

Mathematics of Data Science

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1 Preface

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Welcome to **Mathematics of Data Science** — a modern, computational introduction to the math that underpins today’s data-driven world.

In particular, this book provides an introduction to **linear algebra** and **multivariable calculus** in the context of building a mathematical foundation for data science and machine learning.

Each chapter includes Python-based demonstrations and interactive elements, designed to support both understanding and exploration.

It is important to note that this book is not intended to teach basic Python programming. There are already many excellent resources available for learning basic Python. Instead, our focus here is on using Python as a tool for solving mathematical problems that arise in data science and machine learning.

1.1 Chapter 1: Linear Systems and Matrices

- [Section 1.1: Introduction to Linear Systems](#)

Part I

1 Linear Systems and Matrices

2 1.1 Introduction to Linear Systems

2.0.1 Linear Equations

The solution set of the equation

$$x + 2y = 1$$

is a **line** in the xy -plane.

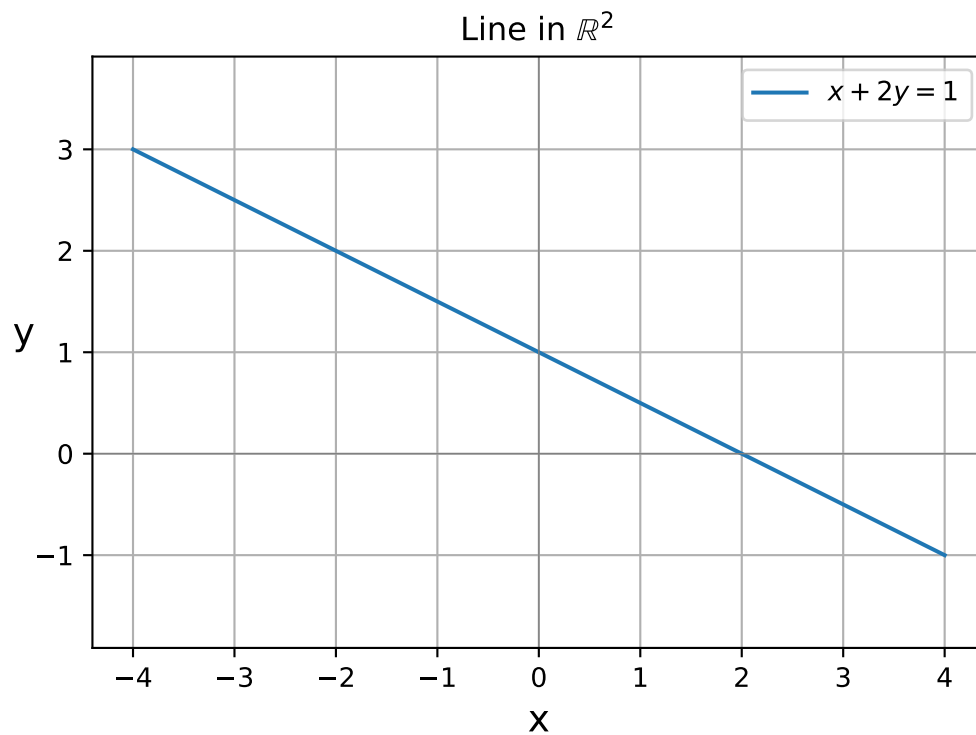


Figure 2.1: The line $x + 2y = 1$

The solution set of the equation

$$x + y + z = 2$$

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

Plane in \mathbb{R}^3

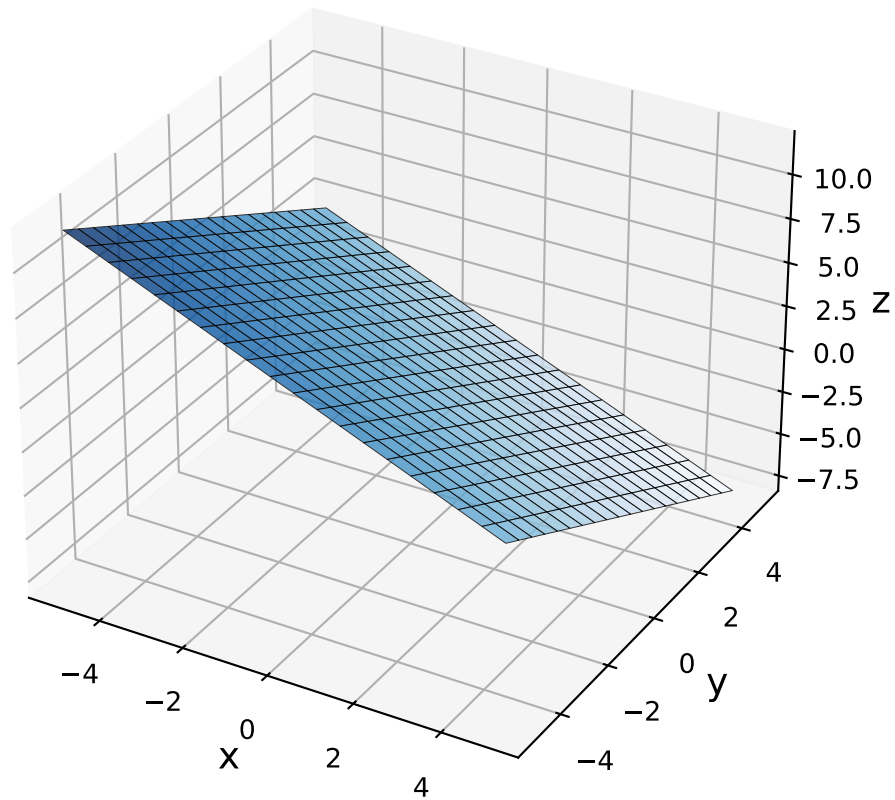


Figure 2.2: The plane $x + y + z = 2$

The above line equation and plane equation are examples of *linear equations*.

i Definition: Linear Equation

For given constants a_1, a_2, \dots, a_n and b in \mathbb{R} we call


$$a_1x_1 + a_2x_2 + \dots + a_nx_n = b$$

a **linear equation** in the variables x_1, x_2, \dots, x_n .

For $n > 3$, graph of a linear equation is called a *hyperplane* in n -dimensional space.

Exercise: Which of the following are linear equations?

- $2x_1 + 3x_2 = 4$
- $x_1 - x_1x_2 = 2$
- $y_1 - 4y_2 + 2y_3 = 0$
- $w - x - 3y + z = 5$
- $x - 2\sqrt{y} = 4$

