

# A Machine Learning Library for Rust

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This is a collection of notes from our meetings!

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## Working out Backpropagation

### Neural Network Structure

In this meeting, we went over the math behind neural networks: feed-forwarding, derivatives, and backpropagation. This document contains what we thought you need to know for implementing back-propagation.

Say that we have a feed-forward neural network consisting of  $L$  layers, where layer  $L$  is the output layer, and layer 0 is the input layer. Let  $\vec{\mathbf{a}}^{(\ell)}$  represent the activations in the  $\ell$ -th layer of the network. So if the input to our network is the vector  $\vec{\mathbf{x}}$ , then  $\vec{\mathbf{a}}^{(0)} = \vec{\mathbf{x}}$ . For the purposes of this writeup, vectors are 1-indexed, as opposed to in code where they are 0-indexed.

Say that layer  $\ell$  has  $n_\ell$  neurons.

Let  $w_{ij}^{(\ell)}$  represent the weight on the edge from the  $j$ -th node in layer  $\ell - 1$  to the  $i$ -th node in layer  $\ell$ . Let  $W^{(\ell)}$  be the matrix defined by

$$W^{(\ell)} = \begin{bmatrix} w_{11}^{(\ell)} & w_{12}^{(\ell)} & \cdots & w_{1n_{\ell-1}}^{(\ell)} \\ w_{21}^{(\ell)} & w_{22}^{(\ell)} & \cdots & w_{2n_{\ell-1}}^{(\ell)} \\ \vdots & \vdots & \ddots & \vdots \\ w_{n_\ell 1}^{(\ell)} & w_{n_\ell 2}^{(\ell)} & \cdots & w_{n_\ell n_{\ell-1}}^{(\ell)} \end{bmatrix}$$

Let  $b_i^{(\ell)}$  be the bias associated with the  $i$ -th node of layer  $\ell$ . Each layer of the network has a “squishification function” written as  $\sigma^{(\ell)}$ , so computing the activation  $a_i^{(\ell)}$  can be written as

$$a_i^{(\ell)} = \sigma^{(\ell)}(z_i^{(\ell)})$$

where we let

$$z_i^{(\ell)} = b_i^{(\ell)} + \sum_{j=1}^{n_{\ell-1}} w_{ij} a_j^{(\ell)}$$

We can also write this more succinctly as

$$\vec{\mathbf{a}}^{(\ell)} = \sigma(\vec{\mathbf{z}}^{(\ell)})$$

where

$$\vec{\mathbf{z}}^{(\ell)} = W^{(\ell)} \vec{\mathbf{a}}^{(\ell-1)} + \vec{\mathbf{b}}^{(\ell)}$$

and where  $\sigma(\vec{\mathbf{x}})$  is applied to each element of  $\vec{\mathbf{x}}$ .

## Cost Gradients

For now, we'll be using squared loss. If for training sample 1 we desire the output layer to have value  $\vec{y}$ ,

$$C_1 = \|\vec{a}^{(\ell)} - \vec{y}\|_2^2 = \sum_{i=1}^{n_\ell} (a_i^{(\ell)} - y_i)^2$$

The overall cost for the network over all  $N$  training samples will be the average of all costs, so

$$C = \frac{1}{N} \sum_{k=1}^N C_k$$

We wish to compute the gradient,  $\nabla C$ , of the loss function, so that we can take a step in the “downwards” direction along the surface formed by the graph of  $C$  in order to find a minimum of  $C$ . Since we only care about the direction the gradient is pointing and not the magnitude, the factor of  $\frac{1}{N}$  in front can be ignored.<sup>1</sup> So, we care about computing

$$\nabla C \approx \nabla C_0 + \nabla C_1 + \cdots + \nabla C_N$$

For explanation purposes, we'll go through computing  $\nabla C_0$  for a label  $\vec{y}$ , with input  $\vec{x} = \vec{a}^{(0)}$ . The gradient is

$$\nabla C_0 = \begin{bmatrix} \partial C_0 / \partial w_{00}^{(1)} \\ \vdots \\ \partial C_0 / \partial w_{ij}^{(1)} \\ \vdots \\ \partial C_0 / \partial w_{n_1 n_0}^{(1)} \\ \vdots \\ \partial C_0 / \partial b_i^{(1)} \\ \vdots \end{bmatrix}$$

Where the dimension of this vector is the number of total parameters (weights and biases) of our network. It's components each reflect how sensitive the overall cost is to a small change in one of the parameters, so we want to take a step in the most efficient direction to decrease the cost.

