

# Lambda Calculus - Combinators (8A)

---

Copyright (c) 2024 - 2016 Young W. Lim.

Permission is granted to copy, distribute and/or modify this document under the terms of the GNU Free Documentation License, Version 1.2 or any later version published by the Free Software Foundation; with no Invariant Sections, no Front-Cover Texts, and no Back-Cover Texts. A copy of the license is included in the section entitled "GNU Free Documentation License".

Please send corrections (or suggestions) to [youngwlim@hotmail.com](mailto:youngwlim@hotmail.com).

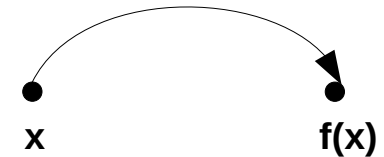
This document was produced by using LibreOffice.

# Fix point (1)

In mathematics, a **fixed point** (fixpoint), also known as an **invariant point**, is a **value** that does not change under a given **transformation**.

Specifically, for **functions**, a **fixed point** is an **element** that is mapped to **itself** by the **function**.

Formally, **c** is a **fixed point** of a **function f** if **c** belongs to both the **domain** and the **codomain** of **f**, and  **$f(c) = c$** .



**c** fixed point       **$f(c) = c$**

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fixed\\_point\\_\(mathematics\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fixed_point_(mathematics))

# Fix point (2)

For example, if  $f$  is defined on the real numbers by

$$f(x) = x^2 - 3x + 4,$$

then 2 is a fixed point of  $f$ , because  $f(2) = 2$ .

Not all functions have **fixed points**: for example,

$f(x) = x + 1$ , has no fixed points,

since  $x$  is never equal to  $x + 1$  for any real number.

In graphical terms, a **fixed-point**  $x$  means

the point  $(x, f(x))$  is on the line  $y = x$ , or in other words

the graph of  $f$  has a point in common with that line.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fixed\\_point\\_\(mathematics\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fixed_point_(mathematics))

# Extensionality (1)

In logic, **extensionality**, or **extensional equality**, refers to principles that judge **objects** to be **equal** if they have the same **external properties**.

It stands in contrast to the concept of **intensionality**, which is concerned with whether the **internal definitions** of **objects** are the same.

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Extensionality>

# Extensionality (2)

Consider the two **functions** **f** and **g** mapping from and to natural numbers, defined as follows:

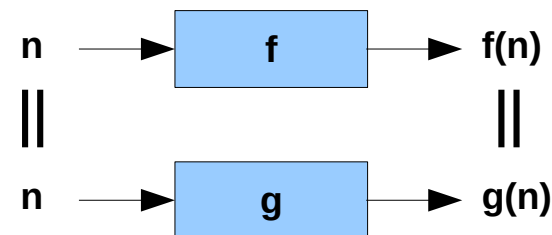
To find **f(n)**, first add 5 to **n**, then multiply by **2**.  $(n + 5) * 2$

To find **g(n)**, first multiply **n** by **2**, then add 10.  $2 * n + 10$

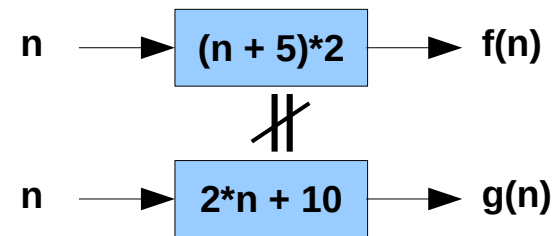
These functions are **extensionally equal**; given the same input, both functions always produce the same value.

But the definitions of the functions are not equal, and in that **intensional** sense the functions are not the same.

**extensionally equal**



**intensionally unequal**



<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Extensionality>

# Extensionality (3)

Similarly, in natural language  
there are many **predicates** (relations)  
that are **intensionally** different  
but are **extensionally** identical.

For example, suppose that a town has one person named Joe,  
who is also the oldest person in the town.

Then, the two predicates "being called Joe",  
and "being the oldest person in this town"  
are **intensionally** distinct,  
but **extensionally** equal  
for the (current) population of this town.

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Extensionality>

# Combinatory Logic

Combinatory logic is a notation to eliminate the need for quantified variables in mathematical logic.

