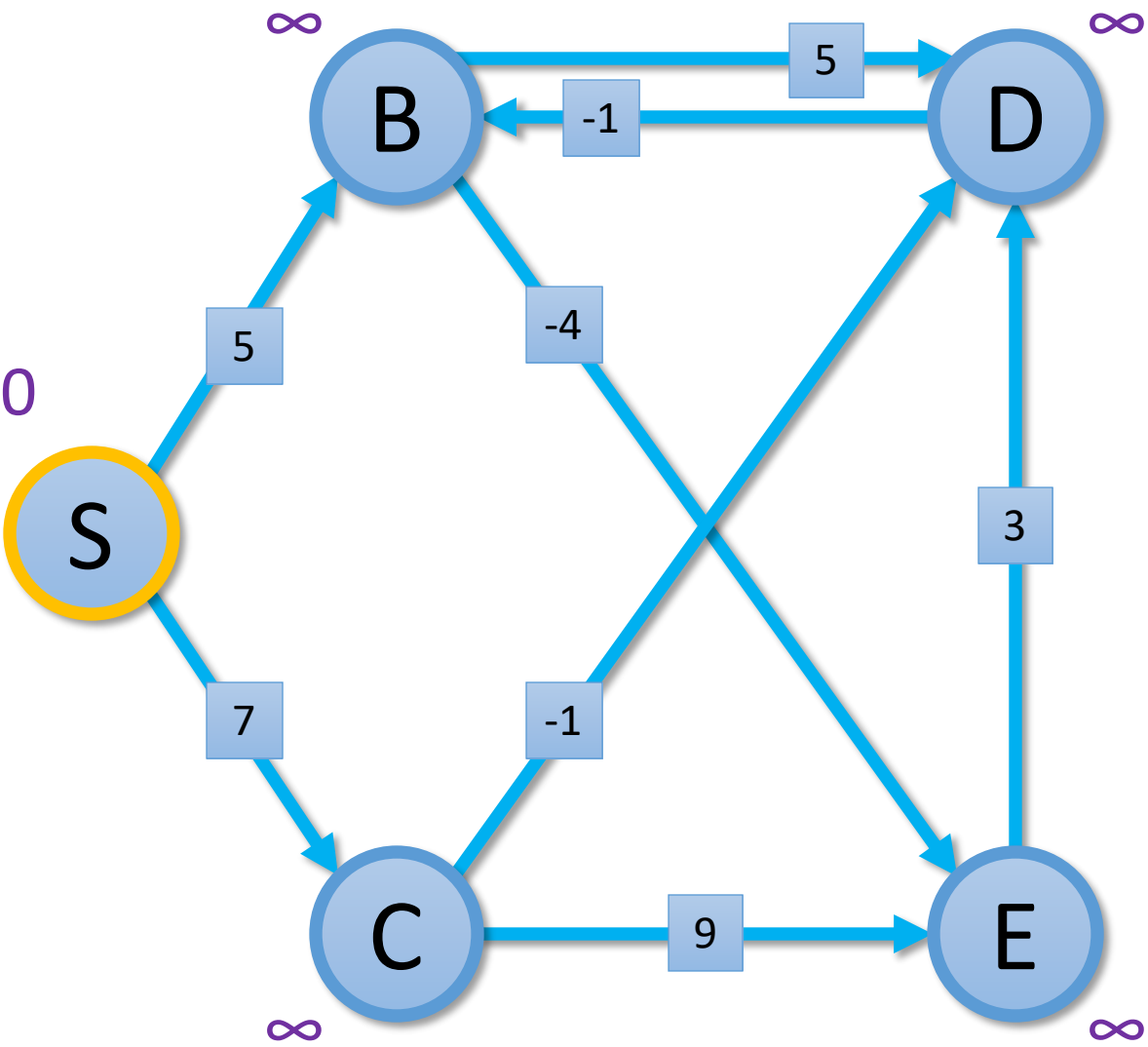


Initialization

Vertex	Predecessor	$i - 1$	$i$
S	S	0	
B	None	$\infty$	
C	None	$\infty$	
D	None	$\infty$	
E	None	$\infty$	

Table is rotated when compared to previous example  
(easier to fit on the slide)

What is the shortest path from S to B?

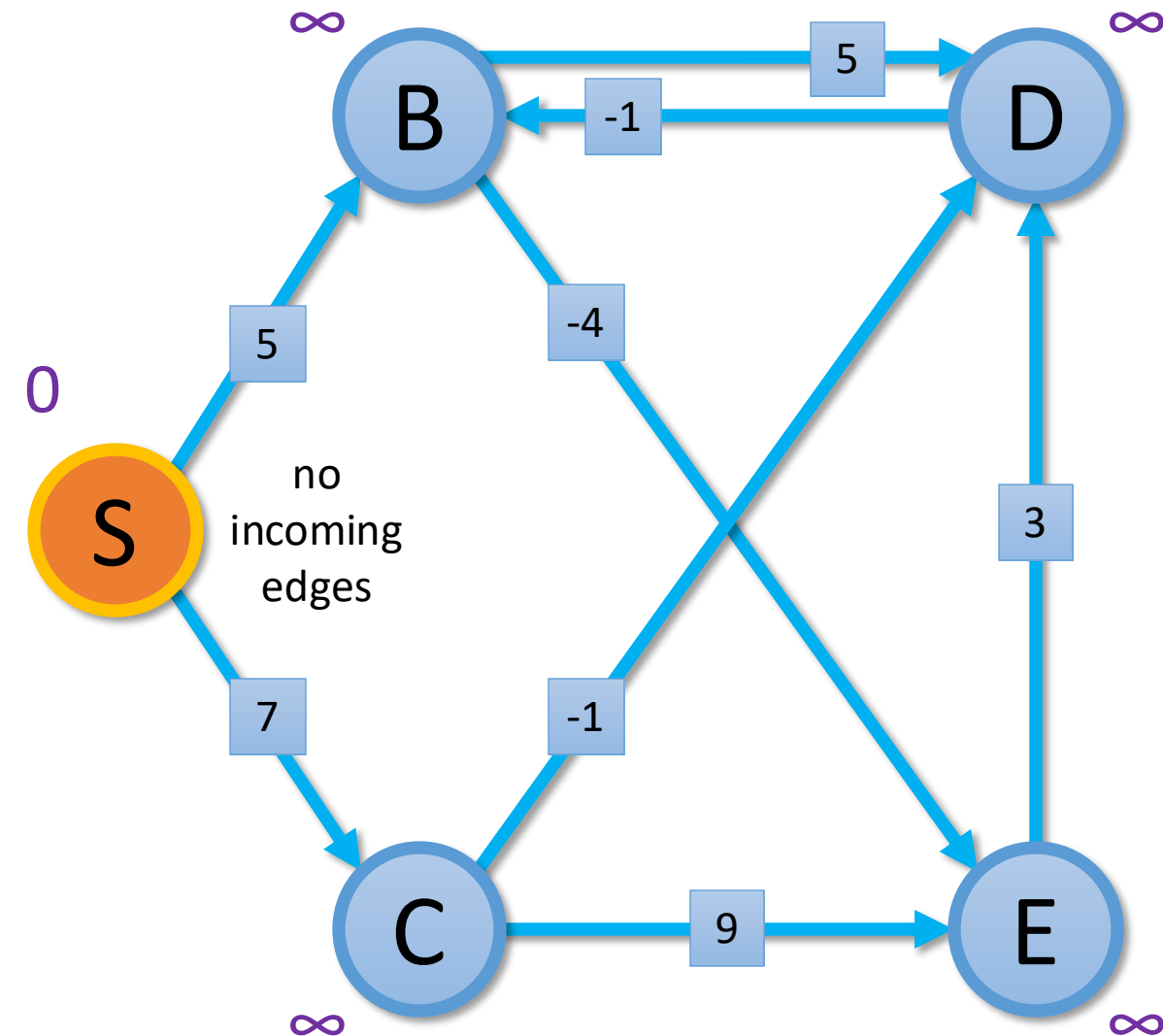


i = 1

Vertex	Predecessor	i - 1	i
S	S	0	
B	None	$\infty$	
C	None	$\infty$	
D	None	$\infty$	
E	None	$\infty$	

Table is rotated when compared to previous example  
(easier to fit on the slide)

What is the shortest path from S to B?

