

Automatic proofs for establishing the structure of integer sequences avoiding a pattern

Eric Rowland
Hofstra University

Joint work with Lara Pudwell

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Squares on a 3-letter alphabet

A **square** is a nonempty word of the form $w^2 = ww$.
Are squares avoidable on a 3-letter alphabet?



Axel Thue (1863–1922)

Are there arbitrarily long square-free words on $\{0, 1, 2\}$?

Choose an order on $\{0, 1, 2\}$ and try to construct one:

01020120210120102012021020102101201020120210...

The backtracking algorithm builds the **lexicographically least** sequence (if it exists).

Squares on an infinite alphabet

On an **infinite** alphabet, the backtracking algorithm doesn't backtrack.

Are squares avoidable on $\mathbb{Z}_{\geq 0} = \{0, 1, 2, \dots\}$? Yes.

$$\mathbf{s}_2 = 01020103010201040102010301020105 \dots$$

Let $\varphi(n) = 0(n+1)$ for each $n \in \mathbb{Z}_{\geq 0}$.

$$\varphi(0) = 01$$

$$\varphi^2(0) = 0102$$

$$\varphi^3(0) = 01020103$$

$$\vdots$$

$$\varphi^\infty(0) = 01020103010201040102010301020105 \dots$$

Since $|\varphi(n)| = 2$, we say φ is a **2-uniform** morphism.

Fractional powers

01110111 = (0111)² is a square.

011101 = (0111)^{3/2} is a $\frac{3}{2}$ -power.

abracadabra = (abracad)^{11/7} is an $\frac{11}{7}$ -power.

Definition

A word w is an $\frac{a}{b}$ -power if

$$w = v^e x$$

where $e \geq 0$ is an integer, x is a prefix of v , and $\frac{|w|}{|v|} = \frac{a}{b}$.

Notation

For $\frac{a}{b} > 1$, let $\mathbf{s}_{a/b}$ be the lex. least $\frac{a}{b}$ -power-free sequence on $\mathbb{Z}_{\geq 0}$.

We assume $\gcd(a, b) = 1$ from now on.

Avoiding 3/2-powers

$\mathbf{s}_{3/2} = 001102100112001103100113001102100114001103 \dots$

$\mathbf{s}_{3/2} =$
001102
100112
001103
100113
001102
100114
001103
100112
⋮



$$s(6n + 5) = s(n) + 2$$

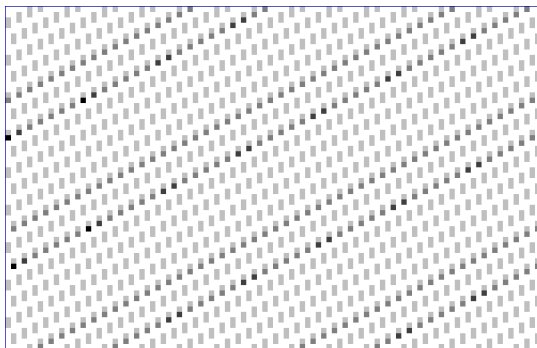
Theorem (Rowland–Shallit 2012)

The sequence $\mathbf{s}_{3/2}$ is generated by a 6-uniform morphism.

Why **6**?

$s_{5/3}$ wrapped into 100 columns

$s_{5/3} = 000010100001010000101000010100001020000101 \dots$



$\mathbf{s}_{5/3}$ wrapped into 7 columns

$\mathbf{s}_{5/3} = 000010100001010000101000010100001020000101 \dots$

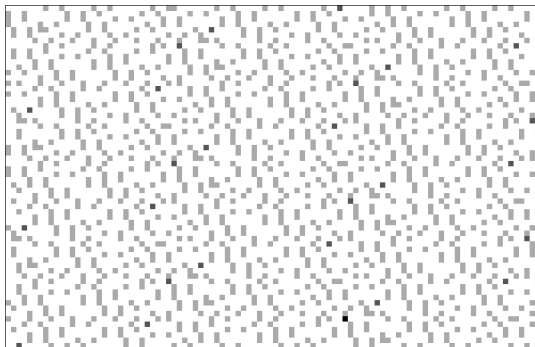


Theorem

$\mathbf{s}_{5/3} = \varphi^\infty(0)$, where $\varphi(n) = 000010(n+1)$ is a 7-uniform morphism.

