

Graduate Texts in Mathematics 242

Editorial Board

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Graduate Texts in Mathematics

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(continued after index)

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Abstract Algebra

Second Edition

 Springer

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Ruth and Don Harris

Preface

This book is a basic algebra text for first-year graduate students, with some additions for those who survive into a second year. It assumes that readers know some linear algebra, and can do simple proofs with sets, elements, mappings, and equivalence relations. Otherwise, the material is self-contained. A previous semester of abstract algebra is, however, highly recommended.

Algebra today is a diverse and expanding field of which the standard contents of a first-year course no longer give a faithful picture. Perhaps no single book can; but enough additional topics are included here to give students a fairer idea. Instructors will have some flexibility in devising syllabi or additional courses; students may read or peek at topics not covered in class.

Diagrams and universal properties appear early to assist the transition from proofs with elements to proofs with arrows; but categories and universal algebras, which provide conceptual understanding of algebra in general, but require more maturity, have been placed last. The appendix has rather more set theory than usual; this puts Zorn's lemma and cardinalities on a reasonably firm footing.

The author is fond of saying (some say, overly fond) that algebra is like French pastry: wonderful, but cannot be learned without putting one's hands to the dough. Over 1400 exercises will encourage readers to do just that. A few are simple proofs from the text, placed there in the belief that useful facts make good exercises. Starred problems are more difficult or have more extensive solutions.

Algebra owes its name, and its existence as a separate branch of mathematics, to a ninth-century treatise on quadratic equations, *Al-jabr wa'l muqabala*, "the balancing of related quantities", written by the Persian mathematician al-Khwarizmi. (The author is indebted to Professor Boumedienne Belkhouche for this translation.) Algebra retained its emphasis on polynomial equations until well into the nineteenth century, then began to diversify. Around 1900, it headed the revolution that made mathematics abstract and axiomatic. William Burnside and the great German algebraists of the 1920s, most notably Emil Artin, Wolfgang Krull, and Emmy Noether, used the clarity and generality of the new mathematics to reach unprecedented depth and to assemble what was then called modern algebra. The next generation, Garrett Birkhoff, Saunders MacLane, and others, expanded its scope and depth but did not change its character. This history is

documented by brief notes and references to the original papers. Time pressures, sundry events, and the state of the local libraries have kept these references a bit short of optimal completeness, but they should suffice to place results in their historical context, and may encourage some readers to read the old masters.

This book is a second edition of *Algebra*, published by the good folks at Wiley in 1999. I meant to add a few topics and incorporate a number of useful comments, particularly from Professor Garibaldi, of Emory University. I ended up rewriting the whole book from end to end. I am very grateful for this chance to polish a major work, made possible by Springer, by the patience and understanding of my editor, Mark Spencer, by the inspired thoroughness of my copy editor, David Kramer, and by the hospitality of the people of Marshall and Scottsville.

Readers who are familiar with the first version will find many differences, some of them major. The first chapters have been streamlined for rapid access to solvability of equations by radicals. Some topics are gone: groups with operators, Lüroth's theorem, Sturm's theorem on ordered fields. More have been added: separability of transcendental extensions, Hensel's lemma, Gröbner bases, primitive rings, hereditary rings, Ext and Tor and some of their applications, subdirect products. There are some 450 more exercises. I apologize in advance for the new errors introduced by this process, and hope that readers will be kind enough to point them out.

New Orleans, Louisiana, and Marshall, Texas, 2006.

Contents

Preface	vii
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Starred sections and chapters may be skipped at first reading.

I. Groups	1
1. Semigroups	1
2. Groups	8
3. Subgroups	12
4. Homomorphisms	18
5. The Isomorphism Theorems	23
6. Free Groups	27
7. Presentations	31
*8. Free Products	37
II. Structure of Groups	43
1. Direct Products	43
*2. The Krull-Schmidt Theorem	48
3. Group Actions	54
4. Symmetric Groups	58
5. The Sylow Theorems	64
6. Small Groups	67
7. Composition Series	70
*8. The General Linear Group	76
9. Solvable Groups	83
*10. Nilpotent Groups	89
*11. Semidirect Products	92
*12. Group Extensions	95
III. Rings	105
1. Rings	105
2. Subrings and Ideals	109
3. Homomorphisms	112
4. Domains and Fields	116
5. Polynomials in One Variable	119
6. Polynomials in Several Variables	125
*7. Formal Power Series	130
8. Principal Ideal Domains	133
*9. Rational Fractions	139

