11.7 Power Series

Now that we can test infinite series for convergence we can study the infinite polynomials mentioned at the beginning of this chapter. We call these polynomials power series because they are defined as infinite series of powers of some variable, in our case x. Like polynomials, power series can be added, subtracted, multiplied, differentiated, and integrated to give new power series.

Power Series and Convergence

We begin with the formal definition.

DEFINITIONS Power Series, Center, Coefficients

A **power series about $x = 0$** is a series of the form

$$\sum_{n=0}^{\infty} c_n x^n = c_0 + c_1 x + c_2 x^2 + \cdots + c_n x^n + \cdots. \tag{1}$$

A **power series about $x = a$** is a series of the form

$$\sum_{n=0}^{\infty} c_n (x-a)^n = c_0 + c_1(x-a) + c_2(x-a)^2 + \cdots + c_n(x-a)^n + \cdots \tag{2}$$

in which the **center** a and the **coefficients** $c_0, c_1, c_2, \ldots, c_n, \ldots$ are constants.

Equation (1) is the special case obtained by taking $a = 0$ in Equation (2).

EXAMPLE 1 A Geometric Series

Taking all the coefficients to be 1 in Equation (1) gives the geometric power series

$$\sum_{n=0}^{\infty} x^n = 1 + x + x^2 + \cdots + x^n + \cdots.$$

This is the geometric series with first term 1 and ratio x. It converges to $1/(1-x)$ for $|x| < 1$. We express this fact by writing

$$\frac{1}{1-x} = 1 + x + x^2 + \cdots + x^n + \cdots, \qquad -1 < x < 1. \tag{3}$$

■

Up to now, we have used Equation (3) as a formula for the sum of the series on the right. We now change the focus: We think of the partial sums of the series on the right as polynomials $P_n(x)$ that approximate the function on the left. For values of x near zero, we need take only a few terms of the series to get a good approximation. As we move toward $x = 1$, or -1, we must take more terms. Figure 11.10 shows the graphs of $f(x) = 1/(1-x)$, and the approximating polynomials $y_n = P_n(x)$ for $n = 0, 1, 2$, and 8. The function $f(x) = 1/(1-x)$ is not continuous on intervals containing $x = 1$, where it has a vertical asymptote. The approximations do not apply when $x \geq 1$.

EXAMPLE 2 A Geometric Series

The power series

$$1 - \frac{1}{2}(x-2) + \frac{1}{4}(x-2)^2 + \cdots + \left(-\frac{1}{2}\right)^n (x-2)^n + \cdots \tag{4}$$

matches Equation (2) with $a = 2$, $c_0 = 1$, $c_1 = -1/2$, $c_2 = 1/4, \ldots, c_n = (-1/2)^n$. This is a geometric series with first term 1 and ratio $r = -\dfrac{x-2}{2}$. The series converges for

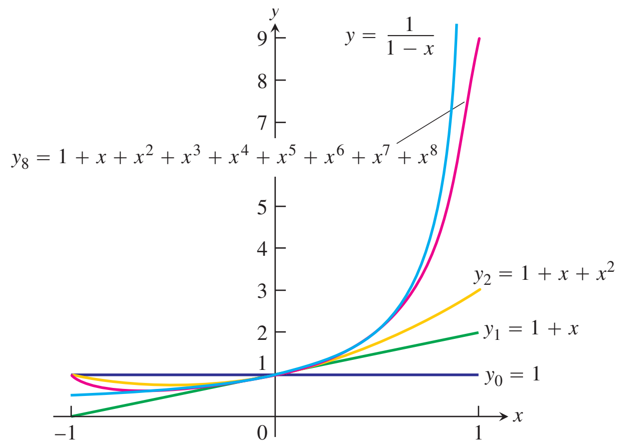


FIGURE 11.10 The graphs of $f(x) = 1/(1-x)$ and four of its polynomial approximations (Example 1).

