

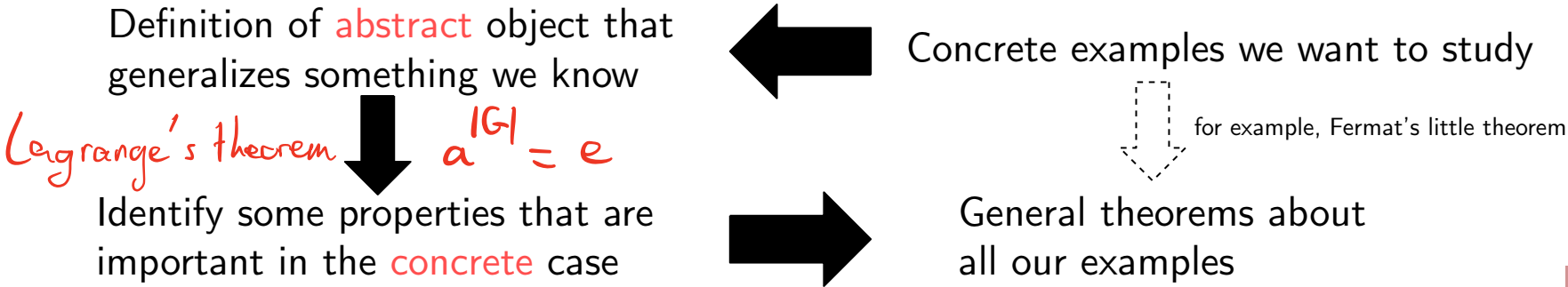
Discrete Algebraic Structures

WiSe 2025/2026

Prof. Dr. Antoine Wiehe
Research Group for Theoretical Computer Science



Abstract	Concrete
Structures with multiplication, neutral elements	(relations, \circ , Id) $(\{0, 1\}^*, \cdot, \epsilon)$ Monoids
<i>Every group is a monoid</i> Structures with multiplication, inverses, neutral elements	Real Numbers: $\times, 1/x, 1$ $a \times 1/a = 1$ Matrices: \times, M^{-1}, I $M \cdot M^{-1} = I$ Bijjective Functions: $\circ, f^{-1}, \text{Id}_A$ Modular arithmetic: $\times, [a]_d^{-1}, [1]_d$ Groups

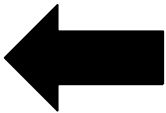


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Definition of **abstract** object that generalizes something we know



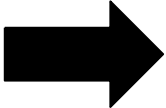
Identify some properties that are important in the **concrete** case



Concrete examples we want to study



for example, Fermat's little theorem



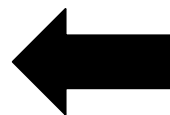
General theorems about all our examples

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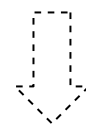
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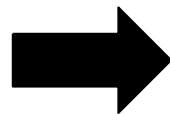
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Plan for today:

- a bit more about **groups**: homomorphisms, how to compare groups
- structures with several binary operations: **rings**
- **polynomials**

Goal:

- overview of algebra for CS
- understand necessary notions for **error-correcting codes** (for next week)

Definition. An **internal composition law** or **binary operation** on A is a function $\circ: A^2 \rightarrow A$. We write $a \circ b$ instead of $\circ(a, b)$.

(A, \circ) is a **monoid** if \circ is associative and has a neutral element

(A, \circ) is a **group** if \circ is associative, has a neutral element, and every $a \in A$ has an inverse

Example.

	a	b	c
a	a	b	c
b	b	c	a
c	c	a	b

$a \circ (b \circ c) = (a \circ b) \circ c$
 there is a special e s.t.: $\forall a \in A: a \circ e = e \circ a = a$.

$b \circ c = a$.

$A = \{a, b, c\}$

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This is:

- A monoid? *a neutral ✓*
- A group? *✓*
- Neither a monoid nor a group? *x*



$$a^{-1} = a$$

$$b \cdot b^{-1} = a \Rightarrow b^{-1} = c$$

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Example.

	0	1	2
0	0	1	2
1	1	2	0
2	2	0	1

$$A = \{0, 1, 2\} \quad (\mathbb{Z}/3\mathbb{Z}, +)$$

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Two different groups! But.. are they really different?

