**Objective 08 ~ Calculate function values and find inverses of simple functions**

Inverses of Functions

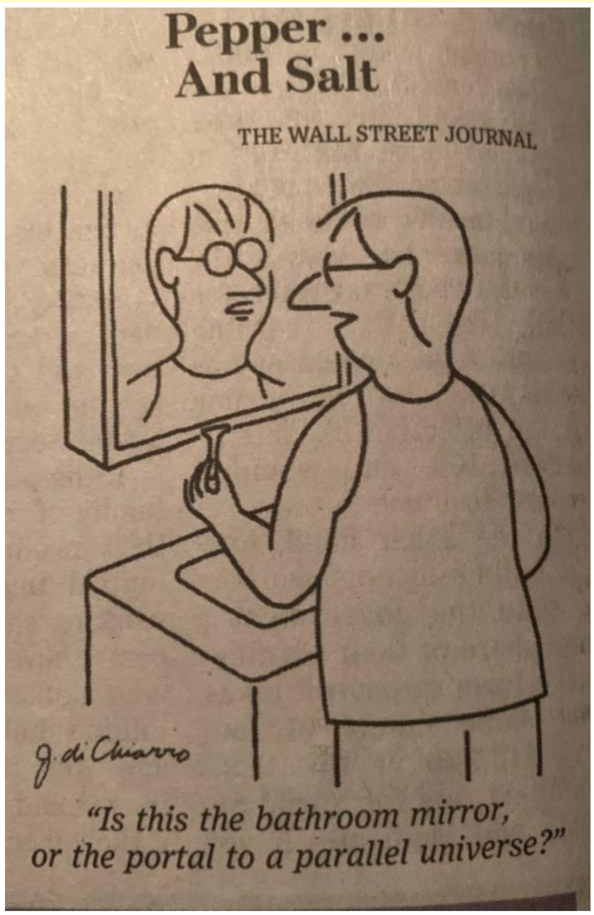
## Inverse of a Relation

Let $R$ be a relation. The **inverse of $R$**, denoted $R^{-1}$, is the set

$$R^{-1} = \{ (b, a) \mid (a, b) \in R \}.$$

## Caution!

We are faced with another example of reuse of notation. $f^{-1}$ does *not* stand for $\frac{1}{f}$ ! We use an exponent of $-1$ to indicate the reciprocal of a number or an algebraic expression, but when applied to a function or a relation it stands for the inverse relation.



## Finding the Inverse of a Function Defined by a Set of Ordered Pairs

Find the inverse of the following one-to-one function:

$$\{(-3, -27), (-2, -8), (-1, -1), (0, 0), (1, 1), (2, 8), (3, 27)\}$$

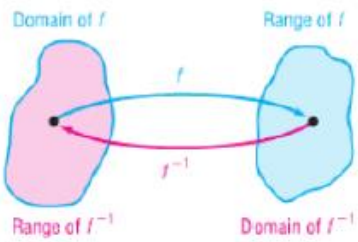
State the domain and the range of the function and its inverse.

The inverse of the given function is found by interchanging the entries in each ordered pair and so is given by

$$\{(-27, -3), (-8, -2), (-1, -1), (0, 0), (1, 1), (8, 2), (27, 3)\}$$

The domain of the function is $\{-3, -2, -1, 0, 1, 2, 3\}$. The range of the function is $\{-27, -8, -1, 0, 1, 8, 27\}$. The domain of the inverse function is $\{-27, -8, -1, 0, 1, 8, 27\}$. The range of the inverse function is $\{-3, -2, -1, 0, 1, 2, 3\}$.

**Figure 11**




**WARNING** Be careful! $f^{-1}$ is a symbol for the inverse function of $f$. The $-1$ used in $f^{-1}$ is not an exponent. That is, $f^{-1}$ does not mean the reciprocal of $f$; $f^{-1}(x)$ is not equal to $\frac{1}{f(x)}$.

Remember, if $f$ is a one-to-one function, it has an inverse function, $f^{-1}$. See Figure 11.

Based on the results of Example 4 and Figure 11, two facts are now apparent about a one-to-one function $f$ and its inverse $f^{-1}$.

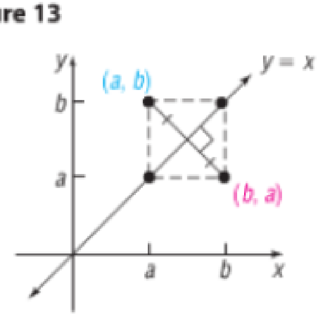
Domain of $f$ = Range of $f^{-1}$ Range of $f$ = Domain of $f^{-1}$

Look again at Figure 11 to visualize the relationship. If we start with $x$, apply $f$, and then apply $f^{-1}$, we get $x$ back again. If we start with $x$, apply $f^{-1}$, and then apply $f$, we get the number $x$ back again. To put it simply, what $f$ does, $f^{-1}$ undoes, and vice versa. See the illustration that follows.

