FINITE DIFFERENCES

Assume that we have a table of values (x_i, y_i), $i = 0, 1, 2, \ldots, n$ of any function $y = f(x)$, the values of x being equally spaced, i.e. $x_i = x_0 + ih$, $i = 0, 1, 2, \ldots, n$. Suppose that we are required to recover the values of $f(x)$ for some intermediate values of x, or to obtain the derivative of $f(x)$ for some x in the range $x_0 \le x \le x_n$. The methods for the solution to these problems are based on the concept of the 'differences' of a function which we now proceed to define.

1 Forward Differences

If $y_0, y_1, y_2, \ldots, y_n$ denote a set of values of y, then $y_1 - y_0, y_2 - y_1, \ldots, y_n - y_{n-1}$ are called the *differences* of y. Denoting these differences by $\Delta y_0, \Delta y_1, \ldots, \Delta y_{n-1}$ respectively, we have

$$\Delta y_0 = y_1 - y_0, \qquad \Delta y_1 = y_2 - y_1, \ldots, \qquad \Delta y_{n-1} = y_n - y_{n-1},$$

where Δ is called the *forward difference operator* and $\Delta y_0, \Delta y_1, \ldots,$ are called *first forward differences*. The differences of the first forward differences are called *second forward differences* and are denoted by $\Delta^2 y_0, \Delta^2 y_1, \ldots$. Similarly, one can define *third forward differences*, *fourth forward differences*, etc.

$$\begin{aligned}
\Delta^2 y_0 &= \Delta y_1 - \Delta y_0 = y_2 - y_1 - (y_1 - y_0) \\
&= y_2 - 2y_1 + y_0, \\
\Delta^3 y_0 &= \Delta^2 y_1 - \Delta^2 y_0 = y_3 - 2y_2 + y_1 - (y_2 - 2y_1 + y_0) \\
&= y_3 - 3y_2 + 3y_1 - y_0 \\
\Delta^4 y_0 &= \Delta^3 y_1 - \Delta^3 y_0 = y_4 - 3y_3 + 3y_2 - y_1 - (y_3 - 3y_2 + 3y_1 - y_0) \\
&= y_4 - 4y_3 + 6y_2 - 4y_1 + y_0.
\end{aligned}$$

Email: firas.thair.almaliky@uomus.edu.iq

Table 1 shows how the forward differences of all orders can be formed:

x	y	Δ	Δ^2	Δ^3	Δ^4	Δ^5	Δ^6
x_0	y_0						
		Δy_0					
x_1	y_1		$\Delta^2 y_0$				
		Δy_1		$\Delta^3 y_0$			
x_2	y_2		$\Delta^2 y_1$		$\Delta^4 y_0$		
		Δy_2		$\Delta^3 y_1$		$\Delta^5 y_0$	
x_3	y_3		$\Delta^2 y_2$		$\Delta^4 y_1$		$\Delta^6 y_0$
		Δy_3		$\Delta^3 y_2$		$\Delta^5 y_1$	
x_4	y_4		$\Delta^2 y_3$		$\Delta^4 y_2$		
		Δy_4		$\Delta^3 y_3$			
x_5	y_5		$\Delta^2 y_4$				
		Δy_5					
x_6	y_6						

2 Backward Differences

The differences $y_1 - y_0, y_2 - y_1, \ldots, y_n - y_{n-1}$ are called *first backward differences* if they are denoted by $\nabla y_1, \nabla y_2, \ldots, \nabla y_n$ respectively, so that $\nabla y_1 = y_1 - y_0,\ \nabla y_2 = y_2 - y_1, \ldots, \nabla y_n = y_n - y_{n-1}$, where ∇ is called the *backward difference operator*. In a similar way, one can define backward differences of higher orders. Thus we obtain

$$\nabla^2 y_2 = \nabla y_2 - \nabla y_1 = y_2 - y_1 - (y_1 - y_0) = y_2 - 2y_1 + y_0,$$

$$\nabla^3 y_3 = \nabla^2 y_3 - \nabla^2 y_2 = y_3 - 3y_2 + 3y_1 - y_0, \text{ etc.}$$

With the same values of x and y as in Table 1, a backward difference table can be formed:

