Smoothing

This dark art is why NLP is taught in the engineering school.

> There are more principled smoothing methods, too. We'll look next at log-linear models, which are a good and popular general technique.

But the traditional methods are easy to implement, run fast, and will give you intuitions about what you want from a smoothing method.

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Never trust a sample under 30



Never trust a sample under 30



Smoothing reduces variance



Smoothing reduces variance





estimates are correct on average: such an estimation method is called unbiased

estimates are typically far from truth (high variance = mean squared error)

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estimates are incorrect on average: such an estimation method is called biased

but estimates are typically close to average (high variance = mean squared distance) and so may tend to be closer to truth, too

Parameter Estimation

 $p(X_1=h, X_2=o, X_3=r, X_4=s, X_5=e, X_6=s, ...)$

trigram model's

those

parameters

 \approx p(h | BOS, BOS) * p(o | BOS, h) * p(r | h, o)* p(s | o, r) * p(e | r, s) * p(s | s, e) * . . .

4470/52108 395/ 4470 1417/14765 values of 1573/26412 parameters, as naively 1610/12253 estimated from Brown 2044/21250 corpus.

Terminology: Types vs. Tokens

- Word type = distinct vocabulary item
 - A dictionary is a list of types (once each)
- Word token = occurrence of that type
 - A corpus is a list of tokens (each type has many tokens)

26 types	300 tokens	
а	100	100 tokens of this type
b	0	0 tokens of this type
С	0	
d	200	200 tokens of this type
е	0	
Ζ	0	
Total	300	

 We'll estimate probabilities of the dictionary <u>types</u> by counting the corpus <u>tokens</u> (in context)

How to Estimate?

• p(z | xy) = ?

Suppose our training data includes

- ... xya xyd ... but never xyz Should we conclude p(a | xy) = 1/3? p(d | xy) = 2/3? p(z | xy) = 0/3?
- NO! Absence of xyz might just be bad luck.

Smoothing the Estimates

- Should we conclude
 p(a | xy) = 1/3? reduce this
 p(d | xy) = 2/3? reduce this
 p(z | xy) = 0/3? increase this
- Discount the positive counts somewhat
- Reallocate that probability to the zeroes
- Especially if the denominator is small ...
 - 1/3 probably too high, 100/300 probably about right
- Especially if numerator is small ...
 - 1/300 probably too high, 100/300 probably about right

Add-One Smoothing

хуа	1	1/3	2	2/29
xyb	0	0/3	1	1/29
хус	0	0/3	1	1/29
xyd	2	2/3	3	3/29
xye	0	0/3	1	1/29
•••				
xyz	0	0/3	1	1/29
Total xy	3	3/3	29	29/29

Add-One Smoothing

300 observations instead of 3 – better data, less smoothing

хуа	100	100/300	101	101/326
xyb	0	0/300	1	1/326
хус	0	0/300	1	1/326
xyd	200	200/300	201	201/326
xye	0	0/300	1	1/326
•••				
xyz	0	0/300	1	1/326
Total xy	300	300/300	326	326/326

Problem with Add-One Smoothing

We've been considering just 26 letter types ...

хуа	1	1/3	2	2/29
xyb	0	0/3	1	1/29
хус	0	0/3	1	1/29
xyd	2	2/3	3	3/29
xye	0	0/3	1	1/29
•••				
xyz	0	0/3	1	1/29
Total xy	3	3/3	29	29/29

Problem with Add-One Smoothing

Suppose we're considering 20000 word types, not 26 letters

see the abacus	1	1/3	2	2/20003
see the abbot	0	0/3	1	1/20003
see the abduct	0	0/3	1	1/20003
see the above	2	2/3	3	3/20003
see the Abram	0	0/3	1	1/20003
see the zygote	0	0/3	1	1/20003
Total	3	3/3	20003	20003/20003

Problem with Add-One Smoothing

Suppose we're considering 20000 word types, not 26 letters

see the abacus	1	1/3	2	2/20003
see the abbot	0	0/3	1	1/20003
see the abduct	0	0/3	1	1/20003

"Novel event" = 0-count event (never happened in training data).

Here: 19998 novel events, with total estimated probability 19998/20003.