 Show Answer

Linear:

- $2x_1 + 3x_2 = 4$
- $y_1 - 4y_2 + 2y_3 = 0$
- $w - x - 3y + z = 5$

Nonlinear:

- $x_1 - x_1x_2 = 2$ (contains product of variables)
- $x - 2\sqrt{y} = 4$ (contains square root of a variable)

2.0.2 Cubic Polynomial Interpolation

Let's consider a data science application where linear equations with more 3 variables arise. Consider the problem of finding the cubic polynomial(s)

$$f(x) = \beta_1 + \beta_2x + \beta_3x^2 + \beta_4x^3$$

with a graph that passes through the following points in the xy -plane:

$$(-2, 3), \quad (-1, -6), \quad (1, 0), \quad (3, -2)$$


We seek values of the coefficients $\beta_1, \beta_2, \beta_3, \beta_4$ such that $f(x)$ satisfies:

$$f(-2) = 3, \quad f(-1) = -6, \quad f(1) = 0, \quad f(3) = -2$$

For $f(-2) = 3$ we plug $x = -2$ into $f(x) = \beta_1 + \beta_2 x + \beta_3 x^2 + \beta_4 x^3$ to get the linear equation:

$$\beta_1 - 2\beta_2 + 4\beta_3 - 8\beta_4 = 3$$

Exercise: What linear equations do we get when plugging in the remaining 3 constraints $f(-1) = -6$, $f(1) = 0$, and $f(3) = -2$?

 Show Answer

For $f(-1) = -6$,

$$\beta_1 - \beta_2 + \beta_3 - \beta_4 = -6$$

For $f(1) = 0$,

$$\beta_1 + \beta_2 + \beta_3 + \beta_4 = 0$$

For $f(3) = -2$,

$$\beta_1 + 3\beta_2 + 9\beta_3 + 27\beta_4 = -2$$

Since the cubic must pass through all 4 points, our unknown coefficients $\beta_1, \beta_2, \beta_3, \beta_4$ must satisfy the following system of equations:

$$\begin{array}{rrrrrr} \beta_1 & - & 2\beta_2 & + & 4\beta_3 & - & 8\beta_4 & = & 3 \\ \beta_1 & - & \beta_2 & + & \beta_3 & - & \beta_4 & = & -6 \\ \beta_1 & + & \beta_2 & + & \beta_3 & + & \beta_4 & = & 0 \\ \beta_1 & + & 3\beta_2 & + & 9\beta_3 & + & 27\beta_4 & = & -2 \end{array}$$

We call a system of linear equations a *linear system*. One can show that the above linear system has the *unique solution* given by:

$$\beta_1 = -5, \quad \beta_2 = 4, \quad \beta_3 = 2, \quad \beta_4 = -1$$

Exercise: Verify by plugging in that the above assignment of variables is a solution of the linear system.