Input $x$ from domain of $f$ $\xrightarrow{\text{Apply } f}$ $f(x)$ $\xrightarrow{\text{Apply } f^{-1}}$ $f^{-1}(f(x)) = x$

Input $x$ from domain of $f^{-1}$ $\xrightarrow{\text{Apply } f^{-1}}$ $f^{-1}(x)$ $\xrightarrow{\text{Apply } f}$ $f(f^{-1}(x)) = x$

**Figure 13**

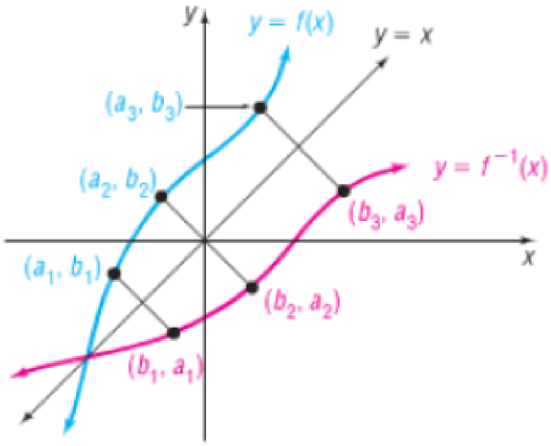



### Obtain the Graph of the Inverse Function from the Graph of the Function

Suppose that $(a, b)$ is a point on the graph of a one-to-one function $f$ defined by $y = f(x)$. Then $b = f(a)$. This means that $a = f^{-1}(b)$, so $(b, a)$ is a point on the graph of the inverse function $f^{-1}$. The relationship between the point $(a, b)$ on $f$ and the point $(b, a)$ on $f^{-1}$ is shown in Figure 13. The line segment with endpoints $(a, b)$ and $(b, a)$ is perpendicular to the line $y = x$ and is bisected by the line $y = x$. (Do you see why?) It follows that the point $(b, a)$ on $f^{-1}$ is the reflection about the line $y = x$ of the point $(a, b)$ on $f$.

The graph of a one-to-one function $f$ and the graph of its inverse $f^{-1}$ are symmetric with respect to the line $y = x$.

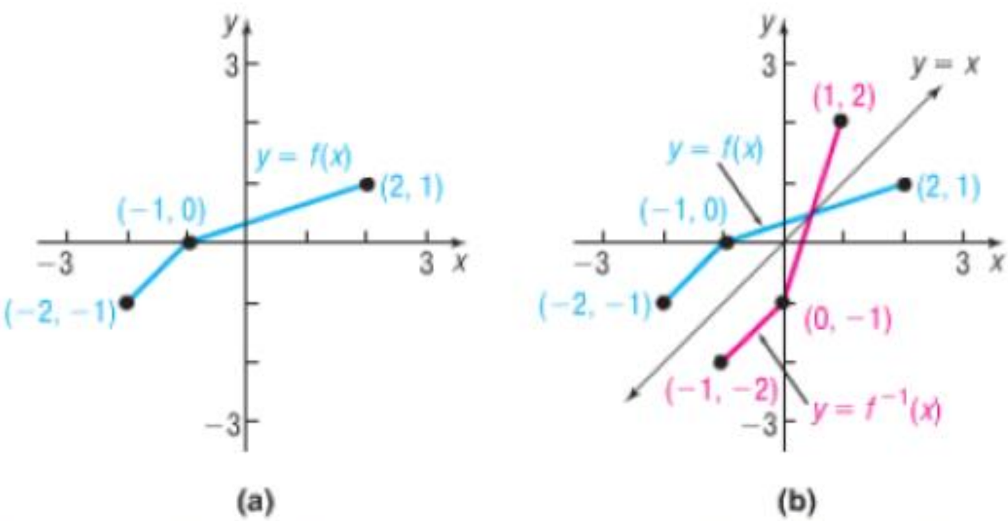
Figure 14 illustrates this result. Notice that, once the graph of $f$ is known, the graph of $f^{-1}$ may be obtained by reflecting the graph of $f$ about the line $y = x$.




## Graphing the Inverse Function

The graph in Figure 15(a) is that of a one-to-one function $y = f(x)$. Draw the graph of its inverse.

