Part II - Number Theory
Lectured by Prof. T. A. Fisher

Artur Avameri

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Contents

0   Introduction

Books:

- A. Baker, *A concise introduction to the theory of numbers*, CUP 1984

- N. Koblitz, *A course in number theory & cryptography*, Springer 1994

- H. Davenport, *The higher arithmetic*, CUP 2008

Number theory studies the hidden and mysterious properties of the integers and the rational numbers.

It has always been an experimental science. Examining numerical data leads to **conjectures**, many of which are very old and still unproven today.

Example 0.1.   (i) Let $N \geq 1$ be an integer of the form $8n + 5, 8n + 6$ or $8n + 7$. Does there exist a right-angled triangle of area N, all of whose sides have rational length? We don't know.

 (ii) Let $\pi(x)$ be the number of primes less than or equal to x and define $\mathrm{li}(x) = \int_2^x \frac{dt}{\log t}$. Then for all $x \geq 3$, $|\pi(x) - \mathrm{li}(x)| \leq \sqrt{x} \log x$. This is in fact equivalent to the Riemann hypothesis.

 (iii) There are infinitely many twin primes. We now know there is an integer $N \leq 246$ such that there are infinitely many pairs of primes the form $p, p + N$.

1 Euclid's algorithm and factoring

Definition 1.1 (Division algorithm)**.** Given $a, b \in \mathbb{Z}$, with $b > 0$, there exist $q, r \in \mathbb{Z}$ such that $a = qb + r$, and $0 \leq r < b$.

Notation. If $r = 0$, then we write $b|a$, else $b \nmid a$.

Proof. Let $S = \{a - nb \mid n \in \mathbb{Z}\}$. This certainly contains integers ≥ 0, so take the smallest one r. We claim $r < b$. Indeed, if not, then $r - b \geq 0$, contradicting minimality. □

Given $a_1, \ldots, a_n \in \mathbb{Z}$ not all zero, let $I = \{\lambda_1 a_1 + \ldots + \lambda_n a_n \mid \lambda_i \in \mathbb{Z}\}$.

Lemma 1.2. $I = d\mathbb{Z}$ for some $d > 0$.

Proof. I certainly contains integers ≥ 0. Let d be the least positive element of I. We claim it works. Take $a \in I$, then $a = qd + r$ with $0 \leq r < d$. But $r = a - qd \in I \implies r = 0$. □

Remark. We get from this that d divides each a_i, and any common divisor of the a_i must divide d. Why?

We write $d = \gcd(a_1, \ldots, a_n)$ for the **greatest common divisor** (or **highest common factor**), or just use the shorthand $d = (a_1, \ldots, a_n)$.

Corollary 1.3. Let $a, b, c \in \mathbb{Z}$. Then there exist $x, y \in \mathbb{Z}$ such that $ax + by = c$ if and only if $(a, b)|c$.

The division algorithm gives a very efficient way to compute (a, b). Assume $a > b > 0$. Apply the division algorithm recursively to get

$$
\begin{aligned}
a &= q_1 b + r_1 & 0 &\leq r_1 < b \\
b &= q_2 r_1 + r_2 & 0 &\leq r_2 < r_1 \\
r_1 &= q_3 r_2 + r_3 & 0 &\leq r_3 < r_2 \\
&\;\;\vdots \\
r_{k-2} &= q_k r_{k-1} + r_k & 0 &\leq r_k < r_{k-1}, r_k \neq 0 \\
r_{k-1} &= q_{k+1} r_k + 0
\end{aligned}
$$

Claim. $r_k = (a, b)$. Indeed, $(a, b) = (b, r_1) = (r_1, r_2) = \ldots = (r_{k-1}, r_k) = r_k$. This is called **Euclid's algorithm**.

Remark. If $d = (a, b)$, then by Lemma 1.2, there exist $r, s \in Z$ such that $ra + st = d$. Euclid's algorithm gives us a way to find r and s.

In the following table, x and y stand for 34 and 25, and we then compute remainders as linear combinations of them.

