

WTW 124 Mathematics

Open Course Notes

Based on *Mathematics 124 Course Notes*

Available at <https://tinyurl.com/wtw124-git>

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1 Vectors and a Model for Space

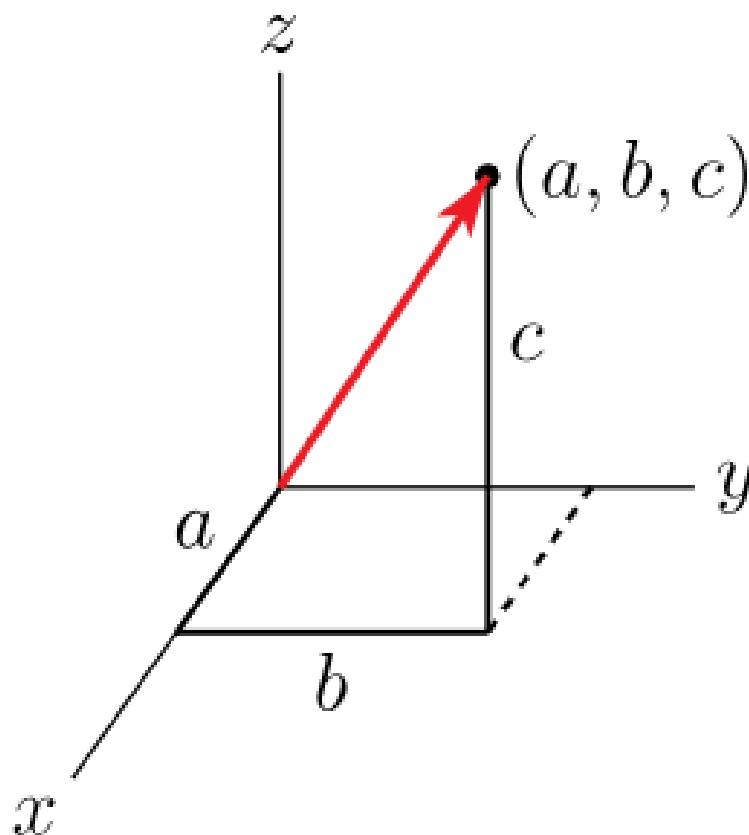
Introduction

Imagine you're standing in a rectangular room. To describe the exact position of any point in the room, say, where a fly is hovering, we can use three numbers. These numbers form an ordered triple:

$$\langle x_1, x_2, x_3 \rangle$$

- x_1 is the distance from one wall,
- x_2 is the distance from the opposite wall (not the same one as x_1),
- x_3 is how high the point is from the floor.

These values give us a simple way to describe positions in 3D space using real numbers. This forms the basis of vectors in \mathbb{R}^3 .



1.1 Algebraic Vectors and Vector Algebra

1.1.1 Algebraic Vectors

In this section, we formalise the ideas presented in the introduction. At this point our definitions and theorems are purely mathematical, and have no connection with the physical world.

Definition

Algebraic Vectors

Let n be any number in \mathbb{N} . An algebraic vector with n components is an ordered set:

$$\bar{x} = \langle x_1, x_2, \dots, x_n \rangle, \quad \text{where } x_i \in \mathbb{R}$$

These numbers are called the *components* of \bar{x} .

Definition

Notation

The set of all vectors with n real-number components is denoted by \mathbb{R}^n .

Example

- $\bar{x} = \langle 1, 2, -3 \rangle \in \mathbb{R}^3$
- $\bar{y} = \langle -2, 0.7, 1.1, 0.2 \rangle \in \mathbb{R}^4$
- $\bar{z} = \langle -1, 2, 3, -3 \rangle \in \mathbb{R}^4$

Definition

Vector Equality

Two vectors $\bar{x} = \langle x_1, x_2, \dots, x_n \rangle$ and $\bar{y} = \langle y_1, y_2, \dots, y_n \rangle$ are equal if and only if:

$$x_1 = y_1, \quad x_2 = y_2, \quad \dots, \quad x_n = y_n$$

Remark

Vectors are **ordered sets**. They are only equal if they have the same number of components and each corresponding component is equal.

Example

The vectors $\bar{x} = \langle 1, 2, -3 \rangle$ and $\bar{y} = \langle 1, -3, 2 \rangle$ in \mathbb{R}^3 are not equal, since $x_3 = -3 \neq 2 = y_3$. Also, let $\bar{w} \in \mathbb{R}^4$. Then the algebraic vectors $\bar{z} = \langle 1, 1, 1 \rangle$ and $\bar{w} = \langle 1, 1, 1, 1 \rangle$ are not equal, since $\bar{z} \in \mathbb{R}^3$ and $\bar{w} \in \mathbb{R}^4$.

1.1.2 Algebraic Vector Operations

The set \mathbb{R}^n is equipped with algebraic operations in a natural way. We can add vectors, multiply them by scalars, and subtract them. These operations are defined as follows:

Definition

Vector Addition

If $\bar{x}, \bar{y} \in \mathbb{R}^n$, then:

$$\bar{x} + \bar{y} = \langle x_1 + y_1, x_2 + y_2, \dots, x_n + y_n \rangle$$

Definition

Scalar Vector Multiplication

If $c \in \mathbb{R}$ and $\bar{x} \in \mathbb{R}^n$, then:

$$c\bar{x} = \langle cx_1, cx_2, \dots, cx_n \rangle$$

Take Note!

Terminology...

Some textbooks say that this is not the same as scalar *product*, which refers to the dot product of two vectors. For our purposes we shall refer to the above definition as scalar vector *multiplication*.

Definition

Zero Vector

The *zero vector* in \mathbb{R}^n is:

$$\bar{0} = \langle 0, 0, \dots, 0 \rangle$$

Definition

Additive Inverse of a Vector

For $\bar{x} \in \mathbb{R}^n$, the additive inverse is:

$$-\bar{x} = \langle -x_1, -x_2, \dots, -x_n \rangle$$

Definition

Vector Subtraction

If $\bar{x}, \bar{y} \in \mathbb{R}^n$, then:

$$\bar{x} - \bar{y} = \bar{x} + (-\bar{y})$$

Example

Let $\bar{x} = \langle 2, 3, 9 \rangle$, $\bar{y} = \langle -2, 4, 1 \rangle$, $\bar{z} = \langle 2, 5, 1, 4 \rangle$ and $\bar{w} = \langle -4, 0, 2, -1 \rangle$.

Then:

$$\bar{x} + \bar{y} = \langle 2, 3, 9 \rangle + \langle -2, 4, 1 \rangle = \langle 2 - 2, 3 + 4, 9 + 1 \rangle = \langle 0, 7, 10 \rangle,$$

$$\bar{z} + \bar{w} = \langle 2, 5, 1, 4 \rangle + \langle -4, 0, 2, -1 \rangle = \langle 2 - 4, 5 + 0, 1 + 2, 4 - 1 \rangle = \langle -2, 5, 3, 3 \rangle,$$

$$\text{and } 7\bar{x} = 7\langle 2, 3, 9 \rangle = \langle 7 \times 2, 7 \times 3, 7 \times 9 \rangle = \langle 14, 21, 63 \rangle.$$

Note that $\bar{z} + \bar{w}$ is not defined, since $\bar{z} \in \mathbb{R}^4$ and $\bar{w} \in \mathbb{R}^3$.

Vectors can be added, subtracted, and multiplied by scalars in a way that is consistent with the properties of real numbers. We can summarise these properties in the following theorem:

Theorem

Properties of Vectors

If $\bar{x}, \bar{y}, \bar{z} \in \mathbb{R}^n$ and $a, b \in \mathbb{R}$, then the following hold:

1. $\bar{x} + \bar{y} = \bar{y} + \bar{x}$ [Commutativity of Vector Addition]
2. $\bar{x} + (\bar{y} + \bar{z}) = (\bar{x} + \bar{y}) + \bar{z}$ [Associativity of Vector Addition]
3. $\bar{x} + \bar{0} = \bar{x}$ [Additive Identity of Vectors]
4. $\bar{x} + (-\bar{x}) = \bar{0}$ [Additive Inverse of a Vector]
5. $a(b\bar{x}) = (ab)\bar{x}$ [Associativity of Scalar Multiplication]
6. $1\bar{x} = \bar{x}$ [Multiplicative Identity]
7. $(-1)\bar{x} = -\bar{x}$ [Multiplication by -1]
8. $0\bar{x} = \bar{0}$ [Multiplication by a Zero Scalar]
9. $a\bar{0} = \bar{0}$ [Multiplying a Zero Vector]
10. $a(\bar{x} + \bar{y}) = a\bar{x} + a\bar{y}$ [Distributivity over Vector Addition]
11. $(a + b)\bar{x} = a\bar{x} + b\bar{x}$ [Distributivity over Scalar Addition]

Proof

1. Commutativity of Vector Addition

Assume $\bar{x}, \bar{y} \in \mathbb{R}^n$.

We want to show that $\bar{x} + \bar{y} = \bar{y} + \bar{x}$.

$$\begin{aligned}\bar{x} + \bar{y} &= \langle x_1 + y_1, x_2 + y_2, \dots, x_n + y_n \rangle && [\text{Def. of Vector Addition}] \\ &= \langle y_1 + x_1, y_2 + x_2, \dots, y_n + x_n \rangle && [\text{Commutativity of Real Numbers}] \\ &= \bar{y} + \bar{x} && [\text{Def. of Vector Addition}]\end{aligned}$$

□

2. Associativity of Vector Addition

Assume $\bar{x}, \bar{y}, \bar{z} \in \mathbb{R}^n$.

We want to show that $\bar{x} + (\bar{y} + \bar{z}) = (\bar{x} + \bar{y}) + \bar{z}$.

$$\begin{aligned}\bar{x} + (\bar{y} + \bar{z}) &= \bar{x} + \langle y_1 + z_1, y_2 + z_2, \dots, y_n + z_n \rangle && [\text{Def. of Vector Addition}] \\ &= \langle x_1 + (y_1 + z_1), x_2 + (y_2 + z_2), \dots, x_n + (y_n + z_n) \rangle && [\text{Def. of Vector Addition}] \\ &= \langle (x_1 + y_1) + z_1, (x_2 + y_2) + z_2, \dots, (x_n + y_n) + z_n \rangle && [\text{Associativity of Real Numbers}] \\ &= \langle (x_1 + y_1), (x_2 + y_2), \dots, (x_n + y_n) \rangle + \langle z_1, z_2, \dots, z_n \rangle && [\text{Def. of Vector Addition}] \\ &= (\bar{x} + \bar{y}) + \bar{z} && [\text{Def. of Vector Addition}]\end{aligned}$$

□

3. Additive Identity of Vectors

Assume $\bar{x} \in \mathbb{R}^n$.

We want to show that $\bar{x} + \bar{0} = \bar{x}$.

$$\begin{aligned}\bar{x} + \bar{0} &= \langle x_1 + 0, x_2 + 0, \dots, x_n + 0 \rangle && [\text{Def. of Vector Addition}] \\ &= \langle x_1, x_2, \dots, x_n \rangle && [\text{Identity Property of Real Numbers}] \\ &= \bar{x} && [\text{Def. of Vector Equality}]\end{aligned}$$

□

4. Additive Inverse of a Vector

Assume $\bar{x} \in \mathbb{R}^n$.

We want to show that $\bar{x} + (-\bar{x}) = \bar{0}$.

$$\begin{aligned}\bar{x} + (-\bar{x}) &= \langle x_1 + (-x_1), x_2 + (-x_2), \dots, x_n + (-x_n) \rangle && [\text{Def. of Vector Addition}] \\ &= \langle 0, 0, \dots, 0 \rangle && [\text{Additive Inverse of Real Numbers}] \\ &= \bar{0} && [\text{Def. of the Zero Vector}]\end{aligned}$$

□

5. Associativity of Scalar Multiplication

Assume $\bar{x} \in \mathbb{R}^n$.

We want to show that $a(b\bar{x}) = (ab)\bar{x}$.

$$\begin{aligned}
 a(b\bar{x}) &= a\langle bx_1, bx_2, \dots, bx_n \rangle && [\text{Def. of Scalar Vector Multiplication}] \\
 &= \langle a(bx_1), a(bx_2), \dots, a(bx_n) \rangle && [\text{Def. of Scalar Vector Multiplication}] \\
 &= \langle (ab)x_1, (ab)x_2, \dots, (ab)x_n \rangle && [\text{Associativity of Real Numbers}] \\
 &= (ab)\langle x_1, x_2, \dots, x_n \rangle && [\text{Def. of Scalar Vector Multiplication}] \\
 &= (ab)\bar{x} && [\text{Def. of Vector Equality}]
 \end{aligned}$$

□

6. Multiplicative Identity

Assume $\bar{x} \in \mathbb{R}^n$.

We want to show that $1\bar{x} = \bar{x}$.

$$\begin{aligned}
 1\bar{x} &= 1\langle x_1, x_2, \dots, x_n \rangle && [\text{Def. of Scalar Vector Multiplication}] \\
 &= \langle 1x_1, 1x_2, \dots, 1x_n \rangle && [\text{Def. of Scalar Vector Multiplication}] \\
 &= \langle x_1, x_2, \dots, x_n \rangle && [\text{Identity Property of Real Numbers}] \\
 &= \bar{x} && [\text{Def. of Vector Equality}]
 \end{aligned}$$

□

7. Multiplication by -1

Assume $\bar{x} \in \mathbb{R}^n$.

We want to show that $(-1)\bar{x} = -\bar{x}$.

$$\begin{aligned}
 (-1)\bar{x} &= (-1)\langle x_1, x_2, \dots, x_n \rangle && [\text{Def. of Scalar Vector Multiplication}] \\
 &= \langle (-1)x_1, (-1)x_2, \dots, (-1)x_n \rangle && [\text{Def. of Scalar Vector Multiplication}] \\
 &= \langle -x_1, -x_2, \dots, -x_n \rangle && [\text{Multiplication by } -1 \text{ in Real Numbers}] \\
 &= -\bar{x} && [\text{Def. of Additive Inverse of a Vector}]
 \end{aligned}$$

□

8. Multiplication by a Zero Scalar

Assume $\bar{x} \in \mathbb{R}^n$.

We want to show that $0\bar{x} = \bar{0}$.

$$\begin{aligned}
 0\bar{x} &= 0\langle x_1, x_2, \dots, x_n \rangle && [\text{Def. of Scalar Vector Multiplication}] \\
 &= \langle 0x_1, 0x_2, \dots, 0x_n \rangle && [\text{Def. of Scalar Vector Multiplication}] \\
 &= \langle 0, 0, \dots, 0 \rangle && [\text{Multiplication by Zero in Real Numbers}] \\
 &= \bar{0} && [\text{Def. of the Zero Vector}]
 \end{aligned}$$

□

9. Multiplying a Zero Vector

Assume $\bar{x} \in \mathbb{R}^n$.

We want to show that $a\bar{0} = \bar{0}$.

$$\begin{aligned}
 a\bar{0} &= a\langle 0, 0, \dots, 0 \rangle && [\text{Def. of Scalar Vector Multiplication}] \\
 &= \langle a \cdot 0, a \cdot 0, \dots, a \cdot 0 \rangle && [\text{Def. of Scalar Vector Multiplication}] \\
 &= \langle 0, 0, \dots, 0 \rangle && [\text{Multiplication by Zero in Real Numbers}] \\
 &= \bar{0} && [\text{Def. of the Zero Vector}]
 \end{aligned}$$

□

10. Distributivity over Vector Addition

Assume $\bar{x}, \bar{y} \in \mathbb{R}^n$ and $a \in \mathbb{R}$.

We want to show that $a(\bar{x} + \bar{y}) = a\bar{x} + a\bar{y}$.

$$\begin{aligned}
 a(\bar{x} + \bar{y}) &= a\langle x_1 + y_1, x_2 + y_2, \dots, x_n + y_n \rangle && [\text{Def. of Vector Addition}] \\
 &= \langle a(x_1 + y_1), a(x_2 + y_2), \dots, a(x_n + y_n) \rangle && [\text{Def. of Scalar Vector Multiplication}] \\
 &= \langle ax_1 + ay_1, ax_2 + ay_2, \dots, ax_n + ay_n \rangle && [\text{Distributivity of Real Numbers}] \\
 &= \langle ax_1, ax_2, \dots, ax_n \rangle + \langle ay_1, ay_2, \dots, ay_n \rangle && [\text{Def. of Vector Addition}] \\
 &= a\bar{x} + a\bar{y} && [\text{Def. of Scalar Vector Multiplication}]
 \end{aligned}$$

□

11. Distributivity over Scalar Addition

Assume $\bar{x} \in \mathbb{R}^n$ and $a, b \in \mathbb{R}$.

We want to show that $(a + b)\bar{x} = a\bar{x} + b\bar{x}$.

$$\begin{aligned}
 (a + b)\bar{x} &= (a + b)\langle x_1, x_2, \dots, x_n \rangle && [\text{Def. of Scalar Vector Multiplication}] \\
 &= \langle (a + b)x_1, (a + b)x_2, \dots, (a + b)x_n \rangle && [\text{Def. of Scalar Vector Multiplication}] \\
 &= \langle ax_1 + bx_1, ax_2 + bx_2, \dots, ax_n + bx_n \rangle && [\text{Distributivity of Real Numbers}] \\
 &= \langle ax_1, ax_2, \dots, ax_n \rangle + \langle bx_1, bx_2, \dots, bx_n \rangle && [\text{Def. of Vector Addition}] \\
 &= a\bar{x} + b\bar{x} && [\text{Def. of Scalar Vector Multiplication}]
 \end{aligned}$$

□

Example

Let $\bar{x} = \langle -2, 3, 1 \rangle$, $\bar{y} = \langle 7, 0, 5 \rangle$, and $\bar{z} = \langle 4, 1, 8 \rangle$.

Calculate $5(\bar{x} + 2\bar{y})$ and $\bar{x} - 3(\bar{x} + \bar{z})$

Solution.

$$\begin{aligned} 5(\bar{x} + 2\bar{y}) &= 5\bar{x} + 5(2\bar{y}) && \text{[Distributivity over vector addition]} \\ &= 5\bar{x} + 10\bar{y} \\ &= \langle -10, 15, 5 \rangle + \langle 70, 0, 50 \rangle && \text{[Definition of scalar multiplication]} \\ &= \langle 60, 15, 55 \rangle && \text{[Definition of vector addition]} \end{aligned}$$

$$\begin{aligned} \bar{x} - 3(\bar{x} + \bar{z}) &= \bar{x} - (3\bar{x} + 3\bar{z}) && \text{[Distributivity over vector addition]} \\ &= (\bar{x} - 3\bar{x}) - 3\bar{z} && \text{[Associativity of vector addition]} \\ &= -2\bar{x} - 3\bar{z} \\ &= \langle 4, -6, -2 \rangle + \langle -12, -3, -24 \rangle && \text{[Definition of scalar multiplication]} \\ &= \langle -8, -9, -26 \rangle && \text{[Definition of vector addition]} \end{aligned}$$

In addition to the properties above, we can also define the **dot product** of two vectors, which is a way to multiply vectors that results in a scalar (real number).

Definition

Dot Product of Two Vectors

Let $\bar{x} = \langle x_1, x_2, \dots, x_n \rangle$ and $\bar{y} = \langle y_1, y_2, \dots, y_n \rangle$ in \mathbb{R}^n . Then:

$$\bar{x} \cdot \bar{y} = x_1y_1 + x_2y_2 + \cdots + x_ny_n$$

Remark

The dot product is only defined when \bar{x} and \bar{y} have the same number of components.

Take Note!

Be careful: the scalar multiple of a vector is still a vector, but the dot product gives a real number.

Example

Let $\bar{x} = \langle 2, 3, 9 \rangle$, $\bar{y} = \langle -2, 4, 1 \rangle$, $\bar{z} = \langle 2, 5, 1, 4 \rangle$, and $\bar{w} = \langle -4, 0, 2, -1 \rangle$.

Then

$$\bar{x} \cdot \bar{y} = 2 \times (-2) + 3 \times 4 + 9 \times 1 = -4 + 12 + 9 = 17,$$

and

$$\bar{z} \cdot \bar{w} = 2 \times (-4) + 5 \times 0 + 1 \times 2 + 4 \times (-1) = -8 + 0 + 2 - 4 = -10.$$

Note that $\bar{x} \cdot \bar{z}$ is undefined, since $\bar{x} \in \mathbb{R}^3$ and $\bar{z} \in \mathbb{R}^4$.

Example

Scenario:

Marti Stair is playing a game where he controls a drone moving in 3-dimensional space. At one moment, the drone's velocity vector is

$$\bar{v} = \langle 3, -1, 4 \rangle,$$

and the wind's velocity vector affecting the drone is

$$\bar{w} = \langle 2, 5, -3 \rangle.$$

Marti wants to find out how much of the drone's velocity is aligned with the wind's velocity by computing the dot product $\bar{v} \cdot \bar{w}$.

$$\bar{v} \cdot \bar{w} = (3)(2) + (-1)(5) + (4)(-3) = 6 - 5 - 12 = -11.$$

Since the dot product $\bar{v} \cdot \bar{w} = -11$ is negative, Marti concludes that the drone's velocity is generally moving against the direction of the wind's velocity vector; the wind is slowing the drone down in some directions.

