



Bias-Variance Tradeoff Regularization

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BE THE DIFFERENCE.

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PART 1

Bias-Variance Tradeoff
Regularization, Ridge Regression

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Outline

- Bias-Variance Tradeoff
- Regularization

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THE BIAS/VARIANCE TRADE-OFF

An important theoretical result of statistics and machine learning is the fact that a model's generalization error can be expressed as the sum of three very different errors:

Bias

This part of the generalization error is due to wrong assumptions, such as assuming that the data is linear when it is actually quadratic. A high-bias model is most likely to underfit the training data. ⁶

Variance

This part is due to the model's excessive sensitivity to small variations in the training data. A model with many degrees of freedom (such as a high-degree polynomial model) is likely to have high variance and thus overfit the training data.

Irreducible error

This part is due to the noisiness of the data itself. The only way to reduce this part of the error is to clean up the data (e.g., fix the data sources, such as broken sensors, or detect and remove outliers).

Increasing a model's complexity will typically increase its variance and reduce its bias. Conversely, reducing a model's complexity increases its bias and reduces its variance. This is why it is called a trade-off.

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Optimal Prediction

Goal: Predict $Y \in \mathbb{R}$ given $X \in \mathbb{R}^d$ if $(X, Y) \sim P_{XY}$

Find function η that minimizes

$$\mathbb{E}_{XY}[(Y - \eta(X))^2] = \mathbb{E}_X \left[\mathbb{E}_{Y|X}[(Y - \eta(x))^2 | X = x] \right]$$

(Hint: for any x , $\eta(x) = c_x$ where c_x minimizes $\mathbb{E}_{Y|X}[(Y - c_x)^2 | X = x]$)

$$0 = \frac{d}{dc_x} \mathbb{E}_{Y|X}[(Y - c_x)^2 | X = x]$$

$$= \mathbb{E}_{Y|X} \left[\frac{d}{dc_x} (Y - c_x)^2 | X = x \right]$$

$$= \mathbb{E}_{Y|X}[-2(Y - c_x) | X = x] = -2\mathbb{E}_{Y|X}[Y | X = x] + 2c_x$$

Squared Error Optimal Predictor: $\eta(x) = \mathbb{E}_{Y|X}[Y | X = x]$

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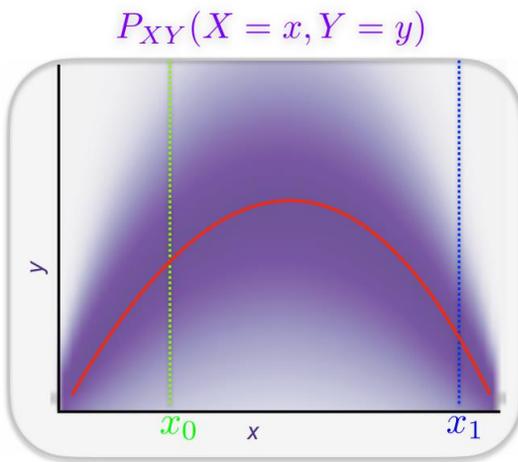
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Statistical Learning

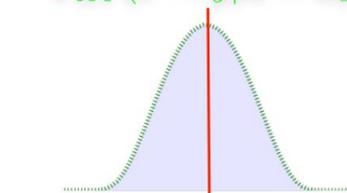
$$\mathbb{E}_{XY}[(Y - \eta(X))^2]$$

Ideally, we want to find:

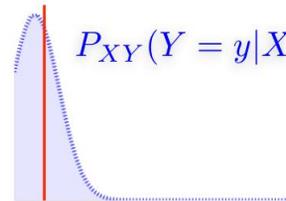
$$\eta(x) = \mathbb{E}_{Y|X}[Y | X = x]$$



$$P_{XY}(Y = y | X = x_0)$$



$$P_{XY}(Y = y | X = x_1)$$

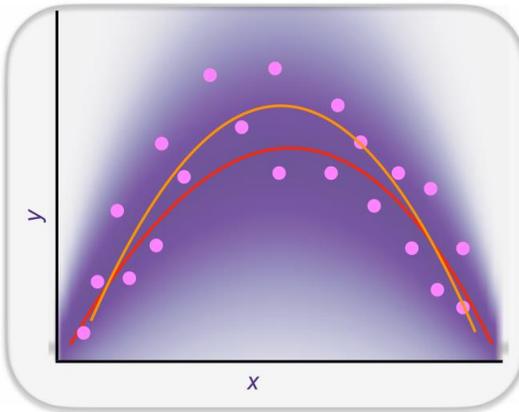


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Statistical Learning

$$P_{XY}(X = x, Y = y)$$



Ideally, we want to find:

$$\eta(x) = \mathbb{E}_{Y|X}[Y|X = x]$$

But we only have samples:

$$(x_i, y_i) \stackrel{i.i.d.}{\sim} P_{XY} \quad \text{for } i = 1, \dots, n$$

and are restricted to a function class (e.g., linear) so we compute:

$$\hat{f} = \arg \min_{f \in \mathcal{F}} \frac{1}{n} \sum_{i=1}^n (y_i - f(x_i))^2$$