$\mathbf{s}_{8/5}$ wrapped into 100 columns

$\mathbf{s}_{8/5} = 000000010010000010010000000100110000000100\dots$



$s_{8/5}$ wrapped into 733 columns

$$s_{8/5} = 00000001001000001001000000010011000000010010000000100 \dots$$



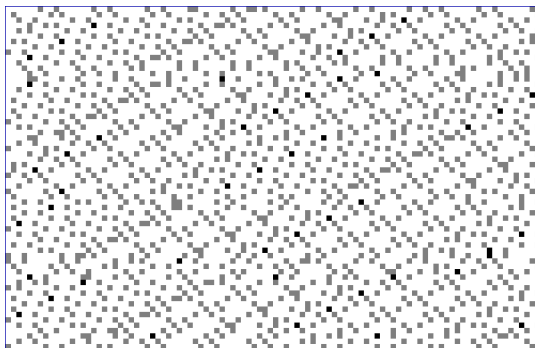
Theorem

$s_{8/5} = \varphi^\infty(0)$ for the 733-uniform morphism

$$\begin{aligned} \varphi(n) = & 000000010010000010010000000100110000000100100000100100000010020000 \\ & 0100100100000001001000001001000001001000000010010010000000100100000 \\ & 10010000010010000001001001000000100100000100100000100100000001001 \\ & 0010000000100100000100100000100100000001001001000000010010000010010 \\ & 0000100100000001001001000000010010000010010000010010000000100100100 \\ & 0000010010000010010000010010000000100100100000001001000001001000001 \\ & 0010110000000100100000100100000001002000001001001000000010010000010 \\ & 0100000100100000001001001000000010010000010010000010010000000100100 \\ & 1000000010010000010010000010010000000100100100000001001000001001000 \\ & 001001000100010001000100010001101000000010010000010010000000101 \\ & 00010001000100010001000100010100000001001000001001000000010100(n+2). \end{aligned}$$

$s_{7/4}$ wrapped into 100 columns

$s_{7/4} = 0000001001000000100100000010010000011000000 \dots$



$s_{7/4}$ wrapped into 50847 columns

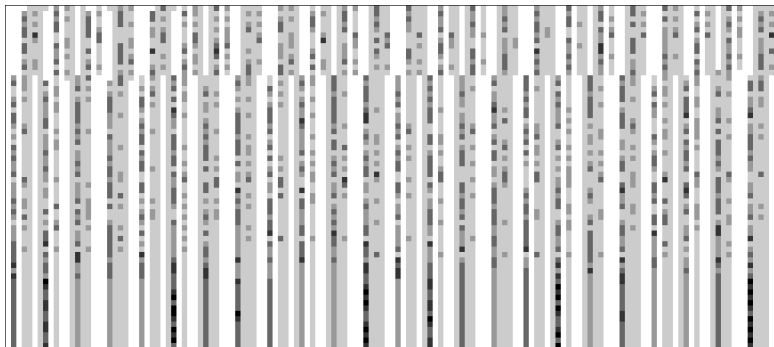
$$s_{7/4} = 00000010010000001001000000100100000110000011000000 \dots$$

Theorem

$$s_{7/4} = \varphi^{\infty}(0) \text{ for some } 50847\text{-uniform morphism } \varphi(n) = u(n+2).$$

$\mathbf{s}_{5/4}$ wrapped into 144 columns

$\mathbf{s}_{5/4} = 000011110202101001011212000013110102101302\dots$



We don't know the structure of $\mathbf{s}_{5/4}$.

Establishing the structure of $\mathbf{s}_{a/b}$

To show that $\mathbf{s}_{a/b} = \varphi^\infty(0)$:

- 1 Show that φ preserves $\frac{a}{b}$ -power-freeness:

w is $\frac{a}{b}$ -power-free $\implies \varphi(w)$ is $\frac{a}{b}$ -power-free.

Since 0 is $\frac{a}{b}$ -power-free, this implies $\varphi^\infty(0)$ is $\frac{a}{b}$ -power-free.

- 2 Show that decrementing any term in $\varphi^\infty(0)$ introduces an $\frac{a}{b}$ -power.

We reduce both steps to finite computations.

Proving $\frac{a}{b}$ -power-freeness

We want to show that $\frac{a}{b}$ -powers in $\varphi(w)$ come from $\frac{a}{b}$ -powers in w .

