Correlation & Linear Regression

Perhaps the most important analytical tool in the physical sciences is the ability to quantify the validity of a model relating a set of measurable parameters. The idea is as follows:

(1) Rearrange the model in such a way that it becomes a *linear equation* of the form $y = mx + c$

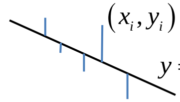
(2) Plot experimental (x,y) data on a graph and determine the **line of best fit** through the data.

(3) Determine *gradient* m and *vertical intercept* c from the line of best fit.

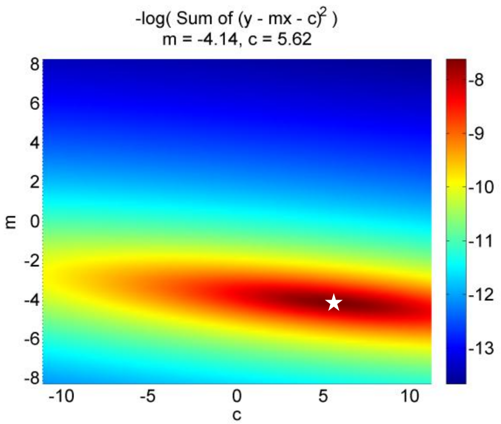
(4) Determine the standard deviation of both gradient m and intercept c, and a quantitative measure of how good the fit is (this is called the **product moment correlation coefficient**).

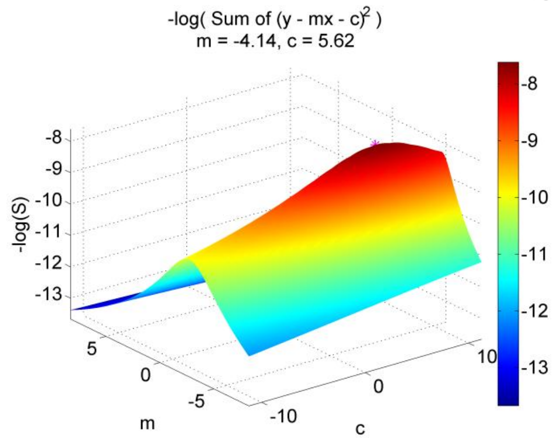
To determine the line of best fit*, let us sum the *squared* deviations of (x,y) from the line of best fit.

$$\boxed{S = \sum_{i=1}^{N} \left(y_i - mx_i - c \right)^2}$$



Using the (*negatively correlated)* data on the right, we can plot a surface of S vs m and c values We can see this has a **minimum** at a particular (m,c) coordinate. (Note for clarity the plots below are of $-\log S$, so the (m,c) coordinate corresponds to the peak, i.e. maximum, instead).





The minimum of S can be found by differentiating S with respect to m and c, and setting these expressions equal to zero. Since S is a function of two variables we must use *partial derivatives.*

$$S = \sum_{i=1}^{N} \left(y_i - mx_i - c \right)^2$$

$$\frac{\partial S}{\partial m} = 2\sum_{i=1}^{N} \left(y_i - mx_i - c \right)\left(-x_i \right)$$

$$\therefore \frac{\partial S}{\partial m} = 0 \Rightarrow \sum_{i=1}^{N} x_i \left(y_i - mx_i - c \right) = 0$$

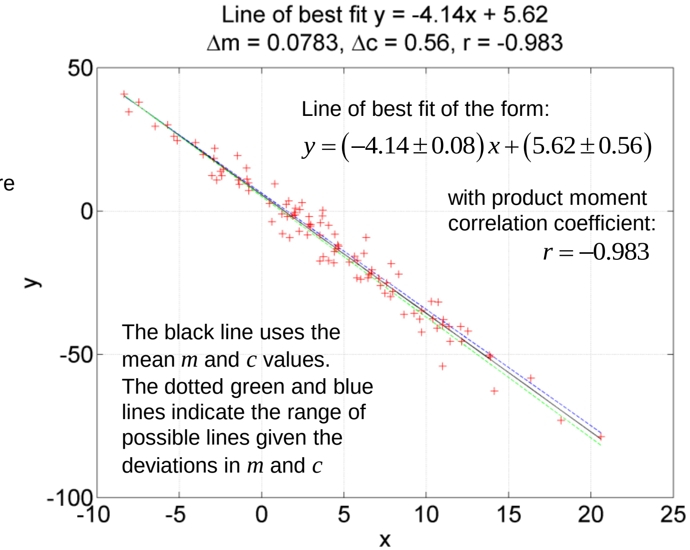
$$\therefore \sum_{i=1}^{N} x_i y_i - m\sum_{i=1}^{N} x_i^2 - c\sum_{i=1}^{N} x_i = 0$$

