

Curves Described by Parametric Equations

The functions describing the curve, C, traditionally use f(t) to represent x and g(t) to represent y. The independent variable t in this case is called a parameter .

The system of equations
$$\begin{cases} x = f(t) \\ y = g(t) \end{cases}$$

is called a system of parametric equations. The parametrization of ${\cal C}$ endows it with an orientation and the arrows on ${\cal C}$ indicate the motion as values of t increase.

For example, this set of equations describes the unit circle, with the arrow indicating the orientation.

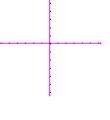
$$\begin{cases} x = \cos t & 0 \le t \le 2\pi \\ y = \sin t & \end{cases}$$

To sketch parametric equations, a chart is often useful.

Ex 1: Draw a chart for this set of equations and plot several points.

$$\begin{cases} x = 2t + 1 \\ y = t^2 - 2 \end{cases} \quad t \ge -2$$

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

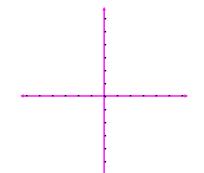


Ex 2: Plot this equation by following these steps.

$$\begin{cases} x = -2t^2 & \text{on the interval } [-1,1] \\ y = t^3 \end{cases}$$

- a) Make a table of values. b) Plot the points, including orientation.

t	x(t)	y(t)	(x(t),y(t))



Ex 3: Plot this parametric curve with orientation.

$$\begin{cases} x = 2\cos t \\ y = 1 + 3\sin t \end{cases} \quad 0 \le t \le \frac{3\pi}{2}$$

t	x(t)	y(t)	(x(t),y(t))

