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On Machine Learning



Paper



Project



Homepage

## AdamO: A Collapse-Suppressed Optimizer for Offline RL

Nan Qiao

Sheng Yue

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# Background: Reinforcement Learning

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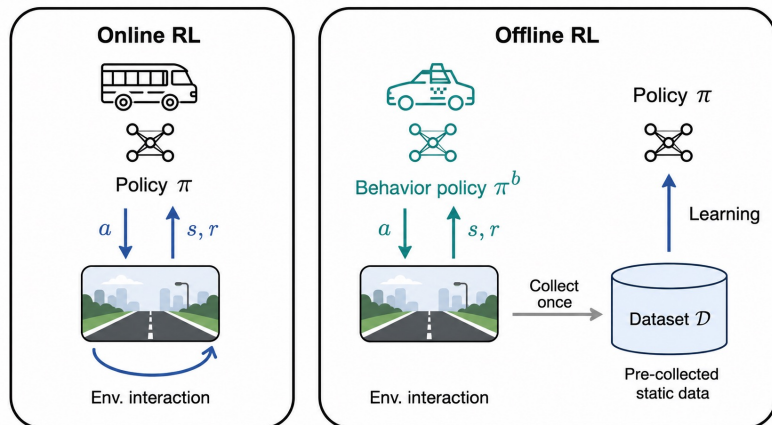
With ever-growing intelligent decision-making applications...



Conducting such online interaction may **not be feasible** in many settings due to the high costs or risks involved

# Background: Offline Reinforcement Learning

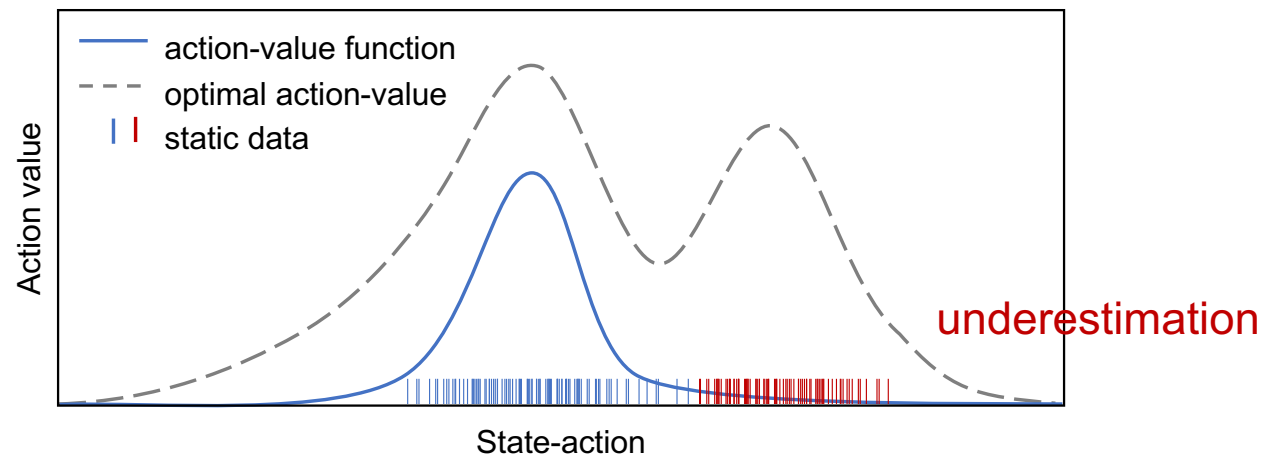
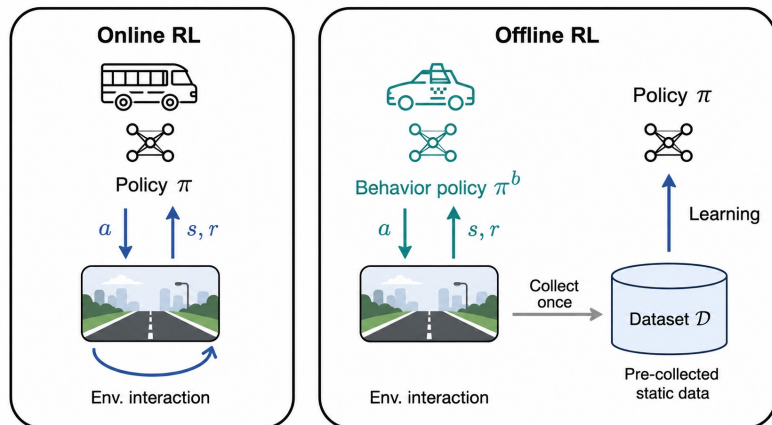
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A major challenge in offline reinforcement learning is out-of-distribution shift, which is typically addressed through **policy constraints** or **value underestimation**.

