

# Homework 1 Solution: Mathematics of Deep Learning (EN 580.745)

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**1. Properties of the  $\ell_1$  norm.** Let  $\mathbf{x} \in \mathbb{R}^n$  and recall the  $\ell_1$  norm  $\|\mathbf{x}\|_1 \triangleq \sum_i |x_i|$ .

(a) **(10 points)** The subdifferential  $\partial f(\mathbf{x})$  of a convex function  $f: \mathbb{R}^n \rightarrow \mathbb{R}$  at  $\mathbf{x}$  is defined to be

$$\partial f(\mathbf{x}) \triangleq \{\mathbf{z} \in \mathbb{R}^n \mid f(\mathbf{y}) \geq f(\mathbf{x}) + \langle \mathbf{z}, \mathbf{y} - \mathbf{x} \rangle \text{ for all } \mathbf{y} \in \mathbb{R}^n\}. \quad (1)$$

Prove that

$$\partial \|\mathbf{x}\|_1 = \{\text{sign}(\mathbf{x}) + \mathbf{w} \mid \text{supp}(\mathbf{w}) \subseteq \text{supp}(\mathbf{x})^c, \max_i |w_i| \leq 1\}, \quad (2)$$

where  $\text{sign}: \mathbb{R}^n \rightarrow \{-1, 0, 1\}$  denotes the sign function, and  $\text{supp}(\mathbf{x}) \subseteq [n]$  denotes the support of  $\mathbf{x}$ , that is the set of indices where  $\mathbf{x}$  is non-zero.

(b) **(10 points)** Define the proximal operator  $\text{prox}_f: \mathbb{R}^n \rightarrow \mathbb{R}^n$  of a convex function  $f$  to be

$$\text{prox}_f(\mathbf{x}) \triangleq \arg \min_{\mathbf{a} \in \mathbb{R}^n} \frac{1}{2} \|\mathbf{a} - \mathbf{x}\|_2^2 + f(\mathbf{a}). \quad (3)$$

**Let  $\tau > 0$ .** Prove that  $\text{prox}_{\tau \|\cdot\|_1}(\mathbf{x}) = \mathcal{S}_\tau(\mathbf{x})$ , where  $\mathcal{S}_\tau$  is the elementwise soft-thresholding operator

$$\mathcal{S}_\tau(x_i) \triangleq \text{sign}(x_i) \max(|x_i| - \tau, 0). \quad (4)$$

*Solution.*

(a) We'll first prove the statement for the special case  $n = 1$ . Fix  $x \in \mathbb{R}$  and suppose  $z = \text{sign}(x) + w$ , with  $w$  as in (2). Choose an arbitrary  $y$  and note that

$$|x| + (\text{sign}(x) + w)(y - x) = (\text{sign}(x) + w)y \leq |y|, \quad (5)$$

where in the first equality we used  $\text{sign}(x)x = |x|$  and  $wx = 0$ , and in the second inequality we used  $|\text{sign}(x) + w| \leq 1$ . This proves the  $\supseteq$  containment in (2) using the definition of the subdifferential.

For the other direction, note first that if  $x \neq 0$ , then  $|\cdot|$  is differentiable at  $x$  with  $\frac{d}{dx}|x| = \text{sign}(x)$ . So suppose that  $x = 0$  and assume  $z \in \partial|x|$ . Then by definition we must have  $|y| \geq zy$  for all  $y$ , which implies  $|z| \leq 1$ .

This completes the proof for the case  $n = 1$ . To show the general case, note that  $\|\mathbf{x}\|_1 = \sum_{i=1}^n |e_i^\top \mathbf{x}|$ , where  $e_i$  is the  $i$ th standard basis element. Then by the summation and affine transformation rules of subdifferential calculus<sup>1</sup>, we know

$$\partial \|\mathbf{x}\|_1 = \sum_{i=1}^n e_i \partial |e_i^\top \mathbf{x}|. \quad (6)$$

By the special case  $n = 1$ , the RHS of (6) is equal to the RHS of (2).