💡 Show Answer

$$\begin{array}{rcccccccl} -5 & - & 2(4) & + & 4(2) & - & 8(-1) & = & 3 \\ -5 & - & 4 & + & 2 & - & -1 & = & -6 \\ -5 & + & 4 & + & 2 & + & -1 & = & 0 \\ -5 & + & 3(4) & + & 9(2) & + & 27(-1) & = & -2 \end{array}$$

Since there exists a solution, we call the linear system *consistent*. Since the linear system has a *unique* solution,

$$f(x) = -5 + 4x + 2x^2 - x^3$$

is the *unique* cubic polynomial with a graph that passes through the given points.

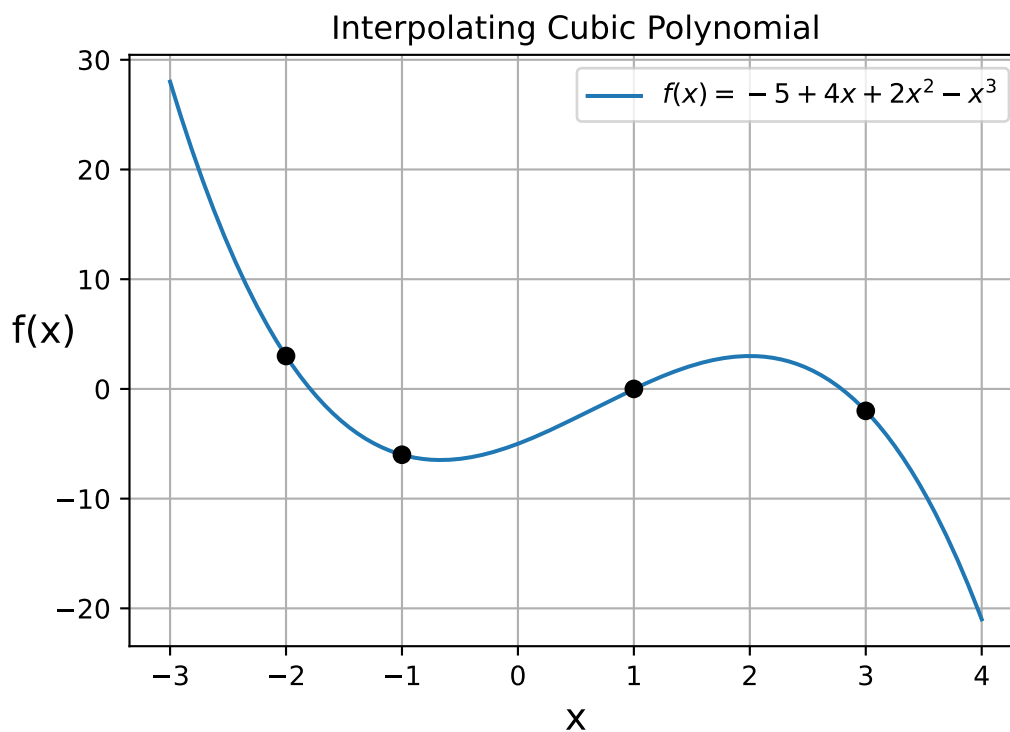


Figure 2.3: Fitted cubic polynomial

As we will see in the next example, not all linear systems have a single unique solution.

2.0.3 Underdetermined Linear System

Consider the problem of finding the cubic polynomial(s)

$$f(x) = \beta_1 + \beta_2 x + \beta_3 x^2 + \beta_4 x^3$$

with a graph that passes through the following points in the xy -plane:

$$(-2, 3), \quad (-1, -6), \quad (1, 0)$$

Since these 3 points are the first 3 points of the previous example, our coefficients $\beta_1, \beta_2, \beta_3, \beta_4$ must satisfy only the first 3 equations of the previous linear system:


$$\begin{array}{rrrrrrcl} \beta_1 & - & 2\beta_2 & + & 4\beta_3 & - & 8\beta_4 & = & 3 \\ \beta_1 & - & \beta_2 & + & \beta_3 & - & \beta_4 & = & -6 \\ \beta_1 & + & \beta_2 & + & \beta_3 & + & \beta_4 & = & 0 \end{array}$$

We call the linear system *underdetermined* since the number of variables (unknowns) is larger than the number of equations (constraints). One can show that linear system has an *infinite* number of solutions which are given by:

$$\beta_1 = -7 - 2t, \quad \beta_2 = 3 - t, \quad \beta_3 = 4 + 2t, \quad \beta_4 = t$$

where t is any real number.