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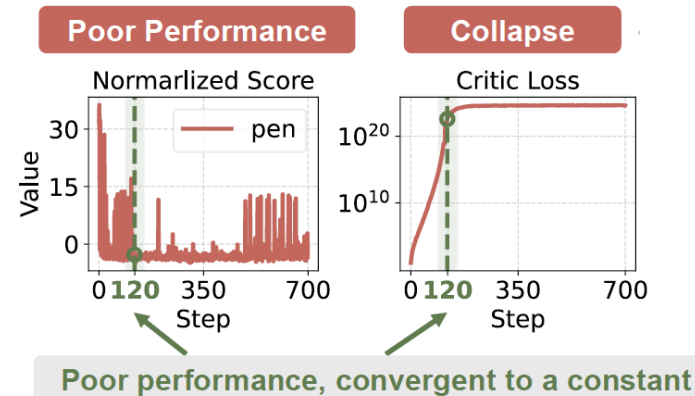
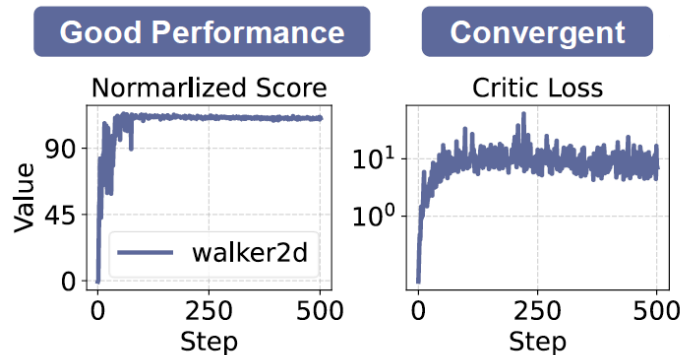
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A major challenge in offline reinforcement learning is out-of-distribution shift, which is typically addressed through **policy constraints** or **value underestimation**.

# Observation on offline RL

Nevertheless, we observe that training collapse frequently occurs in offline RL, primarily manifesting as **unstable or diverging loss**, which ultimately leads to **poor performance**.



# Conditions for Adam-Induced Value Function Collapse

Under a first-order linearization assumption, Adam-driven TD error dynamics reduce to a **second-order linear difference equation**. System convergence is then governed by the Hurwitz condition on matrix  $S$ , or equivalently, by ensuring that every mode's growth factor  $r$  satisfies  $|r| < 1$ , with  $r$  defined as the per-step multiplicative scaling of the error.

**Theorem 1.** Under Assumptions [1]-[3] for  $t \geq t_0$  the TD error satisfies

$$\mathbf{e}_{t+1} = \left( (1 + \beta_1)I + \eta(1 - \beta_1)S \right) \mathbf{e}_t - \beta_1 \mathbf{e}_{t-1} + o(\eta) \quad (20)$$

where  $S$  is defined in Eq. (17). In the local first-order regime of Assumption [1], the linearized dynamics are divergent to zero if  $S$  is Hurwitz. Equivalently, in the Hurwitz case every modal growth factor of Eq. (20) satisfies  $|r| < 1$ .

**TD error** ← (points to  $\mathbf{e}_{t+1}$ )

← (points to  $\eta$ ) **learning rate**

→ (points to  $\beta_1$ ) **A parameter of Adam**

Here, the matrix  $S$  is a function of the parameter gradient, the discount factor, and Adam's diagonal preconditioning matrix.

**Lemma 4.** Under Assumption [3] define for any finite input sets  $X_1$  and  $X_2$  the preconditioned Gram matrix

$$K(X_1, X_2) = Z(X_1)^\top D Z(X_2). \quad (16)$$

Define

$$S = \gamma K(\bar{X}^*, X) - K(X, X). \quad (17)$$

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**Lemma 4.** Under Assumption [3] define for any finite input sets  $X_1$  and  $X_2$  the preconditioned Gram matrix

