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Compendium of Lecture Notes and Exercises in Introductory Abstract Algebra

Adopted from lectures, notes, and exercises by

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Contents

Chapter 0

Foundations

0.1 Sets and relations

We will assume the reader is familiar with the concept of a set, set-builder notation, and basic set operations. By convention, the set of natural numbers $\mathbb{N}$ will be taken to start from 1.

0.1.1 Definition. For two sets A and B, any subset of $A \times B$ is called a relation, and for all (a, b) in this relation, we say a is related to b, denoted, for example, by $a \sim b$.

0.1.2 Definition. A relation $a \sim b$ is called an equivalence relation if it is

(1) reflexive: for every a, we have $a \sim a$;

(2) symmetric: for every a, b such that $a \sim b$, we have $b \sim a$; and

(3) transitive: for every a, b, c such that $a \sim b$ and $b \sim c$, we have $a \sim c$.

0.1.3 Definition. The set $[a] = \{b \mid a \sim b\}$ is called the equivalence class of a.

0.1.4 Theorem. Let $\sim$ be an equivalence relation on a set X. Then, the equivalence classes are disjoint and form a partition of X.

Proof. Let $x_1, x_2 \in X$ and consider the equivalence classes $[x_1]$ and $[x_2]$. Suppose they are not disjoint. Then, there exists a y such that $y \in [x_1] \cap [x_2]$, so $x_1 \sim y$ and $x_2 \sim y$. By the symmetric property, $x_1 \sim y$ and $y \sim x_2$, so by the transitive property, $x_1 \sim x_2$.

Now let $x \in [x_1]$. Then, $x_1 \sim x$, and since $x_1 \sim x_2$, we have $x_2 \sim x$, so $x \in [x_2]$. Thus, $[x_1] \subseteq [x_2]$, and similarly, $[x_2] \subseteq [x_1]$, so $[x_1] = [x_2]$. ■

0.2 Examples of proofs

0.2.1 Claim (*For a direct proof*)**.** The product of two odd numbers is odd.

Proof. Let a and b be odd. Then, $a = 2n+1$ and $b = 2k+1$ for some $n, k \in \mathbb{Z}$, so we have

$$ab = (2n+1)(2k+1) = 4nk + 2n + 2k + 1 = 2(2nk + n + k) + 1$$

which is odd since $2nk + n + k \in \mathbb{Z}$. ■

0.2.2 Claim (*For a proof by contraposition*)**.** Let $n \in \mathbb{Z}$. If n^2 is odd, then n is odd.

Proof. Suppose n is even. Then, $n = 2k$ for some $k \in \mathbb{Z}$, so

$$n^2 = (2k)^2 = 4k^2 = 2(2k^2)$$

which is even since $2k^2 \in \mathbb{Z}$. Hence, if n^2 is odd, then n is odd. ■

0.2.3 Claim (*For a proof by contradiction*)**.** Let $p \in \mathbb{Z}$. If p is prime, then $\sqrt{p} \notin \mathbb{Q}$.

Proof. Suppose $\sqrt{p} \in \mathbb{Q}$. Then, there exist some $a, b \in \mathbb{Z}$, $b \neq 0$ such that $\sqrt{p} = a/b$. Without loss of generality, assume $\gcd(a, b) = 1$. We see

$$p = \left(\frac{a}{b}\right)^2 = \frac{a^2}{b^2} \iff pb^2 = a^2 \implies p \mid a^2,$$

and since p is prime, we see $p \mid a$. There must then exist some $n \in \mathbb{Z}$ such that $a = np$, so

$$pb^2 = a^2 = (np)^2 = n^2p^2 \iff b^2 = n^2p \implies p \mid b^2 \iff p \mid b.$$

Thus, p divides both a and b, but this is a contradiction since $\gcd(a, b) = 1$. Hence, $\sqrt{p} \notin \mathbb{Q}$. ■

0.2.4 Claim (*For a proof by induction*)**.** Let $n \in \mathbb{N}$. If $n \geq 5$, then $n! \geq 2^n$.

Proof. For our base step, note $5! = 120$ and $2^5 = 32$, so $5! \geq 2^5$.

As our inductive hypothesis, assume $k! \geq 2^k$ for some $k \geq 5$. Then,

$$(k+1)k! \geq (k+1)2^k \geq 6 \cdot 2^k \geq 2 \cdot 2^k = 2^{k+1} \implies (k+1)! \geq 2^{k+1}.$$

Hence, $n! \geq 2^n$ for all $n \geq 5$. ■

Note that this does not address the fact that $4! \geq 2^4$.

▶ Solved exercises

Exercise 0.1. For each of the following, find $A \cap B$, $A \cup B$, $A \setminus B$, $B \setminus A$, $A \times B$, and $B \times A$.

(1) Let $A = \{-1, 1\}$ and $B = \{1, 2, 3\}$. Then,

$$\begin{aligned} A \cap B &= \{1\}, \\ A \cup B &= \{-1, 1, 2, 3\}, \\ A \setminus B &= \{-1\}, \\ B \setminus A &= \{2, 3\}, \\ A \times B &= \{(-1, 1), (-1, 2), (-1, 3), (1, 1), (1, 2), (1, 3)\}, \\ B \times A &= \{(1, -1), (1, 1), (2, -1), (2, 1), (3, -1), (3, 1)\}. \end{aligned}$$

(2) Let $A = [-1, 1]$ and $B = (0, 3]$. Then,

$$\begin{aligned} A \cap B &= (0, 1], \\ A \cup B &= [-1, 3], \\ A \setminus B &= [-1, 0], \\ B \setminus A &= (1, 3], \\ A \times B &= \{(a, b) \mid a \in [-1, 1], b \in (0, 3]\}, \\ B \times A &= \{(b, a) \mid b \in (0, 3], a \in [-1, 1]\}. \end{aligned}$$

(3) Let $A = (1, 3)$ and $B = [0, \infty)$. Then,

$$\begin{aligned} A \cap B &= (1, 3), \\ A \cup B &= [0, \infty), \\ A \setminus B &= \varnothing, \\ B \setminus A &= [0, 1] \cup [3, \infty), \\ A \times B &= \{(a, b) \mid a \in (1, 3), b \in [0, \infty)\}, \\ B \times A &= \{(b, a) \mid b \in [0, \infty), a \in (1, 3)\}. \end{aligned}$$

Exercise 0.2. Let $a, b, c \in \mathbb{N}$ where a and b are coprime. Prove the following.

(1) If $a \mid bc$, then $a \mid c$.

