that this constant is *positive,* a fact that will be essential to the form of the solutions. "One-dimensional" means that the equation involves only one space variable, x. In the next section we shall complete setting up the model and then show how to solve it by a general method that is probably the most important one for PDEs in engineering mathematics.

12.3 Solution by Separating Variables. Use of Fourier Series

We continue our work from Sec. 12.2, where we modeled a vibrating string and obtained the one-dimensional wave equation. We now have to complete the model by adding additional conditions and then solving the resulting model.

The model of a vibrating elastic string (a violin string, for instance) consists of the **one-dimensional wave equation**

$$\textbf{(1)} \qquad \frac{\partial^2 u}{\partial t^2} = c^2 \frac{\partial^2 u}{\partial x^2} \qquad c^2 = \frac{T}{\rho}$$

for the unknown deflection $u(x, t)$ of the string, a PDE that we have just obtained, and some ***additional conditions***, which we shall now derive.

Since the string is fastened at the ends $x = 0$ and $x = L$ (see Sec. 12.2), we have the two **boundary conditions**

$$\textbf{(2)} \qquad \text{(a)} \quad u(0, t) = 0, \qquad \text{(b)} \quad u(L, t) = 0, \qquad \text{for all } t \geqq 0.$$

Furthermore, the form of the motion of the string will depend on its *initial deflection* (deflection at time $t = 0$), call it $f(x)$, and on its *initial velocity* (velocity at $t = 0$), call it $g(x)$. We thus have the two **initial conditions**

$$\textbf{(3)} \qquad \text{(a)} \quad u(x, 0) = f(x), \qquad \text{(b)} \quad u_t(x, 0) = g(x) \qquad (0 \leqq x \leqq L)$$

where $u_t = \partial u / \partial t$. We now have to find a solution of the PDE (1) satisfying the conditions (2) and (3). This will be the solution of our problem. We shall do this in three steps, as follows.

Step 1. By the "**method of separating variables**" or *product method,* setting $u(x, t) = F(x)G(t)$, we obtain from (1) two ODEs, one for $F(x)$ and the other one for $G(t)$.

Step 2. We determine solutions of these ODEs that satisfy the boundary conditions (2).

Step 3. Finally, using **Fourier series**, we compose the solutions found in Step 2 to obtain a solution of (1) satisfying both (2) and (3), that is, the solution of our model of the vibrating string.

Step 1. Two ODEs from the Wave Equation (1)

In the **method of separating variables**, or *product method*, we determine solutions of the wave equation (1) of the form

$$\textbf{(4)} \qquad u(x, t) = F(x)G(t)$$

which are a product of two functions, each depending on only one of the variables x and t. This is a powerful general method that has various applications in engineering mathematics, as we shall see in this chapter. Differentiating (4), we obtain

$$\frac{\partial^2 u}{\partial t^2} = F\ddot{G} \qquad \text{and} \qquad \frac{\partial^2 u}{\partial x^2} = F''G$$

where dots denote derivatives with respect to t and primes derivatives with respect to x. By inserting this into the wave equation (1) we have

$$F\ddot{G} = c^2 F'' G.$$

Dividing by $c^2 FG$ and simplifying gives

$$\frac{\ddot{G}}{c^2 G} = \frac{F''}{F}.$$

The variables are now separated, the left side depending only on t and the right side only on x. Hence both sides must be constant because, if they were variable, then changing t or x would affect only one side, leaving the other unaltered. Thus, say,

$$\frac{\ddot{G}}{c^2 G} = \frac{F''}{F} = k.$$

Multiplying by the denominators gives immediately two ***ordinary*** DEs

$$F'' - kF = 0 \tag{5}$$

and

$$\ddot{G} - c^2 kG = 0. \tag{6}$$

Here, the **separation constant** k is still arbitrary.

