

Bounds for Optimal Golomb Rulers

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Abstract

In this paper, we discuss some bounds for optimal Golomb rulers.

Definition

A Golomb ruler, named after Solomon W. Golomb and discovered independently by others, is a set of marks at integer positions along a ruler such that no two pairs of marks are the same distance apart.^[1] The number of marks on the ruler is its order and the length is the maximum distance between two of its marks. It is customary to use 0 as the first mark and n as the last.

Flipping the ruler allows us to generate twice the number of rulers with different starting points.

For example, $[0, 1, 3, 7]$ is a Golomb ruler consisting of four marks where the four marks' consecutive distances are 1, 2, and 4. Subtracting the ruler from the maximum number (i.e., 7) and taking its reflection gives us $[0, 4, 6, 7]$. These two rulers are considered equal since the spacings are the same in reverse order: $(1, 2, 4)$ for the first and $(4, 2, 1)$ for its reflection. Without the numbers, the two rules are the same when rotated. Hence, every Golomb ruler has a unique, and thus equal, rotation. A symmetrical Golomb ruler would break the rule of the distances being unique.

For order n , there are ${}_{n-1}C_2 = \binom{n-1}{2} = \frac{n(n-1)}{2}$ distances to compare.

An optimal Golomb ruler (OGR) is the smallest length of a fixed order.

Note: An OGR for a fixed n is not necessarily unique as seen in Table 1.

A perfect Golomb ruler has all ${}_{n-1}C_2$ distances. Only $O(1)$ to $O(4)$ are perfect. All others have been proven not to be.^[1]

OGR Analysis

The following table shows the OGRs up to order 28 and their lengths and marks.

Table 1 – OGRs up to O(28)

