

Proof by contradiction

Assume that there exists Elias codewords m and n where $m \neq n$ and m is a prefix of n .

Since n is an Elias codeword, it must consist of some non-zero number of length components, followed by the minimal binary code.

If m is a prefix of n , it must terminate at either:

- a. In the middle of some length component
- b. At the end of some length component
- c. In the middle of the minimal binary code

Case a and b:

If m ends without the minimal binary code, then by definition it cannot be an Elias codeword.

Case c:

If m is an Elias codeword, then it must have some last length component m_{L_1} (the length component for the minimal binary code). Similarly, n has the last length component n_{L_1} . In case c, $m_{L_1} = n_{L_1}$ as m is a prefix of n up till the minimal binary code which occurs later in the codeword.

So, m 's minimal binary code must have the same length as n 's minimal binary code. This cannot be possible since m and n are identical up till their L_1 components. If m is a prefix of n , then it has the same length of length components but different length minimal binary codes. This is impossible as $L_1 = \text{len}(\text{minimal binary code})$ for all Elias codewords.

Thus, in all cases, this assumption leads to a contradiction. Using proof by contraction, no Elias codeword m can be a prefix of another Elias codeword n for $m \neq n$.