9.4 Comparisons of Series

- **Use the Direct Comparison Test to determine whether a series converges or diverges.**
- **Use the Limit Comparison Test to determine whether a series converges or diverges.**

Direct Comparison Test

For the convergence tests developed so far, the terms of the series have to be fairly simple and the series must have special characteristics in order for the convergence tests to be applied. A slight deviation from these special characteristics can make a test nonapplicable. For example, in the pairs listed below, the second series cannot be tested by the same convergence test as the first series, even though it is similar to the first.

1. $\displaystyle\sum_{n=0}^{\infty} \frac{1}{2^n}$ is geometric, but $\displaystyle\sum_{n=0}^{\infty} \frac{n}{2^n}$ is not.
2. $\displaystyle\sum_{n=1}^{\infty} \frac{1}{n^3}$ is a p-series, but $\displaystyle\sum_{n=1}^{\infty} \frac{1}{n^3+1}$ is not.
3. $a_n = \dfrac{n}{(n^2+3)^2}$ is easily integrated, but $b_n = \dfrac{n^2}{(n^2+3)^2}$ is not.

In this section, you will study two additional tests for positive-term series. These two tests greatly expand the variety of series you are able to test for convergence or divergence. They allow you to *compare* a series having complicated terms with a simpler series whose convergence or divergence is known.

REMARK As stated, the Direct Comparison Test requires that $0 < a_n \le b_n$ for all n. Because the convergence of a series is not dependent on its first several terms, you could modify the test to require only that $0 < a_n \le b_n$ for all n greater than some integer N.

THEOREM 9.12 Direct Comparison Test

Let $0 < a_n \le b_n$ for all n.

1. If $\displaystyle\sum_{n=1}^{\infty} b_n$ converges, then $\displaystyle\sum_{n=1}^{\infty} a_n$ converges.
2. If $\displaystyle\sum_{n=1}^{\infty} a_n$ diverges, then $\displaystyle\sum_{n=1}^{\infty} b_n$ diverges.

Proof To prove the first property, let $L = \displaystyle\sum_{n=1}^{\infty} b_n$ and let

$$S_n = a_1 + a_2 + \cdot \cdot \cdot + a_n.$$

Because $0 < a_n \le b_n$, the sequence $S_1, S_2, S_3, \ldots$ is nondecreasing and bounded above by L; so, it must converge. Because

$$\lim_{n\to\infty} S_n = \sum_{n=1}^{\infty} a_n$$

it follows that $\displaystyle\sum_{n=1}^{\infty} a_n$ converges. The second property is logically equivalent to the first.

See LarsonCalculus.com for Bruce Edwards's video of this proof.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION Is the Direct Comparison Test just for nonnegative series? To read about the generalization of this test to real series, see the article "The Comparison Test—Not Just for Nonnegative Series" by Michele Longo and Vincenzo Valori in *Mathematics Magazine.* To view this article, go to *MathArticles.com.*

EXAMPLE 1 Using the Direct Comparison Test

Determine the convergence or divergence of

$$\sum_{n=1}^{\infty} \frac{1}{2+3^n}.$$

Solution This series resembles

$$\sum_{n=1}^{\infty} \frac{1}{3^n}. \qquad \text{Convergent geometric series}$$

Term-by-term comparison yields

$$a_n = \frac{1}{2+3^n} < \frac{1}{3^n} = b_n, \quad n \geq 1.$$

So, by the Direct Comparison Test, the series converges.

EXAMPLE 2 Using the Direct Comparison Test

See LarsonCalculus.com for an interactive version of this type of example.

Determine the convergence or divergence of

$$\sum_{n=1}^{\infty} \frac{1}{2+\sqrt{n}}.$$

Solution This series resembles

$$\sum_{n=1}^{\infty} \frac{1}{n^{1/2}}. \qquad \text{Divergent } p\text{-series}$$

Term-by-term comparison yields

$$\frac{1}{2+\sqrt{n}} \leq \frac{1}{\sqrt{n}}, \quad n \geq 1$$

which *does not* meet the requirements for divergence. (Remember that when term-by-term comparison reveals a series that is *less* than a divergent series, the Direct Comparison Test tells you nothing.) Still expecting the series to diverge, you can compare the series with

$$\sum_{n=1}^{\infty} \frac{1}{n}. \qquad \text{Divergent harmonic series}$$

In this case, term-by-term comparison yields

$$a_n = \frac{1}{n} \leq \frac{1}{2+\sqrt{n}} = b_n, \quad n \geq 4$$

and, by the Direct Comparison Test, the given series diverges. To verify the last inequality, try showing that

$$2 + \sqrt{n} \leq n$$

whenever $n \geq 4$. ■

Remember that both parts of the Direct Comparison Test require that $0 < a_n \leq b_n$. Informally, the test says the following about the two series with nonnegative terms.