The dot product has its own properties that make it useful in various applications, such as physics and computer graphics. We can use it to find angles between vectors, project one vector onto another, and more.

Theorem

Properties of the Dot Product

If $\bar{x}, \bar{y}, \bar{z} \in \mathbb{R}^n$, and $a, b \in \mathbb{R}$ then the following hold:

1. **Positive Definiteness:**

- $\bar{x} \cdot \bar{x} \geq 0$
- $\bar{x} \cdot \bar{x} = 0 \Leftrightarrow \bar{x} = \bar{0}$

2. **Commutativity of the Dot Product:** $\bar{x} \cdot \bar{y} = \bar{y} \cdot \bar{x}$

3. **Distributivity of the Dot Product:** $\bar{x} \cdot (a\bar{y} + b\bar{z}) = a(\bar{x} \cdot \bar{y}) + b(\bar{x} \cdot \bar{z})$

Proof

1. Positive Definiteness

Assume $\bar{x} \in \mathbb{R}^n$.

We shall first show that $\bar{x} \cdot \bar{x} \geq 0$.

$$\begin{aligned}\bar{x} \cdot \bar{x} &= (x_1)^2 + (x_2)^2 + \cdots + (x_n)^2 && [\text{Def. of Dot Product}] \\ &= \sum_{i=1}^n (x_i)^2 && [\text{Summation Notation}] \\ &\geq 0 && [\because (x_i)^2 \geq 0 \text{ for all } i \in \{1, 2, \dots, n\}] \end{aligned}$$

Now, we shall show that $\bar{x} \cdot \bar{x} = 0 \Leftrightarrow \bar{x} = \bar{0}$.

Suppose $\bar{x} \cdot \bar{x} = 0$.

$$\begin{aligned}\bar{x} \cdot \bar{x} &= (x_1)^2 + (x_2)^2 + \cdots + (x_n)^2 = 0 && [\text{Def. of Dot Product}] \\ \Rightarrow \text{for all } i \in \{1, 2, \dots, n\}, (x_i)^2 &= 0 && [\text{Each term must be zero}] \end{aligned}$$

Now for contradiction, assume $\bar{x} \neq \bar{0}$.

$$\begin{aligned}\Rightarrow \exists i \in \{1, 2, \dots, n\} \text{ such that } x_i &\neq 0. \\ \Rightarrow (x_i)^2 &> 0 && [\text{Square of a non-zero number is positive}] \end{aligned}$$

This contradicts $(x_i)^2 = 0$.

$$\therefore \bar{x} = \bar{0}.$$

Conversely, if $\bar{x} = \bar{0}$, then:

$$\begin{aligned}\bar{x} \cdot \bar{x} &= 0^2 + 0^2 + \cdots + 0^2 = 0 && [\text{Def. of Dot Product}] \\ \therefore \bar{x} \cdot \bar{x} &= 0. \end{aligned}$$

□

2. Commutativity of the Dot Product

Assume $\bar{x}, \bar{y} \in \mathbb{R}^n$.

We want to show that $\bar{x} \cdot \bar{y} = \bar{y} \cdot \bar{x}$.

$$\begin{aligned}\bar{x} \cdot \bar{y} &= x_1y_1 + x_2y_2 + \cdots + x_ny_n && [\text{Def. of Dot Product}] \\ &= y_1x_1 + y_2x_2 + \cdots + y_nx_n && [\text{Commutativity of Real Numbers}] \\ &= \bar{y} \cdot \bar{x} && [\text{Def. of Dot Product}] \end{aligned}$$

□

3. Distributive Law of the Dot Product

Assume $\bar{x}, \bar{y}, \bar{z} \in \mathbb{R}^n$ and $a, b \in \mathbb{R}$.

We want to show that $\bar{x} \cdot (a\bar{y} + b\bar{z}) = a(\bar{x} \cdot \bar{y}) + b(\bar{x} \cdot \bar{z})$.

$$\begin{aligned}\bar{x} \cdot (a\bar{y} + b\bar{z}) &= \bar{x} \cdot \langle ay_1 + bz_1, ay_2 + bz_2, \dots, ay_n + bz_n \rangle && [\text{Def. of Vector Addition}] \\ &= x_1(ay_1 + bz_1) + x_2(ay_2 + bz_2) + \cdots + x_n(ay_n + bz_n) && [\text{Def. of Dot Product}] \\ &= a(x_1y_1 + x_2y_2 + \cdots + x_ny_n) + b(x_1z_1 + x_2z_2 + \cdots + x_nz_n) && [\text{Distributivity over } \mathbb{R}] \\ &= a(\bar{x} \cdot \bar{y}) + b(\bar{x} \cdot \bar{z}) && [\text{Def. of Dot Product}] \end{aligned}$$

□

Example

Let $\bar{x} = \langle -2, 3, 1 \rangle$, $\bar{y} = \langle 7, 0, 5 \rangle$, and $\bar{z} = \langle 4, 1, 8 \rangle$. We calculate $\bar{x} \cdot (2\bar{y} - \bar{z})$ and $(\bar{x} + \bar{y}) \cdot (\bar{x} + 2\bar{z})$.

$$\begin{aligned}\bar{x} \cdot (2\bar{y} - \bar{z}) &= 2(\bar{x} \cdot \bar{y}) - (\bar{x} \cdot \bar{z}) && \text{[Distributivity over Vector Addition]} \\ &= 2((-2)(7) + 3(0) + 1(5)) - ((-2)(4) + 3(1) + 1(8)) && \text{[Definition of Dot Product]} \\ &= 2(-14 + 0 + 5) - (-8 + 3 + 8) && \text{[Simplify]} \\ &= 2(-9) - 3 = -18 - 3 = -21.\end{aligned}$$

$$\begin{aligned}(\bar{x} + \bar{y}) \cdot (\bar{x} + 2\bar{z}) &= (\bar{x} + \bar{y}) \cdot \bar{x} + 2((\bar{x} + \bar{y}) \cdot \bar{z}) && \text{[Distributivity over Vector Addition]} \\ &= \bar{x} \cdot (\bar{x} + \bar{y}) + 2(\bar{z} \cdot (\bar{x} + \bar{y})) && \text{[Commutativity of Vector Addition]} \\ &= \bar{x} \cdot \bar{x} + \bar{x} \cdot \bar{y} + 2(\bar{z} \cdot \bar{x}) + 2(\bar{z} \cdot \bar{y}) && \text{[Distributivity of Dot Product]} \\ &= 14 - 9 + 6 + 136 = 147.\end{aligned}$$

With these properties, we can also define the **norm** of a vector, which is a measure of its length or magnitude.

Definition

Norm of a Vector

The norm of a vector $\bar{x} = \langle x_1, x_2, \dots, x_n \rangle$ is:

$$\|\bar{x}\| = \sqrt{\bar{x} \cdot \bar{x}} = \sqrt{x_1^2 + x_2^2 + \dots + x_n^2}$$

Take Note!

1. By the dot product properties, the norm $\|\bar{x}\|$ is well-defined for every $\bar{x} \in \mathbb{R}^n$.
2. If a vector \bar{u} in \mathbb{R}^n has $\|\bar{u}\| = 1$, then it's a **unit vector**.

In \mathbb{R}^3 , the standard unit vectors are:

$$\bar{i} = \langle 1, 0, 0 \rangle, \quad \bar{j} = \langle 0, 1, 0 \rangle, \quad \bar{k} = \langle 0, 0, 1 \rangle$$

The set $\{\bar{i}, \bar{j}, \bar{k}\}$ is the **standard basis** for \mathbb{R}^3 . Any vector $\bar{x} = \langle x_1, x_2, x_3 \rangle$ can be written as:

$$\bar{x} = x_1\bar{i} + x_2\bar{j} + x_3\bar{k}$$

Think of it like a set of coordinate translation factors!

Example

Let $\bar{x} = \langle 1, 2, -3 \rangle$, $\bar{y} = \langle -2, 0, 7 \rangle$, and $\bar{z} = \langle -1, 2, 3, -3 \rangle$. Then

$$\begin{aligned}\|\bar{x}\| &= \sqrt{\bar{x} \cdot \bar{x}} = \sqrt{1^2 + 2^2 + (-3)^2} = \sqrt{1 + 4 + 9} = \sqrt{14} \\ \|\bar{y}\| &= \sqrt{\bar{y} \cdot \bar{y}} = \sqrt{(-2)^2 + 0^2 + 7^2} = \sqrt{4 + 0 + 49} = \sqrt{53} \\ \|\bar{z}\| &= \sqrt{\bar{z} \cdot \bar{z}} = \sqrt{(-1)^2 + 2^2 + 3^2 + (-3)^2} = \sqrt{1 + 4 + 9 + 9} = \sqrt{23}\end{aligned}$$

One of the most important properties of the norm of an algebraic vector, in relation to the dot product, is the following result, known as the Cauchy-Schwarz Inequality.

Theorem

Cauchy-Schwarz Inequality

If $\bar{x}, \bar{y} \in \mathbb{R}^n$, then:

$$|\bar{x} \cdot \bar{y}| \leq \|\bar{x}\| \|\bar{y}\|$$

Proof

Assume $\bar{x}, \bar{y} \in \mathbb{R}^n$.

We want to show that $|\bar{x} \cdot \bar{y}| \leq \|\bar{x}\| \cdot \|\bar{y}\|$.

Case 1: Either $\bar{x} = \bar{0}$ or $\bar{y} = \bar{0}$.

Without loss of generality, assume $\bar{y} = \bar{0}$.

$$\text{Then } \|\bar{y}\| = \sqrt{\bar{y} \cdot \bar{y}} = \sqrt{0} = 0$$

[Def. of Norm of a Vector].

$$\text{And } |\bar{x} \cdot \bar{y}| = |\sum_{i=1}^n (x_i \cdot 0)| = 0$$

[Def. of Dot Product].

$$\therefore |\bar{x} \cdot \bar{y}| = 0 = \|\bar{y}\|.$$

$$\text{This implies } |\bar{x} \cdot \bar{y}| = \|\bar{x}\| \|\bar{y}\|.$$

Furthermore, since $\|\bar{y}\| = 0$, we have $|\bar{x} \cdot \bar{y}| \leq \|\bar{x}\| \|\bar{y}\|$.

Case 2: $\bar{y} \neq \bar{0}$.

$$\|\bar{y}\|^2 = \bar{y} \cdot \bar{y} > 0.$$

[Def. of Norm of a Vector]

$$\Rightarrow \exists a \in \mathbb{R} \text{ such that } a = \frac{\bar{x} \cdot \bar{y}}{\|\bar{y}\|^2}.$$

$$\text{Now consider } (\bar{x} - a\bar{y}) \cdot (\bar{x} - a\bar{y}).$$

By the properties of the dot product, we have:

$$(\bar{x} - a\bar{y}) \cdot (\bar{x} - a\bar{y}) = \bar{x} \cdot \bar{x} - 2a(\bar{x} \cdot \bar{y}) + a^2(\bar{y} \cdot \bar{y}).$$

$$= \|\bar{x}\|^2 - 2a(\bar{x} \cdot \bar{y}) + a^2\|\bar{y}\|^2.$$

$$= \|\bar{x}\|^2 - 2\frac{(\bar{x} \cdot \bar{y})^2}{\|\bar{y}\|^2} + \frac{(\bar{x} \cdot \bar{y})^2}{\|\bar{y}\|^2}$$

[Substituting a].

$$= \|\bar{x}\|^2 - \frac{(\bar{x} \cdot \bar{y})^2}{\|\bar{y}\|^2}.$$

[Combining terms].

Since the dot product is positive definite, we know that

$$(\bar{x} - a\bar{y}) \cdot (\bar{x} - a\bar{y}) \geq 0.$$

Therefore:

$$\|\bar{x}\|^2 - \frac{(\bar{x} \cdot \bar{y})^2}{\|\bar{y}\|^2} \geq 0$$

$$\Rightarrow \|\bar{x}\|^2 \cdot \|\bar{y}\|^2 \geq (\bar{x} \cdot \bar{y})^2$$

$$\Rightarrow \|\bar{x}\| \cdot \|\bar{y}\| \geq |\bar{x} \cdot \bar{y}|$$

Thus, the Cauchy-Schwarz inequality holds in this case as well.

□

Let \bar{x} and \bar{y} be algebraic vectors in \mathbb{R}^n . According to the Cauchy-Schwarz Inequality, $|\bar{x} \cdot \bar{y}| \leq \|\bar{x}\| \|\bar{y}\|$.

This inequality includes two possibilities; namely, $|\bar{x} \cdot \bar{y}| < \|\bar{x}\| \|\bar{y}\|$ or $|\bar{x} \cdot \bar{y}| = \|\bar{x}\| \|\bar{y}\|$.

In applications, it is important to know when equality holds in the Cauchy-Schwarz Inequality; that is, when $|\bar{x} \cdot \bar{y}| = \|\bar{x}\| \|\bar{y}\|$. We can thus make the following claim:

Proposition

$|\bar{x} \cdot \bar{y}| = \|\bar{x}\| \|\bar{y}\|$ if and only if $\bar{y} = a\bar{x}$ or $\bar{x} = a\bar{y}$ for some $a \in \mathbb{R}$.

Proof

First, assume that $|\bar{x} \cdot \bar{y}| = \|\bar{x}\| \|\bar{y}\|$. We want to show that $\bar{x} = \alpha\bar{y}$ for some $\alpha \in \mathbb{R}$, or $\bar{x} = \bar{0}$.

If $\bar{y} = \bar{0}$, then both sides of the equation equal zero, and the equality holds trivially.

Suppose $\bar{y} \neq \bar{0}$. Then $\|\bar{y}\| > 0$, and we define the real number

$$\alpha = \frac{\bar{x} \cdot \bar{y}}{\|\bar{y}\|^2}.$$

Then,

$$\bar{x} \cdot \bar{y} = \alpha \|\bar{y}\|^2.$$

Taking absolute values:

$$|\bar{x} \cdot \bar{y}| = |\alpha| \|\bar{y}\|^2.$$

But by assumption,

$$|\bar{x} \cdot \bar{y}| = \|\bar{x}\| \|\bar{y}\| \Rightarrow |\alpha| \|\bar{y}\|^2 = \|\bar{x}\| \|\bar{y}\|.$$

Divide both sides by $\|\bar{y}\|$ (since it's nonzero):

$$|\alpha| \|\bar{y}\| = \|\bar{x}\|.$$

Now square both sides:

$$\alpha^2 \|\bar{y}\|^2 = \|\bar{x}\|^2.$$

But also,

$$\|\bar{x}\|^2 = \bar{x} \cdot \bar{x}, \quad \text{and} \quad \alpha^2 \|\bar{y}\|^2 = (\alpha\bar{y}) \cdot (\alpha\bar{y}).$$

Hence, $\bar{x} \cdot \bar{x} = (\alpha\bar{y}) \cdot (\alpha\bar{y}) \Rightarrow \|\bar{x} - \alpha\bar{y}\|^2 = 0$, which implies that $\bar{x} = \alpha\bar{y}$.

Now assume that $\bar{x} = \alpha\bar{y}$ for some $\alpha \in \mathbb{R}$, and $\bar{y} \neq \bar{0}$. We want to show that $|\bar{x} \cdot \bar{y}| = \|\bar{x}\| \|\bar{y}\|$.

We compute: $|\bar{x} \cdot \bar{y}| = |\alpha\bar{y} \cdot \bar{y}| = |\alpha| |\bar{y} \cdot \bar{y}| = |\alpha| \|\bar{y}\|^2$.

Also, $\|\bar{x}\| = \|\alpha\bar{y}\| = |\alpha| \|\bar{y}\| \Rightarrow \|\bar{x}\| \|\bar{y}\| = |\alpha| \|\bar{y}\|^2$.

Therefore, $|\bar{x} \cdot \bar{y}| = \|\bar{x}\| \|\bar{y}\|$.

□

Using the properties of the dot product and the Cauchy-Schwarz Inequality, we can obtain properties of the norm of a vector.

Theorem

Properties of the Norm of a Vector

If $\bar{x}, \bar{y} \in \mathbb{R}^n$, and $a \in \mathbb{R}$ then the following hold:

1. $\|\bar{x}\| \geq 0$, and $\|\bar{x}\| = 0 \Leftrightarrow \bar{x} = \bar{0}$ [Positive Definiteness]
2. $\|a\bar{x}\| = |a|\|\bar{x}\|$ [Multiplicative Property]
3. $\|\bar{x} + \bar{y}\| \leq \|\bar{x}\| + \|\bar{y}\|$ [Triangle Inequality]

Proof

1. Positive Definiteness

Assume $\bar{x} \in \mathbb{R}^n$. We shall first show that $\|\bar{x}\| \geq 0$.

$$\|\bar{x}\| = \sqrt{x_1^2 + x_2^2 + \cdots + x_n^2} \quad [\text{Def. of Norm}]$$

$$= \sqrt{\sum_{i=1}^n (x_i)^2} \quad [\text{Summation Notation}]$$

$$\geq 0 \quad [\because (x_i)^2 \geq 0 \text{ for all } i \in \{1, 2, \dots, n\}]$$

Now, we shall show that $\|\bar{x}\| = 0 \Leftrightarrow \bar{x} = \bar{0}$. Suppose $\|\bar{x}\| = 0$.

$$\|\bar{x}\| = \sqrt{x_1^2 + x_2^2 + \cdots + x_n^2} = 0 \quad [\text{Def. of Norm}]$$

$$\Rightarrow x_1^2 + x_2^2 + \cdots + x_n^2 = 0 \quad [\text{Square root is zero}]$$

$$\Rightarrow (x_i)^2 = 0 \text{ for all } i \in \{1, 2, \dots, n\} \quad [\text{Each term must be zero}]$$

Now for contradiction, assume $\bar{x} \neq \bar{0}$.

$$\Rightarrow \exists i \in \{1, 2, \dots, n\} \text{ such that } x_i \neq 0.$$

$$\Rightarrow (x_i)^2 > 0 \quad [\text{Square of a non-zero number is positive}]$$

This contradicts $(x_i)^2 = 0$.

$$\therefore \bar{x} = \bar{0}.$$

Conversely, if $\bar{x} = \bar{0}$, then:

$$\|\bar{x}\| = \sqrt{0^2 + 0^2 + \cdots + 0^2} = 0 \quad [\text{Def. of Norm}]$$

$$\therefore \|\bar{x}\| = 0.$$

□

2. Multiplicative Property

Assume $\bar{x} \in \mathbb{R}^n$ and $c \in \mathbb{R}$.

We want to show that $\|c\bar{x}\| = |c|\|\bar{x}\|$.

$$\begin{aligned}
 \|c\bar{x}\| &= \sqrt{(cx_1)^2 + (cx_2)^2 + \cdots + (cx_n)^2} && [\text{Def. of Norm}] \\
 &= \sqrt{c^2(x_1^2 + x_2^2 + \cdots + x_n^2)} && [\text{Factoring out } c^2] \\
 &= |c|\sqrt{x_1^2 + x_2^2 + \cdots + x_n^2} && [\text{Square root of } c^2 \text{ is } |c|] \\
 &= |c|\|\bar{x}\| && [\text{Def. of Norm}]
 \end{aligned}$$

□

3. Triangle Inequality

Assume $\bar{x}, \bar{y} \in \mathbb{R}^n$.

We want to show that $\|\bar{x} + \bar{y}\| \leq \|\bar{x}\| + \|\bar{y}\|$.

By the Cauchy-Schwarz inequality, we have:

$$\begin{aligned}
 \|\bar{x} + \bar{y}\|^2 &= \sum_{i=1}^n (x_i + y_i)^2 && [\text{Def. of Norm}] \\
 &= \sum_{i=1}^n (x_i^2 + 2x_i y_i + y_i^2) && [\text{Expanding the square}] \\
 &= \sum_{i=1}^n x_i^2 + 2 \sum_{i=1}^n x_i y_i + \sum_{i=1}^n y_i^2 && [\text{Distributing the summation}] \\
 &= \|\bar{x}\|^2 + 2 \sum_{i=1}^n x_i y_i + \|\bar{y}\|^2 && [\text{Def. of Norm}]
 \end{aligned}$$

By the Cauchy-Schwarz inequality, we know:

$$\begin{aligned}
 \left(\sum_{i=1}^n x_i y_i\right)^2 &\leq \left(\sum_{i=1}^n x_i^2\right) \left(\sum_{i=1}^n y_i^2\right) \\
 \Rightarrow 2 \sum_{i=1}^n x_i y_i &\leq 2 \sqrt{\left(\sum_{i=1}^n x_i^2\right) \left(\sum_{i=1}^n y_i^2\right)} \\
 \Rightarrow 2 \sum_{i=1}^n x_i y_i &\leq 2 \|\bar{x}\| \|\bar{y}\| && [\text{Def. of Norm}]
 \end{aligned}$$

Thus, we have:

$$\begin{aligned}
 \|\bar{x} + \bar{y}\|^2 &\leq \|\bar{x}\|^2 + 2\|\bar{x}\|\|\bar{y}\| + \|\bar{y}\|^2 \\
 &= (\|\bar{x}\| + \|\bar{y}\|)^2 && [\text{Factoring the right-hand side}]
 \end{aligned}$$

Taking the square root of both sides gives:

$$\|\bar{x} + \bar{y}\| \leq \|\bar{x}\| + \|\bar{y}\|$$

□

Now that we have established the basic properties of algebraic vectors in \mathbb{R}^n , we can apply these concepts to model three-dimensional space using the algebraic structure of \mathbb{R}^3 .

