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978-1-107-61253-2 - A First Course in Computational Algebraic Geometry

Wolfram Decker and Gerhard Pfister

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**A FIRST COURSE IN COMPUTATIONAL
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and

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Universität Kaiserslautern

With Pictures by Oliver Labs



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Contents

Preface		<i>page vii</i>
Prologue:		
General Remarks on Computer Algebra Systems		1
1 The Geometry–Algebra Dictionary		11
1.1 Affine Algebraic Geometry		11
1.1.1 Ideals in Polynomial Rings		11
1.1.2 Affine Algebraic Sets		14
1.1.3 Hilbert’s Nullstellensatz		20
1.1.4 Irreducible Algebraic Sets		23
1.1.5 Removing Algebraic Sets		25
1.1.6 Polynomial Maps		29
1.1.7 The Geometry of Elimination		32
1.1.8 Noether Normalization and Dimension		37
1.1.9 Local Studies		45
1.2 Projective Algebraic Geometry		49
1.2.1 The Projective Space		49
1.2.2 Projective Algebraic Sets		52
1.2.3 Affine Charts and the Projective Closure		54
1.2.4 The Hilbert Polynomial		57
2 Computing		60
2.1 Standard Bases and SINGULAR		60
2.2 Applications		75
2.2.1 Ideal Membership		75
2.2.2 Elimination		75
2.2.3 Radical Membership		77
2.2.4 Ideal Intersections		78

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Frontmatter

[More information](#)

vi

Contents

2.2.5	Ideal Quotients	79
2.2.6	Kernel of a Ring Map	79
2.2.7	Integrality Criterion	80
2.2.8	Noether Normalization	82
2.2.9	Subalgebra Membership	83
2.2.10	Homogenization	83
2.3	Dimension and the Hilbert Function	84
2.4	Primary Decomposition and Radicals	90
2.5	Buchberger's Algorithm and Field Extensions	94
3	Sudoku	95
4	A Problem in Group Theory Solved by Computer Algebra	101
4.1	Finite Groups and Thompson's Theorem	101
4.2	Characterization of Finite Solvable Groups	104
	Bibliography	112
	Index	115

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Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Preface

Most of mathematics is concerned at some level with setting up and solving various types of equations. Algebraic geometry is the mathematical discipline which handles solution sets of systems of polynomial equations. These are called algebraic sets.

By making use of a correspondence which relates algebraic sets to ideals in polynomial rings, problems concerning the geometry of algebraic sets can be translated into algebra. As a consequence, algebraic geometers have developed a multitude of often highly abstract techniques for the qualitative and quantitative study of algebraic sets, without, in the first instance, considering the equations. Modern computer algebra algorithms, on the other hand, allow us to manipulate the equations and, thus, to study explicit examples. In this way, algebraic geometry becomes accessible to experiments. The experimental method, which has proven to be highly successful in number theory, is now also added to the toolbox of the algebraic geometer.

In these notes, we discuss some of the basic operations in geometry and describe their counterparts in algebra. We explain how the operations can be carried out using computation, and give a number of explicit examples, worked out with the computer algebra system SINGULAR. In this way, our book may serve as a first introduction to SINGULAR, guiding the reader to performing his own experiments.

In detail, we proceed along the following lines:

The Prologue contains remarks on computer algebra systems in general with just a few examples of what can be computed in different application areas.

In Chapter 1, we focus on the geometry–algebra dictionary, illustrating its entries by including a number of SINGULAR examples.

Chapter 2 contains a discussion of the algorithms involved and gives a more thorough introduction to SINGULAR.

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Frontmatter
[More information](#)

viii

Preface

For the fun of it, in Chapter 3, we show how to find the solution of a well-posed Sudoku game by solving a corresponding system of polynomial equations.

Finally, in Chapter 4, we discuss a particular classification problem in group theory, and explain how a combination of theory and explicit computations leads to a solution of the problem. Here, algorithmic methods from group theory, number theory, and algebraic geometry are involved.

Due to the expository character of these notes, proofs are only included occasionally. For all other proofs, references are given.

For a set of Exercises, see

<http://www.mathematik.uni-kl.de/~pfister/Exercises.pdf>.

The notes grew out of a course we taught at the African Institute for the Mathematical Sciences (AIMS) in Cape Town, South Africa. Teaching at AIMS was a wonderful experience and we would like to thank all the students for their enthusiasm and the fun we had together. We very much appreciated the facilities at AIMS and we are grateful to its staff for constant support.

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Kaiserslautern,
October 2011

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Gerhard Pfister