

Combinatorial

Games

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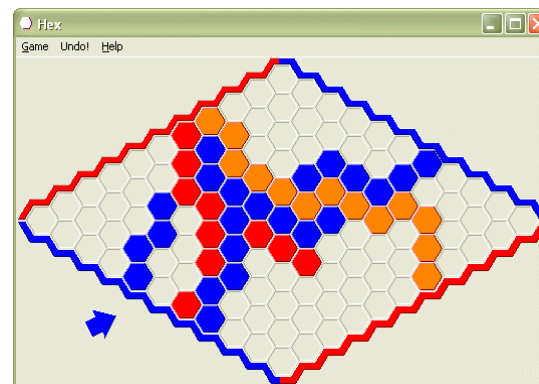
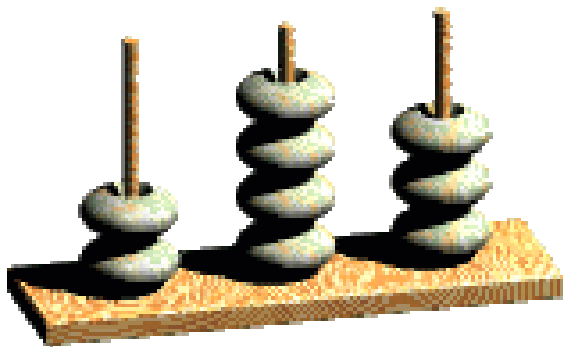
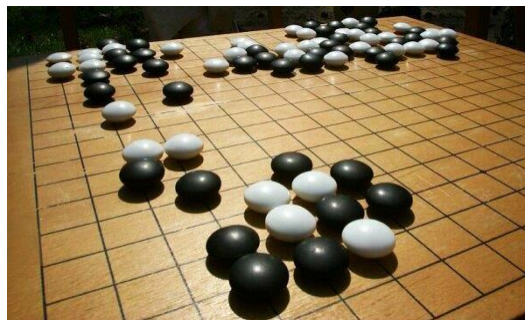
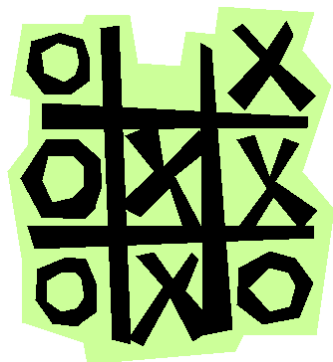


Sequential games

A **sequential game** is a game where one player chooses his action before the others choose their.

We say that a game has **perfect information** if all players know all moves that have taken place.

Sequential games





Combinatorial games

- Two-person sequential game
- Perfect information
- The outcome is either of the players wins
- The game ends in a finite number of moves



Combinatorial games

Terminal position: A position from which no moves is possible

Normal play rule: The last player to move wins

Misere play rule: The last player to move loses



Winning strategy

In a two-person combinatorial game, exactly one of the players has a **winning strategy**.



Zermelo's theorem

In any finite sequential game with perfect information, at least one of the players has a **drawing strategy**. In particular if the game cannot end with a draw, then exactly one of the players has a **winning strategy**.



Negation of quantifiers

for logic statements

$$\neg \forall x P(x) \Leftrightarrow \exists x \neg P(x)$$

$$\neg \exists x P(x) \Leftrightarrow \forall x \neg P(x)$$



Negation of quantifiers

More generally

$$\neg \forall x_1 \exists y_1 \cdots \forall x_k \exists y_k P(x_1, y_1, \dots, x_k, y_k) \\ \Leftrightarrow \exists x_1 \forall y_1 \cdots \exists x_k \forall y_k \neg P(x_1, y_1, \dots, x_k, y_k)$$



Winning strategy

x_i : i^{th} move of 1st player

y_j : j^{th} move of 2nd player

\neg 2nd player has winning strategy

$\Leftrightarrow \neg \forall x_1 \exists y_1 \cdots \forall x_k \exists y_k (2^{\text{nd}} \text{ player wins})$

$\Leftrightarrow \exists x_1 \forall y_1 \cdots \exists x_k \forall y_k \neg (2^{\text{nd}} \text{ player wins})$

$\Leftrightarrow \exists x_1 \forall y_1 \cdots \exists x_k \forall y_k (1^{\text{st}} \text{ player wins})$

\Leftrightarrow 1st player has winning strategy



Subtraction game

- Let n be a positive integer and $S \subset \{1, 2, 3, \dots, n\}$
- There is a pile of n chips.
- A move consists of removing k chips from the pile where $k \in S$.
- The player removes the last chip wins.



Subtraction game

Example when $n = 21$ and

$$S = \{1, 2, 3\}$$

1. Who has the winning strategy?
2. What is the winning strategy?



Subtraction game

1. Who has the winning strategy?

Answer:

When n is not a **multiple of 4**, the **first player** has a winning strategy. **Otherwise** the **second player** has a winning strategy.



