



Why

We want to find the roots of negative numbers.¹

Definition

A *complex number* is an ordered pair of real numbers. The *real part* of a complex number is its first coordinate. The *imaginary part* of a complex number is its second coordinate.

The *complex conjugate* (or *conjugate*) of a complex number z is the complex number whose real part matches z and whose imaginary part is the additive inverse of z . The complex conjugate of a real number (imaginary part is zero) is the real number. In other words, the complex conjugate of a complex number with no imaginary part is the same complex number.

Notation

When we think of \mathbf{R}^2 as the set of complex numbers, we denote it by \mathbf{C} . Let $z \in \mathbf{C}$. We denote the real part of z by $\mathbf{Re}(z)$, read “real of z ,” and the imaginary part by $\mathbf{Im}(z)$, read “imaginary of z .” If $z = (a, b)$ for $a, b \in \mathbf{R}$, then $\mathbf{Re}(z) = a$ and $\mathbf{Im}(z) = b$.

We denote the complex conjugate of the complex number $z \in \mathbf{C}$ by $z^* \in \mathbf{C}$. Another common notation, not used in these sheets is \bar{z} or \bar{z} . If there exists $a, b \in \mathbf{R}$ so that $z = (a, b)$, then $z^* = (a, -b)$.

¹Future editions will modify this, and will discuss the existence of solutions of algebraic equations.

Modulus and argument

The *modulus* of $z \in \mathbf{C}$ is the distance of z to the origin. If $z \in \mathbf{C}$, then the modulus of z is

$$\sqrt{\mathbf{Re} z^2 + \mathbf{Im} z^2}.$$

We denote the modulus of z by $|z|$.

The *argument* of $z \in \mathbf{C}$ is $\tan^{-1}(\mathbf{Im} z / \mathbf{Re} z)$. We denote the argument of z by $\arg z$.²

²Future editions will include the geometric interpretations.

