



MAT301

Groups and Symmetries

SINAN LI

2024

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Part I

Notes

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Course Information

- **Instructor:** Malors Emilio Espinosa Lara
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- **Email:** srolam.espinosalara@mail.utoronto.ca
- **TA:** Shuofeng Xu, Mohammad Honari and Mohammadmahdi Rafiei
- **Office Hours**

LEC101, LEC2001	Tuesday 9 - 11 (PB B250)	Thursday 10 - 11 (MP 202)
Instructor Office Hours	Monday 12 - 1	BA6256 (My office)

- There are **no tutorials** for this course.

1.1.1 Communication

All communication will occur by U of T email. Feel free to contact the instructor via email to ask extra questions and doubts, corrections about homeworks, inquiries, etc. However, the following titles must be used in the subject of the email:

- **MAT301: Mark Correction.** Put this title whenever you feel a correction is needed in one of your homeworks or midterm.

- **MAT301: Math Doubt.** If you have a mathematical doubt.
- **MATH301: Administrative Issue.** If you have any other concern that doesn't fall into the previous categories.

1.1.2 Evaluation Criteria

We will follow the following grading scheme for this course.

10 Homeworks (drop the lowest scored one of the first five and of the last five)	25%
Midterm	25%
Final Examination	50%

Notice that **late homework submission are usually given mark zero**. Exceptions due to required accommodations or unexpected circumstances will be of course taken into account and discussed in a case by case basis. Please write to the instructor in these situations.

Any grade curve that might occur will only be done over the final course mark and not for particular homework, midterm or final test.

1.2 Important Dates

The following are some of the dates relevant, and with respect, to MAT301:

First day of classes of University	Monday, January 8
First Lecture	Tuesday, January 9
Family Day	February 19 (University Closed)
Winter Reading Week(No lectures, nor Office hours)	February 19 to 23
Our Course Midterm	February 26, 19:00 - 21:00 (Venues TBA)
Good Friday	March 29 (University Closed)
Last day of classes	April 5
Study Day	April 9
Final Exam Period	April 10 - 30

1.3 Course Description

This course covers Groups oriented to computations. In order to understand groups well, a solid background in *linear algebra* is required: matrices, determinants, eigenvalues, eigenvectors, etc. *Modular arithmetic* is also required, as well as some basic notions of *number theory*.

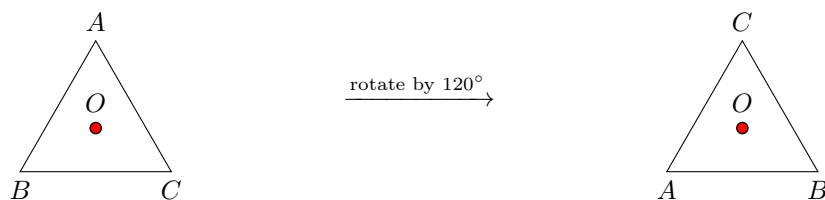
INTRODUCTION TO SYMMETRY

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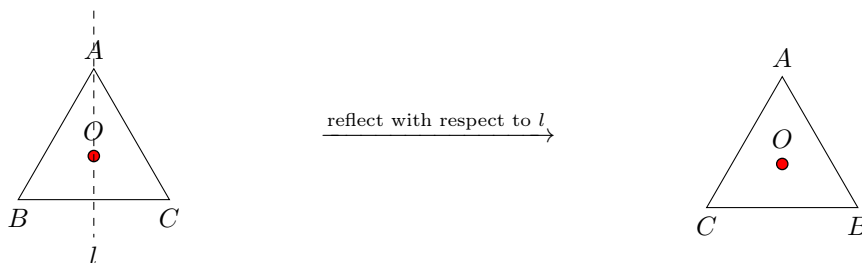
2.1 Intuition and Motivation

The idea of symmetry is the the object has a property that remains invariant under a transformation. For example, if we rotate a square by 90 degrees, the square remains the same. However, symmetry is more than a geometric concept. It is a fundamental concept in mathematics and physics.

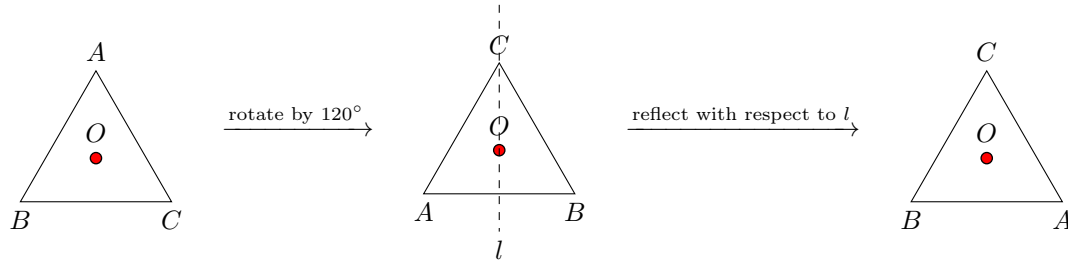
Example (Polygons). We can rotate the following triangle with respect to O by 120° , and the triangle remains the same. This triangle has rotational symmetry.



Moreover, we can also reflect the triangle with respect to the line l passing through O , and the triangle remains the same. This triangle has reflection symmetry.

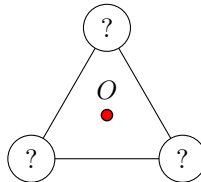


Is there any other symmetry? Yes, we can combine the two symmetries above. We first rotate the triangle by 120° , and then reflect it with respect to l . This triangle has both rotational and reflection symmetry.