$$S = \sum_{i=1}^{N} \left(y_i - mx_i - c \right)^2$$

$$\frac{\partial S}{\partial c} = 2\sum_{i=1}^{N} \left(y_i - mx_i - c \right)\left(-1 \right)$$

$$\therefore \frac{\partial S}{\partial c} = 0 \Rightarrow \sum_{i=1}^{N} \left(y_i - mx_i - c \right) = 0$$

$$\therefore \sum_{i=1}^{N} y_i - m\sum_{i=1}^{N} x_i - cN = 0$$



Define the following quantities:

$$\boxed{\begin{aligned} &\bar{x} = \tfrac{1}{N}\sum_{i=1}^{N} x_i, \quad \bar{y} = \tfrac{1}{N}\sum_{i=1}^{N} y_i, \\ &\overline{x^2} = \tfrac{1}{N}\sum_{i=1}^{N} x_i^2, \quad \overline{y^2} = \tfrac{1}{N}\sum_{i=1}^{N} y_i^2 \\ &\overline{xy} = \tfrac{1}{N}\sum_{i=1}^{N} x_i y_i \\ &V[x] = \overline{x^2} - \bar{x}^2, \quad V[y] = \overline{y^2} - \bar{y} \\ &\operatorname{cov}[x,y] = \overline{xy} - \overline{xy} \end{aligned}}$$

i.e. variance and *covariance*

Hence:

$$\sum_{i=1}^{N} x_i y_i - m\sum_{i=1}^{N} x_i^2 - c\sum_{i=1}^{N} x_i = 0 \quad \therefore \overline{xy} - m\overline{x^2} - c\bar{x} = 0$$

$$\sum_{i=1}^{N} y_i - m\sum_{i=1}^{N} x_i - cN = 0 \quad \therefore \bar{y} - m\bar{x} - c = 0$$

Therefore:

$$\boxed{c = \bar{y} - m\bar{x}}$$

$$\therefore \overline{xy} - m\overline{x^2} - \left(\bar{y} - m\bar{x} \right)\bar{x} = 0$$

$$\therefore m\left(\bar{x}^2 - \overline{x^2} \right) + \overline{xy} - \overline{yx} = 0$$

$$\therefore \boxed{m = \frac{\overline{xy} - \overline{yx}}{\overline{x^2} - \bar{x}^2} = \frac{\operatorname{cov}[x,y]}{V[x]}}$$

If we repeat the analysis for the line: $x = My + d \Rightarrow M = \dfrac{\operatorname{cov}[x,y]}{V[y]}$

If this was the *same line but rearranged*:

$M = \frac{1}{m} \quad \therefore mM = 1$ $\qquad y = mx + c$

Hence define a **product moment correlation coefficient:**

$$\boxed{r = \frac{\operatorname{cov}[x,y]}{\sqrt{V[x]V[y]}}}$$

This will be +1 for a perfect positive correlation and -1 for a perfect negative correlation (i.e. S = 0 in both cases).

*We will use the *vertical* deviations. You can alternatively use horizontal deviations or indeed perpendicular deviations from the line of best fit.

It is possible to show* that the standard deviations (i.e. 'errors') in m and c are:

$$\Delta m = \frac{s}{\sqrt{N}} \frac{1}{\sqrt{V[x]}}$$

$$\Delta c = \frac{s}{\sqrt{N}} \sqrt{1 + \frac{\overline{x}^2}{V[x]}}$$

$$s = \sqrt{\frac{1}{N-2} \sum_{i=1}^{N} \left(y_i - m x_i - c \right)^2}$$

This is very useful in the physical sciences, as the errors in m and c will often be the uncertainties in model parameters (e.g. the strength of gravity...)

s is the *unbiased estimator* of the standard deviation in the y values from the line of best fit. The N-2 factor is due to two parameters (m and c) being used in the calculation, which are of course derived from the sample data themselves as shown above.

In many situations a **direct proportion** is asserted between y and x. The computation of the line of best fit (which passes through (0,0) follows a similar argument to the one above.

$$S = \sum_{i=1}^{N} \left(y_i - m x_i \right)^2$$

$$\frac{\partial S}{\partial m} = 2 \sum_{i=1}^{N} \left(y_i - m x_i \right) \left(-x_i \right)$$

$$\therefore \frac{\partial S}{\partial m} = 0 \Rightarrow \sum_{i=1}^{N} x_i \left(y_i - m x_i \right) = 0$$

