Section 3.2 – Polynomial Functions

Polynomial Function

A *Polynomial function* $P(x)$ in x is a sum of the form is given by:

$$P(x) = a_n x^n + a_{n-1} x^{n-1} + a_{n-2} x^{n-2} + \ldots + a_2 x^2 + a_1 x + a_0$$

Where the coefficients $a_n,\ a_{n-1},\ \ldots, a_2,\ a_1, a_0$ are real numbers and the exponents are whole numbers.

$$a_n x^n$$

Degree

Leading Term

Leading Coefficient

Non-polynomial Functions: $\frac{1}{x} + 2x;\quad \sqrt{x^2 - 3} + x;\quad \frac{x-5}{x^2+2}$

Degree of f	***Form of f(x)***	***Graph of f(x)***
0	$f(x) = a_0$	A horizontal line
1	$f(x) = a_1 x + a_0$	A line with slope a_1
2	$f(x) = a_2 x^2 + a_1 x + a_0$	A parabola with a vertical axis

All polynomial functions are ***continuous functions***.

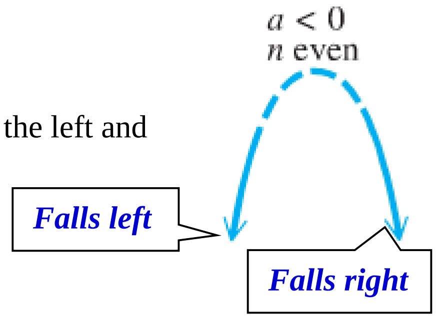
End Behavior $\left(a_n x^n\right)$

If n (degree) is even:

If $a_n < 0$ (in front x^n is negative), then the function falls from the left and right side

$$x \to -\infty \quad \Rightarrow \quad f(x) \to -\infty$$

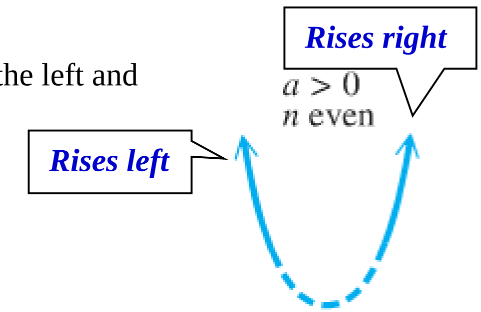
$$x \to \infty \quad \Rightarrow \quad f(x) \to -\infty$$



If $a_n > 0$ (in front x^n is positive), then the function rises from the left and right side

$$x \to -\infty \quad \Rightarrow \quad f(x) \to \infty$$

$$x \to \infty \quad \Rightarrow \quad f(x) \to \infty$$

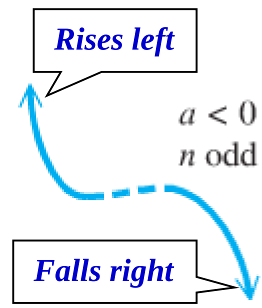


If n (degree) is odd:

If $a_n < 0$ (negative), then the function rises from the left side and falls from the right side

$$x \to -\infty \quad \Rightarrow \quad f(x) \to \infty$$

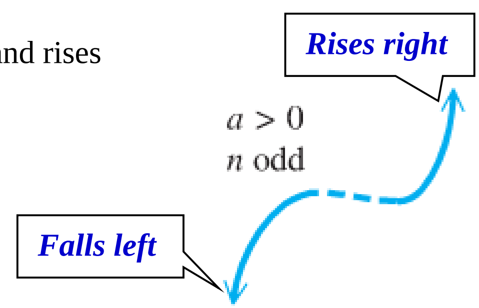
$$x \to \infty \quad \Rightarrow \quad f(x) \to -\infty$$



If $a_n > 0$ (positive), then the function falls from the left side and rises from the right side

$$x \to -\infty \quad \Rightarrow \quad f(x) \to -\infty$$

$$x \to \infty \quad \Rightarrow \quad f(x) \to \infty$$



Example

Determine the end behavior of the graph of the polynomial function $f(x) = -4x^5 + 7x^2 - x + 9$