$\left|\frac{x-2}{2}\right| < 1$ or $0 < x < 4$. The sum is

$$\frac{1}{1-r} = \frac{1}{1 + \frac{x-2}{2}} = \frac{2}{x},$$

so

$$\frac{2}{x} = 1 - \frac{(x-2)}{2} + \frac{(x-2)^2}{4} - \cdots + \left(-\frac{1}{2}\right)^n (x-2)^n + \cdots, \qquad 0 < x < 4.$$

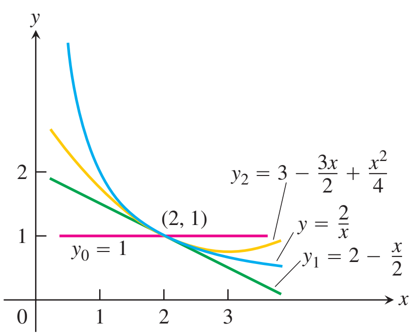


FIGURE 11.11 The graphs of $f(x) = 2/x$ and its first three polynomial approximations (Example 2).

Series (4) generates useful polynomial approximations of $f(x) = 2/x$ for values of x near 2:

$$P_0(x) = 1$$

$$P_1(x) = 1 - \frac{1}{2}(x-2) = 2 - \frac{x}{2}$$

$$P_2(x) = 1 - \frac{1}{2}(x-2) + \frac{1}{4}(x-2)^2 = 3 - \frac{3x}{2} + \frac{x^2}{4},$$

and so on (Figure 11.11). ■

Video

EXAMPLE 3 Testing for Convergence Using the Ratio Test

For what values of x do the following power series converge?

(a) $\displaystyle\sum_{n=1}^{\infty} (-1)^{n-1}\frac{x^n}{n} = x - \frac{x^2}{2} + \frac{x^3}{3} - \cdots$

(b) $\displaystyle\sum_{n=1}^{\infty} (-1)^{n-1}\frac{x^{2n-1}}{2n-1} = x - \frac{x^3}{3} + \frac{x^5}{5} - \cdots$

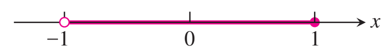
(c) $\displaystyle\sum_{n=0}^{\infty} \frac{x^n}{n!} = 1 + x + \frac{x^2}{2!} + \frac{x^3}{3!} + \cdots$

(d) $\displaystyle\sum_{n=0}^{\infty} n!x^n = 1 + x + 2!x^2 + 3!x^3 + \cdots$

Solution Apply the Ratio Test to the series $\sum |u_n|$, where u_n is the nth term of the series in question.

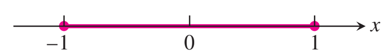
(a) $\left|\dfrac{u_{n+1}}{u_n}\right| = \dfrac{n}{n+1}|x| \to |x|.$

The series converges absolutely for $|x| < 1$. It diverges if $|x| > 1$ because the nth term does not converge to zero. At $x = 1$, we get the alternating harmonic series $1 - 1/2 + 1/3 - 1/4 + \cdots$, which converges. At $x = -1$ we get $-1 - 1/2 - 1/3 - 1/4 - \cdots$, the negative of the harmonic series; it diverges. Series (a) converges for $-1 < x \le 1$ and diverges elsewhere.



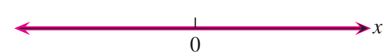
(b) $\left|\dfrac{u_{n+1}}{u_n}\right| = \dfrac{2n-1}{2n+1}x^2 \to x^2.$

The series converges absolutely for $x^2 < 1$. It diverges for $x^2 > 1$ because the nth term does not converge to zero. At $x = 1$ the series becomes $1 - 1/3 + 1/5 - 1/7 + \cdots$, which converges by the Alternating Series Theorem. It also converges at $x = -1$ because it is again an alternating series that satisfies the conditions for convergence. The value at $x = -1$ is the negative of the value at $x = 1$. Series (b) converges for $-1 \le x \le 1$ and diverges elsewhere.



