Optimization Problem

Monday, 9 December 2024 11:01 am

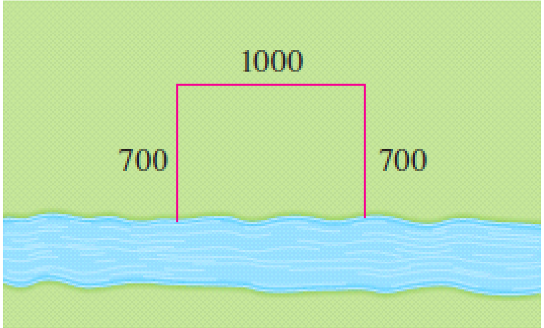
Optimization Problems

Steps in Solving Optimization Problems

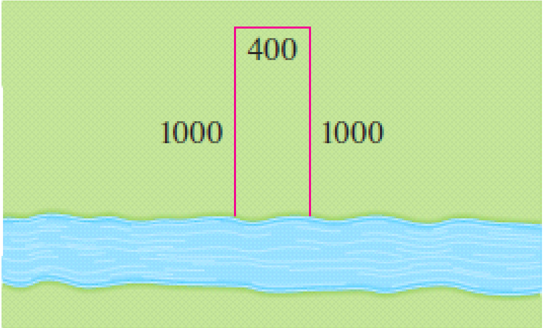
1. **Understand the Problem** The first step is to read the problem carefully until it is clearly understood. Ask yourself: What is the unknown? What are the given quantities? What are the given conditions?
2. **Draw a Diagram** In most problems it is useful to draw a diagram and identify the given and required quantities on the diagram.

3. **Introduce Notation** Assign a symbol to the quantity that is to be maximized or minimized (let's call it Q for now). Also select symbols ($a, b, c, \ldots, x, y$) for other unknown quantities and label the diagram with these symbols. It may help to use initials as suggestive symbols—for example, A for area, h for height, t for time.

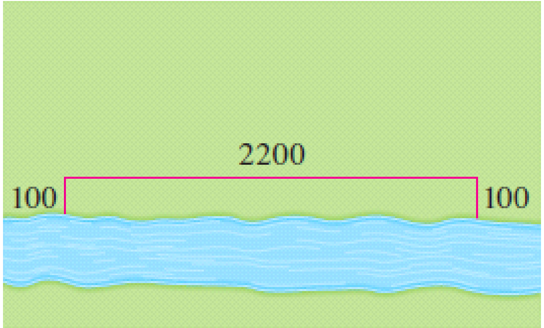
EXAMPLE 1 A farmer has 2400 ft of fencing and wants to fence off a rectangular field that borders a straight river. He needs no fence along the river. What are the dimensions of the field that has the largest area?



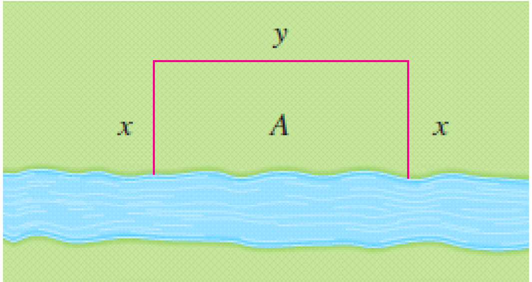
Area $= 700 \cdot 1000 = 700{,}000 \text{ ft}^2$



Area $= 1000 \cdot 400 = 400{,}000 \text{ ft}^2$



Area $= 100 \cdot 2200 = 220{,}000 \text{ ft}^2$



$A = xy$

$$2x + y = 2400$$

From this equation we have $y = 2400 - 2x$, which gives

$$A = x(2400 - 2x) = 2400x - 2x^2$$

$A(x) = 2400x - 2x^2 \qquad 0 \leqslant x \leqslant 1200$

The derivative is $A'(x) = 2400 - 4x$, so to find the critical numbers we solve the equation

$$2400 - 4x = 0$$

which gives $x = 600$. The maximum value of A must occur either at this critical number or at an endpoint of the interval. Since $A(0) = 0$, $A(600) = 720{,}000$, and $A(1200) = 0$, the Closed Interval Method gives the maximum value as $A(600) = 720{,}000$.

[Alternatively, we could have observed that $A''(x) = -4 < 0$ for all x, so A is always concave downward and the local maximum at $x = 600$ must be an absolute maximum.]

Thus the rectangular field should be 600 ft deep and 1200 ft wide.

V EXAMPLE 2 A cylindrical can is to be made to hold 1 L of oil. Find the dimensions that will minimize the cost of the metal to manufacture the can.

