

# $e$ is Irrational

# One Origin of $e$

We paraphrase Jacob Bernoulli's thoughts in the 1680's.

# One Origin of $e$

We paraphrase Jacob Bernoulli's thoughts in the 1680's.  
You have 1 bill in a bank that pays 100% interest per year.

# One Origin of $e$

We paraphrase Jacob Bernoulli's thoughts in the 1680's.

You have 1 bill in a bank that pays 100% interest per year.

(1) Pays out only: you have 2 bills.

# One Origin of $e$

We paraphrase Jacob Bernoulli's thoughts in the 1680's.

You have 1 bill in a bank that pays 100% interest per year.

(1) Pays out only: you have 2 bills.

(2) Pays out twice: you have  $1 + (\frac{1}{2} \times 1) + (\frac{1}{2} \times 1.5) = \$2.25$  bills.

# One Origin of $e$

We paraphrase Jacob Bernoulli's thoughts in the 1680's.

You have 1 bill in a bank that pays 100% interest per year.

(1) Pays out only: you have 2 bills.

(2) Pays out twice: you have  $1 + \left(\frac{1}{2} \times 1\right) + \left(\frac{1}{2} \times 1.5\right) = \$2.25$  bills.

(3) Pays out thrice: you have

$1 + \left(\frac{1}{3} \times 1\right) + \left(\frac{1}{3} \times \frac{4}{3}\right) + \left(\frac{1}{3} \times \frac{16}{9}\right) = \$2.37037 \dots$  bills.

# One Origin of $e$

We paraphrase Jacob Bernoulli's thoughts in the 1680's.

You have 1 bill in a bank that pays 100% interest per year.

(1) Pays out only: you have 2 bills.

(2) Pays out twice: you have  $1 + (\frac{1}{2} \times 1) + (\frac{1}{2} \times 1.5) = \$2.25$  bills.

(3) Pays out thrice: you have

$1 + (\frac{1}{3} \times 1) + (\frac{1}{3} \times \frac{4}{3}) + (\frac{1}{3} \times \frac{16}{9}) = \$2.37037 \dots$  bills.

(4) Pays out continuously? You have  $e$  bills.

## Other Definitions of $e$

$$\lim_{n \rightarrow \infty} \left(1 + \frac{1}{n}\right)^n = e$$



## Other Definitions of $e$

$$\lim_{n \rightarrow \infty} \left(1 + \frac{1}{n}\right)^n = e$$

This is the one we will use:

$$e = 1 + \frac{1}{1!} + \frac{1}{2!} + \dots$$

# History of $e$ Irrational, $e$ Transcendental

# History of $e$ Irrational, $e$ Transcendental

(1) Euler showed  $e$  was irrational in 1737 using continued fractions.

# History of $e$ Irrational, $e$ Transcendental

- (1) Euler showed  $e$  was irrational in 1737 using continued fractions.
- (2) Fourier gave an elementary proof in 1815 which we will present.

# History of $e$ Irrational, $e$ Transcendental

- (1) Euler showed  $e$  was irrational in 1737 using continued fractions.
- (2) Fourier gave an elementary proof in 1815 which we will present.
- (3) Liouville proved that a particular contrived number was transcendental in 1851.

# History of $e$ Irrational, $e$ Transcendental

- (1) Euler showed  $e$  was irrational in 1737 using continued fractions.
- (2) Fourier gave an elementary proof in 1815 which we will present.
- (3) Liouville proved that a particular contrived number was transcendental in 1851.
- (4) Hermite proved  $e$  is transcendental in 1873. 1st non-contrived number to be proven transcendental.

# History of $e$ Irrational, $e$ Transcendental

- (1) Euler showed  $e$  was irrational in 1737 using continued fractions.
- (2) Fourier gave an elementary proof in 1815 which we will present.
- (3) Liouville proved that a particular contrived number was transcendental in 1851.
- (4) Hermite proved  $e$  is transcendental in 1873. 1st non-contrived number to be proven transcendental.
- (5) Cantor proved that most numbers are transcendental in 1874, and gave a method for constructing some.

# Proof that $e$ is Irrational



# Warmup: Proof that $e \notin \mathbb{N}$

## Warmup: Proof that $e \notin \mathbb{N}$

$$e = 1 + \frac{1}{1!} + \frac{1}{2!} + \cdots = 2.5 + \sum_{i=3}^{\infty} \frac{1}{i!}.$$

## Warmup: Proof that $e \notin \mathbb{N}$

$$e = 1 + \frac{1}{1!} + \frac{1}{2!} + \cdots = 2.5 + \sum_{i=3}^{\infty} \frac{1}{i!}.$$

For  $i \geq 3$ ,  $\frac{1}{i!} < \frac{1}{2^{i-1}}$ .

