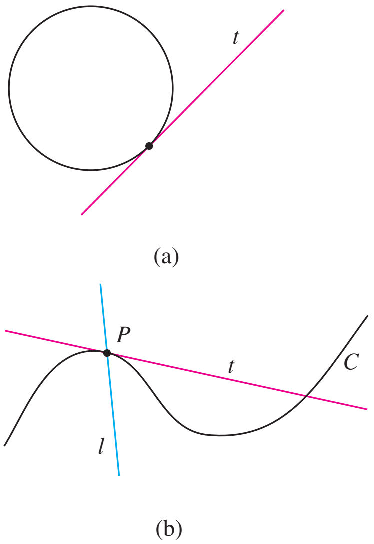
2.1 The Tangent and Velocity Problems

In this section we see how limits arise when we attempt to find the tangent to a curve or the velocity of an object.

The Tangent Problem

The word *tangent* is derived from the Latin word *tangens*, which means "touching." Thus a tangent to a curve is a line that touches the curve. In other words, a tangent line should have the same direction as the curve at the point of contact. How can this idea be made precise?

For a circle we could simply follow Euclid and say that a tangent is a line that intersects the circle once and only once, as in Figure 1(a). For more complicated curves this definition is inadequate. Figure l(b) shows two lines l and t passing through a point P on a curve C. The line l intersects C only once, but it certainly does not look like what we think of as a tangent. The line t, on the other hand, looks like a tangent but it intersects C twice.



(a)

(b)

FIGURE 1

To be specific, let's look at the problem of trying to find a tangent line t to the parabola $y = x^2$ in the following example.

V EXAMPLE 1 Find an equation of the tangent line to the parabola $y = x^2$ at the point $P(1, 1)$.

SOLUTION We will be able to find an equation of the tangent line t as soon as we know its slope m. The difficulty is that we know only one point, P, on t, whereas we need two points to compute the slope. But observe that we can compute an approximation to m by choosing a nearby point $Q(x, x^2)$ on the parabola (as in Figure 2) and computing the slope m_{PQ} of the secant line PQ. [A **secant line**, from the Latin word *secans*, meaning cutting, is a line that cuts (intersects) a curve more than once.]

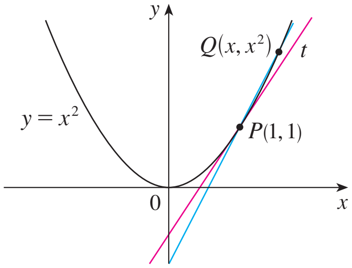


FIGURE 2

We choose $x \neq 1$ so that $Q \neq P$. Then

$$m_{PQ} = \frac{x^2 - 1}{x - 1}$$

For instance, for the point $Q(1.5, 2.25)$ we have

$$m_{PQ} = \frac{2.25 - 1}{1.5 - 1} = \frac{1.25}{0.5} = 2.5$$

x	m_{PQ}
2	3
1.5	2.5
1.1	2.1
1.01	2.01
1.001	2.001

x	m_{PQ}
0	1
0.5	1.5
0.9	1.9
0.99	1.99
0.999	1.999

The tables in the margin show the values of m_{PQ} for several values of x close to 1. The closer Q is to P, the closer x is to 1 and, it appears from the tables, the closer m_{PQ} is to 2. This suggests that the slope of the tangent line t should be $m = 2$.

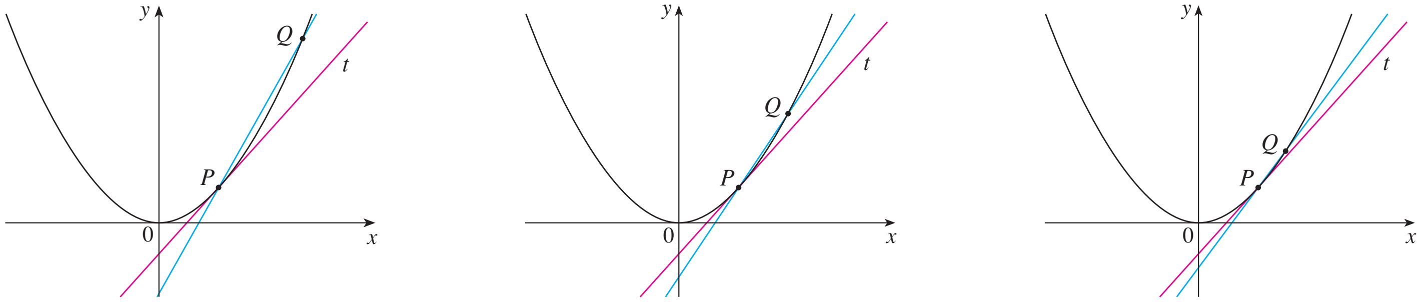
We say that the slope of the tangent line is the *limit* of the slopes of the secant lines, and we express this symbolically by writing

$$\lim_{Q \to P} m_{PQ} = m \qquad \text{and} \qquad \lim_{x \to 1} \frac{x^2 - 1}{x - 1} = 2$$

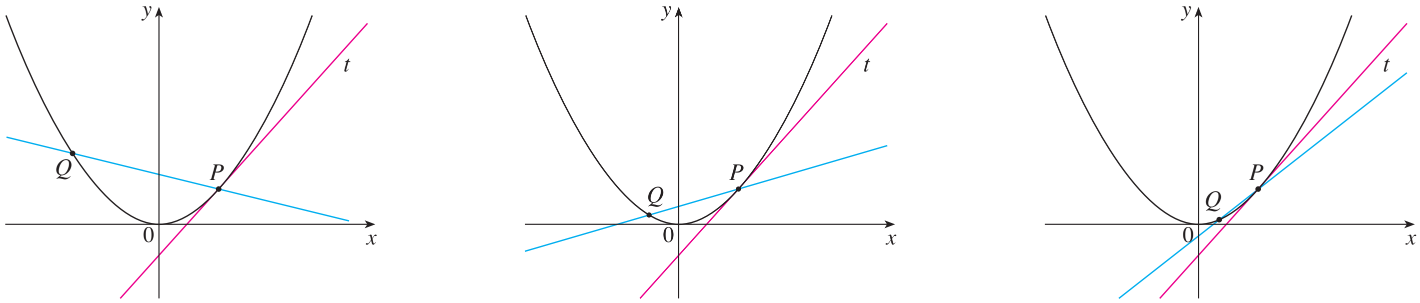
Assuming that the slope of the tangent line is indeed 2, we use the point-slope form of the equation of a line (see Appendix B) to write the equation of the tangent line through $(1, 1)$ as

$$y - 1 = 2(x - 1) \qquad \text{or} \qquad y = 2x - 1$$

Figure 3 illustrates the limiting process that occurs in this example. As Q approaches P along the parabola, the corresponding secant lines rotate about P and approach the tangent line t.



Q approaches P from the right



Q approaches P from the left

FIGURE 3

TEC In Visual 2.1 you can see how the process in Figure 3 works for additional functions.

