

Constraints



Equality constraint: $x = c$ (1)

Inequality constraint: $a \leq x \leq b$ (2)

Any realistic physical system has constraints

- Simple boundary constraints

$$\begin{aligned} \mathbf{x}_{\text{low}} \leq \mathbf{x}(t) \leq \mathbf{x}_{\text{upp}} \\ \mathbf{u}_{\text{low}} \leq \mathbf{u}(t) \leq \mathbf{u}_{\text{upp}} \end{aligned}$$

- End-point constraints:

$$\begin{aligned} \mathbf{x}_{0, \text{low}} \leq \mathbf{x}(t_0) \leq \mathbf{x}_{0, \text{upp}} \\ \mathbf{x}_{F, \text{low}} \leq \mathbf{x}(t_F) \leq \mathbf{x}_{F, \text{upp}} \end{aligned} \quad (3)$$

- Time constraints

$$\begin{aligned} t_{0, \text{low}} \leq t_0 \leq t_{0, \text{upp}} \\ t_{F, \text{low}} \leq t_F \leq t_{F, \text{upp}} \end{aligned} \quad (4)$$

Cost and policy



- The cost function is of the form

$$J_{\mathbf{u}}(\mathbf{x}, t_0, t_F) = \underbrace{c_F(t_0, t_F, \mathbf{x}(t_0), \mathbf{x}(t_F))}_{\text{Mayer Term}} + \underbrace{\int_{t_0}^{t_F} c(\tau, \mathbf{x}(\tau), \mathbf{u}(\tau)) d\tau}_{\text{Lagrange Term}}$$

Cartpole



- Necessary constraint $-u_{\text{max}} < u(t) < u_{\text{max}}$ and $\mathbf{x}_0 = [0 \ 0 \ \pi \ 0]$

- Goal is to bring \mathbf{x} to $\mathbf{x}^g = [1 \ 0 \ 0 \ 0]$

- Up-right cartpole, version 1:

$$J_{\mathbf{u}}(t_0, t_F, \mathbf{x}) = \|\mathbf{x}(t_F) - \mathbf{x}^g\|^2 + \lambda \int_{t_0}^{t_F} \mathbf{u}(t)^\top \mathbf{u}(t)$$

- Constraints $t_0 = 0, t_F = 3$ (complete in 3 seconds)

- Up-right cartpole, version 2:

$$J_{\mathbf{u}}(t_0, t_F, \mathbf{x}) = t_F - t_0$$

- Constraints $\mathbf{x}_F = \mathbf{x}^g$

Endless combinations; depends on goal + method you are using

The continuous-time control problem



Given system dynamics for a system

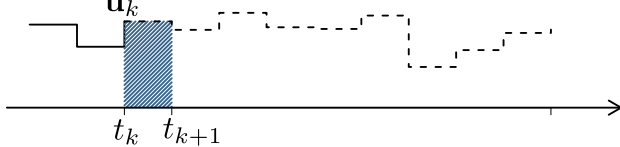
$$\dot{\mathbf{x}}(t) = \mathbf{f}(t, \mathbf{x}(t), \mathbf{u}(t))$$

Obtain $\mathbf{u} : [t_0; t_F] \rightarrow \mathbb{R}^m$ as solution to

$$\mathbf{u}^*, \mathbf{x}^*, t_0^*, t_F^* = \arg \min_{\mathbf{x}, \mathbf{u}, t_0, t_F} J_{\mathbf{u}}(\mathbf{x}, \mathbf{u}, t_0, t_F).$$

(Minimization subject to all constraints)

