

# Taylor Series Revisited

Major: All Engineering Majors

Authors: Autar Kaw, Luke Snyder

<http://numericalmethods.eng.usf.edu>

Transforming Numerical Methods Education for STEM  
Undergraduates

# Taylor Series Revisited

<http://numericalmethods.eng.usf.edu>

# What is a Taylor series?

Some examples of Taylor series which you must have seen

$$\cos(x) = 1 - \frac{x^2}{2!} + \frac{x^4}{4!} - \frac{x^6}{6!} + \dots$$

$$\sin(x) = x - \frac{x^3}{3!} + \frac{x^5}{5!} - \frac{x^7}{7!} + \dots$$

$$e^x = 1 + x + \frac{x^2}{2!} + \frac{x^3}{3!} + \dots$$

# General Taylor Series

The general form of the Taylor series is given by

$$f(x+h) = f(x) + f'(x)h + \frac{f''(x)}{2!}h^2 + \frac{f'''(x)}{3!}h^3 + \dots$$

provided that all derivatives of  $f(x)$  are continuous and exist in the interval  $[x, x+h]$

What does this mean in plain English?

*As Archimedes would have said, "Give me the value of the function at a single point, and the value of all (first, second, and so on) its derivatives at that single point, and I can give you the value of the function at any other point" (fine print excluded)*

# Example—Taylor Series

Find the value of  $f(6)$  given that  $f(4)=125$ ,  $f'(4)=74$ ,  $f''(4)=30$ ,  $f'''(4)=6$  and all other higher order derivatives of  $f(x)$  at  $x=4$  are zero.

Solution:

$$f(x+h) = f(x) + f'(x)h + f''(x)\frac{h^2}{2!} + f'''(x)\frac{h^3}{3!} + \dots$$

$$x = 4$$

$$h = 6 - 4 = 2$$

# Example (cont.)

Solution: (cont.)

Since the higher order derivatives are zero,

$$f(4+2) = f(4) + f'(4)2 + f''(4)\frac{2^2}{2!} + f'''(4)\frac{2^3}{3!}$$

$$f(6) = 125 + 74(2) + 30\left(\frac{2^2}{2!}\right) + 6\left(\frac{2^3}{3!}\right)$$

$$= 125 + 148 + 60 + 8$$

$$= 341$$

Note that to find  $f(6)$  exactly, we only need the value of the function and all its derivatives at some other point, in this case  $x = 4$

# Derivation for Maclaurin Series for $e^x$

Derive the Maclaurin series

$$e^x = 1 + x + \frac{x^2}{2!} + \frac{x^3}{3!} + \dots$$

The Maclaurin series is simply the Taylor series about the point  $x=0$

$$f(x+h) = f(x) + f'(x)h + f''(x)\frac{h^2}{2!} + f'''(x)\frac{h^3}{3!} + f''''(x)\frac{h^4}{4} + f''''''(x)\frac{h^5}{5} + \dots$$

$$f(0+h) = f(0) + f'(0)h + f''(0)\frac{h^2}{2!} + f'''(0)\frac{h^3}{3!} + f''''(0)\frac{h^4}{4} + f''''''(0)\frac{h^5}{5} + \dots$$

# Derivation (cont.)

Since  $f(x) = e^x$ ,  $f'(x) = e^x$ ,  $f''(x) = e^x$ , ...,  $f^n(x) = e^x$  and  $f^n(0) = e^0 = 1$

the Maclaurin series is then

$$\begin{aligned} f(h) &= (e^0) + (e^0)h + \frac{(e^0)}{2!}h^2 + \frac{(e^0)}{3!}h^3 \dots \\ &= 1 + h + \frac{1}{2!}h^2 + \frac{1}{3!}h^3 \dots \end{aligned}$$

So,

$$f(x) = 1 + x + \frac{x^2}{2!} + \frac{x^3}{3!} + \dots$$



# Error in Taylor Series

The Taylor polynomial of order  $n$  of a function  $f(x)$  with  $(n+1)$  continuous derivatives in the domain  $[x, x+h]$  is given by

$$f(x+h) = f(x) + f'(x)h + f''(x)\frac{h^2}{2!} + \cdots + f^{(n)}(x)\frac{h^n}{n!} + R_n(x)$$

where the remainder is given by

$$R_n(x) = \frac{(x-h)^{n+1}}{(n+1)!} f^{(n+1)}(c)$$

where

$$x < c < x+h$$

that is,  $c$  is some point in the domain  $[x, x+h]$

# Example—error in Taylor series

The Taylor series for  $e^x$  at point  $x = 0$  is given by

$$e^x = 1 + x + \frac{x^2}{2!} + \frac{x^3}{3!} + \frac{x^4}{4!} + \frac{x^5}{5!} + \dots$$

It can be seen that as the number of terms used increases, the error bound decreases and hence a better estimate of the function can be found.

How many terms would it require to get an approximation of  $e^1$  within a magnitude of true error of less than  $10^{-6}$ .

# Example—(cont.)

Solution:

Using  $(n+1)$  terms of Taylor series gives error bound of

$$R_n(x) = \frac{(x-h)^{n+1}}{(n+1)!} f^{(n+1)}(c) \quad x=0, h=1, f(x) = e^x$$

$$\begin{aligned} R_n(0) &= \frac{(0-1)^{n+1}}{(n+1)!} f^{(n+1)}(c) \\ &= \frac{(-1)^{n+1}}{(n+1)!} e^c \end{aligned}$$

Since

$$x < c < x+h$$

$$0 < c < 0+1$$

$$0 < c < 1$$

$$\frac{1}{(n+1)!} < |R_n(0)| < \frac{e}{(n+1)!}$$

# Example—(cont.)

Solution: (cont.)

So if we want to find out how many terms it would require to get an approximation of  $e^1$  within a magnitude of true error of less than  $10^{-6}$ ,

$$\frac{e}{(n+1)!} < 10^{-6}$$

$$(n+1)! > 10^6 e$$

$$(n+1)! > 10^6 \times 3$$

$$n \geq 9$$

So 9 terms or more are needed to get a true error less than  $10^{-6}$

# Additional Resources

For all resources on this topic such as digital audiovisual lectures, primers, textbook chapters, multiple-choice tests, worksheets in MATLAB, MATHEMATICA, MathCad and MAPLE, blogs, related physical problems, please visit

[http://numericalmethods.eng.usf.edu/topics/taylor\\_series.html](http://numericalmethods.eng.usf.edu/topics/taylor_series.html)

**THE END**

<http://numericalmethods.eng.usf.edu>