

**Definition 3.1** 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

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

**Definition 3.4** A **system of linear equations** (or a **linear system** for short) is a collection of one or more linear equations.

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

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).

**Definition 3.6** A linear system is **consistent** if there exists a solution for the system. Otherwise it is **inconsistent**.

**Definition 3.14** A system of  $m$  linear equations with  $n$  variables is often represented by writing its coefficients and constants in an **augmented matrix**.

$$\begin{array}{ccccccc} a_{11}x_1 + a_{12}x_2 + \cdots + a_{1n}x_n & = & b_1 \\ a_{21}x_1 + a_{22}x_2 + \cdots + a_{2n}x_n & = & b_2 \\ \vdots & & \vdots \\ a_{m1}x_1 + a_{m2}x_2 + \cdots + a_{mn}x_n & = & b_m \end{array} \quad \left[ \begin{array}{cccc|c} a_{11} & a_{12} & \cdots & a_{1n} & b_1 \\ a_{21} & a_{22} & \cdots & a_{2n} & b_2 \\ \vdots & \vdots & \ddots & \vdots & \vdots \\ a_{m1} & a_{m2} & \cdots & a_{mn} & b_m \end{array} \right]$$

**Definition 3.15** Two systems of linear equations (and their corresponding augmented matrices) are said to be **equivalent** if they have the same solution set.

For example, both of these systems have a single solution:  $(x_1, x_2) = (1, 1)$ .

$$\begin{aligned}3x_1 - 2x_2 &= 1 \\ x_1 + 4x_2 &= 5\end{aligned}$$

$$\begin{aligned}3x_1 - 2x_2 &= 1 \\ 4x_1 + 2x_2 &= 6\end{aligned}$$

Therefore these augmented matrices are equivalent:

$$\left[ \begin{array}{cc|c} 3 & -2 & 1 \\ 1 & 4 & 5 \end{array} \right]$$

$$\left[ \begin{array}{cc|c} 3 & -2 & 1 \\ 4 & 2 & 6 \end{array} \right]$$