

# Lie Algebras

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## 1 Lecture 1

The material for this class will roughly come from Humphrey, Chapters 1 to 5.

Here is a short overview of the topics we expect to cover:

- Ideals, solvability, and nilpotency
- Semisimple Lie algebras
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## 2 Lecture 2

Recall from last time that a Lie Algebra is a vector space with a bilinear bracket, which importantly satisfies the Jacobi identity:

$$[x, [y, z]] + [y, [x, z]] + [z, [x, y]] = \mathbf{0}.$$

Also recall the examples from last time:

- $A_\ell \iff \mathfrak{sl}(\ell + 1, F)$
- $B_\ell \iff \mathfrak{so}(2\ell + 1, F)$
- $C_\ell \iff \mathfrak{sp}(2\ell, F)$
- $D_\ell \iff \mathfrak{so}(2\ell, F)$

**Exercise 1.** Characterize these matrix subalgebras in terms of basis elements, and compute their dimensions.

## 2.1 Lie Algebras of Derivations

**Definition 1.** An  $F$ -algebra  $A$  is an  $F$ -vector space endowed with a bilinear map  $A^2 \rightarrow A$ ,  $(x, y) \mapsto xy$ .

**Definition 2.** An algebra is **associative** if  $x(yz) = (xy)z$ .

Modern interest: simple Lie algebras, which have a good representation theory. Take a look at Erdmann-Wildon (Springer) for an introductory look at 3-dimensional algebras.

**Definition 3.** Any map  $\delta : A^2 \rightarrow A$  that satisfies the Leibniz rule is called a **derivation** of  $A$ , where the rule is given by  $\delta(xy) = \delta(x)y + x\delta(y)$ .

**Definition 4.** We define  $\text{Der}(A) = \{\delta \mid \delta \text{ is a derivation}\}$ .

Any Lie algebra  $\mathfrak{g}$  is an  $F$ -algebra, since  $[\cdot, \cdot]$  is bilinear. Moreover,  $\mathfrak{g}$  is associative iff  $[x, [y, z]] = 0$ .

**Exercise 2.** Show that  $\text{Der } \mathfrak{g} \leq \mathfrak{gl}(\mathfrak{g})$  is a Lie subalgebra. One needs to check that  $\delta_1, \delta_2 \in \mathfrak{g} \implies [\delta_1, \delta_2] \in \mathfrak{g}$ .

**Exercise 3** (Turn in). Define the adjoint by  $\text{ad}_x : \mathfrak{g} \rightarrow \mathfrak{g}, y \mapsto [x, y]$ . Show that  $\text{ad}_x \in \text{Der}(\mathfrak{g})$ .

## 2.2 Abstract Lie Algebras

Fact: Every finite-dimensional Lie algebra is isomorphic to a linear Lie algebra, i.e. a subalgebra of  $\mathfrak{gl}(V)$ . Each isomorphism type can be specified by certain *structure constants* for the Lie bracket.

**Example 1.** Any  $F$ -vector space can be made into a Lie algebra by setting  $[x, y] = 0$ ; such algebras are referred to as *abelian*.

Attempting to classify Lie algebras of dimension at most 2.

- 1 dimensional: We can write  $\mathfrak{g} = Fx$ , and so  $[x, x] = 0 \implies [\cdot, \cdot] = 0$ . So every bracket must be zero, and thus every Lie algebra is abelian.
- 2 dimensional: Write  $\mathfrak{g} = Fx \oplus Fy$ , the only nontrivial bracket here is  $[x, y]$ . Some cases:
  - $[x, y] = 0 \implies \mathfrak{g}$  is abelian.
  - $[x, y] = ax + by \neq 0$ . Assume  $a \neq 0$  and set  $x' = ax + by, y' = \frac{y}{a}$ . Now compute  $[x', y'] = [ax + by, \frac{y}{a}] = [x, y] = ax + by = x'$ . Punchline:  $\mathfrak{g} \cong Fx' \oplus Fy', [x', y'] = x'$ .

