AB Calculus: Intro to Limits **Name:** ______________________________

KNOW YOUR LIMITS

conjugates

The limit is fundamental to the study of calculus. It is important to acquire a good working knowledge of the limit before moving forward, because you will find out through the duration of this course that really, it is all about limits.

Example 1: Use your calculator to generate a graph of $f(x) = \frac{x^2-4}{x-2}$; $x \neq 2$.

Factor

Simplify?

excluded value

DEN = 0

$\frac{x^2-4}{x-2} = \frac{(x+2)\cancel{(x-2)}}{\cancel{x-2}}$

$= x+2$

a) Why is $x \neq 2$ included in the function definition?

because it is the excluded value

(x-value that makes denominator = 0)

b) Complete the table of values below to determine what happens as x gets "close" to 2.

x approaches 2 from the **left** →						← x approaches 2 from the **right**				
x	1.5	1.75	1.9	1.99	1.999	2	2.001	2.01	2.1	2.25	2.5
$f(x)$	3.5	3.75	3.9	3.99	3.999	undefined	4.001	4.01	4.1	4.25	4.5

Definition of a Limit

If the y-value of a function $f(x)$ becomes close to a single value L as x gets closer and closer to a point *c* from both the left and the right side, then the **limit of $f(x)$ as x approaches *c* is L**, which can be written using mathematical notation as:

$$\lim_{x \to c} f(x) = L$$

c) Apply this definition to the function from above to find $\lim_{x \to 2} f(x)$.

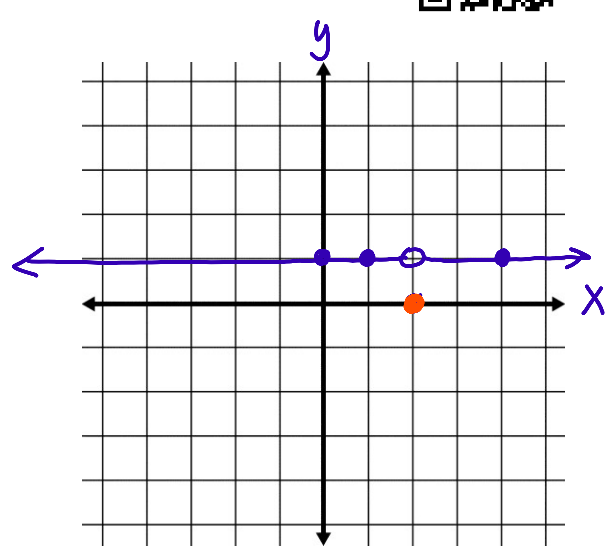
$\lim_{x \to 2} f(x) = 4$

The previous definition of a limit is an informal definition. The formal mathematical definition is called the epsilon-delta definition. It is not required for AP Calculus, however, if you would like to learn about it, click on, or type in, the following link or scan the QR code to the right.
https://goo.gl/gyzBaK

Example 2: Use the graph to find $\lim_{x \to 2} g(x)$, where g is:

piece-wise function →

$$g(x) = \begin{cases} 1, & x \neq 2 \\ 0, & x = 2 \end{cases}$$



$\lim_{x \to 2} g(x) = 1$

In algebra class
$g(2) = 0$

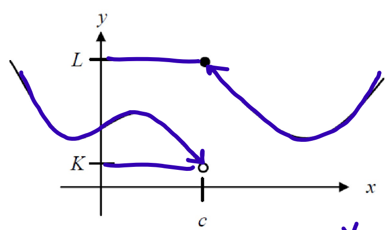
The last example can be confusing at first, but think of a damaged bridge crossing a canyon. Even though the bridge is broken and it seems like the missing section has fallen into the water below, you can probably tell where the missing section should be. The height of that point would be the value of the limit. Limits are important because they give us the ability to discuss what is going on at a point mathematically whether the bridge, or graph, exists at that point or not. With limits, you are only concerned with the y-value the graph approaches, not what the y-value actually is at that point.

One-Sided Limits

Suppose we have the graph of $f(x)$ below. Notice that the function below does not approach the same y-value as x approaches c from the left and right sides. When tracing the graph starting to the left of c, the graph approaches the y-value K. When tracing the graph starting to the right of c, the graph approaches the y-value L.

$\lim_{x\to c^-} f(x) = K$

What is the limit as x approaches c from the left



$\lim_{x\to c^+} f(x) = L$

limit as x approaches c from the right

Sometimes we are only interested in what the function approaches as x approaches from the right or left of c. We can say this using the following notation:

$\lim_{x\to 2} f(x)$ Does not Exist

$\lim_{x\to c^+} f(x) = L$ … "the limit of $f(x)$ as x approaches c from the right is L."
$\lim_{x\to c^-} f(x) = K$ … "the limit of $f(x)$ as x approaches c from the left is K."

