

## planetmath.org

Math for the people, by the people.

## proof of divergence of harmonic series (by grouping terms)

Canonical name ProofOfDivergenceOfHarmonicSeriesbyGroupingTerms

Date of creation 2013-03-22 15:08:39 Last modified on 2013-03-22 15:08:39

Owner rspuzio (6075) Last modified by rspuzio (6075)

Numerical id 9

Author rspuzio (6075)

Entry type Proof

Classification msc 40A05

The harmonic series can be shown to diverge by a simple argument involving grouping terms. Write

$$\sum_{n=1}^{2^M} \frac{1}{n} = \sum_{m=1}^M \sum_{n=2^{m-1}+1}^{2^m} \frac{1}{n}.$$

Since  $1/n \ge 1/N$  when  $n \le N$ , we have

$$\sum_{n=2^{m-1}+1}^{2^m} \frac{1}{n} \ge \sum_{n=2^{m-1}+1}^{2^m} 2^{-m} = (2^m - 2^{m-1})2^{-m} = \frac{1}{2}$$

Hence,

$$\sum_{n=1}^{2^M} \frac{1}{n} \ge \frac{M}{2}$$

so the series diverges in the limit  $M \to \infty$ .