

Combinatorics

Basic Enumeration

尹一通 Nanjing University, 2026 Spring

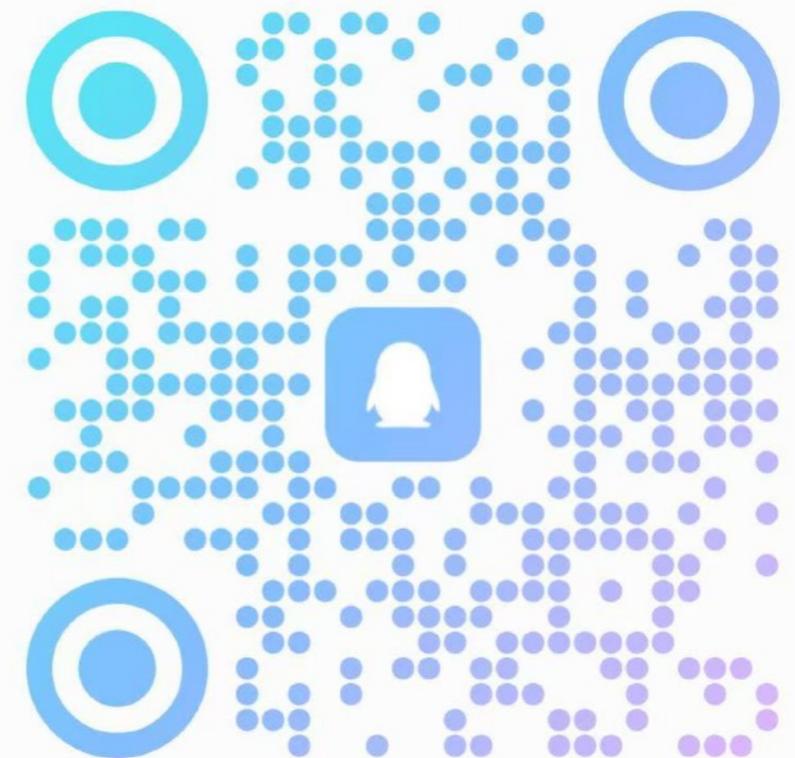
Course Info

- Instructor: 尹一通
 - Email: yinyt@nju.edu.cn
- Office hour:
 - 804 , Tuesday 2-4pm
 - QQ group: 1090691552
- Course homepage:
 - <http://tcs.nju.edu.cn/wiki/>



组合数学（南京大学...

群号: 1090691552

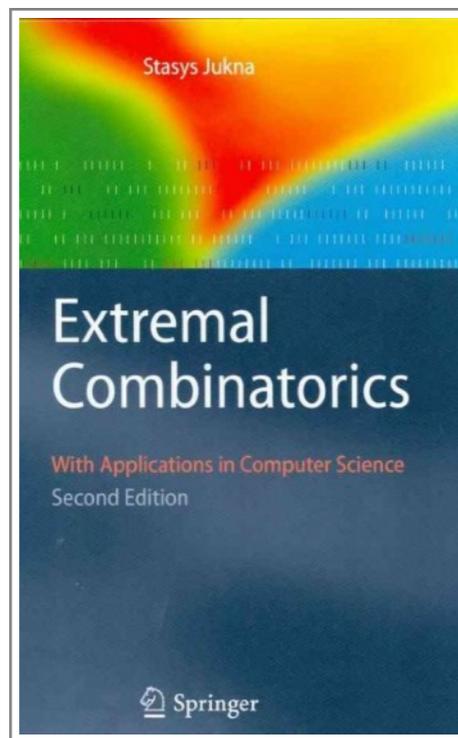
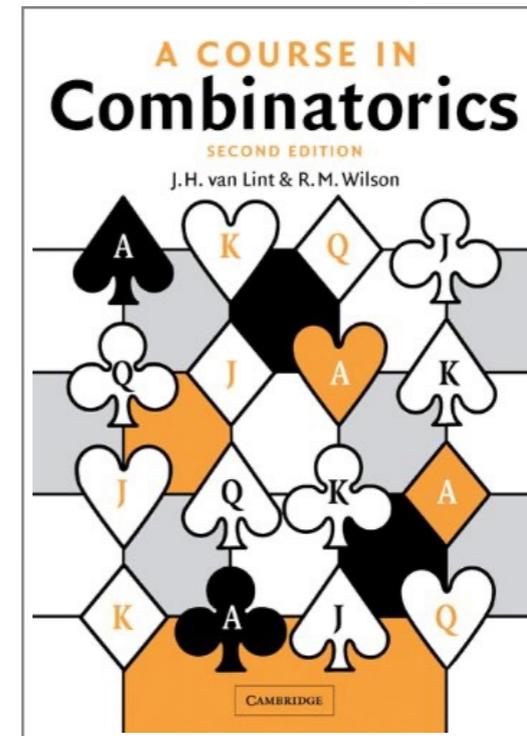


扫一扫二维码，加入群聊



Textbooks

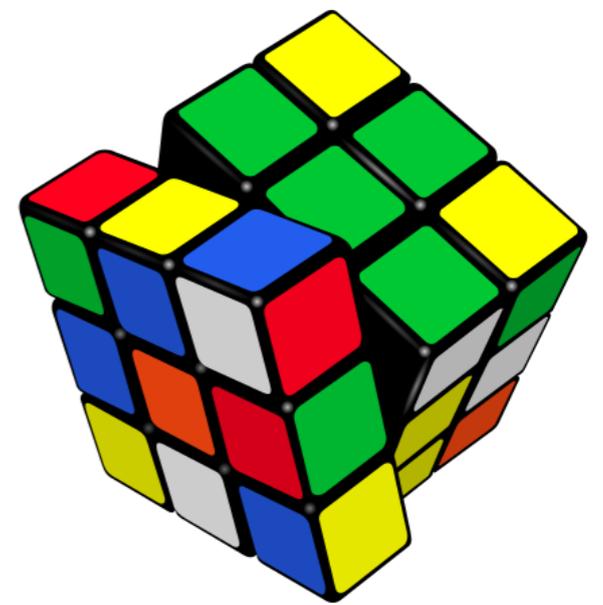
- van Lint and Wilson.
A course in Combinatorics,
2nd Edition.



- Jukna.
Extremal Combinatorics:
with applications in computer science,
2nd Edition.

Combinatorics:

A math for finite structures (not really)



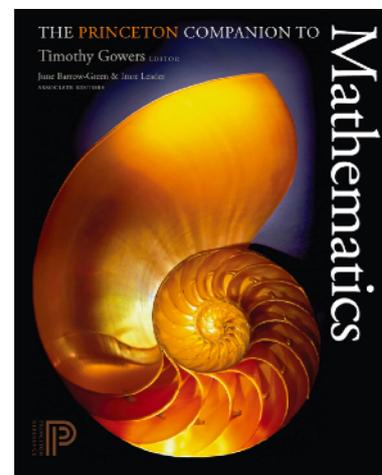
- It is difficult to give rigorous definition of *Combinatorics*.
- According to [Wikipedia](#), subfields of combinatorics include:

Problems • *enumerative combinatorics, extremal combinatorics, combinatorial design*

Tools • *algebraic combinatorics, analytic combinatorics, probabilistic combinatorics, geometric combinatorics, topological combinatorics, arithmetic combinatorics*

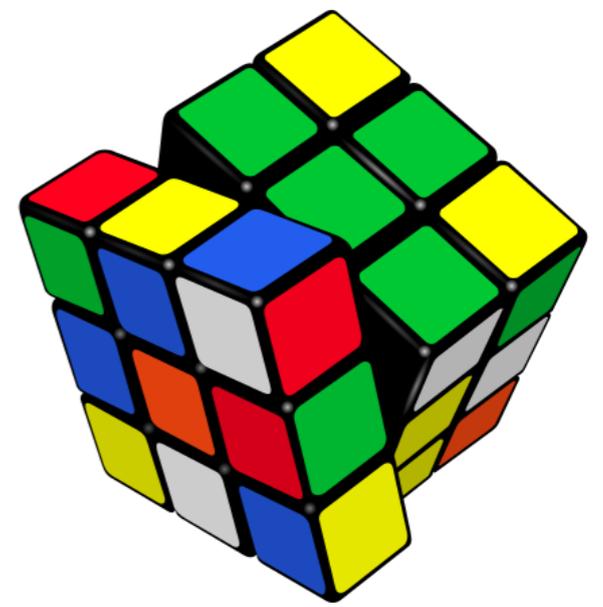
Objects • *partition theory, graph theory, finite geometry, order theory, matroid theory, combinatorics on words, infinitary combinatorics*

