

Cayley Graphs and Semi-Direct Products





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 - Introduction
 - Groups as Symmetries
 - Construction of Symmetry Groups
- - Definitions
 - Drawing Groups
 - The Relationship Between Groups and Cayley Graphs
- - Group Products
 - Construction



What is Group Theory?

group theory a

The study of the symmetries that define the properties of a system.

Figure: Oxford definition of group theory [7]



Groups

A group is a set G together with a binary operation "·" on G that satisfies the following three properties:

- Associativity. For all $a, b, c \in G$ one has $(a \cdot b) \cdot c = a \cdot (b \cdot c)$.
- *Identity.* There exists an element $e \in G$ such that for all $a \in G$ one has $e \cdot a = a$ and $a \cdot e = a$.
- *Inverses.* For each $a \in G$, there exists an element $b \in G$ such that $a \cdot b = e$ and $b \cdot a = e$, where e is the identity element.



The Symmetric Group

Example

The symmetric group S_n is defined as the set of permutations of the set $\{1, 2, 3, ..., n\}$.

Alternatively, it is the set of symmetries of n points.













The Dihedral Group

Example

The *dihedral group* D_n is **defined as** the set of symmetries of the regular n-gon.

For example, the group D_8 consists of the 8 rotations and 8 reflections of the regular octagon.





Reverse-Engineering

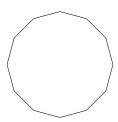
Question: For what object is $\mathbb{Z}/n\mathbb{Z}$ the group of symmetries?



Reverse-Engineering

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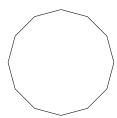
Guess:



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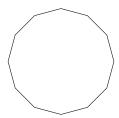
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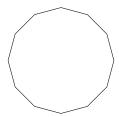
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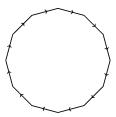


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Idea: Draw a little arrow in the middle of each edge.

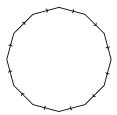
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Symmetries must now preserve the arrows.



More Reverse-Engineering

Question: For what object is \mathbb{Z} the group of symmetries?



More Reverse-Engineering

Question: For what object is \mathbb{Z} the group of symmetries?

Guess:



But...



More Reverse-Engineering

Question: For what object is \mathbb{Z} the group of symmetries?

Guess:

Construction of Symmetry Groups



But... this doesn't work. Although \mathbb{Z} corresponds to translations left or right by n units, we also have reflections about integer or half-integer points are also symmetries of this line.



Preliminaries റ്റ്റേറററ

More Reverse-Engineering

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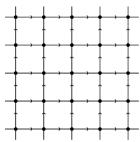
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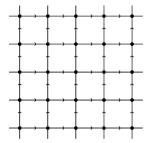


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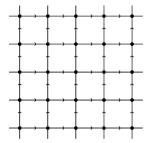


But...this doesn't work. Although every $(a, b) \in \mathbb{Z} \times \mathbb{Z}$ corresponds to a translation (left or right) by a units and (up and down) by b units, we also have reflectional symmetries.

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A Different Technique

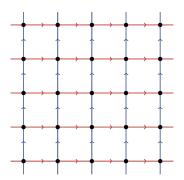
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But...this doesn't work. Although every $(a,b) \in \mathbb{Z} \times \mathbb{Z}$ corresponds to a translation (left or right) by a units and (up and down) by b units, we also have reflectional symmetries. Idea: Colors!

A Different Technique

Question: For what object is $\mathbb{Z} \times \mathbb{Z}$ the group of symmetries?



Symmetries must now preserve the arrows and the colors.



ÖÖGGGG

Where From Here?

I hope to convince you that every finitely presented group is exactly the symmetries of some geometric object, namely, its Cayley graph.

This should make some sense of the definition of group theory as the study of symmetries.

Let's modify our earlier techniques. (Foreshadowing.)

Drawing arrows → Adding directions to edges of a graph

Adding colors Adding labels to edges of a graph



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 - Conclusion



Definitions

What is a Cayley Graph?

Definition

The Cayley graph for a group G with respect to a generating set S is a directed, labeled graph whose vertices correspond to the elements of G, and for each $g \in G$ and $s \in S$ contains an edge from g to gs labeled by s.



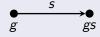
Note: The definition of the Cayley graph depends on the generating set S chosen for G. More on this later.



