Functions of Several Variables

Hayk Aprikyan, Hayk Tarkhanyan

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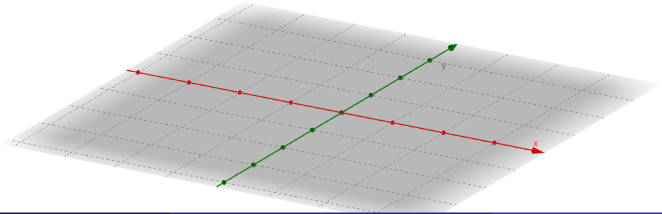

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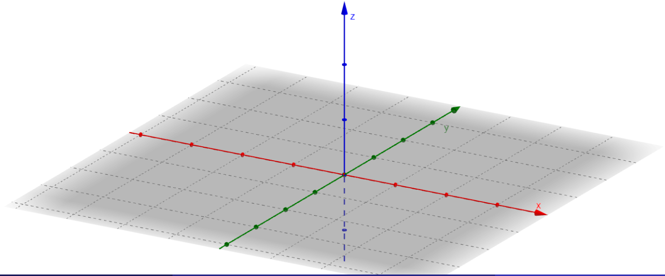

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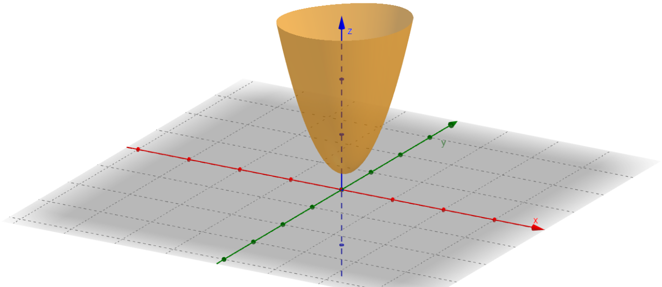

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Partial Derivative

Again, suppose x and y are the costs of apples and peaches, and your profit is given by:

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How can you measure the effect of increasing the cost of apple by a little (i.e. how quickly will f change if x changes)?

By fixing y and then doing the usual derivative stuff with x!

Partial Derivative

Definition

If there exists a finite limit

$$f_x = \lim_{h \to 0} \frac{f(x+h, y) - f(x, y)}{h}$$

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Similarly, we define the partial derivative of $f(x, y)$ with respect to y as:

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Example

If $f(x, y) = x^2 + y^2$, then:

$$f_x = 2x \qquad \text{and} \qquad f_y = 2y$$

Partial Derivative

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So naturally, instead of 1 object to describe the speed, we have 2 objects. We can combine them together in one vector:

Definition

The vector consisting of the partial derivatives of $f(x, y)$:

$$\nabla f = \begin{bmatrix} \frac{\partial f}{\partial x} & \frac{\partial f}{\partial y} \end{bmatrix}$$

is called the *gradient* of $f(x, y)$.

In the previous example, $\nabla f = [2x \quad 2y]$.

Partial Derivative

Similarly, for a function of n variables, $f(x_1, \dots, x_n) = f(\mathbf{x})$ we define partial derivatives as:

$$f_{x_1}(\mathbf{x}) = \frac{\partial f}{\partial x_1}(\mathbf{x}) = \lim_{h \to 0} \frac{f(x_1 + h, x_2, \dots, x_n) - f(x_1, x_2, \dots, x_n)}{h},$$

$$f_{x_2}(\mathbf{x}) = \frac{\partial f}{\partial x_2}(\mathbf{x}) = \lim_{h \to 0} \frac{f(x_1, x_2 + h, \dots, x_n) - f(x_1, x_2, \dots, x_n)}{h},$$

$$\vdots$$

$$f_{x_n}(\mathbf{x}) = \frac{\partial f}{\partial x_n}(\mathbf{x}) = \lim_{h \to 0} \frac{f(x_1, x_2, \dots, x_n + h) - f(x_1, x_2, \dots, x_n)}{h}.$$

