CSE446: Point Estimation
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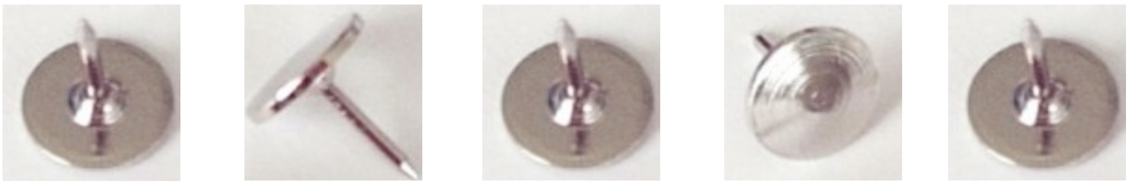
Ali Farhadi

Slides adapted from Carlos Guestrin, Dan Klein, and Luke Zettlemoyer

Your first consulting job

- A billionaire from the suburbs of Seattle asks you a question:
  - He says: I have thumbtack, if I flip it, what's the probability it will fall with the nail up?
  - You say: Please flip it a few times:



  - You say: The probability is:
    - P(H) = 3/5
  - **He says: Why???**
  - You say: Because…

Thumbtack – Binomial Distribution

- P(Heads) = θ, P(Tails) = 1-θ

- Flips are *i.i.d.*: $D=\{x_i \mid i=1\ldots n\},\ P(D \mid \theta) = \Pi_i P(x_i \mid \theta)$
  - Independent events
  - Identically distributed according to Binomial distribution
- Sequence *D* of α_H Heads and α_T Tails

$$P(\mathcal{D} \mid \theta) = \theta^{\alpha_H}(1-\theta)^{\alpha_T}$$

Maximum Likelihood Estimation

- **Data:** Observed set D of α_H Heads and α_T Tails
- **Hypothesis space:** Binomial distributions
- **Learning:** finding θ is an optimization problem
  - What's the objective function?

$$P(\mathcal{D} \mid \theta) = \theta^{\alpha_H}(1-\theta)^{\alpha_T}$$

- **MLE:** Choose θ to maximize probability of *D*

$$\begin{aligned}\widehat{\theta} &= \arg\max_{\theta} \; P(\mathcal{D} \mid \theta) \\ &= \arg\max_{\theta} \; \ln P(\mathcal{D} \mid \theta)\end{aligned}$$

Your first parameter learning algorithm

$$\widehat{\theta} = \arg\max_{\theta} \ln P(\mathcal{D} \mid \theta)$$
$$= \arg\max_{\theta} \ln \theta^{\alpha_H}(1-\theta)^{\alpha_T}$$

- Set derivative to zero, and solve!

$$\frac{d}{d\theta} \ln P(\mathcal{D} \mid \theta) = \frac{d}{d\theta}\left[\ln \theta^{\alpha_H}(1-\theta)^{\alpha_T}\right]$$
$$= \frac{d}{d\theta}\left[\alpha_H \ln \theta + \alpha_T \ln(1-\theta)\right]$$
$$= \alpha_H \frac{d}{d\theta} \ln \theta + \alpha_T \frac{d}{d\theta} \ln(1-\theta)$$
$$= \frac{\alpha_H}{\theta} - \frac{\alpha_T}{1-\theta} = 0$$

$$\widehat{\theta}_{MLE} = \frac{\alpha_H}{\alpha_H + \alpha_T}$$

But, how many flips do I need?

