You might respond: Yes, but what about graphing calculators and computers? Don't they plot such a huge number of points that the sort of uncertainty demonstrated by Figures 2 and 3 is unlikely to happen?

It's true that modern technology is capable of producing very accurate graphs. But even the best graphing devices have to be used intelligently. We saw in Section 1.4 that it is extremely important to choose an appropriate viewing rectangle to avoid getting a misleading graph. (See especially Examples 1, 3, 4, and 5 in that section.) The use of calculus enables us to discover the most interesting aspects of graphs and in many cases to calculate maximum and minimum points and inflection points *exactly* instead of approximately.

For instance, Figure 4 shows the graph of $f(x) = 8x^3 - 21x^2 + 18x + 2$. At first glance it seems reasonable: It has the same shape as cubic curves like $y = x^3$, and it appears to have no maximum or minimum point. But if you compute the derivative, you will see that there is a maximum when $x = 0.75$ and a minimum when $x = 1$. Indeed, if we zoom in to this portion of the graph, we see that behavior exhibited in Figure 5. Without calculus, we could easily have overlooked it.

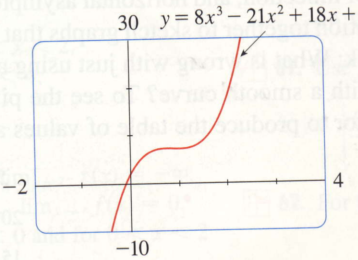


FIGURE 4

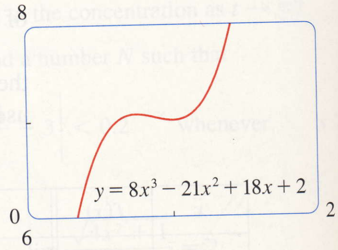


FIGURE 5

In the next section we will graph functions by using the interaction between calculus and graphing devices. In this section we draw graphs by first considering the following information. We don't assume that you have a graphing device, but if you do have one you should use it as a check on your work.

Guidelines for Sketching a Curve

The following checklist is intended as a guide to sketching a curve $y = f(x)$ by hand. Not every item is relevant to every function. (For instance, a given curve might not have an asymptote or possess symmetry.) But the guidelines provide all the information you need to make a sketch that displays the most important aspects of the function.

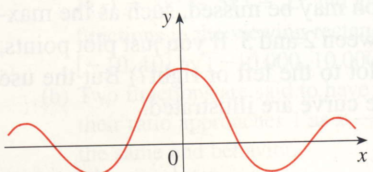
A. Domain It's often useful to start by determining the domain D of f, that is, the set of values of x for which $f(x)$ is defined.

B. Intercepts The y-intercept is $f(0)$ and this tells us where the curve intersects the y-axis. To find the x-intercepts, we set $y = 0$ and solve for x. (You can omit this step if the equation is difficult to solve.)

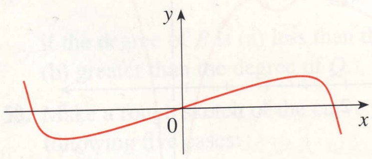
C. Symmetry

(i) If $f(-x) = f(x)$ for all x in D, that is, the equation of the curve is unchanged when x is replaced by $-x$, then f is an **even function** and the curve is symmetric about the y-axis. This means that our work is cut in half. If we know what the curve looks like for $x \geqslant 0$, then we need only reflect about the y-axis to obtain the complete curve [see Figure 6(a)]. Here are some examples: $y = x^2$, $y = x^4$, $y = |x|$, and $y = \cos x$.

(ii) If $f(-x) = -f(x)$ for all x in D, then f is an **odd function** and the curve is symmetric about the origin. Again we can obtain the complete curve if we know what



(a) Even function: reflectional symmetry



(b) Odd function: rotational symmetry

FIGURE 6

it looks like for $x \geqslant 0$. [Rotate 180° about the origin; see Figure 6(b).] Some simple examples of odd functions are $y = x$, $y = x^3$, $y = x^5$, and $y = \sin x$.

