

MA 109: D1&D2 Lecture 19

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Maxima and Minima

The second derivative

Taylor's theorem in 2 variables

Global maxima and minima

Lagrange multipliers

Integral quadratic forms

The Riemann integral in several variables

Local maxima and minima

As in the one variable case we can define local maxima and minima for a function of two or more variables. **These definitions can be made for any function. They do not require us to assume any differentiability properties for the functions.** Let $f : U(\subset \mathbb{R}^2) \rightarrow \mathbb{R}$ be a function of two variables.

Definition: We will say that the function $f(x, y)$ attains a **local minimum** at the point (x_0, y_0) (or that (x_0, y_0) is a local minimum point of f) if there is a disc

$$D_r(x_0, y_0) = \{(x, y) \mid \|(x, y) - (x_0, y_0)\| < r\}$$

of radius $r > 0$ around (x_0, y_0) such that $f(x, y) \geq f(x_0, y_0)$ for every point (x, y) in $D_r(x_0, y_0)$.

Similarly, we can define a **local maximum point** (Do this).

Critical Points

When the function is differentiable we can use the properties of the partial derivatives to find local maxima and minima. As in the one variable situation, we have the **first derivative test**. This is the analogue of Fermat's theorem. Before formulating the test we need make the following definition.

Definition: A point (x_0, y_0) is called a **critical point of $f(x, y)$** if

$$f_x(x_0, y_0) = f_y(x_0, y_0) = 0.$$

What does this say in geometric terms? Recall that the tangent plane to $z = f(x, y)$ at (x_0, y_0) is given by

$$z = z_0 + f_x(x_0, y_0)(x - x_0) + f_y(x_0, y_0)(y - y_0).$$

Hence, at a critical point, **the tangent plane is horizontal, that is, it is parallel to the xy -plane.**

The first derivative test

Theorem 29: If (x_0, y_0) is a local extremum point (that is, a minimum or a maximum point) and if $f_x(x_0, y_0)$ and $f_y(x_0, y_0)$ exist, then (x_0, y_0) is a critical point.

The proof is similar in the one variable case. If (x_0, y_0) is not a critical point, then at least one of the two partial derivatives must be non-zero. Without loss of generality we can assume that $f_x(x_0, y_0) \neq 0$.

Suppose $f_x(x_0, y_0) > 0$. This means that

$$\lim_{h \rightarrow 0} \frac{f(x_0 + h, y_0) - f(x_0, y_0)}{h} > 0.$$

This means that for $|h|$ small enough,

$$\frac{f(x_0 + h, y_0) - f(x_0, y_0)}{h} > 0.$$

If $h > 0$, this shows that the numerator is positive. On the other hand, if $h < 0$, the numerator must be negative.

Thus, in any disc $D_r(x_0, y_0)$ there are points (x, y) for which $f(x_0, y_0) < f(x, y)$ and $f(x_0, y_0) > f(x, y)$. The same argument can be repeated if $f_x(x_0, y_0) < 0$, giving a contradiction to the fact that (x_0, y_0) is an extreme point . □

Towards a second derivative test

As in the one variable case, we would like to decide whether a local extremum is a local maximum or a local minimum. In order to this we will need to look at the partial derivatives of order 2. Let us assume that these exist.

We start by defining the **Hessian** of f . This is the matrix

$$\begin{pmatrix} f_{xx}(x_0, y_0) & f_{xy}(x_0, y_0) \\ f_{yx}(x_0, y_0) & f_{yy}(x_0, y_0) \end{pmatrix}.$$

From now on **we will assume that f is a C^2 function**. Recall that this means that $f_{xy} = f_{yx}$.

