Do We Need the Quotient Rule?

The quotient rule can be difficult to memorize, and some students are more comfortable with negative exponents than they are with fractions. In this exercise we learn how we can use the chain and product rules together in place of the quotient rule.

a) Use the quotient rule to find the derivative of $\dfrac{x^3}{x+1}$.

b) Use the product and chain rules to find the derivative of $x^3 \cdot (x+1)^{-1}$. Note that $x^3 \cdot (x+1)^{-1} = \dfrac{x^3}{x+1}$.

c) Use the chain and product rules (and not the quotient rule) to show that the derivative of $u(x)(v(x))^{-1}$ equals $\dfrac{u'(x)v(x) - u(x)v'(x)}{(v(x))^2}$.

(a) Use quotient rule to find derivative of $\dfrac{x^3}{x+1}$

$$\frac{d}{dx}\left(\frac{x^3}{x+1}\right) = \frac{3x^2(x+1) - x^3(1)}{(x+1)^2}$$

$$= \frac{3x^3 + 3x^2 - x^3}{(x+1)^2}$$

$$= \frac{2x^3 + 3x^2}{(x+1)^2} = \frac{x^2(2x+3)}{(x+1)^2}$$

(c.) Use chain and product rule to show that

$$\frac{d}{dx}\left(u(x)(v(x))^{-1}\right) = \frac{u'(x)v(x) - u(x)v'(x)}{(v(x))^2}$$

$$= u'(x)(v(x))^{-1} + u(x) \cdot \frac{-1}{(v(x))^2} \cdot v'(x)$$

$$= u'(x)(v(x))^{-1} + \frac{-u(x)v'(x)}{(v(x))^2}$$

$$\boxed{= \frac{u'(x)v(x) - u(x)v'(x)}{(v(x))^2}}$$

(b.) Use product rule & chain rule to find $\frac{d}{dx}\left(x^3 \cdot (x+1)^{-1}\right)$.

$$\frac{d}{dx}(x+1)^{-1} = -(x+1)^{-2} \cdot 1$$

$$= -(x+1)^{-2}$$

$$\frac{d}{dx}\left(x^3 \cdot (x+1)^{-1}\right) = 3x^2(x+1)^{-1} + -x^3(x+1)^{-2}$$

$$= \frac{3x^2}{x+1} - \frac{x^3}{(x+1)^2}$$

$$= \frac{3x^2(x+1) - x^3}{(x+1)^2}$$

$$= \frac{3x^3 + 3x^2 - x^3}{(x+1)^2}$$

$$= \frac{2x^3 + 3x^2}{(x+1)^2} = \frac{x^2(2x+3)}{(x+1)^2}$$

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18.01SC Single Variable Calculus
Fall 2010