

If $a = b = \phi$, then $x = \phi$ and the equation $\sqrt[3]{x + \phi} = \sqrt[3]{x - \phi} + \sqrt[3]{\phi}$ with $x > \phi$, has the solution

$$x = \frac{3\sqrt{3}(\phi - \phi) + 4\phi\sqrt{7}}{6\sqrt{3}} = \frac{2\sqrt{21}}{9}\phi.$$

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• **5404:** Proposed Arkady Alt, San Jose, CA

For any given positive integer $n \geq 3$, find the smallest value of the product of $x_1 x_2 \dots x_n$, where $x_1, x_2, x_3, \dots, x_n > 0$ and $\frac{1}{1+x_1} + \frac{1}{1+x_2} + \dots + \frac{1}{1+x_n} = 1$.

Solution 1 by Ed Gray, Highland Beach, FL

Suppose each term had the value of $\frac{1}{n}$. Since there are n terms, the sum is equal to 1, satisfying the problem restriction.

In the event for each $k, 1 \leq k \leq n$

1. $\frac{1}{1+x_k} = \frac{1}{n}$, so $x_k = n - 1$, and the value of the product is:
2. $(n - 1)^n$.

If this is not the smallest product, at least one value of x_k must be less than $n - 1$. Suppose $x_k = n - 1 - e$ where $e > 0$.

Then the series contains the term $\frac{1}{1+x_k} = \frac{1}{n-e}$. We must increase the value of another term so that the sum maintains the value of 1. We must have:

3. $\frac{1}{n-e} + \frac{1}{1+x_m} = \frac{2}{n}$
4. $\frac{1}{1+x_m} - \frac{2}{n} - \frac{1}{n-e} = \frac{2(n-e-n)}{n(n-e)} = \frac{2n-2e-n}{n(n-e)}$
5. $\frac{1}{1+x_m} = \frac{n-2e}{n(n-e)}$
6. $(1+x_m)(n-2e) = n(n-e)$
7. $1+x_m = \frac{n(n-e)}{n-2e}$

8. $x_m = \frac{n(n-e)}{n-2e} - 1 = \frac{n(n-e) - n - 2e}{n-2e} = \frac{n^2 - ne - n + 2e}{n-2e}$
9. The new product is: $\left((n-1)^{n-2}\right) x_k x_m$. If the new product is to be smaller, we must have:
10. $\frac{(n-1)^{n-2}(n-1-e)(n^2 - n - e(n-2))}{n-2e} < (n-1)^n$, or dividing by $(n-1)^{n-2}$
11. $(n-1-e)(n^2 - n - en + 2e) < (n-2e)(n-1)^2$,
12. $(n-1-e)(n^2 - n - en + 2e) < (n-2e)(n^2 - 2n + 1)$, which simplifies to:
13. $2en^2 + ne2 < 2e^2$. Dividing by e^2 ,
14. $\frac{2n^2}{e} + n < 2$, which is a contraction. Therefore, we did not decrease the product, but increased it.
- So $(n-1)^n$ is the minimum product.

Solution 2 by Ramya Dutta (student), Chennai Mathematical Institute) India

Consider the polynomial $P(x) = \prod_{j=1}^n (x + x_j)$, then $\frac{P'(x)}{P(x)} = \sum_{j=1}^n \frac{1}{x + x_j}$, i.e., $P'(1) = P(1)$.

Denoting the j -th symmetric polynomial by, $\sigma_j = \sum_{1 \leq k_1 < k_2 < \dots < k_j \leq n} x_{k_1} x_{k_2} \dots x_{k_j}$ for $j \geq 1$ and

$$\sigma_0 = 1,$$

$$P(x) = \sum_{j=0}^n \sigma_j x^{n-j} \text{ and } P'(x) = \sum_{j=0}^{n-1} (n-j)\sigma_j x^{n-j-1}$$

Therefore, the condition $P(1) = P'(1)$ is equivalent to,

$$\sigma_n = \sum_{j=0}^{n-1} (n-j-1)\sigma_j$$

Using, AM-GM inequality: $\sigma_j \geq \binom{n}{j} \sigma_n^{j/n}$ for $j \geq 1$.