Step 2. Satisfying the Boundary Conditions (2)

We now determine solutions F and G of (5) and (6) so that $u = FG$ satisfies the boundary conditions (2), that is,

$$u(0, t) = F(0)G(t) = 0, \qquad u(L, t) = F(L)G(t) = 0 \qquad \text{for all } t. \tag{7}$$

We first solve (5). If $G \equiv 0$, then $u = FG \equiv 0$, which is of no interest. Hence $G \not\equiv 0$ and then by (7),

$$\text{(a)} \quad F(0) = 0, \qquad \text{(b)} \quad F(L) = 0. \tag{8}$$

We show that k must be negative. For $k = 0$ the general solution of (5) is $F = ax + b$, and from (8) we obtain $a = b = 0$, so that $F \equiv 0$ and $u = FG \equiv 0$, which is of no interest. For positive $k = \mu^2$ a general solution of (5) is

$$F = Ae^{\mu x} + Be^{-\mu x}$$

and from (8) we obtain $F \equiv 0$ as before (verify!). Hence we are left with the possibility of choosing k negative, say, $k = -p^2$. Then (5) becomes $F'' + p^2F = 0$ and has as a general solution

$$F(x) = A \cos px + B \sin px.$$

From this and (8) we have

$$F(0) = A = 0 \qquad \text{and then} \qquad F(L) = B \sin pL = 0.$$

We must take $B \neq 0$ since otherwise $F \equiv 0$. Hence $\sin pL = 0$. Thus

$$pL = n\pi, \qquad \text{so that} \qquad p = \frac{n\pi}{L} \qquad (n \text{ integer}). \tag{9}$$

Setting $B = 1$, we thus obtain infinitely many solutions $F(x) = F_n(x)$, where

$$F_n(x) = \sin \frac{n\pi}{L} x \qquad (n = 1, 2, \cdots). \tag{10}$$

These solutions satisfy (8). [For negative integer n we obtain essentially the same solutions, except for a minus sign, because $\sin(-\alpha) = -\sin \alpha$.]

We now solve (6) with $k = -p^2 = -(n\pi/L)^2$ resulting from (9), that is,

$$\ddot{G} + \lambda_n^2 G = 0 \qquad \text{where} \qquad \lambda_n = cp = \frac{cn\pi}{L}. \tag{11*}$$

A general solution is

$$G_n(t) = B_n \cos \lambda_n t + B_n^* \sin \lambda_n t.$$

Hence solutions of (1) satisfying (2) are $u_n(x, t) = F_n(x)G_n(t) = G_n(t)F_n(x)$, written out

$$\boxed{u_n(x, t) = (B_n \cos \lambda_n t + B_n^* \sin \lambda_n t) \sin \frac{n\pi}{L} x} \qquad (n = 1, 2, \cdots). \tag{11}$$

These functions are called the **eigenfunctions**, or *characteristic functions*, and the values $\lambda_n = cn\pi/L$ are called the **eigenvalues**, or *characteristic values*, of the vibrating string. The set $\{\lambda_1, \lambda_2, \cdots\}$ is called the **spectrum**.

Discussion of Eigenfunctions. We see that each u_n represents a harmonic motion having the **frequency** $\lambda_n/2\pi = cn/2L$ cycles per unit time. This motion is called the nth **normal mode** of the string. The first normal mode is known as the *fundamental mode* ($n = 1$), and the others are known as *overtones;* musically they give the octave, octave plus fifth, etc. Since in (11)

$$\sin \frac{n\pi x}{L} = 0 \qquad \text{at} \qquad x = \frac{L}{n}, \frac{2L}{n}, \cdots, \frac{n-1}{n}L,$$

the nth normal mode has $n - 1$ **nodes**, that is, points of the string that do not move (in addition to the fixed endpoints); see Fig. 287.

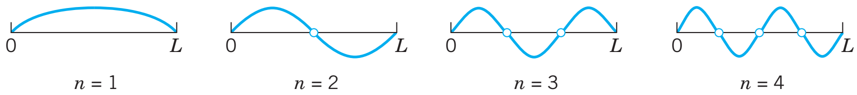


Fig. 287. Normal modes of the vibrating string

Figure 288 shows the second normal mode for various values of t. At any instant the string has the form of a sine wave. When the left part of the string is moving down, the other half is moving up, and conversely. For the other modes the situation is similar.

