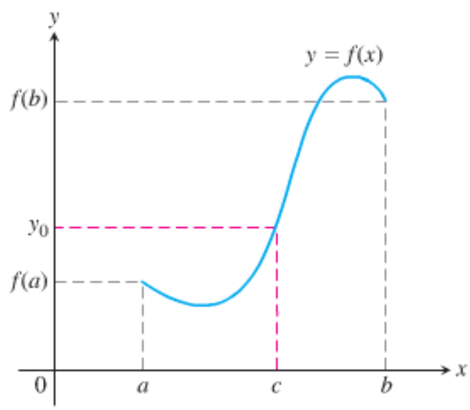
Intermediate Value Theorem, IVT
Extreme Value Theorem, EVT
Mean Value Theorem, MVT

Intermediate Value Theorem for Continuous Functions

Functions that are continuous on intervals have properties that make them particularly useful in mathematics and its applications. One of these is the *Intermediate Value Property*. A function is said to have the **Intermediate Value Property** if whenever it takes on two values, it also takes on all the values in between.

THEOREM 11—The Intermediate Value Theorem for Continuous Functions If f is a continuous function on a closed interval $[a, b]$, and if y_0 is any value between $f(a)$ and $f(b)$, then $y_0 = f(c)$ for some c in $[a, b]$.



Theorem 11 says that continuous functions over *finite closed* intervals have the Intermediate Value Property. Geometrically, the Intermediate Value Theorem says that any horizontal line $y = y_0$ crossing the y-axis between the numbers $f(a)$ and $f(b)$ will cross the curve $y = f(x)$ at least once over the interval $[a, b]$.

The proof of the Intermediate Value Theorem depends on the completeness property of the real number system (Appendix 6) and can be found in more advanced texts.

The continuity of f on the interval is essential to Theorem 11. If f is discontinuous at even one point of the interval, the theorem's conclusion may fail, as it does for the function graphed in Figure 2.46 (choose y_0 as any number between 2 and 3).

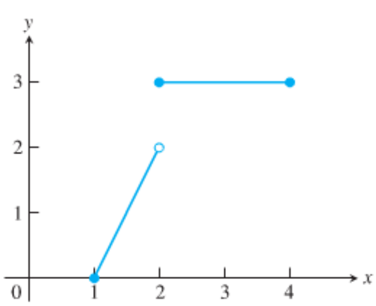


FIGURE 2.46 The function $f(x) = \begin{cases} 2x - 2, & 1 \le x < 2 \\ 3, & 2 \le x \le 4 \end{cases}$ does not take on all values between $f(1) = 0$ and $f(4) = 3$; it misses all the values between 2 and 3.

A Consequence for Graphing: Connectedness Theorem 11 implies that the graph of a function continuous on an interval cannot have any breaks over the interval. It will be **connected**—a single, unbroken curve. It will not have jumps like the graph of the greatest integer function (Figure 2.39), or separate branches like the graph of $1/x$ (Figure 2.41).

A Consequence for Root Finding We call a solution of the equation $f(x) = 0$ a **root** of the equation or **zero** of the function f. The Intermediate Value Theorem tells us that if f is continuous, then any interval on which f changes sign contains a zero of the function.

In practical terms, when we see the graph of a continuous function cross the horizontal axis on a computer screen, we know it is not stepping across. There really is a point where the function's value is zero.

EXAMPLE 11 Show that there is a root of the equation $x^3 - x - 1 = 0$ between 1 and 2.

