Experimenting with Standard Young Tableaux

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In fond memory of Herbert Wilf and Albert Nijenhuis, and in honor of Curtis Greene

Abstract: Using Symbolic Computation with Maple, we can discover lots of (rigorously-proved!) facts about Standard Young Tableaux, in particular the distribution of the entries in any specific cell, and the sorting probabilities.

Maple package

This article is accompanied by a Maple package, SYT.txt, available from:

https://sites.math.rutgers.edu/~zeilberg/tokhniot/SYT.txt

The web-page of this article

https://sites.math.rutgers.edu/~zeilberg/mamarim/mamarimhtml/syt.html

contains many input and output files, some of which will be referred to later.

Preface

One of the most *iconic* objects in mathematics, both *concrete* [K], and *abstract* [F], are Standard Young Tableaux [Wi]. Recall that an *integer partition*, or *partition*, for short, aka *shape*, of a non-negative integer n, with k **parts**, is a non-increasing sequence of **positive** integers

$$\lambda = (\lambda_1, \lambda_2, \dots, \lambda_k)$$
,

$$\lambda_1 \ge \lambda_2 \ge \ldots \ge \lambda_k > 0$$
 ,

such that

$$\lambda_1 + \ldots + \lambda_k = n \quad .$$

The Ferrers diagram (or Young diagram) of a partition λ is a left-justified array of dots (or empty boxes) where the top row has λ_1 dots (boxes), the second row has λ_2 boxes, ..., the k-th row has λ_k dots. For example, the Ferrers diagram of (4, 4, 3, 1) is

* * * * * * * * * * * * Given a shape $\lambda = (\lambda_1, \dots, \lambda_k)$ with n boxes, a **standard Young tableau** is a way of filling the boxes with the integers $\{1, \dots, n\}$, such that each of them shows up (necessarily once) and both rows and columns are increasing. More formally, it is an array

$$T_{i,j}$$
 , $1 \le i \le k$, $1 \le j \le \lambda_i$,

such that $T_{i,j} < T_{i,j+1}$ and $T_{i,j} < T_{i+1,j}$ whenever they exit.

Here are the five standard Young tableaux of shape (2, 2, 1):

To see the set of standard Young tableaux of shape L in our Maple package, type SYT(L); . For example to see the above five tableaux type SYT([2,2,1]);

The total number of standard Young tableaux of shape λ , denoted by f^{λ} , is famously given by the *hook length formula*, or equivalently (and more convenient for us) by the **Young-Frobenius** formula (see [K]).

$$f^{\lambda} = \frac{(\lambda_1 + \lambda_2 + \dots + \lambda_k)!}{(\lambda_1 + k - 1)!(\lambda_2 + k - 2)! \cdots \lambda_k!} \cdot \prod_{i=1}^k \prod_{j=i+1}^k (\lambda_i - \lambda_j + j - i) .$$

Fix a shape λ and fix a cell [i, j], $1 \le i \le k, 1 \le j \le \lambda_i$.

Who can be the occupant of that cell?

Calling that occupant r, we have:

$$ij \leq r \leq \lambda_1 + \lambda_2 + \ldots + \lambda_{i-1} + \lambda'_1 + \lambda'_2 + \ldots + \lambda'_{i-1} - (i-1)(j-1) + 1$$
,

where $\lambda' = (\lambda'_1, \dots, \lambda'_{\lambda_1})$ is the **conjugate partition**.

This gives a certain **probability distribution**. What is it?

For example, with the shape $\lambda = (2, 2, 1)$ again, and the cell [2, 1], the set of possible occupants is $\{2, 3\}$, and the probability of it being 2 is $\frac{3}{5}$ and of it being 3 is $\frac{2}{5}$.

Later on we will be interested not in *specific* shapes, but in general (mostly rectangular) shapes, with a fixed number of rows, but arbitrary (i.e. symbolic) shape. Fixing the number of rows to be k (where k is numeric), and regarding the shape (n, n, \ldots, n) , where n is repeated k times, we would be interested in deriving closed-form expressions (as rational functions of n), for the probability distribution of the possible occupants of a given first row cell [1, j], for any given **numeric** integer j. Note that the possible occupants of [1, j] are $j, j + 1, j + 2, \ldots, k(j - 1) + 1$.

