

# Vector Graphics

## Student Activity

7 8 9 10 11 12



### Introduction

In 1637 René Descartes published a revolutionary book *La Géométrie* where he brought together two areas of mathematics; Geometry and Algebra. The “Cartesian” plane, named after René Descartes, is an integral component of every high school mathematics course. In this activity you will see how vectors can be incorporated into this two dimensional space. Using the same techniques, you can easily extend this approach into three dimensions.

Vectors can be expressed as a direction and magnitude (Polar) or as mutually perpendicular projections (Components), the latter is the focus of this activity. The directions are referred to as  $i$  ( $x$  direction) and  $j$  ( $y$  direction), for three dimensions a  $k$  ( $z$  direction) is also included. For some relatively straight forward problems it is quicker and more appropriate to complete calculations ‘by-hand’, however, as the calculations are repeated and gradually increase in complexity, having a template becomes an extremely useful tool. This activity sets up a template that can be used for other investigations including problems in three dimensions.

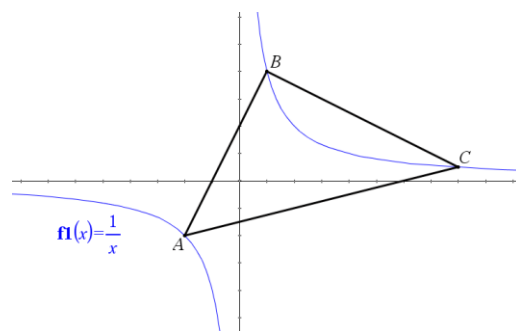
### Problem to be explored

Consider three points A, B and C on the function:  $y = \frac{1}{x}$ .

These three points can be joined to create a triangle:  $\triangle ABC$ .

This triangle has some interesting features that will be explored through the application of vectors.

To begin this investigation, point A = ( -1, -1 ), B = (  $\frac{1}{2}$ , 2 ) and C = ( 4,  $\frac{1}{4}$  ).



### Vectors as Matrices

A vector in **component** form can be used to reference point A:

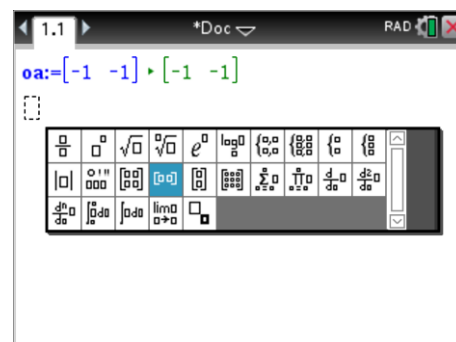
$$OA = \underline{a} = -\underline{i} - \underline{j}$$

One way to represent a vector is to use a matrix. This vector can be stored in the Calculator or the Notes application for a more dynamic and responsive experience.

In a new document, insert a Notes application and insert a Maths box to define matrix OA.

Use the template tool to insert a  $1 \times 2$  matrix to represent vector OA.

Use the above process to also create vectors OB and OC.

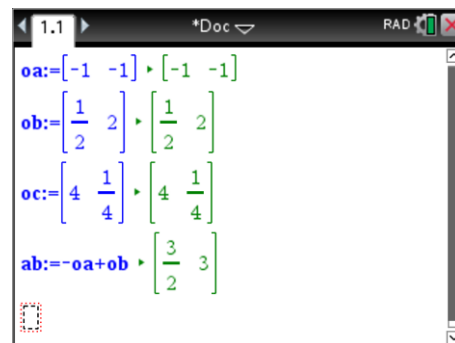


Vector AB is equal to:  $AO + OB$  or  $-OA + OB$

Define vector AB as  $-OA + OB$ , this will allow vector AB to update automatically as OA or OB is changed.

**Note:**

The calculator does not recognise AO as the negative of OA.



**Question 1**

Define expressions for vectors BC and CA in terms of OA, OB and OC as applicable and write down the matrix and vector representations.

**Question 2**

In a Calculator application, calculate:  $AB + BC + CA$  and explain the result.

**Note:** [VAR] key can be used to quickly access and recall each defined vector.

**Question 3**

Draw a diagram of the graph and all six vectors. (Label each vector)

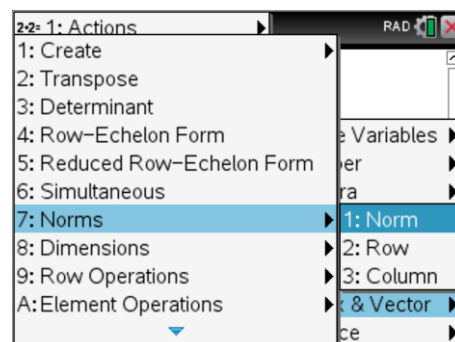
**Magnitude of a Vector**

The magnitude of vector is calculated using Pythagoras's theorem, squaring each component, adding these squared values together and then calculating the square-root:

The magnitude of a vector can be computed by:

$$|\underline{a}| = \sqrt{x^2 + y^2} \quad \text{where } \underline{a} = x\underline{i} + y\underline{j}$$

The "Norm" command within the Matrix and Vector menu computes the magnitude of a vector.



