# Variance reduction for stochastic gradient descent

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# Finite-sum problem

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We consider classic finite-sample average minimization:

$$\min_{x \in \mathbb{R}^p} f(x) = \min_{x \in \mathbb{R}^p} \frac{1}{n} \sum_{i=1}^{n} f_i(x)$$

The gradient descent acts like follows:

$$x_{k+1} = x_k - \frac{\alpha_k}{n} \sum_{i=1}^{n} \nabla f_i(x) \tag{GD}$$

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Let's/ switch from the full gradient calculation to its unbiased estimator, when we randomly choose $i_k$ index of point at each iteration uniformly:

$$x_{k+1} = x_k - \alpha_k \nabla f_{i_k}(x_k) \tag{SGD}$$

With $p(i_k = i) = \frac{1}{n}$, the stochastic gradient is an unbiased estimate of the gradient, given by:

$$\mathbb{E}[\nabla f_{i_k}(x)] = \sum_{i=1}^{n} p(i_k = i) \nabla f_i(x) = \sum_{i=1}^{n} \frac{1}{n} \nabla f_i(x) = \frac{1}{n} \sum_{i=1}^{n} \nabla f_i(x) = \nabla f(x)$$

This indicates that the expected value of the stochastic gradient is equal to the actual gradient of $f(x)$.

# Results for Gradient Descent

Stochastic iterations are $n$ times faster, but how many iterations are needed?

If $\nabla f$ is Lipschitz continuous then we have:

| Assumption | Deterministic Gradient Descent | Stochastic Gradient Descent |
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| PL | $O(\log(1/\varepsilon))$ | $O(1/\varepsilon)$ |
| Convex | $O(1/\varepsilon)$ | $O(1/\varepsilon^2)$ |
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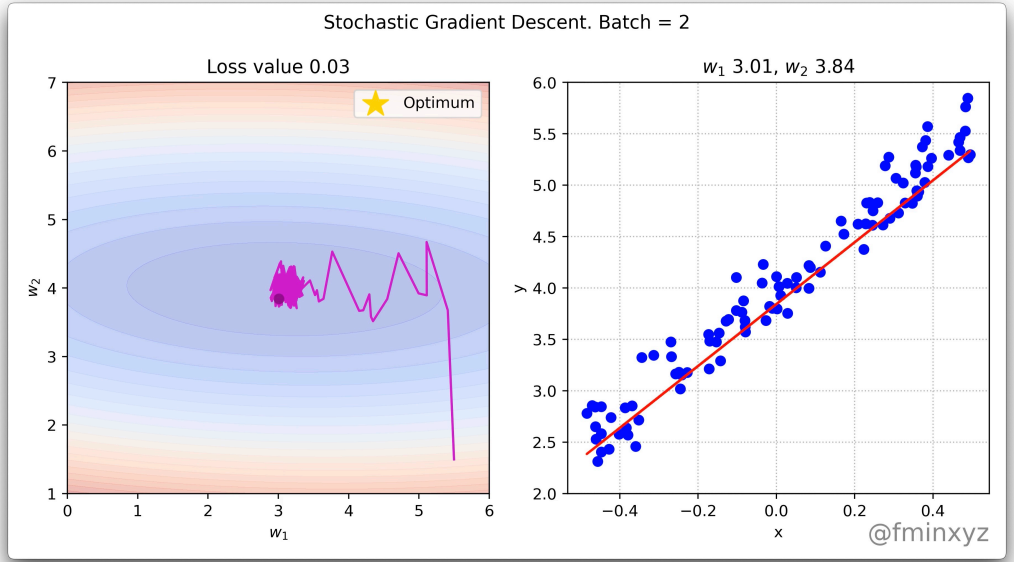
  - Oracle returns an unbiased gradient approximation with bounded variance.
- Momentum and Quasi-Newton-like methods do not improve rates in stochastic case. Can only improve constant factors (bottleneck is variance, not condition number).