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1. From here on out, for two vectors  $\vec{v}$  and  $\vec{u}$ ,  $\vec{v} \approx \vec{u}$  will mean that the two vectors are pointing in the same direction, but may not have the same magnitude. More formally,

$$\vec{v} \approx \vec{u} \iff \frac{\vec{v}}{\|\vec{v}\|} = \frac{\vec{u}}{\|\vec{u}\|}$$

## Computing Partial Derivatives

Using the chain rule, we can compute the derivative with respect to one of the weights in layer  $\ell$ .

$$\frac{\partial C_0}{\partial w_{ij}^{(\ell)}} = \frac{\partial z_i^{(\ell)}}{\partial w_{ij}^{(\ell)}} \cdot \frac{\partial a_i^{(\ell)}}{\partial z_i^{(\ell)}} \cdot \frac{\partial C_0}{\partial a_i^{(\ell)}}$$

In the same manor we can compute the derivative with respect to one of the biases.

$$\frac{\partial C_0}{\partial b_i^{(\ell)}} = \frac{\partial z_i^{(\ell)}}{\partial b_i^{(\ell)}} \cdot \frac{\partial a_i^{(\ell)}}{\partial z_i^{(\ell)}} \cdot \frac{\partial C_0}{\partial a_i^{(\ell)}}$$

We can actually simplify these computations quite a lot. Using the formula for  $z_i^{(\ell)}$ , we know

$$z_i^{(\ell)} = b_i^{(\ell)} + \left( \sum_{j=1}^{n_{\ell-1}} w_{ij}^{(\ell)} a_j^{(\ell-1)} \right) \implies \frac{\partial z_i^{(\ell)}}{\partial w_{ij}^{(\ell)}} = a_j^{(\ell-1)}$$

When taking the derivative with respect to bias, this becomes much simpler.

$$z_i^{(\ell)} = b_i^{(\ell)} + \left( \sum_{j=1}^{n_{\ell-1}} w_{ij}^{(\ell)} a_j^{(\ell-1)} \right) \implies \frac{\partial z_i^{(\ell)}}{\partial b_i^{(\ell)}} = 1$$

Also, because  $a_i^{(\ell)} = \sigma^{(\ell)}(z_i^{(\ell)})$ ,  $\frac{\partial a_i^{(\ell)}}{\partial z_i^{(\ell)}} = \dot{\sigma}^{(\ell)}(z_i^{(\ell)})$  where  $\dot{\sigma}$  is the derivative of  $\sigma$ . Together, this means

$$\begin{aligned} \frac{\partial C_0}{\partial w_{ij}^{(\ell)}} &= a_j^{(\ell-1)} \dot{\sigma}^{(\ell)}(z_i^{(\ell)}) \cdot \frac{\partial C_0}{\partial a_i^{(\ell)}} \\ \frac{\partial C_0}{\partial b_i^{(\ell)}} &= \dot{\sigma}^{(\ell)}(z_i^{(\ell)}) \cdot \frac{\partial C_0}{\partial a_i^{(\ell)}} \end{aligned}$$

Let's use matrix notation to clean this up a bit. Let  $\frac{\partial C_0}{\partial \mathbf{W}^{(\ell)}}$  represent the matrix whose  $(i, j)$ -th entry is  $\frac{\partial C_0}{\partial w_{ij}^{(\ell)}}$ . Likewise,  $\frac{\partial C_0}{\partial \mathbf{b}^{(\ell)}}$  is the vector whose  $i$ -th entry is  $\frac{\partial C_0}{\partial b_i^{(\ell)}}$ . Now, we can write

$$\frac{\partial C_0}{\partial \mathbf{b}^{(\ell)}} = \dot{\sigma}^{(\ell)}(\mathbf{z}^{(\ell)}) \odot \frac{\partial C_0}{\partial \mathbf{a}^{(\ell)}} \quad \text{and} \quad \frac{\partial C_0}{\partial \mathbf{W}^{(\ell)}} = \frac{\partial C_0}{\partial \mathbf{b}^{(\ell)}} \left( \mathbf{a}^{(\ell-1)} \right)^\top$$

Where  $\odot$  represents the point-wise *Hadamard product*.

This leaves the question of how to compute the derivative of  $C_0$  with respect to  $a_i$  for each layer. Notice that if  $\ell = L$  (we are in the last layer) this is actually quite straightforward. Using the definition of cost,

$$C_0 = \sum_{i=1}^{n_L} (a_i^{(L)} - y_i)^2$$

we can easily compute the derivative

$$\frac{\partial C_0}{\partial a_i^{(L)}} = 2(a_i^{(L)} - y_i) \quad \text{or} \quad \frac{\partial C_0}{\partial \vec{a}^{(L)}} = 2(\vec{a}^{(L)} - \vec{y})$$

However, if we try to find an expression for the same derivative but in a previous layer, we find

$$\frac{\partial C_0}{\partial a_k^{(\ell-1)}} = \sum_{j=1}^{n_\ell} \frac{\partial z_j^{(\ell)}}{\partial a_k^{(\ell-1)}} \cdot \frac{\partial a_j^{(\ell)}}{\partial z_j^{(\ell)}} \cdot \frac{\partial C_0}{\partial a_j^{(\ell)}} = \sum_{j=1}^{n_\ell} w_{jk^{(\ell)}} \dot{\sigma}^{(\ell)}(z_j^{(\ell)}) \cdot \frac{\partial C_0}{\partial a_j^{(\ell)}}$$

In matrix notation, this is

$$\frac{\partial C_0}{\partial \vec{a}^{(\ell-1)}} = W^{(\ell)\top} \left( \dot{\sigma}^{(\ell)}(\vec{z}^{(\ell)}) \odot \frac{\partial C_0}{\partial \vec{a}^{(\ell)}} \right)$$

Notice this formula is recursive! To compute it efficiently, we can use a dynamic programming style of approach. This gives us the following natural algorithm for computing  $\nabla C_0$ .

