

Section 1: Concepts and Terminology

Suppose $y = \phi(x)$ is a differentiable function. We know that $dy/dx = \phi'(x)$ is another (related) function.

For example, if $y = \cos(2x)$, then y is differentiable on $(-\infty, \infty)$. In fact,

$$\frac{dy}{dx} = -2 \sin(2x).$$

Even dy/dx is differentiable with $d^2y/dx^2 = -4 \cos(2x)$.

Suppose $y = \cos(2x)$

Note that $\frac{d^2y}{dx^2} + 4y = 0$.

$$\frac{d^2y}{dx^2} = -4 \cos(2x)$$

So

$$\frac{d^2y}{dx^2} + 4y = -4 \cos(2x) + 4 \cos(2x) = 0$$

A differential equation

The equation

$$\frac{d^2y}{dx^2} + 4y = 0.$$

is an example of a **differential equation**.

Questions: If we only started with the equation, how could we determine that $\cos(2x)$ satisfies it? Also, is $\cos(2x)$ the only possible function that y could be?

Definition

A **Differential Equation** is an equation containing the derivative(s) of one or more dependent variables, with respect to one or more independent variables.

Solving a differential equation refers to determining the dependent variable(s)—as function(s).

Independent Variable: will appear as one that derivatives are taken **with respect to**.

Dependent Variable: will appear as one that derivatives are taken **of**.

Independent and Dependent Variables

Often, the derivatives indicate which variable is which:

$$\frac{dy}{dx}$$

↑
independent

← dependent

$$\frac{du}{dt}$$

↑
independent

← dependent

$$\frac{dx}{dr}$$

⇓

u is a function of t

Classifications

Type: An **ordinary differential equation (ODE)** has exactly one independent variable¹. For example

$$\frac{dy}{dx} - y^2 = 3x, \quad \text{or} \quad \frac{dy}{dt} + 2\frac{dx}{dt} = t, \quad \text{or} \quad y'' + 4y = 0$$

A **partial differential equation (PDE)** has two or more independent variables. For example

$$\frac{\partial y}{\partial t} = \frac{\partial^2 y}{\partial x^2}, \quad \text{or} \quad \frac{\partial^2 u}{\partial r^2} + \frac{1}{r} \frac{\partial u}{\partial r} + \frac{1}{r^2} \frac{\partial^2 u}{\partial \theta^2} = 0$$

∂ partial derivative symbol

¹These are the subject of this course.

Classifications

Order: The order of a differential equation is the same as the highest order derivative appearing anywhere in the equation.

$$\frac{dy}{dx} - y^2 = 3x$$

1st derivative
1st order ODE

$$y''' + (y')^4 = x^3$$

3rd order ODE

$$\frac{\partial y}{\partial t} = \frac{\partial^2 y}{\partial x^2}$$

← highest derivative is 2nd
2nd order PDE

Notations and Symbols

We'll use standard derivative notations:

Leibniz: $\frac{dy}{dx}, \frac{d^2y}{dx^2}, \dots, \frac{d^ny}{dx^n},$ or

Prime & superscripts: $y', y'', \dots y^{(n)}.$

Newton's **dot notation** may be used if the independent variable is time. For example if s is a position function, then

velocity is $\frac{ds}{dt} = \dot{s},$ and acceleration is $\frac{d^2s}{dt^2} = \ddot{s}$

Notations and Symbols

An n^{th} order ODE, with independent variable x and dependent variable y can always be expressed as an equation

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

where F is some real valued function of $n + 2$ variables.

Normal Form: If it is possible to isolate the highest derivative term, then we can write a **normal form** of the equation

$$\frac{d^n y}{dx^n} = f(x, y, y', \dots, y^{(n-1)}).$$

$$\frac{d^2y}{dx^2} + 4y = 0$$

2nd order looks like $F(x, y, y', y'') = 0$

where $F(x, y, y', y'') = y'' + 4y$

In normal form $\frac{d^2y}{dx^2} = f(x, y, y')$

where $f(x, y, y') = -4y$

Notations and Symbols

If $n = 1$ or $n = 2$, an equation in normal form would look like

$$\frac{dy}{dx} = f(x, y) \quad \text{or} \quad \frac{d^2y}{dx^2} = f(x, y, y').$$

Differential Form: A first order equation may appear in the form

$$M(x, y) dx + N(x, y) dy = 0$$

$$M(x, y) dx + N(x, y) dy = 0$$

Differential forms may be written in normal form in a couple of ways.

