Permutations and Combinations

Section 6.3

Section Summary

- Permutations
- Combinations
- Combinatorial Proofs

Permutations

Counting ordered arrangements

Example: How many ways can we select 3 students from a group of 5 students to stand in line for a picture?

Solution: Using the product rule, there are

$5 \cdot 4 \cdot 3 = 60$ ways to select 3 students from a group of 5 to stand in line.

If we had wanted to select 5 students, there would be

$5 \cdot 4 \cdot 3 \cdot 2 \cdot 1 = 120$ ways for 5 students to stand in line.

Permutations

Definition: A *permutation* of a set of distinct objects is an ordered arrangement of these objects. An ordered arrangement of r elements of a set is called an *r-permuation*.

Example: Let $S = \{1,2,3\}$.

- The ordered arrangement 3,1,2 is a permutation of S.
- The ordered arrangement 3,2 is a 2-permutation of S.

- The number of r-permutations of a set with n elements is denoted by $P(n,r)$.
  - The 2-permutations of $S = \{1,2,3\}$ are 1,2; 1,3; 2,1; 2,3; 3,1; and 3,2. Hence, $P(3,2) = 6$.

A Formula for the Number of Permutations

Theorem 1: If n is a positive integer and r is an integer with $1 \leq r \leq n$, then there are

$$P(n, r) = n(n-1)(n-2)\cdots(n-r+1)$$

r-permutations of a set with n distinct elements.

Proof: Use the product rule. The first element can be chosen in n ways. The second in $n-1$ ways, and so on until there are $(n-(r-1))$ ways to choose the last element.

- Note that $P(n,0) = 1$, since there is only one way to order zero elements.

Corollary 1: If n and r are integers with $1 \leq r \leq n$, then

$$P(n,r) = \frac{n!}{(n-r)!}$$

Solving Counting Problems by Counting Permutations

Example: How many ways are there to select a first-prize winner, a second prize winner, and a third-prize winner from 100 different people who have entered a contest?

Solution:

$$P(100,3) = \frac{100!}{(100-3)!} = 100 \cdot 99 \cdot 98 = 970{,}200$$

Solving Counting Problems by Counting Permutations (*continued*)

Example: Suppose that a saleswoman has to visit eight different cities. She must begin her trip in a specified city, but she can visit the other seven cities in any order she wishes. How many possible orders can the saleswoman use when visiting these cities?

Solution: The first city is chosen, and the rest are ordered arbitrarily. Hence the orders are:

$$7! = 7 \cdot 6 \cdot 5 \cdot 4 \cdot 3 \cdot 2 \cdot 1 = 5040$$

If she wants to find the tour with the shortest path that visits all the cities, she must consider 5040 paths!

Solving Counting Problems by Counting Permutations (*continued*)

Example: How many permutations of the letters *ABCDEFGH* contain the string *ABC* ?

Solution: We solve this problem by counting the permutations of six objects, *ABC*, *D*, *E*, *F*, *G*, and *H*.

$$6! = 6 \cdot 5 \cdot 4 \cdot 3 \cdot 2 \cdot 1 = 720$$

Combinations

Counting unordered arrangements

Example: How many different committees of 3 students can be formed from a group of 4 students?

Solution: Find the number of subsets with 3 elements from the set containing 4 students. There is one subset for each of the 4 students (choosing 3 students is the same as choosing 1 of 4 students to leave out). Thus, there are 4 ways to choose.

Combinations

Definition: An *r-combination* of elements of a set is an unordered selection of r elements from the set. Thus, an r-combination is a subset of the set with r elements.

- The number of r-combinations of a set with n distinct elements is denoted by $C(n, r)$. The notation $\binom{n}{r}$ is also used and is called a *binomial coefficient*.

Example: Let S be the set $\{a, b, c, d\}$. Then $\{a, c, d\}$ is a 3-combination from S. It is the same as $\{d, c, a\}$ since the order listed does not matter.