### The Backpropagation Algorithm

(Base case of the DP table.) Start by computing all  $\partial C_0 / \partial a_i^{(L)} = 2(a_i^{(L)} - y_i)$  for  $1 \leq i \leq n_L$ . With this done, we can also calculate all

$$\frac{\partial C_0}{\partial w_{ij}^{(L)}} = a_i^{(L-1)} \dot{\sigma}^{(L)}(z_i^{(L)}) \frac{\partial C_0}{\partial a_i^{(L)}} \quad \text{and} \quad \frac{\partial C_0}{\partial b_i^{(L)}} = \dot{\sigma}^{(L)}(z_i^{(L)}) \frac{\partial C_0}{\partial a_i^{(L)}}$$

for the last layer  $L$ . In matrix form, this means computing

$$\begin{aligned} \frac{\partial C_0}{\partial \vec{a}^{(L)}} &= 2(\vec{a}^{(L)} - \vec{y}) \\ \frac{\partial C_0}{\partial \vec{b}^{(L)}} &= \dot{\sigma}^{(L)}(\vec{z}^{(L)}) \odot \frac{\partial C_0}{\partial \vec{a}^{(L)}} \\ \frac{\partial C_0}{\partial W^{(L)}} &= \frac{\partial C_0}{\partial \vec{b}^{(L)}} (\vec{a}^{(L-1)})^\top \end{aligned}$$

(Recursive case of DP table) Now, iterating  $\ell$  from  $L-1$  down to 1, compute for all  $1 \leq i \leq n_\ell$  the derivatives

$$\frac{\partial C_0}{\partial a_i^{(\ell)}} = \sum_{j=1}^{n_{(\ell+1)}} w_{ij}^{(\ell)} \dot{\sigma}^{(\ell+1)}(z_j^{(\ell+1)}) \frac{\partial C_0}{\partial a_j^{(\ell+1)}}$$

Again, in matrix form, this is computing

$$\frac{\partial C_0}{\partial \vec{\mathbf{a}}^{(\ell)}} = W^{(\ell)} \left( \dot{\sigma}^{(\ell+1)} \left( \mathbf{z}^{(\ell)} \right) \odot \frac{\partial C_0}{\partial \vec{\mathbf{a}}^{(\ell+1)}} \right)$$

Once these have been computed, one can directly compute

$$\frac{\partial C_0}{\partial w_{ij}^{(\ell)}} = a_j^{(\ell-1)} \dot{\sigma}^{(\ell)}(z_i^{(\ell)}) \frac{\partial C_0}{\partial a_i^{(\ell)}} \quad \text{and} \quad \frac{\partial C_0}{\partial b_i^{(\ell)}} = \dot{\sigma}^{(\ell)}(z_i^{(\ell)}) \frac{\partial C_0}{\partial a_i^{(\ell)}}$$

which is

$$\begin{aligned} \frac{\partial C_0}{\partial \vec{\mathbf{b}}^{(\ell)}} &= \dot{\sigma}^{(\ell)}(\vec{\mathbf{z}}^{(\ell)}) \odot \frac{\partial C_0}{\partial \vec{\mathbf{a}}^{(\ell)}} \\ \frac{\partial C_0}{\partial W^{(\ell)}} &= \frac{\partial C_0}{\partial \vec{\mathbf{b}}^{(\ell)}} \left( \vec{\mathbf{a}}^{(\ell-1)} \right)^\top \end{aligned}$$

And that's it! This gives everything you need to fully compute  $\nabla C_0$ .

### ***Stochastic Gradient Descent***

Fully computing  $\nabla C \approx \nabla C_0, \dots, \nabla C_N$  is very costly, as that's a lot of gradients to compute. So instead of recomputing  $\nabla C$  and taking a step in the  $-\nabla C$  direction every time, we first start by randomly partitioning our training set into  $B$  “batches.” We'll say that  $C_{k,b}$  is the cost of the network on the  $b$ -th sample of the  $k$ -th batch of our training set, and  $\nabla C_b \approx \nabla C_{1,b} + \dots + \nabla C_{N/B,b}$  for  $1 \leq b \leq B$ . At each step of gradient descent, we iterate over  $1 \leq b \leq B$ , taking a step in the  $-\nabla C_b$  direction. We repeat this iteration until some other stopping condition.