- In [The Princeton Companion to Mathematics](#), there are two branches of mathematics on the subject of combinatorics:
 - *Enumerative and Algebraic Combinatorics* (Counting)
 - *Extremal and Probabilistic Combinatorics* (Hungarian)



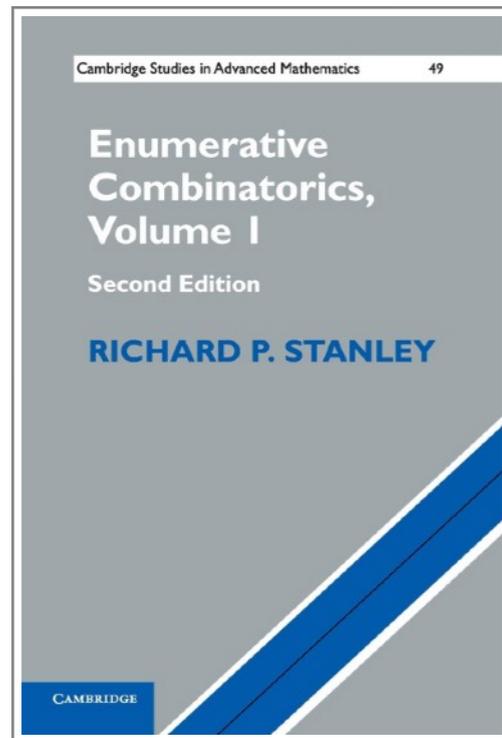
Combinatorics:

by the types of problems it studies



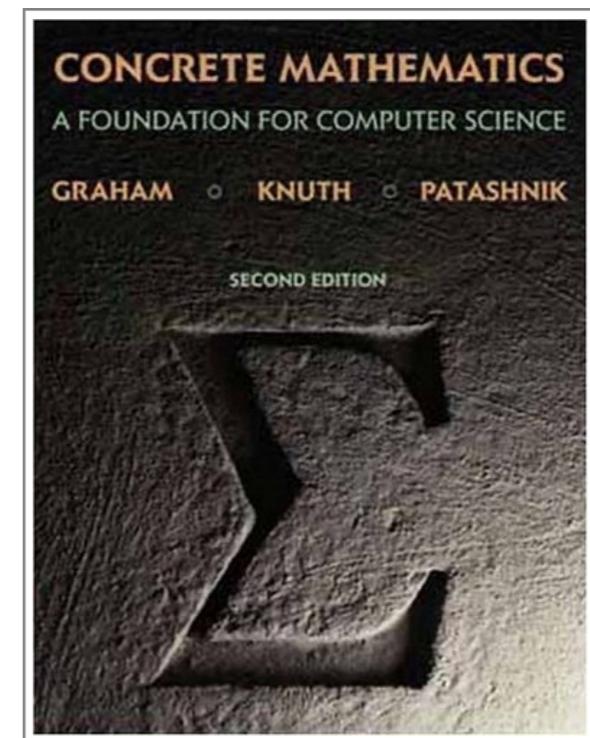
- **Enumeration (counting)** of finite structures (*e.g. solutions/ assignments/arrangements/configurations of finite systems*) satisfying certain given constraints.
- **Existence** of finite structures satisfying certain given constraints.
 - **Extremal** problems: How large/small a finite structure can be to satisfy certain given constraints?
 - **Ramsey** problems: When a finite structure becomes large enough, some regularity must show up somewhere.
- **Construction (design)** of such finite structures.
- **Optimization**: to find the best structure/solution in some sense.

References

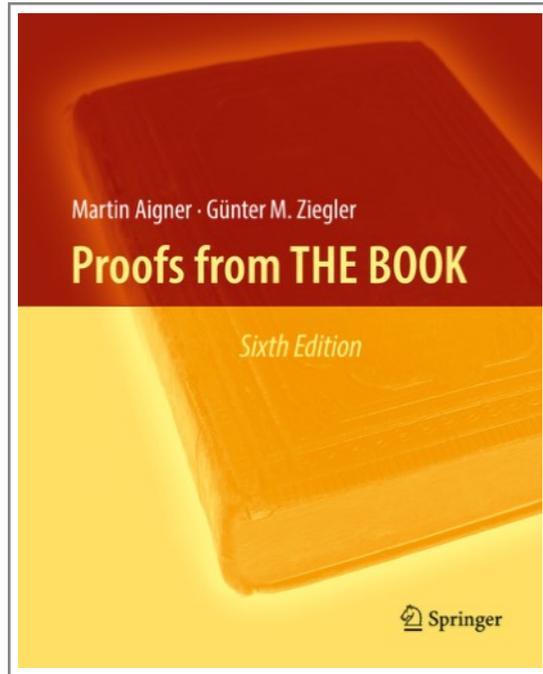


- Stanley.
Enumerative Combinatorics,
Volume 1, 2nd Edition.

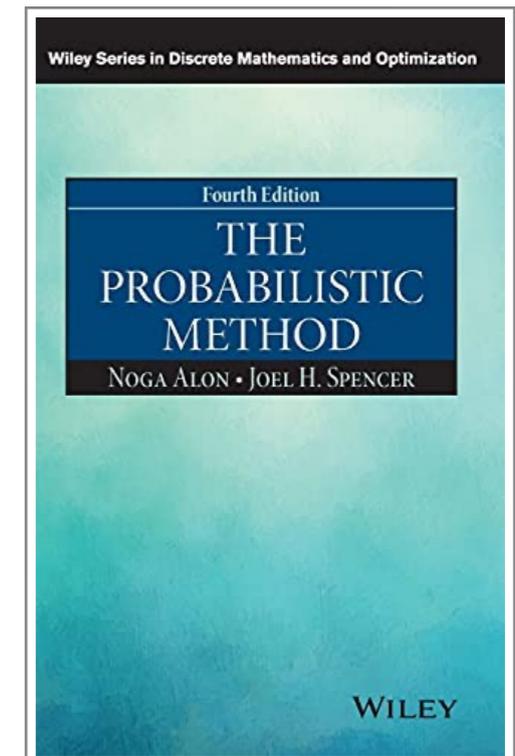
- Graham, Knuth, and Patashnik.
Concrete Mathematics:
A Foundation for Computer Science.



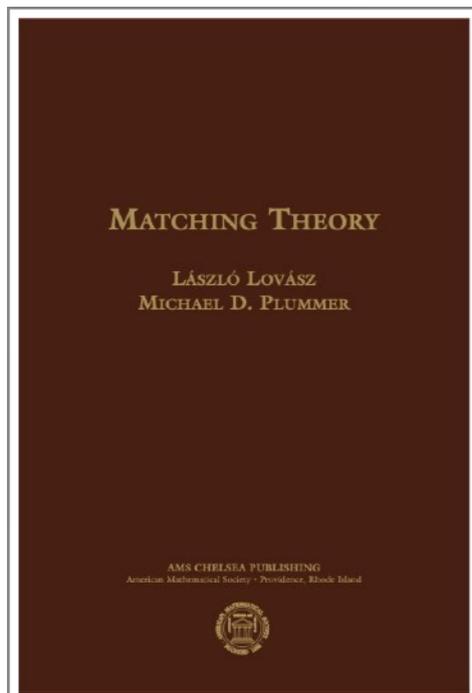
References



- Aigner and Ziegler.
Proofs from THE BOOK,
6th Edition.



- Alon and Spencer.
The Probabilistic Method,
4th Edition.



- Lovász and Plummer.
Matching Theory.

