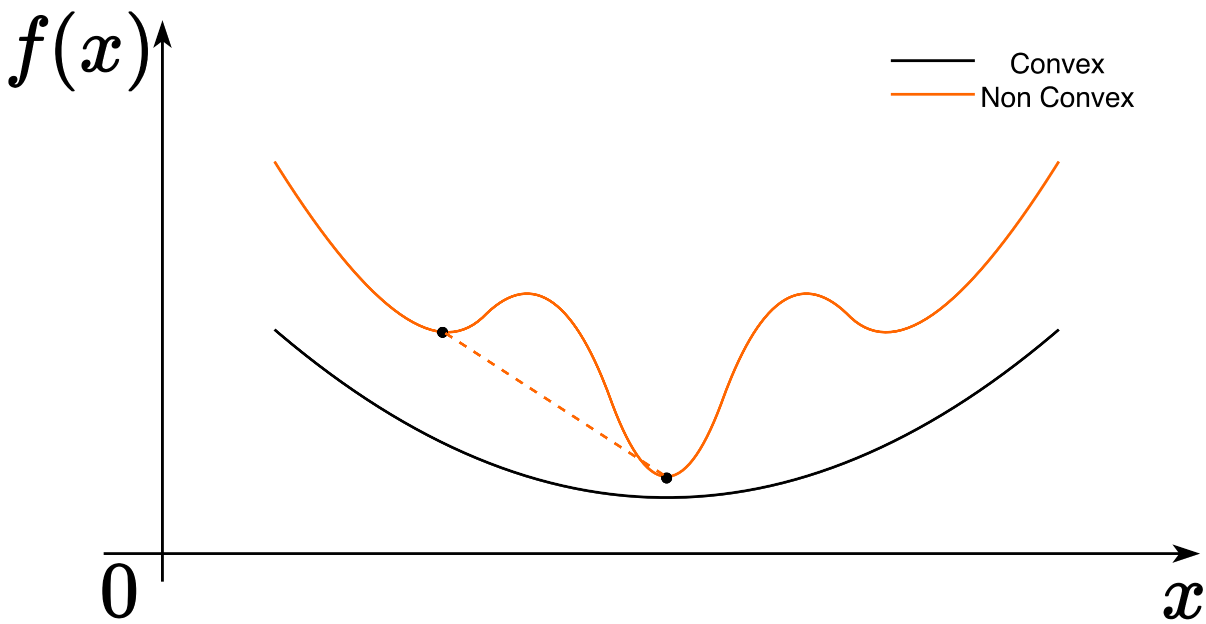
Convex function

The function $f(x)$, **which is defined on the convex set** $S \subseteq \mathbb{R}^n$, is called **convex** on S, if:

$$f(\lambda x_1 + (1-\lambda)x_2) \leq \lambda f(x_1) + (1-\lambda) f(x_2)$$

for any $x_1, x_2 \in S$ and $0 \leq \lambda \leq 1$.
If above inequality holds as strict inequality $x_1 \neq x_2$ and $0 < \lambda < 1$, then function is called strictly convex on S.



🧑‍🏫 **EXAMPLE**

- $f(x) = x^p, \quad p > 1, \quad x \in \mathbb{R}_+$
- $f(x) = \|x\|^p, \quad p > 1, x \in \mathbb{R}^n$
- $f(x) = e^{cx}, \quad c \in \mathbb{R}, x \in \mathbb{R}$
- $f(x) = -\ln x, \quad x \in \mathbb{R}_{++}$
- $f(x) = x \ln x, \quad x \in \mathbb{R}_{++}$
- The sum of the largest k coordinates $f(x) = x_{(1)} + \ldots + x_{(k)}, \quad x \in \mathbb{R}^n$

