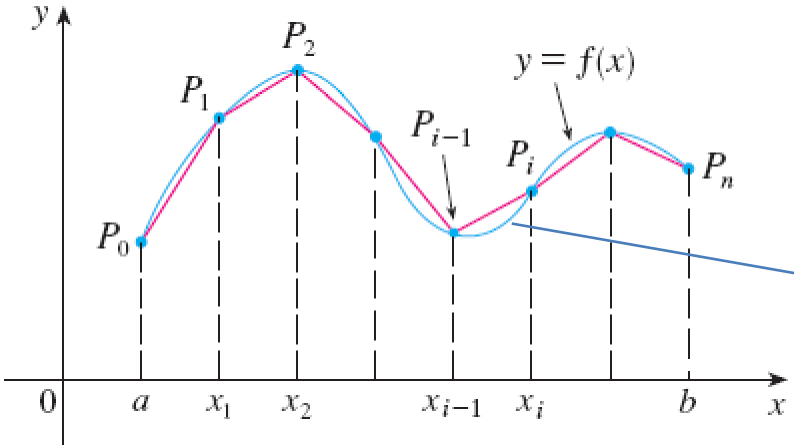
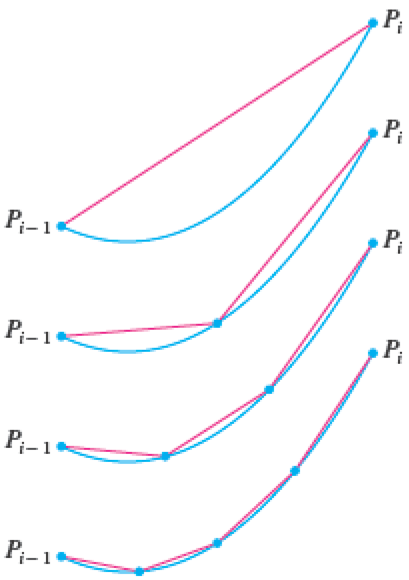
Arc length and curvature





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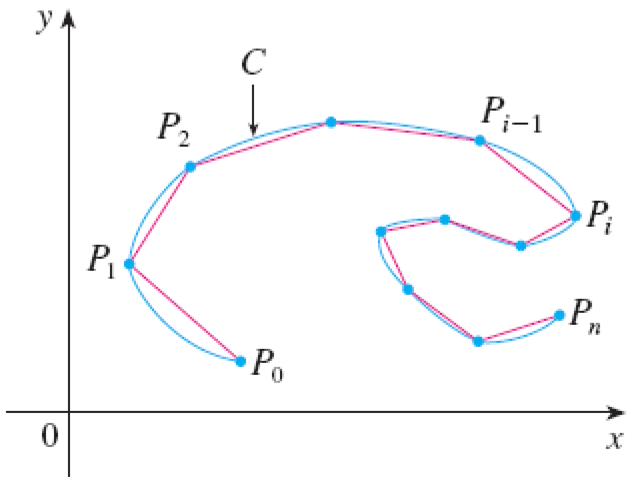
$$L = \lim_{n\to\infty} \sum_{i=1}^{n} |P_{i-1}P_i|$$

2 **The Arc Length Formula** If f' is continuous on $[a, b]$, then the length of the curve $y = f(x)$, $a \leqslant x \leqslant b$, is

$$L = \int_a^b \sqrt{1 + [f'(x)]^2}\, dx$$



5 **Theorem** If a curve C is described by the parametric equations $x = f(t)$, $y = g(t)$, $\alpha \leqslant t \leqslant \beta$, where f' and g' are continuous on $[\alpha, \beta]$ and C is traversed exactly once as t increases from α to β, then the length of C is

$$L = \int_{\alpha}^{\beta} \sqrt{\left(\frac{dx}{dt}\right)^2 + \left(\frac{dy}{dt}\right)^2}\, dt$$

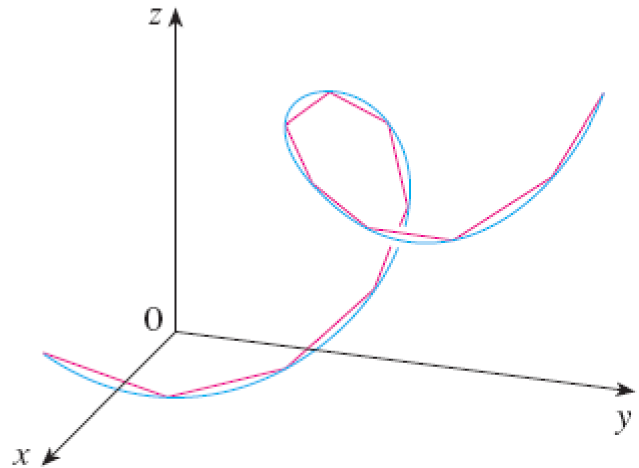


FIGURE 1

The length of a space curve is defined in exactly the same way (see Figure 1). Suppose that the curve has the vector equation $\mathbf{r}(t) = \langle f(t), g(t), h(t) \rangle$, $a \leqslant t \leqslant b$, or, equivalently, the parametric equations $x = f(t)$, $y = g(t)$, $z = h(t)$, where f', g', and h' are continuous. If the curve is traversed exactly once as t increases from a to b, then it can be shown that its length is

