

TRANSPOSE OF LORENTZ TRANSFORMATION

JÚLIO C. V. BARCZYSZYN*
Federal University of Santa Catarina
jucazyn@gmail.com

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Good notations often play a central role in making theoretical advances in the physical sciences, where calculations can easily become lengthy. However, certain notations create more confusion than clarity for beginners.

A quick search reveals widespread confusion regarding index notation and the Einstein summation convention among students. In particular, the property

$$(\Lambda^t)^\mu{}_\nu = \Lambda_\nu{}^\mu \quad (1)$$

of the transpose of a matrix representing a Lorentz transformation is often misunderstood (see, for example, [Stack Exchange](#)). Of course, (1) is not the usual definition for the transpose of a matrix. To my surprise, I couldn't find any simple proof of this equality — just interminable discussions in forums. To make things worse, in many places, the discussions ended up being even more confusing. Unsatisfied with the answers out there, I decided to write and share the proof below, which I believe is accessible to physics students.

Before we prove (1), remember that the transpose of any square matrix M , usually denoted by M^t , is defined by

$$(M^t)_{\alpha\beta} = M_{\beta\alpha}. \quad (*)$$

Proposition. *Let Λ be the matrix of a Lorentz transformation. Then,*

$$(\Lambda^t)^\mu{}_\nu = \Lambda_\nu{}^\mu$$

and

$$(\Lambda^t)_\nu{}^\mu = \Lambda^\mu{}_\nu.$$

Proof. Let η denote the Minkowski metric. We'll prove the first one, since the second is analogous. For that, we simply compute

$$\begin{aligned} (\Lambda^t)^\mu{}_\nu &= \eta^{\mu\alpha} (\Lambda^t)_{\alpha\nu} \\ &= \eta^{\mu\alpha} \Lambda_{\nu\alpha} \quad (*) \\ &= \Lambda_\nu{}^\mu. \end{aligned} \quad \square$$

*This is a first draft. Future versions could evolve into lecture notes; who knows.