Algebraic Properties of Matrices

Properties of Matrix Addition and Scalar Multiplication

The following theorem lists the basic algebraic properties of the matrix operations.

THEOREM 1.4.1 Properties of Matrix Arithmetic

Assuming that the sizes of the matrices are such that the indicated operations can be performed, the following rules of matrix arithmetic are valid.

(a) $A + B = B + A$ **[Commutative law for matrix addition]**

(b) $A + (B + C) = (A + B) + C$ **[Associative law for matrix addition]**

(c) $A(BC) = (AB)C$ **[Associative law for matrix multiplication]**

(d) $A(B + C) = AB + AC$ **[Left distributive law]**

(e) $(B + C)A = BA + CA$ **[Right distributive law]**

(f) $A(B - C) = AB - AC$

(g) $(B - C)A = BA - CA$

(h) $a(B + C) = aB + aC$

(i) $a(B - C) = aB - aC$

(j) $(a + b)C = aC + bC$

(k) $(a - b)C = aC - bC$

(l) $a(bC) = (ab)C$

(m) $a(BC) = (aB)C = B(aC)$

Remark: you know that in real arithmetic it is always true that $ab = ba$, which is called the *commutative law for multiplication*. In matrix arithmetic, however, the equality of AB and BA can fail for three possible reasons:

1. AB may be defined and BA may not (for example, if A is 2×3 and B is 3×4).
2. AB and BA may both be defined, but they may have different sizes (for example, if A is 2×3 and B is 3×2).
3. AB and BA may both be defined and have the same size, but the two products may be different (as illustrated in the next example).

▶ EXAMPLE 2 Order Matters in Matrix Multiplication

Consider the matrices

$$A = \begin{bmatrix} -1 & 0 \\ 2 & 3 \end{bmatrix} \quad \text{and} \quad B = \begin{bmatrix} 1 & 2 \\ 3 & 0 \end{bmatrix}$$

Multiplying gives

$$AB = \begin{bmatrix} -1 & -2 \\ 11 & 4 \end{bmatrix} \quad \text{and} \quad BA = \begin{bmatrix} 3 & 6 \\ -3 & 0 \end{bmatrix}$$

Thus, $AB \neq BA$. ◀

Zero Matrices A matrix whose entries are all zero is called a ***zero matrix***. Some examples are

$$\begin{bmatrix} 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 \end{bmatrix}, \quad \begin{bmatrix} 0 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & 0 \end{bmatrix}, \quad \begin{bmatrix} 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 \end{bmatrix}, \quad \begin{bmatrix} 0 \\ 0 \\ 0 \\ 0 \end{bmatrix}, \quad [0]$$

We will denote a zero matrix by 0 unless it is important to specify its size, in which case we will denote the $m \times n$ zero matrix by $0_{m \times n}$.

It should be evident that if A and 0 are matrices with the same size, then

$$A + 0 = 0 + A = A$$

Thus, 0 plays the same role in this matrix equation that the number 0 plays in the numerical equation $a + 0 = 0 + a = a$.

The following theorem lists the basic properties of zero matrices. Since the results should be self-evident, we will omit the formal proofs.

THEOREM 1.4.2 Properties of Zero Matrices

If c is a scalar, and if the sizes of the matrices are such that the operations can be perfomed, then:

(*a*) $A + 0 = 0 + A = A$

(*b*) $A - 0 = A$

(*c*) $A - A = A + (-A) = 0$

(*d*) $0A = 0$

(*e*) *If* $cA = 0$, *then* $c = 0$ *or* $A = 0$.

Since we know that the commutative law of real arithmetic is not valid in matrix arithmetic, it should not be surprising that there are other rules that fail as well. For example, consider the following two laws of real arithmetic:

- If $ab = ac$ and $a \neq 0$, then $b = c$. **[The cancellation law]**
- If $ab = 0$, then at least one of the factors on the left is 0.

The next two examples show that these laws are not true in matrix arithmetic.

