MATH 304

Linear Algebra

Lecture 14:
Span (continued).
Linear independence.

Span

Let S be a subset of a vector space V.

Definition. The **span** of the set S is the smallest subspace $W \subset V$ that contains S. If S is not empty then $W = \mathrm{Span}(S)$ consists of all linear combinations $\boxed{r_1\mathbf{v}_1 + r_2\mathbf{v}_2 + \cdots + r_k\mathbf{v}_k}$ such that $\mathbf{v}_1, \ldots, \mathbf{v}_k \in S$ and $r_1, \ldots, r_k \in \mathbb{R}$.

We say that the set S **spans** the subspace W or that S is a **spanning set** for W.

Problem Let $\mathbf{v}_1 = (1, 2, 0)$, $\mathbf{v}_2 = (3, 1, 1)$, and $\mathbf{w} = (4, -7, 3)$. Determine whether $\mathbf{w}$ belongs to $\mathrm{Span}(\mathbf{v}_1, \mathbf{v}_2)$.

We have to check if there exist $r_1, r_2 \in \mathbb{R}$ such that $\mathbf{w} = r_1\mathbf{v}_1 + r_2\mathbf{v}_2$. This vector equation is equivalent to a system of linear equations:

$$\begin{pmatrix} 4 \\ -7 \\ 3 \end{pmatrix} = r_1 \begin{pmatrix} 1 \\ 2 \\ 0 \end{pmatrix} + r_2 \begin{pmatrix} 3 \\ 1 \\ 1 \end{pmatrix} \iff \begin{cases} 4 = r_1 + 3r_2 \\ -7 = 2r_1 + r_2 \\ 3 = 0r_1 + r_2 \end{cases}$$

The system has a unique solution: $r_1 = -5$, $r_2 = 3$. Thus $\mathbf{w} = -5\mathbf{v}_1 + 3\mathbf{v}_2$ is in $\mathrm{Span}(\mathbf{v}_1, \mathbf{v}_2)$.

Problem Let $\mathbf{v}_1 = (2,5)$ and $\mathbf{v}_2 = (1,3)$. Show that $\{\mathbf{v}_1, \mathbf{v}_2\}$ is a spanning set for $\mathbb{R}^2$.

Take any vector $\mathbf{w} = (a,b) \in \mathbb{R}^2$. We have to check that there exist $r_1, r_2 \in \mathbb{R}$ such that

$$\mathbf{w} = r_1\mathbf{v}_1 + r_2\mathbf{v}_2 \iff \begin{cases} 2r_1 + r_2 = a \\ 5r_1 + 3r_2 = b \end{cases}$$

Coefficient matrix: $C = \begin{pmatrix} 2 & 1 \\ 5 & 3 \end{pmatrix}$. $\det C = 1 \neq 0$.

Since the matrix C is invertible, the system has a unique solution for any a and b.
Thus $\mathrm{Span}(\mathbf{v}_1, \mathbf{v}_2) = \mathbb{R}^2$.

Problem Let $\mathbf{v}_1 = (2,5)$ and $\mathbf{v}_2 = (1,3)$. Show that $\{\mathbf{v}_1, \mathbf{v}_2\}$ is a spanning set for $\mathbb{R}^2$.

Alternative solution: First let us show that vectors $\mathbf{e}_1 = (1,0)$ and $\mathbf{e}_2 = (0,1)$ belong to $\mathrm{Span}(\mathbf{v}_1, \mathbf{v}_2)$.

$$\mathbf{e}_1 = r_1\mathbf{v}_1 + r_2\mathbf{v}_2 \iff \begin{cases} 2r_1 + r_2 = 1 \\ 5r_1 + 3r_2 = 0 \end{cases} \iff \begin{cases} r_1 = 3 \\ r_2 = -5 \end{cases}$$

$$\mathbf{e}_2 = r_1\mathbf{v}_1 + r_2\mathbf{v}_2 \iff \begin{cases} 2r_1 + r_2 = 0 \\ 5r_1 + 3r_2 = 1 \end{cases} \iff \begin{cases} r_1 = -1 \\ r_2 = 2 \end{cases}$$

Thus $\mathbf{e}_1 = 3\mathbf{v}_1 - 5\mathbf{v}_2$ and $\mathbf{e}_2 = -\mathbf{v}_1 + 2\mathbf{v}_2$.
Then for any vector $\mathbf{w} = (a,b) \in \mathbb{R}^2$ we have

$$\mathbf{w} = a\mathbf{e}_1 + b\mathbf{e}_2 = a(3\mathbf{v}_1 - 5\mathbf{v}_2) + b(-\mathbf{v}_1 + 2\mathbf{v}_2)$$
$$= (3a - b)\mathbf{v}_1 + (-5a + 2b)\mathbf{v}_2.$$

Problem Let $\mathbf{v}_1 = (2,5)$ and $\mathbf{v}_2 = (1,3)$. Show that $\{\mathbf{v}_1, \mathbf{v}_2\}$ is a spanning set for $\mathbb{R}^2$.

Remarks on the alternative solution:
Notice that $\mathbb{R}^2$ is spanned by vectors $\mathbf{e}_1 = (1,0)$ and $\mathbf{e}_2 = (0,1)$ since $(a,b) = a\mathbf{e}_1 + b\mathbf{e}_2$.