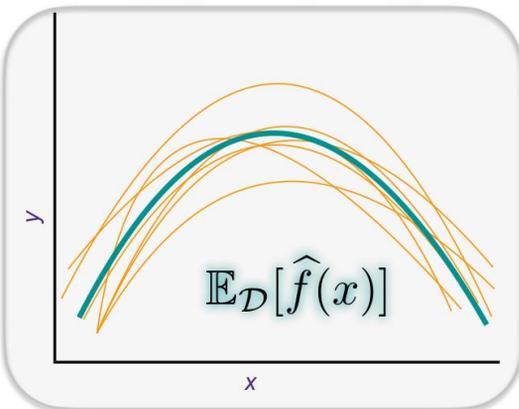
We care about future predictions: $\mathbb{E}_{XY}[(Y - \hat{f}(X))^2]$

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Statistical Learning

$$P_{XY}(X = x, Y = y)$$



Ideally, we want to find:

$$\eta(x) = \mathbb{E}_{Y|X}[Y|X = x]$$

But we only have samples:

$$(x_i, y_i) \stackrel{i.i.d.}{\sim} P_{XY} \quad \text{for } i = 1, \dots, n$$

and are restricted to a function class (e.g., linear) so we compute:

$$\hat{f} = \arg \min_{f \in \mathcal{F}} \frac{1}{n} \sum_{i=1}^n (y_i - f(x_i))^2$$

Each draw $\mathcal{D} = \{(x_i, y_i)\}_{i=1}^n$ results in different \hat{f}

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Bias-Variance Tradeoff

$$\eta(x) = \mathbb{E}_{Y|X}[Y|X = x] \quad \hat{f} = \arg \min_{f \in \mathcal{F}} \frac{1}{n} \sum_{i=1}^n (y_i - f(x_i))^2$$

$$\begin{aligned} \mathbb{E}_{Y|X}[\mathbb{E}_{\mathcal{D}}[(Y - \hat{f}_{\mathcal{D}}(x))^2]|X = x] &= \mathbb{E}_{Y|X}[\mathbb{E}_{\mathcal{D}}[(Y - \eta(x) + \eta(x) - \hat{f}_{\mathcal{D}}(x))^2]|X = x] \\ &= \mathbb{E}_{Y|X} \left[\mathbb{E}_{\mathcal{D}}[(Y - \eta(x))^2 + 2(Y - \eta(x))(\eta(x) - \hat{f}_{\mathcal{D}}(x)) \right. \\ &\quad \left. + (\eta(x) - \hat{f}_{\mathcal{D}}(x))^2] | X = x \right] \\ &= \underbrace{\mathbb{E}_{Y|X}[(Y - \eta(x))^2 | X = x]}_{\text{irreducible error}} + \underbrace{\mathbb{E}_{\mathcal{D}}[(\eta(x) - \hat{f}_{\mathcal{D}}(x))^2]}_{\text{learning error}} \end{aligned}$$

irreducible error
Caused by stochastic label noise

learning error
Caused by either using too "simple" of a model or not enough data to learn the model accurately

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Bias-Variance Tradeoff

$$\eta(x) = \mathbb{E}_{Y|X}[Y|X = x] \quad \hat{f} = \arg \min_{f \in \mathcal{F}} \frac{1}{n} \sum_{i=1}^n (y_i - f(x_i))^2$$

$$\begin{aligned} \mathbb{E}_{\mathcal{D}}[(\eta(x) - \hat{f}_{\mathcal{D}}(x))^2] &= \mathbb{E}_{\mathcal{D}}[(\eta(x) - \mathbb{E}_{\mathcal{D}}[\hat{f}_{\mathcal{D}}(x)] + \mathbb{E}_{\mathcal{D}}[\hat{f}_{\mathcal{D}}(x)] - \hat{f}_{\mathcal{D}}(x))^2] \\ &= \mathbb{E}_{\mathcal{D}}[(\eta(x) - \mathbb{E}_{\mathcal{D}}[\hat{f}_{\mathcal{D}}(x)])^2 + 2(\eta(x) - \mathbb{E}_{\mathcal{D}}[\hat{f}_{\mathcal{D}}(x)])(\mathbb{E}_{\mathcal{D}}[\hat{f}_{\mathcal{D}}(x)] - \hat{f}_{\mathcal{D}}(x)) \\ &\quad + (\mathbb{E}_{\mathcal{D}}[\hat{f}_{\mathcal{D}}(x)] - \hat{f}_{\mathcal{D}}(x))^2] \\ &= \underbrace{(\eta(x) - \mathbb{E}_{\mathcal{D}}[\hat{f}_{\mathcal{D}}(x)])^2}_{\text{biased squared}} + \underbrace{\mathbb{E}_{\mathcal{D}}[(\mathbb{E}_{\mathcal{D}}[\hat{f}_{\mathcal{D}}(x)] - \hat{f}_{\mathcal{D}}(x))^2]}_{\text{variance}} \end{aligned}$$