If $N(x, y) \neq 0$, we can rearrange

$$N(x, y) dy = -M(x, y) dx$$

$$dy = \frac{-M(x, y)}{N(x, y)} dx \Rightarrow \frac{dy}{dx} = \frac{-M(x, y)}{N(x, y)}$$

If $M(x, y) \neq 0$, we can also write this as

$$\frac{dx}{dy} = \frac{-N(x, y)}{M(x, y)}$$

Classifications

Linearity: An n^{th} order differential equation is said to be **linear** if it can be written in the form

$$a_n(x) \frac{d^n y}{dx^n} + a_{n-1}(x) \frac{d^{n-1} y}{dx^{n-1}} + \cdots + a_1(x) \frac{dy}{dx} + a_0(x)y = g(x).$$

Note that each of the coefficients a_0, \dots, a_n and the right hand side g may depend on the independent variable but not on the dependent variable or any of its derivatives.

$y, y', \dots, y^{(n)}$ can only appear to the 1st power,

a_i can only depend on x

g can only depend on x

Examples (Linear -vs- Nonlinear)

$$y'' + 4y = 0$$

$$a_2(x)y'' + a_1(x)y' + a_0(x)y = g(x)$$

$$a_2(x) = 1, \quad a_1(x) = 0$$

$$a_0(x) = 4, \quad g(x) = 0$$

$$\frac{d^3y}{dx^3} + \left(\frac{dy}{dx}\right)^4 = x^3$$

$$\frac{d^3y}{dx^3} + \left(\frac{dy}{dx}\right)^3 \frac{dy}{dx} = x^3$$

non linear

$$t^2 \frac{d^2x}{dt^2} + 2t \frac{dx}{dt} - x = e^t$$

$$a_2(t)x'' + a_1(t)x' + a_0(t)x = g(t)$$

$$a_2(t) = t^2, \quad a_1(t) = 2t$$

$$a_0(t) = -1, \quad g(t) = e^t$$

$$u'' + u' = \cos u$$

↑
non linear term
u is dependent it's
inside the cosine function

Example: Classification

Identify the independent and dependent variables. Determine the order of the equation. State whether it is linear or nonlinear.

(a) $y'' + 2ty' = \cos t + y - y'''$

rewrite

$$y''' + y'' + 2ty' - y = \cos t$$

Looks like

$$a_3(t)y''' + a_2(t)y'' + a_1(t)y' + a_0(t)y = g(t)$$

Order : 3rd

Depend : y

Independent : t

Linear

(b) $\ddot{\theta} + \frac{g}{\ell} \sin \theta = 0$ g and ℓ are constant

non linear
Since θ is dependent

order: 2nd

depend: θ


Independ: time t

Non linear

Solution of $F(x, y, y', \dots, y^{(n)}) = 0$ (*)

Definition: A function ϕ defined on an interval² I and possessing at least n continuous derivatives on I is a **solution** of (*) on I if upon substitution (i.e. setting $y = \phi(x)$) the equation reduces to an identity.

Definition: An **implicit solution** of (*) is a relation $G(x, y) = 0$ provided there exists at least one function $y = \phi$ that satisfies both the differential equation (*) and this relation.

²The interval is called the *domain of the solution* or the *interval of definition*. 

Examples:

Verify that the given function is an solution of the ODE on the indicated interval.

$$\phi(t) = 3e^{2t}, \quad I = (-\infty, \infty), \quad \frac{d^2y}{dt^2} - \frac{dy}{dt} - 2y = 0$$

ϕ has more than 2 continuous derivatives on I .

$$\phi' = 6e^{2t} \text{ and } \phi'' = 12e^{2t}. \quad \text{Set } y = \phi$$

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Then } y'' - y' - 2y &= 12e^{2t} - 6e^{2t} - 2(3e^{2t}) \\ &= 12e^{2t} - 6e^{2t} - 6e^{2t} \\ &= 12e^{2t} - 12e^{2t} = 0 \end{aligned}$$

So ϕ solves the ODE.