

Optimization for Machine Learning

CSCI-599

Lecture 3: Constrained and Non-Smooth Gradient Descent

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USC – <https://spkreddy.org/optmlspring2025.html>

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Can we go even faster?

So far: Error decreases with $1/\sqrt{T}$, or $1/T$...

Could it decrease exponentially in T ?

Can we go even faster?

- ▶ On $f(x) := x^2$: Stepsize $\gamma := \frac{1}{2}$ (f is $L=2$ - smooth)

$$x_{t+1} = x_t - \frac{1}{2} \nabla f(x_t) =$$

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- ▶ converged in one step!

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so $f(x_t) =$

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$$x_{t+1} = x_t - \frac{1}{4} \nabla f(x_t) = x_t - \frac{x_t}{2} = \frac{x_t}{2},$$

so $f(x_t) = f\left(\frac{x_0}{2^t}\right) = \frac{1}{2^{2t}} x_0^2$.

- ▶ Exponential in t !

Strongly convex functions

“Not too flat”

Definition

Let $f : \mathbf{dom}(f) \rightarrow \mathbb{R}$ be a differentiable function, $X \subseteq \mathbf{dom}(f)$ convex and $\mu \in \mathbb{R}_+, \mu > 0$. Function f is called **strongly convex** (with parameter μ) over X if

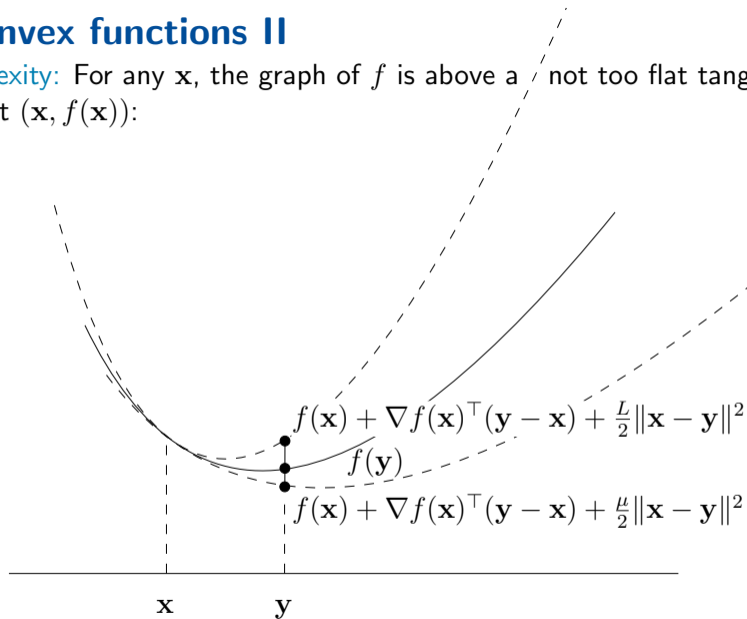
$$f(\mathbf{y}) \geq f(\mathbf{x}) + \nabla f(\mathbf{x})^\top (\mathbf{y} - \mathbf{x}) + \frac{\mu}{2} \|\mathbf{x} - \mathbf{y}\|^2, \quad \forall \mathbf{x}, \mathbf{y} \in X.$$

Lemma (Exercise 21)

If f is strongly convex with parameter $\mu > 0$, then f is strictly convex and has a unique global minimum.

Strongly convex functions II

Strong convexity: For any \mathbf{x} , the graph of f is above a not too flat tangential paraboloid at $(\mathbf{x}, f(\mathbf{x}))$:



Smooth and strongly convex functions: $\mathcal{O}(\log(1/\varepsilon))$ steps

Want to show: $\lim_{t \rightarrow \infty} \mathbf{x}_t = \mathbf{x}^*$

Vanilla Analysis:

$$\nabla f(\mathbf{x}_t)^\top (\mathbf{x}_t - \mathbf{x}^*) = \frac{\gamma}{2} \|\nabla f(\mathbf{x}_t)\|^2 + \frac{1}{2\gamma} (\|\mathbf{x}_t - \mathbf{x}^*\|^2 - \|\mathbf{x}_{t+1} - \mathbf{x}^*\|^2)$$

Now use **stronger** lower bound on left hand side, coming from **strong** convexity:

$$\nabla f(\mathbf{x}_t)^\top (\mathbf{x}_t - \mathbf{x}^*) \geq$$

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Now use **stronger** lower bound on left hand side, coming from **strong** convexity:

$$\nabla f(\mathbf{x}_t)^\top (\mathbf{x}_t - \mathbf{x}^*) \geq f(\mathbf{x}_t) - f(\mathbf{x}^*) + \frac{\mu}{2} \|\mathbf{x}_t - \mathbf{x}^*\|^2$$

Putting it together:

$$f(\mathbf{x}_t) - f(\mathbf{x}^*) \leq$$

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Putting it together:

$$f(\mathbf{x}_t) - f(\mathbf{x}^*) \leq \frac{1}{2\gamma} (\gamma^2 \|\nabla f(\mathbf{x}_t)\|^2 + \|\mathbf{x}_t - \mathbf{x}^*\|^2 - \|\mathbf{x}_{t+1} - \mathbf{x}^*\|^2) - \frac{\mu}{2} \|\mathbf{x}_t - \mathbf{x}^*\|^2.$$

Rewriting:

$$\|\mathbf{x}_{t+1} - \mathbf{x}^*\|^2 \leq$$

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Rewriting:

$$\|\mathbf{x}_{t+1} - \mathbf{x}^*\|^2 \leq 2\gamma(f(\mathbf{x}^*) - f(\mathbf{x}_t)) + \gamma^2 \|\nabla f(\mathbf{x}_t)\|^2 + (1 - \mu\gamma) \|\mathbf{x}_t - \mathbf{x}^*\|^2.$$

Smooth and strongly convex functions: $\mathcal{O}(\log(1/\varepsilon))$ steps II

$$\| \mathbf{x}_{t+1} - \mathbf{x}^* \|^2 \leq 2\gamma(f(\mathbf{x}^*) - f(\mathbf{x}_t)) + \gamma^2 \|\nabla f(\mathbf{x}_t)\|^2 + (1 - \mu\gamma) \| \mathbf{x}_t - \mathbf{x}^* \|^2.$$

Squared distance to \mathbf{x}^* goes down by a constant factor, up to some “noise”.

Theorem

Let $f : \mathbb{R}^d \rightarrow \mathbb{R}$ be differentiable with a global minimum \mathbf{x}^* ; suppose that f is smooth with parameter L and strongly convex with parameter $\mu > 0$. Choosing $\gamma := \frac{1}{L}$, gradient descent with arbitrary \mathbf{x}_0 satisfies the following two properties.