We can use a trick here to speed this up: find each row as $q\cdot$ the row before it + the second row before it, then figure out signs at the end. (In fact, the minus signs zigzag down).

$$
\begin{array}{r|cc}
 & x & y \\
\hline
a = 34 & 1 & 0 \\
b = 25 & 0 & 1 \\
34 = 1 \cdot 25 + 9 & 1 & -1 \\
25 = 2 \cdot 9 + 7 & -2 & 3 \\
9 = 1 \cdot 7 + 2 & 3 & -4 \\
7 = 3 \cdot 2 + 1 & -11 & 15 \\
\end{array}
$$

We hence get $-11 \cdot 34 + 15 \cdot 25 = 1$.

Definition 1.4. An integer $n > 1$ is **prime** if its only positive divisors are 1 and n. Otherwise n is **composite**.

Lemma 1.5. Let p be a prime, and $a, b \in \mathbb{Z}$. If $p|ab$, then $p \mid a$ or $p \mid b$.

Proof. Assume $p \nmid a$. Then $(a, p) = 1$. By Lemma 1.2, $\exists r, s \in \mathbb{Z}$ such that $ra + sp = 1 \implies rab + spb = b$. Since $p \mid ab$, $p \mid b$ follows. $\square$

Theorem 1.6 (**Fundamental Theorem of Arithmetic**)**.** Every integer $n > 1$ can be written as a product of primes. This representation is unique up to reordering.

Proof. Existence is obvious. For uniqueness, suppose $n = p_1 p_2 \ldots p_r = q_1 q_2 \ldots q_s$ for p_i, q_i primes. We have $p_1 \mid q_1 q_2 \ldots q_r$, so by Lemma 1.5, $p_1 \mid q_j$ for some j, so $p_1 = q_j$. Now cancel these out and induct. $\square$

Remark. If $m = \prod_{i=1}^{k} p_i^{\alpha_i}$ and $n = \prod_{i=1}^{k} p_i^{\beta_i}$ for p_i distinct primes and $\alpha_i, \beta_i \geq 0$, then

$$
(m, n) = \prod_{i=1}^{k} p_i^{\min(\alpha_i, \beta_i)}.
$$

However, if m and n are large, it is more efficient to compute (m, n) using Euclid's algorithm.

Suppose we have some large positive integer N. An obvious algorithm for factoring N is to trial divide by 2 and the odd integers up to $\sqrt{N}$.

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Definition 1.7. An algorithm with input a positive integer N is **polynomial** or a **polynomial time** algorithm if it takes $\leq c(\log N)^b$ **elementary operations** for some constants b and c.

Remark. An elementary operation is just adding/multiplying two numbers in $\{0, 1, \ldots, 9\}$.

Remark. "Polynomial" makes sense here as it takes $\log N$ digits to write N.

Polynomial algorithms are known for:

- Adding and multiplying integers (the usual way);

- Computing gcd's (via Euclid's algorithm);

- Detecting n^{th} powers (compute $\sqrt[n]{\ }$ numberically and round)

- More remarkably, primality testing (Agrawal, Kayal, Saxena in 2002)

But trial division up to $\sqrt{N}$ is not polynomial.

Fundamental question: Is there a polynomial time algorithm for factoring? This is unknown.

Later in this course we study the distribution of the prime numbers, in particular the function $\pi(x)$, the number of primes $\leq x$.

Theorem 1.8. There are infinitely many prime numbers, i.e. $\lim_{x \to \infty} \pi(x) \to \infty$.

Proof. Suppose there are only finitely many, say $p_1, \ldots, p_k$. Consider $N = \prod_{i=1}^{k} p_k + 1$. Then N must be divisible by some prime other than the p_i, so we're done. $\qquad\square$

All the largest known primes are of the form $2^n - 1$ for n a prime. These are called **Mersenne primes**. 51 of them are known, the largest being $2^{82589933} - 1$.

2   Congruences

Fix a positive integer n (the modulus).

Definition 2.1. We say $a \equiv b \pmod{n}$, or that a is congruent to $b \pmod{n}$ if n divides $a - b$.

