

# Efficient Emulation of the Matter Power Spectrum with Dilated Convolutions on Synthetic Cosmologies

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## ABSTRACT

Accurate and efficient computation of the matter power spectrum is essential for analyzing cosmological datasets and testing structure formation models, but traditional N-body simulations are computationally expensive, limiting rapid parameter space exploration. Emulating the matter power spectrum is challenging due to its non-linear and high-dimensional nature, requiring models capable of capturing intricate features across different scales. This work introduces a novel approach employing dilated 1D convolutional neural networks (DCNNs) trained on quickly generated synthetic cosmological datasets to efficiently emulate the matter power spectrum. Our method combines dilated convolutions to capture multi-scale dependencies, physics-informed evaluation metrics to guide training, and data augmentation to improve generalization. By training our DCNN on synthetic data, we demonstrate highly accurate matter power spectrum emulation on standard laptop hardware. We validate our approach by comparing emulated power spectra to those from established numerical codes, achieving significant computational cost reduction while maintaining excellent agreement within a few percent. This enables rapid and accurate exploration of cosmological parameter spaces, facilitating more efficient analysis of current and future observational data.

*Keywords:* Neural networks, Convolutional neural networks

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Accurate and efficient computation of the matter power spectrum, denoted as  $P(k)$ , is a cornerstone of modern cosmology. The matter power spectrum encapsulates the statistical distribution of matter fluctuations in the universe as a function of spatial scale, represented by the wavenumber  $k$ . Serving as a crucial link between theoretical models of structure formation and observational data,  $P(k)$  allows us to interpret data from galaxy surveys and cosmic microwave background experiments. Precisely determining the matter power spectrum is essential for constraining cosmological parameters, rigorously testing the standard cosmological model ( $\Lambda$ CDM), and exploring alternative theories of gravity and dark energy. The ability to rapidly and accurately predict the matter power spectrum is thus paramount for advancing our understanding of the cosmos.

However, directly computing the matter power spectrum from first principles poses significant computational challenges. Traditional methods rely on N-body simulations, which numerically evolve the gravitational interactions of billions of particles representing dark matter over cosmological timescales (Bose et al. 2024).

These simulations demand substantial computational resources and time, often limiting the ability to thoroughly explore the vast parameter space of cosmological models. This limitation impedes rapid parameter estimation, model comparison, and uncertainty quantification, critical aspects of modern cosmological research. Consequently, there is a pressing need for faster and more efficient techniques to approximate the matter power spectrum, enabling more agile exploration of cosmological models (Bartlett et al. 2024; Orjuela-Quintana et al. 2024a).

Emulating the matter power spectrum, or constructing a surrogate model that accurately predicts  $P(k)$  for a given set of cosmological parameters, presents several distinct hurdles (Mauland et al. 2024). The matter power spectrum is a complex, non-linear function of cosmological parameters, exhibiting intricate features across different scales (Mancini et al. 2022). Accurately capturing these scale-dependent dependencies requires models capable of learning complex relationships between the input parameters and the output power spectrum (Mancini et al. 2022). Furthermore, the high-dimensional nature of the problem, with the power spectrum typically represented as a vector of values at dif-

ferent wavenumbers  $k$ , adds to the complexity of the emulation task (Bartlett et al. 2024).

Effective emulation necessitates models that can handle high-dimensional data and generalize well to unseen regions of parameter space (Thorp et al. 2024,?; Horowitz & Lukic 2025). The challenge lies in creating a model that balances accuracy with computational efficiency, enabling rapid predictions without sacrificing precision (Horowitz & Lukic 2025). Addressing these issues is crucial for maximizing the scientific return from current and future cosmological surveys (Thorp et al. 2024,?; Horowitz & Lukic 2025). Overcoming these challenges will significantly accelerate the pace of cosmological research and facilitate new discoveries (Horowitz & Lukic 2025). This motivates the development of innovative techniques that can efficiently approximate the matter power spectrum with high fidelity (Horowitz & Lukic 2025).

To address these challenges, we introduce a novel approach leveraging dilated 1D convolutional neural networks (DCNNs) trained on rapidly generated synthetic cosmological datasets (Zhao et al. 2024; Lambaga et al. 2025). Our method harnesses the power of deep learning to efficiently emulate the matter power spectrum while significantly reducing computational cost. DCNNs are particularly well-suited for this task due to their ability to capture multi-scale dependencies in the input data. Dilated convolutions allow the network to effectively increase its receptive field without increasing the number of parameters, enabling it to learn both local and global features in the matter power spectrum (Zhao et al. 2024; Lambaga et al. 2025).

The foundation of our approach relies on the generation of synthetic cosmological datasets using approximate methods (Herrera-Alcantar et al. 2025). These synthetic datasets can be created much faster than full N-body simulations, providing a large and diverse training set for our DCNN. We augment this synthetic data with various transformations to further improve the robustness and generalization ability of our model (Íñigo Zubeldia et al. 2025). This data augmentation strategy helps to prevent overfitting and ensures that our model performs well on unseen cosmological parameters. This approach allows us to efficiently capture the complex relationships between cosmological parameters and the resulting power spectrum shape (Cuceu et al. 2023).

