

Limits

MATH 2511, BCIT

Calculus for Geomatics

January 8, 2018

Limits Introduction

Consider the function graph of the following function.

$$f(x) = \frac{x^2 - 1}{x - 1} \quad (1)$$

It looks like it is a linear equation! However, at $x = 1$, $f(x)$ is not defined. To fill the hole, we define the limit

$$\lim_{x \rightarrow a} f(x) = w \text{ if and only if } w = L = R \quad (2)$$

where L is the number that the function f approaches as x gets closer to a with $x < a$ (that means $x \neq a$!); and R is the number that the function f approaches as x gets closer to a with $x > a$.

Note: for a mathematically rigorous definition of what “approaching” and “getting closer” means we would need to talk about sequences and series, which is a topic we won’t cover here.

Indeterminate Form I

Notice that

$$f(x) = \frac{x^2 - 1}{x - 1} \stackrel{x=1}{=} \frac{0}{0} \quad (3)$$

We call this an **indeterminate form**.

Indeterminate Form

Notice that except at $x = 1$

$$f(x) = \frac{x^2 - 1}{x - 1} = \frac{\cancel{(x - 1)}(x + 1)}{\cancel{x - 1}} = x + 1 = g(x) \quad (4)$$

f and g agree everywhere except on $x = 1$. Consider the following rule,

One Disagreement Rule

If $f = g$ except in one point, then $\lim_{x \rightarrow a} f(x) = \lim_{x \rightarrow a} g(x)$ for all a , even the a where f and g disagree.

Therefore

$$\lim_{x \rightarrow 1} \frac{x^2 - 1}{x - 1} = \lim_{x \rightarrow 1} (x + 1) = 2 \quad (5)$$

Consider a simple function like $f(x) = x^3$. What is $\lim_{x \rightarrow 4} f(x)$?
The answer is almost trivial,

$$\lim_{x \rightarrow 4} f(x) = f(4) = 4^3 = 64 \quad (6)$$

Why is this true? Because f is continuous at $x = 4$. There are no holes, jumps, gaps, or breaks of the function graph at $x = 4$.

Constant functions, the identity function, linear functions, polynomial functions, exponential and logarithmic functions are all continuous. Rational functions and other functions are sometimes **not** continuous.

Interesting Cases

A function is continuous if and only if $\lim_{x \rightarrow c} f(x) = f(c)$. This means that (i) the function needs to be defined at $x = c$; (ii) the limit needs to be defined at $x = c$; and (iii) the function value and the limit need to be equal to each other.

Consider the following interesting cases:

- 1 A function that is continuous and well defined at $x = a$.
- 2 A function that is not continuous at $x = a$.
- 3 A function where the limit exists but $\lim_{x \rightarrow c} f(x) \neq f(c)$.
- 4 A function such as $f(x) = \sin(1/x)$.

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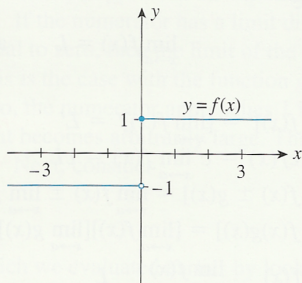
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No Limit Examples I

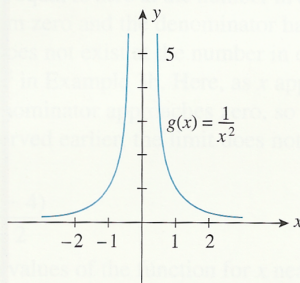
EXAMPLE Evaluate the limit of the following functions as x approaches the indicated point.

a. $f(x) = \begin{cases} -1 & \text{if } x < 0 \\ 1 & \text{if } x \geq 0 \end{cases}; x = 0$ b. $g(x) = \frac{1}{x^2}; x = 0$

Solution The graphs of the functions f and g are shown in Figure 29.

