Section 3.2 : Sequences

Note: Chapter 11 of Stewart's Calculus is a good reference for this chapter of our lecture notes.

Definition 55

A sequence is an infinite ordered list

$$a_1, a_2, a_3, \dots$$

- The items in list a_1, a_2 etc. are called terms (1st term, 2nd term, and so on).
- In our context the terms will generally be real numbers - but they don't have to be.
- The sequence $a_1, a_2, \dots$ can be denoted by (a_n) or by $(a_n)_{n=1}^{\infty}$.
- There may be an overall formula for the terms of the sequence, or a "rule" for getting from one to the next, but there doesn't have to be.

A Few Examples

1. $((-1)^n + 1)_{n=1}^{\infty}$: $a_n = (-1)^n + 1$
   $a_1 = -1 + 1 = 0,\ a_2 = (-1)^2 + 1 = 2, a_3 = (-1)^3 + 1 = 0, \dots$

   $$0, 2, 0, 2, 0, 2, \dots$$

2. $(\sin(\frac{n\pi}{2}))_{n=1}^{\infty}$: $a_n = \sin(\frac{n\pi}{2})$
   $a_1 = \sin(\frac{\pi}{2}) = 1,\ a_2 = \sin(\pi) = 0,\ a_3 = \sin(\frac{3\pi}{2}) = -1,\ a_4 = \sin(2\pi) = 0, \dots$.

   $$1, 0, -1, 0, 1, 0, -1, 0, \dots$$

3. $(\frac{1}{n}\sin(\frac{n\pi}{2}))_{n=1}^{\infty}$: $a_n = \frac{1}{n}\sin(\frac{n\pi}{2})$
   $a_1 = \sin(\frac{\pi}{2}) = 1,\ a_2 = \frac{1}{2}\sin(\pi) = 0,\ a_3 = \frac{1}{3}\sin(\frac{3\pi}{2}) = -\frac{1}{3},\ a_4 = \frac{1}{4}\sin(2\pi) = 0, \dots$.

   $$1, 0, -\frac{1}{3}, 0, \frac{1}{5}, 0, -\frac{1}{7}, 0, \dots$$

Visualising a sequence

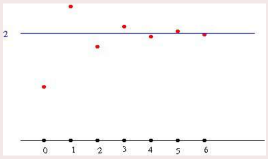
One way of visualizing a sequence is to consider it as a function whose domain is the set of natural numbers and think of its graph, which will be a collection of isolated points, one for each natural number.

Example 56

$(2 + (-1)^n 2^{1-n})_{n=1}^{\infty}$. *Write* $a_n = 2 + (-1)^n 2^{1-n}$. *Then*

$$a_1 = 2 - 2^0 = 1,\ a_2 = 2 + 2^{-1} = \frac{5}{2},\ a_3 = 2 - 2^{-2} = \frac{7}{4}, a_4 = 2 + 2^{-3} = \frac{17}{8}.$$

Graphical representation of (a_n)*:*



The sequence $(2 + (-1)^n \frac{1}{2^{n-1}})_{n=1}^{\infty}$

As n gets very large the positive number $\dfrac{1}{2^{n-1}}$ gets very small. By taking n as large as we like, we can make $\dfrac{1}{2^{n-1}}$ as small as we like.
Hence for very large values of n, the number $2 + (-1)^n \frac{1}{2^{n-1}}$ is very close to 2. By taking n as large as we like, we can make this number as close to 2 as we like.
We say that the sequence converges to 2, or that 2 is the limit of the sequence, and write

$$\lim_{n\to\infty} \left(2 + (-1)^n \frac{1}{2^{n-1}}\right) = 2.$$

Note: Because $(-1)^n$ is alternately positive and negative as n runs through the natural numbers, the terms of this sequence are alternately greater than and less than 2.

Convergence of a sequence : "official" definitions

Definition 57

The sequence (a_n) converges to the number L (or has limit L) if for every positive real number ε (no matter how small) there exists a natural number N with the property that the term a_n of the sequence is within ε of L for all terms a_n beyond the Nth term. In more compact language :

$$\forall \varepsilon > 0,\ \exists N \in \mathbb{N} \text{ for which } |a_n - L| < \varepsilon\ \forall n > N.$$

Notes

- If a sequence has a limit we say that it converges or is convergent. If not we say that it diverges or is divergent.
- If a sequence converges to L, then no matter how small a radius around L we choose, there is a point in the sequence beyond which all terms are within that radius of L. So beyond this point, all terms of the sequence are *very close together* (and very close to L). Where that point is depends on how you interpret "very close together".

