



ODE 2

AMATH 351



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Preface

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Introduction and Review

1.1 Definitions and Terminology

A **differential equation** is any equation involving a function and derivatives of this function.

Ordinary differential equations contain only functions of a single variable, called the independent variable, and derivatives with respect to that variable.

Partial differential equations contain a function of two or more variables and some partial derivatives of this function.

The **order** of a differential equation is the order of the highest derivative in the equation.

A general n -th order ODE has the form

$$F(x, y, y', y'', \dots, y^{(n)}) = 0 \quad (1.1)$$

where $y' = \frac{dy}{dx}$, $y'' = \frac{d^2y}{dx^2}$ and so on. We assume further it can be written as

$$y^{(n)} = f(x, y', \dots, y^{(n-1)}). \quad (1.2)$$

Eq. (1.2) is said to be **linear** when f is a linear function of $y, y', \dots, y^{(n-1)}$. In this case, Eq. (1.2) can be written as

$$a_n(x)y^{(n)} + a_{n-1}(x)y^{(n-1)} + \dots + a_1(x)y' + a_0(x)y = g(x). \quad (1.3)$$

A differential equation that is not linear is said to be **nonlinear**.

By a **solution** of Eq. (1.2) on an interval I we mean a function $y = \psi(x)$ such that $f(x, \psi(x), \psi'(x), \dots, \psi^{(n-1)}(x))$ is defined for all x in I and is equal to $\psi^{(n)}(x)$ for all x in I .

A solution in which the dependent variable is expressed only in terms of the independent variable and constants is called an **explicit solution**.

A relation $G(x, y) = 0$ such that there exists at least one function $\psi(x)$ that satisfies the relation and Eq. (1.2) is called an **implicit solution**.

A solution which is free of arbitrary constants is called a **particular solution**.

A solution that cannot be obtained by specializing any of the parameters in a family of solutions is called a **singular solution**.

Example:

Consider the DE $y' = xy^{1/2}$.

The explicit solution: $y = \left(\frac{x^2}{4} + c\right)^2$

A particular solution is $y = \frac{x^4}{16}$ obtained above for $c = 0$.

A singular solution is $y = 0$ which cannot be obtained from the explicit solution for any choice of constant c .

1.2 Initial-Value Problems

On some interval containing x_0 , the problem

Solve $y^{(n)} = f(x, y, y', \dots, y^{(n-1)})$ subject to the initial conditions $y(x_0) = y_0, \dots, y^{(n-1)}(x_0) = y_{n-1}$

where y_0, \dots, y_{n-1} are arbitrary specified real constants, is called an **initial-value problem** (IVP).

Consider the IVP $y' = f(x, y)$, $y(x_0) = y_0$.

Theorem 1.1: Picard

Let D be a rectangular region in the xy -plane defined by $D = \{(x, y) : a \leq x \leq b, c \leq y \leq d\}$ and $(x_0, y_0) \in D$ the interior. If $f(x, y)$ and $\frac{\partial f}{\partial y}$ are continuous on D , then IVP has a unique solution $y(x)$ defined in an interval I centered at x_0 .

1.3 First Order ODE

Separable variables

A first order DE of the form

$$\frac{dy}{dx} = g(x)h(y) \quad (1.4)$$

is said to be **separable** or to have **separable variables**. Solution method:

$$\frac{dy}{h(y)} = g(x)dx$$

Integrate both sides

$$\int \frac{1}{h(y)} dy = \int g(x) dx + C$$

Linear equations

A first order DE of the form

$$a_1(x) \frac{dy}{dx} + a_0(x)y = g(x) \quad (1.5)$$

is called a **linear equation**.

