

# KL-Divergence, Trust-Region and Natural PG

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# Recap

# Policy Gradient Theorem (Infinite Setting)

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The policy gradient theorem generalizes the likelihood ratio approach

$$\begin{aligned}\nabla_{\theta} J(\pi_{\theta}) &= \sum_{h=0}^{\infty} \gamma^h \mathbb{E}_{s,a \sim \mathbb{P}_h^{\pi_{\theta}}} \nabla_{\theta} \ln \pi_{\theta}(a | s) \cdot Q^{\pi_{\theta}}(s, a) \\ &= \frac{1}{1 - \gamma} \mathbb{E}_{s,a \sim d_{\mu}^{\pi_{\theta}}} \left[ \nabla_{\theta} \ln \pi_{\theta}(a | s) \cdot \boxed{Q^{\pi_{\theta}}(s, a)} \right]\end{aligned}$$

**Policy Evaluation!**



# Policy Gradient Theorem (Infinite Setting)

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We can use the return  $G$  as an unbiased estimate of  $Q$   
(MC)



# REINFORCE

— — —

Initialize policy parameters  $\theta$  arbitrarily

**for** each episode  $\{s_1, a_1, r_2, \dots, s_{T-1}, a_{T-1}, r_T\} \sim \pi_\theta$  **do**

**for**  $t = 1$  to  $T - 1$  **do**

$\theta \leftarrow \theta + \alpha \nabla_\theta \log \pi_\theta(s_t, a_t) G_t$

**endfor**

**endfor**

**return**  $\theta$

VARIANCE!



# Baseline

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To reduce the variance we can introduce baselines (function of state)

$$\nabla_{\theta} J(\pi_{\theta}) = \frac{1}{1 - \gamma} \mathbb{E}_{s, a \sim d_{\mu}^{\pi_{\theta}}} \left[ \nabla_{\theta} \ln \pi_{\theta}(a | s) \cdot (Q^{\pi_{\theta}}(s, a) - b(s)) \right]$$

Is this term introducing a bias? NO!



# Value Function as Baseline

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As baselines have to be action-independent, a common choice for a baseline is

$$b(s) = V^{\pi_{\theta}}(s)$$

$$\nabla_{\theta} J(\theta) = \frac{1}{1-\gamma} \mathbb{E}_{s,a \sim d^{\pi_{\theta}}} \left[ \nabla_{\theta} \ln \pi_{\theta}(a | s) (Q^{\pi_{\theta}}(s, a) - V^{\pi_{\theta}}(s)) \right]$$

Called  
Advantage  
Function

$$\nabla_{\theta} J(\theta_t) = \frac{1}{1-\gamma} \mathbb{E}_{s,a \sim d^{\pi_{\theta_t}}} \left[ \nabla_{\theta} \ln \pi_{\theta_t}(a | s) (A^{\pi_{\theta_t}}(s, a)) \right]$$



# Advantage Function

— — —

**Intuition:** the advantage function tells us how good an action is compared to the average value of the state

Value of an  
action in the  
state

$$Q^{\pi_{\theta}}(s, a) - V^{\pi_{\theta}}(s)$$

Average value  
of the state





# REINFORCE with Baseline

— — —

Initialize policy parameter  $\theta$ , baseline  $b$

**for** iteration=1, 2,  $\dots$  **do**

Collect a set of trajectories by executing the current policy

At each timestep  $t$  in each trajectory  $\tau^i$ , compute

Return  $G_t^i = \sum_{t'=t}^{T-1} r_{t'}^i$ , and

Advantage estimate  $\hat{A}_t = G_t^i - b(s_t)$ .

Re-fit the baseline, by minimizing  $\sum_i \sum_t \|b(s_t) - G_t^i\|^2$ ,

Update the policy, using a policy gradient estimate  $\hat{g}$ ,

Which is a sum of terms  $\nabla_{\theta} \log \pi(a_t | s_t, \theta) \hat{A}_t$ .

(Plug  $\hat{g}$  into SGD or ADAM)

**endfor**

We're still using the  
return and collecting MC  
samples

# Advantage Function

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$$Q^{\pi_{\theta}}(s, a) - V^{\pi_{\theta}}(s)$$

If we can access the true value function, the TD error is an unbiased estimate of the advantage function

$$\begin{aligned}\mathbb{E}_{\pi_{\theta}} [\delta^{\pi_{\theta}} | s, a] &= \mathbb{E}_{\pi_{\theta}} [r + \gamma V^{\pi_{\theta}}(s') | s, a] - V^{\pi_{\theta}}(s) \\ &= Q^{\pi_{\theta}}(s, a) - V^{\pi_{\theta}}(s) \\ &= A^{\pi_{\theta}}(s, a)\end{aligned}$$

So we can use the TD error to compute the policy gradient

$$\nabla_{\theta} J(\theta) = \mathbb{E}_{\pi_{\theta}} [\nabla_{\theta} \log \pi_{\theta}(s, a) \delta^{\pi_{\theta}}]$$

$$\delta^{\pi_{\theta}} = r + \gamma V^{\pi_{\theta}}(s') - V^{\pi_{\theta}}(s)$$

Can be approximated!

# Reducing Variance with Critic

— — —

**Motivation:** Monte-Carlo policy gradient still has high variance!

We can estimate  $V/Q$  by using a *critic*

Such critic is also parameterized

$$Q_w(s, a) \approx Q^{\pi_\theta}(s, a)$$



# MC vs TD Policy Gradient

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- In MC policy gradient, the target is the return  $G$

$$\Delta\theta = \alpha(\mathbf{G}_t - V_v(s_t))\nabla_{\theta} \log \pi_{\theta}(s_t, a_t)$$

- In Actor-Critic the target is a TD target and relies on bootstrapping
  - Multiple timescales are possible (not only 1-step)
  - Also TD-lambda with forward/backward view

$$\Delta\theta = \alpha(r + \gamma V_v(s_{t+1}) - V_v(s_t))\nabla_{\theta} \log \pi_{\theta}(s_t, a_t)$$

# Actor-Critic with LFA

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Critic  $Q_w(s,a) = \phi(s,a)^T w$  updates weights  $w$  by linear TD(0)  
Actor updates weights by policy gradient

```
function QAC
  Initialise  $s, \theta$ 
  Sample  $a \sim \pi_\theta$ 
  for each step do
    Sample reward  $r = \mathcal{R}_s^a$ ; sample transition  $s' \sim \mathcal{P}_{s,\cdot}^a$ .
    Sample action  $a' \sim \pi_\theta(s', a')$ 
     $\delta = r + \gamma Q_w(s', a') - Q_w(s, a)$ 
     $\theta = \theta + \alpha \nabla_\theta \log \pi_\theta(s, a) Q_w(s, a)$ 
     $w \leftarrow w + \beta \delta \phi(s, a)$ 
     $a \leftarrow a', s \leftarrow s'$ 
  end for
end function
```

# Policy Gradient Summary

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$\nabla_{\theta} J(\theta) = \mathbb{E}_{\pi_{\theta}} [\nabla_{\theta} \log \pi_{\theta}(s, a) \mathbf{G}_t]$	REINFORCE
$= \mathbb{E}_{\pi_{\theta}} [\nabla_{\theta} \log \pi_{\theta}(s, a) \mathbf{Q}^w(s, a)]$	Q Actor-Critic
$= \mathbb{E}_{\pi_{\theta}} [\nabla_{\theta} \log \pi_{\theta}(s, a) \mathbf{A}^w(s, a)]$	Advantage Actor-Critic
$= \mathbb{E}_{\pi_{\theta}} [\nabla_{\theta} \log \pi_{\theta}(s, a) \delta]$	TD Actor-Critic
$= \mathbb{E}_{\pi_{\theta}} [\nabla_{\theta} \log \pi_{\theta}(s, a) \delta e]$	TD( $\lambda$ ) Actor-Critic

Critic does policy evaluation to estimate Q, V or A using bootstrapping (*if it uses MC we do not call it a critic*)

# End Recap



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# Policy Iteration Recall

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Procedure:

1. Start with a random guess  $\pi_0$  (can be deterministic or stochastic)
2. For  $t=0, \dots, T$ :
  - a. Do **policy evaluation** and compute  $Q^{\pi^t}$  for all  $s, a$
  - b. Do **policy improvement** as  $\pi_{t+1} = \operatorname{argmax}_a Q^{\pi^t}(s, a)$  for all  $s$

This algorithm only makes progress, and the performance progress of the policy is monotonic





# Policy Iteration Recall

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  - b. Do **policy improvement** as  $\pi_{t+1} = \operatorname{argmax}_a \mathbf{A}^{\pi^t}(\mathbf{s}, \mathbf{a})$  for all  $s$

$$Q^{\pi_\theta}(s, a) - V^{\pi_\theta}(s)$$

We can also use the advantage function, it's equivalent: pick an action that has the largest advantage against  $\pi$  at every state  $s$



# Policy Iteration Recall

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  - b. Do **policy improvement** as  $\pi_{t+1} = \arg\max_a A^{\pi^t}(s, a)$  for all  $s$

$$Q^{\pi_\theta}(s, a) - V^{\pi_\theta}(s)$$

$$\arg \max_a Q^\pi(s, a) = \arg \max_a A^\pi(s, a)$$



# Performance Difference Lemma

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We know that the new policy from PI is better than the old one, but what's their performance difference?

