

Basics of Convex Optimization

Shusen Wang

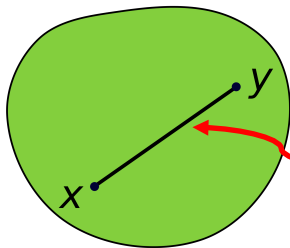
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Convex Set

Convex Set

Definition (Convex Set).

A set \mathcal{C} is convex if and only if for any $\mathbf{x}, \mathbf{y} \in \mathcal{C}$ and any $\eta \in (0, 1)$, the point $\eta\mathbf{x} + (1 - \eta)\mathbf{y}$ is also in \mathcal{C} .



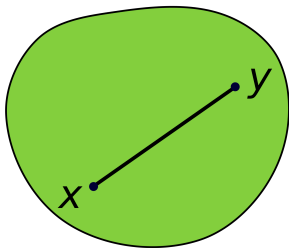
By definition, the line segment between \mathbf{x} and \mathbf{y} is in \mathcal{C} .

A convex set \mathcal{C} .

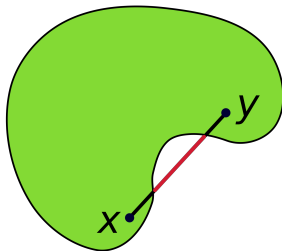
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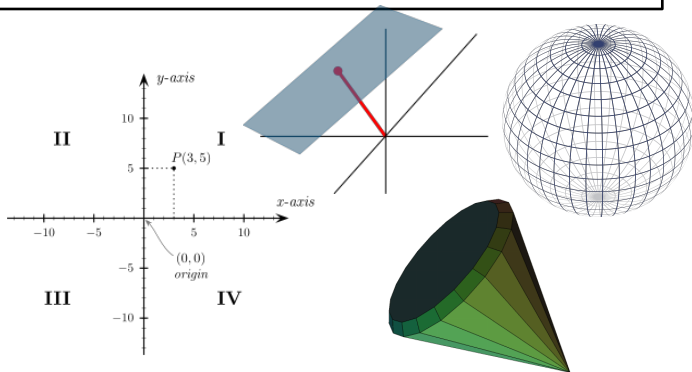
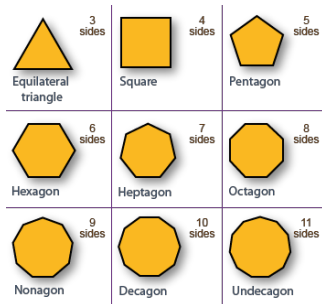


A non-convex set.

Convex Set: Examples

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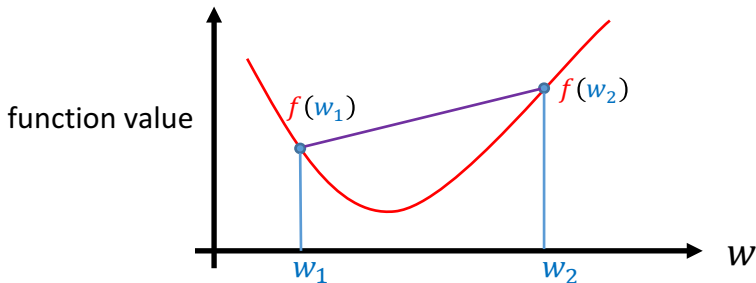
Convex Function

Convex Function

Definition (Convex Function).