The determinant of the Hessian is sometimes called the **discriminant** and is sometimes denoted D . Explicitly,

$$D = f_{xx}(x_0, y_0)f_{yy}(x_0, y_0) - [f_{xy}(x_0, y_0)]^2.$$

The second derivative test

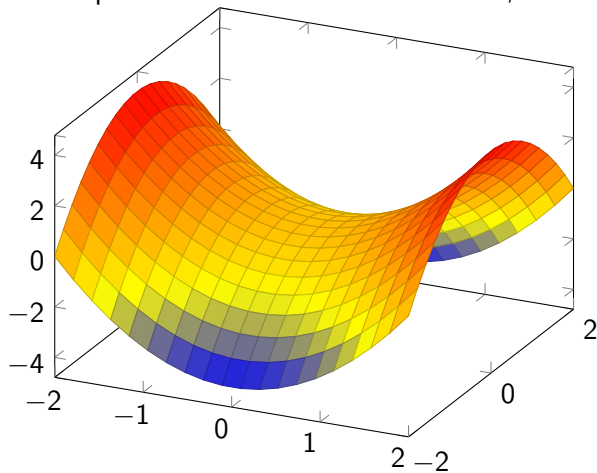
We give a test for finding local maxima and minima below. In the two variable situation, we will also need to understand what a **saddle point** is. We will explain this after stating the theorem.

Theorem 30: With notation as above:

1. If $D > 0$ and $f_{xx}(x_0, y_0) > 0$, then (x_0, y_0) is a local minimum for f .
2. If $D > 0$ and $f_{xx}(x_0, y_0) < 0$, then (x_0, y_0) is a local maximum for f .
3. If $D < 0$, then (x_0, y_0) is a saddle point for f .
4. If $D = 0$, further examination of the function is necessary.

Saddle points

Since a picture is worth a thousand words, let us start with one.



The point $(0, 0)$ is called a **saddle point**. This is a picture of the graph of $z = x^2 - y^2$.

An example (from Marsden and Tromba)

Example 1: Find the maxima, minima and saddle points of $z = (x^2 - y^2)e^{\frac{(-x^2 - y^2)}{2}}$.

Solution: Let us first find the critical points:

$$\frac{\partial z}{\partial x} = [2x - x(x^2 - y^2)]e^{\frac{(-x^2 - y^2)}{2}} \quad \text{and}$$

$$\frac{\partial z}{\partial y} = [-2y - y(x^2 - y^2)]e^{\frac{(-x^2 - y^2)}{2}}.$$

Hence the critical points are the simultaneous solutions of

$$x[2 - (x^2 - y^2)] = 0 \quad \text{and} \quad y[-2 - (x^2 - y^2)] = 0$$

The critical points thus lie at

$$(0, 0), \quad (\pm\sqrt{2}, 0), \quad \text{and} \quad (0, \pm\sqrt{2})$$

Next we have to find the partial derivatives of order 2. We have

$$\frac{\partial^2 z}{\partial x^2} = [2 - 5x^2 + x^2(x^2 - y^2) + y^2]e^{\frac{(-x^2-y^2)}{2}},$$

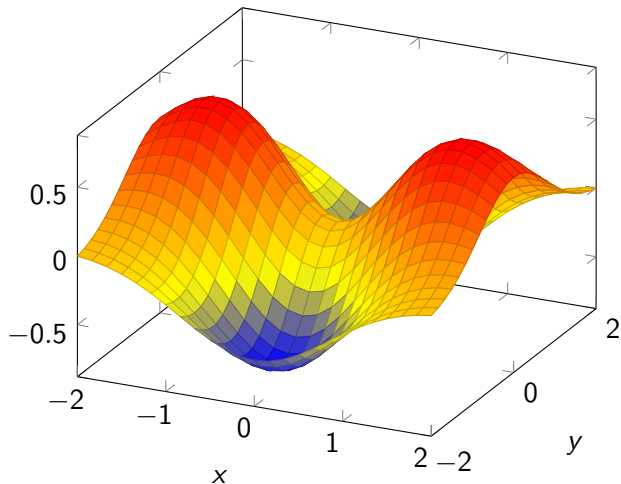
$$\frac{\partial^2 z}{\partial x \partial y} = xy(x^2 - y^2)e^{\frac{(-x^2-y^2)}{2}} \quad \text{and}$$

$$\frac{\partial^2 z}{\partial y^2} = [5y^2 - 2 + y^2(x^2 - y^2) - x^2]e^{\frac{(-x^2-y^2)}{2}}.$$