This defines an equivalence relation on $\mathbb{Z}$, and we write $\mathbb{Z}/n\mathbb{Z}$ for the set of equivalence classes. We can denote these by $a + n\mathbb{Z}$, or (more commonly) by $a \pmod{n}$. We can check that addition and multiplication are well-defined.

Remark. $n\mathbb{Z}$ is a subgroup/ideal of $\mathbb{Z}$ and $\mathbb{Z}/n\mathbb{Z}$ is the quotient group/ring.

Lemma 2.2. Let $a \in \mathbb{Z}/n\mathbb{Z}$. Then the following are equivalent:

(i) $(a, n) = 1$

(ii) $\exists b \in \mathbb{Z}$ such that $ab \equiv 1 \pmod{n}$

(iii) a is a generator for $\mathbb{Z}/n\mathbb{Z}$.

Proof. (i) $\implies$ (ii): $(a, n) = 1 \implies \exists r, s \in \mathbb{Z}$ such that $ra + sn = 1$, so $ra \equiv 1$ (mod n).

(ii) $\implies$ (i): $ab \equiv 1$ (mod n) $\implies ab + kn = 1$ for some $k \in \mathbb{Z} \implies (a, b) = 1$.

(ii) $\iff$ (iii): $\exists b \in \mathbb{Z}$ s.t. $ab \equiv 1$ (mod n) $\iff 1$ belongs to the subgroup of $\mathbb{Z}/n\mathbb{Z}$ generated by a. $\qquad\square$

Notation. $(\mathbb{Z}/n\mathbb{Z})^\times$ is the group of **units** in $\mathbb{Z}/n\mathbb{Z}$, i.e. the elements with an inverse under multiplication.

Definition 2.3. $\phi(n) = |(\mathbb{Z}/n\mathbb{Z})^\times|$ is called the **Euler totient function**. We also have $\phi(n) = |\{1 \le a \le n \mid (a, n) = 1\}|$.

Remark. $\mathbb{Z}/n\mathbb{Z}$ is a field $\iff \phi(n) = n - 1 \iff n$ is prime.

Theorem 2.4 (Euler-Fermat theorem)**.** If $(a, n) = 1$, then $a^{\phi(n)} \equiv 1$ (mod n).

Proof. Apply Lagrange's theorem to the group $G = (\mathbb{Z}/n\mathbb{Z})^\times$. Then for $a \in G$, its order divides $|G| = \phi(n)$. $\qquad\square$

As a corollary:

Theorem 2.5 (Fermat's little theorem)**.** If $p \nmid a$, then $a^{p-1} \equiv 1$ (mod p).

Lemma 2.6. Let G be a cyclic group of order n. We have

$$|\{g \in G \mid \operatorname{order}(g) = d\}| = \begin{cases} \phi(d) & \text{if } d \mid n \\ 0 & \text{otherwise} \end{cases}$$

In particular, $\sum_{d|n} \phi(d) = n$.

Proof. WLOG let $G = (\mathbb{Z}/n\mathbb{Z}, +)$. We have $|\{g \in G \mid \operatorname{order}(g) = n\}| \overset{(*)}{=} \phi(n)$ by Lemma 2.2. If $d \mid n$, say $n = dk$, then the elements of order dividing d are the classes $0, k, 2k, \ldots, (d-1)k$ (mod n). These form a cyclic subgroup of order d. Applying $(*)$ to this cyclic subgroup shows that there are $\phi(d)$ elements of order d. $\qquad\square$

Example 2.7. Consider the simultaneous linear congruences $x \equiv 7$ (mod 10) and $x \equiv 3$ (mod 13). Suppose we can find $u, v \in \mathbb{Z}$ such that

$$\begin{cases} u \equiv 1 \pmod{10} \\ u \equiv 0 \pmod{13} \end{cases} , \begin{cases} v \equiv 0 \pmod{10} \\ v \equiv 1 \pmod{13} \end{cases} .$$

Then $x = 7u + 3v$ is a solution. But $(10, 13) = 1 \implies \exists r, s \in \mathbb{Z}$ such that $10r + 13s = 1$, and we can just take $u = 13s, v = 10r$. To find r, s, we can use Euclid's algorithm to get $r = 4, s = -3$, so $u = -39, v = 40$, and so $x \equiv 7 \cdot (-39) + 3 \cdot 40 \equiv 107$ (mod 130).

