

Exercises Set 1

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Abstract

Only the questions with a * are compulsory (but do all of them!).

1 Optimization

1.1 One dimension

Let's consider $f(x) = x^2 - x + 3$. We are interested in finding the minimum of this function; i.e. we want to find $x^* \in \mathbb{R}$ such that $f(x^*)$ is the smallest possible, mathematically:

$$\forall x \in \mathbb{R}, f(x) \geq f(x^*)$$

It turns out that since this function is quadratic, you can manually compute that $x^ = 0.5$. However, we will suppose that this is a complex function, for which we cannot find the minimum by hand. The techniques we will develop should be generalization to more complex functions, for which you won't be able to find the minimum "by hand".*

Method 1 First, let's try to brute force our problem: compute $f(x)$ for $x = -1.75, x = -0.75, x = -0.25, x = 0.25, x = 0.75, x = 1.25, x = 1.75, x = 2.25, x = 2.75$, and $x = 3.25$.

Find the x value that gave you the smallest value for $f(x)$. This will be your first "guess" for x^* .

This technique is called "grid search".

List the positive and negative aspect of this technique.

Method 2 For this second approach, we will suppose that x^* is in $(-5, 5)$. Define $a = -10$ and $b = 10$, and iterate the following process:

- if $f(a) > f(b)$, then let $a = \frac{a+b}{2}$
- if $f(a) < f(b)$, then let $b = \frac{a+b}{2}$

Manually do 6-7 steps of this process. Your final "guess" for x^* is $\frac{a+b}{2}$.

This technique is called "dichotomy".

List the positive and negative aspect of this technique.

Method 3 For this second approach, we will suppose that x^* is "close" to¹ -0.5 .

Define $x_0 = -0.5$, choose a 'learning rate' $\lambda = 0.8$ (say) and iterate the following process:

- compute $f'(x_k)$
- let $x_{k+1} = x_k - \lambda * f'(x_k)$

Manually do 5 steps of this process. Your final "guess" for x^* is the last x_k calculated.

This technique is called "gradient descent".

¹or at least "not too far" from