So add-one smoothing thinks we are extremely likely to see novel events, rather than words we've seen in training data.

It thinks this only because we have a big dictionary: 20000 possible events. Is this a good reason?

otal	3	3/3	20003	20003/20003
------	---	-----	-------	-------------

Infinite Dictionary?

In fact, aren't there infinitely many possible word types?

see the aaaaa	1	1/3	2	2/(+3)
see the aaaab	0	0/3	1	1/(+3)
see the aaaac	0	0/3	1	1/(+3)
see the aaaad	2	2/3	3	3/(+3)
see the aaaae	0	0/3	1	1/(+3)
see the zzzz	0	0/3	1	1/(+3)
Total	3	3/3	(+3)	(+3)/(+3)

Add-Lambda Smoothing

- A large dictionary makes novel events too probable.
- To fix: Instead of adding 1 to all counts, add $\lambda = 0.01$?
 - This gives much less probability to novel events.
- But how to pick best value for λ ?
 - That is, how much should we smooth?

Add-0.001 Smoothing

Doesn't smooth much (estimated distribution has high variance)

хуа	1	1/3	1.001	0.331
xyb	0	0/3	0.001	0.0003
хус	0	0/3	0.001	0.0003
xyd	2	2/3	2.001	0.661
xye	0	0/3	0.001	0.0003
xyz	0	0/3	0.001	0.0003
Total xy	3	3/3	3.026	1

Add-1000 Smoothing

Smooths too much (estimated distribution has high bias)

хуа	1	1/3	1001	1/26
xyb	0	0/3	1000	1/26
хус	0	0/3	1000	1/26
xyd	2	2/3	1002	1/26
xye	0	0/3	1000	1/26
xyz	0	0/3	1000	1/26
Total xy	3	3/3	26003	1

Add-Lambda Smoothing

- A large dictionary makes novel events too probable.
- To fix: Instead of adding 1 to all counts, add $\lambda = 0.01$?
 - This gives much less probability to novel events.
- But how to pick best value for λ ?
 - That is, how much should we smooth?
 - E.g., how much probability to "set aside" for novel events?
 - Depends on how likely novel events really are!
 - Which may depend on the type of text, size of training corpus, ...
 - Can we figure it out from the data?
 - We'll look at a few methods for deciding how much to smooth.

Setting Smoothing Parameters

- How to pick best value for λ ? (in add- λ smoothing)
- Try many λ values & report the one that gets best results?

Training

Test

- How to measure whether a particular λ gets good results?
- Is it fair to measure that on test data (for setting λ)?
 - Story: Stock scam ...
 Also, tenure letters ...
 - Moral: <u>Selective reporting</u> on test data can make a method look artificially good. So it is unethical.
 - Rule: Test data cannot influence system development. No peeking! Use it only to evaluate the final system(s). Report <u>all</u> results on it.

<u>General Rule of Experimental Ethics:</u> Never skew anything in your favor. Applies to experimental design, reporting, analysis, discussion. <u>Feynman's Advice:</u> "The first principle is that you must not 600.465 fool yourself, and you are the easiest person to fool."

Setting Smoothing Parameters

- How to pick best value for λ ?
- Try many λ values & report the one that gets best results?



Here we held out 20% of our training set (yellow) for development. Would like to use > 20% yellow: 20% not enough to reliably assess λ Would like to use > 80% blue: 20% Best λ for smoothing 80% 0 best λ for smoothing 100%

Could we let the yellow and blue sets overlap? 😕 Ethical, but foolish



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5-fold Cross-Validation ("Jackknifing")

Would like to use > 20% yellow: Would like to use > 80% blue: $0 \text{ best } \lambda \text{ for smoothing 80\%}$





- If 20% yellow too little: try 5 training/dev splits as below
 - Pick λ that gets best average performance



- \bigcirc Tests on all 100% as yellow, so we can more reliably assess λ
- \otimes Still picks a λ that's good at smoothing the 80% size, not 100%.
 - But now we can grow that 80% without trouble ...

