The function F is continuous at $x = c$. It is called the **continuous extension of f** to $x = c$. For rational functions f, continuous extensions are usually found by canceling common factors.

EXAMPLE 10 Show that

$$f(x) = \frac{x^2 + x - 6}{x^2 - 4}, \qquad x \neq 2$$

has a continuous extension to $x = 2$, and find that extension.

Solution Although $f(2)$ is not defined, if $x \neq 2$ we have

$$f(x) = \frac{x^2 + x - 6}{x^2 - 4} = \frac{(x - 2)(x + 3)}{(x - 2)(x + 2)} = \frac{x + 3}{x + 2}.$$

The new function

$$F(x) = \frac{x + 3}{x + 2}$$

is equal to $f(x)$ for $x \neq 2$, but is continuous at $x = 2$, having there the value of $5/4$. Thus F is the continuous extension of f to $x = 2$, and

$$\lim_{x \to 2} \frac{x^2 + x - 6}{x^2 - 4} = \lim_{x \to 2} f(x) = \frac{5}{4}.$$

The graph of f is shown in Figure 2.45. The continuous extension F has the same graph except with no hole at $(2, 5/4)$. Effectively, F is the function f with its point of discontinuity at $x = 2$ removed. ■

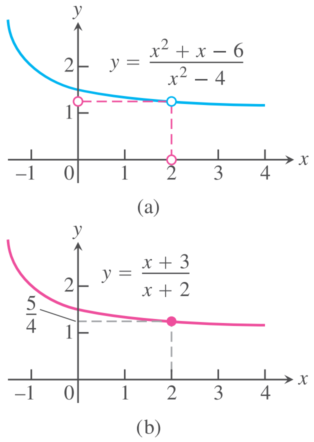
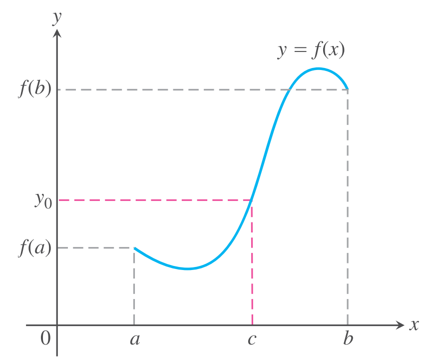


FIGURE 2.45 (a) The graph of $f(x)$ and (b) the graph of its continuous extension $F(x)$ (Example 10).

Intermediate Value Theorem for Continuous Functions

Functions that are continuous on intervals have properties that make them particularly useful in mathematics and its applications. One of these is the *Intermediate Value Property*. A function is said to have the **Intermediate Value Property** if whenever it takes on two values, it also takes on all the values in between.

THEOREM 11—The Intermediate Value Theorem for Continuous Functions If f is a continuous function on a closed interval $[a, b]$, and if y_0 is any value between $f(a)$ and $f(b)$, then $y_0 = f(c)$ for some c in $[a, b]$.



Theorem 11 says that continuous functions over *finite closed* intervals have the Intermediate Value Property. Geometrically, the Intermediate Value Theorem says that any horizontal line $y = y_0$ crossing the y-axis between the numbers $f(a)$ and $f(b)$ will cross the curve $y = f(x)$ at least once over the interval $[a, b]$.

The proof of the Intermediate Value Theorem depends on the completeness property of the real number system (Appendix 6) and can be found in more advanced texts.

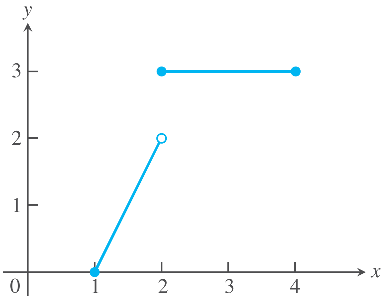


FIGURE 2.46 The function

$$f(x) = \begin{cases} 2x - 2, & 1 \le x < 2 \\ 3, & 2 \le x \le 4 \end{cases}$$

does not take on all values between $f(1) = 0$ and $f(4) = 3$; it misses all the values between 2 and 3.

The continuity of f on the interval is essential to Theorem 11. If f is discontinuous at even one point of the interval, the theorem's conclusion may fail, as it does for the function graphed in Figure 2.46 (choose y_0 as any number between 2 and 3).

A Consequence for Graphing: Connectedness Theorem 11 implies that the graph of a function continuous on an interval cannot have any breaks over the interval. It will be **connected**—a single, unbroken curve. It will not have jumps like the graph of the greatest integer function (Figure 2.39), or separate branches like the graph of $1/x$ (Figure 2.41).

A Consequence for Root Finding We call a solution of the equation $f(x) = 0$ a **root** of the equation or **zero** of the function f. The Intermediate Value Theorem tells us that if f is continuous, then any interval on which f changes sign contains a zero of the function.

