

How to change the direction or speed of traversing a parametric curve

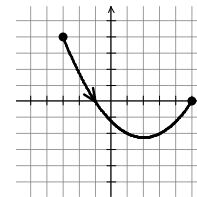
Supposed you already have parametric equations for a curve with a finite domain for the parameter, but you want to change the direction and/or speed of travelling along the curve. This can be accomplished by “changing the timeline”.

For example,

the parametric equations $x = 2t - 1$
 $y = t^2 - 3t$ for $t \in [-1, 3]$ correspond to the curve on the right.

At time $t = -1$, the curve starts at $(x, y) = (-3, 4)$ (the leftmost point) and at time $t = 3$, the curve ends at $(x, y) = (5, 0)$ (the rightmost point).

In between, the curve was traversed from left to right.



Suppose you want to traverse the curve from right to left instead, and instead of taking $3 - (-1) = 4$ units of time to do so, you want to take only 2 units of time.

Create a new time variable T and determine how the values of T correspond to the values of the original time variable t .

In this case, let's say you want $T \in [0, 2]$ (so T spans $2 - 0 = 2$ units of time).

At $T = 0$, you want to start the curve at $(x, y) = (5, 0)$, which corresponds to $t = 3$.

At $T = 2$, you want to end the curve at $(x, y) = (-3, 4)$, which corresponds to $t = -1$.

So, $t = 3$ when $T = 0$, and $t = -1$ when $T = 2$.

Now find a linear function for the original time variable t in terms of the new time variable T .

$$t = mT + b$$
$$m = \frac{\Delta t}{\Delta T} = \frac{3 - (-1)}{0 - 2} = -2$$
$$3 = -2(0) + b, \text{ so } b = 3$$
$$\text{So, } t = -2T + 3$$

Substitute this expression for the original time variable into the original parametric equations to get new equations in terms of the new time variable.

$$\begin{aligned} x = 2t - 1 & \Rightarrow x = 2(-2T + 3) - 1 & \Rightarrow x = -4T + 5 \\ y = t^2 - 3t & \Rightarrow y = (-2T + 3)^2 - 3(-2T + 3) & \Rightarrow y = 4T^2 - 6T \end{aligned} \text{ with } T \in [0, 2]$$

The final parametric equations and domain correspond to the curve on the right, as desired.