Cross-Validation Pseudocode

for λ in {0.01, 0.02, 0.03, ... 9.99}

- for each of the 5 blue/yellow splits
 - train on the 80% blue data, using λ to smooth the counts
 - test on the 20% yellow data, and measure performance
- goodness of this λ = average performance over the 5 splits



- using best λ we found above:
 - train on 100% of the training data, using λ to smooth the counts
 - test on the red test data, measure performance & report it





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N-fold Cross-Validation ("Leave One Out")



- To evaluate a particular λ during dev, test on all the training data: test <u>each</u> sentence with smoothed model from <u>other</u> N-1 sentences
- Still tests on all 100% as yellow, so we can reliably assess λ
- \bigcirc Trains on nearly 100% blue data ((N-1)/N) to measure whether λ is good for smoothing that much data: nearly matches true test conditions
- Surprisingly fast: why?
 - Usually easy to retrain on blue by adding/subtracting 1 sentence's counts

Smoothing reduces variance



Use the backoff, Luke!

- Why are we treating all novel events as the same?
- p(zygote | see the) vs. p(baby | see the)
 - Unsmoothed probs: count(see the zygote) / count(see the)
 - Smoothed probs: (count(see the zygote) + 1) / (count(see the) + V)
 - What if count(see the zygote) = count(see the baby) = 0?
- baby beats zygote as a unigram
- the baby beats the zygote as a bigram
- see the baby beats see the zygote ?
 (even if both have the same count, such as 0)
- Backoff introduces bias, as usual:
 - Lower-order probabilities (unigram, bigram) aren't quite what we want

But we do have enuf data to estimate them & they're better than nothing.
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Early idea: Model averaging

- Jelinek-Mercer smoothing ("deleted interpolation"):
 - Use a weighted average of backed-off naïve models:
 p_{average}(z | xy) = µ₃ p(z | xy) + µ₂ p(z | y) + µ₁ p(z) where ~₃ + ~₂ + ~₁ = 1 and all are 1 0
- The weights μ can depend on the context xy
 - If we have "enough data" in context xy, can make μ_3 large. E.g.:
 - If count(xy) is high
 - If the entropy of z is low in the context xy
 - Learn the weights on held-out data w/ jackknifing
 - Different μ_3 when xy is observed 1 time, 2 times, 3-5 times, ...
- We'll see some better approaches shortly

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More Ideas for Smoothing

- Cross-validation is a general-purpose wrench for tweaking any constants in any system.
 - Here, the system will train the counts from blue data, but we use yellow data to tweak how much the system smooths them (λ) and how much it backs off for different kinds of contexts (μ₃ etc.)
- Is there anything more specific to try in this case?
- Remember, we're trying to decide how much to <u>smooth</u>.
 - E.g., how much probability to "set aside" for novel events?
 - Depends on how likely novel events really are ...
 - Which may depend on the type of text, size of training corpus, ...
 - Can we figure this out from the <u>data</u>?

How likely are novel events?



How likely are novel events?



How likely are novel events?



How common are novel events?

Counts from Brown Corpus (N \approx 1 million tokens)



How common are novel events?



Witten-Bell Smoothing Idea



Good-Turing Smoothing Idea



Justification of Good-Turing



- Justified by leave-one-out training! (Leave out 1 word at a time.)
 Instead of just tuning 2, we will tune
 Better variant: leave out 1 document at a time?
- Instead of just tuning λ, we will tune
 - p(novel)=0.02 [= frac. of yellow dev. words that were novel in blue training]
 - p(singleton)=0.015 [= frac. of yellow dev. words that were singletons in blue training]
 - p(doubleton)=0.012 [= frac. of yellow dev. words that were doubletons in blue training]

i.e.,

- p(novel) = fraction of singletons in <u>full</u> training
- p(singleton) = fraction of doubletons in <u>full</u>training, etc.
- Example: c(aback)=2. On the 2 folds where yellow=aback, aback was a singleton in blue data, so we'd be rewarded for assigning a high prob to training singletons. Overall, we'll get such a reward on 1.5% of the folds.