Solution Let $f(x) = x^3 - x - 1$. Since $f(1) = 1 - 1 - 1 = -1 < 0$ and $f(2) = 2^3 - 2 - 1 = 5 > 0$, we see that $y_0 = 0$ is a value between $f(1)$ and $f(2)$. Since f is continuous, the Intermediate Value Theorem says there is a zero of f between 1 and 2. Figure 2.47 shows the result of zooming in to locate the root near $x = 1.32$. ■

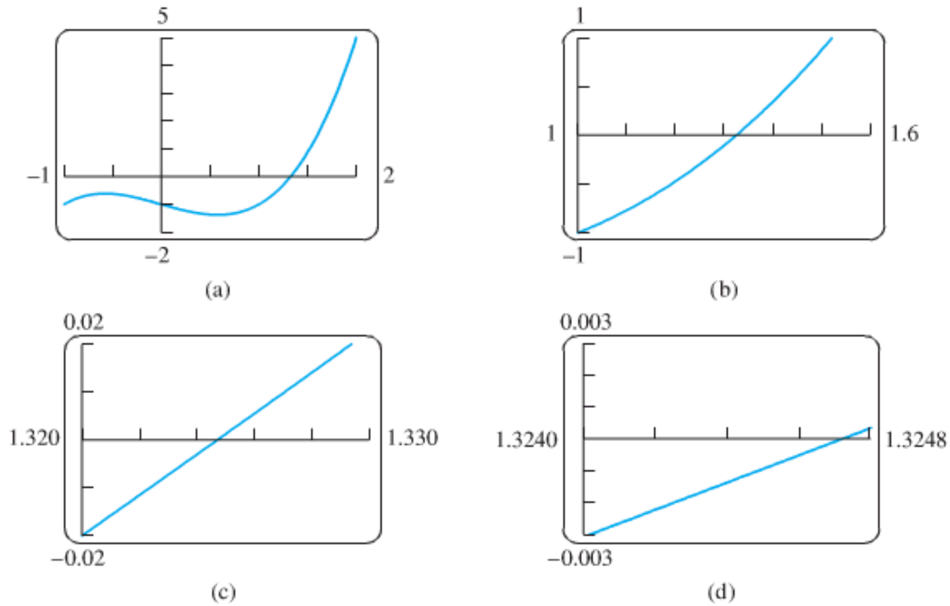


FIGURE 2.47 Zooming in on a zero of the function $f(x) = x^3 - x - 1$. The zero is near $x = 1.3247$ (Example 11).

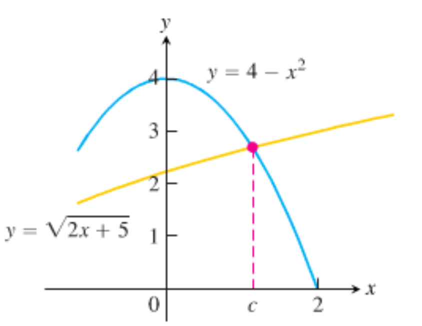


FIGURE 2.48 The curves $y = \sqrt{2x + 5}$ and $y = 4 - x^2$ have the same value at $x = c$ where $\sqrt{2x + 5} = 4 - x^2$ (Example 12).

EXAMPLE 12 Use the Intermediate Value Theorem to prove that the equation

$$\sqrt{2x + 5} = 4 - x^2$$

has a solution (Figure 2.48).

Solution We rewrite the equation as

$$\sqrt{2x + 5} + x^2 = 4,$$

and set $f(x) = \sqrt{2x + 5} + x^2$. Now $g(x) = \sqrt{2x + 5}$ is continuous on the interval $[-5/2, \infty)$ since it is the composite of the square root function with the nonnegative linear function $y = 2x + 5$. Then f is the sum of the function g and the quadratic function $y = x^2$, and the quadratic function is continuous for all values of x. It follows that $f(x) = \sqrt{2x + 5} + x^2$ is continuous on the interval $[-5/2, \infty)$. By trial and error, we find the function values $f(0) = \sqrt{5} \approx 2.24$ and $f(2) = \sqrt{9} + 4 = 7$, and note that f is also continuous on the finite closed interval $[0, 2] \subset [-5/2, \infty)$. Since the value $y_0 = 4$ is between the numbers 2.24 and 7, by the Intermediate Value Theorem there is a number $c \in [0, 2]$ such that $f(c) = 4$. That is, the number c solves the original equation. ■

4.1 Extreme Values of Functions

This section shows how to locate and identify extreme (maximum or minimum) values of a function from its derivative. Once we can do this, we can solve a variety of problems in which we find the optimal (best) way to do something in a given situation (see Section 4.6). Finding maximum and minimum values is one of the most important applications of the derivative.

