

Discrete Algebraic Structures

WiSe 2025/2026

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Research Group for Theoretical Computer Science

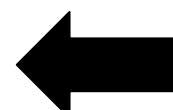


| Abstract | Concrete |
|---|---|
| Structures with multiplication, neutral elements | (relations, \circ , Id) $(\{0, 1\}^*, \cdot, \epsilon)$ Monoids |
| <i>Every group is a monoid</i> | Real Numbers: $\times, 1/x, 1$ $a \times 1/a = 1$ Matrices: \times, M^{-1}, I $M \cdot M^{-1} = I_n$ Bijective Functions: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

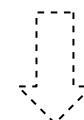
Definition of **abstract** object that generalizes something we know

Lagrange's theorem  $a^{|G|} = e$

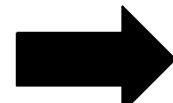
Identify some properties that are important in the **concrete** case



Concrete examples we want to study



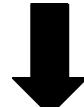
for example, Fermat's little theorem



General theorems about all our examples

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| Structures with addition and multiplication | $(\mathbb{R}, +, \times)$ $(\mathbb{Z}/d\mathbb{Z}, +, \times)$ $(\mathbb{R}^{n \times n}, +, \times)$ $(\mathbb{R}[X], +, \times)$ Rings |

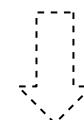
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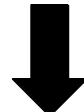
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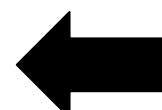
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| Structures with addition and scalar multiplication | $(\mathbb{R}^n, +, \lambda \cdot)$ Vector spaces |

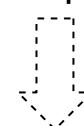
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Plan for today:

- 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

$$a \circ (b \circ c) = (a \circ b) \circ c$$

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

Example.

| | a | b | c |
|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| a | a | b | c |
| b | b | c | a |
| c | c | a | b |

$$b \circ c = a.$$

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

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|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| a | a | b | c |
| b | b | c | a |
| c | c | a | b |

This is:

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



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

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

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Example.

| | a | b | c |
|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| a | a | b | c |
| b | b | c | a |
| c | c | a | b |

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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Example. $a \quad b \quad c$

| | | | |
|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| | a | b | c |
| a | a | b | c |
| b | b | c | a |
| c | c | a | b |

Example. $0 \quad 1 \quad 2$

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| 0 | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| 1 | 1 | 2 | 0 |
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Two different groups! But.. are they really different?

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Example. $a \quad b \quad c$

| | | | |
|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| | a | b | c |
| a | a | b | c |
| b | b | c | a |
| c | c | a | b |

$$\begin{array}{l} a \mapsto 0 \\ b \mapsto 1 \\ c \mapsto 2 \end{array}$$

Example. $0 \quad 1 \quad 2$

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

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

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

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

2

11

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$$\begin{array}{ccc}
 \frac{1}{2} + \frac{1}{4} + \cdots + \frac{1}{1024} & \xrightarrow{-1 \mapsto 2^{-1}} & 2^{1/2} \times 2^{1/4} \times \cdots \times 2^{1/1024} \\
 (\mathbb{R}, +) & \xrightarrow{x \mapsto 2^x} & (\mathbb{R}_{>0}, \times)
 \end{array}$$

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28
11

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

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

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

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

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

$$1 + 2 + \dots + 7 \quad [1]_8 + [2]_8 + \dots + [7]_8$$

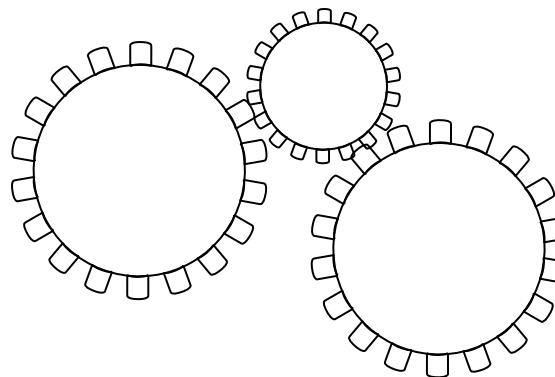
$$\begin{array}{ccc} (\mathbb{Z}, +) & \xrightarrow{\hspace{2cm}} & (\mathbb{Z}/8\mathbb{Z}, +) \\ x \mapsto [x]_8 & & \end{array}$$

