

1.3

Functions and Their Graphs

Functions are the major objects we deal with in calculus because they are key to describing the real world in mathematical terms. This section reviews the ideas of functions, their graphs, and ways of representing them.

Functions; Domain and Range

The temperature at which water boils depends on the elevation above sea level (the boiling point drops as you ascend). The interest paid on a cash investment depends on the length of time the investment is held. The area of a circle depends on the radius of the circle. The distance an object travels from an initial location along a straight line path depends on its speed.

In each case, the value of one variable quantity, which we might call y , depends on the value of another variable quantity, which we might call x . Since the value of y is completely determined by the value of x , we say that y is a function of x . Often the value of y is given by a *rule* or formula that says how to calculate it from the variable x . For instance, the equation $A = \pi r^2$ is a rule that calculates the area A of a circle from its radius r .

In calculus we may want to refer to an unspecified function without having any particular formula in mind. A symbolic way to say “ y is a function of x ” is by writing

$$y = f(x) \quad (\text{“}y \text{ equals } f \text{ of } x\text{”})$$

In this notation, the symbol f represents the function. The letter x , called the **independent variable**, represents the input value of f , and y , the **dependent variable**, represents the corresponding output **value** of f at x .

DEFINITION Function

A **function** from a set D to a set Y is a rule that assigns a *unique* (single) element $f(x) \in Y$ to each element $x \in D$.



FIGURE 1.22 A diagram showing a function as a kind of machine.

The set D of all possible input values is called the **domain** of the function. The set of all values of $f(x)$ as x varies throughout D is called the **range** of the function. The range may not include every element in the set Y .

The domain and range of a function can be any sets of objects, but often in calculus they are sets of real numbers. (In Chapters 13–16 many variables may be involved.)

Think of a function f as a kind of machine that produces an output value $f(x)$ in its range whenever we feed it an input value x from its domain (Figure 1.22). The function

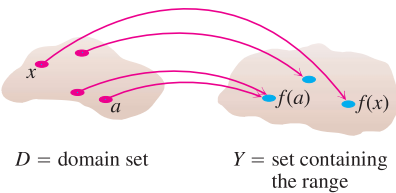


FIGURE 1.23 A function from a set D to a set Y assigns a unique element of Y to each element in D .

keys on a calculator give an example of a function as a machine. For instance, the \sqrt{x} key on a calculator gives an output value (the square root) whenever you enter a nonnegative number x and press the \sqrt{x} key. The output value appearing in the display is usually a decimal approximation to the square root of x . If you input a number $x < 0$, then the calculator will indicate an error because $x < 0$ is not in the domain of the function and cannot be accepted as an input. The \sqrt{x} key on a calculator is not the same as the exact mathematical function f defined by $f(x) = \sqrt{x}$ because it is limited to decimal outputs and has only finitely many inputs.

A function can also be pictured as an **arrow diagram** (Figure 1.23). Each arrow associates an element of the domain D to a unique or single element in the set Y . In Figure 1.23, the arrows indicate that $f(a)$ is associated with a , $f(x)$ is associated with x , and so on.

The domain of a function may be restricted by context. For example, the domain of the area function given by $A = \pi r^2$ only allows the radius r to be positive. When we define a function $y = f(x)$ with a formula and the domain is not stated explicitly or restricted by context, the domain is assumed to be the largest set of real x -values for which the formula gives real y -values, the so-called **natural domain**. If we want to restrict the domain in some way, we must say so. The domain of $y = x^2$ is the entire set of real numbers. To restrict the function to, say, positive values of x , we would write “ $y = x^2, x > 0$.”

Changing the domain to which we apply a formula usually changes the range as well. The range of $y = x^2$ is $[0, \infty)$. The range of $y = x^2, x \geq 2$, is the set of all numbers obtained by squaring numbers greater than or equal to 2. In set notation, the range is $\{x^2 | x \geq 2\}$ or $\{y | y \geq 4\}$ or $[4, \infty)$.

When the range of a function is a set of real numbers, the function is said to be **real-valued**. The domains and ranges of many real-valued functions of a real variable are intervals or combinations of intervals. The intervals may be open, closed, or half open, and may be finite or infinite.



EXAMPLE 1 Identifying Domain and Range

Verify the domains and ranges of these functions.