Exercises

1. Let $\bar{v} = \langle 3, -6, 7 \rangle$, $\bar{x} = \langle 2, 1, 2 \rangle$, $\bar{y} = \langle -1, 8, 1 \rangle$,
 $\bar{z} = \langle -2, 3, 0, 2 \rangle$, $\bar{w} = \langle 9, -2, 1, 1 \rangle$.

Calculate each of the following algebraic vectors, if it is defined. If it is not defined, explain why.

- | | | |
|--|--|-------------------------------------|
| (a) $5\bar{x} - 2\bar{y}$ | (e) $2 + \bar{x}$ | (i) $\bar{x} + (\bar{v} - \bar{w})$ |
| (b) $\bar{v} + 6(\bar{y} - \bar{x})$ | (f) $3\bar{z} - 2(\bar{w} + \bar{z})$ | (j) $\bar{x} + 0\bar{y} - 2\bar{v}$ |
| (c) $\bar{z} - 2(\bar{x} + \bar{y})$ | (g) $6(3\bar{x} + \bar{y} - 2\bar{v})$ | |
| (d) $2\bar{x} - 7(\bar{v} + 3\bar{y})$ | (h) $7\bar{y} - 2\bar{x} + 3\bar{v}$ | |

2. Let $\bar{x} = \langle 1, \alpha, -2 \rangle$, $\bar{y} = \langle \beta, 1 - \beta, \alpha \rangle$, and $\bar{z} = \langle 1, 8, -1 \rangle$,
 where α and β are real numbers. Find all values of α and β , if any, for which the
 following equations are true:

- | | | |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|---|
| (a) $2\bar{x} + 3\bar{y} = \bar{z}$ | (b) $\bar{x} - \bar{y} = \bar{0}$ | (c) $\alpha\bar{x} + 2\bar{y} = \langle 7, -3, 0 \rangle$ |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|---|

3. If \bar{a} , \bar{b} and \bar{c} are algebraic vectors in \mathbb{R}^n , then \bar{a} is a *linear combination* of \bar{b} and \bar{c} if
 there exist real numbers α and β such that:

$$\bar{a} = \alpha\bar{b} + \beta\bar{c}.$$

Let $\bar{b} = \langle -1, 2, 1 \rangle$ and $\bar{c} = \langle 1, 1, 1 \rangle$.

Determine whether the following vectors are linear combinations of \bar{b} and \bar{c} :

- | | | |
|---------------------------------------|--|---|
| • $\bar{p} = \langle 2, 5, 4 \rangle$ | • $\bar{q} = \langle -4, 2, 0 \rangle$ | • $\bar{r} = \langle 2, -4, -1 \rangle$ |
|---------------------------------------|--|---|

4. Use properties of vectors to prove the following:

If $\bar{x}, \bar{y}, \bar{z} \in \mathbb{R}^n$ such that $\bar{x} + \bar{z} = \bar{y} + \bar{z}$, then $\bar{x} = \bar{y}$.

5. Prove that if $\bar{x}, \bar{y} \in \mathbb{R}^3$ and $\alpha \in \mathbb{R}$ with $\alpha \neq 0$ such that $\alpha\bar{x} = \alpha\bar{y}$, then $\bar{x} = \bar{y}$.

6. Let $\bar{v} = \langle 3, -6, 7 \rangle$, $\bar{x} = \langle 2, 1, 2 \rangle$, $\bar{y} = \langle -1, 8, 1 \rangle$, $\bar{z} = \langle -2, 3, 0, 2 \rangle$, $\bar{w} = \langle 9, -2, 1, 1 \rangle$.

Calculate the following, if possible. Otherwise, explain why it is not possible to evaluate
 the given expression.

- | | |
|---|---|
| (a) $\ 5\bar{x} - 2\bar{y}\ $ | (f) $(2\bar{v} - \bar{x} + 3\bar{y}) \cdot (\bar{x} - \bar{v})$ |
| (b) $\bar{v} \cdot (\bar{y} - 2\bar{x})$ | (g) $(\ \bar{x}\ \bar{y} - \ \bar{y}\ \bar{x}) \cdot (\ \bar{x}\ \bar{y} - \ \bar{y}\ \bar{x})$ |
| (c) $\ \bar{z} - \bar{x} + \bar{y}\ $ | (h) $\bar{x} \cdot (\bar{v} - \bar{y})$ |
| (d) $(\bar{w} - 2\bar{z}) \cdot (\bar{w} + 2\bar{z})$ | (i) $(2\bar{x}) \cdot \bar{y} + \bar{v}$ |
| (e) $\ \bar{x} \cdot \bar{y}\ $ | (j) $\ 7\bar{y} - 2\bar{x} + 3\bar{v}\ $ |

Exercises

7. Let \bar{x} and \bar{y} be algebraic vectors in \mathbb{R}^3 .

(a) If $\bar{x} = \alpha\bar{y}$ for some $\alpha \in \mathbb{R}$, show that $|\bar{x} \cdot \bar{y}| = \|\bar{x}\|\|\bar{y}\|$.

(b) Now suppose $|\bar{x} \cdot \bar{y}| = \|\bar{x}\|\|\bar{y}\|$, and $\bar{y} \neq \bar{0}$. In the proof of the Cauchy–Schwarz inequality it is shown that:

$$0 \leq (\bar{x} - \alpha\bar{y}) \cdot (\bar{x} - \alpha\bar{y}) = \|\bar{x}\|^2 - \frac{(\bar{x} \cdot \bar{y})^2}{\|\bar{y}\|^2}$$

for some real number α . Use this fact to prove that $\bar{x} = \alpha\bar{y}$.

8. Let \bar{u} and \bar{v} be algebraic vectors in \mathbb{R}^3 . Prove the following:

(a) $\|\bar{u} - \bar{v}\|^2 + \|\bar{u} + \bar{v}\|^2 = 2\|\bar{u}\|^2 + 2\|\bar{v}\|^2$.

(b) $\bar{u} \cdot \bar{v} = \frac{1}{4} (\|\bar{u} + \bar{v}\|^2 - \|\bar{u} - \bar{v}\|^2)$. [Hint: Use the definition of the norm, and the properties of the dot product.]

1.2 A Mathematical Model for Space

In this section, we explore how the mathematical structure known as \mathbb{R}^3 serves as a model for representing three-dimensional space. Our primary goal is to explain how vectors in \mathbb{R}^3 (that is, ordered triples of real numbers) can be used to describe the location, or *position*, of points within a spatial environment. To illustrate this idea, consider once again a familiar physical setting: a rectangular room.

Now to determine the position of a point within this room, we typically measure its perpendicular distances from three fixed reference surfaces: two adjacent, non-opposing walls, and the floor. These measurements, denoted x_1 , x_2 , and x_3 , effectively capture how far the point lies from each of these surfaces, and they can be expressed as a vector $\bar{x} = \langle x_1, x_2, x_3 \rangle$, which resides in \mathbb{R}^3 .

However, it is important to recognise that this mathematical framework is a simplification, a kind of idealisation, of physical space. While it allows for clear and consistent modelling of position, it abstracts away the complexities and imperfections of the real world. For instance, the notion of assigning a precise position to a large object, such as a bed, within a small room, is problematic under this model, because the object occupies a volume rather than a single point. Conversely, it is more appropriate to model the position of a small object like a mosquito using a point in \mathbb{R}^3 , even though, in reality, the mosquito itself is not dimensionless. Thus, while the mathematical use of vectors in \mathbb{R}^3 offers a powerful tool for analysing space, it operates only within the boundaries of idealised assumptions.

1.2.1 The Model of Space

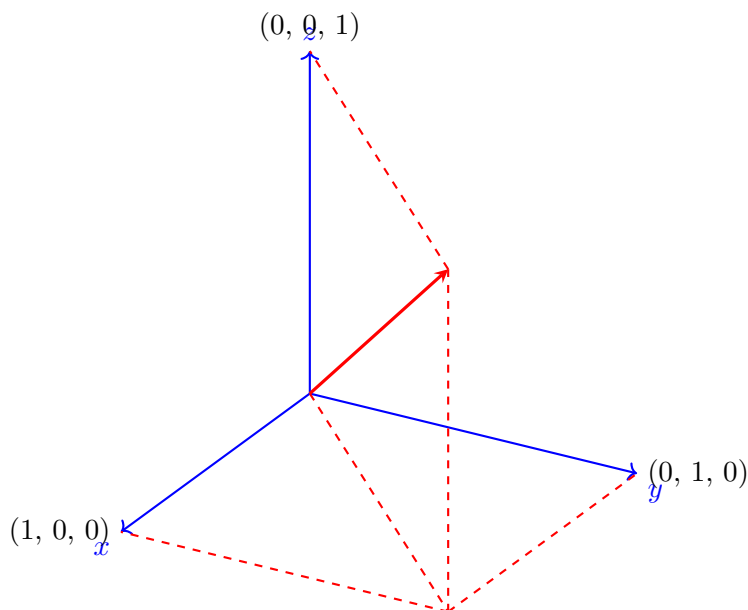
So let us now make precise our mathematical model for space. We assume that we know what a *point in space* is, what is meant by the *distance between two points*, by *direction* and *perpendicular*, and that the *Theorem of Pythagoras* holds.

Definition

The Model of Space

Fix a point of reference in space, and three mutually perpendicular directions, labeled x , y and z , respectively.

1. Define the reference point in space as the zero vector $\bar{0}$ in \mathbb{R}^3 .
2. An algebraic vector $\bar{x} = \langle x_1, x_2, x_3 \rangle$ in \mathbb{R}^3 represents the point in space reached by starting at $\bar{0}$ and then:
 - moving a distance of a units in the x -direction if $a \geq 0$, or $|a|$ units in the opposite direction if $a < 0$;
 - followed by a movement of b units in the y -direction if $b \geq 0$, or $|b|$ units in the opposite direction if $b < 0$;
 - and finally, moving c units in the z -direction if $c \geq 0$, or $|c|$ units in the opposite direction if $c < 0$.



Take Note!

1. Since we identify algebraic vectors in \mathbb{R}^3 with points in three-dimensional space, we may refer to any algebraic vector $\bar{p} \in \mathbb{R}^3$ as a *point in space*, or simply a *point in \mathbb{R}^3* .
2. It follows from the Theorem of Pythagoras that the distance between the origin $\bar{0}$ and a point \bar{p} is given by $\|\bar{p}\|$.
3. In general, the distance between two points \bar{p} and \bar{q} is $\|\bar{p} - \bar{q}\|$. Note that $\|\bar{p} - \bar{q}\| = \|\bar{q} - \bar{p}\|$.
4. When we use an algebraic vector to represent a point in space, we denote its components by lowercase Roman characters. For instance, we may write $\bar{p} = \langle a, b, c \rangle$ or $\bar{x} = \langle x, y, z \rangle$.

For a point $\bar{p} = \langle a, b, c \rangle$ in space, we call the components of the vector \bar{p} the *Cartesian coordinates* of the point. Specifically, a is the x -coordinate of \bar{p} , b is the y -coordinate, and c is the z -coordinate.

Example

The distance between the points $\bar{p} = \langle 3, 2, -1 \rangle$ and $\bar{q} = \langle 1, 4, 0 \rangle$ is

$$\|\bar{p} - \bar{q}\| = \|\langle 2, -2, -1 \rangle\| = \sqrt{2^2 + (-2)^2 + (-1)^2} = \sqrt{4 + 4 + 1} = \sqrt{9} = 3.$$

Our everyday experience tells us that, given points \bar{p} , \bar{q} , and \bar{r} , the distance between \bar{p} and \bar{q} is strictly less than the sum of the distances between \bar{p} and \bar{r} and between \bar{r} and \bar{q} , unless \bar{r} lies *between* \bar{p} and \bar{q} .

If our model for space is to be meaningful and useful, it should be consistent with this intuitive observation. The following theorem partially addresses this issue.

Theorem

The Triangle Inequality for Points in Space

If $\bar{p}, \bar{q}, \bar{r} \in \mathbb{R}^3$, then

$$\|\bar{p} - \bar{q}\| \leq \|\bar{p} - \bar{r}\| + \|\bar{r} - \bar{q}\|.$$

Proof

Assume $\bar{p}, \bar{q}, \bar{r} \in \mathbb{R}^3$.

We want to show that $\|\bar{p} - \bar{q}\| \leq \|\bar{p} - \bar{r}\| + \|\bar{r} - \bar{q}\|$.

$$\|\bar{p} - \bar{q}\| = \|\bar{p} - \bar{r} + \bar{r} - \bar{q}\| \quad [\text{Rearranging terms}]$$

$$\Rightarrow \|(\bar{p} - \bar{r}) + (\bar{r} - \bar{q})\| \leq \|\bar{p} - \bar{r}\| + \|\bar{r} - \bar{q}\| \quad [\text{By the Triangle Inequality for the Norm}]$$

$$\therefore \|\bar{p} - \bar{q}\| \leq \|\bar{p} - \bar{r}\| + \|\bar{r} - \bar{q}\|.$$

□

Example

Let $\bar{p} = \langle 2, 0, 2 \rangle$, $\bar{q} = \langle 0, 1, 0 \rangle$, and $\bar{r} = \langle -2, 0, -2 \rangle$.

Then $\|\bar{p} - \bar{q}\| = \|\langle 2, -1, 2 \rangle\| = \sqrt{4 + 1 + 4} = \sqrt{9} = 3$,

$$\|\bar{p}\| = \sqrt{2^2 + 0^2 + 2^2} = \sqrt{8} = 2\sqrt{2},$$

$$\text{and } \|\bar{q}\| = \sqrt{0^2 + 1^2 + 0^2} = \sqrt{1} = 1.$$

Hence, $\|\bar{p} - \bar{q}\| = 3 < 2\sqrt{2} + 1 = \|\bar{p}\| + \|\bar{q}\|$.

On the other hand, $\|\bar{p} - \bar{r}\| = \|\langle 4, 0, 4 \rangle\| = \sqrt{16 + 0 + 16} = \sqrt{32} = 4\sqrt{2}$,

$$\text{and } \|\bar{p}\| = \|\bar{r}\| = \sqrt{4 + 0 + 4} = \sqrt{8} = 2\sqrt{2}.$$

Therefore, $\|\bar{p} - \bar{r}\| = \|\bar{p}\| + \|\bar{r}\|$, since $4\sqrt{2} = 2\sqrt{2} + 2\sqrt{2}$.

Exercises

1. In each case, calculate the distance between the points \bar{p} and \bar{q} . Determine whether the distance between \bar{p} and \bar{q} is less than the distance between \bar{p} and $\bar{0}$ plus the distance between $\bar{0}$ and \bar{q} .

(a) $\bar{p} = \langle 1, 2, 2 \rangle$, $\bar{q} = \langle 2, 0, -1 \rangle$

(b) $\bar{p} = \langle 2, -1, 2 \rangle$, $\bar{q} = \langle -4, 2, -4 \rangle$

(c) $\bar{p} = \langle 3, 1, -1 \rangle$, $\bar{q} = \langle 1, 2, 3 \rangle$

2. Consider the points $\bar{p} = \langle 1, \alpha, 2 \rangle$, $\bar{q} = \langle 1, 0, 4 \rangle$ where $\alpha \in \mathbb{R}$. Find the value of α if:

(a) the distance between \bar{p} and \bar{q} is 3 units.

(b) the distance between \bar{p} and \bar{q} is 1 unit.

3. Let $\bar{p} = \langle 1, 2, 1 \rangle$, $\bar{q} = \langle -1, 0, -1 \rangle$ and $\bar{r} = \langle x, y, z \rangle$.

Show that $\|\bar{p} - \bar{r}\| = \|\bar{q} - \bar{r}\|$ if and only if $x + y + z = 1$

In the next unit, we will use our model of space to define lines.

1.3 Lines in Space

The idea of a ‘straight line’ is something anyone can understand intuitively. For instance, any person can say that the edge of a rectangular tabletop forms a ‘straight line’, and we would all agree. Similarly, ask any person to draw a ‘straight line’, and they would know what to do. In this section, rather than relying on intuition, we shall introduce a *mathematical model* for what we call a ‘straight line’. This is done in the context of the Model for Space that was introduced in Unit 1.2.

The concept of a ‘straight line’ is closely related to that of ‘betweenness’. Intuitively, if three points in space lie on a ‘straight line’, then one of the three points lies somewhere ‘between’ the other two. In order to motivate our definition of a straight line, we therefore first consider what it means for a point \bar{r} to be ‘between’ two points \bar{p} and \bar{q} .

Definition

Betweenness of Points in Space

Let $\bar{p}, \bar{q}, \bar{r} \in \mathbb{R}^3$. We say that \bar{r} is *between* \bar{p} and \bar{q} if and only if for some $0 < t < 1$,

$$\bar{r} = (1 - t)\bar{p} + t\bar{q}.$$

From our experiences with reality, we understand that the distance between two points on a ‘straight line’ is the shortest, unless an intermediate point lies exactly along that line. Expressing this in terms of our model we have that, given three points $\bar{p}, \bar{q}, \bar{r}$ in space:

$\|\bar{p} - \bar{q}\| < \|\bar{p} - \bar{r}\| + \|\bar{r} - \bar{q}\|$ if \bar{r} is not between \bar{p} and \bar{q} , and $\|\bar{p} - \bar{q}\| = \|\bar{p} - \bar{r}\| + \|\bar{r} - \bar{q}\|$

if \bar{r} is between \bar{p} and \bar{q} . As a motivation for our definition of betweenness, we show that this fact is true in our model for space.

Theorem

Let $\bar{p}, \bar{q}, \bar{r} \in \mathbb{R}^3$ such that $\bar{p} \neq \bar{q}, \bar{p} \neq \bar{r}, \bar{r} \neq \bar{q}$.

Then $\|\bar{p} - \bar{q}\| = \|\bar{p} - \bar{r}\| + \|\bar{r} - \bar{q}\|$ if and only if $\exists t \in (0, 1)$ such that $\bar{r} = (1 - t)\bar{p} + t\bar{q}$.

Proof

We shall first show that if $\|\bar{q} - \bar{p}\| = \|\bar{q} - \bar{r}\| + \|\bar{r} - \bar{p}\|$, then $\exists t \in \mathbb{R}$, $0 < t < 1$ such that $\bar{r} = t\bar{p} + (1-t)\bar{q}$.

Assume $\|\bar{q} - \bar{p}\| = \|\bar{q} - \bar{r}\| + \|\bar{r} - \bar{p}\|$.

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Then } \|\bar{q} - \bar{p}\|^2 &= (\|\bar{q} - \bar{r}\| + \|\bar{r} - \bar{p}\|)^2 \\ &= \|\bar{q} - \bar{r}\|^2 + 2\|\bar{q} - \bar{r}\|\|\bar{r} - \bar{p}\| + \|\bar{r} - \bar{p}\|^2 \end{aligned} \tag{A}$$

By definition of the norm, the commutativity and distributivity of the dot product, we have

$$\begin{aligned} \|\bar{q} - \bar{p}\|^2 &= \|(\bar{q} - \bar{r}) + (\bar{r} - \bar{p})\|^2 \\ &= [(\bar{q} - \bar{r}) + (\bar{r} - \bar{p})] \cdot [(\bar{q} - \bar{r}) + (\bar{r} - \bar{p})] \\ &= [(\bar{q} - \bar{r}) + (\bar{r} - \bar{p})] \cdot (\bar{q} - \bar{r}) + [(\bar{q} - \bar{r}) + (\bar{r} - \bar{p})] \cdot (\bar{r} - \bar{p}) \\ &= (\bar{q} - \bar{r}) \cdot (\bar{q} - \bar{r}) + (\bar{r} - \bar{p}) \cdot (\bar{q} - \bar{r}) + (\bar{q} - \bar{r}) \cdot (\bar{r} - \bar{p}) + (\bar{r} - \bar{p}) \cdot (\bar{r} - \bar{p}) \\ &= \|\bar{q} - \bar{r}\|^2 + 2(\bar{q} - \bar{r}) \cdot (\bar{r} - \bar{p}) + \|\bar{r} - \bar{p}\|^2 \end{aligned} \tag{B}$$

Combining (A) and (B) we have

$$\|\bar{q} - \bar{r}\|\|\bar{r} - \bar{p}\| = (\bar{q} - \bar{r}) \cdot (\bar{r} - \bar{p}). \tag{C}$$

□

Proof

By the Cauchy-Schwarz inequality, it follows that

$$\begin{aligned} \exists a \in \mathbb{R} \text{ such that } \bar{q} - \bar{r} &= a(\bar{r} - \bar{p}) \\ \text{i.e. } a &= \frac{\bar{q} - \bar{r}}{\bar{r} - \bar{p}} \end{aligned} \tag{D}$$

Since $\bar{r} \neq \bar{p}$, $\bar{r} \neq \bar{q}$, it follows that

$$\begin{aligned} \|\bar{r} - \bar{p}\| &> 0 \text{ and } \|\bar{q} - \bar{r}\| > 0. \\ \therefore a &= \frac{\|\bar{q} - \bar{r}\|}{\|\bar{r} - \bar{p}\|} > 0 \end{aligned}$$

Isolating \bar{r} in (D) we find that

$$\bar{r} = \left(\frac{a}{1+a}\right)\bar{p} + \left(1 - \frac{a}{1+a}\right)\bar{q}$$

Since $a > 0$, it follows that $0 < \frac{a}{1+a} < 1$.