Subtraction game

2. What is the winning strategy?

Answer:

To remove the chips so that the remaining number of chips is a **multiple of 4**.



How to find winning strategy?

P-position

The **previous** player has a winning strategy.

N-position

The **next** player has a winning strategy.



P-position and N-position

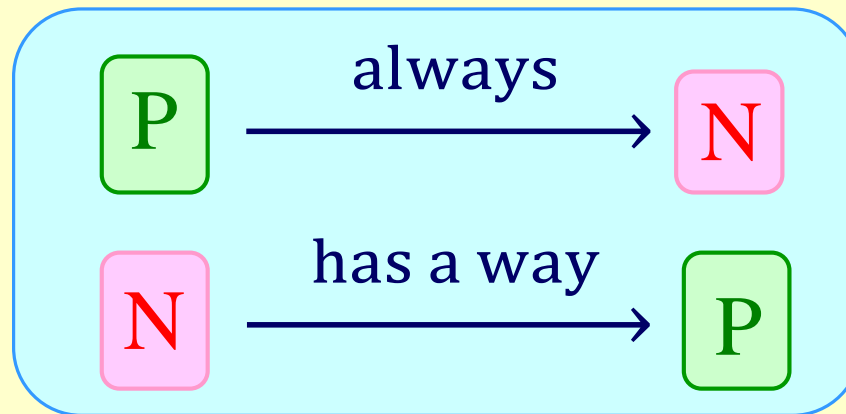
In **normal play rule**, the player makes the last move wins. In this case,

1. Every **terminal position** is a **P-position**
2. A position which **can move to a P-position** is an **N-position**
3. A position which **can only move to an N-position** is a **P-position**

P-position and N-position

P: previous player has winning strategy

N: next player has winning strategy





Subtraction game

For subtraction game with

$$S = \{1, 2, 3\}$$



Subtraction game

Every terminal position is a
P-position

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 ...

P



Subtraction game

A position which can only move to an N-position is a P-position

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	...
P	N	N	N	P								



Subtraction game

A position which can move to a
P-position is an N-position

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	...
P	N	N	N	P	N	N	N					



Subtraction game

A position which can only move to an N-position is a P-position

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	...
P	N	N	N	P	N	N	N	P				



Subtraction game

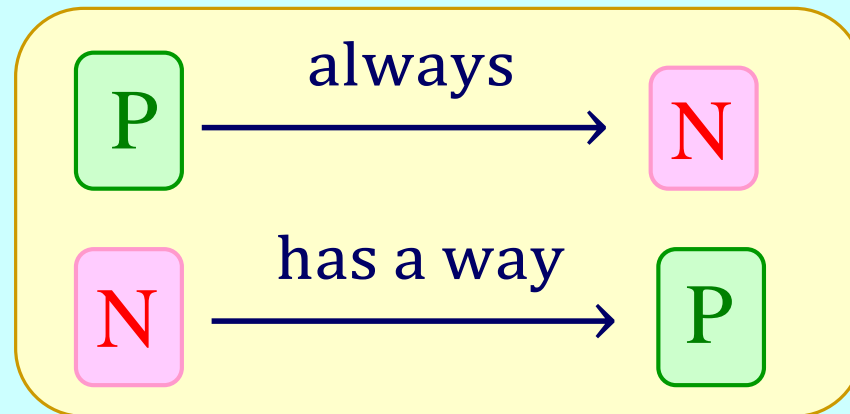
A position which can move to a
P-position is an N-position

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	...
P	N	N	N	P	N	N	N	P	N	N	N	...

Subtraction game

$P = \{ 0, 4, 8, 12, 16, 20, \dots \}$

$N = \{ \text{not multiple of } 4 \}$





Subtraction game

For subtraction game with

$$S = \{1, 3, 4\}$$



Subtraction game

Every terminal position is a
P-position

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 ...

P



Subtraction game

A position which can move to a
P-position is an N-position

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	...
P	N		N	N								



Subtraction game

A position which can only move to an N-position is a P-position

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	...
P	N	P	N	N								



Subtraction game

A position which can move to a
P-position is an N-position

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	...
P	N	P	N	N	N	N						



Subtraction game

A position which can only move to an N-position is a P-position

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	...
P	N	P	N	N	N	N	P					



Subtraction game

A position which can move to a
P-position is an N-position

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	...
P	N	P	N	N	N	N	P	N		N	N	



Subtraction game

A position which can move to a
P-position is an N-position

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	...
P	N	P	N	N	N	N	P	N	P	N	N	



Subtraction game

$$P = \{ 0, 2, 7, 9, 14, 16, \dots \}$$

$$= \{k: k \equiv 0, 2 \pmod{7}\}$$

$$N = \{ 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 10, 11, \dots \}$$

$$= \{k: k \equiv 1, 3, 4, 5, 6 \pmod{7}\}$$



Proof of P-positions

To prove that a set P is the set of P-positions of a game, we need to do the following.

