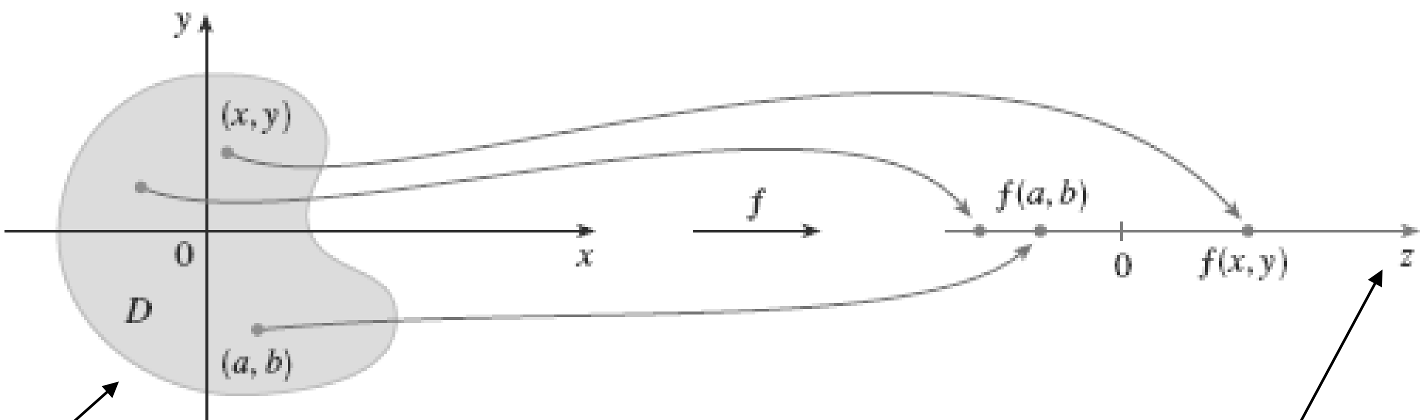
Functions of Several Variables

Definition A **function f of two variables** is a rule that assigns to each ordered pair of real numbers (x, y) in a set D a unique real number denoted by $f(x, y)$. The set D is the **domain** of f and its **range** is the set of values that f takes on, that is, $\{f(x, y) \mid (x, y) \in D\}$.

We often write $z = f(x, y)$ to make explicit the value taken on by f at the general point (x, y). The variables x and y are **independent variables** and z is the **dependent variable**.



range is a subset of $\mathbb{R}$.

domain is a subset of $\mathbb{R}^2$

EXAMPLE 1 For each of the following functions, evaluate $f(3, 2)$ and find and sketch the domain.

(a) $f(x, y) = \dfrac{\sqrt{x + y + 1}}{x - 1}$ (b) $f(x, y) = x \ln(y^2 - x)$

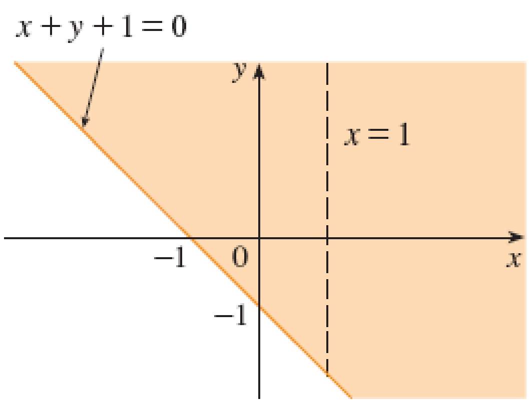


FIGURE 2

Domain of $f(x, y) = \dfrac{\sqrt{x + y + 1}}{x - 1}$

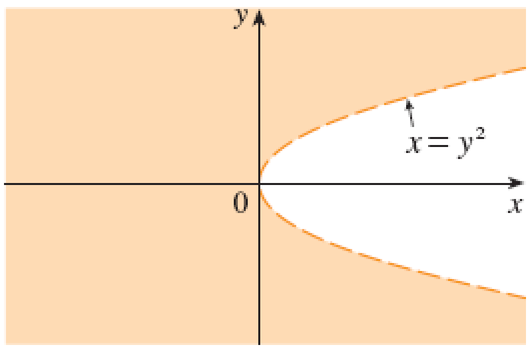


FIGURE 3

Domain of $f(x, y) = x \ln(y^2 - x)$

Graphs

Another way of visualizing the behavior of a function of two variables is to consider its graph.

