
RoVer: Robot Reward Model as Test-Time Verifier for Vision-Language-Action Model

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ABSTRACT

Vision-Language-Action (VLA) models have become a prominent paradigm for embodied intelligence, yet further performance improvements typically rely on scaling up training data and model size – an approach that is prohibitively expensive for robotics and fundamentally limited by data collection costs. We address this limitation with **RoVer**, an embodied test-time scaling framework that uses a **Robot Process Reward Model (PRM)** as a **Test-Time Verifier** to enhance the capabilities of existing VLA models without modifying their architectures or weights. Specifically, RoVer (i) assigns scalar-based process rewards to evaluate the reliability of candidate actions, and (ii) predicts an action-space direction for candidate expansion/refinement. During inference, RoVer generates multiple candidate actions concurrently from the base policy, expands them along PRM-predicted directions, and then scores all candidates with PRM to select the optimal action for execution. Notably, by caching shared perception features, it can amortize perception cost and evaluate more candidates under the same test-time computational budget. Essentially, our approach effectively transforms available computing resources into better action decision-making, realizing the benefits of test-time scaling without extra training overhead. Extensive experiments demonstrate that RoVer consistently improves success rates across diverse manipulation tasks. Our contributions are threefold: (1) a general, plug-and-play test-time scaling framework for VLAs; (2) a PRM that jointly provides scalar process rewards and an action-space direction to guide exploration; and (3) an efficient direction-guided sampling strategy that leverages a shared perception cache to enable scalable candidate generation and selection during inference.

1 INTRODUCTION

The field of embodied AI has witnessed significant progress, from specialist models such as ACT, DP, and DP3 (Zhao et al., 2023; Chi et al., 2024; 2023; Ze et al., 2024) to general-purpose VLA systems like OpenVLA, $\pi 0$, and RDT (Kim et al., 2024; Black et al., 2024; Liu et al., 2025c). These VLA models are typically trained end-to-end on paired vision–language–action data, and most gains to date have come from training-time scaling strategies, i.e., using larger backbones, diversifying demonstration data, and enhancing data curation processes. However, even under identical settings, VLA success rates often fluctuate due to stochastic decoding and manipulation brittleness, and the issue becomes particularly pronounced on long-horizon tasks. This phenomenon motivates reallocating part of the effort from training-time scaling to inference-time computation, with the goal of stabilizing outcomes and unlocking the latent capabilities of existing VLA models.

Inspired by the tremendous success of scaling laws (Kaplan et al., 2020) in large language models (LLMs) and vision-language models (VLMs), many research efforts in embodied AI have aimed to

replicate this progress by collecting large-scale training datasets, such as Open-X-Embodiment, Agi World, Fourier ActionNet, and ARIO (Collaboration et al., 2023; AgiBot-World-Contributors et al., 2025; Fourier ActionNet Team, 2025; Wang et al., 2024), and increasing model parameter sizes (e.g., RT-X (Collaboration et al., 2023), OpenVLA (Kim et al., 2024), RDT (Liu et al., 2025c)). However, unlike internet-scale corpora for LLMs/VLMs, the acquisition of diverse, high-quality robotic experience data remains a resource-intensive and time-consuming process, creating a significant bottleneck for training-time scaling in embodied AI field.

To enhance VLA performance without further training, researchers have begun to increase the proportion of ‘thinking’ at test-time. Some embodied approaches adopt a fast-slow-thinking design that separates a deliberative high-level ‘brain’ from a low-latency ‘cerebellum’ controller, enabling planning-execution decoupling for more challenging tasks (Kahneman, 2011; Zhang et al., 2025; Shentu et al., 2025; Bu et al., 2025a). Subsequent works expand supervisory signals by injecting chain-of-thought annotations into datasets to train sophisticated high-level reasoning modules that can be invoked during inference (Zawalski et al., 2025; Ji et al., 2025; Zhou et al., 2025). These avenues have already shown their potential in LLMs and VLMs, often referred to as test-time scaling (Liu et al., 2025b; Ma et al., 2025). However, most of the above methods require expanding the original dataset with supplementary annotations.

In this case, we pose a fundamental question: can we leverage test-time scaling mechanisms to enhance VLA performance *without* requiring additional data or model retraining? This question leads us to explore a promising paradigm that focuses on maximizing the utility of existing VLA models during inference, rather than pursuing increasingly larger datasets and architectures. To this end, we introduce **RoVer**, a novel external process reward model designed to enhance the capabilities of frozen VLA policies purely at inference time. In particular, our RoVer not only evaluates the reliability scores of massive candidate actions, but also forecasts precise 6D refinement directions in the action space. This design enables both intelligent candidate evaluation and direction-guided sampling, all while maintaining the original backbone architecture and weights intact. Crucially, our approach transforms additional test-time computational resources into improved decision-making capabilities, effectively circumventing the traditional constraints of data collection and model retraining. Another elegance of RoVer lies in its ability to leverage shared computation efficiently. By caching and reusing intermediate features from the perception pipeline, our framework can evaluate multiple action candidates with minimal additional computational overhead. This design choice ensures that the increased decision-making capability comes at a reasonable computational cost, making it practical for real-world robotic applications. In summary, our work makes three significant contributions to the field:

- A general, plug-and-play test-time scaling framework that enhances frozen VLA policies purely at inference time, demonstrating a new paradigm for improving VLA performance without the traditional costs of data collection and model retraining.
- A compact yet powerful Process Reward Model that simultaneously generates scalar process rewards and refinement directions of candidate actions, enabling effective verifier-guided exploration in the action space.
- An efficient direction-guided sampling strategy that capitalizes on a shared *perception cache*, effectively amortizing perception costs and enabling the evaluation of more candidates within the same computational budget.

2 RELATED WORK

Vision-Language-Action Models. VLA models have evolved from specialized, task-specific policy Zhao et al. (2023); Chi et al. (2024; 2023); Ze et al. (2024) to general-purpose systems that couple perception, language, and control Kim et al. (2024); Black et al. (2024); Liu et al. (2025c), with recent advancements exploring hierarchical architectures inspired by human cognition’s dual-process theory Kahneman (2011); Shentu et al. (2025); Zhang et al. (2025); Bu et al. (2025a); Cui et al. (2025); Liu et al. (2025a); NVIDIA et al. (2025). Most performance gains to date have come from *training-time scaling* —larger backbones, broader demonstrations, and improved data curation.

