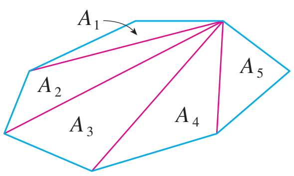
A Preview of Calculus

By the time you finish this course, you will be able to calculate the length of the curve used to design the Gateway Arch in St. Louis, determine where a pilot should start descent for a smooth landing, compute the force on a baseball bat when it strikes the ball, and measure the amount of light sensed by the human eye as the pupil changes size.

CALCULUS IS FUNDAMENTALLY DIFFERENT FROM the mathematics that you have studied previously: calculus is less static and more dynamic. It is concerned with change and motion; it deals with quantities that approach other quantities. For that reason it may be useful to have an overview of the subject before beginning its intensive study. Here we give a glimpse of some of the main ideas of calculus by showing how the concept of a limit arises when we attempt to solve a variety of problems.



$A = A_1 + A_2 + A_3 + A_4 + A_5$

FIGURE 1

The Area Problem

The origins of calculus go back at least 2500 years to the ancient Greeks, who found areas using the "method of exhaustion." They knew how to find the area A of any polygon by dividing it into triangles as in Figure 1 and adding the areas of these triangles.

It is a much more difficult problem to find the area of a curved figure. The Greek method of exhaustion was to inscribe polygons in the figure and circumscribe polygons about the figure and then let the number of sides of the polygons increase. Figure 2 illustrates this process for the special case of a circle with inscribed regular polygons.

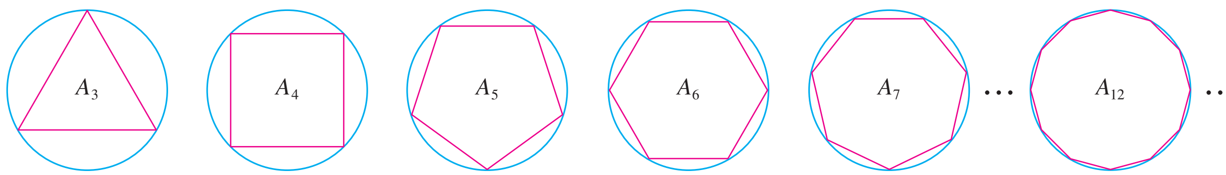


FIGURE 2

Let A_n be the area of the inscribed polygon with n sides. As n increases, it appears that A_n becomes closer and closer to the area of the circle. We say that the area of the circle is the limit of the areas of the inscribed polygons, and we write

TEC In the Preview Visual, you can see how areas of inscribed and circumscribed polygons approximate the area of a circle.

$$A = \lim_{n \to \infty} A_n$$

The Greeks themselves did not use limits explicitly. However, by indirect reasoning, Eudoxus (fifth century BC) used exhaustion to prove the familiar formula for the area of a circle: $A = \pi r^2$.

We will use a similar idea in Chapter 5 to find areas of regions of the type shown in Figure 3. We will approximate the desired area A by areas of rectangles (as in Figure 4), let the width of the rectangles decrease, and then calculate A as the limit of these sums of areas of rectangles.

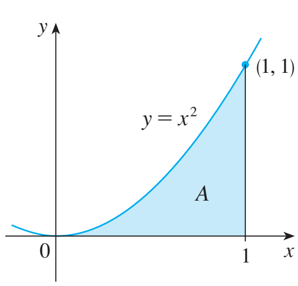


FIGURE 3

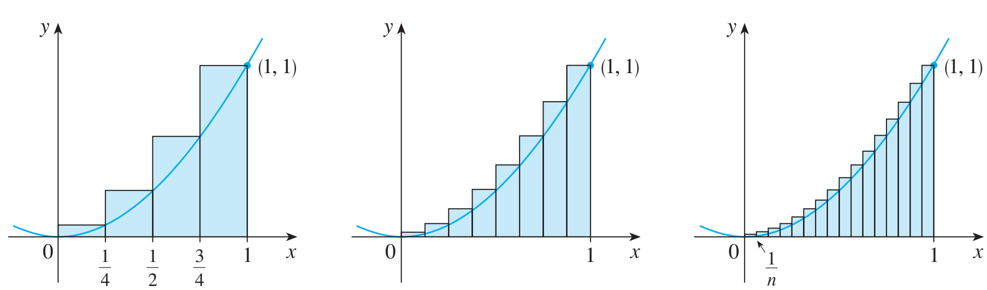


FIGURE 4

The area problem is the central problem in the branch of calculus called *integral calculus*. The techniques that we will develop in Chapter 5 for finding areas will also enable us to compute the volume of a solid, the length of a curve, the force of water against a dam, the mass and center of gravity of a rod, and the work done in pumping water out of a tank.