And the gradient of $f(\mathbf{x})$ as:

$$\nabla f = \frac{df}{d\mathbf{x}} = \begin{bmatrix} \frac{\partial f(\mathbf{x})}{\partial x_1} & \frac{\partial f(\mathbf{x})}{\partial x_2} & \dots & \frac{\partial f(\mathbf{x})}{\partial x_n} \end{bmatrix} \in \mathbb{R}^{1 \times n}$$

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3. $$\frac{\partial}{\partial x_i}(f(\mathbf{x}) \cdot g(\mathbf{x})) = \frac{\partial f(\mathbf{x})}{\partial x_i} \cdot g(\mathbf{x}) + f(\mathbf{x}) \cdot \frac{\partial g(\mathbf{x})}{\partial x_i}$$

Example

Let $f(x, y) = 2x^2$ and $g(x, y) = 4x + 6y$.

$$(f \cdot g)_x = 2x^2(4) + (4x + 6y)(4x) = 24x^2 + 24xy$$
$$(f \cdot g)_y = 2x^2(6) + (4x + 6y)(0) = 12x^2$$

Chain Rule

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How does a change of temperature affect your profit?

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In other words,

- if f depends on x and y
- and x (or y) depends on t
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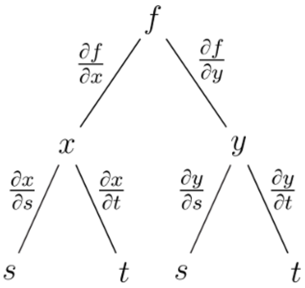
Turns out, there is a simple formula for that:

$$\frac{\partial f}{\partial t} = \frac{\partial f}{\partial x} \cdot \frac{\partial x}{\partial t} + \frac{\partial f}{\partial y} \cdot \frac{\partial y}{\partial t}$$

which is called the **chain rule**.



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Example

Let $z = \sin(x^2 + y^2),\ x = t^2 + 3,\ y = t^3.$

$$\frac{dz}{dt} = \frac{\partial z}{\partial x}\frac{dx}{dt} + \frac{\partial z}{\partial y}\frac{dy}{dt} = (2x\cos(x^2+y^2)) \cdot (2t) + (2y\cos(x^2+y^2)) \cdot (3t^2)$$
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Let $z(x) = x^2 + 4x,\ x(t) = 5t^3 + 2t$. We can again use the chain rule:

$$\frac{dz}{dt} = \frac{dz}{dx} \cdot \frac{dx}{dt} = (2x+4) \cdot (15t^2+2) = (2 \cdot (5t^3+2t)+4) \cdot (15t^2+2)$$

$$= 150t^5 + 80t^3 + 60t^2 + 8t + 8$$

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$$\nabla_{\mathbf{v}} f(\mathbf{x}) = \lim_{h \to 0} \frac{f(\mathbf{x} + h\mathbf{v}) - f(\mathbf{x})}{h}$$

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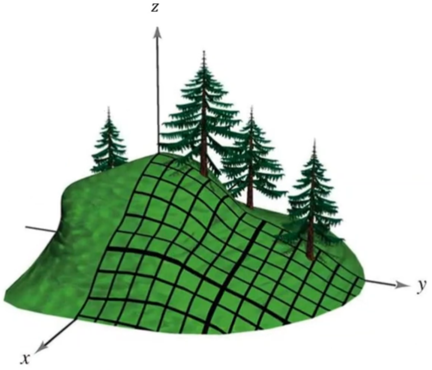
Note that the directional derivative is a *number* (like partial derivatives), not a vector.

Directional Derivative

The directional derivative shows how much our function changes if we "walk" not only along the x or y-axis, but by an arbitrary direction of our choice.



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A particularly important question you might ask is:

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By which direction should I move, so the function increases the most?

In other words, along which direction does $\nabla_{\mathbf{v}} f$ take its highest value?