DEFINITIONS Let f be a function with domain D. Then f has an **absolute maximum** value on D at a point c if

$$f(x) \le f(c) \qquad \text{for all } x \text{ in } D$$

and an **absolute minimum** value on D at c if

$$f(x) \ge f(c) \qquad \text{for all } x \text{ in } D.$$

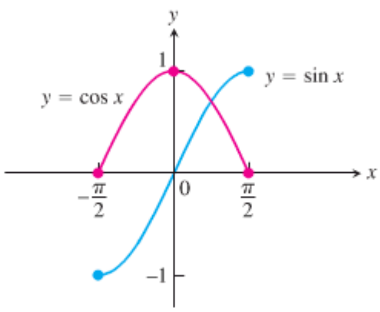


FIGURE 4.1 Absolute extrema for the sine and cosine functions on $[-\pi/2, \pi/2]$. These values can depend on the domain of a function.

Maximum and minimum values are called **extreme values** of the function f. Absolute maxima or minima are also referred to as **global** maxima or minima.

For example, on the closed interval $[-\pi/2, \pi/2]$ the function $f(x) = \cos x$ takes on an absolute maximum value of 1 (once) and an absolute minimum value of 0 (twice). On the same interval, the function $g(x) = \sin x$ takes on a maximum value of 1 and a minimum value of -1 (Figure 4.1).

Functions with the same defining rule or formula can have different extrema (maximum or minimum values), depending on the domain. We see this in the following example.

EXAMPLE 1 The absolute extrema of the following functions on their domains can be seen in Figure 4.2. Notice that a function might not have a maximum or minimum if the domain is unbounded or fails to contain an endpoint.

Function rule	**Domain *D***	**Absolute extrema on *D***
(a) $y = x^2$	$(-\infty, \infty)$	No absolute maximum. Absolute minimum of 0 at $x = 0$.
(b) $y = x^2$	$[0, 2]$	Absolute maximum of 4 at $x = 2$. Absolute minimum of 0 at $x = 0$.
(c) $y = x^2$	$(0, 2]$	Absolute maximum of 4 at $x = 2$. No absolute minimum.
(d) $y = x^2$	$(0, 2)$	No absolute extrema.

■

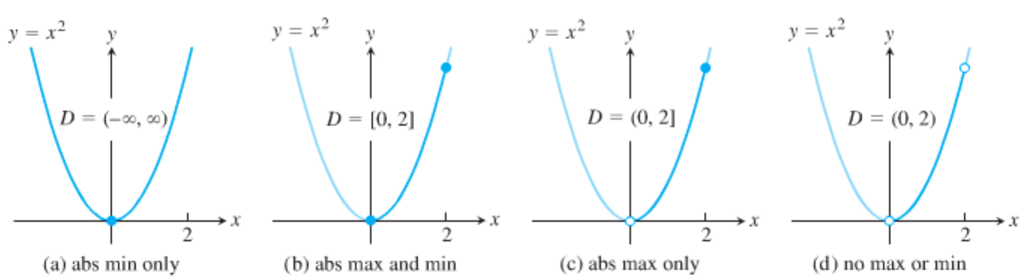


FIGURE 4.2 Graphs for Example 1.

Some of the functions in Example 1 did not have a maximum or a minimum value. The following theorem asserts that a function which is *continuous* at every point of a *closed* interval $[a, b]$ has an absolute maximum and an absolute minimum value on the interval. We look for these extreme values when we graph a function.