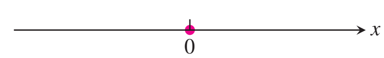
(c) $\left|\dfrac{u_{n+1}}{u_n}\right| = \left|\dfrac{x^{n+1}}{(n+1)!} \cdot \dfrac{n!}{x^n}\right| = \dfrac{|x|}{n+1} \to 0$ for every x.

The series converges absolutely for all x.



(d) $\left|\dfrac{u_{n+1}}{u_n}\right| = \left|\dfrac{(n+1)!x^{n+1}}{n!x^n}\right| = (n+1)|x| \to \infty$ unless $x = 0$.

The series diverges for all values of x except $x = 0$.



■

Example 3 illustrates how we usually test a power series for convergence, and the possible results.

THEOREM 18 The Convergence Theorem for Power Series

If the power series $\sum_{n=0}^{\infty} a_n x^n = a_0 + a_1 x + a_2 x^2 + \cdots$ converges for $x = c \ne 0$, then it converges absolutely for all x with $|x| < |c|$. If the series diverges for $x = d$, then it diverges for all x with $|x| > |d|$.

Proof Suppose the series $\sum_{n=0}^{\infty} a_n c^n$ converges. Then $\lim_{n\to\infty} a_n c^n = 0$. Hence, there is an integer N such that $|a_n c^n| < 1$ for all $n \geq N$. That is,

$$|a_n| < \frac{1}{|c|^n} \qquad \text{for } n \geq N. \tag{5}$$

Now take any x such that $|x| < |c|$ and consider

$$|a_0| + |a_1 x| + \cdots + |a_{N-1}x^{N-1}| + |a_N x^N| + |a_{N+1}x^{N+1}| + \cdots.$$

There are only a finite number of terms prior to $|a_N x^N|$, and their sum is finite. Starting with $|a_N x^N|$ and beyond, the terms are less than

$$\left|\frac{x}{c}\right|^N + \left|\frac{x}{c}\right|^{N+1} + \left|\frac{x}{c}\right|^{N+2} + \cdots \tag{6}$$

because of Inequality (5). But Series (6) is a geometric series with ratio $r = |x/c|$, which is less than 1, since $|x| < |c|$. Hence Series (6) converges, so the original series converges absolutely. This proves the first half of the theorem.

The second half of the theorem follows from the first. If the series diverges at $x = d$ and converges at a value x_0 with $|x_0| > |d|$, we may take $c = x_0$ in the first half of the theorem and conclude that the series converges absolutely at d. But the series cannot converge absolutely and diverge at one and the same time. Hence, if it diverges at d, it diverges for all x with $|x| > |d|$. ■

To simplify the notation, Theorem 18 deals with the convergence of series of the form $\sum a_n x^n$. For series of the form $\sum a_n(x - a)^n$ we can replace $x - a$ by x' and apply the results to the series $\sum a_n(x')^n$.

The Radius of Convergence of a Power Series

The theorem we have just proved and the examples we have studied lead to the conclusion that a power series $\sum c_n(x - a)^n$ behaves in one of three possible ways. It might converge only at $x = a$, or converge everywhere, or converge on some interval of radius R centered at $x = a$. We prove this as a Corollary to Theorem 18.

COROLLARY TO THEOREM 18

The convergence of the series $\sum c_n(x - a)^n$ is described by one of the following three possibilities:

1. There is a positive number R such that the series diverges for x with $|x - a| > R$ but converges absolutely for x with $|x - a| < R$. The series may or may not converge at either of the endpoints $x = a - R$ and $x = a + R$.
2. The series converges absolutely for every x $(R = \infty)$.
3. The series converges at $x = a$ and diverges elsewhere $(R = 0)$.