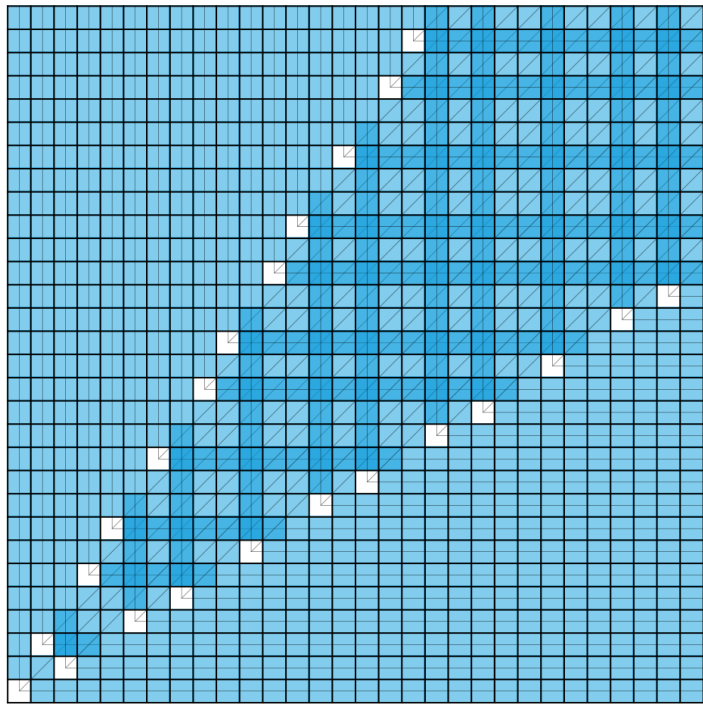
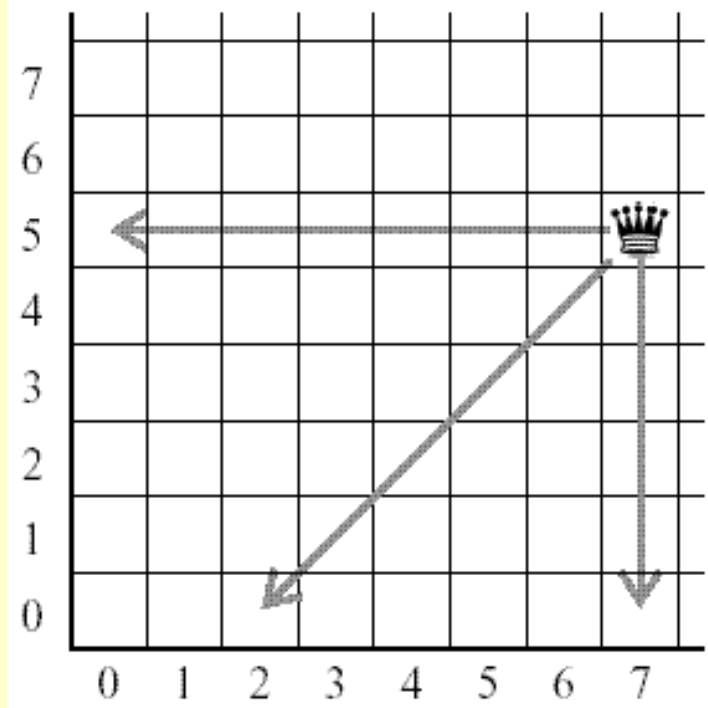
1. Prove that all terminal positions are in P .
2. Prove that any position in P can only move to a position not in P .
3. Prove that any position not in P has a way to move to a position in P .



Wythoff's game

- There are 2 piles of chips
- On each turn, the player may either
 - (a) remove any positive number of chips from one of the piles or
 - (b) remove the same positive number of chips from both piles.
- The player who removes the last chip wins.

Wythoff's game





Wythoff's game

P-positions:

$\{ (0,0), (1,2), (3,5), ?, \dots \}$

What is the next pair?

Wythoff's game

	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
0	P	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
1	N	N													
2	N		N												
3	N			N											
4	N				N										
5	N					N									
6	N						N								
7	N							N							
8	N								N						

Wythoff's game

	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
0	P	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
1	N	N	P												
2	N	P	N												
3	N			N											
4	N				N										
5	N					N									
6	N						N								
7	N							N							
8	N								N						

Wythoff's game

	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
0	P	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
1	N	N	P	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
2	N	P	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
3	N	N	N	N	N										
4	N	N	N	N	N	N									
5	N	N	N		N	N	N								
6	N	N	N			N	N	N							
7	N	N	N				N	N	N						
8	N	N	N					N	N	N					

Wythoff's game

	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
0	P	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
1	N	N	P	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
2	N	P	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
3	N	N	N	N	N	P									
4	N	N	N	N	N	N									
5	N	N	N	P	N	N	N								
6	N	N	N			N	N	N							
7	N	N	N				N	N	N						
8	N	N	N					N	N	N					

Wythoff's game

	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
0	P	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
1	N	N	P	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
2	N	P	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
3	N	N	N	N	N	P	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
4	N	N	N	N	N	N	N								
5	N	N	N	P	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
6	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N						
7	N	N	N	N		N	N	N	N	N					
8	N	N	N	N		N	N	N	N	N	N				

Wythoff's game

	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
0	P	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
1	N	N	P	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
2	N	P	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
3	N	N	N	N	N	P	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
4	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	P							
5	N	N	N	P	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
6	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N						
7	N	N	N	N	P	N	N	N	N	N					
8	N	N	N	N		N	N	N	N	N	N				



Wythoff sequence

$(1,2)$ $(3,5)$ $(4,7)$ $(6,10)$ $(8,13)$...