Where can an $\frac{a}{b}$ -power occur? $(xy)^{a/b} = \mathbf{xyx}$ $1 < \frac{a}{b} < 2$

Example

Let $\varphi(n) = 000010(n+1)$ of length $k = |\varphi(n)| = 7$.

The word 000 occurs in $\varphi(w)$ at positions $\equiv 1, 2 \pmod{7}$.

But each word of length 4 occurs at a unique position modulo 7.

0000 0001 0010 0101 1010 0100 1000 0102 ...

We say φ **locates words of length 4**.

Suppose φ locates words of length k .

If $\varphi(w)$ contains an $\frac{a}{b}$ -power $(xy)^{a/b} = \mathbf{xyx}$ with $|x| \geq k$, then k divides $|xy| = mb$ (for some m).

Assuming $\gcd(b, k) = 1$, then $k \mid m$.

Then k divides $|xyx| = ma$. By shifting, we find an $\frac{a}{b}$ -power in w .

So if w is $\frac{a}{b}$ -power-free, then $\varphi(w)$ does not contain long $\frac{a}{b}$ -powers.

Proving lex-leastness

Show that decrementing any term in $\varphi^\infty(0)$ introduces an $\frac{a}{b}$ -power.

We exploit the self-similarity of $\varphi^\infty(0)$.

Example

Let $\varphi(n) = 000010(n+1)$.

Decrementing 1 to 0 introduces the $\frac{5}{3}$ -power $00000 = (000)^{5/3}$.

Decrementing $n+1$ to $c = 0$ introduces the $\frac{5}{3}$ -power $00100 = (001)^{5/3}$.

Induction on c : Assume that decrementing any letter in $\varphi^\infty(0)$ to $c-1$ introduces an $\frac{a}{b}$ -power ending at this $c-1$.

Let $\varphi(w)$ be a prefix of $\varphi^\infty(0)$ with last letter $n+1$. “De-substitute”; then w is a prefix of $\varphi^\infty(0)$ with last letter n .

Decrementing $n+1$ to c produces the image, under φ , of the word obtained by decrementing n to $c-1$.

So, computationally, we just need to check the base cases.

Catalogue

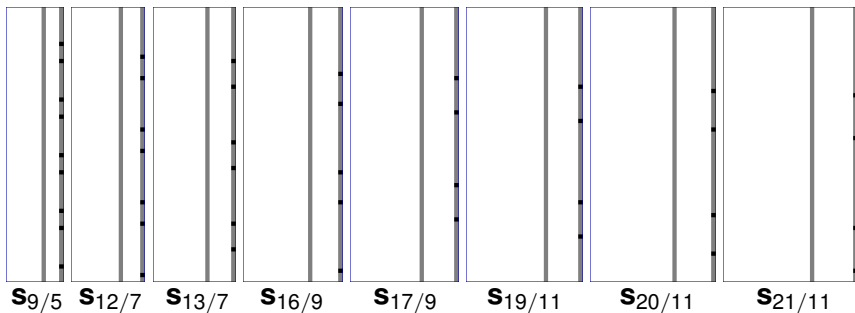
For many sequences $\mathbf{s}_{a/b}$, there is a related k -uniform morphism.

$\frac{a}{b}$	k	running time
$\frac{3}{2}$	6	
$\frac{5}{3}$	7	
$\frac{8}{5}$	733	3 seconds
$\frac{7}{4}$	50847	6 hours
$\frac{5}{4}$?	

Question

Is this true for every $\frac{a}{b} > 1$? How is k related to $\frac{a}{b}$?

A family related to $\mathbf{s}_{5/3}$



Theorem

Let $\frac{5}{3} \leq \frac{a}{b} < 2$ and $\gcd(b, 2) = 1$. Let

$$\varphi(n) = 0^{a-1} 1 0^{a-b-1} (n+1).$$

Then $\mathbf{s}_{a/b} = \varphi^\infty(0)$.

We must prove $\frac{a}{b}$ -power-freeness (and lex-leastness) **symbolically**.

