Limits

Definitions

Precise Definition : We say $\lim_{x\to a} f(x) = L$ if for every $\varepsilon > 0$ there is a $\delta > 0$ such that whenever $0 < |x-a| < \delta$ then $|f(x) - L| < \varepsilon$.

"Working" Definition : We say $\lim_{x\to a} f(x) = L$ if we can make $f(x)$ as close to L as we want by taking x sufficiently close to a (on either side of a) without letting $x = a$.

Right hand limit : $\lim_{x\to a^+} f(x) = L$. This has the same definition as the limit except it requires $x > a$.

Left hand limit : $\lim_{x\to a^-} f(x) = L$. This has the same definition as the limit except it requires $x < a$.

Limit at Infinity : We say $\lim_{x\to\infty} f(x) = L$ if we can make $f(x)$ as close to L as we want by taking x large enough and positive.

There is a similar definition for $\lim_{x\to-\infty} f(x) = L$ except we require x large and negative.

Infinite Limit : We say $\lim_{x\to a} f(x) = \infty$ if we can make $f(x)$ arbitrarily large (and positive) by taking x sufficiently close to a (on either side of a) without letting $x = a$.

There is a similar definition for $\lim_{x\to a} f(x) = -\infty$ except we make $f(x)$ arbitrarily large and negative.

Relationship between the limit and one-sided limits

$\lim_{x\to a} f(x) = L \;\Rightarrow\; \lim_{x\to a^+} f(x) = \lim_{x\to a^-} f(x) = L$ $\lim_{x\to a^+} f(x) = \lim_{x\to a^-} f(x) = L \;\Rightarrow\; \lim_{x\to a} f(x) = L$

$\lim_{x\to a^+} f(x) \neq \lim_{x\to a^-} f(x) \;\Rightarrow\; \lim_{x\to a} f(x)$ Does Not Exist

Properties

Assume $\lim_{x\to a} f(x)$ and $\lim_{x\to a} g(x)$ both exist and c is any number then,

1. $\lim_{x\to a}\left[c f(x)\right] = c\lim_{x\to a} f(x)$
2. $\lim_{x\to a}\left[f(x) \pm g(x)\right] = \lim_{x\to a} f(x) \pm \lim_{x\to a} g(x)$
3. $\lim_{x\to a}\left[f(x) g(x)\right] = \lim_{x\to a} f(x)\ \lim_{x\to a} g(x)$
4. $\lim_{x\to a}\left[\frac{f(x)}{g(x)}\right] = \frac{\lim_{x\to a} f(x)}{\lim_{x\to a} g(x)}$ provided $\lim_{x\to a} g(x) \neq 0$
5. $\lim_{x\to a}\left[f(x)\right]^n = \left[\lim_{x\to a} f(x)\right]^n$
6. $\lim_{x\to a}\left[\sqrt[n]{f(x)}\right] = \sqrt[n]{\lim_{x\to a} f(x)}$

Basic Limit Evaluations at $\pm\infty$

Note : $\operatorname{sgn}(a) = 1$ if $a > 0$ and $\operatorname{sgn}(a) = -1$ if $a < 0$.

1. $\lim_{x\to\infty} \mathbf{e}^x = \infty$ & $\lim_{x\to-\infty} \mathbf{e}^x = 0$
2. $\lim_{x\to\infty} \ln(x) = \infty$ & $\lim_{x\to 0^+} \ln(x) = -\infty$
3. If $r > 0$ then $\lim_{x\to\infty} \frac{b}{x^r} = 0$
4. If $r > 0$ and x^r is real for negative x then $\lim_{x\to-\infty} \frac{b}{x^r} = 0$
5. n even : $\lim_{x\to\pm\infty} x^n = \infty$
6. n odd : $\lim_{x\to\infty} x^n = \infty$ & $\lim_{x\to-\infty} x^n = -\infty$
7. n even : $\lim_{x\to\pm\infty} a\,x^n + \cdots + b\,x + c = \operatorname{sgn}(a)\infty$
8. n odd : $\lim_{x\to\infty} a\,x^n + \cdots + b\,x + c = \operatorname{sgn}(a)\infty$
9. n odd : $\lim_{x\to-\infty} a\,x^n + \cdots + c\,x + d = -\operatorname{sgn}(a)\infty$