We can fill in a table with all of the various combinations of brackets:

$[\cdot, \cdot]$	$x'$	$y'$
$x'$	0	$x'$
$y'$	$-x'$	0

**Example 2.** Let  $V = \mathbb{R}^3$ , and define  $[a, b] = a \times b$  to be the usual cross product.

**Exercise 4.** Look at notes for basis elements of  $\mathfrak{sl}(2, F)$ ,

$$e = \begin{bmatrix} 0 & 1 \\ 0 & 0 \end{bmatrix}, \quad h = \begin{bmatrix} 1 & 0 \\ 0 & -1 \end{bmatrix}, \quad f = \begin{bmatrix} 0 & 0 \\ 1 & 0 \end{bmatrix}$$

Compute the matrices of  $\text{ad}(e), \text{ad}(h), \text{ad}(f)$  with respect to this basis.

## 2.3 Ideals

**Definition 5.** A subspace  $I \subseteq \mathfrak{g}$  is called an **ideal**, and we write  $I \trianglelefteq \mathfrak{g}$ , if  $x, y \in I \implies [x, y] \in I$ .

Note that there is no need to distinguish right, left, or two-sided ideals. This can be shown using  $[x, y] = [-y, x]$ .

**Exercise 5.** Check that the following are all ideals of  $\mathfrak{g}$ :

- $\{0\}, \mathfrak{g}$ .
- $\mathfrak{z}(\mathfrak{g}) = \{z \in \mathfrak{g} \mid [x, z] = 0 \quad \forall x \in \mathfrak{g}\}$
- The commutator (or derived) algebra  $[\mathfrak{g}, \mathfrak{g}] = \{\sum_i [x_i, y_i] \mid x_i, y_i \in \mathfrak{g}\}$ .  
– Moreover,  $[\mathfrak{gl}(n, F), \mathfrak{gl}(n, F)] = \mathfrak{sl}(n, F)$ .

Fact: If  $I, J \trianglelefteq \mathfrak{g}$ , then

- $I + J = \{x + y \mid x \in I, y \in J\} \trianglelefteq \mathfrak{g}$
- $I \cap J \trianglelefteq \mathfrak{g}$
- $[I, J] = \{\sum_i [x_i, y_i] \mid x_i \in I, y_i \in J\} \trianglelefteq \mathfrak{g}$

**Definition 6.** A Lie algebra is **simple** if  $[\mathfrak{g}, \mathfrak{g}] \neq 0$  (i.e. when  $\mathfrak{g}$  is not abelian) and has no non-trivial ideals. Note that this implies that  $[\mathfrak{g}, \mathfrak{g}] = \mathfrak{g}$ .

**Theorem 1.** Suppose that  $\text{char } F \neq 2$ , then  $\mathfrak{sl}(2, F)$  is not simple.

*Proof.* Recall that we have a basis of  $\mathfrak{sl}(2, F)$  given by  $B = \{e, h, f\}$  where

- $[e, f] = h,$
- $[h, e] = 2e,$
- $[h, f] = -2f.$

So think of  $[h, e] = \text{ad}_h$ , so  $h$  is an eigenvector of this map with eigenvalues  $\{0, \pm 2\}$ . Since  $\text{char } F \neq 2$ , these are all distinct. Suppose  $\mathfrak{sl}(2, F)$  has a nontrivial ideal  $I$ ; then pick  $x = ae + bh + cf \in I$ . Then  $[e, x] = 0 - 2be + ch$ , and  $[e, [e, x]] = 0 - 0 + 2ce$ . Again since  $\text{char } F \neq 2$ , then if  $c \neq 0$  then  $e \in I$ . Now you can show that  $h \in I$  and  $f \in I$ , but then  $I = \mathfrak{sl}(2, F)$ , a contradiction. So  $c = 0$ .

Then  $x = bh \neq 0$ , so  $h \in I$ , and we can compute

$$\begin{aligned} 2e &= [h, e] \in I \implies e \in I, \\ 2f &= [h, -f] \in I \implies f \in I. \end{aligned}$$

which implies that  $I = \mathfrak{sl}(2, F)$  and thus it is simple. □

Note that there is a homework coming due next Monday, about 4 questions.