# Performance Difference Lemma

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We know that the new policy from PI is better than the old one, but what's their performance difference?

$$V^{\pi}(s_0) - V^{\pi'}(s_0) = ??$$



# Performance Difference Lemma

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We know that the new policy from PI is better than the old one, but what's their performance difference?

$$\begin{aligned} V^{\pi}(s_0) - V^{\pi'}(s_0) &= \frac{1}{1 - \gamma} \mathbb{E}_{s \sim d_{s_0}^{\pi}} \left[ \mathbb{E}_{a \sim \pi(\cdot|s)} Q^{\pi'}(s, a) - V^{\pi'}(s) \right] \\ &:= \frac{1}{1 - \gamma} \mathbb{E}_{s \sim d_{s_0}^{\pi}} \left[ \mathbb{E}_{a \sim \pi(\cdot|s)} A^{\pi'}(s, a) \right] \end{aligned}$$



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Average advantage value



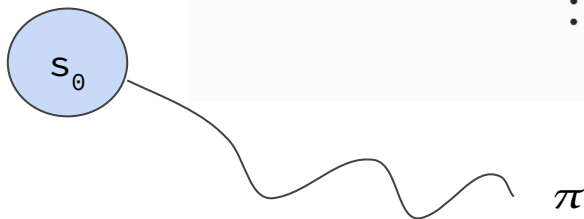
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Average  
advantage value



# Performance Difference Lemma

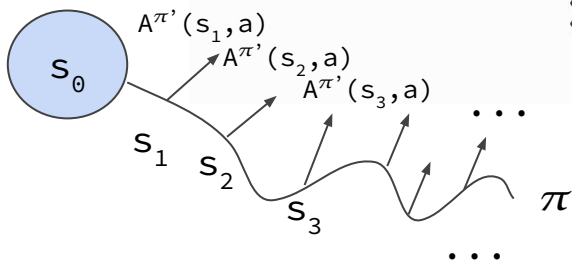
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$$V^{\pi}(s_0) - V^{\pi'}(s_0) = \frac{1}{1 - \gamma} \mathbb{E}_{s \sim d_{s_0}^{\pi}} \left[ \mathbb{E}_{a \sim \pi(\cdot|s)} Q^{\pi'}(s, a) - V^{\pi'}(s) \right]$$

$$:= \frac{1}{1 - \gamma} \mathbb{E}_{s \sim d_{s_0}^{\pi}} \left[ \mathbb{E}_{a \sim \pi(\cdot|s)} A^{\pi'}(s, a) \right]$$

Average  
advantage value

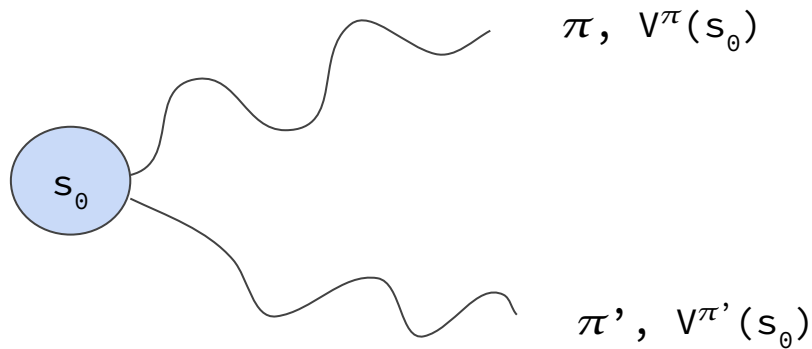




# Performance Difference Lemma

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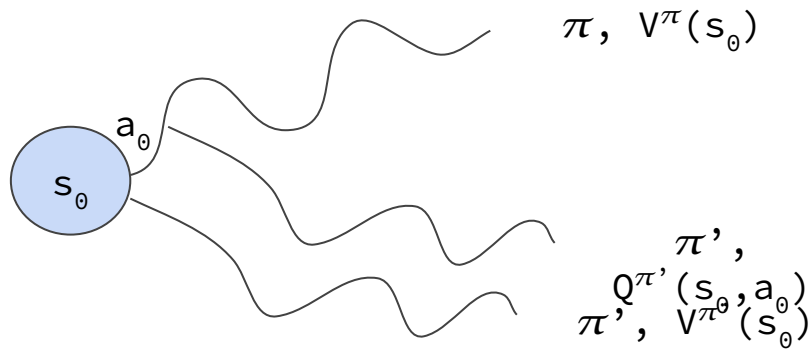
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$$V^{\pi}(s_0) - V^{\pi'}(s_0) = \frac{1}{1 - \gamma} \mathbb{E}_{s \sim d_{s_0}^{\pi}} \left[ \mathbb{E}_{a \sim \pi(\cdot|s)} A^{\pi'}(s, a) \right]$$



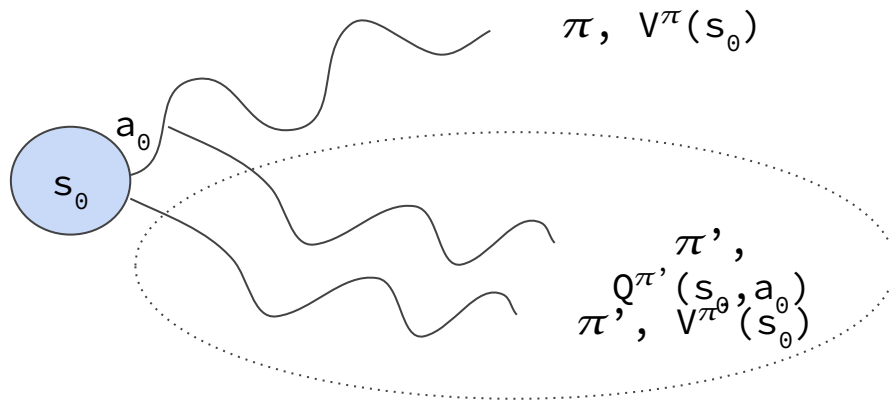
# Performance Difference Lemma

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$$V^{\pi}(s_0) - V^{\pi'}(s_0) = \frac{1}{1 - \gamma} \mathbb{E}_{s \sim d_{s_0}^{\pi}} \left[ \mathbb{E}_{a \sim \pi(\cdot|s)} A^{\pi'}(s, a) \right]$$

This difference is exactly the  
definition of advantage

$$Q^{\pi'}(s, a) - V^{\pi'}(s)$$

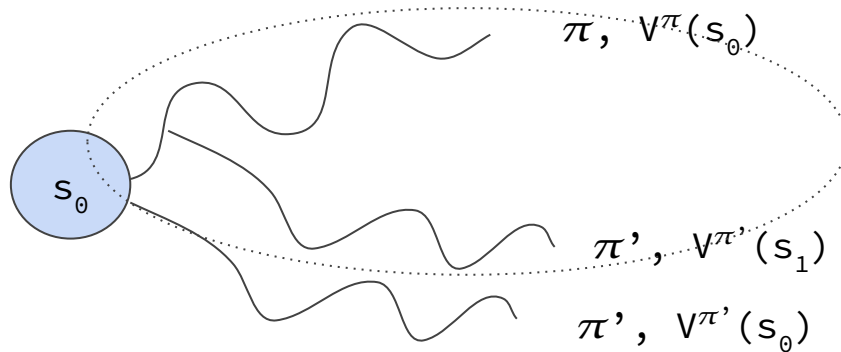


# Performance Difference Lemma

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$$V^{\pi}(s_0) - V^{\pi'}(s_0) = \frac{1}{1 - \gamma} \mathbb{E}_{s \sim d_{s_0}^{\pi}} \left[ \mathbb{E}_{a \sim \pi(\cdot|s)} A^{\pi'}(s, a) \right]$$

