

Pascal's Triangle

Student Activity

7 8 9 10 11 12



Introduction

French mathematician Blaise Pascal [1623 – 1662] is not the creator of this famous triangle, the history of the triangle dates back through Chinese mathematics where it is still referred to as Yang Hui's triangle, and even further back to the Greeks [BC]. The title "Pascal's Triangle" was accredited posthumously by another French Mathematician Pierre Raymond de Montmort.

On the surface Pascal's triangle generates a set of numbers useful to probability and binomial expansion; however a whole treasure chest of patterns are hidden in this amazing triangle.

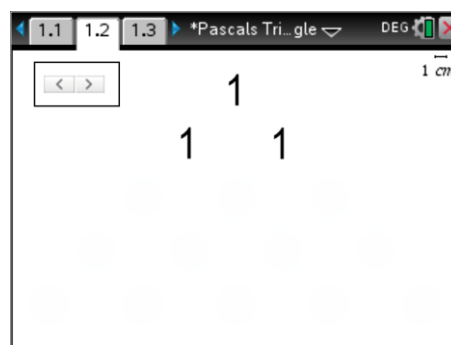


Generating the Triangle

Open the TI-Nspire document: "Pascals Triangle"

Read the instructions on Page 1.1 and then navigate to Page 1.2 where you will see how easy it is to generate the numbers in this truly amazing and powerful triangle!

Click on the slider (top left corner) to successively reveal each number in the triangle and how it is calculated.



Question: 1

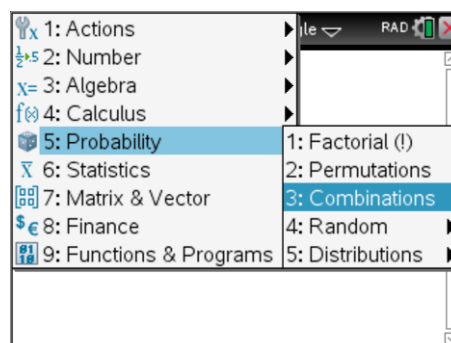
The first row in Pascal's triangle is Row zero (0) and contains a one (1) only. The animation on Page 1.2 reveals rows 0 through to 4. Draw these rows and the next three rows in Pascal's triangle.

Combinatorics and Polynomial Expansions

Navigate to page 1.3 (calculator application) and calculate the following 'combinations'.

[Menu] > Probability > Combinations

$nCr(5, 0)$ $nCr(5, 1)$ $nCr(5, 2)$ $nCr(5, 5)$



Question: 2


How do the calculations $nCr(5, 0)$ $nCr(5, 1)$ $nCr(5, 2)$ $nCr(5, 5)$ relate to the fifth row of Pascal's triangle?

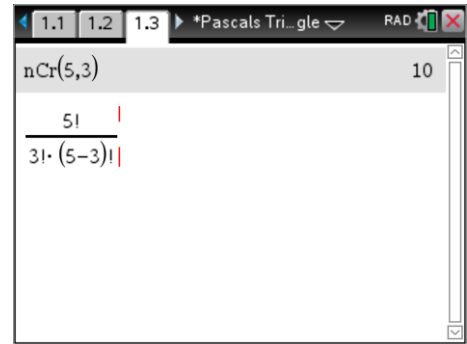
Compare the expression:

$$\frac{n!}{r!(n-r)!}$$

With those from the $\text{ncr}(n,r)$ calculations. Mathematical Notation: $({}^n C_r)$

Example: $\text{ncr}(5,3) = 10$ as shown opposite has $n = 5$ and $r = 3$.

The (!) sign is called 'factorial' and can be found in the probability menu or by using the punctuation symbols key: 



Question: 3

Use the formula: $\frac{n!}{r!(n-r)!}$ to calculate the 7th row of Pascal's triangle.

Tip



To generate an entire row of Pascal's triangle, store the numbers in a list: $r:=\{0,1,2,3,4,5,6,7\}$ then use $\text{ncr}(7,r)$ to see the entire row generated at once. This also works with the command $\text{ncr}(7,r)$.

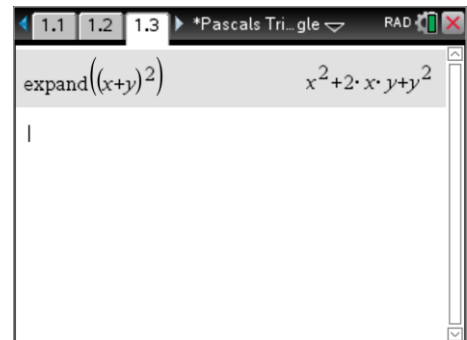
The sequence command can also be used: $\text{nCr}(8,\text{seq}(x,x,0,8))$ to generate the 8th row.