The limit of a function as x approaches any number c exists if and only if the limit as x approaches c from the right is equal to the limit as x approaches c from the left. Using limit notation, we have:

$$\lim_{x\to c} f(x) \text{ exists} \Longleftrightarrow \lim_{x\to c^+} f(x) = \lim_{x\to c^-} f(x)$$

if and only if

Example 3: Let $f(x) = \begin{cases} 5-2x, & x > 2 \\ x-3, & x \le 2 \end{cases}$

greater

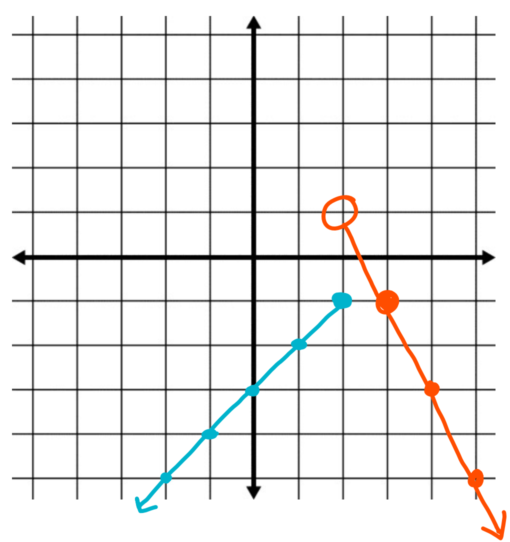
less than or equal to

a) Graph $f(x)$.

b) Find $\lim_{x\to 2^-} f(x)$. -1

c) Find $\lim_{x\to 2^+} f(x)$. 1

d) Find $\lim_{x\to 2} f(x)$? Does not exist



in algebra

$f(2) = -1$

When Limits Do Not Exist

There are times when a limit fails to exist, meaning that we are unable to find a value for the limit at the given point. When this happens, we say that the limit **does not exist**, abbreviating this statement as **DNE**. There are three types of common function behavior that lead to a limit that does not exist.

Common Types of Behavior Associated with a Limit that Does Not Exist
1. $f(x)$ approaches a different number from the right side of c than it approaches from the left side. 2. $f(x)$ increases or decreases without bound as x approaches c. 3. $f(x)$ oscillates between two fixed values as x approaches c.

Note: We will be more specific about Cause Number 2 when we explore infinite limits.

Example 4: Investigate the existence of the following limit using a graph and table.

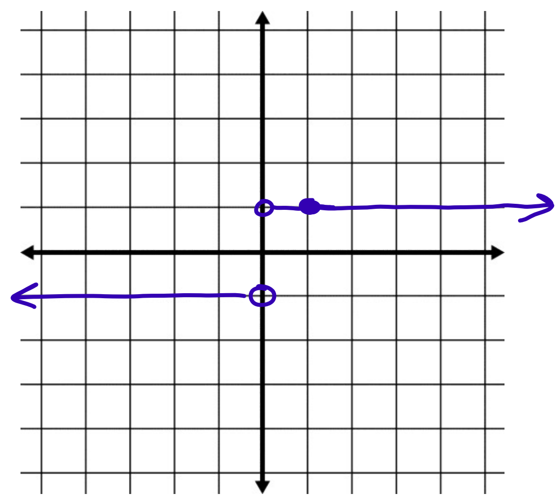
excluded value $x=0$

$$\lim_{x\to 0}\frac{|x|}{x}$$

$$f(x)=\begin{cases} 1, & x>0 \\ -1, & x \quad 0 \end{cases}$$

$$\frac{|x|}{x}=\frac{x}{x} \text{ or } \frac{-x}{x}$$

$$= 1 \text{ or } -1$$

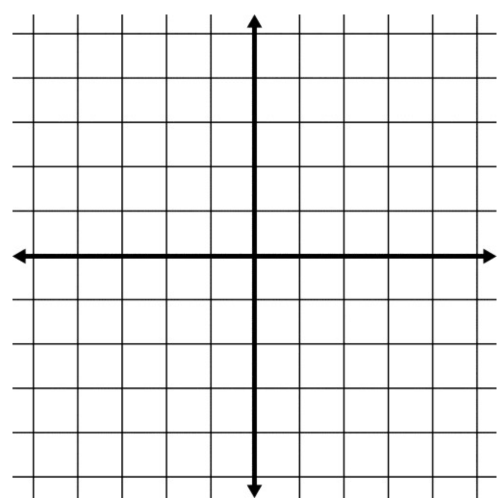


x	-0.5	-0.25	-0.1	-.01	-.001	0	.001	.01	.1	.25	.5
$f(x)$	-1	-1	-1	-1	-1	undefined	1	1	1	1	1

Example 5: Investigate the existence of the following limit using a graph and table.

$$\lim_{x\to 1}\frac{1}{(x-1)^2}$$

excluded value $x=1$



x	0.5	0.75	0.9	0.99	0.999	1	1.001	1.01	1.1	1.25	1.5
$f(x)$						undefined					