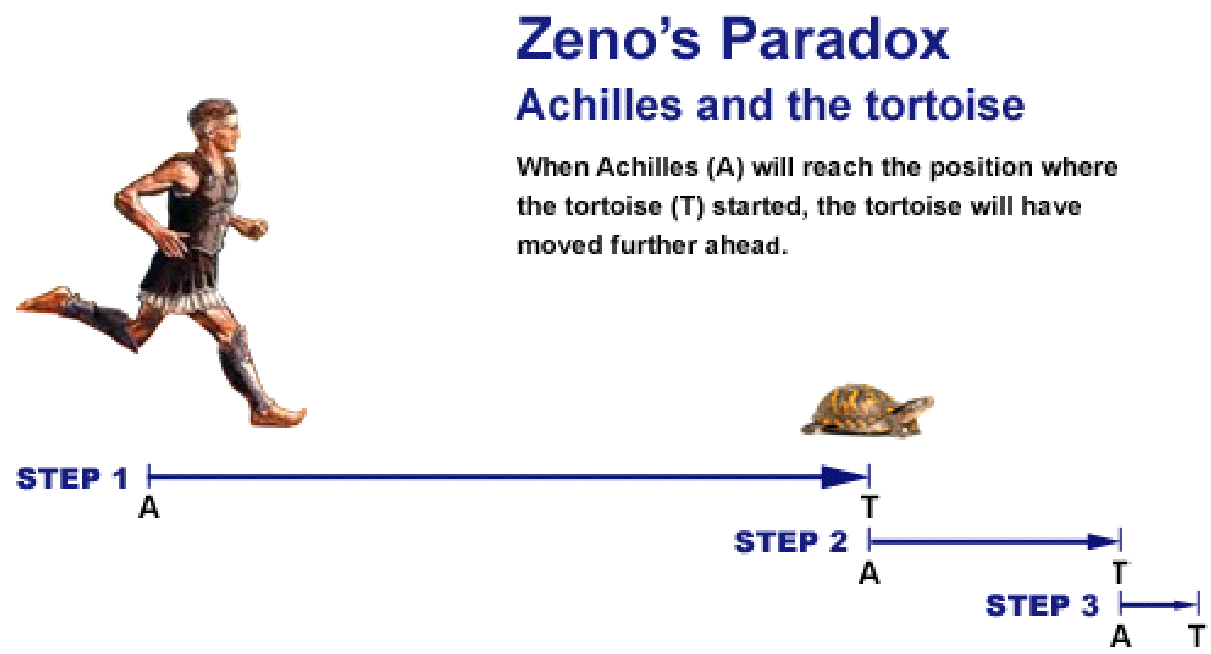
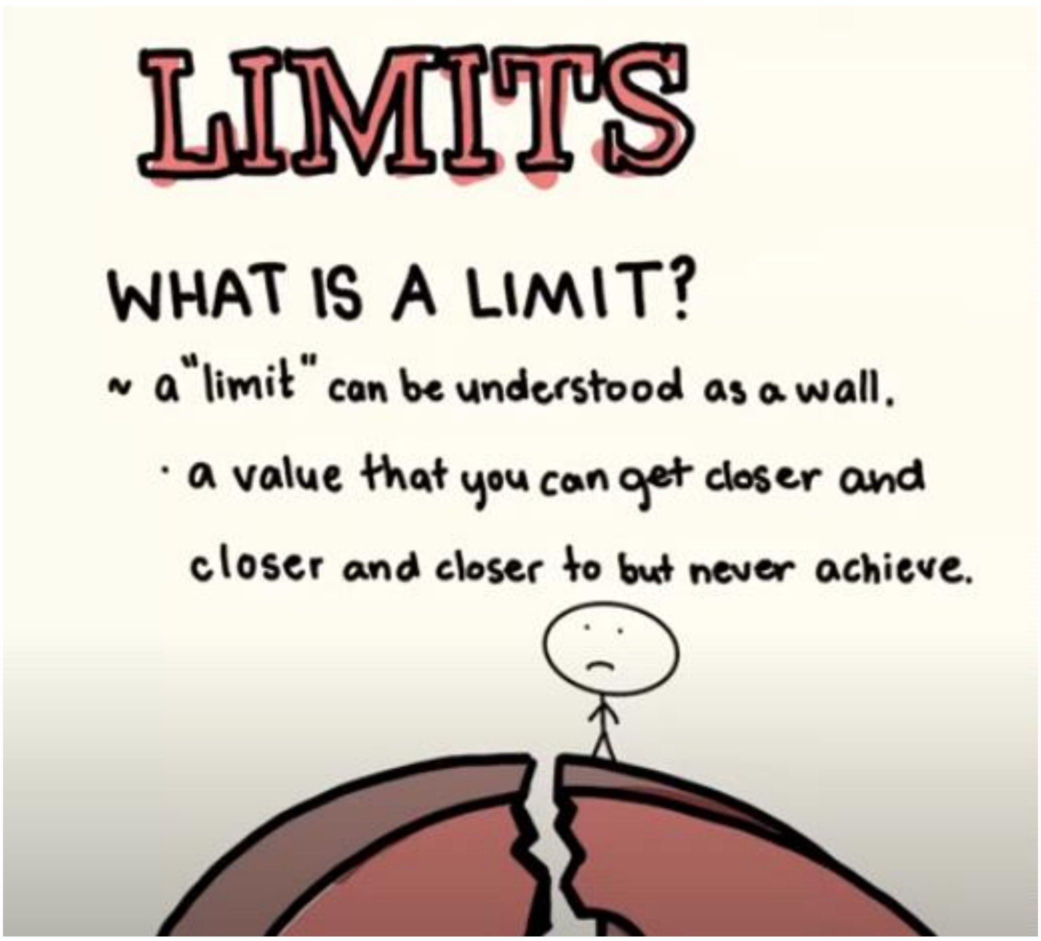
Limit