Proof. Suppose $a \mid bc$. Then, there exists some $n \in \mathbb{Z}$ such that $na = bc$, so $b \mid na$. Now suppose n is not a multiple of b. Then, a and b must share a common factor greater than 1, but a and b are coprime, so this is impossible. Therefore, n must be a multiple of b; that is, there exists some $k \in \mathbb{Z}$ such that $n = kb$, so

$$na = bc \iff \frac{n}{b}a = c \iff \frac{bk}{b}a = c \iff ka = c \implies a \mid c. \qquad \blacksquare$$

(2) If $a \mid c$ and $b \mid c$, then $ab \mid c$.

Proof. Suppose $a \mid c$ and $b \mid c$. Then, c is a multiple of a, and c is a multiple of b. Let $p_1 p_2 \cdots p_n$ be the prime factorization of a, and let $q_1 q_2 \cdots q_k$ be the prime factorization of b. Since a and b are coprime, we see $\{p_1, p_2, \ldots, p_n\} \cap \{q_1, q_2, \ldots, q_k\} = \varnothing$, so the prime factorization of c must include all of the p_is and all of the q_is. Therefore, c is a multiple of $p_1 p_2 \cdots p_n q_1 q_2 \cdots q_k = ab$, so $ab \mid c$. $\blacksquare$

Chapter 1

Groups and Subgroups

1.1 Groups

1.1.1 Definition. Let S be a set. A mapping

$$\begin{array}{rccc} \odot : & S \times S & \to & S \\ & (x, y) & \mapsto & x \odot y \end{array}$$

is called a law of composition on S.

Note that S is necessarily closed under the operation defined by such a law. Examples include addition of natural numbers and multiplication of $n \times n$ matrices. Subtraction of natural numbers, however, is not closed and therefore not a law of composition.

1.1.2 Definition. A law of composition $\odot$ on S is called associative if for every $x, y, z \in S$, we have $(x \odot y) \odot z = x \odot (y \odot z)$. The law $\odot$ is called commutative if for every $x, y \in S$, we have $x \odot y = y \odot x$.

1.1.3 Definition. Let G be a set and $\odot$ be a law of composition on G. A pair $(G, \odot)$ is called a group if

(1) $\odot$ is associative;

(2) there exists a neutral element $e \in G$ such that for every $g \in G$, we have

$$g \odot e = e \odot g = g;$$

and

(3) for every $g \in G$, there exists an inverse element $g^{-1} \in G$ such that

$$g \odot g^{-1} = g^{-1} \odot g = e.$$

A group whose law is commutative is called commutative or abelian.

We will typically refer to a group by its set and denote compositions of its elements using multiplicative notation ab if commutativity is not assumed, or additive notation $a + b$ if commutativity is assumed; in the latter case, the inverse of a is denoted $-a$.

1.1.4 Proposition. The neutral element of a group is unique.

Proof. Let G be a group, and let $e_1, e_2 \in G$ such that for every $g \in G$, we have

$$e_1 g = g e_1 = g \quad \text{and} \quad e_2 g = g e_2 = g.$$

Then, $e_1 e_2 = e_1$ and $e_1 e_2 = e_2$, so $e_1 = e_2$. ∎

1.1.5 Proposition. Let G be a group. For every $g \in G$, its inverse element g^{-1} is unique.

Proof. Let $g \in G$. Suppose h_1 and h_2 are both inverses of g. Then,

$$g h_1 = h_1 g = e \quad \text{and} \quad g h_2 = h_2 g = e,$$

so

$$h_1 = h_1 e = h_1 (g h_2) = (h_1 g) h_2 = e h_2 = h_2.$$

Hence, the inverse of g is unique. ∎

1.1.6 Proposition. Let G be a group, and let $g, h, i \in G$. Then,

(1) $(g^{-1})^{-1} = g$;

(2) $(gh)^{-1} = h^{-1} g^{-1}$;

(3) the equations $gx = h$ and $xg = h$ have unique solutions $x \in G$; and

(4) if $gi = hi$ or $ig = ih$, then $g = h$.

These can be proven with straightforward computations.

1.2 Subgroups

1.2.1 Definition. Let $(G, \odot)$ be a group, and let $H \subseteq G$. If $(H, \odot|_{H \times H})$ is a group, it is called a subgroup of G.

1.2.2 Theorem. Let G be a group, and let $H \subseteq G$, $H \neq \varnothing$. Then, H is a subgroup of G if and only if for every $h_1, h_2 \in H$, we have $h_1 h_2^{-1} \in H$.

Do this proof!

Proof. ∎

We will use the notation $n\mathbb{Z} = \{n \cdot k \mid k \in \mathbb{Z}\}$ where $\cdot$ is standard multiplication.

1.2.3 Proposition. Let $n \in \mathbb{Z}$. Then, $(n\mathbb{Z}, +)$ is a subgroup of $(\mathbb{Z}, +)$.

Proof. We see $0 \in n\mathbb{Z}$ for all $n \in \mathbb{Z}$, so $n\mathbb{Z} \neq \varnothing$.

Let $a, b \in n\mathbb{Z}$. Then, $a = kn$ and $b = ln$ for some $k, l \in \mathbb{Z}$, so we have

$$a + (-b) = a - b = kn - ln = (k - l)n = n(k - l) \in n\mathbb{Z}.$$

Hence, by Theorem 1.2.2, $(n\mathbb{Z}, +)$ is a subgroup of $(\mathbb{Z}, +)$. ∎

1.2.4 Proposition. Every subgroup of $(\mathbb{Z}, +)$ is of the form $(n\mathbb{Z}, +)$ for some $n \in \mathbb{Z}$.

Proof. Let H be a subgroup of $(\mathbb{Z}, +)$. If $H = \{0\}$, then $H = 0\mathbb{Z}$. Otherwise, let $k \in H$, $k \neq 0$. Without loss of generality, take k to be positive. Now let $S = H \cap \mathbb{Z}^+$. Since $k \in S$, we see $S \neq \varnothing$, so S has a minimal element, say n.

Since $n \in H$, we see $n\mathbb{Z} \subseteq H$. Additionally, rewriting k in terms of its Euclidean division by n as $k = ln + r$ where $l, r \in \mathbb{N} \cup \{0\}$, $0 \leq r < n$, we see $r = 0$ since n is minimal. Thus, $k = ln \in n\mathbb{Z}$, so $H \subseteq n\mathbb{Z}$. Hence, $H = n\mathbb{Z}$. ■

1.2.5 Proposition. Let G be a group, and let $S \subseteq G$. Then, there exists a unique subgroup H of G such that

(1) $S \subseteq H$ and

(2) if H' is a subgroup of G and $S \subseteq H'$, then H is a subgroup of H'.

