Advanced SQL

05 — Window Functions

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1 Window Functions

With SQL:2003, the ISO SQL Standard introduced window functions, a new mode of row-based computation:

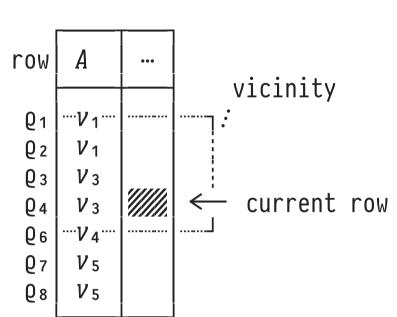
SQL Feature	Mode of Computation
function/operator	row → row
table-generating function	$row \rightarrow table of rows$
aggregate window function 🕤	group of rows → row (one per group)
window function 😏	row vicinity → row (one per row)

SQL Modes of Computation

Window functions ...

- ... are **row-based:** each individual input row *r* is mapped to one result row,
- ullet ... use the **vicinity** around r to compute this result row.

Row Vicinity: Window Frames

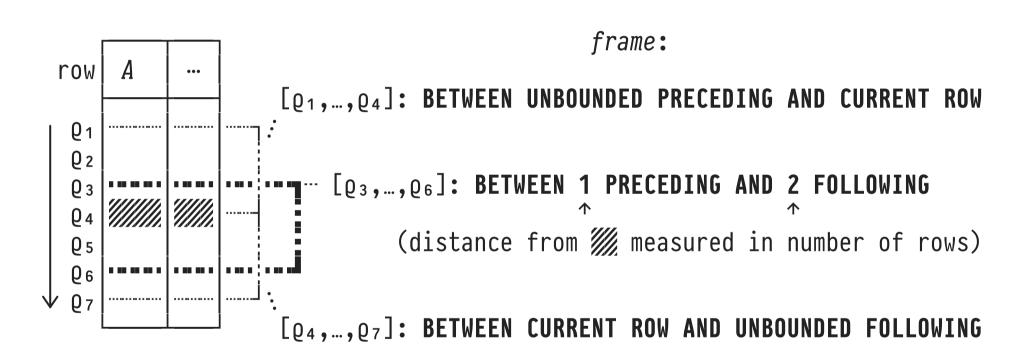


- Each row is the current row /// at one point in time.
- Row vicinity (window, frame) is based on either:
 - 1 row position (ROWS windows),
 - 2 row values v_i (RANGE windows).

- As the current row changes, the window slides with it.
- Window semantics depend on a defined row ordering.

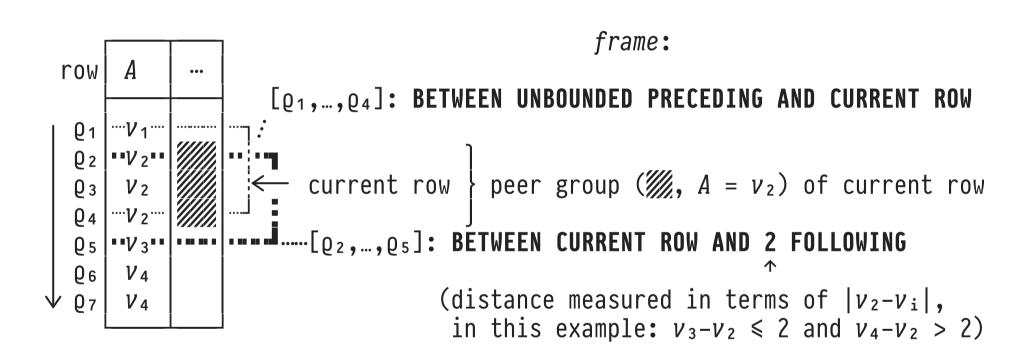
Window Frame Specifications (Variant: ROWS)

window function ordering criteria frame specification f OVER (ORDER BY $e_1,...,e_n$ [ROWS frame])