biased squared

variance

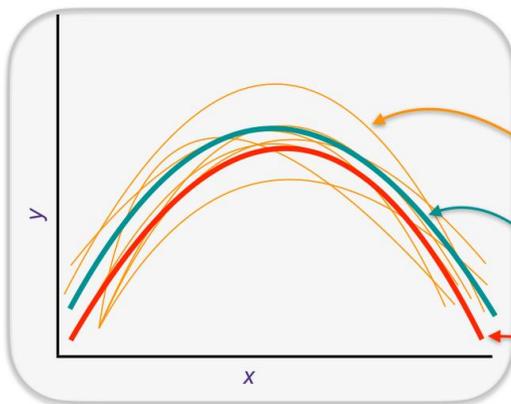
For more insights read also: Abu-Mostafa 2.2-2.3

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Statistical Learning

$$\underbrace{\mathbb{E}_{\mathcal{D}}[(\eta(x) - \hat{f}_{\mathcal{D}}(x))^2]}_{\text{learning error}} = \underbrace{(\eta(x) - \mathbb{E}_{\mathcal{D}}[\hat{f}_{\mathcal{D}}(x)])^2}_{\text{biased squared}} + \underbrace{\mathbb{E}_{\mathcal{D}}[(\mathbb{E}_{\mathcal{D}}[\hat{f}_{\mathcal{D}}(x)] - \hat{f}_{\mathcal{D}}(x))^2]}_{\text{variance}}$$



$$\hat{f} = \arg \min_{f \in \mathcal{F}} \frac{1}{n} \sum_{i=1}^n (y_i - f(x_i))^2$$

$$\mathbb{E}_{\mathcal{D}}[\hat{f}(x)]$$

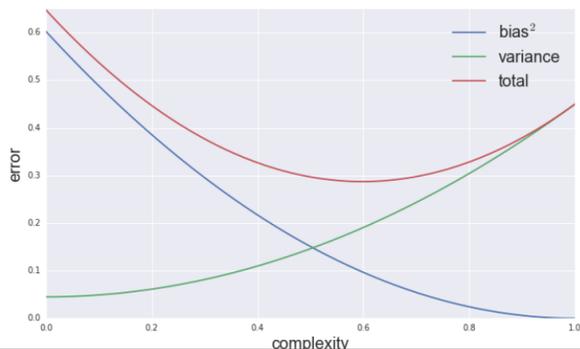
$$\eta(x) = \mathbb{E}_{Y|X}[Y|X=x]$$

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Bias-Variance Tradeoff

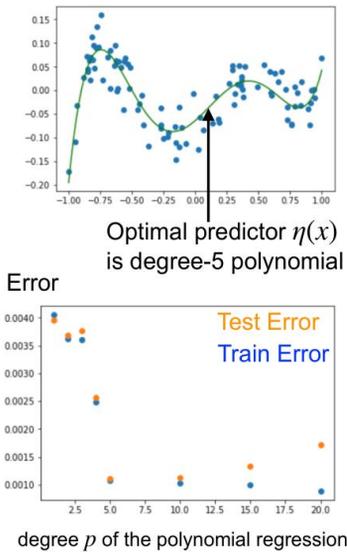
$$\mathbb{E}_{Y|X}[\mathbb{E}_{\mathcal{D}}[(Y - \hat{f}_{\mathcal{D}}(x))^2] | X = x] = \underbrace{\mathbb{E}_{Y|X}[(Y - \eta(x))^2 | X = x]}_{\text{irreducible error}} + \underbrace{(\eta(x) - \mathbb{E}_{\mathcal{D}}[\hat{f}_{\mathcal{D}}(x)])^2}_{\text{biased squared}} + \underbrace{\mathbb{E}_{\mathcal{D}}[(\mathbb{E}_{\mathcal{D}}[\hat{f}_{\mathcal{D}}(x)] - \hat{f}_{\mathcal{D}}(x))^2]}_{\text{variance}}$$



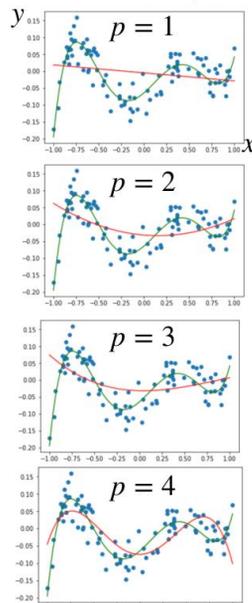
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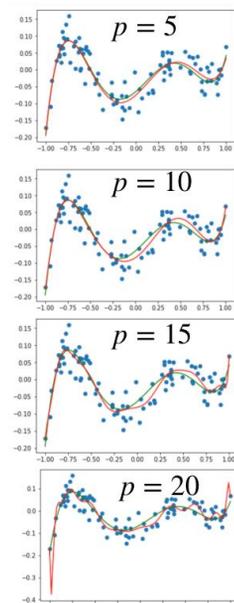
Test error vs. model complexity