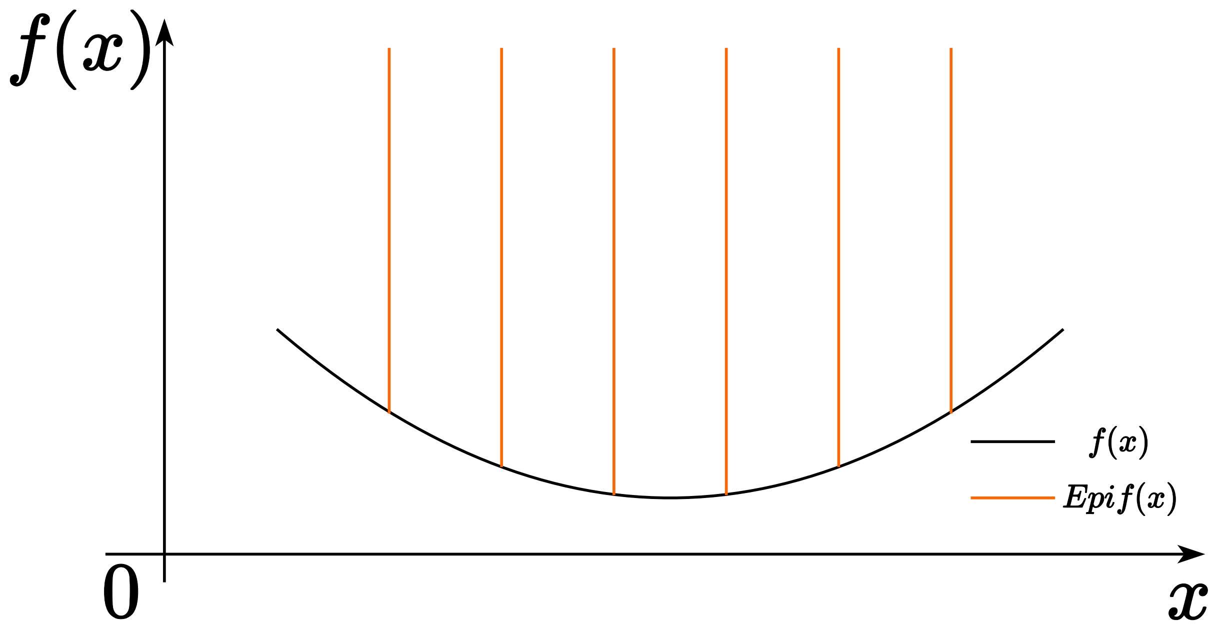
- $f(X) = \lambda_{max}(X), \quad X = X^T$
- $f(X) = -\log \det X, \quad X \in S^n_{++}$

Epigraph

For the function $f(x)$, defined on $S \subseteq \mathbb{R}^n$, the following set:

$$\text{epi } f = \{[x, \mu] \in S \times \mathbb{R} : f(x) \le \mu\}$$

is called **epigraph** of the function $f(x)$.

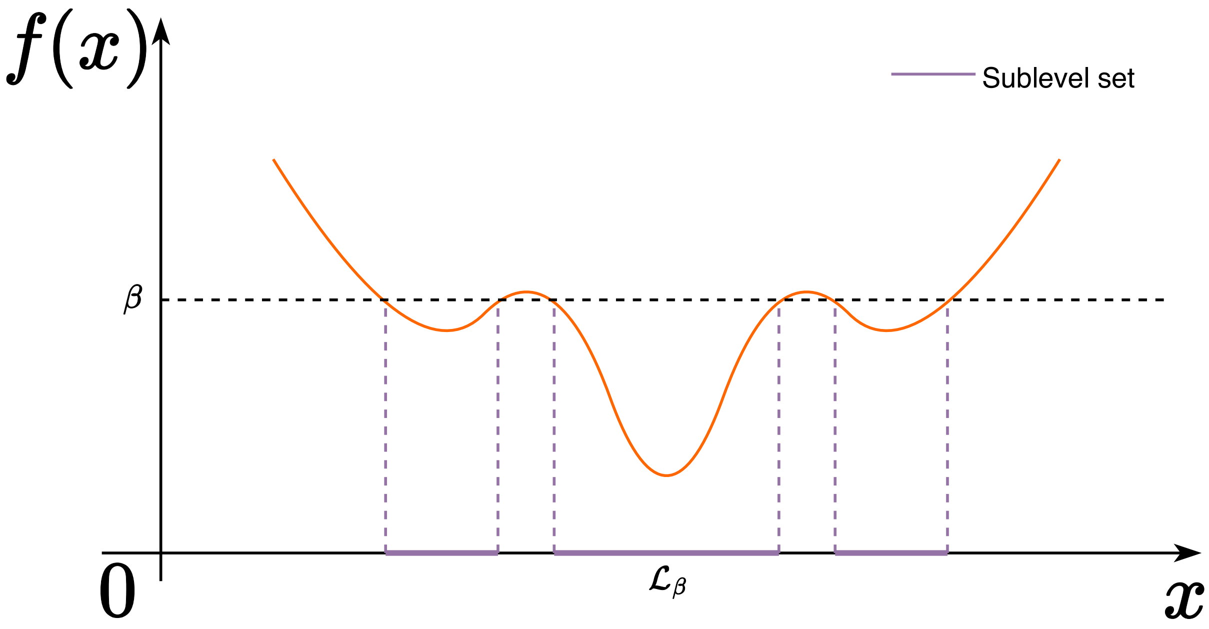


Sublevel set

For the function $f(x)$, defined on $S \subseteq \mathbb{R}^n$, the following set:

$$\mathcal{L}_\beta = \{x \in S : f(x) \le \beta\}$$

is called **sublevel set** or Lebesgue set of the function $f(x)$.