$$\therefore \sum_{i=1}^{N} x_i y_i - m \sum_{i=1}^{N} x_i^2 = 0$$

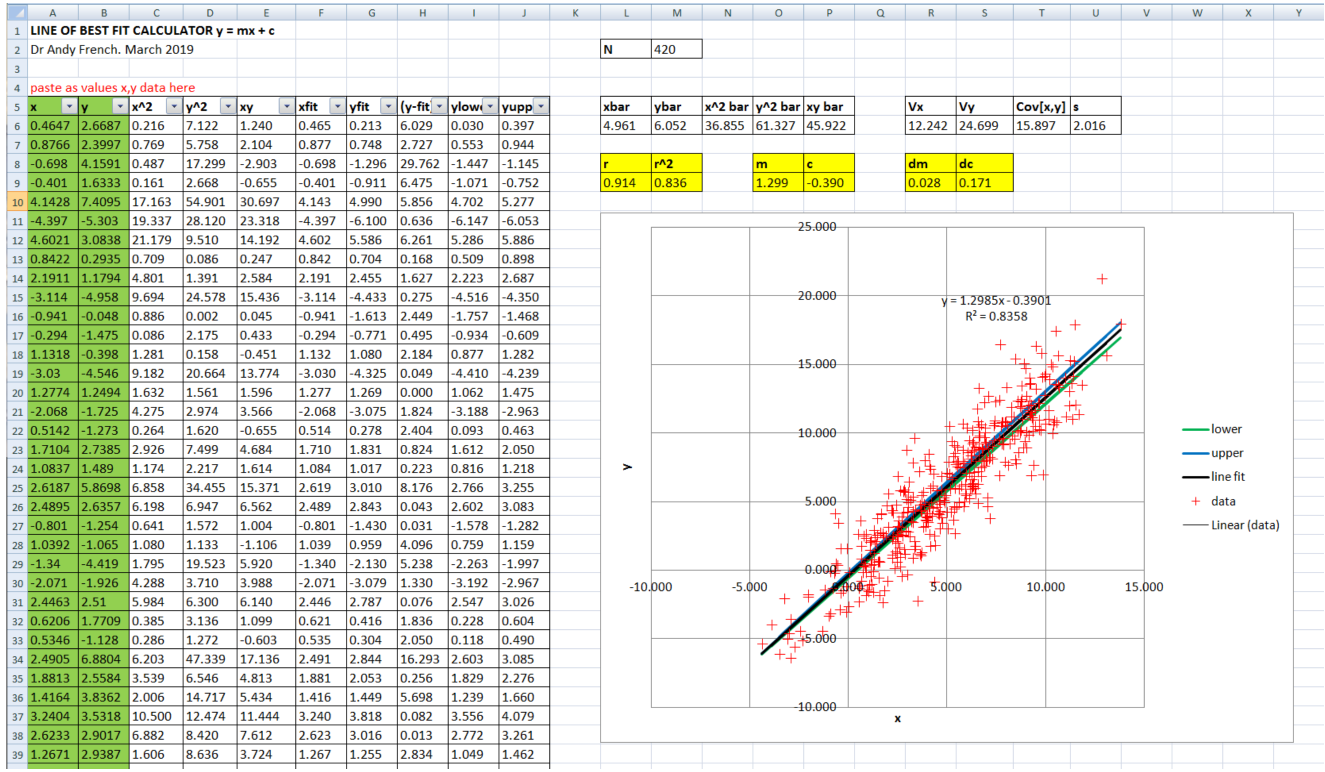
$$\therefore m = \frac{\overline{xy}}{\overline{x^2}}$$

The product moment correlation coefficient is the same as before but the standard deviation in m is slightly different since only *one* parameter is used in the computation of s (i.e. m).

$$\Delta m = \frac{s}{\sqrt{N}} \frac{1}{\sqrt{V[x]}}$$

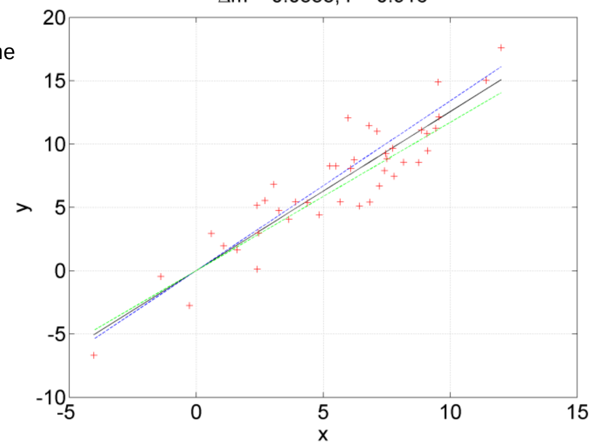
$$s = \sqrt{\frac{1}{N-1} \sum_{i=1}^{N} \left(y_i - m x_i \right)^2}$$

