

# SVM Soft Margin Classification

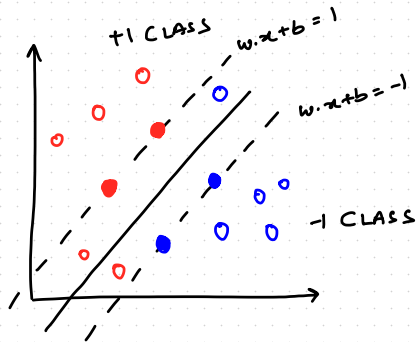
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July 21, 2025

IIT Gandhinagar

"SLIGHTLY" NON-SEPARABLE DATA



## Pop Quiz #1

### Quick Question!

Why might we need a "soft margin" SVM?

- a) Data is perfectly linearly separable

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- c) We want smaller margins
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Why might we need a "soft margin" SVM?

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**Answer:** b) Data has some noise and outliers - soft margin allows controlled violations.



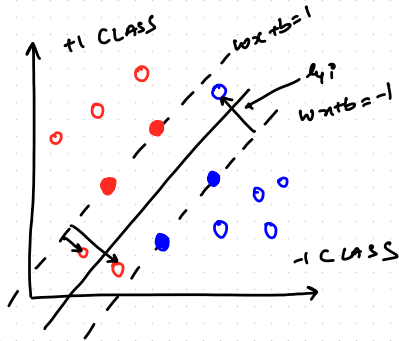
- Can we learn SVM for “slightly” non-separable data without projecting to a higher space?

## Soft-Margin SVM

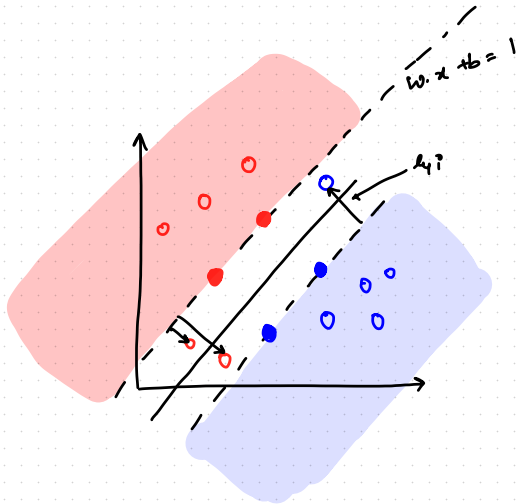
- Can we learn SVM for “slightly” non-separable data without projecting to a higher space?
- Introduce some “slack” ( $\xi_i$ ) or loss or penalty for samples - allow some samples to be misclassified

"SLIGHTLY" NON-SEPARABLE DATA

$e_{yi}$ : Distance from margin



ZONE 1  
 $y_i = +1$   
 $w \cdot x_i + b \geq r$



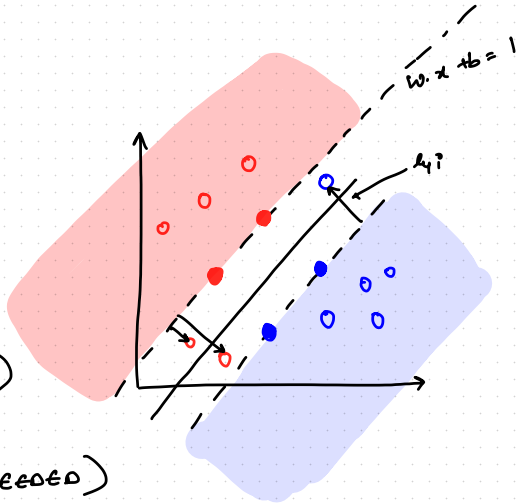
ZONE 1

$$y_i (\vec{w} \cdot \vec{x}_i + b) > 1$$

$$\text{Loss}_i = 0 \quad (\eta_i = 0)$$



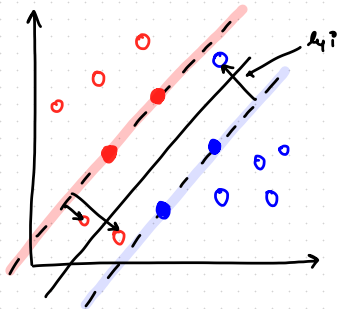
NO PENALTY  
(OR SLACK NEEDED)



ZONE 2

$$y_i (\vec{w} \cdot \vec{x}_i + b) = 1$$

$$\text{Loss}_i = 0$$
$$(\eta_i = 0)$$



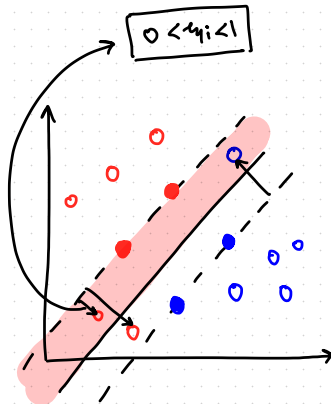
### ZONE 3

$$y_i (\bar{w} \cdot \bar{x}_i + b) < 1$$

$$\text{LOSS}_i \neq 0 \quad (0 < \eta_i < 1)$$

POINT CORRECTLY  
CLASSIFIED

(BUT WRONG  
SIDE OF MARGIN)