$$K(X_1, X_2) = Z(X_1)^T D Z(X_2). \quad (16)$$

Define

$$C = K(\bar{X}^*, X) - K(X, X) \quad (17)$$

**TD loss to converge to zero if and only if the matrix  $S$  is Hurwitz.**

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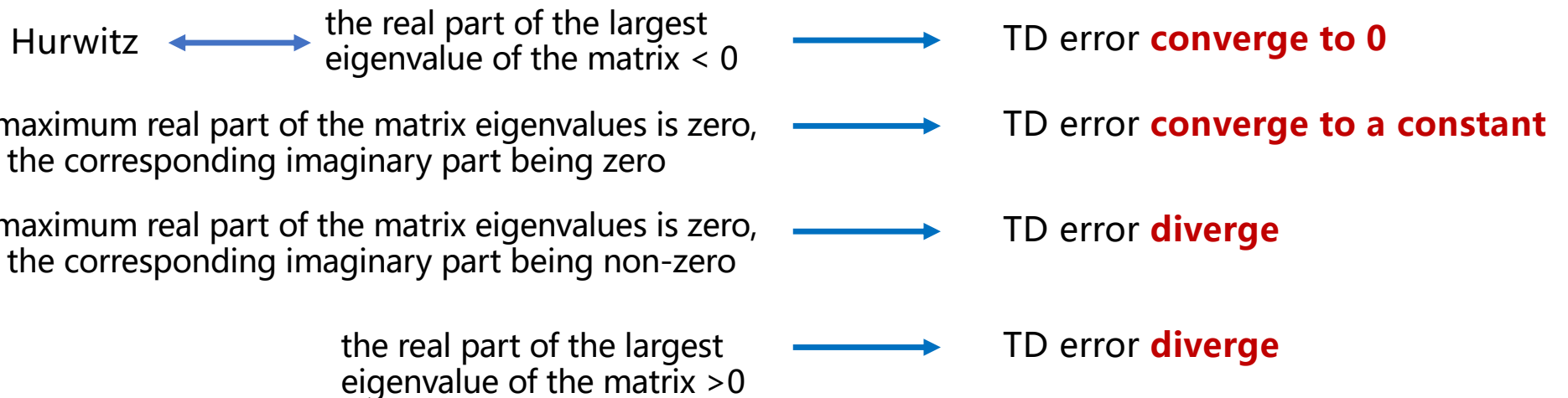
- ✓ A Hurwitz matrix is characterized by eigenvalues with **strictly negative real parts**, corresponding physically to a contractive system with **negative feedback that damps perturbations over time**. In contrast, a non-Hurwitz matrix exhibits **positive-feedback** behavior, **expanding errors exponentially along certain directions**.
- ✓ When the state-transition matrix  $S$  is Hurwitz, all error growth factors satisfy  $|r| < 1$ , ensuring exponential decay of the TD error and **convergence of the entire system**. Otherwise, the presence of any  $|r| \geq 1$  implies divergence."

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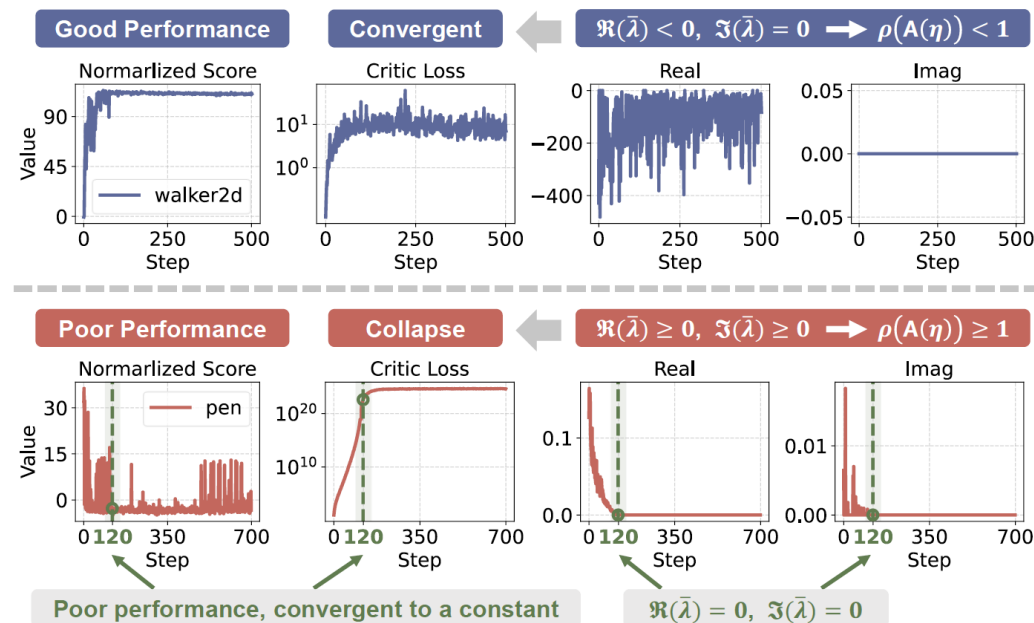
where  $S$  is defined in Eq. (17). In the local first-order regime of Assumption 1 the linearized dynamics are divergent to zero if  $S$  is Hurwitz. Equivalently, in the Hurwitz case every modal growth factor of Eq. (20) satisfies  $|r| < 1$ .



$S = \gamma K(\bar{X}^*, X) - K(X, X)$  → For **supervised learning**, the associated matrix is negative semidefinite, implying that the real parts of all eigenvalues are **naturally less than or equal to zero**.

# Conditions for Adam-Induced Value Function Collapse

We validate the above theoretical analysis through experiments, accurately predicting the precise points of convergence and divergence.

