

Chapter 5 : Lower bounds for Online Linear Optimization

5.1 Lower bounds for bounded OLO

Finding a lower bound accounts to find a strategy for the adversary that forces a certain regret onto the algorithm, no matter what the algorithm does.

The basic method relies on the fact that :

$$\sup_{x \in V} f(x) \geq E[f(z)]$$

Theorem 5.1. Let $V \subset \mathbb{R}^d$ be any non-empty bounded closed convex subset. Let $D = \sup_{v,w \in V} \|v - w\|_2$ be the diameter of V . Let \mathcal{A} be any (possibly randomized) algorithm for OLO on V . Let T be any non-negative integer. There exists a sequence of vectors g_1, \dots, g_T with $\|g_t\|_2 \leq L$ and $u \in V$ such that the regret of algorithm \mathcal{A} satisfies



$$\text{Regret}_T(u) = \sum_{t=1}^T \langle g_t, x_t \rangle - \sum_{t=1}^T \langle g_t, u \rangle \geq \frac{\sqrt{2LD\sqrt{T}}}{4}.$$

D : diameter of V

x_t is generated by \mathcal{A}

Proof :

Denote $\text{Regret}_T = \max_{u \in V} \text{Regret}_T(u)$ (the largest regret)

Let $v, w \in V$. such that $\|v - w\|_2 = D$

let $z = \frac{v-w}{\|v-w\|_2}$, so that $\langle z, v-w \rangle = D$
(to let variable in the feasible set)

let $\epsilon_1, \dots, \epsilon_T$ be i.i.d. Rademacher random variables
i.e. $P[\epsilon_t = 1] = P[\epsilon_t = -1] = 0.5$

set $g_t = L \epsilon_t z$

$$\sup_{g_1, \dots, g_T} \text{Regret}_T$$

$$= \sup_{g_1, \dots, g_T} \max_{u \in V} \text{Regret}_T(u) \quad (\text{definition})$$

$$\geq E \left[\sum_{t=1}^T L \epsilon_t \langle z, x_t \rangle - \min_{u \in V} \sum_{t=1}^T L \epsilon_t \langle z, u \rangle \right] \quad \left(\sup_{x \in V} f(x) \geq E[f(z)] \right)$$

$$= E \left[- \min_{u \in V} \sum_{t=1}^T L \epsilon_t \langle z, u \rangle \right] \quad (E[\epsilon_t] = 0)$$

$$= E \left[\max_{u \in V} \sum_{t=1}^T -L \epsilon_t \langle z, u \rangle \right]$$

$$= E \left[\max_{u \in V} \sum_{t=1}^T L \epsilon_t \langle z, u \rangle \right] \quad (E[\epsilon_t] = E[-\epsilon_t])$$

$$= E \left[\max_{u \in \{v, w\}} \sum_{t=1}^T L \epsilon_t \langle z, u \rangle \right] \quad (z's \text{ definition})$$

$$= E \left[\frac{1}{2} \sum_{t=1}^T L \epsilon_t \langle z, v+w \rangle + \frac{1}{2} \left| \sum_{t=1}^T L \epsilon_t \langle z, v-w \rangle \right| \right]$$

$= \text{Constant}$
 $= 0$

$$(\max(a, b) = \frac{a+b}{2} + \frac{|a-b|}{2})$$

$$= \frac{L}{2} E \left[\left| \sum_{t=1}^T \epsilon_t \langle z, v-w \rangle \right| \right] = \frac{LD}{2} E \left[\left| \sum_{t=1}^T \epsilon_t \right| \right]$$