Proving $\frac{a}{b}$ -power-freeness symbolically

Slide length- a window through the circular word $0^{a-1} 1 0^{a-b-1} (n+1)$:

length- a factor	interval for i
$0^{a-1-i} 1 0^i$	$0 \leq i \leq a - b - 1$
$0^{b-1-i} 1 0^{a-b-1} (n+1) 0^i$	$0 \leq i \leq 2b - a - 1$
$0^{a-b-1-i} 1 0^{a-b-1} (n+1) 0^{2b-a+i}$	$0 \leq i \leq 2a - 3b - 1$
$0^{2b-a-1-i} 1 0^{a-b-1} (n+1) 0^{a-b+i}$	$0 \leq i \leq 2b - a - 1$
$0^{a-b-1-i} (n+1) 0^{b+i}$	$0 \leq i \leq a - b - 1$

Partition each length- a factor into xyz :

x (length $a - b$)	y (length $2b - a$)	z (length $a - b$)	interval for i
0^{a-b}	0^{2b-a}	$0^{a-b-1-i} 1 0^i$	$0 \leq i \leq a - b - 1$
0^{a-b}	$0^{2b-a-1-i} 1 0^i$	$0^{a-b-1-i} (n+1) 0^i$	$0 \leq i \leq 2b - a - 1$
$0^{a-b-1-i} 1 0^i$	0^{2b-a}	$0^{2a-3b-1-i} (n+1) 0^{2b-a+i}$	$0 \leq i \leq 2a - 3b - 1$
$0^{2b-a-1-i} 1 0^{2a-3b+i}$	$0^{2b-a-1-i} (n+1) 0^i$	0^{a-b}	$0 \leq i \leq 2b - a - 1$
$0^{a-b-1-i} (n+1) 0^i$	0^{2b-a}	0^{a-b}	$0 \leq i \leq a - b - 1$

Also compute factors of length $2a, 3a, \dots, m_{\max} a$.

Check that $x \neq z$ for each factor.

We don't need a decision procedure for solvability of symbolic word equations. . .

Testing inequality of symbolic words

We just need to verify **inequality** of pairs of words we encounter.

Example

$$x = 0^{a-b-1-i} 1 0^i, \quad z = 0^{2a-3b-1-i} (n+1) 0^{2b-a+i}.$$

Since $n \geq 0$ and $\frac{5}{3} \leq \frac{a}{b} < 2$, we get $x \neq z$ by comparing prefixes.

Another heuristic: Delete the common prefix/suffix, or delete 0s, and recursively test inequality.

Example

$$0^{352a-621b-i-1} 1 0^{-51a+91b-1} (n+1) 0^i$$
$$0^{-51a+91b-j-1} (n+1) 0^{352a-621b-1} 1 0^j$$

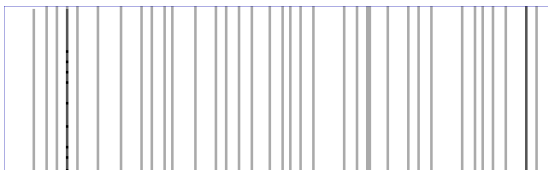
Deleting all explicit 0 letters in both words gives $1(n+1)$ and $(n+1)1$.
But these aren't unequal if $n = 0$!

Instead, look at the system of equalities of the deleted block lengths.

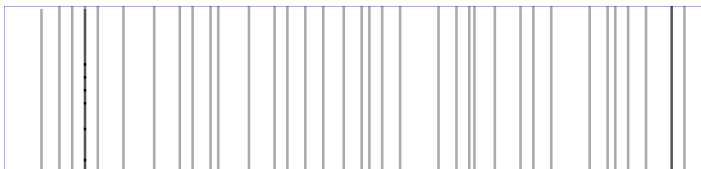
In this case, $-51a + 91b - 1 \neq 352a - 621b - 1$ on $\frac{30}{17} < \frac{a}{b} < \frac{53}{30}$.

