CS 4TH3: Computability Theory

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1. Introduction; Mathematical Preliminaries

Computability theory (or recursive function theory) originated in the 1930's in the research of Church, Gödel, Turing, Kleene and others, who formalised the notion of computable (or "recursive") function in different ways, e.g., by Turing machines, lambda-calculus, definability by μ -recursive schemes, and definability by sets of equations. Corresponding to each of these formalisms is a Church-Turing Thesis which identifies computability by that formalism with intuitive algorithmic computability.

We use *computability by a simple imperative programming lan*guage as our basic notion. Also, we take computability of partial functions ("partial recursiveness") as basic.

References

These notes are based closely on [PZ93], which in turn was directly inspired by [DW83]. We have also benefitted from the classic references [Kle52] and [Rog67]. [DDS78] give a useful set-theoretic background. The collection [Dav65] contains interesting articles by the pioneers in the field: Church, Gödel, Turing and others. [Dav00] is a very readable history of the subject.

- [PZ93] L. Pretorius and J.I. Zucker. "Introduction to Computability Theory". South African Computer Journal, 9, pages 3–30.
- [DW83] M. Davis and E. Weyuker. Computability, Complexity and Languages. Academic Press, 1983.
- [Kle52] S. C. Kleene. Introduction to Metamathematics. North-Holland, 1952.
- [Rog67] H. Rogers, Jr. Theory of Recursive functions and Effective Computability. McGraw-Hill, 1967. (Chapters 1, 2, 5).
- [DDS78] D. van Dalen, H. C. Doets and H. de Swart. Sets: Naive, Axiomatic and Applied. Pergamon Press, Oxford, 1978.
- [Dav65] M. Davis (ed.) The Undecidable. Raven Press, 1965.
- [Dav00] M. Davis. The Universal Computer. Norton, 2000

Mathematical Preliminaries

We review some basic concepts.

Sets and *n*-tuples

- $A \subseteq B$ means: A is a subset of B, i.e., $\forall x (x \in A \Rightarrow x \in B)$.
- $A \subset B$ means: A is a proper subset of B, i.e., $A \subseteq B$ but $A \neq B$.
- $a \in A$ means: a is an element of the set A.
- The order of writing, or repetition of, elements of a set $\{a_1, a_2, \ldots, a_n\}$ is irrelevant.
- The order in an n-tuple $\vec{a} = (a_1, a_2, \dots, a_n)$ is important: $(a_1, \dots, a_m) = (b_1, \dots, b_n) \iff m = n \land a_1 = b_1 \land \dots \land a_n = b_n.$
- $A_1 \times \cdots \times A_n = \{(a_1, \dots, a_n) \mid a_1 \in A_1, \dots, a_n \in A_n\}$ $A^n = \underbrace{A \times \cdots \times A}_{n \text{ times}}.$

Natural numbers

• $\mathbb{N} = \{0, 1, 2, \dots\}$ is the set of natural numbers.

By "number" we will mean natural number.

N will be our basic domain of computation.

Relations

- An *n*-ary relation on a set A is a subset of A^n , for n = 1, 2, 3, ...
- When n = 2, this is a binary relation on A often use infix. E.g., write 'x < y' for '< (x, y)'.
- If B and C are two n-ary relations on A, define:

$$B \cup C = \{ \vec{x} \in A^n \mid \vec{x} \in B \text{ or } \vec{x} \in C \},$$

$$B \cap C = \{ \vec{x} \in A^n \mid \vec{x} \in B \text{ and } \vec{x} \in C \},$$

$$B \setminus C = \{ \vec{x} \in A^n \mid \vec{x} \in B \text{ and } \vec{x} \notin C \},$$

$$B^{\mathsf{C}} = A^n \setminus B.$$

• By "relation" we will usually mean: relation on \mathbb{N} .

Functions

A (partial) function $f: A \to B$ is a subset of $A \times B$ such that for all $a \in A$ there is at most one $b \in B$ (denoted f(a)) such that $(a, b) \in f$.

The *domain* and range of f are defined by

$$dom(f) = \{ x \in A \mid \exists y \in B : (x, y) \in f \}$$

and $ran(f) = \{ y \in B \mid \exists x \in A : (x, y) \in f \},$

Notation.