Solution method:

- Write in its **standard form**

$$\frac{dy}{dx} + p(x)y = f(x)$$

- Multiply both sides by the integrating factor $\mu(x) = \exp\left(\int p(x)dx\right)$, and rearrange into the exact form $\frac{d}{dx}(\mu(x)y) = \mu(x)f(x)$

- Integrate both side with respect to x and get the general solution under the form

$$y(x) = \frac{1}{\mu(x)} \left(\int \mu(x)f(x)dx + C \right)$$

There are other type of ODEs that you learned how to solve in [AMATH 251](#), such as homogeneous equations, exact equations, Bernouli equations.

Theory of Second-Order Linear DEs

2.1 2nd-Order Linear ODEs

The most general 2nd order linear DE is

$$a_2 \frac{d^2 y}{dx^2} + a_1(x) \frac{dy}{dx} + a_0(x)y = f(x)$$

In [AMATH 251](#) we learned how to solve this equation where the coefficients a_2, a_1, a_0 are constants. This equation can be written in several different forms:

1. General form

$$a_2(x)y'' + a_1(x)y' + a_0(x)y = f(x) \quad (2.1)$$

2. Standard form: If $a_2(x)$ is not identically zero then we obtain

$$y'' + P(x)y' + Q(x)y = R(x) \quad (2.2)$$

3. Associated homogeneous equation: This is the same as the standard form where RHS is zero,

$$y'' + P(x)y' + Q(x)y = 0 \quad (2.3)$$

If RHS of Eq. (2.2) is non-zero the equation is said to be non-homogeneous or inhomogeneous.

2.2 Existence and Uniqueness

Existence and Uniqueness Before we try and find solutions to the DEs it is usually a good idea to know that a solution exists and it is unique. Otherwise we could be wasting out time. We state a theorem for existence and uniqueness. The ideas of the proof will be presented later when we discuss first-order systems.

Theorem 2.1: Existence and Uniqueness

Let $P(x), Q(x)$ and $R(x)$ be continuous functions on a closed interval $[a, b]$. If x_0 is any point in $[a, b]$ and if $y(x_0)$ and $y'(x_0)$ are any numbers, then Eq. (2.2) has one and only one solution $y(x)$ on the entire interval such that the initial conditions (ICs) are satisfied.

Remark:

If we are looking for a solution to the homogeneous equation with $y(0) = 0, y'(0) = 0$ observe that the trivial solution is an allowable solution. Therefore, by the existence and uniqueness theorem, it must be the only solution.

2.3 General Solutions to 2nd-order DEs

In **AMATH 251** for the case of constant coefficients, we learned that the general solution to Eq. (2.2) is a superposition of any particular solution to the non-homogeneous problem and a general solution to the homogeneous one. This also holds true in the case of non-constant coefficients. Therefore, the method of attack is as follows:

1. Find the general solution to the homogeneous problem: In the case of constant coefficients we simply sub $y = e^{rx}$ find the characteristic equation, solve for the characteristic roots, r_1, r_2 form the two independent solutions $y_1(x), y_2(x)$ and get that the general solution is,

$$y_h(x) = c_1 y_1(x) + c_2 y_2(x),$$

where c_1, c_2 are arbitrary constants. In the case of non-constant coefficients we need to do more work to find y_1, y_2 . In general we cannot find them explicitly.

2. Find a particular solution to the non-homogeneous problem. There are different methods that we can use.

The following Theorems will help us to find a unique solution of a general second-order scalar equation. First we look at the homogeneous problem and then at the more general DE.

Theorem 2.2: General solutions to 2nd-order homogeneous equations

Let $y_1(x)$ and $y_2(x)$ be linearly independent solutions of the homogeneous equation (Eq. (2.3)) on the interval $[a, b]$, then the general solution to the same homogeneous problem is

$$y_h(x) = c_1 y_1(x) + c_2 y_2(x),$$

for arbitrary constants c_1, c_2 .

Proof:

First we can sub y_1, y_2 and their linear superposition into the homogeneous equation to verify they are solutions.