Using the second derivative test we obtain the following table:

Point	f_{xx}	f_{xy}	f_{yy}	D	Type
$(0, 0)$	2	0	-2	-4	Saddle
$(\sqrt{2}, 0)$	$-4/e$	0	$-4/e$	$16/e^2$	Maximum
$(-\sqrt{2}, 0)$	$-4/e$	0	$-4/e$	$16/e^2$	Maximum
$(0, \sqrt{2})$	$4/e$	0	$4/e$	$16/e^2$	Minimum
$(0, -\sqrt{2})$	$4/e$	0	$4/e$	$16/e^2$	Minimum

The previous example in a picture



This is the graph of $z = (x^2 - y^2)e^{\frac{-x^2 - y^2}{2}}$.

Quadratic functions in two variables

Consider functions of the form

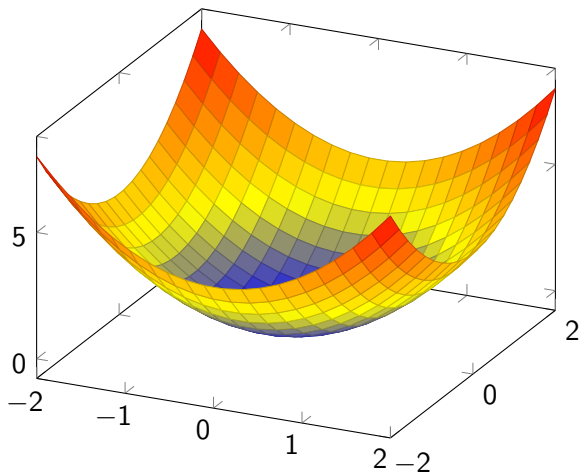
$$z = g(x, y) = Ax^2 + 2Bxy + Cy^2.$$

Notice that $(0, 0)$ is obviously a critical point for the function $g(x, y)$. With a little bit of work we can show that **if $AC - B^2 \neq 0$, then $(0, 0)$ is the only critical point of g .**

From now on we assume that $AC - B^2 \neq 0$. A little more analysis will show the following:

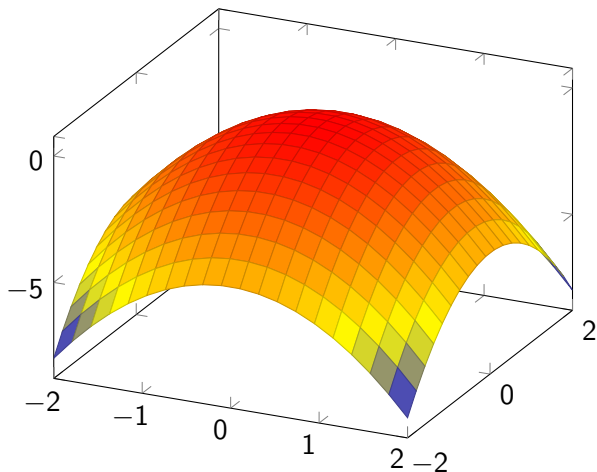
1. If $AC - B^2 > 0$, the function g has a local minimum if $A > 0$ and a local maximum if $A < 0$.
2. If $AC - B^2 < 0$, the function g has a saddle point, that is, in a small disc around the point, the function does not lie on any one side of its tangent plane.

A local minimum



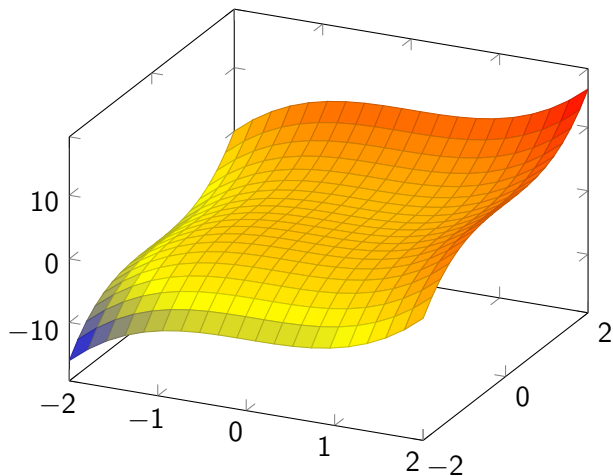
The graph of $x^2 + y^2$ has a local minimum at $(0, 0)$. Clearly $AC - B^2 = 1 > 0$ and $A > 0$.

