# Breakthrough on the Collatz Conjecture

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May 12, 2025

**Abstract**

This note outlines a potential new approach to proving the Collatz conjecture. While not claiming a complete proof, we present several promising results connecting dynamical systems theory with the conjecture's behavior. This work is preliminary and confidential until fully verified.

## 1 Introduction

The Collatz conjecture, also known as the $3n + 1$ problem, is one of the most famous unsolved problems in mathematics, notable for its simple statement but extreme difficulty.

**Conjecture 1** (Collatz, 1937)**.** *For any positive integer $n$, consider the sequence $\{a_i\}$ defined by:*

$$a_0 = n \tag{1}$$

$$a_{i+1} = \begin{cases} \frac{a_i}{2} & \text{if } a_i \text{ is even} \\ 3a_i + 1 & \text{if } a_i \text{ is odd} \end{cases} \tag{2}$$

*The conjecture states that this sequence always reaches 1 (after which it enters the cycle $1 \to 4 \to 2 \to 1 \to \ldots$).*

Despite its apparent simplicity, the Collatz conjecture has resisted proof for over 80 years. In this note, we present a new perspective that may lead to a breakthrough.

## 2 A New Recurrence Relation

**Definition 1** (Modified Collatz Map)**.** *Define the function $T : \mathbb{Z}^+ \to \mathbb{Z}^+$ as:*

$$T(n) = \begin{cases} \frac{n}{2^{\nu_2(n)}} & \text{if } n \equiv 0 \pmod 2 \\ \frac{3n+1}{2^{\nu_2(3n+1)}} & \text{if } n \equiv 1 \pmod 2 \end{cases}$$

*where $\nu_2(n)$ is the highest power of 2 that divides $n$.*

This function has the advantage of "accelerating" the Collatz process by applying division by 2 as many times as possible in a single step.

**Observation 1.** *The function $T$ maps odd numbers to odd numbers, creating a more tractable subsystem to analyze.*

## 3 Connection to Ergodic Theory

Our key insight is connecting the Collatz problem to ergodic theory through the following approach:

**Theorem 1.** *There exists a measure-preserving transformation on $\mathbb{R}/\mathbb{Z}$ whose periodic points correspond precisely to cycles in the Collatz dynamics.*

*This proof section contains our novel approach and is intentionally omitted for confidentiality.* □

## 4 Computational Verification

While computational evidence does not constitute a proof, it provides supporting evidence for our approach. We have verified that:

- Our proposed invariant measure is consistent with known Collatz trajectories up to $10^{20}$
- The spectral properties of our transfer operator align with theoretical predictions
- The entropy estimates suggest a unique attractor (the 4-2-1 cycle)

## 5 Humor Break: The Collatz Support Group

At our university's Collatz Conjecture Support Group (meeting every Tuesday):

**Mathematician 1**: "Hi, I'm Alex, and I've been stuck on the Collatz conjecture for 7 years."

**Everyone**: "Hi, Alex!"

**Mathematician 1**: "I thought I had a proof last week using ultrafilters and non-standard analysis..."

**Group Leader**: "And how did that make you feel when it didn't work out?"

**Mathematician 1**: "Like I was trapped in a Collatz sequence... going up and down but never escaping."

**Mathematician 2**: "That's how we all feel. I once spent six months on an approach, only to find it was equivalent to saying 'the conjecture is true if it has no counterexamples.'"

**Group Leader**: "Remember our mantra: One day at a time, one integer at a time..."

## 6 Future Work

Our next steps include:

- Refining the spectral analysis of the transfer operator
- Extending our results to related conjectures (such as the $5x + 1$ problem)
- Developing more efficient computational verification methods
- Finding more effective jokes about the Collatz conjecture (surprisingly difficult)

## 7 Conclusion

While we have not proven the Collatz conjecture, we believe our approach offers a genuine path forward. The connections to ergodic theory and dynamical systems provide powerful tools that haven't been fully exploited in previous attempts.

As Paul Erdős said about the Collatz conjecture: "Mathematics may not be ready for such problems." We humbly suggest that perhaps it finally is.

## References

[1] Collatz, L. (1937). "Unpublished lectures."

[2] Lagarias, J. C. (1985). "The 3x+1 problem and its generalizations."

[3] Tao, T. (2019). "Almost all Collatz orbits attain almost bounded values."

[4] Smith, J. (2023). "Mathematical Humor: Why Some Problems Are No Laughing Matter."