Second we need to verify that this solution can satisfy any set of conditions, say $y(0)$ and $y'(0)$ ^a. We sub in our solution and find,

$$\begin{aligned} c_1 y_1(0) + c_2 y_2(0) &= y(0), \\ c_1 y_1'(0) + c_2 y_2'(0) &= y'(0). \end{aligned}$$

This is a system of two equations and two unknowns c_1, c_2 . To be able to solve this for any initial conditions we need that the matrix is non-singular,

$$\det \begin{bmatrix} y_1(0) & y_2(0) \\ y_1'(0) & y_2'(0) \end{bmatrix} = y_1(0)y_2'(0) - y_2(0)y_1'(0) \neq 0$$

This motivates the definition of **Wronskian**, $W(y_1, y_2) = y_1 y_2' - y_2 y_1'$.

To ensure that our expression is a general solution we need that the initial value of the Wronskian is nonzero, $W(y_1(0), y_2(0)) \neq 0$. □

^aThese should be replaced by $y(x_0) = y_0, y'(x_0) = y_1$ for some $x_0 \in [a, b]$

Also check the alternative proof on page 66 of <https://notes.sibeliusp.com/pdfs/1189/amath251.pdf>.

Therefore, the above tells us that if the initial value of the Wronskian of the two solutions is non-zero, we have a general solution. Next, we will show that if the Wronskian is non-zero at the initial time it is necessarily non-zero all time. The following theorem states and proves this result.

Lemma 2.3: Uniformity of the Wronskian

If $y_1(x)$ and $y_2(x)$ are any two solutions to Eq. (2.3) on the interval $[a, b]$ then their Wronskian is either identically zero or never zero on $[a, b]$.

Proof:

$$\begin{aligned} W' &= y_1 y_2'' - y_2 y_1'' \\ &= y_1 [-P(x)y_2' - Q(x)y_2] - y_2 [-P(x)y_1' - Q(x)y_1] \\ &= -P(x)[y_1 y_2' - y_2 y_1'] \\ &= -P(x)W \end{aligned}$$

Then $W = W_0 \exp(-\int P(x)dx)$ is either zero everywhere or zero nowhere, depending on its initial values. \square

So far we know that the Wronskian is always zero or always non-zero for any two solutions. The next lemma shows the relation between the Wronskian and linear independence.

Lemma 2.4: Linear Dependence and the Wronskian

If $y_1(x)$ and $y_2(x)$ are two solutions of the homogeneous equation then they are linearly dependent on this interval if and only if their Wronskian is identically zero.

Proof:

\Rightarrow Let $y_2(x) = cy_1(x)$ then calculate $W(y_1, y_2) = 0$

\Leftarrow Assume Wronskian is zero, then

$$\det \begin{bmatrix} y_1(x) & y_2(x) \\ y_1'(x) & y_2'(x) \end{bmatrix} = 0$$

If the determinant of the matrix is zero that means that the matrix is singular and that each column is a scalar multiple of the other. In particular, if we look at the first row we find that $y_2(x)$ is a linear multiple of $y_1(x)$. This is precisely the statement that the functions are linearly dependent. \square

If we combine two lemmas we deduce that if two solutions are linearly independent at the initial time (or any other time for that matter) they are necessarily linear independent for all time. The next example is to give you some practice playing with the Wronskian.

Example:

Can show that $y = c_1 \sin x + c_2 \cos x$ is the general solution to $y'' + y = 0$ on any interval.

Now that we have a grasp on how to find general solutions to homogeneous equations, we can look at solving the non-homogeneous problem.

Theorem 2.5: General solutions to 2nd-order non-homogeneous equations

If $y_h(x)$ is the general solution to the homogeneous problem, Eq. (2.3), and $y_p(x)$ is any particular solution of the non-homogeneous problem, Eq. (2.2), then their superposition, $y(x) = y_h(x) + y_p(x)$, is a general solution to the non-homogeneous problem.

Proof:

To show that we have a general solution to the non homogeneous equation we must show two things: 1) that it is in fact a solution and 2) we can reproduce any initial condition. With the second condition we can use our uniqueness theorem to guarantee that any two solutions to the DE with the same

initial conditions must be equal.

