

# Prime Factors of The Central Binomial Coefficients Down to $2n/3$

(September 12, 2024)

In my last post, I made the small observation that the central binomial coefficient

$$\gamma_n \doteq \binom{2n}{n} = \frac{(2n)!}{(n!)^2} \quad (1)$$

has no prime factors larger than  $2n$ , which is a bit unusual for a number so large. So all the prime factors of  $\gamma_n$  are to be found in  $\{1, 2, \dots, 2n\}$ , and most of the primes in this range occur in the prime factorization of  $\gamma_n$  either to the first power or not at all.

Every prime in the range  $\{n+1, n+2, \dots, 2n\}$  divides  $(2n)!$  but is too large to divide  $n!$ , and so must appear in the prime factorization of  $\gamma_n$ . However, if  $p^2$  divides  $(2n)!$ , then there must be a multiple of  $p$  besides  $p$  itself in range  $\{1, 2, \dots, 2n\}$ . For  $p > n$ , this is impossible, so every prime in the range  $\{n+1, n+2, \dots, 2n\}$  appears in the prime factorization of  $\gamma_n$  to the first power.

If  $\frac{2}{3}n < p \leq n$ , then there is exactly one multiple of  $p$  in the range  $\{1, 2, \dots, n\}$  and exactly two multiples of  $p$  in the range  $\{1, 2, \dots, 2n\}$ , so that in the fraction  $\frac{(2n)!}{(n!)^2}$ , all the  $p$ 's will cancel and no such prime occurs in the prime factorization of  $\gamma_n$ .

For example, if  $n = 50$ , then the primes 53, 59, 61, 67, 71, 73, 79, 83, 89, 97 (the primes between 51 and 100) each occur to the first power in the prime factorization of  $\gamma_n$ , so

$$\gamma_{50} = C(53)(59)(61)(67)(71)(73)(79)(83)(89)(97) \quad (2)$$

Also, the primes 37, 41, 43, 47 (the primes between  $100/3$  and 50) do not divide  $\gamma_{50}$ , so the prime factors of  $C$  are to be found among 2, 3, 5, 7, 11, 13, 17, 19, 23, 29, 31.