Tuning is done by changing the tension T. Our formula for the frequency $\lambda_n/2\pi = cn/2L$ of u_n with $c = \sqrt{T/\rho}$ [see (3), Sec. 12.2] confirms that effect because it shows that the frequency is proportional to the tension. T cannot be increased indefinitely, but can you see what to do to get a string with a high fundamental mode? (Think of both L and ρ.) Why is a violin smaller than a double-bass?

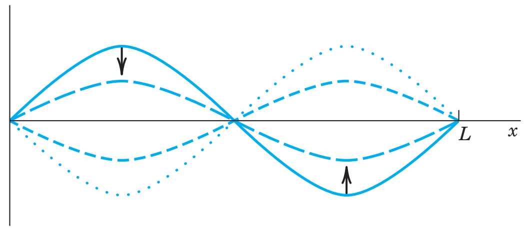


Fig. 288. Second normal mode for various values of t

Step 3. Solution of the Entire Problem. Fourier Series

The eigenfunctions (11) satisfy the wave equation (1) and the boundary conditions (2) (string fixed at the ends). A single u_n will generally not satisfy the initial conditions (3). But since the wave equation (1) is linear and homogeneous, it follows from Fundamental Theorem 1 in Sec. 12.1 that the sum of finitely many solutions u_n is a solution of (1). To obtain a solution that also satisfies the initial conditions (3), we consider the infinite series (with $\lambda_n = cn\pi/L$ as before)

$$u(x,t) = \sum_{n=1}^{\infty} u_n(x,t) = \sum_{n=1}^{\infty} (B_n \cos \lambda_n t + B_n^* \sin \lambda_n t) \sin \frac{n\pi}{L} x. \tag{12}$$

Satisfying Initial Condition (3a) (Given Initial Displacement). From (12) and (3a) we obtain

$$u(x,0) = \sum_{n=1}^{\infty} B_n \sin \frac{n\pi}{L} x = f(x). \qquad (0 \leqq x \leqq L). \tag{13}$$

Hence we must choose the B_n's so that $u(x, 0)$ becomes the **Fourier sine series** of $f(x)$. Thus, by (4) in Sec. 11.3,

$$B_n = \frac{2}{L} \int_0^L f(x) \sin \frac{n\pi x}{L} \, dx, \qquad n = 1, 2, \cdots. \tag{14}$$

Satisfying Initial Condition (3b) (Given Initial Velocity). Similarly, by differentiating (12) with respect to t and using (3b), we obtain

$$\left.\frac{\partial u}{\partial t}\right|_{t=0} = \left[\sum_{n=1}^{\infty} (-B_n\lambda_n \sin \lambda_n t + B_n^*\lambda_n \cos \lambda_n t) \sin \frac{n\pi x}{L}\right]_{t=0}$$

$$= \sum_{n=1}^{\infty} B_n^*\lambda_n \sin \frac{n\pi x}{L} = g(x).$$

Hence we must choose the B_n^*'s so that for $t = 0$ the derivative $\partial u/\partial t$ becomes the Fourier sine series of $g(x)$. Thus, again by (4) in Sec. 11.3,

$$B_n^*\lambda_n = \frac{2}{L}\int_0^L g(x) \sin \frac{n\pi x}{L}\, dx.$$

Since $\lambda_n = cn\pi/L$, we obtain by division

$$\textbf{(15)} \qquad \boxed{B_n^* = \frac{2}{cn\pi}\int_0^L g(x) \sin \frac{n\pi x}{L}\, dx,} \qquad n = 1, 2, \cdots.$$

Result. Our discussion shows that $u(x, t)$ given by (12) with coefficients (14) and (15) is a solution of (1) that satisfies all the conditions in (2) and (3), provided the series (12) converges and so do the series obtained by differentiating (12) twice termwise with respect to x and t and have the sums $\partial^2 u/\partial x^2$ and $\partial^2 u/\partial t^2$, respectively, which are continuous.