Theorem 2.8 (Chinese Remainder Theorem)**.** Let $m_1, \ldots, m_k$ be pairwise coprime integers greater than 1. Let $a_1, \ldots, a_k \in \mathbb{Z}$. Let $M = m_1 m_2 \ldots m_k$. Then $\exists x \in \mathbb{Z}$ satisfying

$$\begin{cases} x \equiv a_1 \pmod{m_1} \\ \vdots \\ x \equiv a_k \pmod{m_k} \end{cases}.$$

Moreover, the solution is unique mod M.

Proof. Uniqueness: Suppose $x \equiv x' \pmod{m_i} \ \forall i$. Then by considering the prime factorization of $x - x'$ and using the fact that the m_i are pairwise coprime, we get $x \equiv x' \pmod{M}$.

Existence: Put $M_i = \frac{M}{m_i}$, so $(M_i, m_i) = 1 \ \forall i$. Hence we can find $u_i \in \mathbb{Z}$ such that $u_i M_i \equiv 1 \pmod{m_i} \ \forall i$. Let $x = \sum_{j=1}^{k} a_j u_j M_j$. Then $x \equiv a_i u_i M_i \equiv a_i \pmod{m_i}$. $\qquad\square$

We can write this theorem in one ling using ring theory.

Definition 2.9. Let $R_i = \mathbb{Z}/m_i\mathbb{Z}$, and define $R_1 \times \ldots \times R_k = \{(r_1, \ldots, r_k) \mid r_i \in R_i\}$ with addition and multiplication defined componentwise. This is a ring.

Theorem 2.10 (CRT, ring-theoretic version)**.** Let $m_1, \ldots, m_k$ be pairwise coprime integers greater than 1 and put $M = m_1 \ldots m_k$. Then the map

$$\theta : \mathbb{Z}/M\mathbb{Z} \to \mathbb{Z}/m_1\mathbb{Z} \times \ldots \times \mathbb{Z}/m_k\mathbb{Z}$$
$$a + M\mathbb{Z} \mapsto (a + m_1\mathbb{Z}, \ldots, a + m_k\mathbb{Z})$$

is an isomorphism of rings.

Proof. θ is a well defined ring homomorphism since $m_i | M \ \forall i$. Injectivity of θ follows from uniqueness in CRT, and surjectivity of θ follows from existence in CRT. $\qquad\square$

Corollary 2.11. θ induces an isomorphism of groups under multiplication

$$(\mathbb{Z}/m\mathbb{Z})^{\times} \cong (\mathbb{Z}/m_1\mathbb{Z})^{\times} \times \ldots \times (\mathbb{Z}/m_k\mathbb{Z})^{\times}$$
$$a + M\mathbb{Z} \mapsto (a + m_1\mathbb{Z}, \ldots, a + m_k\mathbb{Z}).$$

Remark. If $a \in \mathbb{Z}$, then $(a, M) = 1 \iff (a, m_i) = 1 \ \forall i$.

In particular, by looking at orders of the LHS and the RHS above, we get $\phi(M) = \phi(m_1) \ldots \phi(m_k)$, i.e. the Euler phi function is multiplicative.

Definition 2.12. A function $f : \mathbb{Z}^+ \to \mathbb{C}$ is **multiplicative** if $f(m) = f(m)f(n)$ whenever $(m, n) = 1$.

Examples:

- $\phi(n) = |(\mathbb{Z}/n\mathbb{Z})^\times|$;

- $\tau(n) = \sum_{d|n} 1$, the number of divisors of n;

- $\sigma(n) = \sum_{d|n} d$, the sum of divisors of n;

- more generally, $\sigma_k(n) = \sum_{d|n} d^k$, so $\sigma_0 = \tau$ and $\sigma_1 = \sigma$.