(b) The objective in (3) is the sum of a convex and strongly convex function, hence is strongly convex and a unique minimizer exists. Denote this minimizer  $\mathbf{a}^*$ . The (necessary and sufficient) first order optimality condition states that  $\mathbf{a}^*$  must satisfy  $\mathbf{x} - \mathbf{a}^* \in \tau \partial \|\mathbf{a}^*\|_1$ . By part (a), this implies  $\mathbf{x} - \mathbf{a}^* = \tau(\text{sign}(\mathbf{a}^*) + \mathbf{w})$ , for  $\mathbf{w}$  as in (2). We can now check that setting  $\mathbf{a}^* = \mathcal{S}_\tau(\mathbf{x})$  satisfies this condition

$$x_i - \mathcal{S}_\tau(x_i) = \begin{cases} \tau \text{sign}(\mathcal{S}_\tau(x_i)) & |x_i| > \tau \\ x_i & \text{o.w.} \end{cases} \quad (7)$$

□

<sup>1</sup>[https://web.stanford.edu/class/ee364b/lectures/subgradients\\_slides.pdf](https://web.stanford.edu/class/ee364b/lectures/subgradients_slides.pdf)

**2. Properties of the nuclear norm.** Let  $\mathbf{X} \in \mathbb{R}^{D \times N}$  be a matrix of rank  $r$ . Recall the nuclear norm  $\|\mathbf{X}\|_* \triangleq \sum_{i=1}^r \sigma_i(\mathbf{X})$ , where  $\sigma_i(\mathbf{X})$  denotes the  $i$ th singular value of  $\mathbf{X}$ . Let  $\mathbf{X} = \mathbf{U}\Sigma\mathbf{V}^\top$  be the compact SVD, so that  $\mathbf{U} \in \mathbb{R}^{D \times r}$ ,  $\Sigma \in \mathbb{R}^{r \times r}$ , and  $\mathbf{V} \in \mathbb{R}^{N \times r}$ . Recall also the spectral norm  $\|\mathbf{X}\|_2 = \sigma_1(\mathbf{X})$ .

(a) **(10 points)** Prove that <sup>2</sup>

$$\partial\|\mathbf{X}\|_* = \{\mathbf{U}\mathbf{V}^\top + \mathbf{W} \mid \mathbf{U}^\top\mathbf{W} = \mathbf{0}, \mathbf{W}\mathbf{V} = \mathbf{0}, \|\mathbf{W}\|_2 \leq 1\}. \quad (8)$$

(b) **(10 points)** Let  $\tau > 0$ . Prove that  $\text{prox}_{\tau\|\cdot\|_*}(\mathbf{X}) = \mathbf{U}\mathcal{S}_\tau(\Sigma)\mathbf{V}^\top$ , where  $\mathcal{S}_\tau$  is as in (4). Note that when generalizing (3) to matrices, the squared Frobenius norm  $\frac{1}{2}\|\mathbf{A} - \mathbf{X}\|_F^2$  is used in place of the squared  $\ell_2$  norm ( $\|\mathbf{X}\|_F \triangleq (\sum_{ij} X_{ij}^2)^{\frac{1}{2}}$ ).

*Solution.*

(a) Let  $\mathbf{Z} = \mathbf{U}\mathbf{V}^\top + \mathbf{W}$  with  $\mathbf{W}$  as in (8), and fix an arbitrary  $\mathbf{Y}$ . Then we have

$$\|\mathbf{X}\|_* + \langle \mathbf{Z}, \mathbf{Y} - \mathbf{X} \rangle = \langle \mathbf{Z}, \mathbf{Y} \rangle \leq \|\mathbf{Z}\|_2 \|\mathbf{Y}\|_* \leq \|\mathbf{Y}\|_*, \quad (9)$$

where the first equality uses  $\langle \mathbf{Z}, \mathbf{X} \rangle = \|\mathbf{X}\|_*$ , the second inequality uses the Von-Neumann trace inequality and Hölder's inequality, and the last inequality uses  $\|\mathbf{Z}\|_2 \leq 1$ , which holds by the definition (8). This proves the  $\supseteq$  containment.

For the other direction, fix  $\mathbf{Z} \in \partial\|\mathbf{X}\|_*$ . Let  $\|\cdot\|_*^*$  denote the convex conjugate of  $\|\cdot\|_*$

$$\|\mathbf{Z}\|_*^* \triangleq \sup_{\mathbf{Y}} \langle \mathbf{Z}, \mathbf{Y} \rangle - \|\mathbf{Y}\|_*. \quad (10)$$

Note that again by the Von-Neumann trace inequality and Hölder's inequality, we can say

$$\|\mathbf{Z}\|_*^* \leq \sup_{\mathbf{Y}} (\|\mathbf{Z}\|_2 - 1) \|\mathbf{Y}\|_* = \begin{cases} \infty & \|\mathbf{Z}\|_2 > 1 \\ 0 & \text{o.w.} \end{cases} \quad (11)$$