▶ EXAMPLE 3 Failure of the Cancellation Law

Consider the matrices

$$A = \begin{bmatrix} 0 & 1 \\ 0 & 2 \end{bmatrix}, \quad B = \begin{bmatrix} 1 & 1 \\ 3 & 4 \end{bmatrix}, \quad C = \begin{bmatrix} 2 & 5 \\ 3 & 4 \end{bmatrix}$$

We leave it for you to confirm that

$$AB = AC = \begin{bmatrix} 3 & 4 \\ 6 & 8 \end{bmatrix}$$

Although $A \neq 0$, canceling A from both sides of the equation $AB = AC$ would lead to the incorrect conclusion that $B = C$. Thus, the cancellation law does not hold, in general, for matrix multiplication (though there may be particular cases where it is true).

▶ EXAMPLE 4 A Zero Product with Nonzero Factors

Here are two matrices for which $AB = 0$, but $A \neq 0$ and $B \neq 0$:

$$A = \begin{bmatrix} 0 & 1 \\ 0 & 2 \end{bmatrix}, \quad B = \begin{bmatrix} 3 & 7 \\ 0 & 0 \end{bmatrix} \blacktriangleleft$$

Identity Matrices A square matrix with 1's on the main diagonal and zeros elsewhere is called an ***identity matrix***. Some examples are

$$[1], \quad \begin{bmatrix} 1 & 0 \\ 0 & 1 \end{bmatrix}, \quad \begin{bmatrix} 1 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 1 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & 1 \end{bmatrix}, \quad \begin{bmatrix} 1 & 0 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 1 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & 1 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & 0 & 1 \end{bmatrix}$$

An identity matrix is denoted by the letter I. If it is important to emphasize the size, we will write I_n for the $n \times n$ identity matrix.

if A is any $m \times n$ matrix, then

$$AI_n = A \quad \text{and} \quad I_m A = A$$

Thus, the identity matrices play the same role in matrix arithmetic that the number 1 plays in the numerical equation $a \cdot 1 = 1 \cdot a = a$.

EXAMPLE 11 The Square of a Matrix Sum

In real arithmetic, where we have a commutative law for multiplication, we can write

$$(a+b)^2 = a^2 + ab + ba + b^2 = a^2 + ab + ab + b^2 = a^2 + 2ab + b^2$$

However, in matrix arithmetic, where we have no commutative law for multiplication, the best we can do is to write

$$(A+B)^2 = A^2 + AB + BA + B^2$$

It is only in the special case where A and B *commute* (i.e., $AB = BA$) that we can go a step further and write

$$(A+B)^2 = A^2 + 2AB + B^2$$

Matrix Polynomials If A is a square matrix, say $n \times n$, and if

$$p(x) = a_0 + a_1x + a_2x^2 + \cdots + a_mx^m$$

is any polynomial, then we define the $n \times n$ matrix $p(A)$ to be

$$p(A) = a_0I + a_1A + a_2A^2 + \cdots + a_mA^m \qquad (3)$$

where I is the $n \times n$ identity matrix; that is, $p(A)$ is obtained by substituting A for x and replacing the constant term a_0 by the matrix a_0I. An expression of form (3) is called a ***matrix polynomial in A***.

EXAMPLE 12 A Matrix Polynomial

Find $p(A)$ for

$$p(x) = x^2 - 2x - 3 \quad \text{and} \quad A = \begin{bmatrix} -1 & 2 \\ 0 & 3 \end{bmatrix}$$

Solution

$$\begin{aligned} p(A) &= A^2 - 2A - 3I \\ &= \begin{bmatrix} -1 & 2 \\ 0 & 3 \end{bmatrix}^2 - 2\begin{bmatrix} -1 & 2 \\ 0 & 3 \end{bmatrix} - 3\begin{bmatrix} 1 & 0 \\ 0 & 1 \end{bmatrix} \\ &= \begin{bmatrix} 1 & 4 \\ 0 & 9 \end{bmatrix} - \begin{bmatrix} -2 & 4 \\ 0 & 6 \end{bmatrix} - \begin{bmatrix} 3 & 0 \\ 0 & 3 \end{bmatrix} = \begin{bmatrix} 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 \end{bmatrix} \end{aligned}$$

or more briefly, $p(A) = 0$. ◀

Remark It follows from the fact that $A^rA^s = A^{r+s} = A^{s+r} = A^sA^r$ that powers of a square matrix commute, and since a matrix polynomial in A is built up from powers of A, any two matrix polynomials in A also commute; that is, for any polynomials p_1 and p_2 we have

$$p_1(A)p_2(A) = p_2(A)p_1(A) \qquad (4)$$