COLLEGE ALGEBRA

Jay Abramson
Arizona State University

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College Algebra

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

1: Algebra Review

In this chapter, we will review sets of numbers and properties of operations used to manipulate numbers. This understanding will serve as prerequisite knowledge throughout our study of algebra and trigonometry.

1.1: Exponents
1.2: Polynomials
1.3: Factoring Polynomials
1.4: Rational Expressions
1.5: Complex Numbers
1.6: Linear Equations in One Variable
1.6.1: Models and Applications
1.7: Radicals and Rational Expressions
1.8: The Rectangular Coordinate Systems and Graphs
1.9: Functions and Function Notation
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1.1: Exponents

Learning Objectives

- Various rules of Exponents
- Scientific Notation

Mathematicians, scientists, and economists commonly encounter very large and very small numbers. But it may not be obvious how common such figures are in everyday life. For instance, a pixel is the smallest unit of light that can be perceived and recorded by a digital camera. A particular camera might record an image that is $2,048$ pixels by $1,536$ pixels, which is a very high resolution picture. It can also perceive a color depth (gradations in colors) of up to 48 bits per frame, and can shoot the equivalent of 24 frames per second. The maximum possible number of bits of information used to film a one-hour ($3,600$-second) digital film is then an extremely large number.

Using a calculator, we enter $2,048 \times 1,536 \times 48 \times 24 \times 3,600$ and press ENTER. The calculator displays $1.304596316E13$ What does this mean? The "$E13$" portion of the result represents the exponent 13 of ten, so there are a maximum of approximately 1.3×10^{13} bits of data in that one-hour film. In this section, we review rules of exponents first and then apply them to calculations involving very large or small numbers.

Using the Product Rule of Exponents

Consider the product $x^3 \times x^4$. Both terms have the same base, x, but they are raised to different exponents. Expand each expression, and then rewrite the resulting expression.

$$\begin{aligned} x^3 \times x^4 &= \overbrace{x \times x \times x}^{3 \text{ factors}} \times \overbrace{x \times x \times x \times x}^{4 \text{ factors}} \\ &= \overbrace{x \times x \times x \times x \times x \times x \times x}^{7 \text{ factors}} \\ &= x^7 \end{aligned}$$

The result is that $x^3 \times x^4 = x^{3+4} = x^7$.

Notice that the exponent of the product is the sum of the exponents of the terms. In other words, when multiplying exponential expressions with the same base, we write the result with the common base and add the exponents. This is the product rule of exponents.

$$a^m \times a^n = a^{m+n} \tag{1.1.1}$$

Now consider an example with real numbers.

$$2^3 \times 2^4 = 2^{3+4} = 2^7$$

We can always check that this is true by simplifying each exponential expression. We find that 2^3 is 8, 2^4 is 16, and 2^7 is 128. The product 8×16 equals 128, so the relationship is true. We can use the product rule of exponents to simplify expressions that are a product of two numbers or expressions with the same base but different exponents.

THE PRODUCT RULE OF EXPONENTS

For any real number a and natural numbers m and n, the product rule of exponents states that

$$a^m \times a^n = a^{m+n} \tag{1.1.2}$$

Example 1.1.1: Using the Product Rule

Write each of the following products with a single base. Do not simplify further.

a. $t^5 \times t^3$
b. $(-3)^5 \times (-3)$
c. $x^2 \times x^5 \times x^3$

Solution

Use the product rule (Equation 1.1.2) to simplify each expression.

a. $t^5 \times t^3 = t^{5+3} = t^8$
b. $(-3)^5 \times (-3) = (-3)^5 \times (-3)^1 = (-3)^{5+1} = (-3)^6$
c. $x^2 \times x^5 \times x^3$

At first, it may appear that we cannot simplify a product of three factors. However, using the associative property of multiplication, begin by simplifying the first two.

$$x^2 \times x^5 \times x^3 = (x^2 \times x^5) \times x^3 = (x^{2+5}) \times x^3 = x^7 \times x^3 = x^{7+3} = x^{10}$$

Notice we get the same result by adding the three exponents in one step.

$$x^2 \times x^5 \times x^3 = x^{2+5+3} = x^{10}$$

? Exercise 1.1.1

Write each of the following products with a single base. Do not simplify further.

a. $k^6 \times k^9$
b. $\left(\frac{2}{y}\right)^4 \times \left(\frac{2}{y}\right)$
c. $t^3 \times t^6 \times t^5$

Answer a

k^{15}

Answer b

$\left(\frac{2}{y}\right)^5$

Answer c

t^{14}

Using the Quotient Rule of Exponents

The quotient rule of exponents allows us to simplify an expression that divides two numbers with the same base but different exponents. In a similar way to the product rule, we can simplify an expression such as $\frac{y^m}{y^n}$, where $m > n$. Consider the example $\frac{y^9}{y^5}$. Perform the division by canceling common factors.

$$\begin{aligned} \frac{y^9}{y^5} &= \frac{y \cdot y \cdot y \cdot y \cdot y \cdot y \cdot y \cdot y \cdot y}{y \cdot y \cdot y \cdot y \cdot y} \\ &= \frac{y \cdot y \cdot y \cdot y}{1} \\ &= y^4 \end{aligned}$$

Notice that the exponent of the quotient is the difference between the exponents of the divisor and dividend.

$$\frac{a^m}{a^n} = a^{m-n} \tag{1.1.3}$$

In other words, when dividing exponential expressions with the same base, we write the result with the common base and subtract the exponents.

$$\frac{y^9}{y^5} = y^{9-5} = y^4$$

For the time being, we must be aware of the condition $m > n$. Otherwise, the difference $m - n$ could be zero or negative. Those possibilities will be explored shortly. Also, instead of qualifying variables as nonzero each time, we will simplify matters and assume from here on that all variables represent nonzero real numbers.

THE QUOTIENT RULE OF EXPONENTS

For any real number a and natural numbers m and n, such that $m > n$, the quotient rule of exponents states that

$$\frac{a^m}{a^n} = a^{m-n} \tag{1.1.4}$$

Example 1.1.2: Using the Quotient Rule

Write each of the following products with a single base. Do not simplify further.

a. $\frac{(-2)^{14}}{(-2)^9}$
b. $\frac{t^{23}}{t^{15}}$
c. $\frac{(z\sqrt{2})^5}{z\sqrt{2}}$

Solution

Use the quotient rule (Equation 1.1.4) to simplify each expression.

a. $\frac{(-2)^{14}}{(-2)^9} = (-2)^{14-9} = (-2)^5$
b. $\frac{t^{23}}{t^{15}}$=t^{23−15}=t^8\)
c. $\frac{(z\sqrt{2})^5}{z\sqrt{2}} = (z\sqrt{2})^{5-1} = (z\sqrt{2})^4$

Exercise 1.1.2

Write each of the following products with a single base. Do not simplify further.

a. $\frac{s^{75}}{s^{68}}$
b. $\frac{(-3)^6}{-3}$
c. $\frac{(ef^2)^5}{(ef^2)^3}$

Answer a

s^7

Answer b

$(-3)^5$

Answer c

$(ef^2)^2$

Using the Power Rule of Exponents

Suppose an exponential expression is raised to some power. Can we simplify the result? Yes. To do this, we use the power rule of exponents. Consider the expression $(x^2)^3$. The expression inside the parentheses is multiplied twice because it has an exponent of 2. Then the result is multiplied three times because the entire expression has an exponent of 3.

$$\begin{aligned}(x^2)^3 &= (x^2)\times(x^2)\times(x^2)\\ &= x\times x\times x\times x\times x\times x\\ &= x^6\end{aligned}$$

The exponent of the answer is the product of the exponents: $(x^2)^3 = x^{2\cdot 3} = x^6$. In other words, when raising an exponential expression to a power, we write the result with the common base and the product of the exponents.

$$(a^m)^n = a^{m\cdot n} \tag{1.1.5}$$

Be careful to distinguish between uses of the product rule and the power rule. When using the product rule, different terms with the same bases are raised to exponents. In this case, you add the exponents. When using the power rule, a term in exponential notation is raised to a power. In this case, you multiply the exponents.

Table 1.1.1

Product Rule	Power Rule
$5^3\times 5^4 = 5^{3+4} = 5^7$	$(5^3)^4 = 5^{3\times 4} = 5^{12}$
$x^5\times x^2 = x^{5+2} = x^7$	$(x^5)^2 = x^{5\times 2} = x^{10}$
$(3a)^7\times(3a)^{10} = (3a)^{7+10} = (3a)^{17}$	$((3a)^7)^{10} = (3a)^{7\times 10} = (3a)^{70}$

THE POWER RULE OF EXPONENTS

For any real number a and positive integers m and n, the power rule of exponents states that

$$(a^m)^n = a^{m\cdot n} \tag{1.1.6}$$

Example 1.1.3: Using the Power Rule

Write each of the following products with a single base. Do not simplify further.

a. $(x^2)^7$
b. $((2t)^5)^3$
c. $((-3)^5)^{11}$

Solution

Use the power rule (Equation 1.1.6) to simplify each expression.

a. $(x^2)^7 = x^{2\cdot 7} = x^{14}$
b. $((2t)^5)^3 = (2t)^{5\cdot 3} = (2t)^{15}$
c. $((-3)^5)^{11} = (-3)^{5\cdot 11} = (-3)^{55}$

Exercise 1.1.3

Write each of the following products with a single base. Do not simplify further.

a. $((3y)^8)^3$
b. $(t^5)^7$
c. $((-g)^4)^4$

Answer a

$(3y)^{24}$

Answer b

t^{35}

Answer c

$(-g)^{16}$

Using the Zero Exponent Rule of Exponents

Return to the quotient rule. We made the condition that $m > n$ so that the difference $m - n$ would never be zero or negative. What would happen if $m = n$? In this case, we would use the zero exponent rule of exponents to simplify the expression to 1. To see how this is done, let us begin with an example.

$$\frac{t^8}{t^8} = 1$$

If we were to simplify the original expression using the quotient rule, we would have

$$\frac{t^8}{t^8} = t^{8-8} = t^0$$

If we equate the two answers, the result is $t^0 = 1$. This is true for any nonzero real number, or any variable representing a real number.

$$a^0 = 1$$

The sole exception is the expression 0^0. This appears later in more advanced courses, but for now, we will consider the value to be undefined.

THE ZERO EXPONENT RULE OF EXPONENTS

For any nonzero real number a, the zero exponent rule of exponents states that

$$a^0 = 1 \tag{1.1.7}$$

Example 1.1.4: Using the Zero Exponent Rule

Simplify each expression using the zero exponent rule of exponents.

a. $\frac{c^3}{c^3}$
b. $\frac{-3x^5}{x^5}$
c. $\frac{(j^2k)^4}{(j^2k) \times (j^2k)^3}$
d. $\frac{5(rs^2)^2}{(rs^2)^2}$

Solution

Use the zero exponent and other rules to simplify each expression.

a.

$$\begin{aligned}\frac{c^3}{c^3} &= c^{3-3}\\ &= c^0\\ &= 1\end{aligned}$$

b.

$$\begin{aligned}\frac{-3x^5}{x^5} &= -3 \times \frac{x^5}{x^5}\\ &= -3 \times x^{5-5}\\ &= -3 \times x^0\\ &= -3 \times 1\\ &= -3\end{aligned}$$

c.

$$\begin{aligned}\frac{(j^2k)^4}{(j^2k) \times (j^2k)^3} &= \frac{(j^2k)^4}{(j^2k)^{1+3}} && \text{Use the product rule in the denominator}\\ &= \frac{(j^2k)^4}{(j^2k)^4} && \text{Simplify}\\ &= (j^2k)^{4-4} && \text{Use the quotient rule}\\ &= (j^2k)^0 && \text{Simplify}\\ &= 1\end{aligned}$$

d.

$$\begin{aligned}\frac{5(rs^2)^2}{(rs^2)^2} &= 5(rs^2)^{2-2} && \text{Use the quotient rule}\\ &= 5(rs^2)^0 && \text{Simplify}\\ &= 5 \times 1 && \text{Use the zero exponent rule}\\ &= 5 && \text{Simplify}\end{aligned}$$

Exercise 1.1.4

Simplify each expression using the zero exponent rule of exponents.

a. $\frac{t^7}{t^7}$

b. $\frac{(de^2)^{11}}{2(de^2)^{11}}$

c. $\frac{w^4 \times w^2}{w^6}$

d. $\frac{t^3 \times t^4}{t^2 \times t^5}$

Answer a

1

Answer b

$\frac{1}{2}$

Answer c

1

Answer d

1

Using the Negative Rule of Exponents

Another useful result occurs if we relax the condition that $m > n$ in the quotient rule even further. For example, can we simplify $\frac{t^3}{t^5}$? When $m < n$ —that is, where the difference $m - n$ is negative—we can use the negative rule of exponents to simplify the expression to its reciprocal.

Divide one exponential expression by another with a larger exponent. Use our example, $\frac{t^3}{t^5}$.

$$\begin{aligned}\frac{t^3}{t^5} &= \frac{t \times t \times t}{t \times t \times t \times t \times t} \\ &= \frac{1}{t \times t} \\ &= \frac{1}{h^2}\end{aligned}$$

If we were to simplify the original expression using the quotient rule, we would have

$$\begin{aligned}\frac{t^3}{t^5} &= h^{3-5} \\ &= h^{-2}\end{aligned}$$

Putting the answers together, we have $h^{-2} = \frac{1}{h^2}$. This is true for any nonzero real number, or any variable representing a nonzero real number.

A factor with a negative exponent becomes the same factor with a positive exponent if it is moved across the fraction bar—from numerator to denominator or vice versa.

$$a^{-n} = \frac{1}{a^n} \text{ and } a^n = \frac{1}{a^{-n}}$$

We have shown that the exponential expression an is defined when n is a natural number, 0, or the negative of a natural number. That means that an is defined for any integer n. Also, the product and quotient rules and all of the rules we will look at soon hold for any integer n.

THE NEGATIVE RULE OF EXPONENTS

For any nonzero real number a and natural number n, the negative rule of exponents states that

$$a^{-n} = \frac{1}{a^n} \tag{1.1.8}$$

Example 1.1.5: Using the Negative Exponent Rule

Write each of the following quotients with a single base. Do not simplify further. Write answers with positive exponents.

a. $\frac{\theta^3}{\theta^{10}}$

b. $\frac{z^2 \times z}{z^4}$

c. $\frac{(-5t^3)^4}{(-5t^3)^8}$

Solution

a. $\frac{\theta^3}{\theta^{10}} = \theta^{3-10} = \theta^{-7} = \frac{1}{\theta^7}$

b. $\frac{z^2 \times z}{z^4} = \frac{z^{2+1}}{z^4} = \frac{z^3}{z^4} = z^{3-4} = z^{-1} = \frac{1}{z}$

c. $\dfrac{(-5t^3)^4}{(-5t^3)^8} = (-5t^3)^{4-8} = (-5t^3)^{-4} = \dfrac{1}{(-5t^3)^4}$

Exercise 1.1.5

Write each of the following quotients with a single base. Do not simplify further. Write answers with positive exponents.

a. $\dfrac{(-3t)^2}{(-3t)^8}$
b. $\dfrac{f^{47}}{f^{49} \times f}$
c. $\dfrac{2k^4}{5k^7}$

Answer a

$$\frac{1}{(-3t)^6}$$

Answer b

$$\frac{1}{f^3}$$

Answer c

$$\frac{2}{5k^3}$$

Example 1.1.6: Using the Product and Quotient Rules

Write each of the following products with a single base. Do not simplify further. Write answers with positive exponents.

a. $b^2 \times b^{-8}$
b. $(-x)^5 \times (-x)^{-5}$
c. $\dfrac{-7z}{(-7z)^5}$

Solution

a. $b^2 \times b^{-8} = b^{2-8} = b^{-6} = \dfrac{1}{b^6}$
b. $(-x)^5 \times (-x)^{-5} = (-x)^{5-5} = (-x)^0 = 1$
c. $\dfrac{-7z}{(-7z)^5} = \dfrac{(-7z)^1}{(-7z)^5} = (-7z)^{1-5} = (-7z)^{-4} = \dfrac{1}{(-7z)^4}$

Exercise 1.1.6

Write each of the following products with a single base. Do not simplify further. Write answers with positive exponents.

a. $t^{-11} \times t^6$
b. $\dfrac{25^{12}}{25^{13}}$

Answer a

$$t^{-5} = \frac{1}{t^5}$$

Answer b

$$\frac{1}{25}$$

Finding the Power of a Product

To simplify the power of a product of two exponential expressions, we can use the power of a product rule of exponents, which breaks up the power of a product of factors into the product of the powers of the factors. For instance, consider $(pq)^3$. We begin by using the associative and commutative properties of multiplication to regroup the factors.

$$\begin{aligned}(pq)^3 &= (pq)\times(pq)\times(pq)\\ &= p\times q\times p\times q\times p\times q\\ &= p^3\times q^3\end{aligned}$$

In other words, $(pq)^3 = p^3\times q^3$.

THE POWER OF A PRODUCT RULE OF EXPONENTS

For any real numbers a and b and any integer n, the power of a product rule of exponents states that

$$(ab)^n = a^n b^n \tag{1.1.9}$$

Example 1.1.7: Using the Power of a Product Rule

Simplify each of the following products as much as possible using the power of a product rule. Write answers with positive exponents.

a. $(ab^2)^3$
b. $(2t)^{15}$
c. $(-2w^3)^3$
d. $\dfrac{1}{(-7z)^4}$
e. $(e^{-2}f^2)^7$

Solution

Use the product and quotient rules and the new definitions to simplify each expression.

a. $(ab^2)^3 = (a)^3\times(b^2)^3 = a^{1\times3}\times b^{2\times3} = a^3b^6$
b. $(2t)^{15} = (2)^{15}\times(t)^{15} = 2^{15}t^{15} = 32,768t^{15}$
c. $(-2w^3)^3 = (-2)^3\times(w^3)^3 = -8\times w^{3\times3} = -8w^9$
d. $\dfrac{1}{(-7z)^4} = \dfrac{1}{(-7)^4\times(z)^4} = \dfrac{1}{2401z^4}$
e. $(e^{-2}f^2)^7 = (e^{-2})^7\times(f^2)^7 = e^{-2\times7}\times f^{2\times7} = e^{-14}f^{14} = \dfrac{f^{14}}{e^{14}}$

Exercise 1.1.7

Simplify each of the following products as much as possible using the power of a product rule. Write answers with positive exponents.

a. $(g^2h^3)^5$
b. $(5t)^3$
c. $(-3y^5)^3$
d. $\dfrac{1}{(a^6b^7)^3}$
e. $(r^3s^{-2})^4$

Answer a

$g^{10}h^{15}$

Answer b

$125t^3$

Answer c

$-27y^{15}$

Answer d

$\dfrac{1}{a^{18}b^{21}}$

Answer e

$\dfrac{r^{12}}{s^8}$

Finding the Power of a Quotient

To simplify the power of a quotient of two expressions, we can use the power of a quotient rule, which states that the power of a quotient of factors is the quotient of the powers of the factors. For example, let's look at the following example.

$$(e^{-2}f^2)^7 = \frac{f^{14}}{e^{14}} \tag{1.1.10}$$

Let's rewrite the original problem differently and look at the result.

$$\begin{aligned}(e^{-2}f^2)^7 &= \left(\frac{f^2}{e^2}\right)^7 \\ &= \frac{f^{14}}{e^{14}}\end{aligned}$$

It appears from the last two steps that we can use the power of a product rule as a power of a quotient rule.

$$\begin{aligned}(e^{-2}f^2)^7 &= \left(\frac{f^2}{e^2}\right)^7 \\ &= \frac{(f^2)^7}{(e^2)^7} \\ &= \frac{f^{2\times 7}}{e^{2\times 7}} \\ &= \frac{f^{14}}{e^{14}}\end{aligned}$$

THE POWER OF A QUOTIENT RULE OF EXPONENTS

For any real numbers a and b and any integer n, the power of a quotient rule of exponents states that

$$\left(\frac{a}{b}\right)^n = \frac{a^n}{b^n} \tag{1.1.11}$$

Example 1.1.8: Using the Power of a Quotient Rule

Simplify each of the following quotients as much as possible using the power of a quotient rule. Write answers with positive exponents.

a. $\left(\dfrac{4}{z^{11}}\right)^3$

b. $\left(\dfrac{p}{q^3}\right)^6$

c. $\left(\dfrac{-1}{t^2}\right)^{27}$
d. $(j^3k^{-2})^4$
e. $(m^{-2}n^{-2})^3$

Solution

a. $\left(\dfrac{4}{z^{11}}\right)^3 = \dfrac{(4)^3}{(z^{11})^3} = \dfrac{64}{z^{11\times 3}} = \dfrac{64}{z^{33}}$

b. $\left(\dfrac{p}{q^3}\right)^6 = \dfrac{(p)^6}{(q^3)^6} = \dfrac{p^{1\times 6}}{q^{3\times 6}} = \dfrac{p^6}{q^{18}}$

c. $\left(\dfrac{-1}{t^2}\right)^{27} = \dfrac{(-1)^{27}}{(t^2)^{27}} = \dfrac{-1}{t^{2\times 27}} = \dfrac{-1}{t^{54}} = -\dfrac{1}{t^{54}}$

d. $(j^3k^{-2})^4 = \left(\dfrac{j^3}{k^2}\right)^4 = \dfrac{(j^3)^4}{(k^2)^4} = \dfrac{j^{3\times 4}}{k^{2\times 4}} = \dfrac{j^{12}}{k^8}$

e. $(m^{-2}n^{-2})^3 = \left(\dfrac{1}{m^2n^2}\right)^3 = \dfrac{(1)^3}{(m^2n^2)^3} = \dfrac{1}{(m^2)^3(n^2)^3} = \dfrac{1}{m^{2\times 3}n^{2\times 3}} = \dfrac{1}{m^6n^6}$

Exercise 1.1.8

Simplify each of the following quotients as much as possible using the power of a quotient rule. Write answers with positive exponents.

a. $\left(\dfrac{b^5}{c}\right)^3$
b. $\left(\dfrac{5}{u^8}\right)^4$
c. $\left(\dfrac{-1}{w^3}\right)^{35}$
d. $(p^{-4}q^3)^8$
e. $(c^{-5}d^{-3})^4$

Answer a

$$\frac{b^{15}}{c^3}$$

Answer b

$$\frac{625}{u^{32}}$$

Answer c

$$\frac{-1}{w^{105}}$$

Answer d

$$\frac{q^{24}}{p^{32}}$$

Answer e

$$\frac{1}{c^{20}d^{12}}$$

Simplifying Exponential Expressions

Recall that to simplify an expression means to rewrite it by combing terms or exponents; in other words, to write the expression more simply with fewer terms. The rules for exponents may be combined to simplify expressions.

Example 1.1.9: Simplifying Exponential Expressions

Simplify each expression and write the answer with positive exponents only.

a. $(6m^2n^{-1})^3$
b. $17^5 \times 17^{-4} \times 17^{-3}$
c. $\left(\dfrac{u^{-1}v}{v^{-1}}\right)^2$
d. $(-2a^3b^{-1})(5a^{-2}b^2)$
e. $(x^2\sqrt{2})^4(x^2\sqrt{2})^{-4}$
f. $\dfrac{(3w^2)^5}{(6w^{-2})^2}$

Solution

a.
$$\begin{aligned}(6m^2n^{-1})^3 &= (6)^3(m^2)^3(n^{-1})^3 && \text{The power of a product rule}\\ &= 6^3m^{2\times3}n^{-1\times3} && \text{The power rule}\\ &= 216m^6n^{-3} && \text{The power rule}\\ &= \frac{216m^6}{n^3} && \text{The negative exponent rule}\end{aligned}$$

b.
$$\begin{aligned}17^5 \times 17^{-4} \times 17^{-3} &= 17^{5-4-3} && \text{The product rule}\\ &= 17^{-2} && \text{Simplify}\\ &= \frac{1}{17^2} \text{ or } \frac{1}{289} && \text{The negative exponent rule}\end{aligned}$$

c.
$$\begin{aligned}\left(\frac{u^{-1}v}{v^{-1}}\right)^2 &= \frac{(u^{-1}v)^2}{(v^{-1})^2} && \text{The power of a quotient rule}\\ &= \frac{u^{-2}v^2}{v^{-2}} && \text{The power of a product rule}\\ &= u^{-2}v^{2-(-2)} && \text{The quotient rule}\\ &= u^{-2}v^4 && \text{Simplify}\\ &= \frac{v^4}{u^2} && \text{The negative exponent rule}\end{aligned}$$

d.
$$\begin{aligned}\left(-2a^3b^{-1}\right)\left(5a^{-2}b^2\right) &= \left(x^2\sqrt{2}\right)^{4-4} && \text{Commutative and associative laws of multiplication}\\ &= -10 \times a^{3-2} \times b^{-1+2} && \text{The product rule}\\ &= -10ab && \text{Simplify}\end{aligned}$$

e.
$$\begin{aligned}\left(x^2\sqrt{2}\right)^4\left(x^2\sqrt{2}\right)^{-4} &= \left(x^2\sqrt{2}\right)^{4-4} && \text{The product rule}\\ &= \left(x^2\sqrt{2}\right)^0 && \text{Simplify}\\ &= 1 && \text{The zero exponent rule}\end{aligned}$$

f.

https://math.libretexts.org/@go/page/143839

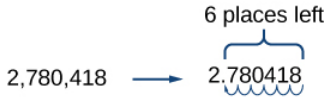
$$\begin{aligned}
\frac{(3w^2)^5}{(6w^{-2})^2} &= \frac{(3)^5\times(w^2)^5}{(6)^2\times(w^{-2})^2} && \text{The power of a product rule}\\
&= \frac{3^5w^{2\times5}}{6^2w^{-2\times2}} && \text{The power rule}\\
&= \frac{243w^{10}}{36w^{-4}} && \text{Simplify}\\
&= \frac{27w^{10-(-4)}}{4} && \text{The quotient rule and reduce fraction}\\
&= \frac{27w^{14}}{4} && \text{Simplify}
\end{aligned}$$

Using Scientific Notation

Recall at the beginning of the section that we found the number 1.3×10^{13} when describing bits of information in digital images. Other extreme numbers include the width of a human hair, which is about $0.00005\ m$, and the radius of an electron, which is about $0.00000000000047\ m$How can we effectively work read, compare, and calculate with numbers such as these?

A shorthand method of writing very small and very large numbers is called scientific notation, in which we express numbers in terms of exponents of 10. To write a number in scientific notation, move the decimal point to the right of the first digit in the number. Write the digits as a decimal number between 1 and 10. Count the number of places n that you moved the decimal point. Multiply the decimal number by 10 raised to a power of n. If you moved the decimal left as in a very large number, n is positive. If you moved the decimal right as in a small large number, n is negative.

For example, consider the number $2,780,418$ Move the decimal left until it is to the right of the first nonzero digit, which is 2.



We obtain $2.780418$by moving the decimal point 6 places to the left. Therefore, the exponent of 10 is 6, and it is positive because we moved the decimal point to the left. This is what we should expect for a large number.

$$2.780418\times10^6$$

Working with small numbers is similar. Take, for example, the radius of an electron, $0.00000000000047\ m$Perform the same series of steps as above, except move the decimal point to the right.

Be careful not to include the leading 0 in your count. We move the decimal point 13 places to the right, so the exponent of 10 is 13. The exponent is negative because we moved the decimal point to the right. This is what we should expect for a small number.

$$4.7\times10^{-13}$$

SCIENTIFIC NOTATION

A number is written in scientific notation if it is written in the form $a\times10^n$, where $1\le|a|<10$ and n is an integer.

Example 1.1.10: Converting Standard Notation to Scientific Notation

Write each number in scientific notation.

a. Distance to Andromeda Galaxy from Earth: $24,000,000,000,000,000,000,000\ m$
b. Diameter of Andromeda Galaxy: $1,300,000,000,000,000,000,000\ m$
c. Number of stars in Andromeda Galaxy: $1,000,000,000,000$
d. Diameter of electron: $0.00000000000094\ m$
e. Probability of being struck by lightning in any single year: 0.00000143

Solution

a. $24,000,000,000,000,000,000,000$ m 22 places

2.4×10^{22} m

b. $1,300,000,000,000,000,000,000$ m 21 places

1.3×10^{21} m

c. $1,000,000,000,000$ 12 places

1×10^{12}

d. 0.00000000000094 m 13 places

9.4×10^{-13} m

e. 0.00000143 6 places

1.43×10^{6}

Analysis

Observe that, if the given number is greater than 1, as in examples a–c, the exponent of 10 is positive; and if the number is less than 1, as in examples d–e, the exponent is negative.

Exercise 1.1.10

Write each number in scientific notation.

a. U.S. national debt per taxpayer (April 2014): $\$152,000$
b. World population (April 2014): $7,158,000,000$
c. World gross national income (April 2014): $\$85,500,000,000,000$
d. Time for light to travel 1 m : 0.00000000334 s
e. Probability of winning lottery (match 6 of 49 possible numbers): 0.0000000715

Answer a

$$\$1.52 \times 10^{5}$$

Answer b

$$7.158 \times 10^{9}$$

Answer c

$$\$8.55 \times 10^{13}$$

Answer d

$$3.34 \times 10^{-9}$$

Answer e

$$7.15 \times 10^{-8}$$

Converting from Scientific to Standard Notation

To convert a number in scientific notation to standard notation, simply reverse the process. Move the decimal n places to the right if n is positive or n places to the left if n is negative and add zeros as needed. Remember, if n is positive, the value of the number is greater than 1, and if n is negative, the value of the number is less than one.

Example 1.1.11: Converting Scientific Notation to Standard Notation

Convert each number in scientific notation to standard notation.

a. 3.547×10^{14}
b. -2×10^{6}
c. 7.91×10^{-7}
d. -8.05×10^{-12}

Solution

a. 3.547×10^{14}

3.54700000000000

$\rightarrow 14$ places

$354,700,000,000,000$

b. -2×10^{6}

-2.000000

$\rightarrow 6$ places

$-2,000,000$

c. 7.91×10^{-7}

0000007.91

$\rightarrow 7$ places

0.000000791

d. -8.05×10^{-12}

-000000000008.05

$\rightarrow 12$ places

-0.00000000000805

Exercise 1.1.11

Convert each number in scientific notation to standard notation.

a. 7.03×10^{5}
b. -8.16×10^{11}
c. -3.9×10^{-13}
d. 8×10^{-6}

Answer a

$703,000$

Answer b

$-816,000,000,000$

Answer c

-0.00000000000039

Answer d

0.000008

Using Scientific Notation in Applications

Scientific notation, used with the rules of exponents, makes calculating with large or small numbers much easier than doing so using standard notation. For example, suppose we are asked to calculate the number of atoms in 1 L of water. Each water molecule contains 3 atoms (2 hydrogen and 1 oxygen). The average drop of water contains around 1.32×1021 molecules of water and 1 L of water holds about 1.22×10^4 average drops. Therefore, there are approximately $3 \cdot (1.32 \times 10^{21}) \cdot (1.22 \times 10^4) \approx 4.83 \times 10^{25}$ atoms in 1 L of water. We simply multiply the decimal terms and add the exponents. Imagine having to perform the calculation without using scientific notation!

When performing calculations with scientific notation, be sure to write the answer in proper scientific notation. For example, consider the product $(7 \times 10^4) \cdot (5 \times 10^6) = 35 \times 10^{10}$. The answer is not in proper scientific notation because 35 is greater than 10. Consider 35 as 3.5×10. That adds a ten to the exponent of the answer.

$$(35) \times 10^{10} = (3.5 \times 10) \times 10^{10} = 3.5 \times (10 \times 10^{10}) = 3.5 \times 10^{11}$$

Example 1.1.12: Using Scientific Notation

Perform the operations and write the answer in scientific notation.

a. $(8.14 \times 10^{-7})(6.5 \times 10^{10})$
b. $(4 \times 10^5) \div (-1.52 \times 10^9)$
c. $(2.7 \times 10^5)(6.04 \times 10^{13})$
d. $(1.2 \times 10^8) \div (9.6 \times 10^5)$
e. $(3.33 \times 10^4)(-1.05 \times 10^7)(5.62 \times 10^5)$

Solutions

a. $$\begin{aligned}(8.14 \times 10^{-7})(6.5 \times 10^{10}) &= (8.14 \times 6.5)(10^{-7} \times 10^{10}) \text{ Commutative and associative properties of multiplication} \\ &= (52.91)(10^3) \text{ Product rule of exponents} \\ &= 5.291 \times 10^4 \text{ Scientific notation}\end{aligned}$$

b. $$\begin{aligned}(4 \times 10^5) \div (-1.52 \times 10^9) &= \left(\frac{4}{-1.52}\right)\left(\frac{10^5}{10^9}\right) \text{ Commutative and associative properties of multiplication} \\ &\approx (-2.63)(10^{-4}) \text{ Quotient rule of exponents} \\ &= -2.63 \times 10^{-4} \text{ Scientific notation}\end{aligned}$$

c. $$\begin{aligned}(2.7 \times 10^5)(6.04 \times 10^{13}) &= (2.7 \times 6.04)(10^5 \times 10^{13}) \text{ Commutative and associative properties of multiplication} \\ &= (16.308)(10^{18}) \text{ Product rule of exponents} \\ &= 1.6308 \times 10^{19} \text{ Scientific notation}\end{aligned}$$

d. $$\begin{aligned}(1.2 \times 10^8) \div (9.6 \times 10^5) &= \left(\frac{1.2}{9.6}\right)\left(\frac{10^8}{10^5}\right) \text{ Commutative and associative properties of multiplication} \\ &= (0.125)(10^3) \text{ Quotient rule of exponents} \\ &= 1.25 \times 10^2 \text{ Scientific notation}\end{aligned}$$

e.

$$\begin{aligned}(3.33\times10^4)(-1.05\times10^7)(5.62\times10^5) &= [3.33\times(-1.05)\times5.62](10^4\times10^7\times10^5)\\ &\approx(-19.65)(10^{16})\\ &=-1.965\times10^{17}\end{aligned}$$

? Exercise 1.1.12

Perform the operations and write the answer in scientific notation.

a. $(-7.5\times10^8)(1.13\times10^{-2})$
b. $(1.24\times10^{11})\div(1.55\times10^{18})$
c. $(3.72\times10^9)(8\times10^3)$
d. $(9.933\times10^{23})\div(-2.31\times10^{17})$
e. $(-6.04\times10^9)(7.3\times10^2)(-2.81\times10^2)$

Answer a

$$-8.475\times10^6$$

Answer b

$$8\times10^{-8}$$

Answer c

$$2.976\times10^{13}$$

Answer d

$$-4.3\times10^6$$

Answer e

$$\approx1.24\times10^{15}$$

✓ Example 1.1.13: Applying Scientific Notation to Solve Problems

In April 2014, the population of the United States was about $308,000,000$ people. The national debt was about $\$17,547,000,000,000$Write each number in scientific notation, rounding figures to two decimal places, and find the amount of the debt per U.S. citizen. Write the answer in both scientific and standard notations.

Solution

The population was $308,000,000=3.08\times10^8$.

The national debt was $\$17,547,000,000,000\approx\$1.75\times10^{13}$.

To find the amount of debt per citizen, divide the national debt by the number of citizens.

$$\begin{aligned}(1.75\times10^{13})\div(3.08\times10^8) &= \left(\frac{1.75}{3.08}\right)(10^5)\\ &\approx0.57\times10^5\\ &=5.7\times10^4\end{aligned}$$

The debt per citizen at the time was about $\$5.7 \times 10^4$, or $\$57,000$.

Exercise 1.1.13

An average human body contains around $30,000,000,000,000$ red blood cells. Each cell measures approximately $0.000008\ m$ long. Write each number in scientific notation and find the total length if the cells were laid end-to-end. Write the answer in both scientific and standard notations.

Answer

Number of cells: 3×10^{13}; length of a cell: $8 \times 10^{-6}\ m$; total length: $2.4 \times 10^8\ m$ or $240,000,000\ m$.

Access these online resources for additional instruction and practice with exponents and scientific notation.

Exponential Notation

Properties of Exponents

Zero Exponent

Simplify Exponent Expressions

Quotient Rule for Exponents

Scientific Notation

Converting to Decimal Notation

Key Equations

Rules of Exponents For nonzero real numbers a and b and integers m and n

Product rule	$a^m \cdot a^n = a^{m+n}$
Quotient rule	$\frac{a^m}{a^n} = a^{m-n}$
Power rule	$(a^m)^n = a^{m \cdot n}$
Zero exponent rule	$a^0 = 1$
Negative rule	$a^{-n} = \frac{1}{a^n}$
Power of a product rule	$(a \cdot b)^n = a^n \cdot b^n$
Power of a quotient rule	$\left(\frac{a}{b}\right)^n = \frac{a^n}{b^n}$

Key Concepts

- Products of exponential expressions with the same base can be simplified by adding exponents. See Example.
- Quotients of exponential expressions with the same base can be simplified by subtracting exponents. See Example.
- Powers of exponential expressions with the same base can be simplified by multiplying exponents. See Example.
- An expression with exponent zero is defined as 1. See Example.
- An expression with a negative exponent is defined as a reciprocal. See Example and Example.
- The power of a product of factors is the same as the product of the powers of the same factors. See Example.
- The power of a quotient of factors is the same as the quotient of the powers of the same factors. See Example.
- The rules for exponential expressions can be combined to simplify more complicated expressions. See Example.
- Scientific notation uses powers of 10 to simplify very large or very small numbers. See Example and Example.
- Scientific notation may be used to simplify calculations with very large or very small numbers. See Example and Example.

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1.2: Polynomials

Learning Objectives

In this section students will:

- Identify the degree and leading coefficient of polynomials.
- Add and subtract polynomials.
- Multiply polynomials.
- Use FOIL to multiply binomials.
- Perform operations with polynomia
- ls of several variables.

Earl is building a doghouse, whose front is in the shape of a square topped with a triangle. There will be a rectangular door through which the dog can enter and exit the house. Earl wants to find the area of the front of the doghouse so that he can purchase the correct amount of paint. Using the measurements of the front of the house, shown in Figure 1.2.1, we can create an expression that combines several variable terms, allowing us to solve this problem and others like it.

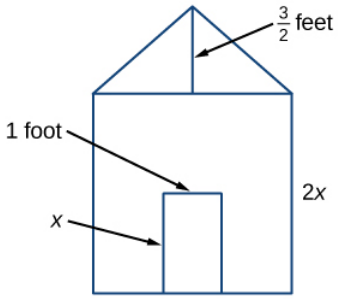


Figure 1.2.1

- First find the area of the square in square feet.

$$\begin{aligned} A &= s^2 \\ &= (2x)^2 \\ &= 4x^2 \end{aligned}$$

- Then find the area of the triangle in square feet.

$$\begin{aligned} A &= \frac{1}{2}bh \\ &= \frac{1}{2}(2x)\left(\frac{3}{2}\right) \\ &= \frac{3}{2}x \end{aligned}$$

- Next find the area of the rectangular door in square feet.

$$\begin{aligned} A &= lw \\ &= x \times 1 \\ &= x \end{aligned}$$

The area of the front of the doghouse can be found by adding the areas of the square and the triangle, and then subtracting the area of the rectangle. When we do this, we get

$$4x^2 + \frac{3}{2}x - x \ \ ft^2$$

or

$$4x^2 + \frac{1}{2}x \ \ ft^2$$

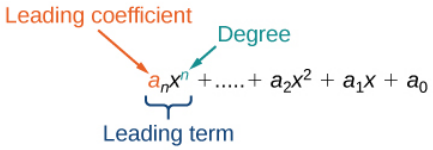
In this section, we will examine expressions such as this one, which combine several variable terms.

Identifying the Degree and Leading Coefficient of Polynomials

The formula just found is an example of a **polynomial**, which is a sum of or difference of terms, each consisting of a variable raised to a nonnegative integer power. A number multiplied by a variable raised to an exponent, such as 384π, is known as a **coefficient**. Coefficients can be positive, negative, or zero, and can be whole numbers, decimals, or fractions. Each product $a_i x^i$, such as $384\pi w$, is a **term of a polynomial**. If a term does not contain a variable, it is called a constant.

A polynomial containing only one term, such as $5x^4$, is called a **monomial**. A polynomial containing two terms, such as $2x-9$, is called a **binomial**. A polynomial containing three terms, such as $-3x^2+8x-7$, is called a **trinomial**.

We can find the **degree** of a polynomial by identifying the highest power of the variable that occurs in the polynomial. The term with the highest degree is called the **leading term** because it is usually written first. The coefficient of the leading term is called the **leading coefficient**. When a polynomial is written so that the powers are descending, we say that it is in standard form.



Polynomials

A polynomial is an expression that can be written in the form

$$a_n x^n + \ldots + a_2 x^2 + a_1 x + a_0 \tag{1.2.1}$$

Each real number ai is called a **coefficient**. The number a_0 that is not multiplied by a variable is called aconstant. Each product $a_i x^i$ is a **term of a polynomial**. The highest power of the variable that occurs in the polynomial is called the **degree** of a polynomial. The **leading term** is the term with the highest power, and its coefficient is called the **leading coefficient.**

How to: Given a polynomial expression, identify the degree and leading coefficient.

1. Find the highest power of x to determine the degree.
2. Identify the term containing the highest power of x to find the leading term.
3. Identify the coefficient of the leading term.

Example 1.2.1: Identifying the Degree and Leading Coefficient of a Polynomial

For the following polynomials, identify the degree, the leading term, and the leading coefficient.

a. $3+2x^2-4x^3$
b. $5t^5-2t^3+7t$
c. $6p-p^3-2$

Solution

a. The highest power of x is 3, so the degree is 3. The leading term is the term containing that degree, $-4x^3$. The leading coefficient is the coefficient of that term, -4.
b. The highest power of t is 5, so the degree is 5. The leading term is the term containing that degree, $5t^5$. The leading coefficient is the coefficient of that term, 5.
c. The highest power of p is 3, so the degree is 3. The leading term is the term containing that degree, $-p^3$, The leading coefficient is the coefficient of that term, -1.

Exercise 1.2.1

Identify the degree, leading term, and leading coefficient of the polynomial $4x^2 - x^6 + 2x - 6$.

Answer

The degree is 6, the leading term is $-x^6$, and the leading coefficient is -1.

Adding and Subtracting Polynomials

We can add and subtract polynomials by combining like terms, which are terms that contain the same variables raised to the same exponents. For example, $5x^2$ and $-2x^2$ are like terms, and can be added to get $3x^2$, but $3x$ and $3x^2$ are not like terms, and therefore cannot be added.

How to: Given multiple polynomials, add or subtract them to simplify the expressions.

1. Combine like terms.
2. Simplify and write in standard form.

Example 1.2.2: Adding Polynomials

Find the sum.

$$(12x^2 + 9x - 21) + (4x^3 + 8x^2 - 5x + 20)$$

Solution

$$4x^3 + (12x^2 + 8x^2) + (9x - 5x) + (-21 + 20) \quad \text{Combine like terms}$$
$$4x^3 + 20x^2 + 4x - 1 \quad \text{Simplify}$$

Analysis

We can check our answers to these types of problems using a graphing calculator. To check, graph the problem as given along with the simplified answer. The two graphs should be equivalent. Be sure to use the same window to compare the graphs. Using different windows can make the expressions seem equivalent when they are not.

Exercise 1.2.2

Find the sum.

$$(2x^3 + 5x^2 - x + 1) + (2x^2 - 3x - 4)$$

Answer

$2x^3 + 7x^2 - 4x - 3$

Example 1.2.3: Subtracting Polynomials

Find the difference.

$$(7x^4 - x^2 + 6x + 1) - (5x^3 - 2x^2 + 3x + 2)$$

Solution

$7x^4 - 5x^3 + (-x^2 + 2x^2) + (6x - 3x) + (1 - 2)$ Combine like terms

$7x^4 - 5x^3 + x^2 + 3x - 1$ Simplify

Analysis

Note that finding the difference between two polynomials is the same as adding the opposite of the second polynomial to the first.

Exercise 1.2.3

Find the difference.

$$(-7x^3-7x^2+6x-2)-(4x^3-6x^2-x+7)$$

Answer

$-11x^3-x^2+7x-9$

Multiplying Polynomials

Multiplying polynomials is a bit more challenging than adding and subtracting polynomials. We must use the distributive property to multiply each term in the first polynomial by each term in the second polynomial. We then combine like terms. We can also use a shortcut called the FOIL method when multiplying binomials. Certain special products follow patterns that we can memorize and use instead of multiplying the polynomials by hand each time. We will look at a variety of ways to multiply polynomials.

Multiplying Polynomials Using the Distributive Property

To multiply a number by a polynomial, we use the distributive property. The number must be distributed to each term of the polynomial. We can distribute the 2 in $2(x+7)$ to obtain the equivalent expression $2x+14$. When multiplying polynomials, the distributive property allows us to multiply each term of the first polynomial by each term of the second. We then add the products together and combine like terms to simplify.

How to: Given the multiplication of two polynomials, use the distributive property to simplify the expression.

1. Multiply each term of the first polynomial by each term of the second.
2. Combine like terms.
3. Simplify.

Example 1.2.4: Multiplying Polynomials Using the Distributive Property

Find the product.

$$(2x+1)(3x^2-x+4)$$

Solution

$$\begin{aligned} &2x(3x^2-x+4)+1(3x^2-x+4) && \text{Use the distributive property}\\ &(6x^3-2x^2+8x)+(3x^2-x+4) && \text{Multiply}\\ &6x^3+(-2x^2+3x^2)+(8x-x)+4 && \text{Combine like terms}\\ &6x^3+x^2+7x+4 && \text{Simplify}\end{aligned}$$

Analysis

We can use a table to keep track of our work, as shown in Table 1.2.1. Write one polynomial across the top and the other down the side. For each box in the table, multiply the term for that row by the term for that column. Then add all of the terms together, combine like terms, and simplify.

Table 1.2.1

	$3x^2$	$-x$	$+4$
$2x$	$6x^3$	$-2x^2$	$8x$
$+1$	$3x^2$	$-x$	4

Exercise 1.2.4

Find the product.

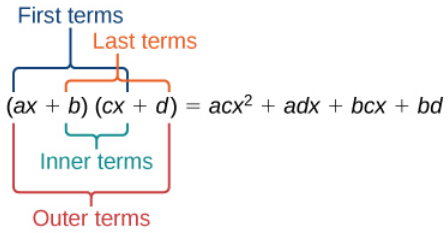
$(3x+2)(x^3-4x^2+7)$

Answer

$3x^4-10x^3-8x^2+21x+14$

Using FOIL to Multiply Binomials

A shortcut called FOIL is sometimes used to find the product of two binomials. It is called FOIL because we multiply the first terms, the outer terms, the inner terms, and then the last terms of each binomial.



The FOIL method arises out of the distributive property. We are simply multiplying each term of the first binomial by each term of the second binomial, and then combining like terms.

FOIL to simplify expression

Given two binomials, use FOIL to simplify the expression.

1. Multiply the outer terms of the binomials.
2. Multiply the last terms of each binomial.
3. Combine like terms and simplify.

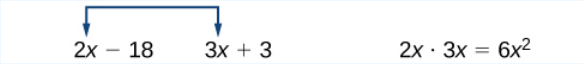
Example 1.2.5: Using FOIL to Multiply Binomials

Use FOIL to find the product.

$$(2x-10)(3x+3)$$

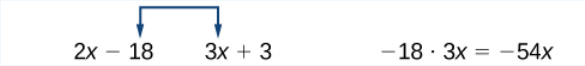
Solution

Find the product of the first terms.



Find the product of the outer terms.

Find the product of the inner terms.



Find the product of the last terms.

$$
\begin{aligned}
&6x^2+6x-54x-54 && \text{Add the products}\\
&6x^2+(6x-54x)-54 && \text{Combine like terms}\\
&6x^2-48x-54 && \text{Simplify}
\end{aligned}
$$

? Exercise 1.2.5

Use FOIL to find the product.

$$(x+7)(3x-5)$$

Answer

$3x^2+16x-35$

Perfect Square Trinomials

Certain binomial products have special forms. When a binomial is squared, the result is called a perfect square trinomial. We can find the square by multiplying the binomial by itself. However, there is a special form that each of these perfect square trinomials takes, and memorizing the form makes squaring binomials much easier and faster. Let's look at a few perfect square trinomials to familiarize ourselves with the form.

$$(x+5)^2=x^2+10x+25$$

$$(x-3)^2=x^2-6x+9$$

$$(4x-1)^2=16x^2-8x+1$$

Notice that the first term of each trinomial is the square of the first term of the binomial and, similarly, the last term of each trinomial is the square of the last term of the binomial. The middle term is double the product of the two terms. Lastly, we see that the first sign of the trinomial is the same as the sign of the binomial.

Perfect Square Trinomials

When a binomial is squared, the result is the first term squared added to double the product of both terms and the last term squared.

$$(x+a)^2=(x+a)(x+a)=x^2+2ax+a^2 \tag{1.2.2}$$

How to: Given a binomial, square it using the formula for perfect square trinomials.

1. Square the first term of the binomial.
2. Square the last term of the binomial.
3. For the middle term of the trinomial, double the product of the two terms.
4. Add and simplify.

✓ Example 1.2.6: Expanding Perfect Squares

Expand $(3x-8)^2$.

Solution

Begin by squaring the first term and the last term. For the middle term of the trinomial, double the product of the two terms.

$$
\begin{aligned}
&(3x)^2-2(3x)(8)+(-8)^2\\
&9x^2-48x+64 && \text{Simplify}
\end{aligned}
$$

Exercise 1.2.6

Expand $(4x-1)^2$.

Answer

$16x^2-8x+1$

Difference of Squares

Another special product is called the difference of squares, which occurs when we multiply a binomial by another binomial with the same terms but the opposite sign. Let's see what happens when we multiply $(x+1)(x-1)$ using the FOIL method.

$$\begin{aligned}(x+1)(x-1) &= x^2-x+x-1\\ &= x^2-1\end{aligned}$$

The middle term drops out, resulting in a difference of squares. Just as we did with the perfect squares, let's look at a few examples.

$$(x+5)(x-5)=x^2-25$$
$$(x+11)(x-11)=x^2-121$$
$$(2x+3)(2x-3)=4x^2-9$$

Because the sign changes in the second binomial, the outer and inner terms cancel each other out, and we are left only with the square of the first term minus the square of the last term.

Q&A

Is there a special form for the sum of squares?

No. The difference of squares occurs because the opposite signs of the binomials cause the middle terms to disappear. There are no two binomials that multiply to equal a sum of squares.

Difference of Squares

When a binomial is multiplied by a binomial with the same terms separated by the opposite sign, the result is the square of the first term minus the square of the last term.

$$(a+b)(a-b)=a^2-b^2 \tag{1.2.3}$$

Howto: Given a binomial multiplied by a binomial with the same terms but the opposite sign, find the difference of squares.

1. Square the first term of the binomials.
2. Square the last term of the binomials.
3. Subtract the square of the last term from the square of the first term.

Example 1.2.7: Multiplying Binomials Resulting in a Difference of Squares

Multiply $(9x+4)(9x-4)$.

Solution

Square the first term to get $(9x)^2=81x^2$. Square the last term to get $4^2=16$. Subtract the square of the last term from the square of the first term to find the product of $81x^2-16$.

Exercise 1.2.7

Multiply $(2x+7)(2x-7)$.

Answer

$4x^2-49$

Performing Operations with Polynomials of Several Variables

We have looked at polynomials containing only one variable. However, a polynomial can contain several variables. All of the same rules apply when working with polynomials containing several variables. Consider an example:

$(a+2b)(4a-b-c)a(4a-b-c)+2b(4a-b-c)$	Use the distributive property
$4a^2-ab-ac+8ab-2b^2-2bc$	Multiply
$4a^2+(-ab+8ab)-ac-2b^2-2bc$	Combine like terms
$4a^2+7ab-ac-2bc-2b^2$	Simplify

Example 1.2.8: Multiplying Polynomials Containing Several Variables

Multiply $(x+4)(3x-2y+5)$.

Solution

$x(3x-2y+5)+4(3x-2y+5)$	Use the distributive property
$3x^2-2xy+5x+12x-8y+20$	Multiply
$3x^2-2xy+(5x+12x)-8y+20$	Combine like terms
$3x^2-2xy+17x-8y+20$	Simplify

Exercise 1.2.8

Multiply $(3x-1)(2x+7y-9)$.

Answer

$6x^2+21xy-29x-7y+9$

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Access these online resources for additional instruction and practice with polynomials.

1. Adding and Subtracting Polynomials
2. Multiplying Polynomials
3. Special Products of Polynomials

Key Equations

perfect square trinomial	$(x+a)^2=(x+a)(x+a)=x^2+2ax+a^2$
difference of squares	$(a+b)(a-b)=a^2-b^2$

Key Concepts

- A polynomial is a sum of terms each consisting of a variable raised to a non-negative integer power. The degree is the highest power of the variable that occurs in the polynomial. The leading term is the term containing the highest degree, and the leading coefficient is the coefficient of that term. See Example.
- We can add and subtract polynomials by combining like terms. See Example and Example.

- To multiply polynomials, use the distributive property to multiply each term in the first polynomial by each term in the second. Then add the products. See Example.
- FOIL (First, Outer, Inner, Last) is a shortcut that can be used to multiply binomials. See Example.
- Perfect square trinomials and difference of squares are special products. See Example and Example.
- Follow the same rules to work with polynomials containing several variables. See Example.

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1.3: Factoring Polynomials

Learning Objectives

In this section students will:

- Factor the greatest common factor of a polynomial.
- Factor a trinomial.
- Factor by grouping.
- Factor a perfect square trinomial.
- Factor a difference of squares.
- Factor the sum and difference of cubes.
- Factor expressions using fractional or negative exponents.

Imagine that we are trying to find the area of a lawn so that we can determine how much grass seed to purchase. The lawn is the green portion in Figure 1.3.1.

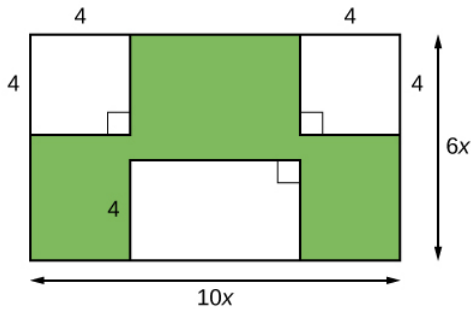

Figure 1.3.1

The area of the entire region can be found using the formula for the area of a rectangle.

$$\begin{aligned} A &= lw \\ &= 10x \times 6x \\ &= 60x^2 \ units^2 \end{aligned}$$

The areas of the portions that do not require grass seed need to be subtracted from the area of the entire region. The two square regions each have an area of $A = s^2 = 4^2 = 16 \ units^2$. The other rectangular region has one side of length $10x - 8$ and one side of length 4, giving an area of

$$A = lw = 4(10x - 8) = 40x - 32 \text{ units}^2.$$

So the region that must be subtracted has an area of

$$2(16) + 40x - 32 = 40x \text{ units}^2.$$

The area of the region that requires grass seed is found by subtracting $60x^2 - 40x$ units^2. This area can also be expressed in factored form as $20x(3x - 2)$ units^2. We can confirm that this is an equivalent expression by multiplying.

Many polynomial expressions can be written in simpler forms by factoring. In this section, we will look at a variety of methods that can be used to factor polynomial expressions.

Factoring the Greatest Common Factor of a Polynomial

When we study fractions, we learn that the greatest common factor (GCF) of two numbers is the largest number that divides evenly into both numbers. For instance, 4 is the GCF of 16 and 20 because it is the largest number that divides evenly into both 16 and 20 The GCF of polynomials works the same way: $4x$ is the GCF of $16x$ and $20x^2$ because it is the largest polynomial that divides evenly into both $16x$ and $20x^2$.

When factoring a polynomial expression, our first step should be to check for a GCF. Look for the GCF of the coefficients, and then look for the GCF of the variables.

Definition: Greatest Common Factor

The *greatest common factor* (GCF) of polynomials is the largest polynomial that divides evenly into the polynomials.

Howto: Given a polynomial expression, factor out the greatest common factor

1. Identify the GCF of the coefficients.
2. Identify the GCF of the variables.
3. Combine to find the GCF of the expression.
4. Determine what the GCF needs to be multiplied by to obtain each term in the expression.
5. Write the factored expression as the product of the GCF and the sum of the terms we need to multiply by.

Example 1.3.1: Factoring the Greatest Common Factor

Factor $6x^3y^3+45x^2y^2+21xy$.

Solution

First, find the GCF of the expression. The GCF of 6, 45, and 21 is 3. The GCF of x^3,x^2, and x is x. (Note that the GCF of a set of expressions in the form x^n will always be the exponent of lowest degree.) And the GCF of y^3,y^2, and y is y. Combine these to find the GCF of the polynomial, $3xy$.

Next, determine what the GCF needs to be multiplied by to obtain each term of the polynomial. We find that

- $3xy(2x^2y^2)=6x^3y^3$,
- $3xy(15xy)=45x^2y^2$, and
- $3xy(7)=21xy$.

Finally, write the factored expression as the product of the GCF and the sum of the terms we needed to multiply by.

$$(3xy)(2x^2y^2+15xy+7)$$

Analysis

After factoring, we can check our work by multiplying. Use the distributive property to confirm that

$$(3xy)(2x^2y^2+15xy+7)=6x^3y^3+45x^2y^2+21xy$$

Exercise 1.3.1

Factor $x(b^2-a)+6(b^2-a)$ by pulling out the GCF.

Answer

$(b^2-a)(x+6)$

Factoring a Trinomial with Leading Coefficient 1

Although we should always begin by looking for a GCF, pulling out the GCF is not the only way that polynomial expressions can be factored. The polynomial x^2+5x+6 has a GCF of 1, but it can be written as the product of the factors $(x+2)$ and $(x+3)$.

Trinomials of the form x^2+bx+c can be factored by finding two numbers with a product of c and a sum of b. The trinomial $x^2+10x+16$, for example, can be factored using the numbers 2 and 8 because the product of those numbers is 16 and their sum is 10. The trinomial can be rewritten as the product of $(x+2)$ and $(x+8)$.

FACTORING A TRINOMIAL WITH LEADING COEFFICIENT 1

A trinomial of the form x^2+bx+c can be written in factored form as $(x+p)(x+q)$ where $pq=c$ and $p+q=b$.

Q&A: Can every trinomial be factored as a product of binomials?

No. Some polynomials cannot be factored. These polynomials are said to be *prime*.

Howto: Given a trinomial in the form $x^2 + bx + c$, factor it

1. List factors of c.
2. Find p and q, a pair of factors of c with a sum of b.
3. Write the factored expression $(x+p)(x+q)$.

Example 1.3.2: Factoring a Trinomial with Leading Coefficient 1

Factor $x^2+2x-15$.

Solution

We have a trinomial with leading coefficient 1, $b=2$, and $c=-15$. We need to find two numbers with a product of -15 and a sum of 2. In Table 1.3.1, we list factors until we find a pair with the desired sum.

Table 1.3.1

Factors of −15	Sum of Factors
1,−15	−14
−1,15	14
3,−5	−2
−3,5	

Now that we have identified p and q as -3 and 5, write the factored form as $(x-3)(x+5)$.

Analysis

We can check our work by multiplying. Use FOIL to confirm that $(x-3)(x+5)=x^2+2x-15$.

Q&A: Does the order of the factors matter?

No. Multiplication is commutative, so the order of the factors does not matter.

Exercise 1.3.2

Factor x^2-7x+6 .

Answer

$(x-6)(x-1)$

Factoring by Grouping

Trinomials with leading coefficients other than 1 are slightly more complicated to factor. For these trinomials, we can **factor by grouping** by dividing the x term into the sum of two terms, factoring each portion of the expression separately, and then factoring out the GCF of the entire expression. The trinomial $2x^2+5x+3$ can be rewritten as $(2x+3)(x+1)$ using this process. We begin by rewriting the original expression as $2x^2+2x+3x+3$ and then factor each portion of the expression to obtain $2x(x+1)+3(x+1)$. We then pull out the GCF of $(x+1)$ to find the factored expression.

Factor by Grouping

To factor a trinomial in the form ax^2+bx+c by grouping, we find two numbers with a product of ac and a sum of b. We use these numbers to divide the x term into the sum of two terms and factor each portion of the expression separately, then factor out the GCF of the entire expression.

Howto: Given a trinomial in the form ax^2+bx+c, factor by grouping.

1. List factors of ac.
2. Find p and q, a pair of factors of ac with a sum of b.
3. Rewrite the original expression as $ax^2+px+qx+c$.
4. Pull out the GCF of ax^2+px.
5. Pull out the GCF of $qx+c$.
6. Factor out the GCF of the expression.

Example 1.3.3: Factoring a Trinomial by Grouping

Factor $5x^2+7x-6$ by grouping.

Solution

We have a trinomial with $a=5, b=7$, and $c=-6$. First, determine $ac=-30$. We need to find two numbers with a product of -30 and a sum of 7. In the table below, we list factors until we find a pair with the desired sum.

Table 1.3.2

Factors of −30	Sum of Factors
1,−30	−29
−1,30	29
2,−15	−13
−2,15	13
3,−10	−7
−3,10	7

So $p=-3$ and $q=10$.

$5x^2-3x+10x-6$ Rewrite the original expression as $ax^2+px+qx+c$.

$x(5x-3)+2(5x-3)$ Factor out the GCF of each part

$(5x-3)(x+2)$ Factor out the GCF of the expression.

Analysis

We can check our work by multiplying. Use FOIL to confirm that $(5x-3)(x+2)=5x^2+7x-6$.

Exercise 1.3.3

Factor:

a. $2x^2+9x+9$
b. $6x^2+x-1$

Answer a

$(2x+3)(x+3)$

Answer b

$(3x-1)(2x+1)$

Factoring a Perfect Square Trinomial

A perfect square trinomial is a trinomial that can be written as the square of a binomial. Recall that when a binomial is squared, the result is the square of the first term added to twice the product of the two terms and the square of the last term.

$$a^2+2ab+b^2=(a+b)^2 \tag{1.3.1}$$

and

$$a^2-2ab+b^2=(a-b)^2 \tag{1.3.2}$$

We can use this equation to factor any perfect square trinomial.

Perfect Square Trinomials

A perfect square trinomial can be written as the square of a binomial:

$$a^2+2ab+b^2=(a+b)^2 \tag{1.3.3}$$

Howto: Given a perfect square trinomial, factor it into the square of a binomial

1. Confirm that the first and last term are perfect squares.
2. Confirm that the middle term is twice the product of ab.
3. Write the factored form as $(a+b)^2$.

Example 1.3.4: Factoring a Perfect Square Trinomial

Factor $25x^2+20x+4$.

Solution

Notice that $25x^2$ and 4 are perfect squares because $25x^2=(5x)^2$ and $4=2^2$. Then check to see if the middle term is twice the product of $5x$ and 2. The middle term is, indeed, twice the product: $2(5x)(2)=20x$. Therefore, the trinomial is a perfect square trinomial and can be written as $(5x+2)^2$.

Exercise 1.3.4

Factor $49x^2-14x+1$.

Answer

$(7x-1)^2$

Factoring a Difference of Squares

A difference of squares is a perfect square subtracted from a perfect square. Recall that a difference of squares can be rewritten as factors containing the same terms but opposite signs because the middle terms cancel each other out when the two factors are multiplied.

$$a^2-b^2=(a+b)(a-b) \tag{1.3.4}$$

We can use this equation to factor any differences of squares.

Differences of Squares

A difference of squares can be rewritten as two factors containing the same terms but opposite signs.

$$a^2 - b^2 = (a+b)(a-b) \tag{1.3.5}$$

Howto: Given a difference of squares, factor it into binomials

1. Confirm that the first and last term are perfect squares.
2. Write the factored form as $(a+b)(a-b)$.

Example 1.3.5: Factoring a Difference of Squares

Factor $9x^2 - 25$.

Solution

Notice that $9x^2$ and 25 are perfect squares because $9x^2 = (3x)^2$ and $25 = 5^2$. The polynomial represents a difference of squares and can be rewritten as $(3x+5)(3x-5)$.

Exercise 1.3.5

Factor $81y^2 - 100$.

Answer

$(9y+10)(9y-10)$

Q&A: Is there a formula to factor the sum of squares?

No. A sum of squares cannot be factored.

Factoring the Sum and Difference of Cubes

Now, we will look at two new special products: the sum and difference of cubes. Although the sum of squares cannot be factored, the sum of cubes can be factored into a binomial and a trinomial.

$$a^3 + b^3 = (a+b)(a^2 - ab + b^2) \tag{1.3.6}$$

Similarly, the sum of cubes can be factored into a binomial and a trinomial, but with different signs.

$$a^3 - b^3 = (a-b)(a^2 + ab + b^2) \tag{1.3.7}$$

We can use the acronym SOAP to remember the signs when factoring the sum or difference of cubes. The first letter of each word relates to the signs: Same Opposite Always Positive. For example, consider the following example.

$$x^3 - 2^3 = (x-2)(x^2 + 2x + 4) \tag{1.3.8}$$

The sign of the first 2 is the same as the sign between $x^3 - 2^3$. The sign of the $2x$ term is opposite the sign between $x^3 - 2^3$. And the sign of the last term, 4, is always positive.

Sum and Difference of Cubes

We can factor the sum of two cubes as

$$a^3 + b^3 = (a+b)(a^2 - ab + b^2) \tag{1.3.9}$$

We can factor the difference of two cubes as

$$a^3 - b^3 = (a-b)(a^2 + ab + b^2) \tag{1.3.10}$$

Howto: Given a sum of cubes or difference of cubes, factor it

1. Confirm that the first and last term are cubes, a^3+b^3 or a^3-b^3.
2. For a sum of cubes, write the factored form as $(a+b)(a^2-ab+b^2)$. For a difference of cubes, write the factored form as $(a-b)(a^2+ab+b^2)$.

Example 1.3.6: Factoring a Sum of Cubes

Factor x^3+512.

Solution

Notice that x^3 and 512 are cubes because $8^3=512$. Rewrite the sum of cubes as $(x+8)(x^2-8x+64)$.

Analysis

After writing the sum of cubes this way, we might think we should check to see if the trinomial portion can be factored further. However, the trinomial portion cannot be factored, so we do not need to check.

Exercise 1.3.6

Factor the sum of cubes: $216a^3+b^3$.

Answer

$(6a+b)(36a^2-6ab+b^2)$

Example 1.3.7: Factoring a Difference of Cubes

Factor $8x^3-125$.

Solution

Notice that $8x^3$ and 125 are cubes because $8x^3=(2x)^3$ and $125=5^3$. Write the difference of cubes as $(2x-5)(4x^2+10x+25)$.

Analysis

Just as with the sum of cubes, we will not be able to further factor the trinomial portion.

Exercise 1.3.7

Factor the difference of cubes: $1000x^3-1$

Answer

$(10x-1)(100x^2+10x+1)$

Factoring Expressions with Fractional or Negative Exponents

Expressions with fractional or negative exponents can be factored by pulling out a GCF. Look for the variable or exponent that is common to each term of the expression and pull out that variable or exponent raised to the lowest power. These expressions follow the same factoring rules as those with integer exponents. For instance, $2x^{\frac{1}{4}}+5x^{\frac{3}{4}}$ can be factored by pulling out $x^{\frac{1}{4}}$ and being rewritten as $x^{\frac{1}{4}}(2+5x^{\frac{1}{2}})$.

Example 1.3.8: Factoring an Expression with Fractional or Negative Exponents

Factor $3x(x+2)^{-\frac{1}{3}}+4(x+2)^{\frac{2}{3}}$.

Solution

Factor out the term with the lowest value of the exponent. In this case, that would be $(x+2)^{-\frac{1}{3}}$.

$$(x+2)^{-\frac{1}{3}}(3x+4(x+2)) \qquad \text{Factor out the GCF}$$
$$(x+2)^{-\frac{1}{3}}(3x+4x+8) \qquad \text{Simplify}$$
$$(x+2)^{-\frac{1}{3}}(7x+8)$$

Exercise 1.3.8

Factor $2(5a-1)^{\frac{3}{4}}+7a(5a-1)^{-\frac{1}{4}}$.

Answer

$$(5a-1)^{-\frac{1}{4}}(17a-2)$$

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Access these online resources for additional instruction and practice with factoring polynomials.

1. Identify GCF
2. Factor Trinomials when a Equals 1
3. Factor Trinomials when a is not equal to 1
4. Factor Sum or Difference of Cubes

Key Equations

difference of squares	$a^2-b^2=(a+b)(a-b)$
perfect square trinomial	$a^2+2ab+b^2=(a+b)^2$
sum of cubes	$a^3+b^3=(a+b)(a^2-ab+b^2)$
difference of cubes	$a^3-b^3=(a-b)(a^2+ab+b^2)$

- The greatest common factor, or GCF, can be factored out of a polynomial. Checking for a GCF should be the first step in any factoring problem. See Example.
- Trinomials with leading coefficient 1 can be factored by finding numbers that have a product of the third term and a sum of the second term. See Example.
- Trinomials can be factored using a process called factoring by grouping. See Example.
- Perfect square trinomials and the difference of squares are special products and can be factored using equations. See Example and Example.
- The sum of cubes and the difference of cubes can be factored using equations. See Example and Example.
- Polynomials containing fractional and negative exponents can be factored by pulling out a GCF. See Example.

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1.4: Rational Expressions

Learning Objectives

In this section students will:

- Simplify rational expressions.
- Multiply rational expressions.
- Divide rational expressions.
- Add and subtract rational expressions.
- Simplify complex rational expressions.

A pastry shop has fixed costs of $\$280$ per week and variable costs of $\$9$ per box of pastries. The shop's costs per week in terms of x, the number of boxes made, is $280+9x$. We can divide the costs per week by the number of boxes made to determine the cost per box of pastries.

$$\frac{280+9x}{x}$$

Notice that the result is a polynomial expression divided by a second polynomial expression. In this section, we will explore quotients of polynomial expressions.

Simplifying Rational Expressions

The quotient of two polynomial expressions is called a rational expression. We can apply the properties of fractions to rational expressions, such as simplifying the expressions by canceling common factors from the numerator and the denominator. To do this, we first need to factor both the numerator and denominator. Let's start with the rational expression shown.

$$\frac{x^2+8x+16}{x^2+11x+28}$$

We can factor the numerator and denominator to rewrite the expression.

$$\frac{(x+4)^2}{(x+4)(x+7)}$$

Then we can simplify that expression by canceling the common factor $(x+4)$.

$$\frac{x+4}{x+7}$$

Howto: Given a rational expression, simplify it

1. Factor the numerator and denominator.
2. Cancel any common factors.

Example 1.4.1: Simplifying Rational Expressions

Simplify $\dfrac{x^2-9}{x^2+4x+3}$

Solution

$$\frac{(x+3)(x-3)}{(x+3)(x+1)} \qquad \text{Factor the numerator and the denominator}$$

$$\frac{x-3}{x+1} \qquad \text{Cancel common factor } (x+3)$$

Analysis

We can cancel the common factor because any expression divided by itself is equal to 1.

Q&A

Can the x^2 term be cancelled in the last example?

No. A factor is an expression that is multiplied by another expression. The x^2 term is not a factor of the numerator or the denominator.

Exercise 1.4.1

Simplify $\dfrac{x-6}{x^2-36}$

Answer

$$\frac{1}{x+6}$$

Multiplying Rational Expressions

Multiplication of rational expressions works the same way as multiplication of any other fractions. We multiply the numerators to find the numerator of the product, and then multiply the denominators to find the denominator of the product. Before multiplying, it is helpful to factor the numerators and denominators just as we did when simplifying rational expressions. We are often able to simplify the product of rational expressions.

Howto: Given two rational expressions, multiply them

1. Factor the numerator and denominator.
2. Multiply the numerators.
3. Multiply the denominators.
4. Simplify.

Example 1.4.2: Multiplying Rational Expressions

Multiply the rational expressions and show the product in simplest form:

$$\frac{(x+5)(x-1)}{3(x+6)} \times \frac{(2x-1)}{(x+5)}$$

Solution

$$\frac{(x+5)(x-1)}{3(x+6)} \times \frac{(2x-1)}{(x+5)}$$ Factor the numerator and denominator.

$$\frac{(x+5)(x-1)(2x-1)}{3(x+6)(x+5)}$$ Multiply numerators and denominators

$$\frac{(x-1)(2x-1)}{3(x+6)}$$ Cancel common factors to simplify

Exercise 1.4.2

Multiply the rational expressions and show the product in simplest form:

$$\frac{x^2+11x+30}{x^2+5x+6} \times \frac{x^2+7x+12}{x^2+8x+16}$$

Answer

$$\frac{(x+5)(x+6)}{(x+2)(x+4)}$$

Dividing Rational Expressions

Division of rational expressions works the same way as division of other fractions. To divide a rational expression by another rational expression, multiply the first expression by the reciprocal of the second. Using this approach, we would rewrite $\frac{1}{x} \div \frac{x^2}{3}$ as the product $\frac{1}{x} \cdot \frac{3}{x^2}$. Once the division expression has been rewritten as a multiplication expression, we can multiply as we did before.

$$\frac{1}{x} \cdot \frac{3}{x^2} = \frac{3}{x^3}$$

Howto: Given two rational expressions, divide them

1. Rewrite as the first rational expression multiplied by the reciprocal of the second.
2. Factor the numerators and denominators.
3. Multiply the numerators.
4. Multiply the denominators.
5. Simplify.

Example 1.4.3: Dividing Rational Expressions

Divide the rational expressions and express the quotient in simplest form:

$$\frac{2x^2+x-6}{x^2-1} \div \frac{x^2-4}{x^2+2x+1}$$

Solution

$$\frac{2x^2+x-6}{x^2-1} \div \frac{x^2-4}{x^2+2x+1}$$

$$\frac{2x^2+x-6}{x^2-1} \times \frac{x^2+2x+1}{x^2-4} \qquad \text{Rewrite as a multiplication problem}$$

$$\frac{(2x-3)(x+2)}{(x-1)(x+1)} \times \frac{(x+1)(x+1)}{(x-2)(x+2)} \qquad \text{Factor the numerator and denominator.}$$

$$\frac{(2x-3)(x+2)(x+1)(x+1)}{(x-1)(x+1)(x-2)(x+2)} \qquad \text{Multiply numerators and denominators}$$

$$\frac{(2x-3)(x+1)}{(x-1)(x-2)} \qquad \text{Cancel common factors to simplify}$$

Exercise 1.4.3

Divide the rational expressions and express the quotient in simplest form:

$$\frac{9x^2-16}{3x^2+17x-28} \div \frac{3x^2-2x-8}{x^2+5x-14}$$

Answer

1

Adding and Subtracting Rational Expressions

Adding and subtracting rational expressions works just like adding and subtracting numerical fractions. To add fractions, we need to find a common denominator. Let's look at an example of fraction addition.

$$\begin{aligned}\frac{5}{24}+\frac{1}{40} &= \frac{25}{120}+\frac{3}{120}\\ &= \frac{28}{120}\\ &= \frac{7}{30}\end{aligned}$$

We have to rewrite the fractions so they share a common denominator before we are able to add. We must do the same thing when adding or subtracting rational expressions.

The easiest common denominator to use will be the **least common denominator**, or LCD. The LCD is the smallest multiple that the denominators have in common. To find the LCD of two rational expressions, we factor the expressions and multiply all of the distinct factors. For instance, if the factored denominators were $(x+3)(x+4)$ and $(x+4)(x+5)$, then the LCD would be $(x+3)(x+4)(x+5)$.

Once we find the LCD, we need to multiply each expression by the form of 1 that will change the denominator to the LCD. We would need to multiply the expression with a denominator of $(x+3)(x+4)$ by $\frac{x+5}{x+5}$ and the expression with a denominator of $(x+4)(x+5)$ by $\frac{x+3}{x+3}$.

Howto: Given two rational expressions, add or subtract them

1. Factor the numerator and denominator.
2. Find the LCD of the expressions.
3. Multiply the expressions by a form of 1 that changes the denominators to the LCD.
4. Add or subtract the numerators.
5. Simplify.

Example 1.4.4: Adding Rational Expressions

Add the rational expressions:

$$\frac{5}{x}+\frac{6}{y}$$

Solution

First, we have to find the LCD. In this case, the LCD will be xy. We then multiply each expression by the appropriate form of 1 to obtain xy as the denominator for each fraction.

$$\begin{aligned}&\frac{5}{x}\times\frac{y}{y}+\frac{6}{y}\times\frac{x}{x}\\ &\frac{5y}{xy}+\frac{6x}{xy}\end{aligned}$$

Now that the expressions have the same denominator, we simply add the numerators to find the sum.

$$\frac{6x+5y}{xy}$$

Analysis

Multiplying by $\frac{y}{y}$ or $\frac{x}{x}$ does not change the value of the original expression because any number divided by itself is 1, and multiplying an expression by 1 gives the original expression.

Example 1.4.5: Subtracting Rational Expressions

Subtract the rational expressions:

$$\frac{6}{x^2+4x+4}-\frac{2}{x^2-4} \tag{1.4.1}$$

Solution

$\frac{6}{(x+2)^2}-\frac{2}{(x+2)(x-2)}$	Factor
$\frac{6}{(x+2)^2}\times\frac{x-2}{x-2}-\frac{2}{(x+2)(x-2)}\times\frac{x+2}{x+2}$	Multiply each fraction to get LCD as denominator
$\frac{6(x-2)}{(x+2)^2(x-2)}-\frac{2(x+2)}{(x+2)^2(x-2)}$	Multiply
$\frac{6x-12-(2x+4)}{(x+2)^2(x-2)}$	Apply distributive property
$\frac{4x-16}{(x+2)^2(x-2)}$	Subtract
$\frac{4(x-4)}{(x+2)^2(x-2)}$	Simplify

Q&A

Do we have to use the LCD to add or subtract rational expressions?

No. Any common denominator will work, but it is easiest to use the LCD.

Exercise 1.4.4

Subtract the rational expressions: $\frac{3}{x+5}-\frac{1}{x-3}$

Answer

$$\frac{2(x-7)}{(x+5)(x-3)}$$

Simplifying Complex Rational Expressions

A complex rational expression is a rational expression that contains additional rational expressions in the numerator, the denominator, or both. We can simplify complex rational expressions by rewriting the numerator and denominator as single rational expressions and dividing. The complex rational expression $\frac{a}{\frac{1}{b}+c}$ can be simplified by rewriting the numerator as the fraction $\frac{a}{1}$ and combining the expressions in the denominator as $\frac{1+bc}{b}$. We can then rewrite the expression as a multiplication problem using the reciprocal of the denominator. We get $\frac{a}{1}\cdot\frac{b}{1+bc}$, which is equal to $\frac{ab}{1+bc}$.

Howto: Given a complex rational expression, simplify it

1. Combine the expressions in the numerator into a single rational expression by adding or subtracting.
2. Combine the expressions in the denominator into a single rational expression by adding or subtracting.
3. Rewrite as the numerator divided by the denominator.
4. Rewrite as multiplication.
5. Multiply.

6. Simplify.

Example 1.4.6: Simplifying Complex Rational Expressions

Simplify: $\dfrac{y+\dfrac{1}{x}}{\dfrac{x}{y}}$

Solution

Begin by combining the expressions in the numerator into one expression.

$$y \times \frac{x}{x} + \frac{1}{x} \qquad \text{Multiply by } \frac{x}{x} \text{ to get LCD as denominator}$$
$$\frac{xy}{x} + \frac{1}{x}$$
$$\frac{xy+1}{x} \qquad \text{Add numerators}$$

Now the numerator is a single rational expression and the denominator is a single rational expression.

$$\frac{\dfrac{xy+1}{x}}{\dfrac{x}{y}}$$

We can rewrite this as division, and then multiplication.

$$\frac{xy+1}{x} \div \frac{x}{y}$$
$$\frac{xy+1}{x} \times \frac{y}{x} \qquad \text{Rewrite as multiplication}$$
$$\frac{y(xy+1)}{x^2} \qquad \text{Multiply}$$

Exercise 1.4.5

Simplify: $\dfrac{\dfrac{x}{y}-\dfrac{y}{x}}{y}$

Answer

$$\frac{x^2-y^2}{xy^2}$$

Q&A

Can a complex rational expression always be simplified?

Yes. We can always rewrite a complex rational expression as a simplified rational expression.

Media

Access these online resources for additional instruction and practice with rational expressions.

1. Simplify Rational Expressions
2. Multiply and Divide Rational Expressions
3. Add and Subtract Rational Expressions

4. Simplify a Complex Fraction

Key Concepts

- Rational expressions can be simplified by cancelling common factors in the numerator and denominator. See Example.
- We can multiply rational expressions by multiplying the numerators and multiplying the denominators. See Example.
- To divide rational expressions, multiply by the reciprocal of the second expression. See Example.
- Adding or subtracting rational expressions requires finding a common denominator. See Example and Example.
- Complex rational expressions have fractions in the numerator or the denominator. These expressions can be simplified. See Example.

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1.5: Complex Numbers

Learning Objectives

- Add and subtract complex numbers.
- Multiply and divide complex numbers.

Discovered by Benoit Mandelbrot around 1980, the Mandelbrot Set is one of the most recognizable fractal images. The image is built on the theory of self-similarity and the operation of iteration. Zooming in on a fractal image brings many surprises, particularly in the high level of repetition of detail that appears as magnification increases. The equation that generates this image turns out to be rather simple.

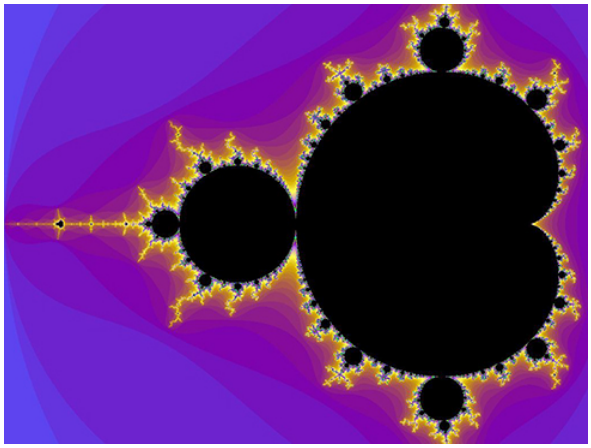

Figure 1.5.1: The Mandelbrot set exhibits similarity, which is best shown in an animation.

In order to better understand it, we need to become familiar with a new set of numbers. Keep in mind that the study of mathematics continuously builds upon itself. Negative integers, for example, fill a void left by the set of positive integers. The set of rational numbers, in turn, fills a void left by the set of integers. The set of real numbers fills a void left by the set of rational numbers. Not surprisingly, the set of real numbers has voids as well. In this section, we will explore a set of numbers that fills voids in the set of real numbers and find out how to work within it.

Expressing Square Roots of Negative Numbers as Multiples of i

We know how to find the square root of any positive real number. In a similar way, we can find the square root of any negative number. The difference is that the root is not real. If the value in the radicand is negative, the root is said to be an imaginary number.The imaginary number i is defined as the square root of -1.

$$\sqrt{-1} = i \tag{1.5.1}$$

So, using properties of radicals,

$$i^2 = (\sqrt{-1})^2 = -1 \tag{1.5.2}$$

We can write the square root of any negative number as a multiple of i. Consider the square root of -49.

$$\begin{aligned} \sqrt{-49} &= \sqrt{49 \times (-1)} \\ &= \sqrt{49}\sqrt{-1} \\ &= 7i \end{aligned}$$

We use $7i$ and not $-7i$ because the principal root of 49 is the positive root.

A complex number is the sum of a real number and an imaginary number. A complex number is expressed in standard form when written $a + bi$ where a is the real part and b is the imaginary part. For example, $5 + 2i$ is a complex number. So, too, is $3 + 4i\sqrt{3}$.

Imaginary numbers differ from real numbers in that a squared imaginary number produces a negative real number. Recall that when a positive real number is squared, the result is a positive real number and when a negative real number is squared, the result is also a positive real number. Complex numbers consist of real and imaginary numbers.

Definition: IMAGINARY AND COMPLEX NUMBERS

A *complex number* is a number of the form $a+bi$ where

1. a is the real part of the complex number.
2. b is the imaginary part of the complex number.

If $b=0$, then $a+bi$ is a real number. If $a=0$ and b is not equal to 0, the complex number is called a pure imaginary number. An **imaginary number** is an even root of a negative number.

Howto: Given an imaginary number, express it in the standard form of a complex number

1. Write $\sqrt{-a}$ as $\sqrt{a}\sqrt{-1}$.
2. Express $\sqrt{-1}$ as i.
3. Write $\sqrt{a}\times i$ in simplest form.

Example 1.5.1: Expressing an Imaginary Number in Standard Form

Express $\sqrt{-9}$ in standard form.

Solution

$$\begin{aligned}\sqrt{-9} &= \sqrt{9}\sqrt{-1)} \\ &= 3i\end{aligned}$$

In standard form, this is $0+3i$.

Exercise 1.5.1

Express $\sqrt{-24}$ in standard form.

Answer

$\sqrt{-24}=0+2i\sqrt{6}$

Plotting a Complex Number on the Complex Plane

We cannot plot complex numbers on a number line as we might real numbers. However, we can still represent them graphically. To represent a complex number, we need to address the two components of the number. We use the **complex plane**, which is a coordinate system in which the horizontal axis represents the real component and the vertical axis represents the imaginary component. Complex numbers are the points on the plane, expressed as ordered pairs (a,b), where a represents the coordinate for the horizontal axis and b represents the coordinate for the vertical axis.

Let's consider the number $-2+3i$. The real part of the complex number is -2 and the imaginary part is 3. We plot the ordered pair $(-2,3)$ to represent the complex number $-2+3i$, as shown in Figure 1.5.2.

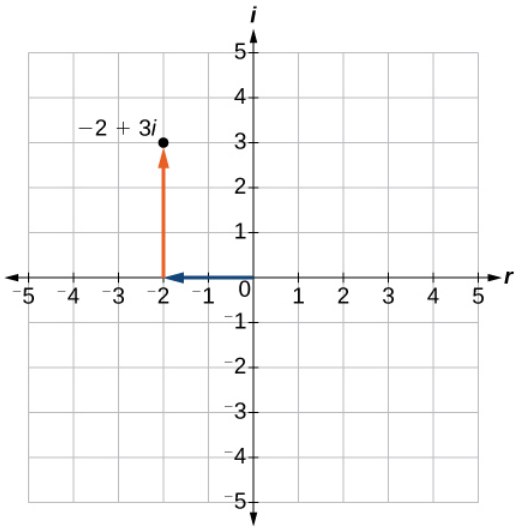

Figure 1.5.2

COMPLEX PLANE

In the complex plane, the horizontal axis is the real axis, and the vertical axis is the imaginary axis, as shown in Figure 1.5.3.

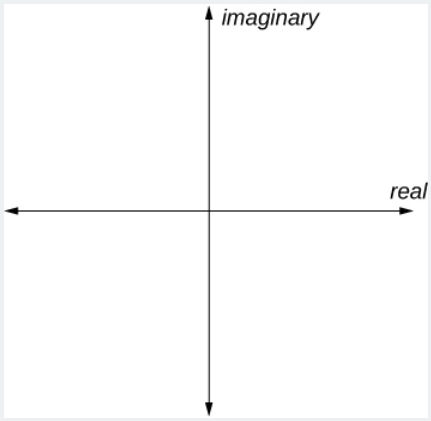

Figure 1.5.3

Howto: Given a complex number, represent its components on the complex plane

1. Determine the real part and the imaginary part of the complex number.
2. Move along the horizontal axis to show the real part of the number.
3. Move parallel to the vertical axis to show the imaginary part of the number.
4. Plot the point.

Example 1.5.2: Plotting a Complex Number on the Complex Plane

Plot the complex number $3 - 4i$ on the complex plane.

Solution

The real part of the complex number is 3, and the imaginary part is -4. We plot the ordered pair $(3, -4)$ as shown in Figure 1.5.4.

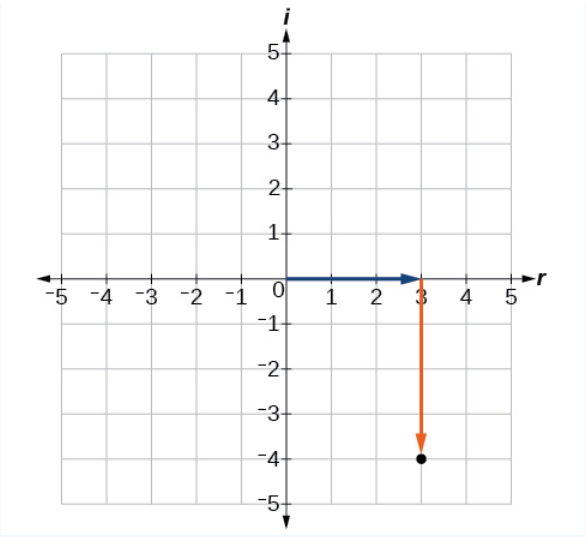

Figure 1.5.4

? Exercise 1.5.2

Plot the complex number $-4-i$ on the complex plane.

Answer

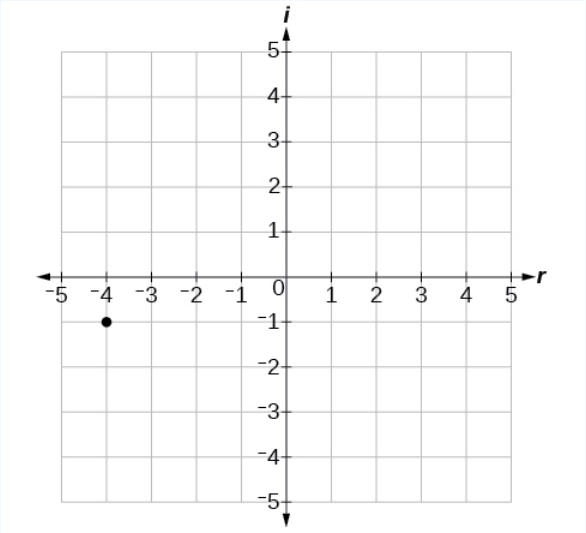

Figure 1.5.5

Adding and Subtracting Complex Numbers

Just as with real numbers, we can perform arithmetic operations on complex numbers. To add or subtract complex numbers, we combine the real parts and then combine the imaginary parts.

COMPLEX NUMBERS: ADDITION AND SUBTRACTION

Adding complex numbers:

$$(a+bi)+(c+di)=(a+c)+(b+d)i \tag{1.5.3}$$

Subtracting complex numbers:

$$(a+bi)-(c+di)=(a-c)+(b-d)i \tag{1.5.4}$$

Howto: Given two complex numbers, find the sum or difference

1. Identify the real and imaginary parts of each number.
2. Add or subtract the real parts.
3. Add or subtract the imaginary parts.

Example 1.5.3: Adding and Subtracting Complex Numbers

Add or subtract as indicated.

a. $(3-4i)+(2+5i)$
b. $(-5+7i)-(-11+2i)$

Solution

a.
$$\begin{aligned}(3-4i)+(2+5i) &= 3-4i+2+5i \\ &= 3+2+(-4i)+5i \\ &= (3+2)+(-4+5)i \\ &= 5+i\end{aligned}$$

b.
$$\begin{aligned}(-5+7i)-(-11+2i) &= -5+7i+11-2i \\ &= -5+11+7i-2i \\ &= (-5+11)+(7-2)i \\ &= 6+5i\end{aligned}$$

Exercise 1.5.3

Subtract $2+5i$ from $3-4i$.

Answer

$(3-4i)-(2+5i)=1-9i$

Multiplying Complex Numbers

Multiplying complex numbers is much like multiplying binomials. The major difference is that we work with the real and imaginary parts separately.

Multiplying a Complex Number by a Real Number

Lets begin by multiplying a complex number by a real number. We distribute the real number just as we would with a binomial. Consider, for example, $3(6+2i)$:

$$\begin{aligned}3(6+2i) &= (3\cdot 6)+(3\cdot 2i) && \text{Distribute.} \\ &= 18+6i && \text{Simplify.}\end{aligned}$$

Howto: Given a complex number and a real number, multiply to find the product

1. Use the distributive property.
2. Simplify.

Example 1.5.4: Multiplying a Complex Number by a Real Number

Find the product $4(2+5i)$.

Solution

Distribute the 4.

$$\begin{aligned} 4(2+5i) &= (4\cdot 2)+(4\cdot 5i) \\ &= 8+20i \end{aligned}$$

Exercise 1.5.4

Find the product: $\frac{1}{2}(5-2i)$.

Answer

$\frac{5}{2}-i$

Multiplying Complex Numbers Together

Now, let's multiply two complex numbers. We can use either the distributive property or more specifically the FOIL method because we are dealing with binomials. Recall that FOIL is an acronym for multiplying First, Inner, Outer, and Last terms together. The difference with complex numbers is that when we get a squared term, i^2, it equals -1.

$$\begin{aligned} (a+bi)(c+di) &= ac+adi+bci+bdi^2 \\ &= ac+adi+bci-bd(-1) \qquad i^2=-1 \\ &= ac+adi+bci-bd \\ &= (ac-bd)+(ad+bc)i \end{aligned}$$

Group real terms and imaginary terms.

Howto: Given two complex numbers, multiply to find the product

1. Use the distributive property or the FOIL method.
2. Remember that $i^2=-1$.
3. Group together the real terms and the imaginary terms

Example 1.5.5: Multiplying a Complex Number by a Complex Number

Multiply $(4+3i)(2-5i)$.

Solution

$$\begin{aligned} (4+3i)(2-5i) &= 4(2)-4(5i)+3i(2)-(3i)(5i) \\ &= 8-20i+6i-15(i^2) \\ &= (8+15)+(-20+6)i \\ &= 23-14i \end{aligned}$$

Exercise 1.5.5

Multiply: $(3-4i)(2+3i)$.

Answer

$18+i$

Dividing Complex Numbers

Dividing two complex numbers is more complicated than adding, subtracting, or multiplying because we cannot divide by an imaginary number, meaning that any fraction must have a real-number denominator to write the answer in standard form $a+bi$. We need to find a term by which we can multiply the numerator and the denominator that will eliminate the imaginary portion of the denominator so that we end up with a real number as the denominator. This term is called the complex conjugate of the denominator, which is found by changing the sign of the imaginary part of the complex number. In other words, the complex conjugate of $a+bi$ is $a-bi$. For example, the product of $a+bi$ and $a-bi$ is

$$\begin{aligned}(a+bi)(a-bi) &= a^2-abi+abi-b^2i^2\\ &= a^2+b^2\end{aligned}$$

The result is a real number.

Note that complex conjugates have an opposite relationship: The complex conjugate of $a+bi$ is $a-bi$, and the complex conjugate of $a-bi$ is $a+bi$. Further, when a quadratic equation with real coefficients has complex solutions, the solutions are always complex conjugates of one another.

Suppose we want to divide $c+di$ by $a+bi$, where neither a nor b equals zero. We first write the division as a fraction, then find the complex conjugate of the denominator, and multiply.

$$\frac{c+di}{a+bi} \text{ where } a\neq 0 \text{ and } b\neq 0$$

Multiply the numerator and denominator by the complex conjugate of the denominator.

$$\begin{aligned}\frac{(c+di)}{(a+bi)}\cdot\frac{(a-bi)}{(a-bi)} &= \frac{(c+di)(a-bi)}{(a+bi)(a-bi)}\\ &= \frac{ca-cbi+adi-bdi^2}{a^2-abi+abi-b^2i^2} && \text{Apply the distributive property}\\ &= \frac{ca-cbi+adi-bd(-1)}{a^2-abi+abi-b^2(-1)} && \text{Simplify, remembering that } i^2=-1\\ &= \frac{(ca+bd)+(ad-cb)i}{a^2+b^2}\end{aligned}$$

Definition: THE COMPLEX CONJUGATE

The complex conjugate of a complex number $a+bi$ is $a-bi$. It is found by changing the sign of the imaginary part of the complex number. The real part of the number is left unchanged.

1. When a complex number is multiplied by its complex conjugate, the result is a real number.
2. When a complex number is added to its complex conjugate, the result is a real number.

Example 1.5.6: Finding Complex Conjugates

Find the complex conjugate of each number.

a. $2+i\sqrt{5}$

b. $-\frac{1}{2}i$

Solution

a. The number is already in the form $a+bi$. The complex conjugate is $a-bi$, or $2-i\sqrt{5}$.

b. We can rewrite this number in the form $a+bi$ as $0-\frac{1}{2}i$. The complex conjugate is $a-bi$, or $0+\frac{1}{2}i$. This can be written simply as $\frac{1}{2}i$.

Analysis

Although we have seen that we can find the complex conjugate of an imaginary number, in practice we generally find the complex conjugates of only complex numbers with both a real and an imaginary component. To obtain a real number from an imaginary number, we can simply multiply by i.

? Exercise 1.5.6

Find the complex conjugate of $-3+4i$.

Answer

$-3-4i$

How to: Given two complex numbers, divide one by the other

1. Write the division problem as a fraction.
2. Determine the complex conjugate of the denominator.
3. Multiply the numerator and denominator of the fraction by the complex conjugate of the denominator.
4. Simplify.

✓ Example 1.5.7: Dividing Complex Numbers

Divide $(2+5i)$ by $(4-i)$.

Solution

We begin by writing the problem as a fraction.

$$\frac{(2+5i)}{(4-i)}$$

Then we multiply the numerator and denominator by the complex conjugate of the denominator.

$$\frac{(2+5i)}{(4-i)}\cdot\frac{(4+i)}{(4+i)}$$

To multiply two complex numbers, we expand the product as we would with polynomials (using FOIL).

$$\begin{aligned}\frac{(2+5i)}{(4-i)}\cdot\frac{(4+i)}{(4+i)} &= \frac{8+2i+20i+5i^2}{16+4i-4i-i^2}\\ &= \frac{8+2i+20i+5(-1)}{16+4i-4i-(-1)} \quad i^2=-1\\ &= \frac{3+22i}{17}\\ &= \frac{3}{17}+\frac{22}{17i}\end{aligned}$$

Separate real and imaginary parts.

Note that this expresses the quotient in standard form.

Simplifying Powers of i

The powers of i are cyclic. Let's look at what happens when we raise i to increasing powers.

$$i^1 = i$$

$$i^2 = -1$$

$$i^3 = i^2 \cdot i = -1 \cdot i = -i$$

$$i^4 = i^3 \cdot i = -i \cdot i = -i^2 = -(-1) = 1$$

$$i^5 = i^4 \cdot i = 1 \cdot i = i$$

We can see that when we get to the fifth power of i , it is equal to the first power. As we continue to multiply i by increasing powers, we will see a cycle of four. Let's examine the next four powers of i.

$$i^6 = i^5 \cdot i = i \cdot i = i^2 = -1$$

$$i^7 = i^6 \cdot i = i^2 \cdot i = i^3 = -i$$

$$i^8 = i^7 \cdot i = i^3 \cdot i = i^4 = 1$$

$$i^9 = i^8 \cdot i = i^4 \cdot i = i^5 = i$$

The cycle is repeated continuously: $i, -1, -i, 1,$every four powers.

Example 1.5.8: Simplifying Powers of i

Evaluate: i^{35}.

Solution

Since $i^4 = 1$, we can simplify the problem by factoring out as many factors of i^4 as possible. To do so, first determine how many times 4 goes into $35 : 35 = 4 \cdot 8 + 3$.

$$i^{35} = i^{4 \cdot 8 + 3} = i^{4 \cdot 8} \cdot i^3 = \left(i^4\right)^8 \cdot i^3 = i^8 \cdot i^3 = i^3 = -i$$

Exercise 1.5.7

Evaluate: i^{18}

Answer

-1

Q&A

Can we write i^{35} in other helpful ways?

As we saw in Example 1.5.8, we reduced i^{35} to i^3 by dividing the exponent by 4 and using the remainder to find the simplified form. But perhaps another factorization of i^{35} may be more useful. Table 1.5.1 shows some other possible factorizations.

Table 1.5.1

Factorization of i^{35}	$i^{34} \cdot i$	$i^{33} \cdot i^2$	$i^{31} \cdot i^4$	$i^{19} \cdot i^{16}$
Reduced form	$\left(i^2\right)^{17} \cdot i$	$i^{33} \cdot (-1)$	$i^{31} \cdot 1$	$i^{19} \cdot \left(i^4\right)^4$
Simplified form	$(-1)^{17} \cdot i$	$-i^{33}$	i^{31}	i^{19}

Each of these will eventually result in the answer we obtained above but may require several more steps than our earlier method.

Media

Access these online resources for additional instruction and practice with complex numbers.

1. Adding and Subtracting Complex Numbers
2. Multiply Complex Numbers
3. Multiplying Complex Conjugates
4. Raising i to Powers

Key Concepts

- The square root of any negative number can be written as a multiple of i. See Example.
- To plot a complex number, we use two number lines, crossed to form the complex plane. The horizontal axis is the real axis, and the vertical axis is the imaginary axis. See Example.
- Complex numbers can be added and subtracted by combining the real parts and combining the imaginary parts. See Example.
- Complex numbers can be multiplied and divided.
  - To multiply complex numbers, distribute just as with polynomials. See Example and Example.
  - To divide complex numbers, multiply both numerator and denominator by the complex conjugate of the denominator to eliminate the complex number from the denominator. See Example and Example.
- The powers of i are cyclic, repeating every fourth one. See Example.

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1.6: Linear Equations in One Variable

Learning Objectives

- Solve equations in one variable algebraically.
- Solve a rational equation.
- Find a linear equation.
- Given the equations of two lines, determine whether their graphs are parallel or perpendicular.
- Write the equation of a line parallel or perpendicular to a given line.

Caroline is a full-time college student planning a spring break vacation. To earn enough money for the trip, she has taken a part-time job at the local bank that pays $\$15.00/hr$, and she opened a savings account with an initial deposit of $\$400$ on January 15. She arranged for direct deposit of her payroll checks. If spring break begins March 20 and the trip will cost approximately $\$2,500$, how many hours will she have to work to earn enough to pay for her vacation? If she can only work 4 hours per day, how many days per week will she have to work? How many weeks will it take? In this section, we will investigate problems like this and others, which generate graphs like the line in Figure 1.6.1.

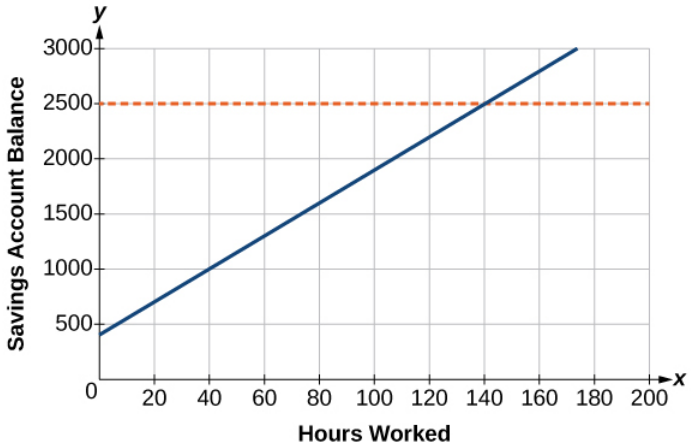

Figure 1.6.1

Solving Linear Equations in One Variable

A *linear equation* is an equation of a straight line, written in one variable. The only power of the variable is 1. Linear equations in one variable may take the form $ax+b=0$ and are solved using basic algebraic operations. We begin by classifying linear equations in one variable as one of three types: identity, conditional, or inconsistent.

- An **identity equation** is true for all values of the variable. Here is an example of an identity equation:

$$3x=2x+x$$

  The *solution set* consists of all values that make the equation true. For this equation, the solution set is all real numbers because any real number substituted for x will make the equation true.
- A **conditional equation** is true for only some values of the variable. For example, if we are to solve the equation $5x+2=3x-6$, we have the following:

$$\begin{aligned} 5x+2 &= 3x-6 \\ 2x &= -8 \\ x &= -4 \end{aligned}$$

  The solution set consists of one number: -4. It is the only solution and, therefore, we have solved a conditional equation.
- An **inconsistent equation** results in a false statement. For example, if we are to solve $5x-15=5(x-4)$, we have the following:

$$\begin{aligned} 5x-15 &= 5x-20 \\ 5x-15-5x &= 5x-20-5x \\ -15 &\neq -20 \end{aligned}$$

Indeed, $-15 \neq -20$. There is no solution because this is an inconsistent equation.

Solving linear equations in one variable involves the fundamental properties of equality and basic algebraic operations. A brief review of those operations follows.

LINEAR EQUATION IN ONE VARIABLE

A linear equation in one variable can be written in the form

$$ax+b=0 \tag{1.6.1}$$

where a and b are real numbers, $a \neq 0$.

Howto: Given a linear equation in one variable, use algebra to solve it

The following steps are used to manipulate an equation and isolate the unknown variable, so that the last line reads $x =$_____, if x is the unknown. There is no set order, as the steps used depend on what is given:

1. We may add, subtract, multiply, or divide an equation by a number or an expression as long as we do the same thing to both sides of the equal sign. Note that we cannot divide by zero.
2. Apply the distributive property as needed: $a(b+c)=ab+ac$.
3. Isolate the variable on one side of the equation.
4. When the variable is multiplied by a coefficient in the final stage, multiply both sides of the equation by the reciprocal of the coefficient.

Example 1.6.1: Solving an Equation in One Variable

Solve the following equation: $2x+7=19$.

Solution

This equation can be written in the form $ax+b=0$ by subtracting 19 from both sides. However, we may proceed to solve the equation in its original form by performing algebraic operations.

$$\begin{aligned} 2x+7 &= 19 \\ 2x &= 12 \qquad \text{Subtract 7 from both sides} \\ x &= 6 \qquad \text{Multiply both sides by } \frac{1}{2} \text{ or divide by 2} \end{aligned}$$

The solution is 6.

Exercise 1.6.1

Solve the linear equation in one variable: $2x+1=-9$.

Answer

$x=-5$

Example 1.6.2: Solving When the Variable Appears on Both Sides

Solve the following equation: $4(x-3)+12=15-5(x+6)$.

Solution

Apply standard algebraic properties.

$$\begin{aligned} 4(x-3)+12 &= 15-5(x+6) \\ 4x-12+12 &= 15-5x-30 \quad \text{Apply the distributive property} \\ 4x &= -15-5x \quad \text{Combine like terms} \\ 9x &= -15 \quad \text{Place x terms on one side and simplify} \\ x &= -\frac{15}{9} \quad \text{Multiply both sides by } \frac{1}{9}\text{, the reciprocal of 9} \\ x &= -\frac{5}{3} \end{aligned}$$

Analysis

This problem requires the distributive property to be applied twice, and then the properties of algebra are used to reach the final line, $x=-\frac{5}{3}$.

? Exercise 1.6.2

Solve the equation in one variable: $-2(3x-1)+x=14-x$.

Answer

$x=-3$

Solving a Rational Equation

In this section, we look at rational equations that, after some manipulation, result in a linear equation. If an equation contains at least one rational expression, it is a considered a **rational equation**. Recall that a **rational number** is the ratio of two numbers, such as $\frac{2}{3}$ or $\frac{7}{2}$. A rational expression is the ratio, or quotient, of two polynomials. Here are three examples.

$$\frac{x+1}{x^2-4}$$

$$\frac{1}{x-3}$$

or

$$\frac{4}{x^2+x-2}$$

Rational equations have a variable in the denominator in at least one of the terms. Our goal is to perform algebraic operations so that the variables appear in the numerator. In fact, we will eliminate all denominators by multiplying both sides of the equation by the **least common denominator** (LCD). Finding the LCD is identifying an expression that contains the highest power of all of the factors in all of the denominators. We do this because when the equation is multiplied by the LCD, the common factors in the LCD and in each denominator will equal one and will cancel out.

✓ Example 1.6.3: Solving a Rational Equation

Solve the rational equation:

$$\frac{7}{2x}-\frac{5}{3x}=\frac{22}{3}$$

Solution

We have three denominators; $2x$,$3x$, and 3. The LCD must contain $2x$,$3x$, and 3. An LCD of $6x$ contains all three denominators. In other words, each denominator can be divided evenly into the LCD. Next, multiply both sides of the equation by the LCD $6x$.

$$
\begin{aligned}
(6x)\left[\frac{7}{2x}-\frac{5}{3x}\right] &= \left[\frac{22}{3}\right](6x) \\
(6x)\left(\frac{7}{2x}\right)-(6x)\left(\frac{5}{3x}\right) &= \left(\frac{22}{3}\right)(6x) && \text{Use the distributive property. Cancel out the common factors} \\
3(7)-2(5) &= 22(2x) && \text{Multiply remaining factors by each numerator.} \\
21-10 &= 44x \\
11 &= 44x \\
\frac{11}{44} &= x \\
\frac{1}{4} &= x
\end{aligned}
$$

A common mistake made when solving rational equations involves finding the LCD when one of the denominators is a binomial—two terms added or subtracted—such as $(x+1)$. Always consider a binomial as an individual factor—the terms cannot be separated. For example, suppose a problem has three terms and the denominators are x, $x-1$, and $3x-3$. First, factor all denominators. We then have x, $(x-1)$, and $3(x-1)$ as the denominators. (Note the parentheses placed around the second denominator.) Only the last two denominators have a common factor of $(x-1)$. The x in the first denominator is separate from the x in the $(x-1)$ denominators. An effective way to remember this is to write factored and binomial denominators in parentheses, and consider each parentheses as a separate unit or a separate factor. The LCD in this instance is found by multiplying together the x, one factor of $(x-1)$, and the 3. Thus, the LCD is the following:

$$x(x-1)3 = 3x(x-1)$$

So, both sides of the equation would be multiplied by $3x(x-1)$. Leave the LCD in factored form, as this makes it easier to see how each denominator in the problem cancels out.

Another example is a problem with two denominators, such as x and x^2+2x. Once the second denominator is factored as $x^2+2x=x(x+2)$, there is a common factor of x in both denominators and the LCD is $x(x+2)$.

Sometimes we have a rational equation in the form of a proportion; that is, when one fraction equals another fraction and there are no other terms in the equation.

$$\frac{a}{b}=\frac{c}{d} \tag{1.6.2}$$

We can use another method of solving the equation without finding the LCD: cross-multiplication. We multiply terms by crossing over the equal sign.

$$\text{If } \frac{a}{b}=\frac{c}{d}, \text{ then } \frac{a}{b}\times\frac{c}{d}.$$

Multiply a(d) and b(c), which results in $ad=bc$.

Any solution that makes a denominator in the original expression equal zero must be excluded from the possibilities.

RATIONAL EQUATIONS

A r*ational equation* contains at least one rational expression where the variable appears in at least one of the denominators.

Howto: Given a rational equation, solve it.

1. Factor all denominators in the equation.
2. Find and exclude values that set each denominator equal to zero.
3. Find the LCD.
4. Multiply the whole equation by the LCD. If the LCD is correct, there will be no denominators left.
5. Solve the remaining equation.
6. Make sure to check solutions back in the original equations to avoid a solution producing zero in a denominator

Example 1.6.4: Solving a Rational Equation without Factoring

Solve the following rational equation:

$$\frac{2}{x}-\frac{3}{2}=\frac{7}{2x}$$

Solution

We have three denominators: x, 2, and $2x$. No factoring is required. The product of the first two denominators is equal to the third denominator, so, the LCD is $2x$. Only one value is excluded from a solution set, 0. Next, multiply the whole equation (both sides of the equal sign) by $2x$.

$$\begin{aligned} 2x\left[\frac{2}{x}-\frac{3}{2}\right] &= \left[\frac{7}{2x}\right](2x) \\ 2x\left(\frac{2}{x}\right)-2x\left(\frac{3}{2}\right) &= \left(\frac{7}{2x}\right)(2x) \qquad \text{Distribute } 2x \\ 2(2)-3x &= 7 \qquad \text{Denominators cancel out.} \\ 4-3x &= 7 \\ -3x &= 3 \\ x &= -1 \text{ or } \{-1\} \end{aligned}$$

The proposed solution is -1, which is not an excluded value, so the solution set contains one number, $x=-1$, or $\{-1\}$ written in set notation.

Exercise 1.6.4

Solve the rational equation:

$$\frac{2}{3x}=\frac{1}{4}-\frac{1}{6x}$$

Answer

$$x=\frac{10}{3}$$

Example 1.6.5: Solving a Rational Equation by Factoring the Denominator

Solve the following rational equation:

$$\frac{1}{x}=\frac{1}{10}-\frac{3}{4x}$$

Solution

First find the common denominator. The three denominators in factored form are $x, 10=2\cdot 5$, and $4x=2\cdot 2\cdot x$. The smallest expression that is divisible by each one of the denominators is $20x$. Only $x=0$ is an excluded value. Multiply the whole equation by $20x$.

$$\begin{aligned} 20x\left(\frac{1}{x}\right) &= \left(\frac{1}{10}-\frac{3}{4x}\right)20x \\ 20 &= 2x-15 \\ 35 &= 2x \\ \frac{35}{2} &= x \end{aligned}$$

The solution is $\frac{35}{2}$.

Exercise 1.6.5

Solve the rational equation:

$$-\frac{5}{2x}+\frac{3}{4x}=-\frac{7}{4}$$

Answer

$x=1$

Example 1.6.6: Solving Rational Equations with a Binomial in the Denominator

Solve the following rational equations and state the excluded values:

a. $\dfrac{3}{x-6}=\dfrac{5}{x}$

b. $\dfrac{x}{x-3}=\dfrac{5}{x-3}-\dfrac{1}{2}$

c. $\dfrac{x}{x-2}=\dfrac{5}{x-2}-\dfrac{1}{2}$

Solution

a.

The denominators x and $x-6$ have nothing in common. Therefore, the LCD is the product $x(x-6)$. However, for this problem, we can cross-multiply.

$$\begin{aligned}\frac{3}{x-6}&=\frac{5}{x}\\ 3x&=5(x-6) \qquad \text{Distribute.}\\ 3x&=5x-30\\ -2x&=-30\\ x&=15\end{aligned}$$

The solution is 15. The excluded values are 6 and 0.

b.

The LCD is $2(x-3)$. Multiply both sides of the equation by $2(x-3)$.

$$\begin{aligned}2(x-3)\left[\frac{x}{x-3}\right]&=\left[\frac{5}{x-3}-\frac{1}{2}\right]2(x-3)\\ \frac{2(x-3)x}{x-3}&=\frac{2(x-3)5}{x-3}-\frac{2(x-3)}{2}\\ 2x&=10-(x-3)\\ 2x&=13-x\\ 3x&=13\\ x&=\frac{13}{3}\end{aligned}$$

The solution is $\dfrac{13}{3}$. The excluded value is 3.

c.

The least common denominator is $2(x-2)$. Multiply both sides of the equation by $x(x-2)$.

$$
\begin{aligned}
2(x-2)\left[\frac{x}{x-2}\right] &= \left[\frac{5}{x-2}-\frac{1}{2}\right]2(x-2) \\
2x &= 10-(x-2) \\
2x &= 12-x \\
3x &= 12 \\
x &= 4
\end{aligned}
$$

The solution is 4. The excluded value is 2.

Exercise 1.6.6

Solve $\frac{-3}{2x+1}=\frac{4}{3x+1}$. State the excluded values.

Answer

$x=-\frac{7}{17}$. Excluded values are $x=-12$ and $x=-13$.

Example 1.6.7: Solving a Rational Equation with Factored Denominators and Stating Excluded Values

Solve the rational equation after factoring the denominators: $\frac{2}{x+1}-\frac{1}{x-1}=\frac{2x}{x^2-1}$. State the excluded values.

Solution

We must factor the denominator x^2-1. We recognize this as the difference of squares, and factor it as $(x-1)(x+1)$. Thus, the LCD that contains each denominator is $(x-1)(x+1)$. Multiply the whole equation by the LCD, cancel out the denominators, and solve the remaining equation.

$$
\begin{aligned}
(x+1)(x-1)\left[\frac{2}{x+1}-\frac{1}{x-1}\right] &= \left[\frac{2x}{x^2-1}\right](x+1)(x-1) \\
2(x-1)-(x+1) &= 2x \\
2x-2-x-1 &= 2x \text{ Distribute the negative sign} \\
-3-x &= 0 \\
x &= -3
\end{aligned}
$$

The solution is -3. The excluded values are 1 and -1.

Exercise 1.6.7

Solve the rational equation:

$$\frac{2}{x-2}+\frac{1}{x+1}=\frac{1}{x^2-x-2}$$

Answer

$x=\frac{1}{3}$

Finding a Linear Equation

Perhaps the most familiar form of a linear equation is the *slope-intercept form*, written as

$$y=mx+b \tag{1.6.3}$$

where $m=$ slope and $b=$ y−intercept. Let us begin with the slope.

The **slope** of a line refers to the ratio of the vertical change in y over the horizontal change in x between any two points on a line. It indicates the direction in which a line slants as well as its steepness. Slope is sometimes described as rise over run.

$$m = \frac{y_2 - y_1}{x_2 - x_1} \tag{1.6.4}$$

If the slope is positive, the line slants to the right. If the slope is negative, the line slants to the left. As the slope increases, the line becomes steeper. Some examples are shown in Figure 1.6.2. The lines indicate the following slopes: $m = -3$, $m = 2$, and $m = \frac{1}{3}$.

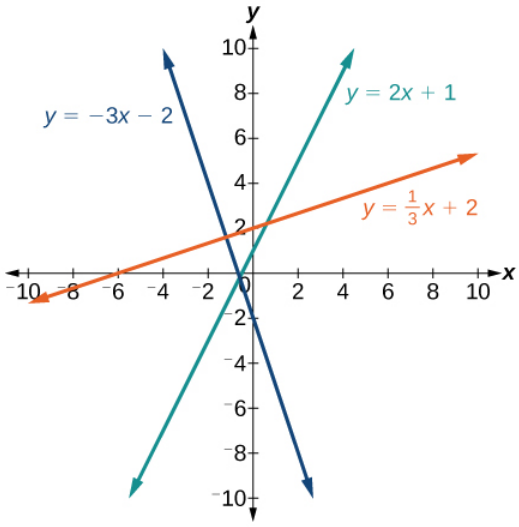

Figure 1.6.2

THE SLOPE OF A LINE

The slope of a line, m, represents the change in y over the change in x. Given two points, (x_1, y_1) and (x_2, y_2), the following formula determines the slope of a line containing these points:

$$m = \frac{y_2 - y_1}{x_2 - x_1} \tag{1.6.5}$$

Example 1.6.8: Finding the Slope of a Line Given Two Points

Find the slope of a line that passes through the points $(2, -1)$ and $(-5, 3)$.

Solution

We substitute the y-values and the x-values into the formula.

$$\begin{aligned} m &= \frac{3 - (-1)}{-5 - 2} \\ &= \frac{4}{-7} \\ &= -\frac{4}{7} \end{aligned}$$

The slope is $-\frac{4}{7}$

Analysis

It does not matter which point is called (x_1, y_1) or (x_2, y_2). As long as we are consistent with the order of the y terms and the order of the x terms in the numerator and denominator, the calculation will yield the same result.

Exercise 1.6.8

Find the slope of the line that passes through the points $(-2, 6)$ and $(1, 4)$.

Answer

$$m = -\frac{2}{3}$$

Example 1.6.9: Identifying the Slope and y-intercept of a Line Given an Equation

Identify the slope and y-intercept, given the equation $y = -\frac{3}{4}x - 4$.

Solution

As the line is in $y = mx + b$ form, the given line has a slope of $m = -\frac{3}{4}$. The y-intercept is $b = -4$.

Analysis

The y-intercept is the point at which the line crosses the y-axis. On the y-axis, $x = 0$. We can always identify the y-intercept when the line is in slope-intercept form, as it will always equal b. Or, just substitute $x = 0$ and solve for y.

The Point-Slope Formula

Given the slope and one point on a line, we can find the equation of the line using the point-slope formula.

$$y - y_1 = m(x - x_1) \tag{1.6.6}$$

This is an important formula, as it will be used in other areas of college algebra and often in calculus to find the equation of a tangent line. We need only one point and the slope of the line to use the formula. After substituting the slope and the coordinates of one point into the formula, we simplify it and write it in slope-intercept form.

THE POINT-SLOPE FORMULA

Given one point and the slope, the point-slope formula will lead to the equation of a line:

$$y - y_1 = m(x - x_1) \tag{1.6.7}$$

Example 1.6.10: Finding the Equation of a Line Given the Slope and One Point

Write the equation of the line with slope $m = -3$ and passing through the point $(4, 8)$. Write the final equation in slope-intercept form.

Solution

Using the point-slope formula, substitute -3 for m and the point $(4, 8)$ for (x_1, y_1).

$$\begin{aligned} y - y_1 &= m(x - x_1) \\ y - 8 &= -3(x - 4) \\ y - 8 &= -3x + 12 \\ y &= -3x + 20 \end{aligned}$$

Analysis

Note that any point on the line can be used to find the equation. If done correctly, the same final equation will be obtained.

Exercise 1.6.10

Given $m = 4$, find the equation of the line in slope-intercept form passing through the point $(2, 5)$.

Answer

$y = 4x - 3$

Example 1.6.11: Finding the Equation of a Line Passing Through Two Given Points

Find the equation of the line passing through the points $(3, 4)$ and $(0, -3)$. Write the final equation in slope-intercept form.

Solution

First, we calculate the slope using the slope formula and two points.

$$\begin{aligned} m &= \frac{-3-4}{0-3} \\ m &= \frac{-7}{-3} \\ m &= \frac{7}{3} \end{aligned}$$

Next, we use the point-slope formula with the slope of $\frac{7}{3}$, and either point. Let's pick the point $(3, 4)$ for (x_1, y_1).

$$\begin{aligned} y - 4 &= \frac{7}{3}(x-3) \\ y - 4 &= \frac{7}{3}x - 7 \\ y &= \frac{7}{3}x - 3 \end{aligned}$$

In slope-intercept form, the equation is written as $y = \frac{7}{3}x - 3$

Analysis

To prove that either point can be used, let us use the second point $(0, -3)$ and see if we get the same equation.

$$\begin{aligned} y - (-3) &= \frac{7}{3}(x-0) \\ y + 3 &= \frac{7}{3}x \\ y &= \frac{7}{3}x - 3 \end{aligned}$$

We see that the same line will be obtained using either point. This makes sense because we used both points to calculate the slope.

Standard Form of a Line

Another way that we can represent the equation of a line is in **standard form**. Standard form is given as

$$Ax + By = C \tag{1.6.8}$$

where A, B, and C are integers. The x- and y-terms are on one side of the equal sign and the constant term is on the other side.

Example 1.6.12: Finding the Equation of a Line and Writing It in Standard Form

Find the equation of the line with $m = -6$ and passing through the point $\left(\frac{1}{4}, -2\right)$. Write the equation in standard form.

Solution

We begin using the point-slope formula.

$$\begin{aligned} y-(-2) &= -6\left(x-\frac{1}{4}\right) \\ y+2 &= -6x+\frac{3}{2} \end{aligned}$$

From here, we multiply through by 2, as no fractions are permitted in standard form, and then move both variables to the left aside of the equal sign and move the constants to the right.

$$\begin{aligned} 2(y+2) &= \left(-6x+\frac{3}{2}\right)2 \\ 2y+4 &= -12x+3 \\ 12x+2y &= -1 \end{aligned}$$

This equation is now written in standard form.

? Exercise 1.6.12

Find the equation of the line in standard form with slope $m=-\frac{1}{3}$ and passing through the point $(1,13)$.

Answer

$x+3y=2$

Vertical and Horizontal Lines

The equations of vertical and horizontal lines do not require any of the preceding formulas, although we can use the formulas to prove that the equations are correct. The equation of a **vertical line** is given as

$$x=c \tag{1.6.9}$$

where c is a constant. The slope of a vertical line is undefined, and regardless of the y-value of any point on the line, the x-coordinate of the point will be c.

Suppose that we want to find the equation of a line containing the following points: $(-3,-5)$,$(-3,1)$,$(-3,3)$, and $(-3,5)$. First, we will find the slope.

$$m=\frac{5-3}{-3-(-3)}=\frac{2}{0}$$

Zero in the denominator means that the slope is undefined and, therefore, we cannot use the point-slope formula. However, we can plot the points. Notice that all of the x-coordinates are the same and we find a vertical line through $x=-3$. See Figure 1.6.3.

The equation of a **horizontal line** is given as

$$y=c \tag{1.6.10}$$

where c is a constant. The slope of a horizontal line is zero, and for any x-value of a point on the line, the y-coordinate will be c.

Suppose we want to find the equation of a line that contains the following set of points: $(-2,-2)$,$(0,-2)$,$(3,-2)$, and $(5,-2)$. We can use the point-slope formula. First, we find the slope using any two points on the line.

$$\begin{aligned} m &= \frac{-2-(-2)}{0-(-2)} \\ &= \frac{0}{2} \\ &= 0 \end{aligned}$$

Use any point for (x_1,y_1) in the formula, or use the y-intercept.

$$\begin{aligned} y-(-2) &= 0(x-3) \\ y+2 &= 0 \\ y &= -2 \end{aligned}$$

The graph is a horizontal line through $y = -2$. Notice that all of the y-coordinates are the same. See Figure 1.6.3.

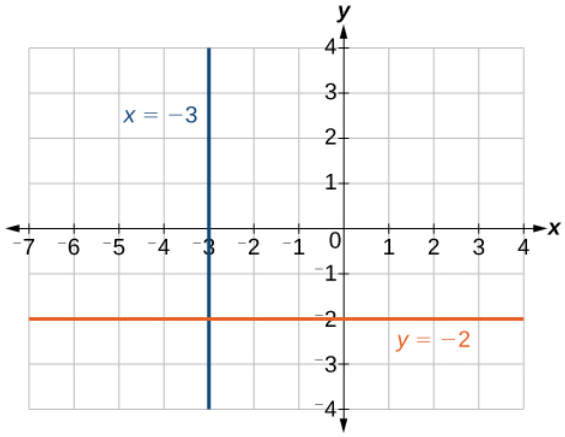

Figure 1.6.3: The line x = −3 is a vertical line. The line y = −2 is a horizontal line

Example 1.6.13: Finding the Equation of a Line Passing Through the Given Points

Find the equation of the line passing through the given points: $(1, -3)$ and $(1, 4)$.

Solution

The x-coordinate of both points is 1. Therefore, we have a vertical line, $x = 1$.

Exercise 1.6.13

Find the equation of the line passing through $(-5, 2)$ and $(2, 2)$.

Answer

Horizontal line: $y = 2$

Determining Whether Graphs of Lines are Parallel or Perpendicular

Parallel lines have the same slope and different y-intercepts. Lines that are parallel to each other will never intersect. For example, Figure 1.6.4 shows the graphs of various lines with the same slope, $m = 2$.

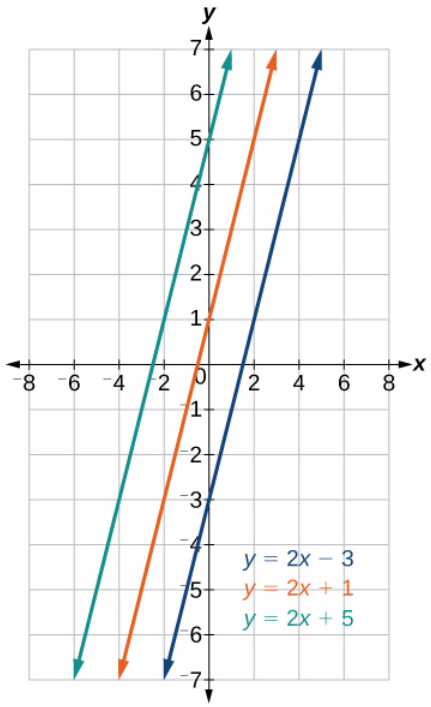

Figure 1.6.4: Parallel lines

All of the lines shown in the graph are parallel because they have the same slope and different y-intercepts.

Lines that are **perpendicular** intersect to form a 90° -angle. The slope of one line is the negative **reciprocal** of the other. We can show that two lines are perpendicular if the product of the two slopes is -1 : $m_1 \cdot m_2 = -1$. For example, Figure 1.6.5 shows the graph of two perpendicular lines. One line has a slope of 3; the other line has a slope of $-\frac{1}{3}$.

$$m_1 \cdot m_2 = -1$$
$$3 \cdot \left(-\frac{1}{3}\right) = -1$$

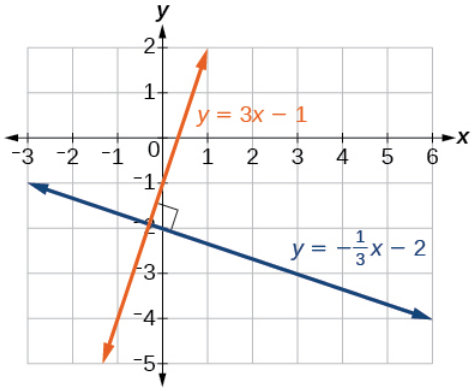

Figure 1.6.5: Perpendicular lines

Example 1.6.14: Graphing Two Equations, and Determining Whether the Lines are Parallel, Perpendicular, or Neither

Graph the equations of the given lines, and state whether they are parallel, perpendicular, or neither: $3y = -4x + 3$ and $3x - 4y = 8$.

Solution

The first thing we want to do is rewrite the equations so that both equations are in slope-intercept form.

First equation:

$$\begin{aligned} 3y &= -4x+3 \\ y &= -\frac{4}{3}x+1 \end{aligned}$$

Second equation:

$$\begin{aligned} 3x-4y &= 8 \\ -4y &= -3x+8 \\ y &= \frac{3}{4}x-2 \end{aligned}$$

See the graph of both lines in Figure 1.6.6.

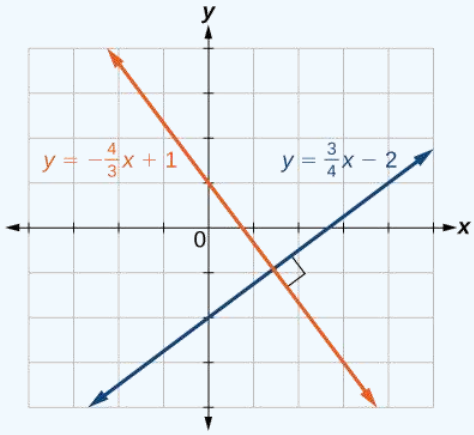

Figure 1.6.6

From the graph, we can see that the lines appear perpendicular, but we must compare the slopes.

$$\begin{aligned} m_1 &= -\frac{4}{3} \\ m_2 &= \frac{3}{4} \\ m_1 \cdot m_2 &= \left(-\frac{4}{3}\right)\left(\frac{3}{4}\right) \\ &= -1 \end{aligned}$$

The slopes are negative reciprocals of each other, confirming that the lines are perpendicular.

Exercise 1.6.14

Graph the two lines and determine whether they are parallel, perpendicular, or neither: $2y-x=10$ and $2y=x+4$.

Answer

Parallel lines: equations are written in slope-intercept form.

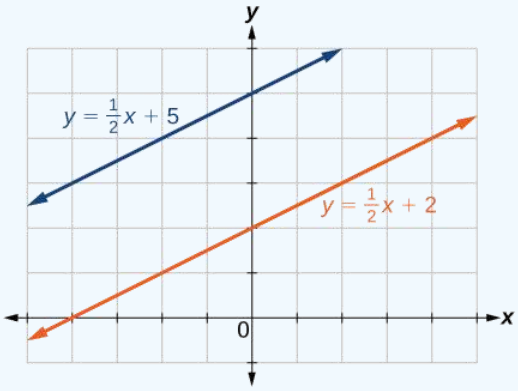

Figure 1.6.7

Writing the Equations of Lines Parallel or Perpendicular to a Given Line

As we have learned, determining whether two lines are parallel or perpendicular is a matter of finding the slopes. To write the equation of a line parallel or perpendicular to another line, we follow the same principles as we do for finding the equation of any line. After finding the slope, use the **point-slope formula** to write the equation of the new line.

Given an equation for a line, write the equation of a line parallel or perpendicular to it.

1. Find the slope of the given line. The easiest way to do this is to write the equation in slope-intercept form.
2. Use the slope and the given point with the point-slope formula.
3. Simplify the line to slope-intercept form and compare the equation to the given line.

Example 1.6.15: Writing the Equation of a Line Parallel to a Given Line Passing Through a Given Point

Write the equation of line parallel to a $5x+3y=1$ and passing through the point $(3,5)$.

Solution

First, we will write the equation in slope-intercept form to find the slope.

$$\begin{aligned} 5x+3y &= 1 \\ 3y &= -5x+1 \\ y &= -\frac{5}{3}x+\frac{1}{3} \end{aligned}$$

The slope is $m=-\frac{5}{3}$. The y-intercept is 13, but that really does not enter into our problem, as the only thing we need for two lines to be parallel is the same slope. The one exception is that if the y-intercepts are the same, then the two lines are the same line. The next step is to use this slope and the given point with the point-slope formula.

$$\begin{aligned} y-5 &= -\frac{5}{3}(x-3) \\ y-5 &= -\frac{5}{3}x+5 \\ y &= -\frac{5}{3}x+10 \end{aligned}$$

The equation of the line is $y=-\frac{5}{3}x+10$. See Figure 1.6.8.

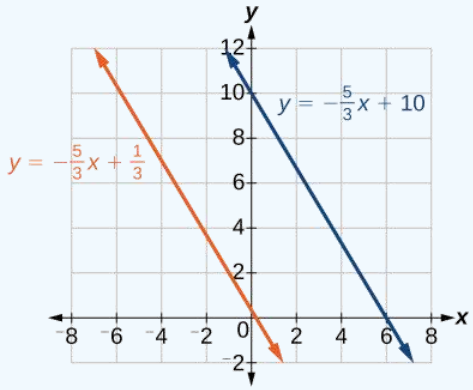

Figure 1.6.8

? Exercise 1.6.15

Find the equation of the line parallel to $5x = 7 + y$ and passing through the point $(-1, -2)$.

Answer

$y = 5x + 3$

✓ Example 1.6.16: Finding the Equation of a Line Perpendicular to a Given Line Passing Through a Given Point

Find the equation of the line perpendicular to $5x - 3y + 4 = 0$ $(-4, 1)$.

Solution

The first step is to write the equation in slope-intercept form.

$$\begin{aligned} 5x - 3y + 4 &= 0 \\ -3y &= -5x - 4 \\ y &= \frac{5}{3}x + \frac{4}{3} \end{aligned}$$

We see that the slope is $m = \frac{5}{3}$. This means that the slope of the line perpendicular to the given line is the negative reciprocal, or $-\frac{3}{5}$. Next, we use the point-slope formula with this new slope and the given point.

$$\begin{aligned} y - 1 &= -\frac{3}{5}(x - (-4)) \\ y - 1 &= -\frac{3}{5}x - \frac{12}{5} \\ y &= -\frac{3}{5}x - \frac{12}{5} + \frac{5}{5} \\ y &= -\frac{3}{5}x - \frac{7}{5} \end{aligned}$$

Media

Access these online resources for additional instruction and practice with linear equations.

1. Solving rational equations
2. Equation of a line given two points
3. Finding the equation of a line perpendicular to another line through a given point
4. Finding the equation of a line parallel to another line through a given point

Key Concepts

- We can solve linear equations in one variable in the form $ax+b=0$ using standard algebraic properties. See Example and Example.
- A rational expression is a quotient of two polynomials. We use the LCD to clear the fractions from an equation. See Example and Example.
- All solutions to a rational equation should be verified within the original equation to avoid an undefined term, or zero in the denominator. See Example and Example.
- Given two points, we can find the slope of a line using the slope formula. See Example.
- We can identify the slope and y-intercept of an equation in slope-intercept form. See Example.
- We can find the equation of a line given the slope and a point. See Example.
- We can also find the equation of a line given two points. Find the slope and use the point-slope formula. See Example.
- The standard form of a line has no fractions. See Example.
- Horizontal lines have a slope of zero and are defined as $y=c$, where c is a constant.
- Vertical lines have an undefined slope (zero in the denominator), and are defined as $x=c$, where c is a constant. See Example.
- Parallel lines have the same slope and different y-intercepts. See Example.
- Perpendicular lines have slopes that are negative reciprocals of each other unless one is horizontal and the other is vertical. See Example.

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1.6.1: Models and Applications

Learning Objectives

- Set up a linear equation to solve a real-world application.
- Use a formula to solve a real-world application.

Josh is hoping to get an A in his college algebra class. He has scores of 75, 82, 95, 91, and 94 on his first five tests. Only the final exam remains, and the maximum of points that can be earned is 100. Is it possible for Josh to end the course with an A? A simple linear equation will give Josh his answer.

Figure 2.4.1 Credit: Kevin Dooley

Many real-world applications can be modeled by linear equations. For example, a cell phone package may include a monthly service fee plus a charge per minute of talk-time; it costs a widget manufacturer a certain amount to produce *x* widgets per month plus monthly operating charges; a car rental company charges a daily fee plus an amount per mile driven. These are examples of applications we come across every day that are modeled by linear equations. In this section, we will set up and use linear equations to solve such problems.

Setting up a Linear Equation to Solve a Real-World Application

To set up or model a linear equation to fit a real-world application, we must first determine the known quantities and define the unknown quantity as a variable. Then, we begin to interpret the words as mathematical expressions using mathematical symbols. Let us use the car rental example above. In this case, a known cost, such as $\$0.10/mi$, is multiplied by an unknown quantity, the number of miles driven. Therefore, we can write $0.10x$. This expression represents a variable cost because it changes according to the number of miles driven.

If a quantity is independent of a variable, we usually just add or subtract it, according to the problem. As these amounts do not change, we call them fixed costs. Consider a car rental agency that charges $\$0.10/mi$ plus a daily fee of $\$50$. We can use these quantities to model an equation that can be used to find the daily car rental cost C.

$$C = 0.10x + 50 \tag{2.4.1}$$

When dealing with real-world applications, there are certain expressions that we can translate directly into math. Table $1.6.1.1$ lists some common verbal expressions and their equivalent mathematical expressions.

Table 1.6.1.1: Verbal to math conversion

Verbal	Translation to Math Operations
One number exceeds another by a	x, $x + a$
Twice a number	$2x$
One number is a more than another number	x, $x + a$
One number is a less than twice another number	x, $2x - a$

Verbal	Translation to Math Operations
The product of a number and a, decreased by b	$ax-b$
The quotient of a number and the number plus a is three times the number	$\frac{x}{x+a}=3x$
The product of three times a number and the number decreased by b is c	$3x(x-b)=c$

How to: Given a real-world problem, model a linear equation to fit it

1. Identify known quantities.
2. Assign a variable to represent the unknown quantity.
3. If there is more than one unknown quantity, find a way to write the second unknown in terms of the first.
4. Write an equation interpreting the words as mathematical operations.
5. Solve the equation. Be sure the solution can be explained in words, including the units of measure.

Example 1.6.1.1

Find a linear equation to solve for the following unknown quantities: One number exceeds another number by 17 and their sum is 31. Find the two numbers.

Solution

Let x equal the first number. Then, as the second number exceeds the first by 17, we can write the second number as $x+17$. The sum of the two numbers is 31. We usually interpret the word is as an equal sign.

$$\begin{aligned} x+(x+17) &= 31 \\ 2x+17 &= 31 \\ 2x &= 14 \\ x &= 7 \end{aligned}$$

$$\begin{aligned} x+17 &= 7+17 \\ &= 24 \end{aligned}$$

The two numbers are 7 and 24.

Exercise 1.6.1.1

Find a linear equation to solve for the following unknown quantities: One number is three more than twice another number. If the sum of the two numbers is 36, find the numbers.

Answer

11 and 25

Example 1.6.1.2: Setting Up a Equation to Solve a Real-World Application

There are two cell phone companies that offer different packages. Company A charges a monthly service fee of $\$34$ plus $\$.05/min$talk-time. Company B charges a monthly service fee of $\$40$ plus $\$.04/min$talk-time.

a. Write a linear equation that models the packages offered by both companies.
b. If the average number of minutes used each month is $1,160$, which company offers the better plan?
c. If the average number of minutes used each month is 420, which company offers the better plan?
d. How many minutes of talk-time would yield equal monthly statements from both companies?

Solution

a.

The model for Company A can be written as $A = 0.05x + 34$. This includes the variable cost of $0.05x$ plus the monthly service charge of $\$34$. Company B's package charges a higher monthly fee of $\$40$, but a lower variable cost of $0.04x$. Company B's model can be written as $B = 0.04x + \$40$.

b.

If the average number of minutes used each month is $1,160$, we have the following:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Company A} &= 0.05(1.160) + 34 \\ &= 58 + 34 \\ &= 92 \end{aligned}$$

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Company B} &= 0.04(1,1600) + 40 \\ &= 46.4 + 40 \\ &= 86.4 \end{aligned}$$

So, Company B offers the lower monthly cost of $\$86.40$ as compared with the $\$92$ monthly cost offered by Company A when the average number of minutes used each month is $1,160$.

c.

If the average number of minutes used each month is 420, we have the following:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Company A} &= 0.05(420) + 34 \\ &= 21 + 34 \\ &= 55 \end{aligned}$$

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Company B} &= 0.04(420) + 40 \\ &= 16.8 + 40 \\ &= 56.8 \end{aligned}$$

If the average number of minutes used each month is 420, then Company A offers a lower monthly cost of $\$55$ compared to Company B's monthly cost of $\$56.80$.

d.

To answer the question of how many talk-time minutes would yield the same bill from both companies, we should think about the problem in terms of (x, y) coordinates: At what point are both the x-value and the y-value equal? We can find this point by setting the equations equal to each other and solving for x.

$$\begin{aligned} 0.05x + 34 &= 0.04x + 40 \\ 0.01x &= 6 \\ x &= 600 \end{aligned}$$

Check the x-value in each equation.

$$0.05(600) + 34 = 64$$

$$0.04(600) + 40 = 64$$

Therefore, a monthly average of 600 talk-time minutes renders the plans equal. See Figure $1.6.1.2$

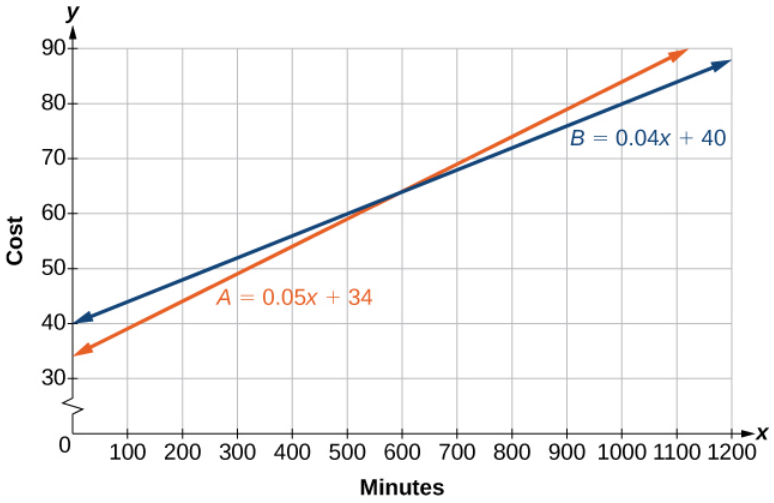

Figure 1.6.1.2

? Exercise 1.6.1.2

Find a linear equation to model this real-world application: It costs ABC electronics company $\$2.50$ per unit to produce a part used in a popular brand of desktop computers. The company has monthly operating expenses of $\$350$ for utilities and $\$3,300$ for salaries. What are the company's monthly expenses?

Answer

$C = 2.5x + 3,650$

Using a Formula to Solve a Real-World Application

Many applications are solved using known formulas. The problem is stated, a formula is identified, the known quantities are substituted into the formula, the equation is solved for the unknown, and the problem's question is answered. Typically, these problems involve two equations representing two trips, two investments, two areas, and so on. Examples of formulas include the **area** of a rectangular region,

$$A = LW \tag{2.4.2}$$

the **perimeter** of a rectangle,

$$P = 2L + 2W \tag{2.4.3}$$

and the **volume** of a rectangular solid,

$$V = LWH. \tag{2.4.4}$$

When there are two unknowns, we find a way to write one in terms of the other because we can solve for only one variable at a time.

✔ Example 1.6.1.3: Solving an Application Using a Formula

It takes Andrew $30\ min$ to drive to work in the morning. He drives home using the same route, but it takes \(10\; min\) longer, and he averages $10\ mi/h$ less than in the morning. How far does Andrew drive to work?

Solution

This is a distance problem, so we can use the formula $d = rt$, where distance equals rate multiplied by time. Note that when rate is given in mi/h, time must be expressed in hours. Consistent units of measurement are key to obtaining a correct solution.

First, we identify the known and unknown quantities. Andrew's morning drive to work takes 30 min, or 12 h at rate r. His drive home takes 40 min, or 23 h, and his speed averages 10 mi/h less than the morning drive. Both trips cover distance d. A table, such as Table 1.6.1.2 is often helpful for keeping track of information in these types of problems.

Table 1.6.1.2

	d	r	t
To Work	d	r	12
To Home	d	$r-10$	23

Write two equations, one for each trip.

$$d = r\left(\frac{1}{2}\right) \qquad \text{To work}$$

$$d = (r-10)\left(\frac{2}{3}\right) \qquad \text{To home}$$

As both equations equal the same distance, we set them equal to each other and solve for r.

$$\begin{aligned} r\left(\frac{1}{2}\right) &= (r-10)\left(\frac{2}{3}\right) \\ \frac{1}{2r} &= \frac{2}{3}r - \frac{20}{3} \\ \frac{1}{2}r - \frac{2}{3}r &= -\frac{20}{3} \\ -\frac{1}{6}r &= -\frac{20}{3} \\ r &= -\frac{20}{3}(-6) \\ r &= 40 \end{aligned}$$

We have solved for the rate of speed to work, 40 mph. Substituting 40 into the rate on the return trip yields $30 mi/h$. Now we can answer the question. Substitute the rate back into either equation and solve for d.

$$\begin{aligned} d &= 40\left(\frac{1}{2}\right) \\ &= 20 \end{aligned}$$

The distance between home and work is 20 mi.

Analysis

Note that we could have cleared the fractions in the equation by multiplying both sides of the equation by the LCD to solve for r.

$$\begin{aligned} r\left(\frac{1}{2}\right) &= (r-10)\left(\frac{2}{3}\right) \\ 6 \times r\left(\frac{1}{2}\right) &= 6 \times (r-10)\left(\frac{2}{3}\right) \\ 3r &= 4(r-10) \\ 3r &= 4r - 40 \\ r &= 40 \end{aligned}$$

Exercise 1.6.1.3

On Saturday morning, it took Jennifer $3.6\ h$ to drive to her mother's house for the weekend. On Sunday evening, due to heavy traffic, it took Jennifer $4\ h$ to return home. Her speed was $5\ mi/h$ slower on Sunday than on Saturday. What was her speed on Sunday?

Answer

$45\ mi/h$

Example 1.6.1.4: Solving a Perimeter Problem

The perimeter of a rectangular outdoor patio is $54\ ft$. The length is $3\ ft$ greater than the width. What are the dimensions of the patio?

Solution

The perimeter formula is standard: $P = 2L + 2W$. We have two unknown quantities, length and width. However, we can write the length in terms of the width as $L = W + 3$. Substitute the perimeter value and the expression for length into the formula. It is often helpful to make a sketch and label the sides as in Figure 1.6.1.3

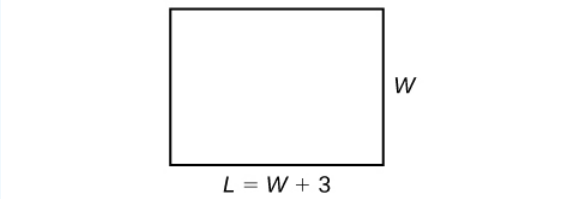

Figure 1.6.1.3

Now we can solve for the width and then calculate the length.

$$\begin{aligned} P &= 2L + 2W \\ 54 &= 2(W+3) + 2W \\ 54 &= 2W + 6 + 2W \\ 54 &= 4W + 6 \\ 48 &= 4W \\ W &= 12 \end{aligned}$$

$$\begin{aligned} L &= 12 + 3 \\ L &= 15 \end{aligned}$$

The dimensions are $L = 15\ ft$ and $W = 12\ ft$.

Exercise 1.6.1.4

Find the dimensions of a rectangle given that the perimeter is $110\ cm$ and the length is $1\ cm$ more than twice the width.

Answer

$L = 37\ cm$, $W = 18\ cm$

Example 1.6.1.5: Solving an Area Problem

The perimeter of a tablet of graph paper is $48\ in.^2$. The length is $6\ in.$ more than the width. Find the area of the graph paper.

Solution

The standard formula for area is $A = LW$; however, we will solve the problem using the perimeter formula. The reason we use the perimeter formula is because we know enough information about the perimeter that the formula will allow us to solve

for one of the unknowns. As both perimeter and area use length and width as dimensions, they are often used together to solve a problem such as this one.

We know that the length is $6\ in.$ more than the width, so we can write length as $L = W + 6$. Substitute the value of the perimeter and the expression for length into the perimeter formula and find the length.

$$\begin{aligned} P &= 2L + 2W \\ 48 &= 2(W+6) + 2W \\ 48 &= 2W + 12 + 2W \\ 48 &= 4W + 12 \\ 36 &= 4W \\ W &= 9 \end{aligned}$$

$$\begin{aligned} L &= 9 + 6 \\ L &= 15 \end{aligned}$$

Now, we find the area given the dimensions of $L = 15\ in.$ and $W = 9\ in.$

$$\begin{aligned} A &= LW \\ A &= 15(9) \\ A &= 135\ in.^2 \end{aligned}$$

The area is $135\ in.^2$.

? Exercise 1.6.1.5

A game room has a perimeter of $70\ ft.$ The length is five more than twice the width. How many ft^2 of new carpeting should be ordered?

Answer

$250\ ft^2$

✓ Example 1.6.1.6: Solving a Volume Problem

Find the dimensions of a shipping box given that the length is twice the width, the height is 8 in, and the volume is $1,600\ in.^3$.

Solution

The formula for the volume of a box is given as $V = LWH$, the product of length, width, and height. We are given that $L = 2W$, and $H = 8$. The volume is $1,600$ cubic inches.

$$\begin{aligned} V &= LWH \\ 1600 &= (2W)W(8) \\ 1600 &= 16W^2 \\ 100 &= W^2 \\ 10 &= W \end{aligned}$$

The dimensions are $L = 20\ in$, $W = 10\ in$, and $H = 8\ in$.

Analysis

Note that the square root of W^2 would result in a positive and a negative value. However, because we are describing width, we can use only the positive result.

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Access these online resources for additional instruction and practice with models and applications of linear equations.

1. Problem solving using linear equations
2. Problem solving using equations
3. Finding the dimensions of area given the perimeter
4. Find the distance between the cities using the distance = rate * time formula
5. Linear equation application (Write a cost equation)

Key Concepts

- A linear equation can be used to solve for an unknown in a number problem. See Example.
- Applications can be written as mathematical problems by identifying known quantities and assigning a variable to unknown quantities. See Example.
- There are many known formulas that can be used to solve applications. Distance problems, for example, are solved using the $d = rt$ formula. See Example.
- Many geometry problems are solved using the perimeter formula $P = 2L + 2W$, the area formula $A = LW$, or the volume formula $V = LWH$. See Example, Example, and Example.

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1.7: Radicals and Rational Expressions

Learning Objectives

- Evaluate square roots.
- Use the product rule to simplify square roots.
- Use the quotient rule to simplify square roots.
- Add and subtract square roots.
- Rationalize denominators.
- Use rational roots.

A hardware store sells 16-ft ladders and 24-ft ladders. A window is located 12 feet above the ground. A ladder needs to be purchased that will reach the window from a point on the ground 5 feet from the building. To find out the length of ladder needed, we can draw a right triangle as shown in Figure 1.7.1, and use the Pythagorean Theorem.

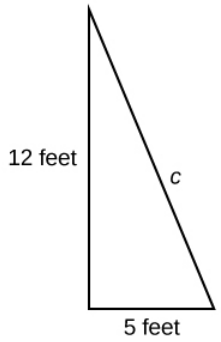

Figure 1.7.1: A right triangle

$$\begin{aligned} a^2+b^2 &= c^2 \\ 5^2+12^2 &= c^2 \\ 169 &= c^2 \end{aligned}$$

Now, we need to find out the length that, when squared, is 169, to determine which ladder to choose. In other words, we need to find a square root. In this section, we will investigate methods of finding solutions to problems such as this one.

Evaluating Square Roots

When the square root of a number is squared, the result is the original number. Since $4^2=16$, the square root of 16 is 4.The square root function is the inverse of the squaring function just as subtraction is the inverse of addition. To undo squaring, we take the square root.

In general terms, if a is a positive real number, then the square root of a is a number that, when multiplied by itself, gives a.The square root could be positive or negative because multiplying two negative numbers gives a positive number. The principal square root is the nonnegative number that when multiplied by itself equals a. The square root obtained using a calculator is the principal square root.

The principal square root of a is written as $\sqrt{a}$. The symbol is called a radical, the term under the symbol is called the radicand, and the entire expression is called a **radical expression**.

Example 1.7.1

Does $\sqrt{25} = \pm 5$?

Solution

No. Although both 5^2 and $(-5)^2$ are 25, the radical symbol implies only a *nonnegative* root, the principal square root. The principal square root of 25 is $\sqrt{25} = 5$.

Note

The principal square root of a is the nonnegative number that, when multiplied by itself, equals a. It is written as a radical expression, with a symbol called a *radical* over the term called the *radicand*: $\sqrt{a}$.

Example 1.7.2: Evaluating Square Roots

Evaluate each expression.

a. $\sqrt{\sqrt{16}}$
b. $\sqrt{49}$-$\sqrt{81}$

Solution

a. $\sqrt{\sqrt{16}} = \sqrt{4} = 2$ because $4^2 = 16$ and $2^2 = 4$
b. $\sqrt{49} - \sqrt{81} = 7 - 9 = -2$ because $7^2 = 49$ and $9^2 = 81$

Example 1.7.3:

For $\sqrt{25 + 144}$,can we find the square roots before adding?

Solution

No. $\sqrt{25} + \sqrt{144} = 5 + 12 = 17$. This is not equivalent to $\sqrt{25 + 144} = 13$. The order of operations requires us to add the terms in the radicand before finding the square root.

Exercise 1.7.1

Evaluate each expression.

a. $\sqrt{\sqrt{81}}$
b. $\sqrt{36} + \sqrt{121}$

Answer a

3

Answer b

17

Using the Product Rule to Simplify Square Roots

To simplify a square root, we rewrite it such that there are no perfect squares in the radicand. There are several properties of square roots that allow us to simplify complicated radical expressions. The first rule we will look at is the product rule for simplifying square roots, which allows us to separate the square root of a product of two numbers into the product of two separate rational expressions. For instance, we can rewrite $\sqrt{15}$ as $\sqrt{3} \times \sqrt{5}$. We can also use the product rule to express the product of multiple radical expressions as a single radical expression.

The Product Rule For Simplifying Square Roots

If a and b are nonnegative, the square root of the product ab is equal to the product of the square roots of a and b

$$\sqrt{ab} = \sqrt{a} \times \sqrt{b} \tag{1.7.1}$$

HOWTO: Given a square root radical expression, use the product rule to simplify it.

1. Factor any perfect squares from the radicand.
2. Write the radical expression as a product of radical expressions.
3. Simplify.

Example 1.7.4: Using the Product Rule to Simplify Square Roots

Simplify the radical expression.

a. $\sqrt{300}$
b. $\sqrt{162a^5b^4}$

Solution

a. $\sqrt{100 \times 3}$ Factor perfect square from radicand.

$\sqrt{100} \times \sqrt{3}$ Write radical expression as product of radical expressions.

$10\sqrt{3}$ Simplify

b. $\sqrt{81a^4b^4 \times 2a}$ Factor perfect square from radicand

$\sqrt{81a^4b^4} \times \sqrt{2a}$ Write radical expression as product of radical expressions

$9a^2b^2\sqrt{2a}$ Simplify

Exercise 1.7.2

Simplify $\sqrt{50x^2y^3z}$

Answer

$5|x||y|\sqrt{2yz}$

Notice the absolute value signs around x and y? That's because their value must be positive!

Howto: Given the product of multiple radical expressions, use the product rule to combine them into one radical expression

1. Express the product of multiple radical expressions as a single radical expression.
2. Simplify.

Example 1.7.5: Using the Product Rule to Simplify the Product of Multiple Square Roots

Simplify the radical expression.

$\sqrt{12} \times \sqrt{3}$

Solution

$\sqrt{12 \times 3}$ Express the product as a single radical expression
$\sqrt{36}$ Simplify
6

Exercise 1.7.3

Simplify $\sqrt{50x} \times \sqrt{2x}$ assuming $x > 0$.

Answer

$10|x|$

Using the Quotient Rule to Simplify Square Roots

Just as we can rewrite the square root of a product as a product of square roots, so too can we rewrite the square root of a quotient as a quotient of square roots, using the quotient rule for simplifying square roots. It can be helpful to separate the numerator and denominator of a fraction under a radical so that we can take their square roots separately. We can rewrite

$$\sqrt{\frac{5}{2}} = \frac{\sqrt{5}}{\sqrt{2}}.$$

THE QUOTIENT RULE FOR SIMPLIFYING SQUARE ROOTS

The square root of the quotient $\frac{a}{b}$ is equal to the quotient of the square roots of a and b, where $b \neq 0$.

$$\sqrt{\frac{a}{b}} = \frac{\sqrt{a}}{\sqrt{b}} \tag{1.7.2}$$

Howto: Given a radical expression, use the quotient rule to simplify it

1. Write the radical expression as the quotient of two radical expressions.
2. Simplify the numerator and denominator.

Example 1.7.6: Using the Quotient Rule to Simplify Square Roots

Simplify the radical expression.

$\sqrt{\frac{5}{36}}$

Solution

$\frac{\sqrt{5}}{\sqrt{36}}$ Write as quotient of two radical expressions
$\frac{\sqrt{5}}{6}$ Simplify denominator

Exercise 1.7.4

Simplify $\sqrt{\frac{2x^2}{9y^4}}$

Answer

$\frac{x\sqrt{2}}{3y^2}$

We do not need the absolute value signs for y^2 because that term will always be nonnegative.

Example 1.7.7: Using the Quotient Rule to Simplify an Expression with Two Square Roots

Simplify the radical expression.

$\frac{\sqrt{234x^{11}y}}{\sqrt{26x^7y}}$

Solution

$\sqrt{\frac{234x^{11}y}{26x^7y}}$ Combine numerator and denominator into one radical expression

$\sqrt{9x^4}$ Simplify fraction

$3x^2$ Simplify square root

Exercise 1.7.5

Simplify $\frac{\sqrt{9a^5b^{14}}}{\sqrt{3a^4b^5}}$

Answer

$b^4\sqrt{3ab}$

Adding and Subtracting Square Roots

We can add or subtract radical expressions only when they have the same radicand and when they have the same radical type such as square roots. For example, the sum of $\sqrt{2}$ and $3\sqrt{2}$ is $4\sqrt{2}$. However, it is often possible to simplify radical expressions, and that may change the radicand. The radical expression $\sqrt{18}$ can be written with a 2 in the radicand, as $3\sqrt{2}$, so $\sqrt{2}+\sqrt{18}=\sqrt{2}+3\sqrt{2}=4\sqrt{2}$

Howto: Given a radical expression requiring addition or subtraction of square roots, solve

1. Simplify each radical expression.
2. Add or subtract expressions with equal radicands.

Example 1.7.8: Adding Square Roots

Add $5\sqrt{12}+2\sqrt{3}$.

Solution

We can rewrite $5\sqrt{12}$ as $5\sqrt{4\times3}$. According the product rule, this becomes $5\sqrt{4}\sqrt{3}$. The square root of $\sqrt{4}$ is 2, so the expression becomes $5\times2\sqrt{3}$, which is $10\sqrt{3}$. Now we can the terms have the same radicand so we can add.

$$10\sqrt{3}+2\sqrt{3}=12\sqrt{3}$$

Exercise 1.7.6

Add $\sqrt{5}+6\sqrt{20}$

Answer

$13\sqrt{5}$

Example 1.7.9: Subtracting Square Roots

Subtract $20\sqrt{72a^3b^4c}-14\sqrt{8a^3b^4c}$

Solution

Rewrite each term so they have equal radicands.

$$\begin{aligned} 20\sqrt{72a^3b^4c} &= 20\sqrt{9}\sqrt{4}\sqrt{2}\sqrt{a}\sqrt{a^2}\sqrt{(b^2)^2}\sqrt{c} \\ &= 20(3)(2)|a|b^2\sqrt{2ac} \\ &= 120|a|b^2\sqrt{2ac} \end{aligned}$$

$$\begin{aligned} 14\sqrt{8a^3b^4c} &= 14\sqrt{2}\sqrt{4}\sqrt{a}\sqrt{a^2}\sqrt{(b^2)^2}\sqrt{c} \\ &= 14(2)|a|b^2\sqrt{2ac} \\ &= 28|a|b^2\sqrt{2ac} \end{aligned}$$

Now the terms have the same radicand so we can subtract.

$$120|a|b^2\sqrt{2ac}-28|a|b^2\sqrt{2ac}=92|a|b^2\sqrt{2ac} \tag{1.7.3}$$

Exercise 1.7.7

Subtract $3\sqrt{80x}-4\sqrt{45x}$

Answer

0

Rationalizing Denominators

When an expression involving square root radicals is written in simplest form, it will not contain a radical in the denominator. We can remove radicals from the denominators of fractions using a process called rationalizing the denominator.

We know that multiplying by 1 does not change the value of an expression. We use this property of multiplication to change expressions that contain radicals in the denominator. To remove radicals from the denominators of fractions, multiply by the form of 1 that will eliminate the radical.

For a denominator containing a single term, multiply by the radical in the denominator over itself. In other words, if the denominator is $b\sqrt{c}$, multiply by $\frac{\sqrt{c}}{\sqrt{c}}$.

For a denominator containing the sum or difference of a rational and an irrational term, multiply the numerator and denominator by the conjugate of the denominator, which is found by changing the sign of the radical portion of the denominator. If the denominator is $a+b\sqrt{c}$, then the conjugate is $a-b\sqrt{c}$.

HowTo: Given an expression with a single square root radical term in the denominator, rationalize the denominator

1. Multiply the numerator and denominator by the radical in the denominator.
2. Simplify.

Example 1.7.10: Rationalizing a Denominator Containing a Single Term

Write $\frac{2\sqrt{3}}{3\sqrt{10}}$ in simplest form.

Solution

The radical in the denominator is $\sqrt{10}$. So multiply the fraction by $\frac{\sqrt{10}}{\sqrt{10}}$. Then simplify.

$$\frac{2\sqrt{3}}{3\sqrt{10}} \times \frac{\sqrt{10}}{\sqrt{10}}$$
$$\frac{2\sqrt{30}}{30}$$
$$\frac{\sqrt{30}}{15}$$

Exercise 1.7.8

Write $\frac{12\sqrt{3}}{\sqrt{2}}$ in simplest form.

Answer

$6\sqrt{6}$

How to: Given an expression with a radical term and a constant in the denominator, rationalize the denominator

1. Find the conjugate of the denominator.
2. Multiply the numerator and denominator by the conjugate.
3. Use the distributive property.
4. Simplify.

Example 1.7.11: Rationalizing a Denominator Containing Two Terms

Write $\frac{4}{1+\sqrt{5}}$ in simplest form.

Solution

Begin by finding the conjugate of the denominator by writing the denominator and changing the sign. So the conjugate of $1+\sqrt{5}$ is $1-\sqrt{5}$. Then multiply the fraction by $\frac{1-\sqrt{5}}{1-\sqrt{5}}$.

$$\frac{4}{1+\sqrt{5}} \times \frac{1-\sqrt{5}}{1-\sqrt{5}}$$
$$\frac{4-4\sqrt{5}}{-4} \quad \text{Use the distributive property}$$
$$\sqrt{5}-1 \quad \text{Simplify}$$

Exercise 1.7.9

Write $\frac{7}{2+\sqrt{3}}$ in simplest form.

Answer

$14-7\sqrt{3}$

Using Rational Roots

Although square roots are the most common rational roots, we can also find cube roots, 4th roots, 5th roots, and more. Just as the square root function is the inverse of the squaring function, these roots are the inverse of their respective power functions. These functions can be useful when we need to determine the number that, when raised to a certain power, gives a certain number.

Understanding n^{th} Roots

Suppose we know that $a^3=8$. We want to find what number raised to the 3rd power is equal to 8. Since $2^3=8$, we say that 2 is the cube root of 8.

The nth root of a is a number that, when raised to the nth power, gives a. For example, -3 is the 5th root of -243 because $(-3)^5=-243$. If a is a real number with at least one n^{th} root, then the principal n^{th} root of a is the number with the same sign as a that, when raised to the nth power, equals a.

The principal n^{th} root of a is written as $\sqrt[n]{a}$, where n is a positive integer greater than or equal to 2. In the radical expression, n is called the index of the radical.

Note: Principal n^{th} Root

If a is a real number with at least one n^{th} root, then the **principal n^{th} root** of a, written as $\sqrt[n]{a}$, is the number with the same sign as a that, when raised to the nth power, equals a. The **index** of the radical is n.

Example 1.7.12: Simplifying n^{th} Roots

Simplify each of the following:

a. $\sqrt[5]{-32}$
b. $\sqrt[4]{4}\times\sqrt[4]{10234}$
c. $-\sqrt[3]{\dfrac{8x^6}{125}}$
d. $8\sqrt[4]{3}-\sqrt[4]{48}$

Solution

a. $\sqrt[5]{-32}=-2$ because $(-2)^5=-32$

b. First, express the product as a single radical expression. $\sqrt[4]{4096}=8$ because $8^4=4096$

c.

$$\frac{-\sqrt[3]{8x^6}}{\sqrt[3]{125}} \quad \text{Write as quotient of two radical expressions}$$
$$\frac{-2x^2}{5} \quad \text{Simplify}$$

d.

$$8\sqrt[4]{3}-2\sqrt[4]{3} \quad \text{Simplify to get equal radicands}$$
$$6\sqrt[4]{3} \quad \text{Add}$$

Exercise 1.7.10

Simplify

a. $\sqrt[3]{-216}$
b. $\dfrac{3\sqrt[4]{80}}{\sqrt[4]{5}}$

c. $6\sqrt[3]{9000}+7\sqrt[3]{576}$

Answer a

-6

Answer b

6

Answer c

$88\sqrt[3]{9}$

Using Rational Exponents

Radical expressions can also be written without using the radical symbol. We can use rational (fractional) exponents. The index must be a positive integer. If the index n is even, then a cannot be negative.

$$a^{\frac{1}{n}} = \sqrt[n]{a} \tag{1.7.4}$$

We can also have rational exponents with numerators other than 1. In these cases, the exponent must be a fraction in lowest terms. We raise the base to a power and take an nth root. The numerator tells us the power and the denominator tells us the root.

$$a^{\frac{m}{n}} = (\sqrt[n]{a})^m = \sqrt[n]{a^m} \tag{1.7.5}$$

All of the properties of exponents that we learned for integer exponents also hold for rational exponents.

Note: Rational Exponents

Rational exponents are another way to express principal n^{th} roots. The general form for converting between a radical expression with a radical symbol and one with a rational exponent is

$$a^{\frac{m}{n}} = (\sqrt[n]{a})^m = \sqrt[n]{a^m} \tag{1.7.6}$$

Howto: Given an expression with a rational exponent, write the expression as a radical

1. Determine the power by looking at the numerator of the exponent.
2. Determine the root by looking at the denominator of the exponent.
3. Using the base as the radicand, raise the radicand to the power and use the root as the index.

Example 1.7.13: Writing Rational Exponents as Radicals

Write $343^{\frac{2}{3}}$ as a radical. Simplify.

Solution

The 2 tells us the power and the 3 tells us the root.

$343^{\frac{2}{3}} = (\sqrt[3]{343})^2 = \sqrt[3]{343^2}$

We know that $\sqrt[3]{343} = 7$ because $7^3 = 343$. Because the cube root is easy to find, it is easiest to find the cube root before squaring for this problem. In general, it is easier to find the root first and then raise it to a power.

$$343^{\frac{2}{3}} = (\sqrt[3]{343})^2 = 7^2 = 49 \tag{1.7.7}$$

Exercise 1.7.11

Write $9^{\frac{5}{2}}$ as a radical. Simplify.

Answer

$(\sqrt{9})^5 = 3^5 = 243$

Example 1.7.14: Writing Radicals as Rational Exponents

Write $\frac{4}{\sqrt[7]{a^2}}$ using a rational exponent.

Solution

The power is 2 and the root is 7, so the rational exponent will be $\frac{2}{7}$. We get $\frac{4}{a^{\frac{2}{7}}}$. Using properties of exponents, we get $\frac{4}{\sqrt[7]{a^2}} = 4a^{\frac{-2}{7}}$

Exercise 1.7.12

Write $x\sqrt{(5y)^9}$ using a rational exponent.

Answer

$x(5y)^{\frac{9}{2}}$

Example 1.7.15: Simplifying Rational Exponents

Simplify:

a. $5(2x^{\frac{3}{4}})(3x^{\frac{1}{5}})$

b. $\left(\frac{16}{9}\right)^{-\frac{1}{2}}$

Solution

a.

$30x^{\frac{3}{4}}\ x^{\frac{1}{5}}$ Multiply the coefficients

$30x^{\frac{3}{4}+\frac{1}{5}}$ Use properties of exponents

$30x^{\frac{19}{20}}$ Simplify

b.

https://math.libretexts.org/@go/page/143844

$\left(\frac{9}{16}\right)^{\frac{1}{2}}$ Use definition of negative exponents

$\sqrt{\frac{9}{16}}$ Rewrite as a radical

$\frac{\sqrt{9}}{\sqrt{16}}$ Use the quotient rule

$\frac{3}{4}$ Simplify

? Exercise 1.7.13

Simplify $(8x)^{\frac{1}{3}}\left(14x^{\frac{6}{5}}\right)$

Answer

$28x^{\frac{23}{15}}$

Media

Access these online resources for additional instruction and practice with radicals and rational exponents.

Radicals

Rational Exponents

Simplify Radicals

Rationalize Denominator

Key Concepts

- The principal square root of a number a is the nonnegative number that when multiplied by itself equals a. See Example.
- If a and b are nonnegative, the square root of the product ab is equal to the product of the square roots of a and b See Example and Example.
- If a and b are nonnegative, the square root of the quotient $\frac{a}{b}$ is equal to the quotient of the square roots of a and b See Example and Example.
- We can add and subtract radical expressions if they have the same radicand and the same index. See Example and Example.
- Radical expressions written in simplest form do not contain a radical in the denominator. To eliminate the square root radical from the denominator, multiply both the numerator and the denominator by the conjugate of the denominator. See Example and Example.
- The principal n^{th} root of a is the number with the same sign as a that when raised to the nth power equals a. These roots have the same properties as square roots. See Example.
- Radicals can be rewritten as rational exponents and rational exponents can be rewritten as radicals. See Example and Example.
- The properties of exponents apply to rational exponents. See Example.

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1.8: The Rectangular Coordinate Systems and Graphs

Learning Objectives

- Plot ordered pairs in a Cartesian coordinate system.
- Graph equations by plotting points.
- Graph equations with a graphing utility.
- Find x-intercepts and y-intercepts.
- Use the distance formula.
- Use the midpoint formula.

Tracie set out from Elmhurst, IL, to go to Franklin Park. On the way, she made a few stops to do errands. Each stop is indicated by a red dot in Figure 1.8.1. Laying a rectangular coordinate grid over the map, we can see that each stop aligns with an intersection of grid lines. In this section, we will learn how to use grid lines to describe locations and changes in locations.

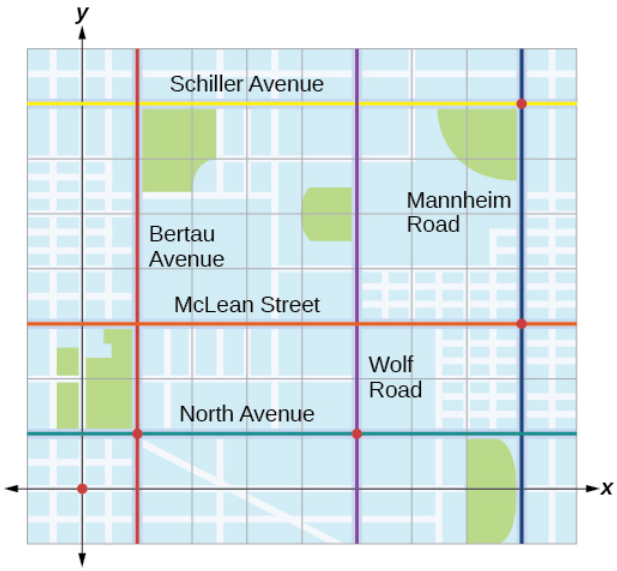


Figure 1.8.1

Plotting Ordered Pairs in the Cartesian Coordinate System

An old story describes how seventeenth-century philosopher/mathematician René Descartes invented the system that has become the foundation of algebra while sick in bed. According to the story, Descartes was staring at a fly crawling on the ceiling when he realized that he could describe the fly's location in relation to the perpendicular lines formed by the adjacent walls of his room. He viewed the perpendicular lines as horizontal and vertical axes. Further, by dividing each axis into equal unit lengths, Descartes saw that it was possible to locate any object in a two-dimensional plane using just two numbers—the displacement from the horizontal axis and the displacement from the vertical axis.

While there is evidence that ideas similar to Descartes' grid system existed centuries earlier, it was Descartes who introduced the components that comprise the Cartesian coordinate system, a grid system having perpendicular axes. Descartes named the horizontal axis the x-axis and the vertical axis the y-axis.

The Cartesian coordinate system, also called the *rectangular coordinate system*, is based on a two-dimensional plane consisting of the x-axis and the y-axis. Perpendicular to each other, the axes divide the plane into four sections. Each section is called a quadrant; the quadrants are numbered counterclockwise as shown in Figure 1.8.2.

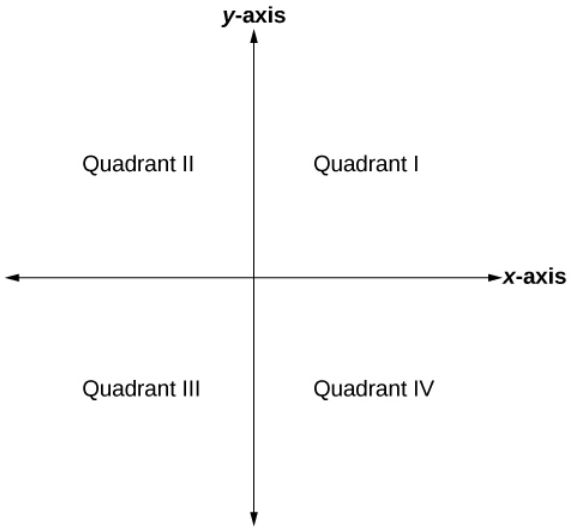


Figure 1.8.2

The center of the plane is the point at which the two axes cross. It is known as the origin, or point $(0, 0)$. From the origin, each axis is further divided into equal units: increasing, positive numbers to the right on the x-axis and up the y-axis; decreasing, negative numbers to the left on the x-axis and down the y-axis. The axes extend to positive and negative infinity as shown by the arrowheads in Figure 1.8.3.

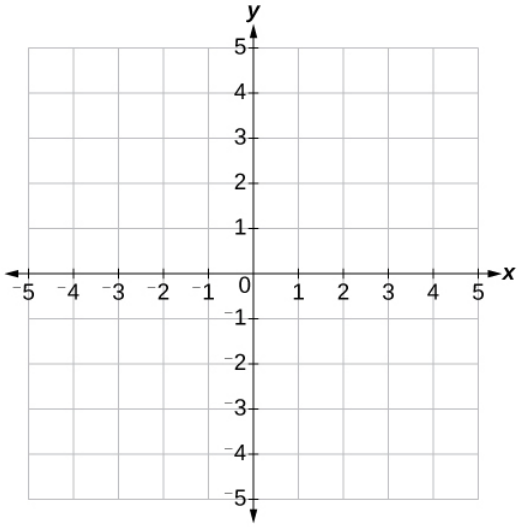


Figure 1.8.3

Each point in the plane is identified by its x-coordinate, or horizontal displacement from the origin, and its y-coordinate, or vertical displacement from the origin. Together, we write them as an ordered pair indicating the combined distance from the origin in the form (x, y). An ordered pair is also known as a coordinate pair because it consists of x- and y-coordinates. For example, we can represent the point $(3, -1)$ in the plane by moving three units to the right of the origin in the horizontal direction, and one unit down in the vertical direction. See Figure 1.8.4.