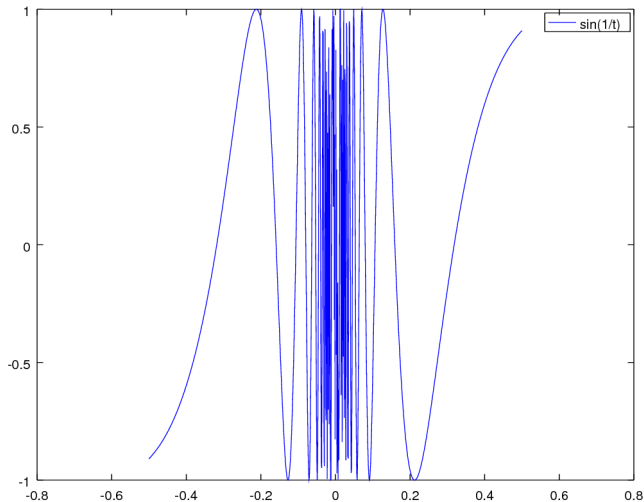


(a) $\lim_{x \rightarrow 0} f(x)$ does not exist.



(b) $\lim_{x \rightarrow 0} g(x)$ does not exist.

No Limit Example II



Suppose $\lim_{x \rightarrow a} f(x) = L$ and $\lim_{x \rightarrow a} g(x) = M$. Then (call this **Theorem 1**),

$$\lim_{x \rightarrow a} [f(x)]^r = L^r, r \text{ a real number} \quad (7)$$

$$\lim_{x \rightarrow a} [c \cdot f(x)] = c \cdot L, c \text{ a real number} \quad (8)$$

$$\lim_{x \rightarrow a} [f(x) \pm g(x)] = L \pm M \quad (9)$$

$$\lim_{x \rightarrow a} [f(x)g(x)] = LM \quad (10)$$

$$\lim_{x \rightarrow a} \frac{f(x)}{g(x)} = \frac{L}{M}, \text{ provided that } M \neq 0 \quad (11)$$

Properties of Limits Exercises

Use the properties of limits to evaluate the following,

$$\lim_{x \rightarrow 2} x^3 \quad (12)$$

$$\lim_{x \rightarrow 4} 5x^{3/2} \quad (13)$$

$$\lim_{x \rightarrow 1} (5x^4 - 2) \quad (14)$$

$$\lim_{x \rightarrow 3} 2x^3 \sqrt{x^2 + 7} \quad (15)$$

$$\lim_{x \rightarrow 2} \frac{2x^2 + 1}{x + 1} \quad (16)$$

Another Indeterminate Form Example I

Here is an example where by skillful manipulation we can determine the limit even though at first the limit is in indeterminate form. Let

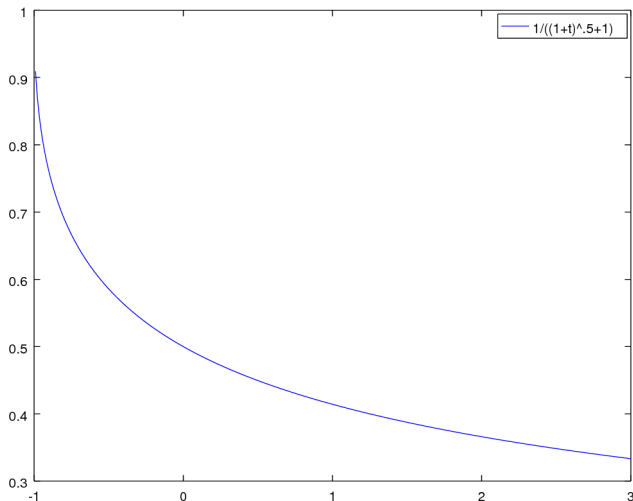
$$f(x) = \frac{\sqrt{1+x} - 1}{x} \quad (17)$$

What is $\lim_{x \rightarrow 0} f(x)$? If we leave the fraction unchanged, it will give us an indeterminate form. However, if we multiply both numerator and denominator by $(\sqrt{1+x} + 1)$, we avoid the indeterminate form!

$$\lim_{x \rightarrow 0} f(x) = \lim_{x \rightarrow 0} \frac{\sqrt{1+x} - 1}{x} = \lim_{x \rightarrow 0} \frac{1}{\sqrt{1+x} + 1} = \frac{1}{\sqrt{1+1}} = \frac{1}{2} \quad (18)$$

Look at the function graph of $f(x)$ to verify that this is the correct limit.

