INDUCTION

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Contents

1. Induction

Roughly speaking, natural numbers $\mathbb{N}$ are the "minimal" data type equipped with a successor function $s : \mathbb{N} \to \mathbb{N}$. We can define $\mathbb{N}$ inductively:

(i) 0 is a natural number;
(ii) if n is a natural number, then $s(n)$ is also a natural number.

```
data ℕ : Set where
  zero : ℕ
  suc : ℕ → ℕ
```

We may want to prove that every natural number has some property P. For example, we may want to prove that for any natural number n, $2 \mid n(n+1)$. If we proceed directly, we may write down "let n be a natural number, we need to prove $2 \mid n(n+1)$." Sadly, we are stuck because we don't know what n is.

The good news is we know that every natural number is either 0 or the successor of some other natural number, i.e., $s(m)$. If we can somehow show the followings:

$$P(0) \qquad\qquad \forall k.\,(P(k) \Rightarrow P(s(k)))$$

then we can reason as follows: let n be any natural number, we want to show $P(n)$. We can do a case analysis on n. If n is 0, then we need to show $P(0)$, which we have shown already. If n is $s(m)$ instead, then we need to show $P(s(m))$. Since we know $\forall k.\,(P(k) \Rightarrow P(s(k)))$, it suffices to show $P(m)$. To show $P(m)$, we repeat the previous argument, i.e., we do a case analysis on m and so on.

This is similar to writing a recursive function with a base case in programming. In fact, we can implement this in programming languages such as Agda.

```
induction : {P : ℕ → Set} →
            P 0 →
            (∀ k → P k → P (suc k)) →
            ∀ n → P n
induction b f zero = b
induction b f (suc x) = f x (induction b f x)
```

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In summary, the principle of induction says that to prove that $\forall n.\, P(n)$, it suffices to prove two things:

(i) Base case: $P(0)$, and
(ii) Induction step: $\forall k.\, (P(k) \Rightarrow P(s(k)))$.

To prove the induction step, we introduce a natural number k and assume $P(k)$ (the induction hypothesis), and derive $P(s(k))$.

2. Examples

Proposition 2.1. *For all $n \in \mathbb{N}$, $2 \mid n(n+1)$.*

Proof. $P(n)$ is $2 \mid n(n+1)$. By induction on n, it suffices to prove

(i) Base case: $P(0)$, i.e., $2 \mid 0(0+1)$.
(ii) Induction step: $\forall k.\, (P(k) \Rightarrow P(k+1))$, i.e.,

$$\forall k.\, (2 \mid k(k+1) \Rightarrow 2 \mid (k+1)((k+1)+1))$$

(Base case): Clearly, 2 divides 0.

(Induction step): Let k be a natural number. Assume $2 \mid k(k+1)$. We need to show that $2 \mid (k+1)((k+1)+1)$, or equivalently, $2 \mid (k(k+1)+2k+2)$. By the induction hypothesis, 2 divides $k(k+1)$, and clearly, 2 also divides $2k+2$. □

Proposition 2.2. *For all $n \in \mathbb{N}$, $2^0 + 2^1 + \cdots + 2^n = 2^{n+1} - 1$, i.e.,*

$$\sum_{i=0}^{n} 2^i = 2^{n+1} - 1$$

Proof. $P(n)$ is $2^0 + 2^1 + \cdots + 2^n = 2^{n+1} - 1$. By induction on n, it suffices to prove

(i) Base case: $P(0)$, i.e., $2^0 = 2^{0+1} - 1$.
(ii) Induction step: $\forall k.\, (P(k) \Rightarrow P(k+1))$, i.e.,

$$\forall k.\, \left(\sum_{i=0}^{n} 2^i = 2^{n+1} - 1 \Rightarrow \sum_{i=0}^{n+1} 2^i = 2^{(n+1)+1} - 1\right)$$

(Base case): It follows immediately by computation.

(Induction case): Let k be a natural number. Assume that

$$\sum_{i=0}^{n} 2^i = 2^{n+1} - 1$$

We need to prove

$$\sum_{i=0}^{n+1} 2^i = 2^{(n+1)+1} - 1$$

Using the induction hypothesis, the left hand side can be rewritten as follows:

$$\left(\sum_{i=0}^{n} 2^i\right) + 2^{n+1} = 2^{n+1} - 1 + 2^{n+1} = 2^{n+2} - 1$$

□

So far, the choice of P is straightforward. Let's see an example where the choice of P is not so straightforward, but let's see what happens if we choose the naïve P.

