Math 1330 - 02877

TuTh 2:30pm – 4:00pm at SW 102

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Math 1330 – Section 4.1 Special Triangles

In this section, we'll work with some special triangles before moving onto defining the six trigonometric functions.

Two special triangles are $30^{\circ} - 60^{\circ} - 90^{\circ}$ triangles and $45^{\circ} - 45^{\circ} - 90^{\circ}$ triangles. With little additional information, you should be able to find the lengths of all sides of one of these special triangles.

First we'll review some conventions when working with triangles: We label angles with capital letters and sides with lower case letters. We'll use the same letter to refer to an angle and the side opposite it, although the angle will be a capital letter and the side will be lower case.

In this section, we will work with right triangles. Right triangles have one angle which measures 90 degrees, and two other angles whose sum is 90 degrees. The side opposite the right angle is called the hypotenuse, and the other two sides are called the legs of the triangle. A labeled right triangle is shown below.



When you are working with a right triangle, you can use the **Pythagorean Theorem** to help you find the length of an unknown side. In a right triangle ABC with right angle C,

$$a^2 + b^2 = c^2$$

Example 1:

a) In right triangle PQR with right angle P, if PQ = 12 and QR = 13, find PR.

b) In right triangle ABC with right angle C, if AB = 12 and AC = 8, find BC.

Special Triangles

In a $30^{\circ} - 60^{\circ} - 90^{\circ}$ triangle, the lengths of the sides are proportional. If the shorter leg (the side opposite the 30 degree angle) has length *a*, then the longer leg has length $\sqrt{3}a$ and the hypotenuse has length 2a. An easy way to remember this is to write the lengths in ratio form as $a: \sqrt{3}a: 2a$. So if you know (or can find) *a*, you can find the lengths of all three sides.



Example 3: In a $30^{\circ} - 60^{\circ} - 90^{\circ}$ **triangle,** the hypotenuse has measure of 14cm. Find the measures of the legs.

In a $45^{\circ} - 45^{\circ} - 90^{\circ}$ triangle, the two legs of the triangle are equal in length. This triangle is also called an isosceles right triangle.

If the legs each measure a, then the hypotenuse has length $\sqrt{2}a$.

The ratio to remember for these triangles is $a:a:\sqrt{2}a$.

Again, if you know *a*, you can find the lengths of all three sides.



Example 5: In an isosceles right triangle, the hypotenuse has measure of 14 cm. What are the measures of the two congruent legs?

Example 6: In right triangle ABC with right angle C, AC = 4 and $m(B) = 30^{\circ}$, find AB.

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The Six Trigonometric Functions of an Angle



Suppose we are given a right triangle, ABC where $\angle C = 90^{\circ}$. We define the trigonometric functions of either of the acute angles of the triangle as follows:

Sine Function:
$$\sin \theta = \frac{\text{length of the side opposite }\theta}{\text{length of hypoteneuse}}$$
Cosine Function: $\cos \theta = \frac{\text{length of the side adjacent to }\theta}{\text{length of hypoteneuse}}$ Tangent Function: $\tan \theta = \frac{\text{length of the side opposite }\theta}{\text{length of the side adjacent to }\theta}$ Cotangent Function: $\cot \theta = \frac{\text{length of the side adjacent to }\theta}{\text{length of side opposite to }\theta}$ Secant Function: $\sec \theta = \frac{\text{length of the side adjacent to }\theta}{\text{length of side opposite to }\theta}$ Cosecant Function: $\sec \theta = \frac{\text{length of the hypoteneuse}}{\text{length of the side adjacent to }\theta}$ Cosecant Function: $\csc \theta = \frac{\text{length of the hypoteneuse}}{\text{length of the side adjacent to }\theta}$

Note: For acute angles the values of the trigonometric functions are always positive since they are ratios of lengths.



$$\sin(A) = \frac{opposite}{hypotenuse} = \frac{a}{h}$$
$$\cos(A) = \frac{adjacent}{hypotenuse} = \frac{b}{h}$$
$$\tan(A) = \frac{opposite}{adjacent} = \frac{a}{b}$$
$$\cot(A) = \frac{adjacent}{opposite} = \frac{b}{a}$$
$$\sec(A) = \frac{hypotenuse}{adjacent} = \frac{h}{b}$$
$$\csc(A) = \frac{hypotenuse}{opposite} = \frac{h}{a}$$

A useful mnemonic device: SOH-CAH-TOA $S = \frac{O}{H}$ $C = \frac{A}{H}$ $T = \frac{O}{A}$ **Example 7:** Suppose you are given this triangle.



a. Find AC.

b. Find the six trigonometric functions of angle *C*.

c. Find the six trigonometric functions of angle *B*.

Example 8: Suppose that BAC is a right triangle with $A = 90^{\circ}$. If BC = 9 and AB = 6, find each of the following:

 $\sin(C) =$ $\tan(C) =$ $\cos(B) =$ $\tan(B) =$

Example 9: Suppose that θ is an acute angle in a right triangle and $\sec \theta = \frac{5\sqrt{3}}{4}$. Find the $\cos \theta$ and $\tan \theta$.

Example 10: Suppose that $\triangle DEF$ is a right triangle and *D* is an acute angle. If $\sin D = \frac{4}{5}$, find the other five trigonometric functions of angle *D*.

Cofunctions

A special relationship exists between sine and cosine, tangent and cotangent, secant and cosecant. The relationship can be summarized as follows:

Function of θ = Cofunction of the complement of θ

Recall that two angles are **complementary** if their sum is 90°. In example 10, angles B and C are complementary, since $A = 90^{\circ}$. Notice that $\sin C = \cos B$ and $\sin B = \cos C$. The same will be true of any pair of cofunctions.

Cofunction relationships

 $\sin A = \cos(90^\circ - A)$ $\cos A = \sin(90^\circ - A)$ $\tan A = \cot(90^\circ - A)$ $\cot A = \tan(90^\circ - A)$ $\sec A = \csc(90^\circ - A)$ $\csc A = \sec(90^\circ - A)$

For example,

 $\sin 60^0 = \cos 30^0$;

 $\tan 10^0 = \cot 80^0$; $\csc 70^0 = \sec 20^0$.