25SG Structure of Groups

Qiu Caiyong

July 23, 2025

Preface

Later Version = Better Version.

Contents

Chapter 1

Abelian Groups

Throughout this chapter, we use the additive notation.

$$\text{abelian groups} = \mathbb{Z} \text{ modules}$$

We will pretend that we're doing linear algebra.

1.1 Fundamentals

Proposition 1.1.1 (subgroup generated by a finite subset)
Let G be an abelian group and $X \subseteq G$ be a finite subset, then the intersection of all subgroups containing X is given by

$$\langle X \rangle = \left\{ \sum_{g \in X} n_g g \,\middle|\, n_g \in \mathbb{Z} \right\}$$

We call it the subgroup generated by X. We define $\langle \varnothing \rangle = \{0\}$ to be the trivial subgroup.

Proposition 1.1.2 (subgroup generated by a subset)
Let G be an abelian group and $X \subseteq G$ be a subset, denote the set of all finite subsets of X by $\mathrm{Sub}_{\mathrm{fin}}(X)$, then the intersection of all subgroups containing X is given by

$$\langle X \rangle = \bigcup_{X_0 \in \mathrm{Sub}_{\mathrm{fin}}(X)} \langle X_0 \rangle$$

We call it the subgroup generated by X. (You should verify that this is a subgroup of G, and this definition is an extension of the previous one.)

Definition 1.1.3 (generating subset)
Let G be an abelian group and $X \subseteq G$ be a subset. If $G = \langle X \rangle$, then we say that the subset X is a generating subset of the group G.

For example, G is a generating subset of G.

Definition 1.1.4 (finite independent subset)
Let G be an abelian group and $X \subseteq G$ be a finite subset. If the mapping

$$\mathbb{Z}^{\mathrm{Card}(X)} \xrightarrow{\kappa_X^G} \langle X \rangle, \quad (n_g)_{g \in X} \mapsto \sum_{g \in X} n_g g$$

is injective, then we say that the subset X is an independent subset of G.

Definition 1.1.5 (independent subset)
Let G be an abelian group and $X \subseteq G$ be a subset. If every finite subset X_0 of X is an independent subset of G, then we say that the subset X is an independent subset of G. (You should verify that this definition is an extension of the previous one.)

Remark 1.1.6
The mapping κ_X^G is always surjective by definition.

Example 1.1.7
The empty subset $\varnothing$ is an independent subset.

Example 1.1.8
The subset $\{g\}$ consists of only one element is an independent subset if and only if $\mathrm{ord}(g) = \infty$.

Definition 1.1.9 (basis)
Let G be an abelian group and $X \subseteq G$ be a subset. We say that X is a basis of the group G if X is a generating subset and an independent subset.

1.2 Free Abelian Groups

Definition 1.2.1 (free abelian group)
If G is an abelian group and $X \subseteq G$ is a basis of G, then we say that G is free on X. If G is an abelian group which is free on some subset $X \subseteq G$, then we say that G is a free abelian group.

Example 1.2.2
$\mathbb{Q}$ is not free.

Exercise 1.2.3
Show that the group $\mathrm{Map}(\mathbb{Z}, \mathbb{Z})$ is not free.

Definition 1.2.4 (free abelian group generated by a set)
Let X be a set, we define $\mathbb{Z}X$ to be the set of all **formal** expressions of the form

$$\sum_{i=1}^{n} a_i x_i, \quad \text{where all } x_i \in X, a_i \in \mathbb{Z}$$

And the set X embed into the group $\mathbb{Z}X$ in a natural way with $\mathbb{Z}X$ free on X.

Proposition 1.2.5 ($\mathbb{Z}X$ as a free object)
For every abelian group G, the restriction

$$\mathrm{Hom}\,(\mathbb{Z}X, G) \xrightarrow{\bullet|_X} \mathrm{Map}\,(X, G)$$

is bijective. Given a mapping $f : X \to G$, we will write $f^\sharp : \mathbb{Z}X \to G$ to be the (unique) group homomorphism such that $f^\sharp|_X = f$.