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$a \mapsto 0$
 $b \mapsto 1$
 $c \mapsto 2$

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$(\mathbb{R}, +)$

neutral: 0

"inverse" of x : $-x$

$(\mathbb{R}_{>0}, \times)$

neutral: 1

inverse of x : $1/x$

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$$\sqrt{2} + \frac{1}{4} + \dots + \frac{1}{1024}$$

2

||

$$\frac{1}{2} + \frac{1}{4} + \dots + \frac{1}{1024}$$

$$2^{1/2} \times 2^{1/4} \times \dots \times 2^{1/1024}$$

$$(\mathbb{R}, +)$$

$$(\mathbb{R}_{>0}, \times)$$



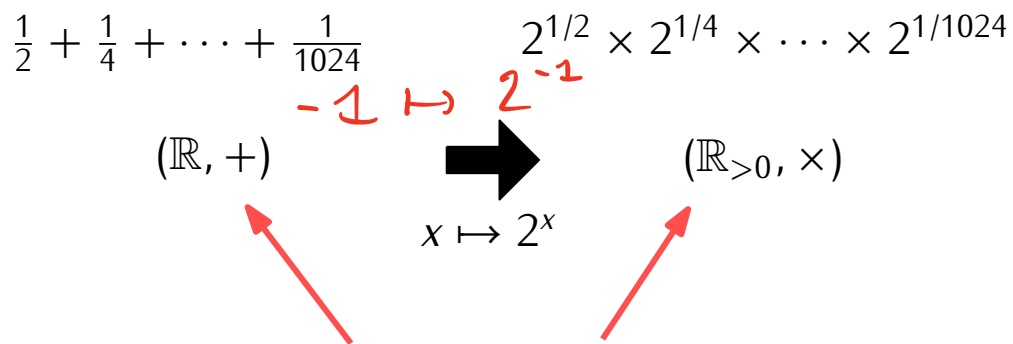
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$$1 + 2 + \overset{28}{\underset{11}{\cdots}} + 7$$

$$(\mathbb{Z}, +)$$

$$[1]_8 + [2]_8 + \cdots + [7]_8$$

$$(\mathbb{Z}/8\mathbb{Z}, +)$$

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$$28 \mapsto [28]_8 = [4]_8$$

$$1 + 2 + \cdots + 7$$

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$$(\mathbb{Z}/8\mathbb{Z}, +)$$

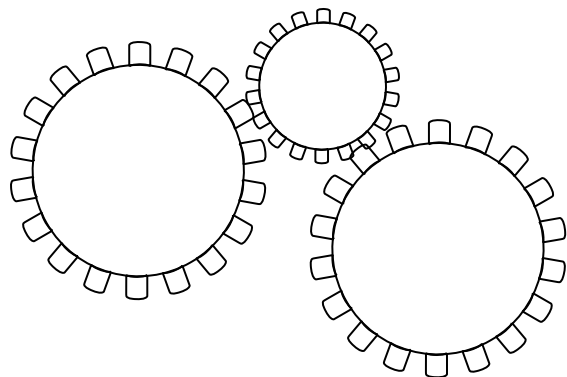
$$x \mapsto [x]_8$$

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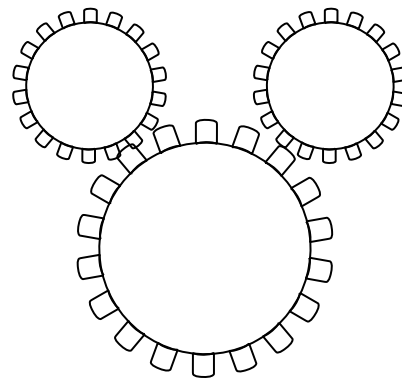
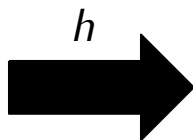
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Computation in (A, \circ)

$$\frac{\frac{1}{2} + \frac{1}{4} + \cdots + \frac{1}{1024}}{1 + 2 + \cdots + 7}$$

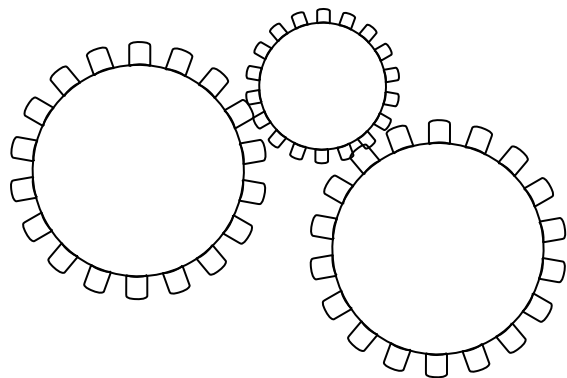


Computation in (B, \square)