Solution (12) Established. According to our derivation, the solution (12) is at first a purely formal expression, but we shall now establish it. For the sake of simplicity we consider only the case when the initial velocity $g(x)$ is identically zero. Then the B_n^* are zero, and (12) reduces to

$$(16) \qquad u(x, t) = \sum_{n=1}^{\infty} B_n \cos \lambda_n t \sin \frac{n\pi x}{L}, \qquad \lambda_n = \frac{cn\pi}{L}.$$

It is possible to ***sum this series***, that is, to write the result in a closed or finite form. For this purpose we use the formula [see (11), App. A3.1]

$$\cos \frac{cn\pi}{L}t \sin \frac{n\pi}{L}x = \frac{1}{2}\left[\sin\left\{\frac{n\pi}{L}(x - ct)\right\} + \sin\left\{\frac{n\pi}{L}(x + ct)\right\}\right].$$

Consequently, we may write (16) in the form

$$u(x, t) = \frac{1}{2}\sum_{n=1}^{\infty} B_n \sin\left\{\frac{n\pi}{L}(x - ct)\right\} + \frac{1}{2}\sum_{n=1}^{\infty} B_n \sin\left\{\frac{n\pi}{L}(x + ct)\right\}.$$

These two series are those obtained by substituting $x - ct$ and $x + ct$, respectively, for the variable x in the Fourier sine series (13) for $f(x)$. Thus

$$\textbf{(17)} \qquad \boxed{u(x, t) = \tfrac{1}{2}[f^*(x - ct) + f^*(x + ct)]}$$

where f^* is the odd periodic extension of f with the period $2L$ (Fig. 289). Since the initial deflection $f(x)$ is continuous on the interval $0 \leqq x \leqq L$ and zero at the endpoints, it follows from (17) that $u(x, t)$ is a continuous function of both variables x and t for all values of the variables. By differentiating (17) we see that $u(x, t)$ is a solution of (1), provided $f(x)$ is twice differentiable on the interval $0 < x < L$, and has one-sided second derivatives at $x = 0$ and $x = L$, which are zero. Under these conditions $u(x, t)$ is established as a solution of (1), satisfying (2) and (3) with $g(x) \equiv 0$. ■

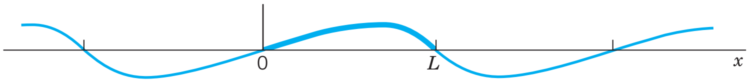


Fig. 289. Odd periodic extension of $f(x)$

Generalized Solution. If $f'(x)$ and $f''(x)$ are merely piecewise continuous (see Sec. 6.1), or if those one-sided derivatives are not zero, then for each t there will be finitely many values of x at which the second derivatives of u appearing in (1) do not exist. Except at these points the wave equation will still be satisfied. We may then regard $u(x, t)$ as a "**generalized solution**," as it is called, that is, as a solution in a broader sense. For instance, a triangular initial deflection as in Example 1 (below) leads to a generalized solution.

Physical Interpretation of the Solution (17). The graph of $f^*(x - ct)$ is obtained from the graph of $f^*(x)$ by shifting the latter ct units to the right (Fig. 290). This means that $f^*(x - ct)(c > 0)$ represents a wave that is traveling to the right as t increases. Similarly, $f^*(x + ct)$ represents a wave that is traveling to the left, and $u(x, t)$ is the superposition of these two waves.

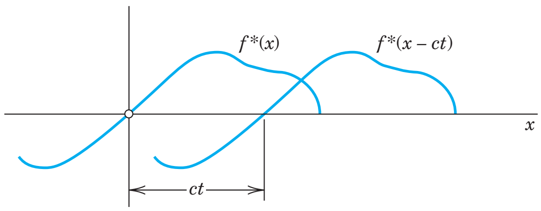


Fig. 290. Interpretation of (17)

EXAMPLE 1 **Vibrating String if the Initial Deflection Is Triangular**

Find the solution of the wave equation (1) satisfying (2) and corresponding to the triangular initial deflection

$$f(x) = \begin{cases} \dfrac{2k}{L} x & \text{if} \quad 0 < x < \dfrac{L}{2} \\[2ex] \dfrac{2k}{L}(L - x) & \text{if} \quad \dfrac{L}{2} < x < L \end{cases}$$

and initial velocity zero. (Figure 291 shows $f(x) = u(x, 0)$ at the top.)