Proof. Suppose $\varphi|_X = \psi|_X$, then $\varphi(x) = \psi(x)$ for all $x \in X$ so φ and ψ agrees on the generating subset X of $\mathbb{Z}X$. Hence $\varphi = \psi$.

To show that $\bullet|_X$ is surjective, we construct $f^\sharp$ explicitly by:

$$f^\sharp\left(\sum_{i=1}^{n} a_i x_i\right) = \sum_{i=1}^{n} a_i f(x_i)$$

which can be easily verified to be a group homomorphism. □

Exercise 1.2.6
Let G be an abelian group and $X \subseteq G$ be a subset. Let $j = j_X^G : X \to G$ be the inclusion mapping. Show that:

- X is a generating subset of G if and only if $j^\sharp$ is surjective.
- X is an independent subset of G if and only if $j^\sharp$ is injective.
- X is a basis of G if and only if $j^\sharp$ is bijective.

Corollary 1.2.7 (every object is a quotient of a free object)
Let G be an abelian group and X be a generating subset of G (which always exists since we can take $X = G$), then $(j_X^G)^\sharp : \mathbb{Z}X \to G$ is surjective and G is isomorphic to a quotient group of $\mathbb{Z}X$.

Example 1.2.8
Let X be a finite set with $\mathrm{Card}(X) = n$, then there are $m^n = \mathrm{Card}(\mathrm{Map}\,(X, \mathbb{Z}/m\mathbb{Z}))$ homomorphisms in total from $\mathbb{Z}X$ to $\mathbb{Z}/m\mathbb{Z}$.

Proposition 1.2.9
If G is an abelian group which is free on $X \subset G$, denote the inclusion $X \to G$ by j, then $j^\sharp : \mathbb{Z}X \to G$ is an isomorphism.

Conversely, if $\varphi : \mathbb{Z}X \to G$ is an isomorphism, then G is free on $\varphi(X)$.

Proof. Everything follows easily from the construction of $j^\sharp$. □

We can speak of the "dimension" of a free abelian group:

Theorem 1.2.10
Let X, Y be two finite set such that $\mathbb{Z}X \simeq \mathbb{Z}Y$, then $\mathrm{Card}(X) = \mathrm{Card}(Y)$.

Proof. Since $\mathbb{Z}X \simeq \mathbb{Z}Y$ we have $\mathrm{Card}(\mathrm{Map}\,(X, \mathbb{Z}/2\mathbb{Z})) = \mathrm{Card}(\mathrm{Map}\,(Y, \mathbb{Z}/2\mathbb{Z}))$, which implies $\mathrm{Card}(X) = \mathrm{Card}(Y)$. □

Remark 1.2.11
By Zorn's lemma, $\mathbb{Z}X \simeq \mathbb{Z}Y$ always imply $\mathrm{Card}(X) = \mathrm{Card}(Y)$ as cardinals.

Corollary 1.2.12 (dimension of a free abelian group)
Suppose G an abelian group which is free on some finite subset $X \subseteq G$, then every basis of G has the same cardinality.

Thus for **abelian groups free on some finite subset** (=FF abelian groups), a non-negative integer called the **dimension** is defined. For two FF abelian groups G, H, they are isomorphic if and only if $\dim G = \dim H$.

1.3 Structure of FF Abelian Groups

Recall that an abelian group G is FF if G is free on some finite subset $X \subseteq G$, if and only if G is isomorphic to $\mathbb{Z}Y$ for some finite set Y. And every FF abelian group has a uniquely determined dimension, which is a non-negative integer.