Criteria of convexity

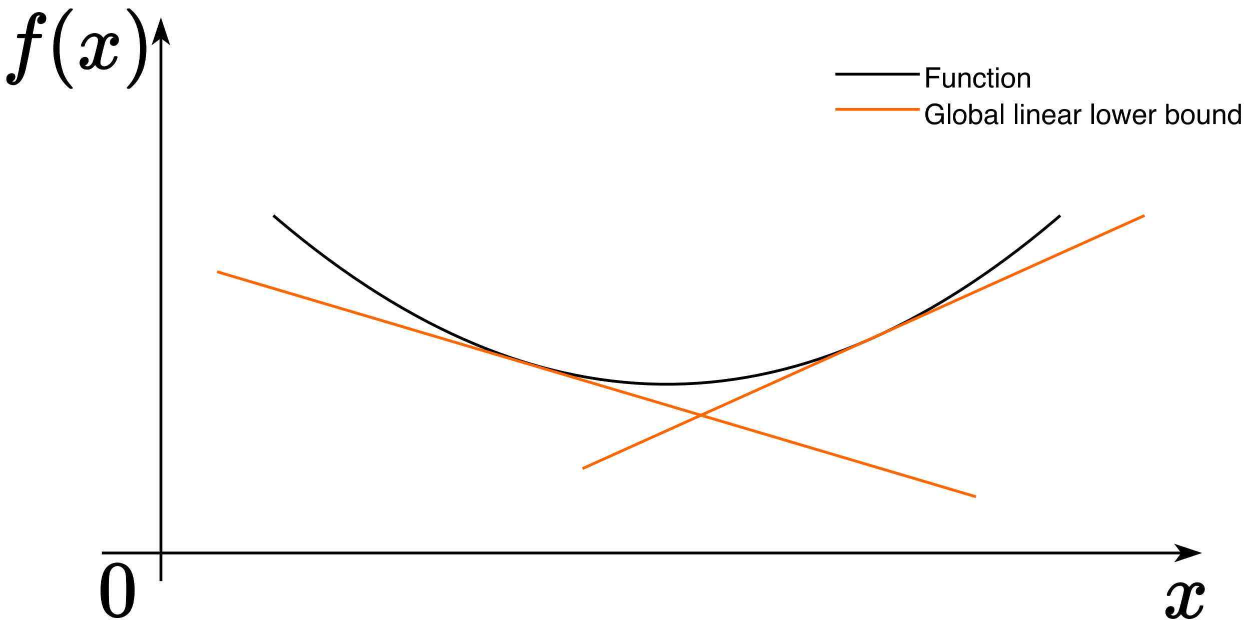
First order differential criterion of convexity

The differentiable function $f(x)$ defined on the convex set $S \subseteq \mathbb{R}^n$ is convex if and only if $\forall x, y \in S$:

$$f(y) \geq f(x) + \nabla f^T(x)(y - x)$$

Let $y = x + \Delta x$, then the criterion will become more tractable:

$$f(x + \Delta x) \geq f(x) + \nabla f^T(x)\Delta x$$



Second order differential criterion of convexity

Twice differentiable function $f(x)$ defined on the convex set $S \subseteq \mathbb{R}^n$ is convex if and only if $\forall x \in \mathbf{int}(S) \neq \emptyset$:

$$\nabla^2 f(x) \succeq 0$$

In other words, $\forall y \in \mathbb{R}^n$:

$$\langle y, \nabla^2 f(x) y \rangle \geq 0$$

Connection with epigraph

The function is convex if and only if its epigraph is a convex set.

🧑‍🏫 **EXAMPLE**

Let a norm $\| \cdot \|$ be defined in the space U. Consider the set:

$$K := \{(x,t) \in U \times \mathbb{R}^+ : \|x\| \leq t\}$$

which represents the epigraph of the function $x \mapsto \|x\|$. This set is called the cone norm. According to statement above, the set K is convex.

