

particular solution y_1 of the equation. Show that the substitution $y = y_1 + u$ reduces Riccati's equation to a Bernoulli equation (4) with $n = 2$. The Bernoulli equation can then be reduced to a linear equation by the substitution $w = u^{-1}$.

- (b) Find a one-parameter family of solutions for the differential equation

$$\frac{dy}{dx} = -\frac{4}{x^2} - \frac{1}{x}y + y^2$$

where $y_1 = 2/x$ is a known solution of the equation.

36. Determine an appropriate substitution to solve

$$xy' = y \ln(xy).$$

Mathematical Models

37. **Falling Chain** In Problem 45 in Exercises 2.4 we saw that a mathematical model for the velocity v of a chain

slipping off the edge of a high horizontal platform is

$$xv \frac{dv}{dx} + v^2 = 32x.$$

In that problem you were asked to solve the DE by converting it into an exact equation using an integrating factor. This time solve the DE using the fact that it is a Bernoulli equation.

38. **Population Growth** In the study of population dynamics one of the most famous models for a growing but bounded population is the **logistic equation**

$$\frac{dP}{dt} = P(a - bP),$$

where a and b are positive constants. Although we will come back to this equation and solve it by an alternative method in Section 3.2, solve the DE this first time using the fact that it is a Bernoulli equation.

2.6

A NUMERICAL METHOD

INTRODUCTION A first-order differential equation $dy/dx = f(x, y)$ is a source of information. We started this chapter by observing that we could garner *qualitative* information from a first-order DE about its solutions even before we attempted to solve the equation. Then in Sections 2.2–2.5 we examined first-order DEs *analytically*—that is, we developed some procedures for obtaining explicit and implicit solutions. But a differential equation can possess a solution yet we may not be able to obtain it analytically. So to round out the picture of the different types of analyses of differential equations, we conclude this chapter with a method by which we can “solve” the differential equation *numerically*—this means that the DE is used as the cornerstone of an algorithm for approximating the unknown solution.

In this section we are going to develop only the simplest of numerical methods—a method that utilizes the idea that a tangent line can be used to approximate the values of a function in a small neighborhood of the point of tangency. A more extensive treatment of numerical methods for ordinary differential equations is given in Chapter 9.

USING THE TANGENT LINE Let us assume that the first-order initial-value problem

$$y' = f(x, y), \quad y(x_0) = y_0 \quad (1)$$

possesses a solution. One way of approximating this solution is to use tangent lines. For example, let $y(x)$ denote the unknown solution of the first-order initial-value problem $y' = 0.1\sqrt{y} + 0.4x^2$, $y(2) = 4$. The nonlinear differential equation in this IVP cannot be solved directly by any of the methods considered in Sections 2.2, 2.4, and 2.5; nevertheless, we can still find approximate numerical values of the unknown $y(x)$. Specifically, suppose we wish to know the value of $y(2.5)$. The IVP has a solution, and as the flow of the direction field of the DE in Figure 2.6.1(a) suggests, a solution curve must have a shape similar to the curve shown in blue.

The direction field in Figure 2.6.1(a) was generated with lineal elements passing through points in a grid with integer coordinates. As the solution curve passes

through the initial point $(2, 4)$, the lineal element at this point is a tangent line with slope given by $f(2, 4) = 0.1\sqrt{4} + 0.4(2)^2 = 1.8$. As is apparent in Figure 2.6.1(a) and the “zoom in” in Figure 2.6.1(b), when x is close to 2, the points on the solution curve are close to the points on the tangent line (the lineal element). Using the point $(2, 4)$, the slope $f(2, 4) = 1.8$, and the point-slope form of a line, we find that an equation of the tangent line is $y = L(x)$, where $L(x) = 1.8x + 0.4$. This last equation, called a **linearization** of $y(x)$ at $x = 2$, can be used to approximate values of $y(x)$ within a small neighborhood of $x = 2$. If $y_1 = L(x_1)$ denotes the y -coordinate on the tangent line and $y(x_1)$ is the y -coordinate on the solution curve corresponding to an x -coordinate x_1 that is close to $x = 2$, then $y(x_1) \approx y_1$. If we choose, say, $x_1 = 2.1$, then $y_1 = L(2.1) = 1.8(2.1) + 0.4 = 4.18$, so $y(2.1) \approx 4.18$.

