

We are given that  $f : \mathbb{R} \rightarrow \mathbb{R}$  is twice continuously differentiable, with  $\int_{-1}^1 f(x) dx = 0$  and  $f(1) = f(-1) = 1$ . We need to prove that  $\int_{-1}^1 [f''(x)]^2 dx \geq 15$  and find all functions achieving equality.

To solve this, we consider the calculus of variations approach. The functional to minimize is  $I = \int_{-1}^1 [f''(x)]^2 dx$  subject to the constraints  $\int_{-1}^1 f(x) dx = 0$  and  $f(-1) = f(1) = 1$ . The Euler-Lagrange equation for minimizing  $\int [f'']^2 dx$  with an integral constraint leads to a fourth-order equation. Thus, we assume the minimizer is a quartic polynomial.

Set  $f(x) = ax^4 + bx^3 + cx^2 + dx + e$ .

### Constraints:

1.  $f(1) = a + b + c + d + e = 1$
2.  $f(-1) = a - b + c - d + e = 1$
3.  $\int_{-1}^1 f(x) dx = 0$

The integral constraint is computed as:

$$\int_{-1}^1 (ax^4 + bx^3 + cx^2 + dx + e) dx = \left[ \frac{ax^5}{5} + \frac{bx^4}{4} + \frac{cx^3}{3} + \frac{dx^2}{2} + ex \right]_{-1}^1 \quad (1)$$

Odd functions integrate to zero over symmetric limits, so:

$$\int_{-1}^1 (ax^4 + cx^2 + e) dx = 2 \int_0^1 (ax^4 + cx^2 + e) dx \quad (2)$$

$$= 2 \left[ \frac{ax^5}{5} + \frac{cx^3}{3} + ex \right]_0^1 \quad (3)$$

$$= 2 \left( \frac{a}{5} + \frac{c}{3} + e \right) \quad (4)$$

Set to zero:

$$2 \left( \frac{a}{5} + \frac{c}{3} + e \right) = 0 \implies \frac{a}{5} + \frac{c}{3} + e = 0 \quad (5)$$

Multiplying by 15:

$$3a + 5c + 15e = 0 \quad (\text{Equation 1}) \quad (6)$$

Add the boundary conditions:

$$(a + b + c + d + e) + (a - b + c - d + e) = 1 + 1 \quad (7)$$

$$\implies 2a + 2c + 2e = 2 \quad (8)$$

$$\implies a + c + e = 1 \quad (\text{Equation 2}) \quad (9)$$

Subtract them:

$$(a + b + c + d + e) - (a - b + c - d + e) = 1 - 1 \quad (10)$$

$$\implies 2b + 2d = 0 \quad (11)$$

$$\implies b + d = 0 \quad (\text{Equation 3}) \quad (12)$$

## Second Derivative:

$$f'(x) = 4ax^3 + 3bx^2 + 2cx + d \quad (13)$$

$$f''(x) = 12ax^2 + 6bx + 2c \quad (14)$$

The functional is:

$$I = \int_{-1}^1 [f''(x)]^2 dx = \int_{-1}^1 (12ax^2 + 6bx + 2c)^2 dx \quad (15)$$

Expanding the square:

$$(12ax^2 + 6bx + 2c)^2 = 144a^2x^4 + 144abx^3 + 36b^2x^2 + 48acx^2 + 24bcx + 4c^2 \quad (16)$$

Integrating over  $[-1, 1]$ , the odd terms  $(144abx^3$  and  $24bcx)$  vanish:

$$I = \int_{-1}^1 (144a^2x^4 + (36b^2 + 48ac)x^2 + 4c^2) dx \quad (17)$$

The integrals are:

$$\int_{-1}^1 x^4 dx = \frac{2}{5}, \quad \int_{-1}^1 x^2 dx = \frac{2}{3}, \quad \int_{-1}^1 dx = 2 \quad (18)$$

So:

$$I = 144a^2 \cdot \frac{2}{5} + (36b^2 + 48ac) \cdot \frac{2}{3} + 4c^2 \cdot 2 = \frac{288a^2}{5} + 24b^2 + 32ac + 8c^2 \quad (19)$$

## Minimizing $I$ :

From Equation 3,  $d = -b$ . From Equation 2 and the boundary conditions, for any  $b$ , as long as  $a + c + e = 1$ , the boundary conditions are satisfied. Since  $I$  contains  $b^2$  with a positive coefficient, to minimize  $I$ , set  $b = 0$  (and thus  $d = 0$ ).

Now solve Equations 1 and 2 for  $a$ ,  $c$ , and  $e$ :

$$a + c + e = 1 \quad (\text{Equation 2}) \quad (20)$$

$$3a + 5c + 15e = 0 \quad (\text{Equation 1}) \quad (21)$$

Express  $a$  and  $c$  in terms of  $e$ . From Equation 2:

$$a + c = 1 - e \quad (22)$$

From Equations 1 and 2, eliminate variables. Multiply Equation 2 by 3:

$$3a + 3c + 3e = 3 \quad (23)$$

Subtract from Equation 1:

$$(3a + 5c + 15e) - (3a + 3c + 3e) = 0 - 3 \quad (24)$$

$$\implies 2c + 12e = -3 \quad (25)$$

So:

$$2c = -12e - 3 \implies c = -6e - \frac{3}{2} \quad (26)$$

Then:

$$a = (1 - e) - c \quad (27)$$

$$= 1 - e - \left(-6e - \frac{3}{2}\right) \quad (28)$$

$$= 1 - e + 6e + \frac{3}{2} \quad (29)$$

$$= \frac{5}{2} + 5e \quad (30)$$

Substitute into  $I$  (with  $b = 0$ ):

$$I = \frac{288}{5}a^2 + 32ac + 8c^2 \quad (31)$$

Substitute  $a = \frac{5}{2} + 5e$  and  $c = -\frac{3}{2} - 6e$ :

$$I = \frac{288}{5} \left(5e + \frac{5}{2}\right)^2 + 32 \left(5e + \frac{5}{2}\right) \left(-6e - \frac{3}{2}\right) + 8 \left(-6e - \frac{3}{2}\right)^2 \quad (32)$$