- $f(x) \uparrow (\text{"diverges"}) \text{ if } x \notin \mathbf{dom}(f),$
- $f(x) \downarrow$ ("converges") if $x \in dom(f)$, and
- $f(x) \downarrow y$ ("converges to y") if $x \in dom(f)$ and $(x, y) \in f$. Also write: f(x) = y.
- If $A = A_1 \times \cdots \times A_n$, we write $f(x_1, \dots, x_n)$ and say f is a function of n arguments, or an n-ary function, or a function of arity n. (We call f unary if n = 1 and binary if n = 2.)
- A function $f: A \rightarrow B$ is **total** if dom(f) = A (written $f: A \rightarrow B$).

Definitions. A total function $f: A \to B$ is called

- *injective* or 1-1, or an *embedding* of A into B, written $f: A \hookrightarrow B$, if $\forall x, y \in dom(f) (f(x) = f(y) \Rightarrow x = y)$;
- *surjective* or *onto* B, written $f: A \rightarrow B$, if ran(f) = B, i.e., $\forall y \in B \exists x \in A (f(x) = y)$;
- bijective or a bijection between A and B, or a 1-1 correspondence between A and B, written $f: A \approx B$, if it is both 1-1 and onto B

Notation.

- $A \hookrightarrow B$ means $\exists f[f: A \hookrightarrow B]$.
- $A \rightarrow B$ means $\exists f[f: A \rightarrow B]$.
- $A \approx B$ means $\exists f[f: A \approx B]$. In this case we also say: A and B are **equinumerous**.

Note. For our purposes,

partial functions are the more basic concept,

and totality of functions should *not* be assumed unless explicitly stated.

In fact we will be concerned mainly with n-ary partial functions on \mathbb{N} , i.e. functions $f: \mathbb{N}^n \to \mathbb{N}$, for some n > 0. So by "function" we will generally mean partial function on \mathbb{N} , denoted by f, g, h, \ldots

• We will use lambda-notation informally. $E.g., \lambda x, y \cdot (x^2 + 3y + 1)$ denotes the function $f : \mathbb{N}^2 \to \mathbb{N}$ such that for all $x, y \in \mathbb{N}$, $f(x,y) = x^2 + 3y + 1$.

Definitions. (1) 1_A is the *identity function* on A.

(2) If $f: A \rightharpoonup B$ and $g: B \rightharpoonup C$, then $g \circ f: A \rightharpoonup C$ is their **composition** $\lambda x \cdot g(f(x))$.

Lemma 1.1. (a) Let $f: A \rightharpoonup B$. Then $f \circ 1_A = f = 1_B \circ f$.

(b) Let $f: A \rightharpoonup B$, $g: B \rightharpoonup C$ and $h: C \rightharpoonup D$. Then $h \circ (g \circ f) = (h \circ g) \circ f$. We therefore write this as $h \circ g \circ f$.

Lemma 1.2. Let $f: A \rightarrow B$ and $g: B \rightarrow C$. Then

- (a) f, g total $\Longrightarrow g \circ f$ total. Suppose f, g total. Then
- $(b) \ f,g \ 1\text{-}1 \implies g \circ f \ 1\text{-}1.$
- (c) f, g onto $\Longrightarrow g \circ f$ onto. **Hence**:
- (d) f, g bijective $\implies g \circ f$ bijective.

Proof: EXERCISES. □

Corollary 1.3. Equinumerosity is an equivalence relation on the universe of sets, i.e.,

- (a) $A \approx A$
- (b) $A \approx B \implies B \approx A$
- (c) $A \approx B \approx C \implies A \approx C$.

Proof: Exercises. (*Note*: For (b), use Cor. 1.5(c) below.)

Definitions. (3) Suppose $f: A \to B$ and $g: B \to A$.

- (a) g is a left inverse of f if $g \circ f = 1_A$.
- (b) g is a right inverse of f if $f \circ g = 1_B$.
- (c) g is a 2-sided inverse of f if g is both a left and a right inverse of f.