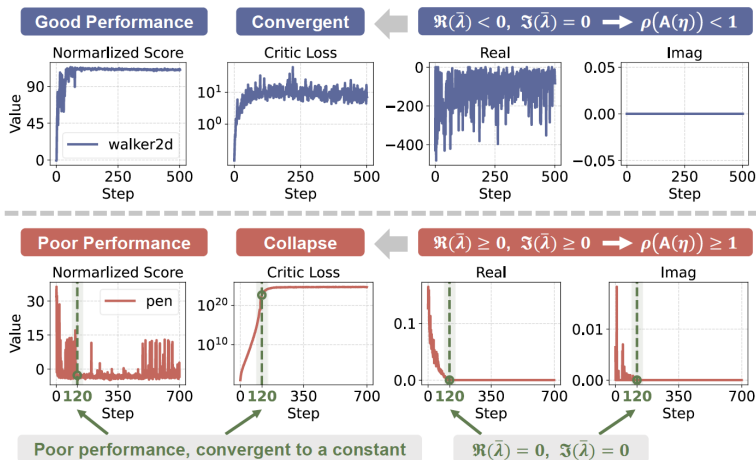


What conditions guarantee that the matrix  $S$  is Hurwitz?

# What conditions guarantee that the matrix $S$ is Hurwitz?

## Key observations and derivations:

- **A sufficient condition** for the matrix  $S$  to be Hurwitz is that Equation (11) holds.
- **A sufficient condition** for Equation (11) to hold is to enforce approximate parameter orthogonality, together with input normalization, EMA (exponential moving average), and spectral normalization — the latter three being standard tricks widely used in reinforcement learning.



**Proposition 5.1.** *If*

$$\gamma \|\Phi\|_2 \|\Phi_*\|_2 + \|\Phi^\top \Phi - I\|_2 < 1, \quad (11)$$

*then  $S$  is Hurwitz.*

$$R(W) = \begin{cases} \frac{1}{4} \|WW^\top - I_r\|_F^2, & r < c, \\ \frac{1}{4} \|W^\top W - I_c\|_F^2, & r \geq c, \end{cases}$$

# Why impose parameter orthogonality at the optimizer level?

- ✓ The orthogonality constraint is **sufficient** to be handled by the optimizer because it only depends on the current parameters and does not require extra data or loss computation.
- ✓ It is also **necessary** to keep it separate from the loss, because TD learning and orthogonalization serve different purposes. If combined in the loss, Adam may mix their gradients and store the orthogonality effect in its moment estimates, which can interfere with later TD updates.

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**Algorithm 2** Adam with  $L_2$  regularization and Adam with decoupled weight decay (AdamW)

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- 1: **given**  $\alpha = 0.001, \beta_1 = 0.9, \beta_2 = 0.999, \epsilon = 10^{-8}, \lambda \in \mathbb{R}$
- 2: **initialize** time step  $t \leftarrow 0$ , parameter vector  $\theta_{t=0} \in \mathbb{R}^n$ , first moment vector  $\mathbf{m}_{t=0} \leftarrow \mathbf{0}$ , second moment vector  $\mathbf{v}_{t=0} \leftarrow \mathbf{0}$ , schedule multiplier  $\eta_{t=0} \in \mathbb{R}$
- 3: **repeat**
- 4:    $t \leftarrow t + 1$
- 5:    $\nabla f_t(\theta_{t-1}) \leftarrow \text{SelectBatch}(\theta_{t-1})$  ▷ select batch and return the corresponding gradient
- 6:    $\mathbf{g}_t \leftarrow \nabla f_t(\theta_{t-1}) + \lambda \theta_{t-1}$
- 7:    $\mathbf{m}_t \leftarrow \beta_1 \mathbf{m}_{t-1} + (1 - \beta_1) \mathbf{g}_t$  ▷ here and below all operations are element-wise
- 8:    $\mathbf{v}_t \leftarrow \beta_2 \mathbf{v}_{t-1} + (1 - \beta_2) \mathbf{g}_t^2$
- 9:    $\hat{\mathbf{m}}_t \leftarrow \mathbf{m}_t / (1 - \beta_1^t)$  ▷  $\beta_1$  is taken to the power of  $t$
- 10:    $\hat{\mathbf{v}}_t \leftarrow \mathbf{v}_t / (1 - \beta_2^t)$  ▷  $\beta_2$  is taken to the power of  $t$
- 11:    $\eta_t \leftarrow \text{SetScheduleMultiplier}(t)$  ▷ can be fixed, decay, or also be used for warm restarts
- 12:    $\theta_t \leftarrow \theta_{t-1} - \eta_t \left( \alpha \hat{\mathbf{m}}_t / (\sqrt{\hat{\mathbf{v}}_t} + \epsilon) + \lambda \theta_{t-1} \right)$
- 13: **until** *stopping criterion is met*
- 14: **return** optimized parameters  $\theta_t$

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# Solution: AdamO

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We introduce an orthogonal projection mechanism to avoid interfering with normal gradient updates.