Our methodology incorporates physics-informed evaluation metrics to guide the training process and rigorously assess the performance of our emulator (Ni et al. 2024). Traditional metrics such as mean squared error (MSE) are supplemented with physically relevant measures such as the percent error in  $P(k)$  at differ-

ent scales (Huppenkothen et al. 2023). By focusing on these physics-informed metrics, we ensure that our emulator accurately captures the key features of the matter power spectrum that are relevant for cosmological analyses. This targeted approach allows us to optimize our model for specific cosmological applications and improve its overall accuracy. The scale-dependent performance metrics allow us to identify and address any scale-dependent biases in our emulator (Mishra-Sharma et al. 2024).

In this work, we demonstrate that our DCNN-based emulator achieves high accuracy in predicting the matter power spectrum while requiring significantly less computational resources compared to traditional methods (Bartlett et al. 2024). We validate our approach by comparing emulated power spectra to those obtained from established numerical codes, such as CAMB, a widely used Boltzmann code (Bartlett et al. 2024). Our results show excellent agreement between the emulated and true power spectra, with typical errors of only a few percent (Bartlett et al. 2024). This level of accuracy is sufficient for many cosmological applications, including parameter estimation and model comparison (Preston et al. 2024; Ye et al. 2024).

The computational efficiency of our emulator enables rapid exploration of cosmological parameter spaces, facilitating more efficient analysis of current and future observational data (Mikkelsen et al. 2012; Maity et al. 2023). The ability to perform accurate matter power spectrum emulation on standard laptop hardware opens up new possibilities for cosmological research. Researchers can now quickly explore the impact of different cosmological parameters on the matter power spectrum without the need for expensive supercomputing resources (Bargot 2003; Mikkelsen et al. 2012). This accessibility democratizes cosmological research and enables more researchers to contribute to the field.

Our emulator can be easily integrated into existing cosmological analysis pipelines, providing a valuable tool for both theoretical and observational cosmologists (Jense et al. 2024). The reduced computational cost also allows for more extensive uncertainty quantification and Bayesian inference (Günther et al. 2025). Furthermore, our approach can be extended to emulate other cosmological observables, such as the halo mass function and the cosmic shear power spectrum (Jamieson et al. 2022, 2024). By adapting our DCNN architecture and training methodology, we can create efficient emulators for a wide range of cosmological quantities (Jamieson et al. 2022, 2024). This versatility makes our approach a valuable asset for the entire cosmological community.

In the future, we plan to further improve the accuracy and efficiency of our emulator by incorporating more sophisticated neural network architectures and training techniques (de Dios Rojas Olvera et al. 2022; Dialektopoulos et al. 2022; Chantada et al. 2023).

We will also explore the use of generative adversarial networks (GANs) to generate synthetic cosmological datasets that more closely resemble the true distribution of matter in the universe.

These advancements will further enhance the performance of our emulator and enable us to tackle even more challenging cosmological problems.

By combining the power of deep learning with the principles of cosmology, we can unlock new insights into the nature of the universe (de Dios Rojas Olvera et al. 2022; Dialektopoulos et al. 2022).

This will lead to a more complete understanding of the cosmos and its evolution (Dialektopoulos et al. 2022).

## 2. METHODS

### 2.1. Data Generation and Preparation

#### 2.1.1. Synthetic Dataset Generation

We generated a synthetic dataset of 4,000 cosmological models using a fast approximate method. Each model is defined by a vector of four cosmological parameters: the matter density  $\Omega_m$ , the amplitude of the matter power spectrum  $\sigma_8$ , the Hubble parameter  $h$ , and the spectral index  $n_s$ . The parameter ranges were chosen to encompass plausible values around the Planck 2018 best-fit cosmology. Specifically, we sampled  $\Omega_m$  from a uniform distribution between 0.2 and 0.4,  $\sigma_8$  between 0.6 and 1.0,  $h$  between 0.6 and 0.8, and  $n_s$  between 0.9 and 1.1.

For each set of cosmological parameters, we computed the corresponding matter power spectrum  $P(k)$  using a fast approximation method (Preston et al. 2024). The resulting  $P(k)$  was discretized into a 64-point vector spanning a range of wavenumbers  $k$  from 0.01 to 1.0  $h/\text{Mpc}$ , equally spaced on a linear scale. This range covers both the linear and mildly non-linear regimes of structure formation (Osato et al. 2019).

#### 2.1.2. Data Preprocessing

Prior to training, the dataset underwent several preprocessing steps to improve the performance and stability of the neural network models (Ichinohe et al. 2018; Monsalves et al. 2024; Bevins et al. 2025).

*Input Parameter Standardization*—These neural networks used a standardized scaling method for input parameters, ensuring a mean of zero and unit standard deviation across the dataset (Kumar et al. 2025). This

technique, commonly referred to as ‘Standard Scaling’, involves adjusting each parameter value by subtracting the mean and dividing by the standard deviation to ensure uniform scaling in parameter space (Kumar et al. 2025).

Each of the four cosmological input parameters ( $\Omega_m$ ,  $\sigma_8$ ,  $h$ ,  $n_s$ ) was standardized to have zero mean and unit variance. The mean and standard deviation for each parameter were computed from the training set only. This standardization ensures that all input parameters are on a similar scale, preventing any single parameter from dominating the training process. The standardization was performed using the following equation:

$$x_{\text{standardized}} = \frac{x - \mu}{\sigma}$$

where  $x$  is the original parameter value,  $\mu$  is the mean of the parameter in the training set, and  $\sigma$  is the standard deviation of the parameter in the training set.

