

Problem 44

Some Special Second Order Equations. Second order equations involve the second derivative of the unknown function and have the general form $y'' = f(t, y, y')$. Usually such equations cannot be solved by methods designed for first order equations. However, there are two types of second order equations that can be transformed into first order equations by a suitable change of variable. The resulting equation can sometimes be solved by the methods presented in this chapter. Problems 36 through 51 deal with these types of equations.

Equations with the Independent Variable Missing. Consider second order differential equations of the form $y'' = f(y, y')$, in which the independent variable t does not appear explicitly. If we let $v = y'$, then we obtain $dv/dt = f(y, v)$. Since the right side of this equation depends on y and v , rather than on t and v , this equation contains too many variables. However, if we think of y as the independent variable, then by the chain rule, $dv/dt = (dv/dy)(dy/dt) = v(dv/dy)$. Hence the original differential equation can be written as $v(dv/dy) = f(y, v)$. Provided that this first order equation can be solved, we obtain v as a function of y . A relation between y and t results from solving $dy/dt = v(y)$, which is a separable equation. Again, there are two arbitrary constants in the final result. In each of Problems 42 through 47, use this method to solve the given differential equation.

$$y'' + y(y')^3 = 0$$

Solution

Make the substitution $v = y'$. Then $v' = y''$, but v' can be written as

$$\frac{dv}{dt} = \frac{dv}{dy} \frac{dy}{dt} = \frac{dv}{dy} v$$

by the chain rule. Consequently, the ODE that v satisfies is

$$\frac{dv}{dy} v + yv^3 = 0.$$

Divide both sides by v .

$$\frac{dv}{dy} + yv^2 = 0$$

Separate variables.

$$\begin{aligned} \frac{dv}{dy} &= -yv^2 \\ \frac{dv}{v^2} &= -y dy \end{aligned}$$

Integrate both sides.

$$-\frac{1}{v} = -\frac{y^2}{2} + C_1$$

Solve for v .

$$v(y) = \frac{1}{\frac{y^2}{2} - C_1}$$

Change back to y' .

$$\frac{dy}{dt} = \frac{1}{\frac{y^2}{2} - C_1}$$

Separate variables once more.

$$\left(\frac{y^2}{2} - C_1\right) dy = dt$$

Therefore, integrating both sides,

$$\frac{y^3}{6} - C_1 y = t + C_2.$$

Notice also that any constant satisfies the ODE: $y(t) = C_3$.