

Outline

Section 10: Parametric Equations and Polar Coordinates

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10.1 Curves defined by parametric equations

Suppose that both x and y are functions of a third parameter t :

$$x = f(t), \quad y = g(t)$$

As t varies the point $(x, y) = (f(t), g(t))$ traces out a curve, called **parametric curve**.

Example

What curve is represented by the following parametric equations?

$$x = \cos t \quad y = \sin t \quad 0 \leq t \leq 2\pi$$

Obviously it is a circle $x^2 + y^2 = 1$.

What if the range of t would be $0 \leq t \leq 4\pi$?

10.2 Calculus with Parametric Curves

If y and x in a parametric curve equation are functions of t then

$$\frac{dy}{dt} = \frac{dy}{dx} \cdot \frac{dx}{dt}$$

Assuming $dx/dt \neq 0$ we get

$$\frac{dy}{dx} = \frac{\frac{dy}{dt}}{\frac{dx}{dt}} \quad \text{if} \quad \frac{dx}{dt} \neq 0$$

To compute d^2y/dx^2 replace y with dy/dx :

$$\frac{d^2y}{dx^2} = \frac{d}{dx} \left(\frac{dy}{dx} \right) = \frac{\frac{d}{dt} \left(\frac{dy}{dx} \right)}{\frac{dx}{dt}}$$

Example

Assume a curve C is defined by $x = t^2$, $y = t^3 - 3t$. Since $y = t(t^2 - 3)$ the curve crosses itself at $t = \pm\sqrt{3}$.

$$\frac{dy}{dx} = \frac{dy/dt}{dx/dt} = \frac{3t^2 - 3}{2t} = \frac{3}{2} \left(t - \frac{1}{t} \right)$$

For $t = \pm\sqrt{3}$ the slopes of the tangent lines dy/dx are $\pm 6/(2\sqrt{3}) = \pm\sqrt{3}$, so the tangent lines are

$$y = \sqrt{3}(x - 3) \quad \text{and} \quad y = -\sqrt{3}(x - 3)$$

To determine concavity we calculate d^2y/dx^2 :

$$\frac{d^2y}{dx^2} = \frac{\frac{d}{dt} \left(\frac{dy}{dx} \right)}{\frac{dx}{dt}} = \frac{\frac{3}{2} \left(1 + \frac{1}{t^2} \right)}{2t} = \frac{3(t^2 + 1)}{4t^3}$$

Thus, C is concave upward for $t > 0$ and downward for $t < 0$.

Areas

Since the area under a curve $y = F(x)$ on $[a, b]$ is $\int_a^b F(x) dx$, for a curve defined by parametric equations $x = f(t)$, $y = g(t)$, $\alpha \leq t \leq \beta$ we have

$$A = \int_a^b y dx = \int_{\alpha}^{\beta} g(t)f'(t) dt$$

Example

For the cycloid $x = r(\theta - \sin \theta)$, $y = r(1 - \cos \theta)$, $0 \leq \theta \leq 2\pi$:

$$\begin{aligned} A &= \int_0^{2\pi r} y dx = \int_0^{2\pi} r(1 - \cos \theta)r(1 - \cos \theta) d\theta \\ &= r^2 \int_0^{2\pi} (1 - 2\cos \theta + \cos^2 \theta) d\theta \\ &= r^2 \int_0^{2\pi} (1 - 2\cos \theta + \frac{1}{2}(1 + \cos 2\theta)) d\theta \\ &= 3\pi r^2 \end{aligned}$$

Arc Length

For the length of a curve C $y = F(x)$ on $[a, b]$ we have

$$L = \int_a^b \sqrt{1 + (dy/dx)^2} dx$$

If C is defined parametrically with $x = f(t)$, $y = g(t)$ on $[\alpha, \beta]$ with $f'(x) > 0$ we get

$$\begin{aligned} L &= \int_a^b \sqrt{1 + (dy/dx)^2} dx = \int_{\alpha}^{\beta} \sqrt{1 + \left(\frac{dy/dt}{dx/dt}\right)^2} \frac{dx}{dt} dt \\ &= \int_{\alpha}^{\beta} \sqrt{\left(\frac{dx}{dt}\right)^2 + \left(\frac{dy}{dt}\right)^2} dt \end{aligned}$$

This formula is also valid if C cannot be expressed in the form $y = F(x)$. To show this we subdivide the interval $[\alpha, \beta]$ with points t_1, t_2, \dots, t_n on equal-size subintervals of length Δt .

