DynMuon: A Dynamic Spectral Shaping View of Muon

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Abstract

In recent years, Muon has emerged as the dominant method for training large language models, and transformers more broadly. The essential difference, when compared to standard gradient descent methods, is to replace the usual update matrix $M = U\Sigma V^\top$ with its polar factor $UV^\top$. In this work, we consider a class of Muon-like updates, where we replace the update M with $U\Sigma^p V^\top$ for some parameter p. We call this a "spectral-shaping" operation, and develop an idealized, noise-aware local model of how to pick p which depends on (a) local curvature of the loss function, (b) noise stemming from stochastic gradients and label noise, and (c) training stage. Our analysis and experimentation reveal a previously overlooked behavior: positive p helps early by emphasizing high-curvature directions and accelerating signal contraction, while mildly negative p helps later by reallocating update strength toward low-curvature directions that still contain useful training signals. Building on the insight, we propose `DynMuon`, an efficient dynamic spectral shaping method that schedules p from positive to mildly negative over training. Extensive experiments across model sizes, architectures, and training settings show that `DynMuon` consistently achieves lower validation loss than Muon, while requiring **10.6–26.5%** fewer steps to reach the same target loss.

1 Introduction

Muon has recently shown strong empirical performance for LLM training (Jordan et al., 2024b). At a high level, for each matrix-valued model parameter, Muon forms a momentum-averaged gradient matrix $M = U\Sigma V^\top$ and replaces it with its polar factor $UV^\top$. The resulting update preserves the singular directions while "flattening" the singular values, and has been shown to improve convergence and training stability across model scales (Liu et al., 2025; Ahn et al., 2025). This flattening of singular values naturally suggests studying more general spectral transformations, which we call *spectral shaping*, for matrix-valued optimization, and exploring how the relative weighting of spectral directions affects training dynamics.

Recent work has explored spectral shaping in a limited capacity by studying fixed power-law singular-value shapings (Qi et al., 2026; Chen et al., 2026), or transformations that suppress dominant spectral subspaces (Huang et al., 2026; Yang, 2026). However, they still treat spectral shaping as static, seeking better fixed spectral transformations. Thus, it is not clear whether a single shaping rule is desirable as training dynamics evolve (Qi et al., 2026). Relatedly, prior work also lacks a training-dynamics model of spectral shaping, and therefore does not characterize how the relative influence of different spectral directions evolves across training (Huang et al., 2026; Yang, 2026). This leaves a central question unresolved, which is the main focus of our paper:

How should Muon-style spectral shaping adapt across training stages, if at all?

Our Results To answer this question, we generalize Muon as one point in a power-law family of what we call *spectral-shaping* operations, where p is the spectral exponent:

$$D^{(p)} := U\Sigma^p V^\top, \qquad \Sigma^p = \mathrm{diag}(\sigma_1^p, \ldots, \sigma_r^p), \tag{1}$$

for a matrix-valued update $M = U\Sigma V^\top$. This is demonstratively a very expressive family of operations: $p = -1$ gives an inverse-spectrum update, $p = 0$ recovers Muon, and $p = 1$ corresponds

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to the standard SGD-style updates. To understand training dynamics as a function of p, we develop an idealized, *noise-aware local model* that interprets spectral shaping as curvature-dependent reweighting of the update along *local curvature directions* of the loss landscape. Along these directions, it jointly tracks the *residual signal*, i.e., the remaining parameter distance to a nearby local optimum, and the stochastic gradient noise introduced by minibatch sampling. This mode-wise decomposition reveals an interesting signal–noise trade-off: decreasing p increases residual-signal contraction in "flat", lower-curvature directions, but also amplifies noise along these same directions. It further suggests that as training progresses, the remaining residual signal becomes less concentrated in high-curvature directions and relatively more prominent in small, flat curvature directions (Section 2.1).

This leads to a stage-dependent finding: positive p helps early by emphasizing high-curvature directions and accelerating residual-signal contraction, whereas a mildly negative p helps later by refocusing the updates towards flat directions that still carry useful residual signal. Thus, we uncover a previously overlooked late-stage training behavior: dynamically shifting emphasis toward flat directions further improves optimization, a stage-dependent advantage that fixed transformations such as Muon cannot capture. Our empirical observations support the predictions of our modelling and show that adapting p across training improves performance (Sections 2.2 to 2.4).

Motivated by these observations, we propose `DynMuon`, a dynamic spectral shaping algorithm that adapts the spectral exponent p over training (Section 3). It leverages a simple decreasing logistic schedule for p, interpolating from positive values early in training to mildly negative values later. To realize our scheduled spectral shaping efficiently, `DynMuon` uses a stage-wise implementation built on the Newton–Schulz Muon update, with a low-order polynomial spectral correction in the mildly negative regime, avoiding full SVD while retaining the same asymptotic per-step cost as Muon. Extensive experiments across model sizes and architectures show that `DynMuon` consistently achieves lower validation loss than Muon across training settings, while reaching target losses with up to **26.5%** fewer training steps. To summarize, our main contributions are:

1. We introduce a dynamic spectral-shaping perspective for matrix-valued updates, reframing Muon-style optimization from a fixed spectral operation into the adaptive problem of choosing a suitable spectral exponent p as training dynamics evolve.
2. We develop a noise-aware local model (section 2) that motivates how the right choice for the spectral exponent changes across training stages through a trade-off between residual-signal reduction and stochastic-noise amplification across local curvature directions.
3. Guided by this model, we uncover a surprising stage-dependent regime: positive spectral exponents help early training, whereas (previously overlooked) mildly negative exponents improve late-stage optimization by emphasizing flat directions that retain useful residual signal.
4. In Section 3, we propose `DynMuon`, a simple and efficient dynamic spectral-shaping algorithm that adapts the spectral exponent throughout training, yielding consistent improvements over Muon across training settings (Section 4).

1.1 Other Related Work

Muon and Spectral Shaping. Recent works have shown that orthonormalizing matrix-shaped momentum can substantially improve neural network / LLM training (Jordan et al., 2024b; Liu et al., 2025). Muon uses Newton–Schulz iterations to produce orthonormalized updates for hidden layers, and recent works explain its effectiveness through trust-region, norm-constrained, and spectral preconditioning perspectives (Kovalev, 2025; Pethick et al., 2025; Chen et al., 2026; Ma et al., 2026). A growing line of work studies variants of matrix updates, including specific fixed positive choices of p within the $U\Sigma^p V^\top$, as well as spike-aware, anisotropic, or mode-guided transformations (Qi et al., 2026; Huang et al., 2026; Yang, 2026; Lu et al., 2026). More broadly, matrix-aware optimizers such as Shampoo, SOAP, and PolarGrad exploit non-diagonal geometry and spectral structure beyond coordinate-wise scaling (Gupta et al., 2018; Shi et al., 2023; Vyas et al., 2025; Lau et al., 2026). These methods establish spectral structure as an important design axis, but they largely use fixed or task-specific transformations. In contrast, this paper studies whether the preferred spectral bias should evolve across training stages, systematically developing a dynamic spectral shaping rule.

Dynamic Scheduling in Optimization. Dynamic schedules are widely used to adapt optimization behavior across training phases, including learning-rate annealing, restarts, warmup, cyclical policies, iteration-dependent scaling, and studies of stage-dependent subspace behavior (Loshchilov & Hutter,

2017; Smith, 2018; Smith & Topin, 2018; Ma & Yarats, 2021; You et al., 2020; Gao et al., 2025; Deng et al., 2026). Unlike schedules that mainly modulate scalar hyperparameters, `DynMuon` dynamically schedules the spectral shape of matrix-valued updates, allowing the emphasis we put over different spectral directions to evolve across training stages. See extended related work in Section H.

2 Motivating Dynamic Spectral Shaping with an Idealized Model

Although Muon-style methods (Jordan et al., 2024b; Liu et al., 2025) have shown strong empirical gains from the orthonormalized update, recent analyses suggest that their effectiveness can vary across training conditions (Qi et al., 2026; Dragutinović & Ranganath, 2026). This raises the question of whether fixed Muon-style spectral shaping remains optimal throughout training. Motivated by this, we systematically vary ***spectral component*** p in the spectral-shaping family $U\Sigma^p V^\top$ and study its effect on optimization. Before proposing our method, we first develop a simple noise-aware local model, using a standard local quadratic and gradient-noise approximation, to isolate how p controls the trade-off between useful training signal and gradient noise (Section 2.1). We note that our modelling and analysis make several simplifying approximations (which we empirically validate). Our goal is not to provide a full end-to-end convergence theory, but rather to introduce a minimal set of reasonable approximations that yield mechanistic insights into the role of the spectral exponent p in training dynamics. In particular, our modelling predicts two stage-dependent regimes: positive p can benefit early training, whereas mildly negative p can improve late-stage training. We *empirically validate these predictions* in Sections 2.2 to 2.4, showing that our simplified modelling can serve as a useful and *predictive* guide for designing dynamic spectral shaping.

