Rectified CFG++ for Flow Based Models

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Abstract

Classifier-free guidance (CFG) effectively steers diffusion models but, when applied naively to rectified flows (RF), induces off-manifold drift and visual artifacts. We introduce Rectified-CFG++*, a predictor–corrector scheme that marries RF's deterministic updates with a geometry-aware conditioning rule. Each inference step anchors the sample via a conditional RF update, then applies a weighted interpolation between conditional and unconditional velocity fields. We prove that the resulting velocity field is marginally consistent and remains within a bounded tubular neighborhood of the data manifold, ensuring stability even at high guidance strengths. Experiments on Flux, Stable Diffusion 3/3.5, and Lumina demonstrate that Rectified-CFG++ outperforms standard CFG on MS-COCO benchmark.*

1. Introduction

Diffusion-based generative models have achieved state-of-the-art image synthesis by learning a reverse stochastic process that maps Gaussian noise to data [4, 8, 13]. Rectified flow (RF) models [9] offer a deterministic alternative, training vector fields via simulation-free objectives and sampling by solving an ODE, yielding faster, more stable generation with fewer function evaluations [2, 6]. Classifier-free guidance (CFG) [7] sharpens prompt adherence by extrapolating between unconditional and conditional scores but, in RFs, its extrapolative nature pulls trajectories off the learned manifold, causing color blow-outs, geometric distortions, and unstable behavior. Existing fixes for stochastic samplers [3, 11, 12, 14] do not adequately address flow-specific drift.

We introduce *Rectified-CFG++*, a predictor–corrector sampler tailored to RFs: each step first follows the conditional RF field to remain on the transport path, then applies a time-scheduled interpolation between conditional and unconditional velocity fields. We prove that this yields a marginally consistent velocity whose trajectories stay within a bounded tubular neighborhood of the data manifold, ensuring stability across guidance scales. Extensive experiments on Flux, Stable Diffusion 3/3.5, and Lumina demonstrate that Rectified-CFG++ outperforms standard CFG in FID, CLIP alignment, visual fidelity, and artifact reduction.

Figure 1. **Effect of guidance on flow-based models.** (*Left*) Unguided samples lack structure; (Middle) naive CFG introduces semantic drift and artifacts. (*Right*) Rectified CFG++ yields detailed, well-aligned, and coherent outputs.

Contributions are summarized below:

- A novel predictor–corrector sampler using scheduled interpolation of RF velocity fields.
- Theoretical guarantees of marginal consistency and on-manifold stability.
- Empirical validation showing superior quality and robustness over CFG on multiple RF backbones.

2. Method

In RF models, direct CFG extrapolation pulls samples off-manifold, causing artifacts. We propose *Rectified-CFG++*, a two-stage predictor–corrector guidance that (i) predicts an intermediate state along the conditional flow to stay on the prompt manifold, then (ii) applies a controlled correction based on the local difference between conditional and unconditional velocities.

Algorithm 1 Rectified-CFG++

Require: $v_\theta(\cdot, t, y)$, prompt y, Δt, $\alpha(t) = \lambda_{\max}(1-t)^\gamma$, $\epsilon \sim \mathcal{N}(0, \sigma^2 I)$

```
x_T ~ N(0, I)
for t = T, ..., 1 do
    v_t^c ← v_θ(x_t, t, y)
    x̃ ← x_t + (Δt/2) v_t^c + ε
    v^c ← v_θ(x̃, t − Δt/2, y),  v^u ← v_θ(x̃, t − Δt/2, ∅)
    v̂_t ← v_t^c + α(t)(v^c − v^u)
    x_{t−1} ← ODEUpdate(x_t, v̂_t, t)
end for
return x_0                                ▷ Generated Sample
```

2.1. Rectified-CFG++

Let $v_t^c = v_\theta(x_t, t, y)$, $v_t^u = v_\theta(x_t, t, \varnothing)$, and $\alpha(t) = \lambda_{\max}(1-t)^\gamma$. Each step proceeds as follows:
Predictor (half-step):

$$\tilde{x} = x_t + \tfrac{\Delta t}{2}\, v_t^c$$

We use only the conditional field v_t^c to ensure the intermediate state lies on the learned conditional manifold, avoiding early off-manifold drift.
Velocity evaluation:

$$v^c = v_\theta(\tilde{x},\, t - \tfrac{\Delta t}{2},\, y), \qquad v^u = v_\theta(\tilde{x},\, t - \tfrac{\Delta t}{2},\, \varnothing)$$

By computing both fields at the predicted state, we capture local curvature and prompt-specific adjustments.
Corrector (guided update):

$$\hat{v}_t = v_t^c + \alpha(t)\left(v^c - v^u\right), \quad x_{t-1} = \mathrm{ODEUpdate}(x_t, \hat{v}_t, t).$$

The interpolation weight $\alpha(t)$ schedules guidance strength, starting small to preserve manifold fidelity and increasing to sharpen prompt adherence. This scheme is parameter-free beyond $\alpha(t)$ and requires no auxiliary networks, yet yields stable, prompt-aligned sampling.