D

$$\geq \frac{\sqrt{LDf}}{4} \quad (\text{Khintchine inequality})$$

Khintchine inequality

Let $\{\varepsilon_n\}_{n=1}^N$ be i.i.d. random variables with $P(\varepsilon_n = \pm 1) = \frac{1}{2}$ for $n = 1, \dots, N$, i.e., a sequence with Rademacher distribution. Let $0 < p < \infty$ and let $x_1, \dots, x_N \in \mathbb{C}$. Then

$$A_p \left(\sum_{n=1}^N |x_n|^2 \right)^{1/2} \leq \left(\mathbb{E} \left| \sum_{n=1}^N \varepsilon_n x_n \right|^p \right)^{1/p} \leq B_p \left(\sum_{n=1}^N |x_n|^2 \right)^{1/2}$$

for some constants $A_p, B_p > 0$ depending only on p (see Expected value for notation). The sharp values of the constants A_p, B_p were found by Haagerup (Ref. 2; see Ref. 3 for a simpler proof). It is a simple matter to see that $A_p = 1$ when $p \geq 2$, and $B_p = 1$ when $0 < p \leq 2$.

Haagerup found that

$$A_p = \begin{cases} 2^{1/2-1/p} & 0 < p \leq p_0, \\ 2^{1/2} (\Gamma((p+1)/2)/\sqrt{\pi})^{1/p} & p_0 < p < 2 \\ 1 & 2 \leq p < \infty \end{cases}$$

and

$$B_p = \begin{cases} 1 & 0 < p \leq 2 \\ 2^{1/2} (\Gamma((p+1)/2)/\sqrt{\pi})^{1/p} & 2 < p < \infty, \end{cases}$$

where $p_0 \approx 1.847$ and Γ is the Gamma function. One may note in particular that B_p matches exactly the moments of a normal distribution.

Thus, $E \left| \sum_{t=1}^T \varepsilon_t \right| \geq \sqrt{\sum_{t=1}^T 1} = \sqrt{T}$

Comment :

the lower bound $\frac{\sqrt{LDF}}{4}$ is also the upper bound
for Online Subgradient Descent when $\eta_t = \frac{D}{L\sqrt{T}}$ or
 $\eta = \frac{D}{L\sqrt{T}}$

Theorem 2.13. Let $V \subseteq \mathbb{R}^d$ a non-empty closed convex set with diameter D , i.e. $\max_{\mathbf{x}, \mathbf{y} \in V} \|\mathbf{x} - \mathbf{y}\|_2 \leq D$. Let ℓ_1, \dots, ℓ_T an arbitrary sequence of convex functions $\ell_t : V \rightarrow \mathbb{R}$ differentiable in open sets containing V for $t = 1, \dots, T$. Pick any $\mathbf{x}_1 \in V$ assume $\eta_{t+1} \leq \eta_t$, $t = 1, \dots, T$. Then, $\forall \mathbf{u} \in V$, the following regret bound holds

$$\sum_{t=1}^T (\ell_t(\mathbf{x}_t) - \ell_t(\mathbf{u})) \leq \frac{D^2}{2\eta_T} + \sum_{t=1}^T \frac{\eta_t}{2} \|\mathbf{g}_t\|_2^2.$$

Moreover, if η_t is constant, i.e. $\eta_t = \eta \forall t = 1, \dots, T$, we have

$$\sum_{t=1}^T (\ell_t(\mathbf{x}_t) - \ell_t(\mathbf{u})) \leq \frac{\|\mathbf{u} - \mathbf{x}_1\|_2^2}{2\eta} + \frac{\eta}{2} \sum_{t=1}^T \|\mathbf{g}_t\|_2^2.$$

5.2 Unconstrained Online Linear Optimization

5.2.1 Convex Analysis Bits : Fenchel conjugate

Before we move to the unconstrained case, we enrich our math toolbox.

Definition 5.2 (Closed Function). A function $f : V \subseteq \mathbb{R}^d \rightarrow [-\infty, +\infty]$ is **closed** iff $\{x : f(x) \leq \alpha\}$ is closed for every $\alpha \in \mathbb{R}$.