Enumeration

(Counting)

- How many ways are there:
 - to rank n people?
 - to assign m zodiac signs to n people?
 - to choose m people out of n people?
 - to partition n people into m groups?
 - to distribute m yuan to n people?
 - to partition m yuan to n parts?
 -

***Basic
Enumeration:
The Twelfold Way***



Gian-Carlo Rota
(1932-1999)

The Twelfold Way

$$f : N \rightarrow M \quad |N| = n, \quad |M| = m$$

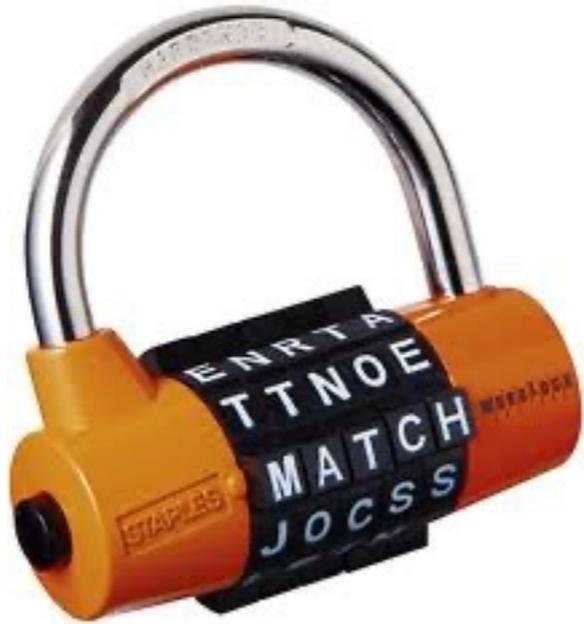
elements of N	elements of M	any f	1-1	on-to
<i>distinct</i>	<i>distinct</i>			
<i>identical</i>	<i>distinct</i>			
<i>distinct</i>	<i>identical</i>			
<i>identical</i>	<i>identical</i>			

Knuth's version (in *TAOCP* vol.4A)

n balls are put into m bins

balls per bin:	unrestricted	≤ 1	≥ 1
n distinct balls, m distinct bins	m^n		
n identical balls, m distinct bins			
n distinct balls, m identical bins			
n identical balls, m identical bins			

Tuples



$$\{1, 2, \dots, m\}$$

$$[m] = \{0, 1, \dots, m-1\}$$

$$[m]^n = \underbrace{[m] \times \dots \times [m]}_n$$

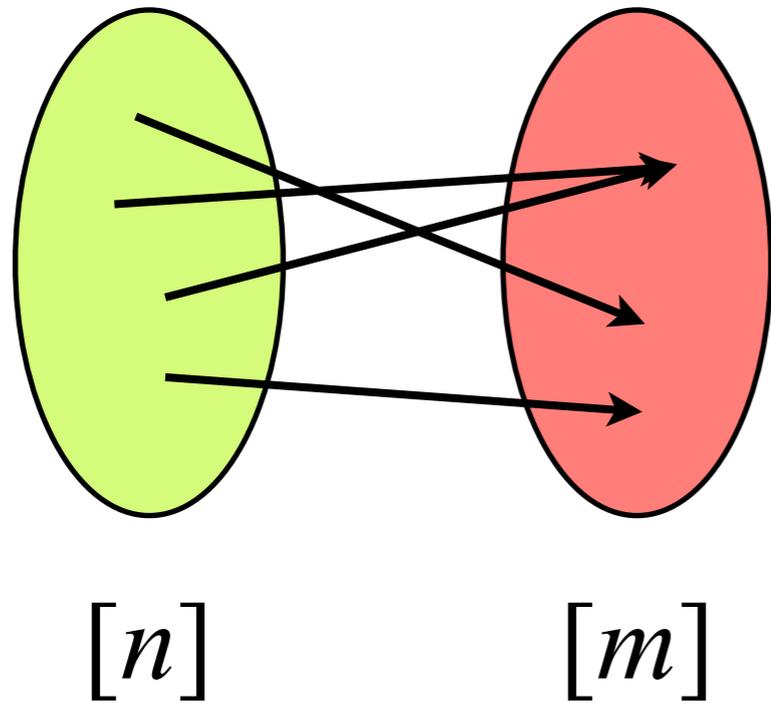
$$|[m]^n| = m^n$$

Product rule:

For finite sets S and T

$$|S \times T| = |S| \cdot |T|$$

Functions



count the # of functions

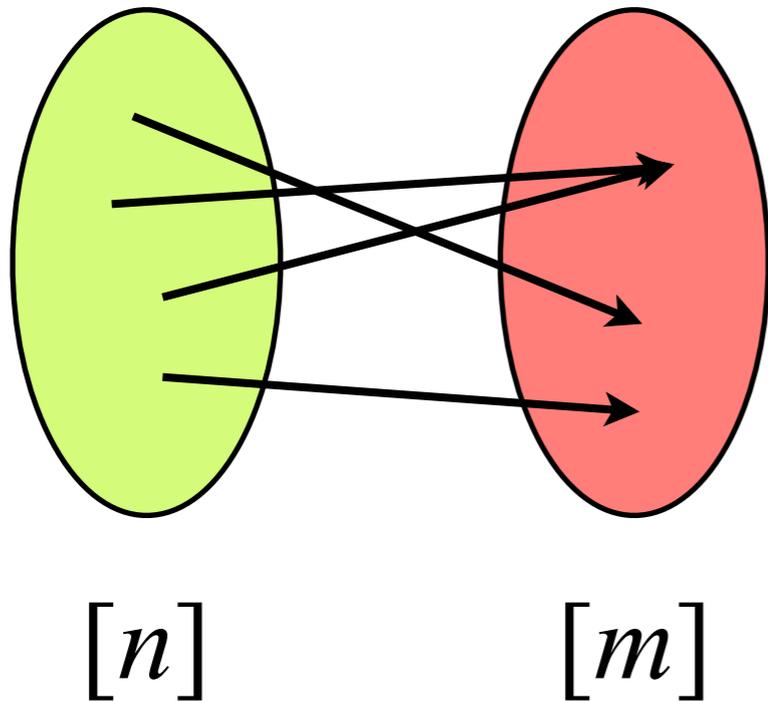
$$f : [n] \rightarrow [m]$$

$$(f(1), f(2), \dots, f(n)) \in [m]^n$$

one-one correspondence

$$[n] \rightarrow [m] \Leftrightarrow [m]^n$$

Functions



count the # of functions

$$f : [n] \rightarrow [m]$$

one-one correspondence

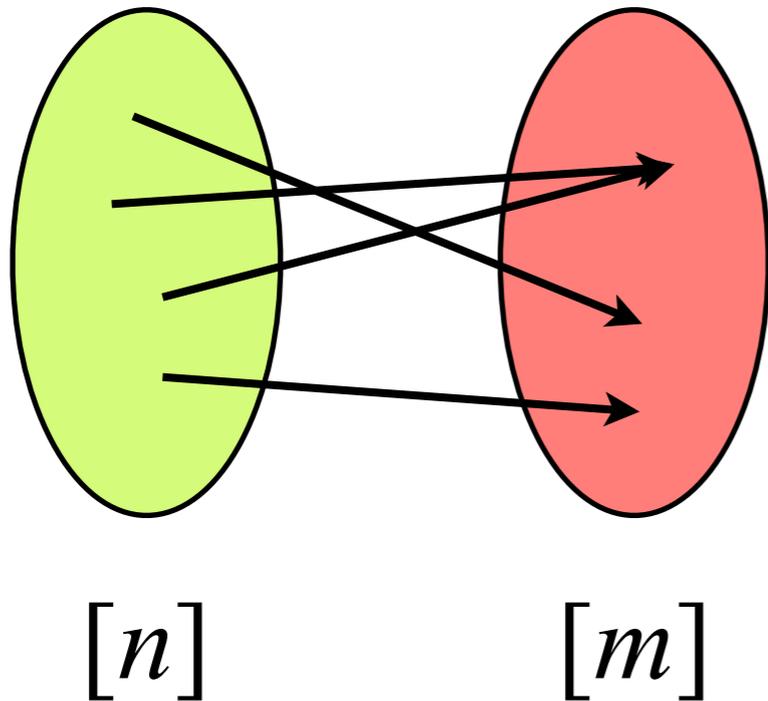
$$[n] \rightarrow [m] \Leftrightarrow [m]^n$$

