Example This is not a subspace of $\mathbb{R}^3$.

$$T = \{ \begin{pmatrix} x \\ y \\ z \end{pmatrix} \mid x + y + z = 1 \}$$

It is a subset of $\mathbb{R}^3$ but it is not a vector space. One condition that it violates is that it is not closed under vector addition: here are two elements of T that sum to a vector that is not an element of T.

$$\begin{pmatrix} 1 \\ 0 \\ 0 \end{pmatrix} + \begin{pmatrix} 0 \\ 1 \\ 0 \end{pmatrix} = \begin{pmatrix} 1 \\ 1 \\ 0 \end{pmatrix}$$

(Another reason that it is not a vector space is that it does not satisfy condition (6). Still another is that it does not contain the zero vector.)

Example The vector space of quadratic polynomials $\mathcal{P}_2 = \{a_0 + a_1x + a_2x^2 \mid a_0, a_1, a_2 \in \mathbb{R}\}$ has a subspace comprised of the linear polynomials $L = \{b_0 + b_1x \mid b_0, b_1 \in \mathbb{R}\}$. By the prior result, to verify that we need only check closure under linear combinations of two members.

$$r(b_0 + b_1x) + s(c_0 + c_1x) = (rb_0 + sc_0) + (rb_1 + sc_1)x$$

The right side is a linear polynomial with real coefficients, and so is a member of L. Thus L is a subspace of $\mathcal{P}_2$.

Example Another subspace of $\mathcal{P}_2$ is the set of quadratic polynomials having three equal coefficients.

$$M = \{a + ax + ax^2 \mid a \in \mathbb{R}\} = \{(1 + x + x^2)a \mid a \in \mathbb{R}\}$$

Verify that it is a subspace by considering a linear combination of two of its members (under the inherited operations).

$$r(a + ax + ax^2) + s(b + bx + bx^2) = (ra + sb) + (ra + sb)x + (ra + sb)x^2$$

The result is a quadratic polynomial with three equal coefficients and so M is closed under linear combinations.

Each of the above examples of subspaces parametrizes the description.

Example This set is a plane inside of $\mathbb{R}^3$.

$$P = \{ \begin{pmatrix} x \\ y \\ z \end{pmatrix} \mid 2x - y + z = 0 \}$$

We could verify that it is a subspace by checking that it is closed under linear combination as above. That's easier if we first parametrize the one-equation linear system $2x - y + z = 0$ using the free variables y and z.

$$P = \{ \begin{pmatrix} (1/2)y - (1/2)z \\ y \\ z \end{pmatrix} \mid y, z \in \mathbb{R} \} = \{ \begin{pmatrix} 1/2 \\ 1 \\ 0 \end{pmatrix} y + \begin{pmatrix} -1/2 \\ 0 \\ 1 \end{pmatrix} z \mid y, z \in \mathbb{R} \}$$

Now we've described each member of P as a linear combination of those two. Verifying that P is closed then involves taking a linear combination of linear combinations, which gives a linear combination.

Span

2.13 *Definition* The *span* (or *linear closure*) of a nonempty subset S of a vector space is the set of all linear combinations of vectors from S.

$$[S] = \{c_1\vec{s}_1 + \cdots + c_n\vec{s}_n \mid c_1, \ldots, c_n \in \mathbb{R} \text{ and } \vec{s}_1, \ldots, \vec{s}_n \in S\}$$

The span of the empty subset of a vector space is its trivial subspace.

No notation for the span is completely standard. The square brackets used here are common but so are 'span(S)' and 'sp(S)'.

Example Inside the vector space of all two-wide row vectors, the span of this one-element set

$$S = \{\begin{pmatrix}1 & 2\end{pmatrix}\}$$

is this.

$$[S] = \{\begin{pmatrix}a & 2a\end{pmatrix} \mid a \in \mathbb{R}\} = \{\begin{pmatrix}1 & 2\end{pmatrix}a \mid a \in \mathbb{R}\}$$

Example This is a subset of $\mathbb{R}^3$.

$$\hat{S} = \{ \begin{pmatrix} 1 \\ -1 \\ 0 \end{pmatrix}, \begin{pmatrix} 1 \\ 1 \\ 0 \end{pmatrix} \}$$

Any vector in the xy-plane is a member of the span $[S]$ because any such vector is a combination of the two; for instance, this system has a solution

$$\begin{pmatrix} 3 \\ 2 \\ 0 \end{pmatrix} = \begin{pmatrix} 1 \\ -1 \\ 0 \end{pmatrix} c_1 + \begin{pmatrix} 1 \\ 1 \\ 0 \end{pmatrix} c_2$$

(the top two rows gives a linear system with a unique solution). But vectors not in the xy-plane are not in the span. For instance, this system does not have a solution.

$$\begin{pmatrix} -1 \\ -2 \\ -3 \end{pmatrix} = \begin{pmatrix} 1 \\ -1 \\ 0 \end{pmatrix} c_1 + \begin{pmatrix} 1 \\ 1 \\ 0 \end{pmatrix} c_2$$

2.15 *Lemma* In a vector space, the span of any subset is a subspace.

Proof If the subset S is empty then by definition its span is the trivial subspace. If S is not empty then by Lemma 2.9 we need only check that the span $[S]$ is closed under linear combinations of pairs of elements. For a pair of vectors from that span, $\vec{v} = c_1\vec{s}_1 + \cdots + c_n\vec{s}_n$ and $\vec{w} = c_{n+1}\vec{s}_{n+1} + \cdots + c_m\vec{s}_m$, a linear combination

$$\begin{aligned} p\cdot(c_1\vec{s}_1 + \cdots + c_n\vec{s}_n) + r\cdot(c_{n+1}\vec{s}_{n+1} + \cdots + c_m\vec{s}_m) \\ = pc_1\vec{s}_1 + \cdots + pc_n\vec{s}_n + rc_{n+1}\vec{s}_{n+1} + \cdots + rc_m\vec{s}_m \end{aligned}$$

is a linear combination of elements of S and so is an element of $[S]$ (possibly some of the $\vec{s}_i$'s from $\vec{v}$ equal some of the $\vec{s}_j$'s from $\vec{w}$ but that does not matter). QED