Thursday, 13 March 2025 10:10 am

The Limit of a Function





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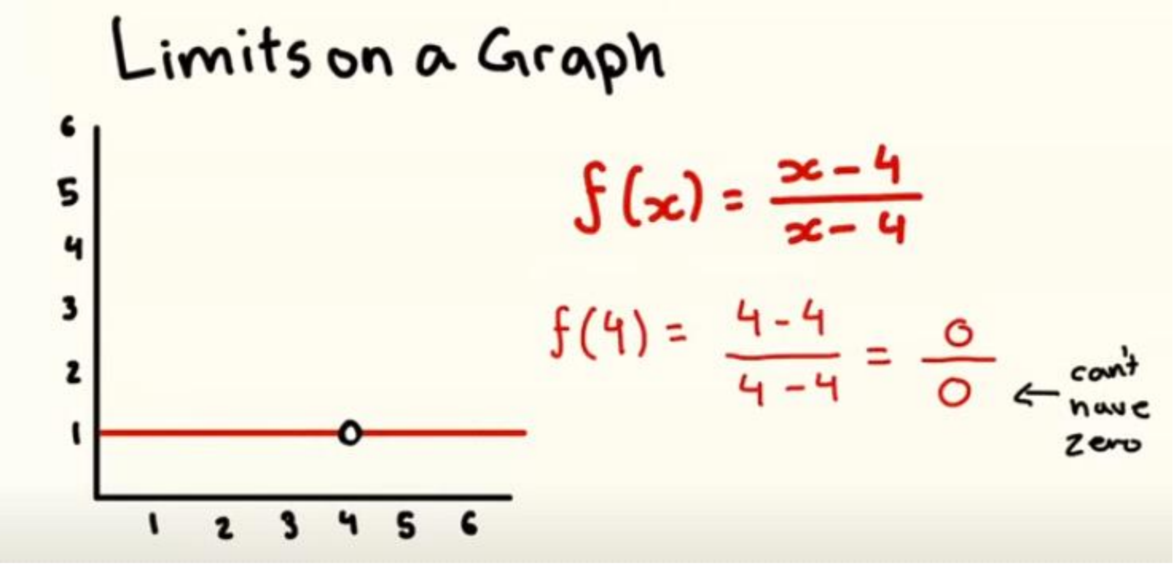
- limits are the same; you can get a number that is closer and closer but never that number because it does not exist.