Bijection rule:

For finite sets S and T

$$\exists \phi : S \xrightarrow[\text{onto}]{1-1} T \implies |S| = |T|$$

Functions



count the # of functions

$$f : [n] \rightarrow [m]$$

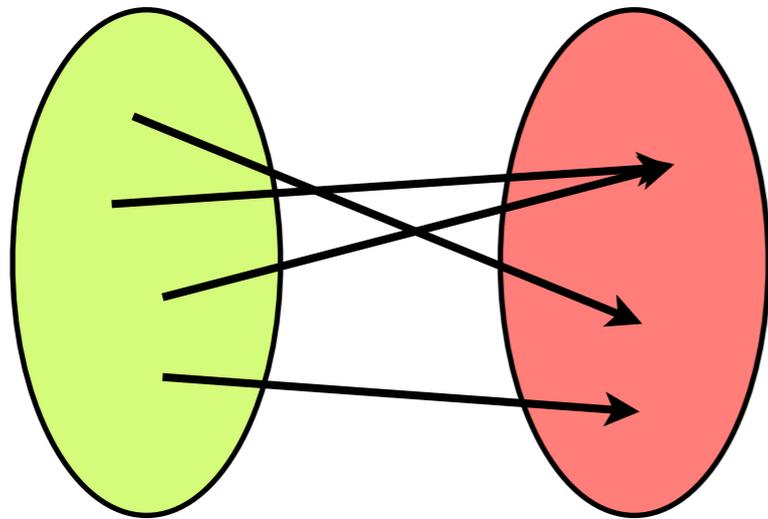
one-one correspondence

$$[n] \rightarrow [m] \Leftrightarrow [m]^n$$

$$|[n] \rightarrow [m]| = |[m]^n| = m^n$$

“Combinatorial proof.”

Injections



$[n]$

$[m]$

count the # of 1-1 functions

$$f : [n] \xrightarrow{1-1} [m]$$

one-to-one correspondence

$$\pi = (f(1), f(2), \dots, f(n))$$

n -permutation: $\pi \in [m]^n$ of **distinct** elements

$$(m)_n = m(m-1) \cdots (m-n+1) = \frac{m!}{(m-n)!}$$

“ m lower factorial n ”

Subsets

subsets of $\{1, 2, 3\}$:

\emptyset ,

$\{1\}, \{2\}, \{3\}$,

$\{1, 2\}, \{1, 3\}, \{2, 3\}$,

$\{1, 2, 3\}$

$$[n] = \{1, 2, \dots, n\}$$

Power set: $2^{[n]} = \{S \mid S \subseteq [n]\}$

$$|2^{[n]}| =$$

Subsets

$$[n] = \{1, 2, \dots, n\}$$

Power set: $2^{[n]} = \{S \mid S \subseteq [n]\}$

$$|2^{[n]}| =$$

Combinatorial proof:

A subset $S \subseteq [n]$ corresponds to a string of n bits, where the i -th bit indicates whether $i \in S$.

Subsets

$$[n] = \{1, 2, \dots, n\}$$

Power set: $2^{[n]} = \{S \mid S \subseteq [n]\}$

$$|2^{[n]}| =$$

Combinatorial proof:

$$S \subseteq [n] \longleftrightarrow \chi_S \in \{0, 1\}^n \quad \chi_S(i) = \begin{cases} 1 & i \in S \\ 0 & i \notin S \end{cases}$$

one-to-one correspondence

Subsets

$$[n] = \{1, 2, \dots, n\}$$

Power set: $2^{[n]} = \{S \mid S \subseteq [n]\}$

$$\left| 2^{[n]} \right| =$$

A not-so-combinatorial proof:

Let $f(n) = \left| 2^{[n]} \right|$

$$f(n) = 2f(n-1)$$

$$f(n) = |2^{[n]}|$$

$$f(n) = 2f(n - 1)$$

$$2^{[n]} = \{S \subseteq [n] \mid n \notin S\} \cup \{S \subseteq [n] \mid n \in S\}$$

$$|2^{[n]}| = |2^{[n-1]}| + |2^{[n-1]}| = 2f(n - 1)$$

Sum rule:

For **disjoint** finite sets S and T

$$|S \cup T| = |S| + |T|$$

Subsets

$$[n] = \{1, 2, \dots, n\}$$

Power set: $2^{[n]} = \{S \mid S \subseteq [n]\}$

$$|2^{[n]}| = 2^n$$

A not-so-combinatorial proof:

Let $f(n) = |2^{[n]}|$

$$f(n) = 2f(n-1)$$

$$f(0) = |2^\emptyset| = 1$$

Basic Rules for Counting

Sum rule:

For **disjoint** finite sets S and T

$$|S \cup T| = |S| + |T|$$

Product rule:

For finite sets S and T

$$|S \times T| = |S| \cdot |T|$$

Bijection rule:

For finite sets S and T

$$\exists \phi : S \xrightarrow[\text{onto}]{1-1} T \implies |S| = |T|$$

Subsets of fixed size

2-subsets of $\{1, 2, 3\}$: $\{1, 2\}, \{1, 3\}, \{2, 3\}$

k -uniform $\binom{S}{k} = \{T \subseteq S \mid |T| = k\}$

$$\binom{n}{k} = \left| \binom{[n]}{k} \right|$$

“ n choose k ”

Subsets of fixed size

$$\binom{n}{k} = \frac{n(n-1)\cdots(n-k+1)}{k(k-1)\cdots 1} = \frac{n!}{k!(n-k)!}$$

of **ordered** k -subsets of $[n]$:

$$n(n-1)\cdots(n-k+1)$$

of permutations of a k -set:

$$k(k-1)\cdots 1$$

Binomial Coefficients

Binomial coefficient: $\binom{n}{k}$

$$\binom{n}{k} = \frac{n!}{k!(n-k)!}$$

1. $\binom{n}{k} = \binom{n}{n-k}$

2. $\sum_{k=0}^n \binom{n}{k} = 2^n$

choose a k -subset \Leftrightarrow
choose its complement

0-subsets + 1-subsets + ...
+ n -subsets = all subsets

Binomial Theorem

Binomial Theorem:

$$(1 + x)^n = \sum_{k=0}^n \binom{n}{k} x^k$$

Proof:

$$(1 + x)^n = \underbrace{(1 + x)(1 + x) \cdots (1 + x)}_n$$

of x^k : choose k factors out of n

Binomial Theorem:

$$(1 + x)^n = \sum_{k=0}^n \binom{n}{k} x^k$$

$$\sum_{k=0}^n \binom{n}{k} = 2^n$$

Let $x = 1$.

$$S = \{x_1, x_2, \dots, x_n\}$$

$$\begin{aligned} & \# \text{ of subsets of } S \text{ of odd sizes} \\ &= \# \text{ of subsets of } S \text{ of even sizes} \end{aligned}$$

Let $x = -1$.

The Twelfefold Way

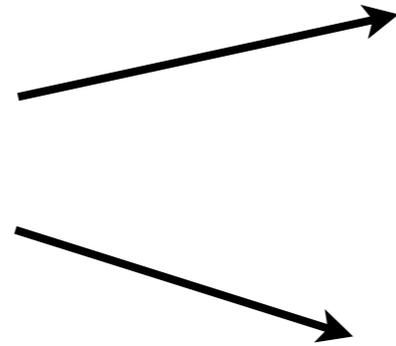
n balls are put into m bins

balls per bin:	unrestricted	≤ 1	≥ 1
<i>n distinct balls, m distinct bins</i>	m^n	$(m)_n$	
<i>n identical balls, m distinct bins</i>		$\binom{m}{n}$	
<i>n distinct balls, m identical bins</i>			
<i>n identical balls, m identical bins</i>			

Compositions of an Integer



n beli



k pirates

How many ways to assign n beli to k pirates?