Discretization



- Simplest choice: Euler's method

- Choose grid size $N: t_0, t_1, \dots, t_N = t_F, t_{k+1} - t_k = \Delta$

- $\mathbf{x}_k = \mathbf{x}(t_k), \mathbf{u}_k = \mathbf{u}(t_k)$

$$\begin{aligned} \mathbf{x}_{k+1} &= \mathbf{f}_k(\mathbf{x}_k, \mathbf{u}_k) \\ &= \mathbf{x}_k + \Delta \mathbf{f}(\mathbf{x}_k, \mathbf{u}_k, t_k) \end{aligned}$$

$$J_{\mathbf{u}=(\mathbf{u}_0, \mathbf{u}_1, \dots, \mathbf{u}_{N-1})}(\mathbf{x}_0) = c_f(t_0, \mathbf{x}_0, t_F, \mathbf{x}_F) + \sum_{k=0}^{N-1} c_k(\mathbf{x}_k, \mathbf{u}_k)$$

$$c_k(\mathbf{x}_k, \mathbf{u}_k) = \Delta c(\mathbf{x}_k, \mathbf{u}_k, t_k)$$

Approaches to control



- Last week: Rule-based methods (build $\mathbf{u}(t) = \pi(\mathbf{x}, t)$ directly)

- **Today: Optimization-based methods:**

$$\mathbf{u}^* = \arg \min_{\mathbf{u}} J_{\mathbf{u}}(\mathbf{x}_0)$$

- Direct optimization of a discretized version of the problem

- Next week: DP-inspired planning methods

Infrastructure: Nonlinear program



A non-linear program is an optimization task of the form

$$\begin{aligned} \min_{z \in \mathbb{R}^n} E(z) \quad & \text{subject to} \\ & h(z) = 0 \\ & g(z) \leq 0 \\ & z_{\text{low}} \leq z \leq z_{\text{upp}} \end{aligned}$$

i.e. the objective is to find the z that minimizes E under the constraints.

- If problem is not too complex, can use methods such as **sequential convex programming** to find z^* .
- Requires luck and engineering
 - Needs a good initial guess
 - Improves when given gradient of J and Jacobian of f and h .

Infrastructure: Linear Quadratic program



A special case of the optimization task:

$$\begin{aligned} \min \frac{1}{2} x^T Q x + c^T x \quad & \text{subject to} \\ & A x \leq b \\ & F x = g \end{aligned}$$

- When Q is positive definite and the problem is not very large the solution can always be found

Optimizing the Discrete Problem: Shooting



Consider the simplest form of a discrete control problem

$$x_{k+1} = A_k x_k + B_k u_k + d_k$$

quadratic cost function

$$J_{u_0, \dots, u_{N-1}}(x_0) = x_N^T Q_N x_N + \sum_{k=0}^{N-1} (x_k^T Q_k x_k + u_k^T R_k u_k)$$

- Given u_0, \dots, u_{N-1} , all the x_k 's can be found from the system dynamics:

$$x_2 = A_1 x_1 + B_1 u_1 + d_1 = A_1(A_0 x_0 + B_0 u_0 + d_0) + B_1 u_1 + d_1$$

- Problem equivalent to optimizing $J_{u_0, \dots, u_{N-1}}(x_0)$ (which is quadratic) wrt. u_0, \dots, u_{N-1}
- This method is called **shooting**
- + **A single linear-quadratic optimization problem**
- + **Easy to understand**

Optimizing the Discrete Problem: Shooting



- General case

$$x_{k+1} = f_k(x_k, u_k)$$

$$J_{u=(u_0, u_1, \dots, u_{N-1})}(x_0) = c_f(t_0, x_0, t_F, x_F) + \sum_{k=0}^{N-1} c_k(x_k, u_k)$$

- Get rid of all the x_k 's except x_0 :

$$x_2 = f(x_1, u_1) = f(f(x_0, u_0), u_1)$$

So just optimize $J_{u=(u_0, u_1, \dots, u_{N-1})}(x_0)$ wrt. u

- + **Easy to understand**
- A big, non-linear program (we cannot avoid that for general dynamics)
- - **Unstable: small changes in u_0 can mean big changes in x_N**
- - **Eulers method is imprecise**
- - **No bueno.** To overcome these issues, we have to take a step back

The continuous-time control problem



Given system dynamics for a system

$$\dot{x}(t) = f(t, x(t), u(t)) \tag{5}$$

Step 1: Must evaluate this ODE somehow

Subject to a number of dynamical and constant path and end-point constraints, obtain $u : [t_0; t_F] \rightarrow \mathbb{R}^m$ as solution to

$$\min_{t_0, t_F, x(t), u(t)} \underbrace{c_F(t_0, t_F, x(t_0), x(t_F))}_{\text{Mayer Term}} + \underbrace{\int_{t_0}^{t_F} c(x(\tau), u(\tau), \tau) d\tau}_{\text{Lagrange Term}}$$

Step 3:
Minimize over all functions?
What about constraints?

