Calculation of extended gcd by normalization

Number theory

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Abstract

We propose a new algorithm solving the extended gcd problem, which provides a solution minimizing one of the two coordinates. The algorithm relies on elementary arithmetic properties.

Keywords: extended gcd; normalizer; co-normalizer; minimizing one of the two coordinates; normal solution; linear diophantine equation; mixed Euclid algorithm.

Contents

1 Introduction ........................................................................................................................................... 2
  1.1 The problem of extended gcd ........................................................................................................ 2
  1.2 Notation ......................................................................................................................................... 2

2 Extended GCD with $a$ and $b$ coprime integers. ............................................................................ 2
  2.1 The normalizer $\nu c$ .................................................................................................................... 2
  2.2 Arithmetic properties of the normalizer .......................................................................................... 3
  2.3 Presentation of the algorithm ......................................................................................................... 4
  2.4 Validity of the algorithm ............................................................................................................... 5

3 General case ......................................................................................................................................... 6

4 Conclusion ........................................................................................................................................... 7

5 References ........................................................................................................................................... 7

6 Appendix: gcd algorithms .................................................................................................................. 8
1 Introduction

1.1 The problem of extended gcd
Let \( a \) and \( b \) be two integers, the extended gcd problem consists in finding three integers \( u, v \) and \( g \) such that:

\[ ua + vb = g \]

with \( g \) equal to gcd of \( a \) and \( b \).

In number theory, this problem occurs in many situations like in the theory of corrector codes [1] or for the factorization of integers [2]. Moreover, it is the elementary component of the classical algorithm of Smith invariants computation of a matrix with integer coefficients, which allows the general resolution of the linear diophantine equations [3]. See also [4] for a recent application of the Euclid algorithm.

1.2 Notation
Let \( x \) and \( y \) be two integers, we denote \( x \mod y \) the remainder of the Euclidean division of \( x \) by \( y \), which belongs to \([0, y - 1]\) by convention.

2 Extended GCD with \( a \) and \( b \) coprime integers.
The purpose of this section is to propose an algorithm to solve the extended gcd problem in the case of coprime integers. Let us take \( a, b \in \mathbb{N}^* \).

2.1 The normalizer \( v_c \)
For any integer \( c \), we consider the following equation \((E_c)\) in \( u \) and \( v \):

\[ ua + vb = c \]

\((E_c)\)

It is well-known that solutions exist if and only if \( \gcd(a, b) \mid c \), and that given a particular solution \((u_0, v_0)\), the set of all solutions is equal to \( \{(u_0 + kb, v_0 - ka), k \in \mathbb{Z}\} \).

Definition 1. Assume \( \gcd(a, b) \mid c \). Then there exists a unique solution \((u_c, v_c)\) of \((E_c)\) verifying \( v_c \in [0, a - 1] \), which will be called the normal solution. \( v_c \) will be called the normalizer of \((E_c)\).

Remark. Knowing \( v_c \), we can deduce \( u_c = (c - v_c b) / a \), and therefore all the solutions of \((E_c)\). Furthermore, if \( c \in [0, a b - 1] \), \( u_c \in [-b + 1, b - 1] \), and if \( c = 1 \) and \( b > 1 \), \( u_c \in [-b + 1, -1] \).

From the structure of solutions of \((E_c)\), we get the following proposition:

Proposition 1. For any solution \((u, v)\) of \((E_c)\), \( v \equiv v_c \pmod{a} \).
Definition 2. Under the same assumptions as definition 1, we can define the co-normalizer of \((E_c)\) to be the unique \(t_c \in \llbracket 0, a - 1 \rrbracket\) such that \((x_c, -t_c)\) solves \((E_c)\) for some \(x_c\).

### 2.2 Arithmetic properties of the normalizer

Let \(g = \gcd(a, b)\).

**Proposition 2.** The normalizer is additive:

\[
\forall c, c' \in \mathbb{Z}g, \quad v_{c+c'} \equiv v_c + v_{c'} \pmod{a}
\]

It is easily proved by summing the equations \((E_c)\) and \((E_{c'})\).