Test-time Scaling in LLMs. Recent advancements in large language models (LLMs) have highlighted the efficacy of test-time scaling (TTS) techniques in boosting their reasoning capabilities

during the inference phase. TTS approaches can generally be categorized into two main types (Liu et al., 2025b): internal and external. Internal TTS methods, such as self-reflection and Chain-of-Thought (CoT), involve the model generating and refining its own intermediate reasoning steps, exemplified by models like OpenAI o1 and DeepSeek-R1 (OpenAI et al., 2024; DeepSeek-AI, 2025). In contrast, external TTS leverages a Process Reward Model (PRM) to provide feedback and supervise the generation process, facilitating search strategies like Best-of-N (BoN) and Beam Search. Notably, studies have indicated that with the aid of external TTS, even significantly smaller models can, in certain tasks, achieve or surpass the performance of much larger counterparts. This paradigm advocates for strategically reallocating computational resources from extensive pre-training to the inference stage, leading to more efficient performance gains. Further strategies like self-consistency and Monte Carlo Tree Search also leverage PRMs to produce diverse and integrated outputs.

Test-time Scaling in Vision-Language-Action Models. *Internal test-time scaling:* Recent work increases a VLA’s internal deliberation at inference: Embodied Chain-of-Thought (Zawalski et al., 2025; Ji et al., 2025; Sun et al., 2024; Zhou et al., 2025) approaches enforce multi-step reasoning before action generation to improve task decomposition and planning, often by expanding training datasets with reasoning annotations. CoT-VLA and UniVLA (Zhao et al., 2025; Bu et al., 2025b; Wang et al., 2025) incorporate future-frame prediction during inference; OneTwo-VLA (Lin et al., 2025) uses [BOR] and [BOA] tokens to adaptively decide when to reason and when to act. However, most of the above work needs additional annotation of the training dataset. *External test-time scaling:* In contrast to internal TTS, which reasons *within* the policy, external TTS *decouples* search and scoring from the policy by introducing a separate reward/value verifier that evaluates candidate actions at inference, guiding candidate generation without modifying backbone weights. Concurrent works explore this direction: Hume (Song et al., 2025) augments a dual-system VLA with a value head to drive repeated sampling and cascaded denoising (with fixed candidate counts), while RoboMonkey (Kwok et al., 2025) studies reward modeling with large backbones and synthetic data at scale. Our work instantiates external TTS with a compact process reward model and systematically examines scaling with candidate budgets and compatibility across backbones; see Section 3.2.

3 METHOD

Overview We augment a frozen VLA with an external process reward model (PRM) that, given observations, language, and a candidate action, outputs a scalar score and a direction toward improvement. At inference, policy proposals are expanded by sampling along the predicted direction within an angular bound, and the top-scoring action under the PRM is executed. Observation, language, and state features are computed once per step and cached that is reused across candidates (see Fig. 1).

3.1 PRELIMINARY

Policy Models We consider sequential decision-making with observations o_t (e.g., RGB-D images, proprioception) and a natural language goal g , and history $h_t = (o_{\leq t}, g)$. A pre-trained VLA policy π_θ maps history h_t to a distribution over low-level actions $a_t \in A$:

$$\pi_\theta(a_t | h_t) \in \Delta(A), \quad (1)$$

We use an end-effector *delta* action with gripper command, $a_t = [\Delta p_t, \Delta q_t, g_t] \in \mathbb{R}^{d_a}$, with $d_a = 7$ in our settings ($\Delta p_t \in \mathbb{R}^3, \Delta q_t \in \mathbb{R}^3, g_t \in \mathbb{R}$). At inference, one may either execute $a_t = \arg \max_a \pi_\theta(a | h_t)$.

Reward Models To unlock additional capability at test time, we introduce a reward model that predicts (i) a scalar *process reward* and (ii) an *action-space direction* pointing from the current action toward a potentially better one:

$$R_\phi(h_t, a_t^i) \rightarrow r_t^i, d_t^i, \quad r_t^i \in \mathbb{R}, d_t^i \in \mathbb{R}^{d_{\text{dir}}}. \quad (2)$$

We predict directions for the actionable subspace of the control (excluding discrete gripper when present). The dimension d_{dir} matches the action subspace; in practice we use the normalized direction $\hat{u}_t^i = \text{normalize}(d_t^i)$.

Notation From this section onward, unless otherwise stated, we omit the time index t for clarity. Subscripts denote action sources: a^i for the i -th candidate, a_e for the expert action from the training dataset, a_p for the policy action, and a_{anc} for the anchor action sampled around a_e during training.

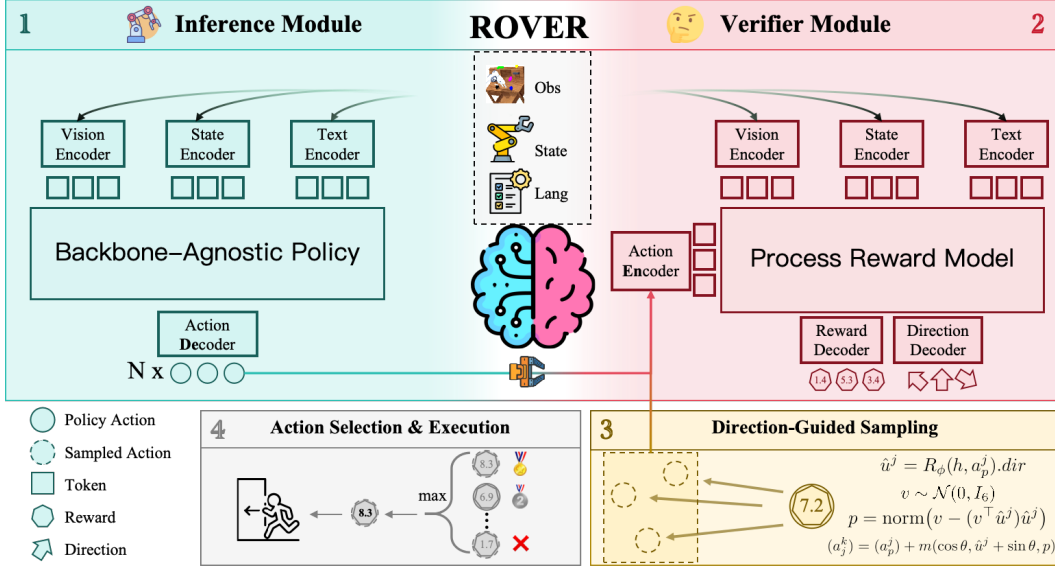


Figure 1: RoVer overview. A frozen VLA proposes N actions; an external process reward model (PRM) scores candidates and predicts a refinement direction. Candidates are expanded along the guided direction and the top-scoring action executes. Perceptual features are cached once and reused across candidates to amortize compute.