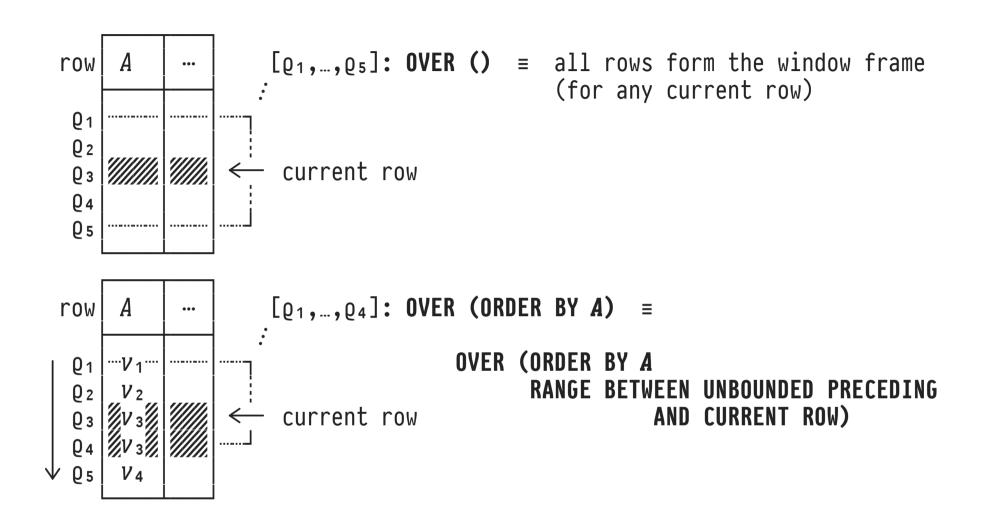


Window Frame Specifications (Variant: RANGE)

window function one criterion frame specification f OVER (ORDER BY A [RANGE frame])

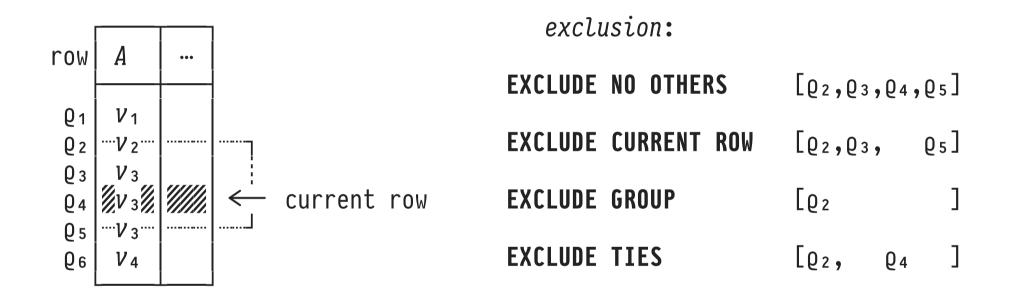


Window Frame Specifications: Abbreviations



WINDOW Frame Specifications: Exclusion¹

window function exclusion clause f OVER (ORDER BY A frame [exclusion])



¹ Q: Which frame would lead to a window as shown above?

WINDOW Clause: Name the Frame

Syntactic **\Pi**: If window frame specifications

- 1. become unwieldy because of verbose SQL syntax and/or
- 2. one frame is used multiple times in a query,

add a WINDOW clause to a SFW block to name the frame, e.g.:

```
SELECT ... f OVER w<sub>i</sub> ... g OVER w<sub>j</sub> ...
FROM ...
WHERE ...
:
WINDOW w<sub>1</sub> AS (frame<sub>1</sub>), ..., w<sub>n</sub> AS (frame<sub>n</sub>)
ORDER BY ...
```

Use SQL Itself to Explain Window Frame Semantics

Regular aggregates may act as window functions f. All rows in the frame will be aggregated:

```
SELECT w.row AS "current row",

COUNT(*) OVER win AS "frame size",

list(w.row) OVER win AS "rows in frame"

FROM W AS w
WINDOW win AS (frame)
```

<u>row</u>	a	b
Q ₁	1	
Q 1 Q 2 Q 3 Q 4	2 3 3	\circ
бз	3	0
Q ₄	3	
	-	:

Table W

Q: What is the Chance of Fine Weather on Weekends?

Input: Daily weather readings in sensors:

<u>day</u>	weekday	temp	rain
1	Fri	10	800
2	Sat	12	300
•	•	•	•

Table sensors

- The weather is fine on day *d* if—on *d* and the two days prior—the minimum temperature is above 15°C and the overall rainfall is less than 600ml/m².
- Expected output:

weekend?	% fine
f	29
t	43

2 PARTITION BY: Window Frames Inside Partitions

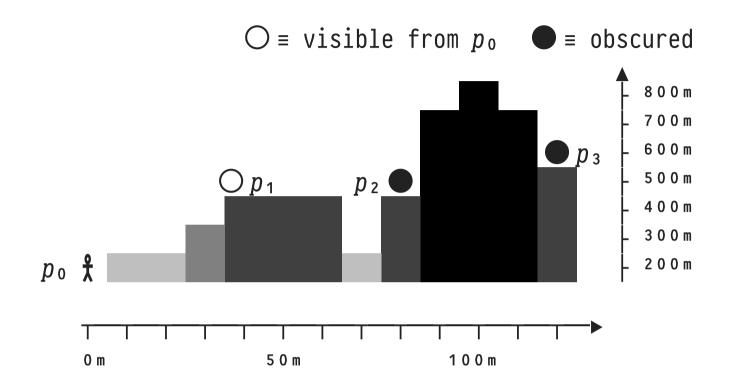
Optionally, we may **partition** the input table *before* rows are sorted and window frames are determined:

```
all input rows that agree on all p_i form one partition f OVER ([ PARTITION BY p_1,...,p_m ] [ ORDER BY e_1,...,e_n ] [ frame ])
```