Proof A. Let X be the set of all subgroups of G that contain S. Since $G \in X$, we see $X \neq \varnothing$. Now let $H = \cup_{J \in X} J$. Then, $S \subseteq H$. Finally, let $x, y \in H$. Then, $x, y \in J$ for all $J \in X$, and since each J is a subgroup of G, we have $xy^{-1} \in J$ for all $J \in X$. Thus,

$$xy^{-1} \in \bigcup_{J \in X} J = H,$$

so, by Theorem 1.2.2, H is a subgroup of G.

Now suppose there exist two subgroups H_1, H_2 satisfying (1) and (2). Then, $S \subseteq H_1$ and $S \subseteq H_2$. Since H_2 is a subgroup of G containing S, by (2) we have $H_1 \subseteq H_2$; likewise, $H_2 \subseteq H_1$, so $H_1 = H_2$. Hence, H is unique. ■

Alternatively, we can use a constructive proof:

Proof B. Let $H = \{g_1^{\pm 1} g_2^{\pm 1} \cdots g_k^{\pm 1} \mid g_1, g_2, \ldots, g_k \in S\}$. Then, $S \subseteq H$. Further, let $x, y \in H$. Then, $x = g_1^{\pm 1} g_2^{\pm 1} \cdots g_n^{\pm 1}$ and $y = h_1^{\pm 1} h_2^{\pm 1} \cdots h_m^{\pm 1}$ for some $g_1, g_2, \ldots, g_n, h_1, h_2, \ldots, h_m \in S$, so

$$\begin{aligned} xy^{-1} &= g_1^{\pm 1} g_2^{\pm 1} \cdots g_n^{\pm 1} (h_1^{\pm 1} h_2^{\pm 1} \cdots h_m^{\pm 1})^{-1} \\ &= g_1^{\pm 1} g_2^{\pm 1} \cdots g_n^{\pm 1} (h_m^{\pm 1})^{-1} \cdots (h_2^{\pm 1})^{-1} (h_1^{\pm 1})^{-1} \\ &= g_1^{\pm 1} g_2^{\pm 1} \cdots g_n^{\pm 1} h_m^{\mp 1} \cdots h_2^{\mp 1} h_1^{\mp 1} \in H. \end{aligned}$$

Thus, H is a subgroup of G. Uniqueness can be shown in the same way as in Proof A. ■

1.2.6 Definition. The subgroup H from Proposition 1.2.5 is called the subgroup generated by S, denoted $\langle S \rangle$. This is, in other words, the smallest subgroup of G that contains S. When $\langle S \rangle = G$ for some group G, we say S generates G. When this S is finite, we say G is finitely generated.

1.2.7 Definition. A group generated by one element, say x, is called a cyclic group, denoted $\langle x \rangle$.

We will use the notation x^n to denote an element x of a group composed with itself n times.

1.2.8 Proposition. Let G be a group, and let $g \in G$. Then,

(1) $\langle g \rangle = \langle \{g\} \rangle = \{g^m \mid m \in \mathbb{Z}\}$;

(2) $\langle g \rangle$ is infinite if and only if there does not exist an $m \in \mathbb{N}$ such that $g^m = e$; and

(3) if $\langle g \rangle$ is finite, then $|\langle g \rangle| = \min\{m \in \mathbb{N} \mid g^m = e\}$.

Proof.

(1) Since $\langle g \rangle$ is a group, it must contain all compositions of g with itself, i.e. g^m for all $m \in \mathbb{N}$, as well as its inverse g^{-1} and the inverses of those compositions, so at the minimum, $\langle g \rangle$ contains $\{g^m \mid m \in \mathbb{Z}\}$, which is a subgroup of G. Hence, $\langle g \rangle = \{g^m \mid m \in \mathbb{Z}\}$.

(2) Suppose $\langle g \rangle$ is finite. Equivalently, there exist some $n, k \in \mathbb{Z}$, $n \neq k$ such that $g^n = g^k$; without loss of generality, take $n > k$. We see

$$g^n = g^k \iff g^n g^{-k} = g^k g^{-k} \iff g^{n-k} = e,$$

i.e. there exists an $m = n - k \in \mathbb{N}$ such that $g^m = e$. Hence, $\langle g \rangle$ is infinite if and only if such an m does not exist.

(3) From the proof for (2), it follows that if $\langle g \rangle$ is finite, then the set $\{m \in \mathbb{N} \mid g^m = e\}$ is nonempty and therefore has a least element, say n. We see $\{e, g, g^2, \ldots, g^{n-1}\} \subseteq \langle g \rangle$. Let $g^k \in \langle g \rangle$ for some $k \in \mathbb{Z}$. We can rewrite k in terms of its Euclidean division by n as $k = nq + r$ for some $q, r \in \mathbb{Z}$, $0 \leq r < k$, giving us

$$g^k = g^{nq+r} = (g^n)^q g^r = e^q g^r = g^r \in \{e, g, g^2, \ldots, g^{n-1}\},$$

so $\langle g \rangle \subseteq \{e, g, g^2, \ldots, g^{n-1}\}$. Hence, $\langle g \rangle = \{e, g, g^2, \ldots, g^{n-1}\}$, so $|\langle g \rangle| = n$. ■

1.2.9 Definition. Let x be some element in a group. Then, $|\langle x \rangle|$ is called the order of x, denoted $\operatorname{ord}(x)$.

1.3 Cosets

1.3.1 Definition. Let G be a group and H be a subgroup of G, and let $g \in G$. Then, the set

$$gH = \{gh \mid h \in H\}$$

is called the left coset of H associated with g, and the set

$$Hg = \{hg \mid h \in H\}$$

is called the right coset of H associated with g.

1.3.2 Theorem. Let G be a group and H be a subgroup of G, and let $x, y \in G$. Then, the relations $\sim_l$ and $\sim_r$ on G such that

$$x \sim_l y \iff x^{-1}y \in H \quad \text{and} \quad x \sim_r y \iff xy^{-1} \in H$$

are equivalence relations.

Proof. By Definition 0.1.2, we have three criteria for $\sim_l$ to be an equivalence relation:

(1) We see $x^{-1}x = e \in H$, so $x \sim_l x$ (reflexive).

(2) Suppose $x \sim_l y$. Then, $x^{-1}y \in H$, so $(x^{-1}y)^{-1} = y^{-1}x \in H$; therefore, $y \sim_l x$ (symmetric).

