

Computer verification of integer sequences avoiding a pattern

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joint work with Jeff Shallit and Lara Pudwell

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Squares on a 2-letter alphabet



Axel Thue (1863–1922)

Are squares avoidable on a 2-letter alphabet?

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

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

010 \boxtimes

Squares on a 3-letter alphabet

Are squares avoidable on $\{0, 1, 2\}$?

01020120210120102012021020102101201020120210...

Theorem (Thue 1906)

There exist arbitrarily long square-free words on 3 letters.

The backtracking algorithm builds the **lexicographically least** sequence.

Open problem (Allouche–Shallit, *Automatic Sequences* §1.10)

Characterize the lex. least square-free sequence on $\{0, 1, 2\}$.

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.

01020103010201040102010301020105...

Theorem (Guay-Paquet–Shallit 2009)

Let $\varphi(n) = 0(n+1)$.

The lexicographically least square-free sequence on $\mathbb{Z}_{\geq 0}$ is $\varphi^\infty(0)$.

$$\varphi(0) = 01$$

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

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

\vdots

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

Integer powers

More generally, let $a \geq 2$. Let $\varphi(n) = 0^{a-1}(n+1)$.

The lexicographically least a -power-free sequence on $\mathbb{Z}_{\geq 0}$ is $\varphi^\infty(0)$.

$$\mathbf{s}_5 = 00001000010000100001000020000100001 \dots$$

$$\begin{aligned} \mathbf{s}_5 &= 00001 \\ &00001 \\ &00001 \\ &00001 \\ &00002 \\ &00001 \\ &\vdots \end{aligned}$$



$$\begin{aligned} s(5n+0) &= 0 \\ s(5n+1) &= 0 \\ s(5n+2) &= 0 \\ s(5n+3) &= 0 \\ s(5n+4) &= s(n) + 1 \end{aligned}$$

\mathbf{s}_5 satisfies a recurrence reflecting the base-5 representation of n . Such a sequence is called **5-regular**.

Fractional powers

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

If $|x| = |y| = |z|$, then $xyzxyzx = (xyz)^{7/3}$ is a $\frac{7}{3}$ -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 6-regular.

Why 6?

k -regular sequences

An integer sequence $s(n)_{n \geq 0}$ is **k -regular** if the set

$$\{s(k^e n + r)_{n \geq 0} : e \geq 0 \text{ and } 0 \leq r \leq k^e - 1\}$$

is contained in a finite-dimensional \mathbb{Q} -vector space.

Analogously: $s(n)_{n \geq 0}$ is constant-recursive if $\{s(n+r)_{n \geq 0} : r \geq 0\}$ is contained in a finite-dimensional \mathbb{Q} -vector space.

Is the value of k unique?

No; a 2-regular sequence is also 4-regular, and vice versa.

But almost: If k and ℓ are **multiplicatively independent** and $s(n)_{n \geq 0}$ is both k -regular and ℓ -regular, then $\sum_{n \geq 0} s(n)x^n$ is the power series of a rational function whose poles are roots of unity [Bell 2006].

So the value of k gives structural information.

The interval $\frac{a}{b} \geq 2$

$$\mathbf{s}_{5/2} = 00001000010000100001000020000100001 \dots = \mathbf{s}_5$$

Theorem

If $\frac{a}{b} \geq 2$, then $\mathbf{s}_{a/b} = \mathbf{s}_a$.

Proof (one direction).