Note. g is a left inverse of $f \iff f$ is a right inverse of g.

Predicates

We identify $2 = \{0, 1\}$ with the set of *truth values*, i.e. 0 = false and 1 = true.

- A predicate on a set A is a total function $P: A \to 2$. An n-ary predicate on A is a predicate on A^n .
- Given $B \subseteq A$, the *characteristic function* or *characteristic predicate* of B on A is the function $\chi_B : A \to 2$ such that $\forall x \in A$:

$$\chi_B(x) = \begin{cases} 1 & \text{if } x \in B \\ 0 & \text{otherwise.} \end{cases}$$

• Conversely, given a predicate $P: A \to 2$, the *characteristic set* of P on A is the set $\mathcal{S}_P = \{x \in A \mid P(x) = 1\} \subseteq A$. Hence (by Cor. 1.5(c) below)

$$\mathcal{P}A \approx \text{PRED}(A)$$

where $\mathcal{P}A$ is the power set (the set of all subsets) of A and PRED(A) is the set of predicates on A.

Note. We will usually take $A = \mathbb{N}$, i.e. we will be working mainly with n-ary relations on \mathbb{N} and n-ary predicates on \mathbb{N} (for $n \ge 1$).

Basic set theory

(For some background, a good reference is [DDS78].)

Theorem 1.4. Suppose $A \neq \emptyset$. The following are equivalent:

- (1) there is a (total) injection $f: A \hookrightarrow B$
- (2) there is a (total) surjection $g: B \rightarrow A$.

Further, given either f or g as above, the other can be chosen so that $g \circ f = 1_A$.

Proof: (Done in class.) \square

Corollary 1.5. Suppose $A \neq \emptyset$ and f, g total.

- (a) $f: A \to B$ is injective \iff f has a left inverse $g: B \to A$.
- (b) $g: B \to A$ is surjective \iff g has a right inverse $f: A \to B$.
- (c) $f: A \to B$ is bijective \iff f has a 2-sided inverse $g: B \to A$.

Note. Part (c) of Corollary 1.5 was used in the proof of Cor. 1.3(b), and also in the proof (p. 1-6) that $\mathcal{P}A \approx \text{PRED}(A)$.

Note.

- (a) A right inverse need not be a left inverse, and vice versa.
- (b) A 1-sided inverse need not be unique.
- (c) However a 2-sided inverse is unique.

We write the (unique) inverse of f (if it exists) as f^{-1} .

Proof: Exercises. (Hint: For (a), (b), take A = 2, $B = \mathbb{N}$.)

Finite and Infinite sets

Definition.
$$seg(n) =_{df} \{0, ..., n-1\}.$$

Note.
$$seg(0) = \emptyset$$
.

Definition (Finite set). (a) A is **finite** $\iff \exists n \in \mathbb{N}[A \approx seg(n)].$

(b) A is *infinite* otherwise.

If A is finite, with $A \approx seg(n)$, write $A = \{a_0, \dots, a_{n-1}\}$.

Q. Is it possible that $B \subset A$ but $B \approx A$?

This question is answered by the following theorems, especially Cor. 1.10.

Lemma 1.6. (a) $B \subseteq seg(n)$, $B \approx seg(n) \implies B = seg(n)$.

$$(b) \ B \subset \mathbf{seg}(n) \ \implies \ \exists m < n[B \approx \mathbf{seg}(m)].$$

Proof: Exercise. (By induction on n.)

Corollaries 1.7.

(a)
$$seg(m) \approx seg(n) \implies m = n.$$
 [by Lemma 1.6(a)]

(b)
$$B \subset A \approx seg(n) \implies \exists m < n[B \approx seg(m)].$$
 [by Lemma 1.6(b)]

(c)
$$B \subset A$$
, A finite $\implies B \not\approx A$. [by (a) and (b)]

(d)
$$A \approx seg(n)$$
 for at most one $n \in \mathbb{N}$. [by (a)]

We call this n the cardinal (number) of A, written card (A) or |A|. We say: A has n elements.