The Tangent Problem

Consider the problem of trying to find an equation of the tangent line t to a curve with equation $y = f(x)$ at a given point P. (We will give a precise definition of a tangent line in

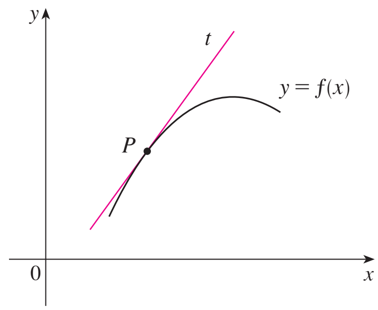


FIGURE 5
The tangent line at P

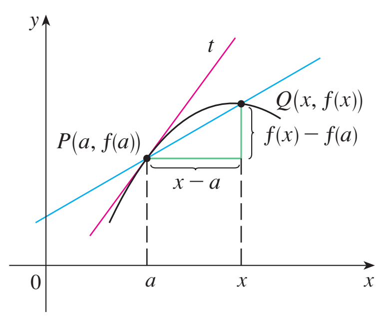


FIGURE 6
The secant line at PQ

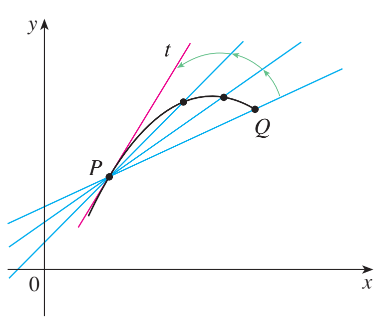


FIGURE 7
Secant lines approaching the tangent line

Chapter 2. For now you can think of it as a line that touches the curve at P as in Figure 5.) Since we know that the point P lies on the tangent line, we can find the equation of t if we know its slope m. The problem is that we need two points to compute the slope and we know only one point, P, on t. To get around the problem we first find an approximation to m by taking a nearby point Q on the curve and computing the slope m_{PQ} of the secant line PQ. From Figure 6 we see that

$$\boxed{1} \qquad m_{PQ} = \frac{f(x) - f(a)}{x - a}$$

Now imagine that Q moves along the curve toward P as in Figure 7. You can see that the secant line rotates and approaches the tangent line as its limiting position. This means that the slope m_{PQ} of the secant line becomes closer and closer to the slope m of the tangent line. We write

$$m = \lim_{Q \to P} m_{PQ}$$

and we say that m is the limit of m_{PQ} as Q approaches P along the curve. Because x approaches a as Q approaches P, we could also use Equation 1 to write

$$\boxed{2} \qquad m = \lim_{x \to a} \frac{f(x) - f(a)}{x - a}$$

Specific examples of this procedure will be given in Chapter 2.

The tangent problem has given rise to the branch of calculus called *differential calculus,* which was not invented until more than 2000 years after integral calculus. The main ideas behind differential calculus are due to the French mathematician Pierre Fermat (1601–1665) and were developed by the English mathematicians John Wallis (1616–1703), Isaac Barrow (1630–1677), and Isaac Newton (1642–1727) and the German mathematician Gottfried Leibniz (1646–1716).

The two branches of calculus and their chief problems, the area problem and the tangent problem, appear to be very different, but it turns out that there is a very close connection between them. The tangent problem and the area problem are inverse problems in a sense that will be described in Chapter 5.

Velocity

When we look at the speedometer of a car and read that the car is traveling at 48 mi/h, what does that information indicate to us? We know that if the velocity remains constant, then after an hour we will have traveled 48 mi. But if the velocity of the car varies, what does it mean to say that the velocity at a given instant is 48 mi/h?

