

The Mathematics of Symmetry

Stephan Tornier



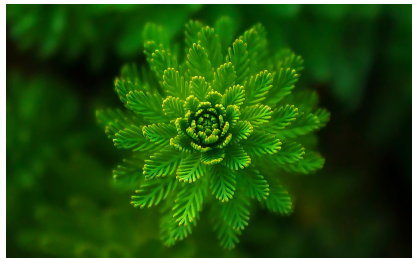
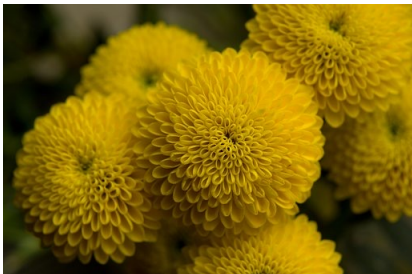
THE UNIVERSITY OF
NEWCASTLE
AUSTRALIA

November 13, 2025

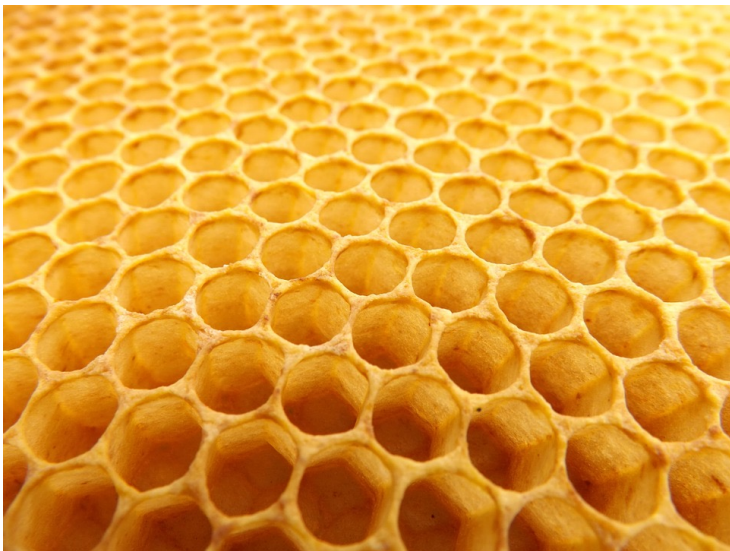
Symmetry

What comes to mind?

