Derivative Word Problems And Solutions

Practice Problems on Derivative Computing (with Solutions)

This problem set is generated by Di. All of the problems came from past exams of Math 221. For derivative computing – unlike many of other math concepts – more lectures do not help much, and nothing compares to practicing on one's own! The idea of this problem set is to get enough practice, till the point that it becomes hard to make any mistake. :)

1. $y = \sqrt[3]{x^2} \sin x$
2. $y = \frac{\tan x}{x^2+2}$
3. $y = \left(x^4 + \sin x \cos x\right)^3$
4. $y = \frac{x^3-2x}{x+3}$
5. $y = \left(\sqrt{x^2-1}+1\right)^{10}$
6. $y = \cos\left(x^2\right) \tan\left(\sqrt{x+1}\right)$
7. $y = \cos\left(\cos\left(\cos\left(3x\right)\right)\right)$
8. $y = \sqrt{\frac{1+x}{2-x}}$
9. $y = x^2\left(\sqrt{x}+2\right)$
10. $f\left(x\right) = 2\sqrt{x^2+1} + \sin\left(\frac{4x}{5}\right)$
11. $h\left(x\right) = \frac{\sin x}{2x-3}$
12. $y = x^3 + \frac{1}{2x^3} - \frac{2}{\sqrt[3]{x}}$
13. $y = \sin\left(5x\right)\cos\left(3x\right)$
14. $y = \left(\cos\left(x^2\right) + \cos^2 x\right)^4$
15. $y = 12 + x\cos x + x^5$
16. $y = \left(x^2+x-1\right)\sin x \cos^2 x$
17. $y = \cos\left(x^2 + \frac{x}{x+1}\right)$
18. $y = \frac{x^2-2}{x^2+1}$
19. $y = x^2\sqrt[3]{\tan x}$
20. $y = \left(\sqrt{x^2+1}+x\right)^5$
21. $y = \sqrt{1-\cos x}\left(\tan x\right)^3$
22. $y = \frac{\sin\left(x^3\right)}{\sin\left(x^2\right)}$
23. $y = x^3 + \sin\left(x\right)\cos^2\left(x\right)$

1

Derivative word problems and solutions are fundamental components of calculus that test a student's ability to apply concepts of differentiation in real-world scenarios. These problems typically involve rates of change, optimization, or the behavior of functions, and they can be both abstract and practical. Understanding how to approach and solve these problems is crucial for students and professionals alike, as derivatives have applications in various fields including physics, engineering, economics, and biology.

Understanding Derivatives

Before diving into word problems, it's essential to grasp what a derivative represents. The derivative of a function at a point measures the rate at which the function's value changes as its input changes. It can be interpreted as the slope of the tangent line to the function's graph at that point. The formal definition is given by:

$$
f'(x) = \lim_{h \to 0} \frac{f(x+h) - f(x)}{h}
$$

This definition leads to several practical interpretations, including:

- Instantaneous Rate of Change: The derivative provides the rate of change of a quantity at a specific point in time.
- Slope of the Tangent Line: It indicates how steep the function is at that point.
- Optimization: Derivatives help find maximum or minimum values of functions, which is vital in many disciplines.

Types of Derivative Word Problems

Derivative word problems can generally be categorized into several types:

1. Related Rates Problems: These problems involve two or more quantities that are related to each other, and they change with respect to time.
2. Optimization Problems: These seek to find the maximum or minimum values of a function, often under certain constraints.
3. Motion Problems: These involve rates of change in position, velocity, or acceleration.

Related Rates Problems

Related rates problems often involve finding the rate at which one quantity changes concerning another. A common approach to these problems involves using implicit differentiation and the chain rule.

Example Problem 1: A balloon is being inflated, and its radius increases at a rate of 2 cm/min. How fast is the volume of the balloon increasing when the radius is 5 cm?

Solution:

1. Identify the given information:
- $dr/dt = 2$ cm/min (rate of change of radius)
- $r = 5$ cm (radius at the moment of interest)

2. Recall the formula for the volume of a sphere:
\[

$$
V = \frac{4}{3} \pi r^3
$$

3. Differentiate with respect to time t:
$$
\frac{dV}{dt} = \frac{dV}{dr} \cdot \frac{dr}{dt}
$$
Here, $\frac{dV}{dr} = 4\pi r^2$.

4. Substitute into the equation:
$$
\frac{dV}{dt} = 4\pi r^2 \cdot \frac{dr}{dt}
$$
$$
\frac{dV}{dt} = 4\pi (5)^2 \cdot (2) = 4\pi \cdot 25 \cdot 2 = 200\pi \text{ cm}^3/\text{min}
$$

Thus, the volume of the balloon is increasing at a rate of 200π cm^3/min when the radius is 5 cm.