2.1 A Noise-Aware Local Model for Spectral Shaping

Our starting point is to consider one such weight matrix $W_t \in \mathbb{R}^{m\times n}$ at training step t, and take its stochastic gradient $G_t = U_t\Sigma_t V_t^\top$ as the update matrix. Applying spectral shaping with exponent p gives $D_t^{(p)} := U_t\Sigma_t^p V_t^\top$. With the learning rate η, the parameter update is

$$W_{t+1} = W_t - \eta D_t^{(p)} = W_t - \eta (G_t G_t^\top)^{\frac{p-1}{2}} G_t. \tag{2}$$

Let $L(W)$ be the population loss and $W^\star$ a nearby approximate local minimizer ($\nabla L(W^\star) \approx 0$). We define the ***residual signal*** $E_t := W_t - W^\star$ and study its evolution under Equation (2). Since the update is driven by the gradient, we relate the gradient to the residual signal E_t by performing a locally linear approximation of the population gradient around $W^\star$ (Nocedal & Wright, 2006). We further use a one-sided Kronecker-factored approximation to the local Hessian action, in the spirit of K-FAC (Martens & Grosse, 2015). We treat the normalized effective curvature as approximately fixed over a short training window (see Figure 8):

$$\nabla L(W_t) \approx \nabla L(W^\star) + \nabla^2 L(W^\star)[E_t] \approx \kappa_t H E_t, \tag{3}$$

where $H = Q\Lambda Q^\top$ is a normalized effective local curvature matrix with $\Lambda = \mathrm{diag}(h_1, \ldots, h_m)$, $h_i \in (0, 1]$, and $\max_i h_i = 1$. The scalar $\kappa_t > 0$ captures the overall curvature scale. The eigenvectors of H define the *modes* of the local loss landscape, where each mode corresponds to one curvature direction and h_i measures the curvature along that direction. Modes with larger h_i are called ***strong modes*** and modes with smaller h_i are called ***flat modes***. To account for stochasticity in training, we decompose the stochastic gradient G_t into the population gradient and a zero-mean noise Ξ_t, following standard unbiased SGD assumptions (Bottou et al., 2018). Plugging into (3) gives:

$$G_t = \nabla L(W_t) + \Xi_t \approx \kappa_t H E_t + \Xi_t. \tag{4}$$

Since the shaped update depends on $(G_t G_t^\top)^{\frac{p-1}{2}}$, we relate the spectral structure of $G_t G_t^\top$ to the effective local curvature. We model the gradient spectrum as aligned with the curvature and related by a power law, $G_t G_t^\top \approx \alpha_t H^\gamma$, where $\alpha_t > 0$ and $\gamma > 0$. This gives $(G_t G_t^\top)^{\frac{p-1}{2}} \approx \alpha_t^{\frac{p-1}{2}} H^{\frac{\gamma(p-1)}{2}}$, so spectral shaping acts as a curvature-dependent reweighting. Related empirical gradient–curvature validations are reported in Section B.2. Substituting this approximation into Equation (2), absorbing $\alpha_t^{\frac{p-1}{2}}$ into the effective learning rate η_t, and using Equation (4), the residual signal evolves as

$$E_{t+1} = \left(I - \eta_t \kappa_t H^{1+\frac{\gamma(p-1)}{2}}\right) E_t - \eta_t H^{\frac{\gamma(p-1)}{2}} \Xi_t. \tag{5}$$

Mode-Wise Signal–Noise Tradeoff. Based on the intuitive "idealized" analysis above, we now arrive at the main training dynamics equation that we focus on. Since p acts through powers of the curvature matrix $H = Q\Lambda Q^\top$ in Equation (5), its effect can vary across curvature directions. This motivates a mode-wise analysis, where we project E_t and Ξ_t onto the eigenbasis of H. Define $\widetilde{E}_t := Q^\top E_t$ and $Z_t := Q^\top \Xi_t$. Let $\delta_{i,t}$ and $\xi_{i,t}$ denote the i-th coordinates of $\widetilde{E}_t$ and Z_t. Then mode i evolves as

$$\boxed{\delta_{i,t+1} = \left(1 - \eta_t \kappa_t h_i^{1+\frac{\gamma(p-1)}{2}}\right)\delta_{i,t} - \eta_t h_i^{\frac{\gamma(p-1)}{2}}\xi_{i,t}.} \tag{6}$$

We next consider the squared residual for each mode. Assume that the mode-wise noise is conditionally zero-mean with $\mathbb{E}[\xi_{i,t} \mid \delta_{i,t}] = 0$ and $\mathbb{E}[\xi_{i,t}^2 \mid \delta_{i,t}] = c_{i,t}$, where $c_{i,t}$ denotes the noise level of mode i at step t. Then Equation (6) gives

$$\boxed{\mathbb{E}[\delta_{i,t+1}^2 \mid \delta_{i,t}] = \left(1 - \eta_t \kappa_t h_i^{1+\frac{\gamma(p-1)}{2}}\right)^2 \delta_{i,t}^2 + \eta_t^2 h_i^{\gamma(p-1)} c_{i,t}.} \tag{7}$$

Thus, p induces a *mode-wise signal–noise trade-off*. The deterministic multiplier $1-\eta_t\kappa_t h_i^{1+\gamma(p-1)/2}$ controls residual-signal contraction: within the stable range $(0, 1)$, larger $h_i^{1+\gamma(p-1)/2}$ makes this multiplier smaller and contracts $\delta_{i,t}$ faster. Increasing p therefore favors contraction in strong, high-curvature modes, whereas decreasing p increases the relative contraction strength in flat modes. However, the stochastic term is scaled by $h_i^{\gamma(p-1)}$, so decreasing p also amplifies noise most strongly in flat modes. Without noise, $p = -1$ would maximize contraction in flat modes; with noise, the choice of p must balance residual-signal contraction against noise amplification. This decomposition also provides the basis for the mode-wise predictions tested in Section 2.3, where we empirically estimate the residual-signal "energy" $\delta_{i,t}^2$ and noise level $c_{i,t}$ during training.

Takeaway: The spectral exponent p controls a mode-wise signal–noise tradeoff. Larger p accelerates residual signal contraction in strong modes, while smaller p shifts more emphasis toward flat modes but also amplifies noise along them.

2.2 Why a Slightly Negative Spectral Exponent Is Preferred in the Late Stage

Building on the mode-wise signal–noise tradeoff in Equation (7), we assess how different spectral exponents affect training performance. We focus on $p \in [-1, 1]$, covering the representative cases in Section 1.1. At a high level, training improves when the update reduces residual signal in modes where substantial signal remains. Since varying p changes which modes are emphasized, the preferred choice of p should depend on how the residual signal is distributed across modes during training.

Why Residual Signal Concentrates in Flat Modes Late in Training. For $h_i \in (0, 1]$, the contraction strength $h_i^{1+\gamma(p-1)/2}$ increases with h_i. The residual signal in strong modes tends to decay earlier, whereas the signal in flat modes decays more slowly and can remain substantial later in training. This suggests that the residual signal becomes relatively more concentrated in flat modes as training progresses. This is also consistent with the local gradient approximation in Equation (3). Projecting the population gradient onto mode i gives $g_{i,t} \approx \kappa_t h_i \delta_{i,t}$, hence $\delta_{i,t} \approx \frac{g_{i,t}}{\kappa_t h_i}$. Thus, for comparable projected gradient magnitudes, a smaller curvature h_i corresponds to a larger residual signal.

When a Mildly Negative Exponent Helps in the Late Stage. Once the residual signal becomes more concentrated in flat modes in the late training stage, it can be beneficial to place relatively more emphasis on those modes rather than on strong modes whose residual signal has already decayed. Decreasing p achieves this effect by allocating relatively more contraction to flat modes. However, from Equation (7), lowering p also increases the noise level, especially in flat modes. Thus, a negative p can improve over $p = 0$ only when the residual signal in flat modes is large enough relative to the noise. This also explains why the exponent should be only mildly negative: otherwise, noise amplification can outweigh the benefit from reducing the residual signal and degrade optimization.

2.3 Validating Predictions of Our Model

We empirically examine whether the signal-noise conditions predicted by our model arise under Muon ($p = 0$). Using a GPT-style model with hidden dimension 768, we freeze all parameters except

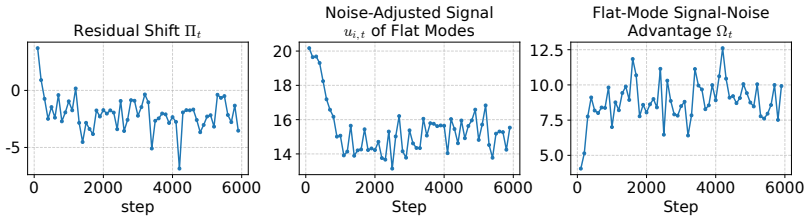

Figure 1: Validation of the mode-wise model predictions. **Left:** The residual-shift metric Π_t decreases during training and becomes negative, indicating that the residual signal shifts from strong, high-curvature modes toward flat modes. **Middle:** The noise-adjusted signal in flat modes remains substantially positive, indicating that flat modes retain the residual signal that is large relative to their noise level. **Right:** The flat-mode signal-noise advantage remains positive, showing that flat modes have a favorable signal-noise tradeoff relative to strong modes in the late stage.

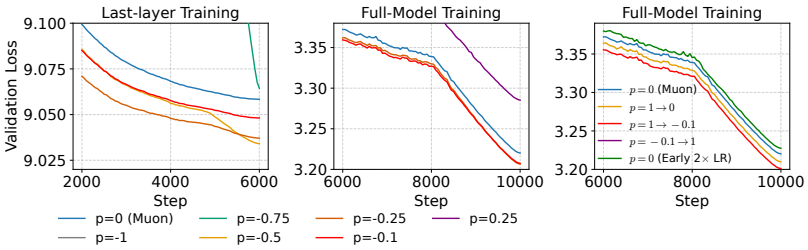

Figure 2: Training performance of stage-dependent spectral shaping. **Left/Middle:** Mildly negative exponents improve late-stage validation loss in both last-layer and full-model training, while overly negative and late-positive exponents degrade performance. **Right:** Early positive p improves full-model training, with the positive-to-negative schedule achieving the lowest validation loss. In contrast, simply doubling the early learning rate or reversing the schedule from negative to positive performs worse than Muon. The panels use capped y-axes; uncapped versions are shown in Appendix Figure 11.

one target matrix in the final transformer block and estimate its mode-wise curvature, residual signal, and noise. Full setup and estimation details are provided in Section A.

Empirical Modes and Proxies. In our analysis, modes are curvature directions, which are expensive to track directly in practice. We therefore use the singular directions of the Muon update as empirical modes, since spectral shaping reweights singular values along these directions. For each empirical mode i at step t, we estimate local curvature $\hat{h}_{i,t}$, mode-wise noise level $\hat{c}_{i,t}$, and residual-signal energy $\hat{\delta}^2_{i,t}$. Specifically, $\hat{h}_{i,t}$ is estimated via Hessian-vector products, $\hat{c}_{i,t}$ from the variance of independent mini-batch gradient projections, and $\hat{\delta}^2_{i,t}$ from fixed-probe gradient projections using the local gradient approximation in Equation (3).

