

10.11 Finding Taylor Polynomial Approximations of Functions

Name: _____ Class: _____ Date: _____ **Total: 14 marks**

KEY WORDS taylor polynomial

Objective

Build the skills to answer exam questions on **Taylor polynomials**.

You must be able to:

- build a **Taylor polynomial** from derivative values at a center
- use the formula $P_n(x) = \sum_{k=0}^n \frac{f^{(k)}(a)}{k!}(x-a)^k$
- estimate a function value with the polynomial

1 Key knowledge and 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.

■ The Taylor polynomial

Centered at $x = a$:

$$P_n(x) = f(a) + f'(a)(x-a) + \frac{f''(a)}{2!}(x-a)^2 + \cdots + \frac{f^{(n)}(a)}{n!}(x-a)^n.$$

Centered at $a = 0$ it is a **Maclaurin polynomial**.

■ Building from a table

Given $f(0) = 2$, $f'(0) = 3$, $f''(0) = -4$, the 2nd-degree Maclaurin polynomial is

$$P_2(x) = 2 + 3x + \frac{-4}{2!}x^2 = 2 + 3x - 2x^2.$$

■ A worked polynomial for e^x

For $f(x) = e^x$ at $a = 0$: all derivatives are 1, so $P_3(x) = 1 + x + \frac{x^2}{2} + \frac{x^3}{6}$.

■ Estimating a value

Use P_n near the center. $e^{0.1} \approx P_3(0.1) = 1 + 0.1 + 0.005 + 0.000167 \approx 1.10517$.

2 Practice

Now apply the methods above.

2.1 Write the general term $\frac{f^{(k)}(a)}{k!}(x-a)^k$ for $k = 2$. [1]

2.2 Given $f(0) = 1$, $f'(0) = 2$, $f''(0) = 6$, write $P_2(x)$ (Maclaurin). [2]

2.3 For $f(x) = e^x$, write the 2nd-degree Maclaurin polynomial. [2]

3 Exam-style questions

3.1 The coefficient of $(x-a)^2$ in a Taylor polynomial is [1]

- ☐
- A $f''(a)$

B $\frac{f''(a)}{2}$

C $2f''(a)$

D $f'(a)$

3.2 A function has $f(1) = 3$, $f'(1) = -2$, $f''(1) = 4$, $f'''(1) = 12$.

(a) Write the 3rd-degree Taylor polynomial about $x = 1$.

[3]

(b) Use it to estimate $f(1.1)$.

[2]

3.3 Write the 4th-degree Maclaurin polynomial for $f(x) = \cos x$ (using $\cos 0 = 1$, and the derivative pattern).

[3]