

# 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	4
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, chapter 2, eq. (19)] gives Newton's formula for backward differences evaluated in zero  $f(x) = \sum_{k=0}^n \binom{x+k-1}{k} \nabla^k f(0)$ .

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In general,

**Proposition 1.1** (Newton formula via backward differences).

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

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

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

Thus,

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

Because,

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

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  $t = 2$  and  $m = 1, 2, 3, 4$ , we get formulas for sums of cubes

$$\begin{aligned}\Sigma^1 n^1 &= 2 \left[ -\binom{2}{1} + \binom{n-2}{1} \right] + 1 \left[ \binom{2}{2} + \binom{n-1}{2} \right], \\ \Sigma^1 n^2 &= 4 \left[ -\binom{2}{1} + \binom{n-2}{1} \right] + 3 \left[ \binom{2}{2} + \binom{n-1}{2} \right] \\ &\quad + 2 \left[ -\binom{2}{3} + \binom{n}{3} \right], \\ \Sigma^1 n^3 &= 8 \left[ -\binom{2}{1} + \binom{n-2}{1} \right] + 7 \left[ \binom{2}{2} + \binom{n-1}{2} \right] \\ &\quad + 6 \left[ -\binom{2}{3} + \binom{n}{3} \right] + 6 \left[ \binom{2}{4} + \binom{n+1}{4} \right], \\ \Sigma^1 n^4 &= 16 \left[ -\binom{2}{1} + \binom{n-2}{1} \right] + 15 \left[ \binom{2}{2} + \binom{n-1}{2} \right] \\ &\quad + 14 \left[ -\binom{2}{3} + \binom{n}{3} \right] + 12 \left[ \binom{2}{4} + \binom{n+1}{4} \right] \\ &\quad + 24 \left[ -\binom{2}{5} + \binom{n+2}{5} \right].\end{aligned}$$

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](#).

**Lemma 1.3** (Backward differences in Eulerian numbers).

$$\Delta^j t^m = \sum_{k=0}^m \left\langle m \atop k \right\rangle \binom{t+k-j}{m-j}$$

*Proof.* By Worpitzky identity  $t^m = \sum_{k=0}^m \left\langle m \atop k \right\rangle \binom{t+k}{m}$  and binomial recurrence  $\binom{n+1}{k} = \binom{n}{k} + \binom{n}{k-1}$ , see [\[4\]](#). □

Thus, let be a formula for ordinary sums of powers in terms of Eulerian numbers  $\left\langle m \atop k \right\rangle$

**Proposition 1.4** (Ordinary sums of powers in Eulerian numbers). *For non-negative integers  $n, m$  and an arbitrary integer  $t$*

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

**Lemma 1.5** (Backward differences in Stirling numbers).

$$\nabla^j t^m = \sum_{k=j}^m \binom{t-j}{k-j} \left\{ m \atop k \right\} k!$$

*Proof.* By the identity  $t^m = \sum_{k=0}^m \binom{t}{k} \left\{ m \atop k \right\} k!$  and binomial recurrence  $\binom{n+1}{k} = \binom{n}{k} + \binom{n}{k-1}$ .  $\square$

Thus, let be a formula for ordinary sums of powers in terms of Stirling numbers  $\left\{ m \atop k \right\}$

**Proposition 1.6** (Ordinary sums of powers in Stirling numbers). *For non-negative integers  $n, m$  and an arbitrary integer  $t$*

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

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- [5] 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 [5] to validate the results

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Mathematica Function	Validates / Prints
MultifoldSumOfPowersRecurrence[r, n, m]	Computes $\sum^r n^m$
ValidateOrdinarySumsOfPowersViaBackwardDifferences[20]	Validates Proposition (1.2)
ValidateBackwardDifferencesInEulerianNumbers[20]	Validates Lemma (1.3)
ValidateOrdinarySumsOfPowersInEulerianNumbers[10]	Validates Proposition (1.4)
ValidateBackwardDifferencesInStirlingNumbers[20]	Validates Lemma (1.5)

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**Sources:** [github.com/kolosovpetro/SumsOfPowersViaBackwardDifferences](https://github.com/kolosovpetro/SumsOfPowersViaBackwardDifferences)

**ORCID:** [0000-0002-6544-8880](#)

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**Email:** [kolosovp94@gmail.com](mailto:kolosovp94@gmail.com)

*Email address:* [kolosovp94@gmail.com](mailto:kolosovp94@gmail.com)

SOFTWARE DEVELOPER, DEVOPS ENGINEER

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