

# Introduction to Number Theory and Algorithms

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## Preface

This is a Distillation of:  
A Computational Introduction to Number Theory and Algebra  
(Version 2), by Victor Shoup.

See <https://shoup.net/ntb/> for the original text and practice problems.

## Basic properties of Integers

### 1.1 Divisibility and primality

“ $a$  divides  $b$ ”, i.e.,  $\left(\frac{b}{a}\right)$ , means  $b$  is reached by  $a$ , when  $a$  is multiplied by some integer.

#### Definition 1.1: Division

Let  $a, b, x \in \mathbb{Z}$ :  $\left(\frac{b}{a}\right)$  means “ $b = ax$ ”.

**Denoted:**  $a|b$ ,  
read “ $a$  divides  $b$ ,” and “ $a$  doesn’t divide  $b$ ” is,  $a \nmid b$ .

#### Examples:

- $3 \mid 6$  because  $6 = 3 \cdot 2$ .
- $3 \nmid 5$  because  $5 \neq 3 \cdot x$  for any  $x \in \mathbb{Z}$ .
- $2 \mid 0$  because  $0 = 2 \cdot 0$ .
- $0 \nmid 2$  because  $2 \neq 0 \cdot x$  for any  $x \in \mathbb{Z}$ .

**Note:**  $a, b, x \in \mathbb{Z}$  for, “ $\left(\frac{b}{a}\right)$ ” or “ $b = ax$ ” are labeled,  $a$ : **divisor**,  $b$ : **dividend**,  $x$ : **quotient**.

**Tip:** Many problems will involve manipulating this “ $b = ax$ ” equation. Whether it’s substituting  $b$  for  $ax$  or vice-versa, or adding/subtracting/multiplying/dividing “ $b = ax$ ” to itself to reveal some property.

Many definitions and theorems will relate to each other or build off one another. It’s crucial to understand what concepts mean rather than memorizing them. This means the ability to derive theorems or definitions from scratch, based on intuitive understanding of the content.

Observe the following:

**Theorem 1.1: Properties of Divisibility**

**Theorem 1.1.** For all  $a, b, c \in \mathbb{Z}$ :

- (i) “ $a \mid a$ ”, “ $1 \mid a$ ”, and “ $a \mid 0$ ”
- (ii) “ $0 \mid a$ ”  $\iff$  “ $a = 0$ ”
- (iii) “ $a \mid b$ ”  $\iff$  “ $-a \mid b$ ”  $\iff$  “ $a \mid -b$ ”
- (iv) “ $a \mid b$ ”  $\wedge$  “ $a \mid c$ ”  $\implies$  “ $a \mid (b + c)$ ”
- (v) “ $a \mid b$ ”  $\wedge$  “ $b \mid c$ ”  $\implies$  “ $a \mid c$ ”

Try to prove these properties before reading the proof below.

**Proof 1.1: Theorem 1.1**

**Proof.** For all  $a, b, x, y \in \mathbb{Z}$ :

- (i) – “ $a \mid a$ ” means “ $a = ax$ ”, choosing  $x = 1$  always satisfies.  
 – “ $1 \mid a$ ” because  $a = 1 \cdot a$   
 – “ $a \mid 0$ ” because  $0 = a \cdot 0$
- (ii) – If “ $0 \mid a$ ” then “ $a = 0 \cdot x$ ”, 0 times any integer is 0, so  $a = 0$   
 – If “ $a = 0$ ” then “ $0 = 0 \cdot x$ ”,  $x$  can be any integer.
- (iii) Proving  $a \mid b \iff -a \mid b$ :  
 – If “ $a \mid b$ ” then “ $b = ax = (-a)(-x)$ ”,  $-x$  is some integer, say  $x'$ .  
 So “ $b = (-a)x'$ ” then “ $-a \mid b$ ”  
 – If “ $-a \mid b$ ” then “ $b = (-a)x$ ”, choose  $x$  to be some negative integer.

Proving  $-a \mid b \iff a \mid -b$ :

- If “ $-a \mid b$ ” then “ $b = (-a)x$ ”, choose  $x$  positive integer.
- If “ $a \mid -b$ ” then “ $-b = ax$ ”, choose  $x$  to be some negative integer.
- (iv) If “ $a \mid b$ ” and “ $a \mid c$ ” then “ $b = ax$ ” and “ $c = ay$ ” add both equations, “ $b + c = ax + ay$ ” factor, “ $b + c = a(x + y)$ ”,  $(x + y)$  is some integer, so “ $a \mid (b + c)$ ”
- (v) If “ $a \mid b$ ” and “ $b \mid c$ ” then “ $b = ax$ ” and “ $c = by$ ” substitute  $b$  in  $c$ , “ $c = (ax)y$ ” shift terms, “ $c = a(xy)$ ”,  $(xy)$  is some integer, so “ $a \mid c$ ”.

■

**Theorem 1.2: Reflexive Divisibility**

For all  $a, b \in \mathbb{Z}$ : " $a \mid b$ "  $\wedge$  " $b \mid a$ "  $\iff$  " $a = \pm b$ ". Additionally, " $a \mid 1$ "  $\iff$  " $a = \pm 1$ ".

**Proof 1.2: Theorem 1.2**

**Proof.** For all  $a, b, x, y \in \mathbb{Z}$ :

Proving " $a \mid b$ "  $\wedge$  " $b \mid a$ "  $\implies$  " $a = \pm b$ ":

$$\begin{array}{ll}
 a \mid b & a \mid b \quad \text{Given} \\
 b = ax & a = by \quad \text{Definition of Division} \\
 ab = (ax)(by) & \text{Multiplying both equations} \\
 ab = (ab)(xy) & \text{Shift terms} \\
 1 = xy & \text{Divide both sides by } ab
 \end{array}$$

$x$  and  $y$  are integers, so " $x = y = 1$ ". Substitute  $x$  and  $y$ ,

$$\begin{array}{ll}
 b = a(1) & a = b(1) \quad \text{Substitute} \\
 a = b & \text{Simplify}
 \end{array}$$

$x$  or  $y$  could be  $\pm$ , so " $a = \pm b$ ". Now " $a = \pm b$ "  $\implies$  " $a \mid b$ " and " $b \mid a$ ". From Theorem 1.1, we can use (i) to show " $a \mid a$ " substitute  $b$  in for  $a$ , " $a \mid b$ " or  $b \mid a$ .

Proving " $a \mid 1$ "  $\implies$  " $a = \pm 1$ ":

$$\begin{array}{ll}
 a \mid 1 & \text{Given} \\
 1 = ax & \text{Definition of Division} \\
 1 = a(1) & \text{Simplify}
 \end{array}$$

$a$  must be 1,  $x$  could be  $\pm$ , so " $a = \pm 1$ " then " $a \mid \pm 1$ " so " $a \mid 1$ ". ■

**Definition 1.2: Cancellation Law**

Let  $a, b, c \in \mathbb{Z}$ : If " $ab = ac$ " and " $a \neq 0$ " then " $b = c$ ".

I.e., given " $b = c$ " multiplying both sides by  $a$  yields " $ab = ac$ ", still  $b = c$ .

**Definition 1.3: Prime Numbers**

If an integer  $n$  is greater than 1 and only has divisors 1 and itself, then  $n$  is a **prime number**.