12.4: The Cross Product

REVIEW: <u>Determinant of 2×2 and 3×3 matrices.</u>

A **determinant of order 2** is defined by

$$\begin{vmatrix} a & b \\ c & d \end{vmatrix} = ad - bc$$

A **determinant of order 3** is defined by

$$\begin{vmatrix} a_1 & a_2 & a_3 \\ b_1 & b_2 & b_3 \\ c_1 & c_2 & c_3 \end{vmatrix} = a_1 \begin{vmatrix} b_2 & b_3 \\ c_2 & c_3 \end{vmatrix} - a_2 \begin{vmatrix} b_1 & b_3 \\ c_1 & c_3 \end{vmatrix} + a_3 \begin{vmatrix} b_1 & b_2 \\ c_1 & c_2 \end{vmatrix}$$

$$ = a_1 b_2 c_3 - a_1 b_3 c_2 - a_2 b_1 c_3 + a_2 b_3 c_1 + a_3 b_1 c_2 - a_3 b_2 c_1$$

or copy the first two columns onto the end and then multiply along each diagonal and add those that move from left to right and subtract those that move from right to left:

$$\begin{vmatrix} a_1 & a_2 & a_3 \\ b_1 & b_2 & b_3 \\ c_1 & c_2 & c_3 \end{vmatrix} \begin{matrix} a_1 & a_2 \\ b_1 & b_2 \\ c_1 & c_2 \end{matrix} = a_1 b_2 c_3 + a_2 b_3 c_1 + a_3 b_1 c_2 - a_3 b_2 c_1 - a_1 b_3 c_2 - a_2 b_1 c_3$$

• THE CROSS PRODUCT IN COMPONENT FORM:

Given $\mathbf{a} = \langle a_1, a_2, a_3 \rangle$ and $\mathbf{b} = \langle b_1, b_2, b_3 \rangle$. Then the cross product is :

$$\mathbf{a} \times \mathbf{b} = \langle a_2 b_3 - a_3 b_2, a_3 b_1 - a_1 b_3, a_1 b_2 - a_2 b_1 \rangle$$

REMARK 1. The cross product requires both of the vectors to be three dimensional vectors.

REMARK 2. The result of a dot product is a number and the result of a cross product is a VECTOR!!!

To remember the cross product component formula use the fact that the cross product can be represented as the determinant of order 3:

$$\mathbf{a} \times \mathbf{b} = \begin{vmatrix} \mathbf{i} & \mathbf{j} & \mathbf{k} \\ a_1 & a_2 & a_3 \\ b_1 & b_2 & b_3 \end{vmatrix} = \hat{\imath} \begin{vmatrix} a_2 & a_3 \\ b_2 & b_3 \end{vmatrix} - \hat{\jmath} \begin{vmatrix} a_1 & a_3 \\ b_1 & b_3 \end{vmatrix} + \hat{k} \begin{vmatrix} a_1 & a_2 \\ b_1 & b_2 \end{vmatrix}$$

EXAMPLE 3. *If* $\mathbf{a} = \langle -2, 1, 1 \rangle$, $\mathbf{b} = \langle 3, 5, 0 \rangle$, *and* $\mathbf{c} = \langle -4, 2, 2 \rangle$ *compute each of the following:*

(a) $\mathbf{a} \times \mathbf{b} = \begin{vmatrix} \hat{\imath} & \hat{\jmath} & \hat{k} \\ -2 & 1 & 1 \\ 3 & 5 & 0 \end{vmatrix} = \hat{\imath} \begin{vmatrix} 1 & 1 \\ 5 & 0 \end{vmatrix} - \hat{\jmath} \begin{vmatrix} -2 & 1 \\ 3 & 0 \end{vmatrix} + \hat{k} \begin{vmatrix} -2 & 1 \\ 3 & 5 \end{vmatrix}$

$$= \hat{\imath}(1 \cdot 0 - 1 \cdot 5) - \hat{\jmath}(-2 \cdot 0 - 1 \cdot 3) + \hat{k}(-2 \cdot 5 - 1 \cdot 3)$$

$$= -5\hat{\imath} + 3\hat{\jmath} - 13\hat{k} \quad = \langle -5, 3, -13 \rangle$$