**Corollary 1.** The normalizer is multiplicative:

\[
\forall (x, c) \in \mathbb{Z} \times \mathbb{Z}g, \quad v_{xc} \equiv x \cdot v_c \pmod{a}.
\]

In particular:

\[
\forall c \in \mathbb{Z}, \quad v_{cg} \equiv c \cdot v_g \pmod{a}.
\]

From the previous propositions, we deduce that the normalizer is \(\mathbb{Z}\)-linear in \(c\) modulo \(a\), but for our algorithm we will only need the following corollary:

**Corollary 2.** We have:

\[
\forall c, c' \in \mathbb{Z}g, \quad v_{c-c'} \equiv v_c - v_{c'} \pmod{a}.
\]

Under certain assumptions, the normalizer may also be stable by division:

**Proposition 3.** If \(a\) is odd and \(c \in \mathbb{Z}g\) is even, then \(c \in \mathbb{Z}g\) and:

\[
v_{c/2} = \begin{cases} \frac{v_c}{2} & \text{if } v_c \text{ is even}, \\ \frac{v_c + a}{2} & \text{otherwise}. \end{cases}
\]

**Proof.** Assume \(a\) odd, \(c\) even, \(u_c a + v_c b = c\). The fact that \(c \in \mathbb{Z}g\) will follow from the fact that we will write it as a linear combination of \(a\) and \(b\).

- If \(v_c\) is even, \(u_c a = c - v_c b\) is even as well, and so is \(u_c\). Therefore \(u_c, \frac{v_c}{2}, \frac{c}{2} \in \mathbb{Z}\) verify \(\frac{u_c}{2} a + \frac{v_c}{2} b = \frac{c}{2}\), which clearly implies \(v_{c/2} = \frac{v_c}{2}\).
- If \(v_c\) is odd:
  - Either \(u_c\) is odd, which means that \(v_c b = c - u_c a\) is odd, so \(b\) must be odd.
  - Or \(u_c\) is even, in which case \(v_c b = c - u_c a\) is even and so \(b\) must be even too.

In both cases, \(\frac{u_c-b}{2}, \frac{v_c+a}{2}, \frac{c}{2} \in \mathbb{Z}\) still verify \(\frac{u_c-b}{2} a + \frac{v_c+a}{2} b = \frac{c}{2}\), and \(0 < \frac{v_c+a}{2} \leq a - \frac{1}{2}\), from which we deduce that \(v_{c/2} = \frac{v_c+a}{2}\).

**Remark.** Similar properties for the co-normalizer can be also shown.

We deduce from the above proposition the following algorithm, which will be part of the extended gcd algorithm: given \((a, c, v)\), such that \(a\) is odd, and \(v\) is the normalizer of some \((E_c)\), it returns the pair of similar integers \((c', v')\) obtained by dividing \(c\) by \(2\) as many times
Calculation of extended gcd by normalization

as possible.

Algorithm 1: Function Div1(a,c,v)

While $c \mod 2 = 0$ do
  $c \leftarrow c/2$
  If $v$ is even then
    $v \leftarrow v/2$
  Else
    $v \leftarrow (v + a)/2$
End If
End While
Return $(c, v)$

We determine two particular values of the normalizer that will initiate our algorithm:

Proposition 4. The normalizer verifies:
• if $c = b \mod a$, $v_c = 1$
• if $c = -b \mod a$, $v_c = a - 1$

Proof.
Case 1: $c = b \mod a$
Let $q$ be the quotient of the Euclidean division of $b$ by $a$, i.e. $b = aq + c$. Hence comes the following equality:
\[-qa + b = c\]
i.e. $(-q, 1)$ is the normal solution of $(E_c)$ and $v_c = 1$.

Case 2: $c = -b \mod a$
We know that $v_{-c} = 1$, therefore $v_c = -1 \mod a = a - 1$.

2.3 Presentation of the algorithm

Solving the problem of extended gcd with $a$ and $b$ being coprime integers is equivalent to determining $v_1$. The algorithm WWL1 proceeds in two steps: an initialization with the two values of $v_c$ given by the previous proposition, and then a descent loop using corollary 2 of proposition 2 to determine $v_1$.