Test-time scaling Given a base policy π_θ and a verifier R_ϕ , we obtain the policy action a_p from π_θ and expand it into a candidate set $\mathcal{A} = \{a^0 = a_p, a^1, a^2, \dots\}$ by Gaussian noise sampling. The PRM verifier R_ϕ scores each candidate with $r^i = R_\phi(h, a^i)$, and we execute $a^* = \arg \max_{a \in \mathcal{A}} r(h, a)$. We illustrate this framework in detail in Section 3.2.3.

3.2 ROVER

RoVer instantiates external test-time scaling with a compact process reward model (PRM) that scores candidate actions and predicts a refinement direction in the action subspace. For policies defined in local frames, actions are mapped to the world frame before expansion and scoring. The following subsections detail the architecture, training objective, and inference procedure.

3.2.1 MODEL ARCHITECTURE

The R_ϕ takes synchronized multi-modal inputs o_t (e.g., third-person and eye-in-hand RGBs, robot states, and language tokens) together with a candidate action a^i , and outputs both a scalar process reward r^i and an action-space direction d^i . The model architecture follows the GPT-2 style (Radford et al., 2019), and is initialized with the pre-trained weight of GR-1 (Wu et al., 2023). Specifically, the image encoder is initialized from a MAE (He et al., 2021) pre-trained model, and the text encoder is initialized from the CLIP text encoder (Radford et al., 2021). The architecture in principle supports up to 10 timesteps of history as input. However, for better plug-and-play usage and faster inference, we restrict inputs to the current timestep observation. Additional heads for reward and direction prediction are added on top of the initialized backbone. Due to all candidate actions sharing the same observation, language, and state at a control step, we compute these perceptual features once and reuse them across candidates as a shared *perception cache*, while encoding actions per candidate to amortize computation. Compared to fine-tuning a 7B-parameter backbone in RoboMonkey (Kwok et al., 2025), RoVer takes 0.2B parameters in total and only 40M for training. See Fig. 2.

Action Amplifier To make small differences between candidate actions more discernible, we apply a lightweight *action amplifier* to the action embedding before fusing it with observation/language tokens. The amplifier is a compact MLP with GELU and LayerNorm mapping $\mathbb{R}^H \rightarrow \mathbb{R}^{2H} \rightarrow \mathbb{R}^H$, reconditioning the action channel so that fine-grained deltas in the action subspace remain salient under strong frozen perception/language backbones. This contrast enhancer improves the PRM’s ability to discriminate and rank nearby actions while keeping inference overhead minimal. For

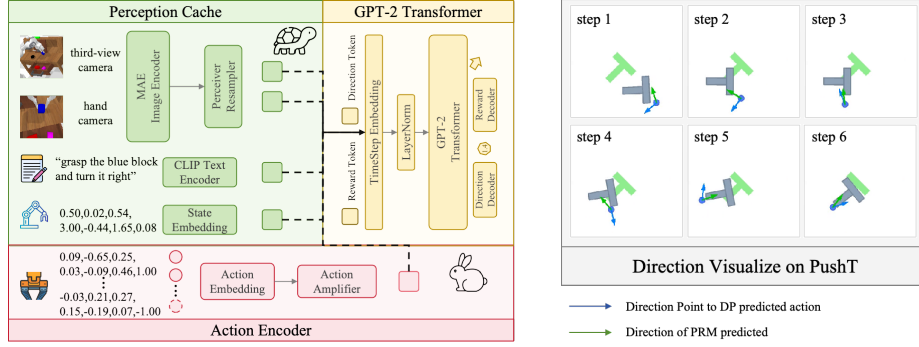


Figure 2: Left: verifier architecture. A shared perception cache and per-candidate action encoder (with an action amplifier) feed a GPT-2 backbone via reward/direction tokens, producing a scalar process reward and an action-space refinement direction. Right: direction visualization on the PushT benchmark, where PRM is trained atop a pre-trained Diffusion Policy and predicts 2D (x, y) action directions; for CALVIN, the PRM predicts 6D pose directions. Note: on PushT, a DP pre-trained policy already achieves near-100% success; we primarily use PushT here for intuitive direction visualization rather than performance gains.

intuition, the right panel of Fig. 2 visualizes the predicted 2D direction field on PushT when the underlying base policy outputs planar (x, y) actions.

3.2.2 MODEL TRAINING

The training objective of the reward model R_ϕ is to equip it with the ability to distinguish which of two candidate actions is better. In RoVer, we regard one action as better if its root mean squared error (RMSE) distance to the expert action is smaller than that of the other. To prepare training data, we first analyze the distribution gap between policy action A_p and expert action samples A_e (Appendix A.2). Based on this analysis, we set a base noise scale $\sigma_{\text{base}} = 0.1$, which is used to construct anchor actions a_{anc} . Given expert demonstrations $h, a_e = [a_e^{\text{pose}}, g_e]$, we then construct local action tuples around a_e to obtain informative preference labels and direction supervision.