To prove this:

Lemma 2.13. If $f : \mathbb{Z}^+ \to \mathbb{C}$ is multiplicative, then so is $g : \mathbb{Z}^+ \to \mathbb{C}$, defined by $g(n) = \sum_{d|n} f(d)$.

Proof. Let m, n be coprime. Note that every divisor d of mn can be written as $d = d_1 d_2$, where $d_1 \mid m$, $d_2 \mid n$ and $(d_1, d_2) = 1$. Thus

$$g(mn) = \sum_{d|mn} f(d) = \sum_{d_1|m} \sum_{d_2|n} f(d_1 d_2) = \sum_{d_1|m} \sum_{d_2|n} f(d_1)f(d_2) = g(m)g(n).$$

$\square$

Lemma 2.14.   (i) For p a prime, $\phi(p^k) = p^{k-1}(p-1) = p^k(1 - \frac{1}{p})$.

(ii) $\phi(n) = n \prod_{p|n}(1 - \frac{1}{p})$.

Proof. (i): $\phi(p^k)$ counts the number of integers a between 1 and p^k such that $(p^k, a) = (p, a) = 1$. So we have p^a numbers, and we don't count the multiples of p, so $\phi(p^k) = p^k - p^{k-1}$.

(ii): Follows from the fact that ϕ is multiplicative. $\square$

Alternative proof that $\sum_{d|n} \phi(d) = n$ (cf Lemma 2.6).

Proof. Obviously the RHS is multiplicative. Since $\phi(n)$ is multiplicative, the LHS is multiplicative by Lemma 2.13, so it suffices to check for n a prime power, say $n = p^k$. To this end, compute

$$\sum_{d|p^k} \phi(d) = \phi(1) + \phi(p) + \ldots + \phi(p^k) = 1 + (p-1) + (p^2 - p) + \ldots + (p^k - p^{k-1}) = p^k.$$

$\square$

2.1 Polynomial congruences

Let $R = \mathbb{Z}, \mathbb{Q}, \mathbb{Z}/n\mathbb{Z}$ (or more generally any commutative ring). Set $R[X] = \{$**polynomials** with coefficients in $R\}$, i.e. $a_n X^n + a_{n-1} X^{n-1} + \ldots + a_1 X + a_0$ for $a_i \in R$.

By definition, two polynomials are equal if and only if they have the same coefficients. We can check that $R[X]$ is a ring (with usual $+$ and $\times$).

Warning. The map $R[X] \to \{$functions $R \to R\}$ by $f \mapsto (\alpha \mapsto f(\alpha))$ is not always injective. For example, if $R = \mathbb{Z}/p\mathbb{Z}$ for p a prime, and $f(X) = X^p - X$, then $f(\alpha) = 0 \ \forall \alpha \in R$, but f is not the zero function.

Question. Can we show that if $f \in R[X]$ has degree n, then f has at most n roots in R?

Answer. No. For example, take $R = \mathbb{Z}/8\mathbb{Z}$, then $f(X) = X^2 - 1$ has 4 solutions in $\mathbb{Z}/8\mathbb{Z}$.

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Let $R = \mathbb{Z}, \mathbb{Q}, \mathbb{Z}/n\mathbb{Z}$ (or any commutative ring).

We have a **division algorithm** on $R[X]$:

Let $f, g \in R[X]$ and suppose the leading coefficient of g is a unit. Then $\exists q, r \in R[X]$ such that $f(X) = Q(X)g(X) + r(X)$ and $\deg(r) < \deg(g)$.

Proof. By induction on $\deg(f)$. If $\deg(f) < \deg(g)$, take $q = 0, r = f$. Otherwise, let $f(X) = aX^m + \ldots$ and $g(X) = bX^n + \ldots$ with $m \geq n$ and b a unit.