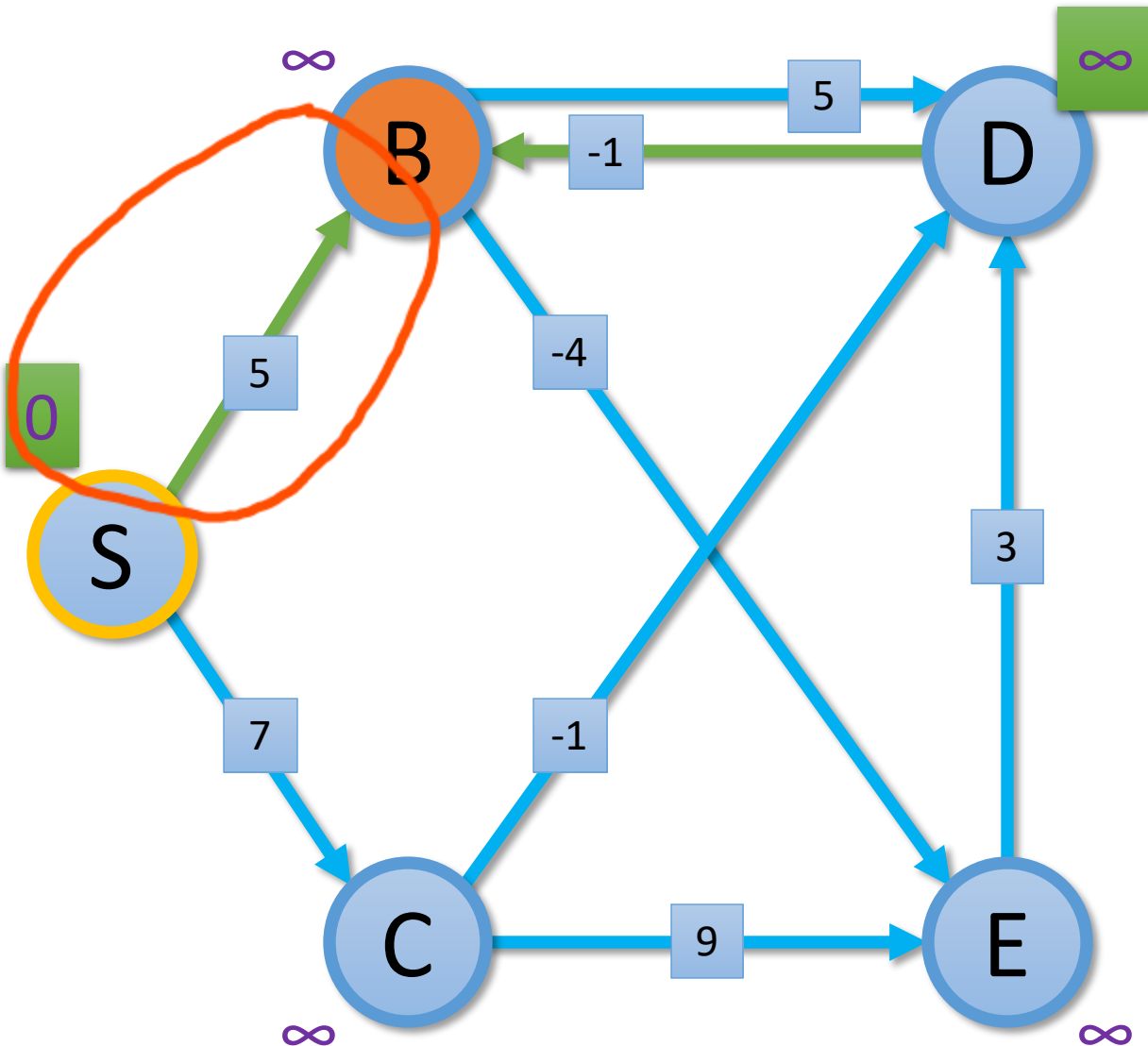


$i = 1$

Vertex	Predecessor	$i - 1$	$i$
S	S	0	0
B	None	$\infty$	
C	None	$\infty$	
D	None	$\infty$	
E	None	$\infty$	

Table is rotated when compared to previous example  
(easier to fit on the slide)

What is the shortest path from S to B?

