

Comparing the Efficiency of a Neural Network

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June 30, 2020

Contents

[Small Introduction 2](#_Toc44516458)

[What will I be comparing? 2](#_Toc44516459)

[MNIST Database 2](#_Toc44516460)

[Contents 2](#_Toc44516461)

[EMNIST Database 3](#_Toc44516462)

[MNIST Database Testing 3](#_Toc44516463)

[Sample of a Random 50 3](#_Toc44516464)

[Testing each Number 10 Times 4](#_Toc44516465)

[Recourses Used (Credits) 6](#_Toc44516466)

Comparing the Efficiency of a Neural Network

# Small Introduction

Artificial Intelligence has always interested me. However, making such requires an extraordinary amount of time. So, for my EPQ, I decided it was the perfect opportunity to have a go and code one from scratch. As I am currently taking A level maths at college, I believed doing this would be in my comfort zone, to a degree I was right. However, this was a lot more challenging and time-consuming than I originally thought, and I didn’t think I’d make it to this point, with a finished product.

# What will I be comparing?

By the end of this, I hope to test multiple things; how well my neural network is at image detection. My initial idea was to include learning inputs for a videogame, e.g. Mario. While this would be possible to do with the product I have created, I don’t understand enough about emulation required to pull it off in time for the deadline. It also wouldn’t make sense in context of the test since detecting a handwritten 2 isn’t comparable with how long it could beat a simple level. But know that the maths and code required all boils down to exactly what I’ve created, so in the future it would be possible

## MNIST Database

So, for this test I have decided to compare detecting a number (0-9), a letter (a-z), and a simple drawing. In theory, these should all follow the same principles, just with different databases for it to learn from. The database for the numbers will be MNIST. From the website:

```The MNIST database of handwritten digits, available from this page, has a training set of 60,000 examples, and a test set of 10,000 examples. It is a subset of a larger set available from NIST. The digits have been size-normalized and centered in a fixed-size image.

It is a good database for people who want to try learning techniques and pattern recognition methods on real-world data while spending minimal efforts on pre-processing and formatting. ```

Source: <http://yann.lecun.com/exdb/mnist/>

So, the general idea:

1. Feed the neural network each one of the 60,000 premade handwritten images
2. Feed the neural network a testing image that it hasn’t previously seen and chart the result.

I’m going to be collecting the data in excel and conclude what numbers it’s best and worst at guessing.

This will then be compared to the handwritten letters, ultimately concluding the neural network’s strengths and weaknesses without and recoding.

### Contents

The database contains 4 binary files:

* Training – Data
* Training – Labels
* Testing – Data
* Testing – Labels

In computing terms, parsing data means taking a document, and sorting it ina logical way into a program. So, in the context of MNIST, it can be parsed using C# into an array or list object. The labels directly correspond to the data in said index, so parsing the data into an object that contains the data and label in one is very easy and simple to do. Since MNIST is a very popular database, there are plenty of methods out there publicly available for parsing the data. While researching, I found a user on Stack overflow use IEnumerables, and I will be using this method in my code:

<https://stackoverflow.com/questions/49407772/reading-mnist-database>

Note: This is the only section of code I am copying. The rest is written all by me

## EMNIST Database

The EMNIST Database is very similar to the MNSIT database, hence the name, except it’s for alphabet characters. Just like the MNIST Database, it contains a set of 60,000 drawings of letters. These are greyscale and of resolution 28x28. It then comes with 10,000 testing drawings which I will use to test and log the results.

From the website:

``` The EMNIST dataset is a set of handwritten character digits derived from the NIST Special Database 19 and converted to a 28x28 pixel image format and dataset structure that directly matches the MNIST dataset ```

This is perfect since none of my code has to be rewritten to use this database.