Direction-guided and anchor-centered sampling In early experiments, we observed that simply sampling noisy expert action a_{en} around a_e yielded poor performance. To better simulate the test-time sampling behavior, we introduce the notion of an *anchor action*. We form an anchor noise by perturbing the expert action in the 6D pose subspace (for CALVIN):

$$a_{\text{anc}}^{\text{pose}} = a_e^{\text{pose}} + \mathbf{n}, \quad \mathbf{n} \sim \mathcal{N}(\mathbf{0}, \sigma_{\text{base}}^2 I_6), \quad g_{\text{anc}} = g_e. \quad (3)$$

We then define the ground-truth direction vector from the anchor action to the expert action:

$$u_{\text{gt}} = \frac{a_e^{\text{pose}} - a_{\text{anc}}^{\text{pose}}}{\|a_e^{\text{pose}} - a_{\text{anc}}^{\text{pose}}\|_2} \in \mathbb{R}^6. \quad (4)$$

Using u_{gt} , we define the orthogonal hyperplane

$$\mathcal{H} = \{a \in \mathbb{R}^6 \mid (a - a_{\text{anc}}^{\text{pose}})^\top u_{\text{gt}} = 0\} \quad (5)$$

which partitions the space into two half-spaces:

$$\mathcal{H}^+ = \{a \in \mathbb{R}^6 \mid (a - a_{\text{anc}}^{\text{pose}})^\top u_{\text{gt}} > 0\}, \quad (6)$$

$$\mathcal{H}^- = \{a \in \mathbb{R}^6 \mid (a - a_{\text{anc}}^{\text{pose}})^\top u_{\text{gt}} < 0\}. \quad (7)$$

Let $d_0 = \sqrt{\frac{1}{6} \|a_e^{\text{pose}} - a_{\text{anc}}^{\text{pose}}\|_2^2}$ be the RMSE distance between a_{anc} and a_e in the 6D pose subspace.

We define an adaptive noise scale as

$$\sigma_{\text{adapt}} = \text{clip}(k d_0, \sigma_{\text{min}}, \sigma_{\text{base}}), \quad k > 0, \sigma_{\text{min}} > 0, \quad (8)$$

to control the spread of candidate actions around a_{anc} . In our implementation, we sample $\epsilon_b, \epsilon_w \sim \mathcal{N}(\mathbf{0}, \sigma_{\text{adapt}}^2 I_6)$ and project them into the correct half-spaces:

$$\text{better: if } \epsilon_b^\top u_{\text{gt}} \leq 0, \epsilon_b \leftarrow -\epsilon_b; \quad \text{worse: if } \epsilon_w^\top u_{\text{gt}} \geq 0, \epsilon_w \leftarrow -\epsilon_w. \quad (9)$$

This yields

$$a_{\text{better}}^{\text{pose}} = a_{\text{anc}}^{\text{pose}} + \epsilon_b, \quad a_{\text{worse}}^{\text{pose}} = a_{\text{anc}}^{\text{pose}} + \epsilon_w \quad (10)$$

with the gripper state inherited from a_{anc} . By construction, a_{better} is more likely to lie closer to the expert action than a_{anc} , while a_{worse} is farther away.

Supervision and Objective From each anchor-centered tuple $\{\text{anchor}, \text{better}, \text{worse}\}$, we supervise two signals. For direction supervision, the ground-truth unit vector from a sampled action a_x toward the expert is

$$u_{\text{gt}}(a_e, a_x) = \frac{a_e^{\text{pose}} - a_x^{\text{pose}}}{\|a_e^{\text{pose}} - a_x^{\text{pose}}\|_2}. \quad (11)$$

Let $\hat{u} = \text{normalize}(d_\phi(h, a_x))$ denote the predicted direction. We minimize the cosine misalignment

$$\mathcal{L}_{\text{dir}} = \mathbb{E}[1 - \langle \hat{u}, u_{\text{gt}} \rangle], \quad (12)$$

averaged over all sampled actions in the tuple. For reward supervision, let $r(a) = R_\phi(h, a)$ denote the PRM score. For every ordered pair $i \succ j$ within a tuple where a_i is closer to the expert action than a_j , we apply the Bradley–Terry preference loss (Bradley & Terry, 1952):

$$\mathcal{L}_{\text{rew}}(i \succ j) = -\log \sigma(r(a_i) - r(a_j)), \quad (13)$$

and define $\mathcal{L}_{\text{rew}}$ as the average over all such pairs.

The final training objective combines both terms:

$$\mathcal{L}_{\text{total}} = \lambda_{\text{dir}} \mathcal{L}_{\text{dir}} + \lambda_{\text{rew}} \mathcal{L}_{\text{rew}}, \quad (14)$$

where λ_{dir} and λ_{rew} balance the two losses. We use standard gradient clipping during optimization. For validation, we track cosine alignment, angle error, and the monotonicity of PRM scores with respect to action–expert distance.

3.2.3 DIRECTION-GUIDED TEST-TIME SCALING

At inference time, RoVer augments the frozen VLA policy by expanding policy actions into a set of candidate actions and selecting the best one under the PRM. The key distinction from training is that candidates are generated from the policy action a_p rather than from expert actions a_e , and only the “better” side of the action space is explored with the guide of predicted direction $\hat{u}$. We implement two sampling strategies and compare: **i)** Random sampling: perturb a_p with Gaussian noise without guidance; **ii)** Direction-guided sampling: expand a_p by sampling along the PRM-predicted direction.

This procedure converts additional test-time computation into improved action selection. Random sampling explores broadly but inefficiently, while direction-guided sampling exploits the PRM’s predicted direction to concentrate candidates in promising regions, yielding better performance under the same budget.

4 EXPERIMENT

We evaluate RoVer both in simulation and on a real robot platform. For simulation, we adopt the CALVIN benchmark under the ABC→D setting: models are trained in three environments (A, B, C) and tested in an unseen environment (D). We select three representative state-of-the-art baselines from different stages of VLA research — GR-1 (Wu et al., 2023), Dita (Hou et al., 2025), and MoDE (Reuss et al., 2025) — to demonstrate that RoVer consistently improves policies of varying capacity. For real-robot experiments, we use Diffusion Policy (DP) (Chi et al., 2024; 2023) as the base policy and show that RoVer also enhances performance in physical manipulation tasks.

4.1 CALVIN BENCHMARK EXPERIMENTS

CALVIN is a widely used simulation benchmark for long-horizon robot manipulation (Mees et al., 2022). It provides multi-stage environments with language-conditioned tasks, enabling evaluation of both skill composition and generalization to unseen configurations. The ABC→D split is particularly challenging since it requires models trained in three training environments (A, B, C) to transfer to a held-out environment (D).

