

Worksheet 6 Solutions Tangent & Normal Vectors

MATH 2210, Fall 2018

1. Consider the vector valued function $\mathbf{r}(t) = t^2\mathbf{i} + t\mathbf{j} + \frac{4}{3}\mathbf{k}$.

- (a) Find the unit tangent vector $\mathbf{T}(t)$.

Solution: The unit tangent vector is given by

$$\mathbf{T}(t) = \frac{\mathbf{r}'(t)}{\|\mathbf{r}'(t)\|}$$

We have

$$\begin{aligned}\mathbf{r}'(t) &= 2t\mathbf{i} + \mathbf{j} \\ \|\mathbf{r}'(t)\| &= ((2t)^2 + (1)^2)^{1/2} = (4t^2 + 1)^{1/2}\end{aligned}$$

so the unit tangent vector is

$$\mathbf{T}(t) = \frac{\mathbf{r}'(t)}{\|\mathbf{r}'(t)\|} = \frac{2t\mathbf{i} + \mathbf{j}}{(4t^2 + 1)^{1/2}}$$

- (b) Find the set of parametric equations for the line tangent to the space curve $\mathbf{r}(t)$ at the point $P(1, 1, \frac{4}{3})$

Solution: The point $P(1, 1, \frac{4}{3})$ is given by $\mathbf{r}(1)$ which implies that $t = 1$ so at this point we have

$$\mathbf{T}(1) = \frac{2(1)\mathbf{i} + \mathbf{j}}{(4(1)^2 + 1)^{1/2}} = \frac{1}{\sqrt{5}}(2\mathbf{i} + \mathbf{j})$$

The direction vector for the tangent line is then given by

$$\left\langle \frac{2}{\sqrt{5}}, \frac{1}{\sqrt{5}}, 0 \right\rangle \quad \text{or} \quad \langle 2, 1, 0 \rangle$$

then the parametric equations for the tangent line are given by

$$\begin{aligned}x &= x_0 + at = 1 + 2t \\ y &= y_0 + bt = 1 + t \\ z &= z_0 + ct = \frac{4}{3}\end{aligned}$$

2. Consider the curve $r(t) = \pi \cos(t)\mathbf{i} + \pi \sin(t)\mathbf{j}$.

(a) Find the unit tangent vector $\mathbf{T}(t)$.

Solution: The unit tangent vector is given by

$$\mathbf{T}(t) = \frac{\mathbf{r}'(t)}{\|\mathbf{r}'(t)\|}$$

We have

$$\begin{aligned}\mathbf{r}'(t) &= -\pi \sin(t)\mathbf{i} + \pi \cos(t)\mathbf{j} \\ \|\mathbf{r}'(t)\| &= [(-\pi \sin(t))^2 + (\pi \cos(t))^2]^{1/2} = \pi \\ \mathbf{T}(t) &= \frac{1}{\pi}(-\pi \sin(t)\mathbf{i} + \pi \cos(t)\mathbf{j}) \\ &= -\sin(t)\mathbf{i} + \cos(t)\mathbf{j}\end{aligned}$$

so the unit tangent vector is

$$\mathbf{T}(t) = \frac{\mathbf{r}'(t)}{\|\mathbf{r}'(t)\|} = \frac{2t\mathbf{i} + \mathbf{j}}{(4t^2 + 1)^{1/2}}$$

(b) Find the unit normal vector $N(t)$ for the value $t = \frac{\pi}{6}$.

Solution: The unit normal vector is given by

$$\mathbf{N}(t) = \frac{\mathbf{T}'(t)}{\|\mathbf{T}'(t)\|}$$

we have

$$\begin{aligned}\mathbf{T}'(t) &= -\cos(t)\mathbf{i} + \sin(t)\mathbf{j} \\ \|\mathbf{T}'(t)\| &= (\cos^2(t) + \sin^2(t))^{1/2} = 1\end{aligned}$$

so the unit normal vector is

$$\mathbf{N}(t) = -\cos(t)\mathbf{i} - \sin(t)\mathbf{j}$$

at the value $t = \frac{\pi}{6}$ we have

$$\mathbf{N}\left(\frac{\pi}{6}\right) = -\cos\left(\frac{\pi}{6}\right)\mathbf{i} - \sin\left(\frac{\pi}{6}\right)\mathbf{j} = -\frac{\sqrt{3}}{2}\mathbf{i} - \frac{1}{2}\mathbf{j}$$