A family with a transient

$S_{17/13}$



$S_{22/17}$



$S_{25/19}$



The interval $\frac{9}{7} < \frac{a}{b} < \frac{4}{3}$

Theorem

Let $\frac{9}{7} < \frac{a}{b} < \frac{4}{3}$ and $\gcd(b, 6) = 1$. Let

$$\varphi(0') = 0'0^{a-2} 10^{a-b-1} 10^{a-b-1} 1\varphi(0)$$

and

$$\begin{aligned} \varphi(n) = & 0^{a-b-1} 10^{2a-2b-1} 10^{-a+2b-1} 10^{2a-2b-1} 10^{a-b-1} 10^{-2a+3b-1} 10^{4a-5b-1} 1 \\ & 0^{-a+2b-1} 10^{2a-2b-1} 10^{a-b-1} 10^{-2a+3b-1} 10^{-2a+3b-1} 10^{5a-6b-1} 1 \\ & 0^{-2a+3b-1} 10^{4a-5b-1} 10^{a-b-1} 10^{-2a+3b-1} 10^{3a-3b-1} 10^{-2a+3b-1} 1 \\ & 0^{a-b-1} 10^{-3a+4b-1} 10^{5a-6b-1} 10^{2a-2b-1} 10^{a-b-1} 10^{-2a+3b-1} 1 \\ & 0^{3a-3b-1} 10^{-2a+3b-1} 10^{4a-5b-1} 10^{a-b-1} 10^{-2a+3b-1} 10^{2a-2b-1} 2 \\ & 0^{a-b-1} 10^{-2a+3b-1} 10^{3a-3b-1} 10^{-2a+3b-1} 10^{a-b-1} 10^{a-b-1} (n+2) \end{aligned}$$

for $n \in \mathbb{Z}_{\geq 0}$. Then $\mathbf{s}_{a/b} = \tau(\varphi^\infty(0'))$.

Other intervals

We have 30 symbolic $\frac{a}{b}$ -power-free morphisms, found experimentally.

Theorem

Let $\frac{3}{2} < \frac{a}{b} < \frac{5}{3}$ and $\gcd(b, 5) = 1$. The $(5a - 4b)$ -uniform morphism

$$\varphi(n) = 0^{a-1} 1 0^{a-b-1} 1 0^{2a-2b-1} 1 0^{a-b-1} (n+1)$$

is $\frac{a}{b}$ -power-free.

Theorem

Let $\frac{6}{5} < \frac{a}{b} < \frac{5}{4}$ and $\frac{a}{b} \notin \{\frac{11}{9}, \frac{17}{14}\}$. The a -uniform morphism

$$\varphi(n) = 0^{6a-7b-1} 1 0^{-3a+4b-1} 1 0^{-8a+10b-1} 1 0^{6a-7b-1} (n+1)$$

is $\frac{a}{b}$ -power-free.

Theorem 50. Let a, b be relatively prime positive integers such that $\frac{10}{9} \neq \frac{a}{b} < \frac{29}{26}$ and $\frac{a}{b} \neq \frac{39}{35}$ and $\gcd(b, 67) = 1$. Then the $(67a - 30b)$ -uniform morphism