Once $v_1$ has been determined, the complete solution is obtained by calculating:
\[u_1 = \frac{1-v_1b}{a} \]
Then $(u_1, v_1)$ is a solution of $(E_1)$. Because the Euclidean division of $b$ by $a$ is done at the beginning of the algorithm, say $b = aq + r$, we put directly $u_1 = -v_1q + \frac{1-v_1r}{a}$, which can be advantageous if $b$ is large.

Algorithm 2: WWL1(a,b) Given $a$ and $b$ two integers, with $a$ and $b$ coprimes and $a$ odd,
returns the unique pair of integers \((u, v)\) such that \(ua + vb = 1\) and \(v \in \{0, a - 1\}\)

**First step: initialization.**

\[
\begin{align*}
& c_1 \leftarrow b \mod a, \ c_2 \leftarrow a - c_1 \\
& v_1 \leftarrow 1, \ v_2 \leftarrow a - 1 \quad \rightarrow \text{initialization of the two values of normalizer } v_c.
\end{align*}
\]

\((c_1, v_1) \leftarrow \text{Div1}(a, c_1, v_1)\) \quad \rightarrow \text{we divide as many times as possible } c_1 \text{ by } 2.

\((c_2, v_2) \leftarrow \text{Div1}(a, c_2, v_2)\) \quad \rightarrow \text{we divide as many times as possible } c_2 \text{ by } 2.

\[
\begin{align*}
& \text{If } c_2 < c_1 \text{ then} \\
& (c_1, c_2) \leftarrow (c_2, c_1), \ (v_1, v_2) \leftarrow (v_2, v_1) \quad \rightarrow \text{we ensure that } c_1 < c_2
\end{align*}
\]

**Second step: iteration.**

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{While } c_1 > 1 \text{ do} & \\
& c_2 \leftarrow c_2 - c_1 \\
& \text{If } v_2 - v_1 < 0 \text{ then} \\
& \quad v_2 \leftarrow v_2 - v_1 + a \\
& \text{Else} \\
& \quad v_2 \leftarrow v_2 - v_1 \quad \rightarrow \text{we modify } c_2 \text{ and we compute the associated normalizer } v_2.
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
& (c_2, v_2) \leftarrow \text{Div1}(a, c_2, v_2) \quad \rightarrow \text{we divide } c_2 \text{ by } 2 \text{ as many times as possible.} \\
& \text{If } c_2 < c_1 \text{ then} \\
& (c_1, c_2) \leftarrow (c_2, c_1), \ (v_1, v_2) \leftarrow (v_2, v_1) \quad \rightarrow \text{we reassign } c_1 \text{ and } c_2 \text{ so as to have } c_1 < c_2.
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{End While} & \quad \rightarrow \text{we will leave the loop when } c_1 = 1 \\
& v \leftarrow v_1 \\
& u_1 \leftarrow -vq, \ u_2 \leftarrow (1 - vr)/a \\
& u \leftarrow u_1 - u_2 \\
& \text{Return } (u, v) \quad \rightarrow \text{the solution is returned}
\end{align*}
\]

---

**2.4 Validity of the algorithm**

It can be noted that throughout the loop, we keep \(v_i\) equal to the normalizer of \(c_i\). Furthermore, at each step of the loop, \(c_1 + c_2\) decreases, with \(c_1\) and \(c_2\) remaining positive. This proves the termination of the algorithm (the sequence of \(c_1 + c_2\) has to be finite).

We deduce that at the end of the loop \(c_1 = 0\) or \(1\). However, because \(\gcd(c_1, c_2) = \gcd(c_1, c_2 - c_1)\), we deduce that \(\gcd(c_1, c_2)\) remains constant equal to its initial value \(\gcd(b \mod a, a - (b \mod a)) = \gcd(a, b) = 1\) by hypothesis. Hence at the end of the loop, if \(c_1\) was equal to \(0\), this would necessarily mean that \(c_2 = 1\), which is impossible: otherwise at the previous step we would already have one of the \(c_i \leq 1\), which would mean that we should already have exited the loop.
3 General case

It is impractical to impose for $a$ and $b$ to be coprimes, therefore we will adapt the previous algorithm to the general case where $a$ and $b$ are any numbers. Experimental tests also highlighted that it is more advantageous to calculate $u_c$ at the same time as the normalizer $v_c$ during the finite descent. Hence our algorithm will return, when it is possible, the unique triplet $(u, v, g)$ satisfying both conditions $ua + vb = g = \gcd(a, b)$ and $v \in [0, a - 1]$. 