Solution. Since $g(x) \equiv 0$, we have $B_n^* = 0$ in (12), and from Example 4 in Sec. 11.3 we see that the B_n are given by (5), Sec. 11.3. Thus (12) takes the form

$$u(x, t) = \frac{8k}{\pi^2} \left[\frac{1}{1^2} \sin \frac{\pi}{L} x \cos \frac{\pi c}{L} t - \frac{1}{3^2} \sin \frac{3\pi}{L} x \cos \frac{3\pi c}{L} t + - \cdots \right].$$

For graphing the solution we may use $u(x, 0) = f(x)$ and the above interpretation of the two functions in the representation (17). This leads to the graph shown in Fig. 291. ■

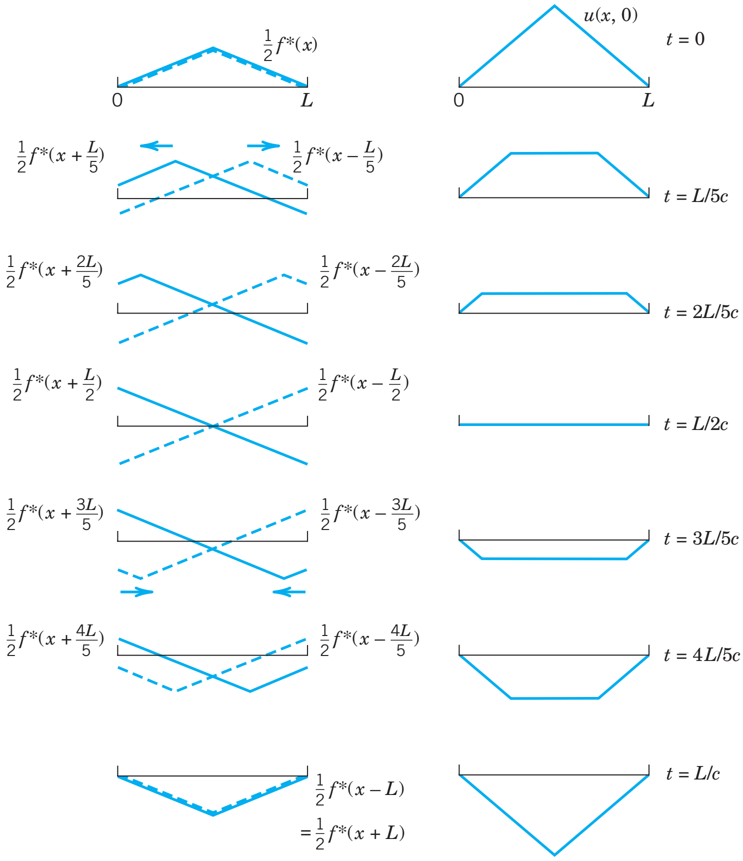


Fig. 291. Solution $u(x, t)$ in Example 1 for various values of t (right part of the figure) obtained as the superposition of a wave traveling to the right (dashed) and a wave traveling to the left (left part of the figure)

PROBLEM SET 12.3

1. **Frequency.** How does the frequency of the fundamental mode of the vibrating string depend on the length of the string? On the mass per unit length? What happens if we double the tension? Why is a contrabass larger than a violin?

2. **Physical Assumptions.** How would the motion of the string change if Assumption 3 were violated? Assumption 2? The second part of Assumption 1? The first part? Do we really need all these assumptions?

3. **String of length π.** Write down the derivation in this section for length $L = \pi$, to see the very substantial simplification of formulas in this case that may show ideas more clearly.

