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How to find the limits of absolute value functions; several examples and detailed solutions are presented along with graphical interpretations. A set of exercises with answers is presented at the bottom of the page. Find the limits of the following functions. Question Find the limit: Solution The steps to find the limit are: Question Evaluate the limit: Solution The steps to find the limit are \(\\/\(\\/\(\) Question Find the limit: \(\lim_{x \to 0} \frac{x}{|x|} \) Solution \(\lim_{x \to 0} \frac{x}{|x|} = \frac{0}{|0|} \; \; \text{indeterminate form} \) Recall that \(| x | = x \) for \(x \le 0 \) and \(| x | = - x \) for \(x \lt 0 \) Let us calculate the limit from the left of \(x = 0 \) where \(x \lt 0 \) and therefore \(| = - x \) \\ \lim_{x \to 0^-} \frac{x}{|x|} = \lim_{x \to 0^-} \frac{x}{-x} = \lim_{x \to 0^-} \ -1 = -1 \) Let us calculate the limit from the right of \(x = 0 \) where \(x \gt 0 \) and therefore \(| x | = x \) \\ \lim_{x \to 0^+} \frac{x}{|x|} = \lim_{x \to 0^+} \frac{x}{x} = 1 \) The limits from the left and from the right of x = 0 are not equal, therefore \(\lim_{x \to 0} \frac{x}{|x|} \; \; \text{does not exist} \) The graph of f(x) = x / |x| is shown below and we clearly see that the limits from the left and right of 0 are not equal. Figure 1. Graph of f(x) = x / |x|. Question Evaluate the limit: \(\lim_{x \to \infty} \frac{x}{|x|} \) Solution as x increases indefinitely , x > 0 and therefore |x| = x Hence \(\lim_{x \to \infty} \frac{x}{|x|} = \lim_{x \to \infty} \frac{x}{x} = \lim_{x \to \infty} 1 = 1 \) Question Find the limit: \(\lim_{x \to -\infty} \frac{x}{|x|} \) Solution as x decreases indefinitely , x < 0 and therefore |x| = - x Hence \(\lim_{x \to -\infty} \frac{x}{|x|} = -1 \) Question Does the limit \(\lim_{x \to -2} \frac{x + 2}{|x + 2|} \) exists? Solution \(\lim_{x \to -2} \frac{x + 2}{|x + 2|} = \dfrac{0}{|0|} \; \; \text{indeterminate} \) Let us calculate the limit from the left of -2 where x ≤ - 2 and from the right of -2 where x ≥ - 2 separately. Recall that If x + 2 ≥ 0 or x ≥ - 2 then | x + 2 | = x + 2 and If x + 2 ≤ 0 or x ≤ - 2 then | x + 2 | = - \((x + 2) \) Let us calculate the limit from the left of x = - 2. \(\lim_{x \to -2^-}\frac{x + 2}{x + 2} = \lim_{x \to -2^-} \frac{-(x + 2)}{x + 2} = \lim_{x \to -2^-} -1 \) Let us calculate the limit from the right of x = - 2 \(\lim_{x \to -2^+} \frac{|x + 2|}{x + 2} = \lim_{x \to -2^+} \frac{x + 2}{x + 2} = \lim_{x \to -2^+} 1 = 1 \) The limits from the left and from the right of x = - 2 are not equal, therefore \(\lim_{x \to -2} \frac{|x + 2|}{x + 2} \; \; \text{does not exist} \) Find the limit: \(\lim_{x \to 1} \frac{x^2+2x-3}{|x - 1|} \) Solution \(\lim_{x \to 1} \frac{x^2+2x-3}{|x - 1|} = \frac{(1)^2+2(1)-3}{|(1) - 1|} = \dfrac{0}{0} \; \; \text{indeterminate} \) At x = 1 both numerator and denominator are equal to zero, they therefore have a common factor x - 1. We factor the numerator. \(\lim_{x \to 1} \frac{x^2+2x-3}{|x - 1|} = \lim_{x \to 1^-} \frac{(x+3)(x-1)}{-(x-1)} = \lim_{x \to 1^-} -(x + 3) = - 4 \) Let us calculate the limit from the right of x = 1 \(\lim_{x \to 1^+} \frac{x^2+2x-3}{|x - 1|} = \lim_{x \to 1^+} \frac{(x+3)(x-1)}{(x-1)} = \lim_{x \to 1^+} (x + 3) = 4 \) The limits from the left and from the right are not equal, therefore \(\lim_{x \to 1} \frac{x^2+2x-3}{|x - 1|} \; \; \text{does not exist} \) The graph of f(x) = (x^2 + 2x - 3)/|x- 1| is shown below and we clearly see that the limits from the left and right of 1 are not equal. Figure 2. Graph of f(x) = (x2 + 2x - 3)/|x- 1|. Question Evaluate the limit: \(\lim_{x \to \infty} \frac{x^2+5x+7}{|x + 2|} \) Solution As x increases indefinitely, x + 2 also increases indefinitely and therefore x + 2 > 0, hence \(\lim_{x \to \infty} \frac{x^2+5x+7}{|x + 2|} = \lim_{x \to \infty} \frac{x^2+5x+7}{(x + 2)} = +\infty \) Question Find the limit: \(\lim_{x \to -\infty} \frac{x^2+5x+7}{|x + 2|} \) Solution As x decreases indefinitely, x + 2 also decreases indefinitely and therefore x + 2 < 0, hence \(\lim_{x \to -\infty} \frac{x^2+5x+7}{|x + 2|} = \lim_{x \to -\infty} \frac{x^2+5x+7}{-(x + 2)} = -\infty \) The graph of f(x) = (x^2 + 5x + 7)/|x + 2| is shown below and we clearly see that \(y = f(x) \) increases indefinitely as x increases indefinitely and also as x decreases indefinitely. Figure 3. Graph of \(f(x) = \dfrac {x^2 + 5x + 7}{|x + 2|} \). Exercises Find the limits 1) \(\lim_{x \to 0} \frac{x^2}{|x|} \) 2) \(\lim_{x \to -6} \dfrac{-(x + 6)}{|x + 6|} \) 3) \(\lim_{x \to 3} \frac{x^2-6}{|x - 6^-|} \) 4) \(\lim_{x \to -6^+} \frac{-(x + 6)}{|x + 6|} \) Answers to