Definition If f is a function of two variables with domain D, then the **graph** of f is the set of all points (x, y, z) in $\mathbb{R}^3$ such that $z = f(x, y)$ and (x, y) is in D.

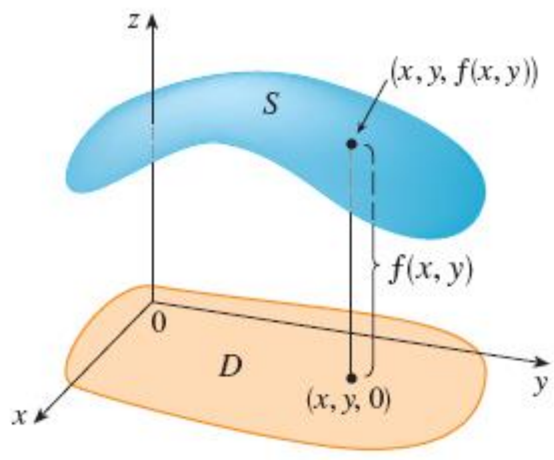


FIGURE 5

EXAMPLE 5 Sketch the graph of the function $f(x, y) = 6 - 3x - 2y$.

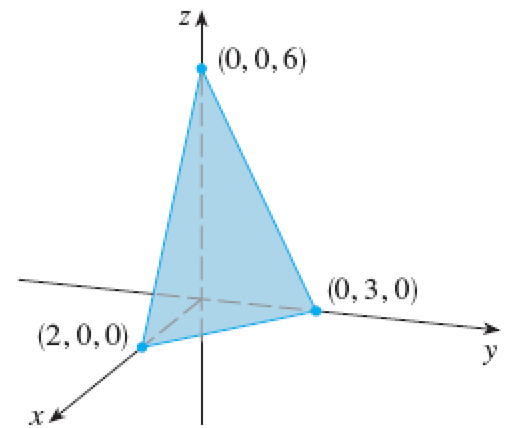
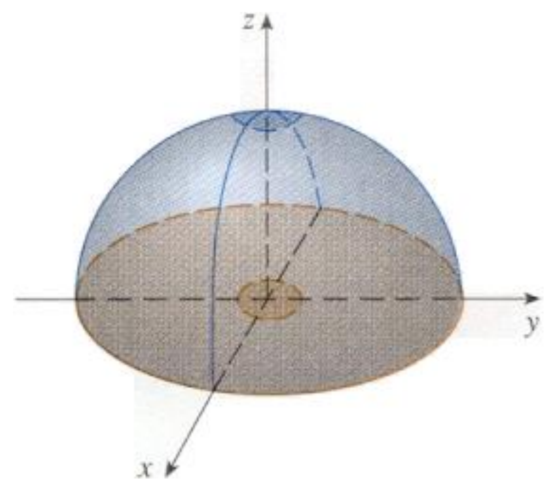
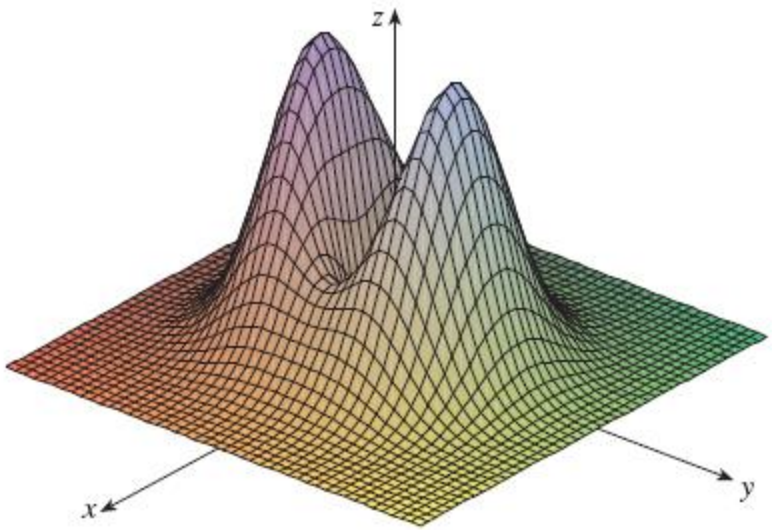