Example 5.3. The indicator function of a set $V \subset \mathbb{R}^d$, is closed iff V is closed.

$$I: V \rightarrow \{0, 1\}$$

Definition 5.4 (Fenchel Conjugate). For a function $f : \mathbb{R}^d \rightarrow [-\infty, \infty]$, we define the **Fenchel conjugate** $f^* : \mathbb{R}^d \rightarrow [-\infty, \infty]$ as

$$f^*(\theta) = \sup_{x \in \mathbb{R}^d} \langle \theta, x \rangle - f(x).$$

From the definition we immediately obtain the Fenchel-Young's inequality

$$\langle \theta, x \rangle \leq f(x) + f^*(\theta), \forall x, \theta \in \mathbb{R}^d.$$

We have the following useful property for Fenchel conjugate

Theorem 5.5 ([Rockafellar, 1970 Corollary 23.5.1 and Theorem 23.5]). Let $f : \mathbb{R}^d \rightarrow (-\infty, +\infty]$ be convex, proper, and closed. Then

1. $x \in \partial f^*(\theta)$ iff $\theta \in \partial f(x)$.
2. $\langle \theta, x \rangle - f(x)$ achieves its supremum in x at $x = x^*$ iff $x^* \in \partial f^*(\theta)$.

Example 5.6. Let $f(x) = \exp(x)$, hence we have $f^*(\theta) = \max_x x\theta - \exp(x)$. Solving the optimization, we have that $x^* = \ln(\theta)$ if $\theta > 0$ and $f^*(\theta) = \theta \ln \theta - \theta$, $f^*(0) = 0$, and $f^*(\theta) = +\infty$ for $\theta < 0$.

$$\nabla_x (x\theta - \exp(x)) = \theta - \exp(x)$$

If $\theta > 0$, the supremum get when $x = \ln \theta$

$$\text{Then } f^*(\theta) = \theta \ln \theta - \theta$$

$$\text{If } \theta = 0, f^*(\theta) = 0 \quad \text{If } \theta < 0, f^*(\theta) = +\infty$$

Lemma 5.8. Let f be a function and let f^* be its Fenchel conjugate. For $a > 0$ and $b \in \mathbb{R}$, the Fenchel conjugate of $g(\mathbf{x}) = af(\mathbf{x}) + b$ is $g^*(\boldsymbol{\theta}) = af^*(\boldsymbol{\theta}/a) - b$.

Proof:

$$\begin{aligned} g^*(\boldsymbol{\theta}) &= \sup_{\mathbf{x} \in \mathbb{R}^d} (\langle \boldsymbol{\theta}, \mathbf{x} \rangle - af(\mathbf{x}) - b) \quad (\text{definition}) \\ &= -b + a \sup_{\mathbf{x} \in \mathbb{R}^d} (\langle \frac{\boldsymbol{\theta}}{a}, \mathbf{x} \rangle - f(\mathbf{x})) \\ &= -b + af^*(\frac{\boldsymbol{\theta}}{a}) \end{aligned}$$

Lemma 5.9 ([Bauschke and Combettes, 2011, Example 13.7]). Let $f : \mathbb{R} \rightarrow (-\infty, +\infty]$ even. Then $(f \circ \|\cdot\|_2)^* = f^* \circ \|\cdot\|_2$.

5.2.2 Lower Bound for the Unconstrained Case.

The above lower bound applies only to the constrained setting. In the unconstrained setting, we proved that OSD with $\mathbf{x}_1 = \mathbf{0}$ and constant learning rate of $\eta = \frac{1}{L\sqrt{T}}$ gives a regret of $\frac{1}{2}L(\|\mathbf{u}\|_2^2 + 1)\sqrt{T}$ for any $\mathbf{u} \in \mathbb{R}^d$. Is this regret optimal? It is clear that the regret must be at least linear in $\|\mathbf{u}\|_2$, but is linear enough?

The approach I will follow is to *reduce the OLO game to the online game of betting on a coin*, where the lower bounds are known. So, let's introduce the coin-betting online game:

- Start with an initial amount of money $\epsilon > 0$.
- In each round, the algorithm bets a fraction of its current wealth on the outcome of a coin.
- The outcome of the coin is revealed and the algorithm wins or lose its bet, 1 to 1.

