

01204211 Discrete Mathematics

Lecture 13: Binomial Coefficients (1)

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The binomial coefficients¹

There is a reason why the term $\binom{n}{k}$ is called the binomial coefficients. In this lecture, we will discuss

- ▶ the Pascal's triangle,
- ▶ the binomial theorem, and
- ▶ advanced counting with binomial coefficients.

¹This lecture mostly follows Chapter 3 of [LPV].

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The table

We shall use the fact that $\binom{n}{0} = 1$ and $\binom{n}{k} = \binom{n-1}{k-1} + \binom{n-1}{k}$ to fill in the following table.

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You can note that the table is left-right symmetric. This is true because of the fact that $\binom{n}{k} = \binom{n}{n-k}$.

The Triangle

If we move the numbers in the table slightly to the right, the table becomes the Pascal's triangle.

Polynomial expansions

Let's start by looking at polynomial of the form $(x + y)^n$. Let's start with small values of n :

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Let's focus on the coefficient of each term. You may notice that terms x^n and y^n always have 1 as their coefficients. *Why is that?* Let's look further at the coefficients of terms $x^{n-1}y$. Do you see any pattern in their coefficients? *Can you explain why?*

Another way to look at it

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The binomial theorem

Theorem: If you expand $(x + y)^n$, the coefficient of the term $x^k y^{n-k}$ is $\binom{n}{k}$.

That is,

$$(x + y)^n = \sum_{k=0}^n \binom{n}{k} x^k y^{n-k} =$$
$$\binom{n}{n} x^n + \binom{n}{n-1} x^{n-1} y^1 + \binom{n}{n-2} x^{n-2} y^2 + \cdots + \binom{n}{1} x y^{n-1} + \binom{n}{0} y^n.$$

Additional applications of the binomial theorem

The binomial theorem can be used to prove various identities regarding the binomial coefficients. For example, if we let $x = 1$ and $y = 1$, we get that

$$(1 + 1)^n = 2^n = \binom{n}{0} + \binom{n}{1} + \cdots + \binom{n}{n-1} + \binom{n}{n}.$$

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$$(1 + 1)^n = 2^n = \binom{n}{0} + \binom{n}{1} + \cdots + \binom{n}{n-1} + \binom{n}{n}.$$

Quick check. Can you prove that

$$\binom{n}{0} - \binom{n}{1} + \binom{n}{2} - \binom{n}{3} + \cdots = 0.$$

Note that this statements says that the number of odd subsets equals the number of even subsets.

More on counting

We shall see more techniques for counting when we consider the following problems.

- ▶ How many anagrams does the word “KASETSARTUNIVERSITY” have? (They do not have to be real English words.)
- ▶ How can you give out n different presents to k students when student i has to get n_i pieces of presents?
- ▶ How many ways can you distribute n baht coins to k children?

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 - ▶ Since each anagram is counted in $4!$ twice, the number of anagrams is $4!/2 = 4 \cdot 3 = 12$.

General anagrams

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The number of permutation of alphabets in *HELLOWORLD*, treating each character differently is $10!$. However, each anagram is counted for $3!2!$ times because of the 3 copies of *L* and the 2 copies of *O*. Therefore, the number of anagrams is

$$\frac{10!}{3!2!}.$$

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- ▶ To see how many times each distribution is counted in the $9!$ ways, we can let children form a line and let each child permute his or her presents. Each child has $3!$ choices. Thus, one distribution appears $3!3!3!$ times.

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- ▶ Thus, the number of ways we can distribute presents is

$$\frac{9!}{3!3!3!}$$

Another way to look at the present distribution

- ▶ Let's look closely at a particular present distribution in the previous question. Let $\{1, 2, \dots, 9\}$ be the set of presents.
- ▶ Consider the case where A gets $\{1, 3, 8\}$, B gets $\{2, 4, 6\}$, and C gets $\{5, 7, 9\}$.

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- ▶ Another way to look at this distribution is to fix the order of the presents and see who gets each of the presents. Thus, the previous distribution is represented in the following table:

Presents	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
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- ▶ This is essentially an anagram problem. You can think of one particular way of present distribution as anagram of AAABBBCCC. Thus, we reach the same solution of

$$\frac{9!}{3!3!3!}.$$

Distributing identical presents

Now suppose that I have 9 identical presents. I want to give them to 3 students: A, B, and C. I want to give each student 3 presents. In how many ways can I do it?

- Note that when we state that the presents are identical, we mean that we do not distinguish them, i.e., the first present and the second present are indistinguishable.

Distributing coins (1)

I have 9 identical coins. I want to give them to 3 students: A, B, and C. In how many ways can I do it so that each student gets at least one coin?

- Let's first try to organize the distribution of coins.

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Since there are 8 places we can mark starting points, and there are 2 starting points we have to place, then there are $\binom{8}{2}$ ways to do so.

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This is a fairly surprising use of binomial coefficients.