| O(n) | L | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 |
|------|-----|---|----|----|----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| 1 | 0 | 0 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 2 | 1 | 0 | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 3 | 3 | 0 | 1 | 3 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 4 | 6 | 0 | 1 | 4 | 6 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 5 | 11 | 0 | 1 | 4 | 9 | 11 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 5 | 11 | 0 | 2 | 7 | 8 | 11 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 6 | 17 | 0 | 1 | 4 | 10 | 12 | 17 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 6 | 17 | 0 | 1 | 4 | 10 | 15 | 17 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 6 | 17 | 0 | 1 | 8 | 11 | 13 | 17 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 6 | 17 | 0 | 1 | 8 | 12 | 14 | 17 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 7 | 25 | 0 | 1 | 4 | 10 | 18 | 23 | 25 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 7 | 25 | 0 | 1 | 7 | 11 | 20 | 23 | 25 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 7 | 25 | 0 | 1 | 11 | 16 | 19 | 23 | 25 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 7 | 25 | 0 | 2 | 3 | 10 | 16 | 21 | 25 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 7 | 25 | 0 | 2 | 7 | 13 | 21 | 22 | 25 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 8 | 34 | 0 | 1 | 4 | 9 | 15 | 22 | 32 | 34 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 9 | 44 | 0 | 1 | 5 | 12 | 25 | 27 | 35 | 41 | 44 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 10 | 55 | 0 | 1 | 6 | 10 | 23 | 26 | 34 | 41 | 53 | 55 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 11 | 72 | 0 | 1 | 4 | 13 | 28 | 33 | 47 | 54 | 64 | 70 | 72 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 11 | 72 | 0 | 1 | 9 | 19 | 24 | 31 | 52 | 56 | 58 | 69 | 72 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 12 | 85 | 0 | 2 | 6 | 24 | 29 | 40 | 43 | 55 | 68 | 75 | 76 | 85 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 13 | 106 | 0 | 2 | 5 | 25 | 37 | 43 | 59 | 70 | 85 | 89 | 98 | 99 | 106 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 14 | 127 | 0 | 4 | 6 | 20 | 35 | 52 | 59 | 77 | 78 | 86 | 89 | 99 | 122 | 127 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 15 | 151 | 0 | 4 | 20 | 30 | 57 | 59 | 62 | 76 | 100 | 111 | 123 | 136 | 144 | 145 | 151 | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 16 | 177 | 0 | 1 | 4 | 11 | 26 | 32 | 56 | 68 | 76 | 115 | 117 | 134 | 150 | 163 | 168 | 177 | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 17 | 199 | 0 | 5 | 7 | 17 | 52 | 56 | 67 | 80 | 81 | 100 | 122 | 138 | 159 | 165 | 168 | 191 | 199 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 18 | 216 | 0 | 2 | 10 | 22 | 53 | 56 | 82 | 83 | 89 | 98 | 130 | 148 | 153 | 167 | 188 | 192 | 205 | 216 | | | | | | | | | | |
| 19 | 246 | 0 | 1 | 6 | 25 | 32 | 72 | 100 | 108 | 120 | 130 | 153 | 169 | 187 | 190 | 204 | 231 | 233 | 242 | 246 | | | | | | | | | |
| 20 | 283 | 0 | 1 | 8 | 11 | 68 | 77 | 94 | 116 | 121 | 156 | 158 | 179 | 194 | 208 | 212 | 228 | 240 | 253 | 259 | 283 | | | | | | | | |
| 21 | 333 | 0 | 2 | 24 | 56 | 77 | 82 | 83 | 95 | 129 | 144 | 179 | 186 | 195 | 255 | 265 | 285 | 293 | 296 | 310 | 329 | 333 | | | | | | | |
| 22 | 356 | 0 | 1 | 9 | 14 | 43 | 70 | 106 | 122 | 124 | 128 | 159 | 179 | 204 | 223 | 253 | 263 | 270 | 291 | 330 | 341 | 353 | 356 | | | | | | |
| 23 | 372 | 0 | 3 | 7 | 17 | 61 | 66 | 91 | 99 | 114 | 159 | 171 | 199 | 200 | 226 | 235 | 246 | 277 | 316 | 329 | 348 | 350 | 366 | 372 | | | | | |
| 24 | 425 | 0 | 9 | 33 | 37 | 38 | 97 | 122 | 129 | 140 | 142 | 152 | 191 | 205 | 208 | 252 | 278 | 286 | 326 | 332 | 353 | 368 | 384 | 403 | 425 | | | | |
| 25 | 480 | 0 | 12 | 29 | 39 | 72 | 91 | 146 | 157 | 160 | 161 | 166 | 191 | 207 | 214 | 258 | 290 | 316 | 354 | 372 | 394 | 396 | 431 | 459 | 467 | 480 | | | |
| 26 | 492 | 0 | 1 | 33 | 83 | 104 | 110 | 124 | 163 | 185 | 200 | 203 | 249 | 251 | 258 | 314 | 318 | 343 | 356 | 386 | 430 | 440 | 456 | 464 | 475 | 487 | 492 | | |
| 27 | 553 | 0 | 3 | 15 | 41 | 66 | 95 | 97 | 106 | 142 | 152 | 220 | 221 | 225 | 242 | 295 | 330 | 338 | 354 | 382 | 388 | 402 | 415 | 486 | 504 | 523 | 546 | 553 | |
| 28 | 585 | 0 | 3 | 15 | 41 | 66 | 95 | 97 | 106 | 142 | 152 | 220 | 221 | 225 | 242 | 295 | 330 | 338 | 354 | 382 | 388 | 402 | 415 | 486 | 504 | 523 | 546 | 553 | 585 |

Upper-Bounds

Trivial UB (${}_{n-1}C_2$)

In order to create a Golomb ruler, one can use the simplest approach. Starting with a sequence, add one more than the length to ensure that all new delta distances are unique.

Thus, starting with 0, we add 1 to get 1, then 2 to get 3, then 4 to get 7, etc. The numbers 0, 1, 3, 7 are the lengths that are guaranteed to generate a Golomb ruler based on the previous order.

Thus, $UB(n) = [0, 1, 3, 7, \dots, 2^{n-1}-1]$.