This way we get points P_1, P_2, \dots, P_n on C so its length L is

$$L = \lim_{n \rightarrow \infty} \sum_{i=1}^n |P_{i-1}P_i|$$

By the Mean Value Theorem applied to $f(t)$ on $[t_{i-1}, t_i]$ we have

$$f(t_i) - f(t_{i-1}) = f'(t_i^*)(t_i - t_{i-1}) = f'(t_i^*)\Delta t$$

Similar equation is also valid for $g(t)$ and some $t_i^{**} \in [t_{i-1}, t_i]$, so

$$\Delta x_i = f'(t_i^*)\Delta t \quad \Delta y_i = g'(t_i^{**})\Delta t$$

Hence,

$$|P_{i-1}P_i| = \sqrt{(\Delta x_i)^2 + (\Delta y_i)^2} = \sqrt{[f'(t_i^*)]^2 + [g'(t_i^{**})]^2} \Delta t$$

So, the length becomes

$$L = \lim_{n \rightarrow \infty} \sum_{i=1}^n \sqrt{[f'(t_i^*)]^2 + [g'(t_i^{**})]^2} \Delta t = \int_{\alpha}^{\beta} \sqrt{[f'(t)]^2 + [g'(t)]^2} dt$$

Example

Find the curve length given by equations $x = \cos t$, $y = \sin t$, $0 \leq t \leq 2\pi$. We have $dx/dt = -\sin t$, $dy/dt = \cos t$, so

$$\begin{aligned} L &= \int_0^{2\pi} \sqrt{\left(\frac{dx}{dt}\right)^2 + \left(\frac{dy}{dt}\right)^2} dt \\ &= \int_0^{2\pi} \sqrt{\sin^2 t + \cos^2 t} dt \\ &= \int_0^{2\pi} dt = 2\pi \end{aligned}$$

Example

Find the length of one arch of the cycloid $x = r(\theta - \sin \theta)$,
 $y = r(1 - \cos \theta)$, $0 \leq \theta \leq 2\pi$. We have

$$\begin{aligned} L &= \int_0^{2\pi} \sqrt{\left(\frac{dx}{d\theta}\right)^2 + \left(\frac{dy}{d\theta}\right)^2} d\theta \\ &= \int_0^{2\pi} \sqrt{r^2(1 - \cos \theta)^2 + r^2 \sin^2 \theta} d\theta \\ &= r \int_0^{2\pi} \sqrt{1 - 2\cos \theta + \cos^2 \theta + \sin^2 \theta} d\theta \\ &= r \int_0^{2\pi} \sqrt{2(1 - \cos \theta)} d\theta = r \int_0^{2\pi} \sqrt{4 \sin^2(\theta/2)} d\theta \\ &= 2r \int_0^{2\pi} \sin(\theta/2) d\theta = 2r[-2 \cos(\theta/2)]_0^{2\pi} \\ &= 2r[2 + 2] = 8r \end{aligned}$$

Surface Area

For a curve $x = f(t)$, $y = g(t)$, $\alpha \leq t \leq \beta$, with f' , g' continuous and $g(t) \geq 0$, rotated about the x -axis, the area of the resulting surface is given by

$$S = \int_{\alpha}^{\beta} 2\pi y \sqrt{\left(\frac{dx}{dt}\right)^2 + \left(\frac{dy}{dt}\right)^2} dt$$

Example

To compute the surface of sphere we rotate a semicircle $x = r \cos t$, $y = r \sin t$, $0 \leq t \leq \pi$:

$$\begin{aligned} S &= \int_0^{\pi} 2\pi r \sin t \sqrt{(-r \sin t)^2 + (r \cos t)^2} dt \\ &= 2\pi r \int_0^{\pi} \sin t \sqrt{r^2(\sin^2 t + \cos^2 t)} dt \\ &= 2\pi r^2 \int_0^{\pi} \sin t dt = 4\pi r^2 \end{aligned}$$

10.3 Polar Coordinates

Polar coordinates of a point $P = (x, y)$ is the distance between P and $(0, 0)$ and the angle θ between the ray OP and the x -axis. That is, $P = (r, \theta)$. The angle θ is measured in radians.