Function	Domain (x)	Range (y)
$y = x^2$	$(-\infty, \infty)$	$[0, \infty)$
$y = 1/x$	$(-\infty, 0) \cup (0, \infty)$	$(-\infty, 0) \cup (0, \infty)$
$y = \sqrt{x}$	$[0, \infty)$	$[0, \infty)$
$y = \sqrt{4 - x}$	$(-\infty, 4]$	$[0, \infty)$
$y = \sqrt{1 - x^2}$	$[-1, 1]$	$[0, 1]$

Solution The formula $y = x^2$ gives a real y -value for any real number x , so the domain is $(-\infty, \infty)$. The range of $y = x^2$ is $[0, \infty)$ because the square of any real number is nonnegative and every nonnegative number y is the square of its own square root, $y = (\sqrt{y})^2$ for $y \geq 0$.

The formula $y = 1/x$ gives a real y -value for every x except $x = 0$. *We cannot divide any number by zero.* The range of $y = 1/x$, the set of reciprocals of all nonzero real numbers, is the set of all nonzero real numbers, since $y = 1/(1/y)$.

The formula $y = \sqrt{x}$ gives a real y -value only if $x \geq 0$. The range of $y = \sqrt{x}$ is $[0, \infty)$ because every nonnegative number is some number’s square root (namely, it is the square root of its own square).

In $y = \sqrt{4 - x}$, the quantity $4 - x$ cannot be negative. That is, $4 - x \geq 0$, or $x \leq 4$. The formula gives real y -values for all $x \leq 4$. The range of $\sqrt{4 - x}$ is $[0, \infty)$, the set of all nonnegative numbers.

The formula $y = \sqrt{1 - x^2}$ gives a real y -value for every x in the closed interval from -1 to 1 . Outside this domain, $1 - x^2$ is negative and its square root is not a real number. The values of $1 - x^2$ vary from 0 to 1 on the given domain, and the square roots of these values do the same. The range of $\sqrt{1 - x^2}$ is $[0, 1]$. ■

Graphs of Functions

Another way to visualize a function is its graph. If f is a function with domain D , its **graph** consists of the points in the Cartesian plane whose coordinates are the input-output pairs for f . In set notation, the graph is

$$\{(x, f(x)) \mid x \in D\}.$$

The graph of the function $f(x) = x + 2$ is the set of points with coordinates (x, y) for which $y = x + 2$. Its graph is sketched in Figure 1.24.

The graph of a function f is a useful picture of its behavior. If (x, y) is a point on the graph, then $y = f(x)$ is the height of the graph above the point x . The height may be positive or negative, depending on the sign of $f(x)$ (Figure 1.25).

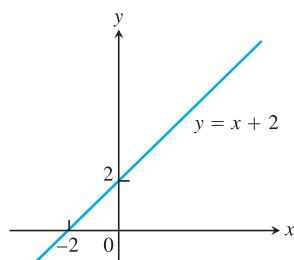


FIGURE 1.24 The graph of $f(x) = x + 2$ is the set of points (x, y) for which y has the value $x + 2$.

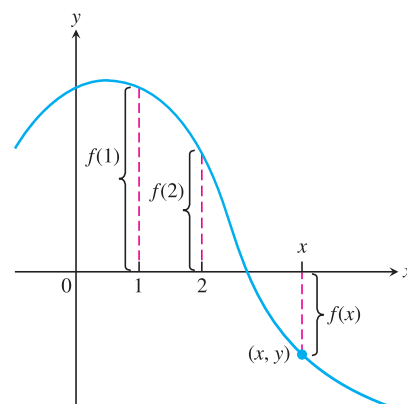


FIGURE 1.25 If (x, y) lies on the graph of f , then the value $y = f(x)$ is the height of the graph above the point x (or below x if $f(x)$ is negative).

x	$y = x^2$
-2	4
-1	1
0	0
1	1
$\frac{3}{2}$	$\frac{9}{4}$
2	4

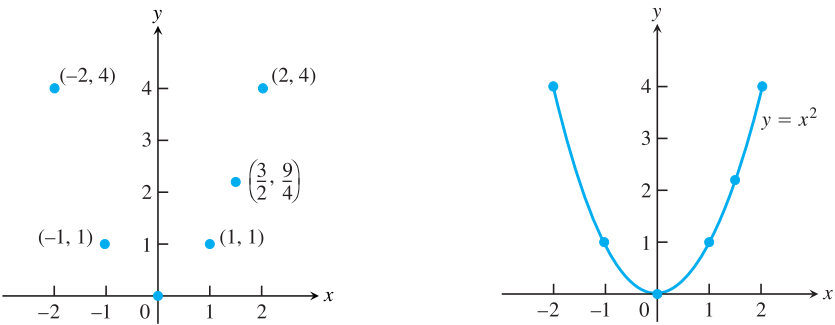
EXAMPLE 2 Sketching a Graph

Graph the function $y = x^2$ over the interval $[-2, 2]$.