Now let $t = \frac{a}{1+a}$, then $t \in \mathbb{R}$, and $0 < t < 1$.

Hence $\bar{r} = t\bar{p} + (1-t)\bar{q}$.

Now we shall prove the inverse; that is, if $\bar{r} = t\bar{p} + (1-t)\bar{q}$ for some $t \in \mathbb{R}$, $0 < t < 1$, then $\|\bar{q} - \bar{p}\| = \|\bar{q} - \bar{r}\| + \|\bar{r} - \bar{p}\|$.

Suppose that $\exists t \in \mathbb{R}$ such that $\bar{r} = t\bar{p} + (1-t)\bar{q}$.

Then:

$$\begin{aligned} \|\bar{q} - \bar{r}\| &= \|\bar{q} - t\bar{p} - (1-t)\bar{q}\| \\ &= \|\bar{q} - t\bar{p} - \bar{q} + t\bar{q}\| && \text{[Distributivity over scalar addition]} \\ &= \|-t(\bar{p} - \bar{q})\| && \text{[Distributivity over Vector Subtraction]} \\ &= t \cdot \|\bar{p} - \bar{q}\| = t \cdot \|\bar{q} - \bar{p}\| && \text{[Positive Definiteness of the Norm]} \end{aligned}$$

And:

$$\begin{aligned} \|\bar{r} - \bar{p}\| &= \|t\bar{p} + (1-t)\bar{q} - \bar{p}\| \\ &= \|t\bar{p} - \bar{p} + (1-t)\bar{q}\| && \text{[Associativity of vector addition]} \\ &= \|(1-t)(\bar{p} - \bar{q})\| && \text{[Distributivity of scalar multiplication]} \\ &= (1-t) \cdot \|\bar{p} - \bar{q}\| = (1-t) \cdot \|\bar{q} - \bar{p}\| && \text{[Positive Definiteness of the Norm]} \end{aligned}$$

Now we have:

$$\begin{aligned} \|\bar{q} - \bar{r}\| + \|\bar{r} - \bar{p}\| &= t\|\bar{q} - \bar{p}\| + (1-t)\|\bar{q} - \bar{p}\| \\ &= \|\bar{q} - \bar{p}\| \end{aligned}$$

□

We shall now illustrate the notion of betweenness at the hand of an example.

Example

Let $\bar{p}, \bar{q}, \bar{r} \in \mathbb{R}^3$ such that $\bar{p} = \langle -4, -1, 1 \rangle, \bar{q} = \langle 2, 1, 3 \rangle, \bar{r} = \langle -1, 0, 2 \rangle$.

Determine whether the points \bar{r} and $\bar{0}$ are between \bar{p} and \bar{q} .

Solution:

By definition of betweenness, $\bar{0}$ is between \bar{p} and \bar{q} if and only if for some constant $0 < t < 1$,

$$\bar{0} = t\bar{p} + (1 - t)\bar{q}.$$

$$= \langle 2 - 6t, 1 - 2t, 3 - 2t \rangle$$

Hence, by definition of vector equality, $\bar{0}$ is between \bar{p} and \bar{q} if and only if for some constant

$$0 < t < 1, 0 = 2 - 6t, 0 = 1 - 2t, 0 = 3 - 2t.$$

$$0 = 2 - 6t \Rightarrow t = \frac{1}{3}, \text{ but}$$

$$0 = 1 - 2t \Rightarrow t = \frac{1}{2}.$$

Since $\frac{1}{3} \neq \frac{1}{2}$, there is no value for t that satisfies the condition.

Therefore, $\bar{0}$ is not between \bar{p} and \bar{q} .

Now \bar{r} is between \bar{p} and \bar{q} if and only if for some constant $0 < t < 1$,

$$\bar{r} = t\bar{p} + (1 - t)\bar{q}.$$

$$= \langle 2 - 6t, 1 - 2t, 3 - 2t \rangle$$

Hence, by definition of vector equality, \bar{r} is between \bar{p} and \bar{q} if and only if for some constant

$$0 < t < 1, -1 = 2 - 6t, 0 = 1 - 2t, 2 = 3 - 2t.$$

$$-1 = 2 - 6t \Rightarrow t = \frac{1}{2}$$

$$0 = 1 - 2t \Rightarrow t = \frac{1}{2}.$$

$$2 = 3 - 2t \Rightarrow t = \frac{1}{2}.$$

$$\text{Hence } \bar{r} = \frac{1}{2}\bar{p} + (1 - \frac{1}{2})\bar{q}.$$

Since $0 < \frac{1}{2} < 1$, it follows that \bar{r} is between \bar{p} and \bar{q} .

Now we can define a ‘straight line’ in our model of space. As mentioned previously, if three points are colinear; that is, they lie on a ‘straight line’, we expect that one of them must be an intermediate point between the other two.

Definition

A Straight Line in Space

A line is a set L of points in the form

$$L = \{t\bar{p} + (1-t)\bar{q} : t \in \mathbb{R}\}$$

where $\bar{p}, \bar{q} \in \mathbb{R}^3$ and $\bar{p} \neq \bar{q}$.

Take Note!

Consider a line $L = \{t\bar{p} + (1-t)\bar{q} : t \in \mathbb{R}\}$ in \mathbb{R}^3 .

1. L is a set in \mathbb{R}^3 . A point \bar{x} is **either** an element of L , or it is **not** an element of L . So say that $\bar{x} \in L$. Then we say that ' \bar{x} is a point on L ', or that ' \bar{x} lies on L '.
2. Both \bar{p} and \bar{q} are elements of L . We therefore refer to L as '**the line through \bar{p} and \bar{q}** '.
3. By the definition of betweenness of points in space, a point $\bar{x} \in \mathbb{R}^3$ is on L if and only if $\bar{x} = (1-t)\bar{p} + t\bar{q}$ for some $t \in \mathbb{R}$. Therefore, we speak of a line determined by the equation
 $\bar{x} = (1-t)\bar{p} + t\bar{q}$ for some $t \in \mathbb{R}$. Equivalently, the equation can be written as
 $\bar{x} = \bar{q} + t(\bar{p} - \bar{q})$ for some $t \in \mathbb{R}$.
4. L has more than one equation, in the form describe in point 3. Furthermore, a single line can be described using infinitely many different equations.

Our intuition of what a 'straight line' is, is further proven to be in agreement with our model for space in the following theorem:

Theorem

Let L be a line in \mathbb{R}^3 . If $\bar{p}, \bar{q}, \bar{r} \in \mathbb{R}^3$, then exactly one of the following statements is true:

- (1) \bar{p} is between \bar{r} and \bar{q} .
- (2) \bar{q} is between \bar{r} and \bar{p} .
- (3) \bar{r} is between \bar{p} and \bar{q} .

Proof

Let $\bar{p}, \bar{q}, \bar{r} \in \mathbb{R}^3$ be points on L .

We shall first show that at most one of (1), (2), or (3) is true.

Assume, for contradiction, that (1) and (2) are both true. Then, by definition of betweenness, $\exists s, t \in \mathbb{R}$ where $s, t \in (0, 1)$ that satisfy

$$\bar{p} = t\bar{p} + (1 - t)\bar{r} \text{ and } \bar{q} = s\bar{p} + (1 - s)\bar{r}.$$

Since $0 < t < 1$, $\bar{p} = t\bar{q} + (1 - t)\bar{r}$

$$\Rightarrow \bar{r} = \frac{\bar{p} - s\bar{q}}{1 - t} \quad (\text{A})$$

Similarly, since $0 < s < 1$, $\bar{q} = s\bar{p} + (1 - s)\bar{r}$

$$\Rightarrow \bar{r} = \frac{\bar{p} - t\bar{q}}{1 - s} \quad (\text{B})$$

Equating (A) and (B) we have

$$\begin{aligned} \frac{\bar{p} - s\bar{q}}{1 - t} &= \frac{\bar{p} - t\bar{q}}{1 - s} \\ \Rightarrow (1 - s)(\bar{p} - t\bar{q}) &= (1 - t)(\bar{q} - s\bar{p}) && [\text{Multiplying by } (1 - s) \text{ and } (1 - t) \text{ on both sides}] \\ \Rightarrow (\bar{p} - t\bar{q}) - s(\bar{p} - t\bar{q}) &= (\bar{q} - s\bar{p}) - t(\bar{q} - s\bar{p}) && [\text{Distributivity over Scalar Subtraction}] \\ \Rightarrow \bar{p} - t\bar{q} - s\bar{p} + st\bar{q} &= \bar{q} - s\bar{p} - t\bar{q} + st\bar{p} && [\text{Distributivity over Scalar Subtraction}] \\ \Rightarrow \bar{p} - st\bar{p} &= \bar{q} - st\bar{q} \\ (1 - st)\bar{p} &= (1 - st)\bar{q} && [\text{Distributivity over Scalar Subtraction}] \end{aligned}$$

Note that by assumption,

$$\begin{aligned} 0 < t < 1 &\Rightarrow 0 < st < s && [\text{Multiplying by } s \text{ on all sides}] \\ &\Rightarrow -s < -st < 0 && [\text{Multiplying by } -1 \text{ on all sides}] \\ &\Rightarrow 1 - s < 1 - st < 1 && [\text{Adding } 1 \text{ to all sides}] \end{aligned}$$

Now $1 - s > 0$

$$\therefore 1 - s < 1 - st$$

$$\Rightarrow 1 - st > 1 - s > 0$$

$$\Rightarrow 1 - st > 0$$

$$\Rightarrow \bar{p} = \bar{r}, \text{ contradicting our assumption that } \bar{p} \neq \bar{r} \quad [\text{Def. of Betweenness}]$$

Therefore (1) and (2) cannot both be true. In the same way, (1) and (3) cannot both be true, and, (2) and (3) cannot both be true. Therefore at most one of (1), (2) and (3) is true.

Now we show that at least one of (1), (2) and (3) is true.

Assume that $\bar{x} = \bar{u} + t\bar{v}, t \in \mathbb{R}$ is an equation for L . Since $\bar{p}, \bar{q}, \bar{r} \in \mathbb{R}, \exists t_0, t_1, t_2 \in \mathbb{R}$ that satisfy $\bar{p} = \bar{u} + t_0\bar{v}, \bar{q} = \bar{u} + t_1\bar{v}$, and $\bar{r} = \bar{u} + t_2\bar{v}$.

Since $\bar{p} \neq \bar{q}, \bar{q} \neq \bar{r}$ and $\bar{p} \neq \bar{r}$, it follows that $t_0 \neq t_1, t_1 \neq t_2$ and $t_0 \neq t_2$.

Now there are three possibilities to consider:

$$(i) \ t_0 < t_1 < t_2 \text{ or } t_2 < t_1 < t_0$$

$$(ii) \ t_0 < t_2 < t_1 \text{ or } t_1 < t_2 < t_0$$

$$(iii) \ t_1 < t_0 < t_2 \text{ or } t_2 < t_0 < t_1$$

□

Proof

Consider case (i), and suppose that $t_0 < t_1 < t_2$.

Then $t_0\bar{v} < t_1\bar{v} < t_2\bar{v}$ [Scalar Multiplication preserves order since \bar{v} is fixed]

$\Rightarrow \bar{u} + t_0\bar{v} < \bar{u} + t_1\bar{v} < \bar{u} + t_2\bar{v}$ [Adding \bar{u} to all sides]

$\Rightarrow \bar{p} < \bar{q} < \bar{r}$ [By definition of $\bar{p}, \bar{q}, \bar{r}$]

Hence, \bar{q} lies between \bar{p} and \bar{r} .

A similar argument applies to cases (ii) and (iii). We thus obtain the following implications:

(i) If $t_0 < t_1 < t_2$ or $t_2 < t_1 < t_0$, then \bar{q} is between \bar{p} and \bar{r} .

(ii) If $t_0 < t_2 < t_1$ or $t_1 < t_2 < t_0$, then \bar{r} is between \bar{p} and \bar{q} .

(iii) If $t_1 < t_0 < t_2$ or $t_2 < t_0 < t_1$, then \bar{p} is between \bar{q} and \bar{r} .

This shows that at least one of (i), (ii), or (iii) must be true. However, it has already been established that at most one of them can be true.

Therefore, exactly one of (i), (ii), or (iii) is true.

□

Given a line L in \mathbb{R}^3 , there are two important kinds of subsets of L : *line segments* and *rays*.

Definition

Line Segment

Consider distinct points \bar{p} and \bar{q} in \mathbb{R}^3 . The *line segment* between \bar{p} and \bar{q} is the set of points

$$S = \{t\bar{p} + (1-t)\bar{q} : 0 \leq t \leq 1\}.$$

Remark

The line segment S between two points \bar{p} and \bar{q} in \mathbb{R}^3 consists of the points \bar{p} and \bar{q} **and** all points \bar{x} between \bar{p} and \bar{q} . In particular, a point \bar{x} is between \bar{p} and \bar{q} if and only if $\bar{x} \in S$ and $\bar{x} \neq \bar{p}$ and $\bar{x} \neq \bar{q}$.

Definition

Ray

Consider distinct points \bar{p} and \bar{q} in \mathbb{R}^3 . A *ray* is a set of points of the form

$$R = \{t\bar{p} + (1-t)\bar{q} : t \geq 0\} = \{\bar{q} + t(\bar{p} - \bar{q}) : t \geq 0\}.$$

The point \bar{q} is called the *origin* of the ray.

Remark

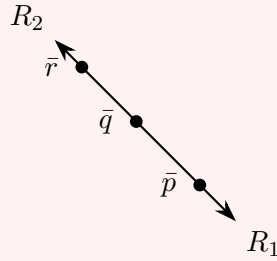
Let L be a line in space.

1. Any point $\bar{q} \in L$ divides L exactly into two rays.

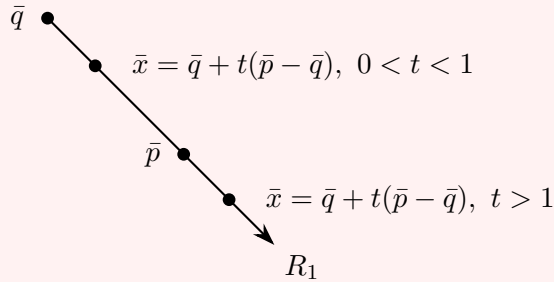
Let \bar{p} and \bar{r} be two points on L such that \bar{q} is between \bar{p} and \bar{r} .

Then $R_1 = \{\bar{q} + t(\bar{p} - \bar{q}) : t \geq 0\}$ and $R_2 = \{\bar{q} + t(\bar{r} - \bar{q}) : t \geq 0\}$ are two rays with origin \bar{q} such that:

$$L = R_1 \cup R_2 \quad \text{and} \quad R_1 \cap R_2 = \{\bar{q}\}.$$



2. If $\bar{x} \in L$, then $\bar{x} \in R_1$ if and only if \bar{x} is on the line segment between \bar{p} and \bar{q} , or \bar{p} is between \bar{q} and \bar{x} . We therefore refer to R_1 as the ray with origin \bar{q} in the direction of \bar{p} , and call $(\bar{p} - \bar{q})$ the direction vector of R_1 .



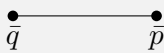
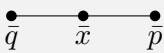


3. For any two points \bar{p} and \bar{q} in \mathbb{R}^3 , the set $R = \{\bar{q} + t\bar{p} : t \geq 0\}$ is a ray. Indeed,

$$R = \{\bar{q} + t([\bar{p} + \bar{q}] - \bar{q}) : t \geq 0\}.$$

Therefore R is the ray with origin \bar{q} in the direction of $\bar{p} + \bar{q}$.

The following table shows how the concepts of lines, rays, line segments and betweenness are related to one another.

Take Note!			
$\bar{x} = t\bar{p} + (1 - t)\bar{q}$			
Line ($t \in \mathbb{R}$)	Ray ($t \geq 0$)	Line segment ($0 \leq t \leq 1$)	Between ($0 < t < 1$)
			

Example

Determine whether the points $\bar{a} = \langle 5, -3, 6 \rangle$ and $\bar{b} = \langle -4, -1, -3 \rangle$ are on the line L through $\bar{p} = \langle 2, -1, 3 \rangle$ and $\bar{q} = \langle -1, 1, 0 \rangle$.

Solution

A point $\bar{x} \in \mathbb{R}^3$ lies on L if and only if

$$\bar{x} = \bar{q} + t(\bar{p} - \bar{q}) = \langle 3t - 1, 1 - 2t, 3t \rangle \quad \text{for some } t \in \mathbb{R}.$$

Therefore, by the definition of vector equality, $\bar{a} = \langle 5, -3, 6 \rangle$ lies on L if and only if there exists $t \in \mathbb{R}$ such that:

$$\begin{aligned} 5 &= 3t - 1 \\ -3 &= 1 - 2t \\ 6 &= 3t \end{aligned}$$

From the third equation, $3t = 6$ implies $t = 2$. Substituting into the first two:

$$3(2) - 1 = 6 - 1 = 5 \quad \text{and} \quad 1 - 2(2) = 1 - 4 = -3$$

So all three equations are satisfied with $t = 2$. Therefore, $\bar{a} \in L$.

Now consider $\bar{b} = \langle -4, -1, -3 \rangle$. This point lies on L if there exists $t \in \mathbb{R}$ such that:

$$\begin{aligned} -4 &= 3t - 1 \\ -1 &= 1 - 2t \\ -3 &= 3t \end{aligned}$$

From the third equation, $3t = -3$ implies $t = -1$. Substituting into the second equation:

$$1 - 2(-1) = 1 + 2 = 3 \neq -1$$

So $t = -1$ satisfies the third equation but not the second. Hence, no single t satisfies all three equations. Therefore, $\bar{b} \notin L$.

Example

Determine whether or not the points $\bar{b} = \langle 0, 3, 0 \rangle$ and $\bar{c} = \langle \frac{3}{2}, 0, \frac{3}{2} \rangle$ are on the line segment S between the points $\bar{p} = \langle 1, 1, 1 \rangle$ and $\bar{q} = \langle 2, -1, 2 \rangle$.

Solution

For a point \bar{x} , we have

$$\bar{x} \in S \iff \bar{x} = t\bar{p} + (1-t)\bar{q} \quad \text{for some } 0 \leq t \leq 1.$$

Hence, the point $\bar{b} = \langle 0, 3, 0 \rangle$ is on the line segment S if and only if there exists a real number $0 \leq t \leq 1$ such that

$$\bar{b} = t\bar{p} + (1-t)\bar{q} = \langle 2-t, 2t-1, 2-t \rangle.$$

So $\bar{b} \in S$ if and only if the following equations are satisfied:

$$0 = 2 - t, \quad 3 = 2t - 1, \quad 0 = 2 - t.$$

From the first equation, we get $t = 2$. This value of t also satisfies the second and third equations, so:

$$\bar{b} = 2\bar{p} + (1-2)\bar{q}.$$

Therefore, \bar{b} is on the line through \bar{p} and \bar{q} . However, $t = 2 > 1$, so \bar{b} is not on the line segment S between \bar{p} and \bar{q} .

Now consider the point $\bar{c} = \langle \frac{3}{2}, 0, \frac{3}{2} \rangle$. This point is on S if and only if

$$\bar{c} = t\bar{p} + (1-t)\bar{q} = \langle 2-t, 2t-1, 2-t \rangle \quad \text{for some } 0 \leq t \leq 1.$$

Thus, $\bar{c} \in S$ if and only if

$$\frac{3}{2} = 2 - t, \quad 0 = 2t - 1, \quad \frac{3}{2} = 2 - t.$$

The first equation implies $t = \frac{1}{2}$. This value also satisfies the other equations. Therefore,

$$\bar{c} = \frac{1}{2}\bar{p} + \left(1 - \frac{1}{2}\right)\bar{q}.$$

Since $0 \leq \frac{1}{2} \leq 1$, it follows that $\bar{c} \in S$.

