

Math Facts Useful for Graduate Macroeconomics

The following collection of facts is useful in many macroeconomic models. No proof is offered in most cases because the derivations are standard elements of prerequisite mathematics or microeconomics classes; this handout is offered as an *aide memoire* and for reference purposes.

Throughout this document, typographical distinctions should be interpreted as meaningful; for example, the variables \mathbf{r} and \mathbf{r} are *different* from each other, like x and y .

1 Utility Functions

1.1 [CRRALim]

Fact 1.

$$\lim_{\rho \rightarrow 1} \left(\frac{c^{1-\rho}}{1-\rho} \right) = \log c \quad (1)$$

because for any $\rho \neq 1$ the derivative exists,

$$u'(c) = c^{-\rho} \quad (2)$$

and $\lim_{\rho \rightarrow 1} c^{-\rho} = 1/c$ but $f'(1/c) = \log c$.

2 Geometric Series

2.1 [FinSum]

Fact 2.

$$\sum_{i=0}^T \gamma^i = \left(\frac{1 - \gamma^{T+1}}{1 - \gamma} \right) \quad (3)$$

2.2 [InfSum]

Fact 3. *If $0 < \gamma < 1$, then*

$$\sum_{i=0}^{\infty} \gamma^i = \left(\frac{1}{1 - \gamma} \right) \quad (4)$$

3 ‘Small’ Number Approximations

Sometimes economic models are written in continuous time and sometimes in discrete time. Generically, there is a close correspondence between the two approaches, which is captured (for example) by the future value of a series that is growing at rate g .

$$e^{gt} \text{ corresponds to } (1 + g)^t \equiv G^t. \quad (5)$$

The words ‘corresponds to’ are not meant to imply that these objects are mathematically identical, but rather that these are the corresponding ways in which constant growth is treated in continuous and in discrete time; while for small values of g they will be numerically very close, continuous-time compounding does yield slightly different values after any given time interval than does discrete growth (for example, continuous growth at a 10 percent rate after 1 year yields $e^{0.1} \approx 1.10517$ while in discrete time we would write it as $G = 1.1$.)

Many of the following facts can be interpreted as manifestations of the limiting relationships between continuous and discrete time approaches to economic problems. (The continuous time formulations often yield simpler expressions, while the discrete formulations are needed for computational solutions; one of approximations is to show how the discrete-time solution becomes close to the corresponding continuous-time problem as the time interval shrinks).

3.1 [TaylorOne]

Fact 4. For ϵ near zero (‘small’), a first order Taylor expansion of $(1 + \epsilon)^\zeta$ around 1 yields

$$(1 + \epsilon)^\zeta \approx 1 + \epsilon\zeta \quad (6)$$

3.2 [TaylorTwo]

Fact 5. For ϵ near zero (‘small’), a second order Taylor expansion of $(1 + \epsilon)^\zeta$ around 1 yields

$$(1 + \epsilon)^\zeta \approx 1 + \zeta\epsilon + \epsilon^2\zeta(\zeta - 1)/2 \quad (7)$$

$$= 1 + \left(1 + \left(\frac{\zeta - 1}{2}\right)\epsilon\right)\zeta\epsilon \quad (8)$$

3.3 [LogEps]

Fact 6. For ϵ near zero (‘small’),

$$\log(1 + \epsilon) \approx \epsilon \quad (9)$$

3.4 [ExpEps]

Fact 7. For ϵ near zero ('small'),

$$(1 + \epsilon) \approx e^\epsilon \quad (10)$$

3.5 [OverPlus]

Fact 8. For ϵ near zero ('small'),

$$1/(1 + \epsilon) \approx 1 - \epsilon \quad (11)$$

3.6 [MultPlus]

Fact 9. For ϵ and ζ near zero ('small'),

$$(1 + \epsilon)(1 + \zeta) \approx 1 + \epsilon + \zeta \quad (12)$$

3.7 [ExpPlus]

Fact 10. For real numbers ϵ and ζ

$$\exp(\zeta) \exp(\epsilon) = \exp(\zeta + \epsilon) \quad (13)$$

3.8 [SmallSmallZero]

Fact 11. If ϵ is small and ζ is small then $\epsilon\zeta$ can be approximated by zero.