Lemma 1.8. $\mathbb{N} \approx a \text{ proper subset of } \mathbb{N}.$

Proof: Ex. \square

Theorem 1.9. For any set A, the following are equivalent:

- (1) A is infinite
- (2) $\mathbb{N} \hookrightarrow A$
- (3) $A \approx \text{some proper subset of } A$

Proof: $(1) \Rightarrow (2)$: (Details in class).

- $(2) \Rightarrow (3)$: Exercise.
- $(3) \Rightarrow (1)$: From Cor. 1.7(c). \square

Note. By Theorem 1.4, we can re-write Theorem 1.9 as:

Theorem 1.9⁺. For any set A, the following are equivalent:

- (1) A is infinite
- (2) $\mathbb{N} \hookrightarrow A$
- $(3) A \rightarrow \mathbb{N}$
- (4) $A \approx \text{some proper subset of } A$

From Theorem 1.9, we get:

Corollary 1.10.

A set is equinumerous with some proper subset of itself iff it is infinite.

Theorem 1.11 (Countability). For any A, the foll. are equiv:

- $(1) A \hookrightarrow \mathbb{N}$
- (2) $A = \emptyset$ or $\exists g \colon \mathbb{N} \to A$.
- (3) A is finite, or $\exists h \colon \mathbb{N} \approx A$.

A is called **countable** or **enumerable** if any of the above conditions holds.

Proof: (1) \Leftrightarrow (2): Thm 1.4 (p. 1-7), with $B = \mathbb{N}$.

- $(3) \Rightarrow (1)$: Clear.
- (2) \Rightarrow (3): Replace g by a bijection h: $seg(n) \approx A$ or h: $\mathbb{N} \approx A$ by deleting repetitions. \square

Corollary 1.12. For any $A \neq \emptyset$: $A \hookrightarrow \mathbb{N} \iff \mathbb{N} \twoheadrightarrow A$.

Notes.

(a) In (2) above, g is called an *enumeration* or *listing with repetitions*, since g enumerates or lists A:

$$A = \{a_0, a_1, a_2, \dots\}$$
 where $a_i = g(i)$.

Similarly, in (3), h is an enumeration without repetitions.

- (b) By (3) above, if A is countable but not finite, then $A \approx \mathbb{N}$, and A is called **countably infinite**.
- (c) A set which is not countable is called *uncountable* (or *uncountable* infinite).
- (d) A subset of a finite set is finite. (By Cor. 1.7(b).)
- (e) A subset of a countable set is countable. (EXERCISE.)
- (f) If $A \approx B$ and A is **finite**, **countably infinite** or **uncountable** (resp.), then so is B. (EXERCISE.) Thus all sets can be classified by size as
 - finite,
 - countably infinite,
 - uncountably infinite.

Roughly speaking, countable infinity is the "smallest" infinity.

Uncountable sets

Recall the notation: B^A is the set of (total) functions from A to B. (Reason for the notation: For finite sets A and B, what is $\operatorname{\boldsymbol{card}}(B^A)$?)

Let $TFN^{(1)} = \mathbb{N}^{\mathbb{N}}$ be the set of total unary functions on \mathbb{N} .

Theorem 1.13 (Cantor).

The sets (a) $TFN^{(1)}$, (b) $\mathfrak{S}^{\mathbb{N}}$ and (c) $PRED(\mathbb{N})$ are uncountably infinite.

Proof: The proofs use a *diagonalisation method*, which we will encounter many times in this course.

(a) Let $F = \{f_0, f_1, f_2, ...\}$ be any countable subset of TFN⁽¹⁾. We will exhibit a function

$$f \in \text{TFN}^{(1)} \backslash F$$
,

i.e. a witness that $F \subset \text{TFN}^{(1)}$. Define

$$f(n) = f_n(n) + 1.$$

Then for all $n, f(n) \neq f_n(n)$, and so $f \neq f_n$. Hence $f \notin F$.

(b) Let $S = \{X_0, X_1, X_2, ...\}$ be any countable subset of $\mathcal{P}\mathbb{N}$. We can similarly define a witness that $S \subset \mathcal{P}\mathbb{N}$, namely

$$X =_{df} \{ n \mid n \notin X_n \},\$$

since for all $n, n \in X \Leftrightarrow n \notin X_n$, and so $X \neq X_n$. Hence $X \notin \mathcal{S}$.

