Math 342 Tutorial
May 21, 2025

Question 1. Prove every integer n with $|n| > 1$ is either prime or can be factored into a product of prime numbers [Hint: use the principle of strong mathematical induction].

We use induction, and we note it suffices to show the result for $n > 0$. Certainly, the result is true for $n = 2$. Next let $n > 2$. If n is prime, we're done. If n is composite, then there exists $a,\, b \neq 1$ such that $n = ab$. But $1 < a,\, b < n$ so that a and b are either prime or a product of prime numbers. But then $n = ab$ is a product of prime numbers. By the principle of strong mathematical induction, the result follows.

Question 2. Use Question 1 to show there are infinitely many prime numbers [Hint. use contradiction and consider the number $N = 1 + p_1 \cdots p_n$ where $p_1, \ldots, p_n$ are the assumed finite number of primes].

Towards a contradiction, assume there are only a finite number of primes, say $p_1, \ldots, p_n$. Define $N = 1 + p_1 \cdots p_n$. From Question 1, either N is a prime or a product of primes. But $N > p_i$ for all $i \in \{1, \ldots, n\}$, hence N cannot be prime. Therefore, N is a product of the primes $p_1, \ldots, p_n$. Observe, however, that no prime $p_1, \ldots, p_n$ can divide N for if some $p_i \mid N$, then $p_i \mid 1$ which cannot be. So N cannot be a product of the primes $p_1, \ldots, p_n$, a contradiction. This establishes the result.

Question 3. The gcd of a multiset $\{a_1, \ldots, a_n\}$ of integers is defined inductively by $(a_1,\, a_2, \ldots, a_n) = (a_1,\, (a_2, \ldots, a_n))$. Show **(a)** the gcd of $\{a_1, \ldots, a_n\}$ is independent of the ordering chosen for the elements of the set, and **(b)** there exists integers $x_1, \ldots, x_n$ such that $(a_1,\, a_2, \ldots, a_n) = x_1 a_1 + \cdots + x_n a_n$.

We prove **(b)**, from which **(a)** follows. Note the logical form of the proposition we are required to prove. We must show for all $n > 1$, the result holds for every multisubset of $\mathbf{Z}$ of cardinality n. We have shown the base case—that is, $n = 2$—in class already. Let $n > 2$, and suppose the result holds for $n - 1$; namely, for every multisubset $\{a_1, \ldots, a_{n-1}\}$ of $\mathbf{Z}$ of cardinality $n - 1$, there exists integers $x_1, \ldots, x_{n-1}$ such that $a_1 x_1 + \cdots + a_{n-1} x_{n-1} = (a_1, \ldots, a_{n-1})$. Let $\{b_1, \ldots, b_n\}$ be an arbitrary multisubset of $\mathbf{Z}$ of cardinality n. From the base case, there exists integers $y_1,\, y_2$ such that

$$(b_1, \ldots, b_n) = (b_1,\, (b_2, \ldots, b_n)) = y_1 b_1 + y_2 (b_2, \ldots, b_n).$$

From the inductive hypothesis, there exists integers $z_2, \ldots, z_n$ such that

$$(b_2, \ldots, b_n) = z_2 b_2 + \cdots + z_n b_n.$$

Putting things together, we have

$$\begin{aligned}(b_1, \ldots, b_n) &= (b_1,\, (b_2, \ldots, b_n)) \\ &= y_1 b_1 + y_2 (b_2, \ldots, b_n) \\ &= y_1 b_1 + y_2 z_2 b_2 + \cdots + y_2 z_n b_n.\end{aligned}$$

Since $\{b_1, \ldots, b_n\}$ was chosen arbitrarily, the result holds for n as well. The result now follows from the principle of mathematical induction.

Question 4. Let p be a prime. Show that if $p \mid ab$ then $p \mid a$ or $p \mid b$.

Suppose that p divides neither a nor b but $p \mid ab$. In particular, $(a,\, p) = (b,\, p) = 1$. Hence, there exists integers w, x, y, and z such that

$$1 = wp + xa = yp + zb.$$

Then

$$1 = (wp + xa)(yp + zb) = wyp^2 + (wzb + xay)p + xzab.$$

Since $p \mid ab$ by assumption, we have that $p \mid wyp^2 + (wzb + xay)p + xzab = 1$, a contradiction. Therefore, p does not divide ab.