In the case where $U = \mathbb{R}^n$ and $\|x\| = \|x\|_2$ (Euclidean norm), the abstract set K transitions into the set:

$$\{(x, t) \in \mathbb{R}^n \times \mathbb{R}^+ : \|x\|_2 \leq t\}$$

Connection with sublevel set

If $f(x)$ - is a convex function defined on the convex set $S \subseteq \mathbb{R}^n$, then for any β sublevel set $\mathcal{L}_\beta$ is convex.

The function $f(x)$ defined on the convex set $S \subseteq \mathbb{R}^n$ is closed if and only if for any β sublevel set $\mathcal{L}_\beta$ is closed.

Reduction to a line

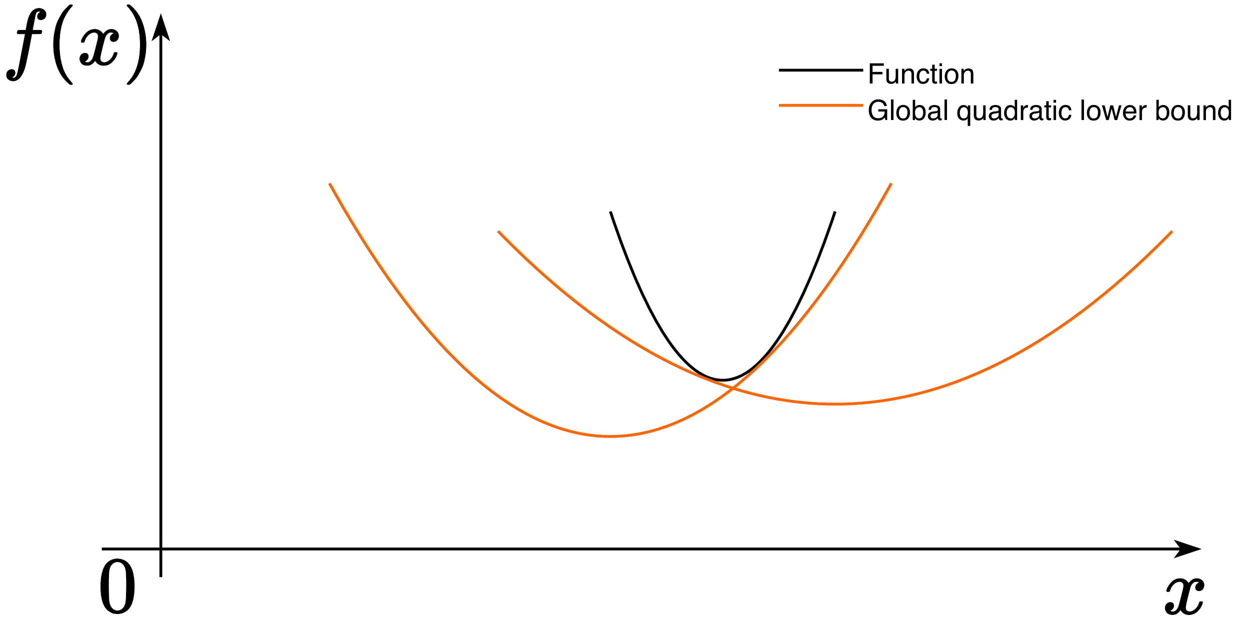
$f : S \to \mathbb{R}$ is convex if and only if S is a convex set and the function $g(t) = f(x + tv)$ defined on $\{t \mid x + tv \in S\}$ is convex for any $x \in S, v \in \mathbb{R}^n$, which allows to check convexity of the scalar function in order to establish convexity of the vector function.

Strong convexity

$f(x)$, **defined on the convex set** $S \subseteq \mathbb{R}^n$, is called μ-strongly convex (strongly convex) on S, if:

$$f(\lambda x_1 + (1 - \lambda)x_2) \leq \lambda f(x_1) + (1 - \lambda)f(x_2) - \mu\lambda(1 - \lambda)\|x_1 - x_2\|^2$$

for any $x_1, x_2 \in S$ and $0 \leq \lambda \leq 1$ for some $\mu > 0$.