Table 1: CALVIN Benchmark results on the ABC→D split. Columns report probability of completing k tasks in a row and the average chain length. All baseline numbers are taken from the official leaderboard (<http://calvin.cs.uni-freiburg.de/>), except for GR-1*. The GR-1 baseline is reported on the leaderboard with an average chain length of 3.06, but in our local reproduction we observed stronger performance (Avg. Len. 3.19); we therefore report the locally evaluated GR-1* as the base policy. † denotes the best performance achieved by applying RoVer test-time scaling on top of the corresponding base policy.

Method	1	2	3	4	5	Avg. Len.
GR-1*	85.1	73.7	63.2	53.7	43.4	3.19
3D Diffuser Actor	92.2	78.7	63.9	51.2	41.2	3.27
GR-1†	86.1	75.3	66.8	56.2	48.7	3.33
Dita	94.5	82.5	72.8	61.3	50.0	3.61
RoboUniView	94.2	84.2	73.4	62.2	50.7	3.64
GHIL-Glue	95.2	88.5	73.2	62.5	49.8	3.69
Dita†	94.8	83.2	76.8	70.0	59.2	3.84
MoDE	96.2	88.9	81.1	71.8	63.5	4.01
MoDE†	97.1	90.9	82.5	74.9	66.6	4.12

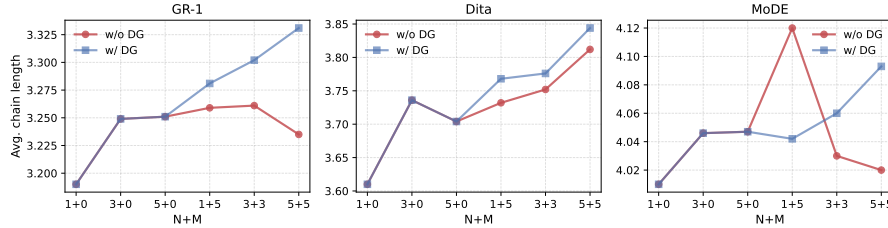


Figure 3: Direction-guided test-time scaling: average chain length versus $N+M$ (N policy proposals, M guided expansions). Panels correspond to GR-1, Dita, and MoDE. Red: unguided (random) expansion; blue: direction-guided (DG). MoDE shows broad but less stable gains due to the chunk-step mismatch discussed in Q2.

Experiment Setup: For RoVer, we reuse the GR-1 backbone architecture as the verifier, replacing the original action token with a reward token and a direction token. The total parameter size is 0.2B, with only 40M parameters trainable – the rest are frozen from MAE and CLIP text encoders. The reward model is trained on the CALVIN ABC→D training split for 100 epochs, and we use the final checkpoint for evaluation on all backbones. Importantly, we only sample 20% of the training set, showing that RoVer is also training-efficient. We study the following questions: **Q1 (Backbone-agnostic gains):** Does RoVer consistently improve different pre-trained baselines (GR-1, Dita, MoDE; and DP on real robot)? **Q2 (Scaling and sampling efficiency):** How does performance scale with the number of policy proposals N and the guided expansion budget M per proposal; under a fixed candidate budget $K=N+M$, is direction-guided sampling more effective than unguided Gaussian expansion? **Q3 (Inference efficiency):** Does a shared perception cache amortize computation and improve throughput/latency at test time?

Baseline Methods: We summarize the three baselines and highlight the test-time considerations when integrating them with RoVer. Unless otherwise noted, RoVer applies a unified candidate handling across backbones: (i) expansion noise is injected only into the 6D arm pose components; (ii) the gripper dimension is not noised and is selected via a simple vote across the N base proposals; and (iii) perceptual features are pre-encoded once per step (`pre_encode`) and reused across candidates.

GR-1 (Wu et al., 2023) is a GPT-style trajectory model that conditions on multi-view RGB and language to autoregressively predict end-effector deltas (6D arm pose delta plus a gripper scalar). At inference, we draw N stochastic proposals per control step, optionally expand each action within a bounded-angle region around the PRM-predicted direction, and rank all candidates by the PRM. Because GR-1 natively operates in world-frame deltas, no additional frame conversion is required.

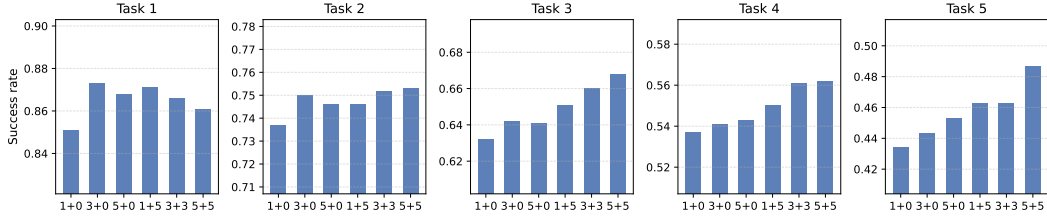


Figure 4: GR-1: SR@k ($k=1 \dots 5$) as a function of N (policy proposals). Increasing N boosts success across all k , revealing the value of proposal diversity; together with Fig. 3, this shows that adding direction-guided expansions M on top of non-trivial N yields further gains.

Table 2: Inference efficiency with/without a shared perception cache. Latency per control step decreases substantially when caching perception features once per step; speedup grows with the number of candidates.

#Actions	w/o cache (s)	w cache (s)	Speedup ($\times$)	Per-action (ms)
10	0.4140	0.0929	4.46	9.29
100	4.1400	0.6174	6.71	6.17
1000	41.4748	5.7384	7.23	5.74
10000	418.1795	58.2168	7.18	5.82

Dita (Hou et al., 2025) is a Diffusion Transformer policy that predicts relative motions in the local end-effector frame (position and Euler-angle deltas), which are converted to world-frame deltas using the current end-effector pose. Under RoVer, we first sample N policy actions in the local frame, convert each to a world-frame action, and then perform noise expansion in the world frame to align with the PRM’s world-frame direction guidance.

