

2.4 Ordinary differential equations

Name: _____ Class: _____ Date: _____

Total: 23 marks

KEY WORDS ordinary differential equation
 • initial condition

• homogeneous

• particular

Objective

Solve first-order linear ODEs with constant coefficients by the classical route (homogeneous + particular + initial condition) and verify each solution at both endpoints.

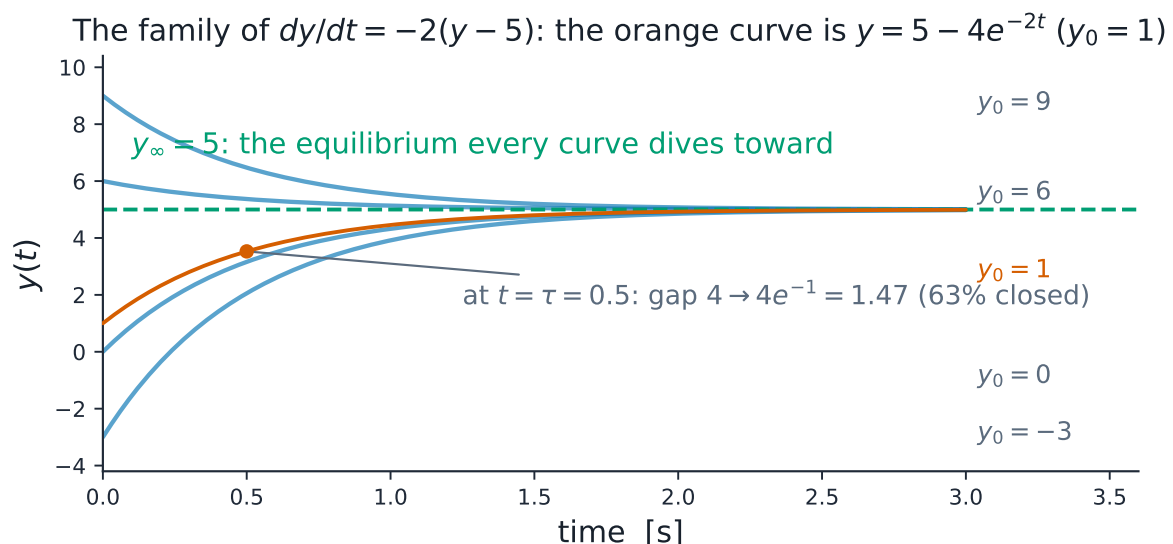
1 Key knowledge and worked examples

■ Homogeneous plus particular

A first-order linear **ODE** $dy/dt + ay = f(t)$ solves as the sum of:

- The **homogeneous** solution Ce^{-at} – the natural decay;
- A **particular** solution forced by $f(t)$ (a constant input forces a constant output: $y_p = f/a$).

The one **initial condition** $y(0)$ then fixes C .



■ **Worked example, with both endpoint checks**

$$dy/dt + 2y = 10, y(0) = 1.$$

- Homogeneous: Ce^{-2t} ; particular: $10/2 = 5$.
- General: $y = 5 + Ce^{-2t}$; $y(0) = 5 + C = 1$ gives $C = -4$.
- Solution: $y = 5 - 4e^{-2t}$.

Check 1 (start): $y(0) = 5 - 4 = 1$ ✓. Check 2 (steady state): as $t \rightarrow \infty$, $y \rightarrow 5$ and $dy/dt \rightarrow 0$; the equation reads $0 + 2(5) = 10$ ✓. Endpoint checks are free and catch most algebra slips.

■ **It is the RC equation**

$RCdv/dt + v = V_s$ rearranges exactly into this form – the wave-1 transient on a general footing. The method, not the circuit, is the content: any first-order system (thermal, fluid, mechanical) with a constant drive answers the same way, with time constant $\tau = 1/a$.

2 Practice

2.1 Solve $dy/dt + 3y = 6$, $y(0) = 2$. Check both endpoints. [3]

2.2 Solve $dy/dt + y = 0$, $y(0) = 5$, and state the time constant. [3]

2.3 For the ODE of the worked example ($y = 5 - 4e^{-2t}$), compute $y(0.5)$ and dy/dt at $t = 0.5$, and verify the ODE holds there. [4]

3 Exam-style questions

3.1 An RC circuit with $R = 2k\Omega$, $C = 500\mu F$ is driven by a 9 V step; the capacitor starts at 1 V.

Write the ODE for $v(t)$, solve it classically, and give the time constant, $v(0)$, $v(\infty)$, and v at one time constant. Verify the ODE at $t = 0$ numerically. [7]

3.2 A sensor cools according to $dT/dt = -k(T - 20)$ with $k = 0.1/min$, from $T(0) = 90^\circ C$.

Rearrange into standard form, solve, and find the time at which $T = 30^\circ C$. Check by substitution of your time back into the solution. [6]
