

Vector space

In mathematics, physics, and engineering, a **vector space** (also called a **linear space**) is a set of objects called *vectors*, which may be added together and multiplied ("scaled") by numbers called *scalars*. Scalars are often real numbers, but some vector spaces have scalar multiplication by complex numbers or, generally, by a scalar from any mathematic field. The operations of vector addition and scalar multiplication must satisfy certain requirements, called vector *axioms* (listed below in § Notation and definition). To specify whether the scalars in a particular vector space are real numbers or complex numbers, the terms **real vector space** and **complex vector space** are often used.

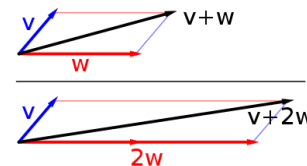
Certain sets of Euclidean vectors are common examples of a vector space. They represent physical quantities such as forces, where any two forces of the same type can be added to yield a third, and the multiplication of a force vector by a real multiplier is another force vector. In the same way (but in a more geometric sense), vectors representing displacements in the plane or three-dimensional space also form vector spaces. Vectors in vector spaces do not necessarily have to be arrow-like objects as they appear in the mentioned examples: vectors are regarded as abstract mathematical objects with particular properties, which in some cases can be visualized as arrows.

Vector spaces are the subject of linear algebra and are well characterized by their dimension, which, roughly speaking, specifies the number of independent directions in the space. Infinite-dimensional vector spaces arise naturally in mathematical analysis as function spaces, whose vectors are functions. These vector spaces are generally endowed with some additional structure such as a topology, which allows the consideration of issues of proximity and continuity. Among these topologies, those that are defined by a norm or inner product are more commonly used (being equipped with a notion of distance between two vectors). This is particularly the case of Banach spaces and Hilbert spaces, which are fundamental in mathematical analysis.

Historically, the first ideas leading to vector spaces can be traced back as far as the 17th century's analytic geometry, matrices, systems of linear equations, and Euclidean vectors. The modern, more abstract treatment, first formulated by Giuseppe Peano in 1888, encompasses more general objects than Euclidean space, but much of the theory can be seen as an extension of classical geometric ideas like lines, planes and their higher-dimensional analogs.

Today, vector spaces are applied throughout mathematics, science and engineering. They are the appropriate linear-algebraic notion to deal with systems of linear equations. They offer a framework for Fourier expansion, which is employed in image compression routines, and they provide an environment that can be used for solution techniques for partial differential equations. Furthermore, vector spaces furnish an abstract, coordinate-free way of dealing with geometrical and physical objects such as tensors. This in turn allows the examination of local properties of manifolds by linearization techniques. Vector spaces may be generalized in several ways, leading to more advanced notions in geometry and abstract algebra.

This article deals mainly with finite-dimensional vector spaces. However, many of the principles are also valid for infinite-dimensional vector spaces.



Vector addition and scalar multiplication: a vector v (blue) is added to another vector w (red, upper illustration). Below, w is stretched by a factor of 2, yielding the sum $v + 2w$.

Contents

Motivating examples

First example: arrows in the plane

Second example: ordered pairs of numbers

Notation and definition

Alternative formulations and elementary consequences

History

Examples

Coordinate space

Complex numbers and other field extensions

Function spaces

Linear equations

Space of derived units

Basis and dimension

Linear maps and matrices

Matrices

Eigenvalues and eigenvectors**Basic constructions**Subspaces and quotient spacesDirect product and direct sumTensor product**Vector spaces with additional structure**Normed vector spaces and inner product spacesTopological vector spacesBanach spacesHilbert spacesAlgebras over fields**Applications**DistributionsFourier analysisDifferential geometry**Related structures**Vector bundlesModulesAffine and projective spaces**See also****Notes****Citations****References**AlgebraAnalysisHistorical referencesFurther references**External links**

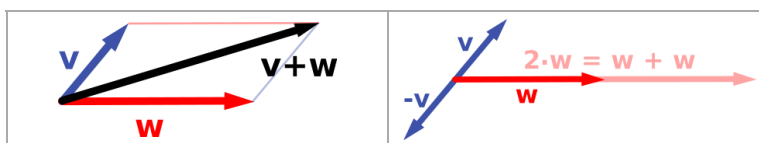
Motivating examples

Two typical vector space examples are described first.

First example: arrows in the plane

The first example of a vector space consists of arrows in a fixed plane, starting at one fixed point. This is used in physics to describe forces or velocities. Given any two such arrows, \mathbf{v} and \mathbf{w} , the parallelogram spanned by these two arrows contains one diagonal arrow that starts at the origin, too. This new arrow is called the *sum* of the two arrows, and is denoted $\mathbf{v} + \mathbf{w}$. In the special case of two arrows on the same line, their sum is the arrow on this line whose length is the sum or the difference of the lengths, depending on whether the arrows have the same direction. Another operation that can be done with arrows is scaling: given any positive real number a , the arrow that has the same direction as \mathbf{v} , but is dilated or shrunk by multiplying its length by a , is called *multiplication* of \mathbf{v} by a . It is denoted $a\mathbf{v}$. When a is negative, $a\mathbf{v}$ is defined as the arrow pointing in the opposite direction instead.

The following shows a few examples: if $a = 2$, the resulting vector $a\mathbf{w}$ has the same direction as \mathbf{w} , but is stretched to the double length of \mathbf{w} (right image below). Equivalently, $2\mathbf{w}$ is the sum $\mathbf{w} + \mathbf{w}$. Moreover, $(-1)\mathbf{v} = -\mathbf{v}$ has the opposite direction and the same length as \mathbf{v} (blue vector pointing down in the right image).



Second example: ordered pairs of numbers

A second key example of a vector space is provided by pairs of real numbers x and y . (The order of the components x and y is significant, so such a pair is also called an ordered pair.) Such a pair is written as (x, y) . The sum of two such pairs and multiplication of a pair with a number is defined as follows:

$$(x_1, y_1) + (x_2, y_2) = (x_1 + x_2, y_1 + y_2)$$

and

$$a(x, y) = (ax, ay).$$

The first example above reduces to this example, if an arrow is represented by a pair of Cartesian coordinates of its endpoint.

Notation and definition

In this article, vectors are represented in boldface to distinguish them from scalars.^[nb 1]

A vector space over a field *F* is a set *V* together with two binary operations that satisfy the eight axioms listed below. In the following, *V* × *V* denotes the set of the ordered pairs of elements of *V* (that is, the Cartesian product of *V* with itself), and → denotes a mapping from one set to another. In this context, the elements of *V* are commonly called *vectors*, and the elements of *F* are called *scalars*.

- The first operation, called *vector addition* or simply *addition* + : *V* × *V* → *V*, assigns to any two vectors **v** and **w** in *V* a third vector in *V* which is commonly written as **v** + **w**, and called the *sum* of these two vectors.
- The second operation, called *scalar multiplication* *F* × *V* → *V*, assigns to any scalar *a* in *F* and any vector **v** in *V* another vector in *V*, which is denoted *a***v**. (Scalar multiplication is not to be confused with the scalar product, which is an additional operation on some specific vector spaces, called inner product spaces. Scalar multiplication is a multiplication of a vector *by* a scalar that produces a vector, while the scalar product is a multiplication of two vectors that produces a scalar.)

For having a vector space these two operations must satisfy the eight axioms,^[1] which are listed in the following table below, where the equations must be satisfied for every **u**, **v** and **w** in *V*, and *a* and *b* in *F*.^{[2][3]}

Axiom	Meaning
Associativity of vector addition	u + (v + w) = (u + v) + w
Commutativity of vector addition	u + v = v + u
Identity element of vector addition	There exists an element 0 ∈ <i>V</i> , called the <i>zero vector</i> , such that v + 0 = v for all v ∈ <i>V</i> .
Inverse elements of vector addition	For every v ∈ <i>V</i> , there exists an element − v ∈ <i>V</i> , called the <i>additive inverse</i> of v , such that v + (− v) = 0 .
Compatibility of scalar multiplication with field multiplication	<i>a</i> (<i>b</i> v) = (<i>ab</i>) v ^[nb 2]
Identity element of scalar multiplication	1 v = v , where 1 denotes the <u>multiplicative identity</u> in <i>F</i> .
Distributivity of scalar multiplication with respect to vector addition	<i>a</i> (u + v) = <i>a</i> u + <i>a</i> v
Distributivity of scalar multiplication with respect to field addition	(<i>a</i> + <i>b</i>) v = <i>a</i> v + <i>b</i> v

It is straightforward to verify that these axioms are verified in the above example. These axioms generalize properties of the vectors introduced in the above examples.

