Method of Partial Fractions ($f(x)/g(x)$ Proper)

1. Let $x - r$ be a linear factor of $g(x)$. Suppose that $(x - r)^m$ is the highest power of $x - r$ that divides $g(x)$. Then, to this factor, assign the sum of the m partial fractions:

$$\frac{A_1}{(x - r)} + \frac{A_2}{(x - r)^2} + \cdots + \frac{A_m}{(x - r)^m}.$$

   Do this for each distinct linear factor of $g(x)$.

2. Let $x^2 + px + q$ be an irreducible quadratic factor of $g(x)$ so that $x^2 + px + q$ has no real roots. Suppose that $(x^2 + px + q)^n$ is the highest power of this factor that divides $g(x)$. Then, to this factor, assign the sum of the n partial fractions:

$$\frac{B_1x + C_1}{(x^2 + px + q)} + \frac{B_2x + C_2}{(x^2 + px + q)^2} + \cdots + \frac{B_nx + C_n}{(x^2 + px + q)^n}.$$

   Do this for each distinct quadratic factor of $g(x)$.

3. Set the original fraction $f(x)/g(x)$ equal to the sum of all these partial fractions. Clear the resulting equation of fractions and arrange the terms in decreasing powers of x.

4. Equate the coefficients of corresponding powers of x and solve the resulting equations for the undetermined coefficients.

EXAMPLE 1 Use partial fractions to evaluate

$$\int \frac{x^2 + 4x + 1}{(x - 1)(x + 1)(x + 3)}\, dx.$$

Solution The partial fraction decomposition has the form

$$\frac{x^2 + 4x + 1}{(x - 1)(x + 1)(x + 3)} = \frac{A}{x - 1} + \frac{B}{x + 1} + \frac{C}{x + 3}.$$

To find the values of the undetermined coefficients A, B, and C, we clear fractions and get

$$\begin{aligned} x^2 + 4x + 1 &= A(x + 1)(x + 3) + B(x - 1)(x + 3) + C(x - 1)(x + 1) \\ &= A(x^2 + 4x + 3) + B(x^2 + 2x - 3) + C(x^2 - 1) \\ &= (A + B + C)x^2 + (4A + 2B)x + (3A - 3B - C). \end{aligned}$$

The polynomials on both sides of the above equation are identical, so we equate coefficients of like powers of x, obtaining

$$\begin{aligned} &\text{Coefficient of } x^2: & A + B + C &= 1 \\ &\text{Coefficient of } x^1: & 4A + 2B &= 4 \\ &\text{Coefficient of } x^0: & 3A - 3B - C &= 1 \end{aligned}$$

$$\begin{aligned} \int \frac{x^2 + 4x + 1}{(x - 1)(x + 1)(x + 3)}\, dx &= \int \left[\frac{3}{4}\frac{1}{x - 1} + \frac{1}{2}\frac{1}{x + 1} - \frac{1}{4}\frac{1}{x + 3}\right] dx \\ &= \frac{3}{4}\ln|x - 1| + \frac{1}{2}\ln|x + 1| - \frac{1}{4}\ln|x + 3| + K, \end{aligned}$$

EXAMPLE 2 Use partial fractions to evaluate

$$\int \frac{6x + 7}{(x + 2)^2}\, dx.$$

Solution First we express the integrand as a sum of partial fractions with undetermine coefficients.

$$\frac{6x+7}{(x+2)^2} = \frac{A}{x+2} + \frac{B}{(x+2)^2}$$

$$6x + 7 = A(x+2) + B \qquad \text{Multiply both sides by } (x+2)^2.$$

$$= Ax + (2A + B)$$

Equating coefficients of corresponding powers of x gives

$$A = 6 \quad \text{and} \quad 2A + B = 12 + B = 7, \quad \text{or} \quad A = 6 \quad \text{and} \quad B = -5.$$

