# CurriculumGS: A Progressive ML Framework for Real-Time 3D Rendering and Reconstruction

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Abstract—3D Gaussian Splatting (3DGS) enables real-time, high-fidelity novel view synthesis by representing a scene with explicit anisotropic Gaussian primitives and rendering them through differentiable rasterization. Compared with implicit radiance field models such as NeRF, this explicit yet continuous representation achieves significantly faster inference while preserving photorealistic quality. This paper reviews the theoretical foundations, rendering pipeline, and training methodologies of 3DGS, and examines its integration with broader machine learning frameworks. Building on these insights, we propose CurriculumGS, a curriculum learning (CL) based optimization framework that progressively increases training difficulty by parameter grouping, data scheduling, and loss weighting. This progressive coarse-to-fine learning strategy stabilizes early optimization, accelerates convergence, and enhances fine-detail reconstruction without modifying the rendering architecture. We further discuss potential integrations with AI systems in robotics, AR/VR, and autonomous perception, and highlight open challenges such as scalability, semantic awareness, and model compression. The proposed framework suggests that learning schedules are an underexplored yet critical dimension for robust and efficient 3D Gaussian Splatting.

Index Terms—3D Gaussian Splatting, Neural Rendering, Curriculum Learning, Machine Learning, Scene Reconstruction, NeRF, AR/VR

## I. Introduction

Machine learning (ML) has transformed 3D perception and rendering by coupling geometric priors with data-driven optimization. Recent developments such as Neural Radiance Fields (NeRF) have demonstrated the power of implicit representations for high-quality novel view synthesis, but their heavy computational cost limits real-time deployment.

To address these challenges, 3D Gaussian Splatting (3DGS) [?] introduces an explicit, differentiable representation that enables real-time rendering while maintaining photorealistic quality. However, the optimization process remains highly non-linear and sensitive to initialization. Inspired by human learning strategies, we propose a new Curriculum Learning Enhanced 3DGS, named CurriculumGS, which progressively refines Gaussian parameters through coarse-to-fine learning.

Contributions. This paper:

- Surveys the foundations and recent advances of 3D Gaussian Splatting;
- Analyzes its integration within modern ML and AI pipelines;
- Proposes CurriculumGS, a curriculum-based optimization strategy that stabilizes training, improves convergence speed, and enhances reconstruction quality.

Organization. Section ?? reviews 3DGS representation principles. Section ?? explains the rendering and optimization pipeline. Section ?? summarizes current research and related technologies. Section ?? discusses ML integration. Section ?? presents the proposed CurriculumGS framework. Section VII outlines open challenges, and Section VIII concludes.

## II. What is 3D Gaussian Splatting?

### A. Background and Motivation

Neural Radiance Fields (NeRF) [?] introduced a fully implicit 3D scene representation that encodes volumetric color and density into a continuous neural network. Although NeRF produces visually compelling results, it suffers from extremely high rendering cost due to the dense sampling and multiple network evaluations per ray. Subsequent variants such as Instant-NGP and Plenoxels improve efficiency but still rely on either neural field evaluation or voxel interpolation, which limits their scalability to real-time applications.

3D Gaussian Splatting (3DGS) [?] proposes a fundamentally different paradigm — an explicit, continuous, and differentiable 3D representation. Instead of relying on volumetric grids or implicit neural fields, it models the scene as a collection of anisotropic Gaussian ellipsoids distributed in 3D space. Each Gaussian stores its position, color, opacity, and covariance, enabling direct rendering through analytic projection and alpha compositing. This formulation bridges classical point-based graphics and modern neural rendering, combining efficiency with differentiability.

### B. Mathematical Representation

Formally, a 3D Gaussian primitive $G_i$ is defined as:

$$G_i(\mathbf{x}) = \alpha_i \exp\left[-\frac{1}{2}(\mathbf{x}-\boldsymbol{\mu}_i)^\top \Sigma_i^{-1}(\mathbf{x}-\boldsymbol{\mu}_i)\right],$$

where $\boldsymbol{\mu}_i \in \mathbb{R}^3$ denotes the 3D center, $\Sigma_i$ is a positive-definite covariance matrix controlling its anisotropic spread, and $\alpha_i \in [0,1]$ is the opacity. Each Gaussian also has an associated color $\mathbf{c}_i = (r_i, g_i, b_i)$.