In order to analyze this question, let's examine the motion of a car that travels along a straight road and assume that we can measure the distance traveled by the car (in feet) at l-second intervals as in the following chart:

t = Time elapsed (s)	0	1	2	3	4	5
d = Distance (ft)	0	2	9	24	42	71

As a first step toward finding the velocity after 2 seconds have elapsed, we find the average velocity during the time interval $2 \leqslant t \leqslant 4$:

$$\text{average velocity} = \frac{\text{change in position}}{\text{time elapsed}}$$
$$= \frac{42 - 9}{4 - 2}$$
$$= 16.5 \text{ ft/s}$$

Similarly, the average velocity in the time interval $2 \leqslant t \leqslant 3$ is

$$\text{average velocity} = \frac{24 - 9}{3 - 2} = 15 \text{ ft/s}$$

We have the feeling that the velocity at the instant $t = 2$ can't be much different from the average velocity during a short time interval starting at $t = 2$. So let's imagine that the distance traveled has been measured at 0.1-second time intervals as in the following chart:

t	2.0	2.1	2.2	2.3	2.4	2.5
d	9.00	10.02	11.16	12.45	13.96	15.80

Then we can compute, for instance, the average velocity over the time interval [2, 2.5]:

$$\text{average velocity} = \frac{15.80 - 9.00}{2.5 - 2} = 13.6 \text{ ft/s}$$

The results of such calculations are shown in the following chart:

Time interval	[2, 3]	[2, 2.5]	[2, 2.4]	[2, 2.3]	[2, 2.2]	[2, 2.1]
Average velocity (ft/s)	15.0	13.6	12.4	11.5	10.8	10.2

The average velocities over successively smaller intervals appear to be getting closer to a number near 10, and so we expect that the velocity at exactly $t = 2$ is about 10 ft/s. In Chapter 2 we will define the instantaneous velocity of a moving object as the limiting value of the average velocities over smaller and smaller time intervals.

In Figure 8 we show a graphical representation of the motion of the car by plotting the distance traveled as a function of time. If we write $d = f(t)$, then $f(t)$ is the number of feet traveled after t seconds. The average velocity in the time interval $[2, t]$ is

$$\text{average velocity} = \frac{\text{change in position}}{\text{time elapsed}} = \frac{f(t) - f(2)}{t - 2}$$

which is the same as the slope of the secant line PQ in Figure 8. The velocity v when $t = 2$ is the limiting value of this average velocity as t approaches 2; that is,

$$v = \lim_{t \to 2} \frac{f(t) - f(2)}{t - 2}$$

and we recognize from Equation 2 that this is the same as the slope of the tangent line to the curve at P.

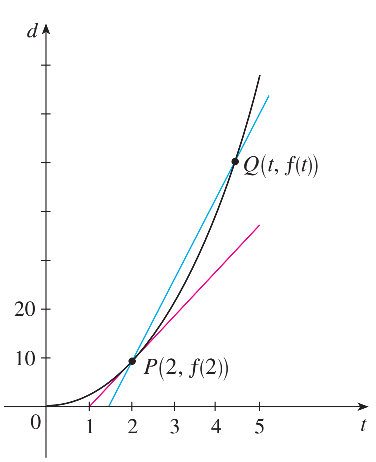


FIGURE 8

Thus, when we solve the tangent problem in differential calculus, we are also solving problems concerning velocities. The same techniques also enable us to solve problems involving rates of change in all of the natural and social sciences.

The Limit of a Sequence

In the fifth century BC the Greek philosopher Zeno of Elea posed four problems, now known as *Zeno's paradoxes*, that were intended to challenge some of the ideas concerning space and time that were held in his day. Zeno's second paradox concerns a race between the Greek hero Achilles and a tortoise that has been given a head start. Zeno argued, as follows, that Achilles could never pass the tortoise: Suppose that Achilles starts at position a_1 and the tortoise starts at position t_1. (See Figure 9.) When Achilles reaches the point $a_2 = t_1$, the tortoise is farther ahead at position t_2. When Achilles reaches $a_3 = t_2$, the tortoise is at t_3. This process continues indefinitely and so it appears that the tortoise will always be ahead! But this defies common sense.

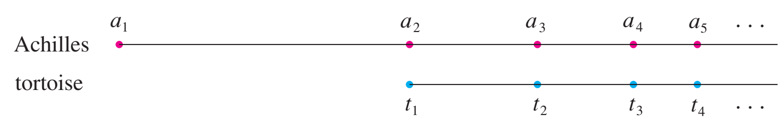


FIGURE 9

One way of explaining this paradox is with the idea of a *sequence*. The successive positions of Achilles $(a_1, a_2, a_3, \ldots)$ or the successive positions of the tortoise $(t_1, t_2, t_3, \ldots)$ form what is known as a sequence.

