1.2 The Span of a Set of Vectors

Definition: The ***Span*** of a non-empty set of vectors $S = \{\vec{v}_1, \vec{v}_2, \ldots, \vec{v}_k\}$ from $\mathbb{R}^n$ is the set of ***all possible linear combinations*** of the vectors in the set. We write:

$$\begin{aligned} Span(S) &= Span(\{\vec{v}_1, \vec{v}_2, \ldots, \vec{v}_k\}) \\ &= \{x_1\vec{v}_1 + x_2\vec{v}_2 + \cdots + x_k\vec{v}_k \mid \\ &\qquad x_1, x_2, \ldots, x_k \in \mathbb{R}\}. \end{aligned}$$

We note that the individual vectors $\vec{v}_1, \vec{v}_2, \ldots, \vec{v}_k$ are all members of $Span(S)$, where we let $x_i = 1$ and all the other coefficients 0 in order to produce $\vec{v}_i$. Similarly, the zero vector $\vec{0}_n$ is also a member of $Span(S)$, where we make all the coefficients x_i zero to produce $\vec{0}_n$.

Theorem: In any $\mathbb{R}^n$: $Span\left(\left\{\overrightarrow{0}_n\right\}\right) = \left\{\overrightarrow{0}_n\right\}$.

Theorem: For all $\vec{v}_1, \vec{v}_2, \ldots, \vec{v}_k \in \mathbb{R}^n$:

$$Span\left(\left\{\overrightarrow{0}_n, \vec{v}_1, \vec{v}_2, \ldots, \vec{v}_k\right\}\right)$$
$$= Span(\{\vec{v}_1, \vec{v}_2, \ldots, \vec{v}_k\}).$$

Theorem: $\mathbb{R}^n = Span(\{\vec{e}_1, \vec{e}_2, \ldots, \vec{e}_n\})$.

The Span of One Vector in $\mathbb{R}^2$

Example: Suppose that $\vec{v} = \langle 5, 3 \rangle \in \mathbb{R}^2$.

Describe $Span(\{\vec{v}\})$.

The Span of One Vector in $\mathbb{R}^3$

Example: Suppose that $\vec{w} = \langle -2, 1, -4 \rangle \in \mathbb{R}^3$. Describe $Span(\{\vec{v}\})$

Lines in $\mathbb{R}^n$

Definition — Axiom for a Line:

If $\vec{v} \in \mathbb{R}^n$ is a ***non-zero*** vector, then $Span(\{\vec{v}\})$ is geometrically a ***line*** L in $\mathbb{R}^n$ passing through the origin.

The Span of Two Parallel Vectors

Example: Suppose that $\vec{v} = \langle -15, 10 \rangle$ and $\vec{w} = \langle 12, -8 \rangle \in \mathbb{R}^2$. Describe $Span(\{\vec{u}, \vec{v}\})$.

Theorem: If $\vec{u}$ and $\vec{v}$ are non-zero vectors in some $\mathbb{R}^n$ which are parallel to each other, then:

$$Span(\{\vec{u}, \vec{v}\}) = Span(\{\vec{v}\}) = Span(\{\vec{u}\}).$$

The Span of Two Non-Parallel Vectors in $\mathbb{R}^2$

Example: Describe $Span(\{\langle 5, 3\rangle, \langle -1, 2\rangle\})$ in $\mathbb{R}^2$.

In general:

Theorem: If $\vec{u}, \vec{v} \in \mathbb{R}^2$ are ***non-parallel*** vectors, then:

$$Span(\{\vec{u}, \vec{v}\}) = \mathbb{R}^2.$$

In other words, ***any vector*** $\vec{w} \in \mathbb{R}^2$ can be expressed as a linear combination:

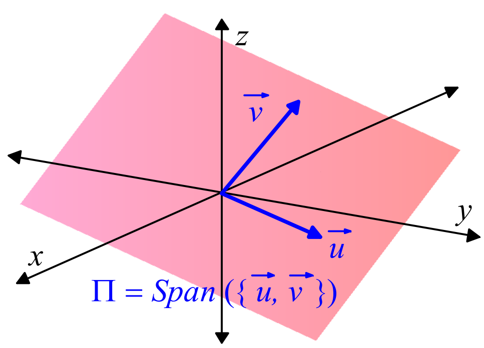
$$\vec{w} = r\vec{u} + s\vec{v},$$

for some scalars r and s.

The Span of Two Non-Parallel Vectors in $\mathbb{R}^3$

Definition — Axiom for a Plane in Cartesian Space:

If $\vec{u}$ and $\vec{v}$ are vectors in $\mathbb{R}^3$ that are ***not parallel*** to each other, then $Span(\{\vec{u}, \vec{v}\})$ is geometrically a ***plane*** Π in Cartesian space that passes through the origin (Π is the capital form of the lowercase Greek letter π).



$$Span(\{\vec{u}, \vec{v}\}) = \Pi$$

Example: $Span(\{\langle -2, 1, -3\rangle, \langle 5, 4, -3\rangle\})$.