(c) Exercise. \square

Some theorems on countability (See [DDS78], pp. 118 ff.)

Recall Thm 1.11 (p. 10): If $A \neq \emptyset$, then A is **countable** \iff

(a) $A \hookrightarrow \mathbb{N}$ or (b) $\mathbb{N} \twoheadrightarrow A$.

In case (a), if $f: A \hookrightarrow \mathbb{N}$, then f is a **coding** of A, and for $x \in A$, f(x) is the **code** of x under f.

If f is effective, then it is an effective coding or Gödel numbering of A (studied later).

In case (b), if $g: \mathbb{N} \to A$, then g is an **enumeration** or **listing** of A:

$$(a_0, a_1, a_2, \dots)$$
 (where $a_i = g(i)$)

— with or without repetitions.

If g is effective, then it is an effective enumeration of A (studied later).

The following results are proved in class.

Theorem 1.14 (Countable sets).

(1) A, B countable $\implies A \cup B$ countable.

Example: \mathbb{Z} is countable.

- (2) A_0, \ldots, A_n countable $\implies A_0 \cup \cdots \cup A_n$ countable.
- (3) A_0, A_1, A_2, \ldots countable $\Longrightarrow \bigcup_{i=0}^{\infty} A_i$ countable.
- (4) A, B countable $\implies A \times B$ countable.

Example: \mathbb{Q} is countable.

- (5) A_0, \ldots, A_n countable $\Longrightarrow \prod_{i=0}^n A_i =_{df} A_0 \times \cdots \times A_n$ is countable.
- (6) A countable $\implies A^n$ countable $(n \ge 0)$
- (7) A countable $\implies A^* =_{df} A^{<\omega} = \bigcup_{n=0}^{\infty} A^n$ is countable.

Example: \mathbb{N}^* is countable.

Q. What about $A^{\omega} \approx A^{\mathbb{N}}$ for A countable?

A note on cardinal numbers

We showed (p. 1-9) how to define cardinal numbers for finite sets A:

$$card(A) = the unique n such that $A \approx seg(n)$.$$

The *card* operation has the property that for finite A, B:

$$\operatorname{card}(A) = \operatorname{card}(B) \iff A \approx B.$$
 (1)

Georg Cantor, the founder of modern set theory, developed a theory of cardinal numbers for all sets, so as to satisfy (1).

Bertrand Russell defined card(A) as the equivalence class of A under the equivalence relation ' \approx '. (Recall Cor. 1.3.)

Notation.

- $\bullet \ \aleph_0 =_{df} \ card(\mathbb{N})$
- c $=_{df} card(\mathbb{R})$ (the cardinality of the real continuum)

Definitions.

- (1) $\operatorname{card}(A) \leq \operatorname{card}(B) \iff_{df} A \hookrightarrow B \text{ or } B \twoheadrightarrow A.$
- (2) $\operatorname{card}(A) < \operatorname{card}(B) \iff_{df} A \hookrightarrow B \text{ but not } A \approx B$ (or equiv: $A \hookrightarrow B \text{ but not } B \hookrightarrow A$).

It can then be shown:

- \aleph_0 is the smallest infinite cardinal
- $card(A) < \aleph_0 \iff A \text{ is finite}$
- $\operatorname{card}(A) \leq \aleph_0 \iff A \text{ is countable} \iff A \hookrightarrow \mathbb{N} \iff \mathbb{N} \twoheadrightarrow A$
- $card(A) = \aleph_0 \iff A \text{ is countably infinite} \iff A \approx \mathbb{N}$
- $card(A) \ge \aleph_0 \iff A \text{ is infinite} \iff \mathbb{N} \hookrightarrow A \iff A \twoheadrightarrow \mathbb{N}$
- $card(A) > \aleph_0 \iff A \text{ is uncountable}$
- $\bullet \ \aleph_0^{\ \aleph_0} \ = \textit{card} \, (\mathbb{N}^{\mathbb{N}}) \ = \ \mathsf{c} \ > \ \aleph_0 \quad \ \mathrm{by \ Cantor's \ Thm}.$
- $2^{\aleph_0} = \operatorname{card}(2^{\mathbb{N}}) = \operatorname{card}(\operatorname{PRED}(\mathbb{N})) = \operatorname{card}(\mathscr{O}\mathbb{N}) = c > \aleph_0$ also.