Ways for a sequence to be divergent

Being convergent is a very strong property for a sequence to have, and there are lots of different ways for a sequence to be divergent.

Example 58

1. $(\max\{(-1)^n, 0\})_{n=1}^{\infty}$: $0,\ 1,\ 0,\ 1,\ 0,\ 1, \dots$
   This sequence alternates between 0 and 1 and does not approach any limit.
2. *A sequence can be divergent by having terms that increase (or decrease) without limit.*
   $(2^n)_{n=1}^{\infty}$: $2,\ 4,\ 8,\ 16,\ 32,\ 64, \dots$
3. *A sequence can have haphazard terms that follow no overall pattern, such as the sequence whose nth term is the nth digit after the decimal point in the decimal representation of* π.

Convergence is a precise concept!

Remark: The notion of a convergent sequence is sometimes described informally with words like "the terms get closer and closer to L as n gets larger". It is not true however that the terms in a sequence that converges to a limit L must get progressively closer to L as n increases.

Example 59

The sequence (a_n) is defined by

$$a_n = 0 \text{ if } n \text{ is even, } a_n = \frac{1}{n} \text{ if } n \text{ is odd.}$$

This sequence begins :

$$1,\ 0,\ \frac{1}{3},\ 0,\ \frac{1}{5},\ 0,\ \frac{1}{7},\ 0,\ \frac{1}{9},\ 0, \ldots$$

It converges to 0 although it is not true that every step takes us closer to zero.

Examples of convergent sequences

Example 60

Find $\lim_{n\to\infty} \frac{n}{2n-1}$.

Solution: As if calculating a limit as $x \to \infty$ of an expression involving a continuous variable x, divide above and below by n.

$$\lim_{n\to\infty} \frac{n}{2n-1} = \lim_{n\to\infty} \frac{n/n}{2n/n - 1/n} = \lim_{n\to\infty} \frac{1}{2 - \frac{1}{n}} = \frac{1}{2}.$$

So the sequence $\left(\frac{n}{2n-1}\right)$ *converges to* $\frac{1}{2}$.

Bounded Sequences

As for subsets of $\mathbb{R}$, there is a concept of boundedness for sequences. Basically a sequence is bounded (or bounded above or bounded below) if the set of its terms, considered as a subset of $\mathbb{R}$, is bounded (or bounded above or bounded below). More precisely :

Definition 61

The sequence (a_n) is bounded above if there exists a real number M for which $a_n \leq M$ for all $n \in \mathbb{N}$.
The sequence (a_n) is bounded below if there exists a real number m for which $m \leq a_n$ for all $n \in \mathbb{N}$.
The sequence (a_n) is bounded if it is bounded both above and below.

Example 62

The sequence (n) is bounded below (for example by 0) but not above. The sequence $(\sin n)$ is bounded below (for example by -1) and above (for example by 1).

Convergent $\implies$ Bounded

Theorem 63

If a sequence is convergent it must be bounded.

Proof Suppose that $(a_n)_{n=1}^{\infty}$ is a convergent sequence with limit L.

Then (by definition of convergence) there exists a natural number N such that every term of the sequence after a_N is between $L-1$ and $L+1$.

The set consisting of the first N terms of the sequence is a finite set : it has a maximum element M_1 and a minimum element m_1.

Let $M = \max\{M_1, L+1\}$ and let $m = \min\{m_1, L-1\}$. Then (a_n) is bounded above by M and bounded below by m.

So our sequence is bounded.

Increasing and decreasing sequences

Definition 64

A sequence (a_n) is called increasing if $a_n \leq a_{n+1}$ for all $n \geq 1$.
A sequence (a_n) is called strictly increasing if $a_n < a_{n+1}$ for all $n \geq 1$.
A sequence (a_n) is called decreasing if $a_n \geq a_{n+1}$ for all $n \geq 1$.
A sequence (a_n) is called strictly decreasing if $a_n > a_{n+1}$ for all $n \geq 1$.