In practical terms, when we see the graph of a continuous function cross the horizontal axis on a computer screen, we know it is not stepping across. There really is a point where the function's value is zero.

EXAMPLE 11 Show that there is a root of the equation $x^3 - x - 1 = 0$ between 1 and 2.

Solution Let $f(x) = x^3 - x - 1$. Since $f(1) = 1 - 1 - 1 = -1 < 0$ and $f(2) = 2^3 - 2 - 1 = 5 > 0$, we see that $y_0 = 0$ is a value between $f(1)$ and $f(2)$. Since f is continuous, the Intermediate Value Theorem says there is a zero of f between 1 and 2. Figure 2.47 shows the result of zooming in to locate the root near $x = 1.32$. ■

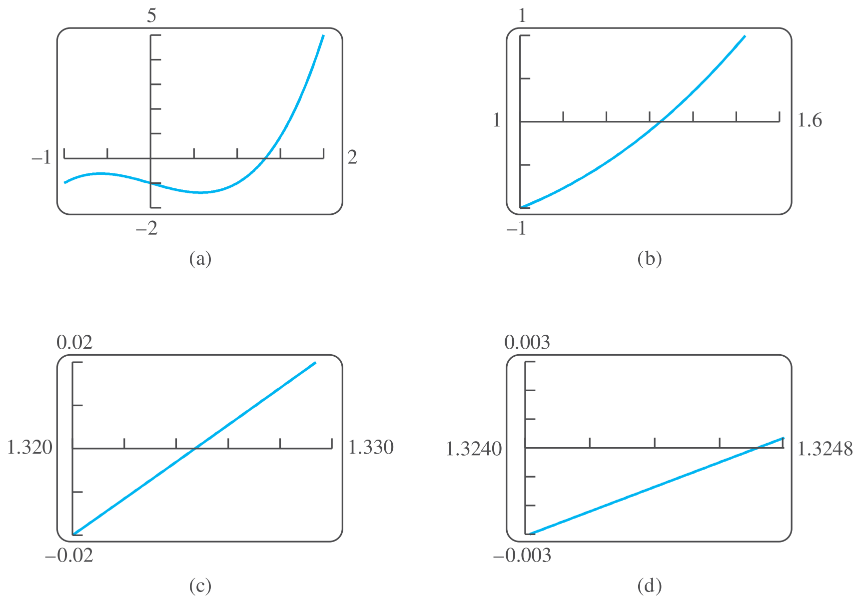


FIGURE 2.47 Zooming in on a zero of the function $f(x) = x^3 - x - 1$. The zero is near $x = 1.3247$ (Example 11).

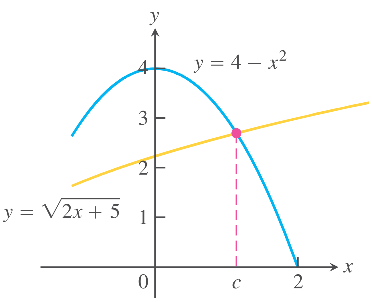


FIGURE 2.48 The curves $y = \sqrt{2x + 5}$ and $y = 4 - x^2$ have the same value at $x = c$ where $\sqrt{2x + 5} = 4 - x^2$ (Example 12).

EXAMPLE 12 Use the Intermediate Value Theorem to prove that the equation

$$\sqrt{2x + 5} = 4 - x^2$$

has a solution (Figure 2.48).

Solution We rewrite the equation as

$$\sqrt{2x + 5} + x^2 = 4,$$

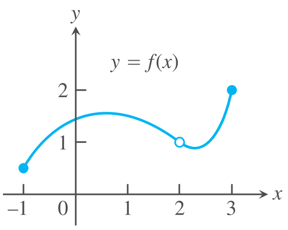
and set $f(x) = \sqrt{2x + 5} + x^2$. Now $g(x) = \sqrt{2x + 5}$ is continuous on the interval $[-5/2, \infty)$ since it is the composite of the square root function with the nonnegative linear function $y = 2x + 5$. Then f is the sum of the function g and the quadratic function $y = x^2$, and the quadratic function is continuous for all values of x. It follows that $f(x) = \sqrt{2x + 5} + x^2$ is continuous on the interval $[-5/2, \infty)$. By trial and error, we find the function values $f(0) = \sqrt{5} \approx 2.24$ and $f(2) = \sqrt{9} + 4 = 7$, and note that f is also continuous on the finite closed interval $[0, 2] \subset [-5/2, \infty)$. Since the value $y_0 = 4$ is between the numbers 2.24 and 7, by the Intermediate Value Theorem there is a number $c \in [0, 2]$ such that $f(c) = 4$. That is, the number c solves the original equation. ■

Exercises 2.5

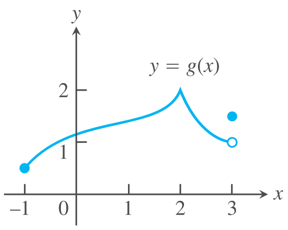
Continuity from Graphs

In Exercises 1–4, say whether the function graphed is continuous on $[-1, 3]$. If not, where does it fail to be continuous and why?