Let $f_1(X) = f(X) - ab^{-1} X^{m-n} g(X)$. Then $\deg(f_1) < \deg(f)$, so by the induction hypothesis, $f_1(x) = q_1(x)g(x) + r_1(x)$ for some $q_1, r_1 \in R[X]$ and $\deg(r_1) < \deg(g)$. Now take $q(X) = ab^{-1} X^{m-n} + q_1(X)$ and $r = r_1$, so we're done. $\square$

Corollary 2.15. If $f \in R[X]$ and $\alpha \in R$ is such that $f(\alpha) = 0$, then $f(X) = (X - \alpha)f_1(X)$ for some $f_1 \in R[X]$.

Proof. By the division algorithm, $f(X) = (X - \alpha)f_1(X) + r$ for some $r \in R$ (as $\deg(r) < \deg(X - \alpha)$). Plug in $X = \alpha$ to get $r = 0$. $\square$

Definition 2.16. R is an **integral domain** if R has no zero divisors, i.e. $\alpha, \beta \in R, \ \alpha\beta = 0 \implies \alpha = 0$ or $\beta = 0$.

Note. Let $n > 1$. Then $\mathbb{Z}/n\mathbb{Z}$ is an integral domain $\iff n$ is prime.

Theorem 2.17. If R is an integral domain, then any polynomial $f \in R[X]$ of degree n has at most n roots.

Proof. By induction on n, the degree of f. If $n = 0$, then our polynomial is a nonzero constant and we're done. Now suppose $\exists \alpha \in R$ such that $f(\alpha) = 0$ (otherwise we're done). By Corollary 2.15, $f(X) = (X - \alpha)f_1(X)$. Since R is an integral domain, every root of f, except possibly α is a root of f_1. By induction, f_1 has at most $n - 1$ roots, hence f has at most n roots and we're done. $\square$

Corollary 2.18 (Lagrange's Theorem). Let p be a prime and $a_0, \ldots, a_n \in \mathbb{Z}$ with $p \nmid a_n$. Then the congruence

$$a_n x^n + a_{n-1} x^{n-1} + \ldots + a_1 x + a_0 \equiv 0 \pmod{p}$$

has at most n solutions mod p.

Proof. Take $R = \mathbb{Z}/p\mathbb{Z}$ in Theorem 2.17. $\qquad\qquad\qquad\qquad\qquad\qquad \square$

Remark. In this course, we will refer to the above theorem as Lagrange's Theorem.

Example 2.19. Let p be a prime. We will factor $X^{p-1} - 1 \pmod{p}$. Let $f(X) = X^{p-1} - 1 - \prod_{a=1}^{p-1}(X - \alpha)$ in $\mathbb{Z}/p\mathbb{Z}[X]$. By Fermat's Little Theorem, f has at least $p - 1$ roots mod p. But $\deg(f) < p - 1$, since the X^{p-1} terms cancel out, so by Lagrange's Theorem, $f = 0$, i.e. $X^{p-1} - 1 = \prod_{a=1}^{p-1}(X - a)$ in $\mathbb{Z}/p\mathbb{Z}[X]$. Plugging in $X = 0$ gives $(p - 1)! \equiv -1 \pmod{p}$, i.e. Wilson's Theorem.

Example 2.20. Working mod 7, the powers of 3 (starting from 0) are $1, 3, 2, 6, 4, 5$. So $(\mathbb{Z}/7\mathbb{Z})^\times$ is cyclic, generated by 3.

Theorem 2.21. Let p be a prime. Then $(\mathbb{Z}/p\mathbb{Z})^\times$ is cyclic.

Proof. Let $S_d = \{a \in (\mathbb{Z}/p\mathbb{Z})^\times \mid \text{ord}(a) = d\}$. Suppose $S_d \neq \emptyset$, say $a \in S_d$. Then $1, a, a^2, \ldots, a^{d-1}$ are distinct elements in $\mathbb{Z}/p\mathbb{Z}$ and they are solutions of $x^d \equiv 1 \pmod{p}$. By Lagrange's theorem, this has at most d solutions, and we found d solutions, so those are all of them, i.e. $S_d \subseteq \{1, a, a^2, \ldots, a^{d-1}\}$. Note that the LHS is a cyclic group of order d, so this has $\phi(d)$ elements of order d.