## Warmup: Proof that $e \notin \mathbb{N}$

$$e = 1 + \frac{1}{1!} + \frac{1}{2!} + \cdots = 2.5 + \sum_{i=3}^{\infty} \frac{1}{i!}.$$

For  $i \geq 3$ ,  $\frac{1}{i!} < \frac{1}{2^{i-1}}$ .

$$\sum_{i=3}^{\infty} \frac{1}{i!} < \sum_{i=3}^{\infty} \frac{1}{2^{i-1}} = \frac{1}{2}.$$

## Warmup: Proof that $e \notin \mathbb{N}$

$$e = 1 + \frac{1}{1!} + \frac{1}{2!} + \cdots = 2.5 + \sum_{i=3}^{\infty} \frac{1}{i!}.$$

For  $i \geq 3$ ,  $\frac{1}{i!} < \frac{1}{2^{i-1}}$ .

$$\sum_{i=3}^{\infty} \frac{1}{i!} < \sum_{i=3}^{\infty} \frac{1}{2^{i-1}} = \frac{1}{2}.$$

Hence

$$e = 2.5 + \sum_{i=3}^{\infty} \frac{1}{i!} < 2.5 + 0.5 = 3.$$

## Warmup: Proof that $e \notin \mathbb{N}$

$$e = 1 + \frac{1}{1!} + \frac{1}{2!} + \cdots = 2.5 + \sum_{i=3}^{\infty} \frac{1}{i!}.$$

For  $i \geq 3$ ,  $\frac{1}{i!} < \frac{1}{2^{i-1}}$ .

$$\sum_{i=3}^{\infty} \frac{1}{i!} < \sum_{i=3}^{\infty} \frac{1}{2^{i-1}} = \frac{1}{2}.$$

Hence

$$e = 2.5 + \sum_{i=3}^{\infty} \frac{1}{i!} < 2.5 + 0.5 = 3.$$

Hence  $2 < e < 3$  so  $e \notin \mathbb{N}$ .

# Proof that $e$ is Irrational

Assume  $e$  is rational. So  $\exists a, b \in \mathbb{N}$  such that  $e = \frac{a}{b}$ .

Let  $n \in \mathbb{N}$  be named later.

$eb = a$ , so  $bn!e = n!a \in \mathbb{N}$ .

# Proof that $e$ is Irrational

Assume  $e$  is rational. So  $\exists a, b \in \mathbb{N}$  such that  $e = \frac{a}{b}$ .

Let  $n \in \mathbb{N}$  be named later.

$eb = a$ , so  $bn!e = n!a \in \mathbb{N}$ .

$$bn!e = bn! \left( \left( 1 + \frac{1}{1!} + \frac{1}{2!} + \cdots + \frac{1}{n!} \right) + \left( \frac{1}{(n+1)!} + \frac{1}{(n+2)!} + \cdots \right) \right)$$



## Proof that $e$ is Irrational

Assume  $e$  is rational. So  $\exists a, b \in \mathbb{N}$  such that  $e = \frac{a}{b}$ .

Let  $n \in \mathbb{N}$  be named later.

$eb = a$ , so  $bn!e = n!a \in \mathbb{N}$ .

$$bn!e = bn! \left( \left( 1 + \frac{1}{1!} + \frac{1}{2!} + \cdots + \frac{1}{n!} \right) + \left( \frac{1}{(n+1)!} + \frac{1}{(n+2)!} + \cdots \right) \right)$$

$$= b \left( \left( n! + \frac{n!}{1!} + \frac{n!}{2!} + \cdots + \frac{n!}{n!} \right) + \left( \frac{n!}{(n+1)!} + \frac{n!}{(n+2)!} + \cdots \right) \right).$$

## Proof that $e$ is Irrational

Assume  $e$  is rational. So  $\exists a, b \in \mathbb{N}$  such that  $e = \frac{a}{b}$ .

Let  $n \in \mathbb{N}$  be named later.

$eb = a$ , so  $bn!e = n!a \in \mathbb{N}$ .

$$\begin{aligned}bn!e &= bn! \left( \left( 1 + \frac{1}{1!} + \frac{1}{2!} + \cdots + \frac{1}{n!} \right) + \left( \frac{1}{(n+1)!} + \frac{1}{(n+2)!} + \cdots \right) \right) \\ &= b \left( \left( n! + \frac{n!}{1!} + \frac{n!}{2!} + \cdots + \frac{n!}{n!} \right) + \left( \frac{n!}{(n+1)!} + \frac{n!}{(n+2)!} + \cdots \right) \right).\end{aligned}$$

The first big parenthesis is a natural number, we call it  $C$ . So

## Proof that $e$ is Irrational

Assume  $e$  is rational. So  $\exists a, b \in \mathbb{N}$  such that  $e = \frac{a}{b}$ .

