Generator Matrices

We can arrange a set of basis vectors for a linear code in a *generator matrix*, each row of which is a basis vector.

A generator matrix for an $[n, k]$ code will have k rows and n columns.

Here's a generator matrix for the $[5, 2]$ code looked at earlier:

$$\begin{pmatrix} 0 & 0 & 1 & 1 & 1 \\ 1 & 1 & 0 & 0 & 1 \end{pmatrix}$$

Note: Almost all codes have more than one generator matrix.

Encoding Blocks Using a Generator Matrix

We can use a generator matrix for an $[n, k]$ code to encode a block of k message bits as a block of n bits to send through the channel.

We regard the k message bits as a row vector, $\mathbf{a}$, and multiply by the generator matrix, G, to produce the channel input, $\mathbf{u}$:

$$\mathbf{u} = \mathbf{a}G$$

If the rows of G are linearly independent, each $\mathbf{a}$ will produce a different $\mathbf{u}$, and every $\mathbf{u}$ that is a codeword will be produced by some $\mathbf{a}$.

Example: Encoding the message block $(1, 1)$ using the generator matrix for the $[5, 2]$ code given earlier:

$$\begin{pmatrix} 1 & 1 \end{pmatrix} \begin{pmatrix} 0 & 0 & 1 & 1 & 1 \\ 1 & 1 & 0 & 0 & 1 \end{pmatrix} = \begin{pmatrix} 1 & 1 & 1 & 1 & 0 \end{pmatrix}$$

Parity-Check Matrices

Suppose we have specified an $[n, k]$ code by a set of $c = n - k$ equations satisfied by any codeword, $\mathbf{v}$:

$$\begin{aligned} b_{1,1}\, v_1 + b_{1,2}\, v_2 + \cdots + b_{1,n}\, v_n &= 0 \\ b_{2,1}\, v_1 + b_{2,2}\, v_2 + \cdots + b_{2,n}\, v_n &= 0 \\ &\vdots \\ b_{c,1}\, v_1 + b_{c,2}\, v_2 + \cdots + b_{c,n}\, v_n &= 0 \end{aligned}$$

We can arrange the coefficients in these equations in a *parity-check matrix*, as follows:

$$\begin{pmatrix} b_{1,1} & b_{1,2} & \cdots & b_{1,n} \\ b_{2,1} & b_{2,2} & \cdots & b_{2,n} \\ & & \vdots & \\ b_{c,1} & b_{c,2} & \cdots & b_{c,n} \end{pmatrix}$$

If $\mathcal{C}$ has parity-check matrix H, we can check whether $\mathbf{v}$ is in $\mathcal{C}$ by seeing whether $\mathbf{v}H^T = \mathbf{0}$.

Note: Almost all codes have more than one parity-check matrix.

Example: The $[5, 2]$ *Code*

Here is one parity-check matrix for the $[5, 2]$ code used earlier:

$$\begin{pmatrix} 1 & 1 & 0 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & 1 & 1 & 0 \\ 1 & 0 & 1 & 0 & 1 \end{pmatrix}$$

We see that 11001 is a codeword as follows:

$$\begin{pmatrix} 1 & 1 & 0 & 0 & 1 \end{pmatrix} \begin{pmatrix} 1 & 0 & 1 \\ 1 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 1 & 1 \\ 0 & 1 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & 1 \end{pmatrix} = \begin{pmatrix} 0 & 0 & 0 \end{pmatrix}$$

But 10011 isn't a codeword, since

$$\begin{pmatrix} 1 & 0 & 0 & 1 & 1 \end{pmatrix} \begin{pmatrix} 1 & 0 & 1 \\ 1 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 1 & 1 \\ 0 & 1 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & 1 \end{pmatrix} = \begin{pmatrix} 1 & 1 & 0 \end{pmatrix}$$