Definition 65

A sequence is called monotonic if it is either increasing or decreasing.
Similar terms: monotonic increasing, monotonic decreasing, monotonically increasing/decreasing.

Note: These definitions are not *entirely* standard. Some authors use the term *increasing* for what we have called *strictly increasing* and/or use the term *nondecreasing* for what we have called *increasing*.

Examples

1. An increasing sequence is bounded below but need not be bounded above. For example

$$(n)_{n=1}^{\infty} : 1,\ 2,\ 3,\ \ldots$$

2. A bounded sequence need not be monotonic. For example

$$((-1)^n) : -1,\ 1,\ -1,\ 1,\ -1,\ \ldots$$

3. A convergent sequence need not be monotonic. For example

$$\left(\frac{(-1)^{n+1}}{n}\right)_{n=1}^{\infty} : 1,\ -\frac{1}{2},\ \frac{1}{3},\ -\frac{1}{4},\ \ldots$$

4. A monotonic sequence need not be convergent, as Example 1 above shows.

However, if a sequence is bounded and monotonic, it is convergent. This is the Monotone Convergence Theorem.

The Monotone Convergence Theorem

Theorem 66

If a sequence $(a_n)_{n=1}^{\infty}$ is monotonic and bounded, then it is convergent.

Proof: Suppose that (a_n) is increasing and bounded.

Then the set $\{a_n : n \in \mathbb{N}\}$ is a bounded subset of $\mathbb{R}$ and by the Axiom of Completeness it has a least upper bound (or supremum) L.

We will show that the sequence (a_n) converges to L.

Choose a (very small) $\varepsilon > 0$. Then $L - \varepsilon$ is not an upper bound for $\{a_n : n \in \mathbb{N}\}$, because L is the least upper bound.

This means there is some $N \in \mathbb{N}$ for which $L - \varepsilon < a_N$. Since L is an upper bound for $\{a_n : n \in \mathbb{N}\}$, this means

$$L - \varepsilon < a_N \leq L$$

Proof of the Monotone Convergence Theorem (continued)

$$L - \varepsilon < a_N \leq L$$

Since the sequence (a_n) is increasing and its terms are bounded above by L, every term after a_N is between a_N and L, and therefore between $L - \varepsilon$ and L. These terms are all within ε of L

Using the fact that our sequence is increasing and bounded, we have

- Identified L as the least upper bound for the set of terms in our sequence
- Showed that no matter how small an ε we take, there is a point in our sequence beyond which all terms are within ε of L.

This is exactly what it means for the sequence to converge to L.

An Example (from 2015 Summer Exam)

Example 67

A sequence (a_n) of real numbers is defined by

$$a_0 = 4, \ a_n = \frac{1}{2}(a_{n-1} - 2) \text{ for } n \geq 1.$$

1. *Write down the first four terms of the sequence.*
2. *Show that the sequence is bounded below.*
3. *Show that the sequence is montonically decreasing.*
4. *State why it can be deduced that the sequence is convergent, and determine its limit.*

Note: This is an example of a sequence that is defined recursively. This means that the first term is given and subsequent terms are defined (one by one) in terms of previous ones. We are not given a general formula for the nth term although one may exist.

Learning Outcomes for Section 3.2

After studying this section you should be able to

- Explain what a sequence is;
- State what it means for a sequence to be
  - convergent or divergent;
  - bounded or unbounded (above or below);
  - monotonic, increasing or decreasing.
- Give and/or identify examples of sequences with or without various properties (or combinations of properties) from the above list;
- State, prove and apply the Monotone Convergence Theorem;
- Analyze examples similar to Example 83.

Section 3.3: Introduction to Infinite Series

Definition 68

A series or infinite series is the sum of all the terms in a sequence.

Example 69 (Examples of infinite series)

1. $\sum_{n=1}^{\infty} n = 1 + 2 + 3 + \ldots$
2. *A geometric series*

$$\sum_{n=0}^{\infty} \frac{1}{2^n} = 1 + \frac{1}{2} + \frac{1}{2^2} + \ldots$$

Every term in this series is obtained from the previous one by multiplying by the common ratio $\frac{1}{2}$. This is what geometric means.

