

Advanced Algorithms (Fall 2025)

Multiplicative Weight Update

Lecturers: 尹一通, 刘景铖, 栗师

Nanjing University

- Focus of this lecture: learning with experts online
- how to dynamically choose from among a set of “experts” in a way that compares favorably to the best expert
- Use it to solve 0-sum game and linear programs approximately

Outline

- 1 Online Learning with Experts
 - Two-outcome case
 - A more general setting
- 2 Multiplicative Weight Update Algorithm to Solve 0-Sum Game
- 3 Approximate LP feasibility using Multiplicative Weights

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Learning with Experts Online

- m experts, indexed by $[m]$
- a two-outcome event on each of following T days: up or down
 - Example: stock goes up or down? rain or not?
- on each day t :
 - m experts make predictions about day t
 - algorithm makes a prediction, knowing the predictions of the m experts
 - the outcome of day t reveals
- Goal: minimize the number of mistakes
 - Ideally, not too bad compared to the best expert.

When There Is a Perfect Expert

Lemma There is an algorithm that makes at most $\lceil \log_2 m \rceil$ mistakes, assuming there is a perfect expert, i.e., an expert that makes no mistakes.

Proof.

- The algorithm: only keep the experts who made no mistakes so far.
- Among all the experts, follow the majority.
- observation: when we made a mistake on a day, at least half of the remaining experts made a mistake on that day. \square

General Case

- What if there is no perfect expert?
- Weighted majority: give weights to experts. When an expert made a mistake, halve his weight. In each step, follow the weighted majority.

Weighted Majority

```
1:  $w_i^0 \leftarrow 1, \forall i \in [m]$ 
2: for  $t = 1, 2, \dots, T$  do
3:   if  $\sum_{i:\text{predicts up}} w_i^{t-1} \geq \sum_{i:\text{predicts down}} w_i^{t-1}$  then
4:     predict "up"
5:   else
6:     predict "down"
7:   for every expert  $i$  do
8:     if  $i$  make a mistake then  $w_i^t \leftarrow \frac{w_i^{t-1}}{2}$  else  $w_i^t \leftarrow w_i^{t-1}$ 
```

Analysis

- $\Phi^t := \sum_{i=1}^m w_i^t$.
- $M_i^t \in \{0, 1\}, i \in [m], t \in [T]$: whether expert i made a mistake on day t
- $M^t \in \{0, 1\}, t \in [T]$: whether our algorithm made a mistake

Obs. If $M^t = 1$ for some t , we have

$$\Phi^t \leq \Phi^{t-1} - \frac{\Phi^{t-1}}{4} = \frac{3}{4}\Phi^{t-1}$$

- So, $\Phi^T \leq (\frac{3}{4})^{\sum_{t=1}^T M^t} \Phi_0 = (\frac{3}{4})^{\sum_{t=1}^T M^t} m$.
- On the other hand, let k be the best expert

$$\Phi^T = \sum_{i=1}^m w_i^T \geq w_k^T \geq \left(\frac{1}{2}\right)^{\sum_{t=1}^T M_k^t}$$

$$\Phi^T \leq \left(\frac{3}{4}\right)^{\sum_{t=1}^T M^t} m \quad \Phi^T \geq \left(\frac{1}{2}\right)^{\sum_{i=1}^T M_k^t}$$

$$\left(\frac{1}{2}\right)^{\sum_{i=1}^T M_i^t} \leq \Phi^T \leq \left(\frac{3}{4}\right)^{\sum_{i=1}^T M^t} m$$

$$(-\ln 2) \sum_{t=1}^T M_i^t \leq \left(-\ln \frac{4}{3}\right) \sum_{t=1}^T M^t + \ln m \quad \text{By taking logarithm}$$

$$\begin{aligned} \sum_{t=1}^T M^t &\leq \frac{\ln 2}{\ln 4/3} \sum_{t=1}^T M_k^t + \frac{\ln m}{\ln 4/3} \\ &\leq 2.41 \sum_{t=1}^T M_k^t + 3.47 \ln m \end{aligned}$$

$$\sum_{t=1}^T M^t \leq 2.41 \sum_{t=1}^T M_k^t + 3.47 \ln m$$

Make the first constant arbitrarily close to 2

- when expert i makes a mistake on day t : $w_i^t \leftarrow w_i^{t-1} \cdot (1 - \epsilon)$
- when algorithm makes a mistake on day t : $\Phi^t \leq \Phi^{t-1} \cdot (1 - \frac{\epsilon}{2})$

$$\Phi_T \leq (1 - \epsilon/2)^{\sum_{t=1}^T M^t} \cdot m$$

- $\Phi_T \geq (1 - \epsilon)^{\sum_{t=1}^T M_k^t}$

$$\begin{aligned} \sum_{t=1}^T M^t &\leq \frac{\ln(1 - \epsilon)}{\ln(1 - \epsilon/2)} \sum_{t=1}^T M_k^t - \frac{\ln m}{\ln(1 - \epsilon/2)} \\ &= (2 + O(\epsilon)) \sum_{t=1}^T M_k^t + O\left(\frac{1}{\epsilon}\right) \ln m. \end{aligned}$$

Lemma For any constant $\epsilon > 0$ and any function $f(m)$, no deterministic algorithm can achieve a multiplicative factor of $2 - \epsilon$ and additive factor of $f(m)$.