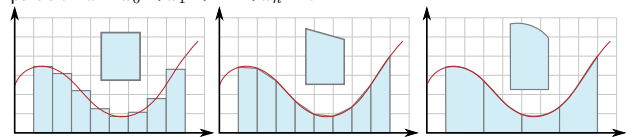
subject to eq. (5) and whatever constraints are imposed on the system.

This is a nasty constrained minimization problem

Numerical integration



Suppose we wish to approximate a function $f(x)$. Divide interval into a partition $a = x_0 < x_1 < \dots < x_n = b$

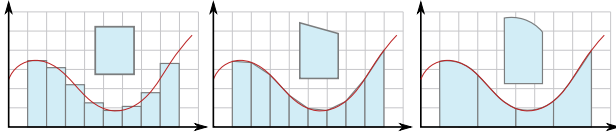


Choices corresponds to

- Piecewise constant
- Piecewise linear
- Piecewise 2nd order polynomial (use midpoint to fit the three parameters)

Approximation and integration

Each provide an approximation for the integral: $\int_a^b f(x) dx$



- Midpoint rule: $\approx \sum_{i=0}^{n-1} f\left(\frac{x_{i+1}+x_i}{2}\right) \Delta_i$
- Trapezoid rule: $\approx \frac{\Delta x}{2} (f(x_0) + 2f(x_1) + 2f(x_2) + \dots + 2f(x_{n-1}) + f(x_n))$
- Simpson's rule: $\approx \frac{\Delta x}{3} (f(x_0) + 4f(x_1) + 2f(x_2) + 4f(x_3) + 2f(x_4) + \dots + 4f(x_{n-1}) + f(x_n))$

General Collocation: Time discretization

- Given t_0 and t_F and N
- We discretize the time into N intervals:

$$t_0 < t_1 < t_2 < \dots < t_{N-1} = t_F$$

- Specifically $t_k = t_0 + \frac{k}{N-1}(t_F - t_0)$
- For later use we define:

$$h_k = t_{k+1} - t_k, \quad k = 0, \dots, N-2$$

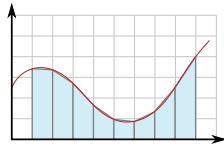
$$\mathbf{x}_k = \mathbf{x}(t_k), \quad k = 0, \dots, N-1$$

$$\mathbf{u}_k = \mathbf{u}(t_k)$$

$$c_k = c(\mathbf{x}_k, \mathbf{u}_k, t_k)$$

$$\mathbf{f}_k = \mathbf{f}(\mathbf{x}_k, \mathbf{u}_k, t_k)$$

Trapezoid collocation

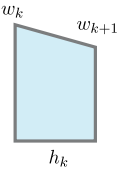


Trapezoid collocation assumes

$$\int_{t_0}^{t_F} c(\mathbf{x}(\tau), \mathbf{u}(\tau), \tau) d\tau \approx \sum_{k=0}^{N-2} \frac{1}{2} h_k (c_k + c_{k+1})$$

We can at this point evaluate the cost if we know \mathbf{x} and \mathbf{u} !

$$c_F(t_0, t_F, \mathbf{x}_0, \mathbf{x}_N) + \frac{1}{2} \sum_{k=0}^{N-2} h_k (c_k + c_{k+1})$$



Collocating system dynamics

Recall

$$\dot{\mathbf{x}} = \mathbf{f}(\mathbf{x}, \mathbf{u}, t)$$

Integrating both sides

$$\int_{t_k}^{t_{k+1}} \dot{\mathbf{x}}(t) dt = \int_{t_k}^{t_{k+1}} \mathbf{f}(\mathbf{x}(t), \mathbf{u}(t), t) dt$$

