Dummit & Foote Ch. 1.4: Matrix Groups

Scott Donaldson

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1. (3/16/23)

Prove that $|GL_2(\mathbb{F}_2)| = 6$.

Proof. Matrices in $GL_2(\mathbb{F}_2)$ have the form $\begin{pmatrix} a & b \\ c & d \end{pmatrix}$, where $a, b, c, d \in \{0, 1\}$. There are 16 possible matrices of this form (2 options for each entry over 4 entries, $2^4 = 16$).

From the definition of GL_2, we discount matrices with determinant 0. A 2×2 matrix has determinant 0 when $ad - bc = 0$, that is, $ad = bc$. This happens only when $ad = bc = 1$ or $ad = bc = 0$. There is only one matrix where $ad = bc = 1$, $\begin{pmatrix} 1 & 1 \\ 1 & 1 \end{pmatrix}$. Matrices with determinant 0 have one of a, d and b, c equal to 0. They are the matrices with all zero entries (1), with three zero entries (4), and with two zero entries (a and b, or a and c, or b and d, or c and d) (4).

This leaves us with $16-1-1-4-4 = 6$ matrices with nonzero determinants, so the order of $GL_2(\mathbb{F}_2) = 6$. $\square$

2. (3/16/23)

Write out all the elements of $GL_2(\mathbb{F}_2)$ and compute the order of each element.

- $\begin{pmatrix} 1 & 0 \\ 0 & 1 \end{pmatrix}$: 1 (identity)
- $\begin{pmatrix} 1 & 1 \\ 0 & 1 \end{pmatrix}$: 2
- $\begin{pmatrix} 1 & 0 \\ 1 & 1 \end{pmatrix}$: 2
- $\begin{pmatrix} 0 & 1 \\ 1 & 1 \end{pmatrix}$: 3

- $\begin{pmatrix} 1 & 1 \\ 1 & 0 \end{pmatrix}$: 3
- $\begin{pmatrix} 0 & 1 \\ 1 & 0 \end{pmatrix}$: 2

3. (3/16/23)

Show that $GL_2(\mathbb{F}_2)$ is non-abelian.

Proof. To prove that $GL_2(\mathbb{F}_2)$ is non-abelian, we need only show that it contains two non-commuting elements.

$\begin{pmatrix} 0 & 1 \\ 1 & 1 \end{pmatrix} \times \begin{pmatrix} 0 & 1 \\ 1 & 0 \end{pmatrix} = \begin{pmatrix} 1 & 0 \\ 1 & 1 \end{pmatrix}$.

However, $\begin{pmatrix} 0 & 1 \\ 1 & 0 \end{pmatrix} \times \begin{pmatrix} 0 & 1 \\ 1 & 1 \end{pmatrix} = \begin{pmatrix} 1 & 1 \\ 0 & 1 \end{pmatrix}$. These products are not equal, so $GL_2(\mathbb{F}_2)$ is non-abelian. $\square$

4. (3/18/23)

Show that if n is not prime then $\mathbb{Z}/n\mathbb{Z}$ is not a field.

Proof. Let n be a composite positive integer and let a divide n with $a > 1$. We will show that a does not have a multiplicative inverse in $\mathbb{Z}/n\mathbb{Z}$, and therefore $\mathbb{Z}/n\mathbb{Z}$ is not a field.

We will show that there is no integer c such that $ac = 1 \bmod n$. Since a divides n, let $ab = n = 0 \bmod n$. So $a(b+1) = ab + a = n + a = a \bmod n$. That is, for the pair of consecutive integers b and $b+1$, we have $ab = 0 < 1$ and $a(b+1) = a > 1$. Then there is no integer c strictly between b and $b+1$ such that $ac = 1 \bmod n$. For any larger integers, we note that $abk = nk = 0 \bmod n$, and $a(bk+1) = abk + a = nk + a = a \bmod n$, and therefore there is no integer c among all of $\mathbb{Z}^+$ with $ac = 1$. Therefore, since a has no multiplicative inverse, $\mathbb{Z}/n\mathbb{Z}$ is not a field. $\square$

5. (3/18/23)

Show that $GL_n(F)$ is a finite group if and only if F has a finite number of elements.