Subtraction of two vectors and division by a (non-zero) scalar can be defined as

$$\begin{aligned} \mathbf{v} - \mathbf{w} &= \mathbf{v} + (-\mathbf{w}) \\ \frac{\mathbf{v}}{a} &= \frac{1}{a}\mathbf{v}. \end{aligned}$$

When the scalar field *F* is the real numbers **R**, the vector space is called a *real vector space*. When the scalar field is the complex numbers **C**, the vector space is called a *complex vector space*. These two cases are the ones used most often in engineering. The general definition of a vector space allows scalars to be elements of any fixed field *F*. The notion is then known as an *F*-*vector space* or a *vector space over F*. A field is, essentially, a set of numbers possessing addition, subtraction, multiplication and division operations.^[nb 3] For example, rational numbers form a field.

In contrast to the intuition stemming from vectors in the plane and higher-dimensional cases, in general vector spaces, there is no notion of nearness, angles or distances. To deal with such matters, particular types of vector spaces are introduced; see § Vector spaces with additional structure below for more.

Alternative formulations and elementary consequences

Vector addition and scalar multiplication are operations, satisfying the closure property: **u** + **v** and *a***v** are in *V* for all *a* in *F*, and **u**, **v** in *V*. Some older sources mention these properties as separate axioms.^[4]

In the parlance of abstract algebra, the first four axioms are equivalent to requiring the set of vectors to be an abelian group under addition. The remaining axioms give this group an *F*-module structure. In other words, there is a ring homomorphism *f* from the field *F* into the endomorphism ring of the group of vectors. Then scalar multiplication *a***v** is defined as $(f(a))(\mathbf{v})$.^[5]

There are a number of direct consequences of the vector space axioms. Some of them derive from elementary group theory, applied to the additive group of vectors: for example, the zero vector **0** of *V* and the additive inverse $-\mathbf{v}$ of any vector **v** are unique. Further properties follow by employing also the distributive law for the scalar multiplication, for example *a***v** equals **0** if and only if *a* equals 0 or **v** equals **0**.

History

Vector spaces stem from affine geometry, via the introduction of coordinates in the plane or three-dimensional space. Around 1636, French mathematicians René Descartes and Pierre de Fermat founded analytic geometry by identifying solutions to an equation of two variables with points on a plane curve.^[6] To achieve geometric solutions without using coordinates, Bolzano introduced, in 1804, certain operations on points, lines and planes, which are predecessors of vectors.^[7] Möbius (1827) introduced the notion of barycentric coordinates. Bellavitis (1833) introduced the notion of a bipoint, i.e., an oriented segment one of whose ends is the origin and the other one a target.^[8] Vectors were reconsidered with the presentation of complex numbers by Argand and Hamilton and the inception of quaternions by the latter.^[9] They are elements in **R**² and **R**⁴; treating them using linear combinations goes back to Laguerre in 1867, who also defined systems of linear equations.

In 1857, Cayley introduced the matrix notation which allows for a harmonization and simplification of linear maps. Around the same time, Grassmann studied the barycentric calculus initiated by Möbius. He envisaged sets of abstract objects endowed with operations.^[10] In his work, the concepts of linear independence and dimension, as well as scalar products are present. Actually Grassmann's 1844 work exceeds the framework of vector spaces, since his considering multiplication, too, led him to what are today called algebras. Italian mathematician Peano was the first to give the modern definition of vector spaces and linear maps in 1888.^[11]

An important development of vector spaces is due to the construction of function spaces by Henri Lebesgue. This was later formalized by Banach and Hilbert, around 1920.^[12] At that time, algebra and the new field of functional analysis began to interact, notably with key concepts such as spaces of *p*-integrable functions and Hilbert spaces.^[13] Also at this time, the first studies concerning infinite-dimensional vector spaces were done.

Examples

Coordinate space

The simplest example of a vector space over a field *F* is the field *F* itself (as it is an abelian group for addition, a part of requirements to be a field.), equipped with its addition (It becomes vector addition.) and multiplication (It becomes scalar multiplication.). More generally, all *n*-tuples (sequences of length *n*)

$$(a_1, a_2, \dots, a_n)$$

of elements *a_i* of *F* form a vector space that is usually denoted *Fⁿ* and called a **coordinate space**.^[14] The case *n* = 1 is the above-mentioned simplest example, in which the field *F* is also regarded as a vector space over itself. The case *F* = **R** and *n* = 2 (so **R**²) was discussed in the introduction above.

Complex numbers and other field extensions

The set of complex numbers **C**, that is, numbers that can be written in the form *x* + *i**y* for real numbers *x* and *y* where *i* is the imaginary unit, form a vector space over the reals with the usual addition and multiplication: $(x + iy) + (a + ib) = (x + a) + i(y + b)$ and $c \cdot (x + iy) = (c \cdot x) + i(c \cdot y)$ for real numbers *x*, *y*, *a*, *b* and *c*. The various axioms of a vector space follow from the fact that the same rules hold for complex number arithmetic.

In fact, the example of complex numbers is essentially the same as (that is, it is *isomorphic* to) the vector space of ordered pairs of real numbers mentioned above: if we think of the complex number *x* + *i* *y* as representing the ordered pair (*x*, *y*) in the complex plane then we see that the rules for addition and scalar multiplication correspond exactly to those in the earlier example.

More generally, field extensions provide another class of examples of vector spaces, particularly in algebra and algebraic number theory: a field *F* containing a smaller field *E* is an *E*-vector space, by the given multiplication and addition operations of *F*.^[15] For example, the complex numbers are a vector space over **R**, and the field extension **Q**(*i*√5) is a vector space over **Q**.

Function spaces

Functions from any fixed set Ω to a field F also form vector spaces, by performing addition and scalar multiplication pointwise. That is, the sum of two functions f and g is the function $(f + g)$ given by

$$(f + g)(w) = f(w) + g(w),$$

and similarly for multiplication. Such function spaces occur in many geometric situations, when Ω is the real line or an interval, or other subsets of \mathbf{R} . Many notions in topology and analysis, such as continuity, integrability or differentiability are well-behaved with respect to linearity: sums and scalar multiples of functions possessing such a property still have that property.^[16] Therefore, the set of such functions are vector spaces. They are studied in greater detail using the methods of functional analysis, see below. Algebraic constraints also yield vector spaces: the vector space $F[x]$ is given by polynomial functions:

$$f(x) = r_0 + r_1x + \dots + r_{n-1}x^{n-1} + r_nx^n, \text{ where the coefficients } r_0, \dots, r_n \text{ are in } F.^[17]$$

Linear equations

Systems of homogeneous linear equations are closely tied to vector spaces.^[18] For example, the solutions of

$$\begin{aligned} a + 3b + c &= 0 \\ 4a + 2b + 2c &= 0 \end{aligned}$$

are given by triples with arbitrary a , $b = a/2$, and $c = -5a/2$. They form a vector space: sums and scalar multiples of such triples still satisfy the same ratios of the three variables; thus they are solutions, too. Matrices can be used to condense multiple linear equations as above into one vector equation, namely

$$A\mathbf{x} = \mathbf{0},$$

where $A = \begin{bmatrix} 1 & 3 & 1 \\ 4 & 2 & 2 \end{bmatrix}$ is the matrix containing the coefficients of the given equations, \mathbf{x} is the vector (a, b, c) , $A\mathbf{x}$ denotes the matrix product, and $\mathbf{0} = (0, 0)$ is the zero vector. In a similar vein, the solutions of homogeneous *linear differential equations* form vector spaces. For example,

$$f''(x) + 2f'(x) + f(x) = 0$$

yields $f(x) = a e^{-x} + b x e^{-x}$, where a and b are arbitrary constants, and e^x is the natural exponential function.