Validating Residual-Signal Concentration in Flat Modes. To test whether the residual signal concentrates in flat modes, we sort modes by curvature $\hat{h}_{i,t}$ and define $\mathcal{S}$ and $\mathcal{F}$ as the top-8 highest-curvature and bottom-8 lowest-curvature modes, respectively. We summarize each bucket by the median $\log$ residual signal energy and define the *residual shift* as $\Pi_t = \mathrm{med}_{i\in\mathcal{S}} \log \hat{\delta}^2_{i,t} - \mathrm{med}_{i\in\mathcal{F}} \log \hat{\delta}^2_{i,t}$. Thus, $\Pi_t < 0$ indicates that flat modes have a larger residual signal than strong modes. Figure 1 (left) shows that Π_t steadily decreases and becomes mostly negative after roughly 500 steps, supporting the predicted late-stage concentration of residual signal in flat modes.

Validating Flat-Mode Signal After Accounting for Noise. Since a negative exponent also amplifies noise, we measure whether the flat-mode residual signal remains useful after accounting for noise. Therefore, we define the mode-wise *noise-adjusted signal* $u_{i,t} := \log \hat{\delta}^2_{i,t} - \log \hat{c}_{i,t}$, which measures the residual signal relative to the noise, and the *flat-mode signal-noise advantage* $\Omega_t = \mathrm{med}_{i\in\mathcal{F}} u_{i,t} - \mathrm{med}_{i\in\mathcal{S}} u_{i,t}$, which compares this noise-adjusted signal between flat and strong modes. Figures 1 (middle, right) show that the noise-adjusted signal $u_{i,t}$ in flat modes remains substantially positive and that Ω_t quickly increases and remains positive. This indicates that flat modes retain the residual signal large enough relative to noise, matching the condition under which a mildly negative exponent can improve over the Muon choice $p = 0$. We provide additional empirical analysis in Section B.

Training Performance for Mildly Negative p. We next test whether the mode-wise analysis translates into improved training performance by switching from $p = 0$ to a negative exponent at step 500, when the residual signal begins to concentrate in flat modes. We first compare negative exponents $p \in \{-0.1, -0.25, -0.5, -0.75, -1\}$ in both last-layer-only and full-model training. As shown in Figure 2 (left, middle), a mildly negative p provides the best performance: $p = -0.1$ and $p = -0.25$ outperform the Muon default $p = 0$, while more aggressive choices such as $p = -0.75$ and $p = -1$ become unstable and perform much worse. This agrees with our analysis: moderate emphasis on flat modes helps late-stage optimization, but overly negative p amplifies noise and degrades performance. Conversely, switching to a positive exponent ($p = 0.25$) at the same step degrades full-model training performance, as shown in Figure 2 (middle). This result further supports our prediction that late-stage gains specifically stem from emphasizing flat modes.

Takeaway: In late training, residual signal shifts toward flat modes, making a slightly negative spectral exponent preferable because it allocates more contraction to these directions. However, this preference is mild: if p is too negative, noise amplification can outweigh the contraction benefit and hurt training. This matches our empirical results, where mildly negative values improve performance while more aggressive negative values degrade it.

2.4 Why a Positive Spectral Exponent Can Help in the Early Stage

Beyond the late-stage preference for a mildly negative exponent, we ask whether the Muon default $p = 0$ is also optimal early in training. Our analysis suggests otherwise: early residual signal can remain concentrated in high-curvature modes, and increasing p accelerates contraction of the strong-mode residual signal while reducing the noise-amplification factor $h_i^{\frac{\gamma(p-1)}{2}}$. Thus, before the residual distribution shifts toward flat modes, a positive exponent can accelerate early optimization by prioritizing the strong-mode residual signal with limited noise amplification.

Training Performance with an Early Positive Exponent. To test this prediction, we use a simple two-stage schedule that sets $p = 1$ for the first 500 steps, then switches to either $p = 0$ or $p = -0.1$. As Figure 2 (right) shows, both early-positive schedules achieve lower validation loss than the fixed Muon baseline, supporting the view that prioritizing strong modes early improves the optimization trajectory. Notably, the schedule transitioning from $p = 1$ to $p = -0.1$ yields the best performance. This validates our stage-dependent picture: a positive exponent accelerates early training, while a mildly negative exponent improves late-stage optimization as the residual signal becomes relatively more concentrated in flat modes. We further test two alternative explanations. First, to rule out the possibility that the early positive p merely acts as a larger effective learning rate, we test a Muon variant that doubles the learning rate during the first 500 steps while keeping $p = 0$. This variant performs worse than fixed Muon, indicating that the gain from an early positive p is distinct from simple step-size scaling. Second, we evaluate a reverse schedule that switches from $p = -0.1$ to $p = 1$ at step 500. This schedule also performs worse than fixed Muon, consistent with our analysis that positive p should be applied early, while mildly negative p is beneficial only later.

Takeaway: A positive early-stage exponent helps reduce strong-mode residual signal before the remaining residual signal shifts toward flat modes, yielding lower validation loss than fixed Muon.

3 DynMuon: Dynamic Spectral Shaping

The above analysis and observations motivate `DynMuon` (Algorithm 1 in Section C), which dynamically adapts spectral shaping by monotonically decreasing the spectral exponent from a positive early-stage value to a mildly negative late-stage value, while maintaining computational efficiency.

Logistic Scheduling of the Spectral Exponent. Although the residual-signal distribution across modes can guide the choice of p, estimating it online would require additional forward and backward passes. We therefore use a simple logistic schedule to approximate a smooth decreasing transition of p_t over training without this extra cost. Given the current training step t and total steps T, we set

$$u_t = \frac{t/T - \tau}{w}, \qquad a_t = \frac{1}{1 + \exp(u_t)}, \qquad p_t = p_{\min} + a_t(p_{\max} - p_{\min}).$$

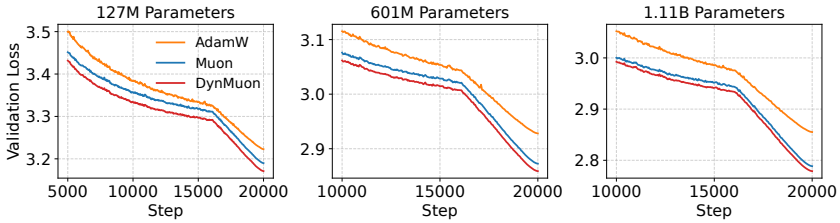

Figure 3: Validation loss trajectories across three model scales trained on 10B tokens.

Here, τ controls the transition point and w controls the transition width, with a smaller w producing a sharper switch. We set $p_{\max} = 1$ and $p_{\min} = -0.25$, where $p_{\min} = -0.25$ is the best-performing negative exponent based on our observations in Section 2.2 (we also ablate $p_{\min}$; see Section 4).

Efficient Updates. Given a scheduled exponent p_t, exact SVD can realize the corresponding fractional spectral shaping, but it is computationally expensive. Muon avoids SVD by approximating the $p = 0$ polar update with a small fixed number of `Newton--Schulz` (NS) iterations, but it does not directly support arbitrary exponents. To obtain an efficient implementation, `DynMuon` uses an equivalent factorization of the target spectral shaping (Appendix Algorithm 2). For the normalized input $X_n = X/\|X\|_F$ and $A := X_n X_n^\top$, we first write

$$U\Sigma^p V^\top = (X_n X_n^\top)^{\frac{p-1}{2}} X_n = (X_n X_n^\top)^{\frac{p}{2}} (X_n X_n^\top)^{-\frac{1}{2}} X_n = A^{\frac{p}{2}} A^{-\frac{1}{2}} X_n. \tag{8}$$

Since $Y_\mu = A^{-\frac{1}{2}} X_n$ corresponds to the Muon update, it can be efficiently approximated by NS. It remains to approximate the left correction $A^{\frac{p}{2}}$. We approximate it by a second-order Taylor expansion around the identity I. Letting $E = A - I, \delta = p/2$, we have $A^{\frac{p}{2}} \approx C = I + \delta E + \frac{1}{2}\delta(\delta - 1)E^2$. Our use of C does not rely on pointwise approximation accuracy: for $p < 0$, C preserves the preference for smaller singular values while limiting additional noise amplification (Section D). The target spectral shaping is then given by $\widetilde{X} = \|X\|_F^p C Y_\mu$. For $X \in \mathbb{R}^{m\times n}$ with $m \le n$, `DynMuon` adds only one polynomial correction of cost $O(m^2 n + m^3)$ on top of NS computations. Thus, our method has the *same asymptotic complexity* as NS-based Muon. Figure 5 (right) shows that our approximation closely tracks exact SVD throughout training.

Stable Anchoring for Positive Exponents. `DynMuon` uses a simple stage-wise scheme to implement spectral shaping with the scheduled exponent p_t (lines 7–10 in Algorithm 1). For computational efficiency, the nonnegative regime uses two inexpensive endpoint updates: the raw update ($p = 1$) when $p_t \ge 0.25$, and the NS-based Muon update ($p = 0$) when $0 \le p_t < 0.25$. For $p_{\min} \le p_t < 0$, `DynMuon` applies the polynomial correction described above using the scheduled exponent p_t. The raw update provides the early emphasis on dominant singular directions motivated by our analysis, while the Muon update serves as an intermediate stage before negative shaping. Our scheduling ablations also support the effectiveness of this scheme (Figure 6).

