

# Package ‘slalom’

November 8, 2025

**Type** Package

**Title** Factorial Latent Variable Modeling of Single-Cell RNA-Seq Data

**Version** 1.33.0

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**Description** slalom is a scalable modelling framework for single-cell RNA-seq data that uses gene set annotations to dissect single-cell transcriptome heterogeneity, thereby allowing to identify biological drivers of cell-to-cell variability and model confounding factors. The method uses Bayesian factor analysis with a latent variable model to identify active pathways (selected by the user, e.g. KEGG pathways) that explain variation in a single-cell RNA-seq dataset. This an R/C++ implementation of the f-scLVM Python package. See the publication describing the method at <https://doi.org/10.1186/s13059-017-1334-8>.

**Depends** R (>= 4.0)

**Imports** Rcpp (>= 0.12.8), RcppArmadillo, BH, ggplot2, grid, GSEABase, methods, rsvd, SingleCellExperiment, SummarizedExperiment, stats

**Suggests** BiocStyle, knitr, rhdf5, rmarkdown, scatter, testthat

**LinkingTo** Rcpp, RcppArmadillo, BH

**License** GPL-2

**VignetteBuilder** knitr

**LazyData** true

**Encoding** UTF-8

**biocViews** ImmunoOncology, SingleCell, RNASeq, Normalization, Visualization, DimensionReduction, Transcriptomics, GeneExpression, Sequencing, Software, Reactome, KEGG

**RoxygenNote** 6.0.1

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|                                                   |
|---------------------------------------------------|
| addResultsToSingleCellExperiment                  |
| <i>Add results to SingleCellExperiment object</i> |

---

Description

Add results to SingleCellExperiment object

Usage

```
addResultsToSingleCellExperiment(sce_object, slalom_object, n_active = 20,  
  mad_filter = 0.4, annotated = TRUE, unannotated_dense = FALSE,  
  unannotated_sparse = FALSE, add_loadings = TRUE, dimred = "slalom",  
  check_convergence = TRUE)
```

**Arguments**

|                    |                                                                                                                                                |
|--------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| sce_object         | an object of class <a href="#">SingleCellExperiment</a>                                                                                        |
| slalom_object      | an object of class <code>Rcpp_SlalomModel</code>                                                                                               |
| n_active           | number of terms (factors) to be added (default is 20)                                                                                          |
| mad_filter         | numeric(1), filter factors by this mean absolute deviation to ensure variability in the factor states. For large datasets this can be set to 0 |
| annotated          | logical(1), should annotated factors be included? Default is TRUE                                                                              |
| unannotated_dense  | logical(1), should dense unannotated factors be included? Default is FALSE                                                                     |
| unannotated_sparse | logical(1), should sparse unannotated factors be included? Default is FALSE                                                                    |
| add_loadings       | logical(1), should gene/feature loadings be added to the rowData of the object?                                                                |
| dimred             | character(1), name of the reduced-dimension slot to save the factor states to. Default is "slalom"                                             |
| check_convergence  | logical(1), check that model has converged before adding slalom results. If TRUE and model has not converged it throws an error.               |

**Value**

a [SingleCellExperiment](#) object with factor states (X) in a reduced-dimension slot, and gene loadings for factors added to rowData.

**Examples**

```
gmtfile <- system.file("extdata", "reactome_subset.gmt", package = "slalom")
genesets <- GSEABase::getGmt(gmtfile)
data("mesc")
model <- newSlalomModel(mesc, genesets, n_hidden = 5, min_genes = 10)
model <- initSlalom(model)
model <- trainSlalom(model, nIterations = 10)
mesc <- addResultsToSingleCellExperiment(mesc, model,
check_convergence = FALSE)
```

---

|            |                                        |
|------------|----------------------------------------|
| initSlalom | <i>Initialize a SlalomModel object</i> |
|------------|----------------------------------------|

---

**Description**

Initialize a SlalomModel with sensible starting values for parameters before training the model.

