

# Linear Algebra Notes

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**Definition 1** A *linear equation* of the variables  $x_1, x_2, \dots, x_n$  is any equation of the form

$$a_1x_1 + a_2x_2 + \dots + a_nx_n = b$$

where  $a_1, \dots, a_n$  are called the coefficients and  $b$  is called the constant.

**Definition 2** A *system of linear equation* is a set of 1 or more linear equations.

**Example 1**

$$x + 2y = 3$$

is a linear system and

$$x - 2y = 1$$

$$2x + 3y = 4$$

$$x + y = 5$$

is a linear system. But

$$5\sqrt{x} - y = 1$$

is not a linear system.

Given a linear system, we want to find all substitutions which satisfy the linear system. A **solution set** is a set of  $n$ -tuples, all of which are valid solutions to a given system of linear equations. Our central problem is: given a linear system, find its solution set. Big problems

1. Existence Question: Do there exist any solutions? If there are, we call the system **consistent**. If there are no solutions, we call the solution **inconsistent**.
2. Uniqueness Question: How many solutions are there? If there is exactly 1 solution, we call that **unique**.

**Theorem 1** If a linear system has solutions, it either has 1 solution or infinitely many solutions. A linear system cannot have 12 solutions.

**Example 2**

$$x + 2y = 5, x + 4y = 6$$

has solution

$$x = -4, y = 9/2$$

This linear system corresponds to the matrix multiplication

$$\begin{bmatrix} 1 & 2 \\ 3 & 4 \end{bmatrix} \begin{bmatrix} x \\ y \end{bmatrix} = \begin{bmatrix} 5 \\ 6 \end{bmatrix}$$

We can turn this into an **augmented matrix** to get

$$\begin{bmatrix} 1 & 2 & 5 \\ 3 & 4 & 6 \end{bmatrix}$$

We are allowed to perform row operations on the rows to get

$$\begin{bmatrix} 1 & 2 & 5 \\ 0 & 1 & 9/2 \end{bmatrix} \Rightarrow \begin{bmatrix} 1 & 0 & -4 \\ 0 & 1 & 9/2 \end{bmatrix}$$

So  $(x, y) = (-4, 9/2)$ . The solution is unique.

**Theorem 2** We are allowed to do these elementary row operations

**Definition 3** We say two systems of equations are **equivalent** if their solutions sets are equal.

1. replacement: replace one row with the sum of itself and another row
2. interchange: swap 2 rows
3. scaling: multiply all entries in a row by a constant

The reason the elementary operations work is because they give an equivalent system, i.e. they do not change the solution set.

Convince yourself that each of the elementary operations do not change the solution set.

**Example 3** Let's solve this system

$$\begin{aligned} kx + y + 2z &= 1 \\ x + z &= h \\ y - z &= 1 \end{aligned}$$

The solution is

$$x = -3h/(k-3), y = \frac{(h+1)k-3}{k-3}, z = \frac{hk}{k-3}$$

The system would have no solutions (inconsistent) iff  $k = 3$  and  $h \neq 0$ . The system has infinite solutions if  $k = 3$  and  $h = 0$ . The system has 1 solution if  $k \neq 3$ .

**Definition 4** A matrix is in **echelon form** iff

1. All nonzero rows are above any rows of all zeroes

2. each leading entry in a row is in a column to the right of the leading entry of the row above it
3. All entries in a column below a leading entry are zeroes

**Definition 5** A matrix is in **reduce row echelon form** iff

1. The leading entry in each nonzero row is 1
2. each leading 1 is the only nonzero entry in its column

**Example 4** This matrix

$$\begin{bmatrix} * & * & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & * & 1 & 0 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & * & 0 & 0 & * \end{bmatrix}$$

is in REF, but not in RREF.

**Example 5** This matrix

$$\begin{bmatrix} 0 & 1 & 0 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & 2 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 1 \\ 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 \end{bmatrix}$$

is in REF, and it would be in RREF if we changed the 2 to a 1.

**Theorem 3** A given matrix has infinitely many equivalent REF, but only 1 RREF.

**Example 6** Reduce this matrix

$$\begin{bmatrix} 1 & -1 & -1 \\ 0 & 2 & 1 \\ 2 & 0 & -1 \end{bmatrix}$$

*Solution:*

$$\begin{pmatrix} 1 & 0 & -\frac{1}{2} \\ 0 & 1 & \frac{1}{2} \\ 0 & 0 & 0 \end{pmatrix}$$

**Definition 6** If a matrix is in REF, the **pivots** are leading entries. The **pivot columns** are the columns which contain a pivot.

**Definition 7** A **basic variable** is a variable which corresponds to a pivot column. A **free variable** is a variable which does not correspond to a pivot column.

**Example 7** Given the matrix

$$\begin{bmatrix} 1 & 0 & 2 & 0 & 4 \\ 0 & 1 & 3 & 0 & 5 \\ 0 & 0 & 0 & 1 & 6 \\ 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 \end{bmatrix}$$

This matrix is in RREF. Variables  $x_1, x_2, x_4$  are basic variables and variable  $x_3$  is a free variable.

If the rightmost column of  $A$  is a pivot column, then we cannot tell if  $\mathbf{A}\vec{x} = \vec{b}$  is consistent or inconsistent.

**Theorem 4** If the rightmost column of  $\begin{bmatrix} \mathbf{A} & \vec{b} \end{bmatrix}$  is a pivot column, then  $\mathbf{A}\vec{x} = \vec{b}$  is not consistent.

**Theorem 5** Even if you have a free variable, that doesn't guarantee infinitely many solutions.

If you have a free variable and the system is consistent, then the system has infinitely many solutions.

**Example 8** Given that the RREF is

$$\begin{bmatrix} 1 & 2 & 3 & 0 & 0 & 6 \\ 0 & 0 & 0 & 1 & 0 & 7 \\ 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 1 & 8 \end{bmatrix}$$

Describe the solution set. It is

$$\begin{bmatrix} x_1 \\ x_2 \\ x_3 \\ x_4 \\ x_5 \end{bmatrix} = x_2 \begin{bmatrix} -2 \\ 1 \\ 0 \\ 0 \\ 0 \end{bmatrix} + x_3 \begin{bmatrix} -3 \\ 0 \\ 1 \\ 0 \\ 0 \end{bmatrix} + \begin{bmatrix} 6 \\ 0 \\ 0 \\ 7 \\ 8 \end{bmatrix}$$

This solution set is infinitely big because it has free variables. This is called **parametric vector form** of the solution set.