Space of derived units

The following vector space, called the space of base and derived physical units, is used in the Buckingham π theorem. Suppose that $\mathbf{u}_1, \dots, \mathbf{u}_n$ are base units (for example, the gram \mathbf{g} (mass), the metre \mathbf{m} (length), and the second \mathbf{s} (time) are base units since none can be defined in terms of the others). Let \mathbb{F} be the set of the rational numbers \mathbb{Q} or the set of the real numbers \mathbb{R} , and let V denote the set of all possible (base or) derived units with exponents in \mathbb{F} , which are units of the form $\mathbf{u}_1^{a_1} \dots \mathbf{u}_n^{a_n}$ where $a_1, \dots, a_n \in \mathbb{F}$ (for example, force has units $\mathbf{gm}/\mathbf{s}^2 = \mathbf{g}^1 \mathbf{m}^1 \mathbf{s}^{-2}$ and velocity has units $\mathbf{m}/\mathbf{s} = \mathbf{m}^1 \mathbf{s}^{-1} = \mathbf{g}^0 \mathbf{m}^1 \mathbf{s}^{-1}$ where the zero exponent in \mathbf{g}^0 indicates that grams \mathbf{g} are not used and the omission of an exponent means that it is 1 , for instance, $\mathbf{m} = \mathbf{m}^1$). Then V becomes a vector space over \mathbb{F} when scalar multiplication of a vector $\mathbf{u}_1^{a_1} \dots \mathbf{u}_n^{a_n} \in V$ by a scalar $c \in \mathbb{F}$ is defined by

$$c \cdot (\mathbf{u}_1^{a_1} \dots \mathbf{u}_n^{a_n}) = \mathbf{u}_1^{ca_1} \dots \mathbf{u}_n^{ca_n}$$

and when vector addition is defined by

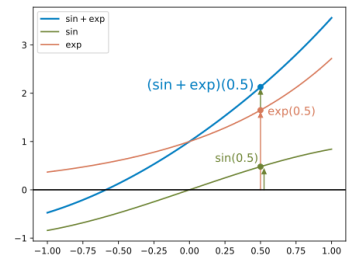
$$(\mathbf{u}_1^{a_1} \dots \mathbf{u}_n^{a_n}) + (\mathbf{u}_1^{b_1} \dots \mathbf{u}_n^{b_n}) = \mathbf{u}_1^{a_1+b_1} \dots \mathbf{u}_n^{a_n+b_n}.$$

For example, the sum of the units of force \mathbf{gm}/\mathbf{s}^2 and the units of velocity \mathbf{m}/\mathbf{s} is

$$\mathbf{gm}\mathbf{s}^{-2} + \mathbf{m}\mathbf{s}^{-1} = \mathbf{g}^{1+0} \mathbf{m}^{1+1} \mathbf{s}^{-2+(-1)} = \mathbf{gm}^2 \mathbf{s}^{-3},$$

which are the units of force \times velocity $= (\mathbf{gm}/\mathbf{s}^2)(\mathbf{m}/\mathbf{s}) = \mathbf{gm}^2/\mathbf{s}^3 =$ units of power. And the units of acceleration $\mathbf{m}/\mathbf{s}^2 = \mathbf{m}\mathbf{s}^{-2}$ scalar multiplied by $c = 1/2$ is

$$(1/2) \cdot (\mathbf{m}\mathbf{s}^{-2}) = \mathbf{m}^{(1/2)1} \mathbf{s}^{(1/2)(-2)} = \mathbf{m}^{1/2} \mathbf{s}^{-1}.$$



Addition of functions: The sum of the sine and the exponential function is $\sin + \exp : \mathbb{R} \rightarrow \mathbb{R}$ with $(\sin + \exp)(x) = \sin(x) + \exp(x)$

Consequently, units such as gm/s^2 can be expressed as the linear combination $gms^{-2} = g + m - 2s$ and also as $gms^{-2} = gm - 2s = gm + s^{-2} = g + ms^{-2} = gs^{-1} + ms^{-1}$, and so on.

The base units u_1, \dots, u_n form a basis for V , which means that V is an n -dimensional vector space over \mathbb{F} . The map $V \rightarrow \mathbb{F}^n$ defined by $u_1^{a_1} \cdots u_n^{a_n} \mapsto (a_1, \dots, a_n)$ is a vector space isomorphism. To only allow units with integer exponents (in order to disallow units such as $m^{1/2}$), the field \mathbb{F} can be replaced with the ring of integers \mathbb{Z} , although doing this will cause V to no longer be a vector space; it will, however, be a generalization of a vector space known as a (left) \mathbb{Z} -module.

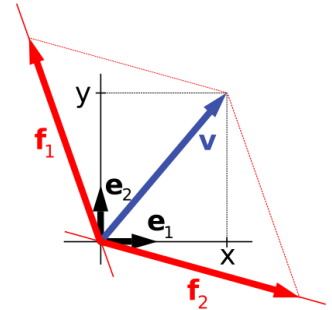
If $g, m, s \in V$ then the three units/vectors

$$g/m = g - m, \quad s/m = s - m, \quad \text{and} \quad g^2/s^2 = 2g - 2s$$

are linearly dependent because $2g - 2s = 2(g - m) - 2(s - m)$ (in the usual language of unit analysis, this is because $g^2/s^2 = (g/m)^2(s/m)^{-2}$); in contrast, $gm = g + m$, s/m , and g^2/s^2 are linearly independent and they even form a basis for the 3-dimensional vector subspace spanned by g, m , and s . One consequence of this, stated in plain English, is that any unit made up of g, m , and s (such as g or acceleration m/s^2) can also be expressed in terms of $gm, s/m$, and g^2/s^2 ; however, some units (such as g for example) can *not* be expressed in terms of $g/m, s/m$, and g^2/s^2 (because their 2-dimensional span does not contain g).

Basis and dimension

Bases allow one to represent vectors by a sequence of scalars called *coordinates* or *components*. A basis is a set $B = \{\mathbf{b}_i\}_{i \in I}$ of vectors \mathbf{b}_i , for convenience often indexed by some index set I , that spans the whole space and is linearly independent. "Spanning the whole space" means that any vector \mathbf{v} can be expressed as a finite sum (called a linear combination) of the basis elements:



A vector \mathbf{v} in \mathbb{R}^2 (blue) expressed in terms of different bases: using the standard basis of \mathbb{R}^2 : $\mathbf{v} = x\mathbf{e}_1 + y\mathbf{e}_2$ (black), and using a different, non-orthogonal basis: $\mathbf{v} = \mathbf{f}_1 + \mathbf{f}_2$ (red).

$$\mathbf{v} = a_1 \mathbf{b}_{i_1} + a_2 \mathbf{b}_{i_2} + \cdots + a_n \mathbf{b}_{i_n}, \quad (1)$$

where the a_k are scalars, called the coordinates (or the components) of the vector \mathbf{v} with respect to the basis B , and \mathbf{b}_{i_k} ($k = 1, \dots, n$) elements of B . Linear independence means that the coordinates a_k are uniquely determined for any vector in the vector space.

For example, the coordinate vectors $\mathbf{e}_1 = (1, 0, \dots, 0)$, $\mathbf{e}_2 = (0, 1, 0, \dots, 0)$, to $\mathbf{e}_n = (0, 0, \dots, 0, 1)$, form a basis of F^n , called the standard basis, since any vector (x_1, x_2, \dots, x_n) can be uniquely expressed as a linear combination of these vectors:

$$(x_1, x_2, \dots, x_n) = x_1(1, 0, \dots, 0) + x_2(0, 1, 0, \dots, 0) + \cdots + x_n(0, \dots, 0, 1) = x_1 \mathbf{e}_1 + x_2 \mathbf{e}_2 + \cdots + x_n \mathbf{e}_n.$$

The corresponding coordinates x_1, x_2, \dots, x_n are just the Cartesian coordinates of the vector.

Every vector space has a basis. This follows from Zorn's lemma, an equivalent formulation of the Axiom of Choice.^[19] Given the other axioms of Zermelo–Fraenkel set theory, the existence of bases is equivalent to the axiom of choice.^[20] The ultrafilter lemma, which is weaker than the axiom of choice, implies that all bases of a given vector space have the same number of elements, or cardinality (cf. Dimension theorem for vector spaces).^[21] It is called the *dimension* of the vector space, denoted by $\dim V$. If the space is spanned by finitely many vectors, the above statements can be proven without such fundamental input from set theory.^[22]

The dimension of the coordinate space F^n is n , by the basis exhibited above. The dimension of the polynomial ring $F[x]$ introduced above is countably infinite, a basis is given by $1, x, x^2, \dots$. A fortiori, the dimension of more general function spaces, such as the space of functions on some (bounded or unbounded) interval, is infinite.^[nb 4] Under suitable regularity assumptions on the coefficients

A field extension over the rationals \mathbf{Q} can be thought of as a vector space over \mathbf{Q} (by defining vector addition as field addition, defining scalar multiplication as field multiplication by elements of \mathbf{Q} , and otherwise ignoring the field multiplication). The dimension (or degree) of the field extension $\mathbf{Q}(\alpha)$ over \mathbf{Q} depends on α . If α satisfies some polynomial equation

$$q_n\alpha^n + q_{n-1}\alpha^{n-1} + \cdots + q_0 = 0$$

with rational coefficients q_n, \dots, q_0 (in other words, if α is algebraic), the dimension is finite. More precisely, it equals the degree of the minimal polynomial having α as a root.^[24] For example, the complex numbers \mathbf{C} are a two-dimensional real vector space, generated by 1 and the imaginary unit i . The latter satisfies $i^2 + 1 = 0$, an equation of degree two. Thus, \mathbf{C} is a two-dimensional \mathbf{R} -vector space (and, as any field, one-dimensional as a vector space over itself, \mathbf{C}). If α is not algebraic, the dimension of $\mathbf{Q}(\alpha)$ over \mathbf{Q} is infinite. For example, for $\alpha = \pi$ there is no such equation. That is, π is transcendental.^[25]