Question 5. If $(a,\, b) = 1$, then $(a + b,\, a - b) = 1$ or 2.

Let $d = (a + b, a - b)$. We have that $d \mid a + b$ and $d \mid a - b$. Therefore, $d \mid (a + b) + (a - b) = 2a$ and $d \mid (a + b) - (a - b) = 2b$. By assumption, there exists integers $x,\, y$ such that $ax + by = 1$ so that $2ax + 2bx = 2$. Since $d \mid 2a,\, 2b$, it must be that $d \mid 2ax + 2bx = 2$. Therefore, $d = 1$ or 2 (up to negation).

Question 6. If $(a,\, b) = 1$, then $(a + b,\, a^2 - ab + b^2) = 1$ or 3.

Let $d = (a+b,\, a^2-ab+b^2)$, and note that $d = (a+b,\, a^2-ab+b^2) = (a+b,\, (a+b)^2-3ab) = (a+b,\, 3ab)$. Suppose that $d > 1$ and p is a prime divisor of d. Then $p \mid a + b$, and either $p \mid 3$ or $p \mid a$ or $p \mid b$. If $p \mid a$, then $p \mid (a + b) - a = b$ contradicting the fact that a and b are coprime. Thus, p does not divide a. Similarly, p does not divide b. Hence, p divides 3. But 3 is prime so that $p = 3$. We have, therefore, that $d = 1$ or 3^k for some $k > 0$. Suppose next that $k > 1$. The single prime divisor 3 of $d = 3^k$ must divide $3ab$. But we have already seen that 3 cannot divide a or b, so it must (trivially) divide the remaining factor 3. Inductively, $d = 3^k \mid 3$, contradicting the the assumption that $k > 1$. We finally have that $d = 1$ or 3.

Question 7. If $(a,\, b) = 1$, then $(a^n,\, b^k) = 1$ for all $n,\, k \geqq 1$.

Recall that $(a,\, b) = 1$ if and only if a and b have no common factors that are not 1. Let $n,\, k > 1$ be given, and suppose that $(a^n,\, b^k) = d$ with $d > 1$. Let p be a prime divisor of d. Then $p \mid a^n,\, b^k$; in particular, $p \mid a,\, b$, a contradiction. Therefore, $d = 1$.

Question 8. If $2^n - 1$ is a prime, then n is a prime.

Towards a contradiction, suppose that n is composite, say $n = xy$ with $1 < x,\, y < n$. Then

$$2^{xy} - 1 = (2^x - 1)(2^{x(y-1)} + 2^{x(y-2)} + \cdots + 2^x + 1).$$

However, $2^x - 1 > 1$ since $x > 1$, hence $2^x - 1$ is a nontrivial divisor of $2^n - 1$. This contradicts the assumption that $2^n - 1$ is prime; thus, it must be that n is prime.

Question 9. If $2^n + 1$ is a prime, then n is a power of 2.

Towards a contradiction, suppose that $n = 2^k m$ with $m > 1$ odd. Then

$$2^{2^k m} + 1 = (2^{2^k})^m + 1 = (2^{2^k} + 1)(2^{2^k(m-1)} - 2^{2^k(m-2)} + \cdots - 2^{2^k} + 1).$$

But $2^{2^k} + 1 \geqq 2$. Since $m > 1$, we have that $2^{2^k m} + 1 > 2^{2^k} + 1$ and $2^{2^k(m-1)} - 2^{2^k(m-2)} + \cdots - 2^{2^k} + 1 > 1$. We have exhibited factorization of $2^n + 1$ into a product of two nontrivial divisors contradicting the assumption that $2^n + 1$ is prime. Therefore, $m = 1$ and n is a power of 2.

Question 10. **(a)** Suppose that $(a,\, b) = (c,\, d) = 1$ and $\frac{a}{b} + \frac{c}{d} = n$ is an integer. Show $|b| = |d|$. **(b)** Prove the sum $\sum_{k=1}^{n} \frac{1}{k}$ is not an integer for $n > 1$ [Hint. show the sum can be written as $\frac{a}{b}$ with a and b of opposite parity].

