

7.1 Modeling Situations with Differential Equations

Name: _____ Class: _____ Date: _____

Total: 10 marks

KEY WORDS differential equation 微分方程

Objective

Build the skills to answer exam questions on **modeling with differential equations** — turning a description of a rate into an equation.

You must be able to:

- write a **differential equation** 微分方程 from a verbal statement about a rate
- recognise “proportional to” as multiplication by a constant k
- identify the quantity, its rate $\frac{dy}{dt}$, and what it depends on

1 Worked examples

Study these first. Each one shows the method for a question type used later — follow the steps and you can do the Practice and Exam-style questions yourself.

■ “Rate of change” is a derivative

“The population P changes over time t ” means the rate is $\frac{dP}{dt}$. The rest of the sentence tells you what it equals.

■ “Proportional to”

“Proportional to” means “equal to a constant times”. “The rate of growth is proportional to the population” becomes

$$\frac{dP}{dt} = kP.$$

■ Proportional to a difference

Newton’s law of cooling: an object’s temperature T changes at a rate proportional to the difference between T and the room temperature T_r :

$$\frac{dT}{dt} = k(T - T_r).$$

■ Reading the sign of k

A **growing** quantity has $k > 0$; a **decaying** or cooling one has $k < 0$. The differential equation captures the model before you ever solve it.

2 Practice

Now apply the methods above.

2.1 Write a differential equation for: “the amount A decreases at a rate proportional to A .” [2]

2.2 A tank drains so that its volume V falls at a constant 3 litres per minute. Write the differential equation. [1]

2.3 Write a differential equation for: “the number of bacteria N grows at a rate proportional to N .” [1]

3 Exam-style questions

3.1 “The rate of change of y is proportional to y ” is written [1]

A	B
C	D

A $y = kt$

B $\frac{dy}{dt} = k$

C $\frac{dy}{dt} = ky$

D $\frac{dy}{dt} = k + y$

3.2 A cup of coffee at temperature T cools in a room at 20°C . Its temperature falls at a rate proportional to how much hotter it is than the room.

(a) Write a differential equation for $\frac{dT}{dt}$. [2]

(b) State the sign of the constant of proportionality, with a reason. [1]

3.3 A savings account earns interest continuously at 4% per year, so the balance B grows at a rate of $0.04B$ per year, while \$2000 per year is also added. Write a differential equation for $\frac{dB}{dt}$. [2]