We extend the coordinates to the case $r < 0$ as follows:

$$(-r, \theta) = (r, \theta + \pi)$$

The same point can be represented in multiple ways:

$$(r, \theta + 2n\pi) = (-r, \theta + (2n + 1)\pi)$$

Conversion formulas:

Polar to Cartesian :	$x = r \cos \theta$	$y = r \sin \theta$
Cartesian to Polar :	$r^2 = x^2 + y^2$	$\tan \theta = \frac{y}{x}$

Example

Convert $(2, \pi/3)$ from polar to Cartesian coordinates. One has:

$$x = r \cos \theta = 2 \cos \frac{\pi}{3} = 2 \cdot \frac{1}{2} = 1$$

$$y = r \sin \theta = 2 \sin \frac{\pi}{3} = 2 \cdot \frac{\sqrt{3}}{2} = \sqrt{3}$$

Example

Convert $(1, -1)$ from Cartesian to polar coordinates. One has

$$r = \sqrt{x^2 + y^2} = \sqrt{1^2 + (-1)^2} = \sqrt{2}$$

$$\tan \theta = \frac{y}{x} = -1$$

We get the following possible representations:

$$\left(\sqrt{2}, -\frac{\pi}{4}\right) \quad \left(\sqrt{2}, \frac{7\pi}{4}\right)$$

Polar Curves

The graph of polar equation $r = f(\theta)$ of $F(r, \theta) = 0$ consists of all points whose at least one polar expression (r, θ) satisfies the equation.

Example

Find a Cartesian equation of the curve $r = 2 \cos \theta$.

Since $x = r \cos \theta$, $\cos \theta = x/r$. Using polar equation we get $\cos \theta = r/2$, so $r/2 = x/r$, or $2x = r^2 = x^2 + y^2$. So, the curve equation is $x^2 + y^2 - 2x = 0$, or

$$(x - 1)^2 + y^2 = 1$$

Symmetry

- ▶ If a polar equation is unchanged when θ is replaced with $-\theta$, the curve is symmetric about the x -axis.
- ▶ If a polar equation is unchanged when r is replaced with $-r$ or θ is replaced with $\theta + \pi$, the curve is symmetric about the pole.
- ▶ If a polar equation is unchanged when θ is replaced with $\pi - \theta$, the curve is symmetric about the y -axis.

Tangents to Polar Curves

Rewrite the parametric equation $r = f(\theta)$ as

$$x = r \cos \theta = f(\theta) \cos \theta \quad y = r \sin \theta = f(\theta) \sin \theta$$

One has

$$\frac{dy}{dx} = \frac{\frac{dy}{d\theta}}{\frac{dx}{d\theta}} = \frac{\frac{dr}{d\theta} \sin \theta + r \cos \theta}{\frac{dr}{d\theta} \cos \theta - r \sin \theta}$$

For tangent line at the pole when $r = 0$ we get

$$\frac{dy}{dx} = \tan \theta \quad \text{provided } \frac{dr}{d\theta} \neq 0$$

Example

Find the points on the cardioid $r = 1 + \sin \theta$ where the tangent line is horizontal or vertical.

$$x = r \cos \theta = (1 + \sin \theta) \cos \theta = \cos \theta + \frac{1}{2} \sin 2\theta$$

$$y = r \sin \theta = (1 + \sin \theta) \sin \theta = \sin \theta + \sin^2 \theta$$

and

$$\frac{dy}{dx} = \frac{dy/d\theta}{dx/d\theta} = \frac{\cos \theta + 2 \sin \theta \cos \theta}{-\sin \theta + \cos 2\theta}$$

So,

$$\begin{aligned} \frac{dy}{d\theta} = 0, & \quad \theta = \frac{\pi}{2}, \frac{3\pi}{2}, \frac{7\pi}{6}, \frac{11\pi}{6} \\ \frac{dx}{d\theta} = 0, & \quad \theta = \frac{3\pi}{2}, \frac{\pi}{6}, \frac{5\pi}{6} \end{aligned}$$

The case $\theta = \frac{3\pi}{2}$ needs a special treatment.

10.4 Areas and Lengths in Polar Coordinates

Recall the area of a circle sector: $A = \frac{1}{2}r^2\theta$.

