

Matrix Binomial Theorem with an AI Co-author

Dan Kalman
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www.dankalman.net

Introduction

- Let A and B be $m \times m$ matrices
- If $AB = BA$ then for any integer $n \geq 1$

$$(A + B)^n = \sum_{k=0}^n \binom{n}{k} A^{n-k} B^k \quad (1)$$

- What about the converse?
- Case $n = 2$: If $(A + B)^2 = A^2 + 2AB + B^2$
then $A^2 + AB + BA + B^2 = A^2 + 2AB + B^2$
 $\Rightarrow AB + BA = AB + AB$
 $\Rightarrow BA = AB$
- Eq (1) holds for all n iff $AB = BA$
- Could Eq(1) hold for specific values of $n > 2$ when $AB \neq BA$?

Example

We define $A = \begin{bmatrix} 2 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & -4 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & 8 \end{bmatrix}$ and $B = \begin{bmatrix} 0 & 1 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & 1 \\ 0 & 0 & 0 \end{bmatrix}$

$$AB = \begin{bmatrix} 0 & 2 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & -4 \\ 0 & 0 & 0 \end{bmatrix} \neq \begin{bmatrix} 0 & -4 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & 8 \\ 0 & 0 & 0 \end{bmatrix} = BA$$

$$A+B = \begin{bmatrix} 2 & 1 & 0 \\ 0 & -4 & 1 \\ 0 & 0 & 8 \end{bmatrix} \text{ and } (A+B)^3 = \begin{bmatrix} 8 & 12 & 6 \\ 0 & -64 & 48 \\ 0 & 0 & 512 \end{bmatrix}$$

$$(A+B)^3 = A^3 + 3A^2B + 3AB^2 + B^3$$

Discovery Route

- Most general approach: Make all 9 entries of A variables, likewise B . Set

$$(A+B)^3 = A^3 + 3A^2B + 3AB^2 + B^3$$

and try to find solutions. TOO HARD!

- Try same approach with simpler matrices:
 - + diagonal (powers easily computed)
 - + 1's on super diagonal (likewise)

- Try $A = \begin{bmatrix} x & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & y & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & z \end{bmatrix}$ $B = \begin{bmatrix} 0 & 1 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & 1 \\ 0 & 0 & 0 \end{bmatrix}$

- General solution: $(x, y, z) = (x, x, x)$
or $(x, y, z) = (x, -2x, 4x)$

- Analogous result for 4×4 matrices

AI Makes an Entrance

- Up to this point, everything was done by hand.
- Results show clear and obvious pattern
- Next step: try a larger matrix. How about 6×6 ?
- In spite of clear algebraic pattern, I keep making errors – even just writing down the matrices.
- Happy thought: let AI format the matrices
- Initially I intended to cut and paste the AI generated matrix into a document, but that isn't how it worked out.
- Let me show you what happened.
- Following slides show prompts and responses, edited and condensed for clarity

Consider three 6×6 matrices defined as follows: A is diagonal with entries x_1, x_2, \dots, x_6 ; B has 1's on the superdiagonal but all other entries are 0, and $S = A+B$. Display the three matrices

Here's a clear way to write them using standard notation.

Matrix A

$$A = \begin{bmatrix} x_1 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & x_2 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & x_3 & 0 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & 0 & x_4 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & x_5 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & x_6 \end{bmatrix}$$

Matrix B

$$B = \begin{bmatrix} 0 & 1 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & 1 & 0 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & 0 & 1 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 1 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 1 \\ 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 \end{bmatrix}$$

Matrix $S = A + B$

$$S = \begin{bmatrix} x_1 & 1 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & x_2 & 1 & 0 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & x_3 & 1 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & 0 & x_4 & 1 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & x_5 & 1 \\ 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & x_6 \end{bmatrix}$$

Show $(A+B)^3$

$$\begin{bmatrix} x_1^3 & x_1^2 + x_1x_2 + x_2^2 & x_1 + x_2 + x_3 & 1 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & x_2^3 & x_2^2 + x_2x_3 + x_3^2 & x_2 + x_3 + x_4 & 1 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & x_3^3 & x_3^2 + x_3x_4 + x_4^2 & x_3 + x_4 + x_5 & 1 \\ 0 & 0 & 0 & x_4^3 & x_4^2 + x_4x_5 + x_5^2 & x_4 + x_5 + x_6 \\ 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & x_5^3 & x_5^2 + x_5x_6 + x_6^2 \\ 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & x_6^3 \end{bmatrix}$$

Now show the matrix defined as $A^3 + 3A^2B + 3AB^2 + B^3$

You asked for the matrix

$$A^3 + 3A^2B + 3AB^2 + B^3$$

and here it is on its own line

$$\begin{bmatrix} x_1^3 & 3x_1^2 & 3x_1 & 1 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & x_2^3 & 3x_2^2 & 3x_2 & 1 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & x_3^3 & 3x_3^2 & 3x_3 & 1 \\ 0 & 0 & 0 & x_4^3 & 3x_4^2 & 3x_4 \\ 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & x_5^3 & 3x_5^2 \\ 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & 0 & x_6^3 \end{bmatrix}$$

In order for this most recent matrix to equal the earlier result for S^3 , what equations must x_1 through x_6 satisfy?