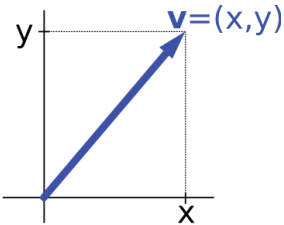
Linear maps and matrices

The relation of two vector spaces can be expressed by *linear map* or *linear transformation*. They are functions that reflect the vector space structure, that is, they preserve sums and scalar multiplication:

$$f(\mathbf{v} + \mathbf{w}) = f(\mathbf{v}) + f(\mathbf{w}) \text{ and } f(a \cdot \mathbf{v}) = a \cdot f(\mathbf{v}) \text{ for all } \mathbf{v} \text{ and } \mathbf{w} \text{ in } V, \text{ all } a \text{ in } F.$$
^[26]

An *isomorphism* is a linear map $f : V \rightarrow W$ such that there exists an inverse map $g : W \rightarrow V$, which is a map such that the two possible compositions $f \circ g : W \rightarrow W$ and $g \circ f : V \rightarrow V$ are identity maps. Equivalently, f is both one-to-one (injective) and onto (surjective).^[27] If there exists an isomorphism between V and W , the two spaces are said to be *isomorphic*; they are then essentially identical as vector spaces, since all identities holding in V are, via f , transported to similar ones in W , and vice versa via g .

For example, the "arrows in the plane" and "ordered pairs of numbers" vector spaces in the introduction are isomorphic: a planar arrow \mathbf{v} departing at the origin of some (fixed) coordinate system can be expressed as an ordered pair by considering the x - and y -component of the arrow, as shown in the image at the right. Conversely, given a pair (x, y) , the arrow going by x to the right (or to the left, if x is negative), and y up (down, if y is negative) turns back the arrow \mathbf{v} .



Describing an arrow vector \mathbf{v} by its coordinates x and y yields an isomorphism of vector spaces.

Linear maps $V \rightarrow W$ between two vector spaces form a vector space $\text{Hom}_F(V, W)$, also denoted $L(V, W)$, or $\mathcal{L}(V, W)$.^[28] The space of linear maps from V to F is called the dual vector space, denoted V^* .^[29] Via the injective natural map $V \rightarrow V^{**}$, any vector space can be embedded into its *bidual*; the map is an isomorphism if and only if the space is finite-dimensional.^[30]

Once a basis of V is chosen, linear maps $f : V \rightarrow W$ are completely determined by specifying the images of the basis vectors, because any element of V is expressed uniquely as a linear combination of them.^[31] If $\dim V = \dim W$, a 1-to-1 correspondence between fixed bases of V and W gives rise to a linear map that maps any basis element of V to the corresponding basis element of W . It is an isomorphism, by its very definition.^[32] Therefore, two vector spaces are isomorphic if their dimensions agree and vice versa. Another way to express this is that any vector space is *completely classified* (up to isomorphism) by its dimension, a single number. In particular, any n -dimensional F -vector space V is isomorphic to F^n . There is, however, no "canonical" or preferred isomorphism; actually an isomorphism $\varphi : F^n \rightarrow V$ is equivalent to the choice of a basis of V , by mapping the standard basis of F^n to V , via φ . The freedom of choosing a convenient basis is particularly useful in the infinite-dimensional context; see below.

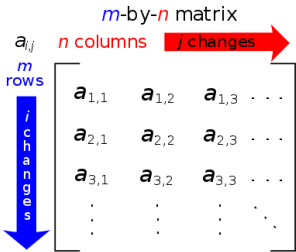
Matrices

Matrices are a useful notion to encode linear maps.^[33] They are written as a rectangular array of scalars as in the image at the right. Any m -by- n matrix A gives rise to a linear map from F^n to F^m , by the following

$$\mathbf{x} = (x_1, x_2, \dots, x_n) \mapsto \left(\sum_{j=1}^n a_{1j}x_j, \sum_{j=1}^n a_{2j}x_j, \dots, \sum_{j=1}^n a_{mj}x_j \right), \text{ where } \sum \text{ denotes summation,}$$

or, using the matrix multiplication of the matrix A with the coordinate vector \mathbf{x} :

$$\mathbf{x} \mapsto A\mathbf{x}.$$



A typical matrix

Moreover, after choosing bases of V and W , any linear map $f: V \rightarrow W$ is uniquely represented by a matrix via this assignment.^[34]

The determinant $\det(A)$ of a square matrix A is a scalar that tells whether the associated map is an isomorphism or not: to be so it is sufficient and necessary that the determinant is nonzero.^[35] The linear transformation of \mathbf{R}^n corresponding to a real n -by- n matrix is orientation preserving if and only if its determinant is positive.

Eigenvalues and eigenvectors

Endomorphisms, linear maps $f: V \rightarrow V$, are particularly important since in this case vectors \mathbf{v} can be compared with their image under f , $f(\mathbf{v})$. Any nonzero vector \mathbf{v} satisfying $\lambda\mathbf{v} = f(\mathbf{v})$, where λ is a scalar, is called an *eigenvector* of f with *eigenvalue* λ .^[nb 5]^[36] Equivalently, \mathbf{v} is an element of the kernel of the difference $f - \lambda \cdot \text{Id}$ (where Id is the identity map $V \rightarrow V$). If V is finite-dimensional, this can be rephrased using determinants: f having eigenvalue λ is equivalent to

$$\det(f - \lambda \cdot \text{Id}) = 0.$$

By spelling out the definition of the determinant, the expression on the left hand side can be seen to be a polynomial function in λ , called the characteristic polynomial of f .^[37] If the field F is large enough to contain a zero of this polynomial (which automatically happens for F algebraically closed, such as $F = \mathbf{C}$) any linear map has at least one eigenvector. The vector space V may or may not possess an eigenbasis, a basis consisting of eigenvectors. This phenomenon is governed by the Jordan canonical form of the map.^[38]^[nb 6] The set of all eigenvectors corresponding to a particular eigenvalue of f forms a vector space known as the *eigenspace* corresponding to the eigenvalue (and f) in question. To achieve the spectral theorem, the corresponding statement in the infinite-dimensional case, the machinery of functional analysis is needed, see below.

Basic constructions

In addition to the above concrete examples, there are a number of standard linear algebraic constructions that yield vector spaces related to given ones. In addition to the definitions given below, they are also characterized by universal properties, which determine an object X by specifying the linear maps from X to any other vector space.

Subspaces and quotient spaces

A nonempty subset W of a vector space V that is closed under addition and scalar multiplication (and therefore contains the **o**-vector of V) is called a *linear subspace* of V , or simply a *subspace* of V , when the ambient space is unambiguously a vector space.^[39]^[nb 7] Subspaces of V are vector spaces (over the same field) in their own right. The intersection of all subspaces containing a given set S of vectors is called its span, and it is the smallest subspace of V containing the set S . Expressed in terms of elements, the span is the subspace consisting of all the linear combinations of elements of S .^[40]

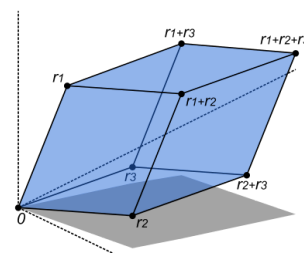
A linear subspace of dimension 1 is a **vector line**. A linear subspace of dimension 2 is a **vector plane**. A linear subspace that contains all elements but one of a basis of the ambient space is a **vector hyperplane**. In a vector space of finite dimension n , a vector hyperplane is thus a subspace of dimension $n - 1$.

The counterpart to subspaces are *quotient vector spaces*.^[41] Given any subspace $W \subset V$, the quotient space V/W (" V modulo W ") is defined as follows: as a set, it consists of $\mathbf{v} + W = \{\mathbf{v} + \mathbf{w} : \mathbf{w} \in W\}$, where \mathbf{v} is an arbitrary vector in V . The sum of two such elements $\mathbf{v}_1 + W$ and $\mathbf{v}_2 + W$ is $(\mathbf{v}_1 + \mathbf{v}_2) + W$, and scalar multiplication is given by $a \cdot (\mathbf{v} + W) = (a \cdot \mathbf{v}) + W$. The key point in this definition is that $\mathbf{v}_1 + W = \mathbf{v}_2 + W$ if and only if the difference of \mathbf{v}_1 and \mathbf{v}_2 lies in W .^[nb 8] This way, the quotient space "forgets" information that is contained in the subspace W .