• Note:

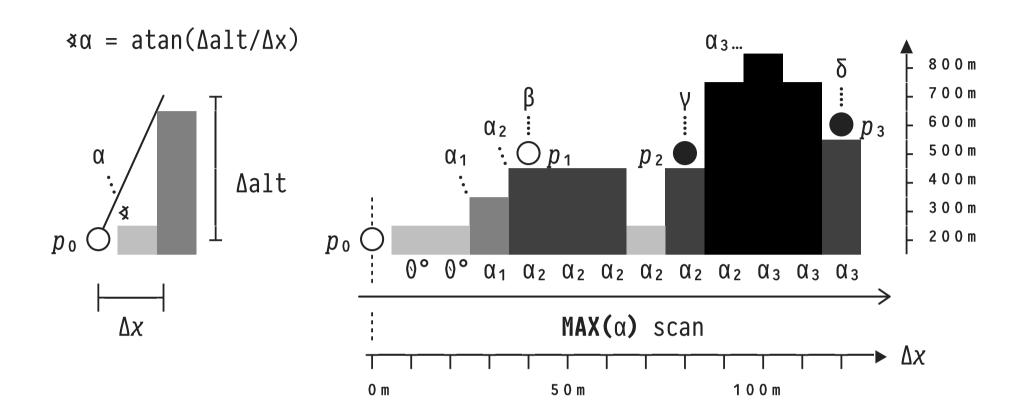
- 1. Frames never cross partitions.
- 2. BETWEEN --- PRECEDING AND --- FOLLOWING respects partition boundaries.

Q: Which Spots are Visible in a Hilly Landscape?



- From the viewpoint of p_0 ($\ref{heights}$) we can see p_1 , but...
 - \circ ... p_2 is **obscured** (no straight-line view from p_0),
 - \circ ... p_3 is **obscured** (lies behind the 800m peak).

Q: Visible Spots in a Hilly Landscape? — A: MAX Scan!



• We have 0° < α_1 < α_2 < α_3 and $\beta \geqslant \alpha_2$, $\gamma < \alpha_2$, $\delta < \alpha_3$. p_1 visible p_2 , 3 obscured

Q: Visible Spots in a Hilly Landscape? — A: MAX Scan!

• Input: Location of p_0 (here: x = 0) and 1D-map of hills:

<u>X</u>	alt
0	200
10	200
•	•
120	500

Table map

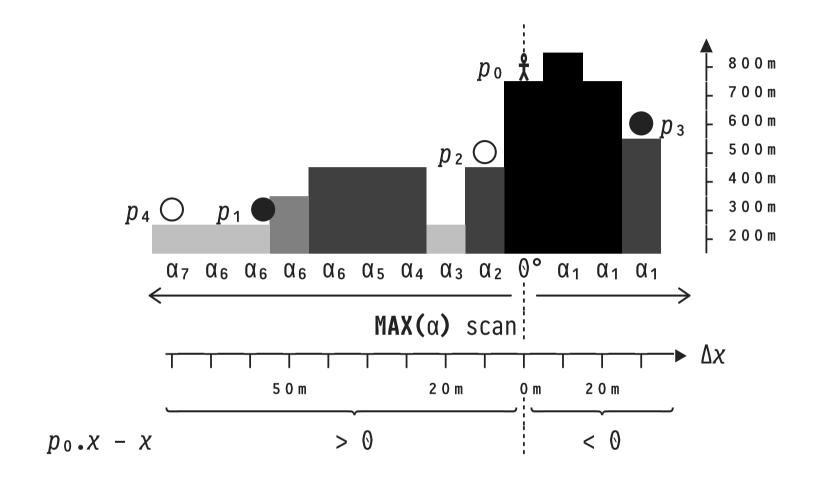
• Output: Can p_0 see the point on the hilltop at x?

X	visible?
0	true
10	true
•	•
120	false

Q: Visible Spots in a Hilly Landscape? — A: MAX Scan!

```
WITH
-- 1 Angles \alpha (in °) between p_0 and the hilltop at x
angles(x, angle) AS (
  SELECT m.x,
         degrees(atan((m.alt - p0.alt) /
                       abs(p0.x - m.x))) AS angle
  FROM
        map AS m
 WHERE m.x > p0.x
-- 2 MAX(\alpha) scan (to the right of p_0)
max_scan(x, max_angle) AS (
  SELECT a.x,
         MAX(a.angle)
           OVER (ORDER BY abs(p0.x - a.x)) AS max_angle
        angles AS a
  FROM
),
```

Looking Left and Right: PARTITION BY



• Need MAX scans left and right of $p_0 \Rightarrow$ use PARTITION BY.