Therefore,

$$\int \frac{6x+7}{(x+2)^2}\,dx = \int \left(\frac{6}{x+2} - \frac{5}{(x+2)^2}\right) dx$$

$$= 6\int \frac{dx}{x+2} - 5\int (x+2)^{-2}\,dx$$

$$= 6\ln|x+2| + 5(x+2)^{-1} + C.$$

EXAMPLE 3 Use partial fractions to evaluate

$$\int \frac{2x^3 - 4x^2 - x - 3}{x^2 - 2x - 3}\,dx.$$

Solution First we divide the denominator into the numerator to get a polynomial plus a proper fraction.

$$\begin{array}{r} 2x \\ x^2 - 2x - 3\,\overline{)\,2x^3 - 4x^2 - x - 3} \\ \underline{2x^3 - 4x^2 - 6x} \\ 5x - 3 \end{array}$$

Then we write the improper fraction as a polynomial plus a proper fraction.

$$\frac{2x^3 - 4x^2 - x - 3}{x^2 - 2x - 3} = 2x + \frac{5x - 3}{x^2 - 2x - 3}$$

We found the partial fraction decomposition of the fraction on the right in the opening example, so

$$\begin{aligned}\int \frac{2x^3 - 4x^2 - x - 3}{x^2 - 2x - 3}\,dx &= \int 2x\,dx + \int \frac{5x - 3}{x^2 - 2x - 3}\,dx \\ &= \int 2x\,dx + \int \frac{2}{x + 1}\,dx + \int \frac{3}{x - 3}\,dx \\ &= x^2 + 2\ln|x + 1| + 3\ln|x - 3| + C. \qquad \blacksquare\end{aligned}$$

EXAMPLE 4 Use partial fractions to evaluate

$$\int \frac{-2x + 4}{(x^2 + 1)(x - 1)^2}\,dx.$$

Solution The denominator has an irreducible quadratic factor as well as a repeated linear factor, so we write

$$\frac{-2x + 4}{(x^2 + 1)(x - 1)^2} = \frac{Ax + B}{x^2 + 1} + \frac{C}{x - 1} + \frac{D}{(x - 1)^2}. \tag{2}$$

Clearing the equation of fractions gives

$$\begin{aligned}-2x + 4 &= (Ax + B)(x - 1)^2 + C(x - 1)(x^2 + 1) + D(x^2 + 1) \\ &= (A + C)x^3 + (-2A + B - C + D)x^2 \\ &\quad + (A - 2B + C)x + (B - C + D).\end{aligned}$$

Equating coefficients of like terms gives

$$\begin{aligned}&\text{Coefficients of } x^3: & 0 &= A + C \\ &\text{Coefficients of } x^2: & 0 &= -2A + B - C + D \\ &\text{Coefficients of } x^1: & -2 &= A - 2B + C \\ &\text{Coefficients of } x^0: & 4 &= B - C + D\end{aligned}$$

We solve these equations simultaneously to find the values of A, B, C, and D:

$$-4 = -2A, \qquad A = 2 \qquad \text{Subtract fourth equation from second.}$$

$$C = -A = -2 \qquad \text{From the first equation}$$

$$B = (A + C + 2)/2 = 1 \qquad \text{From the third equation and } C = -A$$

$$D = 4 - B + C = 1. \qquad \text{From the fourth equation}$$

We substitute these values into Equation (2), obtaining

$$\frac{-2x + 4}{(x^2 + 1)(x - 1)^2} = \frac{2x + 1}{x^2 + 1} - \frac{2}{x - 1} + \frac{1}{(x - 1)^2}.$$

Finally, using the expansion above we can integrate:

$$\begin{aligned}
\int \frac{-2x + 4}{(x^2 + 1)(x - 1)^2}\, dx &= \int \left(\frac{2x + 1}{x^2 + 1} - \frac{2}{x - 1} + \frac{1}{(x - 1)^2}\right) dx \\
&= \int \left(\frac{2x}{x^2 + 1} + \frac{1}{x^2 + 1} - \frac{2}{x - 1} + \frac{1}{(x - 1)^2}\right) dx \\
&= \ln(x^2 + 1) + \tan^{-1} x - 2\ln|x - 1| - \frac{1}{x - 1} + C.
\end{aligned}$$