We can do recursion and follow the same reasoning again



# Performance Difference Lemma Proof Sketch

— — —

$$V^\pi(s_0) - V^{\pi'}(s_0)$$



# Performance Difference Lemma Proof Sketch

— — —

$$\begin{aligned} V^\pi(s_0) - V^{\pi'}(s_0) \\ = V^\pi(s_0) - \mathbb{E}_{a_0 \sim \pi(\cdot | s_0)} \left[ r(s_0, a_0) + \gamma \mathbb{E}_{s' \sim P(s_0, a_0)} V^{\pi'}(s') \right] + \mathbb{E}_{a_0 \sim \pi(\cdot | s_0)} \left[ r(s_0, a_0) + \gamma \mathbb{E}_{s' \sim P(s_0, a_0)} V^{\pi'}(s') \right] - V^{\pi'}(s_0) \end{aligned}$$



# Performance Difference Lemma Proof Sketch

— — —

$$\begin{aligned} & V^\pi(s_0) - V^{\pi'}(s_0) \\ &= \boxed{V^\pi(s_0)} - \mathbb{E}_{a_0 \sim \pi(\cdot | s_0)} \left[ \cancel{r(s_0, a_0)} + \gamma \mathbb{E}_{s' \sim P(s_0, a_0)} V^{\pi'}(s') \right] + \mathbb{E}_{a_0 \sim \pi(\cdot | s_0)} \left[ r(s_0, a_0) + \gamma \mathbb{E}_{s' \sim P(s_0, a_0)} V^{\pi'}(s') \right] - V^{\pi'}(s_0) \end{aligned}$$

$$\mathbb{E}_{a_0 \sim \pi(\cdot | s_0)} \left[ \cancel{r(s_0, a_0)} + \gamma \mathbb{E}_{s' \sim P(s_0, a_0)} V^\pi(s') \right]$$



# Performance Difference Lemma Proof Sketch

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$$\begin{aligned} & V^\pi(s_0) - V^{\pi'}(s_0) \\ &= V^\pi(s_0) - \mathbb{E}_{a_0 \sim \pi(\cdot | s_0)} \left[ \cancel{r(s_0, a_0)} + \gamma \mathbb{E}_{s' \sim P(s_0, a_0)} \boxed{V^{\pi'}(s')} \right] + \mathbb{E}_{a_0 \sim \pi(\cdot | s_0)} \left[ r(s_0, a_0) + \gamma \mathbb{E}_{s' \sim P(s_0, a_0)} V^{\pi'}(s') \right] - V^{\pi'}(s_0) \end{aligned}$$

$$\mathbb{E}_{a_0 \sim \pi(\cdot | s_0)} \left[ \cancel{r(s_0, a_0)} + \gamma \mathbb{E}_{s' \sim P(s_0, a_0)} \boxed{V^\pi(s')} \right]$$





# Performance Difference Lemma Proof Sketch

— — —

$$\begin{aligned} V^\pi(s_0) - V^{\pi'}(s_0) &= V^\pi(s_0) - \mathbb{E}_{a_0 \sim \pi(\cdot | s_0)} \left[ r(s_0, a_0) + \gamma \mathbb{E}_{s' \sim P(s_0, a_0)} V^{\pi'}(s') \right] + \mathbb{E}_{a_0 \sim \pi(\cdot | s_0)} \left[ r(s_0, a_0) + \gamma \mathbb{E}_{s' \sim P(s_0, a_0)} V^{\pi'}(s') \right] - V^{\pi'}(s_0) \\ &= \gamma \mathbb{E}_{a_0 \sim \pi(\cdot | s_0)} \mathbb{E}_{s_1 \sim P(s_0, a_0)} [V^\pi(s_1) - V^{\pi'}(s_1)] + \mathbb{E}_{a_0 \sim \pi(\cdot | s_0)} \left[ r(s_0, a_0) + \gamma \mathbb{E}_{s' \sim P(s_0, a_0)} V^{\pi'}(s') \right] - V^{\pi'}(s_0) \end{aligned}$$



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Apply definition



# Performance Difference Lemma Proof Sketch

— — —

$$\begin{aligned} & V^\pi(s_0) - V^{\pi'}(s_0) \\ &= V^\pi(s_0) - \mathbb{E}_{a_0 \sim \pi(\cdot|s_0)} \left[ r(s_0, a_0) + \gamma \mathbb{E}_{s' \sim P(s_0, a_0)} V^{\pi'}(s') \right] + \mathbb{E}_{a_0 \sim \pi(\cdot|s_0)} \left[ r(s_0, a_0) + \gamma \mathbb{E}_{s' \sim P(s_0, a_0)} V^{\pi'}(s') \right] - V^{\pi'}(s_0) \\ &= \gamma \mathbb{E}_{a_0 \sim \pi(\cdot|s_0)} \mathbb{E}_{s_1 \sim P(s_0, a_0)} [V^\pi(s_1) - V^{\pi'}(s_1)] + \mathbb{E}_{a_0 \sim \pi(\cdot|s_0)} \left[ r(s_0, a_0) + \gamma \mathbb{E}_{s' \sim P(s_0, a_0)} V^{\pi'}(s') \right] - V^{\pi'}(s_0) \\ &= \gamma \mathbb{E}_{a_0 \sim \pi(\cdot|s_0)} \mathbb{E}_{s_1 \sim P(s_0, a_0)} [V^\pi(s_1) - V^{\pi'}(s_1)] + \mathbb{E}_{a_0 \sim \pi(\cdot|s_0)} \boxed{[Q^{\pi'}(s_0, a_0) - V^{\pi'}(s_0)]} \\ &= \gamma \mathbb{E}_{a_0 \sim \pi(\cdot|s_0)} \mathbb{E}_{s_1 \sim P(s_0, a_0)} [V^\pi(s_1) - V^{\pi'}(s_1)] + \mathbb{E}_{a_0 \sim \pi(\cdot|s_0)} \boxed{[A^{\pi'}(s_0, a_0)]} \end{aligned}$$

Apply definition



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# Performance Difference Lemma Proof Sketch

— — —

$$\begin{aligned} & V^\pi(s_0) - V^{\pi'}(s_0) \\ &= V^\pi(s_0) - \mathbb{E}_{a_0 \sim \pi(\cdot | s_0)} \left[ r(s_0, a_0) + \gamma \mathbb{E}_{s' \sim P(s_0, a_0)} V^{\pi'}(s') \right] + \mathbb{E}_{a_0 \sim \pi(\cdot | s_0)} \left[ r(s_0, a_0) + \gamma \mathbb{E}_{s' \sim P(s_0, a_0)} V^{\pi'}(s') \right] - V^{\pi'}(s_0) \\ &= \gamma \mathbb{E}_{a_0 \sim \pi(\cdot | s_0)} \mathbb{E}_{s_1 \sim P(s_0, a_0)} [V^\pi(s_1) - V^{\pi'}(s_1)] + \mathbb{E}_{a_0 \sim \pi(\cdot | s_0)} \left[ r(s_0, a_0) + \gamma \mathbb{E}_{s' \sim P(s_0, a_0)} V^{\pi'}(s') \right] - V^{\pi'}(s_0) \\ &= \gamma \mathbb{E}_{a_0 \sim \pi(\cdot | s_0)} \mathbb{E}_{s_1 \sim P(s_0, a_0)} [V^\pi(s_1) - V^{\pi'}(s_1)] + \mathbb{E}_{a_0 \sim \pi(\cdot | s_0)} [Q^{\pi'}(s_0, a_0) - V^{\pi'}(s_0)] \\ &= \gamma \mathbb{E}_{a_0 \sim \pi(\cdot | s_0)} \mathbb{E}_{s_1 \sim P(s_0, a_0)} [V^\pi(s_1) - V^{\pi'}(s_1)] + \mathbb{E}_{a_0 \sim \pi(\cdot | s_0)} [A^{\pi'}(s_0, a_0)] \end{aligned}$$

Recursion



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# Performance Difference Lemma

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We know that the new policy from PI is better than the old one, but what's their performance difference?

$$V^{\pi_{new}}(s_0) - V^{\pi_{old}}(s_0) = \frac{1}{1 - \gamma} \mathbb{E}_{s, a \sim d_{s_0}^{\pi_{new}}} [A^{\pi_{old}}(s, a)]$$

Advantage against old policy averaged over the new policy induced distribution



# Approximate Policy Iteration Recall

---

Procedure:

1. Start with a random guess  $\pi_0$  (can be deterministic or stochastic)
2. For  $t=0, \dots, T$ :
  - a. Do **policy evaluation** and compute  $A^{\pi_t}$
  - b. Do **policy improvement** as  $\pi_{t+1} = \arg\max_a A^{\pi_t}(s, a)$  for all  $s$

$$Q^{\pi_\theta}(s, a) - V^{\pi_\theta}(s)$$

For example, estimate  $A^\pi$  directly through regression



# Approximate Policy Iteration Recall

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2. For  $t=0, \dots, T$ :
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  - b. Do **policy improvement** as  $\pi_{t+1}^* = \arg\max_a A^{\pi^t}(s, a)$  for all  $s$

$$Q^{\pi_\theta}(s, a) - V^{\pi_\theta}(s)$$

$\pi^*$  is an approximate greedy policy

$$\mathbb{E}_{s \sim d_\mu^{\pi^t}} [A^{\pi^t}(s, \hat{\pi}(s))] \approx \max_{\pi \in \Pi} \mathbb{E}_{s \sim d_\mu^{\pi^t}} [A^{\pi^t}(s, \pi(s))]$$



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# Conservative Policy Iteration

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Oscillations are due to the distribution change induced by the policy

**Can we design an update rule that does not change the distribution so much?**

$$d^{\pi^t} \approx d^{\pi^{t+1}}$$

$$\mathbb{E}_{s \sim d_{\mu}^{\pi^t}} \left[ A^{\pi^t}(s, \pi^{t+1}(s)) \right] \approx \mathbb{E}_{s \sim d_{\mu}^{\pi^{t+1}}} \left[ A^{\pi^t}(s, \pi^{t+1}(s)) \right]$$



# Incremental Update of CPI

---

Oscillations are due to the distribution change induced by the policy

**Can we design an update rule that does not change the distribution so much?**

$$\pi^{t+1}(\cdot | s) = (1 - \alpha)\pi^t(\cdot | s) + \alpha\pi'(\cdot | s), \forall s$$

$$\|\pi^{t+1}(\cdot | s) - \pi^t(\cdot | s)\|_1 \leq 2\alpha \longrightarrow \|d_{\mu}^{\pi^{t+1}}(\cdot) - d_{\mu}^{\pi^t}(\cdot)\|_1 \leq \frac{2\gamma\alpha}{1 - \gamma}$$



# Incremental Update of CPI

— — —  
If we set alpha appropriately we can get back monotonic improvement until termination

If  $\max_{\pi \in \Pi} \mathbb{E}_{s \sim d_{\mu}^{\pi^t}}[A^{\pi^t}(s, \pi(s))] \leq \varepsilon$   
**Return**  $\pi^t$

$$\pi^{t+1}(\cdot | s) = (1 - \alpha)\pi^t(\cdot | s) + \alpha\pi'(\cdot | s), \forall s$$

$$\|\pi^{t+1}(\cdot | s) - \pi^t(\cdot | s)\|_1 \leq 2\alpha \longrightarrow \|d_{\mu}^{\pi^{t+1}}(\cdot) - d_{\mu}^{\pi^t}(\cdot)\|_1 \leq \frac{2\gamma\alpha}{1 - \gamma}$$



# Problem of CPI

---

I now need to retain all the old policies in memory: what if they are all large neural networks?

$$\pi^{t+1}(\cdot | s) = (1 - \alpha)\pi^t(\cdot | s) + \alpha\pi'(\cdot | s), \forall s$$



# Problem of CPI

---

I now need to retain all the old policies in memory: what if they are all large neural networks?

Let's use KL-Divergence



# KL-Divergence

---

Given two distributions  $Q$  and  $P$ , KL-Divergence is defined as

expected excess surprise from using  
 $Q$  as a model when the actual  
distribution is  $P$

$$KL(P|Q) = \mathbb{E}_{x \sim P} \left[ \ln \frac{P(x)}{Q(x)} \right]$$

$$KL(P|Q) \geq 0$$

$$Q = P$$

$$KL(P|Q) = KL(Q|P) = 0$$

$$P = \mathcal{N}(\mu_1, \sigma^2 I), Q = \mathcal{N}(\mu_2, \sigma^2 I)$$

$$KL(P|Q) = \|\mu_1 - \mu_2\|_2^2 / \sigma^2$$



# Trust-Region Formulation for Policy Update

— — —

$$\begin{aligned} \max_{\pi_{\theta}} \mathbb{E}_{s \sim d_{\mu}^{\pi_{\theta_t}}} \left[ \mathbb{E}_{a \sim \pi_{\theta}(s)} A^{\pi_{\theta_t}}(s, a) \right] \\ \text{s.t., } KL \left( \rho_{\pi_{\theta_t}} | \rho_{\pi_{\theta}} \right) \leq \delta \end{aligned}$$

$$\rho_{\theta}(\tau) = \mu(s_0)\pi_{\theta}(a_0 | s_0)P(s_1 | s_0, a_0)\pi_{\theta}(a_1 | s_1)\dots$$



# KL-Divergence of State Distribution

— — —

$$KL(P \mid Q) = \mathbb{E}_{x \sim P} \left[ \ln \frac{P(x)}{Q(x)} \right]$$

$$\rho_{\theta}(\tau) = \mu(s_0)\pi_{\theta}(a_0 \mid s_0)P(s_1 \mid s_0, a_0)\pi_{\theta}(a_1 \mid s_1)\dots$$

$$KL \left( \rho_{\pi_{\theta_t}} \mid \rho_{\pi_{\theta}} \right) = \mathbb{E}_{\tau \sim \rho_{\pi_{\theta_t}}} \ln \frac{\rho_{\pi_{\theta_t}}(\tau)}{\rho_{\pi_{\theta}}(\tau)}$$





# KL-Divergence of State Distribution

$$KL(P \mid Q) = \mathbb{E}_{x \sim P} \left[ \ln \frac{P(x)}{Q(x)} \right]$$

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$$KL \left( \rho_{\pi_{\theta_t}} \mid \rho_{\pi_{\theta}} \right) = \mathbb{E}_{\tau \sim \rho_{\pi_{\theta_t}}} \ln \frac{\rho_{\pi_{\theta_t}}(\tau)}{\rho_{\pi_{\theta}}(\tau)}$$

Initial state distribution, as well as next state distribution simplify, because they are the same. We are only left with the different policies.



# KL-Divergence of State Distribution

$$KL(P \mid Q) = \mathbb{E}_{x \sim P} \left[ \ln \frac{P(x)}{Q(x)} \right]$$

$$\rho_{\theta}(\tau) = \mu(s_0) \pi_{\theta}(a_0 \mid s_0) P(s_1 \mid s_0, a_0) \pi_{\theta}(a_1 \mid s_1) \dots$$

$$KL \left( \rho_{\pi_{\theta_t}} \mid \rho_{\pi_{\theta}} \right) = \mathbb{E}_{\tau \sim \rho_{\pi_{\theta_t}}} \ln \frac{\rho_{\pi_{\theta_t}}(\tau)}{\rho_{\pi_{\theta}}(\tau)} = \mathbb{E}_{\tau \sim \rho_{\pi_{\theta_t}}} \sum_{h=0}^{H-1} \ln \frac{\pi_{\theta_t}(a_h \mid s_h)}{\pi_{\theta}(a_h \mid s_h)}$$



# KL-Divergence of State Distribution

$$KL(P \mid Q) = \mathbb{E}_{x \sim P} \left[ \ln \frac{P(x)}{Q(x)} \right]$$

$$\rho_{\theta}(\tau) = \mu(s_0) \pi_{\theta}(a_0 \mid s_0) P(s_1 \mid s_0, a_0) \pi_{\theta}(a_1 \mid s_1) \dots$$

$$\begin{aligned} KL \left( \rho_{\pi_{\theta_t}} \mid \rho_{\pi_{\theta}} \right) &= \mathbb{E}_{\tau \sim \rho_{\pi_{\theta_t}}} \ln \frac{\rho_{\pi_{\theta_t}}(\tau)}{\rho_{\pi_{\theta}}(\tau)} = \mathbb{E}_{\tau \sim \rho_{\pi_{\theta_t}}} \sum_{h=0}^{\infty} \ln \frac{\pi_{\theta_t}(a_h \mid s_h)}{\pi_{\theta}(a_h \mid s_h)} \\ &= \frac{1}{1 - \gamma} \mathbb{E}_{s_h, a_h \sim d_{\mu}^{\pi_{\theta_t}}} \left[ \ln \frac{\pi_{\theta_t}(a_h \mid s_h)}{\pi_{\theta}(a_h \mid s_h)} \right] := \ell(\theta) \end{aligned}$$



# Trust-Region Formulation for Policy Update

— — —

$$\max_{\pi_{\theta}} \mathbb{E}_{s \sim d_{\mu}^{\pi_{\theta_t}}} \left[ \mathbb{E}_{a \sim \pi_{\theta}(s)} A^{\pi_{\theta_t}}(s, a) \right]$$

$$\text{s.t.}, \boxed{KL \left( \rho_{\pi_{\theta_t}} \mid \rho_{\pi_{\theta}} \right) \leq \delta}$$

This is our trust-region, that maintains the distributions not so far

$$\boxed{\rho_{\theta}(\tau) = \mu(s_0)\pi_{\theta}(a_0 | s_0)P(s_1 | s_0, a_0)\pi_{\theta}(a_1 | s_1)\dots}$$



# Trust-Region Formulation for Policy Update

---

$$\max_{\pi_{\theta}} \mathbb{E}_{s \sim d_{\mu}^{\pi_{\theta_t}}} \left[ \mathbb{E}_{a \sim \pi_{\theta}(s)} A^{\pi_{\theta_t}}(s, a) \right]$$

$$\text{s.t.}, \boxed{KL \left( \rho_{\pi_{\theta_t}} | \rho_{\pi_{\theta}} \right) \leq \delta}$$

How do we optimize this?



