Direct Proof and Counterexample

CS 231

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Vacuous proofs

- Consider an implication: $p \rightarrow q$
- If it can be shown that p is false, then the implication is always true
  - By definition of an implication/conditional
- Note that you are showing that the antecedent is false

Vacuous proof example

- Consider the statement:
  - All criminology majors in CS 231 are female
  - Rephrased: If you are a criminology major and you are in CS231, then you are female
- Since there are no criminology majors in this class, the antecedent is false, and the implication is true

Trivial proofs

- Consider an implication: $p \rightarrow q$
- If it can be shown that q is true, then the implication is always true
  - By definition of an implication
- Note that you are showing that the consequent is true

Trivial proof example

- Consider the statement:
  - If you are in CS231 then you are human (domain is all people)
- Since all people are human, the implication is true regardless

Direct proofs

- Consider an implication: $p \rightarrow q$
  - What if p is true, and q may or may not be true?
  - Show that if p is true, then q is true
- To perform a direct proof, assume that p is true, and show that q must be true

Definitions of Even and Odd

- n is even: $\exists k \in \mathbb{Z}$ such that $n = 2k$
- n is odd: $\exists k \in \mathbb{Z}$ such that $n = 2k+1$

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Direct proof example

- Show that the square of an even number is an even number
  - Rephrased: n is even $\rightarrow n^2$ is even
- Proof:
  - n is even: $n = 2k$, for some $k \in \mathbb{Z}$ (definition of even)
  - $n^2 = (2k)^2 = 4k^2 = 2(2k^2)$
  - $2k^2 \in \mathbb{Z}$
  - As n^2 is 2 times an integer, n^2 is even ■

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Proving Existential Statements

- To prove a statement of the form
  - $\exists x \in D, Q(x)$
- Constructive: find such an x
- Non-constructive:
  - show that the existence of an x that makes $Q(x)$ true is guaranteed by an axiom or a previously proved theorem – no need to find one
  - assume that there is no such x and show a contradiction

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Constructive Existence Proof Example

- Show that a square exists that is the sum of two other squares
  - Proof: $3^2 + 4^2 = 5^2$ ■
- Show that a cube exists that is the sum of three other cubes
  - Proof: $3^3 + 4^3 + 5^3 = 6^3$ ■

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Non-constructive Existence Proof

- Prove that either $2\text{x}10^{500}+15$ or $2\text{x}10^{500}+16$ is not a perfect square
  - A perfect square is the square of an integer
- Proof:
  - The only two perfect squares that differ by 1 are 0 and 1
  - Thus, any other numbers that differ by 1 cannot both be perfect squares
  - Thus, a non-perfect square must exist in any set that contains two numbers that differ by 1 ■
  - Note that we didn't need to specify which one!

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Disproving Universal Statements

- Disproving a statement of the form:
  - $\forall x \in D, P(x) \rightarrow Q(x)$
- Equivalent to showing the negation is true:
  - $\exists x \in D, P(x)$ and $\sim Q(x)$
  - Finding such an x is known as finding a counterexample

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Disproof by Counterexamples

- Every positive integer is the square of another integer
  - $\sqrt{2}$ is not an integer ■
- If the sum of two integers is even, then one of them is even
  - 1+3 = 4 ■

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A note on counterexamples

- You can DISPROVE something by showing a single counter example
  - Find an example to show that something is not true
- You cannot PROVE something by example
- Example: prove or disprove that all numbers are even
  - Disproof by counterexample: 1 is not even
  - (Invalid) proof by example: 2 is even

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Proving Universal Statements

- Exhaustion: list all possibilities

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Proof by Cases

- Show a statement is true by showing all possible cases are true
- Thus, you are showing a statement of the form: $(p_1 \vee p_2 \vee \ldots \vee p_n) \rightarrow q$

  is true by showing that:

  $[(p_1 \vee p_2 \vee \ldots \vee p_n) \rightarrow q] \leftrightarrow [(p_1 \rightarrow q) \wedge (p_2 \rightarrow q) \wedge \ldots \wedge (p_n \rightarrow q)]$

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Proof by cases example

- Prove that $\left|\frac{a}{b}\right| = \frac{|a|}{|b|}$
  - Note that $b \neq 0$
- Cases:
  - Case 1: $a \geq 0$ and $b > 0$
    - Then $|a| = a$, $|b| = b$, and $\left|\frac{a}{b}\right| = \frac{a}{b} = \frac{|a|}{|b|}$
  - Case 2: $a \geq 0$ and $b < 0$
    - Then $|a| = a$, $|b| = -b$, and $\left|\frac{a}{b}\right| = -\frac{a}{b} = \frac{a}{-b} = \frac{|a|}{|b|}$
  - Case 3: $a < 0$ and $b > 0$
    - Then $|a| = -a$, $|b| = b$, and $\left|\frac{a}{b}\right| = -\frac{a}{b} = \frac{-a}{b} = \frac{|a|}{|b|}$
  - Case 4: $a < 0$ and $b < 0$
    - Then $|a| = -a$, $|b| = -b$, and $\left|\frac{a}{b}\right| = \frac{a}{b} = \frac{-a}{-b} = \frac{|a|}{|b|}$ ■

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Control the Cases

- Make sure you get ALL the cases
  - The biggest mistake is to leave out some of the cases
- Don't list extra cases
  - We could have 9 cases in the last example
    - Positive
    - Negative
    - Zero
  - Those additional cases wouldn't have added anything to the proof

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Proving Universal Statements

- Generalizing from the generic particular
  - show that every element of a set satisfies a certain property and that x is an element of such a set

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Example

- If the sum of any two integers is even, so is their difference
  - Let m and n be particular but arbitrarily chosen integers such that $m+n$ is even
  - $m + n = 2k, k \in \mathcal{Z}$
  - $m - n = m + n - 2n = 2k - 2n = 2(k-n)$
  - $k-n \in \mathcal{Z}$
  - $m-n$ is even ■

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Mistakes in proofs

- Modus Badus
  - Fallacy of denying the hypothesis (inverse error)
  - Fallacy of affirming the conclusion (converse error)
- Proving a universal by example
  - You can only prove an existential by example!
- Disproving an existential by example
  - You can only disprove a universal by example!

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Other Pointers

- Directions for writing Proofs
- Common mistakes
- How to get a proof started

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