

THEOREM 1.39. For arbitrary real numbers x and y , we have

$$|x + y| \leq |x| + |y|.$$

NOTE: This property is called the *triangle inequality*, because when x is regarded as vectors it states that the length of any side of a triangle is less than or equal to the sum of the lengths of the other two sides.

PROOF: Adding the inequalities $-|x| \leq x \leq |x|$ and $-|y| \leq y \leq |y|$, we obtain

$$-(|x| + |y|) \leq x + y \leq |x| + |y|,$$

and hence, by Theorem 1.38, we conclude that $|x + y| \leq |x| + |y|$.

If we take $x = a - c$ and $y = c - b$, then $x + y = a - b$ and the triangle inequality becomes

$$|a - b| \leq |a - c| + |c - b|.$$

This form of the triangle inequality is often used in practice.

Using mathematical induction, we may extend the triangle inequality as follows:

THEOREM 1.40. For arbitrary real numbers a_1, a_2, \dots, a_n we have

$$\left| \sum_{i=1}^n a_i \right| \leq \sum_{i=1}^n |a_i|.$$

PROOF: When $n = 1$ the inequality is trivial, and when $n = 2$ it is the triangle inequality. Assume, then, that it is true for n real numbers. Then for $n + 1$ real numbers a_1, a_2, \dots, a_{n+1} we have

$$\left| \sum_{i=1}^{n+1} a_i \right| = \left| \sum_{i=1}^n a_i + a_{n+1} \right| \leq \left| \sum_{i=1}^n a_i \right| + |a_{n+1}| \leq \sum_{i=1}^n |a_i| + |a_{n+1}| = \sum_{i=1}^{n+1} |a_i|.$$

Hence the theorem is true for $n + 1$ numbers if it is true for n . By induction, it is true for every positive integer n .

The next theorem describes an important inequality that we shall use later in connection with our study of vector algebra.

THEOREM 1.41. THE CAUCHY-SCHWARZ INEQUALITY: If a_1, \dots, a_n and b_1, \dots, b_n are arbitrary real numbers, we have

$$\left(\sum_{i=1}^n a_i b_i \right)^2 \leq \left(\sum_{i=1}^n a_i^2 \right) \left(\sum_{i=1}^n b_i^2 \right). \quad (1.25)$$

The equality sign holds if and only if there is a real number λ such that $a_i = \lambda b_i$ for each $i = 1, 2, \dots, n$.

PROOF: We have $\sum_{i=1}^n (a_i x + b_i)^2 \geq 0$ for every real x because a sum of squares can never be negative. This may be written as the form

$$Ax^2 + 2Bx + C \geq 0,$$

where

$$A = \sum_{i=1}^n b_i^2, \quad B = \sum_{i=1}^n a_i b_i, \quad C = \sum_{i=1}^n a_i^2.$$

We wish to prove that $B^2 \leq AC$. If $A = 0$, then each $b_i = 0$, so $B = 0$ and the result is trivial. If $A \neq 0$, we may complete the square and write

$$Ax^2 + 2Bx + C = A \left(x + \frac{B}{A} \right)^2 + \frac{AC - B^2}{A}.$$

The right side has its smallest value when $x = -B/A$. Putting $x = -B/A$ in (1.24), we obtain $B^2 \leq AC$. This proves (1.25). The reader should verify that the equality sign holds if and only if there is an x such that $a_i x + b_i = 0$ for each i .

14.9 Exercises

1. Prove each of the following properties of absolute values:

(a) $|x| \geq 0$ if and only if $x = 0$. (f) $|xy| = |x||y|$.

(b) $|x| = |-x|$. (g) $|x| \geq 0$ and $|x| \leq 0$ if and only if $x = 0$.

(c) $|x - y| \leq |x| + |y|$. (h) $|x - y| \leq |x| + |y|$.

(d) $|x| \leq |y|$ if and only if $|x| \leq |y|$ and $|y| \leq |x|$.

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