

Structure of an induction proof

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To prove: [*write out statement here*]

We'll prove this by induction. Let $P(n)$ be the statement that [*fill in predicate here*]

Let S be the set of positive integers k such that $P(k)$ is true. We'll show first that $1 \in S$, and second, that if $k \in S$, then $k + 1 \in S$. Together, these imply that all positive integers are in S , and we will be done.

Base case: To show that $1 \in S$, we'll write out $P(1)$: [*write out $P(1)$ here, and give an explanation of why it's true.*]

So $P(1)$ is true, and $1 \in S$.

Inductive step: For some fixed but unknown positive integer k , we'll assume $P(k)$ is true, i.e., we'll assume that [*write out $P(k)$ here*]

We'll then use this to prove $P(k + 1)$, i.e., to prove [*write out $P(k + 1)$ here*]

[*Start from $P(k)$ and argue the truth of $P(k + 1)$]*

which is exactly the statement $P(k + 1)$, which we promised to prove.

We conclude, by induction, that S contains all positive integers, so $P(n)$ is true for every positive integer n .