Proof. Let F be a field with $m < \infty$ elements and, for some $n > 1$, let $GL_n(F)$ be the general linear group of degree n on F. The total possible number of $n \times n$ matrices with entries from F is m^{n^2}. Since the number of elements in $GL_n(F)$ is at most this value, it is a finite group (in 6. we will show that it is strictly less than).

To prove the converse, we will show that, if F is an infinite field, then $GL_n(F)$ must not be a finite group. Let F be an infinite field. For every $x \in F$

(excluding $x = 0$), we can construct an $n \times n$ matrix whose diagonal entries are x and all other entries are 0. By definition, the determinant of such a matrix is the product of the diagonal entries, $x^n \neq 0$. Therefore such a matrix belongs to $GL_n(F)$. This is a bijection between F and $GL_n(F)$, and so they have the same cardinality, that is, $GL_n(F)$ must not be a finite group.

Thus, $GL_n(F)$ is a finite group if and only if F has a finite number of elements. $\square$

6. (3/19/23)

If $|F| = q$ is finite prove that $|GL_n(F)| < q^{n^2}$.

Proof. An element of $GL_n(F)$ is an invertible $n \times n$ matrix whose entries come from F. For each entry, there are q possibilities, and there are n^2 total entries, so there are q^{n^2} possible such matrices (before discounting those with determinant $= 0$). It is guaranteed that some number of $n \times n$ matrices have determinant 0; for example, the matrix whose entries are all 0 obviously has determinant 0. So the number of elements of $GL_n(F)$ is always strictly less than q^{n^2}. $\square$

7. (3/19/23)

Let p be a prime. Prove that the order of $GL_2(\mathbb{F}_p)$ is $p^4 - p^3 - p^2 + p$.

Proof. From 5. and 6., there are $p^{2^2} = p^4$ possible 2×2 matrices, and the order of $GL_2(\mathbb{F}_p)$ is strictly less than this number. Let us count the ways in which an element of $GL_2(\mathbb{F}_p)$ might have a determinant equal to 0.

A 2×2 matrix in $GL_2(\mathbb{F}_p)$ has the form $\begin{pmatrix} a & b \\ c & d \end{pmatrix}$, with $a, b, c, d \in F_p$. The determinant of a 2×2 matrix is $ad - bc$. First, consider the cases in which $a, b, c, d \neq 0$. Setting the determinant equal to 0, we can see that d must equal bc/a. So there are $p - 1$ choices for a, b, c, and d is fixed based on the other entries. Then there are $(p-1)^3$ matrices with 4 nonzero entries with determinant equal to 0.

Next, consider 2×2 matrices with one entry equal to 0, for example, $\begin{pmatrix} a & b \\ c & 0 \end{pmatrix}$. The determinant of this matrix is $a \cdot 0 - bc = bc$. In order for this to equal 0, at least one of either b or c must equal zero. Then there are no matrices with exactly 1 zero entry with determinant equal to 0.

Now consider 2×2 matrices with two entries equal to 0. Such matrices have the form $\begin{pmatrix} a & b \\ 0 & 0 \end{pmatrix}$, $\begin{pmatrix} a & 0 \\ c & 0 \end{pmatrix}$, $\begin{pmatrix} 0 & 0 \\ c & d \end{pmatrix}$, or $\begin{pmatrix} 0 & b \\ 0 & d \end{pmatrix}$. There are $p - 1$ possible choices for both of the nonzero entries, so there are $4(p-1)^2$ matrices with exactly 2 nonzero entries with determinant equal to 0.

Matrices with three entries equal to 0 have the form $\begin{pmatrix} a & 0 \\ 0 & 0 \end{pmatrix}$, $\begin{pmatrix} 0 & b \\ 0 & 0 \end{pmatrix}$, $\begin{pmatrix} 0 & 0 \\ c & 0 \end{pmatrix}$, or $\begin{pmatrix} 0 & 0 \\ 0 & d \end{pmatrix}$. There are $4(p-1)$ such matrices.

Finally, there is the single matrix with all 0 entries, $\begin{pmatrix} 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 \end{pmatrix}$.