(i) Squared distances to \mathbf{x}^* are geometrically decreasing:

$$\| \mathbf{x}_{t+1} - \mathbf{x}^* \|^2 \leq \left(1 - \frac{\mu}{L}\right) \| \mathbf{x}_t - \mathbf{x}^* \|^2, \quad t \geq 0.$$

(ii) The absolute error after T iterations is exponentially small in T :

$$f(\mathbf{x}_T) - f(\mathbf{x}^*) \leq \frac{L}{2} \left(1 - \frac{\mu}{L}\right)^T \| \mathbf{x}_0 - \mathbf{x}^* \|^2, \quad T > 0.$$

Smooth and strongly convex functions: $\mathcal{O}(\log(1/\varepsilon))$ steps III

$$\| \mathbf{x}_{t+1} - \mathbf{x}^* \|^2 \leq 2\gamma(f(\mathbf{x}^*) - f(\mathbf{x}_t)) + \gamma^2 \|\nabla f(\mathbf{x}_t)\|^2 + \underbrace{(1 - \mu\gamma)}_{\text{noise}} \|\mathbf{x}_t - \mathbf{x}^*\|^2.$$

Proof of (i).

Bounding the noise:

$$2\gamma(f(\mathbf{x}^*) - f(\mathbf{x}_t)) + \gamma^2 \|\nabla f(\mathbf{x}_t)\|^2 =$$

Smooth and strongly convex functions: $\mathcal{O}(\log(1/\varepsilon))$ steps III

$$\|\mathbf{x}_{t+1} - \mathbf{x}^*\|^2 \leq 2\gamma(f(\mathbf{x}^*) - f(\mathbf{x}_t)) + \gamma^2\|\nabla f(\mathbf{x}_t)\|^2 + \underbrace{(1 - \mu\gamma)\|\mathbf{x}_t - \mathbf{x}^*\|^2}_{\text{noise}}.$$

Proof of (i).

Bounding the noise:

$\gamma = 1/L$, sufficient decrease

$$\begin{aligned} 2\gamma(f(\mathbf{x}^*) - f(\mathbf{x}_t)) + \gamma^2\|\nabla f(\mathbf{x}_t)\|^2 &= \frac{2}{L}(f(\mathbf{x}^*) - f(\mathbf{x}_t)) + \frac{1}{L^2}\|\nabla f(\mathbf{x}_t)\|^2 \\ &\leq \frac{2}{L}(f(\mathbf{x}_{t+1}) - f(\mathbf{x}_t)) + \frac{1}{L^2}\|\nabla f(\mathbf{x}_t)\|^2 \\ &\leq -\frac{1}{L^2}\|\nabla f(\mathbf{x}_t)\|^2 + \frac{1}{L^2}\|\nabla f(\mathbf{x}_t)\|^2 = 0. \end{aligned}$$

Hence, the noise is nonpositive, and we get (i):

$$\|\mathbf{x}_{t+1} - \mathbf{x}^*\|^2 \leq (1 - \mu\gamma)\|\mathbf{x}_t - \mathbf{x}^*\|^2 = \left(1 - \frac{\mu}{L}\right)\|\mathbf{x}_t - \mathbf{x}^*\|^2.$$

Smooth and strongly convex functions: $\mathcal{O}(\log(1/\varepsilon))$ steps III

Proof of (ii).

From (i):

$$\|\mathbf{x}_T - \mathbf{x}^*\|^2 \leq \left(1 - \frac{\mu}{L}\right)^T \|\mathbf{x}_0 - \mathbf{x}^*\|^2.$$

Smoothness together with $\nabla f(\mathbf{x}^*) = \mathbf{0}$:

$$f(\mathbf{x}_T) - f(\mathbf{x}^*) \leq \nabla f(\mathbf{x}^*)^\top (\mathbf{x}_T - \mathbf{x}^*) + \frac{L}{2} \|\mathbf{x}_T - \mathbf{x}^*\|^2 = \frac{L}{2} \|\mathbf{x}_T - \mathbf{x}^*\|^2.$$

Putting it together:

$$f(\mathbf{x}_T) - f(\mathbf{x}^*) \leq \frac{L}{2} \|\mathbf{x}_T - \mathbf{x}^*\|^2 \leq \frac{L}{2} \left(1 - \frac{\mu}{L}\right)^T \|\mathbf{x}_0 - \mathbf{x}^*\|^2.$$



Smooth and strongly convex functions: $\mathcal{O}(\log(1/\varepsilon))$ steps IV

$$R^2 := \|\mathbf{x}_0 - \mathbf{x}^*\|^2.$$

$$T \geq \frac{L}{\mu} \ln\left(\frac{R^2 L}{2\varepsilon}\right) \quad \Rightarrow \quad \text{error} \leq \frac{L}{2} \left(1 - \frac{\mu}{L}\right)^T R^2 \leq \varepsilon.$$

Conclusion: To reach absolute error at most ε , we only need $\mathcal{O}(\log \frac{1}{\varepsilon})$ iterations, e.g.

- ▶ $\frac{L}{\mu} \ln(50 \cdot R^2 L)$ iterations for error 0.01 ...
- ▶ ... as opposed to $50 \cdot R^2 L$ in the smooth case

In Practice:

What if we don't know the smoothness parameter L ?

→ (similar to) **Exercise 15**

Chapter 3

Projected Gradient Descent

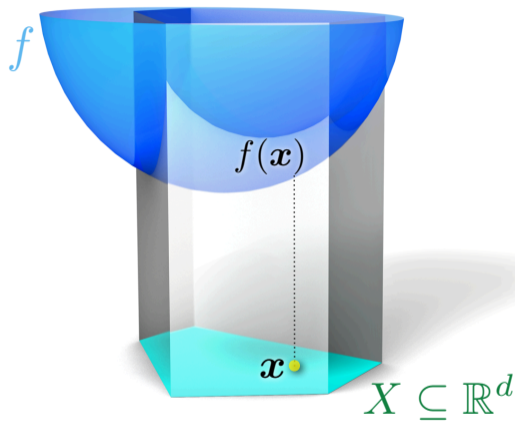
Constrained Optimization

Constrained Optimization Problem

$$\begin{array}{ll} \text{minimize} & f(\mathbf{x}) \\ \text{subject to} & \mathbf{x} \in X \end{array}$$