Exercise: Verify by plugging in that the above assignment of variables is a solution of the linear system for any choice of t .

 Show Answer

$$\begin{array}{rrrrrrcl} (-7 - 2t) & - & 2(3 - t) & + & 4(4 + 2t) & - & 8t & = & 3 \\ (-7 - 2t) & - & (3 - t) & + & (4 + 2t) & - & t & = & -6 \\ (-7 - 2t) & + & (3 - t) & + & (4 + 2t) & + & t & = & 0 \end{array}$$

Since the linear system has an infinite number of solutions, there are an *infinite* number of cubic polynomials with a graph that passes through the given points. The figure below shows three such cubic polynomials corresponding to $t = -1$, $t = 0$, and $t = 1$.

As we will see in the next example, some linear systems have *no* solutions.

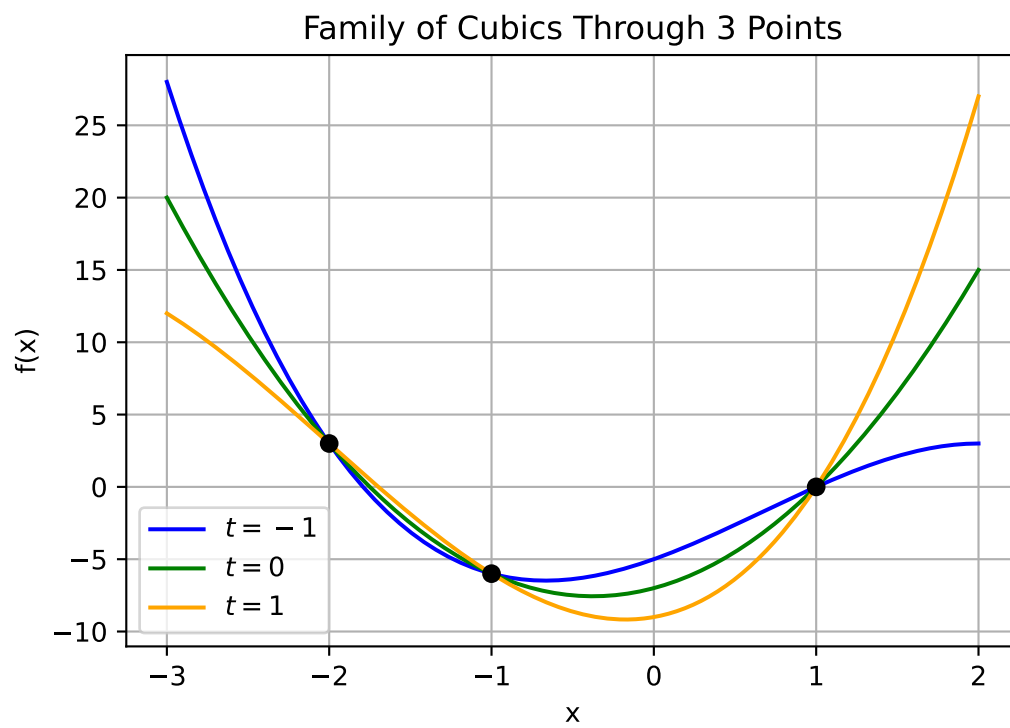


Figure 2.4: Cubic fits for $t = -1, 0, 1$

2.0.4 Overdetermined Linear System

Consider the problem of finding the quadratic polynomial(s)

$$f(x) = \beta_1 + \beta_2 x + \beta_3 x^2$$

with a graph that passes through the 4 points

$$(-2, 3), \quad (-1, -6), \quad (1, 0), \quad (3, -2)$$

Finding the quadratic polynomial(s) corresponds to finding solutions to the linear system:

$$\begin{array}{rrcr} \beta_1 & - & 2\beta_2 & + & 4\beta_3 & = & 3 \\ \beta_1 & - & \beta_2 & + & \beta_3 & = & -6 \\ \beta_1 & + & \beta_2 & + & \beta_3 & = & 0 \\ \beta_1 & + & 3\beta_2 & + & 9\beta_3 & = & -2 \end{array}$$

We call the linear system *overdetermined* since the number of equations (constraints) is larger than the number of variables (unknowns).