Let \mathcal{R} be a polar region bounded by the polar curve $r = f(\theta)$ and rays $\theta = a$ and $\theta = b$ with $0 \leq b - a \leq 2\pi$. We divide it into subintervals of equal width $\Delta\theta$ with endpoints $\theta_1, \dots, \theta_n$. For the sector bounded with θ_{i-1} and θ_i one has

$$\Delta A_i = \frac{1}{2}[f(\theta_i^*)]^2 \Delta\theta \quad \theta_i^* \in [\theta_{i-1}, \theta_i]$$

So the area of \mathcal{R} can be obtained as

$$A = \lim_{n \rightarrow \infty} \sum_{i=1}^n \frac{1}{2}[f(\theta_i^*)]^2 \Delta\theta = \int_a^b \frac{1}{2}[f(\theta)]^2 d\theta = \frac{1}{2} \int_a^b r^2 d\theta$$

Example

Find the area of one loop of the 4-leaved rose $r = \cos 2\theta$.

$$\begin{aligned} A &= \frac{1}{2} \int_{-\pi/4}^{\pi/4} r^2 d\theta = \frac{1}{2} \int_{-\pi/4}^{\pi/4} \cos^2 2\theta d\theta \\ &= \int_0^{\pi/4} \cos^2 2\theta d\theta = \int_0^{\pi/4} \frac{1}{2}(1 + \cos 4\theta) d\theta \\ &= \frac{1}{2} \left[\theta + \frac{1}{4} \sin 4\theta \right]_0^{\pi/4} = \frac{\pi}{8} \end{aligned}$$

Area between two polar curves

If the curves are $r = f(\theta)$ and $r = g(\theta)$, $a \leq \theta \leq b$, the following formula is easy to derive:

$$A = \frac{1}{2} \int_a^b \left([f(\theta)]^2 - [g(\theta)]^2 \right) d\theta$$

Example

Find the area which is inside the circle $r = 3 \sin \theta$ and outside of cardioid $r = 1 + \sin \theta$. The intersecting points are determined by

$$3 \sin \theta = 1 + \sin \theta \quad \Rightarrow \quad \theta = \frac{\pi}{6}, \frac{5\pi}{6}$$

Note that the area is symmetric about the vertical axis.

$$\begin{aligned} A &= \int_{\pi/6}^{\pi/2} (3 \sin \theta)^2 d\theta - \int_{\pi/6}^{\pi/2} (1 + \sin \theta)^2 d\theta \\ &= \int_{\pi/6}^{\pi/2} 9 \sin^2 \theta d\theta - \int_{\pi/6}^{\pi/2} (1 + 2 \sin \theta + \sin^2 \theta) d\theta \\ &= \int_{\pi/6}^{\pi/2} (8 \sin^2 \theta - 1 - 2 \sin \theta) d\theta \\ &= \int_{\pi/6}^{\pi/2} (3 - 4 \cos 2\theta - 2 \sin \theta) d\theta = [3\theta - 2 \sin 2\theta + 2 \cos \theta]_{\pi/6}^{\pi/2} \\ &= \pi \end{aligned}$$

Arc Length

To find the arc length of the polar curve $r = f(\theta)$, $a \leq \theta \leq b$, we treat θ as a parameter in parametric curve equations:

$$x = r \cos \theta = f(\theta) \cos \theta \quad y = r \sin \theta = f(\theta) \sin \theta$$

Differentiating them we get

$$\frac{dx}{d\theta} = \frac{dr}{d\theta} \cos \theta - r \sin \theta \quad \frac{dy}{d\theta} = \frac{dr}{d\theta} \sin \theta + r \cos \theta$$

Therefore,

$$\begin{aligned} \left(\frac{dx}{d\theta}\right)^2 + \left(\frac{dy}{d\theta}\right)^2 &= \left(\frac{dr}{d\theta}\right)^2 \cos^2 \theta - 2r \frac{dr}{d\theta} \cos \theta \sin \theta + r^2 \sin^2 \theta \\ &+ \left(\frac{dr}{d\theta}\right)^2 \sin^2 \theta + 2r \frac{dr}{d\theta} \sin \theta \cos \theta + r^2 \cos^2 \theta \\ &= \left(\frac{dr}{d\theta}\right)^2 + r^2 \end{aligned}$$