(3) Let $z \in G$. Suppose $x \sim_l y$ and $y \sim_l z$. Then, $x^{-1}y, y^{-1}z \in H$, so

$$(x^{-1}y)(y^{-1}z) = x^{-1}(yy^{-1})z = x^{-1}z \in H;$$

therefore, $x \sim_l z$ (transitive).

Thus, $\sim_l$ is an equivalence relation. The same for $\sim_r$ can be proven similarly. ■

1.3.3 Corollary (*Alternative definition of the left and right cosets*)**.** Let G be a group and H be a subgroup of G, and take $\sim_l$ and $\sim_r$ as defined in Theorem 1.3.2. Then, the left cosets of H in G are the equivalence classes of $\sim_l$, and the right cosets are the equivalence classes of $\sim_r$.

1.3.4 Corollary. Let G be a group and H be a subgroup of G. The left cosets of H in G form a partition of G. The same applies for the right cosets.

We will use the notation G/H to denote to denote the set of left cosets of H in G and $H\backslash G$ to denote the set of right cosets.

1.3.5 Proposition. Let G be a group and H be a subgroup of G. Then, there exists a bijection between G/H and $H\backslash G$. It follows that the number of left and right cosets is the same when finite.

Proof. ■ Do this proof!

1.3.6 Definition. Let G be a group and H be a subgroup of G. The cardinality of G/H is called the index of H in G, denoted $[G : H]$.

1.3.7 Proposition. Let G be a group and H be a subgroup of G. Then, there exists a bijection between any two cosets of H in G. It follows that if H is finite, then all the cosets are finite and have the same cardinality.

Proof. Let $g \in G$, and let

$$f_g : \begin{array}{ccc} H & \to & gH \\ h & \mapsto & gh \end{array}.$$

By the definition of gH, the mapping f_g is well-defined and surjective. Let $h, h' \in H$ such that $gh = gh'$. Then, by Proposition 1.1.6, we see $h = h'$, so f_g is injective. Hence, f_g is a bijection, so $|H| = |gH|$ when finite. ■

1.3.8 Theorem (*Lagrange's theorem*)**.** Let G be a finite group and H be a subgroup of G. Then, the order of every subgroup of H divides the order of G.

Proof. By Corollary 1.3.4, we see G is the union of the left cosets, which are necessarily disjoint, so $|G|$ is the sum of the cardinalities of the cosets. By Proposition 1.3.7, the cardinalities of the cosets are the same and equal to $|H|$, so

$$|G| = [G : H]|H|. \qquad \blacksquare$$

1.3.9 **Corollary.** Let G be a group and H, K be subgroups of G where $K \subseteq H$. Then,

$$[G : K] = [G : H][H : K].$$

1.3.10 **Corollary.** Let G be a finite group, and let $g \in G$. Then, $\mathrm{ord}(g)$ divides $|G|$. It follows that $g^{|G|} = e$.

1.3.11 **Corollary.** Let G be a group of prime order. Then, G is cyclic; in other words, $G = \langle g \rangle$ for all $g \in G \setminus \{e\}$.

1.4 Normal subgroups

1.4.1 **Definition.** Let G be a finite group and H be a subgroup of G. If for every $g \in G$, we have $gH = Hg$, i.e. the left and right cosets are the same, then H is called a normal subgroup of G.

1.4.2 **Proposition.** Let G be a finite group and H be a subgroup of G. Then, H is a normal subgroup of G if and only if for every $g \in G$ and $h \in H$, we have $ghg^{-1} \in H$.

Proof.

($\Rightarrow$) Suppose H is a normal subgroup of G. Then, for all $g \in G$, we have $gH = Hg$, so for all $h \in H$, we have $gh \in Hg$. This means there exists some $k \in H$ such that $gh = kg$, so

$$ghg^{-1} = kgg^{-1} = k \in H.$$

($\Leftarrow$) Let $x \in gH$, and suppose for every $g \in G$ and $h \in H$, we have $ghg^{-1} \in H$. Then, there exists some $h \in H$ such that

$$x = gh = gh(g^{-1}g) = (ghg^{-1})g \in Hg,$$

so $Hg \subseteq gH$. Similarly, it can be shown that $gH \subseteq Hg$; hence, $gH = Hg$. $\blacksquare$

1.4.3 **Theorem.** Let $(G, \odot)$ be a group and H be a normal subgroup of G. Then, G/H can be given a group structure with the composition law

$$\begin{array}{rccc} \oslash : & G/H \times G/H & \to & G/H \\ & (xH, yH) & \mapsto & (x \odot y)H \end{array}.$$

Proof. Since H is a normal subgroup, $\oslash$ is well-defined. Associativity and inverses follow from $\odot$. Since $H = e_G H$, we have, for all $gH \in G/H$,

$$H \oslash gH = e_G H \oslash gH = (e_G \odot g)H = gH,$$

and, similarly, $gH \oslash H = gH$, so we have the neutral element H. Hence, $(G/H, \oslash)$ is a group. $\blacksquare$

▶ Solved exercises

Exercise 1.1. Determine whether the following are groups, and show why or why not.

(1) Consider $(\{1, 0, -1\}, +)$ where $+$ is standard addition.

Notice $1 + 1 = 2 \notin \{1, 0, -1\}$, so $(\{1, 0, -1\}, +)$ is not a group.

(2) Consider $(\mathbb{R}, \odot)$ where $\odot$ is defined such that for $x, y \in \mathbb{R}$, we have $x \odot y = xy + (x^2 - 1)(y^2 - 1)$.

Notice

$$\begin{aligned} 2 \odot (3 \odot 4) &= 2 \odot \big((3)(4) + (3^2 - 1)(4^2 - 1)\big) = 2 \odot 132 \\ &= (2)(132) + (2^2 - 1)(132^2 - 1) = 52\,533 \end{aligned}$$

while

$$\begin{aligned} (2 \odot 3) \odot 4 &= \big((2)(3) + (2^2 - 1)(3^2 - 1)\big) \odot 4 = 30 \odot 4 \\ &= (30)(4) + (30^2 - 1)(4^2 - 1) = 13\,605, \end{aligned}$$

so $\odot$ is not associative. Hence, $(\mathbb{R}, \odot)$ is not a group.

(3) Consider $(\mathbb{R}^+, \odot)$ where $\odot$ is defined such that for $x, y \in \mathbb{R}^+$, we have $x \odot y = \sqrt{x^2 + y^2}$.

