

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.

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

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

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

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

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).

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

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

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Sources: github.com/kolosovpetro/SumsOfPowersViaBackwardDifferences

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

Email: kolosovp94@gmail.com

Email address: kolosovp94@gmail.com

SOFTWARE DEVELOPER, DEVOPS ENGINEER

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