THEOREM 1—The Extreme Value Theorem If f is continuous on a closed interval $[a, b]$, then f attains both an absolute maximum value M and an absolute minimum value m in $[a, b]$. That is, there are numbers x_1 and x_2 in $[a, b]$ with $f(x_1) = m$, $f(x_2) = M$, and $m \le f(x) \le M$ for every other x in $[a, b]$.

The proof of the Extreme Value Theorem requires a detailed knowledge of the real number system (see Appendix 6) and we will not give it here. Figure 4.3 illustrates possible locations for the absolute extrema of a continuous function on a closed interval $[a, b]$. As we observed for the function $y = \cos x$, it is possible that an absolute minimum (or absolute maximum) may occur at two or more different points of the interval.

The requirements in Theorem 1 that the interval be closed and finite, and that the function be continuous, are key ingredients. Without them, the conclusion of the theorem

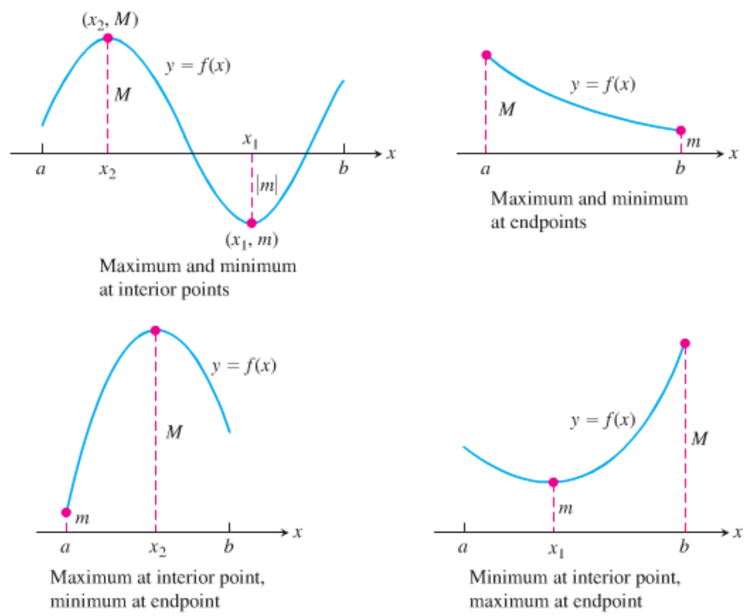


FIGURE 4.3 Some possibilities for a continuous function's maximum and minimum on a closed interval $[a, b]$.

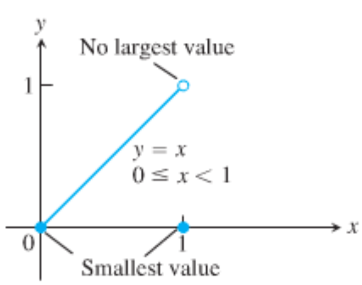


FIGURE 4.4 Even a single point of discontinuity can keep a function from having either a maximum or minimum value on a closed interval. The function

$$y = \begin{cases} x, & 0 \le x < 1 \\ 0, & x = 1 \end{cases}$$

is continuous at every point of $[0, 1]$ except $x = 1$, yet its graph over $[0, 1]$ does not have a highest point.

need not hold. Example 1 shows that an absolute extreme value may not exist if the interval fails to be both closed and finite. Figure 4.4 shows that the continuity requirement cannot be omitted.

4.2 The Mean Value Theorem

We know that constant functions have zero derivatives, but could there be a more complicated function whose derivative is always zero? If two functions have identical derivatives over an interval, how are the functions related? We answer these and other questions in this chapter by applying the Mean Value Theorem. First we introduce a special case, known as Rolle's Theorem, which is used to prove the Mean Value Theorem.