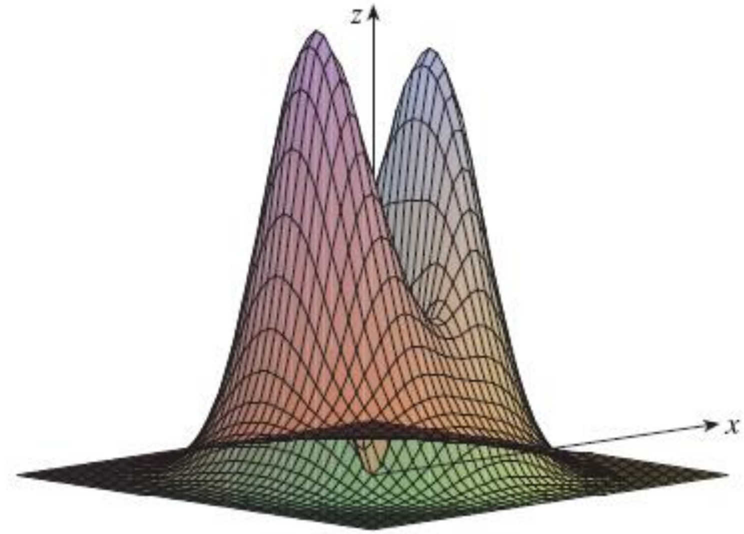
FIGURE 6

EXAMPLE 6 Sketch the graph of $g(x, y) = \sqrt{9 - x^2 - y^2}$.

