

Partial Derivatives

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BHOS

Calculus

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4 If f is a function of two variables, its **partial derivatives** are the functions f_x and f_y defined by

$$f_x(x, y) = \lim_{h \rightarrow 0} \frac{f(x + h, y) - f(x, y)}{h}$$

$$f_y(x, y) = \lim_{h \rightarrow 0} \frac{f(x, y + h) - f(x, y)}{h}$$

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NOTATIONS FOR PARTIAL DERIVATIVES If $z = f(x, y)$, we write

$$f_x(x, y) = f_x = \frac{\partial f}{\partial x} = \frac{\partial}{\partial x} f(x, y) = \frac{\partial z}{\partial x} = f_1 = D_1 f = D_x f$$

$$f_y(x, y) = f_y = \frac{\partial f}{\partial y} = \frac{\partial}{\partial y} f(x, y) = \frac{\partial z}{\partial y} = f_2 = D_2 f = D_y f$$

RULE FOR FINDING PARTIAL DERIVATIVES OF $z = f(x, y)$

1. To find f_x , regard y as a constant and differentiate $f(x, y)$ with respect to x .
2. To find f_y , regard x as a constant and differentiate $f(x, y)$ with respect to y .

EXAMPLE I If $f(x, y) = x^3 + x^2y^3 - 2y^2$, find $f_x(2, 1)$ and $f_y(2, 1)$.

SOLUTION Holding y constant and differentiating with respect to x , we get

$$f_x(x, y) = 3x^2 + 2xy^3$$

and so

$$f_x(2, 1) = 3 \cdot 2^2 + 2 \cdot 2 \cdot 1^3 = 16$$

Holding x constant and differentiating with respect to y , we get

$$f_y(x, y) = 3x^2y^2 - 4y$$

$$f_y(2, 1) = 3 \cdot 2^2 \cdot 1^2 - 4 \cdot 1 = 8$$

EXAMPLE 3 If $f(x, y) = \sin\left(\frac{x}{1+y}\right)$, calculate $\frac{\partial f}{\partial x}$ and $\frac{\partial f}{\partial y}$.

SOLUTION Using the Chain Rule for functions of one variable, we have

$$\frac{\partial f}{\partial x} = \cos\left(\frac{x}{1+y}\right) \cdot \frac{\partial}{\partial x} \left(\frac{x}{1+y}\right) = \cos\left(\frac{x}{1+y}\right) \cdot \frac{1}{1+y}$$

$$\frac{\partial f}{\partial y} = \cos\left(\frac{x}{1+y}\right) \cdot \frac{\partial}{\partial y} \left(\frac{x}{1+y}\right) = -\cos\left(\frac{x}{1+y}\right) \cdot \frac{x}{(1+y)^2}$$

EXAMPLE 4 Find $\partial z/\partial x$ and $\partial z/\partial y$ if z is defined implicitly as a function of x and y by the equation

$$x^3 + y^3 + z^3 + 6xyz = 1$$

SOLUTION To find $\partial z/\partial x$, we differentiate implicitly with respect to x , being careful to treat y as a constant:

$$3x^2 + 3z^2 \frac{\partial z}{\partial x} + 6yz + 6xy \frac{\partial z}{\partial x} = 0$$

Solving this equation for $\partial z/\partial x$, we obtain

$$\frac{\partial z}{\partial x} = -\frac{x^2 + 2yz}{z^2 + 2xy}$$

Similarly, implicit differentiation with respect to y gives

$$\frac{\partial z}{\partial y} = -\frac{y^2 + 2xz}{z^2 + 2xy}$$



If f is a function of two variables, then its partial derivatives f_x and f_y are also functions of two variables, so we can consider their partial derivatives $(f_x)_x$, $(f_x)_y$, $(f_y)_x$, and $(f_y)_y$, which are called the **second partial derivatives** of f . If $z = f(x, y)$, we use the following notation:

$$(f_x)_x = f_{xx} = f_{11} = \frac{\partial}{\partial x} \left(\frac{\partial f}{\partial x} \right) = \frac{\partial^2 f}{\partial x^2} = \frac{\partial^2 z}{\partial x^2}$$

$$(f_x)_y = f_{xy} = f_{12} = \frac{\partial}{\partial y} \left(\frac{\partial f}{\partial x} \right) = \frac{\partial^2 f}{\partial y \partial x} = \frac{\partial^2 z}{\partial y \partial x}$$

$$(f_y)_x = f_{yx} = f_{21} = \frac{\partial}{\partial x} \left(\frac{\partial f}{\partial y} \right) = \frac{\partial^2 f}{\partial x \partial y} = \frac{\partial^2 z}{\partial x \partial y}$$

$$(f_y)_y = f_{yy} = f_{22} = \frac{\partial}{\partial y} \left(\frac{\partial f}{\partial y} \right) = \frac{\partial^2 f}{\partial y^2} = \frac{\partial^2 z}{\partial y^2}$$

Thus the notation f_{xy} (or $\partial^2 f / \partial y \partial x$) means that we first differentiate with respect to x and then with respect to y , whereas in computing f_{yx} the order is reversed.

EXAMPLE 6 Find the second partial derivatives of

$$f(x, y) = x^3 + x^2y^3 - 2y^2$$

SOLUTION In Example 1 we found that

$$f_x(x, y) = 3x^2 + 2xy^3 \qquad f_y(x, y) = 3x^2y^2 - 4y$$

Therefore

$$\begin{aligned} f_{xx} &= \frac{\partial}{\partial x} (3x^2 + 2xy^3) = 6x + 2y^3 & f_{xy} &= \frac{\partial}{\partial y} (3x^2 + 2xy^3) = 6xy^2 \\ f_{yx} &= \frac{\partial}{\partial x} (3x^2y^2 - 4y) = 6xy^2 & f_{yy} &= \frac{\partial}{\partial y} (3x^2y^2 - 4y) = 6x^2y - 4 \end{aligned}$$

CLAIRAUT'S THEOREM Suppose f is defined on a disk D that contains the point (a, b) . If the functions f_{xy} and f_{yx} are both continuous on D , then

$$f_{xy}(a, b) = f_{yx}(a, b)$$

EXAMPLE 7 Calculate f_{xxyz} if $f(x, y, z) = \sin(3x + yz)$.

SOLUTION

$$f_x = 3 \cos(3x + yz)$$

$$f_{xx} = -9 \sin(3x + yz)$$

$$f_{xxy} = -9z \cos(3x + yz)$$

$$f_{xxyz} = -9 \cos(3x + yz) + 9yz \sin(3x + yz)$$