I.e., writing $\sigma_n^{1/n} = \alpha$, we have,

$$\begin{aligned} \alpha^n &= \sum_{j=0}^{n-1} (n-j-1)\sigma_j \geq \sum_{j=0}^{n-1} (n-j-1) \binom{n}{j} \alpha^j \\ &= (n-1) \sum_{j=0}^{n-1} \binom{n}{j} \alpha^j - n \sum_{j=1}^{n-1} \binom{n-1}{j-1} \alpha^j \\ &= (n-1) ((1+\alpha)^n - \alpha^n) - n\alpha ((1+\alpha)^{n-1} - \alpha^{n-1}) \\ &= \alpha^n - (1+\alpha)^n + n(1+\alpha)^{n-1} \end{aligned}$$

that is, $(1+\alpha)^n \geq n(1+\alpha)^{n-1} \implies \alpha \geq n-1$ (since, $\alpha > 0$)

So, the minimum value of $x_1 x_2 \dots x_n$ is $(n-1)^n$.

Solution 3 by David Stone and John Hawkins, Georgia Southern University, Statesboro, GA

We shall use the Method of Lagrange Multipliers to show that the smallest value of the product is $(n-1)^n$, achieved when each $x_i = n-1$.

First suppose that all but one of the x_i are equal: let $x_i = b$ for $1 \leq i \leq n-1$ and choose x_n so that the constraint $\sum_{i=1}^n \frac{1}{1+x_i} = \frac{1}{1+x_1} + \frac{1}{1+x_2} \dots + \frac{1}{1+x_n} = 1$ is satisfied:

$$\sum_{i=1}^n \frac{1}{1+x_i} = (n-1) \frac{1}{1+b} + \frac{1}{1+x_n} = 1, \implies x_n = \frac{n-1}{b-(n-2)}, \text{ where}$$

$b > n-2$ to make $x_n > 0$.

$$\text{Then the product } f(x_1, x_2, \dots, x_n) = \prod_{i=1}^n x_i = b^{n-1} \frac{n-1}{b-(n-2)}.$$

We note that as b becomes unbounded positive, the product of the x_i 's becomes unbounded positive, and as b approaches $n-2$ from above, the product of the x_i 's also becomes unbounded positive. Thus if the product has an absolute extremum subject to the given constraint, it must be a minimum since the product is unbounded above.

For $b = n-1$, we see that $x_n = n-1$, so every $x_i = n-1$ and the product is equal to $(n-1)^n$,

We consider this as a Lagrange Multiplier problem where we minimize the product

$$f(x_1, x_2, \dots, x_n) = \prod_{i=1}^n x_i \text{ subject to the constraint}$$

$$\sum_{i=1}^n \frac{1}{1+x_i} = \frac{1}{1+x_1} + \frac{1}{1+x_2} \dots + \frac{1}{1+x_n} = 1.$$

That is, subject to the constraint

$$g(x_1, x_2, \dots, x_n) = \prod_{i=1}^n x_i = \sum_{i=1}^n \frac{1}{1+x_i} = \frac{1}{1+x_1} + \frac{1}{1+x_2} \dots + \frac{1}{1+x_n} = 1.$$

By the Method of Lagrange Multipliers, we'll find the minimum of f where

$$\frac{\partial}{\partial x_i} f(x_1, x_2, \dots, x_n) = \lambda \frac{\partial}{\partial x_i} g(x_1, x_2, \dots, x_n) \text{ for } 1 \leq k \leq n.$$

$$\text{We see that: } \frac{\partial}{\partial x_i} f(x_1, x_2, \dots, x_n) = \prod_{\substack{i=1 \\ i \neq k}}^n x_i \text{ and } \frac{\partial}{\partial x_i} g(x_1, x_2, \dots, x_n) = \frac{1}{(1+x_i)^2} \text{ for}$$

$$1 \leq k \leq n.$$

$$\text{Thus we want to solve the system, } \prod_{\substack{i=1 \\ i \neq k}}^n x_i = \frac{\lambda}{(1+x_k)^2}, \text{ for } 1 \leq k \leq n.$$