Once we found these expressions in n, we can ask about the *limiting distribution*, that Maple can find for us. Then we can also hope to see how it varies with j and look at the *meta-limiting* behavior as j gets larger.

Another kind of question, inspired by the beautiful work of Chan, Pak, and Panova [CPP1][CPP2], is to study the **sorting probabilities**. Given two cells c_1 and c_2 , draw a standard Young tableau uniformly at random. Who is bigger?

The occupant of c_1 or the occupant of c_2 ?

Of course if the two cells are *related*, i.e. one of them, say c_2 , is (weakly) below and (weakly) to the right of the other, c_1 , i.e. in the underlying poset $c_1 < c_2$, then of course, always $T_{c_1} < T_{c_2}$, but what if they are **not** related i.e. writing

$$c_1 = [i_1, j_1]$$
 , $c_2 = [i_2, j_2]$,

we have $i_1 < i_2$ but $j_1 > j_2$.

The **sorting probability** is defined by:

$$SP(\lambda, c_1, c_2) := Pr(T_{c_1} > T_{c_2}) - Pr(T_{c_2} > T_{c_1}) = 2 Pr(T_{c_1} > T_{c_2}) - 1$$
,

where T is a random standard Young tableau of shape λ .

In particular, following Chan-Pak-Panova, we are interested in the **minimal** (absolute value) of the sorting probabilities, over all pairs of cells, as the shapes get larger.

Going back to the shape $\lambda = (2, 2, 1)$, we see that for the first two tableaux the occupant of (1, 2) is less than the occupant of (2, 1), while for the last three ones it is the reverse. Hence the probability of $T_{1,2} < T_{2,1}$ is $\frac{2}{5}$, and so $SP(221, [1, 2], [2, 1]) = \frac{3}{5} - \frac{2}{5} = \frac{1}{5}$. The **minimal sorting probability** for that shape is also $\frac{1}{5}$ (check!)

Simulation

One way to answer these questions, approximately, is via simulation. The amazing Greene-Nijenhuis-Wilf [GrNW] algorithm (that also lead to a beautiful probabilistic proof of the hook length formula) inputs a shape, λ , and outputs, uniformly at random, one of the f^{λ} standard Young tableaux of that shape. By sampling many of them, we can get approximations to the quantities of interest.

Procedure GNW(L) in our Maple package SYT.txt implements the Greene-Nijenhuis-Wilf algorithm. For example, try

in order to get, uniformly at random, one of the 168 standard Young tableaux of shape (4,3,2).

To get approximations for the probability generating function, using the variable x, of the distribution of the occupants of cell c in a random Young tableau of shape L, by sampling K random tableaux, type

For example for the shape (4, 4, 4) and the cell [2, 2], with 10000 tries, type: SiOcGF([4, 4, 4], [2, 2], x, 10000); getting something like (of course it is slightly different each time)

$$.10900000000 x^7 + .2875000000 x^6 + .3639000000 x^5 + .2396000000 x^4$$
.

To get approximations for the sorting probability of cell c1 vs. cell c2, in the shape L, by sampling K tableaux: enter:

For example,

would give something like 0.010400000. Of course, in this particular case the exact answer is obviously zero, by symmetry, so getting something close to 0 is a good sanity check.

Symbol Crunching in order to find The Probability Distribution of the Occupants of a Specific Cell in a Symbolic Shape