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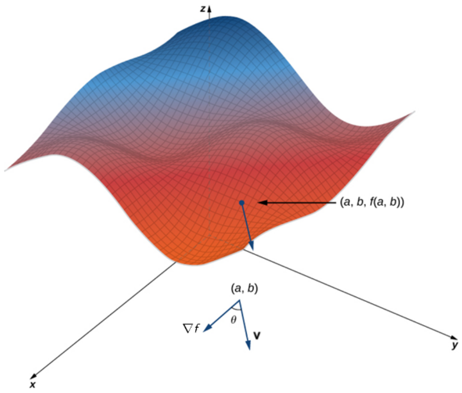

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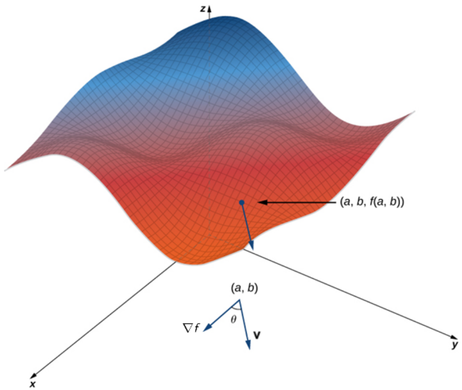

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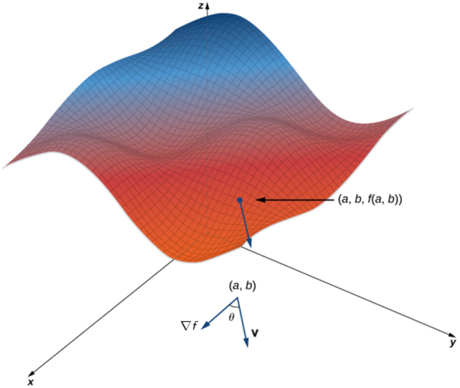

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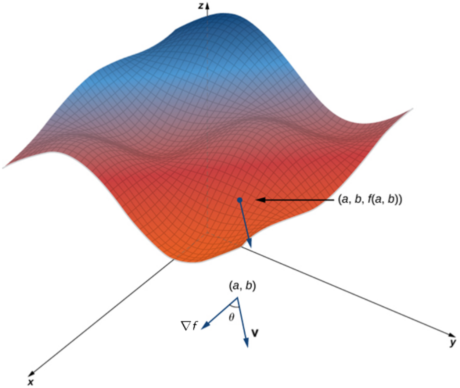

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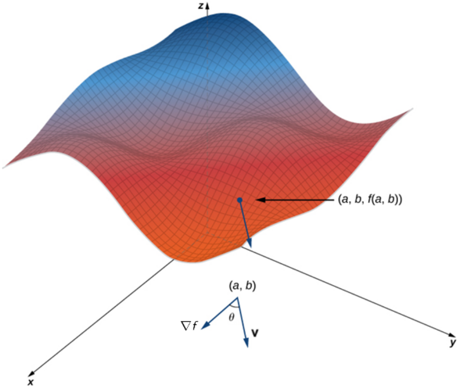

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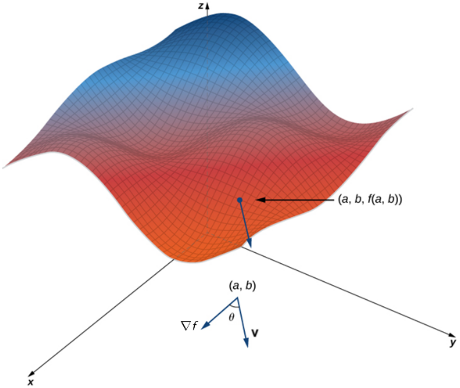

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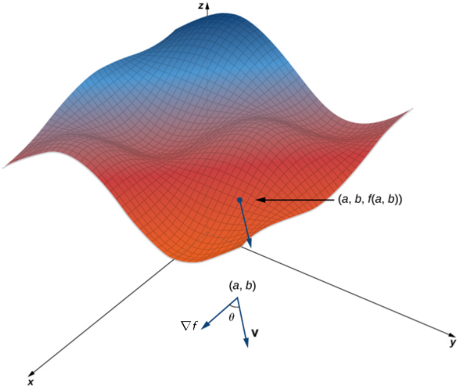

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$\mathbf{x}_0$ is called a *local maximum (minimum)* point of f if there exists a positive number $\delta > 0$ such that for all $\mathbf{x}$, if $\|\mathbf{x} - \mathbf{x}_0\| < \delta$, then $f(\mathbf{x}) \leq f(\mathbf{x}_0) \ \ (f(\mathbf{x}) \geq f(\mathbf{x}_0))$.