Unfortunately, this geometric series grows rapidly and, thus, makes for a bad upper-bound.

Fast UB ($2 * \text{Prev} + 1$)

A slightly better approach would be to take the previous order's length and add one more than the length to ensure that all new delta distances are unique.

Thus, starting with 0, we add 1 to get 1, then add 2 to get 3, then add 4 to get 7. However, since we know that the $O(4)$ is of length 6, we add 7 to get 13 as the upper-bound for $O(5)$. Since the optimal length of $O(5)$ is 11, we add 12 to get an upper-bound of 23 for $O(6)$. These upper-bounds are guaranteed to generate a Golomb ruler based on the previous order's optimal length.

Smart UB

We can find an even lower upper-bound for the higher orders. The order of a ruler is quite small when compared to the length. Thus, the total number of unused marks ($L - {}_{n-1}C_2$) is quite large.

For each OGR, find the smallest unused number (SUN) that, when added to the OGR length, does not generate any existing delta differences and becomes the new maximum for the next OGR. In other words, the $n+1$ new deltas that it generates belong to non-Golomb numbers (highlighted in yellow in Table 2). If the previous set is perfect or no SUN exists (potentially possible, but seems unlikely), then add one more than the length. Numbers highlighted in orange are for orders with multiple lengths and the row with the smallest SUN is chosen.

Note:

1. The deltas of the yellows match the deltas of the OGRs in reverse order.
2. The count of numbers not in a Golomb ruler is $L - {}_{n-1}C_2$. Although this count appears to be increasing, it is not guaranteed as can be seen for $O(23)$ and $O(26)$. The reason for this is due to the SUN chosen and the spread of the OGR numbers.
3. Similarly, the UBs for consecutive numbers are not increasing as can be seen for $UB(18)$, $UB(20)$, $UB(24)$, and $UB(28)$.
4. Only new deltas from $L_{n+1} = L_n + \text{SUN}$ will have to be tested, and not all n new deltas. $L_{n+1} - L_n$ is safe by the definition of SUN. A fixed number from the start will also not have to be tested since some will potentially be bigger than L_n . From largest to smallest, stop testing at the delta larger than L_n .
5. Interestingly enough, $UB(28)$ is exactly its OGR length.

Since $UB(29)$ is equal to 757. It might be faster to test all 29-mark rulers starting at length 757 and test the lengths down. Obviously, to find the smallest length, we would still need to test all the lower-bounds, but this approach might give us a contender faster.

Table 2 – Upper-Bounds for OGRs up to O(29)