4 Statistics/Probability Facts

4.1 [SumNormsIsNorm]

Fact 12. If $\mathbf{r}_{t+1} \sim \mathcal{N}(\mathbf{r}, \sigma_{\mathbf{r}}^2)$ and $\mathbf{r}_{t+1} \sim \mathcal{N}(\mathbf{r}, \sigma_{\mathbf{r}}^2)$ then

$$\mathbf{r}_{t+1} + \mathbf{r}_{t+1} = \mathcal{N}(\mathbf{r} + \mathbf{r}, \sigma_{\mathbf{r}}^2 + \sigma_{\mathbf{r}}^2) \quad (14)$$

4.2 [ELogNorm]

Fact 13. If from the viewpoint of period t the stochastic variable Z_{t+1} is lognormally distributed with mean z and variance σ_z^2 (Defining $z_{t+1} = \log Z_{t+1}$, write this as $z_{t+1} \sim \mathcal{N}(z, \sigma_z^2)$), then

$$\mathbb{E}_t[e^{z_{t+1}}] = e^{z + \sigma_z^2/2} \quad (15)$$

4.3 [LogELogNorm]

Fact 14. If Z_{t+1} is lognormally distributed as in the prior fact, then

$$\log \mathbb{E}_t[Z_{t+1}] = \mathbb{E}_t[\log Z_{t+1}] + \sigma_z^2/2 \quad (16)$$

$$= z + \sigma_z^2/2 \quad (17)$$

which follows from taking the log of both sides of (15).

4.4 [NormTimes]

Fact 15. If $z_{t+1} \sim \mathcal{N}(z, \sigma_z^2)$, then

$$\gamma z_{t+1} \sim \mathcal{N}(\gamma z, \gamma^2 \sigma_z^2) \quad (18)$$

4.5 [MeanOne]

Fact 16. If $\log \mathbf{R}_{t+1} \sim \mathcal{N}(-\sigma_r^2/2, \sigma_r^2)$, then

$$\mathbb{E}_t[\mathbf{R}_{t+1}] = 1 \quad (19)$$

for any value of $\sigma_r^2 \geq 0$.

This follows from substituting $-\sigma_r^2/2$ for z in ELogNorm.

4.6 [LogMeanMPS]

Fact 17. If $\log \mathbf{R}_{t+1} \sim \mathcal{N}(\mathbf{r} - \sigma_r^2/2, \sigma_r^2)$, then

$$\log \mathbb{E}_t[\mathbf{R}_{t+1}] = \mathbf{r} \quad (20)$$

for any value of $\sigma_r^2 \geq 0$.

This follows from substituting $\mathbf{r} - \sigma_r^2/2$ for z in ELogNorm and taking the log.

4.7 [ELogNormTimes]

Fact 18. If $\log \hat{\mathbf{R}}_{t+1} = \gamma \log \mathbf{R}_{t+1}$ where $\log \mathbf{R}_{t+1} \sim \mathcal{N}(z, \sigma_z^2)$, then

$$\mathbb{E}_t[\hat{\mathbf{R}}_{t+1}] = e^{\gamma z + \gamma^2 \sigma_z^2/2} \quad (21)$$

4.8 [LogELogNormTimes]

Fact 19. If $\log \hat{\mathbf{R}}_{t+1} = \gamma \log \mathbf{R}_{t+1}$ where $\log \mathbf{R}_{t+1} \sim \mathcal{N}(z, \sigma_z^2)$, then

$$\log \mathbb{E}_t[\hat{\mathbf{R}}_{t+1}] = \gamma z + \gamma^2 \sigma_z^2/2 \quad (22)$$

which follows from taking the log of (21).

5 Other Facts

5.1 [EulersTheorem]

Fact 20. *If $Y = F(K, L)$ is a constant returns to scale production function, then*

$$Y = F_K K + F_L L, \quad (23)$$

and if this production function characterizes output in a perfectly competitive economy then F_K is the interest factor and F_L is the wage rate.