

GRADUATE STUDIES
IN MATHEMATICS **219**

**Essentials
of Tropical
Combinatorics**

Michael Joswig



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AMERICAN
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Providence, Rhode Island

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Support by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG, German Research Foundation) under Germany's Excellence Strategy - The Berlin Mathematics Research Center MATH⁺ (EXC-2046/1, project ID 390685689); "Symbolic Tools in Mathematics and their Application" (TRR 195, project-ID 286237555); "Facets of Complexity" (GRK 2434, project-ID 385256563) gratefully acknowledged.

For additional information and updates on this book, visit
www.ams.org/bookpages/gsm-219

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Joswig, Michael, 1965- author.

Title: Essentials of tropical combinatorics / Michael Joswig.

Description: Providence, Rhode Island : American Mathematical Society, [2021] | Series: Graduate studies in mathematics, 1065-7339 ; 219 | Includes bibliographical references and index.

Identifiers: LCCN 2021023313 | ISBN 9781470466534 (hardback) | ISBN 9781470467418 (paperback) | ISBN 9781470467401 (v. 219 ; ebook)

Subjects: LCSH: Tropical geometry. | Combinatorial geometry. | Linear programming. | AMS: Algebraic geometry – Tropical geometry – Combinatorial aspects of tropical varieties. | Algebraic geometry – Tropical geometry – Applications of tropical geometry. | Convex and discrete geometry – Polytopes and polyhedra – Computational aspects related to convexity. | Operations research, mathematical programming – Mathematical programming – Linear programming. | Operations research, mathematical programming – Mathematical programming – Tropical optimization (e.g., max-plus optimization).

Classification: LCC QA582 .J67 2021 | DDC 516.3/5–dc23

LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2021023313>

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To Claudia

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Preface

The goal of this book is to explain, at the graduate student level, connections between tropical geometry and optimization. Tropical geometry is the geometry over the semiring $(\mathbb{R}, \min, +)$. Its key objects, tropical hypersurfaces and more general tropical varieties, admit polyhedral descriptions, i.e., in terms of finitely many ordinary linear inequalities and equations. This allows us to approach tropical geometry through geometric combinatorics, and this is what we call tropical combinatorics.

Building bridges between optimization and tropical geometry is fruitful in two ways. Through tropical geometry, optimization algorithms become applicable to questions in algebraic geometry. Conversely, looking at topics in optimization through the tropical geometry lens adds an additional layer of structure to known optimization problems. The main prerequisite for the reader is a working knowledge in polytope theory as contained in the first few chapters in the books by Grünbaum [**Grü03**] or Ziegler [**Zie95**]. For convenience, a terse summary is given in Appendix A. Due to the tremendous growth of tropical geometry it is impossible to cover all aspects. The strategy chosen here is to stay close to polyhedral geometry; this entails that some proofs of algebraic results are replaced by references.

Despite its rather young age, tropical geometry already has a rich history, as it unifies techniques from several directions. Early contributions, which established tropical geometry as a field, include work of Einsiedler, Kapranov, and Lind [**EKL06**] on non-Archimedean amoebas and Mikhailkin's enumerative results on plane algebraic curves [**Mik05**]. A main source of inspiration for this book, however, is the approach to algebraic geometry via polyhedral geometry as expressed in the books by Gel'fand, Kapranov,

and Zelevinsky [GKZ08] and Sturmfels [Stu96]. The first reference to tropical geometry from this perspective is Sturmfels [Stu02, Chapter 9], quickly followed by the landmark paper of Speyer and Sturmfels on tropical Grassmannians [SS04]. Popular introductions to the subject include the book by Itenberg, Mikhalkin, and Shustin [IMS09] and the survey by Richter-Gebert, Sturmfels, and Theobald [RGST05], which access the subject from two different angles. The monograph by Maclagan and Sturmfels [MS15] is now a standard reference.

Specializing tropical geometry to the tropicalization of linear algebra leads to the subject of max-plus linear algebra. This field, rooted in optimization, is much older than tropical geometry. It is linked with signal processing, functional analysis, and other areas. A text containing the early history is the monograph by Baccelli, Cohen, Olsder, and Quadrat [BCOQ92]. Further influential contributions in this line of research include work of Litvinov, Maslov, and Shpiz [LMS01], Cohen, Gaubert, and Quadrat [CGQ04], and Butkovič [But10]. For a recent survey see Akian, Bapat, and Gaubert [ABG14].