Simple model:
Model complexity is below the complexity of $\eta(x)$



Complex model:
Fits noise in train data, diverging from $\eta(x)$

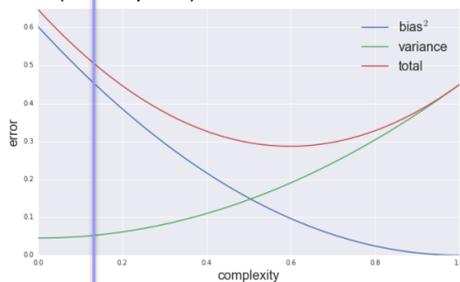


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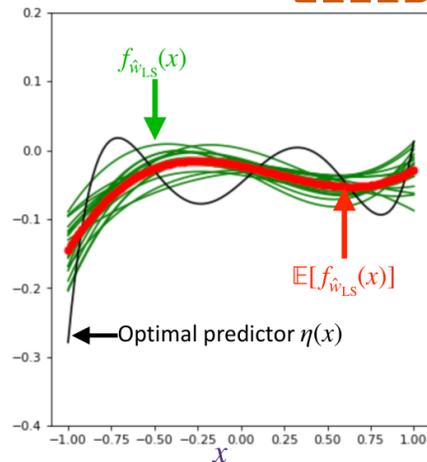
Recap: Bias-variance tradeoff with simple model

(Conceptual) bias variance tradeoff



- When model **complexity is low** (lower than the optimal predictor $\eta(x)$)
 - Bias² of our predictor, $(\eta(x) - \mathbb{E}_{\mathcal{D}}[\hat{f}_{\mathcal{D}}(x)])^2$, is large
 - Variance of our predictor, $\mathbb{E}_{\mathcal{D}}[(\mathbb{E}_{\mathcal{D}}[\hat{f}_{\mathcal{D}}(x)] - \hat{f}_{\mathcal{D}}(x))^2]$, is small
 - If we have more samples (larger n), then
 - What happens to bias?
 - What happens to variance?
 - What happens to overall test error?

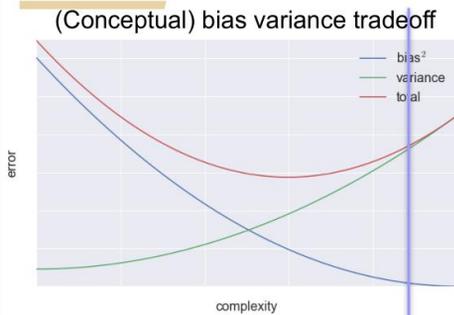
With degree-3 polynomials we underfit



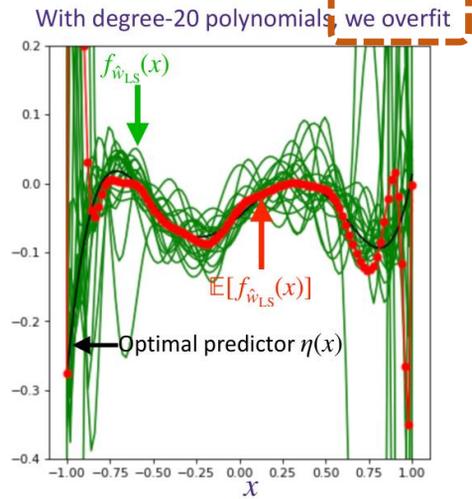
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Recap: Bias-variance tradeoff with complex model



- When model complexity is high (higher than the optimal predictor $\eta(x)$)
 - Bias of our predictor, $(\eta(x) - \mathbb{E}_{\mathcal{D}}[\hat{f}_{\mathcal{D}}(x)])^2$, is small
 - Variance of our predictor, $\mathbb{E}_{\mathcal{D}}[(\mathbb{E}_{\mathcal{D}}[\hat{f}_{\mathcal{D}}(x)] - \hat{f}_{\mathcal{D}}(x))^2]$, is large
- **If we have more samples (larger n), then**
 - What happens to bias?
 - What happens to variance?
 - What happens to overall test error?



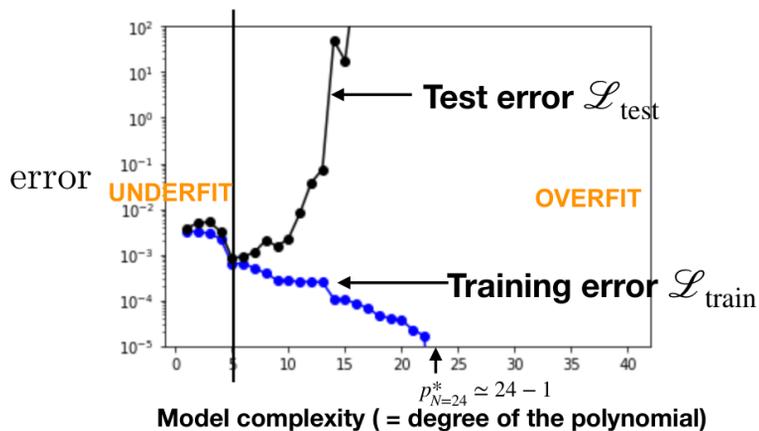
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Optimal model complexity depends on dataset size