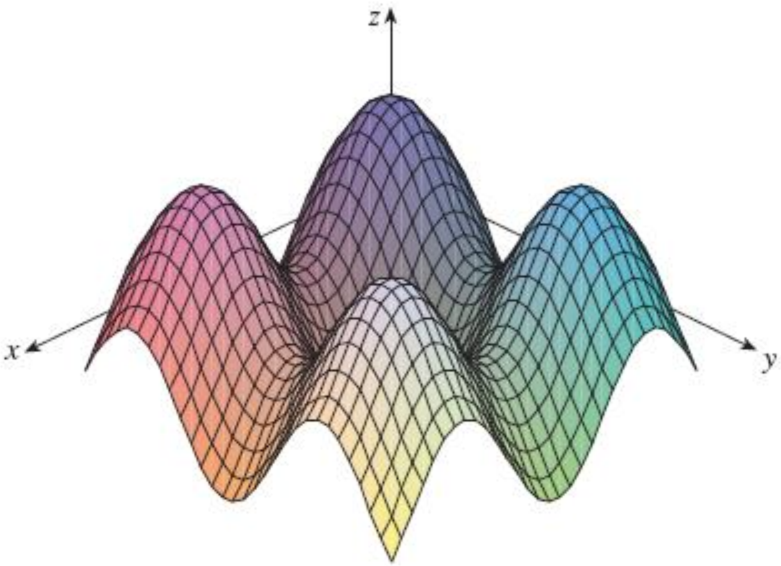




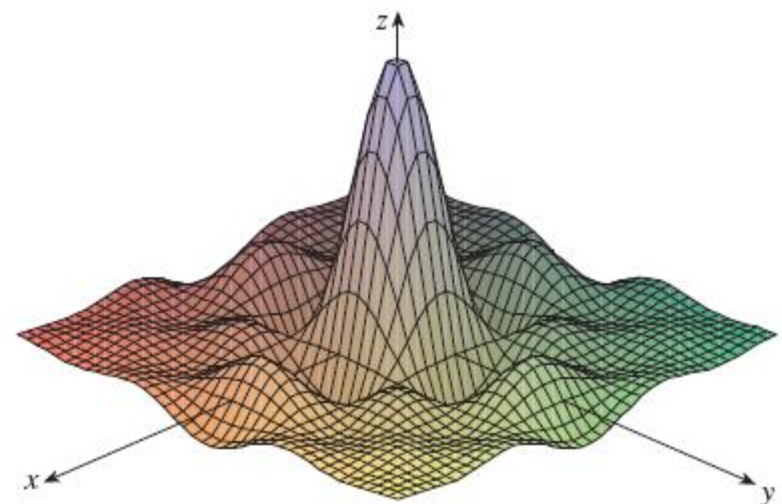
(a) $f(x, y) = (x^2 + 3y^2)e^{-x^2-y^2}$



(b) $f(x, y) = (x^2 + 3y^2)e^{-x^2-y^2}$



(c) $f(x, y) = \sin x + \sin y$



(d) $f(x, y) = \dfrac{\sin x \, \sin y}{xy}$

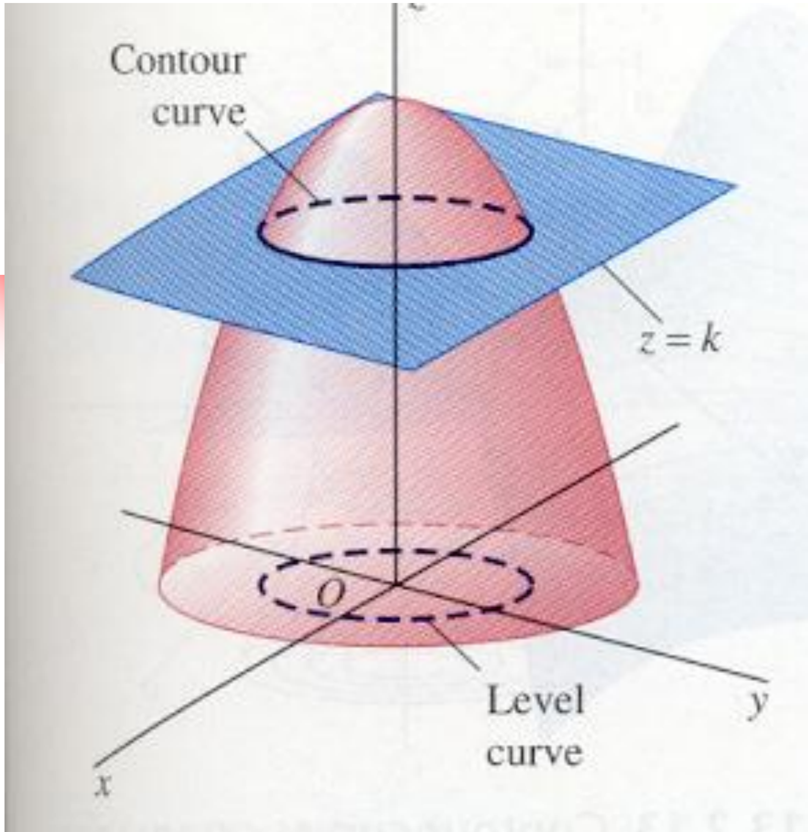


FIGURE 13.2.7 A contour curve and the corresponding level curve.