As its inhabitants know well, the world of tropical geometry is divided between the “min” and “max” conventions. Here we follow a somewhat mixed approach, which needs a word of justification. First of all, sometimes it is beneficial to look into “min” and “max” *together*. Perhaps the most prominent example is that min-tropical convexity is most naturally described in terms of an arrangement of max-tropical hyperplanes, or conversely. But the reader will also find other examples in this book. Another aspect is that the various roots of tropical geometry naturally lead to opposite conventions: For tropical algebraic geometry non-Archimedean valuations on fields play a key role, with Puiseux series as the prime example. In their classical form Puiseux series depend on a formal parameter which may be seen as an infinitesimal, and this leads to the min-convention. Yet this has the drawback that the ordering gets reversed when we look at the ordered field of real Puiseux series. This is one reason why many connections between tropical geometry and optimization are naturally studied via the max-convention. I chose to be guided by the paradigm of tropical convexity, which relates (min, +)-tropical polytopes with (max, +)-tropical hyperplane arrangements. Consequently, in this book tropical point configurations, tropical polynomials, tropical hypersurfaces, and such are usually studied via “min”. When it comes to describing tropical hyperplane arrangements and tropical linear optimization we switch to “max” as the default.

Using this book for teaching. This book grew out of courses given at TU Berlin and elsewhere. The chapters are organized into sections which are meant to be read sequentially. Yet some material may also be skipped

on first reading or in a course which is too short to cover everything. For instance, a course of two hours a week for 15 weeks, with a focus on the relationship to optimization, could follow the path: Chapter 1 (omitting Section 1.6), Sections 2.1 and 2.2, Chapter 3, Chapter 5, Sections 6.1 through 6.3, Chapter 7, and Chapter 8.

Organization of the book. Each chapter ends with two special sections containing problems and remarks. The problems come in three flavors. The first type is comprised of standard exercises intended to help the reader get acquainted with the subject. The second type comes with hints in Appendix D; these problems are marked with “o”. They are selected because often they are related to proofs of lemmas or particularly relevant examples that are used later in the text. The third kind, marked with “•”, are research problems and open questions. References to the literature or historical explanations are usually collected as remarks at the very end of each chapter. Occasionally, we skip a proof of a result which we consider outside the scope of this book, despite its relevance for tropical geometry. In those cases, a textbook reference is given instantly; an example is the Newton–Puiseux Theorem, Theorem 2.1. Some specific examples are copied from the literature, always with an exact reference, usually in the remarks following each chapter. This is meant to ease further reading of the original texts, which often study additional aspects beyond the scope of this book. For instance, Example 4.34 originates from an article of Tran and Yu [TY19, Example 3].

There are four appendices. The first two, A on “Geometric Combinatorics” and B for “Computational Complexity”, collect material that is more or less taken for granted throughout the book. While they cannot replace textbooks on their respective subjects, some readers may find the reminders convenient. Appendix C is very different. It comprises explicit computations with the software system `polymake` [GJ00, HJ17], covering large portions of the book. Looking it up frequently and experimenting with the software may be an additional help. The final appendix, Appendix D, contains hints to the problems marked “o”.

Acknowledgements. I am very grateful to the many readers of early drafts of this book, in its various stages, for their comments, suggestions, and corrections. This includes, in particular, Xavier Allamigeon, Benjamin Assarf, Matthias Beck, Pascal Benchimol, Paul Breiding, Taylor Brysiewicz, Andrei Comănesci, Francisco Criado, Jules Depersin, Maria Dostert, Holger Eble, Stéphane Gaubert, Kevin Guo, Louis Hainaut, Girtrude Hamm, Martin Henk, Katrin Herr, Johannes Hofscheier, Aryaman Jal, Katharina Jochemko, Florian Kohl, Anton Leykin, Niels Lindner, Georg Loho, Ina Mette, Sybille Meyer, Henryk Nagel, Daniel Oberländer, Jorge Alberto

Olarte, Marta Panizzut, Manuel Radons, Janek Reichardt, Felix Rydell, Francisco Santos, Moritz Schmitt, Benjamin Schröter, Sylvain Spitz, Bernd Sturmfels, Paul Vater, André Wagner, and five anonymous referees. Special thanks to Robert Löwe, who helped me to get this book done, finally. In addition to commenting on the text, his support involved copyediting, discussing notation, and contributions to several illustrations.

Berlin, May 2021

Michael Joswig

Notation

The symbols are organized by topic.

Sets.

