

# Combinatorics Notes

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*An important note, these notes are absolutely **NOT** guaranteed to be correct, representative of the course, or rigorous. Any result of this is not the author's fault.*

# 1 Counting Techniques

## 1.1 The Bijection Rule

For  $n$  in  $\mathbb{N}$ , we define  $[n] := \{1, 2, \dots, n\}$ .

For a given set  $X$ , if there exists a bijective function  $f : [n] \rightarrow X$  for some  $n$  in  $\mathbb{N}$ ,  $X$  has  $n$  elements (or rather  $|X| = n$ ).

This can also be achieved by listing out the elements of  $X = \{x_1, x_2, \dots, x_n\}$  as we can use  $f : [n] \rightarrow X$  where  $i$  maps to  $x_i$ .

## 1.2 The Addition Rule

We can count the amount of elements in a given set  $X$  by splitting  $X$  into disjoint sets, counting them, and adding the results.

For  $n$  in  $\mathbb{N}$ , and  $X_1, \dots, X_n$  pairwise disjoint sets:

$$\left| \bigcup_{i=1}^n X_i \right| = \sum_{i=1}^n |X_i|.$$

*For a set of sets  $A$ , pairwise disjoint means for two given sets in  $A$ , they are either disjoint or equal.*

## 1.3 The Multiplication Rule

If a counting problem can be split into a number of stages, we can use the product of the number of choices at each stage to find the total number of outcomes.

*For example, if we want to find how many three digit numbers there are, we can consider it as choosing three digits. We can choose  $1, 2, \dots, 9$  for the first digit and  $0, 1, \dots, 9$  for the rest so we get  $9 \cdot 10^2$  possibilities.*

## 1.4 Inclusion-Exclusion Principle

For  $n$  in  $\mathbb{N}$ , and  $X_1, \dots, X_n$  sets:

$$\begin{aligned} \left| \bigcup_{i=1}^n X_i \right| &= \sum_{i=1}^n |X_i| \\ &\quad - \sum_{i_1 \neq i_2} |X_{i_1} \cap X_{i_2}| \\ &\quad + \sum_{i_1 \neq i_2 \neq i_3} |X_{i_1} \cap X_{i_2} \cap X_{i_3}| \\ &\quad \dots \end{aligned}$$

*Essentially, this says that the size of the union of some finite number of sets is the sum of their sizes, minus the sum of their **paired** intersections, plus the sum of the intersections of **trios**, etc.*

## 1.5 The Factorial

For  $n$  in  $\mathbb{N}$  we can define the factorial  $n!$ :

$$n! = \begin{cases} 1 & n = 0 \\ \prod_{i=1}^n (i) & \text{otherwise.} \end{cases}$$

For  $k$  in  $\mathbb{N}$  we can further define  $(n)_k$ :

$$(n)_k = \frac{n!}{(n-k)!} = n(n-1)(n-2) \cdots (n-k+1).$$

*This can be thought of as the factorial with  $k$  elements (starting at  $n$ ). So,  $(n)_n = n!$ ,  $(n)_1 = n$ , etc.*

## 1.6 The Binomial Coefficient

For  $n, k$  in  $\mathbb{N}$ , we can define the binomial coefficient:

$$\binom{n}{k} = \frac{n!}{k!(n-k)!} = \frac{(n)_k}{k!}.$$

This is the number of ways of choosing  $k$ -element subsets from an  $n$ -element set. Furthermore, we have:

$$\binom{n}{k} = \binom{n}{n-k},$$

as choosing  $k$  elements is equivalent to choosing  $n - k$  elements to remove.

