1.2 Lines, Circles, and Parabolas

This section reviews coordinates, lines, distance, circles, and parabolas in the plane. The notion of increment is also discussed.

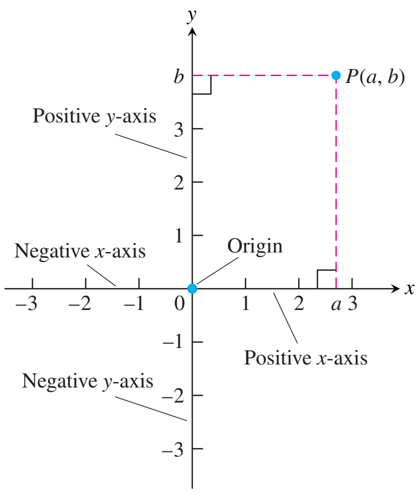

FIGURE 1.5 Cartesian coordinates in the plane are based on two perpendicular axes intersecting at the origin.

Cartesian Coordinates in the Plane

In the previous section we identified the points on the line with real numbers by assigning them coordinates. Points in the plane can be identified with ordered pairs of real numbers. To begin, we draw two perpendicular coordinate lines that intersect at the 0-point of each line. These lines are called **coordinate axes** in the plane. On the horizontal x-axis, numbers are denoted by x and increase to the right. On the vertical y-axis, numbers are denoted by y and increase upward (Figure 1.5). Thus "upward" and "to the right" are positive directions, whereas "downward" and "to the left" are considered as negative. The **origin** O, also labeled 0, of the coordinate system is the point in the plane where x and y are both zero.

If P is any point in the plane, it can be located by exactly one ordered pair of real numbers in the following way. Draw lines through P perpendicular to the two coordinate axes. These lines intersect the axes at points with coordinates a and b (Figure 1.5). The ordered pair (a, b) is assigned to the point P and is called its **coordinate pair**. The first number a is the ***x*-coordinate** (or **abscissa**) of P; the second number b is the ***y*-coordinate** (or **ordinate**) of P. The x-coordinate of every point on the y-axis is 0. The y-coordinate of every point on the x-axis is 0. The origin is the point $(0, 0)$.

Starting with an ordered pair (a, b), we can reverse the process and arrive at a corresponding point P in the plane. Often we identify P with the ordered pair and write $P(a, b)$. We sometimes also refer to "the point (a, b)" and it will be clear from the context when (a, b) refers to a point in the plane and not to an open interval on the real line. Several points labeled by their coordinates are shown in Figure 1.6.

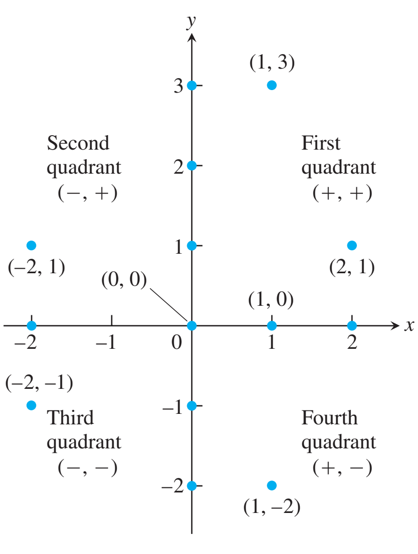

FIGURE 1.6 Points labeled in the xy-coordinate or Cartesian plane. The points on the axes all have coordinate pairs but are usually labeled with single real numbers, (so $(1, 0)$ on the x-axis is labeled as 1). Notice the coordinate sign patterns of the quadrants.

This coordinate system is called the **rectangular coordinate system** or **Cartesian coordinate system** (after the sixteenth century French mathematician René Descartes). The coordinate axes of this coordinate or Cartesian plane divide the plane into four regions called **quadrants**, numbered counterclockwise as shown in Figure 1.6.