Solving Constrained Optimization Problems

- A Projected Gradient Descent
- B Transform it into an *unconstrained* problem

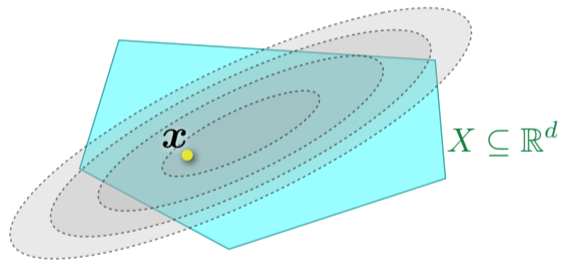


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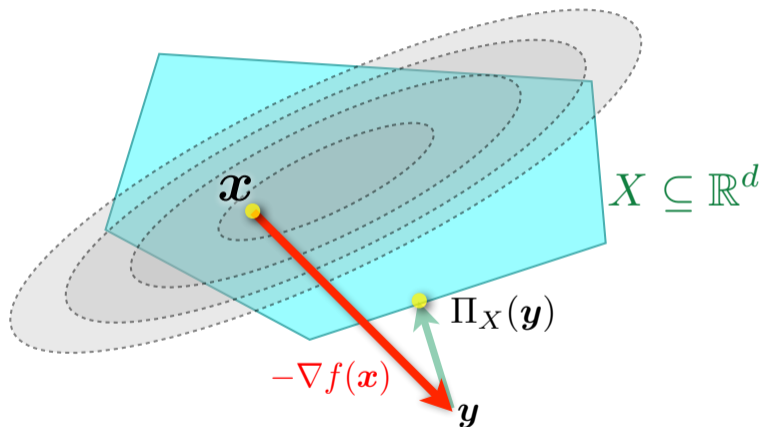
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- ▶ Here: Projected Gradient Descent



Projected Gradient Descent

Idea: project onto X after every step: $\Pi_X(\mathbf{y}) := \operatorname{argmin}_{\mathbf{x} \in X} \|\mathbf{x} - \mathbf{y}\|$



Projected gradient descent: $\mathbf{x}_{t+1} := \Pi_X[\mathbf{x}_t - \gamma \nabla f(\mathbf{x}_t)]$

The Algorithm

Projected gradient descent:

$$\begin{aligned}\mathbf{y}_{t+1} &:= \mathbf{x}_t - \gamma \nabla f(\mathbf{x}_t), \\ \mathbf{x}_{t+1} &:= \Pi_X(\mathbf{y}_{t+1}) := \operatorname{argmin}_{\mathbf{x} \in X} \|\mathbf{x} - \mathbf{y}_{t+1}\|^2.\end{aligned}$$

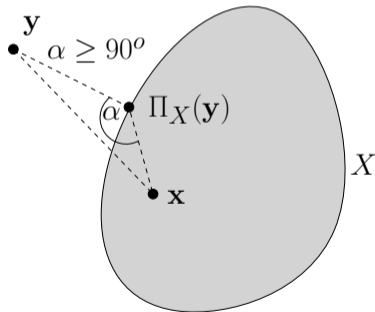
for **timesteps** $t = 0, 1, \dots$, and **stepsize** $\gamma \geq 0$.

Properties of Projection

Fact

Let $X \subseteq \mathbb{R}^d$ be closed and convex, $\mathbf{x} \in X, \mathbf{y} \in \mathbb{R}^d$. Then

- (i) $(\mathbf{x} - \Pi_X(\mathbf{y}))^\top (\mathbf{y} - \Pi_X(\mathbf{y})) \leq 0$.
- (ii) $\|\mathbf{x} - \Pi_X(\mathbf{y})\|^2 + \|\mathbf{y} - \Pi_X(\mathbf{y})\|^2 \leq \|\mathbf{x} - \mathbf{y}\|^2$.



Properties of Projection II

Fact

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Proof.

(i) $\Pi_X(\mathbf{y})$ is minimizer of (differentiable) convex function $d_{\mathbf{y}}(\mathbf{x}) = \|\mathbf{x} - \mathbf{y}\|^2$ over X .
By first-order characterization of optimality (**Lemma 1.28**),

$$0 \leq \nabla d_{\mathbf{y}}(\Pi_X(\mathbf{y}))^\top (\mathbf{x} - \Pi_X(\mathbf{y}))$$

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By first-order characterization of optimality (**Lemma 1.28**),

$$\begin{aligned} 0 &\leq \nabla d_{\mathbf{y}}(\Pi_X(\mathbf{y}))^\top (\mathbf{x} - \Pi_X(\mathbf{y})) \\ &= 2(\Pi_X(\mathbf{y}) - \mathbf{y})^\top (\mathbf{x} - \Pi_X(\mathbf{y})) \\ \Leftrightarrow 0 &\geq 2(\mathbf{y} - \Pi_X(\mathbf{y}))^\top (\mathbf{x} - \Pi_X(\mathbf{y})) \\ \Leftrightarrow 0 &\geq (\mathbf{x} - \Pi_X(\mathbf{y}))^\top (\mathbf{y} - \Pi_X(\mathbf{y})) \end{aligned}$$



Properties of Projection III

Fact

Let $X \subseteq \mathbb{R}^d$ be closed and convex, $\mathbf{x} \in X, \mathbf{y} \in \mathbb{R}^d$. Then

(i) $(\mathbf{x} - \Pi_X(\mathbf{y}))^\top (\mathbf{y} - \Pi_X(\mathbf{y})) \leq 0$.

(ii) $\|\mathbf{x} - \Pi_X(\mathbf{y})\|^2 + \|\mathbf{y} - \Pi_X(\mathbf{y})\|^2 \leq \|\mathbf{x} - \mathbf{y}\|^2$.

Proof.

(ii)

$$\mathbf{v} := (\mathbf{x} - \Pi_X(\mathbf{y})), \quad \mathbf{w} := (\mathbf{y} - \Pi_X(\mathbf{y})).$$

By (i),

$$0 \geq 2\mathbf{v}^\top \mathbf{w} =$$

Properties of Projection III

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$$\mathbf{v} := (\mathbf{x} - \Pi_X(\mathbf{y})), \quad \mathbf{w} := (\mathbf{y} - \Pi_X(\mathbf{y})).$$

By (i),

$$\begin{aligned} 0 \geq 2\mathbf{v}^\top \mathbf{w} &= \|\mathbf{v}\|^2 + \|\mathbf{w}\|^2 - \|\mathbf{v} - \mathbf{w}\|^2 \\ &= \|\mathbf{x} - \Pi_X(\mathbf{y})\|^2 + \|\mathbf{y} - \Pi_X(\mathbf{y})\|^2 - \|\mathbf{x} - \mathbf{y}\|^2. \end{aligned}$$



Results for projected gradient descent over closed and convex X

The **same** number of steps as gradient over \mathbb{R}^d !

- ▶ Lipschitz convex functions over X : $\mathcal{O}(1/\varepsilon^2)$ steps
- ▶ Smooth convex functions over X : $\mathcal{O}(1/\varepsilon)$ steps
- ▶ Smooth and strongly convex functions over X : $\mathcal{O}(\log(1/\varepsilon))$ steps

We will adapt the previous proofs for gradient descent.