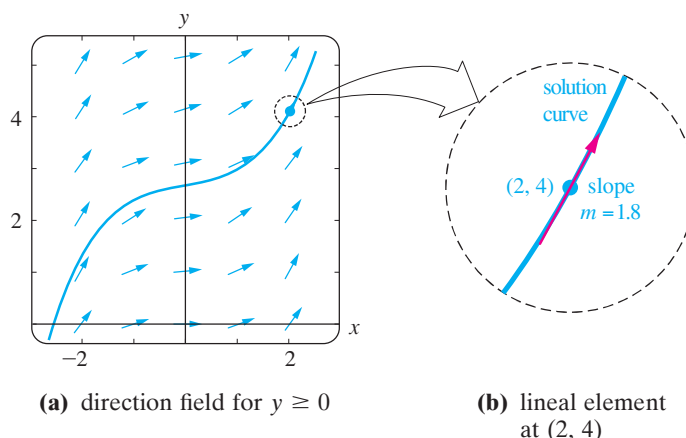


FIGURE 2.6.1 Magnification of a neighborhood about the point $(2, 4)$

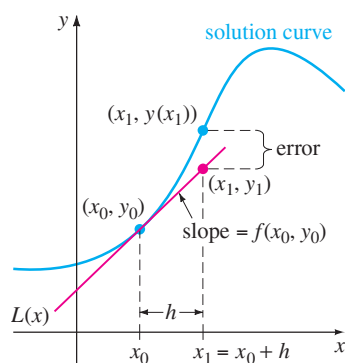


FIGURE 2.6.2 Approximating $y(x_1)$ using a tangent line

EULER'S METHOD To generalize the procedure just illustrated, we use the linearization of the unknown solution $y(x)$ of (1) at $x = x_0$:

$$L(x) = y_0 + f(x_0, y_0)(x - x_0). \quad (2)$$

The graph of this linearization is a straight line tangent to the graph of $y = y(x)$ at the point (x_0, y_0) . We now let h be a positive increment of the x -axis, as shown in Figure 2.6.2. Then by replacing x by $x_1 = x_0 + h$ in (2), we get

$$L(x_1) = y_0 + f(x_0, y_0)(x_0 + h - x_0) \quad \text{or} \quad y_1 = y_0 + hf(x_0, y_0),$$

where $y_1 = L(x_1)$. The point (x_1, y_1) on the tangent line is an approximation to the point $(x_1, y(x_1))$ on the solution curve. Of course, the accuracy of the approximation $L(x_1) \approx y(x_1)$ or $y_1 \approx y(x_1)$ depends heavily on the size of the increment h . Usually, we must choose this **step size** to be “reasonably small.” We now repeat the process using a second “tangent line” at (x_1, y_1) .* By identifying the new starting point as (x_1, y_1) with (x_0, y_0) in the above discussion, we obtain an approximation $y_2 \approx y(x_2)$ corresponding to two steps of length h from x_0 , that is, $x_2 = x_1 + h = x_0 + 2h$, and

$$y(x_2) = y(x_0 + 2h) = y(x_1 + h) \approx y_2 = y_1 + hf(x_1, y_1).$$

Continuing in this manner, we see that y_1, y_2, y_3, \dots , can be defined recursively by the general formula

$$y_{n+1} = y_n + hf(x_n, y_n), \quad (3)$$

where $x_n = x_0 + nh$, $n = 0, 1, 2, \dots$. This procedure of using successive “tangent lines” is called **Euler's method**.

*This is not an actual tangent line, since (x_1, y_1) lies on the first tangent and not on the solution curve.

EXAMPLE 1 Euler's Method

Consider the initial-value problem $y' = 0.1\sqrt{y} + 0.4x^2$, $y(2) = 4$. Use Euler's method to obtain an approximation of $y(2.5)$ using first $h = 0.1$ and then $h = 0.05$.