1. If the "larger" series converges, then the "smaller" series must also converge.
2. If the "smaller" series diverges, then the "larger" series must also diverge.

Limit Comparison Test

Sometimes a series closely resembles a p-series or a geometric series, yet you cannot establish the term-by-term comparison necessary to apply the Direct Comparison Test. Under these circumstances, you may be able to apply a second comparison test, called the **Limit Comparison Test.**

REMARK As with the Direct Comparison Test, the Limit Comparison Test could be modified to require only that a_n and b_n be positive for all n greater than some integer N.

THEOREM 9.13 Limit Comparison Test

If $a_n > 0$, $b_n > 0$, and

$$\lim_{n\to\infty} \frac{a_n}{b_n} = L$$

where L is *finite and positive*, then

$$\sum_{n=1}^{\infty} a_n \quad \text{and} \quad \sum_{n=1}^{\infty} b_n$$

either both converge or both diverge.

Proof Because $a_n > 0$, $b_n > 0$, and

$$\lim_{n\to\infty} \frac{a_n}{b_n} = L$$

there exists $N > 0$ such that

$$0 < \frac{a_n}{b_n} < L + 1, \quad \text{for } n \geq N.$$

This implies that

$$0 < a_n < (L + 1)b_n.$$

So, by the Direct Comparison Test, the convergence of $\Sigma\, b_n$ implies the convergence of $\Sigma\, a_n$. Similarly, the fact that

$$\lim_{n\to\infty} \frac{b_n}{a_n} = \frac{1}{L}$$

can be used to show that the convergence of $\Sigma\, a_n$ implies the convergence of $\Sigma\, b_n$.

See LarsonCalculus.com for Bruce Edwards's video of this proof.

EXAMPLE 3 Using the Limit Comparison Test

Show that the general harmonic series below diverges.

$$\sum_{n=1}^{\infty} \frac{1}{an + b}, \quad a > 0, \quad b > 0$$

Solution By comparison with

$$\sum_{n=1}^{\infty} \frac{1}{n} \qquad \text{Divergent harmonic series}$$

you have

$$\lim_{n\to\infty} \frac{1/(an + b)}{1/n} = \lim_{n\to\infty} \frac{n}{an + b} = \frac{1}{a}.$$

Because this limit is greater than 0, you can conclude from the Limit Comparison Test that the series diverges.

The Limit Comparison Test works well for comparing a "messy" algebraic series with a p-series. In choosing an appropriate p-series, you must choose one with an nth term of the same magnitude as the nth term of the given series.

Given Series	Comparison Series	Conclusion
$\sum_{n=1}^{\infty} \frac{1}{3n^2 - 4n + 5}$	$\sum_{n=1}^{\infty} \frac{1}{n^2}$	Both series converge.
$\sum_{n=1}^{\infty} \frac{1}{\sqrt{3n - 2}}$	$\sum_{n=1}^{\infty} \frac{1}{\sqrt{n}}$	Both series diverge.
$\sum_{n=1}^{\infty} \frac{n^2 - 10}{4n^5 + n^3}$	$\sum_{n=1}^{\infty} \frac{n^2}{n^5} = \sum_{n=1}^{\infty} \frac{1}{n^3}$	Both series converge.

In other words, when choosing a series for comparison, you can disregard all but the *highest powers of n* in both the numerator and the denominator.

EXAMPLE 4 Using the Limit Comparison Test

Determine the convergence or divergence of

$$\sum_{n=1}^{\infty} \frac{\sqrt{n}}{n^2 + 1}.$$

Solution Disregarding all but the highest powers of n in the numerator and the denominator, you can compare the series with

$$\sum_{n=1}^{\infty} \frac{\sqrt{n}}{n^2} = \sum_{n=1}^{\infty} \frac{1}{n^{3/2}}. \qquad \text{Convergent } p\text{-series}$$

Because

$$\begin{aligned}
\lim_{n\to\infty} \frac{a_n}{b_n} &= \lim_{n\to\infty} \left(\frac{\sqrt{n}}{n^2 + 1}\right)\left(\frac{n^{3/2}}{1}\right) \\
&= \lim_{n\to\infty} \frac{n^2}{n^2 + 1} \\
&= 1
\end{aligned}$$

you can conclude by the Limit Comparison Test that the series converges.