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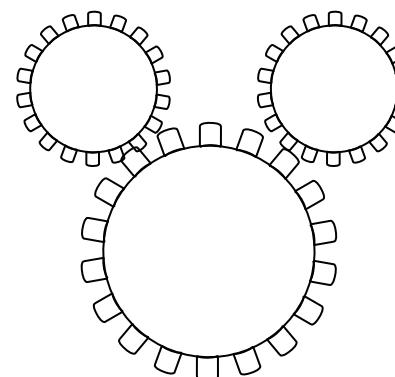
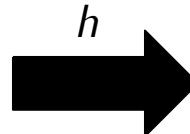
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Computation in (A, \circ)

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



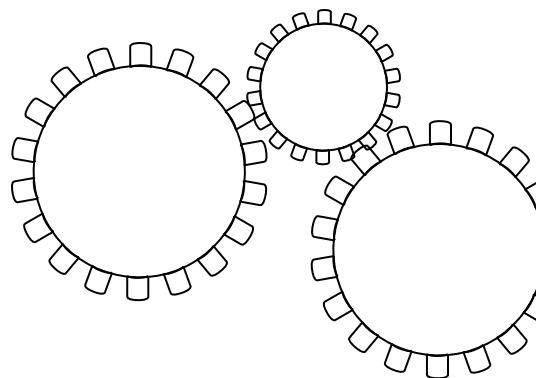
Computation in (B, \square)

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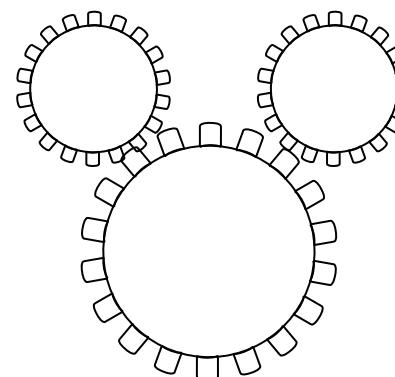
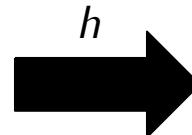
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Computation in (A, \circ)

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



Computation in (B, \square)

$$\begin{aligned} 2^{1/2} \times 2^{1/4} \times \cdots \times 2^{1/1024} \\ [1]_8 + [2]_8 + \cdots + [7]_8 \end{aligned}$$

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

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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:

$$\begin{aligned} f(x+y) &= f(x) + f(y) \\ f(\lambda x) &= \lambda f(x) \end{aligned}$$

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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 $(\mathbb{Z}/d\mathbb{Z}, +) \rightarrow (\mathbb{Z}, +)$?



$$\begin{aligned}
 h(\underbrace{[x]_d + [y]_d}_{0 = h([0]_d)}) &= h([x]) + h([y]) \\
 &= 1 + (d-1) \\
 &= d
 \end{aligned}$$

$x = 1$
 $y = d-1$

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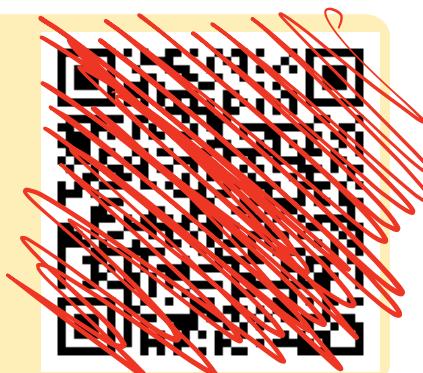
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$$\begin{aligned} A, B \quad A = I \quad B = -B \\ \det(A + B) \neq \det(A) + \det(B) \\ \det(AB) = \det(A)\det(B) \end{aligned}$$

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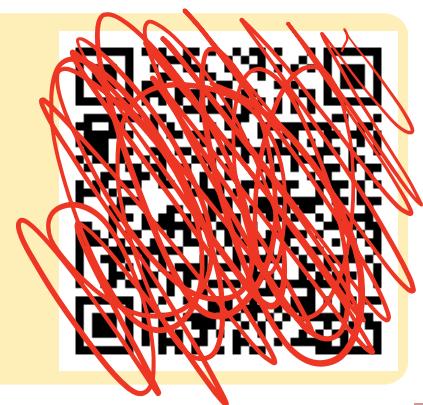
Example. $G = \left\{ \begin{pmatrix} 1 & 0 \\ 0 & 1 \end{pmatrix}, \begin{pmatrix} -1 & 0 \\ 0 & -1 \end{pmatrix} \right\}$ is a group (with matrix multiplication).

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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|--|--|
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| Structures with multiplication, inverses , neutral elements | Real Numbers: $\times, 1/x, 1$ Matrices: \times, M^{-1}, I Bijective Functions: $\circ, f^{-1}, \text{Id}_A$ Groups Modular arithmetic: $\times, [a]_d^{-1}, [1]_d$ |
| Structures with addition and multiplication | $(\mathbb{R}, +, \times)$ $(\mathbb{Z}/d\mathbb{Z}, +, \times)$ $(\mathbb{R}^{n \times n}, +, \times)$ $(\mathbb{R}[X], +, \times)$ Rings |
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What can we say about how $+$ and \times relate in our examples?