| O(n) | n-1C2 | L | SUN | UB | Numbers Not in Golomb Ruler |
|------|-------|-----|-----|-----|---|
| 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | ∅ |
| 2 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 1 | ∅ |
| 3 | 3 | 3 | 4 | 3 | ∅ |
| 4 | 6 | 6 | 7 | 7 | ∅ |
| 5 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | [6] |
| 5 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | [10] |
| 6 | 15 | 17 | 14 | 23 | [14, 15] |
| 6 | 15 | 17 | 18 | 23 | [8, 12] |
| 6 | 15 | 17 | 14 | 23 | [14, 15] |
| 6 | 15 | 17 | 18 | 23 | [10, 15] |
| 7 | 21 | 25 | 26 | 31 | [11, 12, 16, 20] |
| 7 | 21 | 25 | 26 | 31 | [8, 15, 17, 21] |
| 7 | 21 | 25 | 26 | 31 | [13, 17, 20, 21] |
| 7 | 21 | 25 | 20 | 31 | [12, 17, 20, 24] |
| 7 | 21 | 25 | 26 | 31 | [10, 16, 17, 24] |
| 8 | 28 | 34 | 24 | 45 | [16, 20, 24, 26, 27, 29] |
| 9 | 36 | 44 | 28 | 58 | [18, 21, 28, 31, 33, 37, 38, 42] |
| 10 | 45 | 55 | 36 | 72 | [36, 37, 38, 39, 42, 44, 46, 48, 50, 51] |
| 11 | 55 | 72 | 65 | 91 | [11, 22, 30, 35, 38, 40, 45, 48, 49, 52, 55, 56, 58, 61, 62, 65, 67] |
| 11 | 55 | 72 | 26 | 91 | [26, 29, 35, 36, 40, 42, 44, 46, 54, 59, 61, 62, 64, 65, 66, 67, 70] |
| 12 | 66 | 85 | 48 | 98 | [48, 50, 54, 57, 58, 59, 60, 63, 64, 65, 67, 71, 72, 77, 78, 80, 81, 82, 84] |
| 13 | 78 | 106 | 71 | 133 | [24, 31, 44, 49, 50, 51, 53, 58, 66, 67, 71, 72, 75, 76, 77, 78, 79, 82, 86, 88, 90, 91, 92, 95, 100, 102, 103, 105] |
| 14 | 91 | 127 | 56 | 177 | [56, 60, 61, 62, 65, 67, 76, 81, 84, 88, 90, 91, 94, 96, 97, 98, 100, 101, 103, 104, 105, 106, 108, 109, 110, 111, 112, 113, 114, 115, 117, 119, 120, 124, 125, 126] |
| 15 | 105 | 151 | 98 | 183 | [18, 31, 48, 50, 63, 65, 67, 71, 73, 78, 84, 90, 95, 97, 98, 99, 101, 102, 104, 105, 108, 109, 110, 112, 113, 117, 118, 120, 122, 126, 127, 128, 129, 130, 133, 134, 135, 137, 138, 139, 142, 143, 146, 148, 149, 150] |
| 16 | 120 | 177 | 126 | 249 | [23, 37, 38, 40, 54, 63, 69, 70, 71, 73, 77, 79, 80, 81, 84, 86, 88, 90, 93, 96, 97, 98, 99, 103, 105, 110, 119, 120, 122, 125, 126, 127, 128, 129, 132, 135, 138, 140, 141, 143, 144, 147, 148, 153, 154, 155, 156, 158, 160, 161, 165, 169, 170, 171, 172, 174, 175] |
| 17 | 136 | 199 | 89 | 303 | [18, 36, 54, 72, 89, 90, 94, 96, 97, 102, 104, 106, 108, 114, 120, 123, 125, 126, 127, 128, 129, 130, 134, 136, 137, 140, 141, 144, 145, 146, 149, 150, 153, 155, 156, 157, 162, 164, 166, 167, 169, 170, 171, 172, 173, 175, 176, 177, 178, 179, 180, 181, 183, 185, 187, 188, 189, 190, 193, 195, 196, 197, 198] |
| 18 | 153 | 216 | 91 | 288 | [91, 93, 101, 102, 104, 112, 113, 115, 117, 119, 121, 124, 125, 129, 137, 140, 141, 142, 144, 147, 150, 154, 155, 156, 158, 159, 161, 162, 164, 168, 169, 171, 172, 173, 174, 175, 176, 177, 179, 180, 181, 184, 185, 187, 189, 191, 193, 196, 197, 198, 199, 200, 201, 202, 204, 207, 208, 209, 210, 211, 212, 213, 215] |
| 19 | 171 | 246 | 50 | 307 | [50, 54, 63, 65, 85, 86, 91, 92, 106, 109, 110, 117, 127, 135, 136, 139, 140, 141, 143, 145, 148, 149, 150, 151, 154, 156, 157, 160, 164, 166, 167, 171, 173, 175, 176, 177, 178, 180, 182, 183, 185, 188, 191, 192, 193, 194, 195, 196, 197, 200, 202, 205, 207, 209, 211, 212, 213, 215, 216, 218, 219, 220, 222, 223, 224, 226, 228, 229, 234, 235, 237, 238, 239, 243, 244] |