It was introduced by Moses Schönfinke and Haskell Curry, and has more recently been used in computer science as a theoretical model of computation and also as a basis for the design of functional programming languages.

It is based on combinators

Without using quantified variables

theoretical model of computation

functional programming

combinators

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Combinatory\\_logic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Combinatory_logic)



# Combinator

**combinators** were introduced by Schönfinkel in 1920 with the idea of providing an analogous way

- to build up **functions**
- to remove any mention of **variables**
- particularly in **predicate logic**.

A **combinator** is a **higher-order function** that uses only **function application**

earlier defined **combinators** to define a **result** from its **arguments**.

**Combinators:**  
define a result by its **argument**  
without free **variables**

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Combinatory\\_logic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Combinatory_logic)

# Combinator Definitions (1)

**Combinator** : A **lambda expression** containing no free variables.

While this is the most general definition, the word is usually understood more specifically to refer to certain **combinators** of special importance, in particular the following four:

**I** =  $\lambda x . x$

**K** =  $\lambda x . \lambda y . x$

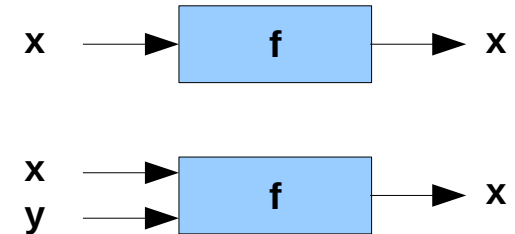
**S** =  $\lambda x . \lambda y . \lambda z . x(z)(y(z))$

**Y** =  $\lambda f . (\lambda u . f(u(u))) (\lambda u . f(u(u)))$

**Identity**

**Constant function**

**Substitution operator**



<https://www.encyclopedia.com/computing/dictionaries-thesauruses-pictures-and-press-releases/combinator>

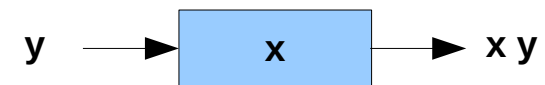
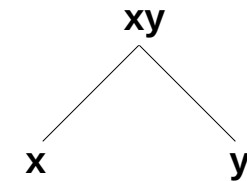
# Combinator informal description (1-1)

Informally, a **tree** ( $xy$ ) can be thought of as a **function**  $x$  applied to an **argument**  $y$ .

When **evaluated** (i.e., when the function is "applied" to the **argument**), the tree "returns a value", i.e., transforms into another **tree**.

The "function", "argument" and the "value" are either **combinators** or **binary trees**.

If they are **binary trees**, they may be thought of as **functions** too, if needed.



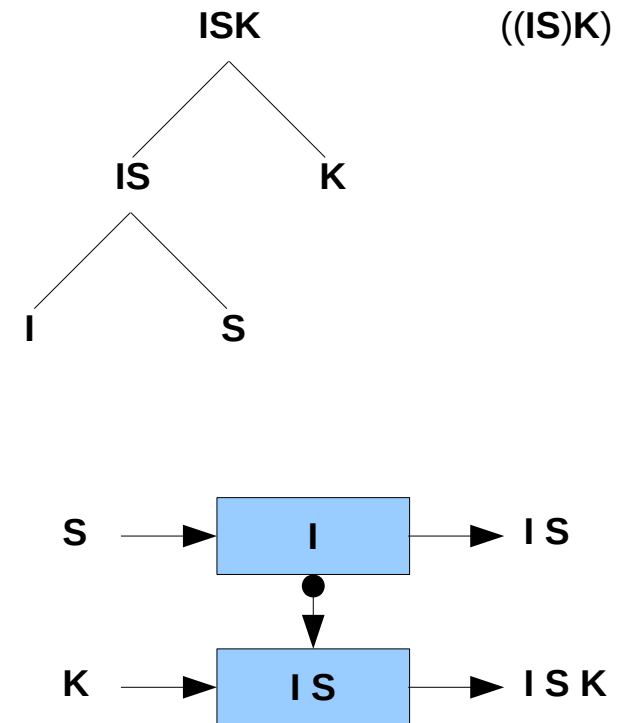
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/SKI\\_combinator\\_calculus](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/SKI_combinator_calculus)

# Combinator informal description (1-2)

Although the most formal representation of the objects in this system requires **binary trees**, for simpler typesetting they are often represented as **parenthesized expressions**, as a shorthand for the tree they represent.

