Computational Learning Theory: Agnostic Learning

Machine Learning

THE UNIVERSITY OF UTAH

Slides based on material from Dan Roth, Avrim Blum, Tom Mitchell and others

This lecture: Computational Learning Theory

- The Theory of Generalization
- Probably Approximately Correct (PAC) learning
- Positive and negative learnability results
- Agnostic Learning
- Shattering and the VC dimension

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- PAC learning and Occam's Razor
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  3. For any concept, there is some function in the hypothesis space that is consistent with the training set

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Let's look at the last assumption. Is it reasonable?

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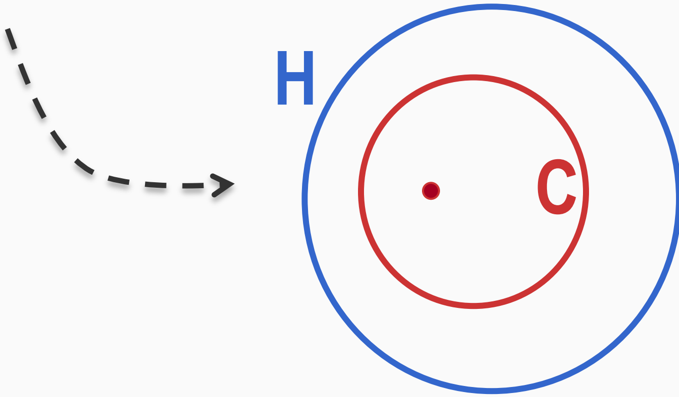
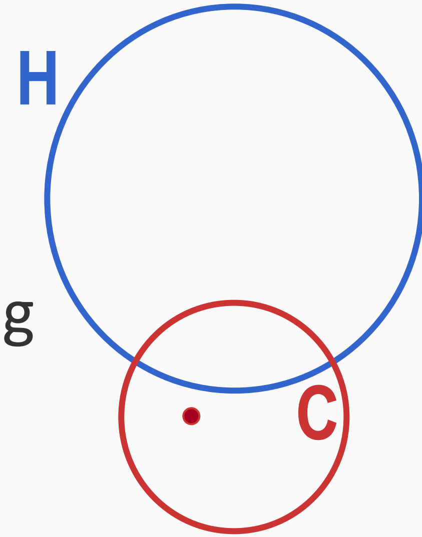


What is agnostic learning?

- So far, we have assumed that the learning algorithm could find the true concept

- What if: We are trying to learn a concept f using hypotheses in H, but f ∉ H
  - That is C is not a subset of H
  - This setting is called *agnostic learning*
  - Can we say something about sample complexity?



More realistic setting than before

Agnostic Learning

Learn a concept f using hypotheses in H, but f $\notin$ H

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We can find a classifier $h \in H$ that has low *training* error

$$\mathrm{err}_s(h) = \frac{|\{f(x) \neq h(x) : x \in S\}|}{m}$$

This is the fraction of training examples that are misclassified

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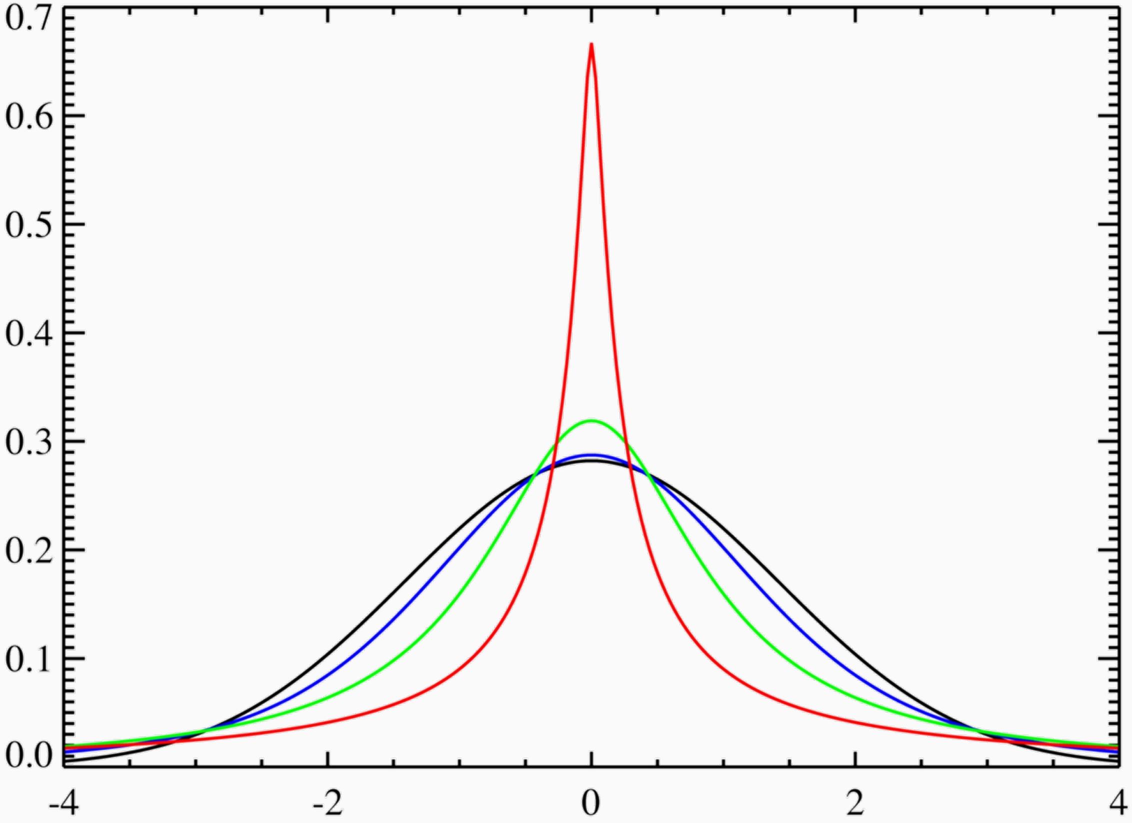
What we want: A guarantee that a hypothesis with small training error will have a good accuracy on unseen examples

