

Calculating Volumes Using the Disc Method

Stephen Styles

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A line can be rotated around either the x -axis or the y -axis in order to create a solid object. From here we can calculate the volume of this solid. Recall that the area of a circle is πr^2 . In this case, we will be calculating a bunch of areas with radius $r = f(x)$, then summing them up to calculate the volume.

The formula to calculate the volume of this solid is

$$V = \int_a^b \pi [f(x)]^2 dx.$$

Examples:

1. Find the volume of the solid generated by rotating the line $f(x) = 3x^2 + 2$ around the x -axis, bounded by the y -axis and the line $x = 1$.

Solution:

$$\begin{aligned} V &= \int_0^1 \pi (3x^2 + 2)^2 dx \\ &= \pi \int_0^1 9x^4 + 12x^2 + 4 dx \\ &= \pi \left(\frac{9x^5}{5} + 4x^3 + 4x \right) \Big|_0^1 \\ &= \pi \left(\frac{9}{5} + 4 + 4 \right) \\ &= \frac{49\pi}{5} \end{aligned}$$

2. Find the volume of the solid generated by rotating the line $f(x) = \frac{1}{x}$ around the x -axis bounded by the lines $x = 1$ and $x = 10$.

Solution:

$$\begin{aligned} V &= \int_1^{10} \pi \left(\frac{1}{x} \right)^2 dx \\ &= \pi \int_1^{10} \frac{1}{x^2} dx \\ &= \pi \left(\frac{-1}{x} \right) \Big|_1^{10} \\ &= \pi \left(\frac{-1}{10} + 1 \right) \\ &= \frac{9\pi}{10} \end{aligned}$$

The disc method can also be extended to cases when we want to find the volume generated by the area between two curves. In that case we will calculate the volume generated by the top curve, then subtract the volume generated by the bottom curve. The formula for this solid volume is

$$V = \pi \int_a^b [f(x)]^2 - [g(x)]^2 dx.$$

Examples:

1. Find the volume of the solid generated by rotating the area between the curves $y = 2 - x^2$ and $y = x^2$ around the x -axis. (Note: these curves intersect at $x = -1$ and $x = 1$.)

Solution:

$$\begin{aligned} V &= \pi \int_{-1}^1 (2 - x^2)^2 - (x^2)^2 dx \\ &= \pi \int_{-1}^1 4 - 2x^2 + x^4 - x^4 dx \\ &= \pi \int_{-1}^1 4 - 2x^2 dx \\ &= \pi \left(4x - \frac{2x^3}{3} \right) \Big|_{-1}^1 \\ &= \pi \left(4 - \frac{2}{3} - \left(-4 + \frac{2}{3} \right) \right) \\ &= \left(8 - \frac{4}{3} \right) \pi \\ &= \frac{20\pi}{3} \end{aligned}$$