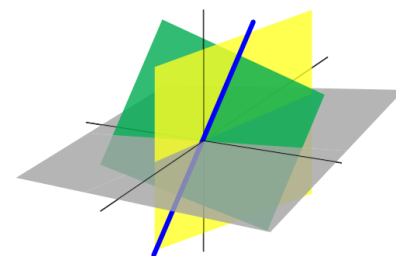
The kernel $\ker(f)$ of a linear map $f: V \rightarrow W$ consists of vectors \mathbf{v} that are mapped to **o** in W .^[42] The kernel and the image $\text{im}(f) = \{f(\mathbf{v}) : \mathbf{v} \in V\}$ are subspaces of V and W , respectively.^[43] The existence of kernels and images is part of the statement that the category of vector spaces (over a fixed field F) is an abelian category, that is, a corpus of mathematical objects and structure-preserving maps between them (a category) that behaves much like the category of abelian groups.^[44] Because of this, many statements such as the first isomorphism theorem (also called rank–nullity theorem in matrix-related terms)

$$V / \ker(f) \cong \text{im}(f).$$

and the second and third isomorphism theorem can be formulated and proven in a way very similar to the corresponding statements for groups.



The volume of this parallelepiped is the absolute value of the determinant of the 3-by-3 matrix formed by the vectors r_1 , r_2 , and r_3 .



A line passing through the origin (blue, thick) in \mathbf{R}^3 is a linear subspace. It is the intersection of two planes (green and yellow).

An important example is the kernel of a linear map $\mathbf{x} \mapsto A\mathbf{x}$ for some fixed matrix A , as [above](#). The kernel of this map is the subspace of vectors \mathbf{x} such that $A\mathbf{x} = \mathbf{0}$, which is precisely the set of solutions to the system of homogeneous linear equations belonging to A . This concept also extends to linear differential equations

$$a_0f + a_1\frac{df}{dx} + a_2\frac{d^2f}{dx^2} + \cdots + a_n\frac{d^nf}{dx^n} = 0,$$
 where the coefficients a_i are functions in x , too.

In the corresponding map

$$f \mapsto D(f) = \sum_{i=0}^n a_i \frac{d^i f}{dx^i},$$

the [derivatives](#) of the function f appear linearly (as opposed to $f'(x)^2$, for example). Since differentiation is a linear procedure (that is, $(f + g)' = f' + g'$ and $(c \cdot f)' = c \cdot f'$ for a constant c) this assignment is linear, called a [linear differential operator](#). In particular, the solutions to the differential equation $D(f) = 0$ form a vector space (over \mathbf{R} or \mathbf{C}).

Direct product and direct sum

The *direct product* of vector spaces and the *direct sum* of vector spaces are two ways of combining an indexed family of vector spaces into a new vector space.

The *direct product* $\prod_{i \in I} V_i$ of a family of vector spaces V_i consists of the set of all tuples $(\mathbf{v}_i)_{i \in I}$, which specify for each index i in some index set I an element \mathbf{v}_i of V_i .^[45] Addition and scalar multiplication is performed componentwise. A variant of this construction is the *direct sum* $\bigoplus_{i \in I} V_i$ (also called [coproduct](#) and denoted $\coprod_{i \in I} V_i$), where only tuples with finitely many nonzero vectors are allowed. If the index set I is finite, the two constructions agree, but in general they are different.

Tensor product

The *tensor product* $V \otimes_F W$, or simply $V \otimes W$, of two vector spaces V and W is one of the central notions of [multilinear algebra](#) which deals with extending notions such as linear maps to several variables. A map $g : V \times W \rightarrow X$ is called [bilinear](#) if g is linear in both variables \mathbf{v} and \mathbf{w} . That is to say, for fixed \mathbf{w} the map $\mathbf{v} \mapsto g(\mathbf{v}, \mathbf{w})$ is linear in the sense above and likewise for fixed \mathbf{v} .

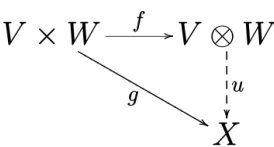
The tensor product is a particular vector space that is a *universal* recipient of bilinear maps g , as follows. It is defined as the vector space consisting of finite (formal) sums of symbols called [tensors](#)

$$\mathbf{v}_1 \otimes \mathbf{w}_1 + \mathbf{v}_2 \otimes \mathbf{w}_2 + \cdots + \mathbf{v}_n \otimes \mathbf{w}_n,$$

subject to the rules

$$\begin{aligned} a \cdot (\mathbf{v} \otimes \mathbf{w}) &= (a \cdot \mathbf{v}) \otimes \mathbf{w} = \mathbf{v} \otimes (a \cdot \mathbf{w}), \text{ where } a \text{ is a scalar,} \\ (\mathbf{v}_1 + \mathbf{v}_2) \otimes \mathbf{w} &= \mathbf{v}_1 \otimes \mathbf{w} + \mathbf{v}_2 \otimes \mathbf{w}, \text{ and} \\ \mathbf{v} \otimes (\mathbf{w}_1 + \mathbf{w}_2) &= \mathbf{v} \otimes \mathbf{w}_1 + \mathbf{v} \otimes \mathbf{w}_2. \end{aligned}$$
^[46]

These rules ensure that the map f from the $V \times W$ to $V \otimes W$ that maps a [tuple](#) (\mathbf{v}, \mathbf{w}) to $\mathbf{v} \otimes \mathbf{w}$ is bilinear. The universality states that given *any* vector space X and *any* bilinear map $g : V \times W \rightarrow X$, there exists a unique map u , shown in the diagram with a dotted arrow, whose [composition](#) with f equals g : $u(\mathbf{v} \otimes \mathbf{w}) = g(\mathbf{v}, \mathbf{w})$.^[47] This is called the [universal property](#) of the tensor product, an instance of the method—much used in advanced abstract algebra—to indirectly define objects by specifying maps from or to this object.



Commutative diagram depicting the universal property of the tensor product.

Vector spaces with additional structure

From the point of view of linear algebra, vector spaces are completely understood insofar as any vector space is characterized, up to isomorphism, by its dimension. However, vector spaces *per se* do not offer a framework to deal with the question—crucial to analysis—whether a sequence of functions [converges](#) to another function. Likewise, linear algebra is not adapted to deal with [infinite series](#), since the addition operation allows [only](#) finitely many terms to be added. Therefore, the needs of [functional analysis](#) require considering additional structures.

A vector space may be given a [partial order](#) \leq , under which some vectors can be compared.^[48] For example, n -dimensional real space \mathbf{R}^n can be ordered by comparing its vectors componentwise. [Ordered vector spaces](#), for example [Riesz spaces](#), are fundamental to [Lebesgue integration](#), which relies on the ability to express a function as a difference of two positive functions

$$f = f^+ - f^-,$$

where \mathbf{f}^+ denotes the positive part of \mathbf{f} and \mathbf{f}^- the negative part.^[49]

Normed vector spaces and inner product spaces

"Measuring" vectors is done by specifying a norm, a datum which measures lengths of vectors, or by an inner product, which measures angles between vectors. Norms and inner products are denoted $|\mathbf{v}|$ and $\langle \mathbf{v}, \mathbf{w} \rangle$, respectively. The datum of an inner product entails that lengths of vectors can be defined too, by defining the associated norm $|\mathbf{v}| := \sqrt{\langle \mathbf{v}, \mathbf{v} \rangle}$. Vector spaces endowed with such data are known as *normed vector spaces* and *inner product spaces*, respectively.^[50]

Coordinate space F^n can be equipped with the standard dot product:

$$\langle \mathbf{x}, \mathbf{y} \rangle = \mathbf{x} \cdot \mathbf{y} = x_1y_1 + \cdots + x_ny_n.$$

In \mathbf{R}^2 , this reflects the common notion of the angle between two vectors \mathbf{x} and \mathbf{y} , by the law of cosines:

$$\mathbf{x} \cdot \mathbf{y} = \cos(\angle(\mathbf{x}, \mathbf{y})) \cdot |\mathbf{x}| \cdot |\mathbf{y}|.$$

Because of this, two vectors satisfying $\langle \mathbf{x}, \mathbf{y} \rangle = 0$ are called orthogonal. An important variant of the standard dot product is used in Minkowski space: \mathbf{R}^4 endowed with the Lorentz product

$$\langle \mathbf{x} | \mathbf{y} \rangle = x_1y_1 + x_2y_2 + x_3y_3 - x_4y_4.$$
^[51]

In contrast to the standard dot product, it is not positive definite: $\langle \mathbf{x} | \mathbf{x} \rangle$ also takes negative values, for example, for $\mathbf{x} = (0, 0, 0, 1)$. Singling out the fourth coordinate—corresponding to time, as opposed to three space-dimensions—makes it useful for the mathematical treatment of special relativity.