10. Unique Factorization Domains	141
11. Noetherian Rings	146
*12. Gröbner Bases	148
IV. Field Extensions	155
1. Fields	155
2. Extensions	159
3. Algebraic Extensions	164
4. The Algebraic Closure	165
5. Separable Extensions	169
6. Purely Inseparable Extensions	173
*7. Resultants and Discriminants	176
8. Transcendental Extensions	181
*9. Separability	184
V. Galois Theory	191
1. Splitting Fields	191
2. Normal Extensions	193
3. Galois Extensions	197
4. Infinite Galois Extensions	200
5. Polynomials	204
6. Cyclotomy	211
7. Norm and Trace	215
8. Solvability by Radicals	221
9. Geometric Constructions	226
VI. Fields with Orders or Valuations	231
1. Ordered Fields	231
2. Real Fields	234
3. Absolute Values	239
4. Completions	243
5. Extensions	247
6. Valuations	251
7. Extending Valuations	256
8. Hensel's Lemma	261
9. Filtrations and Completions	266
VII. Commutative Rings	273
1. Primary Decomposition	273
2. Ring Extensions	277
3. Integral Extensions	280
4. Localization	285
5. Dedekind Domains	290
6. Algebraic Integers	294
7. Galois Groups	297
8. Minimal Prime Ideals	300
9. Krull Dimension	304
10. Algebraic Sets	307

11. Regular Mappings	310
VIII. Modules	315
1. Definition	315
2. Homomorphisms	320
3. Direct Sums and Products	324
4. Free Modules	329
5. Vector Spaces	334
6. Modules over Principal Ideal Domains	336
7. Jordan Form of Matrices	342
8. Chain Conditions	346
*9. Gröbner Bases	350
IX. Semisimple Rings and Modules	359
1. Simple Rings and Modules	359
2. Semisimple Modules	362
3. The Artin-Wedderburn Theorem	366
*4. Primitive Rings	370
5. The Jacobson Radical	374
6. Artinian Rings	377
*7. Representations of Groups	380
*8. Characters	386
*9. Complex Characters	389
X. Projectives and Injectives	393
1. Exact Sequences	393
2. Pullbacks and Pushouts	397
3. Projective Modules	401
4. Injective Modules	403
*5. The Injective Hull	408
*6. Hereditary Rings	411
XI. Constructions	415
1. Groups of Homomorphisms	415
2. Properties of Hom	419
*3. Direct Limits	423
*4. Inverse Limits	429
5. Tensor Products	434
6. Properties of Tensor Products	441
*7. Dual Modules	448
*8. Flat Modules	450
*9. Completions	456
*XII. Ext and Tor	463
1. Complexes	463
2. Resolutions	471
3. Derived Functors	478
4. Ext	487
5. Tor	493

6. Universal Coefficient Theorems	497
7. Cohomology of Groups	500
8. Projective Dimension	507
9. Global Dimension	510
*XIII. Algebras	515
1. Algebras over a Ring	515
2. The Tensor Algebra	518
3. The Symmetric Algebra	521
4. The Exterior Algebra	523
5. Tensor Products of Algebras	527
6. Tensor Products of Fields	530
7. Simple Algebras over a Field	534
*XIV. Lattices	539
1. Definitions	539
2. Complete Lattices	543
3. Modular Lattices	545
4. Distributive Lattices	549
5. Boolean Lattices	553
XV. Universal Algebra	559
1. Universal Algebras	559
2. Word Algebras	564
3. Varieties	567
*4. Subdirect Products	574
XVI. Categories	581
1. Definition and Examples	581
2. Functors	586
3. Limits and Colimits	590
4. Completeness	596
*5. Additive Categories	600
6. Adjoint Functors	604
7. The Adjoint Functor Theorem	609
8. Triples	613
9. Tripleability	616
10. Varieties	621
A. Appendix	625
1. Chain Conditions	625
2. The Axiom of Choice	628
3. Ordinal Numbers	631
4. Ordinal Induction	635
5. Cardinal Numbers	639
References	645
Further Readings	650
Index	652