



How To Create A Clifford Algebra

Synopsis

- Let V be a vector space of dimension n and let Q be a non-degenerate quadratic form on V . The Clifford algebra $Cl(V, Q)$ is the associative algebra generated by the identity element e_0 and products $x \cdot y \cdot z \cdots$ of elements $x, y, z \in V$, subject to the relations

$$x \cdot y + y \cdot x = -2 Q(x, y) e_0.$$

Note that this implies that $x \cdot x = -Q(x, x) \cdot e_0$. If $\{e_1, e_2, \dots, e_n\}$ is a basis for V , then e_0 and the products

$$e_{i_1} \cdot e_{i_2} \cdots e_{i_k} \text{ for } 1 \leq i_1 < i_2 < \cdots < i_k \leq n \text{ and } 1 \leq k \leq n$$

define a basis for $Cl(V, Q)$. In particular, the vector space dimension of the Clifford algebra is $\dim(Cl(V, Q)) = 2^n$.

- In this worksheet we show how to create a Clifford algebra in Maple using the [AlgebraLibraryData](#) procedure.

Examples

Load in the required packages. The interface command allows for the printing of larger dimensional multiplication tables.

```
> with(DifferentialGeometry): with(LieAlgebras):
> interface(rtablesize = 15):
```

Example 1.

The command [AlgebraLibraryData](#) returns a list of the multiplication rules for the basis elements of the specified algebra. The multiplication table for a Clifford algebra becomes more transparent if we label the basis elements as $e_{i_1 i_2 \dots i_k} = e_{i_1} \cdot e_{i_2} \cdots e_{i_k}$. The following is the

multiplication table for the Clifford algebra defined by \mathbb{R}^3 equipped with the standard quadratic form (defined by the identity matrix).

```
> AD1 := AlgebraLibraryData("Clifford(3)", CL3);
AD1 := [e1^2 = e1, e1 · e2 = e2, e1 · e3 = e3, e1 · e4 = e4, e1 · e5 = e5, e1 · e6 = e6, e1 · e7
```

(1)

$$\begin{aligned}
&= e_7, e_1 \cdot e_8 = e_8, e_2 \cdot e_1 = e_2, e_2^2 = -e_1, e_2 \cdot e_3 = e_5, e_2 \cdot e_4 = e_6, e_2 \cdot e_5 = -e_3, e_2 \cdot e_6 \\
&= -e_4, e_2 \cdot e_7 = e_8, e_2 \cdot e_8 = -e_7, e_3 \cdot e_1 = e_3, e_3 \cdot e_2 = -e_5, e_3^2 = -e_1, e_3 \cdot e_4 = e_7, e_3 \\
&\cdot e_5 = e_2, e_3 \cdot e_6 = -e_8, e_3 \cdot e_7 = -e_4, e_3 \cdot e_8 = e_6, e_4 \cdot e_1 = e_4, e_4 \cdot e_2 = -e_6, e_4 \cdot e_3 = \\
&-e_7, e_4^2 = -e_1, e_4 \cdot e_5 = e_8, e_4 \cdot e_6 = e_2, e_4 \cdot e_7 = e_3, e_4 \cdot e_8 = -e_5, e_5 \cdot e_1 = e_5, e_5 \cdot e_2 \\
&= e_3, e_5 \cdot e_3 = -e_2, e_5 \cdot e_4 = e_8, e_5^2 = -e_1, e_5 \cdot e_6 = e_7, e_5 \cdot e_7 = -e_6, e_5 \cdot e_8 = -e_4, e_6 \\
&\cdot e_1 = e_6, e_6 \cdot e_2 = e_4, e_6 \cdot e_3 = -e_8, e_6 \cdot e_4 = -e_2, e_6 \cdot e_5 = -e_7, e_6^2 = -e_1, e_6 \cdot e_7 = e_5, \\
&e_6 \cdot e_8 = e_3, e_7 \cdot e_1 = e_7, e_7 \cdot e_2 = e_8, e_7 \cdot e_3 = e_4, e_7 \cdot e_4 = -e_3, e_7 \cdot e_5 = e_6, e_7 \cdot e_6 = \\
&-e_5, e_7^2 = -e_1, e_7 \cdot e_8 = -e_2, e_8 \cdot e_1 = e_8, e_8 \cdot e_2 = -e_7, e_8 \cdot e_3 = e_6, e_8 \cdot e_4 = -e_5, e_8 \cdot e_5 \\
&= -e_4, e_8 \cdot e_6 = e_3, e_8 \cdot e_7 = -e_2, e_8^2 = e_1]
\end{aligned}$$

Now we load these multiplication rules into memory with [DGsetup](#). At this point we can also specify the labels we wish to use for the vector basis for our Clifford algebra.

```
[> DGsetup(AD1, '[e0, e1, e2, e3, e12, e13, e23, e123]', [omega]);
      algebra name: CL3] (2)
```