For the sake of exposition, we will mostly be concerned with standard Young tableaux of rectangular shape. Fix the number of rows k, and consider the shape

$$(n, n, \ldots, n)$$
 ,

where n is repeated k times. More generally all our algorithms carry over to the general symbolic shape

$$(n_1, n_2, \ldots, n_k)$$
,

where $n_1 \ge n_2 \ge n_k \ge 0$, and they are all left symbolic. Using Young-Frobenius we get an **explicit** formula for their total number in the form of a certain **rational function**, of (n_1, \ldots, n_k) times the **multinomial coefficient**

$$\frac{(n_1+\ldots+n_k)!}{n_1!\cdots n_k!} \quad .$$

In the special case of a $k \times n$ rectangular shape: (i.e. (n, \ldots, n) , where n is repeated k times), it is a certain rational function of n (namely $\frac{(k-1)!}{(n+1)_1(n+1)_2\cdots(n+1)_{k-1}}$, where, as usual $(x)_m := x(x+1)\cdots(x+m-1)$) times

$$\frac{(n\,k)!}{n!^k} \quad .$$

Now also fix a specific (numeric) cell, c = [i, j], and a specific (numeric) integer r. We want an **explicit** formula, as a **rational function** of n, for the probability that, when you draw (say using the GNW algorithm) uniformly at random, one of the $\frac{(n \, k)!(k-1)!}{n!\cdots(n+k-1)!}$ standard Young tableaux, of shape n^k , that the occupant of the cell c = [i, j] is the integer r, in symbols:

$$Pr(T_{ij} = r).$$

We will soon explain how to do it, but you are welcome to try it out first using our Maple package SYT.txt. Let's give a few examples.

• To get the explicit expression for the probability that the occupant of cell [1,3] in a random standard Young tableau of shape (n,n,n) happens to be 7, type:

getting

$$\frac{5n(n+1)^{2}(n+2)}{9(3n-1)(3n-2)(3n-4)(3n-5)}.$$

• For a more complicated example, to get the expression for the probability that the occupant of cell [3,3] in a random standard Young tableau of shape (n,n,n) happens to be 13, type:

getting

$$\frac{110n^{2} \left(-1+n\right) \left(n+1\right)^{2} \left(2+n\right) \left(233n^{2}-1933n+3984\right)}{81 \left(-1+3n\right) \left(-2+3n\right) \left(-4+3n\right) \left(-5+3n\right) \left(-7+3n\right) \left(-8+3n\right) \left(-10+3n\right) \left(-11+3n\right)}$$

• For yet another example, regarding the three-rowed shape (n_1, n_2, n_3) , to get the rational function (in n_1, n_2, n_3) for the probability that cell [1, 2] would be occupied by 3, type

getting

$$\frac{n_1^2n_2 + n_1^2n_3 + n_1n_2^2 + 2n_1n_2n_3 + n_1n_3^2 + n_2^2n_3 + n_2n_3^2 - n_1n_2 - n_1n_3 + n_2^2 - n_3n_2 + 2n_3^2 - 2n_2 - 6n_3}{(n_1 - 2 + n_2 + n_3)(n_1 - 1 + n_2 + n_3)(n_1 + n_2 + n_3)}$$

• If the cell is at the first row, c = [1, j], for some j > 1, then there are only finitely many possible occupants r, namely $r = j, j + 1, \ldots, k(j - 1) + 1$, and to get the probability generating function, using the variable x, type

For example, entering: OcGFs1([n,n,n],2,x);

gives you

$$\frac{2(-1+n)x^{2}}{-1+3n} + \frac{8(-1+n)(n+1)x^{3}}{3(-1+3n)(-2+3n)} + \frac{(n+1)(2+n)x^{4}}{3(-1+3n)(-2+3n)} ,$$

meaning that the cell [1,2] in a standard Young tableau of shape (n,n,n) is occupied by either 2, 3, or 4, with respective probabilities of $\frac{2(-1+n)}{-1+3n}$, $\frac{8(-1+n)(n+1)}{3(-1+3n)(-2+3n)}$, and $\frac{(n+1)(2+n)}{3(-1+3n)(-2+3n)}$.

To get the limiting distribution as $n \to \infty$, as well as the expectation, variance, and the first few moments up to the K-th, try OcGFs1L(L,n,i,x,K);

How does Maple perform these amazing calculations? In other words how does it compute $Pr(T_{i,j} = r)$ for a random standard Young tableau of a symbolic shape?