In the following examples we investigate the intersection of lines in space $L_1 = \{\bar{q} + t(\bar{p} - \bar{q}) : t \in \mathbb{R}\}$ and $L_2 = \{\bar{b} + s(\bar{a} - \bar{b}) : s \in \mathbb{R}\}$ in space intersect at a point \bar{x} if and only if $\bar{x} \in L_1 \cap L_2$. That is, the lines intersect at \bar{x} if and only if both $\bar{x} = \bar{q} + t(\bar{p} - \bar{q})$ for some $t \in \mathbb{R}$ and $\bar{x} = \bar{b} + s(\bar{a} - \bar{b})$ for some $s \in \mathbb{R}$.

Note that it is possible for L_1 and L_2 to:

- intersect at exactly one point,
- not intersect at all (e.g., parallel lines), or
- intersect at infinitely many points (if they coincide).

Example

Consider the line L_1 through $\bar{p} = \langle 1, 0, 1 \rangle$ and $\bar{q} = \langle 0, 2, 0 \rangle$, and the line L_2 through the points $\bar{a} = \langle 2, 1, 2 \rangle$ and $\bar{b} = \langle 0, 3, 0 \rangle$.

Determine whether or not L_1 and L_2 intersect, and find all points of intersection, if any exist.

Solution

The lines L_1 and L_2 intersect at a point $\bar{x} = \langle x, y, z \rangle$ if and only if $\bar{x} \in L_1$ and $\bar{x} \in L_2$. Therefore, L_1 and L_2 intersect at \bar{x} if and only if

$$\bar{q} + t(\bar{p} - \bar{q}) = \bar{x} = \bar{b} + s(\bar{a} - \bar{b}) \quad \text{for some } t, s \in \mathbb{R}. \quad (\text{i})$$

It then follows from the definition of vector equality that

$$t = x = 2s, \quad 2 - 2t = y = 3 - 2s, \quad t = z = 2s.$$

The third equation implies that $t = 2s$. Substituting $t = 2s$ into the second equation yields:

$$2 - 2(2s) = 3 - 2s \quad \Rightarrow \quad -2s = 1 - 2s \quad \Rightarrow \quad s = -\frac{1}{2}.$$

Hence $t = 2s = -1$. These values for s and t also satisfy the first equation, since

$$t = -1 = 2\left(-\frac{1}{2}\right) = 2s.$$

Therefore, these are the only values for t and s that satisfy (i). Thus, L_1 and L_2 intersect at the single point

$$\bar{x} = \bar{q} - (\bar{p} - \bar{q}) = \langle -1, 4, -1 \rangle.$$

Example

Determine whether or not the lines $L_1 = \{\langle 1-t, 1-t, 2t \rangle : t \in \mathbb{R}\}$ and $L_2 = \{\langle s, 2, s-1 \rangle : s \in \mathbb{R}\}$ intersect, and find the points of intersection, if any exist.

Solution

The lines L_1 and L_2 intersect at a point $\bar{x} = \langle x, y, z \rangle$ if and only if $\bar{x} \in L_1$ and $\bar{x} \in L_2$. Therefore, L_1 and L_2 intersect at \bar{x} if and only if

$$\langle 1-t, 1-t, 2t \rangle = \bar{x} = \langle s, 2, s-1 \rangle \quad \text{for some } t, s \in \mathbb{R}. \quad (\text{i})$$

From the definition of vector equality, it follows that

$$1-t = x = s, \quad 1-t = y = 2, \quad 2t = z = s-1.$$

The second equation implies that $t = -1$. Substituting $t = -1$ into the first equation gives:

$$s = 1 - (-1) = 2.$$

Substituting $t = -1$ into the third equation yields:

$$2(-1) = -2 = s-1 \quad \Rightarrow \quad s = -1.$$

Since $2 \neq -1$, it follows that there are no real numbers t and s that satisfy (i). Therefore, the lines L_1 and L_2 do not intersect.

Example

Let L_1 be the line with equation $\bar{x} = \langle 1+t, 2+t, 3+t \rangle$, $t \in \mathbb{R}$, and L_2 the line with equation $\bar{x} = \langle 2-2s, 3-2s, 4-2s \rangle$, $s \in \mathbb{R}$.

Determine whether or not these lines intersect, and find the points of intersection, if any such points exist.

Solution

The lines L_1 and L_2 intersect at a point $\bar{x} = \langle x, y, z \rangle$ if and only if $\bar{x} \in L_1$ and $\bar{x} \in L_2$. Therefore, L_1 and L_2 intersect at \bar{x} if and only if

$$\langle 1+t, 2+t, 3+t \rangle = \bar{x} = \langle 2-2s, 3-2s, 4-2s \rangle$$

for some $t, s \in \mathbb{R}$.

It follows from the definition of vector equality that

$$1+t = x = 2-2s, \quad 2+t = y = 3-2s, \quad 3+t = z = 4-2s. \quad (\text{A})$$

All three equations imply that $t = 1-2s$. Hence for every real number s , there exists a real number $t = 1-2s$ such that t and s satisfy (A).

Therefore, if $\bar{x} = \langle 2-2s, 3-2s, 4-2s \rangle \in L_2$, then $\bar{x} = \langle 1+(1-2s), 2+(1-2s), 3+(1-2s) \rangle \in L_1$.

Conversely, if $\bar{x} = \langle 1+t, 2+t, 3+t \rangle \in L_1$, then $\bar{x} = \left\langle 2-2 \cdot \frac{1-t}{2}, 3-2 \cdot \frac{1-t}{2}, 4-2 \cdot \frac{1-t}{2} \right\rangle \in L_2$. Therefore, $L_1 = L_2$ so that every point on the line is a point of intersection.

Our observations of the physical world tell us that, given two points $\bar{p} \neq \bar{q}$, there is exactly one straight line through \bar{p} and \bar{q} . Another way of expressing this fact is that if two lines L_1 and L_2 intersect in more than one point, then $L_1 = L_2$. In the following theorem, we prove that this is indeed the case. This result serves as a further motivation for our definition of a line in space.

Theorem

Equality of Lines with Multiple Intersection Points

If two lines L_1 and L_2 intersect at more than one point, then $L_1 = L_2$.

Proof

Let $L_1 = \{t\bar{p} + (1-t)\bar{q} : t \in \mathbb{R}\}$ and $L_2 = \{s\bar{a} + (1-s)\bar{b} : s \in \mathbb{R}\}$.

Assume that L_1 and L_2 intersect at two distinct points, say \bar{u} and \bar{v} , with $\bar{u} \neq \bar{v}$. Let L be the line through \bar{u} and \bar{v} .

We shall show that $L_1 = L = L_2$.

Since $\bar{u}, \bar{v} \in L_1$, there exist $t_0, t_1 \in \mathbb{R}$ such that

$$\bar{u} = t_0\bar{p} + (1-t_0)\bar{q}, \quad \bar{v} = t_1\bar{p} + (1-t_1)\bar{q}.$$

Since $\bar{u} \neq \bar{v}$, it follows that $t_0 \neq t_1$.

Now consider a point

$$\bar{x} = r(t_0\bar{p} + (1-t_0)\bar{q}) + (1-r)(t_1\bar{p} + (1-t_1)\bar{q}).$$

By the properties of vector addition and scalar multiplication,

$$\begin{aligned} \bar{x} &= (rt_0 + (1-r)t_1)\bar{p} + (r(1-t_0) + (1-r)(1-t_1))\bar{q} \\ &= (rt_0 + t_1 - rt_1)\bar{p} + (r - rt_0 + 1 - r - (1-t_1))\bar{q} \\ &= (rt_0 + t_1 - rt_1)\bar{p} + (1 - (rt_0 + t_1 - rt_1))\bar{q}. \end{aligned}$$

Hence $\bar{x} \in L_1$. But \bar{x} was a point on the line through \bar{u} and \bar{v} , so this shows every point on the line L lies in L_1 .

Now, using the identities:

$$\bar{u} = t_0\bar{p} + (1-t_0)\bar{q}, \quad \bar{v} = t_1\bar{p} + (1-t_1)\bar{q},$$

we multiply both by t_1 and t_0 , respectively:

$$t_1\bar{u} = t_1t_0\bar{p} + t_1(1-t_0)\bar{q} \tag{A}$$

$$t_0\bar{v} = t_0t_1\bar{p} + t_0(1-t_1)\bar{q} \tag{B}$$

Proof

Subtracting (B) from (A):

$$\begin{aligned}
 t_1\bar{u} - t_0\bar{v} &= t_1(1 - t_0)\bar{q} - t_0(1 - t_1)\bar{q} \\
 &= (t_1 - t_0)\bar{q} \\
 \Rightarrow \bar{q} &= \frac{t_1\bar{u} - t_0\bar{v}}{t_1 - t_0} = \frac{t_0}{t_1 - t_0}\bar{u} - \frac{t_1}{t_1 - t_0}\bar{v}
 \end{aligned} \tag{C}$$

Likewise, observe:

$$\begin{aligned}
 \bar{u} - \bar{v} &= (t_0 - t_1)\bar{p} + (1 - t_0 - (1 - t_1))\bar{q} \\
 &= (t_0 - t_1)\bar{p} + (t_1 - t_0)\bar{q} \\
 &= (t_0 - t_1)(\bar{p} - \bar{q}) \\
 \Rightarrow \bar{p} &= \frac{1 - t_0}{t_0 - t_1}\bar{u} - \frac{1 - t_1}{t_0 - t_1}\bar{v}
 \end{aligned} \tag{D}$$

Now suppose that $\bar{y} \in L_1$. Then $\bar{y} = t\bar{p} + (1 - t)\bar{q}$ for some $t \in \mathbb{R}$. Substitute from (C) and (D):

$$\begin{aligned}
 \bar{y} &= t \left(\frac{1 - t_0}{t_0 - t_1}\bar{u} - \frac{1 - t_1}{t_0 - t_1}\bar{v} \right) + (1 - t) \left(\frac{t_0}{t_1 - t_0}\bar{u} - \frac{t_1}{t_1 - t_0}\bar{v} \right) \\
 &= \left(\frac{t(1 - t_0)}{t_0 - t_1} + \frac{(1 - t)t_0}{t_0 - t_1} \right) \bar{u} + \left(-\frac{t(1 - t_1)}{t_0 - t_1} - \frac{(1 - t)t_1}{t_0 - t_1} \right) \bar{v} \\
 &= \frac{t - t_1}{t_0 - t_1}\bar{u} + \left(1 - \frac{t - t_1}{t_0 - t_1} \right) \bar{v}.
 \end{aligned}$$

Thus $\bar{y} \in L$. So every point on L_1 lies on L , i.e., $L_1 \subseteq L$. By symmetry, the same argument shows $L_2 \subseteq L$. Hence, $L_1 = L = L_2$. \square

As with parallel lines in coordinate geometry, we can also define parallel lines in our model for space:

Definition

Parallel Lines in Space

Two lines $L_1 = \{\bar{q} + t(\bar{p} - \bar{q}) : t \in \mathbb{R}\}$ and $L_2 = \{\bar{b} + t(\bar{a} - \bar{b}) : t \in \mathbb{R}\}$ are *parallel* if and only if

$$\bar{p} - \bar{q} = k(\bar{a} - \bar{b}) \text{ for some } k \in \mathbb{R} \text{ such that } k \neq 0.$$

Remark

Consider the lines $L_1 = \{\bar{q} + t(\bar{p} - \bar{q}) : t \in \mathbb{R}\}$ and $L_2 = \{\bar{b} + t(\bar{a} - \bar{b}) : t \in \mathbb{R}\}$ in \mathbb{R}^3 . If α is a non-zero real number, then

$$\bar{p} - \bar{q} = \alpha(\bar{a} - \bar{b}) \quad \text{if and only if} \quad \bar{a} - \bar{b} = \frac{1}{\alpha}(\bar{p} - \bar{q}).$$

Therefore, L_1 and L_2 are **parallel** if and only if

$$\bar{a} - \bar{b} = \beta(\bar{p} - \bar{q}) \quad \text{for some non-zero real number } \beta.$$

This essentially means that one vector is a scalar multiple of the other. Geometrically, the lines are parallel if they go in the same direction (or exactly opposite).

Intuitively, if two distinct lines L_1 and L_2 are parallel, then L_1 and L_2 do not intersect. In terms of our model of space, we can prove this idea, all while motivating our definition of parallel lines, with the following theorem:

Theorem

Non-Intersection of Parallel Lines

If L_1 and L_2 are distinct parallel lines in \mathbb{R}^3 , then they do not intersect.

Proof

Let $L_1 = \{\bar{q} + t(\bar{p} - \bar{q}) : t \in \mathbb{R}\}$ and $L_2 = \{\bar{b} + s(\bar{a} - \bar{b}) : s \in \mathbb{R}\}$ be distinct parallel lines in \mathbb{R}^3 . Since $L_1 \neq L_2$, and the lines are parallel, they do not coincide. Thus, we may assume (without loss of generality) that $\bar{q} \notin L_2$, i.e., $\bar{q} \neq \bar{b} + s(\bar{a} - \bar{b})$ for all $s \in \mathbb{R}$.

Since L_1 and L_2 are parallel, there exists a non-zero real number α such that $\bar{p} - \bar{q} = \alpha(\bar{a} - \bar{b})$. Therefore, it follows that $L_1 = \{\bar{q} + \alpha t(\bar{a} - \bar{b}) : t \in \mathbb{R}\}$.

Now suppose, for contradiction, that L_1 and L_2 intersect at some point $\bar{x} \in \mathbb{R}^3$. Then there exist $t_0, s_0 \in \mathbb{R}$ that satisfy:

$$\bar{x} = \bar{q} + \alpha t_0(\bar{a} - \bar{b}) = \bar{b} + s_0(\bar{a} - \bar{b}).$$

Subtracting $\alpha t_0(\bar{a} - \bar{b})$ from both sides yields

$$\begin{aligned} \bar{q} &= \bar{b} + s_0(\bar{a} - \bar{b}) - \alpha t_0(\bar{a} - \bar{b}) \\ &= \bar{b} + (s_0 - \alpha t_0)(\bar{a} - \bar{b}). \end{aligned}$$

Now let $s = s_0 - \alpha t_0$. Then $\bar{q} = \bar{b} + s(\bar{a} - \bar{b})$, which implies $\bar{q} \in L_2$, evidently contradicting our earlier assumption that $\bar{q} \notin L_2$.

Hence, L_1 and L_2 do not intersect. □

Take Note!

The Theorem of Non-Intersection of Parallel Lines states that distinct parallel lines do not intersect. The converse of this theorem, however, is generally false. If two lines L_1 and L_2 do not intersect, it does not follow that they are parallel.

Example

Let L_1 be the line through $\bar{p} = \langle 2, 3, 1 \rangle$ and $\bar{q} = \langle 4, 5, 5 \rangle$, and L_2 the line through $\bar{a} = \langle -1, 1, 2 \rangle$ and $\bar{b} = \langle 5, 7, 14 \rangle$. Determine whether or not L_1 and L_2 are parallel.

Solution

$\bar{p} - \bar{q} = \langle -2, -2, -4 \rangle$ and $\bar{a} - \bar{b} = \langle 6, 6, 12 \rangle$. Therefore $\bar{a} - \bar{b} = \langle 6, 6, 12 \rangle = -3\langle -2, -2, -4 \rangle = -3(\bar{p} - \bar{q})$. Therefore L_1 and L_2 are parallel.

Example

Let $L_1 = \{ \langle 1 - t, 1 - t, 2t \rangle : t \in \mathbb{R} \}$ and $L_2 = \{ \langle s, 2, s - 1 \rangle : s \in \mathbb{R} \}$. Given that L_1 and L_2 do not intersect, show that L_1 and L_2 are not parallel.

Solution

By the definition of vector addition, and scalar multiplication, L_1 and L_2 can be expressed as

$$L_1 = \{ \langle 1, 1, 0 \rangle + t\langle -1, -1, 2 \rangle : t \in \mathbb{R} \}$$

and

$$L_2 = \{ \langle 0, 2, -1 \rangle + s\langle 1, 0, 1 \rangle : s \in \mathbb{R} \}.$$

If L_1 and L_2 were parallel, then $\langle -1, -1, 2 \rangle = \alpha \langle 1, 0, 1 \rangle = \langle \alpha, 0, \alpha \rangle$ for some $\alpha \in \mathbb{R}$. By the definition of vector equality, it is implied that $-1 = 0$, which is not true. Therefore L_1 and L_2 are not parallel.

Example

Consider the points $\bar{p} = \langle 1, 0, 2 \rangle$, $\bar{q} = \langle c, 2, 1 \rangle$, $\bar{a} = \langle 5, c, 3 \rangle$, and $\bar{b} = \langle -7, -1, 1 \rangle$ in \mathbb{R}^3 , where $c \in \mathbb{R}$ is a constant. We determine all values of c , if any, so that the line through \bar{p} and \bar{q} is parallel to the line through \bar{a} and \bar{b} .

Solution

By definition, the line through \bar{p} and \bar{q} is parallel to the line through \bar{a} and \bar{b} if and only if there exists a non-zero real number α such that $\bar{a} - \bar{b} = \alpha(\bar{p} - \bar{q})$.

We have $\bar{a} - \bar{b} = \langle 12, c + 1, 2 \rangle$ and $\bar{p} - \bar{q} = \langle 1 - c, -2, 1 \rangle$.

Therefore, for a real number α , the equation $\bar{a} - \bar{b} = \alpha(\bar{p} - \bar{q})$ holds if and only if

$$12 = \alpha(1 - c), \quad c + 1 = -2\alpha, \quad \alpha = 2.$$

According to the last equation, if $\bar{a} - \bar{b} = \alpha(\bar{p} - \bar{q})$, then $\alpha = 2$. Substituting $\alpha = 2$ into the first and second equations yields

$$12 = 2(1 - c) \quad \text{and} \quad c + 1 = -4.$$

Both equations imply that $c = -5$. Therefore, the line through \bar{p} and \bar{q} is parallel to the line through \bar{a} and \bar{b} if and only if $c = -5$.

Now beyond lines in space, our model for space even holds for three-dimensional objects! One such object that appears frequently in applications is the sphere. Consider the fact that the Earth and other celestial bodies are approximated as spheres. As we have done before, we define a sphere in terms of our model for space.

Definition

Sphere

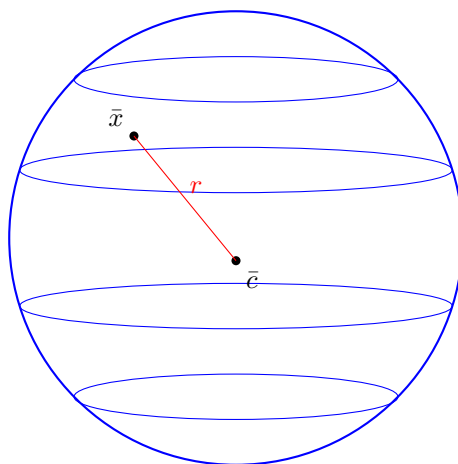
Let \bar{c} be a point in \mathbb{R}^3 , and let $r > 0$ be a real number. The sphere with center \bar{c} and radius r is the set

$$S = \{\bar{x} \in \mathbb{R}^3 : \|\bar{c} - \bar{x}\| = r\}.$$

Consider a sphere

$$S = \{\bar{x} \in \mathbb{R}^3 : \|\bar{c} - \bar{x}\| = r\}.$$

The set S consists of all points in space that are at a distance r from the fixed point \bar{c} , the center of the sphere. The sphere S is shown in the figure below.



Our everyday experience tells us that a line intersects a sphere in either one or two points, or not at all. Indeed, if you shoot an arrow at a soccer ball at a very high speed and do not miss, then the arrow will enter the ball at one point and exit at another, or just graze the surface of the ball. We illustrate this fact by means of some examples.

Example

Let S be the sphere with radius 2 and centre $\bar{0}$, and L the line through the points $\bar{p} = \langle 3, 1, 0 \rangle$ and $\bar{q} = \langle 0, 0, 3 \rangle$. Determine the points where L intersects S , if any such points exist.

Solution

L intersects S at a point \bar{r} if and only if $\bar{r} \in S$ and $\bar{r} \in L$. Therefore L intersects S at \bar{r} if and only if

$$\bar{r} = t\bar{p} + (1 - t)\bar{q} = \langle 3t, t, 3 - 3t \rangle \quad \text{for some } t \in \mathbb{R}$$

and

$$\|\bar{r} - \bar{0}\| = 2.$$

It is convenient to replace the last equation with

$$\|\bar{r} - \bar{0}\|^2 = 4.$$

Substituting the expression for \bar{r} we get

$$4 = \|\bar{r} - \bar{0}\|^2 = \|\langle 3t, t, 3 - 3t \rangle\|^2 = 9t^2 + t^2 + 9 - 18t + 9t^2.$$

Hence

$$19t^2 - 18t + 5 = 0.$$

Because the discriminant of the quadratic equation satisfies

$$\Delta = (-18)^2 - 4 \cdot 19 \cdot 5 = -56 < 0,$$

equation has no real solutions. Therefore the line L does not intersect the sphere S .