Above Exercises 1) 0 2) 1 3) - 1 4) does not exist More References and links Calculus Tutorials and Problems - Limits Find Limits of Functions in Calculus Introduction to Limits in Calculus Properties of Limits of Mathematical Functions in Calculus Limits of basic functions Questions and Answers on Limits in Calculus The absolute value of a number is the distance of the number from zero, meaning that the absolute values of 6 and -6 are 6.An absolute value function is defined as: Limit of an Absolute Value Function as x Approaches a Real Number cBecause the argument of an absolute value function may be positive or negative, we have to satisfy both cases: when x > 0 and x < 0.Suppose we want to find the limit of |2x + 3| as x approaches 2 as follows: To calculate the limit, we have to separate the absolute value into two cases:Case 1: 2x + 3 if 2x + 3 > 0Case 2: -(2x + 3) if 2x + 3 < 0 Because we are looking for the limit as x approaches 2, it falls into the first case since 2 > -3/2. Therefore to find the limit, we have to plug 2 using |2x + 3|. The limit is |2*2 + 3| = 7. More ExamplesFind the limit of each absolute value function if it exists. Calculator solutionType in: lim [x = 4] abs(2x + 3) - 3Case 1: 2x + 3 if 2x + 3 > 0 or x > -3/2Case 2: -(2x + 3) if 2x + 3 < 0 or x < -3/2Since 4 > - 3/2, we evaluate the expression 2x + 3 at x = 4. [x = -3] (abs(x + 1) + 3 / x)Case 1: x + 1 x > - 1Case 2: -(x + 1) if x < -1Since -3 < - 1, we evaluate -(x + 1) at x = -3. -(-3 + 1) + 3/(-3) = -(-2) - 1 = 2 - 1 = 1. Calculator solutionType in: lim [x = 3] (2(abs(x^2 - 4) - abs(x) - 4)) Calculator solutionType in: lim [x = 3] - 3 = 8. Calculator solutionType in: lim [x = 3] (2(abs(x^2 - 4) - abs(x) - 4)) next: 15.8. limit of a trigonometric function > In order to continue enjoying our site, we ask that you confirm your identity as a human. Thank you very much for your cooperation. Limits involving absolute values often involve breaking things into cases. Remember that $${f(x)=\begin{cases} f(x), &\text{ if } f(x)\ge0;\\-f(x), &\text{ if } f(x)\le0.\\ \end{cases}$$ By studying these cases separately, we can often get a good picture of what a function is doing just to the left of $x=a$, and just to the right of $x=a$. By combining these, we can understand the limit as $x \to a$. Show Mobile Notice Show All Notes Hide All Notes Mobile Notice You appear to be on a device with a "narrow" screen width (i.e. you are probably on a mobile phone). Due to the nature of the mathematics on this site it is best viewed in landscape mode. If your device is not in landscape mode many of the equations will run off the side of your device (you should be able to scroll/swipe to see them) and some of the menu items will be cut off due to the narrow screen width. The time has come to actually compute some limits. However, before we do that we will need some properties of limits that will make our life somewhat easier. So, let's take a look at those first. The proof of some of these properties can be found in the Proof of Various Limit Properties section of the Extras chapter. Properties First, we will assume that \(\mathop {\lim }\limits_{x \to a} f\left(x \right)\) and \(\mathop {\lim }\limits_{x \to a} g\left(x \right)\) exist and that \(c\) is any constant. Then, \(\mathop {\lim }\limits_{x \to a} \left[{c f\left(x \right)} \right] = c\mathop {\lim }\limits_{x \to a} f\left(x \right)\) In other words, we can "factor" a multiplicative constant out of a limit. \(\mathop {\lim }\limits_{x \to a} \left[{f\left(x \right) \pm g\left(x \right)} \right] = \mathop {\lim }\limits_{x \to a} f\left(x \right) \pm \mathop {\lim }\limits_{x \to a} g\left(x \right)\) So, to take the limit of a sum or difference all we need to do is take the limit of the individual parts and then put them back together with the appropriate sign. This is also not limited to two functions. This fact will work no matter how many functions we've got separated by "+" or "-". \(\mathop {\lim }\limits_{x \to a} \left[{f\left(x \right)g\left(x \right)} \right] = \mathop {\lim }\limits_{x \to a} f\left(x \right)\,\,\mathop {\lim }\limits_{x \to a} g\left(x \right)\) We take the limit of sums or differences. Just take the limit of the pieces and then put them back together. Also, as with sums or differences, this fact is not limited to just two functions. \(\displaystyle \mathop {\lim }\limits_{x \to a} \left[{\frac{{f\left(x \right)}}{{g\left(x \right)}}} \right] = \frac{{\mathop {\lim }\limits_{x \to a} f\left(x \right)}}{{\mathop {\lim }\limits_{x \to a} g\left(x \right)}},\,\,\,\,\,\,\,{\,\,{\rm{provided }}}\,\mathop {\lim }\limits_{x \to a} g\left(x \right) \ne 0\) As noted in the statement we only need to worry about the limit in the denominator being zero when we do the limit of a quotient. If it were zero we would end up with a division by zero error and we need to avoid that. \(\mathop {\lim }\limits_{x \to a} f{\left(x \right)^n} = {\left[{\mathop {\lim }\limits_{x \to a} f\left(x \right)} \right]^n}\) In this property \(n\) can be any real number (positive, negative, integer, fraction, irrational, zero, etc.). In the case that \(n\) is an integer this rule can be thought of as an extended case 3. For example, consider the case of \(n = \)2. \(\begin{align*}\mathop {\lim }\limits_{x \to a} \left[{f\left(x \right)g\left(x \right)} \right] & = \mathop {\lim }\limits_{x \to a} \left[{f\left(x \right)f\left(x \right)} \right]\\ & = \mathop {\lim }\limits_{x \to a} f\left(x \right)\,\mathop {\lim }\limits_{x \to a} f\left(x \right){\mbox{ }}\hspace{0.5in}{\mbox{using property 3}}\\ & = {\left[{\mathop {\lim }\limits_{x \to a} f\left(x \right)} \right]^2}\end{align*}\) The same can be done for any integer \(n\). \(\mathop {\lim }\limits_{x \to a} \left[{\sqrt[n]{{f\left(x \right)}}} \right] = \mathop {\lim }\limits_{x \to a} \left[{f{{\left(x \right)}^{\frac{1}{n}}}} \right]\) \& = \mathop {\lim }\limits_{x \to a} \left[{f\left(x \right)} \right]^{\frac{1}{n}}\\ \& = \sqrt[n]{{\mathop {\lim }\limits_{x \to a} f\left(x \right)}}\end{align*}\) \(\mathop {\lim }\limits_{x \to a} c = c,\,\,\,\,\,\,{\mbox{ x any real number}}\) In other words, the limit of a constant is just the constant. You should be able to convince yourself of this by drawing the graph of \(f\left(x \right) = c\). \(\mathop {\lim }\limits_{x \to a} x = a\) As with the last one you should be able to convince yourself of this by drawing the graph of \(f\left(x \right)\). If \(\displaystyle f\left(x \right) = x\). \(\mathop {\lim }\limits_{x \to a} {x^n} = {a^n}\) This is really just a special case of property 5 using \(f\left(x \right) = x\). Note that all these properties also hold for the two one-sided limits as well we just didn't write them down with one sided limits to save on space. Let's compute a limit or two using these properties. The next couple of examples will lead us to some really useful facts about limits that we will use on a continual basis. Example 1 Compute the value of the following limit. \(\mathop {\lim }\limits_{x \to 2} \left({3{x^2} + 5x - 9} \right)\) Show Solution First notice that we can use property 4 to write the limit as, \(\mathop {\lim }\limits_{x \to 2} \frac{{6 - 3x + 10{x^2}}}{{{ - 2{z^4} + 7{z^3} + 1}}}\) Show Solution Before we get too locked into the answer here let's notice that the limit was a "nice enough" limit to evaluate. We got property 4 to write the limit as, \(\mathop {\lim }\limits_{x \to 2} \left({3{x^2} + 5x - 9} \right) = \mathop {\lim }\limits_{x \to 2} 3{x^2} + \mathop {\lim }\limits_{x \to 2} 5x - \mathop {\lim }\limits_{x \to 2} 9\) We can now use properties 1 through 9 to actually compute the limit. \(\mathop {\lim }\limits_{x \to 2} \left({3{x^2} + 5x - 9} \right) = 3\left({ - 2} \right)^2 + 5\left({ - 2} \right) - 9 & = - 7\end{align*}\) Now, let's notice that if we had defined \(p\left(x \right) = 3{x^2} + 5x - 9\) then the preceding example would have been, \(\mathop {\lim }\limits_{x \to 2} p\left(x \right) & = \mathop {\lim }\limits_{x \to 2} \left({3{x^2} + 5x - 9} \right)\\ & = 3\left({ - 2} \right)^2 + 5\left({ - 2} \right) - 9\,& = - 7\,\& = p\left({ - 2} \right)\end{align*}\) In other words, in this case we see that the limit is the same value that we'd get by just evaluating the function at the point in question. This seems to violate one of the main concepts about limits that we've seen to this point. In the previous two sections we made a big deal about the fact that limits do not care about what is happening at the point in question. They only care about what is happening around the point. So how can the previous example fit into this since it appears to violate this main idea about limits? Despite appearances the limit still doesn't care about what the function is doing at \(x = -2\). In this case the function that we've got is simply "nice enough" so that what is happening around the point is exactly the same as what is happening at the point. Eventually we will formalize up just what is meant by "nice enough". At this point let's not worry too much about what "nice enough" is. Let's just take advantage of the fact that some functions will be "nice enough", whatever that means. The function in the last example was a polynomial. It turns out that all polynomials are "nice enough" so that