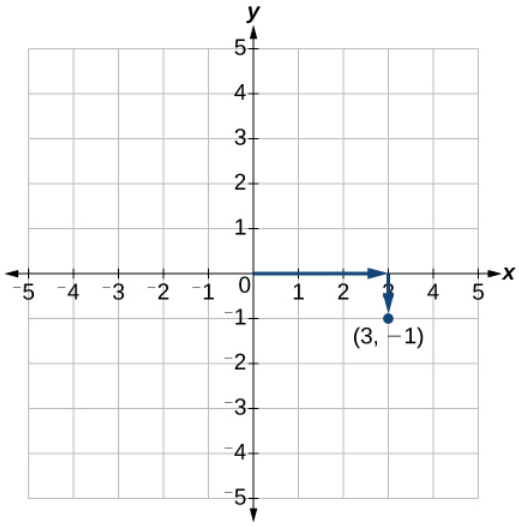


Figure 1.8.4

When dividing the axes into equally spaced increments, note that the x-axis may be considered separately from the y-axis. In other words, while the x-axis may be divided and labeled according to consecutive integers, the y-axis may be divided and labeled by increments of 2, or 10, or 100. In fact, the axes may represent other units, such as years against the balance in a savings account, or quantity against cost, and so on. Consider the rectangular coordinate system primarily as a method for showing the relationship between two quantities.

Cartesian Coordinate System

A two-dimensional plane where the

- x-axis is the horizontal axis
- y-axis is the vertical axis

A point in the plane is defined as an ordered pair, (x, y), such that x is determined by its horizontal distance from the origin and y is determined by its vertical distance from the origin.

Example 1.8.1: Plotting Points in a Rectangular Coordinate System

Plot the points $(-2, 4)$, $(3, 3)$, and $(0, -3)$ in the plane.

Solution

To plot the point $(-2, 4)$, begin at the origin. The x-coordinate is -2, so move two units to the left. The y-coordinate is 4, so then move four units up in the positive y direction.

To plot the point $(3, 3)$, begin again at the origin. The x-coordinate is 3, so move three units to the right. The y-coordinate is also 3, so move three units up in the positive y direction.

To plot the point $(0, -3)$, begin again at the origin. The x-coordinate is 0. This tells us not to move in either direction along the x-axis. The y-coordinate is -3, so move three units down in the negative y direction. See the graph in Figure $1.8.5$.

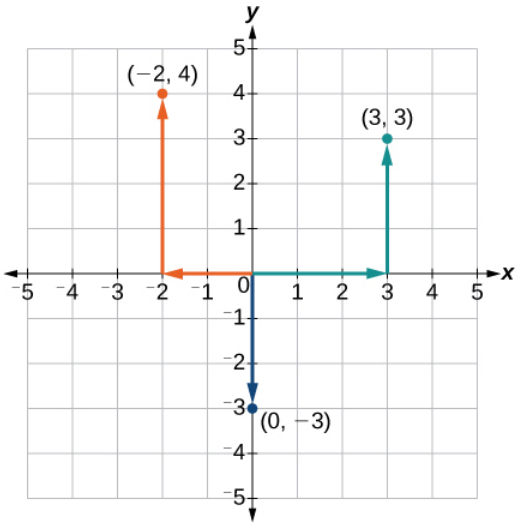


Figure 1.8.5

Analysis

Note that when either coordinate is zero, the point must be on an axis. If the x-coordinate is zero, the point is on the y-axis. If the y-coordinate is zero, the point is on the x-axis.

Graphing Equations by Plotting Points

We can plot a set of points to represent an equation. When such an equation contains both an x variable and a y variable, it is called an **equation in two variables**. Its graph is called a **graph in two variables**. Any graph on a two-dimensional plane is a graph in two variables.

Suppose we want to graph the equation $y = 2x - 1$. We can begin by substituting a value for x into the equation and determining the resulting value of y. Each pair of x- and y-values is an ordered pair that can be plotted. Table 1.8.1 lists values of x from -3 to 3 and the resulting values for y.

Table 1.8.1

x	$y = 2x - 1$	(x, y)
-3	$y = 2(-3) - 1 = -7$	$(-3, -7)$
-2	$y = 2(-2) - 1 = -5$	$(-2, -5)$
-1	$y = 2(-1) - 1 = -3$	$(-1, -3)$
0	$y = 2(0) - 1 = -1$	$(0, -1)$
1	$y = 2(1) - 1 = 1$	$(1, 1)$
2	$y = 2(2) - 1 = 3$	$(2, 3)$
3	$y = 2(3) - 1 = 5$	$(3, 5)$

We can plot the points in the table. The points for this particular equation form a line, so we can connect them (Figure 1.8.6). This is not true for all equations.

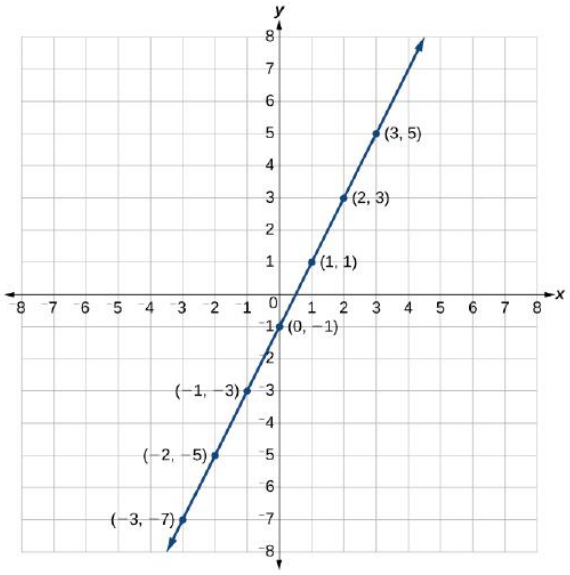


Figure 1.8.6

Note that the x-values chosen are arbitrary, regardless of the type of equation we are graphing. Of course, some situations may require particular values of x to be plotted in order to see a particular result. Otherwise, it is logical to choose values that can be calculated easily, and it is always a good idea to choose values that are both negative and positive. There is no rule dictating how many points to plot, although we need at least two to graph a line. Keep in mind, however, that the more points we plot, the more accurately we can sketch the graph.

Howto: Given an equation, graph by plotting points

1. Make a table with one column labeled x, a second column labeled with the equation, and a third column listing the resulting ordered pairs.
2. Enter x-values down the first column using positive and negative values. Selecting the x-values in numerical order will make the graphing simpler.
3. Select x-values that will yield y-values with little effort, preferably ones that can be calculated mentally.
4. Plot the ordered pairs.
5. Connect the points if they form a line.

Example 1.8.2: Graphing an Equation in Two Variables by Plotting Points

Graph the equation $y = -x + 2$ by plotting points.

Solution

First, we construct a table similar to Table 1.8.2. Choose x values and calculate y.

Table 1.8.2

x	$y = -x + 2$	(x, y)
-5	$y = -(-5) + 2 = 7$	$(-5, 7)$
-3	$y = -(-3) + 2 = 5$	$(-3, 5)$
-1	$y = -(-1) + 2 = 3$	$(-1, 3)$
0	$y = -(0) + 2 = 2$	$(0, 2)$
1	$y = -(1) + 2 = 1$	$(1, 1)$
3	$y = -(3) + 2 = -1$	$(3, -1)$
5	$y = -(5) + 2 = -3$	$(5, -3)$

Now, plot the points. Connect them if they form a line. See Figure 1.8.7.

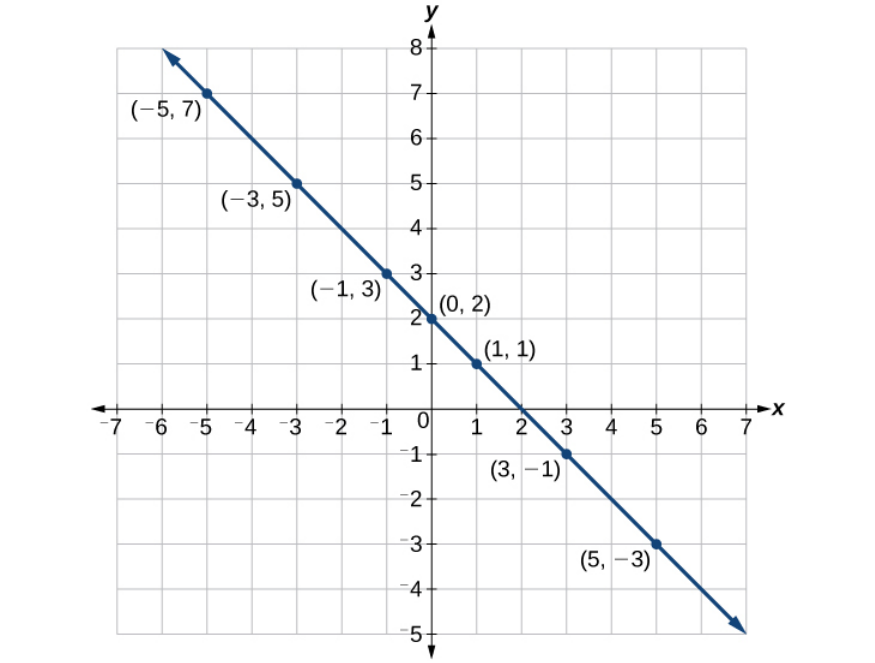


Figure 1.8.7

Exercise 1.8.1

Construct a table and graph the equation by plotting points: $y = \frac{1}{2}x + 2$.

Answer

Please see Table 1.8.3and graph below.

Table 1.8.3

x	$y = 12x + 2$	(x, y)
-2	$y = 12(-2) + 2 = 1$	$(-2, 1)$
-1	$y = 12(-1) + 2 = 32$	$(-1, 32)$
0	$y = 12(0) + 2 = 2$	$(0, 2)$
1	$y = 12(1) + 2 = 52$	$(1, 52)$
2	$y = 12(2) + 2 = 3$	$(2, 3)$

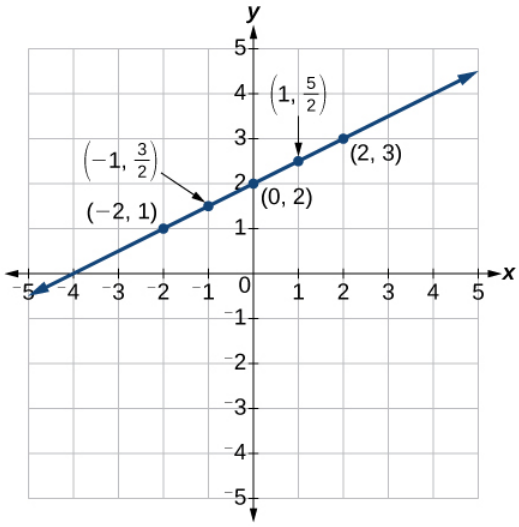
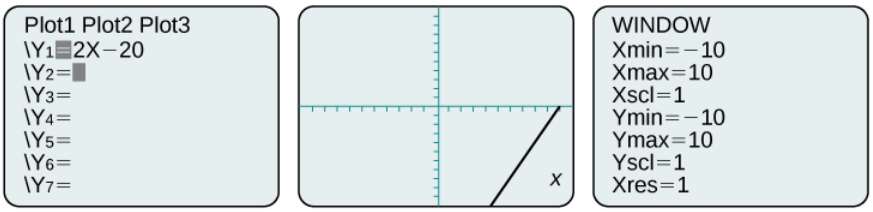


Figure 1.8.8

Graphing Equations with a Graphing Utility

Most graphing calculators require similar techniques to graph an equation. The equations sometimes have to be manipulated so they are written in the style $y =$_____ . The TI-84 Plus, and many other calculator makes and models, have a mode function, which allows the window (the screen for viewing the graph) to be altered so the pertinent parts of a graph can be seen.

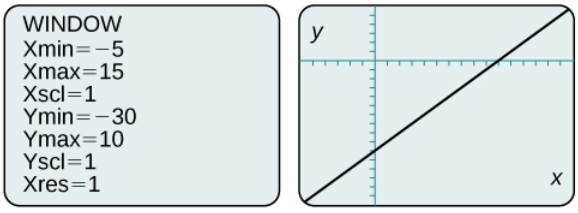
For example, the equation $y = 2x - 20$ has been entered in the TI-84 Plus shown in Figure $1.8.9a$. In Figure $1.8.9b$, the resulting graph is shown. Notice that we cannot see on the screen where the graph crosses the axes. The standard window screen on the TI-84 Plus shows $-10 \leq x \leq 10$, and $-10 \leq y \leq 10$. See Figure \(\PageIndex{9c}\).



(a) (b) (c)

Figure 1.8.9: a. Enter the equation. b. This is the graph in the original window. c. These are the original settings.

By changing the window to show more of the positive x-axis and more of the negative y-axis, we have a much better view of the graph and the x- and y-intercepts. See Figure $1.8.10a$ and Figure $1.8.10b$



(a) (b)

Figure 1.8.10: a. This screen shows the new window settings. b. We can clearly view the intercepts in the new window.

Example 1.8.3: Using a Graphing Utility to Graph an Equation

Use a graphing utility to graph the equation: $y = -\frac{2}{3}x - \frac{4}{3}$.

Solution

Enter the equation in the $y=$ function of the calculator. Set the window settings so that both the x- and y- intercepts are showing in the window. See Figure 1.8.11.

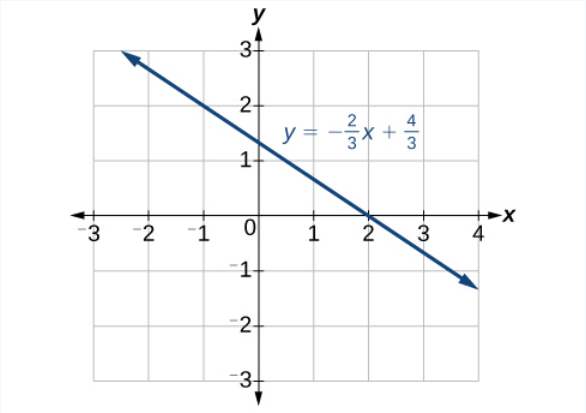


Figure 1.8.11

Finding x-intercepts and y-intercepts

The **intercepts** of a graph are points at which the graph crosses the axes. The x-intercept is the point at which the graph crosses the \(x\)-axis. At this point, the y-coordinate is zero. The y-intercept is the point at which the graph crosses the y-axis. At this point, the x-coordinate is zero.

To determine the x-intercept, we set y equal to zero and solve for x. Similarly, to determine the y-intercept, we set x equal to zero and solve for y. For example, lets find the intercepts of the equation $y=3x-1$.

To find the x-intercept, set $y=0$.

$$\begin{aligned} y &= 3x-1 \\ 0 &= 3x-1 \\ 1 &= 3x \\ \frac{1}{3} &= x \end{aligned}$$

x–intercept: $\left(\frac{1}{3},0\right)$

To find the y-intercept, set $x=0$.

$$\begin{aligned} y &= 3x-1 \\ y &= 3(0)-1 \\ y &= -1 \end{aligned}$$

y–intercept: $(0,-1)$

We can confirm that our results make sense by observing a graph of the equation as in Figure 1.8.12 Notice that the graph crosses the axes where we predicted it would.

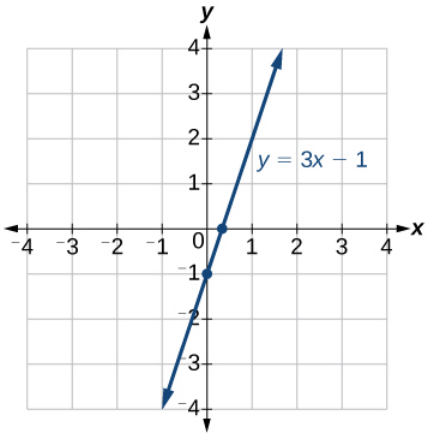


Figure 1.8.12

Howto: GIVEN AN EQUATION, FIND THE INTERCEPTS

1. Find the x-intercept by setting $y = 0$ and solving for x.
2. Find the y-intercept by setting $x = 0$ and solving for y.

Example 1.8.4: Finding the Intercepts of the Given Equation

Find the intercepts of the equation $y = -3x - 4$. Then sketch the graph using only the intercepts.

Solution

Set $y = 0$ to find the x-intercept.

$$\begin{aligned} y &= -3x - 4 \\ 0 &= -3x - 4 \\ 4 &= -3x \\ \frac{4}{3} &= x \end{aligned}$$

x−intercept: $\left(-\frac{4}{3}, 0\right)$

Set $x = 0$ to find the y-intercept.

$$\begin{aligned} y &= -3x - 4 \\ y &= -3(0) - 4 \\ y &= -4 \end{aligned}$$

y−intercept: $(0, -4)$

Plot both points, and draw a line passing through them as in Figure 1.8.13.

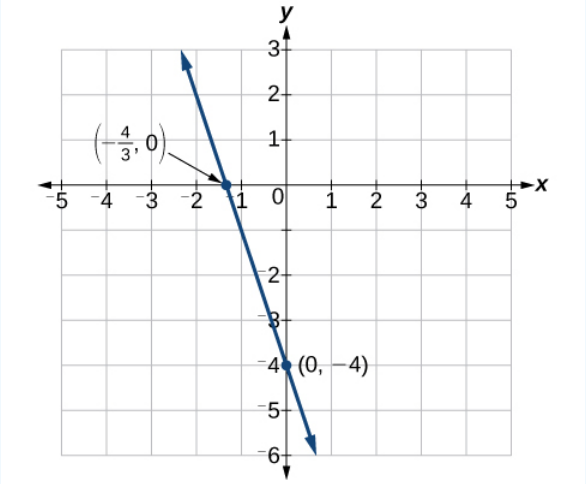


Figure 1.8.13

Exercise 1.8.2

Find the intercepts of the equation and sketch the graph: $y = -\frac{3}{4}x + 3$.

Answer

x-intercept is $(4, 0)$; y-intercept is $(0, 3)$

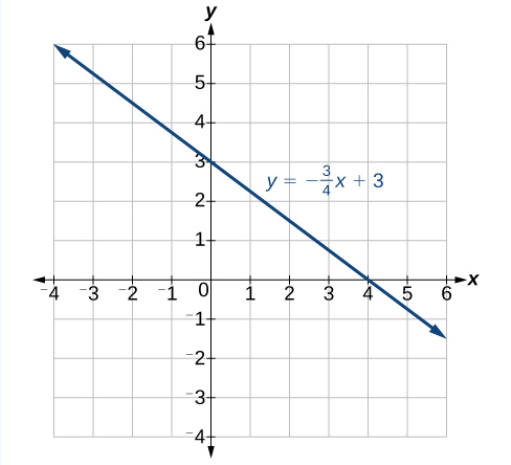


Figure 1.8.14

Using the Distance Formula

Derived from the **Pythagorean Theorem**, the **distance formula** is used to find the distance between two points in the plane. The Pythagorean Theorem, $a^2 + b^2 = c^2$, is based on a right triangle where a and b are the lengths of the legs adjacent to the right angle, and c is the length of the hypotenuse. See Figure 1.8.15.

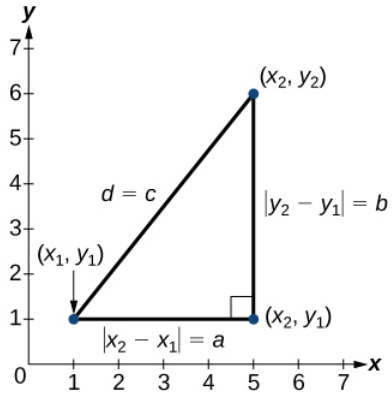


Figure 1.8.15

The relationship of sides $|x_2 - x_1|$ and $|y_2 - y_1|$ to side d is the same as that of sides a and b to side c. We use the absolute value symbol to indicate that the length is a positive number because the absolute value of any number is positive. (For example, $|-3| = 3$.) The symbols $|x_2 - x_1|$ and $|y_2 - y_1|$ indicate that the lengths of the sides of the triangle are positive. To find the length c, take the square root of both sides of the Pythagorean Theorem.

$$c^2 = a^2 + b^2 \rightarrow c = \sqrt{a^2 + b^2} \tag{1.8.1}$$

It follows that the distance formula is given as

$$d^2 = (x_2 - x_1)^2 + (y_2 - y_1)^2 \rightarrow d = \sqrt{(x_2 - x_1)^2 + (y_2 - y_1)^2} \tag{1.8.2}$$

We do not have to use the absolute value symbols in this definition because any number squared is positive.

distance between two points

Given endpoints (x_1, y_1) and (x_2, y_2), the distance between two points is given by

$$d = \sqrt{(x_2 - x_1)^2 + (y_2 - y_1)^2} \tag{1.8.3}$$

Example 1.8.5: Finding the Distance between Two Points

Find the distance between the points $(-3, -1)$ and $(2, 3)$.

Solution

Let us first look at the graph of the two points. Connect the points to form a right triangle as in Figure 1.8.16

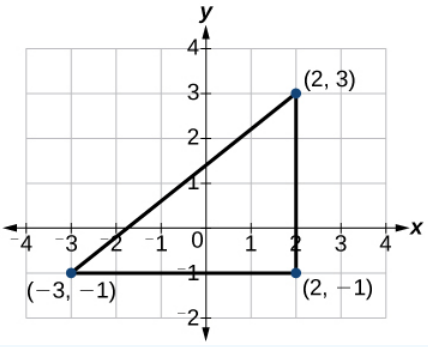


Figure 1.8.16

Then, calculate the length of d using the distance formula.

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$$
\begin{aligned}
d &= \sqrt{(x_2 - x_1)^2 + (y_2 - y_1)^2} \\
&= \sqrt{(2 - (-3))^2 + (3 - (-1))^2} \\
&= \sqrt{(5)^2 + (4)^2} \\
&= \sqrt{25 + 16} \\
&= \sqrt{41}
\end{aligned}
$$

Exercise 1.8.3

Find the distance between two points: $(1, 4)$ and $(11, 9)$.

Answer

$\sqrt{125} = 5\sqrt{5}$

Example 1.8.6: Finding the Distance between Two Locations

Let's return to the situation introduced at the beginning of this section.

Tracie set out from Elmhurst, IL, to go to Franklin Park. On the way, she made a few stops to do errands. Each stop is indicated by a red dot in Figure 1.8.1. Find the total distance that Tracie traveled. Compare this with the distance between her starting and final positions.

Solution

The first thing we should do is identify ordered pairs to describe each position. If we set the starting position at the origin, we can identify each of the other points by counting units east (right) and north (up) on the grid. For example, the first stop is 1 block east and 1 block north, so it is at $(1, 1)$. The next stop is 5 blocks to the east, so it is at $(5, 1)$. After that, she traveled 3 blocks east and 2 blocks north to $(8, 3)$. Lastly, she traveled 4 blocks north to $(8, 7)$. We can label these points on the grid as in Figure 1.8.17.

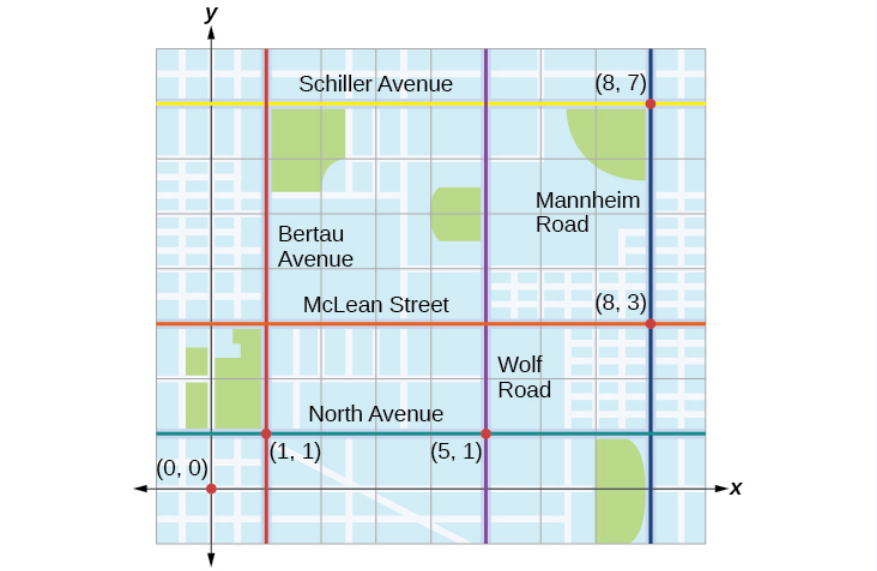

Figure 1.8.17

Next, we can calculate the distance. Note that each grid unit represents $1,000$ feet.

- From her starting location to her first stop at $(1, 1)$, Tracie might have driven north $1,000$ feet and then east $1,000$ feet, or vice versa. Either way, she drove $2,000$ feet to her first stop.
- Her second stop is at $(5, 1)$. So from $(1, 1)$ to $(5, 1)$, Tracie drove east $4,000$ feet.

- Her third stop is at $(8, 3)$. There are a number of routes from $(5, 1)$ to $(8, 3)$. Whatever route Tracie decided to use, the distance is the same, as there are no angular streets between the two points. Let's say she drove east $3,000$ feet and then north $2,000$ feet for a total of $5,000$ feet.
- Tracie's final stop is at $(8, 7)$. This is a straight drive north from $(8, 3)$ for a total of $4,000$ feet.

Next, we will add the distances listed in Table 1.8.4.

Table 1.8.4

From/To	Number of Feet Driven
$(0, 0)$ to $(1, 1)$	$2,000$
$(1, 1)$ to $(5, 1)$	$4,000$
$(5, 1)$ to $(8, 3)$	$5,000$
$(8, 3)$ to $(8, 7)$	$4,000$
Total	$15,000$

The total distance Tracie drove is $15,000$ feet, or 2.84 miles. This is not, however, the actual distance between her starting and ending positions. To find this distance, we can use the distance formula between the points $(0, 0)$ and $(8, 7)$.

$$\begin{aligned} d &= \sqrt{(0-8)^2 + (7-0)^2} \\ &= \sqrt{64+49} \\ &= \sqrt{113} \\ &= 10.63 \text{ units} \end{aligned}$$

At $1,000$ feet per grid unit, the distance between Elmhurst, IL, to Franklin Park is $10,630.14$feet, or 2.01 miles. The distance formula results in a shorter calculation because it is based on the hypotenuse of a right triangle, a straight diagonal from the origin to the point $(8, 7)$. Perhaps you have heard the saying "as the crow flies," which means the shortest distance between two points because a crow can fly in a straight line even though a person on the ground has to travel a longer distance on existing roadways.

Using the Midpoint Formula

When the endpoints of a line segment are known, we can find the point midway between them. This point is known as the midpoint and the formula is known as the **midpoint formula**. Given the endpoints of a line segment, (x_1, y_1) and (x_2, y_2), the midpoint formula states how to find the coordinates of the midpoint M.

$$M = \left(\frac{x_1 + x_2}{2}, \frac{y_1 + y_2}{2} \right) \tag{1.8.4}$$

A graphical view of a midpoint is shown in Figure 1.8.18. Notice that the line segments on either side of the midpoint are congruent.

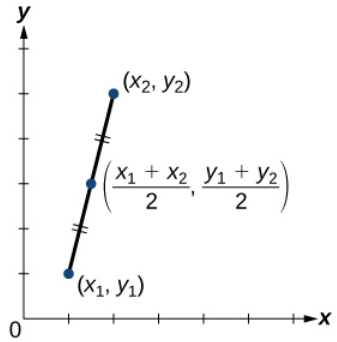

Figure 1.8.18

Example 1.8.7: Finding the Midpoint of the Line Segment

Find the midpoint of the line segment with the endpoints $(7, -2)$ and $(9, 5)$.

Solution

Use the formula to find the midpoint of the line segment.

$$\left(\frac{x_1+x_2}{2}, \frac{y_1+y_2}{2}\right) = \left(\frac{7+9}{2}, \frac{-2+5}{2}\right)$$
$$= \left(8, \frac{3}{2}\right)$$

Exercise 1.8.4

Find the midpoint of the line segment with endpoints $(-2, -1)$ and $(-8, 6)$.

Answer

$$\left(-5, \frac{5}{2}\right)$$

Example 1.8.8: Finding the Center of a Circle

The diameter of a circle has endpoints $(-1, -4)$ and $(5, -4)$. Find the center of the circle.

Solution

The center of a circle is the center, or midpoint, of its diameter. Thus, the midpoint formula will yield the center point.

$$\left(\frac{x_1+x_2}{2}, \frac{y_1+y_2}{2}\right) = \left(\frac{-1+5}{2}, \frac{-4-4}{2})\right)$$
$$= \left(\frac{4}{2}, -\frac{8}{2}\right)$$
$$= (2, 4)$$

Media

Access these online resources for additional instruction and practice with the Cartesian coordinate system.

1. Plotting points on the coordinate plane
2. Find x and y intercepts based on the graph of a line

Key Concepts

- We can locate, or plot, points in the Cartesian coordinate system using ordered pairs, which are defined as displacement from the x-axis and displacement from the y-axis. See Example.
- An equation can be graphed in the plane by creating a table of values and plotting points. See Example.
- Using a graphing calculator or a computer program makes graphing equations faster and more accurate. Equations usually have to be entered in the form $y =$_____. See Example.
- Finding the x- and y-intercepts can define the graph of a line. These are the points where the graph crosses the axes. See Example.
- The distance formula is derived from the Pythagorean Theorem and is used to find the length of a line segment. See Example and Example.
- The midpoint formula provides a method of finding the coordinates of the midpoint dividing the sum of the x-coordinates and the sum of the y-coordinates of the endpoints by 2. See Example and Example.

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1.9: Functions and Function Notation

Learning Objectives

- Determine whether a relation represents a function.
- Find the value of a function.
- Determine whether a function is one-to-one.
- Use the vertical line test to identify functions.
- Graph the functions listed in the library of functions.

A jetliner changes altitude as its distance from the starting point of a flight increases. The weight of a growing child increases with time. In each case, one quantity depends on another. There is a relationship between the two quantities that we can describe, analyze, and use to make predictions. In this section, we will analyze such relationships.

Determining Whether a Relation Represents a Function

A relation is a set of ordered pairs. The set of the first components of each ordered pair is called the domain and the set of the second components of each ordered pair is called the range. Consider the following set of ordered pairs. The first numbers in each pair are the first five natural numbers. The second number in each pair is twice that of the first.

$$\{(1,2),(2,4),(3,6),(4,8),(5,10)\} \tag{1.1.1}$$

The domain is $\{1,2,3,4,5\}$ The range is $\{2,4,6,8,10\}$

Note that each value in the domain is also known as an **input** value, or **independent variable**, and is often labeled with the lowercase letter x. Each value in the range is also known as an output value, or **dependent variable**, and is often labeled lowercase letter y.

A function f is a relation that assigns a single value in the range to each value in the domain. In other words, no x-values are repeated. For our example that relates the first five **natural numbers** to numbers double their values, this relation is a function because each element in the domain, {1, 2, 3, 4, 5}, is paired with exactly one element in the range, $\{2,4,6,8,10\}$

Now let's consider the set of ordered pairs that relates the terms "even" and "odd" to the first five natural numbers. It would appear as

$$\{(\text{odd},1),(\text{even},2),(\text{odd},3),(\text{even},4),(\text{odd},5)\} \tag{1.1.2}$$

Notice that each element in the domain, {even, odd} is not paired with exactly one element in the range, $\{1,2,3,4,5\}$ For example, the term "odd" corresponds to three values from the range, $\{1,3,5\}$,and the term "even" corresponds to two values from the range, $\{2,4\}$. This violates the definition of a function, so this relation is not a function.

Figure $1.9.1$ compares relations that are functions and not functions.

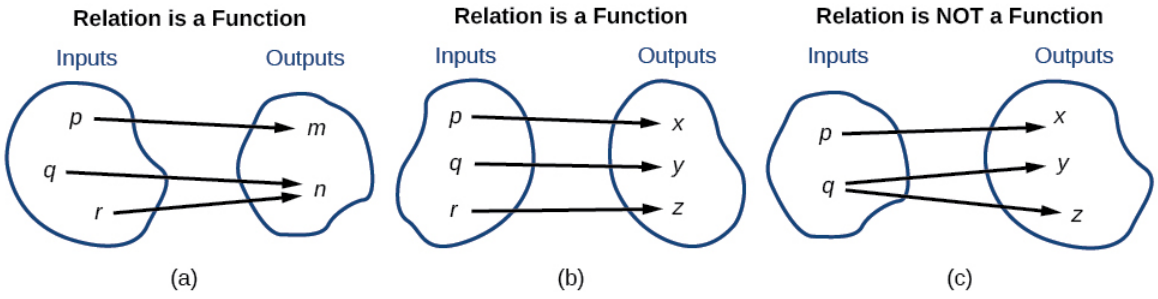


Figure 1.9.1: (a) This relationship is a function because each input is associated with a single output. Note that input q and r both give output n. (b) This relationship is also a function. In this case, each input is associated with a single output. (c) This relationship is not a function because input q is associated with two different outputs.

Function

A **function** is a relation in which each possible input value leads to exactly one output value. We say "the output is a function of the input."

The **input** values make up the **domain**, and the **output** values make up the **range**.

How To: Given a relationship between two quantities, determine whether the relationship is a function

1. Identify the input values.
2. Identify the output values.
3. If each input value leads to only one output value, classify the relationship as a function. If any input value leads to two or more outputs, do not classify the relationship as a function.

Example 1.9.1: Determining If Menu Price Lists Are Functions

The coffee shop menu, shown in Figure 1.9.2 consists of items and their prices.

a. Is price a function of the item?
b. Is the item a function of the price?

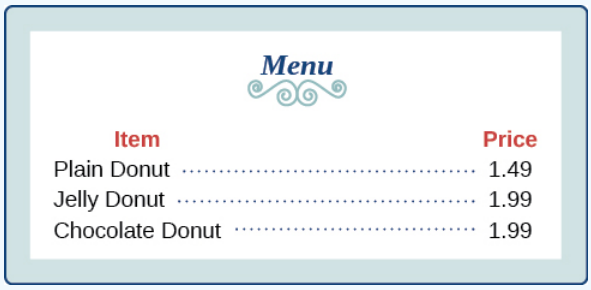


Figure 1.9.2: A menu of donut prices from a coffee shop where a plain donut is $1.49 and a jelly donut and chocolate donut are $1.99.

Solution

a. Let's begin by considering the input as the items on the menu. The output values are then the prices. See Figure 1.9.3.

Figure 1.9.3: A menu of donut prices from a coffee shop where a plain donut is $1.49 and a jelly donut and chocolate donut are $1.99.

Each item on the menu has only one price, so the price is a function of the item.

a. Two items on the menu have the same price. If we consider the prices to be the input values and the items to be the output, then the same input value could have more than one output associated with it. See Figure 1.9.4.

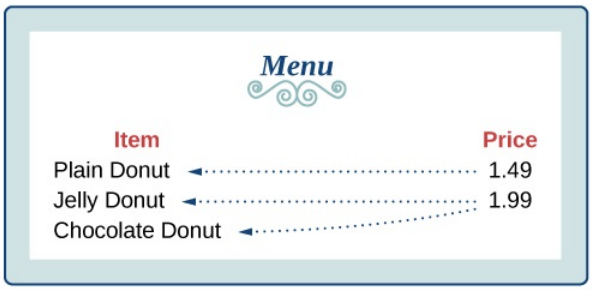


Figure 1.9.4: Association of the prices to the donuts.

Therefore, the item is a not a function of price.

Example 1.9.2: Determining If Class Grade Rules Are Functions

In a particular math class, the overall percent grade corresponds to a grade point average. Is grade point average a function of the percent grade? Is the percent grade a function of the grade point average? Table 1.9.1 shows a possible rule for assigning grade points.

Table 1.9.1: Class grade points.

Percent grade	0–56	57–61	62–66	67–71	72–77	78–86	87–91	92–100
Grade point average	0.0	1.0	1.5	2.0	2.5	3.0	3.5	4.0

Solution

For any percent grade earned, there is an associated grade point average, so the grade point average is a function of the percent grade. In other words, if we input the percent grade, the output is a specific grade point average.

In the grading system given, there is a range of percent grades that correspond to the same grade point average. For example, students who receive a grade point average of 3.0 could have a variety of percent grades ranging from 78 all the way to 86. Thus, percent grade is not a function of grade point average.

Exercise 1.9.2

Table 1.9.2 lists the five greatest baseball players of all time in order of rank.

Table 1.9.2: Five greatest baseball players.

Player	Rank
Babe Ruth	1
Willie Mays	2
Ty Cobb	3
Walter Johnson	4
Hank Aaron	5

a. Is the rank a function of the player name?
b. Is the player name a function of the rank?

Answer a

Yes

Answer b

yes. (Note: If two players had been tied for, say, 4th place, then the name would not have been a function of rank.)

Using Function Notation

Once we determine that a relationship is a function, we need to display and define the functional relationships so that we can understand and use them, and sometimes also so that we can program them into computers. There are various ways of representing functions. A standard function notation is one representation that facilitates working with functions.

To represent "height is a function of age," we start by identifying the descriptive variables h for height and a for age. The letters f, g,and h are often used to represent functions just as we use x, y,and z to represent numbers and A, B, and C to represent sets.

$$\begin{aligned} &h \text{ is } f \text{ of } a && \text{We name the function } f\text{; height is a function of age.} \\ &h = f(a) && \text{We use parentheses to indicate the function input.} \\ &f(a) && \text{We name the function } f \text{ ; the expression is read as "} f \text{ of } a\text{."} \end{aligned} \tag{1.9.1}$$

Remember, we can use any letter to name the function; the notation $h(a)$ shows us that h depends on a. The value a must be put into the function h to get a result. The parentheses indicate that age is input into the function; they do not indicate multiplication.

We can also give an algebraic expression as the input to a function. For example $f(a+b)$ means "first add a and b, and the result is the input for the function f." The operations must be performed in this order to obtain the correct result.

Function Notation

The notation $y = f(x)$ defines a function named f. This is read as "y is a function of x." The letter x represents the input value, or independent variable. The letter y, or $f(x)$, represents the output value, or dependent variable.

Example 1.9.3: Using Function Notation for Days in a Month

Use function notation to represent a function whose input is the name of a month and output is the number of days in that month.

Solution

Using Function Notation for Days in a Month

Use function notation to represent a function whose input is the name of a month and output is the number of days in that month.

The number of days in a month is a function of the name of the month, so if we name the function f, we write days $= f(\text{month})$ or $d = f(m)$. The name of the month is the input to a "rule" that associates a specific number (the output) with each input.

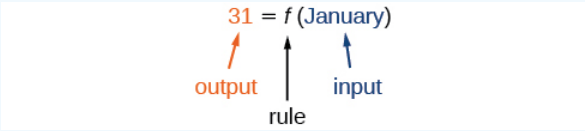


Figure 1.9.5: The function $31 = f(January)$ where 31 is the output, f is the rule, and January is the input.

For example, $f(\text{March}) = 31$, because March has 31 days. The notation $d = f(m)$ reminds us that the number of days, d (the output), is dependent on the name of the month, m (the input).

Analysis

Note that the inputs to a function do not have to be numbers; function inputs can be names of people, labels of geometric objects, or any other element that determines some kind of output. However, most of the functions we will work with in this book will have numbers as inputs and outputs.

Example 1.9.3B: Interpreting Function Notation

A function $N = f(y)$ gives the number of police officers, N, in a town in year y. What does $f(2005) = 300$ represent?

Solution

When we read $f(2005) = 300$, we see that the input year is 2005. The value for the output, the number of police officers (N), is 300. Remember, $N = f(y)$. The statement $f(2005) = 300$ tells us that in the year 2005 there were 300 police officers in the town.

Exercise 1.9.3

Use function notation to express the weight of a pig in pounds as a function of its age in days d.

Answer

$w = f(d)$

Q&A

Instead of a notation such as $y = f(x)$, could we use the same symbol for the output as for the function, such as $y = y(x)$, meaning "y is a function of x?"

Yes, this is often done, especially in applied subjects that use higher math, such as physics and engineering. However, in exploring math itself we like to maintain a distinction between a function such as f, which is a rule or procedure, and the output y we get by applying f to a particular input x. This is why we usually use notation such as $y = f(x), P = W(d)$, and so on.

Representing Functions Using Tables

A common method of representing functions is in the form of a table. The table rows or columns display the corresponding input and output values. In some cases, these values represent all we know about the relationship; other times, the table provides a few select examples from a more complete relationship.

Table 1.9.3 lists the input number of each month ($\text{January} = 1$, $\text{February} = 2$, and so on) and the output value of the number of days in that month. This information represents all we know about the months and days for a given year (that is not a leap year). Note that, in this table, we define a days-in-a-month function f where $D = f(m)$ identifies months by an integer rather than by name.

Table 1.9.3: Months and number of days per month.

Month number, m (input)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Days in month, D (output)	31	28	31	30	31	30	31	31	30	31	30	31

Table 1.9.4 defines a function $Q = g(n)$ Remember, this notation tells us that g is the name of the function that takes the input n and gives the output Q.

Table 1.9.4: Function $Q = g(n)$

n	1	2	3	4	5
Q	8	6	7	6	8

Table 1.9.5 displays the age of children in years and their corresponding heights. This table displays just some of the data available for the heights and ages of children. We can see right away that this table does not represent a function because the same input value, 5 years, has two different output values, 40 in. and 42 in.

Table 1.9.5: Age of children and their corresponding heights.

Age in years, a (input)	5	5	6	7	8	9	10
Height in inches, h (output)	40	42	44	47	50	52	54

How To: Given a table of input and output values, determine whether the table represents a function

1. Identify the input and output values.
2. Check to see if each input value is paired with only one output value. If so, the table represents a function.

Example 1.9.5: Identifying Tables that Represent Functions

Which table, Table 1.9.6, Table 1.9.7, or Table 1.9.8, represents a function (if any)?

Table 1.9.6

Input	Output
2	1
5	3
8	6

Table 1.9.7

Input	Output
-3	5
0	1
4	5

Table 1.9.8

Input	Output
1	0
5	2
5	4

Solution

Table 1.9.6 and Table 1.9.7 define functions. In both, each input value corresponds to exactly one output value. Table 1.9.8 does not define a function because the input value of 5 corresponds to two different output values.

When a table represents a function, corresponding input and output values can also be specified using function notation.

The function represented by Table 1.9.6 can be represented by writing

$$f(2) = 1,\ f(5) = 3, \text{ and } f(8) = 6$$

Similarly, the statements

$$g(-3) = 5,\ g(0) = 1, \text{ and } g(4) = 5$$

represent the function in Table 1.9.7.

Table 1.9.8 cannot be expressed in a similar way because it does not represent a function.

Exercise 1.9.5

Does Table 1.9.9 represent a function?

Table 1.9.9

Input	Output
1	10
2	100
3	1000

Answer

yes

Finding Input and Output Values of a Function

When we know an input value and want to determine the corresponding output value for a function, we evaluate the function. Evaluating will always produce one result because each input value of a function corresponds to exactly one output value.

When we know an output value and want to determine the input values that would produce that output value, we set the output equal to the function's formula and solve for the input. Solving can produce more than one solution because different input values can produce the same output value.

Evaluation of Functions in Algebraic Forms

When we have a function in formula form, it is usually a simple matter to evaluate the function. For example, the function $f(x) = 5 - 3x^2$ can be evaluated by squaring the input value, multiplying by 3, and then subtracting the product from 5.

How To: Given the formula for a function, evaluate.

Given the formula for a function, evaluate.

1. Replace the input variable in the formula with the value provided.
2. Calculate the result.

Example 1.9.6A: Evaluating Functions at Specific Values

1. Evaluate $f(x) = x^2 + 3x - 4$ at
   a. 2
   b. a
   c. $a + h$
   d. Evaluate $\frac{f(a+h) - f(a)}{h}$

Solution

Replace the x in the function with each specified value.

a. Because the input value is a number, 2, we can use simple algebra to simplify.

$$\begin{aligned} f(2) &= 2^2 + 3(2) - 4 \\ &= 4 + 6 - 4 \\ &= 6 \end{aligned}$$

b. In this case, the input value is a letter so we cannot simplify the answer any further.

$$f(a) = a^2 + 3a - 4$$

c. With an input value of $a+h$, we must use the distributive property.

$$\begin{aligned} f(a+h) &= (a+h)^2 + 3(a+h) - 4 \\ &= a^2 + 2ah + h^2 + 3a + 3h - 4 \end{aligned}$$

d. In this case, we apply the input values to the function more than once, and then perform algebraic operations on the result. We already found that

$$f(a+h) = a^2 + 2ah + h^2 + 3a + 3h - 4$$

and we know that

$$f(a) = a^2 + 3a - 4$$

Now we combine the results and simplify.

$$\begin{aligned} \frac{f(a+h) - f(a)}{h} &= \frac{(a^2 + 2ah + h^2 + 3a + 3h - 4) - (a^2 + 3a - 4)}{h} \\ &= \frac{(2ah + h^2 + 3h)}{h} \\ &= \frac{h(2a + h + 3)}{h} && \text{Factor out h.} \\ &= 2a + h + 3 && \text{Simplify.} \end{aligned}$$

Example 1.9.6B: Evaluating Functions

Given the function $h(p) = p^2 + 2p$, evaluate $h(4)$.

Solution

To evaluate $h(4)$, we substitute the value 4 for the input variable p in the given function.

$$\begin{aligned} h(p) &= p^2 + 2p \\ h(4) &= (4)^2 + 2(4) \\ &= 16 + 8 \\ &= 24 \end{aligned}$$

Therefore, for an input of 4, we have an output of 24.

Exercise 1.9.6

Given the function $g(m) = \sqrt{m-4}$, evaluate $g(5)$.

Answer

$g(5) = 1$

Example 1.9.7: Solving Functions

Given the function $h(p) = p^2 + 2p$, solve for $h(p) = 3$.

Solution

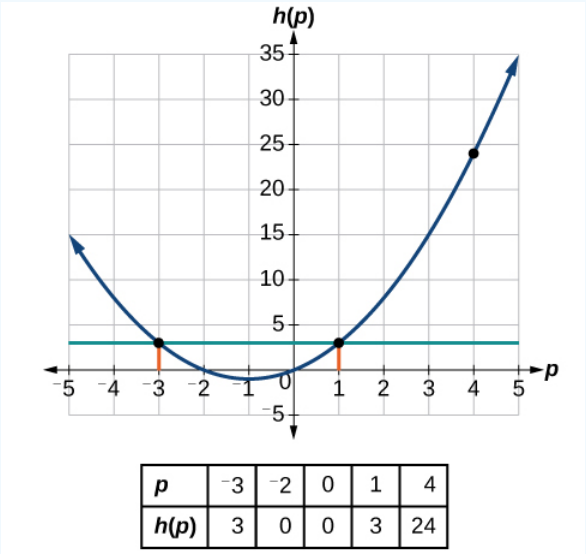
$$\begin{aligned} h(p) &= 3 \\ p^2+2p &= 3 \quad \text{Substitute the original function} \\ p^2+2p-3 &= 0 \quad \text{Subtract 3 from each side.} \\ (p+3)(p-1) &= 0 \quad \text{Factor.} \end{aligned}$$

If $(p+3)(p-1)=0$, either $(p+3)=0$ or $(p-1)=0$ (or both of them equal 0). We will set each factor equal to 0 and solve for p in each case.

$$(p+3)=0,\ p=-3$$

$$(p-1)=0,\ p=1$$

This gives us two solutions. The output $h(p)=3$ when the input is either $p=1$ or $p=-3$. We can also verify by graphing as in Figure 1.9.6. The graph verifies that $h(1)=h(-3)=3$ and $h(4)=24$.



p	−3	−2	0	1	4
h(p)	3	0	0	3	24

Figure 1.9.6: Graph of $h(p)=p^2+2p$

Exercise 1.9.7

Given the function $g(m)=\sqrt{m-4}$, solve $g(m)=2$.

Answer

$m=8$

Evaluating Functions Expressed in Formulas

Some functions are defined by mathematical rules or procedures expressed in **equation** form. If it is possible to express the function output with a formula involving the input quantity, then we can define a function in algebraic form. For example, the equation $2n+6p=12$ expresses a functional relationship between n and p. We can rewrite it to decide if p is a function of n.

How to: Given a function in equation form, write its algebraic formula.

1. Solve the equation to isolate the output variable on one side of the equal sign, with the other side as an expression that involves only the input variable.
2. Use all the usual algebraic methods for solving equations, such as adding or subtracting the same quantity to or from both sides, or multiplying or dividing both sides of the equation by the same quantity.

Example 1.9.8A: Finding an Equation of a Function

Express the relationship $2n+6p=12$ as a function $p=f(n)$, if possible.

Solution

To express the relationship in this form, we need to be able to write the relationship where p is a function of n, which means writing it as $p=[\text{expression involving } n]$.

$$\begin{aligned} 2n+6p &= 12 \\ 6p &= 12-2n && \text{Subtract 2n from both sides.} \\ p &= \frac{12-2n}{6} && \text{Divide both sides by 6 and simplify.} \\ p &= \frac{12}{6}-\frac{2n}{6} \\ p &= 2-\frac{1}{3}n \end{aligned}$$

Therefore, p as a function of n is written as

$$p=f(n)=2-\frac{1}{3}n$$

Analysis

It is important to note that not every relationship expressed by an equation can also be expressed as a function with a formula.

Example 1.9.8B: Expressing the Equation of a Circle as a Function

Does the equation $x^2+y^2=1$ represent a function with x as input and y as output? If so, express the relationship as a function $y=f(x)$.

Solution

First we subtract x^2 from both sides.

$$y^2=1-x^2$$

We now try to solve for y in this equation.

$$y=\pm\sqrt{1-x^2}$$

$$\text{so, } y=\sqrt{1-x^2} \text{ and } y=-\sqrt{1-x^2}$$

We get two outputs corresponding to the same input, so this relationship cannot be represented as a single function $y=f(x)$.

Exercise 1.9.8

If $x-8y^3=0$, express y as a function of x.

Answer

$$y=f(x)=\frac{\sqrt[3]{x}}{2}$$

Q & A

Are there relationships expressed by an equation that do represent a function but which still cannot be represented by an algebraic formula?

Yes, this can happen. For example, given the equation $x=y+2^y$, if we want to express y as a function of x, there is no simple algebraic formula involving only x that equals y. However, each x does determine a unique value for y, and there are

mathematical procedures by which y can be found to any desired accuracy. In this case, we say that the equation gives an implicit (implied) rule for y as a function of x, even though the formula cannot be written explicitly.

Evaluating a Function Given in Tabular Form

As we saw above, we can represent functions in tables. Conversely, we can use information in tables to write functions, and we can evaluate functions using the tables. For example, how well do our pets recall the fond memories we share with them? There is an urban legend that a goldfish has a memory of 3 seconds, but this is just a myth. Goldfish can remember up to 3 months, while the beta fish has a memory of up to 5 months. And while a puppy's memory span is no longer than 30 seconds, the adult dog can remember for 5 minutes. This is meager compared to a cat, whose memory span lasts for 16 hours.

The function that relates the type of pet to the duration of its memory span is more easily visualized with the use of a table (Table 1.9.10).

Table 1.9.10

Pet Memory	span in hours
Puppy	0.008
Adult Dog	0.083
Cat	3
Goldfish	2160
Beta Fish	3600

At times, evaluating a function in table form may be more useful than using equations. Here let us call the function P. The domain of the function is the type of pet and the range is a real number representing the number of hours the pet's memory span lasts. We can evaluate the function P at the input value of "goldfish." We would write $P(goldfish) = 2160$. Notice that, to evaluate the function in table form, we identify the input value and the corresponding output value from the pertinent row of the table. The tabular form for function P seems ideally suited to this function, more so than writing it in paragraph or function form.

How To: Given a function represented by a table, identify specific output and input values

1. Find the given input in the row (or column) of input values.
2. Identify the corresponding output value paired with that input value.
3. Find the given output values in the row (or column) of output values, noting every time that output value appears.
4. Identify the input value(s) corresponding to the given output value.

Example 1.9.9: Evaluating and Solving a Tabular Function

Using Table 1.9.11,

a. Evaluate $g(3)$.
b. Solve $g(n) = 6$.

Table 1.9.11

n	1	2	3	4	5
$g(n)$	8	6	7	6	8

Solution

a. Evaluating $g(3)$ means determining the output value of the function g for the input value of $n = 3$. The table output value corresponding to $n = 3$ is 7, so $g(3) = 7$.
b. Solving $g(n) = 6$ means identifying the input values, n,that produce an output value of 6. Table 1.9.12 shows two solutions: 2 and 4.

Table 1.9.12

n	1	2	3	4	5
$g(n)$	8	6	7	6	8

When we input 2 into the function g, our output is 6. When we input 4 into the function g, our output is also 6.

Exercise 1.9.1

Using Table 1.9.12, evaluate $g(1)$.

Answer

$g(1) = 8$

Finding Function Values from a Graph

Evaluating a function using a graph also requires finding the corresponding output value for a given input value, only in this case, we find the output value by looking at the graph. Solving a function equation using a graph requires finding all instances of the given output value on the graph and observing the corresponding input value(s).

Example 1.9.10: Reading Function Values from a Graph

Given the graph in Figure 1.9.7,

a. Evaluate $f(2)$.
b. Solve $f(x) = 4$.

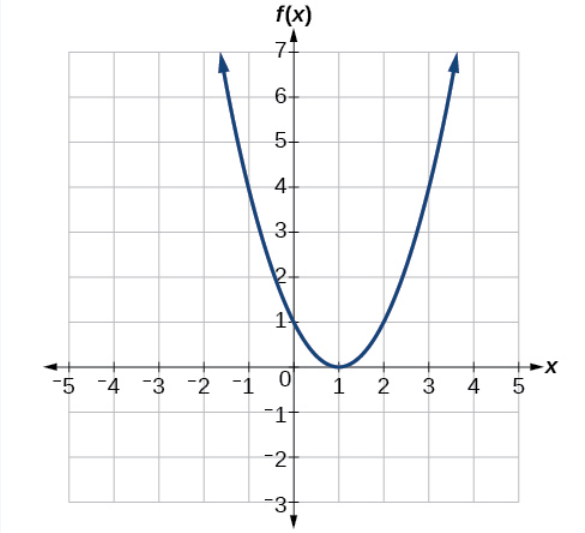
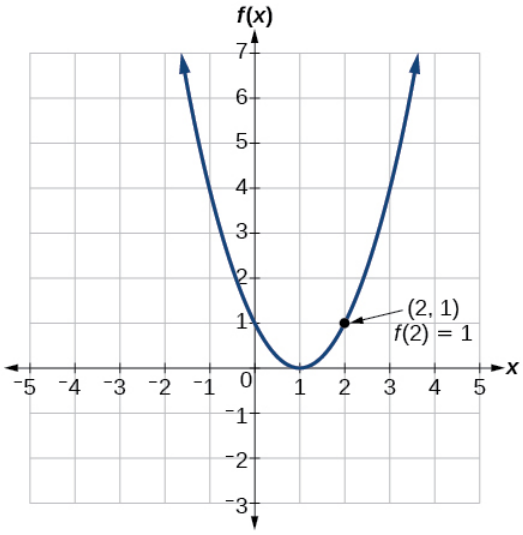


Figure 1.9.7: Graph of a positive parabola centered at $(1, 0)$.

Solution

To evaluate $f(2)$, locate the point on the curve where $x = 2$, then read the y-coordinate of that point. The point has coordinates $(2, 1)$, so $f(2) = 1$. See Figure 1.9.8.



1.9.8: Graph of a positive parabola centered at $(1,0)$ with the labeled point $(2,1)$ where $f(2)=1$.

To solve $f(x)=4$, we find the output value 4 on the vertical axis. Moving horizontally along the line $y=4$, we locate two points of the curve with output value 4: $(-1,4)$ and $(3,4)$. These points represent the two solutions to $f(x)=4$: -1 or 3. This means $f(-1)=4$ and $f(3)=4$, or when the input is -1 or 3, the output is 4. See Figure 1.9.9.

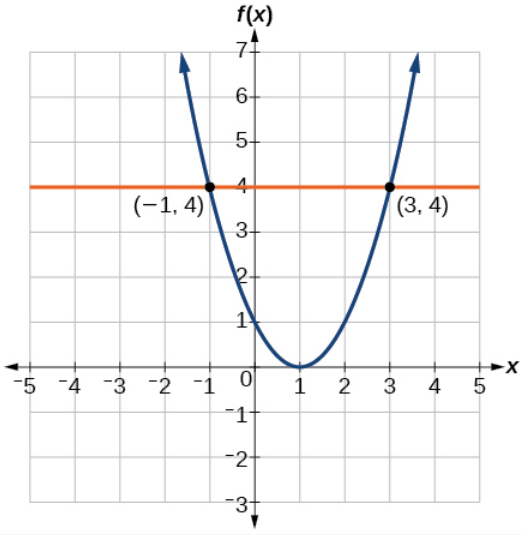


Figure 1.9.9: Graph of an upward-facing parabola with a vertex at $(0,1)$ and labeled points at $(-1,4)$ and $(3,4)$. A line at $y=4$ intersects the parabola at the labeled points.

Exercise 1.9.10

Given the graph in Figure 1.9.7, solve $f(x)=1$.

Answer

$x=0$ or $x=2$

Determining Whether a Function is One-to-One

Some functions have a given output value that corresponds to two or more input values. For example, in the stock chart shown in the Figure at the beginning of this chapter, the stock price was $1000 on five different dates, meaning that there were five different input values that all resulted in the same output value of $1000.

However, some functions have only one input value for each output value, as well as having only one output for each input. We call these functions one-to-one functions. As an example, consider a school that uses only letter grades and decimal equivalents, as listed in Table 1.9.13.

Table 1.9.13: Letter grades and decimal equivalents.

Letter Grade	Grade Point Average
A	4.0
B	3.0
C	2.0
D	1.0

This grading system represents a one-to-one function, because each letter input yields one particular grade point average output and each grade point average corresponds to one input letter.

To visualize this concept, let's look again at the two simple functions sketched in Figures 1.9.1a and 1.9.1b. The function in part (a) shows a relationship that is not a one-to-one function because inputs q and r both give output n. The function in part (b) shows a relationship that is a one-to-one function because each input is associated with a single output.

One-to-One Functions

A **one-to-one function** is a function in which each output value corresponds to exactly one input value.

Example 1.9.11: Determining Whether a Relationship Is a One-to-One Function

Is the area of a circle a function of its radius? If yes, is the function one-to-one?

Solution

A circle of radius r has a unique area measure given by $A = \pi r^2$, so for any input, r, there is only one output, A. The area is a function of radius$r$.

If the function is one-to-one, the output value, the area, must correspond to a unique input value, the radius. Any area measure A is given by the formula $A = \pi r^2$. Because areas and radii are positive numbers, there is exactly one solution: $\sqrt{\frac{A}{\pi}}$. So the area of a circle is a one-to-one function of the circle's radius.

Exercise 1.9.11A

a. Is a balance a function of the bank account number?
b. Is a bank account number a function of the balance?
c. Is a balance a one-to-one function of the bank account number?

Answer

a. yes, because each bank account has a single balance at any given time;

b. no, because several bank account numbers may have the same balance;

c. no, because the same output may correspond to more than one input.

Exercise 1.9.11B

Evaluate the following:

a. If each percent grade earned in a course translates to one letter grade, is the letter grade a function of the percent grade?
b. If so, is the function one-to-one?

Answer

a. Yes, letter grade is a function of percent grade;
b. No, it is not one-to-one. There are 100 different percent numbers we could get but only about five possible letter grades, so there cannot be only one percent number that corresponds to each letter grade.

Using the Vertical Line Test

As we have seen in some examples above, we can represent a function using a graph. Graphs display a great many input-output pairs in a small space. The visual information they provide often makes relationships easier to understand. By convention, graphs are typically constructed with the input values along the horizontal axis and the output values along the vertical axis.

The most common graphs name the input value x and the output y, and we say y is a function of x, or $y = f(x)$ when the function is named f. The graph of the function is the set of all points (x, y) in the plane that satisfies the equation $y = f(x)$. If the function is defined for only a few input values, then the graph of the function is only a few points, where the x-coordinate of each point is an input value and the y-coordinate of each point is the corresponding output value. For example, the black dots on the graph in Figure 1.9.10 tell us that $f(0) = 2$ and $f(6) = 1$. However, the set of all points (x, y) satisfying $y = f(x)$ is a curve. The curve shown includes $(0, 2)$ and $(6, 1)$ because the curve passes through those points

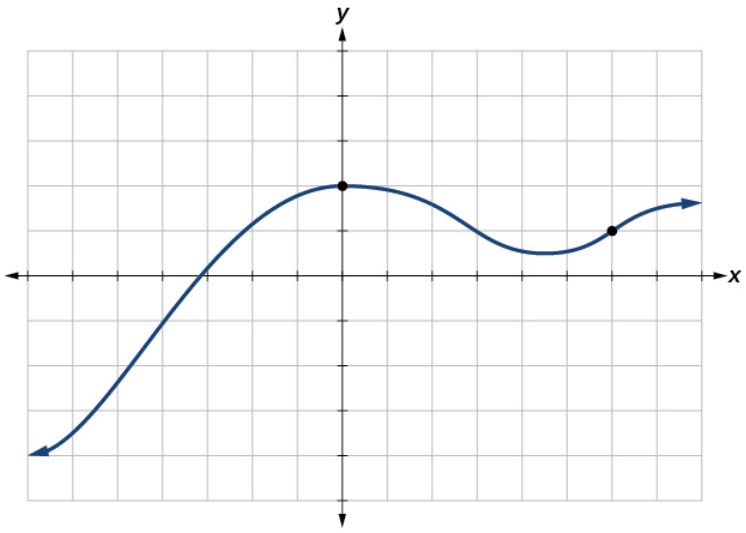


Figure 1.9.10: Graph of a polynomial.

The vertical line test can be used to determine whether a graph represents a function. If we can draw any vertical line that intersects a graph more than once, then the graph does not define a function because a function has only one output value for each input value. See Figure 1.9.11.

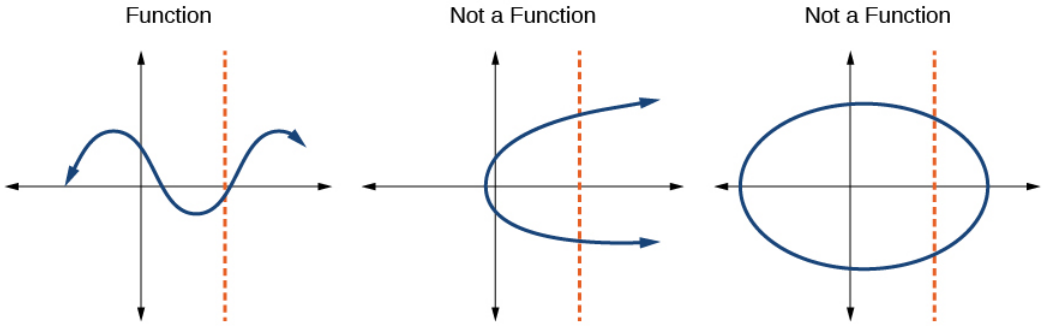


Figure 1.9.11: Three graphs visually showing what is and is not a function.

Howto: Given a graph, use the vertical line test to determine if the graph represents a function

1. Inspect the graph to see if any vertical line drawn would intersect the curve more than once.
2. If there is any such line, determine that the graph does not represent a function.

Example 1.9.12: Applying the Vertical Line Test

Which of the graphs in Figure 1.9.12 represent(s) a function $y = f(x)$?

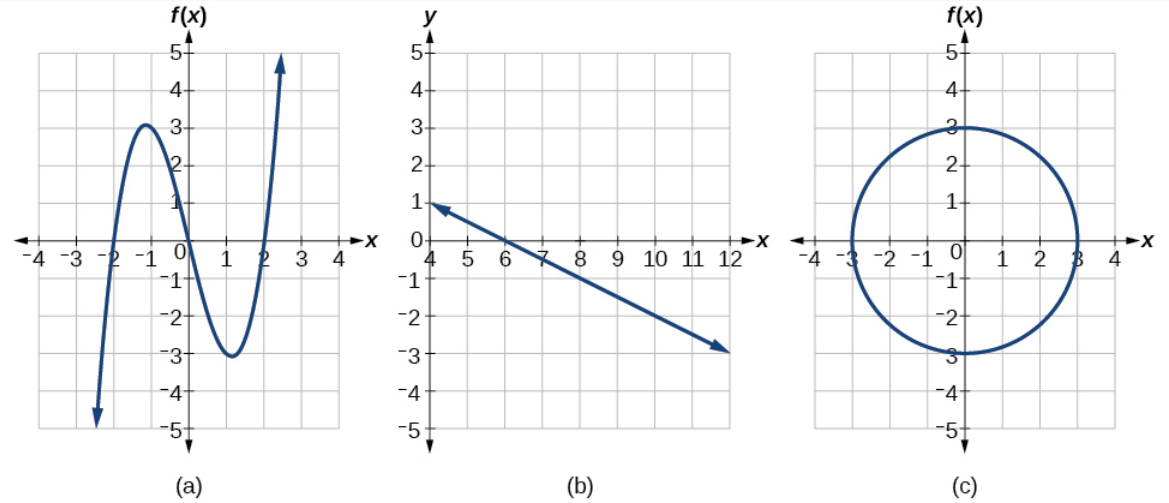


Figure 1.9.12: Graph of a polynomial (a), a downward-sloping line (b), and a circle (c).

Solution

If any vertical line intersects a graph more than once, the relation represented by the graph is not a function. Notice that any vertical line would pass through only one point of the two graphs shown in parts (a) and (b) of Figure 1.9.12. From this we can conclude that these two graphs represent functions. The third graph does not represent a function because, at most x-values, a vertical line would intersect the graph at more than one point, as shown in Figure 1.9.13.

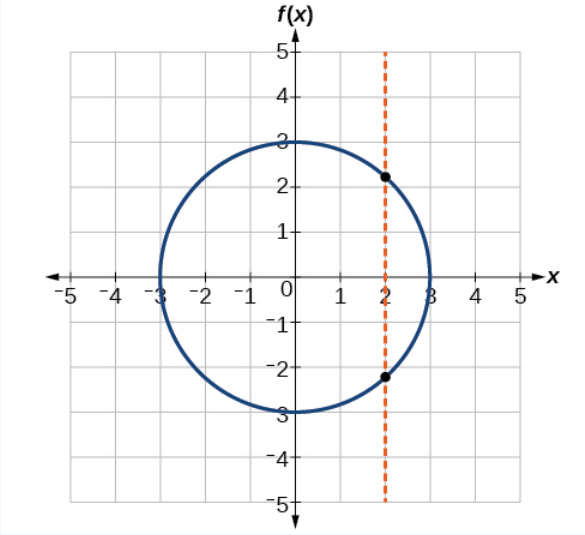


Figure 1.9.13: Graph of a circle.

Exercise 1.9.12

Does the graph in Figure 1.9.14 represent a function?

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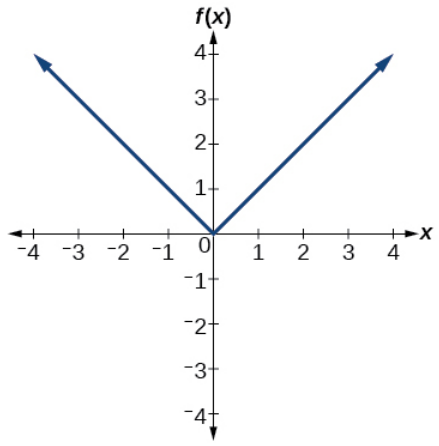


Figure 1.9.14: Graph of absolute value function.

Answer

yes

Using the Horizontal Line Test

Once we have determined that a graph defines a function, an easy way to determine if it is a one-to-one function is to use the **horizontal line test**. Draw horizontal lines through the graph. If any horizontal line intersects the graph more than once, then the graph does not represent a one-to-one function.

Howto: Given a graph of a function, use the horizontal line test to determine if the graph represents a one-to-one function

1. Inspect the graph to see if any horizontal line drawn would intersect the curve more than once.
2. If there is any such line, determine that the function is not one-to-one.

Example 1.9.13: Applying the Horizontal Line Test

Consider the functions shown in Figure $1.9.12a$ and Figure $1.9.12b$ Are either of the functions one-to-one?

Solution

The function in Figure $1.9.12a$ is not one-to-one. The horizontal line shown in Figure $1.9.15$ intersects the graph of the function at two points (and we can even find horizontal lines that intersect it at three points.)

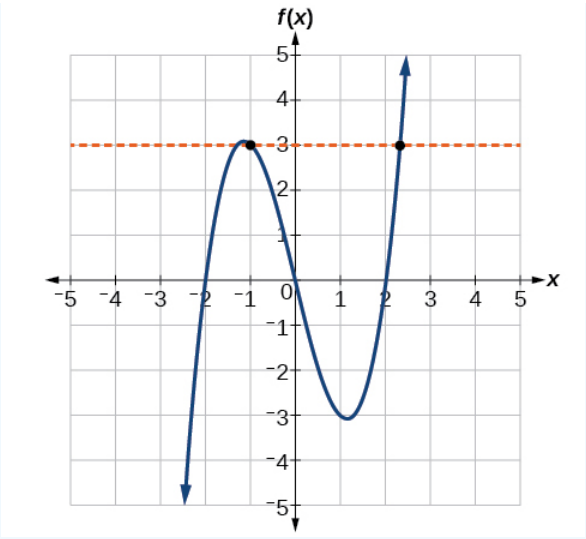


Figure 1.9.15: Graph of a polynomial with a horizontal line crossing through 2 points

The function in Figure $1.9.12b$is one-to-one. Any horizontal line will intersect a diagonal line at most once.

Exercise 1.9.13

Is the graph shown in Figure $1.9.13$one-to-one?

Answer

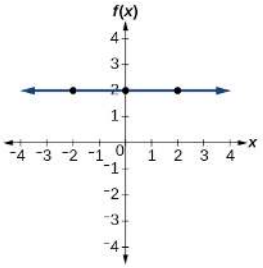
No, because it does not pass the horizontal line test.

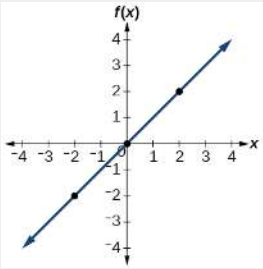
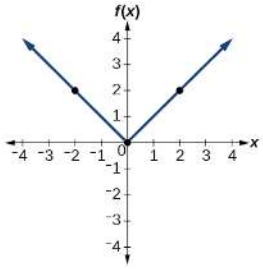
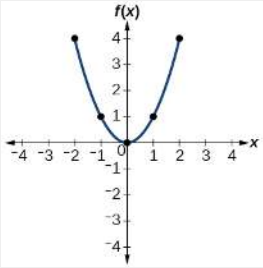
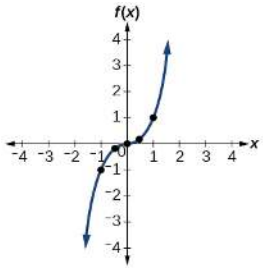
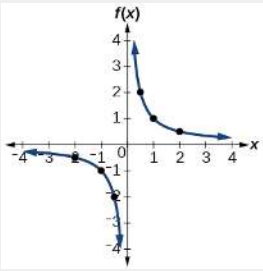
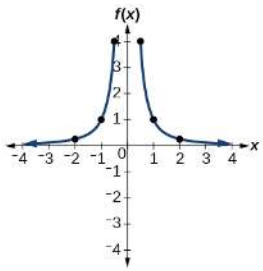
Identifying Basic Toolkit Functions

In this text, we will be exploring functions—the shapes of their graphs, their unique characteristics, their algebraic formulas, and how to solve problems with them. When learning to read, we start with the alphabet. When learning to do arithmetic, we start with numbers. When working with functions, it is similarly helpful to have a base set of building-block elements. We call these our "toolkit functions," which form a set of basic named functions for which we know the graph, formula, and special properties. Some of these functions are programmed to individual buttons on many calculators. For these definitions we will use x as the input variable and $y = f(x)$ as the output variable.

We will see these toolkit functions, combinations of toolkit functions, their graphs, and their transformations frequently throughout this book. It will be very helpful if we can recognize these toolkit functions and their features quickly by name, formula, graph, and basic table properties. The graphs and sample table values are included with each function shown in Table $1.9.14$

Table 1.9.14: Toolkit Functions

Name	Function	Graph
Constant	$f(x) = c$ where c is a constant	 <table><tr><th>x</th><th>f(x)</th></tr><tr><td>−2</td><td>2</td></tr><tr><td>0</td><td>2</td></tr><tr><td>2</td><td>2</td></tr></table>

Name	Function	Graph
Identity	$f(x) = x$	
Absolute Value	$f(x) = \|x\|$	
Quadratic	$f(x) = x^2$	
Cubic	$f(x) = x^3$	
reciprocal	$f(x) = \frac{1}{x}$	
Reciprocal squared	$f(x) = \frac{1}{x^2}$	

x	f(x)
−2	−2
0	0
2	2

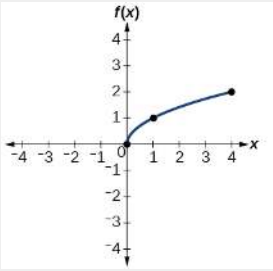
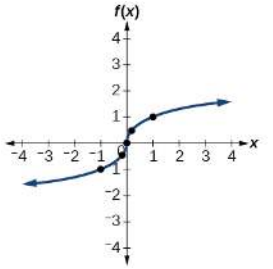
x	f(x)
−2	2
0	0
2	2

x	f(x)
−2	4
−1	1
0	0
1	1
2	4

x	f(x)
−1	−1
−0.5	−0.125
0	0
0.5	0.125
1	1

x	f(x)
−2	−0.5
−1	−1
−0.5	−2
0.5	2
1	1
2	0.5

x	f(x)
−2	0.25
−1	1
−0.5	4
0.5	4
1	1
2	0.25

Name	Function	Graph
Square root	$f(x) = \sqrt{x}$	 <table><tr><th>x</th><th>f(x)</th></tr><tr><td>0</td><td>0</td></tr><tr><td>1</td><td>1</td></tr><tr><td>4</td><td>2</td></tr></table>
Cube root	$f(x) = \sqrt[3]{x}$	 <table><tr><th>x</th><th>f(x)</th></tr><tr><td>−1</td><td>−1</td></tr><tr><td>−0.125</td><td>−0.5</td></tr><tr><td>0</td><td>0</td></tr><tr><td>0.125</td><td>0.5</td></tr><tr><td>1</td><td>1</td></tr></table>

Key Equations

- Constant function $f(x) = c$, where c is a constant
- Identity function $f(x) = x$
- Absolute value function $f(x) = |x|$
- Quadratic function $f(x) = x^2$
- Cubic function $f(x) = x^3$
- Reciprocal function $f(x) = \dfrac{1}{x}$
- Reciprocal squared function $f(x) = \frac{1}{x^2}$
- Square root function $f(x) = \sqrt{x}$
- Cube root function $f(x) = 3\sqrt{x}$

Key Concepts

- A relation is a set of ordered pairs. A function is a specific type of relation in which each domain value, or input, leads to exactly one range value, or output.
- Function notation is a shorthand method for relating the input to the output in the form $y = f(x)$.
- In tabular form, a function can be represented by rows or columns that relate to input and output values.
- To evaluate a function, we determine an output value for a corresponding input value. Algebraic forms of a function can be evaluated by replacing the input variable with a given value.
- To solve for a specific function value, we determine the input values that yield the specific output value.
- An algebraic form of a function can be written from an equation.
- Input and output values of a function can be identified from a table.
- Relating input values to output values on a graph is another way to evaluate a function.
- A function is one-to-one if each output value corresponds to only one input value.
- A graph represents a function if any vertical line drawn on the graph intersects the graph at no more than one point.
- The graph of a one-to-one function passes the horizontal line test.

Footnotes

1 http://www.baseball-almanac.com/lege.../lisn100.shtml. Accessed 3/24/2014.
2 www.kgbanswers.com/how-long-i...y-span/4221590. Accessed 3/24/2014.

Glossary

dependent variable
an output variable

domain
the set of all possible input values for a relation

function
a relation in which each input value yields a unique output value

horizontal line test
a method of testing whether a function is one-to-one by determining whether any horizontal line intersects the graph more than once

independent variable
an input variable

input
each object or value in a domain that relates to another object or value by a relationship known as a function

one-to-one function
a function for which each value of the output is associated with a unique input value

output
each object or value in the range that is produced when an input value is entered into a function

range
the set of output values that result from the input values in a relation

relation
a set of ordered pairs

vertical line test
a method of testing whether a graph represents a function by determining whether a vertical line intersects the graph no more than once

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1.10: Domain and Range

Learning Objectives

- Find the domain of a function defined by an equation.
- Graph piecewise-defined functions.

If you're in the mood for a scary movie, you may want to check out one of the five most popular horror movies of all time—I am Legend, Hannibal, The Ring, The Grudge, and The Conjuring. Figure 1.10.1 shows the amount, in dollars, each of those movies grossed when they were released as well as the ticket sales for horror movies in general by year. Notice that we can use the data to create a function of the amount each movie earned or the total ticket sales for all horror movies by year. In creating various functions using the data, we can identify different independent and dependent variables, and we can analyze the data and the functions to determine the domain and range. In this section, we will investigate methods for determining the domain and range of functions such as these.

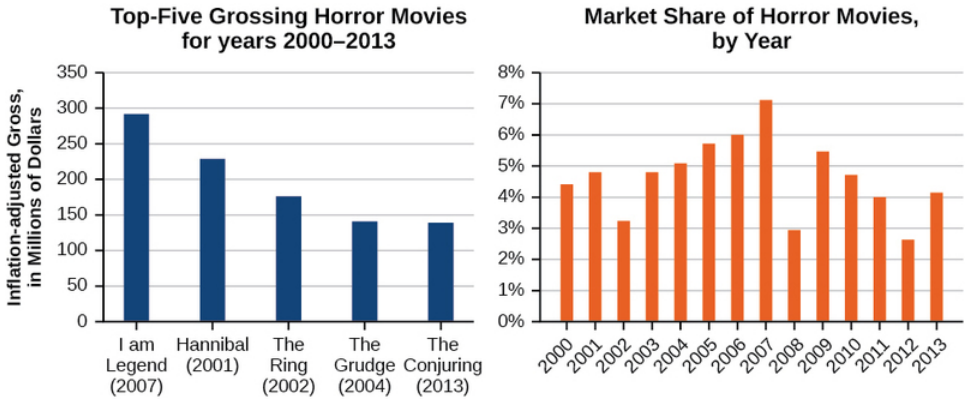


Figure 1.10.1: Graph of the Top-Five Grossing Horror Movies for years 2000-2003, and a Graph of the Market Share of Horror Movies by Year. Based on data compiled by www.the-numbers.com.

Finding the Domain of a Function Defined by an Equation

In Functions and Function Notation, we were introduced to the concepts of **domain and range**. In this section, we will practice determining domains and ranges for specific functions. Keep in mind that, in determining domains and ranges, we need to consider what is physically possible or meaningful in real-world examples, such as tickets sales and year in the horror movie example above. We also need to consider what is mathematically permitted. For example, we cannot include any input value that leads us to take an even root of a negative number if the domain and range consist of real numbers. Or in a function expressed as a formula, we cannot include any input value in the domain that would lead us to divide by 0.

We can visualize the domain as a "holding area" that contains "raw materials" for a "function machine" and the range as another "holding area" for the machine's products (Figure 1.10.2).

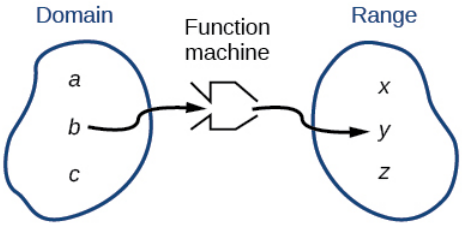


Figure 1.10.2: Diagram of how a function relates two relations

We can write the **domain and range** in **interval notation**, which uses values within brackets to describe a set of numbers. In interval notation, we use a square bracket [when the set includes the endpoint and a parenthesis (to indicate that the endpoint is either not included or the interval is unbounded. For example, if a person has $100 to spend, he or she would need to express the interval that is more than 0 and less than or equal to 100 and write $(0, 100]$. We will discuss interval notation in greater detail later.

Let's turn our attention to finding the domain of a function whose equation is provided. Oftentimes, finding the domain of such functions involves remembering three different forms. First, if the function has no denominator or an even root, consider whether the domain could be all real numbers. Second, if there is a denominator in the function's equation, exclude values in the domain that force the denominator to be zero. Third, if there is an even root, consider excluding values that would make the radicand negative.

Before we begin, let us review the conventions of interval notation:

- The smallest term from the interval is written first.
- The largest term in the interval is written second, following a comma.
- Parentheses, (or), are used to signify that an endpoint is not included, called exclusive.
- Brackets, [or], are used to indicate that an endpoint is included, called inclusive.

See Figure 1.10.3 for a summary of interval notation.

Inequality	Interval Notation	Graph on Number Line	Description
$x > a$	(a, ∞)		x is greater than a
$x < a$	$(-\infty, a)$		x is less than a
$x \geq a$	$[a, \infty)$		x is greater than or equal to a
$x \leq a$	$(-\infty, a]$		x is less than or equal to a
$a < x < b$	(a, b)		x is strictly between a and b
$a \leq x < b$	$[a, b)$		x is between a and b, to include a
$a < x \leq b$	$(a, b]$		x is between a and b, to include b
$a \leq x \leq b$	$[a, b]$		x is between a and b, to include a and b

Figure 1.10.3: Summary of interval notation.

Example 1.10.1: Finding the Domain of a Function as a Set of Ordered Pairs

Find the domain of the following function: $\{(2, 10), (3, 10), (4, 20), (5, 30), (6, 40)\}$

Solution

First identify the input values. The input value is the first coordinate in an ordered pair. There are no restrictions, as the ordered pairs are simply listed. The domain is the set of the first coordinates of the ordered pairs.

$$\{2, 3, 4, 5, 6\}$$

Exercse 1.10.1

Find the domain of the function:

$$\{(-5, 4), (0, 0), (5, -4), (10, -8), (15, -12)\}$$

Answer

$\{-5, 0, 5, 10, 15\}$

How To: Given a function written in equation form, find the domain.

1. Identify the input values.
2. Identify any restrictions on the input and exclude those values from the domain.
3. Write the domain in interval form, if possible.

Example 1.10.2: Finding the Domain of a Function

Find the domain of the function $f(x) = x^2 - 1$.

Solution

The input value, shown by the variable x in the equation, is squared and then the result is lowered by one. Any real number may be squared and then be lowered by one, so there are no restrictions on the domain of this function. The domain is the set of real numbers.

In interval form, the domain of f is $(-\infty, \infty)$.

Exercse 1.10.2

Find the domain of the function:

$$f(x) = 5 - x + x^3$$

Answer

$(-\infty, \infty)$

Howto: Given a function written in an equation form that includes a fraction, find the domain

1. Identify the input values.
2. Identify any restrictions on the input. If there is a denominator in the function's formula, set the denominator equal to zero and solve for x . If the function's formula contains an even root, set the radicand greater than or equal to 0, and then solve.
3. Write the domain in interval form, making sure to exclude any restricted values from the domain.

Example 1.10.3: Finding the Domain of a Function Involving a Denominator

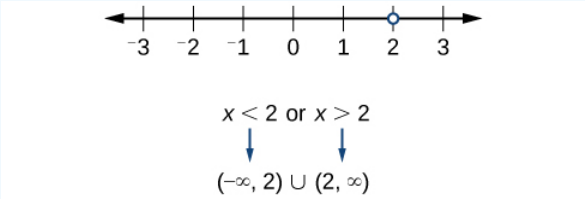
Find the domain of the function $f(x) = \dfrac{x+1}{2-x}$.

Solution

When there is a denominator, we want to include only values of the input that do not force the denominator to be zero. So, we will set the denominator equal to 0 and solve for x.

$$2-x=0$$
$$-x=-2$$
$$x=2$$

Now, we will exclude 2 from the domain. The answers are all real numbers where $x<2$ or $x>2$. We can use a symbol known as the union, $\cup$,to combine the two sets. In interval notation, we write the solution:$(-\infty,2)\cup(2,\infty)$.



In interval form, the domain of f is $(-\infty,2)\cup(2,\infty)$.

Exercse 1.10.3

Find the domain of the function:

$$f(x)=\frac{1+4x}{2x-1}$$

Answer

$$(-\infty,\frac{1}{2})\cup(\frac{1}{2},\infty)$$

How To: Given a function written in equation form including an even root, find the domain.

1. Identify the input values.
2. Since there is an even root, exclude any real numbers that result in a negative number in the radicand. Set the radicand greater than or equal to zero and solve for x.
3. The solution(s) are the domain of the function. If possible, write the answer in interval form.

Example 1.10.4: Finding the Domain of a Function with an Even Root

Find the domain of the function:

$$f(x)=\sqrt{7-x}.$$

Solution

When there is an even root in the formula, we exclude any real numbers that result in a negative number in the radicand.

Set the radicand greater than or equal to zero and solve for x.

$$7-x\geq 0$$
$$-x\geq -7$$
$$x\leq 7$$

Now, we will exclude any number greater than 7 from the domain. The answers are all real numbers less than or equal to 7, or $(-\infty,7]$.

Exercse 1.10.4

Find the domain of the function

$$f(x)=\sqrt{5+2x}.$$

Answer

$$[-2.5, \infty)$$

Q&A: Can there be functions in which the domain and range do not intersect at all?

Yes. For example, the function $f(x) = -\frac{1}{\sqrt{x}}$ *has the set of all positive real numbers as its domain but the set of all negative real numbers as its range. As a more extreme example, a function's inputs and outputs can be completely different categories (for example, names of weekdays as inputs and numbers as outputs, as on an attendance chart), in such cases the domain and range have no elements in common.*

Using Notations to Specify Domain and Range

In the previous examples, we used inequalities and lists to describe the domain of functions. We can also use inequalities, or other statements that might define sets of values or data, to describe the behavior of the variable in set-builder notation. For example, $\{x|10 \leq x < 30\}$ describes the behavior of x in set-builder notation. The braces $\{\}$ are read as "the set of," and the vertical bar $|$ is read as "such that," so we would read $\{x|10 \leq x < 30\}$ as "the set of x-values such that 10 is less than or equal to x, and x is less than 30."

Figure 1.10.4compares inequality notation, set-builder notation, and interval notation.

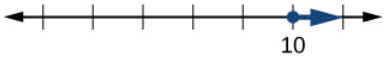
	Inequality Notation	Set-builder Notation	Interval Notation
	$5 < h \leq 10$	$\{h \mid 5 < h \leq 10\}$	$(5, 10]$
	$5 \leq h < 10$	$\{h \mid 5 \leq h < 10\}$	$[5, 10)$
	$5 < h < 10$	$\{h \mid 5 < h < 10\}$	$(5, 10)$
	$h < 10$	$\{h \mid h < 10\}$	$(-\infty, 10)$
	$h \geq 10$	$\{h \mid h \geq 10\}$	$[10, \infty)$
	All real numbers	$\mathbb{R}$	$(-\infty, \infty)$

Figure 1.10.4: Summary of notations for inequalities, set-builder, and interval.

To combine two intervals using inequality notation or set-builder notation, we use the word "or." As we saw in earlier examples, we use the union symbol, $\cup$,to combine two unconnected intervals. For example, the union of the sets $\{2, 3, 5\}$ and $\{4, 6\}$ is the set $\{2, 3, 4, 5, 6\}$. It is the set of all elements that belong to one or the other (or both) of the original two sets. For sets with a finite number of elements like these, the elements do not have to be listed in ascending order of numerical value. If the original two sets have some elements in common, those elements should be listed only once in the union set. For sets of real numbers on intervals, another example of a union is

$$\{x||x| \geq 3\} = (-\infty, -3] \cup [3, \infty) \tag{1.10.1}$$

Set-Builder Notation and Interval Notation

Set-builder notation is a method of specifying a set of elements that satisfy a certain condition. It takes the form $\{x|$ statement about x$\}$ which is read as, "the set of all x such that the statement about x is true." For example,

$$\{x|4 < x \leq 12\}$$

Interval notation is a way of describing sets that include all real numbers between a lower limit that may or may not be included and an upper limit that may or may not be included. The endpoint values are listed between brackets or parentheses. A square bracket indicates inclusion in the set, and a parenthesis indicates exclusion from the set. For example,

$$(4, 12]$$

How to: Given a line graph, describe the set of values using interval notation.

1. Identify the intervals to be included in the set by determining where the heavy line overlays the real line.
2. At the left end of each interval, use [with each end value to be included in the set (solid dot) or (for each excluded end value (open dot).
3. At the right end of each interval, use] with each end value to be included in the set (filled dot) or) for each excluded end value (open dot).
4. Use the union symbol $\cup$ to combine all intervals into one set.

Example 1.10.5: Describing Sets on the Real-Number Line

Describe the intervals of values shown in Figure 1.10.5 using inequality notation, set-builder notation, and interval notation.

Figure 1.10.5: Line graph of $1 \leq x \leq 3$ or $x > 5$.

Solution

To describe the values, x, included in the intervals shown, we would say, "x is a real number greater than or equal to 1 and less than or equal to 3, or a real number greater than 5."

Inequality

$$1 \leq x \leq 3 \text{ or } x > 5$$

Set-builder Notation

$$\{x|1 \leq x \leq 3 \text{ or } x > 5\}$$

Interval notation

$$[1, 3] \cup (5, \infty)$$

Remember that, when writing or reading interval notation, using a square bracket means the boundary is included in the set. Using a parenthesis means the boundary is not included in the set.

Exercse 1.10.5

Given Figure 1.10.6, specify the graphed set in

a. words
b. set-builder notation
c. interval notation

Figure 1.10.6: Line graph of $-2 \leq x$, $-1 \leq x < 3$.leq}x\), $-1 \leq x < 3$.

Answer a

Values that are less than or equal to –2, or values that are greater than or equal to –1 and less than 3;

Answer b

$\{x|x \leq -2 or -1 \leq x < 3\}$

Answer c

$(-\infty, -2] \cup [-1, 3)$

Finding Domain and Range from Graphs

Another way to identify the domain and range of functions is by using graphs. Because the domain refers to the set of possible input values, the domain of a graph consists of all the input values shown on the x-axis. The range is the set of possible output values, which are shown on the y-axis. Keep in mind that if the graph continues beyond the portion of the graph we can see, the domain and range may be greater than the visible values. See Figure 1.10.7.

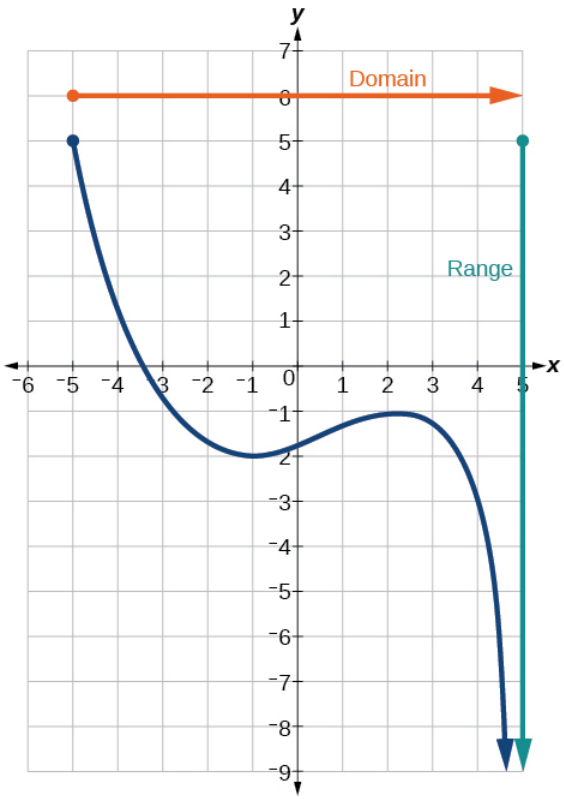


Figure 1.10.7: Graph of a polynomial that shows the x-axis is the domain and the y-axis is the range

We can observe that the graph extends horizontally from −5 to the right without bound, so the domain is $[-5, \infty)$. The vertical extent of the graph is all range values 5 and below, so the range is $(-\infty, 5]$. Note that the domain and range are always written from smaller to larger values, or from left to right for domain, and from the bottom of the graph to the top of the graph for range.

Example 1.10.6A: Finding Domain and Range from a Graph

Find the domain and range of the function f whose graph is shown in Figure 1.2.8.

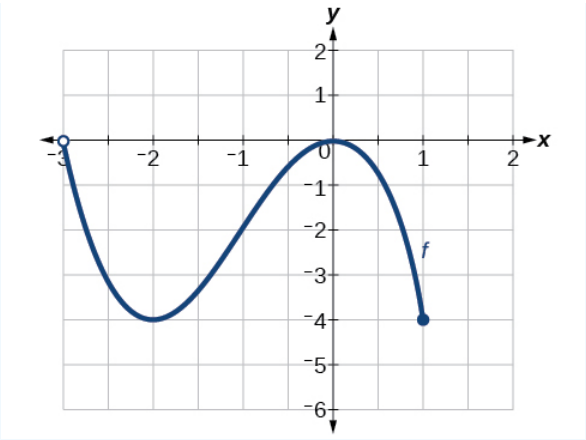


Figure 1.10.8: Graph of a function from (-3, 1].

Solution

We can observe that the horizontal extent of the graph is –3 to 1, so the domain of f is $(-3, 1]$.

The vertical extent of the graph is 0 to –4, so the range is $[-4, 0)$. See Figure 1.10.9.

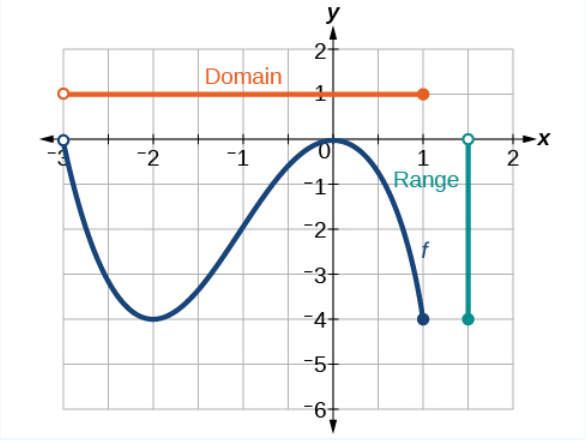


Figure 1.10.9: Graph of the previous function shows the domain and range

Example 1.10.6B: Finding Domain and Range from a Graph of Oil Production

Find the domain and range of the function f whose graph is shown in Figure 1.10.10.

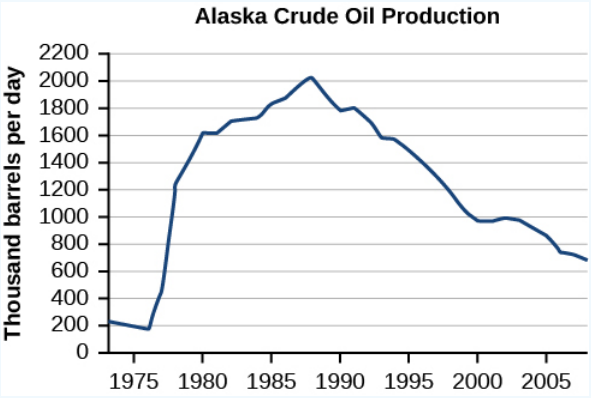


Figure 1.10.10: Graph of the Alaska Crude Oil Production where the y-axis is thousand barrels per day and the -axis is the years(credit: modification of work by the U.S. Energy Information Administration)

Solution

https://math.libretexts.org/@go/page/143847

The input quantity along the horizontal axis is “years,” which we represent with the variable t for time. The output quantity is “thousands of barrels of oil per day,” which we represent with the variable b for barrels. The graph may continue to the left and right beyond what is viewed, but based on the portion of the graph that is visible, we can determine the domain as $1973 \leq t \leq 2008$ and the range as approximately $180 \leq b \leq 2010$.

In interval notation, the domain is $[1973, 2008]$ and the range is about $[180, 2010]$. For the domain and the range, we approximate the smallest and largest values since they do not fall exactly on the grid lines.

Exercse 1.10.6

Given Figure 1.10.11, identify the domain and range using interval notation.

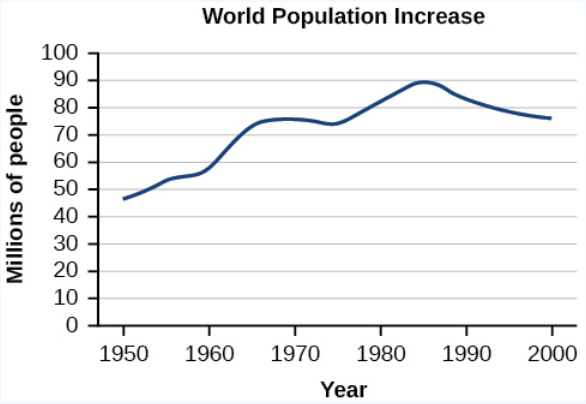


Figure 1.10.11: Graph of World Population Increase where the y-axis represents millions of people and the x-axis represents the year.

Answer

domain =$[1950, 2002]$

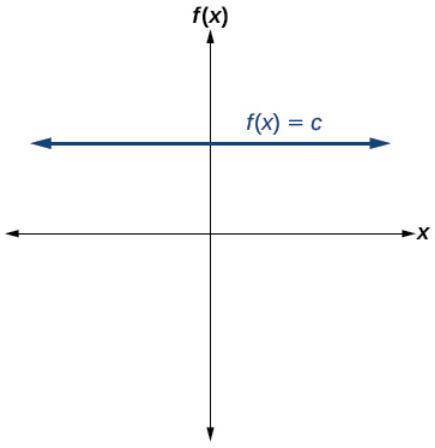
range = $[47,000,000, 89,000,000]$

Can a function’s domain and range be the same?

Yes. For example, the domain and range of the cube root function are both the set of all real numbers.

Finding Domains and Ranges of the Toolkit Functions

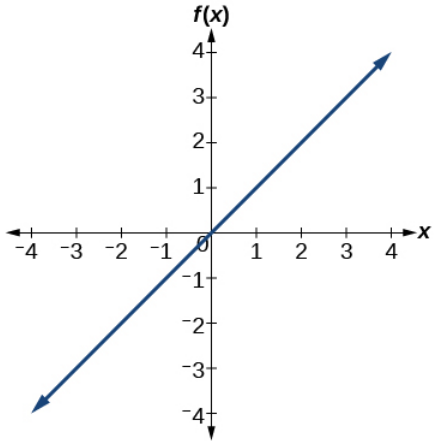
We will now return to our set of toolkit functions to determine the domain and range of each.



Domain: $(-\infty, \infty)$
Range: $[c,c]$

Figure 1.10.12: Constant function $f(x) = c$.

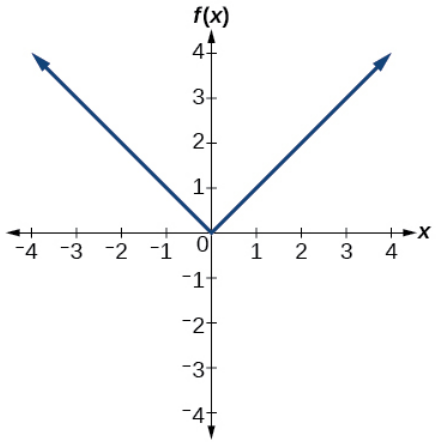
For the **constant function** $f(x) = c$, the domain consists of all real numbers; there are no restrictions on the input. The only output value is the constant c, so the range is the set $\{c\}$ that contains this single element. In interval notation, this is written as $[c, c]$, the interval that both begins and ends with c.



Domain: $(-\infty, \infty)$
Range: $(-\infty, \infty)$

Figure* 1.10.13*: *Identity function f(x)=x.*

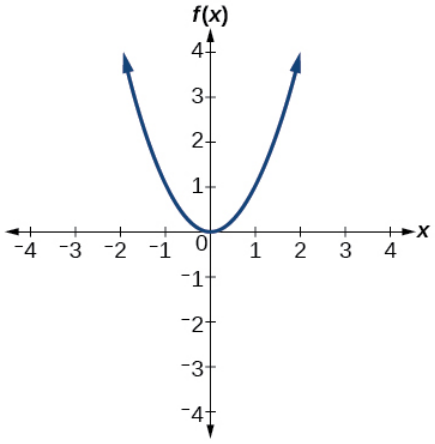
For the **identity function** $f(x) = x$, there is no restriction on x. Both the domain and range are the set of all real numbers.



Domain: $(-\infty, \infty)$
Range: $[0, \infty)$

Figure 1.10.14: Absolute function $f(x) = |x|$.

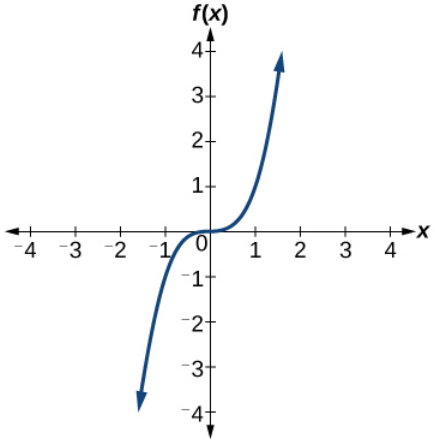
For the **absolute value function** $f(x) = |x|$, there is no restriction on x. However, because absolute value is defined as a distance from 0, the output can only be greater than or equal to 0.



Domain: $(-\infty, \infty)$
Range: $[0, \infty)$

Figure 1.10.15: Quadratic function $f(x) = x^2$.

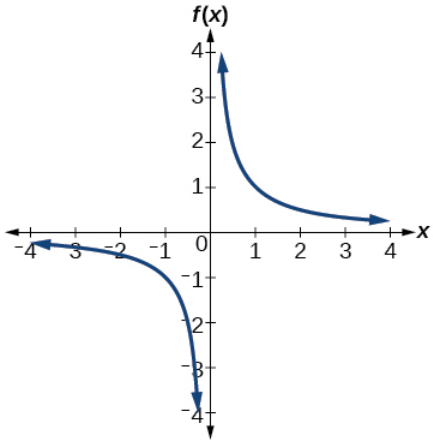
For the **quadratic function** $f(x) = x^2$, the domain is all real numbers since the horizontal extent of the graph is the whole real number line. Because the graph does not include any negative values for the range, the range is only nonnegative real numbers.



Domain: $(-\infty, \infty)$
Range: $(-\infty, \infty)$

Figure 1.10.16: Cubic function $f(x) - x^3$.

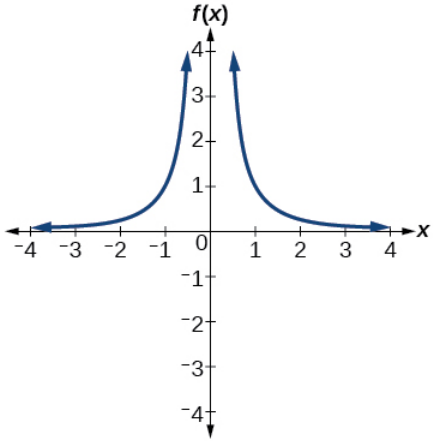
For the **cubic function** $f(x) = x^3$, the domain is all real numbers because the horizontal extent of the graph is the whole real number line. The same applies to the vertical extent of the graph, so the domain and range include all real numbers.



Domain: $(-\infty, 0) \cup (0, \infty)$
Range: $(-\infty, 0) \cup (0, \infty)$

Figure 1.10.17: Reciprocal function $f(x) = \frac{1}{x}$.

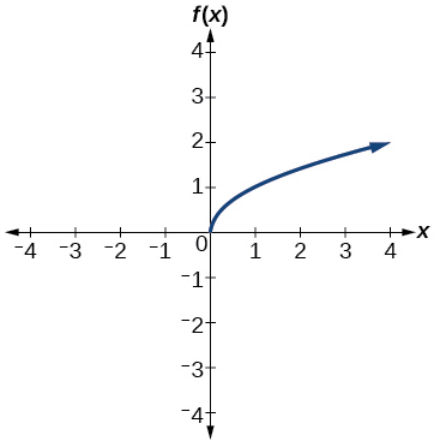
For the **reciprocal function** $f(x) = \frac{1}{x}$, we cannot divide by 0, so we must exclude 0 from the domain. Further, 1 divided by any value can never be 0, so the range also will not include 0. In set-builder notation, we could also write $\{x | x \neq 0\}$,the set of all real numbers that are not zero.



Domain: $(-\infty, 0) \cup (0, \infty)$
Range: $(0, \infty)$

Figure 1.10.18: Reciprocal squared function $f(x) = \frac{1}{x^2}$

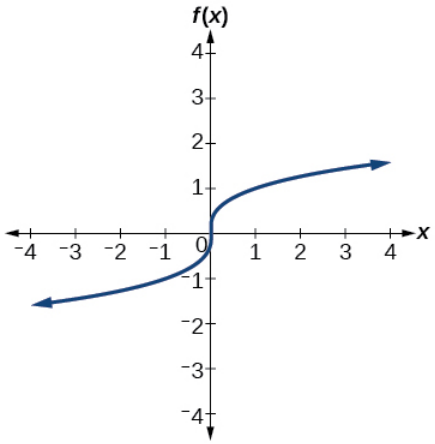
For the **reciprocal squared function** $f(x) = \frac{1}{x^2}$,we cannot divide by 0, so we must exclude 0 from the domain. There is also no x that can give an output of 0, so 0 is excluded from the range as well. Note that the output of this function is always positive due to the square in the denominator, so the range includes only positive numbers.



Domain: [0, ∞)
Range: [0, ∞)

***Figure* 1.10.19:** *Square root function* $f(x) = \sqrt{(x)}$.

For the **square root function** $f(x) = \sqrt{x}$, we cannot take the square root of a negative real number, so the domain must be 0 or greater. The range also excludes negative numbers because the square root of a positive number x is defined to be positive, even though the square of the negative number $-\sqrt{x}$ also gives us x.



Domain: $(-\infty, \infty)$
Range: $(-\infty, \infty)$

Figure 1.10.20: Cube root function $f(x) = \sqrt[3]{x}$.

For the **cube root function** $f(x) = \sqrt[3]{x}$, the domain and range include all real numbers. Note that there is no problem taking a cube root, or any odd-integer root, of a negative number, and the resulting output is negative (it is an odd function).

How To: Given the formula for a function, determine the domain and range.

1. Exclude from the domain any input values that result in division by zero.
2. Exclude from the domain any input values that have nonreal (or undefined) number outputs.
3. Use the valid input values to determine the range of the output values.
4. Look at the function graph and table values to confirm the actual function behavior.

Finding the Domain and Range Using Toolkit Functions

Find the domain and range of $f(x) = 2x^3 - x$.

Solution

There are no restrictions on the domain, as any real number may be cubed and then subtracted from the result.

The domain is $(-\infty, \infty)$ and the range is also $(-\infty, \infty)$.

Example 1.10.7B: Finding the Domain and Range

Find the domain and range of $f(x) = \frac{2}{x+1}$.

Solution

We cannot evaluate the function at -1 because division by zero is undefined. The domain is $(-\infty, -1) \cup (-1, \infty)$. Because the function is never zero, we exclude 0 from the range. The range is $(-\infty, 0) \cup (0, \infty)$.

Example 1.10.7C: Finding the Domain and Range

Find the domain and range of $f(x) = 2\sqrt{x+4}$.

Solution

We cannot take the square root of a negative number, so the value inside the radical must be nonnegative.

$x + 4 \geq 0$ when $x \geq -4$

The domain of $f(x)$ is $[-4, \infty)$.

We then find the range. We know that $f(-4) = 0$, and the function value increases as x increases without any upper limit. We conclude that the range of f is $[0, \infty)$.

Analysis

Figure 1.10.19represents the function f.

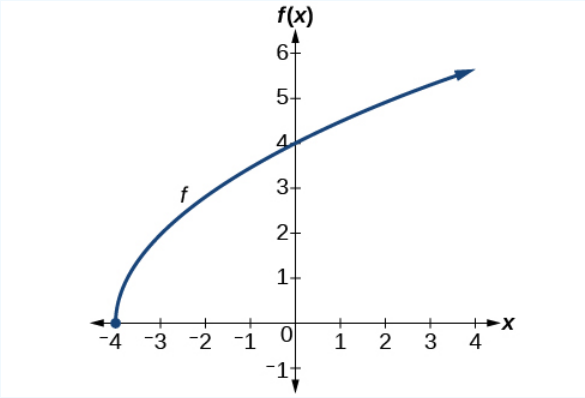


Figure 1.10.19: Graph of a square root function at $(-4, 0)$.

Exercise 1.10.7

Find the domain and range of

$f(x) = \sqrt{-2-x}$.

Answer

domain: $(-\infty, -2]$

range: $[0, \infty)$

Graphing Piecewise-Defined Functions

Sometimes, we come across a function that requires more than one formula in order to obtain the given output. For example, in the toolkit functions, we introduced the absolute value function $f(x) = |x|$. With a domain of all real numbers and a range of values greater than or equal to 0, **absolute value** can be defined as the **magnitude**, or **modulus**, of a real number value regardless of sign. It is the distance from 0 on the number line. All of these definitions require the output to be greater than or equal to 0.

If we input 0, or a positive value, the output is the same as the input.

$$f(x) = x \text{ if } x \geq 0$$

If we input a negative value, the output is the opposite of the input.

$$f(x) = -x \text{ if } x < 0$$

Because this requires two different processes or pieces, the absolute value function is an example of a **piecewise function**. A piecewise function is a function in which more than one formula is used to define the output over different pieces of the domain.

We use piecewise functions to describe situations in which a rule or relationship changes as the input value crosses certain "boundaries." For example, we often encounter situations in business for which the cost per piece of a certain item is discounted once the number ordered exceeds a certain value. Tax brackets are another real-world example of piecewise functions. For example, consider a simple tax system in which incomes up to $10,000 are taxed at 10%, and any additional income is taxed at 20%. The tax on a total income S would be $0.1S$ if $S \leq \$10,000$ and $\$1000 + 0.2(S - \$10,000)$ if $S > \$10,000$.

Piecewise Function

A piecewise function is a function in which more than one formula is used to define the output. Each formula has its own domain, and the domain of the function is the union of all these smaller domains. We notate this idea like this:

$$f(x) = \begin{cases} \text{formula 1} & \text{if x is in domain 1} \\ \text{formula 2} & \text{if x is in domain 2} \\ \text{formula 3} & \text{if x is in domain 3} \end{cases}$$

In piecewise notation, the absolute value function is

$$|x| = \begin{cases} x & \text{if } x \geq 0 \\ -x & \text{if } x < 0 \end{cases}$$

How To: Given a piecewise function, write the formula and identify the domain for each interval.

1. Identify the intervals for which different rules apply.
2. Determine formulas that describe how to calculate an output from an input in each interval.
3. Use braces and if-statements to write the function.

Example 1.10.8A: Writing a Piecewise Function

A museum charges $5 per person for a guided tour with a group of 1 to 9 people or a fixed $50 fee for a group of 10 or more people. Write a **function** relating the number of people, n, to the cost, C.

Solution

Two different formulas will be needed. For n-values under 10, $C = 5n$. For values of n that are 10 or greater, $C = 50$.

$$C(n) = \begin{cases} 5n & \text{if } n < 10 \\ 50 & \text{if } n \geq 10 \end{cases}$$

Analysis

The function is represented in Figure 1.10.20 The graph is a diagonal line from $n = 0$ to $n = 10$ and a constant after that. In this example, the two formulas agree at the meeting point where $n = 10$, but not all piecewise functions have this property.

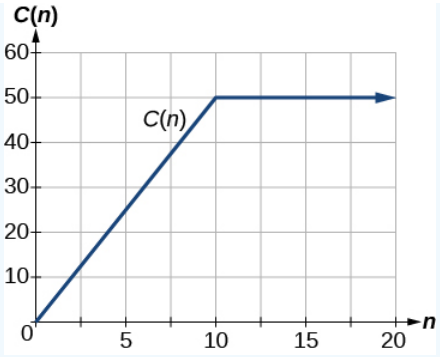


Figure 1.10.20

Example 1.10.8B: Working with a Piecewise Function

A cell phone company uses the function below to determine the cost, C, in dollars for g gigabytes of data transfer.

$$C(g) = \begin{cases} 25 & \text{if } 0 < g < 2 \\ 25 + 10(g-2) & \text{if } g \geq 2 \end{cases}$$

Find the cost of using 1.5 gigabytes of data and the cost of using 4 gigabytes of data.

Soltuion

To find the cost of using 1.5 gigabytes of data, $C(1.5)$, we first look to see which part of the domain our input falls in. Because 1.5 is less than 2, we use the first formula.

$$C(1.5) = \$25$$

To find the cost of using 4 gigabytes of data, C(4), we see that our input of 4 is greater than 2, so we use the second formula.

$$C(4) = 25 + 10(4-2) = \$45$$

Analysis

The function is represented in Figure 1.10.21. We can see where the function changes from a constant to a shifted and stretched identity at $g = 2$. We plot the graphs for the different formulas on a common set of axes, making sure each formula is applied on its proper domain.

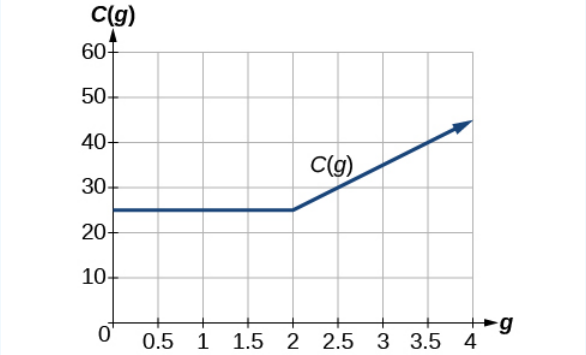


Figure 1.10.21

How To: Given a piecewise function, sketch a graph.

1. Indicate on the x-axis the boundaries defined by the intervals on each piece of the domain.
2. For each piece of the domain, graph on that interval using the corresponding equation pertaining to that piece. Do not graph two functions over one interval because it would violate the criteria of a function.

Example 1.10.8C: Graphing a Piecewise Function

Sketch a graph of the function.

$$f(x) = \begin{cases} x^2 & \text{if } x \leq 1 \\ 3 & \text{if } 1 < x \leq 2 \\ x & \text{if } x > 2 \end{cases}$$

Solution

Each of the component functions is from our library of toolkit functions, so we know their shapes. We can imagine graphing each function and then limiting the graph to the indicated domain. At the endpoints of the domain, we draw open circles to indicate where the endpoint is not included because of a less-than or greater-than inequality; we draw a closed circle where the endpoint is included because of a less-than-or-equal-to or greater-than-or-equal-to inequality.

Figure 1.10.20shows the three components of the piecewise function graphed on separate coordinate systems.

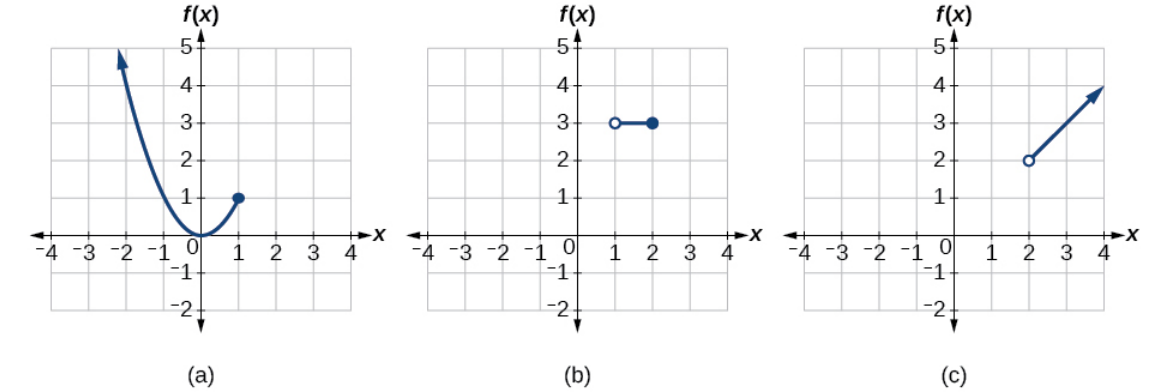


***Figure* 1.10.20:** *Graph of each part of the piece-wise function f(x)*

(a) $f(x) = x^2$ if $x \leq 1$; (b) $f(x) = 3$ if $1 < x \leq 2$; (c) $f(x) = x$ if $x > 2$

Now that we have sketched each piece individually, we combine them in the same coordinate plane. See Figure 1.10.21

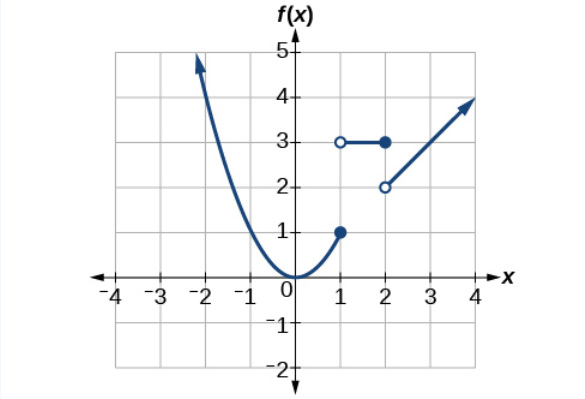


Figure 1.10.21: Graph of the entire function.

Analysis

Note that the graph does pass the vertical line test even at $x = 1$ and $x = 2$ because the points $(1, 3)$ and $(2, 2)$ are not part of the graph of the function, though $(1, 1)$ and $(2, 3)$ are.

Exercise 1.10.8

Graph the following piecewise function.

https://math.libretexts.org/@go/page/143847

$$f(x) = \begin{cases} x^3 & \text{if } x < -1 \\ -2 & \text{if } -1 < x < 4 \\ \sqrt{x} & \text{if } x > 4 \end{cases}$$

Answer

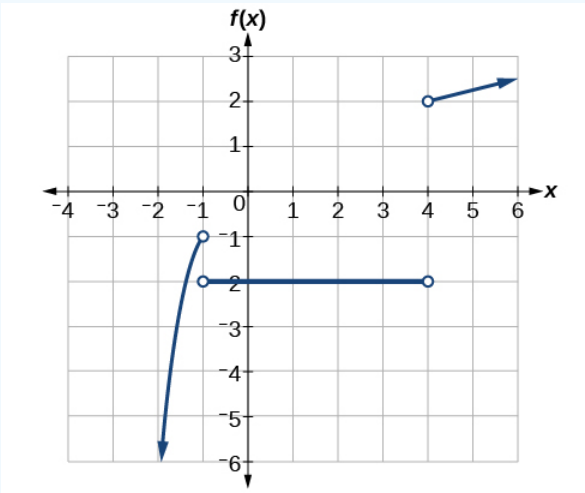


Figure 1.10.22

Can more than one formula from a piecewise function be applied to a value in the domain?

No. Each value corresponds to one equation in a piecewise formula.

Key Concepts

- The domain of a function includes all real input values that would not cause us to attempt an undefined mathematical operation, such as dividing by zero or taking the square root of a negative number.
- The domain of a function can be determined by listing the input values of a set of ordered pairs.
- The domain of a function can also be determined by identifying the input values of a function written as an equation.
- Interval values represented on a number line can be described using inequality notation, set-builder notation, and interval notation.
- For many functions, the domain and range can be determined from a graph.
- An understanding of toolkit functions can be used to find the domain and range of related functions.
- A piecewise function is described by more than one formula.
- A piecewise function can be graphed using each algebraic formula on its assigned subdomain.

Footnotes

1 The Numbers: Where Data and the Movie Business Meet. “Box Office History for Horror Movies.” http://www.the-numbers.com/market/genre/Horror. Accessed 3/24/2014

2 www.eia.gov/dnav/pet/hist/Lea...s=MCRFPAK2&f=A.

Glossary

interval notation

a method of describing a set that includes all numbers between a lower limit and an upper limit; the lower and upper values are listed between brackets or parentheses, a square bracket indicating inclusion in the set, and a parenthesis indicating exclusion

piecewise function

a function in which more than one formula is used to define the output

set-builder notation

a method of describing a set by a rule that all of its members obey; it takes the form {x| statement about x}

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

2: Equations

Recall that a function is a relation that assigns to every element in the domain exactly one element in the range. Linear functions are a specific type of function that can be used to model many real-world applications, such as plant growth over time. In this chapter, we will explore linear functions, their graphs, and how to relate them to data.

2.1: Quadratic Equations
2.2: Rational Exponents
2.3: Radical Equations
2.4: Absolute Value Equations
2.5: Other Types of Equations

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2.1: Quadratic Equations

Learning Objectives

- Solve quadratic equations by factoring.
- Solve quadratic equations by the square root property.
- Solve quadratic equations by completing the square.
- Solve quadratic equations by using the quadratic formula.

The computer monitor on the left in Figure 2.1.1 is a 23.6-inch model and the one on the right is a 27-inch model. Proportionally, the monitors appear very similar. If there is a limited amount of space and we desire the largest monitor possible, how do we decide which one to choose? In this section, we will learn how to solve problems such as this using four different methods.

Figure 2.1.1

Solving Quadratic Equations by Factoring

An equation containing a second-degree polynomial is called a **quadratic equation**. For example, equations such as $2x^2+3x-1=0$ and $x^2-4=0$ are quadratic equations. They are used in countless ways in the fields of engineering, architecture, finance, biological science, and, of course, mathematics.

Often the easiest method of solving a quadratic equation is **factoring**. Factoring means finding expressions that can be multiplied together to give the expression on one side of the equation.

If a quadratic equation can be factored, it is written as a product of linear terms. Solving by factoring depends on the zero-product property, which states that if $a\cdot b=0$, then $a=0$ or $b=0$, where a and b are real numbers or algebraic expressions. In other words, if the product of two numbers or two expressions equals zero, then one of the numbers or one of the expressions must equal zero because zero multiplied by anything equals zero.

Multiplying the factors expands the equation to a string of terms separated by plus or minus signs. So, in that sense, the operation of multiplication undoes the operation of factoring. For example, expand the factored expression $(x-2)(x+3)$ by multiplying the two factors together.

$$\begin{aligned}(x-2)(x+3) &= x^2+3x-2x-6\\ &= x^2+x-6\end{aligned}$$

The product is a quadratic expression. Set equal to zero, $x^2+x-6=0$ is a quadratic equation. If we were to factor the equation, we would get back the factors we multiplied.

The process of factoring a quadratic equation depends on the leading coefficient, whether it is 1 or another integer. We will look at both situations; but first, we want to confirm that the equation is written in standard form, $ax^2+bx+c=0$, where a, b, and c are real numbers, and $a\neq 0$. The equation $x^2+x-6=0$ is in standard form.

We can use the zero-product property to solve quadratic equations in which we first have to factor out the greatest common factor(GCF), and for equations that have special factoring formulas as well, such as the difference of squares, both of which we will see later in this section.

ZERO-PRODUCT PROPERTY AND QUADRATIC EQUATIONS

The **zero-product property** states

$$\text{If } a\cdot b=0\text{, then } a=0 \text{ or } b=0,$$

where a and b are real numbers or algebraic expressions.

A quadratic equation is an equation containing a second-degree polynomial; for example

$$ax^2+bx+c=0 \tag{2.1.1}$$

where a, b, and c are real numbers, and if $a \neq 0$, it is in standard form.

Solving Quadratics with a Leading Coefficient of 1

In the quadratic equation $x^2 + x - 6 = 0$, the leading coefficient, or the coefficient of x^2, is 1. We have one method of factoring quadratic equations in this form.

How to: Factor a quadratic equation with the leading coefficient of 1

1. Find two numbers whose product equals c and whose sum equals b.
2. Use those numbers to write two factors of the form $(x + k)$ or $(x - k)$, where k is one of the numbers found in step 1. Use the numbers exactly as they are. In other words, if the two numbers are 1 and -2, the factors are $(x + 1)(x - 2)$.
3. Solve using the zero-product property by setting each factor equal to zero and solving for the variable.

Example 2.1.1: Solving a Quadratic with Leading Coefficient of 1

Factor and solve the equation: $x^2 + x - 6 = 0$.

Solution

To factor $x^2 + x - 6 = 0$, we look for two numbers whose product equals -6 and whose sum equals 1. Begin by looking at the possible factors of -6.

$$1 \cdot (-6)$$

$$(-6) \cdot 1$$

$$2 \cdot (-3)$$

$$3 \cdot (-2)$$

The last pair, $3 \cdot (-2)$ sums to 1, so these are the numbers. Note that only one pair of numbers will work. Then, write the factors.

$$(x - 2)(x + 3) = 0$$

To solve this equation, we use the zero-product property. Set each factor equal to zero and solve.

$$\begin{aligned} (x - 2)(x + 3) &= 0 \\ (x - 2) &= 0 \\ x &= 2 \\ (x + 3) &= 0 \\ x &= -3 \end{aligned}$$

The two solutions are 2 and -3. We can see how the solutions relate to the graph in Figure 2.1.2. The solutions are the x-intercepts of $x^2 + x - 6 = 0$.

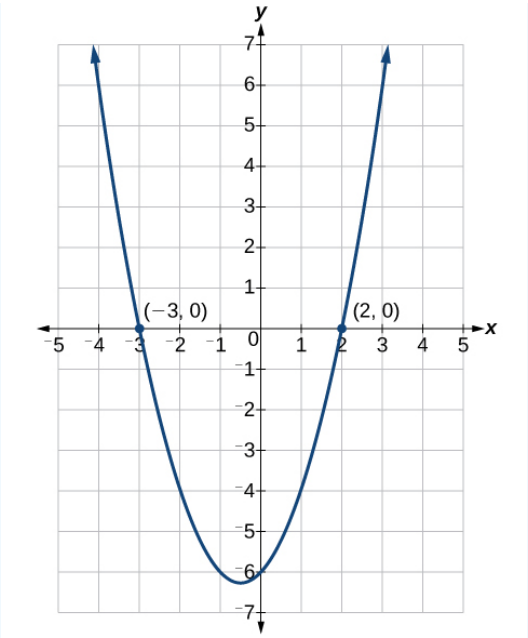

Figure 2.1.2

Exercise 2.1.1

Factor and solve the quadratic equation: $x^2 - 5x - 6 = 0$.

Answer

$(x-6)(x+1) = 0$, $x = 6, x = -1$

Example 2.1.2: Solve the Quadratic Equation by Factoring

Solve the quadratic equation by factoring: $x^2 + 8x + 15 = 0$.

Solution

Find two numbers whose product equals 15 and whose sum equals 8. List the factors of 15.

$$1 \cdot 15$$

$$3 \cdot 5$$

$$(-1) \cdot (-15)$$

$$(-3) \cdot (-5)$$

The numbers that add to 8 are 3 and 5. Then, write the factors, set each factor equal to zero, and solve.

$$\begin{aligned} (x+3)(x+5) &= 0 \\ (x+3) &= 0 \\ x &= -3 \\ (x+5) &= 0 \\ x &= -5 \end{aligned}$$

The solutions are -3 and -5.

Exercise 2.1.2

Solve the quadratic equation by factoring: $x^2 - 4x - 21 = 0$.

Answer

$(x-7)(x+3) = 0$, $x = 7, x = -3$

Example 2.1.3: Using Zero-Product Property to Solve a Quadratic Equation

Solve the difference of squares equation using the zero-product property: $x^2 - 9 = 0$.

Solution

Recognizing that the equation represents the difference of squares, we can write the two factors by taking the square root of each term, using a minus sign as the operator in one factor and a plus sign as the operator in the other. Solve using the zero-factor property.

$$\begin{aligned} x^2 - 9 &= 0 \\ (x-3)(x+3) &= 0 \\ x - 3 &= 0 \\ x &= 3 \\ (x+3) &= 0 \\ x &= -3 \end{aligned}$$

The solutions are 3 and -3.

Exercise 2.1.3

Solve by factoring: $x^2 - 25 = 0$.

Answer

$(x+5)(x-5) = 0, x = -5, x = 5$

Factoring and Solving a Quadratic Equation of Higher Order

When the leading coefficient is not 1, we factor a quadratic equation using the method called *grouping*, which requires four terms.

Grouping: Steps for factoring quadratic equations

With the equation in standard form, let's review the grouping procedures

1. With the quadratic in standard form, $ax^2 + bx + c = 0$, multiply $a \cdot c$.
2. Find two numbers whose product equals ac and whose sum equals b.
3. Rewrite the equation replacing the bx term with two terms using the numbers found in step 1 as coefficients of x.
4. Factor the first two terms and then factor the last two terms. The expressions in parentheses must be exactly the same to use grouping.
5. Factor out the expression in parentheses.
6. Set the expressions equal to zero and solve for the variable.

Example 2.1.4: Solving a Quadratic Equation Using Grouping

Use grouping to factor and solve the quadratic equation: $4x^2 + 15x + 9 = 0$.

Solution

First, multiply ac : $4(9) = 36$. Then list the factors of 36.

$$1 \cdot 36$$

$$2 \cdot 18$$

$$3 \cdot 12$$

$$4 \cdot 9$$

$$6 \cdot 6$$

The only pair of factors that sums to 15 is $3 + 12$. Rewrite the equation replacing the b term, $15x$, with two terms using 3 and 12 as coefficients of x. Factor the first two terms, and then factor the last two terms.

$$
\begin{aligned}
4x^2+3x+12x+9 &= 0 \\
x(4x+3)+3(4x+3) &= 0 \\
(4x+3)(x+3) &= 0 \qquad \text{Solve using the zero-product property} \\
(4x+3) &= 3 \\
x &= -\frac{3}{4} \\
(x+3) &= 0 \\
x &= -3
\end{aligned}
$$

The solutions are $-\frac{3}{4}$, and -3. See Figure 2.1.3.

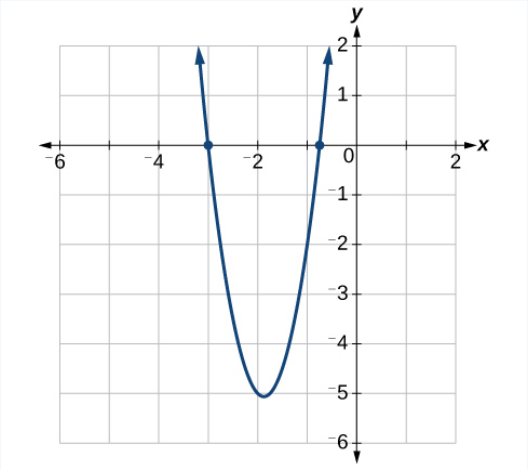

Figure 2.1.3

? Exercise 2.1.4

Solve using factoring by grouping: $12x^2+11x+2=0$.

Answer

$(3x+2)(4x+1)=0$, $x=-\frac{2}{3}$, $x=-\frac{1}{4}$

✓ Example 2.1.5: Solving a Higher Degree Quadratic Equation by Factoring

Solve the equation by factoring: $-3x^3-5x^2-2x=0$.

Solution

This equation does not look like a quadratic, as the highest power is 3, not 2. Recall that the first thing we want to do when solving any equation is to factor out the GCF, if one exists. And it does here. We can factor out $-x$ from all of the terms and then proceed with grouping.

$$
\begin{aligned}
-3x^3-5x^2-2x &= 0 \\
-x(3x^2+5x+2) &= 0 \\
-x(3x^2+3x+2x+2) &= 0 \qquad \text{Use grouping on the expression in parentheses} \\
-x[3x(x+1)+2(x+1)] &= 0 \\
-x(3x+2)(x+1) &= 0
\end{aligned}
$$

Now, we use the zero-product property. Notice that we have three factors.

$$
\begin{aligned}
-x &= 0 \\
x &= 0 \\
3x+2 &= 0 \\
x &= -\frac{2}{3} \\
x+1 &= 0 \\
x &= -1
\end{aligned}
$$

The solutions are 0, $-\frac{2}{3}$, and -1.

Exercise 2.1.5

Solve by factoring: $x^3+11x^2+10x=0$.

Answer

$x=0, x=-10, x=-1$

Using the Square Root Property

When there is no linear term in the equation, another method of solving a quadratic equation is by using the **square root property**, in which we isolate the x^2 term and take the square root of the number on the other side of the equals sign. Keep in mind that sometimes we may have to manipulate the equation to isolate the x^2 term so that the square root property can be used.

THE SQUARE ROOT PROPERTY

With the x^2 term isolated, the square root property states that:

$$\text{if } x^2=k \text{, then } x=\pm\sqrt{k}$$

where k is a nonzero real number.

Howto: Given a quadratic equation with an x^2 term but no x term, use the square root property to solve it

1. Isolate the x^2 term on one side of the equal sign.
2. Take the square root of both sides of the equation, putting a $\pm$ sign before the expression on the side opposite the squared term.
3. Simplify the numbers on the side with the $\pm$ sign.

Example 2.1.6: Solving a Simple Quadratic Equation Using the Square Root Property

Solve the quadratic using the square root property: $x^2=8$.

Solution

Take the square root of both sides, and then simplify the radical. Remember to use a $\pm$ sign before the radical symbol.

$$\begin{aligned} x^2 &= 8 \\ x &= \pm\sqrt{8} \\ &= \pm 2\sqrt{2} \end{aligned}$$

The solutions are $2\sqrt{2}, -2\sqrt{2}$

Example 2.1.7: Solving a Quadratic Equation Using the Square Root Property

Solve the quadratic equation: $4x^2+1=7$.

Solution

First, isolate the x^2 term. Then take the square root of both sides.

$$\begin{aligned} 4x^2+1 &= 7 \\ 4x^2 &= 6 \\ x^2 &= \frac{6}{4} \\ x &= \pm\frac{\sqrt{6}}{2} \end{aligned}$$

The solutions are $\frac{\sqrt{6}}{2}$, and $-\frac{\sqrt{6}}{2}$.

? Exercise 2.1.6

Solve the quadratic equation using the square root property: $3(x-4)^2=15$.

Answer

$x=4\pm\sqrt{5}$

Completing the Square

Not all quadratic equations can be factored or can be solved in their original form using the square root property. In these cases, we may use a method for solving a **quadratic equation** known as **completing the square**. Using this method, we add or subtract terms to both sides of the equation until we have a perfect square trinomial on one side of the equal sign. We then apply the square root property. To complete the square, the leading coefficient, a, must equal 1. If it does not, then divide the entire equation by a. Then, we can use the following procedures to solve a quadratic equation by completing the square.

We will use the example $x^2+4x+1=0$ to illustrate each step.

Given a quadratic equation that cannot be factored, and with $a=1$, first add or subtract the constant term to the right sign of the equal sign.

$$\begin{aligned} x^2+4x+1 &= 0 \\ x^2+4x &= -1 \qquad \text{Multiply the b term by } \frac{1}{2} \text{ and square it.} \\ \frac{1}{2}(4) &= 2 \\ 2^2 &= 4 \qquad \text{Add } \left(\frac{1}{2}\right)^2 \text{ to both sides of the equal sign and simplify the right side. We have} \\ x^2+4x+4 &= -1+4 \\ x^2+4x+4 &= 3 \qquad \text{The left side of the equation can now be factored as a perfect square.} \\ (x+2)^2 &= 3 \\ \sqrt{(x+2)^2} &= \pm\sqrt{3} \qquad \text{Use the square root property and solve.} \\ \sqrt{(x+2)^2} &= \pm\sqrt{3} \\ x+2 &= \pm\sqrt{3} \\ x &= -2\pm\sqrt{3} \end{aligned}$$

The solutions are $-2+\sqrt{3}$, and $-2-\sqrt{3}$.

✓ Example 2.1.8: Solving a Quadratic by Completing the Square

Solve the quadratic equation by completing the square: $x^2-3x-5=0$.

Solution

First, move the constant term to the right side of the equal sign.

$$\begin{aligned} x^2-3x &= 5 \qquad \text{Then, take } \frac{1}{2} \text{ of the b term and square it.} \\ \frac{1}{2}(-3) &= -\frac{3}{2} \\ \left(-\frac{3}{2}\right)^2 &= \frac{9}{4} \\ x^2-3x+\left(-\frac{3}{2}\right)^2 &= 5+\left(-\frac{3}{2}\right)^2 \qquad \text{Add the result to both sides of the equal sign.} \\ x^2-3x+\frac{9}{4} &= 5+\frac{9}{4} \end{aligned}$$

Factor the left side as a perfect square and simplify the right side.

$$\begin{aligned} \left(x-\frac{3}{2}\right)^2 &= \frac{29}{4} \\ (x-\frac{3}{2}) &= \pm\frac{\sqrt{29}}{2} \qquad \text{Use the square root property and solve.} \\ x &= \frac{3}{2}\pm\frac{\sqrt{29}}{2} \end{aligned}$$

The solutions are $\frac{3}{2}+\frac{\sqrt{29}}{2}$, and $\frac{3}{2}-\frac{\sqrt{29}}{2}$

? Exercise 2.1.7

Solve by completing the square: $x^2-6x=13$.

Answer

$x=3\pm\sqrt{22}$

Using the Quadratic Formula

The fourth method of solving a **quadratic equation** is by using the **quadratic formula**, a formula that will solve all quadratic equations. Although the quadratic formula works on any quadratic equation in standard form, it is easy to make errors in substituting the values into the formula. Pay close attention when substituting, and use parentheses when inserting a negative number.

We can derive the quadratic formula by **completing the square**. We will assume that the leading coefficient is positive; if it is negative, we can multiply the equation by -1 and obtain a positive a. Given $ax^2+bx+c=0, a\neq 0$, we will complete the square as follows:

First, move the constant term to the right side of the equal sign:

$$ax^2+bx=-c$$

As we want the leading coefficient to equal 1, divide through by a:

$$x^2+\frac{b}{a}x=-\frac{c}{a}$$

Then, find $\frac{1}{2}$ of the middle term, and add $(\frac{1}{2}\frac{b}{a})^2=\frac{b^2}{4a^2}$ to both sides of the equal sign:

$$x^2+\frac{b}{a}x+\frac{b^2}{4a^2}=\frac{b^2}{4a^2}-\frac{c}{a}$$

Next, write the left side as a perfect square. Find the common denominator of the right side and write it as a single fraction:

$$(x+\frac{b}{2a})^2=\frac{b^2-4ac}{4a^2}$$

Now, use the square root property, which gives

$$x+\frac{b}{2a}=\pm\sqrt{\frac{b^2-4ac}{4a^2}}$$

$$x+\frac{b}{2a}=\frac{\pm\sqrt{b^2-4ac}}{2a}$$

Finally, add $-\frac{b}{2a}$ to both sides of the equation and combine the terms on the right side. Thus,

$$x=\frac{-b\pm\sqrt{b^2-4ac}}{2a}$$

THE QUADRATIC FORMULA

Written in standard form, $ax^2+bx+c=0$, any quadratic equation can be solved using the **quadratic formula**:

$$x=\frac{-b\pm\sqrt{b^2-4ac}}{2a} \tag{2.1.2}$$

where a, b, and c are real numbers and $a\neq 0$.

How to

Given a quadratic equation, solve it using the quadratic formula

1. Make sure the equation is in standard form: $ax^2+bx+c=0$.
2. Make note of the values of the coefficients and constant term, a, b, and c.

3. Carefully substitute the values noted in step 2 into the equation. To avoid needless errors, use parentheses around each number input into the formula.
4. Calculate and solve.

Example 2.1.9: Solve the Quadratic Equation Using the Quadratic Formula

Solve the quadratic equation: $x^2+5x+1=0$.

Solution

Identify the coefficients: $a=1, b=5, c=1$. Then use the quadratic formula.

$$\begin{aligned} x &= \frac{-(5)\pm\sqrt{(5)^2-4(1)(1)}}{2(1)} \\ &= \frac{-5\pm\sqrt{25-4}}{2} \\ &= \frac{-5\pm\sqrt{21}}{2} \end{aligned}$$

Example 2.1.10: Solving a Quadratic Equation with the Quadratic Formula

Use the quadratic formula to solve $x^2+x+2=0$.

Solution

First, we identify the coefficients: $a=1$,$b=1$, and $c=2$.

Substitute these values into the quadratic formula.

$$\begin{aligned} x &= \frac{-b\pm\sqrt{b^2-4ac}}{2a} \\ &= \frac{-(1)\pm\sqrt{(1)^2-4(1)(2)}}{2(1)} \\ &= \frac{-1\pm\sqrt{1-8}}{2} \\ &= \frac{-1\pm\sqrt{-7}}{2} \\ &= \frac{-1\pm i\sqrt{7}}{2} \end{aligned}$$

Exercise 2.1.8

Solve the quadratic equation using the quadratic formula: $9x^2+3x-2=0$.

Answer

$x=-\frac{2}{3}, x=\frac{1}{3}$

The Discriminant

The **quadratic formula** not only generates the solutions to a quadratic equation, it tells us about the nature of the solutions when we consider the **discriminant**, or the expression under the radical, b^2-4ac . The discriminant tells us whether the solutions are real numbers or complex numbers, and how many solutions of each type to expect. Table 2.1.1 relates the value of the discriminant to the solutions of a quadratic equation.

Table 2.1.1

Value of Discriminant	Results
$b^2-4ac=0$	One rational solution (double solution)

Value of Discriminant	Results
$b^2-4ac>0$, perfect square	Two rational solutions
$b^2-4ac>0$, not a perfect square	Two irrational solutions
$b^2-4ac<0$	Two complex solutions

THE DISCRIMINANT

For $ax^2+bx+c=0$, where a, b, and c are real numbers, the **discriminant** is the expression under the radical in the quadratic formula: b^2-4ac. It tells us whether the solutions are real numbers or complex numbers and how many solutions of each type to expect.

Example 2.1.11: Using the Discriminant to Find the Nature of the Solutions to a Quadratic Equation

Use the discriminant to find the nature of the solutions to the following quadratic equations:

a. $x^2+4x+4=0$
b. $8x^2+14x+3=0$
c. $3x^2-5x-2=0$
d. $3x^2-10x+15=0$

Solution

Calculate the discriminant b^2-4ac for each equation and state the expected type of solutions.

a.

$x^2+4x+4=0$

$b^2-4ac=(4)^2-4(1)(4)=0$ There will be one rational double solution.

b.

$8x^2+14x+3=0$

$b^2-4ac=(14)^2-4(8)(3)=100$ As 100 is a perfect square, there will be two rational solutions.

c.

$3x^2-5x-2=0$

$b^2-4ac=(-5)^2-4(3)(-2)=49$ As 49 is a perfect square, there will be two rational solutions.

d.

$3x^2-10x+15=0$

$b^2-4ac=(-10)^2-4(3)(15)=-80$ There will be two complex solutions.

Using the Pythagorean Theorem

One of the most famous formulas in mathematics is the **Pythagorean Theorem**. It is based on a right triangle, and states the relationship among the lengths of the sides as $a^2+b^2=c^2$, where a and b refer to the legs of a right triangle adjacent to the 90° angle, and c refers to the hypotenuse. It has immeasurable uses in architecture, engineering, the sciences, geometry, trigonometry, and algebra, and in everyday applications.

We use the Pythagorean Theorem to solve for the length of one side of a triangle when we have the lengths of the other two. Because each of the terms is squared in the theorem, when we are solving for a side of a triangle, we have a quadratic equation. We can use the methods for solving quadratic equations that we learned in this section to solve for the missing side.

The Pythagorean Theorem is given as

$$a^2+b^2=c^2 \tag{2.1.3}$$

where a and b refer to the legs of a right triangle adjacent to the 90° angle, and c refers to the hypotenuse, as shown in .

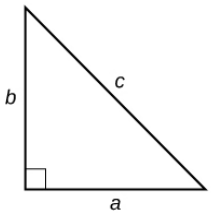

Figure 2.1.4

Example 2.1.12: Finding the Length of the Missing Side of a Right Triangle

Find the length of the missing side of the right triangle in Figure 2.1.5.

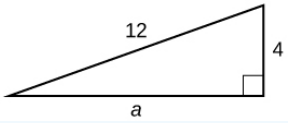

Figure 2.1.5

Solution

As we have measurements for side b and the hypotenuse, the missing side is a.

$$\begin{aligned} a^2+b^2 &= c^2 \\ a^2+(4)^2 &= (12)^2 \\ a^2+16 &= 144 \\ a^2 &= 128 \\ a &= \sqrt{128} \\ &= 8\sqrt{2} \end{aligned}$$

Exercise 2.1.9

Use the Pythagorean Theorem to solve the right triangle problem: Leg a measures 4 units, leg b measures 3 units. Find the length of the hypotenuse.

Answer

5 units

Media

Access these online resources for additional instruction and practice with quadratic equations.

1. Solving Quadratic Equations by Factoring
2. The Zero-Product Property
3. Completing the Square
4. Quadratic Formula with Two Rational Solutions
5. Length of a leg of a right triangle

Key Equations

quadratic formula	$x=\dfrac{-b\pm\sqrt{b^2-4ac}}{2a}$

Key Concepts

- Many quadratic equations can be solved by factoring when the equation has a leading coefficient of 1 or if the equation is a difference of squares. The zero-factor property is then used to find solutions. See Example, Example, and Example.
- Many quadratic equations with a leading coefficient other than 1 can be solved by factoring using the grouping method. See Example and Example.
- Another method for solving quadratics is the square root property. The variable is squared. We isolate the squared term and take the square root of both sides of the equation. The solution will yield a positive and negative solution. See Example and Example.
- Completing the square is a method of solving quadratic equations when the equation cannot be factored. See Example.

- A highly dependable method for solving quadratic equations is the quadratic formula, based on the coefficients and the constant term in the equation. See Example.
- The discriminant is used to indicate the nature of the roots that the quadratic equation will yield: real or complex, rational or irrational, and how many of each. See Example.
- The Pythagorean Theorem, among the most famous theorems in history, is used to solve right-triangle problems and has applications in numerous fields. Solving for the length of one side of a right triangle requires solving a quadratic equation. See Example.

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2.2: Rational Exponents

Using Rational Exponents

Radical expressions can also be written without using the radical symbol. We can use rational (fractional) exponents. The index must be a positive integer. If the index n

is even, then a cannot be negative.

$$a^{\frac{1}{n}} = \sqrt[n]{a}$$

We can also have rational exponents with numerators other than 1. In these cases, the exponent must be a fraction in lowest terms. We raise the base to a power and take an nth root. The numerator tells us the power and the denominator tells us the root.

All of the properties of exponents that we learned for integer exponents also hold for rational exponents.

Note: Rational Exponents

Rational exponents are another way to express principal n^{th} roots. The general form for converting between a radical expression with a radical symbol and one with a rational exponent is

$$a^{\frac{m}{n}} = (\sqrt[n]{a})^m = \sqrt[n]{a^m}$$

How to: Given an expression with a rational exponent, write the expression as a radical

1. Determine the power by looking at the numerator of the exponent.
2. Determine the root by looking at the denominator of the exponent.
3. Using the base as the radicand, raise the radicand to the power and use the root as the index.

Example 1.4.13: Writing Rational Exponents as Radicals

Write $343^{\frac{2}{3}}$ as a radical. Simplify.

Solution

The 2 tells us the power and the 3 tells us the root.

$343^{\frac{2}{3}} = (\sqrt[3]{343})^2 = \sqrt[3]{343^2}$

We know that $\sqrt[3]{343} = 7$ because $7^3 = 343$. Because the cube root is easy to find, it is easiest to find the cube root before squaring for this problem. In general, it is easier to find the root first and then raise it to a power.

$$343^{\frac{2}{3}} = (\sqrt[3]{343})^2 = 7^2 = 49$$

Example 1.4.14: Writing Rational Exponents as Radicals

Write $\frac{4}{\sqrt[7]{a^2}}$ using a rational exponent.

Solution

The power is 2 and the root is 7, so the rational exponent will be $\frac{2}{7}$. We get $\frac{4}{a^{\frac{2}{7}}}$. Using properties of exponents, we get $\frac{4}{\sqrt[7]{2}} = 4a^{\frac{-2}{7}}$

Example 1.4.15 : Simplifying Rational Exponents

Simplify:

a. $5(2x^{\frac{3}{4}})(3x^{\frac{1}{5}})$

b. $(\frac{16}{9})^{\frac{-1}{2}}$

Solution

a.

$30x^{\frac{3}{4}}x^{\frac{1}{5}}$ Multiply the coefficients

$30x^{\frac{3}{4}+\frac{1}{5}}$ Use properties of exponents

$30x^{\frac{19}{20}}$ Simplify

b.

$(\frac{9}{16})^{\frac{1}{2}}$ Use definition of negative exponents

$\sqrt{\frac{9}{16}}$ Rewrite as a radical

$\frac{\sqrt{9}}{\sqrt{16}}$ Use the quotient rule

$\frac{3}{4}$ Simplify

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2.3: Radical Equations

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2.5: Other Types of Equations

Learning Objectives

- Solve equations involving rational exponents.
- Solve equations using factoring.
- Solve radical equations.
- Solve absolute value equations.
- Solve other types of equations.

We have solved linear equations, rational equations, and quadratic equations using several methods. However, there are many other types of equations, and we will investigate a few more types in this section. We will look at equations involving rational exponents, polynomial equations, radical equations, absolute value equations, equations in quadratic form, and some rational equations that can be transformed into quadratics. Solving any equation, however, employs the same basic algebraic rules. We will learn some new techniques as they apply to certain equations, but the algebra never changes.

Solving Equations Involving Rational Exponents

Rational exponents are exponents that are fractions, where the numerator is a power and the denominator is a root. For example, $16^{\frac{1}{2}}$ is another way of writing $\sqrt{16}$; $8^{\frac{1}{3}}$ is another way of writing $\sqrt[3]{8}$. The ability to work with rational exponents is a useful skill, as it is highly applicable in calculus.

We can solve equations in which a variable is raised to a rational exponent by raising both sides of the equation to the reciprocal of the exponent. The reason we raise the equation to the reciprocal of the exponent is because we want to eliminate the exponent on the variable term, and a number multiplied by its reciprocal equals 1. For example,

$$\frac{2}{3}\left(\frac{3}{2}\right)=1$$

$$3\left(\frac{1}{3}\right)=1,$$

and so on.

RATIONAL EXPONENTS

A *rational exponent* indicates a power in the numerator and a root in the denominator. There are multiple ways of writing an expression, a variable, or a number with a rational exponent:

$$a^{\frac{m}{n}}=\left(a^{\frac{1}{n}}\right)^{m}=a^{m\frac{1}{n}}=\sqrt[n]{a^{m}}=(\sqrt[n]{a})^{m} \tag{2.5.1}$$

Example 2.5.1: Evaluating a Number Raised to a Rational Exponent

Evaluate $8^{\frac{2}{3}}$

Solution

Whether we take the root first or the power first depends on the number. It is easy to find the cube root of 8, so rewrite $8^{\frac{2}{3}}$ as $\left(8^{\frac{1}{3}}\right)^{2}$.

$$\begin{aligned}\left(8^{\frac{1}{3}}\right)^{2}&=(2)^{2}\\&=4\end{aligned}$$

Exercise 2.5.1

Evaluate $64^{-\frac{1}{3}}$

Answer

$\frac{1}{4}$

Example 2.5.2: Solve the Equation Including a Variable Raised to a Rational Exponent

Solve the equation in which a variable is raised to a rational exponent: $x^{\frac{5}{4}} = 32$.

Solution

The way to remove the exponent on x is by raising both sides of the equation to a power that is the reciprocal of $\frac{5}{4}$, which is $\frac{4}{5}$.

$$\begin{aligned} x^{\frac{5}{4}} &= 32 \\ \left(x^{\frac{5}{4}}\right)^{\frac{4}{5}} &= (32)^{\frac{4}{5}} \\ x &= (2)^4 \\ &= 16 \end{aligned}$$

Exercise 2.5.2

Solve the equation $x^{\frac{3}{2}} = 125$.

Answer

25

Example 2.5.3: Solving an Equation Involving Rational Exponents and Factoring

Solve $3x^{\frac{3}{4}} = x^{\frac{1}{2}}$.

Solution

This equation involves rational exponents as well as factoring rational exponents. Let us take this one step at a time. First, put the variable terms on one side of the equal sign and set the equation equal to zero.

$$\begin{aligned} 3x^{\frac{3}{4}} - \left(x^{\frac{1}{2}}\right) &= x^{\frac{1}{2}} - \left(x^{\frac{1}{2}}\right) \\ 3x^{\frac{3}{4}} - x^{\frac{1}{2}} &= 0 \end{aligned}$$

Now, it looks like we should factor the left side, but what do we factor out? We can always factor the term with the lowest exponent. Rewrite $x^{\frac{1}{2}}$ as $x^{\frac{2}{4}}$. Then, factor out $x^{\frac{2}{4}}$ from both terms on the left.

$$\begin{aligned} 3x^{\frac{3}{4}} - x^{\frac{1}{2}} &= 0 \\ x^{\frac{2}{4}}\left(3x^{\frac{1}{4}} - 1\right) &= 0 \end{aligned}$$

Where did $x^{\frac{1}{4}}$ come from? Remember, when we multiply two numbers with the same base, we add the exponents. Therefore, if we multiply $x^{\frac{2}{4}}$ back in using the distributive property, we get the expression we had before the factoring, which is what should happen. We need an exponent such that when added to $\frac{2}{4}$ equals $\frac{3}{4}$. Thus, the exponent on x in the parentheses is $\frac{1}{4}$.

Let us continue. Now we have two factors and can use the zero factor theorem.

$$\begin{aligned} x^{\frac{2}{4}}\left(3x^{\frac{1}{4}}-1\right) &= 0 \\ x^{\frac{2}{4}} &= 0 \\ x &= 0 \\ 3x^{\frac{1}{4}}-1 &= 0 \\ 3x^{\frac{1}{4}} &= 1 \\ x^{\frac{1}{4}} &= \frac{1}{3}, \qquad \text{Divide both sides by } 3. \\ \left(x^{\frac{1}{4}}\right)^4 &= \left(\frac{1}{3}\right)^4, \qquad \text{Raise both sides to the reciprocal of } \frac{1}{4} \\ x &= \frac{1}{81} \end{aligned}$$

The two solutions are 0 and $\frac{1}{81}$.

Exercise 2.5.3

Solve: $(x+5)^{\frac{3}{2}}=8$.

Answer

-1

Solving Equations Using Factoring

We have used factoring to solve quadratic equations, but it is a technique that we can use with many types of polynomial equations, which are equations that contain a string of terms including numerical coefficients and variables. When we are faced with an equation containing polynomials of degree higher than 2, we can often solve them by factoring.

POLYNOMIAL EQUATIONS

A polynomial of degree n is an expression of the type

$$a_n x^n + a_{n-1}x^{n-1} + \cdots + a_2 x^2 + a_1 x + a_0 \tag{2.5.2}$$

where n is a positive integer and $a_n, \ldots, a_0$ are real numbers and $a_n \neq 0$.

Setting the polynomial equal to zero gives a **polynomial equation**. The total number of solutions (real and complex) to a polynomial equation is equal to the highest exponent n.

Example 2.5.4: Solving a Polynomial by Factoring

Solve the polynomial by factoring: $5x^4 = 80x^2$.

Solution

First, set the equation equal to zero. Then factor out what is common to both terms, the GCF.

$$\begin{aligned} 5x^4 - 80x^2 &= 0 \\ 5x^2(x^2 - 16) &= 0 \end{aligned}$$

Notice that we have the difference of squares in the factor $x^2 - 16$, which we will continue to factor and obtain two solutions. The first term, $5x^2$, generates, technically, two solutions as the exponent is 2, but they are the same solution.

$$\begin{aligned} 5x^2 &= 0 \\ x &= 0 \\ x^2 - 16 &= 0 \\ (x+4)(x-4) &= 0 \\ x &= 4 \\ x &= -4 \end{aligned}$$

The solutions are 0 (double solution), 4, and -4.

Analysis

We can see the solutions on the graph in Figure 2.5.1. The x-coordinates of the points where the graph crosses the x-axis are the solutions—the x-intercepts. Notice on the graph that at the solution 0, the graph touches the x-axis and bounces back. It does not cross the x-axis. This is typical of double solutions.

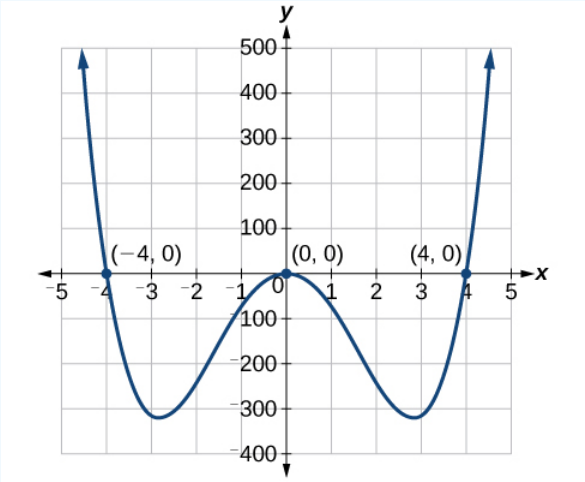

Figure 2.5.1

? Exercise 2.5.4

Solve by factoring: $12x^4 = 3x^2$.

Answer

$x = 0, x = 12, x = -12$

✔ Example 2.5.5: Solve a Polynomial by Grouping

Solve a polynomial by grouping: $x^3 + x^2 - 9x - 9 = 0$.

Solution

This polynomial consists of 4 terms, which we can solve by grouping. Grouping procedures require factoring the first two terms and then factoring the last two terms. If the factors in the parentheses are identical, we can continue the process and solve, unless more factoring is suggested.

$$\begin{aligned} x^3+x^2-9x-9 &= 0 \\ x^2(x+1)-9(x+1) &= 0 \\ (x^2-9)(x+1) &= 0 \end{aligned}$$

The grouping process ends here, as we can factor x^2-9 using the difference of squares formula.

$$\begin{aligned} (x^2-9)(x+1) &= 0 \\ (x-3)(x+3)(x+1) &= 0 \\ x &= 3 \\ x &= -3 \\ x &= -1 \end{aligned}$$

The solutions are 3, -3, and -1. Note that the highest exponent is 3 and we obtained 3 solutions. We can see the solutions, the x-intercepts, on the graph in Figure $2.5.2$.

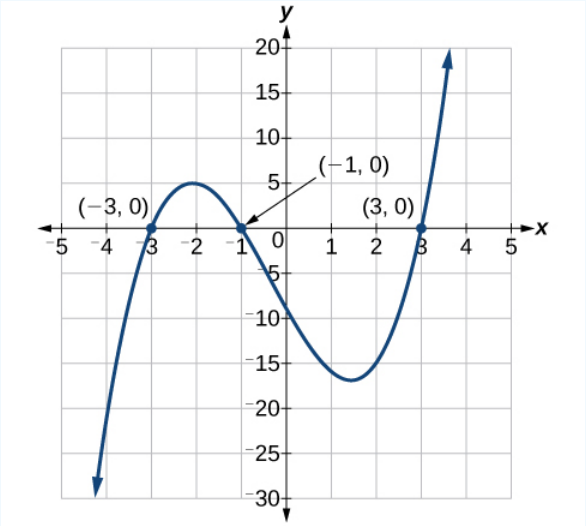

Figure 2.5.2

Analysis

We looked at solving quadratic equations by factoring when the leading coefficient is 1. When the leading coefficient is not 1, we solved by grouping. Grouping requires four terms, which we obtained by splitting the linear term of quadratic equations. We can also use grouping for some polynomials of degree higher than 2, as we saw here, since there were already four terms.

Solving Radical Equations

Radical equations are equations that contain variables in the **radicand** (the expression under a radical symbol), such as

$$\sqrt{3x+18} = x$$

$$\sqrt{x+3} = x-3$$

$$\sqrt{x+5} - \sqrt{x-3} = 2$$

Radical equations may have one or more radical terms, and are solved by eliminating each radical, one at a time. We have to be careful when solving radical equations, as it is not unusual to find **extraneous solutions**, roots that are not, in fact, solutions to the equation. These solutions are not due to a mistake in the solving method, but result from the process of raising both sides of an equation to a power. However, checking each answer in the original equation will confirm the true solutions.

RADICAL EQUATIONS

An equation containing terms with a variable in the radicand is called a **radical equation.**

Howto: Given a radical equation, solve it

1. Isolate the radical expression on one side of the equal sign. Put all remaining terms on the other side.
2. If the radical is a square root, then square both sides of the equation. If it is a cube root, then raise both sides of the equation to the third power. In other words, for an nth root radical, raise both sides to the nth power. Doing so eliminates the radical symbol.
3. Solve the remaining equation.
4. If a radical term still remains, repeat steps 1–2.
5. Confirm solutions by substituting them into the original equation.

Example 2.5.6: Solving an Equation with One Radical

Solve $\sqrt{15-2x}=x$.

Solution

The radical is already isolated on the left side of the equal side, so proceed to square both sides.

$$\begin{aligned}\sqrt{15-2x} &= x\\ (\sqrt{15-2x})^2 &= (x)^2\\ 15-2x &= x^2\end{aligned}$$

We see that the remaining equation is a quadratic. Set it equal to zero and solve.

$$\begin{aligned}0 &= x^2+2x-15\\ 0 &= (x+5)(x-3)\\ x &= -5\\ x &= 3\end{aligned}$$

The proposed solutions are -5 and 3. Let us check each solution back in the original equation. First, check $x=-5$.

$$\begin{aligned}\sqrt{15-2x} &= x\\ \sqrt{15-2(-5)} &= -5\\ \sqrt{25} &= -5\\ 5 &\neq -5\end{aligned}$$

This is an extraneous solution. While no mistake was made solving the equation, we found a solution that does not satisfy the original equation.

Check $x=3$.

$$\begin{aligned}\sqrt{15-2x} &= x\\ \sqrt{15-2(3)} &= 3\\ \sqrt{9} &= 3\\ 3 &= 3\end{aligned}$$

The solution is 3.

Exercise 2.5.5

Solve the radical equation: $\sqrt{x+3}=3x-1$

Answer

$x=1$, extraneous solution $x=-\dfrac{2}{9}$

Example 2.5.7: Solving a Radical Equation Containing Two Radicals

Solve $\sqrt{2x+3}+\sqrt{x-2}=4$

Solution

As this equation contains two radicals, we isolate one radical, eliminate it, and then isolate the second radical.

$$\sqrt{2x+3}+\sqrt{x-2}=4$$

$$\begin{aligned}\sqrt{2x+3} &= 4-\sqrt{x-2} && \text{Subtract } \sqrt{x-2} \text{ from both sides}\\ (\sqrt{2x+3})^2 &= (4-\sqrt{x-2})^2 && \text{Square both sides}\end{aligned}$$

Use the perfect square formula to expand the right side: $(a-b)^2=a^2-2ab+b^2$.

$$\begin{aligned}2x+3 &= (4)^2-2(4)\sqrt{x-2}+(\sqrt{x-2})^2\\ 2x+3 &= 16-8\sqrt{x-2}+(x-2)\\ 2x+3 &= 14+x-8\sqrt{x-2} && \text{Combine like terms}\\ x-11 &= -8\sqrt{x-2} && \text{Isolate the second radical}\\ (x-11)^2 &= (-8\sqrt{x-2})^2 && \text{Square both sides}\\ x^2-22x+121 &= 64(x-2)\end{aligned}$$

Now that both radicals have been eliminated, set the quadratic equal to zero and solve.

$$\begin{aligned}x^2-22x+121 &= 64x-128\\ x^2-86x+249 &= 0\\ (x-3)(x-83) &= 0\\ x &= 3\\ x &= 83\end{aligned}$$

The proposed solutions are 3 and 83. Check each solution in the original equation.

$$\begin{aligned}\sqrt{2x+3}+\sqrt{x-2} &= 4\\ \sqrt{2x+3} &= 4-\sqrt{x-2}\\ \sqrt{2(3)+3} &= 4-\sqrt{(3)-2}\\ \sqrt{9} &= 4-\sqrt{1}\\ 3 &= 3\end{aligned}$$

One solution is 3.

Check $x=83$.

$$\begin{aligned}\sqrt{2x+3}+\sqrt{x-2} &= 4\\ \sqrt{2x+3} &= 4-\sqrt{x-2}\\ \sqrt{2(83)+3} &= 4-\sqrt{(83)-2}\\ \sqrt{169} &= 4-\sqrt{81}\\ 13 &\neq -5\end{aligned}$$

The only solution is 3. We see that $x=83$ is an extraneous solution.

Exercise 2.5.6

Solve the equation with two radicals: $\sqrt{3x+7}+\sqrt{x+2}=1$

Answer

$x=-2$, extraneous solution $x=-1$

Solving an Absolute Value Equation

Next, we will learn how to solve an **absolute value equation**. To solve an equation such as $|2x-6|=8$, we notice that the absolute value will be equal to 8 if the quantity inside the absolute value bars is 8 or -8. This leads to two different equations we can solve independently.

$$\begin{aligned} 2x-6 &= 8 \\ 2x &= 14 \\ x &= 7 \end{aligned}$$

OR

$$\begin{aligned} 2x-6 &= -8 \\ 2x &= -2 \\ x &= -1 \end{aligned}$$

Knowing how to solve problems involving absolute value functions is useful. For example, we may need to identify numbers or points on a line that are at a specified distance from a given reference point.

ABSOLUTE VALUE EQUATIONS

The absolute value of x is written as $|x|$. It has the following properties:

If $x \geq 0$, then $|x| = x$.If $x < 0$, then $x = -x$.

For real numbers A and B, an equation of the form $|A| = B$, with $B \geq 0$, will have solutions when $A = B$ or $A = -B$. If $B < 0$, the equation $|A| = B$ has no solution.

An **absolute value equation** in the form $|ax+b|=c$ has the following properties:

- If $c<0$,$|ax+b|=c$ has no solution.
- If $c=0$,$|ax+b|=c$ has one solution.
- If $c>0$,$|ax+b|=c$ has two solutions.

How to

Given an absolute value equation, solve it.

1. Isolate the absolute value expression on one side of the equal sign.
2. If $c>0$, write and solve two equations: $ax+b=c$ and $ax+b=-c$.

Example 2.5.8: Solving Absolute Value Equations

Solve the following absolute value equations:

a. $|6x+4|=8$
b. $|3x+4|=-9$
c. $|3x-5|-4=6$
d. $|-5x+10|=0$

Solution

a. $|6x+4|=8$

Write two equations and solve each:

$$\begin{aligned} 6x+4 &= 8 \\ 6x &= 4 \\ x &= \frac{2}{3} \end{aligned}$$

OR

$$\begin{aligned} 6x+4 &= -8 \\ 6x &= -12 \\ x &= -2 \end{aligned}$$

The two solutions are $\frac{2}{3}$ and -2.

b. $|3x+4| = -9$

There is no solution as an absolute value cannot be negative.

c. $|3x-5|-4 = 6$

Isolate the absolute value expression and then write two equations.

$$\begin{aligned} |3x-5|-4 &= 6 \\ |3x-5| &= 10 \\ 3x-5 &= 10 \\ 3x &= 15 \\ x &= 5 \end{aligned}$$

OR

$$\begin{aligned} 3x-5 &= -10 \\ 3x &= -5 \\ x &= \frac{5}{3} \end{aligned}$$

There are two solutions: 5, and $-\frac{5}{3}$.

d. $|-5x+10| = 0$

The equation is set equal to zero, so we have to write only one equation.

$$\begin{aligned} -5x+10 &= 0 \\ -5x &= -10 \\ x &= 2 \end{aligned}$$

There is one solution: \(2\).

? Exercise 2.5.7

Solve the absolute value equation: $|1-4x|+8 = 13$.

Answer

$x = -1, x = \frac{3}{2}$

Solving Other Types of Equations

There are many other types of equations in addition to the ones we have discussed so far. We will see more of them throughout the text. Here, we will discuss equations that are in quadratic form, and rational equations that result in a quadratic.

Solving Equations in Quadratic Form

Equations in quadratic form are equations with three terms. The first term has a power other than 2. The middle term has an exponent that is one-half the exponent of the leading term. The third term is a constant. We can solve equations in this form as if they were quadratic. A few examples of these equations include $x^4-5x^2+4=0$,$x^6+7x^3-8=0$, and $x^{\frac{2}{3}}+4x^{\frac{1}{3}}+2=0$. In each one, doubling the exponent of the middle term equals the exponent on the leading term. We can solve these equations by substituting a variable for the middle term.

QUADRATIC FORM

If the exponent on the middle term is one-half of the exponent on the leading term, we have **an equation in quadratic form**, which we can solve as if it were a quadratic. We substitute a variable for the middle term to solve equations in quadratic form.

Howto: Given an equation quadratic in form, solve it

1. Identify the exponent on the leading term and determine whether it is double the exponent on the middle term.
2. If it is, substitute a variable, such as u, for the variable portion of the middle term.
3. Rewrite the equation so that it takes on the standard form of a quadratic.
4. Solve using one of the usual methods for solving a quadratic.
5. Replace the substitution variable with the original term.
6. Solve the remaining equation.

Example 2.5.9: Solving a Fourth-degree Equation in Quadratic Form

Solve this fourth-degree equation: $3x^4 - 2x^2 - 1 = 0$.

Solution

This equation fits the main criteria, that the power on the leading term is double the power on the middle term. Next, we will make a substitution for the variable term in the middle. Let $u = x^2$. Rewrite the equation in u.

$$3u^2 - 2u - 1 = 0$$

Now solve the quadratic.

$$\begin{aligned} 3u^2 - 2u - 1 &= 0 \\ (3u+1)(u-1) &= 0 \end{aligned}$$

Solve each factor and replace the original term for u.

$$\begin{aligned} 3u + 1 &= 0 \\ 3u &= -1 \\ u &= -\frac{1}{3} \\ x^2 &= -\frac{1}{3} \\ x &= \pm i\sqrt{\frac{1}{3}} \\ u - 1 &= 0 \\ u &= 1 \\ x^2 &= 1 \\ x &= \pm 1 \end{aligned}$$

The solutions are $x = \pm i\sqrt{\frac{1}{3}}$ and $x = \pm 1$

Exercise 2.5.8

Solve using substitution: $x^4 - 8x^2 - 9 = 0$.

Answer

$x = -3, 3, -i, i$

Example 2.5.10: Solving an Equation in Quadratic Form Containing a Binomial

Solve the equation in quadratic form: $(x+2)^2+11(x+2)-12=0$.

Solution

This equation contains a binomial in place of the single variable. The tendency is to expand what is presented. However, recognizing that it fits the criteria for being in quadratic form makes all the difference in the solving process. First, make a substitution, letting $u=x+2$. Then rewrite the equation in u.

$$\begin{aligned} u^2+11u-12 &= 0 \\ (u+12)(u-1) &= 0 \end{aligned}$$

Solve using the zero-factor property and then replace u with the original expression.

$$\begin{aligned} u+12 &= 0 \\ u &= -12 \\ x+2 &= -12 \\ x &= -14 \end{aligned}$$

The second factor results in

$$\begin{aligned} u-1 &= 0 \\ u &= 1 \\ x+2 &= 1 \\ x &= -1 \end{aligned}$$

We have two solutions: -14, and -1.

Exercise 2.5.9

Solve: $(x-5)^2-4(x-5)-21=0$.

Answer

$x=2, x=12$

Solving Rational Equations Resulting in a Quadratic

Earlier, we solved rational equations. Sometimes, solving a rational equation results in a quadratic. When this happens, we continue the solution by simplifying the quadratic equation by one of the methods we have seen. It may turn out that there is no solution.

Example 2.5.11: Solving a Rational Equation Leading to a Quadratic

Solve the following rational equation: $\dfrac{-4x}{x-1}+\dfrac{4}{x+1}=\dfrac{-8}{x^2-1}$

Solution

We want all denominators in factored form to find the LCD. Two of the denominators cannot be factored further. However, $x^2-1=(x+1)(x-1)$. Then, the LCD is $(x+1)(x-1)$. Next, we multiply the whole equation by the LCD.

$$
\begin{aligned}
(x+1)(x-1)\left(\frac{-4x}{x-1}+\frac{4}{x+1}\right) &= \left(\frac{-8}{x^2-1}\right)(x+1)(x-1) \\
-4x(x+1)+4(x-1) &= -8 \\
-4x^2-4x+4x-4 &= -8 \\
-4x^2+4 &= 0 \\
-4(x^2-1) &= 0 \\
-4(x+1)(x-1) &= 0 \\
x &= -1 \\
x &= 1
\end{aligned}
$$

In this case, either solution produces a zero in the denominator in the original equation. Thus, there is no solution.

? Exercise 2.5.10

Solve $\frac{3x+2}{x-2}+\frac{1}{x}=\frac{-2}{x^2-2x}$

Answer

$x=-1, x=0$ is not a solution.

Media

Access these online resources for additional instruction and practice with different types of equations.

1. Rational Equation with no Solution
2. Solving equations with rational exponents using reciprocal powers
3. Solving radical equations part 1 of 2
4. Solving radical equations part 2 of 2

Key Concepts

- Rational exponents can be rewritten several ways depending on what is most convenient for the problem. To solve, both sides of the equation are raised to a power that will render the exponent on the variable equal to 1. See Example, Example, and Example.
- Factoring extends to higher-order polynomials when it involves factoring out the GCF or factoring by grouping. See Example and Example.
- We can solve radical equations by isolating the radical and raising both sides of the equation to a power that matches the index. See Example and Example.
- To solve absolute value equations, we need to write two equations, one for the positive value and one for the negative value. See Example.
- Equations in quadratic form are easy to spot, as the exponent on the first term is double the exponent on the second term and the third term is a constant. We may also see a binomial in place of the single variable. We use substitution to solve. See Example and Example.
- Solving a rational equation may also lead to a quadratic equation or an equation in quadratic form. See Example.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

3: Inequalities

3.1: Linear Inequalities
3.2: Absolute Value Inequalities

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3.1: Linear Inequalities

Learning Objectives

- Use interval notation.
- Use properties of inequalities.
- Solve inequalities in one variable algebraically.
- Solve absolute value inequalities.

It is not easy to make the honor role at most top universities. Suppose students were required to carry a course load of at least 12 credit hours and maintain a grade point average of 3.5 or above. How could these honor roll requirements be expressed mathematically? In this section, we will explore various ways to express different sets of numbers, inequalities, and absolute value inequalities.

Figure 3.1.1

Using Interval Notation

Indicating the solution to an inequality such as $x \geq 4$ can be achieved in several ways.

- We can use a number line as shown in Figure $3.1.2$. The blue ray begins at $x = 4$ and, as indicated by the arrowhead, continues to infinity, which illustrates that the solution set includes all real numbers greater than or equal to 4.
- We can use **set-builder notation**: $\{x | x \geq 4\}$, which translates to "all real numbers x such that x is greater than or equal to 4." Notice that braces are used to indicate a set.
- The third method is **interval notation**, in which solution sets are indicated with parentheses or brackets. The solutions to $x \geq 4$ are represented as $[4, \infty)$. This is perhaps the most useful method, as it applies to concepts studied later in this course and to other higher-level math courses.

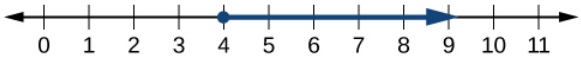

Figure 3.1.2

The main concept to remember is that parentheses represent solutions greater or less than the number, and brackets represent solutions that are greater than or equal to or less than or equal to the number. Use parentheses to represent infinity or negative infinity, since positive and negative infinity are not numbers in the usual sense of the word and, therefore, cannot be "equaled." A few examples of an interval, or a set of numbers in which a solution falls, are $[-2, 6)$, or all numbers between -2 and 6, including -2, but not including 6; $(-1, 0)$, all real numbers between, but not including -1 and 0; and $(-\infty, 1]$, all real numbers less than and including 1. Table $3.1.1$ outlines the possibilities.

a}; (a , infinity). The entries in the fourth row are: All real numbers less than b, but not including b; {x| x < b}; (negative infinity, b). The entries in the fifth row are: All real numbers greater than a, including a; {x| x a}; [a, infinity). The entries in the sixth row are: All real numbers less than b, including b; {x| x b}; (negative infinity, b]. The entries in the seventh row are: All real numbers between a and b, including a; {x| a x < b}; [a, b). The entries in the eighth row are: All real numbers between a and b, including b; {x| a < x b}; (a, b]. The entries in the ninth row are: All real numbers between a and b, including a and b; {x| a x b}; [a, b]. The entries in the tenth row are: all real numbers less than a and greater than b; {x| x < a and x > b}; (negative infinity, a) union (b, infinity). The entries in the eleventh row are: All real numbers; {x| x is all real numbers}; (negative infinity, infinity).">

Table 3.1.1

Set Indicated	Set-Builder Notation	Interval Notation
All real numbers between a and b, but not including a or b	$\{x \mid a < x < b\}$	(a, b)
All real numbers greater than a, but not including a	$\{x \mid x > a\}$	(a, ∞)
All real numbers less than b, but not including b	$\{x \mid x < b\}$	$(-\infty, b)$
All real numbers greater than a, including a	$\{x \mid x \geq a\}$	$[a, \infty)$
All real numbers less than b, including b	$\{x \mid x \leq b\}$	$(-\infty, b]$
All real numbers between a and b, including a	$\{x \mid a \leq x < b\}$	$[a, b)$
All real numbers between a and b, including b	$\{x \mid a < x \leq b\}$	$(a, b]$
All real numbers between a and b, including a and b	$\{x \mid a \leq x \leq b\}$	$[a, b]$
All real numbers less than a or greater than b	$\{x \mid x < a \; and \; x > b\}$	$(-\infty, a) \cup (b, \infty)$
All real numbers	$\{x \mid x \; is \; all \; real \; numbers\}$	$(-\infty, \infty)$

Example 3.1.1: Using Interval Notation to Express All Real Numbers Greater Than or Equal to a

Use interval notation to indicate all real numbers greater than or equal to -2.

Solution

Use a bracket on the left of -2 and parentheses after infinity: $[-2, \infty)$. The bracket indicates that -2 is included in the set with all real numbers greater than -2 to infinity.