Wythoff sequence

$(1,2)$ $(3,5)$ $(4,7)$ $(6,10)$ $(8,13)$...

1. The n -th pair is different by n .



Wythoff sequence

$(1,2)$ $(3,5)$ $(4,7)$ $(6,10)$ $(8,13)$...

1. The n -th pair is different by n .
2. Every integer appears exactly once.

Wythoff sequence

n	(a_n, b_n)	a_n / n	n	(a_n, b_n)	a_n / n
1	(1,2)	1	9	(14,23)	1.5555
2	(3,5)	1.5	10	(16,26)	1.6
3	(4,7)	1.333	13	(21,34)	1.6153
4	(6,10)	1.5	34	(55,89)	1.6176
5	(8,13)	1.6	89	(144,233)	1.6179
6	(9,15)	1.5	100	(161,261)	1.61
7	(11,18)	1.571	1000	(1618,2618)	1.618
8	(12,20)	1.5	10000	(16180,26180)	1.6180



Fibonacci sequence and golden ratio

1, 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 13, 21, 34, 55,...

Golden ratio:

$$\varphi = \frac{1 + \sqrt{5}}{2} \approx 1.6180339887...$$



Wythoff's game

n	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
$n\phi$	1.61	3.23	4.85	6.47	8.09	9.70	11.3
a_n	1	3	4	6	8	9	11
b_n	2	5	7	10	13	15	18

Example: Find all winning moves from (9,13)

Solution: (8,13) and (6,10)



Example 1

Find all winning moves from position (26,34).

Solution:

1. $26/1.618 \approx 16.06$, $26/2.618 \approx 9.93$

$17 \times 1.618 \approx \cancel{27.50}$, $10 \times 2.618 \approx 26.18$

The 10th pair is (16,26). Thus (26,16) is a winning move.

2. $34/1.618 \approx 21.01$, $34/2.618 \approx 12.98$

$22 \times 1.618 \approx \cancel{35.59}$, $13 \times 2.618 \approx 34.03$

The 13th pair is (21,34). Thus (21,34) is a winning move.

3. $34 - 26 = 8$

$8 \times 1.618 \approx 12.94$, $8 \times 2.618 \approx 20.94$

The 8th pair is (12,20). Thus (12,20) is a winning move.

There are 3 winning moves: (26,16), (21,34), (12,20).



Example 2

Find all winning moves from position (153,289).

Solution:

1. $153/1.618 \approx 94.56$, $153/2.618 \approx 58.44$

$95 \times 1.618 \approx 153.71$, $59 \times 2.618 \approx 154.46$

The 95th pair is (153,248). Thus (153,248) is a winning move.

2. $289/1.618 \approx 178.61$, $289/2.618 \approx 110.39$

$179 \times 1.618 \approx 289.62$, $111 \times 2.618 \approx 290.59$

The 179th pair is (289,468). No winning move for this pair.

3. $289 - 153 = 136$

$136 \times 1.618 \approx 220.04$, $136 \times 2.618 \approx 356.04$

The 136th pair is (220,356). No winning move for this pair.

There is one winning move: (153,248).



Wythoff's game

The n^{th} pair is

$$(a_n, b_n) = ([n\varphi], [n\varphi] + n)$$

where $[x]$ is the largest integer not larger than x . In other words, $[x]$ is the unique integer such that

$$x - 1 < [x] \leq x$$



Wythoff's game

It is easy to see that the n -th pair satisfies

$$b_n - a_n = n$$

To prove that every positive integer appears in the sequences exactly once, observe that

$$\frac{1}{\varphi} + \frac{1}{\varphi + 1} = \frac{2}{1 + \sqrt{5}} + \frac{2}{3 + \sqrt{5}} = 1$$

and apply the Beatty's theorem.