Topological vector spaces

Convergence questions are treated by considering vector spaces V carrying a compatible topology, a structure that allows one to talk about elements being close to each other.^{[52][53]} Compatible here means that addition and scalar multiplication have to be continuous maps. Roughly, if \mathbf{x} and \mathbf{y} in V , and a in F vary by a bounded amount, then so do $\mathbf{x} + \mathbf{y}$ and $a\mathbf{x}$.^[nb 9] To make sense of specifying the amount a scalar changes, the field F also has to carry a topology in this context; a common choice are the reals or the complex numbers.

In such *topological vector spaces* one can consider series of vectors. The infinite sum

$$\sum_{i=0}^\infty f_i$$

denotes the limit of the corresponding finite partial sums of the sequence $(f_i)_{i \in \mathbf{N}}$ of elements of V . For example, the f_i could be (real or complex) functions belonging to some function space V , in which case the series is a function series. The mode of convergence of the series depends on the topology imposed on the function space. In such cases, pointwise convergence and uniform convergence are two prominent examples.

A way to ensure the existence of limits of certain infinite series is to restrict attention to spaces where any Cauchy sequence has a limit; such a vector space is called complete. Roughly, a vector space is complete provided that it contains all necessary limits. For example, the vector space of polynomials on the unit interval $[0,1]$, equipped with the topology of uniform convergence is not complete because any continuous function on $[0,1]$ can be uniformly approximated by a sequence of polynomials, by the Weierstrass approximation theorem.^[54] In contrast, the space of *all* continuous functions on $[0,1]$ with the same topology is complete.^[55] A norm gives rise to a topology by defining that a sequence of vectors \mathbf{v}_n converges to \mathbf{v} if and only if

$$\lim_{n \rightarrow \infty} |\mathbf{v}_n - \mathbf{v}| = 0.$$

Banach and Hilbert spaces are complete topological vector spaces whose topologies are given, respectively, by a norm and an inner product. Their study—a key piece of functional analysis—focuses on infinite-dimensional vector spaces, since all norms on finite-dimensional topological vector spaces give rise to the same notion of convergence.^[56] The image at the right shows the equivalence of the 1-norm and ∞ -norm on \mathbf{R}^2 : as the unit "balls" enclose each other, a sequence converges to zero in one norm if and only if it so does in the other norm. In the infinite-dimensional case, however, there will generally be inequivalent topologies, which makes the study of topological vector spaces richer than that of vector spaces without additional data.

From a conceptual point of view, all notions related to topological vector spaces should match the topology. For example, instead of considering all linear maps (also called functionals) $V \rightarrow W$, maps between topological vector spaces are required to be continuous.^[57] In particular, the (topological) dual space V^* consists of continuous functionals $V \rightarrow \mathbf{R}$ (or to \mathbf{C}). The fundamental

Hahn–Banach theorem is concerned with separating subspaces of appropriate topological vector spaces by continuous functionals.^[58]

Banach spaces

Banach spaces, introduced by Stefan Banach, are complete normed vector spaces.^[59]

A first example is the vector space ℓ^p consisting of infinite vectors with real entries $\mathbf{x} = (x_1, x_2, \dots, x_n, \dots)$ whose p -norm ($1 \leq p \leq \infty$) given by

$$\|\mathbf{x}\|_p := \left(\sum_i |x_i|^p \right)^{\frac{1}{p}} \text{ for } p < \infty \text{ and } \|\mathbf{x}\|_\infty := \sup_i |x_i|.$$

The topologies on the infinite-dimensional space ℓ^p are inequivalent for different p . For example, the sequence of vectors $\mathbf{x}_n = (2^{-n}, 2^{-n}, \dots, 2^{-n}, 0, 0, \dots)$, in which the first 2^n components are 2^{-n} and the following ones are 0, converges to the zero vector for $p = \infty$, but does not for $p = 1$:

$$\|\mathbf{x}_n\|_\infty = \sup(2^{-n}, 0) = 2^{-n} \rightarrow 0, \text{ but } \|\mathbf{x}_n\|_1 = \sum_{i=1}^{2^n} 2^{-n} = 2^n \cdot 2^{-n} = 1.$$

More generally than sequences of real numbers, functions $f: \Omega \rightarrow \mathbb{R}$ are endowed with a norm that replaces the above sum by the Lebesgue integral

$$\|f\|_p := \left(\int_\Omega |f(x)|^p d\mu(x) \right)^{\frac{1}{p}}.$$

The space of integrable functions on a given domain Ω (for example an interval) satisfying $\|f\|_p < \infty$, and equipped with this norm are called Lebesgue spaces, denoted $L^p(\Omega)$.^[nb 10]

These spaces are complete.^[60] (If one uses the Riemann integral instead, the space is *not* complete, which may be seen as a justification for Lebesgue's integration theory.^[nb 11]) Concretely this means that for any sequence of Lebesgue-integrable functions $f_1, f_2, \dots, f_n, \dots$ with $\|f_n\|_p < \infty$, satisfying the condition

$$\lim_{k, n \rightarrow \infty} \int_\Omega |f_k(x) - f_n(x)|^p d\mu(x) = 0$$

there exists a function $f(x)$ belonging to the vector space $L^p(\Omega)$ such that

$$\lim_{k \rightarrow \infty} \int_\Omega |f(x) - f_k(x)|^p d\mu(x) = 0.$$

Imposing boundedness conditions not only on the function, but also on its derivatives leads to Sobolev spaces.^[61]

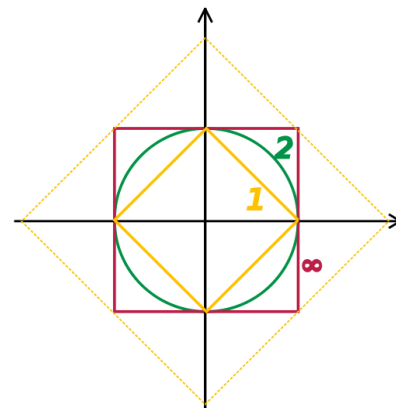
Hilbert spaces

Complete inner product spaces are known as *Hilbert spaces*, in honor of David Hilbert.^[62] The Hilbert space $L^2(\Omega)$, with inner product given by

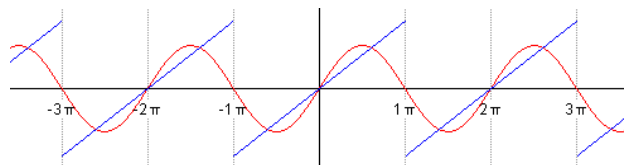
$$\langle f, g \rangle = \int_\Omega f(x) \overline{g(x)} dx,$$

where $\overline{g(x)}$ denotes the complex conjugate of $g(x)$,^{[63][nb 12]} is a key case.

By definition, in a Hilbert space any Cauchy sequence converges to a limit. Conversely, finding a sequence of functions f_n with desirable properties that approximates a given limit function, is equally crucial. Early analysis, in the guise of the Taylor approximation, established an approximation of differentiable functions f by polynomials.^[64] By the Stone–Weierstrass theorem, every continuous function on $[a, b]$ can be approximated as closely as desired by a polynomial.^[65] A similar approximation technique by trigonometric functions is commonly called Fourier expansion, and is



Unit "spheres" in \mathbb{R}^2 consist of plane vectors of norm 1. Depicted are the unit spheres in different p -norms, for $p = 1, 2$, and ∞ . The bigger diamond depicts points of 1-norm equal to 2.



The succeeding snapshots show summation of 1 to 5 terms in approximating a periodic function (blue) by finite sum of sine functions (red).

much applied in engineering, see [below](#). More generally, and more conceptually, the theorem yields a simple description of what "basic functions", or, in abstract Hilbert spaces, what basic vectors suffice to generate a Hilbert space H , in the sense that the *closure* of their span (that is, finite linear combinations and limits of those) is the whole space. Such a set of functions is called a *basis* of H , its cardinality is known as the [Hilbert space dimension](#).^[nb 13] Not only does the theorem exhibit suitable basis functions as sufficient for approximation purposes, but also together with the [Gram–Schmidt process](#), it enables one to construct a basis of orthogonal vectors.^[66] Such orthogonal bases are the Hilbert space generalization of the coordinate axes in finite-dimensional [Euclidean space](#).