In general, a sequence $\{a_n\}$ is a set of numbers written in a definite order. For instance, the sequence

$$\left\{1, \tfrac{1}{2}, \tfrac{1}{3}, \tfrac{1}{4}, \tfrac{1}{5}, \ldots\right\}$$

can be described by giving the following formula for the nth term:

$$a_n = \frac{1}{n}$$

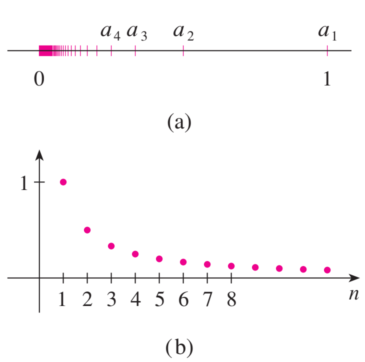


FIGURE 10

We can visualize this sequence by plotting its terms on a number line as in Figure 10(a) or by drawing its graph as in Figure 10(b). Observe from either picture that the terms of the sequence $a_n = 1/n$ are becoming closer and closer to 0 as n increases. In fact, we can find terms as small as we please by making n large enough. We say that the limit of the sequence is 0, and we indicate this by writing

$$\lim_{n \to \infty} \frac{1}{n} = 0$$

In general, the notation

$$\lim_{n \to \infty} a_n = L$$

is used if the terms a_n approach the number L as n becomes large. This means that the numbers a_n can be made as close as we like to the number L by taking n sufficiently large.

The concept of the limit of a sequence occurs whenever we use the decimal representation of a real number. For instance, if

$$\begin{aligned} a_1 &= 3.1 \\ a_2 &= 3.14 \\ a_3 &= 3.141 \\ a_4 &= 3.1415 \\ a_5 &= 3.14159 \\ a_6 &= 3.141592 \\ a_7 &= 3.1415926 \\ &\vdots \end{aligned}$$

then
$$\lim_{n \to \infty} a_n = \pi$$

The terms in this sequence are rational approximations to π.

Let's return to Zeno's paradox. The successive positions of Achilles and the tortoise form sequences $\{a_n\}$ and $\{t_n\}$, where $a_n < t_n$ for all n. It can be shown that both sequences have the same limit:

$$\lim_{n \to \infty} a_n = p = \lim_{n \to \infty} t_n$$

It is precisely at this point p that Achilles overtakes the tortoise.

The Sum of a Series

Another of Zeno's paradoxes, as passed on to us by Aristotle, is the following: "A man standing in a room cannot walk to the wall. In order to do so, he would first have to go half the distance, then half the remaining distance, and then again half of what still remains. This process can always be continued and can never be ended." (See Figure 11.)

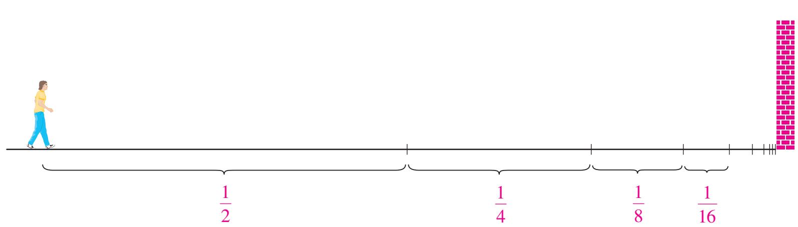


FIGURE 11

Of course, we know that the man can actually reach the wall, so this suggests that perhaps the total distance can be expressed as the sum of infinitely many smaller distances as follows:

$$\boxed{3} \qquad 1 = \frac{1}{2} + \frac{1}{4} + \frac{1}{8} + \frac{1}{16} + \cdots + \frac{1}{2^n} + \cdots$$

Zeno was arguing that it doesn't make sense to add infinitely many numbers together. But there are other situations in which we implicitly use infinite sums. For instance, in decimal notation, the symbol $0.\overline{3} = 0.3333\ldots$ means

$$\frac{3}{10} + \frac{3}{100} + \frac{3}{1000} + \frac{3}{10{,}000} + \cdots$$

and so, in some sense, it must be true that

$$\frac{3}{10} + \frac{3}{100} + \frac{3}{1000} + \frac{3}{10{,}000} + \cdots = \frac{1}{3}$$

More generally, if d_n denotes the nth digit in the decimal representation of a number, then

$$0.d_1d_2d_3d_4\ldots = \frac{d_1}{10} + \frac{d_2}{10^2} + \frac{d_3}{10^3} + \cdots + \frac{d_n}{10^n} + \cdots$$

Therefore some infinite sums, or infinite series as they are called, have a meaning. But we must define carefully what the sum of an infinite series is.

