How do we show if a graph soars off toward infinity as x approaches some number like 0? How would that look?

Calculus I
Class notes
Infinite Limits (section 2.4)

To infinity and beyond! Consider the function $y = \frac{1}{x^2}$. Graph it on the Standard Window and copy it here.

As we approach 0 from the left, what does the function (y-values) go toward?

As we approach 0 from the right, what does the function (y-values) go toward?

We are talking about $\lim\limits_{x\to 0^-} \frac{1}{x^2}$ and $\lim\limits_{x\to 0^+} \frac{1}{x^2}$.

Again, recall that we define $\lim\limits_{x\to 0} \frac{1}{x^2}$ from the values of $\lim\limits_{x\to 0^-} \frac{1}{x^2}$ and $\lim\limits_{x\to 0^+} \frac{1}{x^2}$. What would you say is the value of $\lim\limits_{x\to 0} \frac{1}{x^2}$?

Lovely. Just lovely. Now, we will certainly write this as being "equal to infinity". However, let's be clear. A limit is, strictly speaking, a number and so is *not* really equal to infinity. This limit *does not*, *in fact*, *exist* but we will write such limits as infinity or negative infinity.

Soon, we will also consider stuff like $\lim\limits_{x\to \infty} \frac{1}{x^2}$.
We'll need to keep those ideas separate.

Definition: Infinite Limits:
Suppose f is defined for all x near a. If $f(x)$ grows arbitrarily large for all x sufficiently close (but *not* equal) to a, we write $\lim\limits_{x\to a} f(x) = \infty$. We pronounce this as "the limit of f, as x approaches a, is infinity".

If $f(x)$ is negative and grows arbitrarily large in magnitude for all x sufficiently close (but *not* equal) to a, we write $\lim\limits_{x\to a} f(x) = -\infty$.
We pronounce this as "the limit of f, as x approaches a, is negative infinity".

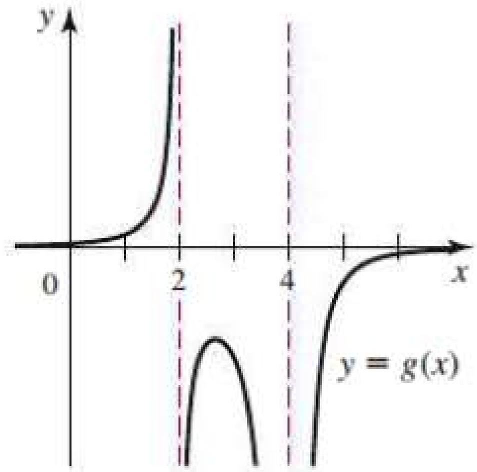
Recall that both $\lim\limits_{x\to a^-} f(x)$ and $\lim\limits_{x\to a^+} f(x)$ have to agree.

The Limit is Infinity but Does *Not* Exist?

Yes, technically the limit does *not* exist but this gives us a handy notation to denote a graph that soars up or down towards infinity or its negative. This limit is said to *not* exist. We will still write this limit as equal to infinity or its negative if $f(x)$ approaches it as we approach a from the right *and* the left.

If the right-sided limit does *not* match the left-sided limit, we will say the limit does *not* exist at all. We often use "d.n.e." as an abbreviation.

expl 1: Notice the vertical asymptotes in this function's graph. Find the following limits. Some are left-sided, some are right-sided, and some are neither. Say "dne" if the limit does *not* exist; use ∞ or -∞ when appropriate.



a.) $\lim_{x \to 2^-} g(x)$

b.) $\lim_{x \to 2^+} g(x)$

c.) $\lim_{x \to 2} g(x)$

d.) $\lim_{x \to 4^-} g(x)$

e.) $\lim_{x \to 4^+} g(x)$

f.) $\lim_{x \to 4} g(x)$

Recall: Definition: Vertical Asymptotes:

You will be familiar with these through rational functions. We define it here using our new concept of limit.

If $\lim_{x \to a} f(x) = \pm\infty$, $\lim_{x \to a^-} f(x) = \pm\infty$, or $\lim_{x \to a^+} f(x) = \pm\infty$, then the line $x = a$ is a vertical asymptote of $f(x)$.

expl 2: Draw a graph of a function such that $\lim_{x \to 3} f(x) = \infty$ and $\lim_{x \to 0^+} f(x) = \infty$ but $\lim_{x \to 0^-} f(x) = -\infty$.

Finding Limits Algebraically (Analytically):

expl 3: Find these limits without consulting a graph.

Direct substitution gets us 0 on bottom, no joy.

Without using a specific value, imagine a z-value that is slightly more than 3.

For each factor, would it be positive or negative?

Part *b*, do the same for a number that you imagine slightly less than 3…

a.) $\lim\limits_{z \to 3^+} \frac{(z-1)(z-2)}{(z-3)}$

b.) $\lim\limits_{z \to 3^-} \frac{(z-1)(z-2)}{(z-3)}$

c.) $\lim\limits_{z \to 3} \frac{(z-1)(z-2)}{(z-3)}$

Division and Infinity:

When we have a fraction whose top is *way bigger* than its bottom, the quotient is a big number. See this with a fraction like $5/0.03$. As the bottom gets smaller and smaller, the quotient gets bigger and bigger. Look at $5/0.003$, $5/0.0003$, $5/0.000\,03$, ...

If we let the bottom approach 0, the fraction will approach positive (or negative) infinity. You want to be on the lookout for fractions whose bottom approaches 0 while its top does *not*.

expl 4: Find these limits but you'll need your factoring skills.

a.) $\lim_{x \to 0} \frac{x-3}{x^4 - 9x^2}$

b.) $\lim_{x \to 3} \frac{x-3}{x^4 - 9x^2}$

c.) $\lim_{x \to -3} \frac{x-3}{x^4 - 9x^2}$

Part *c*, you'll need to find left and right-sided limits first.

Check by graphing the function $y = \frac{x-3}{x^4 - 9x^2}$.

Copy vertical asymptotes as dashed lines.
Label the hole at $x = 3$.

Trig Limits:

Once again, it helps to have a clear picture of the sine and cosine curves. Draw them now.

expl 5: Find $\lim_{\theta \to 0} \left(\frac{2 + \sin\theta}{1 - \cos^2\theta} \right)$.