The solutions to various differential equations can be interpreted in terms of Hilbert spaces. For example, a great many fields in physics and engineering lead to such equations and frequently solutions with particular physical properties are used as basis functions, often orthogonal.^[67] As an example from physics, the time-dependent [Schrödinger equation](#) in [quantum mechanics](#) describes the change of physical properties in time by means of a [partial differential equation](#), whose solutions are called [wavefunctions](#).^[68] Definite values for physical properties such as energy, or momentum, correspond to [eigenvalues](#) of a certain (linear) [differential operator](#) and the associated wavefunctions are called [eigenstates](#). The [spectral theorem](#) decomposes a linear [compact operator](#) acting on functions in terms of these eigenfunctions and their eigenvalues.^[69]

Algebras over fields

General vector spaces do not possess a multiplication between vectors. A vector space equipped with an additional [bilinear operator](#) defining the multiplication of two vectors is an *algebra over a field*.^[70] Many algebras stem from functions on some geometrical object: since functions with values in a given field can be multiplied pointwise, these entities form algebras. The [Stone–Weierstrass theorem](#), for example, relies on [Banach algebras](#) which are both Banach spaces and algebras.

[Commutative algebra](#) makes great use of [rings of polynomials](#) in one or several variables, introduced above. Their multiplication is both [commutative](#) and [associative](#). These rings and their [quotients](#) form the basis of [algebraic geometry](#), because they are [rings of functions of algebraic geometric objects](#).^[71]

Another crucial example are *Lie algebras*, which are neither commutative nor associative, but the failure to be so is limited by the constraints ($[x, y]$ denotes the product of x and y):

- $[x, y] = -[y, x]$ ([anticommutativity](#)), and
- $[x, [y, z]] + [y, [z, x]] + [z, [x, y]] = 0$ ([Jacobi identity](#)).^[72]

Examples include the vector space of n -by- n matrices, with $[x, y] = xy - yx$, the [commutator](#) of two matrices, and \mathbf{R}^3 , endowed with the [cross product](#).

The [tensor algebra](#) $T(V)$ is a formal way of adding products to any vector space V to obtain an algebra.^[73] As a vector space, it is spanned by symbols, called simple [tensors](#)

$\mathbf{v}_1 \otimes \mathbf{v}_2 \otimes \cdots \otimes \mathbf{v}_n$, where the [degree](#) n varies.

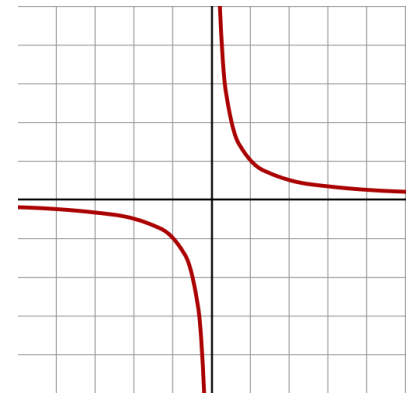
The multiplication is given by concatenating such symbols, imposing the [distributive law](#) under addition, and requiring that scalar multiplication commute with the tensor product \otimes , much the same way as with the tensor product of two vector spaces introduced above. In general, there are no relations between $\mathbf{v}_1 \otimes \mathbf{v}_2$ and $\mathbf{v}_2 \otimes \mathbf{v}_1$. Forcing two such elements to be equal leads to the [symmetric algebra](#), whereas forcing $\mathbf{v}_1 \otimes \mathbf{v}_2 = -\mathbf{v}_2 \otimes \mathbf{v}_1$ yields the [exterior algebra](#).^[74]

When a field, F is explicitly stated, a common term used is F -algebra.

Applications

Vector spaces have many applications as they occur frequently in common circumstances, namely wherever functions with values in some field are involved. They provide a framework to deal with analytical and geometrical problems, or are used in the [Fourier transform](#). This list is not exhaustive: many more applications exist, for example in [optimization](#). The [minimax theorem](#) of [game theory](#) stating the existence of a unique payoff when all players play optimally can be formulated and proven using vector spaces methods.^[75] [Representation theory](#) fruitfully transfers the good understanding of linear algebra and vector spaces to other mathematical domains such as [group theory](#).^[76]

Distributions



A hyperbola, given by the equation $x \cdot y = 1$. The [coordinate ring](#) of functions on this hyperbola is given by $\mathbf{R}[x, y] / (x \cdot y - 1)$, an infinite-dimensional vector space over \mathbf{R} .

A *distribution* (or *generalized function*) is a linear map assigning a number to each "test" function, typically a smooth function with compact support, in a continuous way: in the above terminology the space of distributions is the (continuous) dual of the test function space.^[77] The latter space is endowed with a topology that takes into account not only f itself, but also all its higher derivatives. A standard example is the result of integrating a test function f over some domain Ω :

$$I(f) = \int_{\Omega} f(x) dx.$$

When $\Omega = \{p\}$, the set consisting of a single point, this reduces to the Dirac distribution, denoted by δ , which associates to a test function f its value at the p : $\delta(f) = f(p)$. Distributions are a powerful instrument to solve differential equations. Since all standard analytic notions such as derivatives are linear, they extend naturally to the space of distributions. Therefore, the equation in question can be transferred to a distribution space, which is bigger than the underlying function space, so that more flexible methods are available for solving the equation. For example, Green's functions and fundamental solutions are usually distributions rather than proper functions, and can then be used to find solutions of the equation with prescribed boundary conditions. The found solution can then in some cases be proven to be actually a true function, and a solution to the original equation (for example, using the Lax–Milgram theorem, a consequence of the Riesz representation theorem).^[78]

Fourier analysis

Resolving a periodic function into a sum of trigonometric functions forms a *Fourier series*, a technique much used in physics and engineering.^{[nb 14][79]} The underlying vector space is usually the Hilbert space $L^2(0, 2\pi)$, for which the functions $\sin(mx)$ and $\cos(mx)$ (where m is an integer) form an orthogonal basis.^[80] The Fourier expansion of an L^2 function f is

$$\frac{a_0}{2} + \sum_{m=1}^{\infty} [a_m \cos(mx) + b_m \sin(mx)].$$

The coefficients a_m and b_m are called Fourier coefficients of f , and are calculated by the formulas^[81]

$$a_m = \frac{1}{\pi} \int_0^{2\pi} f(t) \cos(mt) dt, \quad b_m = \frac{1}{\pi} \int_0^{2\pi} f(t) \sin(mt) dt.$$

In physical terms the function is represented as a superposition of sine waves and the coefficients give information about the function's frequency spectrum.^[82] A complex-number form of Fourier series is also commonly used.^[81] The concrete formulae above are consequences of a more general mathematical duality called Pontryagin duality.^[83] Applied to the group \mathbf{R} , it yields the classical Fourier transform; an application in physics are reciprocal lattices, where the underlying group is a finite-dimensional real vector space endowed with the additional datum of a lattice encoding positions of atoms in crystals.^[84]

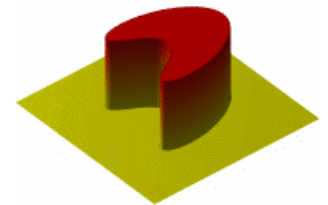
Fourier series are used to solve boundary value problems in partial differential equations.^[85] In 1822, Fourier first used this technique to solve the heat equation.^[86] A discrete version of the Fourier series can be used in sampling applications where the function value is known only at a finite number of equally spaced points. In this case the Fourier series is finite and its value is equal to the sampled values at all points.^[87] The set of coefficients is known as the discrete Fourier transform (DFT) of the given sample sequence. The DFT is one of the key tools of digital signal processing, a field whose applications include radar, speech encoding, image compression.^[88] The JPEG image format is an application of the closely related discrete cosine transform.^[89]

The fast Fourier transform is an algorithm for rapidly computing the discrete Fourier transform.^[90] It is used not only for calculating the Fourier coefficients but, using the convolution theorem, also for computing the convolution of two finite sequences.^[91] They in turn are applied in digital filters^[92] and as a rapid multiplication algorithm for polynomials and large integers (Schönhage–Strassen algorithm).^{[93][94]}

Differential geometry

The tangent plane to a surface at a point is naturally a vector space whose origin is identified with the point of contact. The tangent plane is the best linear approximation, or linearization, of a surface at a point.^[nb 15] Even in a three-dimensional Euclidean space, there is typically no natural way to prescribe a basis of the tangent plane, and so it is conceived of as an abstract vector space rather than a real coordinate space. The *tangent space* is the generalization to higher-dimensional differentiable manifolds.^[95]

Riemannian manifolds are manifolds whose tangent spaces are endowed with a suitable inner product.^[96] Derived therefrom, the Riemann curvature tensor encodes all curvatures of a manifold in one object, which finds applications in general relativity, for example, where the Einstein curvature tensor describes the matter and energy content of space-time.^{[97][98]} The tangent space of a Lie group can be given naturally the structure of a Lie algebra and can be used to classify compact Lie groups.^[99]



The heat equation describes the dissipation of physical properties over time, such as the decline of the temperature of a hot body placed in a colder environment (yellow depicts colder regions than red).