Beauty



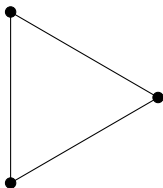
Efficiency



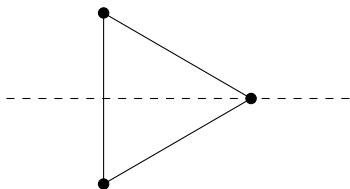
Cost-effectiveness



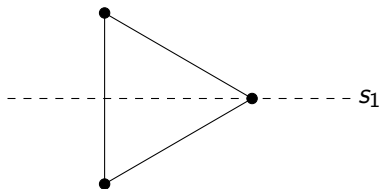
Dynamical approach



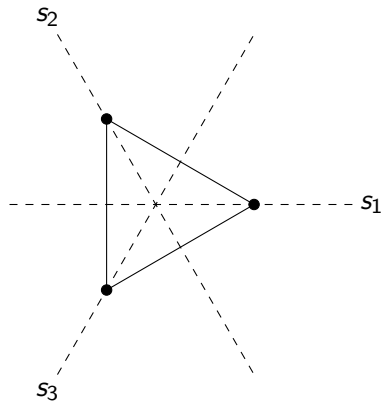
Dynamical approach



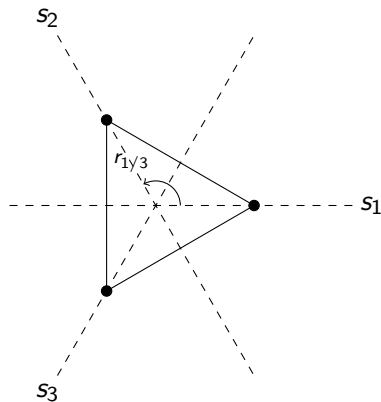
Dynamical approach



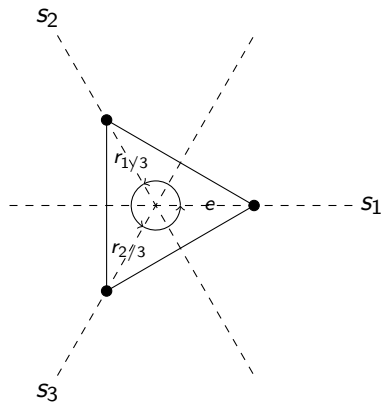
Dynamical approach



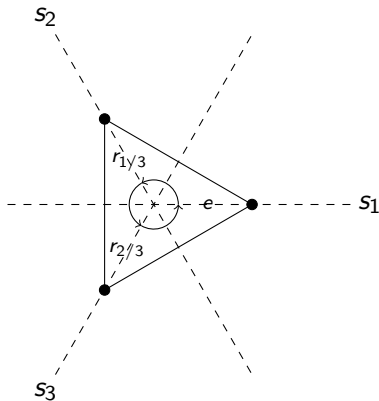
Dynamical approach



Dynamical approach

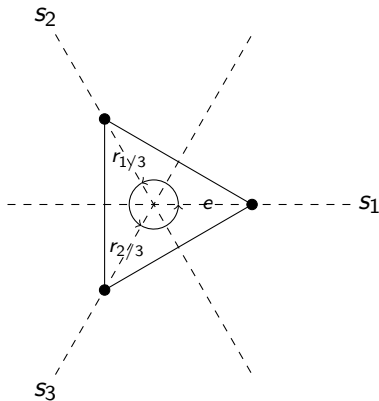


Dynamical approach



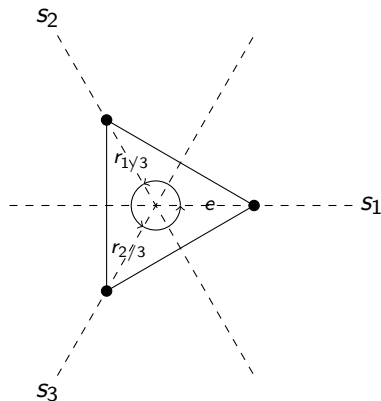
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e						
s_1						
s_2						
s_3						
$r_{1/3}$						
$r_{2/3}$						

Dynamical approach



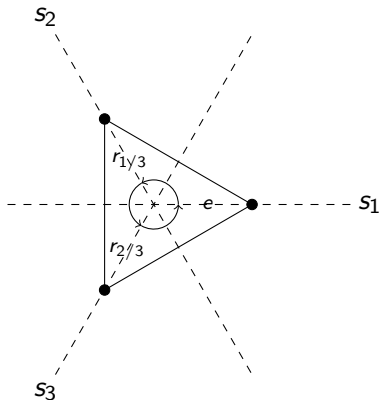
	e	s_1	s_2	s_3	$r_{1/3}$	$r_{2/3}$
e	e					
s_1						
s_2						
s_3						
$r_{1/3}$						
$r_{2/3}$						

Dynamical approach



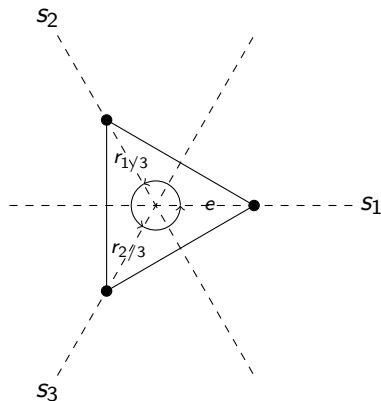
	e	s_1	s_2	s_3	$r_{1/3}$	$r_{2/3}$
e	e	s_1				
s_1						
s_2						
s_3						
$r_{1/3}$						
$r_{2/3}$						

Dynamical approach



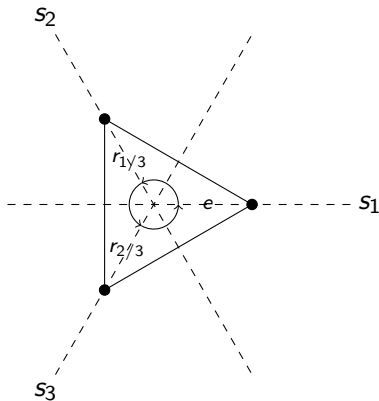
	e	s_1	s_2	s_3	$r_{1/3}$	$r_{2/3}$
e	e	s_1	s_2	s_3	$r_{1/3}$	$r_{2/3}$
s_1						
s_2						
s_3						
$r_{1/3}$						
$r_{2/3}$						