- Let \mathcal{C} be a convex set and $f: \mathcal{C} \mapsto \mathbb{R}$ be a function.
- f is convex if for any $\mathbf{w}_1, \mathbf{w}_2 \in \mathcal{C}$ and any $\eta \in (0, 1)$,

$$f(\eta \mathbf{w}_1 + (1 - \eta) \mathbf{w}_2) \leq \eta f(\mathbf{w}_1) + (1 - \eta) f(\mathbf{w}_2).$$



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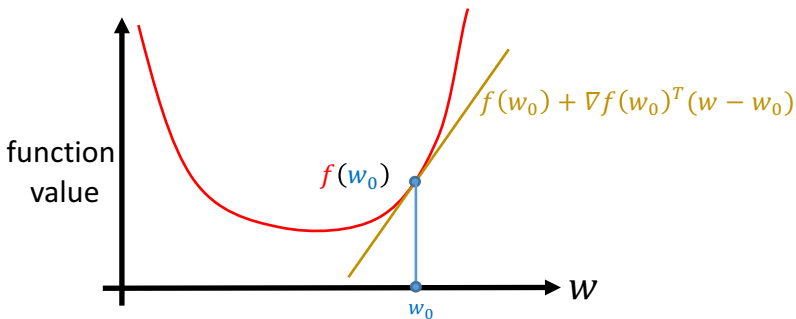
$$f(\eta \mathbf{w}_1 + (1 - \eta) \mathbf{w}_2) \leq \eta f(\mathbf{w}_1) + (1 - \eta) f(\mathbf{w}_2).$$

- Examples of convex functions:
 - Linear function $f(\mathbf{w}) = \mathbf{a}^T \mathbf{w} + b$. (Here $\mathbf{w} \in \mathbb{R}^d$, $\mathbf{a} \in \mathbb{R}^d$, and $b \in \mathbb{R}$.)
 - Vector norm $f(\mathbf{w}) = \|\mathbf{w}\|_p$ for all $p \geq 1$. (Defined on \mathbb{R}^d)
 - Vector norm $f(\mathbf{w}) = \|\mathbf{w}\|_p^p$ for all $p \geq 1$. (Defined on \mathbb{R}^d)
 - Exponential $f(w) = e^w$. (Defined on \mathbb{R})
 - Sum of convex functions $f(\mathbf{w}) = f_1(\mathbf{w}) + \dots + f_k(\mathbf{w})$.

Convex Function: Properties

Properties of convex function:

1. $f(\mathbf{w}_0) + \nabla f(\mathbf{w}_0)^T (\mathbf{w} - \mathbf{w}_0) \leq f(\mathbf{w})$. (Assume f is differentiable).



Convex Function: Properties

Properties of convex function:

1. $f(\mathbf{w}_0) + \nabla f(\mathbf{w}_0)^T (\mathbf{w} - \mathbf{w}_0) \leq f(\mathbf{w})$. (Assume f is differentiable).
2. The Hessian matrix is everywhere positive semi-definite: $\nabla^2 f(\mathbf{w}) \succcurlyeq \mathbf{0}$. (Assume f is twice differentiable).
 - $\mathbf{H} \in \mathbb{R}^{d \times d}$ is positive semi-definite \iff for all $\mathbf{x} \in \mathbb{R}^d$, $\mathbf{x}^T \mathbf{H} \mathbf{x} \geq 0$.

Convex Optimization

Convex Optimization

Definition (Convex Optimization).

- Convex optimization: $\min_{\mathbf{w}} f(\mathbf{w}); \quad \text{s. t. } \mathbf{w} \in \mathcal{C}.$
 1. \mathcal{C} (feasible set) is convex set,
 2. f (objective function) is convex function.

Convex Optimization: Examples

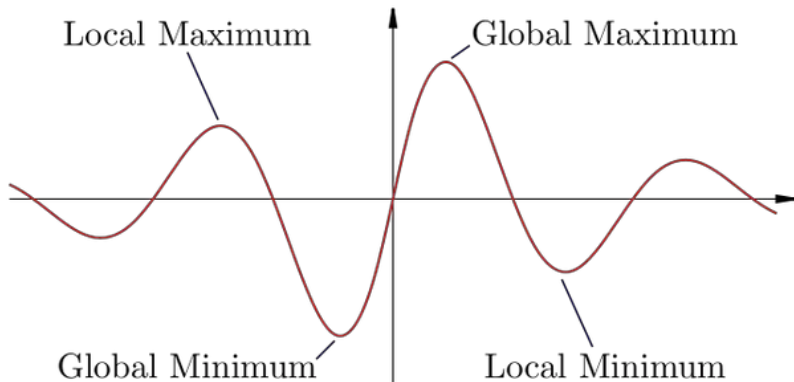
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- Examples:

- Least squares regression: $\min_{\mathbf{w}} \|\mathbf{X}\mathbf{w} - \mathbf{y}\|_2^2.$
- Logistic regression: $\min_{\mathbf{w}} \sum_j \log(1 + \exp(-y_j \mathbf{w}^T \mathbf{x}_j)).$
- SVM: $\min_{\mathbf{w}, b} \|\mathbf{w}\|_2^2 + \lambda \sum_j [1 - y_j(\mathbf{w}^T \mathbf{x}_j + b)]_+.$
- LASSO: $\min_{\mathbf{w}} \|\mathbf{X}\mathbf{w} - \mathbf{y}\|_2^2; \quad \text{s.t. } \|\mathbf{w}\|_1 \leq t.$

Local and Global Optima

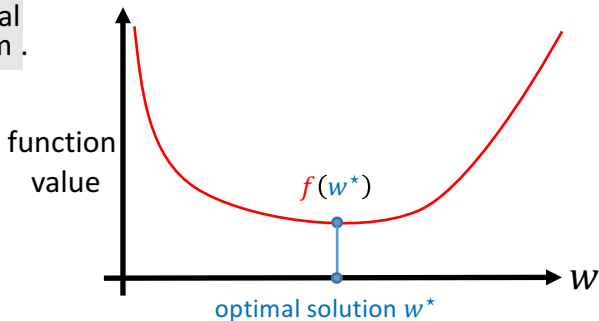


Convex Optimization: Property

Definition (Convex Optimization).

- Convex optimization: $\min_{\mathbf{w}} f(\mathbf{w})$; s. t. $\mathbf{w} \in \mathcal{C}$.

- Property:** Every local minimum is global minimum.

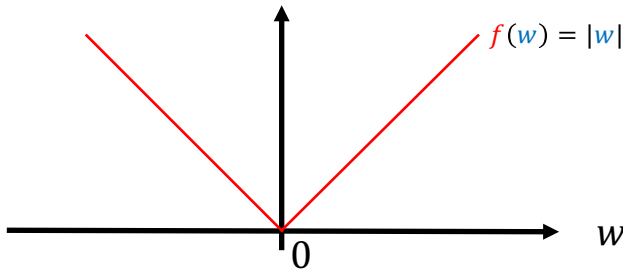


Subgradient and Subdifferential

Non-Differentiable Functions

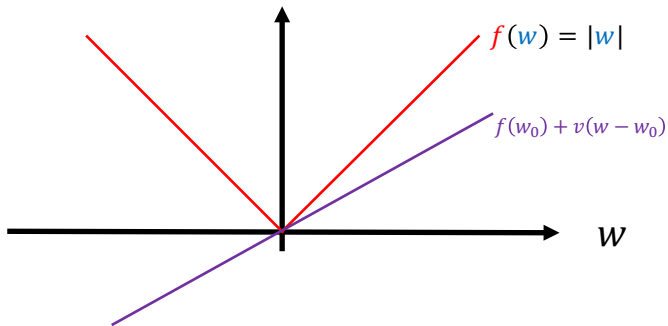
- Example of non-differentiable functions: $f(w) = |w|$

$$\frac{\partial f}{\partial w} = \begin{cases} +1, & \text{if } w > 0; \\ \text{undefined}, & \text{if } w = 0; \\ -1, & \text{if } w < 0. \end{cases}$$