If $a$ and $b$ are both even, a first step is to factor them both by the greatest power of 2 possible (which boils down to a cheap bit shift), so that one of them necessarily becomes odd. From now on, let us assume by symmetry that $a$ is odd.

Algorithm 3: Function Div2(u,v,c): Given $(a, b, u, v, c)$ integers verifying the conditions $a = 1 \mod 2$, $ua + vb = c$ and $v \in [0, a - 1]$, returns a triplet $(u', v', c')$ verifying the same conditions, obtained by dividing as many times as possible $c$ by 2.

While $c = 0 \mod 2$ do 
If $v = 0 \mod 2$ then 
  $(u, v, c) \leftarrow \left(\frac{u}{2}, \frac{v}{2}, \frac{c}{2}\right)$ 
Else 
  $(u, v, c) \leftarrow \left(\frac{u-b}{2}, \frac{v+a}{2}, \frac{c}{2}\right)$ 
End If 
End While 
Return $(u, v, c)$

Proof. This is an extension of the algorithm Div1, exploiting directly the result of the second corollary of proposition 2.

Algorithm 4: WWL2: Given $a$ and $b$ be two integers, with $a$ odd, returns a triplet $(u, v, g)$ such that $g = \gcd(a, b)$, $ua + vb = g$ and $v \in [0, a - 1]$.

First step: initialization.
$c_1 \leftarrow b - \left\lfloor \frac{b}{a} \right\rfloor a$, $c_2 \leftarrow a - c_1$, $v_1 \leftarrow 1$, $v_2 \leftarrow a - 1$
$u_1 \leftarrow \frac{c_1 - v_1 b}{a}$, $u_2 \leftarrow 1 - u_1 - b$ \rightarrow initialization of two triplets $(u, v, c)$
$(u_1, v_1, c_1) \leftarrow \text{Div2}(u_1, v_1, c_1)$ \rightarrow we divide as many times as possible $c_1$ by 2.
$(u_2, v_2, c_2) \leftarrow \text{Div2}(u_2, v_2, c_2)$ \rightarrow we divide as many times as possible $c_2$ by 2.
If $c_2 < c_1$ then $(u_1, v_1, c_1, u_2, v_2, c_2) \leftarrow (u_2, v_2, c_2, u_1, v_1, c_1)$ \rightarrow we ensure that $c_1 < c_2$
End If

Second step: iteration.
While $c_1 > 0$ do

Email : marc.wolf@tsofemail.com  WOLF Marc, WOLF François, LE COZ Corentin  Page 6 / 9
Calculation of extended gcd by normalization

\[ c_2 \leftarrow c_2 - c_1 \]
\[ \text{If } v_2 - v_1 < 0 \text{ then} \]
\[ v_2 \leftarrow v_2 + a - v_1, \quad u_2 \leftarrow u_2 - u_1 - b \]
\[ \text{Else} \]
\[ v_2 \leftarrow v_2 - v_1, \quad u_2 \leftarrow u_2 - u_1 \]
\[ \text{End If} \]
\[ \rightarrow \text{we modify } u_2 \text{ and } v_2 \text{ so that they verify } (E_{c_2}). \]

\[ (c_2, v_2) \leftarrow \text{Div2}(c_2, v_2) \]
\[ \rightarrow \text{we divide as many times as possible } c_2 \text{ by 2.} \]
\[ \text{If } c_2 < c_1 \text{ then} \]
\[ (u_1, v_1, c_1, u_2, v_2, c_2) \leftarrow (u_2, v_2, c_2, u_1, v_1, c_1) \]
\[ \text{End If} \]
\[ \rightarrow \text{we reassign } c_1 \text{ and } c_2 \text{ so as to have } c_1 < c_2. \]
\[ c_2 \leftarrow c_2 - c_1 \]
\[ \text{End While} \]
\[ \rightarrow \text{the loop is left when } c_1 = 0 \]
\[ \text{Return } (u_2, v_2, c_2) \]
\[ \rightarrow \text{the solution is returned} \]

**Proof.** The same arguments as in the proof of WWL1 hold: \( c_1 + c_2 \) decreases strictly along the loop, which ensures that it terminates, \((u_i, v_i)\) always remains the normal solution of \((E_{c_i})\) along the loop, and \(\gcd(c_1, c_2)\) stays equal to \(\gcd(a, b)\), so that when \(c_1 = 0\) necessarily \(c_2 = \gcd(a, b)\).