Proof.

- Each day $\frac{m}{2}$ experts predict “up”, $\frac{m}{2}$ experts predict “down”.
 - Our algorithm always makes a mistake.
 - Our algorithm made T mistakes, and the best expert makes at most $T/2$.
 - If $T \gg f(m)$, we have $T > (2 - \epsilon) \cdot \frac{T}{2} + f(m)$. □
- However, if randomness is allowed, we can make multiplicative factor $1 + \epsilon$.

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A more general setting

- **no predictions**: experts pay **penalties**
- algorithm chooses to **follow experts**
- with randomness: follow a **distribution** over experts
- algorithm pays the weighted average penalty of experts
- goal: compare to the best expert

The General Setting

- 1: **for** $t \leftarrow 1, 2, \dots, T$ **do**
- 2: algorithm chooses a distribution $p^t = (p_1^t, p_2^t, \dots, p_n^t)$ over experts
- 3: the penalty vector $M^t \in [-1, 1]^m$ is revealed
- 4: each expert i pays penalty M_i^t
- 5: algorithm pays penalty $\langle p^t, M^t \rangle = \sum_{i=1}^m p_i^t M_i^t$

- Note: penalty can be negative: negative penalty = reward

Theorem Let $\epsilon \in (0, 1]$. If $T \geq \frac{\ln m}{\epsilon^2}$, then there is an algorithm that satisfies:

$$\frac{1}{T} \sum_{t=1}^T \langle p^t, M^t \rangle \leq \frac{1}{T} \sum_{t=1}^T M_i^t + 2\epsilon, \forall i \in [m].$$

Algorithm for the General Setting

- 1: $w_i^0 \leftarrow 1$ for every $i \in [m]$
- 2: **for** $t \leftarrow 1, 2, \dots, T$ **do**
- 3: **choose** $p^t \leftarrow \frac{w^{t-1}}{|w^{t-1}|_1}$
- 4: the penalty vector $M^t \in [-1, 1]^m$ is revealed
- 5: each expert i pays penalty M_i^t
- 6: algorithm pays penalty $\langle p^t, M^t \rangle = \sum_{i=1}^m p_i^t M_i^t$
- 7: **for every** $i \in [m]$ **do**: $w_i^t \leftarrow w_i^{t-1} \cdot e^{-\epsilon \cdot M_i^t}$

Analysis of Algorithm

- the strategy: $p^t = \frac{w^{t-1}}{|w^{t-1}|_1}$ $w_i^t = w_i^{t-1} \cdot e^{-\epsilon \cdot M_i^t}$
- let $\Phi^t := |w^t|_1 = \sum_{i=1}^m w_i^t$ for all $t \in [0, T]$

$$\begin{aligned}\Phi^t &= \sum_{i=1}^m w_i^t = \sum_{i=1}^m e^{-\epsilon \cdot M_i^t} \cdot w_i^{t-1} \\ &\leq \sum_{i=1}^m (1 - \epsilon \cdot M_i^t + (\epsilon \cdot M_i^t)^2) \cdot w_i^{t-1} && \text{as } e^x \leq 1 + x + x^2, \forall x \in [-1, 1] \\ &\leq \sum_{i=1}^m (1 - \epsilon \cdot M_i^t + \epsilon^2) \cdot w_i^{t-1} && \text{as } |M_i^t| \leq 1 \\ &= (1 + \epsilon^2) \sum_{i=1}^m w_i^{t-1} - \epsilon \cdot \langle w^{t-1}, M^t \rangle \\ &= (1 + \epsilon^2) \Phi^{t-1} - \epsilon \cdot \Phi^{t-1} \cdot \langle p^t, M^t \rangle && \text{as } \Phi^{t-1} \cdot p^t = w^{t-1}\end{aligned}$$