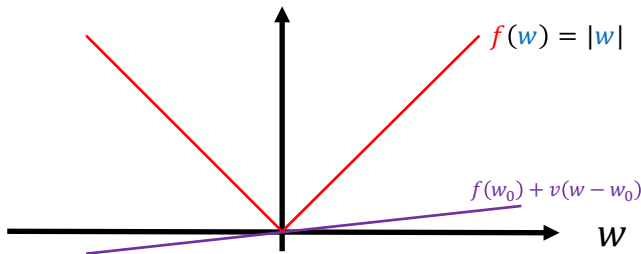
Subgradient of **Convex Function**

Definition (Subgradient). A vector \mathbf{v} is called a subgradient of f at \mathbf{w}_0 if for any \mathbf{w} , $f(\mathbf{w}) \geq f(\mathbf{w}_0) + \mathbf{v}^T(\mathbf{w} - \mathbf{w}_0)$.



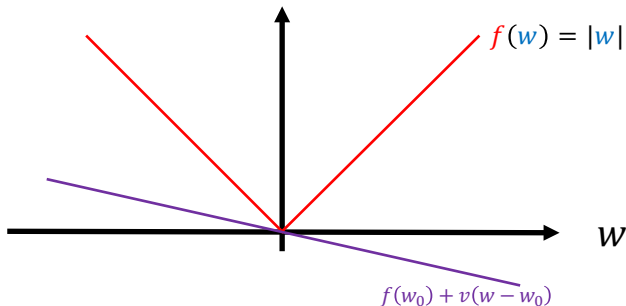
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Definition (Subdifferential). The set containing all the subgradients of f at \mathbf{w}_0 is called the subdifferential. Denote the set by $\partial f(\mathbf{w}_0)$.

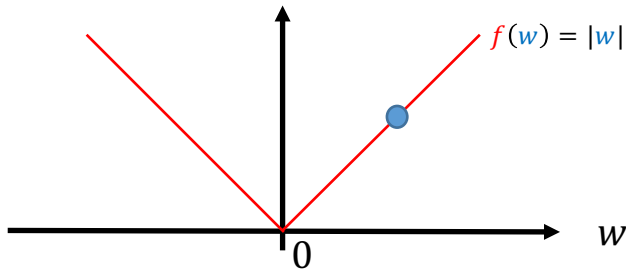
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Example: $f(w) = |w|$

- $\partial f(3) = \{1\}$.



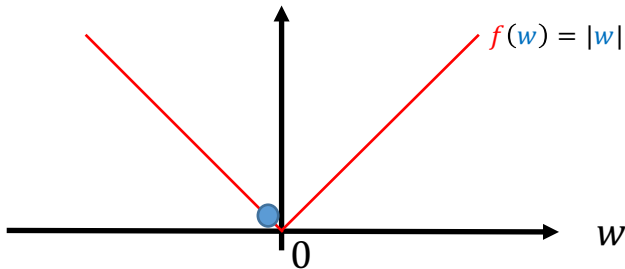
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Example: $f(w) = |w|$

- $\partial f(3) = \{1\}$.
- $\partial f(-0.1) = \{-1\}$.



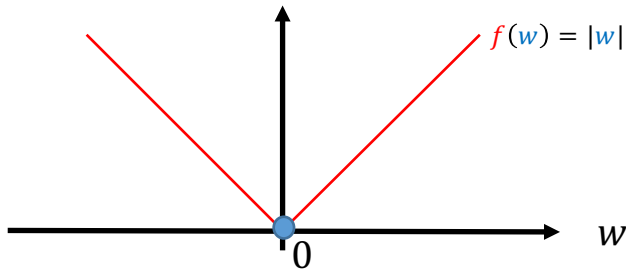
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Example: $f(w) = |w|$

- $\partial f(3) = \{1\}$.
- $\partial f(-0.001) = \{-1\}$.
- $\partial f(0) = [-1, 1]$.



A Property of Convex Optimization

Let f be a convex function.

Property: $w^* = \min_w f(w) \iff 0 \in \partial f(w^*)$.

Example: $\min_w \{f(w) = |w + 5|\}$

- $\partial f(-5) = [-1, 1]$.
- Obviously $0 \in \partial f(-5)$.
- $w^* = -5$ minimizes f .