

Discrete Math Counting Introduction

Victor Bankston

Tulane University

March 24, 2025

Motivation

- Many natural questions start with ‘how many...’

Motivation

- Many natural questions start with ‘how many...’
 - How many times do I need to walk back to the car to bring the groceries in?

Motivation

- Many natural questions start with ‘how many...’
 - How many times do I need to walk back to the car to bring the groceries in?
 - How many ways are there to lace your shoes?

Motivation

- Many natural questions start with 'how many...'
 - How many times do I need to walk back to the car to bring the groceries in?
 - How many ways are there to lace your shoes?
 - How many chess positions are there?

Motivation

- Many natural questions start with 'how many...'
 - How many times do I need to walk back to the car to bring the groceries in?
 - How many ways are there to lace your shoes?
 - How many chess positions are there?
- If understand a thing, you can count that thing: counting tests understanding.

Motivation

- Many natural questions start with 'how many...'
 - How many times do I need to walk back to the car to bring the groceries in?
 - How many ways are there to lace your shoes?
 - How many chess positions are there?
- If understand a thing, you can count that thing: counting tests understanding.
 - How many edges are on a cube? (12)

Motivation

- Many natural questions start with 'how many...'
 - How many times do I need to walk back to the car to bring the groceries in?
 - How many ways are there to lace your shoes?
 - How many chess positions are there?
- If understand a thing, you can count that thing: counting tests understanding.
 - How many edges are on a cube? (12)
 - How many prime numbers are there (∞)?

Motivation

- Many natural questions start with ‘how many...’
 - How many times do I need to walk back to the car to bring the groceries in?
 - How many ways are there to lace your shoes?
 - How many chess positions are there?
- If understand a thing, you can count that thing: counting tests understanding.
 - How many edges are on a cube? (12)
 - How many prime numbers are there (∞)?
 - How many pairs of twin primes (numbers p and $p + 2$ that are both prime) are there? (unknown)

Counting divisors: a first example

- How many divisors of 46 are there?

Counting divisors: a first example

- How many divisors of 46 are there?
- i.e. Find $|\{k \in \mathbb{N} : k|46\}|$.

Counting divisors: a first example

- How many divisors of 46 are there?
- i.e. Find $|\{k \in \mathbb{N} : k|46\}|$.
- Solution: Use the prime factorization $46 = 2^1 \times 23^1$.

Counting divisors: a first example

- How many divisors of 46 are there?
- i.e. Find $|\{k \in \mathbb{N} : k|46\}|$.
- Solution: Use the prime factorization $46 = 2^1 \times 23^1$.
- The factors of 46 come from reducing the exponents in the prime factorization of 46.

Counting divisors: a first example

- How many divisors of 46 are there?
- i.e. Find $|\{k \in \mathbb{N} : k|46\}|$.
- Solution: Use the prime factorization $46 = 2^1 \times 23^1$.
- The factors of 46 come from reducing the exponents in the prime factorization of 46.
- They are of the form $2^{n'_1} \times 23^{n'_2}$, where $0 \leq n_1 \leq 1$ and $0 \leq n_2 \leq 1$.

Counting divisors: a first example

- How many divisors of 46 are there?
- i.e. Find $|\{k \in \mathbb{N} : k|46\}|$.
- Solution: Use the prime factorization $46 = 2^1 \times 23^1$.
- The factors of 46 come from reducing the exponents in the prime factorization of 46.
- They are of the form $2^{n'_1} \times 23^{n'_2}$, where $0 \leq n_1 \leq 1$ and $0 \leq n_2 \leq 1$.
- These factors are

Counting divisors: a first example

- How many divisors of 46 are there?
- i.e. Find $|\{k \in \mathbb{N} : k|46\}|$.
- Solution: Use the prime factorization $46 = 2^1 \times 23^1$.
- The factors of 46 come from reducing the exponents in the prime factorization of 46.
- They are of the form $2^{n_1'} \times 23^{n_2'}$, where $0 \leq n_1 \leq 1$ and $0 \leq n_2 \leq 1$.
- These factors are
 - $2^1 \times 23^1 = 46$

Counting divisors: a first example

- How many divisors of 46 are there?
- i.e. Find $|\{k \in \mathbb{N} : k|46\}|$.
- Solution: Use the prime factorization $46 = 2^1 \times 23^1$.
- The factors of 46 come from reducing the exponents in the prime factorization of 46.
- They are of the form $2^{n_1'} \times 23^{n_2'}$, where $0 \leq n_1 \leq 1$ and $0 \leq n_2 \leq 1$.
- These factors are
 - $2^1 \times 23^1 = 46$
 - $2^0 \times 23^1 = 23$