(b) $\mathbf{b} \times \mathbf{a} = \begin{vmatrix} \hat{\imath} & \hat{\jmath} & k \\ 3 & 5 & 0 \\ -2 & 1 & 1 \end{vmatrix} = \langle 5, -3, 13 \rangle$

Reason:
$$\begin{vmatrix} a & b \\ c & d \end{vmatrix} = - \begin{vmatrix} c & d \\ a & b \end{vmatrix}$$

(c) $\mathbf{a} \times (5\mathbf{b}) = 5(\vec{a} \times \vec{b}) = 5\langle -5, 3, -13 \rangle = \langle -25, 15, -65 \rangle$

(d) $\vec{b} \times \vec{b} = \begin{vmatrix} \hat{\imath} & \hat{\jmath} & \hat{k} \\ 3 & 5 & 0 \\ 3 & 5 & 0 \end{vmatrix} = \langle 0, 0, 0 \rangle = \vec{0}$, because $\begin{vmatrix} a & b \\ a & b \end{vmatrix} = 0$.

(e) $\mathbf{a} \times \mathbf{c} = \begin{vmatrix} \hat{\imath} & \hat{\jmath} & \hat{u} \\ -2 & 1 & 1 \\ -4 & 2 & 2 \end{vmatrix} = \langle 0, 0, 0 \rangle = \vec{0}$, because $\begin{vmatrix} a & b \\ ka & kb \end{vmatrix} = 0$

$$\vec{a} \parallel \vec{c} \quad (\vec{c} = 2\vec{a})$$

Properties:

(1) $\mathbf{a} \times \mathbf{a} = \mathbf{0}$ $\leftarrow \vec{0}$

(2) $\mathbf{a} \times \mathbf{b} = -\mathbf{b} \times \mathbf{a}$

(3) $(\alpha \mathbf{a}) \times \mathbf{b} = \mathbf{a} \times (\alpha \mathbf{b}) = \alpha(\mathbf{a} \times \mathbf{b}), \quad \alpha \in \mathbb{R}$

(4) $\mathbf{a} \times (\mathbf{b} + \mathbf{c}) = \mathbf{a} \times \mathbf{b} + \mathbf{a} \times \mathbf{c}$

(5) $(\mathbf{a} + \mathbf{b}) \times \mathbf{c} = \mathbf{a} \times \mathbf{c} + \mathbf{b} \times \mathbf{c}$

**EXAMPLE 4.** *Show that if* $\mathbf{a}$ *and* $\mathbf{b}$ *are parallel then* $\mathbf{a} \times \mathbf{b} = \mathbf{0}$.

$$\vec{a} \parallel \vec{b} \implies \vec{b} = k\vec{a} \text{ for some } k \in \mathbb{R}. \implies$$

$$\vec{a} \times \vec{b} = \vec{a} \times (k\vec{a}) \stackrel{(3)}{=\!=} k(\vec{a} \times \vec{a}) \stackrel{(1)}{=} k \cdot \vec{0} = \vec{0}$$

• GEOMETRIC INTERPRETATION OF THE CROSS PRODUCT:

Let θ be the angle between the two nonzero vectors **a** and **b**, $0 \le \theta \le \pi$. Then

1. $|\mathbf{a} \times \mathbf{b}| = |\mathbf{a}| \cdot |\mathbf{b}| \sin\theta =$ *the area of the parallelogram determined by* **a** *and* **b**;

2. $\mathbf{a} \times \mathbf{b}$ is orthogonal to both **a** and **b**;

3. the direction of $\mathbf{a} \times \mathbf{b}$ is determined by "right hand" rule: *if the fingers of your right hand curl through the angle θ from* **a** *to* **b**, *then your thumb points in the direction of* $\mathbf{a} \times \mathbf{b}$.
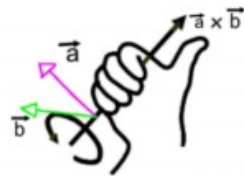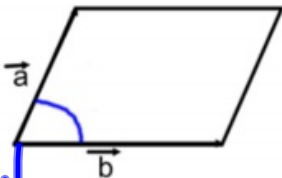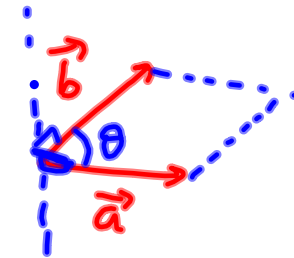
FACT:　　　　$\mathbf{a} \| \mathbf{b} \quad \Leftrightarrow \quad \mathbf{a} \times \mathbf{b} = 0.$

(Note if $\vec{a} = \vec{b} = \vec{0}$, then nothing to proof here).