Using **trapezoid collocation** we on the right-hand side and integrating the left

$$\mathbf{x}_{k+1} - \mathbf{x}_k \approx \frac{1}{2} h_k (\mathbf{f}_{k+1} + \mathbf{f}_k)$$

Trapezoid collocation: System dynamics

- Constraints are translated to simply apply to their knot points:

$$x < 0 \rightarrow x_k < 0$$

$$u < 0 \rightarrow u_k < 0$$

$$\mathbf{h}(t, \mathbf{x}, \mathbf{u}) < 0 \rightarrow \mathbf{h}(t_k, \mathbf{x}_k, \mathbf{u}_k) < 0$$

- Boundary constraints still just apply at boundary:

$$\mathbf{g}(t_0, \mathbf{x}(t_0), \mathbf{u}(t_0)) < 0 \rightarrow \mathbf{g}(t_0, \mathbf{x}_0, \mathbf{u}_0) < 0$$

Trapezoid collocation: First attempt

Optimize over $\mathbf{z} = (\mathbf{x}_0, \mathbf{u}_0, \dots, \mathbf{u}_{N-1}, t_0, t_f)$

$$\min_{\mathbf{z}} \left[c_F(t_0, t_F, \mathbf{x}_0, \mathbf{x}_N) + \frac{1}{2} \sum_{k=0}^{N-2} h_k (c_k + c_{k+1}) \right]$$

Such that

$$\mathbf{h}(t_k, \mathbf{x}_k, \mathbf{u}_k) < 0$$

$$\mathbf{g}(t_0, t_F, \mathbf{x}_0, \mathbf{x}_F) \leq 0$$

with convention we iteratively compute \mathbf{x}_{k+1} from \mathbf{x}_k starting at $k = 0$

$$k = 0, \dots, N-2: \quad \mathbf{x}_{k+1} = \mathbf{x}_k + \frac{1}{2} h_k (\mathbf{f}_{k+1} + \mathbf{f}_k)$$

Wait, did we just solve it?

Almost! The final idea:



- Suppose we let x_k, u_k vary freely (ensure everything can be evaluated)
- But we add the $N - 1$ constraints:

$$x_{k+1} = x_k + \frac{1}{2}h_k (f_{k+1} + f_k)$$

- The key observation is local changes in x_k and u_k have local effects

Trapezoid collocation method



Optimize over $z = (x_0, u_0, x_1, u_1, \dots, x_{N-1}, u_{N-1}, t_0, t_F)$

$$\min_z \left[c_F(t_0, t_F, x_0, x_N) + \frac{1}{2} \sum_{k=0}^{N-2} h_k (c_k + c_{k+1}) \right] \quad (6)$$

$$\text{Such that } z_{lb} \leq z \leq z_{ub} \quad (7)$$

$$h(t_k, x_k, u_k) \leq 0 \quad (8)$$

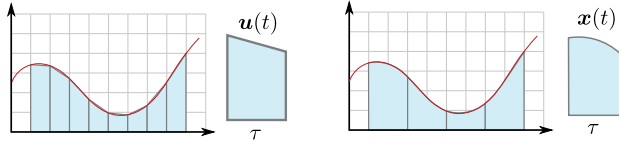
$$x_k - x_{k+1} + \frac{1}{2}h_k (f_{k+1} + f_k) = 0 \quad (9)$$

- Optimizer also need initial point z_0
- Recall $f_k = f(x_k, u_k, t_k)$ so last constraint is non-linear

Reconstruction



Given z , how do we reconstruct the (predicted) path $x(t)$ and $u(t)$?



- $u(t)$ was assumed to be linear, using $\tau = t - t_k$:

$$u(t) \approx u_k + \frac{\tau}{h_k} (u_{k+1} - u_k)$$

- For $x(t)$ we assumed

$$\dot{x}(t) \approx f_k + \frac{\tau}{h_k} (f_{k+1} - f_k)$$

- Integrating both sides and using $x(t_k) = x_k$

$$x(t) = x_k + f_k \tau + \frac{\tau^2}{2h_k} (f_{k+1} - f_k)$$

Implementation



Algorithm 1 Direct solver

- 1: **function** DIRECT-SOLVE(N , GUESS= (t_0^g, t_F^g, x^g, u^g))
- 2: Define $z \leftarrow (x_0, u_0, \dots, x_{N-1}, u_{N-1}, t_0, t_F)$ as all optimization variables
- 3: Define grid time points $t_k = \frac{k}{N-1}(t_F - t_0) + t_0, k = 0, \dots, N - 1 \triangleright$ eq. (15.11)
- 4: Define $h_k, f_k = f(x_k, u_k, t_k)$ and $c_k = c(x_k, u_k, t_k)$.
- 5: Define I_{eq} and I_{ineq} as empty lists of inequality/equality constraints
- 6: **for** $k = 0, \dots, N - 2$ **do**
- 7: Append constraint $x_{k+1} - x_k = \frac{h_k}{2}(f_{k+1} + f_k)$ to $I_{eq} \triangleright$ eq. (15.20)
- 8: Add all other path-constraints eq. (15.21) to I_{ineq} and I_{eq}
- 9: **end for**
- 10: Add possible end-point constraints on x_0, x_F and t_0, t_F to I_{eq} and I_{ineq}
- 11: Build optimization target $E(z) = c_f(t_0, t_F, x_0, x_{N-1}) + \sum_{k=0}^{N-2} \frac{h_k}{2} (c_{k+1} + c_k)$
- 12: Construct guess time-grid: $t_k^g \leftarrow \frac{k}{N-1}(t_F^g - t_0^g) + t_0^g$
- 13: Construct guess states $z^g \leftarrow (x^g(t_0^g), u^g(t_0^g), \dots, x^g(t_{N-1}^g), u^g(t_{N-1}^g), t_0^g, t_F^g)$
- 14: Let z^* be minimum of E optimized over z subject to I_i and I_{eq} using guess z^g
- 15: Re-construct $u^*(t), x^*(t)$ from z^* using eq. (15.22) and eq. (15.26)
- 16: Return u^*, x^* and t_0^*, t_F^*
- 17: **end function**

Making it work well



- For small N , method is imprecise, but less sensitive to z_0
- For moderate N , method is **very** sensitive to z_0
- Initially we do linear interpolation to get z_0
- An idea is to use an optimizer for low value of N , obtain solution z'
- From this z' , we can construct $x'(t)$ and $u'(t)$
- We run optimizer with higher N and an initial guess as $x_k = x'(t_k)$

Implementation



Algorithm 2 Iterative direct solver

Require: An initial guess $z_0^g = (x^g, u^g, t_0^g, t_F^g)$ found using simple linear interpolation

Require: A sequence of grid sizes $10 \approx N_0 < N_1 < \dots < N_T$

- 1: **for** $t = 0, T$ **do**
- 2: $x^*, u^*, t_0^*, t_F^* \leftarrow$ DIRECT-SOLVE(N_t, z_t^g)
- 3: $z_{t+1} \leftarrow x^*, u^*, t_0^*, t_F^*$
- 4: **end for**
- 5: Return u^*, x^* and t_0^*, t_F^*

Implementation:



```

1 # sample.py
2 ineq_cons = {'type': 'ineq',
3             'fun': lambda x: np.array([1 - x[0] - 2 * x[1],
4                                       1 - x[0] ** 2 - x[1],
5                                       1 - x[0] ** 2 + x[1]]),
6             'jac': lambda x: np.array([[ -1.0, -2.0],
7                                       [-2 * x[0], -1.0],
8                                       [-2 * x[0], 1.0]])}
9
10 eq_cons = {'type': 'eq',
11            'fun': lambda x: np.array([2 * x[0] + x[1] - 1]),
12            'jac': lambda x: np.array([2.0, 1.0])}
13
14 from scipy.optimize import Bounds
15 z_lb, z_ub = [0, -0.5], [1.0, 2.0]
16 bounds = Bounds(z_lb, z_ub) # Bounds(z_low, z_up)
17 z0 = np.array([0.5, 0])
18 res = minimize(J_fun, z0, method='SLSQP', jac=J_jac,
19               constraints=[eq_cons, ineq_cons], bounds=bounds)
    
```