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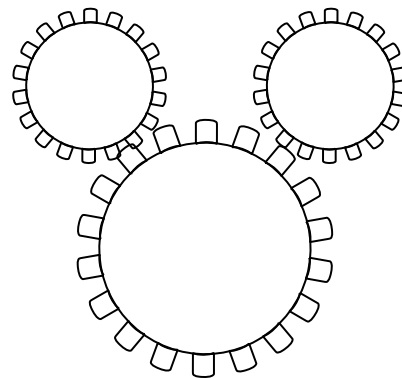
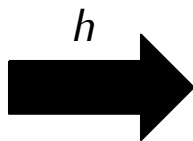
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Computation in (A, \circ)

$$\frac{1}{2} + \frac{1}{4} + \cdots + \frac{1}{1024}$$

$$1 + 2 + \cdots + 7$$



Computation in (B, \square)

$$2^{1/2} \times 2^{1/4} \times \cdots \times 2^{1/1024}$$

$$[1]_8 + [2]_8 + \cdots + [7]_8$$

Definition. Let (A, \circ) and (B, \square) be two monoids.

A **homomorphism** $h: (A, \circ) \rightarrow (B, \square)$ is a function such that

$$h(a \circ a') = h(a) \square h(a')$$

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From Math 1:

Definition. A map $f: \mathbb{R}^n \rightarrow \mathbb{R}^m$ is called **linear** if for all $x, y \in \mathbb{R}^n$ and $\lambda \in \mathbb{R}$, we have:

$$f(x+y) = f(x) + f(y)$$

$$f(\lambda x) = \lambda f(x)$$

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\rightsquigarrow a linear map is a homomorphism $(\mathbb{R}^n, +) \rightarrow (\mathbb{R}^m, +)$!

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Examples.

- Linear maps $\mathbb{R}^n \rightarrow \mathbb{R}^m$
- Exponential map: $x \mapsto e^x$ is a homomorphism $(\mathbb{R}, +) \rightarrow (\mathbb{R}_{>0}, \times)$
- Logarithm?
- The “mod d ” function $x \mapsto [x]_d$ is a homomorphism $(\mathbb{Z}, +) \rightarrow (\mathbb{Z}/d\mathbb{Z}, +)$

$$\log: (\mathbb{R}_{>0}, \times) \rightarrow (\mathbb{R}, +)$$

$$\log(a \times b) = \log(a) + \log(b)$$

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For $x \in \{0, \dots, d-1\}$, define $h([x]_d) = x$.

This is a function $\mathbb{Z}/d\mathbb{Z} \rightarrow \mathbb{Z}$.

Is this a homomorphism $(\mathbb{Z}/d\mathbb{Z}, +) \rightarrow (\mathbb{Z}, +)$?



$$h([x]_d + [y]_d) \stackrel{?}{=} h([x]) + h([y])$$

$$0 = h([0]_d) \quad 1 + (d-1) \equiv 0 \pmod{d}$$

$$x = 1 \quad y = d-1$$

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$A, B \quad A = I \quad B = -B$

$$\det(A + B) \neq \det(A) + \det(B)$$

$$\det(AB) = \det(A)\det(B)$$

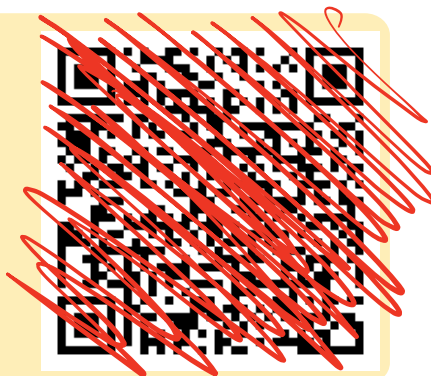
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Consider \det as a function from $n \times n$ -matrices to \mathbb{R} .

Is it a homomorphism:

- $(\mathbb{R}^{n \times n}, +) \rightarrow (\mathbb{R}, +)$?
- $(\mathbb{R}^{n \times n}, \times) \rightarrow (\mathbb{R}, +)$?
- $(\mathbb{R}^{n \times n}, \times) \rightarrow (\mathbb{R}, \times)$? ✓
- $(\mathbb{R}^{n \times n}, \times) \rightarrow (\mathbb{R}, +)$?