The **graph** of an equation or inequality in the variables x and y is the set of all points $P(x, y)$ in the plane whose coordinates satisfy the equation or inequality. When we plot data in the coordinate plane or graph formulas whose variables have different units of measure, we do not need to use the same scale on the two axes. If we plot time vs. thrust for a rocket motor, for example, there is no reason to place the mark that shows 1 sec on the time axis the same distance from the origin as the mark that shows 1 lb on the thrust axis.

Usually when we graph functions whose variables do not represent physical measurements and when we draw figures in the coordinate plane to study their geometry and trigonometry, we try to make the scales on the axes identical. A vertical unit of distance then looks the same as a horizontal unit. As on a surveyor's map or a scale drawing, line segments that are supposed to have the same length will look as if they do and angles that are supposed to be congruent will look congruent.

Computer displays and calculator displays are another matter. The vertical and horizontal scales on machine-generated graphs usually differ, and there are corresponding distortions in distances, slopes, and angles. Circles may look like ellipses, rectangles may look like squares, right angles may appear to be acute or obtuse, and so on. We discuss these displays and distortions in greater detail in Section 1.7.

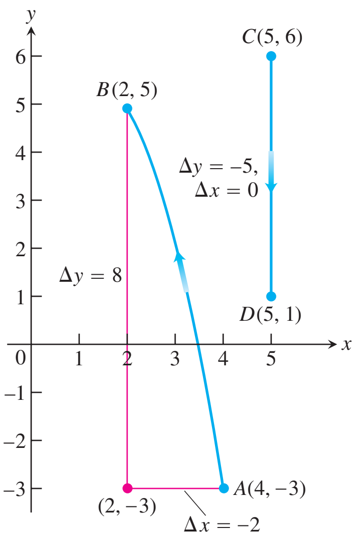

FIGURE 1.7 Coordinate increments may be positive, negative, or zero (Example 1).

HISTORICAL BIOGRAPHY*

René Descartes
(1596–1650)

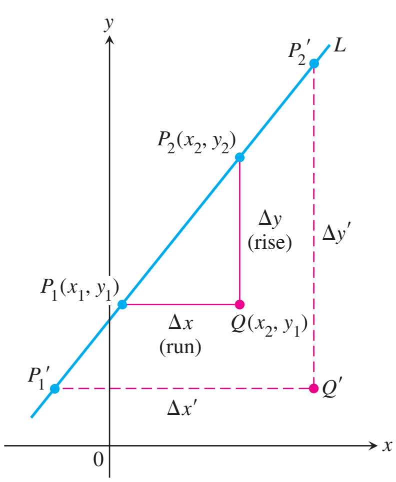

FIGURE 1.8 Triangles P_1QP_2 and $P_1'Q'P_2'$ are similar, so the ratio of their sides has the same value for any two points on the line. This common value is the line's slope.

Increments and Straight Lines

When a particle moves from one point in the plane to another, the net changes in its coordinates are called *increments.* They are calculated by subtracting the coordinates of the starting point from the coordinates of the ending point. If x changes from x_1 to x_2, the **increment** in x is

$$\Delta x = x_2 - x_1.$$

EXAMPLE 1 In going from the point $A(4, -3)$ to the point $B(2, 5)$ the increments in the x- and y-coordinates are

$$\Delta x = 2 - 4 = -2, \qquad \Delta y = 5 - (-3) = 8.$$

From $C(5, 6)$ to $D(5, 1)$ the coordinate increments are

$$\Delta x = 5 - 5 = 0, \qquad \Delta y = 1 - 6 = -5.$$

See Figure 1.7. ■

Given two points $P_1(x_1, y_1)$ and $P_2(x_2, y_2)$ in the plane, we call the increments $\Delta x = x_2 - x_1$ and $\Delta y = y_2 - y_1$ the **run** and the **rise**, respectively, between P_1 and P_2. Two such points always determine a unique straight line (usually called simply a line) passing through them both. We call the line P_1P_2.

Any nonvertical line in the plane has the property that the ratio

$$m = \frac{\text{rise}}{\text{run}} = \frac{\Delta y}{\Delta x} = \frac{y_2 - y_1}{x_2 - x_1}$$

has the same value for every choice of the two points $P_1(x_1, y_1)$ and $P_2(x_2, y_2)$ on the line (Figure 1.8). This is because the ratios of corresponding sides for similar triangles are equal.

