



Computational Science:  
Computational Methods in Engineering

# Introduction to One-Dimensional Finite-Difference Method



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## Outline

- Introduction & Problem Setup
- Conventional Finite-Difference Method
- Improved Finite-Difference Method



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# Introduction & Problem Setup

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## The Finite-Difference Method

The finite-difference method is a way of obtaining a numerical solution to differential equations. It does not give a symbolic solution.

### Governing Equation

$$\frac{d^2 y}{dx^2} - \frac{dy}{dx} + y = 0 \quad 0 \leq x \leq 10$$

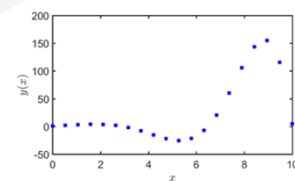
$$y(0) = 1, y(10) = 5$$

### Matrix Equation

$$[A][y] = [b]$$

### Numerical Solution

$$[y] = [A]^{-1}[b]$$

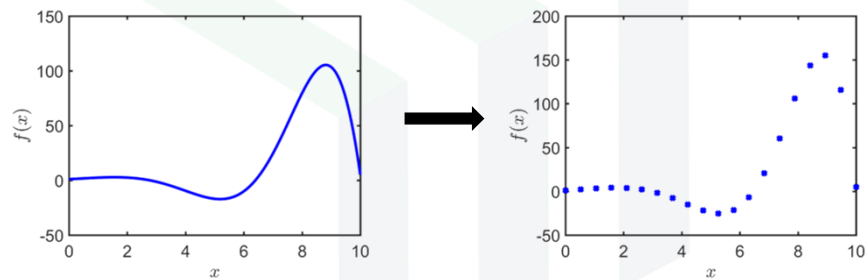


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## Functions are Discrete

To obtain a numerical solution using the finite-difference method, functions are stored as arrays of discrete points.

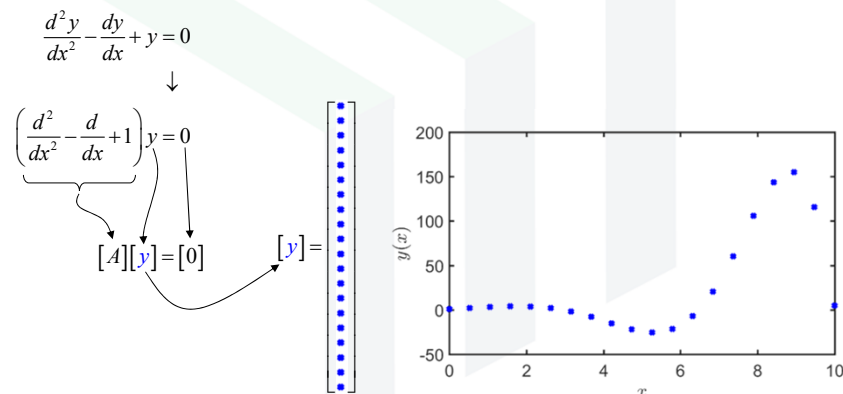


The function can be resolved more accurately using more points, but the solution will be more computationally intensive to obtain. This is a fundamental tradeoff.

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## Discrete Functions are Stored as Column Vectors

Discrete functions are stored as a 1D array of numbers in a column vector.



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# Conventional Finite-Difference Method

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## Step 1 – Identify Governing Equation & Boundary Values

Governing Equation

$$\frac{d^2 y}{dx^2} - \frac{dy}{dx} + y = 0 \quad 0 \leq x \leq 10$$

Boundary Values

$$y(0) = 1$$

$$y(10) = 5$$

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## Step 2 – Approximate Derivatives with Finite-Differences (1 of 3)

First, let the function be discrete.

This allows the derivatives to be approximated with finite-differences.

$$\frac{d^2 y}{dx^2} - \frac{dy}{dx} + y = 0$$

$$\frac{y(x + \Delta x) - 2y(x) + y(x - \Delta x)}{\Delta x^2} - \frac{y(x) - y(x - \Delta x)}{\Delta x} + y(x) = 0$$

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## Step 2 – Approximate Derivatives with Finite-Differences (2 of 3)

It is critical to ensure that each term in the finite-difference equation exists at the same point.

$$\frac{y(x + \Delta x) - 2y(x) + y(x - \Delta x)}{\Delta x^2} - \frac{y(x) - y(x - \Delta x)}{\Delta x} + y(x) = 0$$

Exists at  $x$ 
Exists at  $x - \Delta x/2$

This is not a healthy or stable formulation because not all of the terms exist at the same point.

Exists at  $x$

Exists at  $x$

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## Step 2 – Approximate Derivatives with Finite-Differences (3 of 3)

This is the correct finite-difference equation.

$$\frac{d^2 y}{dx^2} - \frac{dy}{dx} + y = 0$$

$$\downarrow$$

$$\frac{y(x + \Delta x) - 2y(x) + y(x - \Delta x)}{\Delta x^2} - \frac{y(x + \Delta x) - y(x - \Delta x)}{2\Delta x} + y(x) = 0$$

All terms exist at  $x$ .