4 Evaluation

Models and Datasets. We evaluate `DynMuon` on two decoder-only Transformer families: GPT-style models at multiple scales following modded-nanoGPT Jordan et al. (2024a) and a Qwen-style model, with detailed configurations summarized in Tables 2 and 3. The GPT-style models use rotary position embeddings Su et al. (2024), RMSNorm, and squared ReLU MLPs So et al. (2021). The Qwen-style model uses pre-normalized Transformer blocks with RMSNorm, grouped-query attention, and gated SiLU MLPs. All models use sequence length 1024 and global batch size 512. Our main experiments use 10B tokens from FineWeb, and we additionally evaluate on FineWeb-Edu Penedo et al. (2024). To study training-budget scaling, we vary the number of training tokens from 2.5B to 20B.

Baselines. We compare `DynMuon` against Muon and AdamW Loshchilov & Hutter (2019). Muon is our primary and most directly relevant baseline, while AdamW serves as a standard, widely used optimizer baseline. We further include NorMuon (Li et al., 2025) as an additional Muon-variant baseline in Section F. Unless otherwise specified, the default learning rates are 0.01 for Muon and `DynMuon`, and 0.002 for AdamW. We also vary learning rates for all methods. By default, `DynMuon` uses $p_{\max} = 1$ and $p_{\min} = -0.25$. Additional evaluation setup details are provided in Section E.

Table 1: Performance and efficiency of DynMuon relative to Muon across GPT-style model scales. Steps to Target uses the validation loss reached by Muon at 80% of training as the target. Step Saving reports the relative step reduction, and Per-Step Time is the average ms/step.

Tokens	Method (Size)	Best Val. Loss (↓)	Steps to Target (↓)	Step Saving (↑)	Per-Step Time (ms)
10B	Muon (127M)	3.190	16000	0.0%	1142.4
	DynMuon (127M)	**3.171**	**12500**	**21.9%**	1150.3
	Muon (601M)	2.872	16000	0.0%	4121.7
	DynMuon (601M)	**2.858**	**13950**	**12.8%**	4200.1
	Muon (1.1B)	2.788	16000	0.0%	6883.3
	DynMuon (1.1B)	**2.776**	**14300**	**10.6%**	7055.8
20B	Muon (127M)	3.139	30400	0.0%	1137.3
	DynMuon (127M)	**3.124**	**22350**	**26.5%**	1151.8
	Muon (601M)	2.808	30400	0.0%	4126.2
	DynMuon (601M)	**2.797**	**25000**	**17.8%**	4184.8
	Muon (1.1B)	2.722	30400	0.0%	6889.77
	DynMuon (1.1B)	**2.713**	**26450**	**13.0%**	6910.1

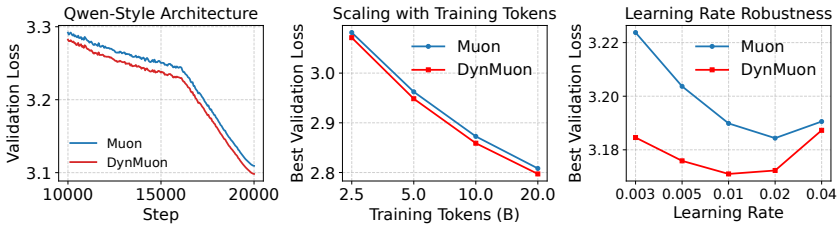

Figure 4: DynMuon outperforms Muon across architectures, token budgets, and learning rates.

Main Results. We train GPT-style models at three scales on FineWeb using both 10B and 20B token budgets. As shown in Figure 3, DynMuon consistently achieves the lowest validation loss across all three model scales compared with baselines. The improvement over Muon is clear in the late training stage, where scheduling the spectral exponent toward mildly negative values provides a stable advantage. Table 1 quantifies the practical significance of these gains in terms of both step efficiency and runtime overhead. For each model size and token budget, we define a fixed target as the validation loss reached by Muon at 80% of training, and record the first step at which DynMuon reaches it. Across model scales, DynMuon reaches the target **10.6–26.5%** earlier than Muon, requiring substantially fewer training steps to reach the same validation loss. Meanwhile, DynMuon has a per-step time ratio of only **1.003–1.025**× relative to Muon, indicating negligible additional runtime cost. Thus, DynMuon improves final performance and step efficiency with minimal per-step overhead.

Model Architecture. To evaluate transferability beyond GPT-style models, we train a 171M Qwen-style decoder-only Transformer using the configuration in Table 3. As shown in Figure 4 (left), DynMuon consistently achieves lower validation loss than Muon, suggesting that dynamic spectral shaping transfers across decoder-only architectures.

Training Token Scale. To evaluate robustness across training budgets, we vary the number of training tokens from 2.5B to 20B for the 601M model. As shown in Figure 4 (middle), DynMuon consistently achieves lower validation loss than Muon across all tested budgets, suggesting that the benefit of dynamic spectral shaping is not tied to a particular training horizon.

Learning Rate. We test learning-rate robustness on the 127M model under the 10B-token budget by sweeping Muon and DynMuon over learning rates from 0.003 to 0.04. As shown in Figure 4 (right), DynMuon outperforms Muon across all tested learning rates and has a flatter curve near its optimum, indicating lower sensitivity to learning-rate choice.

Training Dataset. We test corpus robustness by replacing FineWeb with FineWeb-Edu on the 127M model while keeping all other settings unchanged. As shown in Figure 5 (left), DynMuon consistently outperforms Muon on FineWeb-Edu, with the advantage becoming more pronounced in the late stage. This suggests that the benefit of dynamic spectral shaping is robust to changes in the training corpus.

Ablation on $p_{\min}$. We vary the scheduling endpoint $p_{\min}$ on the 127M model. As shown in Figure 5 (middle), mildly negative choices outperform Muon, with $p_{\min} = -0.25$ achieving the best validation

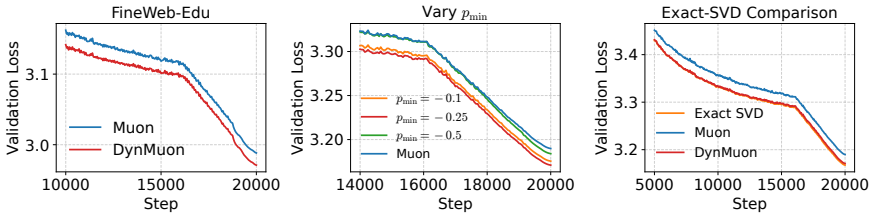

Figure 5: Additional experiments for DynMuon across corpora, $p_{\min}$ choices, and spectral-shaping implementations. **Left:** DynMuon outperforms Muon on FineWeb-Edu. **Middle:** mildly negative $p_{\min}$ values perform best. **Right:** our spectral shaping approximations closely tracks exact SVD.

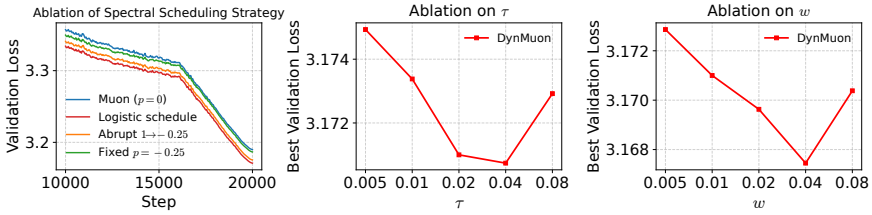

Figure 6: Ablation of spectral scheduling strategies and logistic schedule parameters (τ, w).

loss. More aggressive negative choices, e.g., $p_{\min} = -0.5$, perform worse, consistent with our analysis that overly negative exponents can degrade training performance.

Comparison with Exact Spectral Operations. We compare DynMuon with an exact-SVD implementation of the same dynamic spectral schedule. As shown in Figure 5 (right), DynMuon closely matches exact SVD in validation loss, and both outperform Muon. Since exact SVD is roughly $3\times$ slower, DynMuon captures the benefit of dynamic spectral shaping at much lower cost.

Ablation on Spectral Scheduling, Logistic Parameters (τ, w). We ablate both the scheduling strategy and the logistic schedule parameters (τ, w). As shown in Figure 6 (left), our default logistic schedule outperforms standard Muon and two ablations: an abrupt switch from $p = 1$ to $p = -0.25$ at step 500, and a fixed negative schedule with $p = -0.25$ throughout training. The abrupt schedule underperforms the logistic schedule, suggesting that a smooth transition between spectral shaping is more effective than a sharp switch. The fixed negative schedule performs substantially worse, showing that negative shaping throughout training is insufficient and supporting our stage-dependent design. Figures 6 (middle, right) further show that DynMuon is reasonably robust to the transition point τ and transition width w, with the best performance observed around $\tau = 0.04$ and $w = 0.04$.

Additional Results. Section F reports consistent gains over Muon across seeds and improvements over NorMuon. Section G examines whether mild negative shaping remains beneficial under CE–Brier loss interpolations (Glenn et al., 1950).

5 Conclusions and Future Directions

We studied a broader power-law spectral shaping family, $U\Sigma^p V^\top$. Our noise-aware local model reveals a stage-dependent signal-noise trade-off: early training benefits from positive p that emphasizes high-curvature directions, while late training benefits from mildly negative p that reallocates update strength towards flat directions. We propose DynMuon, which efficiently schedules p from positive to mildly negative values during training. Experiments across model scales, architectures, and training settings show that DynMuon consistently achieves lower validation loss than Muon. Our experiments focus on validating the hypothesis that practical improvements are obtainable by varying p over training. We show that this schedule outperforms fixed p choices and the standard $p = 0$ Muon update, but it is not the final word on the matter. Indeed, the best choice of p may depend on training-time dynamics that cannot be fully anticipated in advance. This suggests interesting directions for future work: selecting p *online* based on observed optimization statistics. Such methods could use more expensive signals, provided they are applied only occasionally rather than at every training step. Since the useful range of p appears relatively small, we conjecture that a future near-optimal adaptive Muon-style scheduler may only need to re-estimate p occasionally during training.