Witten-Bell vs. Good-Turing

- Estimate p(z | xy) using just the tokens we've seen in context xy. Might be a small set ...
- Witten-Bell intuition: If those tokens were distributed over many different types, then novel types are likely in future.
 - Formerly covered on homework 3
- Good-Turing intuition: If many of those tokens came from singleton types, then novel types are likely in future.
 - Very nice idea (but a bit tricky in practice)

See the paper "Good-Turing smoothing without tears"
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Good-Turing (old slides)

- Intuition: Can judge rate of novel events (in a context) by rate of singletons (in that context)
- Let N_r = # of word types with r training tokens
 - e.g., N_0 = number of unobserved words
 - e.g., N_1 = number of singletons

• Let $N = \Sigma r N_r = \text{total } \# \text{ of training tokens}$

Good-Turing (old slides)

- Let $N_r = \#$ of word types with r training tokens
- Let $N = \Sigma r N_r = \text{total } \# \text{ of training tokens}$
- Naïve estimate: if x has r tokens, p(x) = ?
 - Answer: r/N
- Total naïve probability of all word types with r tokens?
 - Answer: N_r r / N.
- Good-Turing estimate of this total probability:
 - Defined as: N_{r+1} (r+1) / N
 - So proportion of novel words in test data is estimated by proportion of singletons in training data.
 - Proportion in test data of the N₁ singletons is estimated by proportion of the N₂ doubletons in training data. Etc.
- So what is Good-Turing estimate of p(x)?

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Smoothing + backoff

- Basic smoothing (e.g., add-λ, Good-Turing, Witten-Bell):
 - Holds out some probability mass for novel events
 - E.g., Good-Turing gives them total mass of N_1/N
 - Divided up evenly among the novel events
- Backoff smoothing
 - Holds out same amount of probability mass for novel events
 - But divide up unevenly in proportion to backoff prob.
 - When defining p(z | xy), the backoff prob for novel z is p(z | y)
 - Novel events are types z that were never observed after xy.
 - When defining p(z | y), the backoff prob for novel z is p(z)
 - Here novel events are types z that were never observed after y.
 - Even if z was never observed after xy, it may have been observed after the shorter, more frequent context y. Then p(z | y) can be estimated without further backoff. If not, we back off further to p(z).
 - When defining p(z), do we need a backoff prob for novel z?
 - What are novel z in this case? What could the backoff prob be? What if the vocabulary is known and finite? What if it's potentially infinite?

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Smoothing + backoff

Note: The best known backoff smoothing methods:

- modified Kneser-Ney (smart engineering)
- Witten-Bell + one small improvement (Carpenter 2005)
- hierarchical Pitman-Yor (clean Bayesian statistics)
- All are about equally good.
- Note:
 - A given context like xy may be quite rare perhaps we've only observed it a few times.
 - Then it may be hard for Good-Turing, Witten-Bell, etc. to accurately guess that context's novel-event rate as required
 - We could try to make a better guess by aggregating xy with other contexts (all contexts? similar contexts?).
 - This is another form of backoff. By contrast, basic Good-Turing, Witten-Bell, etc. were limited to a single implicit context.
 - Log-linear models accomplish this very naturally.

Smoothing

This dark art is why NLP is taught in the engineering school.

> There are more principled smoothing methods, too. We'll look next at log-linear models, which are a good and popular general technique.

Smoothing as Optimization



Conditional Modeling

- Given a context x
- Which outcomes y are likely in that context?
- We need a <u>conditional</u> distribution p(y | x)
 - A black-box function that we call on x, y
 - p(NextWord=y | PrecedingWords=x)
 - y is a unigram
 - x is an (n-1)-gram
 - p(Category=y | Text=x)
 - $y \in \{\text{personal email, work email, spam email}\}$
 - $x \in \Sigma^*$ (it's a string: the text of the email)

• Remember: p can be any function over (x,y)!• Provided that $p(y | x) \ge 0$, and $\sum_{y} p(y | x) = 1$

Linear Scoring

or k="see Det Noun" (named features)

- We need a <u>conditional</u> distribution p(y | x)
- Convert our linear scoring function to this distribution p
 - Require that $p(y | x) \ge 0$, and $\sum_{y} p(y | x) = 1$; not true of score(x,y)

How well does y go with x? Simplest option: a linear function of (x,y). But (x,y) isn't a number. So <u>describe</u> it by one or more numbers: "numeric features" that <u>you</u> pick. Then just use a linear function of <u>those</u> numbers.

