

Mathematics 3A

HSLU, Semester 3

Matteo Frongillo

Last update: November 8, 2025

Contents

I Just stuff I have to explain, wait few days	2
1 Functions in two variables x and y	3
1.1 Spheres	3
2 Linear functions of two variables	3
3 Contour lines	4
4 Cylinders	4
4.1 Property	4
II Partial derivatives	5
5 Local linearization	5
5.1 Tangent plane of a function at point P	5
6 Gradient	5
6.1 Geometrical properties of the gradient vector ∇ in the plane	6
6.2 Gradient of a function of three variables	6
6.3 Second-order partial derivatives of $z = f(x, y)$	6
6.4 Equality of mixed partial derivatives (Schwarz's Theorem)	6
7 Directional derivatives in the plane	7
7.1 Directional derivative of f at $P(a,b)$ in the direction of u	7
7.2 Gradient and directional derivative	7
8 Critical points	7
8.1 Discriminant	7
9 Constraints and Lagrange Multipliers	7
9.1 Graphical representation	7
9.2 Lagrange multiplier λ	7
9.3 Lagrange function \mathcal{L}	7

Part I

Just stuff I have to explain, wait few days

Let π denote the plane:

$$s_x \in \pi, s_y \in \pi, s_z \in \pi$$

$$\pi : ax + by + cz + d = 0$$

For $S_x \in \pi \implies 1a + 0b + 0c + d = 0$, hence
 $a + d = 0$

For $S_y \in \pi \implies 0a + 2b + 0c + d = 0$, hence
 $2b + d = 0$

for $S_z \in \pi \implies 0a + 0b + 3c + d = 0$, hence
 $3c + d = 0$

$$\begin{cases} a + d = 0 \\ 2b + d = 0 \\ 3c + d = 0 \end{cases} \implies \begin{cases} a = -d \\ 2b = -d \\ 3c = -d \end{cases}$$

Case 1:

$$d = 0 \implies a = 0, b = 0, c = 0 \implies \pi : 0 = 0 \implies \text{NOT a plane!}$$

Case 2:

$$d \neq 0 \implies \pi : \frac{ax + by + cz + d}{d} = 0 \implies \frac{a}{d}x + \frac{b}{d}y + \frac{c}{d}z + 1 = 0$$

Hence:

$$\begin{cases} a = -d \\ 2b = -d \\ 3c = -d \end{cases} \implies \begin{cases} \frac{a}{d} = -1 \\ \frac{b}{d} = -\frac{1}{2} \\ \frac{c}{d} = -\frac{1}{3} \end{cases}$$

Which leads to:

$$\pi : -x - \frac{1}{2}y - \frac{1}{3}z + 1 = 0$$

Remark: the equation of a plane is defined up to a multiplication by a real number different from 0

e.g.: the same planed is shared between those 3 equations
ex 1)

$$z = 0 \iff 5z = 0 \iff -10z = 0$$

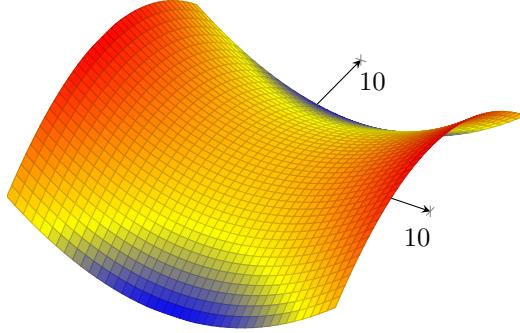
ex 2)

$$-x - \frac{1}{2}y - \frac{1}{3}z + 1 = 0 \iff 6x + 3y + 2z + 6 = 0$$

1 Functions in two variables x and y

Let us take $\pi : x^2 - y^2 = 0$ as example.

The plot would look like this:



1.1 Spheres

2 Linear functions of two variables

We say that z is a *linear function* of x and y , if there are constant a, b and d such that:

$$z = ax + by + d$$

holds. Alternatively: if there are constant A, B, C, D , with $C \neq 0$, such that:

$$Ax + By + Cz + D = 0$$

holds. Since $C \neq 0$, we can rearrange this equation into:

$$z = -\frac{Ax}{C} - \frac{By}{C} - \frac{D}{C}$$

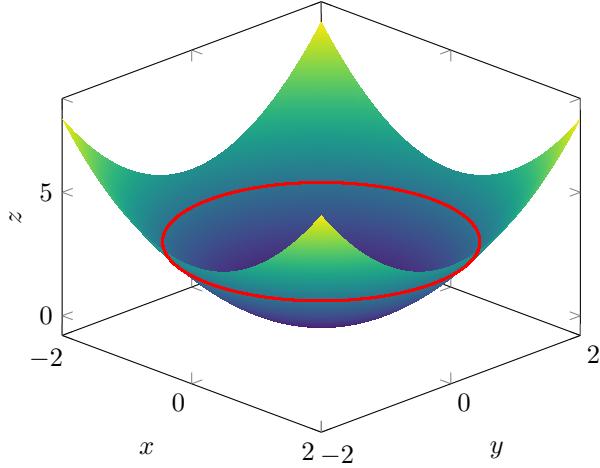
3 Contour lines

$$\begin{cases} z = f(x, y) \\ z = k \quad k \in \mathbb{R} \end{cases}$$

$z = k$ represents all the possible horizontal planes

Ex:

$$\begin{cases} z = x^2 - y^2 \\ z = k \end{cases} \implies \begin{cases} k = x^2 - y^2 \\ z = k \end{cases}$$