*Output Power Spectrum Transformation and Standardization*—Log-transforming the matter power spectrum helps address non-linear effects on large-scale structure (Greiner & Enßlin 2014). Multitaper estimators using Non-Uniform Fast Fourier Transforms improve consistency and reduce bias in power spectrum calculations (Patil et al. 2024). Bayesian approaches parameterize stochastic series in the frequency domain and transform to time domain for AGN variability studies (Li & Wang 2018). Fast Fourier transform-based methods enable efficient computation of image power spectra and window functions in 21 cm cosmology (Xu et al. 2024). Excited quantum states during inflationary transitions can induce steep growth profiles ( $k^4$  to  $k^6$ ) in primordial power spectra (Cielo et al. 2024).

The matter power spectrum  $P(k)$  values exhibit a wide dynamic range, particularly at small scales (large  $k$ ). To stabilize the variance and improve the regression accuracy, we applied a logarithmic transformation to each  $P(k)$  value (Neyrinck 2011; Greiner & Enßlin 2014):

$$P_{\log}(k) = \log_{10}(P(k))$$

After the logarithmic transformation, each point in the transformed power spectrum was standardized to have zero mean and unit variance. The mean and standard deviation for each  $k$  point were computed from the training set only. This standardization ensures that each  $k$  point contributes equally to the loss function during training. The standardization was performed using the following equation:

$$P_{\text{standardized}}(k) = \frac{P_{\log}(k) - \mu_k}{\sigma_k}$$

where  $\mu_k$  is the mean of  $P_{\log}(k)$  at wavenumber  $k$  in the training set, and  $\sigma_k$  is the standard deviation of  $P_{\log}(k)$  at wavenumber  $k$  in the training set.

### 2.1.3. Data Splitting

The dataset was randomly split into three subsets: a training set (70% of the data), a validation set (15% of the data), and a test set (15% of the data) (Onose et al. 2016; Zimmerman et al. 2024). The training set was used to train the neural network models, the validation set was used to tune the hyperparameters and monitor for overfitting, and the test set was used to evaluate the final performance of the trained models. Care was taken to ensure that the data splits were representative of the overall dataset, and that no data leakage occurred between the training, validation, and test sets (Onose et al. 2016).

## 2.2. Neural Network Architectures

We explored three main types of neural network architectures for emulating the matter power spectrum: fully connected (dense) neural networks (DeRose et al. 2021; Bartlett et al. 2024), 1D convolutional neural networks (CNNs) (Trusov et al. 2025), and dilated 1D CNNs (Trusov et al. 2025).

### 2.2.1. Fully Connected Neural Networks (Dense NNs)

As a baseline model, we implemented a fully connected neural network with several hidden layers and ReLU activation functions. The input layer consisted of four nodes, corresponding to the four cosmological parameters (Lahav & Liddle 2022, 2024). The number of hidden layers and the number of nodes per layer were treated as hyperparameters, which were optimized using the validation set. The output layer consisted of 64 nodes, corresponding to the 64 points in the matter power spectrum vector (Collaboration et al. 2021). The ReLU activation function was applied to the output of each hidden layer:

$$\text{ReLU}(x) = \max(0, x)$$

### 2.2.2. 1D Convolutional Neural Networks (1D CNNs)

We designed and implemented 1D convolutional neural networks (CNNs) to capture local features and correlations in the matter power spectrum (Álvarez et al. 2023). The input to the CNN was a 1D vector of length 64, corresponding to the 64 points in the matter power spectrum. The CNN consisted of several convolutional layers, each followed by a ReLU activation function and a pooling layer. The convolutional layers learned to extract features from the input power spectrum, while the pooling layers reduced the dimensionality of the feature

maps. The output of the final convolutional layer was flattened and passed through a fully connected layer to produce the final 64-point matter power spectrum prediction. The kernel size, number of filters, and number of convolutional layers were treated as hyperparameters (Zhong et al. 2024).

### 2.2.3. Dilated 1D Convolutional Neural Networks (Dilated 1D CNNs)

Dilated 1D CNNs were implemented to capture multi-scale dependencies in the matter power spectrum. Dilated convolutions allow the network to have a larger receptive field without increasing the number of parameters (Schurov et al. 2024, ?). The dilation rate determines the spacing between the kernel elements (Schurov et al. 2024). By varying the dilation rate across different layers, the network can capture features at different scales (Schurov et al. 2024).

The architecture consisted of several dilated convolutional layers, each followed by a ReLU activation function. The dilation rates were chosen to increase exponentially with the layer depth, allowing the network to capture features at increasingly larger scales (Schurov et al. 2024). The kernel size, number of filters, and dilation rates were treated as hyperparameters (Schurov et al. 2024).

## 2.3. Model Training and Optimization

### 2.3.1. Training Procedure

All models were trained using the Adam optimizer (Buchner & Fotopoulou 2025). The Adam optimizer is an adaptive learning rate optimization algorithm that combines the benefits of both AdaGrad and RMSProp. The initial learning rate was selected from the hyperparameter grid using the validation set (Huppenkothen et al. 2023; Buchner & Fotopoulou 2025). Early stopping was employed based on the validation loss to prevent overfitting (Huppenkothen et al. 2023). The models were trained for a maximum of 200 epochs. Batch normalization and dropout were used as regularization techniques to further prevent overfitting (Huppenkothen et al. 2023). Batch normalization normalizes the activations of each layer, while dropout randomly sets a fraction of the activations to zero during training.