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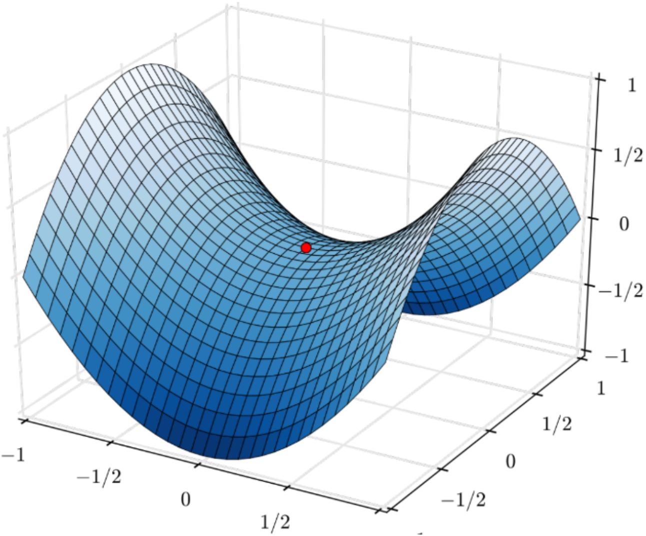
Extrema of a Function



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- each of them has two second order derivatives, so in total, we have 4 second order derivatives:

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Just as the gradient plays the role of f' for a multi-variable function, the Hessian matrix plays the role of f''.

Sometimes we even denote the Hessian by $\nabla^2 f$ or $\nabla\nabla f$.

Extrema of a Function

Note that since all second partial derivatives are functions themselves, the Hessian matrix **is a function** as well, i.e. it depends on x and y:

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Property

If f_{xy} and f_{yx} are continuous, then they are equal:

$$f_{xy} = f_{yx}$$

In other words, the Hessian matrix is *symmetric.*

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Theorem (for one variable)

If $f'(x_0) = 0$ at some point x_0, then:

- if $f''(x_0) > 0$, then x_0 is a local minimum
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In a very similar manner,

Theorem (for several variables)

If $\nabla f(\mathbf{x}_0) = \mathbf{0}$ at some point $\mathbf{x}_0$, then:

- if $Hf(\mathbf{x}_0) \succ 0$, then $\mathbf{x}_0$ is a local minimum
- if $Hf(\mathbf{x}_0) \prec 0$, then $\mathbf{x}_0$ is a local maximum
- if $Hf(\mathbf{x}_0)$ is not positive/negative definite, then we don't know

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To determine whether a critical point (a, b) is a local extremum or not, we need to calculate two numbers:

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If $\nabla f(a, b) = \mathbf{0}$ at some point (a, b), and

- $D > 0$ and $f_{xx} > 0 \quad \Rightarrow \quad$ local minimum
- $D > 0$ and $f_{xx} < 0 \quad \Rightarrow \quad$ local maximum
- $D < 0 \quad \Rightarrow \quad$ saddle point

Extrema of a Function

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Since $D < 0$, $(0, 0)$ is a saddle point.

Taylor Expansion (optional)

Just as in the single-variable case, we can approximate a multi-variable function $f(\mathbf{x})$ around some point $\mathbf{x}_0$ using its derivatives at that point.

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which was a *line* tangent to the graph of f at the point a.

In case of several variables, this becomes a *plane* tangent to the surface of f at the point $\mathbf{x}_0$:

$$f(\mathbf{x}) \approx f(\mathbf{x}_0) + \nabla f(\mathbf{x}_0) \cdot (\mathbf{x} - \mathbf{x}_0)$$

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The Taylor expansion can be extended to even higher orders, but we won't need that – instead check some examples.