Any **subtrees** may be **parenthesized**, but often only the right-side subtrees are **parenthesized**, with **left associativity** implied for any unparenthesized applications.

For example, **ISK** means **((IS)K)**.

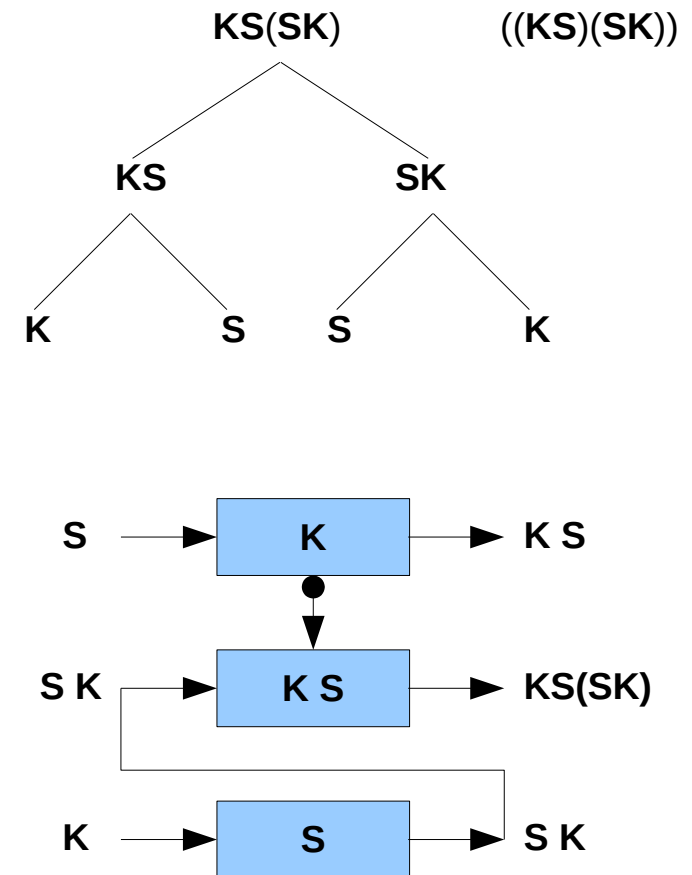


[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/SKI\\_combinator\\_calculus](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/SKI_combinator_calculus)

# Combinator informal description (1-3)

a tree whose **left subtree** is the tree **KS**  
and whose **right subtree** is the tree **SK**  
can be written as **KS(SK)**.

If more explicitness is desired,  
the implied parentheses can be included as well: **((KS)(SK))**.



[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/SKI\\_combinator\\_calculus](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/SKI_combinator_calculus)

# I combinator

The **evaluation operation** is defined as follows:

**x**, **y**, and **z** represent **expressions**  
made from the **functions S**, **K**, and **I**, and **set values**:

**I** returns its argument:

$$I x = x$$

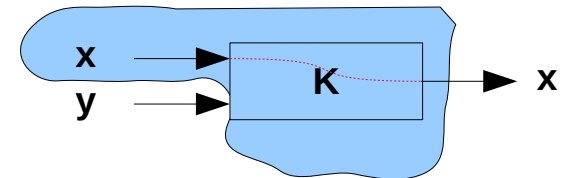
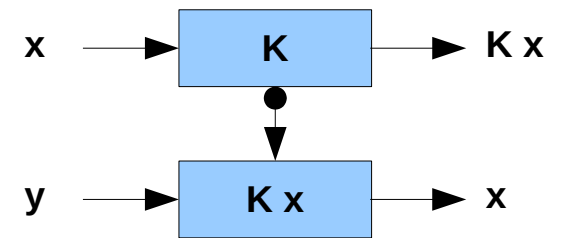
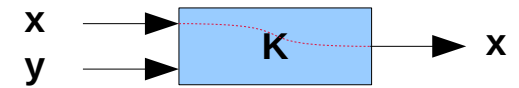