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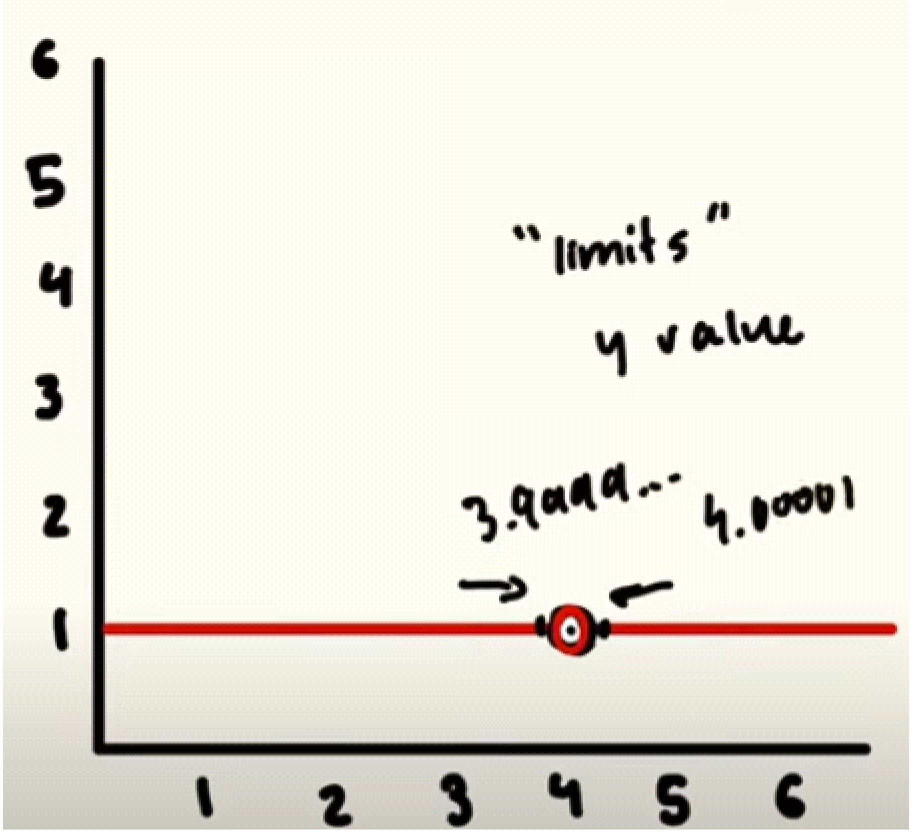
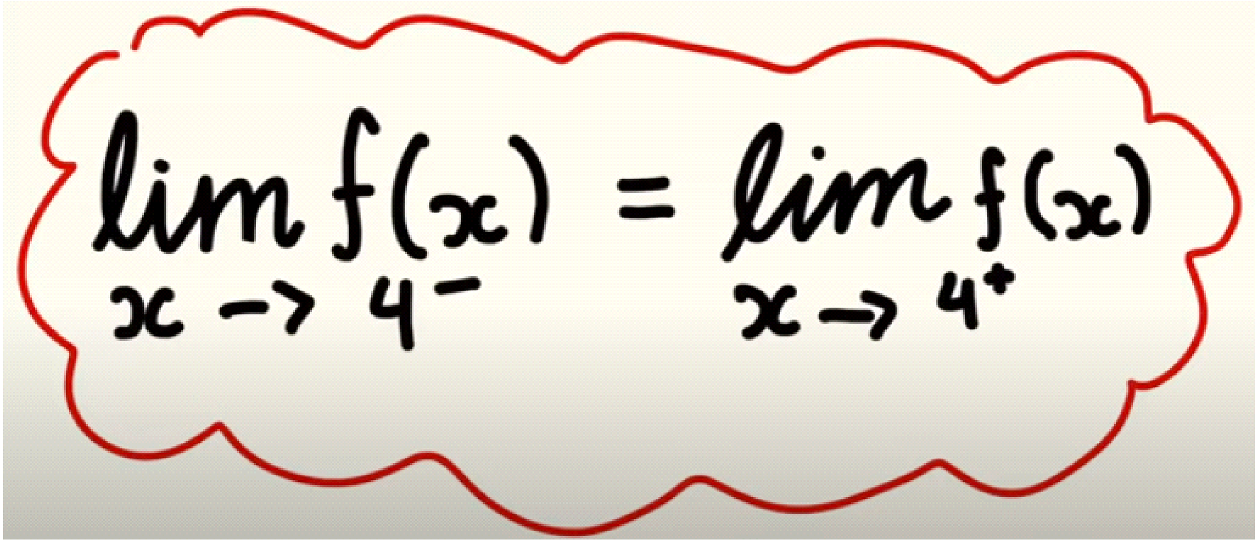