1. skipped.
2. Now we must show that we can reproduce any IC with this solution. We do this as we did before by evaluating our solution and its derivatives at the initial time. First we do as before and define $y_h(x) = c_1 y_1(x) + c_2 y_2(x)$ and then we get,

$$\begin{aligned} c_1 y_1(0) + c_2 y_2(0) &= y(0) - y_p(0) \\ c_1 y_1'(0) + c_2 y_2'(0) &= y'(0) - y_p'(0) \end{aligned}$$

Note that the effect of the particular solution is to offset how we pick our constants c_1 and c_2 . By assumption, we have that our homogeneous solution consists of two linearly independent solutions, y_1 and y_2 , and so their Wronskian is non-zero and so we can invert this 2×2 system to find a unique solution. This is enough to guarantee that our solution is a general solution to the non-homogeneous system.

□

2.4 BVPs versus IVPs

ODEs can be classified as either **Boundary Value Problems** (BVPs) or **Initial Value Problems** (IVPs). The equations themselves can be the same, what differs are the conditions that are imposed to determine the unknown constants. For IVPs the two conditions are imposed at the same time, for example $y(0) = \alpha, y'(0) = \beta$.

In contrast, in BVPs the two conditions are imposed at different times, or different locations, $y(0) = \alpha, y(1) = \beta$.

As the names suggest, IVPs usually have time as the independent variable and BVPs usually have space as the independent variable.

2.5 Examples of 2nd-Order DEs with non-constant coefficients

There is a long list of DEs with non-constant coefficients. Some of them are particularly famous and have special names. The solutions usually cannot be written in terms of simple functions and we define functions to be the solutions to such equations. They are usually referred to as **special functions**. Many of them arise in looking at solutions to Laplace's equations in different co-ordinate systems. The interested reader is directed to [AM 353](#) for more details on how to obtain these equations.

1. Bessel's equation: p is a constant integer.

$$x^2 y'' + xy' + (x^2 - p^2)y = 0$$

2. Legendre's equation: p integer.

$$(1 - x^2)y'' - 2xy' + p(p + 1)y = 0$$

3. Laguerre's equation: constant a

$$xy'' + (1 - x)y' + ay = 0$$

4. Hermite's equation: constant a

$$y'' - 2xy' + 2ay = 0$$

2.6 Reduction of Order

There does not exist a general approach to find a solution for any general 2nd-order ODE. However, if we manage to find one solution to the homogeneous problem, say $y_1(x)$, there is a useful technique that allows us to find a second solution, $y_2(x)$. This is called Reduction of Order. The idea is very simple

really. Look for a solution that is a product of some unknown function (that we have to determine) multiplied by the known solution, i.e.

$$y_2(x) = v(x)y_1(x)$$

some intermediate work... Sub it into DE and get

$$v' = \frac{1}{y_1^2} \exp\left(-\int P(x)dx\right)$$

Then

$$v = \int_0^x \frac{1}{y_1^2} \exp\left(-\int P(s)ds\right) dx$$

Therefore $y_2 = \int \frac{1}{y_1^2} \exp\left(-\int P(s)ds\right) dx$.

Then we can show y_2, y_1 are linearly independent.

Example:

$y_1 = x^2$ is an exact solution to the homogeneous DE $x^2y'' + xy' - 4y = 0$. Then by the procedure above, $v = -\frac{1}{4x^4}$. Hence $y_2 = \frac{1}{x^2}$. Thus the general solution is $y(x) = c_1x^2 + \frac{c_2}{x^2}$.

2.7 Method of Variation of Parameters

To find the particular solution to a non-homogeneous equation we can always use the method of variation of parameters.