Many functions that occur in science are not described by explicit equations; they are defined by experimental data. The next example shows how to estimate the slope of the tangent line to the graph of such a function.

V EXAMPLE 2 **Estimating the slope of a tangent line from experimental data** The flash unit on a camera operates by storing charge on a capacitor and releasing it suddenly when the flash is set off. The data in the table describe the charge Q remaining on the capacitor (measured in microcoulombs) at time t (measured in seconds after the flash goes off). Use the data to draw the graph of this function and estimate the slope of the tangent line at the point where $t = 0.04$. [*Note:* The slope of the tangent line represents the electric current flowing from the capacitor to the flash bulb (measured in microamperes).]

t	Q
0.00	100.00
0.02	81.87
0.04	67.03
0.06	54.88
0.08	44.93
0.10	36.76

SOLUTION In Figure 4 we plot the given data and use them to sketch a curve that approximates the graph of the function.

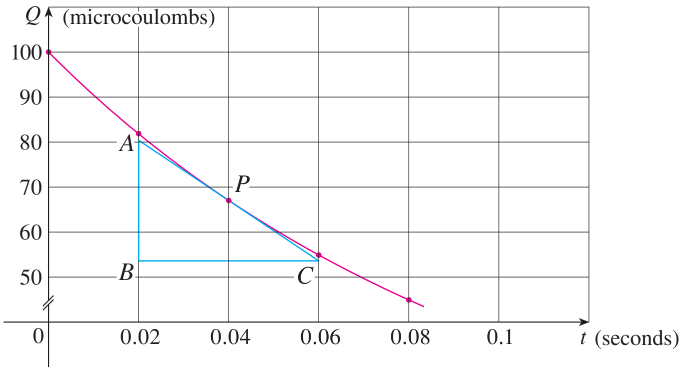


FIGURE 4

Given the points $P(0.04, 67.03)$ and $R(0.00, 100.00)$ on the graph, we find that the slope of the secant line PR is

$$m_{PR} = \frac{100.00 - 67.03}{0.00 - 0.04} = -824.25$$

R	m_{PR}
(0.00, 100.00)	-824.25
(0.02, 81.87)	-742.00
(0.06, 54.88)	-607.50
(0.08, 44.93)	-552.50
(0.10, 36.76)	-504.50

The table at the left shows the results of similar calculations for the slopes of other secant lines. From this table we would expect the slope of the tangent line at $t = 0.04$ to lie somewhere between -742 and -607.5. In fact, the average of the slopes of the two closest secant lines is

$$\tfrac{1}{2}(-742 - 607.5) = -674.75$$

So, by this method, we estimate the slope of the tangent line to be -675.

Another method is to draw an approximation to the tangent line at P and measure the sides of the triangle ABC, as in Figure 4. This gives an estimate of the slope of the tangent line as

$$-\frac{|AB|}{|BC|} \approx -\frac{80.4 - 53.6}{0.06 - 0.02} = -670$$

The physical meaning of the answer in Example 2 is that the electric current flowing from the capacitor to the flash bulb after 0.04 second is about –670 microamperes.

The Velocity Problem

If you watch the speedometer of a car as you travel in city traffic, you see that the needle doesn't stay still for very long; that is, the velocity of the car is not constant. We assume from watching the speedometer that the car has a definite velocity at each moment, but how is the "instantaneous" velocity defined? Let's investigate the example of a falling ball.

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The CN Tower in Toronto was the tallest freestanding building in the world for 32 years.

V **EXAMPLE 3** **Velocity of a falling ball** Suppose that a ball is dropped from the upper observation deck of the CN Tower in Toronto, 450 m above the ground. Find the velocity of the ball after 5 seconds.

SOLUTION Through experiments carried out four centuries ago, Galileo discovered that the distance fallen by any freely falling body is proportional to the square of the time it has been falling. (This model for free fall neglects air resistance.) If the distance fallen after t seconds is denoted by $s(t)$ and measured in meters, then Galileo's law is expressed by the equation

$$s(t) = 4.9t^2$$

The difficulty in finding the velocity after 5 s is that we are dealing with a single instant of time ($t = 5$), so no time interval is involved. However, we can approximate the desired quantity by computing the average velocity over the brief time interval of a tenth of a second from $t = 5$ to $t = 5.1$:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{average velocity} &= \frac{\text{change in position}}{\text{time elapsed}} \\ &= \frac{s(5.1) - s(5)}{0.1} \\ &= \frac{4.9(5.1)^2 - 4.9(5)^2}{0.1} = 49.49 \text{ m/s} \end{aligned}$$

The following table shows the results of similar calculations of the average velocity over successively smaller time periods.

Time interval	Average velocity (m/s)
$5 \leqslant t \leqslant 6$	53.9
$5 \leqslant t \leqslant 5.1$	49.49
$5 \leqslant t \leqslant 5.05$	49.245
$5 \leqslant t \leqslant 5.01$	49.049
$5 \leqslant t \leqslant 5.001$	49.0049

It appears that as we shorten the time period, the average velocity is becoming closer to 49 m/s. The **instantaneous velocity** when $t = 5$ is defined to be the limiting value of these average velocities over shorter and shorter time periods that start at $t = 5$. Thus the (instantaneous) velocity after 5 s is

$$v = 49 \text{ m/s}$$

You may have the feeling that the calculations used in solving this problem are very similar to those used earlier in this section to find tangents. In fact, there is a close connection between the tangent problem and the problem of finding velocities. If we draw the graph of the distance function of the ball (as in Figure 5) and we consider the points $P(a, 4.9a^2)$ and $Q(a + h, 4.9(a + h)^2)$ on the graph, then the slope of the secant line PQ is

$$m_{PQ} = \frac{4.9(a + h)^2 - 4.9a^2}{(a + h) - a}$$

which is the same as the average velocity over the time interval $[a, a + h]$. Therefore the velocity at time $t = a$ (the limit of these average velocities as h approaches 0) must be equal to the slope of the tangent line at P (the limit of the slopes of the secant lines).

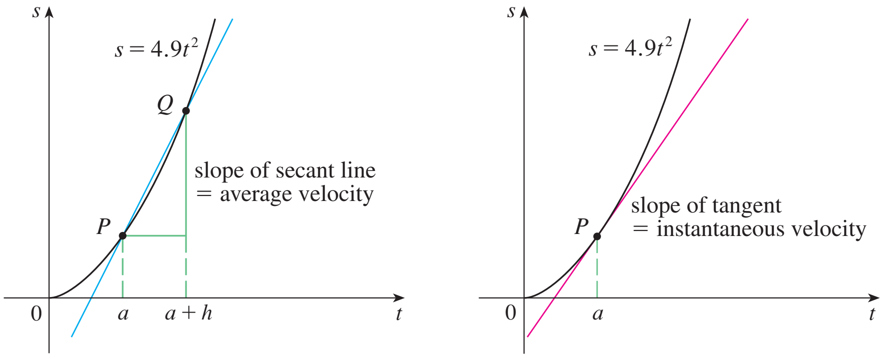


FIGURE 5

Examples 1 and 3 show that in order to solve tangent and velocity problems we must be able to find limits. After studying methods for computing limits in the next four sections, we will return to the problems of finding tangents and velocities in Section 2.6.