EXAMPLE 5 Use partial fractions to evaluate

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

Solution The form of the partial fraction decomposition is

$$\frac{1}{x(x^2 + 1)^2} = \frac{A}{x} + \frac{Bx + C}{x^2 + 1} + \frac{Dx + E}{(x^2 + 1)^2}$$

Multiplying by $x(x^2 + 1)^2$, we have

$$\begin{aligned}
1 &= A(x^2 + 1)^2 + (Bx + C)x(x^2 + 1) + (Dx + E)x \\
&= A(x^4 + 2x^2 + 1) + B(x^4 + x^2) + C(x^3 + x) + Dx^2 + Ex \\
&= (A + B)x^4 + Cx^3 + (2A + B + D)x^2 + (C + E)x + A
\end{aligned}$$

If we equate coefficients, we get the system

$$A + B = 0, \qquad C = 0, \qquad 2A + B + D = 0, \qquad C + E = 0, \qquad A = 1.$$

Solving this system gives $A = 1, B = -1, C = 0, D = -1$, and $E = 0$. Thus,

$$\int \frac{dx}{x(x^2 + 1)^2} = \int \left[\frac{1}{x} + \frac{-x}{x^2 + 1} + \frac{-x}{(x^2 + 1)^2}\right] dx$$

$$= \int \frac{dx}{x} - \int \frac{x\,dx}{x^2 + 1} - \int \frac{x\,dx}{(x^2 + 1)^2}$$

$$= \int \frac{dx}{x} - \frac{1}{2}\int \frac{du}{u} - \frac{1}{2}\int \frac{du}{u^2} \qquad u = x^2 + 1, \quad du = 2x\,dx$$

$$= \ln|x| - \frac{1}{2}\ln|u| + \frac{1}{2u} + K$$

$$= \ln|x| - \frac{1}{2}\ln(x^2 + 1) + \frac{1}{2(x^2 + 1)} + K$$

$$= \ln\frac{|x|}{\sqrt{x^2 + 1}} + \frac{1}{2(x^2 + 1)} + K. \qquad \blacksquare$$

The Heaviside "Cover-up" Method for Linear Factors

When the degree of the polynomial $f(x)$ is less than the degree of $g(x)$ and

$$g(x) = (x - r_1)(x - r_2)\cdots(x - r_n)$$

there is a quick way to expand f*(x)/ g(x)* by partial fractions.

EXAMPLE 6 Find A, B, and C in the partial fraction expansion

$$\frac{x^2+1}{(x-1)(x-2)(x-3)} = \frac{A}{x-1} + \frac{B}{x-2} + \frac{C}{x-3}. \tag{3}$$

Solution If we multiply both sides of Equation (3) by $(x-1)$ to get

$$\frac{x^2+1}{(x-2)(x-3)} = A + \frac{B(x-1)}{x-2} + \frac{C(x-1)}{x-3}$$

and set $x = 1$, the resulting equation gives the value of A:

$$\frac{(1)^2+1}{(1-2)(1-3)} = A + 0 + 0,$$

$$A = 1.$$

Thus, the value of A is the number we would have obtained if we had covered the factor $(x-1)$ in the denominator of the original fraction

$$\frac{x^2+1}{(x-1)(x-2)(x-3)} \tag{4}$$

and evaluated the rest at $x = 1$:

$$A = \frac{(1)^2+1}{\boxed{(x-1)}\,(1-2)(1-3)} = \frac{2}{(-1)(-2)} = 1.$$

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Similarly, we find the value of B in Equation (3) by covering the factor $(x - 2)$ in Expression (4) and evaluating the rest at $x = 2$:

$$B = \frac{(2)^2 + 1}{(2-1)\boxed{(x-2)}(2-3)} = \frac{5}{(1)(-1)} = -5.$$

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Finally, C is found by covering the $(x - 3)$ in Expression (4) and evaluating the rest at $x = 3$:

$$C = \frac{(3)^2 + 1}{(3-1)(3-2)\boxed{(x-3)}} = \frac{10}{(2)(1)} = 5.$$

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EXAMPLE 7 Use the Heaviside Method to evaluate

$$\int \frac{x+4}{x^3 + 3x^2 - 10x}\,dx.$$

Solution The degree of $f(x) = x + 4$ is less than the degree of the cubic polynomial $g(x) = x^3 + 3x^2 - 10x$, and, with $g(x)$ factored,

$$\frac{x+4}{x^3 + 3x^2 - 10x} = \frac{x+4}{x(x-2)(x+5)}.$$

The roots of $g(x)$ are $r_1 = 0$, $r_2 = 2$, and $r_3 = -5$. We find

$$A_1 = \frac{0+4}{\boxed{x}(0-2)(0+5)} = \frac{4}{(-2)(5)} = -\frac{2}{5}$$

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$$A_2 = \frac{2+4}{2\boxed{(x-2)}(2+5)} = \frac{6}{(2)(7)} = \frac{3}{7}$$

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$$A_3 = \frac{-5+4}{(-5)(-5-2)\boxed{(x+5)}} = \frac{-1}{(-5)(-7)} = -\frac{1}{35}.$$

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Therefore,

$$\frac{x+4}{x(x-2)(x+5)} = -\frac{2}{5x} + \frac{3}{7(x-2)} - \frac{1}{35(x+5)},$$

and

$$\int \frac{x+4}{x(x-2)(x+5)}\,dx = -\frac{2}{5}\ln|x| + \frac{3}{7}\ln|x-2| - \frac{1}{35}\ln|x+5| + C.$$

Other Ways to Determine the Coefficients

EXAMPLE 8 Find A, B, and C in the equation

$$\frac{x-1}{(x+1)^3} = \frac{A}{x+1} + \frac{B}{(x+1)^2} + \frac{C}{(x+1)^3}$$

by clearing fractions, differentiating the result, and substituting $x = -1$.

Solution We first clear fractions:

$$x - 1 = A(x+1)^2 + B(x+1) + C.$$

Substituting $x = -1$ shows $C = -2$. We then differentiate both sides with respect to x, obtaining

$$1 = 2A(x+1) + B.$$

Substituting $x = -1$ shows $B = 1$. We differentiate again to get $0 = 2A$, which shows $A = 0$. Hence,

$$\frac{x-1}{(x+1)^3} = \frac{1}{(x+1)^2} - \frac{2}{(x+1)^3}.$$

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EXAMPLE 9 Find A, B, and C in the expression

$$\frac{x^2+1}{(x-1)(x-2)(x-3)} = \frac{A}{x-1} + \frac{B}{x-2} + \frac{C}{x-3}$$

Solution Clear fractions to get

$$x^2 + 1 = A(x - 2)(x - 3) + B(x - 1)(x - 3) + C(x - 1)(x - 2).$$

Then let $x = 1, 2, 3$ successively to find A, B, and C:

$$\begin{aligned}
x = 1: \qquad (1)^2 + 1 &= A(-1)(-2) + B(0) + C(0) \\
2 &= 2A \\
A &= 1 \\
x = 2: \qquad (2)^2 + 1 &= A(0) + B(1)(-1) + C(0) \\
5 &= -B \\
B &= -5 \\
x = 3: \qquad (3)^2 + 1 &= A(0) + B(0) + C(2)(1) \\
10 &= 2C \\
C &= 5.
\end{aligned}$$

$$\frac{x^2 + 1}{(x - 1)(x - 2)(x - 3)} = \frac{1}{x - 1} - \frac{5}{x - 2} + \frac{5}{x - 3}.$$