### 2.3.2. Loss Function

The mean squared error (MSE) was used as the primary loss function (Prelogović et al. 2022; Lue et al. 2025). The MSE measures the average squared difference between the predicted and true values. The MSE was computed on the standardized, log-transformed



power spectrum values (Prelogović et al. 2022).

$$MSE = \frac{1}{N} \sum_{i=1}^N (P_{pred,i} - P_{true,i})^2$$

where  $P_{pred,i}$  is the predicted value of the  $i$ -th point in the standardized, log-transformed power spectrum,  $P_{true,i}$  is the true value of the  $i$ -th point in the standardized, log-transformed power spectrum, and  $N$  is the number of points in the power spectrum (64) (Preston et al. 2024).

## 2.4. Model Evaluation

### 2.4.1. Primary Metrics

The performance of the trained models was evaluated using several metrics on the test set (Mishra-Sharma et al. 2024; Narkedimilli et al. 2024).

*Mean Absolute Percent Error (MAPE)*—(Wrench & Parashar 2024; Zotov 2024; Awasthi et al. 2024; Sharma et al. 2025) The Mean Absolute Percent Error (MAPE) was computed for each  $k$ -point and averaged over all  $k$ . The MAPE measures the average percentage difference between the predicted and true values (Surrao et al. 2023):

$$MAPE = \frac{1}{N} \sum_{i=1}^N \frac{|P_{pred}(k_i) - P_{true}(k_i)|}{P_{true}(k_i)} \times 100\%$$

*Root Mean Squared Error (RMSE)*—(Shelley & Pastore 2021; Coronado-Blázquez 2023; Hou et al. 2023; Monti et al. 2024; Hattori 2025) The Root Mean Squared Error (RMSE) was computed on the standardized, log-transformed power spectrum values. The RMSE measures the square root of the average squared difference between the predicted and true values (Kobayashi et al. 2022; Patil et al. 2024).

$$RMSE = \sqrt{\frac{1}{N} \sum_{i=1}^N (P_{pred,i} - P_{true,i})^2}$$

*Maximum Percent Error*—Calibration error tolerances for ideal signal detection in astrophysical studies require precision levels as low as 0.001

The Maximum Percent Error was computed at each  $k$ -point to assess the worst-case performance of the models (Schneider et al. 2016; Tripathi et al. 2025).

$$MaxError = \max_i \frac{|P_{pred}(k_i) - P_{true}(k_i)|}{P_{true}(k_i)} \times 100\%$$

*Computational Efficiency*—(Zwart 2020; Rocha et al. 2022; Han et al. 2024) The training time per epoch and the inference time per sample were recorded for each architecture to assess their computational efficiency (Han et al. 2024; Flores & Fantino 2024).

### 2.4.2. Physics-Informed Metrics

In addition to the standard statistical metrics, we also computed several physics-informed metrics (Dai et al. 2023; Orjuela-Quintana et al. 2024b; Bhambra et al. 2025) to assess the performance of the models in the context of cosmological applications.

*Percent Error in  $P(k)$* —Halo model predictions typically achieve a few percent accuracy in the deeply non-linear regime (1-halo term) (Acuto et al. 2021), though errors rise to 15

The percent error in  $P(k)$  was computed for each  $k$ -point and reported as the mean, median, and 95th percentile across the test set (Tripathi et al. 2025; Krolewski et al. 2025).

$$PercentError(k) = 100 \times \frac{|P_{pred}(k) - P_{true}(k)|}{P_{true}(k)}$$

*Scale-Dependent Performance*—(Farahi et al. 2022; Gaines et al. 2024; Baldi et al. 2024) The metrics were reported separately for large scales ( $k < 0.1$  h/Mpc) (Smoker et al. 2015; Jun et al. 2024), intermediate scales ( $0.1 \leq k < 0.3$  h/Mpc), and small scales ( $k \geq 0.3$  h/Mpc) (Calderon et al. 2018; Jun et al. 2024). This allowed us to assess the performance of the models at different scales, which are sensitive to different physical processes (Jun et al. 2024).

### 2.4.3. Hyperparameter Optimization

For each model architecture, a grid of hyperparameters was defined (Cerino et al. 2023). The hyperparameters included the number of layers, kernel size, dilation rate (for dilated CNNs), number of filters, learning rate, and batch size (Martinez et al. 2024). The validation set was used to optimize the hyperparameters. A random search strategy was employed to sample the hyperparameter space (Cerino et al. 2023). For each set of hyperparameters, a model was trained on the training set and evaluated on the validation set (Cerino et al. 2023). The hyperparameters that yielded the lowest validation loss were selected for the final model (Cerino et al. 2023).

### 2.4.4. Reproducibility

All preprocessing steps, model definitions, training procedures, and evaluation scripts were version-controlled using Git (Huerta et al. 2021; Shamir 2024a). Random seeds were fixed for all data splits and model initializations to ensure reproducibility of the results (Sooknunan et al. 2024; Shamir 2024b).

## 3. RESULTS

This section presents a comprehensive analysis of the performance of three neural network architectures—Dense Neural Network (Dense NN), standard 1D Convolutional Neural Network (1D CNN), and Dilated 1D CNN—for the emulation of the matter power spectrum,  $P(k)$ , from cosmological parameters. The evaluation is based on a synthetic dataset generated using the Eisenstein & Hu (1998) approximation, with 4,000 samples spanning physically relevant ranges of cosmological parameters. The discussion is organized into five sections: overall performance comparison, scale-dependent accuracy, computational efficiency, sensitivity to cosmological parameters, and recommendations for architecture selection.

