

Group Theory

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Some examples of groups

- The set of real numbers (/complex numbers/rational numbers) **along with** addition.
- The set of nonzero real numbers (/complex numbers/rational numbers) **along with** multiplication.
- The set of integers **along with** addition.
- The set of 2×2 invertible real matrices **along with** multiplication.
- The set $\{0, 1, \dots, n-1\}$ **along with** addition defined modulo n .

Note the “along with.” We don't talk about a group by just talking about a set. It is necessary to have an operation on it as well.

Some non-examples of groups

- The set of real numbers (/complex numbers/rational numbers) along with multiplication.
- The set of natural numbers along with addition.
- The set of non-zero integers (/natural numbers) along with multiplication.
- The set of 2×2 real matrices along with multiplication.
- The set $\{0, 1, \dots, n-1\}$ with multiplication defined modulo n .
- \mathbb{R}^3 with cross-product.
- My friend group.

What is a group?

Definition 1 (Binary operation)

Given a set S , a binary operation \cdot on S is a function of the form

$$\cdot : S \times S \rightarrow S.$$

For ease of notation, we shall write $a \cdot b$ instead of $\cdot((a, b))$.

- $+$ and \cdot are binary operations on $\mathbb{R}(/ \mathbb{Q} / \mathbb{C} / \mathbb{Z})$.
- $-$ is also a binary operation on the above sets but \div is not.
- $+$ is a binary operation on \mathbb{N} but $-$ is not.
- $+$ and \cdot modulo n are binary operations on $\{0, \dots, n-1\}$.

Now, we define what a group is.

What is a group?

Definition 2 (Group)

A group is an ordered pair (G, \cdot) where G is some set and \cdot is a binary operation on G satisfying the following axioms:

- 1 $(a \cdot b) \cdot c = a \cdot (b \cdot c)$ for all $a, b, c \in G$,
- 2 there exists an element e in G , called **an identity** of G , such that for all $a \in G$ we have $a \cdot e = a = a \cdot e$,
- 3 for each $a \in G$, there is an element $a^{-1} \in G$, called **an inverse** of a such that $a \cdot a^{-1} = e = a^{-1} \cdot a$.

I have used “an” above. Why? Well, simply because I can't directly claim that identity (/inverse) is unique. However, it is.

Proof?

- The set of real numbers (/complex numbers/rational numbers) along with multiplication.
- The set of natural numbers along with addition.
- The set of non-zero integers (/natural numbers) along with multiplication.
- The set of 2×2 real matrices along with multiplication.
- The set $\{0, 1, \dots, n-1\}$ with multiplication defined modulo n .
- \mathbb{R}^3 with cross-product.
- My friend group.

The last case is nothing special. Indeed, in general we need the set to be nonempty since it must always have the identity.

Recall vector spaces? Verify that any vector space along with its $+$ forms a group.

Abelian groups

Commutativity... is nice.

Due to this, commutative groups have a name of their own.

Definition 3 (Abelian groups)

A group (G, \cdot) is said to be abelian if

$$a \cdot b = b \cdot a$$

for all $a, b \in G$.

From the first slide, everything except for the matrix example was an example of an abelian.

Even the example of $(V, +)$ for a vector space V is an abelian group.

Abelian groups are named after early 19th century mathematician Niels Henrik **A**bel.

Abuse of notation

It is a common theme in math to abuse notation.

Following this theme, we note that instead of writing “ (G, \cdot) is a group,” we often write the following:

- “ G is a group under \cdot ,” or
- “ G is a group” when \cdot is clear from context.

Notations

Let G be a group and $x \in G$. We define x^n for $n \in \mathbb{Z}$ as follows:

$$x^0 := e.$$

For $n > 0$, we write x^n to mean

$$\underbrace{x \cdot x \cdots x}_{n \text{ times}}.$$

For $n < 0$, we have $x^n := (x^{-1})^{-n}$, which is the same as $(x^{-n})^{-1}$.
(Prove!)

It is convention to write $+$ as the group operation for abelian groups.

Definition 4 (Order (group))

The order of a group is the cardinality of G .
It is denoted by $|G|$.

Note that the order of a group may be infinite. A group is said to be finite if its cardinality is.

Definition 5 (Order (element))

The order of an element $x \in G$ is the smallest positive integer n such that

$$x^n = e.$$

(Where e is the identity of G .)

If no such n exists, then we say the element has infinite order.
It is denoted by $|x|$.

Finite groups

Proposition 1

Every element of a finite group has finite order.

Proof.

Let G be a finite group and let $x \in G$.

It suffices to show that $x^n = e$ for *some* $n \in \mathbb{N}$.

Note that $x^0, x^1, \dots, x^{|G|}$ are $|G| + 1$ elements of G . By PHP, two of them must be equal. Thus,

$$x^n = x^m$$

for some $0 \leq n < m \leq |G|$.