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$$\boxed{\begin{aligned} L &= \int_a^b \sqrt{[f'(t)]^2 + [g'(t)]^2 + [h'(t)]^2}\, dt \\ &= \int_a^b \sqrt{\left(\frac{dx}{dt}\right)^2 + \left(\frac{dy}{dt}\right)^2 + \left(\frac{dz}{dt}\right)^2}\, dt \end{aligned}}$$

$$\boxed{3} \qquad \boxed{L = \int_a^b |\mathbf{r}'(t)|\, dt}$$

Parametrization of a curve with respect to the arc length

Now we suppose that C is a curve given by a vector function

$$\mathbf{r}(t) = f(t)\mathbf{i} + g(t)\mathbf{j} + h(t)\mathbf{k} \qquad a \leqslant t \leqslant b$$

where $\mathbf{r}'$ is continuous and C is traversed exactly once as t increases from a to b. We define its **arc length function** s by

$$\boxed{6} \qquad s(t) = \int_a^t |\mathbf{r}'(u)|\, du = \int_a^t \sqrt{\left(\frac{dx}{du}\right)^2 + \left(\frac{dy}{du}\right)^2 + \left(\frac{dz}{du}\right)^2}\, du$$

Thus $s(t)$ is the length of the part of C between $\mathbf{r}(a)$ and $\mathbf{r}(t)$. (See Figure 3.) If we differentiate both sides of Equation 6 using Part 1 of the Fundamental Theorem of Calculus, we obtain

$$\boxed{7} \qquad \frac{ds}{dt} = |\mathbf{r}'(t)|$$

It is often useful to **parametrize a curve with respect to arc length** because arc length arises naturally from the shape of the curve and does not depend on a particular coordinate system. If a curve $\mathbf{r}(t)$ is already given in terms of a parameter t and $s(t)$ is the arc length function given by Equation 6, then we may be able to solve for t as a function of s: $t = t(s)$. Then the curve can be reparametrized in terms of s by substituting for t: $\mathbf{r} = \mathbf{r}(t(s))$. Thus, if $s = 3$ for instance, $\mathbf{r}(t(3))$ is the position vector of the point 3 units of length along the curve from its starting point.

13–14 Reparametrize the curve with respect to arc length measured from the point where $t = 0$ in the direction of increasing t.

13. $\mathbf{r}(t) = 2t\,\mathbf{i} + (1 - 3t)\,\mathbf{j} + (5 + 4t)\,\mathbf{k}$

14. $\mathbf{r}(t) = e^{2t}\cos 2t\,\mathbf{i} + 2\,\mathbf{j} + e^{2t}\sin 2t\,\mathbf{k}$

CURVATURE

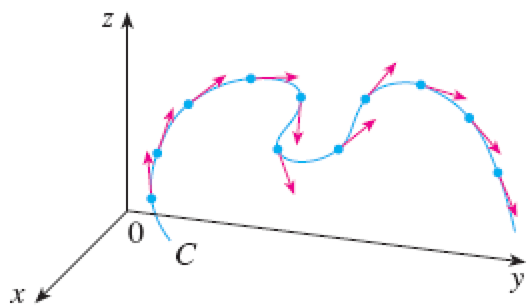

FIGURE 4
Unit tangent vectors at equally spaced points on C

A parametrization $\mathbf{r}(t)$ is called **smooth** on an interval I if $\mathbf{r}'$ is continuous and $\mathbf{r}'(t) \neq \mathbf{0}$ on I. A curve is called **smooth** if it has a smooth parametrization. A smooth curve has no sharp corners or cusps; when the tangent vector turns, it does so continuously.

If C is a smooth curve defined by the vector function $\mathbf{r}$, recall that the unit tangent vector $\mathbf{T}(t)$ is given by

$$\mathbf{T}(t) = \frac{\mathbf{r}'(t)}{|\mathbf{r}'(t)|}$$

and indicates the direction of the curve. From Figure 4 you can see that $\mathbf{T}(t)$ changes direction very slowly when C is fairly straight, but it changes direction more quickly when C bends or twists more sharply.

The curvature of C at a given point is a measure of how quickly the curve changes direction at that point. Specifically, we define it to be the magnitude of the rate of change of the unit tangent vector with respect to arc length. (We use arc length so that the curvature will be independent of the parametrization.)

