

**One more example on proof by contradiction:**

**Example 1.** Prove by contradiction that if  $n$  is a natural number then

$$\frac{n}{n+1} > \frac{n}{n+2}.$$

Natural numbers are positive integers.

*Proof.* (By contradiction:) Assume  $n$  is a natural number and assume  $\frac{n}{n+1} \leq \frac{n}{n+2}$ . Then

$$\begin{aligned}\frac{1}{n+1} &\leq \frac{1}{n+2} \\ \Rightarrow n+2 &\leq n+1 \\ \Rightarrow 2 &\leq 1\end{aligned}$$

which contradicts the order on natural numbers. Thus, if  $n$  is a natural number then  $\frac{n}{n+1} > \frac{n}{n+2}$ .  $\square$

**“If and Only If” or “Equivalence Theorems”** Let  $n$  be a natural number.  $n$  is even if and only if  $n^2$  is even. Here we can denote the statement  $n$  is even by  $A$  and the statement  $n^2$  is even by  $B$ . Then  $A$  and  $B$  are both a sufficient and necessary condition.

$$A \Leftrightarrow B \quad \equiv \quad (A \Rightarrow B) \wedge (B \Rightarrow A).$$

When we are trying to prove a statement link  $A \Leftrightarrow B$  it is at times useful to first prove one direction ( $A \Rightarrow B$ ) and then the other direction ( $B \Rightarrow A$ ).

**Example 2.** Assume  $p$  is prime. Then  $p$  divides if and only if  $p$  divides  $b^2$ .

*Proof.* ( $\Rightarrow$ ) Assume  $p$  is prime and assume  $p$  divides  $b$ , i.e.,  $b = pm$  for some integers  $m$ . Show  $p$  divides  $b^2$ , i.e., show  $b^2 = pk$  for some integer  $k$ . Then

$$\begin{aligned}b^2 &= (pm)^2 \\ &= p^2m^2 \\ &= p(pm^2) \\ &= pk,\end{aligned}$$

where  $k = pm^2$  is an integer. Thus,  $p$  divides  $b^2$ .

( $\Leftarrow$ ) Assume  $p$  is prime and assume that  $p$  divides  $b^2$ , i.e.,  $b^2 = pm$  for some integer  $m$ . Show  $p$  divides  $b$ , i.e., show  $b = pk$  for some integer  $k$ . This will be a direct proof.

Since  $b^2 = pm$ , and the right hand side has at least one factor of the prime number  $p$ , then the left hand side has at least one factor of  $p$  (by Fundamental Theorem of Arithmetic.) If  $b$  has no factor of  $p$ , then  $b^2$  has no factors of  $p$ . Thus,  $b$  has at least one factor of  $p$ , i.e.,  $b = pk$  for some integer  $k$ . Thus,  $p$  divides  $b$ .  $\square$

You should choose an appropriate proof method for each direction:

**Example 3.** Prove: the number  $m$  is odd if and only if  $m^2$  is odd.

*Proof.* ( $\Rightarrow$ ) assume  $m$  is odd, i.e.,  $m = 2p + 1$  for some integer  $p$ . Want to show that  $m^2$  is odd, i.e.,  $m^2 = 2k + 1$  for some integer  $k$ . Then,

$$\begin{aligned}m^2 &= (2p + 1)^2 \\&= 4p^2 + 4p + 1 \\&= 2(2p^2 + 2p) + 1 \\&= 2k + 1\end{aligned}$$

where  $k = 2p^2 + 2p$  is an integer. Thus  $m^2$  is odd.

( $\Leftarrow$ ) (proof by contrapositive:) If  $m$  is even, then  $m^2$  is even.

*Proof:*

Assume  $m$  is even, i.e.,  $m = 2k$  for some integer  $k$ . Show that  $m^2$  is even, i.e.,  $m^2 = 2n$  for some integer  $n$ . Then

$$\begin{aligned}m^2 &= (2k)^2 \\&= 4k^2 \\&= 2(2k^2) = 2n\end{aligned}$$

where  $n = 2k^2$  is an integer. Thus  $m^2$  is even. □

At times you will have to prove multiple equivalent statements. (For the example below we should know that the reciprocal of a real non-zero number  $x$  is just  $\frac{1}{x}$ .)

**Example 4.** Let  $x$  be a real number that is not equal to 0. Then the following statements are equivalent:

- (i)  $x > 0$
- (ii) The sum of  $x$  and its reciprocal is greater than or equal to 2.
- (iii)  $2^{x+\frac{1}{x}} \geq 4$ .

Idea (i) $\Rightarrow$ (ii), (ii) $\Rightarrow$ (iii), (iii) $\Rightarrow$ (i).

(i) $\Rightarrow$ (ii). (Direct proof, work algebra backwards.) Assume  $x$  is a real number and  $x > 0$ . Then,

$$\begin{aligned}(x - 1)^2 &\geq 0 \\&\Rightarrow x^2 - 2x + 1 \geq 0 \\&\Rightarrow x - 2 + \frac{1}{x} \geq 0 \quad \text{since } x > 0 \\&\Rightarrow x + \frac{1}{x} \geq 2.\end{aligned}$$

Thus, (i) $\Rightarrow$ (ii).

[(ii) $\Rightarrow$ (iii)] (Direct proof:) Assume  $x + \frac{1}{x} \geq 2$ . Then  $2^{x+\frac{1}{x}} \geq 4$ , since  $2^y$  is an increasing function.

[(iii) $\Rightarrow$ (i)] (Contrapositive: if  $x < 0$  then  $2^{x+\frac{1}{x}} < 4$ .)

Assume  $x < 0$ . Then  $\frac{1}{x} < 0$

$$\Rightarrow x + \frac{1}{x} < 0$$

$$\Rightarrow x + \frac{1}{x} < 2$$

$$2^{x+\frac{1}{x}} < 2^2 = 4.$$

Therefore, (iii) $\Rightarrow$ (i).

□