How many ways to assign n beli to k pirates,
so that each pirate receives **at least 1** beli?

Compositions of an Integer

$$n \in \mathbb{Z}^+$$

k-composition of *n*:

an **ordered** sum of *k* **positive** integers

a *k*-tuple (x_1, x_2, \dots, x_k) satisfying

$$x_1 + x_2 + \dots + x_k = n \text{ and } x_i \in \mathbb{Z}^+$$

Compositions of an Integer

$$n \in \mathbb{Z}^+$$

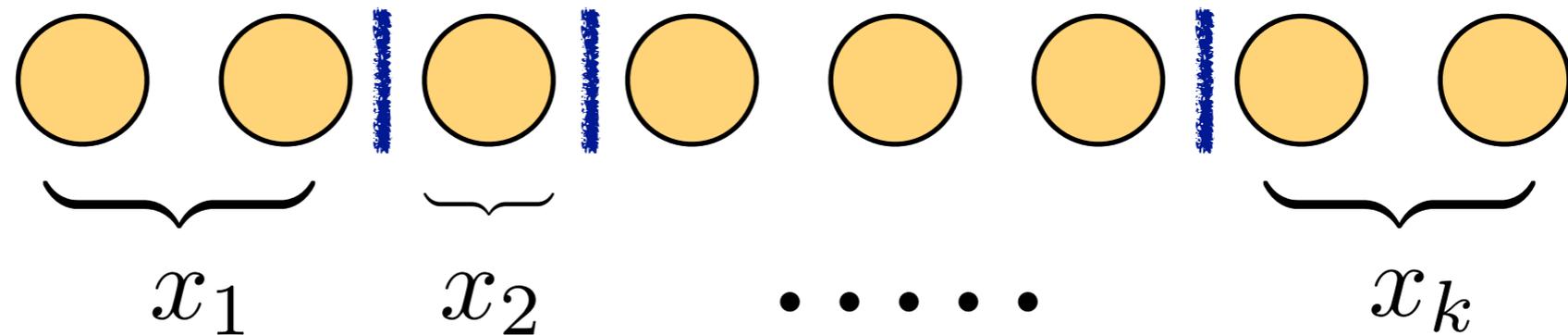
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of *k*-compositions of *n*? $\binom{n-1}{k-1}$

n identical
balls



Compositions of an Integer

a k -tuple (x_1, x_2, \dots, x_k) satisfying

$$x_1 + x_2 + \dots + x_k = n \text{ and } x_i \in \mathbb{Z}^+$$

of k -compositions of n ? $\binom{n-1}{k-1}$

$$\phi((x_1, x_2, \dots, x_k)) = \{x_1, x_1 + x_2, x_1 + x_2 + x_3, \dots, x_1 + x_2 + \dots + x_{k-1}\}$$

ϕ is a 1-1 correspondence between
 $\{k\text{-compositions of } n\}$ and $\binom{\{1, 2, \dots, n-1\}}{k-1}$

Compositions of an Integer

weak k -composition of n :

an **ordered** sum of k **nonnegative** integers

a k -tuple (x_1, x_2, \dots, x_k) satisfying

$$x_1 + x_2 + \dots + x_k = n \text{ and } x_i \in \mathbb{N}$$

Compositions of an Integer

weak k -composition of n :

a k -tuple (x_1, x_2, \dots, x_k) satisfying

$$x_1 + x_2 + \dots + x_k = n \text{ and } x_i \in \mathbb{N}$$

of weak k -compositions of n ? $\binom{n+k-1}{k-1}$

$$(x_1 + 1) + (x_2 + 1) + \dots + (x_k + 1) = n + k$$

a k -composition of $n + k$

1-1 correspondence

Multisets

k -subset of S “ k -combination of S
without repetition”

3-combinations of $\{1, 2, 3, 4\}$

without repetition:

$\{1, 2, 3\}, \{1, 2, 4\}, \{1, 3, 4\}, \{2, 3, 4\}$

with repetition:

$\{1, 1, 1\}, \{1, 1, 2\}, \{1, 1, 3\}, \{1, 1, 4\}, \{1, 2, 2\}, \{1, 3, 3\},$
 $\{1, 4, 4\}, \{2, 2, 2\}, \{2, 2, 3\}, \{2, 2, 4\}, \{2, 3, 3\}, \{2, 4, 4\},$
 $\{3, 3, 3\}, \{3, 3, 4\}, \{3, 4, 4\}, \{4, 4, 4\}$

Multisets

multiset M on set S :

$$m : S \rightarrow \mathbb{N}$$

multiplicity of $x \in S$

$m(x)$: # of repetitions of x in M

cardinality $|M| = \sum_{x \in S} m(x)$

“ k -combination of S with repetition” \longleftrightarrow k -multiset on S

$$\left(\binom{n}{k} \right) : \# \text{ of } k\text{-multisets on an } n\text{-set}$$

Multisets

$$\left(\binom{n}{k} \right) = \binom{n+k-1}{n-1} = \binom{n+k-1}{k}$$

k -multiset on $S = \{x_1, x_2, \dots, x_n\}$

$$m(x_1) + m(x_2) + \dots + m(x_n) = k$$

$$m(x_i) \geq 0$$

a weak n -composition of k

Multinomial Coefficients

permutations of a multiset on k elements
of size n with multiplicities m_1, m_2, \dots, m_k

of reordering of “*multinomial*”

permutations of $\{a, i, i, l, l, m, m, n, o, t, u\}$

assignments of n distinct balls to k distinct bins
with the i -th bin receiving m_i balls

multinomial
coefficient $\binom{n}{m_1, \dots, m_k}$

$$m_1 + m_2 + \dots + m_k = n$$

Multinomial Coefficients

of permutations of a multiset on k elements
of size n with multiplicities m_1, m_2, \dots, m_k

||

of assignments of n distinct balls to k distinct bins
with the i -th bin receiving m_i balls

$$\binom{n}{m_1, \dots, m_k} = \frac{n!}{m_1! m_2! \cdots m_k!}$$

$$\binom{n}{m, n-m} = \binom{n}{m}$$

Multinomial Theorem

Multinomial Theorem:

$$\begin{aligned} & (x_1 + x_2 + \cdots + x_k)^n \\ &= \sum_{m_1 + \cdots + m_k = n} \binom{n}{m_1, \dots, m_k} x_1^{m_1} x_2^{m_2} \cdots x_k^{m_k} \end{aligned}$$

Proof: $(x_1 + x_2 + \cdots + x_k)^n$

$$= \underbrace{(x_1 + x_2 + \cdots + x_k) \cdots \cdots (x_1 + x_2 + \cdots + x_k)}_n$$

of $x_1^{m_1} x_2^{m_2} \cdots x_k^{m_k}$:

assign n factors to k groups of sizes m_1, m_2, \dots, m_k

The Twelfold Way

n balls are put into m bins

balls per bin:	unrestricted	≤ 1	≥ 1
n distinct balls, m distinct bins	m^n	$(m)_n$	
n identical balls, m distinct bins	$\binom{\binom{m}{n}}$	$\binom{m}{n}$	$\binom{n-1}{m-1}$
n distinct balls, m identical bins			
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The Twelfold Way

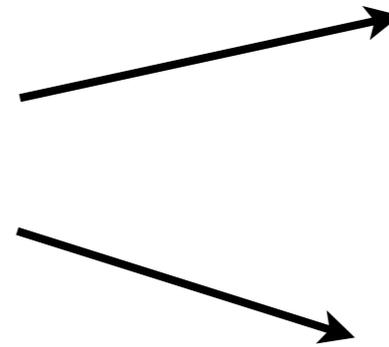
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<i>n identical balls, m distinct bins</i>	$\binom{n+m-1}{m-1}$	$\binom{m}{n}$	$\binom{n-1}{m-1}$
<i>n distinct balls, m identical bins</i>			
<i>n identical balls, m identical bins</i>			

Partitions of a Set



n pirates



k boats

$P = \{A_1, A_2, \dots, A_k\}$ is a partition of S :

- $A_i \neq \emptyset$;
- $A_i \cap A_j = \emptyset$;
- $A_1 \cup A_2 \cup \dots \cup A_k = S$.