So, the total number of elements of $GL_2(\mathbb{F}_p)$ is:

$$\begin{aligned}
&p^4 - (p-1)^3 - 4(p-1)^2 - 4(p-1) - 1 = \\
&\qquad p^4 - (p^3 - 3p^2 + 3p - 1) - (4p^2 - 8p + 4) - (4p - 4) - 1 = \\
&\qquad p^4 - p^3 + 3p^2 - 3p + 1 - 4p^2 + 8p - 4 - 4p + 4 - 1 = \\
&\qquad p^4 - p^3 + (3-4)p^2 + (-3+8-4)p + (1-4+4-1) = \\
&\qquad\qquad p^4 - p^3 - p^2 + p
\end{aligned}$$

as desired. $\square$

8. (3/21/23)

Show that $GL_n(F)$ is non-abelian for any $n \geq 2$ and F.

Proof. To show that $GL_n(F)$ is non-abelian, we need to show that it contains two elements that are noncommutative. By definition of general linear groups, $GL_n(F)$ consists of invertible $n \times n$ matrices whose entries come from the field F. Further, by definition of fields, F contains an additive identity 0 and a multiplicative identity 1. Therefore, if we consider only matrices in $GL_n(F)$ whose entries are 0 or 1 and whose product's entries are 0 or 1 (in $\mathbb{Z}$), these are elements of every $GL_n(F)$ regardless of which F we choose.

Let A be the transpose of the identity matrix and let B be equal to the identity matrix with the final two columns swapped:

$$A = \begin{pmatrix} 0 & 0 & \cdots & 0 & 1 \\ 0 & 0 & \cdots & 1 & 0 \\ \vdots & \vdots & \ddots & \vdots & \vdots \\ 0 & 1 & \cdots & 0 & 0 \\ 1 & 0 & \cdots & 0 & 0 \end{pmatrix}, B = \begin{pmatrix} 1 & 0 & \cdots & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 1 & \cdots & 0 & 0 \\ \vdots & \vdots & \ddots & \vdots & \vdots \\ 0 & 0 & \cdots & 0 & 1 \\ 0 & 0 & \cdots & 1 & 0 \end{pmatrix}.$$

The upper-right entry of AB is the dot product of the first row of A with the last column of B: $0 \cdot 0 + 0 \cdot 0 + \ldots + 0 \cdot 1 + 1 \cdot 0 = 0$.

The upper-right entry of BA is the dot product of the first row of B with the last column of A: $1 \cdot 1 + 0 \cdot 0 + \ldots + 0 \cdot 0 + 0 \cdot 0 = 1$.

Because AB and BA do not contain exactly the same entries, they are not equal matrices. Therefore, A and B do not commute. Further, because for every $n \geq 2$ and every field F, $GL_n(F)$ contains the elements A and B, $GL_n(F)$ is non-abelian. $\square$

9. (3/21/23)

Prove that the binary operation of multiplication of 2×2 matrices is associative.

Proof. Let $A = \begin{pmatrix} a_1 & a_2 \\ a_3 & a_4 \end{pmatrix}, B = \begin{pmatrix} b_1 & b_2 \\ b_3 & b_4 \end{pmatrix}, C = \begin{pmatrix} c_1 & c_2 \\ c_3 & c_4 \end{pmatrix}$.

$$A(BC) = \begin{pmatrix} a_1 & a_2 \\ a_3 & a_4 \end{pmatrix} \left(\begin{pmatrix} b_1 & b_2 \\ b_3 & b_4 \end{pmatrix} \begin{pmatrix} c_1 & c_2 \\ c_3 & c_4 \end{pmatrix} \right) =$$

$$\begin{pmatrix} a_1 & a_2 \\ a_3 & a_4 \end{pmatrix} \begin{pmatrix} b_1c_1 + b_2c_3 & b_1c_2 + b_2c_4 \\ b_3c_1 + b_4c_3 & b_3c_2 + b_4c_4 \end{pmatrix} =$$

$$\begin{pmatrix} a_1(b_1c_1 + b_2c_3) + a_2(b_3c_1 + b_4c_3) & a_1(b_1c_2 + b_2c_4) + a_2(b_3c_2 + b_4c_4) \\ a_3(b_1c_1 + b_2c_3) + a_4(b_3c_1 + b_4c_3) & a_3(b_1c_2 + b_2c_4) + a_4(b_3c_2 + b_4c_4) \end{pmatrix} =$$

$$\begin{pmatrix} (a_1b_1 + a_2b_3)c_1 + (a_1b_2 + a_2b_4)c_3 & (a_1b_1 + a_2b_3)c_2 + (a_1b_2 + a_2b_4)c_4 \\ (a_3b_1 + a_4b_3)c_1 + (a_3b_2 + a_4b_4)c_3 & (a_3b_1 + a_4b_3)c_2 + (a_3b_2 + a_4b_4)c_4 \end{pmatrix} =$$