Proof We assume first that $a = 0$, so that the power series is centered at 0. If the series converges everywhere we are in Case 2. If it converges only at $x = 0$ we are in Case 3. Otherwise there is a nonzero number d such that $\sum c_n d^n$ diverges. The set S of values of x for which the series $\sum c_n x^n$ converges is nonempty because it contains 0 and a positive number p as well. By Theorem 18, the series diverges for all x with $|x| > |d|$, so $|x| \leq |d|$ for all $x \in S$, and S is a bounded set. By the Completeness Property of the real numbers (see Appendix 4) a nonempty, bounded set has a least upper bound R. (The least upper bound is the smallest number with the property that the elements $x \in S$ satisfy $x \leq R$.) If $|x| > R \geq p$, then $x \notin S$ so the series $\sum c_n x^n$ diverges. If $|x| < R$, then $|x|$ is not an upper bound for S (because it's smaller than the least upper bound) so there is a number $b \in S$ such that $b > |x|$. Since $b \in S$, the series $\sum c_n b^n$ converges and therefore the series $\sum c_n |x|^n$ converges by Theorem 18. This proves the Corollary for power series centered at $a = 0$.

For a power series centered at $a \neq 0$, we set $x' = (x - a)$ and repeat the argument with x'. Since $x' = 0$ when $x = a$, a radius R interval of convergence for $\sum c_n (x')^n$ centered at $x' = 0$ is the same as a radius R interval of convergence for $\sum c_n (x - a)^n$ centered at $x = a$. This establishes the Corollary for the general case. ■

R is called the **radius of convergence** of the power series and the interval of radius R centered at $x = a$ is called the **interval of convergence**. The interval of convergence may be open, closed, or half-open, depending on the particular series. At points x with $|x - a| < R$, the series converges absolutely. If the series converges for all values of x, we say its radius of convergence is infinite. If it converges only at $x = a$, we say its radius of convergence is zero.

How to Test a Power Series for Convergence

1. *Use the Ratio Test (or nth-Root Test) to find the interval where the series converges absolutely*. Ordinarily, this is an open interval

$$|x - a| < R \qquad \text{or} \qquad a - R < x < a + R.$$

2. *If the interval of absolute convergence is finite, test for convergence or divergence at each endpoint*, as in Examples 3a and b. Use a Comparison Test, the Integral Test, or the Alternating Series Test.
3. *If the interval of absolute convergence is $a - R < x < a + R$, the series diverges for $|x - a| > R$* (it does not even converge conditionally), because the nth term does not approach zero for those values of x.

Term-by-Term Differentiation

A theorem from advanced calculus says that a power series can be differentiated term by term at each interior point of its interval of convergence.

THEOREM 19 The Term-by-Term Differentiation Theorem

If $\sum c_n(x-a)^n$ converges for $a - R < x < a + R$ for some $R > 0$, it defines a function f:

$$f(x) = \sum_{n=0}^{\infty} c_n(x-a)^n, \qquad a - R < x < a + R.$$

Such a function f has derivatives of all orders inside the interval of convergence. We can obtain the derivatives by differentiating the original series term by term:

$$f'(x) = \sum_{n=1}^{\infty} nc_n(x-a)^{n-1}$$

$$f''(x) = \sum_{n=2}^{\infty} n(n-1)c_n(x-a)^{n-2},$$

and so on. Each of these derived series converges at every interior point of the interval of convergence of the original series.

EXAMPLE 4 Applying Term-by-Term Differentiation

Find series for $f'(x)$ and $f''(x)$ if

$$f(x) = \frac{1}{1-x} = 1 + x + x^2 + x^3 + x^4 + \cdots + x^n + \cdots$$

$$= \sum_{n=0}^{\infty} x^n, \qquad -1 < x < 1$$

Solution

$$f'(x) = \frac{1}{(1-x)^2} = 1 + 2x + 3x^2 + 4x^3 + \cdots + nx^{n-1} + \cdots$$

$$= \sum_{n=1}^{\infty} nx^{n-1}, \qquad -1 < x < 1$$

$$f''(x) = \frac{2}{(1-x)^3} = 2 + 6x + 12x^2 + \cdots + n(n-1)x^{n-2} + \cdots$$