2.1 Exercises

1. A tank holds 1000 gallons of water, which drains from the bottom of the tank in half an hour. The values in the table show the volume V of water remaining in the tank (in gallons) after t minutes.

t (min)	5	10	15	20	25	30
V (gal)	694	444	250	111	28	0

(a) If P is the point (15, 250) on the graph of V, find the slopes of the secant lines PQ when Q is the point on the graph with $t = 5$, 10, 20, 25, and 30.
(b) Estimate the slope of the tangent line at P by averaging the slopes of two secant lines.
(c) Use a graph of the function to estimate the slope of the tangent line at P. (This slope represents the rate at which the water is flowing from the tank after 15 minutes.)

2. A cardiac monitor is used to measure the heart rate of a patient after surgery. It compiles the number of heartbeats after t minutes. When the data in the table are graphed, the slope of the tangent line represents the heart rate in beats per minute.

t (min)	36	38	40	42	44
Heartbeats	2530	2661	2806	2948	3080

The monitor estimates this value by calculating the slope of a secant line. Use the data to estimate the patient's heart rate after 42 minutes using the secant line between the points with the given values of t.
(a) $t = 36$ and $t = 42$ (b) $t = 38$ and $t = 42$
(c) $t = 40$ and $t = 42$ (d) $t = 42$ and $t = 44$
What are your conclusions?

3. The point $P\left(1, \frac{1}{2}\right)$ lies on the curve $y = x/(1 + x)$.
(a) If Q is the point $(x, x/(1 + x))$, use your calculator to find the slope of the secant line PQ (correct to six decimal places) for the following values of x:
(i) 0.5 (ii) 0.9 (iii) 0.99 (iv) 0.999
(v) 1.5 (vi) 1.1 (vii) 1.01 (viii) 1.001
(b) Using the results of part (a), guess the value of the slope of the tangent line to the curve at $P\left(1, \frac{1}{2}\right)$.
(c) Using the slope from part (b), find an equation of the tangent line to the curve at $P\left(1, \frac{1}{2}\right)$.

4. The point $P(0.5, 0)$ lies on the curve $y = \cos \pi x$.
(a) If Q is the point $(x, \cos \pi x)$, use your calculator to find the slope of the secant line PQ (correct to six decimal places) for the following values of x:
(i) 0 (ii) 0.4 (iii) 0.49 (iv) 0.499
(v) 1 (vi) 0.6 (vii) 0.51 (viii) 0.501
(b) Using the results of part (a), guess the value of the slope of the tangent line to the curve at $P(0.5, 0)$.
(c) Using the slope from part (b), find an equation of the tangent line to the curve at $P(0.5, 0)$.
(d) Sketch the curve, two of the secant lines, and the tangent line.

5. If a ball is thrown into the air with a velocity of 40 ft/s, its height in feet t seconds later is given by $y = 40t - 16t^2$.
(a) Find the average velocity for the time period beginning when $t = 2$ and lasting
(i) 0.5 second (ii) 0.1 second
(iii) 0.05 second (iv) 0.01 second
(b) Estimate the instantaneous velocity when $t = 2$.

6. If a rock is thrown upward on the planet Mars with a velocity of 10 m/s, its height in meters t seconds later is given by $y = 10t - 1.86t^2$.
(a) Find the average velocity over the given time intervals:
(i) [1, 2] (ii) [1, 1.5] (iii) [1, 1.1]
(iv) [1, 1.01] (v) [1, 1.001]
(b) Estimate the instantaneous velocity when $t = 1$.

7. The table shows the position of a cyclist.

t (seconds)	0	1	2	3	4	5
s (meters)	0	1.4	5.1	10.7	17.7	25.8

(a) Find the average velocity for each time period:
(i) [1, 3] (ii) [2, 3] (iii) [3, 5] (iv) [3, 4]
(b) Use the graph of s as a function of t to estimate the instantaneous velocity when $t = 3$.

8. The displacement (in centimeters) of a particle moving back and forth along a straight line is given by the equation of motion $s = 2 \sin \pi t + 3 \cos \pi t$, where t is measured in seconds.
(a) Find the average velocity during each time period:
(i) [1, 2] (ii) [1, 1.1]
(iii) [1, 1.01] (iv) [1, 1.001]
(b) Estimate the instantaneous velocity of the particle when $t = 1$.

9. The point $P(1, 0)$ lies on the curve $y = \sin(10\pi/x)$.
(a) If Q is the point $(x, \sin(10\pi/x))$, find the slope of the secant line PQ (correct to four decimal places) for $x = 2$, 1.5, 1.4, 1.3, 1.2, 1.1, 0.5, 0.6, 0.7, 0.8, and 0.9. Do the slopes appear to be approaching a limit?
(b) Use a graph of the curve to explain why the slopes of the secant lines in part (a) are not close to the slope of the tangent line at P.
(c) By choosing appropriate secant lines, estimate the slope of the tangent line at P.

Graphing calculator or computer with graphing software required **1.** Homework Hints available in TEC

2.2 The Limit of a Function

Having seen in the preceding section how limits arise when we want to find the tangent to a curve or the velocity of an object, we now turn our attention to limits in general and numerical and graphical methods for computing them.

Let's investigate the behavior of the function f defined by $f(x) = x^2 - x + 2$ for values of x near 2. The following table gives values of $f(x)$ for values of x close to 2 but not equal to 2.

x	$f(x)$	x	$f(x)$
1.0	2.000000	3.0	8.000000
1.5	2.750000	2.5	5.750000
1.8	3.440000	2.2	4.640000
1.9	3.710000	2.1	4.310000
1.95	3.852500	2.05	4.152500
1.99	3.970100	2.01	4.030100
1.995	3.985025	2.005	4.015025
1.999	3.997001	2.001	4.003001

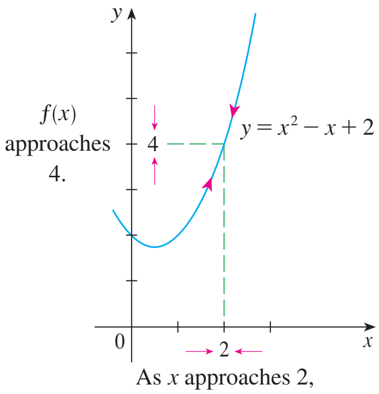


FIGURE 1

From the table and the graph of f (a parabola) shown in Figure 1 we see that when x is close to 2 (on either side of 2), $f(x)$ is close to 4. In fact, it appears that we can make the values of $f(x)$ as close as we like to 4 by taking x sufficiently close to 2. We express this by saying "the limit of the function $f(x) = x^2 - x + 2$ as x approaches 2 is equal to 4." The notation for this is

$$\lim_{x \to 2} (x^2 - x + 2) = 4$$

In general, we use the following notation.

