CS 260: Foundations of Data Science

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Fall 2025

HAVERFORD
COLLEGE

Materials by Sara Mathieson

Admin

- **Lab 4** grades & feedback posted on Moodle
- **Lab 5** due tonight at midnight
- **Lab 6** posted (due next Tuesday)
  - pair-programming optional
- **Midterm 1** returned today

Outline for today

- Entropy and Shannon encoding
- Information gain for selecting features
- Go over Midterm 1

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Applications of Decision Trees

Examples

- Medical diagnostics

- Credit risk analysis

- Modeling calendar scheduling preferences

Decision Trees in Chemistry reactions

- Example of decision trees in practice
- Use decision trees to interpret another ML algorithm (SVMs)

Machine-learning-assisted materials discovery using failed experiments

Paul Raccuglia, Katherine C. Elbert, Philip D. F. Adler, Casey Falk, Malia B. Wenny, Aurelio Mollo, Matthias Zeller, Sorelle A. Friedler ✉, Joshua Schrier ✉ & Alexander J. Norquist ✉

Nature **533**, 73–76 (05 May 2016) | Download Citation ⬇

Optional Reading!

How do we choose the best feature?

- Single feature model + evaluate with a ROC curve **(Lab 4)**

- What feature gives us the most information about the label? **(Lab 6)**

Idea of Entropy

- Average # of bits needed to send one datapoint

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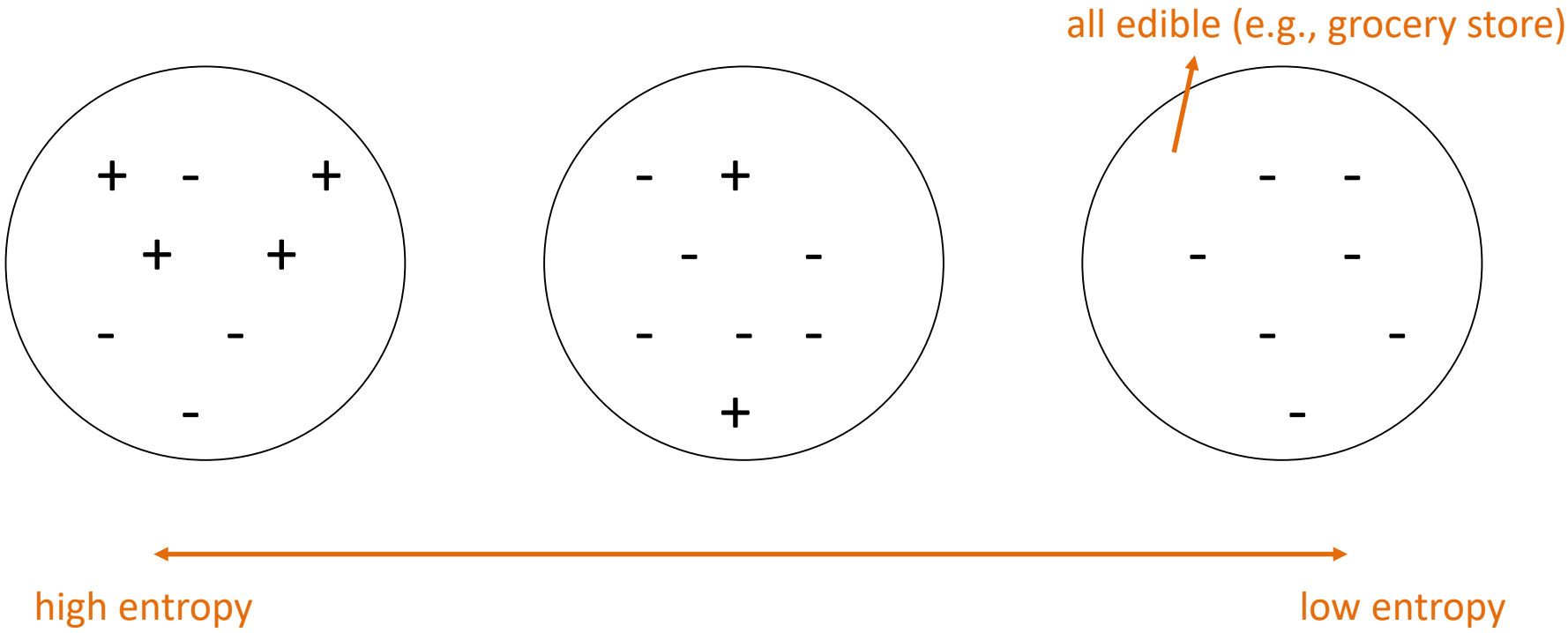
- Average # of bits needed to send one datapoint