Email: firas.thair.almaliky@uomus.edu.iq

Table 2 Backward Difference Table

x	y	∇	∇^2	∇^3	∇^4	∇^5	∇^6
x_0	y_0						
x_1	y_1	∇y_1					
x_2	y_2	∇y_2	$\nabla^2 y_2$				
x_3	y_3	∇y_3	$\nabla^2 y_3$	$\nabla^3 y_3$			
x_4	y_4	∇y_4	$\nabla^2 y_4$	$\nabla^3 y_4$	$\nabla^4 y_4$		
x_5	y_5	∇y_5	$\nabla^2 y_5$	$\nabla^3 y_5$	$\nabla^4 y_5$	$\nabla^5 y_5$	
x_6	y_6	∇y_6	$\nabla^2 y_6$	$\nabla^3 y_6$	$\nabla^4 y_6$	$\nabla^5 y_6$	$\nabla^6 y_6$

NUMERICAL DIFFERENTIATION

The general method for deriving the numerical differentiation formulae is to differentiate the interpolating polynomial. Hence, corresponding to each of the formulae derived , we may derive a formula for the derivative. We illustrate the derivation with Newton's forward difference formula only, the method of derivation being the same with regard to the other formulae.

This formula can be used for computing the value of dy/dx for *non-tabular values* of x. For tabular values of x, the formula takes a simpler form, for by setting $x = x_0$ we obtain

$$\left[\frac{dy}{dx}\right]_{x=x_0} = \frac{1}{h}\left(\Delta y_0 - \frac{1}{2}\Delta^2 y_0 + \frac{1}{3}\Delta^3 y_0 - \frac{1}{4}\Delta^4 y_0 + \cdots\right).$$

Email: firas.thair.almaliky@uomus.edu.iq

Consider Newton's forward difference formula:

$$y = y_0 + u\Delta y_0 + \frac{u(u-1)}{2!}\Delta^2 y_0 + \frac{u(u-1)(u-2)}{3!}\Delta^3 y_0 + \cdots, \qquad (1)$$

where

$$x = x_0 + uh. \qquad (2)$$

Then

$$\frac{dy}{dx} = \frac{dy}{du}\frac{du}{dx} = \frac{1}{h}\left(\Delta y_0 + \frac{2u-1}{2}\Delta^2 y_0 + \frac{3u^2-6u+2}{6}\Delta^3 y_0 + \cdots\right). \qquad (3)$$

This formula can be used for computing the value of dy/dx for *non-tabular values* of x. For tabular values of x, the formula takes a simpler form, for by setting $x = x_0$ we obtain $u = 0$ from (.2), and hence (3) gives

$$\left[\frac{dy}{dx}\right]_{x=x_0} = \frac{1}{h}\left(\Delta y_0 - \frac{1}{2}\Delta^2 y_0 + \frac{1}{3}\Delta^3 y_0 - \frac{1}{4}\Delta^4 y_0 + \cdots\right). \qquad (4)$$

Differentiating (3) once again, we obtain

$$\frac{d^2y}{dx^2} = \frac{1}{h^2}\left(\Delta^2 y_0 + \frac{6u-6}{6}\Delta^3 y_0 + \frac{12u^2-36u+22}{24}\Delta^4 y_0 + \cdots\right), \qquad (.5)$$

from which we obtain

$$\left[\frac{d^2y}{dx^2}\right]_{x=x_0} = \frac{1}{h^2}\left(\Delta^2 y_0 - \Delta^3 y_0 + \frac{11}{12}\Delta^4 y_0 + \cdots\right). \qquad (.6)$$

Formulae for computing higher derivatives may be obtained by successive differentiation. In a similar way, different formulae can be derived by starting with other interpolation formuale. Thus, Newton's backward difference formula gives

$$\left[\frac{dy}{dx}\right]_{x=x_n} = \frac{1}{h}\left(\nabla y_n + \frac{1}{2}\nabla^2 y_n + \frac{1}{3}\nabla^3 y_n + \cdots\right) \quad (7)$$

and

$$\left[\frac{d^2y}{dx^2}\right]_{x=x_n} = \frac{1}{h^2}\left(\nabla^2 y_n + \nabla^3 y_n + \frac{11}{12}\nabla^4 y_n + \frac{5}{6}\nabla^5 y_n + \cdots\right). \quad (8)$$