AI USE STATEMENT

We used generative AI tools only for language polishing. We did not use generative AI tools to develop research ideas or hypotheses, design the methodology or experiments, implement the proposed method, analyze or interpret experimental results. All AI-assisted edits were reviewed by the authors. The authors take full responsibility for the final content of this work.

ETHICS STATEMENT

This work focuses on improving optimization methods for language-model training. We do not anticipate any specific ethical concerns arising from the proposed method or the experiments presented in this paper.

REPRODUCIBILITY STATEMENT

We provide the information needed to reproduce our results throughout the main paper and appendix. These include the update procedure, spectral-shaping schedule, and implementation details of `DynMuon`, along with the model configurations, datasets, training hyperparameters, and evaluation procedures. We also provide our code in the supplementary material to facilitate reproduction of the proposed method and the reported experimental comparisons.

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Table 2: Model scales for the GPT-style architecture used in our main experiments.

Model	d_{model} / Layers / Heads	Tokens/Step	Total Steps	Total Tokens
127M	512 / 24 / 8	0.524M	20K	10B
601M	1280 / 24 / 20	0.524M	20K	10B
1.11B	1792 / 24 / 28	0.524M	20K	10B

Table 3: Model scale for the Qwen-style architecture used in our experiments.

Model	d_{model} / Layers / Heads / KV Heads	MLP Dim.	Tokens/Step	Steps	Total Tokens
171M	512 / 24 / 8 / 2	2816	0.524M	20K	10B

A Validation Details in Section 2

A.1 Validation Setup

To validate the predictions of our model, we run experiments on a GPT-style model with hidden dimension 768, 12 layers, and 6 attention heads (Ahn et al., 2025), trained on FineWeb (Penedo et al., 2024). We consider two settings: last-layer-only training and full-model training. For last-layer-only training, we freeze all model parameters and optimize only one selected matrix-valued parameter in the final Transformer block. We train for 6000 steps in the last-layer-only setting and 10000 steps in the full-model setting, using up to 3B training tokens. For optimization, we use a learning rate of 0.01 for matrix-valued parameter updates under both Muon and stage-wise spectral shaping. For non-matrix parameter groups, we use AdamW with a learning rate of 0.001. We apply a weight decay of 0.01 to the main matrix parameter groups. The learning rate uses a linear warmup for the first 1% of training steps, followed by linear decay with a final warmdown ratio of 0.2. For these validation experiments, we use exact SVD to compute spectral shaping for different exponents. For the experiments in Section 2.2, we switch from $p = 0$ to a negative exponent at step 500 and compare $p \in \{-0.1, -0.25, -0.5, -0.75, -1\}$ in both last-layer-only and full-model training. For the validations in Section 2.4, we use a simple two-stage schedule that sets $p = 1$ for the first 500 steps and then switches to either $p = 0$ or $p = -0.1$.

A.2 Empirical Modes and Proxies

In our analysis, modes are curvature directions, which are expensive to track directly in practice. We therefore use the singular directions of the Muon update as empirical modes, since spectral shaping reweights singular values along these directions. For efficiency, at each step t, we retain the top-k directions with $k = 256$ and represent each as $B_{i,t} := u_{i,t}v_{i,t}^\top$.

For each $B_{i,t}$, we estimate the empirical local curvature using a Hessian-vector product:

$$\hat{h}_{i,t} = \langle \nabla^2 L(W_t) B_{i,t}, B_{i,t} \rangle,$$

This gives the curvature scale along the empirical mode $B_{i,t}$.

We estimate the mode-wise noise level by measuring how much the gradient projection varies across independent mini-batches. Specifically, for $n_b = 32$ mini-batches, we compute

$$g_{i,t}^{(b)} := \langle G_t^{(b)}, B_{i,t} \rangle,$$

and define the noise level proxy as the sample variance

$$\hat{c}_{i,t} := \mathrm{Var}_{b \in [n_b]}[g_{i,t}^{(b)}].$$

To estimate residual signal energy, we use a separate fixed probe set of 8 mini-batches. Let $g_{i,t}^{\text{probe}}$ denote the gradient projection on this fixed probe set. Since the probe gradient is averaged over a fixed batch set, we use it as a low-variance proxy for the population-gradient projection along $B_{i,t}$. Using the local relation $g_{i,t} \approx \kappa_t h_i \delta_{i,t}$, we estimate

$$\hat{\delta}_{i,t}^2 := (g_{i,t}^{\text{probe}})^2 / \hat{h}_{i,t}^2,$$

Here, $\hat{h}_{i,t}$ is the HVP-based empirical curvature and already includes the local curvature scale.

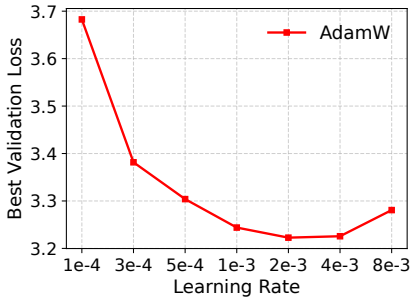

Figure 7: AdamW learning-rate sweep on the 127M GPT-style model, with the best validation loss achieved at 2×10^{-3}.

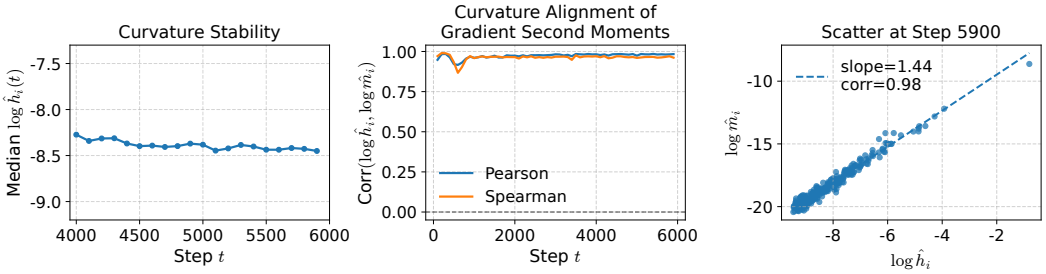

Figure 8: Directional-curvature stability and gradient-curvature alignment. **Left:** The median of $\log \hat{h}_{i,t}$ over the retained empirical modes changes only mildly within the 4k–6k step window, supporting our approximation that the effective local curvature can be treated as approximately fixed over short windows. **Middle:** Pearson (↑) and Spearman (↑) correlations across retained empirical modes between the local curvature proxy $\log \hat{h}_{i,t}$ and the gradient second-moment proxy $\log \hat{m}_{i,t}$, where $\hat{m}_{i,t} := \hat{c}_{i,t} + (g_{i,t}^{\text{probe}})^2$, remain strongly positive throughout training. **Right:** At a representative step ($t = 5900$), the scatter plot of $\log \hat{m}_{i,t}$ versus $\log \hat{h}_{i,t}$ shows a clear positive relationship, where its approximately linear log–log form (slope 1.44) corresponds to the power-law relation in Section 2.1 with $\gamma \approx 1.4$. The left panel supports the local-stability assumption for the effective curvature. The middle and right panels show a positive correlation between gradient second moments and curvature, consistent with the curvature-based model in Equation (5).

B Additional Analysis in Section 2

B.1 Stability of Effective Directional Curvatures

To examine the local-stability assumption in Equation (3), we track $\text{median}_{i \in [k]} \log \hat{h}_{i,t}$ over the 4k–6k step window, where $\hat{h}_{i,t}$ denotes the empirical local curvature estimated along the corresponding direction $B_{i,t}$, as defined in Section 2.3. As shown in Figure 8 (left), this median changes only mildly over this window, supporting our use of an approximately fixed effective local curvature over short training windows.

B.2 Gradient–Curvature Alignment

The relation $G_t G_t^\top \approx \alpha_t H^\gamma$ used in Section 2.1 contains two assumptions: **(A1)** $G_t G_t^\top$ and H approximately share an eigenbasis; and **(A2)** their eigenvalues follow a power law, $\sigma_i^2 \approx \alpha_t h_i^\gamma$, with $\gamma > 0$. We examine their empirical implications through the following diagnostics.

For **(A1)**, we examine whether the Hessian projected onto the retained empirical modes $B_{i,t}$ is approximately diagonal. Define the projected Hessian $H_{Q,t} \in \mathbb{R}^{k \times k}$ by

$$(H_{Q,t})_{ij} := \langle \nabla^2 L(W_t)[B_{j,t}], B_{i,t} \rangle.$$

Table 4: Gradient–curvature diagnostics during single-matrix training with Muon ($d_{\text{model}} = 768$), with all other parameters frozen. Off-diag.: off-diagonal energy fraction of the normalized projected Hessian (%). Slope: maximum local slope of $\log \sigma_i^2$ versus $\log \hat{h}_{i,t}$.

	Attention				MLP			
Training Stage	Off-diag.	Spearman	γ	Slope	Off-diag.	Spearman	γ	Slope
1.67%	1.1	0.990	1.92	2.99	2.1	0.992	2.11	3.49
3.33%	0.4	0.998	1.84	1.99	0.5	0.997	2.05	2.11
10%	0.4	0.994	1.30	1.67	0.5	0.985	1.56	1.58
50%	0.3	0.997	1.17	1.54	0.3	0.994	1.07	1.44
90%	0.3	0.997	1.21	1.54	0.3	0.995	1.10	1.30

Table 5: Gradient–curvature diagnostics for full-model training with `DynMuon` ($d_{\text{model}} = 512$). Entries are medians over six matrices per training stage. Random: off-diagonal fraction after random subspace rotation.

Training Stage	Spearman	γ	R^2	Off-diag. (%)	Random (%)
1%	0.979	1.15	0.96	9.3	98.7
3%	0.992	1.01	0.99	6.3	97.6
10%	0.987	0.98	0.98	6.5	97.3
50%	0.985	0.96	0.97	8.5	98.4
90%	0.982	0.92	0.96	8.8	98.5

Its diagonal entries equal $\hat{h}_{i,t}$. Let $\Lambda_{Q,t} := \operatorname{diag}(\hat{h}_{1,t}, \ldots, \hat{h}_{k,t})$. We report the fraction of the squared Frobenius norm in the off-diagonal entries of $\Lambda_{Q,t}^{-1/2} H_{Q,t} \Lambda_{Q,t}^{-1/2}$. Smaller fractions indicate that the normalized projected Hessian is closer to diagonal. As a control, we repeat the calculation after randomly rotating the basis within the same subspace.

