

# Using Factors and Zeros

Let's write some polynomials.

## 7.1 More Than Factors

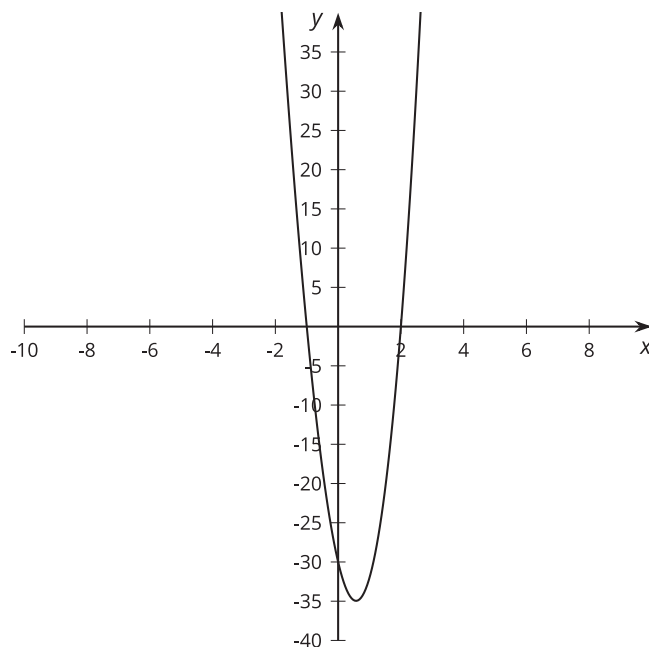
$M$  and  $K$  are both polynomial functions of  $x$ , where  
 $M(x) = (x + 3)(2x - 5)$  and  $K(x) = 3(x + 3)(2x - 5)$ .

1. How are the two functions alike? How are they different?
2. If a graphing window of  $-5 \leq x \leq 5$  and  $-20 \leq y \leq 20$  shows all intercepts of a graph of  $y = M(x)$ , what graphing window would show all intercepts of  $y = K(x)$ ?

## 7.2 Choosing Windows

Mai graphs the function  $p$  given by  $p(x) = (x + 1)(x - 2)(x + 15)$  and sees this graph.

She says, “This graph looks like a parabola, so it must be a quadratic.”



1. Is Mai correct? Use graphing technology to check.
2. Explain how you could select a viewing window before graphing an expression like  $p(x)$  that would show the main features of a graph.
3. Using your explanation, what viewing window would you choose for graphing  $f(x) = (x + 1)(x - 1)(x - 2)(x - 28)$ ?

### Are you ready for more?

Select some different windows for graphing the function  $q(x) = 23(x - 53)(x - 18)(x + 111)$ .  
What is challenging about graphing this function?

## 7.3 What's the Equation?

Write a possible equation for a polynomial whose graph has the following horizontal intercepts.  
Check your equation using graphing technology.

1.  $(4, 0)$
2.  $(0, 0)$  and  $(4, 0)$
3.  $(-2, 0)$ ,  $(0, 0)$  and  $(4, 0)$
4.  $(-4, 0)$ ,  $(0, 0)$ , and  $(2, 0)$
5.  $(-5, 0)$ ,  $(\frac{1}{2}, 0)$ , and  $(3, 0)$

## Lesson 7 Summary

We can use the zeros of a polynomial function to figure out what an expression for the polynomial might be. One way to write a polynomial expression is as a product of linear factors.

For example, for a polynomial function  $Z$  that satisfies  $Z(x) = 0$  when  $x$  is  $-1$ ,  $2$ , or  $4$ , we could multiply together a factor that is  $0$  when  $x = -1$ , a factor that is  $0$  when  $x = 2$ , and a factor that is  $0$  when  $x = 4$ . It turns out that there are many possible expressions for  $Z(x)$ .

Using linear factors, one possibility is  $Z(x) = (x + 1)(x - 2)(x - 4)$ .

Another possibility is  $Z(x) = 2(x + 1)(x - 2)(x - 4)$ , since the  $2$  (or any other rational number) does not change what values of  $x$  make the function equal to  $0$ .

We can test the three values  $-1$ ,  $2$ , and  $4$  to make sure that  $Z(x)$  is  $0$  for those values. We can also graph both possible versions of  $Z$  and see that the graphs intercept the horizontal axis at  $-1$ ,  $2$ , and  $4$ . Notice that while both functions have the same output at these three specific input values, they have different outputs for all other input values.