# Trust-Region Formulation for Policy Update

— — —

$$\begin{aligned} \max_{\pi_{\theta}} \mathbb{E}_{s \sim d_{\mu}^{\pi_{\theta_t}}} \left[ \mathbb{E}_{a \sim \pi_{\theta}(s)} A^{\pi_{\theta_t}}(s, a) \right] \\ \text{s.t., } \boxed{KL \left( \rho_{\pi_{\theta_t}} \mid \rho_{\pi_{\theta}} \right) \leq \delta} \end{aligned}$$

How do we optimize this?

**Remember: the trajectory distribution is actually unknown and we do not know the transition function!**



# Trust-Region Formulation for Policy Update

---

$$\begin{aligned} \max_{\pi_{\theta}} \mathbb{E}_{s \sim d_{\mu}^{\pi_{\theta_t}}} \left[ \mathbb{E}_{a \sim \pi_{\theta}(s)} A^{\pi_{\theta_t}}(s, a) \right] \\ \text{s.t., } \boxed{KL \left( \rho_{\pi_{\theta_t}} \mid \rho_{\pi_{\theta}} \right) \leq \delta} \end{aligned}$$

How do we optimize this?

1st or 2nd order Taylor expansion



# Trust-Region Optimization: Objective Function

Let's first simplify and linearize the objective function using a 1st order Taylor Expansion

$$\mathbb{E}_{s \sim d_{\mu}^{\pi_{\theta_t}}} \left[ \mathbb{E}_{a \sim \pi_{\theta_t}(s)} A^{\pi_{\theta_t}}(s, a) \right] \approx \mathbb{E}_{s \sim d_{\mu}^{\pi_{\theta_t}}} \left[ \mathbb{E}_{a \sim \pi_{\theta_t}(s)} A^{\pi_{\theta_t}}(s, a) \right] + \underbrace{\mathbb{E}_{s \sim d_{\mu}^{\pi_{\theta_t}}} \left[ \mathbb{E}_{a \sim \pi_{\theta_t}(s)} \nabla_{\theta} \ln \pi_{\theta_t}(a | s) A^{\pi_{\theta_t}}(s, a) \right]}_{\nabla_{\theta} J(\pi_{\theta_t})} \cdot (\theta - \theta_t)$$





# Trust-Region Optimization: Objective Function

Let's first simplify and linearize the objective function using a 1st order Taylor Expansion

$$\mathbb{E}_{s \sim d_{\mu}^{\pi_{\theta_t}}} \left[ \mathbb{E}_{a \sim \pi_{\theta_t}(s)} A^{\pi_{\theta_t}}(s, a) \right] \approx \underbrace{\mathbb{E}_{s \sim d_{\mu}^{\pi_{\theta_t}}} \left[ \mathbb{E}_{a \sim \pi_{\theta_t}(s)} A^{\pi_{\theta_t}}(s, a) \right]}_{\nabla_{\theta} J(\pi_{\theta_t})} + \underbrace{\mathbb{E}_{s \sim d_{\mu}^{\pi_{\theta_t}}} \left[ \mathbb{E}_{a \sim \pi_{\theta_t}(s)} \nabla_{\theta} \ln \pi_{\theta_t}(a | s) A^{\pi_{\theta_t}}(s, a) \right]}_{\text{Inner product}} \cdot \theta - \theta_t$$

Advantage of the  
policy against  
itself is 0

Inner  
product



# Trust-Region Optimization: Objective Function

Let's first simplify and linearize the objective function using a 1st order Taylor Expansion

$$\begin{aligned}\mathbb{E}_{s \sim d_{\mu}^{\pi_{\theta_t}}} \left[ \mathbb{E}_{a \sim \pi_{\theta_t}(s)} A^{\pi_{\theta_t}}(s, a) \right] &\approx \mathbb{E}_{s \sim d_{\mu}^{\pi_{\theta_t}}} \left[ \mathbb{E}_{a \sim \pi_{\theta_t}(s)} A^{\pi_{\theta_t}}(s, a) \right] + \underbrace{\mathbb{E}_{s \sim d_{\mu}^{\pi_{\theta_t}}} \left[ \mathbb{E}_{a \sim \pi_{\theta_t}(s)} \nabla_{\theta} \ln \pi_{\theta_t}(a | s) A^{\pi_{\theta_t}}(s, a) \right]}_{\nabla_{\theta} J(\pi_{\theta_t})} \cdot (\theta - \theta_t) \\ &= \boxed{\nabla_{\theta} J(\pi_{\theta_t})^{\top} (\theta - \theta_t)}\end{aligned}$$



# Trust-Region Optimization: Constraint

— — —

Let's then simplify and linearize the constraint using a 2nd order Taylor Expansion

$$KL(\rho_{\theta_t} | \rho_{\theta}) := \ell(\theta)$$



# Trust-Region Optimization: Constraint

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$$\ell(\theta) \approx \ell(\theta_t) + \nabla \ell(\theta_t)^\top (\theta - \theta_t) + \frac{1}{2} (\theta - \theta_t)^\top \nabla_{\theta}^2 \ell(\theta_t) (\theta - \theta_t)$$



# Trust-Region Optimization: Constraint

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$$\ell(\theta_t) = KL(\rho_{\theta_t} | \rho_{\theta_t}) = 0$$



# Trust-Region Optimization: Constraint

- Let's then simplify and linearize the constraint using a 2nd order Taylor Expansion

$$KL(\rho_{\theta_t} | \rho_{\theta}) := \ell(\theta) = \frac{1}{1-\gamma} \mathbb{E}_{s_h, a_h \sim d_{\mu}^{\pi_{\theta_t}}} \left[ \ln \frac{\pi_{\theta_t}(a_h | s_h)}{\pi_{\theta}(a_h | s_h)} \right]$$

$$\ell(\theta) \approx \ell(\theta_t) + \nabla \ell(\theta_t)^{\top} (\theta - \theta_t) + \frac{1}{2} (\theta - \theta_t)^{\top} \nabla_{\theta}^2 \ell(\theta_t) (\theta - \theta_t)$$

$$\ln(a/b) = \ln a - \ln b$$



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Does not depend on the variation of theta

$$\ell(\theta) \approx \ell(\theta_t) + \nabla \ell(\theta_t)^{\top} (\theta - \theta_t) + \frac{1}{2} (\theta - \theta_t)^{\top} \nabla_{\theta}^2 \ell(\theta_t) (\theta - \theta_t)$$



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$$\nabla_{\theta} \ell(\theta) |_{\theta=\theta_t} = \mathbb{E}_{s \sim d_{\mu}^{\pi_{\theta_t}}} \sum_a \pi_{\theta_t}(a | s) \left( -\nabla_{\theta} \ln \pi_{\theta}(a_h | s_h) |_{\theta=\theta_t} \right)$$

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Expectation has nothing to do with gradient, so we bring gradient inside



# Trust-Region Optimization: Constraint

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Bring sum inside:  
this sums to 1

$$\nabla_{\theta} \ell(\theta) |_{\theta=\theta_t} = \mathbb{E}_{s \sim d_{\mu}^{\pi_{\theta_t}}} \sum_a \pi_{\theta_t}(a | s) \left( -\nabla_{\theta} \ln \pi_{\theta}(a | s) |_{\theta=\theta_t} \right) = -\mathbb{E}_{s \sim d_{\mu}^{\pi_{\theta_t}}} \sum_a \pi_{\theta_t}(a | s) \frac{\boxed{\nabla_{\theta} \pi_{\theta_t}(a | s)}}{\cancel{\pi_{\theta_t}(a | s)}} = 0$$