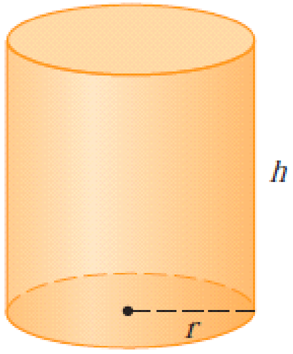
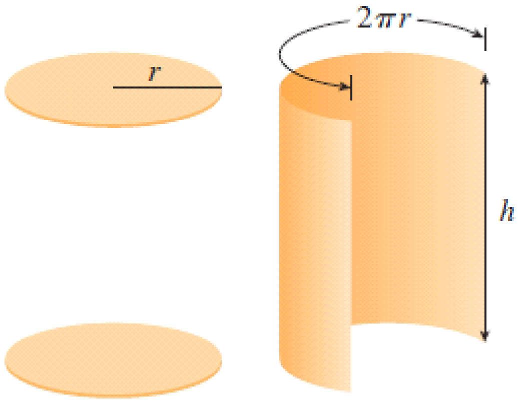


FIGURE 3



Area $2(\pi r^2)$ Area $(2\pi r)h$

$$A = 2\pi r^2 + 2\pi r h$$

To eliminate h we use the fact that the volume is given as 1 L, which we take to be 1000 cm^3. Thus

$$\pi r^2 h = 1000$$

which gives $h = 1000/(\pi r^2)$. Substitution of this into the expression for A gives

$$A = 2\pi r^2 + 2\pi r\left(\frac{1000}{\pi r^2}\right) = 2\pi r^2 + \frac{2000}{r}$$

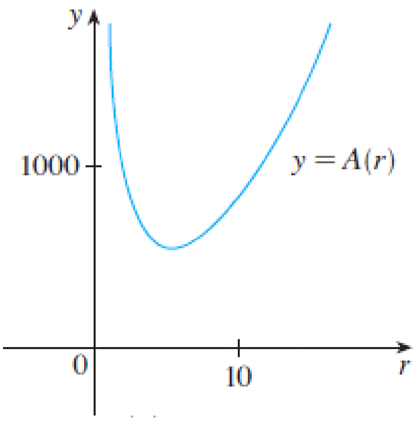
Therefore the function that we want to minimize is

$$A(r) = 2\pi r^2 + \frac{2000}{r} \qquad r > 0$$

To find the critical numbers, we differentiate:

$$A'(r) = 4\pi r - \frac{2000}{r^2} = \frac{4(\pi r^3 - 500)}{r^2}$$

Then $A'(r) = 0$ when $\pi r^3 = 500$, so the only critical number is $r = \sqrt[3]{500/\pi}$.



Since the domain of A is $(0, \infty)$, we can't use the argument of Example 1 concerning endpoints. But we can observe that $A'(r) < 0$ for $r < \sqrt[3]{500/\pi}$ and $A'(r) > 0$ for $r > \sqrt[3]{500/\pi}$, so A is decreasing for *all* r to the left of the critical number and increasing for *all* r to the right. Thus $r = \sqrt[3]{500/\pi}$ must give rise to an *absolute* minimum.

The value of h corresponding to $r = \sqrt[3]{500/\pi}$ is

$$h = \frac{1000}{\pi r^2} = \frac{1000}{\pi(500/\pi)^{2/3}} = 2\sqrt[3]{\frac{500}{\pi}} = 2r$$

Thus, to minimize the cost of the can, the radius should be $\sqrt[3]{500/\pi}$ cm and the height should be equal to twice the radius, namely, the diameter.

NOTE 2 An alternative method for solving optimization problems is to use implicit differentiation. Let's look at Example 2 again to illustrate the method. We work with the same equations

$$A = 2\pi r^2 + 2\pi rh \qquad \pi r^2 h = 1000$$

but instead of eliminating h, we differentiate both equations implicitly with respect to r:

$$A' = 4\pi r + 2\pi h + 2\pi rh' \qquad 2\pi rh + \pi r^2 h' = 0$$

The minimum occurs at a critical number, so we set $A' = 0$, simplify, and arrive at the equations

$$2r + h + rh' = 0 \qquad 2h + rh' = 0$$

and subtraction gives $2r - h = 0$, or $h = 2r$.

V EXAMPLE 3 Find the point on the parabola $y^2 = 2x$ that is closest to the point $(1, 4)$.

SOLUTION The distance between the point $(1, 4)$ and the point (x, y) is

$$d = \sqrt{(x-1)^2 + (y-4)^2}$$

(See Figure 6.) But if (x, y) lies on the parabola, then $x = \frac{1}{2}y^2$, so the expression for d becomes

$$d = \sqrt{\left(\tfrac{1}{2}y^2 - 1\right)^2 + (y-4)^2}$$

(Alternatively, we could have substituted $y = \sqrt{2x}$ to get d in terms of x alone.) Instead of minimizing d, we minimize its square:

$$d^2 = f(y) = \left(\tfrac{1}{2}y^2 - 1\right)^2 + (y-4)^2$$

minimum of d^2, but d^2 is easier to work with.) Differentiating, we obtain

$$f'(y) = 2\left(\tfrac{1}{2}y^2 - 1\right)y + 2(y-4) = y^3 - 8$$

so $f'(y) = 0$ when $y = 2$. Observe that $f'(y) < 0$ when $y < 2$ and $f'(y) > 0$ when $y > 2$, so by the First Derivative Test for Absolute Extreme Values, the absolute minimum occurs when $y = 2$. (Or we could simply say that because of the geometric nature of the problem, it's obvious that there is a closest point but not a farthest point.) The corresponding value of x is $x = \frac{1}{2}y^2 = 2$. Thus the point on $y^2 = 2x$ closest to $(1, 4)$ is $(2, 2)$.