

Limit with shifted harmonic numbers.

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Let $a \in (0, \infty)$. Calculate $\lim_{n \rightarrow \infty} \left(e^{\frac{1}{a} + \frac{1}{a+1} + \dots + \frac{1}{a+n}} - e^{\frac{1}{a} + \frac{1}{a+1} + \dots + \frac{1}{a+n-1}} \right)$.

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First we have to do some preparations.

For any real $a > 0$ let $h_n(a) := \sum_{k=1}^n \frac{1}{a+k}$, $n \in \mathbb{N}$. Note that in particular for $a = 1$ we have

$h_n(1) = H_{n+1}$, where $H_n = 1 + \frac{1}{2} + \dots + \frac{1}{n}$ is n -th harmonic number.

Consider two sequences $l_n := h_n(a) - \ln(a+n+1)$ and $u_n := h_n(a) - \ln(a+n)$.

Note that $l_n < u_n$, $\forall n \in \mathbb{N}$ and $\lim_{n \rightarrow \infty} (u_n - l_n) = \lim_{n \rightarrow \infty} \ln\left(1 + \frac{1}{a+n}\right) = 0$.

Also note that $l_n < l_{n+1}$, $\forall n \in \mathbb{N}$ and $u_n > u_{n+1}$, $\forall n \in \mathbb{N}$.

Indeed, since $\frac{1}{x+1} < \ln\left(1 + \frac{1}{x}\right) < \frac{1}{x}$ for any $x > 0$ then for any $n \in \mathbb{N}$ holds

$$l_{n+1} - l_n = \frac{1}{a+n+1} - \ln\left(1 + \frac{1}{a+n+1}\right) > 0 \text{ and}$$

$$u_n - u_{n+1} = \ln\left(1 + \frac{1}{a+n}\right) - \frac{1}{a+n+1} > 0.$$

Since $l_1 \leq l_n < u_n \leq u_1$ then convergent both sequences (l_n) and (u_n) and

$\lim_{n \rightarrow \infty} (u_n - l_n) = 0$ implies that both have the same limit.

Let $\gamma(a) := \lim_{n \rightarrow \infty} (h_n(a) - \ln(a+n+1)) = \lim_{n \rightarrow \infty} (h_n(a) - \ln(a+n))$. Since (l_n) strictly increase and (u_n) strictly decrease then

$$h_n(a) - \ln(a+n+1) < \gamma(a) < h_n(a) - \ln(a+n) \Leftrightarrow$$

$$\ln(a+n) + \gamma(a) < h_n(a) < \ln(a+n+1) + \gamma(a), \forall n \in \mathbb{N}.$$

Noting that $h_{n+1}(a) = h_n(a) + \frac{1}{a+n+1}$, $\gamma(a) = \lim_{n \rightarrow \infty} (h_{n+1}(a) - \ln(a+n+1))$ and

$\gamma(a+1) = \lim_{n \rightarrow \infty} (h_n(a+1) - \ln(a+1+n))$ we obtain $\gamma(a) = \gamma(a+1) + \frac{1}{a}$.

Since $\lim_{n \rightarrow \infty} (H_n - \ln n) = \lim_{n \rightarrow \infty} (H_n - \ln(n+1)) = \gamma$, where $\gamma \approx 0.5772$ is Euler's

constant then $\gamma(1) = \lim_{n \rightarrow \infty} (h_n(1) - \ln(n+2)) = \lim_{n \rightarrow \infty} (H_{n+1} - \ln(n+2)) = \gamma$

Thus $\gamma(a)$ completely defined by functional equation $\gamma(a+1) = \gamma(a) - \frac{1}{a}$, $\forall a > 0$

and $\gamma(1) = \gamma$.

Since $-\gamma(a+1) = -\gamma(a) + \frac{1}{a}$ and digamma function $\psi(a)$ can be defined by

functional equation $\psi(a+1) = \psi(a) + \frac{1}{a}$ and $\psi(1) = -\gamma$ then $\gamma(a) = -\psi(a)$.

Now we ready to solve the problem.

Let $L(a) := \lim_{n \rightarrow \infty} (e^{h_n(a)} - e^{h_{n-1}(a)})$. We have $L(a) = \lim_{n \rightarrow \infty} e^{h_{n-1}(a)} \left(e^{\frac{1}{a+n}} - 1 \right) =$

$$\lim_{n \rightarrow \infty} \frac{e^{h_{n-1}(a)}}{a+n} \cdot \frac{e^{\frac{1}{a+n}} - 1}{\frac{1}{a+n}} = \lim_{n \rightarrow \infty} \frac{e^{h_{n-1}(a)}}{a+n}.$$

$$\ln(a+n-1) + \gamma(a) < h_{n-1}(a) < \ln(a+n) + \gamma(a) \Leftrightarrow$$

$$\frac{a+n-1}{a+n} e^{\gamma(a)} < \frac{e^{h_{n-1}(a)}}{a+n} < e^{\gamma(a)}$$

$$L(a) = e^{\gamma(a)} = e^{-\psi(a)}$$