2.2. Theoretical Analysis

We now outline why Rectified-CFG++ provably maintains on-manifold trajectories under mild regularity conditions. Assume:

(A1) $v_\theta(\cdot, t, y)$ is L-Lipschitz in x for all t, y.

(A2) The guidance field satisfies $\|\Delta v_t^\theta(x)\| \le B$.

(A3) The schedule $\alpha(t)$ is bounded and integrable on $[0, 1]$.

Under these, two key properties hold:

- **Guidance Stability:** Evaluating the guidance difference at the intermediate state $\tilde{x}$ introduces an error

$$\left\|\Delta v^\theta(\tilde{x}) - \Delta v^\theta(x_t)\right\| \;\le\; L\,\|\,\tilde{x} - x_t\| \;=\; O(\Delta t).$$

  Thus, the correction term reflects the true local guidance direction even on curved regions of the manifold.
- **Bounded Perturbation:** The deviation of one Rectified-CFG++ update from a pure conditional Euler step is

$$\left\|\hat{x}_{t-1} - \tilde{x}_{t-1}\right\| \;\le\; \alpha(t)\, B\, \Delta t,$$

  bounding the per-step "push" off the ideal conditional path by a controllable amount.

Combining these, the full sampling trajectory remains within a *tubular neighborhood* of the true conditional flow:

$$\left\|x_k - \psi_k(x_T\,|\,y)\right\| \;\le\; \sum_{t=k+1}^{T} \alpha(t)\, B\, \Delta t \quad \forall\, k = 0, \dots, T,$$

guaranteeing stability and prompt fidelity across all steps.

3. Experiments

We evaluate Rectified-CFG++ on Stable Diffusion 3/3.5, Flux, and Lumina using MS-COCO (10K). For each model we generate 28-step samples under different guidance scales and compare against vanilla CFG. Image quality and prompt alignment are measured via FID, CLIP-Score, ImageReward, PickScore, HPSv2, and Aesthetic Score. All experiments run on a single NVIDIA A100, with inference overhead below 5% using identical checkpoints and step counts.

3.1. Text-to-Image Generation Evaluation

3.1.1. Quantitative Evaluation

We generate 10,000 images on MS-COCO-10K prompts using 28 NFEs and best guidance scale as recommended. Table 1 compares CFG and Rectified-CFG++ across SD3, SD3.5, Flux-dev, and Lumina-Next. Rectified-CFG++ consistently reduces FID and boosts CLIP-Score, while also improving Aesthetic, ImageReward, PickScore, and HPSv2.

3.1.2. Qualitative Evaluation

Figure 2 (prompts like "bustling streets of Tokyo" and "colossal dragon") shows that conditional flow lacks fidelity and CFG often oversaturates, whereas Rectified-CFG++ produces crisp details, accurate geometry, and balanced colors. Figure 3 confirms similar gains on Lumina-Next across fantasy and architectural prompts.

3.1.3. Performance vs Sampling Steps

Table 2 illustrates performance relative to the num- ber of sampling steps (NFEs). Rectified-CFG++ consis- tently

Table 1. **Comprehensive Quantitative Evaluation of CFG against Rectified-CFG++ when both are integrated into leading T2I Models on MS-COCO 10K validation samples.** Lower(↓) FID and higher(↑) CLIP, Aesthetic, ImageReward, PickScore, and HPSv2 scores indicate better performance. Best values are highlighted in orange, and second best in gray.