SOLUTION With the identification $f(x, y) = 0.1\sqrt{y} + 0.4x^2$, (3) becomes

$$y_{n+1} = y_n + h(0.1\sqrt{y_n} + 0.4x_n^2).$$

Then for $h = 0.1$, $x_0 = 2$, $y_0 = 4$, and $n = 0$ we find

$$y_1 = y_0 + h(0.1\sqrt{y_0} + 0.4x_0^2) = 4 + 0.1(0.1\sqrt{4} + 0.4(2)^2) = 4.18,$$

which, as we have already seen, is an estimate to the value of $y(2.1)$. However, if we use the smaller step size $h = 0.05$, it takes two steps to reach $x = 2.1$. From

$$y_1 = 4 + 0.05(0.1\sqrt{4} + 0.4(2)^2) = 4.09$$

$$y_2 = 4.09 + 0.05(0.1\sqrt{4.09} + 0.4(2.05)^2) = 4.18416187$$

we have $y_1 \approx y(2.05)$ and $y_2 \approx y(2.1)$. The remainder of the calculations were carried out by using software. The results are summarized in Tables 2.1 and 2.2, where each entry has been rounded to four decimal places. We see in Tables 2.1 and 2.2 that it takes five steps with $h = 0.1$ and 10 steps with $h = 0.05$, respectively, to get to $x = 2.5$. Intuitively, we would expect that $y_{10} = 5.0997$ corresponding to $h = 0.05$ is the better approximation of $y(2.5)$ than the value $y_5 = 5.0768$ corresponding to $h = 0.1$. ■

In Example 2 we apply Euler's method to a differential equation for which we have already found a solution. We do this to compare the values of the approximations y_n at each step with the true or actual values of the solution $y(x_n)$ of the initial-value problem.

EXAMPLE 2 Comparison of Approximate and Actual Values

Consider the initial-value problem $y' = 0.2xy$, $y(1) = 1$. Use Euler's method to obtain an approximation of $y(1.5)$ using first $h = 0.1$ and then $h = 0.05$.

SOLUTION With the identification $f(x, y) = 0.2xy$, (3) becomes

$$y_{n+1} = y_n + h(0.2x_n y_n)$$

where $x_0 = 1$ and $y_0 = 1$. Again with the aid of computer software we obtain the values in Tables 2.3 and 2.4.

TABLE 2.1 $h = 0.1$

x_n	y_n
2.00	4.0000
2.10	4.1800
2.20	4.3768
2.30	4.5914
2.40	4.8244
2.50	5.0768

TABLE 2.2 $h = 0.05$

x_n	y_n
2.00	4.0000
2.05	4.0900
2.10	4.1842
2.15	4.2826
2.20	4.3854
2.25	4.4927
2.30	4.6045
2.35	4.7210
2.40	4.8423
2.45	4.9686
2.50	5.0997

TABLE 2.3 $h = 0.1$

x_n	y_n	Actual value	Abs. error	% Rel. error
1.00	1.0000	1.0000	0.0000	0.00
1.10	1.0200	1.0212	0.0012	0.12
1.20	1.0424	1.0450	0.0025	0.24
1.30	1.0675	1.0714	0.0040	0.37
1.40	1.0952	1.1008	0.0055	0.50
1.50	1.1259	1.1331	0.0073	0.64

TABLE 2.4 $h = 0.05$

x_n	y_n	Actual value	Abs. error	% Rel. error
1.00	1.0000	1.0000	0.0000	0.00
1.05	1.0100	1.0103	0.0003	0.03
1.10	1.0206	1.0212	0.0006	0.06
1.15	1.0318	1.0328	0.0009	0.09
1.20	1.0437	1.0450	0.0013	0.12
1.25	1.0562	1.0579	0.0016	0.16
1.30	1.0694	1.0714	0.0020	0.19
1.35	1.0833	1.0857	0.0024	0.22
1.40	1.0980	1.1008	0.0028	0.25
1.45	1.1133	1.1166	0.0032	0.29
1.50	1.1295	1.1331	0.0037	0.32

In Example 1 the true or actual values were calculated from the known solution $y = e^{0.1(x^2-1)}$. (Verify.) The **absolute error** is defined to be

$$|\text{actual value} - \text{approximation}|.$$

The **relative error** and **percentage relative error** are, in turn,

$$\frac{\text{absolute error}}{|\text{actual value}|} \quad \text{and} \quad \frac{\text{absolute error}}{|\text{actual value}|} \times 100.$$

It is apparent from Tables 2.3 and 2.4 that the accuracy of the approximations improves as the step size h decreases. Also, we see that even though the percentage relative error is growing with each step, it does not appear to be that bad. But you should not be deceived by one example. If we simply change the coefficient of the right side of the DE in Example 2 from 0.2 to 2, then at $x_n = 1.5$ the percentage relative errors increase dramatically. See Problem 4 in Exercises 2.6.

