

Odd period square roots

Problem 64

All square roots are periodic when written as continued fractions and can be written in the form:

$$\sqrt{N} = a_0 + \frac{1}{a_1 + \frac{1}{a_2 + \frac{1}{a_3 + \dots}}}$$

For example, let us consider $\sqrt{23}$:

$$\sqrt{23} = 4 + \sqrt{23} - 4 = 4 + \frac{1}{\frac{1}{\sqrt{23}-4}}} = 4 + \frac{1}{1 + \frac{\sqrt{23}-3}{7}}$$

If we continue we would get the following expansion:

$$\sqrt{23} = 4 + \frac{1}{1 + \frac{1}{3 + \frac{1}{1 + \frac{1}{8 + \dots}}}}$$

The process can be summarised as follows:

$$\begin{aligned} a_0 &= 4, \frac{1}{\sqrt{23}-4} = \frac{\sqrt{23}+4}{7} = 1 + \frac{\sqrt{23}-3}{7} \\ a_1 &= 1, \frac{7}{\sqrt{23}-3} = \frac{7(\sqrt{23}+3)}{14} = 3 + \frac{\sqrt{23}-3}{2} \\ a_2 &= 3, \frac{2}{\sqrt{23}-3} = \frac{2(\sqrt{23}+3)}{14} = 1 + \frac{\sqrt{23}-4}{7} \\ a_3 &= 1, \frac{7}{\sqrt{23}-4} = \frac{7(\sqrt{23}+4)}{7} = 8 + \sqrt{23}-4 \\ a_4 &= 8, \frac{1}{\sqrt{23}-4} = \frac{\sqrt{23}+4}{7} = 1 + \frac{\sqrt{23}-3}{7} \\ a_5 &= 1, \frac{7}{\sqrt{23}-3} = \frac{7(\sqrt{23}+3)}{14} = 3 + \frac{\sqrt{23}-3}{2} \\ a_6 &= 3, \frac{2}{\sqrt{23}-3} = \frac{2(\sqrt{23}+3)}{14} = 1 + \frac{\sqrt{23}-4}{7} \\ a_7 &= 1, \frac{7}{\sqrt{23}-4} = \frac{7(\sqrt{23}+4)}{7} = 8 + \sqrt{23}-4 \end{aligned}$$

It can be seen that the sequence is repeating. For conciseness, we use the notation $\sqrt{23} = [4; (1,3,1,8)]$, to indicate that the block (1,3,1,8) repeats indefinitely.

The first ten continued fraction representations of (irrational) square roots are:

$\sqrt{2}=[1;(2)]$, period=1
 $\sqrt{3}=[1;(1,2)]$, period=2
 $\sqrt{5}=[2;(4)]$, period=1
 $\sqrt{6}=[2;(2,4)]$, period=2
 $\sqrt{7}=[2;(1,1,1,4)]$, period=4
 $\sqrt{8}=[2;(1,4)]$, period=2
 $\sqrt{10}=[3;(6)]$, period=1
 $\sqrt{11}=[3;(3,6)]$, period=2
 $\sqrt{12}=[3;(2,6)]$, period=2
 $\sqrt{13}=[3;(1,1,1,1,6)]$, period=5

Exactly four continued fractions, for $N \leq 13$, have an odd period.

How many continued fractions for $N \leq 10000$ have an odd period?