$$\widehat{\theta}_{MLE} = \frac{\alpha_H}{\alpha_H + \alpha_T}$$

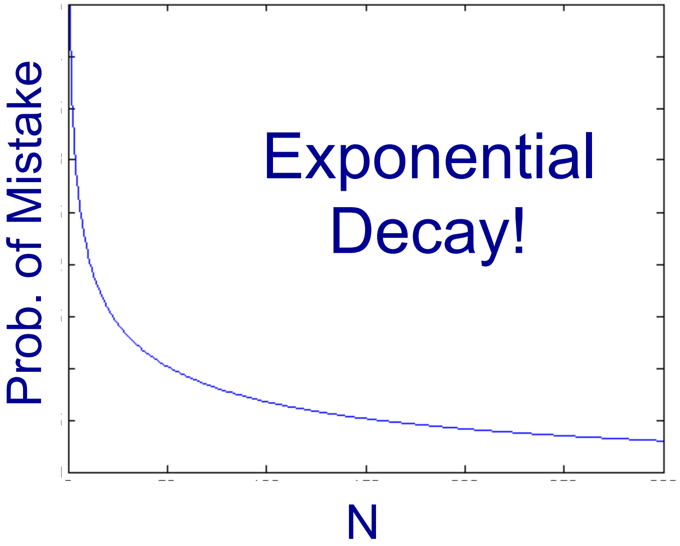
- Billionaire says: I flipped 3 heads and 2 tails.
- You say: $\theta = 3/5$, I can prove it!
- He says: What if I flipped 30 heads and 20 tails?
- You say: Same answer, I can prove it!
- **He says: What's better?**
- You say: Umm… The more the merrier???
- He says: Is this why I am paying you the big bucks???

A bound (from Hoeffding's inequality)

- For $N = \alpha_H + \alpha_T$, and $\widehat{\theta}_{MLE} = \frac{\alpha_H}{\alpha_H + \alpha_T}$

- Let θ^* be the true parameter, for any $\varepsilon > 0$:

$$P(|\,\widehat{\theta} - \theta^*\,| \geq \epsilon) \leq 2e^{-2N\epsilon^2}$$



PAC Learning

- PAC: Probably Approximate Correct
- Billionaire says: I want to know the thumbtack θ, within $\varepsilon = 0.1$, with probability at least $1-\delta = 0.95$.
- How many flips? Or, how big do I set N?

$$P(|\,\widehat{\theta} - \theta^*\,| \geq \epsilon) \;\leq\; 2e^{-2N\epsilon^2}$$

$$\delta \geq 2e^{-2N\epsilon^2} \geq P(\text{mistake})$$

$$\ln \delta \geq \ln 2 - 2N\epsilon^2$$

$$N \geq \frac{\ln(2/\delta)}{2\epsilon^2}$$

Interesting! Lets look at some numbers!

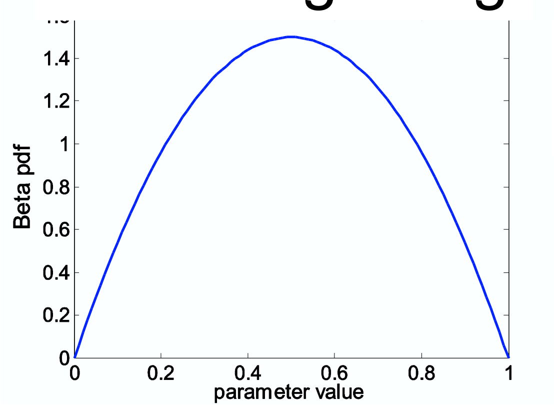
- $\varepsilon = 0.1$, $\delta = 0.05$

$$N \geq \frac{\ln(2/0.05)}{2 \times 0.1^2} \approx \frac{3.8}{0.02} = 190$$

What if I have prior beliefs?

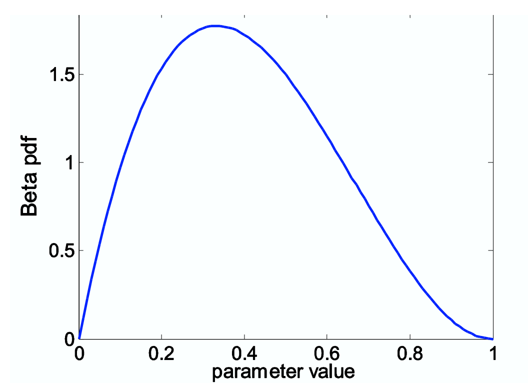
- Billionaire says: Wait, I know that the thumbtack is "close" to 50-50. What can you do for me now?
- **You say: I can learn it the Bayesian way…**
- Rather than estimating a single θ, we obtain a distribution over possible values of θ