1 Definition We write

$$\lim_{x \to a} f(x) = L$$

and say "the limit of $f(x)$, as x approaches a, equals L"

if we can make the values of $f(x)$ arbitrarily close to L (as close to L as we like) by taking x to be sufficiently close to a (on either side of a) but not equal to a.

Roughly speaking, this says that the values of $f(x)$ tend to get closer and closer to the number L as x gets closer and closer to the number a (from either side of a) but $x \neq a$.

An alternative notation for

$$\lim_{x \to a} f(x) = L$$

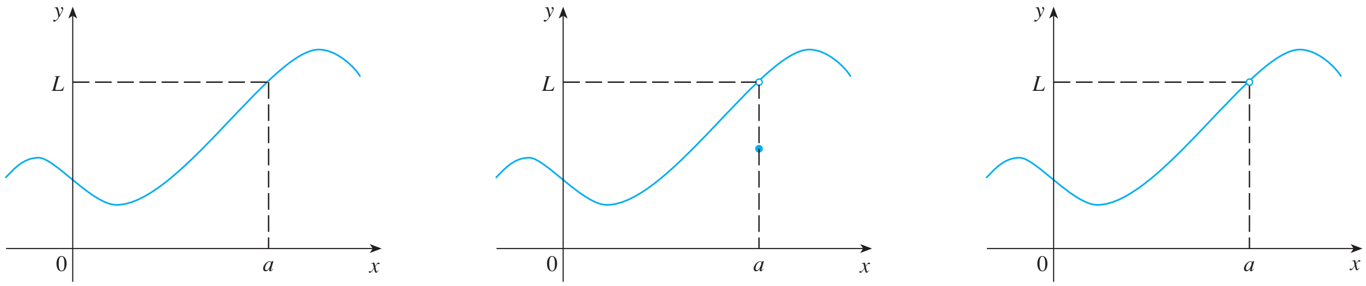
is

$$f(x) \to L \qquad \text{as} \qquad x \to a$$

which is usually read "$f(x)$ approaches L as x approaches a."

Notice the phrase "but $x \neq a$" in the definition of limit. This means that in finding the limit of $f(x)$ as x approaches a, we never consider $x = a$. In fact, $f(x)$ need not even be defined when $x = a$. The only thing that matters is how f is defined *near* a.

Figure 2 shows the graphs of three functions. Note that in part (c), $f(a)$ is not defined and in part (b), $f(a) \neq L$. But in each case, regardless of what happens at a, it is true that $\lim_{x\to a} f(x) = L$.



(a) (b) (c)

FIGURE 2 $\lim_{x\to a} f(x) = L$ in all three cases

EXAMPLE 1 **Guessing a limit from numerical values** Guess the value of $\lim_{x\to 1} \dfrac{x-1}{x^2-1}$.

SOLUTION Notice that the function $f(x) = (x-1)/(x^2-1)$ is not defined when $x = 1$, but that doesn't matter because the definition of $\lim_{x\to a} f(x)$ says that we consider values of x that are close to a but not equal to a.

The tables at the left give values of $f(x)$ (correct to six decimal places) for values of x that approach 1 (but are not equal to 1). On the basis of the values in the tables, we make the guess that

$$\lim_{x\to 1} \frac{x-1}{x^2-1} = 0.5$$

$x < 1$	$f(x)$
0.5	0.666667
0.9	0.526316
0.99	0.502513
0.999	0.500250
0.9999	0.500025

$x > 1$	$f(x)$
1.5	0.400000
1.1	0.476190
1.01	0.497512
1.001	0.499750
1.0001	0.499975

Example 1 is illustrated by the graph of f in Figure 3. Now let's change f slightly by giving it the value 2 when $x = 1$ and calling the resulting function g:

$$g(x) = \begin{cases} \dfrac{x-1}{x^2-1} & \text{if } x \neq 1 \\ 2 & \text{if } x = 1 \end{cases}$$

This new function g still has the same limit as x approaches 1. (See Figure 4.)

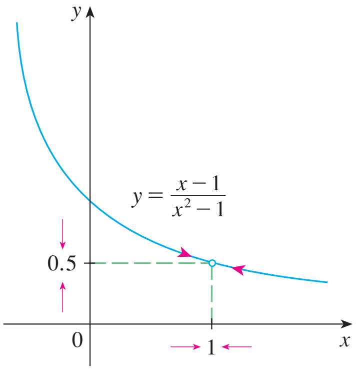


FIGURE 3

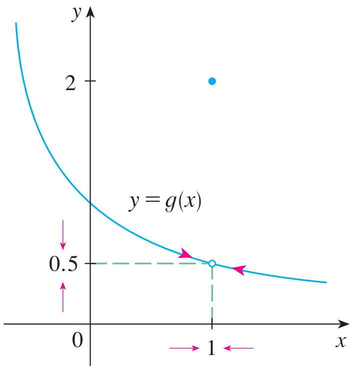


FIGURE 4

EXAMPLE 2 Estimate the value of $\displaystyle\lim_{t \to 0} \frac{\sqrt{t^2 + 9} - 3}{t^2}$.

SOLUTION The table lists values of the function for several values of t near 0.

t	$\dfrac{\sqrt{t^2 + 9} - 3}{t^2}$
±1.0	0.16228
±0.5	0.16553
±0.1	0.16662
±0.05	0.16666
±0.01	0.16667

As t approaches 0, the values of the function seem to approach 0.1666666 . . . and so we guess that

$$\lim_{t \to 0} \frac{\sqrt{t^2 + 9} - 3}{t^2} = \frac{1}{6}$$

t	$\dfrac{\sqrt{t^2 + 9} - 3}{t^2}$
±0.0005	0.16800
±0.0001	0.20000
±0.00005	0.00000
±0.00001	0.00000

In Example 2 what would have happened if we had taken even smaller values of t? The table in the margin shows the results from one calculator; you can see that something strange seems to be happening.

