5

Computer numbering systems

5.1 Binary numbers

The system of numbers in everyday use is the **denary** or **decimal** system of numbers, using the digits 0 to 9. It has ten different digits (0, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9) and is said to have a **radix** or **base** of 10.

The **binary** system of numbers has a radix of 2 and uses only the digits 0 and 1.

5.2 Conversion of binary to denary

The denary number 234.5 is equivalent to

$$2 \times 10^2 + 3 \times 10^1 + 4 \times 10^0 + 5 \times 10^{-1}$$

i.e. is the sum of terms comprising: (a digit) multiplied by (the base raised to some power).

In the binary system of numbers, the base is 2, so 1101.1 is equivalent to:

$$1 \times 2^3 + 1 \times 2^2 + 0 \times 2^1 + 1 \times 2^0 + 1 \times 2^{-1}$$

Thus the denary number equivalent to the binary number 1101.1 is

$$8 + 4 + 0 + 1 + \frac{1}{2}, \text{ that is } 13.5$$

i.e. $\mathbf{1101.1_2 = 13.5_{10}}$, the suffixes 2 and 10 denoting binary and denary systems of numbers respectively.

Problem 1. Convert 11011_2 to a denary number.

$$\begin{aligned}\text{From above: } 11011_2 &= 1 \times 2^4 + 1 \times 2^3 + 0 \times 2^2 \\ &\quad + 1 \times 2^1 + 1 \times 2^0 \\ &= 16 + 8 + 0 + 2 + 1 \\ &= \mathbf{27_{10}}\end{aligned}$$

Problem 2. Convert 0.1011_2 to a decimal fraction.

$$\begin{aligned}0.1011_2 &= 1 \times 2^{-1} + 0 \times 2^{-2} + 1 \times 2^{-3} + 1 \times 2^{-4} \\ &= 1 \times \frac{1}{2} + 0 \times \frac{1}{2^2} + 1 \times \frac{1}{2^3} + 1 \times \frac{1}{2^4} \\ &= \frac{1}{2} + \frac{1}{8} + \frac{1}{16} \\ &= 0.5 + 0.125 + 0.0625 \\ &= \mathbf{0.6875_{10}}\end{aligned}$$

Problem 3. Convert 101.0101_2 to a denary number.

$$\begin{aligned}101.0101_2 &= 1 \times 2^2 + 0 \times 2^1 + 1 \times 2^0 + 0 \times 2^{-1} \\ &\quad + 1 \times 2^{-2} + 0 \times 2^{-3} + 1 \times 2^{-4} \\ &= 4 + 0 + 1 + 0 + 0.25 + 0 + 0.0625 \\ &= \mathbf{5.3125_{10}}\end{aligned}$$

Now try the following exercise

Exercise 17 Further problems on conversion of binary to denary numbers (Answers on page 272)

In Problems 1 to 4, convert the binary numbers given to denary numbers.

1. (a) 110 (b) 1011 (c) 1110 (d) 1001
2. (a) 10101 (b) 11001 (c) 101101 (d) 110011