

Principle of Inclusion and Exclusion

Theorem If A_1, A_2, \dots, A_n are finite sets, then

$$|A_1 \cup A_2 \cup \dots \cup A_n| = \alpha_1 - \alpha_2 + \alpha_3 - \dots + (-1)^{n-1} \alpha_n$$

where α_i is the sum of the cardinalities of the intersections of the sets taken i at a time, $1 \leq i \leq n$.

$$|A_1 \cup A_2 \cup \dots \cup A_n| = \alpha_1 - \alpha_2 + \alpha_3 - \dots + (-1)^{n-1} \alpha_n$$

where α_i is the sum of the cardinalities of the intersections of the sets taken i at a time, $1 \leq i \leq n$.

Proof We will show that every element x of the union makes a net contribution of 1 to the right-hand side.

Suppose x belongs to precisely r , $1 \leq r \leq n$, of the sets A_1, A_2, \dots, A_n .

In $\alpha_1 = |A_1| + |A_2| + \dots + |A_n|$,

x contributes r to α_1 .

In α_2 , x contributes 1 to $|A_i \cap A_j|$ when both A_i and A_j are among the r sets which contain x . There are $\binom{r}{2}$ such pairs, and so $\binom{r}{2}$ is the contribution of x to α_2 .

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In general, the contribution of x to α_i , $1 \leq i \leq r$, is $\binom{r}{i}$.

If $i > r$, the contribution of x to α_i is 0.

Hence the net contribution of x to the right-hand side is $\binom{r}{1} - \binom{r}{2} + \dots + (-1)^{i-1} \binom{r}{i} + \dots + (-1)^{r-1} \binom{r}{r}$

$$= \binom{r}{0} = 1$$

$$\text{since } \binom{r}{0} - \binom{r}{1} + \binom{r}{2} + \dots + (-1)^r \binom{r}{r} = 0. \quad \square$$

Example Let $\phi(n)$ denote the number of integers m in the range $1 \leq m \leq n$ such that m and n are relatively prime, i.e., $\gcd(m, n) = 1$.

$\phi(n)$: Euler's phi function
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Euler's totient function

$$\phi(n) = \left| \left\{ m : 1 \leq m \leq n, \gcd(m, n) = 1 \right\} \right|$$

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Suppose x belongs to precisely r , $1 \leq r \leq n$, of the sets A_1, A_2, \dots, A_n .

n	$\phi(n)$
1	1
2	1
3	2
4	2
5	4
6	2

$1 \leq m \leq n$
 $0 \leq m \leq n-1$

n		$\phi(n)$
1	$\{1\}$	1
2	$\{1, \cancel{2}\}$	1
3	$\{1, \cancel{2}, \cancel{3}\}$	2
4	$\{1, \cancel{2}, \cancel{3}, \cancel{4}\}$	2
5	$\{1, \cancel{2}, \cancel{3}, \cancel{4}, \cancel{5}\}$	4
6	$\{1, \cancel{2}, \cancel{3}, \cancel{4}, \cancel{5}, \cancel{6}\}$	2

$1 \leq m \leq n \quad \text{gcd}(m, n) = 1$
 $0 \leq m \leq n-1 \quad \text{gcd}(m, n) = 1$

4	$\{1, \cancel{2}, \cancel{3}, \cancel{4}\}$	2
5	$\{1, \cancel{2}, \cancel{3}, \cancel{4}, \cancel{5}\}$	4
6	$\{1, \cancel{2}, \cancel{3}, \cancel{4}, \cancel{5}, \cancel{6}\}$	2

$\phi(p) = p-1$ if p is a prime

Find $\phi(60)$.

We have $60 = 2^2 \cdot 3 \cdot 5$

$$\text{and hence } \phi(60) = \left| \left\{ m : 1 \leq m \leq 60, \text{gcd}(m, 60) = 1 \right\} \right|$$

$$= \left| \left\{ m : 1 \leq m \leq 60, 2 \nmid m, 3 \nmid m, 5 \nmid m \right\} \right|$$

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$1 \leq m \leq n \quad \gcd(m, n) = 1$
 $0 \leq m \leq n-1 \quad \gcd(m, n) = 1$

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We have $60 = 2^2 \cdot 3 \cdot 5$

$$\begin{aligned} \text{and hence } \phi(60) &= |\{m : 1 \leq m \leq 60, \gcd(m, 60) = 1\}| \\ &= |\{m : 1 \leq m \leq 60, 2 \nmid m, 3 \nmid m, 5 \nmid m\}| \end{aligned}$$

Let $A_i = \{m : 1 \leq m \leq 60, i \mid m\}$, $i = 2, 3, 5$.

