

How to find the projection of a vector onto a plane (or a hyperplane)

Given a vector \vec{v} and a vector space W :

Step 1. Find a basis $\{\vec{v}_1, \dots, \vec{v}_n\}$ for W .

Step 2. Convert $\{\vec{v}_1, \dots, \vec{v}_n\}$ into an orthonormal basis $\{\vec{u}_1, \dots, \vec{u}_n\}$. (Use the Gram-Schmidt Process from below.)

Step 3. Then compute: $\text{proj}(\vec{v}, W) = \text{proj}(\vec{v}, \vec{u}_1) + \dots + \text{proj}(\vec{v}, \vec{u}_n)$.

The Gram-Schmidt Process

Given a basis $\{\vec{v}_1, \dots, \vec{v}_n\}$ for a vector space W , we can find an orthonormal basis for W as follows:

Notation: For any vector \vec{v} , let's abbreviate $\frac{\vec{v}}{\|\vec{v}\|}$ by $\text{unit}(\vec{v})$.

Let $\vec{u}_1 = \text{unit}[\vec{v}_1]$.

Let $\vec{u}_2 = \text{unit}[\vec{v}_2 - \text{proj}(\vec{v}_2, \text{span}(\vec{v}_1))] = \text{unit}[\vec{v}_2 - \text{proj}(\vec{v}_2, \vec{u}_1)]$.

Let $\vec{u}_3 = \text{unit}[\vec{v}_3 - \text{proj}(\vec{v}_3, \text{span}(\vec{v}_1, \vec{v}_2))] = \text{unit}[\vec{v}_3 - \text{proj}(\vec{v}_3, \vec{u}_1) - \text{proj}(\vec{v}_3, \vec{u}_2)]$.

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Let $\vec{u}_n = \text{unit}[\vec{v}_n - \text{proj}(\vec{v}_n, \text{span}(\vec{v}_1, \dots, \vec{v}_{n-1}))] = \text{unit}[\vec{v}_n - \text{proj}(\vec{v}_n, \vec{u}_1) - \dots - \text{proj}(\vec{v}_n, \vec{u}_{n-1})]$.

Then $\{\vec{u}_1, \dots, \vec{u}_n\}$ is an orthonormal basis for W .