| 20 | 190 | 283 | 98 | 296 | [98, 99, 106, 109, 122, 123, 128, 129, 130, 133, 136, 139, 141, 142, 149, 152, 153, 154, 161, 164, 166, 169, 170, 173, 174, 175, 177, 180, 181, 184, 187, 188, 190, 192, 195, 196, 198, 199, 202, 203, 205, 209, 210, 213, 214, 216, 218, 219, 221, 222, 223, 224, 225, 226, 230, 231, 233, 234, 235, 236, 237, 238, 241, 243, 244, 246, 247, 249, 250, 254, 255, 256, 257, 260, 261, 262, 263, 264, 265, 266, 267, 268, 269, 270, 271, 273, 274, 276, 277, 278, 279, 280, 281] |
| 21 | 210 | 333 | 85 | 381 | [29, 43, 63, 65, 72, 85, 87, 89, 92, 94, 108, 116, 119, 122, 125, 128, 132, 133, 135, 137, 140, 145, 146, 148, 151, 153, 157, 158, 159, 161, 163, 165, 168, 169, 174, 175, 176, 180, 187, 191, 192, 194, 196, 197, 205, 206, 207, 212, 217, 218, 220, 221, 222, 223, 224, 225, 226, 230, 232, 235, 236, 239, 242, 243, 244, 245, 248, 249, 257, 258, 259, 260, 262, 264, 266, 267, 268, 270, 271, 274, 275, 276, 278, 279, 280, 281, 282, 284, 287, 288, 289, 290, 292, 295, 297, 298, 299, 300, 301, 302, 303, 304, 305, 306, 307, 308, 309, 311, 312, 313, 314, 315, 316, 317, 318, 319, 320, 321, 322, 323, 324, 325, 326, 328, 330, 332] |
| 22 | 231 | 356 | 140 | 418 | [24, 32, 33, 41, 46, 48, 72, 75, 96, 102, 120, 138, 140, 143, 144, 154, 155, 156, 160, 166, 168, 172, 173, 175, 176, 181, 184, 186, 187, 188, 189, 191, 192, 196, 198, 199, 201, 205, 207, 211, 212, 215, 216, 218, 226, 230, 233, 236, 237, 238, 240, 241, 242, 243, 245, 246, 251, 255, 257, 258, 259, 264, 265, 266, 267, 268, 272, 273, 274, 275, 276, 278, 279, 280, 281, 284, 285, 288, 289, 292, 293, 294, 295, 296, 297, 299, 300, 301, 302, 303, 304, 305, 306, 307, 308, 309, 311, 312, 314, 315, 317, 318, 319, 320, 322, 323, 324, 325, 326, 328, 331, 333, 334, 335, 336, 337, 338, 343, 345, 346, 348, 349, 350, 351, 354] |
| 23 | 253 | 372 | 119 | 496 | [62, 65, 69, 79, 119, 123, 125, 128, 141, 143, 153, 161, 162, 175, 176, 181, 184, 187, 188, 190, 194, 198, 203, 204, 205, 206, 208, 210, 212, 214, 220, 221, 222, 224, 227, 231, 233, 237, 240, 241, 242, 244, 245, 247, 248, 253, 254, 256, 261, 262, 264, 265, 266, 269, 271, 272, 276, 278, 279, 280, 283, 285, 286, 288, 290, 311, 312, 317, 318, 326, 327, 328, 293, 294, 295, 296, 297, 298, 301, 302, 303, 304, 307, 308, 310, 314, 315, 317, 318, 319, 320, 321, 323, 324, 325, 327, 328, 330, 332, 334, 335, 336, 337, 338, 339, 340, 342, 344, 346, 351, 352, 353, 354, 356, 357, 358, 360, 361, 362, 364, 367, 368, 370, 371] |
| 24 | 276 | 425 | 128 | 491 | [128, 137, 150, 159, 161, 165, 166, 169, 178, 183, 185, 187, 188, 194, 200, 202, 206, 207, 209, 218, 221, 222, 223, 225, 227, 230, 233, 236, 237, 238, 247, 250, 254, 257, 258, 259, 260, 264, 265, 266, 267, 268, 270, 272, 275, 276, 279, 280, 282, 284, 290, 291, 292, 297, 298, 300, 301, 302, 304, 305, 307, 308, 309, 310, 311, 312, 313, 314, 318, 319, 321, 322, 324, 325, 327, 329, 333, 334, 336, 337, 338, 339, 340, 341, 342, 343, 345, 348, 349, 350, 352, 354, 355, 356, 357, 358, 360, 361, 362, 363, 364, 367, 369, 371, 372, 373, 374, 376, 377, 378, 379, 380, 381, 382, 383, 385, 386, 389, 390, 391, 393, 395, 396, 397, 398, 399, 400, 401, 402, 404, 405, 406, 407, 408, 409, 410, 411, 412, 413, 414, 415, 417, 418, 419, 420, 421, 422, 423, 424] |