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**Algorithm 1** AdamO: Adam with Orthogonality Correction

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- 1: **Init**  $\omega_0, m_0 = v_0 = 0, \eta, \kappa, \tau$  and Adam params
  - 2: **for**  $t = 0, 1, \dots$  **do**
  - 3:    $g_t \leftarrow \nabla L_t(\omega_t)$
  - 4:   Compute standard Adam update  $u_t$
  - 5:   Compute  $\delta_t$  by applying (17)–(19) layer-wise
  - 6:    $\omega_{t+1} \leftarrow \omega_t - \eta(u_t + \delta_t)$
  - 7: **end for**
- 

This is applied layer-wise to ensure scale invariance. To prevent the correction from hijacking task progress, we enforce a local budget constraint

$$\langle g_t, \delta_t \rangle_F \geq -\tau (\langle g_t, u_t \rangle_F)_+, \quad \tau \in [0, 1). \quad (18)$$

Among all scalings of  $\delta_{t,0}$  along its ray, AdamO takes the largest feasible one, yielding the closed form:

$$\delta_t = \begin{cases} \delta_{t,0}, & \text{if } \langle g_t, \delta_{t,0} \rangle_F \geq T_t, \\ \frac{T_t}{\langle g_t, \delta_{t,0} \rangle_F} \delta_{t,0}, & \text{otherwise,} \end{cases} \quad (19)$$

# Theoretical guarantees

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***Does introducing the orthogonality term destabilize the Adam optimizer or interfere with normal task gradient updates?***

# Theoretical guarantees

## ***Does introducing the orthogonality term destabilize the Adam optimizer or interfere with normal task gradient updates?***

**Theorem D.8.** Consider the perturbed dynamics Eq. (96) and the Adam Hamiltonian Eq. (94). Along any trajectory,

$$\frac{d}{dt}H_{\text{Adam}}(w_t, m_t, v_t) = \frac{d}{dt}H_{\text{Adam}}^{(\text{Adam})}(w_t, m_t, v_t) - \langle g(w_t), \delta_t \rangle_F \quad (98)$$

$$\leq -\Delta_{\text{Adam}}(w_t, m_t, v_t) + \tau(\langle g(w_t), u_t \rangle_F)_+, \quad (99)$$

where  $\Delta_{\text{Adam}}$  is the nonnegative dissipation term in Eq. (95). In particular:

**Theorem D.5.** Assume  $L_t$  is  $\mu$ -smooth. (a) In conflict-free mode ( $\tau = 0$ ), under an explicit stepsize condition, AdamO does not increase the next-step task loss relative to Adam. (b) In budgeted mode ( $\tau > 0$ ), we give an explicit upper bound quantifying the worst-case next-step degradation.

- ✓ AdamO adds the orthogonality correction separately from Adam's normal gradient update, so it does not contaminate Adam's momentum or variance estimates.
- ✓ Theorems D.5 and D.8 show that this correction is controlled: it preserves task progress when conflict-free, and any possible interference is explicitly bounded.

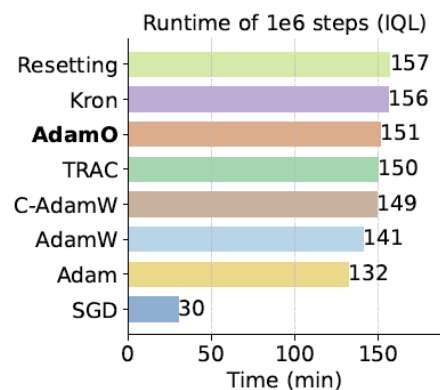
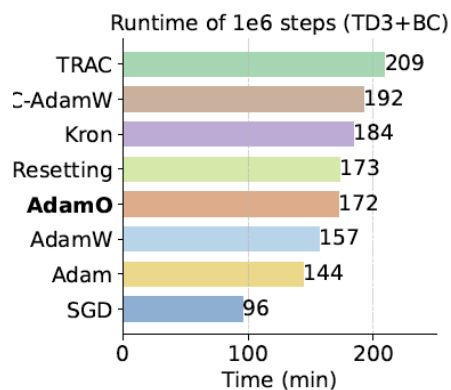
# Experiment setup

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- We evaluate our algorithms using data from a standard offline RL benchmark, D4RL, based on the MuJoCo simulator
- **Baselines:** Our evaluation covers a broad range of offline RL methods, including policy-constraint and regularization approaches such as TD3+BC and ReBRAC, in-sample learning methods such as IQL and ACTIVE, and distribution-shift-robust algorithms such as PARS and SQOG. We also compare with general-purpose optimizers, including SGD, Adam, and AdamW, as well as stability-oriented methods such as periodic state resetting, TRAC, Kron, and cautious momentum variants like C-AdamW.
- **Implementation:** We implement the code using PyTorch 2.1.2 and run experiments on Ubuntu 20.04.4 LTS with 4 NVIDIA GeForce RTX 3090 GPUs