The above equation gives us

$$e = x^{m-n}.$$

Since $m - n \in \mathbb{N}$, we are done. □

What we shall see now is a recurring theme in mathematics. Given a set with some certain properties, we look at subsets which have the same properties.

Where have you seen this before?

There are many examples:

- Subspaces of vector spaces,
- Subgroups of groups,
- Subrings of rings,
- Subfields of fields,
- Subspaces of (metric/topological) spaces, et cetera.

Subgroups

The idea is to find a subset of G which can be regarded as a group in its own right. What group operation should we give it then? Well, it is natural to consider the same operation as that of G .

Definition 6 (Subgroup)

A subset $H \subset G$ is said to be *subgroup* of G if:

- H is nonempty.
- $a \cdot b \in H$ for all $a, b \in H$,
- $a^{-1} \in H$ for all $a \in H$.

The above conditions just tell us that \cdot (restricted to H) is a binary operation on H and that $(H, \cdot|_H)$ forms a group.

One may note that the identity element of (G, \cdot) is always present in H and moreover, it is also the identity of $(H, \cdot|_H)$.

Notation: If H is a subgroup of G , then we write $H \leq G$.

- A group always has at least two subgroups. Can you tell which? (Well, not two if G has only one element.)
- Is $\mathbb{N} \leq \mathbb{Z}$?
- Is $n\mathbb{Z} \leq \mathbb{Z}$? In fact, any subgroup of \mathbb{Z} is of the form $n\mathbb{Z}$ for some $n \in \mathbb{Z}$.
- $\mathbb{Z} \leq \mathbb{Q} \leq \mathbb{R} \leq \mathbb{C}$.
- The set of $n \times n$ upper invertible diagonal (real) matrices is a subgroup of the group of all invertible $n \times n$ (real) matrices.

Let H be a subgroup of G . For $g \in G$, we define $g \cdot H$ as

$$g \cdot H := \{g \cdot h : h \in H\}.$$

Definition 7 (Coset)

A *(left) coset* of H is a set of the form $g \cdot H$.

Define G/H be the set of cosets, that is,

$$G/H := \{gH : g \in G\}.$$

Note that different elements could correspond to the same coset. In fact, we now see precisely when that is possible.

Proposition 2 (Equality of cosets)

Let $a, b \in G$. Then,

$$aH = bH \text{ iff } b^{-1}a \in H.$$

This tells us that if $c \in aH$, then $aH = cH$. This also leads to the following result.

Proposition 3 (Disjointness of cosets)

If aH and bH are two cosets, then either they are equal or they are disjoint.

Note that H itself is a coset since it equals $e \cdot H$. (Or $h \cdot H$ for any $h \in H$.)

Properties of cosets

Proposition 4 (Equality of cardinalities)

Given any coset aH , it has the same cardinality as H .

(That is, there is a bijection between aH and H .)

Proof.

Consider the function $f : H \rightarrow aH$ defined by

$$f(h) = a \cdot h.$$

This is clearly onto, by definition of aH .

Moreover, this is one-one since $ah = ah' \implies h = h'$. (One can cancel a since it has an inverse.) □

Remark. This shows that any two cosets have the same cardinality.

Lagrange's Theorem

Theorem 1 (Lagrange's Theorem)

Let G be a finite group and $H \leq G$.

Then, $|H|$ divides $|G|$.

Proof.

Consider the set of cosets $G/H = \{a_1H, \dots, a_nH\}$.

Note that given any element $g \in G$, it must belong to *some* coset. (Why?)

Thus, $G = a_1H \cup \dots \cup a_nH$.

Moreover, by our previous observation, the above union is of disjoint sets. Thus,

$$\begin{aligned} |G| &= |a_1H| + \dots + |a_nH| \\ &= n|H|. \end{aligned}$$

That completes our proof.



Homomorphisms

What we consider now is another common theme in mathematics. Given two objects of the same type (for example, given two groups), we consider functions between them. However, we don't just consider any function. We study some particular type of functions.

Do you recall what particular type of functions (between vector spaces) we considered in linear algebra?

Similar to that, we consider functions that preserve the “structure” of the objects in consideration.

The case of groups is particularly simple since there's pretty one much thing that gives the group its structure, the operation \cdot .

This leads to the following definition.

Homomorphisms

Definition 8 (Homomorphism)

Let (G, \cdot) and (H, \star) be groups. A function

$$\varphi : G \rightarrow H$$

is said to be a *group homomorphism* if

$$\varphi(a \cdot b) = \varphi(a) \star \varphi(b)$$

for all $a, b \in G$.

One checks the following properties easily:

- $\varphi(e_G) = e_H$,
- $\varphi(a^{-1}) = (\varphi(a))^{-1}$ for all $a \in G$.

Properties of homomorphisms

Now, we see some properties of homomorphisms themselves.