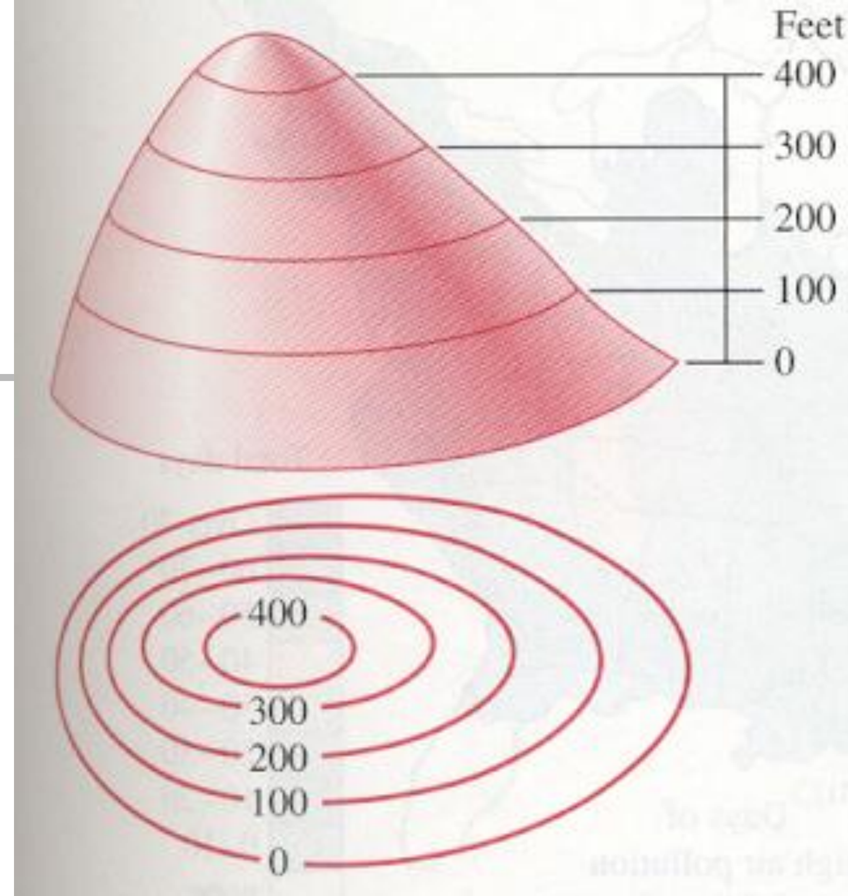
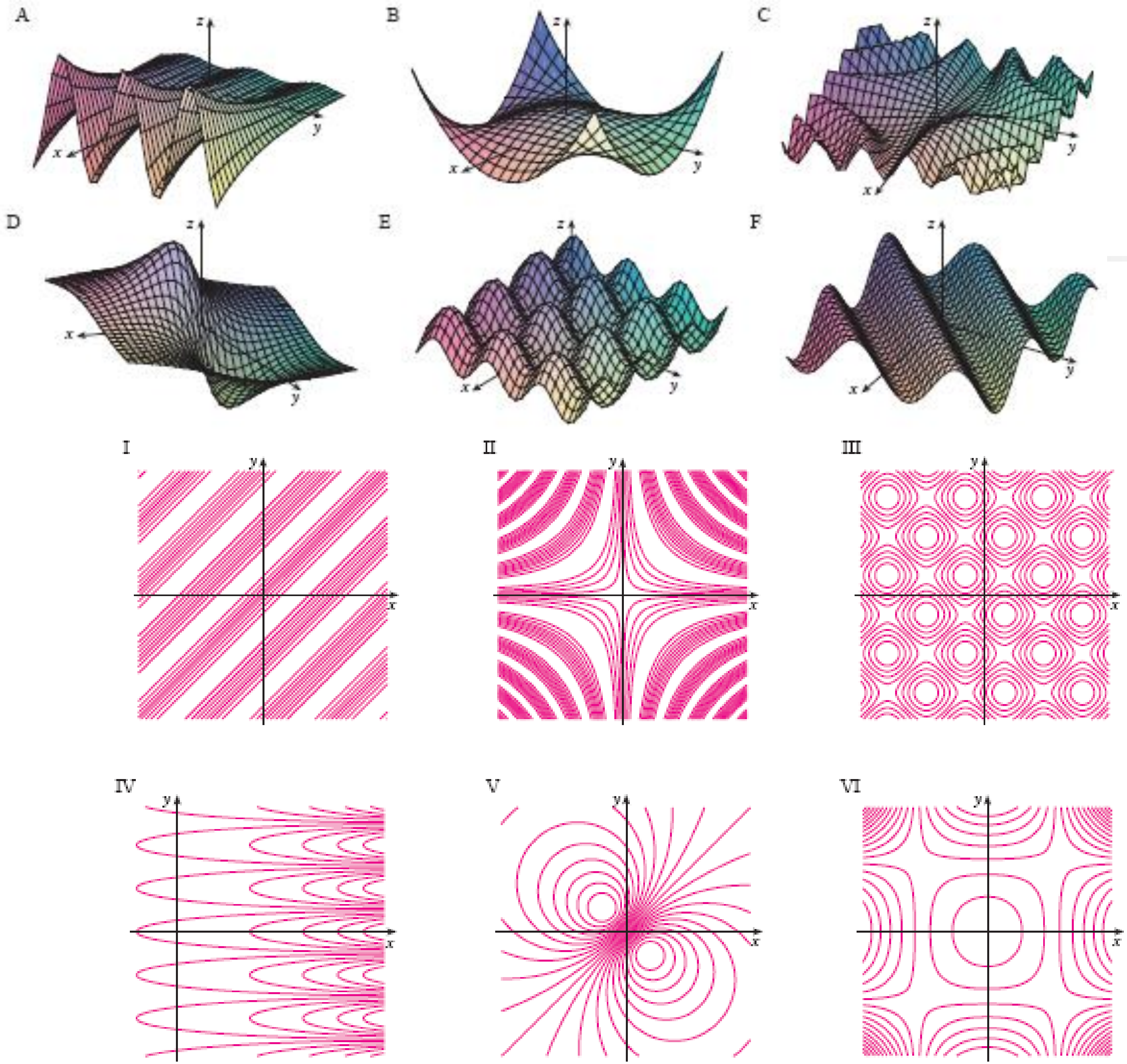