Partitions of a Set

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$\left\{ \begin{matrix} n \\ k \end{matrix} \right\}$: # of k -partitions of an n -set

“Stirling number of the second kind”

$B_n = \sum_{k=1}^n \left\{ \begin{matrix} n \\ k \end{matrix} \right\}$: total # of partitions of an n -set

“Bell number”

Stirling Number of the 2nd Kind

$\left\{ \begin{matrix} n \\ k \end{matrix} \right\}$: # of k -partitions of an n -set

$$\left\{ \begin{matrix} n \\ k \end{matrix} \right\} = k \left\{ \begin{matrix} n-1 \\ k \end{matrix} \right\} + \left\{ \begin{matrix} n-1 \\ k-1 \end{matrix} \right\}$$

Case.1: $\{n\}$ is not a partition block

n is in one of the k blocks in a k -partition of $[n-1]$

Case.2: $\{n\}$ is a partition block

the remaining $k-1$ blocks forms a $(k-1)$ -partition of $[n-1]$

The Twelfold Way

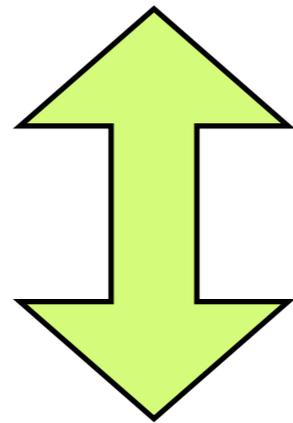
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<i>n identical balls, m distinct bins</i>	$\binom{\binom{m}{n}}$	$\binom{m}{n}$	$\binom{n-1}{m-1}$
<i>n distinct balls, m identical bins</i>	$\sum_{k=1}^m \left\{ \begin{matrix} n \\ k \end{matrix} \right\}$	$\begin{cases} 1 & \text{if } n \leq m \\ 0 & \text{if } n > m \end{cases}$	$\left\{ \begin{matrix} n \\ m \end{matrix} \right\}$
<i>n identical balls, m identical bins</i>			

Surjections

$$f : [n] \xrightarrow{\text{on-to}} [m]$$

$$\forall i \in [m] \\ f^{-1}(i) \neq \emptyset$$



$$(f^{-1}(1), f^{-1}(2), \dots, f^{-1}(m))$$

ordered m -partition of $[n]$

$$m! \left\{ \begin{matrix} n \\ m \end{matrix} \right\}$$

The Twelfefold Way

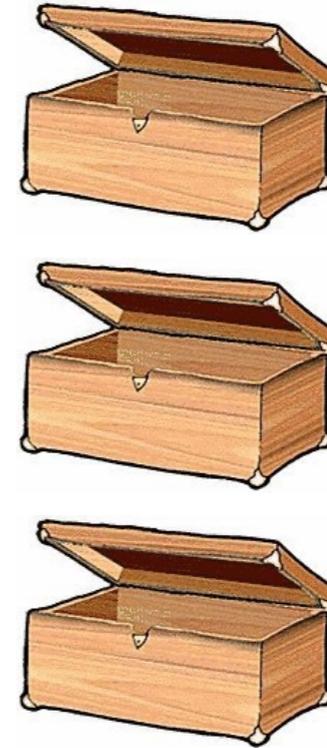
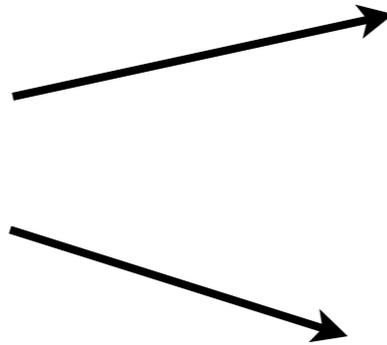
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n identical balls, m distinct bins	$\binom{\binom{m}{n}}$	$\binom{m}{n}$	$\binom{n-1}{m-1}$
n distinct balls, m identical bins	$\sum_{k=1}^m \left\{ \begin{matrix} n \\ k \end{matrix} \right\}$	$\begin{cases} 1 & \text{if } n \leq m \\ 0 & \text{if } n > m \end{cases}$	$\left\{ \begin{matrix} n \\ m \end{matrix} \right\}$
n identical balls, m identical bins			

Partitions of a Number



n beli



k boxes

a **partition** of number n into k parts:

an **unordered** sum of k **positive** integers

Partitions of a Number

a **partition** of n into k parts:

“positive”

$$n = 7$$

$$\{7\}$$

“unordered”

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

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

$$\{1,1,1,4\}, \{1,1,2,3\}, \{1,2,2,2\}$$

$$\{1,1,1,1,3\}, \{1,1,1,2,2\}$$

$$\{1,1,1,1,1,2\}$$

$$\{1,1,1,1,1,1,1\}$$

$p_k(n)$: # of **partitions** of n into k parts

$p_k(n)$: # of partitions of n into k parts

integral solutions to
$$\begin{cases} x_1 + x_2 + \cdots + x_k = n \\ x_1 \geq x_2 \geq \cdots \geq x_k \geq 1 \end{cases}$$

$$p_k(n) = ?$$

$$\begin{cases} x_1 + x_2 + \cdots + x_k = n \\ x_1 \geq x_2 \geq \cdots \geq x_k \geq 1 \end{cases}$$

$$p_k(n) = p_{k-1}(n-1) + p_k(n-k)$$

Case.1 $x_k = 1$

(x_1, \dots, x_{k-1}) is a $(k-1)$ -partition of $n-1$

Case.2 $x_k > 1$

$(x_1 - 1, \dots, x_k - 1)$ is a k -partition of $n-k$

partition

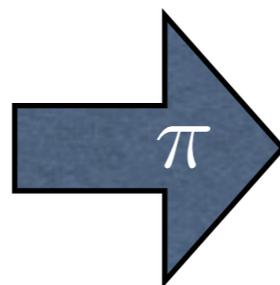
$$\begin{cases} x_1 + x_2 + \cdots + x_k = n \\ x_1 \geq x_2 \geq \cdots \geq x_k \geq 1 \end{cases}$$

composition

$$\begin{cases} x_1 + x_2 + \cdots + x_k = n \\ x_i \geq 1 \end{cases}$$

partition

$$\{x_1, \cdots, x_k\}$$



composition

$$(x_1, \cdots, x_k)$$

permutation

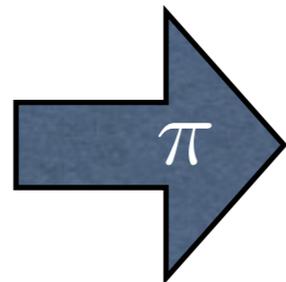
“on-to”

$$k!p_k(n) \geq \binom{n-1}{k-1}$$

partition $\{x_1, \dots, x_k\}$ $y_i = x_i + k - i$

$$\begin{array}{ccccccc}
 x_1 & \geq & x_2 & \geq & \cdots & \geq & x_{k-2} & \geq & x_{k-1} & \geq & x_k & \geq & 1 \\
 +k-1 & & +k-2 & & & & +2 & & +1 & & & &
 \end{array}$$

$$y_1 > y_2 > \cdots > y_{k-2} > y_{k-1} > y_k > 1$$



permutation

composition of $n + \frac{k(k-1)}{2}$

$$(y_1, y_2, \dots, y_k)$$

“1-1”

$$k!p_k(n) \leq \binom{n + \frac{k(k-1)}{2} - 1}{k-1}$$

$$\frac{\binom{n-1}{k-1}}{k!} \leq p_k(n) \leq \frac{\binom{n + \frac{k(k-1)}{2} - 1}{k-1}}{k!}$$