A CAVEAT Euler's method is just one of many different ways in which a solution of a differential equation can be approximated. Although attractive for its simplicity, *Euler's method is seldom used in serious calculations*. It was introduced here simply to give you a first taste of numerical methods. We will go into greater detail in discussing numerical methods that give significantly greater accuracy, notably the **fourth order Runge-Kutta method**, referred to as the **RK4 method**, in Chapter 9.

NUMERICAL SOLVERS Regardless of whether we can actually find an explicit or implicit solution, if a solution of a differential equation exists, it represents a smooth curve in the Cartesian plane. The basic idea behind *any* numerical method for first-order ordinary differential equations is to somehow approximate the y -values of a solution for preselected values of x . We start at a specified initial point (x_0, y_0) on a solution curve and proceed to calculate in a step-by-step fashion a sequence of points $(x_1, y_1), (x_2, y_2), \dots, (x_n, y_n)$ whose y -coordinates y_i approximate the y -coordinates $y(x_i)$ of points $(x_1, y(x_1)), (x_2, y(x_2)), \dots, (x_n, y(x_n))$ that lie on the graph of the usually unknown solution $y(x)$. By taking the x -coordinates close together (that is, for small values of h) and by joining the points $(x_1, y_1), (x_2, y_2), \dots, (x_n, y_n)$ with short line segments, we obtain a polygonal curve whose qualitative characteristics we hope are close to those of an actual solution curve. Drawing curves is something that is well suited to a computer. A computer program written to either implement a numerical method or render a visual representation of an approximate solution curve fitting the numerical data produced by this method is referred to as a **numerical solver**. Many different numerical solvers are commercially available, either embedded in a larger software package, such as a computer algebra system, or provided as a stand-alone package. Some software packages simply plot the generated numerical approximations, whereas others generate hard numerical data as well as the corresponding approximate or **numerical solution curves**. By way of illustration of the connect-the-dots nature of the graphs produced by a numerical solver, the two colored polygonal graphs in Figure 2.6.3 are the numerical solution curves for the initial-value problem $y' = 0.2xy$, $y(0) = 1$ on the interval $[0, 4]$ obtained from Euler's method and the RK4 method using the step size $h = 1$. The blue smooth curve is the graph of the exact solution $y = e^{0.1x^2}$ of the IVP. Notice in Figure 2.6.3 that, even with the ridiculously large step size of $h = 1$, the RK4 method produces the more believable “solution curve.” The numerical solution curve obtained from the RK4 method is indistinguishable from the actual solution curve on the interval $[0, 4]$ when a more typical step size of $h = 0.1$ is used.

