



GAMES, DYNAMICS & LEARNING

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GAMES, DYNAMICS & LEARNING

4. LEARNING IN FINITE GAMES AND BANDITS, CONT'D

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Outline

Overview

Online learning: Algorithms & guarantees



Overview

Learning in finite games

- ▶ **Frequencies** (pop. shares) \leftrightarrow **Choice probabilities** (mixed strategies)
- ▶ **Multi-agent** (game-theoretic) v. **online** ("playing against anything")
- ▶ **Dynamics** (**last time**) \leftrightarrow **Algorithms** (**today**)
- ▶ **Feedback:**
 - ▶ Full information
 - ▶ Pure/Noisy payoff vector
 - ▶ Bandit (only rewards)
- ▶ **Today:** Deep dives



Learning with a finite number of actions

Online decision-making with **mixed strategies**

repeat

At each epoch $t \geq 0$

Choose **mixed strategy** $x_t \in \mathcal{X} := \Delta(\mathcal{A})$

Encounter **payoff vector** $v_t \in \mathbb{R}^A$

[depends on context]

Get mean payoff $u_t(x_t) = \langle v_t, x_t \rangle$

Receive **feedback**

[depends on context]

until end

Key considerations

- ▶ Time: continuous or discrete?
 - ▶ Players: *discrete*
 - ▶ Actions: *discrete*
 - ▶ Payoffs: determined by other players or "Nature"?
 - ▶ Feedback: full info? payoff-based?



Online v. multi-agent learning

	CONTINUOUS TIME	DISCRETE TIME
REGRET (ONLINE)	$\mathcal{O}(1)$	$\mathcal{O}(\sqrt{T})$
NASH (GAME-THEORETIC)	"FOLK THEOREM"	TODAY

Table: Recap of results so far

Recall:

- ▶ **Regret:** $\text{Reg}(T) = \max_{x \in \mathcal{X}} \sum_{t=1}^T [u_t(x) - u_t(X_t)]$ [or integral]
- ▶ **Folk theorem:** Asymptotic stability \iff Strict Nash equilibrium [cont. time]



Outline

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Feedback

Feedback types (from best to worst):

- ▶ **Full information:** observe entire payoff vector $v_t \leftarrow v(X_t)$
- ▶ **Full, inexact information:** observe estimate V_t of v_t
- ▶ **Partial information / Bandit:** only chosen component $u_t(a_t) = v_{a_t,t}$



Feedback

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- ▶ **Full information:** observe entire payoff vector $v_t \leftarrow v(X_t)$
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Abstract feedback model

$$V_t = v_t + Z_t + b_t$$

where Z_t is *zero-mean* and b_t is the *bias* of V_t

Assumptions

- ▶ **Bias:** $\|b_t\| \leq B_t$ (a.s.)
- ▶ **Variance:** $\mathbb{E}[\|Z_t\|^2 | \mathcal{F}_t] \leq \sigma_t^2$ (a.s.)
- ▶ **Second moment:** $\mathbb{E}[\|V_t\|^2 | \mathcal{F}_t] \leq M_t^2$ (a.s.)



EXAMPLES

① FULL INFORMATION

- Game-theoretic model: player i at time t observes

$$V_{i,t} = v_i(X_{i,t}; X_{-i,t})$$

\uparrow mixed of: \uparrow mixed strat of others

Bias: $b_{i,t}=0$ Noise: $Z_{i,t}=0$

② PURE PAYOFF INFORMATION

At round t , each player selects $a_{i,t} \in A_i$ based on $X_{i,t} \in \mathcal{X}_i$.