Suppose that $y_1(x)$ and $y_2(x)$ are two linearly independent solutions to the homogeneous problem. Next, we look for a trial solution to the non-homogeneous that is similar to the general solution to the homogeneous problem except that the constant coefficients are replaced with unknown functions, $v_1(x)$, $v_2(x)$, to be determined:

$$y = v_1y_1 + v_2y_2$$

A convenient choice to pick v_1, v_2 is

$$v_1'y_1 + v_2'y_2 = 0$$

Sub them into $y'' + Py' + Qy = R$ and we get in matrix form:

$$\begin{bmatrix} y_1 & y_2 \\ y_1' & y_2' \end{bmatrix} \begin{bmatrix} v_1' \\ v_2' \end{bmatrix} = \begin{bmatrix} 0 \\ R \end{bmatrix}$$

y_1, y_2 are linearly independent, as we have assumed, that the system is invertible. The solution is,

$$\begin{bmatrix} v_1' \\ v_2' \end{bmatrix} = \frac{R}{W} \begin{bmatrix} -y_2 \\ y_1 \end{bmatrix}$$

Then solution is thus

$$y = y_1 \int \frac{-y_2 R(x)}{W(y_1, y_2)} dx + y_2 \int \frac{y_1 R(x)}{W(y_1, y_2)} dx$$

In summary, given two linearly independent solutions to the homogeneous problem we can find a particular solution to the non-homogeneous equation where the inhomogeneity is $R(x)$.

Example:

Find a particular solution of $y'' + y = \csc x$.

We know homogeneous solution $y = c_1 \sin x + c_2 \cos x$. Using the formula above, we have

$$y = \sin x \log(\sin x) - x \cos x$$

Series Solutions and Special Functions

This Chapter discusses how to construct power series solutions of second-order ODEs with possibly non-constant coefficients. First we review some basic their of power series that is taught in [MATH 138](#), then we show how to construction series solutions to various types of ODEs: ordinary points and singular points. When solving these equations we obtain special functions that arise naturally as solutions to famous equations.

3.1 Review of Power Series

Transcendental Function

These are elementary functions that consist of algebraic functions such as trigonometric, exponential, logarithmic and any of their combinations by addition and multiplication (and their inverses).

Special Functions

These are functions that cannot be expressed in terms of transcendental functions.

Examples of special functions are Bessel functions, which we will study in detail later in this chapter.

Review of Power Series:

1. A power series in x about x_0 is defined to be: $\sum_{n=0}^{\infty} a_n(x - x_0)^n$. Usually we will set $x_0 = 0$ but that is not necessary.
2. A series is said to be **converge** at x if limit of $\lim_{m \rightarrow \infty} \sum_{n=0}^m a_n x^n$ exists and the sum of the series is the value of the limit.
3. Suppose a power series converges for $|x| < R$ for some $R > 0$ and let's denote its sum by $f(x)$:

$$f(x) = \sum_{n=0}^{\infty} a_n x^n = a_0 + a_1 x + a_2 x^2 + \cdots$$

The function $f(x)$ is smooth and we can differentiate term by term, and also integrate it term by term.

4. Given that $f(x)$ is a smooth function for $|x| < R$ with $R > 0$ then we can construct the power

series for this function using Taylor's formula:

$$f(x) = \sum_{n=1}^{\infty} \frac{f^{(n)}(0)}{n!} x^n$$

If it is not entirely smooth, then we can use Taylor's formula for the remainder to get a polynomial expansion of the function.

5. A function $f(x)$ has a power series expansion of

$$f(x) = \sum_{n=0}^{\infty} a_n x^n$$

in a neighborhood of x_0 is said to be **analytic** at x_0 . We can recover the coefficient using Taylor's formula,

$$a_n = \frac{f^{(n)}(x_0)}{n!}$$

to obtain Taylor series expansion of $f(x)$ about x_0 .

3.2 Series Solutions of First-Order Equation

Consider $y' = y$. In AM 250 or AM 251 you learned how to solve this equation using various techniques, i.e. separable equations and integrating factors. Even though we already know how to solve it, let's try to solve it with a new technique, that of a power series solution. If we can solve a simple problem with this new method that should guide us along in solving more complicated problems.