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

Definition. Let $+$ and \times be internal composition laws on A .
We say that \times **distributes** over $+$ if for all $a, b, c \in A$

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

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

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

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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

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

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Monoids

Rings

Group “=” monoid with subtraction

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Fields

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Field “=” commutative ring with division

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Field “=” commutative ring with division

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

~~$x+1$~~
 ~~$x+5$~~

Theorem

If d prime: $(\mathbb{Z}/d\mathbb{Z}, +, \times)$ is a field.

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- $(\mathbb{Z}/d\mathbb{Z}, +, \times)^\circ$

Most of what you learn for \mathbb{R}^n is true for every \mathbb{K}^n if \mathbb{K} is a field

Since $\mathbb{Z}/2\mathbb{Z}$ 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 (pratice 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 $R[X]$.

- $2 + 5X^1$: 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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$$X^2 + X = X + X^2$$

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

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

$$A + B = (a_0 + b_0) + (a_1 + b_1)X + \cdots + (a_d + b_d)X^d$$

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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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def divmod(B,A):  
    assert(A != 0)  
    Q,R = 0,B  
    while deg(R) >= deg(A):  
        a,r = A[deg(A)],R[deg(R)]  
        S = (r/a) * X** (deg(R)-deg(A))  
        Q = Q+S  
        R = R - S*A  
    return (Q,R)
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 \hline
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$$X^2 + 2X + 3$$

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$$X^6 + 3X^5 + 7X^4 + 7X^3 + 6X^2 + 3 = (X^4 + X^3 + 2X^2)(X^2 + 2X + 3) +$$

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

There exists a **unique** pair $Q, R \in \mathbb{K}[X]$ of polynomials such that:

- $B = QA + R$
- $\deg(R) < \deg(A)$.

```
def divmod(B,A):
    assert(A != 0)
    Q,R = 0,B
    while deg(R) >= deg(A):
        a,r = A[deg(A)],R[deg(R)]
        S = (r/a) * X** (deg(R)-deg(A))
        Q = Q+S
        R = R - S*A
    return (Q,R)
```

what is called `divmod` in Python

Definition. A **divides** B if $R = 0$

$$\begin{array}{r}
 X^6 + 3X^5 + 7X^4 + 7X^3 + 6X^2 + 3 \\
 -(X^6 + 2X^5 + 3X^4) \\
 \hline
 X^5 + 4X^4 + 7X^3 + 6X^2 + 3 \\
 -(X^5 + 2X^4 + 3X^3) \\
 \hline
 2X^4 + 4X^3 + 6X^2 + 3 \\
 -(2X^4 + 4X^3 + 6X^2) \\
 \hline
 3
 \end{array}$$

$$X^2 + 2X + 3$$

$$X^4 + X^3 + 2X^2$$

$$X^6 + 3X^5 + 7X^4 + 7X^3 + 6X^2 + 3 = (X^4 + X^3 + 2X^2)(X^2 + 2X + 3) + 3$$

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

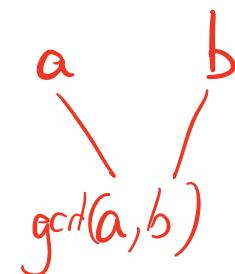
Example. $A = 2, B = X$ polynomials in $\mathbb{Z}[X]$.

- 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)


$$\begin{array}{c} a \quad b \\ \swarrow \quad \searrow \\ \text{gcd}(a, b) \end{array}$$

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

$$\begin{aligned} 1. \quad X^2 - X - 6 &= 1 \cdot (X^2 + 3X + 2) + (-4X - 8) \\ 2. \quad X^2 + 3X + 2 &= (-1/4X - 1/4)(-4X - 8) + 0 \end{aligned}$$

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

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

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

$\exists u, v$ polynomials s.t.:

$$\gcd(A, B) = u \cdot A + v \cdot B$$

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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 $D \in \mathbb{R}[X]$
- ...

$$X^2 + 2X + 1 \quad X^2 + 3X + 2 \quad X^2 + 4X + 3$$

$X + 1$ $X + 2$ $X + 3$...

$1 X^0$

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$$\begin{array}{cccc} X^2 + 2x + 1 & X^2 + 3X + 2 & X^2 + 4X + 3 \\ X + 1 & X + 2 & X + 3 & \dots \\ & \searrow & \swarrow & \\ & 1 & & \end{array}$$

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