$$\begin{pmatrix} a_1b_1 + a_2b_3 & a_1b_2 + a_2b_4 \\ a_3b_1 + a_4b_3 & a_3b_2 + a_4b_4 \end{pmatrix} \begin{pmatrix} c_1 & c_2 \\ c_3 & c_4 \end{pmatrix} =$$

$$\left(\begin{pmatrix} a_1 & a_2 \\ a_3 & a_4 \end{pmatrix} \begin{pmatrix} b_1 & b_2 \\ b_3 & b_4 \end{pmatrix} \right) \begin{pmatrix} c_1 & c_2 \\ c_3 & c_4 \end{pmatrix} = (AB)C.$$

□

10. (3/22/23)

Let $G = \{ \begin{pmatrix} a & b \\ 0 & c \end{pmatrix} \mid a, b, c \in \mathbb{R}, a \neq 0, c \neq 0 \}$.

(a) Compute the product of $\begin{pmatrix} a_1 & b_1 \\ 0 & c_1 \end{pmatrix}$ and $\begin{pmatrix} a_2 & b_2 \\ 0 & c_2 \end{pmatrix}$ to show that G is closed under matrix multiplication.

$\begin{pmatrix} a_1 & b_1 \\ 0 & c_1 \end{pmatrix} \begin{pmatrix} a_2 & b_2 \\ 0 & c_2 \end{pmatrix} = \begin{pmatrix} a_1a_2 & a_1b_2 + b_1c_2 \\ 0 & c_1c_2 \end{pmatrix}$. $\mathbb{R}$ is closed under addition and multiplication, so the entries of the matrix product are all in $\mathbb{R}$, and so the product is an element of G.

(b) Find the matrix inverse of $\begin{pmatrix} a & b \\ 0 & c \end{pmatrix}$ and deduce that G is closed under inverses.

The inverse of $\begin{pmatrix} a & b \\ 0 & c \end{pmatrix}$ is the 2×2 matrix $\begin{pmatrix} d & e \\ f & g \end{pmatrix}$ such that $\begin{pmatrix} a & b \\ 0 & c \end{pmatrix} \begin{pmatrix} d & e \\ f & g \end{pmatrix} = \begin{pmatrix} 1 & 0 \\ 0 & 1 \end{pmatrix}$.

Looking at lower-left entry first, we have $0 \cdot d + cf = 0$. We know that c is nonzero, so $f = 0$.

Next, looking at the upper-left entry, we have $ad + b \cdot 0 = 1 \Rightarrow ad = 1$. So $d = 1/a$. Similarly for the lower-right entry, $cg = 1 \Rightarrow g = 1/c$.

Finally, looking at the upper-right entry, we have $ae + bg = ae + b/c = 0$. So $e = -b/ac$. Therefore the inverse matrix is $\begin{pmatrix} 1/a & -b/ac \\ 0 & 1/c \end{pmatrix}$.

(c) Deduce that G is a subgroup of $GL_2(\mathbb{R})$.

From 9., matrix multiplication is associative for 2×2 matrices. As shown in a), G is closed under the operation of matrix multiplication, and in b), inverses of elements in G are also in G. Thus G is a subgroup of $GL_2(\mathbb{R})$.

(d) Prove that the set of elements of G whose diagonal entries are equal (i.e. $a = c$) is also a subgroup of $GL_2(\mathbb{R})$.

Now let H be the set of elements of G whose diagonal entries are equal; that is, matrices of the form $\begin{pmatrix} a & b \\ 0 & a \end{pmatrix}, a \neq 0$.

H is closed under matrix multiplication:
$\begin{pmatrix} a & b \\ 0 & a \end{pmatrix} \begin{pmatrix} c & d \\ 0 & c \end{pmatrix} = \begin{pmatrix} ac & ad + bc \\ 0 & ac \end{pmatrix}$.

From b), the inverse of $\begin{pmatrix} a & b \\ 0 & a \end{pmatrix}$ is $\begin{pmatrix} 1/a & -b/a^2 \\ 0 & 1/a \end{pmatrix}$, which is also in H.

Thus this set is also a subgroup of $GL_2(\mathbb{R})$.