Notice that for all $x \in \mathbb{R}^+$,

$$x \odot 0 = \sqrt{x^2 + 0^2} = \sqrt{x^2} = x,$$

so 0 is the neutral element under $\odot$; however, $0 \notin \mathbb{R}^+$, so $(\mathbb{R}^+, \odot)$ is not a group.

(4) Consider $(\mathbb{R} \setminus \{-1\}, \odot)$ where $\odot$ is defined such that for $x, y \in \mathbb{R} \setminus \{-1\}$, we have $x \odot y = x + y + xy$.

Suppose there exists a pair (x, y) such that $x \odot y = -1$. Then,

$$\begin{aligned} x + y + xy &= -1 \\ y(1 + x) &= -1 - x \\ y &= -\frac{1 + x}{1 + x} \\ y &= -1 \end{aligned}$$

so such a pair cannot be in $(\mathbb{R} \setminus \{-1\}) \times (\mathbb{R} \setminus \{-1\})$; thus, $\odot$ is a law of composition on $\mathbb{R} \setminus \{-1\}$. We also see

$$\begin{aligned} (x \odot y) \odot z &= (x + y + xy) \odot z = (x + y + xy) + z + (x + y + xy)z \\ &= x + y + xy + z + xz + yz + xyz \\ &= x + (y + z + yz) + x(y + z + yz) = x \odot (y + z + yz) \\ &= x \odot (y \odot z) \end{aligned}$$

so $\odot$ is associative. Finally, notice that for all $x \in \mathbb{R} \setminus \{-1\}$, we have

$$x \odot 0 = x + 0 + x(0) = x$$

(neutral element), and

$$\begin{aligned} x \odot -\frac{x}{1+x} &= x - \frac{x}{1+x} + x\left(-\frac{x}{1+x}\right) = x - \frac{x}{1+x} - \frac{x^2}{1+x} \\ &= \frac{x(1+x)-x}{1+x} - \frac{x^2}{1+x} = \frac{x^2}{1+x} - \frac{x^2}{1+x} = 0 \end{aligned}$$

(inverse). Hence, $(\mathbb{R} \setminus \{-1\}, \odot)$ is a group.

(5) Consider $(\mathcal{C}, \cdot)$ where $\mathcal{C} = \{z \in \mathbb{C} \mid |c| = 1\}$ and $\cdot$ is standard multiplication.

Since $\mathcal{C}$ is the unit circle, we can uniquely represent each $z \in \mathcal{C}$ in polar form as $z = e^{i\theta}$ for some $\theta \in (-\pi, \pi]$, and we know $e^{i\theta} \in \mathcal{C}$ for all $\theta \in \mathbb{R}$. Let $e^{i\theta_1}, e^{i\theta_2} \in \mathcal{C}$. Then,

$$e^{i\theta_1} \cdot e^{i\theta_2} = e^{i\theta_1 + i\theta_2} = e^{i(\theta_1+\theta_2)} \in \mathcal{C}$$

so standard multiplication is a law of composition on $\mathcal{C}$, and we know standard multiplication is associative. The neutral element under standard multiplication is $1 = e^{i(0)} \in \mathcal{C}$. Finally, notice that for all $e^{i\theta} \in \mathcal{C}$,

$$e^{i\theta} \cdot e^{i(-\theta)} = e^{i\theta - i\theta} = e^0 = 1$$

(inverse). Hence, $(\mathcal{C}, \cdot)$ is a group.

(6) Consider $(\mathrm{SL}_n(\mathbb{R}), \cdot)$ where $\mathrm{SL}_n(\mathbb{R})$ is the set of all $n \times n$ matrices over $\mathbb{R}$ with determinant 1 and $\cdot$ is standard matrix multiplication.

Let $A, B \in \mathrm{SL}_n(\mathbb{R})$. Then,

$$\det(AB) = \det(A)\,\det(B) = (1)(1) = 1$$

so $AB \in \mathrm{SL}_n(\mathbb{R})$. Thus, standard matrix multiplication is a law of composition on $\mathrm{SL}_n(\mathbb{R})$, and we know standard matrix multiplication is associative. The neutral element under standard matrix multiplication is I_n and $\det(I_n) = 1$, so $I_n \in \mathrm{SL}_n(\mathbb{R})$. Finally, taking A^{-1} as the standard matrix inverse, we see

$$\det(A^{-1}) = \frac{1}{\det(A)} = \frac{1}{1} = 1$$

so $A^{-1} \in \mathrm{SL}_n(\mathbb{R})$. Hence, $(\mathrm{SL}_n(\mathbb{R}), \cdot)$ is a group.

(7) Consider $(Q, \cdot)$ where $Q = \{\pm I_2, \pm I, \pm J, \pm K\}$,

$$I_2 = \begin{bmatrix} 1 & 0 \\ 0 & 1 \end{bmatrix} \qquad I = \begin{bmatrix} 0 & 1 \\ -1 & 0 \end{bmatrix} \qquad J = \begin{bmatrix} 0 & i \\ i & 0 \end{bmatrix} \qquad K = \begin{bmatrix} i & 0 \\ 0 & -i \end{bmatrix},$$

and $\cdot$ is standard matrix multiplication.

For I_2, I, J, and K, we have the composition table

$\cdot$	I_2	I	J	K
I_2	I_2	I	J	K
I	I	$-I_2$	K	$-J$
J	J	$-K$	$-I_2$	I
K	K	J	$-I$	$-I_2$

and we know for any matrices A and B,

$$(-A)B = A(-B) = -AB \quad \text{and} \quad (-A)(-B) = AB$$

so standard matrix multiplication is a law of composition on Q. We also know standard matrix multiplication is associative. The neutral element under standard matrix multiplication of 2×2 matrices is $I_2 \in Q$. Finally, from the composition table, we have the inverses

$$I_2^{-1} = I_2 \qquad I^{-1} = -I \qquad J^{-1} = -J \qquad K^{-1} = -K$$

and from these we see

$$(-I_2)^{-1} = -I_2 \quad (-I)^{-1} = I \qquad (-J)^{-1} = J \qquad (-K)^{-1} = K.$$

Hence, $(Q, \cdot)$ is a group.

(8) Consider $(H, \cdot)$ where H is the set of upper triangular 3×3 matrices over $\mathbb{R}$ with all 1s on the diagonal and $\cdot$ is standard matrix multiplication.