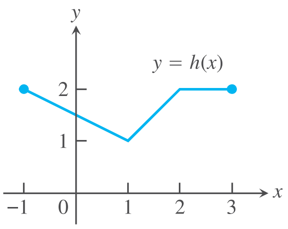
1.



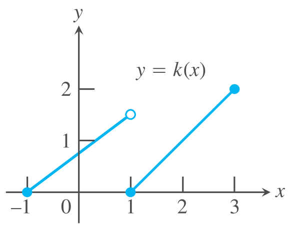
2.



3.



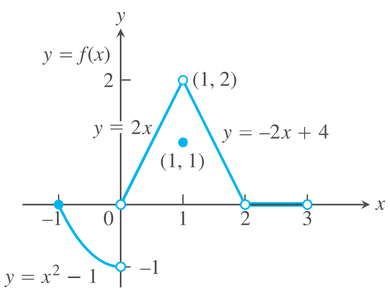
4.



Exercises 5–10 refer to the function

$$f(x) = \begin{cases} x^2 - 1, & -1 \le x < 0 \\ 2x, & 0 < x < 1 \\ 1, & x = 1 \\ -2x + 4, & 1 < x < 2 \\ 0, & 2 < x < 3 \end{cases}$$

graphed in the accompanying figure.



The graph for Exercises 5–10.

5. a. Does $f(-1)$ exist?

b. Does $\lim_{x\to -1^+} f(x)$ exist?

c. Does $\lim_{x\to -1^+} f(x) = f(-1)$?

d. Is f continuous at $x = -1$?

6. a. Does $f(1)$ exist?

b. Does $\lim_{x\to 1} f(x)$ exist?

c. Does $\lim_{x\to 1} f(x) = f(1)$?

d. Is f continuous at $x = 1$?

7. a. Is f defined at $x = 2$? (Look at the definition of f.)

b. Is f continuous at $x = 2$?

8. At what values of x is f continuous?

9. What value should be assigned to $f(2)$ to make the extended function continuous at $x = 2$?

10. To what new value should $f(1)$ be changed to remove the discontinuity?

Applying the Continuity Test

At which points do the functions in Exercises 11 and 12 fail to be continuous? At which points, if any, are the discontinuities removable? Not removable? Give reasons for your answers.

11. Exercise 1, Section 2.4

12. Exercise 2, Section 2.4

At what points are the functions in Exercises 13–30 continuous?

13. $y = \dfrac{1}{x - 2} - 3x$

14. $y = \dfrac{1}{(x + 2)^2} + 4$

15. $y = \dfrac{x + 1}{x^2 - 4x + 3}$

16. $y = \dfrac{x + 3}{x^2 - 3x - 10}$

17. $y = |x - 1| + \sin x$

18. $y = \dfrac{1}{|x| + 1} - \dfrac{x^2}{2}$

19. $y = \dfrac{\cos x}{x}$

20. $y = \dfrac{x + 2}{\cos x}$

21. $y = \csc 2x$

22. $y = \tan \dfrac{\pi x}{2}$

23. $y = \dfrac{x \tan x}{x^2 + 1}$

24. $y = \dfrac{\sqrt{x^4 + 1}}{1 + \sin^2 x}$

25. $y = \sqrt{2x + 3}$

26. $y = \sqrt[4]{3x - 1}$

27. $y = (2x - 1)^{1/3}$

28. $y = (2 - x)^{1/5}$

29. $g(x) = \begin{cases} \dfrac{x^2 - x - 6}{x - 3}, & x \neq 3 \\ 5, & x = 3 \end{cases}$

30. $f(x) = \begin{cases} \dfrac{x^3 - 8}{x^2 - 4}, & x \neq 2, x \neq -2 \\ 3, & x = 2 \\ 4, & x = -2 \end{cases}$

Limits Involving Trigonometric Functions

Find the limits in Exercises 31–38. Are the functions continuous at the point being approached?