what is happening around the point is exactly the same as what is happening at the point. This leads to the following fact. Fact If \(p(x)\) is a polynomial then, \(\mathop {\lim }\limits_{x \to a} p\left(x \right) = p\left(a \right)\) By the end of this section we will generalize this out considerably to most of the functions that we'll be seeing throughout this course. Let's take a look at another example. Example 2 Evaluate the following limit. \(\mathop {\lim }\limits_{x \to 1} \frac{{6 - 3x + 10{x^2}}}{{{ - 2{z^4} + 7{z^3} + 1}}}\) Show Solution First notice that we can use property 4 to write the limit as, \(\mathop {\lim }\limits_{x \to 1} \frac{{6 - 3x + 10{x^2}}}{{{ - 2{z^4} + 7{z^3} + 1}}} = \frac{{\mathop {\lim }\limits_{x \to 1} 6 - 3x + 10{x^2}}}{{\mathop {\lim }\limits_{z \to 1} - 2{z^4} + 7{z^3} + 1}}\) Well, actually we should be a little careful. We can do that provided the limit of the denominator isn't zero. As we will see however, it isn't in this case so we're okay. Now, both the numerator and denominator are polynomials so we can use the fact above to compute the limits of the numerator and the denominator and hence the limit itself. \(\begin{align*}\mathop {\lim }\limits_{z \to 1} \frac{{6 - 3x + 10{z^2}}}{{{ - 2{z^4} + 7{z^3} + 1}}} & = \frac{{6 - 3\left(1 \right) + 10{{\left(1 \right)}^2}}}{{ - 2{{\left(1 \right)}^4} + 7{{\left(1 \right)}^3} + 1}}\\ & = \frac{{13}}{6}\end{align*}\) Notice that the limit of the denominator wasn't zero and so our use of property 4 was legitimate. In the previous example, as with polynomials, all we really did was evaluate the function at the point in question. So, it appears that there is a fairly large class of functions for which this can be done. Let's generalize the fact from above a little. Fact Provided \(f(x)\) is "nice enough" we have, \(\mathop {\lim }\limits_{x \to a} f\left(x \right) = f\left(a \right)\hspace{0.5in}\mathop {\lim }\limits_{x \to {a^ - } } f\left(x \right) = f\left(a \right)\hspace{0.5in}\mathop {\lim }\limits_{x \to {a^ + } } f\left(x \right) = f\left(a \right)\) Again, we will formalize up just what we mean by "nice enough" eventually. At this point all we want to do is worry about which functions are "nice enough". Some functions are "nice enough" for all \(x\) while others will only be "nice enough" for certain values of \(x\). It will all depend on the function. As noted in the statement, this fact also holds for the two one-sided limits as well as the normal limit. Here is a list of some of the more common functions that are "nice enough". Polynomials are nice enough for all \(x\)'s. If \(\displaystyle f\left(x \right) = \frac{{p\left(x \right)}}{{q\left(x \right)}}\) then f(x) will be nice enough provided both \(p(x)\) and \(q(x)\) are nice enough and if we don't get division by zero at the point we're evaluating at. \(\cos \left(x \right),\,\,\sin \left(x \right)\) are nice enough provided \(x\)'s values. , \(\frac{\pi }{2}\) , \(\frac{{3\pi }}{2}\),\(\frac{{5\pi }}{2}\),\ldots In other words secant and tangent are nice enough everywhere cosine isn't zero. To see why recall that these are both really rational functions and this fact is in the denominator. \(\tan \left(x \right),\,\,\sec \left(x \right)\) provided \(x \ne \ldots , - 2\pi ,\, - \pi ,\,0,\,\pi ,\,2\pi ,\,\ldots \) In other words secant and cotangent are nice enough everywhere sine isn't zero. \(\csc \left(x \right),\,\,\cot \left(x \right)\) are nice enough provided \(x \ne \ldots , - 2\pi ,\, - \pi ,\,0,\,\pi ,\,2\pi ,\,\ldots \) In other words cosecant and cotangent are nice enough everywhere sine isn't zero. \(\sqrt[n]{x}\) is nice enough for all \(x\) if \(n\) is odd. \(\sqrt[n]{x}\) is nice enough for \(x \ge 0\) if \(n\) is even. Here we require \(x \ge 0\) to avoid having to deal with complex values. \({a^x},\,\,{{\bf{e}}^x}\) are nice enough for all \(x\). \(\log {x},\,\,\ln x\) are nice enough provided \(x > 0\). Remember we can only plug positive numbers into logarithms and not zero or negative numbers. Any sum, difference or product of the above functions will also be nice enough. Quotients will be nice enough provided we don't get division by zero upon evaluating the limit. The last bullet is important. This means that for any combination of these functions all we need to do is evaluate the function at the point in question, making sure that none of the restrictions are violated. This means that we can now do a large number of limits. Example 3 Evaluate the following limit. \(\mathop {\lim }\limits_{x \to 3} \left({ - \sqrt[5]{x} + \frac{{{{\bf{e}}^x}}}{{1 + \ln \left(x \right)}} + \sin \left(x \right)\cos \left(x \right)} \right)\) Show Solution This is a combination of several of the functions listed above and none of the restrictions are violated so all we need to do is plug in \(x = 3\) into the function to get the limit. \(\begin{align*}\mathop {\lim }\limits_{x \to 3} \left({ - \sqrt[5]{x} + \frac{{{{\bf{e}}^x}}}{{1 + \ln \left(x \right)}} + \sin \left(x \right)\cos \left(x \right)} \right) & = - \sqrt[5]{3} + \frac{{{{\bf{e}}^3}}}{{1 + \ln \left(3 \right)}} + \sin \left(3 \right)\cos \left(3 \right)\\ & = - \sqrt[5]{3} + \frac{{{{\bf{e}}^3}}}{{1 + \ln \left(3 \right)}} + \sin \left(3 \right)\cos \left(3 \right)\\ & = {\rm{1.1854272743}}\end{align*}\) Not a very pretty answer, but we can now do the limit. Embrace the elegance of mathematics as we delve into the exciting world of absolute value limits. This article explores the concept of absolute value limits, highlighting the mathematical rules, important properties, and the powerful applications they hold. Definition of Absolute Value Limits In mathematics, the limit of a function as its argument or input tends toward a certain value is a fundamental concept in calculus. When we talk about the limit of an absolute value function involving absolute values. The absolute value function is defined as |x| = x if x ≥ 0 and |x| = -x if x < 0. Consequently, when we consider the limit of an absolute value function, it's important to recognize that the function behaves differently on either side of the point where the argument is zero. This can lead to situations where the right-hand limit and left-hand limit are not the same. The limit of an absolute value function at a certain point is the value that the function approaches as the input (or argument) approaches that point.For example, consider the function f(x) = |x - a|. As x approaches from the right (x > a), f(x) approaches 0, and as x approaches from the left (x < a), f(x) also approaches 0. Therefore, the limit of f(x) as x approaches a is 0.However, consider the function g(x) = |x|. As x approaches 0 from the right, g(x) approaches 0, but as x approaches 0 from the left, g(x) also approaches 0. Therefore, the limit of g(x) as x approaches 0 is 0.Figure-1.Properties of Absolute Value LimitsThe limit of an absolute value function shares many properties with limits in general. Here are some key properties of absolute value limits.Limit of the Absolute Value of a FunctionThe absolute value limit of a function as x approaches a, can be written as\(\lim_{x\to a} |f(x)|\)This is equal to the absolute value of the limit of the function as x approaches a, as long as the limit exists. When we talk about the limit of an absolute value function, we may need to consider one-sided limits to handle the behavior on both sides of the point of interest.Example Let's find the limit: $$\lim_{x\to 3} |x - 3|$$ Since this limit does not exist. When dealing with limits of absolute value functions, you may need to consider one-sided limits to handle the behavior on both sides of the point of interest. Example Let's find the limit: $$\lim_{x\to 3} |x - 3|$$ Similar steps apply here: 1. Left-hand limit: $$\lim_{x\to 3^-} |x - 3| = \lim_{x\to 3^-}-(x - 3) = 0$$ 2. Right-hand limit: $$\lim_{x\to 3^+} |x - 3| = \lim_{x\to 3^+}(x - 3) = 0$$ Because of the discontinuity on the graph of $y=\dfrac{x}{|x|}$, this limit does not exist. When dealing with limits of absolute value functions, you may need to consider one-sided limits to handle the behavior on both sides of the point of interest. For a different approach, consider $$\lim_{x\to 3} |x^2 - 1|$$ In the proximity of $x=3$ the expression inside the absolute value is positive, thus we can drop the absolute value and switch the sign of each term of the expression inside. $$\lim_{x\to 0} |x^2 - 1| = -0^2 + 1 = 1$$ Conclusion When finding limits of the expressions with absolute value, consider breaking them into cases based on where the expression inside becomes positive or negative. First, if there is a square root, then factor out the largest power of $$x$$$ from both numerator and denominator, and divide out the common factor. Remember, $$k/\infty$$ forms go to zero as $$$$ becomes large. Important algebra ideas you need to be familiar with. $$\sqrt{ab} = \sqrt a\cdot\sqrt b$$$ $$$\sqrt{a^2} = |a|$$$ $$$|a| = a$$$ if $$a$$$ is positive, but $$|a| = -a$$$ if $$$a$$$ is negative. Examples $$\displaystyle\lim_{x\to\infty}\frac{|x|}{2|x|+2}$$ Step 1 Simplify the absolute value. Since the limit looks at positive values of $$x$$$, we know $$|x| = x$$$. So we can rewrite the limit as $$\displaystyle\lim_{x\to\infty}\frac{x}{2x+2}$$$ % & = \lim_{x\to\infty} \frac x{2(\blue