$$\text{Then } \phi(60) = |\overline{A_2 \cap A_3 \cap A_5}|$$

$$= |\overline{A_2 \cup A_3 \cup A_5}|$$

$$= 60 - |A_2 \cup A_3 \cup A_5|$$

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$$= 60 - (|A_2| + |A_3| + |A_5| - |A_2 \cap A_3| - |A_3 \cap A_5| - |A_5 \cap A_2| + |A_2 \cap A_3 \cap A_5|)$$

$$= 60 - \left(\frac{60}{2} + \frac{60}{3} + \frac{60}{5} - \frac{60}{2 \cdot 3} - \frac{60}{3 \cdot 5} - \frac{60}{5 \cdot 2} + \frac{60}{2 \cdot 3 \cdot 5} \right)$$

$$= 60 \left(1 - \frac{1}{2} - \frac{1}{3} - \frac{1}{5} + \frac{1}{2 \cdot 3} + \frac{1}{3 \cdot 5} + \frac{1}{5 \cdot 2} - \frac{1}{2 \cdot 3 \cdot 5} \right)$$

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$$= 60 - (|A_2| + |A_3| + |A_5| - |A_2 \cap A_3| - |A_3 \cap A_5| - |A_5 \cap A_2| + |A_2 \cap A_3 \cap A_5|)$$

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Example Let X and Y be sets with $|X|=m$ and $|Y|=n$. Specifically, suppose that $X = \{1, 2, 3, \dots, m\}$ and $Y = \{1, 2, 3, \dots, n\}$. We know that there are n^m functions from X to Y . How many of these functions are onto?



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Let this number be denoted by $\text{onto}(m, n)$.



Clearly, $\text{onto}(m, n) = 0$ if $m < n$.

$\text{onto}(m, m) = m!$ for all $m \geq 1$

$\text{onto}(m, 1) = 1$ for all $m \geq 1$

$\text{onto}(m, 2) = 2^m - 2$ for all $m \geq 2$

Let A_i denote the set of functions from X to Y which do not take on the value i in Y , $1 \leq i \leq n$.

$$\text{Then } \text{onto}(m, n) = |\bar{A}_1 \cap \bar{A}_2 \cap \dots \cap \bar{A}_n|$$

$$= |\overline{A_1 \cup A_2 \cup \dots \cup A_n}|$$

$$= |S| - |A_1 \cup A_2 \cup \dots \cup A_n|$$

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(where S is the set of all functions from X to Y).

$$\text{We have } |A_i| = (n-1)^m$$

$$|A_i \cap A_j| = (n-2)^m \quad \text{for } i \neq j$$

⋮

$$|A_{i_1} \cap A_{i_2} \cap \dots \cap A_{i_r}| = (n-r)^m \quad \begin{array}{l} \text{for distinct } i_1, i_2, \dots, i_r \\ \text{for } 1 \leq r \leq n. \end{array}$$

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Hence $\alpha_1 = |A_1| + |A_2| + \dots + |A_n| = n \cdot (n-1)^m$
 $\alpha_2 = |A_1 \cap A_2| + |A_1 \cap A_3| + \dots + |A_{n-1} \cap A_n|$
 $= \binom{n}{2} (n-2)^m$
 \vdots
 $\alpha_r = \binom{n}{r} (n-r)^m \quad \text{for } 1 \leq r \leq n$

$\alpha_2 = |A_1 \cap A_2| + |A_1 \cap A_3| + \dots + |A_{n-1} \cap A_n|$
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$\therefore \text{onto}(m, n) = n^m - \sum_{r=1}^n (-1)^{r-1} \binom{n}{r} (n-r)^m$
 $= \sum_{r=0}^n (-1)^r \binom{n}{r} (n-r)^m \quad \text{for } m \geq n$

Hence $\alpha_1 = |A_1| + |A_2| + \dots + |A_n| = n \cdot (n-1)^m$
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 $= \sum_{r=0}^n (-1)^r \binom{n}{r} (n-r)^m$ for $m \geq n$

For $m \geq n$, $\text{onto}(m, n)$ is also the number of ways to distribute m distinct objects into n numbered (but otherwise identical) containers with no container left empty.



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$$S(m, n) = \left\{ \begin{matrix} m \\ n \end{matrix} \right\}$$

Stirling number
of the second kind

= # of ways to distribute m distinct objects into n identical containers with no container left empty

$$= \frac{1}{n!} \text{onto}(m, n)$$

$$= \frac{1}{n!} \sum_{r=0}^n (-1)^r \binom{n}{r} (n-r)^m$$