**Usage**

```
initSlalom(object, alpha_priors = NULL, epsilon_priors = NULL,
  noise_model = "gauss", seed = NULL, pi_prior = NULL, n_hidden = NULL,
  design = NULL, verbose = FALSE, save_init = FALSE)
```

**Arguments**

|                             |                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|-----------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <code>object</code>         | a <code>Rcpp_SlalomModel</code> object                                                                                                                                                 |
| <code>alpha_priors</code>   | numeric(2) giving alpha and beta hyperparameters for a gamma prior distribution for alpha parameters (precision of factor weights)                                                     |
| <code>epsilon_priors</code> | numeric(2) giving alpha and beta hyperparameters for a gamma prior distribution for noise precision parameters                                                                         |
| <code>noise_model</code>    | character(1) defining noise model, defaults to "gauss" for Gaussian noise model                                                                                                        |
| <code>seed</code>           | integer(1) value supplying a random seed to make results reproducible (default is NULL)                                                                                                |
| <code>pi_prior</code>       | numeric matrix (genes x factors) giving prior probability of a gene being active for a factor                                                                                          |
| <code>n_hidden</code>       | integer(1), number of hidden factors in model. Required if <code>pi_prior</code> is not NULL, ignored otherwise.                                                                       |
| <code>design</code>         | matrix of known factors (covariates) to fit in the model. Optional if <code>pi_prior</code> is not NULL, ignored otherwise.                                                            |
| <code>verbose</code>        | logical(1), should messages be printed about what the function is doing? Default is TRUE.                                                                                              |
| <code>save_init</code>      | logical(1), save the initial X values (factor states for each cell) in the object? Default is FALSE as this is potentially a large N (number of cell) by K (number of factors) matrix. |

**Details**

It is strongly recommended to use [newSlalomModel](#) to create the [SlalomModel](#) object prior to applying `initSlalom`.

**Value**

an 'Rcpp\_SlalomModel' object

**Author(s)**

Davis McCarthy

**Examples**

```
gmtfile <- system.file("extdata", "reactome_subset.gmt", package = "slalom")
genesets <- GSEABase::getGmt(gmtfile)
data("mesc")
model <- newSlalomModel(mesc, genesets, n_hidden = 5, min_genes = 10)
model <- initSlalom(model)
```

---

|      |                                                                                                                       |
|------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| mesc | <i>A single-cell expression dataset to demonstrate capabilities of slalom from mouse embryonic stem cells (mESCs)</i> |
|------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

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**Description**

This data set consists of an [SCESet](#) object with log2-counts-per-million expression values for 3635 genes for 182 cells. They are from a real experiment, studying cell cycle in mouse embryonic stem cells (mESCs). See Buettner et al (Nat. Biotech., 2015) for details. d.

**Usage**

```
mesc
```

**Format**

an SCESet instance, 1 row per gene.

**Value**

NULL, but makes available an SCESet object containing expression data

**Author(s)**

Davis McCarthy, Florian Buettner, 2016-12-02

**Source**

EMBL-EBI, Hinxton, UK

**References**

Buettner F, Natarajan KN, Paolo Casale F, Proserpio V, Scialdone A, Theis FJ, et al. Computational analysis of cell-to-cell heterogeneity in single-cell RNA-sequencing data reveals hidden subpopulations of cells. Nat Biotechnol. Nature Publishing Group; 2015;33: 155–160.

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|                |                                         |
|----------------|-----------------------------------------|
| newSlalomModel | <i>Create a new SlalomModel object.</i> |
|----------------|-----------------------------------------|

---

**Description**

Slalom fits relatively complicated hierarchical Bayesian factor analysis models with data and results stored in a "SlalomModel" object. This function builds a new "SlalomModel" object from minimal inputs.

**Usage**

```
newSlalomModel(object, genesets, n_hidden = 5, prune_genes = TRUE,
  min_genes = 15, design = NULL, anno_fpr = 0.01, anno_fnr = 0.001,
  assay_name = "logcounts", verbose = TRUE)
```