Ex.4

$\Leftarrow$　$\vec{a} \times \vec{b} = \vec{0} \Rightarrow |\vec{a} \times \vec{b}| = 0 \overset{1.}{\Rightarrow} |\vec{a}| \cdot |\vec{b}| \cdot \sin\theta = 0$
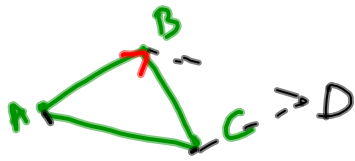
$\neq 0 \quad \neq 0$

$\Rightarrow \sin\theta = 0 \Rightarrow \theta = 0$

$\overset{\|}{\vec{a} \| \vec{b}}$

EXAMPLE 5. *Given the points* $A(1,0,0)$, $B(1,1,1)$ *and* $C(2,-1,3)$. *Find*

(a) *the area of the triangle determined by these points.*

Complete $\triangle ABC$ to the parallelogram $ABCD$.

Then

$$\text{Area}(\triangle ABC) = \frac{1}{2}\,\text{Area}(\square\,ABCD)$$

(→ determined magnitude)

$$= \frac{1}{2}\left|\vec{AB} \times \vec{AC}\right| = \frac{1}{2}\left|\begin{vmatrix} \hat{\imath} & \hat{\jmath} & \hat{k} \\ 0 & 1 & 1 \\ 1 & -1 & 3 \end{vmatrix}\right|$$

(magnitude)

$$\vec{AB} = \langle 0,1,1\rangle$$
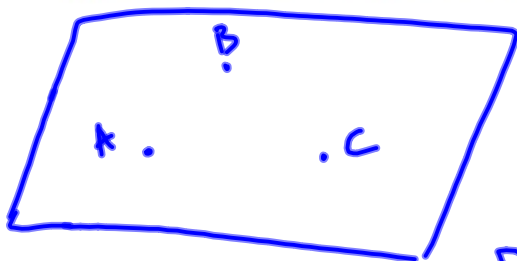$$\vec{AC} = \langle 1,-1,3\rangle$$
$$\vec{AD}$$

$$= \frac{1}{2}\left(\hat{\imath}\begin{vmatrix}1 & 1\\ -1 & 3\end{vmatrix} - \hat{\jmath}\begin{vmatrix}0 & 1\\ 1 & 3\end{vmatrix} + \hat{k}\begin{vmatrix}0 & 1\\ 1 & -1\end{vmatrix}\right)$$

$$= \frac{1}{2}\left(\hat{\imath}(1\cdot3 - 1\cdot(-1)) - \hat{\jmath}(0\cdot3 - 1\cdot1) + \hat{k}(0\cdot(-1) - 1\cdot1)\right) =$$

$$\frac{1}{2}\left|4\hat{\imath} + \hat{\jmath} - \hat{k}\right| = \frac{1}{2}\sqrt{4^2 + 1^2 + (-1)^2} = \frac{\sqrt{18}}{2} = \frac{3\sqrt{2}}{2}\ \text{units}^2$$

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(b) *Find a unit vector* $\hat{n}$ *orthogonal to the plane that contains the points A, B, C.*

It is sufficient to find a unit vector $\hat{n}$ such that

$$\hat{n} \perp \vec{AB} \quad \text{and} \quad \hat{n} \perp \vec{AC}.$$

First find $\vec{n} = \vec{AB} \times \vec{AC}$

then $\vec{n} \perp \vec{AB}$ and $\vec{n} \perp \vec{AC}$.

