

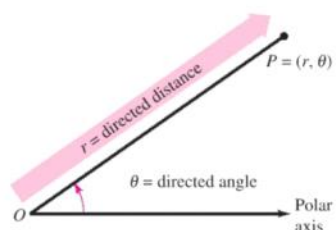
10.4

Tuesday, April 28, 2015 1:58 PM

10.4 Polar Coordinates and Polar Graphs

- Understand the polar coordinate system.
- Rewrite rectangular coordinates and equations in polar form and vice versa.
- Sketch the graph of an equation given in polar form.
- Find the slope of a tangent line to a polar graph.
- Identify several types of special polar graphs.

Polar Coordinates



Polar coordinates
Figure 10.35

So far, you have been representing graphs as collections of points (x, y) on the rectangular coordinate system. The corresponding equations for these graphs have been in either rectangular or parametric form. In this section, you will study a coordinate system called the **polar coordinate system**.

To form the polar coordinate system in the plane, fix a point O , called the **pole** (or **origin**), and construct from O an initial ray called the **polar axis**, as shown in Figure 10.35. Then each point P in the plane can be assigned **polar coordinates** (r, θ) , as follows.

$r =$ directed distance from O to P

$\theta =$ directed angle, counterclockwise from polar axis to segment \overline{OP}

Figure 10.36 shows three points on the polar coordinate system. Notice that in this system, it is convenient to locate points with respect to a grid of concentric circles intersected by **radial lines** through the pole.

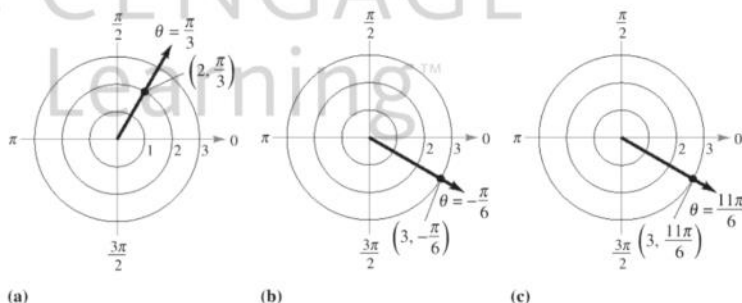


Figure 10.36

With rectangular coordinates, each point (x, y) has a unique representation. This is not true with polar coordinates. For instance, the coordinates

$$(r, \theta) \quad \text{and} \quad (r, 2\pi + \theta)$$

represent the same point [see parts (b) and (c) in Figure 10.36]. Also, because r is a *directed distance*, the coordinates

$$(r, \theta) \quad \text{and} \quad (-r, \theta + \pi)$$

represent the same point. In general, the point (r, θ) can be written as

$$(r, \theta) = (r, \theta + 2n\pi)$$

or

$$(r, \theta) = (-r, \theta + (2n + 1)\pi)$$

where n is any integer. Moreover, the pole is represented by $(0, \theta)$, where θ is any angle.

POLAR COORDINATES
The mathematician credited with first using polar coordinates was James Bernoulli, who introduced them in 1691. However, there is some evidence that it may have been Isaac Newton who first used them.