> Weight of feature k To be learned ...

$$score(x, y) = \sum_{k \in \mathbb{N}} \theta_k f_k(x, y)$$
Ranges over all features, k
e.g., k=5 (numbered features) k
whether (x,y) has feature k(0 or 1)
Or how many times it fires (> 0)
Or how strongly it fires (real #)

What features should we use?

Weight of feature k

To be learned ... $score(x, y) = \sum_{k \in \mathbb{R}} \theta_k f_k(x, y)$ Ranges over all features, k
e.g., k=5 (numbered features)
or k="see Det Noun" (named features) $G_k f_k(x, y)$ Whether (x,y) has feature k (0 or 1)
Or how many times it fires (≥ 0)
Or how strongly it fires (real #)

p(NextWord=y | PrecedingWords=x)

- y is a unigram
- x is an (n-1)-gram
- p(Category=y | Text=x)
 - $y \in \{\text{personal email, work email, spam email}\}$
 - $x \in \Sigma^*$ (it's a string: the text of the email)

Log-Linear Conditional Probability (interpret score as a log-prob, up to a constant)

$$p_{\vec{\theta}}(y \mid x) = \frac{1}{Z(x)} \exp(\operatorname{score}(x, y))$$

$$= \frac{1}{Z(x)} \exp\sum_{k} \vec{\theta} \cdot \vec{f}(x, y)$$
where we choose Z(x) to ensure that
$$\sum_{y} p_{\vec{\theta}}(y \mid x) = 1$$
thus,
$$Z(x) = \sum_{y'} \exp\operatorname{score}(x, y')$$

$$\sup_{y'} \sup_{x'} \operatorname{score}(x, y')$$

$$\sup_{y'} \sup_{x'} \operatorname{score}(x, y')$$

$$\sup_{y'} \sup_{x'} \operatorname{score}(x, y')$$

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Sometimes just written as Z

Training "

This version is "discriminative training": to learn to predict y from x, maximize p(y|x). Whereas "joint training" learns to model x, too, by maximizing p(x,y).

n training examples

$$(\mathbf{x}_1, y_1), (x_2, y_2), \dots (x_n, y_n)$$

- feature functions f₁, f₂, ...
- Want to maximize $p(training data|\theta)$

$$\left(\prod_{i=1}^n p_{\vec{\theta}}(y_i \mid x_i)\right)$$

• Easier to maximize the log of that:

$$\left(\sum_{i=1}^n \log p_{\vec{\theta}}(y_i \mid x_i)\right)$$

Alas, some weights θ_i may be optimal at $-\infty$ or $+\infty$. When would this happen? What's going "wrong"?

Training "

This version is "discriminative training": to learn to predict y from x, maximize p(y|x). Whereas "joint training" learns to model x, too, by maximizing p(x,y).

- n training examples $(x_1, y_1), (x_2, y_2), \dots (x_n, y_n)$ feature functions f₁, f₂, ...
- Want to maximize $p(training data|\theta) \cdot p_{prior}(\theta)$

$$\left(\prod_{i=1}^{n} p_{\vec{\theta}}(y_i \mid x_i)\right) \cdot p_{\text{prior}}(\theta)$$

• Easier to maximize the log of that: $\left(\sum_{i=1}^{n} \log p_{\vec{\theta}}(y_i \mid x_i)\right) \left(- ||\vec{\theta}||^2\right)$

Encourages weights close to 0: "L2 regularization" (other choices possible)

Corresponds to a Gaussian prior, since Gaussian bell curve is just exp(quadratic).

Gradient-based training

 $\left(\sum_{i=1}^{n} \log p_{\vec{\theta}}(y_i \mid x_i)\right) - ||\vec{\theta}||^2$

- Gradually adjust θ in a direction that increases this



Gradient-based training

$$\left(\sum_{i=1}^{n} \log p_{\vec{\theta}}(y_i \mid x_i)\right) - ||\vec{\theta}||^2$$

- Gradually adjust θ in a direction that improves this

Gradient ascent to gradually increase $f(\theta)$:

while $(\nabla f(\theta) \neq 0)$ // not at a local max or min $\theta = \theta + \in \nabla f(\theta)$ // for some small $\in > 0$

