



Definition

Let Ω be an open set in \mathbf{C} and let $f : \Omega \rightarrow \mathbf{C}$. The function f is *holomorphic at the point* $z_0 \in \mathbf{C}$ if the complex quotient

$$\frac{f(z_0 + h) - f(z_0)}{h}$$

has a limit when $h \rightarrow 0$, where $h \in \mathbf{C}$, $h \neq 0$ and $z_0 + h \in \Omega$ so that the quotient is well-defined.

This condition is similar to saying that a function is differentiable, except that the h is complex and so the condition above encompasses all limits approaching z (all angles) in the complex plane.¹ But we emphasize that h is a complex number approaching the complex number $(0, 0)$ from any direction. If the limit exists, then we call its value the *derivative of f at z_0* .

The function f is *holomorphic* on Ω if f is holomorphic at every point of Ω . If C is a closed subset of \mathbf{C} , we say that f is holomorphic on C if f is holomorphic on some open set containing c . If f is holomorphic on all of C then we call f *entire*. A holomorphic function is sometimes called *regular* or *complex differentiable*. The latter term is used in view of the similarities with the definition of a real derivative.

Notation

In the case that $f : \Omega \rightarrow \mathbf{C}$ is holomorphic at z_0 we denote the derivative at z_0 by $f'(z_0)$. We have defined $f'(z_0)$ by

$$f'(z_0) = \lim_{h \rightarrow 0} \frac{f(z_0 + h) - f(z_0)}{h}.$$

¹Future editions will clarify.