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If h is a **bijection**, we say that it is an **isomorphism**.

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If h is a **bijection**, we say that it is an **isomorphism**.

Example. $G = \left\{ \begin{pmatrix} 1 & 0 \\ 0 & 1 \end{pmatrix}, \begin{pmatrix} -1 & 0 \\ 0 & -1 \end{pmatrix} \right\}$ is a group (with matrix multiplication).

Which group has an ~~isomorphism with~~ G ?

- $(\mathbb{Z}/2\mathbb{Z}, +)$ ✓
- $(\mathbb{Z}, +)$
- $(\mathbb{Z}/3\mathbb{Z}, +)$

$$h: [0] \mapsto \begin{pmatrix} 1 & 0 \\ 0 & 1 \end{pmatrix}$$

$$[1] \mapsto \begin{pmatrix} -1 & 0 \\ 0 & -1 \end{pmatrix}$$



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n	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
number of groups	1	1	1	2	1	2	11	5	2	2	1	5

Message:

- if the “thing” you are studying is a group, then there is a lot of structure to exploit
- even if your group is not we saw in class, it could be **isomorphic** to one

Rings, Fields, and Polynomials

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What can we say about how $+$ and \times relate in our examples?

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We say that \times **distributes** over $+$ if for all $a, b, c \in A$

$$a \times (b + c) = a \times b + a \times c \qquad (b + c) \times a = b \times a + c \times a$$

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- All addition/multiplication operations you know
- $\varphi \wedge (\psi \vee \theta) \equiv (\varphi \wedge \psi) \vee (\varphi \wedge \theta)$
- $\varphi \vee (\psi \wedge \theta) \equiv (\varphi \vee \psi) \wedge (\varphi \vee \theta)$
- same with \cap and \cup

$$A \cap (B \cup C) = (A \cap B) \cup (A \cap C)$$

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- same with \cap and \cup

Definition. Let $+$ and \times be binary operations on A .

Then $(A, +, \times)$ is a **ring** if:

- $(A, +)$ is a commutative group,
- (A, \times) is monoid,
- \times distributes over $+$.

Definition. Let $+$ and \times be internal composition laws on A .

We say that \times **distributes** over $+$ if for all $a, b, c \in A$

$$a \times (b + c) = a \times b + a \times c \qquad (b + c) \times a = b \times a + c \times a$$

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Exercise: for each of the following, think about why it is a ring.

- $(\{0, 1\}, \wedge, \vee)$
- $(\{0, 1\}, \vee, \wedge)$
- $(\mathbb{Z}/d\mathbb{Z}, +, \times)$
- $(\mathbb{R}^{n \times n}, +, \times)$

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Neutral element for $+$: written 0

Neutral element for \times : written 1

$$\begin{pmatrix} 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 \end{pmatrix} = 0$$

Groups

\subseteq

Monoids

Rings

Group “=” monoid with subtraction



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Field “=” commutative ring with division

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Definition. Let $(R, +, \times)$ be a ring. We call it a **field** if:

- every $a \neq 0$ has a **multiplicative inverse**: some a^{-1} such that $a \times a^{-1} = 1$
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Examples. The following are fields:

- $(\mathbb{R}, +, \times)$
- $(\mathbb{Q}, +, \times)$
- **Rational fractions** (with addition and multiplication)
- $(\mathbb{Z}/d\mathbb{Z}, +, \times)$?

$[a]^{-1}$ exists if a and d are coprime
 $d=4$ $[2]_4$ has no inverse

~~$x+1$~~
 ~~x^2+5~~

Theorem
 If d prime: $(\mathbb{Z}/d\mathbb{Z}, +, \times)$
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Most of what you learn for \mathbb{R}^n is true for every \mathbb{K}^n if \mathbb{K} is a fieldSince $\mathbb{Z}/2\mathbb{Z}$ is a field so:

- can talk about linear maps and inverses and ... with vectors in $\{0, 1\}^n$
- can talk about Fourier transforms
- a lot of modern CS (practice and theory) does not exist without this algebraic concept

Polynomials

Definition. Let $(R, +, \times)$ be a ring. A **polynomial** with coefficients in R is an expression of the form

$$a_0 + a_1X + a_2X^2 + \cdots + a_mX^m$$

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Notation. The set of all polynomials with coefficients in R is written $R[X]$.