Looking Left and Right: PARTITION BY

```
WITH  \vdots \\ -- \ 2 \ \text{MAX}(\alpha) \ \text{scan (left/right of } p_0) \\ \text{max\_scan}(x, \ \text{max\_angle}) \ \textbf{AS} \ ( \\ \text{SELECT a.x,} \qquad -- \quad \in \{-1, \ 0 \ , 1\} \\ \text{MAX}(\text{a.angle}) \qquad -- \qquad \\ \text{OVER (PARTITION BY sign}(\text{p0.x} - \text{a.x})) \\ \text{ORDER BY abs}(\text{p0.x} - \text{a.x})) \ \textbf{AS} \ \text{max\_angle} \\ \text{FROM angles AS a} \qquad -- \qquad \Delta x > 0 \\ ), \\ \vdots
```

• \forall a \in angles: a.x \neq p0.x \Rightarrow We end up with **two** partitions.

```
3 | Scans: Not Only in the Hills
```

Scans are a general and expressive computational pattern:

```
agg(e) OVER (ORDER BY e_1,...,e_n {ROWS,RANGE} BETWEEN (\phi,z,\oplus) UNBOUNDED PRECEDING AND CURRENT ROW)
```

- Available in a variety of forms in programming languages
 - ∘ Haskell: scanl $z \oplus xs$, APL: $\oplus \setminus xs$, Python: accumulate. scanl $\oplus z [x_1, x_2, ...] = [z, z \oplus x_1, (z \oplus x_1) \oplus x_2, ...]$
- In parallel programming: *prefix sums* (Guy Blelloch)
 - Sorting, lexical analysis, tree operations, reg.exp.
 search, drawing operations, image processing, ...

4 Interlude: Quiz

Q: Assume xs = '((b*2)-4*a*c)*0.5'. What is computed below?

P Hint (this is the same query expressed in APL):

```
xs ← '((b*2)-4×a×c)*0.5'
+\ (1 <sup>-</sup>1 0)['()'ixs]
```

5 | Beyond Aggregation: Window Functions

```
window function f \text{ over } ([\text{ partition BY } p_1, ..., p_m] \\ [\text{ order BY } e_1, ..., e_n] \\ [\text{ frame }])
```

Three kinds of window functions f:

- 1. Aggregates: SUM(•), AVG(•), MAX(•), list(•), ... process
 all rows in the frame. ✓
- 2. Row Access: access row by absolute/relative position in ordered frame or partition: first/last/nth/n rows away.
- 3. Row Ranking: assign numeric rank of row in partition.

```
6 LAG/LEAD: Access Rows of the Past and Future
```

Row access at offset $\pm n$, relative to the current row:

```
-- evaluate e as if we were

-- n rows before the current row

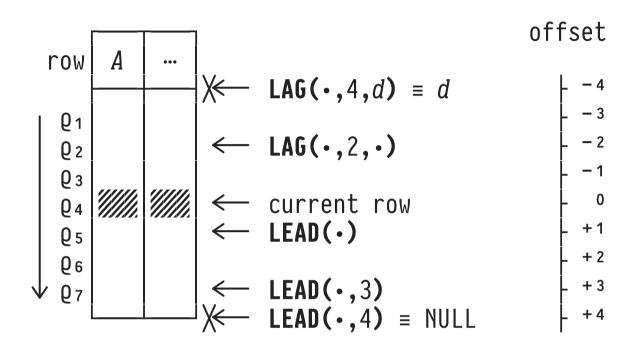
-- LAG(e,n,d) OVER ([ PARTITION BY p_1,...,p_m ]

ORDER BY e_1,...,e_n)
```

Note:

- LEAD(e,n,d): ... n rows after the current row ...
- Scope is partition—no row access outside the partition.
- If there is no row at offset $\pm n \Rightarrow$ return value d.

LAG/LEAD: Row Offsets (Assume: No Partitioning, ORDER BY A)



- The frame of the current row is irrelevant for LAG/LEAD.
- Default parameters if absent: n = 1, d = NULL.