$$\text{Solving each equation for } \lambda \text{ gives } \lambda = -(1+x_k)^2 \prod_{\substack{i=1 \\ i \neq k}}^n x_i \text{ for } 1 \leq k \leq n.$$

$$\text{Hence, for any } 1 \leq j, k \leq n \text{ we must have } \lambda = -(1+x_i)^2 \prod_{\substack{i=1 \\ i \neq k}}^n x_i = -(1+x_j)^2 \prod_{\substack{i=1 \\ i \neq k}}^n x_i$$

Algebra gives $\frac{x_j}{(1+x_j)^2} = \frac{x_k}{(1+x_k)^2}$, $1 \leq j, k \leq n$.

We claim this forces $x_i = x_k$. Suppose that $x_k \neq x_i$ for some $k \neq j$.

Now consider the function $h(x) = \frac{x}{(1+x)^2}$ for $x > 0$.

Note that $h(x_i) = h(x_k)$ for $1 \leq j, k \leq n$

By calculus, $h(x)$ is strictly increasing for $0 < x < 1$ to a maximum (of $1/4$) at $x = 1$, and is then strictly decreasing for $x > 1$. That is, h except for the peak at $x = 1$ is two-to-one function (for $x > 0$).

Moreover, $h(x)$ has the reflective property $h\left(\frac{1}{x}\right) = h(x)$. Hence, for

$1 \leq j \neq k \leq n$, $h(x_j) = h(x_k)$ and $x_j \neq x_k \implies x_j = \frac{1}{x_k}$. Then your constraint becomes

$$\begin{aligned} 1 &= \frac{1}{1+x_k} + \frac{1}{1+x_j} + (\text{other positive terms}) \\ &= \frac{1}{1+x_k} + \frac{1}{1+\frac{1}{x_k}} + (\text{other positive terms}) \\ &= \frac{1}{1+x_k} + \frac{x_k}{1+x_k} + (\text{other positive terms}) \\ &= 1 + (\text{other positive terms}) \end{aligned}$$

which is impossible. Therefore, $x_k = x_j$.

Hence, to achieve the extreme value, which must be a minimum, all of the x_i are equal and must equal $n-1$, forcing the minimum value of the product to be $(n-1)^n$.

Solution 4 by Nicusor Zlota, "Traian Vuia" Technical College, Focsani, Romania

Denote by $\frac{1}{1+x_i} = y_i \implies x_i = \frac{1-y_i}{y_i}$, $y_i > 0, i = 1, 2, \dots, n$

By the AM-GM, we get

$$x_1 x_2 \dots x_n = \prod_{i=1}^n \frac{1-y_i}{y_i} = \frac{y_2 + y_3 + \dots + y_n}{y_1} \dots \frac{y_1 + y_2 + \dots + y_{n-1}}{y_n} \geq \frac{(n-1)^n \sqrt[n-1]{(y_1 y_2 \dots y_n)^{n-1}}}{y_1 y_2 \dots y_n} = (n-1)^n.$$

So, $x_1 x_2 \dots x_n \geq (n-1)^n$. Equality occurs for $x_1 = x_2 = \dots = x_n = n-1$.

Editor's comment : In addition to a general solution to this problem, the problem's author, **Arkady Alt of San Jose, CA**, also provided 4 different solutions for the cases $n = 2 = 3$.

Solution A.

Let $n = 3$. We have $\frac{1}{1+x_1} + \frac{1}{1+x_2} + \frac{1}{1+x_3} = 1 \iff$
 $3 + 2(x_1 + x_2 + x_3) + x_1 x_2 + x_2 x_3 + x_3 x_1 = 1 + x_1 + x_2 + x_3 + x_1 x_2 + x_2 x_3 +$
 $x_3 x_1 + x_1 x_2 x_3 \iff 2 + x_1 + x_2 + x_3 = x_1 x_2 x_3$. Since $x_1 + x_2 + x_3 \geq 3\sqrt[3]{x_1 x_2 x_3}$