

Ramanujan investigated nested radicals. His notebooks may contain proofs of the results below and if so they may be easier to follow.

Consider a sequence formed of radicals, $\sqrt{\quad}$, nested n deep:

$$S_n = \sqrt{1 + \sqrt{1 + \sqrt{1 + \cdots + \sqrt{1}}}} \quad (1)$$

S_n satisfies the recurrence:

$$S_1 = 1; \quad S_{n+1} = \sqrt{1 + S_n} \quad (2)$$

We can show that $\lim_{n \rightarrow \infty} S_n$ exists by induction, proving that it is monotonically increasing and bounded above. By squaring equation (2) and manipulating:

$$S_2 - S_1 > 0 \quad (3)$$

$$\text{assume: } S_{n+1} - S_n > 0 \quad (4)$$

$$S_{n+2}^2 - S_{n+1}^2 = S_{n+1} - S_n \quad (5)$$

$$S_{n+2} - S_{n+1} > 0 \text{ and by induction } S_n \text{ is monotonically increasing} \quad (6)$$

$$S_1 < 2 \quad (7)$$

$$\text{assume: } S_n < 2 \quad (8)$$

$$S_{n+1}^2 = 1 + S_n < 1 + 2 < 4 \quad (9)$$

$$S_{n+1} < 2 \quad (10)$$

Applying the results (6) and (10) with Lemma 1 from this proof of the Bolzano-Weierstrass theorem we have that S_n converges to a limit between 1 and 2. Call this limit ρ . Since $f(x) = \sqrt{1+x}$ is continuous,

$$\rho = \lim_{n \rightarrow \infty} \sqrt{1 + S_n} \quad (11)$$

$$= \sqrt{1 + \lim_{n \rightarrow \infty} S_n} \quad (12)$$

$$= \sqrt{1 + \rho} \quad (13)$$

$$= \frac{1 + \sqrt{5}}{2} \quad (14)$$

Does the following sequence have a limit and what is it?

$$R_n = \sqrt{1 + 2\sqrt{1 + 3\sqrt{1 + 4\sqrt{1 + 5\sqrt{\dots \sqrt{1 + n\sqrt{1 + n + 1}}}}}}} \quad (15)$$

Consider more general sequences formed by the iterated compositions of radicals:

$$S_{kn} = \sqrt{1 + k\sqrt{1 + (k+1)\dots \sqrt{1 + n\sqrt{1 + n + 1}}}} \quad (16)$$

and:

$$T_{kn} = \sqrt{1 + k\sqrt{1 + (k+1)\dots \sqrt{1 + n\sqrt{1 + (n+1)(n+3)}}}} \quad (17)$$

Notice that $0 < S_{kn} < S_{k(n+1)}$ and that $S_{kn} < T_{kn}$. T_{kn} has the fun property that $T_{kn} = k + 1$ for all n . Therefore, $\lim_{n \rightarrow \infty} S_{kn} \leq k + 1$ and exists since S_{kn} is nondecreasing. Define $S_k = \lim_{n \rightarrow \infty} S_{kn}$. Note that $S_k \leq k + 1$, which will be needed later.