# Trust-Region Optimization: Constraint

- Let's then simplify and linearize the constraint using a 2nd order Taylor Expansion

$$KL(\rho_{\theta_t} | \rho_{\theta}) := \ell(\theta) = \frac{1}{1-\gamma} \mathbb{E}_{s_h, a_h \sim d_{\mu}^{\pi_{\theta_t}}} \left[ \ln \frac{\pi_{\theta_t}(a_h | s_h)}{\pi_{\theta}(a_h | s_h)} \right]$$

$$\ell(\theta) \approx \boxed{\ell(\theta_t)} + \boxed{\nabla \ell(\theta_t)^{\top}} (\theta - \theta_t) + \frac{1}{2} (\theta - \theta_t)^{\top} \nabla_{\theta}^2 \ell(\theta_t) (\theta - \theta_t)$$



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# Trust-Region Optimization: Constraint

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Does not depend  
on the variation  
of theta

$$\ell(\theta) \approx \ell(\theta_t) + \nabla \ell(\theta_t)^{\top} (\theta - \theta_t) + \frac{1}{2} (\theta - \theta_t)^{\top} \nabla_{\theta}^2 \ell(\theta_t) (\theta - \theta_t)$$

$$\nabla_{\theta}^2 \ell(\theta) |_{\theta=\theta_t} = \mathbb{E}_{s \sim d_{\mu}^{\pi_{\theta_t}}} \sum_a \pi_{\theta_t}(a | s) \left( -\nabla_{\theta}^2 \ln \pi_{\theta}(a | s) |_{\theta=\theta_t} \right)$$

Expectation has nothing to do  
with gradient, so we bring  
gradient inside

$$\ln(a/b) = \ln a - \ln b$$



# Trust-Region Optimization: Constraint

---

$$KL(\rho_{\theta_t} | \rho_{\theta}) := \ell(\theta) = \frac{1}{1-\gamma} \mathbb{E}_{s_h, a_h \sim d_{\mu}^{\pi_{\theta_t}}} \left[ \ln \frac{\pi_{\theta_t}(a_h | s_h)}{\pi_{\theta}(a_h | s_h)} \right]$$

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$$\nabla_{\theta} \ln \pi_{\theta}(a_h | s_h) |_{\theta=\theta_t} = \frac{\nabla_{\theta} \pi_{\theta_t}(a | s)}{\pi_{\theta_t}(a | s)}$$

$$\nabla_{\theta}^2 \ln \pi_{\theta}(a | s) |_{\theta=\theta_t} \quad ?$$



# Trust-Region Optimization: Constraint

---

$$KL(\rho_{\theta_t} | \rho_{\theta}) := \ell(\theta) = \frac{1}{1-\gamma} \mathbb{E}_{s_h, a_h \sim d_{\mu}^{\pi_{\theta_t}}} \left[ \ln \frac{\pi_{\theta_t}(a_h | s_h)}{\pi_{\theta}(a_h | s_h)} \right]$$

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$$\nabla_{\theta} \ln \pi_{\theta}(a_h | s_h) |_{\theta=\theta_t} = \frac{\nabla_{\theta} \pi_{\theta_t}(a | s)}{\pi_{\theta_t}(a | s)}$$

$$\nabla_{\theta}^2 \ln \pi_{\theta}(a | s) |_{\theta=\theta_t} \quad ?$$

We just have to compute the gradient of this now



# Trust-Region Optimization: Constraint

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$$KL(\rho_{\theta_t} | \rho_{\theta}) := \ell(\theta) = \frac{1}{1-\gamma} \mathbb{E}_{s_h, a_h \sim d_{\mu}^{\pi_{\theta_t}}} \left[ \ln \frac{\pi_{\theta_t}(a_h | s_h)}{\pi_{\theta}(a_h | s_h)} \right]$$

$$\ell(\theta) \approx \boxed{\ell(\theta_t)} + \boxed{\nabla \ell(\theta_t)}^{\top} (\theta - \theta_t) + \frac{1}{2} (\theta - \theta_t)^{\top} \boxed{\nabla_{\theta}^2 \ell(\theta_t)} (\theta - \theta_t)$$

$$\nabla_{\theta}^2 \ell(\theta) |_{\theta=\theta_t} = \mathbb{E}_{s \sim d_{\mu}^{\pi_{\theta_t}}} \sum_a \pi_{\theta_t}(a | s) \left( -\nabla_{\theta}^2 \ln \pi_{\theta}(a | s) |_{\theta=\theta_t} \right)$$

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$$\nabla_{\theta}^2 \ln \pi_{\theta}(a | s) |_{\theta=\theta_t} \quad ?$$

$$(f/g)' = f'/g - fg'/g^2$$



# Trust-Region Optimization: Constraint

---

$$KL(\rho_{\theta_t} | \rho_{\theta}) := \ell(\theta) = \frac{1}{1-\gamma} \mathbb{E}_{s_h, a_h \sim d_{\mu}^{\pi_{\theta_t}}} \left[ \ln \frac{\pi_{\theta_t}(a_h | s_h)}{\pi_{\theta}(a_h | s_h)} \right]$$

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$$= - \mathbb{E}_{s \sim d_{\mu}^{\pi_{\theta_t}}} \sum_a \pi_{\theta_t}(a | s) \left( \frac{\nabla_{\theta}^2 \pi_{\theta_t}(a | s)}{\pi_{\theta_t}(a | s)} - \frac{\nabla_{\theta} \pi_{\theta_t}(a | s) \nabla_{\theta} \pi_{\theta_t}(a | s)^{\top}}{\pi_{\theta_t}^2(a | s)} \right)$$





# Trust-Region Optimization: Constraint

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$$KL(\rho_{\theta_t} | \rho_{\theta}) := \ell(\theta) = \frac{1}{1 - \gamma} \mathbb{E}_{s_h, a_h \sim d_{\mu}^{\pi_{\theta_t}}} \left[ \ln \frac{\pi_{\theta_t}(a_h | s_h)}{\pi_{\theta}(a_h | s_h)} \right]$$

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$$\nabla_{\theta}^2 \ell(\theta) |_{\theta=\theta_t} = \mathbb{E}_{s \sim d_{\mu}^{\pi_{\theta_t}}} \sum_a \pi_{\theta_t}(a | s) \left( -\nabla_{\theta}^2 \ln \pi_{\theta}(a | s) |_{\theta=\theta_t} \right)$$

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Bring sum inside:  
this sums to 1



# Trust-Region Optimization: Constraint

---

$$KL(\rho_{\theta_t} | \rho_{\theta}) := \ell(\theta) = \frac{1}{1-\gamma} \mathbb{E}_{s_h, a_h \sim d_{\mu}^{\pi_{\theta_t}}} \left[ \ln \frac{\pi_{\theta_t}(a_h | s_h)}{\pi_{\theta}(a_h | s_h)} \right]$$

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$$\nabla_{\theta}^2 \ell(\theta) |_{\theta=\theta_t} = \mathbb{E}_{s \sim d_{\mu}^{\pi_{\theta_t}}} \sum_a \pi_{\theta_t}(a | s) \left( -\nabla_{\theta}^2 \ln \pi_{\theta_t}(a | s) \right) = -\mathbb{E}_{s \sim d_{\mu}^{\pi_{\theta_t}}} \sum_a \pi_{\theta_t}(a | s) \left( \frac{\nabla_{\theta}^2 \pi_{\theta_t}(a | s)}{\pi_{\theta_t}(a | s)} - \frac{\nabla_{\theta} \pi_{\theta_t}(a | s) \nabla_{\theta} \pi_{\theta_t}(a | s)^{\top}}{\pi_{\theta_t}^2(a | s)} \right)$$

$$= \mathbb{E}_{s, a \sim d_{\mu}^{\pi_{\theta_t}}} \left[ \boxed{\nabla_{\theta} \ln \pi_{\theta_t}(a | s) \left( \nabla_{\theta} \ln \pi_{\theta_t}(a | s) \right)^{\top}} \right] \in \mathbb{R}^{dim_{\theta} \times dim_{\theta}}$$



# Trust-Region Optimization: Constraint

---

$$KL(\rho_{\theta_t} | \rho_{\theta}) := \ell(\theta) = \frac{1}{1-\gamma} \mathbb{E}_{s_h, a_h \sim d_{\mu}^{\pi_{\theta_t}}} \left[ \ln \frac{\pi_{\theta_t}(a_h | s_h)}{\pi_{\theta}(a_h | s_h)} \right]$$
$$\ell(\theta) \approx \boxed{\ell(\theta_t)} + \boxed{\nabla \ell(\theta_t)}^{\top} (\theta - \theta_t) + \frac{1}{2} (\theta - \theta_t)^{\top} \boxed{\nabla_{\theta}^2 \ell(\theta_t)} (\theta - \theta_t)$$