Solution

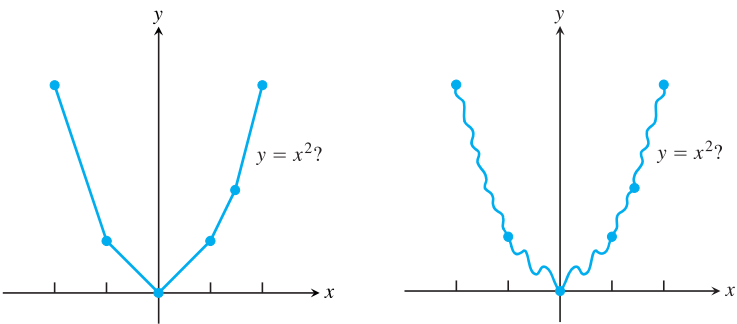
1. Make a table of xy -pairs that satisfy the function rule, in this case the equation $y = x^2$.

2. Plot the points (x, y) whose coordinates appear in the table. Use fractions when they are convenient computationally.
3. Draw a smooth curve through the plotted points. Label the curve with its equation.



Computers and graphing calculators graph functions in much this way—by stringing together plotted points—and the same question arises.

How do we know that the graph of $y = x^2$ doesn't look like one of these curves?



To find out, we could plot more points. But how would we then connect *them*? The basic question still remains: How do we know for sure what the graph looks like between the points we plot? The answer lies in calculus, as we will see in Chapter 4. There we will use the *derivative* to find a curve's shape between plotted points. Meanwhile we will have to settle for plotting points and connecting them as best we can.

EXAMPLE 3 Evaluating a Function from Its Graph

The graph of a fruit fly population p is shown in Figure 1.26.

- (a) Find the populations after 20 and 45 days.
- (b) What is the (approximate) range of the population function over the time interval $0 \leq t \leq 50$?

Solution

- (a) We see from Figure 1.26 that the point $(20, 100)$ lies on the graph, so the value of the population p at 20 is $p(20) = 100$. Likewise, $p(45)$ is about 340.
- (b) The range of the population function over $0 \leq t \leq 50$ is approximately $[0, 345]$. We also observe that the population appears to get closer and closer to the value $p = 350$ as time advances.

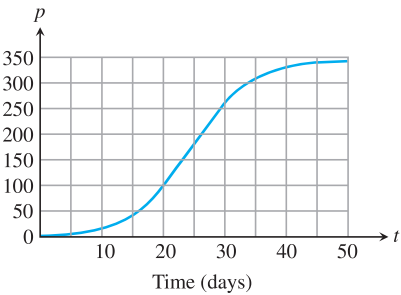


FIGURE 1.26 Graph of a fruit fly population versus time (Example 3).

Representing a Function Numerically

We have seen how a function may be represented algebraically by a formula (the area function) and visually by a graph (Examples 2 and 3). Another way to represent a function is **numerically**, through a table of values. Numerical representations are often used by engineers and applied scientists. From an appropriate table of values, a graph of the function can be obtained using the method illustrated in Example 2, possibly with the aid of a computer. The graph of only the tabled points is called a **scatterplot**.

EXAMPLE 4 A Function Defined by a Table of Values

Musical notes are pressure waves in the air that can be recorded. The data in Table 1.2 give recorded pressure displacement versus time in seconds of a musical note produced by a tuning fork. The table provides a representation of the pressure function over time. If we first make a scatterplot and then connect the data points (t, p) from the table, we obtain the graph shown in Figure 1.27.

TABLE 1.2 Tuning fork data

Time	Pressure	Time	Pressure
0.00091	-0.080	0.00362	0.217
0.00108	0.200	0.00379	0.480
0.00125	0.480	0.00398	0.681
0.00144	0.693	0.00416	0.810
0.00162	0.816	0.00435	0.827
0.00180	0.844	0.00453	0.749
0.00198	0.771	0.00471	0.581
0.00216	0.603	0.00489	0.346
0.00234	0.368	0.00507	0.077
0.00253	0.099	0.00525	-0.164
0.00271	-0.141	0.00543	-0.320
0.00289	-0.309	0.00562	-0.354
0.00307	-0.348	0.00579	-0.248
0.00325	-0.248	0.00598	-0.035
0.00344	-0.041		

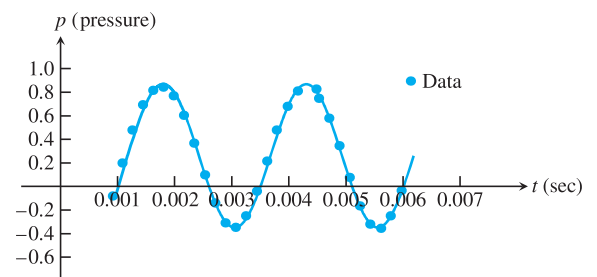


FIGURE 1.27 A smooth curve through the plotted points gives a graph of the pressure function represented by Table 1.2.

