

Introduction to Linear Algebra

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Preface

This note is summarized by Yung-Hsuan Chang as he took the course MIT 18.16 Linear Algebra instructed by Gilbert Strang.

1 System of Linear Equations

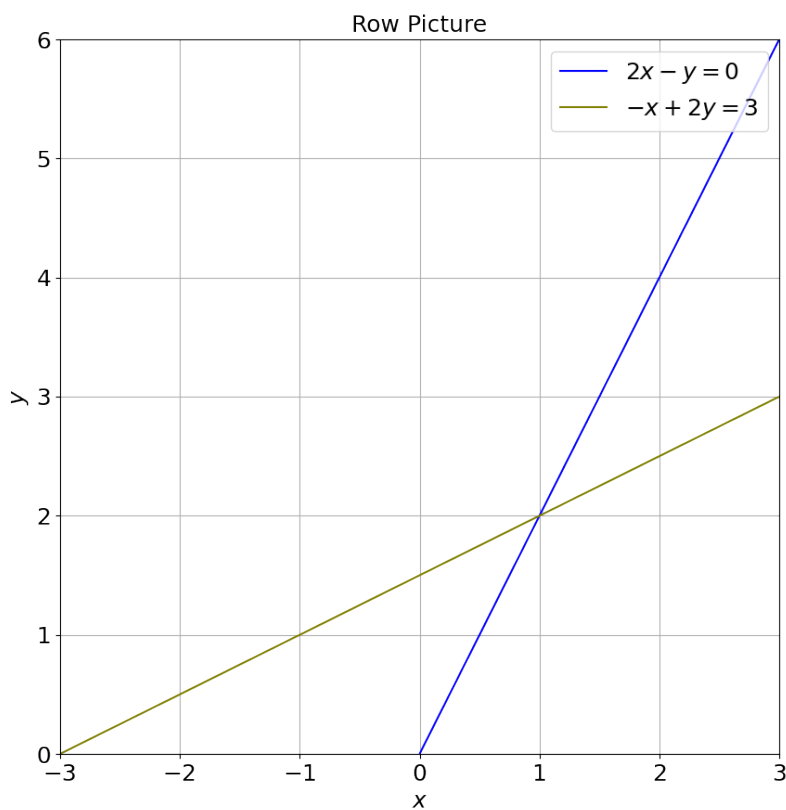
The fundamental problem of linear algebra is to solve n linear equations in n unknowns. For example, the case when $n = 2$,

$$\begin{cases} 2x - y = 0; \\ -x + 2y = 3. \end{cases} \quad (1.0.1)$$

There are three main ways to see this problem:

1. row picture,
2. column picture, and
3. matrix picture.

Row picture describes the relationship among equations. Take (1.0.1) for an example, the graph shows the concept of row picture.



Column picture sees unknowns as scalars of vectors. In (1.0.1), the system can be written as

$$x \begin{bmatrix} 2 \\ -1 \end{bmatrix} + y \begin{bmatrix} -1 \\ 2 \end{bmatrix} = \begin{bmatrix} 0 \\ 3 \end{bmatrix}. \quad (1.0.2)$$

Column picture is relatively difficult to draw on the xy -plane; however, one can imagine that, after some stretch (being multiplied by a scalar), the sum of the two vectors, $(2, -1)$ with scalar x and $(-1, 2)$ with scalar y , is $(0, 3)$. The true answer for (1.0.1) is $(x, y) = (1, 2)$. One can easily verify and check that

$$1 \cdot \begin{bmatrix} 2 \\ -1 \end{bmatrix} + 2 \cdot \begin{bmatrix} -1 \\ 2 \end{bmatrix} = \begin{bmatrix} 0 \\ 3 \end{bmatrix}.$$

Note that the high and thin notation representing a vector in (1.0.2) and the horizontal and with comma notation represent the same thing, i.e., both

$$\begin{bmatrix} 2 \\ -1 \end{bmatrix}$$

and

$$(2, -1)$$

represent the vector with first component 2 and the second component -1 . They are both called the “column vector.” The high and thin notation coincides with the matrix picture, which will be discussed.