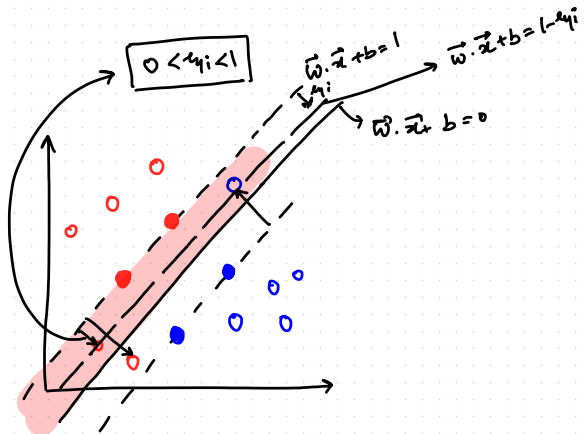
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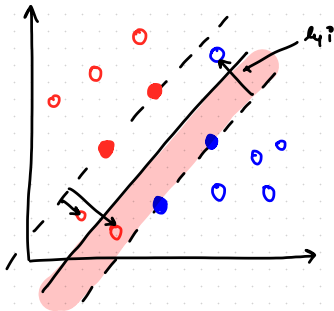
ZONE 4

$$y_i (\vec{w} \cdot \vec{x}_i + b) < 1$$

POINT INCORRECTLY  
CLASSIFIED

$$\text{Loss}_i \neq 0$$

$$h_i > 1$$



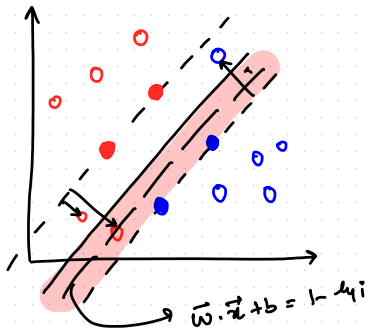
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## Soft-Margin SVM

Change Objective

$$\text{minimize } \frac{1}{2} \|\mathbf{w}\|^2 + C \sum_{i=1}^n \xi_i$$

$$\text{s.t. } y_i(\mathbf{w} \cdot \mathbf{x}_i + b) \geq 1 - \xi_i$$

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In Dual:

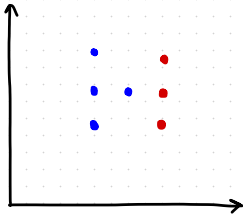
$$\text{minimize } \sum_{i=1}^n \alpha_i - \sum_{i=1}^n \sum_{j=1}^n \alpha_i \alpha_j y_i y_j \mathbf{x}_i \cdot \mathbf{x}_j$$

s.t.

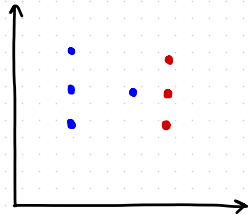
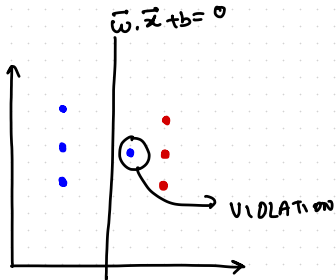
$$0 \leq \alpha_i \leq C \quad \& \quad \sum_{i=1}^n \alpha_i y_i = 0$$

BIAS - VARIANCE

TRADE-OFF

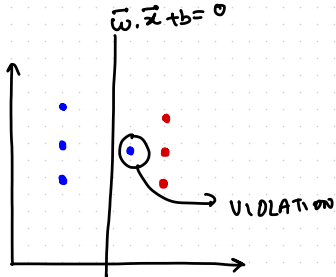


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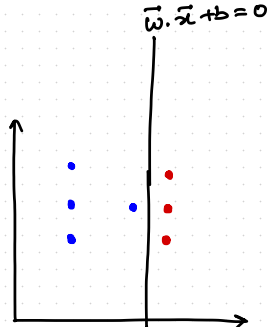


LOW  $C$   
LOW PENALTY FOR VIOLATION  
HIGH TRAIN ERROR  
HIGH BIAS

# BIAS- VARIANCE TRADE-OFF



LOW  $C$   
 LOW PENALTY FOR VIOLATION  
 HIGH TRAIN ERROR  
 HIGH BIAS  
 BIG MARGIN



HIGH  $C$   
 HIGH PENALTY FOR VIOLATION  
 HIGH VARIANCE  
 SMALL MARGIN

## Pop Quiz #2

### Quick Question!

What happens when the regularization parameter  $C$  is very large?