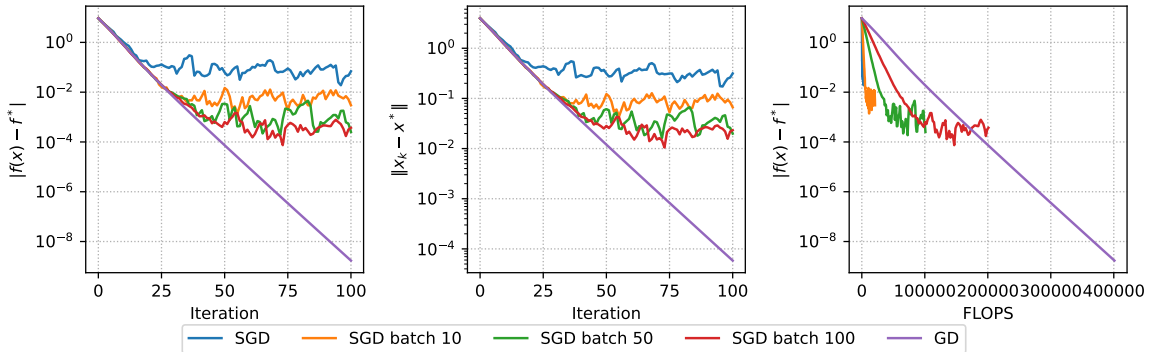
# SGD with constant stepsize does not converge



# Main problem of SGD

$$f(x) = \frac{\mu}{2}\|x\|_2^2 + \frac{1}{m}\sum_{i=1}^{m}\log(1+\exp(-y_i\langle a_i, x\rangle)) \to \min_{x\in\mathbb{R}^n}$$

Strongly convex binary logistic regression. m=200, n=10, mu=1.



# Variance reduction methods

# Key idea of variance reduction

**Principle:** reducing variance of a sample of $X$ by using a sample from another random variable $Y$ with known expectation:

$$Z_\alpha = \alpha(X - Y) + \mathbb{E}[Y]$$

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**Application to gradient estimation ?**

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- $X - Y = \nabla f_{i_k}(x^{(k-1)}) - \nabla f_{i_k}(\tilde{x})$

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$$g_{i_k}^{(k)} = \nabla f_{i_k}(x^{(k-1)}) \quad \text{(most recent gradient of } f_{i_k}\text{)}$$

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- SAG gradient estimates are no longer unbiased, but they have greatly reduced variance
- Isn't it expensive to average all these gradients? Basically just as efficient as SGD, as long we're clever:

$$x^{(k)} = x^{(k-1)} - \alpha_k \underbrace{\left( \frac{1}{n} g_i^{(k)} - \frac{1}{n} g_i^{(k-1)} + \underbrace{\frac{1}{n} \sum_{i=1}^{n} g_i^{(k-1)}}_{\text{old table average}} \right)}_{\text{new table average}}$$

# SAG convergence

Assume that $f(x) = \frac{1}{n}\sum_{i=1}^{n} f_i(x)$, where each $f_i$ is differentiable, and $\nabla f_i$ is Lipschitz with constant $L$.

Denote $\bar{x}^{(k)} = \frac{1}{k}\sum_{l=0}^{k-1} x^{(l)}$, the average iterate after $k-1$ steps.

**Theorem**

SAG, with a fixed step size $\alpha = \frac{1}{16L}$, and the initialization

$$g_i^{(0)} = \nabla f_i(x^{(0)}) - \nabla f(x^{(0)}), \quad i = 1, \dots, n$$

satisfies

$$\mathbb{E}[f(\bar{x}^{(k)})] - f^\star \leq \frac{48n}{k}[f(x^{(0)}) - f^\star] + \frac{128L}{k}\|x^{(0)} - x^\star\|^2$$

where the expectation is taken over random choices of indices.

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- But, the constants are different! Bounds after k steps:
  - GD: $\frac{L\|x^{(0)}-x^\star\|^2}{2k}$
  - SAG: $\frac{48n[f(x^{(0)})-f^\star]+128L\|x^{(0)}-x^\star\|^2}{k}$
- So the first term in SAG bound suffers from a factor of $n$; authors suggest smarter initialization to make $f(x^{(0)}) - f^\star$ small (e.g., they suggest using the result of $n$ SGD steps).

# SAG convergence

Assume further that each $f_i$ is strongly convex with parameter $\mu$.

