

Calculus I, Section 4.4, #64
Indeterminate Forms and l'Hospital's Rule

Find the limit. Use l'Hospital's Rule where appropriate. If there is a more elementary method, consider using it. If l'Hospital's Rule doesn't apply, explain why.¹

$$\lim_{x \rightarrow \infty} x e^{-x}$$

As $x \rightarrow \infty$, $e^{-x} \rightarrow 0$, so the limit has the indeterminate form ∞^0 . Since l'Hospital's Rule doesn't directly apply, we'll name the value of the derivative, then do algebra to get the limit into the proper form.

Let

$$y = \lim_{x \rightarrow \infty} x e^{-x}$$

then

$$\ln(y) = \ln\left(\lim_{x \rightarrow \infty} x e^{-x}\right)$$

$$\ln(y) = \lim_{x \rightarrow \infty} \ln\left(x e^{-x}\right)$$

$$\ln(y) = \lim_{x \rightarrow \infty} e^{-x} \cdot \ln(x) \implies 0 \cdot \infty$$

$$\ln(y) = \lim_{x \rightarrow \infty} \frac{1}{e^x} \cdot \ln(x)$$

$$\ln(y) = \lim_{x \rightarrow \infty} \frac{\ln(x)}{e^x} \implies \frac{\infty}{\infty}$$

$$\ln(y) \stackrel{H}{=} \lim_{x \rightarrow \infty} \frac{\frac{1}{x}}{e^x}$$

$$\ln(y) = \lim_{x \rightarrow \infty} \frac{1}{x e^x}$$

so

$$\ln(y) = 0$$

so

$$y = e^0$$

$$y = 1$$

Thus, $\lim_{x \rightarrow \infty} x e^{-x} = 1$.

¹Stewart, *Calculus, Early Transcendentals*, p. 312, #64.