Given a (symbolic, or numeric) shape λ , a cell c = [i, j], and an integer r, how can it happen that $T_{ij} = r$? The cells occupied by $\{1, 2, ..., r\}$ form a certain standard Young tableau with r cells, that is a certain subshape, that must contain the cell c = [i, j], that must be a corner, of course. So let's ask our beloved computer to find all the shapes with r cells that contain the cell [i, j] as a corner, or equivalently the set of partitions, ν , of r with at least i rows such that $\nu_i = j$. Let's call this (finite) set S([i, j], r).

Let, as usual, $f^{\lambda/\nu}$ denote the number of standard Young tableau of **skew-shape** λ/ν (recall that these are shapes where ν is a subshape of λ , and the cells of ν are removed). Then our quantity of interest is

$$\sum_{\nu \in S([i,j];r)} f^{\nu'} f^{\lambda/\nu} \quad ,$$

where ν' is the shape ν with the cell [i, j] removed.

The **number** $f^{\nu'}$ is easily computed using the Young-Frobenius formula. How do we compute the (symbolic) **expression** $f^{\lambda/\nu}$?

Recall that standard Young tableaux of shape $\lambda = (\lambda_1, \dots, \lambda_k)$ are in bijection with **walks** from the **origin** to the point λ in the k-dimensional discrete lattice \mathcal{N}^k , that always must stay in the region

$$x_1 \ge x_2 \ge \ldots \ge x_k \ge 0$$
.

Similarly, standard Young tableaux of skew-shape λ/ν are in bijection with such 'sub-diagonal' walks from ν to λ . Now following the ideas of André [Z] (see also [GeZ]), put mirrors on the hyperplanes

$$x_1 - x_2 = -1$$
 , $x_2 - x_3 = -1$, ... , $x_{k-1} - x_k = -1$,

and look at the set of k! images of the point ν under the action of the group generated by these k-1 reflections. As is well-known (and fairly easy to see), the underlying group is the symmetric

group S_k , and the sign is 1 or -1 according to whether the number of inversions is even or odd. Calling the set of images $IMAGE(\nu)$, we have:

$$f^{\lambda/\nu} = \sum_{\mu \in IMAGE(\nu)} \pm W(\mu, \lambda) ,$$

where $W(\mu, \lambda)$ is the **number** of walks in the lattice from μ to λ given by the **multinomial** coefficient

$$\frac{(\lambda_1 + \ldots + \lambda_k - \mu_1 - \ldots - \mu_k)!}{(\lambda_1 - \mu_1)!(\lambda_2 - \mu_2)! \cdots (\lambda_k - \mu_k)!} .$$

But since we are interested in probabilities, we can divide everything by f^{λ} and stay in the realm of rational functions.

This is implemented in procedures Swee(L,M).

Computing the Sorting Probabilities for symbolic shape and any two cells where one of them is at the first row

The **numeric** procedure Pr(L,c1,c2), for a random standard Young tableau of shape L, manually finds the sorting probability of cell c1 vs. cell c2, and the numeric procedure MinPr(L) finds the minimal sorting probabilities among all pair of cells, followed by the 'champions'. For example, if you type

you would get

meaning that the minimum (absolute value) of the sorting probabilities among all the $\binom{17}{2} = 136$ pairs of cells is $\frac{1}{127}$ and it is achieved with the pair of cells [1,5] and [3,1]. But we want to do things **symbolically**. Alas, things get complicated if neither cells are at the first row.

But we can, exactly, and **symbolically**, compute a closed-form expression, as a rational function of the symbols, of the sorting probabilities between any cell [1, j] on the first row and any cell below it (to the left, of course, or else the sorting probability is trivially -1).

This is implemented in procedure PrS(L,j,c2), where L is the symbolic shape and c2 is the cell below the first row that we compare it to [1,j]. For example, to get the sorting probability of cell [1,3] vs. the cell [2,2], for the shape (n,n,n), type

$$-\frac{(17n-4)(n-3)}{3(3n-1)(3n-4)} .$$

How Does Maple find The Symbolic Sorting Probabilities?