Poisonous & edible mushrooms

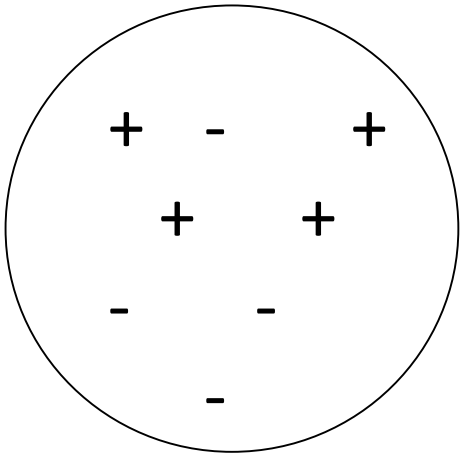


Entropy

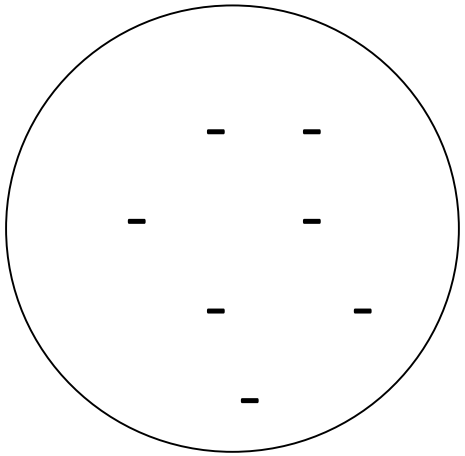
$$H(y) = -\sum_{c \in vals(y)} p(y = c) \log_2(p(y = c))$$

label

# of bits



H(y) = 1



H(y) = 0

Encoding data

Class year	Fixed-length encoding
senior	00
junior	01
sophomore	10
first year	11

Works!

Encoding data

Class year	Prob (p)
senior	0.5
junior	0.25
sophomore	0.125
first year	0.125

Idea: Use fewer bits to encode values that appear more often

Shannon Encoding

Class year	Prob (p)	Cumulative prob	Cumulative prob in binary
senior	0.5	0	0.000…
junior	0.25	0.5	0.100…
sophomore	0.125	0.75	0.110…
first year	0.125	0.875	0.111…

sort highest
to lowest

Decimal to binary conversion

- Multiply the decimal point number with 2
- Take note of the number *before* the decimal point in the result
- Multiply the result's value *after and including* the decimal point with 2
- Repeat until the result is 1
- Place the numbers we noted down after the decimal point in the order we got them

Shannon Encoding

ceiling
(round up)

Class year	Prob (p)	Cumulative prob	Binary	$\lceil -log_2 p \rceil$	Encoding
senior	0.5	0	0.000…	1	0
junior	0.25	0.5	0.100…	2	10
sophomore	0.125	0.75	0.110…	3	110
first year	0.125	0.875	0.111…	3	111

sort highest
to lowest

# of bits to use from
the binary form

$$H(class\ year)$$
$$= 0.5 * 1 + 0.25 * 2 + 0.125 * 3 + 0.125 * 3 = 1.75$$

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Conditional Entropy

- Quantifies the amount of information needed to describe the outcome of Y given X

$$H(Y|X) = \sum_{v \in vals(X)} p(X = v)\, H(Y|X = v)$$

feature
e.g., cap shape

$$H(Y|X = v) = -\sum_{c \in vals(Y)} p(Y = c|X = v) \log_2 p(Y = c|X = v)$$

single feature value
e.g., cap shape = bell

Information Gain

- Reduction in entropy/uncertainty given some information

$$\underbrace{G(Y,X)}_{\text{want high}} = H(Y) - \underbrace{H(Y|X)}_{\text{want low}}$$

- Select the feature that maximizes the information gain

Handout 12

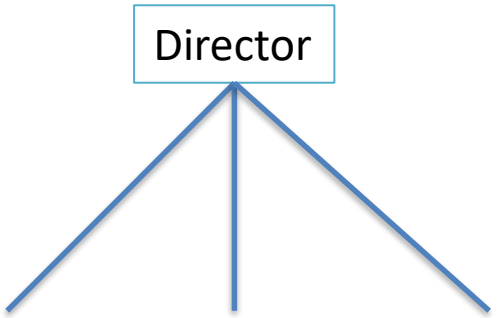
Handout 12

Movie	Type	Length	Director	Famous actors	Liked?
m1	Comedy	Short	Adamson	No	Yes
m2	Animated	Short	Lasseter	No	No
m3	Drama	Medium	Adamson	No	Yes
m4	Animated	Long	Lasseter	Yes	No
m5	Comedy	Long	Lasseter	Yes	No
m6	Drama	Medium	Singer	Yes	Yes
m7	Animated	Short	Singer	No	Yes
m8	Comedy	Long	Adamson	Yes	Yes
m9	Drama	Medium	Lasseter	No	Yes

$P(\text{Li} = \text{yes}) =$ 2/3
$H(\text{Li}) =$ 0.92

$H(\text{Li} \mid \text{T}) = 0.61$
$H(\text{Li} \mid \text{Le}) = 0.61$
$H(\text{Li} \mid \text{D}) = 0.36$ MIN ENTROPY
$H(\text{Li} \mid \text{F}) = 0.85$

$\text{Gain}(\text{Li}, \text{T}) =$ 0.92 – 0.61 = 0.31
$\text{Gain}(\text{Li}, \text{Le}) =$ 0.92 – 0.61 = 0.31
$\text{Gain}(\text{Li}, \text{D}) =$ 0.92 – 0.36 = 0.56 MAX INFO GAIN
$\text{Gain}(\text{Li}, \text{F}) =$ 0.92 – 0.85 = 0.07



Start of the tree

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Midterm solutions
not posted online