- Assume $N=30$

Takeaway



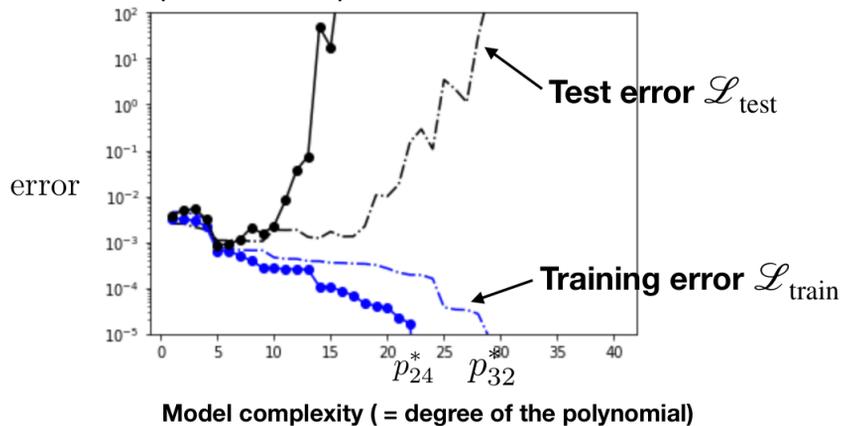
- Given sample size N there is a threshold, p_N^* , where training error is zero
- Training error is **always** monotonically non-increasing
- Test error has a trend of going down and then up, but fluctuates

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Variance decreases with more data, letting you fit more complex models

- Now compare $N=40$ to previous $N=30$ case



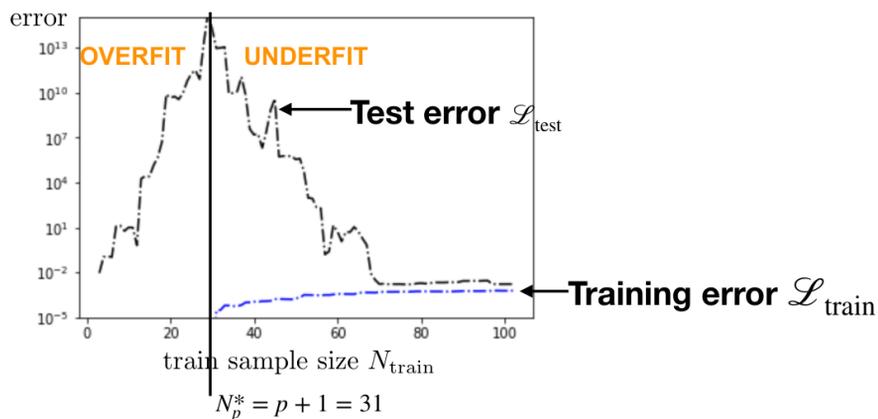
- The threshold, p_N^* , moves right as dataset size increases
- Training error tends to increase, because more points need to fit
- Test error tends to decrease, because Variance decreases

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Variance decreases with more data, letting you fit more complex models

- Choose model complexity $p=30$, vary dataset size n



- There is a threshold, N_p^* , below which training error is zero (extreme overfit)
- Above the threshold, test error tends to decrease
- Training error tends to increase (harder to fit so much data with simple model)

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Regularization - Helps Avoid Overfitting

Ridge Regression

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Regularization in Linear Regression

Recall Least Squares: $\hat{w}_{LS} = \arg \min_w \sum_{i=1}^n (y_i - x_i^T w)^2$

$$= \arg \min_w (\mathbf{y} - \mathbf{X}w)^T (\mathbf{y} - \mathbf{X}w)$$

when $(\mathbf{X}^T \mathbf{X})^{-1}$ exists.... $= (\mathbf{X}^T \mathbf{X})^{-1} \mathbf{X}^T \mathbf{y}$

What if $x_i \in \mathbb{R}^d$ and $d > n$?

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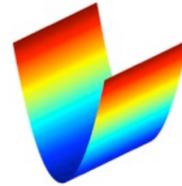
Regularization in Linear Regression

Recall Least Squares: $\hat{w}_{LS} = \arg \min_w \sum_{i=1}^n (y_i - x_i^T w)^2$

When $x_i \in \mathbb{R}^d$ and $d > n$ the objective function is flat in some directions:

Implies optimal solution is *not unique* and unstable due to lack of curvature:

- small changes in training data result in large changes in solution
- often the *magnitudes* of w are “very large”



Regularization imposes “simpler” solutions by a “complexity” penalty

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Sensitivity increases overfitting