Numerical Investigation:

1 Definition Suppose $f(x)$ is defined when x is near the number a. (This means that f is defined on some open interval that contains a, except possibly at a itself.) Then we write

$$\lim_{x \to a} f(x) = L$$

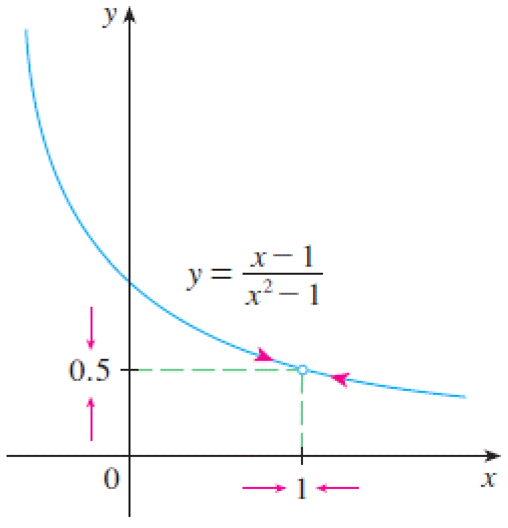
and say "the limit of $f(x)$, as x approaches a, equals L"

if we can make the values of $f(x)$ arbitrarily close to L (as close to L as we like) by taking x to be sufficiently close to a (on either side of a) but not equal to a.

EXAMPLE 1 Guess the value of $\lim_{x \to 1} \dfrac{x - 1}{x^2 - 1}$.

$x < 1$	$f(x)$
0.5	0.666667
0.9	0.526316
0.99	0.502513
0.999	0.500250
0.9999	0.500025

$x > 1$	$f(x)$
1.5	0.400000
1.1	0.476190
1.01	0.497512
1.001	0.499750
1.0001	0.499975



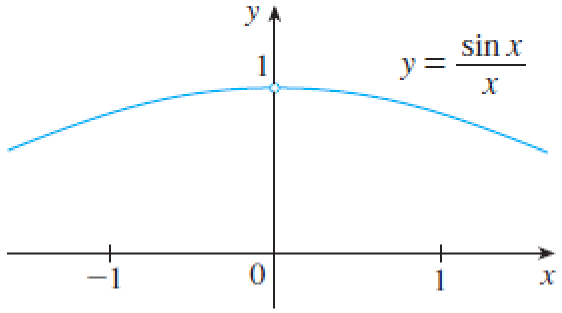
$$\lim_{x \to 1} \frac{x-1}{x^2-1} = 0.5$$

$$g(x) = \begin{cases} \dfrac{x-1}{x^2-1} & \text{if } x \neq 1 \\ 2 & \text{if } x = 1 \end{cases}$$

V EXAMPLE 3 Guess the value of $\lim_{x \to 0} \frac{\sin x}{x}$.

x	$\dfrac{\sin x}{x}$
± 1.0	0.84147098
± 0.5	0.95885108
± 0.4	0.97354586
± 0.3	0.98506736
± 0.2	0.99334665
± 0.1	0.99833417
± 0.05	0.99958339
± 0.01	0.99998333
± 0.005	0.99999583
± 0.001	0.99999983

$$\lim_{x \to 0} \frac{\sin x}{x} = 1$$

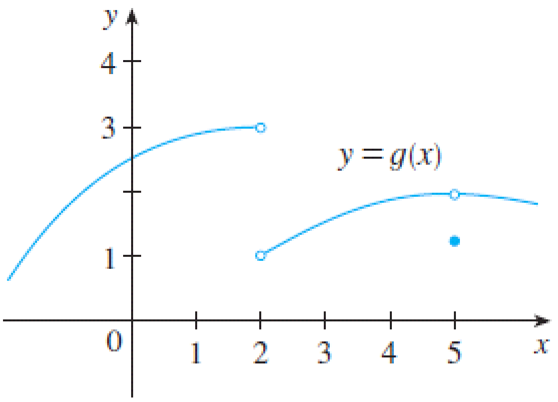


$$\boxed{3} \quad \lim_{x \to a} f(x) = L \quad \text{if and only if} \quad \lim_{x \to a^-} f(x) = L \quad \text{and} \quad \lim_{x \to a^+} f(x) = L$$