- $2 + 5X$: polynomial in $\mathbb{Z}[X]$ of degree 1
- $5X + 2$: same polynomial, order of the terms does not matter
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Note: polynomials work over every ring! This is a polynomial with coefficients in $\mathbb{R}^{2 \times 2}$:

$$\begin{pmatrix} \frac{1}{2} & \frac{1}{2} \\ 1 & \frac{1}{2} \end{pmatrix} X^2 + \begin{pmatrix} 1 & 2 \\ 0 & 1 \end{pmatrix} X + \begin{pmatrix} 0 & 0 \\ 1 & 0 \end{pmatrix}$$

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$$X^2 + X = X + X^2$$

$$\begin{aligned} 0X^0 + 0X + 0X^2 &= 0 \\ 1X^0 + 0X + 0X^2 & \\ &\vdots \end{aligned}$$

$$1 + X + X^2$$

Enumerate all the polynomials of degree ≤ 2 with coefficients in $\mathbb{Z}/2\mathbb{Z}$.
 How many are there?

- 1
- 2
- 4
- 8 ✓
- infinitely many



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Implementation: a polynomial $A \in R[X]$ is just implemented as an array A where $A[i]$ is the coefficient of degree i .

$$(X^2 + 2X + 2) + (X^3 + X + 1) = 3 + 3X + X^2 + X^3 \quad (\text{things you already probably know})$$

$$(X^2 + 2X + 2) \times (X^3 + X + 1) = X^5 + X^3 + X^2 + \dots + 2X^3 + 2X + 2$$


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(things you already probably know)

$$(X^2 + 2X + 2) \times (X^3 + X + 1) =$$

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In general:

Definition. Let $A = a_0 + a_1X + \cdots + a_dX^d$ and $B = b_0 + b_1X + \cdots + b_dX^d$. Define

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Different operations! On different sets!

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What happens to the degree?

- $\deg(A + B) \leq \max(\deg(A), \deg(B))$
- $\deg(A \times B) \leq \deg(A) + \deg(B)$
- $\deg(A \times B) = \deg(A) + \deg(B)$ if coefficients in a field (we define $\deg(0) = -\infty$ for this to be true)

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Different operations! On different sets!

Theorem. Let R be a ring. Then $(R[X], +, \times)$ is a ring.

Theorem. Let $a, b \in \mathbb{Z}$ with $a \neq 0$. There exists a **unique** pair of integers q, r such that:

- $b = qa + r$
- $r \in \{0, \dots, |a| - 1\}$

The first item makes sense if we see a, b, q, r as polynomials, but the second does not.

Theorem. Let \mathbb{K} be a **field**. Let $A, B \in \mathbb{K}[X]$ with $A \neq 0$.

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$$\begin{array}{r} X^6 + 3X^5 + 7X^4 + 7X^3 + 6X^2 + 3 \\ \hline X^2 + 2X + 3 \\ \text{\textcolor{red}{X}^4} \end{array}$$

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```

We need \mathbb{K} to be a field! Otherwise $1/a (= a^{-1})$ does not necessarily exist.

Example. $A = 2, B = X$ polynomials in $\mathbb{Z}[X]$.

- Suppose $B = QA + R$, where $Q, R \in \mathbb{Z}[X]$
- Then $X = (q_0 + q_1X)2 = 2q_0 + 2q_1X$
- So $1 = 2q_1$

Definition. Let $A, B \in \mathbb{K}[X]$. We say that $D \in \mathbb{K}[X]$ is a **gcd** of A and B if:

- D divides A and B
- Every divisor of A and B has degree at most $\deg(D)$

(note: it is not unique. If D is a gcd, then $2D$ is also a gcd)

A handwritten diagram in red ink. At the top, the letters 'a' and 'b' are written. From 'a', a line goes down and to the right. From 'b', a line goes down and to the left. These two lines converge towards the expression 'gcd(a, b)' which is written below them.

Definition. Let $A, B \in \mathbb{K}[X]$. We say that $D \in \mathbb{K}[X]$ is a **gcd** of A and B if:

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Can be computed using Euclid's algorithm!

