

CH 2 – System of Linear Equations

Luke Lu • 2026-01-28

Info – Basic Terminology

1. An equation in n variables x_1, \dots, x_n that can be written in the form

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

where a_1, \dots, a_n, b are constants is called a **linear equation**. The constants are called the **coefficients**, b is called the **constant term**

2. A set of m linear equations in the same variables x_1, \dots, x_n is called a **system of m linear equations in n variables**

3. A vector $\vec{s} = \begin{bmatrix} s_1 \\ \dots \\ s_n \end{bmatrix}$ is called a **solution** of a system of m linear equations in n variables if all m equations are satisfied when we set $x_i = s_i \forall 1 \leq i \leq n$. The set of all solutions of a system of linear equations is called the **solution set** of the system.

4. If a system of linear equations has at least one solution, then it is said to be **consistent**. Otherwise, **inconsistent**

Info – Linear Solutions System

If the system of linear equations has two distinct solutions $\vec{s} = \begin{bmatrix} s_1 \\ \dots \\ s_n \end{bmatrix}, \vec{t} = \begin{bmatrix} t_1 \\ \dots \\ t_n \end{bmatrix}$, then for every $c \in \mathbb{R}$, $\vec{s} + c(\vec{s} - \vec{t})$ is a solution, and furthermore these solutions are all distinct.

Solving Systems of Linear Equations

Discussion

$$\begin{cases} 2x_1 + 3x_2 = 6 \\ x_1 - x_2 = 3 \end{cases}$$

If we swap the order of the equations, the solution set does not change.

We can multiply the first equation by a non-zero scalar and get another equivalent system.

We can subtract the first equation from the second equation. We get another equivalent system.

Info – Matrix

The **coefficient matrix** for the system of linear equations

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

is the rectangular array

$$\begin{bmatrix} a_{11} & a_{12} & \dots & a_{1n} \\ a_{21} & a_{22} & \dots & a_{2n} \\ \dots & \dots & \dots & \dots \\ a_{m1} & a_{m2} & \dots & a_{mn} \end{bmatrix}$$

The **augmented matrix** of the system is

$$\left[\begin{array}{cccc|c} a_{11} & a_{12} & \dots & a_{1n} & b_1 \\ a_{21} & a_{22} & \dots & a_{2n} & b_2 \\ \dots & \dots & \dots & \dots & \dots \\ a_{m1} & a_{m2} & \dots & a_{mn} & b_m \end{array} \right]$$

Two matrices A and B are said to be **row equivalent** if there exist a finite sequence of elementary row operations that transform A into B denoted $A \sim B$

Observe that we can express the linear equations :

- Other than from the augmented matrix by $[\vec{a}_1, \vec{a}_2, \dots, \vec{a}_n | \vec{b}]$ where \vec{a}_i be the i -th column of the augmented matrix
- Other than the coefficient matrix by $A = [a_1, a_2, \dots, a_n]$. Thus presenting the augmented matrix by $[A | \vec{b}]$

Info – Three Elementary Row Operations

1. multiplying a row by a non-zero scalar: cR_i
2. adding a multiple of one row to another: $R_i + cR_j$
3. swapping two rows: $R_i \leftrightarrow R_j$

Note: when we perform row operations, the operation indicator should be on the same line with the corresponding row, and the rows get changed is the row that come in first of the indicator

Example:

$$\begin{aligned} 1. \quad \left[\begin{array}{cc|c} 2 & 3 & 6 \\ 1 & -1 & 3 \end{array} \right] \quad R_1 \leftrightarrow R_2 \quad & \left[\begin{array}{cc|c} 1 & -1 & 3 \\ 2 & 3 & 6 \end{array} \right] \quad R_2 - 2R_1 \quad \left[\begin{array}{cc|c} 1 & -1 & 3 \\ 0 & 5 & 0 \end{array} \right] \quad \frac{1}{5}R_2 \quad \left[\begin{array}{cc|c} 1 & -1 & 3 \\ 0 & 1 & 0 \end{array} \right] \\ & R_1 + R_2 \quad \left[\begin{array}{cc|c} 1 & 0 & 3 \\ 0 & 1 & 0 \end{array} \right] \end{aligned}$$

Thus $x_1 = 3, x_2 = 0$

Info – Row Equivalence

If the augmented matrices $[A_1 \mid \vec{b}_1]$ and $[A_2 \mid \vec{b}_2]$ are row equivalent, then the systems of linear equations associated with each augmented matrix are equivalent.

Info – Reduced Row Echelon Form (RREF)

A matrix R is said to be RREF if

1. All rows containing a non-zero entry are above all rows which only contain zeros.
2. The first non-zero entry in each non-zero row is 1, called a **leading one**
3. The leading one in each non-zero row is the right of the leading one in any row above it
4. A leading one is the only non-zero entry in its column

If A is row equivalent to a matrix R in RREF, then we say that R is RREF of A