Begin by adding the graph of $y = x$ to Figure 15(a). Since the points $(-2, -1)$, $(-1, 0)$, and $(2, 1)$ are on the graph of $f$, the points $(-1, -2)$, $(0, -1)$, and $(1, 2)$ must be on the graph of $f^{-1}$. Keeping in mind that the graph of $f^{-1}$ is the reflection about the line $y = x$ of the graph of $f$, draw $f^{-1}$. See Figure 15(b).



# Finding Inverse Functions

Let $f$ be a one-to-one function, and assume that $f$ is defined by a formula. To find a formula for $f^{-1}$, perform the following steps:

1. Replace $f(x)$ in the definition of $f$ with the variable $y$. The result is an equation in $x$ and $y$ that is solved for $y$ at this point.
2. Interchange $x$ and $y$ in the equation.
3. Solve the new equation for $y$.
4. Replace the $y$ in the remaining equation with $f^{-1}(x)$.

$$h(x) = \frac{x-3}{2}$$

We will use the algorithm for this function.

$$y = \frac{x-3}{2}$$

The first step is to replace $h(x)$ with $y$.

$$x = \frac{y-3}{2}$$

The second step is to interchange $x$ and $y$ in the equation.

$$2x = y - 3$$

Cross multiply

$$y = 2x + 3$$

We now have to solve the equation for $y$.

$$h^{-1}(x) = 2x + 3$$

The last step is to name the formula $h^{-1}$.

EXAMPLE 8

## How to Find the Inverse Function

Find the inverse of $f(x) = 2x + 3$. Graph $f$ and $f^{-1}$ on the same coordinate axes.

### Step-by-Step Solution

**Step 1:** Replace $f(x)$ with $y$. In $y = f(x)$, interchange the variables $x$ and $y$ to obtain $x = f(y)$. This equation defines the inverse function $f^{-1}$ implicitly.

Replace $f(x)$ with $y$ in $f(x) = 2x + 3$ and obtain $y = 2x + 3$. Now interchange the variables $x$ and $y$ to obtain

$$x = 2y + 3$$

This equation defines the inverse $f^{-1}$ implicitly.

**Step 2:** If possible, solve the implicit equation for $y$ in terms of $x$ to obtain the explicit form of $f^{-1}$, $y = f^{-1}(x)$.

To find the explicit form of the inverse, solve $x = 2y + 3$ for $y$.

$$x = 2y + 3$$

$$2y + 3 = x \quad \text{Reflexive Property; If } a = b \text{, then } b = a.$$

$$2y = x - 3 \quad \text{Subtract 3 from both sides.}$$

$$y = \frac{1}{2}(x - 3) \quad \text{Divide both sides by 2.}$$

The explicit form of the inverse $f^{-1}$ is

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

We verified that $f$ and $f^{-1}$ are inverses in Example 5(b).

The graphs of $f(x) = 2x + 3$ and its inverse $f^{-1}(x) = \frac{1}{2}(x - 3)$ are shown in Figure 16 . Note the symmetry of the graphs with respect to the line $y = x$.

### Procedure for Finding the Inverse of a One-to-One Function

**Step 1:** In $y = f(x)$, interchange the variables $x$ and $y$ to obtain

$$x = f(y)$$

This equation defines the inverse function $f^{-1}$ implicitly.