Example

Let S be the sphere with radius 1 and centre $\bar{c} = \langle 1, 1, 1 \rangle$, and L the line through the points $\bar{p} = \langle 2, -1, 1 \rangle$ and $\bar{q} = \langle -1, 2, 1 \rangle$. Determine the points where L intersects S , if any such points exist.

Solution

A point \bar{r} lies on both L and S if and only if $\bar{r} \in S$ and $\bar{r} \in L$. Therefore L intersects S at \bar{r} if and only if

$$\bar{r} = t\bar{p} + (1-t)\bar{q} = \langle 3t-1, 2-3t, 1 \rangle \quad \text{for some } t \in \mathbb{R}$$

and

$$\|\bar{r} - \bar{c}\| = 1.$$

In order to simplify our calculations, we replace this equation with

$$\|\bar{r} - \bar{c}\|^2 = 1.$$

Substituting, we find

$$1 = \|\bar{r} - \bar{c}\|^2 = \|\langle 3t-2, 1-3t, 0 \rangle\|^2 = 9t^2 - 12t + 4 + 1 - 6t + 9t^2.$$

Hence

$$18t^2 - 18t + 4 = 0.$$

Solving, we find $t = \frac{2}{3}$ or $t = \frac{1}{3}$. Substituting these into the expression for \bar{r} :

$$\bar{r}_0 = \langle 3 \cdot \frac{2}{3} - 1, 2 - 3 \cdot \frac{2}{3}, 1 \rangle = \langle 1, 0, 1 \rangle,$$

$$\bar{r}_1 = \langle 3 \cdot \frac{1}{3} - 1, 2 - 3 \cdot \frac{1}{3}, 1 \rangle = \langle 0, 1, 1 \rangle.$$

Example

Let S be the sphere with radius $\sqrt{2}$ and centre $\bar{c} = \langle 1, 0, 1 \rangle$, and L the line through the points $\bar{p} = \langle -2, 2, 2 \rangle$ and $\bar{q} = \langle 1, -1, -1 \rangle$. Determine the points where L intersects S , if any such points exist.

Solution

L intersects S at a point \bar{r} if and only if $\bar{r} \in S$ and $\bar{r} \in L$. Therefore L intersects S at \bar{r} if and only if

$$\bar{r} = t\bar{p} + (1 - t)\bar{q} = \langle 1 - 3t, 3t - 1, 3t - 1 \rangle \quad \text{for some } t \in \mathbb{R}$$

and

$$\|\bar{r} - \bar{c}\| = \sqrt{2}.$$

It is convenient to replace this with

$$\|\bar{r} - \bar{c}\|^2 = 2.$$

Substituting gives

$$2 = \|\bar{r} - \bar{c}\|^2 = \|\langle -3t, 3t - 1, 3t - 1 \rangle\|^2 = 9t^2 + 9t^2 - 6t + 1 + 9t^2 - 12t + 4.$$

Hence

$$27t^2 - 18t + 5 = 2 \Rightarrow 9t^2 - 6t + 1 = 0.$$

This equation has only one solution, namely $t = \frac{1}{3}$. Therefore the line L intersects the sphere S at precisely one point:

$$\bar{r} = \langle 1 - 3 \cdot \frac{1}{3}, 3 \cdot \frac{1}{3} - 1, 3 \cdot \frac{1}{3} - 1 \rangle = \langle 0, 0, 0 \rangle = \bar{0}.$$

Exercises

1. Let L be the line through \bar{p} and \bar{q} . In each case, determine whether or not the given points \bar{a} and \bar{b} are on L . If one or both of the points is on L , also determine whether or not the point is between \bar{p} and \bar{q} .

(a) $\bar{p} = \langle 2, 2, -3 \rangle$, $\bar{q} = \bar{0}$; $\bar{a} = \langle 1, 1, -2 \rangle$, $\bar{b} = \langle -4, -4, 6 \rangle$

(b) $\bar{p} = \langle 1, 2, 1 \rangle$, $\bar{q} = \langle 1, 0, 2 \rangle$; $\bar{a} = \langle 1, 8, -2 \rangle$, $\bar{b} = \langle 1, 4, 1 \rangle$

(c) $\bar{p} = \langle -1, 1, 1 \rangle$, $\bar{q} = \langle 1, 2, 2 \rangle$; $\bar{a} = \langle -5, -1, -1 \rangle$, $\bar{b} = \langle -3, 3, 3 \rangle$

(d) $\bar{p} = \langle 2, 3, -5 \rangle$, $\bar{q} = \langle -1, 2, 1 \rangle$; $\bar{a} = \langle 5, 4, -10 \rangle$, $\bar{b} = \langle -4, 3, 7 \rangle$

(e) $\bar{p} = \langle 0, 2, -1 \rangle$, $\bar{q} = \langle 1, 0, -1 \rangle$; $\bar{a} = \langle -4, 10, -1 \rangle$, $\bar{b} = \langle -2, 7, -1 \rangle$

2. Consider the points $\bar{p} = \langle 1, 0, 1 \rangle$ and $\bar{q} = \langle 4, 2, 6 \rangle$. Determine whether or not the points \bar{a} , \bar{b} and \bar{c} are between \bar{p} and \bar{q} , where

$$\bar{a} = \left\langle \frac{5}{2}, 1, \frac{7}{2} \right\rangle, \quad \bar{b} = \left\langle 3, \frac{4}{3}, \frac{13}{3} \right\rangle, \quad \bar{c} = \langle -2, -2, -4 \rangle.$$

3. Determine whether or not the lines L_1 and L_2 intersect, and find the point(s) of intersection, if any exist.

(a) L_1 : through $\bar{p} = \langle 1, 2, -1 \rangle$, $\bar{q} = \langle 2, 0, 1 \rangle$; L_2 : through $\bar{a} = \langle 0, 4, 1 \rangle$, $\bar{b} = \langle -2, 8, -11 \rangle$

(b) L_1 : through $\bar{p} = \langle -1, 0, -1 \rangle$, $\bar{q} = \langle 1, 1, 1 \rangle$; L_2 : through $\bar{a} = \langle -1, 0, -5 \rangle$, $\bar{b} = \langle 1, 1, -1 \rangle$

(c) L_1 : through $\bar{p} = \langle 1, 2, 1 \rangle$, $\bar{q} = \langle -1, 0, 2 \rangle$; L_2 : through $\bar{a} = \langle -2, -2, 5 \rangle$, $\bar{b} = \langle -1, -1, 6 \rangle$

(d) L_1 : through $\bar{p} = \langle 2, 0, -1 \rangle$, $\bar{q} = \langle 1, -2, 1 \rangle$; L_2 : through $\bar{a} = \langle 0, -4, 1 \rangle$, $\bar{b} = \langle 3, 2, -3 \rangle$

(e) L_1 : through $\bar{p} = \langle 2, 1, -2 \rangle$, $\bar{q} = \langle -2, -1, 2 \rangle$; L_2 : through $\bar{a} = \langle 5, 3, -6 \rangle$, $\bar{b} = \langle 1, 5, -4 \rangle$

(f) L_1 : through $\bar{p} = \langle 2, 3, -1 \rangle$, $\bar{q} = \langle -1, 4, 1 \rangle$; L_2 : through $\bar{a} = \langle 5, 2, -3 \rangle$, $\bar{b} = \langle -1, 4, 0 \rangle$

4. Let $\bar{c} = \langle 1, 0, 0 \rangle$ and let S be the sphere with centre \bar{c} and radius 2. Determine if the line L intersects the sphere S , and find the point(s) of intersection, if any exist.

(a) L : through $\bar{p} = \langle 1, -2, 2 \rangle$, $\bar{q} = \langle 2, -1, 1 \rangle$

(b) $L = \{ \langle 3t, 4 - 4t, 1 \rangle : t \in \mathbb{R} \}$

(c) L : through $\bar{p} = \langle 0, -1, 3\sqrt{2} \rangle$, $\bar{q} = \langle 3, 2, 0 \rangle$

(d) L : through $\bar{p} = \langle 3, 2\sqrt{3}, -2 \rangle$, $\bar{q} = \langle 0, -\sqrt{3}, 4 \rangle$

Exercises

5. Let L be the line through $\bar{p} = \langle 1, 1, -1 \rangle$ and $\bar{q} = \langle -1, 2, 1 \rangle$. For the given points \bar{a} and \bar{b} , determine the value(s) of the real number α so that the line through \bar{a} and \bar{b} intersects L at exactly one point.

(a) $\bar{a} = \langle 1, 0, 1 \rangle, \bar{b} = \langle -3, 1, 3\alpha + 1 \rangle$

(b) $\bar{a} = \langle -9, 6, \alpha^2 \rangle, \bar{b} = \langle 3, 0, -3 \rangle$

(c) $\bar{a} = \langle 1, 0, 1 \rangle, \bar{b} = \langle -3, 1, 3\alpha + 1 \rangle$

(d) $\bar{a} = \langle 2 + \alpha, 2, 3 \rangle, \bar{b} = \langle 2, 1, -1 \rangle$

6. For vectors \bar{a} and \bar{b} as given below, sketch the line segments between $\bar{0}$ and \bar{a} , $\bar{0}$ and \bar{b} , \bar{a} and $\bar{a} + \bar{b}$, and \bar{b} and $\bar{a} + \bar{b}$ in the xy -plane $\{\langle x, y, 0 \rangle : x, y \in \mathbb{R}\}$. Identify the figure formed by the four line segments.

(a) $\bar{a} = \langle 1, 0, 0 \rangle, \bar{b} = \langle 0, 1, 0 \rangle$

(d) $\bar{a} = \langle 3, 1, 0 \rangle, \bar{b} = \langle -2, 3, 0 \rangle$

(b) $\bar{a} = \langle 1, 2, 0 \rangle, \bar{b} = \langle 2, 1, 0 \rangle$

(e) $\bar{a} = \langle 4, 2, 0 \rangle, \bar{b} = \langle 2, 1, 0 \rangle$

(c) $\bar{a} = \langle -1, 1, 0 \rangle, \bar{b} = \langle 2, 1, 0 \rangle$

(f) $\bar{a} = \langle 5, 3, 0 \rangle, \bar{b} = \langle 2, -3, 0 \rangle$

7. Determine whether or not the given lines L_1 and L_2 are parallel.

(a) $L_1: \bar{x} = \langle 2 + 3t, -t, 2 + t \rangle, L_2: \bar{x} = \langle 1, 3, 1 \rangle + s\langle 6, -2, 2 \rangle$

(b) $L_1: \text{through } \bar{p} = \langle -2, 1, 2 \rangle, \bar{q} = \langle 5, 4, -1 \rangle; L_2: \bar{x} = \langle 8 - 14s, -6s, 1 + 5s \rangle$

8. Determine the value(s) of the real number c for which the given lines L_1 and L_2 are parallel.

(a) $L_1: \bar{x} = \langle 4 + c^2t, -1, t + 1 \rangle, L_2: \bar{x} = \langle 4, 2, 1 \rangle + s\langle 4, 0, 2 \rangle$

(b) $L_1: \text{through } \bar{p} = \langle 1, 2c, 0 \rangle, \bar{q} = \langle -1, 1, 1 \rangle; L_2: \text{through } \bar{a} = \langle 0, 1, 1 \rangle, \bar{b} = \langle 1, 2, -1 \rangle$

(c) $L_1: \text{through } \bar{p} = \langle c^2, 1, 1 \rangle, \bar{q} = \langle -1, 0, 2 \rangle; L_2: \text{through } \bar{a} = \langle 3, 4, c \rangle, \bar{b} = \langle -1, 2, 3 \rangle$

(d) $L_1: \bar{x} = \langle 1 + ct, 2, 2t + 1 \rangle, L_2: \bar{x} = \langle 2, 5, -3 \rangle + s\langle 1, 3, -1 \rangle$

(e) $L_1: \bar{x} = \langle c + t, 2t - c, c - 3t \rangle, L_2: \bar{x} = \langle -2, 0, 3 \rangle + s\langle -2, -4, 6 \rangle$

Now that we have properly defined lines in space, we can now move onto to more specific concepts in space; in particular we will look at angles and measurements

1.4 Angles and Measurement

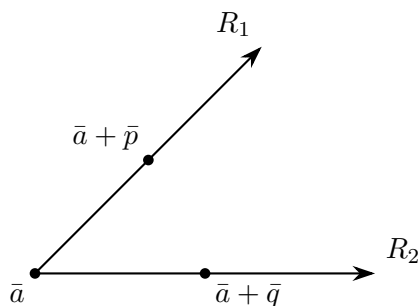
Angles are common in the world around us: the side line and the goal line on a soccer pitch form an angle at the point where they intersect, as do non-opposing walls in a rectangular room. In this section we define angles in the context of our model for space, and introduce angle measure. As a motivation for our definitions of angle and the magnitude of an angle, we introduce triangles, and show that our definitions are consistent with the Cosine Law.

Definition

Angle

Let R_1 and R_2 be two rays $R_1 = \{\bar{a} + t\bar{p} : t \geq 0\}$ and $R_2 = \{\bar{a} + t\bar{q} : t \geq 0\}$ with the same origin \bar{a} . The set $R_1 \cup R_2$ of all points of all points on the two rays is called the **angle** formed by the rays R_1 and R_2 .

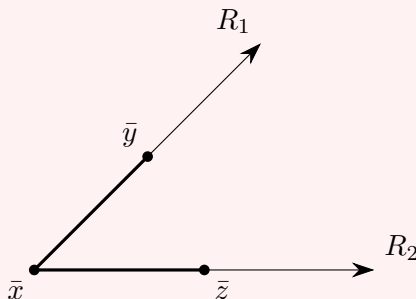
The following figure shows the angle formed by the rays R_1 and R_2 .



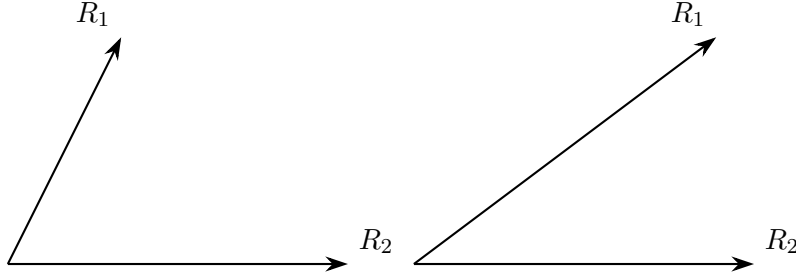
Remark

Take note of the following regarding rays.

1. Consider two rays $R_1 = \{\bar{a} + t\bar{p} : t \geq 0\}$ and $R_2 = \{\bar{a} + t\bar{q} : t \geq 0\}$ with the same origin \bar{a} . If the direction vectors \bar{p} and \bar{q} are scalar multiples of each other, then $R_1 = R_2$, or $R_1 \cup R_2$ is a line.
2. Let $\bar{x}, \bar{y}, \bar{z}$ be three points not on the same line. Then the line segments $S_1 = \{\bar{x} + t(\bar{y} - \bar{x}) : 0 \leq t \leq 1\}$ and $S_2 = \{\bar{x} + t(\bar{z} - \bar{x}) : 0 \leq t \leq 1\}$ determine the angle formed by the rays $R_1 = \{\bar{x} + t(\bar{y} - \bar{x}) : t \geq 0\}$ and $R_2 = \{\bar{x} + t(\bar{z} - \bar{x}) : t \geq 0\}$:



Our aim now is to define the magnitude of an angle; that is, to measure the size of an angle, because, in the figure below, the angle on the right is clearly ‘larger’ than the one on the left.



Now we need to quantify the what we refer to as the ‘size of an angle’.

First note that for vectors \bar{x}, \bar{y} , such that $\bar{x}, \bar{y} \neq 0$, by the Cauchy-Schwarz Inequality, $|\bar{x} \cdot \bar{y}| \leq \|\bar{x}\| \|\bar{y}\|$.

Then, by the Positive Definiteness of the Norm and the definition of the absolute value, we have

$$\left| \frac{\bar{x} \cdot \bar{y}}{\|\bar{x}\| \|\bar{y}\|} \right| \leq 1$$

Finally, we find that:

$$-1 \leq \frac{\bar{x} \cdot \bar{y}}{\|\bar{x}\| \|\bar{y}\|} \leq 1$$

Now consider the function $f : [0, \pi] \rightarrow \mathbb{R}$ defined by $f(\theta) = \cos \theta$. Then f is continuous and strictly decreasing on the interval $[0, \pi]$, with $f(0) = 1$ and $f(\pi) = -1$. By the Intermediate Value Theorem, and the fact that f is strictly decreasing, there exists exactly one $\theta \in [0, \pi]$ that satisfies

$$f(\theta) = \cos \theta = \frac{\bar{x} \cdot \bar{y}}{\|\bar{x}\| \|\bar{y}\|}$$

This leads to our definition of the magnitude of an angle:

Definition

Magnitude of an Angle

Consider the angle formed by the rays with equations $\bar{x} = \bar{a} + t\bar{p}$ and $\bar{x} = \bar{a} + t\bar{q}$, with $t \geq 0$. Then the *magnitude of the angle* is the unique real number $\theta \in [0, \pi]$ such that

$$\cos \theta = \frac{\bar{p} \cdot \bar{q}}{\|\bar{p}\| \|\bar{q}\|}$$

Remark

Consider the angle formed by the rays R_1 and R_2 with equations $\bar{x} = \bar{a} + t\bar{p}$ and $\bar{x} = \bar{a} + t\bar{q}$, with $t \geq 0$, respectively. Let θ be the magnitude of the angle. Then

$$|\bar{p} \cdot \bar{q}| = \|\bar{p}\| \cdot \|\bar{q}\| \text{ if and only if } \bar{p} \text{ and } \bar{q} \text{ are scalar multiples of each other.}$$

In particular, $\bar{p} \cdot \bar{q} = \|\bar{p}\|\|\bar{q}\|$ if and only if $\bar{p} = \alpha\bar{q}$ for some $\alpha > 0$, and $\bar{p} \cdot \bar{q} = -\|\bar{p}\|\|\bar{q}\|$ if and only if $\bar{p} = \alpha\bar{q}$ for some $\alpha < 0$.

We therefore have the following:

1. If \bar{p} and \bar{q} are not scalar multiples of each other, then $\theta \in (0, \pi)$.
2. If $\bar{p} = \alpha\bar{q}$ for some $\alpha > 0$, then $\theta = 0$. In this case, $R_1 = R_2$, so the angle $R_1 \cup R_2$ is a ray.
3. If $\bar{p} = \alpha\bar{q}$ for some $\alpha < 0$, then $\theta = \pi$. In this case, $R_1 \cup R_2$ is a line.

Example

Consider the rays R_1 and R_2 with equations $\bar{x} = \bar{0} + t\langle 1, -1, 1 \rangle$ and $\bar{x} = \bar{0} + t\langle 2\alpha, 1, 1 \rangle$, $t \geq 0$, respectively. Find all values for $\alpha \in \mathbb{R}$ so that the angle formed by R_1 and R_2 has magnitude $\frac{\pi}{3}$.

Solution

The direction vector for R_1 is $\bar{p} = \langle 1, -1, 1 \rangle$, while that for R_2 is $\bar{q} = \langle 2\alpha, 1, 1 \rangle$.

The magnitude of the angle formed by these two rays is $\frac{\pi}{3}$ if and only if

$$\cos\left(\frac{\pi}{3}\right) = \frac{\bar{p} \cdot \bar{q}}{\|\bar{p}\|\|\bar{q}\|} = \frac{2\alpha - 1 + 1}{\sqrt{3}\sqrt{4\alpha^2 + 2}} = \frac{2\alpha}{\sqrt{3}\sqrt{4\alpha^2 + 2}}.$$

Since $\cos\left(\frac{\pi}{3}\right) = \frac{1}{2}$, we equate:

$$\frac{1}{2} = \frac{2\alpha}{\sqrt{3}\sqrt{4\alpha^2 + 2}}.$$

Multiplying both sides by $2\sqrt{3}\sqrt{4\alpha^2 + 2}$, we get:

$$\sqrt{3}\sqrt{4\alpha^2 + 2} = 4\alpha.$$

Squaring both sides:

$$3(4\alpha^2 + 2) = 16\alpha^2 \quad \Rightarrow \quad 12\alpha^2 + 6 = 16\alpha^2 \quad \Rightarrow \quad 4\alpha^2 = 6 \quad \Rightarrow \quad \alpha^2 = \frac{3}{2}.$$

Thus, $\alpha = \pm\frac{\sqrt{6}}{2}$. However, we must check which of these satisfy the original equation.

Substituting $\alpha = \frac{\sqrt{6}}{2}$ into the original equation confirms it satisfies the condition. But

$\alpha = -\frac{\sqrt{6}}{2}$ does not, because the cosine would be negative, implying an angle greater than $\frac{\pi}{2}$.