Beatty's theorem

Suppose α and β are positive irrational numbers such that.

$$\frac{1}{\alpha} + \frac{1}{\beta} = 1$$

Then every positive integer appears exactly once in the sequences

$$\begin{array}{l} [\alpha], [2\alpha], [3\alpha], [4\alpha], [5\alpha], \dots \\ [\beta], [2\beta], [3\beta], [4\beta], [5\beta], \dots \end{array}$$

Proof of Beatty's theorem

For any positive integer n , $n = [k\alpha]$ if and only if

$$k\alpha - 1 < n \leq k\alpha$$

$$\Leftrightarrow k - \frac{1}{\alpha} < \frac{n}{\alpha} \leq k$$

$$\Leftrightarrow k - \frac{1}{\alpha} < \left[\frac{n}{\alpha} \right] + \left\{ \frac{n}{\alpha} \right\} \leq k$$

where $\{x\} = x - [x]$ denotes the fractional part of x . Since α is irrational, such integer k exists if and only if

$$\left\{ \frac{n}{\alpha} \right\} > 1 - \frac{1}{\alpha}$$



Proof of Beatty's theorem

We obtain, if α is a positive irrational number, then $n = [k\alpha]$ for some positive integer k if and only if

$$\left\{ \frac{n}{\alpha} \right\} > 1 - \frac{1}{\alpha}$$



Proof of Beatty's theorem

Similarly, $n = [k\beta]$ for some k if and only if

$$\left\{ \frac{n}{\beta} \right\} > 1 - \frac{1}{\beta}$$

Now observe that

$$\frac{n}{\alpha} + \frac{n}{\beta} = n \left(\frac{1}{\alpha} + \frac{1}{\beta} \right) = n$$

is an integer, which implies that

$$\left\{ \frac{n}{\alpha} \right\} + \left\{ \frac{n}{\beta} \right\} = 1 = 1 - \frac{1}{\alpha} + 1 - \frac{1}{\beta}$$



Proof of Beatty's theorem

It follows, by the irrationality of α and β again, that for any positive integer n , exactly one of

$$\left\{ \frac{n}{\alpha} \right\} > 1 - \frac{1}{\alpha} \quad \text{or} \quad \left\{ \frac{n}{\beta} \right\} > 1 - \frac{1}{\beta}$$

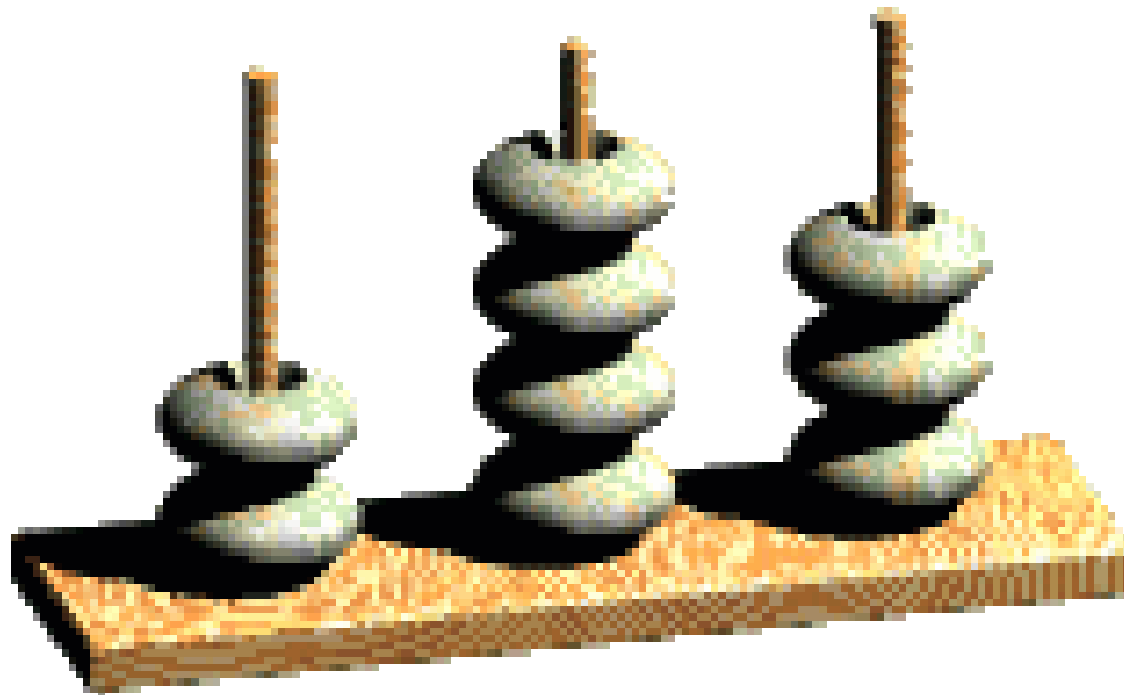
holds and therefore exactly one of the statements

or “there exists positive integer k such that $n = [k\alpha]$ ”

or “there exists positive integer k such that $n = [k\beta]$ ”

holds and the proof of Beatty's theorem is complete.

Nim





Nim

There are three piles of chips.
On each turn , the player may
remove any number of chips
from any one of the piles.

The player who removes the last
chip wins.



Nim

We will use (x, y, z) to represent the position that there are x, y, z chips in the three piles respectively.



Nim

It is easy to see that $(x, x, 0)$ is at **P-position**, in other words the previous player has a winning strategy. By symmetry, $(x, 0, x)$ and $(0, x, x)$ are also at **P-position**.