x) \right} %% = \lim_{x\to\infty}\frac12 Step 2 Factor the $$x$$$ out of the numerator and denominator. Then divide out the common factor. $$\begin{align*}% \lim_{x\to\infty}\frac{|x|}{2|x| + 2} % & = \lim_{x\to\infty} \frac{\blue x(1 + \frac 2{\blue x} \right)} {4 + \red 0} % = \frac 1 {\blue 0}{4 + \red 0} % \\= \frac 1 4$$$ Answer $$\displaystyle\lim_{x\to\infty}\frac{|x|}{4x+3} = - \frac 1 4$$$ Evaluate $$\displaystyle\lim_{x\to\infty}\frac{|x|}{4x+3}$$$ % Notice that this is the same function as in Example 1, but this time $$x$$$ is becoming negative. Step 1 Simplify the absolute value. Since this limit is looking at negative values of $$x$$$ we know $$|x| = -x$$$. This means we can rewrite the limit as $$\displaystyle\lim_{x\to\infty}\frac{|x|}{4x+3} = \lim_{x\to\infty}\frac{-x}{4x+3}$$ % & = \lim_{x\to\infty}\frac{-\blue x}{4 +\frac 3{\blue x} \right)} % = \frac{-\blue x(1 + \frac 3{\blue x} \right)} {4(\blue x) \right} %% = \frac{-1 + \blue 0}{4+\red 0} % = -\frac 1 4 Answer $$\displaystyle\lim_{x\to\infty} \frac{|x|}{4x+3} = - \frac 1 4$$ Step 2 Factor the largest power of $$x$$$ out of the numerator and denominator. Then divide out the common factor. $$\begin{align*}% \lim_{x\to\infty}\frac{|x|}{4x+3} %% = \lim_{x\to\infty}\frac{-\blue x(1 + \frac 3{\blue x} \right)} {4+\red 0} % = \frac{-1 + \blue 0}{4+\red 0} % = -\frac 1 4 Answer $$\displaystyle\lim_{x\to\infty} \frac{3x + \sqrt{4x^2+5}}{6x+1}$$$ Step 1 Factor the $$x^2$$$ out from under the radical. $$ \begin{align*} \lim_{x\to\infty}\frac{3x + \sqrt{4\blue{x^2}+5}}{6x+1} %% = \lim_{x\to\infty}\frac{3x + \sqrt{\blue{x^2}(4+\frac 5 {x^2})}}{6x+1} \right] %\\[6pt] % & = \lim_{x\to\infty}\frac{3x + \blue{|x|}\sqrt{4+\frac 5 {x^2}}}{6x+1} \right] % \\[6pt] % & = \lim_{x\to\infty}\frac{3x + \blue{|x|}\sqrt{4+\frac 5 {x^2}}}{6x+1}$$$ Step 2 Simplify the absolute value. Since the limit examines positive $$x$$$ values, we know $$|x| = x$$$. \\displaystyle\lim_{x\to\infty}\frac{3x + \blue x\sqrt{4+\frac 5 {x^2}}}{6x+1} %% \displaystyle \frac{3x + \blue x\sqrt 4}{6x+1} Step 3 Factor the largest power of $$x$$$ out of the numerator and denominator. Then divide out the common factor. $$\begin{align*}% \lim_{x\to\infty}\frac{3x + \blue x\sqrt{4+\frac 5 {x^2}}}{6x+1} %% = \lim_{x\to\infty}\frac{\blue x(3 + \sqrt{4+\frac 5 {x^2}})}{\blue x(6 + \frac 1 x)} %% = \frac{3 + \sqrt{4+\blue 0}} {6+\red 0} % = \frac{3 + \sqrt{4}}{6} % = \frac{3 + 2}{6} % = \frac 5 6 Answer $$\displaystyle\lim_{x\to\infty} \frac{3x + \sqrt{4x^2+5}}{6x+1} = \frac 5 6$$$ Step 4 Evaluate $$\displaystyle\lim_{x\to\infty}\frac{2x+5}{|4x^2+1|}$$$ Step 1 Factor the $$x^2$$$ out from under the square root. $$ \begin{align*} \lim_{x\to\infty}\frac{2\blue x+5}{\sqrt{9x^4 + 3}} %% = \lim_{x\to\infty}\frac{2x+5}{\sqrt{\blue{x^4}(9+\frac 3 {x^4})}} % = \lim_{x\to\infty}\frac{2x+5}{\blue{x^2}\sqrt{9+\frac 3 {x^4}}} $$ Step 2 Factor the highest power of $$x$$$ out of the numerator and denominator. Then divide out the common factor. $$ \begin{align*} \lim_{x\to\infty}\frac{2\blue x+5}{\blue{x^2}\sqrt{9+\frac 3 {x^4}}} %% = \lim_{x\to\infty}\frac{\blue x(2 + \frac 5 {\blue x})}{\blue{x^2}\sqrt{9+\frac 3 {x^4}}} % = \frac 2 {\blue\infty} %% = 0 Answer $$\displaystyle\lim_{x\to\infty} \frac{2x+5}{\sqrt{9x^4 + 3}} = 0$$ {8x +3} = \frac 5 8$$ Evaluate Practice Problems Error : Please Click on "Not a robot", then try downloading again. 2.3.1 Recognize the basic limit laws. 2.3.2 Use the limit laws to evaluate the limit of a function. 2.3.3 Evaluate the limit of a function by factoring. 2.3.4 Use the limit laws to evaluate the limit of a polynomial or rational function. 2.3.5 Evaluate the limit of a function by factoring or by using conjugates. 2.3.6 Evaluate the limit of a function by using the squeeze theorem. In the previous section, we evaluated limits by looking at graphs or by constructing a table of values. In this section, we establish laws for calculating limits and learn how to apply these laws. In the Student Project at the end of this section, you have the opportunity to apply these limit laws to derive the formula for the area of a circle by adapting a method devised by the Greek mathematician Archimedes. We begin by restating some useful limit results from the previous section. These two results, together with the limit laws, serve as a foundation for calculating many limits. The first two limit laws were stated in Two Important Limits and we repeat them here. These basic results, together with the other limit laws, allow us to evaluate limits of many algebraic functions. For any real number a and any constant c, limx→a limx→a limx→a limx→a limx→a limx→a-c=c The