We can see how this works with matrices step by step:

$$\underline{a} = [x \quad y]$$

To multiply matrix A by itself requires the matrix to be transposed so the rows and columns align:

$$(\underline{a})^T = \begin{bmatrix} x \\ y \end{bmatrix}$$

The product is therefore:

$$\underline{a} \times \underline{a}^T = [x \quad y] \begin{bmatrix} x \\ y \end{bmatrix} = [x^2 + y^2]$$

The determinant of this 1 x 1 matrix is simply  $x^2 + y^2$  which then allows the square-root of this value to be computed. All of this is achieved when the "Norm" command is used.

**Mathematics****Tip!**

In “vector world”, the magnitude of a vector can also be computed using the dot product:

$$|\underline{a}| = \sqrt{\underline{a} \cdot \underline{a}}$$

**Question 4**

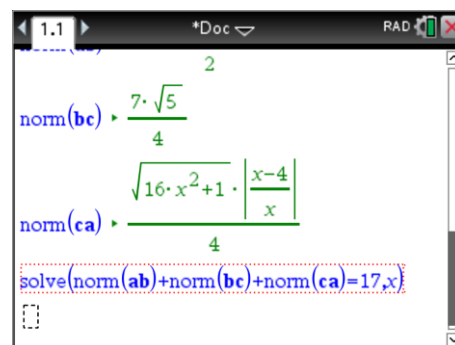
Determine the magnitude of vectors AB, BC and CA and hence the perimeter of triangle ABC.

Suppose point A (-1, -1) is moved to a new location on the curve  $y = \frac{1}{x}$ , the perimeter of the triangle would obviously change.

Set the coordinates of point A as:  $\left(x, \frac{1}{x}\right)$

Suppose point A is moved such that the perimeter is now equal to 17. This means that the sum of the side lengths, vector magnitudes, will be equal to 17.

$$|AB| + |BC| + |CA| = 17$$

**Question 5**

What location(s) are possible for point A to generate a perimeter of 17?

**Note:** The handheld calculator can take quite a while to compute the answer(s) to this problem. The nSolve command can also be used, however this returns single answers only, so extra answers should be considered by including appropriate domain constraints.

**Dot Product of a Vector**

The dot product of two vectors is computed as follows:

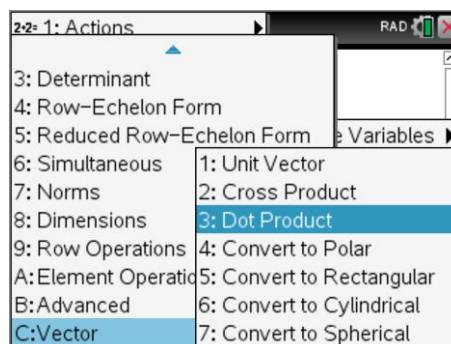
$$\underline{a} \cdot \underline{b} = x_a x_b + y_a y_b + z_a z_b \text{ where: } \underline{a} = x_a \underline{i} + y_a \underline{j} + z_a \underline{k} \text{ and } \underline{b} = x_b \underline{i} + y_b \underline{j} + z_b \underline{k}$$

$$\underline{a} \cdot \underline{b} = |\underline{a}| |\underline{b}| \cos(\theta) \text{ where } \theta \text{ is the angle between the two vectors.}$$

The dot product of two vectors can be used to compute the angle between the vectors, in this section however we will use the fact that if the dot product is equal to zero then the vectors are at right angles. [  $\cos(90^\circ) = 0$  ]

It is easy to calculate the dot product of two vectors via the matrix and vector menu:

[Menu] > Calculations > Matrix & Vector > Vector > Dot Product



**Question 6**

Change the location of point A back to: (-1, -1) then calculate the dot product of vectors AB and BC. What does the result say about the angle between these two sides?

**Question 7**

Using your answer to question 6 to help determine the area of the triangle ABC where A is located at  $(-\frac{1}{2}, 2)$ .

Suppose the vertices of the triangle are now:

$$A = (-1, 1) \qquad B = \left(\frac{1}{3}, 3\right) \qquad C = \left(c, \frac{1}{c}\right)$$

Point C is to be moved such that a right angled triangle is to be formed once again.

**Question 8**

What is the value of C for which ABC is once again a right angled triangle?