We start by explicitly describe all basis transformations:

Lemma 1.3.1 (base change lemma, version 1)
If $\mathbf{a}_1 = (a_{11}, a_{12}, \ldots, a_{1n}), \ldots, \mathbf{a}_n = (a_{n1}, a_{n2}, \ldots, a_{nn})$ is a basis of the group $\mathbb{Z}^n$, then the matrix $A = (a_{ij})$ has determinant $\det(A) = \pm 1$.

Proof. This is because we can write $\mathbf{e}_i = \sum_{j=1}^n b_{ij}\mathbf{a}_j$. $\square$

Lemma 1.3.2 (base change lemma, version 2)
Let G be a FF abelian group of dimension $\dim G = n$ and $(e_1, \ldots, e_n), (\epsilon_1, \ldots, \epsilon_n)$ be two basis of G. Then there exists a matrix $A = (a_{ij}) \in \mathrm{GL}_n(\mathbb{Z})$ such that

$$e_i = \sum_{j=1}^n a_{ij}\epsilon_j$$

Proof. Left as an exercise. $\square$

The next result explains why $\{2\} \subseteq \mathbb{Z}$ is not a basis:

Proposition 1.3.3 (height lemma)
Let G be a FF abelian group of dimension $\dim G = n$ and $0 \neq g \in G$. Then under every basis $\mathcal{B} = (b_1, \ldots, b_n)$ we can write

$$g = \sum_{i=1}^n \Gamma_i^{\mathcal{B}}(g) b_i, \text{ and we define } \mathrm{ht}_{\mathcal{B}}(g) = \gcd_{1 \le i \le n}\left(\Gamma_i^{\mathcal{B}}(g)\right)$$

Then $\mathrm{ht}_{\mathcal{B}}(g) \in \mathbb{N}_+$ is independent of the choice of basis $\mathcal{B}$. We call this number the height of g and denote it by $\mathrm{ht}(g)$.

In particular, $\mathrm{ht}(b_i) = 1$ for all $b_i \in \mathcal{B}$.

Proof. Left as an exercise. $\square$

Proposition 1.3.4
Let G be a FF abelian group of dimension $\dim G = n$ and $0 \neq g \in G$. Then there exists a basis $(e_1, \ldots, e_n)$ of G such that $g = \mathrm{ht}(g)e_1$.

Proof. Consider the following set:

$$\mathrm{B}^{+}(g)=\left\{\mathcal{B} \text{ is a basis of } G \middle| \Gamma_i^{\mathcal{B}}(g)\geq 0 \text{ for all } i\right\}$$

This set is non-empty since if we have $g=a_1b_1+\cdots+a_nb_n$, then

$$g=\sum_{i=1}^{n}|a_i|\left(\operatorname{sgn}(a_i)b_i\right)$$

where $(\operatorname{sgn}(a_1)b_1,\ldots,\operatorname{sgn}(a_n)b_n)$ is still a basis of G. Now for $\mathcal{B}\in\mathrm{B}^{+}(g)$ define

$$|g|_{\mathcal{B}}=\sum_{i=1}^{n}\Gamma_i^{\mathcal{B}}(g)\in\mathbb{N}_{+}$$

Then there exists a basis $\mathcal{B}_0=(e_1,\ldots,e_n)\in\mathrm{B}^{+}(g)$ such that $|g|_{\mathcal{B}}$ is minimal. We claim that $\Gamma_i^{\mathcal{B}_0}(g)=0$ for all but one i.

In fact, if for $i\neq j$ we have $\Gamma_i^{\mathcal{B}_0}(g)>0$ and $\Gamma_j^{\mathcal{B}_0}(g)>0$. WLOG we assume $\Gamma_i^{\mathcal{B}_0}(g)\leq\Gamma_j^{\mathcal{B}_0}(g)$, then we write

$$g=\left(\sum_{k\neq i,k\neq j}\Gamma_k^{\mathcal{B}_0}(g)e_k\right)+\left(\Gamma_j^{\mathcal{B}_0}(g)-\Gamma_i^{\mathcal{B}_0}(g)\right)e_j+\Gamma_i^{\mathcal{B}_0}(g)\left(e_i+e_j\right)$$

This tells us that after a basis transformation $(\ldots,e_i\mapsto e_i+e_j,\ldots)$, $|g|_{\mathcal{B}}$ decrease by a positive amount $\Gamma_i^{\mathcal{B}_0}(g)>0$, which is contradictory to our choice of $\mathcal{B}_0$. So only one term of $\Gamma_i^{\mathcal{B}_0}(g)$ is nonzero.