FIGURE 13.2.9 Contour curves and level curves for a hill.

Definition The **level curves** of a function f of two variables are the curves with equations $f(x, y) = k$, where k is a constant (in the range of f).

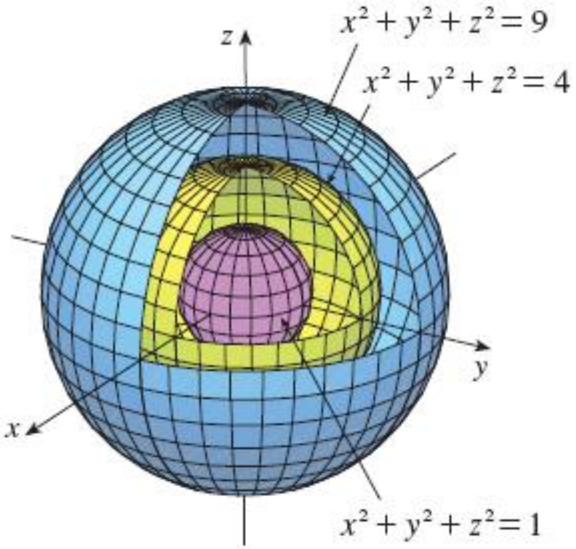


Can you Match the Surfaces And Their Level Curves?

Functions of Three or More Variables

A **function of three variables**, f, is a rule that assigns to each ordered triple (x, y, z) in a domain $D \subset \mathbb{R}^3$ a unique real number denoted by $f(x, y, z)$. For instance, the temperature T at a point on the surface of the earth depends on the longitude x and latitude y of the point and on the time t, so we could write $T = f(x, y, t)$.

It's very difficult to visualize a function f of three variables by its graph, since that would lie in a four-dimensional space. However, we do gain some insight into f by examining its **level surfaces**, which are the surfaces with equations $f(x, y, z) = k$, where k is a constant. If the point (x, y, z) moves along a level surface, the value of $f(x, y, z)$ remains fixed.



Let's compare the behavior of the functions

$$f(x, y) = \frac{\sin(x^2 + y^2)}{x^2 + y^2} \qquad \text{and} \qquad g(x, y) = \frac{x^2 - y^2}{x^2 + y^2}$$

as x and y both approach 0 [and therefore the point (x, y) approaches the origin].