Optimization Problems

Optimization problems aim to find the best solution under given constraints. These problems often require setting up a function that represents the quantity to be maximized or minimized.

Example Problem 2: A farmer wants to create a rectangular pen using 100 meters of fencing. What dimensions will maximize the area of the pen?

Solution:

1. Let the length be l and the width be w.
2. Set up the perimeter constraint:
$$
2l + 2w = 100 \implies l + w = 50 \implies w = 50 - l
$$

3. Express the area A as a function of l:
$$
A = l \cdot w = l(50 - l) = 50l - l^2
$$

4. Find the critical points by taking the derivative:
$$
\frac{dA}{dl} = 50 - 2l
$$
Set $\frac{dA}{dl} = 0$:
$$
50 - 2l = 0 \implies l = 25
$$

5. Find the corresponding width:
$$
w = 50 - l = 50 - 25 = 25
$$

6. Verify it's a maximum:
The second derivative test:
$$
\frac{d^2A}{dl^2} = -2 \quad (\text{which is negative, indicating a maximum})
$$

Thus, the dimensions that maximize the area are 25 meters by 25 meters.

Motion Problems

Motion problems often involve derivatives to determine position, velocity, and acceleration.

Example Problem 3: A car's position is given by the function $s(t) = 4t^3 - 6t^2 + 2t$, where s is in meters and t is in seconds. Find the velocity at $t = 2$ seconds.

Solution:

1. Differentiate the position function to find the velocity:
$$
v(t) = \frac{ds}{dt} = 12t^2 - 12t + 2
$$

2. Substitute $t = 2$:
$$
v(2) = 12(2)^2 - 12(2) + 2 = 12(4) - 24 + 2 = 48 - 24 + 2 = 26 \text{ m/s}
$$

The velocity of the car at $t = 2$ seconds is 26 m/s.

Strategies for Solving Derivative Word Problems

To effectively tackle derivative word problems, consider the following strategies:

1. Read the Problem Carefully: Understand what is being asked and identify the quantities involved.
2. Identify Known and Unknowns: List what you know (variables, rates, equations) and what you need to find.
3. Draw Diagrams: For geometry-related problems, a visual representation can clarify relationships between quantities.
4. Set Up Relationships: Use equations to express relationships between variables.
5. Differentiate: Apply differentiation rules to find the necessary rates of change.
6. Interpret Results: Ensure your answer makes sense in the context of the problem.

Conclusion

Derivative word problems and solutions are essential tools for understanding how mathematical concepts apply to real-world situations. By practicing a variety of problems, students can develop a strong foundation in calculus that will serve them in many academic and professional pursuits. Through careful reading, systematic problem-solving strategies, and a solid grasp of the concepts involved, anyone can master the art of solving derivative problems.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is a derivative word problem?

A derivative word problem involves finding the rate of change of a quantity in relation to another quantity, often framed in a real-world scenario. It typically requires setting up a function and differentiating it to solve.

How do you approach solving a derivative word problem?

To solve a derivative word problem, first read the problem carefully to identify the quantities involved. Next, define the variables and establish a function that relates them. Then, differentiate the function with respect to the appropriate variable and substitute any given values to find the solution.

Can you provide an example of a derivative word problem?

Sure! If the height of a balloon is modeled by the equation $h(t) = -4.9t^2 + 20t + 5$, where t is time in seconds, what is the rate of change of the height at t = 2 seconds? You would first find the derivative $h'(t)$, then evaluate $h'(2)$ to find the rate of change.

What is the significance of the first derivative in word problems?

The first derivative indicates the rate of change of a function, which can represent velocity, growth rate, or any other rate of change. In word problems, this helps in understanding how one quantity changes in relation to another.

What is an example of a real-life application of derivative word problems?

One real-life application is in physics, such as determining the speed of a moving object. For example, if the position of a car is given by a function $s(t)$, the derivative $s'(t)$ gives the car's velocity at any time t.

How can second derivatives be used in word problems?

Second derivatives can be used to determine the concavity of a function and whether an object is accelerating or decelerating. For example, if the position of an object is modeled by a function $s(t)$, the second derivative $s''(t)$ will indicate whether the object is speeding up or slowing down.

What are common mistakes to avoid in derivative word problems?

Common mistakes include misinterpreting the problem, failing to differentiate correctly, neglecting to consider units of measurement, and not checking whether the derivative represents the desired quantity or rate of change.

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