| 25 | 300 | 480 | 90 | 553 | [81, 90, 93, 103, 110, 111, 120, 139, 153, 171, 172, 174, 176, 183, 184, 192, 196, 198, 200, 204, 210, 213, 216, 220, 221, 223, 227, 231, 232, 238, 241, 242, 243, 247, 249, 254, 255, 256, 257, 259, 262, 264, 267, 269, 272, 275, 279, 280, 283, 284, 286, 288, 291, 292, 294, 295, 296, 297, 300, 309, 311, 312, 317, 318, 326, 327, 328, 329, 330, 331, 332, 335, 336, 337, 338, 339, 341, 344, 345, 346, 347, 348, 349, 350, 351, 352, 353, 356, 358, 361, 362, 363, 364, 366, 369, 370, 371, 373, 374, 375, 377, 378, 379, 380, 381, 383, 385, 386, 388, 390, 391, 393, 397, 398, 399, 400, 401, 403, 404, 405, 406, 407, 409, 410, 411, 412, 413, 414, 415, 416, 417, 418, 421, 422, 423, 424, 425, 426, 427, 429, 432, 433, 434, 435, 436, 437, 439, 440, 442, 443, 444, 445, 446, 448, 449, 450, 452, 453, 454, 456, 457, 458, 460, 461, 462, 463, 464, 465, 466, 469, 470, 471, 472, 473, 474, 475, 476, 477, 478, 479] |
| 26 | 325 | 492 | 159 | 570 | [159, 160, 164, 165, 176, 177, 187, 188, 192, 195, 196, 197, 209, 211, 212, 220, 221, 222, 228, 242, 244, 247, 254, 259, 263, 265, 266, 268, 269, 270, 274, 278, 280, 283, 286, 288, 291, 294, 295, 296, 297, 298, 299, 300, 304, 305, 308, 309, 311, 315, 319, 321, 322, 325, 327, 328, 331, 333, 334, 335, 337, 338, 339, 341, 344, 345, 348, 349, 350, 358, 359, 361, 362, 364, 366, 367, 369, 370, 372, 374, 375, 376, 378, 379, 380, 384, 387, 389, 390, 391, 393, 394, 395, 396, 398, 399, 400, 401, 402, 403, 405, 406, 408, 410, 411, 412, 413, 414, 415, 416, 417, 418, 419, 420, 421, 422, 424, 425, 426, 427, 428, 432, 433, 434, 435, 436, 437, 438, 441, 443, 444, 445, 446, 447, 448, 449, 450, 451, 452, 453, 457, 458, 460, 461, 462, 465, 466, 467, 468, 469, 470, 471, 472, 473, 476, 477, 478, 479, 480, 481, 482, 483, 484, 485, 488, 489, 490] |
| 27 | 351 | 553 | 32 | 651 | [32, 39, 62, 81, 99, 170, 172, 175, 183, 187, 197, 203, 204, 207, 211, 213, 214, 219, 226, 231, 234, 237, 238, 245, 247, 249, 252, 253, 255, 256, 267, 268, 269, 270, 271, 274, 275, 277, 278, 286, 290, 294, 299, 300, 301, 306, 308, 310, 312, 314, 317, 319, 324, 329, 331, 337, 340, 342, 343, 345, 346, 348, 350, 353, 355, 356, 357, 358, 359, 360, 363, 364, 365, 366, 368, 369, 370, 372, 375, 376, 377, 378, 383, 384, 386, 390, 392, 393, 395, 396, 397, 403, 405, 406, 408, 410, 413, 414, 416, 418, 419, 421, 422, 423, 424, 425, 427, 429, 430, 431, 432, 433, 434, 435, 436, 437, 439, 441, 442, 443, 444, 446, 448, 450, 452, 453, 454, 455, 459, 460, 461, 462, 464, 465, 466, 467, 468, 469, 470, 472, 473, 474, 475, 476, 477, 478, 479, 481, 484, 485, 488, 490, 491, 492, 493, 494, 495, 496, 497, 498, 499, 500, 502, 503, 506, 507, 509, 510, 511, 513, 514, 515, 516, 517, 518, 519, 521, 522, 524, 525, 526, 527, 528, 529, 530, 532, 533, 534, 535, 536, 537, 539, 540, 541, 542, 544, 545, 547, 548, 549, 551, 552] |