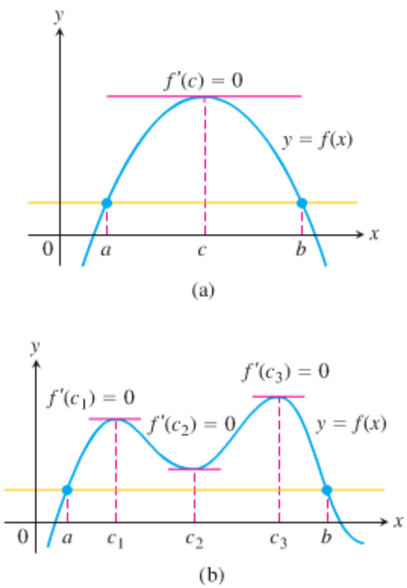


FIGURE 4.10 Rolle's Theorem says that a differentiable curve has at least one horizontal tangent between any two points where it crosses a horizontal line. It may have just one (a), or it may have more (b).

Rolle's Theorem

As suggested by its graph, if a differentiable function crosses a horizontal line at two different points, there is at least one point between them where the tangent to the graph is horizontal and the derivative is zero (Figure 4.10). We now state and prove this result.

> **THEOREM 3—Rolle's Theorem** Suppose that $y = f(x)$ is continuous at every point of the closed interval $[a, b]$ and differentiable at every point of its interior (a, b). If $f(a) = f(b)$, then there is at least one number c in (a, b) at which $f'(c) = 0$.

Proof Being continuous, f assumes absolute maximum and minimum values on $[a, b]$ by Theorem 1. These can occur only

1. at interior points where f' is zero,
2. at interior points where f' does not exist,
3. at the endpoints of the function's domain, in this case a and b.

By hypothesis, f has a derivative at every interior point. That rules out possibility (2), leaving us with interior points where $f' = 0$ and with the two endpoints a and b.

If either the maximum or the minimum occurs at a point c between a and b, then $f'(c) = 0$ by Theorem 2 in Section 4.1, and we have found a point for Rolle's Theorem.

If both the absolute maximum and the absolute minimum occur at the endpoints, then because $f(a) = f(b)$ it must be the case that f is a constant function with $f(x) = f(a) = f(b)$ for every $x \in [a, b]$. Therefore $f'(x) = 0$ and the point c can be taken anywhere in the interior (a, b). ■

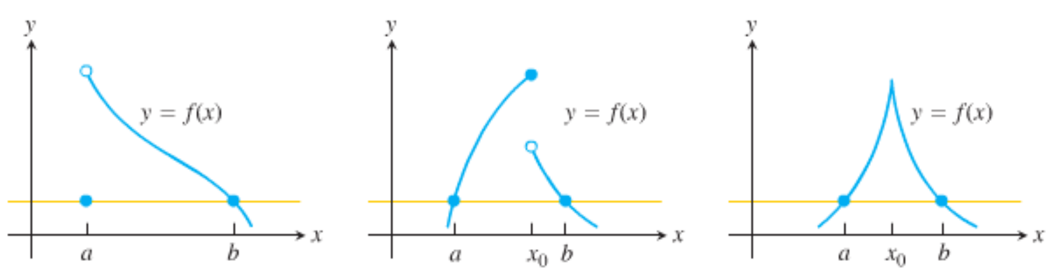
The hypotheses of Theorem 3 are essential. If they fail at even one point, the graph may not have a horizontal tangent (Figure 4.11).

Rolle's Theorem may be combined with the Intermediate Value Theorem to show when there is only one real solution of an equation $f(x) = 0$, as we illustrate in the next example.

EXAMPLE 1 Show that the equation

$$x^3 + 3x + 1 = 0$$

has exactly one real solution.



(a) Discontinuous at an endpoint of $[a, b]$

(b) Discontinuous at an interior point of $[a, b]$

(c) Continuous on $[a, b]$ but not differentiable at an interior point

FIGURE 4.11 There may be no horizontal tangent if the hypotheses of Rolle's Theorem do not hold.