EXAMPLE 5 Using the Limit Comparison Test

Determine the convergence or divergence of

$$\sum_{n=1}^{\infty} \frac{n2^n}{4n^3 + 1}.$$

Solution A reasonable comparison would be with the series

$$\sum_{n=1}^{\infty} \frac{2^n}{n^2}. \qquad \text{Divergent series}$$

Note that this series diverges by the nth-Term Test. From the limit

$$\begin{aligned}
\lim_{n\to\infty} \frac{a_n}{b_n} &= \lim_{n\to\infty} \left(\frac{n2^n}{4n^3 + 1}\right)\left(\frac{n^2}{2^n}\right) \\
&= \lim_{n\to\infty} \frac{1}{4 + (1/n^3)} \\
&= \frac{1}{4}
\end{aligned}$$

you can conclude that the series diverges.

9.4 Exercises

See **CalcChat.com** for tutorial help and worked-out solutions to odd-numbered exercises.

1. Graphical Analysis The figures show the graphs of the first 10 terms, and the graphs of the first 10 terms of the sequence of partial sums, of each series.

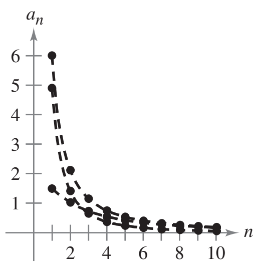
$$\sum_{n=1}^{\infty} \frac{6}{n^{3/2}}, \quad \sum_{n=1}^{\infty} \frac{6}{n^{3/2}+3}, \quad \text{and} \quad \sum_{n=1}^{\infty} \frac{6}{n\sqrt{n^2+0.5}}$$

(a) Identify the series in each figure.

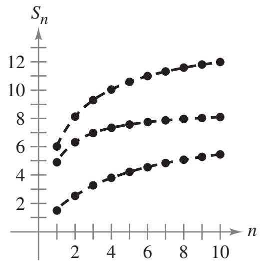
(b) Which series is a p-series? Does it converge or diverge?

(c) For the series that are not p-series, how do the magnitudes of the terms compare with the magnitudes of the terms of the p-series? What conclusion can you draw about the convergence or divergence of the series?

(d) Explain the relationship between the magnitudes of the terms of the series and the magnitudes of the terms of the partial sums.



Graphs of terms



Graphs of partial sums

2. Graphical Analysis The figures show the graphs of the first 10 terms, and the graphs of the first 10 terms of the sequence of partial sums, of each series.

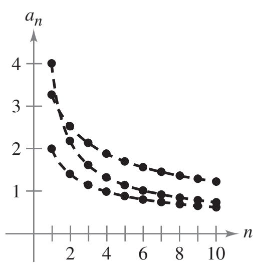
$$\sum_{n=1}^{\infty} \frac{2}{\sqrt{n}}, \quad \sum_{n=1}^{\infty} \frac{2}{\sqrt{n}-0.5}, \quad \text{and} \quad \sum_{n=1}^{\infty} \frac{4}{\sqrt{n+0.5}}$$

(a) Identify the series in each figure.

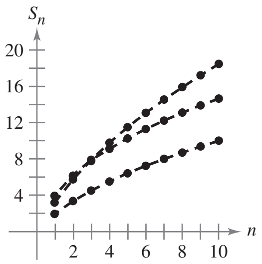
(b) Which series is a p-series? Does it converge or diverge?

(c) For the series that are not p-series, how do the magnitudes of the terms compare with the magnitudes of the terms of the p-series? What conclusion can you draw about the convergence or divergence of the series?

(d) Explain the relationship between the magnitudes of the terms of the series and the magnitudes of the terms of the partial sums.