| O(n) | $n-1C_2$ | L | SUN | UB | Numbers Not in Golomb Ruler |
|------|----------|-----|-----|-----|---|
| 28 | 378 | 585 | 172 | 585 | [172, 175, 187, 204, 207, 211, 213, 214, 219, 226, 234, 237, 238, 245, 249, 252, 253, 256, 267, 268, 269, 270, 271, 274, 275, 277, 278, 286, 294, 299, 300, 301, 306, 308, 310, 312, 314, 317, 319, 324, 329, 331, 337, 340, 342, 345, 346, 348, 350, 353, 355, 356, 357, 358, 359, 363, 366, 368, 369, 370, 372, 375, 376, 377, 378, 383, 384, 386, 390, 392, 393, 395, 396, 397, 403, 405, 406, 408, 410, 413, 414, 416, 418, 419, 421, 422, 423, 424, 425, 427, 429, 430, 431, 432, 434, 435, 436, 437, 439, 441, 442, 444, 446, 448, 450, 452, 453, 454, 455, 459, 460, 461, 462, 464, 465, 466, 467, 468, 469, 470, 472, 473, 474, 475, 476, 477, 478, 481, 484, 485, 491, 492, 493, 494, 495, 496, 497, 498, 499, 500, 502, 503, 506, 507, 509, 510, 511, 513, 514, 515, 516, 517, 518, 521, 522, 524, 525, 526, 527, 528, 529, 530, 532, 533, 534, 535, 536, 537, 539, 540, 541, 542, 545, 547, 548, 549, 551, 552, 554, 555, 556, 557, 558, 559, 560, 561, 562, 563, 564, 565, 566, 567, 568, 569, 571, 572, 573, 574, 575, 576, 577, 578, 579, 580, 581, 583, 584] |