Dynamical approach



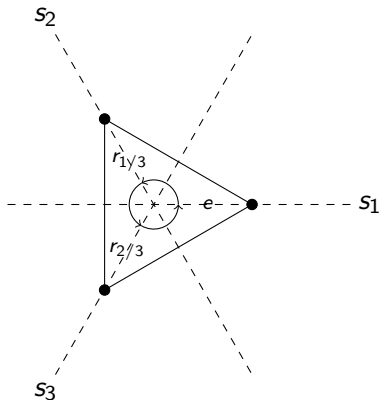
	e	s_1	s_2	s_3	$r_{1/3}$	$r_{2/3}$
e	e	s_1	s_2	s_3	$r_{1/3}$	$r_{2/3}$
s_1	s_1					
s_2	s_2					
s_3	s_3					
$r_{1/3}$	$r_{1/3}$					
$r_{2/3}$	$r_{2/3}$					

Dynamical approach



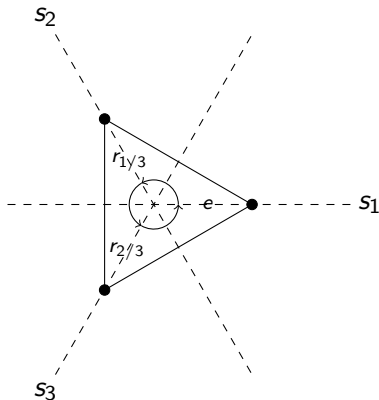
	e	s_1	s_2	s_3	$r_{1/3}$	$r_{2/3}$
e	e	s_1	s_2	s_3	$r_{1/3}$	$r_{2/3}$
s_1	s_1	e				
s_2	s_2					
s_3	s_3					
$r_{1/3}$	$r_{1/3}$					
$r_{2/3}$	$r_{2/3}$					

Dynamical approach



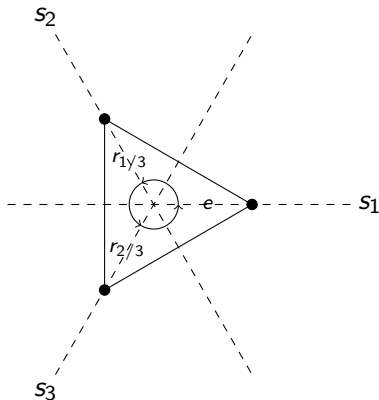
	e	s_1	s_2	s_3	$r_{1/3}$	$r_{2/3}$
e	e	s_1	s_2	s_3	$r_{1/3}$	$r_{2/3}$
s_1	s_1	e				
s_2	s_2		e			
s_3	s_3			e		
$r_{1/3}$	$r_{1/3}$					
$r_{2/3}$	$r_{2/3}$					

Dynamical approach



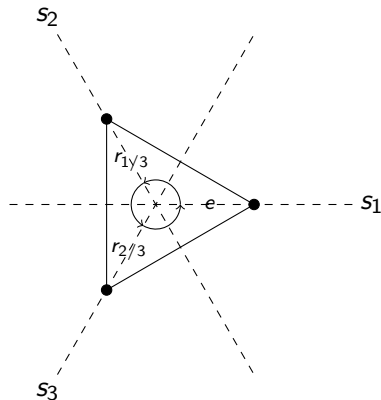
	e	s_1	s_2	s_3	$r_{1/3}$	$r_{2/3}$
e	e	s_1	s_2	s_3	$r_{1/3}$	$r_{2/3}$
s_1	s_1	e				
s_2	s_2		e			
s_3	s_3			e		
$r_{1/3}$	$r_{1/3}$				$r_{2/3}$	
$r_{2/3}$	$r_{2/3}$					

Dynamical approach



	e	s_1	s_2	s_3	$r_{1/3}$	$r_{2/3}$
e	e	s_1	s_2	s_3	$r_{1/3}$	$r_{2/3}$
s_1	s_1	e				
s_2	s_2		e			
s_3	s_3			e		
$r_{1/3}$	$r_{1/3}$				$r_{2/3}$	e
$r_{2/3}$	$r_{2/3}$				e	