**Remark 1.** Here the exit condition is somehow simpler but it actually means one more step than WWL1 when \(\gcd(a, b) = 1\), which could be optimized away in the coprime case.

**Remark 2.** The algorithm can be adapted to return the co-normalizer instead of the normalizer. This is left to the reader.

4 Conclusion

We have reduced linear Diophantine equations solutions to a single and unique integer, its normalizer. We have used this terminology to develop a solution of the extended gcd problem, which has the advantage of controlling the size of the final result as well as that of the intermediary steps, while remaining very simple to implement. Our benchmark with other algorithms (see appendix) suggested a similar complexity, but an average computational gain of 15\% which makes it advantageous to use. Optimizing the algorithm was not our main concern for this article, however we discuss some further possible improvements at the end of the appendix.

**Acknowledgments:** We would like to thank François-Xavier Villemin for his attentive comments and suggestions.

5 References

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Appendix: gcd algorithms

We present here two popular gcd algorithms (not in their extended version for the sake of simplicity), namely the Euclidean algorithm [5] and its binary version [6]. We note that the steps followed by our WWL2 algorithm are exactly the same as a combination of those two, and as stated in the conclusion of our article outperforms on average those two.

Algorithm 5: (classical Euclid algorithm) EulerGCD: Given $a, b$ two integers, returns their gcd.

$\begin{align*}
    r_1, r_2 &\leftarrow a, b \\
    \text{While } r_1 > 0 \text{ do} & \\
    & r_1, r_2 \leftarrow r_2 \mod r_1, r_1 \\
    \text{End While} \\
    \text{Return } r_2
\end{align*}$

This algorithm is the most self-contained, however it performs quite badly due to the high numerical cost of the Euclidean divisions. The next one takes advantage of the inexpensivity of divisions by 2 (bit shifts):

Algorithm 6: (binary Euclid algorithm) BinaryGCD: Given $a, b$ two integers, returns their gcd.

$m = 0$

While $a, b = 0 \mod 2$ do

$m, a, b \leftarrow m + 1, \frac{a}{2}, \frac{b}{2}$

End While

$r_1, r_2 \leftarrow \min(a, b), \max(a, b)$

While $r_1 > 0$ do

$r_2 \leftarrow r_2 - r_1$

While $r_2 = 0 \mod 2$ do

$r_2 \leftarrow r_2/2$

End While

$r_1, r_2 \leftarrow \min(r_1, r_2), \max(r_1, r_2)$

→ Factorization of a power of 2
End While
Return $r_2 \times 2^m$

As stated before, the following mixed Euclid algorithm is a mixture of the two previous ones, which only keeps a single Euclidean division:

Algorithm 7: (mixed Euclid algorithm) MixedEuclid: Given $a, b$ two integers, returns their gcd.

\[
\begin{align*}
  & m = 0 \\
  & \textbf{While} \quad a \text{ and } b \text{ are even} \quad \textbf{do} \\
  & \qquad m, a, b \leftarrow m + 1, \frac{a}{2}, \frac{b}{2} \\
  & \textbf{End While} \\
  & r_1, r_2 \leftarrow \min(a, b), \max(a, b) \\
  & (r_1, r_2) \leftarrow (r_2 \mod r_1, r_1) \\
  & \textbf{Return} \quad \text{BinaryGCD}(r_1, r_2)
\end{align*}
\]

→ Computation of the common power of 2
→ Single Euclidean division
→ We apply the binary algorithm

On average, the cost of this single division is compensated by a significant decrease in the number of remaining binary algorithm steps. For large integers, it could be interesting to check whether performing more than one Euclidean division yields yet a more significant gain. Another idea would be to trigger an Euclidean division when the binary algorithm is likely to perform many substractions in a row (typically if $r_1$ is large and odd, and $r_2$ is small and even).