Graphs of terms



Graphs of partial sums

Using the Direct Comparison Test **In Exercises 3–12, use the Direct Comparison Test to determine the convergence or divergence of the series.**

3. $\displaystyle\sum_{n=1}^{\infty} \frac{1}{2n-1}$

4. $\displaystyle\sum_{n=1}^{\infty} \frac{1}{3n^2+2}$

5. $\displaystyle\sum_{n=2}^{\infty} \frac{1}{\sqrt{n}-1}$

6. $\displaystyle\sum_{n=0}^{\infty} \frac{4^n}{5^n+3}$

7. $\displaystyle\sum_{n=2}^{\infty} \frac{\ln n}{n+1}$

8. $\displaystyle\sum_{n=1}^{\infty} \frac{1}{\sqrt{n^3+1}}$

9. $\displaystyle\sum_{n=0}^{\infty} \frac{1}{n!}$

10. $\displaystyle\sum_{n=1}^{\infty} \frac{1}{4\sqrt[3]{n}-1}$

11. $\displaystyle\sum_{n=0}^{\infty} e^{-n^2}$

12. $\displaystyle\sum_{n=1}^{\infty} \frac{3^n}{2^n-1}$

Using the Limit Comparison Test **In Exercises 13–22, use the Limit Comparison Test to determine the convergence or divergence of the series.**

13. $\displaystyle\sum_{n=1}^{\infty} \frac{n}{n^2+1}$

14. $\displaystyle\sum_{n=1}^{\infty} \frac{5}{4^n+1}$

15. $\displaystyle\sum_{n=0}^{\infty} \frac{1}{\sqrt{n^2+1}}$

16. $\displaystyle\sum_{n=1}^{\infty} \frac{2^n+1}{5^n+1}$

17. $\displaystyle\sum_{n=1}^{\infty} \frac{2n^2-1}{3n^5+2n+1}$

18. $\displaystyle\sum_{n=1}^{\infty} \frac{1}{n^2(n+3)}$

19. $\displaystyle\sum_{n=1}^{\infty} \frac{1}{n\sqrt{n^2+1}}$

20. $\displaystyle\sum_{n=1}^{\infty} \frac{n}{(n+1)2^{n-1}}$

21. $\displaystyle\sum_{n=1}^{\infty} \frac{n^{k-1}}{n^k+1}, \quad k > 2$

22. $\displaystyle\sum_{n=1}^{\infty} \sin\frac{1}{n}$

Determining Convergence or Divergence **In Exercises 23–30, test for convergence or divergence, using each test at least once. Identify which test was used.**

(a) nth-Term Test

(b) Geometric Series Test

(c) p-Series Test

(d) Telescoping Series Test

(e) Integral Test

(f) Direct Comparison Test

(g) Limit Comparison Test

23. $\displaystyle\sum_{n=1}^{\infty} \frac{\sqrt[3]{n}}{n}$

24. $\displaystyle\sum_{n=0}^{\infty} 5\left(-\frac{4}{3}\right)^n$

25. $\displaystyle\sum_{n=1}^{\infty} \frac{1}{5^n+1}$

26. $\displaystyle\sum_{n=2}^{\infty} \frac{1}{n^3-8}$

27. $\displaystyle\sum_{n=1}^{\infty} \frac{2n}{3n-2}$

28. $\displaystyle\sum_{n=1}^{\infty} \left(\frac{1}{n+1} - \frac{1}{n+2}\right)$

29. $\displaystyle\sum_{n=1}^{\infty} \frac{n}{(n^2+1)^2}$

30. $\displaystyle\sum_{n=1}^{\infty} \frac{3}{n(n+3)}$

31. Using the Limit Comparison Test Use the Limit Comparison Test with the harmonic series to show that the series $\Sigma\, a_n$ (where $0 < a_n < a_{n-1}$) diverges when $\displaystyle\lim_{n\to\infty} na_n$ is finite and nonzero.

32. Proof Prove that, if $P(n)$ and $Q(n)$ are polynomials of degree j and k, respectively, then the series

$$\sum_{n=1}^{\infty} \frac{P(n)}{Q(n)}$$

converges if $j < k - 1$ and diverges if $j \geq k - 1$.