A local maximum



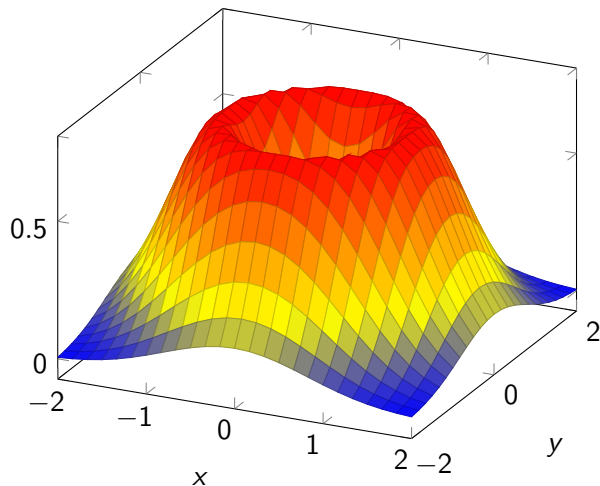
The graph of $-x^2 - y^2$ has a local maximum at $(0, 0)$. Clearly $AC - B^2 = 1 > 0$ and $A < 0$.

Where the test is inconclusive



The graph of $x^3 + y^3$. The test is inconclusive at $(0,0)$.

The volcano



This is the graph of $z = 2(x^2 + y^2)e^{-x^2 - y^2}$. Here the maxima lie on a circle (the rim of the volcano). This sort of behavior cannot arise in a quadratic surface.

Taylor's theorem in two variables

If we look at the quadratic surface $z = Ax^2 + 2Bxy + Cy^2$, we see that $2A = f_{xx}$, $2B = f_{xy}$ and $2C = f_{yy}$. The second derivative test tells us that whatever is true for quadratic surfaces is true in general. Why is this true?

The answer lies in a two variable form of Taylor's Theorem:

Theorem 32: If f is a \mathcal{C}^2 function in a disc around (x_0, y_0) , then

$$f(x_0 + h, y_0 + k) = f(x_0, y_0) + f_x h + f_y k \\ + \frac{1}{2!} [f_{xx} h^2 + 2f_{xy} hk + f_{yy} k^2] + \tilde{R}_2(h, k),$$

where $\tilde{R}_2(h, k) / \|(h, k)\|^2 \rightarrow 0$ as $\|(h, k)\| \rightarrow 0$.

From quadratics surfaces to general surfaces

If (x_0, y_0) is a critical point, Taylor's theorem in a disc around the critical point becomes

$$f(x_0 + h, y_0 + k) = f(x_0, y_0) + \frac{1}{2!}[f_{xx}h^2 + 2f_{xy}hk + f_{yy}k^2] + \tilde{R}_2(h, k),$$

where $\tilde{R}_2(h, k)/\|(h, k)\|^2 \rightarrow 0$ as $\|(h, k)\| \rightarrow 0$.

Thus, in a small disc around (x_0, y_0) the function $f(x, y)$ looks very much like a quadratic surface, and from the point of view of the critical points there is, in fact, no difference, because the error term can be made as small as we please even after dividing by $\|(h, k)\|^2$. This is why the second derivative test works.