- Given any group G , the identity function $\text{id}_G : G \rightarrow G$ is a homomorphism from G to itself.
- Given homomorphisms

$$G \xrightarrow{\varphi} H \xrightarrow{\psi} K,$$

the composition $\psi \circ \varphi$ is a function from G to K . Moreover, it is a homomorphism.

Said simply: composition of homomorphisms is again a homomorphism.

- With the same notation as above, we always have

$$\text{id}_H \circ \varphi = \varphi, \quad \psi \circ \text{id}_H = \psi.$$

Go look up what a Category is. (In the context of Category Theory.)

Examples

Let \mathbb{R}^\times denote the group of nonzero real numbers under \cdot . Similarly, we have \mathbb{Q}^\times and \mathbb{C}^\times .

- The map $\exp : \mathbb{R} \rightarrow \mathbb{R}^\times$ defined by

$$\exp(x) = e^x$$

is a homomorphism because

$$\exp(x + y) = e^x \cdot e^y = \exp(x) \cdot \exp(y).$$

- In the same way, the map $\exp : \mathbb{C} \rightarrow \mathbb{C}^\times$ is a group homomorphism. In fact, this is surjective.
- Given any $n \in \mathbb{Z}$, the map $\varphi : \mathbb{Z} \rightarrow \mathbb{Z}$ defined as

$$\varphi(z) = nz$$

is a homomorphism.

- In general, if G is an abelian group and $n \in \mathbb{Z}$, the map $x \mapsto x^n$ is a homomorphism.

Homomorphisms lead to another equally recurring concept in mathematics. The concept of isomorphism. Loosely speaking, an isomorphism captures two structures to be “equivalent.”

For example, consider the group $\{0, 1, 2\}$ with addition modulo 3 and the group $\{1, \omega, \omega^2\}$ with multiplication. ($\omega = \exp\left(\frac{2\pi}{3}i\right)$.) While the groups are not equal (since they don't have the same element), they pretty much are same in terms of the group properties.

This idea can formalised as follows.

Definition 9 (Isomorphism)

Let G and H be groups. A group homomorphism $\varphi : G \rightarrow H$ is said to be *isomorphism* if φ is bijective.

Remark. It can be checked that the inverse of a bijective homomorphism is again a homomorphism. In particular, if φ is an isomorphism, then so is φ^{-1} .

Definition 10 (Isomorphic)

Two groups G and H are said to be isomorphic if there exists a group isomorphism $\varphi : G \rightarrow H$.
In such a case, we write $G \cong H$.

One can note that \cong is an “equivalence relation”.

Examples

- With $G = \{0, 1, 2\}$ and $H = \{1, \omega, \omega^2\}$ as earlier, we see that $\varphi : G \rightarrow H$ defined by $\varphi(i) = \omega^i$ is an isomorphism.
- In general, the groups $G = \{0, \dots, n-1\}$ and $H = \{z \in \mathbb{C}^\times : z^n = 1\}$ are isomorphic.
- The map $\exp : \mathbb{R} \rightarrow \mathbb{R}^+$ is an isomorphism. (Note that \mathbb{R} is a group under $+$ whereas \mathbb{R}^+ is a group under \cdot .)

Once again, let us look at a concept the quite recurring in mathematics. (This time more focused in the realm of algebra.)

Definition 11 (Kernel)

Given a group homomorphism $\varphi : G \rightarrow H$, we denote the *kernel* of φ by $\ker \varphi$ and define it as

$$\ker \varphi := \{g \in G : \varphi(g) = e_H\}.$$

That is, it is the subset of G consisting of all those elements that get mapped to the identity of H . Does this remind you of anything from linear algebra?

Proposition 5

With the same notations as above, we have

$$\ker \varphi \leq G.$$

A curious property about kernels

Proposition 6

Let $\varphi : G \rightarrow H$ and $K = \ker \varphi$.

Then, given any $a \in G$ and $k \in K$, we have

$$aka^{-1} \in K.$$

The above says that $aKa^{-1} \subset K$, where aKa^{-1} is defined in the natural manner as

$$\{aka^{-1} : k \in K\}.$$

In fact, since the above is true for all $a \in G$, it is also true for a^{-1} and we actually get the equality $aKa^{-1} = K$.

This can be written in yet another way as $aK = Ka$.

A curious calculation

Now, suppose that $a, a', b, b' \in G$ are elements such that $aK = a'K$ and $bK = b'K$.

Then, we see that

$$\begin{aligned}(ab)K &= a(bK) \\ &= a(Kb) \\ &= a(Kb') \\ &= (aK)b' \\ &= (a'K)b' \\ &= a'(Kb') \\ &= (a'b')K.\end{aligned}$$

Let us keep this in mind for now. We shall come back to it later. Note that the only property we used was that $gK = Kg$ and not really that K was a kernel.

Coming back to cosets

Recall the set of cosets G/H . We wish to turn this set into a group.