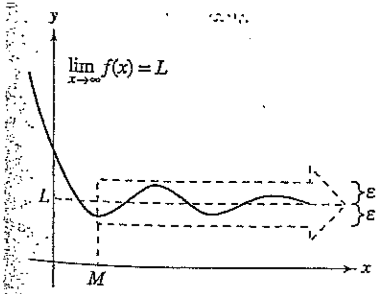
Limits at Infinity • Horizontal Asymptotes

Limits at Infinity

Definition of Limits at Infinity

Let L be a real number.

1. The statement $\lim_{x\to\infty} f(x) = L$ means that for each $\varepsilon > 0$ there exists an $M > 0$ such that $|f(x) - L| < \varepsilon$ whenever $x > M$.
2. The statement $\lim_{x\to-\infty} f(x) = L$ means that for each $\varepsilon > 0$ there exists an $N < 0$ such that $|f(x) - L| < \varepsilon$ whenever $x < N$.



$f(x)$ is within ε units of L as $x \to \infty$.
Figure 3.34

THEOREM 3.10 Limits at Infinity

If r is a positive rational number and c is any real number, then

$$\lim_{x\to\infty} \frac{c}{x^r} = 0.$$

Furthermore, if x^r is defined when $x < 0$, then $\lim_{x\to-\infty} \frac{c}{x^r} = 0$.

Guidelines for Finding Limits of Rational Functions

1. If the degree of the numerator is *less than* the degree of the denominator, then the limit of the rational function is 0.
2. If the degree of the numerator is *equal to* the degree of the denominator, then the limit of the rational function is the ratio of the leading coefficients.
3. If the degree of the numerator is *greater than* the degree of the denominator, then the limit of the rational function does not exist.