# Experimental results

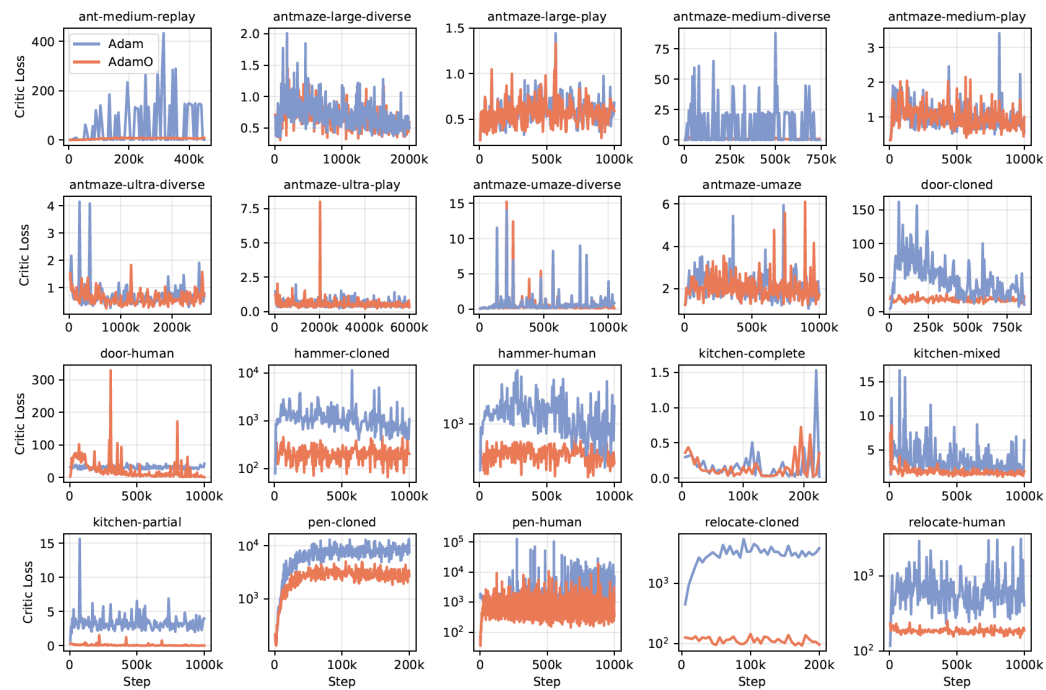
## AdamO outperforms the baselines on all tasks