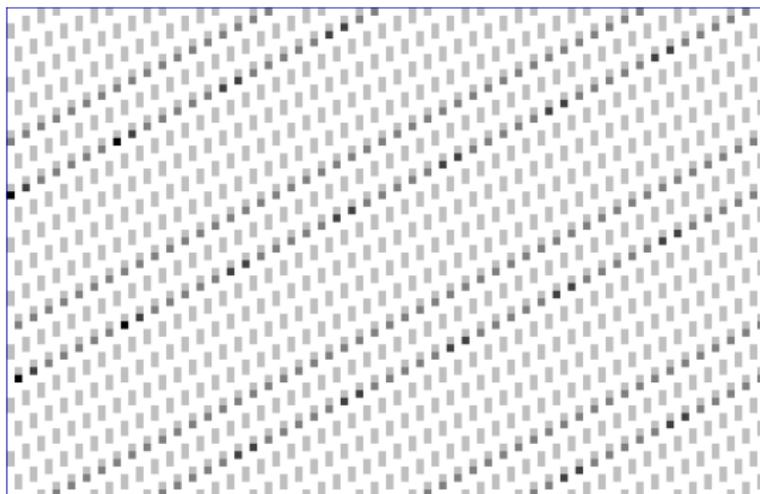
The a -power $v^a = (v^b)^{a/b}$ is also an $\frac{a}{b}$ -power.

So $\mathbf{s}_{a/b}$ is a -power-free. Thus $\mathbf{s}_a \leq \mathbf{s}_{a/b}$ lexicographically. □

It suffices to consider $1 < \frac{a}{b} < 2$.

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

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



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

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

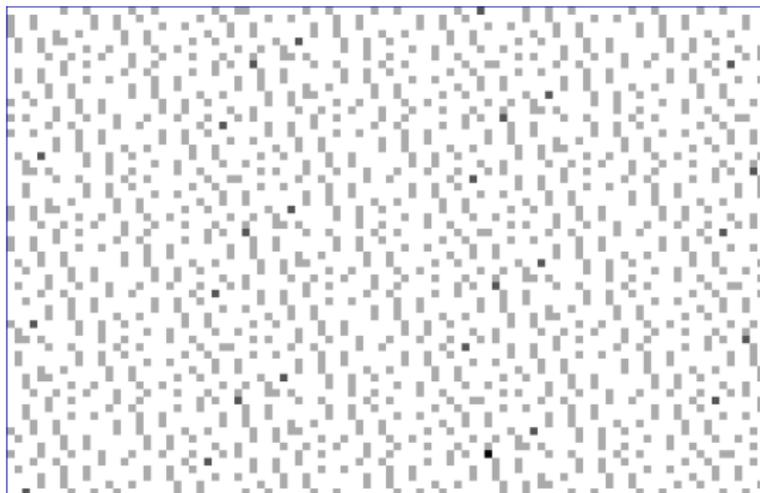


Theorem

$\mathbf{s}_{5/3} = \varphi^\infty(0)$, 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