Nim

One may also find the following
P-positions:

$(1,2,3), (1,4,5), (1,6,7), (1,8,9), \dots$

$(2,4,6), (2,5,7), (2,8,10), (2,9,11), \dots$

$(3,4,7), (3,5,6), (3,8,11), (3,9,10), \dots$

$(4,8,12), (4,9,13), (4,10,14), \dots$



Nim

Binary expression:

Decimal	Binary	Decimal	Binary
1	1_2	7	111_2
2	10_2	8	1000_2
3	11_2	9	1001_2
4	100_2	10	1010_2
5	101_2	11	1011_2
6	110_2	12	1100_2



Nim

Nim-sum:

Sum of binary numbers without carry digit.

Examples:

1. $7 \oplus 5 = 2$

$$\begin{array}{r} 111_2 = 7 \\ \oplus 101_2 = 5 \\ \hline 10_2 = 2 \end{array}$$



Nim

Nim-sum:

Sum of binary numbers without carry digit.

Examples:

$$2. \ 23 \oplus 13 = 26$$

$$\begin{array}{r} 10111_2 = 23 \\ \oplus \ 1101_2 = 13 \\ \hline 11010_2 = 26 \end{array}$$



Nim

Properties:

1. (Associative) $x \oplus (y \oplus z) = (x \oplus y) \oplus z$
2. (Commutative) $x \oplus y = y \oplus x$
3. (Identity) $x \oplus 0 = 0 \oplus x = x$
4. (Inverse) $x \oplus x = 0$
5. (Cancellation law) $x \oplus y = x \oplus z \implies y = z$



Nim

The position (x,y,z) is at **P-position** if and only if

$$x \oplus y \oplus z = 0$$



Nim

P-positions:

decimal	(1,2,3)	(1,6,7)	(2,4,6)	(2,5,7)	(3,4,7)
binary	001	001	010	010	011
	010	110	100	101	100
	011	111	110	111	111

The number of 1's in each column is even (either 0 or 2).

Nim

Examples:

1. (7,5,3)

$$7 \oplus 5 \oplus 3 = 1 \neq 0$$

It is at **N-position**. Next player may win by removing 1 chip from any pile and reach P-positions (6,5,3), (7,4,3) or (7,5,2).