✗ A March Through the Hills: Ascent or Descent?

```
SELECT m.x, m.alt,

CASE sign(LEAD(m.alt, 1) OVER rightwards - m.alt)

WHEN -1 THEN '>' WHEN 1 THEN '>'

WHEN 0 THEN '>' ELSE '?'

END AS climb,

LEAD(m.alt, 1) OVER rightwards - m.alt AS "by [m]"

FROM map AS m

WINDOW rightwards AS (ORDER BY m.x) -- marching right
```

X	alt	climb	by [m]
0	200	\rightarrow	0
•	•	•	•
90	700		100
100	800		-100
110	700		-200
120	500	?	NULL

Crime Scene: Sessionization

A spy broke into the Police HQ computer system. A log records keyboard activity of user uid at time ts:

<u>uid</u>	<u>ts</u>
3 :0:0	2024-05-25 07:25:12
<u>=</u>	2024-05-25 07:25:18 2024-05-25 08:01:55
₩	2024-05-25 08:05:07
*	2024-05-25 08:05:30
•	2024-05-25 08:05:39
+	2024-05-25 08:05:46

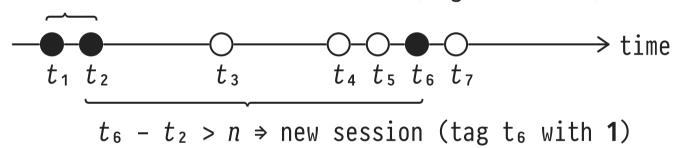
Table log

 Q: Can we sessionize the log so that investigators can identify sessions (= streaks of uninterrupted activity)?

Sessionization (Query Plan)

- 1. Cop and spy sessions happen independently (even if interleaved): partition log into ♀/● and ♣/○ rows.
- 2. Tag keyboard activities (below: tagging for ●):

 $t_2 - t_1 \le \text{threshold } n \Rightarrow \text{continue session (tag } t_2 \text{ with } 0)$



3. Scan the tagged table and derive session IDs by maintaining a runnning sum of start of session tags.

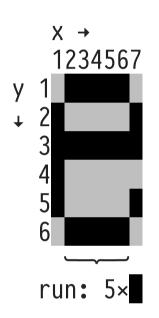
Sessionization (Query Plan)

1 2			1 2 3					4				
uid	ts		uid	ts		uid	ts	SOS		uid	ts	session
•	t ₁ t ₂ t ₃		•	$\downarrow \begin{array}{c} t_1 \\ t_2 \\ \downarrow t_6 \end{array}$		•	$ \downarrow \begin{array}{c} t_1 \\ t_2 \\ t_6 \end{array} $	1 0 1	$\begin{array}{c} \longleftarrow \text{ log start} \\ \hline \\ \hline \\ & \downarrow \\ \end{array} \begin{array}{c} t_6 - t_2 > n \\ \\ & \Rightarrow \text{ new session} \end{array}$	•	t ₁ t ₂ t ₆	1 1 2
0	t ₄ t ₅ t ₆		0 0	$\begin{vmatrix} t_3 \\ t_4 \\ t_5 \\ \downarrow t_7 \end{vmatrix}$		0 0 0	$ \begin{array}{c c} t_3 \\ t_4 \\ t_5 \\ \end{array} $	1 1 1 0 0	<pre></pre>	0 0	$\begin{vmatrix} t_3 \\ t_4 \\ t_5 \\ t_7 \end{vmatrix}$	1 2 2 2 2

- At log start, always begin a new session (sos = 1).
- How to assign *global session IDs* (○'s sessions: 3, 4)?

Image Compression by Run-Length Encoding

Compress image by identifying pixel runs of the same color:



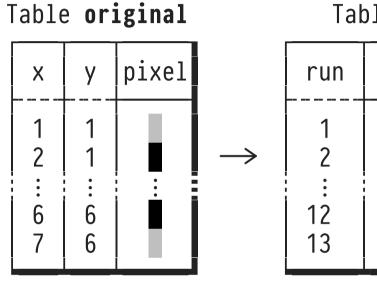


Table **encoding**

length

pixel

• Here: assumes a row-wise linearization of the pixel map.

• In b/w images we may omit column pixel in table encoding.

Run-Length Encoding (Query Plan)

U							
X	у	pixel	change?				
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1	?=	t 1 f 0 f 0 f 1 :				

1

X	У	pixel	change?	Σ change?	
1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1		1 1 0 0 0 0 1	1 2 2 2 2 3 :	··· run #2 of length 5

2

1: LAG(pixel,1,undefined): pixel @ (1,1) always "changes."

2: A SUM() scan of change? yields run identifiers.