$\#M$ cardinality of the set M

$[n]$ set of first n positive integers $1, 2, \dots, n$

$M + N$ disjoint union of the sets M and N

$M - N$ set difference of M and N where N is a subset of M

$M \Delta N$ symmetric difference of sets

$\binom{M}{k}$ set of all k -element subsets of the set M

2^M power set, i.e., set of all subsets of M

Tropical Arithmetic.

\mathbb{T} the set $\mathbb{R} \cup \{\infty\}$ which underlies the tropical semiring (with respect to \min)

\oplus tropical addition, usually: \min

\odot tropical multiplication of scalars, always: $+$

\odot also: tropical matrix multiplication; if it is necessary to explicitly name the relevant tropical addition, we use \odot^{\min} and \odot^{\max}

$\mathbb{R}^d/\mathbb{R}\mathbb{1}$ tropical $(d - 1)$ -torus $\mathbb{R}^d/\mathbb{R}\mathbb{1}$

\mathbb{TP}^{d-1} tropical projective $(d - 1)$ -space

Vectors and Matrices.

e_i i th standard basis vector of \mathbb{R}^d

e_σ sum of standard basis vectors $\sum_{i \in \sigma} e_i$

- e_i^{trop} i th tropical standard basis vector of \mathbb{TP}^{d-1}
 $\zeta(p)$ canonical coordinates of a point $p \in \mathbb{TP}^{d-1}$
 M_i i th row of matrix M
 M_I submatrix of $m \times n$ -matrix M formed from rows indexed by $I \subseteq [m]$
 M_{-i} short for submatrix $M_{[m]-i}$ of M obtained by deleting i th row
 $M^{(k)}$ k th column of M
 $M^{(-k)}$ submatrix of M obtained by deleting the k th column
 A^\top transpose of the matrix A
 $A^\#$ residuated operator defined by matrix A

Valued Fields.

- $\mathbb{F}[[t]]$ power series with coefficients in \mathbb{F} and indeterminate t
 $\mathbb{F}((t))$ Laurent series
 $\mathbb{F}\{\{t\}\}$ standard Puiseux series
 $\mathbb{F}\{\{t\}\}^*$ dual standard Puiseux series
 $\mathbb{F}\{t\}$ Puiseux fractions
 $\mathbb{F}\{\{t^{\mathbb{R}}\}\}$ generalized Puiseux series
 $\mathbb{F}\{\{t^{\mathbb{R}}\}\}^*$ dual generalized Puiseux series
 $\text{ord}(\gamma)$ valuation of a Puiseux series
 $\text{sord}(\gamma)$ signed valuation of a real Puiseux series
 $V(I)$ algebraic variety of the ideal I , affine or projective
 $\mathbb{P}^m(\mathbb{F})$ m -dimensional projective space over \mathbb{F}

Tropical Polynomials and Polyhedral Geometry.

- $\text{pos}(M)$ cone generated by a set M
 $\text{conv}(M)$ convex hull of a set M
 $\mathcal{T}(F)$ tropical hypersurface defined by tropical polynomial F
 $\mathcal{D}(F)$ dome of the tropical polynomial F
 $\text{NC}(F)$ normal complex of the tropical polynomial F
 $\text{supp}(F)$ support of tropical polynomial F
 $\text{localsupp}_F(p)$ local support of point p with respect to tropical polynomial F
 $\text{ct}_F(p)$ coarse type of a point p with respect to F
 $\text{ft}_{F,G}(p)$ fine type of a point p with respect to F and G
 $[p, q]$ ordinary line segment $\text{conv}\{p, q\}$

- Δ_{d-1} ordinary $(d-1)$ -simplex $\text{conv}\{e_1, e_2, \dots, e_d\}$
 $\Delta(d, n)$ hypersimplex $\text{conv}\{e_\sigma \mid \sigma \in \binom{[n]}{d}\}$
 $U(A, \omega)$ unbounded polyhedron defined by the point configuration A and the height function ω
 $\Sigma(A, \omega)$ regular subdivision of A induced by ω
 $\mathcal{N}(f)$ Newton polytope of (tropical or ordinary) polynomial f
 $\tilde{\mathcal{N}}(f)$ extended Newton polyhedron of polynomial f
 $\mathcal{S}(f)$ regular subdivision of $\mathcal{N}(f)$ dual to $\mathcal{T}(F)$
 $\mathcal{F}(P)$ face poset of a not necessarily bounded polyhedron P
 \mathfrak{P}_d polytope algebra in \mathbb{R}^d
 $\mathcal{C}(A, B)$ Cayley embedding of the point configurations A and B
 $R(G)$ root polytope of the bipartite graph $G \subseteq K_{m,n}$
 $\mathcal{S}(L)$ mixed subdivision dual to tropical hyperplane arrangement defined by the matrix L
 $\mathcal{C}(L)$ Cayley embedding corresponding to tropical hyperplane arrangement defined by L
 $C(L)$ tropical Cramer vector
 $\text{LP}(A, b, c)$ linear program: minimize $\langle c, x \rangle$ subject to $Ax + b \geq 0$
 $\mathcal{P}(A, b)$ feasible set of an ordinary or tropical linear program
 $\text{face}_P(w)$ face of the polyhedron P maximizing the linear function w
 $\text{vol}(P)$ Euclidean volume of a polytope P