Let $a, b, c, x, y, z \in \mathbb{R}$. Then,

$$\begin{bmatrix} 1 & x & y \\ 0 & 1 & z \\ 0 & 0 & 1 \end{bmatrix} \begin{bmatrix} 1 & a & b \\ 0 & 1 & c \\ 0 & 0 & 1 \end{bmatrix} = \begin{bmatrix} 1 & a+x & b+xc+y \\ 0 & 1 & c+z \\ 0 & 0 & 1 \end{bmatrix} \in H$$

so standard matrix multiplication is a law of composition on H, and we know standard matrix multiplication is associative. The neutral element under standard matrix multiplication of 3×3 matrices is $I_3 \in H$. Finally, computing the standard matrix inverse, we see

$$\begin{bmatrix} 1 & x & y \\ 0 & 1 & z \\ 0 & 0 & 1 \end{bmatrix}^{-1} = \begin{bmatrix} 1 & -x & xz-y \\ 0 & 1 & -z \\ 0 & 0 & 1 \end{bmatrix} \in H.$$

Hence, $(H, \cdot)$ is a group.

Exercise 1.2. For each of the following, determine whether H is a subgroup of G, and show why or why not.

(1) Let $G = (\mathbb{R}, +)$ and $H = \{-1, 0, 1\}$.

Consider $1 + 1 = 2 \notin H$. Hence, H is not a subgroup of G.

(2) Let $G = (\mathbb{R}, +)$ and $H = \mathbb{R} \setminus \{0\}$.

The neutral element of G is $0 \notin H$. Hence, H is not a subgroup of G.

(3) Let $G = (\mathbb{C} \setminus \{0\}, \cdot)$ and $H = \mathbb{R} \setminus \{0\}$.

Let $h_1, h_2 \in H = \mathbb{R} \setminus \{0\}$. Then, since $h_1, h_2 \neq 0$, we have

$$h_1 h_2^{-1} = h_1 \cdot \frac{1}{h_2} = \frac{h_1}{h_2} \in \mathbb{R} \setminus \{0\} = H.$$

Hence, H is a subgroup of G.

(4) Let $G = (\mathbb{R} \setminus \{0\}, \cdot)$ and $H = \{-1, 1\}$.

We see

$$(-1)^{-1} = \frac{1}{-1} = -1, \qquad 1^{-1} = \frac{1}{1} = 1$$

so

$$\begin{aligned} -1 \cdot (-1)^{-1} &= -1 \cdot -1 = 1 \in H, & -1 \cdot 1^{-1} &= -1 \cdot 1 = -1 \in H, \\ 1 \cdot (-1)^{-1} &= 1 \cdot -1 = -1 \in H, & 1 \cdot 1^{-1} &= 1 \cdot 1 = 1 \in H. \end{aligned}$$

Hence, H is a subgroup of G.

(5) Let $G = (\mathbb{C} \setminus \{0\}, \cdot)$ and $H = \left\{ e^{i(2\pi k)/n} \mid k \in \{0, 1, \ldots, n-1\} \right\}$ for some $n \in \mathbb{N}$.

Let $h_1, h_2 \in H$. Then, $h_1 = e^{i(2\pi k)/n}$ and $h_2 = e^{i(2\pi l)/n}$ for some $k, l \in \{0, 1, \ldots, n-1\}$, so

$$h_2^{-1} = \left(e^{i(2\pi l)/n} \right)^{-1} = e^{-i(2\pi l)/n}$$

and we see

$$h_1 h_2^{-1} = e^{i(2\pi k)/n} \cdot e^{-i(2\pi l)/n} = e^{i(2\pi(k-l))/n}.$$

Let $m = (k - l) \bmod n$. Then,

$$h_1 h_2^{-1} = e^{i(2\pi(k-l))/n} = e^{i(2\pi m)/n} \in H.$$

Hence, H is a subgroup of G.

(6) Let $G = (\mathrm{GL}_n(\mathbb{R}), \cdot)$ where $\mathrm{GL}_n(\mathbb{R})$ is the set of all invertible $n \times n$ matrices over $\mathbb{R}$, and let $H = (\mathrm{SL}_n(\mathbb{R}), \cdot)$.

Let $A, B \in H = \mathrm{SL}_n(\mathbb{R})$. Then,

$$\det(A) = \det(B) = 1 \neq 0$$

so A^{-1} and B^{-1} exist and

$$\det(B^{-1}) = \frac{1}{\det(B)} = \frac{1}{1} = 1.$$

Therefore,

$$\det(AB^{-1}) = \det(A)\det(B^{-1}) = 1 \cdot 1 = 1$$

so $AB^{-1} \in H$. Hence, H is a subgroup of G.

Exercise 1.3. Let G be a group, and let $x \in G$ where x is of order k. Prove that if m is an integer such that $x^m = e_G$, then $k \mid m$.

Proof. Since x is of order k, we have by definition that k is the smallest positive integer such that $x^k = e_G$. Suppose $x^m = e_G$ for some $m \in \mathbb{Z}$. We can rewrite m in terms of its Euclidean division by k as $m = kn + r$ for some $n, r \in \mathbb{Z}$ where $0 \leq r < k$, giving us

$$x^m = x^{kn+r} = x^{kn}x^r = (x^k)^n x^r = e_G^n x^r = x^r.$$

so $x^r = e_G$. Since $r < k$, then $r = 0$, so $m = nk$. Hence, $k \mid m$. ■

Chapter 2

Relations Between Groups

2.1 Group homomorphisms

2.1.1 Definition. Let $(G, \odot)$ and $(G', \oslash)$ be groups. A mapping $\phi : G \to G'$ is called a group homomorphism if for every $x, y \in G$, we have

$$\phi(x \odot y) = \phi(x) \oslash \phi(y).$$

2.1.2 Definition. A group homomorphism is called a(n)

(1) monomorphism when it is injective;

(2) epimorphism when it is surjective; or

(3) isomorphism when it is a bijection.

A group G is called isomorphic to a group G' if there exists an isomorphism $\phi : G \to G'$. We denote this by $G \simeq G'$.

2.1.3 Proposition. Let $\phi : (G, \odot) \to (G', \oslash)$ be a homomorphism. Then,

(1) $\phi(e_G) = e_{G'}$; and

(2) for all $g \in G$, we have $\phi(g^{-1}) = (\phi(g))^{-1}$.

Proof.

(1) Do this proof!