Examples: Repetition Codes and Single Parity-Check Codes

An $[n, 1]$ repetition code has the following generator matrix (for $n = 4$):

$$\begin{pmatrix} 1 & 1 & 1 & 1 \end{pmatrix}$$

Here is a parity-check matrix for this code:

$$\begin{pmatrix} 1 & 0 & 0 & 1 \\ 0 & 1 & 0 & 1 \\ 0 & 0 & 1 & 1 \end{pmatrix}$$

One generator matrix for an $[n, n-1]$ single parity-check code is the following:

$$\begin{pmatrix} 1 & 0 & 0 & 1 \\ 0 & 1 & 0 & 1 \\ 0 & 0 & 1 & 1 \end{pmatrix}$$

Here is the parity-check matrix for this code:

$$\begin{pmatrix} 1 & 1 & 1 & 1 \end{pmatrix}$$

Dual Codes

If $\mathcal{C}$ is a linear $[n, k]$ code, the set of all vectors orthogonal to every vector in $\mathcal{C}$ is a linear $[n, n-k]$ code — the *dual* of $\mathcal{C}$ (written $\mathcal{C}^\perp$).

Why is $\mathcal{C}^\perp$ a linear code? If $\mathbf{v}_1$ and $\mathbf{v}_2$ are in $\mathcal{C}^\perp$, then $\mathbf{v}_1 \cdot \mathbf{u} = 0$ and $\mathbf{v}_2 \cdot \mathbf{u} = 0$ for every $\mathbf{u}$ in $\mathcal{C}$. Hence $(\mathbf{v}_1 + \mathbf{v}_2) \cdot \mathbf{u} = 0$ for every $\mathbf{u}$ in $\mathcal{C}$, from which it follows that $\mathbf{v}_1 + \mathbf{v}_2$ is in $\mathcal{C}^\perp$.

Suppose $\mathbf{u}_1, \ldots, \mathbf{u}_k$ is a set of basis vectors for $\mathcal{C}$. A vector $\mathbf{v}$ will be orthogonal to all $\mathbf{u}$ in $\mathcal{C}$ if and only if it is orthogonal to all these basis vectors. In other words:

$$\mathbf{v} \cdot \mathbf{u}_1 = 0 \;\&\; \mathbf{v} \cdot \mathbf{u}_2 = 0 \;\&\; \cdots \;\&\; \mathbf{v} \cdot \mathbf{u}_k = 0$$

if and only if

$$\mathbf{v} \cdot (a_1\mathbf{u}_1 + a_2\mathbf{u}_2 + a_k\mathbf{u}_k) = 0 \quad \text{for all } a_1, \ldots, a_k$$

It follows that $\mathcal{C}^\perp$ is an $[n, n-k]$ code, since its codewords satisfy k independent equations.

Generator and Parity-Check Matrices For Dual Codes

Suppose $\mathcal{C}$ has a generator matrix G and a parity-check matrix H.

A vector $\mathbf{v}$ will be in $\mathcal{C}^\perp$ if and only if it is orthogonal to all the rows of G — in other words, if $\mathbf{v}G^T = \mathbf{0}$. So G is a parity-check matrix for $\mathcal{C}^\perp$.

If $\mathbf{v}$ is a row of H, it must be in $\mathcal{C}^\perp$, since $\mathbf{v} \cdot \mathbf{u} = 0$ for every $\mathbf{u}$ in $\mathcal{C}$. The rows of H are independent, so these $n-k$ rows form a basis for $\mathcal{C}^\perp$. Hence H is a generator matrix for $\mathcal{C}^\perp$.

We can get the dual of a code by swapping its generator and parity-check matrices. The repetition and single-parity check codes are each duals of the other.

In general, the dual of the dual of $\mathcal{C}$ is $\mathcal{C}$ itself. Some codes are their own duals.

Manipulating the Parity-Check Matrix

There are usually many parity-check matrices for a given code. We can get one such matrix from another using the following "elementary row operations":

- Swapping two rows.
- Multipling a row by a non-zero constant (not useful for F_2).
- Adding a row to a different row.