Denote

the outcomes of the coin : $c_t \in \{-1, 1\}$, $t=1, \dots, T$

fraction of money to bet : $\beta_t \in [-1, 1]$, $t=1, \dots, T$

the initial money : ϵ

money won till the end of round t : r_t

total money :

$$\text{Money at the end of round } t = \text{Money at the beginning of round } t + \underbrace{c_t \beta_t (r_{t-1} + \epsilon)}_{\text{Money won or lost}} = \epsilon \prod_{i=1}^t (1 + \beta_i c_i),$$

(use the fact $r_0 = 0$)

bet of the algorithm on round t : $x_t = \beta_t (\epsilon + r_{t-1})$

The best case : double money in each round : $\epsilon \cdot 2^T$

However, we can get a lower bound for max wealth

Theorem 5.10 ([Cesa-Bianchi and Lugosi, 2006] a simplified statement of Theorem 9.2]). Let $T \geq 21$. Then, for any betting strategy with initial money $\epsilon > 0$ that bets fractions of its current wealth, there exists a sequence of coin outcomes c_t , such that

$$\epsilon + \sum_{t=1}^T c_t x_t \leq \frac{1}{\sqrt{T}} \max_{-1 \leq \beta \leq 1} \epsilon \prod_{t=1}^T (1 + \beta c_t) \leq \frac{\epsilon}{\sqrt{T}} \exp \left(\frac{\ln 2(\sum_{t=1}^T c_t)^2}{T} \right).$$

Now, connect the coin-betting game with OLO.

In OLO,

$$\sum_{t=1}^T \langle \mathbf{g}_t, \mathbf{x}_t \rangle - \sum_{t=1}^T \langle \mathbf{g}_t, \mathbf{u} \rangle \leq \psi_T(\mathbf{u}), \forall \mathbf{u} \in \mathbb{R}^d,$$

Use Fenchel conjugate :

$$\sum_{t=1}^T \langle \mathbf{g}_t, \mathbf{x}_t \rangle \leq \inf_{\mathbf{u}} \sum_{t=1}^T \langle \mathbf{g}_t, \mathbf{u} \rangle + \psi_T(\mathbf{u}) = -\sup_{\mathbf{u}} -\left\langle \sum_{t=1}^T \mathbf{g}_t, \mathbf{u} \right\rangle - \psi_T(\mathbf{u}) = -\psi_T^*(-\sum_{t=1}^T \mathbf{g}_t).$$

Without any other information, it can be challenging to guess what is the slowest increasing function ψ_T . So, we restrict our attention to online algorithms that guarantee a constant regret against the zero vector. This immediately imply the following important consequence.

Theorem 5.11. Let $\epsilon(t)$ a non-decreasing function of the index of the rounds and \mathcal{A} an OLO algorithm that guarantees $\text{Regret}_t(0) \leq \epsilon(t)$ for any sequence of $\mathbf{g}_1, \dots, \mathbf{g}_t \in \mathbb{R}^d$ with $\|\mathbf{g}_i\|_2 \leq 1$. Then, there exists β_t such that $\mathbf{x}_t = \beta_t(\epsilon(T) - \sum_{i=1}^{t-1} \langle \mathbf{g}_i, \mathbf{x}_i \rangle)$ and $\|\beta_t\|_2 \leq 1$ for $t = 1, \dots, T$.

Proof:

Define $r_t = -\sum_{i=1}^t \langle \mathbf{g}_i, \mathbf{x}_i \rangle$, the reward of the algorithm
(smaller, better)

So, we have

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Regret}_T(\mathbf{u}) &= \sum_{t=1}^T \langle \mathbf{g}_t, \mathbf{x}_t \rangle - \sum_{t=1}^T \langle \mathbf{g}_t, \mathbf{u} \rangle \\ &= -r_T + \left\langle \sum_{t=1}^T \mathbf{g}_t, \mathbf{u} \right\rangle \end{aligned}$$

Since we assume : $\text{Regret}_t(0) \leq \epsilon(t)$

we always have : $\text{Regret}_t(0) = -r_t \leq \epsilon(t)$

i.e.