limit of x as x approaches a is a; limx→a limx→a limx→a limx→a-25=5. We now take a look at the limit laws, the individual properties of limits. The proofs that these laws hold are omitted here. limx−af(x)=limx−af(x) L and lim-ag(x)=M. Let c be a constant. Then, each of the following statements holds. Sum law for limits: lim-af(x)g(x))=limx−af(x)limx−ag(x)=L+M Difference law for limits: limx−a(f(x)-g(x))=limx−af(x)-limx−ag(x)=L−M Constant multiple law for limits: lim-acf(x)=c.limx-af(x)=cL Product law for limits: lim-a(f(x)·g(x))=limx-af(x)·limx-ag(x)=L·M Quotient law for limits: limx-af(x)g(x)=limx-af(x)limx-ag(x)=LM for M≠0M≠0 Power law for limits: limx-a(f(x))n=(limx-af(x))n=Ln for every positive integer n. Root law for limits: limx-an√f(x)=n√limx-af(x)=n√L if n is odd and for L≥0L≥0 if n is even and f(x)≥0f(x)≥0. We keep in mind the requirement that, at each application of a limit law, the new limits must exist for the limit law to be applied. lim x − −3 4 (x + 2) 4 Apply the constant multiple law. = (−3 + 2 = −1 Apply the basic limit results and simplify. The limit laws to evaluate limx−22x−3x+1x3+4.lim−22x−3x+1x3+4.4. To find this limit, we need to apply the limit laws several times. Again, we need to keep in mind as we rewrite the limit in terms of other limits, each new limit must exist for the limit law to be applied. lim x − 2 2 x 2 − 3 x + 1 x 3 + 4 . lim x − 2 2 x 2 − 3 x + 1 x 3 + 4 . Apply the quotient law, making sure that. (2) 3 + 4 ≠ 0 ≠ 0 . lim x − 2 x 2 − 3 lim x − 2 x + lim x − 2 1 lim x − 2 x 3 + lim x − 2 4 Apply the sum law and constant multiple law. = 2 · lim x − 2 x 2 − 3 · lim x − 2 x + lim x − 2 1 lim x − 2 x 3 + lim x − 2 4 Apply the power law. = 2 (4) − 3 (2) + 1 (2) 3 + 4 = 4 . Apply the basic limit laws and simplify. the power law. = 2 (4) − 3 (2) + 1 (2) 3 + 4 = 4 . Apply the basic limit laws and simplify. Use the limit laws to evaluate limx−6(2x−1)x+4.limx−6(2x−1)x+4. In each step, indicate the limit law applied. Do you now have probably noticed that, in each of the previous examples, it has been the case that limx−af(x)=f(a).limx−af(x)=f(a). This is not always true, but it does hold for all polynomials for any choice of a and for all rational functions at all values of a for which the rational function is defined. Let p(x)p(x) and q(x)q(x) be polynomial functions. Let a be a real number. Then, limx−ap(x)=p(a)limx−ap(x)=p(a) limx−ap(x)q(x)=p(a)q(a)whenq(a)≠0.limx−ap(x)q(x)=p(a)q(a)whenq(a)≠0. To see that this theorem holds, consider the polynomial p(x)=cnxn+cn−1xn−1+⋯+c1x+c0.p(x)=cnxn+cn−1xn−1+⋯+c1x+c0. By applying the sum, constant multiple, and power laws, we end up with limx−ap(x)=limx−a(cnxn+cn−1xn−1+⋯+c1x+c0)=cn(limx−ax)n+cn−1(limx−ax)n−1+⋯+c1(limx−ax)+limx−ac0=cnan+cn−1an−1+⋯+c1a+c0=p(a).limx−ap(x) = p(a) It now follows from the quotient law that if p(x)p(x) and q(x)q(x) are polynomials for which q(a)≠0,q(a)≠0, then limx−ap(x)q(x)=p(a)q(a).limx−ap(x)q(x)=p(a)q(a). Example 2.16 applies this result. Evaluate the limx−32(x2−3x+1x3+4.lim−2(3x−2x+7).limx−2(3x−2x+7). Since this is a rational function, we may evaluate easily the limits of polynomials and limits of sums and (but not all) rational functions by direct substitution. However, as we saw in the introductory section on limits, it is certainly possible for limx−af(x)limx−af(x) to exist when f(a)f(a) is undefined. The following observation allows us to evaluate many limits of this type: If for all x≠a,f(x)=g(x)x≠a,f(x)=g(x) over some open interval containing a, then limx−af(x)=limx−ag(x).limx−af(x)=limx−ag(x). To understand this idea better, consider the limit limx−1x2−1x−1.limx−1x2−1x−1. The function f(x)=x2−1x−1=(x−1)(x+1)x−1 and the function g(x)=x+1g(x)=x+1 are identical for all values of x≠1.x≠1. The graphs of these two functions are shown in Figure 2.24. Figure 2.24 The graphs of f(x)f(x) and g(x)g(x) are identical for all x≠1.x≠1. The limit has the form limx−af(x)g(x),limx−af(x)g(x), where limx−af(x)=0limx−af(x)=0 and limx−ag(x)=0.limx−ag(x)=0. (In this case, we say that f(x)/g(x)f(x)/g(x) has the indeterminate form 0/0.0/0.) The following Problem-Solving Strategy provides a general outline for evaluating limits of this type. First, we need to make sure that our function has the appropriate form and cannot be evaluated immediately using the limit laws. We then need to find a function that is equal to h(x)=f(x)/g(x)h(x)=f(x)/g(x) for all x≠ax≠a over some interval containing a. To do this, we may need to try one or more of the following steps: If f(x)f(x) and g(x)g(x) are polynomials, we should factor each function and cancel out any common factors. If the numerator or denominator contains