Task Name	TD3+BC		IQL		ReBRAC		ACTIVE		PARS		SQOG	
	Adam	AdamO	Adam	AdamO	Adam	AdamO	Adam	AdamO	Adam	AdamO	Adam	AdamO
AntMaze-umaze	72.2	<b>92.5</b> <sub>↑28%</sub>	80.5	<b>83.8</b> <sub>↑4%</sub>	94.3	<b>96.5</b> <sub>↑2%</sub>	92.4	<b>95.1</b> <sub>↑3%</sub>	<b>97.3</b>	93.5 <sub>↓4%</sub>	89.6	<b>93.1</b> <sub>↑4%</sub>
AntMaze-umaze-div	47.0	<b>82.2</b> <sub>↑75%</sub>	55.8	<b>68.2</b> <sub>↑22%</sub>	87.2	<b>91.5</b> <sub>↑5%</sub>	75.9	<b>78.2</b> <sub>↑3%</sub>	<b>93.2</b>	92.4 <sub>↓1%</sub>	72.8	<b>87.1</b> <sub>↑20%</sub>
AntMaze-med-play	0.3	<b>28.5</b> <sub>↑∞</sub>	<b>70.4</b>	70.1 <sub>↓0.4%</sub>	85.2	<b>89.4</b> <sub>↑5%</sub>	73.7	<b>86.5</b> <sub>↑17%</sub>	<b>91.5</b>	92.8 <sub>↑1%</sub>	60.9	<b>65.4</b> <sub>↑7%</sub>
AntMaze-med-div	0.2	<b>16.4</b> <sub>↑∞</sub>	66.9	<b>75.5</b> <sub>↑13%</sub>	79.8	<b>85.1</b> <sub>↑7%</sub>	77.8	<b>82.4</b> <sub>↑6%</sub>	<b>87.1</b>	90.6 <sub>↑4%</sub>	65.8	<b>81.2</b> <sub>↑23%</sub>
AntMaze-large-play	0.0	<b>13.7</b> <sub>↑∞</sub>	38.5	<b>41.8</b> <sub>↑9%</sub>	55.4	<b>61.8</b> <sub>↑12%</sub>	50.9	<b>56.5</b> <sub>↑11%</sub>	46.6	<b>52.9</b> <sub>↑14%</sub>	52.6	<b>57.4</b> <sub>↑9%</sub>
AntMaze-large-div	0.0	<b>16.5</b> <sub>↑∞</sub>	32.4	<b>36.1</b> <sub>↑11%</sub>	50.5	<b>56.2</b> <sub>↑11%</sub>	46.6	<b>61.8</b> <sub>↑33%</sub>	50.8	<b>56.5</b> <sub>↑11%</sub>	47.5	<b>52.8</b> <sub>↑11%</sub>
AntMaze-ultra-div	0.0	<b>2.4</b> <sub>↑∞</sub>	19.0	<b>31.1</b> <sub>↑64%</sub>	5.7	<b>9.4</b> <sub>↑65%</sub>	10.0	<b>19.8</b> <sub>↑98%</sub>	42.1	<b>48.6</b> <sub>↑15%</sub>	0.0	<b>4.2</b> <sub>↑∞</sub>
AntMaze-ultra-play	0.0	<b>1.8</b> <sub>↑∞</sub>	21.0	<b>29.9</b> <sub>↑42%</sub>	20.6	<b>26.8</b> <sub>↑30%</sub>	13.2	<b>11.5</b> <sub>↓13%</sub>	55.9	<b>62.4</b> <sub>↑12%</sub>	0.0	<b>2.1</b> <sub>↑∞</sub>
<i>AntMaze Avg.</i>	15.0	<b>31.8</b> <sub>↑112%</sub>	48.1	<b>54.6</b> <sub>↑14%</sub>	59.8	<b>64.6</b> <sub>↑8%</sub>	55.1	<b>61.4</b> <sub>↑11%</sub>	<b>70.6</b>	73.7 <sub>↑4%</sub>	48.7	<b>55.4</b> <sub>↑14%</sub>
HalfCheetah-m	35.9	<b>53.5</b> <sub>↑49%</sub>	29.7	<b>35.2</b> <sub>↑19%</sub>	42.8	<b>49.4</b> <sub>↑15%</sub>	42.9	<b>48.5</b> <sub>↑13%</sub>	44.9	<b>51.2</b> <sub>↑14%</sub>	36.5	<b>41.8</b> <sub>↑15%</sub>
HalfCheetah-mr	39.1	<b>46.2</b> <sub>↑18%</sub>	32.7	<b>38.4</b> <sub>↑17%</sub>	40.7	<b>47.1</b> <sub>↑16%</sub>	34.9	<b>40.6</b> <sub>↑16%</sub>	45.4	<b>50.8</b> <sub>↑12%</sub>	30.2	<b>35.5</b> <sub>↑18%</sub>
HalfCheetah-me	33.5	<b>60.1</b> <sub>↑79%</sub>	48.1	<b>54.6</b> <sub>↑14%</sub>	63.9	<b>71.5</b> <sub>↑12%</sub>	55.7	<b>62.3</b> <sub>↑12%</sub>	75.7	<b>82.9</b> <sub>↑10%</sub>	58.9	<b>65.4</b> <sub>↑11%</sub>
Hopper-m	40.7	<b>75.5</b> <sub>↑86%</sub>	38.9	<b>45.1</b> <sub>↑16%</sub>	78.6	<b>86.2</b> <sub>↑10%</sub>	26.2	<b>31.8</b> <sub>↑21%</sub>	73.7	<b>80.4</b> <sub>↑9%</sub>	45.8	<b>51.3</b> <sub>↑12%</sub>
Hopper-mr	21.3	<b>55.8</b> <sub>↑162%</sub>	46.6	<b>52.9</b> <sub>↑14%</sub>	64.2	<b>70.8</b> <sub>↑10%</sub>	62.5	<b>68.7</b> <sub>↑10%</sub>	67.5	<b>74.1</b> <sub>↑10%</sub>	61.4	<b>67.2</b> <sub>↑9%</sub>