31. $\lim_{x \to \pi} \sin(x - \sin x)$

32. $\lim_{t \to 0} \sin\left(\dfrac{\pi}{2} \cos(\tan t)\right)$

33. $\lim_{y \to 1} \sec(y \sec^2 y - \tan^2 y - 1)$

34. $\lim_{x \to 0} \tan\left(\dfrac{\pi}{4} \cos(\sin x^{1/3})\right)$

35. $\lim_{t \to 0} \cos\left(\dfrac{\pi}{\sqrt{19 - 3\sec 2t}}\right)$

36. $\lim_{x \to \pi/6} \sqrt{\csc^2 x + 5\sqrt{3}\tan x}$

37. $\lim_{x \to 0^+} \sin\left(\dfrac{\pi}{2} e^{\sqrt{x}}\right)$

38. $\lim_{x \to 1} \cos^{-1}(\ln \sqrt{x})$

Continuous Extensions

39. Define $g(3)$ in a way that extends $g(x) = (x^2 - 9)/(x - 3)$ to be continuous at $x = 3$.

40. Define $h(2)$ in a way that extends $h(t) = (t^2 + 3t - 10)/(t - 2)$ to be continuous at $t = 2$.

41. Define $f(1)$ in a way that extends $f(s) = (s^3 - 1)/(s^2 - 1)$ to be continuous at $s = 1$.

42. Define $g(4)$ in a way that extends

$$g(x) = (x^2 - 16)/(x^2 - 3x - 4)$$

to be continuous at $x = 4$.

43. For what value of a is

$$f(x) = \begin{cases} x^2 - 1, & x < 3 \\ 2ax, & x \geq 3 \end{cases}$$

continuous at every x?

44. For what value of b is

$$g(x) = \begin{cases} x, & x < -2 \\ bx^2, & x \geq -2 \end{cases}$$

continuous at every x?

45. For what values of a is

$$f(x) = \begin{cases} a^2x - 2a, & x \geq 2 \\ 12, & x < 2 \end{cases}$$

continuous at every x?

46. For what value of b is

$$g(x) = \begin{cases} \dfrac{x - b}{b + 1}, & x < 0 \\ x^2 + b, & x > 0 \end{cases}$$

continuous at every x?

47. For what values of a and b is

$$f(x) = \begin{cases} -2, & x \leq -1 \\ ax - b, & -1 < x < 1 \\ 3, & x \geq 1 \end{cases}$$

continuous at every x?

48. For what values of a and b is

$$g(x) = \begin{cases} ax + 2b, & x \leq 0 \\ x^2 + 3a - b, & 0 < x \leq 2 \\ 3x - 5, & x > 2 \end{cases}$$

continuous at every x?

T In Exercises 49–52, graph the function f to see whether it appears to have a continuous extension to the origin. If it does, use Trace and Zoom to find a good candidate for the extended function's value at $x = 0$. If the function does not appear to have a continuous extension, can it be extended to be continuous at the origin from the right or from the left? If so, what do you think the extended function's value(s) should be?

49. $f(x) = \dfrac{10^x - 1}{x}$

50. $f(x) = \dfrac{10^{|x|} - 1}{x}$

51. $f(x) = \dfrac{\sin x}{|x|}$

52. $f(x) = (1 + 2x)^{1/x}$

Theory and Examples

53. A continuous function $y = f(x)$ is known to be negative at $x = 0$ and positive at $x = 1$. Why does the equation $f(x) = 0$ have at least one solution between $x = 0$ and $x = 1$? Illustrate with a sketch.

54. Explain why the equation $\cos x = x$ has at least one solution.

55. Roots of a cubic Show that the equation $x^3 - 15x + 1 = 0$ has three solutions in the interval $[-4, 4]$.

56. A function value Show that the function $F(x) = (x - a)^2 \cdot (x - b)^2 + x$ takes on the value $(a + b)/2$ for some value of x.

57. Solving an equation If $f(x) = x^3 - 8x + 10$, show that there are values c for which $f(c)$ equals **(a)** π; **(b)** $-\sqrt{3}$; **(c)** 5,000,000.

58. Explain why the following five statements ask for the same information.

a. Find the roots of $f(x) = x^3 - 3x - 1$.

b. Find the x-coordinates of the points where the curve $y = x^3$ crosses the line $y = 3x + 1$.

c. Find all the values of x for which $x^3 - 3x = 1$.

d. Find the x-coordinates of the points where the cubic curve $y = x^3 - 3x$ crosses the line $y = 1$.

e. Solve the equation $x^3 - 3x - 1 = 0$.

59. Removable discontinuity Give an example of a function $f(x)$ that is continuous for all values of x except $x = 2$, where it has a removable discontinuity. Explain how you know that f is discontinuous at $x = 2$, and how you know the discontinuity is removable.

60. Nonremovable discontinuity Give an example of a function $g(x)$ that is continuous for all values of x except $x = -1$, where it has a nonremovable discontinuity. Explain how you know that g is discontinuous there and why the discontinuity is not removable.