The expansion of expressions of the form: $(x + y)^n$ are also interesting with regards to Pascal's triangle.

[Menu] > Algebra > Expand

Try the following: $(x + y)^2$

The set of coefficients for this expansion are: $\{1, 2, 1\}$.



Question: 4

Write down the coefficients in the expansion of: $(x + y)^4$ and locate these numbers in Pascal's triangle?

Question: 5

Use Pascal's triangle to identify the coefficients: $a_0, a_1 \dots a_6$ in the expansion of $(x + y)^6$ as shown below:

$$(x + y)^6 = a_0 x^6 + a_1 x^5 y + a_2 x^4 y^2 + a_3 x^3 y^3 + a_4 x^2 y^4 + a_5 x y^5 + a_6 y^6$$

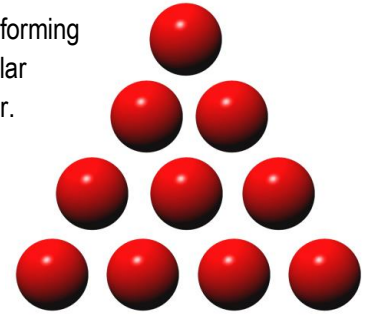
Question: 6

Use Pascal's triangle to identify the coefficients: $a_0, a_1 \dots a_6$ in the expansion of $(x + y)^6$ as shown below:

$$(x + y)^6 = a_0 x^6 + a_1 x^5 y + a_2 x^4 y^2 + a_3 x^3 y^3 + a_4 x^2 y^4 + a_5 x y^5 + a_6 y^6$$

Triangular Numbers

Triangular numbers are essentially any number that can be represented by a dot pattern forming a triangle. Consider the triangle opposite; it contains 10 marbles (dots), so 10 is a triangular number. Remove the bottom row and you will have 6 marbles, so 6 is a triangular number. Add another row to the bottom of this triangle and it will contain 15 marbles, so 15 is a triangular number. The first four triangular numbers are: 1, 3, 6 and 10.



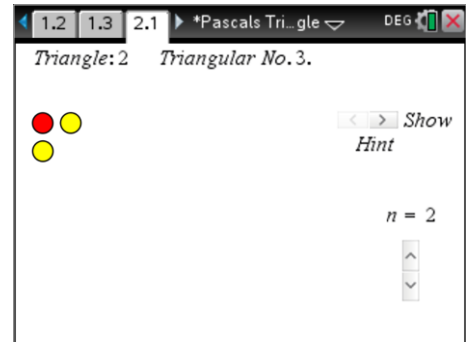
Question: 7

Write down the first 10 triangular numbers.

Navigate to page 2.1.

Use the slider (n) to increase the size of the triangle and reveal the corresponding Triangular numbers.

Use the 'Hint' slider to provide a clue to establish a formula for the nth Triangular number.



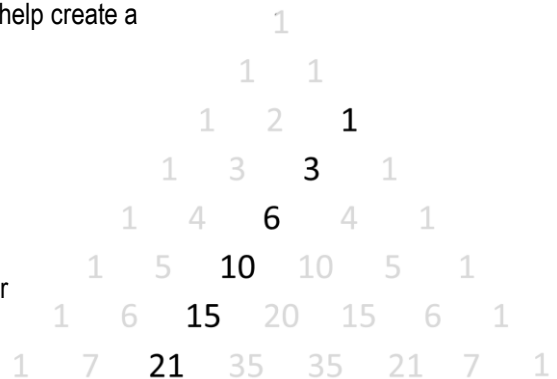
Question: 8

Use the 'hint' on Page 2.1 of the Pascal's triangle TI-Nspire file to help create a formula for Triangular numbers.

Question: 9

The triangular numbers are in Pascal's triangle (shown opposite).

- In which row is the fourth Triangular number?
- Use combinatorics to write an expression for the nth Triangular number and compare this formula to the one created in Question 8.



Question: 10

Triangular numbers are the same as the sum of the first n natural numbers. The calculator can compute the sum of a set of numbers easily.

- Use sigma notation (Σ) to calculate the sum of the first 3 numbers. $(1 + 2 + 3) = \sum_{n=1}^3 n$

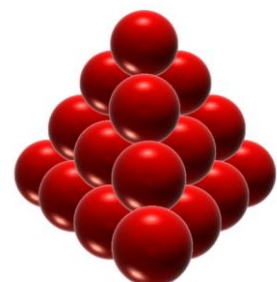
Hint: Use the symbols template to access the Sigma notation:

- Use the sigma notation to calculate the sum of the first 8 numbers.
- Repeat the above for the first 'x' numbers and write down the formula generated by the calculator. Verify that this is the same as the expression produces using combinatorics.

