

Iterative Approach to Model Building. The development of a model of this kind to describe the dependence structure in an observed time series is usually best achieved by a three-stage iterative procedure based on identification, estimation, and diagnostic checking.

1. By *identification* we mean the use of the data, and of any information on how the series was generated, to suggest a subclass of parsimonious models worthy to be entertained.
2. By *estimation* we mean efficient use of the data to make inferences about the parameters conditional on the adequacy of the model entertained.
3. By *diagnostic checking* we mean checking the fitted model in its relation to the data with intent to reveal model inadequacies and so to achieve model improvement.

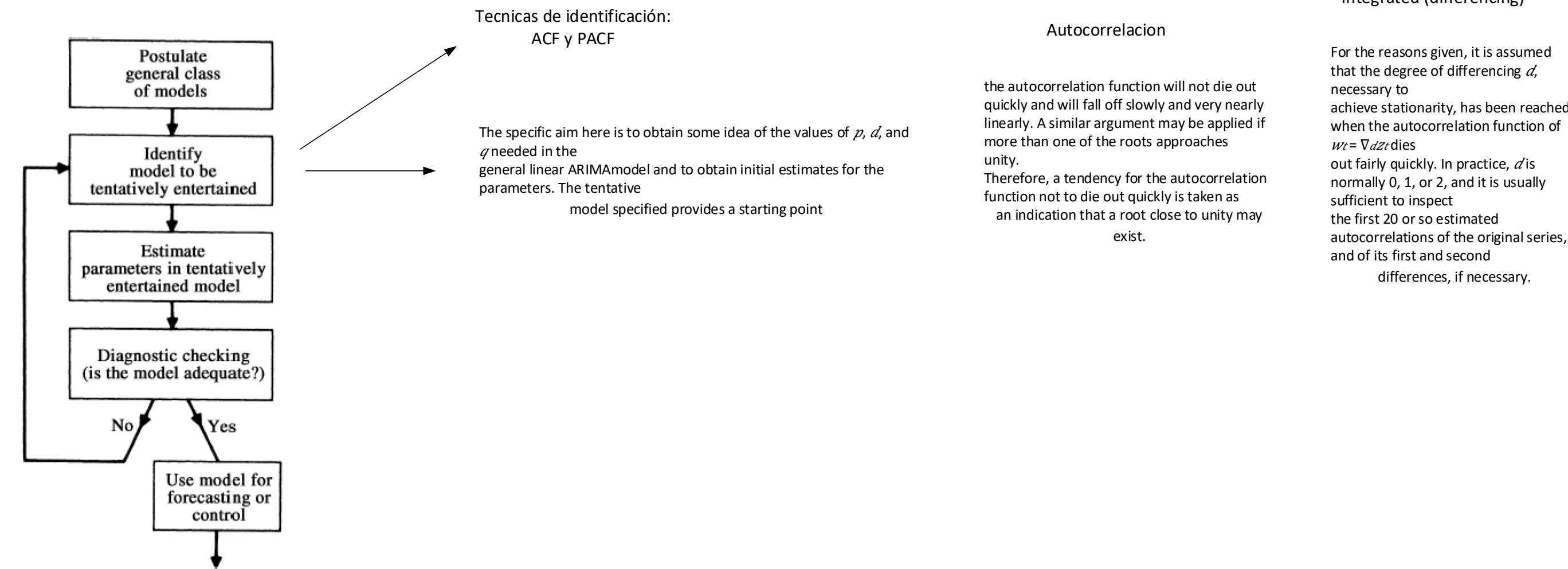


FIGURE 1.7 Stages in the iterative approach to model building.

Prepare your data by using transformations (e.g. square roots or logarithms) to stabilize the variance and differencing to remove remaining seasonality or other trends.

Identify any processes that appear to be a good fit for your data.

Find which model coefficients provide the best fit for your data. This step is computationally complex and usually performed by a computer. Akaike's Information Criterion (AIC) is one option: if you compare two models, the one with the lower AIC is usually the "better" model.

Test the models' assumptions to see how well the model holds up to closer scrutiny. If your chosen model is inadequate, repeat steps 2 and 3 to find a potentially better model.

Compute forecasts on your chosen model with computer software.