Assume observed: $V_{i,t} = (v_{ia_i}(a_i))_{a_i \in A_i}$

$$\mathbb{E}[V_{i,t}] = v_i(X_{i,t}; X_{-i,t}) \Rightarrow \text{Bias } b_{i,t}=0 \quad \text{Variance } \sigma_{i,t} = O(1)$$



Follow the regularized leader

Follow the regularized leader with abstract feedback

$$\begin{aligned} Y_{t+1} &= Y_t + V_t \\ X_{t+1} &= Q(\eta_{t+1} Y_{t+1}) \end{aligned}$$

(FTRL)

*constant η
in the sequel*

where η_t is a variable **learning rate** parameter



Follow the regularized leader

Follow the regularized leader with abstract feedback

$$\begin{aligned} Y_{t+1} &= Y_t + V_t \\ X_{t+1} &= Q(\eta_{t+1} Y_{t+1}) \end{aligned} \tag{FTRL}$$

where η_t is a variable **learning rate** parameter

$$Q(y) = \arg\max \{ \langle y, x \rangle - h(x) \}$$

Technical: Will need Q Lipschitz continuous $\iff h$ is strongly convex

$$h(x') \geq h(x) + \langle \nabla h(x), x' - x \rangle + \frac{K}{2} \|x' - x\|^2$$



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Example: Multiplicative / Exponential Weights algorithm

$$\begin{aligned} Y_{t+1} &= Y_t + V_t \\ X_{t+1} &= \frac{(\exp(\eta_{t+1} Y_{a,t+1}))_{a \in \mathcal{A}}}{\sum_{a \in \mathcal{A}} \exp(\eta_{t+1} Y_{a,t+1})} \end{aligned} \tag{EW}$$

[Vovk, 1990; Littlestone and Warmuth, 1994; Auer et al., 1995; Freund and Schapire, 1999]



Regret guarantees of FTRL

Work as in continuous-time case

- ▶ **Fenchel coupling**

$$F_t = h(x) + g(Y_t) - \langle Y_t, x \rangle$$

where g is a **potential function** for Q , i.e.,

$$Q = \nabla g$$

- ▶ **Discrete-time evolution**

$$F_{t+1} \leq F_t + \gamma \langle V_t, X_t - x \rangle + \frac{\gamma^2}{2K} \|V_t\|_*^2$$

- ▶ Aggregate/Telescope:

$$\overline{\text{Reg}}(T) = \mathcal{O}\left(\frac{\max h - \min h}{\gamma} + \sum_{t=1}^T B_t + \gamma \sum_{t=1}^T M_t^2\right)$$

- ▶ Take $\gamma \propto 1/\sqrt{T}$:

[Why?]

$$\overline{\text{Reg}}(T) = \mathcal{O}\left(\sqrt{T} + \sum_{t=1}^T B_t + \frac{\sum_{t=1}^T M_t^2}{\sqrt{T}}\right)$$



Regret guarantees of FTRL

Theorem (Shalev-Shwartz and Singer, 2006; Shalev-Shwartz, 2011)

- ▶ Assume:
 - ▶ feedback unbiased and bounded in mean square ($B_t = 0$, $\sup_t M_t < M$)
 - ▶ $\gamma = (2/M)\sqrt{KH/T}$ with $H = \max h - \min h$
- ▶ Then: FTRL enjoys the bound

$$\overline{\text{Reg}}(T) \leq 2M\sqrt{(H/K)T} = \mathcal{O}(\sqrt{T})$$

Observe:

- ▶ This bound is tight [Nesterov, 2004; Abernethy et al., 2008; Bubeck, 2015]
- ▶ Cannot achieve $\mathcal{O}(1)$ regret as in continuous time [Why?]
- ▶ How to do if T is unknown? [Exercise]



ANALYSIS

Fenchel Coupling: $F(x, y) = h(x) + g(y) - \langle y, x \rangle$ $\|Dg\|_* = Q$

mindestens score vector

Template Inequality: $F_{t+1} \leq F_t + \gamma \langle v_t, x_t - x \rangle + \frac{\gamma^2}{2x} \|v_t\|_*^2$