(a) We have that
$$\frac{a}{b} + \frac{c}{d} = \frac{ad + bc}{bd} = n.$$
In particular, we have that $bd \mid ad + bc \Rightarrow b \mid ad + bc \Rightarrow b \mid ad$. Since $(a, b) = 1$, it follows that $b \mid d$. Similarly, $d \mid b$. Thus, $|b| = |d|$.

(b) We claim the sum always evaluates to a fraction $\frac{a}{b}$ with a odd and b even. The proof is by induction on n. For $n = 2$, we have $1 + \frac{1}{2} = \frac{3}{2}$, so the base case holds. Let $n > 2$ be given, and suppose the result holds for all m with $m < n$ and $m < 2$. Partitioning the sum $\sum_{k=1}^{n} \frac{1}{k}$ into whether the denominator is even or odd, we find that
$$\sum_{k=1}^{n} \frac{1}{k} = 1 + \cdots + \frac{1}{k} = \sum_{k=2}^{\lceil n/2 \rceil} \frac{1}{2k - 1} + \frac{1}{2} \sum_{k=1}^{\lfloor n/2 \rfloor} \frac{1}{k}.$$
By our inductive hypothesis, we can write $\frac{1}{2} \sum_{k=1}^{\lfloor n/2 \rfloor} \frac{1}{k}$ as $\frac{a}{b}$ with a odd and b even. Next, observe that $\sum_{k=2}^{\lceil n/2 \rceil} \frac{1}{2k-1} = \frac{f(k)}{(2k-1)!!}$ where $f(k)$ is a polynomial in k. Since $(2k - 1)!!$ is odd, it follows that $\sum_{k=2}^{\lceil n/2 \rceil} \frac{1}{2k-1} = \frac{f(k)}{(2k-1)!!}$ can be written as $\frac{c}{d}$ with d odd. Then
$$\sum_{k=1}^{n} \frac{1}{k} = \frac{c}{d} + \frac{a}{b} = \frac{cb + ad}{db}.$$
Since a and d are odd, ad is odd. Also, cb is even as b is even. Therefore, $cb + ad$ is odd. Finally, db is even as b is even. Thus, the result holds for n as well and the proposition follows by the strong principle of mathematical induction.

Question 11. Prove: **(a)** For every integer k the numbers $2k + 1$ and $9k + 4$ are relatively prime. **(b)** For every integer k, express the gcd of $2k - 1$ and $9k + 4$ as a function of k.

(a) We solve $x(2k + 1) + y(9k + 4) = 1$. This leads to the system $2x + 9y = 0$, $x + 4y$ of linear equations. This system has the unique solution $x = 9$ and $y = -2$. Therefore $9(2k + 1) - 2(9k + 4) = 1$, which shows $(2k + 1, 9k + 4) = 1$.

(b) We have
$$(2k-1,\, 9k+4) = (2k-1,\, 4(2k-1)+(k+8)) = (k+8,\, 2k-1) = (k+8,\, 2(2k-1)-17) = (k+8,\, 17).$$
So $(2k - 1, 9k + 4) = 1$ or 17. But $(2k - 1, 9k + 4) = 17$ if and only if $k = 17m + 9$ for some integer m. In all other cases, $(2k - 1, 9k + 4) = 1$.

Question 12. Prove that for positive integers m and a we have
$$\left(\frac{a^m - 1}{a - 1},\, a - 1\right) = (a - 1,\, m).$$
Let $d = (\frac{a^m-1}{a-1},\, a - 1)$, and observe
$$\begin{aligned}\frac{a^m - 1}{a - 1} &= a^{m-1} + a^{m-2} + \cdots + a + 1\\ &= (a^{m-1} - 1) + (a^{m-2} - 1) + \cdots + (a - 1) + m.\end{aligned}$$
Since $a - 1 \mid a^k - 1$ for $k \geqq 0$, we have that $d \mid m$ whereupon $d \mid (a - 1, m)$. Conversely, since $(a, m) \mid a - 1, m$, it follows that $(a, m) \mid \frac{a^m-1}{a-1}$ and hence $(a, m) \mid (\frac{a^m-1}{a-1}, a - 1) = d$. Thus $d = (a - 1, m)$.