

Find the second derivative of $f(x) = \frac{x-1}{x+2}$.

Find the first derivative: Since this function is a quotient, we'll need to apply the quotient rule with $u = x-1$ and $v = x+2$. Taking the derivatives of these pieces yields

$$\begin{array}{l} u = x-1 \\ v = x+2 \end{array} \rightarrow \begin{array}{l} u' = 1 \\ v' = 1 \end{array}$$

Put these pieces into the quotient rule give us

$$f'(x) = \frac{(x+2) \cdot 1 - (x-1) \cdot 1}{(x+2)^2}$$

Simplify the first derivative: Before we take another derivative, we should simplify the first derivative as much as possible. This will make the second derivative a lot easier. In this case, let's remove the parentheses and distribute the subtraction to give

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

Rewrite the first derivative: We could use the quotient rule again, but it is easier to rewrite the first derivative as

$$f'(x) = 3(x+2)^{-2}$$

Take the second derivative: We'll need the chain rule to take this derivative with

$$\begin{array}{l} \text{inside} = x+2 \\ \text{outside} = 3x^{-2} \end{array} \rightarrow \begin{array}{l} \text{inside}' = 1 \\ \text{outside}' = -6x^{-3} \end{array}$$

Applying the chain rule yields

$$f''(x) = -6(x+2)^{-3} \cdot 1$$

We can rewrite this as

$$f''(x) = \frac{-6}{(x+2)^3}$$