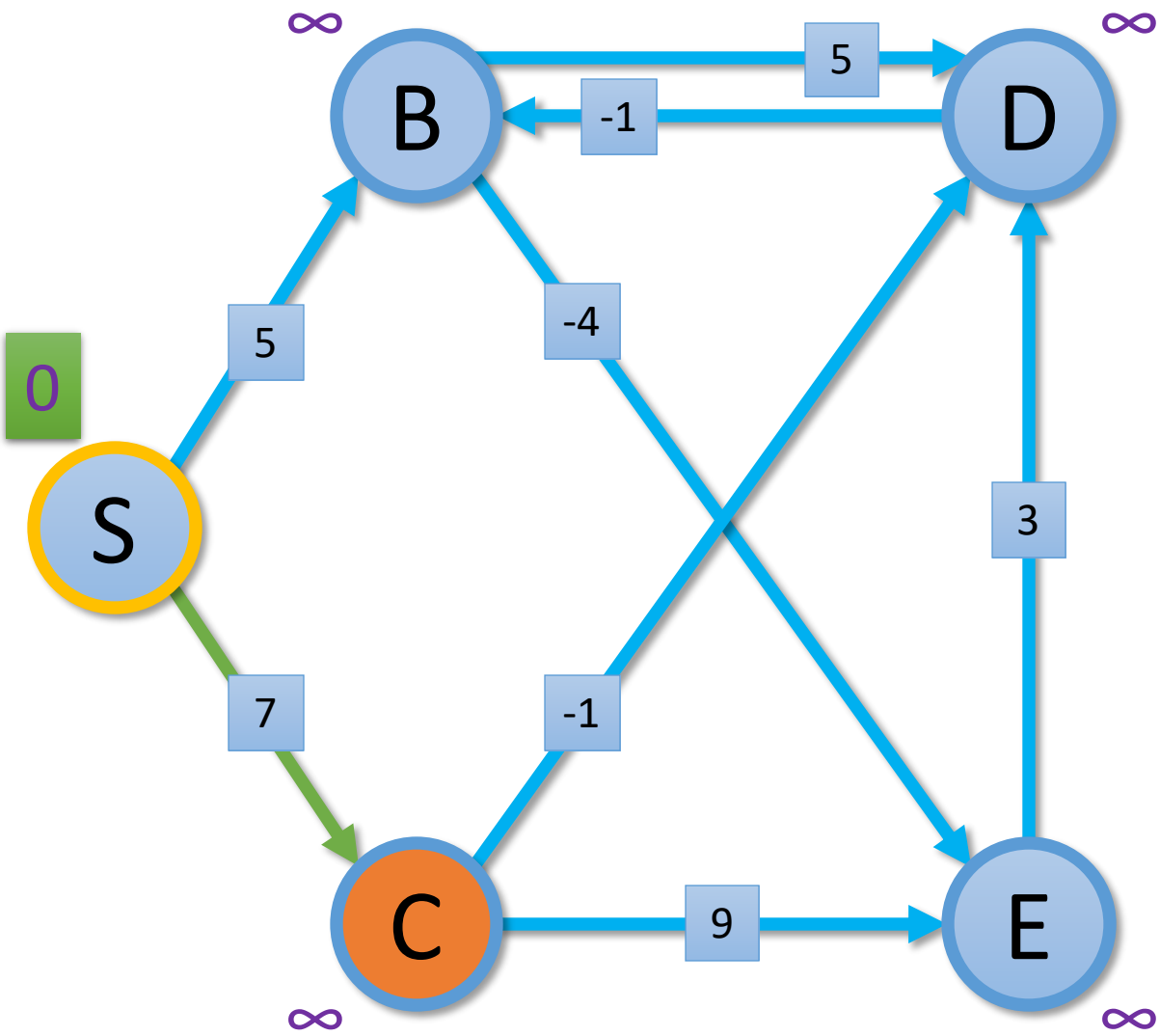


$i = 1$

Vertex	Predecessor	$i - 1$	$i$
S	S	0	0
B	S	$\infty$	5
C	None	$\infty$	
D	None	$\infty$	
E	None	$\infty$	

Table is rotated when compared to previous example  
(easier to fit on the slide)

What is the shortest path from S to B?

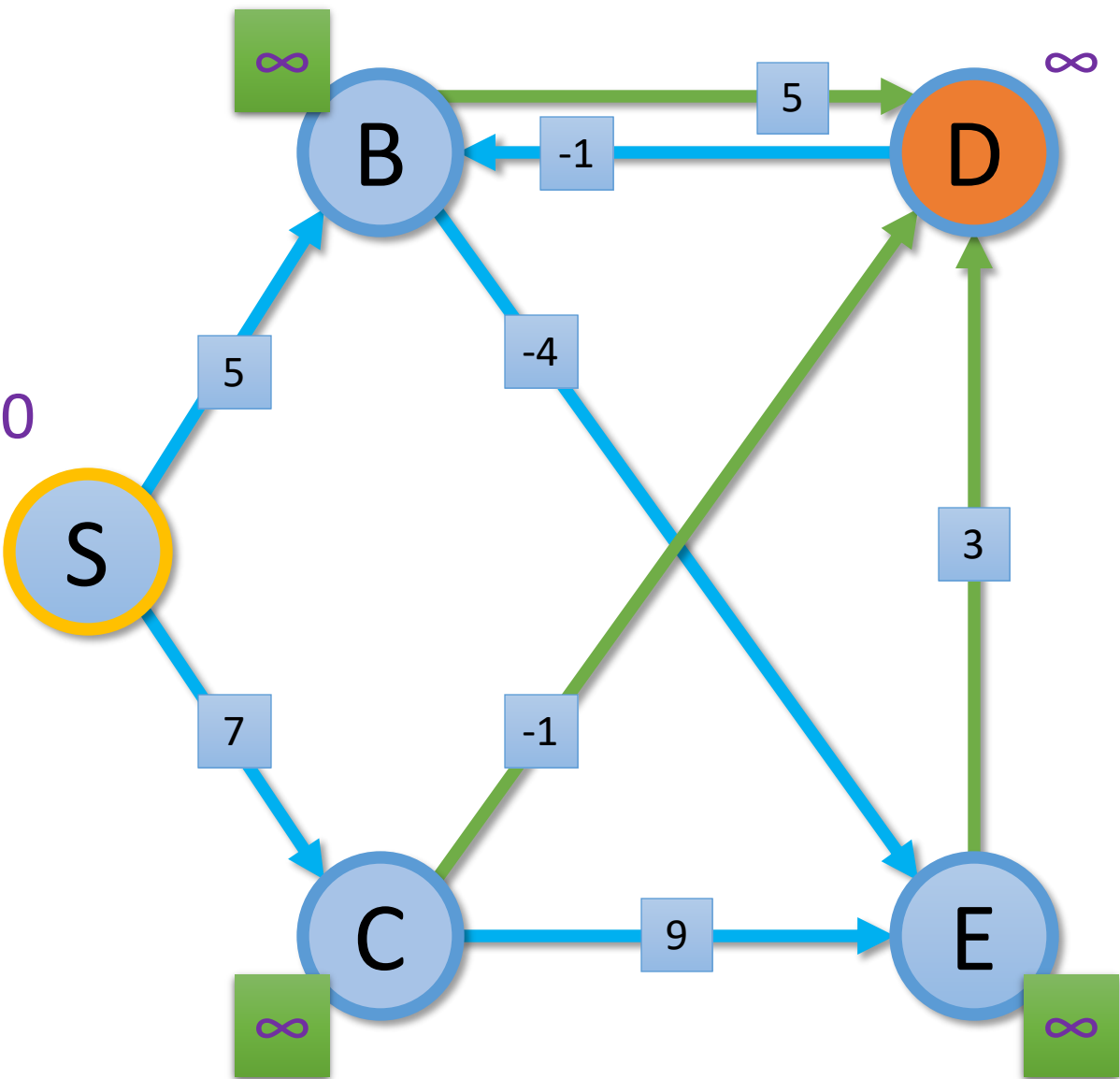


i = 1

Vertex	Predecessor	i - 1	i
S	S	0	0
B	S	$\infty$	5
C	S	$\infty$	7
D	None	$\infty$	
E	None	$\infty$	

Table is rotated when compared to previous example  
(easier to fit on the slide)

What is the shortest path from S to B?