If k is fixed,

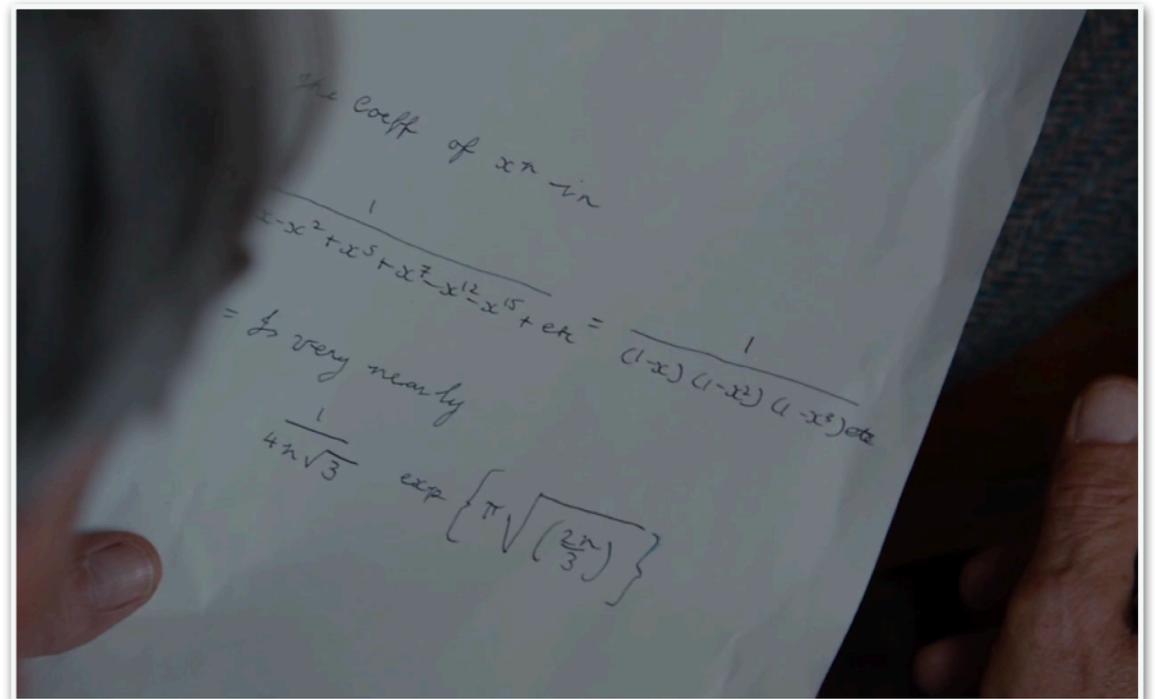
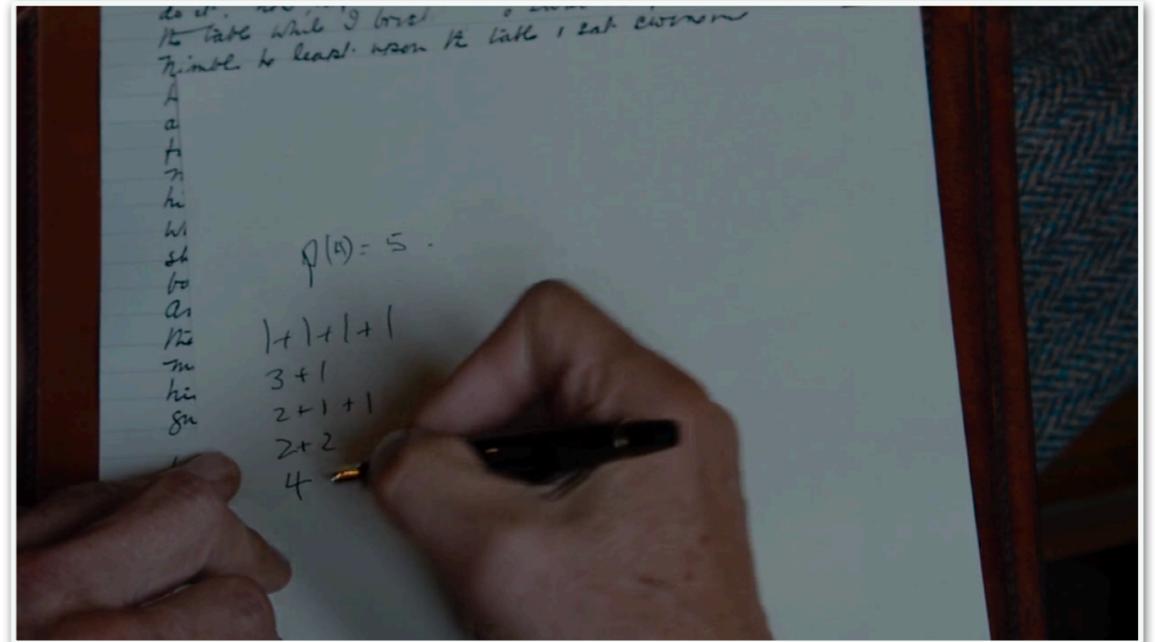
$$p_k(n) \sim \frac{n^{k-1}}{k!(k-1)!} \quad \text{as } n \rightarrow \infty$$



G. H. Hardy
(1877-1947)

Srinivasa
Ramanujan
(1887-1920)

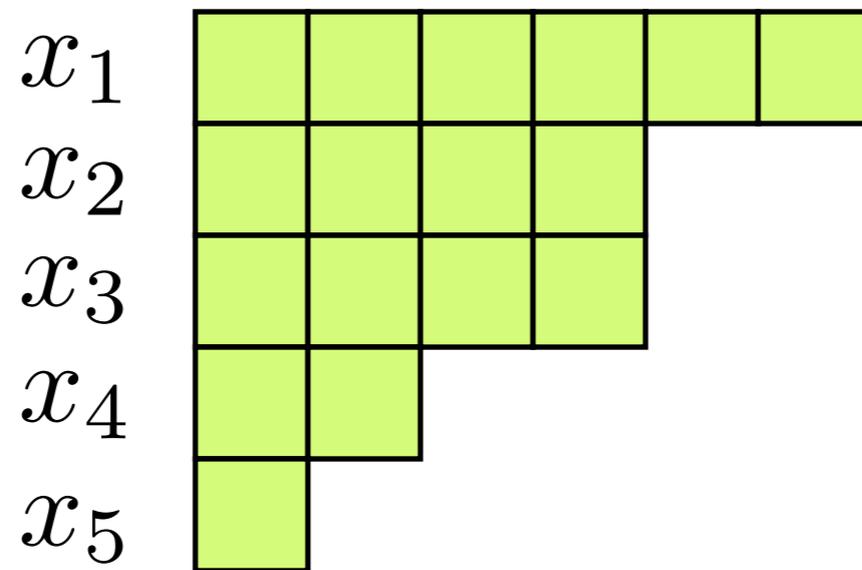
The Man Who Knew Infinity (2015 film)



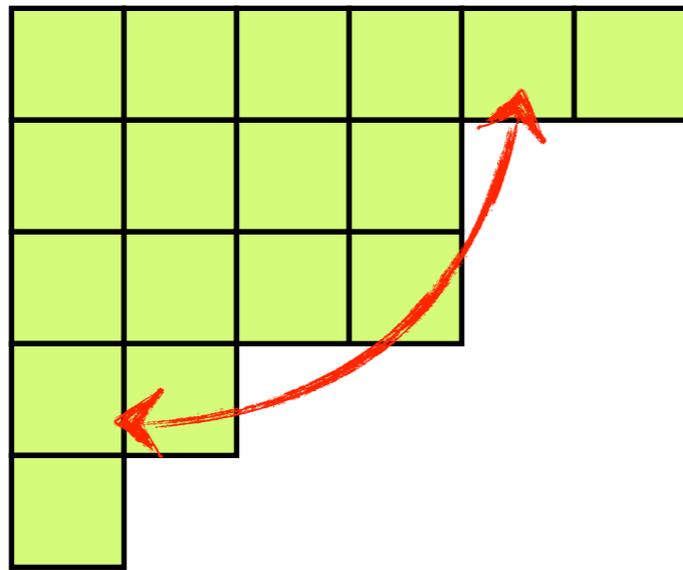
$$p(n) = \sum_{k=1}^n p_k(n)$$

$$\approx \frac{1}{4n\sqrt{3}} \exp \left\{ \pi \sqrt{\frac{2n}{3}} \right\}$$

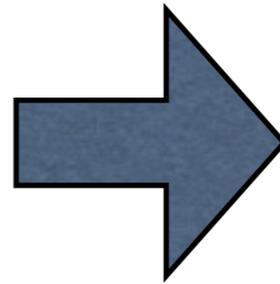
Ferrers diagram (Young diagram)



