

Given a graph of f , how do you sketch a graph of f' ?

When first learning to sketch a graph of f' given the graph of f , if you try to do it completely intuitively, it is common to accidentally sketch the graph of f shifted up or down instead.

The following process breaks down the steps of sketching f' in a more structured way.

- [1] Identify all x – coordinates on the graph of f where there is
a horizontal tangent line
so $f' = 0$
a discontinuity, a cusp or a vertical tangent line
so f' does not exist
- [2] Identify all x – coordinates on the graph of f where
the graph is the steepest or flattest in that neighborhood
- [3] On a number line, mark all x – values from [1] and [2]

At each x – value from [1] where

f has a horizontal tangent line

draw a dot on the number line

f has a vertical tangent line or infinite discontinuity

draw a vertical asymptote

f has a discontinuity or cusp

indicate that there is no corresponding point on the graph of f'

- [4] For each subinterval of the number line in [3],
label whether
 f is increasing
so $f' > 0$
 f is decreasing
so $f' < 0$
 f is horizontal
so $f' = 0$

Also, label whether

f is getting steeper

so f' is getting larger in size

f is getting flatter

so f' is getting smaller in size

f is straight

so f' is not changing

[5] For each subinterval of the number line in [3], sketch a piece of the graph of f' such that

if $f' > 0$, the graph of f' is _____ the number line

if $f' < 0$, the graph of f' is _____ the number line

if $f' = 0$, the graph of f' is _____ the number line

if f' does not exist, the graph of f' has a _____
if f has a vertical tangent line or infinite discontinuity

the graph of f' has a _____
if f has a discontinuity or a cusp
without a vertical tangent line or infinite discontinuity

if f' is large in size, the graph of f' is _____ the number line

if f' is small in size, the graph of f' is _____ the number line

if f' is getting larger in size, the graph of f' is moving _____ the number line

if f' is getting smaller in size, the graph of f' is moving _____ the number line

if f' is not changing, the graph of f' is _____

[6] At each x -value in [3] where f' exists
join up the pieces of f' on the left and right sides of that x -value
paying attention if $f' = 0$ at that x -value

At each x -value in [3] where f' does not exist due to a jump or removable discontinuity
if the graph of f has the same slope as it approaches that x -value from the left and from the right
join up the pieces of f' on the left and right sides of that x -value to meet at _____
if the graph of f has different slopes as it approaches that x -value from the left and from the right
pay attention to which side of f is steeper