



## Plane Analytical Geometry Parabola, Ellipse, and Hyperbola

Parabola, ellipse, and hyperbola are called *conic sections* or *conics* because they are formed by cutting a double cone with a plane (Figure 1).

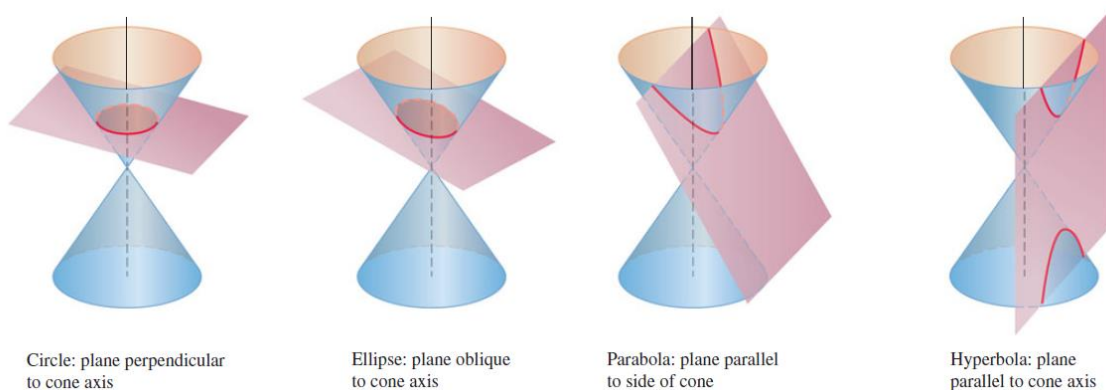


Figure 1

### 1. Parabola

A set that consists of all the points in a plane equidistant from a given fixed point and a given fixed line in the plane is a **parabola**. The fixed point is the **focus** of the parabola. The fixed line is the **directrix**. It is illustrated in Figure 2. The point halfway between the focus and the directrix lies on the parabola is called the vertex.

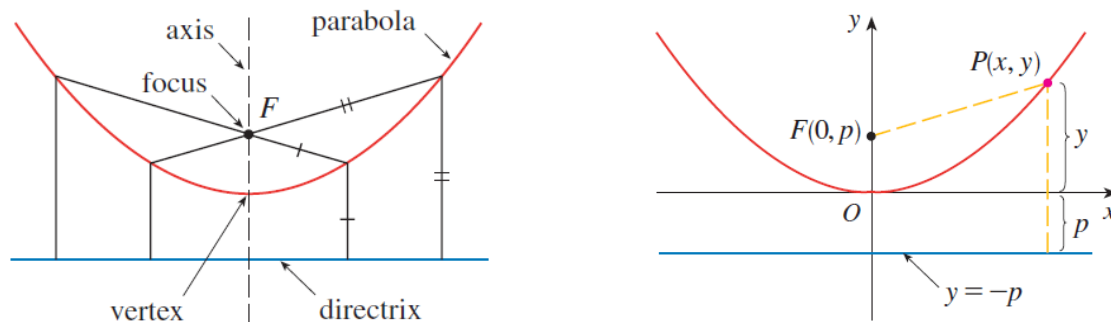


Figure 2



The Equation of parabola based on the focus location are shown in Figure 3.