There are some notes to be made on the definition:

- $\binom{n}{k} = 0$  if  $k > n$
- $\binom{n}{0} = \binom{n}{n} = 1$
- $\binom{n}{k} \geq 0$

## 1.7 Pascal's Identity

Say we are selecting  $k$  elements from an  $n$ -element set (unordered, without repeats). We will see that there are  $\binom{n}{k}$  possibilities. If we fix an element in the set, we can either include said element in our selection or exclude it giving  $\binom{n-1}{k-1}$  and  $\binom{n-1}{k}$  possibilities respectively. Thus:

$$\binom{n}{k} = \binom{n-1}{k-1} + \binom{n-1}{k}.$$

## 1.8 The Binomial Theorem

By performing induction on Pascal's identity, we can see that for  $a, b$  in  $\mathbb{C}$  and  $n$  in  $\mathbb{N}$ :

$$(a+b)^n = \sum_{i=0}^n \binom{n}{i} a^i b^{n-i}.$$

Setting  $a = b = 1$ , we get  $2^n = \sum_{i=0}^n \binom{n}{i}$ .

## 1.9 The Pigeonhole Principle

For  $m, n, k$  in  $\mathbb{N}$ , if we have  $k$  objects being distributed into  $n$  boxes and  $n > mk$  then one box must contain at least  $k + 1$  objects.

## 2 Selection

For this section, we will consider  $n, k$  in  $\mathbb{N}$ .

### 2.1 Ordered Selection with Repeats

As we select, we have  $n$  choices, and we select  $k$  times. Thus, by the Multiplication Rule, we get  $n^k$  outcomes.

### 2.2 Ordered Selection without Repeats

As we select, the amount of choices we have decreases by one each time. We start with  $n$  choices and select  $k$  times. Thus, by the Multiplication Rule, we get  $n(n-1) \cdots (n-k+1) = (n)_k$  outcomes.

### 2.3 Unordered Selection with Repeats

Let the set we are selecting from be  $\{x_1, \dots, x_n\}$ . In this case, any solution can be aggregated into a list indicating how many times the  $i^{\text{th}}$  element was selected (for some  $i$  in  $[n]$ ). For example, if we select  $x_1$  three times and  $x_2$  five times, the outcome would be of the form  $\{3, 5, \dots\}$ .

It can be seen that for each of these solutions, the sum of the elements in the set must equal  $k$ . We can construct a solution by starting with a set of all zeroes  $\{0, 0, 0, \dots\}$  and distributing  $k$  into the set. For example, for  $n = 4$  and  $k = 3$  the following are solutions:

$$\begin{aligned} \{1, 1, 1, 0\} &\text{ as } 1 + 1 + 1 + 0 = 3 = k, \\ \{0, 2, 0, 1\} &\text{ as } 0 + 2 + 0 + 1 = 3 = k, \\ \{3, 0, 0, 0\} &\text{ as } 3 + 0 + 0 + 0 = 3 = k. \end{aligned}$$

These solutions correspond to  $\{x_1, x_2, x_3\}$ ,  $\{x_2, x_2, x_4\}$ ,  $\{x_1, x_1, x_1\}$  respectively.

This distribution of  $k$  can be thought of as separating  $k$  into  $n$  groups. For example, the solution  $\{1, 1, 0, 1\}$  corresponds to:

$$\bullet | \bullet | \bullet | \bullet |$$

The dots and dividers are identical respectively, and we have a total of  $k$  dots plus  $n - 1$  dividers equalling  $k + n - 1$  elements. We can choose where to place the dividers beforehand and then fill in the dots, thus we have:

$$\binom{k + n - 1}{n - 1}$$

choices.

## 2.4 Unordered Selection without Repeats

This is identical to the ordered case but we divide by the number of permutations of the solutions as order does not matter. Thus, we get:

$$\frac{(n)_k}{k!} = \binom{n}{k}.$$

# 3 Generating Functions

## 3.1 Definition of a Generating Function

For a sequence  $(a_n)_{n \geq 0}$ , we can associate a **formal power series**:

$$f(x) = \sum_{k=0}^{\infty} a_k x^k = a_0 + a_1 x + a_2 x^2 + \cdots.$$

We say  $f(x)$  is the generating function of  $(a_n)$ , or write:

$$\begin{aligned} a_0, a_1, a_2, \dots &\leftrightarrow a_0 + a_1 x + a_2 x^2 + \cdots \\ (a_n)_{n \geq 0} &\leftrightarrow f(x). \end{aligned}$$

Note, however, that this doesn't imply that the series is convergent.