[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/SKI\\_combinator\\_calculus](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/SKI_combinator_calculus)

# K combinator

**K**, when applied to any argument **x**,  
yields a one-argument **constant function** **K x**,  
which, when applied to any argument **y**, returns **x**:

$$\mathbf{K\ x\ y = x}$$



[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/SKI\\_combinator\\_calculus](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/SKI_combinator_calculus)

# S combinator

**S** is a **substitution** operator.

takes three arguments (**x y z**)

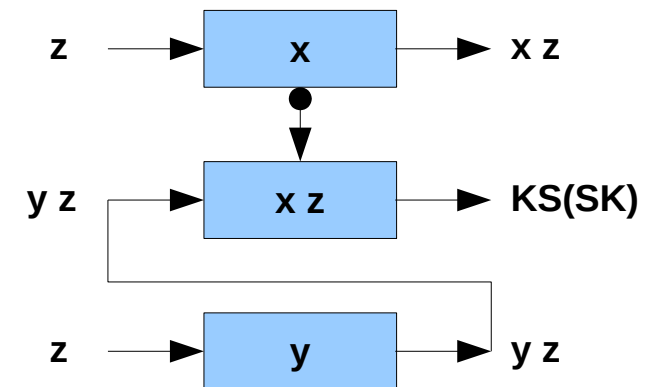
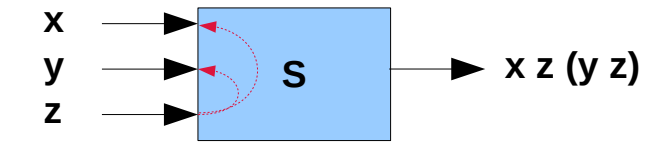
returns the result of **x z** applied to the result of **y z**

the first argument (**x**) applied to the third (**z**),

which is then applied to the result

of the second argument (**y**) applied to the third (**z**).

$$\mathbf{S\ x\ y\ z = x\ z\ (y\ z)}$$



a **function** of **x z** with the **argument** **y z**  
a **function** of **x** with the **argument** **z**  
a **function** of **y** with the **argument** **z**

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/SKI\\_combinator\\_calculus](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/SKI_combinator_calculus)



# Combinator informal description (3-1)

**SKSK** evaluates to **KK(SK)** by the **S-rule**.

Then if we evaluate **KK(SK)**, we get **K** by the **K-rule**.

As no further rule can be applied, the computation halts here.

For all trees **x** and all trees **y**,

**SKxy** will always evaluate to **y** in two steps, **Ky(xy) = y**,

so the ultimate result of evaluating **SKxy**

will always equal the result of evaluating **y**.

We say that **SKx** and **I** are "functionally equivalent" for any **x**  
because they always yield the same result when applied to any **y**.

$$\mathbf{S} \mathbf{x} \mathbf{y} \mathbf{z} = \mathbf{x} \mathbf{z} (\mathbf{y} \mathbf{z}) \quad \text{S-rule}$$

$$\mathbf{S} \mathbf{K} \mathbf{S} \mathbf{K} = \mathbf{K} \mathbf{K} (\mathbf{S} \mathbf{K})$$

$$\mathbf{K} \mathbf{x} \mathbf{y} = \mathbf{x} \quad \text{K-rule}$$

$$\mathbf{K} \mathbf{K} (\mathbf{S} \mathbf{K}) = \mathbf{K}$$

$$\mathbf{S} \mathbf{K} \mathbf{x} \mathbf{y} = \mathbf{K} \mathbf{y} (\mathbf{x} \mathbf{y}) = \mathbf{y}$$

$$\mathbf{I} \mathbf{y} = \mathbf{y}$$

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/SKI\\_combinator\\_calculus](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/SKI_combinator_calculus)

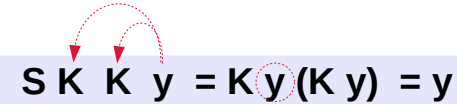
# Combinator informal description (3-2)

it can be shown that **SKI calculus** is not the minimum system that can fully perform the computations of **lambda calculus**,

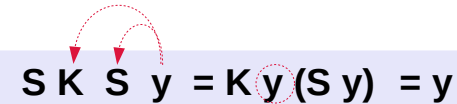
as all occurrences of **I** in any expression can be replaced by **(SKK)** or **(SKS)** or **(SK x)** for any **x**, and the resulting expression will yield the same result.