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The above example is a very simple one. However, given an general object, it is not easy to find all its symmetries. We can label the vertices of the triangle with A, B, C , then permute the labels.



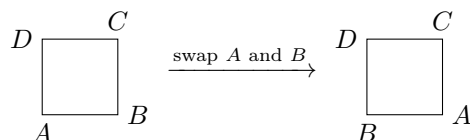
Since the transformations are linear, they preserve linearity. This, it suffices to consider the transformations of the vertices.

Example (Continued). The following table shows all the permutations of the vertices of the triangle.

Identity	A	B	C
Rotation	C	A	B
Reflection	A	C	B
Rotation + Reflection	C	B	A
	B	A	C
	B	C	A

As we can see, there are six transformations of the vertices, each of which corresponds to a symmetry of the triangle. ◇

Naively, given an square, one would argue that there are 24 ways to permute the vertices, and thus 24 symmetries. However, this is not true. There are certain permutations that are not symmetries.



2.2

Symmetric Group

Definition 2.2.1 Symmetric Group

The **symmetric group**, denoted S_n , is the set of all permutations of n elements $1, 2, \dots, n$.

Definition 2.2.2 Identity Permutation

The **identity permutation** is the permutation that does not change the order of the elements.

Example. The identity permutation of S_3 is the identity permutation of $1, 2, 3$. ◇

Definition 2.2.3 Transposition

A **transposition** is a permutation that swaps two elements and leaves the other elements unchanged.

Example. The following are some transpositions of S_3 .

- $2, 1, 3$ swaps 1 and 2.
 - $1, 3, 2$ swaps 2 and 3.
 - $3, 2, 1$ swaps 1 and 3.
- ◇

Definition 2.2.4 Cycle

A **cycle** is a permutation that moves the first element to the second, the second to the third, and so on, and the last element to the first.

Example. The cycle $3, 2, 1$ moves 1 to 3, 3 to 2, and 2 to 1. ◇

Definition 2.2.5 Permutation

A permutation is a way to order n elements. We codify them in “cycles”

Example. Consider S_3 .

1 2 3	1 2 3	1 2 3	1 2 3	1 2 3	1 2 3
1 2 3	1 3 2	3 2 1	2 1 3	3 1 2	2 3 1
(1)(2)(3)	(1)(23)	(13)(2)	(12)(3)	(132)	(123)

Here, $(1)(23)$ means

- 1 goes to 1.

- 2 goes to 3, and 3 goes to 2.

◇

Example. Consider the following permutation.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1 2 3 4 5 6 7
3 4 2 1 7 5 6	2 3 1 4 6 5 7
(1324)(576)	(1 2 3)(5 6)

◇

Example. Suppose you have two permutations σ and τ :

- $\sigma = (12)(3456)$
- $\tau = (1654)(32)$

What happens if we perform one after the other?

- σ first, τ second¹: $(1654)(32)(12)(3456) = (1654)(32)(12)(3456)$
 - We start with 1: $1 \rightarrow 2 \rightarrow 3$, so $1 \rightarrow 3$.
 - We then consider 3: $3 \rightarrow 4 \rightarrow 1$, so $3 \rightarrow 1$.
 - Now, we consider 2: $2 \rightarrow 1 \rightarrow 6$, so $2 \rightarrow 6$.
 - $6 \rightarrow 3 \rightarrow 2$, so $6 \rightarrow 2$.
 - $4 \rightarrow 5 \rightarrow 4$, so $4 \rightarrow 4$.
 - $5 \rightarrow 6 \rightarrow 5$, so $5 \rightarrow 5$.

Thus, we get

$$(13)(26)(4)(5).$$

- τ first, σ second: $(12)(3456)(1654)(32) = (12)(3456)(1654)(32)$
 - We start with 1: $1 \rightarrow 6 \rightarrow 4$, so $1 \rightarrow 3$.
 - We then consider 3: $4 \rightarrow 5 \rightarrow 1$, so $4 \rightarrow 1$.
 - ...

Eventually, we get

$$(13)(24)(5)(6).$$

It is important to note that the order of the permutations matters.

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The above example demonstrates an important property of permutations: closed under composition. That is, if we “merge” two permutations, we get another permutation.

¹Note that we read from right to left.

\circ	$\mathbf{1}$	(12)	(13)	(23)	(123)	(132)
$\mathbf{1}$						
(12)						
(13)						
(23)	(23)	(132)	(123)	\mathbb{I}	(13)	(12)
(123)						
(132)						

This is a multiplication table of S_3 . Symmetries of the same group have the same multiplication table, despite the fact that they are different permutations.

Remark

Note that in the above table of S_3 , we have $(123) = (23)(13)$, and $(132) = (23)(12)$. **All the permutations can be written as a composition of transpositions.** It is important to note that this is not unique. For example, we can write $\mathbf{1} = (12)(12)$.

Theorem 2.2.1

The amount of transpositions needed to create a permutation preserves its parity.

In other words, if a permutation α can be expressed as a product of transpositions

$$\alpha = \tau_1 \tau_2 \dots \tau_n \quad \text{and} \quad \alpha = \sigma_1 \sigma_2 \dots \sigma_m$$

where τ and σ are transpositions, then n and m have the same parity (both even or both odd). The smaller groups are called **alternating groups**.

Part II

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