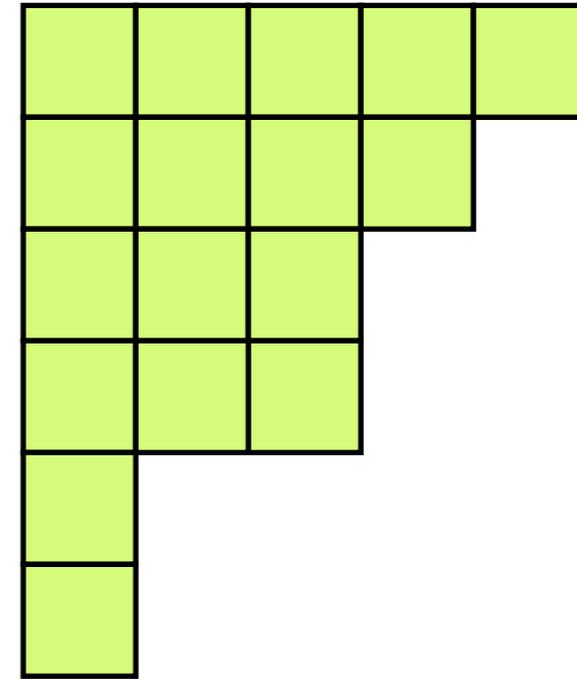
partition $\begin{cases} x_1 + x_2 + \cdots + x_k = n \\ x_1 \geq x_2 \geq \cdots \geq x_k \geq 1 \end{cases}$



(6,4,4,2,1)

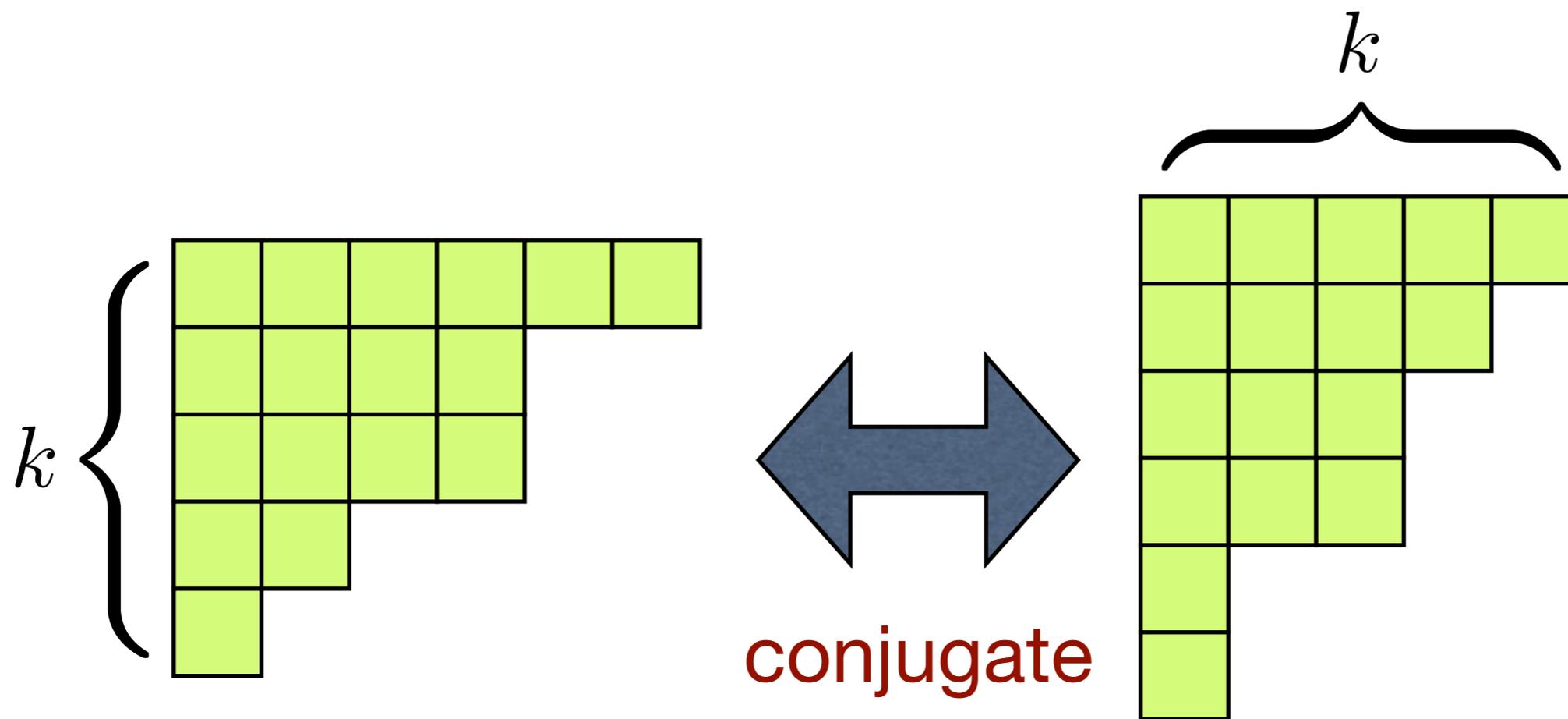


conjugate



(5,4,3,3,1,1)

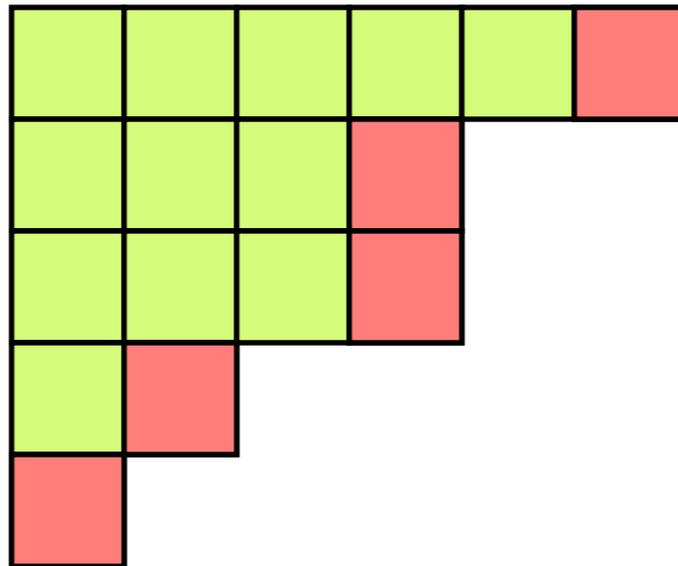
one-to-one
correspondence



of partitions of n
into k parts

=

of partitions of n
with largest part k



of partitions of n
into k parts

=

of partitions of n
with largest part k

$$p_k(n) = \sum_{j=1}^k p_j(n - k)$$

The Twelfefold Way

n balls are put into m bins

balls per bin:	unrestricted	≤ 1	≥ 1
n distinct balls, m distinct bins	m^n	$(m)_n$	$m! \left\{ \begin{matrix} n \\ m \end{matrix} \right\}$
n identical balls, m distinct bins	$\left(\binom{m}{n} \right)$	$\binom{m}{n}$	$\binom{n-1}{m-1}$
n distinct balls, m identical bins	$\sum_{k=1}^m \left\{ \begin{matrix} n \\ k \end{matrix} \right\}$	$\begin{cases} 1 & \text{if } n \leq m \\ 0 & \text{if } n > m \end{cases}$	$\left\{ \begin{matrix} n \\ m \end{matrix} \right\}$
n identical balls, m identical bins	$\sum_{k=1}^m p_k(n)$	$\begin{cases} 1 & \text{if } n \leq m \\ 0 & \text{if } n > m \end{cases}$	$p_m(n)$