So the "**I**" is merely syntactic sugar.

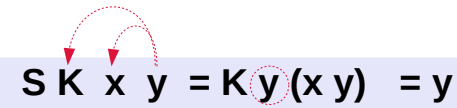
Since **I** is optional, the system is also referred as **SK calculus** or **SK combinator calculus**.


$$S K K y = K y (K y) = y$$

$$I y = y$$


$$S K S y = K y (S y) = y$$

$$I y = y$$


$$S K x y = K y (x y) = y$$

$$I y = y$$

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/SKI\\_combinator\\_calculus](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/SKI_combinator_calculus)

# Combinator informal description (4-1)

It is possible to define a **complete system** using only one (improper) **combinator**.

An example is Chris Barker's **iota combinator**, which can be expressed in terms of **S** and **K** as follows:

$$ix = xSK$$

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/SKI\\_combinator\\_calculus](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/SKI_combinator_calculus)

# Combinator informal description (4-1)

It is possible to reconstruct **S**, **K**, and **I** from the **iota combinator**.

Applying **I** to itself gives  $\mathbf{II} = \mathbf{ISK} = \mathbf{SSKK} = \mathbf{SK(KK)}$

which is functionally equivalent to **I**.

$$\mathbf{Ix} = \mathbf{xSK}$$

$$\mathbf{II} = \mathbf{ISK}$$

$$(\mathbf{IS})\mathbf{K} = (\mathbf{SSK})\mathbf{K}$$

$$\mathbf{SSKK} = \mathbf{SKKK}$$

$$\mathbf{SKKK} = \mathbf{K K K K} = \mathbf{K}$$

$$\mathbf{II}y = \mathbf{ISK}y = \mathbf{SK(KK)}y = \mathbf{Ky}(\mathbf{KK})y = y$$

$$\mathbf{SK}x\ y = \mathbf{Ky}(x\ y) = y$$

$$\mathbf{I}y = y$$

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/SKI\\_combinator\\_calculus](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/SKI_combinator_calculus)

# Combinator informal description (4-2)

**K** can be constructed by applying **I** twice to **I**  
(which is equivalent to application of **I** to itself):

$$I(I(I)) = I(II SK) = I(ISK) = I(SK) = SKSK = K.$$

Applying **I** one more time gives

$$I(I(I(I))) = IK = KSK = S.$$

**IX**


$$SKxy = Ky(xy) = y$$

$$Iy = y$$

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/SKI\\_combinator\\_calculus](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/SKI_combinator_calculus)

# Improper Combinator

Improper combinators, meaning that they are expressed in terms of other combinators rather than pure abstractions.

To be precise: in lambda calculus a proper combinator is an expression of the form  $(\lambda.x_1x_2\dots P(x_1,x_2,\dots))$ , where  $P(x_1,x_2,\dots)$  only has  $x_1, x_2$  etc. as free variables, and does not contain any abstractions.

So for example,  $(\lambda xyz.x(zz))$  is a proper combinator, but  $(\lambda x.x(\lambda y.y))$  is not, because it contains  $x$  applied to a lambda term.

<https://cs.stackexchange.com/questions/57507/basis-sets-for-combinator-calculus>

# Combinator Definitions (2)

The **combinators** **I**, **K**, and **S** were introduced by Schönfinkel and Curry, who showed that any  **$\lambda$ -expression** can essentially be formed by combining them.

More recently **combinators** have been applied to the design of implementations for **functional languages**.