Display the multiplication table for the Clifford algebra $CL(R^3, I_3)$

```
CL3 > MultiplicationTable();
```

| | e_0 | e_1 | e_2 | e_3 | e_{12} | e_{13} | e_{23} | e_{123} |
|-----------|-----------|-----------|------------|-----------|-----------|------------|-----------|-----------|
| e_0 | e_0 | e_1 | e_2 | e_3 | e_{12} | e_{13} | e_{23} | e_{123} |
| e_1 | e_1 | $-e_0$ | e_{12} | e_{13} | $-e_2$ | $-e_3$ | e_{123} | $-e_{23}$ |
| e_2 | e_2 | $-e_{12}$ | $-e_0$ | e_{23} | e_1 | $-e_{123}$ | $-e_3$ | e_{13} |
| e_3 | e_3 | $-e_{13}$ | $-e_{23}$ | $-e_0$ | e_{123} | e_1 | e_2 | $-e_{12}$ |
| e_{12} | e_{12} | e_2 | $-e_1$ | e_{123} | $-e_0$ | e_{23} | $-e_{13}$ | $-e_3$ |
| e_{13} | e_{13} | e_3 | $-e_{123}$ | $-e_1$ | $-e_{23}$ | $-e_0$ | e_{12} | e_2 |
| e_{23} | e_{23} | e_{123} | e_3 | $-e_2$ | e_{13} | $-e_{12}$ | $-e_0$ | $-e_1$ |
| e_{123} | e_{123} | $-e_{23}$ | e_{13} | $-e_{12}$ | $-e_3$ | e_2 | $-e_1$ | e_0 |

(3)

Thus, for example, we see that $e_2 \cdot e_{123} = e_2 \cdot (e_1 \cdot e_2 \cdot e_3) = (e_2 \cdot e_1) \cdot e_2 \cdot e_3 = -(e_1 \cdot e_2) \cdot e_2 \cdot e_3 = -e_1 \cdot (e_2 \cdot e_2) \cdot e_3 = e_1 \cdot e_3 = e_{13}$, which can be checked explicitly, e.g.,

```
CL3 > evalDG(e2.e123);
      e13 (4)
```

Example 2.

Here is the split version of the Clifford algebra, defined with respect to the following quadratic form.

$$\begin{aligned}
 & \text{[> } \mathbf{Q} := \langle \langle 0, 0, 1 \rangle \mid \langle 0, 1, 0 \rangle \mid \langle 1, 0, 0 \rangle \rangle; \\
 & \qquad \qquad \qquad \mathbf{Q} := \begin{bmatrix} 0 & 0 & 1 \\ 0 & 1 & 0 \\ 1 & 0 & 0 \end{bmatrix} \qquad \qquad \qquad (5)
 \end{aligned}$$

We use the keyword argument *quadraticform* in the calling sequence to [AlgebraLibraryData](#).

$$\begin{aligned}
 & \text{[> } \mathbf{AD4} := \text{AlgebraLibraryData}(\text{"Clifford(3)"}, \mathbf{CL3Q}, \text{quadraticform} = \mathbf{Q}); \\
 & \text{[> } \mathbf{DGsetup}(\mathbf{AD4}); \qquad \qquad \qquad \text{algebra name: } \mathbf{CL3Q} \qquad \qquad \qquad (6)
 \end{aligned}$$

Display the multiplication table for the Clifford algebra.

$$\begin{aligned}
 & \mathbf{CL3Q} > \mathbf{MultiplicationTable}(); \\
 & \begin{array}{c|cccccccc} & e1 & e2 & e3 & e4 & e5 & e6 & e7 & e8 \\ \hline e1 & e1 & e2 & e3 & e4 & e5 & e6 & e7 & e8 \\ e2 & e2 & 0 e1 & e5 & e6 & 0 e1 & 0 e1 & e8 & 0 e1 \\ e3 & e3 & -e5 & -e1 & e7 & e2 & -e8 & -e4 & e6 \\ e4 & e4 & -2 e1 - e6 & -e7 & 0 e1 & -2 e3 + e8 & -2 e4 & 0 e1 & -2 e7 \\ e5 & e5 & 0 e1 & -e2 & e8 & 0 e1 & 0 e1 & -e6 & 0 e1 \\ e6 & e6 & -2 e2 & -e8 & 0 e1 & -2 e5 & -2 e6 & 0 e1 & -2 e8 \\ e7 & e7 & -2 e3 + e8 & e4 & 0 e1 & 2 e1 + e6 & -2 e7 & 0 e1 & 2 e4 \\ e8 & e8 & -2 e5 & e6 & 0 e1 & 2 e2 & -2 e8 & 0 e1 & 2 e6 \end{array} \qquad \qquad \qquad (7)
 \end{aligned}$$

Note that $e2^2 = e4^2 = 0$ and that $e1, e3$ no longer anti-commute, which can be checked explicitly, e.g.,

$$\begin{aligned}
 & \text{[} \mathbf{CL3Q} > \mathbf{evalDG}(e2.e2); \\
 & \qquad \qquad \qquad 0 e1 \qquad \qquad \qquad (8)
 \end{aligned}$$

Commands Illustrated

- [AlgebraLibraryData](#), [DGsetup](#), [evalDG](#), [MultiplicationTable](#)

Related Commands

- [AlgebraData](#), [SimpleLieAlgebraData](#)

References

- J. Baez, *The Octonions*

- W. Fulton, J. Harris, *Representation Theory - A First Course*
- F. Reese Harvey, *Spinors and Calibrations*
- http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Clifford_algebra

Release Notes

- The illustrated commands are available in Maple 17 and subsequent releases.

Authors

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