The Cartesian Equation of a Plane

Definition: The ***Cartesian equation*** of a plane through the ***origin*** in Cartesian space, given in the form $\Pi = Span(\{\vec{u}, \vec{v}\})$, where $\vec{u}$ and $\vec{v}$ are not parallel, has the form:

$$ax + by + cz = 0,$$

for some constants, a, b and c, where at least one coefficient is non-zero.

Translation of a Span

$$Q = \{\vec{q} + \vec{v} \,|\, \vec{v} \in Span(S)\},$$

for some ***fixed*** non-zero vector $\vec{q} \in \mathbb{R}^n$.

General Lines in $\mathbb{R}^n$

Definitions: A ***line*** L in $\mathbb{R}^n$ is the translate of the Span of a single ***non-zero*** vector $\vec{d} \in \mathbb{R}^n$:

$$L = \left\{ \vec{x}_p + t\vec{d} \,\middle|\, t \in \mathbb{R} \right\},$$

for some vector $\vec{x}_p \in \mathbb{R}^n$. We may think of $\vec{d}$ as a ***direction vector*** of L, and any non-zero multiple of $\vec{d}$ can also be used as a direction vector for L.

We see that by setting t to zero that $\vec{x}_p$ is a ***particular*** vector on the line L. We will also say that two ***distinct*** lines are ***parallel*** to each other if they are different translates of the same line through the origin.

General Lines in $\mathbb{R}^3$

Example: Consider the line L in Cartesian space passing through the point $(-5, 2, -3)$ and pointing in the direction of $\langle 2, 4, -7\rangle$.

Definition: A line L in Cartesian space passing through the point (x_0, y_0, z_0), and with non-zero direction vector $\vec{d} = \langle a, b, c\rangle$ can be specified using a ***vector equation***, in the form:

$$\langle x, y, z\rangle = \langle x_0, y_0, z_0\rangle + t\langle a, b, c\rangle, \text{ where } t \in \mathbb{R}.$$

If ***none*** of the components of $\vec{d}$ are zero, we can obtain ***symmetric equations*** for L, of the form:

$$\frac{x - x_0}{a} = \frac{y - y_0}{b} = \frac{z - z_0}{c}.$$

General Planes in $\mathbb{R}^n$

Definition: A ***plane*** Π in $\mathbb{R}^n$ is the translate of a Span of two ***non-parallel*** vectors $\vec{u}$ and $\vec{v} \in \mathbb{R}^n$:

$$\Pi = \{\vec{x} = \vec{x}_p + r\vec{u} + s\vec{v} \mid r, s \in \mathbb{R}\},$$

for some $\vec{x}_p \in \mathbb{R}^n$.

Some creative ways to specify a plane in Cartesian space:

- requiring the plane to contain three non-collinear points.
- requiring the plane to contain two intersecting lines.
- requiring the plane to contain two parallel lines.

Example: Find parametric equations and a Cartesian equation for the plane Π passing through $A(1, -3, 2)$, $B(-1, -2, 1)$ and $C(2, 3, -1)$.

Definition: A plane Π in Cartesian space can be specified using a ***Cartesian equation***, in the form:

$$ax + by + cz = d,$$

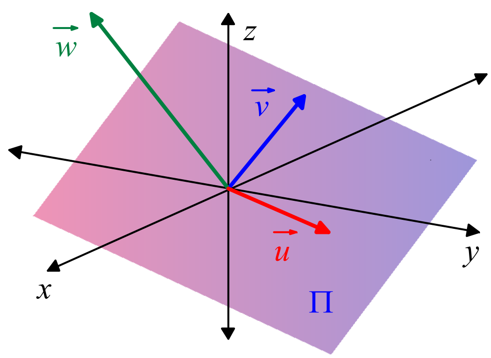
for some constants, a, b, c and d, where either a or b or c is non-zero. It is not unique, because we can multiply all the coefficients in the equation by the same non-zero constant k, and the resulting equation will again be a Cartesian equation for Π. The plane passes through the origin ***if and only if*** $d = 0$.

The Span of Three Non-Coplanar Vectors

Theorem: If $\vec{u}$, $\vec{v}$ and $\vec{w}$ are ***non-coplanar*** vectors in $\mathbb{R}^3$, that is, none of these vectors is on the plane determined by the two others, then:

$$Span(\{\vec{u}, \vec{v}, \vec{w}\}) = \mathbb{R}^3.$$

In other words, any vector $\vec{z} \in \mathbb{R}^3$ can be expressed as a linear combination, $\vec{z} = r\vec{u} + s\vec{v} + t\vec{w}$, for some scalars r, s and t.



If $\vec{u}$, $\vec{v}$ and $\vec{w}$ Are *Non-Coplanar* Vectors in $\mathbb{R}^3$,

Then $Span(\{\vec{u}, \vec{v}, \vec{w}\}) = \mathbb{R}^3$