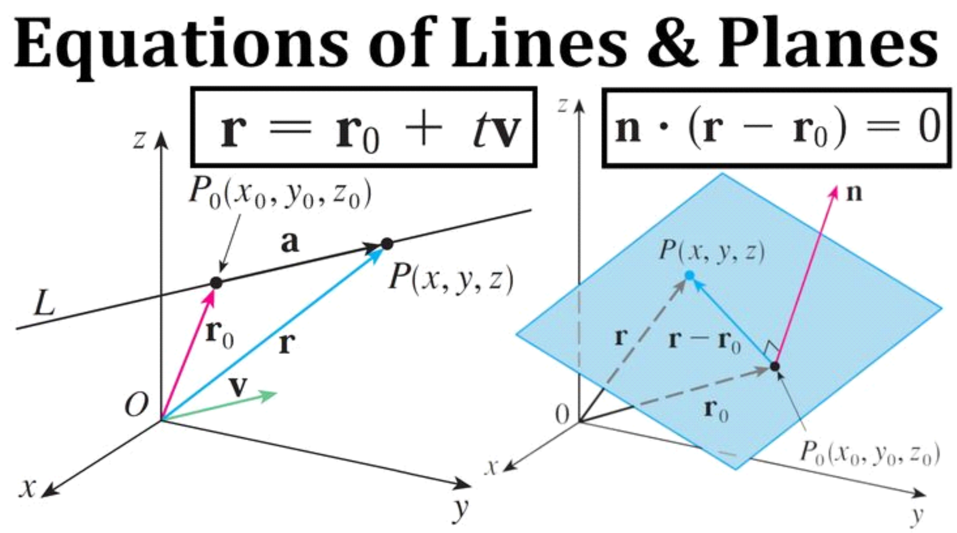
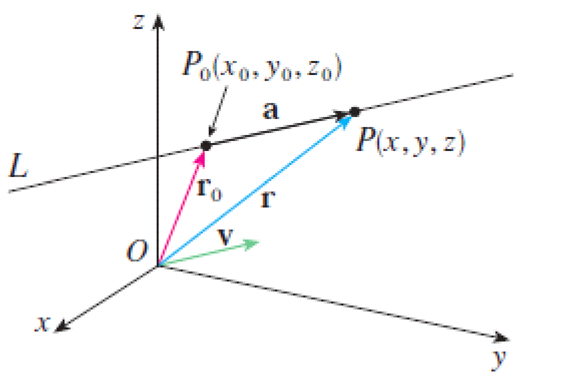
Equation of Line & Plane

Monday, 9 June 2025 5:39 pm

Equations of Lines and Planes



$$\boxed{\mathbf{r} = \mathbf{r}_0 + t\mathbf{v}}$$



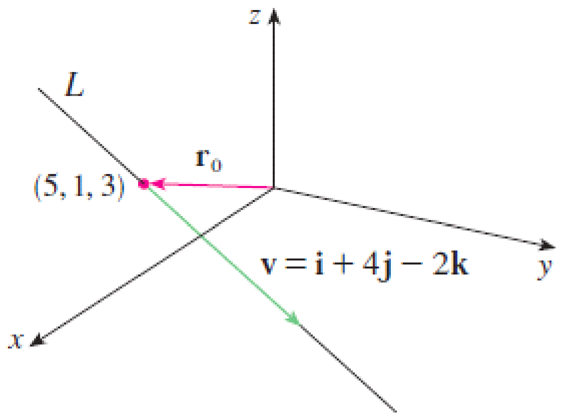
$$\langle x, y, z \rangle = \langle x_0 + ta, y_0 + tb, z_0 + tc \rangle$$

$$\boxed{x = x_0 + at \qquad y = y_0 + bt \qquad z = z_0 + ct}$$

EXAMPLE 1

(a) Find a vector equation and parametric equations for the line that passes through the point (5, 1, 3) and is parallel to the vector $\mathbf{i} + 4\mathbf{j} - 2\mathbf{k}$.

(b) Find two other points on the line.



SOLUTION

(a) Here $\mathbf{r}_0 = \langle 5, 1, 3\rangle = 5\mathbf{i} + \mathbf{j} + 3\mathbf{k}$ and $\mathbf{v} = \mathbf{i} + 4\mathbf{j} - 2\mathbf{k}$, so the vector equation $\boxed{1}$ becomes

$$\mathbf{r} = (5\mathbf{i} + \mathbf{j} + 3\mathbf{k}) + t(\mathbf{i} + 4\mathbf{j} - 2\mathbf{k})$$

or

$$\mathbf{r} = (5 + t)\,\mathbf{i} + (1 + 4t)\,\mathbf{j} + (3 - 2t)\,\mathbf{k}$$

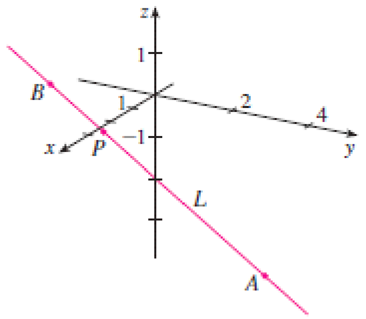
Parametric equations are

$$x = 5 + t \qquad y = 1 + 4t \qquad z = 3 - 2t$$

(b) Choosing the parameter value $t = 1$ gives $x = 6$, $y = 5$, and $z = 1$, so $(6, 5, 1)$ is a point on the line. Similarly, $t = -1$ gives the point $(4, -3, 5)$.

