Application of Derivative: Related Rates

Friday, 15 November 2024 4:15 pm

Related Rates

If we are pumping air into a balloon, both the volume and the radius of the balloon are increasing and their rates of increase are related to each other. But it is much easier to measure directly the rate of increase of the volume than the rate of increase of the radius.

In a related rates problem the idea is to compute the rate of change of one quantity in terms of the rate of change of another quantity (which may be more easily measured). The procedure is to find an equation that relates the two quantities and then use the Chain Rule to differentiate both sides with respect to time.

V EXAMPLE 1 Air is being pumped into a spherical balloon so that its volume increases at a rate of 100 cm^3/s. How fast is the radius of the balloon increasing when the diameter is 50 cm?

$V = \frac{4}{3}\pi r^3$

Given: $\dfrac{dV}{dt} = 100 \text{ cm}^3/\text{s}$

Unknown: $\dfrac{dr}{dt}$ when $r = 25$ cm

$$\frac{dV}{dt} = \frac{dV}{dr}\frac{dr}{dt} = 4\pi r^2 \frac{dr}{dt}$$

Now we solve for the unknown quantity:

$$\frac{dr}{dt} = \frac{1}{4\pi r^2}\frac{dV}{dt}$$

If we put $r = 25$ and $dV/dt = 100$ in this equation, we obtain

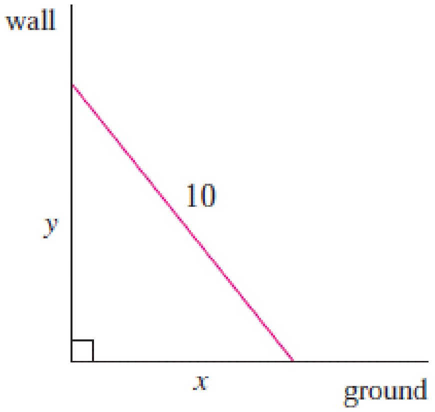
$$\frac{dr}{dt} = \frac{1}{4\pi(25)^2}100 = \frac{1}{25\pi}$$

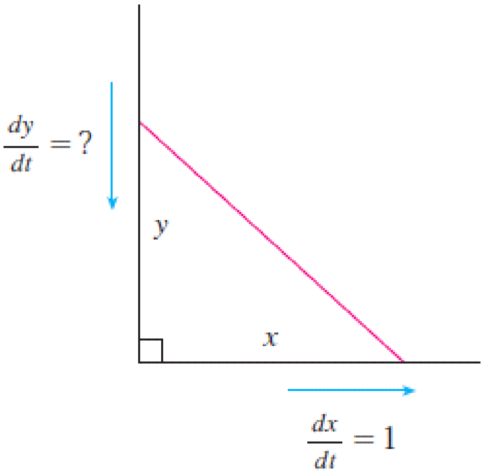
The radius of the balloon is increasing at the rate of $1/(25\pi) \approx 0.0127$ cm/s.

Problem Solving Strategy It is useful to recall some of the problem-solving principles from page 75 and adapt them to related rates in light of our experience in Examples 1–3:

1. Read the problem carefully.
2. Draw a diagram if possible.
3. Introduce notation. Assign symbols to all quantities that are functions of time.
4. Express the given information and the required rate in terms of derivatives.
5. Write an equation that relates the various quantities of the problem. If necessary, use the geometry of the situation to eliminate one of the variables by substitution (as in Example 3).
6. Use the Chain Rule to differentiate both sides of the equation with respect to *t*.
7. Substitute the given information into the resulting equation and solve for the unknown rate.