Therefore, the only value for α for which the angle formed by the rays R_1 and R_2 is $\frac{\pi}{3}$ is

$$\alpha = \frac{\sqrt{6}}{2}.$$

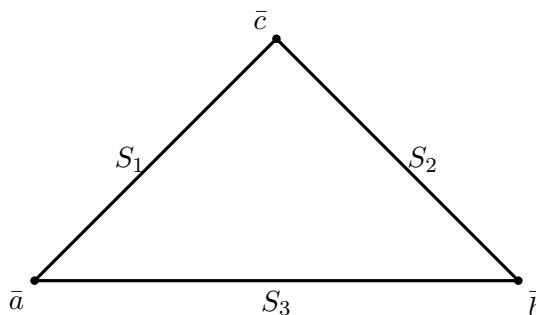
Now that we have defined angles and lines in terms of our model of space, we can define a triangle.

Definition

Triangle

Let $\bar{a}, \bar{b}, \bar{c} \in \mathbb{R}^3$, not all on the same line. Let S_1 be the line segment between \bar{a} and \bar{b} , S_2 be the line segment between \bar{b} and \bar{c} , and S_3 be the line segment between \bar{a} and \bar{c} . Then the *triangle* with vertices \bar{a} , \bar{b} , and \bar{c} is the set $S_1 \cup S_2 \cup S_3$ of points on the three line segments.

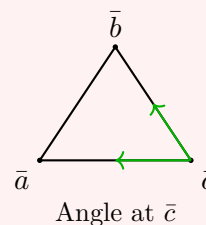
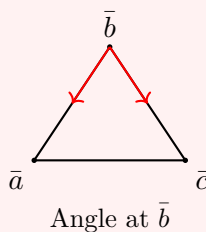
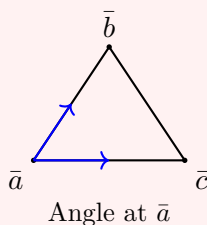
The figure below illustrates a triangle, as defined above:



Remark

Consider three points $\bar{a}, \bar{b}, \bar{c} \in \mathbb{R}^3$, not on the same line, and the triangle with vertices \bar{a} , \bar{b} , and \bar{c} .

1. The line segments S_1, S_2 , and S_3 , joining \bar{a}, \bar{b} , and \bar{c} respectively, are called the *sides* of the triangle.
2. The triangle determines three angles:
 - (a) The angle at \bar{a} , formed by the rays with equations $\bar{x} = \bar{a} + t(\bar{b} - \bar{a})$ and $\bar{x} = \bar{a} + t(\bar{c} - \bar{a})$, where $t \geq 0$.
 - (b) The angle at \bar{b} , formed by the rays with equations $\bar{x} = \bar{b} + t(\bar{a} - \bar{b})$ and $\bar{x} = \bar{b} + t(\bar{c} - \bar{b})$, where $t \geq 0$.
 - (c) The angle at \bar{c} , formed by the rays with equations $\bar{x} = \bar{c} + t(\bar{a} - \bar{c})$ and $\bar{x} = \bar{c} + t(\bar{b} - \bar{c})$, where $t \geq 0$. The triangle with vertices \bar{a} , \bar{b} , and \bar{c} and the three angles determined by the triangle are illustrated below:

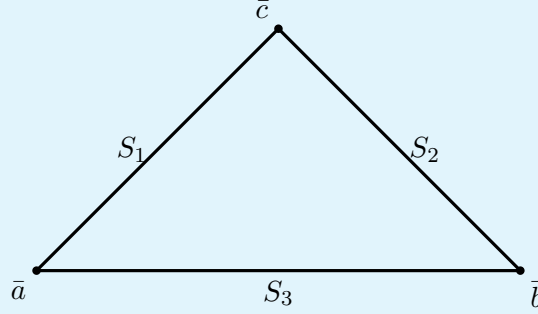


Our definition of the magnitude of an angle is consistent with the Cosine Rule.

Proposition

Cosine Rule

Consider a triangle with vertices \bar{a} , \bar{b} , and \bar{c} . Let θ be the magnitude of the angle at \bar{b} .



Then we have that

$$\|\bar{a} - \bar{c}\|^2 = \|\bar{a} - \bar{b}\|^2 + \|\bar{b} - \bar{c}\|^2 - 2\|\bar{a} - \bar{b}\|\|\bar{b} - \bar{c}\|\cos\theta.$$

Proof

Calculating the square of the length of the side S_3 we have:

$$\begin{aligned} \|\bar{a} - \bar{c}\|^2 &= \|(\bar{a} - \bar{b}) - (\bar{c} - \bar{b})\|^2 \\ &= [(\bar{a} - \bar{b}) - (\bar{c} - \bar{b})] \cdot [(\bar{a} - \bar{b}) - (\bar{c} - \bar{b})] \\ &= (\bar{a} - \bar{b}) \cdot (\bar{a} - \bar{b}) - 2[(\bar{a} - \bar{b}) \cdot (\bar{c} - \bar{b})] + (\bar{c} - \bar{b}) \cdot (\bar{c} - \bar{b}) \\ &= \|\bar{a} - \bar{b}\|^2 - 2[(\bar{a} - \bar{b}) \cdot (\bar{c} - \bar{b})] + \|\bar{c} - \bar{b}\|^2 \end{aligned}$$

Note that the angle at \bar{b} is determined by the rays with equations

$$\bar{x} = \bar{b} + t(\bar{a} - \bar{b}) \quad \text{and} \quad \bar{x} = \bar{b} + t(\bar{c} - \bar{b}), \quad t \geq 0.$$

Therefore, calculating the magnitude θ of the angle at \bar{b} , we find

$$\cos\theta = \frac{(\bar{a} - \bar{b}) \cdot (\bar{c} - \bar{b})}{\|\bar{a} - \bar{b}\| \|\bar{c} - \bar{b}\|}.$$

Hence,

$$\|\bar{a} - \bar{c}\|^2 = \|\bar{a} - \bar{b}\|^2 + \|\bar{c} - \bar{b}\|^2 - 2\|\bar{a} - \bar{b}\| \|\bar{c} - \bar{b}\| \cos\theta.$$

Example

Consider the triangle with vertices $\bar{a} = \langle 1, 0, 1 \rangle$, $\bar{b} = \langle 1, 2, 1 \rangle$, and $\bar{c} = \langle 1, 2, 3 \rangle$. We determine the magnitude of the angle at \bar{a} .

Solution. Let θ be the magnitude of the angle at \bar{a} . According to the cosine rule,

$$\|\bar{b} - \bar{c}\|^2 = \|\bar{b} - \bar{a}\|^2 + \|\bar{c} - \bar{a}\|^2 - 2\|\bar{b} - \bar{a}\|\|\bar{c} - \bar{a}\|\cos\theta.$$

Hence,

$$4 = 4 + 8 - 8\sqrt{2}\cos\theta \quad \Rightarrow \quad \cos\theta = \frac{1}{\sqrt{2}}.$$

Therefore, $\theta = \frac{\pi}{4}$.

Example

Consider the triangle with vertices $\bar{a} = \langle 1, 0, 1 \rangle$, $\bar{b} = \langle 1, 2, 1 \rangle$, and $\bar{c} = \langle \alpha, 1, 0 \rangle$. We find the values for α so that the angle at \bar{a} has magnitude $\frac{\pi}{3}$.

Solution. According to the cosine rule,

$$\|\bar{b} - \bar{c}\|^2 = \|\bar{b} - \bar{a}\|^2 + \|\bar{c} - \bar{a}\|^2 - 2\|\bar{b} - \bar{a}\|\|\bar{c} - \bar{a}\|\cos\left(\frac{\pi}{3}\right).$$

We have:

$$\|\bar{b} - \bar{a}\| = 2, \quad \|\bar{c} - \bar{a}\| = \sqrt{(\alpha - 1)^2 + 2}, \quad \|\bar{b} - \bar{c}\| = \sqrt{(\alpha - 1)^2 + 2}.$$

Substituting:

$$(\alpha - 1)^2 + 2 = 4 + (\alpha - 1)^2 + 2 - 2 \cdot 2 \cdot \sqrt{(\alpha - 1)^2 + 2} \cdot \frac{1}{2}.$$

Simplifying:

$$\begin{aligned} (\alpha - 1)^2 + 2 &= 6 + (\alpha - 1)^2 + 2 - 2\sqrt{(\alpha - 1)^2 + 2}, \\ 2\sqrt{(\alpha - 1)^2 + 2} &= 6 \quad \Rightarrow \quad \sqrt{(\alpha - 1)^2 + 2} = 3 \quad \Rightarrow \quad (\alpha - 1)^2 = 7. \end{aligned}$$

Hence, $\alpha = 1 \pm \sqrt{7}$.

Example

Consider the triangle with vertices $\bar{a} = \langle 1, -1, 1 \rangle$, $\bar{b} = \langle 2, 1, 1 \rangle$, and $\bar{c} = \langle -2\alpha - 1, \alpha, 6 \rangle$. We find the values for α so that the angle at \bar{b} has magnitude $\frac{\pi}{4}$.

Solution. Using the cosine rule:

$$\|\bar{a} - \bar{c}\|^2 = \|\bar{a} - \bar{b}\|^2 + \|\bar{c} - \bar{b}\|^2 - 2\|\bar{a} - \bar{b}\|\|\bar{c} - \bar{b}\|\cos\left(\frac{\pi}{4}\right).$$

We compute:

$$\|\bar{a} - \bar{b}\| = \sqrt{5}, \quad \|\bar{a} - \bar{c}\| = \sqrt{5\alpha^2 + 10\alpha + 30}, \quad \|\bar{c} - \bar{b}\| = \sqrt{5\alpha^2 + 10\alpha + 35}.$$

Substituting:

$$5\alpha^2 + 10\alpha + 30 = 5 + 5\alpha^2 + 10\alpha + 35 - 2\sqrt{5}\sqrt{5\alpha^2 + 10\alpha + 35}\cos\left(\frac{\pi}{4}\right)$$

$$5\alpha^2 + 10\alpha + 30 = 5\alpha^2 + 10\alpha + 40 - 2\sqrt{5}\sqrt{5\alpha^2 + 10\alpha + 35}\frac{1}{\sqrt{2}}$$

$$-10 = -\sqrt{10}\sqrt{5\alpha^2 + 10\alpha + 35} \Rightarrow 10 = \sqrt{10}\sqrt{5\alpha^2 + 10\alpha + 35}$$

$$100 = 10(5\alpha^2 + 10\alpha + 35) \Rightarrow 10 = 5\alpha^2 + 10\alpha + 35 \Rightarrow 5\alpha^2 + 10\alpha + 25 = 0$$

$$\alpha^2 + 2\alpha + 5 = 0.$$

Since the discriminant is negative, there are no real solutions. Therefore, no value of α gives an angle of $\frac{\pi}{4}$ at \bar{b} .

Example

Consider a triangle with vertices \bar{a} , \bar{b} , and \bar{c} such that $\|\bar{a} - \bar{b}\| = 3$, $\|\bar{c} - \bar{a}\| = 4$, and the angle at \bar{b} has magnitude $\frac{\pi}{6}$. We determine $\|\bar{b} - \bar{c}\|$.

Solution. By the cosine rule:

$$\|\bar{a} - \bar{c}\|^2 = \|\bar{c} - \bar{b}\|^2 + \|\bar{a} - \bar{b}\|^2 - 2\|\bar{a} - \bar{b}\|\|\bar{c} - \bar{b}\|\cos\left(\frac{\pi}{6}\right).$$

Substituting:

$$16 = 9 + \|\bar{b} - \bar{c}\|^2 - 2(3)\|\bar{b} - \bar{c}\|\left(\frac{\sqrt{3}}{2}\right).$$

$$16 = 9 + \|\bar{b} - \bar{c}\|^2 - 3\sqrt{3}\|\bar{b} - \bar{c}\|.$$

Let $x = \|\bar{b} - \bar{c}\|$. Then:

$$x^2 - 3\sqrt{3}x - 7 = 0.$$

Solving using the quadratic formula:

$$x = \frac{3\sqrt{3} \pm \sqrt{(3\sqrt{3})^2 - 4(1)(-7)}}{2} = \frac{3\sqrt{3} \pm \sqrt{27 + 28}}{2} = \frac{3\sqrt{3} \pm \sqrt{55}}{2}.$$

Since x must be a positive length, we take the positive root. Therefore:

$$\|\bar{b} - \bar{c}\| = \frac{3\sqrt{3} + \sqrt{55}}{2}.$$

Exercises

- Find the magnitude of the given angle, if it is defined. Otherwise, explain why it is not defined.
 - The angle determined by the rays with equations $\bar{x} = \bar{0} + t\langle 0, 2, 1 \rangle$ and $\bar{x} = \bar{0} + t\langle 3, -1, 2 \rangle$, $t \geq 0$
 - The angle determined by the rays with equations $\bar{x} = \langle 1, 0, 1 \rangle + t\langle 0, 2, 0 \rangle$ and $\bar{x} = \langle 1, 0, 1 \rangle + t\langle -1, 3, \sqrt{2} \rangle$, $t \geq 0$
 - The angle determined by the rays with equations $\bar{x} = \langle 1, 2, 3 \rangle + t\langle \sqrt{2}, -3\sqrt{2}, -2 \rangle$ and $\bar{x} = \langle 1, 2, 3 \rangle + t\langle 0, 2, 0 \rangle$, $t \geq 0$
 - The angle determined by the rays with equations $\bar{x} = \langle -2, 2, 1 \rangle + t\langle 4, 8, 4 \rangle$ and $\bar{x} = \langle -2, 2, 1 \rangle + t\langle 1, 2, 1 \rangle$, $t \geq 0$
 - The angle determined by the rays with equations $\bar{x} = \langle 3, 2, 1 \rangle + t\langle 1, 0, \frac{1}{\sqrt{3}} \rangle$ and $\bar{x} = \langle 2, 2, 5 \rangle + t\langle 0, 0, -1 \rangle$, $t \geq 0$
 - The angle determined by the rays with equations $\bar{x} = \langle 2, 2, 5 \rangle + t\langle 3, 0, \sqrt{3} \rangle$ and $\bar{x} = \langle 2, 2, 5 \rangle + t\langle 0, 0, 2 \rangle$, $t \geq 0$
 - The angle determined by the rays with equations $\bar{x} = \langle 0, -1, -3 \rangle + t\langle 1 + \sqrt{3}, 2, 1 - \sqrt{\sqrt{3}} \rangle$ and $\bar{x} = \langle 0, -1, -3 \rangle + t\langle 1, 2, 1 \rangle$, $t \geq 0$
 - The angle determined by the rays with equations $\bar{x} = \langle 0, -1, -3 \rangle + t\langle -1, 1 + 3, 2 + \sqrt{3} \rangle$ and $\bar{x} = \langle 0, -1, -3 \rangle + t\langle -2, -4, -2 \rangle$, $t \geq 0$
 - The angle determined by the rays with equations $\bar{x} = \langle 1, 2, 1 \rangle + t\langle 1, 1, 2 \rangle$ and $\bar{x} = \langle 1, 2, 1 \rangle + t\langle -1, -1, 2 \rangle$, $t \geq 0$
- Consider the triangle with vertices $\bar{a}, \bar{b}, \bar{c}$. In each case, find the magnitude of the specified angle.
 - $\bar{a} = \langle 1, 1, 1 \rangle$, $\bar{b} = \langle 1, 3, 2 \rangle$, $\bar{c} = \langle 7, -1, 5 \rangle$; the angle at \bar{a}
 - $\bar{a} = \langle 1, -1, 1 \rangle$, $\bar{b} = \langle 1, 3, 1 \rangle$, $\bar{c} = \langle 1 - \sqrt{2}, 3\sqrt{2} - 1, 3 \rangle$; the angle at \bar{a}
 - $\bar{a} = \langle 1, 1, 1 \rangle$, $\bar{b} = \langle 0, 1, 0 \rangle$, $\bar{c} = \langle 0, 0, 1 \rangle$; the angle at \bar{c}
 - $\bar{a} = \bar{0}$, $\bar{b} = \langle 2, -6, -2\sqrt{2} \rangle$, $\bar{c} = \langle 0, 1, 0 \rangle$; the angle at \bar{a}
 - $\bar{a} = \langle \sqrt{3}, 3, -\sqrt{3} \rangle$, $\bar{b} = \langle 1, 5, 1 \rangle$, $\bar{c} = \langle -1, 1, -1 \rangle$; the angle at \bar{c}
 - $\bar{a} = \langle 0, 2, -3 \rangle$, $\bar{b} = \langle \sqrt{3}, 2, -2 \rangle$, $\bar{c} = \langle 0, 2, -5 \rangle$; the angle at \bar{a}
 - $\bar{a} = \langle 2, 1, 3\sqrt{3} \rangle$, $\bar{b} = \langle -1, 1, 2\sqrt{3} \rangle$, $\bar{c} = \langle -1, 1, 4\sqrt{3} \rangle$; the angle at \bar{b}
- Consider the triangle with vertices $\bar{a} = \bar{0}$, $\bar{b} = \langle 1, 2, 1 \rangle$, and $\bar{c} = \langle 0, \alpha, 1 \rangle$. Find the values of α such that the magnitude of the angle at \bar{a} is:

(a) $\frac{\pi}{6}$	(e) $\frac{5\pi}{6}$
(b) $\frac{\pi}{4}$	(f) $\frac{3\pi}{4}$
(c) $\frac{\pi}{3}$	(g) $\frac{\pi}{2}$
(d) $\arccos\left(\frac{2\sqrt{2}}{\sqrt{3}}\right)$	

Exercises

4. Consider a triangle with vertices $\bar{a}, \bar{b}, \bar{c}$. Determine the following:
 - (a) $\|\bar{a} - \bar{c}\|$ if $\|\bar{a} - \bar{b}\| = 2$, $\|\bar{c} - \bar{b}\| = 3$, and the angle at \bar{b} has magnitude $\frac{\pi}{6}$.
 - (b) $\|\bar{a} - \bar{b}\|$ if $\|\bar{a} - \bar{c}\| = 2$, $\|\bar{c} - \bar{b}\| = 3$, and the angle at \bar{b} has magnitude $\frac{\pi}{3}$.
 - (c) $\|\bar{a} - \bar{b}\|$ if $\|\bar{a} - \bar{c}\| = 3$, $\|\bar{c} - \bar{b}\| = 2$, and the angle at \bar{b} has magnitude $\frac{\pi}{2}$.
 - (d) $\|\bar{a} - \bar{b}\|$ if $\|\bar{a} - \bar{c}\| = 3$, the angle at \bar{a} is $\frac{\pi}{3}$ and the angle at \bar{c} is $\frac{\pi}{2}$.
5. Let $\bar{a}, \bar{b}, \bar{c}$ be the vertices of a triangle. Show that if the angle at \bar{a} has magnitude $\frac{\pi}{2}$, then $\|\bar{b} - \bar{c}\|^2 = \|\bar{a} - \bar{c}\|^2 + \|\bar{a} - \bar{b}\|^2$.
6. Let $\bar{a}, \bar{b}, \bar{c}$ be the vertices of a triangle. Show that if $\|\bar{b} - \bar{c}\|^2 = \|\bar{a} - \bar{c}\|^2 + \|\bar{a} - \bar{b}\|^2$, then the angle at \bar{a} has magnitude $\frac{\pi}{2}$.
7. Let $\bar{a}, \bar{b}, \bar{c}$ be the vertices of a triangle. If the angles at \bar{a} and \bar{c} have the same magnitude, show that $\|\bar{b} - \bar{a}\| = \|\bar{b} - \bar{c}\|$.
8. Let $\bar{a}, \bar{b}, \bar{c}$ be the vertices of a triangle. If $\|\bar{b} - \bar{a}\| = \|\bar{b} - \bar{c}\|$, show that the angles at \bar{a} and \bar{c} have the same magnitude.
9. Let $\bar{a}, \bar{b}, \bar{c}$ be the vertices of a triangle. If $\|\bar{b} - \bar{a}\| = \|\bar{b} - \bar{c}\| = \|\bar{a} - \bar{c}\|$, show that the angles at \bar{a} , \bar{b} and \bar{c} all have the same magnitude.
10. Let $\bar{a}, \bar{b}, \bar{c}$ be the vertices of a triangle. If the angles at $\bar{a}, \bar{b}, \bar{c}$ all have the same magnitude, show that $\|\bar{b} - \bar{a}\| = \|\bar{b} - \bar{c}\| = \|\bar{a} - \bar{c}\|$.

1.5 Planes in Space

When we think of a *flat surface* in our everyday experience, perhaps a tabletop, or a blackboard, we are picturing something that can be modeled mathematically as a **plane**. In this unit, we introduce a precise mathematical description of such flat surfaces within our model of three-dimensional space, \mathbb{R}^3 .

But how should we define a *plane* in a way that captures both geometric intuition and mathematical rigor?

Let's begin by considering a few physical and geometric observations:

- **Intersecting Lines:** Suppose we have two distinct lines in space that intersect at a single point. Common experience and spatial reasoning suggest that there is one and only one flat surface that contains both lines. The figure below illustrates this idea: two intersecting lines and the flat surface that includes them both.