Determining Convergence or Divergence **In Exercises 33–36, use the polynomial test given in Exercise 32 to determine whether the series converges or diverges.**

33. $\frac{1}{2} + \frac{2}{5} + \frac{3}{10} + \frac{4}{17} + \frac{5}{26} + \cdots$

34. $\frac{1}{3} + \frac{1}{8} + \frac{1}{15} + \frac{1}{24} + \frac{1}{35} + \cdots$

35. $\displaystyle\sum_{n=1}^{\infty} \frac{1}{n^3 + 1}$

36. $\displaystyle\sum_{n=1}^{\infty} \frac{n^2}{n^3 + 1}$

Verifying Divergence **In Exercises 37 and 38, use the divergence test given in Exercise 31 to show that the series diverges.**

37. $\displaystyle\sum_{n=1}^{\infty} \frac{n^3}{5n^4 + 3}$

38. $\displaystyle\sum_{n=1}^{\infty} \frac{3n^2 + 1}{4n^3 + 2}$

Determining Convergence or Divergence **In Exercises 39–42, determine the convergence or divergence of the series.**

39. $\frac{1}{200} + \frac{1}{400} + \frac{1}{600} + \frac{1}{800} + \cdots$

40. $\frac{1}{200} + \frac{1}{210} + \frac{1}{220} + \frac{1}{230} + \cdots$

41. $\frac{1}{201} + \frac{1}{204} + \frac{1}{209} + \frac{1}{216} + \cdots$

42. $\frac{1}{201} + \frac{1}{208} + \frac{1}{227} + \frac{1}{264} + \cdots$

WRITING ABOUT CONCEPTS

43. Using Series Review the results of Exercises 39–42. Explain why careful analysis is required to determine the convergence or divergence of a series and why only considering the magnitudes of the terms of a series could be misleading.

44. Direct Comparison Test State the Direct Comparison Test and give an example of its use.

45. Limit Comparison Test State the Limit Comparison Test and give an example of its use.

46. Comparing Series It appears that the terms of the series

$$\frac{1}{1000} + \frac{1}{1001} + \frac{1}{1002} + \frac{1}{1003} + \cdots$$

are less than the corresponding terms of the convergent series

$$1 + \frac{1}{4} + \frac{1}{9} + \frac{1}{16} + \cdots.$$

If the statement above is correct, then the first series converges. Is this correct? Why or why not? Make a statement about how the divergence or convergence of a series is affected by the inclusion or exclusion of the first finite number of terms.

47. Using a Series Consider the series $\displaystyle\sum_{n=1}^{\infty} \frac{1}{(2n-1)^2}$.

(a) Verify that the series converges.

(b) Use a graphing utility to complete the table.

n	5	10	20	50	100
S_n					

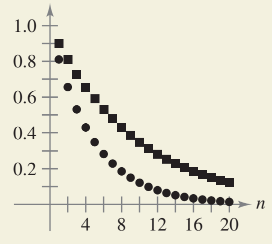
(c) The sum of the series is $\pi^2/8$. Find the sum of the series

$$\sum_{n=3}^{\infty} \frac{1}{(2n-1)^2}.$$

(d) Use a graphing utility to find the sum of the series

$$\sum_{n=10}^{\infty} \frac{1}{(2n-1)^2}.$$

48. HOW DO YOU SEE IT? The figure shows the first 20 terms of the convergent series $\displaystyle\sum_{n=1}^{\infty} a_n$ and the first 20 terms of the series $\displaystyle\sum_{n=1}^{\infty} a_n^2$. Identify the two series and explain your reasoning in making the selection.



True or False? **In Exercises 49–54, determine whether the statement is true or false. If it is false, explain why or give an example that shows it is false.**

49. If $0 < a_n \leq b_n$ and $\displaystyle\sum_{n=1}^{\infty} a_n$ converges, then $\displaystyle\sum_{n=1}^{\infty} b_n$ diverges.

50. If $0 < a_{n+10} \leq b_n$ and $\displaystyle\sum_{n=1}^{\infty} b_n$ converges, then $\displaystyle\sum_{n=1}^{\infty} a_n$ converges.

51. If $a_n + b_n \leq c_n$ and $\displaystyle\sum_{n=1}^{\infty} c_n$ converges, then the series $\displaystyle\sum_{n=1}^{\infty} a_n$ and $\displaystyle\sum_{n=1}^{\infty} b_n$ both converge. (Assume that the terms of all three series are positive.)

52. If $a_n \leq b_n + c_n$ and $\displaystyle\sum_{n=1}^{\infty} a_n$ diverges, then the series $\displaystyle\sum_{n=1}^{\infty} b_n$ and $\displaystyle\sum_{n=1}^{\infty} c_n$ both diverge. (Assume that the terms of all three series are positive.)

53. If $0 < a_n \leq b_n$ and $\displaystyle\sum_{n=1}^{\infty} a_n$ diverges, then $\displaystyle\sum_{n=1}^{\infty} b_n$ diverges.

