

# 7 Steps on the Stairway to Heaven or How to evaluate algorithm for ambiguous MIR tasks (and some examples from a chord labeling task)

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## Background: Necessity for comprehensive evaluation

### The common case: Evaluation against a single Ground Truth (GT)

How it works:

- Use data set with finite number of items, each with a known value of a target variable and a set of predictor variables (supervised case) or data describing properties of the item (unsupervised case)
- All items with predictor-target combinations are assumed (=defined) to be correct ('true')
- Count the number of items in the data set that your algorithm can predict equivalent values for the target variable, given the respective values of the predictors or the corresponding music data.
- Depending on the task, 'equivalence' can mean identical class labels or numerical values, or identical after a suitable transformation, e.g. rank or binary transformations.
- Use single (and possibly transformed) number of correctly predicted items as indicator of algorithm performance

### Common problems with single GT evaluation as only evaluation device

- Does not allow for multiple values of target variable (for same item)
- Does not consider item difficulty and item importance
- Does not consider item and task ambiguity
- Assumes metric for assessing (degree of) correctness of item prediction
- Does not question 'correctness' of GT data set

### Relevancy for MIR work

- Many popular MIR tasks are inherently ambiguous, i.e. two people can both be correct when disagreeing on value of target variable.
- Inherently ambiguous tasks include: Chord labeling, Genre classification, Similarity computation, Chorus finding, Segmentation, Key finding, Cover and remix detection, Mood classification

### A more comprehensive approach

- Looks at algorithmic results from different perspectives
- Assesses task ambiguity
- Positions algorithm in environment of alternative solutions

## General Case

### 1. Define task and output

#### Task:

- Is task something that humans can do?
- Why do humans do this task?
- What human skill/training is required to do the task?
- What are the advantages of a machine doing the task?
- Is the task part of an application?
- Are there critical performance limits for usefulness of algorithm?

#### Output:

- What is the adequate scale / alphabet of the target variable?
- Is an indicator of certainty computed along with the values of target variable?
- Should algorithm be considered cognitively adequate, i.e.
  - should output mirror human behaviour (including errors)?
  - should algorithm be fed same information that humans use?
  - should human and algorithmic processing time be related?

### 2. Qualitative Analysis

#### Check the paradigmatic case

- Does algorithm give right answer in very easy cases?
- Does algorithm give right answer in very common situation?

#### Check the problematic case

- Are answers acceptable in difficult situations?
- Where are weaknesses? Where does the algorithm give nonsense answers?

### 3. Determine task ambiguity (qualitatively)

Are there cases with more than 1 possible and acceptable answer?

Which factors enhance / diminish ambiguity?

### 4. Quantify task ambiguity

Measure coherence between multiple GT data sets or human judges

Measure item difficulty or item-wise level of disagreement

### 5. Test on Ground Truth data set

Test against single GT (the common case)

Test against multiple GT

- Does algorithm match any human solution?
- Is number and pattern of algorithmic deviations significantly different from disagreement between humans?
- How well performs algorithm above baseline of overlap between multiple GTs?

### 6. Compare to alternative solutions

Test rivaling algorithms using different approaches on same GT

What is performance level of trivial models, e.g. all values from most frequent class?

Is copying existing data an alternative (e.g. web spidering)? How good is this data compared to GT?

### 7. Let output be judged

Present algorithmic output to competent judges

Use output to predict data of psychological test (if cognitive adequacy is a desired feature)

Use algorithm in application and measure performance of application

## Chord Labeling

### 1. Define task and output

#### Task:

- Ear-trained humans can perform chord labeling from audio and symbolic data.
- Chord labels are produced for play-along sheet music and analytical purposes.
- Humans are slow and for large amounts of music a computer is needed.
- The main goal is to find time windows of constant harmonic content and to summarise the content as a chord label including chord root, triad, bass, and extensions.
- The application is the identification of recurring harmonic patterns in pop music.
- For harmonic pattern recognition, chords need not to be labeled correctly, but similar harmonic situations need to get the same chord label.

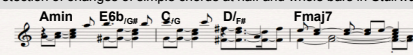
#### Output:

- The chord symbol alphabet should be comparable to those in more sophisticated song books.
- The algorithm (Rhodes et al., 2007) uses pitch class distributions over time windows derived from MIDI transcriptions.
- Humans use pitch class distributions as only one information source; the algorithm is required to perform cognitively adequate within these limitations.

### 2. Qualitative Analysis

#### Check the paradigmatic case

Detection of changes of simple chords at half and whole bars in *Stairway to Heaven*, bars 1-3



#### Check the problematic case

Vaguely meaningful labeling of opening bars of *California Dreaming* as sus4 and minor chords



### 3. Determine task ambiguity (qualitatively)

Cases with more than 1 answer known from music theory, e.g.:

- Diminished chords
- 6-4 chords
- Chords with identical pitch class sets (e.g. Vmin6 vs. IVmaj7)

#### Factors influencing ambiguity?

- Knowledge about harmonic context
- Stylistic information
- Filter for harmonic instruments

### 4. Quantify task ambiguity

Coherence between 4 judges, measured by corrections of chord labels of 40 pop song excerpts

- #identical corrections applied in same place
- #corrections applied in same place
- Correlation between #corrections over songs

Option: Exclusion of difficult items, i.e. items with strong disagreement regarding corrections

### 5. Test on Ground Truth data set

Test against single GT (the common case)

- 80% of 1178 beats from 12 songs with chord root and type identical to solution provided by 1 expert (Rhodes et al. 2007)

Test against multiple GTs

not yet assessed

### 6. Compare to alternative solutions

Test with Temperley's (2001) chord labeling algorithm from Melisma package on same single GT

• 77% of beats correctly labeled

Accuracy level of all chord labels being tonic triad of key on same single GT

• 34% of beats correctly labeled

Accuracy of chord labels taken from official song books for 40 pop song excerpts

Not yet assessed

### 7. Let output be judged

4 judges rated each chord label for 40 pop song excerpts as 'correct', 'acceptable' or 'wrong'  
Ratings not yet completed