Examples of Series (continued)

Example 70

3. *The harmonic series*

$$\sum_{n=1}^{\infty} \frac{1}{n} = 1 + \frac{1}{2} + \frac{1}{3} + \ldots$$

4. *An alternating series*

$$\sum_{n=0}^{\infty} (-1)^n = 1 + (-1) + 1 + (-1) + \ldots$$

Notes

1. For now these infinite sums are just formal expressions or arrangements of symbols. Whether it is meaningful to think of them as numbers or not is something that can be investigated.
2. A series is not the same thing as a sequence - don't confuse these terms! A sequence is a list of numbers. A series is an infinite sum.
3. The "sigma" notation for sums: sigma (lower case σ, upper case Σ) is a letter from the Greek alphabet, the upper case $\sum$ is used to denote sums. The notation $\sum_{n=i}^{j} a_n$ means: i and j are integers and $i \leq j$. For each n from i to j the number a_n is defined; the expression above means the sum of the numbers a_n where n runs through all the values from i to j, i.e.

$$\sum_{n=i}^{j} a_n = a_i + a_{i+1} + a_{i+2} + \cdots + a_{j-1} + a_j.$$

For infinite sums we can have $-\infty$ and/or ∞ (instead of fixed integers i and j) as subscripts and superscripts for the summation.

Sequences of partial sums

In the examples above we can start from the beginning, adding terms at the start of the series. Adding term by term we get the following lists.

1. $\sum_{n=1}^{\infty} n = 1 + 2 + 3 + \ldots$

$1, 1+2, 1+2+3, 1+2+3+4, 1+2+3+4+5, \ldots$ $1, 3, 6, 10, 15, \ldots$

Since the terms being added on at each stage are getting bigger, the numbers in the list above will keep growing (faster and faster as n increases) - we can't associate a numerical value with this infinite sum.

Note: We should be careful when thinking about the difference between a sequence, a series, and the sequences of partial sums. In the previous example for instance we have

- Sequence: $(n) = (1, 2, 3, \ldots)$,
- Series: $\sum_{n=1}^{\infty} n = 1 + 2 + 3 + \ldots$,
- Sequence of partial sums: $(s_k) = (\sum_{n=1}^{k} n) = (1, 3, 6, 10, \ldots)$.

Examples (continued)

2. A geometric series

$$\sum_{n=0}^{\infty} \frac{1}{2^n} = 1 + \frac{1}{2} + \frac{1}{2^2} + \ldots$$

$1, 1+\frac{1}{2}, 1+\frac{1}{2}+\frac{1}{2^2}, 1+\frac{1}{2}+\frac{1}{2^2}+\frac{1}{2^3} \ldots$ $1, \frac{3}{2}, \frac{7}{4}, \frac{15}{8}, \frac{31}{16}, \frac{63}{32} \ldots$

In this example the terms that are being added on at each step $(\frac{1}{2^n})$ are getting smaller and smaller as n increases, and the numbers in the list appear to be converging to 2.

Examples (continued)

3. The harmonic series

$$\sum_{n=1}^{\infty} \frac{1}{n} = 1 + \frac{1}{2} + \frac{1}{3} + \ldots$$

$1, 1+\frac{1}{2}, 1+\frac{1}{2}+\frac{1}{3}, 1+\frac{1}{2}+\frac{1}{3}+\frac{1}{4} \ldots$ $1, \frac{3}{2}, \frac{11}{6}, \frac{25}{12}, \frac{137}{60}, \ldots$

It is harder to see what is going on here.

Notes

4. An alternating series

$$\sum_{n=0}^{\infty} (-1)^n = 1 + (-1) + 1 + (-1) + \ldots$$

$1,\ 1-1,\ 1-1+1,\ 1-1+1-1,\ 1-1+1-1+1 \ldots$ $1, 0, 1, 0, 1, \ldots$

The terms being "added on" at each step are alternating between 1 and -1, and as we proceed with the summation the "running total" alternates between 0 and 1. There is no numerical value that we can associate with the infinite sum $\sum_{n=0}^{\infty} (-1)^n$.

Note: The series in 2. above converges to 2, the series in 1. and 4. are both divergent and it is not obvious yet but the series in 3. is divergent as well. Our next task is to give precise meanings to these terms for series. In order to do this we need some terminology. We know what it means for a sequence to converge, but we don't yet have a definition of convergence for series.