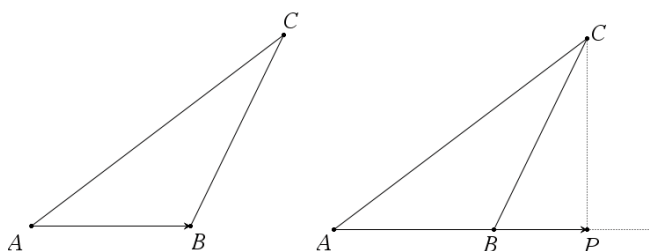
Note: This can be expressed as an exact value.

**Question 9**

Verify that the value of C forms a right angled triangle.

**Vector multiplied by a Scalar**

When a vector is multiplied by a scalar, the direction<sup>1</sup> of the vector remains the same but the length will change if the scalar quantity is not equal to 1. A simple way to explore this is through a geometric example.



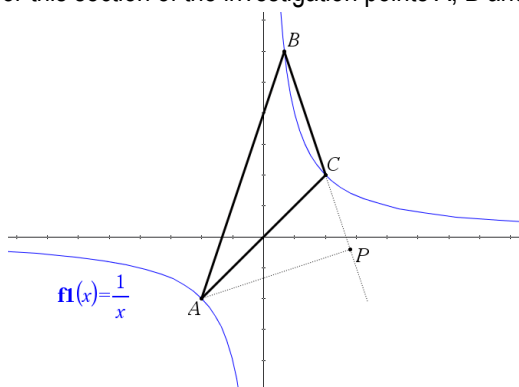
Consider the triangles shown here. When trying to calculate the height of  $\triangle ABC$  we can extend the base to point P such that  $\angle APC = 90^\circ$ .

Vector AB can be multiplied by a scalar  $n$  such that vector  $AP = nAB$ .

Vector AP has the same direction as AB but has a different length. **Note:** PC is the altitude of  $\triangle ABC$ .

For this section of the investigation points A, B and C are defined as:

$$A = (-1, -1) \qquad B = \left(\frac{1}{3}, 3\right) \qquad C = (1, 1)$$



Notice that BC has been extended such that  $BP = nBC$ .

P is located such that PA is perpendicular to BP.

This means that  $PA \cdot BP = 0$

**Note:** AP is the altitude of  $\triangle ABC$ .

**Question 10**

Write a vector equation for AP in terms of BC and AB.

**Question 11**

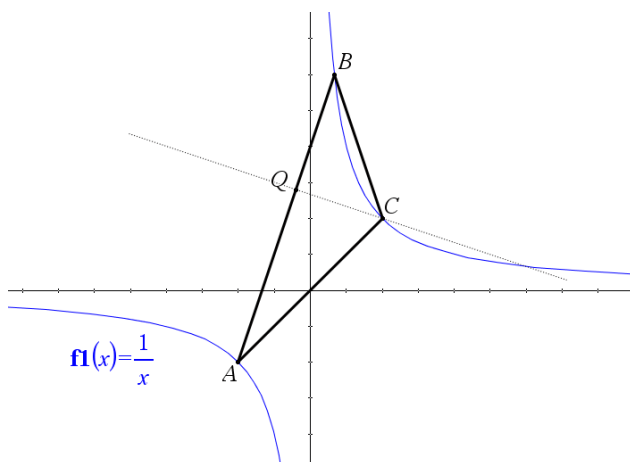
Determine the value of  $n$  such that  $AP \cdot BP = 0$

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<sup>1</sup> Direction – The direction will reverse if the scalar is a negative quantity.

**Question 12**

Determine the vectors  $AP$ ,  $OP$  and the coordinates of point  $P$ .



$$A = (-1, -1)$$

$$B = \left(\frac{1}{3}, 3\right)$$

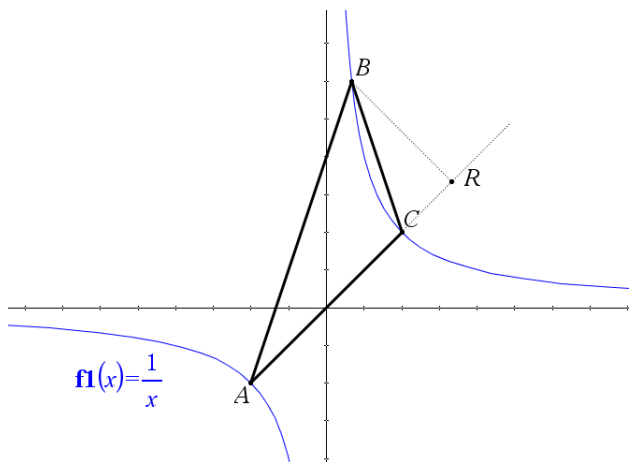
$$C = (1, 1)$$

Point  $Q$  is such that  $AQ$  is perpendicular to  $BC$ .

