Ehrhart Polynomials

VIII Encuentro Colombiano De Combinatoria

Day I: Appetizers

(1) Given integers a, b, c, d, form the line segment $[(a,b),(c,d)] \subset \mathbb{R}^2$ joining the points (a,b) and (c,d). Show that the number of integer points on this line segment is $\gcd(a-c, b-d)+1$.

(2) Prove that a triangle with vertices on the integer lattice has no other interior/boundary lattice points if and only if it has area $\frac{1}{2}$. (*Hint:* You may begin by "doubling" the triangle to form a parallelogram.)

(3) Pick four points in $\mathbb{Z}^3$ and let $\mathcal{P}$ be their convex hull (in $\mathbb{R}^3$). Compute the Ehrhart polynomial of $\mathcal{P}$. (If you cannot think of a good example, consider the regular tetrahedron with vertices $(0,0,0), (1,1,0), (1,0,1), (0,1,1)$.)

(4) Recall that the standard simplex $\Delta \in \mathbb{R}^d$ is the convex hull of the unit vectors and the origin. Verify that

$$L_\Delta(t) = \binom{d+t}{d} \qquad \text{and} \qquad L_{\Delta^\circ}(t) = \binom{t-1}{d}.$$

(If you'd like to amuse your colleagues, we can also write $L_{\Delta^\circ}(t) = (-1)^d \binom{d-t}{d}$.)

(5) Given a $(d-1)$-polytope $\mathcal{Q}$ with vertices $\mathbf{v}_1, \mathbf{v}_2, \ldots, \mathbf{v}_m$ such that the origin is in $\mathcal{Q}$, we define the bipyramid $\mathrm{BiPyr}(\mathcal{Q})$ over $\mathcal{Q}$ as the convex hull of

$$(\mathbf{v}_1, 0), (\mathbf{v}_2, 0), \ldots, (\mathbf{v}_m, 0), (0, \ldots, 0, 1), \text{ and } (0, \ldots, 0, -1).$$

Show that $\mathrm{Ehr}_{\mathrm{BiPyr}(\mathcal{Q})}(z) = \dfrac{1+z}{1-z} \mathrm{Ehr}_{\mathcal{Q}}(z)$.

(6) [`sage`] Plot the roots of the Ehrhart polynomials of cross polytopes in different dimensions. What's going on here?

(7) Define the Eulerian number $A(d,k)$ through[1]

$$\sum_{j \geq 0} j^d z^j = \frac{\sum_{k=0}^{d} A(d,k)\, z^k}{(1-z)^{d+1}}.$$

Alternatively, we may think of the polynomial $\sum_{k=0}^{d} A(d,k)\, z^k$ is the numerator of the rational function

$$\left(z \frac{d}{dz}\right)^d \left(\frac{1}{1-z}\right) = \underbrace{z\frac{d}{dz} \cdots z\frac{d}{dz}}_{d \text{ times}} \left(\frac{1}{1-z}\right).$$

[1] There are two slightly conflicting definitions of *Eulerian numbers* in the literature: sometimes, they are defined through $\sum_{j \geq 0} (j+1)^d z^j = \frac{\sum_{k=0}^{d} A(d,k) z^k}{(1-z)^{d+1}}$ instead.

Prove the following:

$$\begin{aligned}
A\,(d,k) &= A\,(d,d+1-k)\,, \\
A\,(d,k) &= (d-k+1)\,A\,(d-1,k-1) + k\,A\,(d-1,k)\,, \\
\sum_{k=0}^{d} A\,(d,k) &= d!\,, \\
A\,(d,k) &= \sum_{j=0}^{k} (-1)^j \binom{d+1}{j} (k-j)^d.
\end{aligned}$$

(8) [`research problem`] Choose $d+1$ of the 2^d vertices of the unit d-cube, and let Δ be the simplex defined by their convex hull.

(a) Which choice of vertices maximizes $\operatorname{vol}\Delta$?

(b) What is the maximum volume of such a Δ?

(9) Show that a sequence $f(n)$ is given by a polynomial of degree $\le d$ if and only if

$$\sum_{n\ge 0} f(n)\,z^n = \frac{h(z)}{(1-z)^{d+1}}$$

for some polynomial $h(z)$ of degree $\le d$. Furthermore, $f(n)$ has degree d if and only if $h(1) \ne 0$.

