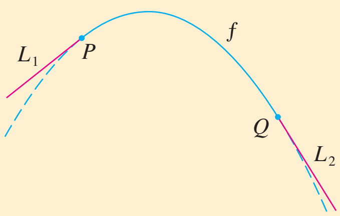
APPLIED PROJECT BUILDING A BETTER ROLLER COASTER



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Suppose you are asked to design the first ascent and drop for a new roller coaster. By studying photographs of your favorite coasters, you decide to make the slope of the ascent 0.8 and the slope of the drop -1.6. You decide to connect these two straight stretches $y = L_1(x)$ and $y = L_2(x)$ with part of a parabola $y = f(x) = ax^2 + bx + c$, where x and $f(x)$ are measured in feet. For the track to be smooth there can't be abrupt changes in direction, so you want the linear segments L_1 and L_2 to be tangent to the parabola at the transition points P and Q. (See the figure.) To simplify the equations, you decide to place the origin at P.

1. (a) Suppose the horizontal distance between P and Q is 100 ft. Write equations in a, b, and c that will ensure that the track is smooth at the transition points.
(b) Solve the equations in part (a) for a, b, and c to find a formula for $f(x)$.
(c) Plot L_1, f, and L_2 to verify graphically that the transitions are smooth.
(d) Find the difference in elevation between P and Q.

2. The solution in Problem 1 might *look* smooth, but it might not *feel* smooth because the piecewise defined function [consisting of $L_1(x)$ for $x < 0$, $f(x)$ for $0 \leqslant x \leqslant 100$, and $L_2(x)$ for $x > 100$] doesn't have a continuous second derivative. So you decide to improve the design by using a quadratic function $q(x) = ax^2 + bx + c$ only on the interval $10 \leqslant x \leqslant 90$ and connecting it to the linear functions by means of two cubic functions:

$$g(x) = kx^3 + lx^2 + mx + n \qquad 0 \leqslant x < 10$$

$$h(x) = px^3 + qx^2 + rx + s \qquad 90 < x \leqslant 100$$

(a) Write a system of equations in 11 unknowns that ensure that the functions and their first two derivatives agree at the transition points.
CAS (b) Solve the equations in part (a) with a computer algebra system to find formulas for $q(x)$, $g(x)$, and $h(x)$.
(c) Plot L_1, g, q, h, and L_2, and compare with the plot in Problem 1(c).

Graphing calculator or computer required

CAS Computer algebra system required

2.4 Derivatives of Trigonometric Functions

A review of trigonometric functions is given in Appendix D.

Before starting this section, you might need to review the trigonometric functions. In particular, it is important to remember that when we talk about the function f defined for all real numbers x by

$$f(x) = \sin x$$

it is understood that $\sin x$ means the sine of the angle whose *radian* measure is x. A similar convention holds for the other trigonometric functions cos, tan, csc, sec, and cot. Recall from Section 1.8 that all of the trigonometric functions are continuous at every number in their domains.

If we sketch the graph of the function $f(x) = \sin x$ and use the interpretation of $f'(x)$ as the slope of the tangent to the sine curve in order to sketch the graph of f' (see Exercise 16 in Section 2.2), then it looks as if the graph of f' may be the same as the cosine curve (see Figure 1).