Compute each term:

$$\left(5e + \frac{5}{2}\right)^2 = 25e^2 + 25e + \frac{25}{4} \quad (33)$$

$$\frac{288}{5} \left(25e^2 + 25e + \frac{25}{4}\right) = 288 \left(5e^2 + 5e + \frac{5}{4}\right) = 1440e^2 + 1440e + 360 \quad (34)$$

$$\left(5e + \frac{5}{2}\right) \left(-6e - \frac{3}{2}\right) = 5 \cdot (-6)e^2 + 5 \cdot \left(-\frac{3}{2}\right)e + \frac{5}{2} \cdot (-6)e + \frac{5}{2} \cdot \left(-\frac{3}{2}\right) \quad (35)$$

$$= -30e^2 - \frac{15}{2}e - 15e - \frac{15}{4} \quad (36)$$

$$= -30e^2 - \frac{45}{2}e - \frac{15}{4} \quad (37)$$

$$32 \left(-30e^2 - \frac{45}{2}e - \frac{15}{4}\right) = -960e^2 - 720e - 120 \quad (38)$$

$$\left(-6e - \frac{3}{2}\right)^2 = 36e^2 + 18e + \frac{9}{4} \quad (39)$$

$$8 \left(36e^2 + 18e + \frac{9}{4}\right) = 288e^2 + 144e + 18 \quad (40)$$

Sum:

$$I = (1440e^2 + 1440e + 360) + (-960e^2 - 720e - 120) + (288e^2 + 144e + 18) \quad (41)$$

$$= (1440 - 960 + 288)e^2 + (1440 - 720 + 144)e + (360 - 120 + 18) \quad (42)$$

$$= 768e^2 + 864e + 258 \quad (43)$$

The minimum occurs at  $e = -\frac{864}{2 \cdot 768} = -\frac{864}{1536} = -\frac{9}{16}$ . Then:

$$I = 768 \left( -\frac{9}{16} \right)^2 + 864 \left( -\frac{9}{16} \right) + 258 \quad (44)$$

$$= 768 \cdot \frac{81}{256} - \frac{864 \cdot 9}{16} + 258 \quad (45)$$

$$= 3 \cdot 81 - 54 \cdot 9 + 258 \quad (46)$$

$$= 243 - 486 + 258 = 15 \quad (47)$$

Thus, the minimum is 15, achieved when  $b = 0$ ,  $d = 0$ ,  $e = -\frac{9}{16}$ ,  $c = -6e - \frac{3}{2} = -6(-\frac{9}{16}) - \frac{3}{2} = \frac{54}{16} - \frac{24}{16} = \frac{30}{16} = \frac{15}{8}$ ,  $a = \frac{5}{2} + 5e = \frac{5}{2} - \frac{45}{16} = \frac{40}{16} - \frac{45}{16} = -\frac{5}{16}$ .

So:

$$f(x) = -\frac{5}{16}x^4 + \frac{15}{8}x^2 - \frac{9}{16} = \frac{1}{16}(-5x^4 + 30x^2 - 9) \quad (48)$$

This satisfies the constraints:

- $f(1) = \frac{1}{16}(-5 + 30 - 9) = \frac{16}{16} = 1 = f(-1)$
- $\int_{-1}^1 f(x) dx = 0$  (as built)

For equality,  $f''(x) = 12ax^2 + 2c = 12(-\frac{5}{16})x^2 + 2(\frac{15}{8}) = -\frac{60}{16}x^2 + \frac{30}{8} = -\frac{15}{4}x^2 + \frac{15}{4} = \frac{15}{4}(1 - x^2)$ , so:

$$[f''(x)]^2 = \left( \frac{15}{4} \right)^2 (1 - x^2)^2 = \frac{225}{16}(1 - 2x^2 + x^4) \quad (49)$$

Integrating:

$$\int_{-1}^1 [f''(x)]^2 dx = \frac{225}{16} \int_{-1}^1 (1 - 2x^2 + x^4) dx \quad (50)$$

$$= \frac{225}{16} \cdot 2 \int_0^1 (1 - 2x^2 + x^4) dx \quad (51)$$

$$= \frac{225}{8} \left[ x - \frac{2x^3}{3} + \frac{x^5}{5} \right]_0^1 \quad (52)$$

$$= \frac{225}{8} \left( 1 - \frac{2}{3} + \frac{1}{5} \right) \quad (53)$$

$$= \frac{225}{8} \left( \frac{15 - 10 + 3}{15} \right) \quad (54)$$

$$= \frac{225}{8} \cdot \frac{8}{15} = \frac{225}{15} = 15 \quad (55)$$

Equality holds only for this function, as the minimizer is unique up to the constraints.

**Final Answer:**

$$\boxed{15} \quad \text{for} \quad f(x) = \frac{1}{16}(-5x^4 + 30x^2 - 9) \quad (56)$$