**Arguments**

|             |                                                                                                                                                                             |
|-------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| object      | "SingleCellExperiment" object N x G expression data matrix (cells x genes)                                                                                                  |
| genesets    | a "GeneSetCollection" object containing annotated gene sets                                                                                                                 |
| n_hidden    | number of hidden factors to fit in the model (2-5 recommended)                                                                                                              |
| prune_genes | logical, should genes that are not annotated to any gene sets be filtered out? If TRUE, then any genes with zero variance in expression are also filtered out.              |
| min_genes   | scalar, minimum number of genes required in order to retain a gene set for analysis                                                                                         |
| design      | numeric design matrix providing values for covariates to fit in the model (rows represent cells)                                                                            |
| anno_fpr    | numeric(1), false positive rate (FPR) for assigning genes to factors (pathways); default is 0.01                                                                            |
| anno_fnr    | numeric(1), false negative rate (FNR) for assigning genes to factors (pathways); default is 0.001                                                                           |
| assay_name  | character(1), the name of the assay of the object to use as expression values. Default is logcounts, assumed to be normalised log2-counts-per-million values or equivalent. |
| verbose     | logical(1), should information about what's going be printed to screen?                                                                                                     |

**Details**

This function builds and returns the object, checking for validity, which includes checking that the input data is of consistent dimensions.

**Value**

a new Rcpp\_SlalomModel object

**Examples**

```
gmtfile <- system.file("extdata", "reactome_subset.gmt", package = "slalom")
genesets <- GSEABase::getGmt(gmtfile)
data("mesc")
model <- newSlalomModel(mesc, genesets, n_hidden = 5, min_genes = 10)

exprsfile <- system.file("extdata", "mesc.csv", package = "slalom")
mesc_mat <- as.matrix(read.csv(exprsfile))
sce <- SingleCellExperiment::SingleCellExperiment(assays = list(logcounts = mesc_mat))
# model2 <- newSlalomModel(mesc_mat, genesets, n_hidden = 5, min_genes = 10)
```

---

|              |                                          |
|--------------|------------------------------------------|
| plotLoadings | <i>Plot highest loadings of a factor</i> |
|--------------|------------------------------------------|

---

## Description

Plot highest loadings of a factor

## Usage

```
plotLoadings(object, term, n_genes = 10)
```

## Arguments

|         |                                                                                                                     |
|---------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| object  | an object of class Rcpp_SlalomModel                                                                                 |
| term    | integer(1) or character(1), providing either index for desired term (if an integer) or the term name (if character) |
| n_genes | integer(1), number of loadings (genes) to show                                                                      |

## Details

Show the factor loadings for a genes with the highest loadings for a given factor. Absolute weights are shown, with genes ordered by absolute weight. Indications are given on the plot as to whether the gene was originally in the factor geneset or added to it by the slalom model.

## Value

a ggplot plot object

## Examples

```
gmtfile <- system.file("extdata", "reactome_subset.gmt", package = "slalom")
genesets <- GSEABase::getGmt(gmtfile)
data("mesc")
model <- newSlalomModel(mesc, genesets, n_hidden = 5, min_genes = 10)
model <- initSlalom(model)
model <- trainSlalom(model, nIterations = 10)
plotLoadings(model, term = 2)
```

---

|               |                                       |
|---------------|---------------------------------------|
| plotRelevance | <i>Plot results of a Slalom model</i> |
|---------------|---------------------------------------|

---

## Description

Plot results of a Slalom model

## Usage

```
plotRelevance(object, n_active = 20, mad_filter = 0.4, annotated = TRUE,
  unannotated_dense = FALSE, unannotated_sparse = FALSE)
```

## Arguments

|                    |                                                                                                                         |
|--------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| object             | an object of class Rcpp_SlalomModel                                                                                     |
| n_active           | number of terms (factors) to be plotted (default is 20)                                                                 |
| mad_filter         | numeric(1), filter factors by this mean absolute deviation to exclude outliers. For large datasets this can be set to 0 |
| annotated          | logical(1), should annotated factors be plotted? Default is TRUE                                                        |
| unannotated_dense  | logical(1), should dense unannotated factors be plotted? Default is FALSE                                               |
| unannotated_sparse | logical(1), should sparse unannotated factors be plotted? Default is FALSE                                              |

## Value

invisibly returns a list containing the two ggplot objects that make up the plot

## Examples

```
gmtfile <- system.file("extdata", "reactome_subset.gmt", package = "slalom")
genesets <- GSEABase::getGmt(gmtfile)
data("mesc")
model <- newSlalomModel(mesc, genesets, n_hidden = 5, min_genes = 10)
model <- initSlalom(model)
model <- trainSlalom(model, nIterations = 10)
plotRelevance(model)
```



plotTerms

*Plot relevance for all terms***Description**

Plot relevance for all terms

**Usage**

```
plotTerms(object, terms = NULL, order_terms = TRUE, mad_filter = 0.2,
  annotated = TRUE, unannotated_dense = TRUE, unannotated_sparse = FALSE)
```

