

Challenge Problem 5

In the last challenge problem, we defined a new operation on the space $\mathcal{M}_n(\mathbb{C})$ of $n \times n$ matrices with complex entries; for matrices $X, Y \in \mathcal{M}_n(\mathbb{C})$, the bracket $[X, Y]$ of X and Y is given by

$$[X, Y] = XY - YX,$$

where the notation “ XY ” indicates the matrix product of X with Y .

We have already proved that the bracket operation is neither commutative nor associative; indeed, we saw that

1. $[X, Y] = -[Y, X]$, and that
2. $[X, [Y, Z]] \neq [[X, Y], Z]$.

In this challenge problem, we will discuss several properties that the bracket operation *does* satisfy.

1. Show that $[X, X] = \mathbf{0}$ for all $n \times n$ matrices X .
2. Let

$$X = \begin{pmatrix} 0 & 1 \\ -1 & 0 \end{pmatrix}, Y = \begin{pmatrix} 2 & 1 \\ 0 & 1 \end{pmatrix} \text{ and } Z = \begin{pmatrix} -1 & 0 \\ 1 & 1 \end{pmatrix}.$$

Calculate:

- (a) $[[X, Y], Z]$
 - (b) $[[Y, Z], X]$
 - (c) $[[Z, X], Y]$
 - (d) $[[X, Y], Z] + [[Y, Z], X] + [[Z, X], Y]$
3. Show that the bracket operation on $\mathcal{M}_n(\mathbb{C})$ satisfies the Jacobi identity:

$$[[X, Y], Z] + [[Y, Z], X] + [[Z, X], Y] = \mathbf{0}.$$

(We can think of this identity as a type of associative law—just not the one we are use to).