
Certificate Programme in Neuroinformatics Fundamentals

Neural Systems and Networks

Neural Systems and Networks are fundamental concepts in the field of neuroinformatics. In this explanation, we will explore key terms and vocabulary related to these concepts.

Neural System: A neural system is a network of neurons that work together to perform a specific function. Neural systems can be divided into two main categories: central nervous system (CNS) and peripheral nervous system (PNS). The CNS includes the brain and spinal cord, while the PNS includes all the nerves outside of the CNS.

Neuron: A neuron is the basic unit of the nervous system. It is a specialized cell that processes and transmits information. Neurons have three main parts: dendrites, cell body, and axon. Dendrites receive signals from other neurons, the cell body processes the signals, and the axon transmits the signals to other neurons or muscles.

Synapse: A synapse is the junction between two neurons where the electrical or chemical signal is transmitted from one neuron to another. There are two types of synapses: electrical and chemical. In electrical synapses, the electrical signal is transmitted directly from one neuron to another through gap junctions. In chemical synapses, the electrical signal is converted into a chemical signal by the release of neurotransmitters from the presynaptic neuron, which then bind to receptors on the postsynaptic neuron.

Neural Network: A neural network is a system of interconnected neurons that work together to process information. Neural networks are modeled after the structure and function of biological neural systems, and they are used in artificial intelligence and machine learning.

Activation Function: An activation function is a mathematical function that is applied to the output of a neuron in a neural network. The activation function determines whether or not the neuron should be activated, or "fired," based on the input it receives. Common activation functions include the sigmoid function, the hyperbolic tangent function, and the rectified linear unit (ReLU) function.

Backpropagation: Backpropagation is a training algorithm used in neural networks. It is a form of supervised learning, where the network is presented with a set of input-output pairs and the weights of the connections between neurons are adjusted to minimize the error between the predicted output and the actual output. Backpropagation works by propagating the error backwards through the network, adjusting the weights of the connections as it goes.

Deep Learning: Deep learning is a subfield of machine learning that uses artificial neural networks with many layers to perform complex tasks such as image recognition, speech recognition, and natural language processing.

Convolutional Neural Network (CNN): A CNN is a type of neural network that is commonly used for image recognition tasks. CNNs are designed to take advantage of the spatial structure of images by applying a set

of convolutional filters to the input image.

Recurrent Neural Network (RNN): An RNN is a type of neural network that is commonly used for sequence-to-sequence tasks such as language translation and speech recognition. RNNs have a feedback loop that allows information from previous time steps to be used in the current time step.

Long Short-Term Memory (LSTM): LSTM is a type of RNN that is capable of learning long-term dependencies in data. LSTMs have a memory cell that can store information for long periods of time, and they have gates that control when information is written to or read from the memory cell.

Generative Adversarial Network (GAN): A GAN is a type of neural network that consists of two components: a generator and a discriminator. The generator generates new data samples, while the discriminator tries to distinguish between real and generated samples. GANs are used for tasks such as image synthesis and style transfer.

Transfer Learning: Transfer learning is a technique where a pre-trained neural network is used as a starting point for a new task. The pre-trained network has already learned features from a large dataset, and these features can be used as a starting point for the new task.

Overfitting: Overfitting is a common problem in machine learning where a model is too complex and learns the noise in the training data rather than the underlying pattern. Overfitting can be avoided by using regularization techniques such as L1 and L2 regularization.

Underfitting: Underfitting is a common problem in machine learning where a model is not complex enough to learn the underlying pattern in the data. Underfitting can be addressed by increasing the complexity of the model or by adding more data.

In conclusion, understanding the key terms and vocabulary related to neural systems and networks is crucial for anyone interested in the field of neuroinformatics. From the basic unit of the nervous system, the neuron, to the complex networks and systems they form, and the artificial neural networks modeled after them, these concepts form the foundation of the field.

When working with neural networks, it's important to understand the activation functions, training algorithms, and architectures used, as well as common challenges such as overfitting and underfitting. With a solid understanding of these concepts and the ability to apply them in practice, you'll be well on your way to making meaningful contributions to the field of neuroinformatics.

Remember, practice is key to mastering these concepts and applying them effectively. Look for opportunities to work with real-world data and apply these techniques to solve real-world problems. With dedication and persistence, you'll be able to unlock the full potential of neural systems and networks in neuroinformatics.