Back to Taylor's Theorem

Suppose $g : [u, v] \rightarrow \mathbb{R}$ is a function of one variable. Let us assume that g is twice continuously differentiable on $[u, v]$. For points $a, b \in (u, v)$ we can rewrite Taylor's Theorem as

$$g(b) = g(a) + g'(a)h + \frac{g''(a)}{2!}h^2 + \frac{g''(c) - g''(a)}{2!}h^2,$$

for some c between a and b . Since we have assumed that g'' is continuous we see that $(g''(c) - g''(a)) \rightarrow 0$ as $h \rightarrow 0$. Thus we can write

$$g(b) = g(a) + g'(a)h + \frac{g''(a)}{2!}h^2 + \tilde{R}_2(h),$$

where $\tilde{R}_2(h)/h^2 \rightarrow 0$.

Exercise 1: Let $f(x, y)$ be a \mathcal{C}^2 function of two variables. Apply the preceding version of Taylor's Theorem to the function

$$g(t) = f(tx + (1-t)x_0, ty + (1-t)y_0),$$

for $0 \leq t \leq 1$. This will give the two variable version of Taylor's Theorem stated above. You can easily generalize this to degree n .

Boundedness of continuous functions of two variables

In one variable we saw that continuous functions are bounded in closed bounded intervals. More generally, we can take a finite union of such intervals and the function will remain bounded. Such sets are called compact sets. What is the analogue for \mathbb{R}^2 ?

It is a little harder to define compact sets in \mathbb{R}^2 , but we can give examples. The **closed** disc

$$\bar{D}_r = \{(x, y) \mid \|(x, y) - (x_0, y_0)\| \leq r\}$$

of radius r around a point $(x_0, y_0) \in \mathbb{R}^2$ is an example. Another example is the **closed** rectangle:

$$\bar{S} = \{(x, y) \mid |x - x_0| \leq a, |y - y_0| \leq b\}$$

Finite unions of such sets will also be compact sets. As before, we have

Theorem 32: A continuous function on a compact set in \mathbb{R}^2 will attain its extreme values.

Global extrema as local extrema

Definition: A point (x_0, y_0) such that $f(x, y) \leq f(x_0, y_0)$ or $f(x, y) \geq f(x_0, y_0)$ for all (x, y) in the domain being considered is called a **global maximum or minimum point** respectively.

In light of Theorem 32, these always exist for continuous functions on closed rectangles or discs.

Assume now that f is a C^2 function on a closed rectangle \bar{S} as above. We can find the global maximum or minimum as follows. We first study all the local extrema which by definition lie in the **open** rectangle

$$S = \{(x, y) \mid |x - x_0| < a, |y - y_0| < b\}$$

(This is because, in order to have a local extremum we need to have a whole disc around the point. A point on the boundary of the closed rectangle does not have such a disc around it where the function is defined.)

After determining all the local maxima we take the points where the function takes the largest value - say M_1 . We compare this with the maximum value of the function on the boundary of the closed rectangle, say M_2 . Let M be the maximum of these two values. The points where M is attained are the global maxima. We can treat a function defined on the closed disc in the same way. Once again, the local extrema will have to lie in the open disc and we will have to consider these values as well as the values of the function on the boundary circle.

Finding global extrema in \mathbb{R}^2

Sometimes, global extrema may exist even when the domain in \mathbb{R}^2 (which is not compact, in fact, not even bounded).

For instance, in the example $z = 2(x^2 - y^2)e^{-\frac{(x^2+y^2)}{2}}$, we can check that when $x^2 + y^2 > 16$, $z < 1/2$, that is, outside the disc $\bar{D}_4(0, 0)$ (try proving this - I have not chosen this disc optimally).

In the closed disc $\bar{D}_4(0, 0)$ we have already found the critical points and the local maxima and minima. We see that $f(\sqrt{2}, 0) = f(-\sqrt{2}, 0) = 2/e > 1/2$. There cannot be other local maxima since we have checked all the other critical points, and local maxima can occur only at the critical points. Hence, these points are global maxima in $\bar{D}_4(0, 0)$.

Now, outside the disc $\bar{D}_4(0, 0)$, we know that $z = f(x, y) < 1/2$. Hence, we see that the value $2/e > 1/2$ is the maximum value taken on all of \mathbb{R}^2 . Thus, this particular function actually has a global maximum (in fact, two global maxima) on \mathbb{R}^2 .