In particular **Y** (also called the **paradoxical combinator**) can be seen as producing **fixed points**, since **Y(f)** reduces to **f(Y(f))**.

$$I = \lambda x . x$$

$$K = \lambda x . \lambda y . x$$

$$S = \lambda x . \lambda y . \lambda z . x(z)(y(z))$$

$$Y = \lambda f . (\lambda u . f(u(u))) (\lambda u . f(u(u)))$$

<https://www.encyclopedia.com/computing/dictionaries-thesauruses-pictures-and-press-releases/combinator>

# Combinatory Logic and Lambda Calculus (1)

Lambda calculus is concerned with objects called **lambda-terms**, which can be represented by the following three forms of strings:

$v$

$\lambda v. E_1$

$(E_1 E_2)$

where  $v$  is a variable name drawn from a predefined infinite set of variable names, and  $E_1$  and  $E_2$  are **lambda-terms**.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Combinatory\\_logic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Combinatory_logic)



# Combinatory Logic and Lambda Calculus (2)

Terms of the form  $\lambda v. E_1$  are called **abstractions**.

The variable  $v$  is called the **formal parameter** of the abstraction, and  $E_1$  is the **body** of the abstraction.

The term  $\lambda v. E_1$  represents the **function**

applied to an **argument**,

binds the **formal parameter**  $v$  to the **argument**

computes the resulting value of  $E_1$

returns  $E_1$ , with every occurrence of  $v$  replaced by the **argument**.

$v$

$\lambda v. E_1$

$(E_1 E_2)$

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Combinatory\\_logic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Combinatory_logic)

# Combinatory Logic and Lambda Calculus (3-1)

Terms of the form  $(E_1 E_2)$  are called **applications**.

**applications** model **function invocation** or **execution**:  
the **function** represented by  $E_1$  is to be invoked,  
with  $E_2$  as its **argument**, and the result is computed.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Combinatory\\_logic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Combinatory_logic)

# Combinatory Logic and Lambda Calculus (3-2)

If  $E_1$  (the applicand) is an **abstraction**, the term may be reduced:

$E_2$ , the **argument**, may be substituted into the **body** of  $E_1$

in place of the **formal parameter**  $v$  of  $E_1$ ,

and the result is a new **lambda term** which is equivalent to the old one.

If a **lambda term** contains no **subterms** of the form  $((\lambda v. E_1) E_2)$

then it cannot be reduced, and is said to be in **normal form**.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Combinatory\\_logic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Combinatory_logic)

# Combinatory Logic and Lambda Calculus (4)

The motivation for this definition of **reduction** is that it captures the essential behavior of all **mathematical functions**.

For example, consider the function that computes the square of a number. We might write

The **square** of **x** is  $x * x$  (using  $*$  to indicate multiplication.)

**x** here is the **formal parameter** of the function.

To evaluate the **square** for a particular **argument**, say 3, we insert it into the definition in place of the formal parameter:

The **square** of **3** is  $3 * 3$

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Combinatory\\_logic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Combinatory_logic)

# Combinatory Logic and Lambda Calculus (5)

To evaluate the resulting expression  $3 * 3$ , we would have to resort to our knowledge of multiplication and the number 3.

Since any computation is simply a composition of the evaluation of suitable **functions** on suitable **primitive arguments**,

this simple **substitution principle** suffices to capture the essential mechanism of computation.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Combinatory\\_logic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Combinatory_logic)

# Combinatory Logic and Lambda Calculus (6)

Moreover, in **lambda calculus**, notions such as '**3**' and '**\***' can be represented without any need for externally defined primitive operators or constants.

It is possible to identify **terms** in **lambda calculus**, which, when suitably interpreted, behave like the number 3 and like the multiplication operator \*, q.v. **Church encoding**.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Combinatory\\_logic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Combinatory_logic)

# Combinatory Logic and Lambda Calculus (7)

Lambda calculus is known to be computationally equivalent in power to many other plausible models for computation (including Turing machines);

that is, any calculation that can be accomplished in any of these other models can be expressed in lambda calculus, and vice versa.

According to the Church-Turing thesis, both models can express any possible computation.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Combinatory\\_logic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Combinatory_logic)

# Combinatory Logic and Lambda Calculus (8-1)

lambda-calculus can represent any conceivable computation using only the simple notions of **function abstraction** and **application** based on simple textual **substitution** of **terms** for **variables**.

**abstraction** is not even *required*.

**Combinatory logic** is a model of computation equivalent to **lambda calculus**, but without **abstraction**.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Combinatory\\_logic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Combinatory_logic)



# Combinatory Logic and Lambda Calculus (8-2)

Combinatory logic is a model of computation equivalent to **lambda calculus**, but without abstraction.