Criteria of strong convexity

First order differential criterion of strong convexity

Differentiable $f(x)$ defined on the convex set $S \subseteq \mathbb{R}^n$ is μ-strongly convex if and only if $\forall x, y \in S$:

$$f(y) \geq f(x) + \nabla f^T(x)(y-x) + \frac{\mu}{2}\|y-x\|^2$$

Let $y = x + \Delta x$, then the criterion will become more tractable:

$$f(x+\Delta x) \geq f(x) + \nabla f^T(x)\Delta x + \frac{\mu}{2}\|\Delta x\|^2$$

Second order differential criterion of strong convexity

Twice differentiable function $f(x)$ defined on the convex set $S \subseteq \mathbb{R}^n$ is called μ-strongly convex if and only if $\forall x \in \mathbf{int}(S) \neq \emptyset$:

$$\nabla^2 f(x) \succeq \mu I$$

In other words:

$$\langle y, \nabla^2 f(x) y\rangle \geq \mu \|y\|^2$$

Facts

- $f(x)$ is called (strictly) concave, if the function $-f(x)$ - is (strictly) convex.
- Jensen's inequality for the convex functions:

$$f\left(\sum_{i=1}^n \alpha_i x_i\right) \leq \sum_{i=1}^n \alpha_i f(x_i)$$

  for $\alpha_i \geq 0; \quad \sum\limits_{i=1}^n \alpha_i = 1$ (probability simplex)
  For the infinite dimension case:

$$f\left(\int\limits_S xp(x)dx\right) \leq \int\limits_S f(x)p(x)dx$$

  If the integrals exist and $p(x) \geq 0, \quad \int\limits_S p(x)dx = 1$

- If the function $f(x)$ and the set S are convex, then any local minimum $x^* = \arg\min\limits_{x \in S} f(x)$ will be the global one. Strong convexity guarantees the uniqueness of the solution.
- Let $f(x)$ - be a convex function on a convex set $S \subseteq \mathbb{R}^n$. Then $f(x)$ is continuous $\forall x \in \mathbf{ri}(S)$.

Operations that preserve convexity

- Non-negative sum of the convex functions: $\alpha f(x) + \beta g(x), (\alpha \geq 0, \beta \geq 0)$.
- Composition with affine function $f(Ax + b)$ is convex, if $f(x)$ is convex.
- Pointwise maximum (supremum): If $f_1(x), \ldots, f_m(x)$ are convex, then $f(x) = \max\{f_1(x), \ldots, f_m(x)\}$ is convex.
- If $f(x, y)$ is convex on x for any $y \in Y$: $g(x) = \sup\limits_{y \in Y} f(x, y)$ is convex.
- If $f(x)$ is convex on S, then $g(x, t) = tf(x/t)$ - is convex with $x/t \in S, t > 0$.
- Let $f_1 : S_1 \to \mathbb{R}$ and $f_2 : S_2 \to \mathbb{R}$, where $\mathrm{range}(f_1) \subseteq S_2$. If f_1 and f_2 are convex, and f_2 is increasing, then $f_2 \circ f_1$ is convex on S_1.

Other forms of convexity

- Log-convex: $\log f$ is convex; Log convexity implies convexity.
- Log-concavity: $\log f$ concave; **not** closed under addition!
- Exponentially convex: $[f(x_i + x_j)] \succeq 0$, for $x_1, \ldots, x_n$
- Operator convex: $f(\lambda X + (1-\lambda)Y) \preceq \lambda f(X) + (1-\lambda) f(Y)$
- Quasiconvex: $f(\lambda x + (1-\lambda)y) \leq \max\{f(x), f(y)\}$
- Pseudoconvex: $\langle \nabla f(y), x - y \rangle \geq 0 \longrightarrow f(x) \geq f(y)$
- Discrete convexity: $f : \mathbb{Z}^n \to \mathbb{Z}$; "convexity + matroid theory."

🧑‍🏫 **EXAMPLE**

Show, that $f(x) = c^\top x + b$ is convex and concave.

▼ Solution

🧑‍🏫 **EXAMPLE**

Show, that $f(x) = x^\top Ax$, where $A \succeq 0$ - is convex on $\mathbb{R}^n$.

▼ Solution

🧑‍🏫 **EXAMPLE**

Show, that $f(A) = \lambda_{max}(A)$ - is convex, if $A \in S^n$.

▼ Solution

🧑‍🏫 **EXAMPLE**

PL inequality holds if the following condition is satisfied for some $\mu > 0$,

$$\|\nabla f(x)\|^2 \geq \mu(f(x) - f^*)\forall x$$

The example of function, that satisfy PL-condition, but is not convex. $f(x, y) = \dfrac{(y - \sin x)^2}{2}$

References

- Steven Boyd lectures
- Suvrit Sra lectures
- Martin Jaggi lectures
- Example pf Pl non-convex function Open in Colab