Another Indeterminate Form Example II



Sometimes, we want to know what happens to a function graph when either x or $-x$ get very large. We use the infinity sign ∞ for notation, but note that we do NOT use infinity to define these limits.

$$\lim_{x \rightarrow \infty} f(x) = w \text{ if and only if } w = S \quad (19)$$

where S is a number such that for any tiny number ε there is a real number x_0 and $|f(x) - S| < \varepsilon$ for all $x > x_0$.

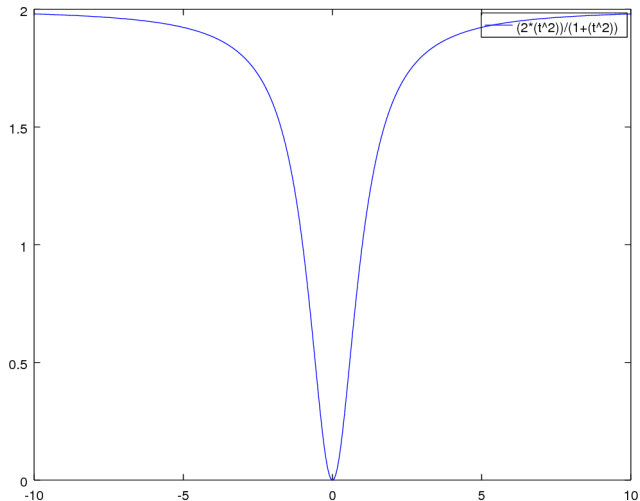
For example, what is

$$\lim_{x \rightarrow \infty} \frac{2x^2}{1 + x^2} \quad (20)$$

or

$$\lim_{x \rightarrow -\infty} \frac{2x^2}{1 + x^2} \quad (21)$$

Limits at Infinity III



Here is another important property of limits (call this **Theorem 2**).
If $1/x^n$ is defined and $n > 0$, then

$$\lim_{x \rightarrow \infty} \frac{1}{x^n} = 0 \text{ and } \lim_{x \rightarrow -\infty} \frac{1}{x^n} = 0 \quad (22)$$

Polynomial and Rational Functions

A polynomial function looks like this,

$$p(x) = a_n x^n + a_{n-1} x^{n-1} + \dots + a_2 x^2 + a_1 x + a_0 \quad (23)$$

For example, $p(x) = 7x^3 - 4.7x^2 + 6$. $n > 0$ is a natural number, and the a_i are called **coefficients**. They are real numbers. A rational function looks like this,

$$q(x) = \frac{p_1(x)}{p_2(x)} \quad (24)$$

where $p_1(x)$ and $p_2(x)$ are polynomial functions. For example,

$$q(x) = \frac{5x^2 - \pi x + 9000}{e^2 x + 2} \quad (25)$$

Limits at Infinity V

When we are looking for the limit of rational functions as they go to negative or positive infinity, we often get an indeterminate form.

$$\lim_{x \rightarrow \infty} \frac{x^2 - x + 3}{2x^3 + 1} = \frac{\infty}{\infty} \quad (26)$$

Here is a technique that will almost always work. Divide both the numerator and the denominator by x^m , where m is the highest exponent you can find.

$$\lim_{x \rightarrow \infty} \frac{x^2 - x + 3}{2x^3 + 1} = \lim_{x \rightarrow \infty} \frac{\frac{1}{x} - \frac{1}{x^2} + \frac{3}{x^3}}{2 + \frac{1}{x^3}} = \frac{0}{2} = 0 \quad (27)$$

Here are two more examples.

$$\lim_{x \rightarrow -\infty} \frac{3x^2 + 8x - 4}{2x^2 + 4x - 5} = \lim_{x \rightarrow -\infty} \frac{3 - \frac{8}{x} - \frac{4}{x^2}}{2 + \frac{4}{x} - \frac{5}{x^2}} = \frac{3}{2} = 1.5 \quad (28)$$

$$\lim_{x \rightarrow \infty} \frac{2x^3 - 3x^2 + 1}{x^2 + 2x + 4} = \lim_{x \rightarrow \infty} \frac{2 - \frac{3}{x} + \frac{1}{x^3}}{\frac{1}{x} + \frac{2}{x^2} + \frac{4}{x^3}} = \frac{2}{0} = \text{undefined} \quad (29)$$

In the second example, the limit does not exist. Sometimes, we write $\lim_{x \rightarrow a} = \infty$ or $\lim_{x \rightarrow a} = -\infty$, depending on which way the function goes.