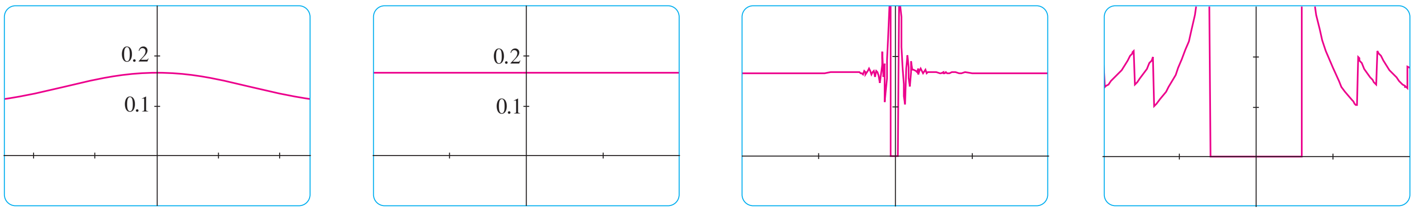
If you try these calculations on your own calculator you might get different values, but eventually you will get the value 0 if you make t sufficiently small. Does this mean that the answer is really 0 instead of $\frac{1}{6}$? No, the value of the limit is $\frac{1}{6}$, as we will show in the next section. The problem is that the calculator gave false values because $\sqrt{t^2 + 9}$ is very close to 3 when t is small. (In fact, when t is sufficiently small, a calculator's value for $\sqrt{t^2 + 9}$ is 3.000. . . to as many digits as the calculator is capable of carrying.)

www.stewartcalculus.com
For a further explanation of why calculators sometimes give false values, click on *Lies My Calculator and Computer Told Me*. In particular, see the section called *The Perils*

Something similar happens when we try to graph the function

$$f(t) = \frac{\sqrt{t^2 + 9} - 3}{t^2}$$

of Example 2 on a graphing calculator or computer. Parts (a) and (b) of Figure 5 show quite accurate graphs of f, and when we use the trace mode (if available) we can estimate easily that the limit is about $\frac{1}{6}$. But if we zoom in too much, as in parts (c) and (d), then we get inaccurate graphs, again because of problems with subtraction.



(a) $[-5, 5]$ by $[-0.1, 0.3]$ (b) $[-0.1, 0.1]$ by $[-0.1, 0.3]$ (c) $[-10^{-6}, 10^{-6}]$ by $[-0.1, 0.3]$ (d) $[-10^{-7}, 10^{-7}]$ by $[-0.1, 0.3]$

FIGURE 5

V **EXAMPLE 3** Guess the value of $\displaystyle\lim_{x\to 0}\frac{\sin x}{x}$.

SOLUTION The function $f(x) = (\sin x)/x$ is not defined when $x = 0$. Using a calculator (and remembering that, if $x \in \mathbb{R}$, $\sin x$ means the sine of the angle whose *radian* measure is x), we construct a table of values correct to eight decimal places. From the table at the left and the graph in Figure 6 we guess that

$$\lim_{x\to 0}\frac{\sin x}{x} = 1$$

This guess is in fact correct, as will be proved in Chapter 3 using a geometric argument.

x	$\dfrac{\sin x}{x}$
±1.0	0.84147098
±0.5	0.95885108
±0.4	0.97354586
±0.3	0.98506736
±0.2	0.99334665
±0.1	0.99833417
±0.05	0.99958339
±0.01	0.99998333
±0.005	0.99999583
±0.001	0.99999983

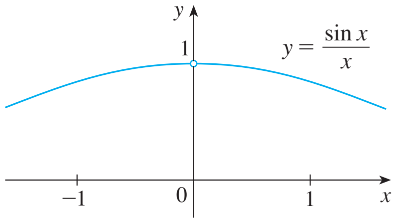


FIGURE 6

V **EXAMPLE 4** **A function with oscillating behavior** Investigate $\displaystyle\lim_{x\to 0}\sin\frac{\pi}{x}$.

SOLUTION Again the function $f(x) = \sin(\pi/x)$ is undefined at 0. Evaluating the function for some small values of x, we get

$$f(1) = \sin \pi = 0 \qquad f\left(\tfrac{1}{2}\right) = \sin 2\pi = 0$$

$$f\left(\tfrac{1}{3}\right) = \sin 3\pi = 0 \qquad f\left(\tfrac{1}{4}\right) = \sin 4\pi = 0$$

$$f(0.1) = \sin 10\pi = 0 \qquad f(0.01) = \sin 100\pi = 0$$

Similarly, $f(0.001) = f(0.0001) = 0$. On the basis of this information we might be tempted to guess that

$$\lim_{x\to 0}\sin\frac{\pi}{x} = 0$$

⊘ but this time our guess is wrong. Note that although $f(1/n) = \sin n\pi = 0$ for any integer n, it is also true that $f(x) = 1$ for infinitely many values of x that approach 0. The graph of f is given in Figure 7.

Computer Algebra Systems

Computer algebra systems (CAS) have commands that compute limits. In order to avoid the types of pitfalls demonstrated in Examples 2, 4, and 5, they don't find limits by numerical experimentation. Instead, they use more sophisticated techniques such as computing infinite series. If you have access to a CAS, use the limit command to compute the limits in the examples of this section and to check your answers in the exercises of this chapter.

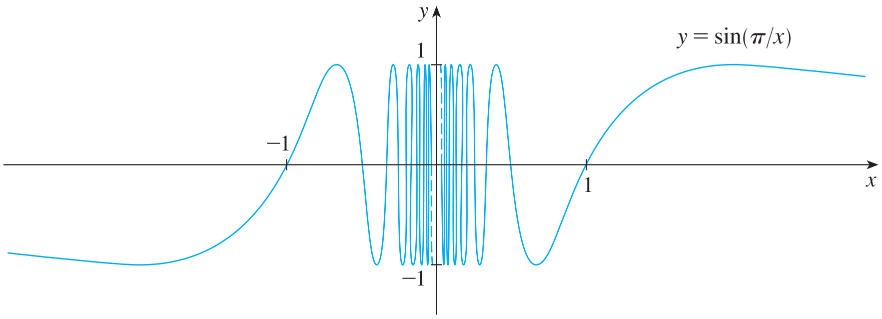


FIGURE 7

The dashed lines near the y-axis indicate that the values of $\sin(\pi/x)$ oscillate between 1 and -1 infinitely often as x approaches 0. (Use a graphing device to graph f and zoom in toward the origin several times. What do you observe?)

Since the values of $f(x)$ do not approach a fixed number as x approaches 0,

$$\lim_{x \to 0} \sin \frac{\pi}{x} \quad \text{does not exist}$$

x	$x^3 + \dfrac{\cos 5x}{10{,}000}$
1	1.000028
0.5	0.124920
0.1	0.001088
0.05	0.000222
0.01	0.000101

x	$x^3 + \dfrac{\cos 5x}{10{,}000}$
0.005	0.00010009
0.001	0.00010000

EXAMPLE 5 Find $\displaystyle\lim_{x \to 0} \left(x^3 + \frac{\cos 5x}{10{,}000} \right)$.

SOLUTION As before, we construct a table of values. From the first table in the margin it appears that

$$\lim_{x \to 0} \left(x^3 + \frac{\cos 5x}{10{,}000} \right) = 0$$

But if we persevere with smaller values of x, the second table suggests that

$$\lim_{x \to 0} \left(x^3 + \frac{\cos 5x}{10{,}000} \right) = 0.000100 = \frac{1}{10{,}000}$$

Later we will see that $\lim_{x \to 0} \cos 5x = 1$; then it follows that the limit is 0.0001.

⊘ Examples 4 and 5 illustrate some of the pitfalls in guessing the value of a limit. It is easy to guess the wrong value if we use inappropriate values of x, but it is difficult to know when to stop calculating values. And, as the discussion after Example 2 shows, sometimes calculators and computers give the wrong values. In the next section, however, we will develop foolproof methods for calculating limits.