Try It! 3.1.1

Use interval notation to indicate all real numbers between and including -3 and 5.

Answer

$[-3, 5]$

Example 3.1.2: Using Interval Notation to Express All Real Numbers Less Than or Equal to a or Greater Than or Equal to b

Write the interval expressing all real numbers less than or equal to -1 or greater than or equal to 1.

Solution

We have to write two intervals for this example. The first interval must indicate all real numbers less than or equal to 1. So, this interval begins at $-\infty$ and ends at -1, which is written as $(-\infty, -1]$.

The second interval must show all real numbers greater than or equal to 1, which is written as $[1, \infty)$. However, we want to combine these two sets. We accomplish this by inserting the union symbol, $\cup$, between the two intervals.

$$(-\infty, -1] \cup [1, \infty)$$

Try It! 3.1.2

Express all real numbers less than -2 or greater than or equal to 3 in interval notation.

Answer

$(-\infty, -2) \cup [3, \infty)$

Using the Properties of Inequalities

When we work with inequalities, we can usually treat them similarly to but not exactly as we treat equalities. We can use the **addition property** and the **multiplication property** to help us solve them. The one exception is when we multiply or divide by a negative number; doing so reverses the inequality symbol.

PROPERTIES OF INEQUALITIES

Addition Property

- If $a < b$, then $a + c < b + c$.

Multiplication Property

- If $a < b$ and $c > 0$, then $ac < bc$.
- If $a < b$ and $c < 0$, then $ac > bc$.

These properties also apply to $a \leq b$, $a > b$, and $a \geq b$.

Example 3.1.3: Demonstrating the Addition Property

Illustrate the addition property for inequalities by solving each of the following:

a. (a) $x - 15 < 4$
b. (b) $6 \geq x - 1$
c. (c) $x + 7 > 9$

Solution

The addition property for inequalities states that if an inequality exists, adding or subtracting the same number on both sides does not change the inequality.

a.

$$\begin{aligned} x - 15 &< 4 \\ x - 15 + 15 &< 4 + 15 \\ x &< 19 \end{aligned}$$

b.

$$\begin{aligned} 6 &\geq x - 1 \\ 6 + 1 &\geq x - 1 + 1 \\ 7 &\geq x \end{aligned}$$

c.

$$\begin{aligned} x + 7 &> 9 \\ x + 7 - 7 &> 9 - 7 \\ x &> 2 \end{aligned}$$

Try It! 3.1.3

Solve: $3x - 2 < 1$.

Answer

$x < 1$

Example 3.1.4: Demonstrating the Multiplication Property

Illustrate the multiplication property for inequalities by solving each of the following:

a. $3x < 6$
b. $-2x - 1 \geq 5$
c. $5 - x > 10$

Solution

a.

$$\begin{aligned} 3x &< 6 \\ \frac{1}{3}(3x) &< (6)\frac{1}{3} \\ x &< 2 \end{aligned}$$

b.

$$\begin{aligned} -2x - 1 &\geq 5 \\ -2x &\geq 6 \\ \left(-\frac{1}{2}\right)(-2) &\geq (6)\left(-\frac{1}{2}\right) && \text{Multiply by } \left(-\frac{1}{2}\right) \\ x &\leq -3 && \text{Reverse the inequality.} \end{aligned}$$

c.

$$\begin{aligned} 5 - x &> 10 \\ -x &> 5 \\ (-1)(-x) &> (5)(-1) && \text{Multiply by } -1 \\ x &< -5 && \text{Reverse the inequality.} \end{aligned}$$

Try It! 3.1.4

Solve: $4x + 7 \geq 2x - 3$.

Answer

$x \geq -5$

Solving Inequalities in One Variable Algebraically

As the examples have shown, we can perform the same operations on both sides of an inequality, just as we do with equations; we combine like terms and perform operations. To solve, we isolate the variable.

Example 3.1.5: Solving an Inequality Algebraically

Solve the inequality: $13 - 7x \geq 10x - 4$.

Solution

Solving this inequality is similar to solving an equation up until the last step.

$$\begin{aligned} 13-7x &\geq 10x-4 & \\ 13-17x &\geq -4 & \text{Move variable terms to one side of the inequality} \\ -17x &\geq -17 & \text{Isolate the variable term} \\ x &\leq 1 & \text{Dividing both sides by -17 reverses the inequality.} \end{aligned}$$

The solution set is given by the interval $(-\infty, 1]$, or all real numbers less than and including 1.

? Try It! 3.1.5

Solve the inequality and write the answer using interval notation: $-x+4<\frac{1}{2}x+1$.

Answer

$(2, \infty)$

✓ Example 3.1.6: Solving an Inequality with Fractions

Solve the following inequality and write the answer in interval notation: $-\frac{3}{4}x \geq -\frac{5}{8}+\frac{2}{3}x$.

Solution

We begin solving in the same way we do when solving an equation.

$$\begin{aligned} -\frac{3}{4}x &\geq -\frac{5}{8}+\frac{2}{3}x & \\ -\frac{3}{4}x-\frac{2}{3}x &\geq -\frac{5}{8} & \text{Put variable terms on one side.} \\ -\frac{9}{12}x-\frac{8}{12}x &\geq -\frac{5}{8} & \text{Write fractions with common denominator.} \\ -\frac{17}{12}x &\geq -\frac{5}{8} & \\ x &\leq -\frac{5}{8}\left(-\frac{12}{17}\right) & \text{Multiplying by a negative number reverses the inequality.} \\ x &\leq \frac{15}{34} & \end{aligned}$$

The solution set is the interval $\left(-\infty, \frac{15}{34}\right]$.

? Try It! 3.1.6

Solve the inequality and write the answer in interval notation: $-\frac{5}{6}x \leq \frac{3}{4}+\frac{8}{3}x$.

Answer

$\left[-\frac{3}{14}, \infty\right)$

Understanding Compound Inequalities

A **compound inequality** includes two inequalities in one statement. A statement such as $4<x\leq 6$ means $4<x$ and $x\leq 6$. There are two ways to solve compound inequalities: separating them into two separate inequalities or leaving the compound inequality intact and performing operations on all three parts at the same time. We will illustrate both methods.

Example 3.1.7: Solving a Compound Inequality

Solve the compound inequality: $3 \leq 2x+2 < 6$

Solution

The first method is to write two separate inequalities: $3 \leq 2x+2$ and $2x+2<6$. We solve them independently.

$$\begin{aligned} 3 &\leq 2x+2 \quad \text{and} \quad 2x+2<6 \\ 1 &\leq 2x \qquad\qquad\quad 2x<4 \\ \tfrac{1}{2} &\leq x \qquad\qquad\quad x<2 \end{aligned}$$

Then, we can rewrite the solution as a compound inequality, the same way the problem began.

$$\frac{1}{2} \leq x < 2$$

In interval notation, the solution is written as $[\frac{1}{2},\ 2)$.

The second method is to leave the compound inequality intact, and perform solving procedures on the three parts at the same time.

$$\begin{aligned} &3 \leq 2x+2 < 6 \\ &1 \leq 2x < 4 \qquad \text{Isolate the variable term, and subtract 2 from all three parts.} \\ &\tfrac{1}{2} \leq x < 2 \qquad \text{Divide through all three parts by 2.} \end{aligned}$$

We get the same solution: $[\frac{1}{2},\ 2)$.

Try It! 3.1.7

Solve the compound inequality: $4 < 2x-8 \leq 10$.

Answer

$6 < x \leq 9$ or $(6, 9]$

▼

Example 3.1.8: Solving a Compound Inequality with the Variable in All Three Parts

Solve the compound inequality with variables in all three parts: $3+x > 7x-2 > 5x-10$.

Solution

Let's try the first method. Write two inequalities:

$$\begin{aligned} 3+x &> 7x-2 \quad \text{and} \quad 7x-2 > 5x-10 \\ 3 &> 6x-2 \qquad\qquad 2x-2 > -10 \\ 5 &> 6x \qquad\qquad\quad 2x > -8 \\ \tfrac{5}{6} &> x \qquad\qquad\quad -4 < x \end{aligned}$$

The solution set is $-4 < x < \frac{5}{6}$ or in interval notation $\left(-4, \frac{5}{6}\right)$. Notice that when we write the solution in interval notation, the smaller number comes first. We read intervals from left to right, as they appear on a number line. See Figure 3.1.3.

Figure 3.1.3

Try It! 3.1.8

Solve the compound inequality: $3y < 4 - 5y < 5 + 3y$.

Answer

$\left(-\frac{1}{8}, \frac{1}{2}\right)$

▼

Solving Absolute Value Inequalities

As we know, the absolute value of a quantity is a positive number or zero. From the origin, a point located at $(-x, 0)$ has an absolute value of x, as it is x units away. Consider absolute value as the distance from one point to another point. Regardless of direction, positive or negative, the distance between the two points is represented as a positive number or zero.

An absolute value inequality is an equation of the form

$$|A| < B, \quad |A| \leq B, \quad |A| > B, \quad \text{or} \quad |A| \geq B,$$

Where A, and sometimes B, represents an algebraic expression dependent on a variable x. Solving the inequality means finding the set of all x-values that satisfy the problem. Usually this set will be an interval or the union of two intervals and will include a range of values.

There are two basic approaches to solving absolute value inequalities: graphical and algebraic. The advantage of the graphical approach is we can read the solution by interpreting the graphs of two equations. The advantage of the algebraic approach is that solutions are exact, as precise solutions are sometimes difficult to read from a graph.

Suppose we want to know all possible returns on an investment if we could earn some amount of money within \$200 of \$600. We can solve algebraically for the set of x-values such that the distance between$x$ and 600 is less than or equal to 200. We represent the distance between x and 600 as $|x - 600|$, and therefore, $|x - 600| \leq 200$ or

$$\begin{gathered} -200 \leq x - 600 \leq 200 \\ -200 + 600 \leq x - 600 + 600 \leq 200 + 600 \\ 400 \leq x \leq 800 \end{gathered}$$

This means our returns would be between \$400 and \$800.

To solve absolute value inequalities, just as with absolute value equations, we write two inequalities and then solve them independently.

Definition: Absolute Value Inequalities

For an algebraic expression X and $k > 0$, an **absolute value inequality** is an inequality of the form

$$|X| < k \text{ is equivalent to } -k < X < k$$

$$|X| > k \text{ is equivalent to } X < -k \text{ or } X > k$$

These statements also apply to $|X| \leq k$ and $|X| \geq k$.

Example 3.1.9: Determining a Number within a Prescribed Distance

Describe all values x within a distance of 4 from the number 5.

Solution

We want the distance between x and 5 to be less than or equal to 4. We can draw a number line, such as in Figure $3.1.4$, to represent the condition to be satisfied.

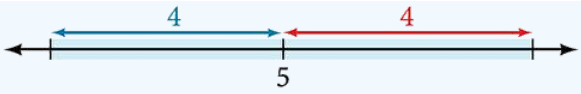

Figure 3.1.4

The distance from x to 5 can be represented using an absolute value symbol, $|x-5|$. Write the values of x that satisfy the condition as an absolute value inequality.

$$|x-5| \leq 4$$

We need to write two inequalities as there are always two solutions to an absolute value equation.

$$x-5 \leq 4 \quad \text{and} \quad x-5 \geq -4$$
$$x \leq 9 \qquad\qquad x \geq 1$$

If the solution set is $x \leq 9$ and $x \geq 1$, then the solution set is an interval including all real numbers between and including 1 and 9.

So $|x-5| \leq 4$ is equivalent to $[1,9]$ in interval notation.

▼

? Try It! 3.1.9

Describe all x-values within a distance of 3 from the number 2.

Answer

$|x-2| \leq 3$

✓ Example 3.1.10: Solving an Absolute Value Inequality

Solve $|x-1| \leq 3$.

Solution

$$|x-1| \leq 3$$
$$-3 \leq x-1 \leq 3$$
$$-2 \leq x \leq 4$$
$$[-2,4]$$

✓ Example 3.1.11: Using a Graphical Approach to Solve Absolute Value Inequalities

Given the equation $y = -\frac{1}{2}|4x-5|+3$, determine the x-values for which the y-values are negative.

Solution

We are trying to determine where $y<0$, which is when $-\frac{1}{2}|4x-5|+3<0$. We begin by isolating the absolute value.

$$-\tfrac{1}{2}|4x-5| < -3 \qquad \text{Multiply both sides by } -2, \text{ and reverse the inequality.}$$
$$|4x-5| > 6$$

Next, we solve for the equality $|4x-5|=6$.

$$4x-5=6 \qquad\qquad 4x-5=-6$$
$$4x=11 \quad \text{or} \quad 4x=-1$$
$$x=\tfrac{11}{4} \qquad\qquad x=-\tfrac{1}{4}$$

Now, we can examine the graph to observe where the y-values are negative. We observe where the branches are below the x-axis. Notice that it is not important exactly what the graph looks like, as long as we know that it crosses the horizontal axis at $x = -\frac{1}{4}$ and $x = \frac{11}{4}$, and that the graph opens downward. See Figure 3.1.5.

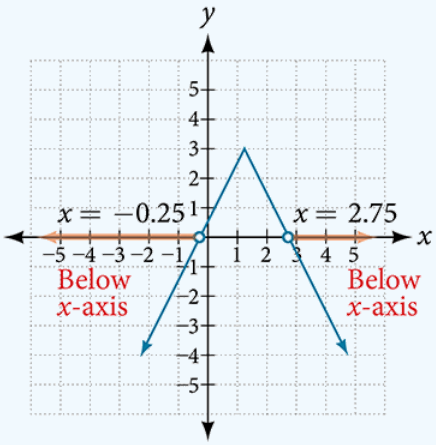

Figure 3.1.5

Try It! 3.1.10

Solve $-2|k-4| \leq -6$.

Answer

$k \leq 1$ or $k \geq 7$; in interval notation, this would be $(-\infty, 1] \cup [7, \infty)$.

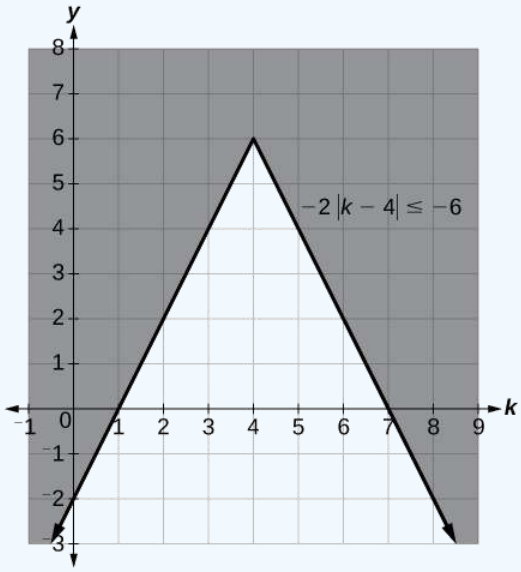

Figure 3.1.6

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3.2: Absolute Value Inequalities

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

4: Functions

4.1: Linear Functions

4.1.1: Modeling with Linear Functions

4.2: Rates of Change and Behavior of Graphs

4.3: Graphs of Basic Functions

4.4: Transformation of Functions

4.5: Composition of Functions

4.6: Inverse Functions

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4.1: Linear Functions

Learning Objectives

- Represent a linear function.
- Determine whether a linear function is increasing, decreasing, or constant.
- Interpret slope as a rate of change.
- Write and interpret an equation for a linear function.
- Graph linear functions.
- Determine whether lines are parallel or perpendicular.
- Write the equation of a line parallel or perpendicular to a given line.

Just as with the growth of a bamboo plant, there are many situations that involve constant change over time. Consider, for example, the first commercial maglev train in the world, the Shanghai MagLev Train (maglev train in the world, the Shanghai MagLev Train (Figure 4.1.1). It carries passengers comfortably for a 30-kilometer trip from the airport to the subway station in only eight minutes.

Figure 4.1.1: Shanghai MagLev Train (credit: “kanegen”/Flickr)

Suppose a maglev train were to travel a long distance, and that the train maintains a constant speed of 83 meters per second for a period of time once it is 250 meters from the station. How can we analyze the train’s distance from the station as a function of time? In this section, we will investigate a kind of function that is useful for this purpose, and use it to investigate real-world situations such as the train’s distance from the station at a given point in time.maglev train were to travel a long distance, and that the train maintains a constant speed of 83 meters per second for a period of time once it is 250 meters from the station. How can we analyze the train’s distance from the station as a function of time? In this section, we will investigate a kind of function that is useful for this purpose, and use it to investigate real-world situations such as the train’s distance from the station at a given point in time.

Representing Linear Functions

The function describing the train’s motion is a **linear function**, which is defined as a function with a constant rate of change, that is, a polynomial of degree 1. There are several ways to represent a linear function, including word form, function notation, tabular form, and graphical form. We will describe the train’s motion as a function using each method.

Representing a Linear Function in Word Form

Let’s begin by describing the linear function in words. For the train problem we just considered, the following word sentence may be used to describe the function relationship.

- *The train’s distance from the station is a function of the time during which the train moves at a constant speed plus its original distance from the station when it began moving at constant speed.*

The speed is the rate of change. Recall that a rate of change is a measure of how quickly the dependent variable changes with respect to the independent variable. The rate of change for this example is constant, which means that it is the same for each input value. As the time (input) increases by 1 second, the corresponding distance (output) increases by 83 meters. The train began moving at this constant speed at a distance of 250 meters from the station.

Representing a Linear Function in Function Notation

Another approach to representing linear functions is by using function notation. One example of function notation is an equation written in the form known as the slope-intercept form of a line, where x is the input value, m is the rate of change, and b is the initial value of the dependent variable.

$$\begin{aligned} &\text{Equation form} && y = mx + b \\ &\text{Equation notation} && f(x) = mx + b \end{aligned}$$

In the example of the train, we might use the notation $D(t)$ in which the total distance D is a function of the time t. The rate, m, is 83 meters per second. The initial value of the dependent variable b is the original distance from the station, 250 meters. We can write a generalized equation to represent the motion of the train.

$$D(t) = 83t + 250 \tag{4.1.1}$$

Representing a Linear Function in Tabular Form

A third method of representing a linear function is through the use of a table. The relationship between the distance from the station and the time is represented in Figure 4.1.2. From the table, we can see that the distance changes by 83 meters for every 1 second increase in time.

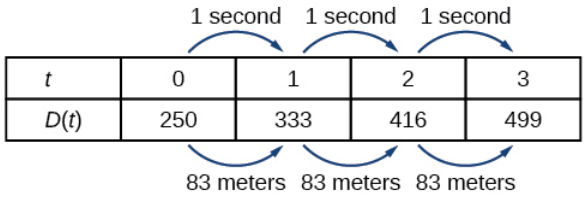

Figure 4.1.2: Tabular representation of the function D showing selected input and output values

Q/A? Can the input in the previous example be any real number?

No. The input represents time, so while nonnegative rational and irrational numbers are possible, negative real numbers are not possible for this example. The input consists of non-negative real numbers.

Representing a Linear Function in Graphical Form

Another way to represent linear functions is visually, using a graph. We can use the function relationship from above, $D(t) = 83t + 250$, to draw a graph, represented in Figure 4.1.3. Notice the graph is a line. When we plot a linear function, the graph is always a line.

The rate of change, which is constant, determines the slant, or **slope** of the line. The point at which the input value is zero is the vertical intercept, or **y-intercept**, of the line. We can see from the graph in Figure 4.1.3 that the y-intercept in the train example we just saw is $(0, 250)$ and represents the distance of the train from the station when it began moving at a constant speed.

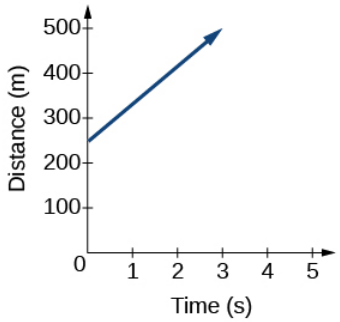

Figure 4.1.3: The graph of $D(t) = 83t + 250$. Graphs of linear functions are lines because the rate of change is constant.

Notice that the graph of the train example is restricted, but this is not always the case. Consider the graph of the line $f(x) = 2x + 1$. Ask yourself what numbers can be input to the function, that is, what is the domain of the function? The domain is comprised of all real numbers because any number may be doubled, and then have one added to the product.

Definition: Linear Function

A **linear function** is a function whose graph is a line. Linear functions can be written in the slope-intercept form of a line

$$f(x) = mx + b \tag{4.1.2}$$

where b is the initial or starting value of the function (when input, $x = 0$), and m is the constant rate of change, or **slope** of the function. The **y-intercept** is at $(0, b)$.

Example 4.1.1: Using a Linear Function to Find the Pressure on a Diver

The pressure, P, in pounds per square inch (PSI) on the diver in Figure 4.1.4 depends upon her depth below the water surface, d, in feet. This relationship may be modeled by the equation, $P(d) = 0.434d + 14.696$. Restate this function in words.

Figure 4.1.4: (credit: Ilse Reijs and Jan-Noud Hutten)Hutten)

To restate the function in words, we need to describe each part of the equation. The pressure as a function of depth equals four hundred thirty-four thousandths times depth plus fourteen and six hundred ninety-six thousandths.

Analysis

The initial value, 14.696, is the pressure in PSI on the diver at a depth of 0 feet, which is the surface of the water. The rate of change, or slope, is 0.434 PSI per foot. This tells us that the pressure on the diver increases 0.434 PSI for each foot her depth increases.

Determining whether a Linear Function Is Increasing, Decreasing, or Constant

The linear functions we used in the two previous examples increased over time, but not every linear function does. A linear function may be increasing, decreasing, or constant. For an increasing function, as with the train example, the output values increase as the input values increase. The graph of an **increasing function** has a positive slope. A line with a positive slope slants upward from left to right as in Figure 4.1.5(a). For a **decreasing function**, the slope is negative. The output values decrease as the input values increase. A line with a negative slope slants downward from left to right as in Figure 4.1.5(b). If the function is constant, the output values are the same for all input values so the slope is zero. A line with a slope of zero is horizontal as in Figure 4.1.5(c).

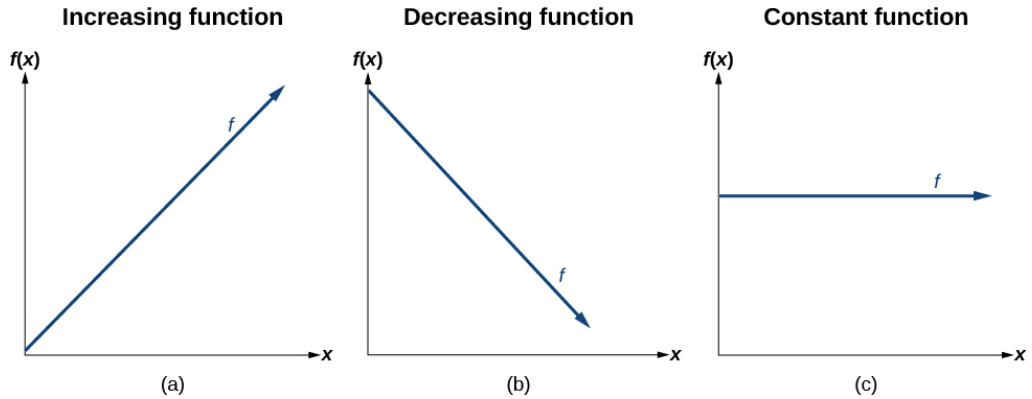

Figure 4.1.5: Three graphs depicting an increasing function, a decreasing function, and a constant function.]

Increasing and Decreasing Functions

Increasing and Decreasing Functions

The slope determines if the function is an **increasing linear function**, a **decreasing linear function**, or a constant function.

- $f(x) = mx + b$ is an increasing function if $m > 0$.
- $f(x) = mx + b$ is an decreasing function if $m < 0$.
- $f(x) = mx + b$ is a constant function if $m = 0$.

Example 4.1.2: decide whether a Function is Increasing, Decreasing, or Constant

Some recent studies suggest that a teenager sends an average of 60 texts per day. For each of the following scenarios, find the linear function that describes the relationship between the input value and the output value. Then, determine whether the graph of the function is increasing, decreasing, or constant.

a. The total number of texts a teen sends is considered a function of time in days. The input is the number of days, and output is the total number of texts sent.
b. A teen has a limit of 500 texts per month in his or her data plan. The input is the number of days, and output is the total number of texts remaining for the month.
c. A teen has an unlimited number of texts in his or her data plan for a cost of $50 per month. The input is the number of days, and output is the total cost of texting each month.

Solution

Analyze each function.

a. The function can be represented as $f(x) = 60x$ where x is the number of days. The slope, 60, is positive so the function is increasing. This makes sense because the total number of texts increases with each day.
b. The function can be represented as $f(x) = 500 - 60x$ where x is the number of days. In this case, the slope is negative so the function is decreasing. This makes sense because the number of texts remaining decreases each day and this function represents the number of texts remaining in the data plan after x days.
c. The cost function can be represented as $f(x) = 50$ because the number of days does not affect the total cost. The slope is 0 so the function is constant.

Calculating and Interpreting Slope

In the examples we have seen so far, we have had the slope provided for us. However, we often need to calculate the slope given input and output values. Given two values for the input, x_1 and x_2, and two corresponding values for the output, y_1 and y_2—which can be represented by a set of points, (x_1, y_1) and (x_2, y_2)—we can calculate the slope m, as follows

$$m = \frac{\text{change in output (rise)}}{\text{change in input (run)}}$$

$$= \frac{\Delta y}{\Delta x} = \frac{y_2 - y_1}{x_2 - x_1}$$

where Δy is the vertical displacement and Δx is the horizontal displacement. Note in function notation two corresponding values for the output y_1 and y_2 for the function f, $y_1 = f(x_1)$ and $y_2 = f(x_2)$, so we could equivalently write

$$m = \frac{f(x_2) - f(x_1)}{x_2 - x_1}$$

Figure 4.1.6 indicates how the slope of the line between the points, (x_1, y_1) and (x_2, y_2), is calculated. Recall that the slope measures steepness. The greater the absolute value of the slope, the steeper the line is.

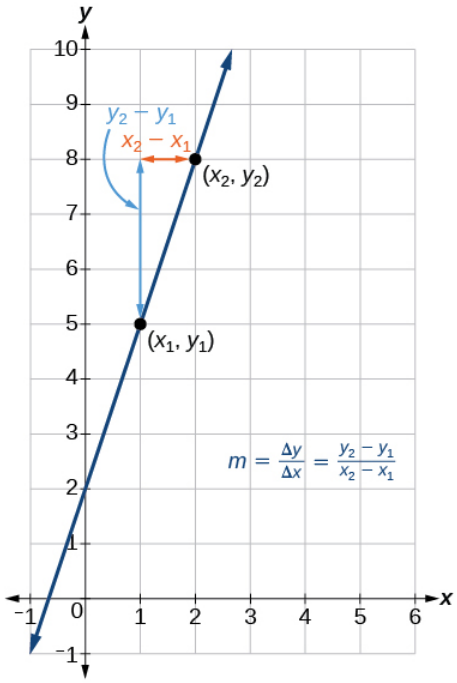

Figure 4.1.6: The slope of a function is calculated by the change in y divided by the change in x. It does not matter which coordinate is used as the (x_2, y_2) and which is the (x_1, y_1),as long as each calculation is started with the elements from the same coordinate pair.

Q & A

Are the units for slope always $\frac{\text{units for the output}}{\text{units for the input}}$?

Yes. Think of the units as the change of output value for each unit of change in input value. An example of slope could be miles per hour or dollars per day. Notice the units appear as a ratio of units for the output per units for the input.

Note: Calculate Slope

The slope or rate of change of a function, m, can be calculated according to the following:

$$m = \frac{\text{change in output (rise)}}{\text{change in input (run)}} = \frac{\Delta y}{\Delta x} = \frac{y_2 - y_1}{x_2 - x_1} \tag{4.1.3}$$

where x_1 and x_2 are input values, y_1 and y_2 are output values.

How to: Given two points from a linear function, calculate and interpret the slope.

1. Determine the units for output and input values.
2. Calculate the change of output values and change of input values.
3. Interpret the slope as the change in output values per unit of the input value.

Example 4.1.3: Finding the Slope of a Linear Function

If $f(x)$ is a linear function, and $(3,-2)$ and $(8,1)$ are points on the line, find the slope. Is this function increasing or decreasing?

Solution

The coordinate pairs are $(3,-2)$ and $(8,1)$. To find the rate of change, we divide the change in output by the change in input.

$$m=\frac{\text{change in output (rise)}}{\text{change in input (run)}}=\frac{1-(-2)}{8-3}=\frac{3}{5} \tag{4.1.4}$$

We could also write the slope as $m=0.6$. The function is increasing because $m>0$.

Analysis

As noted earlier, the order in which we write the points does not matter when we compute the slope of the line as long as the first output value, or *y*-coordinate, used corresponds with the first input value, or *x*-coordinate, used.

Try it! 4.1.1

If $f(x)$ is a linear function, and $(2,3)$ and $(0,4)$ are points on the line, find the slope. Is this function increasing or decreasing?

Answer

$m=\frac{4-3}{0-2}=\frac{1}{-2}=-\frac{1}{2}$; decreasing because $m<0$.

Example 4.1.4: Finding the Population Change from a Linear Function

The population of a city increased from 23,400 to 27,800 between 2008 and 2012. Find the change of population per year if we assume the change was constant from 2008 to 2012.

The rate of change relates the change in population to the change in time. The population increased by $27,800-23,400=4400$ people over the four-year time interval. To find the rate of change, divide the change in the number of people by the number of years.

$$\frac{4,400 \text{ people}}{4 \text{ years}}=1,100\frac{\text{people}}{\text{year}} \tag{4.1.5}$$

So the population increased by 1,100 people per year.

Analysis

Because we are told that the population increased, we would expect the slope to be positive. This positive slope we calculated is therefore reasonable.

Try it! 4.1.2

The population of a small town increased from 1,442 to 1,868 between 2009 and 2012. Find the change of population per year if we assume the change was constant from 2009 to 2012.

Answer

$m = \frac{1{,}868-1{,}442}{2{,}012-2{,}009} = \frac{426}{3} = 142$ people per year

Writing the Point-Slope Form of a Linear Equation

Up until now, we have been using the slope-intercept form of a linear equation to describe linear functions. Here, we will learn another way to write a linear function, the **point-slope form**.

$$y - y_1 = m(x - x_1) \tag{4.1.6}$$

The point-slope form is derived from the slope formula.

$$\begin{aligned} m &= \frac{y-y_1}{x-x_1} && \text{assuming } x \neq x_1 \\ m(x-x_1) &= \frac{y-y_1}{x-x_1}(x-x_1) && \text{Multiply both sides by } (x-x_1). \\ m(x-x_1) &= y-y_1 && \text{Simplify} \\ y-y_1 &= m(x-x_1) && \text{Rearrange} \end{aligned}$$

Keep in mind that the slope-intercept form and the point-slope form can be used to describe the same function. We can move from one form to another using basic algebra. For example, suppose we are given an equation in point-slope form, $y-4 = -\frac{1}{2}(x-6)$. We can convert it to the slope-intercept form as shown.

$$\begin{aligned} y-4 &= -\frac{1}{2}(x-6) \\ y-4 &= -\frac{1}{2}x+3 && \text{Distribute the } -\frac{1}{2}. \\ y &= -\frac{1}{2}x+7 && \text{Add 4 to each side.} \end{aligned}$$

Therefore, the same line can be described in slope-intercept form as $y = \frac{1}{2}x + 7$.

Note: Point-Slope Form of a Linear Equation

The **point-slope** form of a linear equation takes the form

$$y - y_1 = m(x - x_1) \tag{4.1.7}$$

where m is the slope, x_1 and y_1 are the x and y coordinates of a specific point through which the line passes.

Writing the Equation of a Line Using a Point and the Slope

The point-slope form is particularly useful if we know one point and the slope of a line. Suppose, for example, we are told that a line has a slope of 2 and passes through the point $(4, 1)$. We know that $m = 2$ and that $x_1 = 4$ and $y_1 = 1$. We can substitute these values into the general point-slope equation.

$$\begin{aligned} y - y_1 &= m(x - x_1) \\ y - 1 &= 2(x - 4) \end{aligned}$$

If we wanted to then rewrite the equation in slope-intercept form, we apply algebraic techniques.

$$\begin{aligned} y-1 &= 2(x-4) \\ y-1 &= 2x-8 && \text{Distribute the 2.} \\ y &= 2x-7 && \text{Add 1 to each side.} \end{aligned}$$

Both equations, $y-1=2(x-4)$ and $y=2x-7$, describe the same line. See Figure 4.1.7.

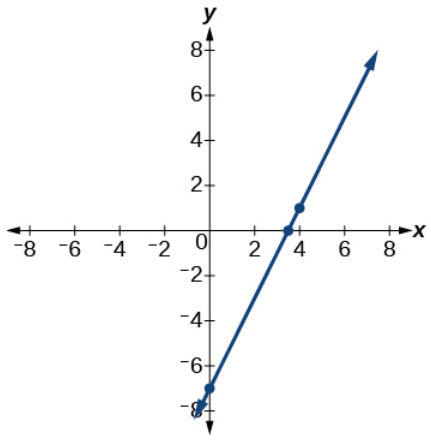

Figure 4.1.7

Example 4.1.5: Writing Linear Equations Using a Point and the Slope

Write the point-slope form of an equation of a line with a slope of 3 that passes through the point $(6,-1)$. Then rewrite it in the slope-intercept form.

Solution

Let's figure out what we know from the given information. The slope is 3, so $m=3$. We also know one point, so we know $x_1=6$ and $y_1=-1$. Now we can substitute these values into the general point-slope equation.

$$\begin{aligned} y-y_1 &= m(x-x_1) \\ y-(-1) &= 3(x-6) && \text{Substitute known values.} \\ y+1 &= 3(x-6) && \text{Distribute } -1 \text{ to find point-slope form.} \end{aligned}$$

Then we use algebra to find the slope-intercept form.

$$\begin{aligned} y+1 &= 3(x-6) \\ y+1 &= 3x-18 && \text{Distribute 3.} \\ y &= 3x-19 && \text{Simplify to slope-intercept form.} \end{aligned}$$

? Try it! 4.1.3

Write the point-slope form of an equation of a line with a slope of –2 that passes through the point $(-2,2)$. Then rewrite it in the slope-intercept form.

Answer

$y-2=-2(x+2)$; $y=-2x-2$

Writing the Equation of a Line Using Two Points

The point-slope form of an equation is also useful if we know any two points through which a line passes. Suppose, for example, we know that a line passes through the points $(0,1)$ and $(3,2)$. We can use the coordinates of the two points to find the slope.

$$\begin{aligned} m &= \frac{y_2-y_1}{x_2-x_1} \\ &= \frac{2-1}{3-0} \\ &= \frac{1}{3} \end{aligned}$$

Now we can use the slope we found and the coordinates of one of the points to find the equation for the line. Let use $(0, 1)$ for our point.

$$\begin{aligned} y - y_1 &= m(x - x_1) \\ y - 1 &= \frac{1}{3}(x - 0) \end{aligned}$$

As before, we can use algebra to rewrite the equation in the slope-intercept form.

$$\begin{aligned} y - 1 &= \frac{1}{3}(x - 0) && \\ y - 1 &= \frac{1}{3}x && \text{Distribute the } \frac{1}{3}. \\ y &= \frac{1}{3}x + 1 && \text{Add 1 to each side.} \end{aligned}$$

Both equations describe the line shown in Figure 4.1.8.

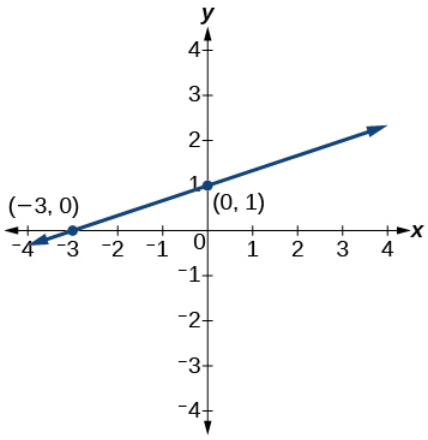

Figure 4.1.8

Example 4.1.6: Writing Linear Equations Using Two Points

Write the point-slope form of an equation of a line that passes through the points $(5, 1)$ and $(8, 7)$. Then rewrite it in the slope-intercept form.

Let's begin by finding the slope.

$$\begin{aligned} m &= \frac{y_2 - y_1}{x_2 - x_1} \\ &= \frac{7 - 1}{8 - 5} \\ &= \frac{6}{3} \\ &= 2 \end{aligned}$$

So $m = 2$. Next, we substitute the slope and the coordinates for one of the points into the general point-slope equation. We can choose either point, but we will use $(5, 1)$.

$$\begin{aligned} y - y_1 &= m(x - x_1) \\ y - 1 &= 2(x - 5) \end{aligned}$$

The point-slope equation of the line is $y_2 - 1 = 2(x_2 - 5)$. To rewrite the equation in slope-intercept form, we use algebra.

$$\begin{aligned} y - 1 &= 2(x - 5) \\ y - 1 &= 2x - 10 \\ y &= 2x - 9 \end{aligned}$$

The slope-intercept equation of the line is $y = 2x - 9$.

Try It! 4.1.4

Write the point-slope form of an equation of a line that passes through the points $(-1, 3)$ and $(0, 0)$. Then rewrite it in the slope-intercept form.

Answer

$y - 0 = -3(x - 0)$; $y = -3x$.

Writing and Interpreting an Equation for a Linear Function

Now that we have written equations for linear functions in both the slope-intercept form and the point-slope form, we can choose which method to use based on the information we are given. That information may be provided in the form of a graph, a point and a slope, two points, and so on. Look at the graph of the function f in Figure 4.1.9.

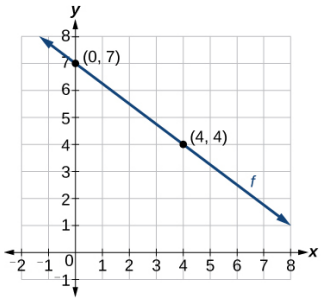

Figure 4.1.9: Graph depicting how to calculate the slope of a line.

We are not given the slope of the line, but we can choose any two points on the line to find the slope. Let's choose $(0, 7)$ and $(4, 4)$. We can use these points to calculate the slope.

$$\begin{aligned} m &= \frac{y_2 - y_1}{x_2 - x_1} \\ &= \frac{4 - 7}{4 - 0} \\ &= -\frac{3}{4} \end{aligned}$$

Now we can substitute the slope and the coordinates of one of the points into the point-slope form.

$$\begin{aligned} y - y_1 &= m(x - x_1) \\ y - 4 &= -\frac{3}{4}(x - 4) \end{aligned}$$

If we want to rewrite the equation in the slope-intercept form, we would find

$$\begin{aligned} y - 4 &= -\frac{3}{4}(x - 4) \\ y - 4 &= -\frac{3}{4}x + 3 \\ y &= -\frac{3}{4}x + 7 \end{aligned}$$

If we wanted to find the slope-intercept form without first writing the point-slope form, we could have recognized that the line crosses the y-axis when the output value is 7. Therefore, $b = 7$. We now have the initial value b and the slope m so we can substitute m and b into the slope-intercept form of a line.

$$f(x) = mx + b$$

$$-\frac{3}{4} \qquad 7$$

$$f(x) = -\frac{3}{4}x + 7$$

Figure 4.1.10

So the function is $f(x) = -\frac{3}{4}x + 7$, and the linear equation would be $y = -\frac{3}{4}x + 7$.

How to: Given the graph of a linear function, write an equation to represent the function.

1. Identify two points on the line.
2. Use the two points to calculate the slope.
3. Determine where the line crosses the y-axis to identify the y-intercept by visual inspection.
4. Substitute the slope and y-intercept into the slope-intercept form of a line equation.

Example 4.1.7: Writing an Equation for a Linear Function

Write an equation for a linear function given a graph of f shown in Figure 4.1.11.

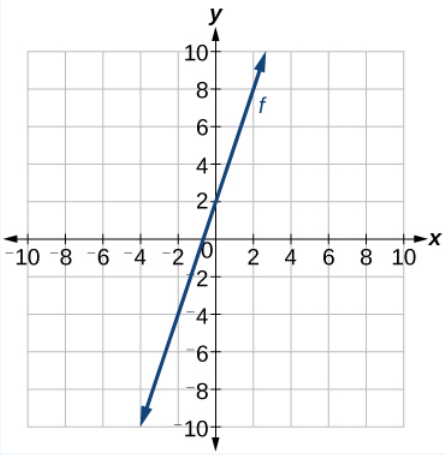

Figure 4.1.11

Solution

Identify two points on the line, such as $(0, 2)$ and $(-2, -4)$. Use the points to calculate the slope.

$$\begin{aligned} m &= \frac{y_2 - y_1}{x_2 - x_1} \\ &= \frac{4 - 2}{-2 - 0} \\ &= \frac{-6}{-2} \\ &= 3 \end{aligned}$$

Substitute the slope and the coordinates of one of the points into the point-slope form.

$$\begin{aligned} y - y_1 &= m(x - x_1) \\ y - (-4) &= 3(x - (-2)) \\ y + 4 &= 3(x + 2) \end{aligned}$$

We can use algebra to rewrite the equation in the slope-intercept form.

$$\begin{aligned} y+4 &= 3(x+2) \\ y+4 &= 3x+6 \\ y &= 3x+2 \end{aligned}$$

Analysis

This makes sense because we can see from Figure 4.1.12 that the line crosses the y-axis at the point $(0, 2)$, which is the y-intercept, so $b = 2$.

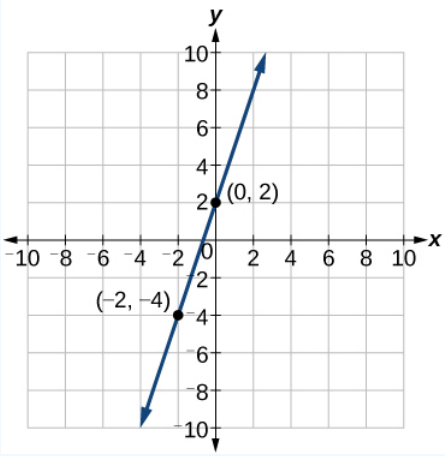

Figure 4.1.12: Graph of an increasing line with points at $(0, 2)$ and $(-2, -4)$.

Example 4.1.8: Writing an Equation for a Linear Cost Function

Suppose Ben starts a company in which he incurs a fixed cost of $1,250 per month for the overhead, which includes his office rent. His production costs are $37.50 per item. Write a linear function C where $C(x)$ is the cost for x items produced in a given month.

Solution

The fixed cost is present every month, $1,250. The costs that can vary include the cost to produce each item, which is $37.50 for Ben. The variable cost, called the marginal cost, is represented by 37.5. The cost Ben incurs is the sum of these two costs, represented by $C(x) = 1250 + 37.5x$.

Analysis

If Ben produces 100 items in a month, his monthly cost is represented by

$$\begin{aligned} C(100) &= 1250 + 37.5(100) \\ &= 5000 \end{aligned}$$

So his monthly cost would be $5,000.

Example 4.1.9: Writing an Equation for a Linear Function Given Two Points

If f is a linear function, with $f(3) = -2$, and $f(8) = 1$, find an equation for the function in slope-intercept form.

Solution

We can write the given points using coordinates.

$$\begin{aligned} f(3) = -2 &\rightarrow (3, 2) \\ f(8) = 1 &\rightarrow (8, 1) \end{aligned}$$

We can then use the points to calculate the slope.

$$\begin{aligned} m &= \frac{y_2 - y_1}{x_2 - x_1} \\ &= \frac{1-(-2)}{8-3} \\ &= \frac{3}{5} \end{aligned}$$

Substitute the slope and the coordinates of one of the points into the point-slope form.

$$\begin{aligned} y - y_1 &= m(x - x_1) \\ y-(-2) &= \frac{3}{5}(x-3) \end{aligned}$$

We can use algebra to rewrite the equation in the slope-intercept form.

$$\begin{aligned} y+2 &= \frac{3}{5}(x-3) \\ y+2 &= \frac{3}{5}x - \frac{9}{5} \\ y &= \frac{3}{5}x - \frac{19}{5} \end{aligned}$$

? Try It! 4.1.5

If $f(x)$ is a linear function, with $f(2) = -11$, and $f(4) = -25$, find an equation for the function in slope-intercept form.

Answer

$y = -7x + 3$

Modeling Real-World Problems with Linear Functions

In the real world, problems are not always explicitly stated in terms of a function or represented with a graph. Fortunately, we can analyze the problem by first representing it as a linear function and then interpreting the components of the function. As long as we know, or can figure out, the initial value and the rate of change of a linear function, we can solve many different kinds of real-world problems.

How to: Given a linear function f and the initial value and rate of change, evaluate $f(c)$.

1. Determine the initial value and the rate of change (slope).
2. Substitute the values into $f(x) = mx + b$.
3. Evaluate the function at $x = c$.

Example 4.1.10: Using a Linear Function to Determine the Number of Songs in a Music Collection

Marcus currently has 200 songs in his music collection. Every month, he adds 15 new songs. Write a formula for the number of songs, N, in his collection as a function of time, t, the number of months. How many songs will he own in a year?

Solution

The initial value for this function is 200 because he currently owns 200 songs, so $N(0) = 200$, which means that $b = 200$.

The number of songs increases by 15 songs per month, so the rate of change is 15 songs per month. Therefore we know that $m = 15$. We can substitute the initial value and the rate of change into the slope-intercept form of a line.

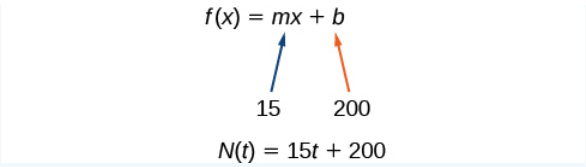

Figure 4.1.13

We can write the formula $N(t) = 15t + 200$.

With this formula, we can then predict how many songs Marcus will have in 1 year (12 months). In other words, we can evaluate the function at $t = 12$.

$$\begin{aligned} N(12) &= 15(12) + 200 \\ &= 180 + 200 \\ &= 380 \end{aligned}$$

Marcus will have 380 songs in 12 months.

Analysis

Notice that N is an increasing linear function. As the input (the number of months) increases, the output (number of songs) increases as well.

Example 4.1.11: Using a Linear Function to Calculate Salary Plus Commission

Working as an insurance salesperson, Ilya earns a base salary plus a commission on each new policy. Therefore, Ilya's weekly income, I,depends on the number of new policies, n, he sells during the week. Last week he sold 3 new policies, and earned \$760 for the week. The week before, he sold 5 new policies and earned \$920. Find an equation for $I(n)$, and interpret the meaning of the components of the equation.

Solution

The given information gives us two input-output pairs: $(3, 760)$ and $(5, 920)$. We start by finding the rate of change.

$$\begin{aligned} m &= \frac{920 - 760}{5 - 3} \\ &= \frac{\$160}{2 \text{ policies}} \\ &= \$80 \text{ per policy} \end{aligned}$$

Keeping track of units can help us interpret this quantity. Income increased by \$160 when the number of policies increased by 2, so the rate of change is \$80 per policy. Therefore, Ilya earns a commission of \$80 for each policy sold during the week.

We can then solve for the initial value.

$$\begin{aligned} I(n) &= 80n + b \\ 760 &= 80(3) + b \text{ when } n = 3, I(3) = 760 \\ 760 - 80(3) &= b \\ 520 &= b \end{aligned}$$

The value of b is the starting value for the function and represents Ilya's income when $n = 0$, or when no new policies are sold. We can interpret this as Ilya's base salary for the week, which does not depend upon the number of policies sold.

We can now write the final equation.

$$I(n) = 80n + 520$$

Our final interpretation is that Ilya's base salary is \$520 per week and he earns an additional \$80 commission for each policy sold.

Example 4.1.12: Using Tabular Form to Write an Equation for a Linear Function

Table 4.1.1 relates the number of rats in a population to time, in weeks. Use the table to write a linear equation.

Table 4.1.1

w, number of weeks	0	2	4	6
P(w), number of rats	1000	1080	1160	1240

Solution

We can see from the table that the initial value for the number of rats is 1000, so $b = 1000$.

Rather than solving for m, we can tell from looking at the table that the population increases by 80 for every 2 weeks that pass. This means that the rate of change is 80 rats per 2 weeks, which can be simplified to 40 rats per week.

$$P(w) = 40w + 1000$$

If we did not notice the rate of change from the table we could still solve for the slope using any two points from the table. For example, using $(2, 1080)$ and $(6, 1240)$

$$\begin{aligned} m &= \frac{1240 - 1080}{6 - 2} \\ &= \frac{160}{4} \\ &= 40 \end{aligned}$$

Is the initial value always provided in a table of values?

No. Sometimes the initial value is provided in a table of values, but sometimes it is not. If you see an input of 0, then the initial value would be the corresponding output. If the initial value is not provided because there is no value of input on the table equal to 0, find the slope, substitute one coordinate pair and the slope into $f(x) = mx + b$, and solve for b.

Try It 4.1.6

A new plant food was introduced to a young tree to test its effect on the height of the tree. Table 4.1.2 shows the height of the tree, in feet, x months since the measurements began. Write a linear function, $H(x)$, where x is the number of months since the start of the experiment.

Table 4.1.2

x	0	2	4	8	12
$H(x)$	12.5	13.5	14.5	16.5	18.5

Answer

$H(x) = 0.5x + 12.5$

Key Equations

- slope-intercept form of a line: $f(x) = mx + b$

- slope: $m = \frac{\text{change in output (rise)}}{\text{change in input (run)}} = \frac{\Delta y}{\Delta x} = \frac{y_2 - y_1}{x_2 - x_1}$
- point-slope form of a line: $y - y_1 = m(x - x_1)$

Key Concepts

- The ordered pairs given by a linear function represent points on a line.
- Linear functions can be represented in words, function notation, tabular form, and graphical form.
- The rate of change of a linear function is also known as the slope.
- An equation in the slope-intercept form of a line includes the slope and the initial value of the function.
- The initial value, or y-intercept, is the output value when the input of a linear function is zero. It is the y-value of the point at which the line crosses the y-axis.
- An increasing linear function results in a graph that slants upward from left to right and has a positive slope.
- A decreasing linear function results in a graph that slants downward from left to right and has a negative slope.
- A constant linear function results in a graph that is a horizontal line.
- Analyzing the slope within the context of a problem indicates whether a linear function is increasing, decreasing, or constant.
- The slope of a linear function can be calculated by dividing the difference between y-values by the difference in corresponding x-values of any two points on the line.
- The slope and initial value can be determined given a graph or any two points on the line.
- One type of function notation is the slope-intercept form of an equation.
- The point-slope form is useful for finding a linear equation when given the slope of a line and one point.
- The point-slope form is also convenient for finding a linear equation when given two points through which a line passes.
- The equation for a linear function can be written if the slope m and initial value b are known.
- A linear function can be used to solve real-world problems.
- A linear function can be written from tabular form.

Footnotes

1 www.chinahighlights.com/shang...glev-train.htm
2 www.cbsnews.com/8301-501465_1...ay-study-says/

Glossary

decreasing linear function

a function with a negative slope: If $f(x) = mx + b$, then $m < 0$.

increasing linear function

a function with a positive slope: If $f(x) = mx + b$, then $m > 0$.

linear function

a function with a constant rate of change that is a polynomial of degree 1, and whose graph is a straight line

point-slope form

the equation for a line that represents a linear function of the form \(y−y_1=m(x−x_1)

slope

the ratio of the change in output values to the change in input values; a measure of the steepness of a line

slope-intercept form

the equation for a line that represents a linear function in the form $f(x) = mx + b$

y-intercept

the value of a function when the input value is zero; also known as initial value

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4.1.1: Modeling with Linear Functions

Learning Objectives

- Build linear models from verbal descriptions.
- Model a set of data with a linear function.

Emily is a college student who plans to spend a summer in Seattle. She has saved $3,500 for her trip and anticipates spending $400 each week on rent, food, and activities. How can we write a linear model to represent her situation? What would be the x-intercept, and what can she learn from it? To answer these and related questions, we can create a model using a linear function. Models such as this one can be extremely useful for analyzing relationships and making predictions based on those relationships. In this section, we will explore examples of **linear function** models.

Figure 4.1.1.1: (credit: EEK Photography/Flickr)

Identifying Steps to Model and Solve Problems

When **modeling** scenarios with linear functions and solving problems involving quantities with a **constant rate of change**, we typically follow the same problem strategies that we would use for any type of function. Let's briefly review them:

Identify changing quantities, and then define descriptive variables to represent those quantities. When appropriate, sketch a picture or define a coordinate system.
Carefully read the problem to identify important information. Look for information that provides values for the variables or values for parts of the functional model, such as slope and initial value.
Carefully read the problem to determine what we are trying to find, identify, solve, or interpret.
Identify a solution pathway from the provided information to what we are trying to find. Often this will involve checking and tracking units, building a table, or even finding a formula for the function being used to model the problem.
When needed, write a formula for the function.
Solve or evaluate the function using the formula.
Reflect on whether your answer is reasonable for the given situation and whether it makes sense mathematically.
Clearly convey your result using appropriate units, and answer in full sentences when necessary.

Building Linear Models

Now let's take a look at the student in Seattle. In her situation, there are two changing quantities: time and money. The amount of money she has remaining while on vacation depends on how long she stays. We can use this information to define our variables, including units.

- Output: M, money remaining, in dollars
- Input: t, time, in weeks

So, the amount of money remaining depends on the number of weeks: $M(t)$

We can also identify the initial value and the rate of change.

- Initial Value: She saved $3,500, so $3,500 is the initial value for M.
- Rate of Change: She anticipates spending $400 each week, so –$400 per week is the rate of change, or slope.

Notice that the unit of dollars per week matches the unit of our output variable divided by our input variable. Also, because the slope is negative, the linear function is decreasing. This should make sense because she is spending money each week.

The **rate of change is constant**, so we can start with the linear model $M(t) = mt + b$. Then we can substitute the intercept and slope provided.

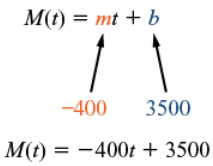

Figure 4.1.1.2

To find the x-intercept, we set the output to zero, and solve for the input.

$$\begin{aligned} 0 &= -400t + 3500 \\ t &= \frac{3500}{400} \\ &= 8.75 \end{aligned}$$

The x-intercept is 8.75 weeks. Because this represents the input value when the output will be zero, we could say that Emily will have no money left after 8.75 weeks.

When modeling any real-life scenario with functions, there is typically a limited domain over which that model will be valid—almost no trend continues indefinitely. Here the domain refers to the number of weeks. In this case, it doesn't make sense to talk about input values less than zero. A negative input value could refer to a number of weeks before she saved $3,500, but the scenario discussed poses the question once she saved $3,500 because this is when her trip and subsequent spending starts. It is also likely that this model is not valid after the x-intercept, unless Emily will use a credit card and goes into debt. The domain represents the set of input values, so the reasonable domain for this function is $0 \le t \le 8.75$.

In the above example, we were given a written description of the situation. We followed the steps of modeling a problem to analyze the information. However, the information provided may not always be the same. Sometimes we might be provided with an intercept. Other times we might be provided with an output value. We must be careful to analyze the information we are given, and use it appropriately to build a linear model.

Using a Given Intercept to Build a Model

Some real-world problems provide the y-intercept, which is the constant or initial value. Once the y-intercept is known, the x-intercept can be calculated. Suppose, for example, that Hannah plans to pay off a no-interest loan from her parents. Her loan balance is $1,000. She plans to pay $250 per month until her balance is $0. The y-intercept is the initial amount of her debt, or $1,000. The rate of change, or slope, is -$250 per month. We can then use the slope-intercept form and the given information to develop a linear model.

$$\begin{aligned} f(x) &= mx + b \\ &= -250x + 1000 \end{aligned}$$

Now we can set the function equal to 0, and solve for x to find the x-intercept.

$$\begin{aligned} 0 &= -250 + 1000 \\ 1000 &= 250x \\ 4 &= x \\ x &= 4 \end{aligned}$$

The x-intercept is the number of months it takes her to reach a balance of $0. The x-intercept is 4 months, so it will take Hannah four months to pay off her loan.

Using a Given Input and Output to Build a Model

Many real-world applications are not as direct as the ones we just considered. Instead they require us to identify some aspect of a linear function. We might sometimes instead be asked to evaluate the linear model at a given input or set the equation of the linear model equal to a specified output.

How To: Given a word problem that includes two pairs of input and output values, use the linear function to solve a problem.

1. Identify the input and output values.
2. Convert the data to two coordinate pairs.
3. Find the slope.
4. Write the linear model.
5. Use the model to make a prediction by evaluating the function at a given x-value.
6. Use the model to identify an x-value that results in a given y-value.
7. Answer the question posed.

Example 4.1.1.1: Using a Linear Model to Investigate a Town's Population

A town's population has been growing linearly. In 2004 the population was 6,200. By 2009 the population had grown to 8,100. Assume this trend continues.

a. Predict the population in 2013.
b. Identify the year in which the population will reach 15,000.

Solution

The two changing quantities are the population size and time. While we could use the actual year value as the input quantity, doing so tends to lead to very cumbersome equations because the y-intercept would correspond to the year 0, more than 2000 years ago!

To make computation a little nicer, we will define our input as the number of years since 2004:

- Input: t, years since 2004
- Output: $P(t)$, the town's population

To predict the population in 2013 ($t = 9$), we would first need an equation for the population. Likewise, to find when the population would reach 15,000, we would need to solve for the input that would provide an output of 15,000. To write an equation, we need the initial value and the rate of change, or slope.

To determine the rate of change, we will use the change in output per change in input.

$$m = \frac{\text{change in output}}{\text{change in input}} \tag{4.1.1.1}$$

The problem gives us two input-output pairs. Converting them to match our defined variables, the year 2004 would correspond to $t = 0$, giving the point $(0, 6200)$. Notice that through our clever choice of variable definition, we have "given" ourselves the y-intercept of the function. The year 2009 would correspond to $t = 5$, giving the point $(5, 8100)$.

The two coordinate pairs are $(0, 6200)$ and $(5, 8100)$. Recall that we encountered examples in which we were provided two points earlier in the chapter. We can use these values to calculate the slope.

$$\begin{aligned} m &= \frac{8100 - 6200}{5 - 0} \\ &= \frac{1900}{5} \\ &= 380 \text{ people per year} \end{aligned}$$

We already know the y-intercept of the line, so we can immediately write the equation:

$$P(t) = 380t + 6200 \tag{4.1.1.2}$$

To predict the population in 2013, we evaluate our function at $t = 9$.

$$\begin{aligned} P(9) &= 380(9)+6,200 \\ &= 9,620 \end{aligned}$$

If the trend continues, our model predicts a population of 9,620 in 2013.

To find when the population will reach 15,000, we can set $P(t) = 15000$ and solve for t.

$$\begin{aligned} 15000 &= 380t+6200 \\ 8800 &= 380t \\ t &\approx 23.158 \end{aligned}$$

Our model predicts the population will reach 15,000 in a little more than 23 years after 2004, or somewhere around the year 2027.

Exercise 4.1.1.1A

A company sells doughnuts. They incur a fixed cost of $25,000 for rent, insurance, and other expenses. It costs $0.25 to produce each doughnut.

a. Write a linear model to represent the cost C of the company as a function of x, the number of doughnuts produced.
b. Find and interpret the y-intercept.

Solution

a. $C(x) = 0.25x + 25,000$ b. The y-intercept is $(0, 25,000)$. If the company does not produce a single doughnut, they still incur a cost of $25,000.

Exercise 4.1.1.1B

A city's population has been growing linearly. In 2008, the population was 28,200. By 2012, the population was 36,800. Assume this trend continues.

a. Predict the population in 2014.
b. Identify the year in which the population will reach 54,000.

Solution

a. 41,100 b. 2020

Using a Diagram to Model a Problem

It is useful for many real-world applications to draw a picture to gain a sense of how the variables representing the input and output may be used to answer a question. To draw the picture, first consider what the problem is asking for. Then, determine the input and the output. The diagram should relate the variables. Often, geometrical shapes or figures are drawn. Distances are often traced out. If a right triangle is sketched, the Pythagorean Theorem relates the sides. If a rectangle is sketched, labeling width and height is helpful.

Example 4.1.1.2: Using a Diagram to Model Distance Walked

Anna and Emanuel start at the same intersection. Anna walks east at 4 miles per hour while Emanuel walks south at 3 miles per hour. They are communicating with a two-way radio that has a range of 2 miles. How long after they start walking will they fall out of radio contact?

Solution

In essence, we can partially answer this question by saying they will fall out of radio contact when they are 2 miles apart, which leads us to ask a new question:

"How long will it take them to be 2 miles apart?"

In this problem, our changing quantities are time and position, but ultimately we need to know how long will it take for them to be 2 miles apart. We can see that time will be our input variable, so we'll define our input and output variables.

- Input: t, time in hours.
- Output: $A(t)$, distance in miles, and $E(t)$, distance in miles

Because it is not obvious how to define our output variable, we'll start by drawing a picture such as Figure 4.1.1.3

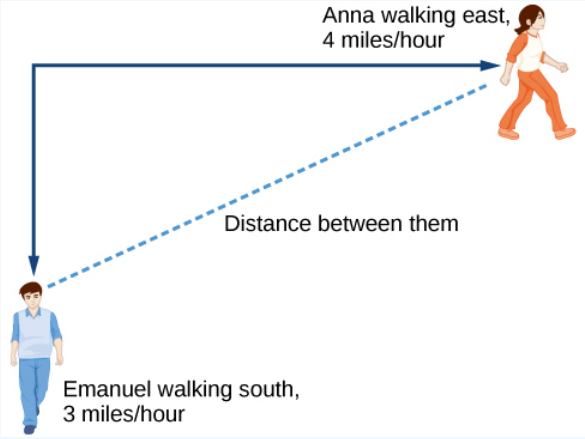

Figure 4.1.1.3

- Initial Value: They both start at the same intersection so when $t = 0$, the distance traveled by each person should also be 0. Thus the initial value for each is 0.
- Rate of Change: Anna is walking 4 miles per hour and Emanuel is walking 3 miles per hour, which are both rates of change. The slope for A is 4 and the slope for E is 3.

Using those values, we can write formulas for the distance each person has walked.

$$A(t) = 4t \tag{4.1.1.3}$$

$$E(t) = 3t \tag{4.1.1.4}$$

For this problem, the distances from the starting point are important. To notate these, we can define a coordinate system, identifying the "starting point" at the intersection where they both started. Then we can use the variable, A, which we introduced above, to represent Anna's position, and define it to be a measurement from the starting point in the eastward direction. Likewise, can use the variable, E, to represent Emanuel's position, measured from the starting point in the southward direction. Note that in defining the coordinate system, we specified both the starting point of the measurement and the direction of measure.

We can then define a third variable, D, to be the measurement of the distance between Anna and Emanuel. Showing the variables on the diagram is often helpful, as we can see from Figure 4.1.1.4

Recall that we need to know how long it takes for D, the distance between them, to equal 2 miles. Notice that for any given input t, the outputs $A(t)$, $E(t)$, and $D(t)$ represent distances.

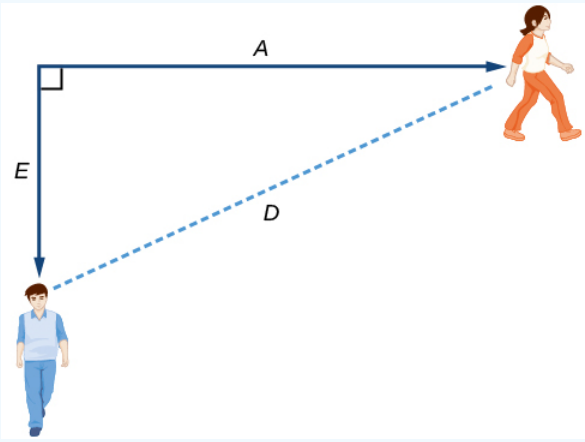

Figure 4.1.1.4: We can use the Pythagorean Theorem because we have drawn a right angle.

Using the Pythagorean Theorem, we get:

$$\begin{aligned} d(t)^2 &= A(t)^2 + E(t)^2 \\ &= (4t)^2 + (3t)^2 \\ &= 16t^2 + 9t^2 \\ &= 25t^2 \\ D(t) &= \pm\sqrt{25t^2} \qquad \text{Solve for } D(t) \text{ using the square root} \\ &= \pm 5|t| \end{aligned}$$

In this scenario we are considering only positive values of t, so our distance $D(t)$ will always be positive. We can simplify this answer to $D(t) = 5t$. This means that the distance between Anna and Emanuel is also a linear function. Because D is a linear function, we can now answer the question of when the distance between them will reach 2 miles. We will set the output $D(t) = 2$ and solve for t.

$$\begin{aligned} D(t) &= 2 \\ 5t &= 2 \\ t &= \frac{2}{5} = 0.4 \end{aligned}$$

They will fall out of radio contact in 0.4 hours, or 24 minutes.

Should I draw diagrams when given information based on a geometric shape?

Yes. Sketch the figure and label the quantities and unknowns on the sketch.

Example 4.1.1.3: Using a Diagram to Model Distance between Cities

There is a straight road leading from the town of Westborough to Agritown 30 miles east and 10 miles north. Partway down this road, it junctions with a second road, perpendicular to the first, leading to the town of Eastborough. If the town of Eastborough is located 20 miles directly east of the town of Westborough, how far is the road junction from Westborough?

Solution

It might help here to draw a picture of the situation. See Figure 4.1.1.5 It would then be helpful to introduce a coordinate system. While we could place the origin anywhere, placing it at Westborough seems convenient. This puts Agritown at coordinates $(30, 10)$, and Eastborough at $(20, 0)$.

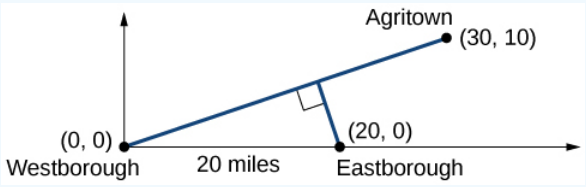

Figure 4.1.1.5

Using this point along with the origin, we can find the slope of the line from Westborough to Agritown:

$$m = \frac{10-0}{30-0} = \frac{1}{3} \tag{4.1.1.5}$$

The equation of the road from Westborough to Agritown would be

$$W(x) = \frac{1}{3}x \tag{4.1.1.6}$$

From this, we can determine the perpendicular road to Eastborough will have slope $m = -3$. Because the town of Eastborough is at the point $(20, 0)$, we can find the equation:

$$\begin{aligned} E(x) &= -3x + b \\ 0 &= -3(20) + b \qquad \text{Substitute in } (20, 0) \\ b &= 60 \\ E(x) &= -3x + 60 \end{aligned}$$

We can now find the coordinates of the junction of the roads by finding the intersection of these lines. Setting them equal,

$$\begin{aligned}
\frac{1}{3}x &= -3x+60 \\
\frac{10}{3}x &= 60 \\
10x &= 180 \\
x &= 18 \qquad \text{Substituting this back into } W(x) \\
y &= W(18) \\
&= \frac{1}{3}(18) \\
&= 6
\end{aligned}$$

The roads intersect at the point $(18, 6)$. Using the distance formula, we can now find the distance from Westborough to the junction.

$$\begin{aligned}
\text{distance} &= \sqrt{(x_2-x_1)^2+(y_2-y_1)^2} \\
&= \sqrt{(18-0)^2+(6-0)^2} \\
&\approx 18.743\text{miles}
\end{aligned}$$

Analysis

One nice use of linear models is to take advantage of the fact that the graphs of these functions are lines. This means real-world applications discussing maps need linear functions to model the distances between reference points.

Exercise 4.1.1.2

There is a straight road leading from the town of Timpson to Ashburn 60 miles east and 12 miles north. Partway down the road, it junctions with a second road, perpendicular to the first, leading to the town of Garrison. If the town of Garrison is located 22 miles directly east of the town of Timpson, how far is the road junction from Timpson?

Solution

21.15 miles

Building Systems of Linear Models

Real-world situations including two or more linear functions may be modeled with a **system of linear equations**. Remember, when solving a system of linear equations, we are looking for points the two lines have in common. Typically, there are three types of answers possible, as shown in Figure 4.1.1.6

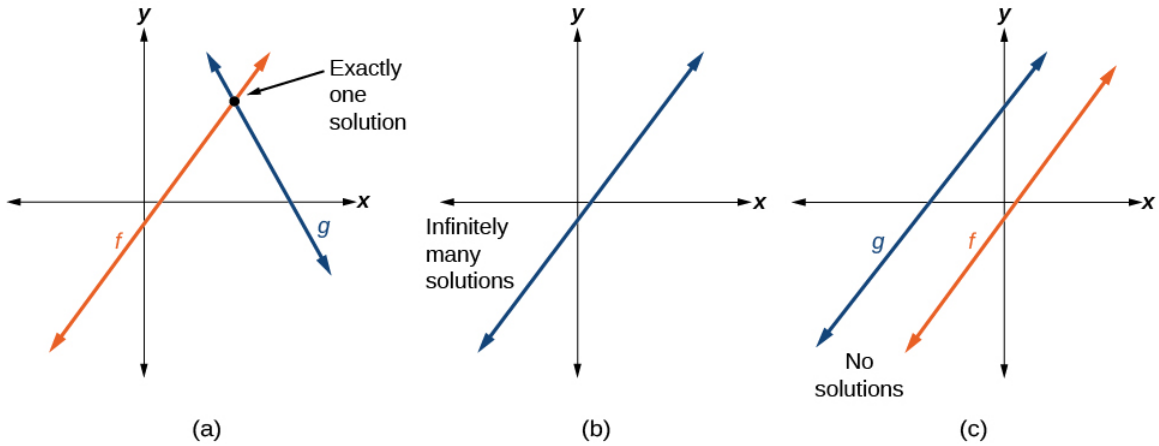

Figure 4.1.1.6

Given a situation that represents a system of linear equations, write the system of equations and identify the solution.

a. Identify the input and output of each linear model.
b. Identify the slope and y-intercept of each linear model.
c. Find the solution by setting the two linear functions equal to another and solving for x,or find the point of intersection on a graph.

Example 4.1.1.4: Building a System of Linear Models to Choose a Truck Rental Company

Jamal is choosing between two truck-rental companies. The first, Keep on Trucking, Inc., charges an up-front fee of $20, then 59 cents a mile[1]. The second, Move It Your Way, charges an up-front fee of $16, then 63 cents a mile. When will Keep on Trucking, Inc. be the better choice for Jamal?

Solution

The two important quantities in this problem are the cost and the number of miles driven. Because we have two companies to consider, we will define two functions.

- Input: d, distance driven in miles
- Outputs: $K(d)$: cost, in dollars, for renting from Keep on Trucking

  $M(d)$: cost, in dollars, for renting from Move It Your Way
- Initial Value: Up-front fee: $K(0) = 20$ and $M(0) = 16$
- Rate of Change: $K(d) = \frac{\$0.59}{\text{mile}}$ and $P(d) = \frac{\$0.63}{\text{mile}}$

A linear function is of the form $f(x) = mx + b$. Using the rates of change and initial charges, we can write the equations

$$K(d) = 0.59d + 20$$

$$M(d) = 0.63d + 16$$

Using these equations, we can determine when Keep on Trucking, Inc. will be the better choice. Because all we have to make that decision from is the costs, we are looking for when Keep on Trucking, Inc. will cost less, or when $K(d) < M(d)$. The solution pathway will lead us to find the equations for the two functions, find the intersection, and then see where the $K(d)$ function is smaller.

These graphs are sketched in Figure 4.1.1.7, with $K(d)$ in blue.

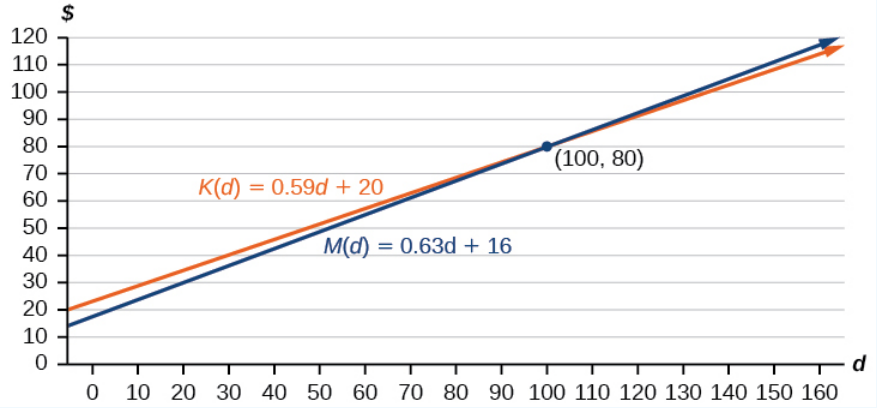

Figure 4.1.1.7

To find the intersection, we set the equations equal and solve:

$$\begin{aligned} K(d) &= M(d) \\ 0.59d + 20 &= 0.63d + 16 \\ 4 &= 0.04d \\ 100 &= d \\ d &= 100 \end{aligned}$$

This tells us that the cost from the two companies will be the same if 100 miles are driven. Either by looking at the graph, or noting that $K(d)$ is growing at a slower rate, we can conclude that Keep on Trucking, Inc. will be the cheaper price when more than 100 miles are driven, that is $d > 100$.

Key Concepts

- We can use the same problem strategies that we would use for any type of function.
- When modeling and solving a problem, identify the variables and look for key values, including the slope and y-intercept.
- Draw a diagram, where appropriate.
- Check for reasonableness of the answer.
- Linear models may be built by identifying or calculating the slope and using the y-intercept.
- The x-intercept may be found by setting $y = 0$, which is setting the expression $mx + b$ equal to 0.
- The point of intersection of a system of linear equations is the point where the x- and y-values are the same.
- A graph of the system may be used to identify the points where one line falls below (or above) the other line.

Footnotes

1 Rates retrieved Aug 2, 2010 from www.budgettruck.com and http://www.uhaul.com/

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4.2: Rates of Change and Behavior of Graphs

Learning Objectives

- Find the average rate of change of a function.
- Use a graph to determine where a function is increasing, decreasing, or constant.
- Use a graph to locate local maxima and local minima.
- Use a graph to locate the absolute maximum and absolute minimum.

Gasoline costs have experienced some wild fluctuations over the last several decades. Table $4.2.1$ lists the average cost, in dollars, of a gallon of gasoline for the years 2005–2012. The cost of gasoline can be considered as a function of year.

Table 4.2.1

y	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
$C(y)$	2.31	2.62	2.84	3.30	2.41	2.84	3.58	3.68

If we were interested only in how the gasoline prices changed between 2005 and 2012, we could compute that the cost per gallon had increased from \$2.31 to \$3.68, an increase of \$1.37. While this is interesting, it might be more useful to look at how much the price changed per year. In this section, we will investigate changes such as these.

Finding the Average Rate of Change of a Function

The price change per year is a **rate of change** because it describes how an output quantity changes relative to the change in the input quantity. We can see that the price of gasoline in Table $4.2.1$ did not change by the same amount each year, so the rate of change was not constant. If we use only the beginning and ending data, we would be finding the **average rate of change** over the specified period of time. To find the average rate of change, we divide the change in the output value by the change in the input value.

$$\begin{aligned}\text{Average rate of change} &= \frac{\text{Change in output}}{\text{Change in input}} \\ &= \frac{\Delta y}{\Delta x} \\ &= \frac{y_2 - y_1}{x_2 - x_1} \\ &= \frac{f(x_2) - f(x_1)}{x_2 - x_1}\end{aligned}$$

The Greek letter Δ (delta) signifies the change in a quantity; we read the ratio as "delta-y over delta-x" or "the change in y divided by the change in x." Occasionally we write Δf instead of Δy, which still represents the change in the function's output value resulting from a change to its input value. It does not mean we are changing the function into some other function.

In our example, the gasoline price increased by \$1.37 from 2005 to 2012. Over 7 years, the average rate of change was

$$\frac{\Delta y}{\Delta x} = \frac{\$1.37}{7\text{years}} \approx 0.196 \text{ dollars per year.} \tag{4.2.1}$$

On average, the price of gas increased by about 19.6¢ each year. Other examples of rates of change include:

- A population of rats increasing by 40 rats per week
- A car traveling 68 miles per hour (distance traveled changes by 68 miles each hour as time passes)
- A car driving 27 miles per gallon (distance traveled changes by 27 miles for each gallon)
- The current through an electrical circuit increasing by 0.125 amperes for every volt of increased voltage
- The amount of money in a college account decreasing by \$4,000 per quarter

Definition: Rate of Change

A **rate of change** describes how an output quantity changes relative to the change in the input quantity. The units on a rate of change are "output units per input units."

The average rate of change between two input values is the total change of the function values (output values) divided by the change in the input values.

$$\frac{\Delta y}{\Delta x} = \frac{f(x_2) - f(x_1)}{x_2 - x_1} \tag{4.2.2}$$

How To...

Given the value of a function at different points, calculate the average rate of change of a function for the interval between two values x_1 and x_2.

1. Calculate the difference $y_2 - y_1 = \Delta y$.
2. Calculate the difference $x_2 - x_1 = \Delta x$.
3. Find the ratio $\frac{\Delta y}{\Delta x}$.

Example 4.2.1: Computing an Average Rate of Change

Using the data in Table 4.2.1, find the average rate of change of the price of gasoline between 2007 and 2009.

Solution

In 2007, the price of gasoline was \$2.84. In 2009, the cost was \$2.41. The average rate of change is

$$\begin{aligned} \frac{\Delta y}{\Delta x} &= \frac{y_2 - y_1}{x_2 - x_1} \\ &= \frac{\$2.41 - \$2.84}{2009 - 2007} \\ &= \frac{-\$0.43}{2 \text{ years}} \\ &= -\$0.22 \text{ per year} \end{aligned}$$

Analysis

Note that a decrease is expressed by a negative change or "negative increase." A rate of change is negative when the output decreases as the input increases or when the output increases as the input decreases.

Exercise 4.2.1

Using the data in Table 4.2.1, find the average rate of change between 2005 and 2010.

Solution

$$\frac{\$2.84 - \$2.315}{5 \text{ years}} = \frac{\$0.535}{5 \text{ years}} = \$0.106 \text{per year.}$$

Example 4.2.2: Computing Average Rate of Change from a Graph

Given the function $g(t)$ shown in Figure 4.2.1, find the average rate of change on the interval $[-1, 2]$.

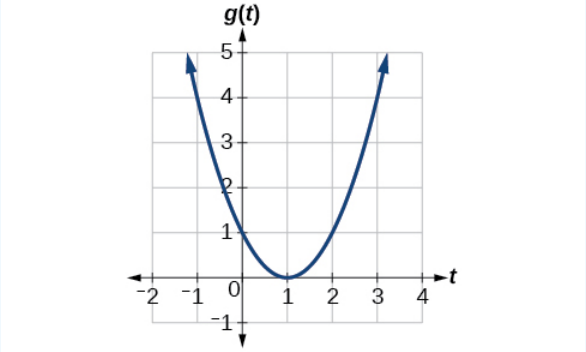


Figure 4.2.1: Graph of a parabola.

Solution

At $t=-1$, Figure 4.2.2 shows $g(-1)=4$. At $t=2$, the graph shows $g(2)=1$.

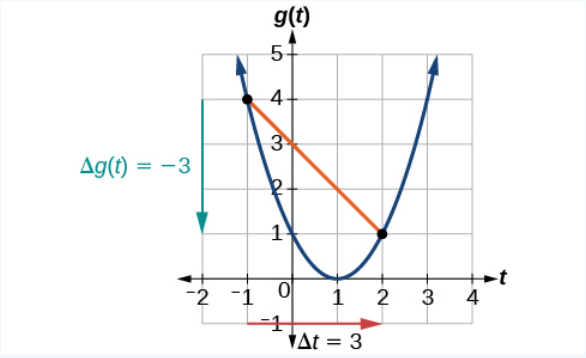


Figure 4.2.2: Graph of a parabola with a line from points (-1, 4) and (2, 1) to show the changes for g(t) and t.

The horizontal change $\Delta t=3$ is shown by the red arrow, and the vertical change $\Delta g(t)=-3$ is shown by the turquoise arrow. The output changes by –3 while the input changes by 3, giving an average rate of change of

$$\frac{1-4}{2-(-1)}=\frac{-3}{3}=-1 \tag{4.2.3}$$

Analysis

Note that the order we choose is very important. If, for example, we use $\frac{y_2-y_1}{x_1-x_2}$, we will not get the correct answer. Decide which point will be 1 and which point will be 2, and keep the coordinates fixed as (x_1,y_1) and (x_2,y_2).

Example 4.2.3: Computing Average Rate of Change from a Table

After picking up a friend who lives 10 miles away, Anna records her distance from home over time. The values are shown in Table 4.2.2. Find her average speed over the first 6 hours.

Table 4.2.2

t (hours)	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
$D(t)$ (miles)	10	55	90	153	214	240	292	300

Solution

Here, the average speed is the average rate of change. She traveled 292 miles in 6 hours, for an average speed of

$$\frac{292-10}{6-0}=\frac{282}{6}$$
$$=47$$

The average speed is about 47 miles per hour.

Analysis

Because the speed is not constant, the average speed depends on the interval chosen. For the interval $[2,3]$, the average speed is 63 miles per hour.

Example 4.2.4: Computing Average Rate of Change for a Function Expressed as a Formula

Compute the average rate of change of $f(x)=x^2-\frac{1}{x}$ on the interval $[2,4]$.

Solution

We can start by computing the function values at each endpoint of the interval.

$$\begin{aligned} f(2) &= 2^2-\frac{1}{2} & f(4) &= 4^2-\frac{1}{4} \\ &= 4-\frac{1}{2} & &= 16-\frac{1}{4} \\ &= 72 & &= \frac{63}{4} \end{aligned}$$

Now we compute the average rate of change.

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Average rate of change} &= \frac{f(4)-f(2)}{4-2} \\ &= \frac{\frac{63}{4}-\frac{7}{2}}{4-2} \\ &= \frac{\frac{49}{4}}{2} \\ &= \frac{49}{8} \end{aligned}$$

Exercise 4.2.2

Find the average rate of change of $f(x)=x-2\sqrt{x}$ on the interval $[1,9]$.

Solution

$\frac{1}{2}$

Example 4.2.5: Finding the Average Rate of Change of a Force

The electrostatic force F, measured in newtons, between two charged particles can be related to the distance between the particles d,in centimeters, by the formula $F(d)=\frac{2}{d^2}$. Find the average rate of change of force if the distance between the particles is increased from 2 cm to 6 cm.

Solution

We are computing the average rate of change of $F(d)=\dfrac{2}{d^2}$ on the interval $[2,6]$.

$$\begin{aligned}
\text{Average rate of change} &= \frac{F(6)-F(2)}{6-2} \\
&= \frac{\frac{2}{6^2}-\frac{2}{2^2}}{6-2} && \text{Simplify} \\
&= \frac{\frac{2}{36}-\frac{2}{4}}{4} \\
&= \frac{-\frac{16}{36}}{4} && \text{Combine numerator terms.} \\
&= -\frac{1}{9} && \text{Simplify}
\end{aligned}$$

The average rate of change is $-\frac{1}{9}$ newton per centimeter.

Example 4.2.6: Finding an Average Rate of Change as an Expression

Find the average rate of change of $g(t)=t^2+3t+1$ on the interval $[0,a]$. The answer will be an expression involving a.

Solution

We use the average rate of change formula.

$$\begin{aligned}
\text{Average rate of change} &= \frac{g(a)-g(0)}{a-0} && \text{Evaluate.} \\
&= \frac{(a^2+3a+1)-(0^2+3(0)+1)}{a-0} && \text{Simplify.} \\
&= \frac{a^2+3a+1-1}{a} && \text{Simplify and factor.} \\
&= \frac{a(a+3)}{a} && \text{Divide by the common factor a.} \\
&= a+3
\end{aligned}$$

This result tells us the average rate of change in terms of a between $t=0$ and any other point $t=a$. For example, on the interval $[0,5]$, the average rate of change would be $5+3=8$.

Exercise 4.2.3

Find the average rate of change of $f(x)=x^2+2x-8$ on the interval $[5,a]$.

Solution

$a+7$

Using a Graph to Determine Where a Function is Increasing, Decreasing, or Constant

As part of exploring how functions change, we can identify intervals over which the function is changing in specific ways. We say that a function is increasing on an interval if the function values increase as the input values increase within that interval. Similarly, a function is decreasing on an interval if the function values decrease as the input values increase over that interval. The average rate of change of an increasing function is positive, and the average rate of change of a decreasing function is negative. Figure 4.2.3 shows examples of increasing and decreasing intervals on a function.

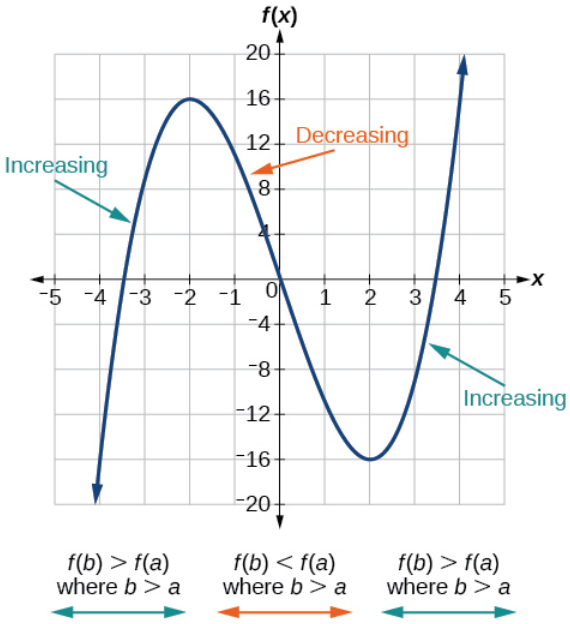


Figure 4.2.3: The function $f(x) = x^3 - 12x$ is increasing on $(-\infty, -2) \cup (2, \infty)$ and is decreasing on $(-2, 2)$.

While some functions are increasing (or decreasing) over their entire domain, many others are not. A value of the input where a function changes from increasing to decreasing (as we go from left to right, that is, as the input variable increases) is called a **local maximum**. If a function has more than one, we say it has local maxima. Similarly, a value of the input where a function changes from decreasing to increasing as the input variable increases is called a **local minimum**. The plural form is "local minima." Together, local maxima and minima are called **local extrema**, or local extreme values, of the function. (The singular form is "extremum.") Often, the term local is replaced by the term relative. In this text, we will use the term local.

Clearly, a function is neither increasing nor decreasing on an interval where it is constant. A function is also neither increasing nor decreasing at extrema. Note that we have to speak of local extrema, because any given local extremum as defined here is not necessarily the highest maximum or lowest minimum in the function's entire domain.

For the function whose graph is shown in Figure 4.2.4, the local maximum is 16, and it occurs at $x = -2$. The local minimum is -16 and it occurs at $x = 2$.

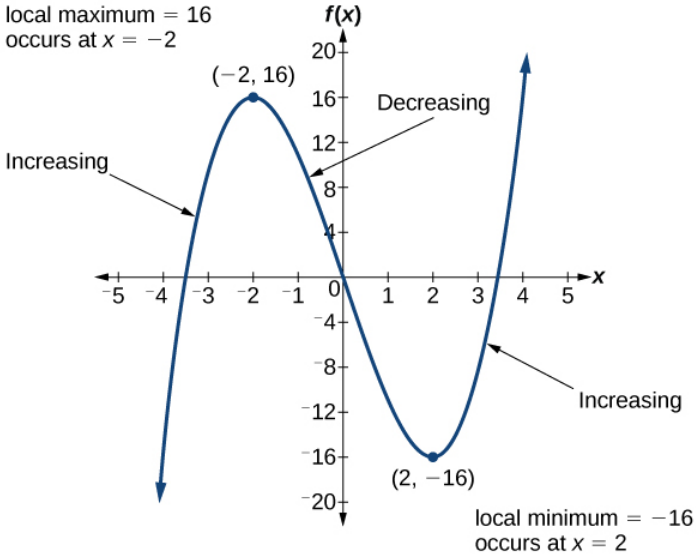


Figure 4.2.4: Graph of a polynomial that shows the increasing and decreasing intervals and local maximum.maximum

To locate the local maxima and minima from a graph, we need to observe the graph to determine where the graph attains its highest and lowest points, respectively, within an open interval. Like the summit of a roller coaster, the graph of a function is higher at a

local maximum than at nearby points on both sides. The graph will also be lower at a local minimum than at neighboring points. Figure 4.2.5 illustrates these ideas for a local maximum.

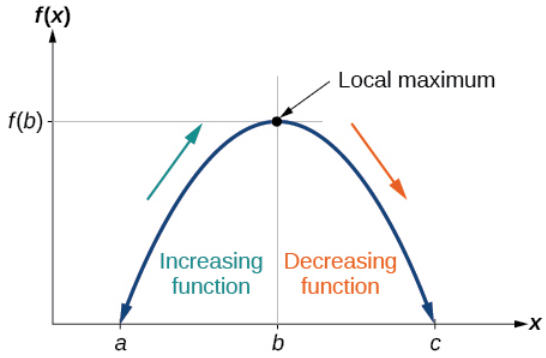


Figure 4.2.5: Definition of a local maximum

These observations lead us to a formal definition of local extrema.

Local Minima and Local Maxima

- A function f is an **increasing function** on an open interval if $f(b) > f(a)$ for every a, b interval where $b > a$.
- A function f is a **decreasing function** on an open interval if $f(b) < f(a)$ for every a, b interval where $b > a$.

A function f has a local maximum at a point b in an open interval (a, c) if $f(b)$ is greater than or equal to $f(x)$ for every point x (x does not equal b) in the interval. Likewise, f has a local minimum at a point b in (a, c) if $f(b)$ is less than or equal to $f(x)$ for every x (x does not equal b) in the interval.

Example 4.2.7 Finding Increasing and Decreasing Intervals on a Graph

Given the function $p(t)$ in Figure 4.2.6, identify the intervals on which the function appears to be increasing.

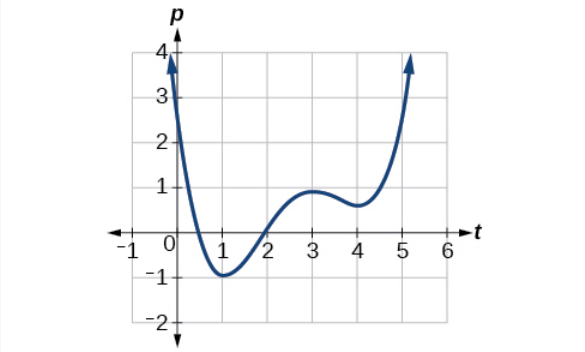


Figure 4.2.6: Graph of a polynomial.

Solution

We see that the function is not constant on any interval. The function is increasing where it slants upward as we move to the right and decreasing where it slants downward as we move to the right. The function appears to be increasing from $t = 1$ to $t = 3$ and from $t = 4$ on.

In interval notation, we would say the function appears to be increasing on the interval $(1, 3)$ and the interval $(4, \infty)$.

Analysis

Notice in this example that we used open intervals (intervals that do not include the endpoints), because the function is neither increasing nor decreasing at $t = 1$, $t = 3$, and $t = 4$. These points are the local extrema (two minima and a maximum).

Example 4.2.8: Finding Local Extrema from a Graph

Graph the function $f(x) = \frac{2}{x} + \frac{x}{3}$. Then use the graph to estimate the local extrema of the function and to determine the intervals on which the function is increasing.

Solution

Using technology, we find that the graph of the function looks like that in Figure 4.2.7. It appears there is a low point, or local minimum, between $x = 2$ and $x = 3$, and a mirror-image high point, or local maximum, somewhere between $x = -3$ and $x = -2$

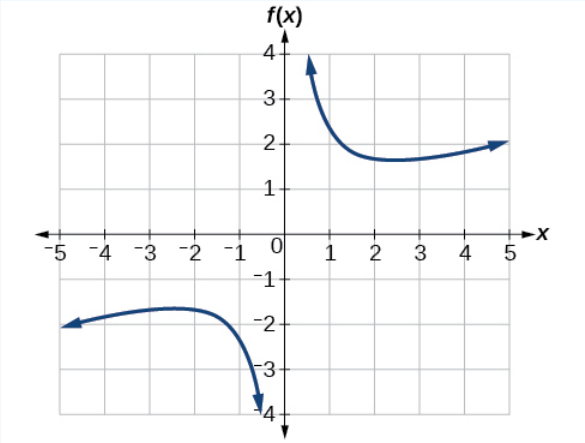


Figure 4.2.7: Graph of a reciprocal function.

Analysis

Most graphing calculators and graphing utilities can estimate the location of maxima and minima. Figure 4.2.8 provides screen images from two different technologies, showing the estimate for the local maximum and minimum.

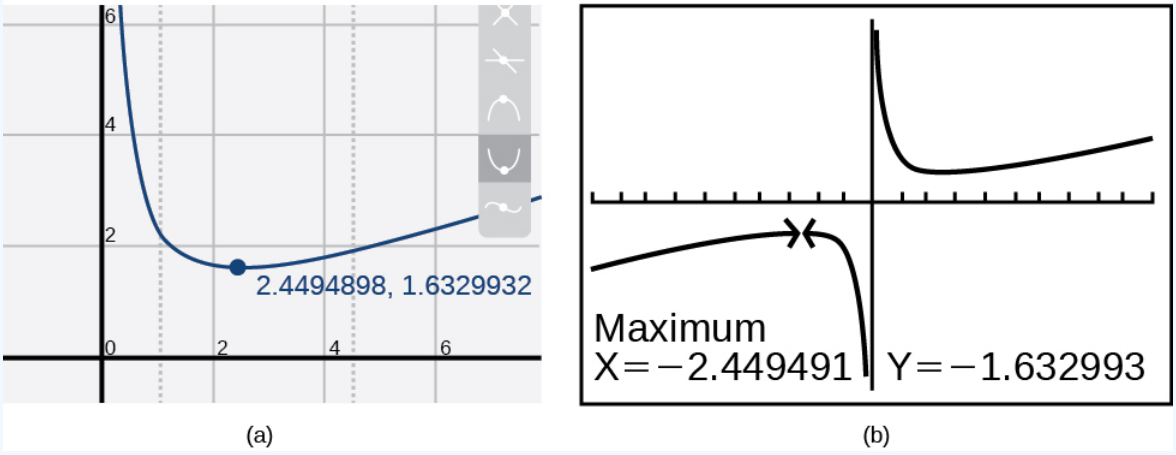


Figure 4.2.8: Graph of the reciprocal function on a graphing calculator.

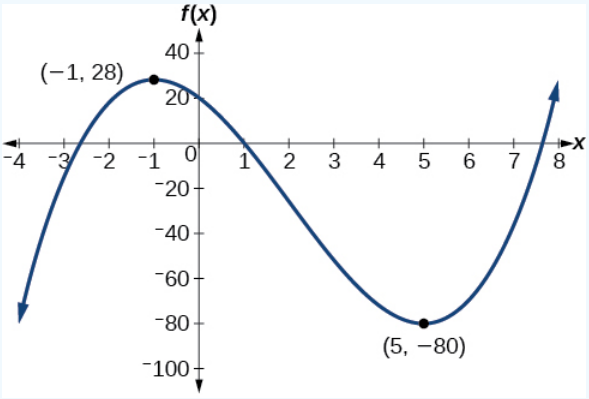
Based on these estimates, the function is increasing on the interval $(-\infty, -2.449)$ and $(2.449, \infty)$. Notice that, while we expect the extrema to be symmetric, the two different technologies agree only up to four decimals due to the differing approximation algorithms used by each. (The exact location of the extrema is at $\pm\sqrt{6}$, but determining this requires calculus.)

Exercise 4.2.8

Graph the function $f(x) = x^3 - 6x^2 - 15x + 20$ to estimate the local extrema of the function. Use these to determine the intervals on which the function is increasing and decreasing.

Solution

The local maximum appears to occur at $(-1, 28)$, and the local minimum occurs at $(5, -80)$. The function is increasing on $(-\infty, -1) \cup (5, \infty)$ and decreasing on $(-1, 5)$.



Graph of a polynomial with a local maximum at (-1, 28) and local minimum at (5, -80).

Example 4.2.9: Finding Local Maxima and Minima from a Graph

For the function f whose graph is shown in Figure 4.2.9, find all local maxima and minima.

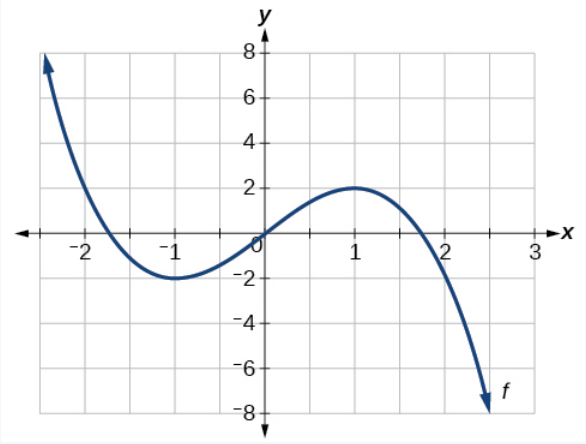


Figure 4.2.9: Graph of a polynomial.

Solution

Observe the graph of f. The graph attains a local maximum at $x = 1$ because it is the highest point in an open interval around $x = 1$.The local maximum is the y-coordinate at $x = 1$, which is 2.

The graph attains a local minimum at $x = -1$ because it is the lowest point in an open interval around $x = -1$. The local minimum is the y-coordinate at $x = -1$, which is −2.

Analyzing the Toolkit Functions for Increasing or Decreasing Intervals

We will now return to our toolkit functions and discuss their graphical behavior in Figure 4.2.10, Figure 4.2.11, and Figure 4.2.12.

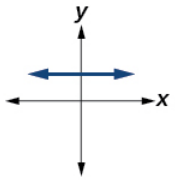
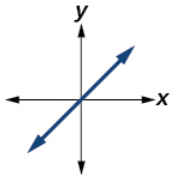
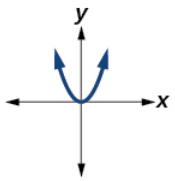
Function	Increasing/Decreasing	Example
Constant Function $f(x) = c$	Neither increasing nor decreasing	
Identity Function $f(x) = x$	Increasing	
Quadratic Function $f(x) = x^2$	Increasing on $(0, \infty)$ Decreasing on $(-\infty, 0)$ Minimum at $x = 0$	

Figure 4.2.10

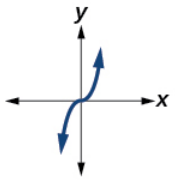
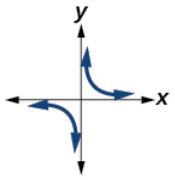
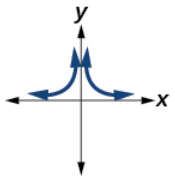
Function	Increasing/Decreasing	Example
Cubic Function $f(x) = x^3$	Increasing	
Reciprocal $f(x) = \frac{1}{x}$	Decreasing $(-\infty, 0) \cup (0, \infty)$	
Reciprocal Squared $f(x) = \frac{1}{x^2}$	Increasing on $(-\infty, 0)$ Decreasing on $(0, \infty)$	

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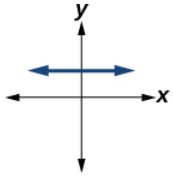
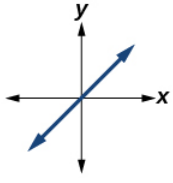
Figure 4.2.11

Function	Increasing/Decreasing	Example
Constant Function $f(x) = c$	Neither increasing nor decreasing	
Identity Function $f(x) = x$	Increasing	

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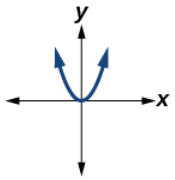
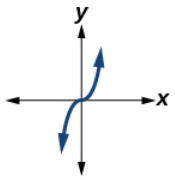
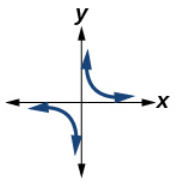
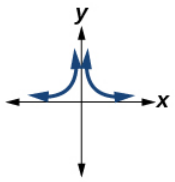
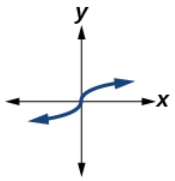
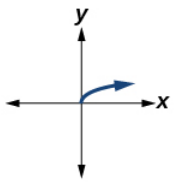
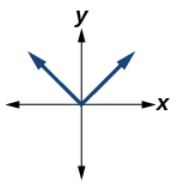
Quadratic Function $f(x) = x^2$	Increasing on $(0, \infty)$ Decreasing on $(-\infty, 0)$ Minimum at $x = 0$	
Cubic Function $f(x) = x^3$	Increasing	
Reciprocal $f(x) = \frac{1}{x}$	Decreasing $(-\infty, 0) \cup (0, \infty)$	
Reciprocal Squared $f(x) = \frac{1}{x^2}$	Increasing on $(-\infty, 0)$ Decreasing on $(0, \infty)$	
Cube Root $f(x) = \sqrt[3]{x}$	Increasing	
Square Root $f(x) = \sqrt{x}$	Increasing on $(0, \infty)$	
Absolute Value $f(x) = \lvert x \rvert$	Increasing on $(0, \infty)$ Decreasing on $(\infty, 0)$	

***Figure* 4.2.12**

Use A Graph to Locate the Absolute Maximum and Absolute Minimum

There is a difference between locating the highest and lowest points on a graph in a region around an open interval (locally) and locating the highest and lowest points on the graph for the entire domain. The y-coordinates (output) at the highest and lowest points are called the **absolute maximum** and **absolute minimum**, respectively. To locate absolute maxima and minima from a graph, we need to observe the graph to determine where the graph attains it highest and lowest points on the domain of the function (Figure 4.2.13).

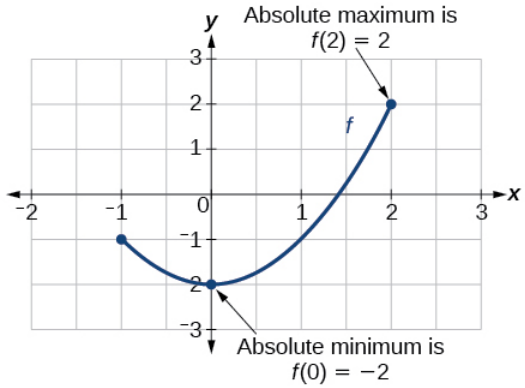


Figure 4.2.13: Graph of a segment of a parabola with an absolute minimum at (0, -2) and absolute maximum at (2, 2).

Not every function has an absolute maximum or minimum value. The toolkit function $f(x) = x^3$ is one such function.

Absolute Maxima and Minima

- The **absolute maximum** of f at $x = c$ is $f(c)$ where $f(c) \geq f(x)$ for all x in the domain of f.
- The **absolute minimum** of f at $x = d$ is $f(d)$ where $f(d) \leq f(x)$ for all x in the domain of f.

Example 4.2.10: Finding Absolute Maxima and Minima from a Graph

For the function f shown in Figure $4.2.14$, find all absolute maxima and minima.

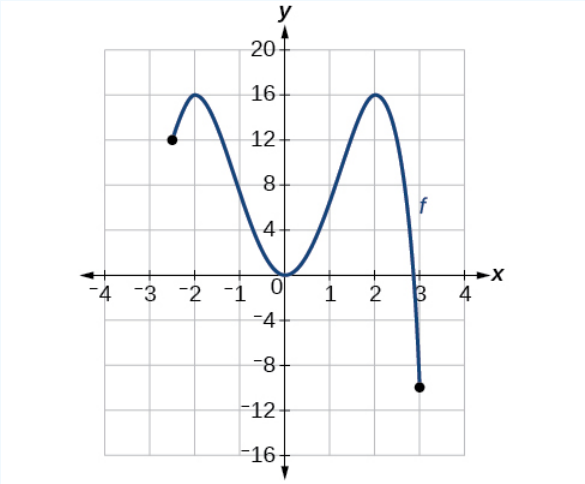


Figure 4.2.14: Graph of a polynomial.

Solution

Observe the graph of f. The graph attains an absolute maximum in two locations, $x = -2$ and $x = 2$, because at these locations, the graph attains its highest point on the domain of the function. The absolute maximum is the y-coordinate at $x = -2$ and $x = 2$, which is 16.

The graph attains an absolute minimum at x=3, because it is the lowest point on the domain of the function's graph. The absolute minimum is the y-coordinate at x=3,which is−10.

Key Equations

- Average rate of change: $\dfrac{\Delta y}{\Delta x} = \dfrac{f(x_2) - f(x_1)}{x_2 - x_1}$

Key Concepts

- A rate of change relates a change in an output quantity to a change in an input quantity. The average rate of change is determined using only the beginning and ending data. See Example.

- Identifying points that mark the interval on a graph can be used to find the average rate of change. See Example.
- Comparing pairs of input and output values in a table can also be used to find the average rate of change. See Example.
- An average rate of change can also be computed by determining the function values at the endpoints of an interval described by a formula. See Example and Example.
- The average rate of change can sometimes be determined as an expression. See Example.
- A function is increasing where its rate of change is positive and decreasing where its rate of change is negative. See Example.
- A local maximum is where a function changes from increasing to decreasing and has an output value larger (more positive or less negative) than output values at neighboring input values.
- A local minimum is where the function changes from decreasing to increasing (as the input increases) and has an output value smaller (more negative or less positive) than output values at neighboring input values.
- Minima and maxima are also called extrema.
- We can find local extrema from a graph. See Example and Example.
- The highest and lowest points on a graph indicate the maxima and minima. See Example.

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4.3: Graphs of Basic Functions

Learning Objectives

- Graph an absolute value function.
- Solve an absolute value equation.

Until the 1920s, the so-called spiral nebulae were believed to be clouds of dust and gas in our own galaxy, some tens of thousands of light years away. Then, astronomer Edwin Hubble proved that these objects are galaxies in their own right, at distances of millions of light years. Today, astronomers can detect galaxies that are billions of light years away. Distances in the universe can be measured in all directions. As such, it is useful to consider distance as an absolute value function. In this section, we will investigate **absolute value functions**.

Figure 4.3.1: Distances in deep space can be measured in all directions. As such, it is useful to consider distance in terms of absolute values. (credit: "s58y"/Flickr)

Understanding Absolute Value

Recall that in its basic form $f(x)=|x|$, the **absolute value** function, is one of our toolkit functions. The absolute value function is commonly thought of as providing the distance the number is from zero on a number line. Algebraically, for whatever the input value is, the output is the value without regard to sign.

Absolute Value Function

The absolute value function can be defined as a piecewise function

$$f(x)=|x|=\begin{cases} x & \text{if } x\geq 0 \\ -x & \text{if } x<0 \end{cases} \tag{4.3.1}$$

Example 4.3.1: Determine a Number within a Prescribed Distance

Describe all values x within or including a distance of 4 from the number 5.

Solution

We want the distance between x and 5 to be less than or equal to 4. We can draw a number line, such as the one in , to represent the condition to be satisfied.

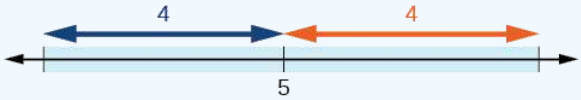

Figure 4.3.2: Number line describing the difference of the distance of 4 away from 5.

The distance from x to 5 can be represented using the absolute value as $|x-5|$. We want the values of x that satisfy the condition $|x-5|\leq 4$.

Analysis

Note that

$$-4 \leq x-5 \qquad x-5 \leq 4$$
$$1 \leq x \qquad\qquad x \leq 9$$

So $|x-5| \leq 4$ is equivalent to $1 \leq x \leq 9$.

However, mathematicians generally prefer absolute value notation.

Exercise 4.3.1

Describe all values x within a distance of 3 from the number 2.

Answer

$|x-2| \leq 3$

Example 4.3.2: Resistance of a Resistor

Electrical parts, such as resistors and capacitors, come with specified values of their operating parameters: resistance, capacitance, etc. However, due to imprecision in manufacturing, the actual values of these parameters vary somewhat from piece to piece, even when they are supposed to be the same. The best that manufacturers can do is to try to guarantee that the variations will stay within a specified range, often ±1%, ±5%, or ±10%.

Suppose we have a resistor rated at 680 ohms, ±5%. Use the absolute value function to express the range of possible values of the actual resistance.

Solution

5% of 680 ohms is 34 ohms. The absolute value of the difference between the actual and nominal resistance should not exceed the stated variability, so, with the resistance R in ohms,

$$|R-680| \leq 34$$

Exercise 4.3.2

Students who score within 20 points of 80 will pass a test. Write this as a distance from 80 using absolute value notation.

Answer

Using the variable p for passing, $|p-80| \leq 20$

Graphing an Absolute Value Function

The most significant feature of the absolute value graph is the corner point at which the graph changes direction. This point is shown at the origin in Figure 4.3.3.

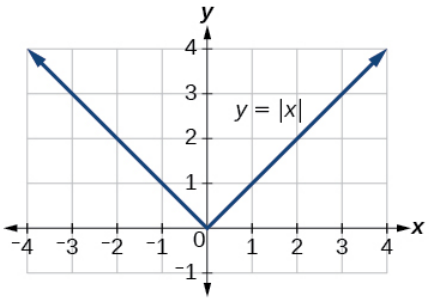

Figure 4.3.3: Graph of an absolute function.

Figure 4.3.3 shows the graph of $y = 2|x-3|+4$. The graph of $y = |x|$ has been shifted right 3 units, vertically stretched by a factor of 2, and shifted up 4 units. This means that the corner point is located at $(3, 4)$ for this transformed function.

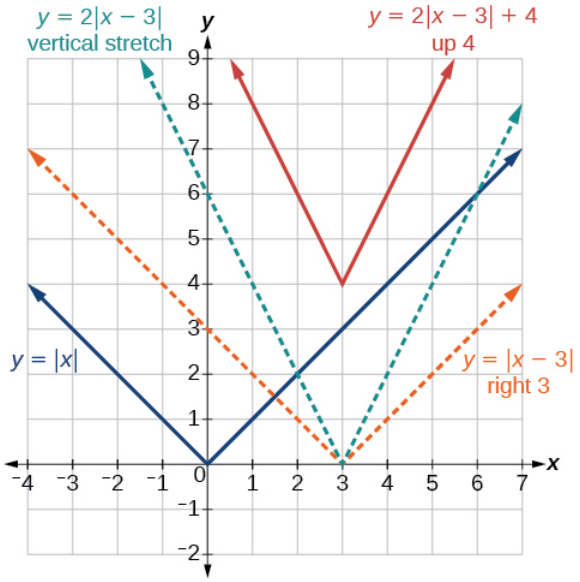

Figure 4.3.4: Graph of the different types of transformations for an absolute function.

Example 4.3.3: Writing an Equation for an Absolute Value Function

Write an equation for the function graphed in Figure 4.3.5.

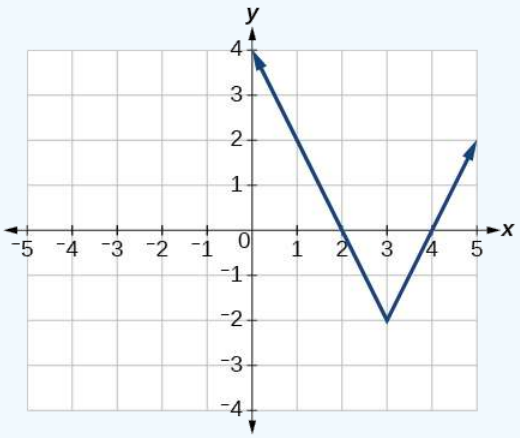

Figure 4.3.5: Graph of an absolute function.

Solution

The basic absolute value function changes direction at the origin, so this graph has been shifted to the right 3 units and down 2 units from the basic toolkit function. See Figure 4.3.6.

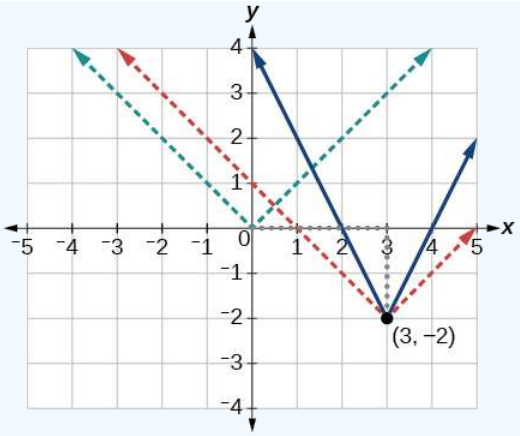

Figure 4.3.6: Graph of two transformations for an absolute function at $(3, -2)$.

We also notice that the graph appears vertically stretched, because the width of the final graph on a horizontal line is not equal to 2 times the vertical distance from the corner to this line, as it would be for an unstretched absolute value function. Instead, the width is equal to 1 times the vertical distance as shown in Figure 4.3.7.

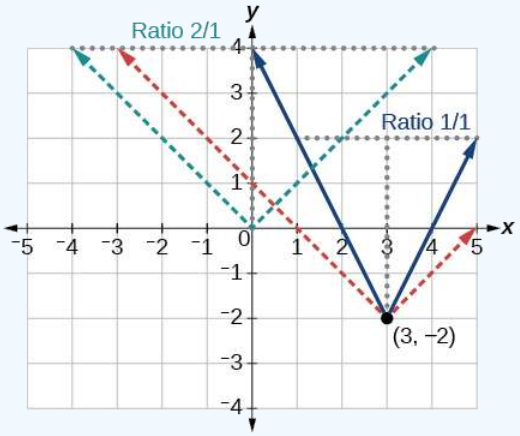

Figure 4.3.7: Graph of two transformations for an absolute function at $(3, -2)$ and the ratios between the two different transformations.

From this information we can write the equation

$$\begin{aligned} f(x) &= 2|x-3|-2, && \text{treating the stretch as a vertial stretch, or} \\ f(x) &= |2(x-3)|-2, && \text{treating the stretch as a horizontal compression.} \end{aligned}$$

Analysis

Note that these equations are algebraically equivalent—the stretch for an absolute value function can be written interchangeably as a vertical or horizontal stretch or compression.

Q & A

If we couldn't observe the stretch of the function from the graphs, could we algebraically determine it?

Answer

Yes. If we are unable to determine the stretch based on the width of the graph, we can solve for the stretch factor by putting in a known pair of values for x and $f(x)$.

$$f(x) = a|x-3|-2$$

Now substituting in the point $(1, 2)$

$$2 = a|1-3|-2$$
$$4 = 2a$$
$$a = 2$$

Exercise 4.3.3

Write the equation for the absolute value function that is horizontally shifted left 2 units, is vertically flipped, and vertically shifted up 3 units.

Answer

$f(x) = -|x+2|+3$

Q & A

Do the graphs of absolute value functions always intersect the vertical axis? The horizontal axis?

Answer

Yes, they always intersect the vertical axis. The graph of an absolute value function will intersect the vertical axis when the input is zero.

No, they do not always intersect the horizontal axis. The graph may or may not intersect the horizontal axis, depending on how the graph has been shifted and reflected. It is possible for the absolute value function to intersect the horizontal axis at zero, one, or two points (Figure 4.3.8).

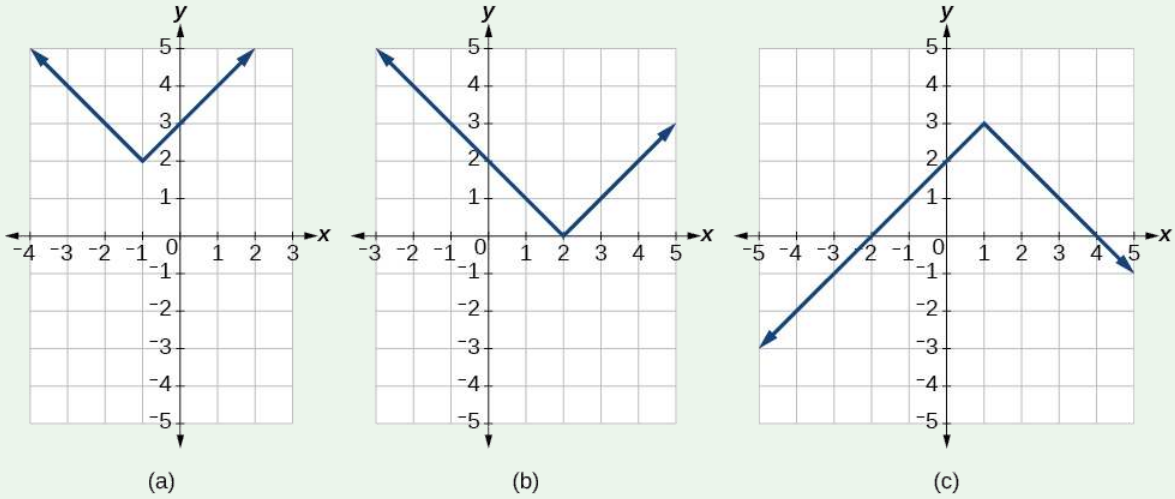

Figure 4.3.8: (a) The absolute value function does not intersect the horizontal axis. (b) The absolute value function intersects the horizontal axis at one point. (c) The absolute value function intersects the horizontal axis at two points.

Solving an Absolute Value Equation

Now that we can graph an absolute value function, we will learn how to solve an absolute value equation. To solve an equation such as $8 = |2x-6|$, we notice that the absolute value will be equal to 8 if the quantity inside the absolute value is 8 or -8. This leads to two different equations we can solve independently.

$$2x-6 = 8 \quad \text{or} \quad 2x-6 = -8$$
$$2x = 14 \qquad 2x = -2$$
$$x = 7 \qquad x = -1$$

Knowing how to solve problems involving absolute value functions is useful. For example, we may need to identify numbers or points on a line that are at a specified distance from a given reference point.

An **absolute value equation** is an equation in which the unknown variable appears in absolute value bars. For example,

$$|x| = 4,$$
$$|2x-1| = 3,$$
$$|5x+2| - 4 = 9.$$

Solutions to Absolute Value Equations

For real numbers A and B, an equation of the form $|A| = B$, with $B \geq 0$, will have solutions when $A = B$ or $A = -B$. If $B < 0$, the equation $|A| = B$ has no solution.

How To ...

Given the formula for an absolute value function, find the horizontal intercepts of its graph.

1. Isolate the absolute value term.
2. Use $|A| = B$ to write $A = B$ or $-A = B$, assuming $B > 0$.
3. Solve for x.

Example 4.3.4: Finding the Zeros of an Absolute Value Function

For the function $f(x) = |4x+1| - 7$, find the values of x such that $f(x) = 0$.

Solution

$$\begin{aligned} 0 &= |4x+1| - 7 && && \text{Substitute 0 for f(x).} \\ 7 &= |4x+1| && && \text{Isolate the absolute value on one side of the equation.} \\ 7 &= 4x+1 && \text{or } -7 = 4x+1 && \text{Break into two separate equations and solve.} \\ 6 &= 4x && -8 = 4x && \\ x &= \frac{6}{4} = 1.5 && x = \frac{-8}{4} = -2 && \end{aligned}$$

The function outputs 0 when $x = 1.5$ or $x = -2$ (Figure 4.3.9).

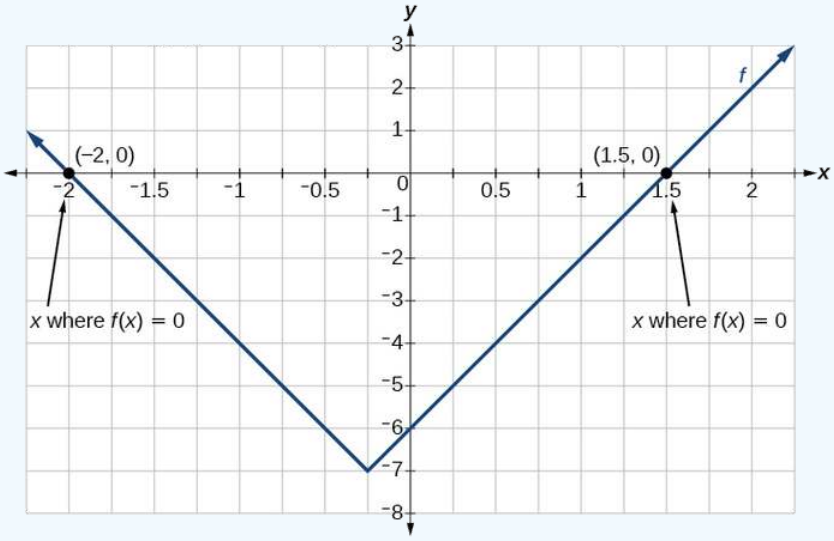

Figure 4.3.9: Graph of an absolute function with x-intercepts at -2 and 1.5.

Exercise 4.3.4

For the function $f(x) = |2x-1| - 3$, find the values of x such that $f(x) = 0$.

Solution

$x = -1$ or $x = 2$

Q & A

Should we always expect two answers when solving $|A| = B$?

Answer

No. We may find one, two, or even no answers. For example, there is no solution to $2 + |3x - 5| = 1$.

How To ...

Given an absolute value equation, solve it.

1. Isolate the absolute value term.
2. Use $|A| = B$ to write $A = B$ or $A = -B$.
3. Solve for x.

Example 4.3.5: Solving an Absolute Value Equation

Solve $1 = 4|x - 2| + 2$.

Solution

Isolating the absolute value on one side of the equation gives the following.

$$\begin{aligned} 1 &= 4|x-2|+2 \\ -1 &= 4|x-2| \\ -\frac{1}{4} &= |x-2| \end{aligned}$$

The absolute value always returns a positive value, so it is impossible for the absolute value to equal a negative value. At this point, we notice that this equation has no solutions.

Q & A

In Example 4.3.5, if $f(x) = 1$ and $g(x) = 4|x - 2| + 2$ were graphed on the same set of axes, would the graphs intersect?

Answer

No. The graphs of f and g would not intersect, as shown in Figure 4.3.10. This confirms, graphically, that the equation $1 = 4|x - 2| + 2$ has no solution.

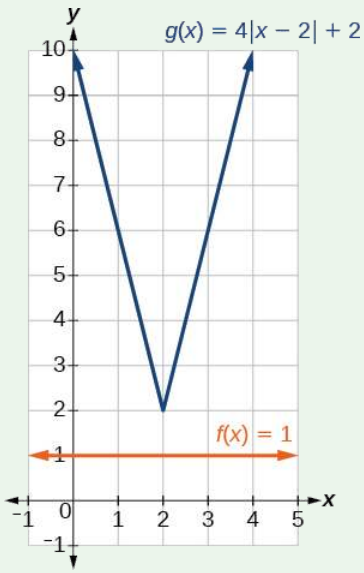

Figure 4.3.10: Graph of $g(x) = 4|x - 2| + 2$ and $f(x) = 1$.

Find where the graph of the function $f(x) = -|x+2|+3$ intersects the horizontal and vertical axes.

$f(0) = 1$, so the graph intersects the vertical axis at $(0, 1)$. $f(x) = 0$ when $x = -5$ and $x = 1$ so the graph intersects the horizontal axis at $(-5, 0)$ and $(1, 0)$.

Solving an Absolute Value Inequality

Absolute value equations may not always involve equalities. Instead, we may need to solve an equation within a range of values. We would use an **absolute value inequality** to solve such an equation. An absolute value inequality is an equation of the form

$$|A| < B,\ |A| \leq B, |A| > B,$$

or

$$|A| \geq B,$$

where an expression A (and possibly but not usually B) depends on a variable x. Solving the inequality means finding the set of all x that satisfy the inequality. Usually this set will be an interval or the union of two intervals.

There are two basic approaches to solving absolute value inequalities: graphical and algebraic. The advantage of the graphical approach is we can read the solution by interpreting the graphs of two functions. The advantage of the algebraic approach is it yields solutions that may be difficult to read from the graph.

For example, we know that all numbers within 200 units of 0 may be expressed as

$$|x| < 200$$

or

$$-200 < x < 200$$

Suppose we want to know all possible returns on an investment if we could earn some amount of money within \$200 of \$600. We can solve algebraically for the set of values x such that the distance between x and 600 is less than 200. We represent the distance between x and 600 as $|x - 600|$.

$$|x - 600| < 200 \tag{4.3.2}$$

or

$$-200 < x - 600 < 200 \tag{4.3.3}$$

$$-200 + 600 < x - 600 + 600 < 200 + 600$$

$$400 < x < 800$$

This means our returns would be between \$400 and \$800.

Sometimes an absolute value inequality problem will be presented to us in terms of a shifted and/or stretched or compressed absolute value function, where we must determine for which values of the input the function's output will be negative or positive.

How To ...

Given an absolute value inequality of the form $|x - A| \leq B$ for real numbers a and b where b is positive, solve the absolute value inequality algebraically.

1. Find boundary points by solving $|x - A| = B$.
2. Test intervals created by the boundary points to determine where $|x - A| \leq B$.
3. Write the interval or union of intervals satisfying the inequality in interval, inequality, or set-builder notation.

Example 4.3.6: Solving an Absolute Value Inequality

Solve $|x - 5| \leq 4$.

Solution

With both approaches, we will need to know first where the corresponding equality is true. In this case we first will find where $|x-5|=4$. We do this because the absolute value is a function with no breaks, so the only way the function values can switch from being less than 4 to being greater than 4 is by passing through where the values equal 4. Solve $|x-5|=4$.

$$\begin{aligned} x-5 &= 4 \quad \text{or} \quad x=9 \\ x-5 &= -4 \quad\quad\;\; x=1 \end{aligned}$$

After determining that the absolute value is equal to 4 at $x=1$ and $x=9$, we know the graph can change only from being less than 4 to greater than 4 at these values. This divides the number line up into three intervals:

$$x<1,\ 1<x<9, \text{ and } x>9.$$

To determine when the function is less than 4, we could choose a value in each interval and see if the output is less than or greater than 4, as shown in Table 4.3.1.

Table 4.3.1

Interval test x	$f(x)$	<4 or >4	
$x<1$	0	$\|0-5\|=5$	Greater than
$1<x<9$	6	$\|6-5\|=1$	Less than
$x>9$	11	$\|11-5\|=6$	Greater than

Because $1\leq x\leq 9$ is the only interval in which the output at the test value is less than 4, we can conclude that the solution to $|x-5|\leq 4$ is $1\leq x\leq 9$, or $[1,9]$.

To use a graph, we can sketch the function $f(x)=|x-5|$. To help us see where the outputs are 4, the line $g(x)=4$ could also be sketched as in Figure 4.3.11.

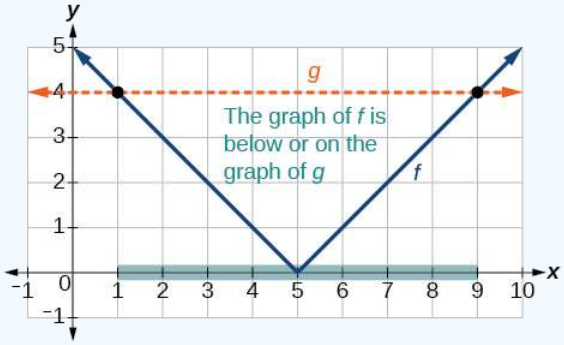

Figure 4.3.11: Graph to find the points satisfying an absolute value inequality.

We can see the following:

- The output values of the absolute value are equal to 4 at $x=1$ and $x=9$.
- The graph of f is below the graph of g on $1<x<9$. This means the output values of $f(x)$ are less than the output values of $g(x)$.
- The absolute value is less than or equal to 4 between these two points, when $1\leq x\leq 9$. In interval notation, this would be the interval $[1,9]$.

Analysis

For absolute value inequalities,

$$\begin{aligned} |x-A|<C, &\qquad |x-A|>C, \\ -C<x-A<C, &\quad x-A<-C \text{ or } x-A>C. \end{aligned}$$

The $<$ or $>$ symbol may be replaced by $\leq$ or $\geq$.

So, for this example, we could use this alternative approach.

$$
\begin{aligned}
|x-5| &\leq 4 \\
-4 \leq x-5 &\leq 4 && \text{Rewrite by removing the absolute value bars.} \\
-4+5 \leq x-5+5 &\leq 4+5 && \text{Isolate the x.} \\
1 \leq x &\leq 9
\end{aligned}
$$

Exercise 4.3.5

Solve $|x+2| \leq 6$.

Answer

$-8 \leq x \leq 4$

How To ...

Given an absolute value function, solve for the set of inputs where the output is positive (or negative).

1. Set the function equal to zero, and solve for the boundary points of the solution set.
2. Use test points or a graph to determine where the function's output is positive or negative.

Example 4.3.7: Using a Graphical Approach to Solve Absolute Value Inequalities

Given the function $f(x) = -\frac{1}{2}|4x-5|+3$, determine the x-values for which the function values are negative.

Solution

We are trying to determine where $f(x) < 0$, which is when $-\frac{1}{2}|4x-5|+3 < 0$. We begin by isolating the absolute value.

$$
\begin{aligned}
-\frac{1}{2}|4x-5| &< -3 && \text{Multiply both sides by } -2, \text{ and reverse the inequality.} \\
|4x-5| &> 6
\end{aligned}
$$

Next we solve for the equality $|4x-5| = 6$.

$$
\begin{aligned}
4x-5 &= 6 \qquad 4x-5 = -6 \\
4x-6 &= 6
\end{aligned}
$$

or

$$
\begin{aligned}
4x &= -1 \\
x = \frac{11}{4} &\qquad x = -\frac{1}{4}
\end{aligned}
$$

Now, we can examine the graph of f to observe where the output is negative. We will observe where the branches are below the x-axis. Notice that it is not even important exactly what the graph looks like, as long as we know that it crosses the horizontal axis at $x = -\frac{1}{4}$ and $x = \frac{11}{4}$ and that the graph has been reflected vertically. See Figure 4.3.12

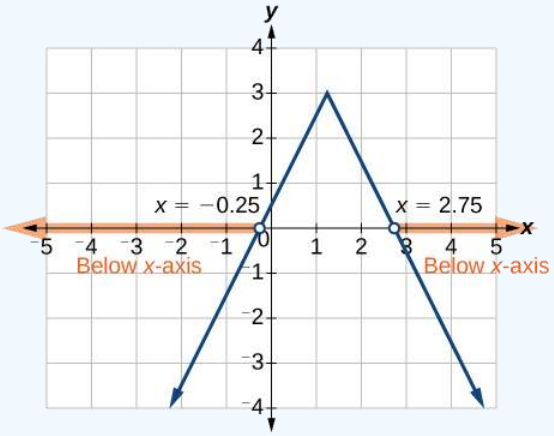

Figure 4.3.12: Graph of an absolute function with x-intercepts at -0.25 and 2.75.]

We observe that the graph of the function is below the x-axis left of $x = -\frac{1}{4}$ and right of $x = \frac{11}{4}$. This means the function values are negative to the left of the first horizontal intercept at $x = -\frac{1}{4}$, and negative to the right of the second intercept at $x = \frac{11}{4}$. This gives us the solution to the inequality.

$$x < -\frac{1}{4} \text{ or } x > 1\frac{1}{4}$$

In interval notation, this would be $(-\infty, -0.25) \cup (2.75, \infty)$.

Exercise 4.3.6

Solve $-2|k-4| \leq -6$.

Answer

$k \leq 1$ or $k \geq 7$; in interval notation, this would be $(-\infty, 1] \cup [7, \infty)$

Key Concepts

- The absolute value function is commonly used to measure distances between points.
- Applied problems, such as ranges of possible values, can also be solved using the absolute value function.
- The graph of the absolute value function resembles a letter V. It has a corner point at which the graph changes direction.
- In an absolute value equation, an unknown variable is the input of an absolute value function.
- If the absolute value of an expression is set equal to a positive number, expect two solutions for the unknown variable.
- An absolute value equation may have one solution, two solutions, or no solutions.
- An absolute value inequality is similar to an absolute value equation but takes the form | A |<B, | A |≤B, | A |>B, or | A |≥B.It can be solved by determining the boundaries of the solution set and then testing which segments are in the set.
- Absolute value inequalities can also be solved graphically.

Glossary

absolute value equation
an equation of the form $|A| = B$, with $B \geq 0$; it will have solutions when $A = B$ or $A = -B$

absolute value inequality
a relationship in the form $|A| < B$, $|A| \leq B$, $|A| > B$, or $|A| \geq B$

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4.4: Transformation of Functions

Learning Objectives

- Graph functions using vertical and horizontal shifts.
- Graph functions using reflections about the x-axis and the y-axis.
- Determine whether a function is even, odd, or neither from its graph.
- Graph functions using compressions and stretches.
- Combine transformations.

We all know that a flat mirror enables us to see an accurate image of ourselves and whatever is behind us. When we tilt the mirror, the images we see may shift horizontally or vertically. But what happens when we bend a flexible mirror? Like a carnival funhouse mirror, it presents us with a distorted image of ourselves, stretched or compressed horizontally or vertically. In a similar way, we can distort or transform mathematical functions to better adapt them to describing objects or processes in the real world. In this section, we will take a look at several kinds of transformations.

Figure 4.4.1: (credit: "Misko"/Flickr)

Often when given a problem, we try to model the scenario using mathematics in the form of words, tables, graphs, and equations. One method we can employ is to adapt the basic graphs of the toolkit functions to build new models for a given scenario. There are systematic ways to alter functions to construct appropriate models for the problems we are trying to solve.

Identifying Vertical Shifts

One simple kind of transformation involves shifting the entire graph of a function up, down, right, or left. The simplest shift is a vertical shift, moving the graph up or down, because this transformation involves adding a positive or negative constant to the function. In other words, we add the same constant to the output value of the function regardless of the input. For a function $g(x) = f(x) + k$, the function $f(x)$ is shifted vertically k units. See Figure 4.4.2 for an example.

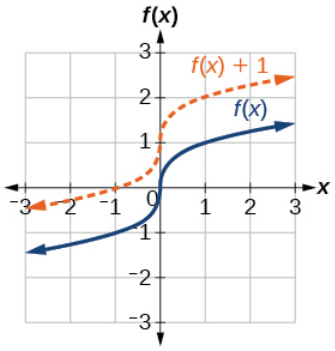

Figure 4.4.2: Vertical shift by $k = 1$ of the cube root function $f(x) = \sqrt[3]{x}$.

To help you visualize the concept of a vertical shift, consider that $y = f(x)$. Therefore, $f(x) + k$ is equivalent to $y + k$. Every unit of y is replaced by $y + k$, so the y-value increases or decreases depending on the value of k. The result is a shift upward or downward.

Definition: Vertical Shift

Given a function $f(x)$, a new function $g(x) = f(x) + k$, where k is a constant, is a **vertical shift** of the function $f(x)$. All the output values change by k units. If k is positive, the graph will shift up. If k is negative, the graph will shift down.

Example 4.4.1: Adding a Constant to a Function

To regulate temperature in a green building, airflow vents near the roof open and close throughout the day. Figure 4.4.3 shows the area of open vents V (in square feet) throughout the day in hours after midnight, t. During the summer, the facilities manager decides to try to better regulate temperature by increasing the amount of open vents by 20 square feet throughout the day and night. Sketch a graph of this new function.

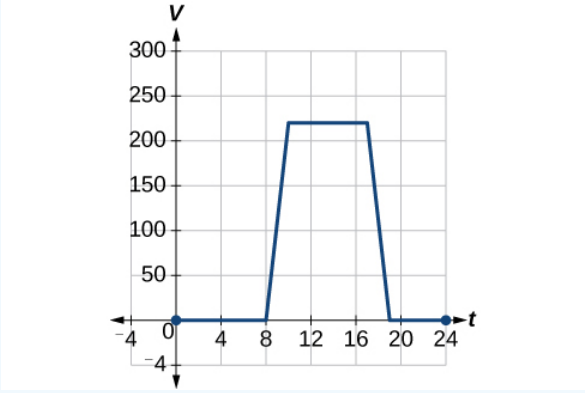

Figure 4.4.3

Solution

We can sketch a graph of this new function by adding 20 to each of the output values of the original function. This will have the effect of shifting the graph vertically up, as shown in Figure 4.4.4.

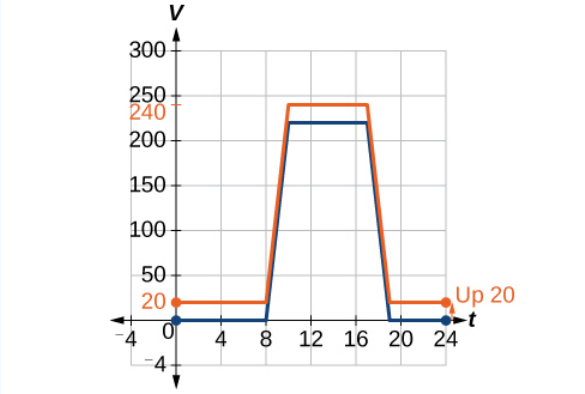

Figure 4.4.4

Notice that in Figure 4.4.4, for each input value, the output value has increased by 20, so if we call the new function $S(t)$,we could write

$$S(t) = V(t) + 20 \tag{4.4.1}$$

This notation tells us that, for any value of t,$S(t)$ can be found by evaluating the function V at the same input and then adding 20 to the result. This defines S as a transformation of the function V, in this case a vertical shift up 20 units. Notice that, with a vertical shift, the input values stay the same and only the output values change. See Table 4.4.1.

Table 4.4.1

t	0	8	10	17	19	24
$V(t)$	0	0	220	220	0	0

$S(t)$	20	20	240	240	20	20

How To...

Given a tabular function, create a new row to represent a vertical shift.

1. Identify the output row or column.
2. Determine the **magnitude** of the shift.
3. Add the shift to the value in each output cell. Add a positive value for up or a negative value for down.

Example 4.4.2: Shifting a Tabular Function Vertically

A function $f(x)$ is given in Table 4.4.2. Create a table for the function $g(x) = f(x) - 3$.

Table 4.4.2

x	2	4	6	8
$f(x)$	1	3	7	11

Solution

The formula $g(x) = f(x) - 3$ tells us that we can find the output values of g by subtracting 3 from the output values of f. For example:

$$\begin{aligned} f(x) &= 1 && \text{Given} \\ g(x) &= f(x) - 3 && \text{Given Transformation} \\ g(2) &= f(2) - 3 \\ &= 1 - 3 \\ &= -2 \end{aligned}$$

Subtracting 3 from each $f(x)$ value, we can complete a table of values for $g(x)$ as shown in Table 4.4.3.

Table 4.4.3

x	2	4	6	8
$f(x)$	1	3	7	11
$g(x)$	-2	0	4	8

Analysis

As with the earlier vertical shift, notice the input values stay the same and only the output values change.

Exercise 4.4.1

The function $h(t) = -4.9t^2 + 30t$ gives the height h of a ball (in meters) thrown upward from the ground after t seconds. Suppose the ball was instead thrown from the top of a 10-m building. Relate this new height function $b(t)$ to $h(t)$, and then find a formula for $b(t)$.

Answer

$b(t) = h(t) + 10 = -4.9t^2 + 30t + 10$

Identifying Horizontal Shifts

We just saw that the vertical shift is a change to the output, or outside, of the function. We will now look at how changes to input, on the inside of the function, change its graph and meaning. A shift to the input results in a movement of the graph of the function

left or right in what is known as a **horizontal shift**, shown in Figure 4.4.4.

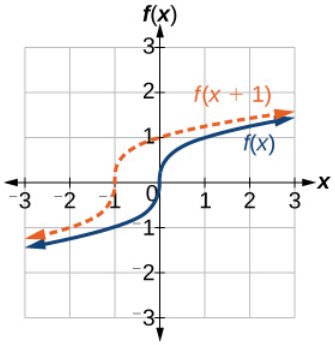

Figure 4.4.4: Horizontal shift of the function $f(x) = \sqrt[3]{x}$. Note that $h = -1$ shifts the graph to the left, that is, towards negative values of x.

For example, if $f(x) = x^2$, then $g(x) = (x-2)^2$ is a new function. Each input is reduced by 2 prior to squaring the function. The result is that the graph is shifted 2 units to the right, because we would need to increase the prior input by 2 units to yield the same output value as given in f.

Definition: Horizontal Shift

Given a function f, a new function $g(x) = f(x-h)$, where h is a constant, is a **horizontal shift** of the function f. If h is positive, the graph will shift right. If h is negative, the graph will shift left.

Example 4.4.4: Adding a Constant to an Input

Returning to our building airflow example from Figure 4.4.2, suppose that in autumn the facilities manager decides that the original venting plan starts too late, and wants to begin the entire venting program 2 hours earlier. Sketch a graph of the new function.

Solution

We can set $V(t)$ to be the original program and $F(t)$ to be the revised program.

$$V(t) = \text{ the original venting plan}$$

$$F(t) = \text{ starting 2 hrs sooner}$$

In the new graph, at each time, the airflow is the same as the original function V was 2 hours later. For example, in the original function V, the airflow starts to change at 8 a.m., whereas for the function F, the airflow starts to change at 6 a.m. The comparable function values are $V(8) = F(6)$. See Figure 4.4.5. Notice also that the vents first opened to 220ft^2 at 10 a.m. under the original plan, while under the new plan the vents reach 220ft^2 at 8 a.m., so $V(10) = F(8)$.

In both cases, we see that, because $F(t)$ starts 2 hours sooner, $h = -2$. That means that the same output values are reached when $F(t) = V(t-(-2)) = V(t+2)$.

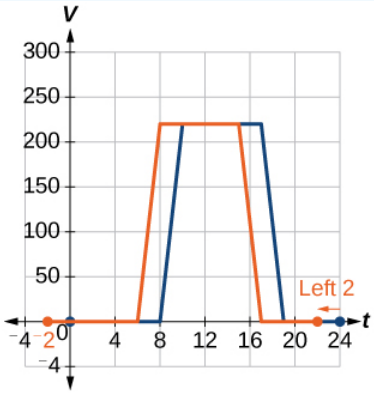

Figure 4.4.5

https://math.libretexts.org/@go/page/143862

Analysis

Note that $V(t+2)$ has the effect of shifting the graph to the left.

Horizontal changes or "inside changes" affect the domain of a function (the input) instead of the range and often seem counterintuitive. The new function $F(t)$ uses the same outputs as $V(t)$, but matches those outputs to inputs 2 hours earlier than those of $V(t)$. Said another way, we must add 2 hours to the input of V to find the corresponding output for F : $F(t)=V(t+2)$.

How To...

Given a tabular function, create a new row to represent a horizontal shift.

1. Identify the input row or column.
2. Determine the magnitude of the shift.
3. Add the shift to the value in each input cell.

Example 4.4.5: Shifting a Tabular Function Horizontally

A function $f(x)$ is given in Table 4.4.4. Create a table for the function $g(x)=f(x-3)$.

Table 4.4.4

x	2	4	6	8
$f(x)$	1	3	7	11

Solution

The formula $g(x)=f(x-3)$ tells us that the output values of g are the same as the output value of f when the input value is 3 less than the original value. For example, we know that $f(2)=1$. To get the same output from the function g, we will need an input value that is 3 larger. We input a value that is 3 larger for $g(x)$ because the function takes 3 away before evaluating the function f.

$$\begin{aligned} g(5) &= f(5-3) \\ &= f(2) \\ &= 1 \end{aligned}$$

We continue with the other values to create Table 4.4.5.

Table 4.4.5

x	5	7	9	11
$x-3$	2	4	6	8
$f(x)$	1	3	7	11
$g(x)$	1	3	7	11

The result is that the function $g(x)$ has been shifted to the right by 3. Notice the output values for $g(x)$ remain the same as the output values for $f(x)$, but the corresponding input values, x, have shifted to the right by 3. Specifically, 2 shifted to 5, 4 shifted to 7, 6 shifted to 9, and 8 shifted to 11.

Analysis

Figure 4.4.6 represents both of the functions. We can see the horizontal shift in each point.

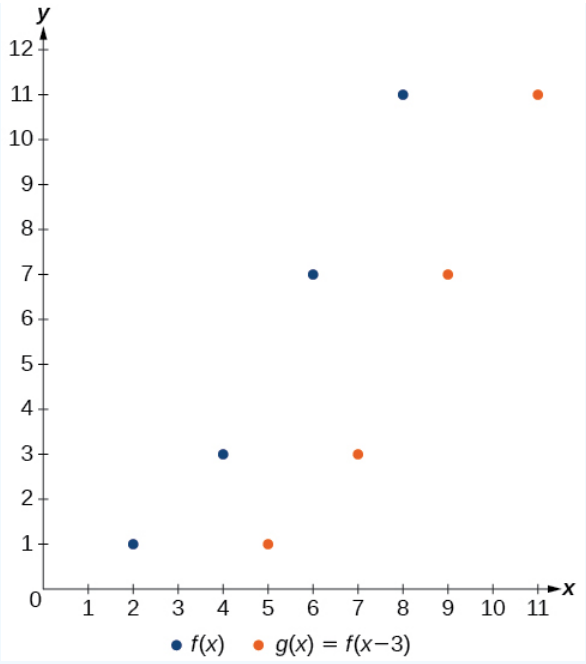

Figure 4.4.6: Graph of the points from the previous table for $f(x)$ and $g(x) = f(x-3)$

Example 4.4.6: Identifying a Horizontal Shift of a Toolkit Function

Figure 4.4.7 represents a transformation of the toolkit function $f(x) = x^2$. Relate this new function $g(x)$ to $f(x)$, and then find a formula for $g(x)$.

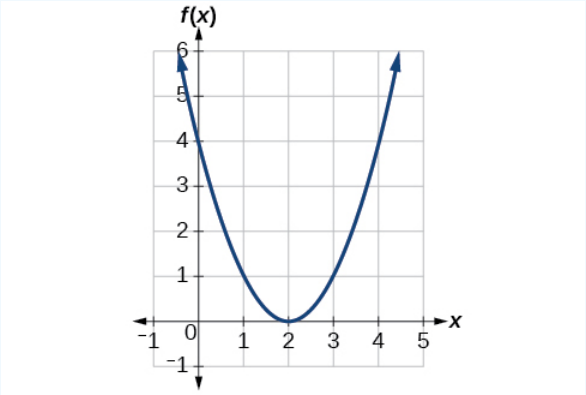

Figure 4.4.7: Graph of a parabola

Solution

Notice that the graph is identical in shape to the $f(x) = x^2$ function, but the x-values are shifted to the right 2 units. The vertex used to be at $(0, 0)$, but now the vertex is at $(2, 0)$. The graph is the basic quadratic function shifted 2 units to the right, so

$$g(x) = f(x-2)$$

Notice how we must input the value $x = 2$ to get the output value $y = 0$; the x-values must be 2 units larger because of the shift to the right by 2 units. We can then use the definition of the $f(x)$ function to write a formula for $g(x)$ by evaluating $f(x-2)$.

$$\begin{aligned} f(x) &= x^2 \\ g(x) &= f(x-2) \\ g(x) &= f(x-2) = (x-2)^2 \end{aligned}$$

Analysis

To determine whether the shift is $+2$ or -2, consider a single reference point on the graph. For a quadratic, looking at the vertex point is convenient. In the original function, $f(0)=0$. In our shifted function, $g(2)=0$. To obtain the output value of 0 from the function f, we need to decide whether a plus or a minus sign will work to satisfy $g(2)=f(x-2)=f(0)=0$. For this to work, we will need to subtract 2 units from our input values.

Example 4.4.7: Interpreting Horizontal versus Vertical Shifts

The function $G(m)$ gives the number of gallons of gas required to drive m miles. Interpret $G(m)+10$ and $G(m+10)$

Solution

$G(m)+10$ can be interpreted as adding 10 to the output, gallons. This is the gas required to drive m miles, plus another 10 gallons of gas. The graph would indicate a vertical shift.

$G(m+10)$ can be interpreted as adding 10 to the input, miles. So this is the number of gallons of gas required to drive 10 miles more than m miles. The graph would indicate a horizontal shift.

Exercise 4.4.7

Given the function $f(x)=\sqrt{x}$, graph the original function $f(x)$ and the transformation $g(x)=f(x+2)$ on the same axes. Is this a horizontal or a vertical shift? Which way is the graph shifted and by how many units?

Answer

The graphs of $f(x)$ and $g(x)$ are shown below. The transformation is a horizontal shift. The function is shifted to the left by 2 units.

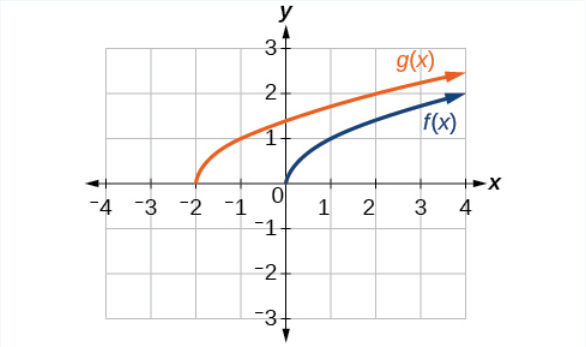

Figure 4.4.8

Combining Vertical and Horizontal Shifts

Now that we have two transformations, we can combine them together. Vertical shifts are outside changes that affect the output $(y-)$ axis values and shift the function up or down. Horizontal shifts are inside changes that affect the input $(x-)$ axis values and shift the function left or right. Combining the two types of shifts will cause the graph of a function to shift up or down and right or left.

How To...

Given a function and both a vertical and a horizontal shift, sketch the graph.

1. Identify the vertical and horizontal shifts from the formula.
2. The vertical shift results from a constant added to the output. Move the graph up for a positive constant and down for a negative constant.
3. The horizontal shift results from a constant added to the input. Move the graph left for a positive constant and right for a negative constant.
4. Apply the shifts to the graph in either order.

Example 4.4.8: Graphing Combined Vertical and Horizontal Shifts

Given $f(x)=|x|$, sketch a graph of $h(x)=f(x+1)-3$.

Solution

The function f is our toolkit absolute value function. We know that this graph has a V shape, with the point at the origin. The graph of h has transformed f in two ways: $f(x+1)$ is a change on the inside of the function, giving a horizontal shift left by 1, and the subtraction by 3 in $f(x+1)-3$ is a change to the outside of the function, giving a vertical shift down by 3. The transformation of the graph is illustrated in Figure 4.4.9.

Let us follow one point of the graph of $f(x)=|x|$.

- The point $(0,0)$ is transformed first by shifting left 1 unit:$(0,0)\rightarrow(-1,0)$
- The point $(-1,0)$ is transformed next by shifting down 3 units:$(-1,0)\rightarrow(-1,-3)$

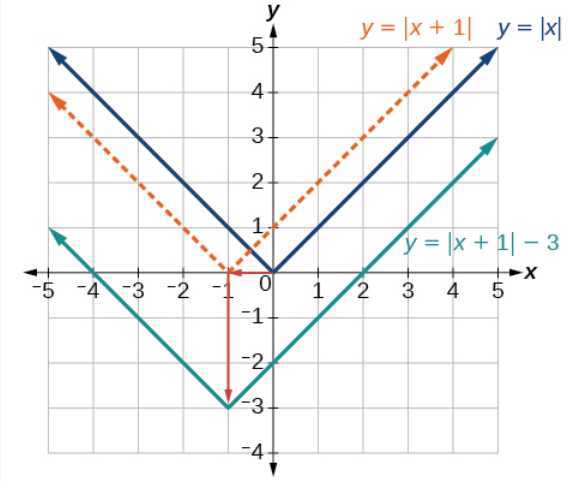

Figure 4.4.9: Graph of an absolute function, $y=|x|$, and how it was transformed to $y=|x+1|-3$

Figure 4.4.10shows the graph of h.

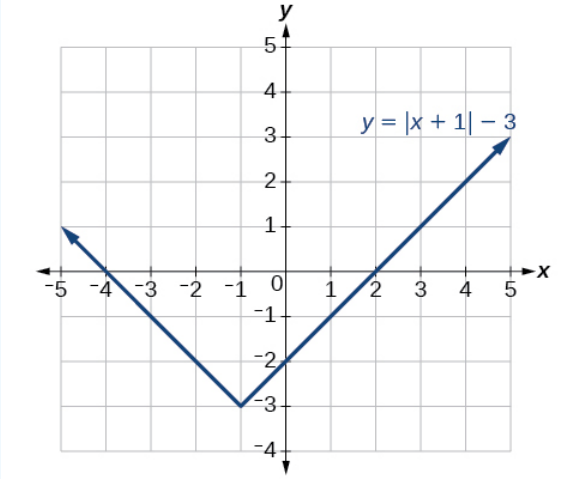

Figure 4.4.10: The final function $y=|x+1|-3$.

Exercise 4.4.8

Given $f(x)=|x|$, sketch a graph of $h(x)=f(x-2)+4$.

Answer

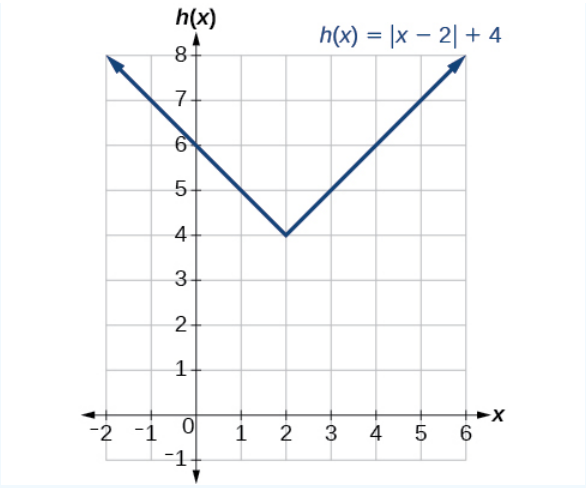

Figure 4.4.11

Example 4.4.9: Identifying Combined Vertical and Horizontal Shifts

Write a formula for the graph shown in Figure 4.4.12, which is a transformation of the toolkit square root function.

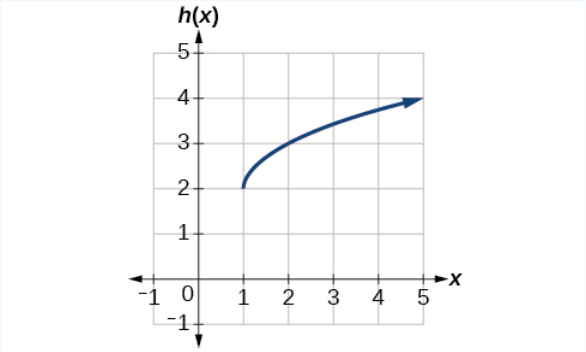

Figure 4.4.12: Graph of a square root function transposed right one unit and up 2.

Solution

The graph of the toolkit function starts at the origin, so this graph has been shifted 1 to the right and up 2. In function notation, we could write that as

$$h(x) = f(x-1)+2$$

Using the formula for the square root function, we can write

$$h(x) = \sqrt{x-1}+2$$

Analysis

Note that this transformation has changed the domain and range of the function. This new graph has domain $[1, \infty)$ and range $[2, \infty)$.

Exercise 4.4.9

Write a formula for a transformation of the toolkit reciprocal function $f(x) = \frac{1}{x}$ that shifts the function's graph one unit to the right and one unit up.

Answer

$$g(x) = \frac{1}{x-1}+1$$

Graphing Functions Using Reflections about the Axes

Another transformation that can be applied to a function is a reflection over the x- or y-axis. A **vertical reflection** reflects a graph vertically across the x-axis, while a **horizontal reflection** reflects a graph horizontally across the y-axis. The reflections are shown in Figure 4.4.13.

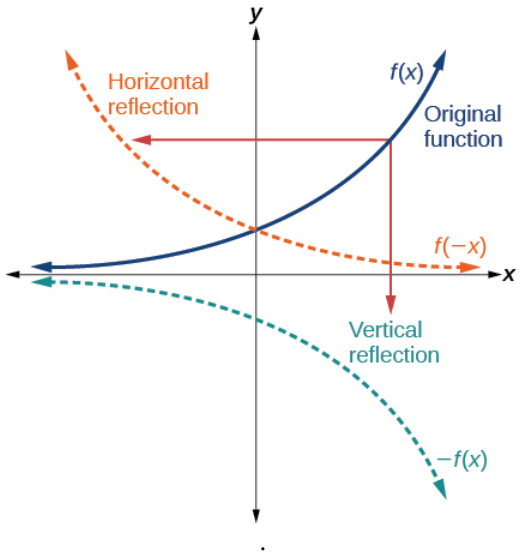

Figure 4.4.13: Graph of the vertical and horizontal reflection of a function.

Notice that the vertical reflection produces a new graph that is a mirror image of the base or original graph about the x-axis. The horizontal reflection produces a new graph that is a mirror image of the base or original graph about the y-axis.

Definitions: Reflections

Given a function $f(x)$, a new function $g(x) = -f(x)$ is a **vertical reflection** of the function $f(x)$, sometimes called a reflection about (or over, or through) the x-axis.

Given a function $f(x)$, a new function $g(x) = f(-x)$ is a **horizontal reflection** of the function $f(x)$, sometimes called a reflection about the y-axis.

How To...

Given a function, reflect the graph both vertically and horizontally.

1. Multiply all outputs by –1 for a vertical reflection. The new graph is a reflection of the original graph about the x-axis.
2. Multiply all inputs by –1 for a horizontal reflection. The new graph is a reflection of the original graph about the y-axis.

Example 4.4.10: Reflecting a Graph Horizontally and Vertically

Reflect the graph of $s(t) = \sqrt{t}$ (a) vertically and (b) horizontally.

Solution

a. Reflecting the graph vertically means that each output value will be reflected over the horizontal t-axis as shown in Figure 4.4.14

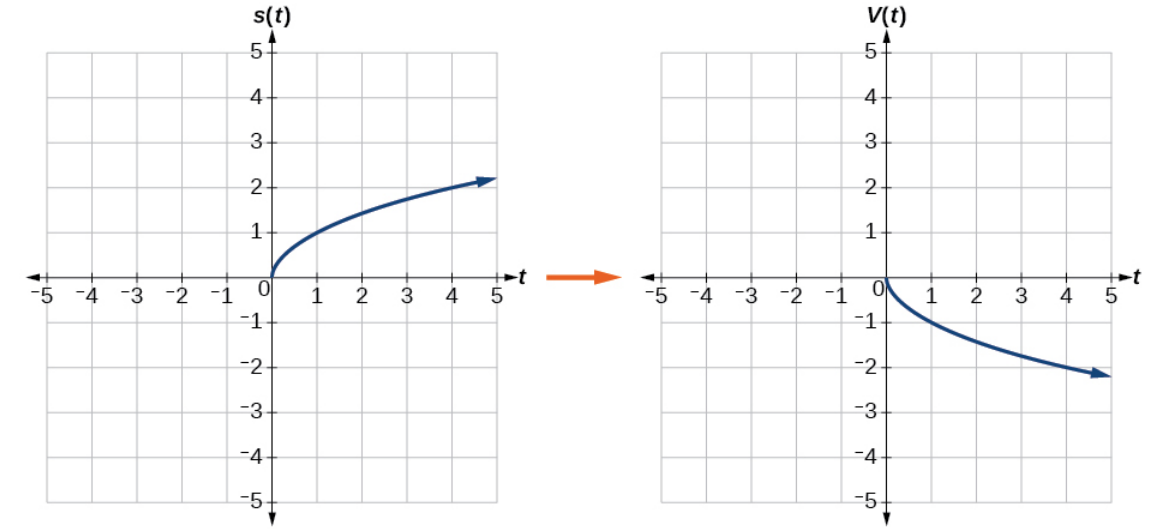

Figure 4.4.14: Graph of the vertical reflection of the square root function.

Because each output value is the opposite of the original output value, we can write

$$V(t) = -s(t) \text{ or } V(t) = -\sqrt{t}$$

Notice that this is an outside change, or vertical shift, that affects the output $s(t)$ values, so the negative sign belongs outside of the function.

b. Reflecting horizontally means that each input value will be reflected over the vertical axis as shown in Figure 4.4.15.

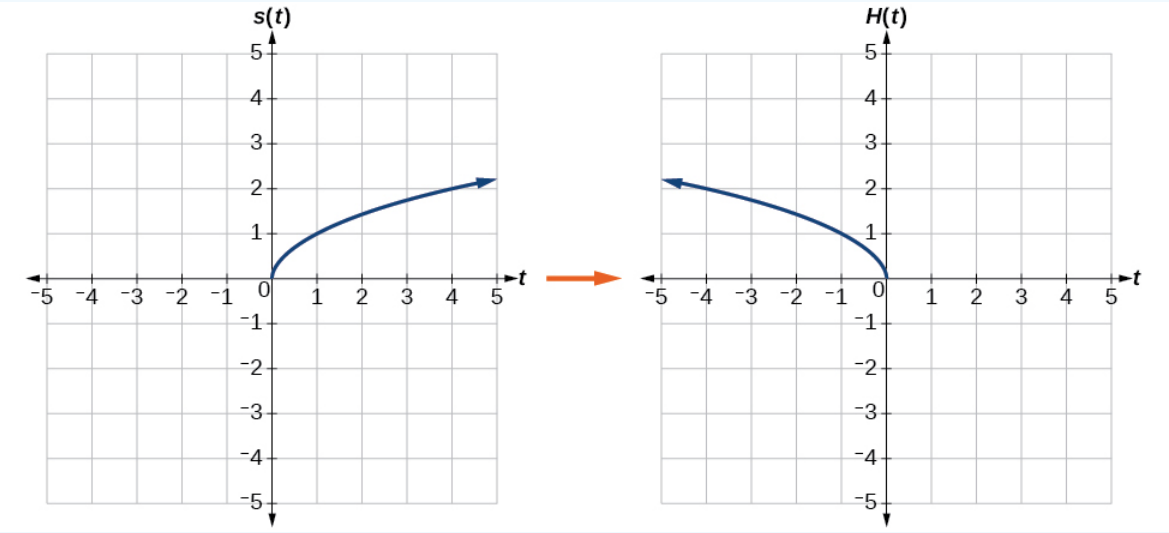

Figure 4.4.15: Horizontal reflection of the square root function

Because each input value is the opposite of the original input value, we can write

$$H(t) = s(-t) \text{ or } H(t) = \sqrt{-t}$$

Notice that this is an inside change or horizontal change that affects the input values, so the negative sign is on the inside of the function.

Note that these transformations can affect the domain and range of the functions. While the original square root function has domain $[0, \infty)$ and range $[0, \infty)$, the vertical reflection gives the $V(t)$ function the range $(-\infty, 0]$ and the horizontal reflection gives the $H(t)$ function the domain $(-\infty, 0]$.

Exercise 4.4.5

Reflect the graph of $f(x) = |x - 1|$ (a) vertically and (b) horizontally.

Answer

a.

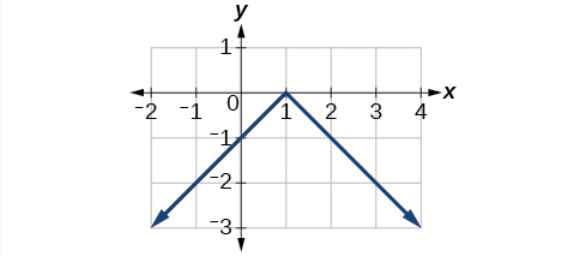

Figure 4.4.16: Graph of a vertically reflected absolute function.

b.

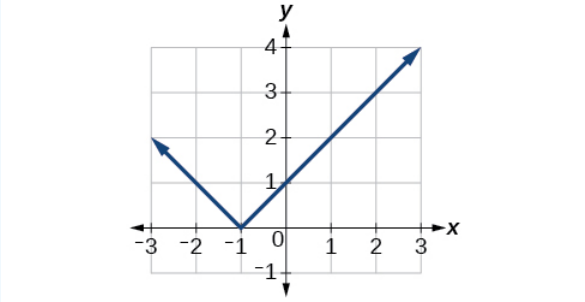

Figure 4.4.17: Graph of an absolute function translated one unit left.

Example 4.4.11: Reflecting a Tabular Function Horizontally and Vertically

A function $f(x)$ is given as Table 4.4.6. Create a table for the functions below.

a. $g(x) = -f(x)$
b. $h(x) = f(-x)$

Table 4.4.6

x	2	4	6	8
$f(x)$	1	3	7	11

a. For $g(x)$, the negative sign outside the function indicates a vertical reflection, so the x-values stay the same and each output value will be the opposite of the original output value. See Table 4.4.7.

Table 4.4.7

x	2	4	6	8
$g(x)$	-1	-3	-7	-11

b. For $h(x)$, the negative sign inside the function indicates a horizontal reflection, so each input value will be the opposite of the original input value and the $h(x)$ values stay the same as the $f(x)$ values. See Table 4.4.8.

Table 4.4.8

x	-2	-4	-6	-8
$h(x)$	1	3	7	11

Exercise 4.4.6

A function $f(x)$ is given as Table 4.4.9. Create a table for the functions below.

a. $g(x) = -f(x)$
b. $h(x) = f(-x)$

Table 4.4.9

x	-2	0	2	4
$f(x)$	5	10	15	20

Answer

a. $g(x) = -f(x)$

Table 4.4.10

x	-2	0	2	4
$g(x)$	-5	-10	-15	-20

b. $h(x) = f(-x)$

Table 4.4.11

x	-2	0	2	-4
$h(x)$	15	10	5	20

Example 4.4.12: Applying a Learning Model Equation

A common model for learning has an equation similar to $k(t) = -2^{-t} + 1$, where k is the percentage of mastery that can be achieved after t practice sessions. This is a transformation of the function $f(t) = 2^t$ shown in Figure 4.4.18. Sketch a graph of $k(t)$.

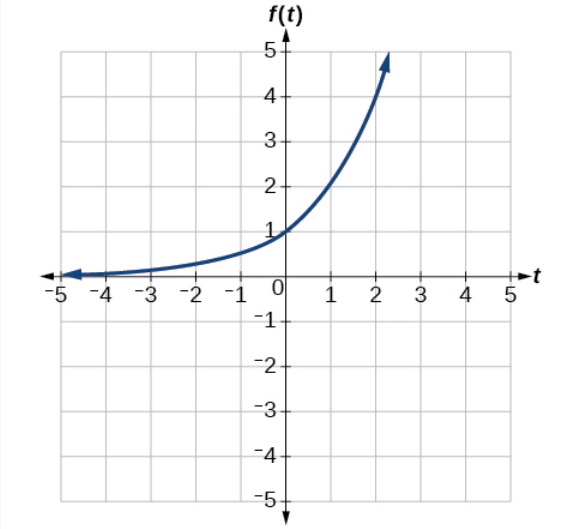

Figure 4.4.18: Graph of $k(t)$

Solution

This equation combines three transformations into one equation.

- A horizontal reflection: $f(-t) = 2^{-t}$

- A vertical reflection: $-f(-t) = -2^{-t}$
- A vertical shift: $-f(-t)+1 = -2^{-t}+1$

We can sketch a graph by applying these transformations one at a time to the original function. Let us follow two points through each of the three transformations. We will choose the points $(0, 1)$ and $(1, 2)$.

- First, we apply a horizontal reflection: $(0, 1)$ $(-1, 2)$.
- Then, we apply a vertical reflection: $(0, -1)$ $(-1, -2)$.
- Finally, we apply a vertical shift: $(0, 0)$ $(-1, -1)$.

This means that the original points, $(0, 1)$ and $(1, 2)$ become $(0, 0)$ and $(-1, -1)$ after we apply the transformations.

In Figure 4.4.19, the first graph results from a horizontal reflection. The second results from a vertical reflection. The third results from a vertical shift up 1 unit.

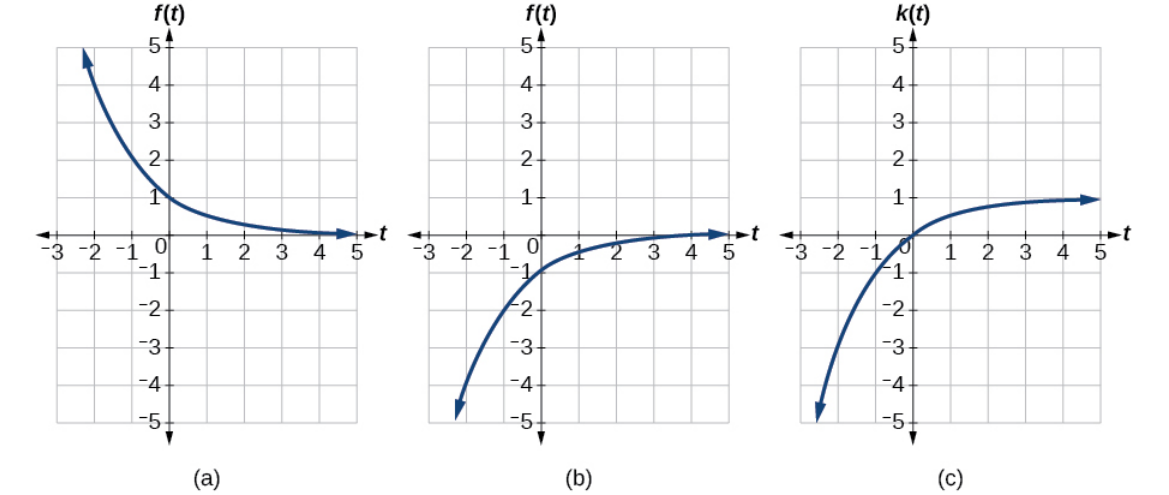

Figure 4.4.19: Graphs of all the transformations.

Analysis

As a model for learning, this function would be limited to a domain of $t \geq 0$, with corresponding range $[0, 1)$.

Exercise 4.4.7

Given the toolkit function $f(x) = x^2$, graph $g(x) = -f(x)$ and $h(x) = f(-x)$. Take note of any surprising behavior for these functions.

Answer

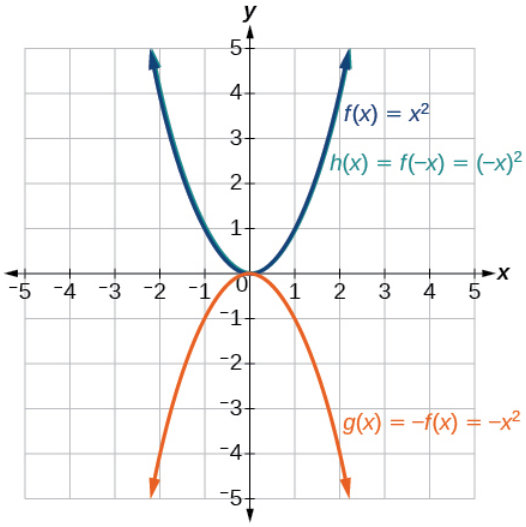

Figure 4.4.20: Graph of x^2 and its reflections.

Notice: $g(x) = f(-x)$ looks the same as $f(x)$.

Determining Even and Odd Functions

Some functions exhibit symmetry so that reflections result in the original graph. For example, horizontally reflecting the toolkit functions $f(x) = x^2$ or $f(x) = |x|$ will result in the original graph. We say that these types of graphs are symmetric about the y-axis. Functions whose graphs are symmetric about the y-axis are called **even functions**.

If the graphs of $f(x) = x^3$ or $f(x) = \frac{1}{x}$ were reflected over both axes, the result would be the original graph, as shown in Figure 4.4.21.

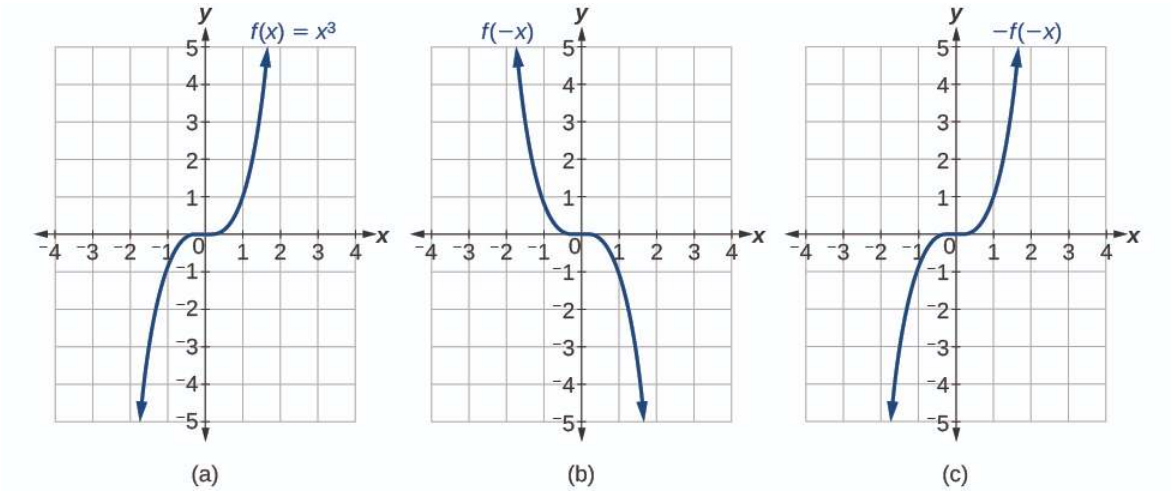

Figure 4.4.21: (a) The cubic toolkit function (b) Horizontal reflection of the cubic toolkit function (c) Horizontal and vertical reflections reproduce the original cubic function.

We say that these graphs are symmetric about the origin. A function with a graph that is symmetric about the origin is called an **odd function**.

Note: A function can be neither even nor odd if it does not exhibit either symmetry. For example, $f(x) = 2^x$ is neither even nor odd. Also, the only function that is both even and odd is the constant function $f(x) = 0$.

Definitions: Even and Odd Functions

A function is called an **even function** if for every input x

$f(x) = f(-x)$

The graph of an even function is symmetric about the y-axis.

A function is called an **odd function** if for every input x

$f(x) = -f(-x)$

The graph of an odd function is symmetric about the origin.

How To...

Given the formula for a function, determine if the function is even, odd, or neither.

1. Determine whether the function satisfies $f(x) = f(-x)$. If it does, it is even.
2. Determine whether the function satisfies $f(x) = -f(-x)$. If it does, it is odd.
3. If the function does not satisfy either rule, it is neither even nor odd.

Example 4.4.13: Determining whether a Function Is Even, Odd, or Neither

Is the function $f(x) = x^3 + 2x$ even, odd, or neither?

Solution

Without looking at a graph, we can determine whether the function is even or odd by finding formulas for the reflections and determining if they return us to the original function. Let's begin with the rule for even functions.

$$f(-x) = (-x)^3 + 2(-x) = -x^3 - 2x$$

This does not return us to the original function, so this function is not even. We can now test the rule for odd functions.

$$-f(-x) = -(-x^3 - 2x) = x^3 + 2x$$

Because $-f(-x) = f(x)$, this is an odd function.

Analysis

Consider the graph of f in Figure 4.4.22 Notice that the graph is symmetric about the origin. For every point (x, y) on the graph, the corresponding point $(-x, -y)$ is also on the graph. For example, $(1, 3)$ is on the graph of f, and the corresponding point $(-1, -3)$ is also on the graph.

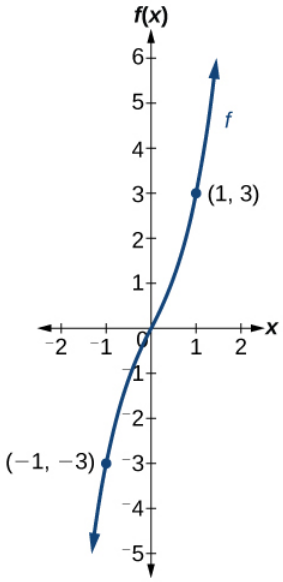

Figure 4.4.22: Graph of $f(x)$ with labeled points at $(1, 3)$ and $(-1, -3)$.

Exercise 4.4.8

Is the function $f(s) = s^4 + 3s^2 + 7$ even, odd, or neither?

Answer

even

Graphing Functions Using Stretches and Compressions

Adding a constant to the inputs or outputs of a function changed the position of a graph with respect to the axes, but it did not affect the shape of a graph. We now explore the effects of multiplying the inputs or outputs by some quantity.

We can transform the inside (input values) of a function or we can transform the outside (output values) of a function. Each change has a specific effect that can be seen graphically.

Vertical Stretches and Compressions

When we multiply a function by a positive constant, we get a function whose graph is stretched or compressed vertically in relation to the graph of the original function. If the constant is greater than 1, we get a **vertical stretch**; if the constant is between 0 and 1, we get a **vertical compression**. Figure 4.4.23 shows a function multiplied by constant factors 2 and 0.5 and the resulting vertical stretch and compression.

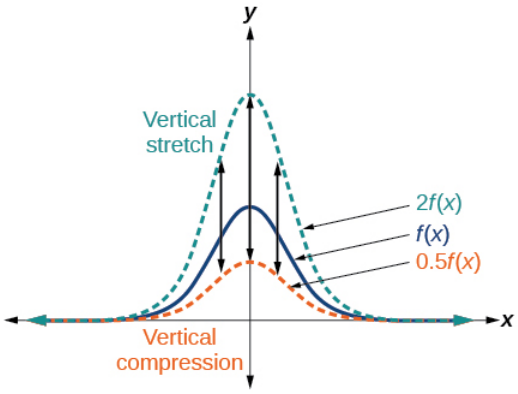

Figure 4.4.23: Vertical stretch and compression

Definitions: Vertical Stretches and Compressions

Given a function $f(x)$, a new function $g(x) = af(x)$, where a is a constant, is a **vertical stretch** or **vertical compression** of the function $f(x)$.