**Theorem**

SAG, with a step size $\alpha = \frac{1}{16L}$ and the same initialization as before, satisfies

$$\mathbb{E}[f(x^{(k)})] - f^\star \leq \left(1 - \min\left(\frac{\mu}{16L}, \frac{1}{8n}\right)\right)^k \left(\frac{3}{2}\left(f(x^{(0)}) - f^\star\right) + \frac{4L}{n}\|x^{(0)} - x^\star\|^2\right)$$

**Notes:**

- This is linear convergence rate $\mathcal{O}(\gamma^k)$ for SAG. Compare this to $\mathcal{O}(\gamma^k)$ for GD, and only $\mathcal{O}\left(\frac{1}{k}\right)$ for SGD.

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- Like GD, we say SAG is adaptive to strong convexity.
- Proofs of these results not easy: 15 pages, computed-aided!

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  - Increase $L$, until the following satisfies

$$f_{i_k}(x^{k+1}) \leq f_{i_k}(x^k) + \nabla f_{i_k}(x^k)(x^{k+1} - x^k) + \frac{L}{2}\|x^{k+1} - x^k\|_2^2$$

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- Since stochastic gradient $g(x^k) \to \nabla f(x^k)$ you can use its norm to track convergence (which is not true for SGD!)
- For the generalized linear models (this includes LogReg, LLS) you need to store much less memory $\mathcal{O}(n)$ instead of $\mathcal{O}(pn)$.

$$f_i(w) = \varphi(w^T x_i) \leftrightarrow \nabla f_i(w) = \varphi'(w^T x_i) x_i$$

# SAG non-uniform sampling

- The step size $\alpha_k$ and the convergence rate of the method are determined by the constant $L$ for $f(x)$, where $L = \max_{1 \leq i \leq n} L_i$, $L_i$ is the Lipschitz constant for the function $f_i$

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- To generate with probabilities $L_i / \sum_j L_j$, there is an algorithm with complexity $O(\log N)$.

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- Two gradient evaluations per inner step.
- Two parameters: length of epochs + step-size $\alpha$.
- Linear convergence rate, simple proof.

# Adaptivity or scaling

# Adagrad (Duchi, Hazan, and Singer 2010)

Very popular adaptive method. Let $g^{(k)} = \nabla f_{i_k}(x^{(k-1)})$, and update for $j = 1, \dots, p$:

$$v_j^{(k)} = v_j^{k-1} + (g_j^{(k)})^2$$

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- Can drastically improve over SGD in sparse problems.
- Main weakness is the monotonic accumulation of gradients in the denominator. AdaDelta, Adam, AMSGrad, etc. improve on this, popular in training deep neural networks.
- The constant $\epsilon$ is typically set to $10^{-6}$ to ensure that we do not suffer from division by zero or overly large step sizes.

# RMSProp (Tieleman and Hinton, 2012)

An enhancement of AdaGrad that addresses its aggressive, monotonically decreasing learning rate. Uses a moving average of squared gradients to adjust the learning rate for each weight. Let $g^{(k)} = \nabla f_{i_k}(x^{(k-1)})$ and update rule for $j = 1, \ldots, p$:

$$v_j^{(k)} = \gamma v_j^{(k-1)} + (1-\gamma)(g_j^{(k)})^2$$

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- Commonly used in training neural networks, particularly in recurrent neural networks.

# Adadelta (Zeiler, 2012)

An extension of RMSProp that seeks to reduce its dependence on a manually set global learning rate. Instead of accumulating all past squared gradients, Adadelta limits the window of accumulated past gradients to some fixed size $w$. Update mechanism does not require learning rate $\alpha$:

$$v_j^{(k)} = \gamma v_j^{(k-1)} + (1-\gamma)(g_j^{(k)})^2$$

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- Often used in deep learning where parameter scales differ significantly across layers.

# Adam (Kingma and Ba, 2014) [1] [2]

Combines elements from both AdaGrad and RMSProp. It considers an exponentially decaying average of past gradients and squared gradients.

EMA:

$$m_j^{(k)} = \beta_1 m_j^{(k-1)} + (1-\beta_1) g_j^{(k)}$$

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Bias correction:

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- Гораздо лучше работает для языковых моделей, чем для задач компьютерного зрения - почему?