How do we do it? Look at all the possible occupants of cell $c_1 = [1, j]$ (there are finitely many of them). Suppose it happens to be r. How can it be larger than the occupant of cell $c_2 = [m_1, m_2]$?. We find the (finite) set of shapes with r cells that include $c_1 = [1, j]$, and in addition it is a corner. In other words all the shapes ν with r cells such that $\nu_1 = j$, ν has at least m_1 rows, and $m_2 \leq \nu_{m_1}$.

As before add-up $f^{\nu'}$ times $f^{\lambda/\nu}$, and then add-them-up for all possible legal occupants of [1,j]. Getting a nice (or not so nice, but sill explicit) expression for $Pr(T_{1,j} > T_{m_1,m_2})$, and hence for the sorting probability $2 Pr(T_{1,j} > T_{m_1,m_2}) - 1$.

Of course, we always divide by f^{λ} (but this is already built-in in all our macros).

A one-line proof that the Minimal sorting probabilities for the Catalan Poset is $O(\frac{1}{n})$

In a deep and beautiful work [CPP2], the authors proved that the minimal sorting probability of the Young lattice, as the shapes get larger, tends to 0. In the more specific paper [CPP1], they proved, by an ingenious and delicate asymptotic analysis, that for the two-rowed case, [n, n], (what they call the Catalan poset), it is $O(\frac{1}{n^{\frac{5}{4}}})$. But using our Maple package, we can get, without human effort, a (rigorous!) proof that it is at least $O(\frac{1}{n})$.

Indeed, entering in our Maple package SYT.txt, the command:

we get, in one nano-second:

$$\frac{3}{2n-1}$$

So we have the following computer-generated proposition (that admittedly could have been done by humans only using paper and pencil).

Proposition: The sorting probability of the cell [1,3] and the cell [2,1] in a random standard Young tableau of shape (n,n) is

$$\frac{3}{2n-1} = \frac{3}{2} \cdot \frac{1}{n} + \frac{3}{4} \cdot \frac{1}{n^2} + \frac{3}{8} \cdot \frac{1}{n^3} + O(\frac{1}{n^4}) \quad .$$

Hence the minimal sorting probability of the Catalan lattice is $O(\frac{1}{n})$.

Similarly, typing

gives the following proposition.

Proposition: The sorting probability of the cell [1,5] and the cell [2,2] in a random standard Young tableau of shape (n,n) is

$$\frac{45n^2 - 135n + 30}{2(2n - 5)(2n - 1)(2n - 3)} = \frac{45}{16} \cdot \frac{1}{n} + \frac{135}{32} \cdot \frac{1}{n^2} + \frac{75}{16} \cdot \frac{1}{n^3} + O(\frac{1}{n^4})$$

Hence, again, the minimal sorting probability of the Catalan poset is $O(\frac{1}{n})$.

Procedure FindZero(L,n,K) searches for all pairs of cells $c_1 = [1, j], c_2 = [m_1, m_2]$ where c_1 is in the first row, and $j, m_2 \leq K$, such that the sorting probability tends to 0 (and hence is, of course O(1/n)). Alas, except for the above two pairs (for the Catalan poset), none exists for K = 100. Note that here we really lucked out, since the pairs $\{[1,3],[2,1]\}$ and $\{[1,5],[2,2]\}$ are numeric (and small), and give upper bound for the minimal sorting probability. In order to get to the true minimum, both c_1 and c_2 must be symbolic (that what was essentially done in [CPP1] and [CPP2] with great human effort).

The special case of the Catalan poset (2-rowed tableaux)

For the Catalan case things can get much faster (as noticed in [CPP1]) and the procedures implementing this can be found by typing ezraD();

Anij(n,i,j) is a faster version of PrS([n,n],i,[2,j]). It turns out that in this case we can get closed-form expressions, for the occupancy distribution of an arbitrary cell [1,i] at the first row of a standard Young tableau of shape (n,n) for **symbolic** i, that entail, in turn, closed-form expressions for the *limiting distribution* as n goes to ∞ , and **surprise!** we can get explicit expressions for the average, variance, and higher moments for that limiting distribution for symbolic i, and even the meta-limiting behavior, as i goes to infinity.