$$= \sum_{n=2}^{\infty} n(n-1)x^{n-2}, \qquad -1 < x < 1$$

■

CAUTION Term-by-term differentiation might not work for other kinds of series. For example, the trigonometric series

$$\sum_{n=1}^{\infty} \frac{\sin(n!x)}{n^2}$$

converges for all x. But if we differentiate term by term we get the series

$$\sum_{n=1}^{\infty} \frac{n! \cos(n!x)}{n^2},$$

which diverges for all x. This is not a power series, since it is not a sum of positive integer powers of x.

Term-by-Term Integration

Another advanced calculus theorem states that a power series can be integrated term by term throughout its interval of convergence.

THEOREM 20 The Term-by-Term Integration Theorem

Suppose that

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

converges for $a - R < x < a + R$ $(R > 0)$. Then

$$\sum_{n=0}^{\infty} c_n \frac{(x-a)^{n+1}}{n+1}$$

converges for $a - R < x < a + R$ and

$$\int f(x)\, dx = \sum_{n=0}^{\infty} c_n \frac{(x-a)^{n+1}}{n+1} + C$$

for $a - R < x < a + R$.

EXAMPLE 5 A Series for $\tan^{-1} x$, $-1 \le x \le 1$

Identify the function

$$f(x) = x - \frac{x^3}{3} + \frac{x^5}{5} - \cdots, \qquad -1 \le x \le 1.$$

Solution We differentiate the original series term by term and get

$$f'(x) = 1 - x^2 + x^4 - x^6 + \cdots, \qquad -1 < x < 1.$$

This is a geometric series with first term 1 and ratio $-x^2$, so

$$f'(x) = \frac{1}{1-(-x^2)} = \frac{1}{1+x^2}.$$

We can now integrate $f'(x) = 1/(1+x^2)$ to get

$$\int f'(x)\, dx = \int \frac{dx}{1+x^2} = \tan^{-1} x + C.$$

The series for $f(x)$ is zero when $x = 0$, so $C = 0$. Hence

$$f(x) = x - \frac{x^3}{3} + \frac{x^5}{5} - \frac{x^7}{7} + \cdots = \tan^{-1} x, \qquad -1 < x < 1. \tag{7}$$

In Section 11.10, we will see that the series also converges to $\tan^{-1} x$ at $x = \pm 1$. ■

Notice that the original series in Example 5 converges at both endpoints of the original interval of convergence, but Theorem 20 can guarantee the convergence of the differentiated series only inside the interval.

EXAMPLE 6 A Series for $\ln(1 + x)$, $-1 < x \leq 1$

The series

$$\frac{1}{1+t} = 1 - t + t^2 - t^3 + \cdots$$

converges on the open interval $-1 < t < 1$. Therefore,

$$\ln(1 + x) = \int_0^x \frac{1}{1+t}\,dt = t - \frac{t^2}{2} + \frac{t^3}{3} - \frac{t^4}{4} + \cdots \Big]_0^x \qquad \text{Theorem 20}$$

$$= x - \frac{x^2}{2} + \frac{x^3}{3} - \frac{x^4}{4} + \cdots, \qquad -1 < x < 1.$$

It can also be shown that the series converges at $x = 1$ to the number $\ln 2$, but that was not guaranteed by the theorem. ■

USING TECHNOLOGY **Study of Series**

Series are in many ways analogous to integrals. Just as the number of functions with explicit antiderivatives in terms of elementary functions is small compared to the number of integrable functions, the number of power series in x that agree with explicit elementary functions on x-intervals is small compared to the number of power series that converge on some x-interval. Graphing utilities can aid in the study of such series in much the same way that numerical integration aids in the study of definite integrals. The ability to study power series at particular values of x is built into most Computer Algebra Systems.