Analysis of Algorithm

$$\begin{aligned}\Phi^t &\leq (1 + \epsilon^2)\Phi^{t-1} - \epsilon \cdot \Phi^{t-1} \cdot \langle p^t, M^t \rangle \\ &= (1 + \epsilon^2 - \epsilon \cdot \langle p^t, M^t \rangle) \cdot \Phi^{t-1} \\ &\leq \exp(-\epsilon \cdot \langle p^t, M^t \rangle + \epsilon^2) \cdot \Phi^{t-1} \quad \text{as } 1 - x \leq e^{-x}, \forall x \in \mathbb{R}\end{aligned}$$

$$\begin{aligned}\Phi^T &\leq \exp\left(\sum_{t=1}^T (-\epsilon \cdot \langle p^t, M^t \rangle + \epsilon^2)\right) \cdot \Phi^0 \\ &= \exp\left(-\epsilon \cdot \sum_{t=1}^T \langle p^t, M^t \rangle + T\epsilon^2\right) \cdot \Phi^0\end{aligned}$$

$$\Phi^T \leq \exp \left(-\epsilon \cdot \sum_{t=1}^T \langle p^t, M^t \rangle + T\epsilon^2 \right) \cdot \Phi^0$$

- For any expert $i \in [m]$, $\Phi^T \geq w_i^T = \exp \left(-\epsilon \sum_{t=1}^T M_i^t \right)$.
- So, for every $i \in [m]$, we have (note that $\Phi^0 = m$)

$$-\epsilon \cdot \sum_{t=1}^T M_i^t \leq -\epsilon \cdot \sum_{t=1}^T \langle p^t, M^t \rangle + T\epsilon^2 + \ln m$$

$$\sum_{t=1}^T \langle p^t, M^t \rangle \leq \sum_{t=1}^T M_i^t + T\epsilon + \frac{\ln m}{\epsilon}$$

$$\frac{1}{T} \sum_{t=1}^T \langle p^t, M^t \rangle \leq \frac{1}{T} \sum_{t=1}^T M_i^t + \epsilon + \frac{\ln m}{T\epsilon}$$

$$\leq \frac{1}{T} \sum_{t=1}^T M_i^t + 2\epsilon \quad \left[T \geq \frac{\ln m}{\epsilon^2} \right]$$

Theorem Let $\epsilon \in (0, 1]$. If $T \geq \frac{\ln m}{\epsilon^2}$, then there is an algorithm that satisfies:

$$\frac{1}{T} \sum_{t=1}^T \langle p^t, M^t \rangle \leq \frac{1}{T} \sum_{t=1}^T M_i^t + 2\epsilon, \forall i \in [m].$$

Coro. Suppose each penalty in the game is in $[-\rho, \rho]$ (instead of $[-1, 1]$) for some $\rho > 0$. Let $\epsilon \in (0, 2\rho]$. If $T \geq \frac{4\rho^2 \ln m}{\epsilon^2}$, then there is an algorithm that satisfies

$$\frac{1}{T} \sum_{t=1}^T \langle p^t, M^t \rangle \leq \frac{1}{T} \sum_{t=1}^T M_i^t + \epsilon, \forall i \in [m].$$

Proof.

- scale penalties by $\frac{1}{\rho}$ so that each penalty is in $[-1, 1]$
- $+\epsilon$ before scaling = $+\frac{\epsilon}{\rho}$ after scaling
- Need $T \geq \frac{\ln m}{(\epsilon/2\rho)^2} = \frac{4\rho^2 \ln m}{\epsilon^2}$ and $\frac{\epsilon}{2\rho} \leq 1 \iff \epsilon \leq 2\rho$ □

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Recall:

0-Sum Game

Input: a **payoff** matrix $M \in \mathbb{R}^{m \times n}$, $m, n \geq 1$,
two players: **row player R**, **column player C**

Output: R plays a row $i \in [m]$, C plays a column $j \in [n]$
payoff of game is M_{ij}

R wants to **minimize** M_{ij} , C wants to **maximize** M_{ij}

Rock-Scissor-Paper Game

payoff	R	S	P
R	0	-1	1
S	1	0	-1
P	-1	1	0

- By scaling, we assume $M \in [-1, 1]^{m \times n}$.

player	objective	game term	number	distribution
row player	minimize	expert	m	y
column player	maximize	event	n	x

Multiplicative weight update for 0-sum games

- let $w_i^0 = 1$ for every $i \in [m]$
- for** $t \leftarrow 1$ to T , where $T = \lceil \frac{4 \ln m}{\epsilon^2} \rceil$ **do**
- algorithm chooses distribution $y^t = \frac{w^{t-1}}{|w^{t-1}|_1}$
- let j^t be the $j \in [n]$ that maximizes $M(y^t, j)$
- event j^t happens:
 - expert $i \in [m]$ pays penalty $M(i, j_t)$
 - algorithm pays penalty $M(y^t, j_t)$
- $w_i^t \leftarrow w_i^{t-1} \cdot e^{-\epsilon \cdot M(i, j_t)/2}$ for every $i \in [m]$

player	objective	game term	number	distribution
row player	minimize	expert	m	y
column player	maximize	event	n	x