11. (3/23/23)

Let $H(F) = \left\{ \begin{pmatrix} 1 & a & b \\ 0 & 1 & c \\ 0 & 0 & 1 \end{pmatrix} \mid a, b, c \in F \right\}$ — called the *Heisenberg group* over F.

Let $X = \begin{pmatrix} 1 & a & b \\ 0 & 1 & c \\ 0 & 0 & 1 \end{pmatrix}$ and $Y = \begin{pmatrix} 1 & d & e \\ 0 & 1 & f \\ 0 & 0 & 1 \end{pmatrix}$ be elements of $H(F)$.

(a) Compute the matrix product XY and deduce that $H(F)$ is closed under matrix multiplication. Exhibit explicit matrices such that $XY \neq YX$ (so that $H(F)$ is always non-abelian).

$$XY = \begin{pmatrix} 1 & a & b \\ 0 & 1 & c \\ 0 & 0 & 1 \end{pmatrix} \begin{pmatrix} 1 & d & e \\ 0 & 1 & f \\ 0 & 0 & 1 \end{pmatrix} = \begin{pmatrix} 1 & a+d & b+e+af \\ 0 & 1 & c+f \\ 0 & 0 & 1 \end{pmatrix}.$$

Given this product, the only entry that has a different value when the order of multiplication is reversed is the upper-right, which is $b + e + af$ for XY and $b + e + cd$ for YX. So we need to find $af \neq cd$. Let $a = f = 1$ and $c = d = 0$.

Then:

$$XY = \begin{pmatrix} 1 & 1 & b \\ 0 & 1 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & 1 \end{pmatrix} \begin{pmatrix} 1 & 0 & e \\ 0 & 1 & 1 \\ 0 & 0 & 1 \end{pmatrix} = \begin{pmatrix} 1 & 1 & b+e+1 \\ 0 & 1 & 1 \\ 0 & 0 & 1 \end{pmatrix} \text{ and}$$

$$YX = \begin{pmatrix} 1 & 0 & e \\ 0 & 1 & 1 \\ 0 & 0 & 1 \end{pmatrix} \begin{pmatrix} 1 & 1 & b \\ 0 & 1 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & 1 \end{pmatrix} = \begin{pmatrix} 1 & 1 & b+e \\ 0 & 1 & 1 \\ 0 & 0 & 1 \end{pmatrix}.$$

For no $b, e \in F$ is it possible for $b+e$ to equal $b+e+1$. Thus $H(F)$ is non-abelian.

(b) Find an explicit formula for the matrix inverse X^{-1} and deduce that $H(F)$ is closed under inverses.

Suppose $D = \begin{pmatrix} d_{11} & d_{12} & d_{13} \\ d_{21} & d_{22} & d_{23} \\ d_{31} & d_{32} & d_{33} \end{pmatrix}$ such that $XD = I_3$. Carrying out the multiplication, we obtain the following set of equations:

- $d_{11} + ad_{21} + bd_{31} = 1$
- $d_{12} + ad_{22} + bd_{32} = 0$
- $d_{13} + ad_{23} + bd_{33} = 0$
- $d_{21} + cd_{31} = 0$
- $d_{22} + cd_{32} = 1$
- $d_{23} + cd_{33} = 1$
- $d_{31} = 0$
- $d_{32} = 0$
- $d_{33} = 1$

Substituting $d_{31} = d_{32} = 0, d_{33} = 1$ into the first equations, we obtain the following:

- $d_{11} + ad_{21} = 1$
- $d_{12} + ad_{22} = 0$
- $d_{13} + ad_{23} + b = 0$
- $d_{21} = 0$
- $d_{22} = 1$
- $d_{23} + c = 1$

So we have $d_{23} = -c$, and substituting that, as well as $d_{21} = 0, d_{22} = 1$ into the above, we obtain:

- $d_{11} = 1$
- $d_{12} + a = 0$

- $d_{13} - ac + b = 0$

Then $D = \begin{pmatrix} 1 & -a & ac-b \\ 0 & 1 & -c \\ 0 & 0 & 1 \end{pmatrix}$. Since $XD = I_3, D = X^{-1}$, and we see that $H(F)$ is closed under inverses.

(c) Prove the associative law for $H(F)$ and deduce that $H(F)$ is a group of order $|F|^3$.

Since $H(F)$ is closed under matrix multiplication, we can ignore all but the upper-triangular entries (upper-middle, upper-right, and middle-right), since they will always be either 0 or 1.