Related structures

Vector bundles

A *vector bundle* is a family of vector spaces parametrized continuously by a topological space X .^[95] More precisely, a vector bundle over X is a topological space E equipped with a continuous map

$$\pi: E \rightarrow X$$

such that for every x in X , the fiber $\pi^{-1}(x)$ is a vector space. The case $\dim V = 1$ is called a line bundle. For any vector space V , the projection $X \times V \rightarrow X$ makes the product $X \times V$ into a "trivial" vector bundle. Vector bundles over X are required to be locally a product of X and some (fixed) vector space V : for every x in X , there is a neighborhood U of x such that the restriction of π to $\pi^{-1}(U)$ is isomorphic^[nb 16] to the trivial bundle $U \times V \rightarrow U$. Despite their locally trivial character, vector bundles may (depending on the shape of the underlying space X) be "twisted" in the large (that is, the bundle need not be (globally isomorphic to) the trivial bundle $X \times V$). For example, the Möbius strip can be seen as a line bundle over the circle S^1 (by identifying open intervals with the real line). It is, however, different from the cylinder $S^1 \times \mathbf{R}$, because the latter is orientable whereas the former is not.^[100]

Properties of certain vector bundles provide information about the underlying topological space. For example, the tangent bundle consists of the collection of tangent spaces parametrized by the points of a differentiable manifold. The tangent bundle of the circle S^1 is globally isomorphic to $S^1 \times \mathbf{R}$, since there is a global nonzero vector field on S^1 .^[nb 17] In contrast, by the hairy ball theorem, there is no (tangent) vector field on the 2-sphere S^2 which is everywhere nonzero.^[101] K-theory studies the isomorphism classes of all vector bundles over some topological space.^[102] In addition to deepening topological and geometrical insight, it has purely algebraic consequences, such as the classification of finite-dimensional real division algebras: \mathbf{R} , \mathbf{C} , the quaternions \mathbf{H} and the octonions \mathbf{O} .

The cotangent bundle of a differentiable manifold consists, at every point of the manifold, of the dual of the tangent space, the cotangent space. Sections of that bundle are known as differential one-forms.

Modules

Modules are to rings what vector spaces are to fields: the same axioms, applied to a ring R instead of a field F , yield modules.^[103] The theory of modules, compared to that of vector spaces, is complicated by the presence of ring elements that do not have multiplicative inverses. For example, modules need not have bases, as the \mathbf{Z} -module (that is, abelian group) $\mathbf{Z}/2\mathbf{Z}$ shows; those modules that do (including all vector spaces) are known as free modules. Nevertheless, a vector space can be compactly defined as a module over a ring which is a field, with the elements being called vectors. Some authors use the term *vector space* to mean modules over a division ring.^[104] The algebraic-geometric interpretation of commutative rings via their spectrum allows the development of concepts such as locally free modules, the algebraic counterpart to vector bundles.

Affine and projective spaces

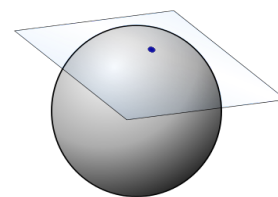
Roughly, *affine spaces* are vector spaces whose origins are not specified.^[105] More precisely, an affine space is a set with a free transitive vector space action. In particular, a vector space is an affine space over itself, by the map

$$V \times V \rightarrow V, (\mathbf{v}, \mathbf{a}) \mapsto \mathbf{a} + \mathbf{v}.$$

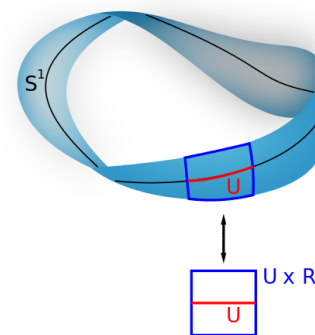
If W is a vector space, then an affine subspace is a subset of W obtained by translating a linear subspace V by a fixed vector $\mathbf{x} \in W$; this space is denoted by $\mathbf{x} + V$ (it is a coset of V in W) and consists of all vectors of the form $\mathbf{x} + \mathbf{v}$ for $\mathbf{v} \in V$. An important example is the space of solutions of a system of inhomogeneous linear equations

$$A\mathbf{x} = \mathbf{b}$$

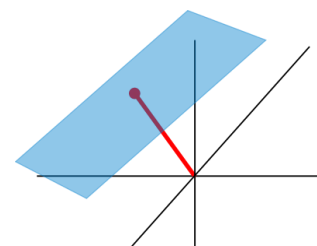
generalizing the homogeneous case above, which can be found by setting $\mathbf{b} = \mathbf{0}$ in this equation.^[106] The space of solutions is the affine subspace $\mathbf{x} + V$ where \mathbf{x} is a particular solution of the equation, and V is the space of solutions of the homogeneous equation (the nullspace of A).



The tangent space to the 2-sphere at some point is the infinite plane touching the sphere in this point.



A Möbius strip. Locally, it looks like $U \times \mathbf{R}$.



An affine plane (light blue) in \mathbf{R}^3 . It is a two-dimensional subspace shifted by a vector \mathbf{x} (red).

The set of one-dimensional subspaces of a fixed finite-dimensional vector space V is known as *projective space*; it may be used to formalize the idea of parallel lines intersecting at infinity.^[107] Grassmannians and flag manifolds generalize this by parametrizing linear subspaces of fixed dimension k and flags of subspaces, respectively.

See also

- Vector (mathematics and physics), for a list of various kinds of vectors
- Cartesian coordinate system
- Graded vector space
- Metric space
- P-vector
- Riesz–Fischer theorem
- Space (mathematics)
- Ordered vector space

Notes

- It is also common, especially in physics, to denote vectors with an arrow on top: \vec{v} .
- This axiom and the next refer to two different operations: scalar multiplication: $b\vec{v}$; and field multiplication: ab . They do not assert the associativity of either operation. More formally, scalar multiplication is a **monoid action** of the multiplicative monoid of the field F on the vector space V .
- Some authors (such as Brown 1991) restrict attention to the fields **R** or **C**, but most of the theory is unchanged for an arbitrary field.
- The **indicator functions** of intervals (of which there are infinitely many) are linearly independent, for example.
- The nomenclature derives from German "**eigen**", which means own or proper.
- See also Jordan–Chevalley decomposition.
- This is typically the case when a vector space is also considered as an **affine space**. In this case, a linear subspace contains the **zero vector**, while an affine subspace does not necessarily contain it.
- Some authors (such as Roman 2005) choose to start with this **equivalence relation** and derive the concrete shape of V/W from this.
- This requirement implies that the topology gives rise to a **uniform structure**, Bourbaki 1989, ch. II
- The **triangle inequality** for $\|f + g\|_p \leq \|f\|_p + \|g\|_p$ is provided by the **Minkowski inequality**. For technical reasons, in the context of functions one has to identify functions that agree **almost everywhere** to get a norm, and not only a **seminorm**.
- "Many functions in L^2 of Lebesgue measure, being unbounded, cannot be integrated with the classical Riemann integral. So spaces of Riemann integrable functions would not be complete in the L^2 norm, and the orthogonal decomposition would not apply to them. This shows one of the advantages of Lebesgue integration.", Dudley 1989, §5.3, p. 125
- For $p \neq 2$, $L^p(\Omega)$ is not a Hilbert space.
- A basis of a Hilbert space is not the same thing as a basis in the sense of linear algebra above. For distinction, the latter is then called a **Hamel basis**.
- Although the Fourier series is periodic, the technique can be applied to any L^2 function on an interval by considering the function to be continued periodically outside the interval. See Kreyszig 1988, p. 601
- That is to say (**BSE-3 2001**), the plane passing through the point of contact P such that the distance from a point P_1 on the surface to the plane is **infinitesimally small** compared to the distance from P_1 to P in the limit as P_1 approaches P along the surface.
- That is, there is a **homeomorphism** from $\pi^{-1}(U)$ to $V \times U$ which restricts to linear isomorphisms between fibers.
- A line bundle, such as the tangent bundle of S^1 is trivial if and only if there is a **section** that vanishes nowhere, see Husemoller 1994, Corollary 8.3. The sections of the tangent bundle are just **vector fields**.

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