Binomial Coefficients and Identities

Section 6.4

Section Summary

- The Binomial Theorem
- Pascal’s Identity and Triangle

Powers of Binomial Expressions

Definition: A *binomial* expression is the sum of two terms, such as $x + y$. (More generally, these terms can be products of constants and variables.)

- We can use counting principles to find the coefficients in the expansion of $(x + y)^n$ where n is a positive integer.

Example: Expand $(x + y)^3$

$$x^3 + 3x^2y + 3xy^2 + y^3$$

continued ➔

Powers of Binomial Expressions

$$(x+y)^3 = (x+y)(x+y)(x+y)$$
$$= (xx+xy+yx+yy)(x+y)$$
$$= xxx + xxy + xyx + xyy + yxx + yxy + yyx + yyy$$
$$= x^3 + 3x^2y + 3xy^2 + y^3$$

How many **ways** are there to get the terms

x^3 : Choose x three times $\binom{3}{3} = C(3,3) = 1$

x^2y : Choose x twice (and y once) $\binom{3}{2} = C(3,2) = 3$

xy^2 : Choose x once (and y twice) $\binom{3}{1} = C(3,1) = 3$

y^3 : Choose x zero times $\binom{3}{0} = C(3,0) = 1$

Binomial Theorem

Binomial Theorem: Let x and y be variables, and n a nonnegative integer. Then:

$$(x+y)^n = \sum_{j=0}^{n} \binom{n}{j} x^{n-j}y^j = \binom{n}{0} x^n + \binom{n}{1} x^{n-1}y + \cdots + \binom{n}{n-1} xy^{n-1} + \binom{n}{n} y^n.$$

Proof: We use combinatorial reasoning. The terms in the expansion of $(x + y)^n$ are of the form $x^{n-j}y^j$ for $j = 0,1,2,\ldots,n$. To form the term $x^{n-j}y^j$, it is necessary to choose $n-j$ x's from the n sums. Therefore, the coefficient of $x^{n-j}y^j$ is $\binom{n}{n-j}$, which equals $\binom{n}{j}$. ◀

Using the Binomial Theorem

Example: What is the expansion of $(x + y)^4$?

Solution: From the binomial theorem, we know that

$$\begin{aligned}(x+y)^4 &= \sum_{j=0}^{4}\binom{4}{j}x^{4-j}y^j \\ &= \binom{4}{0}x^4 + \binom{4}{1}x^3y + \binom{4}{2}x^2y^2 + \binom{4}{3}xy^3 + \binom{4}{4}y^4 \\ &= x^4 + 4x^3y + 6x^2y^2 + 4xy^3 + y^4. \quad \blacktriangleleft\end{aligned}$$

Using the Binomial Theorem

Example: What is the coefficient of $x^{12}y^{13}$ in the expansion of $(2x - 3y)^{25}$?

Solution: We view the expression as $(2x + (-3y))^{25}$. By the binomial theorem

$$(2x + (-3y))^{25} = \sum_{j=0}^{25} \binom{25}{j} (2x)^{25-j}(-3y)^j.$$

The coefficient of $x^{12}y^{13}$ in the expansion is obtained when $j = 13$.

$$\binom{25}{13} 2^{12}(-3)^{13} = -\frac{25!}{13!12!}2^{12}3^{13}.$$

A Useful Identity

Corollary 1: With $n \geq 0$, $\sum_{k=0}^{n} \binom{n}{k} = 2^n$.

Proof (*using binomial theorem*): With $x = 1$ and $y = 1$, from the binomial theorem we see that:

$$2^n = (1+1)^n = \sum_{k=0}^{n} \binom{n}{k} 1^k 1^{(n-k)} = \sum_{k=0}^{n} \binom{n}{k}.$$

◀

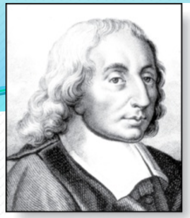
A Useful Identity

Corollary 1: With $n \geq 0$, $\sum_{k=0}^{n} \binom{n}{k} = 2^n.$

Proof (*combinatorial*): Consider the subsets of a set with n elements. There are $\binom{n}{0}$ subsets with zero elements, $\binom{n}{1}$ with one element, $\binom{n}{2}$ with two elements, …, and $\binom{n}{n}$ with n elements. Therefore the total is $\sum_{k=0}^{n} \binom{n}{k}.$

Since, we know that a set with n elements has 2^n subsets, we conclude: $\sum_{k=0}^{n} \binom{n}{k} = 2^n.$ ◀

Blaise Pascal
(1623-1662)



Pascal's Identity

Pascal's Identity: If n and k are integers with $n \geq k \geq 0$, then

$$\binom{n+1}{k} = \binom{n}{k-1} + \binom{n}{k}.$$

Proof (*combinatorial*): Let T be a set where $|T| = n + 1$, $a \in T$, and $S = T - \{a\}$. There are $\binom{n+1}{k}$ subsets of T containing k elements. Each of these subsets either:

- contains a with $k - 1$ other elements, or
- contains k elements of S and not a.

