Infinite Sequences

A sequence can be thought of as a list of numbers written in a definite order:

$$a_1, a_2, a_3, \dots, a_n, \dots$$

The number a_1 is called **the first term,** a_2 is **the second term**, and in general a_n is **the nth term**. We will deal exclusively with infinite sequences and so each term a_n will have a successor a_{n+1}.

Notice that for every positive integer n there is a corresponding number a_n and so a sequence can be defined as a function whose domain is the set of positive integers. But we usually write a_n instead of the function notation $f(n)$ for the value of the function at the number n. The sequence $\{a_1, a_2, a_3, \dots\}$ is also denoted by (a_n), $\{a_n\}$ or $\{a_n\}_{n=1}^{\infty}$.

Now let's solve some examples!!!

Examples

Some sequences can be defined by giving a formula for the nth term. In the following examples we give three descriptions of the sequence: one by using the preceding notation, another by using the defining formula, and a third by writing out the terms of the sequence. Notice that n doesn't have to start at 1.

(a) $\left\{\dfrac{n}{n+1}\right\}_{n=1}^{\infty}$ $\quad a_n = \dfrac{n}{n+1}$ $\quad \left\{\dfrac{1}{2}, \dfrac{2}{3}, \dfrac{3}{4}, \dfrac{4}{5}, \ldots, \dfrac{n}{n+1}, \ldots\right\}$

(b) $\left\{\dfrac{(-1)^n(n+1)}{3^n}\right\}$ $\quad a_n = \dfrac{(-1)^n(n+1)}{3^n}$ $\quad \left\{-\dfrac{2}{3}, \dfrac{3}{9}, -\dfrac{4}{27}, \dfrac{5}{81}, \ldots, \dfrac{(-1)^n(n+1)}{3^n}, \ldots\right\}$

(c) $\left\{\sqrt{n-3}\right\}_{n=3}^{\infty}$ $\quad a_n = \sqrt{n-3},\ n \geqslant 3$ $\quad \left\{0, 1, \sqrt{2}, \sqrt{3}, \ldots, \sqrt{n-3}, \ldots\right\}$

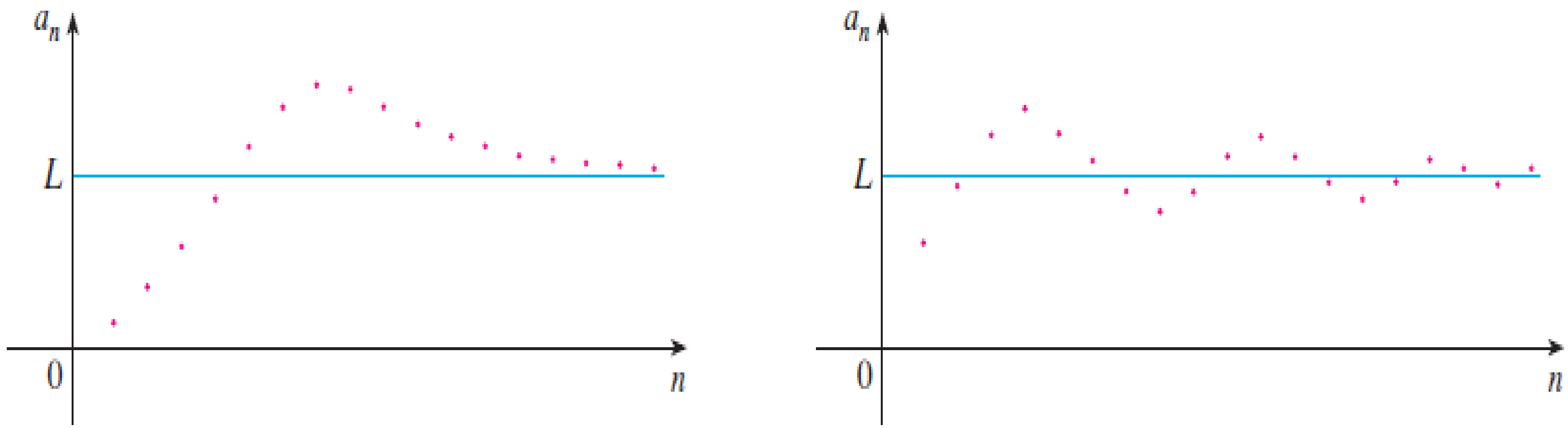
(d) $\left\{\cos\dfrac{n\pi}{6}\right\}_{n=0}^{\infty}$ $\quad a_n = \cos\dfrac{n\pi}{6},\ n \geqslant 0$ $\quad \left\{1, \dfrac{\sqrt{3}}{2}, \dfrac{1}{2}, 0, \ldots, \cos\dfrac{n\pi}{6}, \ldots\right\}$