Furthermore, the upper bound can always be achieved by choosing  $\mathbf{Y}$  to be rank one with top-1 left and right singular vectors equal to those of  $\mathbf{Z}$ . So, (11) is in fact an equality. Now by a fundamental property of the convex conjugate, we know that  $\langle \mathbf{Z}, \mathbf{X} \rangle = \|\mathbf{X}\|_* + \|\mathbf{Z}\|_*^*$ , which implies  $\|\mathbf{Z}\|_*^* = 0$ , hence  $\|\mathbf{Z}\|_2 \leq 1$  and  $\langle \mathbf{Z}, \mathbf{X} \rangle = \|\mathbf{X}\|_*$ . Applying the trace inequality once more, we know  $\langle \mathbf{Z}, \mathbf{X} \rangle = \|\mathbf{X}\|_*$  only if  $\mathbf{Z} = \mathbf{U}\mathbf{V}^\top + \mathbf{W}$  as in (8).

(b) As in problem 1(b), we know the unique minimizer  $\mathbf{A}^*$  of the proximal optimization problem uniquely satisfies the optimality condition  $\mathbf{X} - \mathbf{A}^* \in \tau\partial\|\mathbf{A}^*\|_*$ . Indeed,  $\mathbf{U}\mathcal{S}_\tau(\Sigma)\mathbf{V}^\top$  satisfies this condition

$$\mathbf{X} - \mathbf{U}\mathcal{S}_\tau(\Sigma)\mathbf{V}^\top = \mathbf{U} \begin{pmatrix} \tau\mathbf{I} & \mathbf{0} \\ \mathbf{0} & \Sigma_1 \end{pmatrix} \mathbf{V}^\top = \mathbf{U}_0(\tau\mathbf{I})\mathbf{V}_0^\top + \mathbf{U}_1\Sigma_1\mathbf{V}_1^\top, \quad (12)$$

where  $\mathbf{U} = [\mathbf{U}_0 \ \mathbf{U}_1]$ ,  $\mathbf{V} = [\mathbf{V}_0 \ \mathbf{V}_1]$ ,  $\text{diag}(\Sigma)^\top = [\text{diag}(\Sigma_0)^\top \ \text{diag}(\Sigma_1)^\top]$  with  $\Sigma_0$  containing all singular values greater than  $\tau$ .

□

**3. Low rank matrix factorization.** Let  $\mathbf{Y} \in \mathbb{R}^{D \times N}$  be of rank  $r$ . Consider the matrix factorization problem

$$\underset{\mathbf{U}, \mathbf{V}}{\text{minimize}} \quad F(\mathbf{U}, \mathbf{V}) = \frac{1}{2}\|\mathbf{Y} - \mathbf{U}\mathbf{V}^\top\|_F^2 + \frac{\tau}{2}(\|\mathbf{U}\|_F^2 + \|\mathbf{V}\|_F^2), \quad (13)$$

where  $\mathbf{U} \in \mathbb{R}^{D \times r}$ ,  $\mathbf{V} \in \mathbb{R}^{N \times r}$ , and  $\tau > 0$ . This is in fact a regularized variant of the problem studied in (Baldi & Hornik, 1989). It is also closely related to the nuclear norm proximal operator from Problem 2(b), as we will see.

(a) **(10 points)** Let  $\mathbf{Y} = \mathbf{P}\Sigma\mathbf{Q}^\top$  be the compact SVD. Define

$$\widehat{\mathbf{U}} = \mathbf{P}\mathcal{S}_\tau(\Sigma)^{\frac{1}{2}} \quad \widehat{\mathbf{V}} = \mathbf{Q}\mathcal{S}_\tau(\Sigma)^{\frac{1}{2}}, \quad (14)$$

where the square root of a diagonal matrix is applied elementwise. Prove that  $(\widehat{\mathbf{U}}, \widehat{\mathbf{V}})$  is a critical point of (13).

<sup>2</sup>Hint: the Von-Neumann trace inequality could be useful.

(b) **(bonus)** Prove that  $(\widehat{U}, \widehat{V})$  is in fact a global minimizer.

Problem (13) and the nuclear norm proximal operator are therefore closely related, in the sense that the global minimizer  $(\widehat{U}, \widehat{V})$  satisfies  $\widehat{U}\widehat{V}^\top = \text{prox}_{\tau\|\cdot\|_*}(\mathbf{Y})$ .