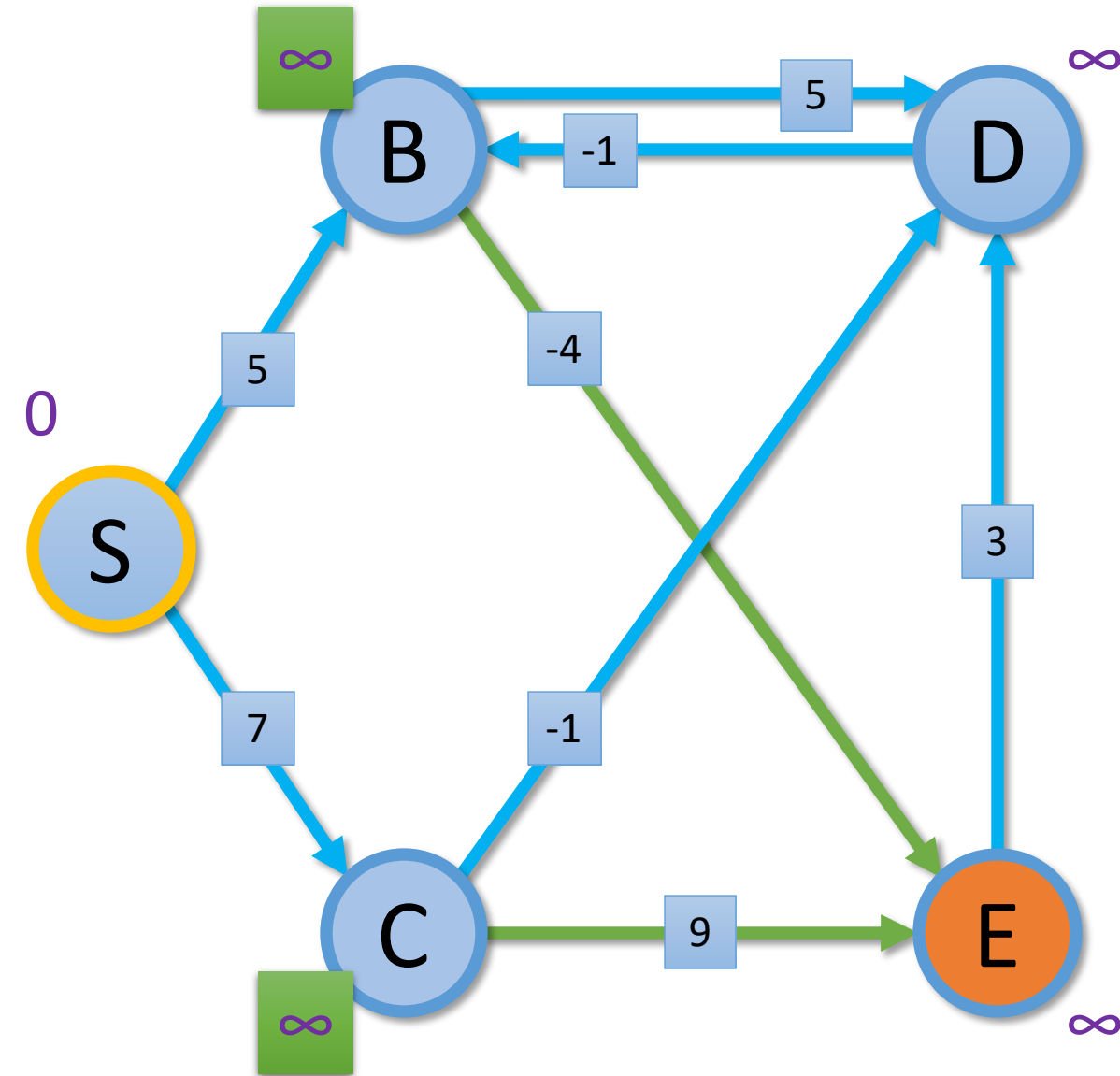


i = 1

Vertex	Predecessor	i - 1	i
S	S	0	0
B	S	$\infty$	5
C	S	$\infty$	7
D	None	$\infty$	$\infty$
E	None	$\infty$	

Table is rotated when compared to previous example  
(easier to fit on the slide)

What is the shortest path from S to B?



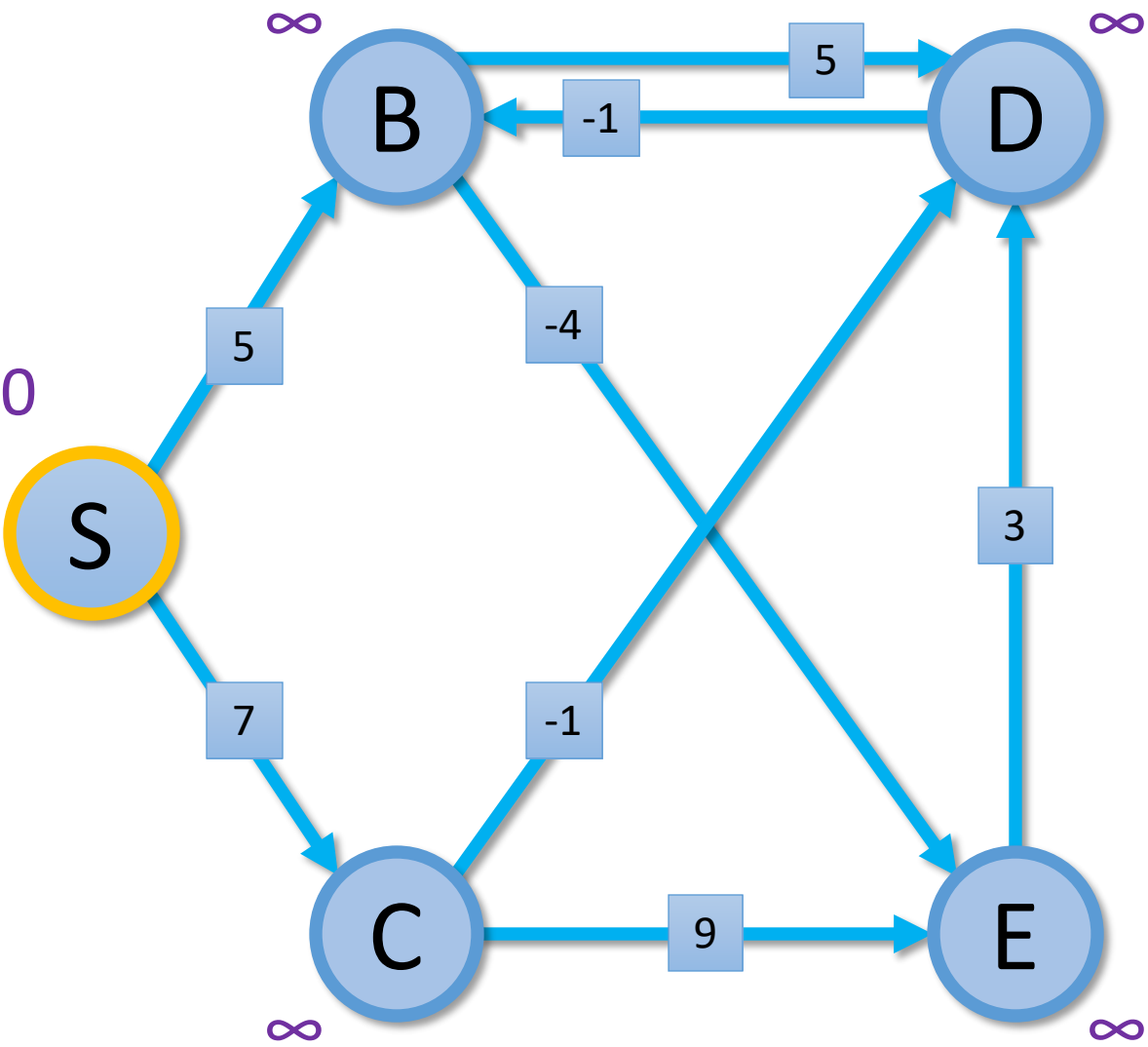
$i = 1$

Vertex	Predecessor	$i - 1$	$i$
S	S	0	0
B	S	$\infty$	5
C	S	$\infty$	7
D	None	$\infty$	$\infty$
E	None	$\infty$	$\infty$

Table is rotated when compared to previous example  
(easier to fit on the slide)



What is the shortest path from S to B?