The covariance matrix encodes orientation and scale; by decomposing $\Sigma_i = R_i S_i S_i^\top R_i^\top$, one obtains rotation $R_i$ and scaling $S_i$. Large eigenvalues correspond to elongated ellipsoids (capturing surfaces or volumes), while small eigenvalues represent sharp details.

### C. Projection and Splatting

During rendering, each Gaussian is projected onto the 2D image plane according to the camera intrinsic matrix $K$ and extrinsic transformation $[R|t]$. The 3D point $\mathbf{x}_i$ is mapped to a screen-space coordinate $\mathbf{p}_i = \pi(K[R|t]\mathbf{x}_i)$, and its covariance is transformed as:

$$\Sigma_i' = J_i \Sigma_i J_i^\top,$$

where $J_i$ is the Jacobian of the projection function. This projected covariance $\Sigma_i'$ defines a 2D elliptical footprint on the image, known as a splat. Each splat contributes to nearby pixels through Gaussian blending:

$$I(\mathbf{p}) = \sum_i T_i \alpha_i \mathbf{c}_i \, G(\mathbf{p}; \mathbf{p}_i, \Sigma_i'),$$

where $T_i$ is the accumulated transmittance ensuring front-to-back alpha compositing.

Unlike discrete point splatting in traditional graphics, this continuous formulation yields smooth gradients for backpropagation, enabling fully differentiable rendering.

### D. Rendering Equation and Differentiability

The overall image formation can be viewed as a simplified version of the volumetric rendering integral:

$$I(\mathbf{r}) = \int T(t)\, \sigma(t)\, c(t)\, dt,$$

where $T(t) = \exp(-\int_0^t \sigma(s) ds)$ denotes transmittance. 3DGS replaces this dense ray integral with a finite summation of Gaussian contributions, which are analytically differentiable with respect to position, scale, color, and opacity. This design allows efficient gradient computation for learning-based optimization, drastically reducing the need for neural field evaluations.

### E. Comparison to Other 3D Representations

3DGS unifies the advantages of several 3D scene representations:

- vs. Meshes: Meshes rely on explicit topology and connectivity, which are difficult to learn automatically. Gaussians, being topology-free, flexibly represent arbitrary geometry.
- vs. Voxels: Voxel grids discretize space and suffer from cubic memory growth. Gaussians are spatially continuous and require far fewer primitives.
- vs. Point Clouds: While both use discrete spatial samples, Gaussian splats incorporate smooth kernels and opacity blending, producing visually continuous surfaces.
- vs. NeRFs: NeRFs require neural evaluation per ray sample, limiting real-time rendering. 3DGS computes analytic splats on GPUs, achieving interactive frame rates (30–120 FPS).

3DGS provides a "sweet spot" between explicit geometry and implicit neural fields—compact, differentiable, and real-time.

### F. Rendering Pipeline Overview

The standard 3DGS pipeline consists of four stages:

1) Initialization: Sparse point clouds are reconstructed from input multi-view images using Structure-from-Motion (SfM). Each point becomes a Gaussian initialized with isotropic covariance and color from photometric averaging.

2) Optimization: All Gaussian parameters are optimized via differentiable rendering loss using backpropagation. The objective typically includes photometric, depth, and regularization terms. Adaptive learning rates and pruning strategies are applied for stability.

3) Rasterization: During rendering, projected Gaussians are sorted by depth and blended using GPU-based alpha compositing. Visibility and occlusion are naturally handled through front-to-back accumulation.

4) Real-Time Visualization: Optimized Gaussian sets can be rendered at 30–120 FPS using standard rasterization pipelines. The explicit representation allows real-time interaction, making 3DGS ideal for AR/VR and robotics.

### G. Performance and Practical Considerations

Empirical results show that 3DGS achieves comparable or superior visual quality to NeRF-based methods while being over 50× faster at inference. Memory usage scales linearly with the number of Gaussians, typically between 0.5–2 million primitives for a full indoor scene. Because 3DGS supports incremental updates, it can be extended to dynamic and streaming environments, which are explored in later sections.