Proposition 2.3. *Consider a function $f : \mathbb{N} \to \mathbb{N}$ defined recursively as follows:*

$$\begin{aligned} f(0) &= 1 \\ f(1) &= 3 \\ f(n+2) &= 2f(n+1) - f(n) \end{aligned}$$

This function has a closed form:

$$\forall n.\, f(n) = 2n + 1$$

Failed Attempt. $P(n)$ is $f(n) = 2n + 1$. By induction on n, we need to prove the base case and the induction step.

(Base case): $P(0)$ is $f(0) = 2 \cdot 0 + 1$. By definition, $f(0) = 1$ and by computation $2 \cdot 0 + 1 = 1$, so the base case goes through fine.

(Induction step): Let $k \in \mathbb{N}$. Assume that $f(k) = 2k + 1$, we need to prove $f(k+1) = 2(k+1) + 1$. If k is 0, then the equality follows by computation. If $k > 0$, then by definition $f(k+1) = 2f(k) - f(k-1)$. By the induction hypothesis, $f(k) = 2k + 1$, so

$$f(k+1) = 2(2k+1) - f(k-1)$$

We are stuck because the induction hypothesis does not tell us anything about $f(k-1)$. $\square$

We need a stronger induction hypothesis that tells us something about $f(k-1)$. This requires a different choice of P. Let's consider the following lemma.

Lemma 2.4. *For all $m \in \mathbb{N}$ and $n \in \mathbb{N}$, if $n < m$ then $f(n) = 2n + 1$.*

Proof. $P(m)$ is $\forall n.\, (n < m \Rightarrow f(n) = 2n + 1)$. By induction on m, it suffices to show the base case and the induction step.

(Base case): $P(0)$ is $\forall n.\, (n < 0 \Rightarrow f(n) = 2n + 1)$. Let $n \in \mathbb{N}$. Assume $n < 0$. This is a contradiction because no natural number is strictly less than 0.

(Induction step): Let $k \in \mathbb{N}$. The induction hypothesis $P(k)$ is

$$\forall n.\, (n < k \Rightarrow f(n) = 2n + 1)$$

and we need to prove $P(k+1)$, which is

$$\forall n.\, (n < k + 1 \Rightarrow f(n) = 2n + 1)$$

Note that the induction hypothesis now tells us something about $f(n)$ for any n less than k. To prove $P(k+1)$, let $n \in \mathbb{N}$. Assume $n < k + 1$.

If k is 0 or 1, then n is 0 or 1. These two cases follow directly from how f is defined.

For $k > 1$, there are two cases: If $n < k$, then the result follows immediately from the induction hypothesis.

If $n = k$, then by definition $f(k) = 2f(k-1) - f(k-2)$.[1] Since $k - 2 < k$ and $k - 1 < k$, the induction hypothesis says that $f(k-2) = 2(k-2) + 1 = 2k - 3$ and

[1]Note that $k - 2$ and $k - 1$ are natural numbers because $k > 1$ in this case. We eliminated $k = 0$ and $k = 1$ in the previous step for this step to work.

that $f(k-1) = 2(k-1) + 1 = 2k - 1$. Thus,

$$\begin{aligned} f(k) &= 2f(k-1) - f(k-2) \\ &= 2(2k-1) - (2k-3) \\ &= 4k - 2 - 2k + 3 \\ &= 2k + 1 \end{aligned}$$

□

Proposition 2.3 is an immediate corollary of Lemma 2.4.

Proof of Proposition 2.3. Let $n \in \mathbb{N}$. We need to prove $f(n) = 2n + 1$. This follows immediately from Lemma 2.4 by setting $m := n + 1$. □

You may have heard *strong induction* in class. Unfortunately, the name "strong induction" is somewhat misleading because anything provable with strong induction can be proved with mathematical induction presented here and vice-versa, i.e., strong induction is **not** stronger than mathematical induction. In fact, the pattern used in Lemma 2.4 is what strong induction does.