$$111_2 = 7$$

$$101_2 = 5$$

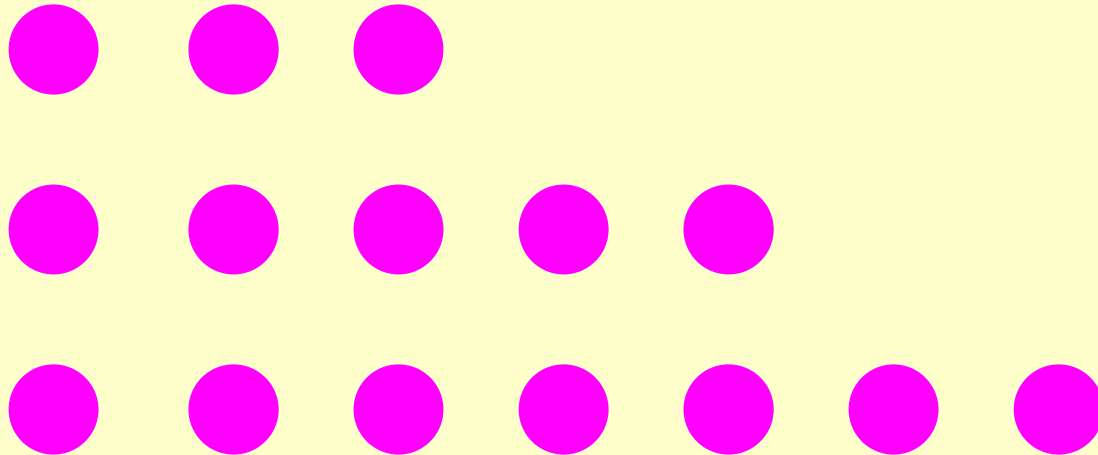
$$\oplus \quad 11_2 = 3$$

$$1_2 = 1$$



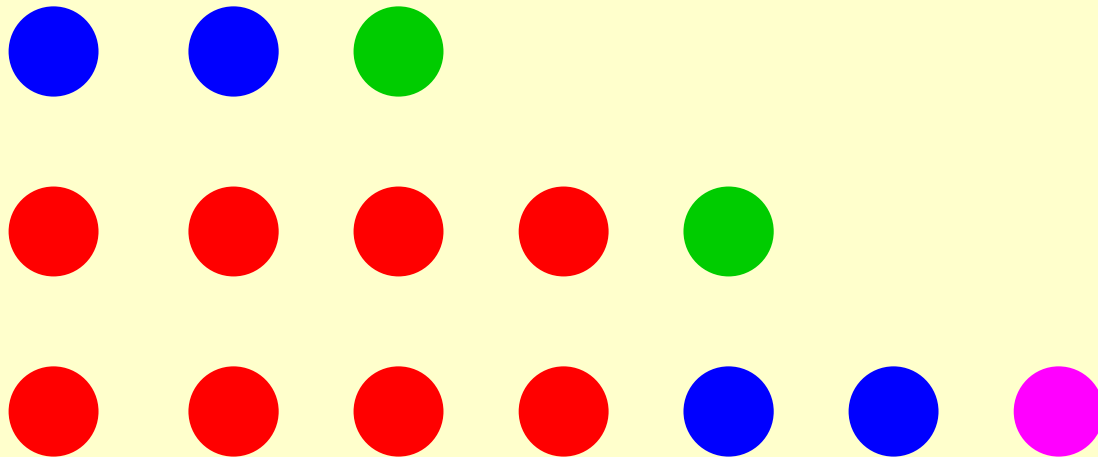
Nim

In practice, we find pairs of powers of 2.



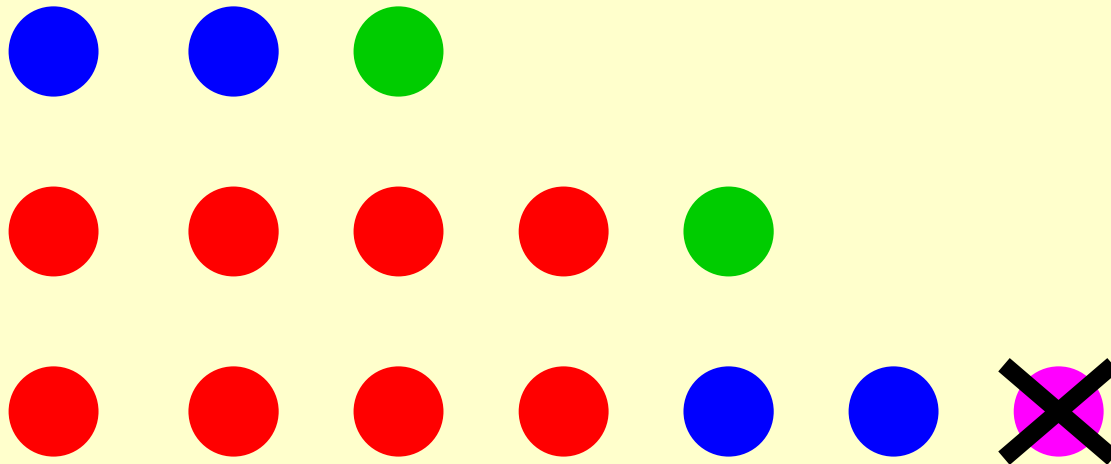
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In practice, we find pairs of powers of 2.



Nim

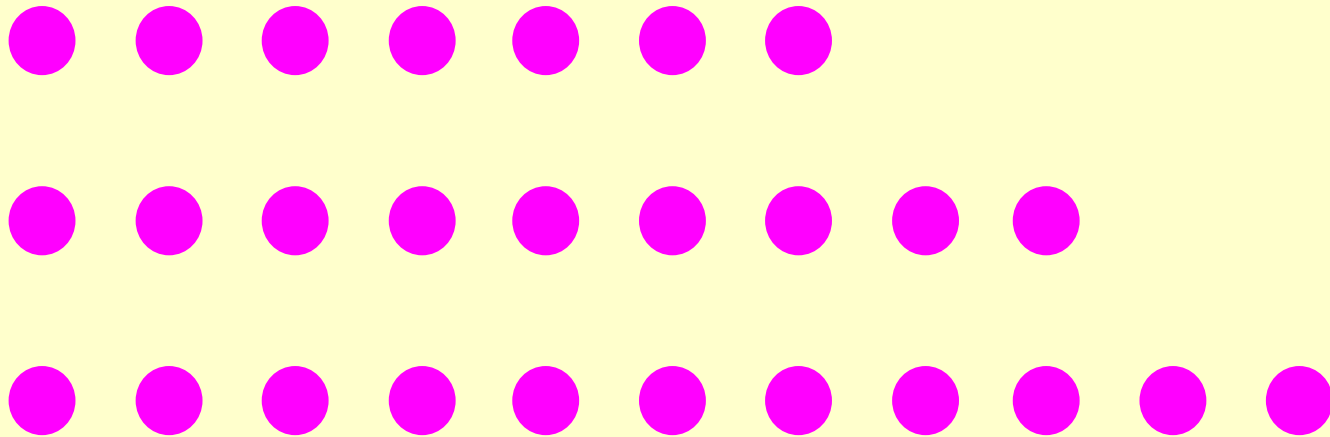
In practice, we find pairs of powers of 2.