EXAMPLE 2 A ladder 10 ft long rests against a vertical wall. If the bottom of the ladder slides away from the wall at a rate of 1 ft/s, how fast is the top of the ladder sliding down the wall when the bottom of the ladder is 6 ft from the wall?





$$x^2 + y^2 = 100$$

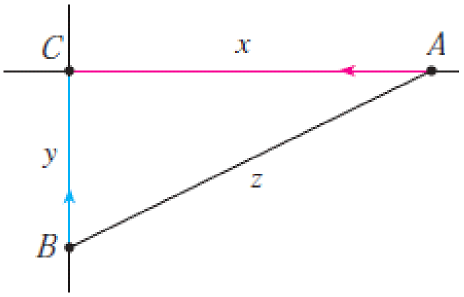
$$2x\frac{dx}{dt} + 2y\frac{dy}{dt} = 0$$

$$\frac{dy}{dt} = -\frac{x}{y}\frac{dx}{dt}$$

When $x = 6$, the Pythagorean Theorem gives $y = 8$ and so, substituting these values and $dx/dt = 1$, we have

$$\frac{dy}{dt} = -\frac{6}{8}(1) = -\frac{3}{4} \text{ ft/s}$$

V EXAMPLE 4 Car A is traveling west at 50 mi/h and car B is traveling north at 60 mi/h. Both are headed for the intersection of the two roads. At what rate are the cars approaching each other when car A is 0.3 mi and car B is 0.4 mi from the intersection?



SOLUTION We draw Figure 4, where C is the intersection of the roads. At a given time t, let x be the distance from car A to C, let y be the distance from car B to C, and let z be the distance between the cars, where x, y, and z are measured in miles.

We are given that $dx/dt = -50$ mi/h and $dy/dt = -60$ mi/h. (The derivatives are negative because x and y are decreasing.) We are asked to find dz/dt. The equation that relates x, y, and z is given by the Pythagorean Theorem:

$$z^2 = x^2 + y^2$$

Differentiating each side with respect to t, we have

$$2z\frac{dz}{dt} = 2x\frac{dx}{dt} + 2y\frac{dy}{dt}$$

$$\frac{dz}{dt} = \frac{1}{z}\left(x\frac{dx}{dt} + y\frac{dy}{dt}\right)$$

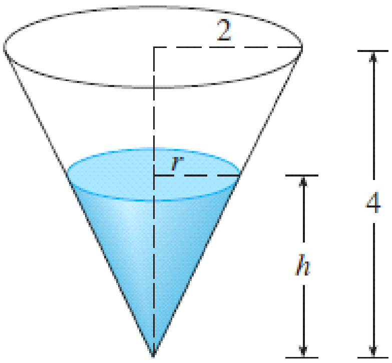
When $x = 0.3$ mi and $y = 0.4$ mi, the Pythagorean Theorem gives $z = 0.5$ mi, so

$$\frac{dz}{dt} = \frac{1}{0.5}[0.3(-50) + 0.4(-60)]$$

$$= -78 \text{ mi/h}$$

The cars are approaching each other at a rate of 78 mi/h. ■

EXAMPLE 3 A water tank has the shape of an inverted circular cone with base radius 2 m and height 4 m. If water is being pumped into the tank at a rate of 2 m^3/min, find the rate at which the water level is rising when the water is 3 m deep.



SOLUTION We first sketch the cone and label it as in Figure 3. Let V, r, and h be the volume of the water, the radius of the surface, and the height of the water at time t, where t is measured in minutes.

We are given that $dV/dt = 2 \text{ m}^3\text{/min}$ and we are asked to find dh/dt when h is 3 m. The quantities V and h are related by the equation

$$V = \tfrac{1}{3}\pi r^2 h$$

$$\frac{r}{h} = \frac{2}{4} \qquad r = \frac{h}{2}$$

$$V = \frac{1}{3}\pi\left(\frac{h}{2}\right)^2 h = \frac{\pi}{12}h^3$$

Now we can differentiate each side with respect to t:

$$\frac{dV}{dt} = \frac{\pi}{4} h^2 \frac{dh}{dt}$$

so

$$\frac{dh}{dt} = \frac{4}{\pi h^2} \frac{dV}{dt}$$

Substituting $h = 3$ m and $dV/dt = 2$ m^3/min, we have

$$\frac{dh}{dt} = \frac{4}{\pi(3)^2} \cdot 2 = \frac{8}{9\pi}$$

The water level is rising at a rate of $8/(9\pi) \approx 0.28$ m/min. ■