Example I

Consider the function,

$$f(x) = \frac{x - 4}{\sqrt{x} - 2} \quad (30)$$

Let's find

$$\lim_{x \rightarrow 4} f(x) \quad (31)$$

Example II

First, fill out the table:

$x = 3$	$f(x) = 3.7321$	$x = 5$	$f(x) = 4.2361$
$x = 3.5$		$x = 4.5$	
$x = 3.75$		$x = 4.25$	
$x = 3.9$		$x = 4.1$	
$x = 3.95$		$x = 4.05$	
$x = 3.99$		$x = 4.01$	

Example III

Next, let's assume that $x \neq 4$ and expand both the numerator and denominator by $\sqrt{x} + 2$. Simplify

$$g(x) = \frac{(x - 4) \cdot (\sqrt{x} + 2)}{(\sqrt{x} - 2) \cdot (\sqrt{x} + 2)} \text{ on domain } \mathbb{R} \setminus \{4\} \quad (32)$$

Except on $x = 4$, g agrees with f . Determine $\lim_{x \rightarrow 4} g(x)$.

Evaluate the following two limits.

$$\lim_{x \rightarrow 3} = \frac{\sqrt{x^2 + 7} + \sqrt{3x - 5}}{x + 2} \quad (33)$$

$$\lim_{x \rightarrow -1} \frac{x^2 - x - 2}{2x^2 - x - 3} \quad (34)$$

Evaluate the following three limits.

$$\lim_{x \rightarrow 2} 3 \quad (35)$$

$$\lim_{x \rightarrow \infty} \frac{3x + 2}{x - 5} \quad (36)$$

$$\lim_{x \rightarrow \infty} \frac{x^5 - x^3 + x - 1}{x^6 + 2x^2 + 1} \quad (37)$$

Finding Limits Exercises

Find the following limits,

$$\lim_{x \rightarrow 9} \frac{\sqrt{x} - 3}{x - 9} \quad (38)$$

$$\lim_{x \rightarrow \infty} \frac{\sqrt{x^2 - 8x}}{2x + 1} \quad (39)$$

$$\lim_{x \rightarrow -1} \frac{x^2 - x - 2}{2x^2 - x - 3} \quad (40)$$

$$\lim_{x \rightarrow \infty} \frac{2 + \frac{1}{x+4}}{3 - \frac{1}{x^2}} \quad (41)$$

$$\lim_{x \rightarrow \infty} \frac{x - 2x^3}{(1 + x)^3} \quad (42)$$

$$\lim_{x \rightarrow \infty} \frac{\sqrt{4x^2 + 3}}{x + 5} \quad (43)$$

In Einstein's theory of relativity, the length L of an object moving at a velocity v is

$$L = L_0 \sqrt{1 - \frac{v^2}{c^2}} \quad (44)$$

where c is the speed of light and L_0 is the length of the object at rest. What is the one-sided limit of L as v gets faster and faster?

Sometimes you need some ingenuity to find a limit. Consider

$$\lim_{\vartheta \rightarrow 0} \frac{\sin \vartheta}{\vartheta} \quad (45)$$

We can use the Squeeze Theorem and a geometric argument to find that this limit is 1 (see James Stewart, Single Variable Calculus, Sixth Edition, page 191).

Here is a summary of methods to use to find limits.

- 1 If a function f is continuous, then $\lim_{x \rightarrow a} f(x) = f(a)$.
- 2 If a function is composed of continuous functions, use the properties of limits (Theorem 1) to find the limit.
- 3 If the last step gives you an indeterminate form, try to factor either the numerator or the denominator and use the One Disagreement Rule. Example:
$$\lim_{x \rightarrow -2} [(x^2 - x - 6)/(x + 2)] = -5.$$
- 4 If there is a square root in a fraction, another thing to try is to multiply both numerator and denominator by the conjugate. Example: $\lim_{x \rightarrow -2} [(x - 4)/(\sqrt{x} - 2)] = 4.$
- 5 For rational functions, use Theorem 2. Example:
$$\lim_{x \rightarrow \infty} (5x^3 - x^2 - x + 3)/(2x^3 + 1) = 5/2.$$

End of Lesson

Next Lesson: Derivatives