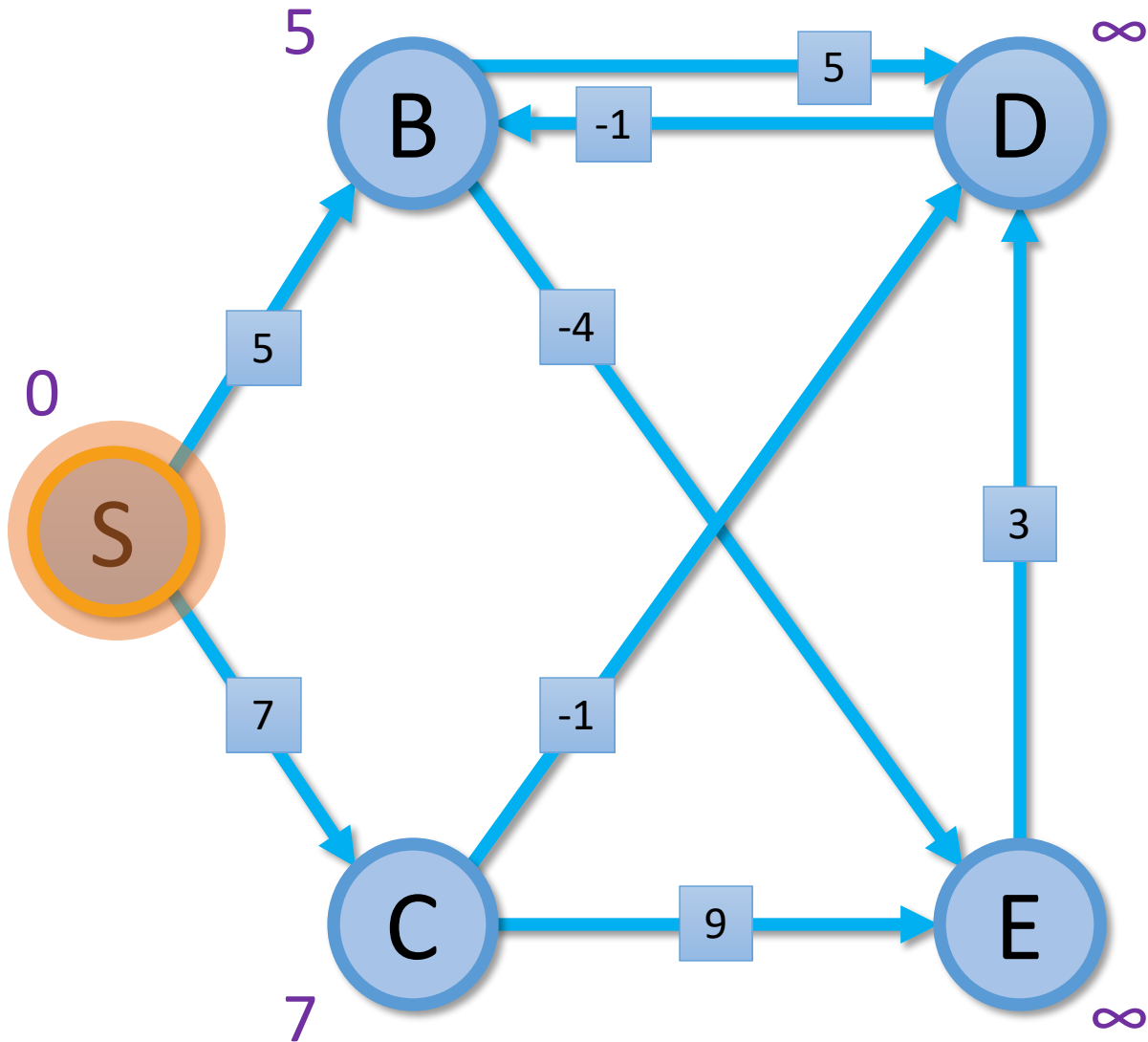


$i = 2$

Vertex	Predecessor	$i - 1$	$i$
S	S	0 ←	0
B	S	$\infty$ ←	5
C	S	$\infty$ ←	7
D	None	$\infty$ ←	$\infty$
E	None	$\infty$ ←	$\infty$

Table is rotated when compared to previous example  
(easier to fit on the slide)

What is the shortest path from S to B?

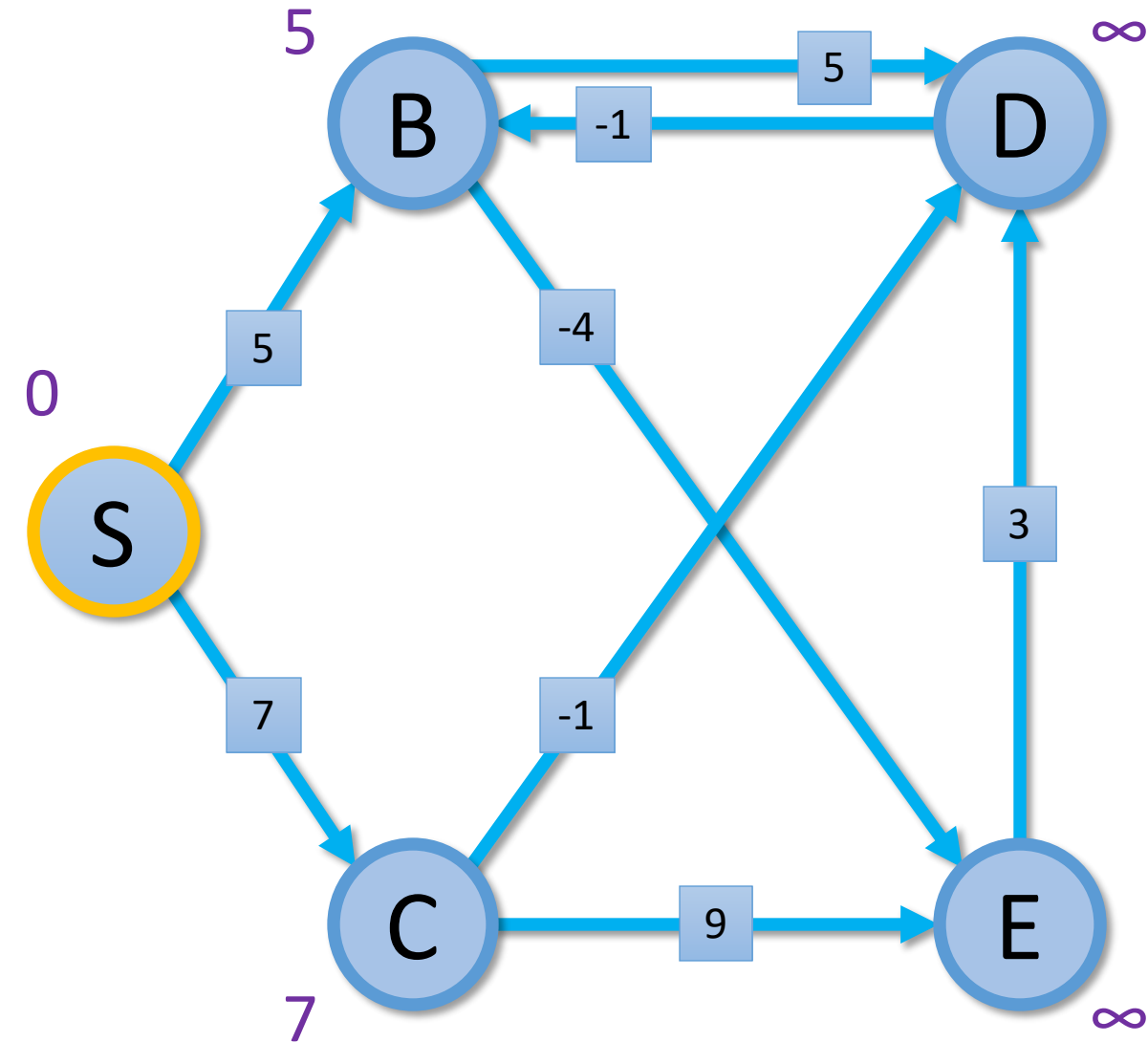


$i = 2$

Vertex	Predecessor	$i - 1$	$i$
S	S	0	0
B	S	5	5
C	S	7	7
D	C	$\infty$	6
E	B	$\infty$	1

Table is rotated when compared to previous example  
(easier to fit on the slide)

What is the shortest path from S to B?