EXAMPLE 2

(a) Find parametric equations and symmetric equations of the line that passes through the points $A(2, 4, -3)$ and $B(3, -1, 1)$.
(b) At what point does this line intersect the xy-plane?



SOLUTION

(a) We are not explicitly given a vector parallel to the line, but observe that the vector $\mathbf{v}$ with representation $\overrightarrow{AB}$ is parallel to the line and

$$\mathbf{v} = \langle 3 - 2, -1 - 4, 1 - (-3)\rangle = \langle 1, -5, 4\rangle$$

Thus direction numbers are $a = 1$, $b = -5$, and $c = 4$. Taking the point $(2, 4, -3)$ as P_0, we see that parametric equations $\boxed{2}$ are

$$x = 2 + t \qquad y = 4 - 5t \qquad z = -3 + 4t$$

and symmetric equations $\boxed{3}$ are

$$\frac{x-2}{1} = \frac{y-4}{-5} = \frac{z+3}{4}$$

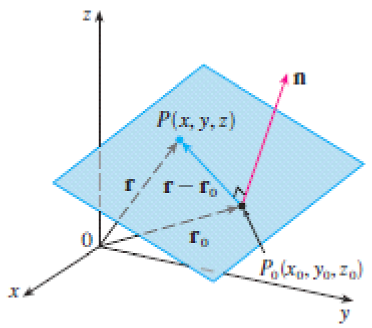
$$\boxed{\frac{x - x_0}{a} = \frac{y - y_0}{b} = \frac{z - z_0}{c}}$$

(b) The line intersects the xy-plane when $z = 0$, so we put $z = 0$ in the symmetric equations and obtain

$$\frac{x - 2}{1} = \frac{y - 4}{-5} = \frac{3}{4}$$

This gives $x = \frac{11}{4}$ and $y = \frac{1}{4}$, so the line intersects the xy-plane at the point $\left(\frac{11}{4}, \frac{1}{4}, 0\right)$.

Planes



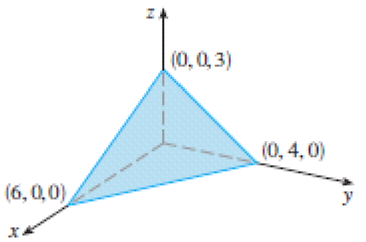
Screen clipping taken: 09/06/2025 5:46 pm

$$\boxed{\mathbf{n} \cdot (\mathbf{r} - \mathbf{r}_0) = 0}$$

$$\langle a, b, c \rangle \cdot \langle x - x_0, y - y_0, z - z_0 \rangle = 0$$

$$\boxed{a(x - x_0) + b(y - y_0) + c(z - z_0) = 0}$$

V EXAMPLE 4 Find an equation of the plane through the point $(2, 4, -1)$ with normal vector $\mathbf{n} = \langle 2, 3, 4 \rangle$. Find the intercepts and sketch the plane.



Screen clipping taken: 09/06/2025 5:47 pm

SOLUTION Putting $a = 2$, $b = 3$, $c = 4$, $x_0 = 2$, $y_0 = 4$, and $z_0 = -1$ in Equation 7, we see that an equation of the plane is

$$2(x - 2) + 3(y - 4) + 4(z + 1) = 0$$

or

$$2x + 3y + 4z = 12$$

To find the x-intercept we set $y = z = 0$ in this equation and obtain $x = 6$. Similarly, the y-intercept is 4 and the z-intercept is 3. This enables us to sketch the portion of the plane that lies in the first octant (see Figure 7).

$$\boxed{ax + by + cz + d = 0}$$

EXAMPLE 5 Find an equation of the plane that passes through the points $P(1, 3, 2)$, $Q(3, -1, 6)$, and $R(5, 2, 0)$.