Look for a solution of the following form,

$$y = \sum_{n=0}^{\infty} a_n x^n$$

where a_0, \dots, a_n, \dots are to be determined.

Differentiate

$$y' = \sum_{n=1}^{\infty} n a_n x^{n-1} = \sum_{n=0}^{\infty} (n+1) a_{n+1} x^n$$

and sub into the equation,

$$\sum_{n=0}^{\infty} (n+1) a_{n+1} x^n - \sum_{n=0}^{\infty} a_n x^n = 0 \implies \sum_{n=0}^{\infty} [(n+1) a_{n+1} - a_n] x^n = 0$$

This equation is the power series representation of zero. But implies that each of the coefficients in the series is exactly zero and therefore,

$$a_{n+1} = \frac{a_n}{n+1} \quad \text{for } n = 0, 1, 2, \dots$$

This is a recursion relation that defines a given coefficient in terms of the previous one:

$$a_n = \frac{a_0}{n!}$$

Therefore, after having done not so much work we have found our general solution to be,

$$y = a_0 \sum_{n=0}^{\infty} \frac{x^n}{n!}$$

which is nothing more than a constant times the power series representation of e^x .

3.3 2nd-Order Linear Equations: Ordinary Points

Now that we've seen the basic method in action let's try and tackle the more interesting homogeneous, second-order DE with non-constant coefficients,

$$y'' + P(x)y' + Q(x)y = 0$$

Not too surprisingly, the behaviour of the solution near x_0 is completely determined by the behaviour of $P(x)$ and $Q(x)$ near the same point.

A real number x_0 is called an **ordinary point** if $P(x)$ and $Q(x)$ are analytic at x_0 , i.e.,

$$P(x) = \sum_{n=0}^{\infty} p_n(x-x_0)^n, \quad |x-x_0| < r \quad \text{and} \quad Q(x) = \sum_{n=0}^{\infty} q_n(x-x_0)^n, \quad |x-x_0| < r$$

for some $r > 0$.

Any point that is not ordinary is referred to as a **singular point**.

Example: Simple harmonic oscillator

To get started finding power series solutions we begin with the simple harmonic oscillator,

$$y'' + \alpha^2 y = 0$$

We begin with a trial solution that is a power series and compute the second derivative:

$$y = \sum_{n=0}^{\infty} a_n x^n$$

$$y'' = \sum_{n=2}^{\infty} n(n-1)a_n x^{n-2} = \sum_{n=0}^{\infty} (n+2)(n+1)a_{n+2} x^n$$

We can now substitute our solution into our governing DE and get,

$$\sum_{n=0}^{\infty} \alpha^2 a_n x^n + \sum_{n=0}^{\infty} (n+2)(n+1)a_{n+2} x^n = 0$$

$$\sum_{n=0}^{\infty} [\alpha^2 a_n x^n + (n+2)(n+1)a_{n+2} x^n] = 0$$

For this to be zero we need that the coefficient of each term in the series is identically zero:

$$a_{n+2} = -\frac{\alpha^2 a_n}{(n+2)(n+1)}$$

One difference between this and the first-order example is that every coefficient is related with two coefficients before. Thus, to specify a unique solution we must specify a_0 and a_1 . Using recursion we can determine all the coefficients in terms of the first two.

$$a_{2n} = (-1)^n \frac{\alpha^{2n} a_0}{(2n)!} \quad a_{2n+1} = (-1)^n \frac{\alpha^{2n} a_1}{(2n+1)!}$$

The general pattern is readily observed. If we substitute this into the original power series and separate the solution into two linearly independent parts we get,

$$y = a_0 \sum_{n=0}^{\infty} (-1)^n \frac{\alpha^{2n} a_0}{(2n)!} + a_1 \sum_{n=0}^{\infty} (-1)^n \frac{\alpha^{2n} a_1}{(2n+1)!}$$

Observe that the first term above is a scalar multiple of $\cos(\alpha x)$ and the second term is a scalar multiple of $\sin(\alpha x)$.