There are

- $\binom{n}{k-1}$ subsets of k elements that contain a, since there are $\binom{n}{k-1}$ subsets of $k - 1$ elements of S,
- $\binom{n}{k}$ subsets of k elements of T that do not contain a, because there are $\binom{n}{k}$ subsets of k elements of S.

Hence, $$\binom{n+1}{k} = \binom{n}{k-1} + \binom{n}{k}.$$ ◀

See Exercise 19 *for an algebraic proof.*

Pascal's Triangle

The nth row in the triangle consists of the binomial coefficients $\binom{n}{k}$, $k = 0,1,\ldots,n$.

$$
\begin{array}{c}
\binom{0}{0} \\
\binom{1}{0}\ \binom{1}{1} \\
\binom{2}{0}\ \binom{2}{1}\ \binom{2}{2} \\
\binom{3}{0}\ \binom{3}{1}\ \binom{3}{2}\ \binom{3}{3} \\
\binom{4}{0}\ \binom{4}{1}\ \binom{4}{2}\ \binom{4}{3}\ \binom{4}{4} \\
\binom{5}{0}\ \binom{5}{1}\ \binom{5}{2}\ \binom{5}{3}\ \binom{5}{4}\ \binom{5}{5} \\
\binom{6}{0}\ \binom{6}{1}\ \binom{6}{2}\ \binom{6}{3}\ \binom{6}{4}\ \binom{6}{5}\ \binom{6}{6} \\
\binom{7}{0}\ \binom{7}{1}\ \binom{7}{2}\ \binom{7}{3}\ \binom{7}{4}\ \binom{7}{5}\ \binom{7}{6}\ \binom{7}{7} \\
\binom{8}{0}\ \binom{8}{1}\ \binom{8}{2}\ \binom{8}{3}\ \binom{8}{4}\ \binom{8}{5}\ \binom{8}{6}\ \binom{8}{7}\ \binom{8}{8} \\
\ldots
\end{array}
$$

(a)

By Pascal's identity:

$$\binom{6}{4} + \binom{6}{5} = \binom{7}{5}$$

$$
\begin{array}{c}
1 \\
1 \quad 1 \\
1 \quad 2 \quad 1 \\
1 \quad 3 \quad 3 \quad 1 \\
1 \quad 4 \quad 6 \quad 4 \quad 1 \\
1 \quad 5 \quad 10 \quad 10 \quad 5 \quad 1 \\
1 \quad 6 \quad 15 \quad 20 \quad 15 \quad 6 \quad 1 \\
1 \quad 7 \quad 21 \quad 35 \quad 35 \quad 21 \quad 7 \quad 1 \\
1 \quad 8 \quad 28 \quad 56 \quad 70 \quad 56 \quad 28 \quad 8 \quad 1 \\
\ldots
\end{array}
$$

(b)

By Pascal's identity, adding two adjacent bionomial coefficients results is the binomial coefficient in the next row between these two coefficients.

Pascal's Triangle

$$\binom{0}{0}$$
$$\binom{1}{0}\ \binom{1}{1}$$
$$\binom{2}{0}\ \binom{2}{1}\ \binom{2}{2}$$
$$\binom{3}{0}\ \binom{3}{1}\ \binom{3}{2}\ \binom{3}{3}$$
$$\binom{4}{0}\ \binom{4}{1}\ \binom{4}{2}\ \binom{4}{3}\ \binom{4}{4}$$
$$\binom{5}{0}\ \binom{5}{1}\ \binom{5}{2}\ \binom{5}{3}\ \binom{5}{4}\ \binom{5}{5}$$
$$\boxed{\binom{6}{0}\ \binom{6}{1}\ \binom{6}{2}\ \binom{6}{3}\ \binom{6}{4}\ \binom{6}{5}\ \binom{6}{6}}$$
$$\binom{7}{0}\ \binom{7}{1}\ \binom{7}{2}\ \binom{7}{3}\ \binom{7}{4}\ \binom{7}{5}\ \binom{7}{6}\ \binom{7}{7}$$
$$\binom{8}{0}\ \binom{8}{1}\ \binom{8}{2}\ \binom{8}{3}\ \binom{8}{4}\ \binom{8}{5}\ \binom{8}{6}\ \binom{8}{7}\ \binom{8}{8}$$

By Pascal's identity:

$$\binom{6}{4} + \binom{6}{5} = \binom{7}{5}$$

1

1 1

1 2 1

1 3 3 1

1 4 6 4 1

1 5 10 10 5 1

$\boxed{1\quad 6\quad 15\quad 20\quad 15\quad 6\quad 1}$

1 7 21 35 35 21 7 1

1 8 28 56 70 56 28 8 1

$$\boxed{(x+y)^6 = 1x^6 + 6x^5y + 15x^4y^2 + 20x^3y^3 + 15x^2y^4 + 6xy^5 + 1y^6}$$