BUT:

- ▶ Each step involves a projection onto X
- ▶ may or may not be efficient (in relevant cases, it is)...

Lipschitz convex functions over X : $\mathcal{O}(1/\varepsilon^2)$ steps

Assume that all gradients of f are bounded in norm over **closed and convex** X .

- ▶ Equivalent to f being Lipschitz over X (Theorem 1.10; Exercise 12).
- ▶ **Many** interesting functions are Lipschitz over **bounded** sets X .

Theorem (same as the unconstrained one, but more useful)

Let $f : \mathbb{R}^d \rightarrow \mathbb{R}$ be convex and differentiable, $X \subseteq \mathbb{R}^d$ closed and convex, \mathbf{x}^* a minimizer of f over X ; furthermore, suppose that $\|\mathbf{x}_0 - \mathbf{x}^*\| \leq R$ with $\mathbf{x}_0 \in X$, and that $\|\nabla f(\mathbf{x})\| \leq B$ for all $\mathbf{x} \in X$. Choosing the constant stepsize

$$\gamma := \frac{R}{B\sqrt{T}},$$

projected gradient descent yields

$$\frac{1}{T} \sum_{t=0}^{T-1} f(\mathbf{x}_t) - f(\mathbf{x}^*) \leq \frac{RB}{\sqrt{T}}.$$

Lipschitz convex functions: $\mathcal{O}(1/\varepsilon^2)$ steps II

Proof.

- ▶ Replace \mathbf{x}_{t+1} in the vanilla analysis with \mathbf{y}_{t+1} (the unprojected gradient step):

$$\mathbf{g}_t^\top (\mathbf{x}_t - \mathbf{x}^*) = \frac{1}{2\gamma} \left(\gamma^2 \|\mathbf{g}_t\|^2 + \|\mathbf{x}_t - \mathbf{x}^*\|^2 - \|\mathbf{y}_{t+1} - \mathbf{x}^*\|^2 \right).$$

- ▶ Use Fact (ii): $\|\mathbf{x} - \Pi_X(\mathbf{y})\|^2 + \|\mathbf{y} - \Pi_X(\mathbf{y})\|^2 \leq \|\mathbf{x} - \mathbf{y}\|^2$.
- ▶ With $\mathbf{x} = \mathbf{x}^*$, $\mathbf{y} = \mathbf{y}_{t+1}$, we have $\Pi_X(\mathbf{y}) = \mathbf{x}_{t+1}$, and hence

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$$\|\mathbf{x}^* - \mathbf{x}_{t+1}\|^2 \leq \|\mathbf{x}^* - \mathbf{y}_{t+1}\|^2$$

- ▶ We go back to the original vanilla analysis and continue from there as before:

Lipschitz convex functions: $\mathcal{O}(1/\varepsilon^2)$ steps II

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- ▶ We go back to the original vanilla analysis and continue from there as before:

$$\mathbf{g}_t^\top (\mathbf{x}_t - \mathbf{x}^*) \leq \frac{1}{2\gamma} \left(\gamma^2 \|\mathbf{g}_t\|^2 + \|\mathbf{x}_t - \mathbf{x}^*\|^2 - \|\underline{\mathbf{x}_{t+1}} - \mathbf{x}^*\|^2 \right).$$

□

Smooth functions over X

Recall:

f is called **smooth** (with parameter L) over X if

$$f(\mathbf{y}) \leq f(\mathbf{x}) + \nabla f(\mathbf{x})^\top (\mathbf{y} - \mathbf{x}) + \frac{L}{2} \|\mathbf{x} - \mathbf{y}\|^2, \quad \forall \mathbf{x}, \mathbf{y} \in X.$$

Sufficient decrease

Lemma

Let $f : \mathbb{R}^d \rightarrow \mathbb{R}$ be differentiable and smooth with parameter L over X . Choosing stepsize

$$\gamma := \frac{1}{L},$$

projected gradient descent with arbitrary $\mathbf{x}_0 \in X$ satisfies

$$f(\mathbf{x}_{t+1}) \leq f(\mathbf{x}_t) - \frac{1}{2L} \|\nabla f(\mathbf{x}_t)\|^2 + \frac{L}{2} \|\mathbf{y}_{t+1} - \mathbf{x}_{t+1}\|^2, \quad t \geq 0.$$

Remark

More specifically, this already holds if f is smooth with parameter L over the line segment connecting \mathbf{x}_t and \mathbf{x}_{t+1} .

Sufficient decrease II

$$f(\mathbf{x}_{t+1}) \leq f(\mathbf{x}_t) - \frac{1}{2L} \|\nabla f(\mathbf{x}_t)\|^2 + \frac{L}{2} \|\mathbf{y}_{t+1} - \mathbf{x}_{t+1}\|^2.$$

Proof.

Use smoothness

:

Sufficient decrease II

$$f(\mathbf{x}_{t+1}) \leq f(\mathbf{x}_t) - \frac{1}{2L} \|\nabla f(\mathbf{x}_t)\|^2 + \frac{L}{2} \|\mathbf{y}_{t+1} - \mathbf{x}_{t+1}\|^2.$$

Proof.

Use smoothness

:

$$f(\mathbf{x}_{t+1}) \leq f(\mathbf{x}_t) + \nabla f(\mathbf{x}_t)^\top (\mathbf{x}_{t+1} - \mathbf{x}_t) + \frac{L}{2} \|\mathbf{x}_t - \mathbf{x}_{t+1}\|^2$$

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Use smoothness

:

$$\begin{aligned} f(\mathbf{x}_{t+1}) &\leq f(\mathbf{x}_t) + \nabla f(\mathbf{x}_t)^\top (\mathbf{x}_{t+1} - \mathbf{x}_t) + \frac{L}{2} \|\mathbf{x}_t - \mathbf{x}_{t+1}\|^2 \\ &= f(\mathbf{x}_t) - L(\mathbf{y}_{t+1} - \mathbf{x}_t)^\top (\mathbf{x}_{t+1} - \mathbf{x}_t) + \frac{L}{2} \|\mathbf{x}_t - \mathbf{x}_{t+1}\|^2 \end{aligned}$$

Sufficient decrease II

$$f(\mathbf{x}_{t+1}) \leq f(\mathbf{x}_t) - \frac{1}{2L} \|\nabla f(\mathbf{x}_t)\|^2 + \frac{L}{2} \|\mathbf{y}_{t+1} - \mathbf{x}_{t+1}\|^2.$$

Proof.