MoDE (Reuss et al., 2025) is a diffusion-transformer with Mixture-of-Expert denoisers that outputs a short action chunk (a sequence of future actions). During test-time scaling with RoVer, we draw multiple candidate chunks and interface with the PRM by scoring the first action of each chunk (optionally after direction-guided expansion of its 6D arm components) to choose the executed action. Alternative chunk-execution strategies are orthogonal and omitted here.

Q1: Backbone-agnostic gains Without any retraining of the base policies, plugging the same RoVer verifier into different backbones yields consistent improvements (Table 1). For average chain length, GR-1 improves from 3.19 to 3.33, Dita from 3.61 to 3.84 and MoDE from 4.01 to 4.12. Looking at long-horizon success (SR@5), GR-1 rises from 41.5% to 48.7% (+17.4%), while Dita goes from 50.0% to 59.2% (+18.4%).

Q2: Direction-guided test-time scaling We study scaling under a unified view of compute: given a total candidate budget $K=N+M$ (policy proposals N and direction-guided expansions M), performance generally increases with K , and direction guidance (DG) further improves sample efficiency by focusing exploration. Empirically (Figs. 3 and 4), increasing N first yields large gains at small budgets by diversifying policy modes; adding a modest M then refines promising proposals and yields additional improvements. Under equal K , DG reliably outperforms unguided Gaussian expansion on GR-1 and Dita, consistent with the intended role of the direction head.

For MoDE, however, gains are not consistently higher across all settings (right panel of Fig. 3). We attribute this to a chunk–step mismatch: MoDE outputs short action chunks, whereas our PRM is trained and applied per time step. To maintain a unified evaluation pipeline, we expand and score only the first action of each chunk and then execute the selected chunk; subsequent steps inside the chunk receive no further guidance. This limits our ability to intervene within chunks and can produce non-monotonic trends as $N+M$ increases. Nevertheless, the method remains effective—most $N+M$ settings still show positive improvements.

Q3: Effect of a shared perception cache We evaluate the impact of caching perceptual features across candidates by measuring wall-clock latency per control step under increasing candidate budgets. As shown in Table 2, caching reduces per-step latency substantially and the speedup grows with the number of candidates: for 10 candidates, latency drops from 0.414s to 0.0929s ($4.46\times$); for 100 and 1000 candidates, the speedups reach $6.71\times$ and $7.23\times$, respectively. With caching, the

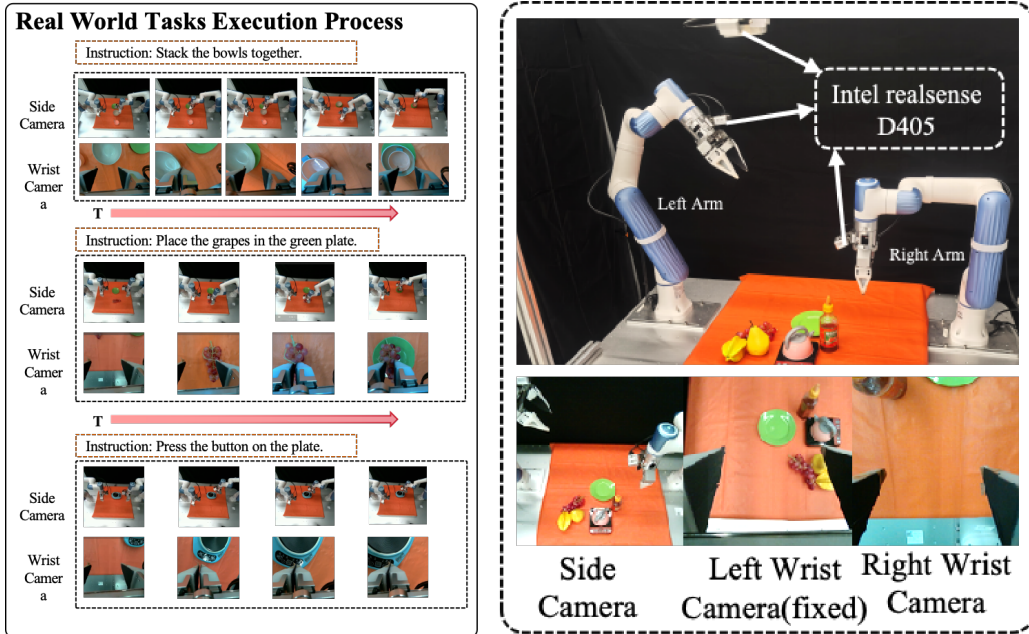


Figure 5: Left: visualization of our real-robot experiments. Right: the dual-arm Dobot testing platform used in our evaluation.

Table 3: Real-robot results: success rate (%). Each entry is computed over 10 trials per condition.

Method	Pick and place			Push button		Stack bowls		Avg.
	Seen	Unseen object	Unseen position	Seen	Unseen position	Seen	Unseen position	
DP	100%	90%	50%	100%	50%	80%	40%	72.9%
DP [†]	100%	100%	70%	100%	80%	100%	70%	88.6%

per-action cost stabilizes around 5.7–6.2 ms (e.g., 6.17 ms at 100 candidates and 5.74 ms at 1000 candidates), enabling near-linear scaling in the number of candidates for a single perception encode. These results validate that amortizing perception via a shared perception cache is critical to test-time scaling efficiency. All latency measurements are conducted on a single NVIDIA V100 GPU.

4.2 REAL ROBOT EXPERIMENTS

We evaluate RoVer on a dual-arm Dobot platform (Fig. 5). Since our tasks are single-arm, the left arm remains stationary while the right arm executes. Perception uses both an eye-in-hand wrist camera on the right arm and an overhead third-person camera. We consider three manipulation tasks—pick-and-place, push button, and stack bowls—each evaluated under **Seen**, **Unseen object**, and **Unseen position** conditions. Concretely: pick-and-place requires grasping a small household item and placing it at a designated location; push button requires moving to and actuating a panel button; stack bowls requires placing one bowl atop another with correct alignment. As shown in Table 3, RoVer (DP[†]) matches DP on seen cases while providing clear gains in generalization.

