Section 2.5: Continuity

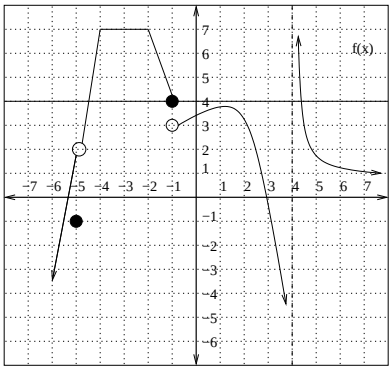
Definition We say $f(x)$ is continuous at $x = a$ if $\lim_{x\to a} f(x) = f(a)$. Note that in order for this definition to be met, the following conditions must hold:

(a) $x = a$ is in the domain of $f(x)$ (This ensures that $f(a)$ exists).

(b) $\lim_{x\to a} f(x)$ must exist.

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

EXAMPLE 1: For the graph of $f(x)$ given below, locate all discontiniuties. For each discontinuity, find the limit from the left and the limit from the right.



EXAMPLE 2: Explain why the following functions are not continuous at the indicated value of x:

(i) $f(x) = \dfrac{-1}{(1-x)^2}$, $x = 1$.

(ii) $f(x) = \begin{cases} \dfrac{x^2-2x-8}{x-4} & \text{if } x \neq 4 \\ 3 & \text{if } x = 4 \end{cases}$

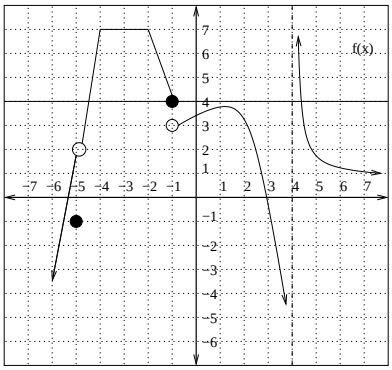
EXAMPLE 3: Find all points of discontinuity for $f(x) = \begin{cases} 2x+1 & \text{if } x \leq -1 \\ 3x & \text{if } -1 < x < 1 \\ 2x-1 & \text{if } x > 1 \end{cases}$

EXAMPLE 4: If $g(x) = \begin{cases} x^2 - c^2 & \text{if } x < 4 \\ cx + 20 & \text{if } x \geq 4 \end{cases}$ For what value(s) of c is $g(x)$ continuous, if any?

EXAMPLE 5: If $f(x) = \begin{cases} x^2 + c & \text{if } x > 1 \\ 4 & \text{if } x = 1 \\ 4cx + 3 & \text{if } x < 1 \end{cases}$,For what value(s) of c is $f(x)$ continuous, if any?

Definition We say $f(x)$ is continuous from the right at $x = a$ if $\lim_{x \to a^+} f(x) = f(a)$. Similarly, we say $f(x)$ is continuous from the left at $x = a$ if $\lim_{x \to a^-} f(x) = f(a)$.

EXAMPLE 6: Going back to the graph of $f(x)$ in example 1, for each point of discontinuity, determine whether $f(x)$ is continuous from the right, left, or neither.



Intermediate Value Theorem If $f(x)$ is continous on the interval $[a, b]$ and N is any number strictly between $f(a)$ and $f(b)$, then there is a number c, $a < c < b$, so that $f(c) = N$.

EXAMPLE 7: If $g(x) = x^5 - 2x^3 + x^2 + 2$, show there a number c so that $g(c) = -1$.

EXAMPLE 8: Show there is a root to the equation $x^5 - 2x^4 - x - 3$ on the interval $(2, 3)$.