

Question

Find the line of intersection between the planes $x+2y+3z = 6$ and $x+y+z = 1$.

Answer

$$\left. \begin{array}{l} (1) \quad x + 2y + 3z = 6 \\ (2) \quad x + y + z = 1 \end{array} \right\} \text{require line of intersection: 2 planes intersect in}$$

a line common to both planes
PICTURE

Take the two simultaneous equations away from each other to eliminate x :

(1) - (2):

$$x + 2y + 3z = 6$$

$$x + y + z = 1$$

$$\hline y + 2z = 5$$

Thus the planes intersect along $y = 2z + 5$ or $y = -2z + 5$.

But this doesn't tell us about the x dependence.

Thus we have to do another elimination, say of y by $2 \times (2) - (1)$

$$2x + 2y + 2z = 2$$

$$x + 2y + 3z = 6$$

$$\hline x - z = -4$$

Hence we have that

$$y + 2z = 5 \quad (3)$$

$$x - z = -4 \quad (4)$$

Thus $x + 4 = z$ from (4)

and $-\left(\frac{y+5}{2}\right) = z$ from (3)

Remember a straight line in 3-D is given by

$$\frac{x - \alpha_1}{\beta_1} = \frac{y - \alpha_2}{\beta_2} = \frac{z - \alpha_3}{\beta_3}$$

for given α_i, β_i

Thus we combine the above two equalities to get

$$\underline{x + 4 = -\left(\frac{y+5}{2}\right) = z}$$

as the equation of intersection.

Note that from questions above, we can write this in vector form:

$$x + 4 = \lambda; \quad -\left(\frac{y + 5}{2}\right) = \lambda; \quad z = -\lambda$$

$$\Rightarrow x = \lambda - 4; \quad y = -5 - 2\lambda; \quad z = \lambda \text{ parametric equation}$$

$$\Rightarrow \mathbf{r} = x\mathbf{i} + y\mathbf{j} + z\mathbf{k} = (\lambda - 4)\mathbf{i} + (-5 - 2\lambda)\mathbf{j} + \lambda\mathbf{k}$$

$$\Rightarrow \underline{\mathbf{r} = -4\mathbf{i} - 5\mathbf{j} + \lambda(\mathbf{i} - 2\mathbf{j} + \mathbf{k})}$$