Section E.1

Definition E.1.1 A **linear equation** is an equation of the variables x_i of the form

$$a_1x_1 + a_2x_2 + \cdots + a_nx_n = b.$$

A **solution** for a linear equation is expressed in terms of the Euclidean vectors

$$\begin{bmatrix} x_1 \\ x_2 \\ \vdots \\ x_n \end{bmatrix} = \begin{bmatrix} s_1 \\ s_2 \\ \vdots \\ s_n \end{bmatrix}$$

and must satisfy

$$a_1s_1 + a_2s_2 + \cdots + a_ns_n = b.$$

Remark E.1.2 In previous classes you likely assumed $x = x_1$, $y = x_2$, and $z = x_3$. However, since this course often deals with equations of four or more variables, we will almost always write our variables as x_i.

Definition E.1.3 A **system of linear equations** (or a **linear system** for short) is a collection of one or more linear equations.

$$\begin{array}{rcrcrcrcl} a_{11}x_1 & + & a_{12}x_2 & + & \dots & + & a_{1n}x_n & = & b_1 \\ a_{21}x_1 & + & a_{22}x_2 & + & \dots & + & a_{2n}x_n & = & b_2 \\ \vdots & & \vdots & & & & \vdots & & \vdots \\ a_{m1}x_1 & + & a_{m2}x_2 & + & \dots & + & a_{mn}x_n & = & b_m \end{array}$$

A **solution**

$$\begin{bmatrix} x_1 \\ x_2 \\ \vdots \\ x_n \end{bmatrix} = \begin{bmatrix} s_1 \\ s_2 \\ \vdots \\ s_n \end{bmatrix}$$

for a linear system satisfies

$$a_{i1}s_1 + a_{i2}s_2 + \cdots + a_{in}s_n = b_i$$

for $1 \leq i \leq m$ (that is, the solution satisfies all equations in the system).

Remark E.1.4 When variables in a large linear system are missing, we prefer to write the system in one of the following standard forms:

Original linear system:

$$\begin{array}{rcr} x_1 + 3x_3 & = & 3 \\ 3x_1 - 2x_2 + 4x_3 & = & 0 \\ -x_2 + x_3 & = & -2 \end{array}$$

Verbose standard form:

$$\begin{array}{rcr} 1x_1 + 0x_2 + 3x_3 & = & 3 \\ 3x_1 - 2x_2 + 4x_3 & = & 0 \\ 0x_1 - 1x_2 + 1x_3 & = & -2 \end{array}$$

Concise standard form:

$$\begin{array}{rcrcrcr} x_1 & & & + & 3x_3 & = & 3 \\ 3x_1 & - & 2x_2 & + & 4x_3 & = & 0 \\ & - & x_2 & + & x_3 & = & -2 \end{array}$$

Definition E.1.5 A linear system is **consistent** if there exists a solution for the system. Otherwise it is **inconsistent**.

Fact E.1.6 All linear systems are either **consistent with one solution**, **consistent with infinitely-many solutions**, or **inconsistent**.

Activity E.1.7 *(∼10 min)* All inconsistent linear systems contain a logical **contradiction**. Find a contradiction in this system.

$$\begin{aligned} -x_1 + 2x_2 &= 5 \\ 2x_1 - 4x_2 &= 6 \end{aligned}$$

Activity E.1.8 *(∼10 min)* Consider the following consistent linear system.

$$\begin{aligned} -x_1 + 2x_2 &= -3 \\ 2x_1 - 4x_2 &= 6 \end{aligned}$$

Part 1: Find three different solutions for this system.
Part 2: Let $x_2 = a$ where a is an arbitrary real number, then find an expression for x_1 in terms of a. Use this to write *all* solutions (the **solution set**) $\left\{ \begin{bmatrix} ? \\ a \end{bmatrix} \middle| \, a \in \mathbb{R} \right\}$ for the linear system in terms of a.

Activity E.1.9 *(∼10 min)* Consider the following linear system.

$$\begin{alignedat}{4} x_1 + 2x_2 & & {}-{} & x_4 &&= 3 \\ & x_3 & {}+{} & 4x_4 &&= -2 \end{alignedat}$$

Describe the solution set

$$\left\{ \begin{bmatrix} ? \\ a \\ ? \\ b \end{bmatrix} \middle| \, a, b \in \mathbb{R} \right\}$$

to the linear system by setting $x_2 = a$ and $x_4 = b$, and then solving for x_1 and x_3.

Observation E.1.10 Solving linear systems of two variables by graphing or substitution is reasonable for two-variable systems, but these simple techniques won't cut it for equations with more than two variables or more than two equations.