$$r_t \geq -\epsilon(t)$$

Then we prove : $\|x_t\|_2 \leq r_{t-1} + \epsilon(t)$, for $t=1, \dots, T$

Proof:

Assume there's a sequence g_1, \dots, g_{t-1} , that $\|x_t\|_2 > r_{t-1} + \epsilon(t)$

We then set $g_t = \frac{x_t}{\|x_t\|_2}$

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Thus we have } r_t &= r_{t-1} - g_t \cdot x_t \\ &= r_{t-1} - \|x_t\|_2 \\ &< -\epsilon(t) \end{aligned}$$



However, $r_t \geq -\epsilon(t)$, (get above)

Thus, contradict the assumption.

So, from the fact that

$$\begin{aligned} \|x_t\|_2 &\leq r_{t-1} + \epsilon(t) \\ &\leq r_{t-1} + \epsilon(T) \end{aligned} \quad (\text{non-decreasing } \epsilon(t))$$

There exists β_t , $\|\beta_t\|_2 \leq 1$, that

$$x_t = \beta_t(\epsilon(T) + r_{t-1})$$

This theorem informs us of something important: *any OLO algorithm that suffer a non-decreasing regret against the null competitor must predict in the form of a “vectorial” coin-betting algorithm.* This immediately implies the following.

Theorem 5.12. Let $T \geq 21$. For any OLO algorithm, under the assumptions of Theorem 5.11 there exist a sequence of $\mathbf{g}_1, \dots, \mathbf{g}_T \in \mathbb{R}^d$ with $\|\mathbf{g}_t\|_2 \leq 1$ and $\mathbf{u}^* \in \mathbb{R}^d$, such that

$$\sum_{i=1}^t \langle \mathbf{g}_t, \mathbf{x}_t \rangle - \sum_{t=1}^T \langle \mathbf{g}_t, \mathbf{u}^* \rangle \geq 0.8 \|\mathbf{u}^*\|_2 \sqrt{T} \left(\sqrt{0.3 \ln \frac{0.8 \|\mathbf{u}^*\|_2 T}{\epsilon(T)}} - 1 \right) + \epsilon(T) \left(1 - \frac{1}{\sqrt{T}} \right).$$

Proof:

This proof works by reducing the OLO game to a coin-betting game and then use the upper bound to the reward for coin-betting games.

First, set $\mathbf{g}_t = [c_t, 0, 0, \dots, 0]$ where $c_t \in \{-1, 1\}$

c_t will be defined in the following so that $\langle \mathbf{g}_t, \mathbf{x} \rangle = -c_t x_1$ for any $\mathbf{x} \in \mathbb{R}^d$

Given Theorem 5.11,

Theorem 5.11. Let $\epsilon(t)$ a non-decreasing function of the index of the rounds and \mathcal{A} an OLO algorithm that guarantees $\text{Regret}_t(\mathbf{0}) \leq \epsilon(t)$ for any sequence of $\mathbf{g}_1, \dots, \mathbf{g}_t \in \mathbb{R}^d$ with $\|\mathbf{g}_i\|_2 \leq 1$. Then, there exists β_t such that $\mathbf{x}_t = \beta_t(\epsilon(T) - \sum_{i=1}^{t-1} \langle \mathbf{g}_i, \mathbf{x}_i \rangle)$ and $\|\beta_t\|_2 \leq 1$ for $t = 1, \dots, T$.

we have the first coordinate of \mathbf{x}_t must satisfy:

$$\begin{aligned} x_{t,1} &= \beta_{t,1} (\epsilon(T) - \sum_{i=1}^{t-1} \langle \mathbf{g}_i, \mathbf{x}_i \rangle) \\ &= \beta_{t,1} (\epsilon(T) + \sum_{i=1}^{t-1} c_i x_{i,1}) \end{aligned}$$

for some $\beta_{t,1}$ that $|\beta_{t,1}| \leq 1$

Hence - that's a coin-betting algorithm that bets $x_{t,1}$ money on the outcome of a coin c_t , with initial money $\epsilon(T)$