- If $a > 1$, then the graph will be stretched.
- If $0 < a < 1$, then the graph will be compressed.
- If $a < 0$, then there will be combination of a vertical stretch or compression with a vertical reflection.

How To...

Given a function, graph its vertical stretch.

a. Identify the value of a.
b. Multiply all range values by a
c. If $a > 1$, the graph is stretched by a factor of a.
d. If $0 < a < 1$, the graph is compressed by a factor of a.
e. If $a < 0$, the graph is either stretched or compressed and also reflected about the x-axis.

Example 1.5.14: Graphing a Vertical Stretch

A function $P(t)$ models the population of fruit flies. The graph is shown in Figure $4.4.24$

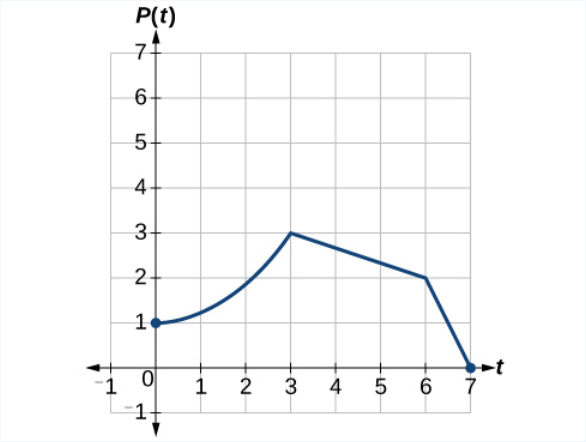

Figure 4.4.24: Graph to represent the growth of the population of fruit flies.

A scientist is comparing this population to another population, Q, whose growth follows the same pattern, but is twice as large. Sketch a graph of this population.

Solution

Because the population is always twice as large, the new population's output values are always twice the original function's output values. Graphically, this is shown in Figure $4.4.25$

If we choose four reference points, $(0, 1)$, $(3, 3)$, $(6, 2)$ and $(7, 0)$ we will multiply all of the outputs by 2.

The following shows where the new points for the new graph will be located.

$$(0, 1) \to (0, 2) \tag{4.4.2}$$
$$(3, 3) \to (3, 6) \tag{4.4.3}$$
$$(6, 2) \to (6, 4) \tag{4.4.4}$$
$$(7, 0) \to (7, 0) \tag{4.4.5}$$

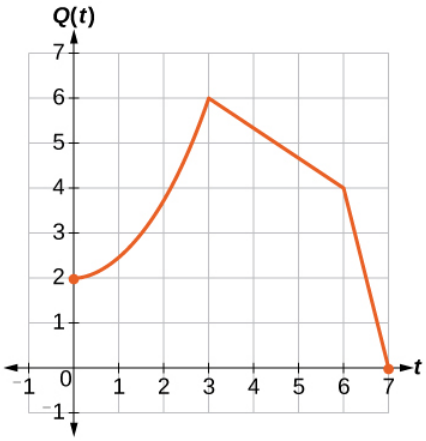

Figure 4.4.25: Graph of the population function doubled.

Symbolically, the relationship is written as

$$Q(t) = 2P(t)$$

This means that for any input t, the value of the function Q is twice the value of the function P. Notice that the effect on the graph is a vertical stretching of the graph, where every point doubles its distance from the horizontal axis. The input values, t, stay the same while the output values are twice as large as before.

How To...

Given a tabular function and assuming that the transformation is a vertical stretch or compression, create a table for a vertical compression.

1. Determine the value of a.
2. Multiply all of the output values by a.

Example 4.4.15: Finding a Vertical Compression of a Tabular Function

A function f is given as Table 4.4.12 Create a table for the function $g(x) = \frac{1}{2}f(x)$.

Table 4.4.12

x	2	4	6	8
$f(x)$	1	3	7	11

Solution

The formula $g(x) = \frac{1}{2}f(x)$ tells us that the output values of g are half of the output values of f with the same inputs. For example, we know that $f(4) = 3$. Then

$$g(4) = \frac{1}{2}f(4) = \frac{1}{2}(3) = \frac{3}{2}$$

We do the same for the other values to produce Table 4.4.13

Table 4.4.13

x	2	4	6	8
$g(x)$	$\frac{1}{2}$	$\frac{3}{2}$	$\frac{7}{2}$	$\frac{11}{2}$

Analysis

The result is that the function $g(x)$ has been compressed vertically by $\frac{1}{2}$. Each output value is divided in half, so the graph is half the original height.

Exercise 4.4.9

A function f is given as Table 4.4.14 Create a table for the function $g(x) = \frac{3}{4} f(x)$.

Table 4.4.14

x	2	4	6	8
$f(x)$	12	16	20	0

Answer

Table 4.4.15

x	2	4	6	8
$g(x)$	9	12	15	0

Example 4.4.16: Recognizing a Vertical Stretch

The graph in Figure 4.4.26 is a transformation of the toolkit function $f(x) = x^3$. Relate this new function $g(x)$ to $f(x)$, and then find a formula for $g(x)$.

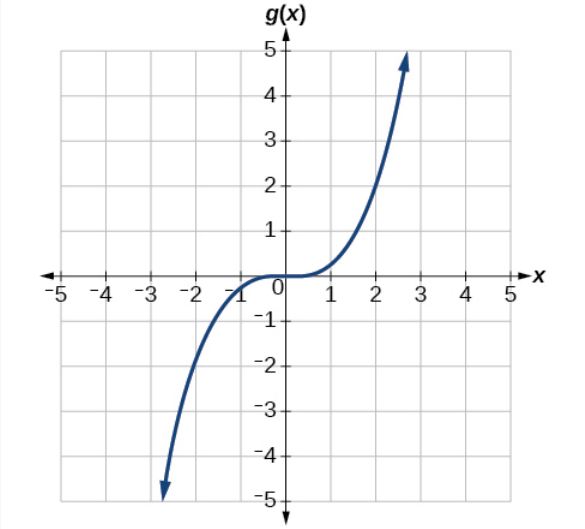

Figure 4.4.26: Graph of a transformation of $f(x) = x^3$

When trying to determine a vertical stretch or shift, it is helpful to look for a point on the graph that is relatively clear. In this graph, it appears that $g(2) = 2$. With the basic cubic function at the same input, $f(2) = 2^3 = 8$. Based on that, it appears that the outputs of g are $\frac{1}{4}$ the outputs of the function f because $g(2) = \frac{1}{4} f(2)$. From this we can fairly safely conclude that $g(x) = \frac{1}{4} f(x)$.

We can write a formula for g by using the definition of the function f.

$$g(x) = \frac{1}{4} f(x) = \frac{1}{4} x^3. \tag{4.4.6}$$

Exercise 4.4.1

Write the formula for the function that we get when we stretch the identity toolkit function by a factor of 3, and then shift it down by 2 units.

Answer

$g(x) = 3x - 2$

Horizontal Stretches and Compressions

Now we consider changes to the inside of a function. When we multiply a function's input by a positive constant, we get a function whose graph is stretched or compressed horizontally in relation to the graph of the original function. If the constant is between 0 and 1, we get a **horizontal stretch**; if the constant is greater than 1, we get a **horizontal compression** of the function.

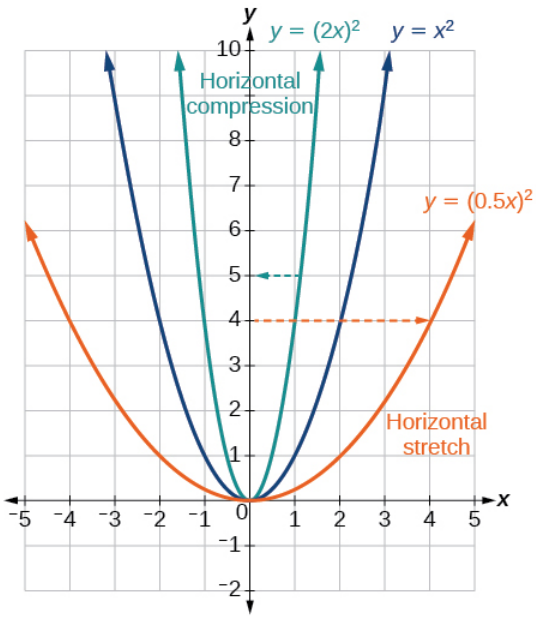

Figure 4.4.27: Graph of the vertical stretch and compression of x^2.

Given a function $y = f(x)$, the form $y = f(bx)$ results in a horizontal stretch or compression. Consider the function $y = x^2$. Observe Figure 4.4.27. The graph of $y = (0.5x)^2$ is a horizontal stretch of the graph of the function $y = x^2$ by a factor of 2. The graph of $y = (2x)^2$ is a horizontal compression of the graph of the function $y = x^2$ by a factor of 2.

Definitions: Horizontal Stretches and Compressions

Given a function $f(x)$, a new function $g(x) = f(bx)$, where b is a constant, is a **horizontal stretch** or **horizontal compression** of the function $f(x)$.

- If $b > 1$, then the graph will be compressed by $\frac{1}{b}$.
- If $0 < b < 1$, then the graph will be stretched by $\frac{1}{b}$.
- If $b < 0$, then there will be combination of a horizontal stretch or compression with a horizontal reflection.

How To...

Given a description of a function, sketch a horizontal compression or stretch.

1. Write a formula to represent the function.
2. Set $g(x) = f(bx)$ where $b > 1$ for a compression or $0 < b < 1$ for a stretch.

Example 4.4.17: Graphing a Horizontal Compression

Suppose a scientist is comparing a population of fruit flies to a population that progresses through its lifespan twice as fast as the original population. In other words, this new population, R, will progress in 1 hour the same amount as the original population does in 2 hours, and in 2 hours, it will progress as much as the original population does in 4 hours. Sketch a graph of this population.

Solution

Symbolically, we could write

$$R(1) = P(2), \tag{4.4.7}$$
$$R(2) = P(4), \quad \text{and in general,} \tag{4.4.8}$$
$$R(t) = P(2t). \tag{4.4.9}$$

See Figure 4.4.28 for a graphical comparison of the original population and the compressed population.

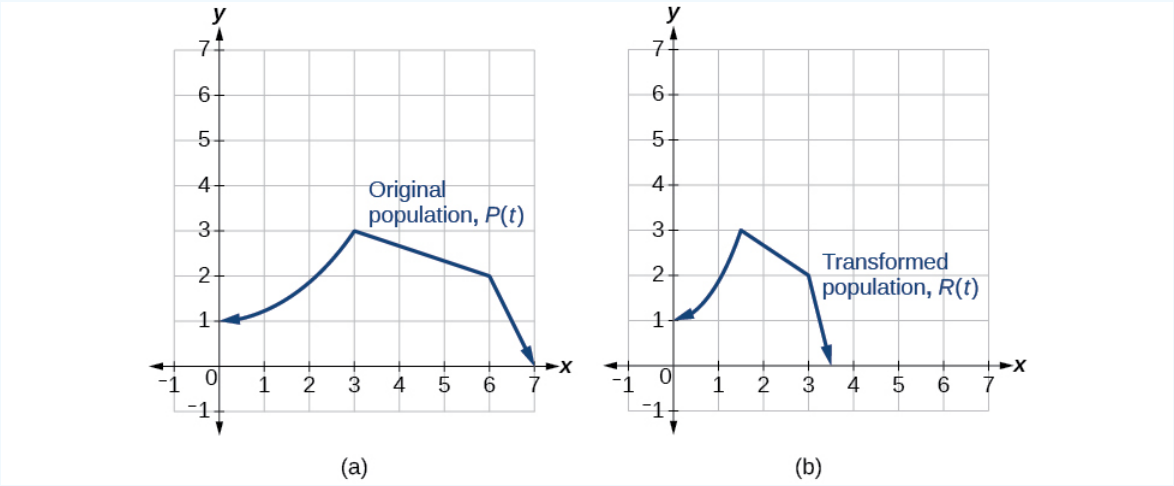

Figure 4.4.28: (a) Original population graph (b) Compressed population graph

Analysis

Note that the effect on the graph is a horizontal compression where all input values are half of their original distance from the vertical axis.

Example 4.4.18: Finding a Horizontal Stretch for a Tabular Function

A function $f(x)$ is given as Table 4.4.16. Create a table for the function $g(x) = f(\frac{1}{2}x)$.

Table 4.4.16

x	2	4	6	8
$f(x)$	1	3	7	11

The formula $g(x) = f(\frac{1}{2}x)$ tells us that the output values for g are the same as the output values for the function f at an input half the size. Notice that we do not have enough information to determine $g(2)$ because $g(2) = f(\frac{1}{2} \cdot 2) = f(1)$, and we do not have a value for $f(1)$ in our table. Our input values to g will need to be twice as large to get inputs for f that we can evaluate. For example, we can determine $g(4)$.

$$g(4) = f(\frac{1}{2} \cdot 4) = f(2) = 1 \tag{4.4.10}$$

We do the same for the other values to produce Table 4.4.17.

Table 4.4.17

x	4	8	12	16

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$g(x)$	1	3	7	11

Figure 4.4.29 shows the graphs of both of these sets of points.

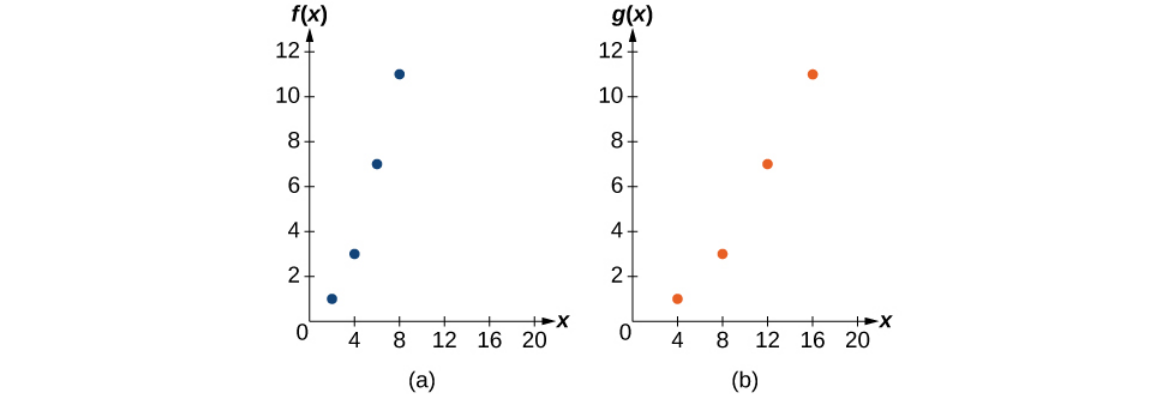

Figure 4.4.29: Graph of the previous table.

Analysis

Because each input value has been doubled, the result is that the function $g(x)$ has been stretched horizontally by a factor of 2.

Example 4.4.19: Recognizing a Horizontal Compression on a Graph

Relate the function $g(x)$ to $f(x)$ in Figure 4.4.30.

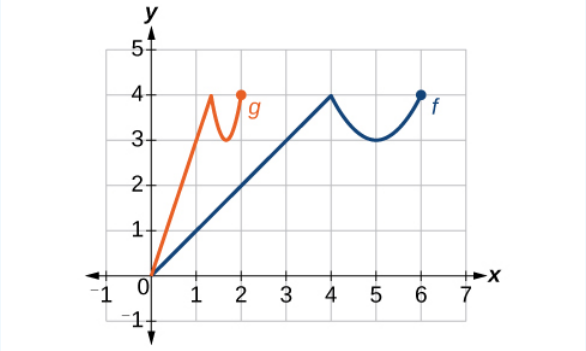

Figure 4.4.30: Graph of $f(x)$ being vertically compressed to $g(x)$.

Solution

The graph of $g(x)$ looks like the graph of $f(x)$ horizontally compressed. Because $f(x)$ ends at (6,4) and $g(x)$ ends at (2,4), we can see that the x-values have been compressed by $\frac{1}{3}$, because $6(\frac{1}{3}) = 2$. We might also notice that $g(2) = f(6)$ and $g(1) = f(3)$. Either way, we can describe this relationship as $g(x) = f(3x)$. This is a horizontal compression by $\frac{1}{3}$.

Analysis

Notice that the coefficient needed for a horizontal stretch or compression is the reciprocal of the stretch or compression. So to stretch the graph horizontally by a scale factor of 4, we need a coefficient of $\frac{1}{4}$ in our function: $f(\frac{1}{4}x)$. This means that the input values must be four times larger to produce the same result, requiring the input to be larger, causing the horizontal stretching.

Exercise 4.4.11

Write a formula for the toolkit square root function horizontally stretched by a factor of 3.

Answer

$g(x) = f(\frac{1}{3}x)$, so using the square root function we get $g(x) = \sqrt{\frac{1}{3}x}$

Performing a Sequence of Transformations

When combining transformations, it is very important to consider the order of the transformations. For example, vertically shifting by 3 and then vertically stretching by 2 does not create the same graph as vertically stretching by 2 and then vertically shifting by 3, because when we shift first, both the original function and the shift get stretched, while only the original function gets stretched when we stretch first.

When we see an expression such as $2f(x)+3$, which transformation should we start with? The answer here follows nicely from the order of operations. Given the output value of $f(x)$, we first multiply by 2, causing the vertical stretch, and then add 3, causing the vertical shift. In other words, multiplication before addition.

Horizontal transformations are a little trickier to think about. When we write $g(x) = f(2x+3)$, for example, we have to think about how the inputs to the function g relate to the inputs to the function f. Suppose we know $f(7) = 12$. What input to g would produce that output? In other words, what value of x will allow $g(x) = f(2x+3) = 12$? We would need $2x+3 = 7$. To solve for x, we would first subtract 3, resulting in a horizontal shift, and then divide by 2, causing a horizontal compression.

This format ends up being very difficult to work with, because it is usually much easier to horizontally stretch a graph before shifting. We can work around this by factoring inside the function.

$$f(bx+p) = f(b(x+\frac{p}{b}))$$

Let's work through an example.

$$f(x) = (2x+4)^2$$

We can factor out a 2.

$$f(x) = (2(x+2))^2$$

Now we can more clearly observe a horizontal shift to the left 2 units and a horizontal compression. Factoring in this way allows us to horizontally stretch first and then shift horizontally.

Combining Transformations

- When combining vertical transformations written in the form $af(x)+k$, first vertically stretch by a and then vertically shift by k.
- When combining horizontal transformations written in the form $f(bx+h)$, first horizontally shift by h and then horizontally stretch by $\frac{1}{b}$.
- When combining horizontal transformations written in the form $f(b(x+h))$, first horizontally stretch by $\frac{1}{b}$ and then horizontally shift by h.
- Horizontal and vertical transformations are independent. It does not matter whether horizontal or vertical transformations are performed first.

Example 4.4.20: Finding a Triple Transformation of a Tabular Function

Given Table 4.4.18 for the function $f(x)$, create a table of values for the function $g(x) = 2f(3x)+1$.

Table 4.4.18

x	6	12	18	24
$f(x)$	10	14	15	17

Solution

There are three steps to this transformation, and we will work from the inside out. Starting with the horizontal transformations, $f(3x)$ is a horizontal compression by $\frac{1}{3}$, which means we multiply each x-value by $\frac{1}{3}$. See Table 4.4.19

Table 4.4.19

x	2	4	6	8
$f(3x)$	10	14	15	17

Looking now to the vertical transformations, we start with the vertical stretch, which will multiply the output values by 2. We apply this to the previous transformation. See Table 4.4.20

Table 4.4.20

x	2	4	6	8
$2f(3x)$	20	28	30	34

Finally, we can apply the vertical shift, which will add 1 to all the output values. See Table 4.4.21

Table 4.4.21

x	2	4	6	8
$g(x)=2f(3x)+1+1$	21	29	31	35

Example 4.4.21: Finding a Triple Transformation of a Graph

Use the graph of $f(x)$ in Figure 4.4.31 to sketch a graph of $k(x)=f\left(\frac{1}{2}x+1\right)-3$.

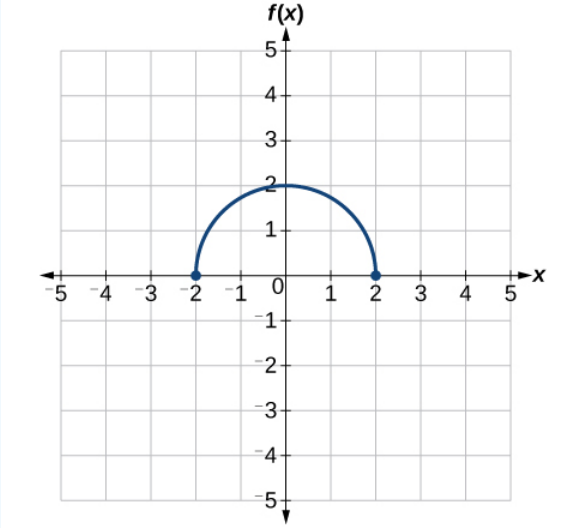

Figure 4.4.31: Graph of a half-circle.

To simplify, let's start by factoring out the inside of the function.

$$f\left(\frac{1}{2}x+1\right)-3=f\left(\frac{1}{2}(x+2)\right)-3 \tag{4.4.11}$$

By factoring the inside, we can first horizontally stretch by 2, as indicated by the $\frac{1}{2}$ on the inside of the function. Remember that twice the size of 0 is still 0, so the point $(0,2)$ remains at $(0,2)$ while the point $(2,0)$ will stretch to $(4,0)$. See Figure 4.4.32

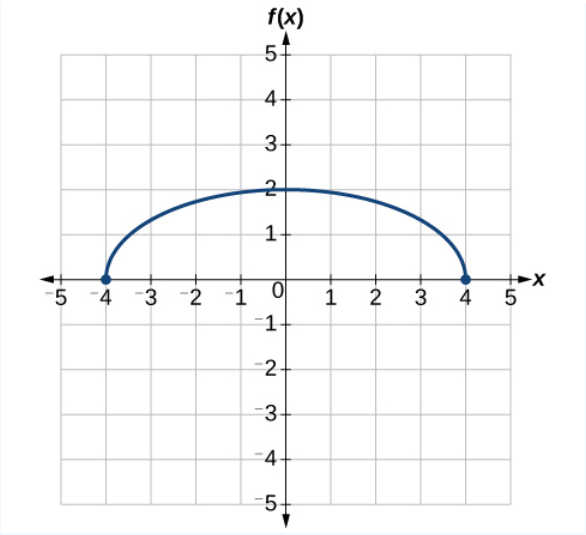

Figure 4.4.32: Graph of a vertically stretch half-circle.

Next, we horizontally shift left by 2 units, as indicated by $x+2$. See Figure 4.4.33

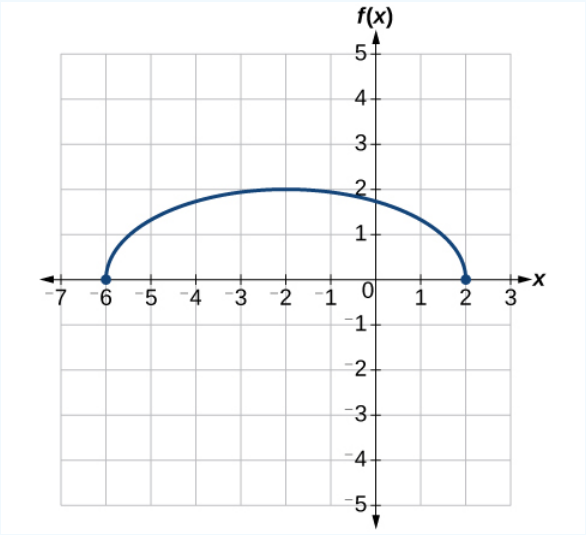

Figure 4.4.33: Graph of a vertically stretch and translated half-circle.

Last, we vertically shift down by 3 to complete our sketch, as indicated by the -3 on the outside of the function. See Figure 4.4.34

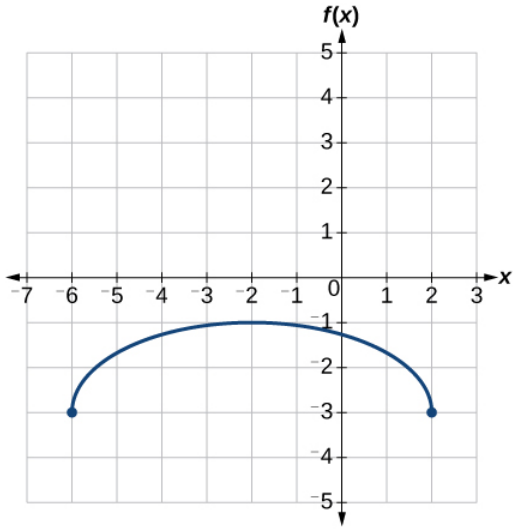

Figure 4.4.34: Graph of a vertically stretch and translated half-circle.

Key Equations

- Vertical shift $g(x) = f(x) + k$ (up for $k > 0$)
- Horizontal shift $g(x) = f(x - h)$ (right) for $h > 0$
- Vertical reflection $g(x) = -f(x)$
- Horizontal reflection $g(x) = f(-x)$
- Vertical stretch $g(x) = af(x)$ (a>0)
- Vertical compression $g(x) = af(x)$ (0<a<1)
- Horizontal stretch $g(x) = f(bx)(0 < b < 1)$
- Horizontal compression $g(x) = f(bx)$ (b>1)

Key Concepts

- A function can be shifted vertically by adding a constant to the output.
- A function can be shifted horizontally by adding a constant to the input.
- Relating the shift to the context of a problem makes it possible to compare and interpret vertical and horizontal shifts.
- Vertical and horizontal shifts are often combined.
- A vertical reflection reflects a graph about the x-axis. A graph can be reflected vertically by multiplying the output by –1.
- A horizontal reflection reflects a graph about the y-axis. A graph can be reflected horizontally by multiplying the input by –1.
- A graph can be reflected both vertically and horizontally. The order in which the reflections are applied does not affect the final graph.
- A function presented in tabular form can also be reflected by multiplying the values in the input and output rows or columns accordingly.
- A function presented as an equation can be reflected by applying transformations one at a time.
- Even functions are symmetric about the y-axis, whereas odd functions are symmetric about the origin.
- Even functions satisfy the condition $f(x) = f(-x)$.
- Odd functions satisfy the condition $f(x) = -f(-x)$.
- A function can be odd, even, or neither.
- A function can be compressed or stretched vertically by multiplying the output by a constant.
- A function can be compressed or stretched horizontally by multiplying the input by a constant.
- The order in which different transformations are applied does affect the final function. Both vertical and horizontal transformations must be applied in the order given. However, a vertical transformation may be combined with a horizontal transformation in any order.

Glossary

even function

a function whose graph is unchanged by horizontal reflection, $f(x) = f(-x)$, and is symmetric about the y-axis

horizontal compression
a transformation that compresses a function's graph horizontally, by multiplying the input by a constant b>1

horizontal reflection
a transformation that reflects a function's graph across the y-axis by multiplying the input by −1

horizontal shift
a transformation that shifts a function's graph left or right by adding a positive or negative constant to the input

horizontal stretch
a transformation that stretches a function's graph horizontally by multiplying the input by a constant 0<b<1

odd function
a function whose graph is unchanged by combined horizontal and vertical reflection, $f(x) = -f(-x)$, and is symmetric about the origin

vertical compression
a function transformation that compresses the function's graph vertically by multiplying the output by a constant 0<a<1

vertical reflection
a transformation that reflects a function's graph across the x-axis by multiplying the output by −1

vertical shift
a transformation that shifts a function's graph up or down by adding a positive or negative constant to the output

vertical stretch
a transformation that stretches a function's graph vertically by multiplying the output by a constant a>1

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4.5: Composition of Functions

Learning Objectives

- Combine functions using algebraic operations.
- Create a new function by composition of functions.
- Evaluate composite functions.
- Find the domain of a composite function.
- Decompose a composite function into its component functions.

Suppose we want to calculate how much it costs to heat a house on a particular day of the year. The cost to heat a house will depend on the average daily temperature, and in turn, the average daily temperature depends on the particular day of the year. Notice how we have just defined two relationships: The cost depends on the temperature, and the temperature depends on the day.

Using descriptive variables, we can notate these two functions. The function $C(T)$ gives the cost C of heating a house for a given average daily temperature in T degrees Celsius. The function $T(d)$ gives the average daily temperature on day d of the year. For any given day, $Cost = C(T(d))$ means that the cost depends on the temperature, which in turns depends on the day of the year. Thus, we can evaluate the cost function at the temperature $T(d)$. For example, we could evaluate $T(5)$ to determine the average daily temperature on the 5th day of the year. Then, we could evaluate the **cost function** at that temperature. We would write $C(T(5))$.

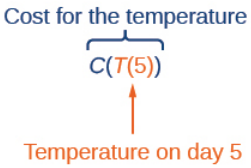

Figure 4.5.1: Explanation of $C(T(5))$, which is the cost for the temperature and $T(5)$ is the temperature on day 5.

By combining these two relationships into one function, we have performed function composition, which is the focus of this section.

Combining Functions Using Algebraic Operations

Function composition is only one way to combine existing functions. Another way is to carry out the usual algebraic operations on functions, such as addition, subtraction, multiplication and division. We do this by performing the operations with the function outputs, defining the result as the output of our new function.

Suppose we need to add two columns of numbers that represent a husband and wife's separate annual incomes over a period of years, with the result being their total household income. We want to do this for every year, adding only that year's incomes and then collecting all the data in a new column. If $w(y)$ is the wife's income and $h(y)$ is the husband's income in year y, and we want T to represent the total income, then we can define a new function.

$$T(y) = h(y) + w(y)$$

If this holds true for every year, then we can focus on the relation between the functions without reference to a year and write

$$T = h + w$$

Just as for this sum of two functions, we can define difference, product, and ratio functions for any pair of functions that have the same kinds of inputs (not necessarily numbers) and also the same kinds of outputs (which do have to be numbers so that the usual operations of algebra can apply to them, and which also must have the same units or no units when we add and subtract). In this way, we can think of adding, subtracting, multiplying, and dividing functions.

For two functions $f(x)$ and $g(x)$ with real number outputs, we define new functions $f+g$, $f-g$, fg, and $\frac{f}{g}$ by the relations.

$$(f+g)(x) = f(x)+g(x)$$
$$(f-g)(x) = f(x)-g(x)$$
$$(fg)(x) = f(x)g(x)$$
$$\left(\frac{f}{g}\right)(x) = \frac{f(x)}{g(x)}$$

Example 4.5.1: Performing Algebraic Operations on Functions

Find and simplify the functions $(g-f)(x)$ and $\left(\frac{g}{f}\right)(x)$, given $f(x)=x-1$ and $g(x)=x^2-1$. Are they the same function?

Solution

Begin by writing the general form, and then substitute the given functions.

$$\begin{aligned}(g-f)(x) &= g(x)-f(x)\\ (g-f)(x) &= x^2-1-(x-1)\\ &= x^2-x\\ &= x(x-1)\end{aligned}$$

$$\left(\frac{g}{f}\right)(x) = g(x)f(x)$$

$$\begin{aligned}\left(\frac{g}{f}\right)(x) &= \frac{x^2-1}{x-1}\\ &= \frac{(x+1)(x-1)}{x-1}\\ &= x+1\end{aligned}$$

No, the functions are not the same.

Note: For $\left(\frac{g}{f}\right)(x)$, the condition $x \neq 1$ is necessary because when $x=1$, the denominator is equal to 0, which makes the function undefined.

Exercise 4.5.1

Find and simplify the functions $(fg)(x)$ and $(f-g)(x)$.

$$f(x) = x-1$$

and

$$g(x) = x^2-1$$

Are they the same function?

Answer

$(fg)(x) = f(x)g(x) = (x-1)(x2-1) = x^3-x^2-x+1$

$(f-g)(x) = f(x)-g(x) = (x-1)-(x^2-1) = x-x^2$

No, the functions are not the same.

Create a Function by Composition of Functions

Performing algebraic operations on functions combines them into a new function, but we can also create functions by composing functions. When we wanted to compute a heating cost from a day of the year, we created a new function that takes a day as input and yields a cost as output. The process of **combining functions** so that the output of one function becomes the input of another is known as a **composition of functions**. The resulting function is known as a **composite function**. We represent this combination by the following notation:

$$f \circ g(x) = f(g(x)) \tag{4.5.1}$$

We read the left-hand side as"f composed with g at x," and the right-hand side as"f of g of x."The two sides of the equation have the same mathematical meaning and are equal. The open circle symbol $\circ$ is called the composition operator. We use this operator mainly when we wish to emphasize the relationship between the functions themselves without referring to any particular input value. Composition is a binary operation that takes two functions and forms a new function, much as addition or multiplication takes two numbers and gives a new number. However, it is important not to confuse function composition with multiplication because, as we learned above, in most cases $f(g(x)) \neq f(x)g(x)$.

It is also important to understand the order of operations in evaluating a composite function. We follow the usual convention with parentheses by starting with the innermost parentheses first, and then working to the outside. In the equation above, the function g takes the input x first and yields an output $g(x)$. Then the function f takes $g(x)$ as an input and yields an output $f(g(x))$.

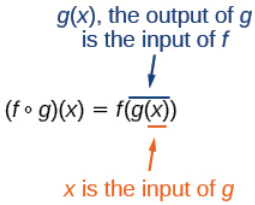

Figure 4.5.2: Explanation of the composite function.

In general, $f \circ g$ and $g \circ f$ are different functions. In other words, in many cases $f(g(x)) \neq g(f(x))$ for all x. We will also see that sometimes two functions can be composed only in one specific order.

For example, if $f(x) = x^2$ and $g(x) = x + 2$, then

$$\begin{aligned} f(g(x)) &= f(x+2) \\ &= (x+2)^2 \\ &= x^2 + 4x + 4 \end{aligned}$$

but

$$\begin{aligned} g(f(x)) &= g(x^2) \\ &= x^2 + 2 \end{aligned}$$

These expressions are not equal for all values of x, so the two functions are not equal. It is irrelevant that the expressions happen to be equal for the single input value $x = -\frac{1}{2}$.

Note that the range of the inside function (the first function to be evaluated) needs to be within the domain of the outside function. Less formally, the composition has to make sense in terms of inputs and outputs.

Composition of Functions

When the output of one function is used as the input of another, we call the entire operation a composition of functions. For any input x and functions f and g, this action defines a **composite function**, which we write as $f \circ g$ such that

$$(f \circ g)(x) = f(g(x)) \tag{4.5.2}$$

The domain of the composite function $f \circ g$ is all x such that x is in the domain of g and $g(x)$ is in the domain of f.

It is important to realize that the product of functions fg is not the same as the function composition $f(g(x))$, because, in general, $f(x)g(x) \neq f(g(x))$.

Example 4.5.2: Determining whether Composition of Functions is Commutative

Using the functions provided, find $f(g(x))$ and $g(f(x))$. Determine whether the composition of the functions is **commutative**.

$$f(x)=2x+1 \quad g(x)=3-x$$

Solution

Let's begin by substituting $g(x)$ into $f(x)$.

$$\begin{aligned} f(g(x)) &= 2(3-x)+1 \\ &= 6-2x+1 \\ &= 7-2x \end{aligned}$$

Now we can substitute $f(x)$ into $g(x)$.

$$\begin{aligned} g(f(x)) &= 3-(2x+1) \\ &= 3-2x-1 \\ &= 2-2x \end{aligned}$$

We find that $g(f(x))\neq f(g(x))$, so the operation of function composition is not commutative.

Example 4.5.3: Interpreting Composite Functions

The function $c(s)$ gives the number of calories burned completing s sit-ups, and $s(t)$ gives the number of sit-ups a person can complete in t minutes. Interpret $c(s(3))$.

Solution

The inside expression in the composition is $s(3)$. Because the input to the s-function is time, $t=3$ represents 3 minutes, and $s(3)$ is the number of sit-ups completed in 3 minutes.

Using $s(3)$ as the input to the function $c(s)$ gives us the number of calories burned during the number of sit-ups that can be completed in 3 minutes, or simply the number of calories burned in 3 minutes (by doing sit-ups).

Example 4.5.4: Investigating the Order of Function Composition

Suppose $f(x)$ gives miles that can be driven in x hours and $g(y)$ gives the gallons of gas used in driving y miles. Which of these expressions is meaningful: $f(g(y))$ or $g(f(x))$?

Solution

The function $y=f(x)$ is a function whose output is the number of miles driven corresponding to the number of hours driven.

$$\text{number of miles } = f(\text{number of hours})$$

The function $g(y)$ is a function whose output is the number of gallons used corresponding to the number of miles driven. This means:

$$\text{number of gallons } = g(\text{number of miles})$$

The expression $g(y)$ takes miles as the input and a number of gallons as the output. The function $f(x)$ requires a number of hours as the input. Trying to input a number of gallons does not make sense. The expression $f(g(y))$ is meaningless.

The expression $f(x)$ takes hours as input and a number of miles driven as the output. The function $g(y)$ requires a number of miles as the input. Using $f(x)$ (miles driven) as an input value for $g(y)$, where gallons of gas depends on miles driven, does make sense. The expression $g(f(x))$ makes sense, and will yield the number of gallons of gas used, g, driving a certain number of miles, $f(x)$, in x hours.

Question/Answer

Are there any situations where $f(g(y))$ and $g(f(x))$ would both be meaningful or useful expressions?

Yes. For many pure mathematical functions, both compositions make sense, even though they usually produce different new functions. In real-world problems, functions whose inputs and outputs have the same units also may give compositions that are meaningful in either order

Exercise 4.5.2

The gravitational force on a planet a distance r from the sun is given by the function $G(r)$. The acceleration of a planet subjected to any force F is given by the function $a(F)$. Form a meaningful composition of these two functions, and explain what it means.

Answer

A gravitational force is still a force, so $a(G(r))$ makes sense as the acceleration of a planet at a distance r from the Sun (due to gravity), but $G(a(F))$ does not make sense.

Evaluating Composite Functions

Once we compose a new function from two existing functions, we need to be able to evaluate it for any input in its domain. We will do this with specific numerical inputs for functions expressed as tables, graphs, and formulas and with variables as inputs to functions expressed as formulas. In each case, we evaluate the inner function using the starting input and then use the inner function's output as the input for the outer function.

Evaluating Composite Functions Using Tables

When working with functions given as tables, we read input and output values from the table entries and always work from the inside to the outside. We evaluate the inside function first and then use the output of the inside function as the input to the outside function.

Example 4.5.5: Using a Table to Evaluate a Composite Function

Using Table 4.5.1, evaluate $f(g(3))$ and $g(f(3))$.

Table 4.5.1

x	$f(x)$	$g(x)$
1	6	3
2	8	5
3	3	2
4	1	7

Solution

To evaluate $f(g(3))$, we start from the inside with the input value 3. We then evaluate the inside expression $g(3)$ using the table that defines the function g : $g(3) = 2$. We can then use that result as the input to the function f, so $g(3)$ is replaced by 2 and we get $f(2)$. Then, using the table that defines the function f, we find that $f(2) = 8$.

$$g(3) = 2$$

$$f(g(3)) = f(2) = 8$$

To evaluate $g(f(3))$, we first evaluate the inside expression $f(3)$ using the first table: $f(3) = 3$. Then, using the table for g, we can evaluate

$$g(f(3)) = g(3) = 2$$

Table $4.5.2$ shows the composite functions $f \circ g$ and $g \circ f$ as tables.

Table 4.5.2

x	$g(x)$	$f(g(x))$	$f(x)$	$g(f(x))$
3	2	8	3	2

Exercise $4.5.3$

Using Table $4.5.1$, evaluate $f(g(1))$ and $g(f(4))$.

Answer

$f(g(1)) = f(3) = 3$ and $g(f(4)) = g(1) = 3$

Evaluating Composite Functions Using Graphs

When we are given individual functions as graphs, the procedure for evaluating composite functions is similar to the process we use for evaluating tables. We read the input and output values, but this time, from the x- and y-axes of the graphs.

How To ...

Given a composite function and graphs of its individual functions, evaluate it using the information provided by the graphs.

1. Locate the given input to the inner function on the x-axis of its graph.
2. Read off the output of the inner function from the y-axis of its graph.
3. Locate the inner function output on the x-axis of the graph of the outer function.
4. Read the output of the outer function from the y-axis of its graph. This is the output of the composite function.

Example $4.5.6$: Using a Graph to Evaluate a Composite Function

Using Figure $4.5.3$, evaluate $f(g(1))$.

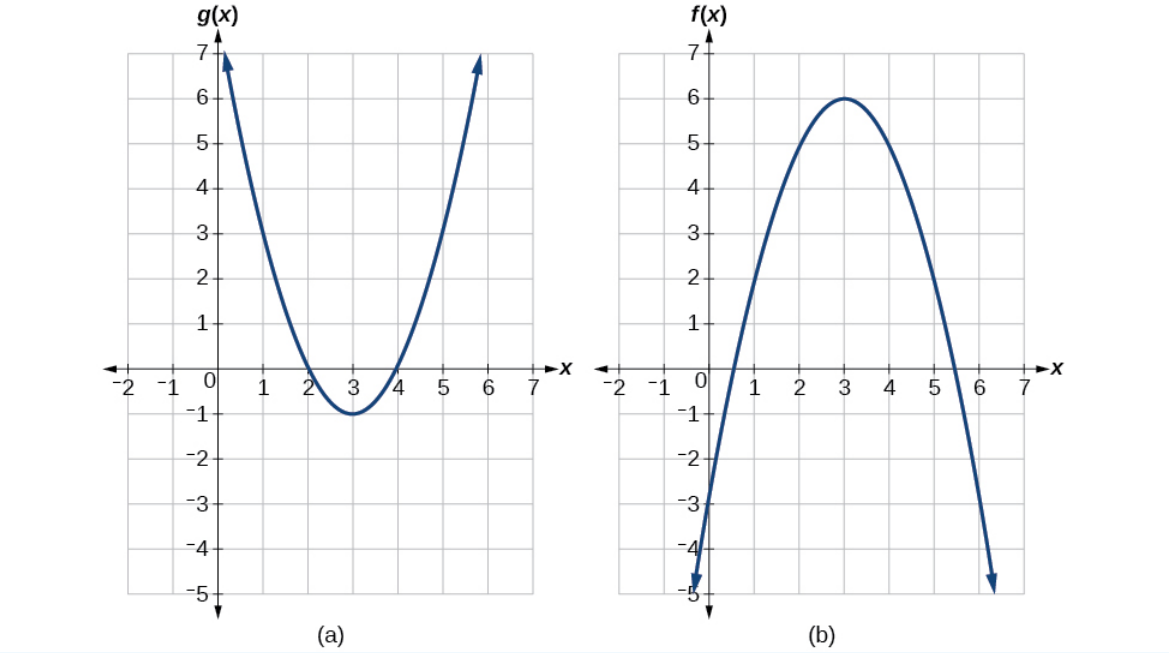

Figure $4.5.3$: Two graphs of a positive and negative parabola.

Solution

To evaluate $f(g(1))$, we start with the inside evaluation. See Figure $4.5.4$.

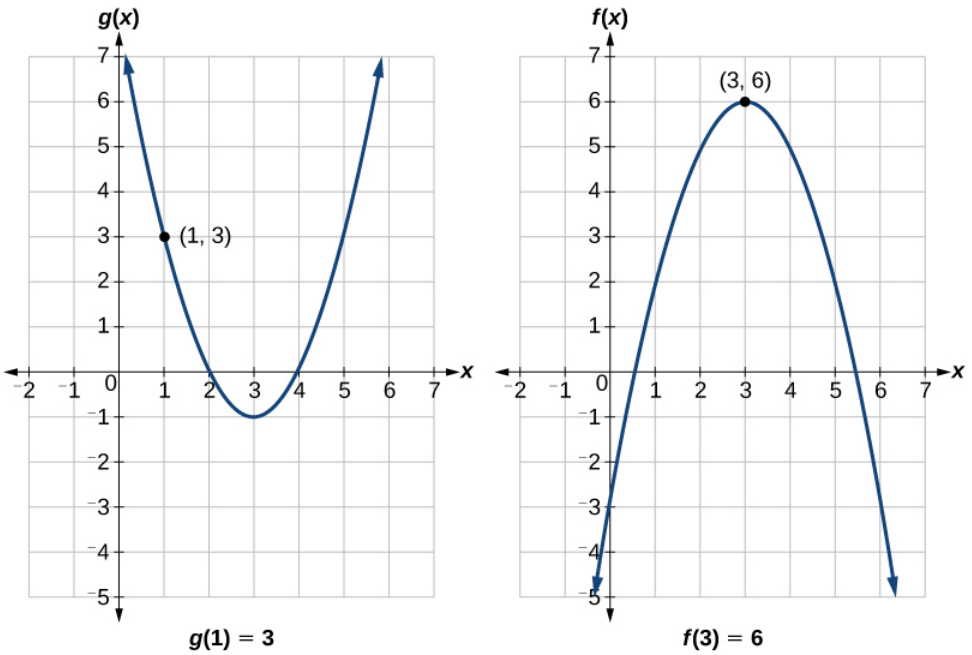

Figure 4.5.4: Two graphs of a positive parabola $g(x)$ and a negative parabola $f(x)$. The following points are plotted: $g(1) = 3$ and $f(3) = 6$.

We evaluate $g(1)$ using the graph of $g(x)$, finding the input of 1 on the x-axis and finding the output value of the graph at that input. Here, $g(1) = 3$. We use this value as the input to the function f.

$$f(g(1)) = f(3)$$

We can then evaluate the composite function by looking to the graph of $f(x)$, finding the input of 3 on the x-axis and reading the output value of the graph at this input. Here, $f(3) = 6$, so $f(g(1)) = 6$.

Analysis

Figure $4.5.5$ shows how we can mark the graphs with arrows to trace the path from the input value to the output value.

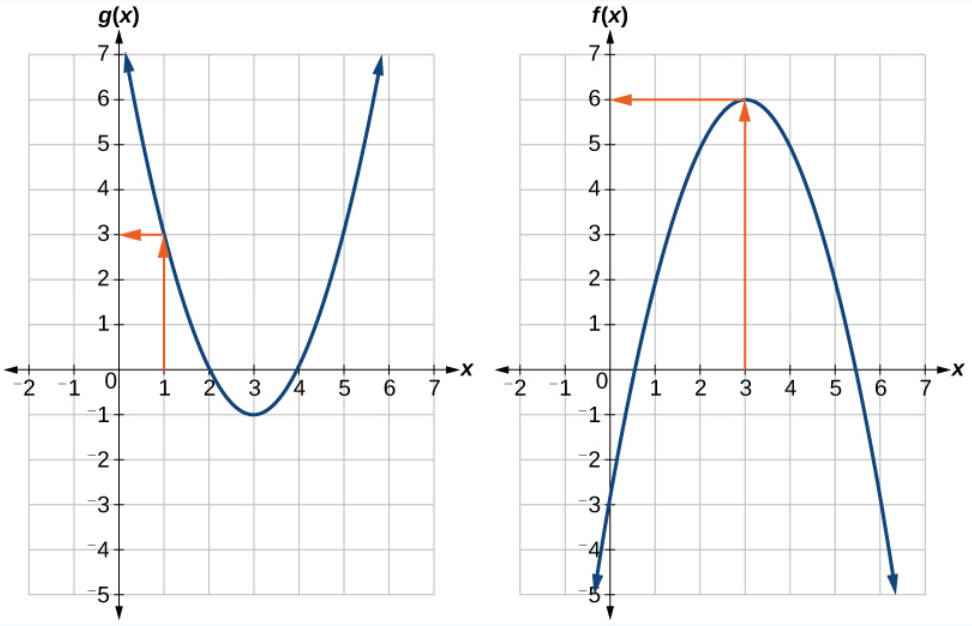

Figure 4.5.5: Two graphs of a positive and negative parabola.

Exercise 4.5.4

Using Figure 4.5.3, evaluate $g(f(2))$.

Answer

$g(f(2)) = g(5) = 3$

Evaluating Composite Functions Using Formulas

When evaluating a composite function where we have either created or been given formulas, the rule of working from the inside out remains the same. The input value to the outer function will be the output of the inner function, which may be a numerical value, a variable name, or a more complicated expression.

While we can compose the functions for each individual input value, it is sometimes helpful to find a single formula that will calculate the result of a composition $f(g(x))$. To do this, we will extend our idea of function evaluation. Recall that, when we evaluate a function like $f(t) = t^2 - t$, we substitute the value inside the parentheses into the formula wherever we see the input variable.

How To...

Given a formula for a composite function, evaluate the function.

1. Evaluate the inside function using the input value or variable provided.
2. Use the resulting output as the input to the outside function.

Example 4.5.7: Evaluating a Composition of Functions Expressed as Formulas with a Numerical Input

Given $f(t) = t^2 - t$ and $h(x) = 3x + 2$, evaluate $f(h(1))$.

Solution

Because the inside expression is $h(1)$, we start by evaluating $h(x)$ at 1.

$$h(1) = 3(1) + 2$$
$$h(1) = 5$$

Then $f(h(1)) = f(5)$, so we evaluate $f(t)$ at an input of 5.

$$f(h(1)) = f(5)$$
$$f(h(1)) = 5^2 - 5$$
$$f(h(1)) = 20$$

Analysis

It makes no difference what the input variables t and x were called in this problem because we evaluated for specific numerical values.

Exercise 4.5.5

Given $f(t) = t^2 - t$ and $h(x) = 3x + 2$, evaluate

a. $h(f(2))$
b. $h(f(-2))$

Answer a

8

Answer b

20

Finding the Domain of a Composite Function

As we discussed previously, the **domain of a composite function** such as $f \circ g$ is dependent on the domain of g and the domain of f. It is important to know when we can apply a composite function and when we cannot, that is, to know the domain of a function such as $f \circ g$. Let us assume we know the domains of the functions f and g separately. If we write the composite function for an input x as $f(g(x))$, we can see right away that x must be a member of the domain of g in order for the expression to be meaningful, because otherwise we cannot complete the inner function evaluation. However, we also see that $g(x)$ must be a member of the domain of f, otherwise the second function evaluation in $f(g(x))$ cannot be completed, and the expression is still undefined. Thus the domain of $f \circ g$ consists of only those inputs in the domain of g that produce outputs from g belonging to the domain of f. Note that the domain of f composed with g is the set of all x such that x is in the domain of g and g(x)\) is in the domain of f.

Definition: Domain of a Composite Function

The **domain of a composite function** $f(g(x))$ is the set of those inputs x in the domain of g for which $g(x)$ is in the domain of f.

How To...

Given a function composition $f(g(x))$, determine its domain.

1. Find the domain of g.
2. Find the domain of f.
3. Find those inputs x in the domain of g for which $g(x)$ is in the domain of f. That is, exclude those inputs x from the domain of g for which $g(x)$ is not in the domain of f. The resulting set is the domain of $f \circ g$.

Example 4.5.8A: Finding the Domain of a Composite Function

Find the domain of

$$(f \circ g)(x) \text{ where } f(x) = \frac{5}{x-1} \text{ and } g(x) = \frac{4}{3x-2}$$

Solution

The domain of $g(x)$ consists of all real numbers except $x = \frac{2}{3}$, since that input value would cause us to divide by 0. Likewise, the domain of f consists of all real numbers except 1. So we need to exclude from the domain of $g(x)$ that value of x for which $g(x) = 1$.

$$\begin{aligned} \frac{4}{3x-2} &= 1 \\ 4 &= 3x-2 \\ 6 &= 3x \\ x &= 2 \end{aligned}$$

So the domain of $f \circ g$ is the set of all real numbers except $\frac{2}{3}$ and 2. This means that

$$x \neq \frac{2}{3} \text{ or } x \neq 2$$

We can write this in interval notation as

$$\left(-\infty, \frac{2}{3}\right) \cup \left(\frac{2}{3}, 2\right) \cup (2, \infty)$$

Example 4.5.8B: Finding the Domain of a Composite Function Involving Radicals

Find the domain of

$$(f\circ g)(x) \text{ where } f(x)=\sqrt{x+2} \text{ and } g(x)=\sqrt{3-x}$$

Solution

Because we cannot take the square root of a negative number, the domain of g is $(-\infty, 3]$. Now we check the domain of the composite function

$$(f\circ g)(x)=\sqrt{\sqrt{3-x}+2}$$

For $(f\circ g)(x)=\sqrt{\sqrt{3-x}+2}$, $\sqrt{3-x}+2\geq 0$, since the radicand of a square root must be positive. Since square roots are positive, $\sqrt{3-x}\geq 0$,or, $3-x\geq 0$, which gives a domain of $(-\infty, 3]$.

Analysis

This example shows that knowledge of the range of functions (specifically the inner function) can also be helpful in finding the domain of a composite function. It also shows that the domain of $f\circ g$ can contain values that are not in the domain of f, though they must be in the domain of g.

Exercise 4.5.6

Find the domain of

$$(f\circ g)(x) \text{ where } f(x)=\frac{1}{x-2} \text{ and } g(x)=\sqrt{x+4}$$

Answer

$[-4, 0)\cup(0, \infty)$

Decomposing a Composite Function into its Component Functions

In some cases, it is necessary to decompose a complicated function. In other words, we can write it as a composition of two simpler functions. There may be more than one way to **decompose a composite function**, so we may choose the decomposition that appears to be most expedient.

Example 4.5.9: Decomposing a Function

Write $f(x)=\sqrt{5-x^2}$ as the composition of two functions.

Solution

We are looking for two functions, g and h, so $f(x)=g(h(x))$. To do this, we look for a function inside a function in the formula for $f(x)$. As one possibility, we might notice that the expression $5-x^2$ is the inside of the square root. We could then decompose the function as

$$h(x)=5-x^2 \text{ and } g(x)=\sqrt{x}$$

We can check our answer by recomposing the functions.

$$g(h(x))=g(5-x^2)=\sqrt{5-x^2}$$

Exercise 4.5.7

Write $f(x)=\dfrac{4}{3-\sqrt{4+x^2}}$ as the composition of two functions.

Answer

Possible answers:

$g(x) = \sqrt{4 + x^2}$

$h(x) = \dfrac{4}{3 - x}$

$f = h \circ g$

Access these online resources for additional instruction and practice with composite functions.

- Composite Functions (http://openstaxcollege.org/l/compfunction)
- Composite Function Notation Application (http://openstaxcollege.org/l/compfuncnot)
- Composite Functions Using Graphs (http://openstaxcollege.org/l/compfuncgraph)
- Decompose Functions (http://openstaxcollege.org/l/decompfunction)
- Composite Function Values (http://openstaxcollege.org/l/compfuncvalue)

Key Equation

- Composite function $(f \circ g)(x) = f(g(x))$

Key Concepts

- We can perform algebraic operations on functions. See Example.
- When functions are combined, the output of the first (inner) function becomes the input of the second (outer) function.
- The function produced by combining two functions is a composite function. See Example and Example.
- The order of function composition must be considered when interpreting the meaning of composite functions. See Example.
- A composite function can be evaluated by evaluating the inner function using the given input value and then evaluating the outer function taking as its input the output of the inner function.
- A composite function can be evaluated from a table. See Example.
- A composite function can be evaluated from a graph. See Example.
- A composite function can be evaluated from a formula. See Example.
- The domain of a composite function consists of those inputs in the domain of the inner function that correspond to outputs of the inner function that are in the domain of the outer function. See Example and Example.
- Just as functions can be combined to form a composite function, composite functions can be decomposed into simpler functions.
- Functions can often be decomposed in more than one way. See Example.

Glossary

composite function

the new function formed by function composition, when the output of one function is used as the input of another

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4.6: Inverse Functions

Learning Objectives

- Verify inverse functions.
- Determine the domain and range of an inverse function, and restrict the domain of a function to make it one-to-one.
- Find or evaluate the inverse of a function.
- Use the graph of a one-to-one function to graph its inverse function on the same axes.

A reversible heat pump is a climate-control system that is an air conditioner and a heater in a single device. Operated in one direction, it pumps heat out of a house to provide cooling. Operating in reverse, it pumps heat into the building from the outside, even in cool weather, to provide heating. As a heater, a heat pump is several times more efficient than conventional electrical resistance heating.

If some physical machines can run in two directions, we might ask whether some of the function "machines" we have been studying can also run backwards. Figure 4.6.1 provides a visual representation of this question. In this section, we will consider the reverse nature of functions.

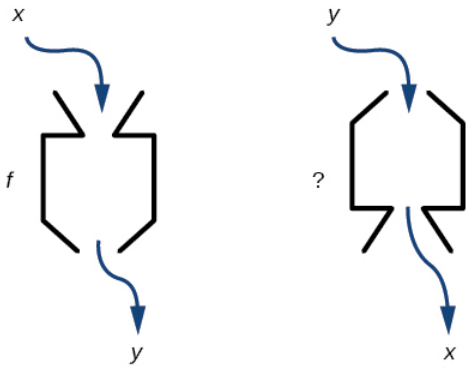

Figure* 4.6.1*: *Can a function "machine" operate in reverse?*

Verifying That Two Functions Are Inverse Functions

Suppose a fashion designer traveling to Milan for a fashion show wants to know what the temperature will be. He is not familiar with the **Celsius** scale. To get an idea of how temperature measurements are related, he asks his assistant, Betty, to convert 75 degrees **Fahrenheit** to degrees Celsius. She finds the formula

$$C = \frac{5}{9}(F - 32) \tag{4.6.1}$$

and substitutes 75 for F to calculate

$$\frac{5}{9}(75 - 32) \approx 24^{\circ} \tag{4.6.2}$$

Knowing that a comfortable 75 degrees Fahrenheit is about 24 degrees Celsius, he sends his assistant the week's weather forecast from Figure 4.6.2 for Milan, and asks her to convert all of the temperatures to degrees Fahrenheit.

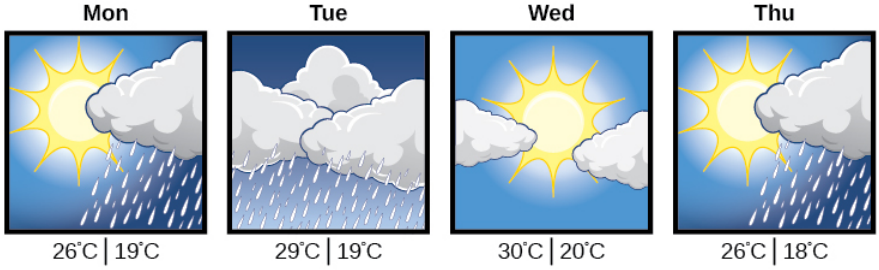

Figure 4.6.2: A forecast of Monday's through Thursday's weather.

At first, Betty considers using the formula she has already found to complete the conversions. After all, she knows her algebra, and can easily solve the equation for F after substituting a value for C. For example, to convert 26 degrees Celsius, she could write

$$26 = \frac{5}{9}(F-32) \tag{4.6.3}$$

$$26 \cdot \frac{9}{5} = F-32 \tag{4.6.4}$$

$$F = 26 \cdot \frac{9}{5} + 32 \approx 79 \tag{4.6.5}$$

After considering this option for a moment, however, she realizes that solving the equation for each of the temperatures will be awfully tedious. She realizes that since evaluation is easier than solving, it would be much more convenient to have a different formula, one that takes the Celsius temperature and outputs the Fahrenheit temperature.

The formula for which Betty is searching corresponds to the idea of an **inverse function**, which is a function for which the input of the original function becomes the output of the inverse function and the output of the original function becomes the input of the inverse function.

Given a function $f(x)$, we represent its inverse as $f^{-1}(x)$, read as "f inverse of x." The raised -1 is part of the notation. It is not an exponent; it does not imply a power of -1 . In other words, $f^{-1}(x)$ does not mean $\frac{1}{f(x)}$ because $\frac{1}{f(x)}$ is the reciprocal of f and not the inverse.

The "exponent-like" notation comes from an analogy between function composition and multiplication: just as $a^{-1}a = 1$ (1 is the identity element for multiplication) for any nonzero number a, so $f^{-1} \circ f$ equals the identity function, that is,

$$(f^{-1} \circ f)(x) = f^{-1}(f(x)) = f^{-1}(y) = x \tag{4.6.6}$$

This holds for all x in the domain of f. Informally, this means that inverse functions "undo" each other. However, just as zero does not have a **reciprocal**, some functions do not have inverses.

Given a function $f(x)$, we can verify whether some other function $g(x)$ is the inverse of $f(x)$ by checking whether either $g(f(x)) = x$ or $f(g(x)) = x$ is true. We can test whichever equation is more convenient to work with because they are logically equivalent (that is, if one is true, then so is the other.)

For example, $y = 4x$ and $y = \frac{1}{4}x$ are inverse functions.

$$(f^{-1} \circ f)(x) = f^{-1}(4x) = \frac{1}{4}(4x) = x \tag{4.6.7}$$

and

$$(f \circ f^{-1})(x) = f\left(\frac{1}{4}x\right) = 4\left(\frac{1}{4}x\right) = x \tag{4.6.8}$$

A few coordinate pairs from the graph of the function $y = 4x$ are $(-2,-8)$, $(0,0)$, and $(2,8)$. A few coordinate pairs from the graph of the function $y = \frac{1}{4}x$ are $(-8,-2)$, $(0,0)$, and $(8,2)$. If we interchange the input and output of each coordinate pair of a function, the interchanged coordinate pairs would appear on the graph of the inverse function.

Definition: Inverse Function

For any **one-to-one function** $f(x) = y$, a function $f^{-1}(x)$ is an **inverse function** of f if $f^{-1}(y) = x$. This can also be written as $f^{-1}(f(x)) = x$ for all x in the domain of f. It also follows that $f(f^{-1}(x)) = x$ for all x in the domain of f^{-1} if f^{-1} is the inverse of f.

The notation f^{-1} is read "f inverse." Like any other function, we can use any variable name as the input for f^{-1}, so we will often write $f^{-1}(x)$, which we read as "f inverse of x." Keep in mind that

$$f^{-1}(x) \neq \frac{1}{f(x)} \tag{4.6.9}$$

and not all functions have inverses.

Example 4.6.1: Identifying an Inverse Function for a Given Input-Output Pair

If for a particular one-to-one function $f(2)=4$ and $f(5)=12$, what are the corresponding input and output values for the inverse function?

Solution

The inverse function reverses the input and output quantities, so if

$$\begin{aligned} f(2)=4, \text{ then } f^{-1}(4)=2; \\ f(5)=12, \text{ then } f^{-1}(12)=5 \end{aligned} \tag{4.6.10}$$

.

Alternatively, if we want to name the inverse function g, then $g(4)=2$ and $g(12)=5$.

Analysis

Notice that if we show the coordinate pairs in a table form, the input and output are clearly reversed. See Table 4.6.1.

Table 4.6.1

$(x, f(x))$	$(x, g(x))$
$(2, 4)$	$(4, 2)$
$(5, 12)$	$(12, 5)$

Exercise 4.6.1

Given that $h^{-1}(6)=2$, what are the corresponding input and output values of the original function h?

Answer

$h(2)=6$

How To: Given two functions $f(x)$ and $g(x)$, test whether the functions are inverses of each other.

1. Determine whether $f(g(x))=x$ or $g(f(x))=x$.
2. If both statements are true, then $g=f^{-1}$ and $f=g^{-1}$. If either statement is false, then both are false, and $g \neq f^{-1}$ and $f \neq g^{-1}$.

Example 4.6.2: Testing Inverse Relationships Algebraically

If $f(x)=\frac{1}{x+2}$ and $g(x)=\frac{1}{x}-2$, is $g=f^{-1}$?

Solution

$$g(f(x)) = \frac{1}{(\frac{1}{x+2})-2} \tag{4.6.11}$$

$$= x+2-2 \tag{4.6.12}$$

$$= x \tag{4.6.13}$$

so

$$g=f^{-1} \text{ and } f=g^{-1} \tag{4.6.14}$$

This is enough to answer yes to the question, but we can also verify the other formula.

$$f(g(x)) = \frac{1}{\frac{1}{x} - 2 + 2} \tag{4.6.15}$$

$$= \frac{1}{\frac{1}{x}} \tag{4.6.16}$$

$$= x \tag{4.6.17}$$

Analysis

Notice the inverse operations are in reverse order of the operations from the original function.

Exercise 4.6.2

If $f(x) = x^3 - 4$ and $g(x) = \sqrt[3]{x+4}$, is $g = f^{-1}$?

Answer

Yes

Example 4.6.3: Determining Inverse Relationships for Power Functions

If $f(x) = x^3$ (the cube function) and $g(x) = \frac{1}{3}x$, is $g = f^{-1}$?

Solution

$$f(g(x)) = \frac{x^3}{27} \neq x \tag{4.6.18}$$

No, the functions are not inverses.

Analysis

The correct inverse to the cube is, of course, the cube root $\sqrt[3]{x} = x^{\frac{1}{3}}$, that is, the one-third is an exponent, not a multiplier.

Exercise 4.6.3

If $f(x) = (x-1)^3$ and $g(x) = \sqrt[3]{x} + 1$, is $g = f^{-1}$?

Answer

Yes

Finding Domain and Range of Inverse Functions

The outputs of the function f are the inputs to f^{-1}, so the range of f is also the domain of f^{-1}. Likewise, because the inputs to f are the outputs of f^{-1}, the domain of f is the range of f^{-1}. We can visualize the situation as in Figure 4.6.3.

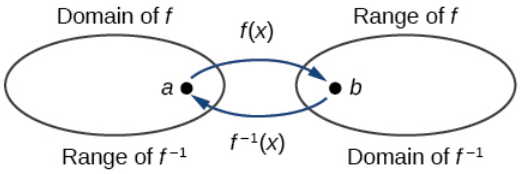

Figure* 4.6.3*: *Domain and range of a function and its inverse.*

When a function has no inverse function, it is possible to create a new function where that new function on a limited domain does have an inverse function. For example, the inverse of $f(x) = \sqrt{x}$ is $f^{-1}(x) = x^2$, because a square "undoes" a square root; but the square is only the inverse of the square root on the domain $[0, \infty)$, since that is the range of $f(x) = \sqrt{x}$.

We can look at this problem from the other side, starting with the square (toolkit quadratic) function $f(x) = x^2$. If we want to construct an inverse to this function, we run into a problem, because for every given output of the quadratic function, there are two corresponding inputs (except when the input is 0). For example, the output 9 from the quadratic function corresponds to the inputs

3 and –3. But an output from a function is an input to its inverse; if this inverse input corresponds to more than one inverse output (input of the original function), then the "inverse" is not a function at all! To put it differently, the quadratic function is not a one-to-one function; it fails the horizontal line test, so it does not have an inverse function. In order for a function to have an inverse, it must be a one-to-one function.

In many cases, if a function is not one-to-one, we can still restrict the function to a part of its domain on which it is one-to-one. For example, we can make a restricted version of the square function $f(x) = x^2$ with its range limited to $[0, \infty)$, which is a one-to-one function (it passes the horizontal line test) and which has an inverse (the square-root function).

If $f(x) = (x-1)^2$ on $[1, \infty)$, then the inverse function is $f^{-1}(x) = \sqrt{x} + 1$.

- The domain of f = range of $f^{-1} = [1, \infty)$.
- The domain of f^{-1} = range of $f = [0, \infty)$.

Is it possible for a function to have more than one inverse?

No. If two supposedly different functions, say, g and h, both meet the definition of being inverses of another function f, then you can prove that $g = h$. We have just seen that some functions only have inverses if we restrict the domain of the original function. In these cases, there may be more than one way to restrict the domain, leading to different inverses. However, on any one domain, the original function still has only one unique inverse.

Note: Domain and Range of Inverse Functions

The range of a function $f(x)$ is the domain of the inverse function $f^{-1}(x)$.

The domain of $f(x)$ is the range of $f^{-1}(x)$.

How To: Given a function, find the domain and range of its inverse.

1. If the function is one-to-one, write the range of the original function as the domain of the inverse, and write the domain of the original function as the range of the inverse.
2. If the domain of the original function needs to be restricted to make it one-to-one, then this restricted domain becomes the range of the inverse function.

Example 4.6.4: Finding the Inverses of Toolkit Functions

Identify which of the toolkit functions besides the quadratic function are not one-to-one, and find a restricted domain on which each function is one-to-one, if any. The toolkit functions are reviewed in Table 4.6.2. We restrict the domain in such a fashion that the function assumes all y-values exactly once.

Table 4.6.2

Constant	Identity	Quadratic	Cubic	Reciprocal
$f(x) = c$	$f(x) = x$	$f(x) = x^2$	$f(x) = x^3$	$f(x) = \frac{1}{x}$
Reciprocal squared	Cube Root	Square Root	Absolute Value	
$f(x) = \frac{1}{x^2}$	$f(x) = \sqrt[3]{x}$	$f(x) = \sqrt{x}$	$f(x) = \lvert x \rvert$	

Solution

The constant function is not one-to-one, and there is no domain (except a single point) on which it could be one-to-one, so the constant function has no meaningful inverse.

The absolute value function can be restricted to the domain $[0, \infty)$,where it is equal to the identity function.

The reciprocal-squared function can be restricted to the domain $(0, \infty)$.

Analysis

We can see that these functions (if unrestricted) are not one-to-one by looking at their graphs, shown in Figure 4.6.4. They both would fail the horizontal line test. However, if a function is restricted to a certain domain so that it passes the horizontal

line test, then in that restricted domain, it can have an inverse.

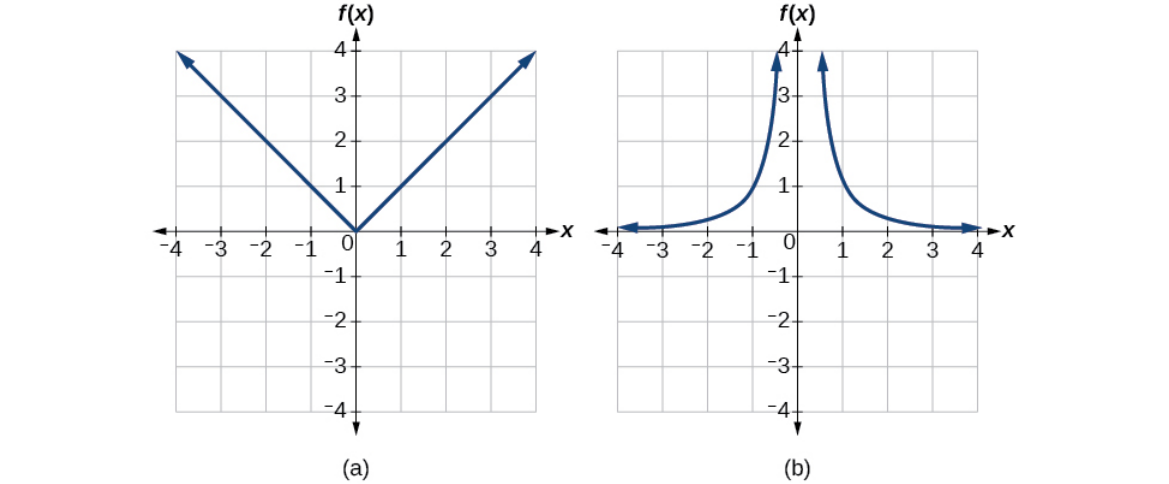

***Figure* 4.6.4:** *(a) Absolute value (b) Reciprocal squared*

4.6.4: The domain of function f is $(1, \infty)$ and the range of function f is $(-\infty, -2)$. Find the domain and range of the inverse function.

Solution

The domain of function f^{-1} is $(-\infty, -2)$ and the range of function f^{-1} is $(1, \infty)$.

Finding and Evaluating Inverse Functions

Once we have a one-to-one function, we can evaluate its inverse at specific inverse function inputs or construct a complete representation of the inverse function in many cases.

Inverting Tabular Functions

Suppose we want to find the inverse of a function represented in table form. Remember that the domain of a function is the range of the inverse and the range of the function is the domain of the inverse. So we need to interchange the domain and range.

Each row (or column) of inputs becomes the row (or column) of outputs for the inverse function. Similarly, each row (or column) of outputs becomes the row (or column) of inputs for the inverse function.

Example 4.6.5: Interpreting the Inverse of a Tabular Function

A function $f(t)$ is given in Table 4.6.3, showing distance in miles that a car has traveled in t minutes. Find and interpret $f^{-1}(70)$

Table 4.6.3

t (minutes)	30	50	70	90
$f(t)$ (miles)	20	40	60	70

The inverse function takes an output of f and returns an input for f. So in the expression $f^{-1}(70)$, 70 is an output value of the original function, representing 70 miles. The inverse will return the corresponding input of the original function f, 90 minutes, so $f^{-1}(70) = 90$. The interpretation of this is that, to drive 70 miles, it took 90 minutes.

Alternatively, recall that the definition of the inverse was that if $f(a) = b$, then $f^{-1}(b) = a$. By this definition, if we are given $f^{-1}(70) = a$, then we are looking for a value a so that $f(a) = 70$. In this case, we are looking for a t so that $f(t) = 70$, which is when $t = 90$.

Exercise 4.6.5

Using Table 4.6.4, find and interpret (a) $f(60)$,and (b) $f^{-1}(60)$.

Table 4.6.4

t (minutes)	30	50	60	70	90
$f(t)$ (miles)	20	40	50	60	70

Answer

$f(60) = 50$. In 60 minutes, 50 miles are traveled.
$f^{-1}(60) = 70$. To travel 60 miles, it will take 70 minutes.

Evaluating the Inverse of a Function, Given a Graph of the Original Function

We saw in **Functions and Function Notation** that the domain of a function can be read by observing the horizontal extent of its graph. We find the domain of the inverse function by observing the *vertical* extent of the graph of the original function, because this corresponds to the horizontal extent of the inverse function. Similarly, we find the range of the inverse function by observing the *horizontal* extent of the graph of the original function, as this is the vertical extent of the inverse function. If we want to evaluate an inverse function, we find its input within its domain, which is all or part of the vertical axis of the original function's graph.

How To: Given the graph of a function, evaluate its inverse at specific points.

1. Find the desired input on the y-axis of the given graph.
2. Read the inverse function's output from the x-axis of the given graph.

Example 4.6.6: Evaluating a Function and Its Inverse from a Graph at Specific Points

A function $g(x)$ is given in Figure 4.6.5. Find $g(3)$ and $g^{-1}(3)$.
.

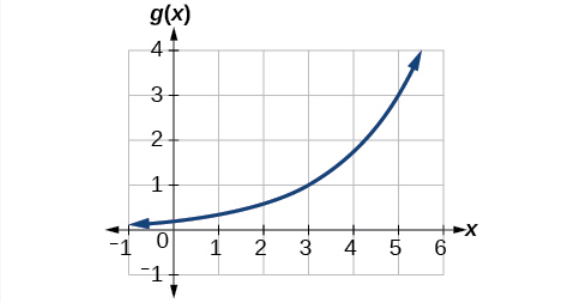

Figure 4.6.5: Graph of $g(x)$

Solution

To evaluate $g(3)$, we find 3 on the x-axis and find the corresponding output value on the y-axis. The point $(3, 1)$ tells us that $g(3) = 1$.

To evaluate $g^{-1}(3)$, recall that by definition $g^{-1}(3)$ means the value of x for which $g(x) = 3$. By looking for the output value 3 on the vertical axis, we find the point $(5, 3)$ on the graph, which means $g(5) = 3$, so by definition, $g^{-1}(3) = 5$. See Figure 4.6.6.

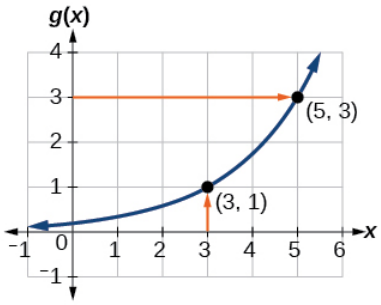

Figure 4.6.6: Graph of $g(x)$.

Exercise 4.6.6

Using the graph in Figure 4.6.6, (a) find $g^{-1}(1)$,and (b) estimate $g^{-1}(4)$.

Answer a

3

Answer b

5.6

Finding Inverses of Functions Represented by Formulas

Sometimes we will need to know an inverse function for all elements of its domain, not just a few. If the original function is given as a formula— for example, y as a function of x— we can often find the inverse function by solving to obtain x as a function of y.

How To: Given a function represented by a formula, find the inverse.

1. Make sure f is a one-to-one function.
2. Solve for x
3. Interchange x and y.

Example 4.6.7: Inverting the Fahrenheit-to-Celsius Function

Find a formula for the inverse function that gives Fahrenheit temperature as a function of Celsius temperature.

$$C = \frac{5}{9}(F - 32) \tag{4.6.19}$$

Solution

$$C = \frac{5}{9}(F - 32) \tag{4.6.20}$$

$$C \cdot \frac{9}{5} = F - 32 \tag{4.6.21}$$

$$F = \frac{9}{5}C + 32 \tag{4.6.22}$$

By solving in general, we have uncovered the inverse function. If

$$C = h(F) = \frac{5}{9}(F - 32) \tag{4.6.23}$$

,

then

$$F = h^{-1}(C) = \frac{9}{5}C + 32. \tag{4.6.24}$$

In this case, we introduced a function h to represent the conversion because the input and output variables are descriptive, and writing C^{-1} could get confusing.

Exercise 4.6.7

Solve for x in terms of y given $y = \frac{1}{3}(x-5)$

Answer

$x = 3y+5$

Example 4.6.8: Solving to Find an Inverse Function

Find the inverse of the function $f(x) = \frac{2}{x-3}+4$.

Solution

$$y = \frac{2}{x-3+4} \quad \text{Set up an equation.} \quad (4.6.25)$$

$$y-4 = \frac{2}{x-3} \quad \text{Subtract 4 from both sides.} \quad (4.6.26)$$

$$x-3 = \frac{2}{y-4} \quad \text{Multiply both sides by x−3 and divide by y−4.} \quad (4.6.27)$$

$$x = \frac{2}{y-4}+3 \quad \text{Add 3 to both sides.} \quad (4.6.28)$$

So $f^{-1}(y) = \frac{2}{y-4}+3$ or $f^{-1}(x) = \frac{2}{x-4}+3$.

Analysis

The domain and range of f exclude the values 3 and 4, respectively. f and f^{-1} are equal at two points but are not the same function, as we can see by creating Table 4.6.5.

Table 4.6.5

x	1	2	5	$f^{-1}(y)$
$f(x)$	3	2	5	y

Example 4.6.9: Solving to Find an Inverse with Radicals

Find the inverse of the function $f(x) = 2+\sqrt{x-4}$.

Solution

$$y = 2+\sqrt{x-4} \quad (4.6.29)$$

$$(y-2)^2 = x-4 \quad (4.6.30)$$

$$x = (y-2)^2+4 \quad (4.6.31)$$

So $f^{-1}(x) = (x-2)^2+4$.

The domain of f is $[4,\infty)$. Notice that the range of f is $[2,\infty)$, so this means that the domain of the inverse function f^{-1} is also $[2,\infty)$

Analysis

The formula we found for $f^{-1}(x)$ looks like it would be valid for all real x. However, f^{-1} itself must have an inverse (namely, f) so we have to restrict the domain of f^{-1} to $[2,\infty)$ in order to make f^{-1} a one-to-one function. This domain of f^{-1} is exactly the range of f.

Exercise 4.6.8

What is the inverse of the function $f(x) = 2 - \sqrt{x}$? State the domains of both the function and the inverse function.

Answer

$f^{-1}(x) = (2-x)^2$; domain of f: $[0, \infty)$; domain of f^{-1}: $(-\infty, 2]$

Finding Inverse Functions and Their Graphs

Now that we can find the inverse of a function, we will explore the graphs of functions and their inverses. Let us return to the quadratic function $f(x) = x^2$ restricted to the domain $[0, \infty)$, on which this function is one-to-one, and graph it as in Figure 4.6.7.

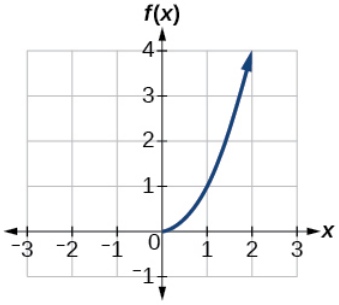

Figure* 4.6.7*: *Quadratic function with domain restricted to* $[0, \infty)$.

Restricting the domain to $[0, \infty)$ makes the function one-to-one (it will obviously pass the horizontal line test), so it has an inverse on this restricted domain.

We already know that the inverse of the toolkit quadratic function is the square root function, that is, $f^{-1}(x) = \sqrt{x}$. What happens if we graph both f and f^{-1} on the same set of axes, using the x-axis for the input to both f and f^{-1}?

We notice a distinct relationship: The graph of $f^{-1}(x)$ is the graph of $f(x)$ reflected about the diagonal line $y = x$, which we will call the identity line, shown in Figure 4.6.8.

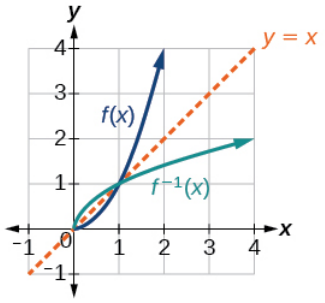

Figure* 4.6.8*: *Square and square-root functions on the non-negative domain*

This relationship will be observed for all one-to-one functions, because it is a result of the function and its inverse swapping inputs and outputs. This is equivalent to interchanging the roles of the vertical and horizontal axes.

Example 4.6.10: Finding the Inverse of a Function Using Reflection about the Identity Line

Given the graph of $f(x)$ in Figure 4.6.9, sketch a graph of $f^{-1}(x)$.

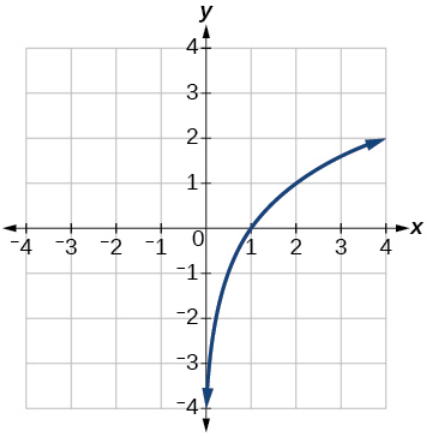

Figure 4.6.9: Graph of $f^(-1)(x)$.

This is a one-to-one function, so we will be able to sketch an inverse. Note that the graph shown has an apparent domain of $(0, \infty)$ and range of $(-\infty, \infty)$, so the inverse will have a domain of $(-\infty, \infty)$ and range of $(0, \infty)$.

If we reflect this graph over the line $y = x$, the point $(1, 0)$ reflects to $(0, 1)$ and the point $(4, 2)$ reflects to $(2, 4)$. Sketching the inverse on the same axes as the original graph gives Figure 4.6.10.

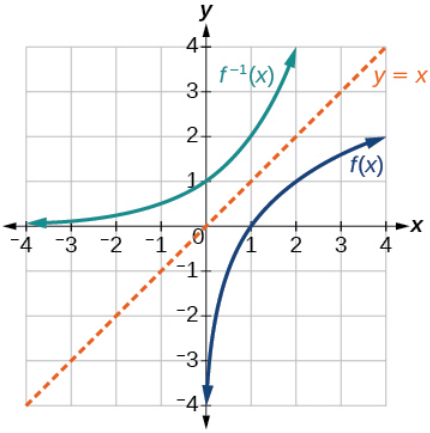

Figure 4.6.10: The function and its inverse, showing reflection about the identity line

Exercise 4.6.1

Draw graphs of the functions f and f^{-1} from Example 4.6.8.

Answer

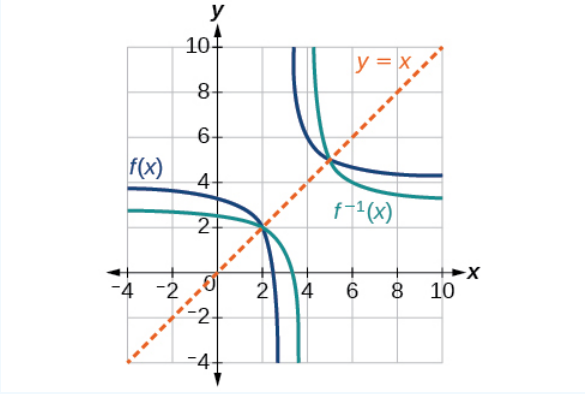

Figure 4.6.11: Graph of $f(x)$ and $f^(-1)(x)$.

Is there any function that is equal to its own inverse?

Yes. If $f = f^{-1}$, then $f(f(x)) = x$, and we can think of several functions that have this property. The identity function does, and so does the reciprocal function, because

$$\frac{1}{\frac{1}{x}} = x \tag{4.6.32}$$

Any function $f(x) = c - x$, where c is a constant, is also equal to its own inverse.

Key Concepts

- If $g(x)$ is the inverse of $f(x)$, then $g(f(x)) = f(g(x)) = x$.
- Each of the toolkit functions has an inverse.
- For a function to have an inverse, it must be one-to-one (pass the horizontal line test).
- A function that is not one-to-one over its entire domain may be one-to-one on part of its domain.
- For a tabular function, exchange the input and output rows to obtain the inverse.
- The inverse of a function can be determined at specific points on its graph.
- To find the inverse of a formula, solve the equation $y = f(x)$ for x as a function of y. Then exchange the labels x and y.
- The graph of an inverse function is the reflection of the graph of the original function across the line $y = x$.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

5: Polynomial and Rational Functions

5.1: Quadratic Functions
5.2: Power Functions and Polynomial Functions
5.3: Graphs of Polynomial Functions
5.4: Dividing Polynomials
5.5: Zeros of Polynomial Functions
5.6: Rational Functions
5.7: Inverses and Radical Functions

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5.1: Quadratic Functions

Learning Objectives

- Recognize characteristics of parabolas.
- Understand how the graph of a parabola is related to its quadratic function.
- Determine a quadratic function's minimum or maximum value.
- Solve problems involving a quadratic function's minimum or maximum value.

Curved antennas, such as the ones shown in Figure 5.1.1, are commonly used to focus microwaves and radio waves to transmit television and telephone signals, as well as satellite and spacecraft communication. The cross-section of the antenna is in the shape of a parabola, which can be described by a quadratic function.

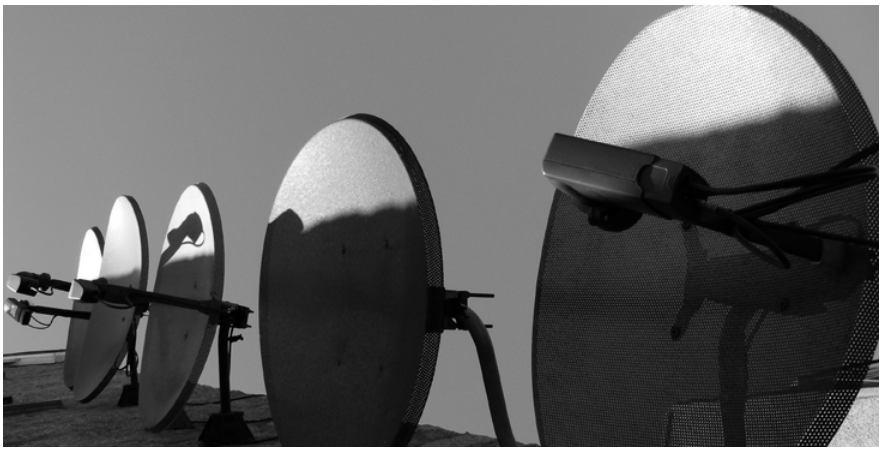


***Figure* 5.1.1:** *An array of satellite dishes. (credit: Matthew Colvin de Valle, Flickr)*

In this section, we will investigate quadratic functions, which frequently model problems involving area and projectile motion. Working with quadratic functions can be less complex than working with higher degree functions, so they provide a good opportunity for a detailed study of function behavior.

Recognizing Characteristics of Parabolas

The graph of a quadratic function is a U-shaped curve called a parabola. One important feature of the graph is that it has an extreme point, called the **vertex**. If the parabola opens up, the vertex represents the lowest point on the graph, or the **minimum value** of the quadratic function. If the parabola opens down, the vertex represents the highest point on the graph, or the **maximum value**. In either case, the vertex is a turning point on the graph. The graph is also symmetric with a vertical line drawn through the vertex, called the **axis of symmetry**. These features are illustrated in Figure 5.1.2.

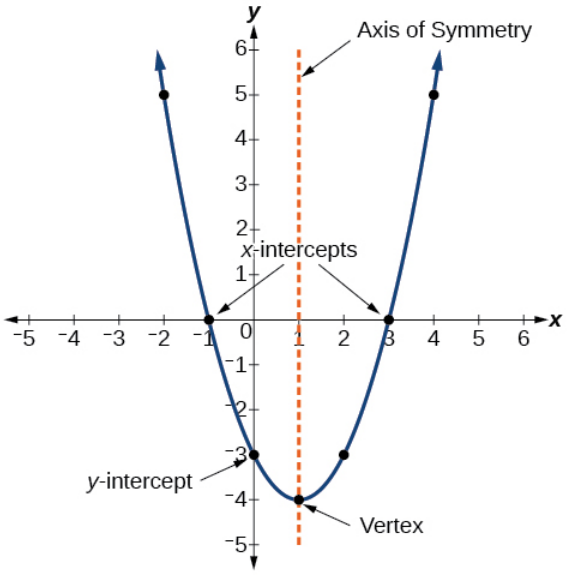


Figure 5.1.2: Graph of a parabola showing where the x and y intercepts, vertex, and axis of symmetry are.

The y-intercept is the point at which the parabola crosses the y-axis. The x-intercepts are the points at which the parabola crosses the x-axis. If they exist, the x-intercepts represent the **zeros**, or **roots**, of the quadratic function, the values of x at which $y = 0$.

Example 5.1.1: Identifying the Characteristics of a Parabola

Determine the vertex, axis of symmetry, zeros, and y-intercept of the parabola shown in Figure 5.1.3.

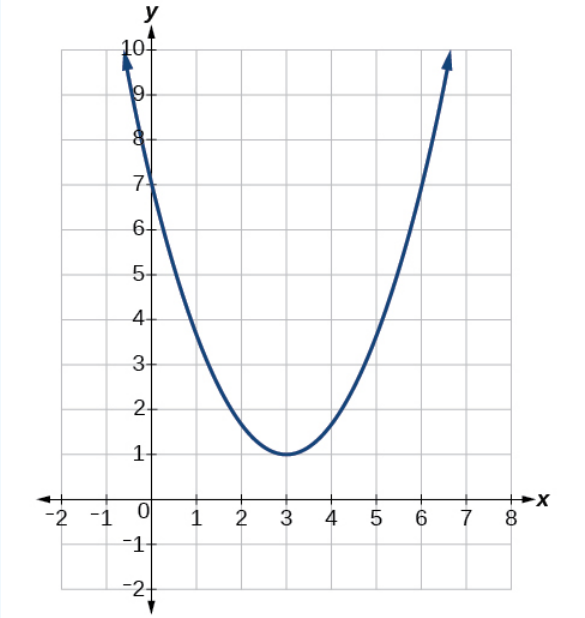


Figure 5.1.3.

Solution

The vertex is the turning point of the graph. We can see that the vertex is at $(3, 1)$. Because this parabola opens upward, the axis of symmetry is the vertical line that intersects the parabola at the vertex. So the axis of symmetry is $x = 3$. This parabola does not cross the x-axis, so it has no zeros. It crosses the y-axis at $(0, 7)$ so this is the y-intercept.

Understanding How the Graphs of Parabolas are Related to Their Quadratic Functions

The **general form of a quadratic function** presents the function in the form

$$f(x) = ax^2 + bx + c \tag{5.1.1}$$

where a, b, and c are real numbers and $a \neq 0$. If $a > 0$, the parabola opens upward. If $a < 0$, the parabola opens downward. We can use the general form of a parabola to find the equation for the axis of symmetry.

The axis of symmetry is defined by $x = -\frac{b}{2a}$. If we use the quadratic formula, $x = \frac{-b \pm \sqrt{b^2 - 4ac}}{2a}$, to solve $ax^2 + bx + c = 0$ for the x-intercepts, or zeros, we find the value of x halfway between them is always $x = -\frac{b}{2a}$, the equation for the axis of symmetry.

Figure 5.1.4 represents the graph of the quadratic function written in general form as $y = x^2 + 4x + 3$. In this form, $a = 1$, $b = 4$, and $c = 3$. Because $a > 0$, the parabola opens upward. The axis of symmetry is $x = -\frac{4}{2(1)} = -2$. This also makes sense because we can see from the graph that the vertical line $x = -2$ divides the graph in half. The vertex always occurs along the axis of symmetry. For a parabola that opens upward, the vertex occurs at the lowest point on the graph, in this instance, $(-2, -1)$. The x-intercepts, those points where the parabola crosses the x-axis, occur at $(-3, 0)$ and $(-1, 0)$.

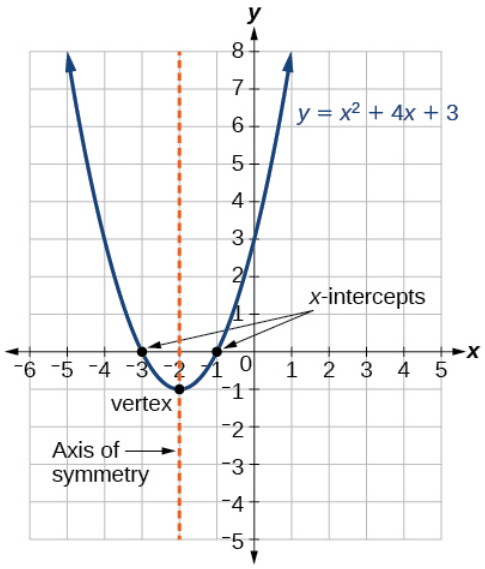


Figure 5.1.4: Graph of a parabola showing where the x and y intercepts, vertex, and axis of symmetry are for the function $y = x^2 + 4x + 3$.

The **standard form of a quadratic function** presents the function in the form

$$f(x) = a(x - h)^2 + k \tag{5.1.2}$$

where (h, k) is the vertex. Because the vertex appears in the standard form of the quadratic function, this form is also known as the **vertex form of a quadratic function**.

As with the general form, if $a > 0$, the parabola opens upward and the vertex is a minimum. If $a < 0$, the parabola opens downward, and the vertex is a maximum. Figure 5.1.5 represents the graph of the quadratic function written in standard form as $y = -3(x + 2)^2 + 4$. Since $x - h = x + 2$ in this example, $h = -2$. In this form, $a = -3$, $h = -2$, and $k = 4$. Because $a < 0$, the parabola opens downward. The vertex is at $(-2, 4)$.

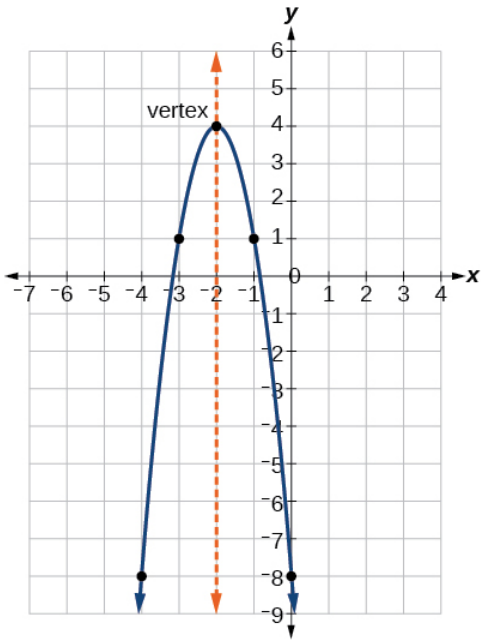


Figure 5.1.5: Graph of a parabola showing where the x and y intercepts, vertex, and axis of symmetry are for the function $y = -3(x+2)^2 + 4$.

The standard form is useful for determining how the graph is transformed from the graph of $y = x^2$. Figure 5.1.6 is the graph of this basic function.

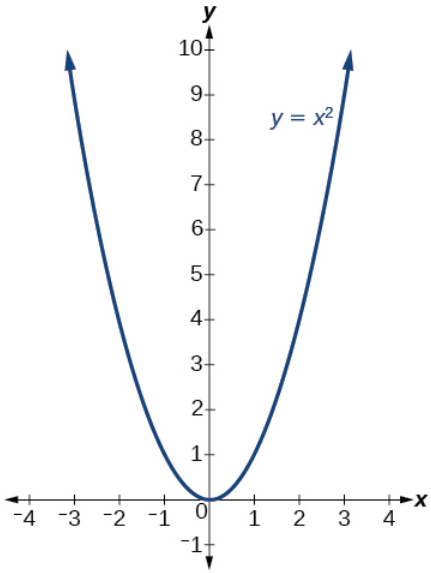


Figure 5.1.6: Graph of $y = x^2$.

If $k > 0$, the graph shifts upward, whereas if $k < 0$, the graph shifts downward. In Figure 5.1.5, $k > 0$, so the graph is shifted 4 units upward. If $h > 0$, the graph shifts toward the right and if $h < 0$, the graph shifts to the left. In Figure 5.1.5, $h < 0$, so the graph is shifted 2 units to the left. The magnitude of a indicates the stretch of the graph. If $|a| > 1$, the point associated with a particular x-value shifts farther from the x-axis, so the graph appears to become narrower, and there is a vertical stretch. But if $|a| < 1$, the point associated with a particular x-value shifts closer to the x-axis, so the graph appears to become wider, but in fact there is a vertical compression. In Figure 5.1.5, $|a| > 1$, so the graph becomes narrower.

The standard form and the general form are equivalent methods of describing the same function. We can see this by expanding out the general form and setting it equal to the standard form.

$$\begin{aligned} a(x-h)^2+k &= ax^2+bx+c \\ ax^2-2ahx+(ah^2+k) &= ax^2+bx+c \end{aligned}$$

For the linear terms to be equal, the coefficients must be equal.

$$-2ah=b, \text{ so } h=-\frac{b}{2a}.$$

This is the **axis of symmetry** we defined earlier. Setting the constant terms equal:

$$\begin{aligned} ah^2+k &= c \\ k &= c-ah^2 \\ &= c-a\cdot\left(-\frac{b}{2a}\right)^2 \\ &= c-\frac{b^2}{4a} \end{aligned}$$

In practice, though, it is usually easier to remember that k is the output value of the function when the input is h, so $f(h)=k$.

Definitions: Forms of Quadratic Functions

A quadratic function is a function of degree two. The graph of a *quadratic function* is a parabola.

- The *general form* of a quadratic function is $f(x)=ax^2+bx+c$ where a, b, and c are real numbers and $a\neq 0$.
- The standard form of a quadratic function is $f(x)=a(x-h)^2+k$.
- The vertex (h,k) is located at

$$h=-\frac{b}{2a},\ k=f(h)=f(\frac{-b}{2a}). \tag{5.1.3}$$

HOWTO: Write a quadratic function in a general form

Given a graph of a quadratic function, write the equation of the function in general form.

1. Identify the horizontal shift of the parabola; this value is h. Identify the vertical shift of the parabola; this value is k.
2. Substitute the values of the horizontal and vertical shift for h and k. in the function $f(x)=a(x-h)^2+k$.
3. Substitute the values of any point, other than the vertex, on the graph of the parabola for x and $f(x)$.
4. Solve for the stretch factor, $|a|$.
5. If the parabola opens up, $a>0$. If the parabola opens down, $a<0$ since this means the graph was reflected about the x-axis.
6. Expand and simplify to write in general form.

Example 5.1.2: Writing the Equation of a Quadratic Function from the Graph

Write an equation for the quadratic function g in Figure 5.1.7 as a transformation of $f(x)=x^2$, and then expand the formula, and simplify terms to write the equation in general form.

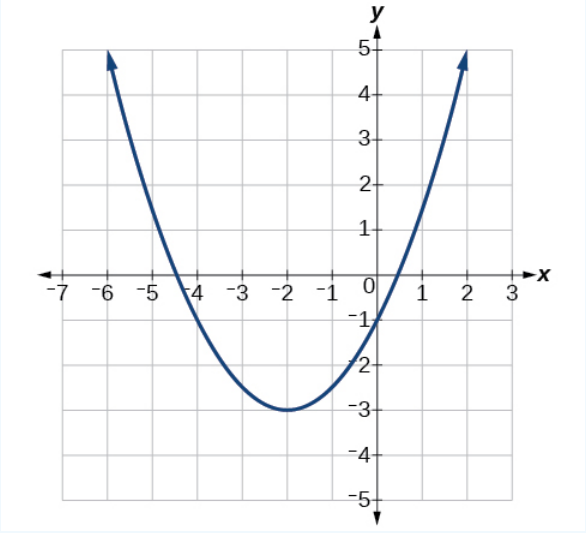


Figure 5.1.7: Graph of a parabola with its vertex at $(-2, -3)$.

Solution

We can see the graph of g is the graph of $f(x) = x^2$ shifted to the left 2 and down 3, giving a formula in the form $g(x) = a(x+2)^2 - 3$.

Substituting the coordinates of a point on the curve, such as $(0, -1)$, we can solve for the stretch factor.

$$-1 = a(0+2)^2 - 3 \tag{5.1.4}$$
$$2 = 4a \tag{5.1.5}$$
$$a = \frac{1}{2} \tag{5.1.6}$$

In standard form, the algebraic model for this graph is $g(x) = \frac{1}{2}(x+2)^2 - 3$.

To write this in general polynomial form, we can expand the formula and simplify terms.

$$g(x) = \frac{1}{2}(x+2)^2 - 3 \tag{5.1.7}$$
$$= \frac{1}{2}(x+2)(x+2) - 3 \tag{5.1.8}$$
$$= \frac{1}{2}(x^2 + 4x + 4) - 3 \tag{5.1.9}$$
$$= \frac{1}{2}x^2 + 2x + 2 - 3 \tag{5.1.10}$$
$$= \frac{1}{2}x^2 + 2x - 1 \tag{5.1.11}$$

Notice that the horizontal and vertical shifts of the basic graph of the quadratic function determine the location of the vertex of the parabola; the vertex is unaffected by stretches and compressions.

Analysis

We can check our work using the table feature on a graphing utility. First enter $\mathrm{Y1} = \frac{1}{2}(\mathrm{x}+2)^2 - 3$. Next, select TBLSET, then use $\mathrm{TblStart} = -6$ and $\Delta\mathrm{Tbl} = 2$, and select TABLE. See Table 5.1.1

Table 5.1.1

x	-6	-4	-2	0	2
y	-5	-1	-3	-1	5

The ordered pairs in the table correspond to points on the graph.

Exercise 5.1.2

A coordinate grid has been superimposed over the quadratic path of a basketball in Figure 5.1.8. Find an equation for the path of the ball. Does the shooter make the basket?

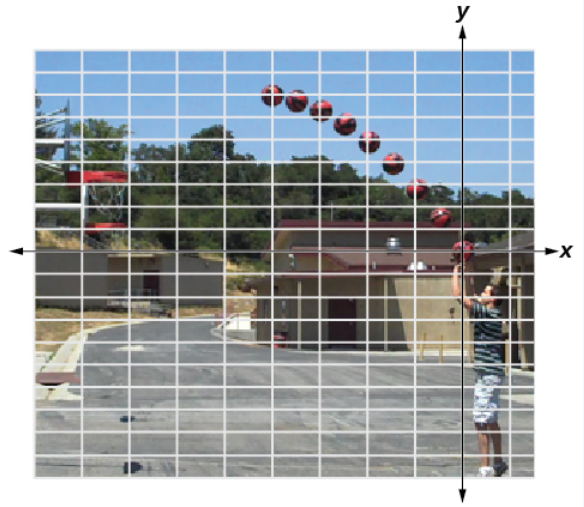


Figure 5.1.8: *Stop motioned picture of a boy throwing a basketball into a hoop to show the parabolic curve it makes. (credit: modification of work by Dan Meyer)*

Answer

The path passes through the origin and has vertex at $(-4, 7)$, so $h(x) = -\frac{7}{16}(x+4)^2 + 7$. To make the shot, $h(-7.5)$ would need to be about 4 but $h(-7.5) \approx 1.64$; he doesn't make it.

How To: Given a quadratic function in general form, find the vertex of the parabola.

1. Identify a, b, and c.
2. Find h, the x-coordinate of the vertex, by substituting a and b into $h = -\frac{b}{2a}$.
3. Find k, the y-coordinate of the vertex, by evaluating $k = f(h) = f\left(-\frac{b}{2a}\right)$.

Example 5.1.3: Finding the Vertex of a Quadratic Function

Find the vertex of the quadratic function $f(x) = 2x^2 - 6x + 7$. Rewrite the quadratic in standard form (vertex form).

Solution

The horizontal coordinate of the vertex will be at

$$h = -\frac{b}{2a} \tag{5.1.12}$$
$$= -\frac{-6}{2(2)} \tag{5.1.13}$$
$$= \frac{6}{4} \tag{5.1.14}$$
$$= \frac{3}{2} \tag{5.1.15}$$

The vertical coordinate of the vertex will be at

$$k = f(h) \tag{5.1.16}$$
$$= f\left(\frac{3}{2}\right) \tag{5.1.17}$$
$$= 2\left(\frac{3}{2}\right)^2 - 6\left(\frac{3}{2}\right) + 7 \tag{5.1.18}$$
$$= \frac{5}{2} \tag{5.1.19}$$

Rewriting into standard form, the stretch factor will be the same as the a in the original quadratic.

$$f(x) = ax^2 + bx + c \tag{5.1.20}$$
$$f(x) = 2x^2 - 6x + 7$$

Using the vertex to determine the shifts,

$$f(x) = 2\left(x - \frac{3}{2}\right)^2 + \frac{5}{2} \tag{5.1.21}$$

Analysis

One reason we may want to identify the vertex of the parabola is that this point will inform us what the maximum or minimum value of the function is, (k),and where it occurs, (h).

Exercise 5.1.3

Given the equation $g(x) = 13 + x^2 - 6x$, write the equation in general form and then in standard form.

Answer

$g(x) = x^2 - 6x + 13$ in general form; $g(x) = (x-3)^2 + 4$ in standard form.

Finding the Domain and Range of a Quadratic Function

Any number can be the input value of a quadratic function. Therefore, the domain of any quadratic function is all real numbers. Because parabolas have a maximum or a minimum point, the range is restricted. Since the vertex of a parabola will be either a maximum or a minimum, the range will consist of all y-values greater than or equal to the y-coordinate at the turning point or less than or equal to the y-coordinate at the turning point, depending on whether the parabola opens up or down.

Definition: Domain and Range of a Quadratic Function

The domain of any **quadratic function** is all real numbers.

The range of a quadratic function written in general form $f(x) = ax^2 + bx + c$ with a positive a value is $f(x) \geq f\left(-\frac{b}{2a}\right)$, or $[f(-\frac{b}{2a}), \infty)$; the range of a quadratic function written in general form with a negative a value is $f(x) \leq f(-\frac{b}{2a})$, or $(-\infty, f(-\frac{b}{2a})]$.

The range of a quadratic function written in standard form $f(x) = a(x-h)^2 + k$ with a positive a value is $f(x) \geq k$; the range of a quadratic function written in standard form with a negative a value is $f(x) \leq k$.

How To: Given a quadratic function, find the domain and range.

1. Identify the domain of any quadratic function as all real numbers.
2. Determine whether a is positive or negative. If a is positive, the parabola has a minimum. If a is negative, the parabola has a maximum.
3. Determine the maximum or minimum value of the parabola, k.
4. If the parabola has a minimum, the range is given by $f(x) \geq k$, or $[k, \infty)$. If the parabola has a maximum, the range is given by $f(x) \leq k$, or $(-\infty, k]$.

Example 5.1.4: Finding the Domain and Range of a Quadratic Function

Find the domain and range of $f(x) = -5x^2 + 9x - 1$.

Solution

As with any quadratic function, the domain is all real numbers.

Because a is negative, the parabola opens downward and has a maximum value. We need to determine the maximum value. We can begin by finding the x-value of the vertex.

$$h = -\frac{b}{2a} \tag{5.1.22}$$

$$= -\frac{9}{2(-5)} \tag{5.1.23}$$

$$= \frac{9}{10} \tag{5.1.24}$$

The maximum value is given by $f(h)$.

$$f(\frac{9}{10}) = 5(\frac{9}{10})^2 + 9(\frac{9}{10}) - 1 \tag{5.1.25}$$

$$= \frac{61}{20} \tag{5.1.26}$$

The range is $f(x) \leq \frac{61}{20}$, or $\left(-\infty, \frac{61}{20}\right]$.

Exercise 5.1.4

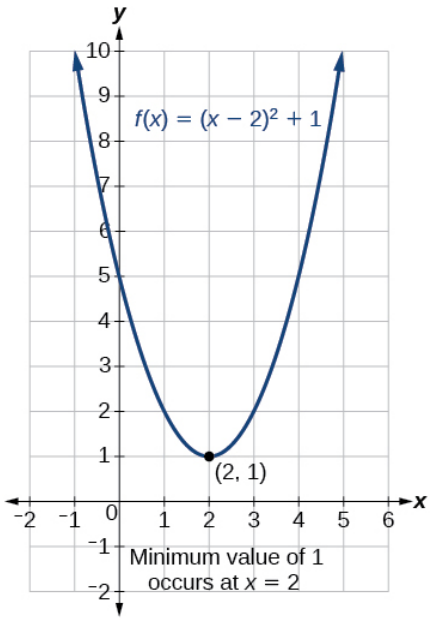
Find the domain and range of $f(x) = 2\left(x - \frac{4}{7}\right)^2 + \frac{8}{11}$.

Answer

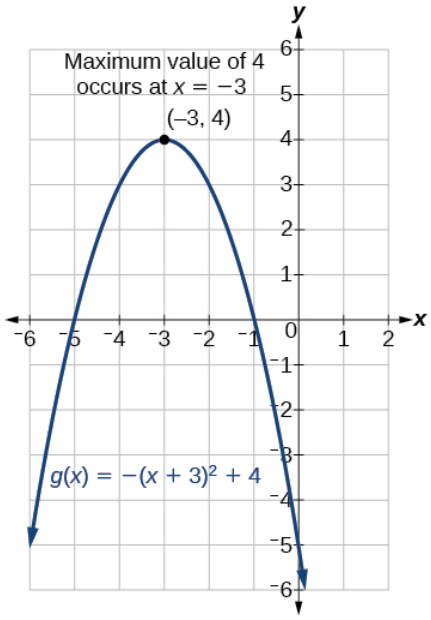
The domain is all real numbers. The range is $f(x) \geq \frac{8}{11}$, or $\left[\frac{8}{11}, \infty\right)$.

Determining the Maximum and Minimum Values of Quadratic Functions

The output of the quadratic function at the vertex is the maximum or minimum value of the function, depending on the orientation of the **parabola**. We can see the maximum and minimum values in Figure 5.1.9.



(a)



(b)

Figure 5.1.9: Minimum and maximum of two quadratic functions.

There are many real-world scenarios that involve finding the maximum or minimum value of a quadratic function, such as applications involving area and revenue.

Example 5.1.5: Finding the Maximum Value of a Quadratic Function

A backyard farmer wants to enclose a rectangular space for a new garden within her fenced backyard. She has purchased 80 feet of wire fencing to enclose three sides, and she will use a section of the backyard fence as the fourth side.

a. Find a formula for the area enclosed by the fence if the sides of fencing perpendicular to the existing fence have length L.
b. What dimensions should she make her garden to maximize the enclosed area?

Solution

Let's use a diagram such as Figure 5.1.10 to record the given information. It is also helpful to introduce a temporary variable, W, to represent the width of the garden and the length of the fence section parallel to the backyard fence.

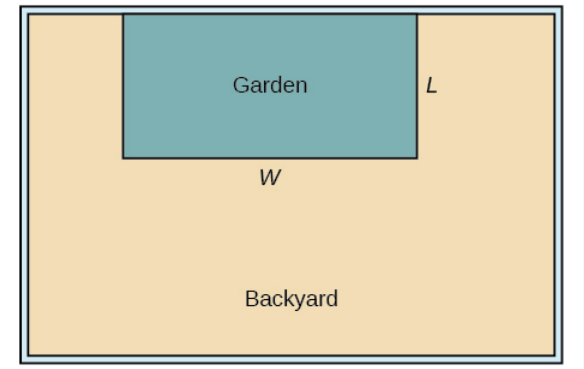


Figure 5.1.10: Diagram of the garden and the backyard.

a. We know we have only 80 feet of fence available, and $L+W+L=80$, or more simply, $2L+W=80$. This allows us to represent the width, W, in terms of L.

$$W=80-2L \tag{5.1.27}$$

Now we are ready to write an equation for the area the fence encloses. We know the area of a rectangle is length multiplied by width, so

$$A = LW = L(80-2L) \tag{5.1.28}$$
$$A(L) = 80L-2L^2 \tag{5.1.29}$$

This formula represents the area of the fence in terms of the variable length L. The function, written in general form, is

$$A(L)=-2L^2+80L \tag{5.1.30}$$

.

The quadratic has a negative leading coefficient, so the graph will open downward, and the vertex will be the maximum value for the area. In finding the vertex, we must be careful because the equation is not written in standard polynomial form with decreasing powers. This is why we rewrote the function in general form above. Since a is the coefficient of the squared term, $a=-2$, $b=80$, and $c=0$.

To find the vertex:

$$h=-\frac{80}{2(-2)} \qquad k=A(20) \tag{5.1.31}$$
$$=20 \qquad \text{and} \qquad =80(20)-2(20)^2 \tag{5.1.32}$$
$$=800 \tag{5.1.33}$$

The maximum value of the function is an area of 800 square feet, which occurs when $L=20$ feet. When the shorter sides are 20 feet, there is 40 feet of fencing left for the longer side. To maximize the area, she should enclose the garden so the two shorter sides have length 20 feet and the longer side parallel to the existing fence has length 40 feet.

Analysis

This problem also could be solved by graphing the quadratic function. We can see where the maximum area occurs on a graph of the quadratic function in Figure 5.1.11.

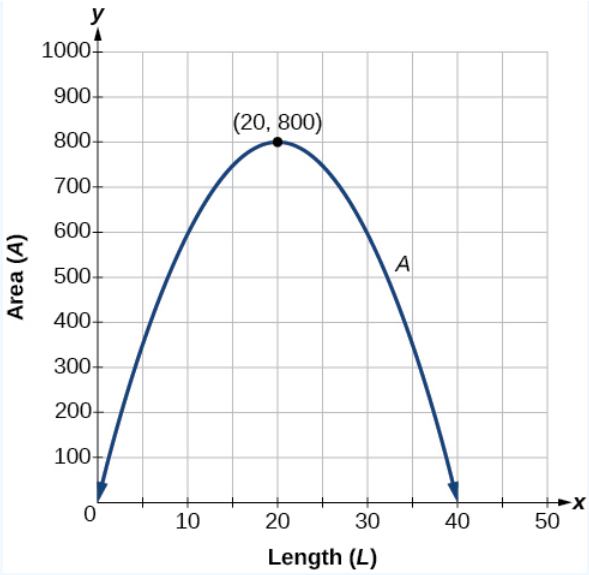


Figure 5.1.11: Graph of the parabolic function $A(L) = -2L^2 + 80L$

How To: Given an application involving revenue, use a quadratic equation to find the maximum.

1. Write a quadratic equation for revenue.
2. Find the vertex of the quadratic equation.
3. Determine the y-value of the vertex.

Example 5.1.6: Finding Maximum Revenue

The unit price of an item affects its supply and demand. That is, if the unit price goes up, the demand for the item will usually decrease. For example, a local newspaper currently has 84,000 subscribers at a quarterly charge of $30. Market research has suggested that if the owners raise the price to $32, they would lose 5,000 subscribers. Assuming that subscriptions are linearly related to the price, what price should the newspaper charge for a quarterly subscription to maximize their revenue?

Solution

Revenue is the amount of money a company brings in. In this case, the revenue can be found by multiplying the price per subscription times the number of subscribers, or quantity. We can introduce variables, p for price per subscription and Q for quantity, giving us the equation $\text{Revenue} = pQ$.

Because the number of subscribers changes with the price, we need to find a relationship between the variables. We know that currently $p = 30$ and $Q = 84,000$. We also know that if the price rises to $32, the newspaper would lose 5,000 subscribers, giving a second pair of values, $p = 32$ and $Q = 79,000$. From this we can find a linear equation relating the two quantities. The slope will be

$$m = \frac{79,000 - 84,000}{32 - 30} \tag{5.1.34}$$

$$= -\frac{5,000}{2} \tag{5.1.35}$$

$$= -2,500 \tag{5.1.36}$$

This tells us the paper will lose 2,500 subscribers for each dollar they raise the price. We can then solve for the y-intercept.

$$Q = -2500p + b \quad \text{Substitute in the point } Q = 84,000 \text{ and } p = 30 \tag{5.1.37}$$

$$84,000 = -2500(30) + b \quad \text{Solve for } b \tag{5.1.38}$$

$$b = 159,000 \tag{5.1.39}$$

This gives us the linear equation $Q = -2,500p + 159,000$ relating cost and subscribers. We now return to our revenue equation.

$$\text{Revenue} = pQ \tag{5.1.40}$$
$$\text{Revenue} = p(-2,500p + 159,000) \tag{5.1.41}$$
$$\text{Revenue} = -2,500p^2 + 159,000p \tag{5.1.42}$$

We now have a quadratic function for revenue as a function of the subscription charge. To find the price that will maximize revenue for the newspaper, we can find the vertex.

$$h = -\frac{159,000}{2(-2,500)} \tag{5.1.43}$$
$$= 31.8 \tag{5.1.44}$$

The model tells us that the maximum revenue will occur if the newspaper charges $31.80 for a subscription. To find what the maximum revenue is, we evaluate the revenue function.

$$\text{maximum revenue} = -2,500(31.8)^2 + 159,000(31.8) \tag{5.1.45}$$
$$= 2,528,100 \tag{5.1.46}$$

Analysis

This could also be solved by graphing the quadratic as in Figure 5.1.12 We can see the maximum revenue on a graph of the quadratic function.

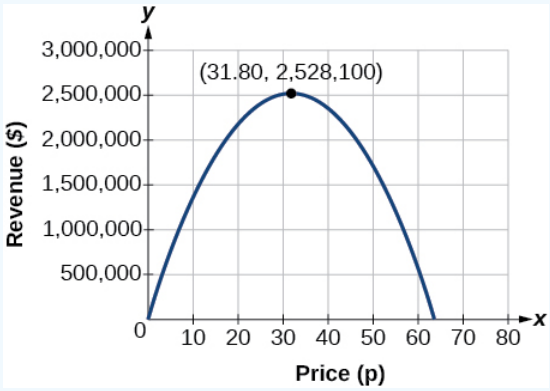


Figure 5.1.12: Graph of the parabolic function

Finding the x- and y-Intercepts of a Quadratic Function

Much as we did in the application problems above, we also need to find intercepts of quadratic equations for graphing parabolas. Recall that we find the y-intercept of a quadratic by evaluating the function at an input of zero, and we find the x-intercepts at locations where the output is zero. Notice in Figure 5.1.13 that the number of x-intercepts can vary depending upon the location of the graph.

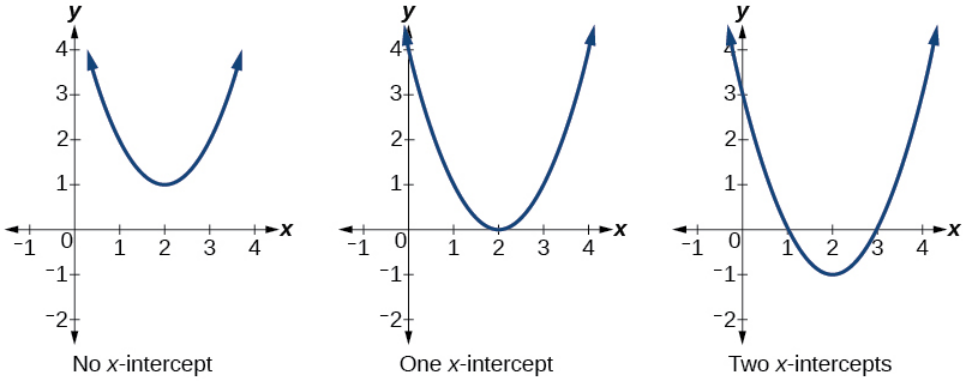


Figure 5.1.13: Number of x-intercepts of a parabola.

Given a quadratic function $f(x)$, find the y- and x-intercepts.

1. Evaluate $f(0)$ to find the y-intercept.
2. Solve the quadratic equation $f(x)=0$ to find the x-intercepts.

Example 5.1.7: Finding the y- and x-Intercepts of a Parabola

Find the y- and x-intercepts of the quadratic $f(x)=3x^2+5x-2$.

Solution

We find the y-intercept by evaluating $f(0)$.

$$f(0) = 3(0)^2+5(0)-2 \tag{5.1.47}$$
$$= -2 \tag{5.1.48}$$

So the y-intercept is at $(0,-2)$.

For the x-intercepts, we find all solutions of $f(x)=0$.

$$0=3x^2+5x-2 \tag{5.1.49}$$

In this case, the quadratic can be factored easily, providing the simplest method for solution.

$$0=(3x-1)(x+2) \tag{5.1.50}$$
$$0=3x-1 \qquad\qquad 0=x+2 \tag{5.1.51}$$
$$x=\frac{1}{3} \qquad \text{or} \qquad x=-2 \tag{5.1.52}$$

So the x-intercepts are at $(\frac{1}{3},0)$ and $(-2,0)$.

Analysis

By graphing the function, we can confirm that the graph crosses the y-axis at $(0,-2)$. We can also confirm that the graph crosses the x-axis at $\left(\frac{1}{3},0\right)$ and $(-2,0)$. See Figure 5.1.14

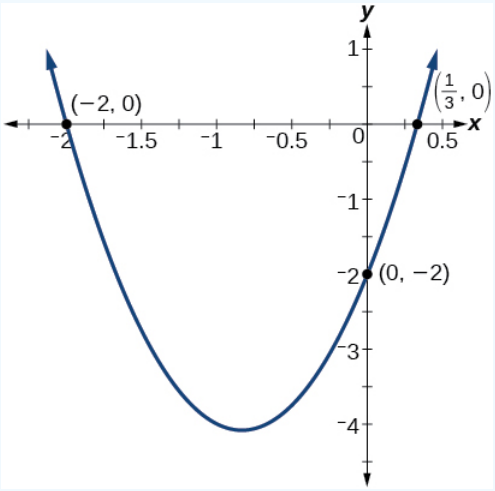


Figure 5.1.14: Graph of a parabola.

Rewriting Quadratics in Standard Form

In Example 5.1.7, the quadratic was easily solved by factoring. However, there are many quadratics that cannot be factored. We can solve these quadratics by first rewriting them in standard form.

How to: Given a quadratic function, find the x-intercepts by rewriting in standard form.

1. Substitute a and b into $h=-\frac{b}{2a}$.
2. Substitute $x=h$ into the general form of the quadratic function to find k.
3. Rewrite the quadratic in standard form using h and k.

4. Solve for when the output of the function will be zero to find the x-intercepts.

Example 5.1.8: Finding the x-Intercepts of a Parabola

Find the x-intercepts of the quadratic function $f(x) = 2x^2 + 4x - 4$.

Solution

We begin by solving for when the output will be zero.

$$0 = 2x^2 + 4x - 4$$

Because the quadratic is not easily factorable in this case, we solve for the intercepts by first rewriting the quadratic in standard form.

$$f(x) = a(x-h)^2 + k$$

We know that $a = 2$. Then we solve for h and k.

$$\begin{aligned} h &= -\frac{b}{2a} & k &= f(-1) \\ &= -\frac{4}{2(2)} & &= 2(-1)^2 + 4(-1) - 4 \\ &= -1 & &= -6 \end{aligned}$$

So now we can rewrite in standard form.

$$f(x) = 2(x+1)^2 - 6$$

We can now solve for when the output will be zero.

$$\begin{aligned} 0 &= 2(x+1)^2 - 6 \\ 6 &= 2(x+1)^2 \\ 3 &= (x+1)^2 \\ x+1 &= \pm\sqrt{3} \\ x &= -1 \pm \sqrt{3} \end{aligned}$$

The graph has x-intercepts at $(-1-\sqrt{3}, 0)$ and $(-1+\sqrt{3}, 0)$.

Analysis

We can check our work by graphing the given function on a graphing utility and observing the x-intercepts. See Figure 5.1.15

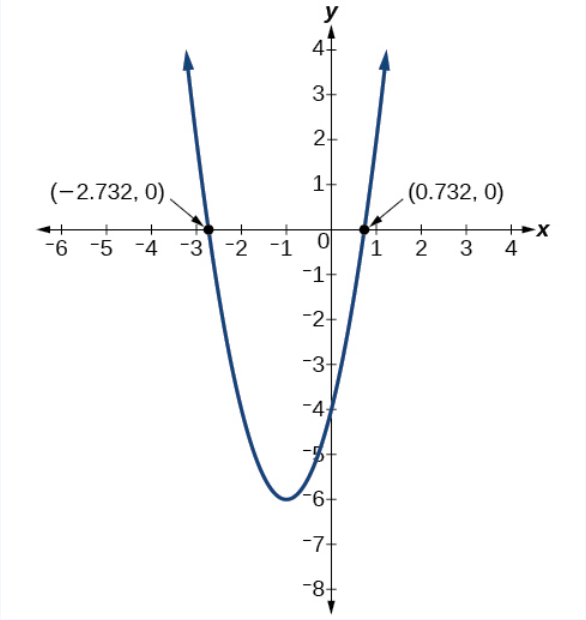


Figure 5.1.15: Graph of a parabola which has the following x-intercepts: $(-2.732, 0)$ and $(0.732, 0)$.

Exercise 5.1.1

In Try It 5.1.1, we found the standard and general form for the function $g(x) = 13 + x^2 - 6x$. Now find the y- and x-intercepts (if any).

Answer

y-intercept at $(0, 13)$, No x-intercepts

Example 5.1.9: Solving a Quadratic Equation with the Quadratic Formula

Solve $x^2 + x + 2 = 0$.

Solution

Let's begin by writing the quadratic formula: $x = \frac{-b \pm \sqrt{b^2 - 4ac}}{2a}$.

When applying the quadratic formula, we identify the coefficients a, b and c. For the equation $x^2 + x + 2 = 0$, we have $a = 1$, $b = 1$, and $c = 2$. Substituting these values into the formula we have:

$$\begin{aligned} x &= \frac{-b \pm \sqrt{b^2 - 4ac}}{2a} \\ &= \frac{-1 \pm \sqrt{1^2 - 4 \cdot 1 \cdot (2)}}{2 \cdot 1} \\ &= \frac{-1 \pm \sqrt{1 - 8}}{2} \\ &= \frac{-1 \pm \sqrt{-7}}{2} \\ &= \frac{-1 \pm i\sqrt{7}}{2} \end{aligned}$$

The solutions to the equation are $x = \frac{-1 + i\sqrt{7}}{2}$ and $x = \frac{-1 - i\sqrt{7}}{2}$ or $x = -\frac{1}{2} + \frac{i\sqrt{7}}{2}$ and $x = \frac{-1}{2} - \frac{i\sqrt{7}}{2}$.

Example 5.1.10: Applying the Vertex and x-Intercepts of a Parabola

A ball is thrown upward from the top of a 40 foot high building at a speed of 80 feet per second. The ball's height above ground can be modeled by the equation $H(t) = -16t^2 + 80t + 40$.

When does the ball reach the maximum height?
What is the maximum height of the ball?
When does the ball hit the ground?

The ball reaches the maximum height at the vertex of the parabola.

$$h = -\frac{80}{2(-16)} \tag{5.1.53}$$
$$= \frac{80}{32} \tag{5.1.54}$$
$$= \frac{5}{2} \tag{5.1.55}$$
$$= 2.5 \tag{5.1.56}$$

The ball reaches a maximum height after 2.5 seconds.

To find the maximum height, find the y-coordinate of the vertex of the parabola.

$$k = H(-\frac{b}{2a}) \tag{5.1.57}$$
$$= H(2.5) \tag{5.1.58}$$
$$= -16(2.5)^2 + 80(2.5) + 40 \tag{5.1.59}$$
$$= 140 \tag{5.1.60}$$

The ball reaches a maximum height of 140 feet.

To find when the ball hits the ground, we need to determine when the height is zero, $H(t) = 0$.

We use the quadratic formula.

$$t = \frac{-80 \pm \sqrt{80^2 - 4(-16)(40)}}{2(-16)} \tag{5.1.61}$$
$$= \frac{-80 \pm \sqrt{8960}}{-32} \tag{5.1.62}$$

Because the square root does not simplify nicely, we can use a calculator to approximate the values of the solutions.

$$t = \frac{-80 - \sqrt{8960}}{-32} \approx 5.458 \text{ or } t = \frac{-80 + \sqrt{8960}}{-32} \approx -0.458 \tag{5.1.63}$$

The second answer is outside the reasonable domain of our model, so we conclude the ball will hit the ground after about 5.458 seconds. See Figure 5.1.16.

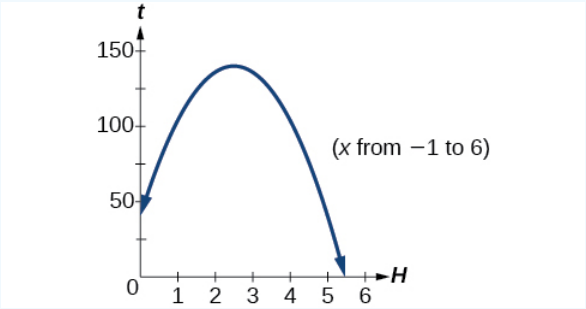


Figure 5.1.16

https://math.libretexts.org/@go/page/143866

5.1.5: A rock is thrown upward from the top of a 112-foot high cliff overlooking the ocean at a speed of 96 feet per second. The rock's height above ocean can be modeled by the equation $H(t) = -16t^2 + 96t + 112$.

a. When does the rock reach the maximum height?
b. What is the maximum height of the rock?
c. When does the rock hit the ocean?

Solution

a. 3 seconds b. 256 feet c. 7 seconds

Key Equations

- general form of a quadratic function: $f(x) = ax^2 + bx + c$
- the quadratic formula: $x = \dfrac{-b \pm \sqrt{b^2 - 4ac}}{2a}$
- standard form of a quadratic function: $f(x) = a(x - h)^2 + k$

Key Concepts

- A polynomial function of degree two is called a quadratic function.
- The graph of a quadratic function is a parabola. A parabola is a U-shaped curve that can open either up or down.
- The axis of symmetry is the vertical line passing through the vertex. The zeros, or x-intercepts, are the points at which the parabola crosses the x-axis. The y-intercept is the point at which the parabola crosses the y-axis.
- Quadratic functions are often written in general form. Standard or vertex form is useful to easily identify the vertex of a parabola. Either form can be written from a graph.
- The vertex can be found from an equation representing a quadratic function. .
- The domain of a quadratic function is all real numbers. The range varies with the function.
- A quadratic function's minimum or maximum value is given by the y-value of the vertex.
- The minimum or maximum value of a quadratic function can be used to determine the range of the function and to solve many kinds of real-world problems, including problems involving area and revenue.
- Some quadratic equations must be solved by using the quadratic formula.
- The vertex and the intercepts can be identified and interpreted to solve real-world problems.

Glossary

axis of symmetry
a vertical line drawn through the vertex of a parabola around which the parabola is symmetric; it is defined by $x = -\frac{b}{2a}$.

general form of a quadratic function
the function that describes a parabola, written in the form $f(x) = ax^2 + bx + c$, where a, b, and c are real numbers and a≠0.

standard form of a quadratic function
the function that describes a parabola, written in the form $f(x) = a(x - h)^2 + k$, where (h, k) is the vertex.

vertex
the point at which a parabola changes direction, corresponding to the minimum or maximum value of the quadratic function

vertex form of a quadratic function
another name for the standard form of a quadratic function

zeros
in a given function, the values of x at which $y = 0$, also called roots

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5.2: Power Functions and Polynomial Functions

Learning Objectives

- Identify power functions.
- Identify end behavior of power functions.
- Identify polynomial functions.
- Identify the degree and leading coefficient of polynomial functions.

Suppose a certain species of bird thrives on a small island. Its population over the last few years is shown in Table 5.2.1.

Table 5.2.1

Year	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Bird Population	800	897	992	1,083	1,169

The population can be estimated using the function $P(t) = -0.3t^3 + 97t + 800$, where $P(t)$ represents the bird population on the island t years after 2009. We can use this model to estimate the maximum bird population and when it will occur. We can also use this model to predict when the bird population will disappear from the island. In this section, we will examine functions that we can use to estimate and predict these types of changes.

Figure 5.2.1: (credit: Jason Bay, Flickr)

Identifying Power Functions

In order to better understand the bird problem, we need to understand a specific type of function. A power function is a function with a single term that is the product of a real number, a coefficient, and a variable raised to a fixed real number. (A number that multiplies a variable raised to an exponent is known as a coefficient.)

As an example, consider functions for area or volume. The function for the area of a circle with radius r is

$$A(r) = \pi r^2$$

and the function for the volume of a sphere with radius r is

$$V(r) = \frac{4}{3}\pi r^3$$

Both of these are examples of power functions because they consist of a coefficient, π or $\frac{4}{3}\pi$, multiplied by a variable r raised to a power.

Definition: Power Function

A *power function* is a function that can be represented in the form

$$f(x) = kx^p \tag{5.2.1}$$

where k and p are real numbers, and k is known as the *coefficient*.

Q&A: Is $f(x) = 2^x$ a power function?

No. A power function contains a variable base raised to a fixed power (Equation 5.2.1). This function has a constant base raised to a variable power. This is called an exponential function, not a power function. This function will be discussed later.

Example 5.2.1: Identifying Power Functions

Which of the following functions are power functions?

$f(x) = 1$	Constant function
$f(x) = x$	Identify function
$f(x) = x^2$	Quadratic function
$f(x) = x^3$	Cubic function
$f(x) = \frac{1}{x}$	Reciprocal function
$f(x) = \frac{1}{x^2}$	Reciprocal squared function
$f(x) = \sqrt{x}$	Square root function
$f(x) = \sqrt[3]{x}$	Cube root function

Solution

All of the listed functions are power functions.

The constant and identity functions are power functions because they can be written as $f(x) = x^0$ and $f(x) = x^1$ respectively.

The quadratic and cubic functions are power functions with whole number powers $f(x) = x^2$ and $f(x) = x^3$.

The **reciprocal** and reciprocal squared functions are power functions with negative whole number powers because they can be written as $f(x) = x^{-1}$ and $f(x) = x^{-2}$.

The square and **cube root** functions are power functions with fractional powers because they can be written as $f(x) = x^{1/2}$ or $f(x) = x^{1/3}$.

Exercise 5.2.1

Which functions are power functions?

- $f(x) = 2x^2 \cdot 4x^3$
- $g(x) = -x^5 + 5x^3 - 4x$
- $h(x) = \frac{2x^5 - 1}{3x^2 + 4}$

Answer

$f(x)$ is a power function because it can be written as $f(x) = 8x^5$. The other functions are not power functions.

Identifying End Behavior of Power Functions

Figure 5.2.2 shows the graphs of $f(x) = x^2$, $g(x) = x^4$ and and $h(x) = x^6$, which are all power functions with even, whole-number powers. Notice that these graphs have similar shapes, very much like that of the quadratic function in the toolkit. However, as the power increases, the graphs flatten somewhat near the origin and become steeper away from the origin.

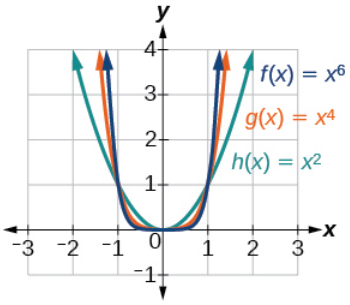


Figure 5.2.2: Even-power functions

To describe the behavior as numbers become larger and larger, we use the idea of infinity. We use the symbol ∞ for positive infinity and $-\infty$ for negative infinity. When we say that "x approaches infinity," which can be symbolically written as $x \to \infty$, we are describing a behavior; we are saying that x is increasing without bound.

With the even-power function, as the input increases or decreases without bound, the output values become very large, positive numbers. Equivalently, we could describe this behavior by saying that as x approaches positive or negative infinity, the $f(x)$ values increase without bound. In symbolic form, we could write

$$\text{as } x \to \pm\infty,\ f(x) \to \infty$$

Figure 5.2.3 shows the graphs of $f(x) = x^3$, $g(x) = x^5$, and $h(x) = x^7$, which are all power functions with odd, whole-number powers. Notice that these graphs look similar to the cubic function in the toolkit. Again, as the power increases, the graphs flatten near the origin and become steeper away from the origin.

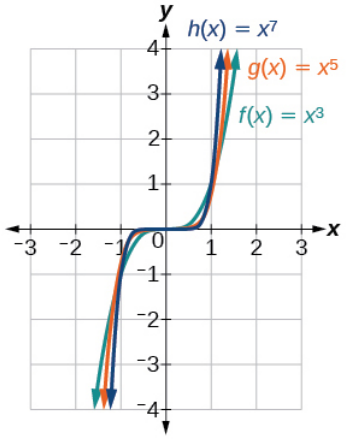


Figure 5.2.3: Odd-power function

These examples illustrate that functions of the form $f(x) = x^n$ reveal symmetry of one kind or another. First, in Figure 5.2.2 we see that even functions of the form $f(x) = x^n$, n even, are symmetric about the y-axis. In Figure 5.2.3 we see that odd functions of the form $f(x) = x^n$, n odd, are symmetric about the origin.

For these odd power functions, as x approaches negative infinity, $f(x)$ decreases without bound. As x approaches positive infinity, $f(x)$ increases without bound. In symbolic form we write

$$\text{as } x \to -\infty,\ f(x) \to -\infty$$
$$\text{as } x \to \infty,\ f(x) \to \infty$$

The behavior of the graph of a function as the input values get very small $(x \to -\infty)$ and get very large $x \to \infty$ is referred to as the *end behavior* of the function. We can use words or symbols to describe end behavior.

Figure 5.2.4 shows the end behavior of power functions in the form $f(x) = kx^n$ where n is a non-negative integer depending on the power and the constant.

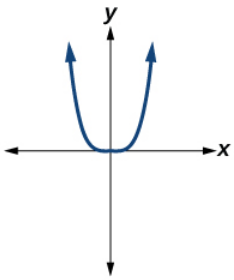
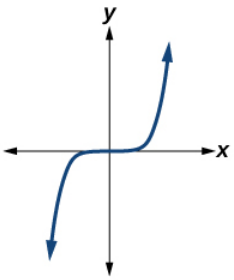
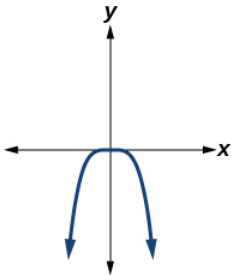
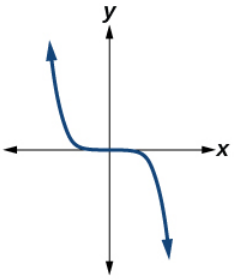
	Even power	Odd power
Positive constant $k > 0$	 $x \to -\infty$, $f(x) \to \infty$ and $x \to \infty$, $f(x) \to \infty$	 $x \to -\infty$, $f(x) \to -\infty$ and $x \to \infty$, $f(x) \to \infty$
Negative constant $k < 0$	 $x \to -\infty$, $f(x) \to -\infty$ and $x \to \infty$, $f(x) \to -\infty$	 $x \to -\infty$, $f(x) \to \infty$ and $x \to \infty$, $f(x) \to -\infty$

Figure 5.2.4

How To: Given a power function $f(x) = kx^n$ where n is a non-negative integer, identify the end behavior.

1. Determine whether the power is even or odd.
2. Determine whether the constant is positive or negative.
3. Use Figure $5.2.4$ to identify the end behavior.

Example 5.2.2: Identifying the End Behavior of a Power Function

Describe the end behavior of the graph of $f(x) = x^8$.

Solution

The coefficient is 1 (positive) and the exponent of the power function is 8 (an even number). As x approaches infinity, the output (value of $f(x)$) increases without bound. We write as $x \to \infty$, $f(x) \to \infty$. As x approaches negative infinity, the output increases without bound. In symbolic form, as $x \to -\infty$, $f(x) \to \infty$. We can graphically represent the function as shown in Figure $5.2.5$.

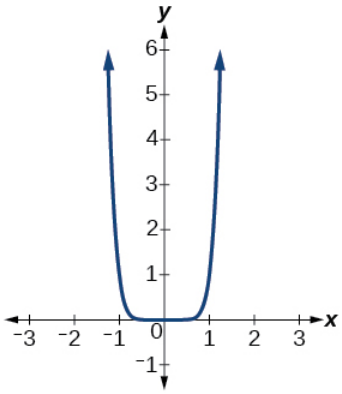


Figure 5.2.5: Graph of $f(x) = x^8$.

Example 5.2.3: Identifying the End Behavior of a Power Function.

Describe the end behavior of the graph of $f(x) = -x^9$.

Solution

The exponent of the power function is 9 (an odd number). Because the coefficient is –1 (negative), the graph is the reflection about the x-axis of the graph of $f(x) = x^9$. Figure 5.2.6 shows that as x approaches infinity, the output decreases without bound. As x approaches negative infinity, the output increases without bound. In symbolic form, we would write

$$\text{as } x \to -\infty,\ f(x) \to \infty$$
$$\text{as } x \to \infty,\ f(x) \to -\infty$$

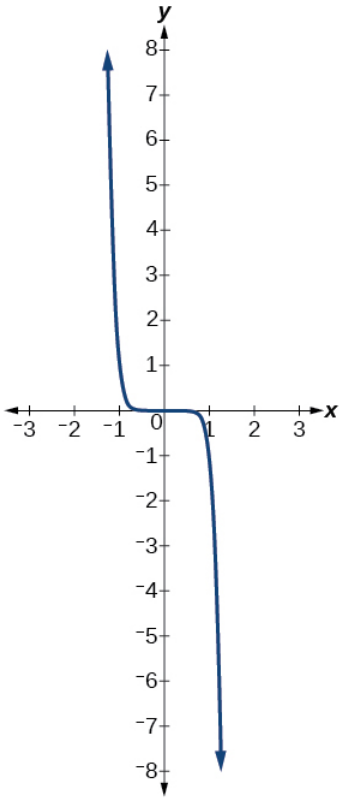


Figure 5.2.6: Graph of $f(x) = -x^9$.

Analysis

We can check our work by using the table feature on a graphing utility.

Table 5.2.2

x	$f(x)$
-10	1,000,000,000
-5	1,953,125
0	0
5	-1,953,125
10	-1,000,000,000

We can see from Table $5.2.2$ that, when we substitute very small values for x, the output is very large, and when we substitute very large values for x, the output is very small (meaning that it is a very large negative value).

Exercise 5.2.2

Describe in words and symbols the end behavior of $f(x) = -5x^4$.

Answer

As x approaches positive or negative infinity, $f(x)$ decreases without bound: as $x \to \pm\infty$, $f(x) \to -\infty$ because of the negative coefficient.

Identifying Polynomial Functions

An oil pipeline bursts in the Gulf of Mexico, causing an oil slick in a roughly circular shape. The slick is currently 24 miles in radius, but that radius is increasing by 8 miles each week. We want to write a formula for the area covered by the oil slick by combining two functions. The radius r of the spill depends on the number of weeks w that have passed. This relationship is linear.

$$r(w) = 24 + 8w$$

We can combine this with the formula for the area A of a circle.

$$A(r) = \pi r^2$$

Composing these functions gives a formula for the area in terms of weeks.

$$\begin{aligned} A(w) &= A(r(w)) \\ &= A(24 + 8w) \\ &= \pi(24 + 8w)^2 \end{aligned}$$

Multiplying gives the formula.

$$A(w) = 576\pi + 384\pi w + 64\pi w^2$$

This formula is an example of a polynomial function. A polynomial function consists of either zero or the sum of a finite number of non-zero terms, each of which is a product of a number, called the coefficient of the term, and a variable raised to a non-negative integer power.

Definition: Polynomial Functions

Let n be a non-negative integer. A *polynomial function* is a function that can be written in the form

$$f(x) = a_n x^n + \ldots + a_2 x^2 + a_1 x + a_0 \tag{5.2.2}$$

This is called the general form of a polynomial function. Each a_i is a coefficient and can be any real number. Each product $a_i x^i$ is a *term of a polynomial function.*

Example 5.2.4: Identifying Polynomial Functions

Which of the following are polynomial functions?

- $f(x) = 2x^3 \cdot 3x + 4$
- $g(x) = -x(x^2 - 4)$
- $h(x) = 5\sqrt{x} + 2$

Solution

The first two functions are examples of polynomial functions because they can be written in the form of Equation 5.2.2, where the powers are non-negative integers and the coefficients are real numbers.

- $f(x)$ can be written as $f(x) = 6x^4 + 4$.
- $g(x)$ can be written as $g(x) = -x^3 + 4x$.
- $h(x)$ cannot be written in this form and is therefore not a polynomial function.

Identifying the Degree and Leading Coefficient of a Polynomial Function

Because of the form of a polynomial function, we can see an infinite variety in the number of terms and the power of the variable. Although the order of the terms in the polynomial function is not important for performing operations, we typically arrange the terms in descending order of power, or in general form. The degree of the polynomial is the highest power of the variable that occurs in the polynomial; it is the power of the first variable if the function is in general form. The leading term is the term containing the highest power of the variable, or the term with the highest degree. The leading coefficient is the coefficient of the leading term.

Terminology of Polynomial Functions

We often rearrange polynomials so that the powers are descending.

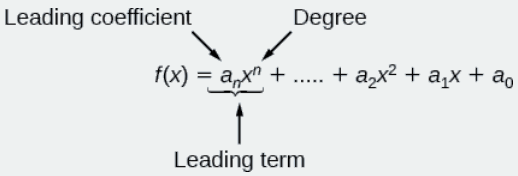


Figure 5.2.7

When a polynomial is written in this way, we say that it is in *general form*.

How To: Given a polynomial function, identify the degree and leading coefficient

1. Find the highest power of x to determine the degree function.
2. Identify the term containing the highest power of x to find the leading term.
3. Identify the coefficient of the leading term.

Example 5.2.5: Identifying the Degree and Leading Coefficient of a Polynomial Function

Identify the degree, leading term, and leading coefficient of the following polynomial functions.

$$f(x) = 3 + 2x^2 - 4x^3$$

$$g(t) = 5t^5 - 2t^3 + 7t$$

$$h(p) = 6p - p^3 - 2$$

Solution

For the function $f(x)$, the highest power of x is 3, so the degree is 3. The leading term is the term containing that degree, $-4x^3$. The leading coefficient is the coefficient of that term, −4.

For the function $g(t)$, the highest power of t is 5, so the degree is 5. The leading term is the term containing that degree, $5t^5$. The leading coefficient is the coefficient of that term, 5.

For the function $h(p)$, the highest power of p is 3, so the degree is 3. The leading term is the term containing that degree, $-p^3$; the leading coefficient is the coefficient of that term, -1.

Exercise 5.2.3

Identify the degree, leading term, and leading coefficient of the polynomial $f(x) = 4x^2 - x^6 + 2x - 6$.

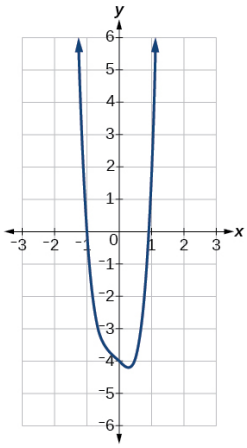
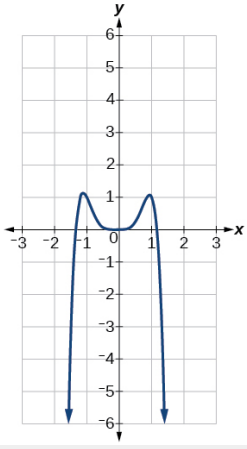
Answer

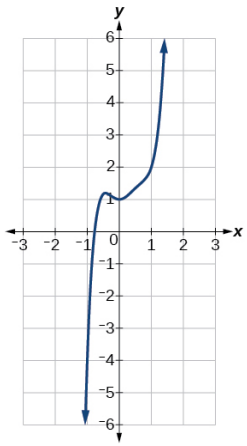
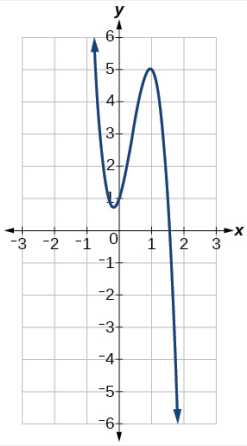
The degree is 6. The leading term is $-x^6$. The leading coefficient is -1.

Identifying End Behavior of Polynomial Functions

Knowing the degree of a polynomial function is useful in helping us predict its end behavior. To determine its end behavior, look at the leading term of the polynomial function. Because the power of the leading term is the highest, that term will grow significantly faster than the other terms as x gets very large or very small, so its behavior will dominate the graph. For any polynomial, the end behavior of the polynomial will match the end behavior of the term of highest degree (Table $5.2.3$).

Table 5.2.3

Polynomial Function	Leading Term	Graph of Polynomial Function
$f(x) = 5x^4 + 2x^3 - x - 4$	$5x^4$	
$f(x) = -2x^6 - x^5 + 3x^4 + x^3$	$-2x^6$	

Polynomial Function	Leading Term	Graph of Polynomial Function
$f(x) = 3x^5 - 4x^4 + 2x^2 + 1$	$3x^5$	
$f(x) = -6x^3 + 7x^2 + 3x + 1$	$-6x^3$	

Example 5.2.6: Identifying End Behavior and Degree of a Polynomial Function

Describe the end behavior and determine a possible degree of the polynomial function in Figure 5.2.8.

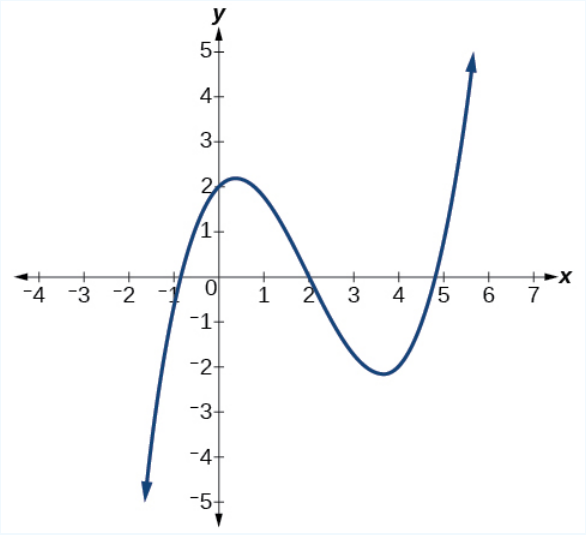


Figure 5.2.8.

Solution

As the input values x get very large, the output values $f(x)$ increase without bound. As the input values x get very small, the output values $f(x)$ decrease without bound. We can describe the end behavior symbolically by writing

$$\text{as } x \to \infty,\ f(x) \to \infty$$

$$\text{as } x \to -\infty,\ f(x) \to -\infty$$

In words, we could say that as x values approach infinity, the function values approach infinity, and as x values approach negative infinity, the function values approach negative infinity.

We can tell this graph has the shape of an odd degree power function that has not been reflected, so the degree of the polynomial creating this graph must be odd and the leading coefficient must be positive.

Exercise 5.2.1

Describe the end behavior, and determine a possible degree of the polynomial function in Figure 5.2.9.

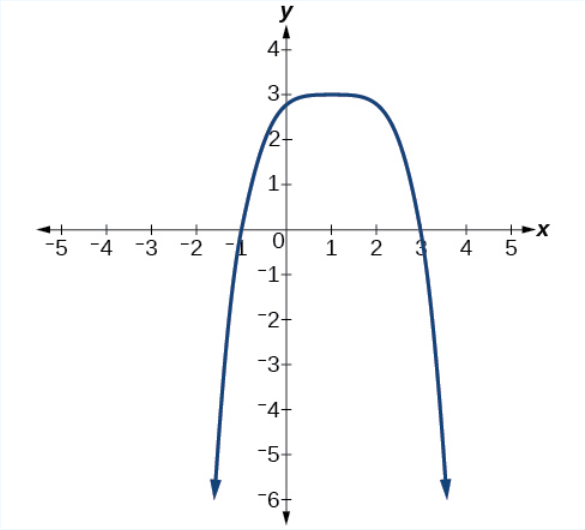


Figure 5.2.9

Answer

As $x \to \infty$, $f(x) \to -\infty$; as $x \to -\infty$, $f(x) \to -\infty$. It has the shape of an even degree power function with a negative coefficient.

Example 5.2.7: Identifying End Behavior and Degree of a Polynomial Function

Given the function $f(x) = -3x^2(x-1)(x+4)$, express the function as a polynomial in general form, and determine the leading term, degree, and end behavior of the function.

Solution

Obtain the general form by expanding the given expression for $f(x)$.

$$\begin{aligned} f(x) &= -3x^2(x-1)(x+4) \\ &= -3x^2(x^2+3x-4) \\ &= -3x^4 - 9x^3 + 12x^2 \end{aligned}$$

The general form is $f(x) = -3x^4 - 9x^3 + 12x^2$. The leading term is $-3x^4$; therefore, the degree of the polynomial is 4. The degree is even (4) and the leading coefficient is negative (–3), so the end behavior is

$$\text{as } x \to -\infty,\ f(x) \to -\infty$$

$$\text{as } x \to \infty,\ f(x) \to -\infty$$

Exercise 5.2.7

Given the function $f(x) = 0.2(x-2)(x+1)(x-5)$, express the function as a polynomial in general form and determine the leading term, degree, and end behavior of the function.

Answer

The leading term is $0.2x^3$, so it is a degree 3 polynomial. As x approaches positive infinity, $f(x)$ increases without bound; as x approaches negative infinity, $f(x)$ decreases without bound.

Identifying Local Behavior of Polynomial Functions

In addition to the end behavior of polynomial functions, we are also interested in what happens in the "middle" of the function. In particular, we are interested in locations where graph behavior changes. A **turning point** is a point at which the function values change from increasing to decreasing or decreasing to increasing.

We are also interested in the intercepts. As with all functions, the y-intercept is the point at which the graph intersects the vertical axis. The point corresponds to the coordinate pair in which the input value is zero. Because a polynomial is a function, only one output value corresponds to each input value so there can be only one y-intercept $(0, a_0)$. The x-intercepts occur at the input values that correspond to an output value of zero. It is possible to have more than one x-intercept. See Figure 5.2.10

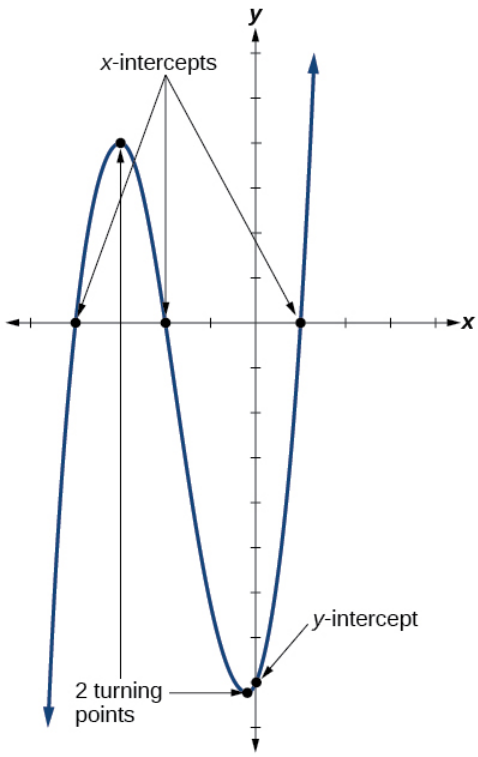


Figure 5.2.10

Defintion: Intercepts and Turning Points of Polynomial Functions

A **turning point** of a graph is a point at which the graph changes direction from increasing to decreasing or decreasing to increasing. The y-intercept is the point at which the function has an input value of zero. The x-intercepts are the points at which the output value is zero.

How To: Given a polynomial function, determine the intercepts.

1. Determine the y-intercept by setting $x = 0$ and finding the corresponding output value.
2. Determine the x-intercepts by solving for the input values that yield an output value of zero.

Example 5.2.8: Determining the Intercepts of a Polynomial Function

Given the polynomial function $f(x)=(x-2)(x+1)(x-4)$, written in factored form for your convenience, determine the y- and x-intercepts.

Solution

The y-intercept occurs when the input is zero, so substitute 0 for x.

$$\begin{aligned} f(0) &= (0-2)(0+1)(0-4) \\ &= (-2)(1)(-4) \\ &= 8 \end{aligned}$$

The y-intercept is $(0,8)$.

The x-intercepts occur when the output is zero.

$$0=(x-2)(x+1)(x-4)$$

$$\begin{aligned} x-2=0 \quad &\text{or} \quad x+1=0 \quad \text{or} \quad x-4=0 \\ x=2 \quad &\text{or} \quad x=-1 \quad \text{or} \quad x=4 \end{aligned}$$

The x-intercepts are $(2,0)$,$(-1,0)$, and $(4,0)$.

We can see these intercepts on the graph of the function shown in Figure 5.2.11.

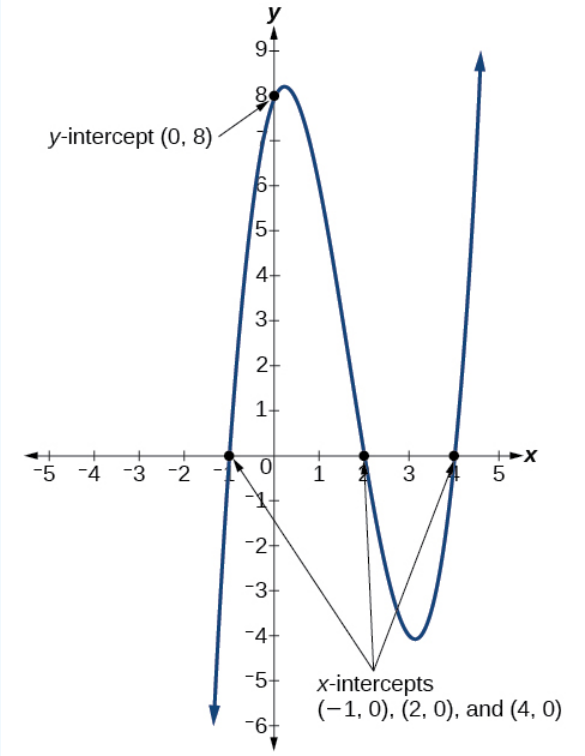


Figure 5.2.11: Graph of $f(x)=(x-2)(x+1)(x-4)$.

Example 5.2.9: Determining the Intercepts of a Polynomial Function with Factoring

Given the polynomial function $f(x)=x^4-4x^2-45$, determine the y- and x-intercepts.

Solution

The y-intercept occurs when the input is zero.

$$\begin{aligned} f(0) &= (0)^4-4(0)^2-45 \\ &= -45 \end{aligned}$$

The y-intercept is $(0, -45)$.

The x-intercepts occur when the output is zero. To determine when the output is zero, we will need to factor the polynomial.

$$\begin{aligned} f(x) &= x^4 - 4x^2 - 45 \\ &= (x^2 - 9)(x^2 + 5) \\ &= (x-3)(x+3)(x^2+5) \end{aligned}$$

$$0 = (x-3)(x+3)(x^2+5)$$

$$\begin{array}{lllll} x-3=0 & \text{or} & x+3=0 & \text{or} & x^2+5=0 \\ x=3 & \text{or} & x=-3 & \text{or} & \text{(no real solution)} \end{array}$$

The x-intercepts are $(3, 0)$ and $(-3, 0)$.

We can see these intercepts on the graph of the function shown in Figure 5.2.12 We can see that the function is even because $f(x) = f(-x)$.

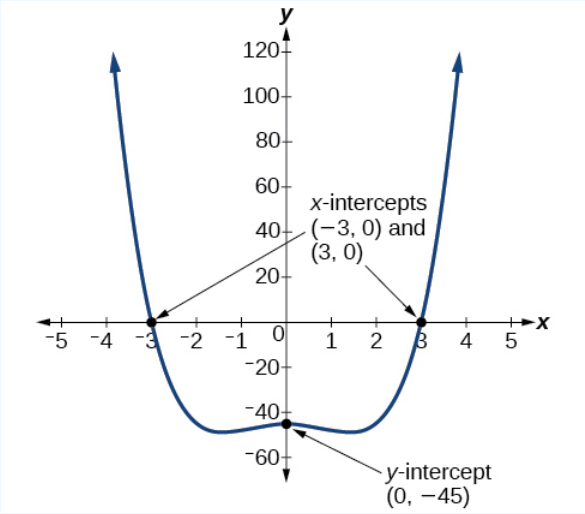


Figure 5.2.12: Graph of $f(x) = x^4 - 4x^2 - 45$.

Exercise 5.2.5

5.2.5: Given the polynomial function $f(x) = 2x^3 - 6x^2 - 20x$, determine the y- and x-intercepts.

Solution

y-intercept $(0, 0)$; x-intercepts $(0, 0)$,$(-2, 0)$, and $(5, 0)$

Comparing Smooth and Continuous Graphs

The degree of a polynomial function helps us to determine the number of x-intercepts and the number of turning points. A polynomial function of nth degree is the product of n factors, so it will have at most n roots or zeros, or x-intercepts. The graph of the polynomial function of degree n must have at most $n-1$ turning points. This means the graph has at most one fewer turning point than the degree of the polynomial or one fewer than the number of factors.

A **continuous function** has no breaks in its graph: the graph can be drawn without lifting the pen from the paper. A smooth curve is a graph that has no sharp corners. The turning points of a smooth graph must always occur at rounded curves. The graphs of polynomial functions are both continuous and smooth.

Intercepts and Turning Points of Polynomials

A polynomial of degree n will have, at most, n x-intercepts and $n-1$ turning points.

Example 5.2.10: Determining the Number of Intercepts and Turning Points of a Polynomial

Without graphing the function, determine the local behavior of the function by finding the maximum number of x-intercepts and turning points for $f(x)=-3x^{10}+4x^7-x^4+2x^3$.

Solution

The polynomial has a degree of **10**, so there are at most n x-intercepts and at most $n-1$ turning points.

Exercise 5.2.6

Without graphing the function, determine the maximum number of x-intercepts and turning points for $f(x)=108-13x^9-8x^4+14x^{12}+2x^3$

Answer

There are at most 12 x-intercepts and at most 11 turning points.

Example 5.2.11: Drawing Conclusions about a Polynomial Function from the Graph

What can we conclude about the polynomial represented by the graph shown in Figure 5.2.12 based on its intercepts and turning points?

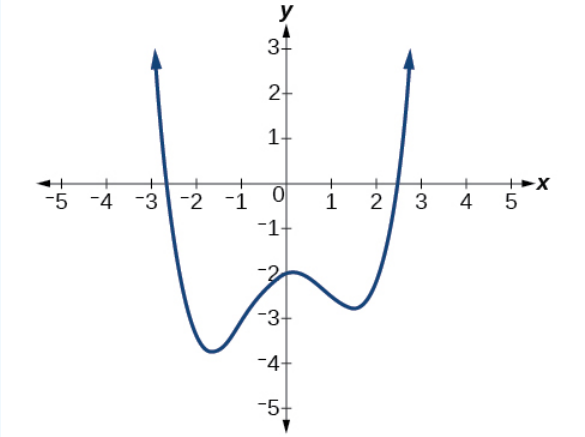


Figure 5.2.13.

Solution

The end behavior of the graph tells us this is the graph of an even-degree polynomial. See Figure 5.2.14

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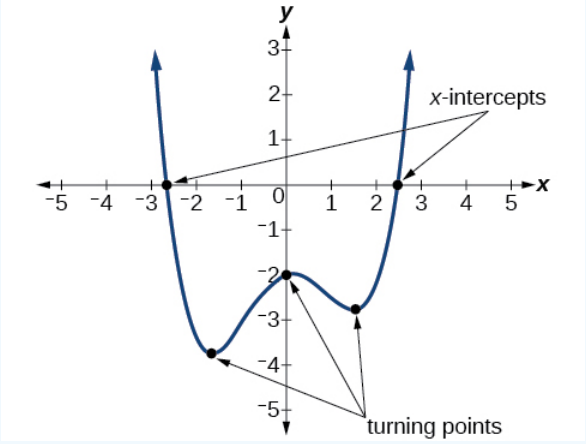

Figure 5.2.14: Graph of an even-degree polynomial.

The graph has 2 x-intercepts, suggesting a degree of 2 or greater, and 3 turning points, suggesting a degree of 4 or greater. Based on this, it would be reasonable to conclude that the degree is even and at least 4.

Exercise 5.2.7

What can we conclude about the polynomial represented by the graph shown in Figure 5.2.15 based on its intercepts and turning points?

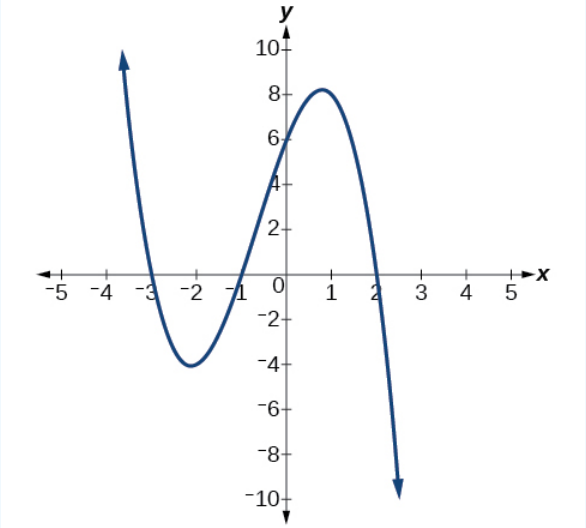

Figure 5.2.15.

Answer

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Solution

The end behavior indicates an odd-degree polynomial function; there are 3 x-intercepts and 2 turning points, so the degree is odd and at least 3. Because of the end behavior, we know that the lead coefficient must be negative.

Example 5.2.12: Drawing Conclusions about a Polynomial Function from the Factors

Given the function $f(x) = -4x(x+3)(x-4)$, determine the local behavior.

Solution

The y-intercept is found by evaluating $f(0)$.

$$\begin{aligned} f(0) &= -4(0)(0+3)(0-4) \\ &= 0 \end{aligned}$$

The y-intercept is $(0, 0)$.

The x-intercepts are found by determining the zeros of the function.

$$\begin{aligned} 0 &= -4x(x+3)(x-4) \\ x &= 0 \quad \text{or} \quad x+3 = 0 \quad \text{or} \quad x-4 = 0 \\ x &= 0 \quad \text{or} \quad x = -3 \quad \text{or} \quad x = 4 \end{aligned}$$

The x-intercepts are $(0, 0)$,$(-3, 0)$, and $(4, 0)$.

The degree is 3 so the graph has at most 2 turning points.

Exercise 5.2.8

Given the function $f(x) = 0.2(x-2)(x+1)(x-5)$, determine the local behavior.

Answer

The x-intercepts are $(2, 0)$, $(-1, 0)$, and $(5, 0)$, the y-intercept is $(0, 2)$, and the graph has at most 2 turning points.

Key Equations

- general form of a polynomial function: $f(x) = a_n x^n + a_{n-1} x^{n-1} \ldots + a_2 x^2 + a_1 x + a_0$

Key Concepts

- A power function is a variable base raised to a number power.
- The behavior of a graph as the input decreases without bound and increases without bound is called the end behavior.
- The end behavior depends on whether the power is even or odd.
- A polynomial function is the sum of terms, each of which consists of a transformed power function with positive whole number power.
- The degree of a polynomial function is the highest power of the variable that occurs in a polynomial. The term containing the highest power of the variable is called the leading term. The coefficient of the leading term is called the leading coefficient.
- The end behavior of a polynomial function is the same as the end behavior of the power function represented by the leading term of the function.
- A polynomial of degree n will have at most n x-intercepts and at most $n-1$ turning points.

Glossary

coefficient

a nonzero real number that is multiplied by a variable raised to an exponent (only the number factor is the coefficient)

continuous function

a function whose graph can be drawn without lifting the pen from the paper because there are no breaks in the graph

degree

the highest power of the variable that occurs in a polynomial

end behavior

the behavior of the graph of a function as the input decreases without bound and increases without bound

leading coefficient

the coefficient of the leading term

leading term

the term containing the highest power of the variable

polynomial function

a function that consists of either zero or the sum of a finite number of non-zero terms, each of which is a product of a number, called the coefficient of the term, and a variable raised to a non-negative integer power.

power function

a function that can be represented in the form $f(x) = kx^p$ where k is a constant, the base is a variable, and the exponent, p, is a constant

smooth curve

a graph with no sharp corners

term of a polynomial function

any $a_i x^i$ of a polynomial function in the form $f(x) = a_n x^n + a_{n-1} x^{n-1} \ldots + a_2 x^2 + a_1 x + a_0$

turning point

the location at which the graph of a function changes direction

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5.3: Graphs of Polynomial Functions

Learning Objectives

- Recognize characteristics of graphs of polynomial functions.
- Use factoring to find zeros of polynomial functions.
- Identify zeros and their multiplicities.
- Determine end behavior.
- Understand the relationship between degree and turning points.
- Graph polynomial functions.
- Use the Intermediate Value Theorem.

The revenue in millions of dollars for a fictional cable company from 2006 through 2013 is shown in Table 5.3.1.

Table 5.3.1

Year	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Revenues	52.4	52.8	51.2	49.5	48.6	48.6	48.7	47.1

The revenue can be modeled by the polynomial function

$$R(t) = -0.037t^4 + 1.414t^3 - 19.777t^2 + 118.696t - 205.332 \tag{5.3.1}$$

where R represents the revenue in millions of dollars and t represents the year, with $t = 6$ corresponding to 2006. Over which intervals is the revenue for the company increasing? Over which intervals is the revenue for the company decreasing? These questions, along with many others, can be answered by examining the graph of the polynomial function. We have already explored the local behavior of quadratics, a special case of polynomials. In this section we will explore the local behavior of polynomials in general.

Recognizing Characteristics of Graphs of Polynomial Functions

Polynomial functions of degree 2 or more have graphs that do not have sharp corners; recall that these types of graphs are called smooth curves. Polynomial functions also display graphs that have no breaks. Curves with no breaks are called continuous. Figure 5.3.1 shows a graph that represents a **polynomial function** and a graph that represents a function that is not a polynomial.

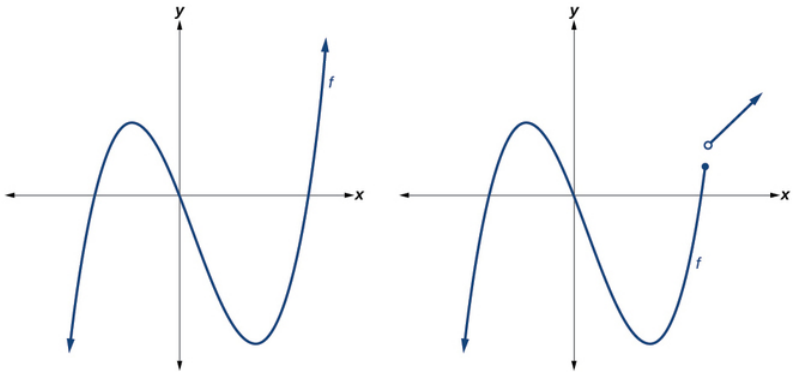

Figure 5.3.1: Graph of $f(x) = x^3 - 0.01x$.

Example 5.3.1: Recognizing Polynomial Functions

Which of the graphs in Figure 5.3.2 represents a polynomial function?

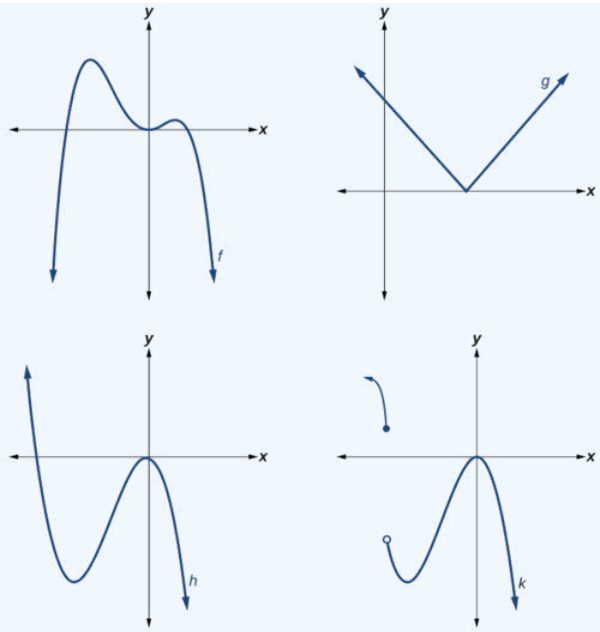

***Figure* 5.3.2**

Solution

- The graphs of f and h are graphs of polynomial functions. They are smooth and **continuous**.
- The graphs of g and k are graphs of functions that are not polynomials. The graph of function g has a sharp corner. The graph of function k is not continuous.

Q&A

Do all polynomial functions have as their domain all real numbers?

- Yes. Any real number is a valid input for a polynomial function.

Using Factoring to Find Zeros of Polynomial Functions

Recall that if f is a polynomial function, the values of x for which $f(x) = 0$ are called **zeros** of f. If the equation of the polynomial function can be factored, we can set each factor equal to zero and solve for the zeros.

We can use this method to find x-intercepts because at the x-intercepts we find the input values when the output value is zero. For general polynomials, this can be a challenging prospect. While quadratics can be solved using the relatively simple quadratic formula, the corresponding formulas for cubic and fourth-degree polynomials are not simple enough to remember, and formulas do not exist for general higher-degree polynomials. Consequently, we will limit ourselves to three cases in this section:

The polynomial can be factored using known methods: greatest common factor and trinomial factoring.
The polynomial is given in factored form.
Technology is used to determine the intercepts.

HOwTO: Given a polynomial function f, find the x-intercepts by factoring

1. Set $f(x) = 0$.
2. If the polynomial function is not given in factored form:
   a. Factor out any common monomial factors.
   b. Factor any factorable binomials or trinomials.
3. Set each factor equal to zero and solve to find the x-intercepts.

Example 5.3.2: Finding the x-Intercepts of a Polynomial Function by Factoring

Find the x-intercepts of $f(x) = x^6 - 3x^4 + 2x^2$.

Solution

We can attempt to factor this polynomial to find solutions for $f(x) = 0$.

$$\begin{aligned} x^6 - 3x^4 + 2x^2 &= 0 && \text{Factor out the greatest common factor.} \\ x^2(x^4 - 3x^2 + 2) &= 0 && \text{Factor the trinomial.} \\ x^2(x^2 - 1)(x^2 - 2) &= 0 && \text{Set each factor equal to zero.} \end{aligned}$$

$$\begin{aligned} x^2 &= 0 \quad & (x^2 - 1) &= 0 \quad & (x^2 - 2) &= 0 \\ x^2 &= 0 \quad \text{or} \quad & x^2 &= 1 \quad \text{or} \quad & x^2 &= 2 \\ x &= 0 & x &= \pm 1 & x &= \pm\sqrt{2} \end{aligned}$$

.

This gives us five x-intercepts: $(0, 0)$, $(1, 0)$, $(-1, 0)$, $(\sqrt{2}, 0)$,and $(-\sqrt{2}, 0)$ (Figure 5.3.3). We can see that this is an even function.

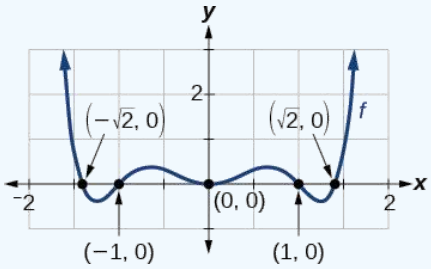

Figure 5.3.3.

Example 5.3.3: Finding the x-Intercepts of a Polynomial Function by Factoring

Find the x-intercepts of $f(x) = x^3 - 5x^2 - x + 5$.

Solution

Find solutions for $f(x) = 0$ by factoring.

$$\begin{aligned} x^3 - 5x^2 - x + 5 &= 0 && \text{Factor by grouping.} \\ x^2(x - 5) - (x - 5) &= 0 && \text{Factor out the common factor.} \\ (x^2 - 1)(x - 5) &= 0 && \text{Factor the difference of squares.} \\ (x + 1)(x - 1)(x - 5) &= 0 && \text{Set each factor equal to zero.} \end{aligned}$$

$$\begin{aligned} x + 1 &= 0 \quad & x - 1 &= 0 \quad & x - 5 &= 0 \\ x &= -1 \quad \text{or} \quad & x &= 1 \quad \text{or} \quad & x &= 5 \end{aligned}$$

There are three x-intercepts: $(-1, 0)$, $(1, 0)$, and $(5, 0)$ (Figure 5.3.4).

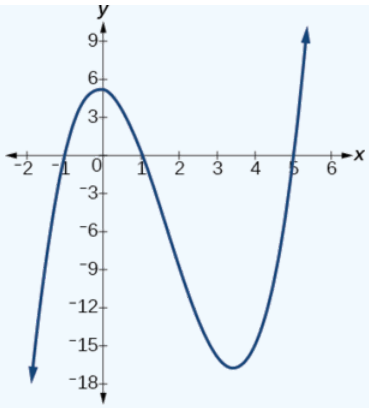

Figure 5.3.4: Graph of $f(x)$.