Remember: $\nabla f(\theta) = (\partial f(\theta) / \partial \theta_1, \partial f(\theta) / \partial \theta_2, ...)$ **So update just means:** $\theta_k + = \partial f(\theta) / \partial \theta_k$ This takes a little step "uphill" (direction of steepest increase). This is why you took calculus. \bigcirc

Gradient-based training

$$\left(\sum_{i=1}^{n} \log p_{\vec{\theta}}(y_i \mid x_i)\right) - ||\vec{\theta}||^2$$

- Gradually adjust θ in a direction that improves this

The key part of the gradient works out as ...

$$\begin{aligned} \nabla_{\vec{\theta}} \log p_{\vec{\theta}}(y \mid x) &= \nabla_{\vec{\theta}} \operatorname{score}(x, y) - \nabla_{\vec{\theta}} \log Z \\ &= \vec{f}(x, y) - \sum_{y'} p_{\vec{\theta}}(y' \mid x) \vec{f}(x, y') \\ &= \vec{f}(x, y) - \mathbb{E}_{p_{\vec{\theta}}}[\vec{f}(x, y)] \end{aligned}$$

- Suppose there are 10 classes, A through J.
- I don't give you any other information.
- Question: Given message m: what is your guess for p(C | m)?
- Suppose I tell you that 55% of all messages are in class A.
- Question: Now what is your guess for p(C | m)?
- Suppose I <u>also</u> tell you that 10% of all messages contain Buy and 80% of these are in class A or C.
- Question: Now what is your guess for p(C | m), if m contains Buy?
- OUCH!

	A	В	С	D	E	F	G	Н		J
Buy	.051	.0025	.029	.0025	.0025	.0025	.0025	.0025	.0025	.0025
Other	.499	.0446	.0446	.0446	.0446	.0446	.0446	.0446	.0446	.0446

Column A sums to 0.55 ("55% of all messages are in class A")

	A	В	С	D	E	F	G	Η		J
Buy	.051	.0025	.029	.0025	.0025	.0025	.0025	.0025	.0025	.0025
Other	.499	.0446	.0446	.0446	.0446	.0446	.0446	.0446	.0446	.0446

- Column A sums to 0.55
- Row Buy sums to 0.1 ("10% of all messages contain Buy")

	A	В	С	D	E	F	G	Η		J
Buy	.051	.0025	.029	.0025	.0025	.0025	.0025	.0025	.0025	.0025
Other	.499	.0446	.0446	.0446	.0446	.0446	.0446	.0446	.0446	.0446

- Column A sums to 0.55
- Row Buy sums to 0.1
- (Buy, A) and (Buy, C) cells sum to 0.08 ("80% of the 10%")
- Given these constraints, fill in cells "as equally as possible": maximize the entropy (related to cross-entropy, perplexity)

Entropy = -.051 log .051 - .0025 log .0025 - .029 log .029 - ... Largest if probabilities are evenly distributed

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	A	В	С	D	E	F	G	Η		J
Buy	.051	.0025	.029	.0025	.0025	.0025	.0025	.0025	.0025	.0025
Other	.499	.0446	.0446	.0446	.0446	.0446	.0446	.0446	.0446	.0446

- Column A sums to 0.55
- Row Buy sums to 0.1
- (Buy, A) and (Buy, C) cells sum to 0.08 ("80% of the 10%")
- Given these constraints, fill in cells "as equally as possible": maximize the entropy
- Now p(Buy, C) = .029 and p(C | Buy) = .29
- We got a compromise: p(C | Buy) < p(A | Buy) < .55
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	А	В	С	D	E	F	G	Н		J
Buy	.051	.0025	.029	.0025	.0025	.0025	.0025	.0025	.0025	.0025
Other	.499	.0446	.0446	.0446	.0446	.0446	.0446	.0446	.0446	.0446

- Given these constraints, fill in cells "as equally as possible": maximize the entropy
- Now p(Buy, C) = .029 and p(C | Buy) = .29
- We got a compromise: p(C | Buy) < p(A | Buy) < .55</p>
- Punchline: This is exactly the maximum-likelihood loglinear distribution p(y) that uses 3 binary feature functions that ask: Is y in column A? Is y in row Buy? Is y one of the yellow cells? So, find it by gradient ascent.