V EXAMPLE 7 The graph of a function g is shown in Figure 10. Use it to state the values (if they exist) of the following:

(a) $\lim_{x \to 2^-} g(x)$ (b) $\lim_{x \to 2^+} g(x)$ (c) $\lim_{x \to 2} g(x)$

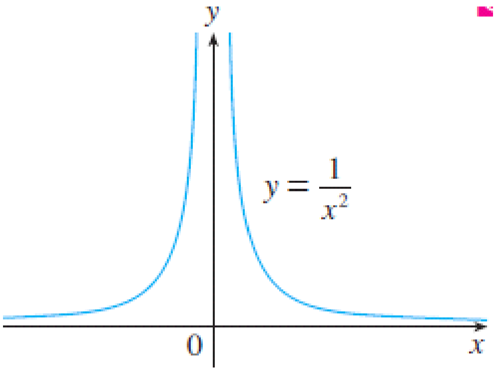
(d) $\lim_{x \to 5^-} g(x)$ (e) $\lim_{x \to 5^+} g(x)$ (f) $\lim_{x \to 5} g(x)$



Infinite Limits

EXAMPLE 8 Find $\lim_{x \to 0} \frac{1}{x^2}$ if it exists.

x	$\frac{1}{x^2}$
± 1	1
± 0.5	4
± 0.2	25
± 0.1	100
± 0.05	400
± 0.01	10,000
± 0.001	1,000,000



$$\lim_{x \to 0} \frac{1}{x^2} = \infty$$

Laws of Limit & Substitution

Limit Laws Suppose that c is a constant and the limits

$$\lim_{x \to a} f(x) \qquad \text{and} \qquad \lim_{x \to a} g(x)$$

exist. Then

1. $\lim_{x \to a} [f(x) + g(x)] = \lim_{x \to a} f(x) + \lim_{x \to a} g(x)$

2. $\lim_{x \to a} [f(x) - g(x)] = \lim_{x \to a} f(x) - \lim_{x \to a} g(x)$

3. $\lim_{x \to a} [cf(x)] = c \lim_{x \to a} f(x)$

4. $\lim_{x \to a} [f(x)g(x)] = \lim_{x \to a} f(x) \cdot \lim_{x \to a} g(x)$

5. $\displaystyle \lim_{x \to a} \frac{f(x)}{g(x)} = \frac{\lim_{x \to a} f(x)}{\lim_{x \to a} g(x)}$ if $\lim_{x \to a} g(x) \neq 0$

6. $\lim_{x \to a} [f(x)]^n = \left[\lim_{x \to a} f(x)\right]^n$ where n is a positive integer

7. $\lim_{x \to a} c = c$

8. $\lim_{x \to a} x = a$

9. $\lim_{x \to a} x^n = a^n$ where n is a positive integer

10. $\lim_{x \to a} \sqrt[n]{x} = \sqrt[n]{a}$ where n is a positive integer
    (If n is even, we assume that $a > 0$.)

11. $\lim_{x \to a} \sqrt[n]{f(x)} = \sqrt[n]{\lim_{x \to a} f(x)}$ where n is a positive integer

    $\left[\text{If } n \text{ is even, we assume that } \lim_{x \to a} f(x) > 0.\right]$

EXAMPLE 2 Evaluate the following limits and justify each step.

(a) $\lim_{x \to 5} (2x^2 - 3x + 4)$ (b) $\lim_{x \to -2} \frac{x^3 + 2x^2 - 1}{5 - 3x}$

SOLUTION

(a)
$$\lim_{x \to 5} (2x^2 - 3x + 4) = \lim_{x \to 5} (2x^2) - \lim_{x \to 5} (3x) + \lim_{x \to 5} 4$$
$$= 2 \lim_{x \to 5} x^2 - 3 \lim_{x \to 5} x + \lim_{x \to 5} 4$$
$$= 2(5^2) - 3(5) + 4$$
$$= 39$$

$$\lim_{x \to -2} \frac{x^3 + 2x^2 - 1}{5 - 3x} = \frac{\lim_{x \to -2} (x^3 + 2x^2 - 1)}{\lim_{x \to -2} (5 - 3x)}$$
$$= \frac{\lim_{x \to -2} x^3 + 2 \lim_{x \to -2} x^2 - \lim_{x \to -2} 1}{\lim_{x \to -2} 5 - 3 \lim_{x \to -2} x}$$
$$= \frac{(-2)^3 + 2(-2)^2 - 1}{5 - 3(-2)}$$
$$= -\frac{1}{11}$$