4. **CAS PROJECT. Graphing Normal Modes.** Write a program for graphing u_n with $L = \pi$ and c^2 of your choice similarly as in Fig. 287. Apply the program to u_2, u_3, u_4. Also graph these solutions as surfaces over the xt-plane. Explain the connection between these two kinds of graphs.

5–13 DEFLECTION OF THE STRING

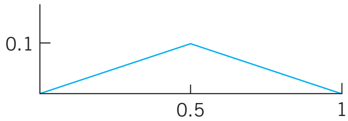
Find $u(x, t)$ for the string of length $L = 1$ and $c^2 = 1$ when the initial velocity is zero and the initial deflection with small k (say, 0.01) is as follows. Sketch or graph $u(x, t)$ as in Fig. 291 in the text.

5. $k \sin 3\pi x$

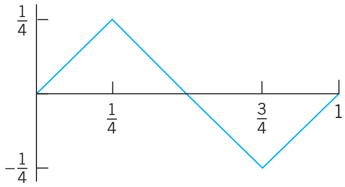
6. $k(\sin \pi x - \frac{1}{2}\sin 2\pi x)$

7. $kx(1 - x)$ **8.** $kx^2(1 - x)$

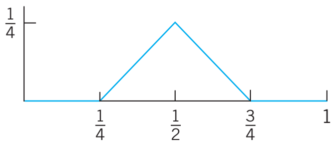
9.



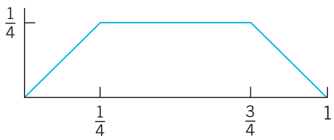
10.



11.



12.



13. $2x - 4x^2$ if $0 < x < \frac{1}{2}$, 0 if $\frac{1}{2} < x < 1$

14. Nonzero initial velocity. Find the deflection $u(x, t)$ of the string of length $L = \pi$ and $c^2 = 1$ for zero initial displacement and "triangular" initial velocity $u_t(x, 0) = 0.01x$ if $0 \leqq x \leqq \frac{1}{2}\pi$, $u_t(x, 0) = 0.01(\pi - x)$ if $\frac{1}{2}\pi \leqq x \leqq \pi$. (Initial conditions with $u_t(x, 0) \neq 0$ are hard to realize experimentally.)

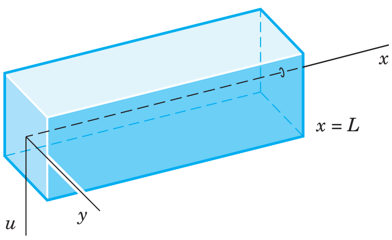


Fig. 292. Elastic beam

15–20 SEPARATION OF A FOURTH-ORDER PDE. VIBRATING BEAM

By the principles used in modeling the string it can be shown that small free vertical vibrations of a uniform elastic beam (Fig. 292) are modeled by the fourth-order PDE

$$\frac{\partial^2 u}{\partial t^2} = -c^2 \frac{\partial^4 u}{\partial x^4} \qquad (21) \qquad \text{(Ref. [C11])}$$

where $c^2 = EI/\rho A$ (E = Young's modulus of elasticity, I = moment of intertia of the cross section with respect to the y-axis in the figure, ρ = density, A = cross-sectional area). (*Bending* of a beam under a load is discussed in Sec. 3.3.)

15. Substituting $u = F(x)G(t)$ into (21), show that

$$F^{(4)}/F = -\ddot{G}/c^2 G = \beta^4 = \text{const},$$
$$F(x) = A\cos\beta x + B\sin\beta x + C\cosh\beta x + D\sinh\beta x,$$
$$G(t) = a\cos c\beta^2 t + b\sin c\beta^2 t.$$

