

## Identity involving binomial coefficients with additions.

<https://www.linkedin.com/feed/update/urn:li:activity:6623128692484911104>

Show that for all natural numbers  $n$ , there is the identity

$$\frac{1}{\binom{2n}{1}} - \frac{1}{\binom{2n}{2}} + \frac{1}{\binom{2n}{3}} - \dots + \frac{(-1)^{k-1}}{\binom{2n}{k}} + \dots + \frac{1}{\binom{2n}{2n-1}} = \frac{1}{n+1}.$$

### Solution by Arkady Alt, San Jose ,California, USA.

We will consider this problem in more general setting:

Find values of the sums

$$S_n := \sum_{k=0}^n \frac{(-1)^k}{\binom{n}{k}} \text{ and } T_n := \sum_{k=0}^n \frac{(-1)^k(k+1)}{\binom{n}{k}}, n \in \mathbb{N} \cup \{0\}.$$

#### 1. Calculation of $S_n$ and $T_n$ .

$$\text{Since } (-1)^n T_n := \sum_{k=0}^n \frac{(-1)^{n-k}(k+1)}{\binom{n}{k}} \stackrel{k=n-i}{=} \sum_{i=0}^n \frac{(-1)^i(n-i+1)}{\binom{n}{n-i}} \stackrel{k=i}{=} \sum_{k=0}^n \frac{(-1)^k(n-k+1)}{\binom{n}{k}}$$

$$\text{then } T_n(1+(-1)^n) = \sum_{k=0}^n \frac{(-1)^k}{\binom{n}{k}} ((k+1) + (n-k+1)) = \sum_{k=0}^n \frac{(-1)^k(n+2)}{\binom{n}{k}} = (n+2)S_n.$$

From the other hand

$$S_n = 1 + \sum_{k=1}^n \frac{(-1)^k}{\binom{n}{k}} = 1 + \sum_{k=0}^{n-1} \frac{(-1)^{k+1}}{\binom{n}{k+1}} = 1 + \sum_{k=0}^{n-1} \frac{(-1)^{k+1}(k+1)}{n \binom{n-1}{k}} = 1 - \frac{T_{n-1}}{n}, n \in \mathbb{N}$$

$$\text{Thus, } \begin{cases} T_n(1+(-1)^n) = (n+2)S_n \\ S_n + \frac{T_{n-1}}{n} = 1 \end{cases}, n \in \mathbb{N}.$$

If  $n$  is odd, that is  $n$  then  $(n+2)S_n = 0 \Leftrightarrow S_n = 0$  and, therefore,  $T_{n-1} = 1 - S_n = 1 \Leftrightarrow T_{n-1} = n, n \in \mathbb{N}$ . Hence,  $T_n = n+1$  if  $n$  is even;

If  $n$  is even, then  $S_n = \frac{T_n(1+(-1)^n)}{(n+2)} = \frac{2(n+1)}{n+2}$  and, therefore,  $T_{n-1} = n - nS_n =$

$$n - \frac{2n(n+1)}{n+2} = -\frac{n^2}{n+2}, \text{ that is } T_{2m-1} = -\frac{(2m)^2}{2m+2} = -\frac{2m^2}{m+1}.$$

$$\text{Thus, } S_n = \begin{cases} 0 & \text{if } n = 2m-1 \\ \frac{2m+1}{m+1} & \text{if } n = 2m \end{cases}, m \in \mathbb{N} \text{ and } T_n = \begin{cases} 2m & \text{if } n = 2m \\ -\frac{2m^2}{m+1} & \text{if } n = 2m-1 \end{cases}, m \in \mathbb{N}.$$

#### 2. Now we will return to the original problem.

$$\text{Since } \sum_{k=0}^{2n} \frac{(-1)^k}{\binom{2n}{k}} = \frac{1}{\binom{2n}{0}} + \frac{1}{\binom{2n}{2n}} + \sum_{k=1}^{2n-1} \frac{(-1)^k}{\binom{2n}{k}} = 2 - \sum_{k=1}^{2n-1} \frac{(-1)^{k-1}}{\binom{2n}{k}}$$

$$\text{and } \sum_{k=0}^{2n} \frac{(-1)^k}{\binom{2n}{k}} = \frac{2n+1}{n+1} \text{ then } \sum_{k=1}^{2n-1} \frac{(-1)^{k-1}}{\binom{2n}{k}} = 2 - \frac{2n+1}{n+1} = \frac{1}{n+1}.$$