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# Algorithms for Verifying Deep Neural Networks

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# Algorithms for Verifying Deep Neural Networks

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## ABSTRACT

Deep neural networks are widely used for nonlinear function approximation, with applications ranging from computer vision to control. Although these networks involve the composition of simple arithmetic operations, it can be very challenging to verify whether a particular network satisfies certain input-output properties. This article surveys methods that have emerged recently for soundly verifying such properties. These methods borrow insights from reachability analysis, optimization, and search. We discuss fundamental differences and connections between existing algorithms. In addition, we provide pedagogical implementations of existing methods and compare them on a set of benchmark problems.

# 1

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## Introduction

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Neural networks [1] have been widely used in many applications, such as image classification and understanding [2], language processing [3], and control of autonomous systems [4]. These networks represent functions that map inputs to outputs through a sequence of layers. At each layer, the input to that layer undergoes an affine transformation followed by a simple nonlinear transformation before being passed to the next layer. These nonlinear transformations are often called *activation functions*, and a common example is the *rectified linear unit* (ReLU), which transforms the input by setting any negative values to zero. Although the computation involved in a neural network is quite simple, these networks can represent complex nonlinear functions by appropriately choosing the matrices that define the affine transformations. The matrices are often learned from data using stochastic gradient descent.

Neural networks are being used for increasingly important tasks, and in some cases, incorrect outputs can lead to costly consequences. Traditionally, validation of neural networks has largely focused on evaluating the network on a large collection of points in the input space and determining whether the outputs are as desired. However, since the input space is effectively infinite in cardinality, it is not feasible to

check all possible inputs. Even networks that perform well on a large sample of inputs may not correctly generalize to new situations and may be vulnerable to adversarial attacks [5].

This article surveys a class of methods that are capable of formally verifying properties of deep neural networks over the full input space. A property can be formulated as a statement that if the input belongs to some set  $\mathcal{X}$ , then the output will belong to some set  $\mathcal{Y}$ . To illustrate, in classification problems, it can be useful to verify that points near a training example belong to the same class as that example. In the control of physical problems, it can be useful to verify that the outputs from a network satisfy hard safety constraints.

The verification algorithms that we survey are *sound*, meaning that they will only report that a property holds if the property actually holds. Some of the algorithms that we discuss are also *complete*, meaning that whenever the property holds, the algorithm will correctly state that it holds. However, some of the algorithms compromise completeness in their use of approximations to improve computational efficiency.

The algorithms may be classified based on whether they draw insights from these three categories of analysis:

1. *Reachability*. These methods use layer-by-layer reachability analysis of the network. Representative methods are ExactReach [6], MaxSens [7], NNV [8], SymBox [9], Ai2 [10], and ERAN [11]–[14]. Some other approaches also use reachability methods (such as interval arithmetic) to compute bounds on the values of the nodes.
2. *Optimization*. These methods use optimization to falsify the assertion. The function represented by the neural network is a constraint to be considered in the optimization. As a result, the optimization problem is not convex. In *primal optimization*, different methods are developed to encode the nonlinear activation functions as linear constraints. Examples include NSVerify [15], MIPVerify [16], and ILP [17]. The constraints can also be simplified through *dual optimization*. Representative methods for dual optimization include Lagrangian dual methods such as Duality [18], ConvDual [19], and LagrangianDecomposition [20], and

semidefinite programming methods such as Certify [21] and SDP [22].

3. *Search*. These methods search for a case to falsify the assertion. Search is usually combined with either reachability or optimization, as the latter two methods provide possible search directions. Representative methods for *search and reachability* include ReluVal [23], Neurify [24], DLV [25], Fast-Lin [26], Fast-Lip [26], CROWN [27], nnum [28], and VeriNet [29]. Representative methods for *search and optimization* include Reluplex [30], Marabou [31], Planet [32], Sherlock [33], Venus [34], PeregrinNN [35], and BaB [36] and its extensions [20], [37], [38]. Some of these methods call Boolean satisfiability (SAT) or satisfiability modulo theories (SMT) solvers [39] to verify networks with only ReLU activations.

**Scope of this article.** This article introduces a unified mathematical framework for verifying neural networks, classifies existing methods under this framework, provides pedagogical implementations of existing methods,<sup>1</sup> and compares those methods on a set of benchmark problems.<sup>2</sup>

The following topics are not included in the discussion:

- neural network testing methods that generate test cases [44]–[47];
- white box approaches that build mappings from network parameters to some functional description [48];
- verification of binarized neural networks [49]–[51];

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<sup>1</sup>Our implementation is provided in the Julia programming language. We have found the language to be ideal for specifying algorithms in human readable form [40]. The full implementation may be found at <https://github.com/sisl/NeuralVerification.jl>.

<sup>2</sup>There have been other reviews of methods for verifying neural networks. Leonfante, Narodytska, Pulina, *et al.* review primal optimization methods that encode ReLU networks as mixed integer programming problems together with search and optimization under the framework of Boolean satisfiability and SMT [41]. Xiang, Musau, Wild, *et al.* review a broader range of verification techniques in addition to safe control and learning [42]. Salman, Yang, Zhang, *et al.* review and compare methods that use convex relaxations to compute robustness bounds of ReLU networks [43].

- closed-loop safety, stability and robustness by executing control policies defined by neural networks [52], [53], or verification of recurrent neural networks [54];
- training or retraining methods to make a network satisfy a property [19], [21], [55];
- robustness of the verification algorithm under floating point arithmetic [12];
- simplification or compression of the network to improve verification efficiency [56], [57].

Chapter 2 discusses the mathematical problem for verification. Chapter 3 gives an overview of the categories of methods that we will consider. Chapter 4 introduces preliminary and background mathematics. Chapter 5 discusses reachability methods. Chapter 6 discusses methods for primal optimization. Chapter 7 discusses methods for dual optimization. Chapter 8 discusses methods for search and reachability. Chapter 9 discusses methods for search and optimization. Chapter 10 compares those methods. Chapter 11 concludes the article.

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