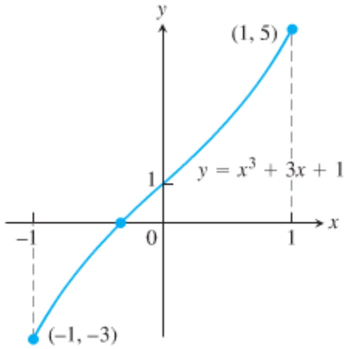


FIGURE 4.12 The only real zero of the polynomial $y = x^3 + 3x + 1$ is the one shown here where the curve crosses the x-axis between -1 and 0 (Example 1).

Solution We define the continuous function

$$f(x) = x^3 + 3x + 1.$$

Since $f(-1) = -3$ and $f(0) = 1$, the Intermediate Value Theorem tells us that the graph of f crosses the x-axis somewhere in the open interval $(-1, 0)$. (See Figure 4.12.) The derivative

$$f'(x) = 3x^2 + 3$$

is never zero (because it is always positive). Now, if there were even two points $x = a$ and $x = b$ where $f(x)$ was zero, Rolle's Theorem would guarantee the existence of a point $x = c$ in between them where f' was zero. Therefore, f has no more than one zero. ■

Our main use of Rolle's Theorem is in proving the Mean Value Theorem.

The Mean Value Theorem

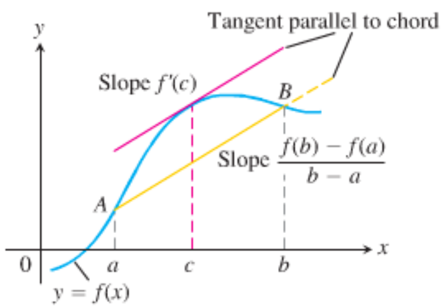


FIGURE 4.13 Geometrically, the Mean Value Theorem says that somewhere between a and b the curve has at least one tangent parallel to chord AB.

The Mean Value Theorem, which was first stated by Joseph-Louis Lagrange, is a slanted version of Rolle's Theorem (Figure 4.13). The Mean Value Theorem guarantees that there is a point where the tangent line is parallel to the chord AB.

> **THEOREM 4—The Mean Value Theorem** Suppose $y = f(x)$ is continuous on a closed interval $[a, b]$ and differentiable on the interval's interior (a, b). Then there is at least one point c in (a, b) at which
>
> $$\frac{f(b) - f(a)}{b - a} = f'(c). \tag{1}$$

Proof We picture the graph of f and draw a line through the points $A(a, f(a))$ and $B(b, f(b))$. (See Figure 4.14.) The line is the graph of the function

$$g(x) = f(a) + \frac{f(b) - f(a)}{b - a}(x - a) \tag{2}$$

(point-slope equation). The vertical difference between the graphs of f and g at x is

$$\begin{aligned} h(x) &= f(x) - g(x) \\ &= f(x) - f(a) - \frac{f(b) - f(a)}{b - a}(x - a). \end{aligned} \tag{3}$$

Figure 4.15 shows the graphs of f, g, and h together.

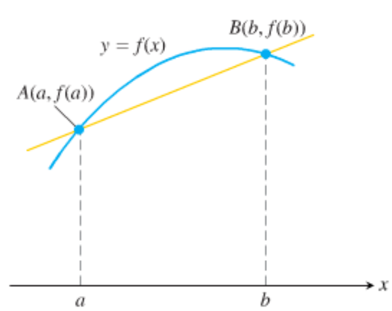


FIGURE 4.14 The graph of f and the chord AB over the interval $[a, b]$.

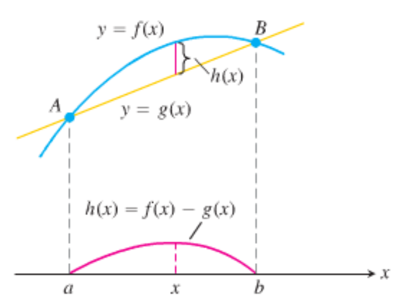


FIGURE 4.15 The chord AB is the graph of the function $g(x)$. The function $h(x) = f(x) - g(x)$ gives the vertical distance between the graphs of f and g at x.