Proof: $F_{t+1} = F(x, y_{t+1})$

$$= h(x) + g(y_{t+1}) - \langle y_{t+1}, x \rangle$$

{Eq FTR}

$$= h(x) + g(y_t + \gamma v_t) - \langle y_t + \gamma v_t, x \rangle$$

$$= h(x) + g(y_t + \gamma v_t) - \langle y_t, x \rangle - \gamma \langle v_t, x \rangle$$

$$= \underbrace{h(x) + g(y_t)}_{\text{red}} - \langle y_t, x \rangle + g(y_t + \gamma v_t) - g(y_t) - \gamma \langle v_t, x \rangle$$

$$= F_t + g(y_t + v_t) - g(y_t) - \gamma \langle v_t, x \rangle$$



ANALYSIS

$$\langle X_t, V_t \rangle$$

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Control: } g(Y_t + \gamma V_t) &= g(Y_t) + \gamma \langle \nabla g(Y_t), V_t \rangle \\ &\quad + \frac{\sigma^2}{2} V_t^T \text{Hess}(g(\xi_t)) V_t \\ &\leq g(Y_t) + \gamma \langle V_t, X_t \rangle + \frac{\sigma^2}{2K} \|V_t\|_F^2 \end{aligned}$$

* Proof not entirely rigorous, but can be made rigorous via Cox one.

** NB: $\|\cdot\|_F$ is the dual norm, i.e., $\|y\|_F = \max_{\|x\|=1} |\langle y, x \rangle|$

Example: If $\|x\| = \sum_j |x_j| \rightsquigarrow \|y\|_F = \max_i |y_i|$

L^1 norm $\rightsquigarrow L^\infty$ norm

L^p norm $\rightsquigarrow L^q$ norm where $\frac{1}{p} + \frac{1}{q} = 1$

L^2 norm $\rightsquigarrow L^2$ norm



ANALYSIS

Continue: $F_{t+1} = F_t + g(Y_t + V_t) - g(Y_t) - \gamma \langle V_t, x \rangle$

$$\leq F_t + \gamma \langle V_t, X_t \rangle + \frac{\sigma^2}{2\kappa} \|V_t\|_p^2 - \gamma \langle V_t, x \rangle$$

$$= F_t + \gamma \langle V_t, X_t - x \rangle + \frac{\sigma^2}{2\kappa} \|V_t\|_p^2$$

$\hookrightarrow V_t = v_t + z_t + b_x$

$$\Rightarrow \gamma \langle v_t, x - X_t \rangle \leq F_t - F_{t+1} + \gamma \langle z_t, X_t - x \rangle$$

$$+ \gamma \langle b_x, X_t - x \rangle$$

$$+ \frac{\sigma^2}{2\kappa} \|v_t\|_p^2$$

$\gamma \langle v_t, x - X_t \rangle$

$$\Rightarrow \gamma \mathbb{E}[\langle v_t, x - X_t \rangle | \mathcal{F}_t] \leq F_t - \mathbb{E}[F_{t+1} | \mathcal{F}_t] + \gamma \langle \mathbb{E}[z_t | \mathcal{F}_t], X_t - x^* \rangle$$

$$+ \gamma \text{diam}(x) \cdot B_t$$

$$+ \frac{\sigma^2}{2\kappa} M_t^2$$



ANALYSIS

$$\gamma \mathbb{E}[\langle v_t, z - x_t \rangle] = \gamma \mathbb{E}[F_t - F_{t+1}] + \gamma \text{diam}(Z) B_t + \frac{\sigma^2}{2\kappa} M_t^2$$

$$\overline{\text{Reg}}(T) \leq F_1/\gamma + \text{diam}(Z) \sum_{t=1}^T B_t + \frac{\sigma^2}{2\kappa} \sum_{t=1}^T M_t^2$$

- If $B_t = 0$, $M_t \leq M$

$$\hookrightarrow \overline{\text{Reg}}(T) \leq \frac{\max - \min}{\gamma} + \frac{\sigma^2}{2\kappa} M T$$

Take $\gamma = \sqrt{T} \rightsquigarrow \boxed{\overline{\text{Reg}}(T) = \mathcal{O}(\sqrt{T})}$



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Observe:

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Which regularizer to pick?

- ▶ Assume perfect info, $v_{a,t} \in [0, 1]$ [for simplicity]



Which regularizer to pick?