Counting divisors: a first example

- How many divisors of 46 are there?
- i.e. Find $|\{k \in \mathbb{N} : k|46\}|$.
- Solution: Use the prime factorization $46 = 2^1 \times 23^1$.
- The factors of 46 come from reducing the exponents in the prime factorization of 46.
- They are of the form $2^{n_1'} \times 23^{n_2'}$, where $0 \leq n_1 \leq 1$ and $0 \leq n_2 \leq 1$.
- These factors are
 - $2^1 \times 23^1 = 46$
 - $2^0 \times 23^1 = 23$
 - $2^1 \times 23^0 = 2$

Counting divisors: a first example

- How many divisors of 46 are there?
- i.e. Find $|\{k \in \mathbb{N} : k|46\}|$.
- Solution: Use the prime factorization $46 = 2^1 \times 23^1$.
- The factors of 46 come from reducing the exponents in the prime factorization of 46.
- They are of the form $2^{n_1'} \times 23^{n_2'}$, where $0 \leq n_1 \leq 1$ and $0 \leq n_2 \leq 1$.
- These factors are
 - $2^1 \times 23^1 = 46$
 - $2^0 \times 23^1 = 23$
 - $2^1 \times 23^0 = 2$
 - $2^0 \times 23^0 = 1$

Counting divisors: a first example

- How many divisors of 46 are there?
- i.e. Find $|\{k \in \mathbb{N} : k|46\}|$.
- Solution: Use the prime factorization $46 = 2^1 \times 23^1$.
- The factors of 46 come from reducing the exponents in the prime factorization of 46.
- They are of the form $2^{n_1'} \times 23^{n_2'}$, where $0 \leq n_1 \leq 1$ and $0 \leq n_2 \leq 1$.
- These factors are
 - $2^1 \times 23^1 = 46$
 - $2^0 \times 23^1 = 23$
 - $2^1 \times 23^0 = 2$
 - $2^0 \times 23^0 = 1$
- There are 4 factors of 46.

Generalizing

- Given $N \in \mathbb{N}$, how many divisors does N have?

Generalizing

- Given $N \in \mathbb{N}$, how many divisors does N have?
- Assume $N = p_1^{n_1} p_2^{n_2} \dots p_k^{n_k}$ is the prime factorization of N .

Generalizing

- Given $N \in \mathbb{N}$, how many divisors does N have?
- Assume $N = p_1^{n_1} p_2^{n_2} \dots p_k^{n_k}$ is the prime factorization of N .
- Solution: $(n_1 + 1)(n_2 + 1) \dots (n_k + 1)$.

Generalizing

- Given $N \in \mathbb{N}$, how many divisors does N have?
- Assume $N = p_1^{n_1} p_2^{n_2} \dots p_k^{n_k}$ is the prime factorization of N .
- Solution: $(n_1 + 1)(n_2 + 1) \dots (n_k + 1)$.
- Notice: we need to include $+1$ in each factor because of the possibility of reducing the exponent n_i to a number in $\{0, 1, \dots, n_i\}$.

Generalizing

- Given $N \in \mathbb{N}$, how many divisors does N have?
- Assume $N = p_1^{n_1} p_2^{n_2} \dots p_k^{n_k}$ is the prime factorization of N .
- Solution: $(n_1 + 1)(n_2 + 1) \dots (n_k + 1)$.
- Notice: we need to include $+1$ in each factor because of the possibility of reducing the exponent n_i to a number in $\{0, 1, \dots, n_i\}$.
 - The mistake of using n_i instead of $n_i + 1$ is an “off by one” error. Watch out.

Generalizing

- Given $N \in \mathbb{N}$, how many divisors does N have?
- Assume $N = p_1^{n_1} p_2^{n_2} \dots p_k^{n_k}$ is the prime factorization of N .
- Solution: $(n_1 + 1)(n_2 + 1) \dots (n_k + 1)$.
- Notice: we need to include $+1$ in each factor because of the possibility of reducing the exponent n_i to a number in $\{0, 1, \dots, n_i\}$.
 - The mistake of using n_i instead of $n_i + 1$ is an “off by one” error. Watch out.
- In this solution, why did we multiply the number of choices for each n'_i ?

Product Rule

- Suppose a task involves 2 steps: We do step 1, **then** we do step 2.

Product Rule

- Suppose a task involves 2 steps: We do step 1, **then** we do step 2.
- The Product rule says that the number of ways to complete the task is $\#WaysToDoStep1 \times \#WaysToDoStep2$.