**Note:**  $QC$  is another altitude of  $\triangle ABC$ .

**Question 13**

Determine the value of  $m$  such that  $m\vec{AQ} \cdot \vec{CQ} = 0$  and hence define vector  $CQ$



$$A = (-1, -1)$$

$$B = \left(\frac{1}{3}, 3\right)$$

$$C = (1, 1)$$

Point  $R$  is such that  $AR$  is perpendicular to  $BC$ .

**Note:**  $BR$  is the third altitude of  $\triangle ABC$ .

**Question 14**

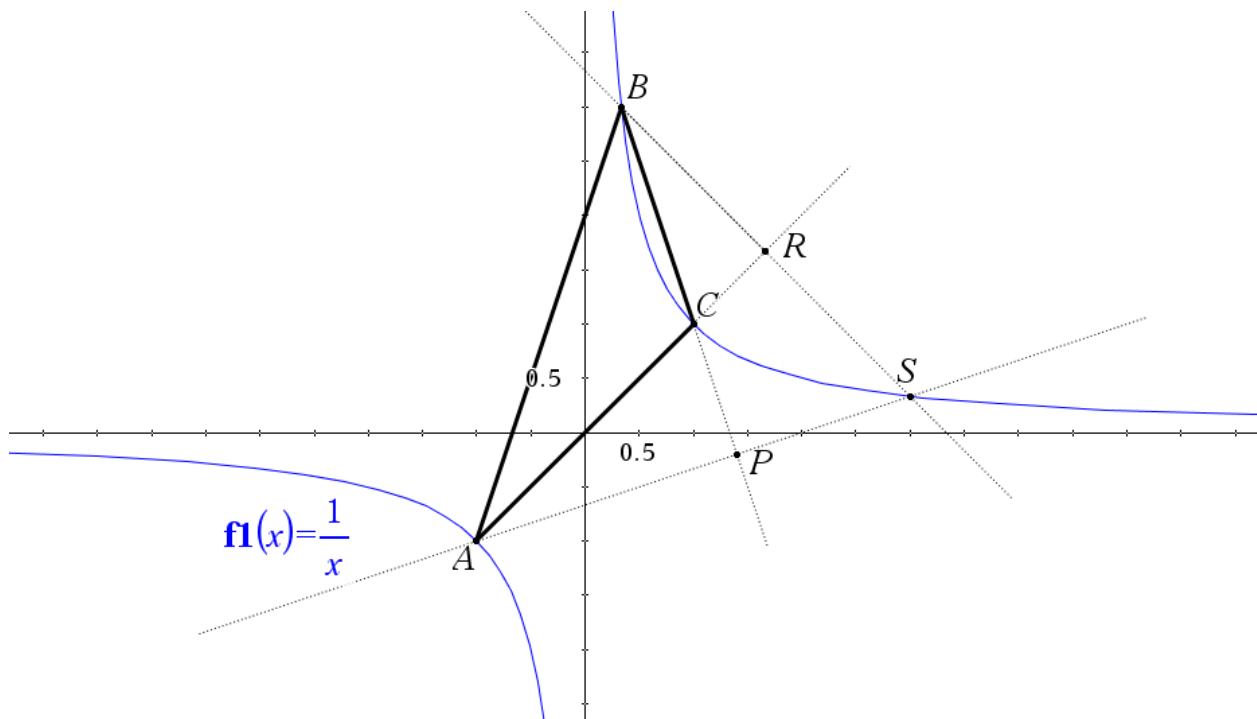
Determine the value of  $s$  such that  $s\vec{AC} \cdot \vec{BR} = 0$  and hence define the vector  $BR$ .

**Question 15**

Consider the values of  $m$ ,  $n$ , and  $s$  established in the previous questions and their respective locations. By considering the values only, how is it possible to tell if the altitude (perpendicular) sits on the vector?

### Extension: Points of Intersection Investigation

It is possible to determine where each of the altitudes intersects one another. The diagram below shows the point of intersection between altitudes BR and AP at point S.



#### Important knowledge:

- $\vec{BS}$  is a scalar multiple of  $\vec{BR}$ .
- $\vec{AS}$  is a scalar multiple of  $\vec{AP}$ .
- $\vec{OS} = \vec{OB} + \vec{BS}$  and  $\vec{OS} = \vec{OA} + \vec{AS}$ .

The above information can be used to determine the location of  $\vec{OS}$ . Determine the location of S and explore the location of the point(s) of intersection for the altitude passing through C with those passing through A and B.

Vary the locations of points A, B and C and summarise the location of point S and the general vector defining  $\vec{OS}$ .