- ▶ Assume perfect info, $v_{a,t} \in [0, 1]$

$$\|V_t\|^2 = \sum_{i=1}^n v_{a_it}^2 \leq n = M^2$$

[for simplicity]

- ▶ Euclidean regularization

- ▶ L^2 -norm bound $M = |\mathcal{A}|^{1/2}$

$$\overline{\text{Reg}}(T) \leq 2M\sqrt{(H/K)T} = \mathcal{O}(\sqrt{T})$$

- ▶ Strong convexity modulus $K = 1$; $H \leq 1/2$

- ▶ Optimal tuning gives

$$H = \max h - \min h$$

$$\overline{\text{Reg}}(T) \leq 2\sqrt{|\mathcal{A}| \cdot T}$$





Which regularizer to pick?

- ▶ Assume perfect info, $v_{a,t} \in [0, 1]$ [for simplicity]

- ▶ Euclidean regularization

- ▶ L^2 -norm bound $M = |\mathcal{A}|^{1/2}$

$$\overline{\text{Reg}}(T) \leq 2M\sqrt{(H/K)T} = \mathcal{O}(\sqrt{T})$$

- ▶ Strong convexity modulus $K = 1$; $H \leq 1/2$
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$$\overline{\text{Reg}}(T) \leq 2\sqrt{|\mathcal{A}| \cdot T}$$

- ▶ Entropic regularization / Exponential weights

- ▶ L^∞ -norm bound $M = 1$ $\|v_t\|_\infty = \max_a |v_{a,t}| \leq 1 = M$
 - ▶ Strong convexity modulus $K = 1$; $H = \log|\mathcal{A}|$
 - ▶ Optimal tuning gives

$$\overline{\text{Reg}}(T) \leq 2\sqrt{\log|\mathcal{A}| \cdot T}$$



Which regularizer to pick?

- ▶ Assume perfect info, $v_{a,t} \in [0, 1]$ [for simplicity]

- ▶ Euclidean regularization

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- ▶ Strong convexity modulus $K = 1$; $H \leq 1/2$
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- ▶ L^∞ -norm bound $M = 1$
- ▶ Strong convexity modulus $K = 1$; $H = \log|\mathcal{A}|$
- ▶ Optimal tuning gives

$$\overline{\text{Reg}}(T) \leq 2\sqrt{\log|\mathcal{A}| \cdot T}$$

- ▶ Huge reduction in dimensionality!



Learning with bandit feedback

The bandit / partial info case:

- ▶ Play action $a_t \in \mathcal{A}$ according to mixed strategy $X_t \in \mathcal{X}$
- ▶ Receive payoff $u_t(a_t) = v_{a_t, t} \in [0, 1]$



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 - ▶ Receive payoff $u_t(a_t) = v_{a_t, t} \in [0, 1]$
- ▶ **Importance weighted estimator:**

$$V_{a,t} = \frac{\mathbb{1}(a_t = a)}{\mathbb{P}(a_t = a)} u_t(a_t) = \begin{cases} 0 & \text{if } a \neq a_t \\ \frac{u_t(a_t)}{X_{a,t}} & \text{if } a = a_t \end{cases}$$



Learning with bandit feedback

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- ▶ Importance weighted estimator:

$$V_{a,t} = \frac{\mathbb{1}(a_t = a)}{\mathbb{P}(a_t = a)} u_t(a_t) = \begin{cases} 0 & \text{if } a \neq a_t \\ \frac{u_t(a_t)}{X_{a,t}} & \text{if } a = a_t \end{cases}$$

✓ Unbiased estimator

[Verify this]

$$\Rightarrow \mathbb{E}[V_{a,t}] = v_{a,t} \quad \text{Indeed: } \mathbb{E}[V_{a,t}] = \sum_{a' \in \mathcal{A}} V_{a,t} \mathbb{P}(a_t = a')$$

$$= \underbrace{\frac{u_t(a)}{X_{a,t}} \mathbb{P}(a = a_t)}_{1} + \sum_{a' \neq a} 0 \cdot \mathbb{P}(a_t = a')$$



Learning with bandit feedback

The bandit / partial info case:

- ▶ Play action $a_t \in \mathcal{A}$ according to mixed strategy $X_t \in \mathcal{X}$
- ▶ Receive payoff $u_t(a_t) = v_{a_t, t} \in [0, 1]$

- ▶ Importance weighted estimator:

$$V_{a,t} = \frac{\mathbb{1}(a_t = a)}{\mathbb{P}(a_t = a)} u_t(a_t) = \begin{cases} 0 & \text{if } a \neq a_t \\ \frac{u_t(a_t)}{X_{a,t}} & \text{if } a = a_t \end{cases}$$

✓ Unbiased estimator

[Verify this]

✗ Not bounded in mean square!