- $C(4,2) = 6$ because the 2-combinations of $\{a, b, c, d\}$ are the six subsets $\{a, b\}$, $\{a, c\}$, $\{a, d\}$, $\{b, c\}$, $\{b, d\}$, and $\{c, d\}$.

Combinations

Theorem 2: The number of *r*-combinations of a set with *n* elements, where $n \geq r \geq 0$, equals

$$C(n,r) = \frac{n!}{(n-r)!r!}.$$

Proof: By the product rule $P(n, r) = C(n,r) \cdot P(r,r)$. Therefore,

$$C(n,r) = \frac{P(n,r)}{P(r,r)} = \frac{n!/(n-r)!}{r!/(r-r)!} = \frac{n!}{(n-r)!r!}.$$

Combinations

Example: How many poker hands of five cards can be dealt from a standard deck of 52 cards? Also, how many ways are there to select 47 cards from a deck of 52 cards?

Solution: Since the order in which the cards are dealt does not matter, the number of five card hands is:

$$C(52,5) = \frac{52!}{5!47!}$$

$$= \frac{52 \cdot 51 \cdot 50 \cdot 49 \cdot 48}{5 \cdot 4 \cdot 3 \cdot 2 \cdot 1} = 26 \cdot 17 \cdot 10 \cdot 49 \cdot 12 = 2,598,960$$

- The different ways to select 47 cards from 52 is

$$C(52,47) = \frac{52!}{47!5!} = C(52,5) = 2,598,960.$$

This is a special case of a general result. →

Combinations

Corollary 2: Let n and r be nonnegative integers with $r \leq n$. Then $C(n, r) = C(n, n - r)$.

Proof: From Theorem 2, it follows that

$$C(n,r) = \frac{n!}{(n-r)!r!}$$

and

$$C(n,n-r) = \frac{n!}{(n-r)![n-(n-r)]!} = \frac{n!}{(n-r)!r!} .$$

Hence, $C(n, r) = C(n, n - r)$. ◀

This result can be proved without using algebraic manipulation. →

Combinatorial Proofs

Combinatorial Proofs

- **Definition 1**: A *combinatorial proof* of an identity is a proof that uses one of the following methods.
  - A *double counting proof* uses counting arguments to prove that both sides of an identity count the same objects, but in different ways.
  - A *bijective proof* shows that there is a bijection between the sets of objects counted by the two sides of the identity.

Combinatorial Proofs

- Here is a combinatorial proof that

$$C(n, r) = C(n, n - r)$$

when r and n are nonnegative integers with $r \leq n$:

Bijective Proof: Suppose that S is a set with n elements. The function that maps a subset A of S to $\bar{A}$ is a bijection between the subsets of S with r elements and the subsets with $n - r$ elements. Since there is a bijection between the two sets, they must have the same number of elements. ◀

Combinatorial Proofs

- Here is a combinatorial proof that

$$C(n, r) = C(n, n - r)$$

when r and n are nonnegative integers with $r \leq n$:

Double counting Proof: Suppose that S is a set with n elements. The number of subsets of S with r elements is $C(n,r)$. But each subset A of S is also determined by specifying which elements are not in A (and so are in $\bar{A}$). Given that $\bar{A}$ has $n - r$ elements, then there are also $C(n, n\text{-}r)$ elements of S with r elements. Thus $C(n,r) = C(n, n\text{-}r)$.

◀

Combinations

Example: How many ways are there to select five players from a 10-member tennis team to make a trip to a match at another school?

Solution: By Theorem 2, the number of combinations is

$$C(10,5) = \frac{10!}{5!5!} = 252.$$

Example: A group of 30 people have been trained as astronauts to go on the first mission to Mars. How many ways are there to select a crew of six people to go on this mission?

Solution: By Theorem 2, the number of possible crews is

$$C(30,6) = \frac{30!}{6!24!} = \frac{30 \cdot 29 \cdot 28 \cdot 27 \cdot 26 \cdot 25}{6 \cdot 5 \cdot 4 \cdot 3 \cdot 2 \cdot 1} = 593,775\ .$$