## 3.2 Generating Functions of Finite Sequences

For finite sequences (or rather, sequences with finitely many non-zero terms), we have that their generating functions can be written as polynomials.

## 3.3 The Scaling Rule

For a sequence  $(a_n)_{n \geq 0}$  with an associated generating function  $f(x)$  and  $c$  in  $\mathbb{R}$ :

$$(ca_n)_{n \geq 0} \leftrightarrow cf(x).$$

### 3.4 The Addition Rule

For the sequences  $(a_n)_{n \geq 0}$ ,  $(b_m)_{m \geq 0}$  with the associated generating functions  $f(x)$ ,  $g(x)$  respectively:

$$(a + b)_{n \geq 0} \leftrightarrow f(x) + g(x).$$

### 3.5 The Right-Shift Rule

For a sequence  $(a_n)_{n \geq 0}$  with an associated generating function  $f(x)$ , we can add  $k$  in  $\mathbb{N}$  leading zeroes by multiplying the sequence by  $x^k$ :

$$0, \dots, 0, a_0, a_1, \dots \leftrightarrow x^k f(x).$$

### 3.6 The Differentiation Rule

For a sequence  $(a_n)_{n \geq 0}$  with an associated generating function  $f(x)$ , we have that:

$$a_1, 2a_2, 3a_3, \dots \leftrightarrow \frac{d}{dx} f(x).$$

*So, each element in the sequence is multiplied by its index and left-shifted by one, with the farthest left term (the constant) removed.*

### 3.7 The Convolution Rule

For the sequences  $(a_n)_{n \geq 0}$ ,  $(b_m)_{m \geq 0}$  with associated generating functions  $f(x)$ ,  $g(x)$  respectively. We have that:

$$c_0, c_1, c_2, \dots \leftrightarrow f(x) \cdot g(x),$$

where:

$$c_n := \sum_{i=0}^n a_i b_{n-i} = a_0 b_n + a_1 b_{n-1} + \dots + a_{n-1} b_1 + a_n b_0.$$

### 3.8 The Negative Binomial Theorem

For all  $n$  in  $\mathbb{N}$ , we have that:

$$(1 + x)^{-n} = \sum_{k=0}^{\infty} (-1)^k \binom{n+k-1}{n-1} x^k.$$

## 4 Combinatorial Designs

### 4.1 Definition of a Set System

For  $V$  a finite set, we let  $B$  be a collection of subsets of  $V$ . We call the pair  $(V, B)$  a set system with **ground set**  $V$ .

If for all elements in  $B$ , each element has the same cardinality  $k$ , we have that  $(V, B)$  is  **$k$ -uniform**.

*We have that  $B \subseteq \mathcal{P}(V)$  (that is, the powerset of  $V$ ).*

### 4.2 Definition of Block Design

For  $v, k, t, \lambda$  integers, we suppose:

$$v > k \geq t \geq 1, \quad \lambda \geq 1.$$

A block design of type:

$$t - (v, k, \lambda),$$

is a set system  $(V, B)$  with the following properties:

- $V$  has size  $v$
- $(V, B)$  is  $k$ -uniform
- Each  $t$ -element subset of  $V$  is contained in exactly  $\lambda$  'blocks' (elements of  $B$ ).

### 4.3 The Quantity of Blocks in a Block Design

For a block design of type  $t - (v, k, \lambda)$ , we have that the number of blocks  $b$  can be defined as follows:

$$b = \frac{\lambda \binom{v}{t}}{\binom{k}{t}}.$$