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Day II: Ehrhart Theory

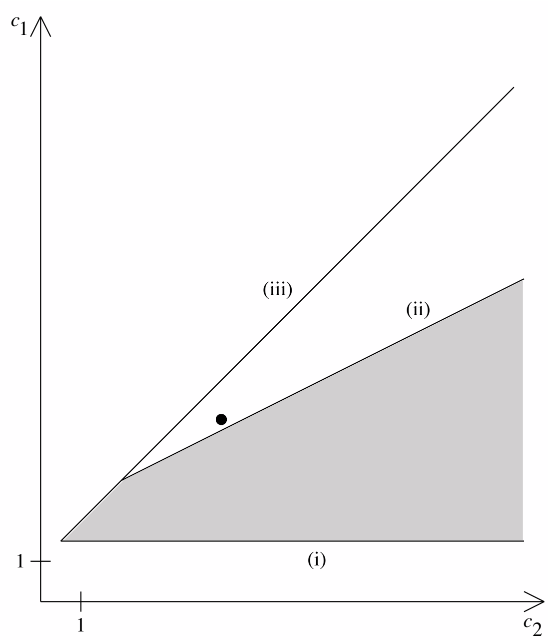
(1) For any polynomial $h(z)$ of degree d, show there exist unique polynomials $a(z)$ and $b(z)$ such that

$$h(z) = a(z) + z\, b(z) \qquad \text{where} \qquad a(z) = z^d\, a(\tfrac{1}{z}) \qquad \text{and} \qquad b(z) = z^{d-1}\, b(\tfrac{1}{z})\,.$$

(There are many variations of this; e.g., we could leave out the z factor in front of $b(z)$.)

(2) Derive inequalities for the coefficients of $h(z)$ if we know that both $a(z)$ and $b(z)$ have only nonnegative coefficients.

(3) Verify (parts of) the classification picture of degree-2 Ehrhart polynomials $c_2t^2 + c_1t + 1$: every half-integral point in the figure below corresponds to an Ehrhart polynomial.



(4) [`research problem`] Give the corresponding classification picture of degree-3 Ehrhart polynomials.

(5) Give an example of a polynomial $f(n)$ with (some) negative coefficients whose corresponding generating function numerator polynomial $h(z)$ has only positive coefficients.

(6) For a lattice polytope $\mathcal{P}$, the numerator of the generating function is the *h^*-polynomial* of $\mathcal{P}$. Give a non-unimodal example of an h^*-polynomial.

(7) [`research problem`] Now let $\mathcal{P} = \left\{\mathbf{x} \in [0,1]^d : x_1 + x_2 + \cdots + x_d = k\right\}$, for your favorite integers $2 \leq k \leq d-2$. (This is the (d,k)-*hypersimplex*.) Prove that the h^*-polynomial of $\mathcal{P}$ is unimodal.

(8) Given a polytope $\mathcal{P} \subseteq \mathbb{R}^d$ with vertices $\mathbf{v}_1, \mathbf{v}_2, \ldots, \mathbf{v}_n$, randomly choose $h_1, h_2, \ldots, h_n \in \mathbb{R}$, and define the new polytope $\mathcal{Q} \subseteq \mathbb{R}^{d+1}$ as the convex hull of $(\mathbf{v}_1, h_1), (\mathbf{v}_2, h_2), \ldots, (\mathbf{v}_n, h_n)$. The *lower hull* of $\mathcal{Q}$ consists of all points that are *visible from below*: all points $(x_1, x_2, \ldots, x_{d+1}) \in \mathcal{Q}$ for which there is no $\epsilon > 0$ such that $(x_1, x_2, \ldots, x_{d+1} - \epsilon) \in \mathcal{Q}$. A *lower face* of $\mathcal{Q}$ is a face of $\mathcal{Q}$ that is in the lower hull. Let $\pi : \mathbb{R}^{d+1} \to \mathbb{R}^d$ be the projection that forgets the last coordinate. Show that all lower faces of $\mathcal{Q}$ are simplices, and that their projections under π form a triangulation of $\mathcal{P}$.