Functions

1 Why

We want a notion for a correspondence between two sets.

2 Definition

A **functional** relation on two sets relates each element of the first set with a unique element of the second set. A **function** is a functional relation.

The **domain** of the function is the first set and **codomain** of the function is the second set. The function **maps** elements **from** the domain **to** the codomain. We call the codomain element associated with the domain element the **result** of **applying** the function to the domain element.

2.1 Notation

Let A and B be sets. If A is the domain and B the codomain, we denote the set of functions from A to B by $A \to B$, read aloud as "A to B".

A function is an element of th set $A \to B$, so we denote them by lower case latin letters, especially f, g, and h. Of course, f is a mnemonic for function; g and h follow f in the alphabet. We denote that $f \in A \to B$, by $f : A \to B$, read aloud as "f from A to B".

Let $f : A \to B$. For each element $a \in A$, we denote the result of applying f to a by $f(a)$, read aloud "f of a." We sometimes drop the parentheses, and write the result as f_a, read aloud as "f sub a."

Let $g : A \times B \to C$. We often write $g(a, b)$ or g_{ab} instead of $g((a, b))$. We read $g(a, b)$ aloud as "g of a and b". We read g_{ab} aloud as "g sub a b."

3 Properties

Let $f : A \to B$. The **image** of a set $C \subset A$ is the set $\{f(c) \in B \mid c \in C\}$. The **range** of f is the image of the domain. The **inverse image** of a set $D \subset B$ is the set $\{a \in A \mid f(a) \in B\}$.

The range need not equal the codomain; though it, like every other image, is a subset of the codomain. The function maps to domain **on** to the codomain if the range and codomain are equal; in this case we call the function **onto**. This language suggests that every element of the codomain is used by f. It means that for each element b of the codomain, we can find an element a of the domain so that $f(a) = b$.

An element of the codomain may be the result of several elements of the domain. This overlapping, using an element of the codomain more than once, is a regular occurrence. If a function is a unique correspondence in that every domain element has a different result, we call it **one-to-one**. This language is meant to suggest that each element of the domain corresponds to one and exactly one element of the codomain, and vice versa.

3.1 Notation

Let $f : A \to B$. We denote the image of $C \subset A$ by $f(C)$, read aloud as "f of C." This notation is overloaded: for $c \in C$, $f(c) \in A$, whereas $f(C) \subset A$. Read aloud, the two are indistinguishable, so we must be careful to specify whether we mean an element c or a set C. The property that f is onto can be written succintly as $f(A) = B$. We denote the inverse image of $D \subset B$ by $f^{-1}(D)$, read aloud as "f inverse D."