Chapter 12. **Partial derivatives.**
Section 12.1 **Functions of several variables.**

Definition. Let $D \subset \mathbb{R}^2$. A **function** f **of two variables** is a rule that assigns to each ordered pair (x, y) in D a unique real number denoted by $f(x, y)$. The set D is the **domain** of f and its **range** is the set of values that f takes on, that is, $\{f(x, y)|(x, y) \in D)\}$.

We write $z = f(x, y)$ to make explicit the value taken on by f at the general point (x, y). The variables x and y are **independent variables** and z is **dependent variable**.

If a function f is given by a formula and no domain is specified, then the domain of f is understood to be the set of all pairs (x, y) for which the given expression is well-defined real number.

Example 1. Find the domain and the range of the function $f(x, y) = x^2 \ln(x - y)$ and evaluate $f(e, 0)$.

Definition. If f is a function of two variables with domain D, the **graph** of f is the set

$$S = \{(x, y, z) \in \mathbb{R}^3 | z = f(x, y), (x, y) \in D\}.$$

Example 2. Sketch the graph of the function $f(x, y) = 3 - x^2 - y^2$.

Definition. The **level curves** of a function f of two variables are the curves with equations $f(x, y) = k$, where k is a constant (in the range of f).

A level curve $f(x, y) = k$ is the locus of all points at which f takes on a given value k. In other words, it shows where the graph of f has height k.

Example 3. Describe the level curves for the following functions.

1. $f(x, y) = -x + 4y$

2. $f(x, y) = x^2 - y^2$

Functions of three or more variables.

A **function of three variables**, f, is a rule that assigns to each ordered triple (x, y, z) in a domain $D \subset \mathbb{R}^3$ a unique real number denoted by $f(x, y, z)$.

We can get some information about f by examining its **level surfaces**, which are surfaces with equations $f(x, y, z) = k$, where k is a constant. If the point (x, y, z) moves along a level surface, the value of $f(x, y, z)$ remains fixed.

Example 4. Find the domain of the function $f(x, y, z) = \ln(16 - 4x^2 - 4y^2 - z^2)$.

Example 5. Describe the level surfaces of the function $f(x, y, z) = x^2 - y^2 + z^2$.

A **function of n variables** is a rule that assigns a number $z = f(x_1, x_2, ...x_n)$ to an n-tuple $(x_1, x_2, ...x_n)$ of real numbers. The notation

$$f : D \subset \mathbb{R}^n \to \mathbb{R}$$

is used to signify that f is a real valued function whose domain D is a subset of $\mathbb{R}^n$.