Use smoothness, $\mathbf{y}_{t+1} - \mathbf{x}_t = -\nabla f(\mathbf{x}_t)/L$:

$$\begin{aligned} f(\mathbf{x}_{t+1}) &\leq f(\mathbf{x}_t) + \nabla f(\mathbf{x}_t)^\top (\mathbf{x}_{t+1} - \mathbf{x}_t) + \frac{L}{2} \|\mathbf{x}_t - \mathbf{x}_{t+1}\|^2 \\ &= f(\mathbf{x}_t) - L(\mathbf{y}_{t+1} - \mathbf{x}_t)^\top (\mathbf{x}_{t+1} - \mathbf{x}_t) + \frac{L}{2} \|\mathbf{x}_t - \mathbf{x}_{t+1}\|^2 \\ &= f(\mathbf{x}_t) - \frac{L}{2} (\|\mathbf{y}_{t+1} - \mathbf{x}_t\|^2 + \|\mathbf{x}_{t+1} - \mathbf{x}_t\|^2 - \|\mathbf{y}_{t+1} - \mathbf{x}_{t+1}\|^2) + \frac{L}{2} \|\mathbf{x}_t - \mathbf{x}_{t+1}\|^2 \end{aligned}$$

Sufficient decrease II

$$f(\mathbf{x}_{t+1}) \leq f(\mathbf{x}_t) - \frac{1}{2L} \|\nabla f(\mathbf{x}_t)\|^2 + \frac{L}{2} \|\mathbf{y}_{t+1} - \mathbf{x}_{t+1}\|^2.$$

Proof.

Use smoothness, $\mathbf{y}_{t+1} - \mathbf{x}_t = -\nabla f(\mathbf{x}_t)/L$, $2\mathbf{v}^\top \mathbf{w} = \|\mathbf{v}\|^2 + \|\mathbf{w}\|^2 - \|\mathbf{v} - \mathbf{w}\|^2$:

$$\begin{aligned} f(\mathbf{x}_{t+1}) &\leq f(\mathbf{x}_t) + \nabla f(\mathbf{x}_t)^\top (\mathbf{x}_{t+1} - \mathbf{x}_t) + \frac{L}{2} \|\mathbf{x}_t - \mathbf{x}_{t+1}\|^2 \\ &= f(\mathbf{x}_t) - L(\mathbf{y}_{t+1} - \mathbf{x}_t)^\top (\mathbf{x}_{t+1} - \mathbf{x}_t) + \frac{L}{2} \|\mathbf{x}_t - \mathbf{x}_{t+1}\|^2 \\ &= f(\mathbf{x}_t) - \frac{L}{2} (\|\mathbf{y}_{t+1} - \mathbf{x}_t\|^2 + \|\mathbf{x}_{t+1} - \mathbf{x}_t\|^2 - \|\mathbf{y}_{t+1} - \mathbf{x}_{t+1}\|^2) + \frac{L}{2} \|\mathbf{x}_t - \mathbf{x}_{t+1}\|^2 \\ &= f(\mathbf{x}_t) - \frac{L}{2} \|\mathbf{y}_{t+1} - \mathbf{x}_t\|^2 + \frac{L}{2} \|\mathbf{y}_{t+1} - \mathbf{x}_{t+1}\|^2 \end{aligned}$$

Sufficient decrease II

$$f(\mathbf{x}_{t+1}) \leq f(\mathbf{x}_t) - \frac{1}{2L} \|\nabla f(\mathbf{x}_t)\|^2 + \frac{L}{2} \|\mathbf{y}_{t+1} - \mathbf{x}_{t+1}\|^2.$$

Proof.

Use smoothness, $\mathbf{y}_{t+1} - \mathbf{x}_t = -\nabla f(\mathbf{x}_t)/L$, $2\mathbf{v}^\top \mathbf{w} = \|\mathbf{v}\|^2 + \|\mathbf{w}\|^2 - \|\mathbf{v} - \mathbf{w}\|^2$:

$$\begin{aligned} f(\mathbf{x}_{t+1}) &\leq f(\mathbf{x}_t) + \nabla f(\mathbf{x}_t)^\top (\mathbf{x}_{t+1} - \mathbf{x}_t) + \frac{L}{2} \|\mathbf{x}_t - \mathbf{x}_{t+1}\|^2 \\ &= f(\mathbf{x}_t) - L(\mathbf{y}_{t+1} - \mathbf{x}_t)^\top (\mathbf{x}_{t+1} - \mathbf{x}_t) + \frac{L}{2} \|\mathbf{x}_t - \mathbf{x}_{t+1}\|^2 \\ &= f(\mathbf{x}_t) - \frac{L}{2} \left(\|\mathbf{y}_{t+1} - \mathbf{x}_t\|^2 + \|\mathbf{x}_{t+1} - \mathbf{x}_t\|^2 - \|\mathbf{y}_{t+1} - \mathbf{x}_{t+1}\|^2 \right) + \frac{L}{2} \|\mathbf{x}_t - \mathbf{x}_{t+1}\|^2 \\ &= f(\mathbf{x}_t) - \frac{L}{2} \|\mathbf{y}_{t+1} - \mathbf{x}_t\|^2 + \frac{L}{2} \|\mathbf{y}_{t+1} - \mathbf{x}_{t+1}\|^2 \\ &= f(\mathbf{x}_t) - \frac{1}{2L} \|\nabla f(\mathbf{x}_t)\|^2 + \frac{L}{2} \|\mathbf{y}_{t+1} - \mathbf{x}_{t+1}\|^2. \end{aligned}$$

Smooth convex functions over X : $\mathcal{O}(1/\varepsilon)$ steps

Theorem

Let $f : \mathbb{R}^d \rightarrow \mathbb{R}$ be convex and differentiable. Let $X \subseteq \mathbb{R}^d$ be a closed convex set, and assume that there is a minimizer \mathbf{x}^* of f over X ; furthermore, suppose that f is smooth over X with parameter L . Choosing stepsize

$$\gamma := \frac{1}{L},$$

projected gradient descent yields

$$f(\mathbf{x}_T) - f(\mathbf{x}^*) \leq \frac{L}{2T} \|\mathbf{x}_0 - \mathbf{x}^*\|^2, \quad T > 0.$$

Smooth convex functions over X : $\mathcal{O}(1/\varepsilon)$ steps II

$$f(\mathbf{x}_T) - f(\mathbf{x}^*) \leq \frac{L}{2T} \|\mathbf{x}_0 - \mathbf{x}^*\|^2, \quad T > 0.$$

Proof.

As before, use sufficient decrease to bound sum of squared gradients in vanilla analysis:

$$\frac{1}{2L} \|\nabla f(\mathbf{x}_t)\|^2 \leq f(\mathbf{x}_t) - f(\mathbf{x}_{t+1}) + \frac{L}{2} \|\mathbf{y}_{t+1} - \mathbf{x}_{t+1}\|^2$$

But now: **extra** term $\frac{L}{2} \|\mathbf{y}_{t+1} - \mathbf{x}_{t+1}\|^2$.