- For a linear model,
 $y \simeq b + w_1 x_1 + w_2 x_2 + \dots + w_d x_d$
if $|w_j|$ is large then the prediction is **sensitive** to small changes in x_j
- Large **sensitivity** leads to overfitting and poor generalization, and equivalently models that overfit tend to have large weights
- Note that b is a constant and hence there is no sensitivity for the offset b
- In **Ridge Regression**, we use a regularizer $\|w\|_2^2$ to measure and control the sensitivity of the predictor
- And optimize for small loss and small sensitivity, by adding a **regularizer** in the objective (assume no offset for now)

$$\hat{w}_{\text{ridge}} = \arg \min_w \left\{ \sum_{i=1}^n (y_i - x_i^T w)^2 + \lambda \|w\|_2^2 \right\}$$

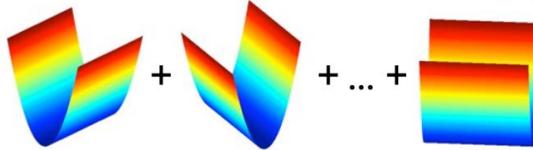
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Ridge Regression

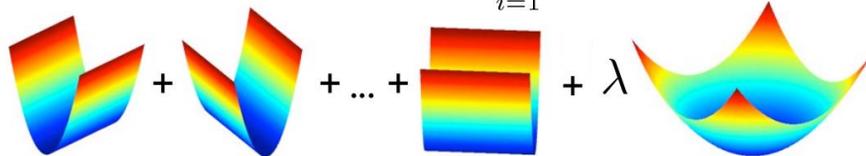
- Old Least squares objective:

$$\hat{w}_{LS} = \arg \min_w \sum_{i=1}^n (y_i - x_i^T w)^2$$



- Ridge Regression objective:

$$\hat{w}_{ridge} = \arg \min_w \sum_{i=1}^n (y_i - x_i^T w)^2 + \lambda \|w\|_2^2$$



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Minimizing the Ridge Regression Objective

$$\hat{w}_{ridge} = \arg \min_w \sum_{i=1}^n (y_i - x_i^T w)^2 + \lambda \|w\|_2^2$$

| Scalar derivative | Vector derivative |
|----------------------------------|--|
| $f(x) \rightarrow \frac{df}{dx}$ | $f(\mathbf{x}) \rightarrow \frac{df}{d\mathbf{x}}$ |
| $bx \rightarrow b$ | $\mathbf{x}^T \mathbf{B} \rightarrow \mathbf{B}$ |
| $bx^2 \rightarrow 2bx$ | $\mathbf{x}^T \mathbf{b} \rightarrow \mathbf{b}$ |
| | $\mathbf{x}^T \mathbf{x} \rightarrow 2\mathbf{x}$ |
| | $\mathbf{x}^T \mathbf{B} \mathbf{x} \rightarrow 2\mathbf{B}\mathbf{x}$ |

Same idea as before: take derivative, set to zero. Arrive at:

$$\hat{w}_{ridge} = \arg \min_w \sum_{i=1}^n (y_i - x_i^T w)^2 + \lambda \|w\|_2^2$$

$$= (\mathbf{X}^T \mathbf{X} + \lambda \mathbf{I})^{-1} \mathbf{X}^T \mathbf{y}$$

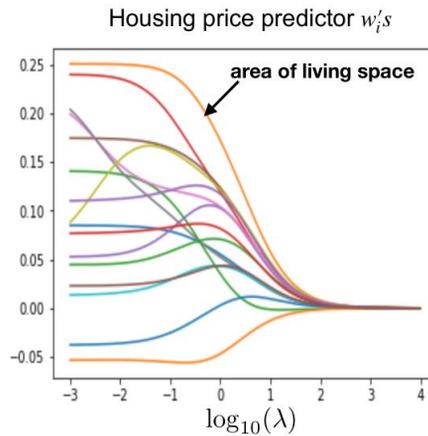
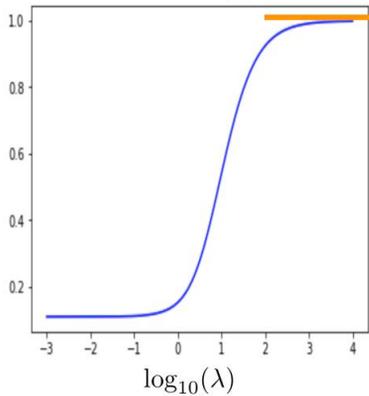
- When $\lambda = 0$, this gives the least squares model
- This defines a family of models hyper-parametrized by λ
- Large λ means more regularization and simpler model
- Small λ means less regularization and more complex model

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Ridge regression: minimize $\sum_{i=1}^n (w^T x_i - y_i)^2 + \lambda \|w\|_2^2$

training MSE $\frac{1}{n} \sum_{i=1}^n (y_i - x_i^T \hat{w}_{\text{ridge}}^{(\lambda)})^2$