- a) The model becomes more tolerant to misclassifications



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- b) The model tries to classify all training points correctly
- c) The margin becomes larger
- d) Regularization increases

**Answer:** b) The model tries to classify all training points correctly - high variance!

## Bias Variance Trade-off for Soft-Margin SVM

Low  $C \implies$  Higher train error (higher bias)

High  $C \implies$  Very sensitive to datasete (high variance)

## Soft-Margin SVM

If  $C \rightarrow 0$

Objective  $\rightarrow$  minimize  $\frac{1}{2} \|\mathbf{w}\|^2$

$\Rightarrow$  Choose large margin (without worrying for  $\xi_i$ s)

$$\text{Recall: Margin} = \frac{2}{\|\mathbf{w}\|}$$

If  $C \rightarrow \infty$  (or very large)    Objective  $\rightarrow$  minimize  $C \sum \xi_i$  or  
choose  $\mathbf{w}$ ,  $b$ , s.t.  $\xi_i$  is small!

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- b)  $C \rightarrow \infty$

**Answer:** b)  $C \rightarrow \infty$  - No violations allowed!

## Pop Quiz #4

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For a support vector with slack variable  $\xi_i = 1.5$ , this point is:

- a) On the margin boundary

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- d) Outside both margins

**Answer:** c) Misclassified - since  $\xi_i > 1$ !

# Soft-Margin SVM

Types of support vectors:

- Zone 2:  $y_i(\mathbf{w} \cdot \mathbf{x}_i + b) = 1$

∴ As  $C$  increases, # support vectors decreases

Notebook: SVM-soft-margin

# Soft-Margin SVM

Types of support vectors:

- Zone 2:  $y_i(\mathbf{w} \cdot \mathbf{x}_i + b) = 1$
- Zone 3:  $0 < \xi_i < 1$  (correctly classified)

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Types of support vectors:

- Zone 2:  $y_i(\mathbf{w} \cdot \mathbf{x}_i + b) = 1$
- Zone 3:  $0 < \xi_i < 1$  (correctly classified)
- Zone 4:  $\xi_i > 1$  (Misclassified)

$\therefore$  As  $C$  increases,  $\#$  support vectors decreases

Notebook: SVM-soft-margin

## SVM Formulation in the Loss + Penalty Form

Objective:

$$\text{minimize } \frac{1}{2} \|\mathbf{w}\|^2 + C \sum_{i=1}^N \xi_i$$

Now:

$$y_i(\mathbf{w} \cdot \mathbf{x}_i + b) \geq 1 - \xi_i$$

$$\xi_i \geq 1 - y_i(\mathbf{w} \cdot \mathbf{x}_i + b)$$

But  $\xi_i \geq 0$

$$\therefore \xi_i = \max [0, 1 - y_i(\mathbf{w} \cdot \mathbf{x}_i + b)]$$

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- c) Non-convex but differentiable



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- c) Non-convex but differentiable
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**Answer:** b) Convex but not differentiable at  $y_i(\mathbf{w} \cdot \mathbf{x}_i + b) = 1$ !

## SVM Formulation in the Loss + Penalty Form

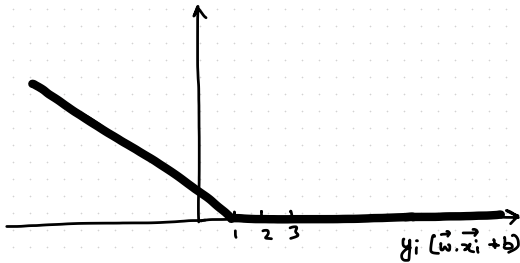
∴ Objective is:

$$\text{minimize } C \sum \xi_i + \frac{1}{2} \|\mathbf{w}\|^2$$

$$\Rightarrow \text{minimize } C \sum_{i=1}^N \max [0, 1 - y_i(\mathbf{w} \cdot \mathbf{x}_i + b)] + \frac{1}{2} \|\mathbf{w}\|^2$$

$$\Rightarrow \text{minimize } \underbrace{\sum_{i=1}^N \max [0, 1 - y_i(\mathbf{w} \cdot \mathbf{x}_i + b)]}_{\text{Loss}} + \underbrace{\frac{1}{2C} \|\mathbf{w}\|^2}_{\text{Regularisation}}$$

# HINGE LOSS



## Loss Function for Sum (Hinge Loss)

Loss function is  $\sum_{i=1}^N \max [0, 1 - y_i(\mathbf{w} \cdot \mathbf{x}_i + b)]$

- Case I  $y_i(\mathbf{w} \cdot \mathbf{x}_i + b) = 1$

Lies on Margin:  $Loss_i = 0$

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- Case II

$$y_i(\mathbf{w} \cdot \mathbf{x}_i + b) > 1$$

$$Loss_i = 0$$

## Loss Function for Sum (Hinge Loss)

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Lies on Margin:  $Loss_i = 0$

- Case II

$$y_i(\mathbf{w} \cdot \mathbf{x}_i + b) > 1$$

$$Loss_i = 0$$

- Case III

$$y_i(\mathbf{w} \cdot \mathbf{x}_i + b) < 1$$

$$Loss_i \neq 0$$



## Hinge Loss Continued

Q) Is hinge loss convex and differentiable?

Convex: ✓

Differentiable: X

Subgradient: ✓

## SVM Loss is Convex

Hinge Loss  $\sum(\max[0, (1 - y_i(\mathbf{w} \cdot \mathbf{x}_i + b))])$  is convex

Penalty  $\frac{1}{2}\|\mathbf{w}\|^2$  is convex

$\therefore$  SVM loss is convex