



cuDNN Best Practices

Table of Contents

Chapter 1. Introduction.....	1
Chapter 2. Best Practices For Medical Imaging.....	2
2.1. Recommended Settings In cuDNN While Performing 3D Convolutions.....	2
2.1.1. cuDNN 8.x.x.....	2
2.1.2. cuDNN 7.6.x.....	3
Chapter 3. Medical Imaging Performance.....	6
Chapter 4. Medical Imaging Limitations.....	7

Chapter 1. Introduction



ATTENTION: These guidelines are applicable to 3D convolution and deconvolution functions starting in NVIDIA® CUDA® Deep Neural Network library™ (cuDNN) v7.6.3.

This document provides guidelines for setting the cuDNN library parameters to enhance the performance of 3D convolutions. Specifically, these guidelines are focused on settings such as filter sizes, padding and dilation settings. Additionally, an application-specific use-case, namely, medical imaging, is presented to demonstrate the performance enhancement of 3D convolutions with these recommended settings.

Specifically, these guidelines are applicable to the following functions and their associated data types:

- ▶ [cudnnConvolutionForward\(\)](#)
- ▶ [cudnnConvolutionBackwardData\(\)](#)
- ▶ [cudnnConvolutionBackwardFilter\(\)](#)

For more information, see the [cuDNN Developer Guide](#) and [cuDNN API](#).

Chapter 2. Best Practices For Medical Imaging

To optimize your performance in your model, ensure you meet the following general guidelines:

Layout

The layout is in NCHW format.

Filter size

The filter size is $T \times 1 \times 1$, $T \times 2 \times 2$, $T \times 3 \times 3$, $T \times 5 \times 5$, where T is a positive integer. There are additional limits for the value of T in `wgrad` and `strided dgrad`.

Stride

Arbitrary for forward and backward filter; `dgrad/deconv`: $1 \times 1 \times 1$ or $2 \times 2 \times 2$ with $2 \times 2 \times 2$ filter.

Dilation

The dilation is $1 \times 1 \times 1$.

Platform

The platform is Volta, Turing, and Ampere with input/output channels divisible by 8.

Batch/image size

cuDNN will fallback to non-Tensor Core kernel if it determines that the workspace required is larger than 256MB of GPU memory. The workspace required depends on many factors. For the Tensor Core kernels, the workspace size generally scales linearly with output tensor size. Therefore, this can be mitigated by using smaller image sizes or minibatch sizes.

2.1. Recommended Settings In cuDNN While Performing 3D Convolutions

The following tables show the specific improvements that were made in each release.

2.1.1. cuDNN 8.x.x

Recommended settings while performing 3D convolutions for cuDNN 8.x.x.

		8.0.3 - 8.0.4	8.0.0 and 8.0.1 Preview - 8.0.2
Platform		NVIDIA Ampere GPU architecture NVIDIA Turing GPU architecture NVIDIA Volta GPU architecture	
Convolution (3D or 2D)		3D and 2D	
Convolution or deconvolution (fprop, dgrad, or wgrad)		fprop dgrad wgrad	
Grouped convolution	Yes or No	Yes	
	Group size	C_per_group == K_per_group == {4, 8, 16, 32, 64, 128, 256}	C_per_group == K_per_group == {4, 8, 16, 32}
Data layout format (NHWC/NCHW) ¹		NDHWC	
Input/output precision (FP16, FP32, or FP64)		FP16 and FP32 ²	
Accumulator (compute) precision (FP16, FP32, or FP64)		FP32	
Filter (kernel) sizes		No limitation	
Padding		No limitation	
Image sizes		2GB limitation for a tensor	
Number of channels	C	0 mod 8	
	K	0 mod 8	
Convolution mode		Cross-correlation and convolution	
Strides		dgrad: 1x1x1 or 2x2x2	
Dilation		No limitation	
Data pointer alignment		All data pointers are 16-bytes aligned.	

2.1.2. cuDNN 7.6.x

Recommended settings while performing 3D convolutions for cuDNN 7.6.x.

	7.6.5	7.6.4	7.6.2	7.6.1
Platform	Turing Volta	Volta		
Convolution (3D or 2D)	3D and 2D	3D		
Convolution or deconvolution (fprop, dgrad, or wgrad)	fprop dgrad	fprop dgrad	fprop dgrad	fprop dgrad

¹ NHWC/NCHW corresponds to NDHWC/NCDHW in 3D convolution.

² With CUDNN_TENSOROP_MATH_ALLOW_CONVERSION pre-Ampere. Default TF32 math in Ampere.

		7.6.5	7.6.4	7.6.2	7.6.1
		wgrad			wgrad
Grouped convolution	Yes or No	Yes		No	
	Group size	C_per_group == K_per_group == {4, 8, 16, 32}		NA	
Data layout format (NHWC/NCHW) ³		NCDHW			NCDHW ⁴
Input/output precision (FP16, FP32, or FP64)		FP16		FP16 or FP32	FP16 ⁵ or FP32 ⁶
Accumulator (compute) precision (FP16, FP32, or FP64)		FP32		Better to be the same with input/output precision.	FP32
Filter (kernel) sizes		2x2x2			1x1x1
		T ⁷ x1x1			2x2x2
		Tx2x2			3x3x3
		Tx3x3			5x5x5
		Tx5x5			Tx1x1
					Tx2x2
					Tx3x3
					Tx5x5
					Tx1x1
					Tx2x2
					Tx3x3
					Tx5x5
Padding		No limitation			Filter // 2 ⁸
Image sizes		256 MB WS limit		No limitation	256 MB WS limit
Number of channels	C	Arbitrary			0 mod 8
	K	Arbitrary			0 mod 8
Convolution mode		Cross-correlation for dgrad; otherwise, both modes		No limitation Cross-correlation	
Strides		1x1x1 and 2x2x2 strides for dgrad		2x2x2	1x1x1

³ NHWC/NCHW corresponds to NDHWC/NCDHW in 3D convolution.

⁴ With NCHW <> NHWC format transformation.

⁵ FP16: CUDNN_TENSOROP_MATH

⁶ FP32: CUDNN_TENSOROP_MATH_ALLOW_CONVERSION

⁷ An arbitrary positive value.

⁸ padding = filter // 2

	7.6.5	7.6.4	7.6.2	7.6.1
			Arbitrary stride	
Dilation			1x1x1	

Chapter 3. Medical Imaging Performance

The following table shows the average speed-up of **unique cuDNN 3D convolution calls** for each network that satisfies the conditions in [Best Practices For Medical Imaging](#). The end-to-end training performance will depend on a number of factors, such as framework overhead, kernel run time, and model architecture type.

Model	Batchsize	Avg. Speed-up of unique cuDNN 3D convolution API calls (7.6.3 vs. 7.5.1)
V-Net (3D-Image segmentation)	2	4.4x
	4	4.4x
	8	4x
	16	4x
	32	4x
	64	3.4x
	128	3x
3D-UNet (3D-Image Segmentation)	2	4.4x
	4	4.1x
	8	4.4x
	16	4.3x
	32	4x
	64	4x
	128	4.2x

Chapter 4. Medical Imaging Limitations

Your application will be functional but slow if the model has:

- ▶ Channel counts lower than 32 (gets worse the lower it is)
- ▶ Data gradients for convolutions with stride

If the above is in the network, use `cuDNNFind` to get the best option.

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