$$\begin{aligned} \varphi(n) = & 0^{-7a+8b-1} 1 0^{10a-11b-1} 1 0^{10a-11b-1} 1 0^{a-b-1} 1 0^{-26a+29b-1} 1 0^{28a-31b-1} 1 0^{28a-2b-1} 1 \\ & 0^{a-b-1} 1 0^{-25a+28b-1} 1 0^{10a-11b-1} 1 0^{2b-2b-1} 1 0^{a-b-1} 1 0^{10a-11b-1} 1 0^{2a-2b-1} 1 \\ & 0^{-25a+28b-1} 1 0^{10a-11b-1} 1 0^{3a-3b-1} 1 0^{10a-11b-1} 1 0^{-8a+9b-1} 1 0^{a-b-1} 1 0^{10a-11b-1} 1 \\ & 0^{-25a+28b-1} 1 0^{10a-11b-1} 1 0^{-8a+9b-1} 1 0^{a-b-1} 1 0^{10a-11b-1} 1 0^{2b-2b-1} 2 0^{a-b-1} 1 \\ & 0^{10a-11b-1} 1 0^{-25a+28b-1} 1 0^{2b-2b-1} 2 0^{a-b-1} 1 0^{10a-11b-1} 1 0^{3b-3b-1} 1 0^{10a-11b-1} 1 \\ & 0^{-25a+28b-1} 1 0^{3b-3b-1} 1 0^{10a-11b-1} 1 0^{a-b-1} 1 0^{a-b-1} 2 0^{a-b-1} 1 0^{10a-11b-1} 1 \\ & 0^{-25a+28b-1} 1 0^{a-b-1} 1 0^{a-b-1} 2 0^{a-b-1} 1 0^{2a-2b-1} 1 0^{1a-12b-1} 1 0^{10a-11b-1} 1 \\ & 0^{2a-2b-1} 1 0^{-24a+27b-1} 1 0^{2b-2b-1} 1 0^{a-b-1} 1 0^{10a-11b-1} 1 0^{10a-11b-1} 1 0^{2b-2b-1} 1 \\ & 0^{a-b-1} 1 0^{-25a+28b-1} 1 0^{27a-30b-1} 1 0^{-24a+27b-1} 1 0^{10a-11b-1} 1 0^{10a-11b-1} 1 0^{-8a+9b-1} 1 \\ & 0^{1a-12b-1} 1 0^{2b-2b-1} 1 0^{a-b-1} 1 0^{-25a+28b-1} 1 0^{10a-11b-1} 1 0^{2b-2b-1} 1 0^{a-b-1} 1 \\ & 0^{10a-11b-1} 1 0^{-25a+28b-1} 1 0^{28a-31b-1} 1 0^{-25a+28b-1} 1 0^{10a-11b-1} 1 0^{10a-11b-1} 1 0^{-7a+8b-1} 1 \\ & 0^{10a-11b-1} 1 0^{-8a+9b-1} 1 0^{a-b-1} 1 0^{10a-11b-1} 1 0^{-25a+28b-1} 1 0^{10a-11b-1} 1 0^{-8a+9b-1} 1 \\ & 0^{a-b-1} 1 0^{10a-11b-1} 1 0^{3b-3b-1} 1 0^{10a-11b-1} 1 0^{-25a+28b-1} 1 0^{3b-3b-1} 1 0^{10a-11b-1} 1 \\ & 0^{a-b-1} 1 0^{2b-10b-1} 1 0^{-7a+8b-1} 1 0^{10a-11b-1} 1 0^{-25a+28b-1} 1 0^{a-b-1} 1 0^{2b-10b-1} 1 \\ & 0^{-7a+8b-1} 1 0^{3b-3b-1} 1 0^{a-b-1} 1 0^{10a-11b-1} 1 0^{10a-11b-1} 1 0^{2b-2b-1} 1 0^{a-b-1} 1 \\ & 0^{-25a+28b-1} 1 0^{3b-3b-1} 1 0^{10a-11b-1} 1 0^{10a-11b-1} 1 0^{2b-2b-1} 1 0^{-25a+28b-1} 1 0^{27a-30b-1} 1 \\ & 0^{a-b-1} 1 0^{-25a+28b-1} 1 0^{10a-11b-1} 1 0^{10a-11b-1} 1 0^{-8a+9b-1} 1 0^{a-b-1} 1 0^{10a-11b-1} 1 \\ & 0^{2a-2b-1} 2 0^{a-b-1} 1 0^{-25a+28b-1} 1 0^{10a-11b-1} 1 0^{2b-2b-1} 2 0^{a-b-1} 1 0^{10a-11b-1} 1 \\ & 0^{2a-2b-1} 1 0^{-25a+28b-1} 1 0^{10a-11b-1} 1 0^{2b-2b-1} 1 0^{10a-11b-1} 1 0^{a-b-1} 1 0^{a-b-1} 2 \\ & 0^{a-b-1} 1 0^{-25a+28b-1} 1 0^{10a-11b-1} 1 0^{a-b-1} 1 0^{a-b-1} 2 0^{a-b-1} 1 0^{2b-2b-1} 1 \\ & 0^{1a-12b-1} 1 0^{-25a+28b-1} 1 0^{2b-2b-1} 1 0^{1a-12b-1} 1 0^{2b-2b-1} 