[$X_{a,t}$ can become arbitrarily small]



Possible outlets

Two approaches:

1. Adjust the algorithm:

[valid for all regularizers]

- ▶ Reduce variance by increasing exploration

$$X_t \leftarrow (1 - \varepsilon_t)Q(Y_t) + \varepsilon_t \text{unif}$$

- ▶ Still unbiased; variance = $\mathcal{O}(1/\varepsilon_t)$
- ▶ Adaptation of FTRL bounds yields

$$\overline{\text{Reg}}(T) = \mathcal{O}(T^{2/3}) \rightsquigarrow \Theta(T^{1/6}) \text{ gap}$$

Suboptimal relative to full/noisy information based



ANALYSIS

$$Y_t = (1-\varepsilon)Q(Y_{t-1}) + \varepsilon v_t \text{ unit}$$

$$Q(Y_t) = \frac{1}{1-\varepsilon} Y_t - \frac{\varepsilon}{1-\varepsilon} \text{ unit}$$

Control: $g(Y_t + \gamma V_t) = g(Y_t) + \gamma \langle P_g(Y_t), V_t \rangle$

$$\frac{\gamma}{1-\varepsilon} \langle V_t, Y_t \rangle - \frac{\varepsilon}{1-\varepsilon} \langle V_t, \text{unif} \rangle$$

$\left\{ \begin{array}{c} \uparrow \\ \downarrow \end{array} \right.$
"trembling hand"

$$\varepsilon \mathcal{F}_T^{\text{TRV}} \overline{\text{Reg}}(T) \leq \frac{F_i}{\gamma} + O(\varepsilon T) + O(\gamma T/\varepsilon)$$

$$\widehat{\mathcal{F}_T^{\text{TRV}}} \widehat{\text{Reg}}(T) \leq F_i/\gamma + \text{diam}(T) \sum_{t=1}^T B_t + \frac{\gamma}{2\varepsilon} \sum_{t=1}^T M_t^2$$



Possible outlets

Two approaches:

1. Adjust the algorithm:

[valid for all regularizers]

- ▶ Reduce variance by increasing exploration

$$X_t \leftarrow (1 - \varepsilon_t)Q(Y_t) + \varepsilon_t \text{unif}$$

- ▶ Still unbiased; variance = $\mathcal{O}(1/\varepsilon_t)$
- ▶ Adaptation of FTRL bounds yields

$$\overline{\text{Reg}}(T) = \mathcal{O}(T^{2/3})$$

2. Adjust the analysis:

[only valid for (EW)]

- ▶ Derive refined bound on KL divergence [not clear for other FTRL]
- ▶ Refined bound suitable for variance growth up to $\mathcal{O}(1/\min|X_{a,t}|)$
- ▶ Almost tight bound:

$$\overline{\text{Reg}}(T) = \mathcal{O}(\sqrt{|\mathcal{A}| \log |\mathcal{A}| \cdot T})$$

→ Auer et al. 1995
"Gambling in a rigged
casino"

[Log factor can be shaved off, cf. Audibert and Bubeck, 2010]



Recap

Quick recap:

- ▶ In general, no-regret learning does not converge to equilibrium ✗
- ▶ Multi-agent FTRL echoes replicator properties
- ▶ Discrete-time analysis ↵ next lecture
- ▶ Regret guarantees: $\mathcal{O}(1)$ in continuous time, $\mathcal{O}(\sqrt{T})$ in discrete [both tight]
- ▶ Non-Euclidean regularization can be very beneficial [EW algo]
- ▶ Bandit framework much harder, but still possible to achieve $\mathcal{O}(\sqrt{T})$ ✓



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