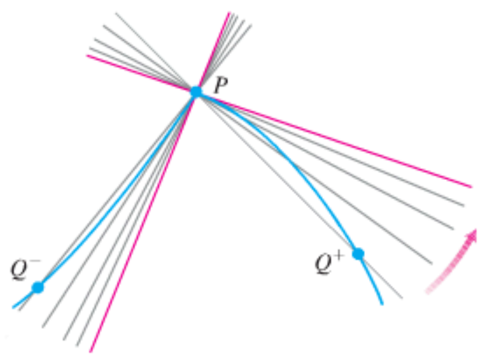
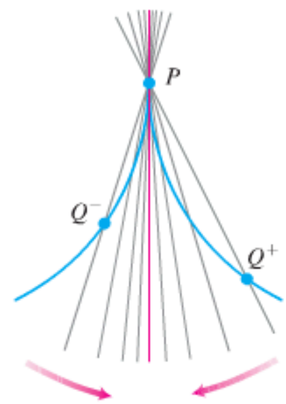
When Does a Function *Not* Have a Derivative at a Point?

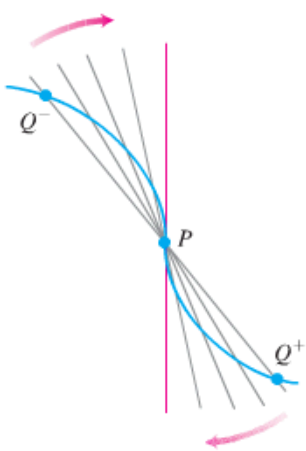
A function has a derivative at a point x_0 if the slopes of the secant lines through $P(x_0, f(x_0))$ and a nearby point Q on the graph approach a finite limit as Q approaches P. Whenever the secants fail to take up a limiting position or become vertical as Q approaches P, the derivative does not exist. Thus differentiability is a "smoothness" condition on the graph of f. A function can fail to have a derivative at a point for many reasons, including the existence of points where the graph has



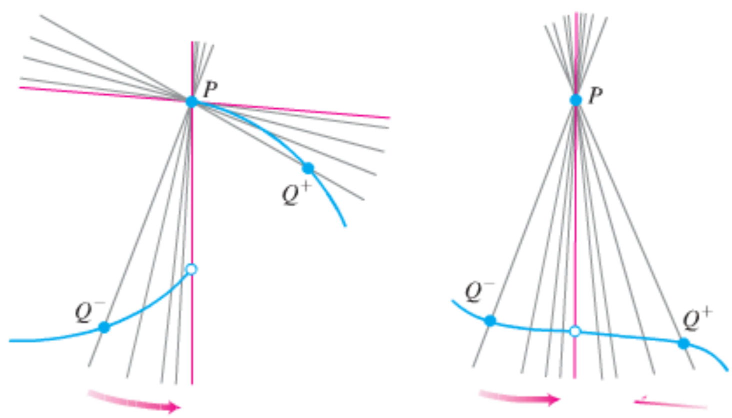
1. a *corner*, where the one-sided derivatives differ.



2. a *cusp*, where the slope of PQ approaches ∞ from one side and $-\infty$ from the other.



3. a *vertical tangent*, where the slope of PQ approaches ∞ from both sides or approaches $-\infty$ from both sides (here, $-\infty$).



4. a *discontinuity* (two examples shown).

Thomas' Calculus, Early Transcendentals, 12th ed. Pearson, 2010. Section 3.2, p. 130.