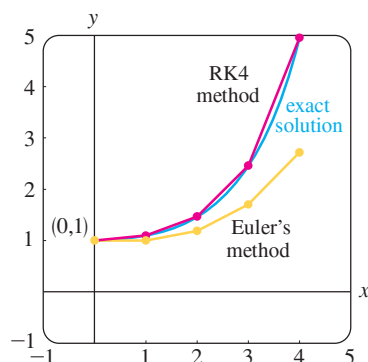


FIGURE 2.6.3 Comparison of the Runge-Kutta (RK4) and Euler methods

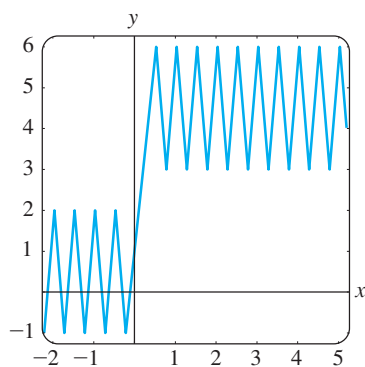


FIGURE 2.6.4 A not very helpful numerical solution curve

USING A NUMERICAL SOLVER Knowledge of the various numerical methods is not necessary in order to use a numerical solver. A solver usually requires that the differential equation be expressed in normal form $dy/dx = f(x, y)$. Numerical solvers that generate only curves usually require that you supply $f(x, y)$ and the initial data x_0 and y_0 and specify the desired numerical method. If the idea is to approximate the numerical value of $y(a)$, then a solver may additionally require that you state a value for h or, equivalently, give the number of steps that you want to take to get from $x = x_0$ to $x = a$. For example, if we wanted to approximate $y(4)$ for the IVP illustrated in Figure 2.6.3, then, starting at $x = 0$ it would take four steps to reach $x = 4$ with a step size of $h = 1$; 40 steps is equivalent to a step size of $h = 0.1$. Although we will not delve here into the many problems that one can encounter when attempting to approximate mathematical quantities, you should at least be aware of the fact that a numerical solver may break down near certain points or give an incomplete or misleading picture when applied to some first-order differential equations in the normal form. Figure 2.6.4 illustrates the graph obtained by applying Euler's method to a certain first-order initial-value problem $dy/dx = f(x, y)$, $y(0) = 1$. Equivalent results were obtained using three different commercial numerical solvers, yet the graph is hardly a plausible solution curve. (Why?) There are several avenues of recourse when a numerical solver has difficulties; three of the more obvious are decrease the step size, use another numerical method, and try a different numerical solver.

EXERCISES 2.6

Answers to selected odd-numbered problems begin on page ANS-2.

In Problems 1 and 2 use Euler's method to obtain a four-decimal approximation of the indicated value. Carry out the recursion of (3) by hand, first using $h = 0.1$ and then using $h = 0.05$.

- $y' = 2x - 3y + 1, y(1) = 5; \quad y(1.2)$
- $y' = x + y^2, y(0) = 0; \quad y(0.2)$

In Problems 3 and 4 use Euler's method to obtain a four-decimal approximation of the indicated value. First use $h = 0.1$ and then use $h = 0.05$. Find an explicit solution for each initial-value problem and then construct tables similar to Tables 2.3 and 2.4.

- $y' = y, y(0) = 1; \quad y(1.0)$
- $y' = 2xy, y(1) = 1; \quad y(1.5)$

In Problems 5–10 use a numerical solver and Euler's method to obtain a four-decimal approximation of the indicated value. First use $h = 0.1$ and then use $h = 0.05$.

- $y' = e^{-y}, y(0) = 0; \quad y(0.5)$
- $y' = x^2 + y^2, y(0) = 1; \quad y(0.5)$
- $y' = (x - y)^2, y(0) = 0.5; \quad y(0.5)$
- $y' = xy + \sqrt{y}, y(0) = 1; \quad y(0.5)$
- $y' = xy^2 - \frac{y}{x}, y(1) = 1; \quad y(1.5)$
- $y' = y - y^2, y(0) = 0.5; \quad y(0.5)$

In Problems 11 and 12 use a numerical solver to obtain a numerical solution curve for the given initial-value problem. First use Euler's method and then the RK4 method. Use $h = 0.25$ in each case. Superimpose both solution curves on the same coordinate axes. If possible, use a different color for each curve. Repeat, using $h = 0.1$ and $h = 0.05$.

- $y' = 2(\cos x)y, \quad y(0) = 1$
- $y' = y(10 - 2y), \quad y(0) = 1$

Discussion Problems

- Use a numerical solver and Euler's method to approximate $y(1.0)$, where $y(x)$ is the solution to $y' = 2xy^2, y(0) = 1$. First use $h = 0.1$ and then use $h = 0.05$. Repeat, using the RK4 method. Discuss what might cause the approximations to $y(1.0)$ to differ so greatly.

Computer Lab Assignments

- (a) Use a numerical solver and the RK4 method to graph the solution of the initial-value problem $y' = -2xy + 1, y(0) = 0$.
(b) Solve the initial-value problem by one of the analytic procedures developed earlier in this chapter.
(c) Use the analytic solution $y(x)$ found in part (b) and a CAS to find the coordinates of all relative extrema.