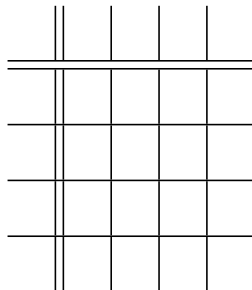
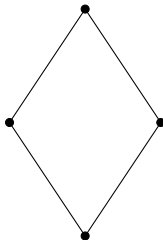
Dynamical approach



	e	s_1	s_2	s_3	$r_{1/3}$	$r_{2/3}$
e	e	s_1	s_2	s_3	$r_{1/3}$	$r_{2/3}$
s_1	s_1	e				
s_2	s_2		e			
s_3	s_3			e		
$r_{1/3}$	$r_{1/3}$				$r_{2/3}$	e
$r_{2/3}$	$r_{2/3}$				e	$r_{1/3}$

Exercise 1

Consider the diamond shape below. Find and give names to all its symmetries, and record their compositions in the table.



Exercise 2

Complete the following table of addition of integers modulo 4.

$+_4$	0	1	2	3
0				
1				
2				
3		0		

Exercise 3

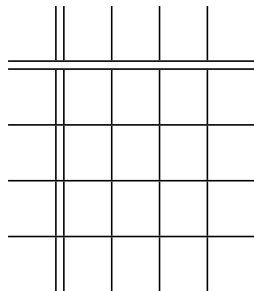
Consider the expression below.

$$a + b + c \times d$$

Choosing numbers for a , b , c and d , the expression takes a value. For example:

$$\begin{array}{c|c|c|c} a & b & c & d \\ \hline -1 & 3 & 2 & 4 \end{array} \rightsquigarrow -1 + 3 + 2 \times 4 = 10,$$

$$\begin{array}{c|c|c|c} a & b & c & d \\ \hline -1 & 4 & 2 & 3 \end{array} \rightsquigarrow -1 + 4 + 2 \times 3 = 9.$$



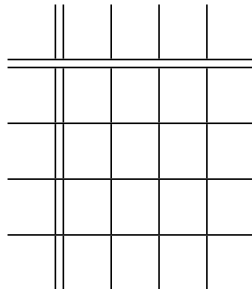
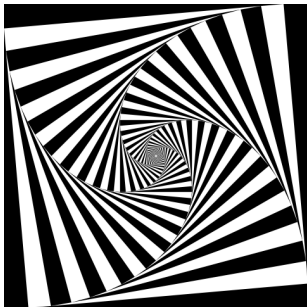
Find and give names to all rearrangements of the letters a , b , c , d that do *not* change the expression value for *any* choice of numbers a , b , c , d .

Record their compositions in the table.

Note: By the example above, swapping b and d is no such rearrangement.

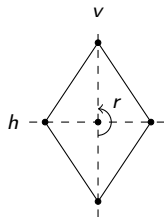
Exercise 4

Consider the image below. Find and give names to all its symmetries, and record their compositions in the table.

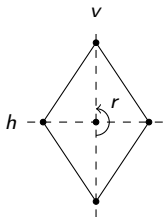


Results & comparison

Results & comparison

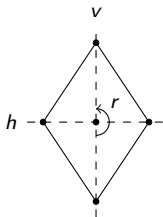


Results & comparison



	e	h	v	r
e	e	h	v	r
h	h	e	r	v
v	v	r	e	h
r	r	v	h	e

Results & comparison

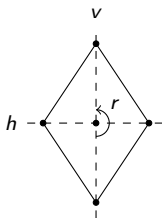


	e	h	v	r
e	e	h	v	r
h	h	e	r	v
v	v	r	e	h
r	r	v	h	e

Addition

modulo 4

Results & comparison



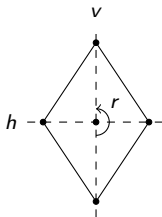
	e	h	v	r
e	e	h	v	r
h	h	e	r	v
v	v	r	e	h
r	r	v	h	e

Addition

modulo 4

	0	1	2	3
0	0	1	2	3
1	1	2	3	0
2	2	3	0	1
3	3	0	1	2

Results & comparison



	<i>e</i>	<i>h</i>	<i>v</i>	<i>r</i>
<i>e</i>	<i>e</i>	<i>h</i>	<i>v</i>	<i>r</i>
<i>h</i>	<i>h</i>	<i>e</i>	<i>r</i>	<i>v</i>
<i>v</i>	<i>v</i>	<i>r</i>	<i>e</i>	<i>h</i>
<i>r</i>	<i>r</i>	<i>v</i>	<i>h</i>	<i>e</i>