Compensate in the vanilla analysis itself! □

Recall: Constrained vanilla analysis

Proof.

- ▶ Replace \mathbf{x}_{t+1} in the vanilla analysis with \mathbf{y}_{t+1} (the unprojected gradient step):

$$\mathbf{g}_t^\top (\mathbf{x}_t - \mathbf{x}^*) = \frac{1}{2\gamma} (\gamma^2 \|\mathbf{g}_t\|^2 + \|\mathbf{x}_t - \mathbf{x}^*\|^2 - \|\mathbf{y}_{t+1} - \mathbf{x}^*\|^2).$$

- ▶ Use Fact (ii): $\|\mathbf{x} - \Pi_X(\mathbf{y})\|^2 + \|\mathbf{y} - \Pi_X(\mathbf{y})\|^2 \leq \|\mathbf{x} - \mathbf{y}\|^2$.
With $\mathbf{x} = \mathbf{x}^*$, $\mathbf{y} = \mathbf{y}_{t+1}$, we have $\Pi_X(\mathbf{y}) = \mathbf{x}_{t+1}$, and hence

Recall: Constrained vanilla analysis

Proof.

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$$\|\mathbf{x}^* - \mathbf{x}_{t+1}\|^2 + \|\mathbf{y}_{t+1} - \mathbf{x}_{t+1}\|^2 \leq \|\mathbf{x}^* - \mathbf{y}_{t+1}\|^2$$

- ▶ We get back to the vanilla analysis. . . but with a saving!

Recall: Constrained vanilla analysis

Proof.

- ▶ Replace \mathbf{x}_{t+1} in the vanilla analysis with \mathbf{y}_{t+1} (the unprojected gradient step):

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With $\mathbf{x} = \mathbf{x}^*$, $\mathbf{y} = \mathbf{y}_{t+1}$, we have $\Pi_X(\mathbf{y}) = \mathbf{x}_{t+1}$, and hence

$$\|\mathbf{x}^* - \mathbf{x}_{t+1}\|^2 + \|\mathbf{y}_{t+1} - \mathbf{x}_{t+1}\|^2 \leq \|\mathbf{x}^* - \mathbf{y}_{t+1}\|^2$$

- ▶ We get back to the vanilla analysis... but with a saving!

$$\mathbf{g}_t^\top (\mathbf{x}_t - \mathbf{x}^*) \leq \frac{1}{2\gamma} (\gamma^2 \|\mathbf{g}_t\|^2 + \|\mathbf{x}_t - \mathbf{x}^*\|^2 - \|\mathbf{x}_{t+1} - \mathbf{x}^*\|^2 - \|\mathbf{y}_{t+1} - \mathbf{x}_{t+1}\|^2)$$

□

Smooth convex functions over X : $\mathcal{O}(1/\varepsilon)$ steps III

$$f(\mathbf{x}_T) - f(\mathbf{x}^*) \leq \frac{L}{2T} \|\mathbf{x}_0 - \mathbf{x}^*\|^2, \quad T > 0.$$

Proof.

Use $f(\mathbf{x}_t) - f(\mathbf{x}^*) \leq \mathbf{g}_t^\top (\mathbf{x}_t - \mathbf{x}^*)$ (convexity)

$$\sum_{t=0}^{T-1} (f(\mathbf{x}_t) - f(\mathbf{x}^*)) \leq \sum_{t=0}^{T-1} \mathbf{g}_t^\top (\mathbf{x}_t - \mathbf{x}^*)$$

Smooth convex functions over X : $\mathcal{O}(1/\varepsilon)$ steps III

$$f(\mathbf{x}_T) - f(\mathbf{x}^*) \leq \frac{L}{2T} \|\mathbf{x}_0 - \mathbf{x}^*\|^2, \quad T > 0.$$

Proof.

Use $f(\mathbf{x}_t) - f(\mathbf{x}^*) \leq \mathbf{g}_t^\top (\mathbf{x}_t - \mathbf{x}^*)$ (convexity), vanilla analysis with saving, $\gamma = 1/L$:

$$\begin{aligned} \sum_{t=0}^{T-1} (f(\mathbf{x}_t) - f(\mathbf{x}^*)) &\leq \sum_{t=0}^{T-1} \mathbf{g}_t^\top (\mathbf{x}_t - \mathbf{x}^*) \\ &\leq \frac{1}{2L} \sum_{t=0}^{T-1} \|\mathbf{g}_t\|^2 + \frac{L}{2} \|\mathbf{x}_0 - \mathbf{x}^*\|^2 - \frac{L}{2} \sum_{t=0}^{T-1} \|\mathbf{y}_{t+1} - \mathbf{x}_{t+1}\|^2. \end{aligned}$$

Smooth convex functions over X : $\mathcal{O}(1/\varepsilon)$ steps III

$$f(\mathbf{x}_T) - f(\mathbf{x}^*) \leq \frac{L}{2T} \|\mathbf{x}_0 - \mathbf{x}^*\|^2, \quad T > 0.$$

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Use sufficient decrease to bound $\frac{1}{2L} \sum_{t=0}^{T-1} \|\mathbf{g}_t\|^2$ by

Smooth convex functions over X : $\mathcal{O}(1/\varepsilon)$ steps III

$$f(\mathbf{x}_T) - f(\mathbf{x}^*) \leq \frac{L}{2T} \|\mathbf{x}_0 - \mathbf{x}^*\|^2, \quad T > 0.$$

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Use $f(\mathbf{x}_t) - f(\mathbf{x}^*) \leq \mathbf{g}_t^\top (\mathbf{x}_t - \mathbf{x}^*)$ (convexity), vanilla analysis with saving, $\gamma = 1/L$:

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Use sufficient decrease to bound $\frac{1}{2L} \sum_{t=0}^{T-1} \|\mathbf{g}_t\|^2$ by

$$\sum_{t=0}^{T-1} \left(f(\mathbf{x}_t) - f(\mathbf{x}_{t+1}) + \frac{L}{2} \|\mathbf{y}_{t+1} - \mathbf{x}_{t+1}\|^2 \right)$$

Smooth convex functions over X : $\mathcal{O}(1/\varepsilon)$ steps III

$$f(\mathbf{x}_T) - f(\mathbf{x}^*) \leq \frac{L}{2T} \|\mathbf{x}_0 - \mathbf{x}^*\|^2, \quad T > 0.$$

Proof.