From a), the upper-middle and middle-right entries of XY are $a+d$ and $c+f$, respectively. If we multiply their product by a third matrix, these entries will be the sum of the respective entries of the three entries, which is associative.

The upper-right entry of XY is $b+e+af$. Let Z be a matrix with upper-triangular entries g, h, i. Then $(XY)Z$ has the upper-right entry $(b+e+af)+h+(a+d)i = b+e+h+af+ai+di$. The upper-right entry of $X(YZ)$ is $(e+h+di)+b+a(f+i) = b+e+h+af+ai+di$. Thus, $(XY)Z = X(YZ)$, and so $H(F)$ is associative.

Since $H(F)$ is closed under matrix multiplication, inverses, and is associative, it is a group. In choosing elements of $H(F)$, we can freely choose from three elements $a, b, c \in F$. Therefore $|H(F)| = |F|^3$.

(d) Find the order of each element of the finite group $H(\mathbb{Z}/2\mathbb{Z})$.

- $\begin{pmatrix} 1 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 1 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & 1 \end{pmatrix}$: 1
- $\begin{pmatrix} 1 & 1 & 0 \\ 0 & 1 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & 1 \end{pmatrix}$: 2
- $\begin{pmatrix} 1 & 0 & 1 \\ 0 & 1 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & 1 \end{pmatrix}$: 2
- $\begin{pmatrix} 1 & 0 & 0 \\ 0 & 1 & 1 \\ 0 & 0 & 1 \end{pmatrix}$: 2
- $\begin{pmatrix} 1 & 1 & 1 \\ 0 & 1 & 0 \\ 0 & 0 & 1 \end{pmatrix}$: 2
- $\begin{pmatrix} 1 & 1 & 0 \\ 0 & 1 & 1 \\ 0 & 0 & 1 \end{pmatrix}$: 3

- $\begin{pmatrix} 1 & 0 & 1 \\ 0 & 1 & 1 \\ 0 & 0 & 1 \end{pmatrix}$: 2
- $\begin{pmatrix} 1 & 1 & 1 \\ 0 & 1 & 1 \\ 0 & 0 & 1 \end{pmatrix}$: 3

(e) Prove that every nonidentity element of the group $H(\mathbb{R})$ has infinite order.

Proof. Let $X = \begin{pmatrix} 1 & a & b \\ 0 & 1 & c \\ 0 & 0 & 1 \end{pmatrix} \in H(\mathbb{R})$. We will show by induction that the upper-middle, upper-right, and middle-right entries of X^n are na, $(n(n-1)/2)ac + nb$, and nc, respectively.

For the base case, $X^1 = X$ has the upper-middle, upper-right, and middle-right entries $a = 1 \cdot a, b = 0 \cdot ac + 1 \cdot b, c = 1 \cdot c$.

For the induction step, suppose for X^n, the relevant entries are na, $(n(n-1)/2)ac + nb$, and nc. Then
$X^{n+1} = X^n X = \begin{pmatrix} 1 & na & (n(n-1)/2)ac + nb \\ 0 & 1 & nc \\ 0 & 0 & 1 \end{pmatrix} \begin{pmatrix} 1 & a & b \\ 0 & 1 & c \\ 0 & 0 & 1 \end{pmatrix} =$
$\begin{pmatrix} 1 & (n+1)a & b + nac + (n(n-1)/2)ac + nb \\ 0 & 1 & (n+1)c \\ 0 & 0 & 1 \end{pmatrix}$. The upper-middle and middle-right entries satisfy the induction hypothesis, and the upper-right entry is:

$$\begin{aligned} b + nac + (n(n-1)/2)ac + nb &= (n + n(n-1)/2)ac + (n+1)b = \\ ((2n + n^2 - n)/2)ac + (n+1)b &= ((n^2+n)/2)ac + (n+1)b = \\ &(n(n+1)/2)ac + (n+1)b. \end{aligned}$$

Thus, X^{n+1} satisfies the induction hypothesis.

Now if $|X| < \infty$, then for some n, $X^n = I_3$. So we need:

$na = (n(n-1)/2)ac + nb = nc = 0$. For na and nc, since $n > 0$, we need $a = c = 0$. Then $nb = 0$, so $b = 0$. Therefore the identity matrix is the only element of $H(\mathbb{R})$ with finite order. □