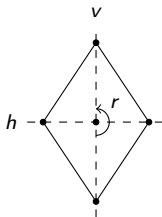
$$\begin{array}{c}
 \overset{b}{\curvearrowright} \\
 a + b + c \times d \\
 \underset{s}{\curvearrowleft} \quad \quad \quad \underset{t}{\curvearrowleft}
 \end{array}$$

Addition

modulo 4

	0	1	2	3
0	0	1	2	3
1	1	2	3	0
2	2	3	0	1
3	3	0	1	2

Results & comparison



	e	h	v	r
e	e	h	v	r
h	h	e	r	v
v	v	r	e	h
r	r	v	h	e

$$\begin{array}{c}
 \overset{b}{\curvearrowright} \\
 a + b + c \times d \\
 \underset{s}{\curvearrowleft} \qquad \underset{t}{\curvearrowleft}
 \end{array}$$

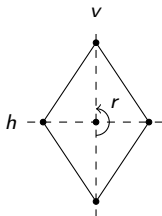
	e	s	t	b
e	e	s	t	b
s	s	e	b	t
t	t	b	e	s
b	b	t	s	e

Addition

modulo 4

	0	1	2	3
0	0	1	2	3
1	1	2	3	0
2	2	3	0	1
3	3	0	1	2

Results & comparison



	e	h	v	r
e	e	h	v	r
h	h	e	r	v
v	v	r	e	h
r	r	v	h	e

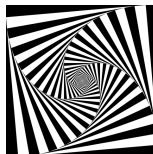
$$\begin{array}{c}
 b \\
 \curvearrowright \\
 a + b + c \times d \\
 \curvearrowleft \\
 s
 \end{array}
 \quad
 \begin{array}{c}
 b \\
 \curvearrowright \\
 \\
 \curvearrowleft \\
 t
 \end{array}$$

	e	s	t	b
e	e	s	t	b
s	s	e	b	t
t	t	b	e	s
b	b	t	s	e

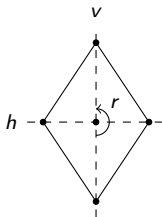
Addition

modulo 4

	0	1	2	3
0	0	1	2	3
1	1	2	3	0
2	2	3	0	1
3	3	0	1	2



Results & comparison



	e	h	v	r
e	e	h	v	r
h	h	e	r	v
v	v	r	e	h
r	r	v	h	e

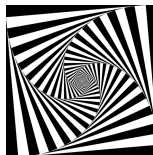
$$\begin{array}{c}
 b \\
 \curvearrowright \\
 a + b + c \times d \\
 \curvearrowleft \\
 s
 \end{array}
 \quad
 \begin{array}{c}
 b \\
 \curvearrowright \\
 \\
 \curvearrowleft \\
 t
 \end{array}$$

	e	s	t	b
e	e	s	t	b
s	s	e	b	t
t	t	b	e	s
b	b	t	s	e

Addition

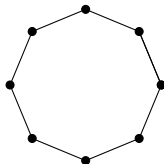
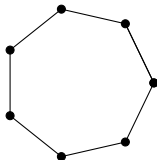
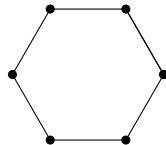
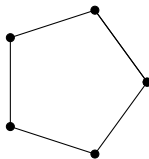
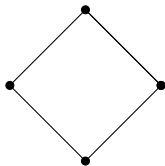
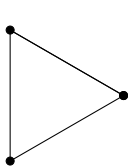
modulo 4

	0	1	2	3
0	0	1	2	3
1	1	2	3	0
2	2	3	0	1
3	3	0	1	2



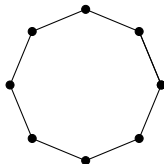
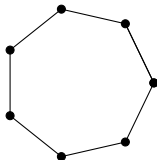
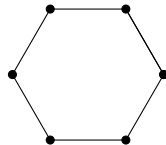
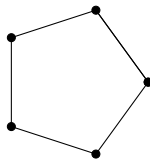
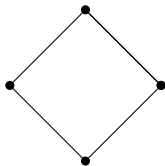
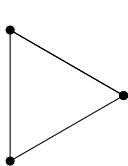
	e	$r_{1/4}$	$r_{2/4}$	$r_{3/4}$
e	e	$r_{1/4}$	$r_{2/4}$	$r_{3/4}$
$r_{1/4}$	$r_{1/4}$	$r_{2/4}$	$r_{3/4}$	e
$r_{2/4}$	$r_{2/4}$	$r_{3/4}$	e	$r_{1/4}$
$r_{3/4}$	$r_{3/4}$	e	$r_{1/4}$	$r_{2/4}$

More symmetry

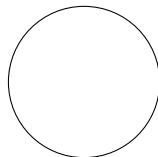


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More symmetry



...