V EXAMPLE 6 **A limit that does not exist** The Heaviside function H is defined by

$$H(t) = \begin{cases} 0 & \text{if } t < 0 \\ 1 & \text{if } t \geqslant 0 \end{cases}$$

[This function is named after the electrical engineer Oliver Heaviside (1850–1925) and can be used to describe an electric current that is switched on at time $t = 0$.] Its graph is shown in Figure 8.

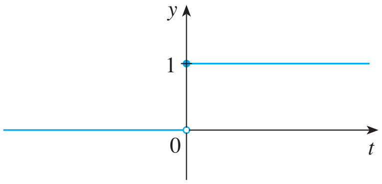


FIGURE 8
The Heaviside function

As t approaches 0 from the left, $H(t)$ approaches 0. As t approaches 0 from the right, $H(t)$ approaches 1. There is no single number that $H(t)$ approaches as t approaches 0. Therefore, $\lim_{t \to 0} H(t)$ does not exist.

One-Sided Limits

We noticed in Example 6 that $H(t)$ approaches 0 as t approaches 0 from the left and $H(t)$ approaches 1 as t approaches 0 from the right. We indicate this situation symbolically by writing

$$\lim_{t \to 0^-} H(t) = 0 \qquad \text{and} \qquad \lim_{t \to 0^+} H(t) = 1$$

The symbol "$t \to 0^-$" indicates that we consider only values of t that are less than 0. Likewise, "$t \to 0^+$" indicates that we consider only values of t that are greater than 0.

2 Definition We write

$$\lim_{x \to a^-} f(x) = L$$

and say the **left-hand limit of $f(x)$ as x approaches a** [or the **limit of $f(x)$ as x approaches a from the left**] is equal to L if we can make the values of $f(x)$ arbitrarily close to L by taking x to be sufficiently close to a and x less than a.

Notice that Definition 2 differs from Definition 1 only in that we require x to be less than a. Similarly, if we require that x be greater than a, we get "the **right-hand limit of $f(x)$ as x approaches a** is equal to L" and we write

$$\lim_{x \to a^+} f(x) = L$$

Thus the symbol "$x \to a^+$" means that we consider only $x > a$. These definitions are illustrated in Figure 9.

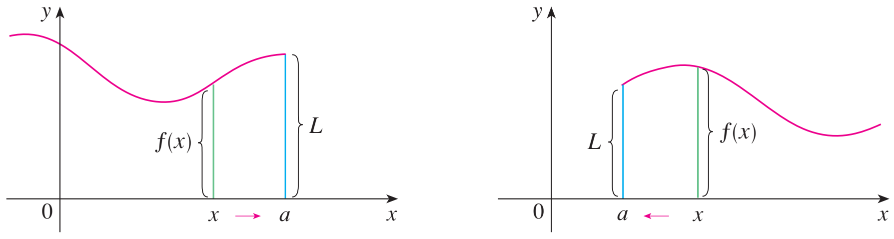


FIGURE 9

(a) $\lim_{x \to a^-} f(x) = L$

(b) $\lim_{x \to a^+} f(x) = L$

By comparing Definition 1 with the definitions of one-sided limits, we see that the following is true.

3 $\lim_{x \to a} f(x) = L$ if and only if $\lim_{x \to a^-} f(x) = L$ and $\lim_{x \to a^+} f(x) = L$

V EXAMPLE 7 One-sided limits from a graph The graph of a function g is shown in Figure 10. Use it to state the values (if they exist) of the following:

(a) $\lim_{x \to 2^-} g(x)$ (b) $\lim_{x \to 2^+} g(x)$ (c) $\lim_{x \to 2} g(x)$

(d) $\lim_{x \to 5^-} g(x)$ (e) $\lim_{x \to 5^+} g(x)$ (f) $\lim_{x \to 5} g(x)$

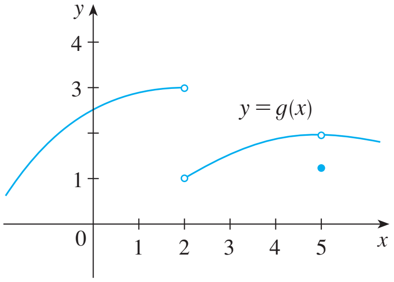


FIGURE 10

SOLUTION From the graph we see that the values of $g(x)$ approach 3 as x approaches 2 from the left, but they approach 1 as x approaches 2 from the right. Therefore

$$\text{(a)} \quad \lim_{x \to 2^-} g(x) = 3 \qquad \text{and} \qquad \text{(b)} \quad \lim_{x \to 2^+} g(x) = 1$$

(c) Since the left and right limits are different, we conclude from (3) that $\lim_{x \to 2} g(x)$ does not exist.

The graph also shows that

$$\text{(d)} \quad \lim_{x \to 5^-} g(x) = 2 \qquad \text{and} \qquad \text{(e)} \quad \lim_{x \to 5^+} g(x) = 2$$

(f) This time the left and right limits are the same and so, by (3), we have

$$\lim_{x \to 5} g(x) = 2$$

Despite this fact, notice that $g(5) \neq 2$.

EXAMPLE 8 Find $\lim_{x \to 0} \dfrac{1}{x^2}$ if it exists.

SOLUTION As x becomes close to 0, x^2 also becomes close to 0, and $1/x^2$ becomes very large. (See the table in the margin.) In fact, it appears from the graph of the function $f(x) = 1/x^2$ shown in Figure 11 that the values of $f(x)$ can be made arbitrarily large by taking x close enough to 0. Thus the values of $f(x)$ do not approach a number, so $\lim_{x \to 0} (1/x^2)$ does not exist.

x	$\dfrac{1}{x^2}$
± 1	1
± 0.5	4
± 0.2	25
± 0.1	100
± 0.05	400
± 0.01	10,000
± 0.001	1,000,000

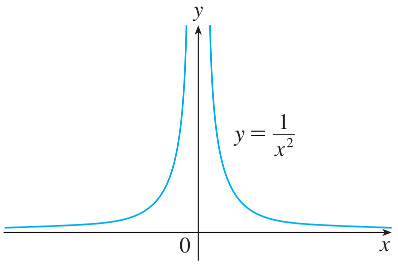


FIGURE 11

At the beginning of this section we considered the function $f(x) = x^2 - x + 2$ and, based on numerical and graphical evidence, we saw that

$$\lim_{x \to 2} (x^2 - x + 2) = 4$$

According to Definition 1, this means that the values of $f(x)$ can be made as close to 4 as we like, provided that we take x sufficiently close to 2. In the following example we use graphical methods to determine just how close is sufficiently close.

EXAMPLE 9 If $f(x) = x^2 - x + 2$, how close to 2 does x have to be to ensure that $f(x)$ is within a distance 0.1 of the number 4?