5 CONCLUSION

RoVer is an external test-time scaling framework that upgrades frozen VLA policies by introducing a compact process reward model to score and direction-guide candidate actions. Without retraining the backbones, RoVer consistently improves performance across diverse policies (Q1), scales effectively with candidate budgets—especially under direction guidance (Q2)—and achieves substantial inference speedups via a shared perception cache (Q3). While limitations remain (e.g., step-chunk mismatches for chunked policies and the use of expert proximity as a supervision proxy), RoVer demonstrates that reallocating compute from training to inference can reliably unlock additional capability in embodied policies without extra pre-training or data.

Ethics Statement

Our work involves only robotic simulation and real-robot experiments, and does not include human or animal subjects. All datasets are collected from robotic manipulation trials and contain no personally identifiable information. The methods proposed are intended for academic research on embodied AI and robotics. We are not aware of direct misuse risks, but as with any general-purpose learning method, caution is advised if deployed in safety-critical or adversarial settings.

Reproducibility Statement

We provide detailed descriptions of model architectures, training procedures, and evaluation protocols in the main paper and appendix. Hyperparameters, network sizes, and task setups are specified in the text and tables. Additional training details, data processing steps, and evaluation scripts will be open-sourced after acceptance.

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A APPENDIX

A.1 THE USE OF LARGE LANGUAGE MODELS

Large language models (LLMs) were not involved in the design, implementation, or evaluation of the proposed methods. Their sole use in this work was for minor linguistic assistance, such as polishing the writing style and improving readability of the manuscript. All technical ideas, experiments, and analyses were conceived and conducted entirely by the authors.

A.2 ACTION DISTRIBUTION ANALYSIS

To calibrate the perturbation scale used by the preference reward model (PRM) and our test-time sampling, we quantified the distribution gap between policy actions A_p and expert actions A_e on the CALVIN validation set. Following the analysis script in GR-1 (visualizing 3D deviations and their projections), we collect per-step deviations $\Delta a = A_p - A_e$ and summarize both the coordinate-wise statistics for translation (XYZ) and the Euclidean distance $\|\Delta a_{xyz}\|_2$.

Key findings from the aggregated statistics are:

- Near-zero bias: mean translation deviation is small in all axes (X/Y/Z: 0.0009/0.0048/-0.0013 m). Medians are similarly close to zero.
- Anisotropic spread: standard deviations are (X/Y/Z: 0.184/0.116/0.165 m), indicating a slightly tighter spread along Y and broader tails along X and Z.
- Heavy-tailed distances: the Euclidean distance has mean 0.215 m and median 0.170 m with a long tail (min 0.003 m, max 1.708 m). This matches the visualizations where most samples cluster near the origin with a small fraction of large outliers.

Implications for training and sampling. We set a conservative base noise scale of $\sigma_{\text{base}} = 0.1$ for constructing anchor-centered pairs: it is smaller than the median policy–expert gap (0.17 m), which (i) keeps most synthesized “better/worse” pairs on-manifold around policy proposals and (ii) avoids over-penalizing the verifier with rare, far-out outliers. At test time, the same scale serves as the initial radius for candidate expansion around policy actions; we combine it with direction guidance from the PRM to bias samples toward the expert manifold while preserving diversity.

Together with the qualitative 3D scatter and projection plots, this analysis supports our choice of a small but non-trivial perturbation radius and motivates the direction-aware, anchor-centered sampling used throughout the paper.

A.3 IMPLEMENTATION DETAILS

Stabilizing training with an Action Amplifier During early training of the PRM, we observed a degeneration phenomenon where the reward head collapsed toward nearly constant outputs across inputs and the loss plateaued. Our hypothesis is that a strong frozen backbone (initialized from GR-1) dominated the feature fusion, causing small differences in action embeddings to be attenuated and thus providing weak gradients to the reward head. We therefore introduced an *Action Amplifier* — a lightweight MLP $H \rightarrow 2H \rightarrow H$ with GELU and LayerNorm — placed after the action embedding and before token fusion. This reconditions the action channel, preserves fine-grained deltas among nearby candidates, and restores useful gradients. After adding the amplifier, training became stable and the loss decreased reliably.

Anchor-based dynamic sampling for robust preference learning Using a single fixed noise scale to generate noisy action pairs around expert actions yielded a narrow training distribution and sub-optimal test-time scaling. To diversify supervision while matching test-time behavior, we adopt an *anchor-centered* dynamic scheme (see Section 3.2): (i) sample an anchor action by adding base Gaussian noise in the 6D pose subspace to the expert action; (ii) compute the ground-truth direction u_{gt} from the anchor toward the expert and define the orthogonal hyperplane; (iii) sample additional actions on the two half-spaces (“better” and “worse”) using an adaptive noise scale clipped by the anchor–expert distance; and (iv) train with a Bradley–Terry preference loss over ordered pairs (closer-to-expert preferred) together with a direction loss that aligns predicted directions to u_{gt} . In

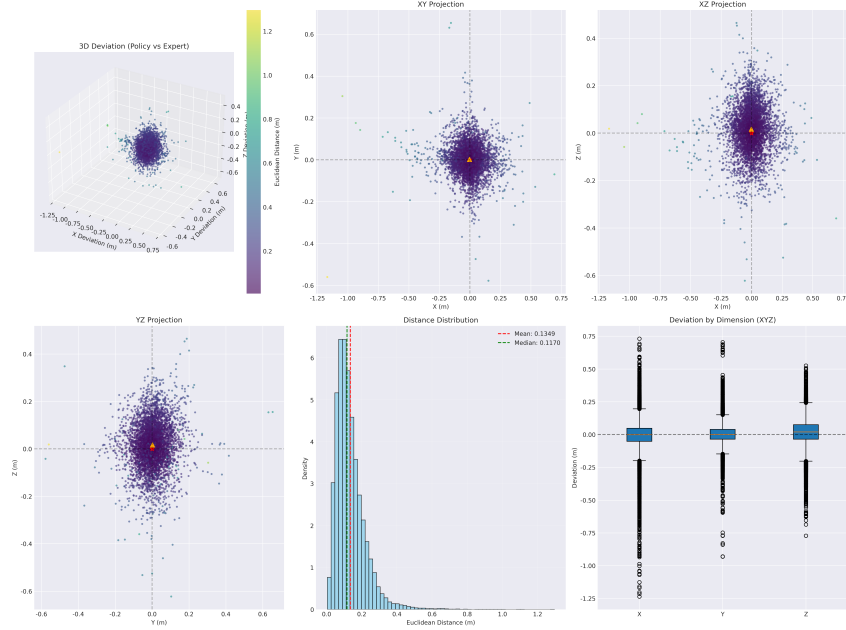


Figure 6: The visualization of distribution gap between policy action from GR-1 and expert action.