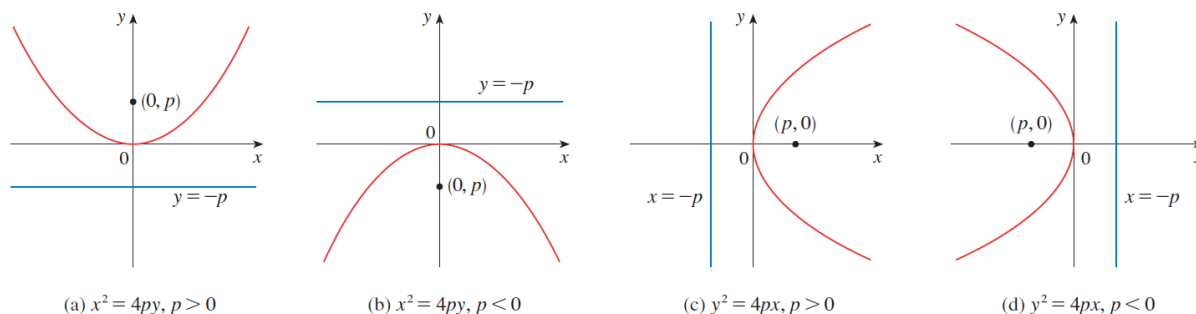


Figure 4

**EXAMPLE** Find the focus and directrix of the parabola  $y^2 = 10x$ .

**Solution** We find the value of  $p$  in the standard equation  $y^2 = 4px$ :

$$4p = 10, \quad \text{so} \quad p = \frac{10}{4} = \frac{5}{2}.$$

Then we find the focus and directrix for this value of  $p$ :

$$\text{Focus:} \quad (p, 0) = \left(\frac{5}{2}, 0\right)$$

$$\text{Directrix:} \quad x = -p \quad \text{or} \quad x = -\frac{5}{2}.$$

**EXAMPLE** Find the focus and directrix of the parabola  $y^2 + 10x = 0$  and sketch the graph.

**SOLUTION** If we write the equation as  $y^2 = -10x$

see that  $4p = -10$ , so  $p = -\frac{5}{2}$ . Thus the focus is  $(p, 0) = \left(-\frac{5}{2}, 0\right)$  and the directrix is  $x = \frac{5}{2}$ . The sketch is shown in Figure 5.

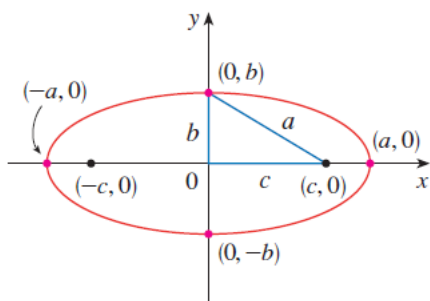


## 2. Ellipse

An **ellipse** is the set of points in a plane whose distances from two fixed points in the plane have a constant sum. The two fixed points are the foci of the ellipse.

The line through the foci of an ellipse is the **ellipse's focal axis**. The point on the axis halfway between the foci is **the center**. The points where the focal axis and ellipse cross are the ellipse's vertices (Figure 4).

If the foci lie on the x-axis, then:

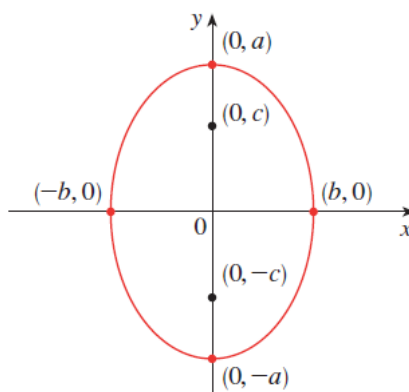


The ellipse

$$\frac{x^2}{a^2} + \frac{y^2}{b^2} = 1 \quad a \geq b > 0$$

has foci  $(\pm c, 0)$ , where  $c^2 = a^2 - b^2$ , and vertices  $(\pm a, 0)$ .

If the foci lie on the y-axis, then:



The ellipse

$$\frac{x^2}{b^2} + \frac{y^2}{a^2} = 1 \quad a \geq b > 0$$

has foci  $(0, \pm c)$ , where  $c^2 = a^2 - b^2$ , and vertices  $(0, \pm a)$ .