**Arguments**

|                    |                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|--------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| object             | an object of class Rcpp_SlalomModel                                                                                                                                             |
| terms              | integer or character vector, providing either indices for desired terms (if an integer) or the term names (if character); default is NULL, in which case all terms are plotted. |
| order_terms        | logical(1), should factors be ordered by relevance ( TRUE, default), or in the order the come                                                                                   |
| mad_filter         | numeric(1), filter factors by this mean absolute deviation to exclude outliers. For large datasets this can be set close to 0; default is 0.2.                                  |
| annotated          | logical(1), should annotated factors be plotted? Default is TRUE                                                                                                                |
| unannotated_dense  | logical(1), should dense unannotated factors be plotted? Default is TRUE                                                                                                        |
| unannotated_sparse | logical(1), should sparse unannotated factors be plotted? Default is TRUE                                                                                                       |

**Value**

a ggplot plot object

**Examples**

```
gmtfile <- system.file("extdata", "reactome_subset.gmt", package = "slalom")
genesets <- GSEABase::getGmt(gmtfile)
data("mesc")
model <- newSlalomModel(mesc, genesets, n_hidden = 5, min_genes = 10)
model <- initSlalom(model)
model <- trainSlalom(model, nIterations = 10)
plotTerms(model)
```

---

|                  |                                                    |
|------------------|----------------------------------------------------|
| Rcpp_SlalomModel | <i>The "Slalom Model" (Rcpp_SlalomModel) class</i> |
|------------------|----------------------------------------------------|

---

### Description

S4 class and the main class used by slalom to hold model data and results. SingleCellExperiment extends the Bioconductor SummarizedExperiment class.

### Details

This class is initialized from a matrix of expression values and a collection of genesets in a GeneSetCollection object from the GSEABase package.

Methods that operate on SingleCellExperiment objects constitute the basic scater workflow.

### Methods

```
train() void train() docstring : Train the SlalomModel
update() void update() docstring : Update the SlalomModel
updateAlpha(...) void updateAlpha(int) docstring : Update alpha
updateEpsilon() void updateEpsilon() docstring : Update Epsilon
updatePi(...) void updatePi(int) docstring : Update Pi
updateW(...) void updateW(int) docstring : Update W
updateX(...) void updateX(int) docstring : Update X
```

### Slots

.xData: Environment enabling access to the C++-level SlalomModel object.

---

|        |                                                     |
|--------|-----------------------------------------------------|
| slalom | <i>Factorial single-cell latent variable models</i> |
|--------|-----------------------------------------------------|

---

### Description

slalom

### Details

Factorial latent variable models for RNA-seq data.

### Author(s)

Davis McCarthy

---

|             |                              |
|-------------|------------------------------|
| SlalomModel | <i>SlalomModel C++ class</i> |
|-------------|------------------------------|

---

**Description**

A C++ class for SlalomModel models.

**Arguments**

|               |                                                                                                          |
|---------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Y_init        | matrix of expression values                                                                              |
| pi_init       | G x K matrix with each entry being the prior probability for a gene g being active for factor k.         |
| X_init        | matrix of initial factor states (N x K)                                                                  |
| W_init        | G x K matrix of initial weights                                                                          |
| prior_alpha   | numeric vector of length two giving prior values for the gamma hyperparameters of the precisions         |
| prior_epsilon | numeric vector of length two giving prior values for the gamma hyperparameters of the residual variances |

**Value**

an object of the SlalomModel class

---

|          |                                       |
|----------|---------------------------------------|
| topTerms | <i>Show results of a Slalom model</i> |
|----------|---------------------------------------|

---

**Description**

Show results of a Slalom model

**Usage**

```
topTerms(object, n_active = 20, mad_filter = 0.4, annotated = TRUE,
  unannotated_dense = FALSE, unannotated_sparse = FALSE)
```