$$s_{8/5} = 000000010010000010010000000100110000000100110000000100 \dots$$



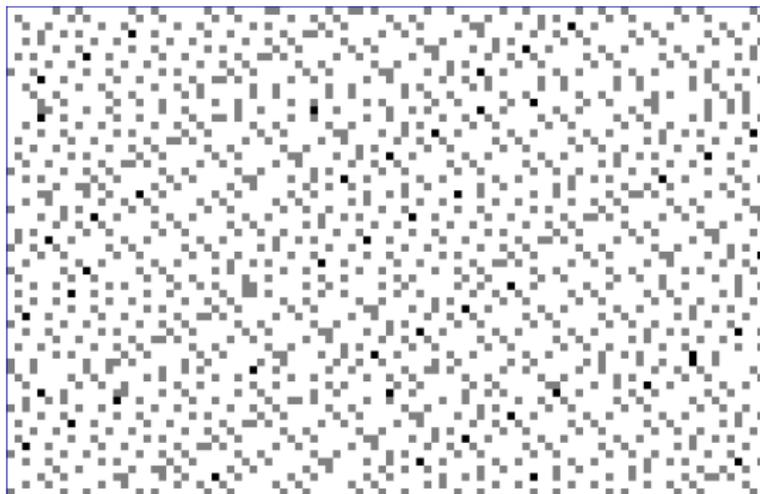
Theorem

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

$$\begin{aligned} \varphi(n) = & 0000000100100000100100000001001100000001001000001001000000010020000 \\ & 0100100100000001001000001001000001001000000010010010000000100100000 \\ & 10010000010010000001001001000000100100000100100000100100000001001 \\ & 0010000000100100000100100000100100000001001001000000010010000010010 \\ & 0000100100000001001001000000010010000010010000010010000000100100100 \\ & 0000010010000010010000010010000000100100100000001001000001001000001 \\ & 0010110000000100100000100100000001002000001001001000000010010000010 \\ & 0100000100100000001001001000000010010000010010000010010000000100100 \\ & 1000000010010000010010000010010000000100100100000001001000001001000 \\ & 001001000100010001000100010001101000000010010000010010000000101 \\ & 00010001000100010001000100010100000001001000001001000000010100(n+2). \end{aligned}$$

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

$s_{7/4} = 000000100100000010010000001001000011000000 \dots$



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

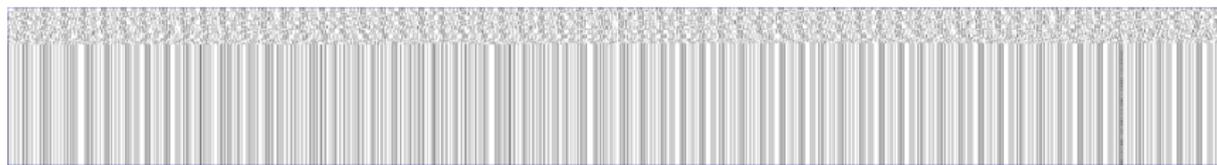
$$s_{7/4} = 00000010010000001001000000100100000110000011000000 \dots$$

Theorem

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

$\mathbf{s}_{6/5}$ wrapped into 1001 columns

$$\mathbf{s}_{6/5} = 000001111102020201011101000202120210110010\dots$$



Introduce a new letter $0'$.

Let $\tau(0') = 0$ and $\tau(n) = n$ for $n \in \mathbb{Z}_{\geq 0}$.

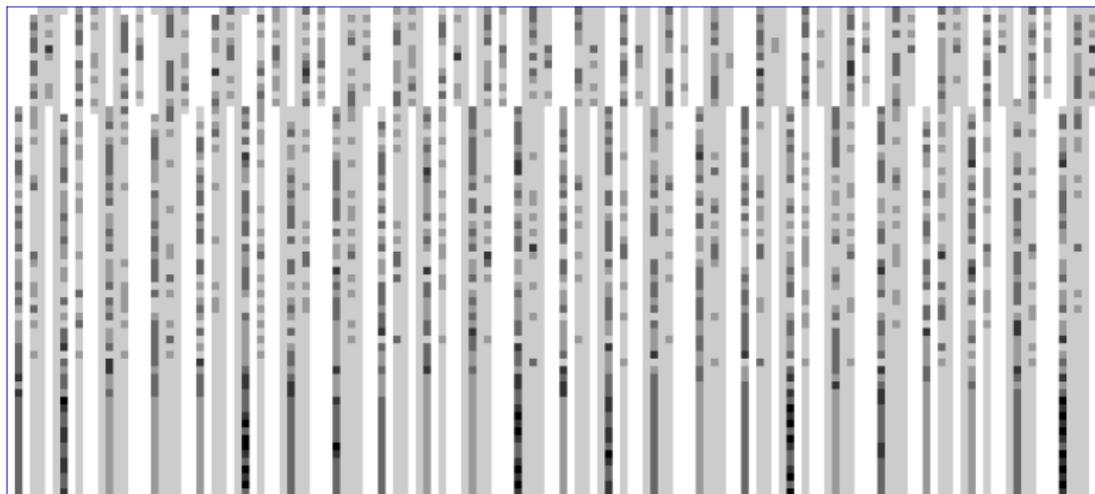
Theorem

There exist words u, v of lengths $|u| = 1001 - 1$ and $|v| = 29949$ such that $\mathbf{s}_{6/5} = \tau(\varphi^\infty(0'))$, where

$$\varphi(n) = \begin{cases} v\varphi(0) & \text{if } n = 0' \\ u(n+3) & \text{if } n \geq 0. \end{cases}$$