SOLUTION If the distance from $f(x)$ to 4 is less than 0.1, then $f(x)$ lies between 3.9 and 4.1, so the requirement is that

$$3.9 < x^2 - x + 2 < 4.1$$

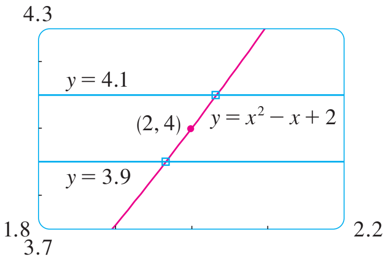


FIGURE 12

Thus we need to determine the values of x such that the curve $y = x^2 - x + 2$ lies between the horizontal lines $y = 3.9$ and $y = 4.1$. We graph the curve and lines near the point (2, 4) in Figure 12. With the cursor, we estimate that the x-coordinate of the point of intersection of the line $y = 3.9$ and the curve $y = x^2 - x + 2$ is about 1.966. Similarly, the curve intersects the line $y = 4.1$ when $x \approx 2.033$. So, rounding to be safe, we conclude that

$$3.9 < x^2 - x + 2 < 4.1 \quad \text{when} \quad 1.97 < x < 2.03$$

Therefore $f(x)$ is within a distance 0.1 of 4 when x is within a distance 0.03 of 2.

The idea behind Example 9 can be used to formulate the precise definition of a limit that is discussed in Appendix D.

2.2 Exercises

1. Explain in your own words what is meant by the equation

$$\lim_{x\to 2} f(x) = 5$$

Is it possible for this statement to be true and yet $f(2) = 3$? Explain.

2. Explain what it means to say that

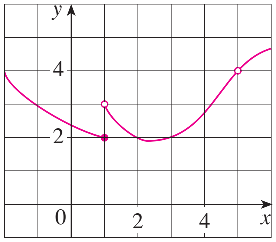
$$\lim_{x\to 1^-} f(x) = 3 \qquad \text{and} \qquad \lim_{x\to 1^+} f(x) = 7$$

In this situation is it possible that $\lim_{x\to 1} f(x)$ exists? Explain.

3. Use the given graph of f to state the value of each quantity, if it exists. If it does not exist, explain why.

(a) $\lim_{x\to 1^-} f(x)$ (b) $\lim_{x\to 1^+} f(x)$ (c) $\lim_{x\to 1} f(x)$

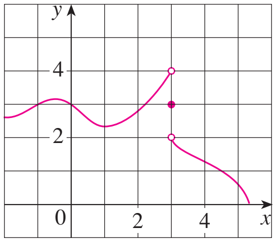
(d) $\lim_{x\to 5} f(x)$ (e) $f(5)$



4. For the function f whose graph is given, state the value of each quantity, if it exists. If it does not exist, explain why.

(a) $\lim_{x\to 0} f(x)$ (b) $\lim_{x\to 3^-} f(x)$ (c) $\lim_{x\to 3^+} f(x)$

(d) $\lim_{x\to 3} f(x)$ (e) $f(3)$

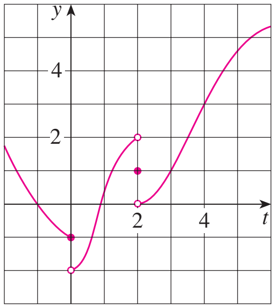


5. For the function g whose graph is given, state the value of each quantity, if it exists. If it does not exist, explain why.

(a) $\lim_{t\to 0^-} g(t)$ (b) $\lim_{t\to 0^+} g(t)$ (c) $\lim_{t\to 0} g(t)$

(d) $\lim_{t\to 2^-} g(t)$ (e) $\lim_{t\to 2^+} g(t)$ (f) $\lim_{t\to 2} g(t)$

(g) $g(2)$ (h) $\lim_{t\to 4} g(t)$



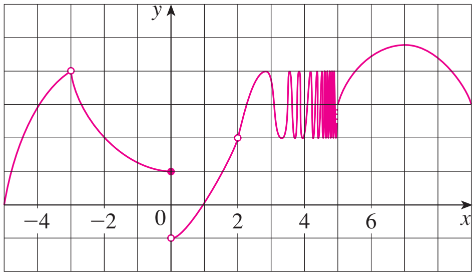
6. For the function h whose graph is given, state the value of each quantity, if it exists. If it does not exist, explain why.

(a) $\lim_{x\to -3^-} h(x)$ (b) $\lim_{x\to -3^+} h(x)$ (c) $\lim_{x\to -3} h(x)$

(d) $h(-3)$ (e) $\lim_{x\to 0^-} h(x)$ (f) $\lim_{x\to 0^+} h(x)$

(g) $\lim_{x\to 0} h(x)$ (h) $h(0)$ (i) $\lim_{x\to 2} h(x)$

(j) $h(2)$ (k) $\lim_{x\to 5^+} h(x)$ (l) $\lim_{x\to 5^-} h(x)$



7–8 Sketch the graph of the function and use it to determine the values of a for which $\lim_{x\to a} f(x)$ exists.

7. $f(x) = \begin{cases} 1 + x & \text{if } x < -1 \\ x^2 & \text{if } -1 \leqslant x < 1 \\ 2 - x & \text{if } x \geqslant 1 \end{cases}$

8. $f(x) = \begin{cases} 1 + \sin x & \text{if } x < 0 \\ \cos x & \text{if } 0 \leqslant x \leqslant \pi \\ \sin x & \text{if } x > \pi \end{cases}$

9–11 Use the graph of the function f to state the value of each limit, if it exists. If it does not exist, explain why.

(a) $\lim_{x\to 0^-} f(x)$ (b) $\lim_{x\to 0^+} f(x)$ (c) $\lim_{x\to 0} f(x)$

9. $f(x) = \dfrac{1}{1 + e^{1/x}}$

10. $f(x) = \dfrac{x^2 + x}{\sqrt{x^3 + x^2}}$

Graphing calculator or computer with graphing software required

1. Homework Hints available in TEC

11. $f(x) = \dfrac{\sqrt{2 - 2\cos 2x}}{x}$

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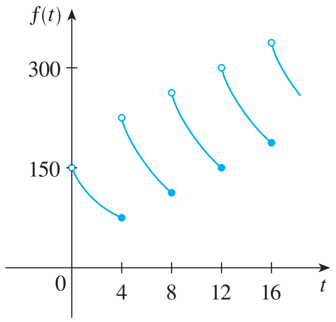
12. A patient receives a 150-mg injection of a drug every 4 hours. The graph shows the amount $f(t)$ of the drug in the bloodstream after t hours. Find

$$\lim_{t \to 12^-} f(t) \qquad \text{and} \qquad \lim_{t \to 12^+} f(t)$$

and explain the significance of these one-sided limits.



13–16 Sketch the graph of an example of a function f that satisfies all of the given conditions.