Example 5.3.4: Finding the y- and x-Intercepts of a Polynomial in Factored Form

Find the y- and x-intercepts of $g(x) = (x-2)^2(2x+3)$.

Solution

The y-intercept can be found by evaluating $g(0)$.

$$\begin{aligned} g(0) &= (0-2)^2(2(0)+3) \\ &= 12 \end{aligned}$$

So the y-intercept is $(0, 12)$.

The x-intercepts can be found by solving $g(x) = 0$.

$$(x-2)^2(2x+3) = 0 \tag{5.3.2}$$

$$\begin{aligned} (x-2)^2 &= 0 \qquad\qquad (2x+3) = 0 \\ x-2 &= 0 \quad \text{or} \quad x = -\frac{3}{2} \\ x &= 2 \end{aligned}$$

So the x-intercepts are $(2, 0)$ and $\left(-\frac{3}{2}, 0\right)$.

Analysis

We can always check that our answers are reasonable by using a graphing calculator to graph the polynomial as shown in Figure 5.3.5.

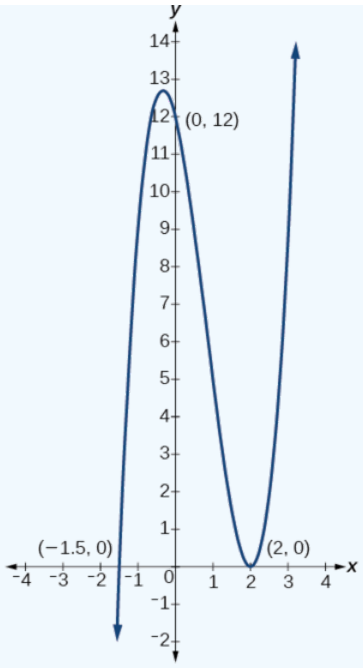

Figure 5.3.5: Graph of $g(x)$.

Example 5.3.5: Finding the x-Intercepts of a Polynomial Function Using a Graph

Find the x-intercepts of $h(x) = x^3 + 4x^2 + x - 6$.

Solution

This polynomial is not in factored form, has no common factors, and does not appear to be factorable using techniques previously discussed. Fortunately, we can use technology to find the intercepts. Keep in mind that some values make graphing difficult by hand. In these cases, we can take advantage of graphing utilities.

Looking at the graph of this function, as shown in Figure 5.3.6, it appears that there are x-intercepts at $x = -3, -2, \text{ and } 1$.

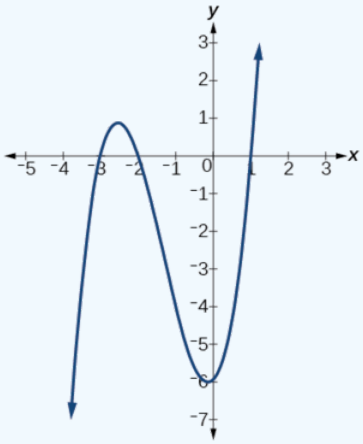

Figure 5.3.6: Graph of $h(x)$.

We can check whether these are correct by substituting these values for x and verifying that

$$h(-3) = h(-2) = h(1) = 0.$$

Since $h(x) = x^3 + 4x^2 + x - 6$, we have:

$$\begin{aligned} h(-3) &= (-3)^3+4(-3)^2+(-3)-6=-27+36-3-6=0 \\ h(-2) &= (-2)^3+4(-2)^2+(-2)-6=-8+16-2-6=0 \\ h(1) &= (1)^3+4(1)^2+(1)-6=1+4+1-6=0 \end{aligned}$$

Each x-intercept corresponds to a zero of the polynomial function and each zero yields a factor, so we can now write the polynomial in factored form.

$$\begin{aligned} h(x) &= x^3+4x^2+x-6 \\ &= (x+3)(x+2)(x-1) \end{aligned}$$

Exercise 5.3.1

Find the y-and x-intercepts of the function $f(x)=x^4-19x^2+30x$.

Answer

- y-intercept $(0,0)$;
- x-intercepts $(0,0)$, $(-5,0)$, $(2,0)$, and $(3,0)$

Identifying Zeros and Their Multiplicities

Graphs behave differently at various x-intercepts. Sometimes, the graph will cross over the horizontal axis at an intercept. Other times, the graph will touch the horizontal axis and bounce off. Suppose, for example, we graph the function

$$f(x)=(x+3)(x-2)^2(x+1)^3. \tag{5.3.3}$$

Notice in Figure 5.3.7 that the behavior of the function at each of the x-intercepts is different.

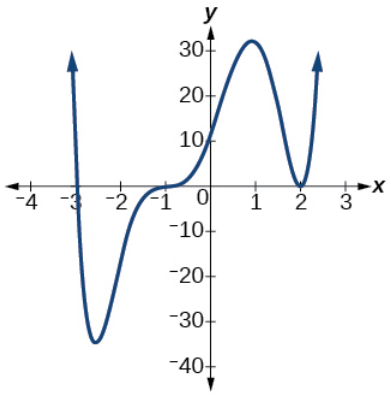

Figure 5.3.7: Identifying the behavior of the graph at an x-intercept by examining the multiplicity of the zero.

The x-intercept −3 is the solution of equation $(x+3)=0$. The graph passes directly through thex-intercept at $x=-3$. The factor is linear (has a degree of 1), so the behavior near the intercept is like that of a line—it passes directly through the intercept. We call this a single zero because the zero corresponds to a single factor of the function.

The x-intercept 2 is the repeated solution of equation $(x-2)^2=0$. The graph touches the axis at the intercept and changes direction. The factor is quadratic (degree 2), so the behavior near the intercept is like that of a quadratic—it bounces off of the horizontal axis at the intercept.

$$(x-2)^2=(x-2)(x-2) \tag{5.3.4}$$

The factor is repeated, that is, the factor $(x-2)$ appears twice. The number of times a given factor appears in the factored form of the equation of a polynomial is called the **multiplicity**. The zero associated with this factor, $x=2$, has multiplicity 2 because the factor $(x-2)$ occurs twice.

The x-intercept −1 is the repeated solution of factor $(x+1)^3=0$ .The graph passes through the axis at the intercept, but flattens out a bit first. This factor is cubic (degree 3), so the behavior near the intercept is like that of a cubic—with the same S-shape near

the intercept as the toolkit function $f(x) = x^3$. We call this a triple zero, or a zero with multiplicity 3.

For **zeros** with even multiplicities, the graphs touch or are tangent to the x-axis. For zeros with odd multiplicities, the graphs cross or intersect the x-axis. See Figure $5.3.8$ for examples of graphs of polynomial functions with multiplicity 1, 2, and 3.

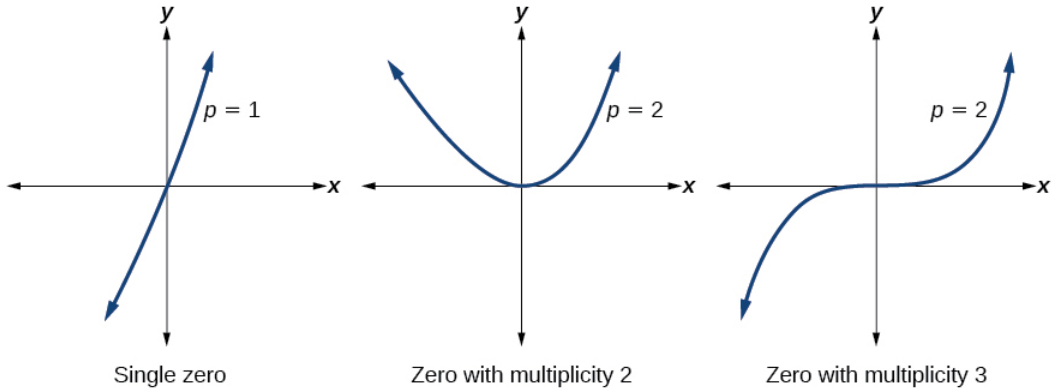

Figure 5.3.8: Three graphs showing three different polynomial functions with multiplicity 1, 2, and 3.

For higher even powers, such as 4, 6, and 8, the graph will still touch and bounce off of the horizontal axis but, for each increasing even power, the graph will appear flatter as it approaches and leaves the x-axis.

For higher odd powers, such as 5, 7, and 9, the graph will still cross through the horizontal axis, but for each increasing odd power, the graph will appear flatter as it approaches and leaves the x-axis.

Graphical Behavior of Polynomials at x-Intercepts

If a polynomial contains a factor of the form $(x-h)^p$, the behavior near the x-intercepth is determined by the power p. We say that $x = h$ is a zero of **multiplicity** p.

The graph of a polynomial function will touch the x-axis at zeros with even multiplicities. The graph will cross the x-axis at zeros with odd multiplicities.

The sum of the multiplicities is the degree of the polynomial function.

HOWTO: Given a graph of a polynomial function of degree n, identify the zeros and their multiplicities

1. If the graph crosses the x-axis and appears almost linear at the intercept, it is a single zero.
2. If the graph touches the x-axis and bounces off of the axis, it is a zero with even multiplicity.
3. If the graph crosses the x-axis at a zero, it is a zero with odd multiplicity.
4. The sum of the multiplicities is n.

Example 5.3.6: Identifying Zeros and Their Multiplicities

Use the graph of the function of degree 6 in Figure $5.3.9$ to identify the zeros of the function and their possible multiplicities.

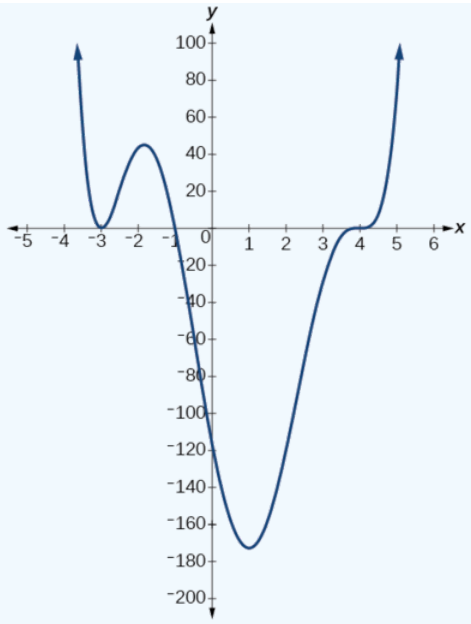

Figure 5.3.9: Graph of a polynomial function with degree 5.

Solution

The polynomial function is of degree n. The sum of the multiplicities must be n.

Starting from the left, the first zero occurs at $x = -3$. The graph touches the x-axis, so the multiplicity of the zero must be even. The zero of −3 has multiplicity 2.

The next zero occurs at $x = -1$. The graph looks almost linear at this point. This is a single zero of multiplicity 1.

The last zero occurs at $x = 4$.The graph crosses the x-axis, so the multiplicity of the zero must be odd. We know that the multiplicity is likely 3 and that the sum of the multiplicities is likely 6.

Exercise 5.3.2

Use the graph of the function of degree 5 in Figure 5.3.10 to identify the zeros of the function and their multiplicities.

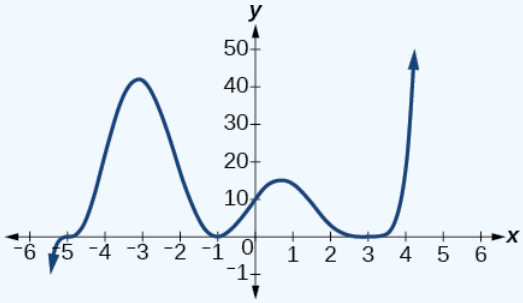

Figure* 5.3.10*: *Graph of a polynomial function with degree 5.*

Answer

The graph has a zero of –5 with multiplicity 1, a zero of –1 with multiplicity 2, and a zero of 3 with even multiplicity.

Determining End Behavior

As we have already learned, the behavior of a graph of a polynomial function of the form

$$f(x) = a_n x^n + a_{n-1} x^{n-1} + \ldots + a_1 x + a_0 \tag{5.3.5}$$

will either ultimately rise or fall as x increases without bound and will either rise or fall as x decreases without bound. This is because for very large inputs, say 100 or 1,000, the leading term dominates the size of the output. The same is true for very small inputs, say –100 or –1,000.

Recall that we call this behavior the end behavior of a function. As we pointed out when discussing quadratic equations, when the leading term of a polynomial function, $a_n x^n$, is an even power function, as x increases or decreases without bound, $f(x)$ increases without bound. When the leading term is an odd power function, as x decreases without bound, $f(x)$ also decreases without bound; as x increases without bound, $f(x)$ also increases without bound. If the leading term is negative, it will change the direction of the end behavior. Figure $5.3.11$ summarizes all four cases.

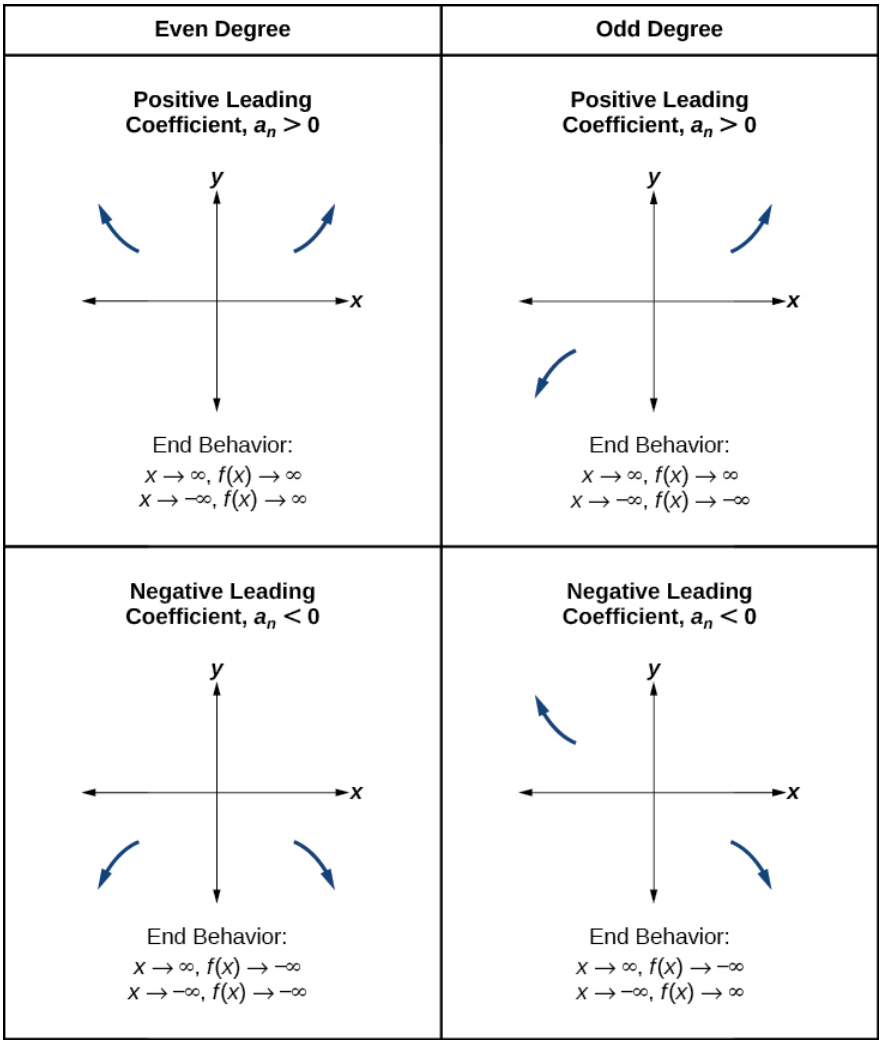

Figure 5.3.11.

Understanding the Relationship between Degree and Turning Points

In addition to the end behavior, recall that we can analyze a polynomial function's local behavior. It may have a turning point where the graph changes from increasing to decreasing (rising to falling) or decreasing to increasing (falling to rising). Look at the graph of the polynomial function $f(x) = x^4 - x^3 - 4x^2 + 4x$ in Figure $5.3.12$ The graph has three turning points.

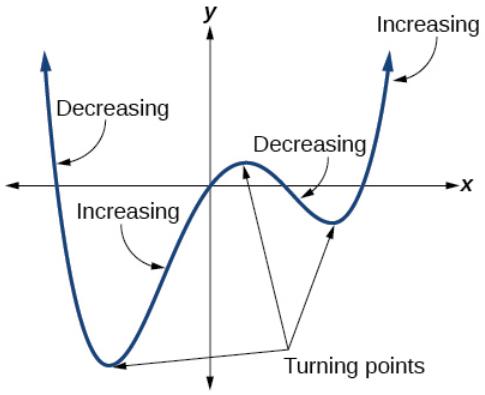

Figure 5.3.12: Graph of $f(x) = x^4 - x^3 - 4x^2 + 4x$

This function f is a 4th degree polynomial function and has 3 turning points. The maximum number of turning points of a polynomial function is always one less than the degree of the function.

Definition: Interpreting Turning Points

A turning point is a point of the graph where the graph changes from increasing to decreasing (rising to falling) or decreasing to increasing (falling to rising). A polynomial of degree n will have at most $n-1$ turning points.

Example 5.3.7: Finding the Maximum Number of Turning Points Using the Degree of a Polynomial Function

Find the maximum number of turning points of each polynomial function.

a. $f(x) = -x^3 + 4x^5 - 3x^2 + 1$
b. $f(x) = -(x-1)^2(1+2x^2)$

Solution

a. $f(x) = -x^3 + 4x^5 - 3x^2 + 1$

First, rewrite the polynomial function in descending order: $f(x) = 4x^5 - x^3 - 3x^2 + 1$

Identify the degree of the polynomial function. This polynomial function is of degree 5.

The maximum number of turning points is $5 - 1 = 4$.

b. $f(x) = -(x-1)^2(1+2x^2)$

First, identify the leading term of the polynomial function if the function were expanded.

$$f(x) = -(x-1)^2\ (1+2x^2)$$
$$a_n = -(x^2)\ (2x^2) - 2x^4$$

Then, identify the degree of the polynomial function. This polynomial function is of degree 4.

The maximum number of turning points is $4 - 1 = 3$.

Graphing Polynomial Functions

We can use what we have learned about multiplicities, end behavior, and turning points to sketch graphs of polynomial functions. Let us put this all together and look at the steps required to graph polynomial functions.

Howto: Given a polynomial function, sketch the graph

1. Find the intercepts.
2. Check for symmetry. If the function is an even function, its graph is symmetrical about the y-axis, that is, $f(-x) = f(x)$. If a function is an odd function, its graph is symmetrical about the origin, that is, $f(-x) = -f(x)$.
3. Use the multiplicities of the zeros to determine the behavior of the polynomial at the x-intercepts.

4. Determine the end behavior by examining the leading term.
5. Use the end behavior and the behavior at the intercepts to sketch a graph.
6. Ensure that the number of turning points does not exceed one less than the degree of the polynomial.
7. Optionally, use technology to check the graph.

Example 5.3.8: Sketching the Graph of a Polynomial Function

Sketch a graph of $f(x) = -2(x+3)^2(x-5)$.

Solution

This graph has two x-intercepts. At $x = -3$, the factor is squared, indicating a multiplicity of 2. The graph will bounce at this x-intercept. At $x = 5$,the function has a multiplicity of one, indicating the graph will cross through the axis at this intercept.

The y-intercept is found by evaluating $f(0)$.

$$\begin{aligned} f(0) &= -2(0+3)^2(0-5) \\ &= -2 \cdot 9 \cdot (-5) \\ &= 90 \end{aligned}$$

The y-intercept is $(0, 90)$.

Additionally, we can see the leading term, if this polynomial were multiplied out, would be $-2x3$, so the end behavior is that of a vertically reflected cubic, with the outputs decreasing as the inputs approach infinity, and the outputs increasing as the inputs approach negative infinity. See Figure 5.3.13

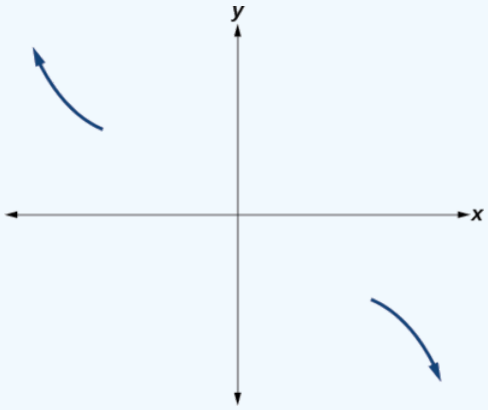

Figure 5.3.13: Showing the distribution for the leading term.

To sketch this, we consider that:

- As $x \to -\infty$ the function $f(x) \to \infty$,so we know the graph starts in the second quadrant and is decreasing toward the x-axis.
- Since $f(-x) = -2(-x+3)^2(-x-5)$ is not equal to $f(x)$, the graph does not display symmetry.
- At $(-3, 0)$, the graph bounces off of thex-axis, so the function must start increasing.
- At $(0, 90)$, the graph crosses the y-axis at the y-intercept. See Figure 5.3.14

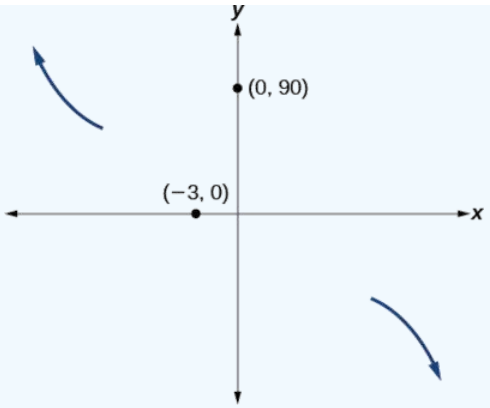

Figure 5.3.14: Graph of the end behavior and intercepts, $(-3,0)$ and $(0,90)$, for the function $f(x)=-2(x+3)^2(x-5)$.

Somewhere after this point, the graph must turn back down or start decreasing toward the horizontal axis because the graph passes through the next intercept at $(5,0)$. See Figure 5.3.15.

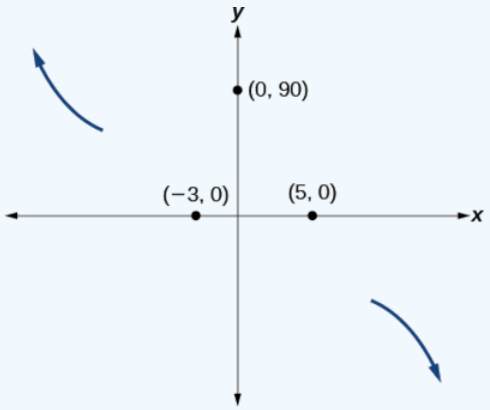

Figure 5.3.15: Graph of the end behavior and intercepts, $(-3,0)$, $(0,90)$ and $(5,0)$, for the function $f(x)=-2(x+3)^2(x-5)$.

As $x\to\infty$ the function $f(x)\to-\infty$,

so we know the graph continues to decrease, and we can stop drawing the graph in the fourth quadrant.

Using technology, we can create the graph for the polynomial function, shown in Figure 5.3.16, and verify that the resulting graph looks like our sketch in Figure 5.3.15.

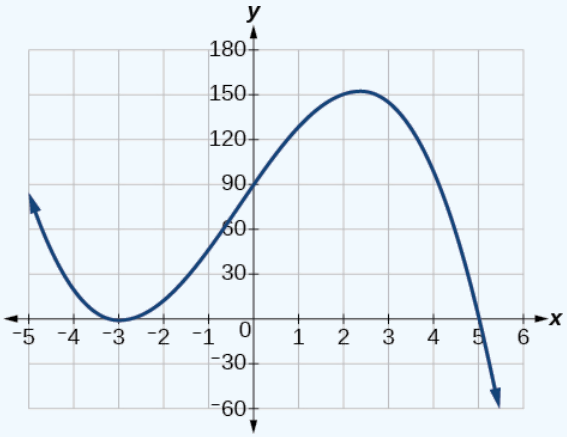

Figure 5.3.16: *The complete graph of the polynomial function* $f(x)=-2(x+3)^2(x-5)$.

https://math.libretexts.org/@go/page/143868

Exercise 5.3.8

Sketch a graph of $f(x) = \frac{1}{4}x(x-1)^4(x+3)^3$.

Answer

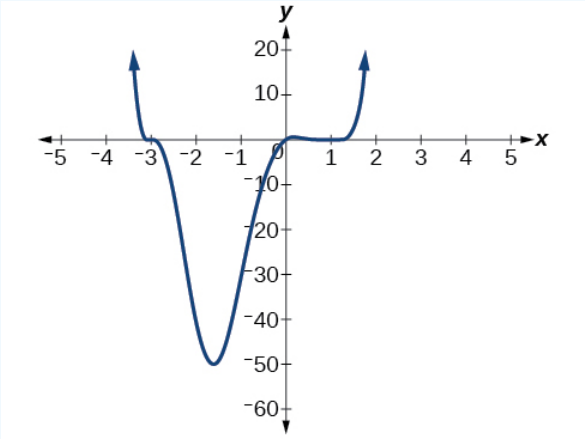

Figure 5.3.17: Graph of $f(x) = \frac{1}{4}x(x-1)^4(x+3)^3$

Using the Intermediate Value Theorem

In some situations, we may know two points on a graph but not the zeros. If those two points are on opposite sides of the x-axis, we can confirm that there is a zero between them. Consider a polynomial function f whose graph is smooth and continuous. The **Intermediate Value Theorem** states that for two numbers a and b in the domain of f,if $a < b$ and $f(a) \neq f(b)$,then the function f takes on every value between $f(a)$ and $f(b)$. We can apply this theorem to a special case that is useful in graphing polynomial functions. If a point on the graph of a continuous function f at $x = a$ lies above the x-axis and another point at $x = b$ lies below thex-axis, there must exist a third point between $x = a$ and $x = b$ where the graph crosses the x-axis. Call this point $(c, f(c))$.This means that we are assured there is a solution c where $f(c) = 0$.

In other words, the **Intermediate Value Theorem** tells us that when a polynomial function changes from a negative value to a positive value, the function must cross the x-axis. Figure 5.3.18shows that there is a zero between a and b.

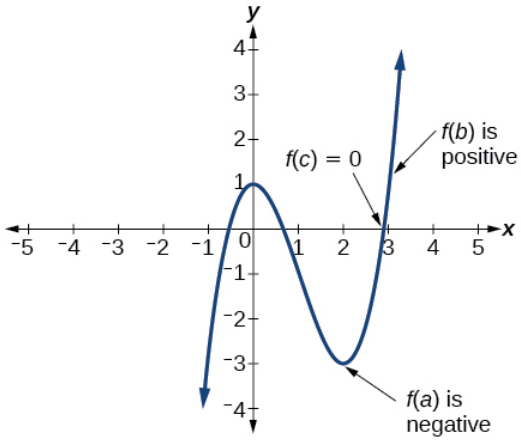

Figure 5.3.18: Using the Intermediate Value Theorem to show there exists a zero.

Definition: Intermediate Value Theorem

Let f be a polynomial function. The **Intermediate Value Theorem** states that if $f(a)$ and $f(b)$ have opposite signs, then there exists at least one value c between a and b for which $f(c) = 0$.

Example 5.3.9: Using the Intermediate Value Theorem

Show that the function $f(x) = x^3 - 5x^2 + 3x + 6$ has at least two real zeros between $x = 1$ and $x = 4$.

Solution

As a start, evaluate $f(x)$ at the integer values $x = 1,\ 2,\ 3,$ and 4 (Table 5.3.2).

Table 5.3.2

x	1	2	3	4
$f(x)$	5	0	-3	2

We see that one zero occurs at $x = 2$. Also, since $f(3)$ is negative and $f(4)$ is positive, by the Intermediate Value Theorem, there must be at least one real zero between 3 and 4.

We have shown that there are at least two real zeros between $x = 1$ and $x = 4$.

Analysis

We can also see on the graph of the function in Figure 5.3.19 that there are two real zeros between $x = 1$ and $x = 4$.

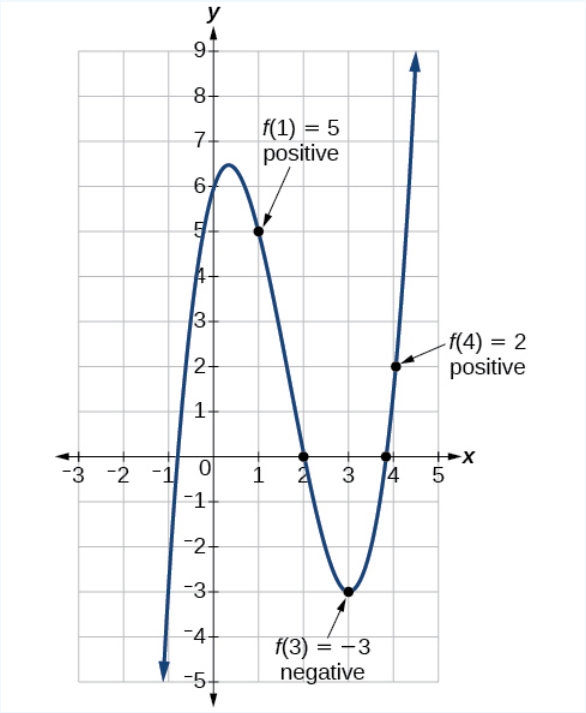

Figure 5.3.19.

Exercise 5.3.4

Show that the function $f(x) = 7x^5 - 9x^4 - x^2$ has at least one real zero between $x = 1$ and $x = 2$.

Answer

Because f is a polynomial function and since $f(1)$ is negative and $f(2)$ is positive, there is at least one real zero between $x = 1$ and $x = 2$.

Writing Formulas for Polynomial Functions

Now that we know how to find zeros of polynomial functions, we can use them to write formulas based on graphs. Because a **polynomial function** written in factored form will have an x-intercept where each factor is equal to zero, we can form a function

that will pass through a set of x-intercepts by introducing a corresponding set of factors.

Note: Factored Form of Polynomials

If a polynomial of lowest degree p has horizontal intercepts at $x = x_1, x_2, \ldots, x_n$, then the polynomial can be written in the factored form: $f(x) = a(x - x_1)^{p_1}(x - x_2)^{p_2} \cdots (x - x_n)^{p_n}$ where the powers p_i on each factor can be determined by the behavior of the graph at the corresponding intercept, and the stretch factor a can be determined given a value of the function other than the x-intercept.

How To: Given a graph of a polynomial function, write a formula for the function.

1. Identify the x-intercepts of the graph to find the factors of the polynomial.
2. Examine the behavior of the graph at the x-intercepts to determine the multiplicity of each factor.
3. Find the polynomial of least degree containing all the factors found in the previous step.
4. Use any other point on the graph (the y-intercept may be easiest) to determine the stretch factor.

Example 5.3.10: Writing a Formula for a Polynomial Function from the Graph

Write a formula for the polynomial function shown in Figure 5.3.20.

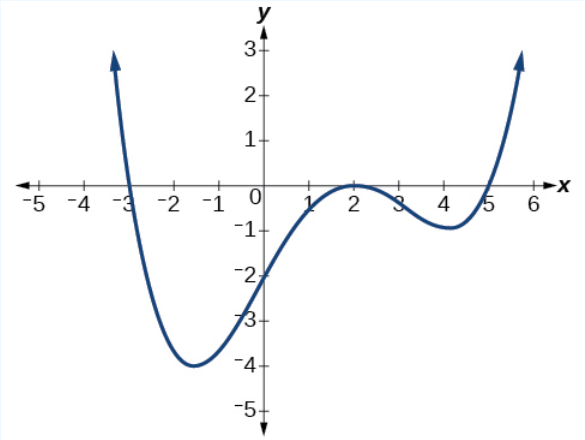

Figure 5.3.20.

Solution

This graph has three x-intercepts: $x = -3,\ 2,$ and 5. The y-intercept is located at $(0, 2)$.At $x = -3$ and $x = 5$, the graph passes through the axis linearly, suggesting the corresponding factors of the polynomial will be linear. At $x = 2$, the graph bounces at the intercept, suggesting the corresponding factor of the polynomial will be second degree (quadratic). Together, this gives us

$$f(x) = a(x+3)(x-2)^2(x-5) \tag{5.3.6}$$

To determine the stretch factor, we utilize another point on the graph. We will use the y-intercept $(0, -2)$, to solve for a.

$$\begin{aligned} f(0) &= a(0+3)(0-2)^2(0-5) \\ -2 &= a(0+3)(0-2)^2(0-5) \\ -2 &= -60a \\ a &= \frac{1}{30} \end{aligned}$$

The graphed polynomial appears to represent the function $f(x) = \frac{1}{30}(x+3)(x-2)^2(x-5)$.

Exercise 5.3.5

Given the graph shown in Figure 5.3.21, write a formula for the function shown.

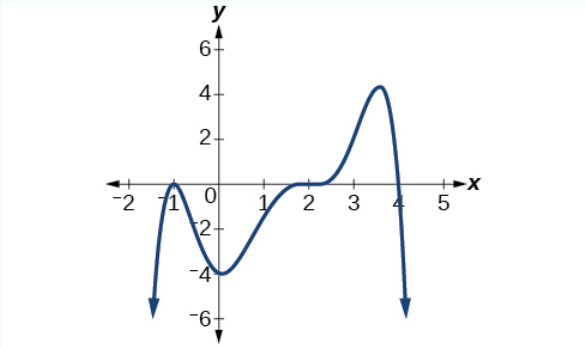

Figure 5.3.21.

Answer

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

Using Local and Global Extrema

With quadratics, we were able to algebraically find the maximum or minimum value of the function by finding the vertex. For general polynomials, finding these turning points is not possible without more advanced techniques from calculus. Even then, finding where extrema occur can still be algebraically challenging. For now, we will estimate the locations of turning points using technology to generate a graph.

Each turning point represents a local minimum or maximum. Sometimes, a turning point is the highest or lowest point on the entire graph. In these cases, we say that the turning point is a **global maximum** or a **global minimum**. These are also referred to as the absolute maximum and absolute minimum values of the function.

Note: Local and Global Extrema

A **local maximum** or **local minimum** at $x = a$ (sometimes called the relative maximum or minimum, respectively) is the output at the highest or lowest point on the graph in an open interval around $x = a$.If a function has a local maximum at a, then $f(a) \geq f(x)$for all x in an open interval around $x = a$. If a function has a local minimum at a, then $f(a) \leq f(x)$for all x in an open interval around $x = a$.

A **global maximum** or **global minimum** is the output at the highest or lowest point of the function. If a function has a global maximum at a, then $f(a) \geq f(x)$ for all x. If a function has a global minimum at a, then $f(a) \leq f(x)$ for all x.

We can see the difference between local and global extrema in Figure 5.3.22

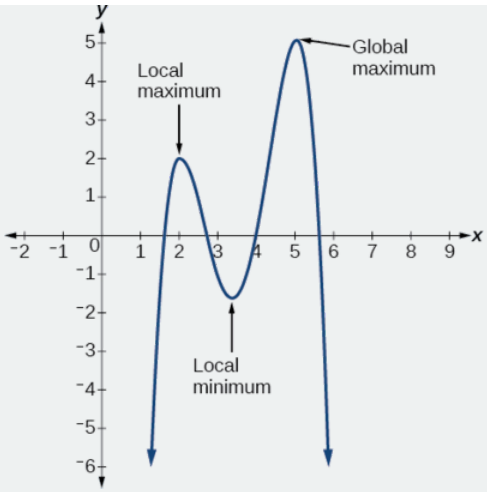

Figure 5.3.22: Graph of an even-degree polynomial that denotes the local maximum and minimum and the global maximum.

Do all polynomial functions have a global minimum or maximum?

No. Only polynomial functions of even degree have a global minimum or maximum. For example, $f(x) = x$ has neither a global maximum nor a global minimum.

Example 5.3.11: Using Local Extrema to Solve Applications

An open-top box is to be constructed by cutting out squares from each corner of a 14 cm by 20 cm sheet of plastic then folding up the sides. Find the size of squares that should be cut out to maximize the volume enclosed by the box.

Solution

We will start this problem by drawing a picture like that in Figure 5.3.23, labeling the width of the cut-out squares with a variable, w.

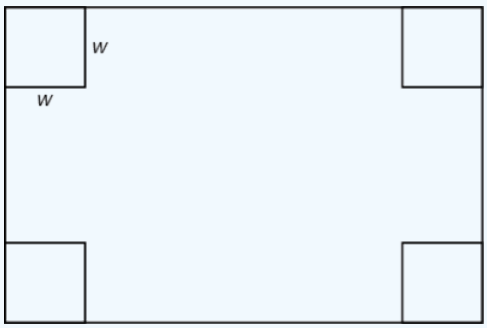

Figure 5.3.23: Diagram of a rectangle with four squares at the corners.

Notice that after a square is cut out from each end, it leaves $a(14-2w)$ cm by $(20-2w)$ cm rectangle for the base of the box, and the box will be w cm tall. This gives the volume

$$\begin{aligned} V(w) &= (20-2w)(14-2w)w \\ &= 280w - 68w^2 + 4w^3 \end{aligned}$$

Notice, since the factors are $20-2w$, $14-2w$, and w, the three zeros are 10, 7, and 0, $)respectively. Becauseaheightof\(0$ cm is not reasonable, we consider the only the zeros 10 and 7. The shortest side is 14 and we are cutting off two squares, so values w may take on are greater than zero or less than 7. This means we will restrict the domain of this function to $0 < w < 7$.Using technology to sketch the graph of $V(w)$ on this reasonable domain, we get a graph like that in Figure 5.3.24 We can use this graph to estimate the maximum value for the volume, restricted to values for w that are reasonable for this problem—values from 0 to 7.

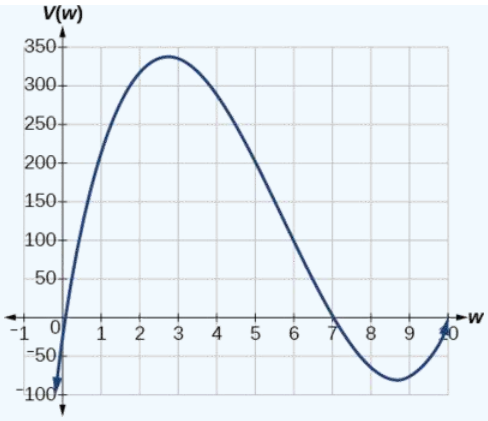

Figure 5.3.24: Graph of $V(w) = (20 - 2w)(14 - 2w)w$

From this graph, we turn our focus to only the portion on the reasonable domain, $[0, 7]$. We can estimate the maximum value to be around 340 cubic cm, which occurs when the squares are about 2.75 cm on each side. To improve this estimate, we could use advanced features of our technology, if available, or simply change our window to zoom in on our graph to produce Figure 5.3.25

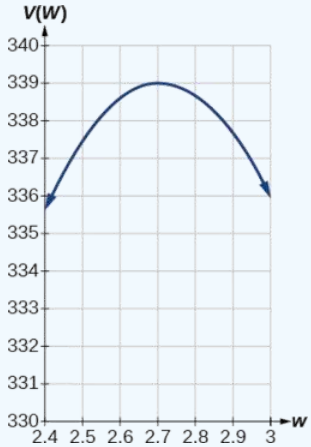

Figure 5.3.25: Graph of $V(w) = (20 - 2w)(14 - 2w)w$.

From this zoomed-in view, we can refine our estimate for the maximum volume to about 339 cubic cm, when the squares measure approximately 2.7 cm on each side.

Exercise 5.3.1

Use technology to find the maximum and minimum values on the interval $[-1, 4]$ of the function $f(x) = -0.2(x - 2)^3(x + 1)^2(x - 4)$.

Answer

The minimum occurs at approximately the point $(0, -6.5)$,
and the maximum occurs at approximately the point $(3.5, 7)$.

Key Concepts

- Polynomial functions of degree 2 or more are smooth, continuous functions.
- To find the zeros of a polynomial function, if it can be factored, factor the function and set each factor equal to zero.
- Another way to find the x-intercepts of a polynomial function is to graph the function and identify the points at which the graph crosses the x-axis.
- The multiplicity of a zero determines how the graph behaves at the x-intercepts.
- The graph of a polynomial will cross the horizontal axis at a zero with odd multiplicity.
- The graph of a polynomial will touch the horizontal axis at a zero with even multiplicity.

- The end behavior of a polynomial function depends on the leading term.
- The graph of a polynomial function changes direction at its turning points.
- A polynomial function of degree n has at most $n-1$ turning points.
- To graph polynomial functions, find the zeros and their multiplicities, determine the end behavior, and ensure that the final graph has at most $n-1$ turning points.
- Graphing a polynomial function helps to estimate local and global extremas.
- The Intermediate Value Theorem tells us that if $f(a)$ and $f(b)$ have opposite signs, then there exists at least one value c between a and b for which $f(c)=0$.

Glossary

global maximum
highest turning point on a graph; $f(a)$ where $f(a) \geq f(x)$ for all x.

global minimum
lowest turning point on a graph; $f(a)$ where $f(a) \leq f(x)$ for all x.

Intermediate Value Theorem
for two numbers a and b in the domain of f, if $a<b$ and $f(a) \neq f(b)$, then the functionf takes on every value between $f(a)$ and $f(b)$; specifically, when a polynomial function changes from a negative value to a positive value, the function must cross the x-axis

multiplicity
the number of times a given factor appears in the factored form of the equation of a polynomial; if a polynomial contains a factor of the form $(x-h)^p$, $x=h$ is a zero of multiplicity p.

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5.4: Dividing Polynomials

Learning Objectives

- Use long division to divide polynomials.
- Use synthetic division to divide polynomials.

The exterior of the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C., is a large rectangular solid with length 61.5 meters (m), width 40 m, and height 30 m.[1]

We can easily find the volume using elementary geometry.

$$\begin{aligned} V &= l \cdot w \cdot h \\ &= 61.5 \cdot 40 \cdot 30 \\ &= 73,800 \end{aligned}$$

So the volume is $73,800$ cubic meters (m^3).

Figure 5.4.1: Lincoln Memorial, Washington, D.C. (credit: Ron Cogswell, Flickr)

Suppose we knew the volume, length, and width. We could divide to find the height.

$$\begin{aligned} h &= \frac{V}{l \cdot w} \\ &= \frac{73,800}{61.5 \cdot 40} \\ &= 30 \end{aligned}$$

As we can confirm from the dimensions above, the height is 30 m. We can use similar methods to find any of the missing dimensions. We can also use the same method if any or all of the measurements contain variable expressions. For example, suppose the volume of a rectangular solid is given by the polynomial $3x^4 - 3x^3 - 33x^2 + 54x$. The length of the solid is given by $3x$; the width is given by $x - 2$.

To find the height of the solid, we can use polynomial division, which is the focus of this section.

Using Long Division to Divide Polynomials

We are familiar with the **long division** algorithm for ordinary arithmetic. We begin by dividing into the digits of the dividend that have the greatest place value. We divide, multiply, subtract, include the digit in the next place value position, and repeat. For example, let's divide 178 by 3 using long division.

Long Division

$$\begin{array}{r} 59 \\ 3\overline{)178} \\ \underline{-15}\downarrow \\ 28 \\ \underline{-27} \\ 1 \end{array}$$

Step 1: $5 \times 3 = 15$ and $17 - 15 = 2$
Step 2: Bring down the 8
Step 3: $9 \times 3 = 27$ and $28 - 27 = 1$

Answer: $59\,R\,1$ or $59\frac{1}{3}$

Another way to look at the solution is as a sum of parts. This should look familiar, since it is the same method used to check division in elementary arithmetic.

$$\begin{aligned}\text{dividend} &= (\text{divisor}\cdot\text{quotient})+\text{remainder}\\ 178 &= (3\cdot 59)+1\\ &= 177+1\\ &= 178\end{aligned}$$

We call this the **Division Algorithm** and will discuss it more formally after looking at an example.

Division of polynomials that contain more than one term has similarities to long division of whole numbers. We can write a polynomial dividend as the product of the divisor and the quotient added to the remainder. The terms of the polynomial division correspond to the digits (and place values) of the whole number division. This method allows us to divide two polynomials. For example, if we were to divide $2x^3-3x^2+4x+5$ by $x+2$ using the long division algorithm, it would look like this:

$$\begin{array}{rl}
x+2\overline{)2x^3-3x^2+4x+5} & \text{Set up the division problem.}\\[2ex]
2x^2 & 2x^3 \text{ divided by } x \text{ is } 2x^2.\\
x+2\overline{)2x^3-3x^2+4x+5} & \\[2ex]
2x^2 & \\
x+2\overline{)2x^3-3x^2+4x+5} & \\
\underline{-(2x^3+4x^2)} & \text{Multiply } x+2 \text{ by } 2x^2 \text{ and subtract.}\\
-7x^2+4x & \text{Bring down the next term.}\\[2ex]
2x^2-7x & -7x^2 \text{ divided by } x \text{ is } -7x.\\
x+2\overline{)2x^3-3x^2+4x+5} & \\
\underline{-(2x^3+4x^2)} & \\
-7x^2+4x & \\
\underline{-(-7x^2-14x)} & \text{Multiply } x+2 \text{ by } -7x.\\
18x+5 & \text{Subtract and bring down the next term.}\\[2ex]
2x^2-7x+18 & 18x \text{ divided by } x \text{ is } 18.\\
x+2\overline{)2x^3-3x^2+4x+5} & \\
\underline{-(2x^3+4x^2)} & \\
-7x^2+4x & \\
\underline{-(-7x^2-14x)} & \\
18x+\ 5 & \\
\underline{-(18x+36)} & \text{Multiply } x+2 \text{ by } 18.\\
-31 & \text{Subtract.}
\end{array}$$

We have found

$$\frac{2x^3-3x^2+4x+5}{x+2}=2x^2-7x+18-\frac{31}{x+2}$$

or

$$2x^3-3x^2+4x+5=(x+2)(2x^2-7x+18)-31$$

We can identify the dividend, the **divisor**, the **quotient**, and the **remainder**.

Writing the result in this manner illustrates the Division Algorithm.

The Division Algorithm

The Division Algorithm states that, given a polynomial dividend $f(x)$ and a non-zero polynomial divisor $d(x)$ where the degree of $d(x)$ is less than or equal to the degree of $f(x)$, there exist unique polynomials $q(x)$ and $r(x)$ such that

$$f(x) = d(x)q(x) + r(x) \tag{5.4.1}$$

$q(x)$ is the quotient and $r(x)$ is the remainder. The remainder is either equal to zero or has degree strictly less than $d(x)$.

If $r(x) = 0$, then $d(x)$ divides evenly into $f(x)$. This means that, in this case, both $d(x)$ and $q(x)$ are factors of $f(x)$.

Given a polynomial and a binomial, use long division to divide the polynomial by the binomial

1. Set up the division problem.
2. Determine the first term of the quotient by dividing the leading term of the dividend by the leading term of the divisor.
3. Multiply the answer by the divisor and write it below the like terms of the dividend.
4. Subtract the bottom **binomial** from the top binomial.
5. Bring down the next term of the dividend.
6. Repeat steps 2–5 until reaching the last term of the dividend.
7. If the remainder is non-zero, express as a fraction using the divisor as the denominator.

Example 5.4.1: Using Long Division to Divide a Second-Degree Polynomial

Divide $5x^2 + 3x - 2$ by $x + 1$.

Solution

$x+1\ \overline{)\,5x^2+3x-2}$	Set up division problem.
$\phantom{x+1\ \overline{)\,}5x$	$5x^2$ divided by x is $5x$.
$x+1\ \overline{)\,5x^2+3x-2}$ $\phantom{x+1\ \overline{)\,}5x$	Multiply $x+1$ by $5x$.
$x+1\ \overline{)\,5x^2+3x-2}$ $\underline{-(5x^2+5x)}$	Subtract.
$\phantom{x+1\ \overline{)\,}-2x-2$	Bring down the next term.
$\phantom{x+1\ \overline{)\,}5x-2$	$-2x$ divided by x is -2.
$x+1\ \overline{)\,5x^2+3x-2}$ $\underline{-(5x^2+5x)}$ $\phantom{x+1\ \overline{)\,}-2x-2$	
$\phantom{x+1\ \overline{)\,}\underline{-(-2x-2)}$	Multiply $x+1$ by -2.
$\phantom{x+1\ \overline{)\,}0$	Subtract.

The quotient is $5x - 2$. The remainder is 0. We write the result as

$$\frac{5x^2+3x-2}{x+1} = 5x - 2$$

or

$$5x^2 + 3x - 2 = (x+1)(5x-2)$$

Analysis

This division problem had a remainder of 0. This tells us that the dividend is divided evenly by the divisor, and that the divisor is a factor of the dividend.

Example 5.4.2: Using Long Division to Divide a Third-Degree Polynomial

Divide $6x^3 + 11x^2 - 31x + 15$ by $3x - 2$.

Solution

$$
\begin{array}{rl}
2x^2 + 5x - 7 & 6x^3 \text{ divided by } 3x \text{ is } 2x^2. \\
3x-2\,\overline{)\,6x^3+11x^2-31x+15} & \\
-\left(6x^3-4x^2\right) & \text{Multiply } 3x-2 \text{ by } 2x^2. \\
\hline
15x^2-31x & \text{Subtract. Bring down next term. } 15x^2 \text{ divided by } 3x \text{ is } 5x. \\
-\left(15x^2-10x\right) & \text{Multiply } 3x-2 \text{ by } 5x. \\
\hline
-21x+15 & \text{Subtract. Bring down next term. } -21x \text{ divided by } 3x \text{ is } -7. \\
-(-21x+14) & \text{Multiply } 3x-2 \text{ by } -7. \\
\hline
1 & \text{Subtract. The remainder is } 1.
\end{array}
$$

There is a remainder of 1. We can express the result as:

$$\frac{6x^3+11x^2-31x+15}{3x-2} = 2x^2+5x-7+\frac{1}{3x-2}$$

Analysis

We can check our work by using the Division Algorithm to rewrite the solution. Then multiply.

$$(3x-2)(2x^2+5x-7)+1 = 6x^3+11x^2-31x+15$$

Notice, as we write our result,

- the dividend is $6x^3+11x^2-31x+15$
- the divisor is $3x-2$
- the quotient is $2x^2+5x-7$
- the remainder is 1

Try It! 5.4.2

Divide $16x^3-12x^2+20x-3$ by $4x+5$.

Solution

$$4x^2-8x+15-\frac{78}{4x+5}$$

Using Synthetic Division to Divide Polynomials

As we've seen, long division of polynomials can involve many steps and be quite cumbersome. **Synthetic division** is a shorthand method of dividing polynomials for the special case of dividing by a linear factor whose leading coefficient is 1.

To illustrate the process, recall the example at the beginning of the section.

Divide $2x^3-3x^2+4x+5$ by $x+2$ using the long division algorithm.

The final form of the process looked like this:

$$
\begin{array}{r}
2x^2-7x+18 \\
x+2\,\overline{)\,2x^3-3x^2+4x+5} \\
-\left(2x^3+4x^2\right) \\
\hline
-7x^2+4x \\
-\left(-7x^2-14x\right) \\
\hline
18x+5 \\
-(18x+36) \\
\hline
-31
\end{array}
$$

There is a lot of repetition in the table. If we don't write the variables but, instead, line up their coefficients in columns under the division sign and also eliminate the partial products, we already have a simpler version of the entire problem.

$$\begin{array}{r|rrrr} 2 & 2 & -3 & 4 & 5 \\ & -2 & -4 & & \\ \hline & & -7 & 14 & \\ & & & 18 & -36 \\ \hline & & & & -31 \end{array}$$

Synthetic division carries this simplification even a few more steps. Collapse the table by moving each of the rows up to fill any vacant spots. Also, instead of dividing by 2, as we would in division of whole numbers, then multiplying and subtracting the middle product, we change the sign of the "divisor" to –2, multiply and add. The process starts by bringing down the leading coefficient.

$$\begin{array}{r|rrrr} -2 & 2 & -3 & 4 & 5 \\ & & -4 & 14 & -36 \\ \hline & 2 & -7 & 18 & -31 \end{array}$$

We then multiply it by the "divisor" and add, repeating this process column by column, until there are no entries left. The bottom row represents the coefficients of the quotient; the last entry of the bottom row is the remainder. In this case, the quotient is $2x^2-7x+18$ and the remainder is -31. The process will be made more clear in Example $5.4.3$.

Synthetic Division

Synthetic division is a shortcut that can be used when the divisor is a binomial in the form $x-k$. In *synthetic division*, only the coefficients are used in the division process.

Given two polynomials, use synthetic division to divide

1. Write k for the divisor.
2. Write the coefficients of the dividend.
3. Bring the lead coefficient down.
4. Multiply the lead coefficient by k. Write the product in the next column.
5. Add the terms of the second column.
6. Multiply the result by k. Write the product in the next column.
7. Repeat steps 5 and 6 for the remaining columns.
8. Use the bottom numbers to write the quotient. The number in the last column is the remainder and has degree 0, the next number from the right has degree 1, the next number from the right has degree 2, and so on.

Example $5.4.3$: Using Synthetic Division to Divide a Second-Degree Polynomial

Use synthetic division to divide $5x^2-3x-36$ by $x-3$.

Solution

Begin by setting up the synthetic division. Write k and the coefficients.

$$\begin{array}{r|rrr} 3 & 5 & -3 & -36 \\ \hline & & & \end{array}$$

Bring down the lead coefficient. Multiply the lead coefficient by k.

$$\begin{array}{r|rrr} 3 & 5 & -3 & -36 \\ & & 15 & \\ \hline & 5 & & \end{array}$$

Continue by adding the numbers in the second column. Multiply the resulting number by k.Write the result in the next column. Then add the numbers in the third column.

$$\begin{array}{r|rrr} 3 & 5 & -3 & -36 \\ & & 15 & 36 \\ \hline & 5 & 12 & 0 \end{array}$$

The result is $5x+12$. The remainder is 0. So $x-3$ is a factor of the original polynomial.

Analysis

Just as with long division, we can check our work by multiplying the quotient by the divisor and adding the remainder.

$$(x-3)(5x+12)+0=5x^2-3x-36$$

Example 5.4.4: Using Synthetic Division to Divide a Third-Degree Polynomial

Use synthetic division to divide $4x^3+10x^2-6x-20$ by $x+2$.

Solution

The binomial divisor is $x+2$ so $k=-2$. Add each column, multiply the result by –2, and repeat until the last column is reached.

$$\begin{array}{r|rrrr} -2 & 1 & -1 & -11 & 18 \\ & & 2 & 2 & -18 \\ \hline & 1 & 1 & -9 & 0 \end{array}$$

The result is $4x^2+2x-10$.

The remainder is 0. Thus, $x+2$ is a factor of $4x^3+10x^2-6x-20$.

Analysis

The graph of the polynomial function $f(x)=4x^3+10x^2-6x-20$ in Figure 5.4.2 shows a zero at $x=k=-2$. This confirms that $x+2$ is a factor of $4x^3+10x^2-6x-20$.

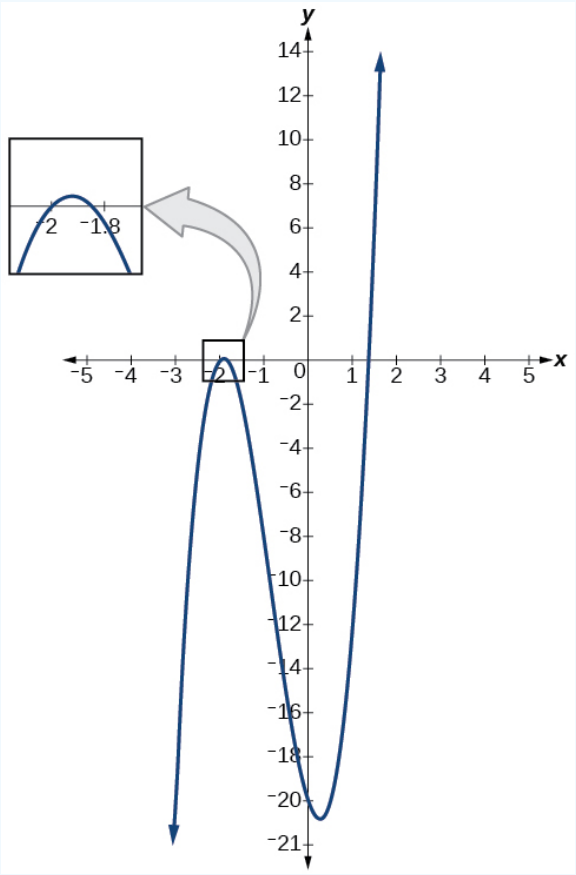

Figure 5.4.2

Example 5.4.5: Using Synthetic Division to Divide a Fourth-Degree Polynomial

Use synthetic division to divide $-9x^4+10x^3+7x^2-6$ by $x-1$.

Solution

Notice there is no x-term. We will use a zero as the coefficient for that term.

$$\begin{array}{r|rrrrr} 1 & -9 & 10 & 7 & 0 & -6 \\ & & -9 & 1 & 8 & 8 \\ \hline & -9 & 1 & 8 & 8 & 2 \end{array}$$

The result is $-9x^3+x^2+8x+8+\dfrac{2}{x-1}$.

Try It! 5.4.3

Use synthetic division to divide $3x^4+18x^3-3x+40$ by $x+7$.

Solution

$$3x^3-3x^2+21x-150+\frac{1090}{x+7}$$

Using Polynomial Division to Solve Application Problems

Polynomial division can be used to solve a variety of application problems involving expressions for area and volume. We looked at an application at the beginning of this section. Now we will solve that problem in the following example.

Example 5.4.6: Using Polynomial Division in an Application Problem

The volume of a rectangular solid is given by the polynomial $3x^4-3x^3-33x^2+54x$. The length of the solid is given by $3x$ and the width is given by $x-2$. Find the height h of the solid.

Solution

There are a few ways to approach this problem. We need to divide the expression for the volume of the solid by the expressions for the length and width. Let us create a sketch as in Figure 5.4.3. Let h equal the height of the box.

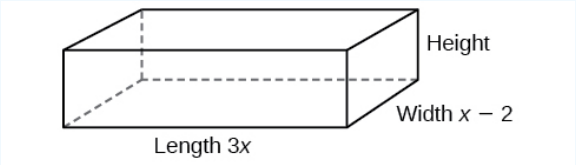

Figure 5.4.3

We can now write an equation by substituting the known values into the formula for the volume of a rectangular solid.

$$\begin{aligned} V &= l\cdot w\cdot h \\ 3x^4-3x^3-33x^2+54x &= 3x\cdot(x-2)\cdot h \end{aligned}$$

To solve for h, first divide both sides by $3x$.

$$\frac{3x\cdot(x-2)\cdot h}{3x}=\frac{3x^4-3x^3-33x^2+54x}{3x}$$

$$(x-2)h=\frac{x^3-x^2-11x+18}{x-2}$$

Now solve for h using synthetic division.

$$h = \frac{x^3 - x^2 - 11x + 18}{x - 2}$$

$$\begin{array}{r|rrrr} 2 & 1 & -1 & -11 & 18 \\ & & 2 & 2 & -18 \\ \hline & 1 & 1 & -9 & 0 \end{array}$$

The quotient is $x^2 + x - 9$ and the remainder is 0. The height of the solid is $x^2 + x - 9$.

Try It! 5.4.4

The area of a rectangle is given by $3x^3 + 14x^2 - 23x + 6$. The width of the rectangle is given by $x + 6$. Find an expression for the length of the rectangle.

Solution

$3x^2 - 4x + 1$

Key Equations

Division Algorithm $f(x) = d(x)q(x) + r(x)$ where $q(x) \neq 0$

Key Concepts

- Polynomial long division can be used to divide a polynomial by any polynomial with equal or lower degree.
- The Division Algorithm tells us that a polynomial dividend can be written as the product of the divisor and the quotient added to the remainder.
- Synthetic division is a shortcut that can be used to divide a polynomial by a binomial in the form $x - k$.
- Polynomial division can be used to solve application problems, including area and volume.

Footnotes

[1] National Park Service. "Lincoln Memorial Building Statistics." www.nps.gov/linc/historycultu...statistics.htm. Accessed 4/3/2014

Glossary

Division Algorithm

given a polynomial dividend $f(x)$ and a non-zero polynomial divisor $d(x)$ where the degree of $d(x)$ is less than or equal to the degree of $f(x)$, there exist unique polynomials $q(x)$ and $r(x)$ such that $f(x) = d(x)q(x) + r(x)$ where $q(x)$ is the quotient and $r(x)$ is the remainder. The remainder is either equal to zero or has degree strictly less than $d(x)$.

synthetic division

a shortcut method that can be used to divide a polynomial by a binomial of the form $x - k$

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5.5: Zeros of Polynomial Functions

Learning Objectives

- Evaluate a polynomial using the Remainder Theorem.
- Use the Factor Theorem to solve a polynomial equation.
- Use the Rational Zero Theorem to find rational zeros.
- Find zeros of a polynomial function.
- Use the Linear Factorization Theorem to find polynomials with given zeros.
- Use Descartes' Rule of Signs.
- Solve real-world applications of polynomial equations

A new bakery offers decorated sheet cakes for children's birthday parties and other special occasions. The bakery wants the volume of a small cake to be 351 cubic inches. The cake is in the shape of a rectangular solid. They want the length of the cake to be four inches longer than the width of the cake and the height of the cake to be one-third of the width. What should the dimensions of the cake pan be?

This problem can be solved by writing a cubic function and solving a cubic equation for the volume of the cake. In this section, we will discuss a variety of tools for writing polynomial functions and solving polynomial equations.

Evaluating a Polynomial Using the Remainder Theorem

In the last section, we learned how to divide polynomials. We can now use polynomial division to evaluate polynomials using the **Remainder Theorem**. If the polynomial is divided by $x-k$, the remainder may be found quickly by evaluating the polynomial function at k, that is, $f(k)$. Let's walk through the proof of the theorem.

Recall that the Division Algorithm states that, given a polynomial dividend $f(x)$ and a non-zero polynomial divisor $d(x)$ where the degree of $d(x)$ is less than or equal to the degree of $f(x)$,there exist unique polynomials $q(x)$ and $r(x)$ such that

$$f(x)=d(x)q(x)+r(x)$$

If the divisor, $d(x)$, is $x-k$, this takes the form

$$f(x)=(x-k)q(x)+r$$

Since the divisor $x-k$

is linear, the remainder will be a constant, r. And, if we evaluate this for $x=k$, we have

$$\begin{aligned} f(k) &= (k-k)q(k)+r \\ &= 0\cdot q(k)+r \\ &= r \end{aligned}$$

In other words, $f(k)$ is the remainder obtained by dividing $f(x)$by $x-k$.

The Remainder Theorem

If a polynomial $f(x)$ is divided by $x-k$,then the remainder is the value $f(k)$.

How To: Given a polynomial function f, evaluate $f(x)$ at $x=k$ using the Remainder Theorem.

1. Use synthetic division to divide the polynomial by $x-k$.
2. The remainder is the value $f(k)$.

Example 5.5.1: Using the Remainder Theorem to Evaluate a Polynomial

Use the Remainder Theorem to evaluate $f(x)=6x^4-x^3-15x^2+2x-7$ at $x=2$.

Solution

To find the remainder using the Remainder Theorem, use synthetic division to divide the polynomial by $x-2$.

$$\begin{array}{r|rrrrr} 2 & 6 & -1 & -15 & 2 & -7 \\ & & 12 & 22 & 14 & 32 \\ \hline & 6 & 11 & 7 & 16 & 25 \end{array} \tag{5.5.1}$$

The remainder is 25. Therefore, $f(2)=25$.

Analysis

We can check our answer by evaluating $f(2)$.

$$\begin{aligned} f(x) &= 6x^4-x^3-15x^2+2x-7 \\ f(2) &= 6(2)^4-(2)^3-15(2)^2+2(2)-7 \\ &= 25 \end{aligned}$$

Exercise 5.5.1

se the Remainder Theorem to evaluate $f(x)=2x^5-3x^4-9x^3+8x^2+2$ at $x=-3$.

Answer

$f(-3)=-412$

Using the Factor Theorem to Solve a Polynomial Equation

The **Factor Theorem** is another theorem that helps us analyze polynomial equations. It tells us how the zeros of a polynomial are related to the factors. Recall that the Division Algorithm.

$$f(x)=(x-k)q(x)+r \tag{5.5.2}$$

If k is a zero, then the remainder r is $f(k)=0$ and $f(x)=(x-k)q(x)+0$ or $f(x)=(x-k)q(x)$.

Notice, written in this form, $x-k$ is a factor of $f(x)$. We can conclude if k is a zero of $f(x)$, then $x-k$ is a factor of $f(x)$.

Similarly, if $x-k$ is a factor of $f(x)$, then the remainder of the Division Algorithm $f(x)=(x-k)q(x)+r$ is 0. This tells us that k is a zero.

This pair of implications is the Factor Theorem. As we will soon see, a polynomial of degree n in the complex number system will have n zeros. We can use the Factor Theorem to completely factor a polynomial into the product of n factors. Once the polynomial has been completely factored, we can easily determine the zeros of the polynomial.

THE FACTOR THEOREM

According to the Factor Theorem, k is a zero of $f(x)$ if and only if $(x-k)$ is a factor of $f(x)$.

How to: Given a factor and a third-degree polynomial, use the Factor Theorem to factor the polynomial

1. Use synthetic division to divide the polynomial by $(x-k)$.
2. Confirm that the remainder is 0.
3. Write the polynomial as the product of $(x-k)$ and the quadratic quotient.
4. If possible, factor the quadratic.
5. Write the polynomial as the product of factors.

Example 5.5.2: Using the Factor Theorem to Solve a Polynomial Equation

Show that $(x+2)$ is a factor of x^3-6x^2-x+30 . Find the remaining factors. Use the factors to determine the zeros of the **polynomial**.

Solution

We can use synthetic division to show that $(x+2)$ is a factor of the polynomial.

$$\begin{array}{r|rrrr} -2 & 1 & -6 & -1 & 30 \\ & & -2 & 16 & -30 \\ \hline & 1 & -8 & 15 & 0 \end{array} \tag{5.5.3}$$

The remainder is zero, so $(x+2)$ is a factor of the polynomial. We can use the Division Algorithm to write the polynomial as the product of the divisor and the quotient:

$$(x+2)(x^2-8x+15) \tag{5.5.4}$$

We can factor the quadratic factor to write the polynomial as

$$(x+2)(x-3)(x-5) \tag{5.5.5}$$

By the Factor Theorem, the zeros of x^3-6x^2-x+30 are –2, 3, and 5.

Exercise 5.5.2

Use the Factor Theorem to find the zeros of $f(x)=x^3+4x^2-4x-16$ given that $(x-2)$ is a factor of the polynomial.

Answer

The zeros are 2, –2, and –4.

Using the Rational Zero Theorem to Find Rational Zeros

Another use for the Remainder Theorem is to test whether a rational number is a zero for a given polynomial. But first we need a pool of rational numbers to test. The **Rational Zero Theorem** helps us to narrow down the number of possible rational zeros using the ratio of the factors of the constant term and factors of the leading **coefficient** of the polynomial

Consider a quadratic function with two zeros, $x=\frac{2}{5}$ and $x=\frac{3}{4}$. By the Factor Theorem, these zeros have factors associated with them. Let us set each factor equal to 0, and then construct the original quadratic function absent its stretching factor.

$x-\frac{2}{5}=0$ or $x-\frac{3}{4}=0$	Set each factor equal to 0.
$5x-2=0$ or $4x-3=0$	Multiply both sides of the equation to eliminate fractions.
$f(x)=(5x-2)(4x-3)$	Create the quadratic function, multiplying the factors.
$f(x)=20x^2-23x+6$	Expand the polynomial.
$f(x)=(5\cdot 4)x^2-23x+(2\cdot 3)$	

Notice that two of the factors of the constant term, 6, are the two numerators from the original rational roots: 2 and 3. Similarly, two of the factors from the leading coefficient, 20, are the two denominators from the original rational roots: 5 and 4.

We can infer that the numerators of the rational roots will always be factors of the constant term and the denominators will be factors of the leading coefficient. This is the essence of the Rational Zero Theorem; it is a means to give us a pool of possible rational zeros.

THE RATIONAL ZERO THEOREM

The Rational Zero Theorem states that, if the polynomial $f(x)=a_nx^n+a_{n-1}x^{n-1}+\ldots+a_1x+a_0$ has integer coefficients, then every rational zero of $f(x)$ has the form $\frac{p}{q}$ where p is a factor of the constant term a_0 and q is a factor of the leading coefficient a_n.

When the leading coefficient is 1, the possible rational zeros are the factors of the constant term.

How to: Given a polynomial function $f(x)$, use the Rational Zero Theorem to find rational zeros.

1. Determine all factors of the constant term and all factors of the leading coefficient.

2. Determine all possible values of $\frac{p}{q}$, where p is a factor of the constant term and q is a factor of the leading coefficient. Be sure to include both positive and negative candidates.
3. Determine which possible zeros are actual zeros by evaluating each case of $f(\frac{p}{q})$.

Example 5.5.3: Listing All Possible Rational Zeros

List all possible rational zeros of $f(x)=2x^4-5x^3+x^2-4$.

Solution

The only possible rational zeros of $f(x)$ are the quotients of the factors of the last term, –4, and the factors of the leading coefficient, 2.

The constant term is –4; the factors of –4 are $p=\pm1,\pm2,\pm4$.

The leading coefficient is 2; the factors of 2 are $q=\pm1,\pm2$.

If any of the four real zeros are rational zeros, then they will be of one of the following factors of –4 divided by one of the factors of 2.

$$\frac{p}{q}=\pm\frac{1}{1},\pm\frac{1}{2} \qquad \frac{p}{q}=\pm\frac{2}{1},\pm\frac{2}{2} \qquad \frac{p}{q}=\pm\frac{4}{1},\pm\frac{4}{2}$$

Note that $\frac{2}{2}=1$ and $\frac{4}{2}=2$, which have already been listed. So we can shorten our list.

$$\frac{p}{q}=\frac{\text{Factors of the last}}{\text{Factors of the first}}=\pm1,\pm2,\pm4,\pm\frac{1}{2}$$

Example 5.5.4: Using the Rational Zero Theorem to Find Rational Zeros

Use the Rational Zero Theorem to find the rational zeros of $f(x)=2x^3+x^2-4x+1$.

Solution

The Rational Zero Theorem tells us that if $\frac{p}{q}$ is a zero of $f(x)$, then p is a factor of 1 and q is a factor of 2.

$$\frac{p}{q}=\frac{factor\ of\ constant\ term}{factor\ of\ leading\ coefficient}$$

$$=\frac{factor\ of\ 1}{factor\ of\ 2}$$

The factors of 1 are ±1 and the factors of 2 are ±1 and ±2. The possible values for $\frac{p}{q}$ are ±1 and $\pm\frac{1}{2}$. These are the possible rational zeros for the function. We can determine which of the possible zeros are actual zeros by substituting these values for x in $f(x)$.

$$f(-1)=2(-1)^3+(-1)^2-4(-1)+1=4 \tag{5.5.6}$$

$$f(1)=1(1)^3+(1)^2-4(1)+1=0 \tag{5.5.7}$$

$$f(-\frac{1}{2})=2(-\frac{1}{2})^3+(-\frac{1}{2})^2-4(-\frac{1}{2})+1=3 \tag{5.5.8}$$

$$f(\frac{1}{2})=2(\frac{1}{2})^3+(\frac{1}{2})^2-4(\frac{1}{2})+1=-\frac{1}{2} \tag{5.5.9}$$

Of those, $-1,-\frac{1}{2}$, and $\frac{1}{2}$ are not zeros of $f(x)$. 1 is the only rational zero of $f(x)$.

Exercise 5.5.3

Use the Rational Zero Theorem to find the rational zeros of $f(x) = x^3 - 5x^2 + 2x + 1$.

Answer

There are no rational zeros.

Finding the Zeros of Polynomial Functions

The Rational Zero Theorem helps us to narrow down the list of possible rational zeros for a polynomial function. Once we have done this, we can use **synthetic division** repeatedly to determine all of the **zeros** of a polynomial function.

How to: Given a polynomial function f, use synthetic division to find its zeros.

1. Use the Rational Zero Theorem to list all possible rational zeros of the function.
2. Use synthetic division to evaluate a given possible zero by synthetically dividing the candidate into the polynomial. If the remainder is 0, the candidate is a zero. If the remainder is not zero, discard the candidate.
3. Repeat step two using the quotient found with synthetic division. If possible, continue until the quotient is a quadratic.
4. Find the zeros of the quadratic function. Two possible methods for solving quadratics are factoring and using the quadratic formula.

Example 5.5.5: Finding the Zeros of a Polynomial Function with Repeated Real Zeros

Find the zeros of $f(x) = 4x^3 - 3x - 1$.

Solution

The Rational Zero Theorem tells us that if $\frac{p}{q}$ is a zero of $f(x)$, then p is a factor of –1 and q is a factor of 4.

$$\frac{p}{q} = \frac{factor\ of\ constant\ term}{factor\ of\ leading\ coefficient}$$
$$= \frac{factor\ of\ -1}{factor\ of\ 4}$$

The factors of –1 are ±1 and the factors of 4 are ±1,±2, and ±4. The possible values for $\frac{p}{q}$ are $\pm 1, \pm\frac{1}{2}$, and $\pm\frac{1}{4}$. These are the possible rational zeros for the function. We will use synthetic division to evaluate each possible zero until we find one that gives a remainder of 0. Let's begin with 1.

Dividing by $(x-1)$ gives a remainder of 0, so 1 is a zero of the function. The polynomial can be written as

$$(x-1)(4x^2+4x+1)$$

The quadratic is a perfect square. $f(x)$ can be written as

$$(x-1)(2x+1)^2$$

We already know that 1 is a zero. The other zero will have a multiplicity of 2 because the factor is squared. To find the other zero, we can set the factor equal to 0.

$$2x+1=0$$
$$x=-\frac{1}{2}$$

The zeros of the function are 1 and $-\frac{1}{2}$ with multiplicity 2.

Analysis

Look at the graph of the function f in Figure 5.5.1. Notice, at $x = -0.5$, the graph bounces off the x-axis, indicating the even multiplicity (2,4,6…) for the zero −0.5. At $x = 1$, the graph crosses the x-axis, indicating the odd multiplicity (1,3,5…) for the zero $x = 1$.

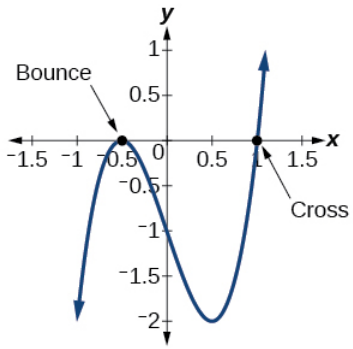

Figure 5.5.1.

Using the Fundamental Theorem of Algebra

Now that we can find rational zeros for a polynomial function, we will look at a theorem that discusses the number of complex zeros of a polynomial function. The **Fundamental Theorem of Algebra** tells us that every polynomial function has at least one complex zero. This theorem forms the foundation for solving polynomial equations.

Suppose f is a polynomial function of degree four, and $f(x) = 0$. The Fundamental Theorem of Algebra states that there is at least one complex solution, call it c_1. By the Factor Theorem, we can write $f(x)$ as a product of $x - c_1$ and a polynomial quotient. Since $x - c_1$ is linear, the polynomial quotient will be of degree three. Now we apply the Fundamental Theorem of Algebra to the third-degree polynomial quotient. It will have at least one complex zero, call it c_2. So we can write the polynomial quotient as a product of $x - c_2$ and a new polynomial quotient of degree two. Continue to apply the Fundamental Theorem of Algebra until all of the zeros are found. There will be four of them and each one will yield a factor of $f(x)$.

THE FUNDAMENTAL THEOREM OF ALGEBRA

The *Fundamental Theorem of Algebra* states that, if $f(x)$ is a polynomial of degree $n > 0$, then $f(x)$ has at least one complex zero.

We can use this theorem to argue that, if $f(x)$ is a polynomial of degree $n > 0$, and a is a non-zero real number, then $f(x)$ has exactly n linear factors

$$f(x) = a(x - c_1)(x - c_2)\ldots(x - c_n) \tag{5.5.10}$$

where $c_1, c_2,...,c_n$ are complex numbers. Therefore, $f(x)$ has n roots if we allow for multiplicities.

Q&A: Does every polynomial have at least one imaginary zero?

No. Real numbers are a subset of complex numbers, but not the other way around. A complex number is not necessarily imaginary. Real numbers are also complex numbers.

Example 5.5.6: Finding the Zeros of a Polynomial Function with Complex Zeros

Find the zeros of $f(x) = 3x^3 + 9x^2 + x + 3$.

Solution

The Rational Zero Theorem tells us that if $\frac{p}{q}$ is a zero of $f(x)$, then p is a factor of 3 and q is a factor of 3.

$$\frac{p}{q} = \frac{factor\ of\ constant\ term}{factor\ of\ leading\ coefficient}$$

$$= \frac{factor\ of\ 3}{factor\ of\ 3}$$

The factors of 3 are ±1 and ±3. The possible values for $\frac{p}{q}$, and therefore the possible rational zeros for the function, are ±3,±1, and $\pm\frac{1}{3}$. We will use synthetic division to evaluate each possible zero until we find one that gives a remainder of 0. Let's begin with –3.

Dividing by $(x+3)$ gives a remainder of 0, so –3 is a zero of the function. The polynomial can be written as

$$(x+3)(3x^2+1)$$

We can then set the quadratic equal to 0 and solve to find the other zeros of the function.

$$\begin{aligned} 3x^2+1 &= 0 \\ x^2 &= -\frac{1}{3} \\ x &= \pm -\sqrt{\frac{1}{3}} \\ &= \pm\frac{i\sqrt{3}}{3} \end{aligned}$$

The zeros of $f(x)$ are -3 and $\pm\frac{i\sqrt{3}}{3}$.

Analysis

Look at the graph of the function f in Figure 5.5.2. Notice that, at $x=-3$, the graph crosses the x-axis, indicating an odd multiplicity (1) for the zero $x=-3$. Also note the presence of the two turning points. This means that, since there is a 3rd degree polynomial, we are looking at the maximum number of turning points. So, the end behavior of increasing without bound to the right and decreasing without bound to the left will continue. Thus, all the x-intercepts for the function are shown. So either the multiplicity of $x=-3$ is 1 and there are two complex solutions, which is what we found, or the multiplicity at $x=-3$ is three. Either way, our result is correct.

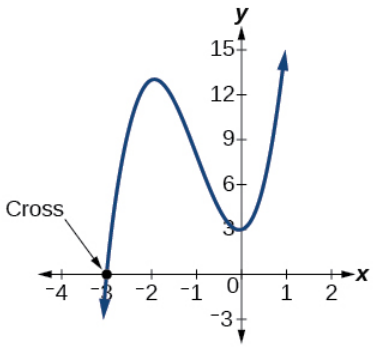

Figure 5.5.2.

5.5.4

Find the zeros of $f(x)=2x^3+5x^2-11x+4$.

Solution

The zeros are -4, $\frac{1}{2}$, and 1.

Using the Linear Factorization Theorem to Find Polynomials with Given Zeros

A vital implication of the **Fundamental Theorem of Algebra**, as we stated above, is that a polynomial function of degree n will have n zeros in the set of complex numbers, if we allow for multiplicities. This means that we can factor the polynomial function into n factors. The **Linear Factorization Theorem** tells us that a polynomial function will have the same number of factors as its degree, and that each factor will be in the form $(x-c)$, where c is a complex number.

Let f be a polynomial function with real coefficients, and suppose $a+bi$, $b \neq 0$, is a zero of $f(x)$. Then, by the Factor Theorem, $x-(a+bi)$ is a factor of $f(x)$. For f to have real coefficients, $x-(a-bi)$ must also be a factor of $f(x)$. This is true because any factor other than $x-(a-bi)$, when multiplied by $x-(a+bi)$, will leave imaginary components in the product. Only multiplication with conjugate pairs will eliminate the imaginary parts and result in real coefficients. In other words, if a polynomial function f with real coefficients has a complex zero $a+bi$, then the complex conjugate $a-bi$ must also be a zero of $f(x)$. This is called the **Complex Conjugate Theorem**.

COMPLEX CONJUGATE THEOREM

According to the Linear Factorization Theorem, a polynomial function will have the same number of factors as its degree, and each factor will be in the form $(x-c)$, where c is a complex number.

If the polynomial function f has real coefficients and a complex zero in the form $a+bi$, then the complex conjugate of the zero, $a-bi$, is also a zero.

How to

Given the zeros of a polynomial function f and a point $(c, f(c))$ on the graph of f, use the Linear Factorization Theorem to find the polynomial function.

1. Use the zeros to construct the linear factors of the polynomial.
2. Multiply the linear factors to expand the polynomial.
3. Substitute $(c, f(c))$ into the function to determine the leading coefficient.
4. Simplify.

Example 5.5.7: Using the Linear Factorization Theorem to Find a Polynomial with Given Zeros

Find a fourth degree polynomial with real coefficients that has zeros of -3, 2, i, such that $f(-2)=100$.

Solution

Because $x=i$ is a zero, by the Complex Conjugate Theorem $x=-i$ is also a zero. The polynomial must have factors of $(x+3)$, $(x-2)$, $(x-i)$, and $(x+i)$. Since we are looking for a degree 4 polynomial, and now have four zeros, we have all four factors. Let's begin by multiplying these factors.

$$f(x) = a(x+3)(x-2)(x-i)(x+i) \tag{5.5.11}$$
$$f(x) = a(x^2+x-6)(x^2+1) \tag{5.5.12}$$
$$f(x) = a(x^4+x^3-5x^2+x-6) \tag{5.5.13}$$

We need to find a to ensure $f(-2)=100$. Substitute $x=-2$ and $f(-2)=100$ into $f(x)$.

$$100 = a((-2)^4+(-2)^3-5(-2)^2+(-2)-6) \tag{5.5.14}$$
$$100 = a(-20) \tag{5.5.15}$$
$$-5 = a \tag{5.5.16}$$

So the polynomial function is

$$f(x) = -5(x^4+x^3-5x^2+x-6) \tag{5.5.17}$$

or

$$f(x) = -5x^4-5x^3+25x^2-5x+30 \tag{5.5.18}$$

Analysis

We found that both i and $-i$ were zeros, but only one of these zeros needed to be given. If i is a zero of a polynomial with real coefficients, then $-i$ must also be a zero of the polynomial because $-i$ is the complex conjugate of i.

Q&A

If $2+3i$ were given as a zero of a polynomial with real coefficients, would $2-3i$ also need to be a zero?

Yes. When any complex number with an imaginary component is given as a zero of a polynomial with real coefficients, the conjugate must also be a zero of the polynomial.

5.5.5

Find a third degree polynomial with real coefficients that has zeros of 5 and $-2i$ such that $f(1)=10$.

Solution

$f(x)=-\frac{1}{2}x^3+\frac{5}{2}x^2-2x+10$

Using Descartes' Rule of Signs

There is a straightforward way to determine the possible numbers of positive and negative real zeros for any polynomial function. If the polynomial is written in descending order, **Descartes' Rule of Signs** tells us of a relationship between the number of sign changes in $f(x)$ and the number of positive real zeros. For example, the polynomial function below has one sign change.

$$f(x) = x^4 + x^3 + x^2 + x - 1$$

This tells us that the function must have 1 positive real zero.

There is a similar relationship between the number of sign changes in $f(-x)$ and the number of negative real zeros.

$$f(-x) = (-x)^4 + (-x)^3 + (-x)^2 + (-x) - 1$$
$$f(-x) = +x^4 - x^3 + x^2 - x - 1$$

In this case, $f(-x)$ has 3 sign changes. This tells us that $f(x)$ could have 3 or 1 negative real zeros.

DESCARTES' RULE OF SIGNS

According to *Descartes' Rule of Signs*, if we let $f(x)=a_nx^n+a_{n-1}x^{n-1}+\ldots+a_1x+a_0$ be a polynomial function with real coefficients:

- The number of positive real zeros is either equal to the number of sign changes of $f(x)$ or is less than the number of sign changes by an even integer.
- The number of negative real zeros is either equal to the number of sign changes of $f(-x)$ or is less than the number of sign changes by an even integer.

Example 5.5.8: Using Descartes' Rule of Signs

Use Descartes' Rule of Signs to determine the possible numbers of positive and negative real zeros for $f(x)=-x^4-3x^3+6x^2-4x-12$.

Solution

Begin by determining the number of sign changes.

There are two sign changes, so there are either 2 or 0 positive real roots. Next, we examine $f(-x)$ to determine the number of negative real roots.

$$f(-x) = -(-x)^4-3(-x)^3+6(-x)^2-4(-x)-12 \quad (5.5.19)$$
$$f(-x) = -x^4+3x^3+6x^2+4x-12 \quad (5.5.20)$$

$$f(-x) = -x^4 + 3x^3 + 6x^2 + 4x - 12$$

Again, there are two sign changes, so there are either 2 or 0 negative real roots.

There are four possibilities, as we can see in Table 5.5.1.

Table 5.5.1

Positive Real Zeros	Negative Real Zeros	Complex Zeros	Total Zeros
2	2	0	4
2	0	2	4
0	2	2	4
0	0	4	4

Analysis

We can confirm the numbers of positive and negative real roots by examining a graph of the function. See Figure 5.5.3. We can see from the graph that the function has 0 positive real roots and 2 negative real roots.

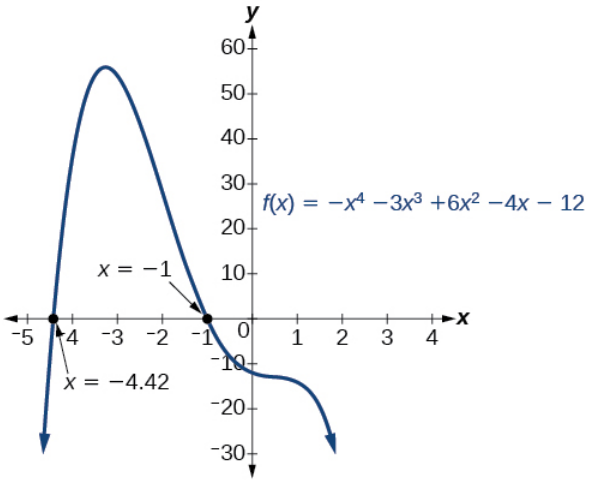

Figure 5.5.3.

5.5.6

Use Descartes' Rule of Signs to determine the maximum possible numbers of positive and negative real zeros for $f(x) = 2x^4 - 10x^3 + 11x^2 - 15x + 12$. Use a graph to verify the numbers of positive and negative real zeros for the function.

Solution

There must be 4, 2, or 0 positive real roots and 0 negative real roots. The graph shows that there are 2 positive real zeros and 0 negative real zeros.

Solving Real-World Applications

We have now introduced a variety of tools for solving polynomial equations. Let's use these tools to solve the bakery problem from the beginning of the section.

Example 5.5.9

Solving Polynomial Equations

A new bakery offers decorated sheet cakes for children's birthday parties and other special occasions. The bakery wants the volume of a small cake to be 351 cubic inches. The cake is in the shape of a rectangular solid. They want the length of the cake to be four inches longer than the width of the cake and the height of the cake to be one-third of the width. What should the dimensions of the cake pan be?

Solution

Begin by writing an equation for the volume of the cake. The volume of a rectangular solid is given by $V = lwh$. We were given that the length must be four inches longer than the width, so we can express the length of the cake as $l = w + 4$. We were given that the height of the cake is one-third of the width, so we can express the height of the cake as $h = \frac{1}{3}w$. Let's write the volume of the cake in terms of width of the cake.

$$V = (w+4)(w)(\frac{1}{3}w) \tag{5.5.21}$$

$$V = \frac{1}{3}w^3 + \frac{4}{3}w^2 \tag{5.5.22}$$

Substitute the given volume into this equation.

$351 = 13w^3 + 43w^2$ Substitute 351 for V. $1053 = w^3 + 4w^2$ Multiply both sides by 3. $0 = w^3 + 7w^2 - 1053$ Subtract 1053 from both sides.

Descartes' rule of signs tells us there is one positive solution. The Rational Zero Theorem tells us that the possible rational zeros are $\pm 1, \pm 3, \pm 9, \pm 13, \pm 27, \pm 39, \pm 81, \pm 117, \pm 351$, and ± 1053. We can use synthetic division to test these possible zeros. Only positive numbers make sense as dimensions for a cake, so we need not test any negative values. Let's begin by testing values that make the most sense as dimensions for a small sheet cake. Use synthetic division to check $x = 1$.

1	1	4	0	−1053
		1	5	5
	1	5	5	−1048

Since 1 is not a solution, we will check $x = 3$.

3	1	4	0	−1053
		3	21	63
	1	7	21	−990

Since 3 is not a solution either, we will test $x = 9$.

9	1	4	0	−1053
		9	117	1053
	1	13	117	0

Synthetic division gives a remainder of 0, so 9 is a solution to the equation. We can use the relationships between the width and the other dimensions to determine the length and height of the sheet cake pan.

$l = w + 4 = 9 + 4 = 13$ and $h = \frac{1}{3}w = \frac{1}{3}(9) = 3$

The sheet cake pan should have dimensions 13 inches by 9 inches by 3 inches

5.5.7

A shipping container in the shape of a rectangular solid must have a volume of 84 cubic meters. The client tells the manufacturer that, because of the contents, the length of the container must be one meter longer than the width, and the height must be one meter greater than twice the width. What should the dimensions of the container be?

Solution

3 meters by 4 meters by 7 meters

Media

Access these online resources for additional instruction and practice with zeros of polynomial functions.

- Real Zeros, Factors, and Graphs of Polynomial Functions
- Complex Factorization Theorem
- Find the Zeros of a Polynomial Function

- Find the Zeros of a Polynomial Function 2
- Find the Zeros of a Polynomial Function 3

Key Concepts

- To find $f(k)$, determine the remainder of the polynomial $f(x)$ when it is divided by $x-k$. This is known as the Remainder Theorem. See Example 5.5.1.
- According to the Factor Theorem, k is a zero of $f(x)$ if and only if $(x-k)$ is a factor of $f(x)$. See Example5.5.2.
- According to the Rational Zero Theorem, each rational zero of a polynomial function with integer coefficients will be equal to a factor of the constant term divided by a factor of the leading coefficient. See Example 5.5.3 and Example 5.5.4.
- When the leading coefficient is 1, the possible rational zeros are the factors of the constant term.
- Synthetic division can be used to find the zeros of a polynomial function. See Example 5.5.5.
- According to the Fundamental Theorem, every polynomial function with degree greater than 0 has at least one complex zero. See Example 5.5.6.
- Allowing for multiplicities, a polynomial function will have the same number of factors as its degree. Each factor will be in the form $(x-c)$, where c is a complex number. See Example 5.5.7.
- The number of positive real zeros of a polynomial function is either the number of sign changes of the function or less than the number of sign changes by an even integer.
- The number of negative real zeros of a polynomial function is either the number of sign changes of $f(-x)$ or less than the number of sign changes by an even integer. See Example 5.5.8.
- Polynomial equations model many real-world scenarios. Solving the equations is easiest done by synthetic division. See Example 5.5.9.

Glossary

Descartes' Rule of Signs

a rule that determines the maximum possible numbers of positive and negative real zeros based on the number of sign changes of $f(x)$ and $f(-x)$

Factor Theorem

k is a zero of polynomial function $f(x)$ if and only if $(x-k)$ is a factor of $f(x)$

Fundamental Theorem of Algebra

a polynomial function with degree greater than 0 has at least one complex zero

Linear Factorization Theorem

allowing for multiplicities, a polynomial function will have the same number of factors as its degree, and each factor will be in the form $(x-c)$, where c is a complex number

Rational Zero Theorem

the possible rational zeros of a polynomial function have the form $\frac{p}{q}$ where p is a factor of the constant term and q is a factor of the leading coefficient.

Remainder Theorem

if a polynomial $f(x)$ is divided by $x-k$,then the remainder is equal to the value $f(k)$

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5.6: Rational Functions

Learning Objectives

- Use arrow notation.
- Solve applied problems involving rational functions.
- Find the domains of rational functions.
- Identify vertical asymptotes.
- Identify horizontal asymptotes.
- Graph rational functions.

Suppose we know that the cost of making a product is dependent on the number of items, x, produced. This is given by the equation $C(x) = 15,000x - 0.1x^2 + 1000$. If we want to know the average cost for producing x items, we would divide the cost function by the number of items, x. The average cost function, which yields the average cost per item for x items produced, is

$$f(x) = \frac{15,000x - 0.1x^2 + 1000}{x}$$

Many other application problems require finding an average value in a similar way, giving us variables in the denominator. Written without a variable in the denominator, this function will contain a negative integer power.

In the last few sections, we have worked with polynomial functions, which are functions with non-negative integers for exponents. In this section, we explore rational functions, which have variables in the denominator.

Using Arrow Notation

We have seen the graphs of the basic **reciprocal function** and the squared reciprocal function from our study of toolkit functions. Examine these graphs, as shown in Figure 5.6.1, and notice some of their features.

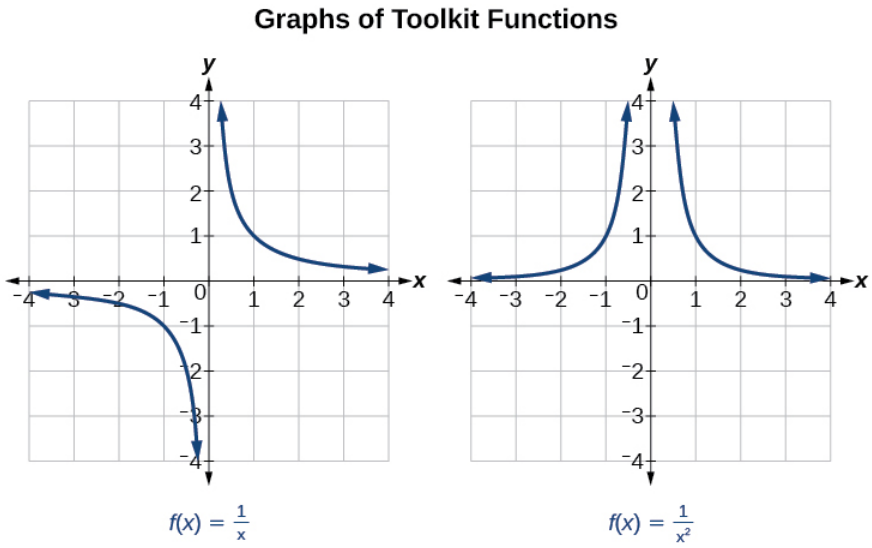

Figure 5.6.1

Several things are apparent if we examine the graph of $f(x) = \frac{1}{x}$.

- On the left branch of the graph, the curve approaches the x-axis $(y = 0)$ as $x \to -\infty$.
- As the graph approaches $x = 0$ from the left, the curve drops, but as we approach zero from the right, the curve rises.
- Finally, on the right branch of the graph, the curves approaches the x-axis $(y = 0)$ as $x \to \infty$.

To summarize, we use **arrow notation** to show that x or $f(x)$ is approaching a particular value (Table 5.6.1).

Table 5.6.1

Symbol	Meaning

Symbol	Meaning
$x \to a^-$	x approaches a from the left ($x < a$ but close to a)
$x \to a^+$	x approaches a from the right ($x > a$ but close to a)
$x \to \infty$	x approaches infinity (x increases without bound)
$x \to -\infty$	x approaches negative infinity (x decreases without bound)
$f(x) \to \infty$	the output approaches infinity (the output increases without bound)
$f(x) \to -\infty$	the output approaches negative infinity (the output decreases without bound)
$f(x) \to a$	the output approaches a

Local Behavior of $f(x) = \frac{1}{x}$

Let's begin by looking at the reciprocal function, $f(x) = \frac{1}{x}$. We cannot divide by zero, which means the function is undefined at $x = 0$; so zero is not in the domain. As the input values approach zero from the left side (becoming very small, negative values), the function values decrease without bound (in other words, they approach negative infinity). We can see this behavior in Table 5.6.2.

Table 5.6.2

x	–0.1	–0.01	–0.001	–0.0001
$f(x) = \frac{1}{x}$	–10	–100	–1000	–10,000

We write in arrow notation

$$\text{as } x \to 0^-, f(x) \to -\infty$$

As the input values approach zero from the right side (becoming very small, positive values), the function values increase without bound (approaching infinity). We can see this behavior in Table 5.6.3.

Table 5.6.3

x	0.1	0.01	0.001	0.0001
$f(x) = \frac{1}{x}$	10	100	1000	10,000

We write in arrow notation

$$\text{As } x \to 0^+, f(x) \to \infty \text{ .}$$

See Figure 5.6.2.

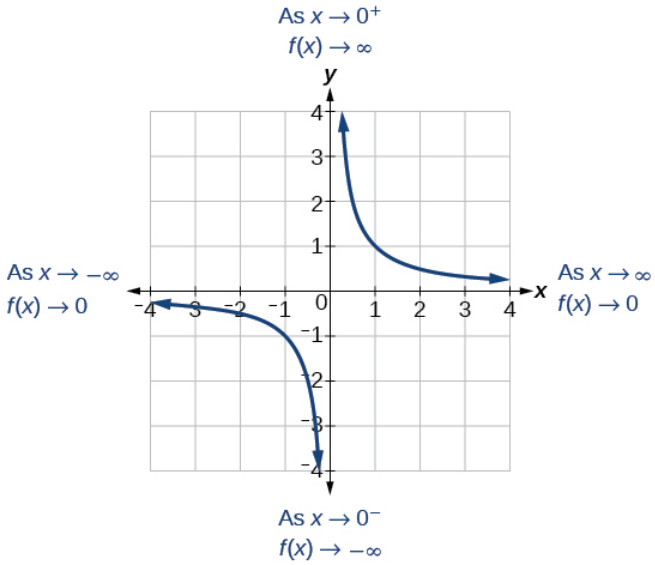

Figure 5.6.2.

This behavior creates a **vertical asymptote**, which is a vertical line that the graph approaches but never crosses. In this case, the graph is approaching the vertical line $x = 0$ as the input becomes close to zero (Figure 5.6.3).

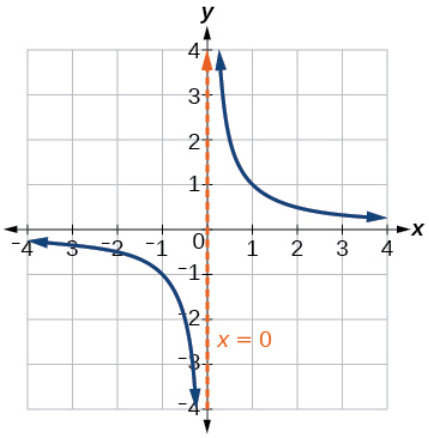

Figure 5.6.3.

Definition: VERTICAL ASYMPTOTE

A vertical asymptote of a graph is a vertical line $x = a$ where the graph tends toward positive or negative infinity as the inputs approach a. We write

As $x \to a$, $f(x) \to \infty$, or as $x \to a$, $f(x) \to -\infty$.

End Behavior of $f(x) = \frac{1}{x}$

As the values of x approach infinity, the function values approach 0. As the values of x approach negative infinity, the function values approach 0 (Figure 5.6.4). Symbolically, using arrow notation

As $x \to \infty$, $f(x) \to 0$,and as $x \to -\infty$, $f(x) \to 0$.

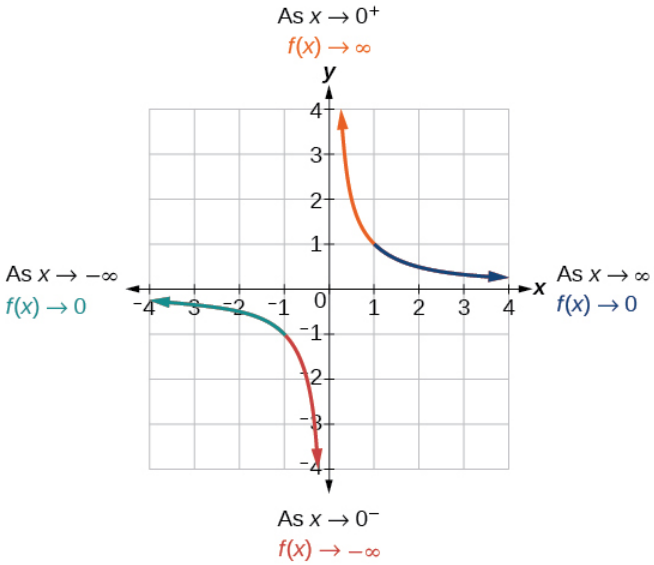

Figure 5.6.4.

Based on this overall behavior and the graph, we can see that the function approaches 0 but never actually reaches 0; it seems to level off as the inputs become large. This behavior creates a **horizontal asymptote**, a horizontal line that the graph approaches as the input increases or decreases without bound. In this case, the graph is approaching the horizontal line $y = 0$. See Figure 5.6.5.

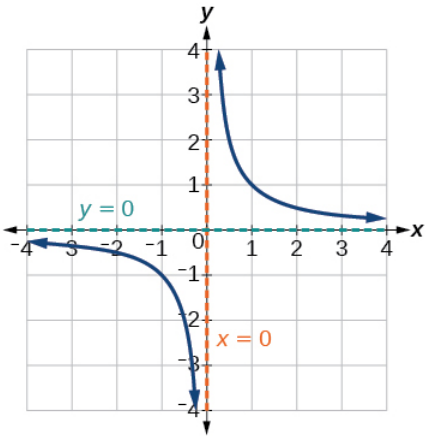

Figure 5.6.5.

Definition: HORIZONTAL ASYMPTOTE

A *horizontal asymptote* of a graph is a horizontal line $y = b$ where the graph approaches the line as the inputs increase or decrease without bound. We write

$$\text{As } x \to \infty \text{ or } x \to -\infty \text{ , } f(x) \to b.$$

Example 5.6.1: Using Arrow Notation.

Use arrow notation to describe the end behavior and local behavior of the function graphed in Figure 5.6.6.

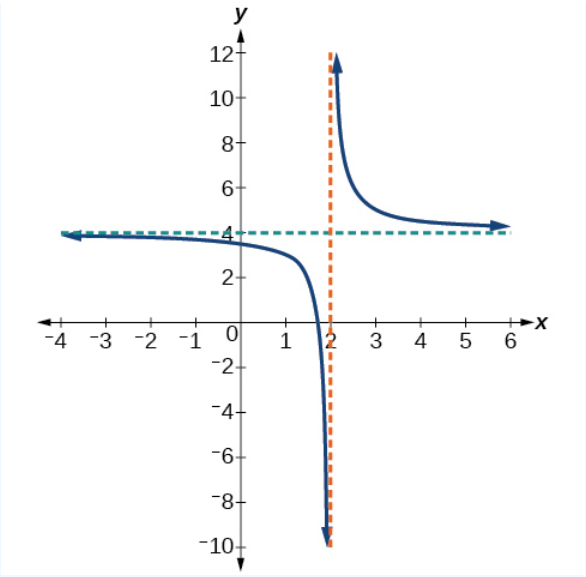

Figure 5.6.6.

Solution

Notice that the graph is showing a vertical asymptote at $x = 2$, which tells us that the function is undefined at $x = 2$.

$$\text{As } x \to 2^-,\ f(x) \to -\infty, \text{ and as } x \to 2^+,\ f(x) \to \infty.$$

And as the inputs decrease without bound, the graph appears to be leveling off at output values of 4, indicating a horizontal asymptote at $y = 4$. As the inputs increase without bound, the graph levels off at 4.

$$\text{As } x \to \infty,\ f(x) \to 4 \text{ and as } x \to -\infty,\ f(x) \to 4.$$

Exercises 5.6.1

Use arrow notation to describe the end behavior and local behavior for the reciprocal squared function.

Answer

End behavior: as $x \to \pm\infty$, $f(x) \to 0$;

Local behavior: as $x \to 0$, $f(x) \to \infty$ (there are no x- or y-intercepts)

Example 5.6.2: Using Transformations to Graph a Rational Function.

Sketch a graph of the reciprocal function shifted two units to the left and up three units. Identify the horizontal and vertical asymptotes of the graph, if any.

Solution

Shifting the graph left 2 and up 3 would result in the function

$$f(x) = \frac{1}{x+2} + 3 \tag{5.6.1}$$

or equivalently, by giving the terms a common denominator,

$$f(x) = \frac{3x+7}{x+2} \tag{5.6.2}$$

The graph of the shifted function is displayed in Figure 5.6.7.

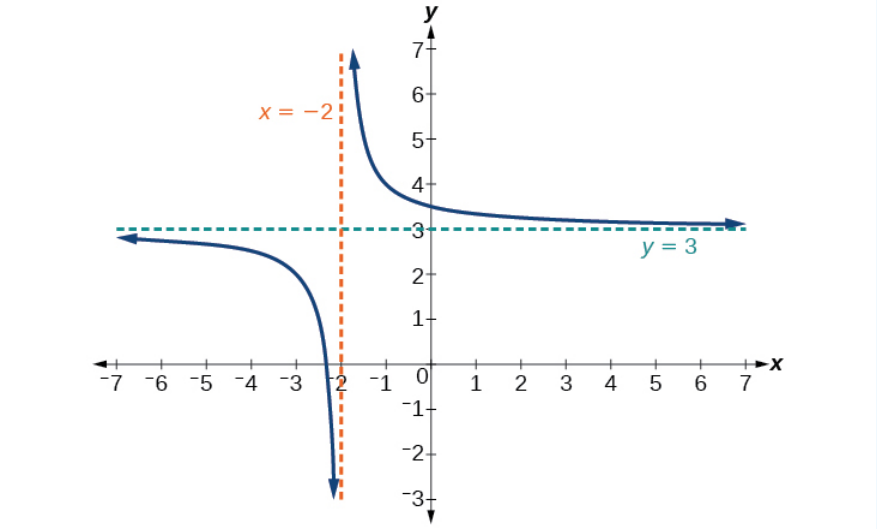

Figure 5.6.7.

Notice that this function is undefined at $x = -2$, and the graph also is showing a vertical asymptote at $x = -2$.

$$\text{As } x \to -2^{-}\text{ , } f(x) \to -\infty\text{, and as } x \to -2^{+}\text{ , } f(x) \to \infty\text{.}$$

As the inputs increase and decrease without bound, the graph appears to be leveling off at output values of 3, indicating a horizontal asymptote at $y = 3$.

$$\text{As } x \to \pm\infty\text{ , } f(x) \to 3\text{.}$$

Analysis

Notice that horizontal and vertical asymptotes are shifted left 2 and up 3 along with the function.

Exercise 5.6.2

Sketch the graph, and find the horizontal and vertical asymptotes of the reciprocal squared function that has been shifted right 3 units and down 4 units.

Solution

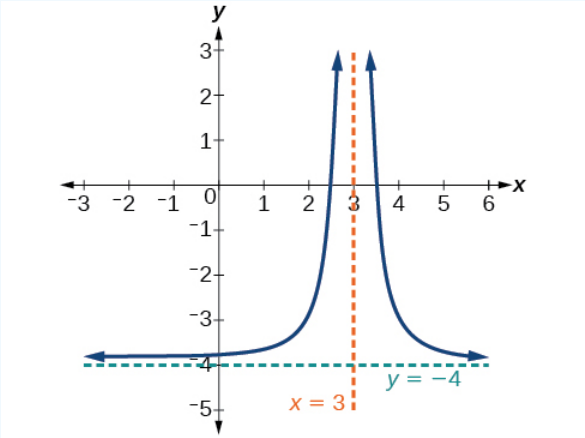

Figure 5.6.8.

The function and the asymptotes are shifted 3 units right and 4 units down. As $x \to 3$, $f(x) \to \infty$, and as $x \to \pm\infty$, $f(x) \to -4$.

The function is $f(x) = \frac{1}{(x-3)^2} - 4$.

Solving Applied Problems Involving Rational Functions

In Example 5.6.2, we shifted a toolkit function in a way that resulted in the function $f(x)=\frac{3x+7}{x+2}$. This is an example of a rational function. A *rational function* is a function that can be written as the quotient of two polynomial functions. Many real-world problems require us to find the ratio of two polynomial functions. Problems involving rates and concentrations often involve rational functions.

Definition: RATIONAL FUNCTION

A ***rational function*** is a function that can be written as the quotient of two polynomial functions $P(x)$ and $Q(x)$.

$$f(x)=\frac{P(x)}{Q(x)}=\frac{a_p x^p+a_{p-1}x^{p-1}+\ldots+a_1 x+a_0}{b_q x^q+b_{q-1}x^{q-1}+\ldots+b_1 x+b_0},\ Q(x)\neq 0 \tag{5.6.3}$$

Example 5.6.3: Solving an Applied Problem Involving a Rational Function

A large mixing tank currently contains 100 gallons of water into which 5 pounds of sugar have been mixed. A tap will open pouring 10 gallons per minute of water into the tank at the same time sugar is poured into the tank at a rate of 1 pound per minute. Find the concentration (pounds per gallon) of sugar in the tank after 12 minutes. Is that a greater concentration than at the beginning?

Solution

Let t be the number of minutes since the tap opened. Since the water increases at 10 gallons per minute, and the sugar increases at 1 pound per minute, these are constant rates of change. This tells us the amount of water in the tank is changing linearly, as is the amount of sugar in the tank. We can write an equation independently for each:

$$\begin{array}{c}\text{water: } W(t)=100+10t \text{ in gallons}\\ \text{sugar: } S(t)=5+1t \text{ in pounds}\end{array}$$

The concentration, C, will be the ratio of pounds of sugar to gallons of water

$$C(t)=\frac{5+t}{100+10t} \tag{5.6.4}$$

The concentration after 12 minutes is given by evaluating $C(t)$ at $t=12$.

$$C(12)=\frac{5+12}{100+10(12)} \tag{5.6.5}$$

$$=\frac{17}{220} \tag{5.6.6}$$

This means the concentration is 17 pounds of sugar to 220 gallons of water.

At the beginning, the concentration is

$$C(0)=\frac{5+0}{100+10(0)} \tag{5.6.7}$$

$$=\frac{1}{20} \tag{5.6.8}$$

Since $\frac{17}{220}\approx 0.08>\frac{1}{20}=0.05$, the concentration is greater after 12 minutes than at the beginning.

Analysis

To find the horizontal asymptote, divide the leading coefficient in the numerator by the leading coefficient in the denominator:

$$\frac{1}{10}=0.1 \tag{5.6.9}$$

Notice the horizontal asymptote is $y=0.1$. This means the concentration, C, the ratio of pounds of sugar to gallons of water, will approach 0.1 in the long term.

Exercise 5.6.3

There are 1,200 freshmen and 1,500 sophomores at a prep rally at noon. After 12 p.m., 20 freshmen arrive at the rally every five minutes while 15 sophomores leave the rally. Find the ratio of freshmen to sophomores at 1 p.m.

Answer

$\frac{12}{11}$

Finding the Domains of Rational Functions

A *vertical asymptote* represents a value at which a rational function is undefined, so that value is not in the domain of the function. A reciprocal function cannot have values in its domain that cause the denominator to equal zero. In general, to find the domain of a rational function, we need to determine which inputs would cause division by zero.

Definition: DOMAIN OF A RATIONAL FUNCTION

The domain of a rational function includes all real numbers except those that cause the denominator to equal zero.

How To: Given a rational function, find the domain.

1. Set the denominator equal to zero.
2. Solve to find the x-values that cause the denominator to equal zero.
3. The domain is all real numbers except those found in Step 2.

Example 5.6.4: Finding the Domain of a Rational Function

Find the domain of $f(x) = \dfrac{x+3}{x^2-9}$.

Solution

Begin by setting the denominator equal to zero and solving.

$$x^2 - 9 = 0$$

$$x^2 = 9$$

$$x = \pm 3$$

The denominator is equal to zero when $x = \pm 3$. The domain of the function is all real numbers except $x = \pm 3$.

Analysis

A graph of this function, as shown in Figure 5.6.9, confirms that the function is not defined when $x = \pm 3$.

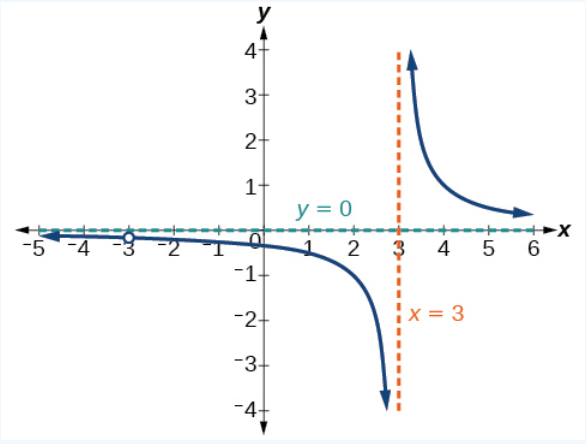

Figure 5.6.9.

There is a vertical asymptote at $x = 3$ and a hole in the graph at $x = -3$. We will discuss these types of holes in greater detail later in this section.

Exercise 5.6.4

Find the domain of $f(x) = \dfrac{4x}{5(x-1)(x-5)}$.

Answer

The domain is all real numbers except $x = 1$ and $x = 5$.

Identifying Vertical Asymptotes of Rational Functions

By looking at the graph of a rational function, we can investigate its local behavior and easily see whether there are asymptotes. We may even be able to approximate their location. Even without the graph, however, we can still determine whether a given rational function has any asymptotes, and calculate their location.

Vertical Asymptotes

The vertical asymptotes of a rational function may be found by examining the factors of the denominator that are not common to the factors in the numerator. Vertical asymptotes occur at the zeros of such factors.

How To: Given a rational function, identify any vertical asymptotes of its graph

1. Factor the numerator and denominator.
2. Note any restrictions in the domain of the function.
3. Reduce the expression by canceling common factors in the numerator and the denominator.
4. Note any values that cause the denominator to be zero in this simplified version. These are where the vertical asymptotes occur.
5. Note any restrictions in the domain where asymptotes do not occur. These are removable discontinuities, or "holes."

Example 5.6.5: Identifying Vertical Asymptotes

Find the vertical asymptotes of the graph of $k(x) = \dfrac{5+2x^2}{2-x-x^2}$.

Solution

First, factor the numerator and denominator.

$$k(x) = \frac{5+2x^2}{2-x-x^2}$$
$$= \frac{5+2x^2}{(2+x)(1-x)}$$

To find the vertical asymptotes, we determine where this function will be undefined by setting the denominator equal to zero:

$$(2+x)(1-x) = 0$$
$$x = -2,\ x = 1$$

Neither $x = -2$ nor $x = 1$ are zeros of the numerator, so the two values indicate two vertical asymptotes. The graph in Figure 5.6.10 confirms the location of the two vertical asymptotes.

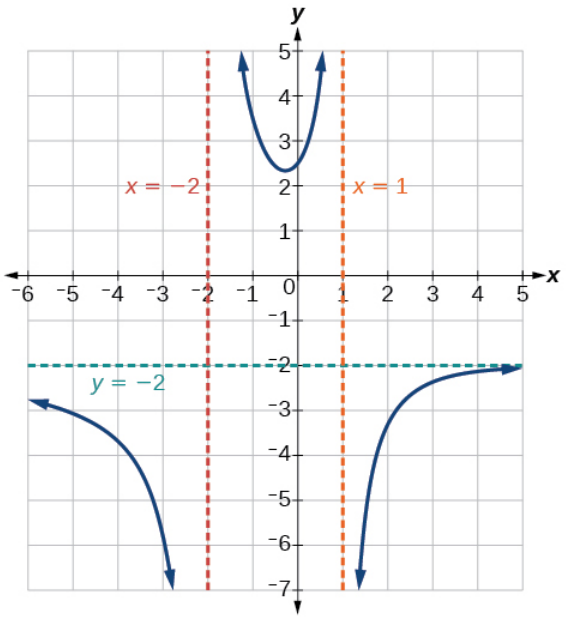

***Figure* 5.6.10.**

Removable Discontinuities

Occasionally, a graph will contain a hole: a single point where the graph is not defined, indicated by an open circle. We call such a hole a *removable discontinuity*. For example, the function $f(x) = \dfrac{x^2 - 1}{x^2 - 2x - 3}$ may be re-written by factoring the numerator and the denominator.

$$f(x) = \frac{(x+1)(x-1)}{(x+1)(x-3)}$$

Notice that $x+1$ is a common factor to the numerator and the denominator. The zero of this factor, $x = -1$, is the location of the removable discontinuity. Notice also that $(x-3)$ is not a factor in both the numerator and denominator. The zero of this factor, $x = 3$, is the vertical asymptote. See Figure 5.6.11. [Note that removable discontinuities may not be visible when we use a graphing calculator, depending upon the window selected.]

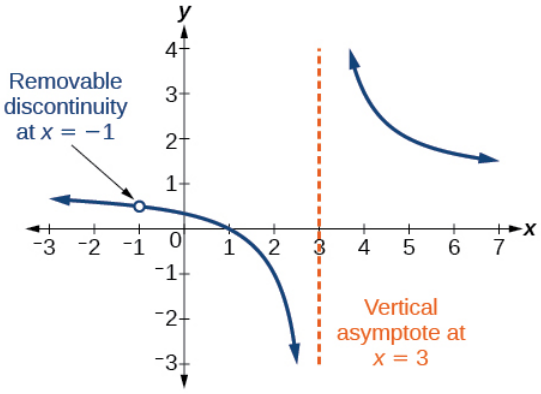

Figure 5.6.11.

REMOVABLE DISCONTINUITIES OF RATIONAL FUNCTIONS

A **removable discontinuity** occurs in the graph of a rational function at $x = a$ if a is a zero for a factor in the denominator that is common with a factor in the numerator. We factor the numerator and denominator and check for common factors. If we find any, we set the common factor equal to 0 and solve. This is the location of the removable discontinuity. This is true if the

multiplicity of this factor is greater than or equal to that in the denominator. If the multiplicity of this factor is greater in the denominator, then there is still an asymptote at that value.

Example 5.6.6: Identifying Vertical Asymptotes and Removable Discontinuities for a Graph

Find the vertical asymptotes and removable discontinuities of the graph of $k(x) = \dfrac{x-2}{x^2-4}$.

Solution

Factor the numerator and the denominator.

$$k(x) = \frac{x-2}{(x-2)(x+2)}$$

Notice that there is a common factor in the numerator and the denominator, $x-2$. The zero for this factor is $x=2$. This is the location of the removable discontinuity.

Notice that there is a factor in the denominator that is not in the numerator, $x+2$. The zero for this factor is $x=-2$. The vertical asymptote is $x=-2$. See Figure 5.6.12

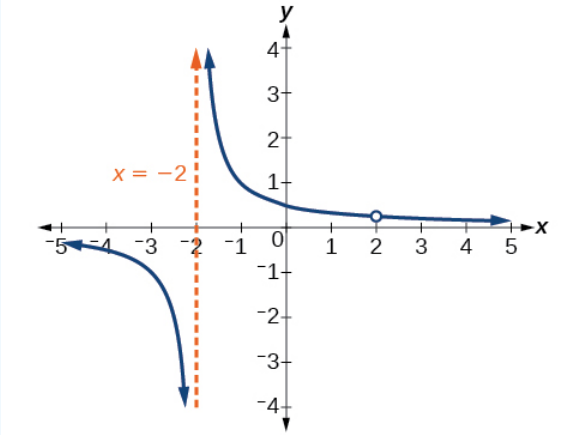

Figure 5.6.12.

The graph of this function will have the vertical asymptote at $x=-2$, but at $x=2$ the graph will have a hole.

Exercise 5.6.5

Find the vertical asymptotes and removable discontinuities of the graph of $f(x) = \dfrac{x^2-25}{x^3-6x^2+5x}$.

Answer

Removable discontinuity at $x=5$.

Vertical asymptotes: $x=0$, $x=1$.

Identifying Horizontal Asymptotes of Rational Functions

While vertical asymptotes describe the behavior of a graph as the *output* gets very large or very small, horizontal asymptotes help describe the behavior of a graph as the *input* gets very large or very small. Recall that a polynomial's end behavior will mirror that of the leading term. Likewise, a rational function's end behavior will mirror that of the ratio of the function that is the ratio of the leading terms.

There are three distinct outcomes when checking for horizontal asymptotes:

Case 1: If the degree of the denominator > degree of the numerator, there is a **horizontal asymptote** at $y=0$.

Example: $f(x)=\dfrac{4x+2}{x^2+4x-5}$

In this case, the end behavior is $f(x)\approx\dfrac{4x}{x^2}=\dfrac{4}{x}$. This tells us that, as the inputs increase or decrease without bound, this function will behave similarly to the function $g(x)=\dfrac{4}{x}$, and the outputs will approach zero, resulting in a horizontal asymptote at $y=0$. See **Figure** 5.6.13. Note that this graph crosses the horizontal asymptote.

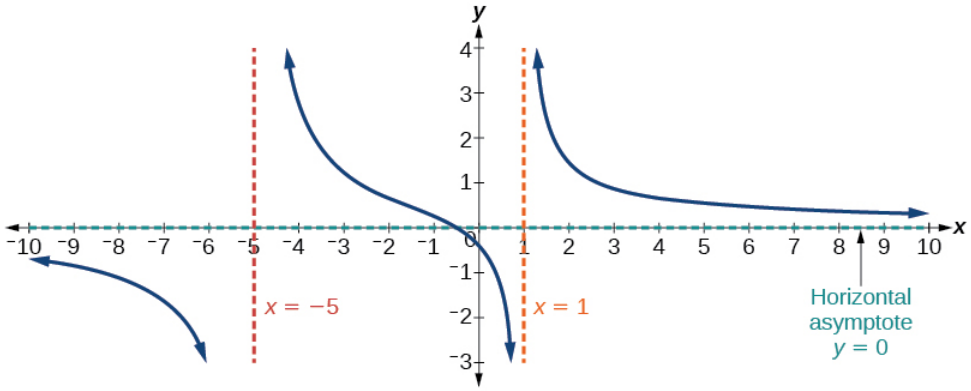

Figure 5.6.13: Horizontal asymptote $y=0$ when $f(x)=\dfrac{p(x)}{q(x)}$, $q(x)\neq 0$ where degree of p < degree of q.

Case 2: If the degree of the denominator < degree of the numerator by one, we get a slant asymptote.

Example: $f(x)=\dfrac{3x^2-2x+1}{x-1}$

In this case, the end behavior is $f(x)\approx\dfrac{3x^2}{x}=3x$. This tells us that as the inputs increase or decrease without bound, this function will behave similarly to the function $g(x)=3x$. As the inputs grow large, the outputs will grow and not level off, so this graph has no horizontal asymptote. However, the graph of $g(x)=3x$ looks like a diagonal line, and since f will behave similarly to g, it will approach a line close to $y=3x$. This line is a slant asymptote.

To find the equation of the slant asymptote, divide $\dfrac{3x^2-2x+1}{x-1}$. The quotient is $3x+1$, and the remainder is 2. The slant asymptote is the graph of the line $g(x)=3x+1$. See Figure 5.6.14

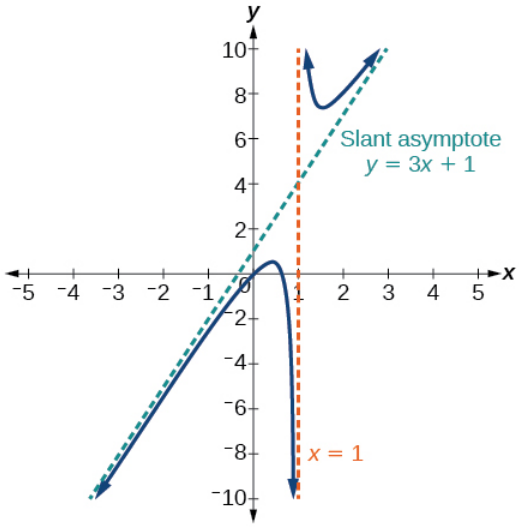

Figure 5.6.14: Slant asymptote when $f(x)=\dfrac{p(x)}{q(x)}$, $q(x)\neq 0$ where degree of p >degree of q by 1.

Case 3: If the degree of the denominator = degree of the numerator, there is a horizontal asymptote at $y = \frac{a_n}{b_n}$, where a_n and b_n are respectively the leading coefficients of $p(x)$ and $q(x)$ for $f(x) = \frac{p(x)}{q(x)}$, $q(x) \neq 0$.

Example: $f(x) = \frac{3x^2 + 2}{x^2 + 4x - 5}$

In this case, the end behavior is $f(x) \approx \frac{3x^2}{x^2} = 3$. This tells us that as the inputs grow large, this function will behave like the function $g(x) = 3$, which is a horizontal line. As $x \to \pm\infty$, $f(x) \to 3$, resulting in a horizontal asymptote at $y = 3$. See Figure 5.6.15. Note that this graph crosses the horizontal asymptote.

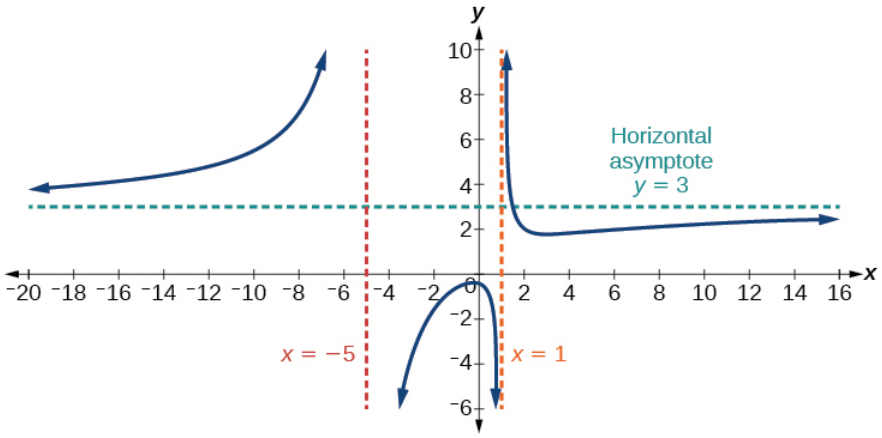

Figure 5.6.15: Horizontal asymptote when $f(x) = \frac{p(x)}{q(x)}$, $q(x) \neq 0$ where degree of p = degree of q.

Notice that, while the graph of a rational function will never cross a **vertical asymptote**, the graph may or may not cross a horizontal or slant asymptote. Also, although the graph of a rational function may have many vertical asymptotes, the graph will have at most one horizontal (or slant) asymptote.

It should be noted that, if the degree of the numerator is larger than the degree of the denominator by more than one, the **end behavior** of the graph will mimic the behavior of the reduced end behavior fraction. For instance, if we had the function

$$f(x) = \frac{3x^5 - x^2}{x + 3}$$

with end behavior

$$f(x) \approx \frac{3x^5}{x} = 3x^4$$

the end behavior of the graph would look similar to that of an even polynomial with a positive leading coefficient.

$$x \to \pm\infty, f(x) \to \infty$$

HORIZONTAL ASYMPTOTES OF RATIONAL FUNCTIONS

The **horizontal asymptote** of a rational function can be determined by looking at the degrees of the numerator and denominator.

- Degree of numerator is less than degree of denominator: horizontal asymptote at $y = 0$.
- Degree of numerator is greater than degree of denominator by one: no horizontal asymptote; slant asymptote.
- Degree of numerator is equal to degree of denominator: horizontal asymptote at ratio of leading coefficients.

Example 5.6.7: Identifying Horizontal and Slant Asymptotes

For the functions listed, identify the horizontal or slant asymptote.

1. $g(x) = \dfrac{6x^3 - 10x}{2x^3 + 5x^2}$
2. $h(x) = \dfrac{x^2 - 4x + 1}{x + 2}$
3. $k(x) = \dfrac{x^2 + 4x}{x^3 - 8}$

Solution

For these solutions, we will use $f(x) = \dfrac{p(x)}{q(x)},\ q(x) \neq 0$.

1. $g(x) = \dfrac{6x^3 - 10x}{2x^3 + 5x^2}$: The degree of $p =$ degree of $q = 3$, so we can find the horizontal asymptote by taking the ratio of the leading terms. There is a horizontal asymptote at $y = \frac{6}{2}$ or $y = 3$.
2. $h(x) = \dfrac{x^2 - 4x + 1}{x + 2}$: The degree of $p = 2$ and degree of $q = 1$. Since $p > q$ by 1, there is a slant asymptote found at $\dfrac{x^2 - 4x + 1}{x + 2}$.

$$\begin{array}{r|rr} -2 & 1 & -4 & 1 \\ & & -2 & 12 \\ \hline & 1 & -6 & 13 \end{array}$$

3. $k(x) = \dfrac{x^2 + 4x}{x^3 - 8}$: The degree of $p = 2 <$ degree of $q = 3$, so there is a horizontal asymptote $y = 0$.

Example 5.6.8 Identifying Horizontal Asymptotes

In the sugar concentration problem earlier, we created the equation $C(t) = \dfrac{5 + t}{100 + 10t}$.

Find the horizontal asymptote and interpret it in context of the problem.

Solution

Both the numerator and denominator are linear (degree 1). Because the degrees are equal, there will be a horizontal asymptote at the ratio of the leading coefficients. In the numerator, the leading term is t, with coefficient 1. In the denominator, the leading term is 10t, with coefficient 10. The horizontal asymptote will be at the ratio of these values:

$$t \to \infty,\ C(t) \to \tfrac{1}{10}$$

This function will have a horizontal asymptote at $y = \frac{1}{10}$.

This tells us that as the values of t increase, the values of C will approach $\frac{1}{10}$. In context, this means that, as more time goes by, the concentration of sugar in the tank will approach one-tenth of a pound of sugar per gallon of water or $\frac{1}{10}$ pounds per gallon.

Example 5.6.9: Identifying Horizontal and Vertical Asymptotes

Find the horizontal and vertical asymptotes of the function $f(x) = \dfrac{(x-2)(x+3)}{(x-1)(x+2)(x-5)}$

Solution

First, note that this function has no common factors, so there are no potential removable discontinuities.

The function will have vertical asymptotes when the denominator is zero, causing the function to be undefined. The denominator will be zero at $x = 1, -2,$ and 5, indicating vertical asymptotes at these values.

The numerator has degree 2, while the denominator has degree 3. Since the degree of the denominator is greater than the degree of the numerator, the denominator will grow faster than the numerator, causing the outputs to tend towards zero as the inputs get large, and so as $x \to \pm\infty$, $f(x) \to 0$. This function will have a horizontal asymptote at $y = 0$. See Figure 5.6.16.

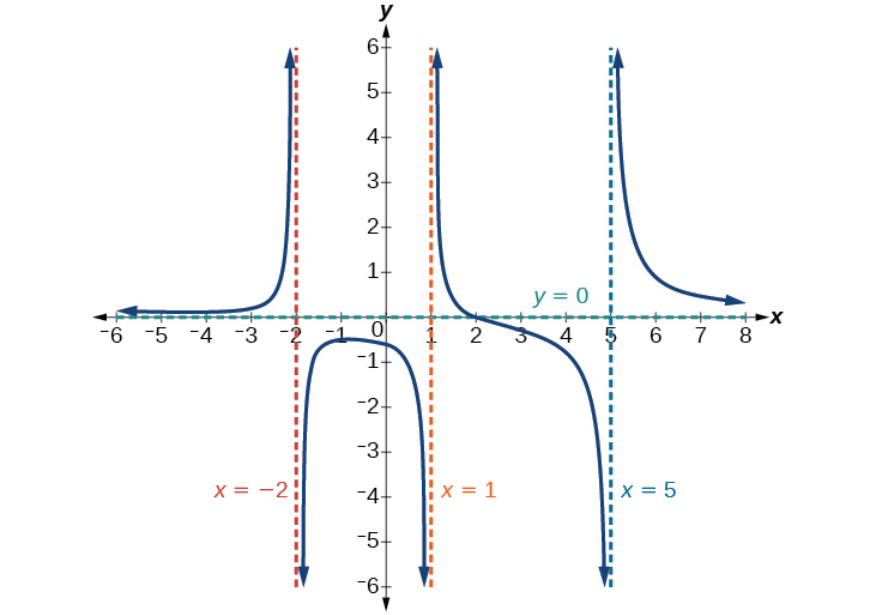

Figure 5.6.16.

Exercise 5.6.6

Find the vertical and horizontal asymptotes of the function:

$$f(x) = \frac{(2x-1)(2x+1)}{(x-2)(x+3)}$$

Answer

Vertical asymptotes at $x = 2$ and $x = -3$

horizontal asymptote at $y = 4$.

INTERCEPTS OF RATIONAL FUNCTIONS

A *rational function* will have a y-intercept at $f(0)$, if the function is defined at zero. A rational function will not have a y-intercept if the function is not defined at zero.

Likewise, a rational function will have x-intercepts at the inputs that cause the output to be zero. Since a fraction is only equal to zero when the numerator is zero, x-intercepts can only occur when the numerator of the rational function is equal to zero.

Example 5.6.10: Finding the Intercepts of a Rational Function

Find the intercepts of $f(x) = \dfrac{(x-2)(x+3)}{(x-1)(x+2)(x-5)}$.

Solution

We can find the y-intercept by evaluating the function at zero

$$f(0) = \frac{(0-2)(0+3)}{(0-1)(0+2)(0-5)}$$

$$= -\frac{6}{10}$$
$$= -\frac{3}{5}$$
$$= -0.6$$

The x-intercepts will occur when the function is equal to zero:

$$0 = \frac{(x-2)(x+3)}{(x-1)(x+2)(x-5)} \text{ This is zero when the numerator is zero.}$$

$$0 = (x-2)(x+3)$$

$$x = 2, x = -3$$

The y-intercept is $(0, -0.6)$, the x-intercepts are $(2, 0)$ and $(-3, 0)$. See Figure 5.6.17.

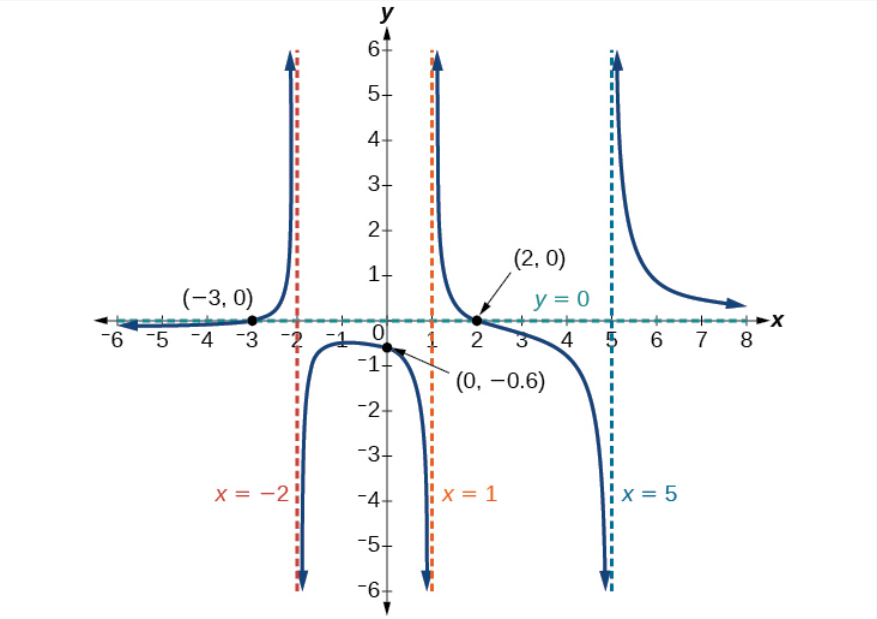

Figure 5.6.17.

Exercise 5.6.7

Given the reciprocal squared function that is shifted right 3 units and down 4 units, write this as a rational function. Then, find the x- and y-intercepts and the horizontal and vertical asymptotes.

Answer

For the transformed reciprocal squared function, we find the rational form.

$$f(x) = \frac{1}{(x-3)^2} - 4 = \frac{1-4(x-3)^2}{(x-3)^2} = \frac{1-4(x^2-6x+9)}{(x-3)(x-3)} = \frac{-4x^2+24x-35}{x^2-6x+9}$$

Because the numerator is the same degree as the denominator we know that as $x \to \pm\infty$, $f(x) \to -4$; so $y = -4$ is the horizontal asymptote. Next, we set the denominator equal to zero, and find that the vertical asymptote is $x = 3$, because as

$x \to 3$, $f(x) \to \infty$. We then set the numerator equal to 0 and find the x-intercepts are at $(2.5, 0)$ and $(3.5, 0)$. Finally, we evaluate the function at 0 and find the y-intercept to be at $(0, -\frac{35}{9})$.

Graphing Rational Functions

In Example 5.6.10, we see that the numerator of a rational function reveals the *x*-intercepts of the graph, whereas the denominator reveals the vertical asymptotes of the graph. As with polynomials, factors of the numerator may have integer powers greater than one. Fortunately, the effect on the shape of the graph at those intercepts is the same as we saw with polynomials.

The vertical asymptotes associated with the factors of the denominator will mirror one of the two toolkit reciprocal functions. When the degree of the factor in the denominator is odd, the distinguishing characteristic is that on one side of the vertical asymptote the graph heads towards positive infinity, and on the other side the graph heads towards negative infinity. See Figure 5.6.18

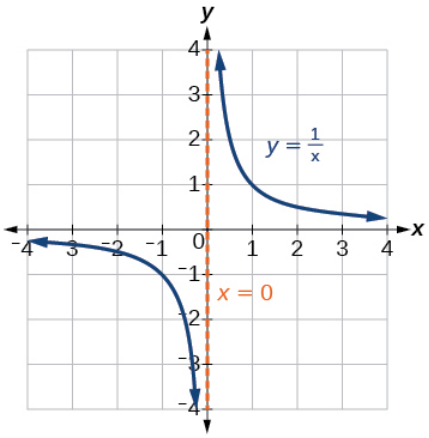

Figure 5.6.18.

When the degree of the factor in the denominator is even, the distinguishing characteristic is that the graph either heads toward positive infinity on both sides of the vertical asymptote or heads toward negative infinity on both sides. See Figure 5.6.19

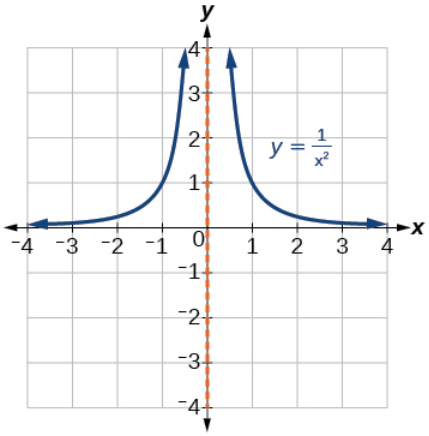

Figure 5.6.19.

For example, the graph of $f(x) = \dfrac{(x+1)^2(x-3)}{(x+3)^2(x-2)}$ is shown in Figure 5.6.20

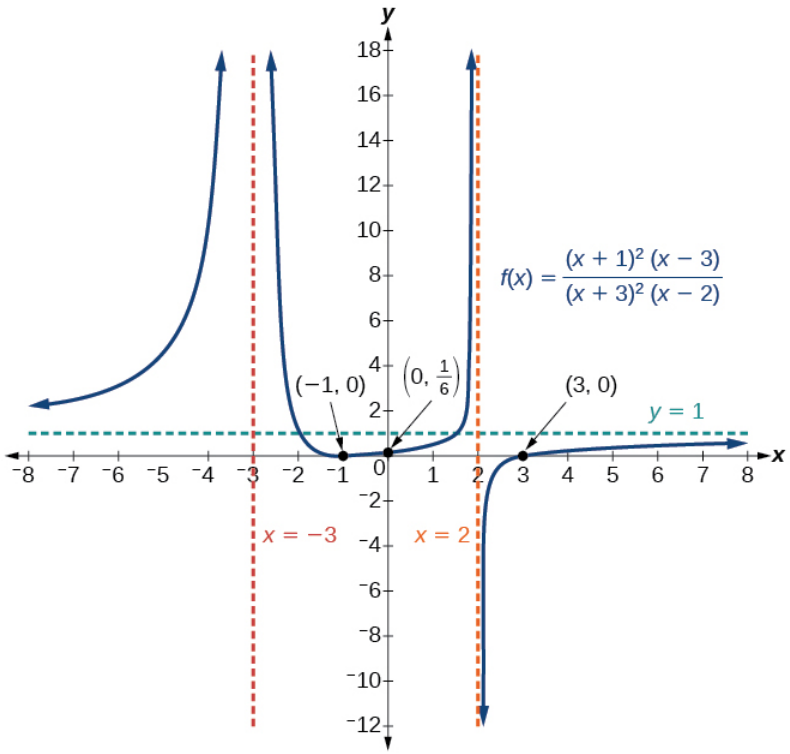

Figure 5.6.20.

- At the x-intercept $x=-1$ corresponding to the $(x+1)^2$ factor of the numerator, the graph "bounces", consistent with the quadratic nature of the factor.
- At the x-intercept $x=3$ corresponding to the $(x-3)$ factor of the numerator, the graph passes through the axis as we would expect from a linear factor.
- At the vertical asymptote $x=-3$ corresponding to the $(x+3)^2$ factor of the denominator, the graph heads towards positive infinity on both sides of the asymptote, consistent with the behavior of the function $f(x)=\dfrac{1}{x^2}$.
- At the vertical asymptote $x=2$, corresponding to the $(x-2)$ factor of the denominator, the graph heads towards positive infinity on the left side of the asymptote and towards negative infinity on the right side, consistent with the behavior of the function $f(x)=\dfrac{1}{x}$.

Howto: Given a rational function, sketch a graph.

1. Evaluate the function at 0 to find the y-intercept.
2. Factor the numerator and denominator.
3. For factors in the numerator not common to the denominator, determine where each factor of the numerator is zero to find the x-intercepts.
4. Find the multiplicities of the x-intercepts to determine the behavior of the graph at those points.
5. For factors in the denominator, note the multiplicities of the zeros to determine the local behavior. For those factors not common to the numerator, find the vertical asymptotes by setting those factors equal to zero and then solve.
6. For factors in the denominator common to factors in the numerator, find the removable discontinuities by setting those factors equal to 0 and then solve.
7. Compare the degrees of the numerator and the denominator to determine the horizontal or slant asymptotes.
8. Sketch the graph.

Example 5.6.11: Graphing a Rational Function

Sketch a graph of $f(x)=\frac{(x+2)(x-3)}{(x+1)^2(x-2)}$.

Solution

We can start by noting that the function is already factored, saving us a step.

Next, we will find the intercepts. Evaluating the function at zero gives the y-intercept:

$$f(0)=\frac{(0+2)(0-3)}{(0+1)^2(0-2)}=3$$

To find the x-intercepts, we determine when the numerator of the function is zero. Setting each factor equal to zero, we find x-intercepts at $x=-2$ and $x=3$. At each, the behavior will be linear (multiplicity 1), with the graph passing through the intercept.

We have a y-intercept at $(0,3)$ and x-intercepts at $(-2,0)$ and $(3,0)$.

To find the vertical asymptotes, we determine when the denominator is equal to zero. This occurs when $x+1=0$ and when $x-2=0$, giving us vertical asymptotes at $x=-1$ and $x=2$.

There are no common factors in the numerator and denominator. This means there are no removable discontinuities.

Finally, the degree of denominator is larger than the degree of the numerator, telling us this graph has a horizontal asymptote at $y=0$.

To sketch the graph, we might start by plotting the three intercepts. Since the graph has no x-intercepts between the vertical asymptotes, and the y-intercept is positive, we know the function must remain positive between the asymptotes, letting us fill in the middle portion of the graph as shown in Figure 5.6.21.

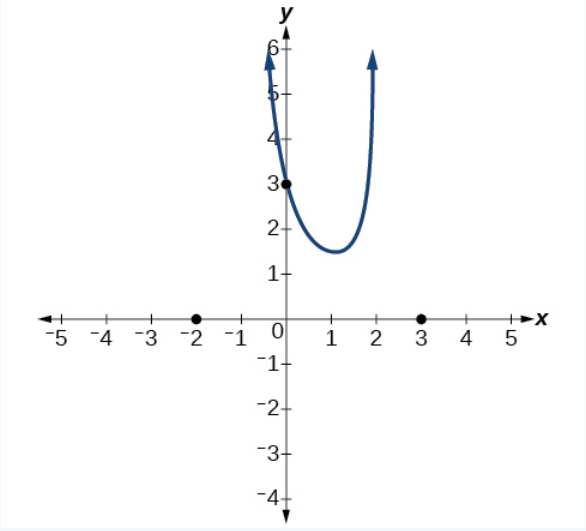

Figure 5.6.21.

The factor associated with the vertical asymptote at $x=-1$ was squared, so we know the behavior will be the same on both sides of the asymptote. The graph heads toward positive infinity as the inputs approach the asymptote on the right, so the graph will head toward positive infinity on the left as well.

For the vertical asymptote at $x=2$, the factor was not squared, so the graph will have opposite behavior on either side of the asymptote. See Figure 5.6.22 After passing through the x-intercepts, the graph will then level off toward an output of zero, as indicated by the horizontal asymptote.

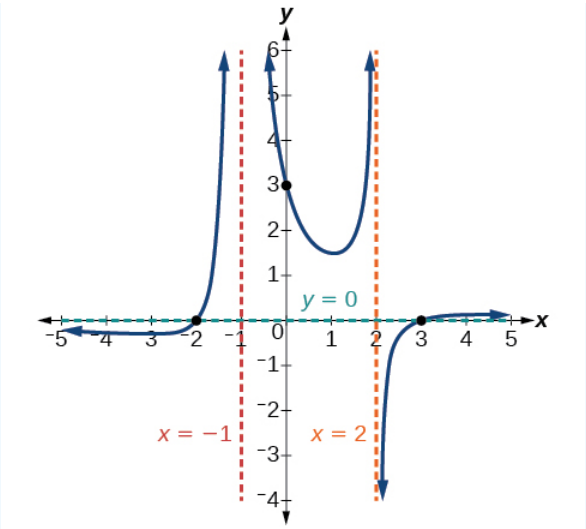

Figure 5.6.22.

Exercise 5.6.8

Given the function $f(x) = \frac{(x+2)^2(x-2)}{2(x-1)^2(x-3)}$, use the characteristics of polynomials and rational functions to describe its behavior and sketch the function.

Answer

Horizontal asymptote at $y = \frac{1}{2}$. Vertical asymptotes at $x = 1$ and $x = 3$. y-intercept at $(0, \frac{4}{3})$.

x-intercepts at $(2, 0)$ and $(-2, 0)$. $(-2, 0)$ is a zero with multiplicity 2, and the graph bounces off the x-axis at this point. $(2, 0)$ is a single zero and the graph crosses the axis at this point.

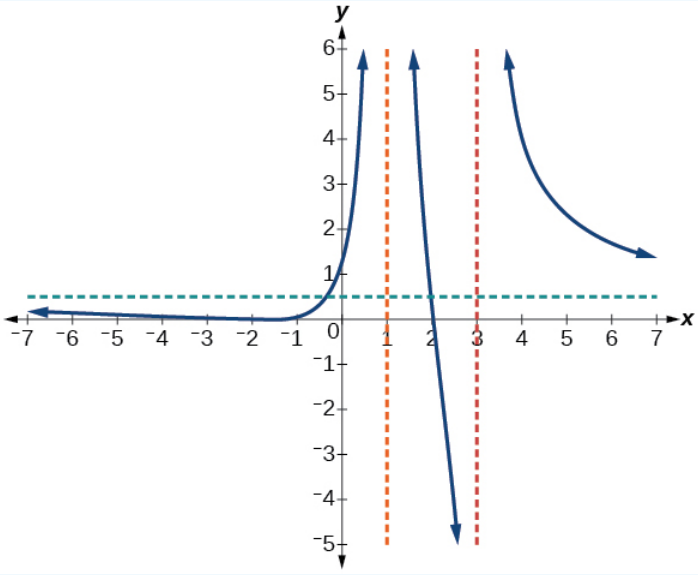

Figure 5.6.23.

Writing Rational Functions

Now that we have analyzed the equations for rational functions and how they relate to a graph of the function, we can use information given by a graph to write the function. A rational function written in factored form will have an *x*-intercept where each factor of the numerator is equal to zero. (An exception occurs in the case of a removable discontinuity.) As a result, we can form a

numerator of a function whose graph will pass through a set of *x*-intercepts by introducing a corresponding set of factors. Likewise, because the function will have a vertical asymptote where each factor of the denominator is equal to zero, we can form a denominator that will produce the vertical asymptotes by introducing a corresponding set of factors.

WRITING RATIONAL FUNCTIONS FROM INTERCEPTS AND ASYMPTOTES

If a **rational function** has x-intercepts at $x = x_1, x_2, \ldots, x_n$, vertical asymptotes at $x = v_1, v_2, \ldots, v_m$, and no $x_i =$ any v_j, then the function can be written in the form:

$$f(x) = a\frac{(x-x_1)^{p_1}(x-x_2)^{p_2}\cdots(x-x_n)^{p_n}}{(x-v_1)^{q_1}(x-v_2)^{q_2}\cdots(x-v_m)^{q_n}}$$

where the powers p_i or q_i on each factor can be determined by the behavior of the graph at the corresponding intercept or asymptote, and the stretch factor a can be determined given a value of the function other than the x-intercept or by the horizontal asymptote if it is nonzero.

Given a graph of a rational function, write the function.

1. Determine the factors of the numerator. Examine the behavior of the graph at the *x*-intercepts to determine the zeroes and their multiplicities. (This is easy to do when finding the "simplest" function with small multiplicities—such as 1 or 3—but may be difficult for larger multiplicities—such as 5 or 7, for example.)
2. Determine the factors of the denominator. Examine the behavior on both sides of each vertical asymptote to determine the factors and their powers.
3. Use any clear point on the graph to find the stretch factor.

Example 5.6.12: Writing a Rational Function from Intercepts and Asymptotes

Write an equation for the rational function shown in Figure 5.6.24

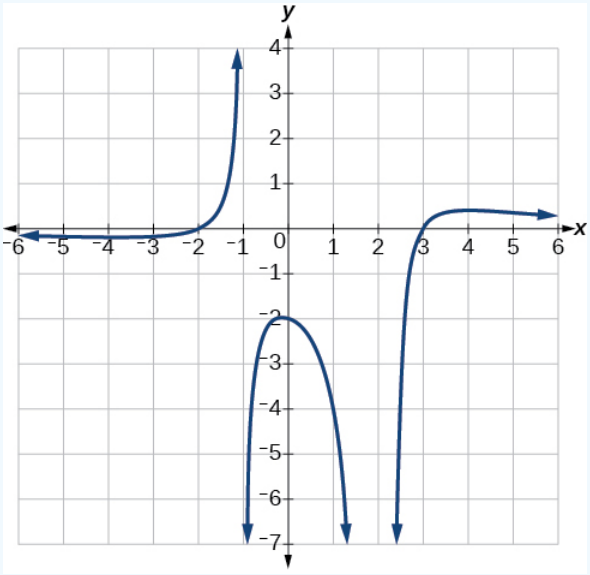

Figure 5.6.24.

Solution

The graph appears to have x-intercepts at $x = -2$ and $x = 3$. At both, the graph passes through the intercept, suggesting linear factors. The graph has two vertical asymptotes. The one at $x = -1$ seems to exhibit the basic behavior similar to $\frac{1}{x}$, with the graph heading toward positive infinity on one side and heading toward negative infinity on the other. The asymptote at $x = 2$ is exhibiting a behavior similar to $\frac{1}{x^2}$, with the graph heading toward negative infinity on both sides of the asymptote. See Figure 5.6.25

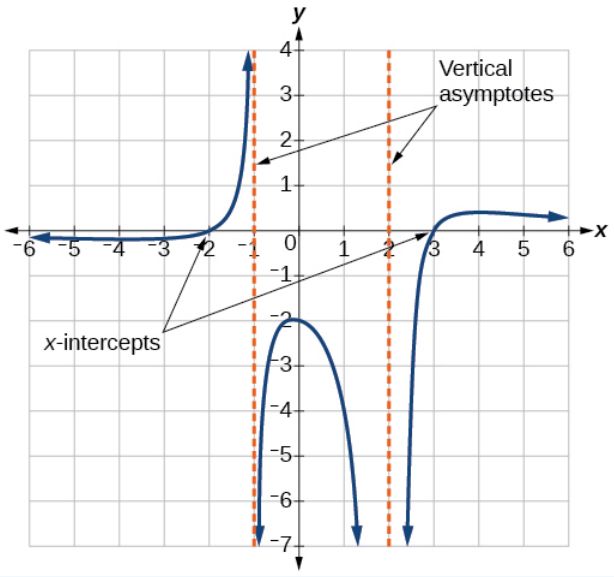

Figure 5.6.25.

We can use this information to write a function of the form

$$f(x) = a\frac{(x+2)(x-3)}{(x+1)(x-2)^2}$$

To find the stretch factor, we can use another clear point on the graph, such as the *y*-intercept $(0,-2)$.

$$-2 = a\frac{(0+2)(0-3)}{(0+1)(0-2)^2}$$
$$-2 = a\frac{-6}{4}$$
$$a = \frac{-8}{-6} = \frac{4}{3}$$

This gives us a final function of $f(x) = \dfrac{4(x+2)(x-3)}{3(x+1)(x-2)^2}$.

Media

Access these online resources for additional instruction and practice with rational functions.

- Graphing Rational Functions
- Find the Equation of a Rational Function
- Determining Vertical and Horizontal Asymptotes
- Find the Intercepts, Asymptotes, and Hole of a Rational Function

Key Equations

Rational Function	$f(x) = \dfrac{P(x)}{Q(x)} = \dfrac{a_p x^p + a_{p-1}x^{p-1} + \ldots + a_1 x + a_0}{b_q x^q + b_{q-1}x^{q-1} + \ldots + b_1 x + b_0},\ Q(x) \neq 0$

Key Concepts

- We can use arrow notation to describe local behavior and end behavior of the toolkit functions $f(x) = \frac{1}{x}$ and $f(x) = \frac{1}{x^2}$. See Example 5.6.1.
- A function that levels off at a horizontal value has a horizontal asymptote. A function can have more than one vertical asymptote. See Example.

- Application problems involving rates and concentrations often involve rational functions. See Example.
- The domain of a rational function includes all real numbers except those that cause the denominator to equal zero. See Example.
- The vertical asymptotes of a rational function will occur where the denominator of the function is equal to zero and the numerator is not zero. See Example.
- A removable discontinuity might occur in the graph of a rational function if an input causes both numerator and denominator to be zero. See Example.
- A rational function's end behavior will mirror that of the ratio of the leading terms of the numerator and denominator functions. See Example, Example, Example, and Example.
- Graph rational functions by finding the intercepts, behavior at the intercepts and asymptotes, and end behavior. See Example.
- If a rational function has x-intercepts at $x = x_1, x_2, \ldots, x_n$, vertical asymptotes at $x = v_1, v_2, \ldots, v_m$, and no $x_i =$ any v_j, then the function can be written in the form

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5.7: Inverses and Radical Functions

Learning Objectives

In this section, you will:

- Find the inverse of an invertible polynomial function.
- Restrict the domain to find the inverse of a polynomial function.

A mound of gravel is in the shape of a cone with the height equal to twice the radius.

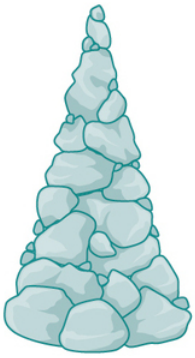

Figure 5.7.1

The volume is found using a formula from elementary geometry.

$$\begin{aligned} V &= \frac{1}{3}\pi r^2 h \\ &= \frac{1}{3}\pi r^2 (2r) \\ &= \frac{2}{3}\pi r^3 \end{aligned}$$

We have written the volume V in terms of the radius r. However, in some cases, we may start out with the volume and want to find the radius. For example: A customer purchases 100 cubic feet of gravel to construct a cone shape mound with a height twice the radius. What are the radius and height of the new cone? To answer this question, we use the formula

$$r = \sqrt[3]{\frac{3V}{2\pi}}$$

This function is the inverse of the formula for V in terms of r.

In this section, we will explore the inverses of polynomial and rational functions and in particular the radical functions we encounter in the process.

Finding the Inverse of a Polynomial Function

Two functions f and g are inverse functions if for every coordinate pair in f, (a, b), there exists a corresponding coordinate pair in the inverse function, g, (b, a). In other words, the coordinate pairs of the inverse functions have the input and output interchanged. Only one-to-one functions have inverses. Recall that a one-to-one function has a unique output value for each input value and passes the horizontal line test.

For example, suppose a water runoff collector is built in the shape of a parabolic trough as shown in Figure 5.7.2. We can use the information in the figure to find the surface area of the water in the trough as a function of the depth of the water.

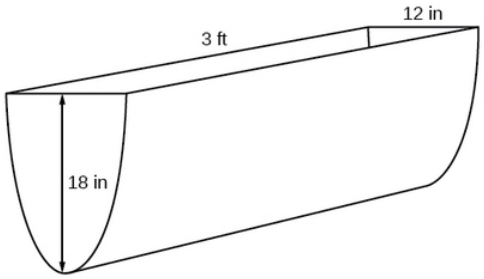

Figure 5.7.2

Because it will be helpful to have an equation for the parabolic cross-sectional shape, we will impose a coordinate system at the cross section, with x measured horizontally and y measured vertically, with the origin at the vertex of the parabola (Figure 5.7.3).

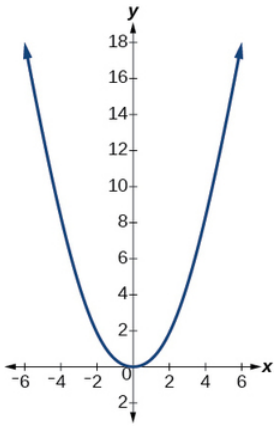

Figure 5.7.3

From this we find an equation for the parabolic shape. We placed the origin at the vertex of the parabola, so we know the equation will have form $y(x) = ax^2$. Our equation will need to pass through the point $(6, 18)$, from which we can solve for the stretch factor a.

$$\begin{aligned} 18 &= a6^2 \\ a &= \frac{18}{36} \\ &= \frac{1}{2} \end{aligned}$$

Our parabolic cross section has the equation

$$y(x) = \frac{1}{2}x^2$$

We are interested in the *surface area* of the water, so we must determine the width at the top of the water as a function of the water depth. For any depth y, the width will be given by $2x$, so we need to solve the equation above for x and find the inverse function. However, notice that the original function is not one-to-one, and indeed, given any output there are two inputs that produce the same output, one positive and one negative.

To find an inverse, we can restrict our original function to a limited domain on which it *is* one-to-one. In this case, it makes sense to restrict ourselves to positive x values. On this domain, we can find an inverse by solving for the input variable:

$$\begin{aligned} y &= \frac{1}{2}x^2 \\ 2y &= x^2 \\ x &= \pm\sqrt{2y} \end{aligned}$$

This is not a function as written. We are limiting ourselves to positive x values, so we eliminate the negative solution, giving us the inverse function we're looking for.

$$y = \frac{x^2}{2}, x > 0$$

Because x is the distance from the center of the parabola to either side, the entire width of the water at the top will be $2x$. The trough is 3 feet (36 inches) long, so the surface area will then be:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Area } &= l \cdot w \\ &= 36 \cdot 2x \\ &= 72x \\ &= 72\sqrt{2y} \end{aligned}$$

This example illustrates two important points:

1. When finding the inverse of a quadratic, we have to limit ourselves to a domain on which the function is one-to-one.
2. The inverse of a quadratic function is a square root function. Both are toolkit functions and different types of power functions.

Functions involving roots are often called **radical functions**. While it is not possible to find an inverse of most polynomial functions, some basic polynomials do have inverses. Such functions are called **invertible functions**, and we use the notation $f^{-1}(x)$.

Warning: $f^{-1}(x)$ is not the same as the reciprocal of the function $f(x)$. This use of "–1" is reserved to denote inverse functions. To denote the reciprocal of a function $f(x)$, we would need to write:

$$(f(x))^{-1} = \frac{1}{f(x)}. \tag{5.7.1}$$

An important relationship between inverse functions is that they "undo" each other. If f^{-1} is the inverse of a function f, then f is the inverse of the function f^{-1}. In other words, whatever the function f does to x, f^{-1} undoes it—and vice-versa.

$$f^{-1}(f(x)) = x, \text{ for all } x \text{ in the domain of } f$$

and

$$f(f^{-1}(x)) = x, \text{ for all } x \text{ in the domain of } f^{-1}$$

Note that the inverse switches the domain and range of the original function.

VERIFYING TWO FUNCTIONS ARE INVERSES OF ONE ANOTHER

Two functions, f and g, are inverses of one another if for all x in the domain of f and g,

$$g(f(x)) = f(g(x)) = x$$

Howto: Given a polynomial function, find the inverse of the function by restricting the domain in such a way that the new function is one-to-one

1. Replace $f(x)$ with y.
2. Interchange x and y.
3. Solve for y, and rename the function $f^{-1}(x)$.

Example 5.7.1: Verifying Inverse Functions

Show that $f(x) = \frac{1}{x+1}$ and $f^{-1}(x) = \frac{1}{x} - 1$ are inverses, for $x \neq 0, -1$.

Solution

We must show that $f^{-1}(f(x)) = x$ and $f(f^{-1}(x)) = x$.

$$f^{-1}(f(x)) = f^{-1}\left(\frac{1}{x+1}\right)$$
$$= \frac{1}{\frac{1}{x+1}} - 1$$
$$= (x+1) - 1$$
$$= x$$

and

$$f(f^{-1}(x)) = f(\frac{1}{x-1})$$
$$= \frac{1}{\left(\frac{1}{x-1}\right)+1}$$
$$= \frac{1}{\frac{1}{x}}$$
$$= x$$

Therefore, $f(x) = \dfrac{1}{x+1}$ and $f^{-1}(x) = \dfrac{1}{x} - 1$ are inverses.

Exercise 5.7.1

Show that $f(x) = \frac{x+5}{3}$ and $f^{-1}(x) = 3x - 5$ are inverses.

Answer a

$f^{-1}(f(x)) = f^{-1}(\frac{x+5}{3}) = 3(\frac{x+5}{3}) - 5 = (x-5) + 5 = x$

Answer b

$f(f^{-1}(x)) = f(3x-5) = \frac{(3x-5)+5}{3} = \frac{3x}{3} = x$

Example 5.7.2: Finding the Inverse of a Cubic Function

Find the inverse of the function $f(x) = 5x^3 + 1$.

Solution

This is a transformation of the basic cubic toolkit function, and based on our knowledge of that function, we know it is one-to-one. Solving for the inverse by solving for x.

$$y = 5x^3 + 1$$
$$x = 5y^3 + 1$$
$$x - 1 = 5y^3$$
$$\frac{x-1}{5} = y^3$$
$$f^{-1}(x) = \sqrt[3]{\frac{x-1}{5}}$$

Analysis

Look at the graph of f and f^{-1}. Notice that one graph is the reflection of the other about the line $y = x$. This is always the case when graphing a function and its inverse function.

Also, since the method involved interchanging x and y, notice corresponding points. If (a, b) is on the graph of f,then (b, a) is on the graph of f^{-1}. Since $(0, 1)$ is on the graph of f, then $(1, 0)$ is on the graph of f^{-1}. Similarly, since $(1, 6)$ is on the graph of f,then $(6, 1)$ is on the graph of f^{-1} (Figure 5.7.9).

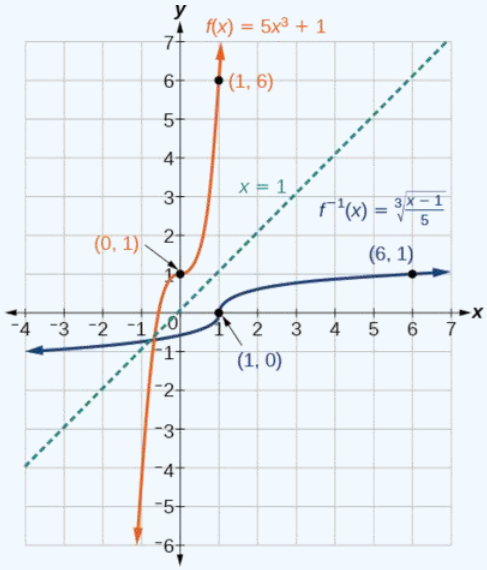

Figure 5.7.4

Exercise 5.7.2

Find the inverse function of $f(x) = \sqrt[3]{x+4}$.

Answer

$f^{-1}(x) = x^3 - 4$

Restricting the Domain to Find the Inverse of a Polynomial Function

So far, we have been able to find the inverse functions of **cubic functions** without having to restrict their domains. However, as we know, not all cubic polynomials are one-to-one. Some functions that are not one-to-one may have their domain restricted so that they are one-to-one, but only over that domain. The function over the restricted domain would then have an **inverse function**. Since quadratic functions are not one-to-one, we must restrict their domain in order to find their inverses.

RESTRICTING THE DOMAIN

If a function is not one-to-one, it cannot have an inverse. If we restrict the domain of the function so that it becomes one-to-one, thus creating a new function, this new function will have an inverse.

How to: Given a polynomial function, restrict the domain of a function that is not one-to-one and then find the inverse

1. Restrict the domain by determining a domain on which the original function is one-to-one.
2. Replace $f(x)$ with y.
3. Interchange x and y.
4. Solve for y, and rename the function or pair of function $f^{-1}(x)$.
5. Revise the formula for $f^{-1}(x)$ by ensuring that the outputs of the inverse function correspond to the restricted domain of the original function.

Example 5.7.3: Restricting the Domain to Find the Inverse of a Polynomial Function

Find the inverse function of f:

1. $f(x) = (x-4)^2$, $x \geq 4$
2. $f(x) = (x-4)^2$, $x \leq 4$

Solution

The original function $f(x) = (x-4)^2$ is not one-to-one, but the function is restricted to a domain of $x \geq 4$ or $x \leq 4$ on which it is one-to-one (Figure 5.7.6).

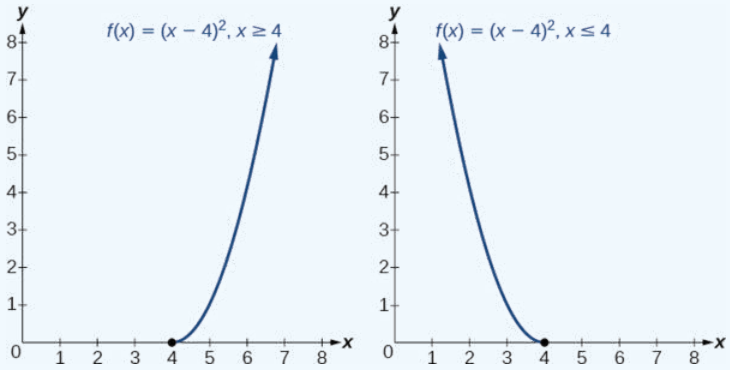

Figure 5.7.5

To find the inverse, start by replacing $f(x)$ with the simple variable y.

$$y = (x-4)^2 \text{ Interchange } x \text{ and } y.$$

$$x = (y-4)^2 \text{ Take the square root.}$$

$$\pm\sqrt{x} = y - 4 \text{ Add 4 to both sides.}$$

$$4 \pm \sqrt{x} = y$$

This is not a function as written. We need to examine the restrictions on the domain of the original function to determine the inverse. Since we reversed the roles of x and y for the original $f(x)$, we looked at the domain: the values x could assume. When we reversed the roles of x and y, this gave us the values y could assume. For this function, $x \geq 4$, so for the inverse, we should have $y \geq 4$, which is what our inverse function gives.

1. The domain of the original function was restricted to $x \geq 4$, so the outputs of the inverse need to be the same, $f(x) \geq 4$, and we must use the + case:
$$f^{-1}(x) = 4 + \sqrt{x}$$
2. The domain of the original function was restricted to $x \leq 4$, so the outputs of the inverse need to be the same, $f(x) \leq 4$, and we must use the – case:
$$f^{-1}(x) = 4 - \sqrt{x}$$

Analysis

On the graphs in Figure 5.7.6, we see the original function graphed on the same set of axes as its inverse function. Notice that together the graphs show symmetry about the line $y = x$. The coordinate pair $(4, 0)$ is on the graph off f and the coordinate pair $(0, 4)$ is on the graph of f^{-1}. For any coordinate pair, if (a, b) is on the graph of f, then (b, a) is on the graph of f^{-1}. Finally, observe that the graph of f intersects the graph of f^{-1} on the line $y = x$. Points of intersection for the graphs of f and f^{-1} will always lie on the line $y = x$.

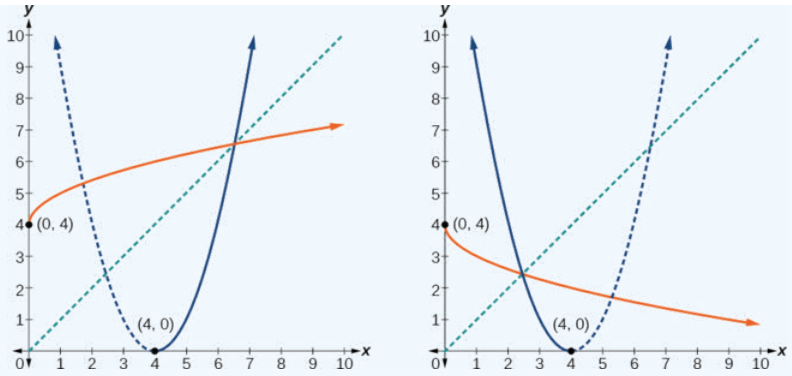

Figure 5.7.6

Example 5.7.4: Finding the Inverse of a Quadratic Function When the Restriction Is Not Specified

Restrict the domain and then find the inverse of

$$f(x) = (x-2)^2 - 3\,.$$

Solution

We can see this is a parabola with vertex at $(2,-3)$ that opens upward. Because the graph will be decreasing on one side of the vertex and increasing on the other side, we can restrict this function to a domain on which it will be one-to-one by limiting the domain to $x \geq 2$.

To find the inverse, we will use the vertex form of the quadratic. We start by replacing $f(x)$ with a simple variable, y, then solve for x.

$$y = (x-2)^2 - 3 \text{ Interchange } x \text{ and } y.$$

$$x = (y-2)^2 - 3 \text{ Add 3 to both sides.}$$

$$x+3 = (y-2)^2 \text{ Take the square root.}$$

$$\pm\sqrt{x+3} = y-2 \text{ Add 2 to both sides.}$$

$$2 \pm \sqrt{x+3} = y \text{ Rename the function.}$$

$$f^{-1}(x) = 2 \pm \sqrt{x+3}$$

Now we need to determine which case to use. Because we restricted our original function to a domain of $x \geq 2$, the outputs of the inverse should be the same, telling us to utilize the + case

$$f^{-1}(x) = 2 + \sqrt{x+3}$$

If the quadratic had not been given in vertex form, rewriting it into vertex form would be the first step. This way we may easily observe the coordinates of the vertex to help us restrict the domain.

Analysis

Notice that we arbitrarily decided to restrict the domain on $x \geq 2$. We could just as easily have opted to restrict the domain to $x \leq 2$, in which case $f^{-1}(x) = 2 - \sqrt{x+3}$. Observe the original function graphed on the same set of axes as its inverse function in Figure 5.7.7. Notice that both graphs show symmetry about the line $y = x$. The coordinate pair $(2,-3)$ is on the graph of f and the coordinate pair $(-3,2)$ is on the graph of f^{-1}. Observe from the graph of both functions on the same set of axes that

$$\text{domain of } f = \text{range of } f^{-1} = [2,\infty)$$

and

$$\text{domain of } f^{-1} = \text{range of } f = [-3,\infty).$$

Finally, observe that the graph of f intersects the graph of f^{-1} along the line $y = x$.

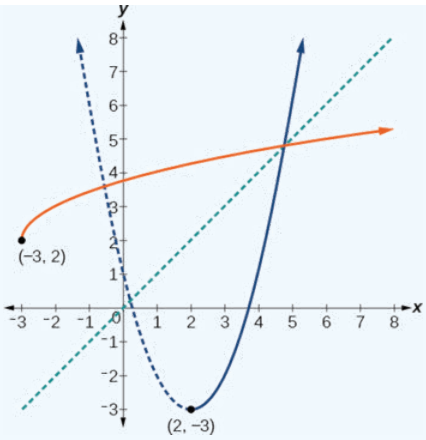

Figure 5.7.7

Exercise 5.7.4

Find the inverse of the function $f(x) = x^2 + 1$, on the domain $x \geq 0$.

Answer

$f^{-1}(x) = \sqrt{x-1}$

Finding Inverses

Notice that the functions from previous examples were all polynomials, and their inverses were radical functions. If we want to find the inverse of a radical function, we will need to restrict the domain of the answer because the range of the original function is limited.

How to: Given a radical function, find the inverse

1. Determine the range of the original function.
2. Replace $f(x)$ with y, then solve for x.
3. If necessary, restrict the domain of the inverse function to the range of the original function.

Example 5.7.5: Finding the Inverse of a Radical Function

Restrict the domain of the function $f(x) = \sqrt{x-4}$ and then find the inverse.

Solution

Note that the original function has range $f(x) \geq 0$. Replace $f(x)$ with y, then solve for x.

$$y = \sqrt{x-4} \text{ Replace } f(x) \text{ with } y.$$
$$x = \sqrt{y-4} \text{ Interchange } x \text{ and } y.$$
$$x = \sqrt{y-4} \text{ Square each side.}$$
$$x^2 = y - 4 \text{ Add 4.}$$
$$x^2 + 4 = y \text{ Rename the function } f^{-1}(x).$$
$$f^{-1}(x) = x^2 + 4$$

Recall that the domain of this function must be limited to the range of the original function.

$$f^{-1}(x) = x^2 + 4, \; x \geq 0$$

Analysis

Notice in Figure 5.7.8 that the inverse is a reflection of the original function over the line $y = x$. Because the original function has only positive outputs, the inverse function has only nonnegative inputs.

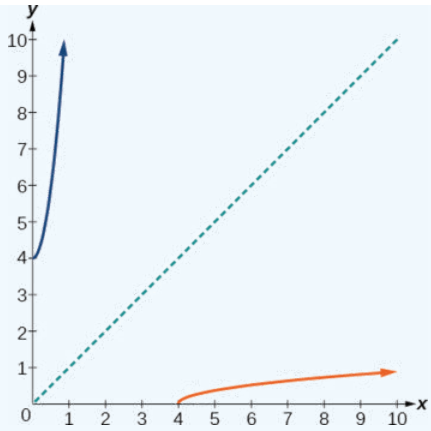

Figure 5.7.8

Exercise 5.7.5

Restrict the domain and then find the inverse of the function $f(x) = \sqrt{2x+3}$.

Answer

$f^{-1}(x) = \frac{x^2-3}{2}$, $x \geq 0$

Solving Applications of Radical Functions

Radical functions are common in physical models, as we saw in the section opener. We now have enough tools to be able to solve the problem posed at the start of the section.

Example 5.7.6: Solving an Application with a Cubic Function

A mound of gravel is in the shape of a cone with the height equal to twice the radius. The volume of the cone in terms of the radius is given by

$$V = \frac{2}{3}\pi r^3$$

Find the inverse of the function $V = \frac{2}{3}\pi r^3$ that determines the volume V of a cone and is a function of the radius r. Then use the inverse function to calculate the radius of such a mound of gravel measuring 100 cubic feet. Use $\pi = 3.14$.

Solution

Start with the given function for V. Notice that the meaningful domain for the function is $r > 0$ since negative radii would not make sense in this context nor would a radius of 0. Also note the range of the function (hence, the domain of the inverse function) is $V > 0$. Solve for r in terms of V, using the method outlined previously. Note that in real-world applications, we do not swap the variables when finding inverses. Instead, we change which variable is considered to be the independent variable.

$$V = \frac{2}{3}\pi r^3$$

Solve for r^3.

$$r^3 = \frac{3V}{2\pi}$$

Solve for r.

$$r = \sqrt[3]{\frac{3V}{2\pi}}$$

This is the result stated in the section opener. Now evaluate this for $V = 100$ and $\pi = 3.14$.

$$
\begin{aligned}
r &= \sqrt[3]{\frac{3V}{2\pi}} \\
&= \sqrt[3]{\frac{3 \cdot 100}{2 \cdot 3.14}} \\
&\approx \sqrt[3]{47.7707} \\
&\approx 3.63
\end{aligned}
$$

Therefore, the radius is about 3.63 ft.

Determining the Domain of a Radical Function Composed with Other Functions

When radical functions are composed with other functions, determining domain can become more complicated.

Example 5.7.7: Finding the Domain of a Radical Function Composed with a Rational Function

Find the domain of the function:

$$f(x) = \sqrt{\frac{(x+2)(x-3)}{(x-1)}}.$$

Solution

Because a square root is only defined when the quantity under the radical is non-negative, we need to determine where

$$\frac{(x+2)(x-3)}{(x-1)} \geq 0.$$

The output of a rational function can change signs (change from positive to negative or vice versa) at *x*-intercepts and at vertical asymptotes. For this equation, the graph could change signs at $x = -2$, 1, and 3.

To determine the intervals on which the rational expression is positive, we could test some values in the expression or sketch a graph. While both approaches work equally well, for this example we will use a graph as shown in Figure 5.7.9.

