

Proof that if $\sigma \in S_n$ is an element of odd order then $\sigma = A_n \sigma$.

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We assume $\sigma \in S_n$ is an element of odd order such that ($n \geq 3$) and will prove $\sigma = A_n \sigma$ by using the First Isomorphism Theorem (Dummit, D. S., & Foote, R. M., pg 97

(2004)) so that $\frac{S_n}{A_n} \cong \epsilon(S_n) = \{\pm 1\}$ & $|A_n| = \frac{1}{2}|S_n| = \frac{1}{2}(n!)$.

First let us look at S_3 . The permutations are:

(123)(132)(12)(13)(23). If we consider whether each permutation is even or odd we get:
(1)(1)(-1)(-1)(-1)

Therefore we have shown that $\sigma \in S_3 = -1$

Also $|A_3| = \frac{1}{2}|S_3| = \frac{1}{2}(3!) = \frac{6}{2} = 3$ which is odd.

We assume $\frac{S_{2k+1}}{A_{2k+1}} \cong \epsilon(S_{2k+1}) = \{-1\}$ & $|A_{2k+1}| = \frac{1}{2}|S_{2k+1}| = \frac{1}{2}((2k+1)!) = \text{odd}$

If add an even number ($2k$) we get:

$\frac{S_{2k+1+2k}}{A_{2k+1+2k}} \cong \epsilon(S_{2k+1+2k}) = \{-1\}$ & $|A_{2k+1+2k}| = \frac{1}{2}|S_{2k+1+2k}| = \frac{1}{2}((2k+1+2k)!) = \text{odd}$

$\frac{S_{4k+1}}{A_{4k+1}} \cong \epsilon(S_{4k+1}) = \{-1\}$ & $|A_{4k+1}| = \frac{1}{2}|S_{4k+1}| = \frac{1}{2}((4k+1)!) = \text{odd}$

Therefore when n is odd $\sigma \in S_n$ is an element of odd order and $\sigma = A_n \sigma$ is odd (-1).

Now we can consider S_4

Odd Permutations = -1

(1234)

(1243)

(1423)

(1342)

(1324)

(1432)

(12)

(13)

(14)

(23)

(24)

(34)

There are 12 odd permutations (-1)

Even Permutations = 1

(123)

(124)

(132)

(134)

(142)

(143)

(234)

(243)

(12)(34)

(13)(24)

(14)(23)

There are 11 even permutations (1)

Since $(-1)(-1)=(1)$ & $12/2=6$ we have shown that S_4 is even $\sigma = (1)$.

Also $|A_4| = \frac{1}{2}|S_4| = \frac{1}{2}(4!) = \frac{24}{2} = 12$ which is odd.

We assume $\frac{S_{2k}}{A_{2k}} \cong \epsilon(S_{2k}) = \{1\}$ & $|A_{2k}| = \frac{1}{2}|S_{2k}| = \frac{1}{2}((2k)!) = \text{even}$

If add an even number $(2k)$ we get

$\frac{S_{2k+2k}}{A_{2k+2k}} \cong \epsilon(S_{2k+2k}) = \{1\}$ & $|A_{2k+2k}| = \frac{1}{2}|S_{2k+2k}| = \frac{1}{2}((2k+2k)!) = \text{even}$

$\frac{S_{4k}}{A_{4k}} \cong \epsilon(S_{4k}) = \{1\}$ & $|A_{4k}| = \frac{1}{2}|S_{4k}| = \frac{1}{2}((4k)!) = \text{even}$

Therefore when n is even $\sigma \in S_n$ is an element of even order and $\sigma = A_n\sigma$ is odd (1).

Therefore, since we have shown that when n is odd $\sigma = -1$ and when n is even then $\sigma = 1$, we conclude that $\sigma = A_n\sigma$.

References:

Dummit, D. S., & Foote, R. M. (2004). Abstract algebra. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.