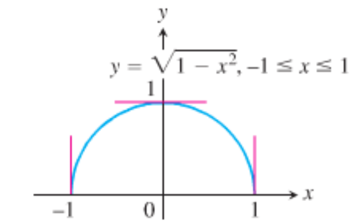


FIGURE 4.16 The function $f(x) = \sqrt{1 - x^2}$ satisfies the hypotheses (and conclusion) of the Mean Value Theorem on $[-1, 1]$ even though f is not differentiable at -1 and 1.

The function h satisfies the hypotheses of Rolle's Theorem on $[a, b]$. It is continuous on $[a, b]$ and differentiable on (a, b) because both f and g are. Also, $h(a) = h(b) = 0$ because the graphs of f and g both pass through A and B. Therefore $h'(c) = 0$ at some point $c \in (a, b)$. This is the point we want for Equation (1).

To verify Equation (1), we differentiate both sides of Equation (3) with respect to x and then set $x = c$:

$$h'(x) = f'(x) - \frac{f(b) - f(a)}{b - a} \qquad \text{Derivative of Eq. (3) . . .}$$

$$h'(c) = f'(c) - \frac{f(b) - f(a)}{b - a} \qquad \text{. . . with } x = c$$

$$0 = f'(c) - \frac{f(b) - f(a)}{b - a} \qquad h'(c) = 0$$

$$f'(c) = \frac{f(b) - f(a)}{b - a}, \qquad \text{Rearranged}$$

which is what we set out to prove. ■

The hypotheses of the Mean Value Theorem do not require f to be differentiable at either a or b. Continuity at a and b is enough (Figure 4.16).

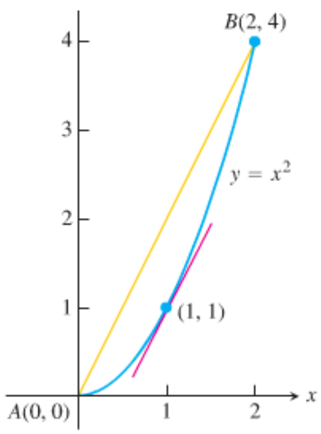


FIGURE 4.17 As we find in Example 2, $c = 1$ is where the tangent is parallel to the chord.

EXAMPLE 2 The function $f(x) = x^2$ (Figure 4.17) is continuous for $0 \le x \le 2$ and differentiable for $0 < x < 2$. Since $f(0) = 0$ and $f(2) = 4$, the Mean Value Theorem says that at some point c in the interval, the derivative $f'(x) = 2x$ must have the value $(4 - 0)/(2 - 0) = 2$. In this case we can identify c by solving the equation $2c = 2$ to get $c = 1$. However, it is not always easy to find c algebraically, even though we know it always exists. ■

A Physical Interpretation

We can think of the number $(f(b) - f(a))/(b - a)$ as the average change in f over $[a, b]$ and $f'(c)$ as an instantaneous change. Then the Mean Value Theorem says that at some interior point the instantaneous change must equal the average change over the entire interval.

EXAMPLE 3 If a car accelerating from zero takes 8 sec to go 352 ft, its average velocity for the 8-sec interval is $352/8 = 44$ ft/sec. The Mean Value Theorem says that at some point during the acceleration the speedometer must read exactly 30 mph (44 ft/sec) (Figure 4.18). ■

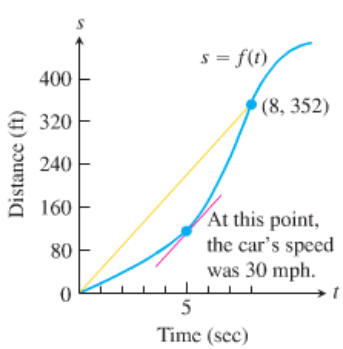


FIGURE 4.18 Distance versus elapsed time for the car in Example 3.