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

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



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

Catalogue

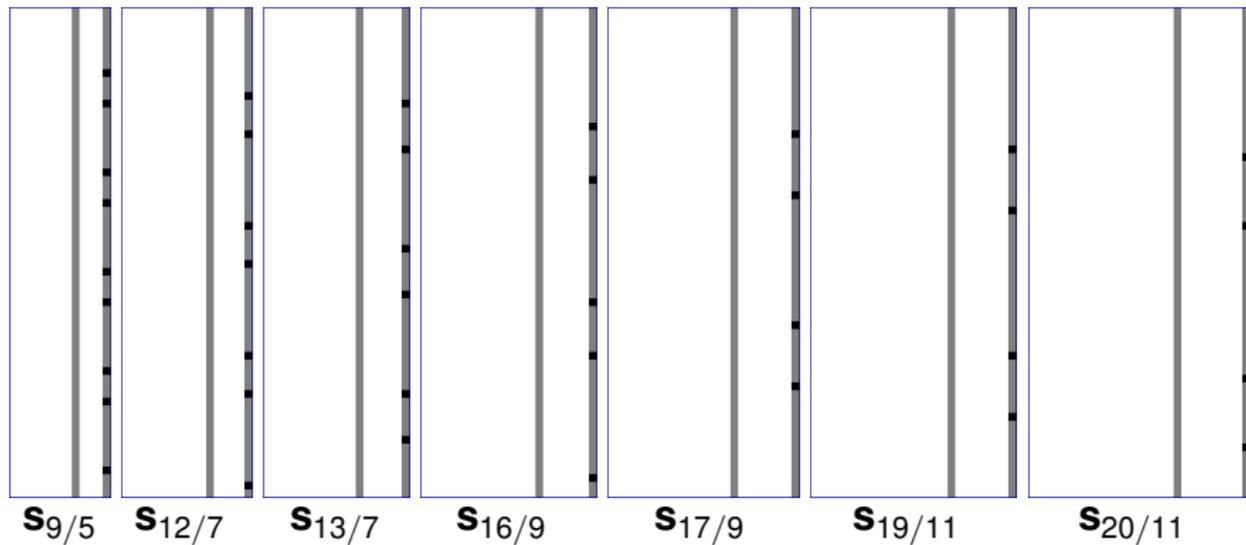
For many sequences $\mathbf{s}_{a/b}$, there is a related k -uniform morphism. A k -uniform morphism generates a k -regular sequence.

$\frac{a}{b}$	k
$\frac{3}{2}$	6
$\frac{5}{3}$	7
$\frac{8}{5}$	733
$\frac{7}{4}$	50847
$\frac{6}{5}$	1001
$\frac{5}{4}$?

Question

Is every $\mathbf{s}_{a/b}$ k -regular for some k ? How is k related to $\frac{a}{b}$?

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



The interval $\frac{5}{3} \leq \frac{a}{b} < 2$

Theorem

Let $\frac{5}{3} \leq \frac{a}{b} < 2$ and b odd. Let φ be the $(2a - b)$ -uniform morphism

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

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

- 1 Show that φ preserves $\frac{a}{b}$ -power-freeness.
That is, if w is $\frac{a}{b}$ -power-free then $\varphi(w)$ is $\frac{a}{b}$ -power-free.
Since 0 is $\frac{a}{b}$ -power-free, it follows that $\varphi^\infty(0)$ is $\frac{a}{b}$ -power-free.
- 2 Show that decrementing any term in $\mathbf{s}_{a/b}$ introduces an $\frac{a}{b}$ -power.