In the beginning



Observe flips
e.g.: {tails, tails}

After observations

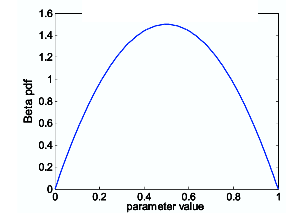


Bayesian Learning

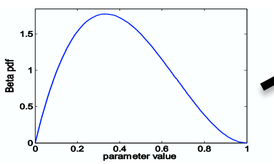
- Use Bayes rule:

Data Likelihood

Prior



Posterior



$$P(\theta \mid \mathcal{D}) = \frac{P(\mathcal{D} \mid \theta) P(\theta)}{P(\mathcal{D})}$$

Normalization

- Or equivalently: $P(\theta \mid \mathcal{D}) \propto P(\mathcal{D} \mid \theta) P(\theta)$
- Also, for uniform priors:

  → reduces to MLE objective

$$P(\theta) \propto 1 \qquad P(\theta \mid \mathcal{D}) \propto P(\mathcal{D} \mid \theta)$$

Bayesian Learning for Thumbtacks

$$P(\theta \mid \mathcal{D}) \;\; \propto \;\; P(\mathcal{D} \mid \theta) P(\theta)$$

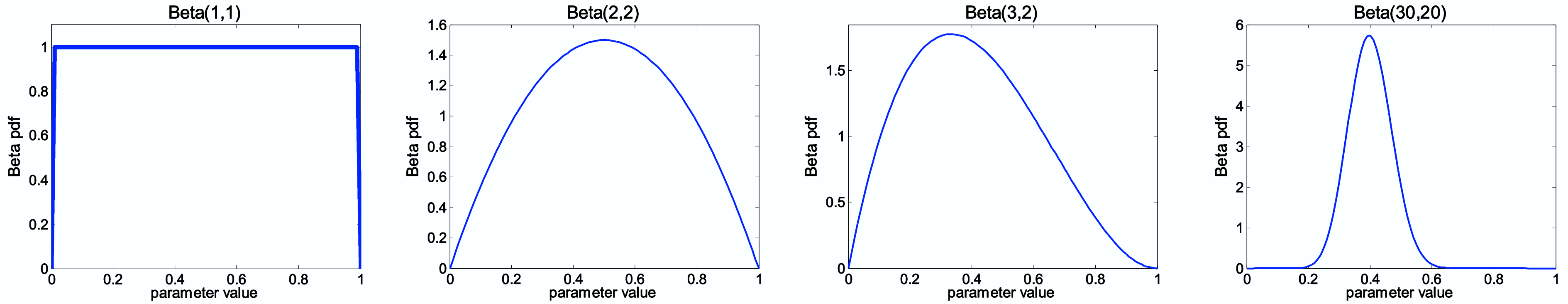
Likelihood function is Binomial:

$$P(\mathcal{D} \mid \theta) = \theta^{\alpha_H} (1 - \theta)^{\alpha_T}$$

- What about prior?
  - Represent expert knowledge
  - Simple posterior form
- Conjugate priors:
  - Closed-form representation of posterior
  - **For Binomial, conjugate prior is Beta distribution**

Beta prior distribution – P(θ)

$$P(\theta) = \frac{\theta^{\beta_H - 1}(1-\theta)^{\beta_T - 1}}{B(\beta_H, \beta_T)} \sim Beta(\beta_H, \beta_T)$$



