Today (and for the next 5 weeks) we’re focused on **supervised learning**.

This means we’re given a training set consisting of **inputs** and corresponding **labels**, e.g.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Inputs</th>
<th>Labels</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>object recognition</td>
<td>image</td>
<td>object category</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>image captioning</td>
<td>image</td>
<td>caption</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>document classification</td>
<td>text</td>
<td>document category</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>speech-to-text</td>
<td>audio waveform</td>
<td>text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...</td>
<td>...</td>
<td>...</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Input Vectors

What an image looks like to the computer:

[Image credit: Andrej Karpathy]
Machine learning algorithms need to handle lots of types of data: images, text, audio waveforms, credit card transactions, etc.

Common strategy: represent the input as an input vector in $\mathbb{R}^d$

- **Representation** = mapping to another space that’s easy to manipulate
- Vectors are a great representation since we can do linear algebra!
Input Vectors

Can use raw pixels:

Can do much better if you compute a vector of meaningful features.
Mathematically, our training set consists of a collection of pairs of an input vector $\mathbf{x} \in \mathbb{R}^d$ and its corresponding target, or label, $t$

- **Regression**: $t$ is a real number (e.g. stock price)
- **Classification**: $t$ is an element of a discrete set $\{1, \ldots, C\}$
- These days, $t$ is often a highly structured object (e.g. image)

Denote the training set $\{(\mathbf{x}^{(1)}, t^{(1)}), \ldots, (\mathbf{x}^{(N)}, t^{(N)})\}$

- Note: these superscripts have nothing to do with exponentiation!
Nearest Neighbors

- Suppose we’re given a novel input vector $x$ we’d like to classify.
- The idea: find the nearest input vector to $x$ in the training set and copy its label.
- Can formalize “nearest” in terms of Euclidean distance

$$||x^{(a)} - x^{(b)}||_2 = \sqrt{\sum_{j=1}^{d} (x_{j}^{(a)} - x_{j}^{(b)})^2}$$

**Algorithm:**

1. Find example $(x^*, t^*)$ (from the stored training set) closest to $x$. That is:

$$x^* = \arg\min_{x^{(i)} \in \text{train. set}} \text{distance}(x^{(i)}, x)$$

2. Output $y = t^*$

- Note: we don’t need to compute the square root. Why?
Nearest Neighbors: Decision Boundaries

We can visualize the behavior in the classification setting using a Voronoi diagram.
Decision boundary: the boundary between regions of input space assigned to different categories.
Nearest Neighbors: Decision Boundaries

Example: 3D decision boundary
**k-Nearest Neighbors**

Nearest neighbors are sensitive to noise or mis-labeled data ("class noise").

Solution?

- Smooth by having k nearest neighbors vote

**Algorithm (kNN):**

1. Find k examples \( \{x^{(i)}, t^{(i)}\} \) closest to the test instance \( x \)
2. Classification output is majority class

\[
y = \arg \max_{t^{(z)}} \sum_{r=1}^{k} \delta(t^{(z)}, t^{(r)})
\]
K-Nearest neighbors

k=1

[Image credit: "The Elements of Statistical Learning"]
K-Nearest neighbors

$k=15$

[Image credit: "The Elements of Statistical Learning"]
k-Nearest Neighbors

Tradeoffs in choosing $k$?

- Small $k$
  - Good at capturing fine-grained patterns
  - May overfit, i.e. be sensitive to random idiosyncrasies in the training data

- Large $k$
  - Makes stable predictions by averaging over lots of examples
  - May underfit, i.e. fail to capture important regularities

- Rule of thumb: $k < \sqrt{n}$, where $n$ is the number of training examples
K-Nearest neighbors

- We would like our algorithm to **generalize** to data it hasn’t before.
- We can measure the **generalization error** (error rate on new examples) using a **test set**.

[Image credit: "The Elements of Statistical Learning"]
$k$ is an example of a hyperparameter, something we can’t fit as part of the learning algorithm itself.