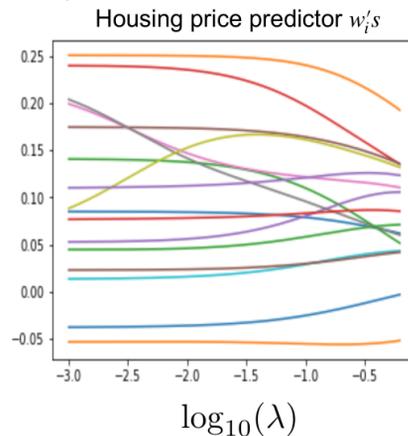
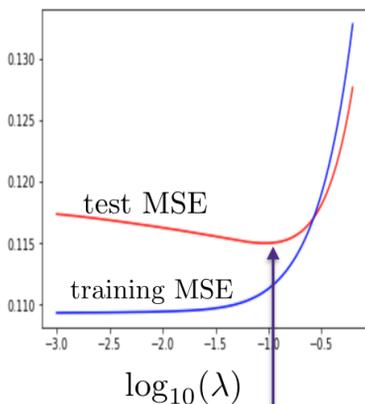


- Left plot: leftmost training error is with no regularization: 0.1093
- Left plot: rightmost training error is variance of the training data: 0.9991
- Right plot: called **regularization path**

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Ridge regression: minimize $\sum_{i=1}^n (w^T x_i - y_i)^2 + \lambda \|w\|_2^2$



- this gain in test MSE comes from shrinking w's to get a less sensitive predictor (which in turn reduces the variance)

- this is the role of regularizer

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Role of Regularizer

- **Penalizes large coefficients:**
 - It discourages the model from relying too heavily on any single feature by shrinking weights toward zero.
- **Controls model complexity:**
 - By constraining weight size, it reduces the flexibility of the regression function, which helps prevent overfitting.
 - Higher complexity = huge coefficients that wiggle to fit noise; more flexible model → more complex decision boundary
 - Lower complexity = smaller closer-to-each-other coefficients means simpler, smoother models

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Bias-Variance Properties

- Recall: $\hat{w}_{\text{ridge}} = (\mathbf{X}^T \mathbf{X} + \lambda \mathbf{I})^{-1} \mathbf{X}^T \mathbf{y}$
- To analyze bias-variance tradeoff, we need to assume probabilistic generative model: $x_i \sim P_X$, $\mathbf{y} = \mathbf{X}w + \epsilon$, $\epsilon \sim \mathcal{N}(0, \sigma^2 \mathbf{I})$
- The true error at a sample with feature x is

$$\begin{aligned} & \mathbb{E}_{y, \mathcal{D}_{\text{train}} | x} [(y - x^T \hat{w}_{\text{ridge}})^2 | x] \\ &= \mathbb{E}_{y | x} [(y - \mathbb{E}[y | x])^2 | x] + \mathbb{E}_{\mathcal{D}_{\text{train}}} [(\mathbb{E}[y | x] - x^T \hat{w}_{\text{ridge}})^2 | x] \\ &= \mathbb{E}_{y | x} [(y - x^T w)^2 | x] + \mathbb{E}_{\mathcal{D}_{\text{train}}} [(x^T w - x^T \hat{w}_{\text{ridge}})^2 | x] \\ &= \underbrace{\sigma^2}_{\text{Irreduc. Error}} + \underbrace{(x^T w - \mathbb{E}_{\mathcal{D}_{\text{train}}} [x^T \hat{w}_{\text{ridge}} | x])^2}_{\text{Bias-squared}} + \underbrace{\mathbb{E}_{\mathcal{D}_{\text{train}}} [(\mathbb{E}_{\mathcal{D}_{\text{train}}} [x^T \hat{w}_{\text{ridge}} | x] - x^T \hat{w}_{\text{ridge}})^2 | x]}_{\text{Variance}} \end{aligned}$$

Suppose $\mathbf{X}^T \mathbf{X} = n \mathbf{I}$, then $\hat{w}_{\text{ridge}} = (\mathbf{X}^T \mathbf{X} + \lambda \mathbf{I})^{-1} \mathbf{X}^T (\mathbf{X}w + \epsilon)$

$$= \frac{n}{n + \lambda} w + \frac{1}{n + \lambda} \mathbf{X}^T \epsilon$$

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Bias-Variance Properties

Suppose $\mathbf{X}^T \mathbf{X} = n\mathbf{I}$, then

$$\hat{w}_{\text{ridge}} = \frac{n}{n + \lambda} w + \frac{1}{n + \lambda} \mathbf{X}^T \epsilon$$