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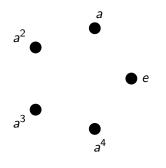


Sometimes, we color-code (or vary the patterns of) the edges by their generator instead of labeling them. Also, if there is an edge with arrows on both sides, we sometimes omit the arrowheads.



A First Example

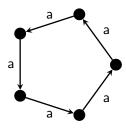
The Cayley graph for $C_5 = \langle a \rangle = \{e, a, a^2, a^3, a^4\}$ with respect to the generating set $\{a\}$ is





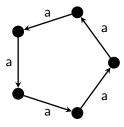
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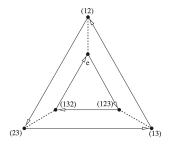
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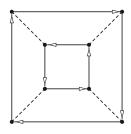
After removing the vertex labels, what are the symmetries (preserving labels and directions) of this graph?

More Cayley Graphs

Can you tell which generators correspond to which edge patterns?



 S_3 with respect to $\{(12), (123)\}$

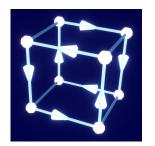


D4 with respect to a rotation and a reflection

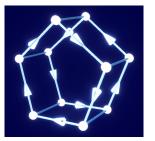
What happens if you look at the graph of the dihedral group in 3D?



Dihedral Groups in 3D



 D_4 with respect to a rotation and a reflection



 D_5 with respect to a rotation and a reflection



 D_6 with respect to a rotation and a reflection

Can you see why these groups might be called "dihedral?"



A More Complicated Cayley Graph

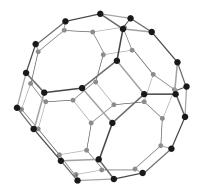


Figure: The Cayley graph of the symmetry group of a cube (generated by three reflections).



Cayley Graphs

Cayley's Theorem

Let Cay(G, S) denote the Cayley graph of a group G with respect to the generating set S.

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$\mathsf{Theorem}$

Every group G with finite generating set S is isomorphic to the (direction, label)-preserving symmetries of Cay(G,S).



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Proof Sketch



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Cayley's Theorem

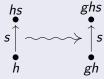
$\mathsf{Theorem}$

Every group G with finite generating set S is isomorphic to the (direction, label)-preserving symmetries of Cay(G, S).

Proof Sketch

Every element $g \in G$ determines a symmetry γ_g of Cay(G, S),

which sends $\stackrel{h}{\bullet} \rightsquigarrow \stackrel{gh}{\bullet}$



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Cayley's Theorem

$\mathsf{Theorem}$

Every group G with finite generating set S is isomorphic to the (direction, label)-preserving symmetries of Cay(G, S).

Proof Sketch

Now we show that every symmetry of Cay(G, S) arises in this way. Claim: If ρ is a symmetry of Cay(G, S), then $\rho = \gamma_g$ for the element g such that $\rho(\bullet_e) = \bullet_g$. Consider the symmetry $\rho \cdot \gamma_{g}^{-1}$. This takes \bullet_{e} to \bullet_{e} and edges

incident to e (since it preserves directions and labels). Hence $\rho \cdot \gamma_e^{-1}$ fixes all vertices adjacent to \bullet_e . But then it will fix edges incident to these, and so on. Thus $\rho \cdot \gamma_g^{-1} = \mathrm{id}$, i.e., $\rho = \gamma_g$.



Uniqueness

Question: Are Cayley graphs unique?



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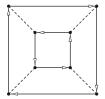
Answer: No, Cay(G, S) depends on the generating set S.

The Relationship Between Groups and Cayley Graphs

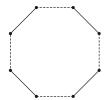
Uniqueness

Question: Are Cayley graphs unique?

Answer: No, Cay(G, S) depends on the generating set S.



 D_4 with respect to a rotation and reflection



 D_4 with respect to two adjacent reflections

But...



The Relationship Between Groups and Cayley Graphs

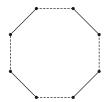
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But... Cayley graphs are unique up to quasi-isometry(!)



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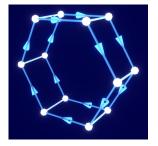
Group Products

Given groups (G, \star) and (H, \triangle) , recall the notion of the direct product $G \times H$, whose binary operation is defined component-wise: $(g_1, h_1) \cdot (g_2, h_2) = (g_1 \star g_2, h_1 \triangle h_2)$.

What does the Cayley graph of $G \times H$ look like? Let's look at the case where G and H are cyclic.



