

Chain Rule

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Calculus

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Lets start with an equation that we have seen before:

THE CHAIN RULE

Recall that the Chain Rule for functions of a single variable gives the rule for differentiating a composite function: If $y = f(x)$ and $x = g(t)$, where f and g are differentiable functions, then y is indirectly a differentiable function of t and



$$\frac{dy}{dt} = \frac{dy}{dx} \frac{dx}{dt}$$

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For functions of more than one variable, the Chain Rule has several versions, each of them giving a rule for differentiating a composite function. The first version (Theorem 2) deals with the case where $z = f(x, y)$ and each of the variables x and y is, in turn, a function of a variable t . This means that z is indirectly a function of t , $z = f(g(t), h(t))$, and the Chain Rule gives a formula for differentiating z as a function of t . We assume that f is dif-

2 THE CHAIN RULE (CASE I) Suppose that $z = f(x, y)$ is a differentiable function of x and y , where $x = g(t)$ and $y = h(t)$ are both differentiable functions of t . Then z is a differentiable function of t and

$$\frac{dz}{dt} = \frac{\partial f}{\partial x} \frac{dx}{dt} + \frac{\partial f}{\partial y} \frac{dy}{dt}$$

EXAMPLE 1 If $z = x^2y + 3xy^4$, where $x = \sin 2t$ and $y = \cos t$, find dz/dt when $t = 0$.

SOLUTION The Chain Rule gives

$$\begin{aligned}\frac{dz}{dt} &= \frac{\partial z}{\partial x} \frac{dx}{dt} + \frac{\partial z}{\partial y} \frac{dy}{dt} \\ &= (2xy + 3y^4)(2 \cos 2t) + (x^2 + 12xy^3)(-\sin t)\end{aligned}$$

It's not necessary to substitute the expressions for x and y in terms of t . We simply observe that when $t = 0$, we have $x = \sin 0 = 0$ and $y = \cos 0 = 1$. Therefore

$$\left. \frac{dz}{dt} \right|_{t=0} = (0 + 3)(2 \cos 0) + (0 + 0)(-\sin 0) = 6$$

3 THE CHAIN RULE (CASE 2) Suppose that $z = f(x, y)$ is a differentiable function of x and y , where $x = g(s, t)$ and $y = h(s, t)$ are differentiable functions of s and t . Then

$$\frac{\partial z}{\partial s} = \frac{\partial z}{\partial x} \frac{\partial x}{\partial s} + \frac{\partial z}{\partial y} \frac{\partial y}{\partial s} \qquad \frac{\partial z}{\partial t} = \frac{\partial z}{\partial x} \frac{\partial x}{\partial t} + \frac{\partial z}{\partial y} \frac{\partial y}{\partial t}$$

EXAMPLE 3 If $z = e^x \sin y$, where $x = st^2$ and $y = s^2t$, find $\partial z / \partial s$ and $\partial z / \partial t$.

SOLUTION Applying Case 2 of the Chain Rule, we get

$$\begin{aligned}\frac{\partial z}{\partial s} &= \frac{\partial z}{\partial x} \frac{\partial x}{\partial s} + \frac{\partial z}{\partial y} \frac{\partial y}{\partial s} = (e^x \sin y)(t^2) + (e^x \cos y)(2st) \\ &= t^2 e^{st^2} \sin(s^2t) + 2ste^{st^2} \cos(s^2t)\end{aligned}$$

$$\begin{aligned}\frac{\partial z}{\partial t} &= \frac{\partial z}{\partial x} \frac{\partial x}{\partial t} + \frac{\partial z}{\partial y} \frac{\partial y}{\partial t} = (e^x \sin y)(2st) + (e^x \cos y)(s^2) \\ &= 2ste^{st^2} \sin(s^2t) + s^2 e^{st^2} \cos(s^2t)\end{aligned}$$

4 THE CHAIN RULE (GENERAL VERSION) Suppose that u is a differentiable function of the n variables x_1, x_2, \dots, x_n and each x_j is a differentiable function of the m variables t_1, t_2, \dots, t_m . Then u is a function of t_1, t_2, \dots, t_m and

$$\frac{\partial u}{\partial t_i} = \frac{\partial u}{\partial x_1} \frac{\partial x_1}{\partial t_i} + \frac{\partial u}{\partial x_2} \frac{\partial x_2}{\partial t_i} + \dots + \frac{\partial u}{\partial x_n} \frac{\partial x_n}{\partial t_i}$$

for each $i = 1, 2, \dots, m$.

EXAMPLE 5 If $u = x^4y + y^2z^3$, where $x = rse^t$, $y = rs^2e^{-t}$, and $z = r^2s \sin t$, find the value of $\partial u / \partial s$ when $r = 2$, $s = 1$, $t = 0$.

SOLUTION With the help of the tree diagram in Figure 4, we have

$$\begin{aligned}\frac{\partial u}{\partial s} &= \frac{\partial u}{\partial x} \frac{\partial x}{\partial s} + \frac{\partial u}{\partial y} \frac{\partial y}{\partial s} + \frac{\partial u}{\partial z} \frac{\partial z}{\partial s} \\ &= (4x^3y)(re^t) + (x^4 + 2yz^3)(2rse^{-t}) + (3y^2z^2)(r^2 \sin t)\end{aligned}$$

When $r = 2$, $s = 1$, and $t = 0$, we have $x = 2$, $y = 2$, and $z = 0$, so

$$\frac{\partial u}{\partial s} = (64)(2) + (16)(4) + (0)(0) = 192$$