By part $(\vec{a})$

$$\vec{n} = \vec{AB} \times \vec{AC} = \langle 4, 1, -1 \rangle$$

and $$|\vec{n}| = |\vec{AB} \times \vec{AC}| = 3\sqrt{2} = \frac{3\sqrt{2}\sqrt{2}}{\sqrt{2}} = \frac{6}{\sqrt{2}}$$

$$\hat{n} = \pm \frac{\vec{n}}{|\vec{n}|} = \pm \frac{\langle 4, 1, -1 \rangle}{\frac{6}{\sqrt{2}}} = \pm \frac{\sqrt{2}}{6} \langle 4, 1, -1 \rangle$$

$$= \pm \langle \frac{2\sqrt{2}}{3}, \frac{\sqrt{2}}{6}, -\frac{\sqrt{2}}{6} \rangle$$

- **SCALAR TRIPLE PRODUCT** of the vectors **a**, **b**, **c** is

$$\mathbf{a} \cdot (\mathbf{b} \times \mathbf{c}).$$

vector

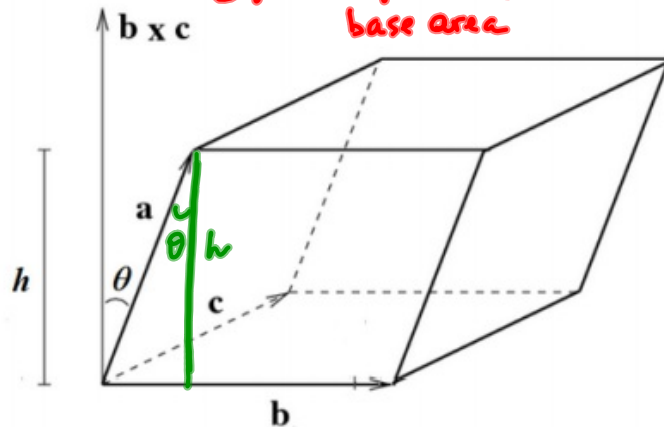Note that the scalar triple product is a NUMBER.

FACTS:

1. $\mathbf{a} \cdot (\mathbf{b} \times \mathbf{c}) = (\mathbf{a} \times \mathbf{b}) \cdot \mathbf{c}$

2. If $\mathbf{a} = \langle a_1, a_2, a_3 \rangle$, $\mathbf{b} = \langle b_1, b_2, b_3 \rangle$ and $\mathbf{c} = \langle c_1, c_2, c_3 \rangle$ then $\mathbf{a} \cdot (\mathbf{b} \times \mathbf{c}) = \begin{vmatrix} a_1 & a_2 & a_3 \\ b_1 & b_2 & b_3 \\ c_1 & c_2 & c_3 \end{vmatrix}$

3. $|\mathbf{a} \cdot (\mathbf{b} \times \mathbf{c})| = $ *the volume of the parallelepiped determined by* **a**, **b**, **c**.

abs. value

$|\vec{a}| \cdot |\vec{b} \times \vec{c}| \cos \theta = h \cdot (\text{base area})$

base area

$h = |\vec{a}| \cos \theta$

EXAMPLE 6. *Determine if the vectors*

$$\mathbf{a} = \langle 0, -9, 18 \rangle, \quad \mathbf{b} = \langle 1, 4, -7 \rangle, \quad \mathbf{c} = \langle 2, -1, 4 \rangle$$

are coplanar (i.e. they lie in the same plane).

Any three vectors are coplanar if and only if their scalar triple product is equal to zero.

$$\vec{a} \cdot (\vec{b} \times \vec{c}) = \begin{vmatrix} 0 & -9 & 18 \\ 1 & 4 & -7 \\ 2 & -1 & 4 \end{vmatrix} = 0 \cdot \begin{vmatrix} 4 & -7 \\ -1 & 4 \end{vmatrix} - (-9) \begin{vmatrix} 1 & -7 \\ 2 & 4 \end{vmatrix} + 18 \begin{vmatrix} 1 & 4 \\ 2 & -1 \end{vmatrix}$$

$$= 9(4 + 14) + 18(-1 - 8)$$

$$= 9 \cdot 18 - 18 \cdot 9 = 0$$

So, $\vec{a}$, $\vec{b}$ and $\vec{c}$ are coplanar.