

AP Calculus AP: Notes, Formulas, Examples

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Units

1 Limits and Continuity

The limit is when a given value approaches, or gets *really close* (infinitely) to another value. The standard limit notation is:

$$\lim_{x \rightarrow c} f(x)$$

represents when x can approach c from either left ($-$) or the right ($+$). By adding a sign superscript to the c , it means that x can only approach from that direction:

$$\lim_{x \rightarrow c^+} f(x)$$

Right hand limit, x approaches c from values greater than c

$$\lim_{x \rightarrow c^-} f(x)$$

Left hand limit, x approaches c from values lower than c

1.1 Limits to Infinity

If a degree (biggest exponent) of a polynomial is greater than or equal to 1, its limit as x approaches $\pm\infty$ will also be $\pm\infty$. This depends on the sign of the leading coefficient and the degree of polynomial

Example:

$$f(x) = 3x^3 - 7x^2 + 2$$

$$\lim_{x \rightarrow \infty} f(x) = \infty$$

$$\lim_{x \rightarrow -\infty} f(x) = -\infty$$

The degree of $f(x)$ is 3, and the leading coefficient is positive. The graph goes down to up from left to right.

With Fractions, just find whether the highest degree is the numerator or the denominator. Numerator means ∞ , denominator means 0

1.2 Asymptotes

Functions can have asymptotes, either vertical or horizontal. In the case of vertical asymptotes, the limit would be *unbounded* as it approaches that x value.

Example:

$$f(x) = \frac{2x - 4}{x - 3}$$

$$\lim_{x \rightarrow 3} f(x) = \text{undef}$$

$$\lim_{x \rightarrow 3^-} f(x) = -\infty$$

$$\lim_{x \rightarrow 3^+} f(x) = \infty$$

As with vertical asymptotes, as x approaches c (in this case $\pm\infty$), the limit would approach the horizontal asymptote. Although the y -value never actually touches the asymptote, the limit gets really close to the value, from both below and above

1.3 Limit Properties

The limits of combined functions can be found by finding the limit of each of the individual functions, then applying the operations.

- **Addition/Subtraction**

When taking the limit of the sum or difference of multiple functions, it's the same thing as taking the sum or difference of each of the separate limits of each function

$$\lim_{x \rightarrow c} [f(x) + g(x)] \implies \lim_{x \rightarrow c} f(x) + \lim_{x \rightarrow c} g(x)$$

$$\lim_{x \rightarrow c} [f(x) - g(x)] \implies \lim_{x \rightarrow c} f(x) - \lim_{x \rightarrow c} g(x)$$

Note that when the limit of either function is *undefined* the combined limit would also be undefined

- **Multiplication**

Multiplication of the limits of functions is quite straightforward

$$\lim_{x \rightarrow c} [f(x) \cdot g(x)] \implies \lim_{x \rightarrow c} f(x) \cdot \lim_{x \rightarrow c} g(x)$$

The same exception applies when one of the limits is *undefined*. This just makes the entire combined limit undefined

- **Division**

Division is basically the same as the other basic operations except if the denominator is 0

$$\lim_{x \rightarrow c} \frac{f(x)}{g(x)} \implies \frac{\lim_{x \rightarrow c} f(x)}{\lim_{x \rightarrow c} g(x)}$$

- **Composite Functions**

When working with composite functions, it's the same thing as taking the limit of the inner function, then evaluating the outer function normally

$$\lim_{x \rightarrow c} f(g(x)) \implies f\left(\lim_{x \rightarrow c} g(x)\right)$$

1.4 Solving Limits

The first thing to always try to do when solving limits is **direct substitution**. If this is not possible (undefined limit), then algebraic manipulation (factoring) is the next step

$$\begin{aligned} \lim_{x \rightarrow c} \frac{x^4 + 3x^3 - 10x^2}{x^2 - 2x} \\ &= \lim_{x \rightarrow c} \frac{x^2(x^2 + 3x - 10)}{x(x - 2)} \\ &= \lim_{x \rightarrow c} \frac{x^2(x + 5)(x - 2)}{x(x - 2)} \\ &= \lim_{x \rightarrow c} x^2(x + 5) \end{aligned}$$

When encountering radicals, conjugates can be used.

$$\begin{aligned} \lim_{x \rightarrow c} \frac{x + 4}{\sqrt{3x + 13} - 1} \\ &= \lim_{x \rightarrow c} \frac{x + 4}{\sqrt{3x + 13} - 1} \cdot \frac{\sqrt{3x + 13} + 1}{\sqrt{3x + 13} + 1} \\ &= \lim_{x \rightarrow c} \frac{(x + 4)(\sqrt{3x + 13} + 1)}{3x + 12} \\ &= \lim_{x \rightarrow c} \frac{(x + 4)(\sqrt{3x + 13} + 1)}{3(x + 4)} \\ &= \lim_{x \rightarrow c} \frac{\sqrt{3x + 13} + 1}{3} \end{aligned}$$

When dealing with trigonometric equations, trig identities can be used (assuming direct substitution doesn't work)