The advantage of this is that evaluating expressions in **lambda calculus** is quite complicated because the **semantics** of **substitution** must be specified with great care to avoid variable capture problems.

evaluating expressions in **combinatory logic** is much simpler, because there is no notion of **substitution**.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Combinatory\\_logic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Combinatory_logic)

# Combinatory Calculus

**abstraction** is the only way to manufacture **functions**  
in the **lambda calculus**

Instead of **abstraction**,  
**combinatory calculus** provides a limited set of **primitive functions**  
out of which other **functions** may be built.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Combinatory\\_logic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Combinatory_logic)

# Combinatory Terms (1)

A **combinatory term** has one of the following **forms**:

Syntax	Name	Description
<b>x</b>	<b>Variable</b>	A <b>character</b> or <b>string</b> representing a <b>combinatory term</b> .
<b>P</b>	<b>Primitive function</b>	One of the <b>combinator symbols</b> <b>I</b> , <b>K</b> , <b>S</b> .
<b>(M N)</b>	<b>Application</b>	<u>Applying</u> a <b>function</b> to an <b>argument</b> . <b>M</b> and <b>N</b> are <b>combinatory terms</b> .

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Combinatory\\_logic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Combinatory_logic)

# Combinatory Terms (2)

The **primitive functions** are **combinators**, or **functions** that, when seen as **lambda terms**, contain no **free variables**.

To shorten the notations, a general convention is that  $( E_1 E_2 E_3 \dots E_n )$ , or even  $E_1 E_2 E_3 \dots E_n$ , denotes the term  $( \dots ( ( E_1 E_2 ) E_3 ) \dots E_n )$ .

This is the same general convention (left-associativity) as for multiple application in lambda calculus.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Combinatory\\_logic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Combinatory_logic)

# Reductions in Combinatory Logic

In **combinatory logic**, each **primitive combinator** comes with a **reduction rule** of the form

$$(P x_1 \dots x_n) = E$$

where **E** is a **term** mentioning only **variables** from the set  $\{x_1 \dots x_n\}$ .

It is in this way that **primitive combinators** behave as **functions**.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Combinatory\\_logic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Combinatory_logic)

# Examples of Combinators (1-1)

The simplest example of a **combinator** is **I**, the **identity combinator**, defined by

$$(I\ x) = x \quad \text{for all terms } x.$$

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Combinatory\\_logic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Combinatory_logic)

# Examples of Combinators (1-2)

Another simple **combinator** is **K**,

which manufactures **constant functions**:

**(K x)** is the **function** which, for any **argument**, returns **x**, so we say

$$((K x) y) = x \quad \text{for all terms } x \text{ and } y.$$

Or, following the convention for **multiple application**,

$$(K x y) = x$$

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Combinatory\\_logic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Combinatory_logic)

# Examples of Combinators (2-1)

A third **combinator** is **S**, which is a generalized version of **application**:

$$(S\ x\ y\ z) = (x\ z\ (y\ z))$$

**S** applies **x** to **y**

after first substituting **z** into each of them (**x** and **y**)

**x** is applied to **y**

inside the **environment** **z**.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Combinatory\\_logic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Combinatory_logic)



# Examples of Combinators (2-2)

Given **S** and **K**, **I** itself is *unnecessary*,  
since it can be built from the other two:

$$((S K K) x)$$
$$= (S K K x)$$
$$= (K x (K x))$$
$$= x$$

for any **term**  $x$ .

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Combinatory\\_logic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Combinatory_logic)

# Examples of Combinators (3-1)

Note that although  $((S K K) x) = (I x)$  for any  $x$ ,  
 $(S K K)$  itself is not equal to  $I$ .

We say the terms are **extensionally equal**.

**Extensional equality** captures the mathematical notion  
of the **equality** of **functions**:

that two **functions** are equal  
if they always produce the same results for the same arguments.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Combinatory\\_logic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Combinatory_logic)

# Examples of Combinators (3-2)

In contrast, the **terms** themselves,  
together with the **reduction** of **primitive combinators**,  
capture the notion of **intensional equality** of functions:

that two **functions** are equal  
only if they have **identical implementations**  
up to the expansion of **primitive combinators**.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Combinatory\\_logic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Combinatory_logic)

# Examples of Combinators (3-3)

There are many ways to implement an **identity function**;  
**(S K K)** and **I** are among these ways.