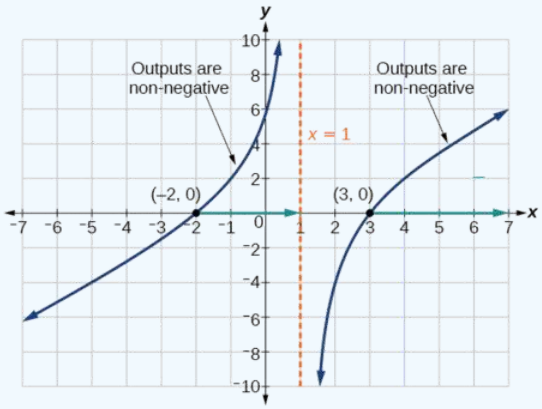

Figure 5.7.9

This function has two *x*-intercepts, both of which exhibit linear behavior near the *x*-intercepts. There is one vertical asymptote, corresponding to a linear factor; this behavior is similar to the basic reciprocal toolkit function, and there is no horizontal asymptote because the degree of the numerator is larger than the degree of the denominator. There is a *y*-intercept at $(0, \sqrt{6})$.

From the *y*-intercept and *x*-intercept at $x = -2$, we can sketch the left side of the graph. From the behavior at the asymptote, we can sketch the right side of the graph.

From the graph, we can now tell on which intervals the outputs will be non-negative, so that we can be sure that the original function $f(x)$ will be defined. $f(x)$ has domain $-2 \leq x < 1$ or $x \geq 3$, or in interval notation, $[-2, 1) \cup [3, \infty)$.

Finding Inverses of Rational Functions

As with finding inverses of quadratic functions, it is sometimes desirable to find the *inverse of a rational function*, particularly of rational functions that are the ratio of linear functions, such as in concentration applications.

Example 5.7.8: Finding the Inverse of a Rational Function

The function

$$C = \frac{20 + 0.4n}{100 + n} \tag{5.7.2}$$

represents the concentration C of an acid solution after n mL of 40% solution has been added to 100 mL of a 20% solution. First, find the inverse of the function; that is, find an expression for n in terms of C. Then use your result to determine how much of the 40% solution should be added so that the final mixture is a 35% solution.

Solution

We first want the inverse of the function in order to determine how many mL we need for a given concentration. We will solve for n in terms of C.

$$\begin{aligned} C &= \frac{20 + 0.4n}{100 + n} \\ C(100 + n) &= 20 + 0.4n \\ 100C + Cn &= 20 + 0.4n \\ 100C - 20 &= 0.4n - Cn \\ 100C - 20 &= (0.4 - C)n \\ n &= \frac{100C - 20}{0.4 - C} \end{aligned}$$

Now evaluate this function at 35%, which is $C = 0.35$.

$$\begin{aligned} n &= \frac{100(0.35) - 20}{0.4 - 0.35} \\ &= \frac{15}{0.05} \\ &= 300 \end{aligned}$$

We can conclude that 300 mL of the 40% solution should be added.

Exercise 5.7.8

Find the inverse of the function $f(x) = \frac{x+3}{x-2}$.

Answer

$f^{-1}(x) = \frac{2x+3}{x-1}$

Media

Access these online resources for additional instruction and practice with inverses and radical functions.

- Graphing the Basic Square Root Function
- Find the Inverse of a Square Root Function
- Find the Inverse of a Rational Function
- Find the Inverse of a Rational Function and an Inverse Function Value
- Inverse Functions

Key Concepts

- The inverse of a quadratic function is a square root function.
- If f^{-1} is the inverse of a function f, then f is the inverse of the function f^{-1}. See Example $5.7.1$.
- While it is not possible to find an inverse of most polynomial functions, some basic polynomials are invertible. See Example $5.7.2$.
- To find the inverse of certain functions, we must restrict the function to a domain on which it will be one-to-one. See Examples $5.7.3$ and $5.7.4$
- When finding the inverse of a radical function, we need a restriction on the domain of the answer. See Example $5.7.5$ and $5.7.7$.
- Inverse and radical and functions can be used to solve application problems. See Examples $5.7.6$ and $5.7.8$.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

6: Exponential and Logarithmic Functions

In this chapter, we will explore exponential functions, which can be used for, among other things, modeling growth patterns such as those found in bacteria. We will also investigate logarithmic functions, which are closely related to exponential functions. Both types of functions have numerous real-world applications when it comes to modeling and interpreting data.

6.1: Exponential Functions
6.2: Graphs of Exponential Functions
6.3: Logarithmic Functions
6.4: Graphs of Logarithmic Functions
6.5: Logarithmic Properties
6.6: Exponential and Logarithmic Equations
6.7: Exponential and Logarithmic Models

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6.1: Exponential Functions

Learning Objectives

- Evaluate exponential functions.
- Find the equation of an exponential function.
- Use compound interest formulas.
- Evaluate exponential functions with base e.

India is the second most populous country in the world with a population of about 1.25 billion people in 2013. The population is growing at a rate of about $.2\%$ each year. If this rate continues, the population of India will exceed China's population by the year 2031. When populations grow rapidly, we often say that the growth is "exponential," meaning that something is growing very rapidly. To a mathematician, however, the term *exponential growth* has a very specific meaning. In this section, we will take a look at *exponential functions*, which model this kind of rapid growth.

Identifying Exponential Functions

When exploring linear growth, we observed a constant rate of change—a constant number by which the output increased for each unit increase in input. For example, in the equation $f(x) = 3x + 4$, the slope tells us the output increases by 3 each time the input increases by 1. The scenario in the India population example is different because we have a *percent* change per unit time (rather than a constant change) in the number of people.

Defining an Exponential Function

A study found that the percent of the population who are vegans in the United States doubled from 2009 to 2011. In 2011, 2.5% of the population was vegan, adhering to a diet that does not include any animal products—no meat, poultry, fish, dairy, or eggs. If this rate continues, vegans will make up 10% of the U.S. population in 2015, 40% in 2019, and 80% in 2050.

What exactly does it mean to *grow exponentially*? What does the word *double* have in common with *percent increase*? People toss these words around errantly. Are these words used correctly? The words certainly appear frequently in the media.

- **Percent change** refers to a *change* based on a *percent* of the original amount.
- **Exponential growth** refers to an *increase* based on a constant multiplicative rate of change over equal increments of time, that is, a *percent* increase of the original amount over time.
- **Exponential decay** refers to a *decrease* based on a constant multiplicative rate of change over equal increments of time, that is, a *percent* decrease of the original amount over time.

For us to gain a clear understanding of **exponential growth**, let us contrast exponential growth with **linear growth**. We will construct two functions. The first function is exponential. We will start with an input of 0, and increase each input by 1. We will double the corresponding consecutive outputs. The second function is linear. We will start with an input of 0, and increase each input by 1. We will add 2 to the corresponding consecutive outputs (Table $6.1.1$).

From Table $6.1.1$ we can infer that for these two functions, exponential growth dwarfs linear growth.

- **Exponential growth** refers to the original value from the range increases by the *same percentage* over equal increments found in the domain.
- **Linear growth** refers to the original value from the range increases by the *same amount* over equal increments found in the domain.

Table 6.1.1

x	$f(x) = 2^x$	$g(x) = 2x$
0	1	0
1	2	2
2	4	4

x	$f(x)=2^x$	$g(x)=2x$
3	8	6
4	16	8
5	32	10
6	64	12

Apparently, the difference between “the same percentage” and “the same amount” is quite significant. For exponential growth, over equal increments, the constant multiplicative rate of change resulted in doubling the output whenever the input increased by one. For linear growth, the constant additive rate of change over equal increments resulted in adding 2 to the output whenever the input was increased by one.

The general form of the **exponential function** is $f(x)=ab^x$, where a is any nonzero number, b is a positive real number not equal to 1.

- If $b>1$,the function grows at a rate proportional to its size.
- If $0<b<1$, the function decays at a rate proportional to its size.

Let’s look at the function $f(x)=2^x$ from our example. We will create a table (Table 6.1.2) to determine the corresponding outputs over an interval in the domain from -3 to 3.

Table 6.1.2

x	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3
$f(x)=2^x$	$2^{-3}=\frac{1}{8}$	$2^{-2}=\frac{1}{4}$	$2^{-1}=\frac{1}{2}$	$2^0=1$	$2^1=2$	$2^2=4$	$2^3=8$

Let us examine the graph of f by plotting the ordered pairs from Table 6.1.2 and then make a few observations 6.1.1.

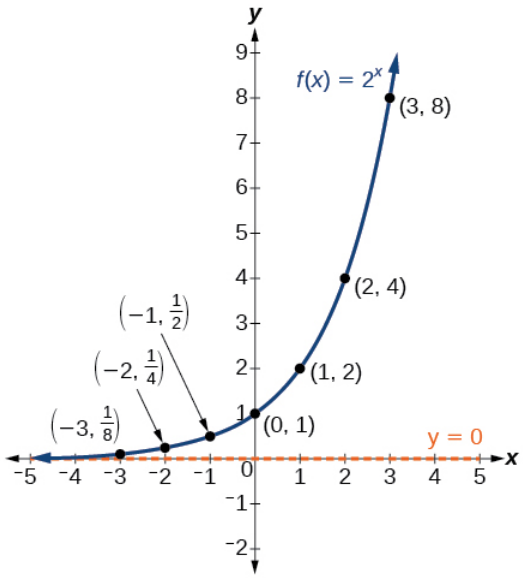

Figure 6.1.1

Let’s define the behavior of the graph of the exponential function $f(x)=2^x$ and highlight some its key characteristics.

- the domain is $(-\infty,\infty)$,
- the range is $(0,\infty)$,
- as $x\to\infty$, $f(x)\to\infty$,
- as $x\to-\infty$, $f(x)\to 0$,
- $f(x)$ is always increasing,
- the graph of $f(x)$ will never touch the *x*-axis because base two raised to any exponent never has the result of zero.

- $y = 0$ is the horizontal asymptote.
- the y-intercept is 1.

Definition: Exponential Functions

For any real number x,an exponential function is a function with the form

$$f(x) = ab^x \tag{6.1.1}$$

where

- a is a non-zero real number called the initial value and
- b is any positive real number such that $b \neq 1$.
- The domain of f is all real numbers.
- The range of f is all positive real numbers if $a > 0$.
- The range of f is all negative real numbers if $a < 0$.
- The y-intercept is $(0, a)$,and the horizontal asymptote is $y = 0$.

Example 6.1.1: Identifying Exponential Functions

Which of the following equations are *not* exponential functions?

- $f(x) = 4^{3(x-2)}$
- $g(x) = x^3$
- $h(x) = \left(\frac{1}{3}\right)^x$
- $j(x) = (-2)^x$

Solution

By definition, an exponential function has a constant as a base and an independent variable as an exponent. Thus, $g(x) = x^3$ does not represent an exponential function because the base is an independent variable. In fact, $g(x) = x^3$ is a power function.

Recall that the base b of an exponential function is always a positive constant, and $b \neq 1$. Thus, $j(x) = (-2)^x$ does not represent an exponential function because the base, -2, is less than 0.

Exercise 6.1.1

Which of the following equations represent exponential functions?

- $f(x) = 2x^2 - 3x + 1$
- $g(x) = 0.875^x$
- $h(x) = 1.75x + 2$
- $j(x) = 1095.6^{-2x}$

Answer

$g(x) = 0.875^x$ and $j(x) = 1095.6^{-2x}$ represent exponential functions.

Evaluating Exponential Functions

Recall that the base of an exponential function must be a positive real number other than 1.Why do we limit the base bb to positive values? To ensure that the outputs will be real numbers. Observe what happens if the base is not positive:

- Let $b = -9$ and $x = \frac{1}{2}$. Then $f(x) = f\left(\frac{1}{2}\right) = (-9)^{\frac{1}{2}} = \sqrt{-9}$,which is not a real number.

Why do we limit the base to positive values other than 1? Because base 1 results in the constant function. Observe what happens if the base is 1:

- Let $b = 1$. Then $f(x) = 1^x = 1$ for any value of x.

To evaluate an exponential function with the form $f(x) = b^x$,we simply substitute x with the given value, and calculate the resulting power. For example:

Let $f(x) = 2^x$. What is $f(3)$?

$$\begin{aligned} f(x) &= 2^x \\ f(3) &= 2^3 \qquad \text{Substitute } x = 3 \\ &= 8 \qquad \text{Evaluate the power} \end{aligned}$$

To evaluate an exponential function with a form other than the basic form, it is important to follow the order of operations. For example:

Let $f(x) = 30(2)^x$. What is $f(3)$?

$$\begin{aligned} f(x) &= 30(2)^x \\ f(3) &= 30(2)^3 \qquad \text{Substitute } x = 3 \\ &= 30(8) \qquad \text{Simplify the power first} \\ &= 240 \qquad \text{Multiply} \end{aligned}$$

Note that if the order of operations were not followed, the result would be incorrect:

$$f(3) = 30(2)^3 \neq 60^3 = 216,000$$

Example 6.1.2: Evaluating Exponential Functions

Let $f(x) = 5(3)^{x+1}$. Evaluate $f(2)$ without using a calculator.

Solution

Follow the order of operations. Be sure to pay attention to the parentheses.

$$\begin{aligned} f(x) &= 5(3)^{x+1} \\ f(2) &= 5(3)^{2+1} \qquad \text{Substitute } x = 2 \\ &= 5(3)^3 \qquad \text{Add the exponents} \\ &= 5(27) \qquad \text{Simplify the power} \\ &= 135 \qquad \text{Multiply} \end{aligned}$$

Exercise 6.1.2

Let $f(x) = 8(1.2)^{x-5}$. Evaluate $f(3)$ using a calculator. Round to four decimal places.

Answer

5.5556

Defining Exponential Growth

Because the output of exponential functions increases very rapidly, the term “exponential growth” is often used in everyday language to describe anything that grows or increases rapidly. However, exponential growth can be defined more precisely in a mathematical sense. If the growth rate is proportional to the amount present, the function models exponential growth.

Definition: Exponential Growth

A function that models exponential growth grows by a rate proportional to the amount present. For any real number x and any positive real numbers a and b such that $b \neq 1$,an exponential growth function has the form

$$f(x) = ab^x \tag{6.1.2}$$

where

- a is the initial or starting value of the function.
- b is the growth factor or growth multiplier per unit x.

In more general terms, we have an *exponential function*, in which a constant base is raised to a variable exponent. To differentiate between linear and exponential functions, let's consider two companies, A and B. Company A has 100 stores and expands by opening 50 new stores a year, so its growth can be represented by the function $A(x) = 100 + 50x$. Company B has 100 stores and expands by increasing the number of stores by 50% each year, so its growth can be represented by the function $B(x) = 100(1 + 0.5)^x$.

A few years of growth for these companies are illustrated in Table 6.1.3.

Table 6.1.3

Year, x	Stores, Company A	Stores, Company B
0	$100 + 50(0) = 100$	$100(1 + 0.5)^0 = 100$
1	$100 + 50(1) = 150$	$100(1 + 0.5)^1 = 150$
2	$100 + 50(2) = 200$	$100(1 + 0.5)^2 = 225$
3	$100 + 50(3) = 250$	$100(1 + 0.5)^3 = 337.5$
x	$A(x) = 100 + 50x$	$B(x) = 100(1 + 0.5)^x$

The graphs comparing the number of stores for each company over a five-year period are shown in Figure 6.1.2. We can see that, with exponential growth, the number of stores increases much more rapidly than with linear growth.

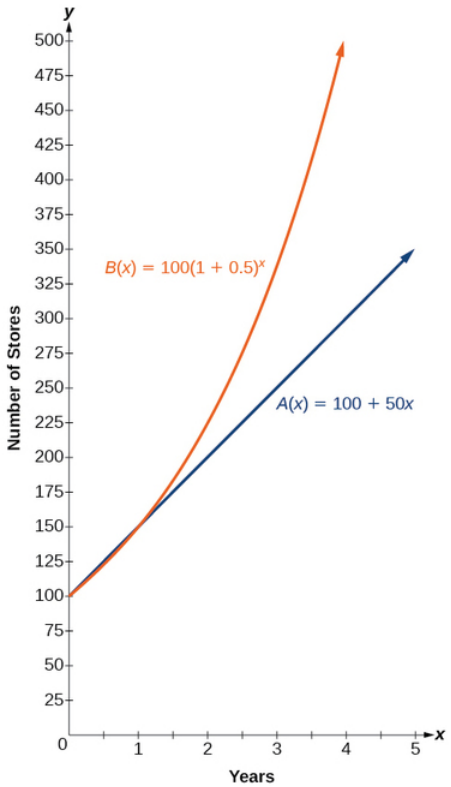

Figure 6.1.2: The graph shows the numbers of stores Companies A and B opened over a five-year period.

Notice that the domain for both functions is $[0, \infty)$,and the range for both functions is $[100, \infty)$. After year 1, Company B always has more stores than Company A.

Now we will turn our attention to the function representing the number of stores for Company B, $B(x) = 100(1 + 0.5)^x$. In this exponential function, 100 represents the initial number of stores, 0.50 represents the growth rate, and $1 + 0.5 = 1.5$ represents the

growth factor. Generalizing further, we can write this function as $B(x) = 100(1.5)^x$,where 100 is the initial value, 1.5 is called the *base*, and x is called the *exponent*.

Example 6.1.3: Evaluating a Real-World Exponential Model

At the beginning of this section, we learned that the population of India was about 1.25 billion in the year 2013, with an annual growth rate of about 1.2%. This situation is represented by the growth function $P(t) = 1.25(1.012)^t$, where t is the number of years since 2013. To the nearest thousandth, what will the population of India be in 2031?

Solution

To estimate the population in 2031, we evaluate the models for $t = 18$, because 2031 is 18 years after 2013. Rounding to the nearest thousandth,

$$P(18) = 1.25(1.012)^{18} \approx 1.549$$

There will be about 1.549 billion people in India in the year 2031.

Exercise 6.1.3

The population of China was about 1.39 billion in the year 2013, with an annual growth rate of about 0.6%. This situation is represented by the growth function $P(t) = 1.39(1.006)^t$, where t is the number of years since 2013.To the nearest thousandth, what will the population of China be for the year 2031? How does this compare to the population prediction we made for India in Example 6.1.3?

Answer

About 1.548 billion people; by the year 2031, India's population will exceed China's by about 0.001 billion, or 1 million people.

Finding Equations of Exponential Functions

In the previous examples, we were given an exponential function, which we then evaluated for a given input. Sometimes we are given information about an exponential function without knowing the function explicitly. We must use the information to first write the form of the function, then determine the constants a, a and b, b,and evaluate the function.

How to: Given two data points, write an exponential model

1. If one of the data points has the form $(0, a)$, then a is the initial value. Using a, substitute the second point into the equation $f(x) = a(b)^x$, and solve for b.
2. If neither of the data points have the form $(0, a)$, substitute both points into two equations with the form $f(x) = a(b)^x$. Solve the resulting system of two equations in two unknowns to find a and b.
3. Using the a and b found in the steps above, write the exponential function in the form $f(x) = a(b)^x$.

Example 6.1.4: Writing an Exponential Model When the Initial Value Is Known

In 2006, 80 deer were introduced into a wildlife refuge. By 2012, the population had grown to 180 deer. The population was growing exponentially. Write an algebraic function $N(t)$ representing the population (N) of deer over time t.

Solution

We let our independent variable t be the number of years after 2006. Thus, the information given in the problem can be written as input-output pairs: (0, 80) and (6, 180). Notice that by choosing our input variable to be measured as years after 2006, we have given ourselves the initial value for the function, $a = 80$. We can now substitute the second point into the equation $N(t) = 80b^t$ to find b:

$$
\begin{aligned}
N(t) &= 80b^t \\
180 &= 80b^6 && \text{Substitute using point } (6, 180) \\
\frac{9}{4} &= b^6 && \text{Divide and write in lowest terms} \\
b &= \left(\frac{9}{4}\right)^{\frac{1}{6}} && \text{Isolate b using properties of exponents} \\
b &\approx 1.1447 && \text{Round to 4 decimal places}
\end{aligned}
$$

> *Unless otherwise stated, do not round any intermediate calculations. Then round the final answer to four places for the remainder of this section.*

The exponential model for the population of deer is $N(t) = 80(1.1447)^t$. (Note that this exponential function models short-term growth. As the inputs gets large, the output will get increasingly larger, so much so that the model may not be useful in the long term.)

We can graph our model to observe the population growth of deer in the refuge over time. Notice that the graph in Figure 6.1.3 passes through the initial points given in the problem, $(0, 80)$ and $(6, 180)$. We can also see that the domain for the function is $[0, \infty)$,and the range for the function is $[80, \infty)$.

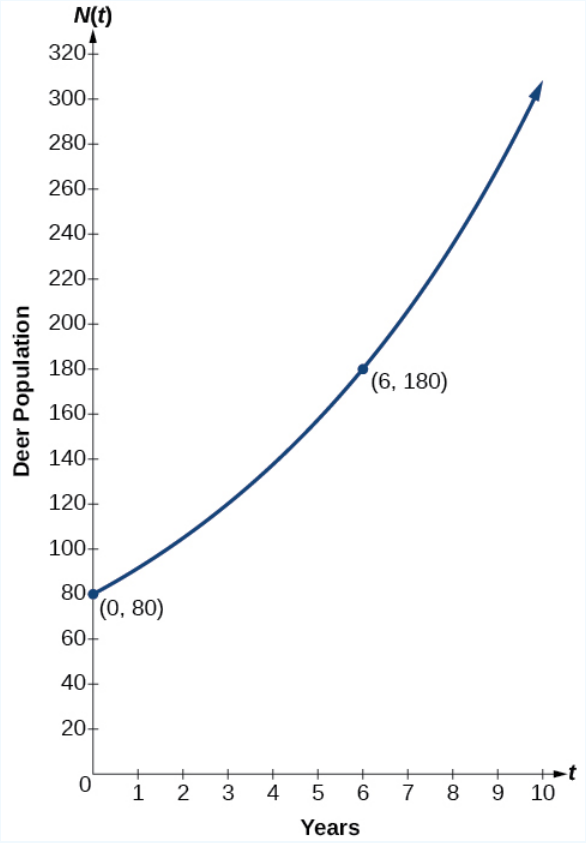

Figure 6.1.3: Graph showing the population of deer over time, $N(t) = 80(1.1447)^t$, t years after 2006

Exercise 6.1.4

A wolf population is growing exponentially. In 2011, 129 wolves were counted. By 2013, the population had reached 236 wolves. What two points can be used to derive an exponential equation modeling this situation? Write the equation representing the population N of wolves over time t.

Answer

$(0, 129)$ and $(2, 236)$; $N(t) = 129(1.3526)^t$

Example 6.1.5: Writing an Exponential Model When the Initial Value is Not Known

Find an exponential function that passes through the points $(-2, 6)$ and $(2, 1)$.

Solution

Because we don't have the initial value, we substitute both points into an equation of the form $f(x) = ab^x$, and then solve the system for a and b.

- Substituting $(-2, 6)$ gives $6 = ab^{-2}$
- Substituting $(2, 1)$ gives $1 = ab^2$

Use the first equation to solve for a in terms of b:

$$\begin{aligned} 6 &= ab^{-2} \\ \frac{6}{b^{-2}} &= a \qquad \text{Divide} \\ a &= 6b^2 \qquad \text{Use properties of exponents to rewrite the denominator} \end{aligned}$$

Substitute a in the second equation, and solve for b:

$$\begin{aligned} 1 &= ab^2 \\ 1 &= 6b^2b^2 \\ &= 6b^4 \qquad \text{Substitute a} \\ b &= \left(\frac{1}{6}\right)^{\frac{1}{4}} \qquad \text{Round 4 decimal places rewrite the denominator} \\ b &\approx 0.6389 \end{aligned}$$

Use the value of b in the first equation to solve for the value of a:

$$\begin{aligned} a &= 6b^2 \\ &\approx 6(0.6389)^2 \\ &\approx 2.4492 \end{aligned}$$

Thus, the equation is $f(x) = 2.4492(0.6389)^x$.

We can graph our model to check our work. Notice that the graph in Figure 6.1.4 passes through the initial points given in the problem, $(-2, 6)$ and $(2, 1)$. The graph is an example of an exponential decay function.

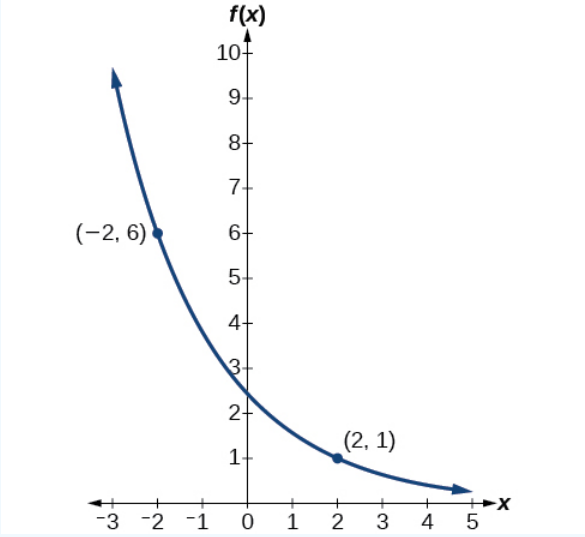

Figure 6.1.4: The graph of $f(x) = 2.4492(0.6389)^x$ models exponential decay.

Exercise 6.1.5

Given the two points $(1, 3)$ and $(2, 4.5)$, find the equation of the exponential function that passes through these two points.

Answer

$f(x) = 2(1.5)^x$

Q&A: Do two points always determine a unique exponential function?

Yes, provided the two points are either both above the x-axis or both below the x-axis and have different x-coordinates. But keep in mind that we also need to know that the graph is, in fact, an exponential function. Not every graph that looks exponential really is exponential. We need to know the graph is based on a model that shows the same percent growth with each unit increase in x, which in many real world cases involves time.

How to: Given the graph of an exponential function, write its equation

1. First, identify two points on the graph. Choose the y-intercept as one of the two points whenever possible. Try to choose points that are as far apart as possible to reduce round-off error.
2. If one of the data points is the y-intercept $(0, a)$, then a is the initial value. Using a, substitute the second point into the equation $f(x) = a(b)^x$, and solve for b
3. If neither of the data points have the form $(0, a)$, substitute both points into two equations with the form $f(x) = a(b)^x$. Solve the resulting system of two equations in two unknowns to find a and b.
4. Write the exponential function, $f(x) = a(b)^x$.

Example 6.1.6: Writing an Exponential Function Given Its Graph

Find an equation for the exponential function graphed in Figure 6.1.5.

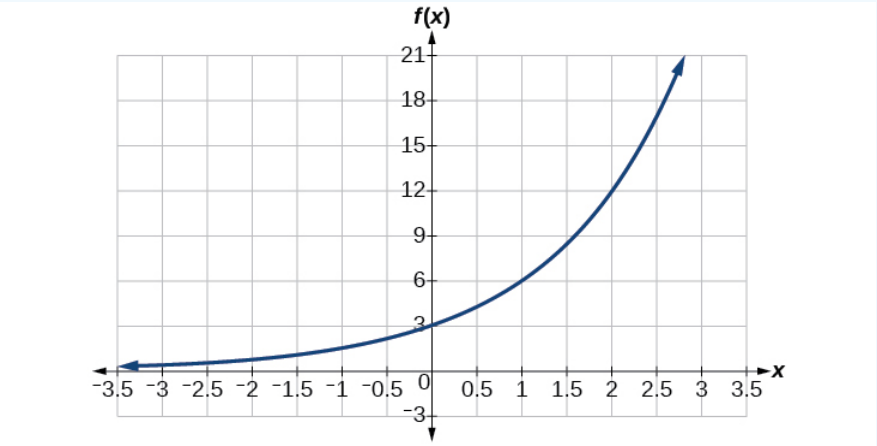

Figure 6.1.5

Solution

We can choose the y-intercept of the graph, $(0, 3)$, as our first point. This gives us the initial value, $a = 3$. Next, choose a point on the curve some distance away from $(0, 3)$ that has integer coordinates. One such point is $(2, 12)$.

$$\begin{aligned} y &= ab^x && \text{Write the general form of an exponential equation} \\ y &= 3b^x && \text{Substitute the initial value 3 for } a \\ 12 &= 3b^2 && \text{Substitute in 12 for } y \text{ and 2 for } x \\ 4 &= b^2 && \text{Divide by 3} \\ b &= \pm 2 && \text{Take the square root} \end{aligned}$$

Because we restrict ourselves to positive values of b, we will use $b = 2$. Substitute a and b into the standard form to yield the equation $f(x) = 3(2)^x$.

Exercise 6.1.6

Find an equation for the exponential function graphed in Figure 6.1.6.

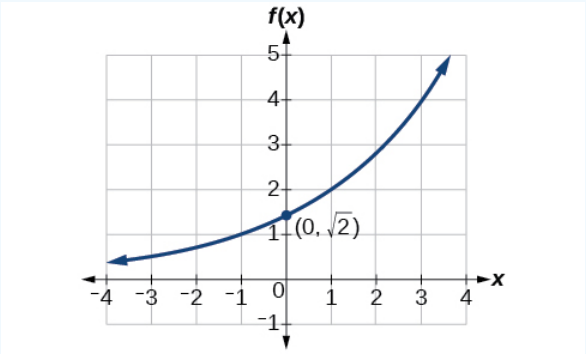

Figure 6.1.6

Answer

$f(x) = \sqrt{2}(\sqrt{2})^x$. Answers may vary due to round-off error. The answer should be very close to $1.4142(1.4142)^x$.

How to: Given two points on the curve of an exponential function, use a graphing calculator to find the equation

1. Press **[STAT].**
2. Clear any existing entries in columns **L1** or **L2.**
3. In **L1**, enter the *x*-coordinates given.
4. In **L2**, enter the corresponding *y*-coordinates.
5. Press **[STAT]** again. Cursor right to **CALC**, scroll down to **ExpReg (Exponential Regression)**, and press **[ENTER].**
6. The screen displays the values of *a* and *b* in the exponential equation $y = a \cdot b^x$.

Example 6.1.7: Using a Graphing Calculator to Find an Exponential Function

Use a graphing calculator to find the exponential equation that includes the points $(2, 24.8)$ and $(5, 198.4)$.

Solution

Follow the guidelines above. First press **[STAT]**, **[EDIT]**, **[1: Edit…],** and clear the lists **L1** and **L2**. Next, in the **L1** column, enter the x-coordinates, 2 and 5. Do the same in the **L2** column for the y-coordinates, 24.8 and 198.4.

Now press **[STAT]**, **[CALC]**, **[0: ExpReg]** and press **[ENTER]**. The values $a = 6.2$ and $b = 2$ will be displayed. The exponential equation is $y = 6.2 \cdot 2^x$.

Exercise 6.1.7

Use a graphing calculator to find the exponential equation that includes the points $(3, 75.98)$ and $(6, 481.07)$.

Answer

$y \approx 12 \cdot 1.85^x$

Applying the Compound-Interest Formula

Savings instruments in which earnings are continually reinvested, such as mutual funds and retirement accounts, use **compound interest**. The term *compounding* refers to interest earned not only on the original value, but on the accumulated value of the

account.

The **annual percentage rate (APR)** of an account, also called the **nominal rate**, is the yearly interest rate earned by an investment account. The term *nominal* is used when the compounding occurs a number of times other than once per year. In fact, when interest is compounded more than once a year, the effective interest rate ends up being *greater* than the nominal rate! This is a powerful tool for investing.

We can calculate the compound interest using the compound interest formula, which is an exponential function of the variables time t, principal P, APR r, and number of compounding periods in a year n:

$$A(t) = P\left(1 + \frac{r}{n}\right)^{nt}$$

For example, observe Table 6.1.4, which shows the result of investing $\$1,000$ at 10% for one year. Notice how the value of the account increases as the compounding frequency increases.

Table 6.1.4

Frequency	Value after 1 year
Annually	$1100
Semiannually	$1102.50
Quarterly	$1103.81
Monthly	$1104.71
Daily	$1105.16

Definition: Compound Interest

Compound interest can be calculated using the formula

$$A(t) = P\left(1 + \frac{r}{n}\right)^{nt} \tag{6.1.3}$$

where

- $A(t)$ is the account value,
- t is measured in years,
- P is the starting amount of the account, often called the principal, or more generally present value,
- r is the annual percentage rate (APR) expressed as a decimal, and
- n is the number of compounding periods in one year.

Example 6.1.8: Calculating Compound Interest

If we invest $\$3,000$ in an investment account paying 3% interest compounded quarterly, how much will the account be worth in 10 years?

Solution

Because we are starting with $\$3,000$, $P = 3000$. Our interest rate is 3%, so $r = 0.03$. Because we are compounding quarterly, we are compounding 4 times per year, so $n = 4$. We want to know the value of the account in 10 years, so we are looking for $A(10)$,the value when $t = 10$.

$$A(t) = P\left(1 + \frac{r}{n}\right)^{nt} \quad \text{Use the compound interest formula}$$

$$A(10) = 3000\left(1 + \frac{0.03}{4}\right)^{(4)\cdot(10)} \quad \text{Substitute using given values}$$

$$\approx \$4045.05 \quad \text{Round to two decimal places}$$

The account will be worth about $\$4,045.05$ in 10 years.

Exercise 6.1.8

An initial investment of $\$100,000$ at 12% interest is compounded weekly (use 52 weeks in a year). What will the investment be worth in 30 years?

Answer

about $\$3,644,675.88$

Example 6.1.9: Using the Compound Interest Formula to Solve for the Principal

A 529 Plan is a college-savings plan that allows relatives to invest money to pay for a child's future college tuition; the account grows tax-free. Lily wants to set up a 529 account for her new granddaughter and wants the account to grow to $\$40,000$ over 18 years. She believes the account will earn 6% compounded semi-annually (twice a year). To the nearest dollar, how much will Lily need to invest in the account now?

Solution

The nominal interest rate is 6%, so $r = 0.06$. Interest is compounded twice a year, so $k = 2$.

We want to find the initial investment, P, needed so that the value of the account will be worth $\$40,000$ in 18 years. Substitute the given values into the compound interest formula, and solve for P.

$$A(t) = P\left(1+\frac{r}{n}\right)^{nt} \quad \text{Use the compound interest formula}$$

$$40,000 = P\left(1+\frac{0.06}{2}\right)^{2(18)} \quad \text{Substitute using given values } A, r, n, t$$

$$40,000 = P(1.03)^{36} \quad \text{Simplify}$$

$$\frac{40,000}{(1.03)^{36}} = P \quad \text{Isolate } P$$

$$P \approx \$13,801 \quad \text{Divide and round to the nearest dollar}$$

Lily will need to invest $\$13,801$ to have $\$40,000$ in 18 years.

Exercise 6.1.9

Refer to Example 6.1.9. To the nearest dollar, how much would Lily need to invest if the account is compounded quarterly?

Answer

$\$13,693$

Evaluating Functions with Base e

As we saw earlier, the amount earned on an account increases as the compounding frequency increases. Table 6.1.5 shows that the increase from annual to semi-annual compounding is larger than the increase from monthly to daily compounding. This might lead us to ask whether this pattern will continue.

Examine the value of $\$1$ invested at 100% interest for 1 year, compounded at various frequencies, listed in Table 6.1.5.

Table 6.1.5

Frequency	$A(t) = \left(1+\frac{1}{n}\right)^n$	Value
Annually	$\left(1+\frac{1}{1}\right)^1$	$\$2$
Semiannually	$\left(1+\frac{1}{2}\right)^2$	$\$2.25$

Frequency	$A(t)=\left(1+\frac{1}{n}\right)^n$	Value
Quarterly	$\left(1+\frac{1}{4}\right)^4$	$2.441406
Monthly	$\left(1+\frac{1}{12}\right)^{12}$	$2.613035
Daily	$\left(1+\frac{1}{365}\right)^{365}$	$2.714567
Hourly	$\left(1+\frac{1}{8760}\right)^{8760}$	$2.718127
Once per minute	$\left(1+\frac{1}{525600}\right)^{525600}$	$2.718279
Once per second	$\left(1+\frac{1}{31536000}\right)^{31536000}$	$2.718282

These values appear to be approaching a limit as n increases without bound. In fact, as n gets larger and larger, the expression $\left(1+\frac{1}{n}\right)^n$ approaches a number used so frequently in mathematics that it has its own name: the letter e. This value is an irrational number, which means that its decimal expansion goes on forever without repeating. Its approximation to six decimal places is shown below.

Definition: The Number e

The letter e represents the irrational number

$$\left(1+\frac{1}{n}\right)^n \tag{6.1.4}$$

as n increases without bound

The letter e is used as a base for many real-world exponential models. To work with base e, we use the approximation, $e \approx 2.718282$. The constant was named by the Swiss mathematician Leonhard Euler (1707–1783) who first investigated and discovered many of its properties.

Example 6.1.10: Using a Calculator to Find Powers of e

Calculate $e^{3.14}$. Round to five decimal places.

Solution

On a calculator, press the button labeled $[e^x]$. The window shows $[e^(]$. Type 3.14 and then close parenthesis, $[)]$. Press [ENTER]. Rounding to 5 decimal places, $e^{3.14} \approx 23.10387$. Caution: Many scientific calculators have an "Exp" button, which is used to enter numbers in scientific notation. It is not used to find powers of e.

Exercise 6.1.10

Use a calculator to find $e^{-0.5}$. Round to five decimal places.

Answer

$e^{-0.5} \approx 0.60653$

Investigating Continuous Growth

So far we have worked with rational bases for exponential functions. For most real-world phenomena, however, e is used as the base for exponential functions. Exponential models that use e as the base are called continuous growth or decay models. We see these models in finance, computer science, and most of the sciences, such as physics, toxicology, and fluid dynamics.

Definition: The Continuous Growth/decay Formula

For all real numbers t,and all positive numbers a and r, continuous growth or decay is represented by the formula

$$A(t) = ae^{rt} \tag{6.1.5}$$

where

- a is the initial value,
- r is the continuous growth rate per unit time,
- t is the elapsed time.

If $r > 0$, then the formula represents continuous growth. If $r < 0$, then the formula represents continuous decay.

For business applications, the continuous growth formula is called the continuous compounding formula and takes the form

$$A(t) = Pe^{rt} \tag{6.1.6}$$

where

- P is the principal or the initial invested,
- r is the growth or interest rate per unit time,
- t is the period or term of the investment.

How to: Given the initial value, rate of growth or decay, and time t, solve a continuous growth or decay function

1. Use the information in the problem to determine a, the initial value of the function.
2. Use the information in the problem to determine the growth rate r.
   - If the problem refers to continuous growth, then $r > 0$.
   - If the problem refers to continuous decay, then $r < 0$.
3. Use the information in the problem to determine the time t.
4. Substitute the given information into the continuous growth formula and solve for $A(t)$.

Example 6.1.11: Calculating Continuous Growth

A person invested $\$1,000$ in an account earning a nominal 10% per year compounded continuously. How much was in the account at the end of one year?

Solution

Since the account is growing in value, this is a continuous compounding problem with growth rate $r = 0.10$. The initial investment was $\$1,000$, so $P = 1000$. We use the continuous compounding formula to find the value after $t = 1$ year:

$$\begin{aligned} A(t) &= Pe^{rt} && \text{Use the continuous compounding formula} \\ &= 1000(e)^{0.1} && \text{Substitute known values for } P, r, t \\ &\approx 1105.17 && \text{Use a calculator to approximate} \end{aligned}$$

The account is worth $\$1,105.17$after one year.

Exercise 6.1.11

A person invests $\$100,000$ at a nominal 12% interest per year compounded continuously. What will be the value of the investment in 30 years?

Answer

$\$3,659,823.44$

Example 6.1.12: Calculating Continuous Decay

$Radon-222$ decays at a continuous rate of 17.3% per day. How much will $100mg$ of $Radon-222$ decay to in 3 days?

Solution

Since the substance is decaying, the rate, 17.3%, is negative. So, $r=-0.173$. The initial amount of $Radon-222$ was 100 mg, so $a=100$. We use the continuous decay formula to find the value after $t=3$ days:

$$\begin{aligned} A(t) &= ae^{rt} && \text{Use the continuous growth formula} \\ &= 100e6-0.173(3) && \text{Substitute known values for } a, r, t \\ &\approx 59.5115 && \text{Use a calculator to approximate} \end{aligned}$$

So 59.5115mg of $Radon-222$ will remain.

Exercise 6.1.12

Using the data in Example 6.1.12, how much $Radon-222$ will remain after one year?

Answer

$3.77E-26$ (This is calculator notation for the number written as 3.77×10^{-26} in scientific notation. While the output of an exponential function is never zero, this number is so close to zero that for all practical purposes we can accept zero as the answer.)

Media

Access these online resources for additional instruction and practice with exponential functions.

- Exponential Growth Function
- Compound Interest

Key Equations

definition of the exponential function	$f(x)=b^x$, where $b>0, b\neq1$
definition of exponential growth	$f(x)=ab^x$, where $a>0, b>0, b\neq1$
compound interest formula	$A(t)=P(1+\frac{r}{n})^{nt}$, where $A(t)$ is the account value at time t t is the number of years P is the initial investment, often called the principal r is the annual percentage rate (APR), or nominal rate n is the number of compounding periods in one year
continuous growth formula	$A(t)=ae^{rt}$, where t is the number of unit time periods of growth a is the starting amount (in the continuous compounding formula a is replaced with P, the principal) e is the mathematical constant, $e\approx2.718282$

Key Concepts

- An exponential function is defined as a function with a positive constant other than 1 raised to a variable exponent. See Example.
- A function is evaluated by solving at a specific value. See Example and Example.

- An exponential model can be found when the growth rate and initial value are known. See Example.
- An exponential model can be found when the two data points from the model are known. See Example.
- An exponential model can be found using two data points from the graph of the model. See Example.
- An exponential model can be found using two data points from the graph and a calculator. See Example.
- The value of an account at any time t can be calculated using the compound interest formula when the principal, annual interest rate, and compounding periods are known. See Example.
- The initial investment of an account can be found using the compound interest formula when the value of the account, annual interest rate, compounding periods, and life span of the account are known. See Example.
- The number e is a mathematical constant often used as the base of real world exponential growth and decay models. Its decimal approximation is $e \approx 2.718282$.
- Scientific and graphing calculators have the key $[ex]$ or $[exp(x)]$ for calculating powers of e. See Example.
- Continuous growth or decay models are exponential models that use e as the base. Continuous growth and decay models can be found when the initial value and growth or decay rate are known. See Example and Example.

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6.2: Graphs of Exponential Functions

Learning Objectives

- Graph exponential functions.
- Graph exponential functions using transformations.

As we discussed in the previous section, exponential functions are used for many real-world applications such as finance, forensics, computer science, and most of the life sciences. Working with an equation that describes a real-world situation gives us a method for making predictions. Most of the time, however, the equation itself is not enough. We learn a lot about things by seeing their pictorial representations, and that is exactly why graphing exponential equations is a powerful tool. It gives us another layer of insight for predicting future events.

Graphing Exponential Functions

Before we begin graphing, it is helpful to review the behavior of exponential growth. Recall the table of values for a function of the form $f(x) = b^x$ whose base is greater than one. We'll use the function $f(x) = 2^x$. Observe how the output values in Table 6.2.1 change as the input increases by 1.

Table 6.2.1

x	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3
$f(x) = 2^x$	$\frac{1}{8}$	$\frac{1}{4}$	$\frac{1}{2}$	1	2	4	8

Each output value is the product of the previous output and the base, 2. We call the base 2 the *constant ratio*. In fact, for any exponential function with the form $f(x) = ab^x$, b is the constant ratio of the function. This means that as the input increases by 1, the output value will be the product of the base and the previous output, regardless of the value of a.

Notice from the table that

- the output values are positive for all values of x;
- as x increases, the output values increase without bound; and
- as x decreases, the output values grow smaller, approaching zero.

Figure 6.2.1 shows the exponential growth function $f(x) = 2^x$.

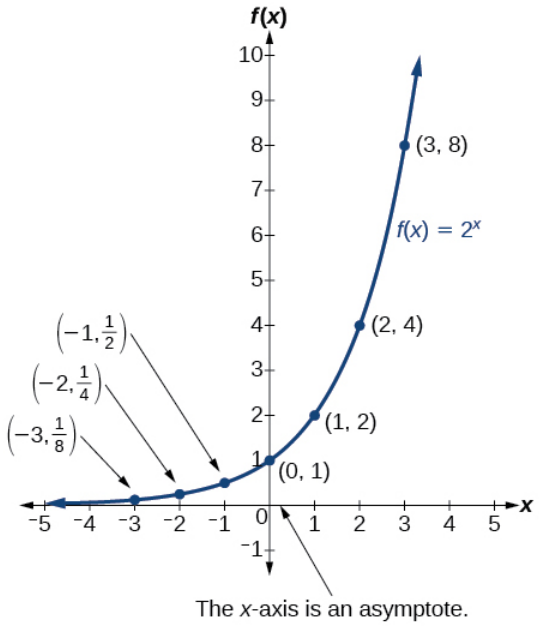


Figure 6.2.1: Notice that the graph gets close to the x-axis, but never touches it.

The domain of $f(x) = 2^x$ is all real numbers, the range is $(0, \infty)$, and the horizontal asymptote is $y = 0$.

To get a sense of the behavior of exponential decay, we can create a table of values for a function of the form $f(x) = b^x$ whose base is between zero and one. We'll use the function $g(x) = \left(\frac{1}{2}\right)^x$. Observe how the output values in Table 6.2.2 change as the input increases by 1.

Table 6.2.2

x	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3
$g(x) = \left(\frac{1}{2}\right)^x$	8	4	2	1	$\frac{1}{2}$	$\frac{1}{4}$	$\frac{1}{8}$

Again, because the input is increasing by 1, each output value is the product of the previous output and the base, or constant ratio $\frac{1}{2}$.

Notice from the table that

- the output values are positive for all values of x;
- as x increases, the output values grow smaller, approaching zero; and
- as x decreases, the output values grow without bound.

Figure 6.2.2 shows the exponential decay function, $g(x) = \left(\frac{1}{2}\right)^x$.

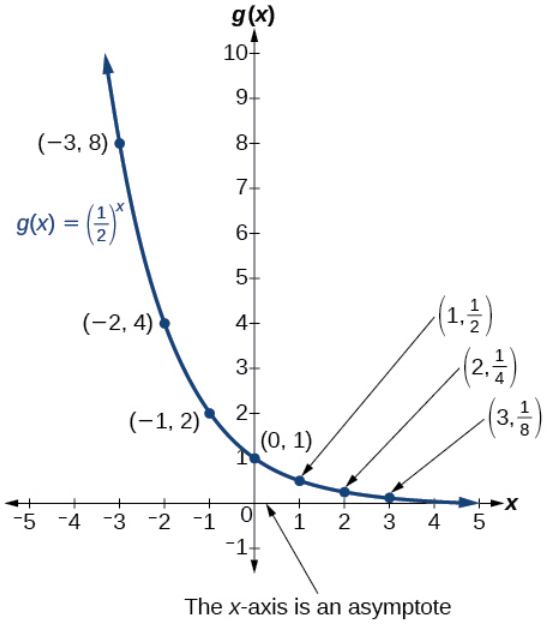


Figure 6.2.2

The domain of $g(x) = (\frac{1}{2})^x$ is all real numbers, the range is $(0, \infty)$,and the horizontal asymptote is $y = 0$.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE GRAPH OF THE PARENT FUNCTION $F(X) = b^x$

An exponential function with the form $f(x) = b^x$, $b > 0$, $b \neq 1$,has these characteristics:

- one-to-one function
- horizontal asymptote: $y = 0$
- domain: $(-\infty, \infty)$
- range: $(0, \infty)$
- x-intercept: none

- y-intercept: $(0, 1)$
- increasing if $b > 1$
- decreasing if $b < 1$

Figure $6.2.3$ compares the graphs of exponential growth and decay functions.

1 and the second graph is of the same function when b is 0

Figure 6.2.3

How to: Given an exponential function of the form $f(x) = b^x$,graph the function

1. Create a table of points.
2. Plot at least 3 point from the table, including the y-intercept $(0, 1)$.
3. Draw a smooth curve through the points.
4. State the domain, $(-\infty, \infty)$,the range, $(0, \infty)$,and the horizontal asymptote, $y = 0$.

Example 6.2.1: Sketching the Graph of an Exponential Function of the Form $f(x) = b^x$

Sketch a graph of $f(x) = 0.25^x$. State the domain, range, and asymptote.

Solution

Before graphing, identify the behavior and create a table of points for the graph.

Table 6.2.3

x	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3
$f(x) = 0.25^x$	64	16	4	1	0.25	\(0.0625\0	0.015625

- Since $b = 0.25$ is between zero and one, we know the function is decreasing. The left tail of the graph will increase without bound, and the right tail will approach the asymptote $y = 0$.
- Create a table of points as in Table $6.2.3$.
- Plot the y-intercept, $(0, 1)$,along with two other points. We can use $(-1, 4)$ and $(1, 0.25)$.

Draw a smooth curve connecting the points as in Figure $6.2.4$.

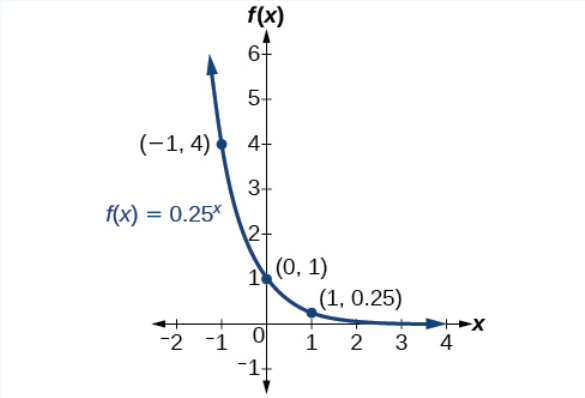


Figure 6.2.4

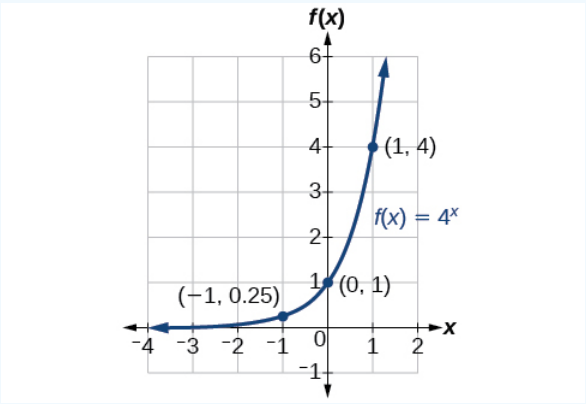
The domain is $(-\infty, \infty)$; the range is $(0, \infty)$; the horizontal asymptote is $y = 0$.

Exercise 6.2.1

Sketch the graph of $f(x) = 4^x$. State the domain, range, and asymptote.

Answer

The domain is $(-\infty, \infty)$; the range is $(0, \infty)$; the horizontal asymptote is $y = 0$.



Graphing Transformations of Exponential Functions

Transformations of exponential graphs behave similarly to those of other functions. Just as with other parent functions, we can apply the four types of transformations—shifts, reflections, stretches, and compressions—to the parent function $f(x) = b^x$ without loss of shape. For instance, just as the quadratic function maintains its parabolic shape when shifted, reflected, stretched, or compressed, the exponential function also maintains its general shape regardless of the transformations applied.

Graphing a Vertical Shift

The first transformation occurs when we add a constant d to the parent function $f(x) = b^x$, giving us a vertical shiftd d units in the same direction as the sign. For example, if we begin by graphing a parent function, $f(x) = 2^x$, we can then graph two vertical shifts alongside it, using $d = 3$: the upward shift, $g(x) = 2^x + 3$ and the downward shift, $h(x) = 2^x - 3$. Both vertical shifts are shown in Figure 6.2.5.

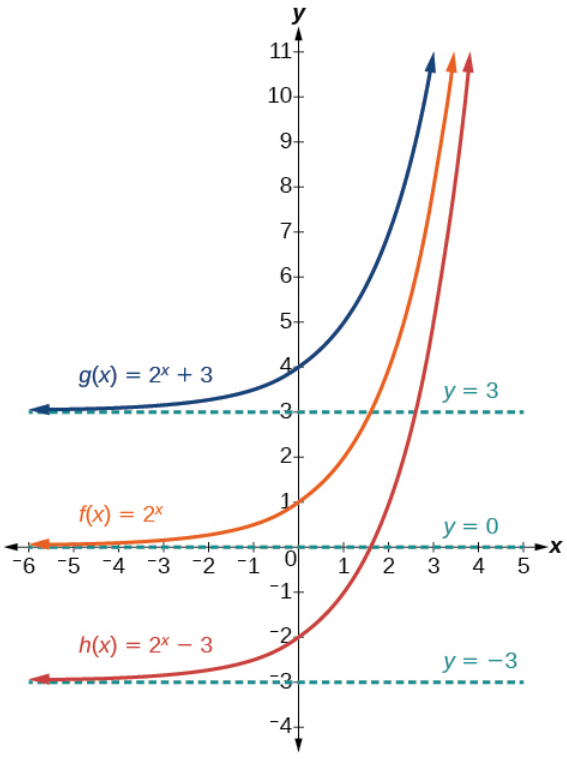


Figure 6.2.5

Observe the results of shifting $f(x) = 2^x$ vertically:

- The domain, $(-\infty, \infty)$ remains unchanged.

- When the function is shifted up 3 units to $g(x) = 2^x + 3$:
  - The *y*-intercept shifts up 3 units to $(0, 4)$.
  - The asymptote shifts up 3 units to $y = 3$.
  - The range becomes $(3, \infty)$.
- When the function is shifted down 3 units to $h(x) = 2^x - 3$:
  - The *y*-intercept shifts down 3 units to $(0, -2)$.
  - The asymptote also shifts down 3 units to $y = -3$.
  - The range becomes $(-3, \infty)$.

Graphing a Horizontal Shift

The next transformation occurs when we add a constant c to the input of the parent function $f(x) = b^x$, giving us a horizontal shift c units in the *opposite* direction of the sign. For example, if we begin by graphing the parent function $f(x) = 2^x$, we can then graph two horizontal shifts alongside it, using $c = 3$: the shift left, $g(x) = 2^{x+3}$, and the shift right, $h(x) = 2^{x-3}$. $h(x) = 2^{x-3}$. Both horizontal shifts are shown in Figure $6.2.6$.

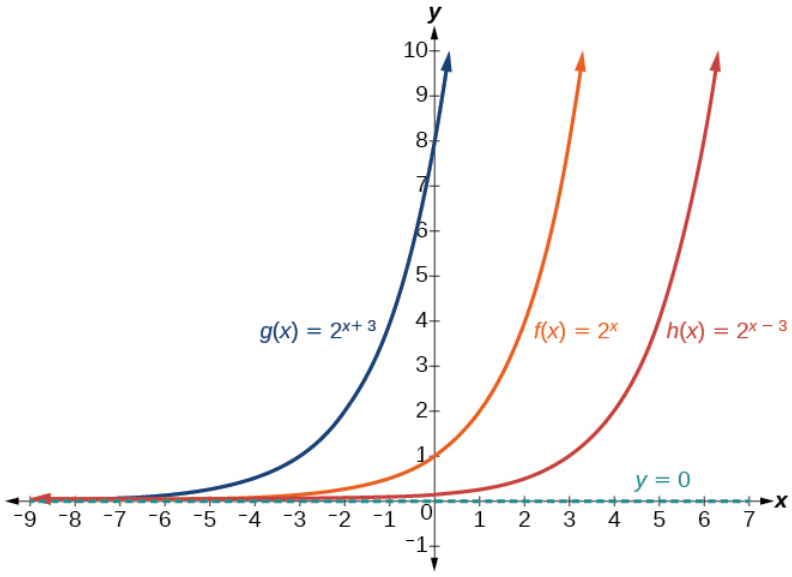


Figure 6.2.6

Observe the results of shifting $f(x) = 2^x$ horizontally:

- The domain, $(-\infty, \infty)$,remains unchanged.
- The asymptote, $y = 0$,remains unchanged.
- The *y*-intercept shifts such that:
  - When the function is shifted left 3 units to $g(x) = 2^{x+3}$,the *y*-intercept becomes $(0, 8)$. This is because $2^{x+3} = (8)2^x$,so the initial value of the function is 8.
  - When the function is shifted right 3 units to $h(x) = 2^{x-3}$,the *y*-intercept becomes $(0, \frac{1}{8})$. Again, see that $2^{x-3} = (\frac{1}{8})2^x$,so the initial value of the function is $\frac{1}{8}$.

SHIFTS OF THE PARENT FUNCTION $F(X) = b^x$

For any constants c and d,the function $f(x) = b^{x+c} + d$ shifts the parent function $f(x) = b^x$

- vertically d units, in the *same* direction of the sign of d.
- horizontally c units, in the *opposite* direction of the sign of c.
- The *y*-intercept becomes $(0, b^c + d)$.
- The horizontal asymptote becomes $y = d$.
- The range becomes (d, ∞).

- The domain, $(-\infty, \infty)$,remains unchanged.

How to: Given an exponential function with the form $f(x) = b^{x+c} + d$, graph the translation

1. Draw the horizontal asymptote $y = d$.
2. Identify the shift as $(-c, d)$. Shift the graph of $f(x) = b^x$ left c units if c is positive, and right c units if c is negative.
3. Shift the graph of $f(x) = b^x$ up d units if d is positive, and down d units if d is negative.
4. State the domain, $(-\infty, \infty)$,the range, (d, ∞),and the horizontal asymptote $y = d$.

Example 6.2.2: Graphing a Shift of an Exponential Function

Graph $f(x) = 2^{x+1} - 3$. State the domain, range, and asymptote.

Solution

We have an exponential equation of the form $f(x) = b^{x+c} + d$, with $b = 2$, $c = 1$, and $d = -3$.

Draw the horizontal asymptote $y = d$, so draw $y = -3$.

Identify the shift as $(-c, d)$, so the shift is $(-1, -3)$.

Shift the graph of $f(x) = b^x$ left 1 units and down 3 units.

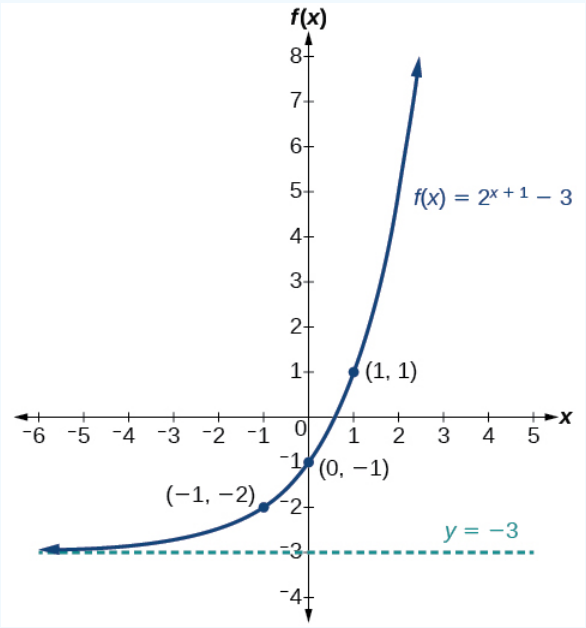


Figure 6.2.7

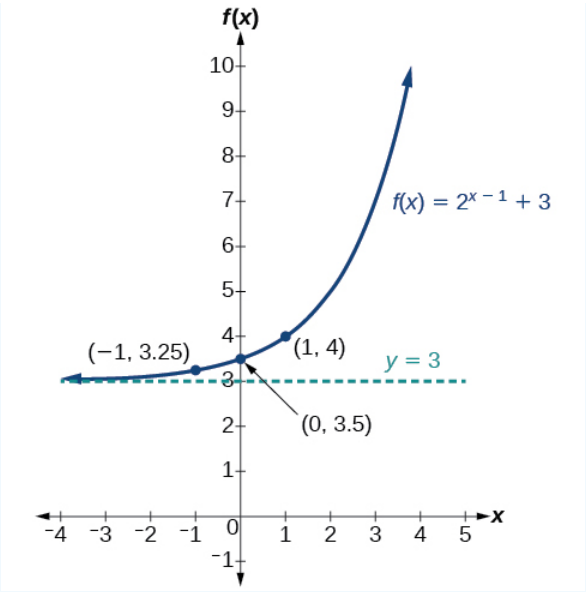
The domain is $(-\infty, \infty)$; the range is $(-3, \infty)$; the horizontal asymptote is $y = -3$.

Exercise 6.2.2

Graph $f(x) = 2^{x-1} + 3$. State domain, range, and asymptote.

Answer

The domain is $(-\infty, \infty)$; the range is $(3, \infty)$; the horizontal asymptote is $y = 3$.



How to: Given an equation of the form $f(x) = b^{x+c} + d$ for x, use a graphing calculator to approximate the solution

- Press **[Y=]**. Enter the given exponential equation in the line headed "$\mathbf{Y_1}$=".
- Enter the given value forf(x) f(x) in the line headed "$\mathbf{Y_2}$=".
- Press **[WINDOW]**. Adjust the *y*-axis so that it includes the value entered for "$\mathbf{Y_2}$=".
- Press **[GRAPH]** to observe the graph of the exponential function along with the line for the specified value off(x). f(x).
- To find the value ofx, x,we compute the point of intersection. Press **[2ND]** then **[CALC]**. Select "intersect" and press **[ENTER]** three times. The point of intersection gives the value of *x* for the indicated value of the function.

Example 6.2.3: Approximating the Solution of an Exponential Equation

Solve $42 = 1.2(5)^x + 2.8$ graphically. Round to the nearest thousandth.

Solution

Press **[Y=]** and enter $1.2(5)^x + 2.8$ next to $\mathbf{Y_1}$=. Then enter 42 next to **Y2=**. For a window, use the values -3 to 3 for x and -5 to 55 for y. Press **[GRAPH]**. The graphs should intersect somewhere near $x = 2$.

For a better approximation, press **[2ND]** then **[CALC]**. Select **[5: intersect]** and press **[ENTER]** three times. The *x*-coordinate of the point of intersection is displayed as 2.1661943 (Your answer may be different if you use a different window or use a different value for **Guess?**) To the nearest thousandth, $x \approx 2.166$.

Exercise 6.2.3

Solve $4 = 7.85(1.15)^x - 2.27$ graphically. Round to the nearest thousandth.

Answer

$x \approx -1.608$

Graphing a Stretch or Compression

While horizontal and vertical shifts involve adding constants to the input or to the function itself, a **stretch** or **compression** occurs when we multiply the parent function $f(x) = b^x$ by a constant $|a| > 0$. For example, if we begin by graphing the parent function $f(x) = 2^x$,we can then graph the stretch, using $a = 3$,to get $g(x) = 3(2)^x$ as shown on the left in Figure 6.2.8, and the compression, using $a = \frac{1}{3}$,to get $h(x) = \frac{1}{3}(2)^x$ as shown on the right in Figure 6.2.8.

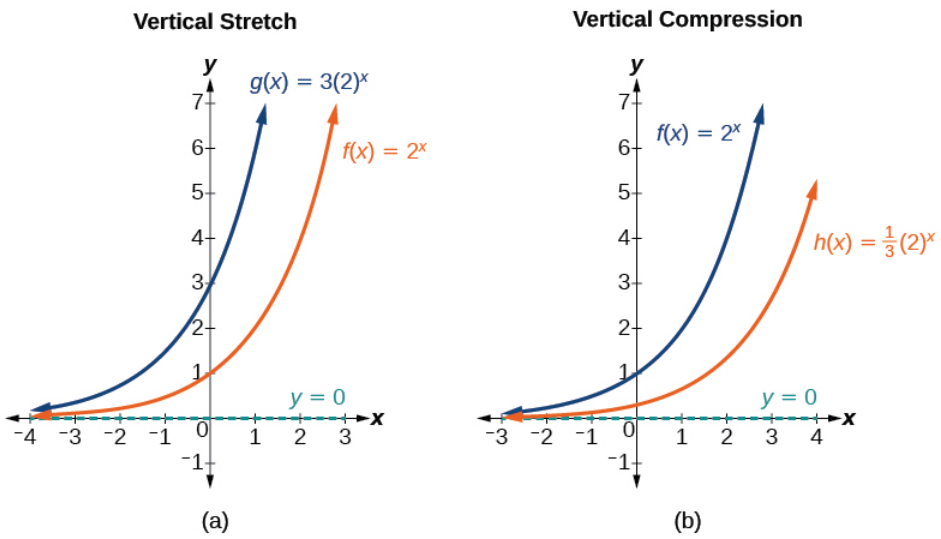


Figure 6.2.8: (a) $g(x) = 3(2)^x$ stretches the graph of $f(x) = 2^x$ vertically by a factor of 3. (b) $h(x) = \frac{1}{3}(2)^x$ compresses the graph of $f(x) = 2^x$ vertically by a factor of $\frac{1}{3}$.

STRETCHES AND COMPRESSIONS OF THE PARENT FUNCTION $F(X) = B^X$

For any factor $a > 0$,the function $f(x) = a(b)^x$

- is stretched vertically by a factor of a if $|a| > 1$.
- is compressed vertically by a factor of a if $|a| < 1$.
- has a y-intercept of $(0, a)$.
- has a horizontal asymptote at $y = 0$, a range of $(0, \infty)$, and a domain of $(-\infty, \infty)$,which are unchanged from the parent function.

Example 6.2.4: Graphing the Stretch of an Exponential Function

Sketch a graph of $f(x) = 4(\frac{1}{2})^x$. State the domain, range, and asymptote.

Solution

Before graphing, identify the behavior and key points on the graph.

- Since $b = \frac{1}{2}$ is between zero and one, the left tail of the graph will increase without bound as x decreases, and the right tail will approach the x-axis as x increases.
- Since $a = 4$,the graph of $f(x) = (\frac{1}{2})^x$ will be stretched by a factor of 4.
- Create a table of points as shown in Table 6.2.4.

Table 6.2.4

x	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3
$f(x) = 4(\frac{1}{2})^x$	32	16	8	4	2	1	0.5

- Plot the y-intercept, $(0, 4)$,along with two other points. We can use $(-1, 8)$ and $(1, 2)$.

Draw a smooth curve connecting the points, as shown in Figure 6.2.9.

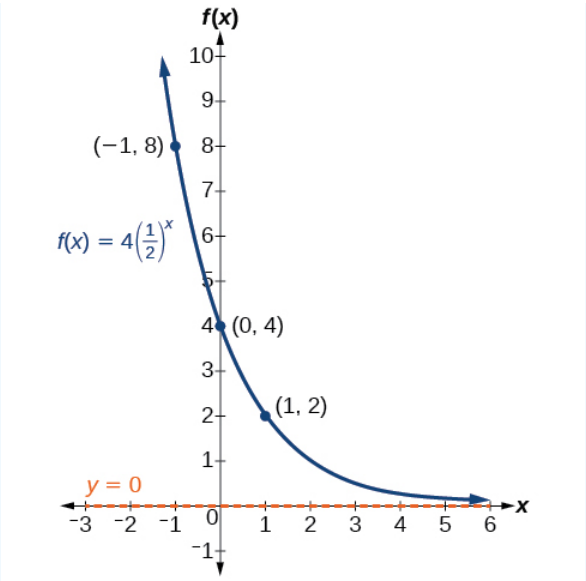


Figure 6.2.9

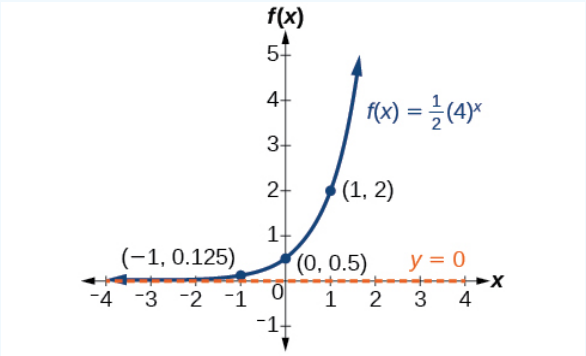
The domain is $(-\infty, \infty)$; the range is $(0, \infty)$; the horizontal asymptote is $y = 0$.

? Exercise 6.2.4

Sketch the graph of $f(x) = \frac{1}{2}(4)^x$. State the domain, range, and asymptote.

Answer

The domain is $(-\infty, \infty)$; the range is $(0, \infty)$; the horizontal asymptote is $y = 0$.



Graphing Reflections

In addition to shifting, compressing, and stretching a graph, we can also reflect it about the *x*-axis or the *y*-axis. When we multiply the parent function $f(x) = b^x$ by -1,we get a reflection about the *x*-axis. When we multiply the input by -1,we get a reflection about the *y*-axis. For example, if we begin by graphing the parent function $f(x) = 2^x$, we can then graph the two reflections alongside it. The reflection about the *x*-axis, $g(x) = -2^x$,is shown on the left side of Figure 6.2.10, and the reflection about the y-axis $h(x) = 2^{-x}$, is shown on the right side of Figure 6.2.10.

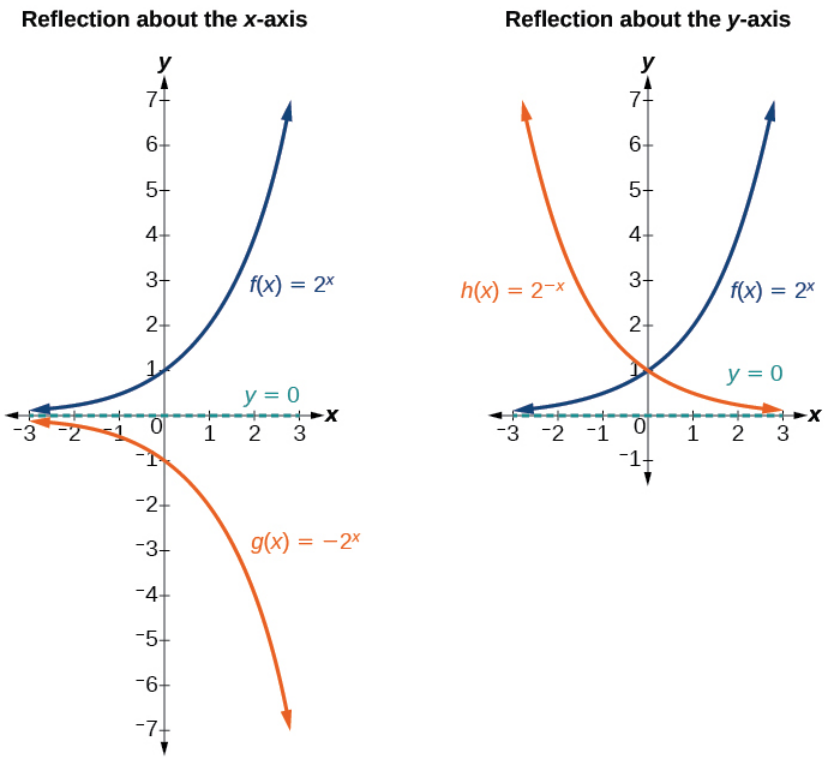


Figure 6.2.10: (a) $g(x) = -2^x$ reflects the graph of $f(x) = 2^x$ about the x-axis. (b) $g(x) = 2^{-x}$ reflects the graph of $f(x) = 2^x$ about the y-axis.

REFLECTIONS OF THE PARENT FUNCTION $F(X) = B^x$

The function $f(x) = -b^x$

- reflects the parent function $f(x) = b^x$ about the *x*-axis.
- has a *y*-intercept of $(0, -1)$.
- has a range of $(-\infty, 0)$
- has a horizontal asymptote at $y = 0$ and domain of $(-\infty, \infty)$,which are unchanged from the parent function.

The function $f(x) = b^{-x}$

- reflects the parent function $f(x) = b^x$ about the *y*-axis.
- has a *y*-intercept of $(0, 1)$, a horizontal asymptote at $y = 0$, a range of $(0, \infty)$, and a domain of $(-\infty, \infty)$, which are unchanged from the parent function.

Example 6.2.5: Writing and Graphing the Reflection of an Exponential Function

Find and graph the equation for a function, $g(x)$,that reflects $f(x) = (\frac{1}{4})^x$ about the *x*-axis. State its domain, range, and asymptote.

Solution

Since we want to reflect the parent function $f(x) = (\frac{1}{4})^x$ about the *x*-axis, we multiply $f(x)$ by -1 to get, $g(x) = -(\frac{1}{4})^x$. Next we create a table of points as in Table 6.2.5.

Table 6.2.5

x	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3
$g(x) = -(\frac{1}{4})^x$	-64	-16	-4	-1	-0.25	$\mathbf{-0.0625}$	$\mathbf{-0.0156}$

Plot the y-intercept, $(0, -1)$,along with two other points. We can use $(-1, -4)$ and $(1, -0.25)$.

Draw a smooth curve connecting the points:

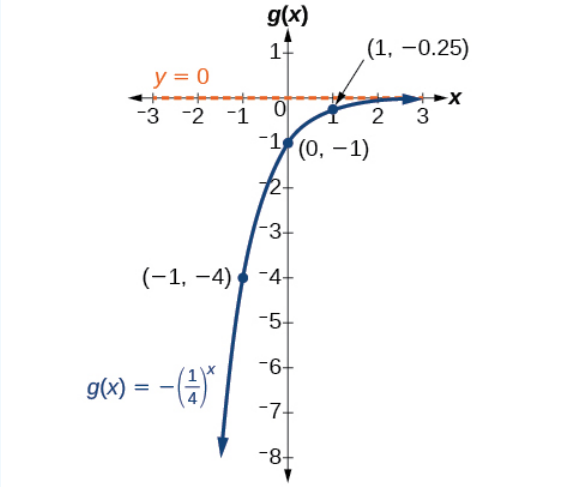


Figure 6.2.11

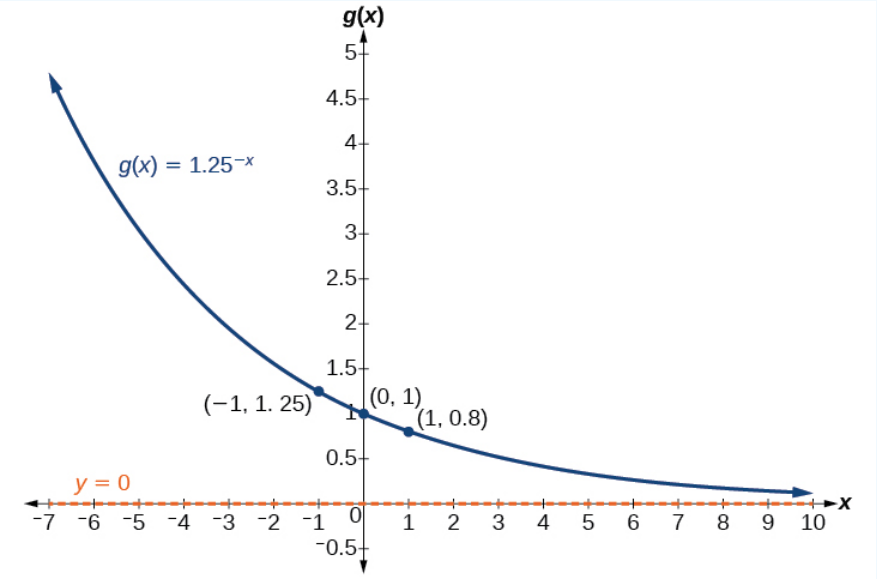
The domain is $(-\infty, \infty)$; the range is $(-\infty, 0)$; the horizontal asymptote is $y = 0$.

Exercise 6.2.5

Find and graph the equation for a function, $g(x)$, that reflects $f(x) = 1.25^x$ about the y-axis. State its domain, range, and asymptote.

Answer

The domain is $(-\infty, \infty)$; the range is $(0, \infty)$; the horizontal asymptote is $y = 0$.



Summarizing Translations of the Exponential Function

Now that we have worked with each type of translation for the exponential function, we can summarize them in **Table 6.2.6** to arrive at the general equation for translating exponential functions.

1, and notes the following changes: the reflected function is decreasing as x moves from 0 to infinity, the asymptote remains x=0, the x-intercept remains (1, 0), the key point changes to (b^(-1), 1), the domain remains (0, infinity), and the range remains (-infinity, infinity). The second column shows the left shift of the equation g(x)=log_b(x) when b>1, and notes the following

changes: the reflected function is decreasing as x moves from 0 to infinity, the asymptote remains x=0, the x-intercept changes to (-1, 0), the key point changes to (-b, 1), the domain changes to (-infinity, 0), and the range remains (-infinity, infinity).">

Table 6.2.6: Translations of the Parent Function $f(x) = b^x$

Translation	Form
Shift • Horizontally c units to the left • Vertically d units up	$f(x) = b^{x+c} + d$
Stretch and Compress • Stretch if $\|a\| > 1$ • Compression if $0 < \|a\| < 1$	$f(x) = ab^x$
Reflect about the x-axis	$f(x) = -b^x$
Reflect about the y-axis	$f(x) = b^{-x} = (\frac{1}{b})^x$
General equation for all translations	$f(x) = ab^{x+c} + d$

TRANSLATIONS OF EXPONENTIAL FUNCTIONS

A translation of an exponential function has the form

$$f(x) = ab^{x+c} + d$$

Where the parent function, $y = b^x$, $b > 1$,is

- shifted horizontally c units to the left.
- stretched vertically by a factor of $|a|$ if $|a| > 0$.
- compressed vertically by a factor of $|a|$ if $0 < |a| < 1$.
- shifted vertically d units.
- reflected about the x-axis when $a < 0$.

Note the order of the shifts, transformations, and reflections follow the order of operations.

Example 6.2.6: Writing a Function from a Description

Write the equation for the function described below. Give the horizontal asymptote, the domain, and the range.

$f(x) = e^x$ is vertically stretched by a factor of 2, reflected across the y-axis, and then shifted up 4 units.

Solution

We want to find an equation of the general form f(x)=abx+c+d. f(x)=abx+c+d. We use the description provided to finda, a, b,b, c,c, and d. d.

- We are given the parent function $f(x) = e^x$, so $b = e$.
- The function is stretched by a factor of 2, so $a = 2$.
- The function is reflected about the y-axis. We replace x with $-x$ to get: e^{-x}.
- The graph is shifted vertically 4 units, so $d = 4$.

Substituting in the general form we get,

$$\begin{aligned} f(x) &= ab^{x+c} + d \\ &= 2e^{-x+0} + 4 \\ &= 2e^{-x} + 4 \end{aligned}$$

The domain is $(-\infty, \infty)$; the range is $(4, \infty)$; the horizontal asymptote is $y = 4$.

Exercise 6.2.6

Write the equation for function described below. Give the horizontal asymptote, the domain, and the range.

$f(x) = e^x$ is compressed vertically by a factor of $\frac{1}{3}$, reflected across the *x*-axis and then shifted down 2 units.

Answer

$f(x) = -\frac{1}{3}e^x - 2$; the domain is $(-\infty, \infty)$; the range is $(-\infty, 2)$; the horizontal asymptote is $y = 2$.

Media

Access this online resource for additional instruction and practice with graphing exponential functions.

- Graph Exponential Functions

Key Equations

General Form for the Translation of the Parent Function $f(x) = b^x$	$f(x) = ab^{x+c} + d$

Key Concepts

- The graph of the function $f(x) = b^x$ has a *y*-intercept at $(0, 1)$,domain $(-\infty, \infty)$,range $(0, \infty)$, and horizontal asymptote $y = 0$. See Example.
- If $b > 1$,the function is increasing. The left tail of the graph will approach the asymptote $y = 0$, and the right tail will increase without bound.
- If $0 < b < 1$, the function is decreasing. The left tail of the graph will increase without bound, and the right tail will approach the asymptote $y = 0$.
- The equation $f(x) = b^x + d$ represents a vertical shift of the parent function $f(x) = b^x$.
- The equation $f(x) = b^{x+c}$ represents a horizontal shift of the parent function $f(x) = b^x$. See Example.
- Approximate solutions of the equation $f(x) = b^{x+c} + d$ can be found using a graphing calculator. See Example.
- The equation $f(x) = ab^x$, where $a > 0$, represents a vertical stretch if $|a| > 1$ or compression if $0 < |a| < 1$ of the parent function $f(x) = b^x$. See Example.
- When the parent function $f(x) = b^x$ is multiplied by -1,the result, $f(x) = -b^x$, is a reflection about the *x*-axis. When the input is multiplied by -1,the result, $f(x) = b^{-x}$, is a reflection about the *y*-axis. See Example.
- All translations of the exponential function can be summarized by the general equation $f(x) = ab^{x+c} + d$. See Table.
- Using the general equation $f(x) = ab^{x+c} + d$, we can write the equation of a function given its description. See Example.

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6.3: Logarithmic Functions

Learning Objectives

- Convert from logarithmic to exponential form.
- Convert from exponential to logarithmic form.
- Evaluate logarithms.
- Use common logarithms.
- Use natural logarithms.

In 2010, a major earthquake struck Haiti, destroying or damaging over 285,000 homes. One year later, another, stronger earthquake devastated Honshu, Japan, destroying or damaging over 332,000 buildings, like those shown in Figure 6.3.1. Even though both caused substantial damage, the earthquake in 2011 was 100 times stronger than the earthquake in Haiti. How do we know? The magnitudes of earthquakes are measured on a scale known as the Richter Scale. The Haitian earthquake registered a 7.0 on the Richter Scale whereas the Japanese earthquake registered a 9.0.

Figure 6.3.1: Devastation of March 11, 2011 earthquake in Honshu, Japan. (credit: Daniel Pierce).

The Richter Scale is a base-ten logarithmic scale. In other words, an earthquake of magnitude 8 is not twice as great as an earthquake of magnitude 4. It is

$$10^{8-4} = 10^4 = 10,000$$

times as great! In this lesson, we will investigate the nature of the Richter Scale and the base-ten function upon which it depends.

Converting from Logarithmic to Exponential Form

In order to analyze the magnitude of earthquakes or compare the magnitudes of two different earthquakes, we need to be able to convert between logarithmic and exponential form. For example, suppose the amount of energy released from one earthquake were 500 times greater than the amount of energy released from another. We want to calculate the difference in magnitude. The equation that represents this problem is $10^x = 500$, where x represents the difference in magnitudes on the Richter Scale. How would we solve for x?

We have not yet learned a method for solving exponential equations. None of the algebraic tools discussed so far is sufficient to solve $10^x = 500$. We know that $10^2 = 100$ and $10^3 = 1000$, so it is clear that x must be some value between 2 and 3, since $y = 10^x$ is increasing. We can examine a graph, as in Figure 6.3.1, to better estimate the solution.

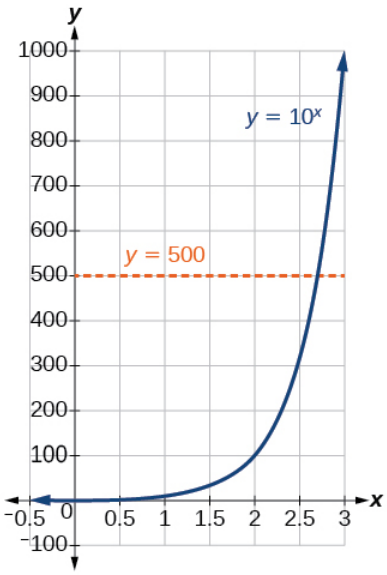


Figure 6.3.2

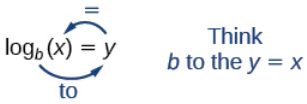
Estimating from a graph, however, is imprecise. To find an algebraic solution, we must introduce a new function. Observe that the graph in Figure $6.3.2$ passes the horizontal line test. The exponential function $y = b^x$ is one-to-one, so its inverse, $x = b^y$ is also a function. As is the case with all inverse functions, we simply interchange x and y and solve for y to find the inverse function. To represent y as a function of x, we use a logarithmic function of the form $y = \log_b(x)$. The base b **logarithm** of a number is the exponent by which we must raise b to get that number.

We read a logarithmic expression as, "The logarithm with base b of x is equal to y," or, simplified, "log base b of x is y." We can also say, "b raised to the power of y is x," because logs are exponents. For example, the base 2 logarithm of 32 is 5, because 5 is the exponent we must apply to 2 to get 32. Since $2^5 = 32$, we can write $\log_2 32 = 5$. We read this as "log base 2 of 32 is 5."

We can express the relationship between logarithmic form and its corresponding exponential form as follows:

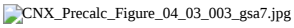
$$\log_b(x) = y \Leftrightarrow b^y = x, b > 0, b \neq 1 \tag{6.3.1}$$

Note that the base b is always positive.



Because logarithm is a function, it is most correctly written as $\log_b(x)$, using parentheses to denote function evaluation, just as we would with $f(x)$. However, when the input is a single variable or number, it is common to see the parentheses dropped and the expression written without parentheses, as $\log_b x$. Note that many calculators require parentheses around the x.

We can illustrate the notation of logarithms as follows:



Notice that, comparing the logarithm function and the exponential function, the input and the output are switched. This means $y = \log^b(x)$ and $y = b^x$ are inverse functions.

DEFINITION OF THE LOGARITHMIC FUNCTION

A logarithm base b of a positive number x satisfies the following definition.

For $x > 0, b > 0, b \neq 1$,

$$y = \log_b(x) \text{ is equivalent to } b^y = x \tag{6.3.2}$$

where,

- we read $\log_b(x)$ as, "the logarithm with base b of x" or the "log base b of x."

- the logarithm y is the exponent to which b must be raised to get x.

Also, since the logarithmic and exponential functions switch the x and y values, the domain and range of the exponential function are interchanged for the logarithmic function. Therefore,

- the domain of the logarithm function with base b is $(0, \infty)$.
- the range of the logarithm function with base b is $(-\infty, \infty)$.

Q&A: Can we take the logarithm of a negative number?

No. Because the base of an exponential function is always positive, no power of that base can ever be negative. We can never take the logarithm of a negative number. Also, we cannot take the logarithm of zero. Calculators may output a log of a negative number when in complex mode, but the log of a negative number is not a real number.

How to: Given an equation in logarithmic form $\log_b(x) = y$, convert it to exponential form

1. Examine the equation $y = \log_b x$ and identify b, y,and x.
2. Rewrite $\log_b x = y$ as $b^y = x$.

Example 6.3.1: Converting from Logarithmic Form to Exponential Form

Write the following logarithmic equations in exponential form.

a. $\log_6(\sqrt{6}) = \frac{1}{2}$
b. $\log_3(9) = 2$

Solution

First, identify the values of b, y,and x. Then, write the equation in the form $b^y = x$.

a. $\log_6(\sqrt{6}) = \frac{1}{2}$

Here, $b = 6$, $y = \frac{1}{2}$,and $x = \sqrt{6}$. Therefore, the equation $\log_6(\sqrt{6}) = \frac{1}{2}$ is equivalent to

$$6^{\frac{1}{2}} = \sqrt{6}$$

b. $\log_3(9) = 2$

Here, $b = 3$, $y = 2$,and $x = 9$. Therefore, the equation $\log_3(9) = 2$ is equivalent to

$$3^2 = 9$$

Exercise 6.3.1

Write the following logarithmic equations in exponential form.

a. $\log_{10}(1,000,000) = 6$
b. $\log_5(25) = 2$

Answer a

$\log_{10}(1,000,000) = 6$is equivalent to $10^6 = 1,000,000$

Answer b

$\log_5(25) = 2$ is equivalent to $5^2 = 25$

Converting from Exponential to Logarithmic Form

To convert from exponents to logarithms, we follow the same steps in reverse. We identify the base b,exponent x,and output y. Then we write $x = \log_b(y)$.

Example 6.3.2: Converting from Exponential Form to Logarithmic Form

Write the following exponential equations in logarithmic form.

a. $2^3 = 8$
b. $5^2 = 25$
c. $10^{-4} = \dfrac{1}{10,000}$

Solution

First, identify the values of b, y,and x. Then, write the equation in the form $x = \log_b(y)$.

a. $2^3 = 8$

Here, $b = 2$, $x = 3$,and $y = 8$. Therefore, the equation $2^3 = 8$ is equivalent to $\log_2(8) = 3$.

b. $5^2 = 25$

Here, $b = 5$, $x = 2$,and $y = 25$. Therefore, the equation $5^2 = 25$ is equivalent to $\log_5(25) = 2$.

c. $10^{-4} = \dfrac{1}{10,000}$

Here, $b = 10$, $x = -4$,and $y = \dfrac{1}{10,000}$. Therefore, the equation $10^{-4} = \dfrac{1}{10,000}$ is equivalent to $\log_{10}\left(\dfrac{1}{10,000}\right) = -4$.

Exercise 6.3.2

Write the following exponential equations in logarithmic form.

a. $3^2 = 9$
b. $5^3 = 125$
c. $2^{-1} = \dfrac{1}{2}$

Answer a

$3^2 = 9$ is equivalent to $\log_3(9) = 2$

Answer b

$5^3 = 125$ is equivalent to $\log_5(125) = 3$

Answer c

$2^{-1} = \dfrac{1}{2}$ is equivalent to $\log_2\left(\dfrac{1}{2}\right) = -1$

Evaluating Logarithms

Knowing the squares, cubes, and roots of numbers allows us to evaluate many logarithms mentally. For example, consider $\log_2 8$. We ask, "To what exponent must 2 be raised in order to get 8?" Because we already know $2^3 = 8$, it follows that $\log_2 8 = 3$.

Now consider solving $\log_7 49$ and $\log_3 27$ mentally.

- We ask, "To what exponent must 7 be raised in order to get 49?" We know $7^2 = 49$. Therefore, $\log_7 49 = 2$
- We ask, "To what exponent must 3 be raised in order to get 27?" We know $3^3 = 27$. Therefore, $\log_3 27 = 3$

Even some seemingly more complicated logarithms can be evaluated without a calculator. For example, let's evaluate $\log_{\frac{2}{3}} \frac{4}{9}$ mentally.

- We ask, "To what exponent must $\frac{2}{3}$ be raised in order to get $\frac{4}{9}$?" We know $2^2 = 4$ and $3^2 = 9$, so

$$\left(\frac{2}{3}\right)^2 = \frac{4}{9}.$$

Therefore,

$$\log_{\frac{2}{3}}\left(\frac{4}{9}\right) = 2.$$

How to: Given a logarithm of the form $y = \log_b(x)$,evaluate it mentally

1. Rewrite the argument x as a power of b: $b^y = x$.
2. Use previous knowledge of powers of b identify y by asking, "To what exponent should b be raised in order to get x?"

Example 6.3.3: Solving Logarithms Mentally

Solve $y = \log_4(64)$ without using a calculator.

Solution

First we rewrite the logarithm in exponential form: $4^y = 64$. Next, we ask, "To what exponent must 4 be raised in order to get 64?"

We know

$$4^3 = 64$$

Therefore,

$$\log_4(64) = 3$$

Exercise 6.3.3

Solve $y = \log_{121}(11)$ without using a calculator.

Answer

$\log_{121}(11) = \frac{1}{2}$ (recalling that $\sqrt{121} = (121)^{\frac{1}{2}} = 11$)

Example 6.3.4: Evaluating the Logarithm of a Reciprocal

Evaluate $y = \log_3\left(\frac{1}{27}\right)$ without using a calculator.

Solution

First we rewrite the logarithm in exponential form: $3^y = \frac{1}{27}$. Next, we ask, "To what exponent must 3 be raised in order to get $\frac{1}{27}$?"

We know $3^3 = 27$,but what must we do to get the reciprocal, $\frac{1}{27}$? Recall from working with exponents that $b^{-a} = \frac{1}{b^a}$. We use this information to write

$$3^{-3} = \frac{1}{3^3}$$
$$= \frac{1}{27}$$

Therefore, $\log_3\left(\frac{1}{27}\right) = -3$.

Exercise 6.3.4

Evaluate $y = \log_2\left(\frac{1}{32}\right)$ without using a calculator.

Answer

$\log_2\left(\frac{1}{32}\right) = -5$

Using Common Logarithms

Sometimes we may see a logarithm written without a base. In this case, we assume that the base is 10. In other words, the expression $\log(x)$ means $\log_{10}(x)$. We call a base -10 logarithm a *common logarithm*. Common logarithms are used to measure the Richter Scale mentioned at the beginning of the section. Scales for measuring the brightness of stars and the pH of acids and bases also use common logarithms.

DEFINITION OF THE COMMON LOGARITHM

A common logarithm is a logarithm with base 10. We write $\log_{10}(x)$ simply as $\log(x)$. The common logarithm of a positive number x satisfies the following definition.

For $x > 0$,

$$y = \log(x) \text{ is equivalent to } 10^y = x \tag{6.3.3}$$

We read $\log(x)$ as, "the logarithm with base 10 of x " or "log base 10 of x."

The logarithm y is the exponent to which 10 must be raised to get x.

How to: Given a common logarithm of the form $y = \log(x)$, evaluate it mentally

1. Rewrite the argument x as a power of 10: $10^y = x$.
2. Use previous knowledge of powers of 10 to identify y by asking, "To what exponent must 10 be raised in order to get x?"

Example 6.3.5: Finding the Value of a Common Logarithm Mentally

Evaluate $y = \log(1000)$ without using a calculator.

Solution

First we rewrite the logarithm in exponential form: $10^y = 1000$. Next, we ask, "To what exponent must 10 be raised in order to get 1000?" We know

$$10^3 = 1000$$

Therefore, $\log(1000) = 3$.

Exercise 6.3.5

Evaluate $y = \log(1,000,000)$

Answer

$\log(1,000,000) = 6$

How to: Given a common logarithm with the form $y = \log(x)$,evaluate it using a calculator

1. Press **[LOG]**.
2. Enter the value given for x,followed by **[ )]**.
3. Press **[ENTER]**.

Example 6.3.6: Finding the Value of a Common Logarithm Using a Calculator

Evaluate $y = \log(321)$to four decimal places using a calculator.

Solution

- Press **[LOG]**.
- Enter 321, followed by **[ )]**.
- Press **[ENTER]**.

Rounding to four decimal places, $\log(321) \approx 2.5065$

Analysis

Note that $10^2 = 100$ and that $10^3 = 1000$. Since 321 is between 100 and 1000, we know that $\log(321)$must be between $\log(100)$and $\log(1000)$. This gives us the following:

$$100 < 321 < 1000$$

$$2 < 2.5065 < 3$$

Exercise 6.3.6

Evaluate $y = \log(123)$to four decimal places using a calculator.

Answer

$\log(123) \approx 2.0899$

Example 6.3.7: Rewriting and Solving a Real-World Exponential Model

The amount of energy released from one earthquake was 500 times greater than the amount of energy released from another. The equation $10^x = 500$ represents this situation, where x is the difference in magnitudes on the Richter Scale. To the nearest thousandth, what was the difference in magnitudes?

Solution

We begin by rewriting the exponential equation in logarithmic form.

$$10^x = 500$$

$$\log(500) = x \text{ Use the definition of the common log.}$$

Next we evaluate the logarithm using a calculator:

- Press **[LOG]**.
- Enter 500,followed by **[ )]**.
- Press **[ENTER]**.
- To the nearest thousandth, $\log(500) \approx 2.699$

The difference in magnitudes was about 2.699.

Exercise 6.3.7

The amount of energy released from one earthquake was $8,500$ times greater than the amount of energy released from another. The equation $10^x = 8500$ represents this situation, where x is the difference in magnitudes on the Richter Scale. To the nearest thousandth, what was the difference in magnitudes?

Answer

The difference in magnitudes was about 3.929

Using Natural Logarithms

The most frequently used base for logarithms is e. Base e logarithms are important in calculus and some scientific applications; they are called **natural logarithms**. The base e logarithm, $\log_e(x)$, has its own notation, $\ln(x)$. Most values of $\ln(x)$ can be found only using a calculator. The major exception is that, because the logarithm of 1 is always 0 in any base, $\ln 1 = 0$. For other natural logarithms, we can use the ln key that can be found on most scientific calculators. We can also find the natural logarithm of any power of e using the inverse property of logarithms.

DEFINITION OF THE NATURAL LOGARITHM

A natural logarithm is a logarithm with base e. We write $\log_e(x)$ simply as $\ln(x)$. The natural logarithm of a positive number x satisfies the following definition.

For $x > 0$,

$$y = \ln(x) \text{ is equivalent to } e^y = x$$

We read $\ln(x)$ as, "the logarithm with base e of x" or "the natural logarithm of x."

The logarithm y is the exponent to which e must be raised to get x.

Since the functions $y = e^x$ and $y = \ln(x)$ are inverse functions, $\ln(e^x) = x$ for all x and $e^{\ln(x)} = x$ for $x > 0$.

How to: Given a natural logarithm with the form $y = \ln(x)$, evaluate it using a calculator

1. Press **[LN]**.
2. Enter the value given for x, followed by **[ )]**.
3. Press **[ENTER]**.

Example 6.3.8: Evaluating a Natural Logarithm Using a Calculator

Evaluate $y = \ln(500)$ to four decimal places using a calculator.

Solution

- Press **[LN]**.
- Enter 500, followed by **[ )]**.
- Press **[ENTER]**.

Rounding to four decimal places, $\ln(500) \approx 6.2146$

Exercise 6.3.8

Evaluate $\ln(-500)$.

Answer

It is not possible to take the logarithm of a negative number in the set of real numbers.

Media

Access this online resource for additional instruction and practice with logarithms.

- Introduction to Logarithms

Key Equations

Definition of the logarithmic function	For $x > 0$, $b > 0$, $b \neq 1$, $y = \log_b(x)$ if and only if $b^y = x$.
Definition of the common logarithm	For $x > 0$, $y = \log(x)$ if and only if $10^y = x$.
Definition of the natural logarithm	For $x > 0$, $y = \ln(x)$ if and only if $e^y = x$.

Key Concepts

- The inverse of an exponential function is a logarithmic function, and the inverse of a logarithmic function is an exponential function.
- Logarithmic equations can be written in an equivalent exponential form, using the definition of a logarithm. See Example 6.3.1.
- Exponential equations can be written in their equivalent logarithmic form using the definition of a logarithm See Example 6.3.2.
- Logarithmic functions with base b can be evaluated mentally using previous knowledge of powers of b. See Example 6.3.3 and Example 6.3.4.
- Common logarithms can be evaluated mentally using previous knowledge of powers of 10. See Example 6.3.5.
- When common logarithms cannot be evaluated mentally, a calculator can be used. See Example 6.3.6.
- Real-world exponential problems with base 10 can be rewritten as a common logarithm and then evaluated using a calculator. See Example 6.3.7.
- Natural logarithms can be evaluated using a calculator Example 6.3.8.

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6.4: Graphs of Logarithmic Functions

Learning Objectives

- Identify the domain of a logarithmic function.
- Graph logarithmic functions.

In the Section on Graphs of Exponential Functions, we saw how creating a graphical representation of an exponential model gives us another layer of insight for predicting future events. How do logarithmic graphs give us insight into situations? Because every logarithmic function is the inverse function of an exponential function, we can think of every output on a logarithmic graph as the input for the corresponding inverse exponential equation. In other words, logarithms give the *cause* for an *effect*.

To illustrate, suppose we invest $\$2500$ in an account that offers an annual interest rate of 5%, compounded continuously. We already know that the balance in our account for any year t can be found with the equation $A = 2500e^{0.05t}$.

But what if we wanted to know the year for any balance? We would need to create a corresponding new function by interchanging the input and the output; thus we would need to create a logarithmic model for this situation. By graphing the model, we can see the output (year) for any input (account balance). For instance, what if we wanted to know how many years it would take for our initial investment to double? Figure $6.4.1$ shows this point on the logarithmic graph.

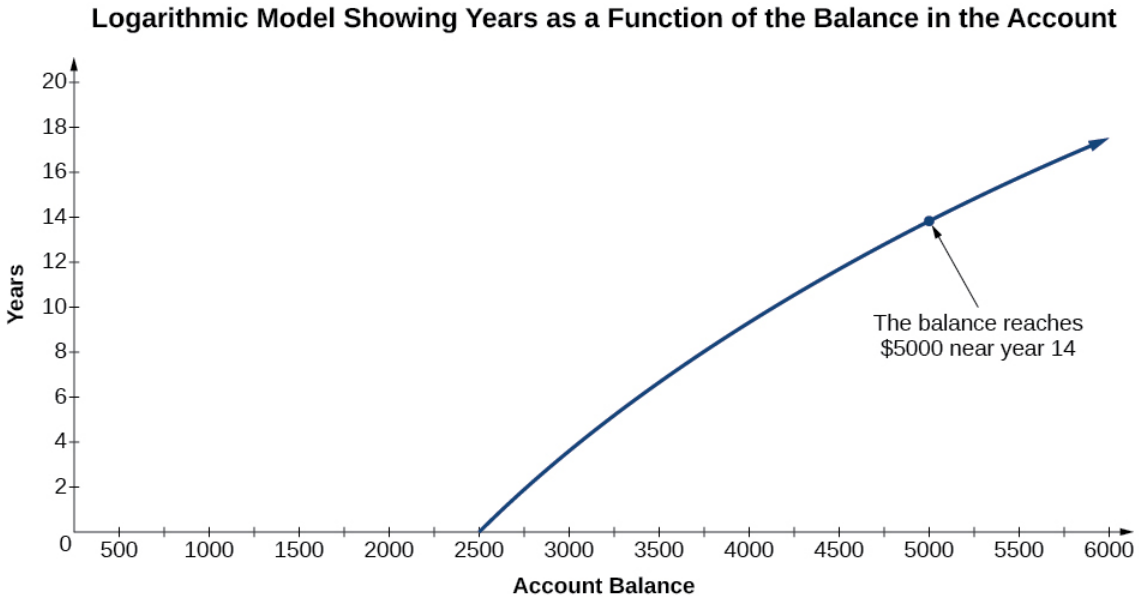


Figure 6.4.1

In this section we will discuss the values for which a logarithmic function is defined, and then turn our attention to graphing the family of logarithmic functions.

Finding the Domain of a Logarithmic Function

Before working with graphs, we will take a look at the domain (the set of input values) for which the logarithmic function is defined.

Recall that the exponential function is defined as $y = b^x$ for any real number x and constant $b > 0$, $b \neq 1$, where

- The domain of y is $(-\infty, \infty)$.
- The range of y is $(0, \infty)$.

In the last section we learned that the logarithmic function $y = \log_b(x)$ is the inverse of the exponential function $y = b^x$. So, as inverse functions:

- The domain of $y = \log_b(x)$ is the range of $y = b^x$: $(0, \infty)$.
- The range of $y = \log_b(x)$ is the domain of $y = b^x$: $(-\infty, \infty)$.

Transformations of the parent function $y = \log_b(x)$ behave similarly to those of other functions. Just as with other parent functions, we can apply the four types of transformations—shifts, stretches, compressions, and reflections—to the parent function without loss of shape.

In Graphs of Exponential Functions we saw that certain transformations can change the *range* of $y = b^x$. Similarly, applying transformations to the parent function $y = \log_b(x)$ can change the *domain*. When finding the domain of a logarithmic function, therefore, it is important to remember that the domain consists *only of positive real numbers*. That is, the argument of the logarithmic function must be greater than zero.

For example, consider $f(x) = \log_4(2x - 3)$. This function is defined for any values of x such that the argument, in this case $2x - 3$,is greater than zero. To find the domain, we set up an inequality and solve for x:

$$\begin{aligned} 2x - 3 &> 0 && \text{Show the argument greater than zero} \\ 2x &> 3 && \text{Add 3} \\ x &> 1.5 && \text{Divide by 2} \end{aligned}$$

In interval notation, the domain of $f(x) = \log_4(2x - 3)$ is $(1.5, \infty)$.

Given a logarithmic function, identify the domain

1. Set up an inequality showing the argument greater than zero.
2. Solve for x.
3. Write the domain in interval notation.

Example 6.4.1: Identifying the Domain of a Logarithmic Shift

What is the domain of $f(x) = \log_2(x + 3)$?

Solution

The logarithmic function is defined only when the input is positive, so this function is defined when $x + 3 > 0$. Solving this inequality,

$$\begin{aligned} x + 3 &> 0 && \text{The input must be positive} \\ x &> -3 && \text{Subtract 3} \end{aligned}$$

The domain of $f(x) = \log_2(x + 3)$ is $(-3, \infty)$.

Exercise 6.4.1

What is the domain of $f(x) = \log_5(x - 2) + 1$?

Answer

$(2, \infty)$

Example 6.4.2: Identifying the Domain of a Logarithmic Shift and Reflection

What is the domain of $f(x) = \log(5 - 2x)$?

Solution

The logarithmic function is defined only when the input is positive, so this function is defined when $5 - 2x > 0$. Solving this inequality,

$$\begin{aligned} 5 - 2x &> 0 && \text{The input must be positive} \\ -2x &> -5 && \text{Subtract 5} \\ x &< \frac{5}{2} && \text{Divide by -2 and switch the inequality} \end{aligned}$$

The domain of $f(x) = \log(5 - 2x)$ is $\left(-\infty, \frac{5}{2}\right)$.

? Exercise 6.4.2

What is the domain of $f(x) = \log(x - 5) + 2$?

Answer

$(5, \infty)$

Graphing Logarithmic Functions

Now that we have a feel for the set of values for which a logarithmic function is defined, we move on to graphing logarithmic functions. The family of logarithmic functions includes the parent function $y = \log_b(x)$ along with all its transformations: shifts, stretches, compressions, and reflections.

We begin with the parent function $y = \log_b(x)$. Because every logarithmic function of this form is the inverse of an exponential function with the form $y = b^x$, their graphs will be reflections of each other across the line $y = x$. To illustrate this, we can observe the relationship between the input and output values of $y = 2^x$ and its equivalent $x = \log_2(y)$ in Table 6.4.1.

Table 6.4.1

x	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3
$2^x = y$	$\frac{1}{8}$	$\frac{1}{4}$	$\frac{1}{2}$	1	2	4	8
$\log_2(y) = x$	-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3

Using the inputs and outputs from Table 6.4.1, we can build another table to observe the relationship between points on the graphs of the inverse functions $f(x) = 2^x$ and $g(x) = \log_2(x)$. See Table 6.4.2.

Table 6.4.2

$f(x) = 2^x$	$\left(-3, \frac{1}{8}\right)$	$\left(-2, \frac{1}{4}\right)$	$\left(-1, \frac{1}{2}\right)$	$(0, 1)$	$(1, 2)$	$(2, 4)$	$(3, 8)$
$g(x) = \log_2(x)$	$\left(\frac{1}{8}, -3\right)$	$\left(\frac{1}{4}, -2\right)$	$\left(\frac{1}{2}, -1\right)$	$(1, 0)$	$(2, 1)$	$(4, 2)$	$(8, 3)$

As we'd expect, the x- and y-coordinates are reversed for the inverse functions. Figure 6.4.2 shows the graph of f and g.

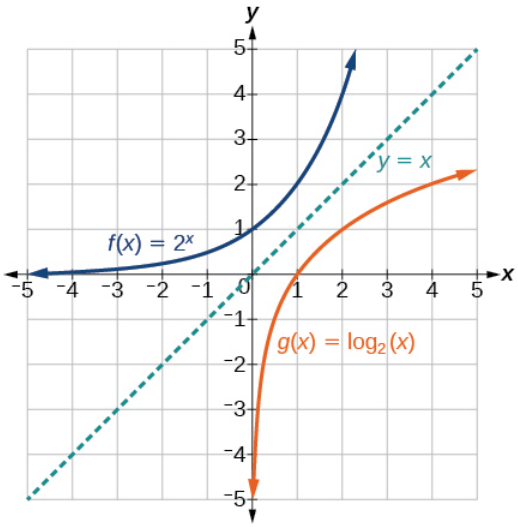


Figure 6.4.2: Notice that the graphs of $f(x) = 2^x$ and $g(x) = \log_2(x)$ are reflections about the line $y = x$.

Observe the following from the graph:

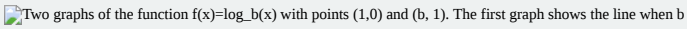
- $f(x) = 2^x$ has a y-intercept at $(0, 1)$ and $g(x) = \log_2(x)$ has an x- intercept at $(1, 0)$.
- The domain of $f(x) = 2^x$, $(-\infty, \infty)$, is the same as the range of $g(x) = \log_2(x)$.
- The range of $f(x) = 2^x$, $(0, \infty)$, is the same as the domain of $g(x) = \log_2(x)$.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE GRAPH OF THE PARENT FUNCTION, $F(X) = LOG_B(X)$

For any real number x and constant $b > 0$, $b \neq 1$, we can see the following characteristics in the graph of $f(x) = \log_b(x)$:

- one-to-one function
- vertical asymptote: $x = 0$
- domain: $(0, \infty)$
- range: $(-\infty, \infty)$
- x-intercept: $(1, 0)$ and key point $(b, 1)$
- y-intercept: none
- increasing if $b > 1$
- decreasing if $0 < b < 1$

See Figure 6.4.3.



1, and the second graph shows the line when 0

<1.">

Figure 6.4.3

Figure 6.4.4 shows how changing the base b in $f(x) = \log_b(x)$ can affect the graphs. Observe that the graphs compress vertically as the value of the base increases. (Note: recall that the function $\ln(x)$ has base $e \approx 2.718$.)

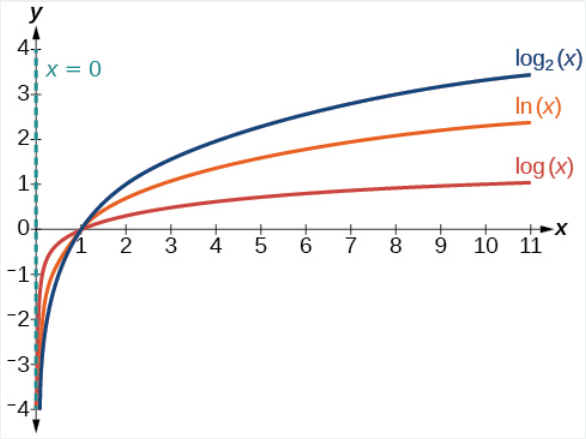


Figure 6.4.4: The graphs of three logarithmic functions with different bases, all greater than 1.

Given a logarithmic function with the form $f(x) = \log_b(x)$, graph the function.

1. Draw and label the vertical asymptote, $x = 0$.
2. Plot the x-intercept, $(1, 0)$.
3. Plot the key point $(b, 1)$.
4. Draw a smooth curve through the points.
5. State the domain, $(0, \infty)$,the range, $(-\infty, \infty)$, and the vertical asymptote, $x = 0$.

Example 6.4.3: Graphing a Logarithmic Function with the Form $f(x) = log_b(x)$

Graph $f(x) = \log_5(x)$. State the domain, range, and asymptote.

Solution

Before graphing, identify the behavior and key points for the graph.

- Since $b = 5$ is greater than one, we know the function is increasing. The left tail of the graph will approach the vertical asymptote $x = 0$, and the right tail will increase slowly without bound.
- The x-intercept is $(1, 0)$.
- The key point $(5, 1)$ is on the graph.
- We draw and label the asymptote, plot and label the points, and draw a smooth curve through the points (see Figure 6.4.5).

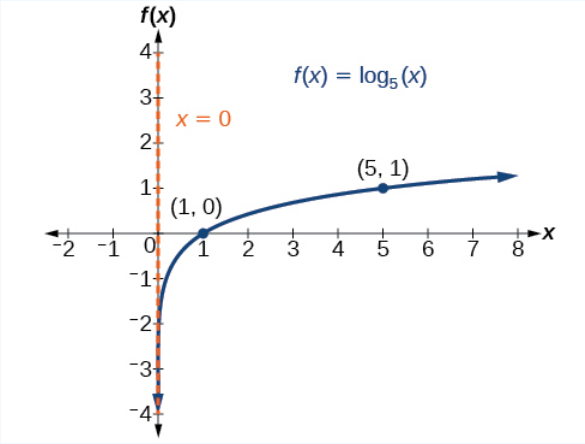


Figure 6.4.5

The domain is $(0, \infty)$, the range is $(-\infty, \infty)$, and the vertical asymptote is $x = 0$.

? Exercise 6.4.3

Graph $f(x) = \log_{\frac{1}{5}}(x)$. State the domain, range, and asymptote.

Answer

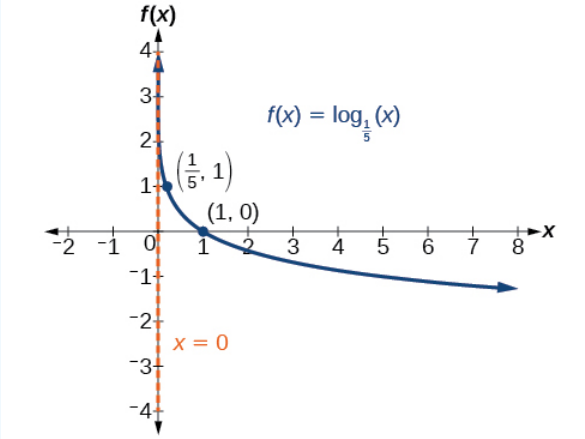


Figure 6.4.6

The domain is $(0, \infty)$, the range is $(-\infty, \infty)$, and the vertical asymptote is $x = 0$.

Graphing Transformations of Logarithmic Functions

As we mentioned in the beginning of the section, transformations of logarithmic graphs behave similarly to those of other parent functions. We can shift, stretch, compress, and reflect the parent function $y = \log_b(x)$ without loss of shape.

Graphing a Horizontal Shift of $f(x) = \log_b(x)$

When a constant c is added to the input of the parent function $f(x) = \log_b(x)$, the result is a horizontal shift c units in the *opposite* direction of the sign on c. To visualize horizontal shifts, we can observe the general graph of the parent function $f(x) = \log_b(x)$ and for $c > 0$ alongside the shift left, $g(x) = \log_b(x + c)$, and the shift right, $h(x) = \log_b(x - c)$. See Figure 6.4.7.

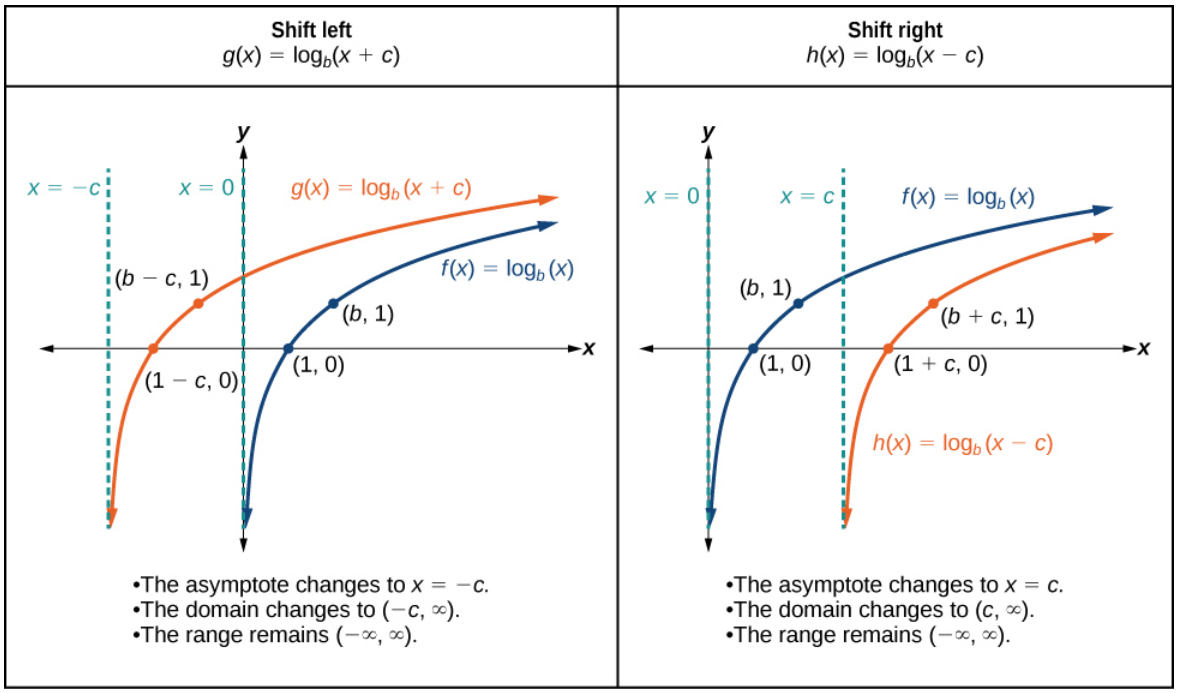


Figure 6.4.7

HORIZONTAL SHIFTS OF THE PARENT FUNCTION $Y = LOG_B(X)$

For any constant c,the function $f(x) = \log_b(x + c)$

- shifts the parent function $y = \log_b(x)$ left c units if $c > 0$.
- shifts the parent function $y = \log_b(x)$ right c units if $c < 0$.
- has the vertical asymptote $x = -c$.
- has domain $(-c, \infty)$.
- has range $(-\infty, \infty)$.

Given a logarithmic function with the form $f(x) = \log_b(x + c)$, graph the translation.

1. Identify the horizontal shift:
   - If $c > 0$,shift the graph of $f(x) = \log_b(x)$ left c units.
   - If $c < 0$,shift the graph of $f(x) = \log_b(x)$ right c units.
2. Draw the vertical asymptote $x = -c$.
3. Identify three key points from the parent function. Find new coordinates for the shifted functions by subtracting c from the x coordinate.
4. Label the three points.
5. The Domain is $(-c, \infty)$,the range is $(-\infty, \infty)$, and the vertical asymptote is $x = -c$.

Example 6.4.4: Graphing a Horizontal Shift of the Parent Function $y = log_b(x)$

Sketch the horizontal shift $f(x) = \log_3(x - 2)$ alongside its parent function. Include the key points and asymptotes on the graph. State the domain, range, and asymptote.

Solution

Since the function is $f(x) = \log_3(x - 2)$, we notice $x + (-2) = x - 2$.

Thus $c = -2$, so $c < 0$. This means we will shift the function $f(x) = \log_3(x)$ right 2 units.

The vertical asymptote is $x = -(-2)$ or $x = 2$.

Consider the three key points from the parent function, $\left(\frac{1}{3}, -1\right)$, $(1, 0)$,and $(3, 1)$.

The new coordinates are found by adding 2 to the x coordinates.

Label the points $\left(\frac{7}{3}, -1\right)$, $(3, 0)$,and $(5, 1)$.

The domain is $(2, \infty)$,the range is $(-\infty, \infty)$,and the vertical asymptote is $x = 2$.

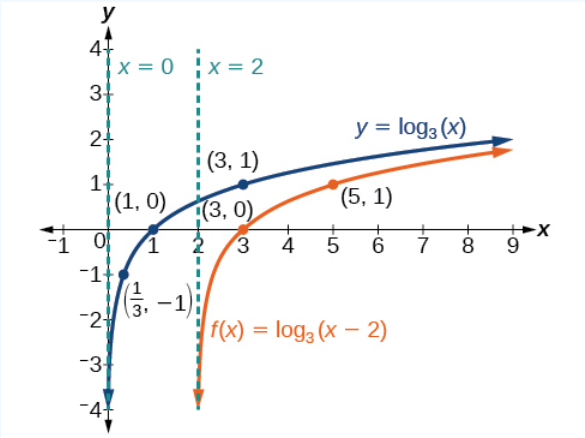


Figure 6.4.8

Exercise 6.4.4

Sketch a graph of $f(x) = \log_3(x + 4)$ alongside its parent function. Include the key points and asymptotes on the graph. State the domain, range, and asymptote.

Answer

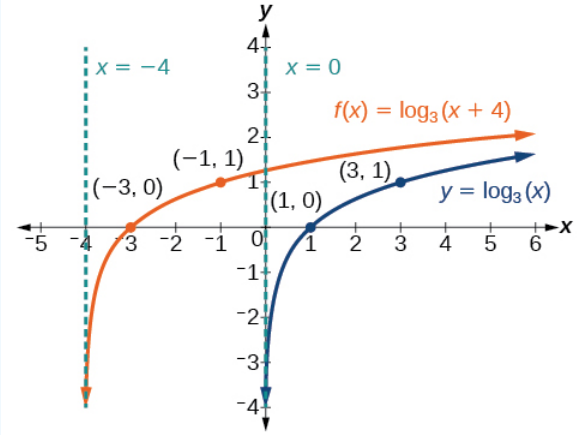


Figure 6.4.9

The domain is $(-4, \infty)$,the range $(-\infty, \infty)$,and the asymptote $x = -4$.

Graphing a Vertical Shift of $y = log_b(x)$

When a constant d is added to the parent function $f(x) = \log_b(x)$,the result is a vertical shift d units in the direction of the sign on d. To visualize vertical shifts, we can observe the general graph of the parent function $f(x) = \log_b(x)$ alongside the shift up, $g(x) = \log_b(x) + d$ and the shift down, $h(x) = \log_b(x) - d$ .See Figure 6.4.10

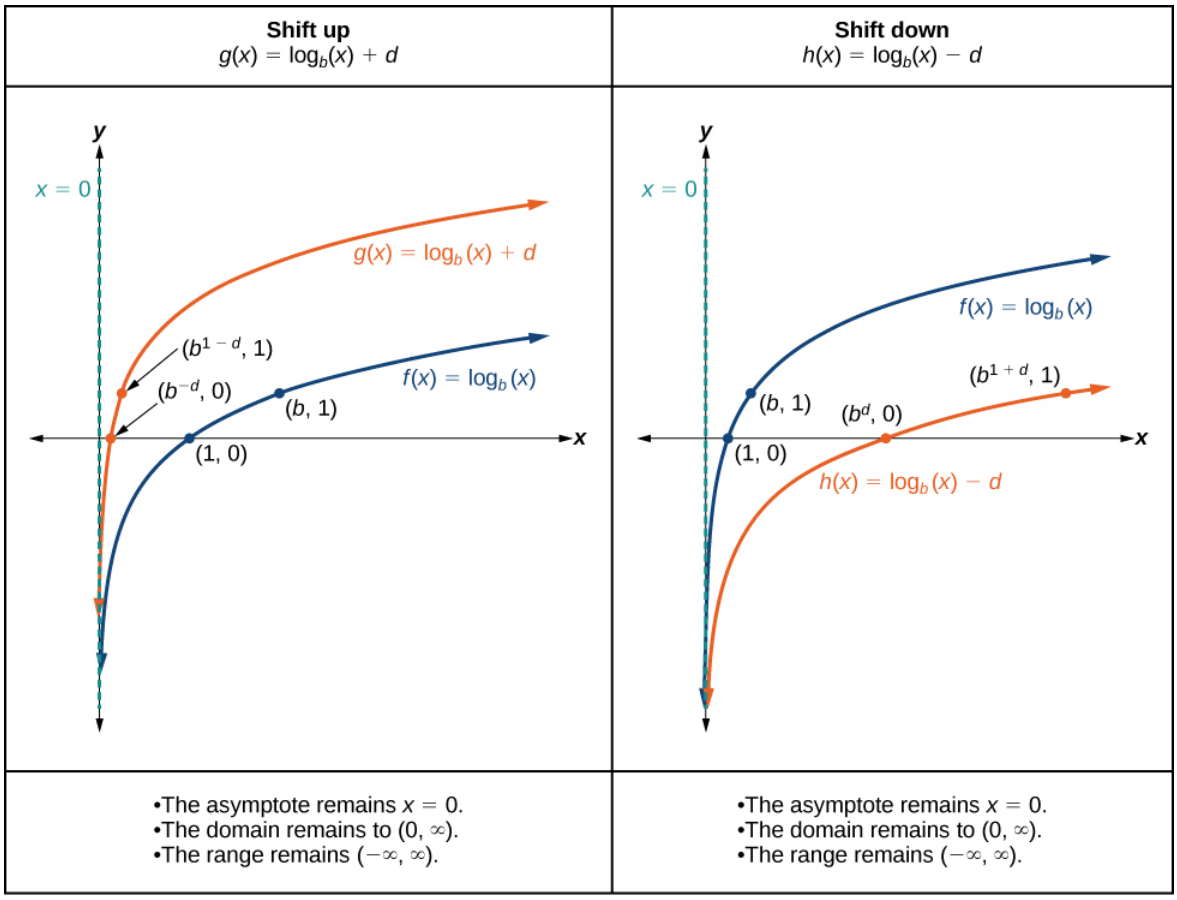


Figure 6.4.10

VERTICAL SHIFTS OF THE PARENT FUNCTION $Y = LOG_B(X)$

For any constant d,the function $f(x) = \log_b(x) + d$

- shifts the parent function $y = \log_b(x)$ up d units if $d > 0$.
- shifts the parent function $y = \log_b(x)$ down d units if $d < 0$.
- has the vertical asymptote $x = 0$.
- has domain $(0, \infty)$.
- has range $(-\infty, \infty)$.

Given a logarithmic function with the form $f(x) = \log_b(x) + d$, graph the translation.

1. Identify the vertical shift:
   - If $d > 0$, shift the graph of $f(x) = \log_b(x)$ up d units.
   - If $d < 0$, shift the graph of $f(x) = \log_b(x)$ down d units.
2. Draw the vertical asymptote $x = 0$.
3. Identify three key points from the parent function. Find new coordinates for the shifted functions by adding d to the y coordinate.
4. Label the three points.
5. The domain is $(0, \infty)$, the range is $(-\infty, \infty)$,and the vertical asymptote is $x = 0$.

Example 6.4.5: Graphing a Vertical Shift of the Parent Function $y = log_b(x)$

Sketch a graph of $f(x) = \log_3(x) - 2$ alongside its parent function. Include the key points and asymptote on the graph. State the domain, range, and asymptote.

Solution

Since the function is $f(x) = \log_3(x) - 2$,we will notice $d = -2$. Thus $d < 0$.

This means we will shift the function $f(x) = \log_3(x)$ down 2 units.

The vertical asymptote is $x = 0$.

Consider the three key points from the parent function, $\left(\frac{1}{3}, -1\right)$, $(1, 0)$,and $(3, 1)$.

The new coordinates are found by subtracting 2 from the *y* coordinates.

Label the points $\left(\frac{1}{3}, -3\right)$, $(1, -2)$, and $(3, -1)$.

The domain is $(0, \infty)$,the range is $(-\infty, \infty)$, and the vertical asymptote is $x = 0$.

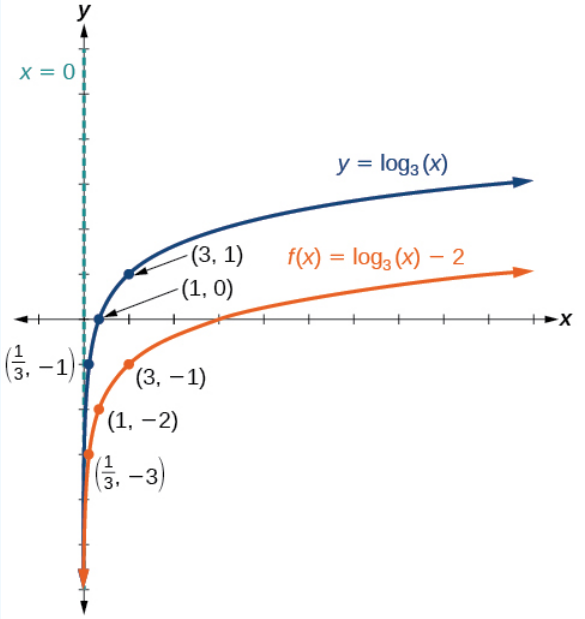


Figure 6.4.11

The domain is $(0, \infty)$,the range is $(-\infty, \infty)$,and the vertical asymptote is $x = 0$.

? Exercise 6.4.5

Sketch a graph of $f(x) = \log_2(x) + 2$ alongside its parent function. Include the key points and asymptote on the graph. State the domain, range, and asymptote.

Answer

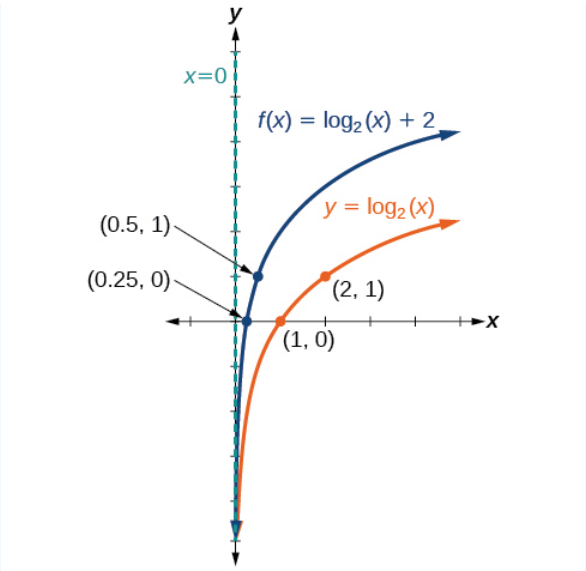


Figure 6.4.12

The domain is $(0, \infty)$,the range is $(-\infty, \infty)$, and the vertical asymptote is $x = 0$.

Graphing Stretches and Compressions of $y = log_b(x)$

When the parent function $f(x) = \log_b(x)$ is multiplied by a constant $a > 0$, the result is a vertical stretch or compression of the original graph. To visualize stretches and compressions, we set $a > 1$ and observe the general graph of the parent function $f(x) = \log_b(x)$ alongside the vertical stretch, $g(x) = a\log_b(x)$ and the vertical compression, $h(x) = \frac{1}{a}\log_b(x)$.See Figure 6.4.13

Graph of two functions. The parent function is f(x)=log_b(x), with an asymptote at x=0 and g(x)=alog_b(x) when a
1 is the translation function with an asymptote at x=0. The graph note the intersection of the two lines at (1, 0). This shows the translation of a vertical stretch." src="/@api/deki/files/12175/fig_6.5.13.jpg">

Figure 6.4.13

VERTICAL STRETCHES AND COMPRESSIONS OF THE PARENT FUNCTION $Y = LOG_B(X)$

For any constant $a > 1$,the function $f(x) = a\log_b(x)$

- stretches the parent function $y = \log_b(x)$ vertically by a factor of a if $a > 1$.
- compresses the parent function $y = \log_b(x)$ vertically by a factor of a if $0 < a < 1$.
- has the vertical asymptote $x = 0$.
- has the x-intercept $(1, 0)$.
- has domain $(0, \infty)$.
- has range $(-\infty, \infty)$.

Given a logarithmic function with the form $f(x) = a\log_b(x)$, $a > 0$,graph the translation.

1. Identify the vertical stretch or compressions:
   - If $|a| > 1$, the graph of $f(x) = \log_b(x)$ is stretched by a factor of a units.
   - If $|a| < 1$, the graph of $f(x) = \log_b(x)$ is compressed by a factor of a units.
2. Draw the vertical asymptote $x = 0$.
3. Identify three key points from the parent function. Find new coordinates for the shifted functions by multiplying they y coordinates by a.
4. Label the three points.
5. The domain is $(0, \infty)$, the range is $(-\infty, \infty)$, and the vertical asymptote is $x = 0$.

Example 6.4.6: Graphing a Stretch or Compression of the Parent Function $y = log_b(x)$

Sketch a graph of $f(x) = 2\log_4(x)$ alongside its parent function. Include the key points and asymptote on the graph. State the domain, range, and asymptote.

Solution

Since the function is $f(x) = 2\log_4(x)$,we will notice $a = 2$.

This means we will stretch the function $f(x) = \log_4(x)$ by a factor of 2.

The vertical asymptote is $x = 0$.

Consider the three key points from the parent function, $\left(\frac{1}{4}, -1\right)$, $(1, 0)$, and $(4, 1)$.

The new coordinates are found by multiplying the y coordinates by 2.

Label the points $\left(\frac{1}{4}, -2\right)$, $(1, 0)$, and $(4, 2)$.

The domain is $(0, \infty)$, the range is $(-\infty, \infty)$, and the vertical asymptote is $x = 0$. See Figure 6.4.14

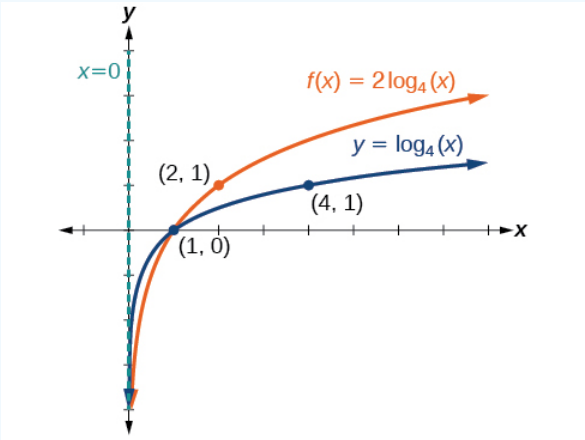


Figure 6.4.14

The domain is $(0, \infty)$, the range is $(-\infty, \infty)$, and the vertical asymptote is $x = 0$.

Exercise 6.4.6

Sketch a graph of $f(x) = \frac{1}{2}\log_4(x)$ alongside its parent function. Include the key points and asymptote on the graph. State the domain, range, and asymptote.

Answer

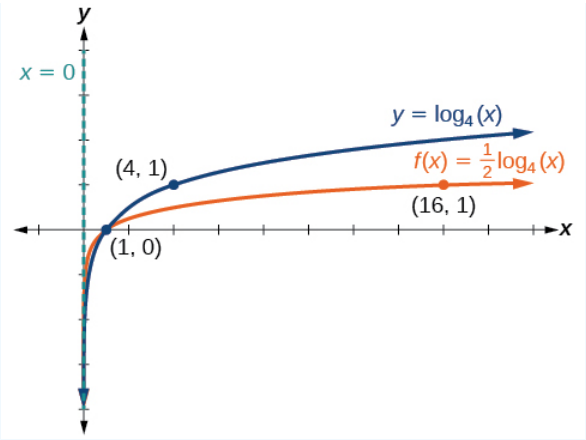


Figure 6.4.15

The domain is $(0, \infty)$, the range is $(-\infty, \infty)$,and the vertical asymptote is $x = 0$.

Example 6.4.7: Combining a Shift and a Stretch

Sketch a graph of $f(x) = 5\log(x + 2)$. State the domain, range, and asymptote.

Solution

Remember: what happens inside parentheses happens first. First, we move the graph left 2 units, then stretch the function vertically by a factor of 5, as in Figure 6.4.16. The vertical asymptote will be shifted to $x = -2$. The x-intercept will be $(-1, 0)$. The domain will be $(-2, \infty)$. Two points will help give the shape of the graph: $(-1, 0)$ and $(8, 5)$. We chose $x = 8$ as the x-coordinate of one point to graph because when $x = 8$, $x + 2 = 10$, the base of the common logarithm.

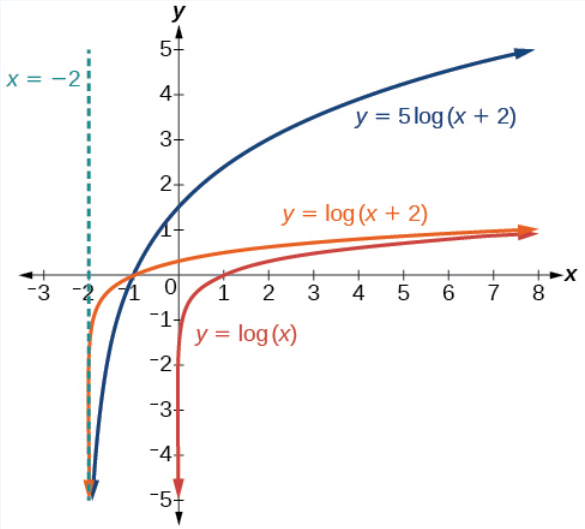


Figure 6.4.16

The domain is $(-2, \infty)$, the range is $(-\infty, \infty)$,and the vertical asymptote is $x = -2$.

Exercise 6.4.7

Sketch a graph of the function $f(x) = 3\log(x - 2) + 1$. State the domain, range, and asymptote.

Answer

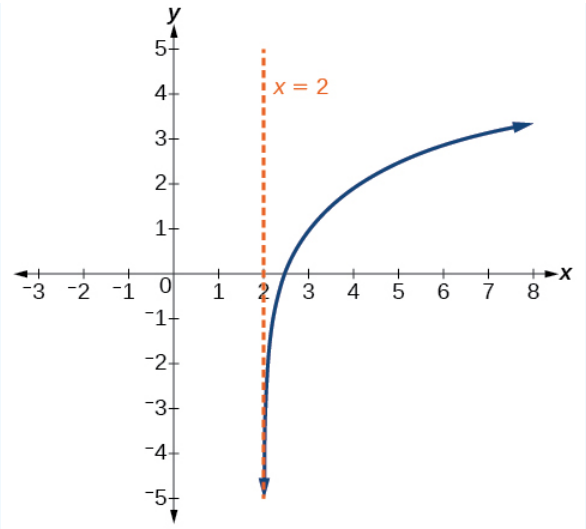


Figure 6.4.17

The domain is $(2, \infty)$,the range is $(-\infty, \infty)$, and the vertical asymptote is $x = 2$.

Graphing Reflections of $f(x) = log_b(x)$

When the parent function $f(x) = \log_b(x)$ is multiplied by -1,the result is a reflection about the x-axis. When the *input* is multiplied by -1,the result is a reflection about the y-axis. To visualize reflections, we restrict $b > 1$, and observe the general graph of the parent function $f(x) = \log_b(x)$ alongside the reflection about the x-axis, $g(x) = -\log_b(x)$ and the reflection about the y-axis, $h(x) = \log_b(-x)$.

Graph of two functions. The parent function is f(x)=log_b(x), with an asymptote at x=0 and g(x)=-log_b(x) when b
1 is the translation function with an asymptote at x=0. The graph note the intersection of the two lines at (1, 0). This shows the translation of a reflection about the x-axis." src="/@api/deki/files/12180/fig_6.5.18.jpg">

Figure 6.4.18

REFLECTIONS OF THE PARENT FUNCTION $Y = LOG_B(X)$

The function $f(x) = -\log_b(x)$

- reflects the parent function $y = \log_b(x)$ about the x-axis.
- has domain, $(0, \infty)$, range, $(-\infty, \infty)$, and vertical asymptote, $x = 0$, which are unchanged from the parent function.

The function $f(x) = \log_b(-x)$

- reflects the parent function $y = \log_b(x)$ about the y-axis.
- has domain $(-\infty, 0)$.
- has range, $(-\infty, \infty)$, and vertical asymptote, $x = 0$, which are unchanged from the parent function.

Given a logarithmic function with the parent function $f(x) = \log_b(x)$, graph a translation.

Table 6.4.3

If $f(x) = -\log_b(x)$	If $f(x) = \log_b(-x)$
1. Draw the vertical asymptote, $x = 0$.	1. Draw the vertical asymptote, $x = 0$.
2. Plot the *x*-intercept, $(1, 0)$.	2. Plot the *x*-intercept, $(1, 0)$.
3. Reflect the graph of the parent function $f(x) = \log_b(x)$ about the *x*-axis.	3. Reflect the graph of the parent function $f(x) = \log_b(x)$ about the *y*-axis.
4. Draw a smooth curve through the points.	4. Draw a smooth curve through the points.

If $f(x) = -\log_b(x)$	If $f(x) = \log_b(-x)$
5. State the domain, $(0, \infty)$, the range, $(-\infty, \infty)$, and the vertical asymptote $x = 0$.	5. State the domain, $(-\infty, 0)$, the range, $(-\infty, \infty)$, and the vertical asymptote $x = 0$.

Example 6.4.8: Graphing a Reflection of a Logarithmic Function

Sketch a graph of $f(x) = \log(-x)$ alongside its parent function. Include the key points and asymptote on the graph. State the domain, range, and asymptote.

Solution

Before graphing $f(x) = log(-x)$, $f(x) = log(-x)$,identify the behavior and key points for the graph.

- Since $b = 10$ is greater than one, we know that the parent function is increasing. Since the *input* value is multiplied by -1, $f(x)$ is a reflection of the parent graph about the y-axis. Thus, $f(x) = \log(-x)$ will be decreasing as x moves from negative infinity to zero, and the right tail of the graph will approach the vertical asymptote $x = 0$.
- The x-intercept is $(-1, 0)$.
- We draw and label the asymptote, plot and label the points, and draw a smooth curve through the points.

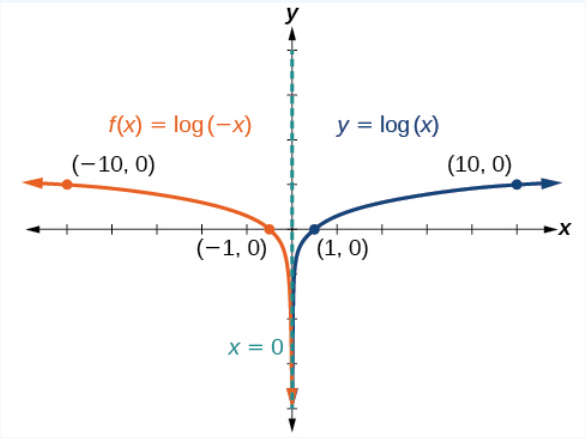


Figure 6.4.19

The domain is $(-\infty, 0)$, the range is $(-\infty, \infty)$, and the vertical asymptote is $x = 0$.

Exercise 6.4.8

Graph $f(x) = -\log(-x)$. State the domain, range, and asymptote.

Answer

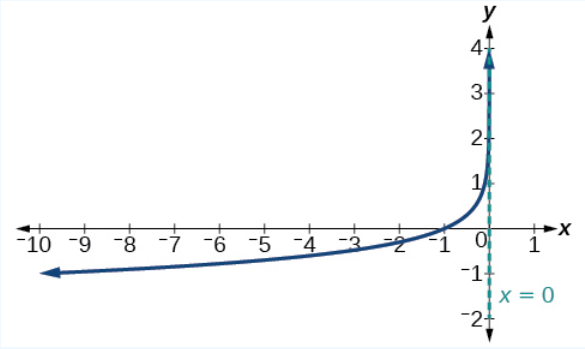


Figure 6.4.20

The domain is $(-\infty, 0)$,the range is $(-\infty, \infty)$,and the vertical asymptote is $x = 0$.

Given a logarithmic equation, use a graphing calculator to approximate solutions.

1. Press **[Y=]**. Enter the given logarithm equation or equations as $\mathbf{Y_1}$= and, if needed, $\mathbf{Y_2}$=.
2. Press **[GRAPH]** to observe the graphs of the curves and use **[WINDOW]** to find an appropriate view of the graphs, including their point(s) of intersection.
3. To find the value of x, we compute the point of intersection. Press **[2ND]** then **[CALC]**. Select "intersect" and press **[ENTER]** three times. The point of intersection gives the value of x,for the point(s) of intersection.

Example 6.4.9: Approximating the Solution of a Logarithmic Equation

Solve $4\ln(x)+1=-2\ln(x-1)$ graphically. Round to the nearest thousandth.

Solution

Press **[Y=]** and enter $4\ln(x)+1$ next to $\mathbf{Y_1}$=. Then enter $-2\ln(x-1)$ next to $\mathbf{Y_2}$=. For a window, use the values 0 to 5 for $x\backslash 0\ and\backslash(-10$ to 10 for y. Press **[GRAPH]**. The graphs should intersect somewhere a little to right of $x=1$.

For a better approximation, press **[2ND]** then **[CALC]**. Select **[5: intersect]** and press **[ENTER]** three times. The *x*-coordinate of the point of intersection is displayed as 1.3385297 (Your answer may be different if you use a different window or use a different value for **Guess?**) So, to the nearest thousandth, $x\approx 1.339$.

Exercise 6.4.9

Solve $5\log(x+2)=4-\log(x)$ graphically. Round to the nearest thousandth.

Answer

$x\approx 3.049$

Summarizing Translations of the Logarithmic Function

Now that we have worked with each type of translation for the logarithmic function, we can summarize each in Table $6.4.4$ to arrive at the general equation for translating exponential functions.

1 and a compression is 0<|a|<1. Note its form is f(x)=alog_b(x). The third translation is a reflection about the x-axis with the form f(x) = -log_b(x). The fourth translation is a reflection about the y-axis with the form f(x)=log_b(-x). The general equation for all translations is f(x)=alog_b(x+c)+d.">

***Table* 6.4.4**

Translations of the Parent Function $y=\log_b(x)$	
Translation	Form
Shift Horizontally c units to the left Vertically d units up	$y=\log_b(x+c)+d$
Stretch and Compress Stretch if $\lvert a\rvert>1$ Compression if $\lvert a\rvert<1$	$y=a\log_b(x)$
Reflect about the x-axis	$y=-\log_b(x)$
Reflect about the y-axis	$y=\log_b(-x)$
General equation for all translations	$y=a\log_b(x+c)+d$

TRANSLATIONS OF LOGARITHMIC FUNCTIONS

All translations of the parent logarithmic function, $y = \log_b(x)$, have the form

$$f(x) = a\log_b(x + c) + d$$

where the parent function, $y = \log_b(x)$, $b > 1$,is

- shifted vertically up d units.
- shifted horizontally to the left c units.
- stretched vertically by a factor of $|a|$ if $|a| > 0$.
- compressed vertically by a factor of $|a|$ if $0 < |a| < 1$.
- reflected about the x-axis when $a < 0$.

For $f(x) = \log(-x)$, the graph of the parent function is reflected about the y-axis.

Example 6.4.10: Finding the Vertical Asymptote of a Logarithm Graph

What is the vertical asymptote of $f(x) = -2\log_3(x + 4) + 5$?

Solution

The vertical asymptote is at $x = -4$.

Analysis

The coefficient, the base, and the upward translation do not affect the asymptote. The shift of the curve 4 units to the left shifts the vertical asymptote to$x = -4$.

Exercise 6.4.10

What is the vertical asymptote of $f(x) = 3 + \ln(x - 1)$?

Answer

$x = 1$

Example 6.4.11: Finding the Equation from a Graph

Find a possible equation for the common logarithmic function graphed in Figure 6.4.21.

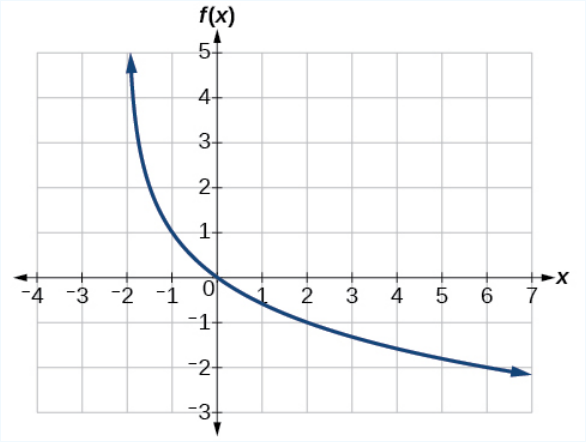


Figure 6.4.21

Solution

This graph has a vertical asymptote at $x = -2$ and has been vertically reflected. We do not know yet the vertical shift or the vertical stretch. We know so far that the equation will have form:

$$f(x) = -a\log(x+2)+k$$

It appears the graph passes through the points $(-1,1)$ and $(2,-1)$. Substituting $(-1,1)$,

$$\begin{aligned} 1 &= -a\log(-1+2)+k \qquad \text{Substitute}(-1,1) \\ 1 &= -a\log(1)+k \qquad \text{Arithmetic} \\ 1 &= k\log(1) \\ &= 0 \end{aligned}$$

Next, substituting in $(2,-1)$,

$$\begin{aligned} -1 &= -a\log(2+2)+1 \qquad \text{Substitute}(2,-1) \\ -2 &= -a\log(4) \qquad \text{Arithmetic} \\ a &= \frac{2}{\log(4)} \qquad \text{Solve for a} \end{aligned}$$

This gives us the equation $f(x) = -\frac{2}{\log(4)}\log(x+2)+1$.

Analysis

We can verify this answer by comparing the function values in Table 6.4.5 with the points on the graph in Figure 6.4.21.

Table 6.4.5

x	-1	0	1	2	3
$f(x)$	1	0	−0.58496	−1	−1.3219
x	4	5	6	7	8
$f(x)$	−1.5850	−1.8074	−2	−2.1699	−2.3219

Exercise 6.4.11

Give the equation of the natural logarithm graphed in Figure 6.4.22

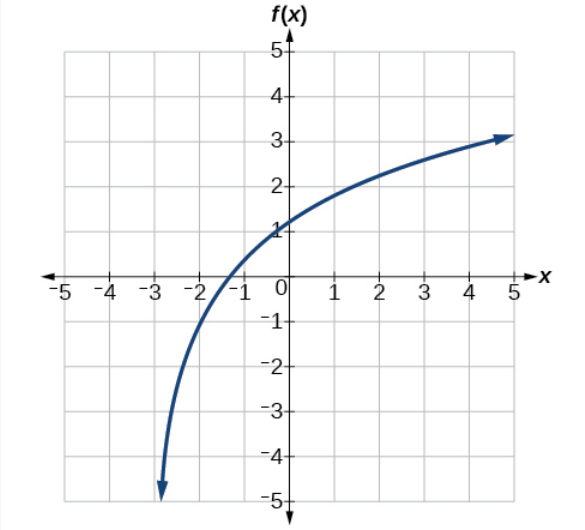


Figure 6.4.22

Answer

$f(x) = 2\ln(x+3)-1$

Media: Is it possible to tell the domain and range and describe the end behavior of a function just by looking at the graph?

Yes, if we know the function is a general logarithmic function. For example, look at the graph in Figure 6.4.22 The graph approaches $x = -3$ (or thereabouts) more and more closely, so $x = -3$ is, or is very close to, the vertical asymptote. It approaches from the right, so the domain is all points to the right, $x|x > -3$. The range, as with all general logarithmic functions, is all real numbers. And we can see the end behavior because the graph goes down as it goes left and up as it goes right. The end behavior is that as $x \to -3^+$, $f(x) \to -\infty$ and as $x \to \infty$, $f(x) \to \infty$.

Media

Access these online resources for additional instruction and practice with graphing logarithms.

- Graph an Exponential Function and Logarithmic Function
- Match Graphs with Exponential and Logarithmic Functions
- Find the Domain of Logarithmic Functions

Key Equations

General Form for the Translation of the Parent Logarithmic Function $f(x) = \log_b(x)$	$f(x) = a\log_b(x + c) + d$

Key Concepts

- To find the domain of a logarithmic function, set up an inequality showing the argument greater than zero, and solve for x. See Example 6.4.1 and Example 6.4.2
- The graph of the parent function $f(x) = \log_b(x)$ has an *x*-intercept at $(1, 0)$,domain $(0, \infty)$,range $(-\infty, \infty)$,vertical asymptote $x = 0$,and
- - if $b > 1$,the function is increasing.
  - if $0 < b < 1$, the function is decreasing.

  See Example 6.4.3.
- The equation $f(x) = \log_b(x + c)$ shifts the parent function $y = \log_b(x)$ horizontally
  - left c units if $c > 0$.
  - right c units if $c < 0$.

  See Example 6.4.4.
- The equation $f(x) = \log_b(x) + d$ shifts the parent function $y = \log_b(x)$ vertically
  - up d units if $d > 0$.
  - down d units if $d < 0$.

  See Example 6.4.5.
- For any constant $a > 0$, the equation $f(x) = a\log_b(x)$
  - stretches the parent function $y = \log_b(x)$ vertically by a factor of a if $|a| > 1$.
  - compresses the parent function $y = \log_b(x)$ vertically by a factor of a if $|a| < 1$.

  See Example 6.4.6 and Example 6.4.7.
- When the parent function $y = \log_b(x)$ is multiplied by -1, the result is a reflection about the *x*-axis. When the input is multiplied by -1, the result is a reflection about the *y*-axis.
  - The equation $f(x) = -\log_b(x)$ represents a reflection of the parent function about the *x*-axis.
  - The equation $f(x) = \log_b(-x)$ represents a reflection of the parent function about the *y*-axis.

  See Example 6.4.8.
  - A graphing calculator may be used to approximate solutions to some logarithmic equations See Example 6.4.9.
- All translations of the logarithmic function can be summarized by the general equation $f(x) = a\log_b(x + c) + d$. See Table 6.4.4.

- Given an equation with the general form $f(x) = a\log_b(x + c) + d$,we can identify the vertical asymptote $x = -c$ for the transformation. See Example 6.4.10.
- Using the general equation $f(x) = a\log_b(x + c) + d$, we can write the equation of a logarithmic function given its graph. See Example 6.4.11.

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6.5: Logarithmic Properties

Learning Objectives

- Use the product rule for logarithms.
- Use the quotient rule for logarithms.
- Use the power rule for logarithms.
- Expand logarithmic expressions.
- Condense logarithmic expressions.
- Use the change-of-base formula for logarithms.

In chemistry, the pH scale is used as a measure of the acidity or alkalinity of a substance. Substances with a pH less than 7 are considered acidic, and substances with a pH greater than 7 are said to be alkaline. Our bodies, for instance, must maintain a pH close to 7.35 in order for enzymes to work properly. To get a feel for what is acidic and what is alkaline, consider the following pH levels of some common substances:

- Battery acid: 0.8
- Stomach acid: 2.7
- Orange juice: 3.3
- Pure water: 7 at $25^{\circ}C$
- Human blood: 7.35
- Fresh coconut: 7.8
- Sodium hydroxide (lye): 14

To determine whether a solution is acidic or alkaline, we find its pH, which is a measure of the number of active positive hydrogen ions in the solution. The pH is defined by the following formula, where $[\mathrm{H}^+]$ is the concentration of hydrogen ions in the solution

$$pH = -\log([\mathrm{H}^+]) \tag{6.5.1}$$

$$= \log\left(\frac{1}{[\mathrm{H}^+]}\right) \tag{6.5.2}$$

The equivalence of Equations 6.5.1 and 6.5.2 is one of the logarithm properties we will examine in this section.

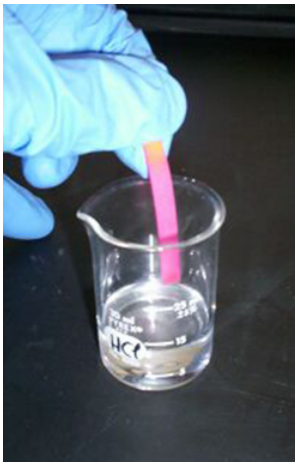

Figure 6.5.1: The pH of hydrochloric acid is tested with litmus paper. (credit: David Berardan).

Using the Product Rule for Logarithms

Recall that the logarithmic and exponential functions "undo" each other. This means that logarithms have similar properties to exponents. Some important properties of logarithms are given here. First, the following properties are easy to prove.

$$\log_b 1 = 0$$

$$\log_b b = 1$$

For example, $\log_5 1 = 0$ since $5^0 = 1$. And $\log_5 5 = 1$ since $5^1 = 5$.

Next, we have the inverse property.

$$\log_b(b^x) = x$$
$$b^{\log_b x} = x,\ x > 0$$

For example, to evaluate $\log(100)$, we can rewrite the logarithm as $\log_{10}(10^2)$, and then apply the inverse property $\log_b(b^x) = x$ to get $\log_{10}(10^2) = 2$.

To evaluate $e^{\ln(7)}$, we can rewrite the logarithm as $e^{\log_e 7}$, and then apply the inverse property $b^{\log_b x} = x$ to get $e^{\log_e 7} = 7$.

Finally, we have the one-to-one property.

$$\log_b M = \log_b N \text{ if and only if } M = N \tag{6.5.3}$$

We can use the one-to-one property to solve the equation $\log_3(3x) = \log_3(2x+5)$ for x. Since the bases are the same, we can apply the one-to-one property by setting the arguments equal and solving for x:

$3x = 2x + 5$ Set the arguments equal.

$x = 5$ Subtract $2x$.

But what about the equation $\log_3(3x) + \log_3(2x+5) = 2$? The one-to-one property does not help us in this instance. Before we can solve an equation like this, we need a method for combining terms on the left side of the equation.

Recall that we use the *product rule of exponents* to combine the product of exponents by adding: $x^a x^b = x^{a+b}$. We have a similar property for logarithms, called the **product rule for logarithms**, which says that the logarithm of a product is equal to a sum of logarithms. Because logs are exponents, and we multiply like bases, we can add the exponents. We will use the inverse property to derive the product rule below.

Given any real number x and positive real numbers M, N, and b, where $b \neq 1$, we will show

$$\log_b(MN) = \log_b(M) + \log_b(N)\ .$$

Let $m = \log_b M$ and $n = \log_b N$. In exponential form, these equations are $b^m = M$ and $b^n = N$. It follows that

$$\begin{aligned} \log_b(MN) &= \log_b(b^m b^n) && \text{Substitute for M and N} \\ &= \log_b(b^{m+n}) && \text{Apply the product rule for exponents} \\ &= m+n && \text{Apply the inverse property of logs} \\ &= \log_b(M) + \log_b(N) && \text{Substitute for m and n} \end{aligned}$$

Note that repeated applications of the product rule for logarithms allow us to simplify the logarithm of the product of any number of factors. For example, consider $\log_b(wxyz)$. Using the product rule for logarithms, we can rewrite this logarithm of a product as the sum of logarithms of its factors:

$$\log_b(wxyz) = \log_b w + \log_b x + \log_b y + \log_b z$$

The Product Rule for Logarithms

The product rule for logarithms can be used to simplify a logarithm of a product by rewriting it as a sum of individual logarithms.

$$\log_b(MN) = \log_b(M) + \log_b(N) \text{ for } b > 0 \tag{6.5.4}$$

How to: Given the logarithm of a product, use the product rule of logarithms to write an equivalent sum of logarithms

1. Factor the argument completely, expressing each whole number factor as a product of primes.
2. Write the equivalent expression by summing the logarithms of each factor.

Example 6.5.1: Using the Product Rule for Logarithms

Expand $\log_3(30x(3x+4))$.

Solution

We begin by factoring the argument completely, expressing 30 as a product of primes.

$$\log_3(30x(3x+4)) = \log_3(2\cdot 3\cdot 5\cdot x\cdot(3x+4))$$

Next we write the equivalent equation by summing the logarithms of each factor.

$$\log_3(30x(3x+4)) = \log_3(2)+\log_3(3)+\log_3(5)+\log_3(x)+\log_3(3x+4)$$

Exercise 6.5.1

Expand $\log_b(8k)$.

Answer

$$\log_b 2+\log_b 2+\log_b 2+\log_b k = 3\log_b 2+\log_b k$$

Using the Quotient Rule for Logarithms

For quotients, we have a similar rule for logarithms. Recall that we use the *quotient rule of exponents* to combine the quotient of exponents by subtracting: $x^{\frac{a}{b}} = x^{a-b}$. The **quotient rule for logarithms** says that the logarithm of a quotient is equal to a difference of logarithms.

The Quotient Rule for Logarithms

The quotient rule for logarithms can be used to simplify a logarithm or a quotient by rewriting it as the difference of individual logarithms.

$$\log_b\left(\frac{M}{N}\right) = \log_b M - \log_b N \tag{6.5.5}$$

Just as with the product rule, we can use the inverse property to derive the quotient rule.

Proof

Given any real number x and positive real numbers M, N, and b, b, where $b\neq 1$, we will show

$$\log_b\left(\frac{M}{N}\right) = \log_b(M) - \log_b(N)\ .$$

Let $m=\log_b M$ and $n=\log_b N$. In exponential form, these equations are $b^m = M$ and $b^n = N$. It follows that

$$\begin{aligned}
\log_b\left(\frac{M}{N}\right) &= \log_b\left(\frac{b^m}{b^n}\right) && \text{Substitute for M and N}\\
&= \log_b(b^{m-n}) && \text{Apply the quotient rule for exponents}\\
&= m-n && \text{Apply the inverse property of logs}\\
&= \log_b(M)-\log_b(N) && \text{Substitute for m and n}
\end{aligned}$$

For example, to expand $\log\left(\frac{2x^2+6x}{3x+9}\right)$, we must first express the quotient in lowest terms. Factoring and canceling we get,

$$\log\left(\frac{2x^2+6x}{3x+9}\right)=\log\left(\frac{2x(x+3)}{3(x+3)}\right) \qquad \text{Factor the numerator and denominator}$$

$$=\log\left(\frac{2x}{3}\right) \qquad \text{Cancel the common factors}$$

Next we apply the quotient rule by subtracting the logarithm of the denominator from the logarithm of the numerator. Then we apply the product rule.

$$\log\left(\frac{2x}{3}\right)=\log(2x)-\log(3)$$

$$=\log(2)+\log(x)-\log(3)$$

How to: Given the logarithm of a quotient, use the quotient rule of logarithms to write an equivalent difference of logarithms

1. Express the argument in lowest terms by factoring the numerator and denominator and canceling common terms.
2. Write the equivalent expression by subtracting the logarithm of the denominator from the logarithm of the numerator.
3. Check to see that each term is fully expanded. If not, apply the product rule for logarithms to expand completely.

Example 6.5.2: Using the Quotient Rule for Logarithms

Expand $log_2\left(\frac{15x(x-1)}{(3x+4)(2-x)}\right)$.

Solution

First we note that the quotient is factored and in lowest terms, so we apply the quotient rule.

$$\log_2(\frac{15x(x-1)}{(3x+4)(2-x)})=\log_2(15x(x-1))-\log_2((3x+4)(2-x))$$

Notice that the resulting terms are logarithms of products. To expand completely, we apply the product rule, noting that the prime factors of the factor 15 are 3 and 5.

$$\log_2(15x(x-1))-\log_2((3x+4)(2-x)) = [\log_2(3)+\log_2(5)+\log_2(x)+\log_2(x-1)]-[\log_2(3x+4)+\log_2(2-x)]$$

$$=\log_2(3)+\log_2(5)+\log_2(x)+\log_2(x-1)-\log_2(3x+4)-\log_2(2-x)$$

Analysis

There are exceptions to consider in this and later examples. First, because denominators must never be zero, this expression is not defined for $x=-\frac{4}{3}$ and $x=2$. Also, since the argument of a logarithm must be positive, we note as we observe the expanded logarithm, that $x>0$, $x>1$, $x>-\frac{4}{3}$, and $x<2$. Combining these conditions is beyond the scope of this section, and we will not consider them here or in subsequent exercises.

Exercise 6.5.2

Expand $\log_3\left(\frac{7x^2+21x}{7x(x-1)(x-2)}\right)$.

Answer

$\log_3(x+3)-\log_3(x-1)-\log_3(x-2)$

Using the Power Rule for Logarithms

We've explored the product rule and the quotient rule, but how can we take the logarithm of a power, such as x^2? One method is as follows:

$$\begin{aligned}\log_b(x^2) &= \log_b(x \cdot x)\\ &= \log_b x + \log_b x\\ &= 2\log_b x\end{aligned}$$

Notice that we used the **product rule for logarithms** to find a solution for the example above. By doing so, we have derived the **power rule for logarithms**, which says that the log of a power is equal to the exponent times the log of the base. Keep in mind that, although the input to a logarithm may not be written as a power, we may be able to change it to a power. For example,

$$100 = 10^2 \quad \sqrt{3} = 3^{\frac{1}{2}} \quad \frac{1}{e} = e^{-1}$$

The Power Rule for Logarithms

The power rule for logarithms can be used to simplify the logarithm of a power by rewriting it as the product of the exponent times the logarithm of the base.

$$\log_b(M^n) = n\log_b M \tag{6.5.6}$$

How to: Given the logarithm of a power, use the power rule of logarithms to write an equivalent product of a factor and a logarithm

1. Express the argument as a power, if needed.
2. Write the equivalent expression by multiplying the exponent times the logarithm of the base.

Example 6.5.3: Expanding a Logarithm with Powers

Expand $\log_2 x^5$.

Solution

The argument is already written as a power, so we identify the exponent, 5, and the base, x, and rewrite the equivalent expression by multiplying the exponent times the logarithm of the base.

$$\log_2(x^5) = 5\log_2 x$$

Exercise 6.5.3

Expand $\ln x^2$.

Answer

$2\ln x$

Example 6.5.4: Rewriting an Expression as a Power before Using the Power Rule

Expand $\log_3(25)$ using the power rule for logs.

Solution

Expressing the argument as a power, we get $\log_3(25) = \log_3(5^2)$.

Next we identify the exponent, 2, and the base, 5, and rewrite the equivalent expression by multiplying the exponent times the logarithm of the base.

$$\log_3(52) = 2\log_3(5)$$

Exercise 6.5.4

Expand $\ln\left(\frac{1}{x^2}\right)$.

Answer

$-2\ln(x)$

Example 6.5.5: Using the Power Rule in Reverse

Rewrite $4\ln(x)$ using the power rule for logs to a single logarithm with a leading coefficient of 1.

Solution

Because the logarithm of a power is the product of the exponent times the logarithm of the base, it follows that the product of a number and a logarithm can be written as a power. For the expression $4\ln(x)$, we identify the factor, 4, as the exponent and the argument, x, as the base, and rewrite the product as a logarithm of a power: $4\ln(x) = \ln(x^4)$.

Exercise 6.5.5

Rewrite $2\log_3 4$ using the power rule for logs to a single logarithm with a leading coefficient of 1.

Answer

$\log_3 16$

Expanding Logarithmic Expressions

Taken together, the product rule, quotient rule, and power rule are often called "laws of logs." Sometimes we apply more than one rule in order to simplify an expression. For example:

$$\begin{aligned}\log_b\left(\frac{6x}{y}\right) &= \log_b(6x) - \log_b y \\ &= \log_b 6 + \log_b x - \log_b y\end{aligned}$$

We can use the power rule to expand logarithmic expressions involving negative and fractional exponents. Here is an alternate proof of the quotient rule for logarithms using the fact that a reciprocal is a negative power:

$$\begin{aligned}\log_b\left(\frac{A}{C}\right) &= \log_b(AC^{-1}) \\ &= \log_b(A) + \log_b(C^{-1}) \\ &= \log_b A + (-1)\log_b C \\ &= \log_b A - \log_b C\end{aligned}$$

We can also apply the product rule to express a sum or difference of logarithms as the logarithm of a product.

With practice, we can look at a logarithmic expression and expand it mentally, writing the final answer. Remember, however, that we can only do this with products, quotients, powers, and roots—never with addition or subtraction inside the argument of the logarithm.

Example 6.5.6: Expanding Logarithms Using Product, Quotient, and Power Rules

Rewrite $ln\left(\frac{x^4 y}{7}\right)$ as a sum or difference of logs.

Solution

First, because we have a quotient of two expressions, we can use the quotient rule:

$$\ln\left(\frac{x^4y}{7}\right) = \ln(x^4y) - \ln(7)$$

Then seeing the product in the first term, we use the product rule:

$$\ln(x^4y) - \ln(7) = \ln(x^4) + \ln(y) - \ln(7)$$

Finally, we use the power rule on the first term:

$$\ln(x^4) + \ln(y) - \ln(7) = 4\ln(x) + \ln(y) - \ln(7)$$

? Exercise 6.5.6

Expand $\log\left(\frac{x^2y^3}{z^4}\right)$.

Answer

$2\log x + 3\log y - 4\log z$

✓ Example 6.5.7: Using the Power Rule for Logarithms to Simplify the Logarithm of a Radical Expression

Expand $\log(\sqrt{x})$.

Solution

$$\log(\sqrt{x}) = \log x^{\left(\frac{1}{2}\right)}$$
$$= \frac{1}{2}\log x$$

? Exercise 6.5.7

Expand $\ln(\sqrt[3]{x^2})$.

Answer

$\frac{2}{3}\ln x$

Q&A: Can we expand $\ln(x^2 + y^2)$?

No. There is no way to expand the logarithm of a sum or difference inside the argument of the logarithm.

✓ Example 6.5.8: Expanding Complex Logarithmic Expressions

Expand $\log_6\left(\frac{64x^3(4x+1)}{(2x-1)}\right)$.

Solution

We can expand by applying the Product and Quotient Rules.

$$\log_6\left(\frac{64x^3(4x+1)}{(2x-1)}\right) = \log_6 64 + \log_6 x^3 + \log_6(4x+1) - \log_6(2x-1) \quad \text{Apply the Quotient Rule}$$
$$= \log_6 2^6 + \log_6 x^3 + \log_6(4x+1) - \log_6(2x-1) \quad \text{Simplify by writing } 64 \text{ as } 2^6$$
$$= 6\log_6 2 + 3\log_6 x + \log_6(4x+1) - \log_6(2x-1) \quad \text{Apply the Power Rule}$$

Exercise 6.5.8

Expand $\ln\left(\dfrac{\sqrt{(x-1)(2x+1)^2}}{(x^2-9)}\right)$.

Answer

$\dfrac{1}{2}\ln(x-1)+\ln(2x+1)-\ln(x+3)-\ln(x-3)$

Condensing Logarithmic Expressions

We can use the rules of logarithms we just learned to condense sums, differences, and products with the same base as a single logarithm. It is important to remember that the logarithms must have the same base to be combined. We will learn later how to change the base of any logarithm before condensing.

How to: Given a sum, difference, or product of logarithms with the same base, write an equivalent expression as a single logarithm

1. Apply the power property first. Identify terms that are products of factors and a logarithm, and rewrite each as the logarithm of a power.
2. Next apply the product property. Rewrite sums of logarithms as the logarithm of a product.
3. Apply the quotient property last. Rewrite differences of logarithms as the logarithm of a quotient.

Example 6.5.9: Using the Product and Quotient Rules to Combine Logarithms

Write $\log_3(5)+\log_3(8)-\log_3(2)$ as a single logarithm.

Solution

Using the product and quotient rules

$$\log_3(5)+\log_3(8)=\log_3(5\cdot 8)=\log_3(40)$$

This reduces our original expression to

$$\log_3(40)-\log_3(2)$$

Then, using the quotient rule

$$\log_3(40)-\log_3(2)=\log_3\left(\frac{40}{2}\right)=\log_3(20)$$

Exercise 6.5.9

Condense $\log_3-\log_4+\log_5-\log_6$.

Answer

$\log\left(\dfrac{3\cdot 5}{4\cdot 6}\right)$; can also be written $\log\left(\dfrac{5}{8}\right)$ by reducing the fraction to lowest terms.

Example 6.5.10: Condensing Complex Logarithmic Expressions

Condense $\log_2(x^2)+\dfrac{1}{2}\log_2(x-1)-3\log_2((x+3)^2)$.

Solution

We apply the power rule first:

$$\log_2(x^2)+\frac{1}{2}\log_2(x-1)-3\log_2((x+3)^2)=\log_2(x^2)+\log_2(\sqrt{x-1})-\log_2((x+3)^6)$$

Next we apply the product rule to the sum:

$$\log_2(x^2)+\log_2(\sqrt{x-1})-\log_2((x+3)^6)=\log_2(x^2\sqrt{x-1})-\log_2((x+3)^6)$$

Finally, we apply the quotient rule to the difference:

$$\log_2(x^2\sqrt{x-1})-\log_2((x+3)^6)=\log_2\frac{x^2\sqrt{x-1}}{(x+3)^6}$$

Example 6.5.11: Rewriting as a Single Logarithm

Rewrite $2\log x-4\log(x+5)+\frac{1}{x}\log(3x+5)$ as a single logarithm.

Solution

We apply the power rule first:

$$2\log x-4\log(x+5)+\frac{1}{x}\log(3x+5)=\log(x^2)-\log(x+5)^4+\log((3x+5)^{x^{-1}})$$

Next we rearrange and apply the product rule to the sum:

$$\begin{aligned}\log(x^2)-\log(x+5)^4+\log((3x+5)^{x^{-1}}) &=\log(x^2)+\log((3x+5)^{x^{-1}}-\log(x+5)^4\\ &=\log(x^2(3x+5)^{x^{-1}})-\log(x+5)^4\\ &=\log\frac{x^2(3x+5)^{x^{-1}}}{(x+5)^4} \qquad \text{Apply the quotient rule to the difference}\end{aligned}$$

Exercise 6.5.10

Rewrite $\log(5)+0.5\log(x)-\log(7x-1)+3\log(x-1)$ as a single logarithm.

Answer

$$\log\frac{5(x-1)^3\sqrt{x}}{(7x-1)}$$

Exercise 6.5.11

Condense $4(3\log(x)+\log(x+5)-\log(2x+3))$.

Answer

$\log\frac{x^{12}(x+5)^4}{(2x+3)^4}$; this answer could also be written $\log\left(\frac{x^3(x+5)}{(2x+3)}\right)^4$

Example 6.5.12: Applying of the Laws of Logs

Recall that, in chemistry, $pH=-\log[H+]$. If the concentration of hydrogen ions in a liquid is doubled, what is the effect on pH?

Solution

Suppose C is the original concentration of hydrogen ions, and P is the original pH of the liquid. Then $P=-\log(C)$. If the concentration is doubled, the new concentration is $2C$. Then the pH of the new liquid is

$$pH=-\log(2C)$$

Using the product rule of logs

$$pH = -\log(2C) = -(\log(2) + \log(C)) = -\log(2) - \log(C)$$

Since $P = -\log(C)$,the new pH is

$$pH = P - \log(2) \approx P - 0.301$$

? Exercise 6.5.12

When the concentration of hydrogen ions is doubled, the pH decreases by about 0.301.

How does the pH change when the concentration of positive hydrogen ions is decreased by half?

Answer

The pH increases by about 0.301.

Using the Change-of-Base Formula for Logarithms

Most calculators can evaluate only common and natural logs. In order to evaluate logarithms with a base other than 10 ore, e,we use the **change-of-base formula** to rewrite the logarithm as the quotient of logarithms of any other base; when using a calculator, we would change them to common or natural logs.

To derive the change-of-base formula, we use the **one-to-one** property and **power rule for logarithms**.

Given any positive real numbers M, b, and n, where $n \neq 1$ and $b \neq 1$,we show

$$\log_b M = \frac{\log_n M}{\log_n b}$$

Let $y = \log_b M$. By taking the log base n of both sides of the equation, we arrive at an exponential form, namely $b^y = M$. It follows that

$$\begin{aligned} \log_n(b^y) &= \log_n M && \text{Apply the one-to-one property} \\ y\log_n b &= \log_n M && \text{Apply the power rule for logarithms} \\ y &= \frac{\log_n M}{\log_n b} && \text{Isolate y} \\ \log_b M &= \frac{\log_n M}{\log_n b} && \text{Substitute for y} \end{aligned}$$

For example, to evaluate $\log_5 36$ using a calculator, we must first rewrite the expression as a quotient of common or natural logs. We will use the common log.

$$\begin{aligned} \log_5 36 &= \frac{\log(36)}{\log(5)} && \text{Apply the change of base formula using base 10} \\ &\approx 2.2266 && \text{Use a calculator to evaluate to 4 decimal places} \end{aligned}$$

THE CHANGE-OF-BASE FORMULA

The change-of-base formula can be used to evaluate a logarithm with any base.

For any positive real numbers M, b, and n, where $n \neq 1$ and $b \neq 1$,

$$\log_b M = \frac{\log_n M}{\log_n b} \tag{6.5.7}$$

It follows that the change-of-base formula can be used to rewrite a logarithm with any base as the quotient of common or natural logs.

$$\log_b M = \frac{\ln M}{\ln b} \tag{6.5.8}$$

and

$$\log_b M = \frac{\log M}{\log b} \tag{6.5.9}$$

How to: Given a logarithm with the form $\log_b M$, use the change-of-base formula to rewrite it as a quotient of logs with any positive base n, where $n \neq 1$

1. Determine the new base n, remembering that the common log, $\log(x)$, has base 10, and the natural log, $\ln(x)$,has base e.
2. Rewrite the log as a quotient using the change-of-base formula
   - The numerator of the quotient will be a logarithm with base n and argument M.
   - The denominator of the quotient will be a logarithm with base n and argument b.

Example 6.5.13: Changing Logarithmic Expressions to Expressions Involving Only Natural Logs

Change $\log_5 3$ to a quotient of natural logarithms.

Solution

Because we will be expressing $\log_5 3$ as a quotient of natural logarithms, the new base, $n = e$.

We rewrite the log as a quotient using the change-of-base formula. The numerator of the quotient will be the natural log with argument 3. The denominator of the quotient will be the natural log with argument 5.

$$\log_b M = \frac{\ln M}{\ln b}$$

$$\log_5 3 = \frac{\ln 3}{\ln 5}$$

Exercise 6.5.13

Change $\log 0.58$ to a quotient of natural logarithms.

Answer

$$\frac{\ln 8}{\ln 0.5}$$

Q&A: Can we change common logarithms to natural logarithms?

Yes. Remember that $\log 9$ *means*l $\log_{10} 9$. *So,* $\log 9 = \frac{\ln 9}{\ln 10}$.

Example 6.5.14: Using the Change-of-Base Formula with a Calculator

Evaluate $\log_2(10)$ using the change-of-base formula with a calculator.

Solution

According to the change-of-base formula, we can rewrite the log base 2 as a logarithm of any other base. Since our calculators can evaluate the natural log, we might choose to use the natural logarithm, which is the log base e.

$$\log_2 10 = \frac{\ln 10}{\ln 2} \qquad \text{Apply the change of base formula using base } e$$

$$\approx 3.3219 \qquad \text{Use a calculator to evaluate to 4 decimal places}$$

Exercise 6.5.14

Evaluate $\log_5(100)$ using the change-of-base formula.

Answer

$$\frac{\ln 100}{\ln 5} \approx \frac{4.6051}{1.6094} = 2.861$$

Media

Access these online resources for additional instruction and practice with laws of logarithms.