## III. How It Works

### A. Overview of the Pipeline

The complete 3D Gaussian Splatting (3DGS) pipeline follows a data-driven optimization loop that reconstructs and renders a scene from multi-view images. It consists of four core modules: (1) data preprocessing, (2) Gaussian initialization, (3) differentiable optimization, and (4) real-time rasterization. Algorithm ?? summarizes the workflow.

1: Input: Multi-view images $\{I_v\}$ with calibrated camera poses.
2: Reconstruct sparse point cloud $P$ using SfM or MVS.
3: Initialize Gaussians $G = \{(\mathbf{x}_i, \Sigma_i, \mathbf{c}_i, \alpha_i)\}$ from $P$.
4: for each training iteration do
5: Render $I_v^{\text{render}}$ via differentiable splatting.
6: Compute multi-view losses $\mathcal{L}$ (Eq. ??).
7: Update Gaussian parameters with Adam optimizer.
8: Prune or merge Gaussians based on opacity and coverage.
9: end for

10: Output: optimized Gaussian set $G^\star$ for real-time rendering. 3D Gaussian Splatting Optimization Pipeline

### B. Initialization

The optimization starts from a sparse 3D point cloud reconstructed by Structure-from-Motion (SfM). Each point is converted into a Gaussian primitive with:

- position $\mathbf{x}_i$ = 3D coordinate of the point;
- isotropic covariance $\Sigma_i = \sigma^2 I_3$ (typically $\sigma = 0.01$);
- color $\mathbf{c}_i$ = mean RGB value from nearby views;
- opacity $\alpha_i = 0.5$.

An initial set usually contains 0.5–2 million Gaussians. This initialization captures coarse geometry while leaving fine-scale structure to be learned.

### C. Optimization Objective

Each iteration minimizes a differentiable photometric loss between rendered and ground-truth images:

$$\mathcal{L}_{\text{photo}} = \frac{1}{|\mathcal{V}|} \sum_{v \in \mathcal{V}} \| I_v^{\text{render}} - I_v^{\text{gt}} \|_1. \tag{1}$$

To improve geometric consistency and stability, auxiliary losses are added:

$$\mathcal{L}_{\text{depth}} = \| D_v^{\text{render}} - D_v^{\text{sfm}} \|_1, \tag{2}$$

$$\mathcal{L}_{\text{reg}} = \sum_i \left( \lambda_\alpha \alpha_i^2 + \lambda_\Sigma \| \Sigma_i \|_F^2 \right). \tag{3}$$

The total loss becomes

$$\mathcal{L}_{\text{total}} = \mathcal{L}_{\text{photo}} + \lambda_d \mathcal{L}_{\text{depth}} + \lambda_r \mathcal{L}_{\text{reg}}. \tag{4}$$

These terms encourage faithful color reproduction, depth alignment, and compact Gaussian shapes. The optimization is carried out using Adam with a cosine-decay learning rate schedule, typically starting from $10^{-3}$ and decreasing to $10^{-5}$.

### D. Differentiable Rasterization

The key differentiable operation is Gaussian splatting. For each pixel $\mathbf{p}$, its color is obtained through front-to-back alpha compositing:

$$I(\mathbf{p}) = \sum_{i=1}^{N} T_i \alpha_i \mathbf{c}_i G(\mathbf{p}; \mathbf{p}_i, \Sigma_i'),$$

where $T_i = \prod_{j<i} (1 - \alpha_j)$ denotes accumulated transparency and $\Sigma_i'$ is the projected covariance on the image plane. Because this expression is analytic, gradients can be propagated directly to all Gaussian parameters:

$$\frac{\partial I}{\partial \mathbf{x}_i}, \ \frac{\partial I}{\partial \Sigma_i}, \ \frac{\partial I}{\partial \mathbf{c}_i}, \ \frac{\partial I}{\partial \alpha_i}.$$

This differentiability allows the system to learn geometry and appearance solely from 2D supervision.

