

The systems

$$x_1 - 2x_2 - 7x_3 = -1 \quad E_1$$

$$-x_1 + 3x_2 + 6x_3 = 0 \quad E_2$$

and

$$x_1 - 2x_2 - 7x_3 = -1 \quad E_1$$

$$x_2 - x_3 = -1 \quad E_2 + E_1$$

have the same solutions:

The systems

$$\begin{array}{rrcrcl} x_1 & - & 2x_2 & - & 7x_3 & = & -1 & E_1 \\ -x_1 & + & 3x_2 & + & 6x_3 & = & 0 & E_2 \end{array}$$

and

$$\begin{array}{rrcrcl} x_1 & - & 2x_2 & - & 7x_3 & = & -1 & E_1 \\ & & x_2 & - & x_3 & = & -1 & E_2 + E_1 \end{array}$$

have the same solutions:

Let  $\vec{x} = (x_1, x_2, x_3)$ .

$\vec{x}$  a solution of  $E_1$  and  $E_2 \implies \vec{x}$  a solution of  $(E_1 \text{ and } E_2)$ .

The systems

$$\begin{array}{rclcl} x_1 & - & 2x_2 & - & 7x_3 & = & -1 & E_1 \\ -x_1 & + & 3x_2 & + & 6x_3 & = & 0 & E_2 \end{array}$$

and

$$\begin{array}{rclcl} x_1 & - & 2x_2 & - & 7x_3 & = & -1 & E_1 \\ & & x_2 & - & x_3 & = & -1 & E_2 + E_1 \end{array}$$

have the same solutions:

Let  $\vec{x} = (x_1, x_2, x_3)$ .

$\vec{x}$  a solution of  $E_1$  and  $E_2 \implies \vec{x}$  a solution of  $(E_1 \text{ and } E_1 + E_2)$ .

Since  $E_2 = (E_1 + E_2) - E_1$ ,

$\vec{x}$  a solution of  $E_1$  and  $E_1 + E_2 \implies \vec{x}$  a solution of  $(E_1 \text{ and } E_2)$

Similarly, the systems

$$x_1 - 2x_2 - 7x_3 = -1 \quad E_1$$

$$x_2 - x_3 = -1 \quad E_2 + E_1$$

and

$$x_1 - 9x_3 = -3 \quad E_1 + 2(E_2 + E_1)$$

$$x_2 - x_3 = -1 \quad E_2 + E_1$$

have the same solutions.

Similarly, the systems

$$\begin{array}{rclcl} x_1 & - & 2x_2 & - & 7x_3 & = & -1 & E_1 \\ & & x_2 & - & x_3 & = & -1 & E_2 + E_1 \end{array}$$

and

$$\begin{array}{rclcl} x_1 & & & - & 9x_3 & = & -3 & E_1 + 2(E_2 + E_1) \\ & & x_2 & - & x_3 & = & -1 & E_2 + E_1 \end{array}$$

have the same solutions.

Psychological step: Stop thinking of  $x_3$  as a variable. Rather, think of it as a **parameter**.

Similarly, the systems

$$\begin{array}{rclcl} x_1 & - & 2x_2 & - & 7x_3 & = & -1 & E_1 \\ & & x_2 & - & x_3 & = & -1 & E_2 + E_1 \end{array}$$

and

$$\begin{array}{rclcl} x_1 & & & - & 9x_3 & = & -3 & E_1 + 2(E_2 + E_1) \\ & & x_2 & - & x_3 & = & -1 & E_2 + E_1 \end{array}$$

have the same solutions.

Psychological step: Stop thinking of  $x_3$  as a variable. Rather, think of it as a **parameter**.

Distinguish variables and the parameter notationally: Set  $t = x_3$ .

$$\begin{array}{rcl} x_1 & = & 9t - 3 \\ x_2 & = & t - 1 \end{array} \quad \begin{array}{l} E_1 + 2(E_2 + E_1) \\ E_2 + E_1 \end{array}$$

Conclusion:  $(x_1, x_2, x_3) = (9t - 3, t - 1, t)$  is a solution **for all**  $t$ .



In particular, the system has **infinitely many solutions**.



In particular, the system has **infinitely many solutions**.

Analyze the above argument: All solutions have the form

$$(x_1, x_2, x_3) = (9t - 3, t - 1, t), \quad (*)$$

for some  $t$ .

In particular, the system has **infinitely many solutions**.

Analyze the above argument: All solutions have the form

$$(x_1, x_2, x_3) = (9t - 3, t - 1, t), \quad (*)$$

for some  $t$ .

$(*)$  is called the **general solution** of the system.