SOLUTION The vectors $\mathbf{a}$ and $\mathbf{b}$ corresponding to $\overrightarrow{PQ}$ and $\overrightarrow{PR}$ are

$$\mathbf{a} = \langle 2, -4, 4 \rangle \qquad \mathbf{b} = \langle 4, -1, -2 \rangle$$

Since both $\mathbf{a}$ and $\mathbf{b}$ lie in the plane, their cross product $\mathbf{a} \times \mathbf{b}$ is orthogonal to the plane and can be taken as the normal vector. Thus

$$\mathbf{n} = \mathbf{a} \times \mathbf{b} = \begin{vmatrix} \mathbf{i} & \mathbf{j} & \mathbf{k} \\ 2 & -4 & 4 \\ 4 & -1 & -2 \end{vmatrix} = 12\,\mathbf{i} + 20\,\mathbf{j} + 14\,\mathbf{k}$$

With the point $P(1, 3, 2)$ and the normal vector $\mathbf{n}$, an equation of the plane is

$$12(x - 1) + 20(y - 3) + 14(z - 2) = 0$$

or

$$6x + 10y + 7z = 50$$

EXAMPLE 6 Find the point at which the line with parametric equations $x = 2 + 3t$, $y = -4t$, $z = 5 + t$ intersects the plane $4x + 5y - 2z = 18$.

SOLUTION We substitute the expressions for x, y, and z from the parametric equations into the equation of the plane:

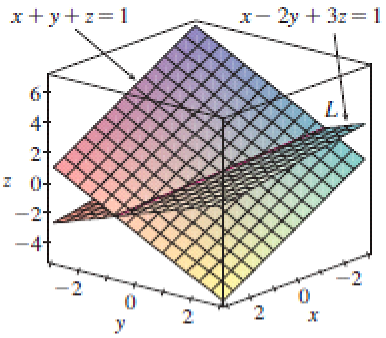
$$4(2 + 3t) + 5(-4t) - 2(5 + t) = 18$$

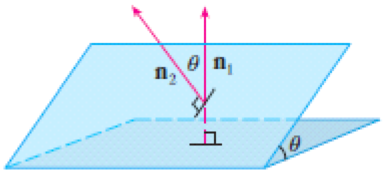
This simplifies to $-10t = 20$, so $t = -2$. Therefore the point of intersection occurs when the parameter value is $t = -2$. Then $x = 2 + 3(-2) = -4$, $y = -4(-2) = 8$, $z = 5 - 2 = 3$ and so the point of intersection is $(-4, 8, 3)$.

Two planes are **parallel** if their normal vectors are parallel. For instance, the planes $x + 2y - 3z = 4$ and $2x + 4y - 6z = 3$ are parallel because their normal vectors are $\mathbf{n}_1 = \langle 1, 2, -3 \rangle$ and $\mathbf{n}_2 = \langle 2, 4, -6 \rangle$ and $\mathbf{n}_2 = 2\mathbf{n}_1$. If two planes are not parallel, then they intersect in a straight line and the angle between the two planes is defined as the acute angle between their normal vectors (see angle θ in Figure 9).

V **EXAMPLE 7**

(a) Find the angle between the planes $x + y + z = 1$ and $x - 2y + 3z = 1$.
(b) Find symmetric equations for the line of intersection L of these two planes.





SOLUTION

(a) The normal vectors of these planes are

$$\mathbf{n}_1 = \langle 1, 1, 1 \rangle \qquad \mathbf{n}_2 = \langle 1, -2, 3 \rangle$$

and so, if θ is the angle between the planes, Corollary 12.3.6 gives

$$\cos\theta = \frac{\mathbf{n}_1 \cdot \mathbf{n}_2}{|\mathbf{n}_1||\mathbf{n}_2|} = \frac{1(1) + 1(-2) + 1(3)}{\sqrt{1+1+1}\,\sqrt{1+4+9}} = \frac{2}{\sqrt{42}}$$

$$\theta = \cos^{-1}\left(\frac{2}{\sqrt{42}}\right) \approx 72^\circ$$

(b) We first need to find a point on L. For instance, we can find the point where the line intersects the xy-plane by setting $z = 0$ in the equations of both planes. This gives the

equations $x + y = 1$ and $x - 2y = 1$, whose solution is $x = 1$, $y = 0$. So the point $(1, 0, 0)$ lies on L.

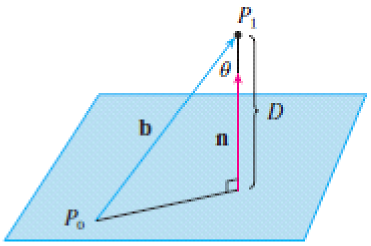
Now we observe that, since L lies in both planes, it is perpendicular to both of the normal vectors. Thus a vector $\mathbf{v}$ parallel to L is given by the cross product

$$\mathbf{v} = \mathbf{n}_1 \times \mathbf{n}_2 = \begin{vmatrix} \mathbf{i} & \mathbf{j} & \mathbf{k} \\ 1 & 1 & 1 \\ 1 & -2 & 3 \end{vmatrix} = 5\mathbf{i} - 2\mathbf{j} - 3\mathbf{k}$$

and so the symmetric equations of L can be written as

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

$$\boxed{D = \frac{|ax_1 + by_1 + cz_1 + d|}{\sqrt{a^2 + b^2 + c^2}}}$$


P_1
θ
D
b
n
P_0