We need the entries of the two matrices to match band by band.

From the earlier direct computation,

- **First superdiagonal of S^3 :** $x_i^2 + x_i x_{i+1} + x_{i+1}^2$
- **Second superdiagonal of S^3 :** $x_i + x_{i+1} + x_{i+2}$

From $A^3 + 3A^2B + 3AB^2 + B^3$

- **First superdiagonal:** $3x_i^2$
- **Second superdiagonal:** $3x_i$

So we must have, for appropriate indices:

1. **First superdiagonal equality** (for $i = 1, \dots, 5$): $x_i^2 + x_i x_{i+1} + x_{i+1}^2 = 3x_i^2$
2. **Second superdiagonal equality** (for $i = 1, \dots, 4$): $x_i + x_{i+1} + x_{i+2} = 3x_i$

1. First superdiagonal condition

Start with $x_i^2 + x_i x_{i+1} + x_{i+1}^2 = 3x_i^2 \Rightarrow x_{i+1}^2 + x_i x_{i+1} - 2x_i^2 = 0$.

Factor it: $x_{i+1}^2 + x_i x_{i+1} - 2x_i^2 = (x_{i+1} + 2x_i)(x_{i+1} - x_i)$.

Thus

$$(x_{i+1} + 2x_i)(x_{i+1} - x_i) = 0,$$

so for each i ,

$$x_{i+1} = x_i \quad \text{or} \quad x_{i+1} = -2x_i.$$

2. Second superdiagonal condition

Now compare the **second superdiagonal** entries.

- In S^3 , the second superdiagonal entry in row i is $x_i + x_{i+1} + x_{i+2}$.
- In $A^3 + 3A^2B + 3AB^2 + B^3$, the second superdiagonal entry in row i is $3x_i$.

Equating them gives, **for** $i = 1, 2, 3, 4$:

$$x_i + x_{i+1} + x_{i+2} = 3x_i \implies x_{i+1} + x_{i+2} = 2x_i.$$

Now combine this with the first-superdiagonal possibilities.

From the first condition, for each i ,

$$x_{i+1} = x_i \text{ or } x_{i+1} = -2x_i,$$

Non-AI comment. special case $i = 1$:

$$(x_2 = x_1 \text{ OR } x_2 = -2x_1) \text{ AND } x_2 + x_3 = 2x_1 \\ \implies (x_3 = x_2 \text{ OR } x_3 = -2x_2)$$

Recent Hallucinations

References for this specific step:

- **V. Rishes (1988)**: "The Binomial Theorem for Matrices" in *The American Mathematical Monthly*. This paper specifically discusses the necessity of invertibility for the converse to hold.
- **M.H. Mortad (2012)**: *Selected Problems in Real Analysis*, which covers the conditions under which B commuting with $f(A)$ implies B commutes with A .

JSTOR does not find any article titled The Binomial Theorem for Matrices in the American Mathematical Monthly

My apologies—it appears I provided an incorrect reference for that specific article title. The correct study on the converse of the binomial theorem for matrices is typically found in discussions of **rings and linear algebra identities** rather than a single 1988 *Monthly* article.

World cat does not find any book by mortad titled Selected Problems in Real Analysis

The book you are looking for is likely "**Selected Problems in Real Analysis**" by **B. M. Makarov** (and others), published as part of the *Translations of Mathematical Monographs* series. Mohammed Hichem Mortad is a prolific author of "Exercises and Solutions" books in related fields like **Linear Algebra** and **Operator Theory**, but he does not have a title by that exact name.

Non-AI slides, continued

- As suggested by an earlier comment, the results reveal two families of solutions. The diagonal entries of A can all be equal, or form a geometric progression $x_1(1, -2, 4, -8, 16, -32)$
- In the first case A is a scalar multiple of the identity matrix, hence commutes with B , hence the binomial expansion is valid for all n .
- The dialog shown in preceding slides continued through additional analyses, and was augmented by several subsequent dialogs.
- Additional *conjectures* asserted as fact but false

But wait, there's more

- At the end of the first session, I gave the AI a prompt something like this:
Prepare a summary of the results of the foregoing dialog. Include [certain items] but leave out [other items]. Formulate it as a latex document. Output to me the tex file for the document.
- I cut and pasted the output into a text file, and ran it through LaTeX. It compiled with no errors on the first attempt.
- End result: a beautifully formatted and acceptably organized account, properly encoded as a LaTeX document.
- I didn't have to write the tex code for all those matrices!

...And still more

- In a subsequent session, the AI pointed out a combinatorial strategy that I had completely overlooked.
- It then claimed this strategy implied a general result (far off of my radar) – with a gaping logical hole.
- I pointed out the hole, and how to fill it.
- End result, independently verified by me:
If $A+B$ is nonsingular, and if the binomial expansion for $(A + B)^n$ is valid for three consecutive n 's greater than or equal to 1, then $AB = BA$.

Final Comments

- The AI contributed many other ideas, some of which were completely wrong
- It cited related published work that I have yet to check
- It suggested directions for extensions, which I have yet to pursue
- I have posted on my website a brief note proving the last theorem. I wrote it by means of a series of prompts to the AI followed by some minor copy editing.
- I will definitely use AI in future projects