The Vertical Line Test

Not every curve you draw is the graph of a function. A function f can have only one value $f(x)$ for each x in its domain, so no *vertical line* can intersect the graph of a function more than once. Thus, a circle cannot be the graph of a function since some vertical lines intersect the circle twice (Figure 1.28a). If a is in the domain of a function f , then the vertical line $x = a$ will intersect the graph of f in the single point $(a, f(a))$.

The circle in Figure 1.28a, however, does contain the graphs of *two* functions of x ; the upper semicircle defined by the function $f(x) = \sqrt{1 - x^2}$ and the lower semicircle defined by the function $g(x) = -\sqrt{1 - x^2}$ (Figures 1.28b and 1.28c).

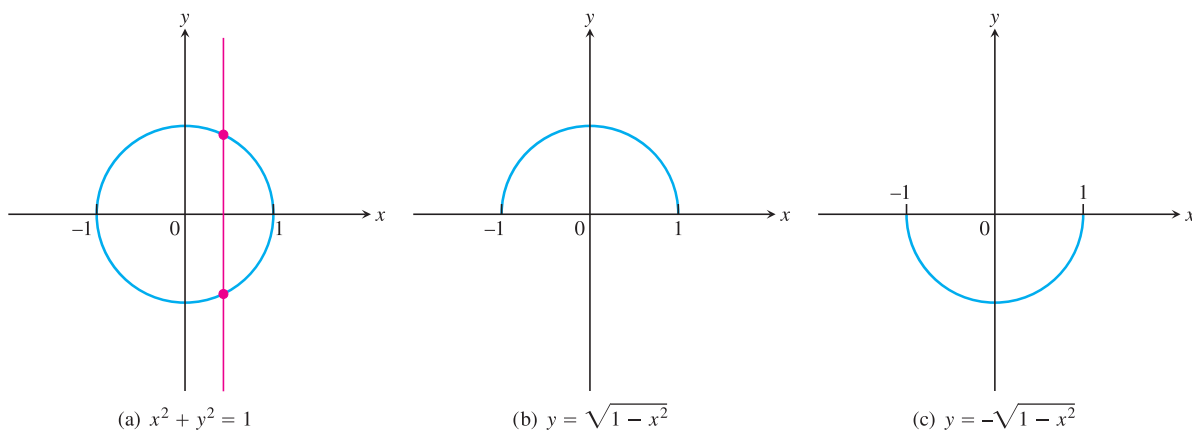


FIGURE 1.28 (a) The circle is not the graph of a function; it fails the vertical line test. (b) The upper semicircle is the graph of a function $f(x) = \sqrt{1 - x^2}$. (c) The lower semicircle is the graph of a function $g(x) = -\sqrt{1 - x^2}$.

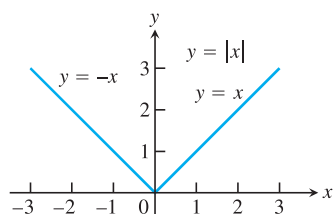


FIGURE 1.29 The absolute value function has domain $(-\infty, \infty)$ and range $[0, \infty)$.

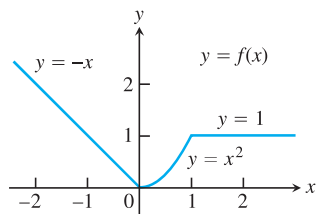


FIGURE 1.30 To graph the function $y = f(x)$ shown here, we apply different formulas to different parts of its domain (Example 5).

Piecewise-Defined Functions

Sometimes a function is described by using different formulas on different parts of its domain. One example is the **absolute value function**

$$|x| = \begin{cases} x, & x \geq 0 \\ -x, & x < 0, \end{cases}$$

whose graph is given in Figure 1.29. Here are some other examples.