$$r = \frac{\mathrm{cov}[x,y]}{\sqrt{V[x]V[y]}}$$



	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J
1	**LINE OF BEST FIT CALCULATOR y = mx + c**									
2	Dr Andy French. March 2019									
3										
4	paste as values x,y data here									
5	**x**	**y**	**x^2**	**y^2**	**xy**	**xfit**	**yfit**	**(y-fit**	**ylow**	**yupp**
6	0.4647	2.6687	0.216	7.122	1.240	0.465	0.213	6.029	0.030	0.397
7	0.8766	2.3997	0.769	5.758	2.104	0.877	0.748	2.727	0.553	0.944
8	-0.698	4.1591	0.487	17.299	-2.903	-0.698	-1.296	29.762	-1.447	-1.145
9	-0.401	1.6333	0.161	2.668	-0.655	-0.401	-0.911	6.475	-1.071	-0.752
10	4.1428	7.4095	17.163	54.901	30.697	4.143	4.990	5.856	4.702	5.277
11	-4.397	-5.303	19.337	28.120	23.318	-4.397	-6.100	0.636	-6.147	-6.053
12	4.6021	3.0838	21.179	9.510	14.192	4.602	5.586	6.261	5.286	5.886
13	0.8422	0.2935	0.709	0.086	0.247	0.842	0.704	0.168	0.509	0.898
14	2.1911	1.1794	4.801	1.391	2.584	2.191	2.455	1.627	2.223	2.687
15	-3.114	-4.958	9.694	24.578	15.436	-3.114	-4.433	0.275	-4.516	-4.350
16	-0.941	-0.048	0.886	0.002	0.045	-0.941	-1.613	2.449	-1.757	-1.468
17	-0.294	-1.475	0.086	2.175	0.433	-0.294	-0.771	0.495	-0.934	-0.609
18	1.1318	-0.398	1.281	0.158	-0.451	1.132	1.080	2.184	0.877	1.282
19	-3.03	-4.546	9.182	20.664	13.774	-3.030	-4.325	0.049	-4.410	-4.239
20	1.2774	1.2494	1.632	1.561	1.596	1.277	1.269	0.000	1.062	1.475
21	-2.068	-1.725	4.275	2.974	3.566	-2.068	-3.075	1.824	-3.188	-2.963
22	0.5142	-1.273	0.264	1.620	-0.655	0.514	0.278	2.404	0.093	0.463
23	1.7104	2.7385	2.926	7.499	4.684	1.710	1.831	0.824	1.612	2.050
24	1.0837	1.489	1.174	2.217	1.614	1.084	1.017	0.223	0.816	1.218
25	2.6187	5.8698	6.858	34.455	15.371	2.619	3.010	8.176	2.766	3.255
26	2.4895	2.6357	6.198	6.947	6.562	2.489	2.843	0.043	2.602	3.083
27	-0.801	-1.254	0.641	1.572	1.004	-0.801	-1.430	0.031	-1.578	-1.282
28	1.0392	-1.065	1.080	1.133	-1.106	1.039	0.959	4.096	0.759	1.159
29	-1.34	-4.419	1.795	19.523	5.920	-1.340	-2.130	5.238	-2.263	-1.997
30	-2.071	-1.926	4.288	3.710	3.988	-2.071	-3.079	1.330	-3.192	-2.967
31	2.4463	2.51	5.984	6.300	6.140	2.446	2.787	0.076	2.547	3.026
32	0.6206	1.7709	0.385	3.136	1.099	0.621	0.416	1.836	0.228	0.604
33	0.5346	-1.128	0.286	1.272	-0.603	0.535	0.304	2.050	0.118	0.490
34	2.4905	6.8804	6.203	47.339	17.136	2.491	2.844	16.293	2.603	3.085
35	1.8813	2.5584	3.539	6.546	4.813	1.881	2.053	0.256	1.829	2.276
36	1.4164	3.8362	2.006	14.717	5.434	1.416	1.449	5.698	1.239	1.660
37	3.2404	3.5318	10.500	12.474	11.444	3.240	3.818	0.082	3.556	4.079
38	2.6233	2.9017	6.882	8.420	7.612	2.623	3.016	0.013	2.772	3.261
39	1.2671	2.9387	1.606	8.636	3.724	1.267	1.255	2.834	1.049	1.462

	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U
2	**N**	420								
5	**xbar**	**ybar**	**x^2 bar**	**y^2 bar**	**xy bar**		**Vx**	**Vy**	**Cov[x,y]**	**s**
6	4.961	6.052	36.855	61.327	45.922		12.242	24.699	15.897	2.016
8	**r**	**r^2**		**m**	**c**		**dm**	**dc**		
9	0.914	0.836		1.299	-0.390		0.028	0.171		



Line of best fit (or '**linear regression**') analysis can be clearly demonstrated using a computer spreadsheet package such as Microsoft Excel.

In the above example, the gradient and vertical intercept values are manually computed, and compared to the built-in *trendline* function.

* http://mathworld.wolfram.com/LeastSquaresFitting.html