54. If $0 < a_n \leq b_n$ and $\displaystyle\sum_{n=1}^{\infty} b_n$ diverges, then $\displaystyle\sum_{n=1}^{\infty} a_n$ diverges.

55. Proof Prove that if the nonnegative series

$$\sum_{n=1}^{\infty} a_n \quad \text{and} \quad \sum_{n=1}^{\infty} b_n$$

converge, then so does the series $\sum_{n=1}^{\infty} a_n b_n$.

56. Proof Use the result of Exercise 55 to prove that if the nonnegative series $\sum_{n=1}^{\infty} a_n$ converges, then so does the series $\sum_{n=1}^{\infty} a_n^2$.

57. Finding Series Find two series that demonstrate the result of Exercise 55.

58. Finding Series Find two series that demonstrate the result of Exercise 56.

59. Proof Suppose that $\Sigma\, a_n$ and $\Sigma\, b_n$ are series with positive terms. Prove that if $\lim_{n\to\infty} \frac{a_n}{b_n} = 0$ and $\Sigma\, b_n$ converges, $\Sigma\, a_n$ also converges.

60. Proof Suppose that $\Sigma\, a_n$ and $\Sigma\, b_n$ are series with positive terms. Prove that if $\lim_{n\to\infty} \frac{a_n}{b_n} = \infty$ and $\Sigma\, b_n$ diverges, $\Sigma\, a_n$ also diverges.

61. Verifying Convergence Use the result of Exercise 59 to show that each series converges.

(a) $\sum_{n=1}^{\infty} \frac{1}{(n+1)^3}$ (b) $\sum_{n=1}^{\infty} \frac{1}{\sqrt{n}\pi^n}$

62. Verifying Divergence Use the result of Exercise 60 to show that each series diverges.

(a) $\sum_{n=1}^{\infty} \frac{\ln n}{n}$ (b) $\sum_{n=2}^{\infty} \frac{1}{\ln n}$

63. Proof Suppose that $\Sigma\, a_n$ is a series with positive terms. Prove that if $\Sigma\, a_n$ converges, then $\Sigma \sin a_n$ also converges.

64. Proof Prove that the series

$$\sum_{n=1}^{\infty} \frac{1}{1+2+3+\cdot\cdot\cdot+n}$$

converges.

65. Comparing Series Show that $\sum_{n=1}^{\infty} \frac{\ln n}{n\sqrt{n}}$ converges by comparison with $\sum_{n=1}^{\infty} \frac{1}{n^{5/4}}$.

PUTNAM EXAM CHALLENGE

66. Is the infinite series $\sum_{n=1}^{\infty} \frac{1}{n^{(n+1)/n}}$ convergent? Prove your statement.

67. Prove that if $\sum_{n=1}^{\infty} a_n$ is a convergent series of positive real numbers, then so is $\sum_{n=1}^{\infty} (a_n)^{n/(n+1)}$.

SECTION PROJECT

Solera Method

Most wines are produced entirely from grapes grown in a single year. Sherry, however, is a complex mixture of older wines with new wines. This is done with a sequence of barrels (called a solera) stacked on top of each other, as shown in the photo.

The oldest wine is in the bottom tier of barrels, and the newest is in the top tier. Each year, half of each barrel in the bottom tier is bottled as sherry. The bottom barrels are then refilled with the wine from the barrels above. This process is repeated throughout the solera, with new wine being added to the top barrels.

A mathematical model for the amount of n-year-old wine that is removed from a solera (with k tiers) each year is

$$f(n, k) = \binom{n-1}{k-1}\left(\frac{1}{2}\right)^{n+1}, \quad k \le n.$$

(a) Consider a solera that has five tiers, numbered $k = 1, 2, 3, 4,$ and 5. In 1995 ($n = 0$), half of each barrel in the top tier (tier 1) was refilled with new wine. How much of this wine was removed from the solera in 1996? In 1997? In 1998? . . . In 2010? During which year(s) was the greatest amount of the 1995 wine removed from the solera?

(b) In part (a), let a_n be the amount of 1995 wine that is removed from the solera in year n. Evaluate

$$\sum_{n=0}^{\infty} a_n.$$

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION See the article "Finding Vintage Concentrations in a Sherry Solera" by Rhodes Peele and John T. MacQueen in the *UMAP Modules*.

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