13. $\lim_{x \to 0^-} f(x) = -1, \quad \lim_{x \to 0^+} f(x) = 2, \quad f(0) = 1$

14. $\lim_{x \to 0} f(x) = 1, \quad \lim_{x \to 3^-} f(x) = -2, \quad \lim_{x \to 3^+} f(x) = 2,$
$f(0) = -1, \quad f(3) = 1$

15. $\lim_{x \to 3^+} f(x) = 4, \quad \lim_{x \to 3^-} f(x) = 2, \quad \lim_{x \to -2} f(x) = 2,$
$f(3) = 3, \quad f(-2) = 1$

16. $\lim_{x \to 0^-} f(x) = 2, \quad \lim_{x \to 0^+} f(x) = 0, \quad \lim_{x \to 4^-} f(x) = 3,$
$\lim_{x \to 4^+} f(x) = 0, \quad f(0) = 2, \quad f(4) = 1$

17–20 Guess the value of the limit (if it exists) by evaluating the function at the given numbers (correct to six decimal places).

17. $\lim_{x \to 2} \dfrac{x^2 - 2x}{x^2 - x - 2}, \quad x = 2.5, 2.1, 2.05, 2.01, 2.005, 2.001,$
$1.9, 1.95, 1.99, 1.995, 1.999$

18. $\lim_{x \to -1} \dfrac{x^2 - 2x}{x^2 - x - 2},$
$x = 0, -0.5, -0.9, -0.95, -0.99, -0.999,$
$-2, -1.5, -1.1, -1.01, -1.001$

19. $\lim_{t \to 0} \dfrac{e^{5t} - 1}{t}, \quad t = \pm 0.5, \pm 0.1, \pm 0.01, \pm 0.001, \pm 0.0001$

20. $\lim_{h \to 0} \dfrac{(2 + h)^5 - 32}{h},$
$h = \pm 0.5, \pm 0.1, \pm 0.01, \pm 0.001, \pm 0.0001$

21–24 Use a table of values to estimate the value of the limit. If you have a graphing device, use it to confirm your result graphically.

21. $\lim_{x \to 0} \dfrac{\sqrt{x + 4} - 2}{x}$

22. $\lim_{x \to 0} \dfrac{\tan 3x}{\tan 5x}$

23. $\lim_{x \to 1} \dfrac{x^6 - 1}{x^{10} - 1}$

24. $\lim_{x \to 0} \dfrac{9^x - 5^x}{x}$

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25. (a) By graphing the function $f(x) = (\cos 2x - \cos x)/x^2$ and zooming in toward the point where the graph crosses the y-axis, estimate the value of $\lim_{x \to 0} f(x)$.
(b) Check your answer in part (a) by evaluating $f(x)$ for values of x that approach 0.

26. (a) Estimate the value of

$$\lim_{x \to 0} \frac{\sin x}{\sin \pi x}$$

by graphing the function $f(x) = (\sin x)/(\sin \pi x)$. State your answer correct to two decimal places.
(b) Check your answer in part (a) by evaluating $f(x)$ for values of x that approach 0.

27. (a) Estimate the value of the limit $\lim_{x \to 0} (1 + x)^{1/x}$ to five decimal places. Does this number look familiar?
(b) Illustrate part (a) by graphing the function $y = (1 + x)^{1/x}$.

28. The slope of the tangent line to the graph of the exponential function $y = 2^x$ at the point $(0, 1)$ is $\lim_{x \to 0} (2^x - 1)/x$. Estimate the slope to three decimal places.

29. (a) Evaluate the function $f(x) = x^2 - (2^x/1000)$ for $x = 1$, 0.8, 0.6, 0.4, 0.2, 0.1, and 0.05, and guess the value of

$$\lim_{x \to 0} \left(x^2 - \frac{2^x}{1000} \right)$$

(b) Evaluate $f(x)$ for $x = 0.04$, 0.02, 0.01, 0.005, 0.003, and 0.001. Guess again.

30. (a) Evaluate $h(x) = (\tan x - x)/x^3$ for $x = 1$, 0.5, 0.1, 0.05, 0.01, and 0.005.
(b) Guess the value of $\lim_{x \to 0} \dfrac{\tan x - x}{x^3}$.
(c) Evaluate $h(x)$ for successively smaller values of x until you finally reach a value of 0 for $h(x)$. Are you still confident that your guess in part (b) is correct? Explain why you eventually obtained 0 values. (In Section 4.5 a method for evaluating the limit will be explained.)
(d) Graph the function h in the viewing rectangle $[-1, 1]$ by $[0, 1]$. Then zoom in toward the point where the graph

crosses the y-axis to estimate the limit of $h(x)$ as x approaches 0. Continue to zoom in until you observe distortions in the graph of h. Compare with the results of part (c).

31. Use a graph to determine how close to 2 we have to take x to ensure that $x^3 - 3x + 4$ is within a distance 0.2 of the number 6. What if we insist that $x^3 - 3x + 4$ be within 0.1 of 6?

32. (a) Use numerical and graphical evidence to guess the value of the limit

$$\lim_{x \to 1} \frac{x^3 - 1}{\sqrt{x} - 1}$$

(b) How close to 1 does x have to be to ensure that the function in part (a) is within a distance 0.5 of its limit?

2.3 Calculating Limits Using the Limit Laws

In Section 2.2 we used calculators and graphs to guess the values of limits, but we saw that such methods don't always lead to the correct answer. In this section we use the following properties of limits, called the *Limit Laws,* to calculate limits.

Limit Laws Suppose that c is a constant and the limits

$$\lim_{x \to a} f(x) \qquad \text{and} \qquad \lim_{x \to a} g(x)$$

exist. Then

1. $\lim_{x \to a} [f(x) + g(x)] = \lim_{x \to a} f(x) + \lim_{x \to a} g(x)$

2. $\lim_{x \to a} [f(x) - g(x)] = \lim_{x \to a} f(x) - \lim_{x \to a} g(x)$

3. $\lim_{x \to a} [cf(x)] = c \lim_{x \to a} f(x)$

4. $\lim_{x \to a} [f(x)g(x)] = \lim_{x \to a} f(x) \cdot \lim_{x \to a} g(x)$

5. $\displaystyle \lim_{x \to a} \frac{f(x)}{g(x)} = \frac{\lim_{x \to a} f(x)}{\lim_{x \to a} g(x)} \quad \text{if } \lim_{x \to a} g(x) \neq 0$

These five laws can be stated verbally as follows:

Sum Law

1. The limit of a sum is the sum of the limits.

Difference Law

2. The limit of a difference is the difference of the limits.

Constant Multiple Law

3. The limit of a constant times a function is the constant times the limit of the function.

Product Law

4. The limit of a product is the product of the limits.

Quotient Law

5. The limit of a quotient is the quotient of the limits (provided that the limit of the denominator is not 0).

It is easy to believe that these properties are true. For instance, if $f(x)$ is close to L and $g(x)$ is close to M, it is reasonable to conclude that $f(x) + g(x)$ is close to $L + M$. This gives us an intuitive basis for believing that Law 1 is true. All of these laws can be proved using the precise definition of a limit. In Appendix E we give the proof of Law 1.