

Section 13.5 The Chain Rule

The Chain Rule (Case 1) Suppose that $z = f(x, y)$ is a differentiable function of x and y , where $x = g(t)$ and $y = h(t)$ are both differentiable functions of t . Then z is a differentiable function of t and

$$\frac{dz}{dt} = \frac{\partial z}{\partial x} \cdot \frac{dx}{dt} + \frac{\partial z}{\partial y} \cdot \frac{dy}{dt}.$$

The Chain Rule (Case 2) Suppose that $z = f(x, y)$ is a differentiable function of x and y , where $x = g(s, t)$ and $y = h(s, t)$ are differentiable functions of s and t . Then

$$\begin{aligned}\frac{\partial z}{\partial s} &= \frac{\partial z}{\partial x} \cdot \frac{\partial x}{\partial s} + \frac{\partial z}{\partial y} \cdot \frac{\partial y}{\partial s} \\ \frac{\partial z}{\partial t} &= \frac{\partial z}{\partial x} \cdot \frac{\partial x}{\partial t} + \frac{\partial z}{\partial y} \cdot \frac{\partial y}{\partial t}.\end{aligned}$$

Case 2 of the Chain Rule contains three types of variables: s and t are independent variables, x and y are called intermediate variables, and z is the dependent variable.

Implicit Differentiation We suppose that an equation of the form $F(x, y) = 0$ defines y implicitly as a differentiable function of x . Then we can apply chain rule to obtain

$$\frac{\partial F}{\partial x} \cdot \frac{dx}{dx} + \frac{\partial F}{\partial y} \cdot \frac{dy}{dx} = 0$$

which gives

$$\frac{dy}{dx} = -\frac{F_x}{F_y}.$$