

SUMS OF POWERS VIA BACKWARD FINITE DIFFERENCES AND NEWTON'S FORMULA

PETRO KOLOSOV

ABSTRACT. We develop formula for sums of powers using Newton's interpolation formula in terms of backward finite differences of powers.

CONTENTS

Abstract	1
1. Introduction and main results	1
References	3
Mathematica programs	4

1. INTRODUCTION AND MAIN RESULTS

Define multifold sums of powers in Knuth's [1] notation

$$\Sigma^0 n^m = n^m$$

$$\Sigma^1 n^m = \Sigma^0 1^m + \Sigma^0 2^m + \cdots + \Sigma^0 n^m$$

$$\Sigma^{r+1} n^m = \Sigma^r 1^m + \Sigma^r 2^m + \cdots + \Sigma^r n^m$$

The book Interpolation by Steffensen [2] gives Newton's formula in terms of backward finite differences

Date: January 2, 2026.

2010 *Mathematics Subject Classification.* 05A19, 05A10, 11B68, 11B73, 11B83.

Key words and phrases. Sums of powers, Newton's interpolation formula, Finite differences, Binomial coefficients, Faulhaber's formula, Bernoulli numbers, Bernoulli polynomials, Interpolation, Discrete convolution, Combinatorics, Polynomial identities, Central factorial numbers, Stirling numbers, Eulerian numbers, Worpitzky identity, Pascal's triangle, OEIS.

Proposition 1.1 (Newton formula via backward differences).

$$f(x) = \sum_{k=0}^{\infty} \binom{x-a+k-1}{k} \nabla^k f(a)$$

where $\nabla^k f(a) = \sum_{j=0}^k (-1)^j \binom{k}{j} f(a-j)$.

Thus, by setting $f(n) = n^m$

$$n^m = \sum_{j=0}^m \binom{n-t+j-1}{j} \nabla^j t^m,$$

where $\nabla^j t^m = \sum_{k=0}^j (-1)^k \binom{j}{k} (t-k)^m$. Therefore, ordinary sums of powers is equivalent to

$$\Sigma^1 n^m = \sum_{j=0}^m \nabla^j t^m \sum_{k=1}^n \binom{k-t+j-1}{j}$$

We notice that the sum $\sum_{k=1}^n \binom{k-t+j-1}{j}$ is a good candidate for hockey stick identity for binomial coefficients $\sum_{k=0}^n \binom{k}{j} = \binom{n+1}{j+1}$. Thus, by setting $a = j-t$ and $b = j-t-1+n$, we get

$$\sum_{k=1}^n \binom{-t+j-1+k}{j} = \sum_{m=j-t}^{j-t-1+n} \binom{m}{j}$$

Because,

$$\sum_{m=a}^b \binom{m}{j} = \binom{b+1}{j+1} - \binom{a}{j+1}$$

Thus,

$$\sum_{k=1}^n \binom{-t+j-1+k}{j} = \binom{j-t+n}{j+1} - \binom{j-t}{j+1}$$

Applying the identity for binomial coefficients $\binom{-k}{j} = (-1)^j \binom{j+k-1}{j}$, we obtain

Proposition 1.2 (Ordinary sums of powers via backward differences). *For non-negative integers n, m and an arbitrary integer t*

$$\Sigma^1 n^m = \sum_{j=0}^m \nabla^j t^m \left[(-1)^j \binom{t}{j+1} + \binom{j-t+n}{j+1} \right]$$

For example, by setting $t = 2$, $m = 1, 2, 3, 4$, we get formulas for sums of cubes

$$\Sigma^1 n^1 = 2 \left[-\binom{2}{1} + \binom{n-2}{1} \right] + 1 \left[\binom{2}{2} + \binom{n-1}{2} \right],$$

$$\begin{aligned} \Sigma^1 n^2 &= 4 \left[-\binom{2}{1} + \binom{n-2}{1} \right] + 3 \left[\binom{2}{2} + \binom{n-1}{2} \right] \\ &\quad + 2 \left[-\binom{2}{3} + \binom{n}{3} \right]. \end{aligned}$$

$$\begin{aligned} \Sigma^1 n^3 &= 8 \left[-\binom{2}{1} + \binom{n-2}{1} \right] + 7 \left[\binom{2}{2} + \binom{n-1}{2} \right] \\ &\quad + 6 \left[-\binom{2}{3} + \binom{n}{3} \right] + 6 \left[\binom{2}{4} + \binom{n+1}{4} \right]. \end{aligned}$$

$$\begin{aligned} \Sigma^1 n^4 &= 16 \left[-\binom{2}{1} + \binom{n-2}{1} \right] + 15 \left[\binom{2}{2} + \binom{n-1}{2} \right] \\ &\quad + 14 \left[-\binom{2}{3} + \binom{n}{3} \right] + 12 \left[\binom{2}{4} + \binom{n+1}{4} \right] \\ &\quad + 24 \left[-\binom{2}{5} + \binom{n+2}{5} \right]. \end{aligned}$$

The coefficients $1, 2, 1, 4, 3, 2, 8, 7, 6, 6, \dots$ for $t = 2$ is the sequence [A391068](#) in the OEIS [3].

For $t = 0$ the coefficients are $1, 0, 1, 0, -1, 2, 0, 1, -6, 6, \dots$ and registered in the OEIS as [A278075](#). For $t = 1$ the coefficients are $1, 1, 1, 1, 1, 2, 1, 1, 0, 6, \dots$ and registered in the OEIS as [A389570](#). For $t = 3$ the coefficients are $1, 3, 1, 9, 5, 2, 27, 19, 12, 6, \dots$ and registered in the OEIS as [A391210](#).

REFERENCES

- [1] Knuth, Donald E. Johann Faulhaber and sums of powers. *Mathematics of Computation*, 61(203):277–294, 1993. <https://arxiv.org/abs/math/9207222>.
- [2] Steffensen, Johan Frederik. *Interpolation*. Williams & Wilkins, 1927. <https://www.amazon.com/-/de/Interpolation-Second-Dover-Books-Mathematics-ebook/dp/B00GHQV0N8>.
- [3] Sloane, Neil J.A. and others. The on-line encyclopedia of integer sequences, 2003. <https://oeis.org/>.

- [4] Petro Kolosov. Mathematica programs for backward finite differences and newton's formula. <https://github.com/kolosovpetro/SumsOfPowersViaBackwardFiniteDifferencesAndNewtonFormula/tree/main/mathematica>, 2026. GitHub repository, Mathematica source files.

MATHEMATICA PROGRAMS

Use the *Mathematica* package [4] to validate the results

Mathematica Function	Validates / Prints
<code>MultifoldSumOfPowersRecurrence[r, n, m]</code>	Computes $\sum^r n^m$
<code>ValidateOrdinarySumsOfPowersViaBackwardDifferences[20]</code>	Validates Proposition (1.2)

Version: Local-0.1.0

License: This work is licensed under a [CC BY 4.0 License](#).

Sources: github.com/kolosovpetro/SumsOfPowersViaBackwardDifferences

ORCID: [0000-0002-6544-8880](https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6544-8880)

DOI: [10.5281/zenodo.18118011](https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.18118011)

Email: kolosovp94@gmail.com

Email address: kolosovp94@gmail.com

SOFTWARE DEVELOPER, DEVOPS ENGINEER

URL: <https://kolosovpetro.github.io>