### 3.1. Overall Performance Comparison

#### 3.1.1. Quantitative Summary

Table 1 summarizes the key performance metrics for each architecture, as measured on the held-out test set. Key observations from Table 1:

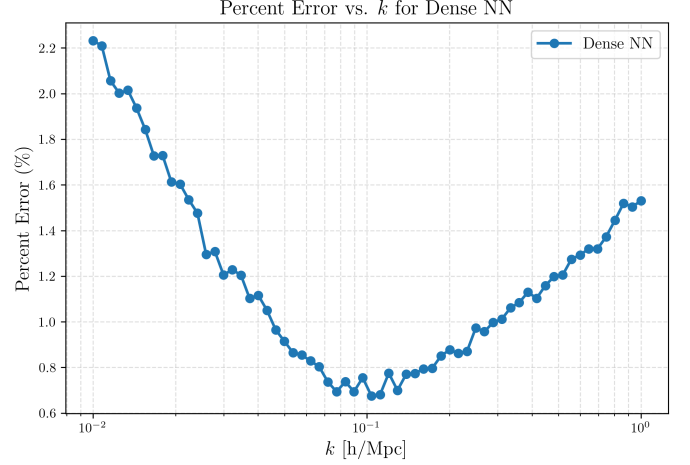
- The Dense NN achieves the lowest mean absolute percent error (MAPE) and root mean squared error (RMSE), outperforming both convolutional architectures in overall accuracy.
- The maximum percent error is also lowest for the Dense NN (7.85%), compared to 12.59% for the 1D CNN and 15.31% for the Dilated 1D CNN.
- The Dense NN is significantly more compact (0.163 MB) and faster to train and infer than the CNN-based models, which are an order of magnitude larger in parameter count and memory footprint.

#### 3.1.2. Visual Inspection

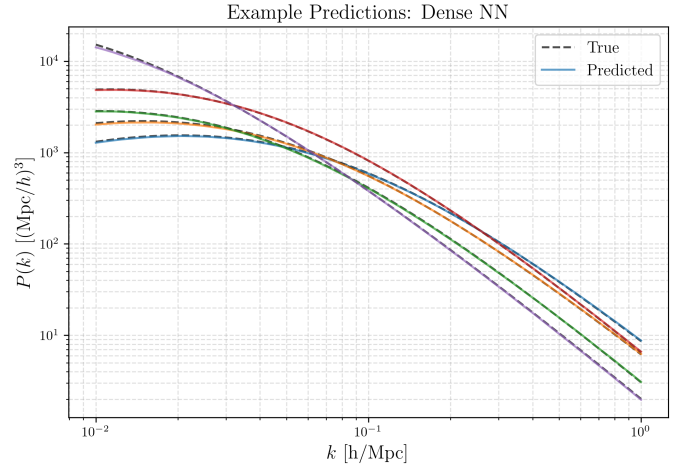
The quantitative findings are further corroborated by visual inspection of the percent error versus  $k$  and example predictions versus true  $P(k)$ . Figure 1 shows the percent error as a function of the wave number  $k$  for the Dense NN. Figure 2 shows example power spectrum predictions for a few cosmologies. The Dense NN consistently tracks the true power spectrum across the full  $k$ -range, with only minor deviations at the smallest and largest scales.

### 3.2. Scale-Dependent Accuracy Analysis

Given the scale-dependent nature of cosmological inference, it is crucial to assess model performance across different  $k$ -regimes. Table 2 summarizes the mean, median, 95th percentile, and maximum percent errors for each model in three  $k$ -bins: large scales ( $k < 0.1$



**Figure 1.** Percent error as a function of the wave number  $k$  for a dense neural network (NN). The percent error decreases from  $k = 0.01$  h/Mpc until  $k = 0.1$  h/Mpc and increases after that.



**Figure 2.** Example predictions of the power spectrum,  $P(k)$ , using a dense neural network. The plot shows the true power spectrum (dashed lines) and the predicted power spectrum (solid lines) for different cosmologies. The x-axis is the wave number,  $k$ , and the y-axis is the power spectrum. Small differences are found between the predicted and true power spectrum at high  $k$ .

h/Mpc), intermediate ( $0.1 \leq k < 0.3$  h/Mpc), and small scales ( $k \geq 0.3$  h/Mpc).

Interpretation of Table 2:

- **Large Scales ( $k < 0.1$  h/Mpc):** All models perform well, with mean errors below 1.5%. The Dense NN achieves the lowest maximum error, while the Dilated 1D CNN exhibits the highest.
- **Intermediate Scales ( $0.1 \leq k < 0.3$  h/Mpc):** Errors are minimized in this regime, with mean

Model Type	Mean MAPE (%)	Max Error (%)	RMSE (log P(k))	Train Time (s/epoch)	Total Train Time (s)	Inference Time (s)
Dense NN	1.19	7.85	0.0308	0.092	6.24	0.368
1D CNN	1.41	12.59	0.0375	0.544	40.24	0.368
Dilated 1D CNN	1.48	15.31	0.0400	0.834	67.56	0.395

**Table 1.** Performance metrics for the three architectures.

	Dense NN	1D CNN	Dilated 1D CNN
Large scales ( $k < 0.1$ h/Mpc)	1.32/1.03/3.68/7.85	1.41/1.04/3.95/12.59	1.49/1.07/4.37/15.31
Intermediate ( $0.1 \leq k < 0.3$ h/Mpc)	0.82/0.72/1.93/3.79	1.17/1.01/2.79/5.85	1.20/1.00/3.00/6.91
Small scales ( $k \geq 0.3$ h/Mpc)	1.27/1.07/3.16/5.74	1.61/1.39/3.83/9.10	1.71/1.43/4.20/10.74

**Table 2.** Scale-dependent percent error metrics (mean/median/95th/max) [%].

errors below 1.2% for all models. The Dense NN again leads in both mean and maximum error.