TABLE 1 Values of $f(x, y)$

x \ y	−1.0	−0.5	−0.2	0	0.2	0.5	1.0
−1.0	0.455	0.759	0.829	0.841	0.829	0.759	0.455
−0.5	0.759	0.959	0.986	0.990	0.986	0.959	0.759
−0.2	0.829	0.986	0.999	1.000	0.999	0.986	0.829
0	0.841	0.990	1.000		1.000	0.990	0.841
0.2	0.829	0.986	0.999	1.000	0.999	0.986	0.829
0.5	0.759	0.959	0.986	0.990	0.986	0.959	0.759
1.0	0.455	0.759	0.829	0.841	0.829	0.759	0.455

TABLE 2 Values of $g(x, y)$

x \ y	−1.0	−0.5	−0.2	0	0.2	0.5	1.0
−1.0	0.000	0.600	0.923	1.000	0.923	0.600	0.000
−0.5	−0.600	0.000	0.724	1.000	0.724	0.000	−0.600
−0.2	−0.923	−0.724	0.000	1.000	0.000	−0.724	−0.923
0	−1.000	−1.000	−1.000		−1.000	−1.000	−1.000
0.2	−0.923	−0.724	0.000	1.000	0.000	−0.724	−0.923
0.5	−0.600	0.000	0.724	1.000	0.724	0.000	−0.600
1.0	0.000	0.600	0.923	1.000	0.923	0.600	0.000

$$\lim_{(x,y)\to(0,0)} \frac{\sin(x^2 + y^2)}{x^2 + y^2} = 1$$

$$\lim_{(x,y)\to(0,0)} \frac{x^2 - y^2}{x^2 + y^2} \quad \text{does not exist}$$

In general, we use the notation

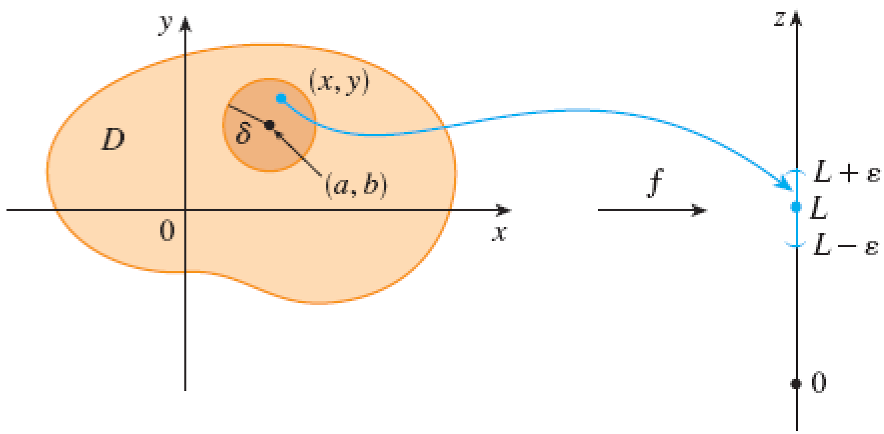
$$\lim_{(x,y)\to(a,b)} f(x, y) = L$$

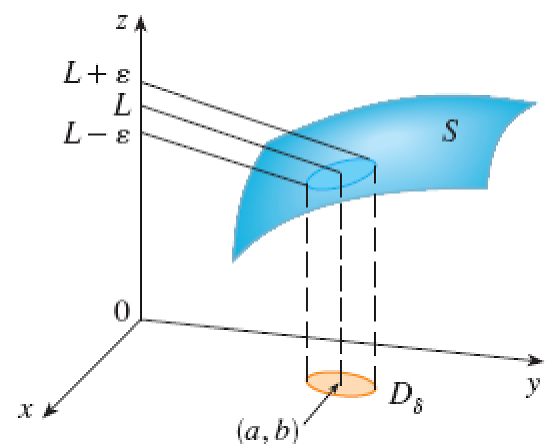
1 Definition Let f be a function of two variables whose domain D includes points arbitrarily close to (a, b). Then we say that the **limit of $f(x, y)$ as (x, y) approaches (a, b)** is L and we write