- The Properties of Logarithms
- Expand Logarithmic Expressions
- Evaluate a Natural Logarithmic Expression

Key Equations

The Product Rule for Logarithms	$\log_b(MN) = \log_b(M) + \log_b(N)$
The Quotient Rule for Logarithms	$\log_b(\frac{M}{N}) = \log_b M - \log_b N$
The Power Rule for Logarithms	$\log_b(M^n) = n\log_b M$
The Change-of-Base Formula	$\log_b M = \frac{\log_n M}{\log_n b} \quad n > 0, n \neq 1, b \neq 1$

Key Concepts

- We can use the product rule of logarithms to rewrite the log of a product as a sum of logarithms. See Example 6.5.1.
- We can use the quotient rule of logarithms to rewrite the log of a quotient as a difference of logarithms. See Example 6.5.2.
- We can use the power rule for logarithms to rewrite the log of a power as the product of the exponent and the log of its base. See Example 6.5.3, Example 6.5.4, and Example 6.5.5.
- We can use the product rule, the quotient rule, and the power rule together to combine or expand a logarithm with a complex input. See Example 6.5.6, Example 6.5.7, and Example 6.5.8.
- The rules of logarithms can also be used to condense sums, differences, and products with the same base as a single logarithm. See Example 6.5.9, Example 6.5.10, Example 6.5.11, and Example 6.5.12
- We can convert a logarithm with any base to a quotient of logarithms with any other base using the change-of-base formula. See Example 6.5.13
- The change-of-base formula is often used to rewrite a logarithm with a base other than 10 and e as the quotient of natural or common logs. That way a calculator can be used to evaluate. See Example 6.5.14

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6.6: Exponential and Logarithmic Equations

Learning Objectives

- Use like bases to solve exponential equations.
- Use logarithms to solve exponential equations.
- Use the definition of a logarithm to solve logarithmic equations.
- Use the one-to-one property of logarithms to solve logarithmic equations.
- Solve applied problems involving exponential and logarithmic equations.

In 1859, an Australian landowner named Thomas Austin released 24 rabbits into the wild for hunting. Because Australia had few predators and ample food, the rabbit population exploded. In fewer than ten years, the rabbit population numbered in the millions.

Figure 6.6.1: Wild rabbits in Australia. The rabbit population grew so quickly in Australia that the event became known as the "rabbit plague." (credit: Richard Taylor, Flickr)

Uncontrolled population growth, as in the wild rabbits in Australia, can be modeled with exponential functions. Equations resulting from those exponential functions can be solved to analyze and make predictions about exponential growth. In this section, we will learn techniques for solving exponential functions.

Using Like Bases to Solve Exponential Equations

The first technique involves two functions with like bases. Recall that the one-to-one property of exponential functions tells us that, for any real numbers b, S, and T, where $b > 0$, $b \neq 1$, $b^S = b^T$ if and only if $S = T$.

In other words, when an **exponential equation** has the same base on each side, the exponents must be equal. This also applies when the exponents are algebraic expressions. Therefore, we can solve many exponential equations by using the rules of exponents to rewrite each side as a power with the same base. Then, we use the fact that exponential functions are one-to-one to set the exponents equal to one another, and solve for the unknown.

For example, consider the equation $3^{4x-7} = \dfrac{3^{2x}}{3}$. To solve for x, we use the division property of exponents to rewrite the right side so that both sides have the common base, 3. Then we apply the one-to-one property of exponents by setting the exponents equal to one another and solving for x:

$$
\begin{aligned}
3^{4x-7} &= \frac{3^{2x}}{3} && \\
3^{4x-7} &= \frac{3^{2x}}{3^1} && \text{Rewrite 3 as } 3^1 \\
3^{4x-7} &= 3^{2x-1} && \text{Use the division property of exponents} \\
4x-7 &= 2x-1 && \text{Apply the one-to-one property of exponents} \\
2x &= 6 && \text{Subtract 2x and add 7 to both sides} \\
x &= 3 && \text{Divide by 3}
\end{aligned}
$$

USING THE ONE-TO-ONE PROPERTY OF EXPONENTIAL FUNCTIONS TO SOLVE EXPONENTIAL EQUATIONS

For any algebraic expressions S and T, and any positive real number $b \neq 1$,

$$b^S = b^T \text{ if and only if } S = T \tag{6.6.1}$$

How to: Given an exponential equation with the form $b^S = b^T$, where S and T are algebraic expressions with an unknown, solve for the unknown.

1. Use the rules of exponents to simplify, if necessary, so that the resulting equation has the form $b^S = b^T$.
2. Use the one-to-one property to set the exponents equal.
3. Solve the resulting equation, $S = T$, for the unknown.

Example 6.6.1: Solving an Exponential Equation with a Common Base

Solve $2^{x-1} = 2^{2x-4}$.

Solution

$2^{x-1} = 2^{2x-4}$	The common base is 2
$x - 1 = 2x - 4$	By the one-to-one property the exponents must be equal
$x = 3$	Solve for x

Exercise 6.6.1

Solve $5^{2x} = 5^{3x+2}$.

Answer

$x = -2$

Rewrite Equations So All Powers Have the Same Base

Sometimes the *common base* for an exponential equation is not explicitly shown. In these cases, we simply rewrite the terms in the equation as powers with a common base, and solve using the one-to-one property.

For example, consider the equation $256 = 4^{x-5}$. We can rewrite both sides of this equation as a power of 2. Then we apply the rules of exponents, along with the one-to-one property, to solve for x:

$256 = 4^{x-5}$	
$2^8 = (2^2)^{x-5}$	Rewrite each side as a power with base 2
$2^8 = 2^{2x-10}$	Use the one-to-one property of exponents
$8 = 2x - 10$	Apply the one-to-one property of exponents
$18 = 2x$	Add 10 to both sides
$x = 9$	Divide by 2

How to: Given an exponential equation with unlike bases, use the one-to-one property to solve it.

1. Rewrite each side in the equation as a power with a common base.
2. Use the rules of exponents to simplify, if necessary, so that the resulting equation has the form $b^S = b^T$.
3. Use the one-to-one property to set the exponents equal.
4. Solve the resulting equation, $S = T$, for the unknown.

Example 6.6.2: Solving Equations by Rewriting Them to Have a Common Base

Solve $8^{x+2} = 16^{x+1}$.

Solution

$$
\begin{aligned}
8^{x+2} &= 16^{x+1} && \\
(2^3)^{x+2} &= (2^4)^{x+1} && \text{Write 8 and 16 as powers of 2} \\
2^{3x+6} &= 2^{4x+4} && \text{To take a power of a power, multiply exponents} \\
3x+6 &= 4x+4 && \text{Use the one-to-one property to set the exponents equal} \\
x &= 2 && \text{Solve for x}
\end{aligned}
$$

Exercise 6.6.2

Solve $5^{2x} = 25^{3x+2}$.

Answer

$x = -1$

Example 6.6.3: Solving Equations by Rewriting Roots with Fractional Exponents to Have a Common Base

Solve $2^{5x} = \sqrt{2}$.

Solution

$$
\begin{aligned}
2^{5x} &= 2^{\frac{1}{2}} && \text{Write the square root of 2 as a power of 2} \\
5x &= \frac{1}{2} && \text{Use the one-to-one property} \\
x &= \frac{1}{10} && \text{Solve for x}
\end{aligned}
$$

Exercise 6.6.3

Solve $5^x = \sqrt{5}$.

Answer

$x = \frac{1}{2}$

Q&A: Do all exponential equations have a solution? If not, how can we tell if there is a solution during the problem-solving process?

No. Recall that the range of an exponential function is always positive. While solving the equation, we may obtain an expression that is undefined.

Example 6.6.4: Solving an Equation with Positive and Negative Powers

Solve $3^{x+1} = -2$.

Solution

This equation has no solution. There is no real value of x that will make the equation a true statement because any power of a positive number is positive.

Analysis

Figure 6.6.2 shows that the two graphs do not cross so the left side is never equal to the right side. Thus the equation has no solution.

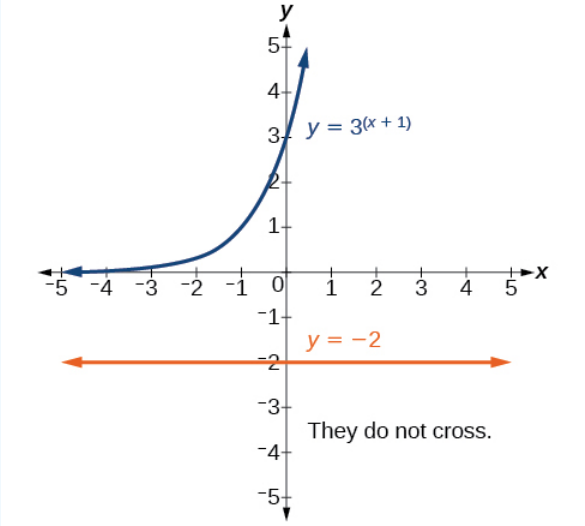

Figure 6.6.2

Exercise 6.6.4

Solve $2^x = -100$.

Answer

The equation has no solution.

Solving Exponential Equations Using Logarithms

Sometimes the terms of an exponential equation cannot be rewritten with a common base. In these cases, we solve by taking the logarithm of each side. Recall, since $\log(a) = \log(b)$ is equivalent to $a = b$, we may apply logarithms with the same base on both sides of an exponential equation.

How to: Given an exponential equation in which a common base cannot be found, solve for the unknown

1. Apply the logarithm of both sides of the equation.
   - If one of the terms in the equation has base 10, use the common logarithm.
   - If none of the terms in the equation has base 10, use the natural logarithm.
2. Use the rules of logarithms to solve for the unknown.

Example 6.6.5: Solving an Equation Containing Powers of Different Bases

Solve $5^{x+2} = 4^x$.

Solution

5^{x+2}	$=4^{x}$	There is no easy way to get the powers to have the same base
$\ln 5^{x+2}$	$=\ln 4^{x}$	Take ln of both sides
$(x+2)\ln 5$	$=x\ln 4$	Use laws of logs
$x\ln 5+2\ln 5$	$=x\ln 4$	Use the distributive law
$x\ln 5-x\ln 4$	$=-2\ln 5$	Get terms containing x on one side, terms without x on the other
$x(\ln 5-\ln 4)$	$=-2\ln 5$	On the left hand side, factor out an x
$x\ln\left(\frac{5}{4}\right)$	$=\ln\left(\frac{1}{25}\right)$	Use the laws of logs
x	$=\frac{\ln\left(\frac{1}{25}\right)}{\ln\left(\frac{5}{4}\right)}$	Divide by the coefficient of x

? Exercise 6.6.5

Solve $2^{x}=3^{x+1}$.

Answer

$$x=\frac{\ln 3}{\ln\left(\frac{2}{3}\right)}$$

Q&A: Is there any way to solve $2^{x}=3^{x}$?

Yes. The solution is 0.

Equations Containing e

One common type of exponential equations are those with base e. This constant occurs again and again in nature, in mathematics, in science, in engineering, and in finance. When we have an equation with a base e on either side, we can use the natural logarithm to solve it.

How to: Given an equation of the form $y=Ae^{kt}$, solve for t.

1. Divide both sides of the equation by A.
2. Apply the natural logarithm of both sides of the equation.
3. Divide both sides of the equation by k.

Example 6.6.6: Solve an Equation of the Form $y=Ae^{kt}$

Solve $100=20e^{2t}$.

Solution

100	$=20e^{2t}$	
5	$=e^{2t}$	Divide by the coefficient of the power
$\ln 5$	$=2t$	Take ln of both sides. Use the fact that $ln(x)$ and e^{x} are inverse functions
t	$=\frac{\ln 5}{2}$	Divide by the coefficient of t

Analysis

Using laws of logs, we can also write this answer in the form $t=\ln\sqrt{5}$. If we want a decimal approximation of the answer, we use a calculator.

Exercise 6.6.6

Solve $3e^{0.5t} = 11$.

Answer

$$t = 2\ln\left(\frac{11}{3}\right) \text{ or } \ln\left(\frac{11}{3}\right)^2$$

Q&A: Does every equation of the form $y = Ae^{kt}$ have a solution?

No. There is a solution when $k \neq 0$,and when y and A are either both 0 or neither 0, and they have the same sign. An example of an equation with this form that has no solution is $2 = -3e^t$.

Example 6.6.7: Solving an Equation That Can Be Simplified to the Form $y = Ae^{kt}$

Solve $4e^{2x} + 5 = 12$.

Solution

$4e^{2x} + 5 = 12$	
$4e^{2x} = 7$	Combine like terms
$e^{2x} = \frac{7}{4}$	Divide by the coefficient of the power
$2x = \ln\left(\frac{7}{4}\right)$	Take ln of both sides
$x = \frac{1}{2}\ln\left(\frac{7}{4}\right)$	Solve for x

Exercise 6.6.7

Solve $3 + e^{2t} = 7e^{2t}$.

Answer

$$t = \ln\left(\frac{1}{\sqrt{2}}\right) = -\frac{1}{2}\ln(2)$$

Extraneous Solutions

Sometimes the methods used to solve an equation introduce an **extraneous solution**, which is a solution that is correct algebraically but does not satisfy the conditions of the original equation. One such situation arises in solving when the logarithm is taken on both sides of the equation. In such cases, remember that the argument of the logarithm must be positive. If the number we are evaluating in a logarithm function is negative, there is no output.

Example 6.6.8: Solving Exponential Functions in Quadratic Form

Solve $e^{2x} - e^x = 56$.

Solution

$$
\begin{aligned}
e^{2x}-e^{x} &= 56 & \\
e^{2x}-e^{x}-56 &= 0 & \text{Get one side of the equation equal to zero} \\
(e^{x}+7)(e^{x}-8) &= 0 & \text{Factor by the FOIL method} \\
e^{x}+7 &= 0 & \text{or} \\
e^{x}-8 &= 0 & \text{If a product is zero, then one factor must be zero} \\
e^{x} &= -7 & \text{or} \\
e^{x} &= 8 & \text{Isolate the exponentials} \\
e^{x} &= 8 & \text{Reject the equation in which the power equals a negative number} \\
x &= \ln 8 & \text{Solve the equation in which the power equals a positive number}
\end{aligned}
$$

Analysis

When we plan to use factoring to solve a problem, we always get zero on one side of the equation, because zero has the unique property that when a product is zero, one or both of the factors must be zero. We reject the equation $e^{x}=-7$ because a positive number never equals a negative number. The solution $\ln(-7)$ is not a real number, and in the real number system this solution is rejected as an extraneous solution.

? Exercise 6.6.8

Solve $e^{2x}=e^{x}+2$.

Answer

$x=\ln 2$

Q&A: Does every logarithmic equation have a solution?

No. Keep in mind that we can only apply the logarithm to a positive number. Always check for extraneous solutions.

Using the Definition of a Logarithm to Solve Logarithmic Equations

We have already seen that every logarithmic equation $\log_b(x)=y$ is equivalent to the exponential equation $b^{y}=x$. We can use this fact, along with the rules of logarithms, to solve logarithmic equations where the argument is an algebraic expression.

For example, consider the equation $\log_2(2)+\log_2(3x-5)=3$. To solve this equation, we can use rules of logarithms to rewrite the left side in compact form and then apply the definition of logs to solve for x:

$$
\begin{aligned}
\log_2(2)+\log_2(3x-5) &= 3 & \\
\log_2(2(3x-5)) &= 3 & \text{Apply the product rule of logarithms} \\
\log_2(6x-10) &= 3 & \text{Distribute} \\
2^{3} &= 6x-10 & \text{Apply the definition of a logarithm} \\
8 &= 6x-10 & \text{Calculate } 2^{3} \\
18 &= 6x & \text{Add 10 to both sides} \\
x &= 3 & \text{Divide by 6}
\end{aligned}
$$

USING THE DEFINITION OF A LOGARITHM TO SOLVE LOGARITHMIC EQUATIONS

For any algebraic expression S and real numbers b and c,where $b>0$, $b\neq 1$,

$$\log_b(S)=c \text{ if and only if } b^{c}=S \tag{6.6.2}$$

✓ Example 6.6.9: Using Algebra to Solve a Logarithmic Equation

Solve $2\ln x+3=7$.

Solution

$$\begin{aligned} 2\ln x+3 &= 7 \\ 2\ln x &= 4 \quad \text{Subtract 3} \\ \ln x &= 2 \quad \text{Divide by 2} \\ x &= e^2 \quad \text{Rewrite in exponential form} \end{aligned}$$

? Exercise 6.6.9

Solve $6+\ln x = 10$.

Answer

$x = e^4$

✓ Example 6.6.10: Using Algebra Before and After Using the Definition of the Natural Logarithm

Solve $2\ln(6x) = 7$.

Solution

$$\begin{aligned} 2\ln(6x) &= 7 \\ \ln(6x) &= \frac{7}{2} \quad \text{Divide by 2} \\ 6x &= e^{\left(\frac{7}{2}\right)} \quad \text{Use the definition of ln} \\ x &= \frac{1}{6}e^{\left(\frac{7}{2}\right)} \quad \text{Divide by 6} \end{aligned}$$

? Exercise 6.6.10

Solve $2\ln(x+1) = 10$.

Answer

$x = e^5 - 1$

✓ Example 6.6.11: Using a Graph to Understand the Solution to a Logarithmic Equation

Solve $\ln x = 3$.

Solution

$$\begin{aligned} \ln x &= 3 \\ x &= e^3 \quad \text{Use the definition of the natural logarithm} \end{aligned}$$

Figure 6.6.3 represents the graph of the equation. On the graph, the *x*-coordinate of the point at which the two graphs intersect is close to 20. In other words $e^3 \approx 20$. A calculator gives a better approximation: $e^3 \approx 20.0855$.

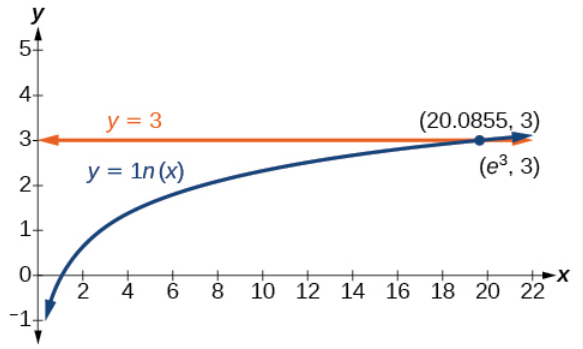

Figure 6.6.3: The graphs of $y = \ln x$ and $y = 3$ cross at the point $(e^3, 3)$, which is approximately $(20.0855, 3)$.

? Exercise 6.6.11

Use a graphing calculator to estimate the approximate solution to the logarithmic equation $2^x = 1000$ to 2 decimal places.

Answer

$x \approx 9.97$

Using the One-to-One Property of Logarithms to Solve Logarithmic Equations

As with exponential equations, we can use the one-to-one property to solve logarithmic equations. The one-to-one property of logarithmic functions tells us that, for any real numbers $x > 0$, $S > 0$, $T > 0$ and any positive real number b, where $b \neq 1$,

$$\log_b S = \log_b T \text{ if and only if } S = T.$$

For example,

$$\text{If } \log_2(x-1) = \log_2(8), \text{ then } x - 1 = 8.$$

So, if $x - 1 = 8$, then we can solve for x,and we get $x = 9$. To check, we can substitute $x = 9$ into the original equation: $\log_2(9-1) = \log_2(8) = 3$. In other words, when a logarithmic equation has the same base on each side, the arguments must be equal. This also applies when the arguments are algebraic expressions. Therefore, when given an equation with logs of the same base on each side, we can use rules of logarithms to rewrite each side as a single logarithm. Then we use the fact that logarithmic functions are one-to-one to set the arguments equal to one another and solve for the unknown.

For example, consider the equation $\log(3x-2) - \log(2) = \log(x+4)$. To solve this equation, we can use the rules of logarithms to rewrite the left side as a single logarithm, and then apply the one-to-one property to solve for x:

$$\begin{aligned}
\log(3x-2) - \log(2) &= \log(x+4) \\
\log\left(\frac{3x-2}{2}\right) &= \log(x+4) && \text{Apply the quotient rule of logarithms} \\
\frac{3x-2}{2} &= x+4 && \text{Apply the one to one property of a logarithm} \\
3x-2 &= 2x+8 && \text{Multiply both sides of the equation by 2} \\
x &= 10 && \text{Subtract 2x and add 2}
\end{aligned}$$

To check the result, substitute $x = 10$ into $\log(3x-2) - \log(2) = \log(x+4)$.

$$\begin{aligned}
\log(3(10)-2) - \log(2) &= \log((10)+4) \\
\log(28) - \log(2) &= \log(14) \\
\log\left(\frac{28}{2}\right) &= \log(14) && \text{The solution checks}
\end{aligned}$$

USING THE ONE-TO-ONE PROPERTY OF LOGARITHMS TO SOLVE LOGARITHMIC EQUATIONS

For any algebraic expressions S and T and any positive real number b, where $b \neq 1$,

$$b^S = b^T \text{ if and only if } S = T \tag{6.6.3}$$

Note, when solving an equation involving logarithms, always check to see if the answer is correct or if it is an extraneous solution.

How to: Given an equation containing logarithms, solve it using the one-to-one property

1. Use the rules of logarithms to combine like terms, if necessary, so that the resulting equation has the form $\log_b S = \log_b T$.
2. Use the one-to-one property to set the arguments equal.
3. Solve the resulting equation, $S = T$, for the unknown.

Example 6.6.12: Solving an Equation Using the One-to-One Property of Logarithms

Solve $\ln(x^2) = \ln(2x+3)$.

Solution

$$\begin{aligned} \ln(x^2) &= \ln(2x+3) \\ x^2 &= 2x+3 \quad \text{Use the one-to-one property of the logarithm} \\ x^2-2x-3 &= 0 \quad \text{Get zero on one side before factoring} \\ (x-3)(x+1) &= 0 \quad \text{Factor using FOIL} \\ x-3 &= 0 \quad \text{or } x+1=0 \text{ If a product is zero, one of the factors must be zero} \\ x &= 3 \quad \text{or} \\ x &= -11 \quad \text{Solve for x} \end{aligned}$$

Analysis

There are two solutions: 3 or -1. The solution -1 is negative, but it checks when substituted into the original equation because the argument of the logarithm functions is still positive.

Exercise 6.6.12

Solve $\ln(x^2) = \ln 1$.

Answer

$x = 1$ or $x = -1$

Solving Applied Problems Using Exponential and Logarithmic Equations

In previous sections, we learned the properties and rules for both exponential and logarithmic functions. We have seen that any exponential function can be written as a logarithmic function and vice versa. We have used exponents to solve logarithmic equations and logarithms to solve exponential equations. We are now ready to combine our skills to solve equations that model real-world situations, whether the unknown is in an exponent or in the argument of a logarithm.

One such application is in science, in calculating the time it takes for half of the unstable material in a sample of a radioactive substance to decay, called its **half-life**. Table 6.6.1 lists the half-life for several of the more common radioactive substances.

Table 6.6.1

Substance	*Use*	*Half-life*
gallium-67	*nuclear medicine*	*80 hours*
cobalt-60	*manufacturing*	*5.3 years*

Substance	Use	Half-life
technetium-99m	nuclear medicine	6 hours
americium-241	construction	432 years
carbon-14	archeological dating	5,715 years
uranium-235	atomic power	703,800,000 years

We can see how widely the half-lives for these substances vary. Knowing the half-life of a substance allows us to calculate the amount remaining after a specified time. We can use the formula for radioactive decay:

$$A(t) = A_0 e^{\frac{\ln(0.5)}{T}t} \tag{6.6.4}$$

$$A(t) = A_0 e^{\frac{\ln(0.5)t}{T}} \tag{6.6.5}$$

$$A(t) = A_0 (e^{\ln(0.5)})^{\frac{t}{T}} \tag{6.6.6}$$

$$A(t) = A_0 \left(\frac{1}{2}\right)^{\frac{t}{T}} \tag{6.6.7}$$

where

- A_0 is the amount initially present
- T is the half-life of the substance
- t is the time period over which the substance is studied
- y is the amount of the substance present after time t

Example 6.6.13: Using the Formula for Radioactive Decay to Find the Quantity of a Substance

How long will it take for ten percent of a 1000-gram sample of uranium-235 to decay?

Solution

$$\begin{aligned} y &= 1000e^{\frac{\ln(0.5)}{703,800,000}t} \\ 900 &= 1000e^{\frac{\ln(0.5)}{703,800,000}t} && \text{After } 10\% \text{ decays, 900 grams are left} \\ 0.9 &= e^{\frac{\ln(0.5)}{703,800,000}t} && \text{Divide by 1000} \\ \ln(0.9) &= \ln\left(e^{\frac{\ln(0.5)}{703,800,000}t}\right) && \text{Take ln of both sides} \\ \ln(0.9) &= \frac{\ln(0.5)}{703,800,000}t && \ln(e^M) = M \\ t &= 703,800,000 \times \frac{\ln(0.9)}{\ln(0.5)} && \text{years Solve for t} \\ t &\approx 106,979,777 && \text{years} \end{aligned}$$

Analysis

Ten percent of 1000 grams is 100 grams. If 100 grams decay, the amount of uranium-235 remaining is 900 grams.

Exercise 6.6.13

How long will it take before twenty percent of our 1000-gram sample of uranium-235 has decayed?

Answer

$t = 703,800,000 \times \frac{\ln(0.8)}{\ln(0.5)}$ years ≈ 226,572,993 years.

Media

Access these online resources for additional instruction and practice with exponential and logarithmic equations.

- Solving Logarithmic Equations
- Solving Exponential Equations with Logarithms

Key Equations

One-to-one property for exponential functions	For any algebraic expressions S and T and any positive real number b, where $b^S = b^T$ if and only if $S = T$.
Definition of a logarithm	For any algebraic expression S and positive real numbers b and c, where $b \neq 1$, $\log_b(S) = c$ if and only if $b^c = S$.
One-to-one property for logarithmic functions	For any algebraic expressions S and T and any positive real number b, where $b \neq 1$, $\log_b S = \log_b T$ if and only if $S = T$.

Key Concepts

- We can solve many exponential equations by using the rules of exponents to rewrite each side as a power with the same base. Then we use the fact that exponential functions are one-to-one to set the exponents equal to one another and solve for the unknown.
- When we are given an exponential equation where the bases are explicitly shown as being equal, set the exponents equal to one another and solve for the unknown. See Example 6.6.1.
- When we are given an exponential equation where the bases are *not* explicitly shown as being equal, rewrite each side of the equation as powers of the same base, then set the exponents equal to one another and solve for the unknown. See Example 6.6.2, Example 6.6.3, and Example 6.6.4.
- When an exponential equation cannot be rewritten with a common base, solve by taking the logarithm of each side. See Example 6.6.5.
- We can solve exponential equations with base e,by applying the natural logarithm of both sides because exponential and logarithmic functions are inverses of each other. See Example 6.6.6 and Example 6.6.7.
- After solving an exponential equation, check each solution in the original equation to find and eliminate any extraneous solutions. See Example 6.6.8.
- When given an equation of the form $\log_b(S) = c$, where S is an algebraic expression, we can use the definition of a logarithm to rewrite the equation as the equivalent exponential equation $b^c = S$, and solve for the unknown. See Example 6.6.9 and Example 6.6.10.
- We can also use graphing to solve equations with the form $\log_b(S) = c$. We graph both equations $y = \log_b(S)$ and $y = c$ on the same coordinate plane and identify the solution as the *x*-value of the intersecting point. See Example 6.6.11.
- When given an equation of the form $\log_b S = \log_b T$, where S and T are algebraic expressions, we can use the one-to-one property of logarithms to solve the equation $S = T$ for the unknown. See Example 6.6.12.
- Combining the skills learned in this and previous sections, we can solve equations that model real world situations, whether the unknown is in an exponent or in the argument of a logarithm. See Example 6.6.13.

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6.7: Exponential and Logarithmic Models

Learning Objectives

- Model exponential growth and decay.
- Use Newton's Law of Cooling.
- Use logistic-growth models.
- Choose an appropriate model for data.
- Express an exponential model in base e.

We have already explored some basic applications of exponential and logarithmic functions. In this section, we explore some important applications in more depth, including radioactive isotopes and Newton's Law of Cooling.

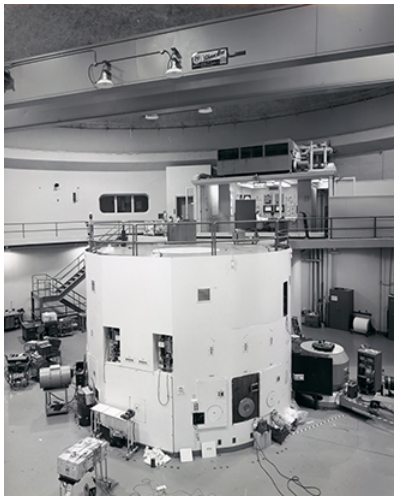

Figure 6.7.1: A nuclear research reactor inside the Neely Nuclear Research Center on the Georgia Institute of Technology campus (credit: Georgia Tech Research Institute)

Modeling Exponential Growth and Decay

In real-world applications, we need to model the behavior of a function. In mathematical modeling, we choose a familiar general function with properties that suggest that it will model the real-world phenomenon we wish to analyze. In the case of rapid growth, we may choose the exponential growth function:

$$y = A_0 e^{kt} \tag{6.7.1}$$

where A_0 is equal to the value at time zero, e is Euler's constant, and k is a positive constant that determines the rate (percentage) of growth. We may use the exponential growth function in applications involving **doubling time**, the time it takes for a quantity to double. Such phenomena as wildlife populations, financial investments, biological samples, and natural resources may exhibit growth based on a doubling time. In some applications, however, as we will see when we discuss the logistic equation, the logistic model sometimes fits the data better than the exponential model.

On the other hand, if a quantity is falling rapidly toward zero, without ever reaching zero, then we should probably choose the **exponential decay** model. Again, we have the form $y = A_0 e^{kt}$ where A_0 is the starting value, and e is Euler's constant. Now k is a negative constant that determines the rate of decay. We may use the exponential decay model when we are calculating half-life, or the time it takes for a substance to exponentially decay to half of its original quantity. We use half-life in applications involving radioactive isotopes.

In our choice of a function to serve as a mathematical model, we often use data points gathered by careful observation and measurement to construct points on a graph and hope we can recognize the shape of the graph. Exponential growth and decay graphs have a distinctive shape, as we can see in Figure 6.7.2 and Figure 6.7.3. It is important to remember that, although parts of each of the two graphs seem to lie on the x-axis, they are really a tiny distance above the x-axis.

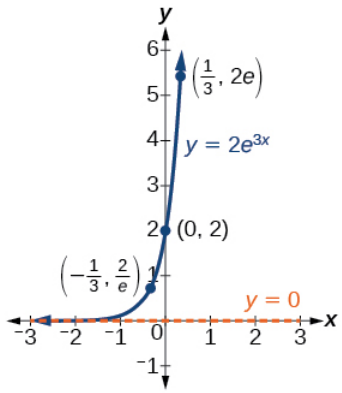

Figure 6.7.2: A graph showing exponential growth. The equation is $y = 2e^{3x}$.

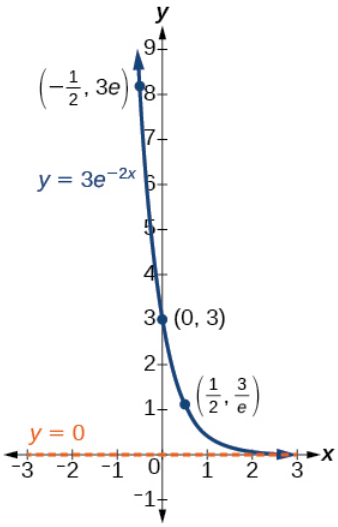

Figure 6.7.3: A graph showing exponential decay. The equation is $y = 3e^{-2x}$.

Exponential growth and decay often involve very large or very small numbers. To describe these numbers, we often use orders of magnitude. The **order of magnitude** is the power of ten, when the number is expressed in scientific notation, with one digit to the left of the decimal. For example, the distance to the nearest star, **Proxima Centauri**, measured in kilometers, is $40,113,497,200,000$kilometers. Expressed in scientific notation, this is 4.01134972×1013 So, we could describe this number as having order of magnitude 1013.

$y = a_0 e^{kt}$

An exponential function with the form $y = A_0 e^{kt}$ has the following characteristics:

- one-to-one function
- horizontal asymptote: $y = 0$
- domain: $(-\infty, \infty)$
- range: $(0, \infty)$
- x intercept: none
- y-intercept: $(0, A_0)$
- increasing if $k > 0$ (see Figure 6.7.4)
- decreasing if $k < 0$ (see Figure 6.7.4)

Two graphs of y=(A_0)(e^(kt)) with the asymptote at y=0. The first graph is of when k
0 and with the labeled points (1/k, (A_0)e), (0, A_0), and (-1/k, (A_0)/e). The second graph is of when k<0 and with the labeled points (-1/k, (A_0)e), (0, A_0), and (1/k, (A_0)/e)." src="/@api/deki/files/12238/fig_6.8.4.jpg">

Figure 6.7.4: An exponential function models exponential growth when $k > 0$ and exponential decay when $k < 0$.

Example 6.7.1: Graphing Exponential Growth

A population of bacteria doubles every hour. If the culture started with 10 bacteria, graph the population as a function of time.

Solution

When an amount grows at a fixed percent per unit time, the growth is exponential. To find A_0 we use the fact that A_0 is the amount at time zero, so $A_0 = 10$. To find k, use the fact that after one hour $(t = 1)$ the population doubles from 10 to 20.The formula is derived as follows

$$\begin{aligned} 20 &= 10e^{k\cdot 1} \\ 2 &= e^{k} \qquad \text{Divide by 10} \\ \ln 2 &= k \qquad \text{Take the natural logarithm} \end{aligned}$$

so $k = \ln(2)$. Thus the equation we want to graph is $y = 10e^{(\ln 2)t} = 10(e^{\ln 2})^t = 10 \cdot 2^t$. The graph is shown in Figure 6.7.5.

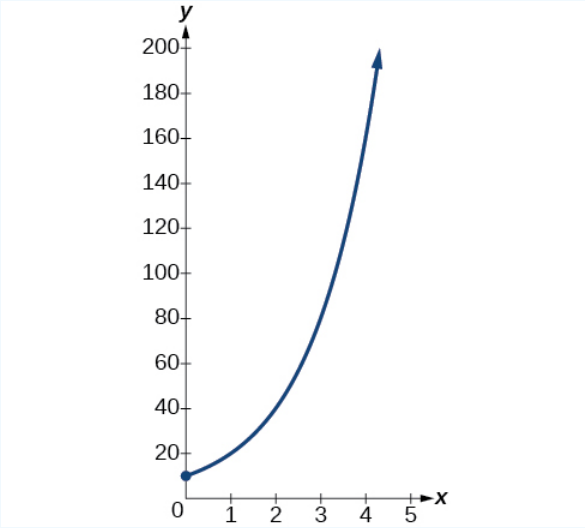

Figure 6.7.5: The graph of $y = 10e^{(\ln 2)t}$

Analysis

The population of bacteria after ten hours is $10,240$. We could describe this amount is being of the order of magnitude 10^4. The population of bacteria after twenty hours is $10,485,760$which is of the order of magnitude 10^7, so we could say that the population has increased by three orders of magnitude in ten hours.

Half-Life

We now turn to **exponential decay**. One of the common terms associated with exponential decay, as stated above, is **half-life**, the length of time it takes an exponentially decaying quantity to decrease to half its original amount. Every radioactive isotope has a half-life, and the process describing the exponential decay of an isotope is called radioactive decay.

To find the half-life of a function describing exponential decay, solve the following equation:

$$\frac{1}{2}A_0 = A_0 e^{kt}$$

We find that the half-life depends only on the constant k and not on the starting quantity A_0.

The formula is derived as follows

$$\begin{aligned}
\frac{1}{2}A_0 &= A_0 e^{kt} \\
\frac{1}{2} &= e^{kt} && \text{Divide by } A_0 \\
\ln\left(\frac{1}{2}\right) &= ktv && \text{Take the natural log} \\
-\ln(2) &= kt && \text{Apply laws of logarithms} \\
-\ln(2)k &= t && \text{Divide by k}
\end{aligned}$$

Since t, the time, is positive, k must, as expected, be negative. This gives us the half-life formula

$$t = -\frac{\ln(2)}{k} \tag{6.7.2}$$

Given the half-life, find the decay rate.

1. Write $A = A_0 e^{kt}$.
2. Replace A by $\frac{1}{2}A_0$ and replace t by the given half-life.
3. Solve to find k. Express k as an exact value (do not round).

Note: It is also possible to find the decay rate using $k = -\ln(2)t$.

Example 6.7.2: Finding the Function that Describes Radioactive Decay

The half-life of carbon-14 is $5,730$ years. Express the amount of carbon-14 remaining as a function of time, t.

Solution

This formula is derived as follows.

$$\begin{aligned}
A &= A_0 e^{kt} && \text{The continuous growth formula} \\
0.5A_0 &= A_0 e^{k\cdot 5730} && \text{Substitute the half-life for t and } 0.5A_0 \text{ for } f(t) \\
0.5 &= e^{5730k} && \text{Divide by } A_0 \\
\ln(0.5) &= 5730k && \text{Take the natural log of both sides} \\
k &= \frac{\ln(0.5)}{5730} && \text{Divide by the coefficient of k} \\
A &= A_0 e^{\left(\frac{\ln(0.5)}{5730}\right)t} && \text{Substitute for r in the continuous growth formula}
\end{aligned}$$

The function that describes this continuous decay is $f(t) = A_0 e^{\left(\frac{\ln(0.5)}{5730}\right)t}$. We observe that the coefficient of t, $\frac{\ln(0.5)}{5730} \approx -1.2097 \times 10^{-4}$ is negative, as expected in the case of exponential decay.

Exercise 6.7.1

The half-life of plutonium-244 is $80,000,000$ years. Find function gives the amount of carbon-14 remaining as a function of time, measured in years.

Answer

$f(t) = A_0 e^{-0.0000000087t}$

Radiocarbon Dating

The formula for radioactive decay is important in **radiocarbon dating**, which is used to calculate the approximate date a plant or animal died. Radiocarbon dating was discovered in 1949 by Willard Libby, who won a Nobel Prize for his discovery. It compares

the difference between the ratio of two isotopes of carbon in an organic artifact or fossil to the ratio of those two isotopes in the air. It is believed to be accurate to within about 1% error for plants or animals that died within the last $60,000$ years.

Carbon-14 is a radioactive isotope of carbon that has a half-life of $5,730$ years. It occurs in small quantities in the carbon dioxide in the air we breathe. Most of the carbon on Earth is carbon-12, which has an atomic weight of 12 and is not radioactive. Scientists have determined the ratio of carbon-14 to carbon-12 in the air for the last $60,000$ years, using tree rings and other organic samples of known dates—although the ratio has changed slightly over the centuries.

As long as a plant or animal is alive, the ratio of the two isotopes of carbon in its body is close to the ratio in the atmosphere. When it dies, the carbon-14 in its body decays and is not replaced. By comparing the ratio of carbon-14 to carbon-12 in a decaying sample to the known ratio in the atmosphere, the date the plant or animal died can be approximated.

Since the half-life of carbon-14 is $5,730$ years, the formula for the amount of carbon-14 remaining after t years is

$$A \approx A_0 e^{\left(\frac{\ln(0.5)}{5730}\right)t}$$

where

- A is the amount of carbon-14 remaining
- A_0 is the amount of carbon-14 when the plant or animal began decaying.

This formula is derived as follows:

$$\begin{aligned}
A &= A_0 e^{kt} && \text{The continuous growth formula} \\
0.5A_0 &= A_0 e^{k\cdot 5730} && \text{Substitute the half-life for t and } 0.5A_0 \text{ for f(t)} \\
0.5 &= e^{5730k} && \text{Divide by } A_0 \\
\ln(0.5) &= 5730k && \text{Take the natural log of both sides} \\
k &= \frac{\ln(0.5)}{5730} && \text{Divide by the coefficient of k} \\
A &= A_0 e^{\left(\frac{\ln(0.5)}{5730}\right)t} && \text{Substitute for r in the continuous growth formula}
\end{aligned}$$

To find the age of an object, we solve this equation for t:

$$t = \frac{\ln\left(\frac{A}{A_0}\right)}{-0.000121}$$

Out of necessity, we neglect here the many details that a scientist takes into consideration when doing carbon-14 dating, and we only look at the basic formula. The ratio of carbon-14 to carbon-12 in the atmosphere is approximately 0.0000000001 Let r be the ratio of carbon-14 to carbon-12 in the organic artifact or fossil to be dated, determined by a method called liquid scintillation. From the equation $A \approx A_0 e^{-0.000121t}$ we know the ratio of the percentage of carbon-14 in the object we are dating to the percentage of carbon-14 in the atmosphere is $r = \frac{A}{A_0} \approx e^{-0.000121t}$. We solve this equation for t, to get

$$t = \frac{\ln(r)}{-0.000121}$$

1. Express the given percentage of carbon-14 as an equivalent decimal, k.
2. Substitute for k in the equation $t = \frac{\ln(r)}{-0.000121}$ and solve for the age, t.

Example 6.7.3: Finding the Age of a Bone

A bone fragment is found that contains 20% of its original carbon-14. To the nearest year, how old is the bone?

Solution

We substitute $20\% = 0.20$ for k in the equation and solve for t:

$$\begin{aligned} t &= \frac{\ln(r)}{-0.000121} && \text{Use the general form of the equation} \\ &= \frac{\ln(0.20)}{-0.000121} && \text{Substitute for r} \\ &\approx 13301 && \text{Round to the nearest year} \end{aligned}$$

The bone fragment is about $13,301$ years old.

Analysis

The instruments that measure the percentage of carbon-14 are extremely sensitive and, as we mention above, a scientist will need to do much more work than we did in order to be satisfied. Even so, carbon dating is only accurate to about 1%, so this age should be given as $13,301$ years $\pm 1\%$ or $13,301$ years ± 133 years.

? Exercise 6.7.2

Cesium-137 has a half-life of about 30 years. If we begin with 200 mg of cesium-137, will it take more or less than 230 years until only 1 milligram remains?

Answer

less than 230 years, 229.3157 to be exact

Calculating Doubling Time

For decaying quantities, we determined how long it took for half of a substance to decay. For growing quantities, we might want to find out how long it takes for a quantity to double. As we mentioned above, the time it takes for a quantity to double is called the **doubling time**.

Given the basic **exponential growth** equation $A = A_0 e^{kt}$, doubling time can be found by solving for when the original quantity has doubled, that is, by solving $2A_0 = A_0 e^{kt}$.

The formula is derived as follows:

$$\begin{aligned} 2A_0 &= A_0 e^{kt} \\ 2 &= e^{kt} && \text{Divide by } A_0 \\ \ln 2 &= kt && \text{Take the natural logarithm} \\ t &= \frac{\ln 2}{k} && \text{Divide by the coefficient of t} \end{aligned}$$

Thus the doubling time is

$$t = \frac{\ln 2}{k} \tag{6.7.3}$$

✓ Example 6.7.4: Finding a Function That Describes Exponential Growth

According to Moore's Law, the doubling time for the number of transistors that can be put on a computer chip is approximately two years. Give a function that describes this behavior.

Solution

The formula is derived as follows:

$$\begin{aligned} t &= \frac{\ln 2}{k} && \text{The doubling time formula} \\ 2 &= \frac{\ln 2}{k} && \text{Use a doubling time of two years} \\ k &= \frac{\ln 2}{2} && \text{Multiply by k and divide by 2} \\ A &= A_0 e^{\frac{\ln 2}{2} t} && \text{Substitute k into the continuous growth formula} \end{aligned}$$

The function is $A = A_0 e^{\frac{\ln 2}{2} t}$.

Exercise 6.7.3

Recent data suggests that, as of 2013, the rate of growth predicted by Moore's Law no longer holds. Growth has slowed to a doubling time of approximately three years. Find the new function that takes that longer doubling time into account.

Answer

$f(t) = A_0 e^{\frac{\ln 2}{3} t}$

Using Newton's Law of Cooling

Exponential decay can also be applied to temperature. When a hot object is left in surrounding air that is at a lower temperature, the object's temperature will decrease exponentially, leveling off as it approaches the surrounding air temperature. On a graph of the temperature function, the leveling off will correspond to a horizontal asymptote at the temperature of the surrounding air. Unless the room temperature is zero, this will correspond to a **vertical shift** of the generic **exponential decay** function. This translation leads to **Newton's Law of Cooling**, the scientific formula for temperature as a function of time as an object's temperature is equalized with the ambient temperature

$$T(t) = ae^{kt} + T_s$$

This formula is derived as follows:

$$\begin{aligned} T(t) &= Ab^{ct} + T_s \\ T(t) &= Ae^{\ln(b^{ct})} + T_s && \text{Laws of logarithms} \\ T(t) &= Ae^{ct \ln b} + T_s && \text{Laws of logarithms} \\ T(t) &= Ae^{kt} + T_s && \text{Rename the constant c } lnb\text{, calling it } k \end{aligned}$$

NEWTON'S LAW OF COOLING

The temperature of an object, T, in surrounding air with temperature T_s will behave according to the formula

$$T(t) = Ae^{kt} + T_s \tag{6.7.4}$$

where

- t is time
- A is the difference between the initial temperature of the object and the surroundings
- k is a constant, the continuous rate of cooling of the object

Given a set of conditions, apply Newton's Law of Cooling.

1. Set T_s equal to the y-coordinate of the horizontal asymptote (usually the ambient temperature).
2. Substitute the given values into the continuous growth formula $T(t) = Ae^{kt} + T_s$ to find the parameters A and k.
3. Substitute in the desired time to find the temperature or the desired temperature to find the time.

Example 6.7.5: Using Newton's Law of Cooling

A cheesecake is taken out of the oven with an ideal internal temperature of $165^\circ F$, and is placed into a $35^\circ F$ refrigerator. After 10 minutes, the cheesecake has cooled to $150^\circ F$. If we must wait until the cheesecake has cooled to $70^\circ F$ before we eat it, how long will we have to wait?

Solution

Because the surrounding air temperature in the refrigerator is 35 degrees, the cheesecake's temperature will decay exponentially toward 35, following the equation

$$T(t) = Ae^{kt} + 35$$

We know the initial temperature was 165, so $T(0) = 165$.

$$\begin{aligned} 165 &= Ae^{k0} + 35 && \text{Substitute } (0, 165) \\ A &= 130 && \text{Solve for A} \end{aligned}$$

We were given another data point, $T(10) = 150$, which we can use to solve for k.

$$\begin{aligned} 150 &= 130e^{k10} + 35 && \text{Substitute } (10, 150) \\ 115 &= 130e^{k10} && \text{Subtract 35} \\ \frac{115}{130} &= e^{10k} && \text{Divide by 130} \\ \ln\left(\frac{115}{130}\right) &= 10k && \text{Take the natural log of both sides} \\ k &= \frac{\ln\left(\frac{115}{130}\right)}{10} \\ &= -0.0123 && \text{Divide by the coefficient of k} \end{aligned}$$

This gives us the equation for the cooling of the cheesecake: $T(t) = 130e^{-0.0123t} + 35$.

Now we can solve for the time it will take for the temperature to cool to 70 degrees.

$$\begin{aligned} 70 &= 130e^{-0.0123t} + 35 && \text{Substitute in 70 for } T(t) \\ 35 &= 130e^{-0.0123t} && \text{Subtract 35} \\ \frac{35}{130} &= e^{-0.0123t} && \text{Divide by 130} \\ \ln\left(\frac{35}{130}\right) &= -0.0123t && \text{Take the natural log of both sides} \\ t &= \frac{\ln\left(\frac{35}{130}\right)}{-0.0123} \\ &\approx 106.68 && \text{Divide by the coefficient of t} \end{aligned}$$

It will take about 107 minutes, or one hour and 47 minutes, for the cheesecake to cool to $70^\circ F$.

? Exercise 6.7.4

A pitcher of water at 40 degrees Fahrenheit is placed into a 70 degree room. One hour later, the temperature has risen to 45 degrees. How long will it take for the temperature to rise to 60 degrees?

Answer

6.026hours

Using Logistic Growth Models

Exponential growth cannot continue forever. Exponential models, while they may be useful in the short term, tend to fall apart the longer they continue. Consider an aspiring writer who writes a single line on day one and plans to double the number of lines she writes each day for a month. By the end of the month, she must write over 17 billion lines, or one-half-billion pages. It is impractical, if not impossible, for anyone to write that much in such a short period of time. Eventually, an exponential model must begin to approach some limiting value, and then the growth is forced to slow. For this reason, it is often better to use a model with an upper bound instead of an exponential growth model, though the **exponential growth** model is still useful over a short term, before approaching the limiting value.

The **logistic growth model** is approximately exponential at first, but it has a reduced rate of growth as the output approaches the model's upper bound, called the **carrying capacity**. For constants a, b, and c, the logistic growth of a population over time x is

represented by the model

$$f(x) = \frac{c}{1 + ae^{-bx}}$$

The graph in Figure 6.7.6 shows how the growth rate changes over time. The graph increases from left to right, but the growth rate only increases until it reaches its point of maximum growth rate, at which point the rate of increase decreases.

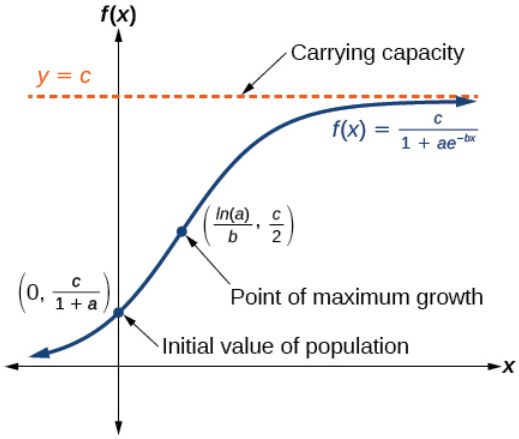

Figure 6.7.6

LOGISTIC GROWTH

The logistic growth model is

$$f(x) = \frac{c}{1 + ae^{-bx}} \tag{6.7.5}$$

where

- $\frac{c}{1+a}$ is the initial value
- c is the *carrying capacity*, or *limiting value*
- b is a constant determined by the rate of growth.

Example 6.7.6: Using the Logistic-Growth Model

An influenza epidemic spreads through a population rapidly, at a rate that depends on two factors: The more people who have the flu, the more rapidly it spreads, and also the more uninfected people there are, the more rapidly it spreads. These two factors make the logistic model a good one to study the spread of communicable diseases. And, clearly, there is a maximum value for the number of people infected: the entire population.

For example, at time $t = 0$ there is one person in a community of $1,000$ people who has the flu. So, in that community, at most $1,000$ people can have the flu. Researchers find that for this particular strain of the flu, the logistic growth constant is $b = 0.6030$. Estimate the number of people in this community who will have had this flu after ten days. Predict how many people in this community will have had this flu after a long period of time has passed.

Solution

We substitute the given data into the logistic growth model

$$f(x) = \frac{c}{1 + ae^{-bx}}$$

Because at most $1,000$ people, the entire population of the community, can get the flu, we know the limiting value is $c = 1000$. To find a,we use the formula that the number of cases at time $t = 0$ is $\frac{c}{1+a} = 1$, from which it follows that $a = 999$.This model predicts that, after ten days, the number of people who have had the flu is

$f(x) = \dfrac{1000}{1 + 999e^{-0.6030x}} \approx 293.8$. Because the actual number must be a whole number (a person has either had the flu or not) we round to 294. In the long term, the number of people who will contract the flu is the limiting value, $c = 1000$.

Analysis

Remember that, because we are dealing with a virus, we cannot predict with certainty the number of people infected. The model only approximates the number of people infected and will not give us exact or actual values.

The graph in Figure $6.7.7$ gives a good picture of how this model fits the data.

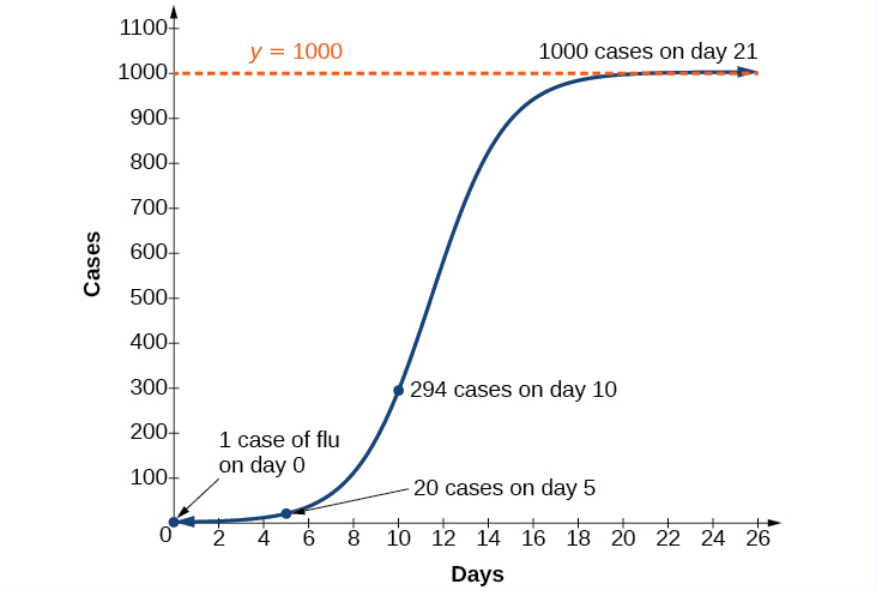

Figure 6.7.7: The graph of $f(x) = \dfrac{1000}{1 + 999e^{-0.6030x}}$

? Exercise 6.7.5

Using the model in the Example above, estimate the number of cases of flu on day 15.

Answer

895 cases on day 15

Choosing an Appropriate Model for Data

Now that we have discussed various mathematical models, we need to learn how to choose the appropriate model for the raw data we have. Many factors influence the choice of a mathematical model, among which are experience, scientific laws, and patterns in the data itself. Not all data can be described by elementary functions. Sometimes, a function is chosen that approximates the data over a given interval. For instance, suppose data were gathered on the number of homes bought in the United States from the years 1960 to 2013. After plotting these data in a scatter plot, we notice that the shape of the data from the years 2000 to 2013 follow a logarithmic curve. We could restrict the interval from 2000 to 2010, apply regression analysis using a logarithmic model, and use it to predict the number of home buyers for the year 2015.

Three kinds of functions that are often useful in mathematical models are linear functions, exponential functions, and logarithmic functions. If the data lies on a straight line, or seems to lie approximately along a straight line, a linear model may be best. If the data is non-linear, we often consider an exponential or logarithmic model, though other models, such as quadratic models, may also be considered.

In choosing between an exponential model and a logarithmic model, we look at the way the data curves. This is called the concavity. If we draw a line between two data points, and all (or most) of the data between those two points lies above that line, we say the curve is concave down. We can think of it as a bowl that bends downward and therefore cannot hold water. If all (or most)

of the data between those two points lies below the line, we say the curve is concave up. In this case, we can think of a bowl that bends upward and can therefore hold water. An exponential curve, whether rising or falling, whether representing growth or decay, is always concave up away from its horizontal asymptote. A logarithmic curve is always concave away from its vertical asymptote. In the case of positive data, which is the most common case, an exponential curve is always concave up, and a logarithmic curve always concave down.

A logistic curve changes concavity. It starts out concave up and then changes to concave down beyond a certain point, called a point of inflection.

After using the graph to help us choose a type of function to use as a model, we substitute points, and solve to find the parameters. We reduce round-off error by choosing points as far apart as possible.

Example 6.7.7: Choosing a Mathematical Model

Does a linear, exponential, logarithmic, or logistic model best fit the values listed in Table 6.7.1? Find the model, and use a graph to check your choice.

Table 6.7.1

x	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
y	0	1.386	2.197	2.773	3.219	3.584	3.892	4.159	4.394

Solution

First, plot the data on a graph as in Figure 6.7.8. For the purpose of graphing, round the data to two significant digits.

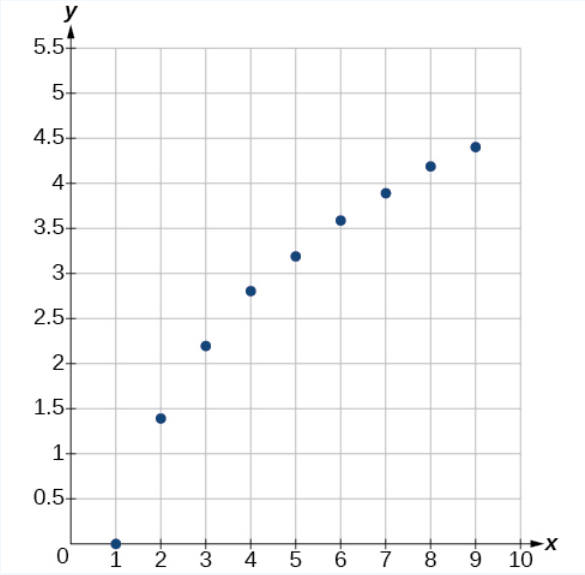

Figure 6.7.8

Clearly, the points do not lie on a straight line, so we reject a linear model. If we draw a line between any two of the points, most or all of the points between those two points lie above the line, so the graph is concave down, suggesting a logarithmic model. We can try $y = a\ln(bx)$. Plugging in the first point, $(1, 0)$, gives $0 = a\ln b$. We reject the case that $a = 0$ (if it were, all outputs would be 0), so we know $\ln(b) = 0$. Thus $b = 1$ and $y = a\ln(x)$. Next we can use the point $(9, 4.394)$ to solve for a:

$$\begin{aligned} y &= a\ln(x) \\ 4.394 &= a\ln(9) \\ a &= \frac{4.394}{\ln(9)} \end{aligned}$$

Because $a = \dfrac{4.394}{\ln(9)} \approx 2$,an appropriate model for the data is $y = 2\ln(x)$.

To check the accuracy of the model, we graph the function together with the given points as in Figure 6.7.9.

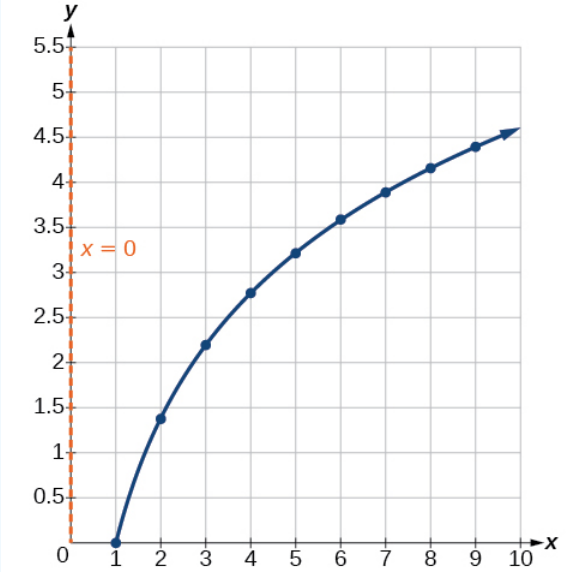

Figure 6.7.9: The graph of $y = 2 \ln x$.

We can conclude that the model is a good fit to the data.

Compare Figure 6.7.9 to the graph of $y = \ln(x^2)$ shown in Figure 6.7.10.

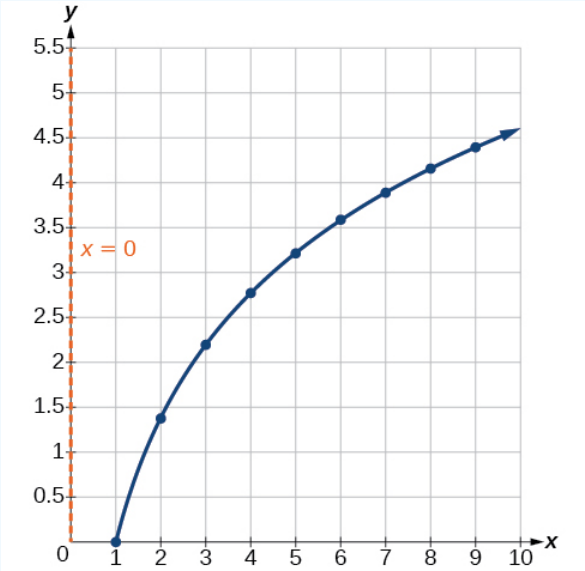

Figure 6.7.10: The graph of $y = \ln(x^2)$

The graphs appear to be identical when $x > 0$. A quick check confirms this conclusion: $y = \ln(x^2) = 2 \ln(x)$ for $x > 0$.

However, if $x < 0$, the graph of $y = \ln(x^2)$ includes a "extra" branch, as shown in Figure 6.7.11. This occurs because, while $y = 2 \ln(x)$ cannot have negative values in the domain (as such values would force the argument to be negative), the function $y = \ln(x^2)$ can have negative domain values.

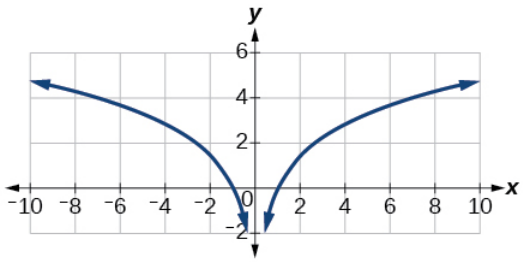

Figure 6.7.11

Exercise 6.7.6

Does a linear, exponential, or logarithmic model best fit the data in Table 6.7.2? Find the model.

Table 6.7.2

x	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
y	3.297	5.437	8.963	14.778	24.365	40.172	66.231	109.196	180.034

Answer

Exponential $y = 2e^{0.5x}$.

Expressing an Exponential Model in Base e

While powers and logarithms of any base can be used in modeling, the two most common bases are 10 and e. In science and mathematics, the base e is often preferred. We can use laws of exponents and laws of logarithms to change any base to base e.

Given a model with the form $y = ab^x$, change it to the form $y = A_0e^{kx}$.

1. Rewrite $y = ab^x$ as $y = ae^{\ln(b^x)}$.
2. Use the power rule of logarithms to rewrite y as $y = ae^{x\ln(b)} = ae^{\ln(b)^x}$.
3. Note that $a = A_0$ and $k = \ln(b)$ in the equation $y = A_0e^{kx}$.

Example 6.7.8: Changing to base e

Change the function $y = 2.5(3.1)^x$ so that this same function is written in the form $y = A_0e^{kx}$.

Solution

The formula is derived as follows

$$\begin{aligned} y &= 2.5(3.1)^x \\ &= 2.5e^{\ln(3.1^x)} && \text{Insert exponential and its inverse} \\ &= 2.5e^{x\ln 3.1} && \text{Laws of logs} \\ &= 2.5e^{(\ln 3.1)x} && \text{Commutative law of multiplication} \end{aligned}$$

Exercise 6.7.7

Change the function $y = 3(0.5)^x$ to one having e as the base.

Answer

$y = 3e^{(\ln 0.5)x}$

Media

Access these online resources for additional instruction and practice with exponential and logarithmic models.

- Logarithm Application – pH
- Exponential Model – Age Using Half-Life
- Newton's Law of Cooling
- Exponential Growth Given Doubling Time
- Exponential Growth – Find Initial Amount Given Doubling Time

Key Equations

Half-life formula	If $A = A_0 e^{kt}$, $k < 0$, the half-life is $t = -\frac{\ln(2)}{k}$.
Carbon-14 dating	$t = \frac{\ln(\frac{A}{A_0})}{-0.000121}$. A_0 A is the amount of carbon-14 when the plant or animal died t is the amount of carbon-14 remaining today is the age of the fossil in years
Doubling time formula	If $A = A_0 e^{kt}$, $k > 0$, the doubling time is $t = \frac{\ln 2}{k}$
Newton's Law of Cooling	$T(t) = Ae^{kt} + T_s$, where T_s is the ambient temperature, $A = T(0) - T_s$, and k is the continuous rate of cooling.

Key Concepts

- The basic exponential function is $f(x) = ab^x$. If $b > 1$,we have exponential growth; if $0 < b < 1$, we have exponential decay.
- We can also write this formula in terms of continuous growth as $A = A_0 e^{kx}$, where A_0 is the starting value. If A_0 is positive, then we have exponential growth when $k > 0$ and exponential decay when $k < 0$. See Example 6.7.1.
- In general, we solve problems involving exponential growth or decay in two steps. First, we set up a model and use the model to find the parameters. Then we use the formula with these parameters to predict growth and decay. See Example 6.7.2.
- We can find the age, t, of an organic artifact by measuring the amount, k, of carbon-14 remaining in the artifact and using the formula $t = \frac{\ln(k)}{-0.000121}$ to solve for t. See Example 6.7.3.
- Given a substance's doubling time or half-time, we can find a function that represents its exponential growth or decay. See Example 6.7.4.
- We can use Newton's Law of Cooling to find how long it will take for a cooling object to reach a desired temperature, or to find what temperature an object will be after a given time. See Example 6.7.5.
- We can use logistic growth functions to model real-world situations where the rate of growth changes over time, such as population growth, spread of disease, and spread of rumors. See Example 6.7.6.
- We can use real-world data gathered over time to observe trends. Knowledge of linear, exponential, logarithmic, and logistic graphs help us to develop models that best fit our data. See Example 6.7.7.
- Any exponential function with the form $y = abx$ can be rewritten as an equivalent exponential function with the form $y = A_0 e^{kx}$ where $k = \ln b$. See Example 6.7.8.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

7: Systems of Equations and Inequalities

In this chapter, we will investigate matrices and their inverses, and various ways to use matrices to solve systems of equations. First, however, we will study systems of equations on their own: linear and nonlinear, and then partial fractions.

7.1: Systems of Linear Equations - Two Variables

7.2: Systems of Nonlinear Equations and Inequalities - Two Variables

7.3: Partial Fractions

Contributors

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7.1: Systems of Linear Equations - Two Variables

Learning Objectives

- Solve systems of equations by graphing.
- Solve systems of equations by substitution.
- Solve systems of equations by addition.
- Identify inconsistent systems of equations containing two variables.
- Express the solution of a system of dependent equations containing two variables.

A skateboard manufacturer introduces a new line of boards. The manufacturer tracks its costs, which is the amount it spends to produce the boards, and its revenue, which is the amount it earns through sales of its boards. How can the company determine if it is making a profit with its new line? How many skateboards must be produced and sold before a profit is possible? In this section, we will consider linear equations with two variables to answer these and similar questions.

Figure 7.1.1

Introduction to Systems of Equations

In order to investigate situations such as that of the skateboard manufacturer, we need to recognize that we are dealing with more than one variable and likely more than one equation. **A system of linear equations** consists of two or more linear equations made up of two or more variables such that all equations in the system are considered simultaneously. To find the unique solution to a system of linear equations, we must find a numerical value for each variable in the system that will satisfy all equations in the system at the same time. Some linear systems may not have a solution and others may have an infinite number of solutions. In order for a linear system to have a unique solution, there must be at least as many equations as there are variables. Even so, this does not guarantee a unique solution.

In this section, we will look at systems of linear equations in two variables, which consist of two equations that contain two different variables. For example, consider the following system of linear equations in two variables.

$$\begin{aligned} 2x+y &= 15 \\ 3x-y &= 5 \end{aligned}$$

The *solution* to a system of linear equations in two variables is any ordered pair that satisfies each equation independently. In this example, the ordered pair $(4,7)$ is the solution to the system of linear equations. We can verify the solution by substituting the values into each equation to see if the ordered pair satisfies both equations. Shortly we will investigate methods of finding such a solution if it exists.

$$\begin{aligned} 2(4)+(7) &= 15 \text{ True} \\ 3(4)-(7) &= 5 \text{ True} \end{aligned}$$

In addition to considering the number of equations and variables, we can categorize systems of linear equations by the number of solutions. A consistent system of equations has at least one solution. A consistent system is considered to be an **independent system** if it has a single solution, such as the example we just explored. The two lines have different slopes and intersect at one point in the plane. A consistent system is considered to be a **dependent system** if the equations have the same slope and the same y-intercepts. In other words, the lines coincide so the equations represent the same line. Every point on the line represents a coordinate pair that satisfies the system. Thus, there are an infinite number of solutions.

Another type of system of linear equations is an **inconsistent system**, which is one in which the equations represent two parallel lines. The lines have the same slope and different y-intercepts. There are no points common to both lines; hence, there is no solution to the system.

TYPES OF LINEAR SYSTEMS

There are three types of systems of linear equations in two variables, and three types of solutions.

- An independent system has exactly one solution pair (x, y). The point where the two lines intersect is the only solution.
- An inconsistent system has no solution. Notice that the two lines are parallel and will never intersect.
- A dependent system has infinitely many solutions. The lines are coincident. They are the same line, so every coordinate pair on the line is a solution to both equations.

Figure $7.1.2$ compares graphical representations of each type of system.

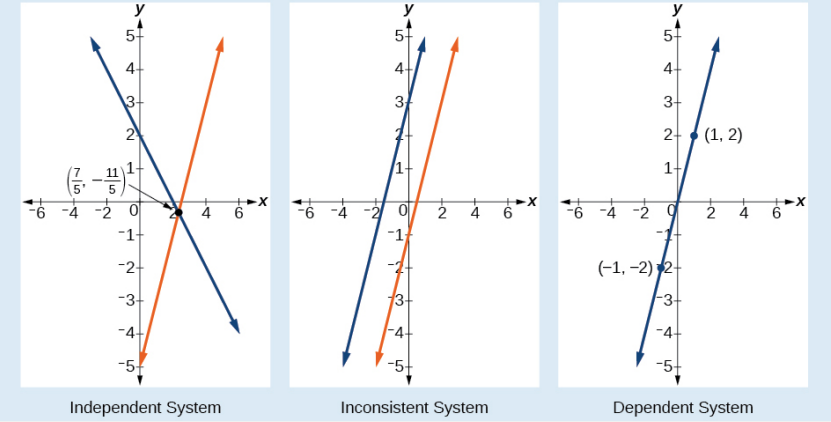

Figure 7.1.2

Given a system of linear equations and an ordered pair, determine whether the ordered pair is a solution

1. Substitute the ordered pair into each equation in the system.
2. Determine whether true statements result from the substitution in both equations; if so, the ordered pair is a solution.

Example 7.1.1: Determining Whether an Ordered Pair Is a Solution to a System of Equations

Determine whether the ordered pair $(5, 1)$ is a solution to the given system of equations.

$$\begin{aligned} x + 3y &= 8 \\ 2x - 9 &= y \end{aligned}$$

Solution

Substitute the ordered pair $(5, 1)$ into both equations.

$$\begin{aligned} (5) + 3(1) &= 8 \\ 8 &= 8 \text{ True} \\ 2(5) - 9 &= (1) \\ 1 &= 1 \text{ True} \end{aligned}$$

The ordered pair $(5, 1)$ satisfies both equations, so it is the solution to the system.

Analysis

We can see the solution clearly by plotting the graph of each equation. Since the solution is an ordered pair that satisfies both equations, it is a point on both of the lines and thus the point of intersection of the two lines. See Figure $7.1.3$.

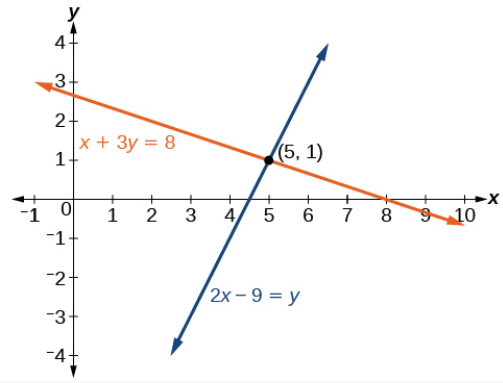

Figure 7.1.3

? Exercise 7.1.1

Determine whether the ordered pair $(8, 5)$ is a solution to the following system.

$$\begin{aligned} 5x - 4y &= 20 \\ 2x + 1 &= 3y \end{aligned}$$

Answer

Not a solution.

Solving Systems of Equations by Graphing

There are multiple methods of solving systems of linear equations. For a system of linear equations in two variables, we can determine both the type of system and the solution by graphing the system of equations on the same set of axes.

✓ Example 7.1.2: Solving a System of Equations in Two Variables by Graphing

Solve the following system of equations by graphing. Identify the type of system.

$$\begin{aligned} 2x + y &= -8 \\ x - y &= -1 \end{aligned}$$

Solution

Solve the first equation for y.

$$\begin{aligned} 2x + y &= -8 \\ y &= -2x - 8 \end{aligned}$$

Solve the second equation for y.

$$\begin{aligned} x - y &= -1 \\ y &= x + 1 \end{aligned}$$

Graph both equations on the same set of axes as in Figure 7.1.4.

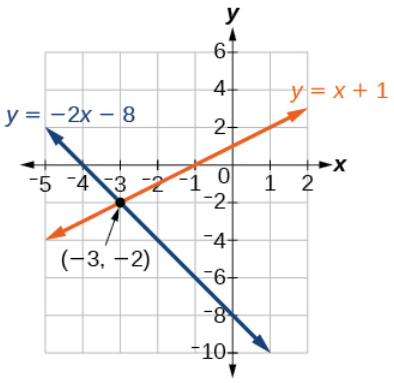

Figure 7.1.4

The lines appear to intersect at the point $(-3,-2)$. We can check to make sure that this is the solution to the system by substituting the ordered pair into both equations.

$$\begin{aligned} 2(-3)+(-2) &= -8 \\ -8 &= -8 \text{ True} \\ (-3)-(-2) &= -1 \\ -1 &= -1 \text{ True} \end{aligned}$$

The solution to the system is the ordered pair $(-3,-2)$,so the system is independent.

Exercise 7.1.2

Solve the following system of equations by graphing.

$$\begin{aligned} 2x-5y &= -25 \\ -4x+5y &= 35 \end{aligned}$$

Answer

The solution to the system is the ordered pair $(-5,3)$.

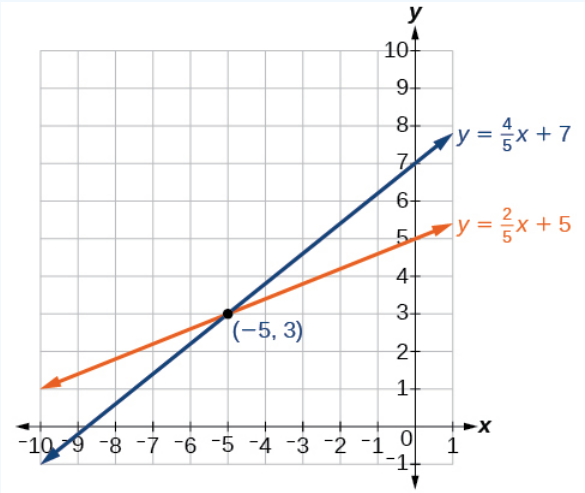

Figure 7.1.5

Q&A

Can graphing be used if the system is inconsistent or dependent?

Yes, in both cases we can still graph the system to determine the type of system and solution. If the two lines are parallel, the system has no solution and is inconsistent. If the two lines are identical, the system has infinite solutions and is a dependent

system.

Solving Systems of Equations by Substitution

Solving a linear system in two variables by graphing works well when the solution consists of integer values, but if our solution contains decimals or fractions, it is not the most precise method. We will consider two more methods of solving a **system of linear equations** that are more precise than graphing. One such method is solving a system of equations by the **substitution method**, in which we solve one of the equations for one variable and then substitute the result into the second equation to solve for the second variable. Recall that we can solve for only one variable at a time, which is the reason the substitution method is both valuable and practical.

How to: Given a system of two equations in two variables, solve using the substitution method.

1. Solve one of the two equations for one of the variables in terms of the other.
2. Substitute the expression for this variable into the second equation, then solve for the remaining variable.
3. Substitute that solution into either of the original equations to find the value of the first variable. If possible, write the solution as an ordered pair.
4. Check the solution in both equations.

Example 7.1.3: Solving a System of Equations in Two Variables by Substitution

Solve the following system of equations by substitution.

$$\begin{aligned} -x+y &= -5 \\ 2x-5y &= 1 \end{aligned}$$

Solution

First, we will solve the first equation for y.

$$\begin{aligned} -x+y &= -5 \\ y &= x-5 \end{aligned}$$

Now we can substitute the expression $x-5$ for y in the second equation.

$$\begin{aligned} 2x-5y &= 1 \\ 2x-5(x-5) &= 1 \\ 2x-5x+25 &= 1 \\ -3x &= -24 \\ x &= 8 \end{aligned}$$

Now, we substitute $x=8$ into the first equation and solve for y.

$$\begin{aligned} -(8)+y &= -5 \\ y &= 3 \end{aligned}$$

Our solution is $(8,3)$.

Check the solution by substituting $(8,3)$ into both equations.

$$\begin{aligned} -x+y &= -5 \\ -(8)+(3) &= -5 \text{ True} \\ 2x-5y &= 1 \\ 2(8)-5(3) &= 1 \text{ True} \end{aligned}$$

Exercise 7.1.3

Solve the following system of equations by substitution.

$$x = y + 3$$
$$4 = 3x - 2y$$

Answer

$(-2, -5)$

Q&A

Can the substitution method be used to solve any linear system in two variables?

Yes, but the method works best if one of the equations contains a coefficient of 1 *or* -1 *so that we do not have to deal with fractions.*

Solving Systems of Equations in Two Variables by the Addition Method

A third method of solving systems of linear equations is the addition method. In this method, we add two terms with the same variable, but opposite coefficients, so that the sum is zero. Of course, not all systems are set up with the two terms of one variable having opposite coefficients. Often we must adjust one or both of the equations by multiplication so that one variable will be eliminated by addition.

How to: Given a system of equations, solve using the addition method.

1. Write both equations with *x*- and *y*-variables on the left side of the equal sign and constants on the right.
2. Write one equation above the other, lining up corresponding variables. If one of the variables in the top equation has the opposite coefficient of the same variable in the bottom equation, add the equations together, eliminating one variable. If not, use multiplication by a nonzero number so that one of the variables in the top equation has the opposite coefficient of the same variable in the bottom equation, then add the equations to eliminate the variable.
3. Solve the resulting equation for the remaining variable.
4. Substitute that value into one of the original equations and solve for the second variable.
5. Check the solution by substituting the values into the other equation.

Example 7.1.4: Solving a System by the Addition Method

Solve the given system of equations by addition.

$$x + 2y = -1$$
$$-x + y = 3$$

Solution

Both equations are already set equal to a constant. Notice that the coefficient of x in the second equation, -1, is the opposite of the coefficient of x in the first equation, 1. We can add the two equations to eliminate x without needing to multiply by a constant.

$$\begin{aligned} x + 2y &= -1 \\ \underline{-x + y} &= \underline{3} \\ 3y &= 2 \end{aligned}$$

Now that we have eliminated x, we can solve the resulting equation for y.

$$3y = 2$$
$$y = \frac{2}{3}$$

Then, we substitute this value for y into one of the original equations and solve for x.

$$\begin{aligned} -x+y &= 3 \\ -x+\frac{2}{3} &= 3 \\ -x &= 3-\frac{2}{3} \\ -x &= \frac{7}{3} \\ x &= -\frac{7}{3} \end{aligned}$$

The solution to this system is $\left(-\frac{7}{3}, \frac{2}{3}\right)$.

Check the solution in the first equation.

$$\begin{aligned} x+2y &= -1 \\ \left(-\frac{7}{3}\right)+2\left(\frac{2}{3}\right) &= \\ -\frac{7}{3}+\frac{4}{3} &= -\frac{3}{3} \\ -1 &= -1 \qquad \text{True} \end{aligned}$$

Analysis

We gain an important perspective on systems of equations by looking at the graphical representation. See Figure 7.1.6 to find that the equations intersect at the solution. We do not need to ask whether there may be a second solution because observing the graph confirms that the system has exactly one solution.

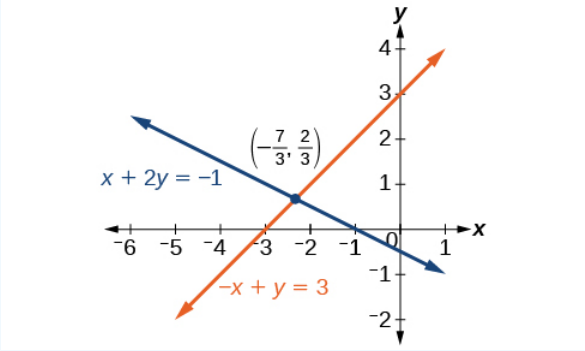

Figure 7.1.6

Example 7.1.5: Using the Addition Method When Multiplication of One Equation Is Required

Solve the given system of equations by the addition method.

$$\begin{aligned} 3x+5y &= -11 \\ x-2y &= 11 \end{aligned}$$

Solution

Adding these equations as presented will not eliminate a variable. However, we see that the first equation has $3x$ in it and the second equation has x. So if we multiply the second equation by -3,the x-terms will add to zero.

$$\begin{aligned} x-2y &= 11 \\ -3(x-2y) &= -3(11) \qquad \text{Multiply both sides by } -3. \\ -3x+6y &= -33 \qquad \text{Use the distributive property.} \end{aligned}$$

Now, let's add them.

$$\begin{aligned} 3x+5y &= -11 \\ \underline{-3x+6y} &= \underline{-33} \\ 11y &= -44 \\ y &= -4 \end{aligned}$$

For the last step, we substitute $y=-4$ into one of the original equations and solve for x.

$$\begin{aligned} 3x+5y &= -11 \\ 3x+5(-4) &= -11 \\ 3x-20 &= -11 \\ 3x &= 9 \\ x &= 3 \end{aligned}$$

Our solution is the ordered pair $(3,-4)$. See Figure 7.1.7. Check the solution in the original second equation.

$$\begin{aligned} x-2y &= 11 \\ (3)-2(-4) &= 3+8 \\ &= 11 \qquad \text{True} \end{aligned}$$

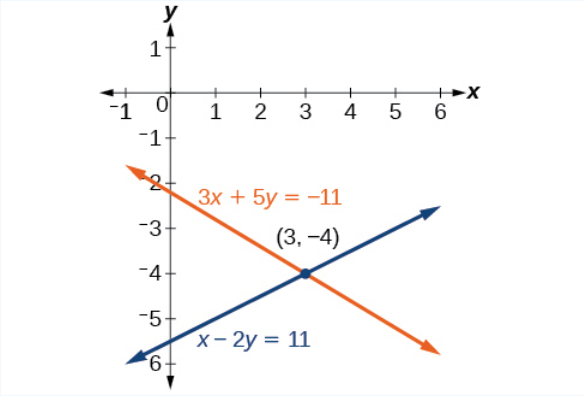

Figure 7.1.7

Exercise 7.1.4

Solve the system of equations by addition.

$$\begin{aligned} 2x-7y &= 2 \\ 3x+y &= -20 \end{aligned}$$

Answer

$(-6,-2)$

Example 7.1.6: Using the Addition Method When Multiplication of Both Equations Is Required

Solve the given system of equations in two variables by addition.

$$\begin{aligned} 2x+3y &= -16 \\ 5x-10y &= 30 \end{aligned}$$

Solution

One equation has $2x$ and the other has $5x$. The least common multiple is $10x$ so we will have to multiply both equations by a constant in order to eliminate one variable. Let's eliminate x by multiplying the first equation by -5 and the second equation by 2.

$$\begin{aligned} -5(2x+3y) &= -5(-16) \\ -10x-15y &= 80 \\ 2(5x-10y) &= 2(30) \\ 10x-20y &= 60 \end{aligned}$$

Then, we add the two equations together.

$$\begin{aligned} -10x-15y &= 80 \\ \underline{10x-20y} &= \underline{60} \\ -35y &= 140 \\ y &= -4 \end{aligned}$$

Substitute $y=-4$ into the original first equation.

$$\begin{aligned} 2x+3(-4) &= -16 \\ 2x-12 &= -16 \\ 2x &= -4 \\ x &= -2 \end{aligned}$$

The solution is $(-2,-4)$. Check it in the other equation.

$$\begin{aligned} 5x-10y &= 30 \\ 5(-2)-10(-4) &= 30 \\ -10+40 &= 30 \\ 30 &= 30 \end{aligned}$$

See Figure 7.1.8.

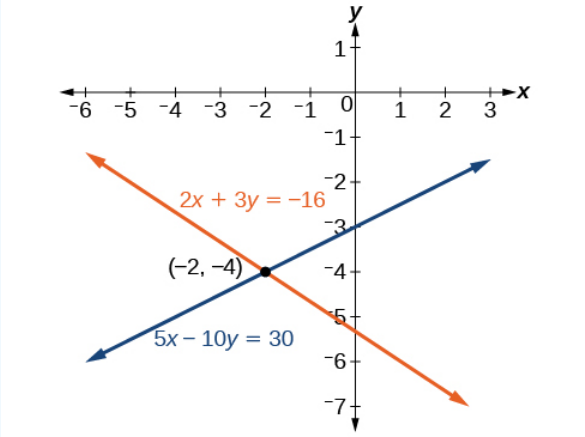

Figure 7.1.8

Example 7.1.7: Using the Addition Method in Systems of Equations Containing Fractions

Solve the given system of equations in two variables by addition.

$$\begin{aligned} \frac{x}{3}+\frac{y}{6} &= 3 \\ \frac{x}{2}-\frac{y}{4} &= 1 \end{aligned}$$

Solution

First clear each equation of fractions by multiplying both sides of the equation by the least common denominator.

$$6\left(\frac{x}{3}+\frac{y}{6}\right)=6(3)$$
$$2x+y=18$$
$$4\left(\frac{x}{2}-\frac{y}{4}\right)=4(1)$$
$$2x-y=4$$

Now multiply the second equation by -1 so that we can eliminate the x-variable.

$$-1(2x-y)=-1(4)$$
$$-2x+y=-4$$

Add the two equations to eliminate the x-variable and solve the resulting equation.

$$2x+y=18$$
$$-2x+y=-4$$
$$2y=14$$
$$y=7$$

Substitute $y=7$ into the first equation.

$$2x+(7)=18$$
$$2x=11$$
$$x=\frac{11}{2}$$
$$=7.5$$

The solution is $\left(\frac{11}{2},7\right)$. Check it in the other equation.

$$\frac{x}{2}-\frac{y}{4}=1$$
$$\frac{\frac{11}{2}}{2}-\frac{7}{4}=1$$
$$\frac{11}{4}-\frac{7}{4}=1$$
$$\frac{4}{4}=1$$

? Exercise 7.1.5

Solve the system of equations by addition.

$$2x+3y=8$$
$$3x+5y=10$$

Answer

$(10,-4)$

Identifying Inconsistent Systems of Equations Containing Two Variables

Now that we have several methods for solving systems of equations, we can use the methods to identify inconsistent systems. Recall that an inconsistent system consists of parallel lines that have the same slope but different y-intercepts. They will never intersect. When searching for a solution to an inconsistent system, we will come up with a false statement, such as $12=0$.

Example 7.1.8: Solving an Inconsistent System of Equations

Solve the following system of equations.

$$\begin{aligned} x &= 9-2y \\ x+2y &= 13 \end{aligned}$$

Solution

We can approach this problem in two ways. Because one equation is already solved for x, the most obvious step is to use substitution.

$$\begin{aligned} x+2y &= 13 \\ (9-2y)+2y &= 13 \\ 9+0y &= 13 \\ 9 &= 13 \end{aligned}$$

Clearly, this statement is a contradiction because $9 \neq 13$. Therefore, the system has no solution.

The second approach would be to first manipulate the equations so that they are both in slope-intercept form. We manipulate the first equation as follows.

$$\begin{aligned} x &= 9-2y \\ 2y &= -x+9 \\ y &= -\frac{1}{2}x+\frac{9}{2} \end{aligned}$$

We then convert the second equation expressed to slope-intercept form.

$$\begin{aligned} x+2y &= 13 \\ 2y &= -x+13 \\ y &= -\frac{1}{2}x+\frac{13}{2} \end{aligned}$$

Comparing the equations, we see that they have the same slope but different y-intercepts. Therefore, the lines are parallel and do not intersect.

$$\begin{aligned} y &= -\frac{1}{2}x+\frac{9}{2} \\ y &= -\frac{1}{2}x+\frac{13}{2} \end{aligned}$$

Analysis

Writing the equations in slope-intercept form confirms that the system is inconsistent because all lines will intersect eventually unless they are parallel. Parallel lines will never intersect; thus, the two lines have no points in common. The graphs of the equations in this example are shown in Figure 7.1.9.

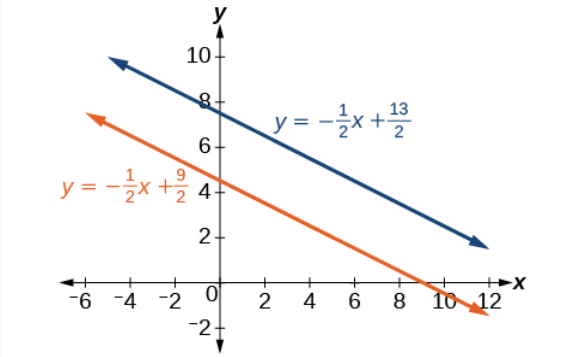

Figure 7.1.9

? Exercise 7.1.6

Solve the following system of equations in two variables.

$$\begin{aligned} 2y-2x &= 2 \\ 2y-2x &= 6 \end{aligned}$$

Answer

No solution. It is an inconsistent system.

Expressing the Solution of a System of Dependent Equations Containing Two Variables

Recall that a dependent system of equations in two variables is a system in which the two equations represent the same line. Dependent systems have an infinite number of solutions because all of the points on one line are also on the other line. After using substitution or addition, the resulting equation will be an identity, such as $0=0$.

✓ Example 7.1.9: Finding a Solution to a Dependent System of Linear Equations

Find a solution to the system of equations using the **addition method**.

$$\begin{aligned} x+3y &= 2 \\ 3x+9y &= 6 \end{aligned}$$

Solution

With the addition method, we want to eliminate one of the variables by adding the equations. In this case, let's focus on eliminating x. If we multiply both sides of the first equation by -3, then we will be able to eliminate the x-variable.

$$\begin{aligned} x+3y &= 2 \\ (-3)(x+3y) &= (-3)(2) \\ -3x-9y &= -6 \end{aligned}$$

Now add the equations.

$$\begin{aligned} -3x-9y &= -6 \\ \underline{+\,3x+9y} &= \underline{6} \\ 0 &= 0 \end{aligned}$$

We can see that there will be an infinite number of solutions that satisfy both equations.

Analysis

If we rewrote both equations in the slope-intercept form, we might know what the solution would look like before adding. Let's look at what happens when we convert the system to slope-intercept form.

$$\begin{aligned} x+3y &= 2 \\ 3y &= -x+2 \\ y &= -\frac{1}{3}x+\frac{2}{3} \\ 3x+9y &= 6 \\ 9y &= -3x+6 \\ y &= -\frac{3}{9}x+\frac{6}{9} \\ y &= -\frac{1}{3}x+\frac{2}{3} \end{aligned}$$

See Figure 7.1.10. Notice the results are the same. The general solution to the system is $\left(x,-\frac{1}{3}x+\frac{2}{3}\right)$.

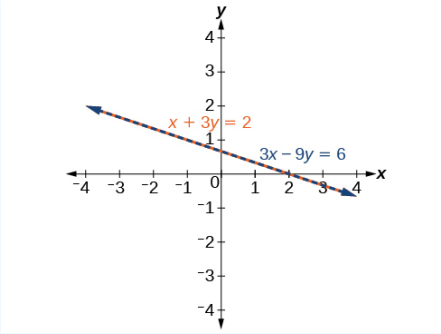

Figure 7.1.10

Exercise 7.1.7

Solve the following system of equations in two variables.

$$\begin{aligned} y-2x &= 5 \\ -3y+6x &= -15 \end{aligned}$$

Answer

The system is dependent so there are infinite solutions of the form $(x, 2x+5)$.

Using Systems of Equations to Investigate Profits

Using what we have learned about systems of equations, we can return to the skateboard manufacturing problem at the beginning of the section. The skateboard manufacturer's revenue function is the function used to calculate the amount of money that comes into the business. It can be represented by the equation $R = xp$, where x=quantity and p=price. The revenue function is shown in orange in Figure 7.1.11.

The cost function is the function used to calculate the costs of doing business. It includes fixed costs, such as rent and salaries, and variable costs, such as utilities. The cost function is shown in blue in Figure 7.1.11. The x-axis represents quantity in hundreds of units. The y-axis represents either cost or revenue in hundreds of dollars.

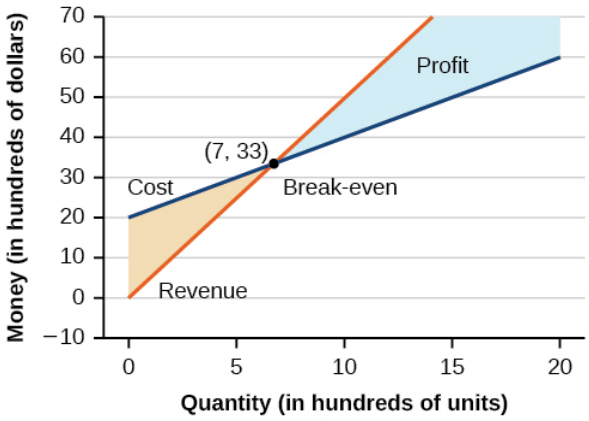

Figure 7.1.11

The point at which the two lines intersect is called the break-even point. We can see from the graph that if 700 units are produced, the cost is $\$3,300$ and the revenue is also $\$3,300$. In other words, the company breaks even if they produce and sell 700 units. They neither make money nor lose money.

The shaded region to the right of the break-even point represents quantities for which the company makes a profit. The shaded region to the left represents quantities for which the company suffers a loss. The profit function is the revenue function minus the cost function, written as $P(x) = R(x) - C(x)$. Clearly, knowing the quantity for which the cost equals the revenue is of great importance to businesses.

Example 7.1.10: Finding the Break-Even Point and the Profit Function Using Substitution

Given the cost function $C(x) = 0.85x + 35,000$ and the revenue function $R(x) = 1.55x$, find the break-even point and the profit function.

Solution

Write the system of equations using y to replace function notation.

$$\begin{aligned} y &= 0.85x + 35,000 \\ y &= 1.55x \end{aligned}$$

Substitute the expression $0.85x + 35,000$ from the first equation into the second equation and solve for x.

$$\begin{aligned} 0.85x + 35,000 &= 1.55x \\ 35,000 &= 0.7x \\ 50,000 &= x \end{aligned}$$

Then, we substitute $x = 50,000$ into either the cost function or the revenue function.

$$1.55(50,000) = 77,500$$

The break-even point is $(50,000, 77,500)$.

The profit function is found using the formula $P(x) = R(x) - C(x)$.

$$\begin{aligned} P(x) &= 1.55x - (0.85x + 35,000) \\ &= 0.7x - 35,000 \end{aligned}$$

The profit function is $P(x) = 0.7x - 35,000$.

Analysis

The cost to produce $50,000$ units is $\$77,500$, and the revenue from the sales of $50,000$ units is also $\$77,500$. To make a profit, the business must produce and sell more than $50,000$ units. See Figure 7.1.12.

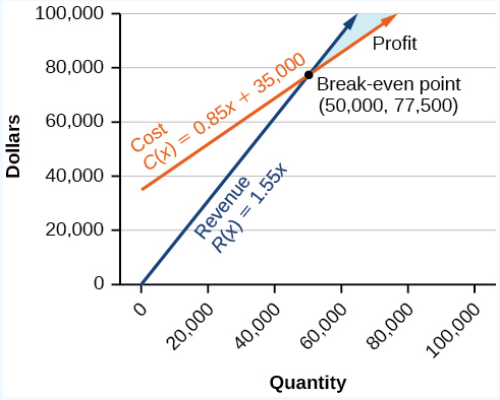

Figure 7.1.12

We see from the graph in Figure 7.1.13 that the profit function has a negative value until $x = 50,000$, when the graph crosses the x-axis. Then, the graph emerges into positive y-values and continues on this path as the profit function is a straight line. This illustrates that the break-even point for businesses occurs when the profit function is 0. The area to the left of the break-even point represents operating at a loss.

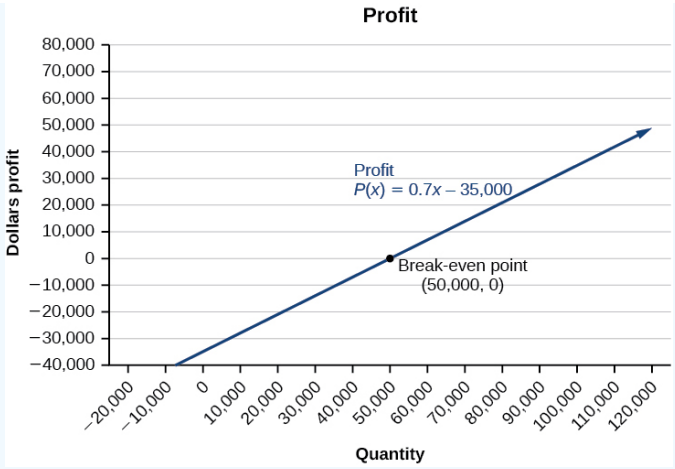

Figure 7.1.13

Example 7.1.11: Writing and Solving a System of Equations in Two Variables

The cost of a ticket to the circus is $\$25.00$ for children and $\$50.00$ for adults. On a certain day, attendance at the circus is $2,000$ and the total gate revenue is $\$70,000$. How many children and how many adults bought tickets?

Solution

Let c = the number of children and a = the number of adults in attendance.

The total number of people is $2,000$. We can use this to write an equation for the number of people at the circus that day.

$$c+a=2,000$$

The revenue from all children can be found by multiplying $\$25.00$ by the number of children, $25c$. The revenue from all adults can be found by multiplying $\$50.00$ by the number of adults, $50a$. The total revenue is $\$70,000$. We can use this to write an equation for the revenue.

$$25c+50a=70,000$$

We now have a system of linear equations in two variables.

$$c+a=2,000$$
$$25c+50a=70,000$$

In the first equation, the coefficient of both variables is 1. We can quickly solve the first equation for either c or a. We will solve for a.

$$\begin{aligned} c+a &= 2,000 \\ a &= 2,000-c \end{aligned}$$

Substitute the expression $2,000-c$ in the second equation fora a and solve for c.

$$\begin{aligned} 25c+50(2,000-c) &= 70,000 \\ 25c+100,000-50c &= 70,000 \\ -25c &= -30,000 \\ c &= 1,200 \end{aligned}$$

Substitute $c=1,200$ into the first equation to solve for a.

$$\begin{aligned} 1,200+a &= 2,000 \\ a &= 800 \end{aligned}$$

We find that $1,200$ children and 800 adults bought tickets to the circus that day.

Exercise 7.1.8

Meal tickets at the circus cost $\$4.00$ for children and $\$12.00$ for adults. If $1,650$ meal tickets were bought for a total of, $\$14,200$, how many children and how many adults bought meal tickets?

Answer

700 children, 950 adults

Media

Access these online resources for additional instruction and practice with systems of linear equations.

- Solving Systems of Equations Using Substitution
- Solving Systems of Equations Using Elimination
- Applications of Systems of Equations

Key Concepts

- A system of linear equations consists of two or more equations made up of two or more variables such that all equations in the system are considered simultaneously.
- The solution to a system of linear equations in two variables is any ordered pair that satisfies each equation independently. See Example 7.1.1.
- Systems of equations are classified as independent with one solution, dependent with an infinite number of solutions, or inconsistent with no solution.
- One method of solving a system of linear equations in two variables is by graphing. In this method, we graph the equations on the same set of axes. See Example 7.1.2.
- Another method of solving a system of linear equations is by substitution. In this method, we solve for one variable in one equation and substitute the result into the second equation. See Example 7.1.3.
- A third method of solving a system of linear equations is by addition, in which we can eliminate a variable by adding opposite coefficients of corresponding variables. See Example 7.1.4.
- It is often necessary to multiply one or both equations by a constant to facilitate elimination of a variable when adding the two equations together. See Example 7.1.5, Example 7.1.6, and Example 7.1.7.
- Either method of solving a system of equations results in a false statement for inconsistent systems because they are made up of parallel lines that never intersect. See Example 7.1.8.
- The solution to a system of dependent equations will always be true because both equations describe the same line. See Example 7.1.9.
- Systems of equations can be used to solve real-world problems that involve more than one variable, such as those relating to revenue, cost, and profit. See Example 7.1.10 and Example 7.1.11.

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7.2: Systems of Nonlinear Equations and Inequalities - Two Variables

Learning Objectives

- Solve a system of nonlinear equations using substitution.
- Solve a system of nonlinear equations using elimination.
- Graph a nonlinear inequality.
- Graph a system of nonlinear inequalities.

Halley's Comet (Figure 7.2.1) orbits the sun about once every 75 years. Its path can be considered to be a very elongated ellipse. Other comets follow similar paths in space. These orbital paths can be studied using systems of equations. These systems, however, are different from the ones we considered in the previous section because the equations are not linear.

Figure 7.2.1: Halley's Comet (credit: "NASA Blueshift"/Flickr)

In this section, we will consider the intersection of a parabola and a line, a circle and a line, and a circle and an ellipse. The methods for solving systems of nonlinear equations are similar to those for linear equations.

Solving a System of Nonlinear Equations Using Substitution

A system of nonlinear equations is a system of two or more equations in two or more variables containing at least one equation that is not linear. Recall that a linear equation can take the form $Ax + By + C = 0$. Any equation that cannot be written in this form in nonlinear. The substitution method we used for linear systems is the same method we will use for nonlinear systems. We solve one equation for one variable and then substitute the result into the second equation to solve for another variable, and so on. There is, however, a variation in the possible outcomes.

Intersection of a Parabola and a Line

There are three possible types of solutions for a system of nonlinear equations involving a parabola and a line.

Possible Types of Solutions For Points of Intersection of a Parabola and a Line

Figure 7.2.2 illustrates possible solution sets for a system of equations involving a parabola and a line.

- No solution - The line will never intersect the parabola.
- One solution - The line is tangent to the parabola and intersects the parabola at exactly one point.
- Two solutions - The line crosses on the inside of the parabola and intersects the parabola at two points.

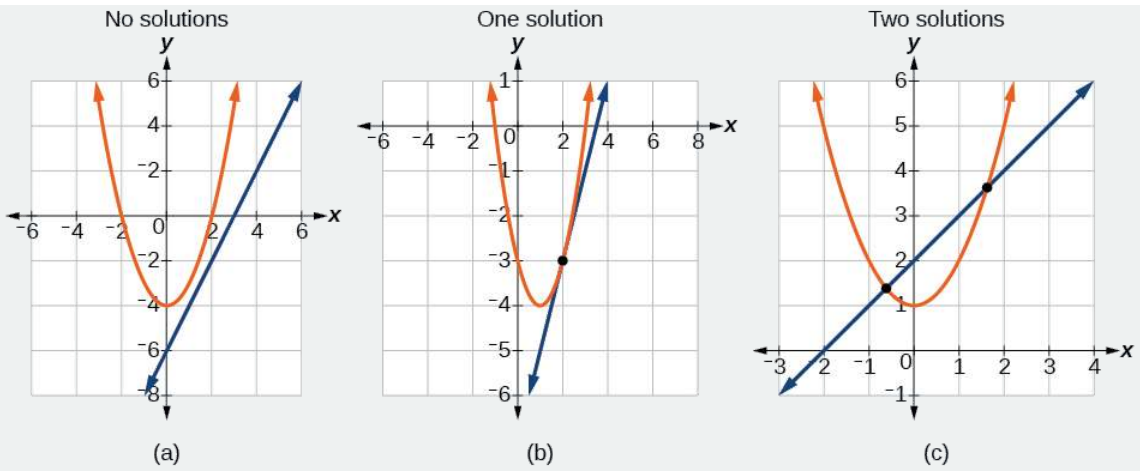

Figure 7.2.2

How to: Given a system of equations containing a line and a parabola, find the solution

1. Solve the linear equation for one of the variables.
2. Substitute the expression obtained in step one into the parabola equation.
3. Solve for the remaining variable.
4. Check your solutions in both equations.

Example 7.2.1: Solving a System of Nonlinear Equations Representing a Parabola and a Line

Solve the system of equations.

$$\begin{aligned} x-y &= -1 \\ y &= x^2+1 \end{aligned}$$

Solution

Solve the first equation for x and then substitute the resulting expression into the second equation.

$$\begin{aligned} x-y &= -1 \\ x &= y-1 \qquad \text{Solve for } x. \end{aligned}$$

$$\begin{aligned} y &= x^2+1 \\ y &= (y-1)^2+1 \qquad \text{Substitute expression for } x. \end{aligned}$$

Expand the equation and set it equal to zero.

$$\begin{aligned} y &= (y-1)^2+1 \\ &= (y^2-2y+1)+1 \\ &= y^2-2y+2 \\ 0 &= y^2-3y+2 \\ &= (y-2)(y-1) \end{aligned}$$

Solving for y gives $y=2$ and $y=1$. Next, substitute each value for y into the first equation to solve for x. Always substitute the value into the linear equation to check for extraneous solutions.

$$\begin{aligned} x-y &= -1 \\ x-(2) &= -1 \\ x &= 1 \\ x-(1) &= -1 \\ x &= 0 \end{aligned}$$

The solutions are $(1, 2)$ and $(0, 1)$,which can be verified by substituting these (x, y) values into both of the original equations (Figure 7.2.3).

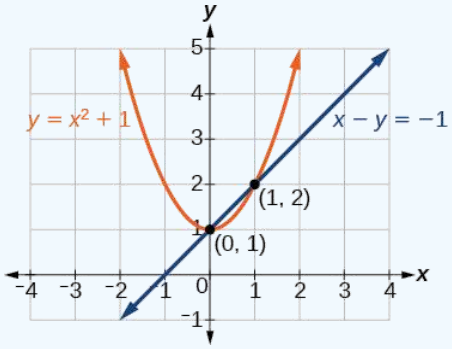

Figure 7.2.3

Q&A: Could we have substituted values for y into the second equation to solve for x in last example?

Yes, but because x is squared in the second equation this could give us extraneous solutions for x.

For $y = 1$

$$\begin{aligned} y &= x^2 + 1 \\ y &= x^2 + 1 \\ x^2 &= 0 \\ x &= \pm\sqrt{0} = 0 \end{aligned}$$

This gives us the same value as in the solution.

For $y = 2$

$$\begin{aligned} y &= x^2 + 1 \\ 2 &= x^2 + 1 \\ x^2 &= 1 \\ x &= \pm\sqrt{1} = \pm 1 \end{aligned}$$

Notice that -1 is an extraneous solution.

Exercise 7.2.1

Solve the given system of equations by substitution.

$$\begin{aligned} 3x - y &= -2 \\ 2x^2 - y &= 0 \end{aligned}$$

Answer

$\left(-\frac{1}{2}, \frac{1}{2}\right)$ and $(2, 8)$

Intersection of a Circle and a Line

Just as with a parabola and a line, there are three possible outcomes when solving a system of equations representing a circle and a line.

POSSIBLE TYPES OF SOLUTIONS FOR THE POINTS OF INTERSECTION OF A CIRCLE AND A LINE

Figure 7.2.4 illustrates possible solution sets for a system of equations involving a circle and a line.

- No solution - The line does not intersect the circle.

- One solution - The line is tangent to the circle and intersects the circle at exactly one point.
- Two solutions - The line crosses the circle and intersects it at two points.

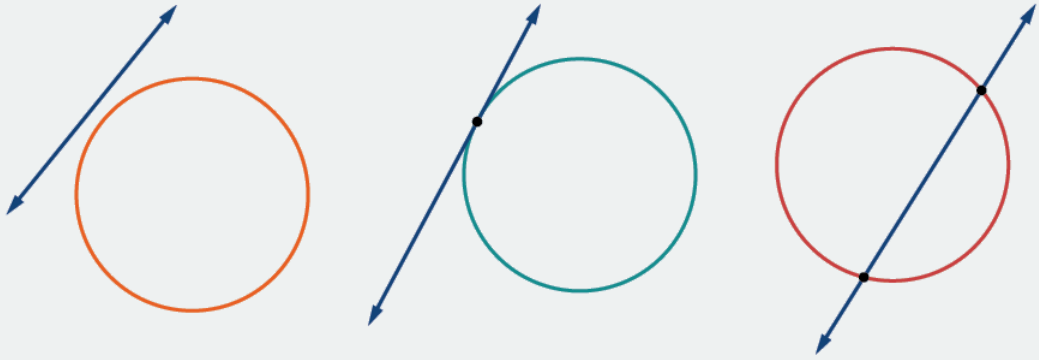

Figure 7.2.4

How to: Given a system of equations containing a line and a circle, find the solution

1. Solve the linear equation for one of the variables.
2. Substitute the expression obtained in step one into the equation for the circle.
3. Solve for the remaining variable.
4. Check your solutions in both equations.

Example 7.2.2: Finding the Intersection of a Circle and a Line by Substitution

Find the intersection of the given circle and the given line by substitution.

$$\begin{aligned} x^2+y^2 &= 5 \\ y &= 3x-5 \end{aligned}$$

Solution

One of the equations has already been solved for y. We will substitute $y=3x-5$ into the equation for the circle.

$$\begin{aligned} x^2+(3x-5)^2 &= 5 \\ x^2+9x^2-30x+25 &= 5 \\ 10x^2-30x+20 &= 0 \end{aligned}$$

Now, we factor and solve for x.

$$\begin{aligned} 10(x2-3x+2) &= 0 \\ 10(x-2)(x-1) &= 0 \\ x &= 2 \\ x &= 1 \end{aligned}$$

Substitute the two x-values into the original linear equation to solve for y.

$$\begin{aligned} y &= 3(2)-5 \\ &= 1 \\ y &= 3(1)-5 \\ &= -2 \end{aligned}$$

The line intersects the circle at $(2,1)$ and $(1,-2)$,which can be verified by substituting these (x,y) values into both of the original equations (Figure 7.2.5).

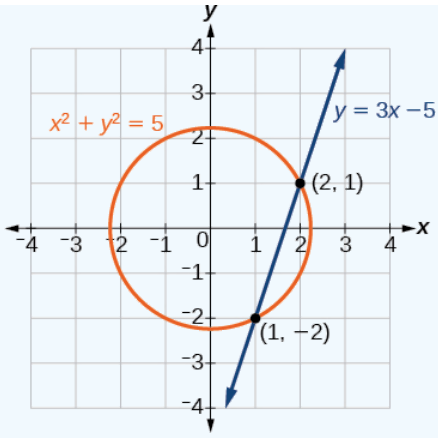

Figure 7.2.5

? Exercise 7.2.2

Solve the system of nonlinear equations.

$$\begin{aligned} x^2 + y^2 &= 10 \\ x - 3y &= -10 \end{aligned}$$

Answer

$(-1, 3)$

Solving a System of Nonlinear Equations Using Elimination

We have seen that substitution is often the preferred method when a system of equations includes a linear equation and a nonlinear equation. However, when both equations in the system have like variables of the second degree, solving them using elimination by addition is often easier than substitution. Generally, elimination is a far simpler method when the system involves only two equations in two variables (a two-by-two system), rather than a three-by-three system, as there are fewer steps. As an example, we will investigate the possible types of solutions when solving a system of equations representing a circle and an ellipse.

POSSIBLE TYPES OF SOLUTIONS FOR THE POINTS OF INTERSECTION OF A CIRCLE AND AN ELLIPSE

Figure 7.2.6 illustrates possible solution sets for a system of equations involving a circle and an ellipse.

- No solution - The circle and ellipse do not intersect. One shape is inside the other or the circle and the ellipse are a distance away from the other.
- One solution - The circle and ellipse are tangent to each other, and intersect at exactly one point.
- Two solutions - The circle and the ellipse intersect at two points.
- Three solutions - The circle and the ellipse intersect at three points.
- Four solutions - The circle and the ellipse intersect at four points.

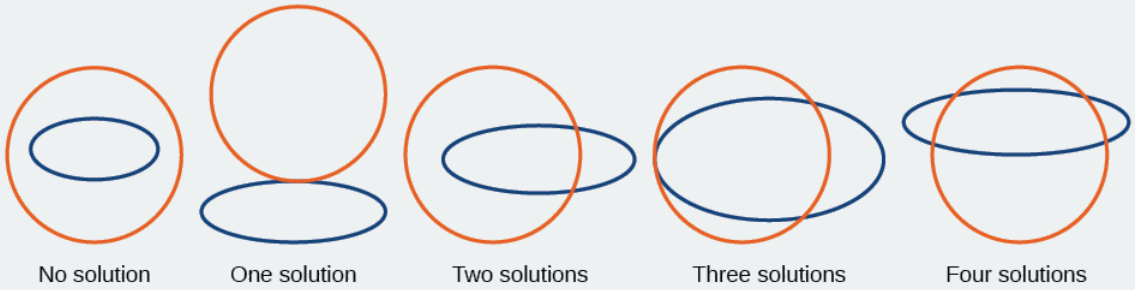

Figure 7.2.6

Example 7.2.3: Solving a System of Nonlinear Equations Representing a Circle and an Ellipse

Solve the system of nonlinear equations.

$$\begin{aligned} x^2+y^2 &= 26 \quad (1)\\ 3x^2+25y^2 &= 100 \quad (2)\end{aligned}$$

Solution

Let's begin by multiplying equation (1) by -3,and adding it to equation (2).

$$\begin{aligned} (-3)(x^2+y^2) &= (-3)(26)\\ -3x^2-3y^2 &= -78\\ 3x^2+25y^2 &= 100\\ \hline 22y^2 &= 22\end{aligned}$$

After we add the two equations together, we solve for y.

$$\begin{aligned} y^2 &= 1\\ y &= \pm\sqrt{1} = \pm 1\end{aligned}$$

Substitute $y=\pm 1$ into one of the equations and solve for x.

$$\begin{aligned} x^2+(1)^2 &= 26\\ x^2+1 &= 26\\ x^2 &= 25\\ x &= \pm\sqrt{25} = \pm 5\\ x^2+(-1)^2 &= 26\\ x^2+1 &= 26\\ x^2 &= \pm\sqrt{25} = \pm 5\end{aligned}$$

There are four solutions: $(5,1)$, $(-5,1)$, $(5,-1)$,and $(-5,-1)$. See Figure 7.2.7.

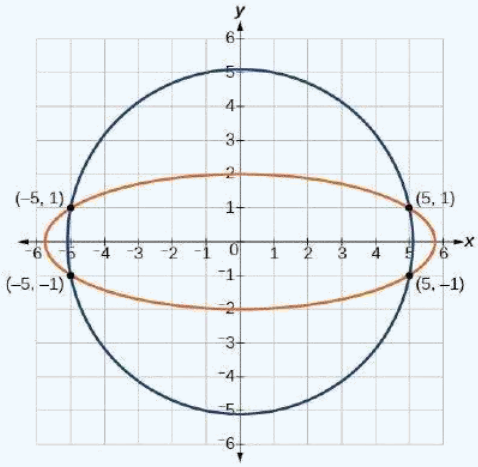

Figure 7.2.7

Exercise 7.2.3

Find the solution set for the given system of nonlinear equations.

$$\begin{aligned} 4x^2+y^2 &= 13\\ x^2+y^2 &= 10\end{aligned}$$

Answer

$(1,3),(1,-3),(-1,3),(-1,-3)$

Graphing a Nonlinear Inequality

All of the equations in the systems that we have encountered so far have involved equalities, but we may also encounter systems that involve inequalities. We have already learned to graph linear inequalities by graphing the corresponding equation, and then shading the region represented by the inequality symbol. Now, we will follow similar steps to graph a nonlinear **inequality** so that we can learn to solve systems of nonlinear inequalities. A **nonlinear inequality** is an inequality containing a nonlinear expression. Graphing a nonlinear inequality is much like graphing a linear inequality.

Recall that when the inequality is greater than, $y > a$,or less than, $y < a$,the graph is drawn with a dashed line. When the inequality is greater than or equal to, $y \geq a$,or less than or equal to, $y \leq a$,the graph is drawn with a solid line. The graphs will create regions in the plane, and we will test each region for a solution. If one point in the region works, the whole region works. That is the region we shade (Figure 7.2.8).

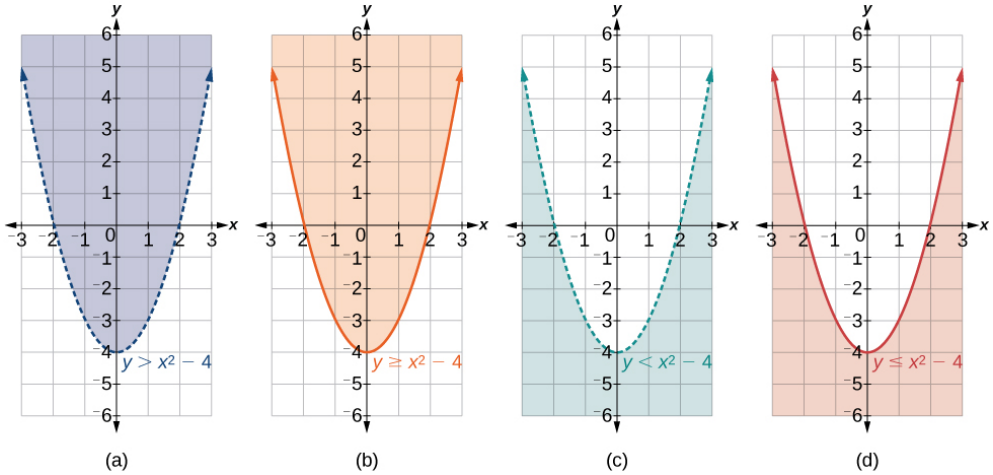

Figure 7.2.8: (a) an example of $y > a$; (b) an example of $y \geq a$; (c) an example of $y < a$; (d) an example of $y \leq a$

How to: Given an inequality bounded by a parabola, sketch a graph

1. Graph the parabola as if it were an equation. This is the boundary for the region that is the solution set.
2. If the boundary is included in the region (the operator is $\leq$ or $\geq$), the parabola is graphed as a solid line.
3. If the boundary is not included in the region (the operator is $<$ or $>$), the parabola is graphed as a dashed line.
4. Test a point in one of the regions to determine whether it satisfies the inequality statement. If the statement is true, the solution set is the region including the point. If the statement is false, the solution set is the region on the other side of the boundary line.
5. Shade the region representing the solution set.

Example 7.2.4: Graphing an Inequality for a Parabola

Graph the inequality $y > x^2 + 1$.

Solution

First, graph the corresponding equation $y = x^2 + 1$. Since $y > x^2 + 1$ has a greater than symbol, we draw the graph with a dashed line. Then we choose points to test both inside and outside the parabola. Let's test the points

$(0, 2)$ and $(2, 0)$. One point is clearly inside the parabola and the other point is clearly outside.

$$y > x^2 + 1$$
$$2 > (0)^2 + 1$$
$$2 > 1 \qquad \text{True}$$

$$0 > (2)^2 + 1$$
$$0 > 5 \qquad \text{False}$$

The graph is shown in Figure 7.2.9. We can see that the solution set consists of all points inside the parabola, but not on the graph itself.

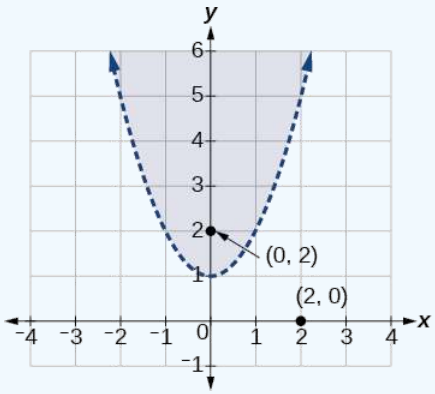

Figure 7.2.9

Graphing a System of Nonlinear Inequalities

Now that we have learned to graph nonlinear inequalities, we can learn how to graph systems of nonlinear inequalities. A **system of nonlinear inequalities** is a system of two or more inequalities in two or more variables containing at least one inequality that is not linear. Graphing a system of nonlinear inequalities is similar to graphing a system of linear inequalities. The difference is that our graph may result in more shaded regions that represent a solution than we find in a system of linear inequalities. The solution to a nonlinear system of inequalities is the region of the graph where the shaded regions of the graph of each inequality overlap, or where the regions intersect, called the **feasible region**.

How to: Given a system of nonlinear inequalities, sketch a graph

1. Find the intersection points by solving the corresponding system of nonlinear equations.
2. Graph the nonlinear equations.
3. Find the shaded regions of each inequality.
4. Identify the feasible region as the intersection of the shaded regions of each inequality or the set of points common to each inequality.

Example 7.2.5: Graphing a System of Inequalities

Graph the given system of inequalities.

$$x^2 - y \leq 0$$
$$2x^2 + y \leq 12$$

Solution

These two equations are clearly parabolas. We can find the points of intersection by the elimination process: Add both equations and the variable y will be eliminated. Then we solve for x.

$$\begin{aligned} x^2 - y &= 0 \\ 2x^2 + y &= 12 \\ \hline 3x^2 &= 12 \\ x^2 &= 4 \\ x &= \pm 2 \end{aligned}$$

Substitute the x-values into one of the equations and solve for y.

$$\begin{aligned} x^2 - y &= 0 \\ (2)^2 - y &= 0 \\ 4 - y &= 0 \\ y &= 4 \end{aligned}$$

$$\begin{aligned} (-2)^2 - y &= 0 \\ 4 - y &= 0 \\ y &= 4 \end{aligned}$$

The two points of intersection are $(2, 4)$ and $(-2, 4)$. Notice that the equations can be rewritten as follows.

$$\begin{aligned} x^2 - y &\leq 0 \\ x^2 &\leq y \\ y &\geq x^2 \end{aligned}$$

$$\begin{aligned} 2x^2 + y &\leq 12 \\ y &\leq -2x^2 + 12 \end{aligned}$$

Graph each inequality. See Figure 7.2.10. The feasible region is the region between the two equations bounded by $2x^2 + y \leq 12$ on the top and $x^2 - y \leq 0$ on the bottom.

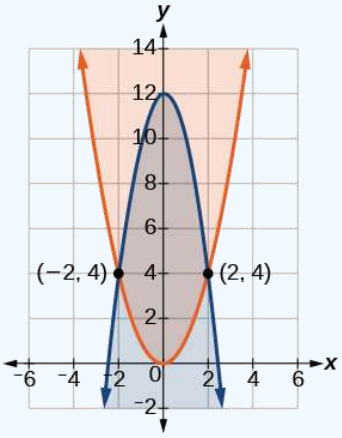

Figure 7.2.10

Exercise 7.2.5

Graph the given system of inequalities.

$$\begin{aligned} y &\geq x^2 - 1 \\ x - y &\geq -1 \end{aligned}$$

Answer

Shade the area bounded by the two curves, above the quadratic and below the line.

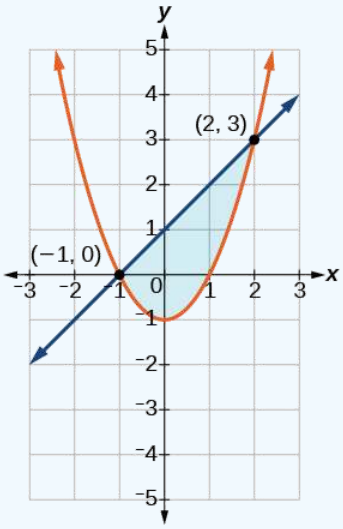

Figure 7.2.11

Media

Access these online resources for additional instruction and practice with nonlinear equations.

- Solve a System of Nonlinear Equations Using Substitution
- Solve a System of Nonlinear Equations Using Elimination

Key Concepts

- There are three possible types of solutions to a system of equations representing a line and a parabola: (1) no solution, the line does not intersect the parabola; (2) one solution, the line is tangent to the parabola; and (3) two solutions, the line intersects the parabola in two points. See Example 7.2.1.
- There are three possible types of solutions to a system of equations representing a circle and a line: (1) no solution, the line does not intersect the circle; (2) one solution, the line is tangent to the parabola; (3) two solutions, the line intersects the circle in two points. See Example 7.2.2.
- There are five possible types of solutions to the system of nonlinear equations representing an ellipse and a circle: (1) no solution, the circle and the ellipse do not intersect; (2) one solution, the circle and the ellipse are tangent to each other; (3) two solutions, the circle and the ellipse intersect in two points; (4) three solutions, the circle and ellipse intersect in three places; (5) four solutions, the circle and the ellipse intersect in four points. See Example 7.2.3.
- An inequality is graphed in much the same way as an equation, except for > or <, we draw a dashed line and shade the region containing the solution set. See Example 7.2.4.
- Inequalities are solved the same way as equalities, but solutions to systems of inequalities must satisfy both inequalities. See Example 7.2.5.

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7.3: Partial Fractions

Learning Objectives

Decompose $\frac{P(x)}{Q(x)}$, where

- $Q(x)$ has only nonrepeated linear factors.
- $Q(x)$ has repeated linear factors.
- $Q(x)$ has a nonrepeated irreducible quadratic factor.
- $Q(x)$ has a repeated irreducible quadratic factor.

Earlier in this chapter, we studied systems of two equations in two variables, systems of three equations in three variables, and nonlinear systems. Here we introduce another way that systems of equations can be utilized—the decomposition of rational expressions. Fractions can be complicated; adding a variable in the denominator makes them even more so. The methods studied in this section will help simplify the concept of a rational expression.

Decomposing $\frac{P(x)}{Q(x)}$ where $Q(x)$ Has Only Nonrepeated Linear Factors

Recall the algebra regarding adding and subtracting rational expressions. These operations depend on finding a common denominator so that we can write the sum or difference as a single, simplified rational expression. In this section, we will look at **partial fraction decomposition**, which is the undoing of the procedure to add or subtract rational expressions. In other words, it is a return from the single simplified **rational expression** to the original expressions, called the **partial fractions**.

For example, suppose we add the following fractions:

$$\frac{2}{x-3}+\frac{-1}{x+2}$$

We would first need to find a common denominator: $(x+2)(x-3)$.

Next, we would write each expression with this common denominator and find the sum of the terms.

$$\begin{aligned}\frac{2}{x-3}\left(\frac{x+2}{x+2}\right)+\frac{-1}{x+2}\left(\frac{x-3}{x-3}\right) &= \frac{2x+4-x+3}{(x+2)(x-3)}\\ &= \frac{x+7}{x^2-x-6}\end{aligned}$$

Partial fraction **decomposition** is the reverse of this procedure. We would start with the solution and rewrite (decompose) it as the sum of two fractions.

$$\underbrace{\frac{x+7}{x^2-x-6}}_{\text{Simplified sum}}=\underbrace{\frac{2}{x-3}+\frac{-1}{x+2}}_{\text{Partial fraction decomposition}}$$

We will investigate rational expressions with linear factors and quadratic factors in the denominator where the degree of the numerator is less than the degree of the denominator. Regardless of the type of expression we are decomposing, the first and most important thing to do is factor the denominator.

When the denominator of the simplified expression contains distinct linear factors, it is likely that each of the original rational expressions, which were added or subtracted, had one of the linear factors as the denominator. In other words, using the example above, the factors of x^2-x-6 are $(x-3)(x+2)$, the denominators of the decomposed rational expression. So we will rewrite the simplified form as the sum of individual fractions and use a variable for each numerator. Then, we will solve for each numerator using one of several methods available for partial fraction decomposition.

PARTIAL FRACTION DECOMPOSITION OF $\frac{P(x)}{Q(x)}$: $Q(x)$ HAS NONREPEATED LINEAR FACTORS

The *partial fraction decomposition* of $\dfrac{P(x)}{Q(x)}$ when $Q(x)$ has nonrepeated linear factors and the degree of $P(x)$ is less than the degree of $Q(x)$ is

$$\frac{P(x)}{Q(x)}=\frac{A_1}{(a_1x+b_1)}+\frac{A_2}{(a_2x+b_2)}+\frac{A_3}{(a_3x+b_3)}+\cdots+\frac{A_n}{(a_nx+b_n)} \tag{7.3.1}$$

How to: Given a rational expression with distinct linear factors in the denominator, decompose it

1. Use a variable for the original numerators, usually A, B, or C, depending on the number of factors, placing each variable over a single factor. For the purpose of this definition, we use A_n for each numerator
$$\frac{P(x)}{Q(x)}=\frac{A_1}{(a_1x+b_1)}+\frac{A_2}{(a_2x+b_2)}+\frac{A_3}{(a_3x+b_3)}+\cdots+\frac{A_n}{(a_nx+b_n)}$$
2. Multiply both sides of the equation by the common denominator to eliminate fractions.
3. Expand the right side of the equation and collect like terms.
4. Set coefficients of like terms from the left side of the equation equal to those on the right side to create a system of equations to solve for the numerators.

Example 7.3.1: Decomposing a Rational Function with Distinct Linear Factors

Decompose the given rational expression with distinct linear factors.

$$\frac{3x}{(x+2)(x-1)}$$

Solution

We will separate the denominator factors and give each numerator a symbolic label, like A, B ,or C.

$$\frac{3x}{(x+2)(x-1)}=\frac{A}{(x+2)}+\frac{B}{(x-1)}$$

Multiply both sides of the equation by the common denominator to eliminate the fractions:

$$(x+2)(x-1)\left[\frac{3x}{(x+2)(x-1)}\right]=(x+2)(x-1)\left[\frac{A}{(x+2)}\right]+(x+2)(x-1)\left[\frac{B}{(x-1)}\right]$$

The resulting equation is

$$3x=A(x-1)+B(x+2)$$

Expand the right side of the equation and collect like terms.

$$\begin{aligned}3x&=Ax-A+Bx+2B\\3x&=(A+B)x-A+2B\end{aligned}$$

Set up a system of equations associating corresponding coefficients.

$$\begin{aligned}3&=A+B\\0&=-A+2B\end{aligned}$$

Add the two equations and solve for B.

$$\begin{aligned}3&=A+B\\\underline{0}&=\underline{-A+2B}\\3&=0+3B\\1&=B\end{aligned}$$

Substitute $B=1$ into one of the original equations in the system.

$$\begin{aligned} 3 &= A+1 \\ 2 &= A \end{aligned}$$

Thus, the partial fraction decomposition is

$$\frac{3x}{(x+2)(x-1)} = \frac{2}{(x+2)} + \frac{1}{(x-1)}$$

Another method to use to solve for A or B is by considering the equation that resulted from eliminating the fractions and substituting a value for x that will make either the $A-$ or $B-$term equal 0. If we let $x=1$, the

$A-$ term becomes 0 and we can simply solve for B.

$$\begin{aligned} 3x &= A(x-1)+B(x+2) \\ 3(1) &= A[(1)-1]+B[(1)+2] \\ 3 &= 0+3B \\ 1 &= B \end{aligned}$$

Next, either substitute $B=1$ into the equation and solve for A, or make the $B-$term 0 by substituting $x=-2$ into the equation.

$$\begin{aligned} 3x &= A(x-1)+B(x+2) \\ 3(-2) &= A[(-2)-1]+B[(-2)+2] \\ -6 &= -3A+0 \\ \frac{-6}{-3} &= A \\ 2 &= A \end{aligned}$$

We obtain the same values for A and B using either method, so the decompositions are the same using either method.

$$\frac{3x}{(x+2)(x-1)} = \frac{2}{(x+2)} + \frac{1}{(x-1)}$$

Although this method is not seen very often in textbooks, we present it here as an alternative that may make some partial fraction decompositions easier. It is known as the **Heaviside method**, named after Charles Heaviside, a pioneer in the study of electronics.

? Exercise 7.3.1

Find the partial fraction decomposition of the following expression.

$$\frac{x}{(x-3)(x-2)}$$

Answer

$$\frac{3}{x-3} - \frac{2}{x-2}$$

Decomposing $\frac{P(x)}{Q(x)}$ where $Q(x)$ Has Repeated Linear Factors

Some fractions we may come across are special cases that we can decompose into partial fractions with repeated linear factors. We must remember that we account for repeated factors by writing each factor in increasing powers.

PARTIAL FRACTION DECOMPOSITION OF $\frac{P(x)}{Q(x)}$: $Q(x)$ HAS REPEATED LINEAR FACTORS

The partial fraction decomposition of $\dfrac{P(x)}{Q(x)}$, when $Q(x)$ has a repeated linear factor occurringn n times and the degree of $P(x)$ is less than the degree of $Q(x)$, is

$$\frac{P(x)}{Q(x)} = \frac{A_1}{(a_1x+b_1)} + \frac{A_2}{(a_2x+b_2)} + \frac{A_3}{(a_3x+b_3)} + \cdots + \frac{A_n}{(a_nx+b_n)} \tag{7.3.2}$$

Write the denominator powers in increasing order.

How to: decompose a rational expression with repeated linear factors

1. Use a variable like A, B, or C for the numerators and account for increasing powers of the denominators.

$$\frac{P(x)}{Q(x)} = \frac{A_1}{(a_1x+b_1)} + \frac{A_2}{(a_2x+b_2)} + \frac{A_3}{(a_3x+b_3)} + \cdots + \frac{A_n}{(a_nx+b_n)} \tag{7.3.3}$$

2. Multiply both sides of the equation by the common denominator to eliminate fractions.
3. Expand the right side of the equation and collect like terms.
4. Set coefficients of like terms from the left side of the equation equal to those on the right side to create a system of equations to solve for the numerators.

Example 7.3.2: Decomposing with Repeated Linear Factors

Decompose the given rational expression with repeated linear factors.

$$\frac{-x^2+2x+4}{x^3-4x^2+4x}$$

Solution

The denominator factors are $x(x-2)^2$. To allow for the repeated factor of $(x-2)$, the decomposition will include three denominators: x, $(x-2)$, and $(x-2)^2$. Thus,

$$\frac{-x^2+2x+4}{x^3-4x^2+4x} = \frac{A}{x} + \frac{B}{(x-2)} + \frac{C}{(x-2)^2}$$

Next, we multiply both sides by the common denominator.

$$x(x-2)^2\left[\frac{-x^2+2x+4}{x(x-2)^2}\right] = \left[\frac{A}{x} + \frac{B}{(x-2)} + \frac{C}{(x-2)^2}\right] x(x-2)^2$$

$$-x^2+2x+4 = A(x-2)^2 + Bx(x-2) + Cx$$

On the right side of the equation, we expand and collect like terms.

$$\begin{aligned} -x^2+2x+4 &= A(x^2-4x+4) + B(x^2-2x) + Cx \\ &= Ax^2 - 4Ax + 4A + Bx^2 - 2Bx + Cx \\ &= (A+B)x^2 + (-4A-2B+C)x + 4A \end{aligned}$$

Next, we compare the coefficients of both sides. This will give the system of equations in three variables:

$$-x^2+2x+4 = (A+B)x^2 + (-4A-2B+C)x + 4A \tag{7.3.4}$$

$$A+B = -1 \tag{7.3.5}$$

$$-4A-2B+C = 2 \tag{7.3.6}$$

$$4A = 4 \tag{7.3.7}$$

Solving for A in Equation 7.3.7, we have

$$\begin{aligned} 4A &= 4 \\ A &= 1 \end{aligned}$$

Substitute $A = 1$ into Equation 7.3.5.

$$\begin{aligned} A + B &= -1 \\ (1) + B &= -1 \\ B &= -2 \end{aligned}$$

Then, to solve for C, substitute the values for A and B into Equation 7.3.6.

$$\begin{aligned} -4A - 2B + C &= 2 \\ -4(1) - 2(-2) + C &= 2 \\ -4 + 4 + C &= 2 \\ C &= 2 \end{aligned}$$

Thus,

$$\frac{-x^2 + 2x + 4}{x^3 - 4x^2 + 4x} = \frac{1}{x} - \frac{2}{(x-2)} + \frac{2}{(x-2)^2}$$

? Exercise 7.3.2

Find the partial fraction decomposition of the expression with repeated linear factors.

$$\frac{6x - 11}{(x-1)^2}$$

Answer

$$\frac{6}{x-1} - \frac{5}{(x-1)^2}$$

Decomposing $\frac{P(x)}{Q(x)}$, where $Q(x)$ Has a Nonrepeated Irreducible Quadratic Factor

So far, we have performed partial fraction decomposition with expressions that have had linear factors in the denominator, and we applied numerators A, B, or C representing constants. Now we will look at an example where one of the factors in the denominator is a quadratic expression that does not factor. This is referred to as an irreducible quadratic factor. In cases like this, we use a linear numerator such as $Ax + B$, $Bx + C$, etc.

DECOMPOSITION OF $\frac{P(x)}{Q(x)}$: $Q(x)$ HAS A NONREPEATED IRREDUCIBLE QUADRATIC FACTOR

The partial fraction decomposition of $\dfrac{P(x)}{Q(x)}$ such that $Q(x)$ has a nonrepeated irreducible quadratic factor and the degree of $P(x)$ is less than the degree of $Q(x)$ is written as

$$\frac{P(x)}{Q(x)} = \frac{A_1 x + B_1}{(a_1 x^2 + b1_x + c_1)} + \frac{A_2 x + B_2}{(a_2 x^2 + b_2 x + c_2)} + \cdots + \frac{A_n x + B_n}{(a_n x^2 + b_n x + c_n)} \tag{7.3.8}$$

The decomposition may contain more rational expressions if there are linear factors. Each linear factor will have a different constant numerator: A, B, C, and so on.

Howto: decompose a rational expression where the factors of the denominator are distinct, irreducible quadratic factors

1. Use variables such as A, B, or C for the constant numerators over linear factors, and linear expressions such as A_1x+B_1, A_2x+B_2, etc., for the numerators of each quadratic factor in the denominator.
$$\frac{P(x)}{Q(x)}=\frac{A}{ax+b}+\frac{A_1x+B_1}{(a_1x^2+b1_x+c_1)}+\frac{A_2x+B_2}{(a_2x^2+b_2x+c_2)}+\cdots+\frac{A_nx+B_n}{(a_nx^2+b_nx+c_n)}$$
2. Multiply both sides of the equation by the common denominator to eliminate fractions.
3. Expand the right side of the equation and collect like terms.
4. Set coefficients of like terms from the left side of the equation equal to those on the right side to create a system of equations to solve for the numerators.

Example 7.3.3: Decomposing $\frac{P(x)}{Q(x)}$ When $Q(x)$ Contains a Nonrepeated Irreducible Quadratic Factor

Find a partial fraction decomposition of the given expression.
$$\frac{8x^2+12x-20}{(x+3)(x^2+x+2)}$$

Solution

We have one linear factor and one irreducible quadratic factor in the denominator, so one numerator will be a constant and the other numerator will be a linear expression. Thus,
$$\frac{8x^2+12x-20}{(x+3)(x^2+x+2)}=\frac{A}{(x+3)}+\frac{Bx+C}{(x^2+x+2)}$$
We follow the same steps as in previous problems. First, clear the fractions by multiplying both sides of the equation by the common denominator.
$$\begin{aligned}(x+3)(x^2+x+2)\left[\frac{8x^2+12x-20}{(x+3)(x^2+x+2)}\right] &=\left[\frac{A}{(x+3)}+\frac{Bx+C}{(x^2+x+2)}\right](x+3)(x^2+x+2)\\ 8x^2+12x-20 &=A(x^2+x+2)+(Bx+C)(x+3)\end{aligned}$$
Notice we could easily solve for A by choosing a value for x that will make the $Bx+C$ term equal 0. Let $x=-3$ and substitute it into the equation.
$$\begin{aligned}8x^2+12x-20 &=A(x^2+x+2)+(Bx+C)(x+3)\\ 8(-3)^2+12(-3)-20 &=A((-3)^2+(-3)+2)+(B(-3)+C)((-3)+3)\\ 16&=8A\\ A&=2\end{aligned}$$
Now that we know the value of A, substitute it back into the equation. Then expand the right side and collect like terms.
$$\begin{aligned}8x^2+12x-20 &=2(x^2+x+2)+(Bx+C)(x+3)\\ 8x^2+12x-20 &=2x^2+2x+4+Bx^2+3B+Cx+3C\\ 8x^2+12x-20 &=(2+B)x^2+(2+3B+C)x+(4+3C)\end{aligned}$$
Setting the coefficients of terms on the right side equal to the coefficients of terms on the left side gives the system of equations.
$$2+B=8 \tag{7.3.9}$$
$$2+3B+C=12 \tag{7.3.10}$$
$$4+3C=-20 \tag{7.3.11}$$
Solve for B using Equation 7.3.9

\[

$$2+B=8$$

$$B=6$$

and solve for C using Equation 7.3.11.

$$4+3C=-20$$

$$3C=-24$$

$$C=-8$$

Thus, the partial fraction decomposition of the expression is

$$\frac{8x^2+12x-20}{(x+3)(x^2+x+2)}=\frac{2}{(x+3)}+\frac{6x-8}{(x^2+x+2)}$$

Q&A: Could we have just set up a system of equations to solve the example above?

Yes, we could have solved it by setting up a system of equations without solving for A first. The expansion on the right would be:

$$8x^2+12x-20 = Ax^2+Ax+2A+Bx^2+3B+Cx+3C$$

$$8x^2+12x-20 = (A+B)x^2+(A+3B+C)x+(2A+3C)$$

So the system of equations would be:

$$A+B=8$$

$$A+3B+C=12$$

$$2A+3C=-20$$

Exercise 7.3.3

Find the partial fraction decomposition of the expression with a nonrepeating irreducible quadratic factor.

$$\frac{5x^2-6x+7}{(x-1)(x^2+1)}$$

Answer

$$\frac{3}{x-1}+\frac{2x-4}{x^2+1}$$

Decomposing $\frac{P(x)}{Q(x)}$ When $Q(x)$ Has a Repeated Irreducible Quadratic Factor

Now that we can decompose a simplified rational expression with an irreducible quadratic factor, we will learn how to do partial fraction decomposition when the simplified rational expression has repeated irreducible quadratic factors. The decomposition will consist of partial fractions with linear numerators over each irreducible quadratic factor represented in increasing powers.

DECOMPOSITION OF $\frac{P(x)}{Q(x)}$ WHEN $Q(X)$ HAS A REPEATED IRREDUCIBLE QUADRATIC FACTOR

The partial fraction decomposition of $\frac{P(x)}{Q(x)}$, when $Q(x)$ has a repeated irreducible quadratic factor and the degree of $P(x)$ is less than the degree of $Q(x)$, is

$$\frac{P(x)}{(ax^2+bx+c)^n}=\frac{A_1x+B_1}{(ax^2+bx+c)}+\frac{A_2x+B_2}{(ax^2+bx+c)^2}+\frac{A_3x+B_3}{(ax^2+bx+c)^3}+\cdots+\frac{A_nx+B_n}{(ax^2+bx+c)^n} \quad (7.3.12)$$

Write the denominators in increasing powers.

How to: decompose a rational expression that has a repeated irreducible factor

1. Use variables like A, B, or C for the constant numerators over linear factors, and linear expressions such as A_1x+B_1, A_2x+B_2, etc., for the numerators of each quadratic factor in the denominator written in increasing powers, such as
$$\frac{P(x)}{Q(x)}=\frac{A}{ax+b}+\frac{A_1x+B_1}{(ax^2+bx+c)}+\frac{A_2x+B_2}{(ax^2+bx+c)^2}+\cdots+\frac{A_nx+B_n}{(ax^2+bx+c)^n}$$
2. Multiply both sides of the equation by the common denominator to eliminate fractions.
3. Expand the right side of the equation and collect like terms.
4. Set coefficients of like terms from the left side of the equation equal to those on the right side to create a system of equations to solve for the numerators.

Example 7.3.4: Decomposing a Rational Function with a Repeated Irreducible Quadratic Factor in the Denominator

Decompose the given expression that has a repeated irreducible factor in the denominator.
$$\frac{x^4+x^3+x^2-x+1}{x(x^2+1)^2}$$

Solution

The factors of the denominator are x, (x^2+1), and $(x^2+1)^2$. Recall that, when a factor in the denominator is a quadratic that includes at least two terms, the numerator must be of the linear form $Ax+B$. So, let's begin the decomposition.
$$\frac{x^4+x^3+x^2-x+1}{x(x^2+1)^2}=\frac{A}{x}+\frac{Bx+C}{(x^2+1)}+\frac{Dx+E}{(x^2+1)^2}$$

We eliminate the denominators by multiplying each term by $x(x^2+1)^2$. Thus,
$$\begin{aligned} x^4+x^3+x^2-x+1 &= A(x^2+1)^2+(Bx+C)(x)(x^2+1)+(Dx+E)(x) \\ x^4+x^3+x^2-x+1 &= A(x^4+2x^2+1)+Bx^4+Bx^2+Cx^3+Cx+Dx^2+Ex \qquad \text{Expand the right side.} \\ &= Ax^4+2Ax^2+A+Bx^4+Bx^2+Cx^3+Cx+Dx^2+Ex \end{aligned}$$

Now we will collect like terms.
$$x^4+x^3+x^2-x+1=(A+B)x^4+(C)x^3+(2A+B+D)x^2+(C+E)x+A$$

Set up the system of equations matching corresponding coefficients on each side of the equal sign.
$$\begin{aligned} A+B &= 1 \\ C &= 1 \\ 2A+B+D &= 1 \\ C+E &= -1 \\ A &= 1 \end{aligned}$$

We can use substitution from this point. Substitute $A=1$ into the first equation.
$$\begin{aligned} 1+B &= 1 \\ B &= 0 \end{aligned}$$

Substitute $A=1$ and $B=0$ into the third equation.
$$\begin{aligned} 2(1)+0+D &= 1 \\ D &= -1 \end{aligned}$$

Substitute $C = 1$ into the fourth equation.

$$1 + E = -1$$
$$E = -2$$

Now we have solved for all of the unknowns on the right side of the equal sign. We have $A = 1$, $B = 0$, $C = 1$, $D = -1$, and $E = -2$. We can write the decomposition as follows:

$$\frac{x^4 + x^3 + x^2 - x + 1}{x(x^2+1)^2} = \frac{1}{x} + \frac{1}{(x^2+1)} - \frac{x+2}{(x^2+1)^2}$$

Exercise 7.3.4

Find the partial fraction decomposition of the expression with a repeated irreducible quadratic factor.

$$\frac{x^3 - 4x^2 + 9x - 5}{(x^2 - 2x + 3)^2}$$

Answer

$$\frac{x-2}{x^2-2x+3} + \frac{2x+1}{(x^2-2x+3)^2}$$

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Access these online resources for additional instruction and practice with partial fractions.

- Partial Fraction Decomposition
- Partial Fraction Decomposition With Repeated Linear Factors
- Partial Fraction Decomposition With Linear and Quadratic Factors

Key Concepts

- Decompose $\frac{P(x)}{Q(x)}$ by writing the partial fractions as

  $$\frac{A}{a_1 x + b_1} + \frac{B}{a_2 x + b_2}.$$

  Solve by clearing the fractions, expanding the right side, collecting like terms, and setting corresponding coefficients equal to each other, then setting up and solving a system of equations (see Example 7.3.1).
- The decomposition of $\frac{P(x)}{Q(x)}$ with repeated linear factors must account for the factors of the denominator in increasing powers (see Example 7.3.2).
- The decomposition of $\frac{P(x)}{Q(x)}$ with a nonrepeated irreducible quadratic factor needs a linear numerator over the quadratic factor, as in $\frac{A}{x} + \frac{Bx + C}{(ax^2 + bx + c)}$ (see Example 7.3.3).
- In the decomposition of $\frac{P(x)}{Q(x)}$, where $Q(x)$ has a repeated irreducible quadratic factor, when the irreducible quadratic factors are repeated, powers of the denominator factors must be represented in increasing powers as

  $$\frac{A_1 x + B_1}{ax^2 + bx + c} + \frac{A_2 x + B_2}{(ax^2 + bx + c)^2} + \cdots + \frac{A_n x + B_n}{(ax^2 + bx + c)^n}$$

  See Example 7.3.4.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

8: Analytic Geometry

In this chapter, we will investigate the two-dimensional figures that are formed when a right circular cone is intersected by a plane. We will begin by studying each of three figures created in this manner. We will develop defining equations for each figure and then learn how to use these equations to solve a variety of problems. Conic sections are formed when a plane intersects two right circular cones aligned tip to tip and extending infinitely far in opposite directions, which we also call a cone. The way in which we slice the cone will determine the type of conic section formed at the intersection. A circle is formed by slicing a cone with a plane perpendicular to the axis of symmetry of the cone. An ellipse is formed by slicing a single cone with a slanted plane not perpendicular to the axis of symmetry.

8.1: The Ellipse

8.2: The Hyperbola

8.3: The Parabola

Contributors

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8.1: The Ellipse

Learning Objectives

- Write equations of ellipses in standard form.
- Graph ellipses centered at the origin.
- Graph ellipses not centered at the origin.
- Solve applied problems involving ellipses.

Can you imagine standing at one end of a large room and still being able to hear a whisper from a person standing at the other end? The National Statuary Hall in Washington, D.C., shown in Figure 8.1.1, is such a room. It is an oval-shaped room called a *whispering chamber* because the shape makes it possible for sound to travel along the walls. In this section, we will investigate the shape of this room and its real-world applications, including how far apart two people in Statuary Hall can stand and still hear each other whisper.

Figure 8.1.1: The National Statuary Hall in Washington, D.C. (credit: Greg Palmer, Flickr)

Writing Equations of Ellipses in Standard Form

A conic section, or conic, is a shape resulting from intersecting a right circular cone with a plane. The angle at which the plane intersects the cone determines the shape, as shown in Figure 8.1.2.

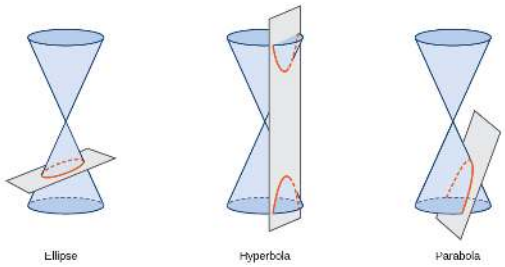

Figure 8.1.2

Conic sections can also be described by a set of points in the coordinate plane. Later in this chapter, we will see that the graph of any quadratic equation in two variables is a conic section. The signs of the equations and the coefficients of the variable terms determine the shape. This section focuses on the four variations of the standard form of the equation for the ellipse. An ellipse is the set of all points (x, y) in a plane such that the sum of their distances from two fixed points is a constant. Each fixed point is called a focus(plural: foci).

We can draw an ellipse using a piece of cardboard, two thumbtacks, a pencil, and string. Place the thumbtacks in the cardboard to form the foci of the ellipse. Cut a piece of string longer than the distance between the two thumbtacks (the length of the string represents the constant in the definition). Tack each end of the string to the cardboard, and trace a curve with a pencil held taut against the string. The result is an ellipse. See Figure 8.1.3.

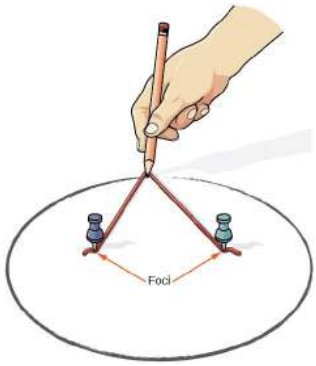

Figure 8.1.3

Every ellipse has two axes of symmetry. The longer axis is called the major axis, and the shorter axis is called the minor axis. Each endpoint of the major axis is the vertex of the ellipse (plural: vertices), and each endpoint of the minor axis is a co-vertex of the ellipse. The center of an ellipse is the midpoint of both the major and minor axes. The axes are perpendicular at the center. The foci always lie on the major axis, and the sum of the distances from the foci to any point on the ellipse (the constant sum) is greater than the distance between the foci (Figure 8.1.4).

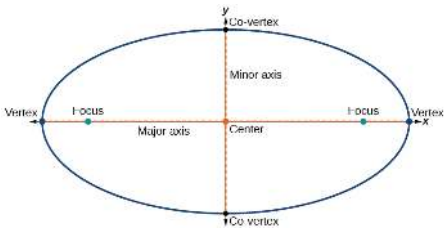

Figure 8.1.4

In this section, we restrict ellipses to those that are positioned vertically or horizontally in the coordinate plane. That is, the axes will either lie on or be parallel to the x- and y-axes. Later in the chapter, we will see ellipses that are rotated in the coordinate plane.

To work with horizontal and vertical ellipses in the coordinate plane, we consider two cases: those that are centered at the origin and those that are centered at a point other than the origin. First we will learn to derive the equations of ellipses, and then we will learn how to write the equations of ellipses in standard form. Later we will use what we learn to draw the graphs.

Deriving the Equation of an Ellipse Centered at the Origin

To derive the equation of an **ellipse** centered at the origin, we begin with the foci $(-c,0)$ and $(c,0)$. The ellipse is the set of all points (x,y) such that the sum of the distances from (x,y) to the foci is constant, as shown in Figure 8.1.5.

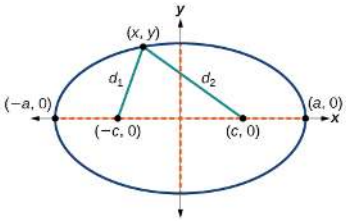

Figure 8.1.5

If $(a,0)$ is a vertex of the ellipse, the distance from $(-c,0)$ to $(a,0)$ is $a-(-c)=a+c$. The distance from $(c,0)$ to $(a,0)$ is $a-c$. The sum of the distances from the foci to the vertex is

$$(a+c)+(a-c)=2a$$

If (x,y) is a point on the ellipse, then we can define the following variables:

- $d_1 =$ the distance from $(-c,0)$ to (x,y)
- $d_2 =$ the distance from $(c,0)$ to (x,y)

By the definition of an ellipse, d_1+d_2 is constant for any point (x,y) on the ellipse. We know that the sum of these distances is $2a$ for the vertex $(a,0)$. It follows that $d_1+d_2=2a$ for any point on the ellipse. We will begin the derivation by applying the distance formula. The rest of the derivation is algebraic.

$$\begin{aligned}
d_1+d_2 &= 2a \\
\sqrt{(x-(-c))^2+(y-0)^2}+\sqrt{(x-c)^2+(y-0)^2} &= 2a && \text{Distance formula} \\
\sqrt{(x+c)^2+y^2}+\sqrt{(x-c)^2+y^2} &= 2a && \text{Simplify expressions.} \\
\sqrt{(x+c)^2+y^2} &= 2a-\sqrt{(x-c)^2+y^2} && \text{Move radical to opposite side.} \\
(x+c)^2+y^2 &= \left[2a-\sqrt{(x-c)^2+y^2}\right]^2 && \text{Square both sides.} \\
x^2+2cx+c^2+y^2 &= 4a^2-4a\sqrt{(x-c)^2+y^2}+(x-c)^2+y^2 && \text{Expand the squares.} \\
x^2+2cx+c^2+y^2 &= 4a^2-4a\sqrt{(x-c)^2+y^2}+x^2-2cx+c^2+y^2 && \text{Expand remaining squares.} \\
2cx &= 4a^2-4a\sqrt{(x-c)^2+y^2}-2cx && \text{Combine like terms.} \\
4cx-4a^2 &= -4a\sqrt{(x-c)^2+y^2} && \text{Isolate the radical.} \\
cx-a^2 &= -a\sqrt{(x-c)^2+y^2} && \text{Divide by 4.} \\
\left[cx-a^2\right]^2 &= a^2\left[\sqrt{(x-c)^2+y^2}\right]^2 && \text{Square both sides.} \\
c^2x^2-2a^2cx+a^4 &= a^2(x^2-2cx+c^2+y^2) && \text{Expand the squares.} \\
c^2x^2-2a^2cx+a^4 &= a^2x^2-2a^2cx+a^2c^2+a^2y^2 && \text{Distribute } a^2 \\
a^2x^2-c^2x^2+a^2y^2 &= a^4-a^2c^2 && \text{Rewrite.} \\
x^2(a^2-c^2)+a^2y^2 &= a^2(a^2-c^2) && \text{Factor common terms.} \\
x^2b^2+a^2y^2 &= a^2b^2 && \text{Set } b^2=a^2-c^2 \\
\frac{x^2b^2}{a^2b^2}+\frac{a^2y^2}{a^2b^2} &= \frac{a^2b^2}{a^2b^2} && \text{Divide both sides by } a^2b^2 \\
\frac{x^2}{a^2}+\frac{y^2}{b^2} &= 1 && \text{Simplify}
\end{aligned}$$

Thus, the standard equation of an ellipse is $\frac{x^2}{a^2}+\frac{y^2}{b^2}=1$ .This equation defines an ellipse centered at the origin. If $a>b$,the ellipse is stretched further in the horizontal direction, and if $b>a$, the ellipse is stretched further in the vertical direction.

Writing Equations of Ellipses Centered at the Origin in Standard Form

Standard forms of equations tell us about key features of graphs. Take a moment to recall some of the standard forms of equations we've worked with in the past: linear, quadratic, cubic, exponential, logarithmic, and so on. By learning to interpret standard forms of equations, we are bridging the relationship between algebraic and geometric representations of mathematical phenomena.

The key features of the **ellipse** are its center, **vertices**, **co-vertices**, **foci**, and lengths and positions of the **major and minor axes**. Just as with other equations, we can identify all of these features just by looking at the standard form of the equation. There are four variations of the standard form of the ellipse. These variations are categorized first by the location of the center (the origin or not the origin), and then by the position (horizontal or vertical). Each is presented along with a description of how the parts of the equation relate to the graph. Interpreting these parts allows us to form a mental picture of the ellipse.

STANDARD FORMS OF THE EQUATION OF AN ELLIPSE WITH CENTER $(0,0)$

The standard form of the equation of an ellipse with center $(0,0)$ and major axis on the x-*axis* is

$$\frac{x^2}{a^2}+\frac{y^2}{b^2}=1 \tag{8.1.1}$$

where

- $a>b$
- the length of the major axis is $2a$
- the coordinates of the vertices are $(\pm a,0)$
- the length of the minor axis is $2b$
- the coordinates of the co-vertices are $(0,\pm b)$
- the coordinates of the foci are $(\pm c,0)$, where $c^2=a^2-b^2$. See Figure 8.1.6*a*.

The standard form of the equation of an ellipse with center $(0,0)$ and major axis on the y-*axis* is

$$\frac{x^2}{b^2}+\frac{y^2}{a^2}=1 \tag{8.1.2}$$

where

- $a>b$
- the length of the major axis is $2a$
- the coordinates of the vertices are $(0,\pm a)$
- the length of the minor axis is $2b$
- the coordinates of the co-vertices are $(\pm b,0)$
- the coordinates of the foci are $(0,\pm c)$, where $c^2=a^2-b^2$. See Figure 8.1.6*b*.

Note that the vertices, co-vertices, and foci are related by the equation $c^2=a^2-b^2$. When we are given the coordinates of the foci and vertices of an ellipse, we can use this relationship to find the equation of the ellipse in standard form.

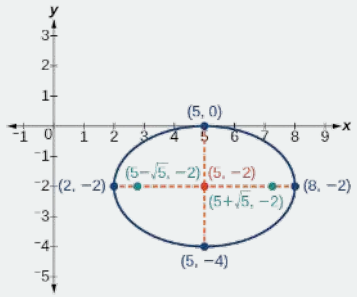

Figure 8.1.6: (a) Horizontal ellipse with center $(0,0)$ (b) Vertical ellipse with center $(0,0)$

How to: Given the vertices and foci of an ellipse centered at the origin, write its equation in standard form

1. Determine whether the major axis lies on the *x*- or *y*-axis.
   - If the given coordinates of the vertices and foci have the form $(\pm a,0)$ and $(\pm c,0)$ respectively, then the major axis is the *x*-axis. Use the standard form $\frac{x^2}{a^2}+\frac{y^2}{b^2}=1$
   - If the given coordinates of the vertices and foci have the form $(0,\pm a)$ and $(\pm c,0)$,respectively, then the major axis is the *y*-axis. Use the standard form $\frac{x^2}{b^2}+\frac{y^2}{a^2}=1$
2. Use the equation $c^2=a^2-b^2$, along with the given coordinates of the vertices and foci, to solve for b^2.
3. Substitute the values for a^2 and b^2 into the standard form of the equation determined in Step 1.

Example 8.1.1: Writing the Equation of an Ellipse Centered at the Origin in Standard Form

What is the standard form equation of the ellipse that has vertices $(\pm 8,0)$ and foci $(\pm 5,0)$?

Solution

The foci are on the x-axis, so the major axis is the x-axis. Thus, the equation will have the form $\frac{x^2}{a^2}+\frac{y^2}{b^2}=1$

The vertices are $(\pm 8,0)$,so $a=8$ and $a^2=64$.

The foci are $(\pm 5,0)$,so $c=5$ and $c^2=25$.

We know that the vertices and foci are related by the equation $c^2=a^2-b^2$. Solving for b^2, we have:

$$\begin{aligned} c^2 &= a^2-b^2 \\ 25 &= 64-b^2 \qquad \text{Substitute for } c^2 \text{ and } a^2 \\ b^2 &= 39 \qquad \text{Solve for } b^2 \end{aligned}$$

Now we need only substitute $a^2=64$ and $b^2=39$ into the standard form of the equation. The equation of the ellipse is $\frac{x^2}{64}+\frac{y^2}{39}=1$.

Exercise 8.1.1

What is the standard form equation of the ellipse that has vertices $(0,\pm 4)$ and foci $(0,\pm\sqrt{15})$?

Answer

$$x^2+\frac{y^2}{16}=1$$

Q&A

Can we write the equation of an ellipse centered at the origin given coordinates of just one focus and vertex?

Yes. Ellipses are symmetrical, so the coordinates of the vertices of an ellipse centered around the origin will always have the form $(\pm a, 0)$ *or* $(0, \pm a)$. *Similarly, the coordinates of the foci will always have the form* $(\pm c, 0)$ *or* $(0, \pm c)$. *Knowing this, we can use* a *and* c *from the given points, along with the equation* $c^2 = a^2 - b^2$ *, to find* b^2.

Writing Equations of Ellipses Not Centered at the Origin

Like the graphs of other equations, the graph of an **ellipse** can be translated. If an ellipse is translated h units horizontally and k units vertically, the center of the ellipse will be (h, k). This **translation** results in the standard form of the equation we saw previously, with x replaced by $(x - h)$ and y replaced by $(y - k)$.

STANDARD FORMS OF THE EQUATION OF AN ELLIPSE WITH CENTER (H, K)

The standard form of the equation of an ellipse with center (h, k) and major axis parallel to the x-axis is

$$\frac{(x-h)^2}{a^2} + \frac{(y-k)^2}{b^2} = 1 \tag{8.1.3}$$

where

- $a > b$
- the length of the major axis is $2a$
- the coordinates of the vertices are $(h \pm a, k)$
- the length of the minor axis is $2b$
- the coordinates of the co-vertices are $(h, k \pm b)$
- the coordinates of the foci are $(h \pm c, k)$,where $c^2 = a^2 - b^2$. See Figure 8.1.7*a*

The standard form of the equation of an ellipse with center (h, k) and major axis parallel to the y-axis is

$$\frac{(x-h)^2}{b^2} + \frac{(y-k)^2}{a^2} = 1 \tag{8.1.4}$$

where

- $a > b$
- the length of the major axis is $2a$
- the coordinates of the vertices are $(h, k \pm a)$
- the length of the minor axis is $2b$
- the coordinates of the co-vertices are $(h \pm b, k)$
- the coordinates of the foci are $(h, k \pm c)$, where $c^2 = a^2 - b^2$. See Figure 8.1.7*b*

Just as with ellipses centered at the origin, ellipses that are centered at a point (h, k) have vertices, co-vertices, and foci that are related by the equation $c^2 = a^2 - b^2$. We can use this relationship along with the midpoint and distance formulas to find the equation of the ellipse in standard form when the vertices and foci are given.

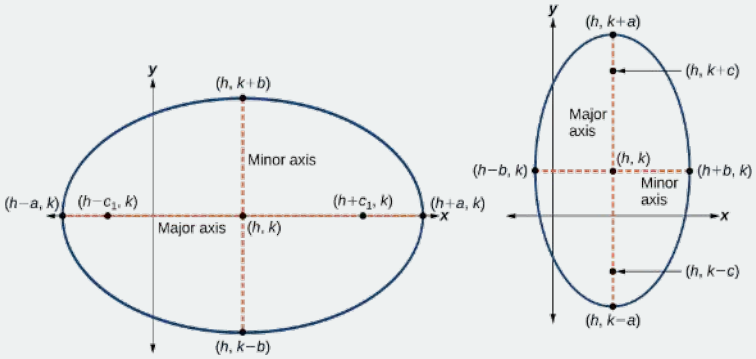

Figure 8.1.7: (a) Horizontal ellipse with center (h, k) (b) Vertical ellipse with center (h, k)

How to: Given the vertices and foci of an ellipse not centered at the origin, write its equation in standard form

1. Determine whether the major axis is parallel to the x- or y-axis.
   - If the y-coordinates of the given vertices and foci are the same, then the major axis is parallel to the x-axis. Use the standard form $\frac{(x-h)^2}{a^2} + \frac{(y-k)^2}{b^2} = 1$
   - If the x-coordinates of the given vertices and foci are the same, then the major axis is parallel to the y-axis. Use the standard form $\frac{(x-h)^2}{b^2} + \frac{(y-k)^2}{a^2} = 1$
2. Identify the center of the ellipse (h, k) using the midpoint formula and the given coordinates for the vertices.
3. Find a^2 by solving for the length of the major axis, $2a$, which is the distance between the given vertices.
4. Find c^2 using h and k, found in Step 2, along with the given coordinates for the foci.
5. Solve for b^2 using the equation $c^2 = a^2 - b^2$.
6. Substitute the values for h, k, a^2, and b^2 into the standard form of the equation determined in Step 1.

Example 8.1.2: Writing the Equation of an Ellipse Centered at a Point Other Than the Origin

What is the standard form equation of the ellipse that has vertices $(-2, -8)$ and $(-2, 2)$ and foci $(-2, -7)$ and $(-2, 1)$?

Solution

The x-coordinates of the vertices and foci are the same, so the major axis is parallel to the y-axis. Thus, the equation of the ellipse will have the form

$$\frac{(x-h)^2}{b^2} + \frac{(y-k)^2}{a^2} = 1$$

First, we identify the center, (h, k). The center is halfway between the vertices, $(-2, -8)$ and $(-2, 2)$. Applying the midpoint formula, we have:

$$(h,k)=\left(\frac{-2+(-2)}{2},\frac{-8+2}{2}\right)$$
$$=(-2,-3)$$

Next, we find a^2. The length of the major axis, $2a$, is bounded by the vertices. We solve for a by finding the distance between the y-coordinates of the vertices.

$$\begin{aligned}2a&=2-(-8)\\2a&=10\\a&=5\end{aligned}$$

So $a^2=25$.

Now we find c^2. The foci are given by $(h,k\pm c)$. So, $(h,k-c)=(-2,-7)$ and $(h,k+c)=(-2,1)$. We substitute $k=-3$ using either of these points to solve for c.

$$\begin{aligned}k+c&=1\\-3+c&=1\\c&=4\end{aligned}$$

So $c^2=16$.

Next, we solve for b^2 using the equation $c^2=a^2-b^2$.

$$\begin{aligned}c^2&=a^2-b^2\\16&=25-b^2\\b^2&=9\end{aligned}$$

Finally, we substitute the values found for h, k, a^2, and b^2 into the standard form equation for an ellipse:

$$\frac{(x+2)^2}{9}+\frac{(y+3)^2}{25}=1$$

Exercise 8.1.2

What is the standard form equation of the ellipse that has vertices $(-3,3)$ and $(5,3)$ and foci $(1-2\sqrt{3},3)$ and $(1+2\sqrt{3},3)$?

Answer

$$\frac{(x-1)^2}{16}+\frac{(y-3)^2}{4}=1$$

Graphing Ellipses Centered at the Origin

Just as we can write the equation for an ellipse given its graph, we can graph an ellipse given its equation. To graph ellipses centered at the origin, we use the standard form

$$\frac{x^2}{a^2}+\frac{y^2}{b^2}=1, a>b \text{ for horizontal ellipses}$$

and

$$\frac{x^2}{b^2}+\frac{y^2}{a^2}=1, a>b \text{ for vertical ellipses}$$

How to: Given the standard form of an equation for an ellipse centered at $(0,0)$, sketch the graph.

1. Use the standard forms of the equations of an ellipse to determine the major axis, vertices, co-vertices, and foci.
   - If the equation is in the form $\frac{x^2}{a^2}+\frac{y^2}{b^2}=1$, where $a>b$, then
     - the major axis is the x-axis
     - the coordinates of the vertices are $(\pm a,0)$
     - the coordinates of the co-vertices are $(0,\pm b)$
     - the coordinates of the foci are $(\pm c,0)$
   - If the equation is in the form $x^2b^2+y^2a^2=1$, where $a>b$, then
     - the major axis is the y-axis
     - the coordinates of the vertices are $(0,\pm a)$
     - the coordinates of the co-vertices are $(\pm b,0)$
     - the coordinates of the foci are $(0,\pm c)$
2. Solve for c using the equation $c^2=a^2-b^2$.
3. Plot the center, vertices, co-vertices, and foci in the coordinate plane, and draw a smooth curve to form the ellipse.

Example 8.1.3: Graphing an Ellipse Centered at the Origin

Graph the ellipse given by the equation, $\frac{x^2}{9}+\frac{y^2}{25}=1$. Identify and label the center, vertices, co-vertices, and foci.

Solution

First, we determine the position of the major axis. Because $25>9$, the major axis is on the y-axis. Therefore, the equation is in the form $\frac{x^2}{b^2}+\frac{y^2}{a^2}=1$, where $b^2=9$ and $a^2=25$. It follows that:

- the center of the ellipse is $(0,0)$
- the coordinates of the vertices are $(0,\pm a)=(0,\pm\sqrt{25})=(0,\pm5)$
- the coordinates of the co-vertices are $(\pm b,0)=(\pm9,0)=(\pm3,0)$
- the coordinates of the foci are $(0,\pm c)$, where $c^2=a^2-b^2$ Solving for c, we have:

$$\begin{aligned}c&=\pm\sqrt{a^2-b^2}\\&=\pm\sqrt{25-9}\\&=\pm\sqrt{16}\\&=\pm4\end{aligned}$$

Therefore, the coordinates of the foci are $(0,\pm4)$.

Next, we plot and label the center, vertices, co-vertices, and foci, and draw a smooth curve to form the ellipse. See Figure 8.1.8.

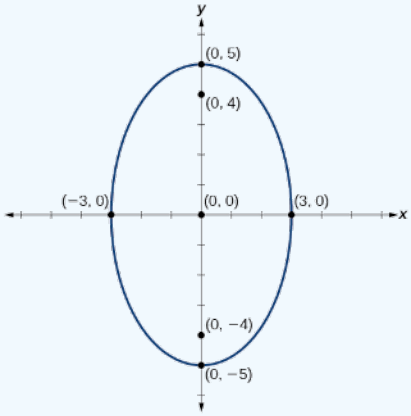

Figure 8.1.8

? Exercise 8.1.3

Graph the ellipse given by the equation $\frac{x^2}{36}+\frac{y^2}{4}=1$. Identify and label the center, vertices, co-vertices, and foci.

Answer

center: $(0,0)$; vertices: $(\pm 6,0)$; co-vertices: $(0,\pm 2)$; foci: $(\pm 4\sqrt{2},0)$

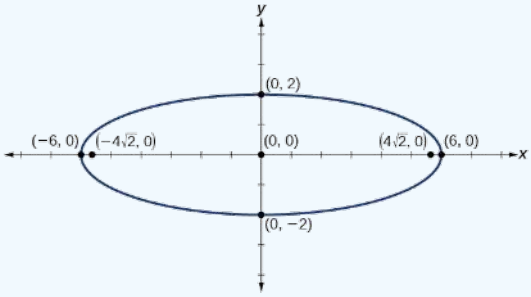

Figure 8.1.9

✓ Example 8.1.4: Graphing an Ellipse Centered at the Origin from an Equation Not in Standard Form

Graph the ellipse given by the equation $4x^2+25y^2=100$. Rewrite the equation in standard form. Then identify and label the center, vertices, co-vertices, and foci.

Solution

First, use algebra to rewrite the equation in standard form.

$$\begin{aligned} 4x^2+25y^2 &= 100 \\ \frac{4x^2}{100}+\frac{25y^2}{100} &= \frac{100}{100} \\ \frac{x^2}{25}+\frac{y^2}{4} &= 1 \end{aligned}$$

Next, we determine the position of the major axis. Because $25>4$, the major axis is on the x-axis. Therefore, the equation is in the form $\frac{x^2}{a^2}+\frac{y^2}{b^2}=1$, where $a^2=25$ and $b^2=4$. It follows that:

- the center of the ellipse is $(0,0)$
- the coordinates of the vertices are $(\pm a,0)=(\pm\sqrt{25},0)=(\pm 5,0)$
- the coordinates of the co-vertices are $(0,\pm b)=(0,\pm\sqrt{4})=(0,\pm 2)$
- the coordinates of the foci are $(\pm c,0)$, where $c^2=a^2-b^2$. Solving for c, we have:

$$\begin{aligned} c &= \pm\sqrt{a^2-b^2} \\ &= \pm\sqrt{25-4} \\ &= \pm\sqrt{21} \end{aligned}$$

Therefore the coordinates of the foci are $(\pm\sqrt{21},0)$.

Next, we plot and label the center, vertices, co-vertices, and foci, and draw a smooth curve to form the ellipse.

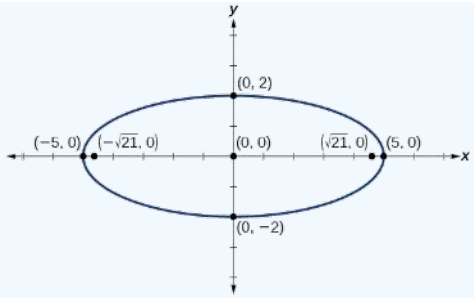

Figure 8.1.10

? Exercise 8.1.4

Graph the ellipse given by the equation $49x^2+16y^2=784$. Rewrite the equation in standard form. Then identify and label the center, vertices, co-vertices, and foci.

Answer

Standard form: $\frac{x^2}{16}+\frac{y^2}{49}=1$; center: $(0,0)$; vertices: $(0,\pm 7)$; co-vertices: $(\pm 4,0)$; foci: $(0,\pm\sqrt{33})$

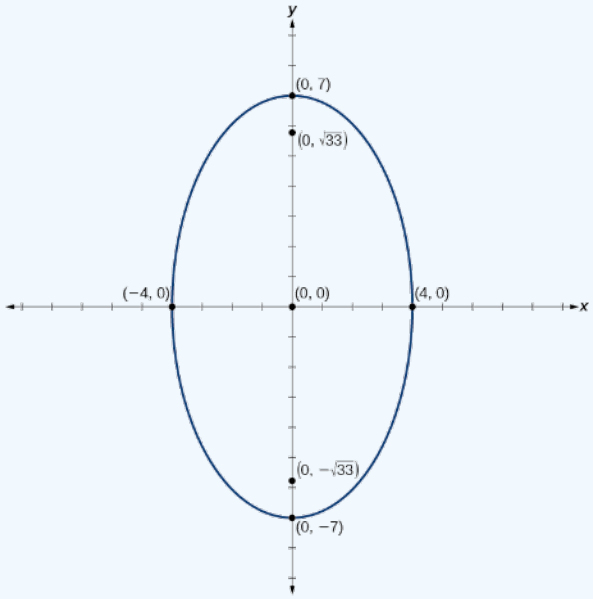

Figure 8.1.11

Graphing Ellipses Not Centered at the Origin

When an **ellipse** is not centered at the origin, we can still use the standard forms to find the key features of the graph. When the ellipse is centered at some point, (h,k),we use the standard forms $\frac{(x-h)^2}{a^2}+\frac{(y-k)^2}{b^2}=1$, $a>b$ for horizontal ellipses and $\frac{(x-h)^2}{b^2}+\frac{(y-k)^2}{a^2}=1$, $a>b$ for vertical ellipses. From these standard equations, we can easily determine the center, vertices, co-vertices, foci, and positions of the major and minor axes.

How to: Given the standard form of an equation for an ellipse centered at (h,k), sketch the graph.

1. Use the standard forms of the equations of an ellipse to determine the center, position of the major axis, vertices, co-vertices, and foci.
   - If the equation is in the form $\frac{(x-h)^2}{a^2}+\frac{(y-k)^2}{b^2}=1$, where $a>b$, then
     - the center is (h,k)
     - the major axis is parallel to the x-axis
     - the coordinates of the vertices are $(h\pm a,k)$
     - the coordinates of the co-vertices are $(h,k\pm b)$
     - the coordinates of the foci are $(h\pm c,k)$
   - If the equation is in the form $\frac{(x-h)^2}{b^2}+\frac{(y-k)^2}{a^2}=1$, where $a>b$, then
     - the center is (h,k)
     - the major axis is parallel to the y-axis
     - the coordinates of the vertices are $(h,k\pm a)$
     - the coordinates of the co-vertices are $(h\pm b,k)$
     - the coordinates of the foci are $(h,k\pm c)$
2. Solve for c using the equation $c^2=a^2-b^2$.
3. Plot the center, vertices, co-vertices, and foci in the coordinate plane, and draw a smooth curve to form the ellipse.

Example 8.1.5: Graphing an Ellipse Centered at (h, k)

Graph the ellipse given by the equation, $\frac{(x+2)^2}{4}+\frac{(y-5)^2}{9}=1$. Identify and label the center, vertices, co-vertices, and foci.