Model	Guidance	FID ↓	CLIP ↑	Aesthetic ↑	ImageReward ↑	PickScore ↑	HPSv2 ↑
Lumina [10]	CFG	26.9321	0.3511	5.8226	1.0924	0.5867	0.2797
	Rect-CFG++	**22.4899**	**0.3464**	**5.7755**	**0.9611**	**0.6133**	**0.3004**
SD3 [5]	CFG	23.8898	0.3439	5.5465	0.9812	0.4408	0.2751
	Rect-CFG++	**23.3945**	**0.3471**	**5.6529**	**1.0009**	**0.5591**	**0.2897**
SD3.5 [5]	CFG	20.2945	0.3506	6.155	1.0487	0.4923	0.2933
	Rect-CFG++	**20.2169**	**0.3497**	**6.1651**	**1.0796**	**0.5077**	**0.2946**
Flux-dev [1]	CFG	37.8625	0.3351	4.7210	1.0528	0.3248	0.2621
	Rect-CFG++	**32.2262**	**0.3493**	**5.3251**	**0.9480**	**0.6752**	**0.2996**

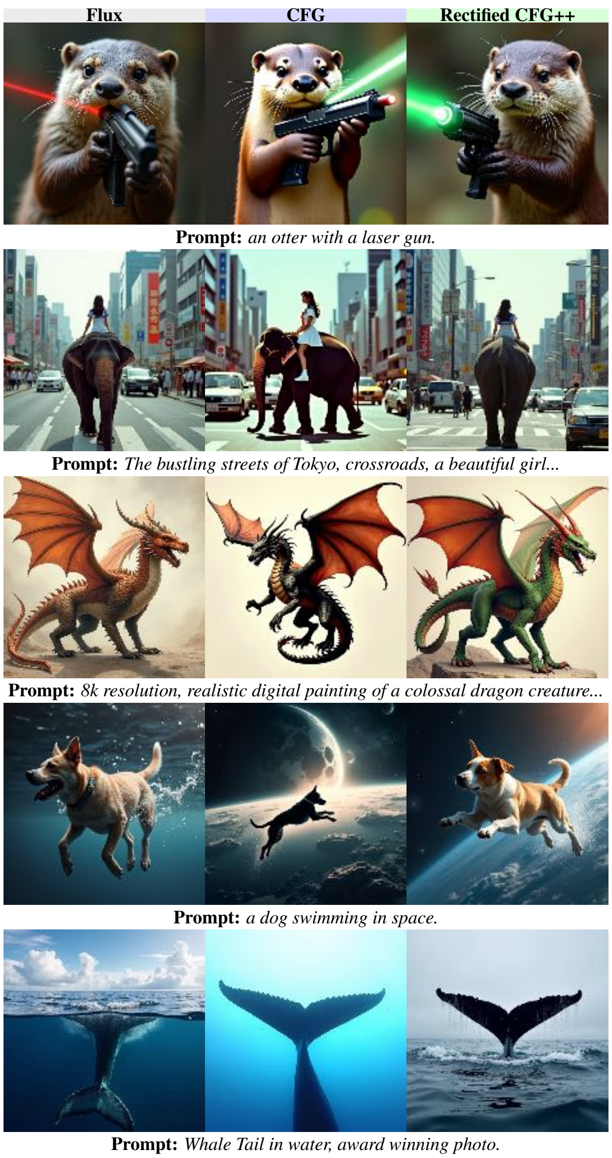

Figure 2. **Final generation comparison for Flux model.** From left to right: default conditional flow, CFG, and Rectified CFG++.

outperforms standard CFG on all metrics, achieving better scores especially when the number of steps is greatly reduced. This empirically validates our stability analysis in Section 2.2 and underscores the efficiency gains of our method, primarily due to smoother ODE trajectories.

Table 2. **Evaluation of the Flux [1] model across different sampling steps (NFEs) on MS-COCO 1K.** We compare standard CFG and Rectified CFG++ across key metrics. Lower FID and higher CLIP/ImageReward indicate better performance.

Steps	FID ↓		CLIP ↑		ImageReward ↑	
	CFG	Rect.-CFG++	CFG	Rect.-CFG++	CFG	Rect.-CFG++
5	177.81	**71.17**	0.24	**0.33**	-1.54	**0.93**
15	114.94	**74.47**	0.30	**0.34**	-0.38	**1.04**
28	85.82	**75.34**	0.32	**0.34**	0.46	**1.01**
40	78.47	**74.13**	0.34	**0.35**	0.80	**1.04**
50	76.88	**75.17**	0.34	**0.35**	0.92	**1.01**
60	85.82	**75.34**	0.32	**0.34**	0.47	**1.02**

3.1.4. Computational Efficiency

All methods run on a single NVIDIA A100 with identical 28 NFEs. Rectified-CFG++ adds $< 5\%$ overhead (0.84 s/sample vs. 0.80 s/sample) due to one extra velocity evaluation per step. To reach the same FID, it requires $\tilde{1}0$–20 % fewer NFEs. Cutting total FLOPs and inference time for latency-sensitive or resource-constrained applications.