We can tune hyperparameters using a validation set:

The test set is used only at the very end, to measure the generalization performance of the final configuration.
Low-dimensional visualizations are misleading! In high dimensions, “most” points are far apart.

If we want the nearest neighbor to be closer then $\epsilon$, how many points do we need to guarantee it?

The volume of a single ball of radius $\epsilon$ is $\mathcal{O}(\epsilon^d)$

The total volume of $[0, 1]^d$ is 1.

Therefore $\mathcal{O}\left((\frac{1}{\epsilon})^d\right)$ balls are needed to cover the volume.

[Image credit: "The Elements of Statistical Learning"]
Pitfalls: The Curse of Dimensionality

- In high dimensions, “most” points are approximately the same distance.
  (Homework question coming up…)

- Saving grace: some datasets (e.g. images) may have low intrinsic dimension,
  i.e. lie on or near a low-dimensional manifold. So nearest neighbors
  sometimes still works in high dimensions.
Pitfalls: Normalization

- Nearest neighbors can be sensitive to the ranges of different features.
- Often, the units are arbitrary:

  ![Chart showing two sets of data points with different scales.](chart.png)

  Simple fix: **normalize** each dimension to be zero mean and unit variance. I.e., compute the mean $\mu_j$ and standard deviation $\sigma_j$, and take

  $$\tilde{x}_j = \frac{x_j - \mu_j}{\sigma_j}$$

  Caution: depending on the problem, the scale might be important!
Pitfalls: Computational Cost

- Number of computations at **training time**: 0
- Number of computations at **test time**, per query (naïve algorithm)
  - Calculate $D$-dimensional Euclidean distances with $N$ data points: $O(ND)$
  - Sort the distances: $O(N \log N)$
- This must be done for each query, which is very expensive by the standards of a learning algorithm!
- Need to store the entire dataset in memory!
- Tons of work has gone into algorithms and data structures for efficient nearest neighbors with high dimensions and/or large datasets.
Example: Digit Classification

- Decent performance when lots of data

- Yann LeCunn – MNIST Digit Recognition
  - Handwritten digits
  - 28x28 pixel images: \( d = 784 \)
  - 60,000 training samples
  - 10,000 test samples

- Nearest neighbour is competitive

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Test Error Rate (%)</th>
<th>Linear classifier (1-layer NN)</th>
<th>12.0</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>K-nearest-neighbors, Euclidean</td>
<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>K-nearest-neighbors, Euclidean, deskewed</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>K-NN, Tangent Distance, 16x16</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>K-NN, shape context matching</td>
<td>0.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1000 RBF + linear classifier</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SVM deg 4 polynomial</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2-layer NN, 300 hidden units</td>
<td>4.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2-layer NN, 300 HU, [deskewing]</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>LeNet-5, [distortions]</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Boosted LeNet-4, [distortions]</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Example: Digit Classification

- KNN can perform a lot better with a good similarity measure.
- Example: shape contexts for object recognition. In order to achieve invariance to image transformations, they tried to warp one image to match the other image.
  - Distance measure: average distance between corresponding points on warped images
- Achieved 0.63% error on MNIST, compared with 3% for Euclidean KNN.
- Competitive with conv nets at the time, but required careful engineering.

[Belongie, Malik, and Puzicha, 2002. Shape matching and object recognition using shape contexts.]
80 Million Tiny Images was the first extremely large image dataset. It consisted of color images scaled down to $32 \times 32$.

With a large dataset, you can find much better semantic matches, and KNN can do some surprising things.

Note: this required a carefully chosen similarity metric.

[Torralba, Fergus, and Freeman, 2007. 80 Million Tiny Images.]
Example: 80 Million Tiny Images

[Torralba, Fergus, and Freeman, 2007. 80 Million Tiny Images.]
Conclusions

- Simple algorithm that does all its work at test time — in a sense, no learning!
- Can control the complexity by varying $k$
- Suffers from the Curse of Dimensionality
- Next time: decision trees, another approach to regression and classification
Questions?