For **(A2)**, we compare $\hat{h}_{i,t}$ with two quantities: the directional gradient second moment and the squared singular values of the update matrix before spectral shaping. We estimate the former as

$$\hat{m}_{i,t} := \hat{c}_{i,t} + (g_{i,t}^{\text{probe}})^2,$$

where $\hat{c}_{i,t}$ estimates the mode-wise noise variance and $g_{i,t}^{\text{probe}}$ estimates the population-gradient projection. For both quantities, we fit power laws against $\hat{h}_{i,t}$ in log space and report the fitted exponents, R^2, and Spearman correlations. For $\hat{m}_{i,t}$, we also report Pearson correlations between $\log \hat{m}_{i,t}$ and $\log \hat{h}_{i,t}$.

Table 4 examines the attention and MLP output projections in the final block (layer 11) of the 12-layer GPT with $d_{\text{model}} = 768$. Each matrix is trained separately with Muon, with all other parameters frozen. Table 5 examines the same two projection types in layers 0, 11, and 23 of the 24-layer, 127M GPT with $d_{\text{model}} = 512$ during full-model `DynMuon` training.

Results. For **(A1)**, normalized off-diagonal fractions are 0.3–2.1% in the single-matrix runs and have stage medians of 6.3–9.3% in full-model training, compared with 91–99% under random rotations. Thus, the normalized projected Hessian is closer to diagonal in the empirical-mode basis than in the randomly rotated bases.

For **(A2)**, the directional gradient second moments are well described by a power-law relation with curvature: fits yield mean $R^2 = 0.95$ over 59 checkpoints, with exponents around 2 early in training and 1.5 later. Figure 8 (middle) shows strongly positive Pearson and Spearman correlations throughout training, with a representative snapshot at $t = 5900$ in the right panel. The squared singular values of the update matrix provide consistent evidence, with Spearman correlations ≥ 0.945 and fitted exponents of approximately 0.65–2.1 across stages and matrices(Tables 4 and 5). In full-model training, these spectral fits achieve stage-median R^2 values of 0.96–0.99. These results support the positive power-law dependence on curvature assumed in **(A2)** within the measured empirical modes.

Table 6: Residual shift Π_t across depths and matrix types, and training stages.

Matrix	Layer	1.67%	3.33%	10%	50%	90%
Attention	0	0.192	-0.021	-3.366	-2.710	-2.821
MLP	0	0.053	-0.119	-2.883	-1.136	-4.080
Attention	5	0.323	-1.110	-3.379	-4.747	-2.604
MLP	5	-0.608	-0.695	-2.505	-2.431	-2.684
Attention	11	2.688	-0.114	-4.436	-3.960	-3.606
MLP	11	3.703	0.906	-2.389	-2.220	-0.652

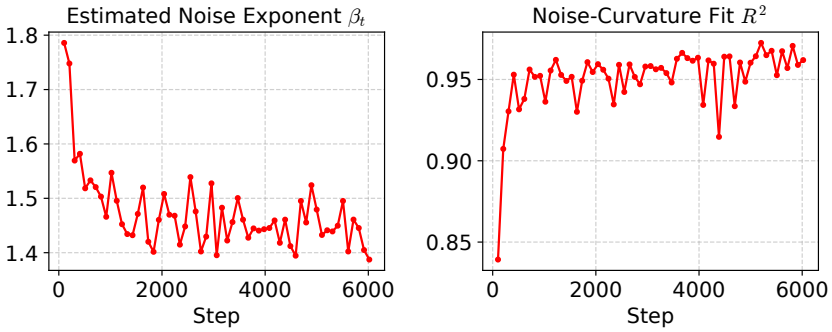

Figure 9: Trends in the estimated noise exponent β_t and the noise-curvature fit R^2 during training. The power-law relationship between noise and curvature remains stable and pronounced throughout training.

B.3 Residual Shift Across Depths and Matrix Types

We extend the frozen analysis in Section 2.3 to six matrices across layers 0, 5, and 11, including attention and MLP output projections. Following the setup in Section A, we train only the selected matrix with Muon in each run and estimate Π_t at steps 100, 200, 600, 3000, and 5400 (1.67%, 3.33%, 10%, 50%, and 90% of training) using the estimators described therein. As shown in Table 6, across all six matrices, Π_t is lower late in training than at the first measured step and is negative at every measured stage from 10% of training onward. These results indicate that the residual signal shifts from strong toward flat modes across layers and matrix types.

B.4 Noise-Curvature Scaling

Motivated by prior work on the geometry of gradient noise, we examine how noise level varies with curvature across modes by fitting a power-law relation $\hat{c}_{i,t} \asymp N_t \hat{h}_{i,t}^{\beta_t}$. The exponent β_t describes the curvature dependence of noise, where a positive β_t means that the raw noise level is larger on high-curvature modes and smaller on flat modes. Figure 9 (left) shows that β_t remains stable around 1.4, while Figure 9 (right) shows consistently high R^2 values, indicating that this power-law relation provides a reliable description of the mode-wise noise structure. Thus, although decreasing p amplifies noise more strongly on flat modes, their raw noise level remains comparatively smaller, leaving room for slightly negative spectral shaping to exploit the flat-mode residual signal.

B.5 Impact of Gradient-Noise Amplification on the Preferred Spectral Exponent p

To investigate how gradient-noise amplification affects the preferred spectral exponent p in the late stage, we vary the batch size from 2^1 to 2^7 to induce different noise levels. We compare negative spectral exponents $p \in \{-0.1, -0.25, -0.5\}$ with Muon ($p = 0$) in last-layer training. As shown in Figure 10, smaller batch sizes, which induce higher gradient noise, favor mildly negative exponents closer to 0: the best exponent is $p = -0.1$ when the batch size is 2, and shifts to $p = -0.25$ when the batch size is 16. As the batch size further increases to 128, the preferred exponent becomes more negative, with $p = -0.5$ achieving the best validation loss. This trend is consistent with our

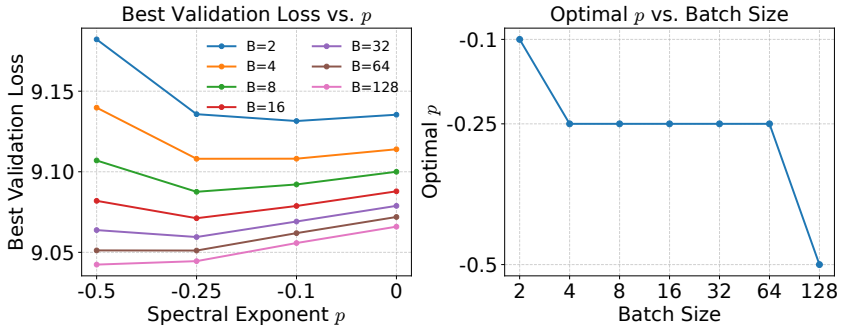

Figure 10: Impact of batch size on the preferred spectral exponent p. Left: best validation loss as a function of p under different batch sizes. Right: the optimal p selected by the best validation loss for each batch size. Smaller batch sizes induce higher gradient noise and favor mildly negative values of p closer to 0, consistent with our analysis that noise amplification limits the benefit of overly negative spectral exponents.

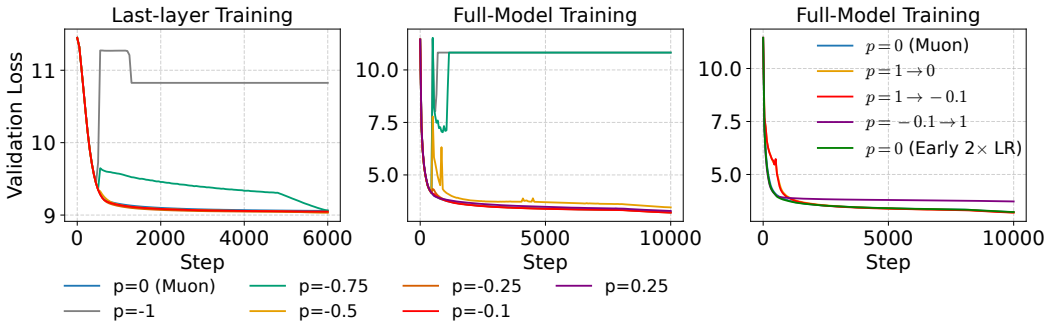

Figure 11: Training performance of stage-dependent spectral shaping. **Left/Middle:** Mildly negative exponents improve late-stage validation loss in both last-layer and full-model training, while overly negative and late-positive exponents degrade performance. **Right:** Early positive p improves full-model training, with the positive-to-negative schedule achieving the lowest validation loss. In contrast, simply doubling the early learning rate or reversing the schedule from negative to positive performs worse than Muon.

analysis: negative spectral shaping can improve late-stage optimization by emphasizing flat modes, but overly negative exponents also amplify noise and can degrade performance, especially when the gradient-noise level is high. These results also suggest that reducing gradient noise, for example, through larger batch sizes, may make more negative spectral exponents beneficial.

C DynMuon Algorithm Details

We provide the full and efficient implementations of `DynMuon` in Algorithms 1 and 2. To facilitate reproducibility, we release a lightweight implementation of these core algorithmic components, including the spectral-exponent schedule and the fast spectral-shaping approximation. The implementation is modular and plug-and-play: it only requires a matrix-valued update as input, applies the scheduled spectral-shaping transform, and returns the shaped update for use in existing training code.

