

Source:

## 1 | Problem

Suppose  $U$  and  $V$  are finite-dimensional vector spaces and  $S \in \mathcal{L}(V, W)$  and  $T \in \mathcal{L}(U, V)$ . Prove that

$$\dim \text{null } ST \leq \dim \text{null } S + \dim \text{null } T.$$

## 2 | Proof

All vectors  $v \in \text{null } ST$  must have been nulled by  $T$  or  $S$ , and therefore either it must be in  $\text{null } T$  or  $Tv$  in  $\text{range } T \cap \text{null } S$ . Notationally,  $\text{null } ST = \text{null } T + \{v : Tv \in (\text{range } T \cap \text{null } S)\}$

$$\text{null } ST = \text{null } T + \{v : Tv \in \text{null } S\}$$

Because no vector can be in both  $\text{null } T$  and  $\text{range } T$ , the dimension of the union is

$$\dim \text{null } ST = \dim \text{null } T + \dim (\text{range } T \cap \text{null } S)$$

An intersection can only make the dimension of a set smaller, so  $\dim (\text{range } T \cap \text{null } S) \leq \dim \text{null } S$  and

$$\dim \text{range } ST \leq \dim \text{null } S, \dim \text{null } T$$