If a series converges rapidly enough, CAS exploration might give us an idea of the sum. For instance, in calculating the early partial sums of the series $\sum_{k=1}^{\infty} [1/(2^{k-1})]$ (Section 11.4, Example 2b), Maple returns $S_n = 1.6066\,95152$ for $31 \leq n \leq 200$. This suggests that the sum of the series is 1.6066 95152 to 10 digits. Indeed,

$$\sum_{k=201}^{\infty} \frac{1}{2^k - 1} = \sum_{k=201}^{\infty} \frac{1}{2^{k-1}(2 - (1/2^{k-1}))} < \sum_{k=201}^{\infty} \frac{1}{2^{k-1}} = \frac{1}{2^{199}} < 1.25 \times 10^{-60}.$$

The remainder after 200 terms is negligible.

However, CAS and calculator exploration cannot do much for us if the series converges or diverges very slowly, and indeed can be downright misleading. For example, try calculating the partial sums of the series $\sum_{k=1}^{\infty} [1/(10^{10}k)]$. The terms are tiny in comparison to the numbers we normally work with and the partial sums, even for hundreds of terms, are miniscule. We might well be fooled into thinking that the series converges. In fact, it diverges, as we can see by writing it as $(1/10^{10})\sum_{k=1}^{\infty}(1/k)$, a constant times the harmonic series.

We will know better how to interpret numerical results after studying error estimates in Section 11.9.

Multiplication of Power Series

Another theorem from advanced calculus states that absolutely converging power series can be multiplied the way we multiply polynomials. We omit the proof.

THEOREM 21 The Series Multiplication Theorem for Power Series

If $A(x) = \sum_{n=0}^{\infty} a_n x^n$ and $B(x) = \sum_{n=0}^{\infty} b_n x^n$ converge absolutely for $|x| < R$, and

$$c_n = a_0 b_n + a_1 b_{n-1} + a_2 b_{n-2} + \cdots + a_{n-1} b_1 + a_n b_0 = \sum_{k=0}^{n} a_k b_{n-k},$$

then $\sum_{n=0}^{\infty} c_n x^n$ converges absolutely to $A(x)B(x)$ for $|x| < R$:

$$\left(\sum_{n=0}^{\infty} a_n x^n\right) \cdot \left(\sum_{n=0}^{\infty} b_n x^n\right) = \sum_{n=0}^{\infty} c_n x^n.$$

EXAMPLE 7 Multiply the geometric series

$$\sum_{n=0}^{\infty} x^n = 1 + x + x^2 + \cdots + x^n + \cdots = \frac{1}{1-x}, \qquad \text{for } |x| < 1,$$

by itself to get a power series for $1/(1-x)^2$, for $|x| < 1$.

Solution Let

$$A(x) = \sum_{n=0}^{\infty} a_n x^n = 1 + x + x^2 + \cdots + x^n + \cdots = 1/(1-x)$$

$$B(x) = \sum_{n=0}^{\infty} b_n x^n = 1 + x + x^2 + \cdots + x^n + \cdots = 1/(1-x)$$

and

$$c_n = \underbrace{a_0 b_n + a_1 b_{n-1} + \cdots + a_k b_{n-k} + \cdots + a_n b_0}_{n+1 \text{ terms}}$$

$$= \underbrace{1 + 1 + \cdots + 1}_{n+1 \text{ ones}} = n + 1.$$

Then, by the Series Multiplication Theorem,

$$A(x) \cdot B(x) = \sum_{n=0}^{\infty} c_n x^n = \sum_{n=0}^{\infty} (n+1) x^n$$

$$= 1 + 2x + 3x^2 + 4x^3 + \cdots + (n+1)x^n + \cdots$$

is the series for $1/(1-x)^2$. The series all converge absolutely for $|x| < 1$.

Notice that Example 4 gives the same answer because

$$\frac{d}{dx}\left(\frac{1}{1-x}\right) = \frac{1}{(1-x)^2}.$$

■