D A Conservative Polynomial Correction

The polynomial correction in Section 3 is used when $p < 0$. Its purpose is to preserve the preference for smaller singular values while limiting the noise amplification. We first establish this spectral property, then connect it to the local model and examine its behavior during training.

Algorithm 1 `DynMuon`

Input: Update matrix M, step t, total steps T, schedule parameters $(p_{\max}, p_{\min}, \tau, w)$
▷ /* Logistic Scheduling */
$u \leftarrow (t/T - \tau)/w$
$a \leftarrow 1/(1 + \exp(u))$
$p_t \leftarrow p_{\min} + a(p_{\max} - p_{\min})$
▷ /* Positive Anchoring */
if $p_t \geq 1/4$ **then**
  return M
else if $p_t \geq 0$ **then**
  return `Newton--Schulz`(M)
else
  return `Fast--Spectral`(M, p_t)

Algorithm 2 `Fast-Spectral`

Input: Target matrix X, spectral exponent p
$X_n \leftarrow X/\|X\|_F$,
▷ /* Compute Muon Update */
$Y_\mu \leftarrow$ `Newton--Schulz`(X_n)
▷ /* Low-Order Correction */
$A \leftarrow X_n X_n^\top$
$E \leftarrow A - I$
$\delta \leftarrow p/2$
$C \leftarrow I + \delta E + \frac{1}{2}\delta(\delta - 1)E^2$
▷ /* Rescaling */
$\widetilde{X} \leftarrow \|X\|_F^p C Y_\mu$
return $\widetilde{X}$

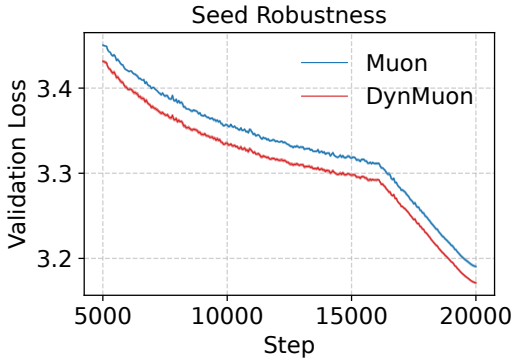

Figure 12: Mean validation loss across three random seeds. Shaded regions indicate one standard deviation, showing that `DynMuon` consistently outperforms Muon with very low seed variability.

Spectral effect. Let $\lambda \in (0, 1]$ be an eigenvalue of the normalized Gram matrix A, corresponding to a normalized squared singular value. The exact correction uses the multiplier $\lambda^{p/2}$. Writing $a = -p/2 > 0$, the polynomial instead uses

$$q_p(\lambda) = 1 + a(1 - \lambda) + \tfrac{1}{2}a(a + 1)(1 - \lambda)^2.$$

Because this polynomial truncates a binomial series with positive coefficients,

$$1 \leq q_p(\lambda) \leq \lambda^{p/2}.$$

It also decreases with λ, so smaller singular values receive larger multipliers. However, unlike the exact negative power, its multiplier remains bounded as $\lambda \to 0$:

$$q_p(0) = 1 + a + \tfrac{1}{2}a(a + 1).$$

Thus, the polynomial retains the preference for smaller singular values while limiting their amplification. Under our gradient–curvature alignment model, this corresponds to a bounded preference for flat modes.

Relation to the local model. We use the local model to compare the one-step effects of the polynomial and exact corrections. To isolate the correction, we fix the spectrum and overall scale and assume an exact polar factor. Let $F_i(q)$ denote the expected squared residual of mode i after one step with multiplier q. By Equation (7), $F_i(q)$ is a convex quadratic in q, and $q = 1$ corresponds to the uncorrected polar update at the same scale. For $0 < \lambda < 1$, the polynomial multiplier lies strictly between 1 and the exact multiplier $q_{\text{ex}} = \lambda^{p/2}$. Convexity therefore implies

$$F_i(q_{\text{ex}}) < F_i(1) \quad \Longrightarrow \quad F_i(q_p) < F_i(1).$$

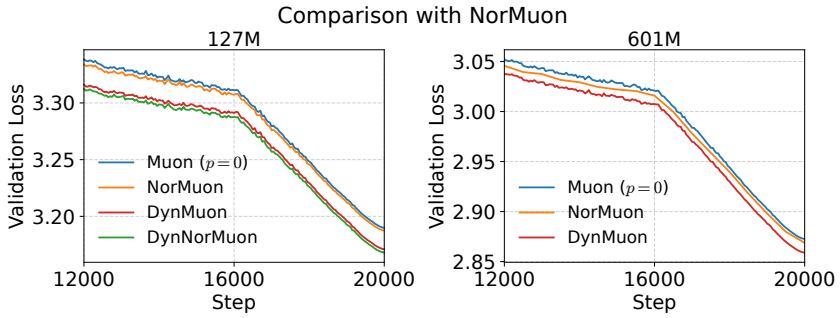

Figure 13: Comparison with NorMuon on the 127M (left) and 601M (right) models. `DynMuon` achieves lower validation loss than both Muon and NorMuon at both scales. NorDynMuon further reduces the final validation loss on the 127M model.

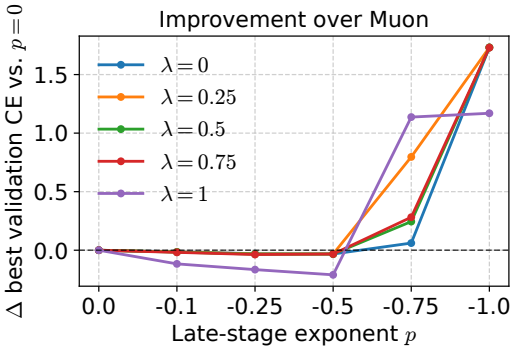

Figure 14: Robustness of mild negative spectral shaping across loss objectives. We plot the best validation CE relative to the corresponding $p = 0$ baseline for each λ. Negative values indicate improvement over Muon. Mildly negative exponents remain beneficial across the CE–Brier interpolation, whereas overly negative exponents degrade performance.

Thus, whenever the exact correction improves a mode over the uncorrected update, the polynomial correction also improves it. At $\lambda = 1$, both corrections leave the update unchanged. This is a conditional one-step result under the stated assumptions, not a guarantee for the full training trajectory. The polynomial also limits noise amplification in this comparison. The noise term in the local model scales quadratically with the multiplier. At $p = -0.25$, we have

$$q_p(\lambda) \le \frac{153}{128} \approx 1.1953.$$

The resulting noise variance is therefore at most $(153/128)^2 \approx 1.429$ times that of the uncorrected polar update at the same scale.

Observed behavior. We examine the attention and MLP output projections in layers 0, 11, and 23 of the 127M GPT during full-model `DynMuon` training. We evaluate these six matrices at all six scheduled diagnostic checkpoints in the negative-exponent stage: 10%, 14%, 50%, 57%, 90%, and 95% of training. This yields 36 records, all with $p \approx -0.25$. Table 7 reports medians over the six checkpoints for each matrix and describes both the concentration of the spectrum and the behavior of the correction. The largest eigenvalue λ_1 and the top-five share measure how much spectral mass lies in the leading directions. The error column compares the polynomial and exact multipliers at λ_1. We also report the local spectral exponent

$$p_{\text{eff}}(\lambda) := \frac{2\lambda q_p'(\lambda)}{q_p(\lambda)}.$$

This quantity equals p for the exact power and zero for a constant multiplier, characterizing the strength of local spectral reweighting. For the five matrices other than the layer-11 MLP projection,

Table 7: Spectral structure and polynomial correction during full-model 127M DynMuon training, with $p \approx -0.25$. Entries are medians over six checkpoints per output projection. Top-5 share is $\sum_{i=1}^{5} \lambda_i / \sum_i \lambda_i$. Error is the relative multiplier error at λ_1.

Layer	Projection	λ_1	Top-5 share	Error (%)	$p_{\text{eff}}(\lambda_1)$
0	Attention	0.67	0.76	0.2	-0.22
	MLP	0.48	0.55	1.2	-0.17
11	Attention	0.56	0.65	0.6	-0.19
	MLP	0.13	0.21	9.7	-0.06
23	Attention	0.75	0.79	0.1	-0.23
	MLP	0.67	0.76	0.2	-0.22

the relative multiplier error at the leading singular direction remains below 3.6% across all six checkpoints. The polynomial assigns smaller multipliers to these leading directions than to tail directions. Under our alignment model, this increases the relative weight of flatter modes while keeping their amplification bounded.

The median cosine similarity between updates from Fast-Spectral and the exact-SVD implementation (Exact) is 0.80 for attention projections and 0.99 for MLP projections. Fast-Spectral also closely tracks Exact in validation loss (Figure 5, right).

E Experimental Details

Models. We consider two decoder-only Transformer families: a GPT-style architecture following the modded-nanoGPT setup Ahn et al. (2025), and a Qwen-style architecture. The GPT-style models use a GPT-2 tokenizer with a vocabulary size of 50304, rotary position embeddings Su et al. (2024), non-parametric RMSNorm, bias-free linear layers, and squared ReLU activations in the MLP blocks So et al. (2021). The Qwen-style models use pre-normalized residual Transformer blocks with grouped-query attention, rotary position embeddings, and a gated MLP with SiLU activation, followed by a final RMSNorm layer and a bias-free output head. As shown in Tables 2 and 3, we evaluate three GPT-style model scales and one Qwen-style model scale. The GPT-style models use $d_{\text{model}} = 512, 1280$, and 1792, while the Qwen-style model uses $d_{\text{model}} = 512$. Across all models, we use the same training setup, with a global batch size of 512, per-device batch size 64, and sequence length 1024.