Graphs, Partially Ordered Sets, and Polytopes Derived.

- $\text{tdet } M$ tropical determinant of the matrix M
 $\delta^{\text{in}}(v)$ (multi)set of in-arcs of the node v in a directed graph
 $\delta^{\text{out}}(v)$ (multi)set of out-arcs of the node v in a directed graph
 $B(A)$ bipartite graph recording the finite entries of the matrix A
 $Q(W)$ weighted digraph polyhedron associated with the square matrix W
 $\mathfrak{P}(\Gamma)$ partially ordered set arising from the digraph Γ
 $\text{Ord}(\mathfrak{P})$ order polytope of the poset \mathfrak{P}

Tropical Convexity.

- $\text{tpos}(M)$ tropical cone generated by M
 $\text{tconv}(M)$ tropical convex hull, in $\mathbb{R}^d/\mathbb{R}\mathbf{1}$ or \mathbb{TP}^{d-1}
 $\text{tconv}(V)$ tropical convex hull of the columns of $V \in \mathbb{T}^{d \times n}$

- $\text{tvol}(V)$ tropical volume of $\text{tconv}(V)$, where $V \in \mathbb{T}^{d \times d}$
 $[p, q]_{\text{trop}}$ tropical line segment $\text{tconv}\{p, q\}$
 $\mathcal{E}(V)$ envelope of the (columns of) the matrix V
 S_k closed sector of the tropical hyperplane with apex 0
 S_k° open sector of the tropical hyperplane with apex 0
 $\text{CovDec}(V)$ covector decomposition induced by (the columns of) V
 $\text{CovGraph}(C)$ covector graph of the cell C
 $\text{ext } K$ set of extreme points of the tropically convex set K
 pr_i projection $\mathbb{R}^d \rightarrow \mathbb{R}^{d-1}$ by omitting the i th coordinate
 $\overline{S}_p \sigma$ closed tropical half-space (in $\mathbb{R}^d/\mathbb{R}\mathbf{1}$) with apex p and closed sectors $\sigma \subset [d]$
 \mathbb{T}_\pm signed tropical numbers $\mathbb{T}_+ \cup \mathbb{T}_-$
 $\ominus a$ negative tropical numbers, where $a \in \mathbb{T}$
 $\text{stdet } M$ signed tropical determinant of the matrix M
 $\mathcal{H}(a', a'')$ signed tropical hyperplane defined by $a' \odot x = a'' \odot x$
 $\text{TLP}(A, b, c)$ tropical linear program, usually with respect to $\oplus = \max$

Games.

- $\Gamma_\infty(A, B)$ mean payoff game for a pair of matrices
 $\Gamma^\circ(A, B, s_0)$ finite game, starting at s_0 ; ends if a node is revisited
 $\Gamma'(A, B, s_0; z)$ finite game, starting at s_0 ; restarting at z
 $G(A, B)$ digraph on which the games above are played
 $G_\beta(A, B)$ reduced digraph for (positional) strategy β

Matroids and Tropical Linear Spaces.

- $U_{d,n}$ uniform matroid of rank d on n elements
 $P(M)$ matroid polytope of the matroid M
 \mathcal{L}_π tropical linear space defined by tropical Plücker vector π
 $\text{Gr}(d, n)$ ordinary Grassmannian of d -planes in n -space
 $\text{TGr}(d, n)$ tropical Grassmannian
 $\text{Dr}(d, n)$ Dressian
 M_x initial matroid defined by weight vector w
 $\tilde{\mathcal{B}}(M)$ Bergman fan of the matroid M
 $\mathcal{B}(M)$ Bergman complex of the matroid M

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ISBN 978-1-4704-6653-4



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