[1] Adam: A Method for Stochastic Optimization

[2] On the Convergence of Adam and Beyond

# AdamW (Loshchilov & Hutter, 2017)

Addresses a common issue with $\ell_2$ regularization in adaptive optimizers like Adam. Standard $\ell_2$ regularization adds $\lambda\|x\|^2$ to the loss, resulting in a gradient term $\lambda x$. In Adam, this term gets scaled by the adaptive learning rate $\left(\sqrt{\hat{v}_j} + \epsilon\right)$, coupling the weight decay to the gradient magnitudes.

AdamW decouples weight decay from the gradient adaptation step.

Update rule:

$$m_j^{(k)} = \beta_1 m_j^{(k-1)} + (1-\beta_1) g_j^{(k)}$$

$$v_j^{(k)} = \beta_2 v_j^{(k-1)} + (1-\beta_2)(g_j^{(k)})^2$$

$$\hat{m}_j = \frac{m_j^{(k)}}{1-\beta_1^k}, \quad \hat{v}_j = \frac{v_j^{(k)}}{1-\beta_2^k}$$

$$x_j^{(k)} = x_j^{(k-1)} - \alpha \left( \frac{\hat{m}_j}{\sqrt{\hat{v}_j} + \epsilon} + \lambda x_j^{(k-1)} \right)$$

**Notes:**

- The weight decay term $\lambda x_j^{(k-1)}$ is added after the adaptive gradient step.

# AdamW (Loshchilov & Hutter, 2017)

Addresses a common issue with $\ell_2$ regularization in adaptive optimizers like Adam. Standard $\ell_2$ regularization adds $\lambda\|x\|^2$ to the loss, resulting in a gradient term $\lambda x$. In Adam, this term gets scaled by the adaptive learning rate $\left(\sqrt{\hat{v}_j} + \epsilon\right)$, coupling the weight decay to the gradient magnitudes.

AdamW decouples weight decay from the gradient adaptation step.

Update rule:

$$m_j^{(k)} = \beta_1 m_j^{(k-1)} + (1-\beta_1) g_j^{(k)}$$

$$v_j^{(k)} = \beta_2 v_j^{(k-1)} + (1-\beta_2)(g_j^{(k)})^2$$

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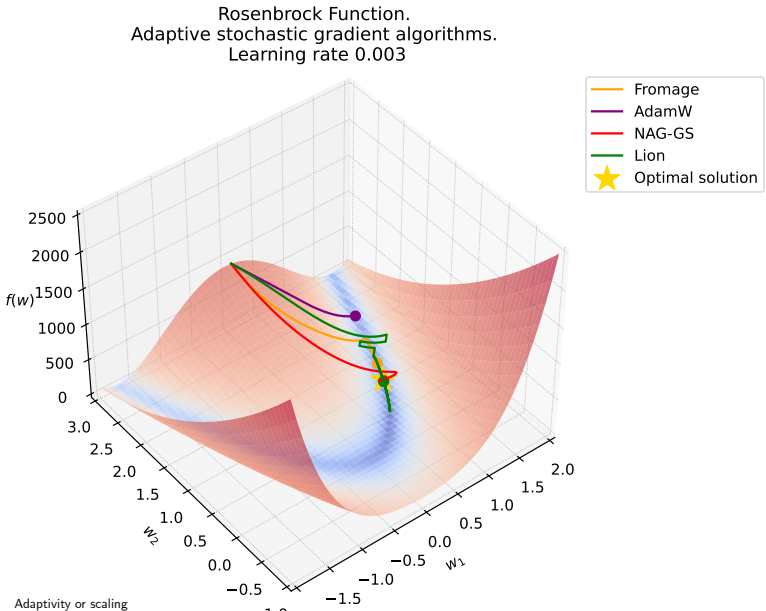
**Notes:**