$$\mathrm{err}_D(h) = \Pr_{x \sim D}[f(x) \neq h(x)]$$

We will use *Tail bounds* for analysis

How far can a random variable get from its mean?



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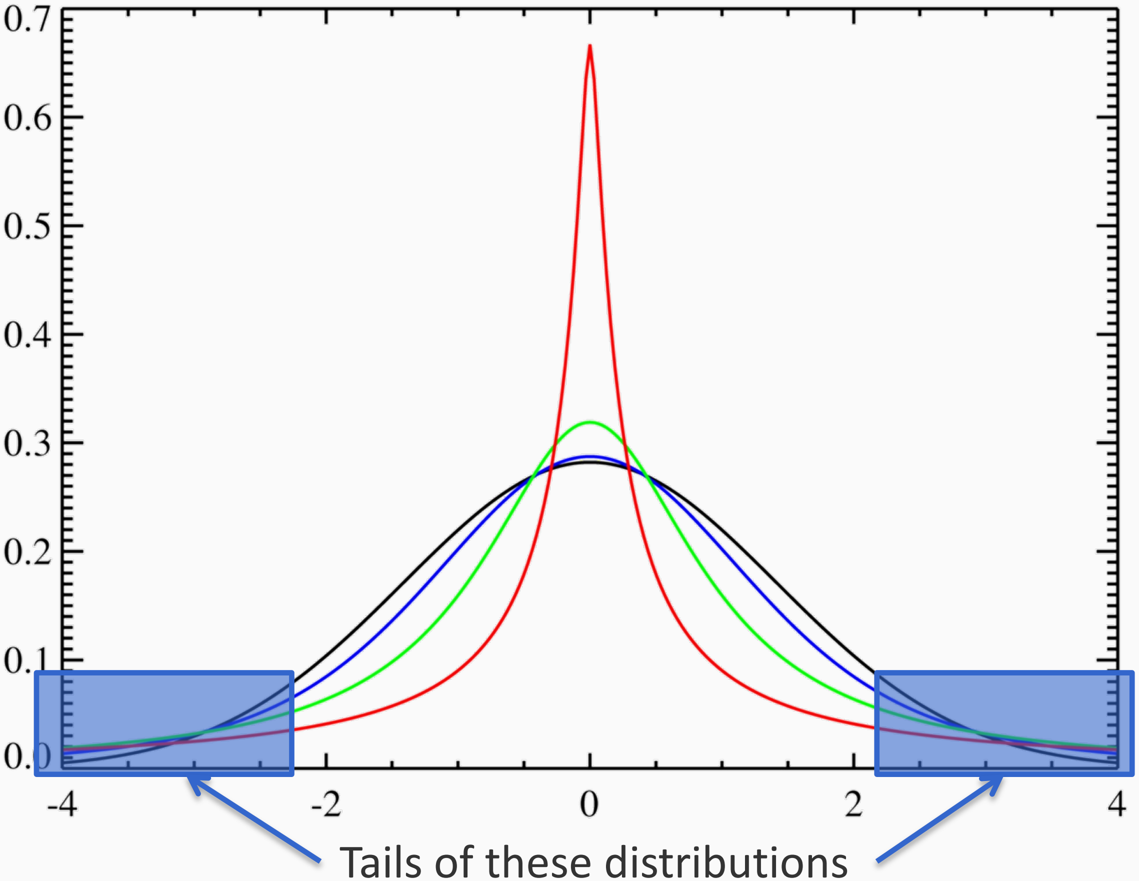

Tails of these distributions

Bounding probabilities

Law of large numbers: As we collect more samples, the empirical average converges to the true expectation

- Suppose we have an unknown coin and we want to estimate its bias (i.e. probability of heads)
- Toss the coin m times

$$\frac{\text{number of heads}}{m} \to \mathrm{P(heads)}$$

As m increases, we get a better estimate of $\mathrm{P(heads)}$

What can we say about the gap between these two terms?