We conclude that for every d, $|S_d| = 0$ or $|S_d| = \phi(d)$. In particular, $|S_d| \leq \phi(d)$. Hence

$$p - 1 \stackrel{(\star)}{=} \sum_{d \mid (p-1)} |S_d| \leq \sum_{d \mid (p-1)} \phi(d) = p - 1,$$

where $(\star)$ follows since we just count all the elements in $(\mathbb{Z}/p\mathbb{Z})^\times$. Hence $|S_d| = \phi(d) \; \forall d \mid (p - 1)$. In particular, $S_{p-1} \neq \emptyset$, i.e. $(\mathbb{Z}/p\mathbb{Z})^\times$ contains elements of order $p - 1$, i.e. $(\mathbb{Z}/p\mathbb{Z})^\times$ is cyclic. $\qquad\qquad \square$

Remark. The same argument shows that any finite subgroup of the multiplicative group of a field is cyclic.

Definition 2.22. An integer a such that $a \pmod{n}$ generates $(\mathbb{Z}/n\mathbb{Z})^\times$ is called a **primitive root** mod n.

Theorem 2.21 showed that primitive roots exist mod p.

Example 2.23. Let $p = 19$. Let d be the order of 2 in $(\mathbb{Z}/19\mathbb{Z})^\times$. We know $d \mid 18$, so we work out

$$2^3 \equiv 8 \pmod{19}$$
$$2^6 \equiv 7 \not\equiv 1 \pmod{19} \implies d \nmid 6$$
$$2^9 \equiv -1 \not\equiv 1 \pmod{19} \implies d \nmid 9,$$

so $d = 18$ and hence 2 is a primitive root mod 19.

In general, $g \in \mathbb{Z}$ (coprime to p) is a primitive root mod p if and only if $g^{\frac{p-1}{q}} \not\equiv 1 \pmod{p}$ $\forall$primes $q \mid (p-1)$.

Remark. The number of primitive roots mod p is $\phi(p-1) = \phi(\phi(p))$.

Here are some (open) problems concerning primitive roots:

(i) Artin's conjecture (1927) – Let $a > 1$ be an integer which is not a square. Then a is a primitive root mod p for infinitely many primes p. This is unknown for $a = 2$. Hooley (1967) proved this assuming GRH. Heath-Brown (1986) proved that Artin's conjecture holds for at least one of $2, 3$ or 5. In fact, he proved something stronger: he proved the conjecture fails for at most 2 prime values of a.

(ii) How large is the smallest primitive root mod p? Burgess (1962) showed it is $\leq cp^{1/4+\epsilon}$ $\forall \epsilon > 0$ and some constant $c = c(\epsilon)$. Shoup (1992) showed it is $\leq c(\log p)^6$ assuming GRH.

We now consider $\mathbb{Z}/p^n\mathbb{Z}$ for $n > 1$. For $n \geq 3$, there is a surjective group homomorphism from $(\mathbb{Z}/2^n\mathbb{Z})^\times \to (\mathbb{Z}/8\mathbb{Z})^\times = \{\pm 1, \pm 3\} \cong C_2 \times C_2$, so $(\mathbb{Z}/2^n\mathbb{Z})^\times$ is not cyclic (since generators map to generators).

Theorem 2.24. Let p be an odd prime. Then $(\mathbb{Z}/p^n\mathbb{Z})^\times$ is cyclic $\forall n \geq 1$.

We divide the proof into 3 lemmas.

Lemma 2.25. Let $n \geq 2$. Then g is a primitive root mod p^n if and only if the following two conditions hold:

$$\begin{cases} g \text{ is a primitive root mod } p \\ g^{p^{n-2}(p-1)} \not\equiv 1 \pmod{p^n} \end{cases}.$$

Proof. ($\implies$) is clear, as $\phi(p^n) = p^{n-1}(p-1)$.

