

Calculus I, Section 2.4, #22
The Precise Definition of a Limit

Prove the statement using the ϵ, δ definition of a limit.¹

$$\lim_{x \rightarrow -1.5} \frac{9 - 4x^2}{3 + 2x} = 6$$

Given $\epsilon > 0$, we need $\delta > 0$ such that if $0 < |x - (-1.5)| < \delta$, then $\left| \frac{9 - 4x^2}{3 + 2x} - 6 \right| < \epsilon$.

To find the appropriate δ , we start with the relationship for epsilon, and do whatever algebra is needed to find the relationship for δ .²

$$\begin{aligned} \left| \frac{9 - 4x^2}{3 + 2x} - 6 \right| &< \epsilon \\ \left| \frac{(3 - 2x)(3 + 2x)}{3 + 2x} - 6 \right| &< \epsilon \\ |3 - 2x - 6| &< \epsilon \\ |-3 - 2x| &< \epsilon \\ |-2| \left| \frac{3}{2} + x \right| &< \epsilon \\ 2 \cdot \left| x + \frac{3}{2} \right| &< \epsilon \\ \left| x + \frac{3}{2} \right| &< \frac{\epsilon}{2} \quad (\text{Note that } |x + \frac{3}{2}| = |x - (-1.5)|.) \end{aligned}$$

Since all of these steps are reversible, we now know to choose $\delta = \frac{\epsilon}{2}$. We construct the actual proof³, beginning with $0 < |x + 1.5| < \delta$ and leading to $\left| \frac{9 - 4x^2}{3 + 2x} - 6 \right| < \epsilon$.

Choose $\delta = \frac{\epsilon}{2}$. We have

$$\begin{aligned} 0 &< |x + 1.5| < \delta \\ \implies 0 &< |x + 1.5| < \frac{\epsilon}{2} \\ \implies |-2| \left| \frac{3}{2} + x \right| &< \epsilon \\ \implies |-3 - 2x| &< \epsilon \\ \implies \left| \frac{(3 - 2x)(3 + 2x)}{3 + 2x} - 6 \right| &< \epsilon \quad (\text{Since } 0 < |x - (-1.5)|, x \neq -\frac{3}{2}, \text{ and } 3 + 2x \neq 0.) \\ \implies \left| \frac{9 - 4x^2}{3 + 2x} - 6 \right| &< \epsilon \end{aligned}$$

Thus, given $\epsilon > 0$, we have $\delta = \frac{\epsilon}{2} > 0$ such that if $0 < |x - (-1.5)| < \delta$, then $\left| \frac{9 - 4x^2}{3 + 2x} - 6 \right| < \epsilon$.

¹Stewart, *Calculus, Early Transcendentals*, p. 114, #22.

²Many textbooks refer to this as "Guessing a value for δ ."

³Many textbooks refer to this as "Showing that this δ works."