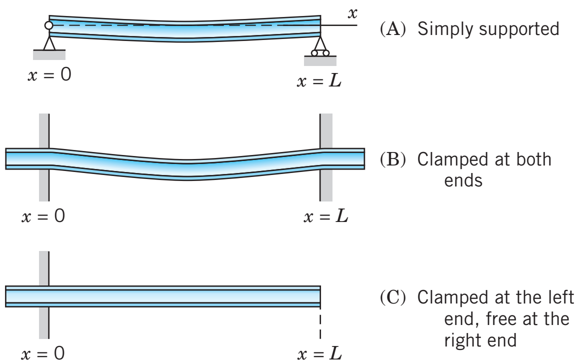


Fig. 293. Supports of a beam

16. Simply supported beam in Fig. 293A. Find solutions $u_n = F_n(x)G_n(t)$ of (21) corresponding to zero initial velocity and satisfying the boundary conditions (see Fig. 293A)

$$u(0, t) = 0, \; u(L, t) = 0$$
(ends simply supported for all times t),
$$u_{xx}(0, t) = 0, \; u_{xx}(L, t) = 0$$
(zero moments, hence zero curvature, at the ends).

17. Find the solution of (21) that satisfies the conditions in Prob. 16 as well as the initial condition

$$u(x, 0) = f(x) = x(L - x).$$

18. Compare the results of Probs. 17 and 7. What is the basic difference between the frequencies of the normal modes of the vibrating string and the vibrating beam?

19. Clamped beam in Fig. 293B. What are the boundary conditions for the clamped beam in Fig. 293B? Show that F in Prob. 15 satisfies these conditions if βL is a solution of the equation

$$\cosh\beta L \cos\beta L = 1. \qquad (22)$$

Determine approximate solutions of (22), for instance, graphically from the intersections of the curves of $\cos\beta L$ and $1/\cosh\beta L$.

20. Clamped-free beam in Fig. 293C. If the beam is clamped at the left and free at the right (Fig. 293C), the boundary conditions are

$$u(0, t) = 0, \qquad u_x(0, t) = 0,$$
$$u_{xx}(L, t) = 0, \qquad u_{xxx}(L, t) = 0.$$

Show that F in Prob. 15 satisfies these conditions if βL is a solution of the equation

$$\cosh \beta L \cos \beta L = -1. \tag{23}$$

Find approximate solutions of (23).

12.4 D'Alembert's Solution of the Wave Equation. Characteristics

It is interesting that the solution (17), Sec. 12.3, of the wave equation

$$\frac{\partial^2 u}{\partial t^2} = c^2 \frac{\partial^2 u}{\partial x^2}, \qquad c^2 = \frac{T}{\rho}, \tag{1}$$

can be immediately obtained by transforming (1) in a suitable way, namely, by introducing the new independent variables

$$v = x + ct, \qquad w = x - ct. \tag{2}$$

Then u becomes a function of v and w. The derivatives in (1) can now be expressed in terms of derivatives with respect to v and w by the use of the chain rule in Sec. 9.6. Denoting partial derivatives by subscripts, we see from (2) that $v_x = 1$ and $w_x = 1$. For simplicity let us denote $u(x, t)$, as a function of v and w, by the same letter u. Then

$$u_x = u_v v_x + u_w w_x = u_v + u_w.$$

We now apply the chain rule to the right side of this equation. We assume that all the partial derivatives involved are continuous, so that $u_{wv} = u_{vw}$. Since $v_x = 1$ and $w_x = 1$, we obtain

$$u_{xx} = (u_v + u_w)_x = (u_v + u_w)_v v_x + (u_v + u_w)_w w_x = u_{vv} + 2u_{vw} + u_{ww}.$$

Transforming the other derivative in (1) by the same procedure, we find

$$u_{tt} = c^2(u_{vv} - 2u_{vw} + u_{ww}).$$

By inserting these two results in (1) we get (see footnote 2 in App. A3.2)

$$\boxed{u_{vw} \equiv \frac{\partial^2 u}{\partial w \, \partial v} = 0.} \tag{3}$$

The point of the present method is that (3) can be readily solved by two successive integrations, first with respect to w and then with respect to v. This gives

$$\frac{\partial u}{\partial v} = h(v) \qquad \text{and} \qquad u = \int h(v)\, dv + \psi(w).$$