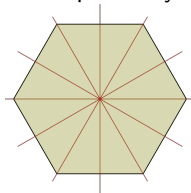


Symmetry in Mathematics

Group Theory

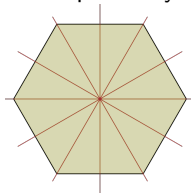
Symmetry in Mathematics

Group Theory



Symmetry in Mathematics

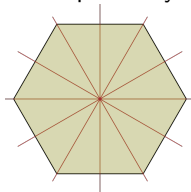
Group Theory



D_6

Symmetry in Mathematics

Group Theory

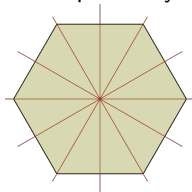


D_6

Linear Algebra

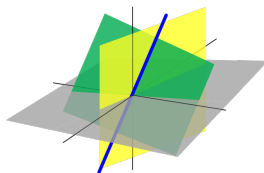
Symmetry in Mathematics

Group Theory



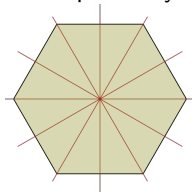
D_6

Linear Algebra



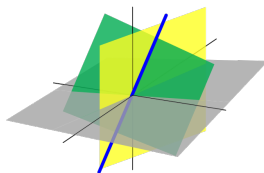
Symmetry in Mathematics

Group Theory



D_6

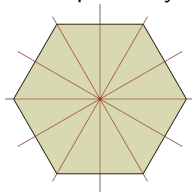
Linear Algebra



$GL(n, \mathbb{R})$

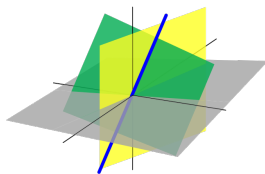
Symmetry in Mathematics

Group Theory



D_6

Linear Algebra

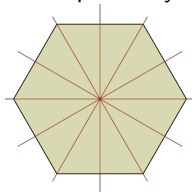


$GL(n, \mathbb{R})$

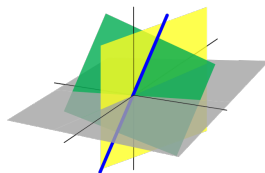
Number Theory

Symmetry in Mathematics

Group Theory

 D_6

Linear Algebra

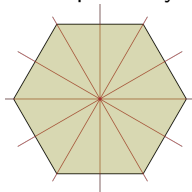
 $GL(n, \mathbb{R})$

Number Theory

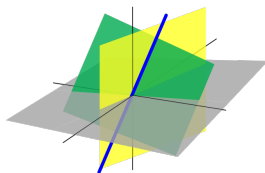
 $K \subseteq E$ fields

Symmetry in Mathematics

Group Theory

 D_6

Linear Algebra

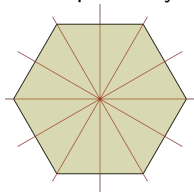
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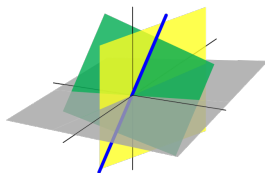
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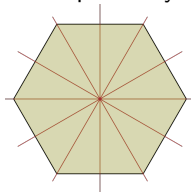
$$K \subseteq E \text{ fields}$$

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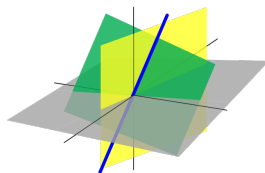
$$\mathbb{F}_p \subseteq \overline{\mathbb{F}_p(X)}$$

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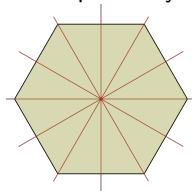
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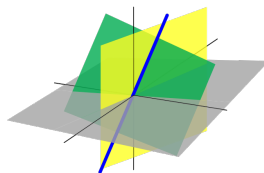
$$\text{Aut}(E/K)$$