1 0^{a-b-1} 1 0^{10a-11b-1} 1 \\ & 0^{-25a+28b-1} 1 0^{2b-2b-1} 1 0^{a-b-1} 1 0^{10a-11b-1} 1 0^{-8a+9b-1} 1 0^{1a-12b-1} 1 0^{10a-11b-1} 1 \\ & 0^{-25a+28b-1} 1 0^{27a-30b-1} 1 0^{-24a+27b-1} 1 0^{2b-2b-1} 1 0^{a-b-1} 1 0^{10a-11b-1} 1 0^{10a-11b-1} 1 \\ & 0^{2b-2b-1} 1 0^{a-b-1} 1 0^{-25a+28b-1} 1 0^{10a-11b-1} 1 0^{-7a+8b-1} 1 0^{10a-11b-1} 1 0^{10a-11b-1} 1 \\ & 0^{-25a+28b-1} 1 0^{28a-31b-1} 1 0^{-25a+28b-1} 1 0^{27a-30b-1} 1 0^{a-b-1} 1 0^{-25a+28b-1} 1 0^{10a-11b-1} 1 \\ & 0^{10a-11b-1} 1 0^{-8a+9b-1} 1 0^{a-b-1} 1 0^{10a-11b-1} 1 0^{3b-3b-1} 1 0^{-25a+28b-1} 1 0^{10a-11b-1} 1 \\ & 0^{2b-2b-1} 1 0^{10a-11b-1} 1 0^{a-b-1} 1 0^{-26a+29b-1} 1 0^{28a-31b-1} 1 0^{-25a+28b-1} 1 0^{10a-11b-1} 1 \\ & 0^{a-b-1} 2 0^{a-b-1} 1 0^{-7a+8b-1} 1 0^{2b-2b-1} 1 0^{a-b-1} 1 0^{10a-11b-1} 1 0^{-25a+28b-1} 1 \\ & 0^{2b-2b-1} 1 0^{a-b-1} 1 0^{10a-11b-1} 1 0^{2b-2b-1} 1 0^{10a-11b-1} 1 0^{-25a+28b-1} 1 0^{3b-3b-1} 1 \\ & 0^{10a-11b-1} 1 0^{-8a+9b-1} 1 0^{a-b-1} 1 0^{10a-11b-1} 1 0^{10a-11b-1} 1 0^{-25a+28b-1} 1 0^{27a-30b-1} 1 \\ & 0^{a-b-1} 1 0^{-25a+28b-1} 1 0^{2b-2b-1} 2 0^{a-b-1} 1 0^{10a-11b-1} 1 0^{10a-11b-1} 1 0^{2a-2b-1} 2 \\ & 0^{a-b-1} 1 0^{-25a+28b-1} 1 0^{3b-3b-1} 1 0^{10a-11b-1} 1 0^{10a-11b-1} 1 0^{3b-3b-1} 1 0^{-25a+28b-1} 1 \\ & 0^{a-b-1} 1 0^{2b-2b-1} 2 0^{a-b-1} 1 0^{10a-11b-1} 1 0^{10a-11b-1} 1 0^{a-b-1} 1 0^{a-b-1} 2 \\ & 0^{a-b-1} 1 0^{2b-2b-1} 1 0^{-24a+27b-1} 1 0^{10a-11b-1} 1 0^{2b-2b-1} 1 0^{1a-12b-1} 1 0^{2b-2b-1} 1 \\ & 0^{a-b-1} 1 0^{-25a+28b-1} 1 0^{10a-11b-1} 1 0^{2b-2b-1} 1 0^{a-b-1} 1 0^{10a-11b-1} 1 0^{-8a+9b-1} 1 \\ & 0^{1a-12b-1} 1 0^{-25a+28b-1} 1 0^{10a-11b-1} 1 0^{-8a+9b-1} 1 0^{1a-12b-1} 1 0^{2b-2b-1} 1 0^{a-b-1} 1 \\ & 0^{10a-11b-1} 1 0^{-25a+28b-1} 1 0^{2b-2b-1} 1 0^{a-b-1} 1 0^{10a-11b-1} 1 0^{10a-11b-1} 1 0^{-7a+8b-1} 1 \\ & 0^{10a-11b-1} 1 0^{-25a+28b-1} 1 0^{10a-11b-1} 1 0^{-7a+8b-1} 1 0^{10a-11b-1} 1 0^{-8a+9b-1} 1 0^{a-b-1} 1 \\ & 0^{10a-11b-1} 1 0^{10a-11b-1} 1 0^{-25a+28b-1} 1 0^{27a-30b-1} 1 0^{a-b-1} 1 0^{-25a+28b-1} 1 0^{2b-2b-1} 1 \\ & 0^{10a-11b-1} 1 0^{10a-11b-1} 1 0^{3b-3b-1} 1 0^{-25a+28b-1} 1 0^{a-b-1} 1 0^{3b-3b-1} 1 (n+1). \end{aligned}$$

with 279 nonzero letters, locates words of length $5a - 4b$ and is $\frac{9}{26}$ -power-free.

Coverage of $\frac{a}{b}$ -power-free morphisms