Solution

Leading term: $-4x^5$ with 5th degree (n is odd)

$x \to -\infty \quad \Rightarrow \quad f(x) = -(-)^5 = (-)(-) = + \to \infty \qquad f(x)$ rises left

$x \to \infty \quad \Rightarrow \quad f(x) \to -\infty \qquad\qquad f(x)$ falls right

The Intermediate Value *Theorem*

For any polynomial function $f(x)$ with real coefficients and $f(a) \neq f(b)$ for $a < b$, then f takes on every value between $f(a)$ and $f(b)$ in the interval $[a,\ b]$.

$\therefore$ $f(a)$ and $f(b)$ are the opposite signs. Then the function has a real zero between a and b.

Example

Using the intermediate value theorem, determine, if possible, whether the function has a real zero between a and b.

a) $f(x) = x^3 + x^2 - 6x; \quad a = -4,\ b = -2$

b) $f(x) = x^3 + x^2 - 6x; \quad a = -1,\ b = 3$

Solution

a) $f(x) = x^3 + x^2 - 6x; \quad a = -4,\ b = -2$

$f(-4) = (-4)^3 + (-4)^2 - 6(-4) = -24$

$f(-2) = (-2)^3 + (-2)^2 - 6(-2) = 8$ $\qquad$ $f(x)$ has a zero between -4 and -2

b) $f(x) = x^3 + x^2 - 6x; \quad a = -1,\ b = 3$

$f(-1) = (-1)^3 + (-1)^2 - 6(-1) = 6$

$f(3) = (3)^3 + (3)^2 - 6(3) = 18$ $\qquad$ *Can't be determined*

Example

Show that $f(x) = x^5 + 2x^4 - 6x^3 + 2x - 3$ has a zero between 1 and 2.

Solution

$f(1) = (1)^5 + 2(1)^4 - 6(1)^3 + 2(1) - 3 = -4$

$f(2) = (2)^5 + 2(2)^4 - 6(2)^3 + 2(2) - 3 = 17$

Since $f(1)$ *and* $f(2)$ have opposite signs; therefore, $f(c) = 0$ for at least one real number c between 1 and 2.

Exercises *Section* 3.2 – Polynomial Functions

Determine the end behavior of the graph of the polynomial function

1. $f(x)=5x^3+7x^2-x+9$

2. $f(x)=11x^3-6x^2+x+3$

3. $f(x)=-11x^3-6x^2+x+3$

4. $f(x)=5x^4+7x^2-x+9$

5. $f(x)=11x^4-6x^2+x+3$

6. $f(x)=-5x^4+7x^2-x+9$

7. $f(x)=-11x^4-6x^2+x+3$

Use the Intermediate Value Theorem to show that each polynomial has a real zero between the given integers.

8. $f(x)=x^3-x-1;\quad between\ \ 1\ and\ \ 2$

9. $f(x)=x^3-4x^2+2;\quad between\ \ 0\ and\ \ 1$

10. $f(x)=2x^4-4x^2+1;\quad between\ \ -1\ and\ \ 0$

11. $f(x)=x^4+6x^3-18x^2;\quad between\ \ 2\ and\ \ 3$

12. $f(x)=x^3+x^2-2x+1;\quad between\ \ -3\ and\ \ -2$

13. $f(x)=x^5-x^3-1;\quad between\ \ 1\ and\ \ 2$

14. $f(x)=3x^3-10x+9;\quad between\ \ -3\ and\ \ -2$

15. $f(x)=3x^3-8x^2+x+2;\quad between\ \ 2\ and\ \ 3$

16. $f(x)=3x^3-8x^2+x+2;\quad between\ \ 1\ and\ \ 2$

17. $f(x)=x^5+2x^4-6x^3+2x-3;\quad between\ \ 0\ and\ \ 1$