DEFINITION Slope

The constant

$$m = \frac{\text{rise}}{\text{run}} = \frac{\Delta y}{\Delta x} = \frac{y_2 - y_1}{x_2 - x_1}$$

is the **slope** of the nonvertical line P_1P_2.

The slope tells us the direction (uphill, downhill) and steepness of a line. A line with positive slope rises uphill to the right; one with negative slope falls downhill to the right (Figure 1.9). The greater the absolute value of the slope, the more rapid the rise or fall. The slope of a vertical line is *undefined*. Since the run Δx is zero for a vertical line, we cannot evaluate the slope ratio m.

The direction and steepness of a line can also be measured with an angle. The **angle of inclination** of a line that crosses the x-axis is the smallest counterclockwise angle from the x-axis to the line (Figure 1.10). The inclination of a horizontal line is 0°. The inclination of a vertical line is 90°. If ϕ (the Greek letter phi) is the inclination of a line, then $0 \le \phi < 180°$.

*To learn more about the historical figures and the development of the major elements and topics of calculus, visit **www.aw-bc.com/thomas**.

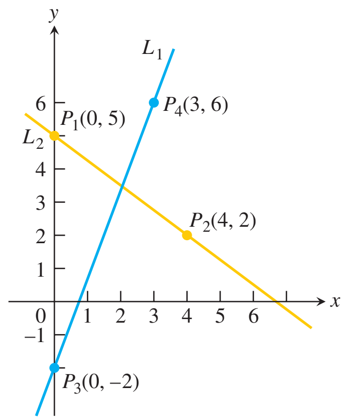

FIGURE 1.9 The slope of L_1 is

$$m = \frac{\Delta y}{\Delta x} = \frac{6 - (-2)}{3 - 0} = \frac{8}{3}.$$

That is, y increases 8 units every time x increases 3 units. The slope of L_2 is

$$m = \frac{\Delta y}{\Delta x} = \frac{2 - 5}{4 - 0} = \frac{-3}{4}.$$

That is, y decreases 3 units every time x increases 4 units.

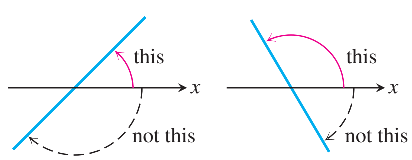

FIGURE 1.10 Angles of inclination are measured counterclockwise from the x-axis.

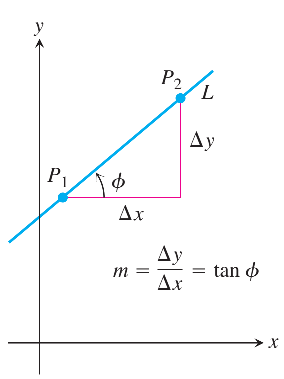

FIGURE 1.11 The slope of a nonvertical line is the tangent of its angle of inclination.

The relationship between the slope m of a nonvertical line and the line's angle of inclination ϕ is shown in Figure 1.11:

$$m = \tan \phi.$$

Straight lines have relatively simple equations. All points on the *vertical line* through the point a on the x-axis have x-coordinates equal to a. Thus, $x = a$ is an equation for the vertical line. Similarly, $y = b$ is an equation for the *horizontal line* meeting the y-axis at b. (See Figure 1.12.)

We can write an equation for a nonvertical straight line L if we know its slope m and the coordinates of one point $P_1(x_1, y_1)$ on it. If $P(x, y)$ is *any* other point on L, then we can use the two points P_1 and P to compute the slope,

$$m = \frac{y - y_1}{x - x_1}$$

so that

$$y - y_1 = m(x - x_1) \qquad \text{or} \qquad y = y_1 + m(x - x_1).$$

> The equation
>
> $$y = y_1 + m(x - x_1)$$
>
> is the **point-slope equation** of the line that passes through the point (x_1, y_1) and has slope m.