Algebraic Simplification

EXAMPLE 3 Find $\lim_{x \to 1} \frac{x^2 - 1}{x - 1}$.

$$\frac{x^2 - 1}{x - 1} = \frac{(x - 1)(x + 1)}{x - 1}$$

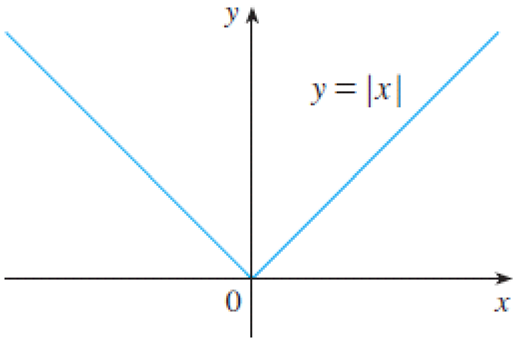
$$\lim_{x \to 1} \frac{x^2 - 1}{x - 1} = \lim_{x \to 1} \frac{(x - 1)(x + 1)}{x - 1}$$
$$= \lim_{x \to 1} (x + 1)$$
$$= 1 + 1 = 2$$

$$\lim_{x\to 1} g(x) = \lim_{x\to 1} (x + 1) = 2$$

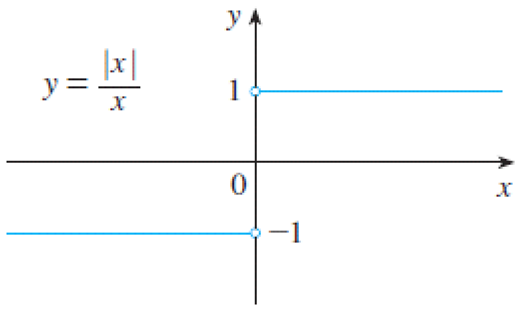
EXAMPLE 7 Show that $\lim_{x\to 0} |x| = 0$.

SOLUTION Recall that

$$|x| = \begin{cases} x & \text{if } x \geqslant 0 \\ -x & \text{if } x < 0 \end{cases}$$

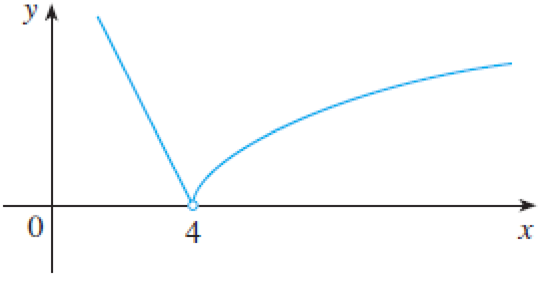


V **EXAMPLE 8** Prove that $\lim_{x\to 0} \frac{|x|}{x}$ does not exist.



EXAMPLE 9 If

$$f(x) = \begin{cases} \sqrt{x - 4} & \text{if } x > 4 \\ 8 - 2x & \text{if } x < 4 \end{cases}$$



Continuity

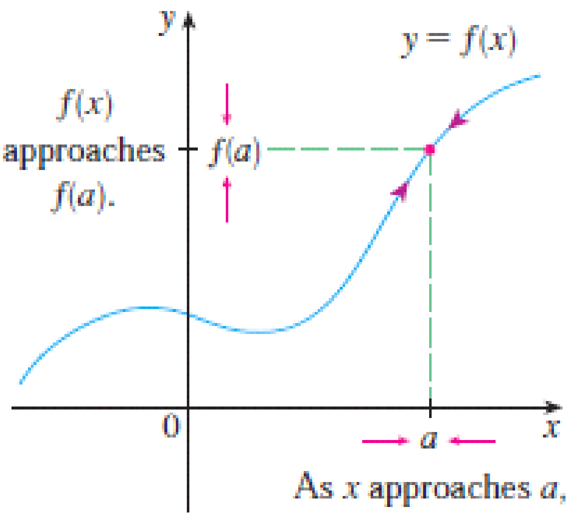
1 Definition A function f is **continuous at a number** a if

$$\lim_{x \to a} f(x) = f(a)$$

Notice that Definition 1 implicitly requires three things if f is continuous at a:

1. $f(a)$ is defined (that is, a is in the domain of f)
2. $\lim_{x \to a} f(x)$ exists
3. $\lim_{x \to a} f(x) = f(a)$

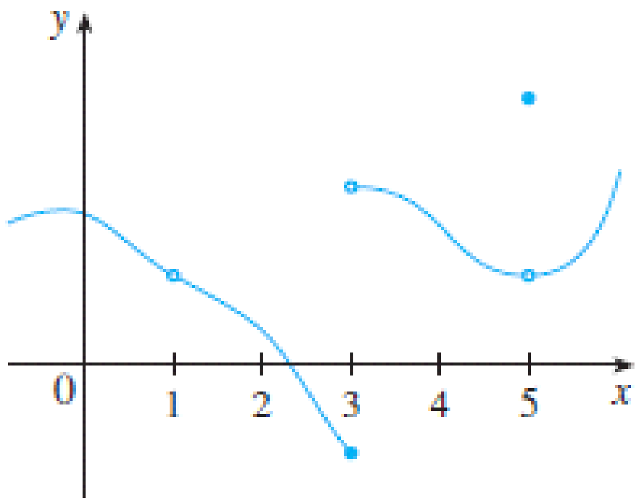
As illustrated in Figure 1, if f is continuous, then the points $(x, f(x))$ on the graph of f approach the point $(a, f(a))$ on the graph. So there is no gap in the curve.



GeoGebra Link: [Limits & Continuity]

Again, all this means is that there are no **holes**, **breaks**, or **jumps** in the graph. Otherwise, the function is considered discontinuous.

EXAMPLE 1 Figure 2 shows the graph of a function f. At which numbers is f discontinuous? Why?



EXAMPLE 2 Where are each of the following functions discontinuous?

(a) $f(x) = \dfrac{x^2 - x - 2}{x - 2}$

(b) $f(x) = \begin{cases} \dfrac{1}{x^2} & \text{if } x \neq 0 \\ 1 & \text{if } x = 0 \end{cases}$

(c) $f(x) = \begin{cases} \dfrac{x^2 - x - 2}{x - 2} & \text{if } x \neq 2 \\ 1 & \text{if } x = 2 \end{cases}$

(d) $f(x) = [\![x]\!]$

SOLUTION

(a) Notice that $f(2)$ is not defined, so f is discontinuous at 2. Later we'll see why f is continuous at all other numbers.

(b) Here $f(0) = 1$ is defined but

$$\lim_{x \to 0} f(x) = \lim_{x \to 0} \frac{1}{x^2}$$

does not exist. (See Example 8 in Section 2.2.) So f is discontinuous at 0.

(c) Here $f(2) = 1$ is defined and

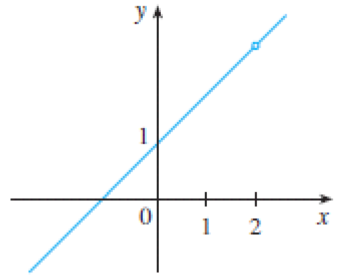
$$\lim_{x \to 2} f(x) = \lim_{x \to 2} \frac{x^2 - x - 2}{x - 2} = \lim_{x \to 2} \frac{(x - 2)(x + 1)}{x - 2} = \lim_{x \to 2} (x + 1) = 3$$

exists. But

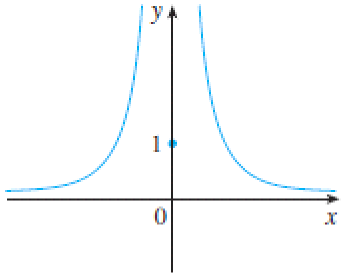
$$\lim_{x \to 2} f(x) \neq f(2)$$

so f is not continuous at 2.

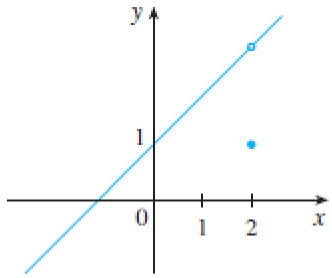
(d) The greatest integer function $f(x) = [\![x]\!]$ has discontinuities at all of the integers because $\lim_{x \to n} [\![x]\!]$ does not exist if n is an integer. (See Example 10 and Exercise 51 in Section 2.3.)