The EMNIST Database can be found here:

<https://www.nist.gov/itl/products-and-services/emnist-dataset>

# MNIST Database Testing

## Sample of a Random 50

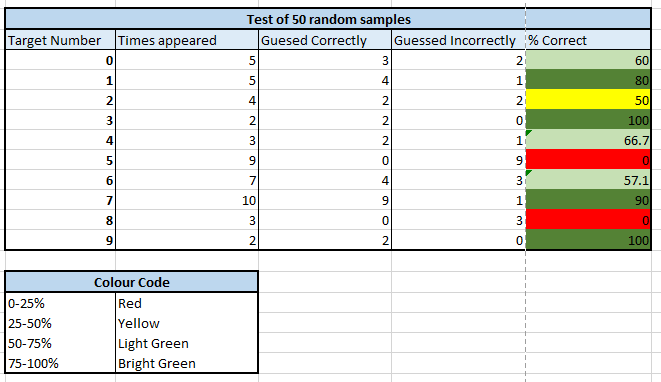


Figure 1 - Source: My own testing

Some interesting notes:

* For some reason, the neural network really struggles to guess 8 and 5 correctly, with getting 0 correct out of 50 attempts
* The neural network got 9 and 3 100% of times, however I wouldn’t say this is reliable since 9 and 3 only got randomly picked twice.
* Out of all the data, I’d say the neural network is reliably best at guessing 7. Since out of all 10 times it was picked, it correctly guessed 9. This surprised me since 7 is very similar to 1 and I expected the neural network to confuse the two.
* I expected the neural network to correctly guess 0 and 3 since they are very distinct numbers. However, I assume it thought 8 was 0 as well as 6 since they both contain circles which could be mistaken for a 0.

## Testing each Number 10 Times

A screenshot of a cell phone

Description automatically generated

Figure 2 - Source: My own testing

Things to note:

* As you can see, the neural network becomes pretty reliable when you test each number x amount of times. I assume after maybe 50 guesses on each number, the scores will plateau to be around 90% correct rate
* Once again, it struggles to guess the number 8

# Recourses Used (Credits)

A massive thank you to these recourses, since I they helped immensely.

|  |  |
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| What it is | Direct link |
| An archive of a livestream by the university professor who runs The Coding Train YouTube channel. | [The Coding Train’s – Live Stream #120, MNIST and Pendulums](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KhogNPC24eI&t=5557s) |
| A video demonstrating how a neural network can solve XOR and why a simple perceptron can not | [The Coding Train’s – Coding Challenge #92: XOR Problem](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=188B6k_F9jU) |
| This is my main recourse used in developing the neural network. It’s an 8.5-hour long series where he goes through the maths, and code required for this project. And while I wish it was as simple as copying the code, I decided to challenge myself and code mine in a different language. The outcome is very similar however. | [The Coding Train’s – Neural Network – The Nature of Code Series](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XJ7HLz9VYz0&list=PLRqwX-V7Uu6aCibgK1PTWWu9by6XFdCfh) |
| Great help with understanding the theory behind it | [3Blue1Brown - But What is a Neural Network? | Deep learning, chapter 1](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aircAruvnKk) |
| ^ | [3Blue1Brown - Gradient descent, how neural networks learn | Deep learning, chapter 2](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IHZwWFHWa-w) |
| This is the first recourse I bought to ensure I stuck with the project. It’s a book I bough on my kindle which I gradually read through quarantine. It’s split into 3 sections; the theory, a worked example, and using it. The worked example was written in a programming language called Python, since mine is written in C# it didn’t help massively but gave me the general workflow for how it should work. The theory section is what inspired The Coding Train’s series, so it was crucial for me to read it | [Tariq Rashid - Make your own Neural Network](https://www.amazon.com/Make-Your-Own-Neural-Network-ebook/dp/B01EER4Z4G/ref=as_li_ss_tl?ie=UTF8&qid=1498492463&sr=8-1&keywords=make+your+own+neural+network&linkCode=sl1&tag=natureofcode-20&linkId=0d10fdc485d6452bb7fc2b62ab4ffd31) |
| The MNIST Database, used for the handwritten numbers | <http://yann.lecun.com/exdb/mnist/> |
| The EMNIST Database, used for the handwritten letters | <https://www.nist.gov/itl/products-and-services/emnist-dataset> |
| The code I used to parse the database is publicly available from here | <https://stackoverflow.com/questions/49407772/reading-mnist-database> |