Let  $n \in \mathbb{N}$  be named later.

$eb = a$ , so  $bn!e = n!a \in \mathbb{N}$ .

$$\begin{aligned}bn!e &= bn! \left( \left( 1 + \frac{1}{1!} + \frac{1}{2!} + \cdots + \frac{1}{n!} \right) + \left( \frac{1}{(n+1)!} + \frac{1}{(n+2)!} + \cdots \right) \right) \\ &= b \left( \left( n! + \frac{n!}{1!} + \frac{n!}{2!} + \cdots + \frac{n!}{n!} \right) + \left( \frac{n!}{(n+1)!} + \frac{n!}{(n+2)!} + \cdots \right) \right).\end{aligned}$$

The first big parenthesis is a natural number, we call it  $C$ . So

$$bn!e = b \left( C + \frac{1}{(n+1)} + \frac{1}{(n+1)(n+2)} + \cdots \right) \in \mathbb{N}.$$

# Proof Continued

**Recap** If  $e = \frac{a}{b}$  then for all  $n \in \mathbb{N}$

## Proof Continued

**Recap** If  $e = \frac{a}{b}$  then for all  $n \in \mathbb{N}$

$$bn!e = b \left( C + \frac{1}{(n+1)} + \frac{1}{(n+1)(n+2)} + \dots \right) \in \mathbb{N}.$$

## Proof Continued

**Recap** If  $e = \frac{a}{b}$  then for all  $n \in \mathbb{N}$

$$bn!e = b \left( C + \frac{1}{(n+1)} + \frac{1}{(n+1)(n+2)} + \dots \right) \in \mathbb{N}.$$

$$bC + b \left( \frac{1}{(n+1)} + \frac{1}{(n+1)(n+2)} + \dots \right) \in \mathbb{N}.$$

## Proof Continued

**Recap** If  $e = \frac{a}{b}$  then for all  $n \in \mathbb{N}$

$$bn!e = b \left( C + \frac{1}{(n+1)} + \frac{1}{(n+1)(n+2)} + \dots \right) \in \mathbb{N}.$$

$$bC + b \left( \frac{1}{(n+1)} + \frac{1}{(n+1)(n+2)} + \dots \right) \in \mathbb{N}.$$

$$b \left( \frac{1}{(n+1)} + \frac{1}{(n+1)(n+2)} + \dots \right) \in \mathbb{N}.$$

## Lets Look at that Series

$$\frac{1}{(n+1)} + \frac{1}{(n+1)(n+2)} + \dots$$

For large  $n$  we can approximate it very well by

$$\begin{aligned} & \frac{1}{n} + \frac{1}{n^2} + \dots \\ &= \frac{1}{n} \left( 1 + \frac{1}{n} + \frac{1}{n^2} + \dots \right) = \frac{1}{n} \frac{1}{1 - (1/n)} = \frac{1}{n-1} \end{aligned}$$



# Proof Continued

## Recap (again!)

If  $e = \frac{a}{b}$  then  $be = a$ , so

# Proof Continued

## Recap (again!)

If  $e = \frac{a}{b}$  then  $be = a$ , so  
for all  $n$ ,  $n!be = n!a \in \mathbb{N}$ .

# Proof Continued

## Recap (again!)

If  $e = \frac{a}{b}$  then  $be = a$ , so  
for all  $n$ ,  $n!be = n!a \in \mathbb{N}$ .

After algebra and using the series for  $e$  we get

# Proof Continued

## Recap (again!)

If  $e = \frac{a}{b}$  then  $be = a$ , so  
for all  $n$ ,  $n!be = n!a \in \mathbb{N}$ .

After algebra and using the series for  $e$  we get

$$b \left( \frac{1}{(n+1)} + \frac{1}{(n+1)(n+2)} + \dots \right) \in \mathbb{N}.$$

After more algebra we get

$$b \times \frac{1}{n-1} \in \mathbb{N}.$$

# Proof Continued

## Recap (again!)

If  $e = \frac{a}{b}$  then  $be = a$ , so  
for all  $n$ ,  $n!be = n!a \in \mathbb{N}$ .

After algebra and using the series for  $e$  we get

$$b \left( \frac{1}{(n+1)} + \frac{1}{(n+1)(n+2)} + \dots \right) \in \mathbb{N}.$$

After more algebra we get

$$b \times \frac{1}{n-1} \in \mathbb{N}.$$

Take  $n$  big enough and this cannot happen. Contradiction!