

Lecture 32: Trig substitutions

Trig substitution is a special case of substitution, where x is a trigonometric function of u or u is a trigonometric function of x . Also this topic is covered more in follow up courses like Math 1b. This lecture allows us to practice more the substitution method.

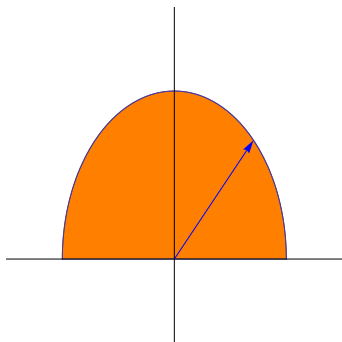
Here is an important example:

- 1 The area of a half circle of radius 1 is given by the integral

$$\int_{-1}^1 \sqrt{1-x^2} dx .$$

Solution. Write $x = \sin(u)$ so that $\cos(u) = \sqrt{1-x^2}$. $dx = \cos(u)du$. We have $\sin(-\pi/2) = -1$ and $\sin(\pi/2) = 1$ the answer is

$$\int_{-\pi/2}^{\pi/2} \cos(u) \cos(u) du = \int_{-\pi/2}^{\pi/2} (1 + \cos(2u))/2 = \frac{\pi}{2} .$$



Lets generalize this a bit and do the same computation for a general radius r :

- 2 Compute the area of a half disc of radius r which is given by the integral

$$\int_{-r}^r \sqrt{r^2 - x^2} dx .$$

Solution. Write $x = r \sin(u)$ so that $r \cos(u) = \sqrt{r^2 - x^2}$ and $dx = r \cos(u) du$ and $r \sin(-\pi/2) = -r$ and $r \sin(\pi/2) = r$. The answer is

$$\int_{-\pi/2}^{\pi/2} r^2 \cos^2(u) du = r^2 \pi/2 .$$

Here is an example, we know how to integrate

- 3 Find the integral

$$\int \frac{dx}{\sqrt{1-x^2}} .$$

We know the answer is $\arcsin(x)$. How can we do that without knowing? **Solution.** We can do it also with a trig substitution. Try $x = \sin(u)$ to get $dx = \cos(u) du$ and so

$$\int \frac{\cos(u) du}{\cos(u)} = u = \arcsin(x) + C .$$

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Here is an example, where $\tan(u)$ is the right substitution. You have to be told that first. It is hard to come up with the idea:

- 4 Find the following integral:

$$\int \frac{dx}{x^2 \sqrt{1+x^2}}$$

by using the substitution $x = \tan(u)$. **Solution.** Then $1+x^2 = 1/\cos^2(u)$ and $dx = du/\cos^2(u)$. We get

$$\int \frac{du}{\cos^2(u) \tan^2(u) (1/\cos(u))} = \int \frac{\cos(u)}{\sin^2(u)} du = -1/\sin(u) = -1/\sin(\arctan(x)) .$$

Trig substitution is based on the trig identity :

$$\cos^2(u) + \sin^2(u) = 1$$

Depending on whether you divide this by $\sin^2(u)$ or $\cos^2(u)$ we get

$$1 + \tan^2(u) = 1/\cos^2(u), 1 + \cot^2(u) = 1/\sin^2(u)$$

These identities are worth remembering. Lets look at more examples:

- 5 Evaluate the following integral

$$\int x^2/\sqrt{1-x^2} dx .$$

Solution: Substitute $x = \cos(u)$, $dx = -\sin(u) du$ and get

$$\int -\frac{\cos^2(u)}{\sin(u)} \sin(u) du = - \int \cos^2(u) du = -\frac{u}{2} - \frac{\sin(2u)}{4} + C = -\frac{\arcsin(x)}{2} + \frac{\sin(2 \arcsin(x))}{4} + C .$$

- 6 Evaluate the integral

$$\int \frac{dx}{(1+x^2)^2} .$$

Solution: we make the substitution $x = \tan(u)$, $dx = du/(\cos^2(u))$. Since $1+x^2 = \sec^2(u)$ we have

$$\int \frac{dx}{(1+x^2)^2} = \int \cos^2(u) du = (u/2) + \frac{\sin(2u)}{4} + C = \frac{\arctan(u)}{2} + \frac{\sin(2 \arctan(u))}{4} + C .$$

Here comes an other prototype problem:

- 7 Find the anti derivative of $1/\sin(x)$. **Solution:** We use the substitution $u = \tan(x/2)$ which gives $x = 2 \arctan(u)$, $dx = 2du/(1+u^2)$. Because $1+u^2 = 1/\cos^2(x/2)$ we have

$$\frac{2u}{1+u^2} = 2 \tan(x/2) \cos^2(x/2) = 2 \sin(x/2) \cos(x/2) = \sin(x) .$$

Plug this into the integral

$$\int \frac{1}{\sin(x)} dx = \int \frac{1+u^2}{2u} \frac{2du}{1+u^2} = \int \frac{1}{u} du = \log(u) + C = \log(\tan(\frac{x}{2})) + C .$$

Unlike before, where x is a trig function of u , now u is a trig function of x . This example shows that the substitution $u = \tan(x/2)$ is magic. Because of the following identities

$$\begin{aligned}
 u &= \tan(x/2) \\
 dx &= \frac{2du}{1+u^2} \\
 \sin(x) &= \frac{2u}{1+u^2} \\
 \cos(x) &= \frac{1-u^2}{1+u^2}
 \end{aligned}$$

it allows us to reduce any rational function involving trig functions to rational functions.

Any function $p(x)/q(x)$ where p, q are trigonometric polynomials can be integrated using elementary functions.

It is usually a lot of work but here is an example:

8 To find the integral

$$\int \frac{\cos(x) + \tan(x)}{\sin(x) + \cot(x)} dx$$

for example, we replace $dx, \sin(x), \cos(x), \tan(x) = \sin(x)/\cos(x), \cot(x) = \cos(x)/\sin(x)$ with the above formulas we get a rational expression which involves u only. This gives us an integral $\int p(u)/q(u) du$ with polynomials p, q . In our case, this would simplify to

$$\int \frac{2u(u^4 + 2u^3 - 2u^2 + 2u + 1)}{(u-1)(u+1)(u^2+1)(u^4 - 4u^2 - 1)} du$$

The method of partial fractions provides us then with the solution.

Homework

1 Find the antiderivative:

$$\int \sqrt{1-4x^2} dx.$$

2 Find the antiderivative:

$$\int (1-x^2)^{3/2} dx.$$

3 Find the antiderivative:

$$\int \frac{\sqrt{1-x^2}}{x^2} dx.$$

4 Integrate

$$\int \frac{1}{1+\sin(x)}$$

using the substitution $x = \tan(u)$.

Hint. Look at the example in this handout.

5 Compute

$$\int \frac{dx}{\cos(x)}$$

using the substitution $u = \tan(x/2)$.

Hint. Look at the example in this handout text and use the identity $(1-u^2)/(1+u^2) = \cos(x)$.