Easy permutation of $\mathcal{B}_0$ makes $g=\operatorname{ht}(g)e_1$. $\square$

Recall that an element $g\in G$ is called a torsion element if the order $\operatorname{ord}(g)$ is finite.

Definition 1.3.5 (torsion-free abelian group)
Let G be an abelian group. We say that G is torsion-free if the only torsion element of G is 0. Equivalently, if G has no non-trivial finite subgroup.

Theorem 1.3.6 (finitely generated+torsion free = free on some finite set)
Let G be a finitely generated abelian group, that is, it has at least one generating subset of finite cardinality. If G is torsion-free, then G is free on some finite subset.

Proof. Choose a generating subset $X\subset G$ with minimal cardinality, we now show that $(j_X^G)^{\sharp}:\mathbb{Z}X\to G$ is injective. Suppose the kernel $K=\ker(j_X^G)^{\sharp}$ is nontrivial, we choose a non-zero element $k\in K$ with minimal height.

Then under some basis $Y=(e_1,\ldots,e_n)$ of $\mathbb{Z}X$, we can write $k=\operatorname{ht}(k)e_1$. The inclusion $j_Y^{\mathbb{Z}X}:Y\to\mathbb{Z}X$ gives us an isomorphism $\left(j_Y^{\mathbb{Z}X}\right)^{\sharp}:\mathbb{Z}Y\to\mathbb{Z}X$.

If $\operatorname{ht}(k)=1$, then $e_1\in K$, so $\mathbb{Z}(Y\setminus\{e_1\})\to\mathbb{Z}X\to G$ is surjective, contradictory to our choice of X. If $\operatorname{ht}(k)>1$, then $e_1\notin K$ by our choice of k, but then $\left(j_X^G\right)^{\sharp}(e_1)\in G$ is a non-zero torsion element, another contradiction. $\square$

1.4 Subgroups of FF Abelian Groups

We consider the following proposition:
SubFF(n): If G is a FF abelian groups of dimension $\dim G = n$ and $H \leq G$ be a nontrivial subgroup. Then the following set

$$\mathrm{SubInfo}(G,H) = \left\{ \begin{pmatrix} (e_1,\ldots,e_n) \\ r \\ (d_1,\ldots,d_r) \end{pmatrix} \middle| \begin{array}{c} (e_1,\ldots,e_n) \text{ is a basis of } G \\ 1 \leq r \leq n \text{ is an integer} \\ d_i \in \mathbb{N}_+ \text{ with } d_i | d_{i+1}, \text{ and} \\ (d_1 e_1, \ldots, d_r e_r) \text{ is a basis of } H \end{array} \right\}$$

is non-empty.

Proposition 1.4.1 (subgroups of $\mathbb{Z}$)
SubFF(1) is true.

Proof. A FF abelian group of dimension 1 is isomorphic to $\mathbb{Z}$. □

Theorem 1.4.2
If **SubFF(1)**,...,**SubFF($n-1$)** are true, then **SubFF(n)** is true.

Proof. Choose $0 \neq h \in H$ with minimal height, and choose a basis $(e_1, \ldots, e_n)$ of G such that $h = \mathrm{ht}(h) e_1$. We define $G_0 = \langle e_2, \ldots, e_n \rangle$ and $H_0 = H \cap G_0$, induction

TO BE WRITTEN □