Data Science Math Skills
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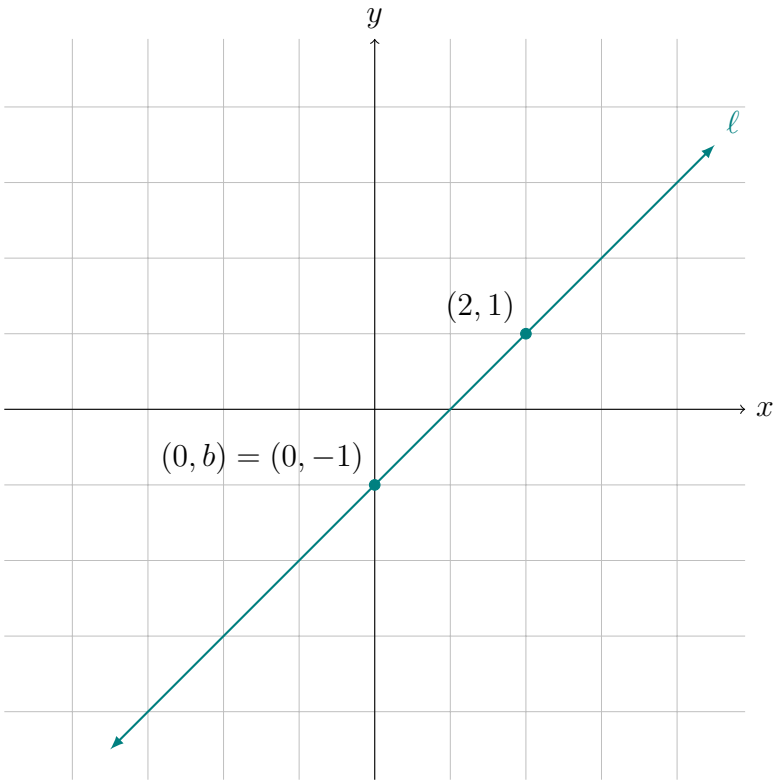
Cartesian Plane: Slope-Intercept Formula for Lines

Video companion

1 Derivation using point-slope form



From last video, the equation of a line in point-slope form that passes through $(2, 1)$ and has slope $m = 1$ is

$$y - 1 = 1(x - 2).$$

The y-intercept is at point $(0, b)$. To find b, we substitute that point into the definition of the line:

$$\begin{aligned}(0, b) &\in \ell, \text{ so} \\ b - 1 &= 1(0 - 2) \\ b &= -1\end{aligned}$$

Using the y-intercept in the equation for the line in point-slope form:

$$\begin{aligned} y-(-1) &= 1(x-0) \\ y+1 &= x \\ y &= 1x-1 \end{aligned}$$

2 Slope-intercept form

If ℓ has slope m, and ℓ hits the y-axis at $(0, b)$, then

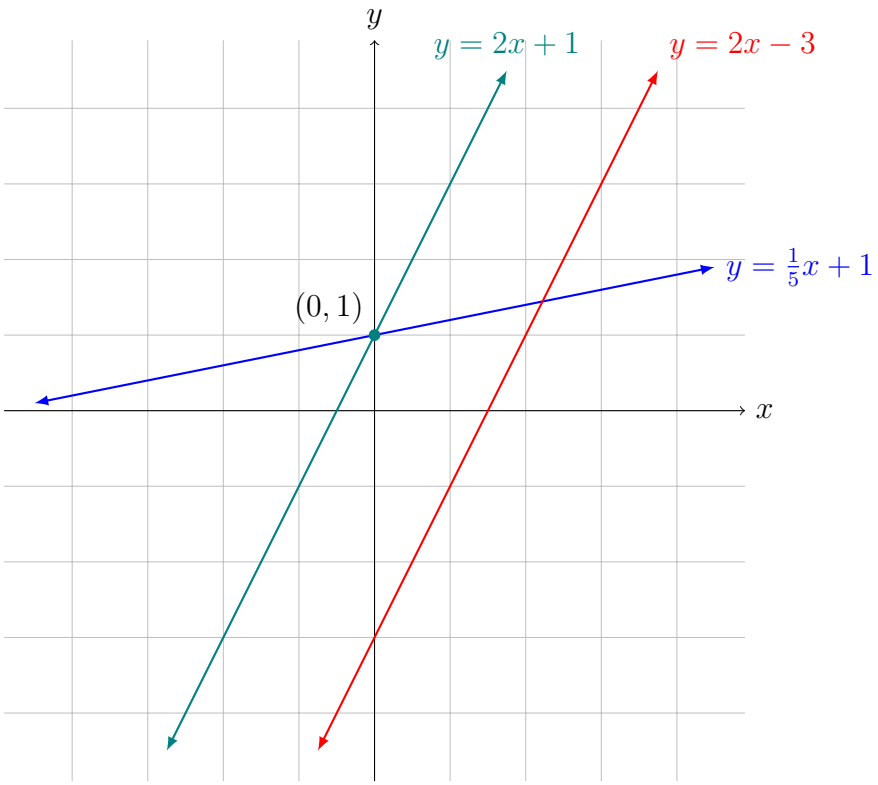
$$\boxed{y = mx + b}$$

is an equation for ℓ, where m is the slope and b is the y-intercept.

3 Drawing lines

Draw line with equation

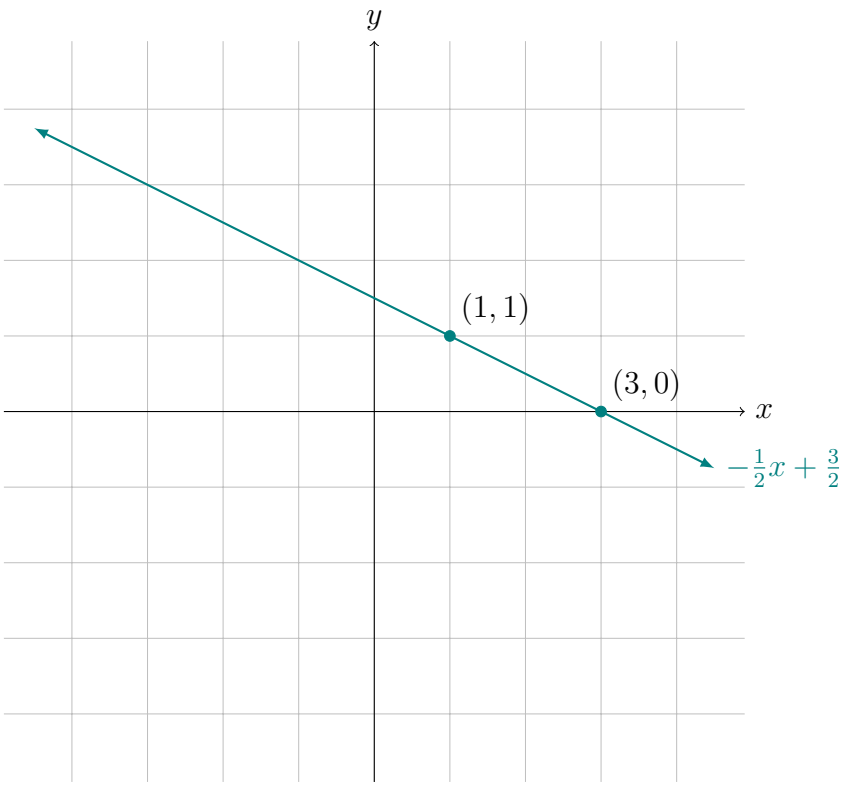
$$y = 2x + 1$$
$$y = \frac{1}{5}x + 1$$
$$y = 2x - 3$$



The slope tells you how to angle the line, and the y-intercept tells you where to anchor it on the y-axis.

4 Example

Problem: Line ℓ has points $(1, 1)$ and $(3, 0)$ on it. Find an equation for ℓ.



Find the slope:

$$m = \frac{0-1}{3-1} = -\frac{1}{2}$$

Some possible equations for the line in point-slope form:

$$y - 1 = -\frac{1}{2}(x - 1)$$
$$y - 0 = -\frac{1}{2}(x - 3)$$

An equation for the line in slope-intercept form:

$$y = -\frac{1}{2}x + \frac{3}{2}$$