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

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

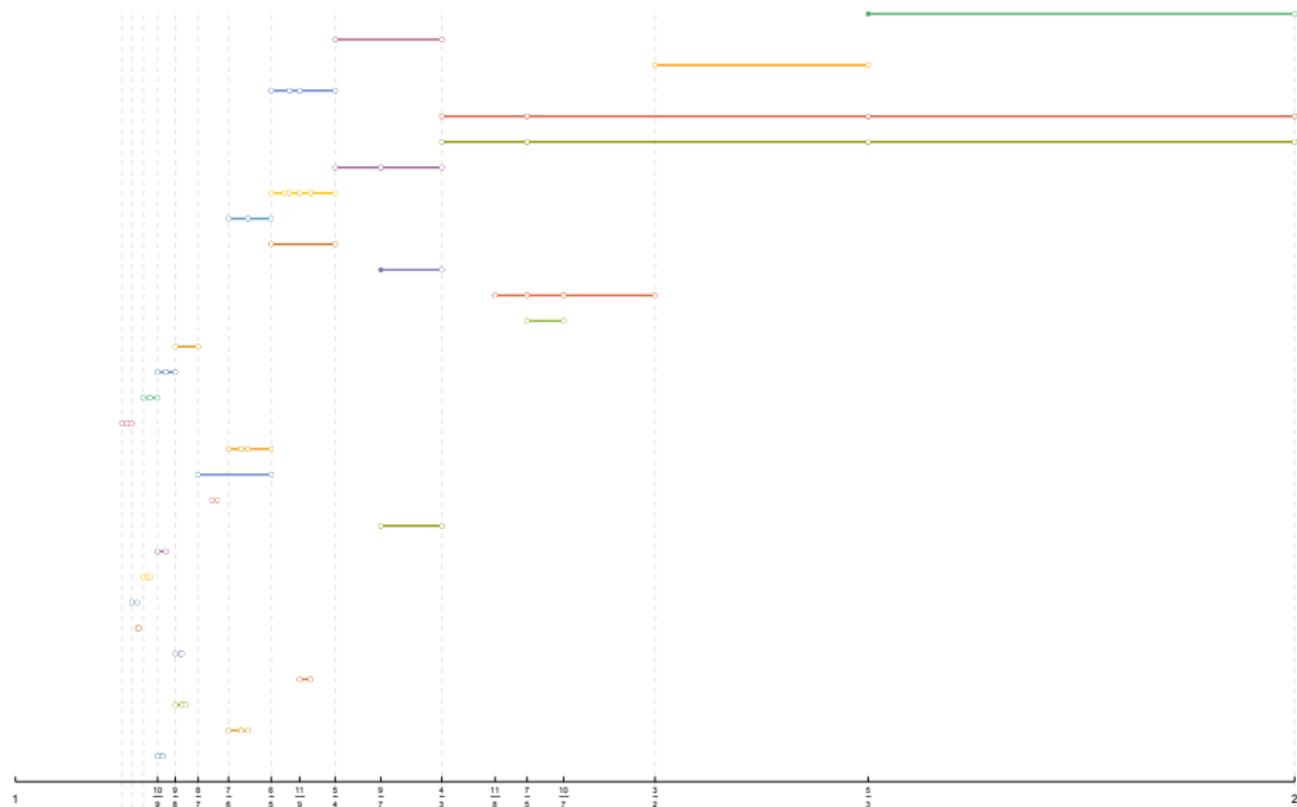
is $\frac{a}{b}$ -power-free.

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^{3a-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^{9a-10b-1} 1 0^{-7a+8b-1} 1 0^{10a-11b-1} 1 0^{-25a+28b-1} 1 0^{a-b-1} 1 0^{9a-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^{3a-3b-1} 1 0^{-25a+28b-1} 1 0^{10a-11b-1} 1 \\ & 0^{2a-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^{9a-10b-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^{2a-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^{2a-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^{a-b-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^{2a-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^{11a-12b-1} 1 0^{-25a+28b-1} 1 0^{10a-11b-1} 1 0^{-8a+9b-1} 1 0^{11a-12b-1} 1 0^{2b-2b-1} 1 0^{a-b-1} 1 \\ & 0^{10a-11b-1} 1 0^{-25a+28b-1} 1 0^{2a-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^{3a-3b-1} 1 0^{-25a+28b-1} 1 0^{a-b-1} 1 0^{3a-3b-1} 1 0^{a-b-1} 1 \end{aligned}$$

with 279 nonzero letters, locates words of length $5a - 4b$ and is $\frac{9}{10}$ -power-free.