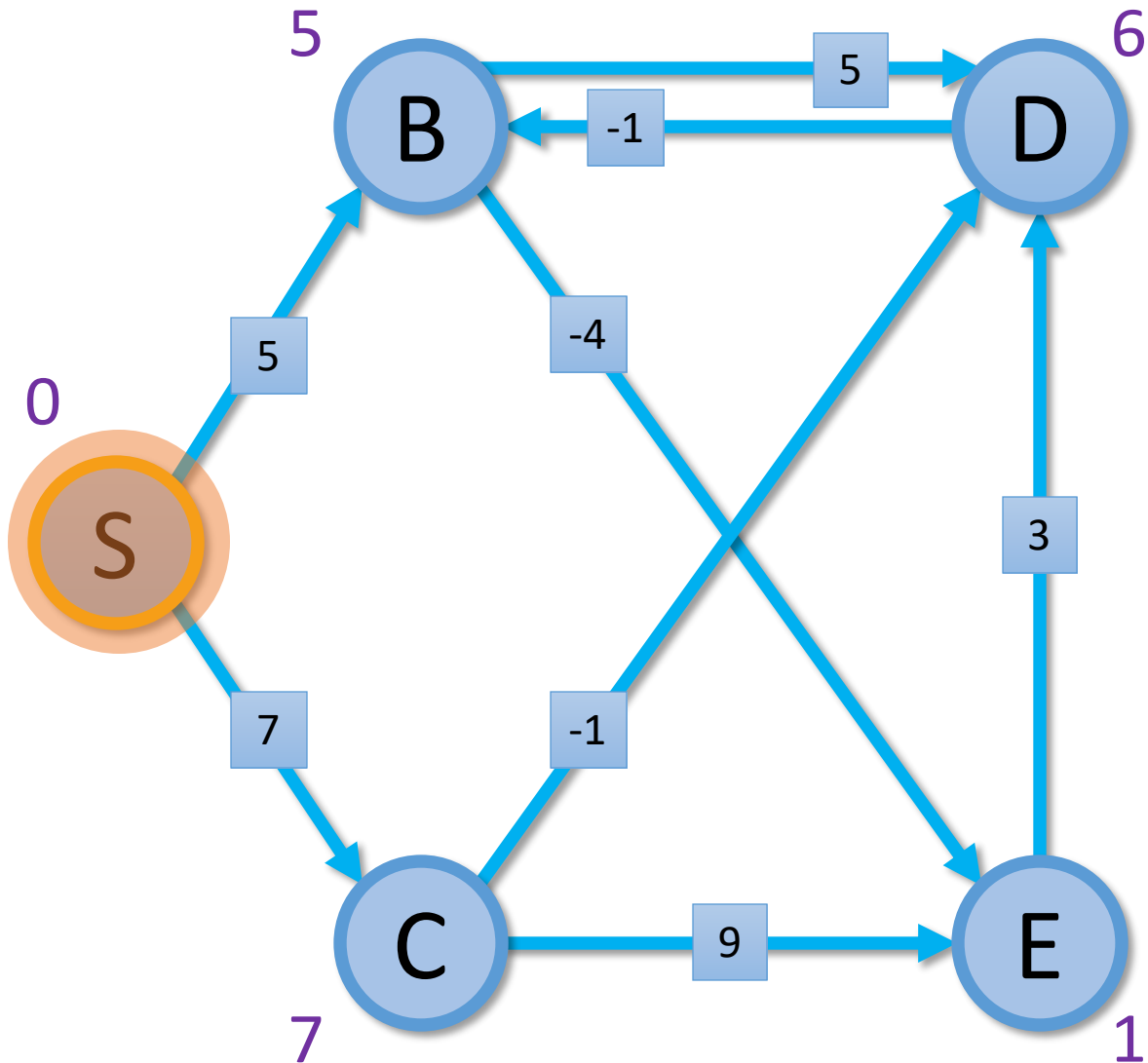


$i = 3$

Vertex	Predecessor	$i - 1$	$i$
S	S	0 ←	0
B	S	5 ←	5
C	S	7 ←	7
D	C	$\infty$ ←	6
E	B	$\infty$ ←	1

Table is rotated when compared to previous example  
(easier to fit on the slide)

What is the shortest path from S to B?