- Recall: $\hat{w}_{\text{ridge}} = (\mathbf{X}^T \mathbf{X} + \lambda \mathbf{I})^{-1} \mathbf{X}^T \mathbf{y}$
- To analyze bias-variance tradeoff, we need to assume probabilistic generative model: $x_i \sim P_X$, $\mathbf{y} = \mathbf{X}w + \epsilon$, $\epsilon \sim \mathcal{N}(0, \sigma^2 \mathbf{I})$
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$$\begin{aligned} & \mathbb{E}_{y, \mathcal{D}_{\text{train}} | x} [(y - x^T \hat{w}_{\text{ridge}})^2 | x] \\ &= \mathbb{E}_{y | x} [(y - \mathbb{E}[y | x])^2 | x] + \mathbb{E}_{\mathcal{D}_{\text{train}}} [(\mathbb{E}[y | x] - x^T \hat{w}_{\text{ridge}})^2 | x] \\ &= \mathbb{E}_{y | x} [(y - x^T w)^2 | x] + \mathbb{E}_{\mathcal{D}_{\text{train}}} [(x^T w - x^T \hat{w}_{\text{ridge}})^2 | x] \\ &= \sigma^2 + (x^T w - \mathbb{E}_{\mathcal{D}_{\text{train}}} [x^T \hat{w}_{\text{ridge}} | x])^2 + \mathbb{E}_{\mathcal{D}_{\text{train}}} [(\mathbb{E}_{\mathcal{D}_{\text{train}}} [x^T \hat{w}_{\text{ridge}} | x] - x^T \hat{w}_{\text{ridge}})^2 | x] \\ & \text{(verify at home)} \\ &= \sigma^2 + \frac{\lambda^2}{(n + \lambda)^2} (w^T x)^2 + \frac{\sigma^2 n}{(n + \lambda)^2} \|x\|_2^2 \end{aligned}$$

Irreduc. Error
Bias-squared
Variance

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Bias-Variance Properties

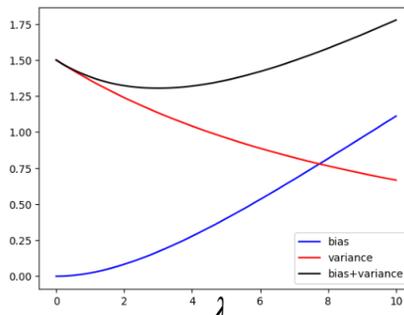
Suppose $\mathbf{X}^T \mathbf{X} = n\mathbf{I}$,

- Ridge regressor: $\hat{w}_{\text{ridge}} = \arg \min_w \sum_{i=1}^n (y_i - x_i^T w)^2 + \lambda \|w\|_2^2$
- True error

$$\mathbb{E}_{y, \mathcal{D}_{\text{train}} | x} [(y - x^T \hat{w}_{\text{ridge}})^2 | x] = \sigma^2 + \frac{\lambda^2}{(n + \lambda)^2} (w^T x)^2 + \frac{\sigma^2 n}{(n + \lambda)^2} \|x\|_2^2$$

Bias-squared
Variance

$$d=10, n=20, \sigma^2 = 3.0, \|w\|_2^2 = 10$$



as $\lambda \rightarrow 0$,

$$\hat{w}_{\text{ridge}} \rightarrow \hat{w}_{\text{LS}}$$

as $\lambda \rightarrow \infty$

$$\hat{w}_{\text{ridge}} \rightarrow 0$$

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Recap

- > Regularization
 - Penalizes complex models towards preferred, simpler models
- > Ridge regression
 - L_2 penalized least-squares regression
 - Regularization parameter trades off model complexity with training error
 - Never regularize the offset!

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Sparsity & the LASSO

How to make the model compact and interpretable

See lecture notes

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PART 2

More Details

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Details

- See hand-written notes and discussion in class.

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PART 3

Code Time!

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Code Time

- See demonstration and discussion in class.
- See also links in the “Assignment” for this Lecture.
- Bias Variance Tradeoff
 - [bias_variance_demo.ipynb](#) (uwash)
- Regularization, Ridge Regression
 - [ridge_lasso_kaggle.ipynb](#) (uwash)

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Conclusion

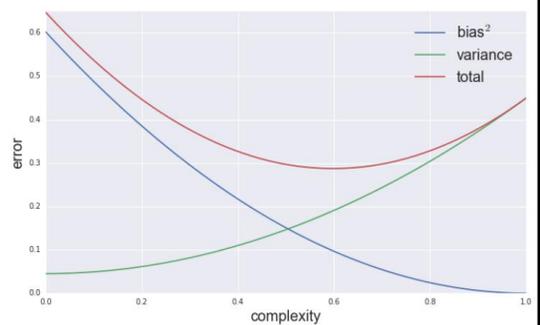
Takeaways

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Conclusion

- **Learning error** = Biased Squared + Variance
 - Caused by either using too “simple” of a model or not enough Data to learn the model accurately
- **Regularization**
 - Imposes “simpler” solutions by a “complexity” penalty



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References and Credits

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- Yaser S. Abu-Mostafa, Malik Magdon-Ismael and Hsuan-Tien Lin. <https://amlbook.com/slides.html>
- Ethem Alpaydin. <https://www.cmpe.boun.edu.tr/~ethem/i2ml3e/>
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- Aurelien Geron. <https://github.com/ageron/handson-ml3>
- Sebastian Raschka. <https://github.com/rasbt/machine-learning-book>
- Trevor Hastie. <https://www.statlearning.com/resources-python>
- Andrew Ng. <https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLoROMvodv4rMiGQp3WXShtMGgzqpfVfbU>
- Richard Povineli. <https://www.richard.povinelli.org/teaching>
- ... and many others.