Convergence of a series

Definition 71

For a series $\sum_{n=1}^{\infty} a_n$, and for $k \geq 1$, let

$$s_k = \sum_{n=1}^{k} a_n = a_1 + a_2 + a_3 + \cdots + a_k.$$

Thus $s_1 = a_1$, $s_2 = a_1 + a_2$, $s_3 = a_1 + a_2 + a_3$ etc.
Then s_k is called the kth partial sum of the series, and the sequence $\{s_k\}_{k=1}^{\infty}$ is called the sequence of partial sums of the series.
If the sequence of partial sums converges to a limit s, the series is said to converge and s is called its sum. In this situation we can write $\sum_{n=1}^{\infty} a_n = s$. If the sequence of partial sums diverges, the series is said to diverge.

Convergence of a geometric series

Recall Example 2 above:

$$\sum_{n=0}^{\infty} \frac{1}{2^n} = 1 + \frac{1}{2} + \frac{1}{2^2} + \ldots$$

In this example, for $k \geq 0$,

$$s_k = \sum_{n=0}^{k} \frac{1}{2^n} = 1 + \frac{1}{2} + \frac{1}{4} + \ldots \frac{1}{2^k}$$

$$\frac{1}{2}s_k = \sum_{n=1}^{k} \frac{1}{2^{n+1}} = \frac{1}{2} + \frac{1}{4} + \ldots \frac{1}{2^k} + \frac{1}{2^{k+1}}$$

Then

$$s_k - \frac{1}{2}s_k = \frac{1}{2}s_k = 1 - \frac{1}{2^{k+1}} \implies s_k = 2 - \frac{1}{2^k}.$$

So the sequence of partial sums has kth term $2 - \frac{1}{2^k}$. This sequence converges to 2 so the series converges to 2.

General geometric series

Consider the sequence of partial sums for the geometric series

$$\sum_{n=0}^{\infty} ar^n = a + ar + ar^2 + \ldots$$

(This is a geometric series with initial term a and common ratio r.) The kth partial sum s_k is given by

$$\begin{array}{lllllllll} s_k & = & \sum_{n=0}^{k} ar^n & = & a + & ar + & \ldots & + & ar^k \\ rs_k & = & \sum_{n=0}^{k} ar^{n+1} & = & & ar + & ar^2 + \ldots + & ar^k & + \; ar^{k+1} \end{array}$$

Then $(1-r)s_k = a - ar^{k+1} \implies s_k = \frac{a(1-r^{k+1})}{1-r}$. If $|r| < 1$, then $r^{k+1} \to 0$ as $k \to \infty$, and the sequence of partial sums (hence the series) converges to $\frac{a}{1-r}$. If $|r| \geq 1$ the series is divergent.

The harmonic series is divergent

Theorem 72

The harmonic series $\sum_{n=1}^{\infty} \frac{1}{n}$ *is divergent.*

Proof: Think of $\frac{1}{n}$ as the area of a rectangle of height $\frac{1}{n}$ and width 1, sitting on the interval $[n, n+1]$ on the x-axis. So the $\frac{1}{1}$ corresponds to a square of area 1 sitting on the interval $[1, 2]$, the term $\frac{1}{2}$ corresponds to a rectangle of area $\frac{1}{2}$ sitting on the interval $[2, 3]$ and so on.
The total area accounted for by these triangles is the sum of the harmonic series, and this exceeds the area accounted for by the improper integral

$$\int_1^{\infty} \frac{1}{x}\,dx.$$

From Section 1.5 we know that this area is infinite.

A necessary condition for convergence

Note: A necessary condition for the series

$$\sum_{n=1}^{\infty} a_n$$

to converge is that the sequence $\{a_n\}_{n=1}^{\infty}$ converges to 0; i.e. that $a_n \to 0$ as $n \to \infty$. If this does *not* happen, then the sequence of partial sums has no possibility of converging.

The example of the harmonic series shows that the condition $a_n \to 0$ as $n \to \infty$ is not sufficient to guarantee that the series $\sum_{n=1}^{\infty}$ will converge.