EXAMPLE 5 Graphing Piecewise-Defined Functions

The function

$$f(x) = \begin{cases} -x, & x < 0 \\ x^2, & 0 \leq x \leq 1 \\ 1, & x > 1 \end{cases}$$

is defined on the entire real line but has values given by different formulas depending on the position of x . The values of f are given by: $y = -x$ when $x < 0$, $y = x^2$ when $0 \leq x \leq 1$, and $y = 1$ when $x > 1$. The function, however, is *just one function* whose domain is the entire set of real numbers (Figure 1.30). ■

EXAMPLE 6 The Greatest Integer Function

The function whose value at any number x is the *greatest integer less than or equal to* x is called the **greatest integer function** or the **integer floor function**. It is denoted $\lfloor x \rfloor$, or, in some books, $[x]$ or $[[x]]$ or $\text{int } x$. Figure 1.31 shows the graph. Observe that

$$\begin{aligned} \lfloor 2.4 \rfloor &= 2, & \lfloor 1.9 \rfloor &= 1, & \lfloor 0 \rfloor &= 0, & \lfloor -1.2 \rfloor &= -2, \\ \lfloor 2 \rfloor &= 2, & \lfloor 0.2 \rfloor &= 0, & \lfloor -0.3 \rfloor &= -1, & \lfloor -2 \rfloor &= -2. \end{aligned}$$



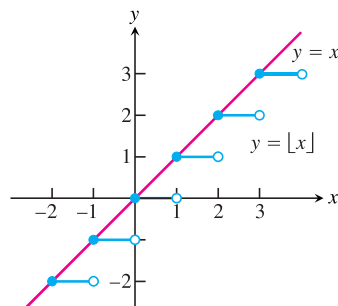


FIGURE 1.31 The graph of the greatest integer function $y = \lfloor x \rfloor$ lies on or below the line $y = x$, so it provides an integer floor for x (Example 6).

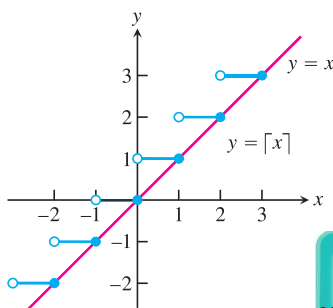


FIGURE 1.32 The graph of the least integer function $y = \lceil x \rceil$ lies on or above the line $y = x$, so it provides an integer ceiling for x (Example 7).



EXAMPLE 7 The Least Integer Function

The function whose value at any number x is the *smallest integer greater than or equal to* x is called the **least integer function** or the **integer ceiling function**. It is denoted $\lceil x \rceil$. Figure 1.32 shows the graph. For positive values of x , this function might represent, for example, the cost of parking x hours in a parking lot which charges \$1 for each hour or part of an hour.

EXAMPLE 8 Writing Formulas for Piecewise-Defined Functions

Write a formula for the function $y = f(x)$ whose graph consists of the two line segments in Figure 1.33.

Solution We find formulas for the segments from $(0, 0)$ to $(1, 1)$, and from $(1, 0)$ to $(2, 1)$ and piece them together in the manner of Example 5.

Segment from $(0, 0)$ to $(1, 1)$ The line through $(0, 0)$ and $(1, 1)$ has slope $m = (1 - 0)/(1 - 0) = 1$ and y -intercept $b = 0$. Its slope-intercept equation is $y = x$. The segment from $(0, 0)$ to $(1, 1)$ that includes the point $(0, 0)$ but not the point $(1, 1)$ is the graph of the function $y = x$ restricted to the half-open interval $0 \leq x < 1$, namely,

$$y = x, \quad 0 \leq x < 1.$$

Segment from $(1, 0)$ to $(2, 1)$ The line through $(1, 0)$ and $(2, 1)$ has slope $m = (1 - 0)/(2 - 1) = 1$ and passes through the point $(1, 0)$. The corresponding point-slope equation for the line is

$$y = 0 + 1(x - 1), \quad \text{or} \quad y = x - 1.$$

The segment from $(1, 0)$ to $(2, 1)$ that includes both endpoints is the graph of $y = x - 1$ restricted to the closed interval $1 \leq x \leq 2$, namely,

$$y = x - 1, \quad 1 \leq x \leq 2.$$

Piecewise formula Combining the formulas for the two pieces of the graph, we obtain

$$f(x) = \begin{cases} x, & 0 \leq x < 1 \\ x - 1, & 1 \leq x \leq 2. \end{cases}$$

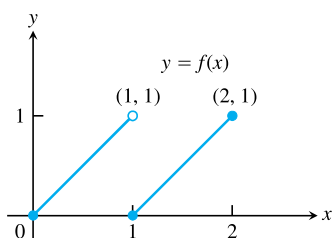


FIGURE 1.33 The segment on the left contains $(0, 0)$ but not $(1, 1)$. The segment on the right contains both of its endpoints (Example 8).