Exercise: Show that $\beta_2 = 3$ by subtracting the second equation from the third equation.

 Show Answer

$$0 - (-6) = (\beta_1 + \beta_2 + \beta_3) - (\beta_1 - \beta_2 + \beta_3) = 2\beta_2$$

We conclude that $\beta_2 = 3$.

Exercise: Show that $\beta_3 = -4$ by subtracting the first equation from the fourth equation and using the fact that $\beta_2 = 3$.

 Show Answer

$$-2 - 3 = (\beta_1 + 3\beta_2 + 9\beta_3) - (\beta_1 - 2\beta_2 + 4\beta_3) = 5\beta_2 + 5\beta_3 = 15 + 5\beta_3$$

We conclude that $\beta_3 = -4$.

Exercise: Show that $\beta_1 = 25$ by plugging $\beta_2 = 3$ and $\beta_3 = -4$ into the first equation.

💡 Show Answer

$$3 = \beta_1 - 2\beta_2 + 4\beta_3 = \beta_1 - 6 - 16$$

We conclude that $\beta_1 = 25$.

Plugging $\beta_1 = 25$, $\beta_2 = 3$, and $\beta_3 = -4$ into the second equation gives:

$$\beta_1 - \beta_2 + \beta_3 = 25 - 3 - 4 = 18 \neq -6$$

We conclude that the linear system has *no solution* and thus *no quadratic polynomial* has a graph that passes through the given points. Since there exists no solution, we call the linear system *inconsistent*.

2.0.5 General Linear Systems

Now that we have seen specific example of linear systems, let's look at the general definition:

i Definition: Linear System

A system of m linear equations in n variables x_1, x_2, \dots, x_n is called an $m \times n$ **linear system**.

$$\begin{aligned}a_{11}x_1 + a_{12}x_2 + \cdots + a_{1n}x_n &= b_1 \\a_{21}x_1 + a_{22}x_2 + \cdots + a_{2n}x_n &= b_2 \\&\vdots \\a_{m1}x_1 + a_{m2}x_2 + \cdots + a_{mn}x_n &= b_m\end{aligned}$$

- An **assignment** of the variables x_1, x_2, \dots, x_n is a **solution** of the linear system if it satisfies **all** m equations simultaneously.
- A linear system that has **at least one solution** is called **consistent**.
- A linear system with **no solution** is called **inconsistent**.
- A system is **underdetermined** if there are **more variables than equations** ($n > m$).
- A system is **overdetermined** if there are **more equations than variables** ($m > n$).

Here are some questions about linear systems that we will soon be able to answer.

1. What are the possible sizes of the solution set of a linear system?
2. How do we tell if a linear system is consistent?
3. How can we tell if a consistent linear system has a unique solution?
4. How do we find all solutions of a consistent linear system?
5. How can we find an approximate solution to an inconsistent linear system?

The answers to these questions are not obvious. For example, given what we have seen so far about linear systems it seems intuitive to conclude that any overdetermined linear system is inconsistent. Since the following linear system is consistent with solution $x = 1$, $y = 1$, that intuition is incorrect.

$$\begin{aligned}x + y &= 2 \\x - y &= 0 \\2x + 3y &= 5\end{aligned}$$

To answer these questions and more we will first need to learn about *matrices* and *vectors*. For example, a linear system can be written much more consisely using matrices and vectors as:

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

where:

$$A = \begin{bmatrix} a_{11} & a_{12} & \cdots & a_{1n} \\ a_{21} & a_{22} & \cdots & a_{2n} \\ \vdots & \vdots & \ddots & \vdots \\ a_{m1} & a_{m2} & \cdots & a_{mn} \end{bmatrix}, \quad \mathbf{x} = \begin{bmatrix} x_1 \\ x_2 \\ \vdots \\ x_n \end{bmatrix}, \quad \mathbf{b} = \begin{bmatrix} b_1 \\ b_2 \\ \vdots \\ b_m \end{bmatrix}$$

and

- A is called the *coefficient matrix*
- \mathbf{x} is called the *solution vector*
- \mathbf{b} is called the *right-and-side vector*