For more information, see, e.g., [DDS78].

Truth tables: basic operations on truth values

Let p and q be boolean variables, i.e. ranging over 2. The operations not, and, and or, denoted by \neg , \wedge , and \vee respectively, are defined by the truth tables

			p	q	$p \wedge q$	í
p	$\neg p$		1	1	1	
1	0	and	1	0	0	
0	1		0	1	0	
			0	0	0	

Now we can form new predicates from old, for if P and Q are predicates on A, then so are $\neg P$, $P \land Q$, and $P \lor Q$, where for $x \in A$:

1

$$\neg P(x) = 1 - P(x),$$

$$(P \land Q)(x) = P(x) \land Q(x) = \begin{cases} 1 & \text{if } P(x) = 1 \text{ and } Q(x) = 1 \\ 0 & \text{otherwise,} \end{cases}$$

$$(P \lor Q)(x) = P(x) \lor Q(x) = \begin{cases} 1 & \text{if } P(x) = 1 \text{ or } Q(x) = 1 \\ 0 & \text{otherwise.} \end{cases}$$

The corresponding *characteristic sets* are

$$S_{\neg P} = A \backslash S_P = \{ x \in A \mid \neg P(x) \},$$

$$S_{P \wedge Q} = S_P \cap S_Q = \{ x \in A \mid P(x) \wedge Q(x) \},$$

$$S_{P \vee Q} = S_P \cup S_Q = \{ x \in A \mid P(x) \vee Q(x) \}.$$

We will use De Morgan's laws:

$$\neg (p \land q) = \neg p \lor \neg q,$$

$$\neg (p \lor q) = \neg p \land \neg q.$$

We define $p \to q$ to mean $\neg p \lor q$ **or** $\neg (p \land \neg q)$.

Quantifiers

We usually quantify over \mathbb{N} , so that $\forall x \, R(x)$ means $(\forall x \in \mathbb{N}) \, R(x)$ and $\exists x \, R(x)$ means $(\exists x \in \mathbb{N}) \, R(x)$. Quantifiers can also be *relativised* to predicates P on \mathbb{N} , thus:

$$(\forall x)_{P(x)}R(x) = \forall x [P(x) \to R(x)],$$

$$(\exists x)_{P(x)}R(x) = \exists x [P(x) \land R(x)].$$

In particular, we have bounded quantifiers:

$$(\forall x \le n)P(x) = (\forall x)_{x \le n}P(x),$$

$$(\forall x < n)P(x) = (\forall x)_{x < n}P(x),$$

$$(\exists x \le n)P(x) = (\exists x)_{x \le n}P(x),$$

$$(\exists x < n)P(x) = (\exists x)_{x < n}P(x).$$

De Morgan's laws for quantifiers are

$$\neg \forall x R(x) = \exists x \neg R(x),$$

$$\neg \exists x R(x) = \forall x \neg R(x),$$

$$\neg (\forall x)_{P(x)} R(x) = (\exists x)_{P(x)} \neg R(x),$$

$$\neg (\exists x)_{P(x)} R(x) = (\forall x)_{P(x)} \neg R(x).$$

Mathematical induction

We give three different (but equivalent) formulations of this principle. Let P be a predicate on \mathbb{N} .

• Simple induction (SI)

If
$$P(0)$$
 and $\forall n [P(n) \Rightarrow P(n+1)]$
then $\forall n P(n)$.

• Course-of-values induction (CVI)

If
$$\forall n[(\forall m < n \ P(m)) \Rightarrow P(n)]$$

then $\forall n P(n)$.

• Least number principle (LNP)

If
$$\exists n P(n)$$

then $\exists least \ n \ P(n)$,
that is, $\exists n \ [P(n) \land \forall m < n \ \neg P(m)]$.

EXERCISE. Prove the equivalence of these three induction schemes.