Tetrahedral Numbers

The Tetrahedral numbers are a three dimensional version of the triangular numbers. A tetrahedron is a triangular pyramid. In the pyramid shown opposite the top row contains one ball. The second row contains three providing a total of four balls. The third row contains six balls for a total of ten.

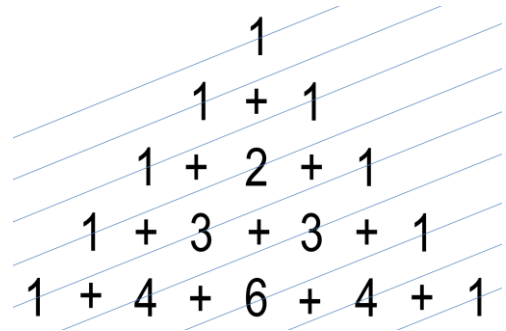
The first three tetrahedral numbers are therefore: { 1, 4, 10 }



Shallow Diagonals

Shallow diagonals can cross multiple rows in Pascal's triangle. The triangle must be drawn accurately (as shown) to identify all the numbers that lie on the shallow diagonals.

Diagonal:	Numbers:	Sum:
1	1	1
2	1	1
3	1, 2	3
4	1, 3, 1	5
5	1, 4, 3	8



Question: 16

Determine the numbers that lie on the next two diagonals, their corresponding sum and the pattern that is being formed with the sums of these diagonals.

Exhaustive Products

Some patterns in Pascal's triangle are easier to find and prove than others. This pattern is one of the most amazing hidden gems in Pascal's triangle. The rule for this pattern is to find the product of the numbers in row n , and multiply this by the product of the numbers in row $n + 2$, then, divide the result by the product squared for the numbers in row $n + 1$. This rule can be written as:

$$\frac{\prod_{r=0}^{n-1} \binom{n-1}{r} \times \prod_{r=0}^{n+1} \binom{n+1}{r}}{\left(\prod_{r=0}^n \binom{n}{r}\right)^2}$$

For example, suppose $n = 5$.

$$\text{Row 4} = \{1, 4, 6, 4, 1\} \quad \prod_{r=0}^{n-1} \binom{n-1}{r} = \prod_{r=0}^4 \binom{4}{r} = 1 \times 4 \times 6 \times 4 \times 1 = 96$$

$$\text{Row 5} = \{1, 5, 10, 10, 5, 1\} \quad \prod_{r=0}^n \binom{n}{r} = \prod_{r=0}^5 \binom{5}{r} = 1 \times 5 \times 10 \times 10 \times 5 \times 1 = 25,000$$

$$\text{Row 6} = \{1, 6, 15, 20, 15, 6, 1\} \quad \prod_{r=0}^{n+1} \binom{n+1}{r} = \prod_{r=0}^6 \binom{6}{r} = 1 \times 6 \times 15 \times 20 \times 15 \times 6 \times 1 = 162,000$$

$$\frac{96 \times 162,000}{25,000^2} \approx \frac{7776}{3125} \approx 2.48832$$

Tip



The product template: $\prod_{r=0}^n \binom{n}{r}$ is located in the templates menu.

Question: 17

Determine the value of the products and resulting approximation when $n = 10$.

Question: 18

The values in this product get very big, very quickly. The maximum value the calculator can compute is for the 67th, 68th and 69th rows. It can be shown however that:

$$\frac{\prod_{r=0}^{n-1} \binom{n-1}{r} \times \prod_{r=0}^{n+1} \binom{n+1}{r}}{\left(\prod_{r=0}^n \binom{n}{r}\right)^2} = \left(1 + \frac{1}{n}\right)^n$$

- Compare the result from this algebraic equivalence by substituting $n = 10$.
- It is possible to substitute larger values into this algebraic equivalence. What is the ratio when $n = 1000$.
Note: This is equivalent to finding the product of the terms in the 999th row of Pascal's triangle and multiplying by the product of the terms in the 1001th row and dividing by the square of the product of the terms in the 1000th row!
- What transcendental number do you think this might be approaching?

Triangles within Triangles

Modular arithmetic is sometimes called 'clock arithmetic'. What time will it be in 25 hours from now? The answer is simply "one hour past the current time." The same is true for 49 hours from now and also for 73 hours. We ignore the number of days, the multiples of 24 and focus on the 'remainder'. The calculator is capable of performing modular arithmetic. For the examples given above: $\text{Mod}(25,24) = 1$; $\text{Mod}(49,24) = 1$ and $\text{Mod}(73,24) = 1$. The first number in the Mod command is the quotient and the second number is the divisor, the answer is the 'remainder'.

Question: 19

Explore what happens if $\text{Mod}(n,2)$ is applied to every element in Pascal's triangle? You will need to create many lines to see the pattern.

Hint: Try colouring regions containing 1's in one colour and 0's in another.