7 FIRST_VALUE, LAST_VALUE, NTH_VALUE: In-Frame Row Access

Aggregates reduce *all rows* inside a frame to a single value. Now for something different:

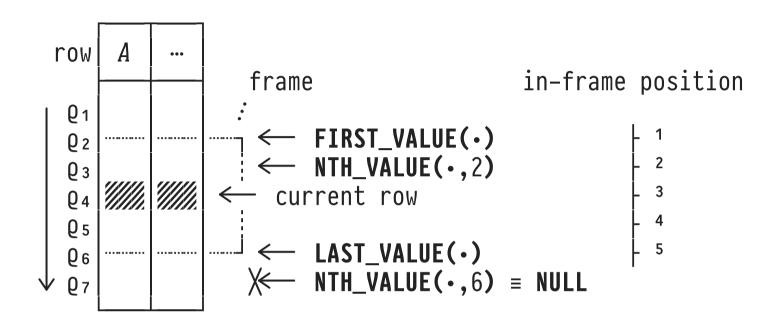
• Positional access to individual rows inside a frame is provided by three window functions:

```
-- evaluate expression e as if we were at
-- the first/last/n<sup>th</sup> row in the frame
-- FIRST_VALUE(e)
LAST_VALUE(e)
NTH_VALUE(e,n)

OVER (...)
```

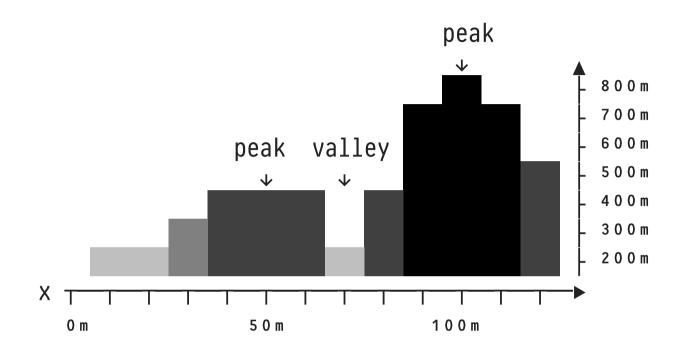
• NTH_VALUE(e,n): No n^{th} row in frame \Rightarrow return NULL.

In-Frame Row Access



• We have $FIRST_VALUE(e) = NTH_VALUE(e, 1)$.

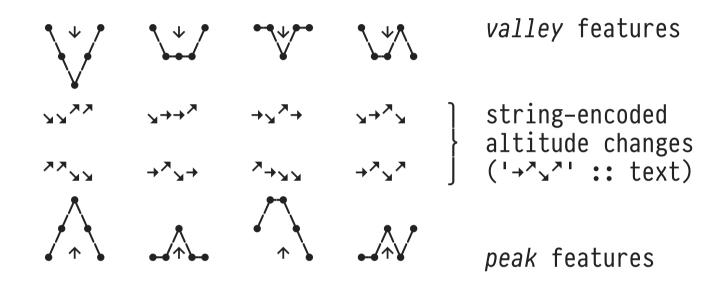
Detecting Landscape Features



- Detect features in a hilly landscape. Attach label ∈ {peak, valley, -} to every location x.
- Feature defined by relative altitude change in vicinity.

Detecting Landscape Features (Query Plan)

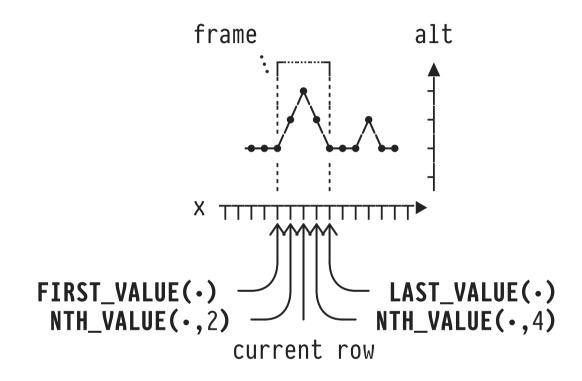
1. Track relative altitude changes in a sliding x-window of size 5:



2. Pattern match on change strings to detect features.

Altitude Changes in a Sliding Window

• Frame: ROWS BETWEEN 2 PRECEDING AND 2 FOLLOWING (5 rows):



• FIRST_VALUE(alt) < NTH_VALUE(alt,2) ⇒ ascent ('^').

Altitude Changes in a Sliding Window

- Recall: 1D landscape represented as table map(x,alt).
- Encode altitude changes: slope(-1) ≡ '*', slope(0) ≡ '→'
 (here: slope(•) implemented as a DuckDB macro).

Row Pattern Matching (SQL:2016)

SQL:2016 introduced an entirely new SQL construct, row pattern matching (MATCH_RECOGNIZE):

- ORDER BY: Order the rows of a table.
- 2. DEFINE: Tag rows that satisfy given predicates.
- 3. PATTERN: Specify a regular expression over row tags, find matches in the ordered sequence of rows.
- 4. MEASURES: For each match, evaluate expressions that measure its features (matched rows, length, ...).

As of June 2022, not supported by . Currently implemented by Oracle® only.