EXAMPLE 2 Write an equation for the line through the point (2, 3) with slope $-3/2$.

Solution We substitute $x_1 = 2, y_1 = 3$, and $m = -3/2$ into the point-slope equation and obtain

$$y = 3 - \frac{3}{2}\left(x - 2\right), \qquad \text{or} \qquad y = -\frac{3}{2}x + 6.$$

When $x = 0, y = 6$ so the line intersects the y-axis at $y = 6$. ■

EXAMPLE 3 A Line Through Two Points

Write an equation for the line through $(-2, -1)$ and $(3, 4)$.

Solution The line's slope is

$$m = \frac{-1 - 4}{-2 - 3} = \frac{-5}{-5} = 1.$$

We can use this slope with either of the two given points in the point-slope equation:

With $(x_1, y_1) = (-2, -1)$	**With $(x_1, y_1) = (3, 4)$**
$y = -1 + 1 \cdot (x - (-2))$	$y = 4 + 1 \cdot (x - 3)$
$y = -1 + x + 2$	$y = 4 + x - 3$
$y = x + 1$	$y = x + 1$

Same result

Either way, $y = x + 1$ is an equation for the line (Figure 1.13). ■

The y-coordinate of the point where a nonvertical line intersects the y-axis is called the ***y*-intercept** of the line. Similarly, the ***x*-intercept** of a nonhorizontal line is the x-coordinate of the point where it crosses the x-axis (Figure 1.14). A line with slope m and y-intercept b passes through the point $(0, b)$, so it has equation

$$y = b + m(x - 0), \qquad \text{or, more simply,} \qquad y = mx + b.$$

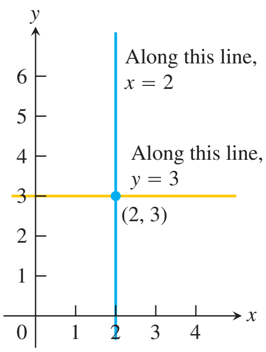

FIGURE 1.12 The standard equations for the vertical and horizontal lines through (2, 3) are $x = 2$ and $y = 3$.

> The equation
>
> $$y = mx + b$$
>
> is called the **slope-intercept equation** of the line with slope m and y-intercept b.

Lines with equations of the form $y = mx$ have y-intercept 0 and so pass through the origin. Equations of lines are called **linear** equations.

The equation

$$Ax + By = C \qquad (A \text{ and } B \text{ not both } 0)$$

is called the **general linear equation** in x and y because its graph always represents a line and every line has an equation in this form (including lines with undefined slope).

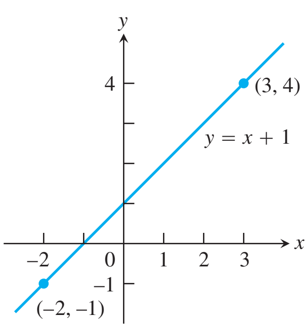

FIGURE 1.13 The line in Example 3.

EXAMPLE 4 Finding the Slope and y-Intercept

Find the slope and y-intercept of the line $8x + 5y = 20$.

Solution Solve the equation for y to put it in slope-intercept form:

$$8x + 5y = 20$$
$$5y = -8x + 20$$
$$y = -\frac{8}{5}x + 4.$$

The slope is $m = -8/5$. The y-intercept is $b = 4$. ■

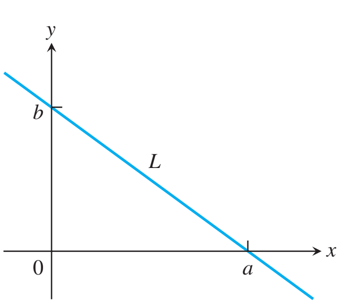

FIGURE 1.14 Line L has x-intercept a and y-intercept b.

Parallel and Perpendicular Lines

Lines that are parallel have equal angles of inclination, so they have the same slope (if they are not vertical). Conversely, lines with equal slopes have equal angles of inclination and so are parallel.