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## Step 3 – Write Finite-Difference Equation Using Array Indices

$$\frac{d^2 y}{dx^2} - \frac{dy}{dx} + y = 0$$

$$\downarrow$$

$$\frac{y(x + \Delta x) - 2y(x) + y(x - \Delta x)}{\Delta x^2} - \frac{y(x + \Delta x) - y(x - \Delta x)}{2\Delta x} + y(x) = 0$$

$$\downarrow$$

$$\frac{y_{i+1} - 2y_i + y_{i-1}}{\Delta x^2} - \frac{y_{i+1} - y_{i-1}}{2\Delta x} + y_i = 0$$

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## Step 4 – Rearrange Finite-Difference Equation

The finite-difference equation is rearranged so as to collect the  $y$  terms.

$$\begin{aligned} \frac{y_{i+1} - 2y_i + y_{i-1}}{\Delta x^2} - \frac{y_{i+1} - y_{i-1}}{2\Delta x} + y_i &= 0 \\ \downarrow \\ \frac{1}{\Delta x^2} y_{i+1} - \frac{2}{\Delta x^2} y_i + \frac{1}{\Delta x^2} y_{i-1} - \frac{1}{2\Delta x} y_{i+1} + \frac{1}{2\Delta x} y_{i-1} + y_i &= 0 \\ \downarrow \\ \left( \frac{1}{\Delta x^2} + \frac{1}{2\Delta x} \right) y_{i-1} + \left( 1 - \frac{2}{\Delta x^2} \right) y_i + \left( \frac{1}{\Delta x^2} - \frac{1}{2\Delta x} \right) y_{i+1} &= 0 \end{aligned}$$

## Step 5 – Setup Grid

Solve this problem using 21 points.



The grid spacing  $\Delta x$  is then

$$\Delta x = \frac{x_b - x_a}{N - 1} = \frac{10 - 0}{21 - 1} = 0.5$$

## Step 6 – Revise Finite-Difference Equation

Substituting  $\Delta x = 0.5$  into the finite-difference equation gives

$$\left(\frac{1}{\Delta x^2} + \frac{1}{2\Delta x}\right)y_{i-1} + \left(1 - \frac{2}{\Delta x^2}\right)y_i + \left(\frac{1}{\Delta x^2} - \frac{1}{2\Delta x}\right)y_{i+1} = 0$$

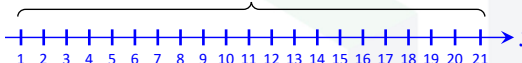
$$\downarrow$$

$$\left(\frac{1}{0.5^2} + \frac{1}{2 \cdot 0.5}\right)y_{i-1} + \left(1 - \frac{2}{0.5^2}\right)y_i + \left(\frac{1}{0.5^2} - \frac{1}{2 \cdot 0.5}\right)y_{i+1} = 0$$

$$\downarrow$$

$$5y_{i-1} - 7y_i + 3y_{i+1} = 0$$

## Step 7 – Write Finite-Difference Equation at Each Point on Grid

$$5y_{i-1} - 7y_i + 3y_{i+1} = 0$$


$$\begin{aligned} 5y_0 - 7y_1 + 3y_2 &= 0 \\ 5y_1 - 7y_2 + 3y_3 &= 0 \\ 5y_2 - 7y_3 + 3y_4 &= 0 \\ 5y_3 - 7y_4 + 3y_5 &= 0 \\ 5y_4 - 7y_5 + 3y_6 &= 0 \\ 5y_5 - 7y_6 + 3y_7 &= 0 \\ 5y_6 - 7y_7 + 3y_8 &= 0 \\ 5y_7 - 7y_8 + 3y_9 &= 0 \\ 5y_8 - 7y_9 + 3y_{10} &= 0 \\ 5y_9 - 7y_{10} + 3y_{11} &= 0 \\ 5y_{10} - 7y_{11} + 3y_{12} &= 0 \\ 5y_{11} - 7y_{12} + 3y_{13} &= 0 \\ 5y_{12} - 7y_{13} + 3y_{14} &= 0 \\ 5y_{13} - 7y_{14} + 3y_{15} &= 0 \\ 5y_{14} - 7y_{15} + 3y_{16} &= 0 \\ 5y_{15} - 7y_{16} + 3y_{17} &= 0 \\ 5y_{16} - 7y_{17} + 3y_{18} &= 0 \\ 5y_{17} - 7y_{18} + 3y_{19} &= 0 \\ 5y_{18} - 7y_{19} + 3y_{20} &= 0 \\ 5y_{19} - 7y_{20} + 3y_{21} &= 0 \\ 5y_{20} - 7y_{21} + 3y_{22} &= 0 \end{aligned}$$

These terms exist  
outside of the grid.





# Improved Finite-Difference Method

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## Step 1 – Identify Governing Equation & Boundary Values

Governing Equation

$$\frac{d^2 y}{dx^2} - \frac{dy}{dx} + y = 0 \quad 0 \leq x \leq 10$$

Boundary Values

$$y(0) = 1$$

$$y(10) = 5$$

EMPossible

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## Step 2 – Write Equation in Matrix Form Going Term-by-Term

$$\frac{d^2}{dx^2}y(x) - \frac{d}{dx}y(x) + y(x) = 0$$

$$[D_x^2][y] - [D_x][y] + [y] = [0]$$

## Step 3 – Factor Out $[y]$ To Put in Standard Form

$$[D_x^2][y] - [D_x][y] + [y] = [0]$$

$$\downarrow$$

$$\left([D_x^2] - [D_x] + [I]\right)[y] = [0]$$

$$\downarrow$$

$$[A][y] = [0] \quad \text{standard form}$$

$$[A] = [D_x^2] - [D_x] + [I]$$

$$A = DX^2 - DX + I;$$









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