Hence, the formula for the length becomes

$$L = \int_a^b \sqrt{\left(\frac{dx}{d\theta}\right)^2 + \left(\frac{dy}{d\theta}\right)^2} d\theta = \int_a^b \sqrt{r^2 + \left(\frac{dr}{d\theta}\right)^2} d\theta$$

Example

Find the length of the cardioid $r = 1 + \sin \theta$.

$$\begin{aligned} L &= \int_0^{2\pi} \sqrt{r^2 + \left(\frac{dr}{d\theta}\right)^2} d\theta = \int_0^{2\pi} \sqrt{(1 + \sin \theta)^2 + \cos^2 \theta} d\theta \\ &= \int_0^{2\pi} \sqrt{2 + 2 \sin \theta} d\theta = \int_0^{2\pi} \frac{\sqrt{2 + 2 \sin \theta} \sqrt{2 - 2 \sin \theta}}{\sqrt{2 - 2 \sin \theta}} d\theta \\ &= \int_0^{2\pi} \frac{2 \cos \theta d\theta}{\sqrt{2 - 2 \sin \theta}} = -2\sqrt{2} \int_{-\pi/2}^{\pi/2} \frac{d(1 - \sin \theta)}{\sqrt{1 - \sin \theta}} \\ &= -2\sqrt{2} \int_{-1}^1 \frac{d(1 - z)}{\sqrt{1 - z}} = -2\sqrt{2} \cdot 2 \sqrt{1 - z} \Big|_{-1}^1 = 8 \end{aligned}$$

10.5 Conic Sections

Parabolas

Parabola is a set of points in a plane which are equidistant from a fixed point F (focus) and a fixed line (directrix).

If directrix is $y = -p$ and focus is $(0, p)$, the distance from a point (x, y) on the parabola to F is $\sqrt{x^2 + (y - p)^2}$. The distance from (x, y) to the directrix is $|y + p|$, so the parabola equation becomes

$$\sqrt{x^2 + (y - p)^2} = |y + p|$$

which simplifies to

$$x^2 = 4py$$

Similarly, if directrix is $x = -p$ and focus is $(p, 0)$ the parabola equation is

$$y^2 = 4px$$

Ellipses

An ellipse is the set of points in a plane, the sum of whose distances from two fixed points F_1, F_2 (foci) is a constant. If $F_1 = (-c, 0)$, $F_2 = (c, 0)$, and the constant is $2a$ the ellipse equation becomes

$$\sqrt{(x+c)^2 + y^2} + \sqrt{(x-c)^2 + y^2} = 2a$$

which simplifies to

$$\frac{x^2}{a^2} + \frac{y^2}{b^2} = 1, \quad c^2 = a^2 - b^2, \quad a \geq b > 0$$

If the foci are of the y -axis, i.e. $F_1 = (0, -c)$, $F_2 = (0, c)$, the ellipse equation becomes

$$\frac{x^2}{b^2} + \frac{y^2}{a^2} = 1, \quad c^2 = a^2 - b^2, \quad a \geq b > 0$$

Hyperbolas

A hyperbola is the set of points in a plane, the difference of whose distances from two fixed points F_1, F_2 (foci) is a constant. If $F_1 = (-c, 0)$, $F_2 = (c, 0)$, and the constant is $2a$ the hyperbola equation is

$$\frac{x^2}{a^2} - \frac{y^2}{b^2} = 1, \quad c^2 = a^2 + b^2$$

The x -intercepts $(\pm a, 0)$ are called the vertices of hyperbola, and it has asymptotes $y = \pm(b/a)x$.

If the foci are of the y -axis, i.e. $F_1 = (0, -c)$, $F_2 = (0, c)$, the hyperbola equation becomes

$$\frac{y^2}{a^2} - \frac{x^2}{b^2} = 1, \quad c^2 = a^2 + b^2$$

Its vertices are $(0, \pm a)$ and asymptotes are $y = \pm(a/b)x$.

Shifted conics

Shifted conic can be obtained by replacing x and y in its equation with $x - h$ and $y - k$, respectively.

