Fortex is a conical or triangular "stack of wheels". Each row is a wheel that spins either clockwise or counterclockwise. A center column functions both for the calculation of a modular sum and as an escalator that increases the number of possible states the machine can be in.

Earlier versions of Fortex did not use a triangular shape, and this shape is not necessary. Mathematically all that's needed is arrays that are each of a different length and a perpendicular rotation that gets symbols from one row to another. For instance, one can use the first element of each "row" as part of such a virtual column.