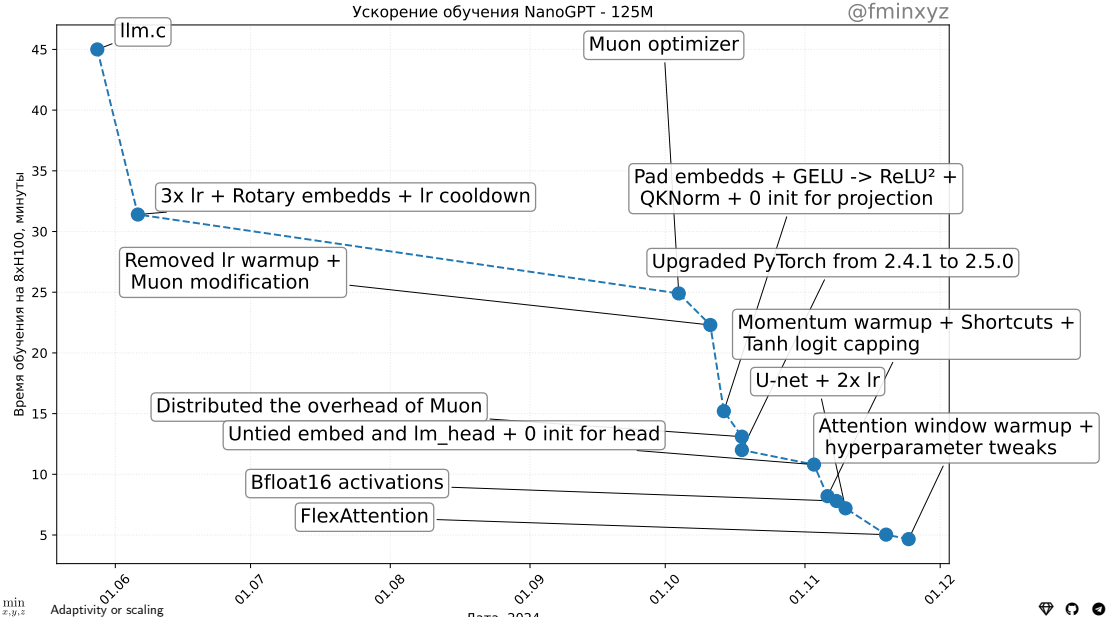
- The weight decay term $\lambda x_j^{(k-1)}$ is added after the adaptive gradient step.
- Widely adopted in training transformers and other large models. Default choice for huggingface trainer.

# A lot of them


Rosenbrock Function.
Adaptive stochastic gradient algorithms.
Learning rate 0.003
Fromage
AdamW
NAG-GS
Lion
Optimal solution
f(w)
2500
2000
1500
1000
500
0
3.0
2.5
2.0
1.5
1.0
0.5
0.0
−0.5
w2
−1.5
−1.0
−0.5
0.0
0.5
1.0
1.5
2.0
w1

# How to compare them? AlgoPerf benchmark

# NanoGPT speedrun



# Shampoo (Gupta, Anil, et al., 2018; Anil et al., 2020)

Stands for **S**tochastic **H**essian-**A**pproximation **M**atrix **P**reconditioning for **O**ptimization **O**f deep networks. It's a method inspired by second-order optimization designed for large-scale deep learning.

**Core Idea:** Approximates the full-matrix AdaGrad pre conditioner using efficient matrix structures, specifically Kronecker products.

For a weight matrix $W \in \mathbb{R}^{m \times n}$, the update involves preconditioning using approximations of the statistics matrices $L \approx \sum_k G_k G_k^T$ and $R \approx \sum_k G_k^T G_k$, where $G_k$ are the gradients.

Simplified concept:

1. Compute gradient $G_k$.

**Notes:**

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Simplified concept:

1. Compute gradient $G_k$.
2. Update statistics $L_k = \beta L_{k-1} + (1-\beta) G_k G_k^T$ and $R_k = \beta R_{k-1} + (1-\beta) G_k^T G_k$.

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**Notes:**

- Aims to capture curvature information more effectively than first-order methods.

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- Computationally more expensive than Adam but can converge faster or to better solutions in terms of steps.
- Requires careful implementation for efficiency (e.g., efficient computation of inverse matrix roots, handling large matrices).
- Variants exist for different tensor shapes (e.g., convolutional layers).

# Muon [3]

$$
\begin{aligned}
W_{t+1} &= W_t - \eta (G_t G_t^\top)^{-1/4} G_t (G_t^\top G_t)^{-1/4} \\
&= W_t - \eta (US^2U^\top)^{-1/4} (USV^\top)(VS^2V^\top)^{-1/4} \\
&= W_t - \eta (US^{-1/2}U^\top)(USV^\top)(VS^{-1/2}V^\top) \\
&= W_t - \eta US^{-1/2} SS^{-1/2} V^\top \\
&= W_t - \eta UV^\top
\end{aligned}
$$

[3] Deriving Muon