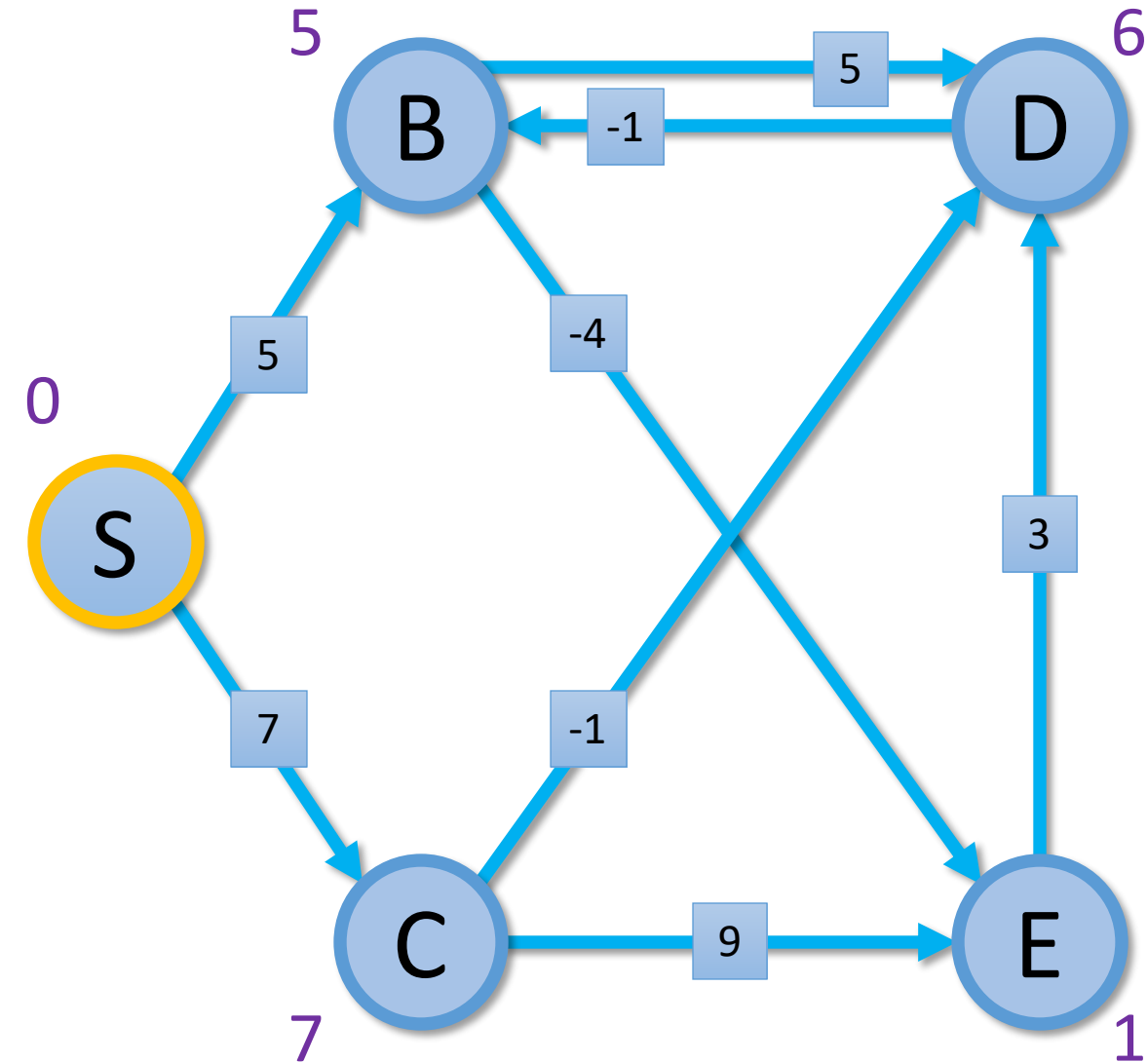


$i = 3$

Vertex	Predecessor	$i - 1$	$i$
S	S	0	0
B	S	5	5
C	S	7	7
D	E	6	4
E	B	1	1

Table is rotated when compared to previous example  
(easier to fit on the slide)

What is the shortest path from S to B?

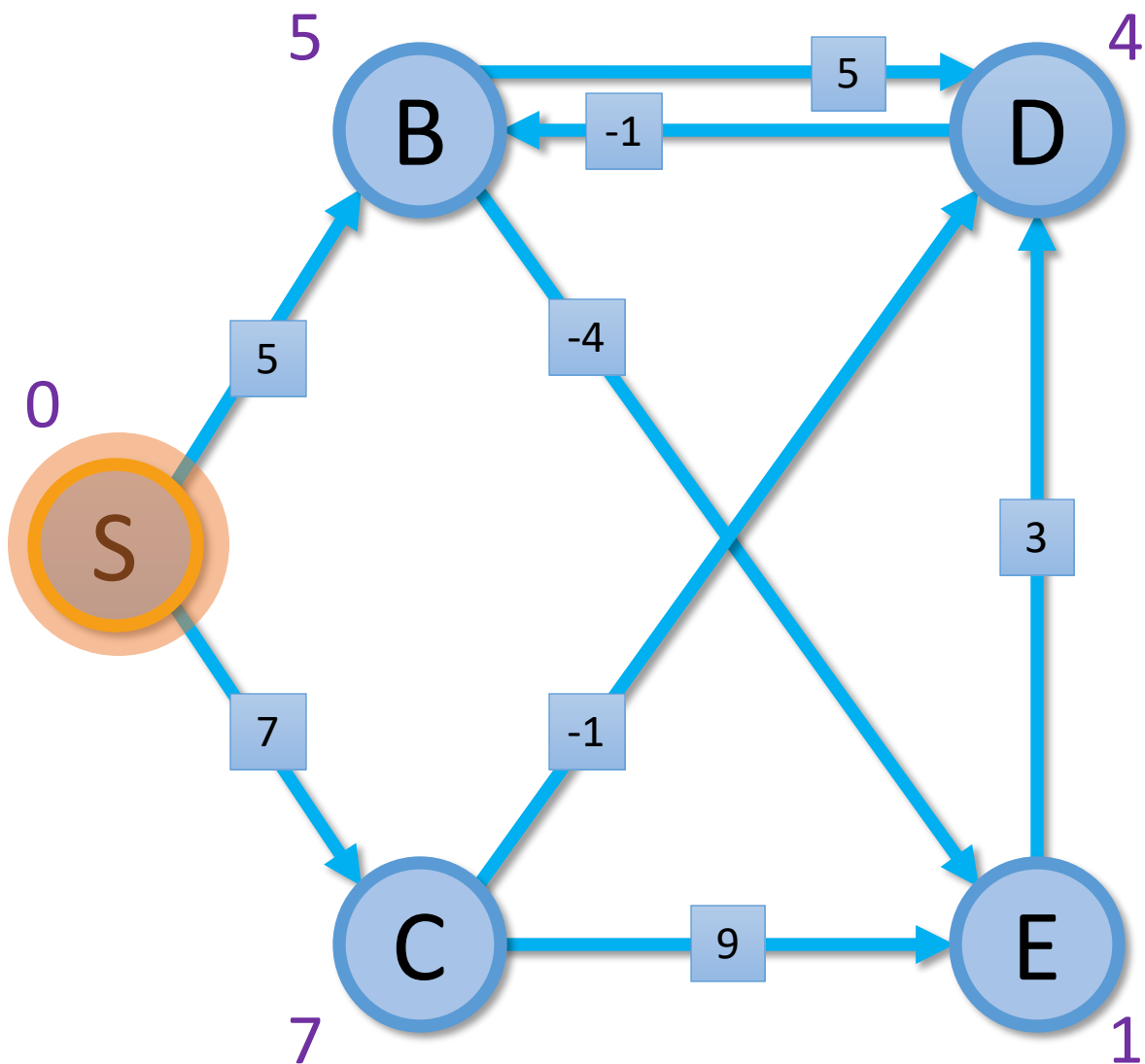


$i = 4$

Vertex	Predecessor	$i - 1$	$i$
S	S	0 ←	0
B	S	5 ←	5
C	S	7 ←	7
D	E	6 ←	4
E	B	1 ←	1

Table is rotated when compared to previous example  
(easier to fit on the slide)

What is the shortest path from S to B?