Direct Products

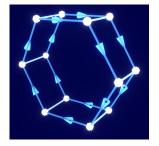


Cayley graph of $C_2 \times C_6$



Cayley graph of $C_3 \times C_6$

Direct Products



Cayley graph of $C_2 \times C_6$



Cayley graph of $C_3 \times C_6$

Let $C_2 = \langle a \rangle$ and $C_6 = \langle b \rangle$. Then multiplying by the generator (a,e) takes us along the white lines and multiplying by (e,b) takes us around the hexagon.

Let's compare the Cayley graph of $C_2 \times C_6$ with that of D_6 .



Construction

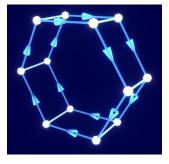
Generalizing the Direct Product

Let's compare the Cayley graph of $C_2 \times C_6$ with that of D_6 .



 $C_2 \times C_6$

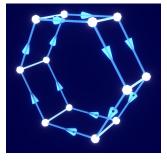




 $C_2 \times C_6$



They are the same, except that we traverse the back hexagon in the opposite direction.



 $C_2 \times C_6$



 $)_6$

Recall that in $C_2 \times C_6$, moving around the hexagon corresponds to multiplying by (e, h) for some h.



That is, we have

$$(e,h)\cdot(a,b)=(a,hb),$$

so the first component is fixed and the second is multiplied by h.

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Construction

Generalizing the Direct Product

That is, we have

$$(e,h)\cdot(a,b)=(a,hb),$$

so the first component is fixed and the second is multiplied by h. What if we relax the condition that we must stay at the same first component? In the general case for two groups G and H, we write

$$(e, h_1) \cdot (g_2, h_2) = (f_{h_1}(g_2), h_1 h_2),$$

where $f_{h_1}(g_2)$ need not be equal to g_2 .



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$$(e, h_1) \cdot (g_2, h_2) = (f_{h_1}(g_2), h_1 h_2),$$

where $f_{h_1}(g_2)$ need not be equal to g_2 . As we vary g_2 , we might expect $f_{h_1}(g_2)$ to vary across all elements of G, so we enforce that f_{h_1} is a bijection for all $h_1 \in H$.



Let's denote our new group by $G \rtimes H$. Since we want our multiplication to be well-defined, we must have

$$(f_{h_1}(g_1) \cdot f_{h_1}(g_2), h_1 h_2) = (f_{h_1}(g_1), e) \cdot (f_{h_1}(g_2), h_1 h_2)$$

$$= (e, h_1) \cdot (g_1, h_1^{-1}) \cdot (e, h_1) \cdot (g_2, h_2)$$

$$= (e, h_1) \cdot (g_1, e) \cdot (g_2, h_2)$$

$$= (e, h_1) \cdot (g_1g_2, h_2)$$

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so $f_{h_1}(g_1) \cdot f_{h_1}(g_2) = f_{h_1}(g_1g_2)$, i.e. f_{h_1} must be a homomorphism.



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so $f_{h_1}(g_1) \cdot f_{h_1}(g_2) = f_{h_1}(g_1g_2)$, i.e. f_{h_1} must be a homomorphism. Since it is also a bijection, f_{h_1} must be an automorphism for all $h_1 \in H$.



Hence we have a map $\varphi \colon H \to Aut(G)$ defined by $h \mapsto f_h$. Moreover,



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$$(f_{h_1 h_2}(g_1), h_1 h_2) = (e, h_1 h_2) \cdot (g_1, e)$$

$$= (e, h_1) \cdot (e, h_2) \cdot (g_1, e)$$

$$= (e, h_1) \cdot (f_{h_2}(g_1), h_2)$$

$$= (f_{h_1}(f_{h_2}(g_1)), h_1 h_2)$$

$$= ((f_{h_1} \circ f_{h_2})(g_1), h_1 h_2)$$

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$$f_{h_1 h_2}(g_1) = (f_{h_1} \circ f_{h_2})(g_1)$$
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Hence we have a map $\varphi \colon H \to Aut(G)$ defined by $h \mapsto f_h$. Moreover,

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so $f_{h_1 h_2}(g_1) = (f_{h_1} \circ f_{h_2})(g_1)$. In other words, the map φ is a homomorphism.