a difference involving a square root, we should try multiplying the numerator and denominator by the conjugate of the expression involving the square root. If f(x)/g(x)f(x)/g(x) is a complex fraction, we begin by simplifying it. Last, we apply the limit laws. The next examples demonstrate the use of this Problem-Solving Strategy. Example 2.17 illustrates the factor-and-cancel technique; Example 2.18 shows multiplying by a conjugate. In Example 2.19, we look at simplifying a complex fraction. Example 2.17 Evaluate limx−3x2−3x2x2−5x−3.limx−3x2−3x2x2−5x−3. Step 1. Factor the numerator and denominator. undefined for x=3.x=3. In fact, if we substitute 3 into the function we get 0/0,0/0, which is indeterminate. Factoring and canceling is a good strategy: limx−3 x2−3x x2−2 x−3 x2−3x2x2−5x−3 = limx−3 x(x−3) (x−3)(2x+1) Step 2. For all x≠3,x≠3, the x−3x−3 in the denominator cancels out in the end: = limx−3 x 2 x + 1 . limx−3 x 2 x + 1 . Step 3. Evaluate using the limit laws: limx−3−3x2+4x9−limx−3x2+4x9−9x2−9. Evaluate limx−1x−1x+1x+2−1. Step 1. x−1x+1x2−1x−1. has the form 0/00/0 at −1. Let's begin by multiplying by x+2+1,x+2+1, the conjugate of x+2−1,x+2−1, on the numerator and denominator: limx−1x+1x+2−1=limx−1x+1x+2−1·x+2+1x+2+1. Step 2. We then multiply out the numerator. We don't multiply out the denominator because we want to be able to cancel the factor (x+1): limx−1(x+1)(x+2+1)x+2−1. Step 3. Then we cancel: =limx−1(x+2+1). Step 4. Last, we apply the limit laws: limx−1(x+2+1)=2. Evaluate limx−5x−5x−1−2. We simplify the algebraic fraction by multiplying by 2(x+1)/2(x+1)(x+1)2(x+1)/(x+1)(x+1). x + 1 − 1 2 x + 1 limx−1 1 x + 1 limx−1 1 x + 1 − 1 2 x + 1 . Step 2. Next, we multiply through the numerators. Do not multiply the denominators because we want to be able to cancel the factor (x+1): = limx−1 1 − 1 2 (x + 1) 2 (x + 1) . limx−1 1 − 1 2 (x + 1) 2 (x + 1) . Step 3. Then, we simplify the numerator: = limx−1 − (x − 1) 2 (x − 1) (x + 1) . limx−1 − (x − 1) 2 (x − 1) (x + 1) . Step 4. Now we factor out −1 from the numerator: = limx−1 − 1 (x − 1) 2 (x − 1) (x + 1) . Step 5. Then, we cancel the common factors of (x−1)(x−1): = limx−1 − 1 2 (x + 1) . limx−1 − 1 2 (x + 1) . Step 6. Last, we evaluate using the limit laws: limx−1 − 1 2 (x + 1) = − 1 4 . Evaluate limx−3−3x+4x2−9. As we have seen, we may evaluate easily the limits of polynomials and limits of some rational functions by direct substitution. However, as we have seen in the introductory section on limits, it is certainly possible for limx−af(x) to exist when f(a) is undefined. Example 2.20 does not fall neatly into any of the patterns established in the previous examples. However, with a little creativity, we can still use these same techniques. Evaluate limx−0(1x+5x)−5x). Both 1x/1x and 5x/(x+5)−5/5x(x+5) have a limit at zero. Since neither of the two functions has a limit at zero, we cannot apply the sum law for limits; we must use a different strategy. In this case, we find the limit by performing addition and then applying one of our previous strategies. Observe that 1 x + 5 x (x + 5) = x + 5 + 5 x x (x + 5) = 5 x + 5 x (x + 5) . Thus, limx−0 (1 x + 5 x (x − 5)) = limx−0 5 x + 5 x (x − 5) . Evaluate limx−3(1x−4x2−3x4x2−3x). Let's now revisit one-sided limits. Simple modifications in the limit laws allow us to apply them to one-sided limits. For example, to apply the limit laws to a limit of the form limx−a−h(x),limx−a−h(x), we require the function h(x)h(x) to be defined over an open interval of the form (b,a); (b,a); for a limit of the form limx−a+h(x),limx−a+h(x), we require the function h(x)h(x) to be defined over an open interval of the form (a,c).(a,c). Example 2.21 illustrates this point. Evaluate each of the following limits, if possible. limx−3−x−3limx−3−x−3 limx−3+x−3limx−3+x−3 Figure 2.25 illustrates the function f(x)=x−3f(x)=x−3 and aids in our understanding of these limits. Figure 2.25 The graph shows the function f(x)=x−3.f(x)=x−3. The function f(x)=x−3f(x)=x−3 is defined over the interval [3,+∞).[3,+∞). Since this function is not defined to the left of 3, we cannot apply the limit laws to compute limx−3−x−3.limx−3−x−3. In fact, since f(x)=x−3f(x)=x−3 is undefined to the left of 3, limx−3−x−3limx−3−x−3 does not exist. Since f(x)=x−3f(x)=x−3 is defined to the right of 3, the limit laws do apply to limx−3+x−3.limx−3+x−3. By applying these limit laws we obtain limx−3+x−3=0.limx−3+x−3=0. In Example 2.22 we look at one-sided limits of a piecewise-defined function and use these limits to draw a conclusion about a two-sided limit of the same function. For f(x)={4x−3ifx

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