Bounding probabilities

- Markov's inequality: Bounds the probability that a non-negative random variable exceeds a fixed value

$$P[X \geq a] \leq \frac{E[X]}{a}$$

- Chebyshev's inequality: Bounds the probability that a random variable differs from its expected value by more than a fixed number of standard deviations

$$P[|X - \mu| \geq k\sigma] \leq \frac{1}{k^2}$$

What we want: To bound sums of random variables

- Why? Because the training error depends on the number of errors on the training set

Hoeffding’s inequality

Upper bounds on how much the sum of a set of random variables differs from its expected value

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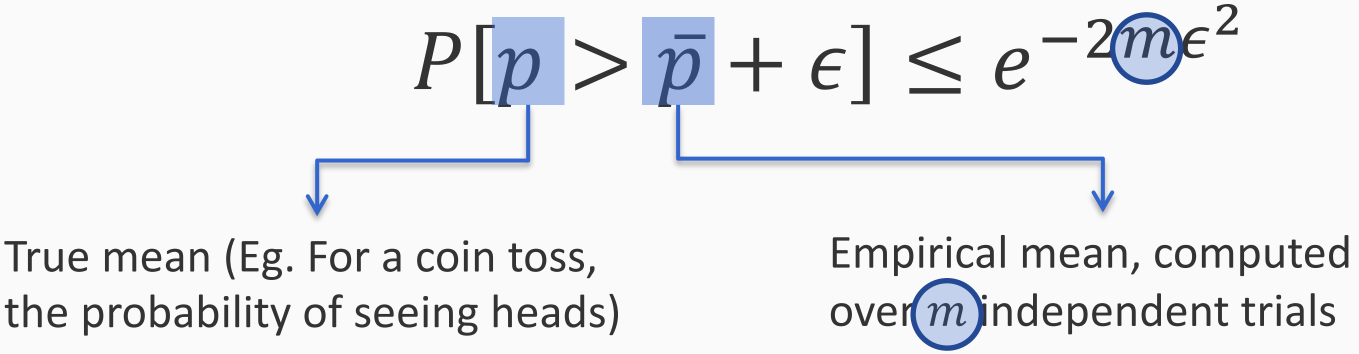

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The probability that the true mean will be more than ϵ away from the empirical mean, computed over m trials

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Empirical mean, computed over m independent trials

What this tells us: The empirical mean will not be too far from the expected mean if there are many samples.

And, it quantifies the convergence rate as well.

Back to agnostic learning

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We can ask: What is the probability that the true error is more than ϵ away from the empirical error?

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$$Err_D(h) = Pr_{x \sim D}[f(x) \neq h(x)]$$

$$Err_S(h) = \frac{|\{f(x) \neq h(x), x \in S\}|}{m}$$

Agnostic learning

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The probability that there *exists* a hypothesis in H whose training error is ϵ away from the true error is bounded above

$$P\left[\text{for } \mathit{some}\ h \in H,\quad \text{we have } Err_D(h) > Err_S(h) + \epsilon\right] \leq |H|e^{-2m\epsilon^2}$$

Union bound

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This is an undesirable situation because our learner may end up picking this hypothesis.

Let us see what it takes to make this an improbable situation

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Same game as before: We want this probability to be smaller than δ

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Rearranging this gives us

$$m \geq \frac{1}{2\epsilon^2}\left[\ln|H| + \ln\left(\frac{1}{\delta}\right)\right]$$

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Size of the hypothesis class: Again an Occam's razor argument – prefer smaller sets of functions

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2. We have a *generalization bound*: A bound on how much the true error will deviate from the training error. If we have more than m examples, then with high probability (more than $1 - \delta$),

$$err_D(h) - err_S(h) \leq \sqrt{\frac{\ln|H| + \ln(1/\delta)}{2m}}$$

Generalization error   Training error

What we have seen so far

Occam's razor: When the hypothesis space contains the true concept

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Learnability depends on the log of the size of the hypothesis space

Have we solved everything? Eg: What about linear classifiers?