**Step 2:** If possible, solve the implicit equation for $y$ in terms of $x$ to obtain the explicit form of $f^{-1}$:

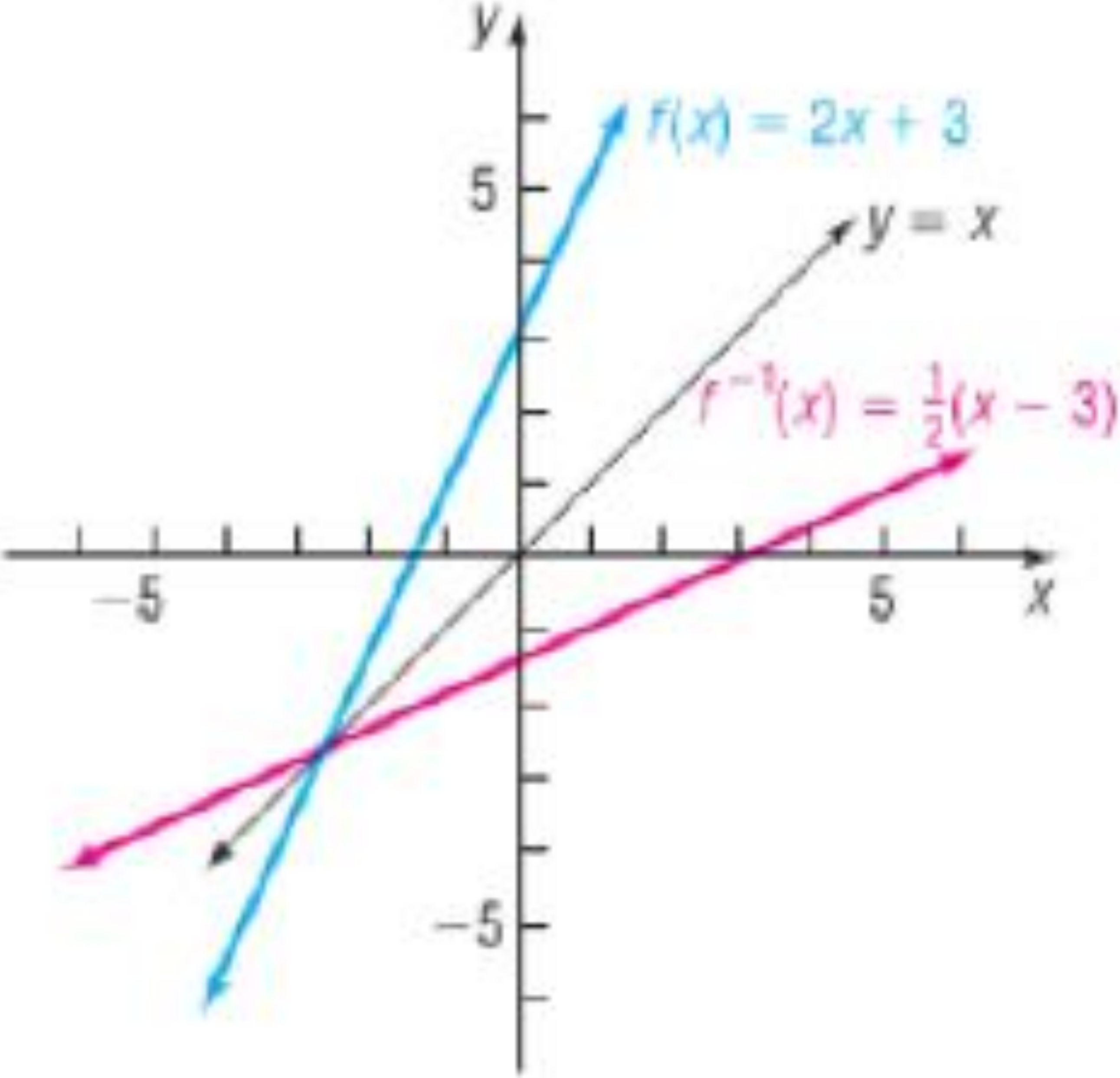
$$y = f^{-1}(x)$$

**Step 3:** Check the result by showing that

$$f^{-1}(f(x)) = x \quad \text{and} \quad f(f^{-1}(x)) = x$$

**Step 3:** Check the result by showing that $f^{-1}(f(x)) = x$ and $f(f^{-1}(x)) = x$.

**Figure 16**



## Finding the Inverse Function

The function

$$f(x) = \frac{2x + 1}{x - 1} \qquad x \neq 1$$

is one-to-one. Find its inverse and check the result.

**STEP 1:** Replace $f(x)$ with $y$ and interchange the variables $x$ and $y$ in

$$y = \frac{2x + 1}{x - 1}$$

to obtain

$$x = \frac{2y + 1}{y - 1}$$

**STEP 2:** Solve for $y$.

$$x = \frac{2y + 1}{y - 1}$$

$x(y - 1) = 2y + 1$ Multiply both sides by $y - 1$.

$xy - x = 2y + 1$ Apply the Distributive Property.

$xy - 2y = x + 1$ Subtract $2y$ from both sides; add $x$ to both sides.

$(x - 2)y = x + 1$ Factor.

$y = \frac{x + 1}{x - 2}$ Divide by $x - 2$.

The inverse is

$$f^{-1}(x) = \frac{x + 1}{x - 2} \quad x \neq 2$$ Replace $y$ by $f^{-1}(x)$.

**STEP 3:** ✓**Check:**

$$f^{-1}(f(x)) = f^{-1}\left(\frac{2x+1}{x-1}\right) = \frac{\frac{2x+1}{x-1} + 1}{\frac{2x+1}{x-1} - 2} = \frac{2x + 1 + x - 1}{2x + 1 - 2(x - 1)} = \frac{3x}{3} = x \quad x \neq 1$$

$$f(f^{-1}(x)) = f\left(\frac{x+1}{x-2}\right) = \frac{2\left(\frac{x+1}{x-2}\right) + 1}{\frac{x+1}{x-2} - 1} = \frac{2(x + 1) + x - 2}{x + 1 - (x - 2)} = \frac{3x}{3} = x \quad x \neq 2$$