3.1 Introduction to Determinants

Notation: A_{ij} is the matrix obtained from matrix A by deleting the ith row and jth column of A.

EXAMPLE:

$$A = \begin{bmatrix} 1 & 2 & 3 & 4 \\ 5 & 6 & 7 & 8 \\ 9 & 10 & 11 & 12 \\ 13 & 14 & 15 & 16 \end{bmatrix} \qquad A_{23} = \begin{bmatrix} & & \\ & & \\ & & \end{bmatrix}$$

Recall that $\det\begin{bmatrix} a & b \\ c & d \end{bmatrix} = ad - bc$ and we let $\det[a] = a$.

For $n \geq 2$, the **determinant** of an $n \times n$ matrix $A = [a_{ij}]$ is given by

$$\det A = a_{11}\det A_{11} - a_{12}\det A_{12} + \cdots + (-1)^{1+n}a_{1n}\det A_{1n}$$

$$= \sum_{j=1}^{n}(-1)^{1+j}a_{1j}\det A_{1j}$$

EXAMPLE: Compute the determinant of $A = \begin{bmatrix} 1 & 2 & 0 \\ 3 & -1 & 2 \\ 2 & 0 & 1 \end{bmatrix}$

Solution

$$\det A = 1\det\begin{bmatrix} -1 & 2 \\ 0 & 1 \end{bmatrix} - 2\det\begin{bmatrix} 3 & 2 \\ 2 & 1 \end{bmatrix} + 0\det\begin{bmatrix} 3 & -1 \\ 2 & 0 \end{bmatrix}$$

$$= \underline{\hspace{8cm}} = \underline{\hspace{1.5cm}}$$

Common notation: $\det\begin{bmatrix} 3 & 2 \\ 2 & 1 \end{bmatrix} = \begin{vmatrix} 3 & 2 \\ 2 & 1 \end{vmatrix}$.

So

$$\begin{vmatrix} 1 & 2 & 0 \\ 3 & -1 & 2 \\ 2 & 0 & 1 \end{vmatrix} = 1\begin{vmatrix} -1 & 2 \\ 0 & 1 \end{vmatrix} - 2\begin{vmatrix} 3 & 2 \\ 2 & 1 \end{vmatrix} + 0\begin{vmatrix} 3 & -1 \\ 2 & 0 \end{vmatrix}$$

The (**i**, **j**)**-cofactor** of A is the number C_{ij} where $C_{ij} = (-1)^{i+j}\det A_{ij}$.

$$\begin{vmatrix} 1 & 2 & 0 \\ 3 & -1 & 2 \\ 2 & 0 & 1 \end{vmatrix} = 1C_{11} + 2C_{12} + 0C_{13}$$

(cofactor expansion across row 1)

THEOREM 1 The determinant of an $n \times n$ matrix A can be computed by a cofactor expansion across any row or down any column:

$$\det A = a_{i1}C_{i1} + a_{i2}C_{i2} + \cdots + a_{in}C_{in} \qquad \text{(expansion across row } i\text{)}$$

$$\det A = a_{1j}C_{1j} + a_{2j}C_{2j} + \cdots + a_{nj}C_{nj} \qquad \text{(expansion down column } j\text{)}$$

Use a matrix of signs to determine $(-1)^{i+j}$

$$\begin{bmatrix} + & - & + & \cdots \\ - & + & - & \cdots \\ + & - & + & \cdots \\ \vdots & \vdots & \vdots & \ddots \end{bmatrix}$$

EXAMPLE: Compute the determinant of $A = \begin{bmatrix} 1 & 2 & 0 \\ 3 & -1 & 2 \\ 2 & 0 & 1 \end{bmatrix}$ using cofactor expansion down column 3.

Solution

$$\begin{vmatrix} 1 & 2 & 0 \\ 3 & -1 & 2 \\ 2 & 0 & 1 \end{vmatrix} = 0\begin{vmatrix} 3 & -1 \\ 2 & 0 \end{vmatrix} - 2\begin{vmatrix} 1 & 2 \\ 2 & 0 \end{vmatrix} + 1\begin{vmatrix} 1 & 2 \\ 3 & -1 \end{vmatrix} = 1.$$

EXAMPLE: Compute the determinant of $A = \begin{bmatrix} 1 & 2 & 3 & 4 \\ 0 & 2 & 1 & 5 \\ 0 & 0 & 2 & 1 \\ 0 & 0 & 3 & 5 \end{bmatrix}$

Solution

$$\begin{vmatrix} 1 & 2 & 3 & 4 \\ 0 & 2 & 1 & 5 \\ 0 & 0 & 2 & 1 \\ 0 & 0 & 3 & 5 \end{vmatrix}$$

$$= 1\begin{vmatrix} 2 & 1 & 5 \\ 0 & 2 & 1 \\ 0 & 3 & 5 \end{vmatrix} - 0\begin{vmatrix} 2 & 3 & 4 \\ 0 & 2 & 1 \\ 0 & 3 & 5 \end{vmatrix} + 0\begin{vmatrix} 2 & 3 & 4 \\ 2 & 1 & 5 \\ 0 & 3 & 5 \end{vmatrix} - 0\begin{vmatrix} 2 & 3 & 4 \\ 2 & 1 & 5 \\ 0 & 2 & 1 \end{vmatrix}$$

$$= 1 \cdot 2\begin{vmatrix} 2 & 1 \\ 3 & 5 \end{vmatrix} = 14$$

Method of cofactor expansion is not practical for large matrices - see Numerical Note on page 190.

Triangular Matrices:

$$\begin{bmatrix} * & * & \cdots & * & * \\ 0 & * & \cdots & * & * \\ 0 & 0 & \ddots & * & * \\ 0 & 0 & 0 & * & * \\ 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & * \end{bmatrix} \qquad \begin{bmatrix} * & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 \\ * & * & 0 & 0 & 0 \\ * & * & \ddots & 0 & 0 \\ * & * & \cdots & * & 0 \\ * & * & \cdots & * & * \end{bmatrix}$$

(upper triangular) (lower triangular)

THEOREM 2: If A is a triangular matrix, then $\det A$ is the product of the main diagonal entries of A.

EXAMPLE:

$$\begin{vmatrix} 2 & 3 & 4 & 5 \\ 0 & 1 & 2 & 3 \\ 0 & 0 & -3 & 5 \\ 0 & 0 & 0 & 4 \end{vmatrix} = \underline{\hspace{6cm}} = -24$$