*Solution.*

(a) First, compute the gradients with respect to  $U, V$  to find the first order optimality conditions

$$\nabla_U F(U, V) = (UV^\top - Y)V + \tau U = \mathbf{0} \quad \nabla_V F(U, V) = (UV^\top - Y)^\top U + \tau V = \mathbf{0} \quad (15)$$

$$\Rightarrow U(V^\top V + \tau I) = YV \quad \Rightarrow V(U^\top U + \tau I) = Y^\top U. \quad (16)$$

Now, note that

$$\widehat{U}(\widehat{V}^\top \widehat{V} + \tau I) = P\mathcal{S}_\tau(\Sigma)^{\frac{1}{2}}(\mathcal{S}_\tau(\Sigma) + \tau I) = P\Sigma\mathcal{S}_\tau(\Sigma)^{\frac{1}{2}} = Y\widehat{V}, \quad (17)$$

where the middle equality holds because

$$\max(\sigma_i - \tau, 0)^{\frac{1}{2}}(\max(\sigma_i - \tau, 0) + \tau) = \sigma_i \max(\sigma_i - \tau, 0)^{\frac{1}{2}}. \quad (18)$$

Similarly,

$$\widehat{V}(\widehat{U}^\top \widehat{U} + \tau I) = Q\mathcal{S}_\tau(\Sigma)^{\frac{1}{2}}(\mathcal{S}_\tau(\Sigma) + \tau I) = Q\Sigma\mathcal{S}_\tau(\Sigma)^{\frac{1}{2}} = Y^\top \widehat{U}. \quad (19)$$

Thus,  $\widehat{U}, \widehat{V}$  satisfy the first order optimality conditions.

(b) We first prove the equivalence of the nuclear norm with its so-called ‘‘variational form’’.

**Lemma 1** (Variational form of the nuclear norm). *Let  $Y$  be as defined above. Then*

$$\|Y\|_* = \min_{\substack{U \in \mathbb{R}^{D \times r}, V \in \mathbb{R}^{N \times r} \\ Y = UV^\top}} \frac{1}{2}(\|U\|_F^2 + \|V\|_F^2). \quad (20)$$

*In particular, the minimum in (20) exists.*

*Proof.* Let  $P, \Sigma, Q$  also be as defined above. Then note that setting  $U = P\Sigma^{\frac{1}{2}}$  and  $V = Q\Sigma^{\frac{1}{2}}$  satisfies  $Y = UV^\top$  and  $\|Y\|_* = \frac{1}{2}(\|U\|_F^2 + \|V\|_F^2)$ . This proves

$$\|Y\|_* \geq \inf_{\substack{U, V \\ Y = UV^\top}} \frac{1}{2}(\|U\|_F^2 + \|V\|_F^2). \quad (21)$$

It remains to show the corresponding upper bound. So choose any  $U, V$  such that  $Y = UV^\top$ . Let  $U' = P^\top U$  and  $V' = Q^\top V$ . Then  $\Sigma = U'V'^\top$ . Moreover, since  $P$  and  $Q$  have orthonormal columns,  $\|U\|_F^2 \geq \|U'\|_F^2$  and  $\|V\|_F^2 \geq \|V'\|_F^2$ . Now, let  $\sigma_j$  be the  $j$ th singular value, and let  $u'_j, v'_j$  be the  $j$ th rows of  $U', V'$ . Then we have

$$\sigma_j = u_j'^\top v'_j \leq \|u'_j\|_2 \|v'_j\|_2 \leq \frac{1}{2}(\|u'_j\|_2^2 + \|v'_j\|_2^2), \quad (22)$$

where the first upper bound is Cauchy-Schwarz, the second is the AM-GM inequality. It follows that

$$\|Y\|_* = \sum_j \sigma_j \leq \frac{1}{2} \sum_j (\|u'_j\|_2^2 + \|v'_j\|_2^2) = \frac{1}{2}(\|U'\|_F^2 + \|V'\|_F^2), \quad (23)$$

completing the proof of the lemma.  $\square$

By Lemma 1, we now know that for all  $U, V$

$$\frac{1}{2}\|Y - UV^\top\|_F^2 + \tau\|UV^\top\|_* \leq F(U, V). \quad (24)$$

Thus,

$$\min_X \frac{1}{2}\|Y - X\|_F^2 + \tau\|X\|_* \leq \min_{U, V} F(U, V). \quad (25)$$