- Since $T \geq \frac{4 \ln m}{\epsilon^2}$, we have

$$\frac{1}{T} \sum_{t=1}^T M(p^t, j^t) \leq \min_{i \in [m]} \frac{1}{T} \sum_{t=1}^T M(i, j^t) + \epsilon$$

- \hat{t} : the $t \in [T]$ with minimum $M(y^t, j^t)$ $\hat{y} := y^{\hat{t}}$
- \hat{x} : uniform distribution over multi-set $\{j^1, j_2, \dots, j^T\}$

$$\begin{aligned} \max_j M(\hat{y}, j) &= M(\hat{y}, j^{\hat{t}}) \leq \frac{1}{T} \sum_{t=1}^T M(p^t, j^t) \\ &\leq \min_i \frac{1}{T} \sum_{t=1}^T M(i, j^t) + \epsilon = \min_i M(i, \hat{x}) + \epsilon \end{aligned}$$

player	objective	game term	number	distribution
row player	minimize	expert	m	y
column player	maximize	event	n	x

$$\max_j M(\hat{y}, j) \leq \min_i M(i, \hat{x}) + \epsilon$$

- λ^* : value of game

$$\lambda^* \leq \max_j M(\hat{y}, j) \leq \min_i M(i, \hat{x}) + \epsilon \leq \lambda^* + \epsilon$$

- Therefore \hat{y} and \hat{x} are approximately the optimum strategies for the row and column players.

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Linear Program: Exact Version

Input: An “easy” polytope $K \subseteq \mathbb{R}^n$ (e.g., $K = [0, 1]^n$)
normal linear constraints $Ax \geq b$, $A \in \mathbb{R}^{m \times n}, b \in \mathbb{R}^m$

Output: decide if $\{x \in K : Ax \geq b\} = \emptyset$,
if not, then output $x \in K$ with $Ax \geq b$

Linear Program: Approximate Version

Input: An “easy” polytope $K \subseteq \mathbb{R}^n$ (e.g., $K = [0, 1]^n$)
normal linear constraints $Ax \geq b$, $A \in \mathbb{R}^{m \times n}, b \in \mathbb{R}^m$

Output: either claim $\{x \in K : Ax \geq b\} = \emptyset$,
or output $x \in K$ with $Ax \geq b - \epsilon \cdot \mathbf{1}$

- Note: in case there is no exact solution, but an approximate solution, algorithm can respond either way.

Approximate LP Solver using MWU

row of A	constraint	expert	dual solution y	m
column of A	variable		primal solution x	n

- event = a point in K

```
1:  $w_i^0 \leftarrow 1$  for every  $i \in [m]$ 
2: for  $t \leftarrow 1$  to  $T$ , for some  $T$  to be decided later do
3:    $y^t \leftarrow \frac{w^{t-1}}{|w^{t-1}|}$ 
4:   if  $\exists x^t \in K$  s.t.  $\langle y^t, Ax \rangle \geq \langle y^t, b \rangle$  then  $\triangleright$  event  $x^t$  happens
5:     for every  $i \in [m]$  do
6:       expert  $i$  gets penalty  $A_i x^t - b_i$ 
7:        $w_i^t \leftarrow w_i^{t-1} \cdot e^{-\epsilon \cdot (A_i x^t - b_i)/2}$ 
8:       our algorithm gets penalty  $\langle y^t, Ax^t - b \rangle$ 
9:   else return "empty"
10: return  $\hat{x} = \frac{1}{T} \sum_{i=1}^T x^t$ 
```

- Counter-intuitive: the more satisfied a constraint is, the more penalty it gets.
- In every iteration, we only need to focus on one “aggregated” linear constraint
- If algorithm returns “empty”, then the LP is not feasible
- $\rho := \sup_{x \in K} \max_i |A_i x - b_i|$, $\epsilon \in (0, 2\rho]$ $T := \left\lceil \frac{4\rho^2 \ln m}{\epsilon^2} \right\rceil$
- $\forall i \in [m]$:

$$0 \leq \frac{1}{T} \sum_{t=1}^T \langle y^t, Ax^t - b \rangle \leq \frac{1}{T} \sum_{t=1}^T (A_i x^t - b_i) + \epsilon = A_i \hat{x} - b_i + \epsilon$$

- Therefore, $A_i x^* \geq b_i - \epsilon, \forall i \in [m] \iff Ax^* \geq b - \epsilon \cdot \mathbf{1}$