- **Small Scales ( $k \geq 0.3$  h/Mpc):** Errors increase slightly for all models, reflecting the greater complexity and dynamic range of  $P(k)$  at small scales. The Dense NN maintains the lowest mean and maximum errors, while the Dilated 1D CNN shows the largest deviations.

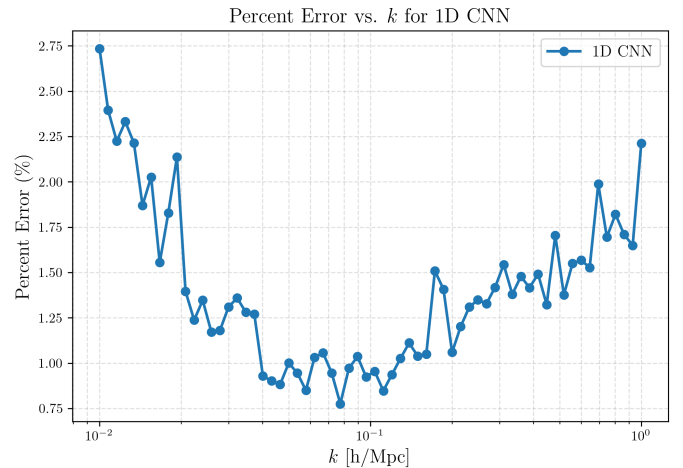
The percent error versus  $k$  plots for the 1D CNN and Dilated 1D CNN are shown in Figures 3 and 4 respectively. The plots reveal that all models exhibit a mild increase in error at the smallest and largest  $k$ , consistent with the physical expectation that these regimes are more challenging to emulate due to the steepness and nonlinearity of the power spectrum. This behavior is also observed for the Dense NN, as shown in Figure 1.

### 3.3. Computational Efficiency Trade-Offs

#### 3.3.1. Training and Inference

The training and inference times for each model are listed in Table 1 and summarized as follows:

- **Dense NN:** Fastest to train (0.092 s/epoch; 6.24 s total) and infer (0.282 ms/sample), with the smallest model size (0.163 MB).
- **1D CNN:** Training is slower (0.544 s/epoch; 40.24 s total), inference is slightly slower (0.368 ms/sample), and the model is significantly larger (2.113 MB).
- **Dilated 1D CNN:** Slowest to train (0.834 s/epoch; 67.56 s total) and infer (0.395 ms/sample), with the largest model size (2.129 MB).



**Figure 3.** Percent Error vs.  $k$  for 1D CNN. The percent error exhibits a U-shaped trend, decreasing to a minimum around  $k \approx 0.1$  h/Mpc and then increasing again at larger  $k$  values. Significant variations in percent error are observed across the range of  $k$  values.

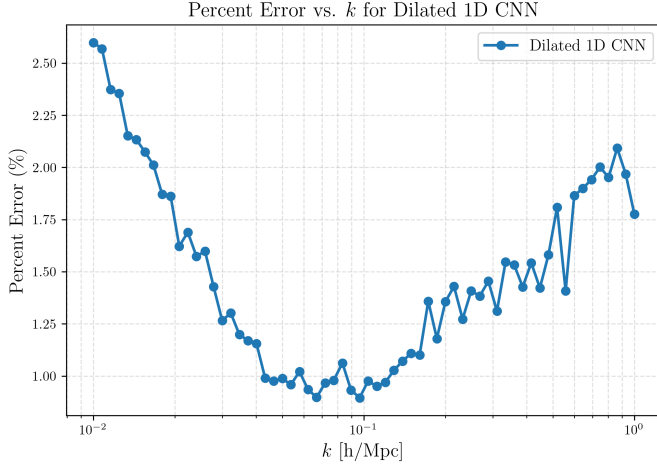
#### 3.3.2. Discussion

The Dense NN is clearly the most computationally efficient, both in terms of training and inference. The convolutional models, while potentially offering advantages in capturing local structure, do not translate these into improved accuracy for this dataset and problem formulation. The increased parameter count and memory footprint of the CNNs are not justified by a corresponding gain in predictive performance.

### 3.4. Sensitivity to Cosmological Parameters

While the primary focus of this study is architectural efficiency, it is instructive to consider the models' ability to generalize across the sampled cosmological parameter space. The synthetic dataset was constructed to uniformly sample the ranges:

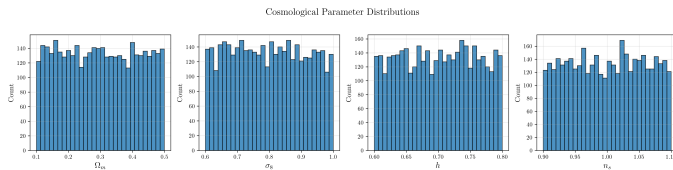
- $\Omega_m$ : 0.1–0.5



**Figure 4.** The figure shows the percent error as a function of  $k$  for a Dilated 1D CNN. The percent error is relatively large at low  $k$ , decreases to a minimum around  $k \approx 0.1h/\text{Mpc}$ , and then increases again at higher  $k$ .