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

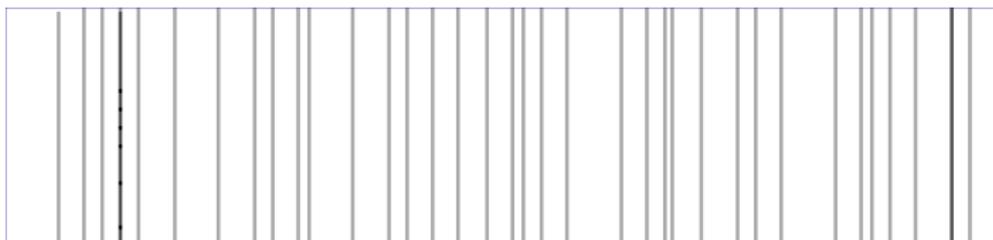


A family with a transient

$S_{17/13}$



$S_{22/17}$



$S_{25/19}$



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

The same proof technique applies to symbolic and explicit rationals. . .

$\mathbf{s}_{8/5}$ is a 733-regular sequence.

$\mathbf{s}_{7/4}$ is a 50847-regular sequence.

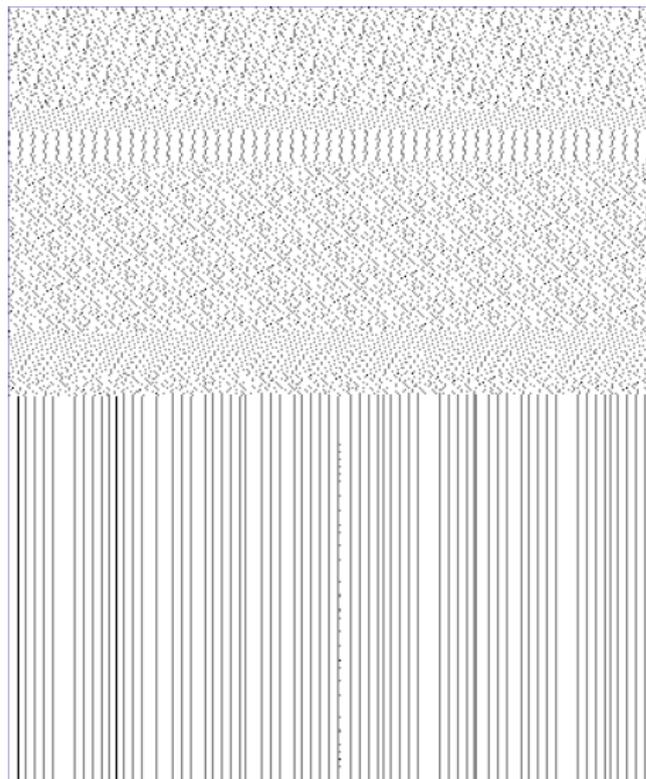
$\mathbf{s}_{13/9}$ is a 45430-regular sequence.

$\mathbf{s}_{17/10}$ is a 55657-regular sequence.

etc.

Is there some way to understand these values?

$\mathbf{s}_{27/23}$ wrapped into 353 columns



There exist words u, v on $\{0, 1, 2\}$ of lengths $|u| = 353 - 1$ and $|v| = 75019$ such that $\mathbf{s}_{27/23} = \tau(\varphi^\infty(0'))$, where

$$\varphi(n) = \begin{cases} v\varphi(0) & \text{if } n = 0' \\ u(n+0) & \text{if } n \geq 0. \end{cases}$$

$$s(353n + 75371) = s(n)$$

$\mathbf{s}_{27/23}$ is a sequence on a finite alphabet!