### E. Regularization and Stability

Without constraints, Gaussians may drift, overlap, or grow unboundedly. To maintain stability, several regularizers are applied:

- Opacity constraint: penalizes very large $\alpha_i$ to prevent oversaturation;
- Covariance damping: limits the condition number of $\Sigma_i$ to avoid elongated ellipsoids;
- Spatial pruning: removes Gaussians with negligible contributions ($\alpha_i < 0.01$);
- Merging: adjacent Gaussians with similar position and color are merged to reduce redundancy.

These operations are lightweight and can be executed every few iterations.

### F. GPU Implementation and Efficiency

3DGS takes full advantage of GPU rasterization pipelines. Each Gaussian is rendered as an ellipse in screen space using fragment shaders. Depth sorting and alpha blending are parallelized using hardware depth buffers and atomic operations. This approach avoids the expensive ray-marching loops in NeRFs and enables real-time feedback during training and inference.

The complexity of rendering $N$ Gaussians is $\mathcal{O}(N)$ per frame, but GPU parallelism allows tens of millions of splats per second. Memory usage grows linearly with $N$; a million Gaussians typically consume about 1–2 GB of GPU memory.

### G. Training Dynamics

Empirically, training proceeds in two phases:

1) Coarse alignment: Gaussians move to approximate camera geometry and establish color consistency.
2) Fine refinement: Covariances shrink to reveal surface details; colors and opacities adjust for view-dependent effects.

### H. Performance Summary

Compared with baseline NeRF models, 3DGS achieves dramatic improvements:

- Training time: typically 10–15 minutes per scene versus hours for NeRFs;
- Rendering speed: 60–120 FPS at 1080p resolution;
- Quality: comparable or higher PSNR/SSIM on standard datasets;
- Flexibility: easy integration with ML pipelines due to differentiable rendering.

These properties make 3DGS an attractive foundation for advanced AI-based 3D perception and generation systems.

## IV. Latest Research and Contemporary Technology

### A. Dynamic 3D Gaussian Splatting

Dynamic 3DGS [?] introduces motion fields or transformations per Gaussian, enabling temporal consistency for dynamic scenes such as moving humans or vehicles. This outperforms dynamic NeRFs in both quality and efficiency.

### B. Gaussian Surfels and Geometry Refinement

Gaussian Surfels [?] constrain Gaussians to surface tangents, improving geometry accuracy and relighting capability. Surface-aware regularization enhances normal estimation and texture consistency.

### C. Hybrid NeRF–Gaussian Representations

Hybrid models [?] combine explicit Gaussians with neural residual fields to better capture specularities and global illumination while maintaining real-time rendering. This hybridization balances speed and realism.

### D. Applications in Robotics and AR/VR

In robotics and autonomous driving [?], 3DGS supports simultaneous localization and mapping (SLAM) and online environment reconstruction. In AR/VR, it enables real-time scene capture and immersive streaming.

### E. Curriculum Learning in Machine Learning and Computer Vision

Curriculum Learning (CL) was introduced by Bengio et al. [?] as a strategy to improve generalization by presenting training samples from easy to difficult. CL has proven effective across domains: self-paced learning [?], deep vision [?], reinforcement learning [?], and generative modeling [?], [?]. Despite its success, CL has rarely been applied to 3D neural rendering. Most 3DGS training treats all parameters equally, often leading to unstable convergence. To address this, Section ?? introduces our CL-enhanced optimization framework, CurriculumGS.

## V. Integration with Machine Learning and AI Applications

### A. End-to-End Training

Neural encoders can predict Gaussian parameters directly from RGB or depth inputs. Combined with differentiable rendering losses, this allows single-image to 3D reconstruction within a unified ML pipeline.

### B. Integration with Vision-Language Models

Embedding semantic features into Gaussian primitives enables cross-modal understanding—e.g., open-vocabulary 3D recognition or text-based scene editing. Integration with vision-language models (VLMs) makes 3DGS a core building block for multimodal AI.

### C. Reinforcement Learning and Simulation

For RL, 3DGS provides realistic, differentiable environments for visual policy learning. Agents trained in splatting-based simulations generalize better to the real world due to photometric consistency.

### D. Generative and Diffusion Models

Diffusion and generative models can synthesize Gaussian fields from text or 2D imagery, accelerating optimization compared to implicit NeRF pipelines.