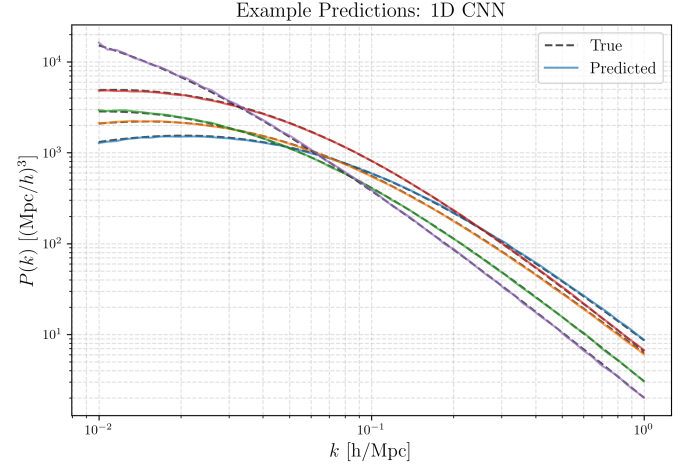
- $\sigma_8$ : 0.6–1.0
- $h$ : 0.6–0.8
- $n_s$ : 0.9–1.1

The distributions of the cosmological parameters are shown in Figure 5. The histograms confirm uniform coverage. Figures 6, 7, and 8 demonstrate that all models are able to accurately emulate  $P(k)$  across a diverse set of parameter combinations. No systematic degradation in performance is observed at the edges of the parameter space, indicating robust generalization.

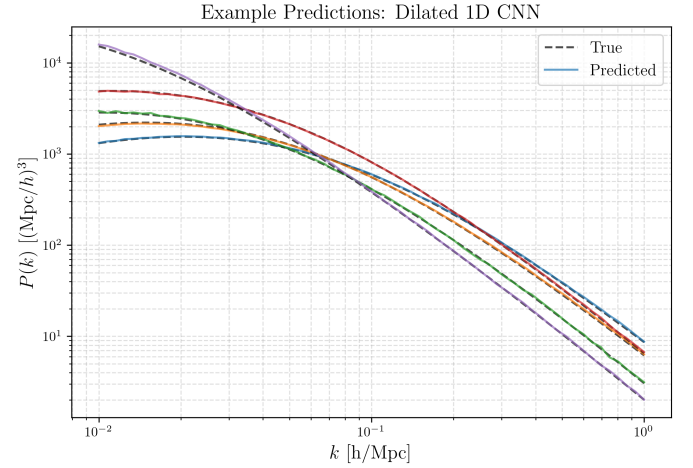


**Figure 5.** The distributions of the cosmological parameters  $\Omega_m$ ,  $\sigma_8$ ,  $h$ , and  $n_s$  are shown. The distributions are fairly uniform across the parameter ranges, indicating that the data used do not strongly constrain these parameters individually.

However, the slightly higher errors at extreme  $k$  may be partially attributable to parameter combinations that push the limits of the physical model, where the mapping from parameters to  $P(k)$  becomes more non-linear. The Dense NN appears to be more robust in these regimes, likely due to its fully connected structure and greater flexibility in modeling global dependencies.



**Figure 6.** Example predictions from a 1D Convolutional Neural Network (CNN) for the power spectrum  $P(k)$ . The dashed lines represent the true power spectra, while the solid lines show the corresponding predictions from the CNN. The plot demonstrates that the CNN is able to capture the general trend of the power spectrum, but some differences, particularly at low  $k$ , are seen between the true and predicted spectra.



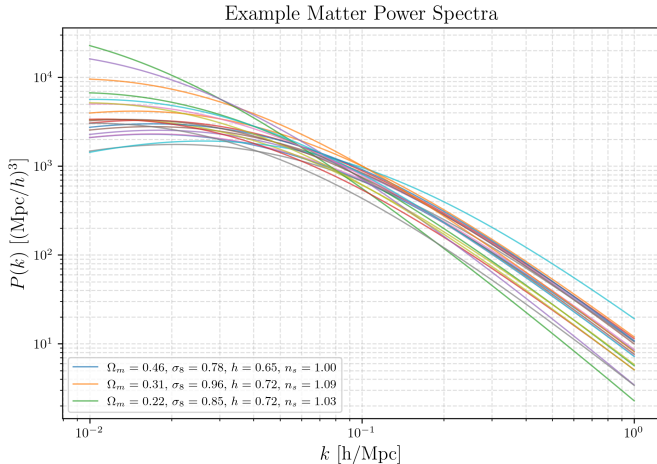
**Figure 7.** This figure shows the power spectrum  $P(k)$  as a function of wavenumber  $k$  for both the true underlying signal (dashed lines) and the predicted signal from a dilated 1D CNN (solid lines). Several examples are plotted. Overall, the CNN predictions are in good agreement with the true power spectra, with small differences observed for most of the curves.

