

**A convergent series which is not absolutely convergent
can be rearranged to sum to any number you choose, but rearrangement
never changes the sum of an absolutely convergent series.**

Part I. To see that rearrangement of a convergent but not absolutely convergent series can lead to any desired sum one can argue as follows:

Given a sequence of real numbers $\{a_n\}$, we can introduce the sequences $\{a_n^+\}$ and $\{a_n^-\}$ defined by

$$a_n^+ = \begin{cases} a_n & \text{if } a_n > 0 \\ 0 & \text{if } a_n \leq 0 \end{cases} \quad \text{and} \quad a_n^- = \begin{cases} -a_n & \text{if } a_n < 0 \\ 0 & \text{if } a_n \geq 0 \end{cases}$$

Note that $|a_n| = a_n^+ + a_n^-$ and $a_n = a_n^+ - a_n^-$.

Proposition 1. If $\sum_{n=1}^{\infty} a_n$ converges and $\sum_{n=1}^{\infty} |a_n|$ diverges, then $\sum_{n=1}^{\infty} a_n^+ = \sum_{n=1}^{\infty} a_n^- = \infty$.

Proof: Since $\sum_{n=1}^N |a_n| = \sum_{n=1}^N a_n^+ + \sum_{n=1}^N a_n^-$, we cannot have both $\sum_{n=1}^N a_n^+$ and $\sum_{n=1}^N a_n^-$ bounded as $N \rightarrow \infty$. However, since $\sum_{n=1}^N a_n = \sum_{n=1}^N a_n^+ - \sum_{n=1}^N a_n^-$, if either of $\sum_{n=1}^N a_n^+$ or $\sum_{n=1}^N a_n^-$ is unbounded as $N \rightarrow \infty$, the other must also be unbounded.

Theorem: Let $\{a_n\}_{n=1}^{\infty}$ be a sequence of nonzero real numbers. If $\sum_{n=1}^{\infty} a_n$ converges and $\sum_{n=1}^{\infty} |a_n| = \infty$, then, given any $\alpha \in \mathbb{R} \cup \{+\infty\} \cup \{-\infty\}$, we can rearrange the terms a_1, a_2, \dots so that the new series converges to α .

Proof: Let b_1, b_2, \dots be the numbers a_1^+, a_2^+, \dots in the same order but with the zeroes omitted, and let c_1, c_2, \dots be the numbers a_1^-, a_2^-, \dots in the same order but with the zeroes omitted. Then any series consisting of all the b 's with plus signs and all the c 's with minus signs will be a rearrangement of $\sum_{n=1}^{\infty} a_n$.

I will take $\alpha > 0$ first, and give the changes needed for $\alpha < 0$ and $\alpha = \pm\infty$ at the end.

To build a series converging to α proceed as follows. The new series will be $\sum_{n=1}^{\infty} a'_n$. Take $a'_1 = b_1, a'_2 = b_2, \dots$ until the first n such that

$$b_1 + b_2 + \dots + b_n > \alpha$$

(n might be 1, but that is OK). Call this n, n_1 . Then take $a'_{n_1+1} = -c_1, a'_{n_1+2} = -c_2, \dots$ until the first n such that

$$b_1 + b_2 + \dots + b_{n_1} - c_1 - c_2 - \dots - c_n < \alpha.$$

Call this n, n_2 . Next repeat the process, adding b 's until the sum is greater than α and then subtracting c 's until the sum is less than α , back and forth, forever.

The series you get will look like

$$b_1 + \cdots + b_{n_1} - c_1 - \cdots - c_{n_2} + b_{n_1+1} + \cdots + b_{n_1+n_3} - c_{n_2+1} - \cdots - c_{n_2+n_4} + b_{n_1+n_3+1} + \cdots$$

I claim that $\lim_{N \rightarrow \infty} \sum_{n=1}^N a'_n = \alpha$. First, since $\sum_{n=1}^{\infty} b_n = \sum_{n=1}^{\infty} c_n = \infty$, no matter how many b 's or c 's you have used the sum of those remaining is still ∞ . That means that at each stage you will be able to get above α or below α as required, and the integers n_k with $n_k \geq 1$ will be defined for all k . Secondly, for

$$n_1 + n_2 + \cdots + n_{k-1} \leq N < n_1 + n_2 + \cdots + n_k$$

the difference between $\sum_{n=1}^N a'_n$ and α is bounded by $b_{n_1+n_2+\cdots+n_{k-1}}$ if k is even and $c_{n_2+n_4+\cdots+n_{k-1}}$ if k is odd. Since $\sum_{n=1}^{\infty} a_n$ converges, $\lim_{n \rightarrow \infty} a_n = 0$ and this implies $\lim_{n \rightarrow \infty} b_n = \lim_{n \rightarrow \infty} c_n = 0$. Thus, given $\epsilon > 0$, there is a $K(\epsilon)$ such that $|\sum_{n=1}^N a'_n - \alpha| < \epsilon$ when $N \geq n_1 + n_2 + \cdots + n_{k-1}$ with $k \geq K(\epsilon)$. This completes the proof for $\alpha > 0$ (I admit that the last step here is a bit of a leap, but I think that more words will not help you understand it).

If $\alpha < 0$, just begin with c 's instead of b 's. If $\alpha = +\infty$, add b 's until the sum is greater than 1. Then subtract c 's until the sum is less than 1. Then add b 's until the sum is greater than 2. Then subtract c 's until the sum is less than 2. Continue this way, going up 1 when you add b 's each time. If $\alpha = -\infty$, start by subtracting c 's until the sum is less than -1. Then add b 's until the sum is greater than -1. Then subtract c 's until the sum is less than -2, and so on.

Part II. To see that rearrangement does not change the sums of absolutely convergent series one can argue as follows:

Assume that $\sum_{n=1}^{\infty} a_n = S$ and that $\sum a_n$ is absolutely convergent. Then, given $\epsilon > 0$, we can choose $N_1(\epsilon)$ so that $|\sum_{k=1}^n a_k - S| < \epsilon/2$ for $n \geq N_1(\epsilon)$, and choose $N_2(\epsilon)$ so that $\sum_{k=m}^n |a_k| < \epsilon/2$ for $m, n \geq N_2(\epsilon)$. We can assume that N_2 is chosen to be greater than N_1 . Let σ , mapping \mathbb{N} one-to-one onto \mathbb{N} , be the rearrangement, and choose $N(\epsilon)$ so that

$$\{n \in \mathbb{N} : n \leq N_2(\epsilon)\} \subset \{\sigma(k) : k \leq N(\epsilon)\}.$$

Note that $N(\epsilon) \geq N_2(\epsilon)$. Now for $n \geq N(\epsilon)$ we have

$$|\sum_{k=1}^n a_{\sigma(k)} - S| \leq |\sum_{k=1}^{N_2(\epsilon)} a_k - S| + \sum_{\{\sigma(k) : \sigma(k) > N_2(\epsilon), k \leq n\}} |a_{\sigma(k)}| < \epsilon/2 + \epsilon/2.$$

Thus

$$\lim_{n \rightarrow \infty} \sum_{k=1}^n a_{\sigma(k)} = S.$$