Baselines. We compare DynMuon against two baselines: Muon Jordan et al. (2024b) and AdamW Loshchilov & Hutter (2019). For Muon and DynMuon, we use a default learning rate of 0.01, and for AdamW, we use a default learning rate of 0.002. We use a weight decay of 0.01 for the main matrix parameter groups. Since Muon and DynMuon are designed for matrix-valued parameter updates, we use AdamW as the default scalar optimizer with a learning rate of 0.001 for parameters outside the main matrix groups, including the embedding table and output head. We tune the learning rate over $\{0.003, 0.005, 0.01, 0.02, 0.04\}$ for Muon and DynMuon, and over $\{10^{-4}, 3\times10^{-4}, 5\times10^{-4}, 10^{-3}, 2\times10^{-3}, 4\times10^{-3}, 8\times10^{-3}\}$ for AdamW. As shown in Figure 7, AdamW achieves its best validation loss at learning rate 2×10^{-3}. We use this tuned AdamW baseline when comparing against Muon and DynMuon in the main experiments. For DynMuon, we use $w = 0.01$, $\tau = 0.02$, $p_{\max} = 1$, and $p_{\min} = -0.25$ by default. For all methods, we use a linear warmup for the first 0.01 of training steps, followed by a linear decay over the remaining steps, with a final warmdown ratio of 0.2.

Dataset. We train our models on pretraining datasets FineWeb and FineWeb-Edu Penedo et al. (2024). Unless otherwise specified, our main setting uses a training budget of 10B tokens of the FineWeb dataset. To study the effect of data scale, we vary the training budget from 2.5B to 20B tokens, corresponding to 5K, 10K, 20K, and 38K training steps, respectively.

Devices. We use NVIDIA H200 GPUs for all experiments.

F Additional Experiments

Seed Robustness. To assess the robustness of `DynMuon` to training randomness, we run Muon and `DynMuon` with three different seeds $\{0, 1, 42\}$. Figure 12 reports the mean validation loss with one-standard-deviation bands across seeds. `DynMuon` consistently outperforms Muon, and the very small across-seed variance suggests that the improvement is robust to training randomness rather than seed-specific effects.

Comparison and Combination with NorMuon. We further compare `DynMuon` with NorMuon Li et al. (2025), a recent Muon variant that augments Muon orthogonalization with neuron-wise normalization based on second-moment statistics. We implement NorMuon following its original algorithmic design in our controlled setting. We additionally evaluate DynNorMuon on the 127M model, combining DynMuon's spectral shaping with NorMuon's normalization. Specifically, after computing the Nesterov momentum matrix M_t, we apply DynMuon's spectral transformation according to its full schedule, followed by NorMuon's row-wise normalization of the transformed matrix. As shown in Figure 13, `DynMuon` consistently achieves lower validation loss than both Muon and NorMuon on the 127M and 601M models. On the 127M model, DynNorMuon achieves a slightly lower final validation loss than `DynMuon`. This result suggests that neuron-wise normalization can complement the spectral shaping in `DynMuon`, yielding an additional improvement in validation loss when the two are combined.

G Discussion on Robustness Across Loss Objectives

The preferred spectral exponent may depend not only on the optimizer but also on the loss objective, since different losses induce different gradient and noise structures. Cross-Entropy (CE) emphasizes poorly predicted target tokens through the $-\log \hat{y}_c$ term, whereas squared-error-like probability losses impose smoother penalties on probability errors. These differences can alter the distribution of the residual signal and stochastic noise across spectral directions. Since p controls the relative update strength across these directions, we investigate whether the mild negative regime identified above is specific to CE or remains beneficial under other probability-space objectives.

To investigate this question, we use a simple parameterized family of probability-space losses that interpolates between CE and a squared-error-like objective:

$$L_\lambda(y, \hat{y}) = (1 - \lambda)\mathrm{CE}(y, \hat{y}) + \lambda \mathrm{Brier}(y, \hat{y}), \tag{9}$$

where $\hat{y}$ denotes the predicted probability distribution and $\mathrm{Brier}(y, \hat{y}) = \sum_i (y_i - \hat{y}_i)^2$ is the squared error on predicted probabilities (Glenn et al., 1950). The endpoint $\lambda = 0$ recovers the standard CE objective, while $\lambda = 1$ gives the Brier score, a probability-space analogue of MSE. By varying λ, we systematically change how the loss weights prediction errors and test whether the preferred mild-negative spectral regime remains robust.

We use the same last-block target-matrix setting as in Section 2.2, but train for 3000 steps. For each loss interpolation parameter $\lambda \in \{0, 0.25, 0.5, 0.75, 1.0\}$, we sweep late-stage exponents $p \in \{0, -0.1, -0.25, -0.5, -0.75, -1.0\}$. As before, we use $p = 0$ before the switch step and apply the target exponent afterward. Because the training objective changes with λ, objective values are not directly comparable across different loss choices. We therefore evaluate all runs using validation CE as a common metric, since it is the standard language-modeling measure of next-token predictive quality and is directly tied to perplexity (Kaplan et al., 2020).

For each configuration (λ, p), we report the difference between its best validation CE and that of the corresponding $p = 0$ baseline under the same λ. Results in Figure 14 show that mildly negative exponents consistently improve upon the Muon baseline across the CE–Brier interpolation, while more aggressive negative exponents such as $p = -0.75$ and $p = -1$ degrade performance. This suggests that the late-stage benefit of mild negative spectral shaping is not specific to standard cross-entropy, but persists across this family of probability-space loss objectives.

Parallel Training. `DynMuon` preserves the matrix-wise update structure of Muon and only changes the local spectral shaping rule through the scheduled exponent p_t. It therefore introduces no additional cross-layer or cross-device coupling beyond Muon, and should be compatible with existing Muon-style parallel training implementations.

H Extended Related Work

Orthonormalization-Based Optimizers for LLM Training. Recent work has shown that explicitly orthonormalizing matrix-shaped momentum can substantially improve optimization in large-scale neural network training (Jordan et al., 2024b; Liu et al., 2025; Wen et al., 2026; Semenov et al., 2025). In particular, Muon applies Newton–Schulz-style iterations to transform matrix-valued momentum into an orthonormalized update direction, and was introduced as a structure-aware optimizer for hidden-layer matrices with strong empirical performance in neural network training (Jordan et al., 2024b). Subsequent large-scale studies further demonstrate that Muon remains effective in language model pretraining when combined with appropriate weight decay and update scaling, supporting orthonormalization-based optimization as a practical paradigm beyond small-scale settings (Liu et al., 2025). Beyond empirical scaling, recent theory has also begun to explain why orthonormalization-based updates can be effective, interpreting Muon through non-Euclidean trust-region optimization, norm-constrained optimization, and spectral preconditioning viewpoints (Kovalev, 2025; Pethick et al., 2025; Chen et al., 2026; Ma et al., 2026). Taken together, these works establish orthonormalization as a promising matrix-aware optimization principle and motivate studying the spectral design of matrix-valued updates more directly.

Spectral Shaping Beyond Fixed Muon Updates. Recent work has begun to view Muon through a broader spectral lens, rather than treating it solely as a fixed orthonormalization rule. For instance, Qi et al. (2026) places Muon within a family of spectral operators of the form $U\Sigma^p V^\top$ and studies how different fixed choices of positive p connect Muon-style updates to momentum and Adam-like normalization. Other recent extensions further explore richer but still largely fixed or task-specific forms of spectral shaping. For example, Spectra (Huang et al., 2026) argues that LLM training exhibits persistent spectral anisotropy with a dominant spike subspace and a long informative tail, and proposes spike-aware shaping that suppresses dominant directions without amplifying the noise-sensitive tail. PRISM (Yang, 2026) augments first-order spectral descent with low-rank quasi-second-order information to perform anisotropic spectral shaping, while SpecMuon (Lu et al., 2026) introduces mode-wise spectral guidance for scientific machine learning settings with stiff multi-scale dynamics. More broadly, beyond Muon-specific extensions, matrix-aware optimizers such as Shampoo, SOAP, and PolarGrad also exploit non-diagonal geometry and spectral structure to reshape updates beyond simple coordinate-wise scaling (Gupta et al., 2018; Shi et al., 2023; Vyas et al., 2025; Lau et al., 2026). These works establish spectral structure as an important design axis for matrix-valued optimization. However, they mainly study fixed or task-specific spectral transformations. In contrast, `DynMuon` asks whether the preferred spectral shaping should evolve across different training stages, and studies dynamic spectral shaping rather than a single fixed spectral rule. We primarily compare against Muon because `DynMuon` directly generalizes the Muon update: Muon corresponds to the fixed exponent $p = 0$, whereas `DynMuon` dynamically varies p within the same spectral-shaping family. This provides a controlled comparison that isolates the effect of the spectral schedule while keeping the rest of the optimizer design fixed. Muon is also a strong and widely used baseline for LLM training, with recent work showing substantial efficiency gains. Matrix-preconditioned optimizers such as Shampoo, SOAP, and PolarGrad are better viewed as complementary to our study rather than as controlled baselines for isolating the effect of dynamic spectral shaping, since they also change the underlying preconditioner and update rule.

Dynamic Scheduling in Optimization. A long line of work improves training by dynamically scheduling optimizer hyperparameters across different phases of optimization, reflecting the broader principle that different stages of training often benefit from different update behaviors. Classic examples include learning-rate annealing and restart strategies such as SGDR (Loshchilov & Hutter, 2017), cyclical and one-cycle policies that jointly vary learning rate and momentum (Smith, 2018; Smith & Topin, 2018), and warmup schedules that stabilize adaptive optimizers such as Adam in the early stage of training (Ma & Yarats, 2021). Such schedules remain central in modern large-batch and foundation-model training, where warmup and decay of scalar step sizes are often crucial for stable and efficient optimization (You et al., 2020). More recent work has also begun to study iteration-dependent scaling more directly, for example, by learning online scaling matrices for gradient methods (Gao et al., 2025), while recent analyses of optimization under ill-conditioned objectives suggest that the relative importance of dominant and bulk subspaces can shift over the course of training (Deng et al., 2026). Unlike prior schedules that mainly modulate scalar hyperparameters, `DynMuon` dynamically schedules the spectral shape of the update itself. This allows the preferred spectral bias to evolve across training rather than remain fixed for the entire run.