This is why we have checked that vectors $\mathbf{e}_1$ and $\mathbf{e}_2$ belong to $\mathrm{Span}(\mathbf{v}_1, \mathbf{v}_2)$. Then

$$\mathbf{e}_1, \mathbf{e}_2 \in \mathrm{Span}(\mathbf{v}_1, \mathbf{v}_2) \implies \mathrm{Span}(\mathbf{e}_1, \mathbf{e}_2) \subset \mathrm{Span}(\mathbf{v}_1, \mathbf{v}_2)$$
$$\implies \mathbb{R}^2 \subset \mathrm{Span}(\mathbf{v}_1, \mathbf{v}_2) \implies \mathrm{Span}(\mathbf{v}_1, \mathbf{v}_2) = \mathbb{R}^2.$$

In general, to show that $\mathrm{Span}(S_1) = \mathrm{Span}(S_2)$, it is enough to check that $S_1 \subset \mathrm{Span}(S_2)$ and $S_2 \subset \mathrm{Span}(S_1)$.

More properties of span

Let S_0 and S be subsets of a vector space V.

- $S_0 \subset S \implies \mathrm{Span}(S_0) \subset \mathrm{Span}(S)$.
- $\mathrm{Span}(S_0) = V$ and $S_0 \subset S \implies \mathrm{Span}(S) = V$.
- If $\mathbf{v}_0, \mathbf{v}_1, \ldots, \mathbf{v}_k$ is a spanning set for V and $\mathbf{v}_0$ is a linear combination of vectors $\mathbf{v}_1, \ldots, \mathbf{v}_k$ then $\mathbf{v}_1, \ldots, \mathbf{v}_k$ is also a spanning set for V.

Indeed, if $\mathbf{v}_0 = r_1\mathbf{v}_1 + \cdots + r_k\mathbf{v}_k$, then
$t_0\mathbf{v}_0 + t_1\mathbf{v}_1 + \cdots + t_k\mathbf{v}_k = (t_0r_1 + t_1)\mathbf{v}_1 + \cdots + (t_0r_k + t_k)\mathbf{v}_k$.

- $\mathrm{Span}(S_0 \cup \{\mathbf{v}_0\}) = \mathrm{Span}(S_0)$ if and only if $\mathbf{v}_0 \in \mathrm{Span}(S_0)$.

If $\mathbf{v}_0 \in \mathrm{Span}(S_0)$, then $S_0 \cup \{\mathbf{v}_0\} \subset \mathrm{Span}(S_0)$, which implies $\mathrm{Span}(S_0 \cup \{\mathbf{v}_0\}) \subset \mathrm{Span}(S_0)$. On the other hand, $\mathrm{Span}(S_0) \subset \mathrm{Span}(S_0 \cup \{\mathbf{v}_0\})$.

Linear independence

Definition. Let V be a vector space. Vectors $\mathbf{v}_1, \mathbf{v}_2, \dots, \mathbf{v}_k \in V$ are called **linearly dependent** if they satisfy a relation

$$r_1\mathbf{v}_1 + r_2\mathbf{v}_2 + \cdots + r_k\mathbf{v}_k = \mathbf{0},$$

where the coefficients $r_1, \dots, r_k \in \mathbb{R}$ are not all equal to zero. Otherwise vectors $\mathbf{v}_1, \mathbf{v}_2, \dots, \mathbf{v}_k$ are called **linearly independent**. That is, if

$$r_1\mathbf{v}_1 + r_2\mathbf{v}_2 + \cdots + r_k\mathbf{v}_k = \mathbf{0} \implies r_1 = \cdots = r_k = 0.$$

A set $S \subset V$ is **linearly dependent** if one can find some distinct linearly dependent vectors $\mathbf{v}_1, \dots, \mathbf{v}_k$ in S. Otherwise S is **linearly independent**.

Examples of linear independence

- Vectors $\mathbf{e}_1 = (1,0,0)$, $\mathbf{e}_2 = (0,1,0)$, and $\mathbf{e}_3 = (0,0,1)$ in $\mathbb{R}^3$.

$x\mathbf{e}_1 + y\mathbf{e}_2 + z\mathbf{e}_3 = \mathbf{0} \implies (x,y,z) = \mathbf{0}$
$\implies x = y = z = 0$

- Matrices $E_{11} = \begin{pmatrix} 1 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 \end{pmatrix}$, $E_{12} = \begin{pmatrix} 0 & 1 \\ 0 & 0 \end{pmatrix}$, $E_{21} = \begin{pmatrix} 0 & 0 \\ 1 & 0 \end{pmatrix}$, and $E_{22} = \begin{pmatrix} 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 1 \end{pmatrix}$.

$aE_{11} + bE_{12} + cE_{21} + dE_{22} = O \implies \begin{pmatrix} a & b \\ c & d \end{pmatrix} = O$
$\implies a = b = c = d = 0$

Examples of linear independence

- Polynomials $1, x, x^2, \dots, x^n$.

$a_0 + a_1 x + a_2 x^2 + \cdots + a_n x^n = 0$ identically
$\implies a_i = 0$ for $0 \le i \le n$

- The infinite set $\{1, x, x^2, \dots, x^n, \dots\}$.

- Polynomials $p_1(x) = 1$, $p_2(x) = x - 1$, and $p_3(x) = (x-1)^2$.

$a_1 p_1(x) + a_2 p_2(x) + a_3 p_3(x) = a_1 + a_2(x-1) + a_3(x-1)^2 =$
$= (a_1 - a_2 + a_3) + (a_2 - 2a_3)x + a_3 x^2$.

Hence $a_1 p_1(x) + a_2 p_2(x) + a_3 p_3(x) = 0$ identically
$\implies a_1 - a_2 + a_3 = a_2 - 2a_3 = a_3 = 0$
$\implies a_1 = a_2 = a_3 = 0$