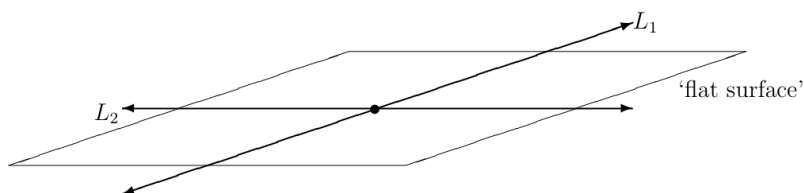


Figure 1: Two lines intersecting at a point lie on a unique plane.

- **Lines and Planes:** If a straight line intersects a flat surface in more than one point, then it must lie entirely within the surface. The figure below shows this situation: one line intersects the surface at a single point (and is not part of the plane), while another line intersects it in two points—indicating that it lies in the plane.

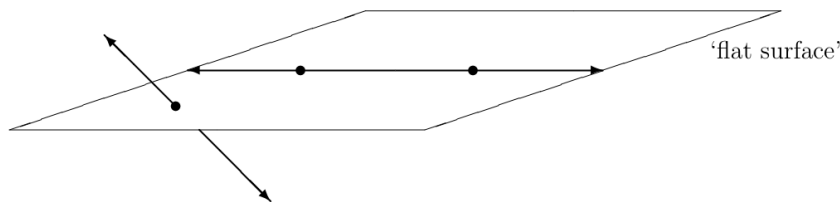


Figure 2: A line intersecting a plane in one point vs. in two points.

- **Three Points:** If we fix three points in space that do not all lie on the same line (i.e., they are *non-collinear*), there is exactly one flat surface—one plane—that passes through all three. Imagine holding a rigid wooden board against a wall by three of its corners. The entire board is forced to lie flat against the wall; there's no room for bending. This illustrates the uniqueness of a plane determined by three non-collinear points.

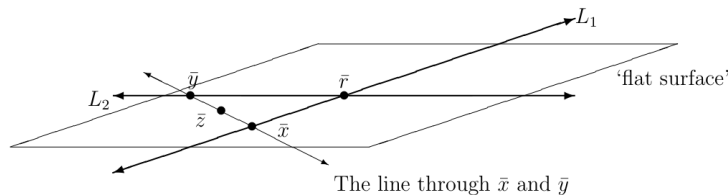


Figure 3: A unique plane passes through three non-collinear points.

These intuitive ideas lead us toward a more formal definition of a plane in \mathbb{R}^3 .

Now, suppose we are given two lines in space, L_1 and L_2 , that intersect at a point \bar{r} . From earlier discussions (e.g., the theorem on intersecting lines), we know that these lines can be expressed parametrically as:

$$\bar{x} = \bar{r} + t(\bar{p} - \bar{r}), \quad t \in \mathbb{R},$$

$$\bar{y} = \bar{r} + s(\bar{q} - \bar{r}), \quad s \in \mathbb{R},$$

where $\bar{p} \in L_1$, $\bar{q} \in L_2$, and both pass through the common point \bar{r} . We now ask: what kind of surface contains *every point* on both of these lines?

Take any point \bar{x} on L_1 and any point \bar{y} on L_2 . The line connecting \bar{x} and \bar{y} lies in the same surface. A general point along this line can be described by:

$$\bar{z} = \bar{x} + \alpha(\bar{y} - \bar{x}) = \bar{r} + (\alpha s)(\bar{q} - \bar{r}) + (t - \alpha t)(\bar{p} - \bar{r}), \quad \alpha \in \mathbb{R}.$$

Thus, any such point \bar{z} lies in the surface determined by $\bar{r}, \bar{p}, \bar{q}$. As we vary $s, t, \alpha \in \mathbb{R}$, we generate all points on this surface.

It appears reasonable, both geometrically and algebraically, that this set includes *all* points on the plane determined by the intersecting lines L_1 and L_2 .

Definition

Plane

A *plane* in \mathbb{R}^3 is a set

$$P = \{\bar{r} + s(\bar{p} - \bar{r}) + t(\bar{q} - \bar{r}) : s, t \in \mathbb{R}\}$$

where $\bar{p}, \bar{q}, \bar{r} \in \mathbb{R}^3$ such that $\bar{p} - \bar{r}$ and $\bar{q} - \bar{r}$ are not scalar multiples of each other.

Remark

Consider a set

$$P = \{\bar{r} + s(\bar{p} - \bar{r}) + t(\bar{q} - \bar{r}) : s, t \in \mathbb{R}\}, \quad \text{where } \bar{p}, \bar{q}, \bar{r} \in \mathbb{R}^3.$$

1. If $\bar{p} - \bar{r} = \alpha(\bar{q} - \bar{r})$ for some $\alpha \in \mathbb{R}$, then

$$P = \{\bar{r} + s(\alpha(\bar{q} - \bar{r})) + t(\bar{q} - \bar{r}) : s, t \in \mathbb{R}\} = \{\bar{r} + (\alpha s + t)(\bar{q} - \bar{r}) : s, t \in \mathbb{R}\}.$$

Therefore, in this case, the set P is a **line** in space.

2. If $\bar{p} - \bar{r}$ and $\bar{q} - \bar{r}$ are not scalar multiples of each other, then P is a **plane** in \mathbb{R}^3 . Note that:

$$\bar{r} = \bar{r} + 0(\bar{p} - \bar{r}) + 0(\bar{q} - \bar{r}), \quad \bar{p} = \bar{r} + 1(\bar{p} - \bar{r}) + 0(\bar{q} - \bar{r}),$$

$$\bar{q} = \bar{r} + 0(\bar{p} - \bar{r}) + 1(\bar{q} - \bar{r}).$$

Thus, $\bar{r} \in P$, $\bar{p} \in P$, and $\bar{q} \in P$. We therefore call P the **plane through** \bar{p} , \bar{q} , and \bar{r} .

3. If P is a plane, then a point $\bar{x} \in \mathbb{R}^3$ lies on the plane P if and only if

$$\bar{x} = \bar{r} + s(\bar{p} - \bar{r}) + t(\bar{q} - \bar{r}) \quad \text{for some } s, t \in \mathbb{R}.$$

We therefore speak of the plane described by the equation:

$$\bar{x} = \bar{r} + s(\bar{p} - \bar{r}) + t(\bar{q} - \bar{r}).$$

4. Let $P = \{\bar{r} + s(\bar{p} - \bar{r}) + t(\bar{q} - \bar{r}) : s, t \in \mathbb{R}\}$ be a plane through $\bar{p}, \bar{q}, \bar{r}$, and let

$$\bar{a} = \alpha(\bar{p} - \bar{r}), \quad \bar{b} = \beta(\bar{q} - \bar{r}),$$

with $\alpha, \beta \in \mathbb{R} \setminus \{0\}$. Then it follows that

$$P = \{\bar{r} + s\bar{a} + t\bar{b} : s, t \in \mathbb{R}\}.$$

Conversely, if $\bar{a}, \bar{b} \in \mathbb{R}^3$ are nonzero vectors that are not scalar multiples of each other, then the set

$$Q = \{\bar{r} + s\bar{a} + t\bar{b} : s, t \in \mathbb{R}\} = \{\bar{r} + s((\bar{a} + \bar{r}) - \bar{r}) + t((\bar{b} + \bar{r}) - \bar{r}) : s, t \in \mathbb{R}\}$$

is a plane through the points \bar{r} , $\bar{r} + \bar{a}$, and $\bar{r} + \bar{b}$.

Example

Consider the set $P = \{\langle 2, 3, -2 \rangle + s\langle 1, -4, 2 \rangle + t\langle 2, -3, 4 \rangle : s, t \in \mathbb{R}\}$, and let $\bar{r} = \langle 2, 3, -2 \rangle$, $\bar{a} = \langle 1, -4, 2 \rangle$, and $\bar{b} = \langle 2, -3, 4 \rangle$. Determine $\bar{r} + \bar{a}$ and $\bar{r} + \bar{b}$.

Solution

Since \bar{a} and \bar{b} are not scalar multiples of each other, P is a plane through \bar{r} , $\bar{r} + \bar{a} = \langle 3, -1, 0 \rangle$, and $\bar{r} + \bar{b} = \langle 4, 0, 2 \rangle$.

Example

Consider the set $P = \{\langle -1, 1, 6 \rangle + s\langle 2, 3, -5 \rangle + t\langle -6, -9, 15 \rangle : s, t \in \mathbb{R}\}$. Determine the points through which P is a line.

Solution

Since $\langle -6, -9, 15 \rangle = -3\langle 2, 3, -5 \rangle$, we have:

$$P = \{\langle -1, 1, 6 \rangle + (s - 3t)\langle 2, 3, -5 \rangle : s, t \in \mathbb{R}\} = \{\langle -1, 1, 6 \rangle + \alpha\langle 2, 3, -5 \rangle : \alpha \in \mathbb{R}\}.$$

Therefore, P is the line through $\langle -1, 1, 6 \rangle$ and $\langle 1, 4, 1 \rangle$.

Example

Consider the plane $P = \{\bar{r} + s(\bar{p} - \bar{r}) + t(\bar{q} - \bar{r}) : s, t \in \mathbb{R}\}$, where $\bar{x} = \langle 2, 0, 0 \rangle$ and $\bar{y} = \langle 1, 2, 0 \rangle$ are given. Let $\bar{r} = \langle 1, 1, 0 \rangle$, $\bar{p} = \langle 0, 3, 1 \rangle$, and $\bar{q} = \langle 1, 2, 1 \rangle$. Determine whether or not the points \bar{x} and \bar{y} lie on P .

Solution

The point $\bar{x} = \langle 2, 0, 0 \rangle$ is in P if and only if for some $s, t \in \mathbb{R}$,

$$\bar{x} = \bar{r} + s(\bar{p} - \bar{r}) + t(\bar{q} - \bar{r}) = \langle 1 - s, 1 + 2s + t, s + t \rangle$$

By comparing components:

$$2 = 1 - s \qquad \qquad \qquad \Rightarrow s = -1$$

$$0 = 1 + 2s + t \qquad \qquad \qquad \Rightarrow t = 1$$

$$0 = s + t \qquad \text{Check: } -1 + 1 = 0.$$

So $\bar{x} \in P$. Now check $\bar{y} = \langle 1, 2, 0 \rangle$:

$$\bar{y} = \bar{r} + s(\bar{p} - \bar{r}) + t(\bar{q} - \bar{r}) = \langle 1 - s, 1 + 2s + t, s + t \rangle.$$

Compare components:

$$1 = 1 - s \qquad \qquad \qquad \Rightarrow s = 0$$

$$2 = 1 + 2s + t \qquad \qquad \qquad \Rightarrow t = 1$$

$$0 = s + t = 0 + 1 = 1 \qquad \text{Contradiction.}$$

Since no such $s, t \in \mathbb{R}$ satisfy all equations, $\bar{y} \notin P$.

It was mentioned at the beginning of this unit three properties that a 'flat surface' must satisfy. We can motivate our definition of a plane in \mathbb{R}^3 by showing that it satisfies the properties.

Theorem

Line in a Plane

Let L be a line in \mathbb{R}^3 and P be a plane in \mathbb{R}^3 . If L intersects P in more than one point, then $L \subseteq P$; that is, every point on L lies on P .

Proof

Let $P = \{\bar{r} + s(\bar{p} - \bar{r}) + t(\bar{q} - \bar{r}) : s, t \in \mathbb{R}\}$, and suppose that L intersects P in two points \bar{a} and \bar{b} . Then by the Theorem on Multiple Intersections of Lines,

$$L = \{t\bar{a} + (1 - t)\bar{b} : t \in \mathbb{R}\}.$$

Since $\bar{a}, \bar{b} \in P$, there exist distinct real numbers s_0, s_1, t_0, t_1 such that

$$\bar{a} = \bar{r} + s_0(\bar{p} - \bar{r}) + t_0(\bar{q} - \bar{r}) \text{ and } \bar{b} = \bar{r} + s_1(\bar{p} - \bar{r}) + t_1(\bar{q} - \bar{r}).$$

Now consider a point $\bar{x} \in L$. Then for some $t \in \mathbb{R}$,

$$\begin{aligned} \bar{x} &= t\bar{a} + (1 - t)\bar{b} \\ &= t[\bar{r} + s_0(\bar{p} - \bar{r}) + t_0(\bar{q} - \bar{r})] + (1 - t)[\bar{r} + s_1(\bar{p} - \bar{r}) + t_1(\bar{q} - \bar{r})] \\ &= [t + (1 - t)]\bar{r} + [ts_0 + (1 - t)s_1](\bar{p} - \bar{r}) + [tt_0 + (1 - t)t_1](\bar{q} - \bar{r}) \\ &= \bar{r} + [ts_0 + (1 - t)s_1](\bar{p} - \bar{r}) + [tt_0 + (1 - t)t_1](\bar{q} - \bar{r}). \end{aligned}$$

Hence $\bar{x} \in P$ and therefore $L \subseteq P$. □

Theorem

Unique Plane through Intersecting Lines

Let L_1 and L_2 be two lines in space that intersect at a single point. Then there is exactly one plane P that contains both lines; that is, there is exactly one plane such that $L_1 \subseteq P$ and $L_2 \subseteq P$.

Proof

We first show that there exists a unique plane P containing two intersecting lines L_1 and L_2 . Assume L_1 and L_2 intersect at a point \bar{a} , and let $\bar{b} \in L_1$ and $\bar{c} \in L_2$ be points different from \bar{a} . Then, by the theorem on the intersection of lines, we have

$$L_1 = \{\bar{a} + t(\bar{b} - \bar{a}) : t \in \mathbb{R}\}, \quad L_2 = \{\bar{a} + s(\bar{c} - \bar{a}) : s \in \mathbb{R}\}.$$

Now, consider any points $x \in L_1$ and $y \in L_2$. Then

$$\bar{x} = \bar{a} + t_0(\bar{b} - \bar{a}), \quad \bar{y} = \bar{a} + s_0(\bar{c} - \bar{a})$$

for some $t_0, s_0 \in \mathbb{R}$. The vector connecting \bar{x} and \bar{y} is

$$\bar{y} - \bar{x} = s_0(\bar{c} - \bar{a}) - t_0(\bar{b} - \bar{a}),$$

which is a linear combination of $\bar{b} - \bar{a}$ and $\bar{c} - \bar{a}$.

This implies that the vector connecting any point on L_1 to any point on L_2 lies in the span of $\bar{b} - \bar{a}$ and $\bar{c} - \bar{a}$. Consequently, if we start at \bar{a} and add all linear combinations of these two vectors, we obtain all points on L_1 , all points on L_2 , and all points “between” them. In other words, we obtain the entire plane containing both lines. Hence, the set

$$P = \{\bar{a} + t(\bar{b} - \bar{a}) + s(\bar{c} - \bar{a}) : t, s \in \mathbb{R}\}$$

contains both L_1 and L_2 , so at least one plane containing them exists.

Now we prove that said plane is unique.

By construction, $\bar{b} - \bar{a}$ and $\bar{c} - \bar{a}$ are not scalar multiples of each other, because L_1 and L_2 are distinct lines.

According to the definition of a plane in \mathbb{R}^3 , a plane is uniquely determined by a point and two non-collinear vectors.

Therefore, any plane containing the point \bar{a} and the vectors $\bar{b} - \bar{a}$ and $\bar{c} - \bar{a}$ must coincide with P .

Hence, the plane containing L_1 and L_2 is unique, and we have

$$P = \{\bar{a} + t(\bar{b} - \bar{a}) + s(\bar{c} - \bar{a}) : t, s \in \mathbb{R}\}.$$

□

Example

Consider the lines L_1 and L_2 through $\bar{p} = \langle 1, 0, 1 \rangle$ and $\bar{q} = \langle 1, 2, -2 \rangle$, and $\bar{u} = \langle -1, 2, 0 \rangle$ and $\bar{v} = \langle -3, 3, 0 \rangle$.

Show that L_1 and L_2 intersect, and find an equation for the plane containing both lines.

Solution

L_1 and L_2 intersect at $\bar{a} = \langle x, y, z \rangle$ if and only if

$$\bar{q} + t(\bar{p} - \bar{q}) = \bar{a} = \bar{u} + s(\bar{v} - \bar{u}) \quad \text{for some } t, s \in \mathbb{R},$$

i.e.,

$$1 = x = 2s - 3, \quad 2 - 2t = y = 3 - s, \quad 2t - 1 = z = 0 \quad \text{for some } s, t \in \mathbb{R}.$$

The first equation implies $s = 2$, and the third that $t = \frac{1}{2}$. These values for s and t also satisfy the second equation. Therefore the lines L_1 and L_2 intersect at the point

$$\bar{a} = \frac{1}{2}\bar{p} + \left(1 - \frac{1}{2}\right)\bar{q} = \langle 1, 1, 0 \rangle.$$

According to the Theorem on a Unique Plane through Intersecting Lines, there is exactly one plane P containing both L_1 and L_2 .

In order to write down an equation for this plane, we need three points on the plane that are not all on the same line.

We have $\bar{a} \in L_1$, $\bar{a} \in L_2$, $\bar{p} \in L_1$, $\bar{u} \in L_2$.

Since P contains L_1 and L_2 , it follows that $\bar{a}, \bar{p}, \bar{u} \in P$.

But $\bar{p} \notin L_2$ and $\bar{u} \notin L_1$. Therefore $\bar{a}, \bar{p}, \bar{u}$ are not all on the same line.

Hence an equation for P is

$$\bar{x} = \bar{a} + s(\bar{p} - \bar{a}) + t(\bar{u} - \bar{a}) = \langle 1, 1, 0 \rangle + s\langle 0, -1, 1 \rangle + t\langle -2, 1, 0 \rangle.$$

Theorem

Three-Point Plane Theorem

Let \bar{p}, \bar{q} and \bar{r} be three points in \mathbb{R}^3 , not all on the same line. Then there exists a unique plane $P \in \mathbb{R}^3$ such that $\bar{p}, \bar{q}, \bar{r} \in P$.

Proof

Let L_1 be the line through \bar{p} and \bar{r} , and L_2 be the line through \bar{q} and \bar{r} .

Since \bar{p}, \bar{q} and \bar{r} are not all on the same line, it follows that L_1 and L_2 intersect at a single point, namely, at \bar{r} . It follows from the Theorem on a Unique Plane through Intersecting Lines that there exists a unique plane P containing both L_1 and L_2 .

Since $\bar{p}, \bar{r} \in L_1$ and $\bar{q}, \bar{r} \in L_2$, it follows that $\bar{p}, \bar{q}, \bar{r} \in P$.

If some plane Q is a plane containing \bar{p}, \bar{q} , and \bar{r} , then $L_1, L_2 \subseteq Q$ by the Theorem on a Line in a Plane. Since P is the unique plane containing both L_1 and L_2 , it follows that $P = Q$. \square

Recall that we call two lines $L_1 = \{\bar{q} + t(\bar{p} - \bar{q}) : t \in \mathbb{R}\}$ and $L_2 = \{\bar{r} + s(\bar{q} - \bar{r}) : s \in \mathbb{R}\}$ *parallel* if $\bar{p} - \bar{q}$ and $\bar{a} - \bar{b}$ are scalar multiples of each other. We showed in the Theorem on the Non-Intersection of Parallel Lines that if L_1 and L_2 are parallel, and $L_1 \neq L_2$, then L_1 and L_2 do not intersect. The converse of this statement is false—in the example that followed, we showed an instance of two lines that are not parallel, and do not intersect.

The following result further clarifies this issue.

Theorem

Parallel Lines in a Plane

Let L_1 and L_2 be two lines in \mathbb{R}^3 such that $L_1 \neq L_2$ defined as

$$L_1 = \{\bar{q} + t(\bar{p} - \bar{q}) : t \in \mathbb{R}\}, \quad L_2 = \{\bar{r} + s(\bar{q} - \bar{r}) : s \in \mathbb{R}\}.$$

Then the following statements are true:

- (1) If L_1 and L_2 are parallel, then there exists exactly one plane P that contains both lines.
- (2) If L_1 and L_2 do not intersect, and there is a plane P such that $L_1, L_2 \subseteq P$, then L_1 and L_2 are parallel.

Proof

- (1) Assume that L_1 and L_2 are parallel. Then by the definition of parallel lines, there exists a non-zero $\alpha \in \mathbb{R}$ such that

$$\bar{a} - \bar{b} = \alpha(\bar{p} - \bar{q}).$$

Since L_1 and L_2 are parallel, it follows by the Theorem on Non-Intersection of Parallel Lines, that L_1 and L_2 do not intersect.

Therefore $\bar{p}, \bar{q}, \bar{b}$ are not all on the same line. By the Three-Point Plane Theorem, we find that

$$P = \{\bar{q} + s(\bar{p} - \bar{q}) + t(\bar{b} - \bar{q}) : s, t \in \mathbb{R}\}.$$

is a plane in \mathbb{R}^3 such that $\bar{p}, \bar{q}, \bar{b} \in P$.

Now consider points \bar{x} and \bar{y} on L_1 and L_2 , respectively.

Then

$$\bar{x} = \bar{q} + t(\bar{p} - \bar{q}), \quad \bar{y} = \bar{r} + s(\bar{q} - \bar{r}) \text{ for some } s, t \in \mathbb{R}.$$