**(S K S)** is yet another.

We will use the word **equivalent** to indicate **extensional equality**,  
reserving **equal** for **identical combinatorial terms**.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Combinatory\\_logic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Combinatory_logic)

# Examples of Combinators (4)

A more interesting combinator is the **fixed point combinator** or **Y combinator**, which can be used to implement **recursion**.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Combinatory\\_logic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Combinatory_logic)

# Fix-point combinator (1)

In combinatory logic for computer science, a **fixed-point combinator** (or **fixpoint combinator**), denoted **fix**, is a **higher-order function** (which takes a **function** as **argument**) that **returns** some **fixed point** (a value that is mapped to itself) of its **argument function**, if one exists.

Formally, if the function  $f$  has one or more fixed points, then

$$\mathbf{fix\ f = f\ (fix\ f),}$$

and hence, by repeated application,

$$\mathbf{fix\ f = f\ (f\ (... f\ (fix\ f)\ ...))}$$

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fixed-point\\_combinator](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fixed-point_combinator)

# Fix-point combinator (1111)

Every **recursively defined function** can be seen as a **fixed point** of some suitably defined **function closing** over the **recursive call** with an **extra argument**,

and therefore, using  $Y$ , every recursively defined function can be expressed as a lambda expression.

In particular, we can now cleanly define the subtraction, multiplication and comparison predicate of natural numbers recursively.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lambda\\_calculus#Formal\\_definition](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lambda_calculus#Formal_definition)

# Fix-point combinator (3-1)

In the classical untyped lambda calculus,  
every function has a fixed point.

A particular implementation of fix is  
Curry's paradoxical combinator Y, represented by

$$Y = \lambda f. (\lambda x. f (x x)) (\lambda x. f (x x))$$

In functional programming, the Y combinator can be used  
to formally define recursive functions in a programming language  
that does not support recursion.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fixed-point\\_combinator](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fixed-point_combinator)



# Fix-point combinator (3-2)

This **combinator** may be used in implementing **Curry's paradox**.

The heart of Curry's paradox is that untyped **lambda calculus** is unsound as a **deductive system**, and the **Y combinator** demonstrates this by allowing an **anonymous expression** to represent **zero**, or even many **values**.

This is inconsistent in **mathematical logic**.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fixed-point\\_combinator](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fixed-point_combinator)

# Fix-point combinator (4)

Every recursively defined function can be seen as a fixed point of some suitably defined function closing over the recursive call with an extra argument,

and therefore, using  $Y$ , every recursively defined function can be expressed as a lambda expression.

In particular, we can now cleanly define the subtraction, multiplication and comparison predicate of natural numbers recursively.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fixed-point\\_combinator](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fixed-point_combinator)

# Fix-point combinator (5)

Applied to a function with one variable,  
the Y combinator usually does not terminate.

More interesting results are obtained  
by applying the Y combinator to functions of two or more variables.

The additional variables may be used as a counter, or index.

The resulting function behaves like a while or a for loop  
in an imperative language.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fixed-point\\_combinator](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fixed-point_combinator)

# Fix-point combinator (6)

Used in this way, the Y combinator implements simple recursion.

In the lambda calculus, it is not possible to refer to the definition of a function inside its own body by name.

Recursion though may be achieved by obtaining the same function passed in as an argument, and then using that argument to make the recursive call, instead of using the function's own name, as is done in languages which do support recursion natively.

The Y combinator demonstrates this style of programming.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fixed-point\\_combinator](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fixed-point_combinator)

# Fix-point combinator (7)

An example implementation of Y combinator in two languages is presented below.

```
# Y Combinator in Python
```

```
Y=lambda f: (lambda x: f(x(x)))(lambda x: f(x(x)))
```

```
Y(Y)
```

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fixed-point\\_combinator](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fixed-point_combinator)

---

## References

- [1] <ftp://ftp.geoinfo.tuwien.ac.at/navratil/HaskellTutorial.pdf>
- [2] <https://www.umiacs.umd.edu/~hal/docs/daume02yaht.pdf>