Derivatives of Inverse Trig Functions

TABLE 3.1 Derivatives of the inverse trigonometric functions

1. $$\frac{d(\sin^{-1} u)}{dx} = \frac{1}{\sqrt{1-u^2}}\frac{du}{dx}, \quad |u| < 1$$

2. $$\frac{d(\cos^{-1} u)}{dx} = -\frac{1}{\sqrt{1-u^2}}\frac{du}{dx}, \quad |u| < 1$$

3. $$\frac{d(\tan^{-1} u)}{dx} = \frac{1}{1+u^2}\frac{du}{dx}$$

4. $$\frac{d(\cot^{-1} u)}{dx} = -\frac{1}{1+u^2}\frac{du}{dx}$$

5. $$\frac{d(\sec^{-1} u)}{dx} = \frac{1}{|u|\sqrt{u^2-1}}\frac{du}{dx}, \quad |u| > 1$$

6. $$\frac{d(\csc^{-1} u)}{dx} = -\frac{1}{|u|\sqrt{u^2-1}}\frac{du}{dx}, \quad |u| > 1$$

EXAMPLE 2 Using the Chain Rule, we calculate the derivative

$$\frac{d}{dx}(\sin^{-1} x^2) = \frac{1}{\sqrt{1-(x^2)^2}} \cdot \frac{d}{dx}(x^2) = \frac{2x}{\sqrt{1-x^4}}.$$

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EXAMPLE 3 Using the Chain Rule and derivative of the arcsecant function, we find

$$\begin{aligned}\frac{d}{dx}\sec^{-1}(5x^4) &= \frac{1}{|5x^4|\sqrt{(5x^4)^2-1}}\frac{d}{dx}(5x^4) \\ &= \frac{1}{5x^4\sqrt{25x^8-1}}(20x^3) \qquad 5x^4 > 1 > 0 \\ &= \frac{4}{x\sqrt{25x^8-1}}.\end{aligned}$$

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Let's derive the formula for the derivative of sec^{-1}x using implicit differentiation:

$$y = \sec^{-1} x$$

$$\sec y = x \qquad \text{Inverse function relationship}$$

$$\frac{d}{dx}(\sec y) = \frac{d}{dx} x \qquad \text{Differentiate both sides.}$$

$$\sec y \tan y \frac{dy}{dx} = 1 \qquad \text{Chain Rule}$$

$$\frac{dy}{dx} = \frac{1}{\sec y \tan y}. \qquad \text{Since } |x| > 1, y \text{ lies in } (0, \pi/2) \cup (\pi/2, \pi) \text{ and } \sec y \tan y \neq 0.$$

To express the result in terms of x, we use the relationships

$$\sec y = x \qquad \text{and} \qquad \tan y = \pm\sqrt{\sec^2 y - 1} = \pm\sqrt{x^2 - 1}$$

to get

$$\frac{dy}{dx} = \pm\frac{1}{x\sqrt{x^2 - 1}}.$$

Can we do anything about the $\pm$ sign? A glance at Figure 3.42 shows that the slope of the graph $y = \sec^{-1} x$ is always positive. Thus,

$$\frac{d}{dx}\sec^{-1} x = \begin{cases} +\dfrac{1}{x\sqrt{x^2 - 1}} & \text{if } x > 1 \\ -\dfrac{1}{x\sqrt{x^2 - 1}} & \text{if } x < -1. \end{cases}$$

With the absolute value symbol, we can write a single expression that eliminates the "$\pm$" ambiguity:

$$\frac{d}{dx}\sec^{-1} x = \frac{1}{|x|\sqrt{x^2 - 1}}.$$

If u is a differentiable function of x with $|u| > 1$, we have the formula

$$\boxed{\frac{d}{dx}(\sec^{-1} u) = \frac{1}{|u|\sqrt{u^2 - 1}}\frac{du}{dx}, \qquad |u| > 1.}$$

We need to use the absolute value of the u term because the slope of the $\sec^{-1}u$ is always positive as evidenced in the graph below.

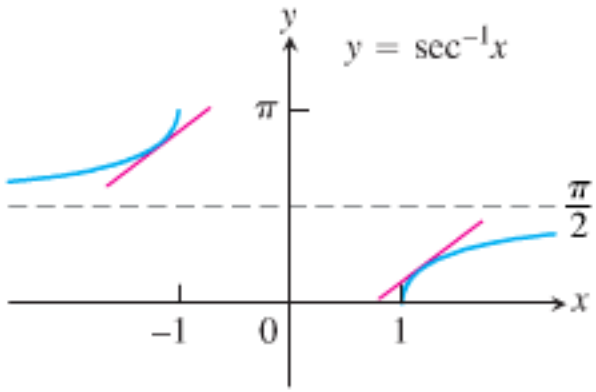

FIGURE 3.42 The slope of the curve $y = \sec^{-1} x$ is positive for both $x < -1$ and $x > 1$.