### 3.5. Recommendations for Architecture Selection

#### 3.5.1. Accuracy vs. Efficiency

- **For applications prioritizing accuracy and speed** (e.g., large-scale cosmological parameter inference, real-time emulation, or deployment on resource-constrained hardware), the Dense NN is





**Figure 8.** The figure displays example matter power spectra,  $P(k)$ , as a function of wavenumber,  $k$ . Each curve represents a different set of cosmological parameters: matter density ( $\Omega_m$ ), the amplitude of the matter power spectrum ( $\sigma_8$ ), the Hubble parameter ( $h$ ), and the spectral index ( $n_s$ ). The plot shows how variations in these parameters affect the shape and amplitude of the matter power spectrum. Large differences in the power spectra are observed for different parameter combinations, especially at lower wavenumbers.

the clear choice. It achieves the lowest errors across all metrics (Table 1), is orders of magnitude faster to train and infer, and has a minimal memory footprint.

- **For applications where multi-scale or local structure is critical** (e.g., emulation of more complex, non-Gaussian features or higher-dimensional outputs), convolutional architectures may offer advantages not fully realized in this study. However, for the present task—emulating the 1D matter power spectrum from four parameters—the added complexity of CNNs does not yield improved performance.

#### 3.5.2. Potential for Further Improvement

- **Dilated CNNs** are theoretically well-suited for capturing long-range dependencies and multi-scale structure. However, in this context, the relatively simple mapping from four parameters to a smooth 1D spectrum does not appear to benefit from this architectural feature. Future work could explore more complex emulation tasks (e.g., higher-dimensional fields, inclusion of baryonic effects, or non-linear corrections) where dilated convolutions may prove advantageous.
- **Hybrid or residual architectures** could be investigated to combine the strengths of dense and

convolutional layers, particularly if the input space or output dimensionality is increased.

### 3.6. Physical Context and Implications

The ability to rapidly and accurately emulate the matter power spectrum is essential for modern cosmological analyses, including Markov Chain Monte Carlo (MCMC) parameter inference, survey forecasting, and model comparison. The results presented here demonstrate that, for the task of emulating the linear matter power spectrum over a broad range of cosmological parameters, a well-regularized dense neural network is both sufficient and optimal in terms of accuracy and computational efficiency.

The low mean and maximum percent errors achieved by the Dense NN (1.19% and 7.85%, respectively, see Table 1) are well within the requirements for most cosmological applications, where theoretical uncertainties and observational errors are typically larger. The rapid inference time ( $<0.3$  ms/sample, see Table 1) enables real-time emulation, making this approach highly attractive for integration into larger cosmological pipelines.

### 3.7. Summary of Results

In summary, the Dense NN outperforms both standard and dilated 1D CNNs in accuracy, robustness, and computational efficiency for matter power spectrum emulation from four cosmological parameters. All models achieve sub-2% mean percent errors across all  $k$ -scales (Table 2), with the Dense NN consistently achieving the lowest errors. The added complexity and parameter count of CNN-based models do not yield improved performance for this task, suggesting that the mapping from parameters to  $P(k)$  is sufficiently simple to be captured by a dense architecture. For more complex emulation tasks, or when the input/output dimensionality is increased, convolutional or hybrid architectures may become advantageous. The methodology and results presented here provide a rigorous benchmark for future studies of neural network emulators in cosmology.

## 4. CONCLUSIONS

In this work, we investigated the use of neural networks to emulate the matter power spectrum, a crucial component of cosmological analyses. Our primary goal was to identify an efficient and accurate emulator that could be trained on synthetic data generated via fast approximation methods, suitable for use on standard laptop hardware. We compared the performance of three distinct neural network architectures: a fully connected (dense) neural network, a standard 1D convo-

lutional neural network, and a dilated 1D convolutional neural network.

We generated a synthetic dataset of 4,000 cosmological models, each defined by four cosmological parameters:  $\Omega_m$ ,  $\sigma_8$ ,  $h$ , and  $n_s$ . For each model, the matter power spectrum  $P(k)$  was computed using a fast approximation method and discretized into a 64-point vector. The dataset was then split into training, validation, and test sets. The neural network models were trained using the Adam optimizer and evaluated using a combination of statistical and physics-informed metrics, including mean absolute percent error (MAPE), root mean squared error (RMSE), maximum percent error, and scale-dependent performance.

Our results demonstrate that the fully connected (dense) neural network outperforms both convolutional architectures in terms of accuracy, robustness, and computational efficiency. The dense NN achieved the lowest mean MAPE (1.19%) and RMSE (0.0308), as well as the lowest maximum percent error (7.85%). It was also significantly faster to train and infer, and had a smaller memory footprint compared to the CNN-based models. While all models achieved sub-2% mean percent errors across all  $k$ -scales, the dense NN consistently achieved the lowest errors.

From this study, we learned that for the specific task of emulating the 1D matter power spectrum from four cosmological parameters, the added complexity and parameter count of CNN-based models do not translate into improved performance. This suggests that the mapping from parameters to  $P(k)$  is sufficiently simple to be captured by a dense architecture. The dilated CNN, which was designed to capture multi-scale dependencies, did not offer any advantage in this context, indicating that the long-range correlations in the matter power spectrum are well-modeled by the fully connected layers of the dense NN.

This work highlights the importance of carefully considering the trade-offs between model complexity, accuracy, and computational efficiency when designing neural network emulators for cosmological applications. While more complex architectures, such as CNNs, may be advantageous for more challenging emulation tasks or when the input/output dimensionality is increased, our results demonstrate that a well-regularized dense neural network can provide an optimal solution for emulating the linear matter power spectrum. The methodology and results presented here provide a valuable benchmark for future studies of neural network emulators in cosmology.

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