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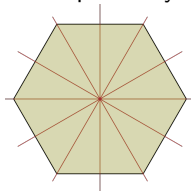
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Differential Equations

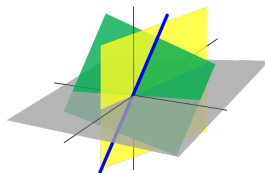
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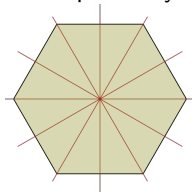
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Differential Equations

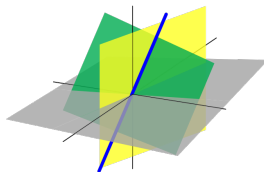
$$\Delta f = 0$$

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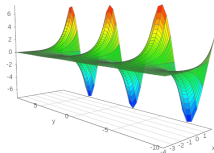
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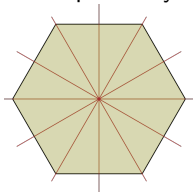
Differential Equations

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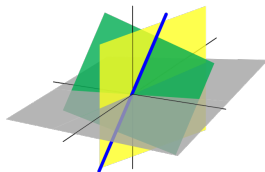


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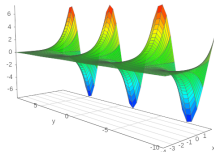
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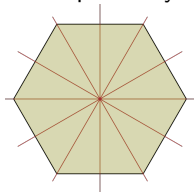
Differential Equations

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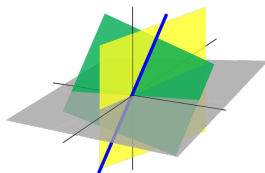

 $O(n)$

Symmetry in Mathematics

Group Theory


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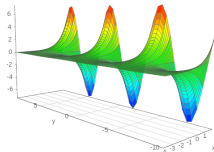
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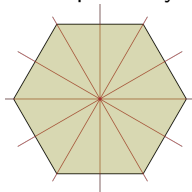
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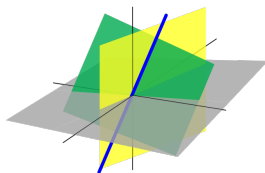
Differential Geometry

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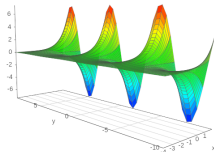
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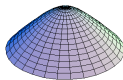
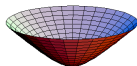
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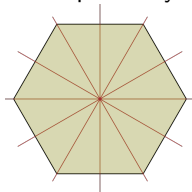

 $O(n)$

Differential Geometry

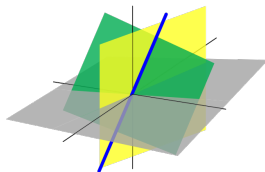


Symmetry in Mathematics

Group Theory


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Linear Algebra


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Number Theory

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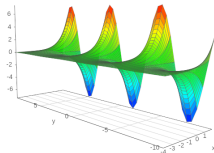
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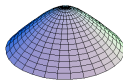
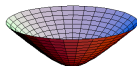
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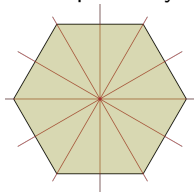

 $O(n)$

Differential Geometry

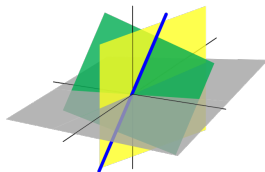

 $O(1, n)$

Symmetry in Mathematics

Group Theory


 D_6

Linear Algebra


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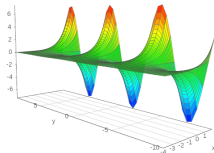
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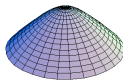
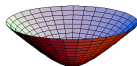
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Differential Equations

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 $O(n)$

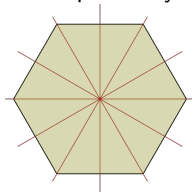
Differential Geometry


 $O(1, n)$

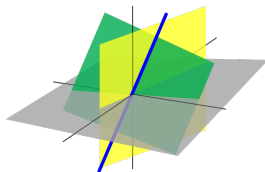
Graph Theory

Symmetry in Mathematics

Group Theory


 D_6

Linear Algebra


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Number Theory

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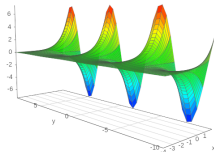
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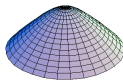
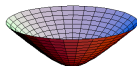
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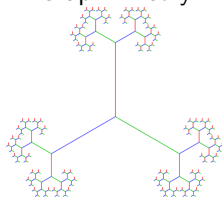
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Differential Geometry