Finally, we derive the group operation for $G \rtimes H$.

$$(g_1, h_1) \cdot (g_2, h_2) = (g_1, e) \cdot (e, h_1) \cdot (g_2, h_2)$$

$$= (g_1, e) \cdot (f_{h_1}(g_2), h_1 h_2)$$

$$= (g_1 f_{h_1}(g_2), h_1 h_2)$$

$$= (g_1 \varphi(h_1)(g_2), h_1 h_2).$$

Therefore, we arrive at the definition of a semi-direct product of groups.



The Definition

Definition

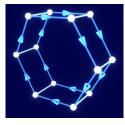
The semi-direct product of two groups G and H with respect to a homomorphism $\varphi \colon H \to Aut(G)$, denoted $G \rtimes_{\varphi} H$, is the set $G \times H$ with the binary operation defined by

$$(g_1, h_1) \cdot (g_2, h_2) = (g_1 \varphi(h_1)(g_2), h_1 h_2).$$

If we choose φ to be the trivial homomorphism, then the semi-direct product reduces to the direct product.



Our Original Example

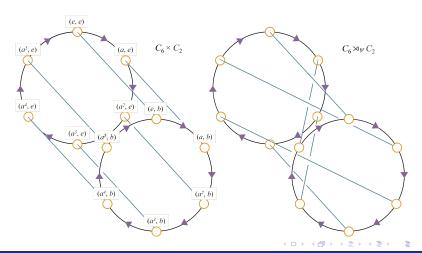


 $C_2 \times C_6 \cong C_6 \times C_2$



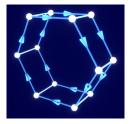
 D_6

A Twist



Construction

Our Original Example

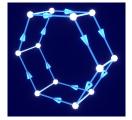


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 D_6

Our Original Example



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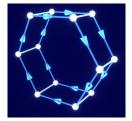


 D_6

If we define $\varphi \colon C_2 \to Aut(C_6) \cong C_2$ to be the nontrivial homomorphism, then $C_6 \rtimes_{\varphi} C_2 \cong D_6!$



Our Original Example



 $C_2 \times C_6 \cong C_6 \times C_2$



 D_6

If we define $\varphi\colon C_2\to Aut(C_6)\cong C_2$ to be the nontrivial homomorphism, then $C_6\rtimes_{\varphi}C_2\cong D_6!$ In this case, φ acts like a twist that reverses the directions of the arrows on one of the hexagons.

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Why Should We Care?

Are Cayley graphs just for show?



Why Should We Care?

Are Cayley graphs just for show? No.



Decision Problems

In 1912, German mathematician Max Dehn posed the following questions.



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- Word Problem. Is it possible to decide which words (i.e. finite products of the generators and their inverses) represent the identity element?
- Conjugacy Problem. Is it possible to decide whether two elements are conjugate?
- Isomorphism Problem. Is it possible to decide whether two groups are isomorphic?

All three problems are...



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- Isomorphism Problem. Is it possible to decide whether two groups are isomorphic?

All three problems are... undecidable, in general. However...



The Decision Problems

Cayley graphs can help. Much of the efforts of geometric group theorists has been to solve the word problem for certain classes of groups.



The Decision Problems

Cayley graphs can help. Much of the efforts of geometric group theorists has been to solve the word problem for certain classes of groups.

If a group G is generated by the set S, then every word w in the generators determines a path in the Cayley graph from \bullet_e to \bullet_w . Conversely, every edge path in the Cayley graph determines a word (where we add inverses if the path travels in the opposite direction of an edge).

Words that represent the identity element \leftrightarrow

Closed edge paths in the Cayley graph



The Decision Problems

Cayley graphs can help. Much of the efforts of geometric group theorists has been to solve the word problem for certain classes of groups.

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Words that represent \leftrightarrow Closed edge paths in the identity element \leftrightarrow the Cayley graph

The latter can be analyzed via geometry and topology!



Group-Theoretic and Geometric Connections

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The shortest path metric on the Cayley graph is called the *word metric*. Treating Cayley graphs (1-complexes) as geometric objects can illumiate geometric properties that are useful in solving the word problem. For example, short-cuts in Cayley graphs in hyperbolic space can be shown to correspond to length-reducing applications of group relations [3].



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My research involves Cayley graphs embedded in $\mathrm{CAT}(0)$ spaces (complexes), which are defined by non-positive curvature.



A Parting Reflection

So, my interest in symmetry has not been misplaced.

H. S. M. Coxeter. upon learning that his brain displayed a high degree of bilateral symmetry



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Jules Poon.

Cayley graphs.



Jules Poon.

Cayley graphs and pretty things.



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