Returning to the series in Equation 3, we denote by s_n the sum of the first n terms of the series. Thus

$$\begin{aligned}
s_1 &= \tfrac{1}{2} = 0.5 \\
s_2 &= \tfrac{1}{2} + \tfrac{1}{4} = 0.75 \\
s_3 &= \tfrac{1}{2} + \tfrac{1}{4} + \tfrac{1}{8} = 0.875 \\
s_4 &= \tfrac{1}{2} + \tfrac{1}{4} + \tfrac{1}{8} + \tfrac{1}{16} = 0.9375 \\
s_5 &= \tfrac{1}{2} + \tfrac{1}{4} + \tfrac{1}{8} + \tfrac{1}{16} + \tfrac{1}{32} = 0.96875 \\
s_6 &= \tfrac{1}{2} + \tfrac{1}{4} + \tfrac{1}{8} + \tfrac{1}{16} + \tfrac{1}{32} + \tfrac{1}{64} = 0.984375 \\
s_7 &= \tfrac{1}{2} + \tfrac{1}{4} + \tfrac{1}{8} + \tfrac{1}{16} + \tfrac{1}{32} + \tfrac{1}{64} + \tfrac{1}{128} = 0.9921875 \\
&\;\vdots \\
s_{10} &= \tfrac{1}{2} + \tfrac{1}{4} + \cdots + \tfrac{1}{1024} \approx 0.99902344 \\
&\;\vdots \\
s_{16} &= \frac{1}{2} + \frac{1}{4} + \cdots + \frac{1}{2^{16}} \approx 0.99998474
\end{aligned}$$

Observe that as we add more and more terms, the partial sums become closer and closer to 1. In fact, it can be shown that by taking n large enough (that is, by adding sufficiently many terms of the series), we can make the partial sum s_n as close as we please to the number 1. It therefore seems reasonable to say that the sum of the infinite series is 1 and to write

$$\frac{1}{2} + \frac{1}{4} + \frac{1}{8} + \cdots + \frac{1}{2^n} + \cdots = 1$$

In other words, the reason the sum of the series is 1 is that

$$\lim_{n \to \infty} s_n = 1$$

In Chapter 11 we will discuss these ideas further. We will then use Newton's idea of combining infinite series with differential and integral calculus.

Summary

We have seen that the concept of a limit arises in trying to find the area of a region, the slope of a tangent to a curve, the velocity of a car, or the sum of an infinite series. In each case the common theme is the calculation of a quantity as the limit of other, easily calculated quantities. It is this basic idea of a limit that sets calculus apart from other areas of mathematics. In fact, we could define calculus as the part of mathematics that deals with limits.

After Sir Isaac Newton invented his version of calculus, he used it to explain the motion of the planets around the sun. Today calculus is used in calculating the orbits of satellites and spacecraft, in predicting population sizes, in estimating how fast oil prices rise or fall, in forecasting weather, in measuring the cardiac output of the heart, in calculating life insurance premiums, and in a great variety of other areas. We will explore some of these uses of calculus in this book.

In order to convey a sense of the power of the subject, we end this preview with a list of some of the questions that you will be able to answer using calculus:

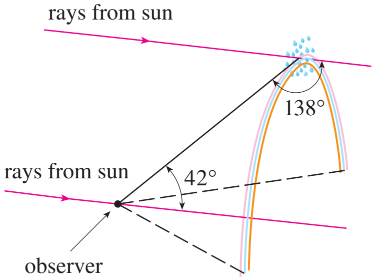


FIGURE 12

1. How can we explain the fact, illustrated in Figure 12, that the angle of elevation from an observer up to the highest point in a rainbow is 42°? (See page 285.)
2. How can we explain the shapes of cans on supermarket shelves? (See page 343.)
3. Where is the best place to sit in a movie theater? (See page 465.)
4. How can we design a roller coaster for a smooth ride? (See page 182.)
5. How far away from an airport should a pilot start descent? (See page 208.)
6. How can we fit curves together to design shapes to represent letters on a laser printer? (See page 657.)
7. How can we estimate the number of workers that were needed to build the Great Pyramid of Khufu in ancient Egypt? (See page 460.)
8. Where should an infielder position himself to catch a baseball thrown by an outfielder and relay it to home plate? (See page 465.)
9. Does a ball thrown upward take longer to reach its maximum height or to fall back to its original height? (See page 609.)
10. How can we explain the fact that planets and satellites move in elliptical orbits? (See page 868.)
11. How can we distribute water flow among turbines at a hydroelectric station so as to maximize the total energy production? (See page 980.)
12. If a marble, a squash ball, a steel bar, and a lead pipe roll down a slope, which of them reaches the bottom first? (See page 1052.)