Learning outcomes for Section 3.3

After studying this section you should be able to

- explain what an infinite series is and what it means for an infinite series to converge;
- Give examples of convergent and divergent series;
- show that the harmonic series is divergent;
- Use the “sigma” notation for sums.

Section 3.4: Introduction to power series

Definition 73

A power series in the variable x resembles a polynomial, except that it may contain infinitely many positive powers of x. It is an expression of the type

$$\sum_{i=0}^{\infty} a_i x^i = a_0 + a_1 x + a_2 x^2 + \dots,$$

where each a_i is a number.

Example 74

$$\sum_{n=0}^{\infty} x^n = 1 + x + x^2 + x^3 + \dots$$

is a power series.

Question: Can we think of a power series as a function of x?

Power Series as Functions

Define a "function" by

$$f(x) = \sum_{n=0}^{\infty} x^n = 1 + x + x^2 + \dots$$

- If we try to evaluate this function at $x = 2$, we get a series of real numbers.

$$f(2) = \sum_{n=0}^{\infty} 2^n = 1 + 2 + 2^2 + \dots$$

  This series is divergent, so our power series does not define a function that can be evaluated at 2.
- If we try evaluating at 0 (and allow that the first term x^0 of the power series is interpreted as 1 for *all* values of x), we get

$$f(0) = 1 + 0 + 0^2 + \cdots = 1.$$

  So it does make sense to "evaluate" this function at $x = 0$.

$f(x) = \sum_{n=0}^{\infty} x^n = 1 + x + x^2 + \dots$

- If we try evaluating at $x = \frac{1}{2}$, we get

$$f\left(\frac{1}{2}\right) = \sum_{n=0}^{\infty} \left(\frac{1}{2}\right)^n = 1 + \frac{1}{2} + \left(\frac{1}{2}\right)^2 + \dots$$

  This is a geometric series with first term $a = 1$ and common ratio $r = \frac{1}{2}$. We know that if $|r| < 1$, such a series converges to the number $\frac{a}{1-r}$. In this case

$$\frac{a}{1-r} = \frac{1}{1-\frac{1}{2}} = 2,$$

  and we have $f(\frac{1}{2}) = 2$.

So we can evaluate our function at $x = \frac{1}{2}$.

$f(x) = \sum_{n=0}^{\infty} x^n = \frac{1}{1-x}$, for $|x| < 1$

A geometric series of this sort converges provided that the absolute value of its common ratio is less than 1. In general for any value of x whose absolute value is less than 1 (i.e. any x in the interval $(-1, 1)$), we find that $f(x)$ is a convergent geometric series, converging to $\frac{1}{1-x}$.

Conclusion: For values of x in the interval $(-1, 1)$ (i.e. $|x| < 1$), the function $f(x) = \frac{1}{1-x}$ coincides with the power series $\sum_{n=0}^{\infty} x^n$.

$$\frac{1}{1-x} = \sum_{n=0}^{\infty} x^n, \quad \text{for } |x| < 1.$$

The interval $(-1, 1)$ is called the interval of convergence of the power series, and 1 is the radius of convergence. We say that the power series representation of the function $f(x) = \frac{1}{1-x}$ is $\sum_{n=0}^{\infty} x^n$, for values of x in the interval $(-1, 1)$.

Which functions have power series representations?

Remark: The power series representation is not particularly useful if you want to calculate $\frac{1}{1-x}$ for some particular value of x, because this is easily done directly. However, if we could obtain a power series representation for a function like $\sin x$ and use it to evaluate (or approximate) $\sin(1)$ or $\sin(9)$ or $\sin(20)$, that might be of real practical use. These numbers are not easy to obtain directly because the definition of $\sin x$ doesn't tell us how to calculate $\sin x$ for a particular x - you can use a calculator of course but how does the calculator do it?

Questions: What functions can be represented by power series, and on what sorts of interval or subsets of $\mathbb{R}$? If a function could be represented by a power series, how would we calculate the coefficients in this series?

Maclaurin (or Taylor) series

Suppose that $f(x)$ is an infinitely differentiable function (this means that all the deriviatives of f are themselves differentiable), and suppose that f is represented by the power series

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

We can work out appropriate values for the coefficients c_n as follows.