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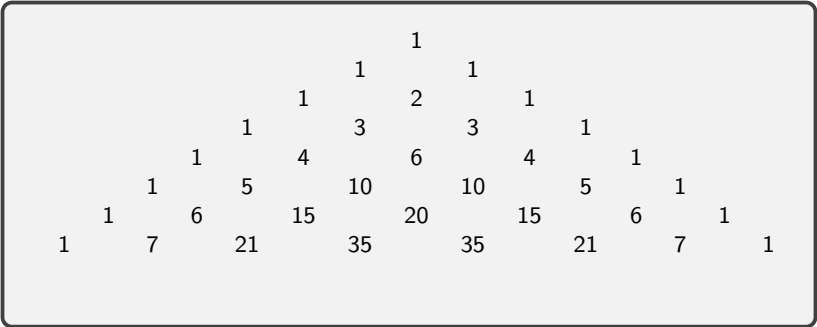
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There are $\binom{n-1}{k-1}$ ways to distribute n identical coins to k children so that each child get at least one coin.

Distributing coins (4)

I have 9 identical coins. I want to give them to 3 students: A, B, and C. In how many ways can I do it, given that some student may not get any coins?

Identities in the Triangle



							1							
						1		1						
				1		2		1						
			1		3		3		1					
		1		4		6		4		1				
	1		5		10		10		5		1			
	1	6		15		20		15		6		1		
1		7		21		35		35		21		7		1

Odd and even subsets

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Let's try to prove this identity with the Pascal's triangle

$$\binom{n}{0} - \binom{n}{1} + \binom{n}{2} - \cdots + (-1)^n \binom{n}{n} = 0.$$

A more formal proof

$$\binom{n}{0} - \binom{n}{1} + \binom{n}{2} - \cdots + (-1)^n \binom{n}{n} = 0.$$

The next experiment

							1								
							1		1						
						1	2		1						
				1		3	3		3		1				
			1	4		6	4		4		1				
		1	5	10		10	5		5		1				
	1	6	15	20		15	6		6		1				
1	7	21	35	35		21	7		1						

Let's try to compute the sum of squares of numbers in each row.

$$1^2 = 1$$

The next experiment

						1								
							1							
						1		1						
					1		2		1					
				1		3		3		1				
			1		4		6		4		1			
		1		5		10		10		5		1		
	1		6		15		20		15		6		1	
1		7		21		35		35		21		7		1

Let's try to compute the sum of squares of numbers in each row.

$$1^2 = 1$$

$$1^2 + 1^2 = 2$$

The next experiment

							1							
							1		1					
					1		2		1					
			1		3		3		1					
		1		4		6		4		1				
	1		5		10		10		5		1			
		1		6		15		15		6		1		
			7		21		35		35		21		7	
				15		35		35		21		7		1
					35		35		21		7		1	
						20		15		6		1		
						10		10		5		1		
						4		6		4				
						3		3		1				
						1		2						
							1							
								1						

Let's try to compute the sum of squares of numbers in each row.

$$1^2 = 1$$

$$1^2 + 1^2 = 2$$

$$1^2 + 2^2 + 1^2 = 6$$

The next experiment

						1								
							1			1				
					1			2			1			
			1			3			3			1		
		1		4			6			4			1	
	1		5		10			10			5			1
		6		15		20			15			6		
1			7		21		35			35		21		7
														1

Let's try to compute the sum of squares of numbers in each row.

$$1^2 = 1$$

$$1^2 + 1^2 = 2$$

$$1^2 + 2^2 + 1^2 = 6$$

$$1^2 + 3^2 + 3^2 + 1^2 = 20$$

The next experiment

						1								
							1			1				
					1			2			1			
			1			3			3			1		
		1		4			6			4			1	
	1		5		10			10			5			1
		6		15		20			15			6		
1			7		21		35			35		21		7
														1

Let's try to compute the sum of squares of numbers in each row.

$$1^2 = 1$$

$$1^2 + 1^2 = 2$$

$$1^2 + 2^2 + 1^2 = 6$$

$$1^2 + 3^2 + 3^2 + 1^2 = 20$$

$$1^2 + 4^2 + 6^2 + 4^2 + 1^2 = 70$$

Theorem:

$$\binom{n}{0}^2 + \binom{n}{1}^2 + \binom{n}{2}^2 + \cdots + \binom{n}{n}^2 = \binom{2n}{n}.$$

Another identity

							1								
							1			1					
						1	2		1						
				1		3	3		3		1				
			1	4		6	4		4		1				
		1	5	10		10	5		5		1				
	1	6	15	20		15	6		6		1				
1	7	21	35	35		21	7		7		1				

Another identity

[illegible]

This suggests

$$\binom{n}{0} + \binom{n+1}{1} + \binom{n+2}{2} + \cdots + \binom{n+k}{k} = \binom{n+k+1}{k}.$$

Theorem:

$$\binom{n}{0} + \binom{n+1}{1} + \binom{n+2}{2} + \cdots + \binom{n+k}{k} = \binom{n+k+1}{k}.$$