**Arguments**

|                    |                                                                                                                         |
|--------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| object             | an object of class Rcpp_SlalomModel                                                                                     |
| n_active           | number of terms (factors) to be plotted (default is 20)                                                                 |
| mad_filter         | numeric(1), filter factors by this mean absolute deviation to exclude outliers. For large datasets this can be set to 0 |
| annotated          | logical(1), should annotated factors be plotted? Default is TRUE                                                        |
| unannotated_dense  | logical(1), should dense unannotated factors be plotted? Default is FALSE                                               |
| unannotated_sparse | logical(1), should sparse unannotated factors be plotted? Default is FALSE                                              |

**Value**

data.frame with factors ordered by relevance, showing term (term names), relevance, type (factor type: known, annotated or unannotated), n\_prior (number of genes annotated to the gene set/factor), n\_gain (number of genes added/switched on for the factor), n\_loss (number of genes turned off for the factor).

**Examples**

```
gmtfile <- system.file("extdata", "reactome_subset.gmt", package = "slalom")
genesets <- GSEABase::getGmt(gmtfile)
data("mesc")
model <- newSlalomModel(mesc, genesets, n_hidden = 5, min_genes = 10)
model <- initSlalom(model)
model <- trainSlalom(model, nIterations = 10)
topTerms(model)
```

---

|             |                                   |
|-------------|-----------------------------------|
| trainSlalom | <i>Train a SlalomModel object</i> |
|-------------|-----------------------------------|

---

**Description**

Train a SlalomModel to infer model parameters.

**Usage**

```
trainSlalom(object, nIterations = 5000, minIterations = 700,
  tolerance = 1e-08, forceIterations = FALSE, shuffle = TRUE,
  pretrain = TRUE, verbose = TRUE, seed = NULL, drop_factors = TRUE)
```

**Arguments**

|                 |                                                                                                                                                                                |
|-----------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| object          | a Rcpp_SlalomModel object                                                                                                                                                      |
| nIterations     | integer(1) maximum number of iterations to use in training the model (default: 5000)                                                                                           |
| minIterations   | integer(1) minimum number of iterations to perform.                                                                                                                            |
| tolerance       | numeric(1) tolerance to allow between iterations (default 1e-08)                                                                                                               |
| forceIterations | logical(1) should the model be forced to update nIteration times?                                                                                                              |
| shuffle         | logical(1) should the order in which factors are updated be shuffled between iterations? Shuffling generally helps speed up convergence so is recommended and defaults is TRUE |
| pretrain        | logical(1), should the model be "pre-trained" to achieve faster convergence and obtain an initial update order? Recommended; default is TRUE                                   |
| verbose         | logical(1), should messages be printed about what the function is doing? Default is TRUE.                                                                                      |

|              |                                                                                                                        |
|--------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| seed         | integer(1) value supplying a random seed to make results reproducible (default is NULL)                                |
| drop_factors | logical(1), should factors be dropped from the model if the model determines them not to be relevant? Default is TRUE. |

**Details**

Train the model using variational Bayes methods to infer parameters.

**Value**

an 'Rcpp\_SlalomModel' object

**Author(s)**

Davis McCarthy

**Examples**

```
gmtfile <- system.file("extdata", "reactome_subset.gmt", package = "slalom")
genesets <- GSEABase::getGmt(gmtfile)
data("mesc")
model <- newSlalomModel(mesc, genesets, n_hidden = 5, min_genes = 10)
model <- initSlalom(model)
model <- trainSlalom(model, nIterations = 10)
```

---

updateSlalom

*Update a SlalomModel object*


---

**Description**

Do one variational update of a SlalomModel to infer model parameters.

**Usage**

```
updateSlalom(object)
```

**Arguments**

object            a Rcpp\_SlalomModel object

**Details**

Update the model with one iteration using variational Bayes methods to infer parameters.

**Value**

an 'Rcpp\_SlalomModel' object

**Author(s)**

Davis McCarthy

**Examples**

```
gmtfile <- system.file("extdata", "reactome_subset.gmt", package = "slalom")
genesets <- GSEABase::getGmt(gmtfile)
data("mesc")
model <- newSlalomModel(mesc, genesets, n_hidden = 5, min_genes = 10)
model <- initSlalom(model)
model <- updateSlalom(model)
```

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