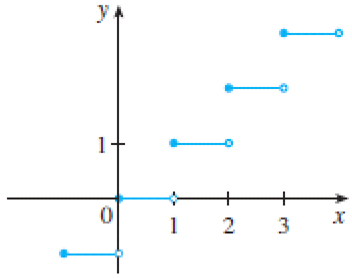
(a) $f(x) = \dfrac{x^2 - x - 2}{x - 2}$



(b) $f(x) = \begin{cases} \dfrac{1}{x^2} & \text{if } x \neq 0 \\ 1 & \text{if } x = 0 \end{cases}$



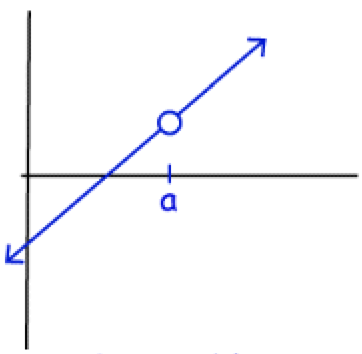
(c) $f(x) = \begin{cases} \dfrac{x^2 - x - 2}{x - 2} & \text{if } x \neq 2 \\ 1 & \text{if } x = 2 \end{cases}$



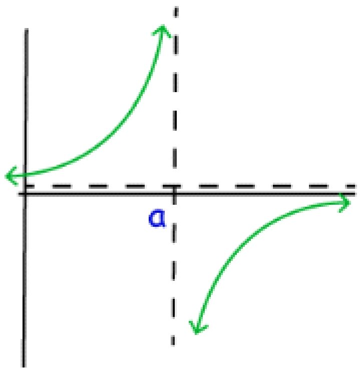
(d) $f(x) = [\![x]\!]$

Recall that there are four types of discontinuity:

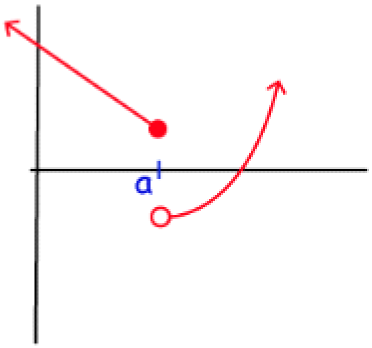
1. Removable
2. Infinite
3. Jump
4. Oscillating

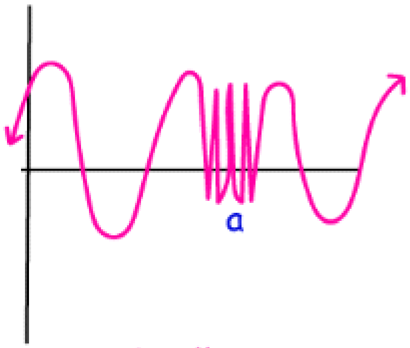


Removable Discontinuity



Infinite Discontinuity





3 Definition A function f is **continuous on an interval** if it is continuous at every number in the interval. (If f is defined only on one side of an endpoint of the interval, we understand *continuous* at the endpoint to mean *continuous from the right* or *continuous from the left*.)

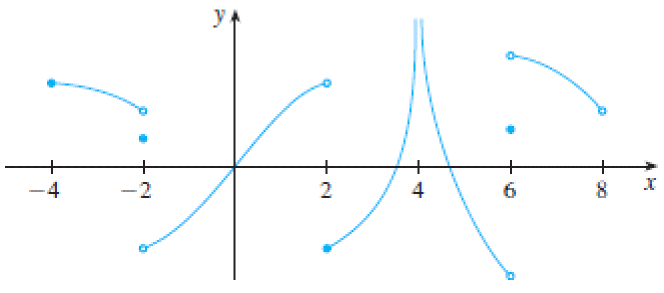
7 Theorem The following types of functions are continuous at every number in their domains:

polynomials · rational functions · root functions

trigonometric functions · inverse trigonometric functions

exponential functions · logarithmic functions

From the graph of g, state the intervals on which g is continuous.



$$f(x) = \begin{cases} \cos x & \text{if } x < 0 \\ 0 & \text{if } x = 0 \\ 1 - x^2 & \text{if } x > 0 \end{cases} \qquad a = 0$$