Algorithm 1: RoVer Test-Time Scaling Framework

Input: Observation h , policy π_θ , verifier R_ϕ , number of policy actions N , expanded candidates M , angular bound α

Output: Final executed action a^*

1. Policy step: Query the base policy for N actions

$$\{a_p^1, a_p^2, \dots, a_p^N\} \leftarrow \pi_\theta(h)$$

2. Expansion step: For each policy action a_p^j , expand it into $\frac{M}{N}$ candidates:

Predict direction $\hat{u}^j = R_\phi(h, a_p^j).dir$ (dimension d_{dir} matches the action subspace)

For $k = 1, \dots, \frac{M}{N}$:

Sample random vector $v \sim \mathcal{N}(0, I_{d_{dir}})$, project $p = v - (v^\top \hat{u}^j) \hat{u}^j$, normalize $p \leftarrow p / \|p\|$.

Sample angle $\theta \sim \text{Unif}(0, \alpha)$ and magnitude $m \sim |\mathcal{N}(0, \sigma^2)|$.

Construct perturbation $\epsilon = m(\cos \theta \hat{u}^j + \sin \theta p)$.

Update candidate in the actionable subspace, leaving the discrete gripper unchanged when present.

$$\text{Collect } \mathcal{A} = \{a_p^j\}_{j=1}^N \cup \{a_j^k\}_{j=1..N, k=1.., \frac{M}{N}}$$

3. Encoding step: Compute shared perception features

$$z_{\text{obs}} \leftarrow f_{\text{obs}}(h) \quad (\text{pre_encode})$$

4. Candidate scoring: For each $a \in \mathcal{A}$

$$z_{\text{act}} \leftarrow f_{\text{act}}(a) \quad (\text{action_encode})$$

$$(r, d) \leftarrow R_\phi(z_{\text{obs}}, z_{\text{act}})$$

5. Action selection:

$$a^* \leftarrow \arg \max_{a \in \mathcal{A}} r(a)$$

return a^*

practice, this produces a PRM that generalizes better to direction-guided TTS than models trained with fixed-scale Gaussian pairs.

Model Architecture The verifier R_ϕ is a lightweight GPT-2-style transformer with frozen CLIP text and MAE vision encoders. A Perceiver Resampler compresses image tokens; robot state and the 7D action are linearly embedded, and an *action amplifier* MLP ($H \rightarrow 2H \rightarrow H$) highlights small action differences. Two learned query tokens produce a scalar process reward and a normalized direction in the action subspace (typically 6D on CALVIN, 2D on PushT). For efficiency, we split

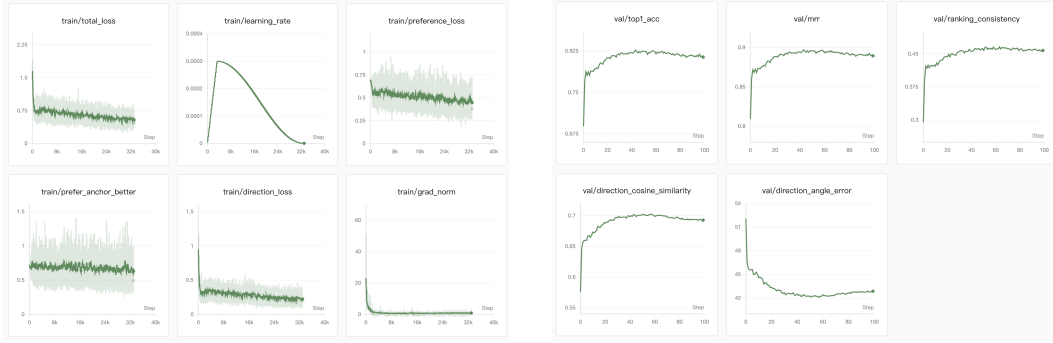


Figure 7: Training (left) and validation (right) logs for the PRM. With the Action Amplifier, losses decrease stably and the reward head avoids degenerate (constant) outputs.

Table 4: Verifier architecture hyperparameters (key = value).

Key	Value
Hidden size	$H = 384$
Layers	12
Attention heads	12
FFN	$4H$
Dropout	0.1
Positions	1024
Seq. length	$L = 10$
Text encoder dim	$512 \rightarrow H$
Vision patch size	16
Resampler latents	9
Resampler depth	3
Resampler dim_head	128
Resampler heads	4
State dim	6 (pose) + 2 (one-hot gripper)
Action dim	7
Amplifier	$H \rightarrow 2H \rightarrow H$
Reward head	$H \rightarrow H/2 \rightarrow H/4 \rightarrow 1$
Direction head	$H \rightarrow H/2 \rightarrow d_{\text{dir}}$

computation into a shared ‘pre_encode’ step (perception/language/state) and a fast ‘action_encode’ step (per candidate), enabling near-linear scaling in the number of candidates. Key hyperparameters are summarized in Table 4.

A.4 CALVIN BENCHMARK

We evaluate on the CALVIN benchmark (Mees et al., 2022) under the standard ABC→D generalization setting: we train reward model on environments A, B, and C, and evaluate on unseen environment D. CALVIN features long-horizon, language-conditioned tabletop manipulation with multi-object scenes and compositional goals. Each episode is paired with a natural-language instruction; success is counted when the instructed behavior is completed within a fixed horizon (see Fig. 8).

The task set covers rotation and pushing of colored blocks, opening/closing the drawer and slider, lifting/placing/stacking/unstacking blocks, toggling a lightbulb/LED, and pushing a block into the drawer. Following the official evaluation protocol of each backbone, we execute 1,000 multi-step sequences of 5 language instructions per sequence for GR-1 and MoDE, and 250 sequences for Dita. For each subtask, we allow up to 360 control steps and count success when the task-specific oracle detects completion.



Figure 8: Overview of the CALVIN benchmark and the ABC→D split.