Product Rule

- Suppose a task involves 2 steps: We do step 1, **then** we do step 2.
- The Product rule says that the number of ways to complete the task is $\#WaysToDoStep1 \times \#WaysToDoStep2$.
- Identifying a factor of 46 involves 2 steps: First choose $n'_1 \in \{0, 1\}$, then choose $n'_2 \in \{0, 1\}$.

Product Rule

- Suppose a task involves 2 steps: We do step 1, **then** we do step 2.
- The Product rule says that the number of ways to complete the task is $\#WaysToDoStep1 \times \#WaysToDoStep2$.
- Identifying a factor of 46 involves 2 steps: First choose $n'_1 \in \{0, 1\}$, then choose $n'_2 \in \{0, 1\}$.
- The product rule justifies multiplying $2 \times 2 = 4$ to count the factors of 46.

Product Rule

- Suppose a task involves 2 steps: We do step 1, **then** we do step 2.
- The Product rule says that the number of ways to complete the task is $\#WaysToDoStep1 \times \#WaysToDoStep2$.
- Identifying a factor of 46 involves 2 steps: First choose $n'_1 \in \{0, 1\}$, then choose $n'_2 \in \{0, 1\}$.
- The product rule justifies multiplying $2 \times 2 = 4$ to count the factors of 46.
- Mathematically, the product rule states that $|A \times B| = |A||B|$.

Sum Rule

- Suppose a task involves 2 steps: We do step 1 **or** we do step 2 (but not both).

Sum Rule

- Suppose a task involves 2 steps: We do step 1 **or** we do step 2 (but not both).
- The Sum rule says that the number of ways to complete the task is $\#WaysToDoStep1 + \#WaysToDoStep2$.

Sum Rule

- Suppose a task involves 2 steps: We do step 1 **or** we do step 2 (but not both).
- The Sum rule says that the number of ways to complete the task is $\#WaysToDoStep1 + \#WaysToDoStep2$.
- Example: I have a king and rook on a chessboard. In some position, the king can go to 8 squares and the rook can go to 14 squares. How many moves can I make?

Sum Rule

- Suppose a task involves 2 steps: We do step 1 **or** we do step 2 (but not both).
- The Sum rule says that the number of ways to complete the task is $\#WaysToDoStep1 + \#WaysToDoStep2$.
- Example: I have a king and rook on a chessboard. In some position, the king can go to 8 squares and the rook can go to 14 squares. How many moves can I make?
- The total number of moves is $8 + 14 = 22$.

Counting and bijections

- Recall: Bijections are invertible functions.

Counting and bijections

- Recall: Bijections are invertible functions.
- They determine a matching between the domain and codomain.

Counting and bijections

- Recall: Bijections are invertible functions.
- They determine a matching between the domain and codomain.
- When both the domain and codomain are finite, a bijection demonstrates that they have the same size

Counting and bijections

- Recall: Bijections are invertible functions.
- They determine a matching between the domain and codomain.
- When both the domain and codomain are finite, a bijection demonstrates that they have the same size
- Example $A = \{1, 2, 3, \dots, 10\}$ is in bijection with $B = \{10, 20, \dots, 100\}$ under $x \leftrightarrow 10x$.

Counting and bijections

- Recall: Bijections are invertible functions.
- They determine a matching between the domain and codomain.
- When both the domain and codomain are finite, a bijection demonstrates that they have the same size
- Example $A = \{1, 2, 3, \dots, 10\}$ is in bijection with $B = \{10, 20, \dots, 100\}$ under $x \leftrightarrow 10x$.
- This means that A and B have the same size.

Counting and bijections

- Recall: Bijections are invertible functions.
- They determine a matching between the domain and codomain.
- When both the domain and codomain are finite, a bijection demonstrates that they have the same size
- Example $A = \{1, 2, 3, \dots, 10\}$ is in bijection with $B = \{10, 20, \dots, 100\}$ under $x \leftrightarrow 10x$.
- This means that A and B have the same size.
- When we count “one two three...” we are establishing a bijection with $\{1, 2, 3, \dots\}$.

Counting the infinite

- Mathematicians generalize the notion of the size to cardinality.

Counting the infinite

- Mathematicians generalize the notion of the size to cardinality.
- Specifically, two sets have the same cardinality if there is a bijection between them.

Counting the infinite

- Mathematicians generalize the notion of the size to cardinality.
- Specifically, two sets have the same cardinality if there is a bijection between them.
- The difficult Cantor-Bernstein theorem states that cardinalities are ordered.