- Put $x = 0$. Then $f(0) = c_0 + \sum_{n=1}^{\infty} c_n(0)^n \implies f(0) = c_0$.
  The constant term in the power series is the value of f at 0.
- To calculate c_1, look at the value of the first derivative of f at 0, and differentiate the power series term by term. We expect

$$f'(x) = c_1 + 2c_2 x + 3c_3 x^2 + \cdots = \sum_{n=1}^{\infty} n c_n x^{n-1}.$$

  Then we should have $f'(0) = c_1 + 2c_2 \times 0 + 3c_3 \times 0 + \cdots = c_1$. Thus

$$c_1 = f'(0).$$

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

- For c_2, look at the second derivative of f. We expect

$$f''(x) = 2(1)c_2 + 3(2)c_3x + 4(3)c_4x^2 + 5(4)c_5x^3 + \ldots$$

Putting $x = 0$ gives $f''(0) = 2(1)c_2$ or

$$c_2 = \frac{f''(0)}{2(1)}.$$

- For c_3, look at the third derivative $f^{(3)}(x)$. We have

$$f^{(3)}(x) = 3(2)(1)c_3 + 4(3)(2)c_4x + 5(4)(3)c_5x^2 + \ldots$$

Setting $x = 0$ gives $f^{(3)}(0) = 3(2)(1)c_3$ or

$$c_3 = \frac{f^{(3)}(0)}{3(2)(1)}$$

Coefficients of the Maclaurin Series

Continuing this process, we obtain the following general formula for c_n:

$$c_n = \frac{1}{n!} f^{(n)}(0).$$

Definition 75

For a positive integer n, the number n factorial, denoted $n!$ is defined by

$$n! = n \times (n-1) \times (n-2) \times \ldots 3 \times 2 \times 1.$$

The number 0! (zero factorial) is defined to be 1.

Power series representation of $\sin x$

Write $f(x) = \sin x$, and write $\sum_{n=0}^{\infty} c_n x^n$ for the Maclaurin series of $\sin x$. Then

- $f(0) = \sin 0 = 0 \Longrightarrow c_0 = 0$
- $f'(0) = \cos 0 = 1 \Longrightarrow c_1 = 1$
- $f''(0) = -\sin 0 = 0 \Longrightarrow c_2 = \frac{0}{2!} = 0$
- $f^{(3)}(0) = -\cos 0 = -1 \Longrightarrow c_3 = \frac{-1}{3!} = -\frac{1}{6}$
- $f^{(4)}(0) = \sin 0 = 0 \Longrightarrow c_4 = \frac{0}{4!} = 0$

Power series representation of $\sin x$

This pattern continues :

- If k is even then $f^{(k)}(0) = \pm \sin 0 = 0$, so $c_k = 0$.
- If k is odd and $k \equiv 1 \mod 4$ then $f^{(k)}(0) = \cos 0 = 1$ and $c_k = \frac{1}{k!}$.
- If k is odd and $k \equiv 3 \mod 4$ then $f^{(k)}(0) = -\cos 0 = -1$ and $c_k = -\frac{1}{k!}$.

Thus the Maclaurin series for $\sin x$ is given by

$$\sum_{k=0}^{\infty} \frac{(-1)^k}{(2k+1)!} x^{2k+1} = x - \frac{1}{3!}x^3 + \frac{1}{5!}x^5 - \frac{1}{7!}x^7 + \ldots$$

Note that this series only involves odd powers of x - this is not surprising because sin is an odd function; it satisfies $\sin(-x) = -\sin x$.

Power series representations of $\sin x$ and $\cos x$

Theorem 76

For every real number x, the above series converges to $\sin x$.

Thus computing partial sums of this series gives us an effective way of approximating $\sin x$ for any real number x.

Exercise 77

Show that the Maclaurin series for $\cos x$ is given by

$$\sum_{k=0}^{\infty} \frac{(-1)^k}{(2k!)} x^{2k}.$$

(Note that this can be obtained by differentiating term-by-term the series for $\sin x$, as we would expect since $\frac{d}{dx}(\sin x) = \cos x$.)

Learning outcomes for Section 3.4

After studying this section you should be able to

- State the meaning of the term *power series*,
- Explain the concept of the *radius of convergence* of a power series,
- Calculate the coefficients in (an initial segment of) the Maclaurin series representation of a given function.