In matrix picture, we write the system as

$$\begin{bmatrix} 2 & -1 \\ -1 & 2 \end{bmatrix} \begin{bmatrix} x \\ y \end{bmatrix} = \begin{bmatrix} 0 \\ 3 \end{bmatrix}. \quad (1.0.3)$$

In this case, we call $\begin{bmatrix} 2 & -1 \\ -1 & 2 \end{bmatrix}$ the coefficient matrix and $\begin{bmatrix} x \\ y \end{bmatrix}$ the vector of unknowns. We can simply write

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

where A is the coefficient matrix and \mathbf{x} is the vector of unknowns. The benefit of this form is that there might be some beautiful properties for the matrix on the left of the vector (x, y) . We are going to discuss those properties in this book.

1.1 Elimination with Matrices

Question. How to solve the equation

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

in a systematic way?

We can solve the equation by transforming the matrix A into an upper triangular matrix.

Notation (Matrix). We usually use a capital letter to represent a matrix. For example, just as we see, A . In addition, we use the lowercase of the letter we just chose and with two numbers i and j to indicate the component a_{ij} on the i -th row and the j -th column.

Example 1.1. Let

$$A = \begin{bmatrix} 4 & 0 \\ -1 & 2 \end{bmatrix}.$$

Then, $a_{11} = 4$, $a_{21} = -1$, $a_{12} = 0$, and $a_{22} = 2$.

Definition 1.2 (Upper Triangular). We say a square matrix $A_{n \times n}$ is upper triangular if

$$a_{ij} = 0$$

for all $n \geq i > j > 0$, i.e.,

$$A = \begin{bmatrix} & & & \\ 0 & & * & \\ \vdots & \ddots & & \\ 0 & \cdots & 0 & \end{bmatrix},$$

where the asterisk denotes any possible situation.

Example 1.3. Let

$$B = \begin{bmatrix} 4 & -1 \\ 0 & 2 \end{bmatrix}, \quad C = \begin{bmatrix} 6 & 0 \\ 7 & -13 \end{bmatrix}.$$

Then, B is upper triangular, and C is not upper triangular.

If we have an upper triangular coefficient matrix, the solution for the last equation is straightforward. We can then solve the equation above it, followed by the one above that, and so on. To transform a matrix A into an upper triangular matrix U , we simply need to multiply A by an appropriate sequence of elementary matrices.

Definition 1.4 (Elementary Matrix). The effect of elementary matrix is to do row operations. There are three types of elementary matrix:

1. row switching,
2. row multiplication, and
3. row addition.

Row switching exchanges two rows, row multiplication makes a specific row being scaled by a non-zero constant, and row addition replace a row with the sum of it and another row with a scalar. Symbolically, we write

$$R_i \leftrightarrow R_j$$

to indicate row switching between row i and row j ,

$$kR_i \rightarrow R_i$$

to indicate row i is scaled by k , and

$$R_i + kR_j \rightarrow R_i$$

to indicate row i is being added by R_j scaled by k .

Take a matrix

$$A = \begin{bmatrix} 1 & 2 & 1 \\ 3 & 8 & 1 \\ 0 & 4 & 1 \end{bmatrix}$$

for example, we add -3 times of the first row to the second row, which makes the matrix A become

$$E_{21}A = \begin{bmatrix} 1 & 2 & 1 \\ 0 & 2 & -2 \\ 0 & 4 & 1 \end{bmatrix}$$

without knowing what E_{21} is now. To make the matrix upper triangular, we add -2 times of the second row the the third row, which makes the matrix A become an upper triangular matrix

$$U = E_{32}E_{21}A = \begin{bmatrix} 1 & 2 & 1 \\ 0 & 2 & -2 \\ 0 & 0 & 5 \end{bmatrix}$$

without knowing what E_{32} is now as well.