Mathematical Consequences

At the beginning of the section, we asked what kind of function has a zero derivative over an interval. The first corollary of the Mean Value Theorem provides the answer that only constant functions have zero derivatives.

COROLLARY 1 If $f'(x) = 0$ at each point x of an open interval (a, b), then $f(x) = C$ for all $x \in (a, b)$, where C is a constant.

Proof We want to show that f has a constant value on the interval (a, b). We do so by showing that if x_1 and x_2 are any two points in (a, b) with $x_1 < x_2$, then $f(x_1) = f(x_2)$. Now f satisfies the hypotheses of the Mean Value Theorem on $[x_1, x_2]$: It is differentiable at every point of $[x_1, x_2]$ and hence continuous at every point as well. Therefore,

$$\frac{f(x_2) - f(x_1)}{x_2 - x_1} = f'(c)$$

at some point c between x_1 and x_2. Since $f' = 0$ throughout (a, b), this equation implies successively that

$$\frac{f(x_2) - f(x_1)}{x_2 - x_1} = 0, \qquad f(x_2) - f(x_1) = 0, \qquad \text{and} \qquad f(x_1) = f(x_2). \qquad \blacksquare$$

At the beginning of this section, we also asked about the relationship between two functions that have identical derivatives over an interval. The next corollary tells us that their values on the interval have a constant difference.

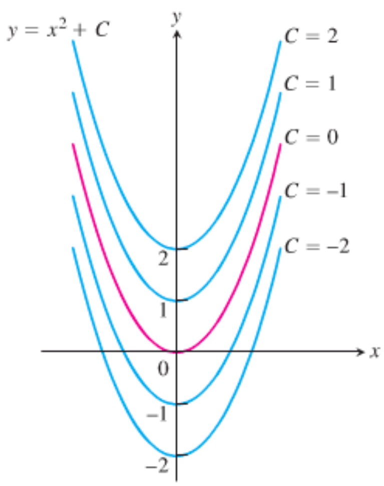


FIGURE 4.19 From a geometric point of view, Corollary 2 of the Mean Value Theorem says that the graphs of functions with identical derivatives on an interval can differ only by a vertical shift there. The graphs of the functions with derivative $2x$ are the parabolas $y = x^2 + C$, shown here for selected values of C.

COROLLARY 2 If $f'(x) = g'(x)$ at each point x in an open interval (a, b), then there exists a constant C such that $f(x) = g(x) + C$ for all $x \in (a, b)$. That is, $f - g$ is a constant function on (a, b).

Proof At each point $x \in (a, b)$ the derivative of the difference function $h = f - g$ is

$$h'(x) = f'(x) - g'(x) = 0.$$

Thus, $h(x) = C$ on (a, b) by Corollary 1. That is, $f(x) - g(x) = C$ on (a, b), so $f(x) = g(x) + C$. $\blacksquare$

Corollaries 1 and 2 are also true if the open interval (a, b) fails to be finite. That is, they remain true if the interval is (a, ∞), $(-\infty, b)$, or $(-\infty, \infty)$.

Corollary 2 plays an important role when we discuss antiderivatives in Section 4.8. It tells us, for instance, that since the derivative of $f(x) = x^2$ on $(-\infty, \infty)$ is $2x$, any other function with derivative $2x$ on $(-\infty, \infty)$ must have the formula $x^2 + C$ for some value of C (Figure 4.19).

EXAMPLE 4 Find the function $f(x)$ whose derivative is $\sin x$ and whose graph passes through the point $(0, 2)$.

Solution Since the derivative of $g(x) = -\cos x$ is $g'(x) = \sin x$, we see that f and g have the same derivative. Corollary 2 then says that $f(x) = -\cos x + C$ for some constant C. Since the graph of f passes through the point $(0, 2)$, the value of C is determined from the condition that $f(0) = 2$:

$$f(0) = -\cos(0) + C = 2, \qquad \text{so} \qquad C = 3.$$

The function is $f(x) = -\cos x + 3$. $\blacksquare$