8 **Definition** The **curvature** of a curve is

$$\kappa = \left| \frac{d\mathbf{T}}{ds} \right|$$

where $\mathbf{T}$ is the unit tangent vector.

10 **Theorem** The curvature of the curve given by the vector function $\mathbf{r}$ is

$$\kappa(t) = \frac{|\mathbf{r}'(t) \times \mathbf{r}''(t)|}{|\mathbf{r}'(t)|^3}$$

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$$\kappa(x) = \frac{|f''(x)|}{[1 + (f'(x))^2]^{3/2}}$$

THE NORMAL AND BINORMAL VECTORS

We can think of the normal vector as indicating the direction in which the curve is turning at each point.

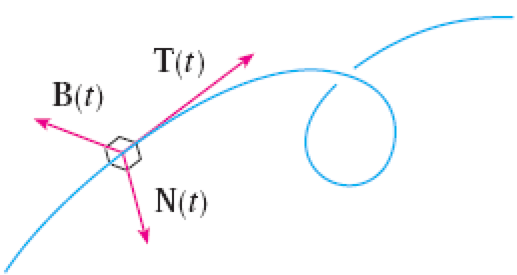

FIGURE 6

At any point where $\kappa \neq 0$ we can define the **principal unit normal vector** $\mathbf{N}(t)$ (or simply **unit normal**) as

$$\mathbf{N}(t) = \frac{\mathbf{T}'(t)}{|\mathbf{T}'(t)|}$$

The vector $\mathbf{B}(t) = \mathbf{T}(t) \times \mathbf{N}(t)$ is called the **binormal vector**. It is perpendicular to both $\mathbf{T}$ and $\mathbf{N}$ and is also a unit vector.

EXAMPLE 6 Find the unit normal and binormal vectors for the circular helix

$$\mathbf{r}(t) = \cos t\,\mathbf{i} + \sin t\,\mathbf{j} + t\,\mathbf{k}$$

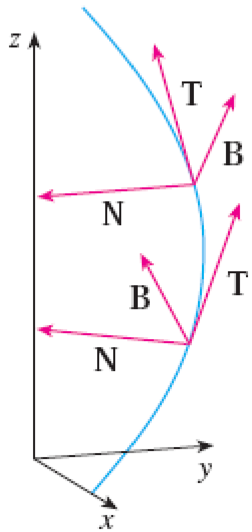

FIGURE 7

Figure 7 illustrates Example 6 by showing the vectors $\mathbf{T}$, $\mathbf{N}$, and $\mathbf{B}$ at two locations on the helix. In general, the vectors $\mathbf{T}$, $\mathbf{N}$, and $\mathbf{B}$, starting at the various points on a curve, form a set of orthogonal vectors, called the $\mathbf{TNB}$ frame, that moves along the curve as t varies. This $\mathbf{TNB}$ frame plays an important role in the branch of mathematics known as differential geometry and in its applications to the motion of spacecraft.

Motion in Space: Velocity and Acceleration

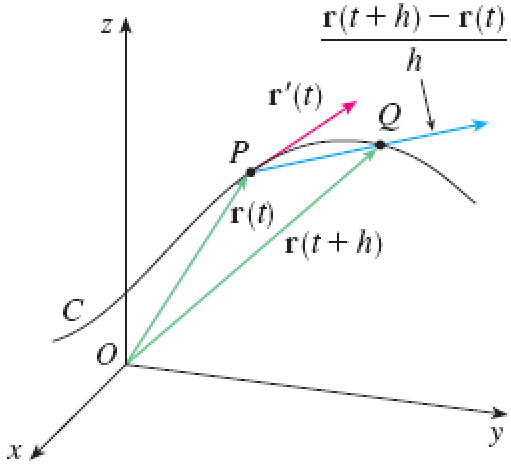

FIGURE 1

Suppose a particle moves through space so that its position vector at time t is $\mathbf{r}(t)$. Notice from Figure 1 that, for small values of h, the vector

$$\boxed{1} \qquad \frac{\mathbf{r}(t+h)-\mathbf{r}(t)}{h}$$

approximates the direction of the particle moving along the curve $\mathbf{r}(t)$. Its magnitude measures the size of the displacement vector per unit time. The vector $\boxed{1}$ gives the average velocity over a time interval of length h and its limit is the **velocity vector** $\mathbf{v}(t)$ at time t:

$$\boxed{2} \qquad \boxed{\mathbf{v}(t) = \lim_{h\to 0} \frac{\mathbf{r}(t+h)-\mathbf{r}(t)}{h} = \mathbf{r}'(t)}$$

The **speed** $= |\mathbf{v}(t)| = |\mathbf{r}'(t)| = \dfrac{ds}{dt} =$ rate of change of distance with respect to time

As in the case of one-dimensional motion, the **acceleration** of the particle is defined as the derivative of the velocity:

$$\mathbf{a}(t) = \mathbf{v}'(t) = \mathbf{r}''(t)$$