Easy to compute, as we know how to compute  
the gradient of the log likelihood of the  
policy

$$= \mathbb{E}_{s, a \sim d_{\mu}^{\pi_{\theta_t}}} \left[ \boxed{\nabla_{\theta} \ln \pi_{\theta_t}(a | s) \left( \nabla_{\theta} \ln \pi_{\theta_t}(a | s) \right)^{\top}} \right] \in \mathbb{R}^{dim_{\theta} \times dim_{\theta}}$$



# Trust-Region Optimization: Simplified Constraint

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$$KL\left(\rho_{\pi_{\theta_t}} \mid \rho_{\pi_{\theta}}\right) \approx \frac{1}{2}(\theta - \theta_t)^{\top} F_{\theta_t}(\theta - \theta_t)$$

$$F_{\theta_t} := \mathbb{E}_{s, a \sim d_{\mu}^{\pi_{\theta_t}}} \left[ \nabla_{\theta} \ln \pi_{\theta_t}(a \mid s) \left( \nabla_{\theta} \ln \pi_{\theta_t}(a \mid s) \right)^{\top} \right] \in \mathbb{R}^{dim_{\theta} \times dim_{\theta}}$$


F is always positive semi-definite



# Simplified Trust-Region Formulation

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$$\begin{aligned} \max_{\pi_{\theta}} \mathbb{E}_{s \sim d_{\mu}^{\pi_{\theta_t}}} \left[ \mathbb{E}_{a \sim \pi_{\theta}(s)} A^{\pi_{\theta_t}}(s, a) \right] \\ \text{s.t.}, KL \left( \rho_{\pi_{\theta_t}} | \rho_{\pi_{\theta}} \right) \leq \delta \end{aligned}$$


$$\begin{aligned} \max_{\theta} \nabla_{\theta} J(\pi_{\theta_t})^{\top} (\theta - \theta_t) \\ \text{s.t.} (\theta - \theta_t)^{\top} F_{\theta_t} (\theta - \theta_t) \leq \delta \end{aligned}$$



# Simplified Trust-Region Formulation

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$$\begin{aligned} \max_{\theta} \quad & \nabla_{\theta} J(\pi_{\theta_t})^{\top} (\theta - \theta_t) \\ \text{s.t.} \quad & (\theta - \theta_t)^{\top} F_{\theta_t} (\theta - \theta_t) \leq \delta \end{aligned}$$

This looks very easy and we can compute the solution in closed form!



# Simplified Trust-Region Solution

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$$\begin{aligned} \max_{\theta} \quad & \nabla_{\theta} J(\pi_{\theta_t})^{\top} (\theta - \theta_t) \\ \text{s.t.} \quad & (\theta - \theta_t)^{\top} F_{\theta_t} (\theta - \theta_t) \leq \delta \end{aligned}$$

Let's first simplify the notation:

$$\theta - \theta_t = \Delta$$

$$\nabla_{\theta} J(\pi_{\theta_t}) = \nabla$$



# Simplified Trust-Region Solution

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$$\begin{aligned} & \max_{\Delta} \nabla^{\top} \Delta, \\ & \text{s.t. } \Delta^{\top} F \Delta \leq \delta \end{aligned}$$

Let's first simplify the notation:

$$\theta - \theta_t = \Delta$$

$$\nabla_{\theta} \mathcal{J}(\pi_{\theta_t}) = \nabla$$





# Simplified Trust-Region Solution

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$$\begin{aligned} & \max_{\Delta} \nabla^T \Delta, \\ & \text{s.t. } \Delta^T F \Delta \leq \delta \end{aligned}$$

Let's then introduce  $F^{1/2}$

For a positive definite matrix this can be obtained from the Eigen Decomposition:  $F = U\Sigma U^T$ ,  $F^{1/2} = U\sqrt{\Sigma}U^T$



# Simplified Trust-Region Solution

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$$\begin{aligned} & \max_{\Delta} \nabla^T \Delta, \\ & \text{s.t. } \Delta^T F \Delta \leq \delta \end{aligned}$$

$$(F^{1/2})^2 = F$$

$$F^{1/2} F^{-1/2} = I$$



$$\max_{\Delta} \nabla^T F^{1/2} F^{-1/2} \Delta$$

$$\text{s.t. } (F^{1/2} \Delta)^T (F^{1/2} \Delta) \leq \delta$$



# Simplified Trust-Region Solution

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$$\max_{\widetilde{\Delta}} \left( F^{-1/2} \nabla \right)^{\top} \widetilde{\Delta},$$

$$\widetilde{\Delta} := F^{1/2} \Delta$$

$$\text{s.t. } \widetilde{\Delta}^{\top} \widetilde{\Delta} \leq \delta$$

$$(F^{1/2})^2 = F$$

$$F^{1/2} F^{-1/2} = I$$



$$\max_{\Delta} \nabla^{\top} F^{1/2} F^{-1/2} \Delta$$

$$\text{s.t. } (F^{1/2} \Delta)^{\top} (F^{1/2} \Delta) \leq \delta$$



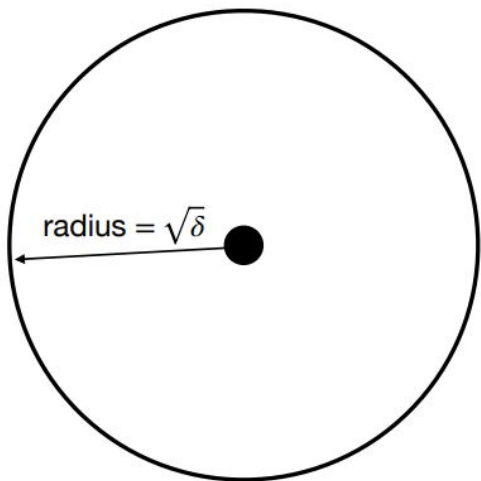
# Simplified Trust-Region Solution

---

$$\max_{\widetilde{\Delta}} \left( F^{-1/2} \nabla \right)^{\top} \widetilde{\Delta},$$

$$\widetilde{\Delta} := F^{1/2} \Delta$$

$$\text{s.t. } \boxed{\widetilde{\Delta}^{\top} \widetilde{\Delta} \leq \delta}$$

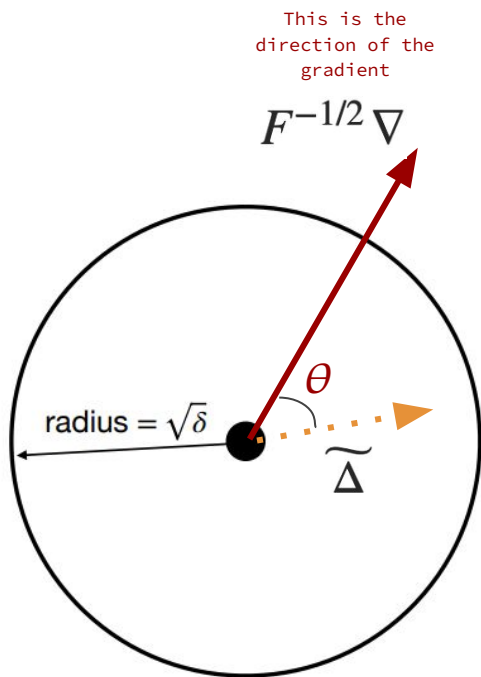


This is my (ball) constraint: the norm of  $\widetilde{\Delta}$  has to be  $\leq \delta$  (so, any vector  $\widetilde{\Delta}$  falls in this ball)



# Simplified Trust-Region Solution

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$$\max_{\widetilde{\Delta}} (F^{-1/2} \nabla)^{\top} \widetilde{\Delta},$$

$$\text{s.t. } \widetilde{\Delta}^{\top} \widetilde{\Delta} \leq \delta$$

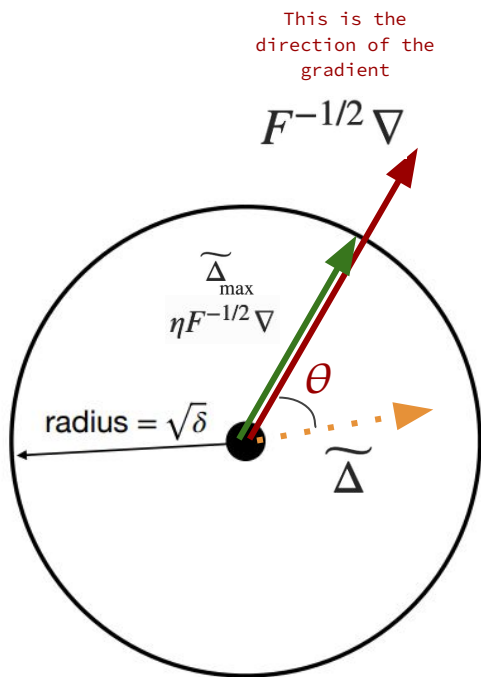
$$\widetilde{\Delta} := F^{1/2} \Delta$$