1 Definition A sequence $\{a_n\}$ has the **limit** L and we write

$$\lim_{n\to\infty} a_n = L \qquad \text{or} \qquad a_n \to L \text{ as } n \to \infty$$

if we can make the terms a_n as close to L as we like by taking n sufficiently large. If $\lim_{n\to\infty} a_n$ exists, we say the sequence **converges** (or is **convergent**). Otherwise, we say the sequence **diverges** (or is **divergent**).

The following figure illustrates Definition 1 by showing the graphs of two sequences that have the limit L.



A more precise version of Definition 1 is as follows.

2 Definition A sequence $\{a_n\}$ has the **limit** L and we write

$$\lim_{n\to\infty} a_n = L \qquad \text{or} \qquad a_n \to L \text{ as } n \to \infty$$

if for every $\varepsilon > 0$ there is a corresponding integer N such that

$$\text{if} \qquad n > N \qquad \text{then} \qquad |a_n - L| < \varepsilon$$

If $\lim_{n\to\infty} a_n = \infty$, then the sequence is divergent but in a special way. We say that $\{a_n\}$ diverges to ∞.

If $\{a_n\}$ and $\{b_n\}$ are convergent sequences and c is a constant, then

$$\lim_{n\to\infty}(a_n+b_n)=\lim_{n\to\infty}a_n+\lim_{n\to\infty}b_n$$

$$\lim_{n\to\infty}(a_n-b_n)=\lim_{n\to\infty}a_n-\lim_{n\to\infty}b_n$$

$$\lim_{n\to\infty}ca_n=c\lim_{n\to\infty}a_n \qquad \lim_{n\to\infty}c=c$$

$$\lim_{n\to\infty}(a_nb_n)=\lim_{n\to\infty}a_n\cdot\lim_{n\to\infty}b_n$$

$$\lim_{n\to\infty}\frac{a_n}{b_n}=\frac{\lim\limits_{n\to\infty}a_n}{\lim\limits_{n\to\infty}b_n}\quad\text{if }\lim_{n\to\infty}b_n\neq 0$$

$$\lim_{n\to\infty}a_n^p=\left[\lim_{n\to\infty}a_n\right]^p\quad\text{if }\ p>0\text{ and }a_n>0$$

The Squeeze Theorem can also be adapted for sequences as follows

If $a_n \leqslant b_n \leqslant c_n$ for $n \geqslant n_0$ and $\lim_{n\to\infty} a_n = \lim_{n\to\infty} c_n = L$, then $\lim_{n\to\infty} b_n = L$.

6 Theorem If $\lim_{n\to\infty} |a_n| = 0$, then $\lim_{n\to\infty} a_n = 0$.

10 Definition A sequence $\{a_n\}$ is called **increasing** if $a_n < a_{n+1}$ for all $n \geqslant 1$, that is, $a_1 < a_2 < a_3 < \cdots$. It is called **decreasing** if $a_n > a_{n+1}$ for all $n \geqslant 1$. A sequence is **monotonic** if it is either increasing or decreasing.

11 Definition A sequence $\{a_n\}$ is **bounded above** if there is a number M such that

$$a_n \leqslant M \qquad \text{for all } n \geqslant 1$$

It is **bounded below** if there is a number m such that

$$m \leqslant a_n \qquad \text{for all } n \geqslant 1$$

If it is bounded above and below, then $\{a_n\}$ is a **bounded sequence**.