Also get Bézout's coefficients directly from this

```
def euclid(A,B):  
    if deg(A) > deg(B):  
        A,B = B,A # swap A and B  
    if A == 0:  
        return B  
  
    remainders = [B,A]  
    while remainders[-1] != 0:  
        B = remainders[-2]  
        A = remainders[-1]  
        Q,R = divmod(B,A)  
        remainders.append(R)  
  
    return remainders[-2]
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$$\gcd(X^2 - X - 6, X^2 + 3X + 2)$$

$$1. \quad X^2 - X - 6 = 1 \cdot (X^2 + 3X + 2) + (-4X - 8)$$

$$2. \quad X^2 + 3X + 2 = (-1/4X - 1/4)(-4X - 8) + 0$$

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$$\gcd(X^2 - X - 6, X^2 + 3X + 2) = -4X - 8 = -4(X + 2)$$

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$\exists U, V$ polynomials s.t.:

$$\gcd(A, B) = U \cdot A + V \cdot B$$

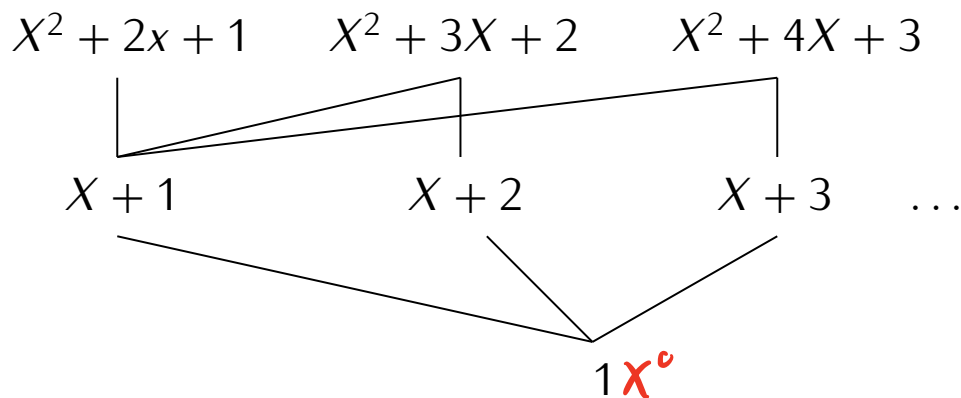
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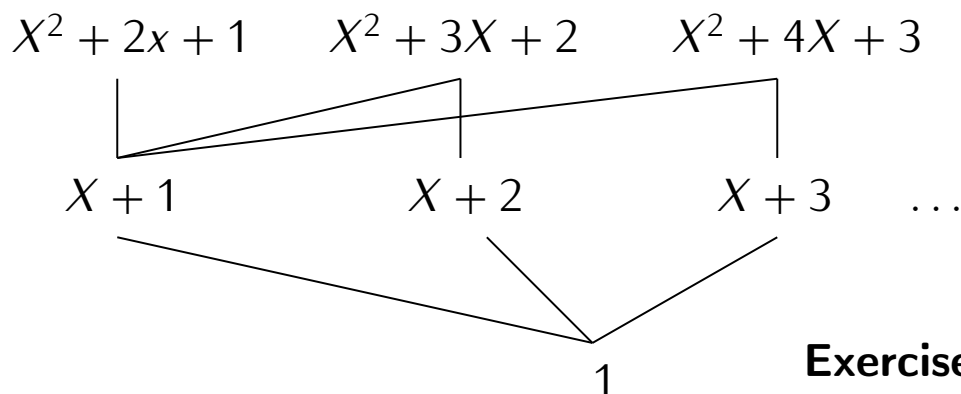
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$(\mathbb{Z}/2\mathbb{Z})[X]$

- “A divides B” is an order on $\mathbb{K}[X]$
- can define **prime** polynomials just like for numbers
- can prove the existence/uniqueness of prime decompositions
- there are infinitely many prime polynomials
- can define an equivalence relation \equiv_D for $D \in \mathbb{R}[X]$
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Exercise Think about these things!

Is the polynomial $X^2 + 1$ in $\mathbb{R}[X]$ prime? Why/why not?

- Rings “ultimate” structures that generalizes the notions you know about addition/multiplication
- Commutative rings with division = **fields**
- Polynomials with coefficients in a field behave a lot like \mathbb{Z} (division, gcd, primes, ...)
- fields/polynomials pop up all the time in CS

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Next week

- A bit more about **finite** fields
- Application: error-correcting codes
(QR codes, space communication, ...)

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Final week

- Final exam organisation
- Recap of notions
- Quizzes