Counting the infinite

- Mathematicians generalize the notion of the size to cardinality.
- Specifically, two sets have the same cardinality if there is a bijection between them.
- The difficult Cantor-Bernstein theorem states that cardinalities are ordered.
- Ex: $|\mathbb{Z}| = |\mathbb{Q}|$, but $|\mathbb{R}| > |\mathbb{Z}|$.

Counting the infinite

- Mathematicians generalize the notion of the size to cardinality.
- Specifically, two sets have the same cardinality if there is a bijection between them.
- The difficult Cantor-Bernstein theorem states that cardinalities are ordered.
- Ex: $|\mathbb{Z}| = |\mathbb{Q}|$, but $|\mathbb{R}| > |\mathbb{Z}|$.
- An elaborate theory justifies the slogan “Some infinities are bigger than others.”

Counting the infinite

- Mathematicians generalize the notion of the size to cardinality.
- Specifically, two sets have the same cardinality if there is a bijection between them.
- The difficult Cantor-Bernstein theorem states that cardinalities are ordered.
- Ex: $|\mathbb{Z}| = |\mathbb{Q}|$, but $|\mathbb{R}| > |\mathbb{Z}|$.
- An elaborate theory justifies the slogan “Some infinities are bigger than others.”
- In Discrete math, we should stick to the finite, or at least countably finite sets.

Handshakes

- How many handshakes occur if 10 people meet for the first time?

Handshakes

- How many handshakes occur if 10 people meet for the first time?
- To specify a handshake, choose a person A . Then choose a person $B \neq A$ for A to shake hands with.

Handshakes

- How many handshakes occur if 10 people meet for the first time?
- To specify a handshake, choose a person A . Then choose a person $B \neq A$ for A to shake hands with.
- This counts each handshake twice, once between A and B and again between B and A , so we divide by 2.

Handshakes

- How many handshakes occur if 10 people meet for the first time?
- To specify a handshake, choose a person A . Then choose a person $B \neq A$ for A to shake hands with.
- This counts each handshake twice, once between A and B and again between B and A , so we divide by 2.
- There are $\frac{10 \times 9}{2}$ handshakes.

Combinations/Binomial coefficients

- We also write this as $\frac{10 \times 9}{2} = \binom{10}{2}$.

Combinations/Binomial coefficients

- We also write this as $\frac{10 \times 9}{2} = \binom{10}{2}$.
- $\binom{10}{2}$ is the number of pairs of people, where the order of the pair does not matter.

Combinations/Binomial coefficients

- We also write this as $\frac{10 \times 9}{2} = \binom{10}{2}$.
- $\binom{10}{2}$ is the number of pairs of people, where the order of the pair does not matter.
- A dual way to think about “order does not matter” is that we count according to a fixed order.

Combinations/Binomial coefficients

- We also write this as $\frac{10 \times 9}{2} = \binom{10}{2}$.
- $\binom{10}{2}$ is the number of pairs of people, where the order of the pair does not matter.
- A dual way to think about “order does not matter” is that we count according to a fixed order.
- For example, we can always think of the taller person as shaking the shorter person’s hand.

Combinations/Binomial coefficients

- We also write this as $\frac{10 \times 9}{2} = \binom{10}{2}$.
- $\binom{10}{2}$ is the number of pairs of people, where the order of the pair does not matter.
- A dual way to think about “order does not matter” is that we count according to a fixed order.
- For example, we can always think of the taller person as shaking the shorter person’s hand.
- The distinction between counting with order and without order is a common source of mistakes.

Combinations/Binomial coefficients

- We also write this as $\frac{10 \times 9}{2} = \binom{10}{2}$.
- $\binom{10}{2}$ is the number of pairs of people, where the order of the pair does not matter.
- A dual way to think about “order does not matter” is that we count according to a fixed order.
- For example, we can always think of the taller person as shaking the shorter person’s hand.
- The distinction between counting with order and without order is a common source of mistakes.
- It can be tricky to write unambiguous questions so that it is clear exactly what is being counted.

Combinations/Binomial coefficients

- We also write this as $\frac{10 \times 9}{2} = \binom{10}{2}$.
- $\binom{10}{2}$ is the number of pairs of people, where the order of the pair does not matter.
- A dual way to think about “order does not matter” is that we count according to a fixed order.
- For example, we can always think of the taller person as shaking the shorter person’s hand.
- The distinction between counting with order and without order is a common source of mistakes.
- It can be tricky to write unambiguous questions so that it is clear exactly what is being counted.
- Example: How many ways can 10 people sit if there are 11 chairs? (Just 1: everybody sits down in a chair.)