

Graphing Calculator Encyclopedia

Article

Graphing Calculator

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Graphing Calculator

During the 1970s, the hand-held **calculator** became quite commonplace for use in mathematical calculations. Originally, these could perform only the basic functions of **addition**, **subtraction**, **multiplication**, and **division**, and perhaps derive the **square** of a number. Later scientific calculators, the more advanced of which were programmable, added many new functions to the abilities of these useful devices. Yet the most they could display was numerical or symbolic results that often had to be interpreted by the user.

In the late 1980s, however, graphing calculators began to combine the power of its best predecessors with the ability to visually display results of certain calculations. The 1990s saw the graphing calculator virtually become a hand-held computer with advanced liquid crystal display capabilities. Some now even allow for symbolic **algebra** and **calculus** to be performed as well as graphing of two variables in three dimensions, a feat that would otherwise require a mathematician to be something of a technical illustrator as well. There are definite advantages to using graphing calculators for learning mathematics. These include the ability to visualize examples that are more complex than those that might normally be attempted by students or instructors. By using the graphing calculator students can discover properties for themselves, allowing them to be more engaged in the learning process. Graphing calculators connect a visual representation to the functions being studied.