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

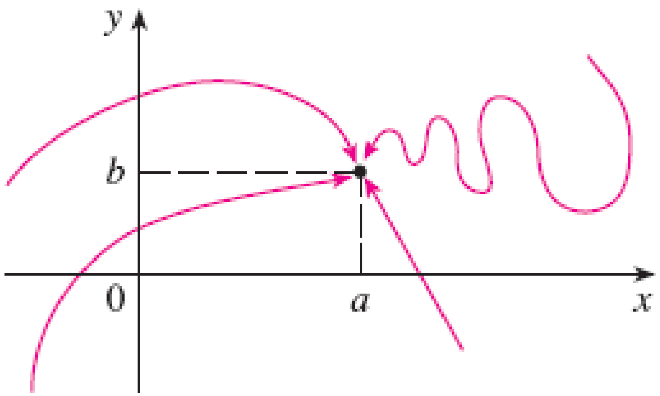
if for every number $\varepsilon > 0$ there is a corresponding number $\delta > 0$ such that

$$\text{if} \quad (x, y) \in D \quad \text{and} \quad 0 < \sqrt{(x-a)^2 + (y-b)^2} < \delta \quad \text{then} \quad |f(x, y) - L| < \varepsilon$$





Independence of The path



If $f(x, y) \to L_1$ as $(x, y) \to (a, b)$ along a path C_1 and $f(x, y) \to L_2$ as $(x, y) \to (a, b)$ along a path C_2, where $L_1 \neq L_2$, then $\lim_{(x, y) \to (a, b)} f(x, y)$ does not exist.

EXAMPLE 1 Show that $\displaystyle\lim_{(x, y) \to (0, 0)} \frac{x^2 - y^2}{x^2 + y^2}$ does not exist.

EXAMPLE 4 Find $\displaystyle\lim_{(x, y) \to (0, 0)} \frac{3x^2 y}{x^2 + y^2}$ if it exists.

CONTINUITY

4 Definition A function f of two variables is called **continuous at** (a, b) if

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

We say f is **continuous on** D if f is continuous at every point (a, b) in D.

A **polynomial function of two variables** (or polynomial, for short) is a sum of terms of the form $cx^m y^n$, where c is a constant and m and n are nonnegative integers. A **rational function** is a ratio of polynomials. For instance,

$$f(x, y) = x^4 + 5x^3y^2 + 6xy^4 - 7y + 6$$

is a polynomial, whereas

$$g(x, y) = \frac{2xy + 1}{x^2 + y^2}$$

is a rational function.

Examine the continuity at the origin of the following functions:

$$f(x, y) = \frac{x^2 - y^2}{x^2 + y^2}$$

$$g(x, y) = \begin{cases} \dfrac{x^2 - y^2}{x^2 + y^2} & \text{if } (x, y) \neq (0, 0) \\ 0 & \text{if } (x, y) = (0, 0) \end{cases}$$

$\boxed{5}$ If f is defined on a subset D of $\mathbb{R}^n$, then $\lim_{\mathbf{x}\to\mathbf{a}} f(\mathbf{x}) = L$ means that for every number $\varepsilon > 0$ there is a corresponding number $\delta > 0$ such that

$$\text{if} \quad \mathbf{x} \in D \quad \text{and} \quad 0 < |\mathbf{x} - \mathbf{a}| < \delta \quad \text{then} \quad |f(\mathbf{x}) - L| < \varepsilon$$

Notice that if $n = 1$, then $\mathbf{x} = x$ and $\mathbf{a} = a$, and $\boxed{5}$ is just the definition of a limit for functions of a single variable. For the case $n = 2$, we have $\mathbf{x} = \langle x, y \rangle$, $\mathbf{a} = \langle a, b \rangle$, and $|\mathbf{x} - \mathbf{a}| = \sqrt{(x - a)^2 + (y - b)^2}$, so $\boxed{5}$ becomes Definition 1. If $n = 3$, then $\mathbf{x} = \langle x, y, z \rangle$, $\mathbf{a} = \langle a, b, c \rangle$, and $\boxed{5}$ becomes the definition of a limit of a function of three variables. In each case the definition of continuity can be written as

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