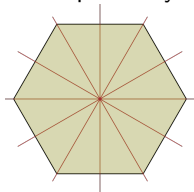

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Graph Theory

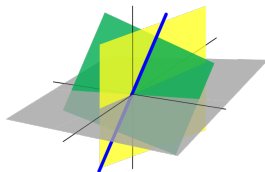


Symmetry in Mathematics

Group Theory


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Linear Algebra


 $GL(n, \mathbb{R})$

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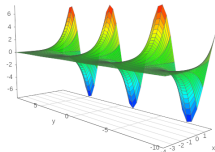
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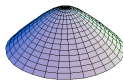
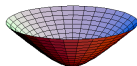
 $\text{Aut}(E/K)$

Differential Equations

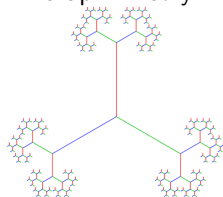
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 $O(n)$

Differential Geometry


 $O(1, n)$

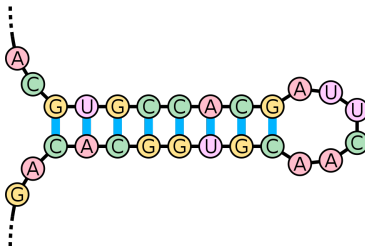
Graph Theory


 $\text{Aut}(T_d)$

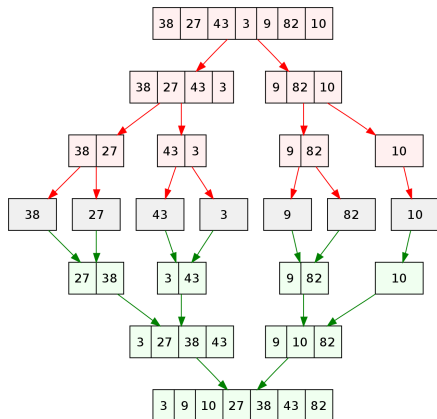
Symmetry in Biology



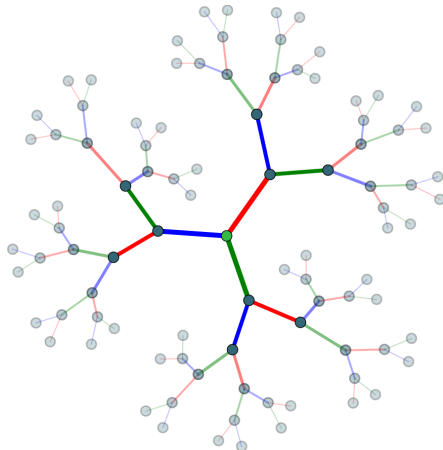
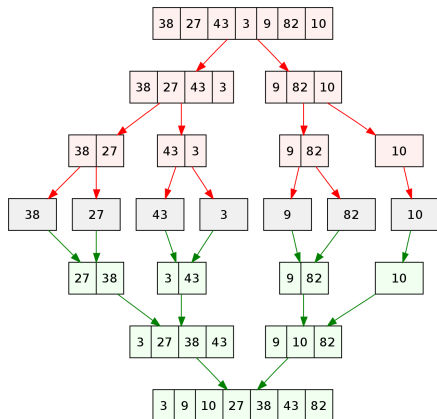
Symmetry in Biology



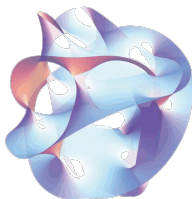
Symmetry in Computer Science



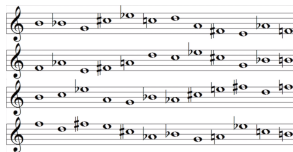
Symmetry in Computer Science



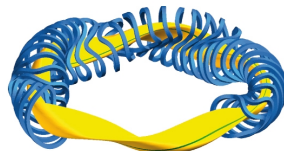
And everywhere else...



Physics



Music



Engineering



Evolution



Information Technology

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