

Exercise walk-through

5.1

Derivatives and stationary points

INTERNATIONAL BACCALAUREATE · IB DIPLOMA ·
MATHEMATICS: APPLICATIONS AND INTERPRETATION · SL · EXERCISE
SHEET

5.1 Derivatives and stationary points

Name: _____ Class: _____ Date: _____

Total: 13 marks

KEY WORDS derivative

Objective

Derivatives and stationary points. Original classroom practice for IB SL; not an official IB paper.

1 Key knowledge and worked examples

■ What is the slope at one point?

- A curved road has different slopes at different positions. An average gradient cannot describe every point.
- This lesson studies **derivative** : The instantaneous rate of change, also the

gradient of a tangent.

■ The method

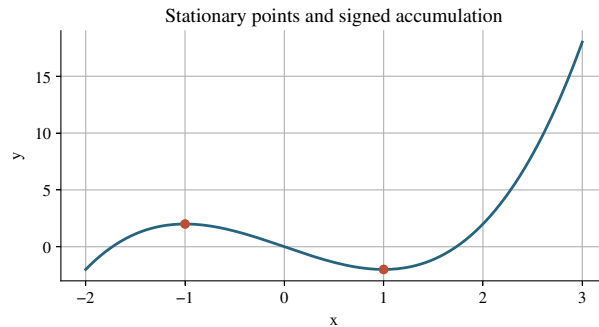
- For $y = ax^n$, $dy/dx = anx^{n-1}$.
 - A stationary point satisfies $dy/dx = 0$.
 - Check the sign change of the derivative, or the second derivative when it is nonzero, to classify it.
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■ A worked case

$$\frac{d}{dx}(ax^n) = anx^{n-1}, \quad f'(x) = 0$$

Example:

For $y=x^3-3x$, $dy/dx=3x^2-3$. At $x=1$, the gradient is 0 and $y=-2$. The second derivative is $6x$, positive at $x=1$, so this is a local minimum. At $x=-1$, $y=2$ and the second derivative is negative, giving a local maximum.



■ **Where it goes wrong**

- A zero derivative does not always mean a maximum or minimum: $y=x^3$ is stationary at 0 but continues increasing.
- An endpoint can also produce an extreme value on a restricted domain.

Not true: Every point with zero derivative is a local maximum or minimum. A zero derivative can also be a point of inflection: $y=x^3$ at $x=0$ is neither a maximum nor a minimum.

■ **Applying it**

- At GCSE/IGCSE use only the polynomial scope allowed by the tier; do not add chain, product or quotient rules there.
 - At advanced level, connect the derivative to rates and optimization with a valid domain.
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■ **In your course**

- Applications and Interpretation SL, the course first assessed in 2021.
- Every paper allows a calculator, but method marks still need the expression or equation written before its value.

Key:

- **Derivative:** The instantaneous rate of change, also the gradient of a tangent.
 - For $y=ax^n$, $dy/dx=nax^{n-1}$.
 - Watch for: A zero derivative does not always mean a maximum or minimum: $y=x^3$ is stationary at 0 but continues increasing.
-

■ Write from a derivative of 4

- For $y = x^2 - 6x$, find the derivative at $x = 5$.
- Find the stationary value. A derivative of 0 is not always a turning point.

Exercises 2.1·2.3

2.1 For $y=x^3-3x$, find dy/dx at $x=2$. Show the relation, substitution and units. [2]

2.2 Find the y-coordinate of the stationary point at $x=1$. Show the relation, substitution and units. [2]

2.3 For $y=4x^3$, find dy/dx at $x=2$. Show the relation, substitution and units. [2]

Exercises 2.1-2.3

2.1 For $y=x^3-3x$, find dy/dx at $x=2$. Show the relation, substitution and units. [2]

2.1 $dy/dx=3x^2-3$. At $x=2$ it is $12-3=9$.

2.2 Find the y-coordinate of the stationary point at $x=1$. Show the relation, substitution and units. [2]

2.2 Substitute into the original curve: $y(1)=1-3=-2$.

2.3 For $y=4x^3$, find dy/dx at $x=2$. Show the relation, substitution and units. [2]

2.3 The derivative is $12x^2$; at 2 it is $12 \times 4=48$.

Exercises 2.4·2.5

2.4 Decide whether this claim is true and justify: Derivative means the instantaneous rate of change, also the gradient of a tangent. [2]

2.5 At $x=0$ the curve $y=x^3$ has $dy/dx=0$. Why is it not a local maximum or minimum? Choose one answer.

- **A** Every stationary point is a maximum or minimum; $x=0$ is a minimum of x^3
- **B** The derivative $3x^2$ is undefined at $x=0$, so the point is not stationary
- **C** The gradient does not change sign: the curve keeps increasing through the point [1]

Exercises 2.4·2.5

2.4 Decide whether this claim is true and justify: Derivative means the instantaneous rate of change, also the gradient of a tangent. [2]

2.4 True. True: The instantaneous rate of change, also the gradient of a tangent.

2.5 At $x=0$ the curve $y=x^3$ has $dy/dx=0$. Why is it not a local maximum or minimum? Choose one answer.

- **A** Every stationary point is a maximum or minimum; $x=0$ is a minimum of x^3
- **B** The derivative $3x^2$ is undefined at $x=0$, so the point is not stationary
- **C** The gradient does not change sign: the curve keeps increasing through the point [1]

2.5 C The derivative $3x^2$ is positive on both sides of $x=0$, so the point is stationary but the function continues to rise - a point of inflection. Classification needs the sign change or the second derivative, not merely $dy/dx=0$.

Exercise 3.1

3.1 For $y=x^3-3x$ on $[-2, 2]$, find the absolute maximum and minimum, including all candidates. [4]

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3.1 Derivative $3x^2-3=0$ at ± 1 . Values $y(-2)=-2$, $y(-1)=2$, $y(1)=-2$, $y(2)=2$. Maximum 2 at $-1, 2$; minimum -2 at $-2, 1$. Checking only stationary points misses endpoint ties.