($\impliedby$): Let d be the order of g in $(\mathbb{Z}/p^n\mathbb{Z})^\times$. Then $d \mid \phi(p^n) = p^{n-1}(p-1)$. Since $g^d \equiv 1 \pmod{p^n}$, we have $g^d \equiv 1 \pmod{p}$. Hence by assumption 1, we have $(p-1) \mid d$. Say $d = p^j(p-1)$ for some $0 \leq j \leq n-1$. If $j \leq n-2$, then this contradicts assumption 2. Hence $j = n-1$, so $d = \phi(p^n)$ is a primtive root mod p^n. $\square$

Next we show $\exists g \in \mathbb{Z}$ satisfying conditions 1 and 2 in the case $n = 2$.

Lemma 2.26. $\exists g \in \mathbb{Z}$ a primitive root mod p such that $g^{p-1} \not\equiv 1 \pmod{p^2}$.

Proof. Let g be a primtive root mod p. If $g^{p-1} \equiv 1 \pmod{p^2}$, then consider $g + p$, which is still a primtive root mod p, but

$$(g+p)^{p-1} = g^{p-1} + (p-1)g^{p-2}p + \ldots \equiv 1 + (p-1)g^{p-2}p \pmod{p^2},$$

where the second term is not divisible by p^2, so $(g+p)^{p-1} \not\equiv 1 \pmod{p^2}$. $\qquad\square$

Next we show that if g is a primitive root mod p^2, then it is a primitive root mod p^n $\forall n \geq 2$.

Lemma 2.27. If $g^{p-1} \not\equiv 1 \pmod{p^2}$, then $g^{p^{n-2}(p-1)} \not\equiv 1 \pmod{p^n}$ $\forall n \geq 2$.

Proof. By induction on n, the case $n = 2$ being given. Suppose the result is true for n. By Euler-Fermat, $g^{p^{n-2}(p-1)} \equiv 1 \pmod{p^{n-1}}$, so $g^{p^{n-2}(p-1)} = 1 + bp^{n-1}$ for some $b \in \mathbb{Z}$, where $p \nmid b$ by the induction hypothesis. Taking p^{th} powers gives

$$g^{p^{n-1}(p-1)} = (1 + bp^{n-1})^p = 1 + bp^n + \binom{p}{2}b^2 p^{2(n-1)} + \ldots \equiv$$
$$1 + bp^n + \binom{p}{2}b^2 p^{2(n-1)} \overset{\star}{\equiv} 1 + bp^n \pmod{p^{n+1}},$$

where $\star$ follows since p is odd, so $p \mid \binom{p}{2}$ (and also we use $3(n-1) \geq n+1$ and $2(n-1)+1 \geq n+1$). Thus $g^{p^{n-1}(n-1)} \equiv 1 + bp^n \not\equiv 1 \pmod{p^{n+1}}$, so the result follows for $n+1$. $\qquad\square$

This completes the proof of Theorem 2.24.

Example 2.28. We saw 3 is a primitive root mod 7. We calculate $3^3 = -1 + 4\cdot 7$, so $3^6 \equiv 1 - 8 \cdot 7 \not\equiv 1 \pmod{7^2}$. Hence 3 is a primitive root mod 7^n $\forall n$.

For the case $p = 2$, let $G = \{a \in (\mathbb{Z}/2^n\mathbb{Z})^\times \mid a \equiv 1 \pmod 4\}$. Then $(\mathbb{Z}/2^n\mathbb{Z})^\times \cong \{\pm 1\} \times G$ by $a + 2^n\mathbb{Z} \mapsto \begin{cases} (1, a + 2^n\mathbb{Z}) & \text{if } a \equiv 1 \pmod 4 \\ (-1, -a + 2^n\mathbb{Z}) & \text{if } a \equiv 3 \pmod 4. \end{cases}$

Exercise. Show that G is cyclic (and generated by 5).
Exercise. For which n is $(\mathbb{Z}/n\mathbb{Z})^\times$ cyclic?