We use sympy because of the gradient/Jacobians

Example: Pendulum



Example: Cartpole, the Kelly task



Task is taken from the excellent [Kel17]

- Constraints: $t_0 = 0, t_F = 2$, end-point constraints x_0 and $x_F = x^9$ and $-20 < u(t) < 20$
- $c(x, u, t) = u(t)^2$
- Grid refinement: $N = 10$ then $N = 60$

lecture_05_cartpole_kelly

Example: Cartpole, the minimum-time task



From the (also great!) https://github.com/MatthewPeterKelly/OptimTraj/blob/master/demo/cartPole/MAIN_minTime.m

- Constraints: $t_0 = 0, t_F > 0$, end-point constraints x_0 and $x_F = x^9$ and $-50 < u(t) < 50$
- $c(x, u, t) = t_F - t_0$
- $N = 8, 16, 32, 70$

lecture_05_cartpole_time

Optimizing the Discrete Problem - Collocation



- We can also optimize over both action/state values

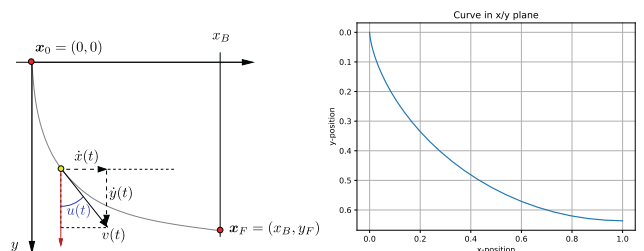
The optimisation problem is then defined as

$$\begin{aligned}
 &\text{minimize} && \mathbf{x}_N^T Q_N \mathbf{x}_N + \sum_{k=0}^{N-1} (\mathbf{x}_k^T Q_k \mathbf{x}_k + \mathbf{u}_k^T R_k \mathbf{u}_k) \\
 &\text{subject to} && F' \mathbf{x} \leq \mathbf{h}' \\
 &&& F'' \mathbf{x} \leq \mathbf{h}'' \\
 &&& A_k \mathbf{x}_k + B_k \mathbf{u}_k + \mathbf{d}_k - \mathbf{x}_{k+1} = 0
 \end{aligned}$$

Example: Brachistochrone



What is the fastest path for a bead to travel x_B distance in the x -direction?

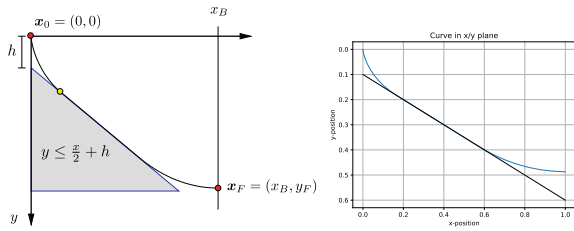


- Cost: $\min t_F$
- Actions is the angle $u(t)$. Dynamics:

$$\dot{x} = v \sin u, \quad \dot{y} = v \cos u, \quad \dot{v} = g \cos u \quad (10)$$
- End-point constraints

$$x(0) = y(0) = v(0) = 0, \quad x(t_F) = x_B$$

Same as before but bead cannot pass through solid object



- Dynamical constraint

$$h(\mathbf{x}) = y - \frac{x}{2} - h \leq 0 \quad (11)$$


Hermite-Simpson collocation refers to replacing the Trapezoid rule


$$\int_{t_0}^{t_F} c(\tau) d\tau \approx \sum_{k=0}^{N-1} \frac{h_k}{6} (c_k + 4c_{k+\frac{1}{2}} + c_{k+1})$$

For dynamics

$$\mathbf{x}_{k+1} - \mathbf{x}_k = \frac{1}{6} h_k (\mathbf{f}_k + 4\mathbf{f}_{k+\frac{1}{2}} + \mathbf{f}_{k+1})$$

- Generally better for small N
- Scales worse in N

 Tue Herlau.
Sequential decision making.
(Freely available online), 2024.

 Matthew Kelly.
An introduction to trajectory optimization: How to do your own direct collocation.
SIAM Review, 59(4):849–904, 2017.
(See [kelly2017.pdf](#)).