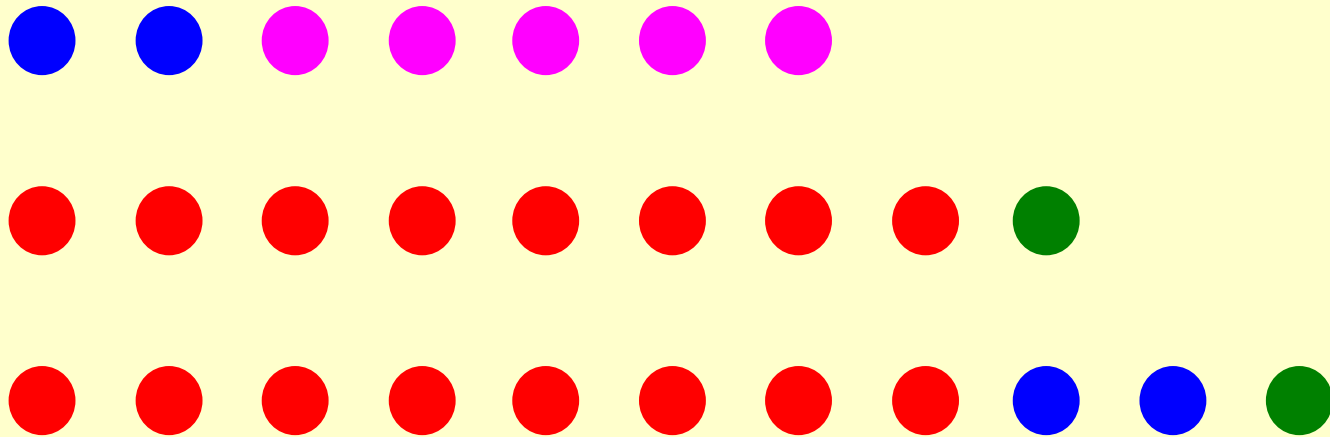
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In practice, we find pairs of powers of 2.



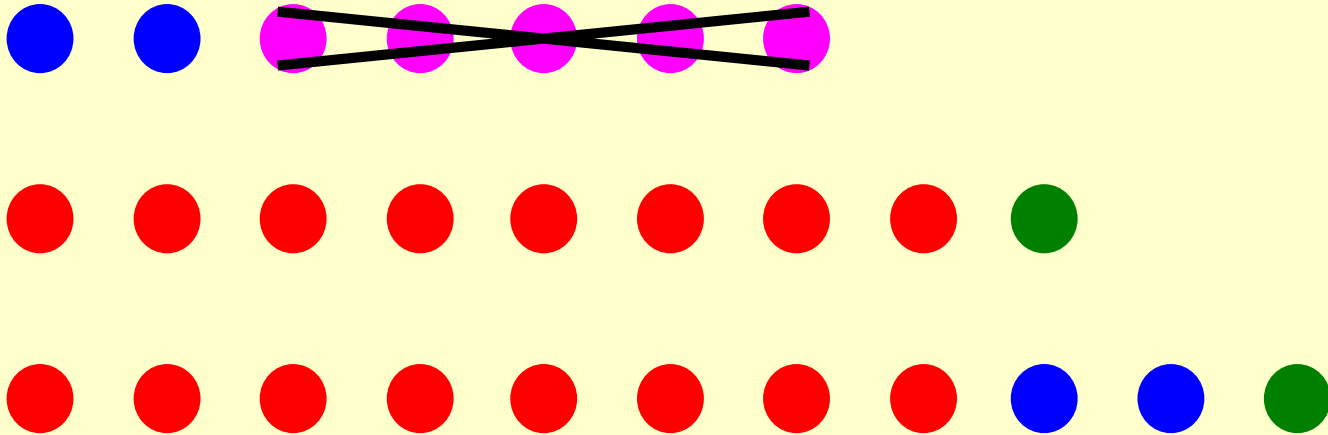
Nim

In practice, we find pairs of powers of 2.



Nim

In practice, we find pairs of powers of 2.



Example 1

Examples: (25,21,11)

$$25 \oplus 21 \oplus 11 = 7 \neq 0$$

It is at **N-position**. Next player may win by removing 3 chips from the second pile and reach **P-position** (25,18,11).

$$11001_2 = 25$$

$$10101_2 = 21$$

$$\oplus 1011_2 = 11$$

$$111_2 = 7$$

Example 1

Examples: (25,21,11)

$$25 \oplus 21 \oplus 11 = 7 \neq 0$$

It is at **N-position**. Next player may win by removing 3 chips from the second pile and reach P-position (25, **18**, 11).

$$11001_2 = 25$$

$$10101_2 = 21$$

$$\oplus \quad 1011_2 = 11$$

$$111_2 = 7$$

Note: $21 \oplus 7 = 18$

Example 2

Examples: (11,23,28)

$$13 \oplus 23 \oplus 28 = 6 \neq 0$$

It is at **N-position**. The next player can win with the following moves

1st pile to $1011_2 = 11$

2nd pile to $10001_2 = 17$

3rd pile to $11010_2 = 26$

There are 3 winning moves:

(11,23,28), (13,17,28), (11,23,26)

$$\begin{array}{r} 1101_2 = 13 \\ 10111_2 = 23 \\ \oplus 11100_2 = 28 \\ \hline 110_2 = 6 \end{array}$$