Vectors & Scalars

Vectors

$\mathbb{R}^2$ is the set of all pairs of real numbers. In the context of drawing graphs, the objects in $\mathbb{R}^2$ are called points, and pairs are written left-to-right, so that $(3, 2)$ is the point in $\mathbb{R}^2$ whose x-coordinate equals 3 and whose y-coordinate equals 2.

In the context of linear algebra, the objects in $\mathbb{R}^2$ are called *vectors*, and instead of being written left-to-right, they are usually written top-to-bottom. Written in this way, the vector in $\mathbb{R}^2$ whose x-coordinate is 3 and whose y-coordinate is 2 is

$$\begin{pmatrix} 3 \\ 2 \end{pmatrix}$$

$\mathbb{R}^3$ is the set of all "triples" of real numbers. An object in $\mathbb{R}^3$ – also called a vector – has an x-coordinate, a y-coordinate, and a z-coordinate. When writing vectors in $\mathbb{R}^3$, the x-coordinate is on top, the y-coordinate is directly below, and the z-coordinate is on the bottom. Thus

$$\begin{pmatrix} 5 \\ 0 \\ -1 \end{pmatrix}$$

is the vector in $\mathbb{R}^3$ where $x = 5$, $y = 0$, and $z = -1$.

Vector addition

To add two vectors in $\mathbb{R}^2$ – or two vectors in $\mathbb{R}^3$ – add each of their coordinates.

Examples.

$$\begin{pmatrix} -5 \\ 1 \end{pmatrix} + \begin{pmatrix} 4 \\ 2 \end{pmatrix} = \begin{pmatrix} -5+4 \\ 1+2 \end{pmatrix} = \begin{pmatrix} -1 \\ 3 \end{pmatrix}$$

and

$$\begin{pmatrix} 4 \\ 2 \\ 6 \end{pmatrix} + \begin{pmatrix} 3 \\ -8 \\ 0 \end{pmatrix} = \begin{pmatrix} 4+3 \\ 2-8 \\ 6+0 \end{pmatrix} = \begin{pmatrix} 7 \\ -6 \\ 6 \end{pmatrix}$$

Scalar multiplication

In linear algebra, real numbers are often called *scalars*. You cannot multiply two vectors, but you can multiply a scalar and a vector. To do so, multiply every coordinate in the vector by the scalar.

Examples.

$$2\begin{pmatrix} 7 \\ -3 \end{pmatrix} = \begin{pmatrix} 2(7) \\ 2(-3) \end{pmatrix} = \begin{pmatrix} 14 \\ -6 \end{pmatrix}$$

and

$$5\begin{pmatrix} -1 \\ 0 \\ 4 \end{pmatrix} = \begin{pmatrix} 5(-1) \\ 5(0) \\ 5(4) \end{pmatrix} = \begin{pmatrix} -5 \\ 0 \\ 20 \end{pmatrix}$$

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Exercises

1.) Find

$$\begin{pmatrix} -5 \\ 1 \end{pmatrix} + \begin{pmatrix} 4 \\ 2 \end{pmatrix}$$

2.) Find

$$\begin{pmatrix} 4 \\ 2 \\ 6 \end{pmatrix} + \begin{pmatrix} 3 \\ -8 \\ 0 \end{pmatrix}$$

3.) Find

$$2 \begin{pmatrix} 7 \\ -3 \end{pmatrix}$$

4.) Find

$$5 \begin{pmatrix} -1 \\ 0 \\ 4 \end{pmatrix}$$