Use $f(\mathbf{x}_t) - f(\mathbf{x}^*) \leq \mathbf{g}_t^\top (\mathbf{x}_t - \mathbf{x}^*)$ (convexity), vanilla analysis with saving, $\gamma = 1/L$:

$$\begin{aligned} \sum_{t=0}^{T-1} (f(\mathbf{x}_t) - f(\mathbf{x}^*)) &\leq \sum_{t=0}^{T-1} \mathbf{g}_t^\top (\mathbf{x}_t - \mathbf{x}^*) \\ &\leq \frac{1}{2L} \sum_{t=0}^{T-1} \|\mathbf{g}_t\|^2 + \frac{L}{2} \|\mathbf{x}_0 - \mathbf{x}^*\|^2 - \frac{L}{2} \sum_{t=0}^{T-1} \|\mathbf{y}_{t+1} - \mathbf{x}_{t+1}\|^2. \end{aligned}$$

Use sufficient decrease to bound $\frac{1}{2L} \sum_{t=0}^{T-1} \|\mathbf{g}_t\|^2$ by

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Smooth convex functions over X : $\mathcal{O}(1/\varepsilon)$ steps III

$$f(\mathbf{x}_T) - f(\mathbf{x}^*) \leq \frac{L}{2T} \|\mathbf{x}_0 - \mathbf{x}^*\|^2, \quad T > 0.$$

Proof.

Use $f(\mathbf{x}_t) - f(\mathbf{x}^*) \leq \mathbf{g}_t^\top (\mathbf{x}_t - \mathbf{x}^*)$ (convexity), vanilla analysis with saving, $\gamma = 1/L$:

$$\begin{aligned} \sum_{t=0}^{T-1} (f(\mathbf{x}_t) - f(\mathbf{x}^*)) &\leq \sum_{t=0}^{T-1} \mathbf{g}_t^\top (\mathbf{x}_t - \mathbf{x}^*) \\ &\leq \frac{1}{2L} \sum_{t=0}^{T-1} \|\mathbf{g}_t\|^2 + \frac{L}{2} \|\mathbf{x}_0 - \mathbf{x}^*\|^2 - \underbrace{\frac{L}{2} \sum_{t=0}^{T-1} \|\mathbf{y}_{t+1} - \mathbf{x}_{t+1}\|^2}_{\text{saving}}. \end{aligned}$$

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Smooth convex functions over X : $\mathcal{O}(1/\varepsilon)$ steps IV

$$f(\mathbf{x}_T) - f(\mathbf{x}^*) \leq \frac{L}{2T} \|\mathbf{x}_0 - \mathbf{x}^*\|^2, \quad T > 0.$$

Proof.

Putting it together: extra terms cancel, and as in unconstrained case, we get

$$\sum_{t=1}^T (f(\mathbf{x}_t) - f(\mathbf{x}^*)) \leq \frac{L}{2} \|\mathbf{x}_0 - \mathbf{x}^*\|^2.$$

Exercise ??: again, we make progress in every step (not immediate from sufficient decrease here). Hence,

$$f(\mathbf{x}_T) - f(\mathbf{x}^*) \leq \frac{1}{T} \sum_{t=1}^T (f(\mathbf{x}_t) - f(\mathbf{x}^*)) \leq \frac{L}{2T} \|\mathbf{x}_0 - \mathbf{x}^*\|^2.$$



Smooth and strongly convex functions over X

Recall:

f is **strongly convex** (with parameter μ) over X if

$$f(\mathbf{y}) \geq f(\mathbf{x}) + \nabla f(\mathbf{x})^\top (\mathbf{y} - \mathbf{x}) + \frac{\mu}{2} \|\mathbf{x} - \mathbf{y}\|^2, \quad \forall \mathbf{x}, \mathbf{y} \in X.$$

Smooth and strongly convex functions over X

Exercise ??: a strongly convex function has a unique minimizer \mathbf{x}^* of f over X .

We prove that projected gradient descent converges to \mathbf{x}^* .

Smooth and strongly convex functions over X : $\mathcal{O}(\log(1/\varepsilon))$ steps

Theorem

Let $f : \mathbb{R}^d \rightarrow \mathbb{R}$ be convex and differentiable. Let $X \subseteq \mathbb{R}^d$ be a nonempty closed and convex set and suppose that f is smooth over X with parameter L and strongly convex over X with parameter $\mu > 0$. Choosing $\gamma := \frac{1}{L}$, **projected** gradient descent with arbitrary \mathbf{x}_0 satisfies the following two properties.

(i) Squared distances to \mathbf{x}^* are geometrically decreasing:

$$\|\mathbf{x}_{t+1} - \mathbf{x}^*\|^2 \leq \left(1 - \frac{\mu}{L}\right) \|\mathbf{x}_t - \mathbf{x}^*\|^2, \quad t \geq 0.$$

(ii) The absolute error after T iterations is exponentially small in T :

$$\begin{aligned} f(\mathbf{x}_T) - f(\mathbf{x}^*) &\leq \|\nabla f(\mathbf{x}^*)\| \left(1 - \frac{\mu}{L}\right)^{T/2} \|\mathbf{x}_0 - \mathbf{x}^*\| \\ &\quad + \frac{L}{2} \left(1 - \frac{\mu}{L}\right)^T \|\mathbf{x}_0 - \mathbf{x}^*\|^2, \quad T > 0. \end{aligned}$$

Smooth and strongly convex functions over X : $\mathcal{O}(\log(1/\varepsilon))$ steps

Theorem

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Smooth and strongly convex functions over X : $\mathcal{O}(\log(1/\varepsilon))$ steps I

Proof.

(i) Geometric decrease plus noise: $\|\mathbf{x}_{t+1} - \mathbf{x}^*\|^2 \leq \dots$

► unconstrained case:

$$2\gamma(f(\mathbf{x}^*) - f(\mathbf{x}_t)) + \gamma^2\|\nabla f(\mathbf{x}_t)\|^2 + \underline{(1 - \mu\gamma)\|\mathbf{x}_t - \mathbf{x}^*\|^2}.$$

► constrained case (vanilla analysis with a saving):

$$2\gamma(f(\mathbf{x}^*) - f(\mathbf{x}_t)) + \gamma^2\|\nabla f(\mathbf{x}_t)\|^2 - \|\mathbf{y}_{t+1} - \mathbf{x}_{t+1}\|^2 + \underline{(1 - \mu\gamma)\|\mathbf{x}_t - \mathbf{x}^*\|^2}.$$

Smooth and strongly convex functions over X : $\mathcal{O}(\log(1/\varepsilon))$ steps II

Proof.

To bound the noise, we use sufficient decrease.

► unconstrained case:

$$f(\mathbf{x}_{t+1}) \leq f(\mathbf{x}_t) - \frac{1}{2L} \|\nabla f(\mathbf{x}_t)\|^2, \quad t \geq 0.$$

► constrained case:

$$f(\mathbf{x}_{t+1}) \leq f(\mathbf{x}_t) - \frac{1}{2L} \|\nabla f(\mathbf{x}_t)\|^2 + \frac{L}{2} \|\mathbf{y}_{t+1} - \mathbf{x}_{t+1}\|^2, \quad t \geq 0.$$

Putting it together, the terms $\|\mathbf{y}_{t+1} - \mathbf{x}_{t+1}\|^2$ cancel, and we get

Smooth and strongly convex functions over X : $\mathcal{O}(\log(1/\varepsilon))$ steps II

Proof.