We have

Proposition: The expectation of the occupant of cell [1, i] in a random standard Young tableau of shape (n, n), as n goes to infinity is

$$2i + 2 - \frac{2 \cdot 4^{-i} (1 + 2i)!}{i!^2}$$
,

confirming Richard Stanley's observation mentioned in [CPP1], Eq. (5.1). The asymptotics is

$$2i + 2 - \frac{4}{\sqrt{\pi}}i^{1/2} - \frac{3}{2\sqrt{\pi}}i^{-1/2} + \frac{7}{32\sqrt{\pi}}i^{-3/2} - \frac{9}{256\sqrt{\pi}}i^{-5/2} + O(i^{-7/2})$$

The variance is

$$-\frac{4 \cdot 16^{-i} (1+2i)!^2}{i!^4} - \frac{2 \cdot 4^{-i} (1+2i)!}{i!^2} + 6i + 6 .$$

The limiting (as i goes to infinity) skewness is $\frac{2(5\pi-16)\sqrt{2}}{(3\pi-8)^{\frac{3}{2}}} = -0.4856928234...$

The limiting (as *i* goes to infinity) kurtosis is $\frac{15\pi^2+16\pi-192}{(3\pi-8)^2}=3.108163850...$

The limiting (as i goes to infinity) scaled-fifth-moment is $\frac{2(51\pi^2-80\pi-256)\sqrt{2}}{(3\pi-8)^{\frac{5}{2}}} = -4.642979574...$

The limiting (as *i* goes to infinity) scaled-sixth-moment is $\frac{105\pi^3 + 648\pi^2 - 2240\pi - 2560}{(3\pi - 8)^3} = 18.66866547...$

For more details see the output file

https://sites.math.rutgers.edu/~zeilberg/tokhniot/oSYT9new.txt

We note that, by miracle, the (limiting, as n goes to infinity) average, variance, and any higher moment, happened to be *gosperable* so Maple is able to evaluate them in closed-form using the Maple command sum. We doubt whether this will happen for more rows, but we did not try.

We believe that the Maple package SYT.txt can be used to explore further and possibly suggest improvements to the already very impressive work in [CPP1] and [CPP2].

Sample Output

The web-page of this article

https://sites.math.rutgers.edu/~zeilberg/mamarim/mamarimhtml/syt.html ,

contains lots of output file. Let's just mention some highlights.

• If you want to see a computer-generated article with lots of explicit expressions (as rational functions of n) for the probability distribution of the occupant of cell [1, i] in a (uniformly-at) random-generated Young tableau of rectangular shape with 2 rows and n columns (i.e. of shape [n, n]) for all i between 2 and 40, see the output file

https://sites.math.rutgers.edu/~zeilberg/tokhniot/oSYT1.txt

If you want to see an abbreviated version, with only the *limiting distribution* as n goes to infinity, but all the way to i = 60, as well as the expectation, variance, skewness, and kurtosis, see

https://sites.math.rutgers.edu/~zeilberg/tokhniot/oSYT1L.txt

If you want to see the plot of the occupancy distribution of the cell [1, 40] as n goes to ∞ , look here:

https://sites.math.rutgers.edu/~zeilberg/tokhniot/oSYTpic2.html

• For the analogous output for 3-rowed rectangular shapes, (i.e. (n, n, n)), see, respectively

https://sites.math.rutgers.edu/~zeilberg/tokhniot/oSYT2.txt

https://sites.math.rutgers.edu/~zeilberg/tokhniot/oSYT2L.txt

https://sites.math.rutgers.edu/~zeilberg/tokhniot/oSYTpic3.html

For the analogous information for up to 8 rows (but with less data) see the above-mentioned front of this article.

• For testing the amazing Greene-Nijenhuis-Wilf algorithm vs. the exact results, see the output file https://sites.math.rutgers.edu/~zeilberg/tokhniot/oSYTsi1.txt .

To get lots of explicit expressions for sorting probabilities refer to the above web-page.

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[Christian Krattenthaler noticed a very long time ago that on the second page (p. 326), last word on line 3: first \rightarrow last] .

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