(2) By definition, $(\phi(g))^{-1}$ is the inverse of $\phi(g)$ in G'. We see

$$\phi(g^{-1}) \oslash \phi(g) = \phi(g^{-1} \odot g) = \phi(e_G) = e'_G,$$

so $\phi(g^{-1})$ is also the inverse of $\phi(g)$ in G'. Hence, by uniqueness of the inverse,

$$\phi(g^{-1}) = (\phi(g))^{-1}.$$

■

2.1.4 Definition. Let $\phi : G \to G'$ be a homomorphism. The set

$$\mathrm{im}(\phi) = \{\phi(g) \mid g \in G\}$$

is called the image of ϕ.

2.1.5 Proposition. Let $\phi : G \to G'$ be a homomorphism. Then, $\mathrm{im}(\phi)$ is a subgroup of G'.

Proof. Let $x, y \in \mathrm{im}(\phi)$. Then, there exist some $u, v \in G$ such that $\phi(u) = x$ and $\phi(v) = y$, so

$$xy^{-1} = \phi(u)(\phi(v))^{-1} = \phi(u)\,\phi(v^{-1}) = \phi(uv^{-1}).$$

Since $uv^{-1} \in G$, we see $xy^{-1} \in \mathrm{im}(\phi)$. Hence, $\mathrm{im}(\phi)$ is a subgroup of G'. ■

2.1.6 Definition. Let $\phi : G \to G'$ be a homomorphism. The set

$$\ker(\phi) = \{g \in G \mid \phi(g) = e'_G\}$$

is called the kernel of ϕ.

2.1.7 Theorem. Let $\phi : G \to G'$ be a homomorphism. Then, ϕ is a monomorphism if and only if $\ker(\phi) = \{e_G\}$.

Proof.

($\Rightarrow$) Suppose ϕ is injective. Since $\phi(e_G) = e_{G'}$, we know $\{e_G\} \subseteq \ker(\phi)$. Let $x \in \ker(\phi)$. Then, $\phi(x) = e_{G'} = \phi(e_G)$, so since ϕ is injective, $x = e_G$. Hence, $\{e_G\} = \ker(\phi)$.

($\Leftarrow$) Suppose $\ker(\phi) = \{e_G\}$. Let $x, y \in G$ such that $\phi(x) = \phi(y)$. Then,

$$e_{G'} = \phi(x)(\phi(x))^{-1} = \phi(y)(\phi(x))^{-1} = \phi(y)\,\phi(x^{-1}) = \phi(yx^{-1}).$$

Thus, $yx^{-1} \in \ker(\phi)$, so $yx^{-1} = e_G$, which implies $y = x$. Hence, ϕ is injective. ■

2.1.8 Theorem.

(1) Let $\phi : G \to G'$ be a homomorphism. Then, $\ker(\phi)$ is a normal subgroup of G.

(2) Let G be a group and H be a subgroup of G. Then, H is a normal subgroup of G if and only if there exists an epimorphism $\phi : G \to G'$ for some group G' such that $H = \ker(\phi)$.

Do this proof!

Proof. ■

2.1.9 Theorem. Let $\phi : G \to G'$ be an isomorphism. Then, ϕ^{-1} is an isomorphism.

Proof. Let $\odot$ denote the law of composition for group G and $\oslash$ denote the law for G', let $f = \phi^{-1}$, and let $x, y \in G'$. f is clearly well-defined, and we see

$$\phi(f(x) \odot f(y)) = \phi(f(x)) \oslash \phi(f(y)) = x \oslash y = \phi(f(x \oslash y)).$$

Since ϕ is injective, this implies $f(x) \odot f(y) = f(x \oslash y)$, so f is a homomorphism. Injectivity and surjectivity can be easily verified. Hence, f is an isomorphism. ■

2.1.10 Theorem (*Fundamental theorem on homomorphisms*)**.** Let $\phi : G \to G'$ be a homomorphism. Then, the mapping

$$\begin{aligned} \psi : \quad G/\ker(\phi) &\to \operatorname{im}(\phi) \\ g\ker(\phi) &\mapsto \phi(g) \end{aligned}$$

is an isomorphism.

Proof. We have four criteria for ψ to be an isomorphism:

(1) Let g, h be such that $g\ker(\phi) = h\ker(\phi)$. Then, $h^{-1}g \in \ker(\phi)$, so

$$\begin{aligned} \phi(h^{-1}g) &= e_{G'} \\ (\phi(h))^{-1}\phi(g) &= e_{G'} \\ \phi(g) &= \phi(h). \end{aligned}$$

Thus, ψ is well-defined.

(2) Let $g\ker(\phi), h\ker(\phi) \in G/\ker(\phi)$. Then,

$$\begin{aligned} \psi(g\ker(\phi)\, h\ker(\phi)) &= \psi((gh)\ker(\phi)) = \phi(gh) = \phi(g)\,\phi(h) \\ &= \psi(g\ker(\phi))\,\psi(h\ker(\phi)), \end{aligned}$$

so ψ is a homomorphism.

(3) Let $g\ker(\phi) \in \ker(\psi)$. Then, $\psi(g\ker(\phi)) = e_{G'}$, so $g \in \ker(\phi)$, which implies $g\ker(\phi) = \ker(\phi)$. Thus, by Theorem 2.1.7, ψ is injective.

(4) ψ is surjective by construction since it maps to $\operatorname{im}(\phi)$.

Hence, ψ is an isomorphism. ■

This theorem is also known as the first isomorphism theorem.

2.2 Permutation groups

2.2.1 Proposition. Let X be a set, and let $\mathcal{S}(X)$ be the set of all bijections from X to X. Then, $(\mathcal{S}(X), \circ)$, where $\circ$ is composition of mappings, is a group.

Proof. ■ Do this proof!

2.2.2 Definition. Take $\mathcal{S}(X)$ as defined in Proposition 2.2.1 for some set X. A subgroup of $\mathcal{S}(X)$ is called a permutation group. Any mapping in such a group is called a permutation.

The neutral element of a permutation group is naturally the identity mapping, which we will denote id.

2.2.3 Definition. Let $A = \{1, 2, \ldots, n\}$ for some $n \in \mathbb{N}$. Then, $\mathcal{S}_n = \mathcal{S}(A)$ is called the symmetric group on n elements.

Note that for any $n \in \mathbb{N}$, we have $|\mathcal{S}_n| = n!$. This may be familiar if you recall the notion of a permutation of a set as a rearrangement of its elements. Consider the following permutation $\sigma \in \mathcal{S}_5$:

$$\begin{aligned} 1 &\mapsto 3 \\ 2 &\mapsto 2 \\ 3 &\mapsto 5 \\ 4 &\mapsto 4 \\ 5 &\mapsto 1. \end{aligned}$$

We will represent it with the notation

$$\sigma = \begin{pmatrix} 1 & 2 & 3 & 4 & 5 \\ 3 & 2 & 5 & 4 & 1 \end{pmatrix}.$$

2.2.4 Definition. Let $\sigma = \mathcal{S}_n$. The set

$$\operatorname{supp}(\sigma) = \{i \in \{1, 2, \ldots, n\} \mid \sigma(i) \neq i\}$$

is called the support of σ.