To bound the noise, we use sufficient decrease.

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$$f(\mathbf{x}_{t+1}) \leq f(\mathbf{x}_t) - \frac{1}{2L} \|\nabla f(\mathbf{x}_t)\|^2, \quad t \geq 0.$$

► constrained case:

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Putting it together, the terms $\|\mathbf{y}_{t+1} - \mathbf{x}_{t+1}\|^2$ cancel, and we get

$$\|\mathbf{x}_{t+1} - \mathbf{x}^*\|^2 \leq (1 - \mu\gamma) \|\mathbf{x}_t - \mathbf{x}^*\|^2 = \left(1 - \frac{\mu}{L}\right) \|\mathbf{x}_t - \mathbf{x}^*\|^2.$$

in both cases. □

Smooth and strongly convex functions over X : $\mathcal{O}(\log(1/\varepsilon))$ steps III

Proof.

(ii) Error bound from smoothness:

$$f(\mathbf{x}_T) - f(\mathbf{x}^*) \leq \nabla f(\mathbf{x}^*)^\top (\mathbf{x}_T - \mathbf{x}^*) + \frac{L}{2} \|\mathbf{x}^* - \mathbf{x}_T\|^2$$

Smooth and strongly convex functions over X : $\mathcal{O}(\log(1/\varepsilon))$ steps III

Proof.

(ii) Error bound from smoothness:

$$\begin{aligned} f(\mathbf{x}_T) - f(\mathbf{x}^*) &\leq \nabla f(\mathbf{x}^*)^\top (\mathbf{x}_T - \mathbf{x}^*) + \frac{L}{2} \|\mathbf{x}^* - \mathbf{x}_T\|^2 \\ &\leq \|\nabla f(\mathbf{x}^*)\| \|\mathbf{x}_T - \mathbf{x}^*\| + \frac{L}{2} \|\mathbf{x}^* - \mathbf{x}_T\|^2 \quad (\text{Cauchy-Schwarz}) \end{aligned}$$

Smooth and strongly convex functions over X : $\mathcal{O}(\log(1/\varepsilon))$ steps III

Proof.

(ii) Error bound from smoothness:

$$\begin{aligned} f(\mathbf{x}_T) - f(\mathbf{x}^*) &\leq \nabla f(\mathbf{x}^*)^\top (\mathbf{x}_T - \mathbf{x}^*) + \frac{L}{2} \|\mathbf{x}^* - \mathbf{x}_T\|^2 \\ &\leq \|\nabla f(\mathbf{x}^*)\| \|\mathbf{x}_T - \mathbf{x}^*\| + \frac{L}{2} \|\mathbf{x}^* - \mathbf{x}_T\|^2 \quad (\text{Cauchy-Schwarz}) \\ &\leq \|\nabla f(\mathbf{x}^*)\| \left(1 - \frac{\mu}{L}\right)^{T/2} \|\mathbf{x}_0 - \mathbf{x}^*\| + \frac{L}{2} \left(1 - \frac{\mu}{L}\right)^T \|\mathbf{x}_0 - \mathbf{x}^*\|^2. \quad (\text{i}) \end{aligned}$$

□

constrained error bound $\approx \sqrt{\text{unconstrained error bound}}$

required number of steps roughly doubles.

The Projection Step: $\Pi_X(\mathbf{y}) := \operatorname{argmin}_{\mathbf{x} \in X} \|\mathbf{x} - \mathbf{y}\|$

Computing $\Pi_X(\mathbf{y})$ is an optimization problem itself.

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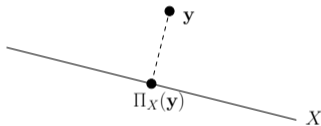
It can efficiently be solved in relevant cases:

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- ▶ Projecting onto an affine subspace (leads to system of linear equations, similar to least squares)

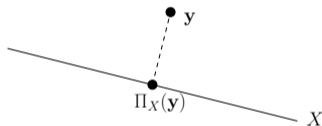


The Projection Step: $\Pi_X(\mathbf{y}) := \operatorname{argmin}_{\mathbf{x} \in X} \|\mathbf{x} - \mathbf{y}\|$

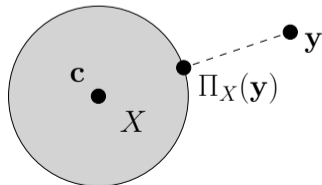
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It can efficiently be solved in relevant cases:

- ▶ Projecting onto an affine subspace (leads to system of linear equations, similar to least squares)

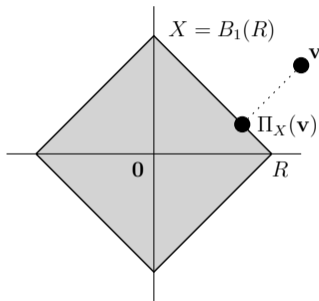


- ▶ Projecting onto a Euclidean ball with center \mathbf{c} (simply scale the vector $\mathbf{y} - \mathbf{c}$)



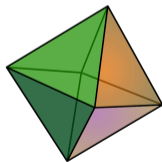
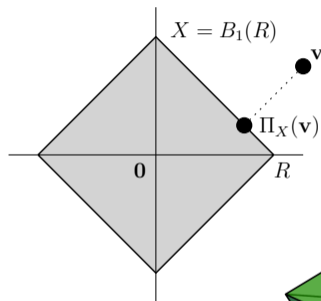
Projecting onto ℓ_1 -balls (needed in Lasso)

W.l.o.g. restrict to center at $\mathbf{0}$: $B_1(R) = \{\mathbf{x} \in \mathbb{R}^d : \|\mathbf{x}\|_1 = \sum_{i=1}^d |x_i| \leq R\}$.



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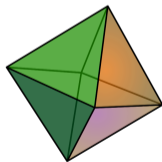
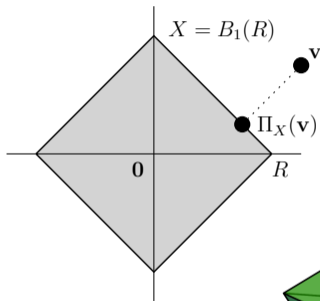


$B_1(R)$ is the **cross polytope** ($2d$ vertices, 2^d facets).

(octahedron, $d = 3$)

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Section ?? : projection can be computed in $\mathcal{O}(d \log d)$ time (can be improved to $\mathcal{O}(d)$)