Example

Identify the conic $9x^2 - 4y^2 - 72x + 8y + 176 = 0$ and find its foci. To accomplish it, we complete the squares:

$$4(y^2 - 2y) - 9(x^2 - 8x) = 176$$

$$4(y^2 - 2y + 1) - 9(x^2 - 8x + 16) = 176 + 4 - 144 = 36$$

$$4(y - 1)^2 - 9(x - 4)^2 = 36$$

$$\frac{(y - 1)^2}{9} - \frac{(x - 4)^2}{4} = 1$$

Hence, it is a shifted hyperbola with $a = 3$, $b = 2$, $c = \sqrt{13}$ whose (original) foci $(0, \pm\sqrt{13})$ are also shifted accordingly and become $(4, 1 \pm \sqrt{13})$.

10.6 Conic Sections in Polar Coordinates

Theorem

Let

- ▶ F be a fixed point (focus)
- ▶ ℓ be a fixed line (directrix) in a plane
- ▶ $e > 0$ be a fixed number (eccentricity).

The set of all points P in the plane such that

$$\frac{|PF|}{|P\ell|} = e$$

is a conic section. The conic is

- (i) an ellipse, if $e < 1$
- (ii) a parabola, if $e = 1$
- (iii) a hyperbola, if $e > 1$

Note that for $e = 1$ then we get the definition of parabola.
Let $F = (0, 0)$ and ℓ be the line $x = d$. For $P = (r, \theta)$ one has

$$|PF| = r \quad |P\ell| = d - r \cos \theta$$

The condition $|PF| = e|P\ell|$ becomes

$$r = e(d - r \cos \theta) \quad \text{or} \quad \sqrt{x^2 + y^2} = e(d - x)$$

By squaring both parts after a little algebra we get

$$\begin{aligned} x^2 + y^2 &= e^2(d - x)^2 = e^2(d^2 - 2dx + x^2) \\ (1 - e^2)x^2 + 2de^2x + y^2 &= e^2d^2 \end{aligned}$$

After completing the square we obtain

$$\left(x + \frac{e^2d}{1 - e^2}\right)^2 + \frac{y^2}{1 - e^2} = \frac{e^2d^2}{(1 - e^2)^2}$$

Proof.

For $e < 1$ we get the ellipse equation of the form

$$\frac{(x - h)^2}{a^2} + \frac{y^2}{b^2} = 1$$

where $h = -\frac{e^2 d}{1 - e^2}$, $a = \frac{ed}{1 - e^2}$, $b = \frac{ed}{\sqrt{1 - e^2}}$. The foci are at distance c from the ellipse center, where $c = \sqrt{a^2 - b^2} = \frac{e^2 d}{1 - e^2} = -h$ and $e = \frac{c}{a}$.

For $e > 1$ we have $1 - e^2 < 0$, so the equation represents a hyperbola. We could write its equation in the form

$$\frac{(x - h)^2}{a^2} - \frac{y^2}{b^2} = 1$$

and derive $e = \frac{c}{a}$ with $c^2 = a^2 + b^2$. □

Therefore, the curve equation in polar coordinates is

$$r = \frac{ed}{1 + e \cos \theta}$$

For directrix of the form $x = -d$, $y = -d$, or $y = d$ the equation can be obtained by rotating the graph on angles π , $-\pi/2$, or $\pi/2$, respectively. For example, for $y = d$ we get the equation $r = \frac{ed}{1 + e \cos(\theta - \pi/2)} = \frac{ed}{1 + e \sin \theta}$. Thus, we the theorem:

Theorem

A polar equation of the form

$$r = \frac{ed}{1 \pm e \cos \theta} \quad \text{or} \quad r = \frac{ed}{1 \pm e \sin \theta}$$

represents a conic setion of eccentricity e . The conic is an ellipse if $e < 1$, a parabola if $e = 1$, or a hyperbola if $e > 1$.

Example

The conic equation $r = \frac{10}{3-2\cos\theta}$ can be rewritten as

$$r = \frac{\frac{10}{3}}{1 - \frac{2}{3}\cos\theta}$$

So, $e = 2/3$ and it is an ellipse. The directrix line is at distance $d = \frac{10}{3/e} = 5$ from the origin, so its equation is $x = -5$.

Example

If we replace the equation from the previous example with

$$r = \frac{10}{3 - 2\cos(\theta - \pi/4)}$$

we get an ellipse rotated on angle $\pi/4$ about one of its foci. The directrix line becomes $y = 5\sqrt{2} - x$.