1   Introduction to Mathematics

1.4   Introduction to Quantification

Quantification is often where students struggle in higher mathematics. Not only are the concepts abstract, the concepts must be carefully delineated into cases.

Recall that sentences of the form "$x > 0$" are not propositions (unless the context of x is perfectly clear). In this case, we call x a **free variable**.

Definition 1.55. A sentence with a free variable is called a **predicate**.

Exercise 1.56. Give 3 examples of mathematical predicates involving 1, 2, and 3 free variables, respectively.

It is convenient to borrow function notation to represent predicates. For example: $S(x) :=$ "$x^2 - 4 = 0$", $L(a, b) :=$ "$a < b$", $F(x, y) :=$ "x is friends with y".* Each of these represents a predicate with the indicated free variables.

We can make propositions out of predicates by assigning specific values to the free variables. For example, if $P(x)$ is a predicate and x_0 is specific value, then $P(x_0)$ is now a proposition (and may be true or false).

Exercise 1.57. Consider $S(x)$ and $L(a, b)$ from the discussion above. Determine the truth values of $S(2)$, $S(0)$, $S(-2)$, $L(1, 2)$, $L(2, 1)$, and $L(-3, -2)$.

Exercise 1.58. Again, consider $L(a, b)$ from above. Is $L(2, b)$ a proposition or a predicate? Explain your answer.

Besides substituting specific values in for free variables in a predicate, there are (at least) two other ways in which we can use predicates to build propositions. We do this by making a claim about which values of the free variables apply to the predicate.

Example 1.59. The following sentences are both propositions:

1. For all $x \in \mathbb{R}$, $x^2 - 4 = 0$.

2. There exists $x \in \mathbb{R}$ such that $x^2 - 4 = 0$.

Exercise 1.60. Determine the truth value of the two propositions from Example 1.59. What would it take to prove your answers?

Definition 1.61. "For all" is called the **universal quantifier** and "there exists... such that" is called the **existential quantifier**.

The variables in propositions with quantifiers are called **bound variables**. In order for a sentence containing variables to be a proposition, *all* variables must be bound. That is, all variables need to be quantified. When all variables are quantified, there is no ambiguity (we aren't making any claims about whether a proposition is true or false here).

It is important to note that the existential quantifier is making a claim about "at least one" *not* "exactly one." It is also worth noting that "for all", "for any", "for every" are used interchangeably in mathematics (even though they might convey slightly different meanings in colloquial language). Also, we can replace "there exists... such that" with "for some".

---

*The symbol ":=" is used in mathematics to define something as being equal to something else.

A few additional remarks are in order. We must take care to specify the universe of acceptable values for the free variables. Consider for a moment, the proposition "For all x, $x > 0$". Is this proposition true or false? The answer depends on what x's we are taking *all* of. For example, if the universe of discourse is the set of integers, then the statement is false. However, if we take the universe of acceptable values to be the natural numbers, then the proposition is true. We must be careful to avoid such ambiguities. Often, the context can resolve such ambiguities, but otherwise, we need to write things like: "For all $x \in \mathbb{Z}$, $x > 0$" or "For all $x \in \mathbb{N}$, $x > 0$".

Exercise 1.62. Suppose our universe of acceptable values is the set of integers.

1. Provide an example of a predicate $P(x)$ such that "For all x, $P(x)$" is true.

2. Provide an example of a predicate $Q(x)$ such that "For all x, $Q(x)$" is false, but "There exists x such that $Q(x)$" is true.

If a predicate has more than one free variable, then we can build propositions by quantifying each variable. However, the order of the quantifiers is extremely important!!!

Exercise 1.63. Suppose that the universe of acceptable values is the set of married people. Consider the predicate $M(x, y) :=$ "x is married to y". Discuss the meaning of each of the following.

1. For all x, there exists y such that $M(x, y)$.

2. There exists y such that for all x, $M(x, y)$.

Exercise 1.64. Suppose that the universe of acceptable values is the set of real numbers. Consider the predicate $R(x, y) :=$ "$x = y^2$". Discuss the meaning of each of the following.

1. There exists x such that there exists y such that $R(x, y)$.

2. There exists y such that there exists x such that $R(x, y)$.

Exercise 1.65. Repeat the exercise above but replace the existential quantifiers with universal quantifiers.

Exercise 1.66. Suppose that the universe of acceptable values is the set of real numbers. Consider the predicate $G(x, y) :=$ "$x > y$". There are six ways to bind the variables of this predicate (why six?). Find all six propositions and determine the truth value of each (you do not need to prove your answers). Do any of the six have the same meaning as one of the others?