Row Pattern Matching (SQL:2016)

```
Output
SELECT *
                                             feature slope
FROM
      map
                                          X
MATCH_RECOGNIZE (
ORDER BY X
                                          50
                                                     DOWN
                                          70
MEASURES FIRST(x,1) AS x,
                                                     UP
          MATCH_NUMBER() AS feature,
                                                     DOWN
                                         100
          CLASSIFIER() AS slope
 ONE ROW PER MATCH
 AFTER MATCH SKIP TO NEXT ROW
 PATTERN (((DOWN DOWN|DOWN EVEN|UP DOWN|EVEN DOWN)...)
 DEFINE UP AS UP.alt > PREV(UP.alt),
        DOWN AS DOWN.alt < PREV(DOWN.alt), -- } row tags
        EVEN AS EVEN.alt = PREV(EVEN.alt) --
```

8 | Numbering and Ranking Rows

Countless problem scenarios involve the **number** (position) or **rank** of the current row in an *ordered sequence* of rows.

• Family of window functions to number/rank rows:

```
ROW_NUMBER()

DENSE_RANK()

RANK()

OVER ([ PARTITION BY p<sub>1</sub>,...,p<sub>m</sub> ]

[ ORDER BY e<sub>1</sub>,...,e<sub>n</sub> ] )

-- ranking w/o ORDER BY 

NTILE(n)
```

• Scope is partition (if present)—*frame* is irrelevant.

Numbering and Ranking Rows — f() OVER (ORDER BY A)

row	A	ROW_NUMBER	DENSE_RANK	RANK
21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29	1 2 3 4 6 7	1 2 3	1 2 3 3 4 5 5	1 2 3 6 7 9

Table W

- ··· Rows that agree on
- ··· the sort criterion
- --- (here: **A**) ...
 - ... number randomly
 - ... rank equally
- Mind the ranking gap
 (think Olympics)

• In general: DENSE_RANK() ≤ RANK() ≤ ROW_NUMBER()

ightharpoonup Once More: Find the Top n Rows in a Group



```
SELECT tallest.legs, tallest.species, tallest.height
FROM (SELECT d.legs, d.species, d.height,

ROW_NUMBER()—RANK() OVER (PARTITION BY d.legs
ORDER BY d.height DESC) AS n

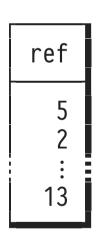
FROM dinosaurs AS d
WHERE d.legs IS NOT NULL) AS tallest
WHERE tallest.n <= 3
```

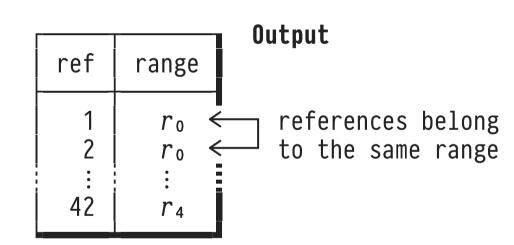
- RANK() vs ROW_NUMBER(): both OK, but different semantics!
- Need a subquery: window functions not allowed in WHERE.

Identify Consecutive Ranges

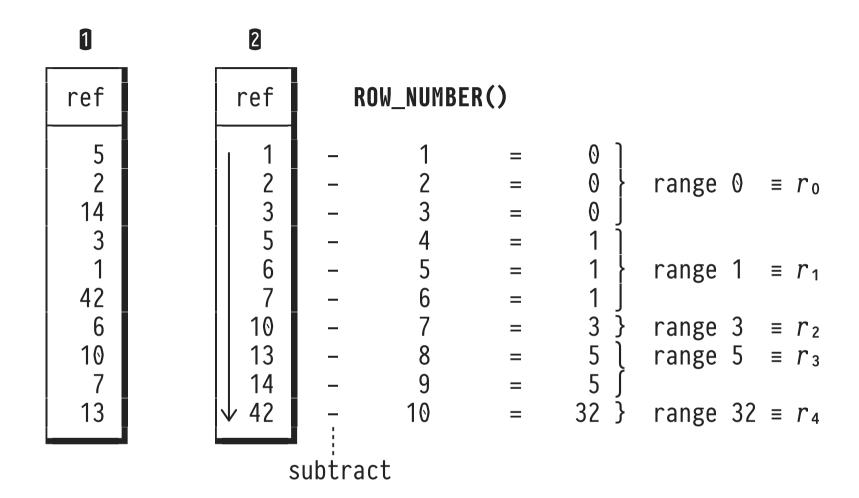
- What you want to see ≅:
 - "... as Knuth has shown in [1-3,5-7,10,13&14,42] ..."