Example 1 From the following table of values of x and y, obtain dy/dx and d^2y/dx^2 for $x = 1.2$:

x	y	x	y
1.0	2.7183	1.8	6.0496
1.2	3.3201	2.0	7.3891
1.4	4.0552	2.2	9.0250
1.6	4.9530		

The difference table is

x	y	Δ	Δ^2	Δ^3	Δ^4	Δ^5	Δ^6
1.0	2.7183						
		0.6018					
1.2	3.3201		0.1333				
		0.7351		0.0294			
1.4	4.0552		0.1627		0.0067		
		0.8978		0.0361		0.0013	
1.6	4.9530		0.1988		0.0080		0.0001
		1.0966		0.0441		0.0014	
1.8	6.0496		0.2429		0.0094		
		1.3395		0.0535			
2.0	7.3891		0.2964				
		1.6359					
2.2	9.0250						

Here $x_0 = 1.2$, $y_0 = 3.3201$ and $h = 0.2$.

$$\left[\frac{dy}{dx}\right]_{x=1.2} = \frac{1}{0.2}\left[0.7351 - \frac{1}{2}(0.1627) + \frac{1}{3}(0.0361) - \frac{1}{4}(0.0080) + \frac{1}{5}(0.0014)\right]$$

$$= 3.3205.$$

Similarly, formula

$$\left[\frac{d^2y}{dx^2}\right]_{x=1.2} = \frac{1}{0.04}\left[0.1627 - 0.0361 + \frac{11}{12}(0.0080) - \frac{5}{6}(0.0014)\right] = 3.318.$$

Example 2 Calculate the first and second derivatives of the function tabulated in the preceding example at the point $x = 2.2$ and also dy/dx at $x = 2.0$.

We use the table of differences of Example 1. Here $x_n = 2.2$, $y_n = 9.0250$ and $h = 0.2$. Hence formula

$$\left[\frac{dy}{dx}\right]_{x=2.2} = \frac{1}{0.2}\left[1.6359 + \frac{1}{2}(0.2964) + \frac{1}{3}(0.0535) + \frac{1}{4}(0.0094) + \frac{1}{5}(0.0014)\right]$$

$$= 9.0228.$$

$$\left[\frac{d^2y}{dx^2}\right]_{x=2.2} = \frac{1}{0.04}\left[0.2964 + 0.0535 + \frac{11}{12}(0.0094) + \frac{5}{6}(0.0014)\right] = 8.992.$$

To find dy/dx at $x = 2.0$, we can use either (5.15) or (5.16). Formula (5.15) gives

$$\left[\frac{dy}{dx}\right]_{x=2.0} = \frac{1}{0.2}\left[1.3395 + \frac{1}{2}(0.2429) + \frac{1}{3}(0.0441) + \frac{1}{4}(0.0080) + \frac{1}{5}(0.0013) + \frac{1}{6}(0.0001)\right]$$

$$= 7.3896.$$

$$\left[\frac{d^2y}{dx^2}\right]_{x=2.2} = \frac{1}{0.04}\left[0.2964 + 0.0535 + \frac{11}{12}(0.0094) + \frac{5}{6}(0.0014)\right] = 8.992.$$

To find dy/dx at $x = 2.0$, we can use

$$\left[\frac{dy}{dx}\right]_{x=2.0} = \frac{1}{0.2}\left[1.3395 + \frac{1}{2}(0.2429) + \frac{1}{3}(0.0441) + \frac{1}{4}(0.0080) + \frac{1}{5}(0.0013) + \frac{1}{6}(0.0001)\right]$$

$$= 7.3896.$$

Exercises

1- The following table of values of x and y is given:

x	y	x	y
0	6.9897	4	8.4510
1	7.4036	5	8.7506
2	7.7815	6	9.0309
3	8.1291		

2- Find dy/dx when (i) $x = 1$, (ii) $x = 3$, and (iii) $x = 6$. Also find d^2y/dx^2 when $x = 3$.

A function $y = f(x)$ is defined as follows:

x	$y = f(x)$	x	$y = f(x)$
1.0	1.0	1.20	1.095
1.05	1.025	1.25	1.118
1.10	1.049	1.30	1.140
1.15	1.072		

Compute the values of dy/dx and d^2y/dx^2 at $x = 1.05$.

Email: firas.thair.almaliky@uomus.edu.iq