Then we can use Theorem 5.10

Theorem 5.10 ([Cesa-Bianchi and Lugosi 2006] a simplified statement of Theorem 9.2). Let $T \geq 21$. Then, for any betting strategy with initial money $\epsilon > 0$ that bets fractions of its current wealth, there exists a sequence of coin outcomes c_t , such that

$$\epsilon + \sum_{t=1}^T c_t x_t \leq \frac{1}{\sqrt{T}} \max_{-1 \leq \beta \leq 1} \epsilon \prod_{t=1}^T (1 + \beta c_t) \leq \frac{\epsilon}{\sqrt{T}} \exp \left(\frac{\ln 2(\sum_{t=1}^T c_t)^2}{T} \right).$$

Then,

$$\sum_{t=1}^T \langle g_t, x_t \rangle - \epsilon c_T = - \sum_{t=1}^T c_t x_{t,1} - \epsilon c_T$$

$$\geq - \frac{\epsilon c_T}{\sqrt{T}} \exp \left(\frac{\ln 2(\sum_{t=1}^T c_t)^2}{T} \right)$$

$$= -f \left(\sum_{t=1}^T c_t \right) \quad \left(\text{let } f(x) = \frac{\epsilon c_T}{\sqrt{T}} \exp \left(\frac{x^2 \ln 2}{T} \right) \right)$$

$$= - \sum_{t=1}^T c_t u_t^* + f^*(\|u^*\|_2) \quad \left(\text{Theorem 5.5 part 2} \right)$$

$$(f^*(\theta) = \sup_x [\theta x - f(x)])$$

$$(u^* = f' \left(\sum_{t=1}^T c_t \right))$$

$$= \sum_{t=1}^T \langle g_t, u_t^* \rangle + f^*(\|u^*\|_2) \quad \left(\langle g_t, x \rangle = -c_t x_1 \right)$$

Theorem 5.5 ([Rockafellar 1970] Corollary 23.5.1 and Theorem 23.5). Let $f : \mathbb{R}^d \rightarrow (-\infty, +\infty]$ be convex, proper, and closed. Then

1. $x \in \partial f^*(\theta)$ iff $\theta \in \partial f(x)$.
2. $\langle \theta, x \rangle - f(x)$ achieves its supremum in x at $x = x^*$ iff $x^* \in \partial f^*(\theta)$.

Then by lemma A.3,

$$f(x) = \frac{\epsilon(T)}{T} \exp\left(\frac{x^2/\ln 2}{T}\right)$$

Theorem A.3. Let $a, b > 0$. Then, the Fenchel conjugate of $f(x) = b \exp(x^2/(2a))$ is

$$f^*(\theta) = \sqrt{a}|\theta| \sqrt{W(a\theta^2/b^2)} - b \exp\left(\frac{W(a\theta^2/b^2)}{2}\right) = \sqrt{a}|\theta| \left(\sqrt{W(a\theta^2/b^2)} - \frac{1}{\sqrt{W(a\theta^2/b^2)}} \right).$$

Moreover,

$$f^*(\theta) \leq \sqrt{a}|\theta| \sqrt{\ln(a\theta^2/b^2 + 1)} - b.$$

We already have:

$$\sum_{t=1}^T \langle g_t, x_t \rangle - \epsilon(T) \geq \sum_{t=1}^T \langle g_t, u^* \rangle + f^*(\|u^*\|_2)$$

we have

$$\begin{aligned} \sum_{t=1}^T \langle g_t, x_t \rangle - \sum_{t=1}^T \langle g_t, u^* \rangle \\ \geq \epsilon(T) + 0.8\|u^*\|_2 \sqrt{T} \left(\sqrt{0.3 \ln \frac{0.8\|u^*\|_2 T}{\epsilon(T)}} - 1 \right) \end{aligned}$$

$$\geq \epsilon(T) \left(1 - \frac{1}{\sqrt{T}} \right) + 0.8\|u^*\|_2 \sqrt{T} \left(\sqrt{0.3 \ln \frac{0.8\|u^*\|_2 T}{\epsilon(T)}} - 1 \right)$$