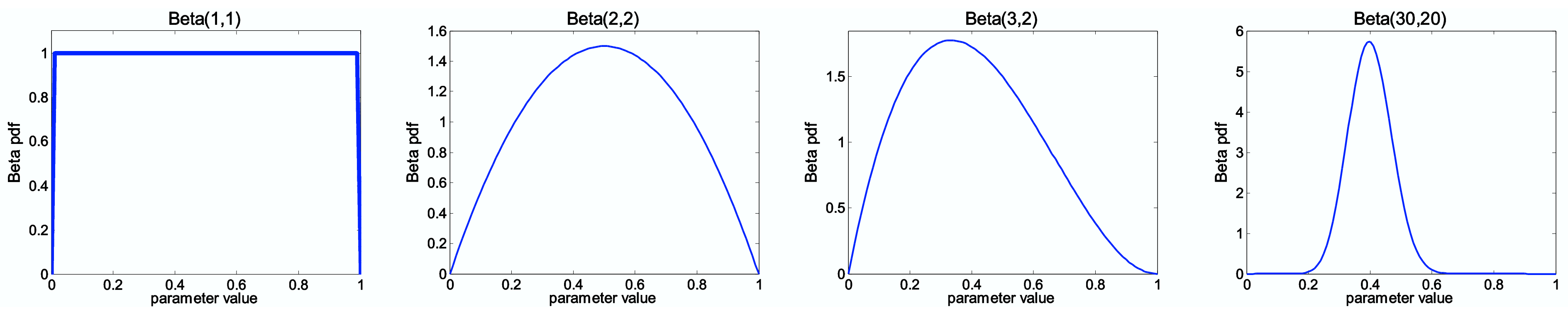
- Likelihood function: $P(\mathcal{D} \mid \theta) = \theta^{\alpha_H}(1-\theta)^{\alpha_T}$
- Posterior: $P(\theta \mid \mathcal{D}) \propto P(\mathcal{D} \mid \theta) P(\theta)$

$$\begin{aligned} P(\theta \mid \mathcal{D}) &\propto \theta^{\alpha_H}(1-\theta)^{\alpha_T}\ \theta^{\beta_H - 1}(1-\theta)^{\beta_T - 1} \\ &= \theta^{\alpha_H + \beta_H - 1}(1-\theta)^{\alpha_T + \beta_T - 1} \\ &= Beta(\alpha_H + \beta_H, \alpha_T + \beta_T) \end{aligned}$$

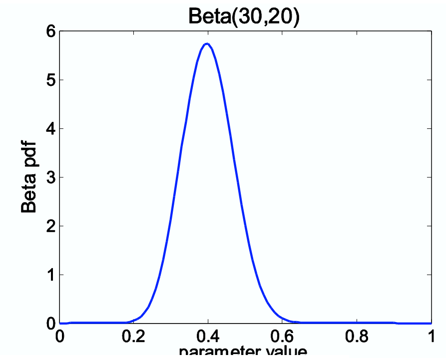
Posterior distribution

- Prior: $Beta(\beta_H, \beta_T)$
- Data: α_H heads and α_T tails
- Posterior distribution:

$$P(\theta \mid \mathcal{D}) \sim Beta(\beta_H + \alpha_H, \beta_T + \alpha_T)$$



MAP for Beta distribution



$$P(\theta \mid \mathcal{D}) = \frac{\theta^{\beta_H+\alpha_H-1}(1-\theta)^{\beta_T+\alpha_T-1}}{B(\beta_H+\alpha_H, \beta_T+\alpha_T)} \sim Beta(\beta_H+\alpha_H, \beta_T+\alpha_T)$$

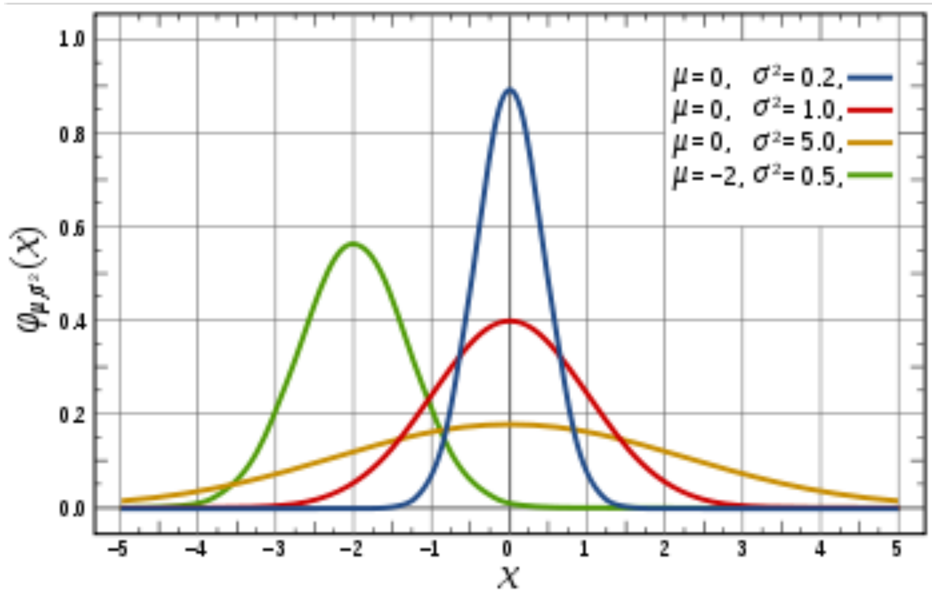
- MAP: use most likely parameter:

$$\widehat{\theta} = \arg\max_{\theta} P(\theta \mid \mathcal{D}) = \frac{\alpha_H + \beta_H - 1}{\alpha_H + \beta_H + \alpha_T + \beta_T - 2}$$

- Beta prior equivalent to extra thumbtack flips
- As $N \to \infty$, prior is “forgotten”
- **But, for small sample size, prior is important!**

What about continuous variables?

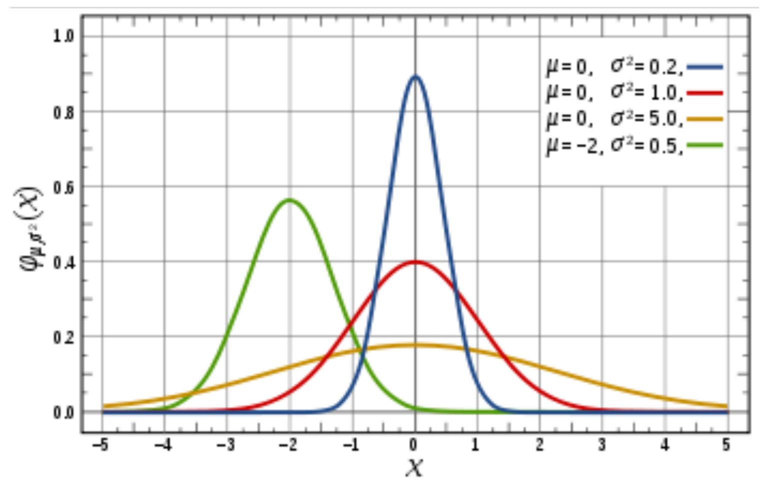
- Billionaire says: If I am measuring a continuous variable, what can you do for me?
- **You say: Let me tell you about Gaussians…**



$$P(x \mid \mu, \sigma) = \frac{1}{\sigma\sqrt{2\pi}} e^{\frac{-(x-\mu)^2}{2\sigma^2}}$$

Some properties of Gaussians

- Affine transformation (multiplying by scalar and adding a constant) are Gaussian
  - $X \sim N(\mu,\sigma^2)$
  - $Y = aX + b \rightarrow Y \sim N(a\mu+b,a^2\sigma^2)$



- Sum of Gaussians is Gaussian
  - $X \sim N(\mu_X,\sigma^2_X)$
  - $Y \sim N(\mu_Y,\sigma^2_Y)$
  - $Z = X+Y \rightarrow Z \sim N(\mu_X+\mu_Y, \sigma^2_X+\sigma^2_Y)$

- Easy to differentiate, as we will see soon!