First and Second-to-Last Non-Zero Markers

Now that we have an upper-bound for $O(n)$, we need to also have an upper-bound for the first non-zero marker (L_0) and a lower-bound for the second-to-last non-zero marker (L_{n-1}).

We know that the minimum length of $O(n)$ is $n-1C_2$. Summing forward or backwards, the maximum distance between L_0 and L_1 , and similarly for L_{n-1} and L_n , is $UB - n-2C_2$. Thus, the maximum L_1 is $UB - n-2C_2$ and the minimum L_{n-1} is $n-2C_2$.

Example:

For $n = 7$, the upper-bound is 31. Thus, the markers could be anything in between $[0, 1, 3, 6, 10, 15, 21]$ (increasing deltas) or $[0, 16, 21, 25, 28, 30, 31]$ (decreasing deltas) with a length from 21 to 31. $L(7) = 25$ in this case.

Lower-Bounds

Trivial LB ($n-1C_2$)

For a ruler with n marks, there have to be $n-1C_2$ unique distances between them. Thus, the simplest OGR must be greater than or equal to $n-1C_2$.

Smart LB

Since the length of every OGR of order $O(n)$ must be strictly greater than the length of $O(n-1)$, a better lower-bound is the maximum between $n-1C_2$ and one more than the previous length ($L_{n-1} + 1$). For $n \leq 10$, $n-1C_2$ is the minimum starting point (with equality at 10). However, for $n > 10$, $L_{n-1} + 1$ grows more rapidly. The only way for $n-1C_2$ to grow faster is if there are many short length differences (ΔL) among the OGRs.

Table 3 – Lower-Bounds for OGRs up to $O(29)$

| O(n) | $n-1C_2$ | L | LB | ΔL |
|------|----------|-----|-----|------------|
| 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | – |
| 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 2 |
| 4 | 6 | 6 | 6 | 3 |
| 5 | 10 | 11 | 10 | 5 |
| 6 | 15 | 17 | 15 | 6 |
| 7 | 21 | 25 | 21 | 8 |
| 8 | 28 | 34 | 28 | 9 |
| 9 | 36 | 44 | 36 | 10 |
| 10 | 45 | 55 | 45 | 11 |
| 11 | 55 | 72 | 56 | 17 |
| 12 | 66 | 85 | 73 | 13 |
| 13 | 78 | 106 | 86 | 21 |
| 14 | 91 | 127 | 107 | 21 |
| 15 | 105 | 151 | 128 | 24 |

| O(n) | $n-1C_2$ | L | LB | ΔL |
|------|----------|-----|-----|------------|
| 16 | 120 | 177 | 152 | 26 |
| 17 | 136 | 199 | 178 | 22 |
| 18 | 153 | 216 | 200 | 17 |
| 19 | 171 | 246 | 217 | 30 |
| 20 | 190 | 283 | 247 | 37 |
| 21 | 210 | 333 | 284 | 50 |
| 22 | 231 | 356 | 334 | 23 |
| 23 | 253 | 372 | 357 | 16 |
| 24 | 276 | 425 | 373 | 53 |
| 25 | 300 | 480 | 426 | 55 |
| 26 | 325 | 492 | 481 | 12 |
| 27 | 351 | 553 | 493 | 61 |
| 28 | 378 | 585 | 554 | 32 |

Other LBs

It is only fair to mention that there are other lower-bound estimates^{[2][3]} for the OGR lengths that don't depend on calculating the previous OGR first.

Optimal Direction

Looking at the lower- and upper-bounds compared to the known lengths, for this approach only, starting from the lower-bound appears to be the better approach almost always.

Table 4 – Bound Distances to Length

| O(n) | L - LB | UB - L | Closer |
|------|--------|--------|--------|
| 1 | 0 | 0 | – |
| 2 | 0 | 0 | – |
| 3 | 0 | 0 | – |
| 4 | 0 | 1 | Min |
| 5 | 1 | 2 | Min |
| 6 | 2 | 6 | Min |
| 7 | 4 | 6 | Min |
| 8 | 6 | 11 | Min |
| 9 | 8 | 14 | Min |
| 10 | 10 | 17 | Min |
| 11 | 16 | 19 | Min |
| 12 | 12 | 13 | Min |
| 13 | 20 | 27 | Min |
| 14 | 20 | 50 | Min |
| 15 | 23 | 32 | Min |
| 16 | 25 | 72 | Min |
| 17 | 21 | 104 | Min |
| 18 | 16 | 72 | Min |
| 19 | 29 | 61 | Min |
| 20 | 36 | 13 | Max |
| 21 | 49 | 48 | Max |
| 22 | 22 | 62 | Min |
| 23 | 15 | 124 | Min |
| 24 | 52 | 66 | Min |
| 25 | 54 | 73 | Min |
| 26 | 11 | 78 | Min |
| 27 | 60 | 98 | Min |
| 28 | 31 | 0 | Max |

References

- [1] Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia (2025), https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Golomb_ruler, **Golomb ruler**
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- [3] Shearer, James B. "[Improved LP lower bounds for difference triangle sets](#)", The Electronic Journal of Combinatorics, Volume 6 (1999), Article #R31, pp. 1-6