Table citations





Identify Consecutive Ranges (Query Plan)



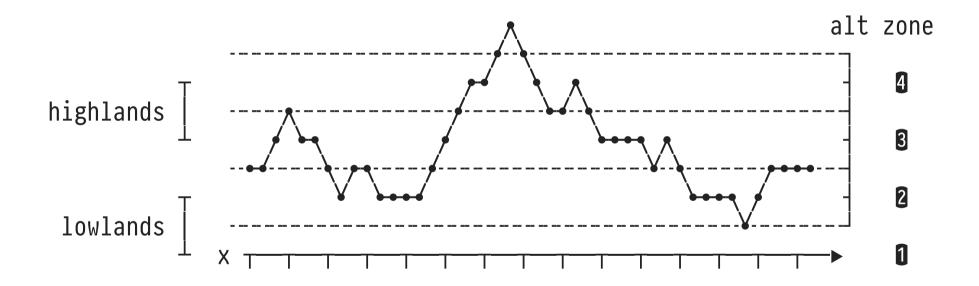
Numbering and Ranking Rows — f OVER (ORDER BY A)

row	A	PERCENT_RANK	CUME_DIST	NTILE(3)	
21 22 23 24 25 26 27 29	3 3 4 6	1/8 2/8	5/9 5/9 6/9 8/9	2 2 2 3	Rows that agree on the sort criterion (here: A) rank equally - current row is in the n th of 3 chunks of rows

n% of the other rows rank the current row and lower ranked lower than the current row rows make up n% of all rows

Altitudinal Mountain Zones

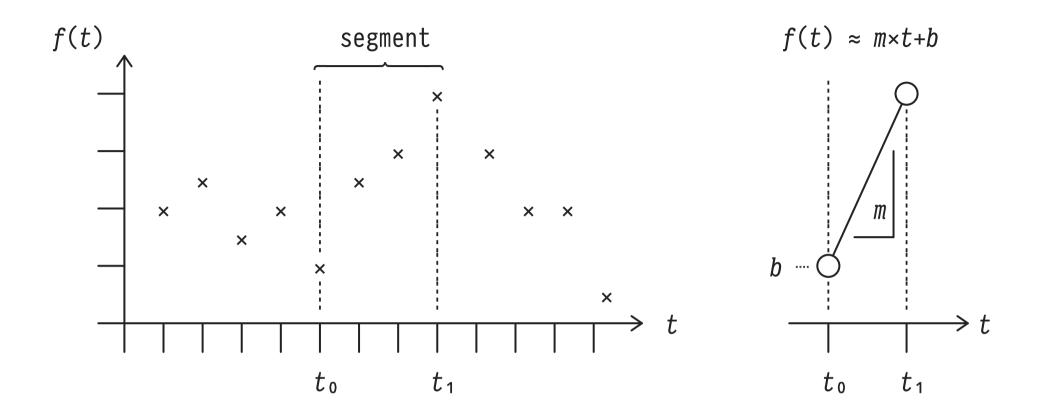
- Classify the altitudes of a mountain range into
 - equal-sized vegetation zones and
 - 2. lowlands (altitude in the lowest 20%) and highlands (between 60%-80% of maximum altitude).



Altitudinal Mountain Zones

```
-- Classify altitudinal zones in table mountains(x, alt)
SELECT
 m.x, m.alt,
  NTILE(4) OVER altitude AS zone,
  CASE
    WHEN PERCENT_RANK() OVER altitude BETWEEN 0.6 AND 0.8
         THEN 'highlands'
    WHEN PERCENT_RANK() OVER altitude < 0.2
         THEN 'lowlands'
         ELSE '-'
  END AS region
FROM mountains AS m
WINDOW altitude AS (ORDER BY m.alt)
ORDER BY m.x;
```

Linear Approximation of a Time Series



- 1. NTILE(n) segments time series at desired granularity.
- 2. Compute m, b in each **segment** \equiv **window frame**.

9 | Summary: Window Function Semantics²

Scope	Computation	Function	Description
frame :	aggregation row access	(aggregates) FIRST_VALUE(e)	SUM, AVG, MAX, array_agg, e at first row in frame
		LAST_VALUE(e) NTH_VALUE(e,n)	e at last row in frame e at n^{th} row in frame
partition	row access	LAG(e,n,d) LEAD(e,n,d)	<pre>e at n rows before current row e at n rows after current row</pre>
	ranking	ROW_NUMBER() RANK()	<pre>number of current row rank with gaps ("Olympics")</pre>
		<pre>DENSE_RANK()</pre>	rank without gaps
		PERCENT_RANK()	relative rank of current row
		CUME_DIST()	ratio of rows up to -"-
		NTILE(n)	rank on a scale $\{1,2,\ldots,n\}$

FIRST_VALUE(e): expression e will be evaluated as if we are at the first row in the frame. LAG(e,n,d): default expression d is returned if there is no row at offset n before the current row.