All the planes with equation $z = k$ are parallel to the coordinate planes $z = 0$.

When $z = k = 0$, the circle is reduced to a point, the origin.

When $k < 0$, the equation $x^2 + y^2 = k$ has no solution in \mathbb{R} .

When $k > 0$, the equation $x^2 + y^2 = k$ represents a circle with radius \sqrt{k} centered at the origin.

4 Cylinders

A cylinder is a surface generated by all the lines parallel to a given line d and passing through a given curve \mathcal{C} .

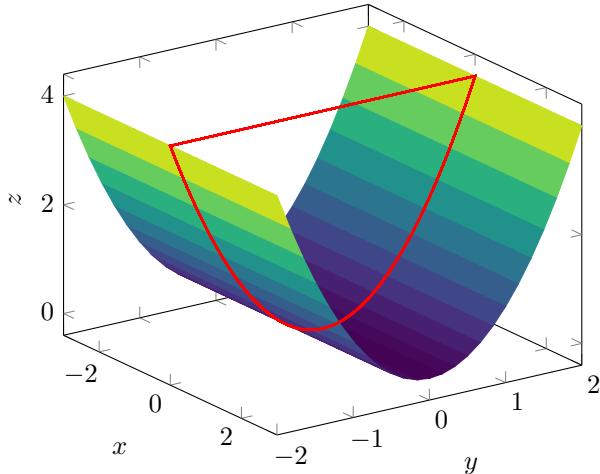
4.1 Property

Whenever you have a polynomial equation of degree at least 2 with a missing variable, then you have a cylinder (up to few exceptions).

Ex:

$$z = y^2 \implies y^2 - z = 0$$

This is a cylinder with generatrix parallel to the x axis and directrix the parabola $y^2 - z = 0$ in the yz plane.



Part II

Partial derivatives

For a multivariable function $f(x, y, \dots)$, the partial derivative to one variable measures the instantaneous rate of change of f when that variable changes and the others are held constant:

$$\boxed{\frac{\partial z}{\partial x} = f_x(x, y)}$$

If z is a function of x and y , we define:

The rate of change of z with respect to x , with y fixed, at the point $(x, y) = (a, b)$ as

$$\boxed{\frac{\partial z}{\partial x}|_{(x,y)=(a,b)} = \lim_{h \rightarrow 0} \frac{Z|_{(x,y)=(a+h,b)} - Z|_{(x,y)=(a,b)}}{h}}$$

The rate of change of z with respect to y , with x fixed, at the point $(x, y) = (a, b)$ as

$$\boxed{\frac{\partial z}{\partial y}|_{(x,y)=(a,b)} = \lim_{h \rightarrow 0} \frac{Z|_{(x,y)=(a,b+h)} - Z|_{(x,y)=(a,b)}}{h}}$$

For the lectures, we will be using the formula with 2-steps difference ($\Delta z_a = (a + h, b) - (a - h, b)$):

$$\boxed{\begin{aligned} \frac{\partial z}{\partial x}|_{(x,y)=(a,b)} &= \frac{Z|_{(x,y)=(a+h,b)} - Z|_{(x,y)=(a-h,b)}}{2h} \\ \frac{\partial z}{\partial y}|_{(x,y)=(a,b)} &= \frac{Z|_{(x,y)=(a,b+h)} - Z|_{(x,y)=(a,b-h)}}{2h} \end{aligned}}$$

5 Local linearization

5.1 Tangent plane of a function at point P

Let $f(x, y)$ be our function and $P(a, b)$ a point, $P \in f$:

$$\boxed{f(x, y) \approx f(a, b) + \frac{\partial}{\partial x} f(a, b)(x - a) + \frac{\partial}{\partial y} f(a, b)(y - b)}$$

6 Gradient

The gradient of a function $z = f(x, y)$ is defined by:

$$\boxed{\begin{aligned} \text{grad } f = \nabla f &= f_x \vec{e}_x + f_y \vec{e}_y = \begin{pmatrix} f_x \\ f_y \end{pmatrix} \\ \text{where } f_x &= \frac{\partial f}{\partial x} \text{ and } f_y = \frac{\partial f}{\partial y} \end{aligned}}$$

