

Define the sequence $n_0 = 2$, $n_{i+1} = 2^{n_i} - 1$, for $i \in \mathbb{N}$.

$$n_1 = 2^2 - 1 = 3, \quad n_2 = 2^3 - 1 = 7, \quad n_3 = 2^7 - 1 = 127 \text{ and}$$

$$n_4 = 2^{127} - 1 = 170141183460469231731687303715884105727, \text{ which has 39 digits.}$$

$$n_1 = 1 + n_0, \quad n_2 = 1 + m_1 n_0 n_1, \quad n_3 = 1 + m_2 n_0 n_1 n_2, \text{ and } n_4 = 1 + m_3 n_0 n_1 n_2 n_3$$

where $m_1 = 1$, $m_2 = 3$, and

$$m_3 = 31897484713248824846585546253446589$$

$$= 3^2 \times 7 \times 19 \times 43 \times 73 \times 337 \times 5419 \times 92737 \times 649657 \times 77158673929.$$

This sequence for which $i = 1, 2, 3$ and 4 are known Mersenne primes. Is n_5 a prime?

ϕ is Euler's totient function. We observe:

$$n_1 = 2^{n_0} - 1 = 1 + n_0, \quad \phi(n_1) = n_1 - 1 = n_0,$$

$$n_2 = 2^{n_1} - 1 = 1 + m_1 n_0 n_1, \quad \phi(n_2) = n_2 - 1 = n_0 n_1, \quad = n_1 \phi(n_1)$$

$$n_3 = 2^{n_2} - 1 = 1 + m_2 n_0 n_1 n_2, \quad \phi(n_3) = n_3 - 1 = 3 n_0 n_1 n_2 = 3 n_2 \phi(n_2) \text{ and}$$

$$n_4 = 2^{n_3} - 1 = 1 + m_3 n_0 n_1 n_2 n_3, \quad \phi(n_4) = n_4 - 1 = m_3 n_0 n_1 n_2 n_3 = k_3 n_3 \phi(n_3), \quad k_3 = \frac{m_3}{3}$$

$$n_1 \phi(n_1) \mid \phi(n_2), \quad n_2 \phi(n_2) \mid \phi(n_3), \quad n_3 \phi(n_3) \mid \phi(n_4).$$

Theorem: n_5 is a Mersenne prime.

Proposition 1: $n_5 = 2^{n_4} - 1 \equiv 1 \pmod{\prod_{s=0}^4 n_s}$.

Proof: $n_5 = 2^{n_4} - 1 \Rightarrow n_5 - 1 = 2^{n_4} - 2 = 2(2^{m_3 n_0 n_1 n_2 n_3} - 1) \equiv 0 \pmod{\prod_{s=0}^4 n_s}$

$2^{n_3} \equiv 1 \pmod{n_4}, \dots, 2^{n_0} \equiv 1 \pmod{n_1}$ since each $n_i, 1 \leq i \leq 4$, is a distinct prime.

$\Rightarrow n_5 - 1 = m_4 n_0 n_1 n_2 n_3 n_4$ for some $m_4 \in \mathbb{N}$ and proposition 4.1 is true.

Since $n_5 = 2^{n_4} - 1$, $2^{n_4} \equiv 1 \pmod{n_5} \Rightarrow n_4 \mid \phi(n_5)$ because n_4 is a prime.

Proposition 2: $(n_4 - 1) = \phi(n_4)$ divides $(n_5 - 1)$.

Proof: $n_5 - 1 = 2(2^{n_4-1} - 1) = 2(2^{\phi(n_4)} - 1)$ and $n_4 - 1 = 2(2^{\phi(n_3)} - 1)$.

Let T be the integer $2^{\phi(n_3)} - 1$. Then clearly, $2^{\phi(n_3)} \equiv 1 \pmod{T}$.

So, $2T = n_4 - 1$ and $2^{\phi(n_4)} - 1 = 2^{k\phi(n_3)} - 1 \equiv 0 \pmod{T}$ for some $k \in \mathbb{N}$,

$\Rightarrow (n_4 - 1) \mid (n_5 - 1)$ and we have the result.

We now have $n_1 \phi(n_1) \mid n_2 \phi(n_2) \mid n_3 \phi(n_3) \mid n_4 \phi(n_4) \mid (n_5 - 1)$ and $n_4 \mid \phi(n_5) \Rightarrow m_3 \mid m_4$.

So $n_5 - 1 = \frac{m_4}{m_3} n_4 \phi(n_4)$ and $\frac{m_4}{m_3} \in \mathbb{N}$.

Proposition 3: $\phi(n_5) = n_5 - 1$

Proof: Consider $n_6 = 2^{n_5} - 1 = 2^{1+m_4 n_0 n_1 n_2 n_3 n_4} - 1 \equiv 1 \pmod{n_5, n_4, n_3, n_2, n_1, \text{ and } n_0}$.

$2^{n_4} \equiv 1 \pmod{n_5}, 2^{n_3} \equiv 1 \pmod{n_4}, \dots, 2^{n_0} \equiv 1 \pmod{n_1}$.

Since n_4, n_3, n_2, n_1 , and n_0 are distinct primes, and $(n_i, n_5) = 1$ for $i \in \{0, 1, 2, 3, 4\}$, we have

$$n_6 = 2^{n_5} - 1 \equiv 1 \pmod{n_5 n_4 n_3 n_2 n_1 n_0}.$$

$\Rightarrow 2(2^{n_5-1} - 1) \equiv 0 \pmod{n_5 n_4 n_3 n_2 n_1 n_0} \Rightarrow n_i \phi(n_i) \mid \phi(n_5)$ for $i \in \{0, 1, 2, 3, 4\}$, $[(n_i, \phi(n_i)) = 1]$.

We now have $n_i \phi(n_i) \mid \phi(n_5) \Rightarrow (n_i)^2 \mid n_5$ which is impossible since $n_i \mid (n_5 - 1)$.

Hence, $\phi(n_5) = n_5 - 1$ and n_5 is a Mersenne prime.

n_5 has 51,217,600,457,105,052,828,189,829,037,592,592,347 digits.

This also proves the sequence: $n_0 = 2$, $n_{i+1} = 2^{n_i} - 1$, $i \in \mathbb{N}$ defines a set of Mersenne primes.