Learning a Gaussian

- Collect a bunch of data
  - Hopefully, i.i.d. samples
  - e.g., exam scores
- Learn parameters
  - Mean: μ
  - Variance: σ

x_i $i =$	Exam Score
0	85
1	95
2	100
3	12
…	…
99	89

$$P(x \mid \mu, \sigma) = \frac{1}{\sigma\sqrt{2\pi}} e^{\frac{-(x-\mu)^2}{2\sigma^2}}$$

MLE for Gaussian: $P(x \mid \mu, \sigma) = \frac{1}{\sigma\sqrt{2\pi}} e^{\frac{-(x-\mu)^2}{2\sigma^2}}$

- Prob. of i.i.d. samples $D=\{x_1,\dots,x_N\}$:

$$P(\mathcal{D} \mid \mu, \sigma) = \left(\frac{1}{\sigma\sqrt{2\pi}}\right)^N \prod_{i=1}^{N} e^{\frac{-(x_i-\mu)^2}{2\sigma^2}}$$

$$\mu_{MLE}, \sigma_{MLE} = \arg\max_{\mu,\sigma} P(\mathcal{D} \mid \mu, \sigma)$$

- Log-likelihood of data:

$$\begin{aligned} \ln P(\mathcal{D} \mid \mu, \sigma) &= \ln\left[\left(\frac{1}{\sigma\sqrt{2\pi}}\right)^N \prod_{i=1}^{N} e^{\frac{-(x_i-\mu)^2}{2\sigma^2}}\right] \\ &= -N \ln \sigma\sqrt{2\pi} - \sum_{i=1}^{N} \frac{(x_i-\mu)^2}{2\sigma^2} \end{aligned}$$

Your second learning algorithm: MLE for mean of a Gaussian

- What's MLE for mean?

$$\frac{d}{d\mu} \ln P(\mathcal{D} \mid \mu, \sigma) = \frac{d}{d\mu}\left[-N \ln \sigma\sqrt{2\pi} - \sum_{i=1}^{N} \frac{(x_i-\mu)^2}{2\sigma^2}\right]$$

$$= \frac{d}{d\mu}\left[-N \ln \sigma\sqrt{2\pi}\right] - \sum_{i=1}^{N} \frac{d}{d\mu}\left[\frac{(x_i-\mu)^2}{2\sigma^2}\right]$$

$$= -\sum_{i=1}^{N} \frac{(x_i-\mu)}{\sigma^2} = 0$$

$$= -\sum_{i=1}^{N} x_i + N\mu = 0$$

$$\widehat{\mu}_{MLE} = \frac{1}{N}\sum_{i=1}^{N} x_i$$

MLE for variance

- Again, set derivative to zero:

$$\frac{d}{d\sigma} \ln P(\mathcal{D} \mid \mu, \sigma) = \frac{d}{d\sigma}\left[-N \ln \sigma\sqrt{2\pi} - \sum_{i=1}^{N} \frac{(x_i - \mu)^2}{2\sigma^2}\right]$$

$$= \frac{d}{d\sigma}\left[-N \ln \sigma\sqrt{2\pi}\right] - \sum_{i=1}^{N} \frac{d}{d\sigma}\left[\frac{(x_i - \mu)^2}{2\sigma^2}\right]$$

$$= -\frac{N}{\sigma} + \sum_{i=1}^{N} \frac{(x_i - \mu)^2}{\sigma^3} \qquad = 0$$

$$\widehat{\sigma}^2_{MLE} = \frac{1}{N}\sum_{i=1}^{N}(x_i - \widehat{\mu})^2$$

Learning Gaussian parameters

- MLE:

$$\widehat{\mu}_{MLE} = \frac{1}{N}\sum_{i=1}^{N} x_i$$

$$\widehat{\sigma}^2_{MLE} = \frac{1}{N}\sum_{i=1}^{N} (x_i - \widehat{\mu})^2$$

- BTW. MLE for the variance of a Gaussian is **biased**
  - Expected result of estimation is **not** true parameter!
  - Unbiased variance estimator:

$$\widehat{\sigma}^2_{unbiased} = \frac{1}{N-1}\sum_{i=1}^{N} (x_i - \widehat{\mu})^2$$

Bayesian learning of Gaussian parameters

- Conjugate priors
  - Mean: Gaussian prior
  - Variance: Wishart Distribution

- Prior for mean:

$$P(\mu \mid \eta, \lambda) = \frac{1}{\lambda\sqrt{2\pi}} e^{\frac{-(\mu-\eta)^2}{2\lambda^2}}$$