4. Conclusion and Discussion

We present **Rectified-CFG++**, a training-free predictor–corrector guidance that first follows the conditional flow and then applies an interpolated correction. It consistently enhances quality and stability across flow-based models, reducing CFG's artifacts and sensitivity to guidance scale. User studies confirm gains in detail, color fidelity, and text alignment. With negligible overhead, Rectified-CFG++ serves as a drop-in upgrade for existing generators. Future work includes extensions to video, 3D diffusion, and reinforcement-based guidance.

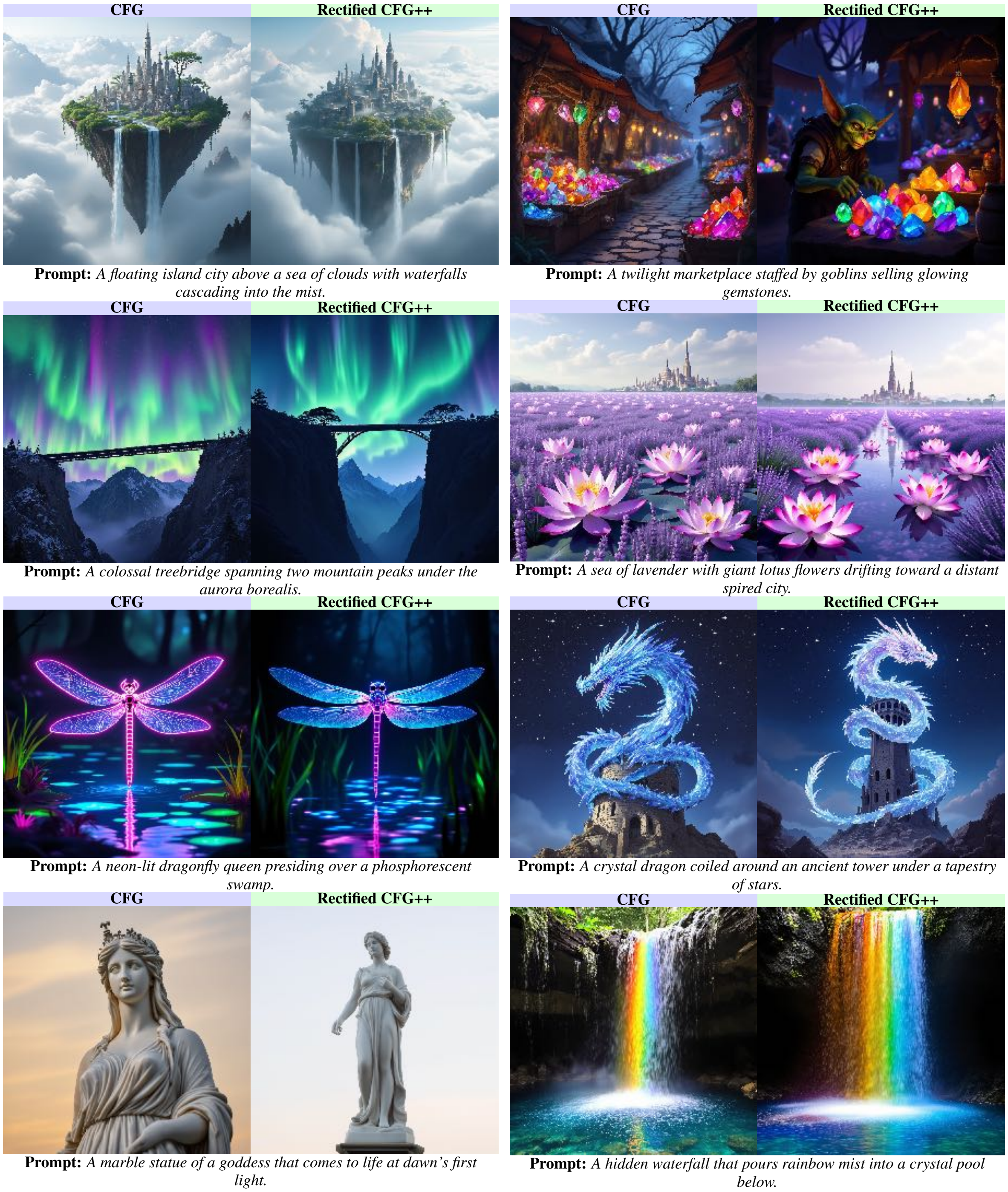

Figure 3. **CFG vs Rectified CFG++ on Lumina-Next across curated high-detail prompts.** Rectified CFG++ improves compositional clarity, color balance, and prompt adherence under fantastical and artistic conditions.

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