**Note:** If  $a = b$ , the ellipse is a circle.



**EXAMPLE:** Find an equation of the ellipse with foci  $(0, \pm 2)$  and vertices  $(0, \pm 3)$ .

**SOLUTION** Using the notation of (5), we have  $c = 2$  and  $a = 3$ . Then we obtain  $b^2 = a^2 - c^2 = 9 - 4 = 5$ , so an equation of the ellipse is

$$\frac{x^2}{5} + \frac{y^2}{9} = 1$$

**EXAMPLE:** Find the foci, vertices, and the center of the ellipse that has the following equation:

$$\frac{x^2}{16} + \frac{y^2}{9} = 1$$

**Solution:**  $a = \sqrt{16} = 4$        $b = \sqrt{9} = 3$

Center-to-focus distance:  $c = \sqrt{16 - 9} = \sqrt{7}$

Foci:  $(\pm c, 0) = (\pm \sqrt{7}, 0)$

Vertices:  $(\pm a, 0) = (\pm 4, 0)$

Center:  $(0, 0)$ .

### 3. Hyperbola

A hyperbola is the set of points in a plane whose distances from two fixed points in the plane have a constant difference. The two fixed points are the foci of the hyperbola.

The line through the foci of a hyperbola is the focal axis. The point on the axis halfway between the foci is the hyperbola's center. The points where the focal axis and hyperbola cross are the vertices (Figure 5).

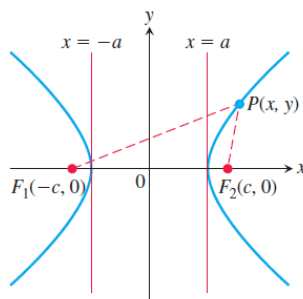
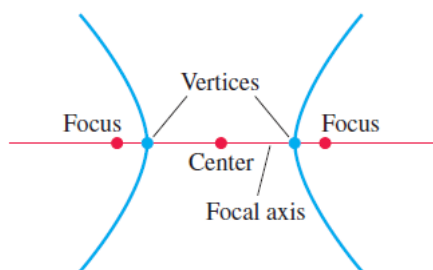
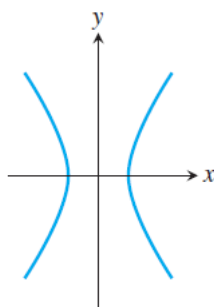


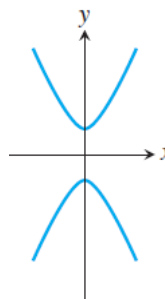
Figure 5



If the foci lie on the x-axis,



If the foci lie on the y-axis,



Foci on the x-axis:  $\frac{x^2}{a^2} - \frac{y^2}{b^2} = 1$

Center-to-focus distance:  $c = \sqrt{a^2 + b^2}$

Foci:  $(\pm c, 0)$

Vertices:  $(\pm a, 0)$

Asymptotes:  $\frac{x^2}{a^2} - \frac{y^2}{b^2} = 0$  or  $y = \pm \frac{b}{a}x$

Foci on the y-axis:  $\frac{y^2}{a^2} - \frac{x^2}{b^2} = 1$

Center-to-focus distance:  $c = \sqrt{a^2 + b^2}$

Foci:  $(0, \pm c)$

Vertices:  $(0, \pm a)$

Asymptotes:  $\frac{y^2}{a^2} - \frac{x^2}{b^2} = 0$  or  $y = \pm \frac{a}{b}x$

Notice the difference in the asymptote equations ( $b/a$  in the first,  $a/b$  in the second).

### EXAMPLE:

$a^2 = 4$  and  $b^2 = 5$

Center-to-focus distance:  $c = \sqrt{a^2 + b^2} = \sqrt{4 + 5} = 3$

Foci:  $(\pm c, 0) = (\pm 3, 0)$ , Vertices:  $(\pm a, 0) = (\pm 2, 0)$

Center:  $(0, 0)$

Asymptotes:  $\frac{x^2}{4} - \frac{y^2}{5} = 0$  or  $y = \pm \frac{\sqrt{5}}{2}x$ .