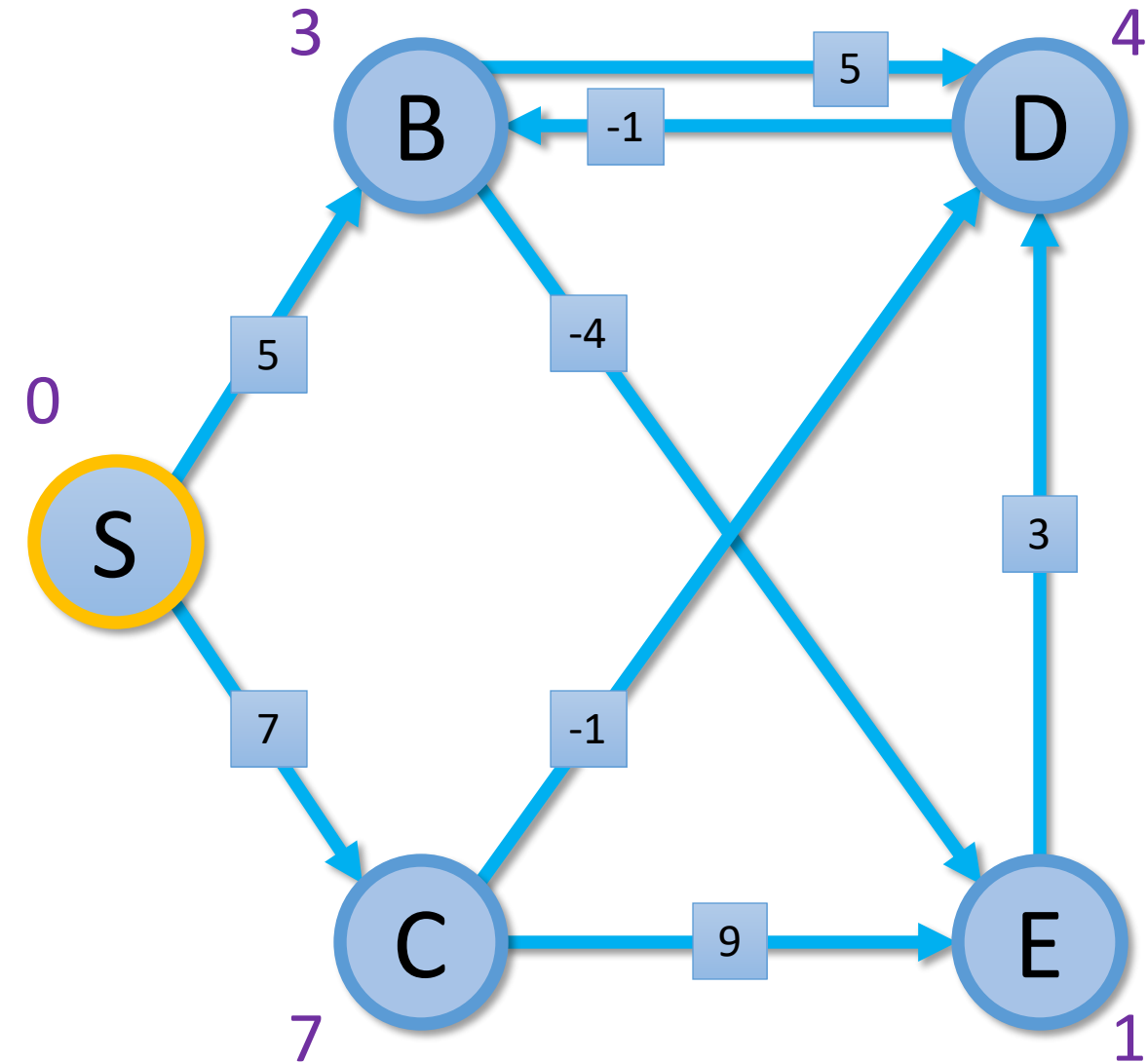


$i = 4$

Vertex	Predecessor	$i - 1$	$i$
S	S	0	0
B	D	5	3
C	S	7	7
D	E	4	4
E	B	1	1

Table is rotated when compared to previous example  
(easier to fit on the slide)

What is the shortest path from S to B?



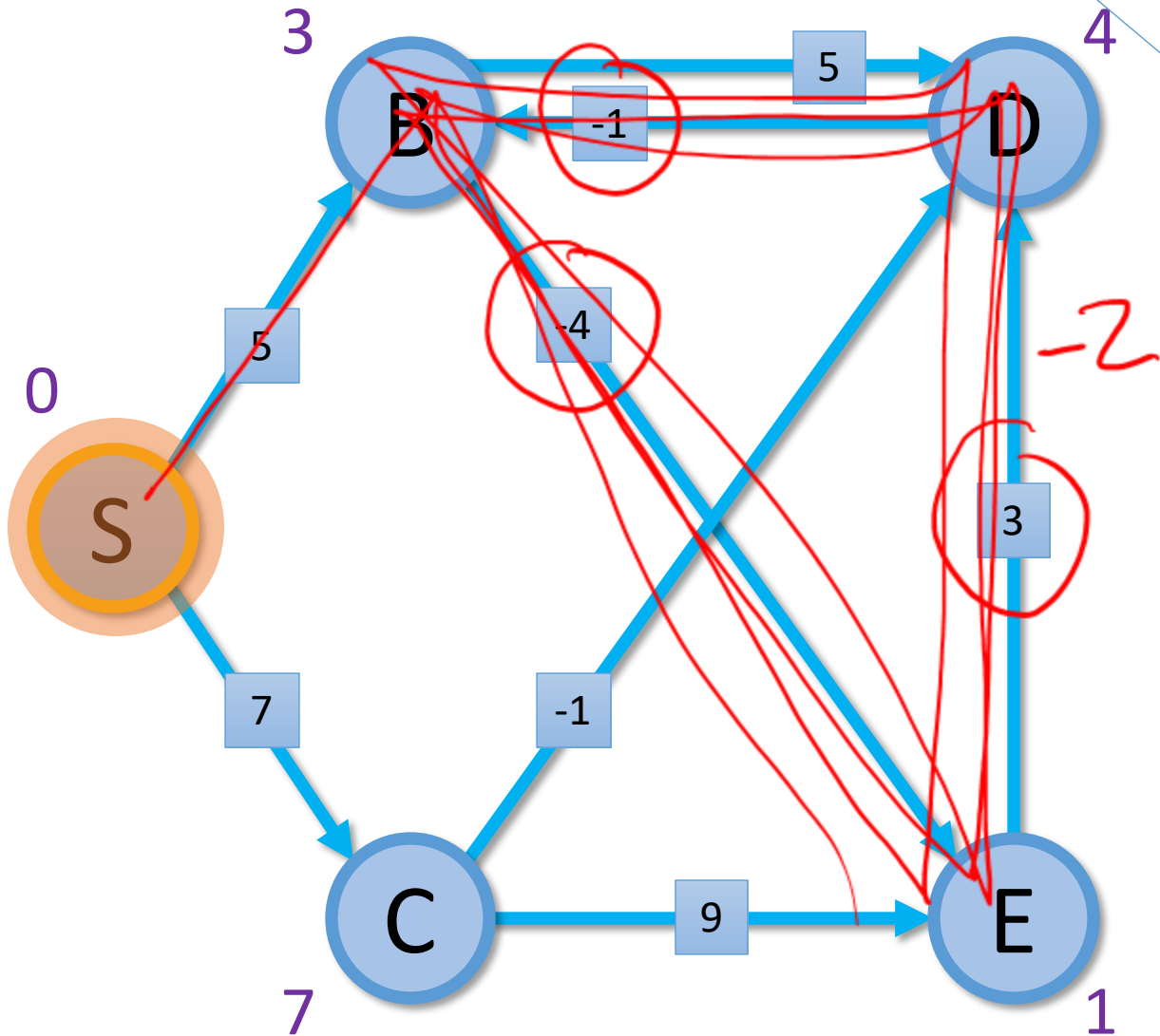
$i = 5$

Vertex	Predecessor	$i - 1$	$i$
S	S	0 ←	0
B	D	3 ←	3
C	S	7 ←	7
D	E	4 ←	4
E	B	1 ←	1

Table is rotated when compared to previous example  
(easier to fit on the slide)

Last iteration is only to detect negative cycles.

What is the shortest path from S to B?



$i = 5$

Vertex	Predecessor	$i - 1$	$i$
S	S	0	0
B	D	3	3
C	S	7	7
D	E	4	4
E	B	1	-1

Table is rotated when compared to previous example  
(easier to fit on the slide)



# Summary of Bellman-Ford

- Single-source shortest path problem (like Dijkstra's)
- Running time is  $O(nm)$
- Works with negative weights
- Can detect negative cycles
  - Run the loop  $n$  times and if a path length goes down, then you've found a negative cycle