(iii) If $f(x + p) = f(x)$ for all x in D, where p is a positive constant, then f is called a **periodic function** and the smallest such number p is called the **period.** For instance, $y = \sin x$ has period 2π and $y = \tan x$ has period π. If we know what the graph looks like in an interval of length p, then we can use translation to sketch the entire graph (see Figure 7).

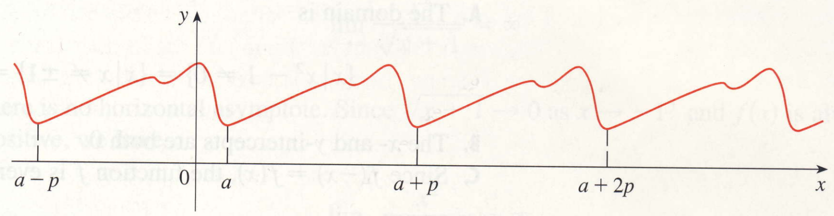


FIGURE 7
Periodic function: translational symmetry

D. Asymptotes

(i) *Horizontal Asymptotes.* Recall from Section 4.4 that if either $\lim_{x \to \infty} f(x) = L$ or $\lim_{x \to -\infty} f(x) = L$, then the line $y = L$ is a horizontal asymptote of the curve $y = f(x)$. If it turns out that $\lim_{x \to \infty} f(x) = \infty$ (or $-\infty$), then we do not have an asymptote to the right, but that is still useful information for sketching the curve.

(ii) *Vertical Asymptotes.* Recall from Section 2.2 that the line $x = a$ is a vertical asymptote if at least one of the following statements is true:

$$\boxed{1} \qquad \lim_{x \to a^+} f(x) = \infty \qquad \lim_{x \to a^-} f(x) = \infty$$

$$\lim_{x \to a^+} f(x) = -\infty \qquad \lim_{x \to a^-} f(x) = -\infty$$

(For rational functions you can locate the vertical asymptotes by equating the denominator to 0 after canceling any common factors. But for other functions this method does not apply.) Furthermore, in sketching the curve it is very useful to know exactly which of the statements in (1) is true. If $f(a)$ is not defined but a is an endpoint of the domain of f, then you should compute $\lim_{x \to a^-} f(x)$ or $\lim_{x \to a^+} f(x)$, whether or not this limit is infinite.

(iii) *Slant Asymptotes.* These are discussed at the end of this section.

E. Intervals of Increase or Decrease Use the I/D Test. Compute $f'(x)$ and find the intervals on which $f'(x)$ is positive (f is increasing) and the intervals on which $f'(x)$ is negative (f is decreasing).

F. Local Maximum and Minimum Values Find the critical numbers of f [the numbers c where $f'(c) = 0$ or $f'(c)$ does not exist]. Then use the First Derivative Test. If f' changes from positive to negative at a critical number c, then $f(c)$ is a local maximum. If f' changes from negative to positive at c, then $f(c)$ is a local minimum. Although it is usually preferable to use the First Derivative Test, you can use the Second Derivative Test if c is a critical number such that $f''(c) \neq 0$. Then $f''(c) > 0$ implies that $f(c)$ is a local minimum, whereas $f''(c) < 0$ implies that $f(c)$ is a local maximum.

G. Concavity and Points of Inflection Compute $f''(x)$ and use the Concavity Test. The curve is concave upward where $f''(x) > 0$ and concave downward where $f''(x) < 0$. Inflection points occur where the direction of concavity changes.

In Module 4.5 you can practice using information about f', f'', and asymptotes to determine the shape of the graph of f.

H. Sketch the Curve Using the information in items A–G, draw the graph. Sketch the asymptotes as dashed lines. Plot the intercepts, maximum and minimum points, and inflection