6.1 Geometrical properties of the gradient vector ∇ in the plane

If f is differentiable at the point (a, b) and $\nabla f \neq \vec{0}$, then the following holds:

$\nabla f(\mathbf{a}, \mathbf{b})$:

- is perpendicular to the contour line of f through (a, b)
- points in the direction of the maximum rate of change f

The length $\|\nabla f(\mathbf{a}, \mathbf{b})\|$ of the gradient vector is:

- the maximum rate of change f at this point
- large when the contour lines are close together
- small when the contour lines are far apart

6.2 Gradient of a function of three variables

The gradient of a function $w = f(x, y, z)$ is defined by:

$$\text{grad } f = \nabla f = f_x \vec{e}_x + f_y \vec{e}_y + f_z \vec{e}_z = \begin{pmatrix} f_x \\ f_y \\ f_z \end{pmatrix}$$

where $f_x = \frac{\partial f}{\partial x}$, $f_y = \frac{\partial f}{\partial y}$, and $f_z = \frac{\partial f}{\partial z}$

6.3 Second-order partial derivatives of $z = f(x, y)$

A function $z = f(x, y)$ has two first-order partial derivatives, f_x and f_y , and four second-order partial derivatives:

1. $\frac{\partial^2 z}{\partial x^2} = f_{xx}(x, y) = (f_x)_x(x, y),$
2. $\frac{\partial^2 z}{\partial x \partial y} = f_{yx}(x, y) = (f_y)_x(x, y),$
3. $\frac{\partial^2 z}{\partial y \partial x} = f_{xy}(x, y) = (f_x)_y(x, y),$
4. $\frac{\partial^2 z}{\partial y^2} = f_{yy}(x, y) = (f_y)_y(x, y)$

Usually, parenthesis are omitted, writing directly f_{xy} instead of $(f_x)_y$, and $\frac{\partial^2 z}{\partial y \partial x}$ instead of $\frac{\partial}{\partial y} \left(\frac{\partial z}{\partial x} \right)$.

6.4 Equality of mixed partial derivatives (Schwarz's Theorem)

If f_{xy} and f_{yx} are continuous at a point (a, b) inside the domain, then:

$$f_{xy}(a, b) = f_{yx}(a, b)$$

7 Directional derivatives in the plane

7.1 Directional derivative of f at $P(a, b)$ in the direction of \vec{u}

If $\vec{e}_u = \vec{u} = u_1 \vec{e}_x + u_2 \vec{e}_y$ is a unit vector $\|u\| = 1$, we define the directional derivative $\frac{\partial f}{\partial \vec{u}} = f_{\vec{u}}$ by

$$\boxed{\frac{\partial f}{\partial \vec{u}}(a, b) = f_{\vec{u}}(a, b) = \lim_{h \rightarrow 0} \frac{f(a + hu_1, b + hu_2) - f(a, b)}{h}}$$

7.2 Gradient and directional derivative

If f is differentiable and $\vec{e}_u = u_1 \vec{e}_x + u_2 \vec{e}_y$ is the unit vector in the direction of \vec{u} , then:

$$\boxed{\frac{\partial f}{\partial \vec{u}}(a, b) = f_{\vec{u}}(a, b) = f_x(a, b)u_1 + f_y(a, b)u_2 = \nabla f(a, b) \cdot \vec{e}_u}$$

8 Critical points

8.1 Discriminant

Let (x_0, y_0) be a critical point. Furthermore, let

$$\boxed{D(x_0, y_0) = f_{xx}(x_0, y_0)f_{yy}(x_0, y_0) - (f_{xy}(x_0, y_0))^2}$$

Then the following holds:

- If $D > 0$ and $f_{xx} > 0$, then f has a local minimum at (x_0, y_0)
- If $D > 0$ and $f_{xx} < 0$, then f has a local maximum at (x_0, y_0)
- If $D < 0$, then f has a saddle point at (x_0, y_0)
- If $D = 0$, no conclusion can be made

9 Constraints and Lagrange Multipliers

9.1 Graphical representation

9.2 Lagrange multiplier λ

9.3 Lagrange function \mathcal{L}

When optimizing $f(x, y)$ under the constraint $g(x, y) = c$, the Lagrange function is used:

$$\boxed{\mathcal{L}(x, y, \lambda) = f(x, y) - \lambda(g(x, y) - c)}$$

The partial derivatives must be calculated:

$$\boxed{\begin{aligned}\frac{\partial \mathcal{L}}{\partial x} &= \frac{\partial f}{\partial x} - \lambda \frac{\partial g}{\partial x} \\ \frac{\partial \mathcal{L}}{\partial y} &= \frac{\partial f}{\partial y} - \lambda \frac{\partial g}{\partial y} \\ \frac{\partial \mathcal{L}}{\partial \lambda} &= -(g(x, y) - c)\end{aligned}}$$