These operations don't alter the solutions to the equations the parity-check matrix represents.

Ex: This parity-check matrix for the $[5, 2]$ code:

$$\begin{pmatrix} 1 & 1 & 0 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & 1 & 1 & 0 \\ 1 & 0 & 1 & 0 & 1 \end{pmatrix}$$

can be transformed into this alternative:

$$\begin{pmatrix} 1 & 1 & 0 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & 1 & 1 & 0 \\ 0 & 1 & 0 & 1 & 1 \end{pmatrix}$$

Manipulating the Generator Matrix

We can apply the same elementary row operations to a generator matrix for a code, in order to produce another generator matrix, since these operations just convert one set of basis vectors to another.

Example: Here is a generator matrix for the $[5,2]$ code we have been looking at:

$$\begin{pmatrix} 0 & 0 & 1 & 1 & 1 \\ 1 & 1 & 0 & 0 & 1 \end{pmatrix}$$

Here is another generator matrix, found by adding the first row to the second:

$$\begin{pmatrix} 0 & 0 & 1 & 1 & 1 \\ 1 & 1 & 1 & 1 & 0 \end{pmatrix}$$

Note: These manipulations leave the set of codewords unchanged, but they *don't* leave the way we encode messages by computing $\mathbf{u} = \mathbf{a}G$ unchanged!

Equivalent Codes

Two codes are said to be *equivalent* if the codewords of one are just the codewords of the other with the order of symbols permuted.

Permuting the order of the columns of a generator matrix will produce a generator matrix for an equivalent code, and similarly for a parity-check matrix.

Example: Here is a generator matrix for the $[5,2]$ code we have been looking at:

$$\begin{pmatrix} 0 & 0 & 1 & 1 & 1 \\ 1 & 1 & 0 & 0 & 1 \end{pmatrix}$$

We can get an equivalent code using the following generator matrix obtained by moving the last column to the middle:

$$\begin{pmatrix} 0 & 0 & 1 & 1 & 1 \\ 1 & 1 & 1 & 0 & 0 \end{pmatrix}$$

Generator and Parity-Check Matrices In Systematic Form

Using elementary row operations and column permutations, we can convert any generator matrix to a generator matrix for an equivalent code that is is *systematic form*, in which the left end of the matrix is the identity matrix.

Similarly, we can convert to the systematic form for a parity-check matrix, which has an identity matrix in the right end.

For the $[5,2]$ code, only permutations are needed. The generator matrix can be permuted by swapping columns 1 and 3:

$$\begin{pmatrix} 0 & 0 & 1 & 1 & 1 \\ 1 & 1 & 0 & 0 & 1 \end{pmatrix} \Rightarrow \begin{pmatrix} 1 & 0 & 0 & 1 & 1 \\ 0 & 1 & 1 & 0 & 1 \end{pmatrix}$$

When we use a systematic generator matrix to encode a block $\mathbf{a}$ as $\mathbf{u} = \mathbf{a}G$, the first k bits will be the same as those in $\mathbf{a}$. The remaining $n-k$ bits can be seen as "check bits".

Relationship of Generator and Parity-Check Matrices

If G and H are generator and parity-check matrices for $\mathcal{C}$, then for every $\mathbf{a}$, we must have $(\mathbf{a}G)H^T = \mathbf{0}$ — since we should only generate valid codewords. It follows that

$$GH^T = \mathbf{0}$$

Furthermore, any H with $n-k$ independent rows that satisfies this is a valid parity-check matrix for $\mathcal{C}$.

Suppose G is in systematic form, so

$$G \;=\; [\,I_k \mid P\,]$$

for some P. Then we can find a parity-check matrix for $\mathcal{C}$ in systematic form as follows:

$$H \;=\; [\,-P^T \mid I_{n-k}\,]$$

since $GH^T = -I_kP + PI_{n-k} = \mathbf{0}$. (Note that $-P^T = P^T$ in F_2.)