Hopper-me	32.6	<b>84.2</b> <sub>↑158%</sub>	66.5	<b>73.2</b> <sub>↑10%</sub>	78.5	<b>85.9</b> <sub>↑9%</sub>	62.7	<b>69.1</b> <sub>↑10%</sub>	75.5	<b>81.6</b> <sub>↑8%</sub>	72.9	<b>78.5</b> <sub>↑8%</sub>
Walker2d-m	21.2	<b>68.4</b> <sub>↑223%</sub>	54.9	<b>61.5</b> <sub>↑12%</sub>	62.2	<b>69.4</b> <sub>↑12%</sub>	53.6	<b>59.2</b> <sub>↑10%</sub>	68.0	<b>74.5</b> <sub>↑10%</sub>	49.8	<b>55.6</b> <sub>↑12%</sub>
Walker2d-mr	19.3	<b>52.5</b> <sub>↑172%</sub>	51.4	<b>57.8</b> <sub>↑12%</sub>	69.4	<b>76.1</b> <sub>↑10%</sub>	45.8	<b>51.4</b> <sub>↑12%</sub>	63.4	<b>69.2</b> <sub>↑9%</sub>	58.5	<b>64.3</b> <sub>↑10%</sub>
Walker2d-me	22.4	<b>98.5</b> <sub>↑340%</sub>	57.3	<b>63.7</b> <sub>↑11%</sub>	74.0	<b>80.8</b> <sub>↑9%</sub>	58.6	<b>64.9</b> <sub>↑11%</sub>	81.6	<b>88.3</b> <sub>↑8%</sub>	68.7	<b>74.9</b> <sub>↑9%</sub>
<i>Locomotion Avg.</i>	29.6	<b>66.1</b> <sub>↑123%</sub>	47.3	<b>53.6</b> <sub>↑13%</sub>	63.8	<b>70.8</b> <sub>↑11%</sub>	49.2	<b>55.2</b> <sub>↑12%</sub>	66.2	<b>72.6</b> <sub>↑10%</sub>	53.6	<b>59.4</b> <sub>↑11%</sub>
Pen-human	-4.1	<b>83.1</b> <sub>↑∞</sub>	79.1	<b>89.8</b> <sub>↑14%</sub>	<b>105.4</b>	102.5 <sub>↓3%</sub>	106.2	<b>109.8</b> <sub>↑3%</sub>	88.1	<b>94.5</b> <sub>↑7%</sub>	<b>77.0</b>	75.9 <sub>↓1%</sub>
Pen-cloned	5.6	<b>82.4</b> <sub>↑1371%</sub>	46.5	<b>82.2</b> <sub>↑77%</sub>	<b>98.5</b>	92.4 <sub>↓6%</sub>	96.5	<b>100.2</b> <sub>↑4%</sub>	<b>107.1</b>	105.8 <sub>↓1%</sub>	73.6	<b>87.4</b> <sub>↑19%</sub>
Door-human	-0.3	<b>0.2</b> <sub>↑∞</sub>	3.5	<b>4.8</b> <sub>↑37%</sub>	-0.1	<b>0.1</b> <sub>↑∞</sub>	0.0	<b>0.2</b> <sub>↑∞</sub>	0.1	<b>0.3</b> <sub>↑200%</sub>	-0.1	<b>0.1</b> <sub>↑∞</sub>
Door-cloned	-0.3	<b>0.1</b> <sub>↑∞</sub>	3.3	<b>4.5</b> <sub>↑36%</sub>	0.1	<b>0.5</b> <sub>↑400%</sub>	0.1	<b>0.4</b> <sub>↑300%</sub>	0.1	<b>0.3</b> <sub>↑200%</sub>	0.1	<b>0.5</b> <sub>↑400%</sub>
Hammer-human	1.1	<b>0.5</b> <sub>↓55%</sub>	1.9	<b>3.1</b> <sub>↑63%</sub>	0.3	<b>0.8</b> <sub>↑167%</sub>	0.3	<b>0.9</b> <sub>↑200%</sub>	0.3	<b>0.8</b> <sub>↑167%</sub>	0.3	<b>0.8</b> <sub>↑167%</sub>
Hammer-cloned	0.3	<b>0.4</b> <sub>↑33%</sub>	1.7	<b>3.2</b> <sub>↑88%</sub>	5.4	<b>7.5</b> <sub>↑39%</sub>	5.9	<b>7.8</b> <sub>↑32%</sub>	4.6	<b>7.0</b> <sub>↑52%</sub>	5.1	<b>6.8</b> <sub>↑33%</sub>
Relocate-human	-0.3	<b>0.2</b> <sub>↑∞</sub>	0.1	<b>0.5</b> <sub>↑400%</sub>	0.2	<b>0.6</b> <sub>↑200%</sub>	0.2	<b>0.7</b> <sub>↑250%</sub>	0.1	<b>0.7</b> <sub>↑600%</sub>	0.2	<b>0.6</b> <sub>↑200%</sub>
Relocate-cloned	0.1	<b>0.0</b> <sub>↓100%</sub>	0.0	0.0	0.0	<b>0.4</b> <sub>↑∞</sub>	<b>0.2</b>	<b>0.1</b> <sub>↓50%</sub>	<b>0.1</b>	0.0 <sub>↓100%</sub>	-0.2	<b>0.6</b> <sub>↑∞</sub>
<i>Adroit Avg.</i>	0.3	<b>20.9</b> <sub>↑6866%</sub>	17.0	<b>23.5</b> <sub>↑38%</sub>	<b>26.2</b>	25.6 <sub>↓2%</sub>	26.2	<b>27.5</b> <sub>↑5%</sub>	25.1	<b>26.2</b> <sub>↑4%</sub>	19.5	<b>21.6</b> <sub>↑11%</sub>

# Experimental results

- AdamO effectively mitigates loss divergence.



# Thank You!

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