Since the LHS of (25) is the nuclear norm proximal optimization problem, and by construction  $\widehat{\mathbf{U}}\widehat{\mathbf{V}}'^{\top} = \text{prox}_{\tau\|\cdot\|_*}(\mathbf{Y})$ , it follows that  $(\widehat{\mathbf{U}}, \widehat{\mathbf{V}})$  is a global minimizer of (13).  $\square$

**Proposition 1** (Von-Neumann trace inequality). *Let  $\mathbf{X}, \mathbf{Y} \in \mathbb{R}^{D \times N}$ . Assume without loss of generality that  $r = \text{rank}(\mathbf{X}) \geq \text{rank}(\mathbf{Y}) = r'$ . Let  $\mathbf{X} = \mathbf{U}_X \Sigma_X \mathbf{V}_X^{\top}$  and  $\mathbf{Y} = \mathbf{U}_Y \Sigma_Y \mathbf{V}_Y^{\top}$  be their respective compact **rank- $r$**  SVDs. Also let  $\mathbf{U}'_X \Sigma'_X \mathbf{V}'_X{}^{\top}$  and  $\mathbf{U}'_Y \Sigma'_Y \mathbf{V}'_Y{}^{\top}$  contain just the top  $r'$  singular vectors. Then*

$$\langle \mathbf{X}, \mathbf{Y} \rangle \leq \langle \Sigma_X, \Sigma_Y \rangle, \quad (26)$$

*with equality if and only if  $\mathbf{U}'_Y{}^{\top} \mathbf{U}'_X = \mathbf{V}'_Y{}^{\top} \mathbf{V}'_X = \Pi \in \mathbb{R}^{r' \times r'}$ , for a permutation matrix  $\Pi$  satisfying  $\langle \Pi^{\top} \Sigma'_X \Pi, \Sigma'_Y \rangle = \langle \Sigma_X, \Sigma_Y \rangle$ . If all singular values are unique,  $\Pi = \mathbf{I}$ .*

*Proof.* Let  $\mathbf{P} = \mathbf{U}_Y^{\top} \mathbf{U}_X$ ,  $\mathbf{Q} = \mathbf{V}_Y^{\top} \mathbf{V}_X$ , and  $\widehat{\mathbf{X}} = \mathbf{P} \Sigma_X \mathbf{Q}^{\top}$ . Note that both  $\mathbf{P}$  and  $\mathbf{Q}$  are  $r \times r$  orthogonal matrices. By the cyclic property of trace, we have  $\langle \mathbf{X}, \mathbf{Y} \rangle = \langle \widehat{\mathbf{X}}, \Sigma_Y \rangle$ . Furthermore, note that

$$\langle \widehat{\mathbf{X}}, \Sigma_Y \rangle = \sum_{i=1}^{r'} \sigma_{Y_i} \mathbf{p}_i^{\top} \Sigma_X \mathbf{q}_i, \quad (27)$$

where the  $\mathbf{p}_i, \mathbf{q}_i$  are rows of  $\mathbf{P}, \mathbf{Q}$  respectively. Now consider the optimization problem

$$\max_{\mathbf{P}, \mathbf{Q}} \sum_{i=1}^{r'} \sigma_{Y_i} \mathbf{p}_i^{\top} \Sigma_X \mathbf{q}_i \quad \text{s.t.} \quad \mathbf{P}^{\top} \mathbf{P} = \mathbf{Q}^{\top} \mathbf{Q} = \mathbf{I}, \quad (28)$$

whose optimal value is an (achievable) upper bound for (27). By induction on  $r'$ , one can show that the maximizers  $(\mathbf{P}^*, \mathbf{Q}^*)$  of (28) satisfy  $\mathbf{p}_i^* = \mathbf{q}_i^* = \mathbf{e}_{\pi(i)} \in \mathbb{R}^r$  for  $i = 1, \dots, r'$  and some permutation  $\pi: [r'] \rightarrow [r']$  such that  $\sigma_{Y_i} \mathbf{p}_i^{*\top} \Sigma_X \mathbf{q}_i^* = \sigma_{Y_i} \sigma_{X_{\pi(i)}} = \sigma_{Y_i} \sigma_{X_i}$ . Taking  $\Pi = [\mathbf{e}_{\pi(1)} \cdots \mathbf{e}_{\pi(r')}] \in \mathbb{R}^{r' \times r'}$ , this also means  $\langle \Pi^{\top} \Sigma'_X \Pi, \Sigma'_Y \rangle = \langle \Sigma_X, \Sigma_Y \rangle$ . Moreover, note that if all singular values are unique,  $\pi$  must be the identity.  $\square$