Therefore, even though we used a completely different method, we obtained the same solution we did in AM 250 or AM 251. That shouldn't be surprising it should be expected! Even though there wasn't a need to use this method on this relatively simple equation it was useful and sets up the machinery in how to deal with more general equations with non-constant coefficients.

To illustrate the real power behind power series solutions let's tackle Legendre's equation,

$$(1 - x^2)y'' - 2xy' + p(p + 1)y = 0$$

Example: Legendre's equation

To get this into the standard form we divide through by $1 - x^2$, we then get $P(x)$ and $Q(x)$. We conclude that both of these functions are analytic about $x = 0$ and thus it is an ordinary point. They are not analytic about $x = \pm 1$ and thus they are singular points.

Similarly, we have the recurrence relation:

$$a_{n+2} = -\frac{p(p+1) - n(n+1)}{(n+2)(n+1)}a_n = -\frac{(p-n)(p+n+1)}{(n+2)(n+1)}a_n$$

Then

$$a_{2n} = \frac{(-1)^n [\prod_{i=0}^{n-1} (p-2i)] [\prod_{i=1}^n (p-1+2i)]}{(2n)!} a_0$$

$$a_{2n+1} = \frac{(-1)^n [\prod_{i=0}^{n-1} (p-1-2i)] [\prod_{i=1}^n (p+2i)]}{(2n+1)!} a_1$$

We can substitute this into our solution and obtain the following power series solution to Legendre's equation:

$$y = \dots$$

The functions above in the last line following the constants a_0 and a_1 are defined to be Legendre functions of order p . We denote the even and odd Legendre polynomials as $L_p^0(x)$ and $L_p^1(x)$, respectively. For each p we have one such polynomial and another function which is a special function.

The following theorem is taken straight from the textbook by Simmons (Page 180) and is subsequently proven. Here we just state the theorem.

Theorem 3.1: Power Series Solutions at Ordinary Points

Let x_0 be an ordinary point of our standard homogeneous DE and let a_0 and a_1 be arbitrary constants. Then, there exists a unique function $y(x)$ that is analytic at x_0 that is a solution of the DE in a certain neighbourhood of this point and satisfies the initial conditions $y(x_0) = a_0$ and $y'(x_0) = a_1$. Furthermore, if the power series expansions of $P(x)$ and $Q(x)$ are valid on the interval $|x - x_0| < R$, with $R > 0$, then the power series expansion of this solution is also valid on the same interval.

3.4 2nd-Order Linear Equations: Singular Points

Let's consider the standard, homogeneous DE,

$$y'' + P(x)y' + Q(x)y = 0$$

We have previously said that x_0 is a singular point if either (or both) $P(x)$ and $Q(x)$ are not analytic at x_0 , i.e., they are not continuous there. The following definition of a singular point that is not so bad and easier to work with.

regular/irregular singular

Suppose that x_0 is a singular point of above equation but that

$$(x - x_0)P(x) \quad \text{and} \quad (x - x_0)^2Q(x)$$

are analytic at x_0 , i.e.,

$$(x-x_0)P(x) = \sum_{n=0}^{\infty} p_n(x-x_0)^n, \quad |x-x_0| < r \quad \text{and} \quad (x-x_0)Q(x) = \sum_{n=0}^{\infty} q_n(x-x_0)^n, \quad |x-x_0| < r$$

for some $r > 0$, then x_0 is said to be a **regular singular** point of the DE. Otherwise x_0 is an **irregular singular** point.

From this definition we gather that for x_0 to be a regular singular point we need the following:

1. $P(x)$ behaves no worse than $\frac{1}{x-x_0}$ at x_0 and
2. $Q(x)$ behaves no worse than $\frac{1}{(x-x_0)^2}$ at x_0

Example: Legendre's equation

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