What I do care about now is the inner product between the vector  $F^{-1/2} \Delta$  and any vector  $\widetilde{\Delta}$  in this ball



# Simplified Trust-Region Solution

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$$\max_{\widetilde{\Delta}} (F^{-1/2} \nabla)^\top \widetilde{\Delta},$$

$$\widetilde{\Delta} := F^{1/2} \Delta$$

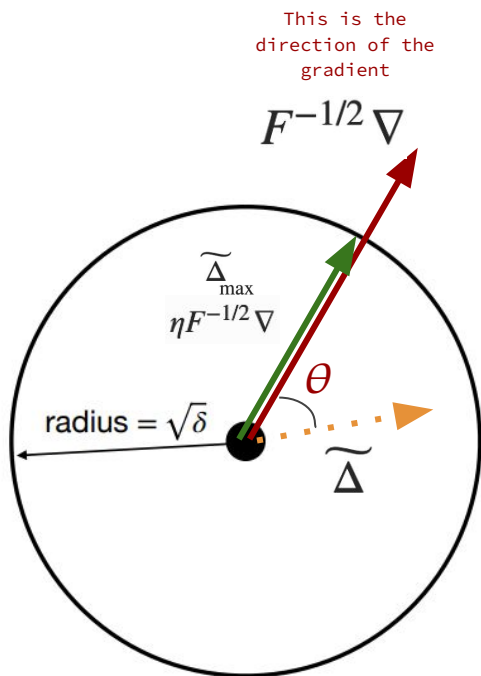
$$\text{s.t. } \widetilde{\Delta}^\top \widetilde{\Delta} \leq \delta$$

Which vector does maximize this inner product? The green one: minimum angle (same direction  $F^{-1/2} \Delta$ ), maximum length (scaled by  $\eta$ )



# Simplified Trust-Region Solution

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$$\max_{\widetilde{\Delta}} \left( F^{-1/2} \nabla \right)^{\top} \widetilde{\Delta},$$

$$\widetilde{\Delta} := F^{1/2} \Delta$$

$$\text{s.t. } \widetilde{\Delta}^{\top} \widetilde{\Delta} \leq \delta$$

$$\|\eta F^{-1/2} \nabla\|_2 = \sqrt{\delta} \Rightarrow \eta = \sqrt{\frac{\delta}{\nabla^{\top} F^{-1} \nabla}}$$

$$\widetilde{\Delta}_{max} := \sqrt{\frac{\delta}{\nabla^{\top} F^{-1} \nabla}} F^{-1/2} \nabla$$

$$\Delta_{max} := \sqrt{\frac{\delta}{\nabla^{\top} F^{-1} \nabla}} F^{-1} \nabla$$



# Natural Policy Gradient

$$\begin{aligned} \max_{\theta} \quad & \nabla_{\theta} J(\pi_{\theta_t})^{\top} (\theta - \theta_t) \\ \text{s.t.} \quad & (\theta - \theta_t)^{\top} F_{\theta_t} (\theta - \theta_t) \leq \delta \end{aligned}$$

$$\theta_{t+1} = \theta_t + \eta F_{\theta_t}^{-1} \nabla_{\theta} J(\pi_{\theta_t}) \quad \eta = \sqrt{\frac{\delta}{\nabla_{\theta} J(\pi_{\theta_t})^{\top} F_{\theta_t}^{-1} \nabla_{\theta} J(\pi_{\theta_t})}}$$

The same solution can be obtained by applying Lagrange multipliers

$$\min_{\lambda \geq 0} \max_{\theta} \nabla_{\theta} J(\pi_{\theta_t})^{\top} (\theta - \theta_t) + \lambda \left( (\theta - \theta_t)^{\top} F_{\theta_t} (\theta - \theta_t) - \delta \right)$$





# Natural Policy Gradient

---

$$\begin{aligned} \max_{\theta} \quad & \nabla_{\theta} J(\pi_{\theta_t})^{\top} (\theta - \theta_t) \\ \text{s.t.} \quad & (\theta - \theta_t)^{\top} F_{\theta_t} (\theta - \theta_t) \leq \delta \end{aligned}$$

$$\theta_{t+1} = \theta_t + \eta F_{\theta_t}^{-1} \nabla_{\theta} J(\pi_{\theta_t}) \quad \eta = \sqrt{\frac{\delta}{\nabla_{\theta} J(\pi_{\theta_t})^{\top} F_{\theta_t}^{-1} \nabla_{\theta} J(\pi_{\theta_t})}}$$

F is generally invertible, but in case it is not you can use pseudo-inverse or add regularization ( $F = F + \lambda I$  with  $\lambda$  very small)



# Natural Policy Gradient

---

$$\begin{aligned} \max_{\theta} \quad & \nabla_{\theta} J(\pi_{\theta_t})^{\top} (\theta - \theta_t) \\ \text{s.t.} \quad & (\theta - \theta_t)^{\top} F_{\theta_t} (\theta - \theta_t) \leq \delta \end{aligned}$$

$$\theta_{t+1} = \theta_t + \eta F_{\theta_t}^{-1} \nabla_{\theta} J(\pi_{\theta_t}) \quad \eta = \sqrt{\frac{\delta}{\nabla_{\theta} J(\pi_{\theta_t})^{\top} F_{\theta_t}^{-1} \nabla_{\theta} J(\pi_{\theta_t})}}$$

Step size ( $\eta$ ) depends on the allowed trust region ( $\delta$  is a hyper-parameter that we typically set to a small number like 1e-2 or 1e-3)



# Natural Policy Gradient

---

$$\begin{aligned} \max_{\theta} \quad & \nabla_{\theta} J(\pi_{\theta_t})^{\top} (\theta - \theta_t) \\ \text{s.t.} \quad & (\theta - \theta_t)^{\top} F_{\theta_t} (\theta - \theta_t) \leq \delta \end{aligned}$$

$$\theta_{t+1} = \theta_t + \eta F_{\theta_t}^{-1} \nabla_{\theta} J(\pi_{\theta_t}) \quad \eta = \sqrt{\frac{\delta}{\nabla_{\theta} J(\pi_{\theta_t})^{\top} F_{\theta_t}^{-1} \nabla_{\theta} J(\pi_{\theta_t})}}$$

F is pre-conditioning our gradient, instead of just fully going for it



# TRPO: Line Search

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Due to the quadratic approximation, the KL constraint might be violated: we solve this by doing a simple line search

```
for  $j = 0, 1, 2, \dots, L$  do  
  Compute proposed update  $\theta = \theta_k + \alpha^j \Delta_k$   
  if  $\mathcal{L}_{\theta_k}(\theta) \geq 0$  and  $\bar{D}_{KL}(\theta || \theta_k) \leq \delta$  then  
    accept the update and set  $\theta_{k+1} = \theta_k + \alpha^j \Delta_k$   
    break  
  end if  
end for
```



# Natural Policy Gradient: Additional Comments

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We want to keep two distributions close, but parameters can change a lot: learning rate ( $\eta$ ) is very high if eigen-values of  $F$  are very small (as the matrix is inverted)

Generally, Natural PG moves faster than standard/plain PG

**If we have many parameters, computing & inverting  $F$  is too heavy!**



# Extending TRPO: Proximal Policy Optimization

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If we have many params, we can impose KL divergence as a regularization term and optimize (simply through SG Ascent)

$$\max_{\theta} \mathbb{E}_{s \sim d_{\mu}^{\pi_{\theta_t}}} \left[ \mathbb{E}_{a \sim \pi_{\theta}(\cdot | s)} A^{\pi_{\theta_t}}(s, a) \right] - \underbrace{\lambda \mathbb{E}_{s \sim d_{\mu}^{\pi_t}} \left[ \text{KL} \left( \pi_{\theta_t}(a | s) | \pi_{\theta}(a | s) \right) \right]}_{\text{regularization}}$$

using importance weighting and expanding KL divergence through expectation

$$\ell(\theta) := \mathbb{E}_{s \sim d_{\mu}^{\pi_{\theta_t}}} \left[ \mathbb{E}_{a \sim \pi_{\theta_t}(\cdot | s)} \frac{\pi_{\theta}(a | s)}{\pi_{\theta_t}(a | s)} A^{\pi_{\theta_t}}(s, a) \right] - \lambda \mathbb{E}_{s \sim d_{\mu}^{\pi_{\theta_t}}} \mathbb{E}_{a \sim \pi_{\theta_t}(\cdot | s)} [-\ln \pi_{\theta}(a | s)]$$