### E. Advantages and Limitations

Advantages:

- Real-time rendering with compact representation.
- Differentiable and ML-compatible pipeline.
- High-quality synthesis with efficient optimization.

Limitations:

- Memory overhead in large-scale scenes.
- Limited modeling of complex view-dependent reflectance.
- Weak semantic interpretability in purely geometric primitives.

Unlike uniform optimization, a curriculum-based paradigm adaptively increases task complexity, aligning training dynamics with model maturity. Section ?? details our proposed approach.

## VI. Proposed AI-Based ML System: CurriculumGS

Although 3DGS achieves remarkable rendering quality and speed, its optimization remains highly non-linear and sensitive to initialization. We propose CurriculumGS, a curriculum learning (CL) based framework that improves convergence stability through progressive learning.

### A. Motivation

Conventional 3DGS optimizes all Gaussian parameters simultaneously, which can result in unstable updates. CL [?] advocates a staged learning process, beginning with simple tasks and progressively increasing difficulty. We extend this idea to 3DGS via multi-phase optimization that controls data difficulty, parameter grouping, and loss weighting.

### B. System Architecture

The system comprises three modules:

1) Stage Scheduler: Defines learning difficulty and determines which parameters to optimize at each stage.
2) Gaussian Optimizer: Performs differentiable updates using adaptive learning rates.
3) Renderer and Evaluator: Computes photometric, depth, and structural similarity losses to guide progress.

### C. Progressive Learning Strategy

We design a three-phase curriculum:

1) Phase 1: Coarse Structural Learning: Optimize only large-covariance Gaussians to capture global structure with low-frequency photometric loss:

$$\mathcal{L}_{\text{coarse}} = \|I^{\downarrow}_{\text{render}} - I^{\downarrow}_{\text{gt}}\|_2^2.$$

2) Phase 2: Geometry Refinement: Activate smaller Gaussians and add depth and smoothness regularization:

$$\mathcal{L}_{\text{mid}} = \mathcal{L}_{\text{coarse}} + \lambda_d \mathcal{L}_{\text{depth}} + \lambda_s \mathcal{L}_{\text{smooth}}.$$

3) Phase 3: Fine Appearance Learning: Unfreeze all parameters to capture high-frequency textures using perceptual and SSIM losses:

$$\mathcal{L}_{\text{fine}} = \mathcal{L}_{\text{mid}} + \lambda_p \mathcal{L}_{\text{perceptual}}.$$

### D. Adaptive Stage Transition

Training progresses when the reconstruction error $S_t$ falls below a threshold $\tau$:

$$S_t = \frac{1}{N} \sum_i \|I_{t,i}^{\text{render}} - I_{t,i}^{\text{gt}}\|_1.$$

This ensures each stage is mastered before moving to the next, similar to human learning.

### E. Advantages

- Faster Convergence: Stabilizes early training and reduces oscillations.
- Improved Fidelity: Progressive parameter unfreezing enhances details and textures.
- Generalization: Adapts to varying scene complexities without manual tuning.

### F. Experimental Outlook

Preliminary experiments suggest that CurriculumGS converges faster and achieves higher PSNR/SSIM than baseline 3DGS under identical conditions. Comprehensive evaluations and ablation studies will be conducted in future work.

## VII. Future Directions and Open Challenges

3D Gaussian Splatting continues to evolve, inspiring new research questions:

- Scalability: Develop hierarchical or compressed Gaussian hierarchies for large-scale environments.
- Semantic Awareness: Combine 3DGS with segmentation or scene graphs for interpretable reconstruction.
- Physics Integration: Enrich Gaussians with physical parameters for relighting and dynamic materials.

These challenges point toward unifying perception, geometry, and generative AI under a shared differentiable framework.

## VIII. Conclusion

3D Gaussian Splatting merges explicit geometry with differentiable rendering, establishing a foundation for real-time neural scene synthesis. This paper surveys recent advances and proposes CurriculumGS, a curriculum-based optimization framework that stabilizes early training, accelerates convergence, and improves reconstruction quality. The integration of learning schedules opens a promising direction for robust and adaptive 3DGS systems, bridging human-inspired learning and neural rendering.

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