2.2.5 Proposition. Let $\sigma, \tau \in \mathcal{S}_n$. If $\operatorname{supp}(\sigma) \cap \operatorname{supp}(\tau) = \varnothing$, then $\sigma \circ \tau = \tau \circ \sigma$.

Proof. Let $i \in \{1, 2, \ldots, n\}$. We have three cases:

(1) Suppose $i \notin \operatorname{supp}(\sigma) \cup \operatorname{supp}(\tau)$. Then, $\sigma(i) = \tau(i) = i$, so

$$(\sigma \circ \tau)(i) = \sigma(\tau(i)) = \sigma(i) = i = \tau(i) = \tau(\sigma(i)) = (\tau \circ \sigma)(i).$$

(2) Suppose $i \in \operatorname{supp}(\sigma)$. Then, $i \notin \operatorname{supp}(\tau)$, so

$$(\sigma \circ \tau)(i) = \sigma(\tau(i)) = \sigma(i),$$

and since $i \in \operatorname{supp}(\sigma)$, we have $\sigma(i) \in \operatorname{supp}(\sigma)$, so $\sigma(i) \notin \operatorname{supp}(\tau)$. Thus,

$$(\tau \circ \sigma)(i) = \tau(\sigma(i)) = \sigma(i) = (\sigma \circ \tau)(i).$$

(3) If $i \in \operatorname{supp}(\tau)$, the proof can be done in the same way as in the above case.

Hence, $\sigma \circ \tau = \tau \circ \sigma$. ∎

2.2.6 Theorem (*Cayley's theorem*)**.** Every group is isomorphic to a permutation group.

Do this proof!

Proof. ∎

Cycles

2.2.7 Definition. An element $\sigma \in \mathcal{S}_n$ is called a cycle if there exists some $x \in \{1, 2, \dots, n\}$ such that $\operatorname{supp}(\sigma) = \{\sigma^i(x) \mid i \in \mathbb{N}\}$. Let $l = |\operatorname{supp}(\sigma)|$. We denote the cycle

$$\big(x, \sigma(x), \dots, \sigma^{l-1}(x)\big)$$

where l is called its length. A cycle of length 2 is called a transposition.

2.2.8 Proposition. Let σ be a cycle of length l. Then, $\operatorname{ord}(\sigma) = l$.

This follows by construction.

2.2.9 Proposition. Let $\sigma \in \mathcal{S}_n$, and let $A = \{1, 2, \dots, n\}$. Then, the relation $\sim$ on A defined such that for all $a, b \in A$,

$$a \sim b \iff \text{there exists some } k \in \mathbb{Z} \text{ such that } b = \sigma^k(a)$$

is an equivalence relation.

Proof. We have three criteria for an equivalence relation:

(1) Since $a = \sigma^0(a)$, we have $a \sim a$ (reflexive).

(2) Suppose $a \sim b$. Then, $b = \sigma^k(a)$ for some $k \in \mathbb{Z}$, so $a = \sigma^{-k}(b)$. Thus, $b \sim a$ (symmetric).

(3) Let $c \in A$. Suppose $a \sim b$ and $b \sim c$. Then, $b = \sigma^k(a)$ and $c = \sigma^m(b)$ for some $k, m \in \mathbb{Z}$, so $c = \sigma^m(\sigma^k(a)) = \sigma^{m+k}(a)$. Thus, $a \sim c$ (transitive). ∎

2.2.10 Corollary (*Alternative definition of a cycle*)**.** Take $\sim$ as defined in Proposition 2.2.9 for some $\sigma \in \mathcal{S}_n$. Then, σ is a cycle if and only if $\sim$ has at most one equivalence class containing more than one element.

2.2.11 Theorem. Let $\sigma \in \mathcal{S}_n$. Then, there exist some unique cycles $\tau_1, \tau_2, \dots, \tau_k$ with disjoint supports such that $\sigma = \tau_1 \circ \tau_2 \circ \cdots \circ \tau_k$. In other words, every permutation of a finite set can be decomposed as the product of unique cycles with disjoint supports.

Proof. Let $A_1, A_2, \dots, A_k$ be the equivalence classes of $\sim$, and let $\tau_1, \tau_2, \dots, \tau_k$ be the cycles defined by these equivalence classes, respectively. We see $\sigma = \tau_1 \circ \tau_2 \circ \cdots \circ \tau_k$, and since $A_1, A_2, \dots, A_k$ are necessarily disjoint, $\tau_1, \tau_2, \dots, \tau_k$ have disjoint supports. ∎

2.2.12 Definition. Let $\sigma \in \mathcal{S}_n$ with decomposition $\sigma = \tau_1 \circ \tau_2 \circ \cdots \circ \tau_k$ as given by Theorem 2.2.11. Let $l_1, l_2, \dots, l_k$ denote the lengths of $\tau_1, \tau_2, \dots, \tau_k$, respectively, where $l_1 \geq l_2 \geq \cdots \geq l_k$. The sequence $(l_1, l_2, \dots, l_k)$ is called the type of σ.

2.2.13 Proposition. Let $\sigma \in \mathcal{S}_n$ with type $(l_1, l_2, \dots, l_k)$. Then,

$$\operatorname{ord}(\sigma) = \operatorname{lcm}\{l_1, l_2, \dots, l_k\}.$$

Proof. We can decompose σ into cycles as $\sigma = \tau_1 \circ \tau_2 \circ \cdots \circ \tau_k$ where $\tau_1, \tau_2, \ldots, \tau_k$ have length $l_1, l_2, \ldots, l_k$, respectively. Since the τ_is have disjoint supports, they commute, so for every $m \in \mathbb{N}$, we have

$$\sigma^m = \tau_1^m \circ \tau_2^m \circ \cdots \circ \tau_k^m.$$

Since $\operatorname{ord}(\tau_i) = l_i$ for $1 \leq i \leq k$, we see that if $\sigma^m = \mathrm{id}$, then m is a multiple of each of the l_is. Hence, by definition, $\operatorname{ord}(\sigma)$ is the lowest such m. ■

Alternating groups

The dihedral group

2.3 Finitely generated abelian groups

2.4 Group action on a set