Solution

First, we determine the position of the major axis. Because $9>4$, the major axis is parallel to the y-axis. Therefore, the equation is in the form $\frac{(x-h)^2}{b^2}+\frac{(y-k)^2}{a^2}=1$, where $b^2=4$ and $a^2=9$. It follows that:

- the center of the ellipse is $(h, k)=(-2,5)$
- the coordinates of the vertices are $(h, k \pm a)=(-2,5 \pm \sqrt{9})=(-2,5 \pm 3)$, or $(-2,2)$ and $(-2,8)$
- the coordinates of the co-vertices are $(h \pm b, k)=(-2 \pm \sqrt{4}, 5)=(-2 \pm 2,5)$, or $(-4,5)$ and $(0,5)$
- the coordinates of the foci are $(h, k \pm c)$, where $c^2=a^2-b^2$. Solving for c,we have:

$$\begin{aligned} c &= \pm\sqrt{a^2-b^2} \\ &= \pm\sqrt{9-4} \\ &= \pm\sqrt{5} \end{aligned}$$

Therefore, the coordinates of the foci are $(-2,5-\sqrt{5})$ and $(-2,5+\sqrt{5})$.

Next, we plot and label the center, vertices, co-vertices, and foci, and draw a smooth curve to form the ellipse.

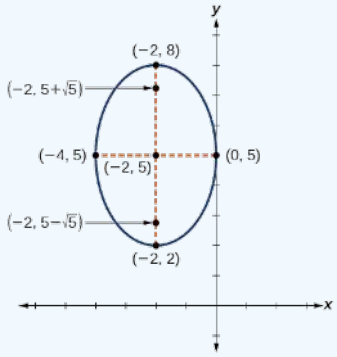

Figure 8.1.12

Exercise 8.1.5

Graph the ellipse given by the equation $\frac{(x-4)^2}{36}+\frac{(y-2)^2}{20}=1$. Identify and label the center, vertices, co-vertices, and foci.

Answer

Center: $(4,2)$; vertices: $(-2,2)$ and $(10,2)$; co-vertices: $(4,2-2\sqrt{5})$ and $(4,2+2\sqrt{5})$; foci: $(0,2)$ and $(8,2)$

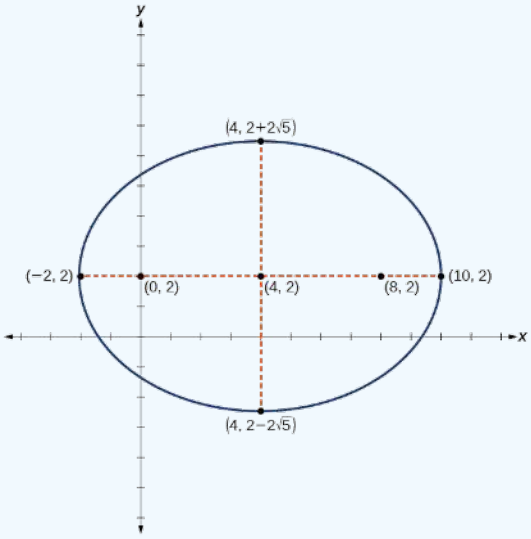

Figure 8.1.13

How to: Given the general form of an equation for an ellipse centered at (h, k), express the equation in standard form.

1. Recognize that an ellipse described by an equation in the form $ax^2+by^2+cx+dy+e=0$ is in general form.
2. Rearrange the equation by grouping terms that contain the same variable. Move the constant term to the opposite side of the equation.
3. Factor out the coefficients of the x^2 and y^2 terms in preparation for completing the square.
4. Complete the square for each variable to rewrite the equation in the form of the sum of multiples of two binomials squared set equal to a constant, $m_1(x-h)^2+m_2(y-k)^2=m_3$, where m_1, m_2,and m_3 are constants.
5. Divide both sides of the equation by the constant term to express the equation in standard form.

Example 8.1.6: Graphing an Ellipse Centered at (h, k) by First Writing It in Standard Form

Graph the ellipse given by the equation $4x^2+9y^2-40x+36y+100=0$. Identify and label the center, vertices, co-vertices, and foci.

Solution

We must begin by rewriting the equation in standard form.

$$4x^2+9y^2-40x+36y+100=0$$

Group terms that contain the same variable, and move the constant to the opposite side of the equation.

$$(4x^2-40x)+(9y^2+36y)=-100$$

Factor out the coefficients of the squared terms.

$$4(x^2-10x)+9(y^2+4y)=-100$$

Complete the square twice. Remember to balance the equation by adding the same constants to each side.

$$4(x^2-10x+25)+9(y^2+4y+4)=-100+100+36$$

Rewrite as perfect squares.

$$4(x-5)^2+9(y+2)^2=36$$

Divide both sides by the constant term to place the equation in standard form.

$$\frac{(x-5)^2}{9}+\frac{(y+2)^2}{4}=1$$

Now that the equation is in standard form, we can determine the position of the major axis. Because $9>4$, the major axis is parallel to the x-axis. Therefore, the equation is in the form $\frac{(x-h)^2}{a^2}+\frac{(y-k)^2}{b^2}=1$, where $a^2=9$ and $b^2=4$. It follows that:

- the center of the ellipse is $(h, k)=(5,-2)$
- the coordinates of the vertices are $(h\pm a, k)=(5\pm\sqrt{9},-2)=(5\pm 3,-2)$, or $(2,-2)$ and $(8,-2)$
- the coordinates of the co-vertices are $(h, k\pm b)=(5,-2\pm\sqrt{4})=(5,-2\pm 2)$, or $(5,-4)$ and $(5,0)$
- the coordinates of the foci are $(h\pm c, k)$, where $c^2=a^2-b^2$. Solving for c, we have:

$$\begin{aligned} c &= \pm\sqrt{a^2-b^2} \\ &= \pm\sqrt{9-4} \\ &= \pm\sqrt{5} \end{aligned}$$

Therefore, the coordinates of the foci are $(5-\sqrt{5},-2)$ and $(5+\sqrt{5},-2)$.

Next we plot and label the center, vertices, co-vertices, and foci, and draw a smooth curve to form the ellipse as shown in Figure 8.1.14

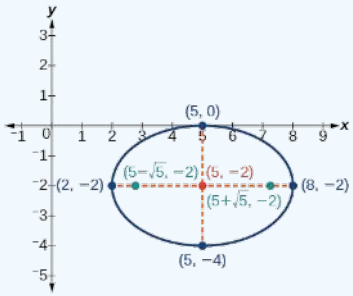

Figure 8.1.14

Exercise 8.1.6

Express the equation of the ellipse given in standard form. Identify the center, vertices, co-vertices, and foci of the ellipse.

$$4x^2+y^2-24x+2y+21=0$$

Answer

$\frac{(x-3)^2}{4}+\frac{(y+1)^2}{16}=1$; center: $(3,-1)$; vertices: $(3,-5)$ and $(3,3)$; co-vertices: $(1,-1)$ and $(5,-1)$; foci: $(3,-1-2\sqrt{3})$ and $(3,-1+2\sqrt{3})$

Solving Applied Problems Involving Ellipses

Many real-world situations can be represented by ellipses, including orbits of planets, satellites, moons and comets, and shapes of boat keels, rudders, and some airplane wings. A medical device called a lithotripter uses elliptical reflectors to break up kidney stones by generating sound waves. Some buildings, called whispering chambers, are designed with elliptical domes so that a person whispering at one focus can easily be heard by someone standing at the other focus. This occurs because of the acoustic properties of an ellipse. When a sound wave originates at one focus of a whispering chamber, the sound wave will be reflected off the elliptical dome and back to the other focus (Figure 8.1.15). In the whisper chamber at the Museum of Science and Industry in Chicago, two people standing at the foci—about 43 feet apart—can hear each other whisper.

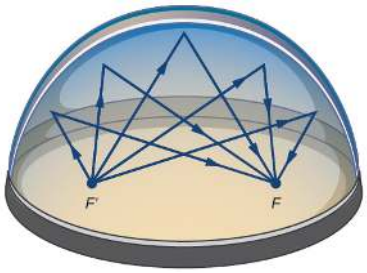

Figure 8.1.15: Sound waves are reflected between foci in an elliptical room, called a whispering chamber.

Example 8.1.7: Locating the Foci of a Whispering Chamber

The Statuary Hall in the Capitol Building in Washington, D.C. is a whispering chamber. Its dimensions are 46 feet wide by 96 feet long as shown in Figure 8.1.16

a. What is the standard form of the equation of the ellipse representing the outline of the room? ***Hint:*** assume a horizontal ellipse, and let the center of the room be the point $(0, 0)$.
b. If two senators standing at the foci of this room can hear each other whisper, how far apart are the senators? Round to the nearest foot.

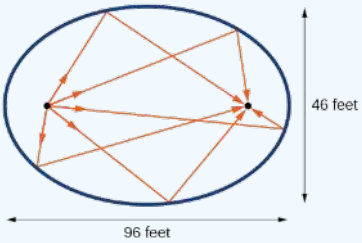

Figure 8.1.16

Solution

a. We are assuming a horizontal ellipse with center $(0, 0)$, so we need to find an equation of the form $\frac{x^2}{a^2}+\frac{y^2}{b^2}=1$, where $a > b$. We know that the length of the major axis, $2a$, is longer than the length of the minor axis, $2b$. So the length of the room, 96, is represented by the major axis, and the width of the room, 46, is represented by the minor axis.

Therefore, the equation of the ellipse is \[(dfrac{x^2}{2304}+\dfrac{y^2}{529}=1\)

- Solving for a, we have $2a = 96$, so $a = 48$, and $a^2 = 2304$.
- Solving for b, we have $2b = 46$, so $b = 23$, and $b^2 = 529$.

b. To find the distance between the senators, we must find the distance between the foci, $(\pm c, 0)$, where $c^2 = a^2 - b^2$. Solving for c,we have:

$$\begin{aligned} c^2 &= a^2 - b^2 \\ c^2 &= 2304 - 529 \quad \text{Substitute using the values found in part } (a) \\ c &= \pm\sqrt{2304 - 529} \quad \text{Take the square root of both sides.} \\ c &= \pm\sqrt{1775} \quad \text{Subtract.} \\ c &\approx \pm 42 \quad \text{Round to the nearest foot.} \end{aligned}$$

The points $(\pm 42, 0)$ represent the foci. Thus, the distance between the senators is $2(42) = 84$ feet.

Exercise 8.1.7

Suppose a whispering chamber is 480 feet long and 320 feet wide.

a. What is the standard form of the equation of the ellipse representing the room? Hint: assume a horizontal ellipse, and let the center of the room be the point $(0, 0)$.
b. If two people are standing at the foci of this room and can hear each other whisper, how far apart are the people? Round to the nearest foot.

Answer a

$$\frac{x^2}{57,600}+\frac{y^2}{25,600}=1$$

Answer b

The people are standing 358 feet apart.

Media

Access these online resources for additional instruction and practice with ellipses.

- Conic Sections: The Ellipse
- Graph an Ellipse with Center at the Origin
- Graph an Ellipse with Center Not at the Origin

Key Equations

Horizontal ellipse, center at origin	$\frac{x^2}{a^2}+\frac{y^2}{b^2}=1\text{ , }a>b$
Vertical ellipse, center at origin	$\frac{x^2}{b^2}+\frac{y^2}{a^2}=1\text{ , }a>b$
Horizontal ellipse, center (h, k)	$\frac{(x-h)^2}{a^2}+\frac{(y-k)^2}{b^2}=1\text{ , }a>b$
Vertical ellipse, center (h, k)	$\frac{(x-h)^2}{b^2}+\frac{(y-k)^2}{a^2}=1\text{ , }a>b$

Key Concepts

- An ellipse is the set of all points (x, y) in a plane such that the sum of their distances from two fixed points is a constant. Each fixed point is called a focus (plural: foci).
- When given the coordinates of the foci and vertices of an ellipse, we can write the equation of the ellipse in standard form. See Example $8.1.1$ and Example $8.1.2$.
- When given an equation for an ellipse centered at the origin in standard form, we can identify its vertices, co-vertices, foci, and the lengths and positions of the major and minor axes in order to graph the ellipse. See Example $8.1.3$ and Example $8.1.4$.
- When given the equation for an ellipse centered at some point other than the origin, we can identify its key features and graph the ellipse. See Example $8.1.5$ and Example $8.1.6$.
- Real-world situations can be modeled using the standard equations of ellipses and then evaluated to find key features, such as lengths of axes and distance between foci. See Example $8.1.7$.

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8.2: The Hyperbola

Learning Objectives

- Locate a hyperbola's vertices and foci.
- Write equations of hyperbolas in standard form.
- Graph hyperbolas centered at the origin.
- Graph hyperbolas not centered at the origin.
- Solve applied problems involving hyperbolas.

What do paths of comets, supersonic booms, ancient Grecian pillars, and natural draft cooling towers have in common? They can all be modeled by the same type of **conic**. For instance, when something moves faster than the speed of sound, a shock wave in the form of a cone is created. A portion of a conic is formed when the wave intersects the ground, resulting in a sonic boom (Figure 8.2.1).

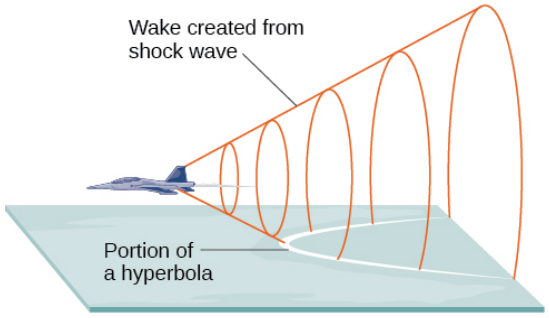

Figure 8.2.1: A shock wave intersecting the ground forms a portion of a conic and results in a sonic boom.

Most people are familiar with the sonic boom created by supersonic aircraft, but humans were breaking the sound barrier long before the first supersonic flight. The crack of a whip occurs because the tip is exceeding the speed of sound. The bullets shot from many firearms also break the sound barrier, although the bang of the gun usually supersedes the sound of the sonic boom.

Locating the Vertices and Foci of a Hyperbola

In analytic geometry, a **hyperbola** is a conic section formed by intersecting a right circular cone with a plane at an angle such that both halves of the cone are intersected. This intersection produces two separate unbounded curves that are mirror images of each other (Figure 8.2.2).

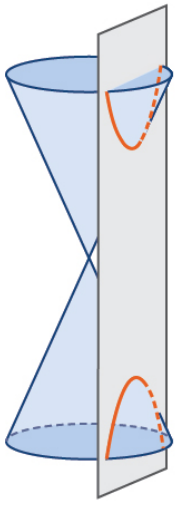

Figure 8.2.2: A hyperbola

Like the ellipse, the hyperbola can also be defined as a set of points in the coordinate plane. A hyperbola is the set of all points (x, y) in a plane such that the difference of the distances between (x, y) and the foci is a positive constant.

Notice that the definition of a hyperbola is very similar to that of an ellipse. The distinction is that the hyperbola is defined in terms of the *difference* of two distances, whereas the ellipse is defined in terms of the *sum* of two distances.

As with the ellipse, every hyperbola has two **axes of symmetry**. The **transverse axis** is a line segment that passes through the center of the hyperbola and has vertices as its endpoints. The foci lie on the line that contains the transverse axis. The **conjugate axis** is perpendicular to

the transverse axis and has the co-vertices as its endpoints. The **center of a hyperbola** is the midpoint of both the transverse and conjugate axes, where they intersect. Every hyperbola also has two **asymptotes** that pass through its center. As a hyperbola recedes from the center, its branches approach these asymptotes. The **central rectangle** of the hyperbola is centered at the origin with sides that pass through each vertex and co-vertex; it is a useful tool for graphing the hyperbola and its asymptotes. To sketch the asymptotes of the hyperbola, simply sketch and extend the diagonals of the central rectangle (Figure 8.2.3).

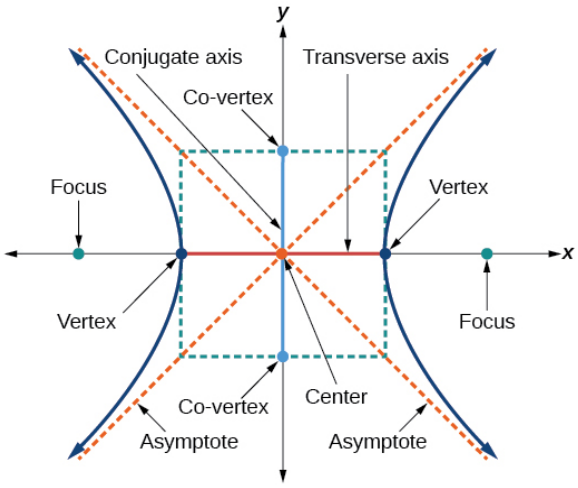

Figure 8.2.3: Key features of the hyperbola

In this section, we will limit our discussion to hyperbolas that are positioned vertically or horizontally in the coordinate plane; the axes will either lie on or be parallel to the x- and y-axes. We will consider two cases: those that are centered at the origin, and those that are centered at a point other than the origin.

Deriving the Equation of an Ellipse Centered at the Origin

Let $(-c, 0)$ and $(c, 0)$ be the foci of a hyperbola centered at the origin. The hyperbola is the set of all points (x, y) such that the difference of the distances from (x, y) to the foci is constant. See Figure 8.2.4.

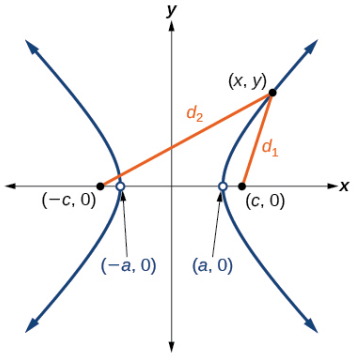

Figure 8.2.4

If $(a, 0)$ is a vertex of the hyperbola, the distance from $(-c, 0)$ to $(a, 0)$ is $a-(-c)=a+c$. The distance from $(c, 0)$ to $(a, 0)$ is $c-a$. The sum of the distances from the foci to the vertex is

$$(a+c)-(c-a)=2a$$

If (x, y) is a point on the hyperbola, we can define the following variables:

$$d_2 = \text{the distance from } (-c, 0) \text{ to } (x, y)$$

$$d_1 = \text{the distance from } (c, 0) \text{ to } (x, y)$$

By definition of a hyperbola, d_2-d_1 is constant for any point (x, y) on the hyperbola. We know that the difference of these distances is $2a$ for the vertex $(a, 0)$. It follows that $d_2-d_1=2a$ for any point on the hyperbola. As with the derivation of the equation of an ellipse, we will begin by applying the **distance formula**. The rest of the derivation is algebraic. Compare this derivation with the one from the previous section for ellipses.

$$
\begin{aligned}
d_2 - d_1 &= 2a \\
\sqrt{(x-(-c))^2+(y-0)^2} - \sqrt{(x-c)^2+(y-0)^2} &= 2a \qquad \text{Distance Formula} \\
\sqrt{(x+c)^2+y^2} - \sqrt{(x-c)^2+y^2} &= 2a \qquad \text{Simplify expressions.} \\
\sqrt{(x+c)^2+y^2} &= 2a + \sqrt{(x-c)^2+y^2} \qquad \text{Move radical to opposite side.} \\
(x+c)^2+y^2 &= \left(2a + \sqrt{(x-c)^2+y^2}\right)^2 \qquad \text{Square both sides.} \\
x^2+2cx+c^2+y^2 &= 4a^2 + 4a\sqrt{(x-c)^2+y^2} + (x-c)^2 + y^2 \qquad \text{Expand the squares.} \\
x^2+2cx+c^2+y^2 &= 4a^2 + 4a\sqrt{(x-c)^2+y^2} + x^2 - 2cx + c^2 + y^2 \qquad \text{Expand remaining square.} \\
2cx &= 4a^2 + 4a\sqrt{(x-c)^2+y^2} - 2cx \qquad \text{Combine like terms.} \\
4cx - 4a^2 &= 4a\sqrt{(x-c)^2+y^2} \qquad \text{Isolate the radical.} \\
cx - a^2 &= a\sqrt{(x-c)^2+y^2} \qquad \text{Divide by 4.} \\
(cx-a^2)^2 &= a^2\left[\sqrt{(x-c)^2+y^2}\right]^2 \qquad \text{Square both sides.} \\
c^2x^2 - 2a^2cx + a^4 &= a^2(x^2 - 2cx + c^2 + y^2) \qquad \text{Expand the squares.} \\
c^2x^2 - 2a^2cx + a^4 &= a^2x^2 - 2a^2cx + a^2c^2 + a^2y^2 \qquad \text{Distribute } a^2 \\
a^4 + c^2x^2 &= a^2x^2 + a^2c^2 + a^2y^2 \qquad \text{Combine like terms.} \\
c^2x^2 - a^2x^2 - a^2y^2 &= a^2c^2 - a^4 \qquad \text{Rearrange terms.} \\
x^2(c^2-a^2) - a^2y^2 &= a^2(c^2-a^2) \qquad \text{Factor common terms.} \\
x^2b^2 - a^2y^2 &= a^2b^2 \qquad \text{Set } b^2 = c^2 - a^2 \\
\cdot \frac{x^2b^2}{a^2b^2} - \frac{a^2y^2}{a^2b^2} &= \frac{a^2b^2}{a^2b^2} \qquad \text{Divide both sides by } a^2b^2 \\
\frac{x^2}{a^2} - \frac{y^2}{b^2} &= 1
\end{aligned}
$$

This equation defines a hyperbola centered at the origin with vertices $(\pm a, 0)$ and co-vertices $(0, \pm b)$.

STANDARD FORMS OF THE EQUATION OF A HYPERBOLA WITH CENTER $(0,0)$

The standard form of the equation of a hyperbola with center $(0,0)$ and transverse axis on the x-axis is

$$\frac{x^2}{a^2} - \frac{y^2}{b^2} = 1$$

where

- the length of the transverse axis is $2a$
- the coordinates of the vertices are $(\pm a, 0)$
- the length of the conjugate axis is $2b$
- the coordinates of the co-vertices are $(0, \pm b)$
- the distance between the foci is $2c$, where $c^2 = a^2 + b^2$
- the coordinates of the foci are $(\pm c, 0)$
- the equations of the asymptotes are $y = \pm \frac{b}{a}x$

See Figure $8.2.5a$

The standard form of the equation of a hyperbola with center $(0,0)$ and transverse axis on the y-axis is

$$\frac{y^2}{a^2} - \frac{x^2}{b^2} = 1$$

where

- the length of the transverse axis is $2a$
- the coordinates of the vertices are $(0, \pm a)$
- the length of the conjugate axis is $2b$
- the coordinates of the co-vertices are $(\pm b, 0)$
- the distance between the foci is $2c$, where $c^2 = a^2 + b^2$

- the coordinates of the foci are $(0, \pm c)$
- the equations of the asymptotes are $y = \pm \frac{a}{b}x$

See Figure $8.2.5b$

Note that the vertices, co-vertices, and foci are related by the equation $c^2 = a^2 + b^2$. When we are given the equation of a hyperbola, we can use this relationship to identify its vertices and foci.

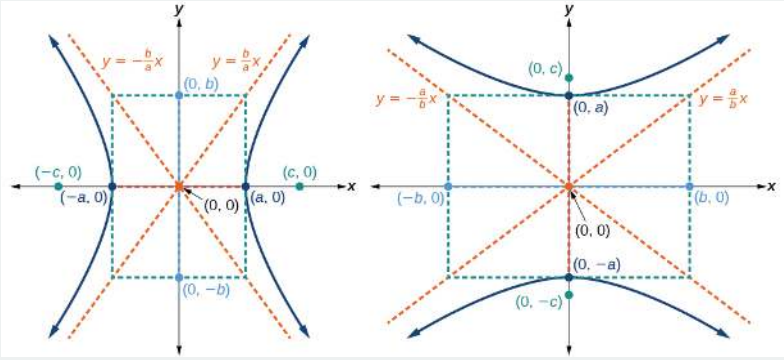

Figure 8.2.5: (a) Horizontal hyperbola with center $(0, 0)$ (b) Vertical hyperbola with center $(0, 0)$

How to: Given the equation of a hyperbola in standard form, locate its vertices and foci

1. Determine whether the transverse axis lies on the x- or y-axis. Notice that a^2 is always under the variable with the positive coefficient. So, if you set the other variable equal to zero, you can easily find the intercepts. In the case where the hyperbola is centered at the origin, the intercepts coincide with the vertices.
   - If the equation has the form $\frac{x^2}{a^2} - \frac{y^2}{b^2} = 1$, then the transverse axis lies on the x-axis. The vertices are located at $(\pm a, 0)$, and the foci are located at $(\pm c, 0)$.
   - If the equation has the form $\frac{y^2}{a^2} - \frac{x^2}{b^2} = 1$, then the transverse axis lies on the y-axis. The vertices are located at $(0, \pm a)$, and the foci are located at $(0, \pm c)$.
2. Solve for a using the equation $a = \sqrt{a^2}$.
3. Solve for c using the equation $c = \sqrt{a^2 + b^2}$.

Example 8.2.1: Locating a Hyperbola's Vertices and Foci

Identify the vertices and foci of the hyperbola with equation $\frac{y^2}{49} - \frac{x^2}{32} = 1$.

Solution

The equation has the form $\frac{y^2}{a^2} - \frac{x^2}{b^2} = 1$, so the transverse axis lies on the y-axis. The hyperbola is centered at the origin, so the vertices serve as the y-intercepts of the graph. To find the vertices, set $x = 0$, and solve for y.

$$\begin{aligned} 1 &= \frac{y^2}{49} - \frac{x^2}{32} \\ 1 &= \frac{y^2}{49} - \frac{0^2}{32} \\ 1 &= \frac{y^2}{49} \\ y^2 &= 49 \\ y &= \pm\sqrt{49} \\ &= \pm 7 \end{aligned}$$

The foci are located at $(0, \pm c)$. Solving for c,

$$\begin{aligned} c &= \sqrt{a^2+b^2} \\ &= \sqrt{49+32} \\ &= \sqrt{81} \\ &= 9 \end{aligned}$$

Therefore, the vertices are located at $(0, \pm 7)$, and the foci are located at $(0, 9)$.

? Exercise 8.2.1

Identify the vertices and foci of the hyperbola with equation $\frac{x^2}{9} - \frac{y^2}{25} = 1$.

Answer

Vertices: $(\pm 3, 0)$; Foci: $(\pm\sqrt{34}, 0)$

Writing Equations of Hyperbolas in Standard Form

Just as with ellipses, writing the equation for a hyperbola in standard form allows us to calculate the key features: its center, vertices, co-vertices, foci, asymptotes, and the lengths and positions of the transverse and conjugate axes. Conversely, an equation for a hyperbola can be found given its key features. We begin by finding standard equations for hyperbolas centered at the origin. Then we will turn our attention to finding standard equations for hyperbolas centered at some point other than the origin.

Hyperbolas Centered at the Origin

Reviewing the standard forms given for hyperbolas centered at $(0, 0)$,we see that the vertices, co-vertices, and foci are related by the equation $c^2 = a^2 + b^2$. Note that this equation can also be rewritten as $b^2 = c^2 - a^2$. This relationship is used to write the equation for a hyperbola when given the coordinates of its foci and vertices.

How to: Given the vertices and foci of a hyperbola centered at $(0, 0)$, write its equation in standard form

1. Determine whether the transverse axis lies on the x- or y-axis.
   - If the given coordinates of the vertices and foci have the form $(\pm a, 0)$ and $(\pm c, 0)$, respectively, then the transverse axis is the x-axis. Use the standard form $\frac{x^2}{a^2} - \frac{y^2}{b^2} = 1$.
   - If the given coordinates of the vertices and foci have the form $(0, \pm a)$ and $(0, \pm c)$, respectively, then the transverse axis is the y-axis. Use the standard form $\frac{y^2}{a^2} - \frac{x^2}{b^2} = 1$.
2. Find b^2 using the equation $b^2 = c^2 - a^2$.
3. Substitute the values for a^2 and b^2 into the standard form of the equation determined in Step 1.

Example 8.2.2: Finding the Equation of a Hyperbola Centered at $(0, 0)$ Given its Foci and Vertices

What is the standard form equation of the hyperbola that has vertices $(\pm 6, 0)$ and foci $(\pm 2\sqrt{10}, 0)$?

Solution

The vertices and foci are on the x-axis. Thus, the equation for the hyperbola will have the form $\frac{x^2}{a^2} - \frac{y^2}{b^2} = 1$.

The vertices are $(\pm 6, 0)$, so $a = 6$ and $a^2 = 36$.

The foci are $(\pm 2\sqrt{10}, 0)$, so $c = 2\sqrt{10}$ and $c^2 = 40$.

Solving for b^2, we have

$$\begin{aligned} b^2 &= c^2 - a^2 \\ b^2 &= 40 - 36 \qquad \text{Substitute for } c^2 \text{ and } a^2 \\ b^2 &= 4 \qquad \text{Subtract.} \end{aligned}$$

Finally, we substitute $a^2 = 36$ and $b^2 = 4$ into the standard form of the equation, $\frac{x^2}{a^2} - \frac{y^2}{b^2} = 1$. The equation of the hyperbola is $\frac{x^2}{36} - \frac{y^2}{4} = 1$, as shown in Figure 8.2.6.

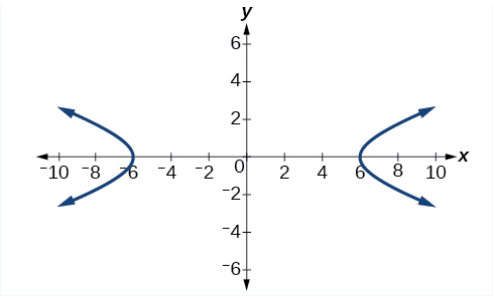

Figure 8.2.6

Exercise 8.2.2

What is the standard form equation of the hyperbola that has vertices $(0, \pm 2)$ and foci $(0, \pm 2\sqrt{5})$?

Answer

$$\frac{y^2}{4} - \frac{x^2}{16} = 1$$

Hyperbolas Not Centered at the Origin

Like the graphs for other equations, the graph of a hyperbola can be translated. If a hyperbola is translated h units horizontally and k units vertically, the center of the hyperbola will be (h, k). This translation results in the standard form of the equation we saw previously, with x replaced by $(x - h)$ and y replaced by $(y - k)$.

STANDARD FORMS OF THE EQUATION OF A HYPERBOLA WITH CENTER (H, K)

The standard form of the equation of a hyperbola with center (h, k) and transverse axis parallel to the x-axis is

$$\frac{(x-h)^2}{a^2} - \frac{(y-k)^2}{b^2} = 1 \tag{8.2.1}$$

where

- the length of the transverse axis is $2a$
- the coordinates of the vertices are $(h \pm a, k)$
- the length of the conjugate axis is $2b$
- the coordinates of the co-vertices are $(h, k \pm b)$
- the distance between the foci is $2c$, where $c^2 = a^2 + b^2$
- the coordinates of the foci are $(h \pm c, k)$

The asymptotes of the hyperbola coincide with the diagonals of the central rectangle. The length of the rectangle is $2a$ and its width is $2b$. The slopes of the diagonals are $\pm\frac{b}{a}$,and each diagonal passes through the center (h, k). Using the point-slope formula, it is simple to show that the equations of the asymptotes are $y = \pm\frac{b}{a}(x - h) + k$. See Figure 8.2.7a

The standard form of the equation of a hyperbola with center (h, k) and transverse axis parallel to the y-axis is

$$\frac{(y-k)^2}{a^2} - \frac{(x-h)^2}{b^2} = 1 \tag{8.2.2}$$

where

- the length of the transverse axis is $2a$
- the coordinates of the vertices are $(h, k \pm a)$
- the length of the conjugate axis is $2b$
- the coordinates of the co-vertices are $(h \pm b, k)$
- the distance between the foci is $2c$, where $c^2 = a^2 + b^2$
- the coordinates of the foci are $(h, k \pm c)$

Using the reasoning above, the equations of the asymptotes are $y = \pm\frac{a}{b}(x - h) + k$. See Figure 8.2.7b

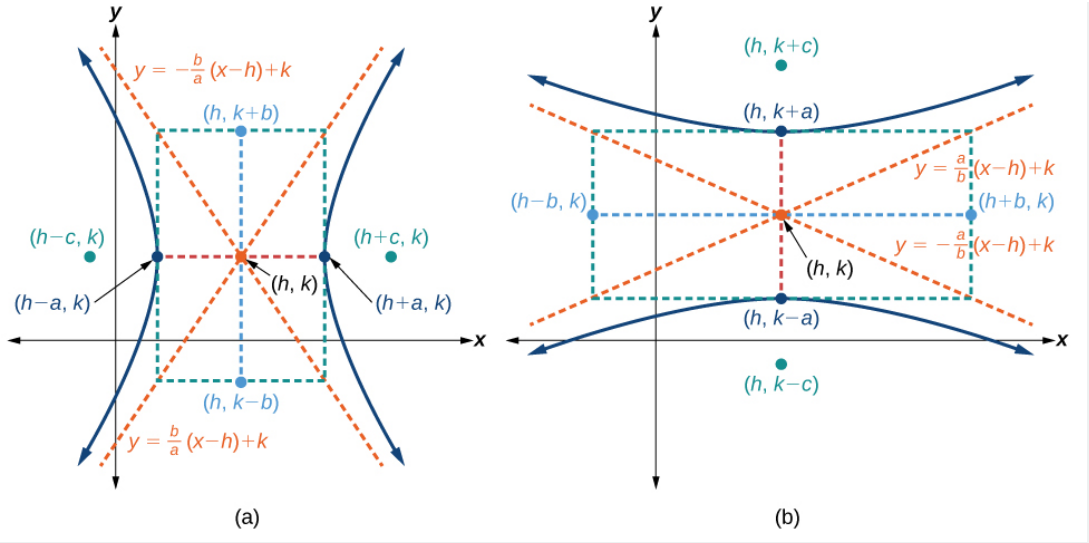

Figure 8.2.7: (a) Horizontal hyperbola with center (h, k) (b) Vertical hyperbola with center (h, k)

Like hyperbolas centered at the origin, hyperbolas centered at a point (h, k) have vertices, co-vertices, and foci that are related by the equation $c^2 = a^2 + b^2$. We can use this relationship along with the midpoint and distance formulas to find the standard equation of a hyperbola when the vertices and foci are given.

How to: Given the vertices and foci of a hyperbola centered at (h, k),write its equation in standard form

1. Determine whether the transverse axis is parallel to the x- or y-axis.
   - If the y-coordinates of the given vertices and foci are the same, then the transverse axis is parallel to the x-axis. Use the standard form $\frac{(x-h)^2}{a^2} - \frac{(y-k)^2}{b^2} = 1$.
   - If the x-coordinates of the given vertices and foci are the same, then the transverse axis is parallel to the y-axis. Use the standard form $\frac{(y-k)^2}{a^2} - \frac{(x-h)^2}{b^2} = 1$.
2. Identify the center of the hyperbola, (h, k),using the midpoint formula and the given coordinates for the vertices.
3. Find a^2 by solving for the length of the transverse axis, $2a$, which is the distance between the given vertices.
4. Find c^2 using h and k found in Step 2 along with the given coordinates for the foci.
5. Solve for b^2 using the equation $b^2 = c^2 - a^2$.
6. Substitute the values for h, k, a^2, and b^2 into the standard form of the equation determined in Step 1.

Example 8.2.3: Finding the Equation of a Hyperbola Centered at (h, k) Given its Foci and Vertices

What is the standard form equation of the **hyperbola** that has vertices at $(0, -2)$ and $(6, -2)$ and foci at $(-2, -2)$ and $(8, -2)$?

Solution

The y-coordinates of the vertices and foci are the same, so the transverse axis is parallel to the x-axis. Thus, the equation of the hyperbola will have the form

$$\frac{(x-h)^2}{a^2} - \frac{(y-k)^2}{b^2} = 1$$

First, we identify the center, (h, k). The center is halfway between the vertices $(0, -2)$ and $(6, -2)$. Applying the midpoint formula, we have

$$(h, k) = \left(\frac{0+6}{2}, \frac{-2+(-2)}{2}\right) = (3, -2)$$

Next, we find a^2. The length of the transverse axis, $2a$,is bounded by the vertices. So, we can find a^2 by finding the distance between the x-coordinates of the vertices.

$$\begin{aligned} 2a &= |0-6| \\ 2a &= 6 \\ a &= 3 \\ a^2 &= 9 \end{aligned}$$

Now we need to find c^2. The coordinates of the foci are $(h \pm c, k)$. So $(h-c, k) = (-2, -2)$ and $(h+c, k) = (8, -2)$. We can use the x-coordinate from either of these points to solve for c. Using the point $(8, -2)$, and substituting $h = 3$,

$$\begin{aligned} h+c &= 8 \\ 3+c &= 8 \\ c &= 5 \\ c^2 &= 25 \end{aligned}$$

Next, solve for b^2 using the equation $b^2 = c^2 - a^2$:

$$\begin{aligned} b^2 &= c^2 - a^2 \\ &= 25 - 9 \\ &= 16 \end{aligned}$$

Finally, substitute the values found for h, k, a^2,and b^2 into the standard form of the equation.

$$\frac{(x-3)^2}{9} - \frac{(y+2)^2}{16} = 1$$

? Exercise 8.2.3

What is the standard form equation of the hyperbola that has vertices $(1, -2)$ and $(1, 8)$ and foci $(1, -10)$ and $(1, 16)$?

Answer

$$\frac{(y-3)^2}{25} + \frac{(x-1)^2}{144} = 1$$

Graphing Hyperbolas Centered at the Origin

When we have an equation in standard form for a hyperbola centered at the origin, we can interpret its parts to identify the key features of its graph: the center, vertices, co-vertices, asymptotes, foci, and lengths and positions of the transverse and conjugate axes. To graph hyperbolas centered at the origin, we use the standard form $\frac{x^2}{a^2} - \frac{y^2}{b^2} = 1$ for horizontal hyperbolas and the standard form $\frac{y^2}{a^2} - \frac{x^2}{b^2} = 1$ for vertical hyperbolas.

How to: Given a standard form equation for a hyperbola centered at $(0, 0)$, sketch the graph

1. Determine which of the standard forms applies to the given equation.
2. Use the standard form identified in Step 1 to determine the position of the transverse axis; coordinates for the vertices, co-vertices, and foci; and the equations for the asymptotes.
   - If the equation is in the form $\frac{x^2}{a^2} - \frac{y^2}{b^2} = 1$, then
     - the transverse axis is on the x-axis
     - the coordinates of the vertices are \((\pm a,0)\0
     - the coordinates of the co-vertices are $(0, \pm b)$
     - the coordinates of the foci are $(\pm c, 0)$
     - the equations of the asymptotes are $y = \pm \frac{b}{a} x$
   - If the equation is in the form $\frac{y^2}{a^2} - \frac{x^2}{b^2} = 1$, then
     - the transverse axis is on the y-axis
     - the coordinates of the vertices are $(0, \pm a)$
     - the coordinates of the co-vertices are $(\pm b, 0)$
     - the coordinates of the foci are $(0, \pm c)$
     - the equations of the asymptotes are $y = \pm \frac{a}{b} x$

3. Solve for the coordinates of the foci using the equation $c = \pm\sqrt{a^2 + b^2}$.
4. Plot the vertices, co-vertices, foci, and asymptotes in the coordinate plane, and draw a smooth curve to form the hyperbola.

Example 8.2.4: Graphing a Hyperbola Centered at $(0, 0)$ Given an Equation in Standard Form

Graph the hyperbola given by the equation $\frac{y^2}{64} - \frac{x^2}{36} = 1$. Identify and label the vertices, co-vertices, foci, and asymptotes.

Solution

The standard form that applies to the given equation is $\frac{y^2}{a^2} - \frac{x^2}{b^2} = 1$. Thus, the transverse axis is on the y-axis

The coordinates of the vertices are $(0, \pm a) = (0, \pm\sqrt{64}) = (0, \pm 8)$

The coordinates of the co-vertices are $(\pm b, 0) = (\pm\sqrt{36}, 0) = (\pm 6, 0)$

The coordinates of the foci are $(0, \pm c)$, where $c = \pm\sqrt{a^2 + b^2}$. Solving for c, we have

$$c = \pm\sqrt{a^2 + b^2} = \pm\sqrt{64 + 36} = \pm\sqrt{100} = \pm 10$$

Therefore, the coordinates of the foci are $(0, \pm 10)$

The equations of the asymptotes are $y = \pm\frac{a}{b}x = \pm\frac{8}{6}x = \pm\frac{4}{3}x$

Plot and label the vertices and co-vertices, and then sketch the central rectangle. Sides of the rectangle are parallel to the axes and pass through the vertices and co-vertices. Sketch and extend the diagonals of the central rectangle to show the asymptotes. The central rectangle and asymptotes provide the framework needed to sketch an accurate graph of the hyperbola. Label the foci and asymptotes, and draw a smooth curve to form the hyperbola, as shown in Figure 8.2.8.

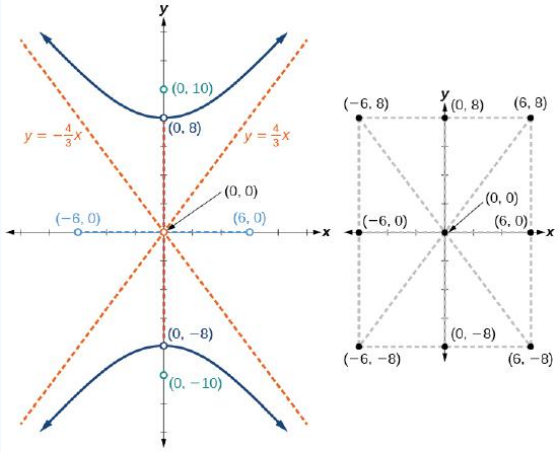

Figure 8.2.8

Exercise 8.2.4

Graph the hyperbola given by the equation $\frac{x^2}{144} - \frac{y^2}{81} = 1$. Identify and label the vertices, co-vertices, foci, and asymptotes.

Answer

vertices: $(\pm 12, 0)$; co-vertices: $(0, \pm 9)$; foci: $(\pm 15, 0)$; asymptotes: $y = \pm\frac{3}{4}x$;

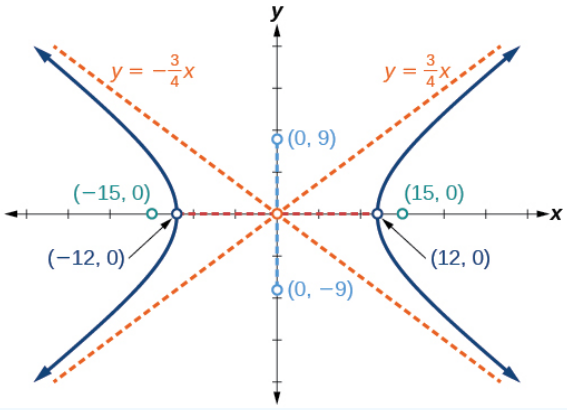

Figure 8.2.9

Graphing Hyperbolas Not Centered at the Origin

Graphing hyperbolas centered at a point (h, k) other than the origin is similar to graphing ellipses centered at a point other than the origin. We use the standard forms $\frac{(x-h)^2}{a^2} - \frac{(y-k)^2}{b^2} = 1$ for horizontal hyperbolas, and $\frac{(y-k)^2}{a^2} - \frac{(x-h)^2}{b^2} = 1$ for vertical hyperbolas. From these standard form equations we can easily calculate and plot key features of the graph: the coordinates of its center, vertices, co-vertices, and foci; the equations of its asymptotes; and the positions of the transverse and conjugate axes.

How to: Given a general form for a hyperbola centered at (h, k), sketch the graph

1. Convert the general form to that standard form. Determine which of the standard forms applies to the given equation.
2. Use the standard form identified in Step 1 to determine the position of the transverse axis; coordinates for the center, vertices, co-vertices, foci; and equations for the asymptotes.
   1. If the equation is in the form $\frac{(x-h)^2}{a^2} - \frac{(y-k)^2}{b^2} = 1$, then
      - the transverse axis is parallel to the x-axis
      - the center is (h, k)
      - the coordinates of the vertices are $(h \pm a, k)$
      - the coordinates of the co-vertices are $(h, k \pm b)$
      - the coordinates of the foci are $(h \pm c, k)$
      - the equations of the asymptotes are $y = \pm\frac{b}{a}(x-h) + k$
   2. If the equation is in the form $\frac{(y-k)^2}{a^2} - \frac{(x-h)^2}{b^2} = 1$, then
      - the transverse axis is parallel to the y-axis
      - the center is (h, k)
      - the coordinates of the vertices are $(h, k \pm a)$
      - the coordinates of the co-vertices are $(h \pm b, k)$
      - the coordinates of the foci are $(h, k \pm c)$
      - the equations of the asymptotes are $y = \pm\frac{a}{b}(x-h) + k$
3. Solve for the coordinates of the foci using the equation $c = \pm\sqrt{a^2 + b^2}$.
4. Plot the center, vertices, co-vertices, foci, and asymptotes in the coordinate plane and draw a smooth curve to form the hyperbola.

Example 8.2.5: Graphing a Hyperbola Centered at (h, k) Given an Equation in General Form

Graph the hyperbola given by the equation $9x^2 - 4y^2 - 36x - 40y - 388 = 0$. Identify and label the center, vertices, co-vertices, foci, and asymptotes.

Solution

Start by expressing the equation in standard form. Group terms that contain the same variable, and move the constant to the opposite side of the equation.

$$(9x^2-36x)-(4y^2+40y)=388$$

Factor the leading coefficient of each expression.

$$9(x^2-4x)-4(y^2+10y)=388$$

Complete the square twice. Remember to balance the equation by adding the same constants to each side.

$$9(x^2-4x+4)-4(y^2+10y+25)=388+36-100$$

Rewrite as perfect squares.

$$9(x-2)^2-4(y+5)^2=324$$

Divide both sides by the constant term to place the equation in standard form.

$$\frac{(x-2)^2}{36}-\frac{(y+5)^2}{81}=1$$

The standard form that applies to the given equation is $\frac{(x-h)^2}{a^2}-\frac{(y-k)^2}{b^2}=1$, where $a^2=36$ and $b^2=81$,or $a=6$ and $b=9$. Thus, the transverse axis is parallel to the x-axis. It follows that:

the center of the ellipse is $(h,k)=(2,-5)$

the coordinates of the vertices are $(h\pm a,k)=(2\pm 6,-5)$, or $(-4,-5)$ and $(8,-5)$

the coordinates of the co-vertices are $(h,k\pm b)=(2,-5\pm 9)$, or $(2,-14)$ and $(2,4)$

the coordinates of the foci are $(h\pm c,k)$, where $c=\pm\sqrt{a^2+b^2}$. Solving for c,we have

$$c=\pm\sqrt{36+81}=\pm\sqrt{117}=\pm 3\sqrt{13}$$

Therefore, the coordinates of the foci are $(2-3\sqrt{13},-5)$ and $(2+3\sqrt{13},-5)$.

The equations of the asymptotes are $y=\pm\frac{b}{a}(x-h)+k=\pm\frac{3}{2}(x-2)-5$.

Next, we plot and label the center, vertices, co-vertices, foci, and asymptotes and draw smooth curves to form the hyperbola, as shown in Figure 8.2.10

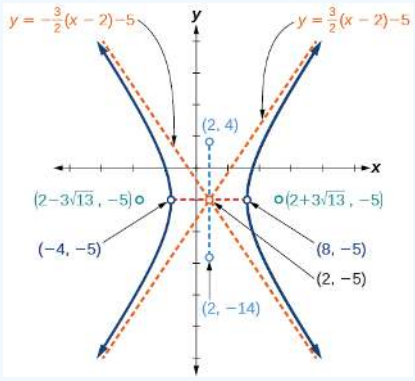

Figure 8.2.10

Exercise 8.2.5

Graph the hyperbola given by the standard form of an equation $\frac{(y+4)^2}{100}-\frac{(x-3)^2}{64}=1$. Identify and label the center, vertices, co-vertices, foci, and asymptotes.

Answer

center: $(3,-4)$; vertices: $(3,-14)$ and $(3,6)$; co-vertices: $(-5,-4)$; and $(11,-4)$; foci: $(3,-4-2\sqrt{41})$ and $(3,-4+2\sqrt{41})$; asymptotes: $y=\pm\frac{5}{4}(x-3)-4$

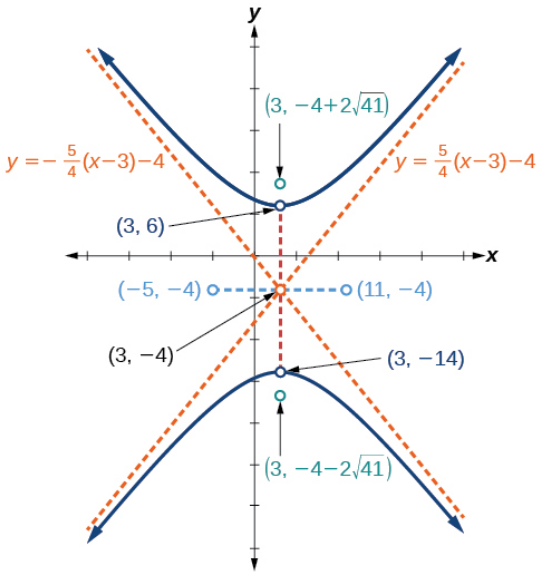

Figure 8.2.11

Solving Applied Problems Involving Hyperbolas

As we discussed at the beginning of this section, hyperbolas have real-world applications in many fields, such as astronomy, physics, engineering, and architecture. The design efficiency of hyperbolic cooling towers is particularly interesting. Cooling towers are used to transfer waste heat to the atmosphere and are often touted for their ability to generate power efficiently. Because of their hyperbolic form, these structures are able to withstand extreme winds while requiring less material than any other forms of their size and strength (Figure 8.2.12). For example, a 500-foot tower can be made of a reinforced concrete shell only 6 or 8 inches wide!

Figure 8.2.12: Cooling towers at the Drax power station in North Yorkshire, United Kingdom (credit: Les Haines, Flickr)

The first hyperbolic towers were designed in 1914 and were 35 meters high. Today, the tallest cooling towers are in France, standing a remarkable 170 meters tall. In Example 8.2.6 we will use the design layout of a cooling tower to find a hyperbolic equation that models its sides.

Example 8.2.6: Solving Applied Problems Involving Hyperbolas

The design layout of a cooling tower is shown in Figure 8.2.13. The tower stands 179.6 meters tall. The diameter of the top is 72 meters. At their closest, the sides of the tower are 60 meters apart.

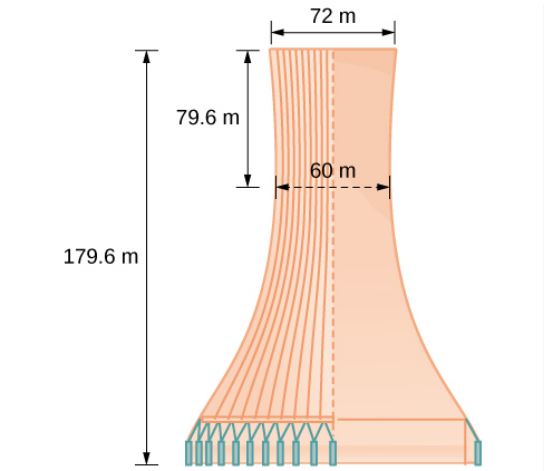

Figure 8.2.13: Project design for a natural draft cooling tower

Find the equation of the hyperbola that models the sides of the cooling tower. Assume that the center of the hyperbola—indicated by the intersection of dashed perpendicular lines in the figure—is the origin of the coordinate plane. Round final values to four decimal places.

Solution

We are assuming the center of the tower is at the origin, so we can use the standard form of a horizontal hyperbola centered at the origin: $\frac{x^2}{a^2}-\frac{y^2}{b^2}=1$, where the branches of the hyperbola form the sides of the cooling tower. We must find the values of a^2 and b^2 to complete the model.

First, we find a^2. Recall that the length of the transverse axis of a hyperbola is $2a$. This length is represented by the distance where the sides are closest, which is given as 65.3 meters. So, $2a=60$. Therefore, $a=30$ and $a^2=900$.

To solve for b^2,we need to substitute for x and y in our equation using a known point. To do this, we can use the dimensions of the tower to find some point (x,y) that lies on the hyperbola. We will use the top right corner of the tower to represent that point. Since the y-axis bisects the tower, our x-value can be represented by the radius of the top, or 36 meters. The y-value is represented by the distance from the origin to the top, which is given as 79.6 meters. Therefore,

$$\begin{aligned}\frac{x^2}{a^2}-\frac{y^2}{b^2}&=1 && \text{Standard form of horizontal hyperbola.}\\ b^2&=\frac{y^2}{\frac{x^2}{a^2}-1} && \text{Isolate } b^2\\ &=\frac{(79.6)^2}{\frac{(36)^2}{900}-1} && \text{Substitute for } a^2,\ x,\ \text{and } y\\ &\approx 14400.3636 && \text{Round to four decimal places}\end{aligned}$$

The sides of the tower can be modeled by the hyperbolic equation

$$\frac{x^2}{900}-\frac{y^2}{14400.3636}=1 \text{ ,or } \frac{x^2}{30^2}-\frac{y^2}{120.0015^2}=1$$

? Exercise 8.2.6

A design for a cooling tower project is shown in Figure 8.2.14 Find the equation of the hyperbola that models the sides of the cooling tower. Assume that the center of the hyperbola—indicated by the intersection of dashed perpendicular lines in the figure—is the origin of the coordinate plane. Round final values to four decimal places.

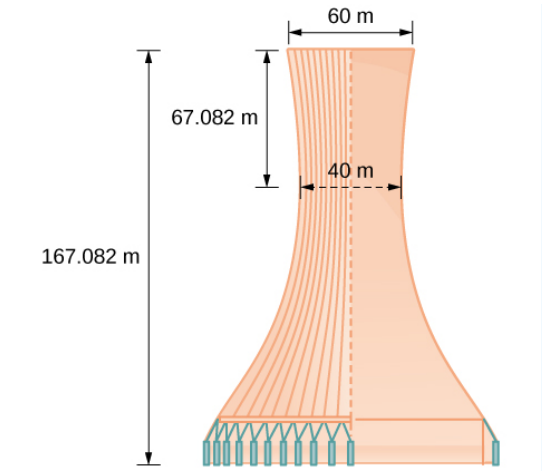

Figure 8.2.14

Answer

The sides of the tower can be modeled by the hyperbolic equation. $\frac{x^2}{400} - \frac{y^2}{3600} = 1$ or $\frac{x^2}{20^2} - \frac{y^2}{60^2} = 1$.

Media

Access these online resources for additional instruction and practice with hyperbolas.

- Conic Sections: The Hyperbola Part 1 of 2
- Conic Sections: The Hyperbola Part 2 of 2
- Graph a Hyperbola with Center at Origin
- Graph a Hyperbola with Center not at Origin

Key Equations

Hyperbola, center at origin, transverse axis on *x*-axis	$\frac{x^2}{a^2} - \frac{y^2}{b^2} = 1$
Hyperbola, center at origin, transverse axis on *y*-axis	$\frac{y^2}{a^2} - \frac{x^2}{b^2} = 1$
Hyperbola, center at (h, k),transverse axis parallel to *x*-axis	$\frac{(x-h)^2}{a^2} - \frac{(y-k)^2}{b^2} = 1$
Hyperbola, center at (h, k),transverse axis parallel to *y*-axis	$\frac{(y-k)^2}{a^2} - \frac{(x-h)^2}{b^2} = 1$

Key Concepts

- A hyperbola is the set of all points (x, y) in a plane such that the difference of the distances between (x, y) and the foci is a positive constant.
- The standard form of a hyperbola can be used to locate its vertices and foci. See Example $8.2.1$.
- When given the coordinates of the foci and vertices of a hyperbola, we can write the equation of the hyperbola in standard form. See Example $8.2.2$ and Example $8.2.3$.
- When given an equation for a hyperbola, we can identify its vertices, co-vertices, foci, asymptotes, and lengths and positions of the transverse and conjugate axes in order to graph the hyperbola. See Example $8.2.4$ and Example $8.2.5$.
- Real-world situations can be modeled using the standard equations of hyperbolas. For instance, given the dimensions of a natural draft cooling tower, we can find a hyperbolic equation that models its sides. See Example $8.2.6$.

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8.3: The Parabola

Learning Objectives

- Graph parabolas with vertices at the origin.
- Write equations of parabolas in standard form.
- Graph parabolas with vertices not at the origin.
- Solve applied problems involving parabolas.

Did you know that the Olympic torch is lit several months before the start of the games? The ceremonial method for lighting the flame is the same as in ancient times. The ceremony takes place at the Temple of Hera in Olympia, Greece, and is rooted in Greek mythology, paying tribute to Prometheus, who stole fire from Zeus to give to all humans. One of eleven acting priestesses places the torch at the focus of a parabolic mirror (Figure 8.3.1), which focuses light rays from the sun to ignite the flame.

Figure 8.3.1: The Olympic torch concludes its journey around the world when it is used to light the Olympic cauldron during the opening ceremony. (credit: Ken Hackman, U.S. Air Force)

Parabolic mirrors (or reflectors) are able to capture energy and focus it to a single point. The advantages of this property are evidenced by the vast list of parabolic objects we use every day: satellite dishes, suspension bridges, telescopes, microphones, spotlights, and car headlights, to name a few. Parabolic reflectors are also used in alternative energy devices, such as solar cookers and water heaters, because they are inexpensive to manufacture and need little maintenance. In this section we will explore the parabola and its uses, including low-cost, energy-efficient solar designs.

Graphing Parabolas with Vertices at the Origin

Previously, we saw that an ellipse is formed when a plane cuts through a right circular cone. If the plane is parallel to the edge of the cone, an unbounded curve is formed. This curve is a *parabola* (Figure 8.3.2).

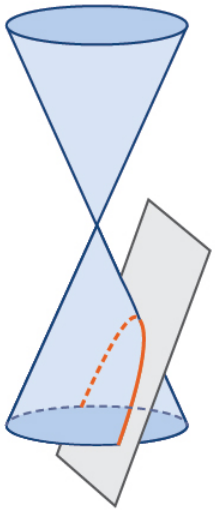

Figure 8.3.2: Parabola

Like the ellipse and hyperbola, the parabola can also be defined by a set of points in the coordinate plane. A parabola is the set of all points (x, y) in a plane that are the same distance from a fixed line, called the *directrix*, and a fixed point (the *focus*) not on the directrix.

Previously, we learned about a parabola's vertex and axis of symmetry. Now we extend the discussion to include other key features of the parabola (Figure 8.3.3). Notice that the axis of symmetry passes through the focus and vertex and is perpendicular to the directrix. The vertex is the midpoint between the directrix and the focus. The line segment that passes through the focus and is parallel to the directrix is called the *latus rectum*. The endpoints of the latus rectum lie on the curve. By definition, the distance d from the focus to any point P on the parabola is equal to the distance from P to the directrix.

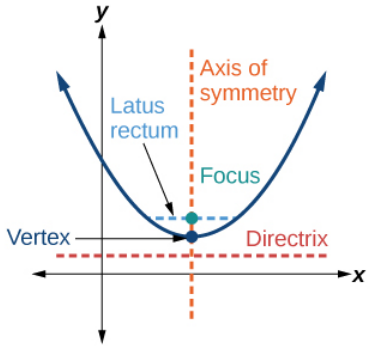

Figure 8.3.3: Key features of the parabola

To work with parabolas in the *coordinate plane*, we consider two cases: those with a vertex at the origin and those with a *vertex* at a point other than the origin. We begin with the former.

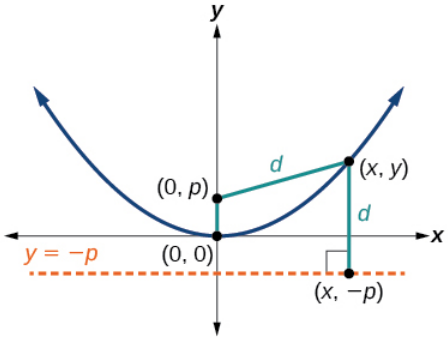

Figure 8.3.4

Let (x, y) be a point on the parabola with vertex $(0, 0)$, focus $(0, p)$,and directrix $y = -p$ as shown in Figure 8.3.4. The distance d from point (x, y) to point $(x, -p)$ on the directrix is the difference of the *y*-values: $d = y + p$. The distance from the focus $(0, p)$ to the point (x, y) is also equal to d and can be expressed using the distance formula.

$$d = \sqrt{(x-0)^2 + (y-p)^2}$$
$$= \sqrt{x^2 + (y-p)^2}$$

Set the two expressions for d equal to each other and solve for y to derive the equation of the parabola. We do this because the distance from (x, y) to $(0, p)$ equals the distance from (x, y) to $(x, -p)$.

$$\sqrt{x^2 + (y-p)^2} = y + p \tag{8.3.1}$$

We then square both sides of the equation, expand the squared terms, and simplify by combining like terms.

$$\begin{aligned} x^2+(y-p)^2 &= (y+p)^2 \\ x^2+y^2-2py+p^2 &= y^2+2py+p^2 \\ x^2-2py &= 2py \\ x^2 &= 4py \end{aligned}$$

The equations of parabolas with vertex $(0,0)$ are $y^2=4px$ when the x-axis is the axis of symmetry and $x^2=4py$ when the y-axis is the axis of symmetry. These standard forms are given below, along with their general graphs and key features.

STANDARD FORMS OF PARABOLAS WITH VERTEX $(0,0)$

Table 8.3.1 and Figure 8.3.5 summarize the standard features of parabolas with a vertex at the origin.

Table 8.3.1

Axis of Symmetry	Equation	Focus	Directrix	Endpoints of Latus Rectum
x-axis	$y^2=4px$	$(p,0)$	$x=-p$	$(p,\pm 2p)$
y-axis	$x^2=4py$	$(0,p)$	$y=-p$	$(\pm 2p,p)$

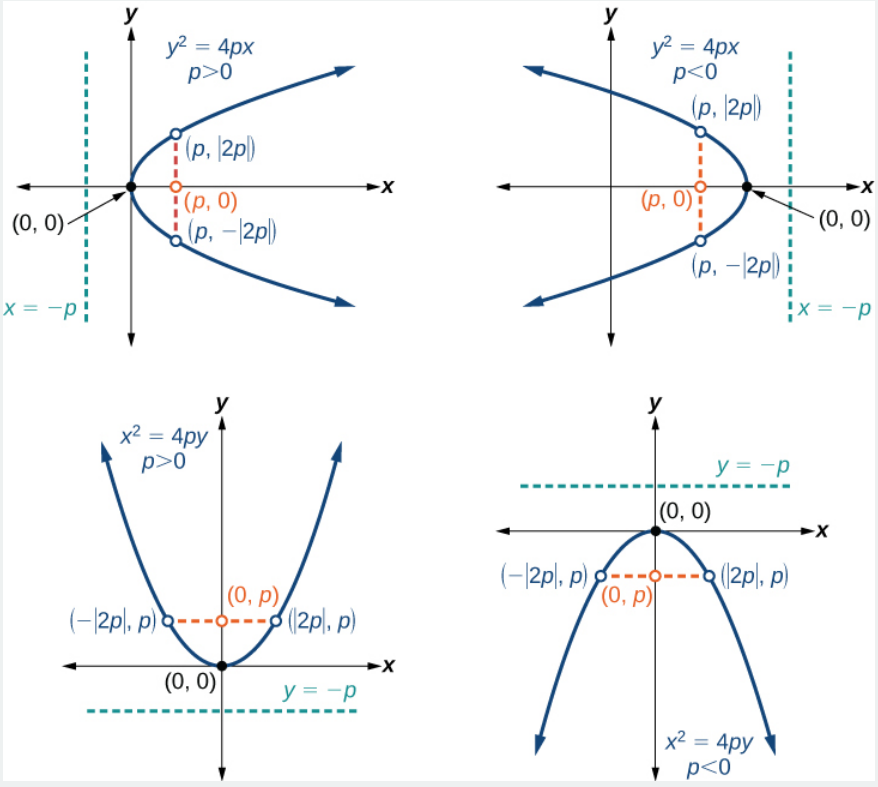

Figure 8.3.5: (a) When $p>0$ and the axis of symmetry is the x-axis, the parabola opens right. (b) When $p<0$ and the axis of symmetry is the x-axis, the parabola opens left. (c) When $p<0$ and the axis of symmetry is the y-axis, the parabola opens up. (d) When $p<0$ and the axis of symmetry is the y-axis, the parabola opens down.

The key features of a parabola are its vertex, axis of symmetry, focus, directrix, and *latus rectum* (Figure 8.3.5). When given a standard equation for a parabola centered at the origin, we can easily identify the key features to graph the parabola. A line is said to be tangent to a curve if it intersects the curve at exactly one point. If we sketch lines tangent to the parabola at the endpoints of the *latus rectum*, these lines intersect on the axis of symmetry, as shown in Figure 8.3.6.

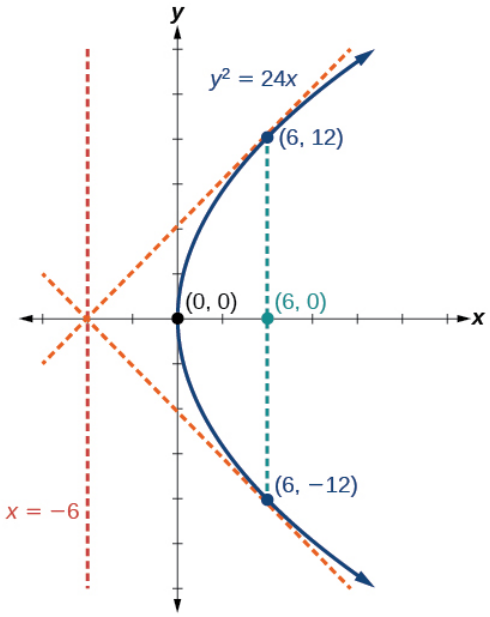

Figure 8.3.6

How to: Given a standard form equation for a parabola centered at $(0, 0)$, sketch the graph

1. Determine which of the standard forms applies to the given equation: $y^2 = 4px$ or $x^2 = 4py$.
2. Use the standard form identified in Step 1 to determine the axis of symmetry, focus, equation of the directrix, and endpoints of the latus rectum.
   - If the equation is in the form $y^2 = 4px$, then
     - the axis of symmetry is the x-axis, $y = 0$
     - set $4p$ equal to the coefficient of x in the given equation to solve for p. If $p > 0$, the parabola opens right. If $p < 0$, the parabola opens left.
     - use p to find the coordinates of the focus, $(p, 0)$
     - use p to find the equation of the directrix, $x = -p$
     - use p to find the endpoints of the latus rectum, $(p, \pm 2p)$. Alternately, substitute $x = p$ into the original equation.
   - If the equation is in the form $x^2 = 4py$,then
     - the axis of symmetry is the y-axis, $x = 0$
     - set $4p$ equal to the coefficient of y in the given equation to solve for p. If $p > 0$, the parabola opens up. If $p < 0$, the parabola opens down.
     - use p to find the coordinates of the focus, $(0, p)$
     - use p to find equation of the directrix, $y = -p$
     - use p to find the endpoints of the latus rectum, $(\pm 2p, p)$
3. Plot the focus, directrix, and latus rectum, and draw a smooth curve to form the parabola.

-axis as the Axis of Symmetry

Graph $y^2 = 24x$. Identify and label the focus, directrix, and endpoints of the *latus rectum*.

Solution

The standard form that applies to the given equation is $y^2 = 4px$. Thus, the axis of symmetry is the *x*-axis. It follows that:

- $24 = 4p$, so $p = 6$. Since $p > 0$, the parabola opens right
- the coordinates of the focus are $(p, 0) = (6, 0)$
- the equation of the directrix is $x = -p = -6$
- the endpoints of the latus rectum have the same *x*-coordinate at the focus. To find the endpoints, substitute $x = 6$ into the original equation: $(6, \pm 12)$

Next we plot the focus, directrix, and latus rectum, and draw a smooth curve to form the parabola (Figure 8.3.7).

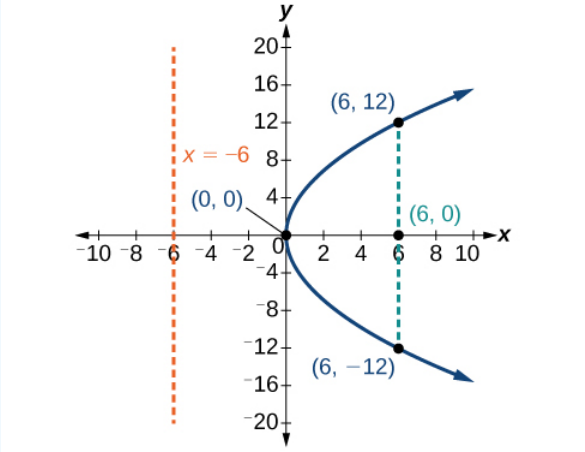

Figure 8.3.7

Exercise 8.3.1

Graph $y^2 = -16x$. Identify and label the focus, directrix, and endpoints of the *latus rectum*.

Answer

- Focus: $(-4, 0)$
- Directrix: $x = 4$
- Endpoints of the latus rectum: $(-4, \pm 8)$

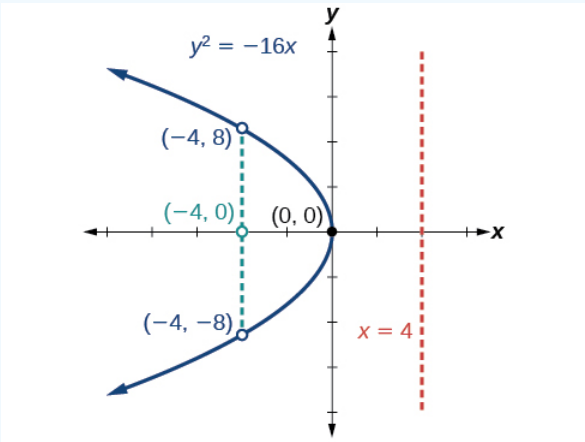

Figure 8.3.8

-axis as the Axis of Symmetry

Graph $x^2 = -6y$. Identify and label the focus, directrix, and endpoints of the *latus rectum*.

Solution

The standard form that applies to the given equation is $x^2 = 4py$. Thus, the axis of symmetry is the y-axis. It follows that:

- $-6 = 4p$,so $p = -\frac{3}{2}$. Since $p < 0$, the parabola opens down.
- the coordinates of the focus are $(0, p) = (0, -\frac{3}{2})$
- the equation of the directrix is $y = -p = \frac{3}{2}$
- the endpoints of the latus rectum can be found by substituting $y = \frac{3}{2}$ into the original equation, $(\pm 3, -\frac{3}{2})$

Next we plot the focus, directrix, and *latus rectum*, and draw a smooth curve to form the parabola.

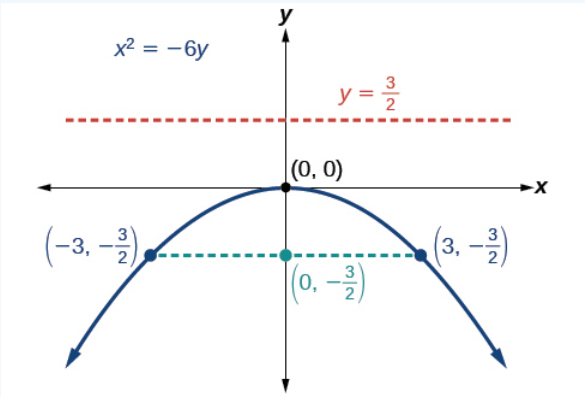

Figure 8.3.9

Exercise 8.3.2

Graph $x^2 = 8y$. Identify and label the focus, directrix, and endpoints of the *latus rectum*.

Answer

- Focus: $(0, 2)$
- Directrix: $y = -2$
- Endpoints of the latus rectum: $(\pm 4, 2)$.

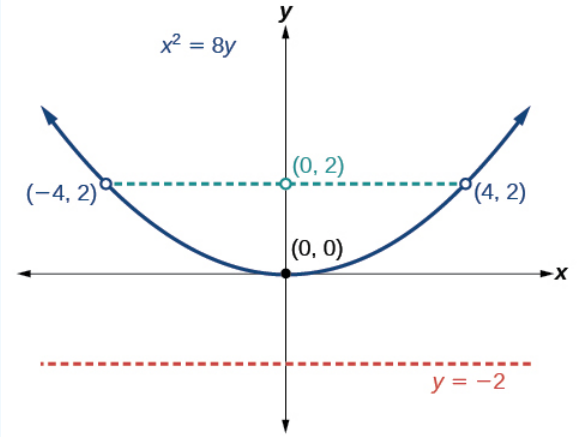

Figure 8.3.10

Writing Equations of Parabolas in Standard Form

In the previous examples, we used the standard form equation of a parabola to calculate the locations of its key features. We can also use the calculations in reverse to write an equation for a parabola when given its key features.

How to: Given its focus and directrix, write the equation for a parabola in standard form

1. Determine whether the axis of symmetry is the x- or y-axis.
   i. If the given coordinates of the focus have the form $(p, 0)$, then the axis of symmetry is the x-axis. Use the standard form $y^2 = 4px$.
   ii. If the given coordinates of the focus have the form $(0, p)$, then the axis of symmetry is the y-axis. Use the standard form $x^2 = 4py$.
2. Multiply $4p$.
3. Substitute the value from Step 2 into the equation determined in Step 1.

Example 8.3.3: Writing the Equation of a Parabola in Standard Form Given its Focus and Directrix

What is the equation for the parabola with focus $(-\frac{1}{2}, 0)$ and directrix $x = \frac{1}{2}$?

Solution

The focus has the form $(p, 0)$, so the equation will have the form $y^2 = 4px$.

- Multiplying $4p$, we have $4p = 4(-\frac{1}{2}) = -2$.
- Substituting for $4p$, we have $y^2 = 4px = -2x$.=

Therefore, the equation for the parabola is $y^2 = -2x$.

Exercise 8.3.3

What is the equation for the parabola with focus $\left(0, \frac{7}{2}\right)$ and directrix $y = -\frac{7}{2}$?

Answer

$x^2 = 14y$.

Graphing Parabolas with Vertices Not at the Origin

Like other graphs we've worked with, the graph of a parabola can be translated. If a parabola is translated h units horizontally and k units vertically, the vertex will be (h, k). This translation results in the standard form of the equation we saw previously with x replaced by $(x - h)$ and y replaced by $(y - k)$.

To graph parabolas with a vertex (h, k) other than the origin, we use the standard form $(y - k)^2 = 4p(x - h)$ for parabolas that have an axis of symmetry parallel to the x-axis, and $(x - h)^2 = 4p(y - k)$ for parabolas that have an axis of symmetry parallel to the y-axis. These standard forms are given below, along with their general graphs and key features.

STANDARD FORMS OF PARABOLAS WITH VERTEX (H, K)

Table 8.3.2 and Figure 8.3.11 summarize the standard features of parabolas with a vertex at a point (h, k).

Table 8.3.2

Axis of Symmetry	Equation	Focus	Directrix	Endpoints of Latus Rectum
$y = k$	$(y - k)^2 = 4p(x - h)$	$(h + p, k)$	$x = h - p$	$(h + p, k \pm 2p)$
$x = h$	$(x - h)^2 = 4p(y - k)$	$(h, k + p)$	$y = k - p$	$(h \pm 2p, k + p)$

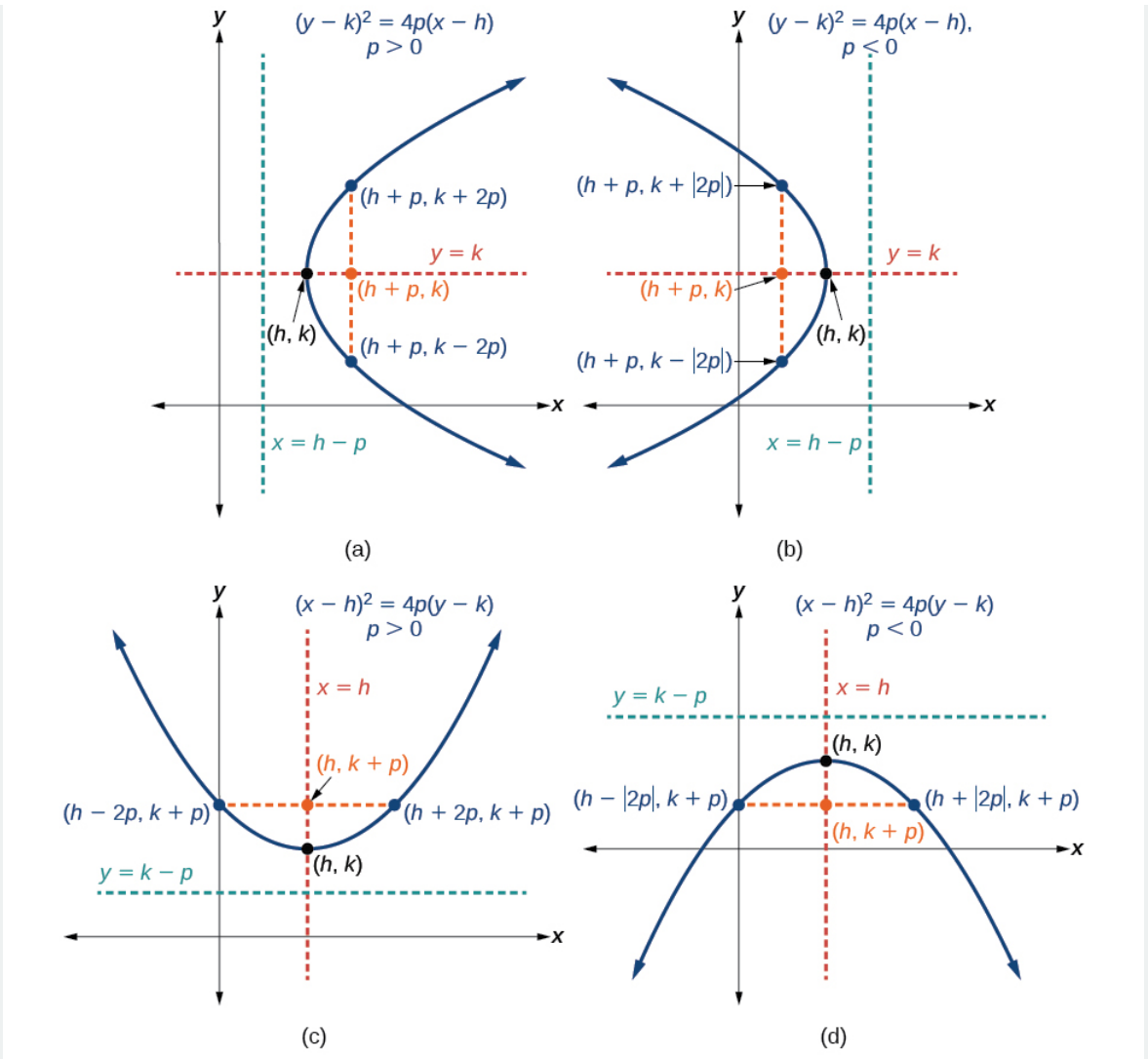

Figure 8.3.11: (a) When $p > 0$, the parabola opens right. (b) When $p < 0$, the parabola opens left. (c) When $p > 0$,the parabola opens up. (d) When $p < 0$, the parabola opens down.

How to: Given a standard form equation for a parabola centered at (h, k), sketch the graph

1. Determine which of the standard forms applies to the given equation: $(y-k)^2 = 4p(x-h)$ or $(x-h)^2 = 4p(y-k)$.
2. Use the standard form identified in Step 1 to determine the vertex, axis of symmetry, focus, equation of the directrix, and endpoints of the latus rectum.
   - If the equation is in the form $(y-k)^2 = 4p(x-h)$,then:
     - use the given equation to identify h and k for the vertex, (h, k)
     - use the value of k to determine the axis of symmetry, $y = k$
     - set $4p$ equal to the coefficient of $(x-h)$ in the given equation to solve for p. If $p > 0$,the parabola opens right. If $p < 0$, the parabola opens left.
     - use h, k, and p to find the coordinates of the focus, $(h+p, k)$
     - use h andp p to find the equation of the directrix, $x = h-p$
     - use h, k, and p to find the endpoints of the latus rectum, $(h+p, k \pm 2p)$
   - If the equation is in the form $(x-h)^2 = 4p(y-k)$,then:
     - use the given equation to identify h and k for the vertex, (h, k)
     - use the value of h to determine the axis of symmetry, $x = h$

- set $4p$ equal to the coefficient of $(y-k)$ in the given equation to solve for p. If $p>0$, the parabola opens up. If $p<0$, the parabola opens down.
- use h, k, and p to find the coordinates of the focus, $(h, k+p)$
- use k and p to find the equation of the directrix, $y=k-p$
- use h, k, and p to find the endpoints of the latus rectum, $(h \pm 2p, k+p)$

3. Plot the vertex, axis of symmetry, focus, directrix, and latus rectum, and draw a smooth curve to form the parabola.

Example 8.3.4: Graphing a Parabola with Vertex (h, k) and Axis of Symmetry Parallel to the x-axis

Graph $(y-1)^2=-16(x+3)$. Identify and label the vertex, axis of symmetry, focus, directrix, and endpoints of the latus rectum.

Solution

The standard form that applies to the given equation is $(y-k)^2=4p(x-h)$. Thus, the axis of symmetry is parallel to the x-axis. It follows that:

- the vertex is $(h, k)=(-3, 1)$
- the axis of symmetry is $y=k=1$
- $-16=4p$,so $p=-4$. Since $p<0$, the parabola opens left.
- the coordinates of the focus are $(h+p, k)=(-3+(-4), 1)=(-7, 1)$
- the equation of the directrix is $x=h-p=-3-(-4)=1$
- the endpoints of the latus rectum are $(h+p, k \pm 2p)=(-3+(-4), 1 \pm 2(-4))$, or $(-7, -7)$ and $(-7, 9)$

Next we plot the vertex, axis of symmetry, focus, directrix, and latus rectum, and draw a smooth curve to form the parabola (Figure 8.3.10).

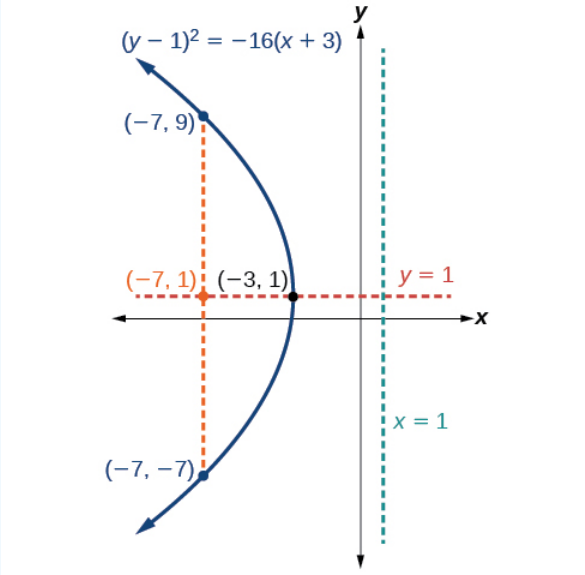

Figure 8.3.12

Exercise 8.3.4

Graph $(y+1)^2=4(x-8)$. Identify and label the vertex, axis of symmetry, focus, directrix, and endpoints of the *latus rectum*.

Answer

- Vertex: $(8, -1)$
- Axis of symmetry: $y=-1$
- Focus: $(9, -1)$
- Directrix: $x=7$

- Endpoints of the *latus rectum*: $(9, -3)$ and $(9, 1)$.

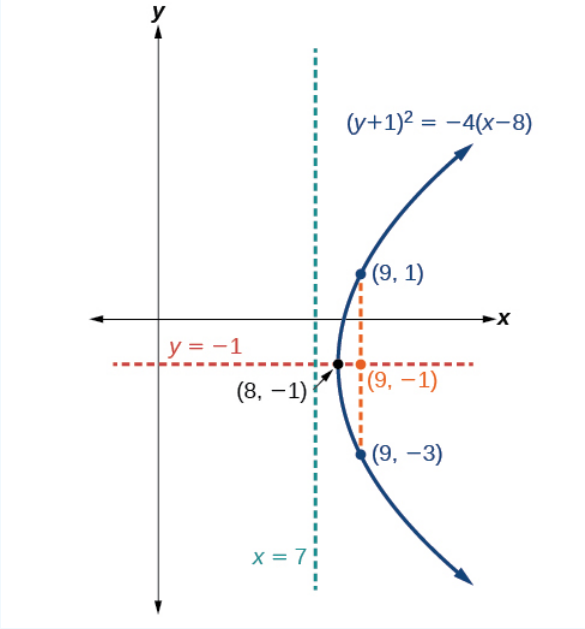

Figure 8.3.13

Example 8.3.5: Graphing a Parabola from an Equation Given in General Form

Graph $x^2 - 8x - 28y - 208 = 0$. Identify and label the vertex, axis of symmetry, focus, directrix, and endpoints of the *latus rectum*.

Solution

Start by writing the equation of the parabola in standard form. The standard form that applies to the given equation is $(x-h)^2 = 4p(y-k)$. Thus, the axis of symmetry is parallel to the y-axis. To express the equation of the parabola in this form, we begin by isolating the terms that contain the variable x in order to complete the square.

$$\begin{aligned} x^2 - 8x - 28y - 208 &= 0 \\ x^2 - 8x &= 28y + 208 \\ x^2 - 8x + 16 &= 28y + 208 + 16 \\ (x-4)^2 &= 28y + 224 \\ (x-4)^2 &= 28(y+8) \\ (x-4)^2 &= 4 \cdot 7 \cdot (y+8) \end{aligned}$$

It follows that:

- the vertex is $(h, k) = (4, -8)$
- the axis of symmetry is $x = h = 4$
- since $p = 7$, $p > 0$ and so the parabola opens up
- the coordinates of the focus are $(h, k+p) = (4, -8+7) = (4, -1)$
- the equation of the directrix is $y = k - p = -8 - 7 = -15$
- the endpoints of the latus rectum are $(h \pm 2p, k+p) = (4 \pm 2(7), -8+7)$, or $(-10, -1)$ and $(18, -1)$

Next we plot the vertex, axis of symmetry, focus, directrix, and latus rectum, and draw a smooth curve to form the parabola (Figure 8.3.14).

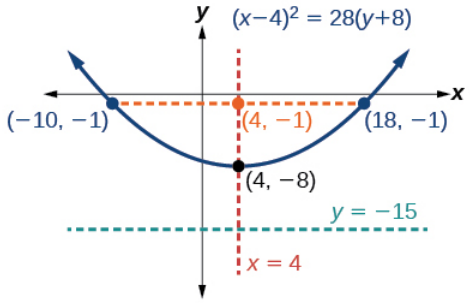

Figure 8.3.14

? Exercise 8.3.5

Graph $(x+2)^2 = -20(y-3)$. Identify and label the vertex, axis of symmetry, focus, directrix, and endpoints of the *latus rectum*.

Answer

- Vertex: $(-2, 3)$
- Axis of symmetry: $x = -2$
- Focus: $(-2, -2)$
- Directrix: $y = 8$
- Endpoints of the *latus rectum*: $(-12, -2)$ and $(8, -2)$.

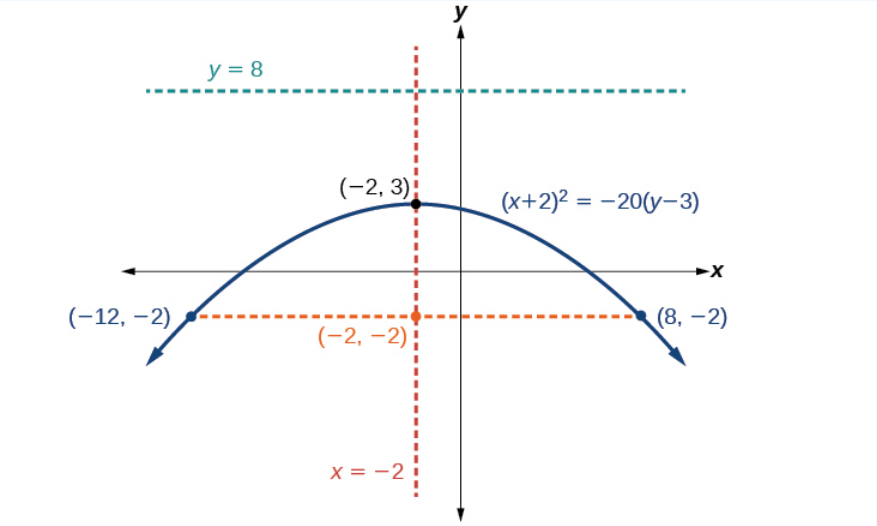

Figure 8.3.15

Solving Applied Problems Involving Parabolas

As we mentioned at the beginning of the section, parabolas are used to design many objects we use every day, such as telescopes, suspension bridges, microphones, and radar equipment. Parabolic mirrors, such as the one used to light the Olympic torch, have a very unique reflecting property. When rays of light parallel to the parabola's axis of symmetry are directed toward any surface of the mirror, the light is reflected directly to the focus (Figure 8.3.16). This is why the Olympic torch is ignited when it is held at the focus of the parabolic mirror.

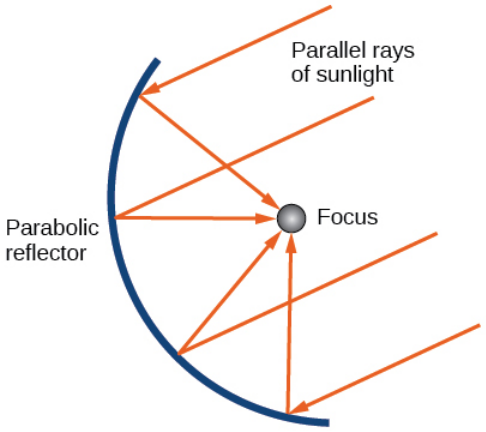

Figure 8.3.16: Reflecting property of parabolas

Parabolic mirrors have the ability to focus the sun's energy to a single point, raising the temperature hundreds of degrees in a matter of seconds. Thus, parabolic mirrors are featured in many low-cost, energy efficient solar products, such as solar cookers, solar heaters, and even travel-sized fire starters.

Example 8.3.6: Solving Applied Problems Involving Parabolas

A cross-section of a design for a travel-sized solar fire starter is shown in Figure 8.3.17. The sun's rays reflect off the parabolic mirror toward an object attached to the igniter. Because the igniter is located at the focus of the parabola, the reflected rays cause the object to burn in just seconds.

a. Find the equation of the parabola that models the fire starter. Assume that the vertex of the parabolic mirror is the origin of the coordinate plane.
b. Use the equation found in part (a) to find the depth of the fire starter.

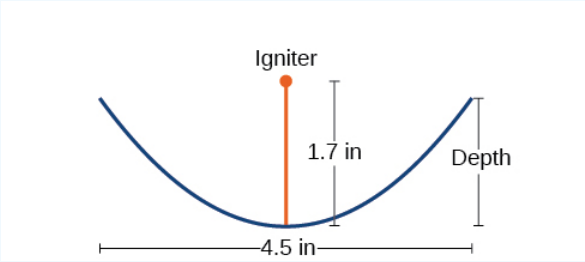

Figure 8.3.17 Cross-section of a travel-sized solar fire starter

Solution

a. The vertex of the dish is the origin of the coordinate plane, so the parabola will take the standard form $x^2 = 4py$,where $p > 0$. The igniter, which is the focus, is 1.7 inches above the vertex of the dish. Thus we have $p = 1.7$.

$$\begin{aligned} x^2 &= 4py && \text{Standard form of upward-facing parabola with vertex } (0,0) \\ x^2 &= 4(1.7)y && \text{Substitute } 1.7 \text{ for } p \\ x^2 &= 6.8y && \text{Multiply.} \end{aligned}$$

b. The dish extends $\dfrac{4.5}{2} = 2.25$ inches on either side of the origin. We can substitute 2.25 for x in the equation from part (a) to find the depth of the dish.

$$\begin{aligned} x^2 &= 6.8y && \text{Equation found in part } (a) \\ (2.25)^2 &= 6.8y && \text{Substitute } 2.25 \text{ for } x \\ y &\approx 0.74 && \text{Solve for } y \end{aligned}$$

The dish is about 0.74 inches deep.

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Exercise 8.3.6

Balcony-sized solar cookers have been designed for families living in India. The top of a dish has a diameter of 1600 mm. The sun's rays reflect off the parabolic mirror toward the "cooker," which is placed 320 mm from the base.

a. Find an equation that models a cross-section of the solar cooker. Assume that the vertex of the parabolic mirror is the origin of the coordinate plane, and that the parabola opens to the right (i.e., has the *x*-axis as its axis of symmetry).
b. Use the equation found in part (a) to find the depth of the cooker.

Answer a

$y^2 = 1280x$

Answer b

The depth of the cooker is 500 mm

Key Equations

Parabola, vertex at origin, axis of symmetry on *x*-axis	$y^2 = 4px$
Parabola, vertex at origin, axis of symmetry on *y*-axis	$x^2 = 4py$
Parabola, vertex at (h, k),axis of symmetry on *x*-axis	$(y-k)^2 = 4p(x-h)$
Parabola, vertex at (h, k),axis of symmetry on *y*-axis	$(x-h)^2 = 4p(y-k)$

Key Concepts

- A parabola is the set of all points (x, y) in a plane that are the same distance from a fixed line, called the directrix, and a fixed point (the focus) not on the directrix.
- The standard form of a parabola with vertex $(0, 0)$ and the *x*-axis as its axis of symmetry can be used to graph the parabola. If $p > 0$, the parabola opens right. If $p < 0$, the parabola opens left. See Example 8.3.1.
- The standard form of a parabola with vertex $(0, 0)$ and the *y*-axis as its axis of symmetry can be used to graph the parabola. If $p > 0$, the parabola opens up. If $p < 0$, the parabola opens down. See Example 8.3.2.
- When given the focus and directrix of a parabola, we can write its equation in standard form. See Example 8.3.3.
- The standard form of a parabola with vertex (h, k) and axis of symmetry parallel to the x-axis can be used to graph the parabola. If $p > 0$, the parabola opens right. If $p < 0$, the parabola opens left. See Example 8.3.4.
- The standard form of a parabola with vertex (h, k) and axis of symmetry parallel to the y-axis can be used to graph the parabola. If $p > 0$, the parabola opens up. If $p < 0$, the parabola opens down. See Example 8.3.5.
- Real-world situations can be modeled using the standard equations of parabolas. For instance, given the diameter and focus of a cross-section of a parabolic reflector, we can find an equation that models its sides. See Example 8.3.6.

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CHAPTER OVERVIEW

9: Sequences, Probability, and Counting Theory

In this chapter, we will explore the mathematics behind situations involving probabilities and counting. We will take an in-depth look at annuities. We will also look at the branch of mathematics that would allow us to calculate the number of ways to choose lottery numbers and the probability of winning.

9.1: Sequences and Their Notations
9.2: Arithmetic Sequences
9.3: Geometric Sequences
9.4: Series and Their Notations

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9.1: Sequences and Their Notations

Learning Objectives

- Write the terms of a sequence defined by an explicit formula.
- Write the terms of a sequence defined by a recursive formula.
- Use factorial notation.

A video game company launches an exciting new advertising campaign. They predict the number of online visits to their website, or hits, will double each day. The model they are using shows 2 hits the first day, 4 hits the second day, 8 hits the third day, and so on (Table 9.1.1).

Table 9.1.1

Day	1	2	3	4	5	…
Hits	2	4	8	16	32	…

If their model continues, how many hits will there be at the end of the month? To answer this question, we'll first need to know how to determine a list of numbers written in a specific order. In this section, we will explore these kinds of ordered lists.

Writing the Terms of a Sequence Defined by an Explicit Formula

One way to describe an ordered list of numbers is as a *sequence*. A sequence is a function whose domain is a subset of the counting numbers. The sequence established by the number of hits on the website is

$$\{2, 4, 8, 16, 32, \ldots\}$$

The *ellipsis* (…) indicates that the sequence continues indefinitely. Each number in the sequence is called a term. The first five terms of this sequence are 2, 4, 8, 16, and 32.

Listing all of the terms for a sequence can be cumbersome. For example, finding the number of hits on the website at the end of the month would require listing out as many as 31 terms. A more efficient way to determine a specific term is by writing a formula to define the sequence.

One type of formula is an *explicit formula*, which defines the terms of a sequence using their position in the sequence. Explicit formulas are helpful if we want to find a specific term of a sequence without finding all of the previous terms. We can use the formula to find the nth *term of the sequence*, where nn is any positive number. In our example, each number in the sequence is double the previous number, so we can use powers of 2 to write a formula for the nth term.

$$\{2,\ 4,\ 8, 16, 32, \ldots, ?, \ldots\}$$
$$\downarrow\ \downarrow\ \downarrow\ \downarrow\ \downarrow\ \downarrow\ \qquad \downarrow$$
$$\{2^1, 2^2, 2^3, 2^4, 2^5, \ldots, 2^n, \ldots\}$$

The first term of the sequence is $2^1 = 2$, the second term is $2^2 = 4$, the third term is $2^3 = 8$, and so on. The nth term of the sequence can be found by raising 2 to the nth power. An explicit formula for a sequence is named by a lower case letter a, b, c... with the subscript n. The explicit formula for this sequence is

$$a_n = 2^n$$

Now that we have a formula for the nth term of the sequence, we can answer the question posed at the beginning of this section. We were asked to find the number of hits at the end of the month, which we will take to be 31 days. To find the number of hits on the last day of the month, we need to find the 31st term of the sequence. We will substitute 31 for n in the formula.

$$a_{31} = 2^{31}$$
$$[5pt] = 2,147,483,648$$

If the doubling trend continues, the company will get $2,147,483,648$hits on the last day of the month. That is over 2.1 billion hits! The huge number is probably a little unrealistic because it does not take consumer interest and competition into account. It does, however, give the company a starting point from which to consider business decisions.

Another way to represent the sequence is by using a table. The first five terms of the sequence and the nth term of the sequence are shown in Table 9.1.2.

Table 9.1.2

n	1	2	3	4	5	n
n^{th} term of the sequence, a_n	2	4	8	16	32	2^n

Graphing provides a visual representation of the sequence as a set of distinct points. We can see from the graph in Figure 9.1.1 that the number of hits is rising at an exponential rate. This particular sequence forms an exponential function.

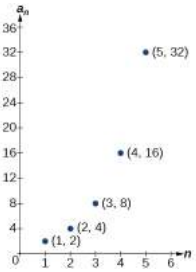

Figure 9.1.1

Lastly, we can write this particular sequence as

$$\{2, 4, 8, 16, 32, \ldots, 2^n, \ldots\}$$

A sequence that continues indefinitely is called an **infinite sequence**. The domain of an infinite sequence is the set of counting numbers. If we consider only the first 10 terms of the sequence, we could write

$$\{2, 4, 8, 16, 32, \ldots, 2^n, \ldots, 1024\}$$

This sequence is called a **finite sequence** because it does not continue indefinitely.

SEQUENCE

A *sequence* is a function whose domain is the set of positive integers. A *finite sequence* is a sequence whose domain consists of only the first n positive integers. The numbers in a sequence are called *terms*. The variable a with a number subscript is used to represent the terms in a sequence and to indicate the position of the term in the sequence.

$$a_1, a_2, a_3, \ldots, a_n, \ldots \tag{9.1.1}$$

We call a_1 the first term of the sequence, a_2 the second term of the sequence, a_3 the third term of the sequence, and so on. The term a_n is called the nth term of the sequence, or the general term of the sequence. An explicit formula defines the nth term of a sequence using the position of the term. A sequence that continues indefinitely is an infinite sequence.

Q&A: Does a sequence always have to begin with a_1?

No. In certain problems, it may be useful to define the initial term as a_0 instead of a_1. In these problems, the domain of the function includes 0.

How to: Given an explicit formula, write the first n terms of a sequence

1. Substitute each value of n into the formula. Begin with $n = 1$ to find the first term, a_1.
2. To find the second term, a_2, use $n = 2$.
3. Continue in the same manner until you have identified all nn terms.

Example 9.1.1: Writing the Terms of a Sequence Defined by an Explicit Formula

Write the first five terms of the sequence defined by the explicit formula $a_n = -3n + 8$.

Solution

Substitute $n = 1$ into the formula. Repeat with values 2 through 5 for n.

$$\begin{aligned} n = 1 \quad & a_1 = -3(1) + 8 = 5 \\ n = 2 \quad & a_2 = -3(2) + 8 = 2 \\ n = 3 \quad & a_3 = -3(3) + 8 = -1 \\ n = 4 \quad & a_4 = -3(4) + 8 = -4 \\ n = 5 \quad & a_5 = -3(5) + 8 = -7 \end{aligned}$$

The first five terms are $\{5, 2, -1, -4, -7\}$.

Analysis

The sequence values can be listed in a table. A table, such as Table 9.1.3, is a convenient way to input the function into a graphing utility.

Table 9.1.3

n	1	2	3	4	5
a_n	5	2	–1	–4	–7

A graph can be made from this table of values. From the graph in Figure 9.1.2, we can see that this sequence represents a linear function, but notice the graph is not continuous because the domain is over the positive integers only.

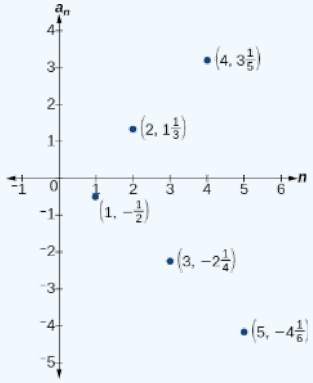

Figure 9.1.2

Exercise 9.1.1

Write the first five terms of the sequence defined by the *explicit formula* $t_n = 5n - 4$.

Answer

The first five terms are $\{1, 6, 11, 16, 21\}$

Investigating Alternating Sequences

Sometimes sequences have terms that are alternate. In fact, the terms may actually alternate in sign. The steps to finding terms of the sequence are the same as if the signs did not alternate. However, the resulting terms will not show increase or decrease as n increases. Let's take a look at the following sequence.

$$\{2, -4, 6, -8\}$$

Notice the first term is greater than the second term, the second term is less than the third term, and the third term is greater than the fourth term. This trend continues forever. Do not rearrange the terms in numerical order to interpret the sequence.

How to: Given an explicit formula with alternating terms, write the first nn terms of a sequence

1. Substitute each value of nn into the formula. Begin with $n=1$ to find the first term, a_1. The sign of the term is given by the $(-1)^n$ in the explicit formula.
2. To find the second term, a_2, use $n=2$.
3. Continue in the same manner until you have identified all n terms.

Example 9.1.2: Writing the Terms of an Alternating Sequence Defined by an Explicit Formula

Write the first five terms of the sequence.

$$a_n=\frac{(-1)^n n^2}{n+1}$$

Solution

Substitute $n=1$, $n=2$, and so on in the formula.

$$\begin{aligned} n=1 \quad a_1&=\frac{(-1)^1 2^2}{1+1}=-\frac{1}{2}\\ n=2 \quad a_2&=\frac{(-1)^2 2^2}{2+1}=\frac{4}{3}\\ n=3 \quad a_3&=\frac{(-1)^3 3^2}{3+1}=-\frac{9}{4}\\ n=4 \quad a_4&=\frac{(-1)^4 4^2}{4+1}=\frac{16}{5}\\ n=5 \quad a_5&=\frac{(-1)^5 5^2}{5+1}=-\frac{25}{6} \end{aligned}$$

The first five terms are $\{-12, 43, -94, 165, -256\}$

Analysis

The graph of this function, shown in Figure 9.1.3, looks different from the ones we have seen previously in this section because the terms of the sequence alternate between positive and negative values.

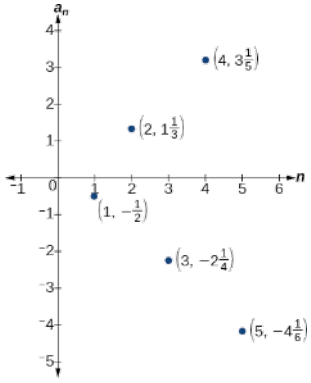

Figure 9.1.3

Q&A: In the example above, does the (-1) to the power of n account for the oscillations of signs?

Yes, the power might be n, $n+1$, $n-1$, and so on, but any odd powers will result in a negative term, and any even power will result in a positive term.

Exercise 9.1.2

Write the first five terms of the sequence:

$$a_n=\frac{4n}{(-2)^n}$$

Answer

The first five terms are $\{-2, 2, -32, 1, -58\}$

Investigating Piecewise Explicit Formulas

We've learned that sequences are functions whose domain is over the positive integers. This is true for other types of functions, including some piecewise functions. Recall that a *piecewise function* is a function defined by multiple subsections. A different formula might represent each individual subsection.

How to: Given an explicit formula for a piecewise function, write the first n terms of a sequence

1. Identify the formula to which $n=1$ applies.
2. To find the first term, a_1, use $n=1$ in the appropriate formula.
3. Identify the formula to which $n=2$ applies.
4. To find the second term, a_2, use $n=2$ in the appropriate formula.
5. Continue in the same manner until you have identified all n terms.

Example 9.1.3: Writing the Terms of a Sequence Defined by a Piecewise Explicit Formula

Write the first six terms of the sequence.

$$a_n = \begin{cases} n^2 \text{ if n is not divisible by 3} \\ \frac{n}{3} \text{if n is divisible by 3} \end{cases}$$

Solution

Substitute $n = 1$, $n = 2$, and so on in the appropriate formula. Use n^2 when n is not a multiple of 3. Use n^3 when n is a multiple of 3.

$$\begin{aligned} a_1 &= 1^2 = 1 && 1 \text{ is not a multiple of 3. Use } n^2. \\ a_2 &= 2^2 = 4 && 2 \text{ is not a multiple of 3 . Use } n^2. \\ a_3 &= \frac{3}{3} = 1 && 3 \text{ is a multiple of 3. Use } \frac{n}{3}. \\ a_4 &= 4^2 = 16 && 4 \text{ is not a multiple of 3. Use } n^2. \\ a_5 &= 5^2 = 25 && 5 \text{ is not a multiple of 3.Use } n^2. \\ a_6 &= \frac{6}{3} = 2 && 6 \text{ is a multiple of 3.Use } \frac{n}{3} \end{aligned}$$

The first six terms are $\{1, 4, 1, 16, 25, 2\}$

Analysis

Every third point on the graph shown in Figure 9.1.4 stands out from the two nearby points. This occurs because the sequence was defined by a piecewise function.

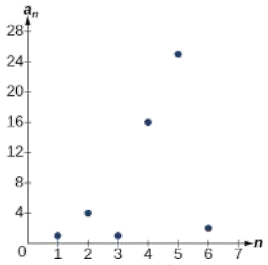

Figure 9.1.4

Exercise 9.1.3

Write the first six terms of the sequence.

$$a_n = \begin{cases} 2n^3 \text{ if } n \text{ is odd} \\ \frac{5n}{2} \text{ if } n \text{ is even} \end{cases}$$

Answer

The first six terms are $\{2, 5, 54, 10, 250, 15\}$

Finding an Explicit Formula

Thus far, we have been given the explicit formula and asked to find a number of terms of the sequence. Sometimes, the explicit formula for the nth term of a sequence is not given. Instead, we are given several terms from the sequence. When this happens, we can work in reverse to find an explicit formula from the first few terms of a sequence. The key to finding an explicit formula is to look for a pattern in the terms. Keep in mind that the pattern may involve alternating terms, formulas for numerators, formulas for denominators, exponents, or bases.

How to: Given the first few terms of a sequence, find an explicit formula for the sequence

1. Look for a pattern among the terms.
2. If the terms are fractions, look for a separate pattern among the numerators and denominators.
3. Look for a pattern among the signs of the terms.
4. Write a formula for a_n in terms of n. Test your formula for $n = 1$, $n = 2$, and $n = 3$.

Example 9.1.4: Writing an Explicit Formula for the *n*th Term of a Sequence

Write an explicit formula for the nth term of each sequence.

a. $\{-\frac{2}{11}, \frac{3}{13}, -\frac{4}{15}, \frac{5}{17}, -\frac{6}{19}, \ldots\}$

b. $\{-\frac{2}{25}, -\frac{2}{125}, -\frac{2}{625}, -\frac{2}{3,125}, -\frac{2}{15,625}, \ldots\}$

c. $\{e^4, e^5, e^6, e^7, e^8, \ldots\}$

Solution

Look for the pattern in each sequence.

a. The terms alternate between positive and negative. We can use $(-1)^n$ to make the terms alternate. The numerator can be represented by $n+1$. The denominator can be represented by $2n+9$.

$$a_n = \frac{(-1)^n(n+1)}{2n+9}$$

b. The terms are all negative. $\left\{-\frac{2}{25}, -\frac{2}{125}, -\frac{2}{625}, -\frac{2}{3,125}, -\frac{2}{15,625}, \ldots\right\}$ The numerator is 2.

$\left\{-\frac{2}{5^2}, -\frac{2}{5^3}, -\frac{2}{5^4}, -\frac{2}{5^6}, -\frac{2}{5^7}, \ldots, -\frac{2}{5^n}\right\}$ The denominators are increasing powers of 5.

So we know that the fraction is negative, the numerator is 2, and the denominator can be represented by $5n+1$.

$a_n = -\frac{2}{5^{n+1}}$

c. The terms are powers of e. For $n = 1$, the first term is e^4 so the exponent must be $n + 3$.

$$a_n = e^{n+3}$$

? Exercise 9.1.4A

Write an explicit formula for the nth term of the sequence.

$$\{9, -81, 729, -6,561, 59,049, \ldots\}$$

Answer

$a_n = (-1)^{n+1}9^n$

? Exercise 9.1.4B

Write an explicit formula for the nth term of the sequence.

$$\{-34, -98, -2712, -8116, -24320, \ldots\}$$

Answer

$a_n = -\frac{3^n}{4n}$

? Exercise 9.1.4C

Write an explicit formula for the nth term of the sequence.

$$\left\{\frac{1}{e^2}, \frac{1}{e}, 1, e, e^2, \ldots\right\}$$

Answer

$a_n = e^{n-3}$

Writing the Terms of a Sequence Defined by a Recursive Formula

Sequences occur naturally in the growth patterns of nautilus shells, pinecones, tree branches, and many other natural structures. We may see the sequence in the leaf or branch arrangement, the number of petals of a flower, or the pattern of the chambers in a nautilus shell. Their growth follows the Fibonacci sequence, a famous sequence in which each term can be found by adding the preceding two terms. The numbers in the sequence are $1, 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 13, 21, 34, \ldots$ Other examples from the natural world that exhibit the Fibonacci sequence are the Calla Lily, which has just one petal, the Black-Eyed Susan with 13 petals, and different varieties of daisies that may have 21 or 34 petals.

Each term of the Fibonacci sequence depends on the terms that come before it. The Fibonacci sequence cannot easily be written using an explicit formula. Instead, we describe the sequence using a **recursive formula**, a formula that defines the terms of a sequence using previous terms.

A recursive formula always has two parts: the value of an initial term (or terms), and an equation defining a_n in terms of preceding terms. For example, suppose we know the following:

$$\begin{aligned} a_1 &= 3 \\ a_n &= 2a_{n-1} - 1, \text{ for } n \geq 2 \end{aligned}$$

We can find the subsequent terms of the sequence using the first term.

$$\begin{aligned} a_1 &= 3 \\ a_2 &= 2a_1 - 1 = 2(3) - 1 = 5 \\ a_3 &= 2a_2 - 1 = 2(5) - 1 = 9 \\ a_4 &= 2a_3 - 1 = 2(9) - 1 = 17 \end{aligned}$$

So the first four terms of the sequence are $\{3, 5, 9, 17\}$.

The recursive formula for the Fibonacci sequence states the first two terms and defines each successive term as the sum of the preceding two terms.

$$\begin{aligned} a_1 &= 1 \\ a_2 &= 1 \\ a_n &= a_{n-1} + a_{n-2}, \text{ for } n \geq 3 \end{aligned}$$

To find the tenth term of the sequence, for example, we would need to add the eighth and ninth terms. We were told previously that the eighth and ninth terms are 21 and 34, so

$$a_{10} = a_9 + a_8 = 34 + 21 = 55$$

RECURSIVE FORMULA

A recursive formula is a formula that defines each term of a sequence using preceding term(s). Recursive formulas must always state the initial term, or terms, of the sequence.

Q&A: Must the first two terms always be given in a recursive formula?

No. The Fibonacci sequence defines each term using the two preceding terms, but many recursive formulas define each term using only one preceding term. These sequences need only the first term to be defined.

How to: Given a recursive formula with only the first term provided, write the first n terms of a sequence

1. Identify the initial term, a_1, which is given as part of the formula. This is the first term.
2. To find the second term, a_2, substitute the initial term into the formula for a_{n-1}. Solve.
3. To find the third term, a_3, substitute the second term into the formula. Solve.
4. Repeat until you have solved for the nth term.

Example 9.1.5: Writing the Terms of a Sequence Defined by a Recursive Formula

Write the first five terms of the sequence defined by the recursive formula.

$$\begin{aligned} a_1 &= 9 \\ a_n &= 3a_{n-1} - 20, \text{ for } n \geq 2 \end{aligned}$$

Solution

The first term is given in the formula. For each subsequent term, we replace $a_n - 1$ with the value of the preceding term.

$$\begin{aligned} n = 1 \quad & a_1 = 9 \\ n = 2 \quad & a_2 = 3a_1 - 20 = 3(9) - 20 = 27 - 20 = 7 \\ n = 3 \quad & a_3 = 3a_2 - 20 = 3(7) - 20 = 21 - 20 = 1 \\ n = 4 \quad & a_4 = 3a_3 - 20 = 3(1) - 20 = 3 - 20 = -17 \\ n = 5 \quad & a_5 = 3a_4 - 20 = 3(-17) - 20 = -51 - 20 = -71 \end{aligned}$$

The first five terms are $\{9, 7, 1, -17, -71\}$ See Figure 9.1.5.

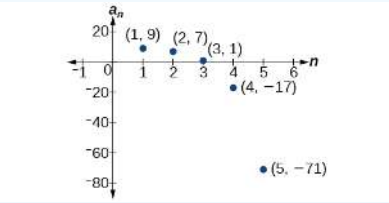

Figure 9.1.5

Exercise 9.1.5

Write the first five terms of the sequence defined by the recursive formula.

$$\begin{aligned} a_1 &= 2 \\ a_n &= 2a_{n-1} + 1, \text{ for } n \geq 2 \end{aligned}$$

Answer

$\{2, 5, 11, 23, 47\}$

How to: Given a recursive formula with two initial terms, write the first n terms of a sequence

1. Identify the initial term, a_1, which is given as part of the formula.
2. Identify the second term, a_2, which is given as part of the formula.
3. To find the third term, substitute the initial term and the second term into the formula. Evaluate.
4. Repeat until you have evaluated the nth term.

Example 9.1.6: Writing the Terms of a Sequence Defined by a Recursive Formula

Write the first six terms of the sequence defined by the recursive formula.

$$\begin{aligned} a_1 &= 1 \\ a_2 &= 2 \\ a_n &= 3a_{n-1} + 4a_{n-2}, \text{ for } n \geq 3 \end{aligned}$$

Solution

The first two terms are given. For each subsequent term, we replace a_{n-1} and a_{n-2} with the values of the two preceding terms.

$$\begin{aligned} n = 3 \quad & a_3 = 3a_2 + 4a_1 = 3(2) + 4(1) = 10 \\ n = 4 \quad & a_4 = 3a_3 + 4a_2 = 3(10) + 4(2) = 38 \\ n = 5 \quad & a_5 = 3a_4 + 4a_3 = 3(38) + 4(10) = 154 \\ n = 6 \quad & a_6 = 3a_5 + 4a_4 = 3(154) + 4(38) = 614 \end{aligned}$$

The first six terms are $\{1, 2, 10, 38, 154, 614\}$See Figure 9.1.6.

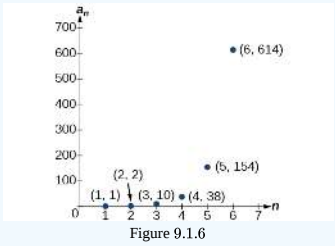

Figure 9.1.6

Exercise 9.1.6

Write the first 8 terms of the sequence defined by the recursive formula.

$$\begin{aligned} a_1 &= 0 \\ a_2 &= 1 \\ a_3 &= 1 \\ a_n &= \frac{a_{n-1}}{a_{n-2}} + a_{n-3}, \text{ for } n \geq 4 \end{aligned}$$

Answer

$\{0, 1, 1, 1, 2, 3, 52, 176\}$

Using Factorial Notation

The formulas for some sequences include products of consecutive positive integers. ***n* factorial**, written as $n!$, is the product of the positive integers from 1 to n. For example,

$$\begin{aligned} 4! &= 4 \cdot 3 \cdot 2 \cdot 1 = 24 \\ 5! &= 5 \cdot 4 \cdot 3 \cdot 2 \cdot 1 = 120 \end{aligned}$$

An example of formula containing a **factorial** is $a_n = (n+1)!$. The sixth term of the sequence can be found by substituting 6 for n.

$$a_6 = (6+1)! = 7! = 7 \cdot 6 \cdot 5 \cdot 4 \cdot 3 \cdot 2 \cdot 1 = 5040$$

The factorial of any whole number n is $n(n-1)!$ We can therefore also think of $5!$ as $5 \cdot 4!$.

FACTORIAL

n factorial is a mathematical operation that can be defined using a recursive formula. The factorial of n, denoted $n!$, is defined for a positive integer n as:

$$0! = 1 \tag{9.1.2}$$
$$1! = 1 \tag{9.1.3}$$
$$n! = n(n-1)(n-2)\cdots(2)(1), \text{ for } n \geq 2 \tag{9.1.4}$$

The special case $0!$ is defined as $0! = 1$.

Q&A: Can factorials always be found using a calculator?

No. Factorials get large very quickly—faster than even exponential functions! When the output gets too large for the calculator, it will not be able to calculate the factorial.

Example 9.1.7: Writing the Terms of a Sequence Using Factorials

Write the first five terms of the sequence defined by the explicit formula $a_n = \dfrac{5n}{(n+2)!}$.

Solution

Substitute $n = 1$, $n = 2$, and so on in the formula.

$$n = 1 \quad a_1 = \frac{5(1)}{(1+2)!} = \frac{5}{3!} = \frac{5}{3 \cdot 2 \cdot 1} = \frac{5}{6}$$
$$n = 2 \quad a_2 = \frac{5(2)}{(2+2)!} = \frac{10}{4!} = \frac{10}{4 \cdot 3 \cdot 2 \cdot 1} = \frac{5}{12}$$
$$n = 3 \quad a_3 = \frac{5(3)}{(3+2)!} = \frac{15}{5!} = \frac{15}{5 \cdot 4 \cdot 3 \cdot 2 \cdot 1} = \frac{1}{8}$$
$$n = 4 \quad a_4 = \frac{5(4)}{(4+2)!} = \frac{20}{6!} = \frac{20}{6 \cdot 5 \cdot 4 \cdot 3 \cdot 2 \cdot 1} = \frac{1}{36}$$
$$n = 5 \quad a_5 = \frac{5(5)}{(5+2)!} = \frac{25}{7!} = \frac{25}{7 \cdot 6 \cdot 5 \cdot 4 \cdot 3 \cdot 2 \cdot 1} = \frac{5}{1,008}$$

The first five terms are $\left\{\frac{5}{6}, \frac{5}{12}, \frac{1}{8}, \frac{1}{36}, \frac{5}{1,008}\right\}$.

Analysis

Figure 9.1.7 shows the graph of the sequence. Notice that, since factorials grow very quickly, the presence of the factorial term in the denominator results in the denominator becoming much larger than the numerator as nn increases. This means the quotient gets smaller and, as the plot of the terms shows, the terms are decreasing and nearing zero.

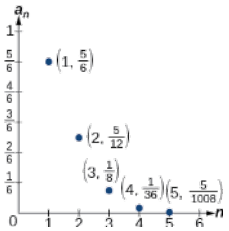

Figure 9.1.7

Exercise 9.1.7

Write the first five terms of the sequence defined by the explicit formula $a_n = \dfrac{(n+1)!}{2n}$.

Answer

The first five terms are $\left\{1, \frac{3}{2}, 4, 15, 72\right\}$

Media

Access this online resource for additional instruction and practice with sequences.

- Finding Terms in a Sequence

Key Equations

Formula for a factorial	$0! = 1$ $1! = 1$ $n! = n(n-1)(n-2)\cdots(2)(1)$, for $n \geq 2$

Key Concepts

- A sequence is a list of numbers, called terms, written in a specific order.
- Explicit formulas define each term of a sequence using the position of the term. See Example $9.1.1$, Example $9.1.2$, and Example $9.1.3$.
- An explicit formula for thenth nth term of a sequence can be written by analyzing the pattern of several terms. See Example $9.1.4$.
- Recursive formulas define each term of a sequence using previous terms.
- Recursive formulas must state the initial term, or terms, of a sequence.
- A set of terms can be written by using a recursive formula. See Example $9.1.5$ and Example $9.1.6$.
- A factorial is a mathematical operation that can be defined recursively.
- The factorial of n is the product of all integers from 1 to n. See Example $9.1.7$.

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9.2: Arithmetic Sequences

Learning Objectives

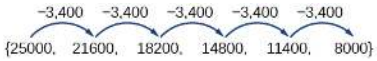
- Find the common difference for an arithmetic sequence.
- Write terms of an arithmetic sequence.
- Use a recursive formula for an arithmetic sequence.
- Use an explicit formula for an arithmetic sequence.

Companies often make large purchases, such as computers and vehicles, for business use. The book-value of these supplies decreases each year for tax purposes. This decrease in value is called depreciation. One method of calculating depreciation is straight-line depreciation, in which the value of the asset decreases by the same amount each year.

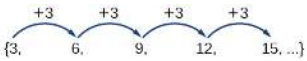
As an example, consider a woman who starts a small contracting business. She purchases a new truck for $\$25,000$. After five years, she estimates that she will be able to sell the truck for $\$8,000$. The loss in value of the truck will therefore be $\$17,000$, which is $\$3,400$ per year for five years. The truck will be worth $\$21,600$ after the first year; $\$18,200$ after two years; $\$14,800$ after three years; $\$11,400$ after four years; and $\$8,000$ at the end of five years. In this section, we will consider specific kinds of sequences that will allow us to calculate depreciation, such as the truck's value.

Finding Common Differences

The values of the truck in the example are said to form an **arithmetic sequence** because they change by a constant amount each year. Each term increases or decreases by the same constant value called the **common difference** of the sequence. For this sequence, the common difference is $-3,400$.



The sequence below is another example of an arithmetic sequence. In this case, the constant difference is 3. You can choose any term of the sequence, and add 3 to find the subsequent term.



ARITHMETIC SEQUENCE

An *arithmetic sequence* is a sequence that has the property that the difference between any two consecutive terms is a constant. This constant is called the *common difference*. If a_1 is the first term of an arithmetic sequence and d is the common difference, the sequence will be:

$$\{a_n\} = \{a_1, a_1 + d, a_1 + 2d, a_1 + 3d, \dots\} \tag{9.2.1}$$

Example 9.2.1: Finding Common Differences

Is each sequence arithmetic? If so, find the common difference.

a. $\{1, 2, 4, 8, 16, \dots\}$
b. $\{-3, 1, 5, 9, 13, \dots\}$

Solution

Subtract each term from the subsequent term to determine whether a common difference exists.

a. The sequence is not arithmetic because there is no common difference.

$$2 - 1 = 1 \qquad 4 - 2 = 2 \qquad 8 - 4 = 4 \qquad 16 - 8 = 8$$

b. The sequence is arithmetic because there is a common difference. The common difference is 4.

$$1 - (-3) = 4 \qquad 5 - 1 = 4 \qquad 9 - 5 = 4 \qquad 13 - 9 = 4$$

Analysis

The graph of each of these sequences is shown in Figure 9.2.1. We can see from the graphs that, although both sequences show growth, (a) is not linear whereas (b) is linear. Arithmetic sequences have a constant rate of change so their graphs will always be points on a line.

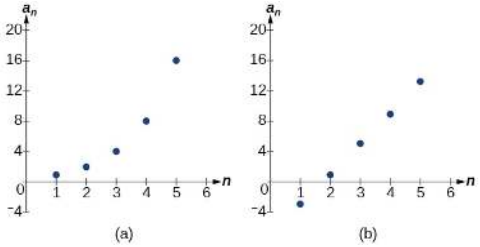


Figure 9.2.1

Q&A

If we are told that a sequence is arithmetic, do we have to subtract every term from the following term to find the common difference?

No. If we know that the sequence is arithmetic, we can choose any one term in the sequence, and subtract it from the subsequent term to find the common difference.

Exercise 9.2.1A

Is the given sequence arithmetic? If so, find the common difference.

$$\{18, 16, 14, 12, 10, \dots\}$$

Answer

The sequence is arithmetic. The common difference is -2.

? Exercise 9.2.1B

Is the given sequence arithmetic? If so, find the common difference.

$$\{1, 3, 6, 10, 15, \ldots\}$$

Answer

The sequence is not arithmetic because $3 - 1 \neq 6 - 3$.

Writing Terms of Arithmetic Sequences

Now that we can recognize an arithmetic sequence, we will find the terms if we are given the first term and the common difference. The terms can be found by beginning with the first term and adding the common difference repeatedly. In addition, any term can also be found by plugging in the values of n and d into formula below.

$$a_n = a_1 + (n-1)d \tag{9.2.2}$$

How to: Given the first term and the common difference of an arithmetic sequence, find the first several terms.

1. Add the common difference to the first term to find the second term.
2. Add the common difference to the second term to find the third term.
3. Continue until all of the desired terms are identified.
4. Write the terms separated by commas within brackets.

✓ Example 9.2.2: Writing Terms of Arithmetic Sequences

Write the first five terms of the arithmetic sequence with $a_1 = 17$ and $d = -3$.

Solution

Adding -3 is the same as subtracting 3. Beginning with the first term, subtract 3 from each term to find the next term.

The first five terms are $\{17, 14, 11, 8, 5\}$

Analysis

As expected, the graph of the sequence consists of points on a line as shown in Figure 9.2.2.

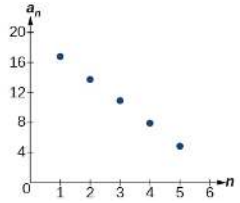


Figure 9.2.2

? Exercise 9.2.2

List the first five terms of the arithmetic sequence with $a_1 = 1$ and $d = 5$.

Answer

$\{1, 6, 11, 16, 21\}$

How to: Given any the first term and any other term in an arithmetic sequence, find a given term.

1. Substitute the values given for a_1, a_n, n into the formula $a_n = a_1 + (n-1)d$ to solve for d.
2. Find a given term by substituting the appropriate values for a_1, n, and d into the formula $a_n = a_1 + (n-1)d$.

✓ Example 9.2.3: Writing Terms of Arithmetic Sequences

Given $a_1 = 8$ and $a_4 = 14$, find a_5.

Solution

The sequence can be written in terms of the initial term 8 and the common difference d.

$$\{8, 8+d, 8+2d, 8+3d\}$$

We know the fourth term equals 14; we know the fourth term has the form $a_1 + 3d = 8 + 3d$.

We can find the common difference d.

$$\begin{aligned} a_n &= a_1 + (n-1)d \\ a_4 &= a_1 + 3d \\ a_4 &= 8 + 3d \quad \text{Write the fourth term of the sequence in terms of } a_1 \text{ and } d. \\ 14 &= 8 + 3d \quad \text{Substitute 14 for } a_4. \\ d &= 2 \quad \text{Solve for the common difference.} \end{aligned}$$

Find the fifth term by adding the common difference to the fourth term.

$$a_5 = a_4 + 2 = 16$$

Analysis

Notice that the common difference is added to the first term once to find the second term, twice to find the third term, three times to find the fourth term, and so on. The tenth term could be found by adding the common difference to the first term nine times or by using the equation $a_n = a_1 + (n-1)d$.

? Exercise 9.2.3

Given $a_3 = 7$ and $a_5 = 17$, find a_2.

Answer

$a_2 = 2$

Using Recursive Formulas for Arithmetic Sequences

Some arithmetic sequences are defined in terms of the previous term using a *recursive formula*. The formula provides an algebraic rule for determining the terms of the sequence. A recursive formula allows us to find any term of an arithmetic sequence using a function of the preceding term. Each term is the sum of the previous term and the common difference. For example, if the common difference is 5, then each term is the previous term plus 5. As with any recursive formula, the first term must be given.

$$a_n = a_n - 1 + d$$

for $n \geq 2$

Note: RECURSIVE FORMULA FOR AN ARITHMETIC SEQUENCE

The recursive formula for an arithmetic sequence with common difference d is:

$$a_n = a_n - 1 + d \tag{9.2.3}$$

for $n \geq 2$

How to: Given an arithmetic sequence, write its recursive formula.

1. Subtract any term from the subsequent term to find the common difference.
2. State the initial term and substitute the common difference into the recursive formula for arithmetic sequences.

Example 9.2.4: Writing a Recursive Formula for an Arithmetic Sequence

Write a **recursive formula** for the **arithmetic sequence**.

$$\{-18, -7, 4, 15, 26, \ldots\}$$

Solution

The first term is given as -18. The common difference can be found by subtracting the first term from the second term.

$$d = -7 - (-18) = 11$$

Substitute the initial term and the common difference into the recursive formula for arithmetic sequences.

$$a_1 = -18$$

$$a_n = a_{n-1} + 11$$

for $n \geq 2$

Analysis

We see that the common difference is the slope of the line formed when we graph the terms of the sequence, as shown in Figure 9.2.3. The growth pattern of the sequence shows the constant difference of 11 units.

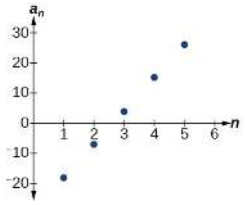


Figure 9.2.3

Q&A

Do we have to subtract the first term from the second term to find the common difference?

No. We can subtract any term in the sequence from the subsequent term. It is, however, most common to subtract the first term from the second term because it is often the easiest method of finding the common difference.

? Exercise 9.2.4

Write a recursive formula for the arithmetic sequence.

$$\{25, 37, 49, 61, \ldots\}$$

Answer

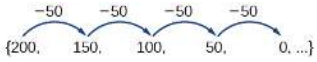
$a_1 = 25$
$a_n = a_{n-1} + 12, \text{ for } n \geq 2$

Using Explicit Formulas for Arithmetic Sequences

We can think of an arithmetic sequence as a function on the domain of the natural numbers; it is a linear function because it has a constant rate of change. The common difference is the constant rate of change, or the slope of the function. We can construct the linear function if we know the slope and the vertical intercept.

$$a_n = a_1 + d(n-1)$$

To find the y-intercept of the function, we can subtract the common difference from the first term of the sequence. Consider the following sequence.



The common difference is -50, so the sequence represents a linear function with a slope of -50. To find the y-intercept, we subtract -50 from 200: $200-(-50)=200+50=250$. You can also find the y-intercept by graphing the function and determining where a line that connects the points would intersect the vertical axis. The graph is shown in Figure 9.2.4.

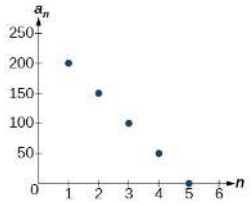


Figure 9.2.4

Recall the slope-intercept form of a line is $y=mx+b$. When dealing with sequences, we use a_n in place of y and n in place of x. If we know the slope and vertical intercept of the function, we can substitute them for m and b in the slope-intercept form of a line. Substituting -50 for the slope and 250 for the vertical intercept, we get the following equation:

$$a_n=-50n+250$$

We do not need to find the vertical intercept to write an explicit formula for an arithmetic sequence. Another explicit formula for this sequence is $a_n=200-50(n-1)$, which simplifies to $a_n=-50n+250$.

Note: EXPLICIT FORMULA FOR AN ARITHMETIC SEQUENCE

An explicit formula for the nth term of an arithmetic sequence is given by

$$a_n=a_1+d(n-1) \tag{9.2.4}$$

How to: Given the first several terms for an arithmetic sequence, write an explicit formula.

1. Find the common difference, a_2-a_1.
2. Substitute the common difference and the first term into $a_n=a_1+d(n-1)$.

Example 9.2.5: Writing the *n*th Term Explicit Formula for an Arithmetic Sequence

Write an explicit formula for the arithmetic sequence.

$$\{2,12,22,32,42,\ldots\}$$

Solution

The common difference can be found by subtracting the first term from the second term.

$$\begin{aligned} d &= a_2-a_1 \\ &= 12-2 \\ &= 10 \end{aligned}$$

The common difference is 10. Substitute the common difference and the first term of the sequence into the formula and simplify.

$$\begin{aligned} a_n &= 2+10(n-1) \\ a_n &= 10n-8 \end{aligned}$$

Analysis

The graph of this sequence, represented in Figure 9.2.5, shows a slope of 10 and a vertical intercept of -8.

Figure 9.2.5

Exercise 9.2.5

Write an explicit formula for the following arithmetic sequence.

$$\{50,47,44,41,\ldots\}$$

Answer

$a_n=53-3n$

Finding the Number of Terms in a Finite Arithmetic Sequence

Explicit formulas can be used to determine the number of terms in a finite arithmetic sequence. We need to find the common difference, and then determine how many times the common difference must be added to the first term to obtain the final term of the sequence.

How to: Given the first three terms and the last term of a finite arithmetic sequence, find the total number of terms.

1. Find the common difference d.
2. Substitute the common difference and the first term into $a_n=a_1+d(n-1)$.
3. Substitute the last term for a_n and solve for n.

Example 9.2.6: Finding the Number of Terms in a Finite Arithmetic Sequence

Find the number of terms in the finite arithmetic sequence.

$$\{8,1,-6,\ldots,-41\}$$

Solution

The common difference can be found by subtracting the first term from the second term.

$$1-8=-7$$

The common difference is -7. Substitute the common difference and the initial term of the sequence into the nth term formula and simplify.

$$\begin{aligned} a_n &= a_1 + d(n-1) \\ a_n &= 8 + -7(n-1) \\ a_n &= 15 - 7n \end{aligned}$$

Substitute -41 for a_n and solve for n

$$\begin{aligned} -41 &= 15 - 7n \\ 8 &= n \end{aligned}$$

There are eight terms in the sequence.

Exercise 9.2.6

Find the number of terms in the finite arithmetic sequence.

$$\{6, 11, 16, \ldots, 56\}$$

Answer

There are 11 terms in the sequence.

Solving Application Problems with Arithmetic Sequences

In many application problems, it often makes sense to use an initial term of a_0 instead of a_1. In these problems, we alter the explicit formula slightly to account for the difference in initial terms. We use the following formula:

$$a_n = a_0 + dn \tag{9.2.5}$$

Example 9.2.7: Solving Application Problems with Arithmetic Sequences

A five-year old child receives an allowance of \$1 each week. His parents promise him an annual increase of \$2 per week.

a. Write a formula for the child's weekly allowance in a given year.
b. What will the child's allowance be when he is 16 years old?

Solution

a. The situation can be modeled by an arithmetic sequence with an initial term of 1 and a common difference of 2.

Let A be the amount of the allowance and n be the number of years after age 5. Using the altered explicit formula for an arithmetic sequence we get:

$$A_n = 1 + 2n$$

b. We can find the number of years since age 5 by subtracting.

$$16 - 5 = 11$$

We are looking for the child's allowance after 11 years. Substitute 11 into the formula to find the child's allowance at age 16.

$$A_{11} = 1 + 2(11) = 23$$

The child's allowance at age 16 will be \$23 per week.

Exercise 9.2.7

A woman decides to go for a 10-minute run every day this week and plans to increase the time of her daily run by 4 minutes each week. Write a formula for the time of her run after n weeks. How long will her daily run be 8 weeks from today?

Answer

The formula is $T_n = 10 + 4n$, and it will take her 42 minutes.

Media

Access this online resource for additional instruction and practice with arithmetic sequences.

- Arithmetic Sequences

Key Equations

recursive formula for nth term of an arithmetic sequence	$a_n = a_{n-1} + d \;\; n \geq 2$
explicit formula for nth term of an arithmetic sequence	$a_n = a_1 + d(n-1)$

Key Concepts

- An arithmetic sequence is a sequence where the difference between any two consecutive terms is a constant.
- The constant between two consecutive terms is called the common difference.
- The common difference is the number added to any one term of an arithmetic sequence that generates the subsequent term. See Example 9.2.1.
- The terms of an arithmetic sequence can be found by beginning with the initial term and adding the common difference repeatedly. See Example 9.2.2 and Example 9.2.3.
- A recursive formula for an arithmetic sequence with common difference dd is given by $a_n = a_{n-1} + d$, $n \geq 2$. See Example 9.2.4.
- As with any recursive formula, the initial term of the sequence must be given.
- An explicit formula for an arithmetic sequence with common difference d is given by $a_n = a_1 + d(n-1)$. See Example 9.2.5.
- An explicit formula can be used to find the number of terms in a sequence. See Example 9.2.6.
- In application problems, we sometimes alter the explicit formula slightly to $a_n = a_0 + dn$. See Example 9.2.7.

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9.3: Geometric Sequences

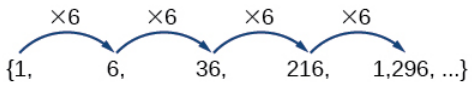
Learning Objectives

- Find the common ratio for a geometric sequence.
- List the terms of a geometric sequence.
- Use a recursive formula for a geometric sequence.
- Use an explicit formula for a geometric sequence.

Many jobs offer an annual cost-of-living increase to keep salaries consistent with inflation. Suppose, for example, a recent college graduate finds a position as a sales manager earning an annual salary of $\$26,000$. He is promised a 2% cost of living increase each year. His annual salary in any given year can be found by multiplying his salary from the previous year by 102%. His salary will be $\$26,520$ after one year; $\$27,050.40$ after two years; $\$27,591.41$ after three years; and so on. When a salary increases by a constant rate each year, the salary grows by a constant factor. In this section, we will review sequences that grow in this way.

Finding Common Ratios

The yearly salary values described form a **geometric sequence** because they change by a constant factor each year. Each term of a geometric sequence increases or decreases by a constant factor called the **common ratio**. The sequence below is an example of a geometric sequence because each term increases by a constant factor of 6. Multiplying any term of the sequence by the common ratio 6 generates the subsequent term.



Definition: GEOMETRIC SEQUENCE

A geometric sequence is one in which any term divided by the previous term is a constant. This constant is called the *common ratio* of the sequence. The common ratio can be found by dividing any term in the sequence by the previous term. If a_1 is the initial term of a geometric sequence and r is the common ratio, the sequence will be

$$\{a_1, a_1 r, a_1 r^2, a_1 r^3, \dots\}. \tag{9.3.1}$$

How to: Given a set of numbers, determine if they represent a geometric sequence.

1. Divide each term by the previous term.
2. Compare the quotients. If they are the same, a common ratio exists and the sequence is geometric.

Example 9.3.1: Finding Common Ratios

Is the sequence geometric? If so, find the common ratio.

a. 1, 2, 4, 8, 16,...
b. 48, 12, 4, 2,...

Solution

Divide each term by the previous term to determine whether a common ratio exists.

a. $\frac{2}{1} = 2 \ \frac{4}{2} = 2 \ \frac{8}{4} = 2 \ \frac{16}{8} = 2$

The sequence is geometric because there is a common ratio. The common ratio is 2.

b. $\frac{12}{48} = \frac{1}{4} \ \frac{4}{12} = \frac{1}{3} \ \frac{2}{4} = \frac{1}{2}$

The sequence is not geometric because there is not a common ratio.

Analysis

The graph of each sequence is shown in Figure 9.3.1. It seems from the graphs that both (a) and (b) appear have the form of the graph of an exponential function in this viewing window. However, we know that (a) is geometric and so this interpretation holds, but (b) is not.

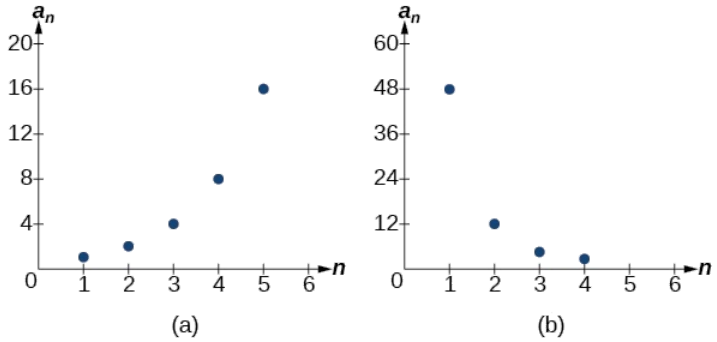


Figure 9.3.1

Q&A

If you are told that a sequence is geometric, do you have to divide every term by the previous term to find the common ratio?

No. If you know that the sequence is geometric, you can choose any one term in the sequence and divide it by the previous term to find the common ratio.

Exercise 9.3.1A

Is the sequence geometric? If so, find the common ratio.

$$5, 10, 15, 20,...$$

Answer

The sequence is not geometric because $\frac{10}{5} \neq \frac{15}{10}$

Exercise 9.3.1B

Is the sequence geometric? If so, find the common ratio.

$$100, 20, 4, \frac{4}{5},...$$

Answer

The sequence is geometric. The common ratio is $\frac{1}{5}$

Writing Terms of Geometric Sequences

Now that we can identify a geometric sequence, we will learn how to find the terms of a geometric sequence if we are given the first term and the common ratio. The terms of a geometric sequence can be found by beginning with the first term and multiplying by the common ratio repeatedly. For instance, if the first term of a geometric sequence is $a_1 = -2$ and the common ratio is $r = 4$, we can find subsequent terms by multiplying $-2 \cdot 4$ to get -8 then multiplying the result $-8 \cdot 4$ to get -32 and so on.

$$
\begin{aligned}
a_1 &= -2 \\
a_2 &= (-2 \cdot 4) = -8 \\
a_3 &= (-8 \cdot 4) = -32 \\
a_4 &= (-32 \cdot 4) = 128
\end{aligned}
$$

The first four terms are $\{-2, -8, -32, -128\}$

How to: Given the first term and the common factor, find the first four terms of a geometric sequence.

1. Multiply the initial term, a_1, by the common ratio to find the next term, a_2.
2. Repeat the process, using $a_n = a_2$ to find a_3 and then use a_3 to find a_4, until all four terms have been identified.
3. Write the terms separated by commons within brackets.

Example 9.3.2: Writing the Terms of a Geometric Sequence

List the first four terms of the geometric sequence with $a_1 = 5$ and $r = -2$.

Solution

Multiply a_1 by -2 to find a_2. Repeat the process, using a_2 to find a_3, and so on.

$$
\begin{aligned}
a_1 &= 5 \\
a_2 &= -2a_1 = -10 \\
a_3 &= -2a_2 = 20 \\
a_4 &= -2a_3 = -40
\end{aligned}
$$

The first four terms are $\{5, -10, 20, -40\}$

Exercise 9.3.2

List the first five terms of the geometric sequence with $a_1 = 18$ and $r = \frac{1}{3}$.

Answer

$$\left\{18, 6, 2, \frac{2}{3}, \frac{2}{9}\right\}$$

Using Recursive Formulas for Geometric Sequences

A recursive formula allows us to find any term of a geometric sequence by using the previous term. Each term is the product of the common ratio and the previous term. For example, suppose the common ratio is 9. Then each term is nine times the previous term. As with any recursive formula, the initial term must be given.

Note: RECURSIVE FORMULA FOR A GEOMETRIC SEQUENCE

The recursive formula for a geometric sequence with common ratio r and first term a_1 is

$$a_n = ra_{n-1}, \quad n \geq 2 \tag{9.3.2}$$

How to: Given the first several terms of a geometric sequence, write its recursive formula.

1. State the initial term.
2. Find the common ratio by dividing any term by the preceding term.
3. Substitute the common ratio into the recursive formula for a geometric sequence.

Example 9.3.3: Using Recursive Formulas for Geometric Sequences

Write a recursive formula for the following geometric sequence.

$$\{6, 9, 13.5, 20.25, \dots\}$$

Solution

The first term is given as 6. The common ratio can be found by dividing the second term by the first term.

$$r = \frac{9}{6} = 1.5$$

Substitute the common ratio into the recursive formula for geometric sequences and define a_1.

$$\begin{aligned} a_n &= ra_{n-1} \\ a_n &= 1.5a_{n-1} \text{ for } n \geq 2 \\ a_1 &= 6 \end{aligned}$$

Analysis

The sequence of data points follows an exponential pattern. The common ratio is also the base of an exponential function as shown in Figure 9.3.2.

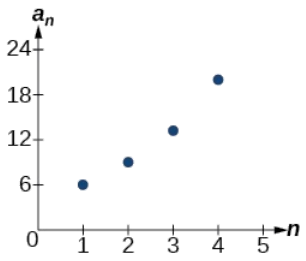


Figure 9.3.2

Q&A

Do we have to divide the second term by the first term to find the common ratio?

No. We can divide any term in the sequence by the previous term. It is, however, most common to divide the second term by the first term because it is often the easiest method of finding the common ratio.

Exercise 9.3.3

Write a recursive formula for the following geometric sequence.

$$\{2, \tfrac{4}{3}, \tfrac{8}{9}, \tfrac{16}{27}, \dots\}$$

Answer

$$\begin{aligned} a_1 &= 2 \\ a_n &= \frac{2}{3}a_{n-1} \text{ for } n \geq 2 \end{aligned}$$

Using Explicit Formulas for Geometric Sequences

Because a geometric sequence is an exponential function whose domain is the set of positive integers, and the common ratio is the base of the function, we can write explicit formulas that allow us to find particular terms.

$$a_n = a_1 r^{n-1} \tag{9.3.3}$$

Let's take a look at the sequence $\{18, 36, 72, 144, 288, \dots\}$. This is a geometric sequence with a common ratio of 2 and an exponential function with a base of 2. An explicit formula for this sequence is

$$a_n = 18 \cdot 2^{n-1}$$

The graph of the sequence is shown in Figure 9.3.3.

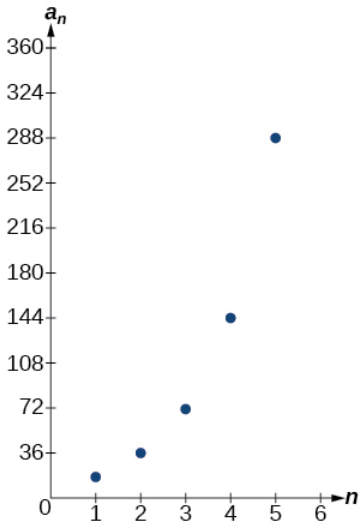


Figure 9.3.3

Note: EXPLICIT FORMULA FOR A GEOMETRIC SEQUENCE

The nth term of a geometric sequence is given by the *explicit formula*:

$$a_n = a_1 r^{n-1} \tag{9.3.4}$$

Example 9.3.4: Writing Terms of Geometric Sequences Using the Explicit Formula

Given a geometric sequence with $a_1 = 3$ and $a_4 = 24$, find a_2.

Solution

The sequence can be written in terms of the initial term and the common ratio r.

$$3, 3r, 3r^2, 3r^3, \ldots$$

Find the common ratio using the given fourth term.

$$\begin{aligned} a_n &= a_1 r^{n-1} \\ a_4 &= 3r^3 \quad \text{Write the fourth term of sequence in terms of } a_1 \text{ and } r \\ 24 &= 3r^3 \quad \text{Substitute 24 for } a_4 \\ 8 &= r^3 \quad \text{Divide} \\ r &= 2 \quad \text{Solve for the common ratio} \end{aligned}$$

Find the second term by multiplying the first term by the common ratio.

$$\begin{aligned} a_2 &= 2 \\ a_1 &= 2(3) \\ &= 6 \end{aligned}$$

Analysis

The common ratio is multiplied by the first term once to find the second term, twice to find the third term, three times to find the fourth term, and so on. The tenth term could be found by multiplying the first term by the common ratio nine times or by multiplying by the common ratio raised to the ninth power.

Exercise 9.3.4

Given a geometric sequence with $a_2 = 4$ and $2a_3 = 32$, find a_6.

Answer

$a_6 = 16,384$

Example 9.3.5: Writing an Explicit Formula for the *n*th Term of a Geometric Sequence

Write an explicit formula for the nth term of the following geometric sequence.

$$\{2, 10, 50, 250, \dots\}$$

Solution

The first term is 2. The common ratio can be found by dividing the second term by the first term.

$$\frac{10}{2} = 5$$

The common ratio is 5. Substitute the common ratio and the first term of the sequence into the formula.

$$a_n = a_1 r^{(n-1)}$$
$$a_n = 2 \cdot 5^{n-1}$$

The graph of this sequence in Figure 9.3.4 shows an exponential pattern.

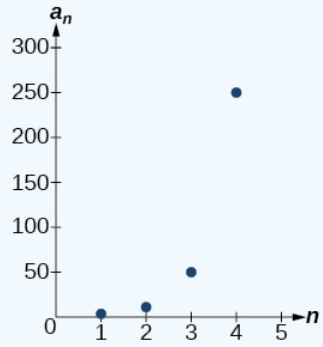


Figure 9.3.4

Exercise 9.3.5

Write an explicit formula for the following geometric sequence.

$$\{-1, 3, -9, 27, \dots\}$$

Answer

$a_n = -(-3)^{n-1}$

Solving Application Problems with Geometric Sequences

In real-world scenarios involving arithmetic sequences, we may need to use an initial term of a_0 instead of a_1. In these problems, we can alter the explicit formula slightly by using the following formula:

$$a_n = a_0 r^n$$

Example 9.3.6: Solving Application Problems with Geometric Sequences

In 2013, the number of students in a small school is 284. It is estimated that the student population will increase by 4% each year.

a. Write a formula for the student population.
b. Estimate the student population in 2020.

Solution

a. The situation can be modeled by a geometric sequence with an initial term of 284. The student population will be 104% of the prior year, so the common ratio is 1.04.

Let P be the student population and n be the number of years after 2013. Using the explicit formula for a geometric sequence we get

$$P_n = 284 \cdot 1.04^n$$

b. We can find the number of years since 2013 by subtracting.

$$2020 - 2013 = 7$$

We are looking for the population after 7 years. We can substitute 7 for n to estimate the population in 2020.

$$P_7 = 284 \cdot 1.04^7 \approx 374$$

The student population will be about 374 in 2020.

Exercise 9.3.6

A business starts a new website. Initially the number of hits is 293 due to the curiosity factor. The business estimates the number of hits will increase by 2.6 per week.

a. Write a formula for the number of hits.
b. Estimate the number of hits in 5 weeks.

Answer a

$P_n = 293 \cdot 1.026a^n$

Answer b

The number of hits will be about 333.

Media

Access these online resources for additional instruction and practice with geometric sequences.

- Geometric Sequences
- Determine the Type of Sequence
- Find the Formula for a Sequence

Key Equations

recursive formula for nth term of a geometric sequence	$a_n = ra_{n-1}, n \geq 2$
explicit formula for nth term of a geometric sequence	$a_n = a_1 r^{n-1}$

Key Concepts

- A geometric sequence is a sequence in which the ratio between any two consecutive terms is a constant.
- The constant ratio between two consecutive terms is called the common ratio.
- The common ratio can be found by dividing any term in the sequence by the previous term. See Example 9.3.1.

- The terms of a geometric sequence can be found by beginning with the first term and multiplying by the common ratio repeatedly. See Example $9.3.2$ and Example $9.3.4$.
- A recursive formula for a geometric sequence with common ratio r is given by $a_n = ra_{n-1}$ for $n \geq 2$.
- As with any recursive formula, the initial term of the sequence must be given. See Example $9.3.3$.
- An explicit formula for a geometric sequence with common ratio r is given by $a_n = a_1 r^{n-1}$. See Example $9.3.5$.
- In application problems, we sometimes alter the explicit formula slightly to $a_n = a_0 r^n$. See Example $9.3.6$.

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9.4: Series and Their Notations

Learning Objectives

- Use summation notation.
- Use the formula for the sum of the first n terms of an arithmetic series.
- Use the formula for the sum of the first n terms of a geometric series.
- Use the formula for the sum of an infinite geometric series.
- Solve annuity problems.

A couple decides to start a college fund for their daughter. They plan to invest $\$50$ in the fund each month. The fund pays 6% annual interest, compounded monthly. How much money will they have saved when their daughter is ready to start college in 6 years? In this section, we will learn how to answer this question. To do so, we need to consider the amount of money invested and the amount of interest earned.

Using Summation Notation

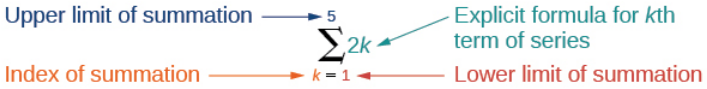
To find the total amount of money in the college fund and the sum of the amounts deposited, we need to add the amounts deposited each month and the amounts earned monthly. The sum of the terms of a sequence is called a *series*. Consider, for example, the following series.

$$3+7+11+15+19+\ldots$$

The nth *partial sum* of a series is the sum of a finite number of consecutive terms beginning with the first term. The notation S_n represents the partial sum.

$$\begin{aligned} S_1 &= 3 \\ S_2 &= 3+7=10 \\ S_3 &= 3+7+11=21 \\ S_4 &= 3+7+11+15=36 \end{aligned}$$

Summation notation is used to represent series. Summation notation is often known as sigma notation because it uses the Greek capital letter *sigma*, $\sum$, to represent the sum. Summation notation includes an explicit formula and specifies the first and last terms in the series. An explicit formula for each term of the series is given to the right of the sigma. A variable called the *index of summation* is written below the sigma. The index of summation is set equal to the *lower limit of summation*, which is the number used to generate the first term in the series. The number above the sigma, called the *upper limit of summation*, is the number used to generate the last term in a series.



If we interpret the given notation, we see that it asks us to find the sum of the terms in the series $a_k=2k$ for $k=1$ through $k=5$. We can begin by substituting the terms for k and listing out the terms of this series.

$$\begin{aligned} a_1 &= 2(1)=2 \\ a_2 &= 2(2)=4 \\ a_3 &= 2(3)=6 \\ a_4 &= 2(4)=8 \\ a_5 &= 2(5)=10 \end{aligned}$$

We can find the sum of the series by adding the terms:

$$\sum_{k=1}^{5} 2k = 2+4+6+8+10=30$$

Definition: SUMMATION NOTATION

The sum of the first n terms of a series can be expressed in *summation notation* as follows:

$$\sum_{k=1}^{n} a_k \tag{9.4.1}$$

This notation tells us to find the sum of a_k from $k=1$ to $k=n$.

k is called the index of summation, 1 is the lower limit of summation, and n is the upper limit of summation.

Q&A: Does the lower limit of summation have to be 1?

No. The lower limit of summation can be any number, but 1 *is frequently used. We will look at examples with lower limits of summation other than* 1.

How to: Given summation notation for a series, evaluate the value

1. Identify the lower limit of summation.
2. Identify the upper limit of summation.
3. Substitute each value of k from the lower limit to the upper limit into the formula.
4. Add to find the sum.

Example 9.4.1: Using Summation Notation

Evaluate

$$\sum_{k=3}^{7} k^2$$

Solution

According to the notation, the lower limit of summation is 3 and the upper limit is 7. So we need to find the sum of k^2 from $k=3$ to $k=7$. We find the terms of the series by substituting $k=3,4,5,6,$ and 7 into the function k^2. We add the terms to find the sum.

$$\begin{aligned}\sum_{k=3}^{7} k^2 &= 3^2+4^2+5^2+6^2+7^2\\ &= 9+16+25+36+49\\ &= 135\end{aligned}$$

Exercise 9.4.1

Evaluate

$$\sum_{k=2}^{5}(3k-1)$$

Answer

38

Using the Formula for Arithmetic Series

Just as we studied special types of sequences, we will look at special types of series. Recall that an arithmetic sequence is a sequence in which the difference between any two consecutive terms is the *common difference*, d. The sum of the terms of an arithmetic sequence is called an *arithmetic series*. We can write the sum of the first n terms of an arithmetic series as:

$$S_n = a_1+(a_1+d)+(a_1+2d)+\ldots+(a_n-d)+a_n.$$

We can also reverse the order of the terms and write the sum as

$$S_n = a_n + (a_n - d) + (a_n - 2d) + \ldots + (a_1 + d) + a_1.$$

If we add these two expressions for the sum of the first n terms of an arithmetic series, we can derive a formula for the sum of the first n terms of any arithmetic series.

$$\begin{aligned} S_n &= a_1 + (a_1 + d) + (a_1 + 2d) + \ldots + (a_n - d) + a_n \\ +S_n &= a_n + (a_n - d) + (a_n - 2d) + \ldots + (a_1 + d) + a_1 \\ \hline 2S_n &= (a_1 + a_n) + (a_1 + a_n) + \ldots + (a_1 + a_n) \end{aligned}$$

Because there are n terms in the series, we can simplify this sum to

$$2S_n = n(a_1 + a_n).$$

We divide by 2 to find the formula for the sum of the first n terms of an arithmetic series.

$$S_n = \frac{n(a_1 + a_n)}{2}$$

FORMULA FOR THE SUM OF THE FIRST N TERMS OF AN ARITHMETIC SERIES

An arithmetic series is the sum of the terms of an arithmetic sequence. The formula for the sum of the first n terms of an arithmetic sequence is

$$S_n = \frac{n(a_1 + a_n)}{2} \tag{9.4.2}$$

How to: Given terms of an arithmetic series, find the sum of the first n terms

1. Identify a_1 and a_n.
2. Determine n.
3. Substitute values for a_1, a_n, and n into the formula $S_n = \frac{n(a_1 + a_n)}{2}$.
4. Simplify to find S_n.

Terms of an Arithmetic Series

Find the sum of each arithmetic series.

a. $5 + 8 + 11 + 14 + 17 + 20 + 23 + 26 + 29 + 32$
b. $20 + 15 + 10 + \ldots + -50$
c. $\sum_{k=1}^{12} 3k - 8$

Solution

a. We are given $a_1 = 5$ and $a_n = 32$.

Count the number of terms in the sequence to find $n = 10$.

Substitute values for a_1, a_n, and n into the formula and simplify.

$$\begin{aligned} S_n &= \frac{n(a_1 + a_n)}{2} \\ S_{10} &= \frac{10(5 + 32)}{2} \\ &= 185 \end{aligned}$$

2. We are given $a_1 = 20$ and $a_n = -50$.

Use the formula for the general term of an arithmetic sequence to find n.

$$\begin{aligned} a_n &= a_1 + (n-1)d \\ -50 &= 20 + (n-1)(-5) \\ -70 &= (n-1)(-5) \\ 14 &= n-1 \\ 15 &= n \end{aligned}$$

Substitute values for a_1, a_n, n into the formula and simplify.

$$\begin{aligned} S_n &= \frac{n(a_1 + a_n)}{2} \\ S_{15} &= \frac{15(20-50)}{2} \\ &= -225 \end{aligned}$$

c. To find a_1, substitute $k = 1$ into the given explicit formula.

$$\begin{aligned} a_k &= 3k - 8 \\ a_1 &= 3(1) - 8 \\ &= -5 \end{aligned}$$

We are given that $n = 12$. To find a_12, substitute $k = 12$ into the given explicit formula.

$$\begin{aligned} a_k &= 3k - 8 \\ a_{12} &= 3(12) - 8 \\ &= 28 \end{aligned}$$

Substitute values for a_1, a_n, and n into the formula and simplify.

$$\begin{aligned} S_n &= \frac{n(a_1 + a_n)}{2} \\ S_{12} &= \frac{12(-5+28)}{2} \\ &= 138 \end{aligned}$$

Use the formula to find the sum of each arithmetic series.

? Exercise 9.4.2A

$1.4 + 1.6 + 1.8 + 2.0 + 2.2 + 2.4 + 2.6 + 2.8 + 3.0 + 3.2 + 3.4$

Answer

26.4

? Exercise 9.4.2B

$13 + 21 + 29 + \ldots + 69$

Answer

328

? Exercise 9.4.2C

$\sum_{k=1} 105 - 6k$

Answer

-280

Example 9.4.3: Solving Application Problems with Arithmetic Series

On the Sunday after a minor surgery, a woman is able to walk a half-mile. Each Sunday, she walks an additional quarter-mile. After 8 weeks, what will be the total number of miles she has walked?

Solution

This problem can be modeled by an arithmetic series with $a_1 = \frac{1}{2}$ and $d = \frac{1}{4}$. We are looking for the total number of miles walked after 8 weeks, so we know that $n = 8$, and we are looking for S_8. To find a_8, we can use the explicit formula for an arithmetic sequence.

$$\begin{aligned} a_n &= a_1 + d(n-1) \\ a_8 &= \frac{1}{2} + \frac{1}{4}(8-1) \\ &= \frac{9}{4} \end{aligned}$$

We can now use the formula for arithmetic series.

$$\begin{aligned} S_n &= \frac{n(a_1 + a_n)}{2} \\ S_8 &= \frac{8\left(\frac{1}{2} + \frac{9}{4}\right)}{2} \\ &= 11 \end{aligned}$$

She will have walked a total of 11 miles.

Exercise 9.4.3

A man earns $\$100$ in the first week of June. Each week, he earns $\$12.50$ more than the previous week. After 12 weeks, how much has he earned?

Answer

$\$2,025$

Using the Formula for Geometric Series

Just as the sum of the terms of an arithmetic sequence is called an arithmetic series, the sum of the terms in a geometric sequence is called a **geometric series**. Recall that a **geometric sequence** is a sequence in which the ratio of any two consecutive terms is the **common ratio**, r. We can write the sum of the first n terms of a geometric series as

$$S_n = a_1 + ra_1 + r^2 a_1 + \ldots + r^{n-1} a_1 \ .$$

Just as with arithmetic series, we can do some algebraic manipulation to derive a formula for the sum of the first n terms of a geometric series. We will begin by multiplying both sides of the equation by r.

$$rS_n = ra_1 + r^2 a_1 + r^3 a_1 + \ldots + r^n a_1$$

Next, we subtract this equation from the original equation.

$$\begin{aligned} S_n &= a_1 + ra_1 + r^2 a_1 + \ldots + r^{n-1} a_1 \\ \underline{-rS_n} &= \underline{-(ra_1 + r^2 a_1 + r^3 a_1 + \ldots + r^n a_1)} \\ (1-r)S_n &= a_1 - r^n a_1 \end{aligned}$$

Notice that when we subtract, all but the first term of the top equation and the last term of the bottom equation cancel out. To obtain a formula for S_n, divide both sides by $(1-r)$.

$$S_n = \frac{a_1(1-r^n)}{1-r} \quad r \neq 1$$

TERMS OF A GEOMETRIC SERIES

A geometric series is the sum of the terms in a geometric sequence. The formula for the sum of the first n terms of a geometric sequence is represented as

$$S_n = \frac{a_1(1-r^n)}{1-r} \quad r \neq 1$$

How to: Given a geometric series, find the sum of the first n terms.

1. Identify a_1, r, and n.
2. Substitute values for a_1, r, and n into the formula $S_n = \frac{a_1(1-r^n)}{1-r}$.
3. Simplify to find S_n.

Terms of a Geometric Series

Use the formula to find the indicated partial sum of each geometric series.

a. S_{11} for the series $8 + -4 + 2 + \ldots$
b. $\sum_{6}^{k=1} 3 \cdot 2k$

Solution

a. $a_1 = 8$, and we are given that $n = 11$.

We can find r by dividing the second term of the series by the first.

$$r = \frac{-4}{8} = -\frac{1}{2}$$

Substitute values for a_1, r, and n into the formula and simplify.

$$S_n = \frac{a_1(1-r^n)}{1-r}$$

$$S_{11} = \frac{8\left(1-\left(-\frac{1}{2}\right)^{11}\right)}{1-\left(-\frac{1}{2}\right)}$$

$$\approx 5.336$$

b. Find a_1 by substituting $k = 1$ into the given explicit formula.

$$a_1 = 3 \cdot 2^1 = 6$$

We can see from the given explicit formula that $r = 2$. The upper limit of summation is 6, so $n = 6$.

Substitute values for a_1, r, and n into the formula, and simplify.

$$S_n = \frac{a_1(1-r^n)}{1-r}$$

$$S_6 = \frac{6(1-2^6)}{1-2}$$

$$= 378$$

Use the formula to find the indicated partial sum of each geometric series.

Exercise 9.4.4A

S_{20} for the series $1,000+500+250+\ldots$

Answer

$\approx 2,000.00$

Exercise 9.4.4B

$\sum_{k=1}^{8} 3^k$

Answer

$9,840$

Example 9.4.5: Solving an Application Problem with a Geometric Series

At a new job, an employee's starting salary is $\$26,750$. He receives a 1.6% annual raise. Find his total earnings at the end of 5 years.

Solution

The problem can be represented by a geometric series with $a_1 = 26,750$; $n = 5$; and $r = 1.016$. Substitute values for a_1, r, and n into the formula and simplify to find the total amount earned at the end of 5 years.

$$S_n = \frac{a_1(1-r^n)}{1-r}$$
$$S_5 = \frac{26,750(1-1.016^5)}{1-1.016}$$
$$\approx 138,099.03$$

He will have earned a total of $\$138,099.03$ by the end of 5 years.

Exercise 9.4.5

At a new job, an employee's starting salary is $\$32,100$. She receives a 2% annual raise. How much will she have earned by the end of 8 years?

Answer

$\$275,513.31$

Using the Formula for the Sum of an Infinite Geometric Series

Thus far, we have looked only at finite series. Sometimes, however, we are interested in the sum of the terms of an infinite sequence rather than the sum of only the first n terms. An infinite series is the sum of the terms of an **infinite sequence**. An example of an infinite series is $2+4+6+8+\ldots$

This series can also be written in summation notation as $\sum_{k=1}^{\infty} 2k$, where the upper limit of summation is infinity. Because the terms are not tending to zero, the sum of the series increases without bound as we add more terms. Therefore, the sum of this infinite series is not defined. When the sum is not a real number, we say the series **diverges**.

Determining Whether the Sum of an Infinite Geometric Series is Defined

If the terms of an **infinite geometric series** approach 0, the sum of an infinite geometric series can be defined. The terms in this series approach 0:

$$1+0.2+0.04+0.008+0.0016+\ldots$$

The common ratio $r = 0.2$. As n gets very large, the values of r^n get very small and approach 0. Each successive term affects the sum less than the preceding term. As each succeeding term gets closer to 0, the sum of the terms approaches a finite value. The terms of any infinite geometric series with $-1 < r < 1$ approach 0; the sum of a geometric series is defined when $-1 < r < 1$.

DETERMINING WHETHER THE SUM OF AN INFINITE GEOMETRIC SERIES IS DEFINED

The sum of an infinite series is defined if the series is geometric and $-1 < r < 1$.

How to: Given the first several terms of an infinite series, determine if the sum of the series exists.

1. Find the ratio of the second term to the first term.
2. Find the ratio of the third term to the second term.
3. Continue this process to ensure the ratio of a term to the preceding term is constant throughout. If so, the series is geometric.
4. If a common ratio, r, was found in step 3, check to see if $-1 < r < 1$. If so, the sum is defined. If not, the sum is not defined.

Example 9.4.6: Determining Whether the Sum of an Infinite Series is Defined

Determine whether the sum of each infinite series is defined.

a. $12 + 8 + 4 + \ldots$
b. $\frac{3}{4} + \frac{1}{2} + \frac{1}{3} + \ldots$
c. $\sum_{k=1}^{\infty} 27 \cdot \left(\frac{1}{3}\right)^k$
d. $\sum_{k=1}^{\infty} 5k$

Solution

a. The ratio of the second term to the first is $\frac{2}{3}$, which is not the same as the ratio of the third term to the second, $\frac{1}{2}$.The series is not geometric.
b. The ratio of the second term to the first is the same as the ratio of the third term to the second. The series is geometric with a common ratio of $\frac{2}{3}$. The sum of the infinite series is defined.
c. The given formula is exponential with a base of $\frac{1}{3}$; the series is geometric with a common ratio of $\frac{1}{3}$. The sum of the infinite series is defined.
d. The given formula is not exponential; the series is not geometric because the terms are increasing, and so cannot yield a finite sum.

Determine whether the sum of the infinite series is defined.

Exercise 9.4.6A

$\frac{1}{3} + \frac{1}{2} + \frac{3}{4} + \frac{9}{8} + \ldots$

Answer

The sum is defined. It is geometric.

Exercise 9.4.6B

$24 + (-12) + 6 + (-3) + \ldots$

Answer

The sum of the infinite series is defined.

Exercise 9.4.6C

$\sum_{k=1}^{\infty} 15 \cdot (-0.3)^k$

Answer

The sum of the infinite series is defined.

Finding Sums of Infinite Series

When the sum of an infinite geometric series exists, we can calculate the sum. The formula for the sum of an infinite series is related to the formula for the sum of the first n terms of a geometric series.

$$S_n = \frac{a_1(1-r^n)}{1-r} \tag{9.4.3}$$

We will examine an infinite series with $r = \frac{1}{2}$. What happens to r^n as n increases?

$$\left(\frac{1}{2}\right)^2 = \frac{1}{4}$$
$$\left(\frac{1}{2}\right)^3 = \frac{1}{8}$$
$$\left(\frac{1}{2}\right)^4 = \frac{1}{16}$$

The value of r^n decreases rapidly. What happens for greater values of n?

$$\left(\frac{1}{2}\right)^{10} = \frac{1}{1,024}$$
$$\left(\frac{1}{2}\right)^{20} = \frac{1}{1,048,576}$$
$$\left(\frac{1}{2}\right)^{30} = \frac{1}{1,073,741,824}$$

As n gets very large, r^n gets very small. We say that, as n increases without bound, r^n approaches 0. As r^n approaches 0, 1, $-r^n$ approaches 1. When this happens, the numerator approaches a_1. This give us a formula for the sum of an infinite geometric series.

FORMULA FOR THE SUM OF AN INFINITE GEOMETRIC SERIES

The formula for the sum of an infinite geometric series with $-1 < r < 1$ is

$$S = \frac{a_1}{1-r} \tag{9.4.4}$$

How to: Given an infinite geometric series, find its sum

1. Identify a_1 and r.
2. Confirm that $-1 < r < 1$.
3. Substitute values for a_1 and r into the formula, $S = \frac{a_1}{1-r}$.
4. Simplify to find S.

Example 9.4.7A: Finding the Sum of an Infinite Geometric Series

Find the sum, if it exists, for the following:

a. $10+9+8+7+\ldots$
b. $248.6+99.44+39.776+\ldots$
c. $\sum_{k=1}^{\infty} 4,374\cdot(-\frac{1}{3})^{k-1}$
d. $\sum_{k=1}^{\infty} \frac{1}{9}\cdot(\frac{4}{3})^{k}$

Solution

a. There is not a constant ratio; the series is not geometric.

b. There is a constant ratio; the series is geometric. $a_1=248.6$ and $r=\dfrac{99.44}{248.6}=0.4$, so the sum exists. Substitute $a_1=248.6$ and $r=0.4$ into the formula and simplify to find the sum:

$$\begin{aligned} S &= \frac{a_1}{1-r} \\ &= \frac{248.6}{1-0.4} \\ &= 414.\overline{3} \end{aligned}$$

c. The formula is exponential, so the series is geometric with $r=-\dfrac{1}{3}$. Find a_1 by substituting $k=1$ into the given explicit formula:

$$a_1 = 4,374\cdot(-\frac{1}{3})^{1-1} = 4,374$$

Substitute $a_1=4,374$ and $r=-\dfrac{1}{3}$ into the formula, and simplify to find the sum:

$$\begin{aligned} S &= \frac{a_1}{1-r} \\ &= \frac{4,374}{1-\left(-\frac{1}{3}\right)} \\ &= 3,280.5 \end{aligned}$$

d. The formula is exponential, so the series is geometric, but $r>1$. The sum does not exist.

Example 9.4.7B: Finding an Equivalent Fraction for a Repeating Decimal

Find an equivalent fraction for the repeating decimal $0.\overline{3}$

Solution

We notice the repeating decimal $0.\overline{3}=0.333\ldots$so we can rewrite the repeating decimal as a sum of terms.

$$0.\overline{3}=0.3+0.03+0.003+\ldots$$

Looking for a pattern, we rewrite the sum, noticing that we see the first term multiplied to 0.1 in the second term, and the second term multiplied to 0.1 in the third term.

$$0.\overline{3} = 0.3 + (0.1)\underbrace{(0.3)}_{\text{First Term}} + (0.1)\underbrace{(0.1)(0.3)}_{\text{Second Term}}$$

Notice the pattern; we multiply each consecutive term by a common ratio of 0.1 starting with the first term of 0.3. So, substituting into our formula for an infinite geometric sum, we have

$$S_n = \frac{a_1}{1-r} = \frac{0.3}{1-0.1} = \frac{0.3}{0.9} = \frac{1}{3} \ .$$

Find the sum, if it exists.

Exercise 9.4.7A

$2+23+29+\ldots$

Answer

3

Exercise 9.4.7B

$\sum_{k=1}^{\infty} 0.76k+1$

Answer

The series is not geometric.

Exercise 9.4.7C

$\sum_{k=1}^{\infty} \left(-\frac{3}{8}\right)^k$

Answer

$-\frac{3}{11}$

Solving Annuity Problems

At the beginning of the section, we looked at a problem in which a couple invested a set amount of money each month into a college fund for six years. An annuity is an investment in which the purchaser makes a sequence of periodic, equal payments. To find the amount of an annuity, we need to find the sum of all the payments and the interest earned. In the example, the couple invests $\$50$ each month. This is the value of the initial deposit. The account paid 6% annual interest, compounded monthly. To find the interest rate per payment period, we need to divide the 6% annual percentage interest (APR) rate by 12. So the monthly interest rate is 0.5%. We can multiply the amount in the account each month by 100.5% to find the value of the account after interest has been added.

We can find the value of the annuity right after the last deposit by using a geometric series with $a_1 = 50$ and $r = 100.5$. After the first deposit, the value of the annuity will be $\$50$. Let us see if we can determine the amount in the college fund and the interest earned.

We can find the value of the annuity after nn deposits using the formula for the sum of the first nn terms of a geometric series. In 6 years, there are 72 months, so $n = 72$. We can substitute $a_1 = 50$, $r = 1.005$, and $n = 72$ into the formula, and simplify to find the value of the annuity after 6 years.

$$S_{72} = \frac{50(1-1.005^{72})}{1-1.005} \approx 4,320.44$$

After the last deposit, the couple will have a total of $\$4,320.44$in the account. Notice, the couple made 72 payments of $\$50$ each for a total of $72(50) = \$3,600$. This means that because of the annuity, the couple earned $\$720.44$interest in their college fund.

How to: Given an initial deposit and an interest rate, find the value of an annuity.

1. Determine a_1, the value of the initial deposit.
2. Determine n, the number of deposits.
3. Determine r.
   - Divide the annual interest rate by the number of times per year that interest is compounded.
   - Add 1 to this amount to find r.
4. Substitute values for a_1, r, and n into the formula for the sum of the first nn terms of a geometric series, $S_n = \frac{a_1(1-r^n)}{1-r}$.
5. Simplify to find S_n, the value of the annuity after n deposits.

Example 9.4.8: Solving an Annuity Problem

A deposit of $\$100$ is placed into a college fund at the beginning of every month for 10 years. The fund earns 9% annual interest, compounded monthly, and paid at the end of the month. How much is in the account right after the last deposit?

Solution

The value of the initial deposit is $\$100$, so $a_1 = 100$. A total of 120 monthly deposits are made in the 10 years, so $n = 120$. To find r, divide the annual interest rate by 12 to find the monthly interest rate and add 1 to represent the new monthly deposit.

$$r = 1 + \frac{0.09}{12} = 1.0075$$

Substitute $a_1 = 100$, $r = 1.0075$, and $n = 120$ into the formula for the sum of the first n terms of a geometric series, and simplify to find the value of the annuity.

$$S_{120} = \frac{100(1 - 1.0075^{120})}{1 - 1.0075} \approx 19,351.43$$

So the account has $19,351.43 after the last deposit is made.

Exercise 9.4.8

At the beginning of each month, $\$200$ is deposited into a retirement fund. The fund earns 6% annual interest, compounded monthly, and paid into the account at the end of the month. How much is in the account if deposits are made for 10 years?

Answer

$\$92,408.18$

Media

Access these online resources for additional instruction and practice with series.

- Arithmetic Series
- Geometric Series
- Summation Notation

Key Equations

sum of the first n terms of an arithmetic series	$S_n = \frac{n(a_1 + a_n)}{2}$
sum of the first n terms of a geometric series	$S_n = \frac{a_1(1-r^n)}{1-r} \cdot r \neq 1$
sum of an infinite geometric series with $-1 < r < 1$	$S_n = \frac{a_1}{1-r} \cdot r \neq 1$

Key Concepts

- The sum of the terms in a sequence is called a series.
- A common notation for series is called summation notation, which uses the Greek letter sigma to represent the sum. See Example $9.4.1$.
- The sum of the terms in an arithmetic sequence is called an arithmetic series.
- The sum of the first n terms of an arithmetic series can be found using a formula. See Example $9.4.2$ and Example $9.4.3$.
- The sum of the terms in a geometric sequence is called a geometric series.
- The sum of the first n terms of a geometric series can be found using a formula. See Example $9.4.4$ and Example $9.4.5$.
- The sum of an infinite series exists if the series is geometric with $-1 < r < 1$.
- If the sum of an infinite series exists, it can be found using a formula. See Example $9.4.6$, Example $9.4.7$, and Example $9.4.8$.
- An annuity is an account into which the investor makes a series of regularly scheduled payments. The value of an annuity can be found using geometric series. See Example $9.4.9$.

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