If two nonvertical lines L_1 and L_2 are perpendicular, their slopes m_1 and m_2 satisfy $m_1 m_2 = -1$, so each slope is the *negative reciprocal* of the other:

$$m_1 = -\frac{1}{m_2}, \qquad m_2 = -\frac{1}{m_1}.$$

To see this, notice by inspecting similar triangles in Figure 1.15 that $m_1 = a/h$, and $m_2 = -h/a$. Hence, $m_1 m_2 = (a/h)(-h/a) = -1$.

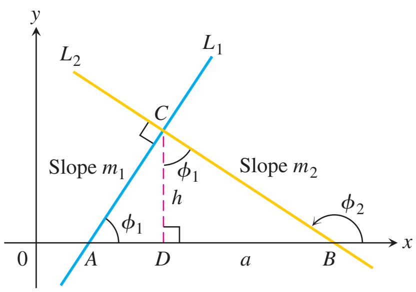

FIGURE 1.15 ΔADC is similar to ΔCDB. Hence ϕ_1 is also the upper angle in ΔCDB. From the sides of ΔCDB, we read $\tan \phi_1 = a/h$.

Distance and Circles in the Plane

The distance between points in the plane is calculated with a formula that comes from the Pythagorean theorem (Figure 1.16).

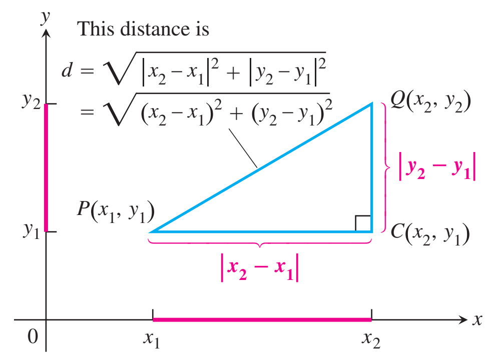

FIGURE 1.16 To calculate the distance between $P(x_1, y_1)$ and $Q(x_2, y_2)$, apply the Pythagorean theorem to triangle PCQ.

> **Distance Formula for Points in the Plane**
> The distance between $P(x_1, y_1)$ and $Q(x_2, y_2)$ is
> $$d = \sqrt{(\Delta x)^2 + (\Delta y)^2} = \sqrt{(x_2 - x_1)^2 + (y_2 - y_1)^2}.$$

EXAMPLE 5 Calculating Distance

(a) The distance between $P(-1, 2)$ and $Q(3, 4)$ is

$$\sqrt{(3 - (-1))^2 + (4 - 2)^2} = \sqrt{(4)^2 + (2)^2} = \sqrt{20} = \sqrt{4 \cdot 5} = 2\sqrt{5}.$$

(b) The distance from the origin to $P(x, y)$ is

$$\sqrt{(x - 0)^2 + (y - 0)^2} = \sqrt{x^2 + y^2}.$$

■

By definition, a **circle** of radius a is the set of all points $P(x, y)$ whose distance from some center $C(h, k)$ equals a (Figure 1.17). From the distance formula, P lies on the circle if and only if

$$\sqrt{(x - h)^2 + (y - k)^2} = a,$$

so

$$\boxed{(x - h)^2 + (y - k)^2 = a^2. \qquad (1)}$$

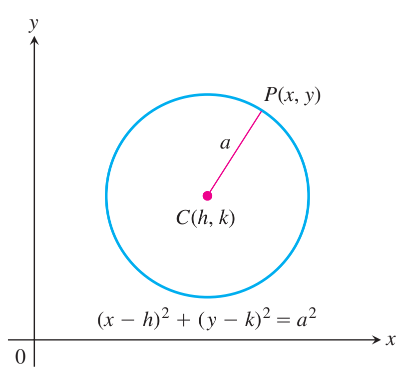

FIGURE 1.17 A circle of radius a in the xy-plane, with center at (h, k).

Equation (1) is the **standard equation** of a circle with center (h, k) and radius a. The circle of radius $a = 1$ and centered at the origin is the **unit circle** with equation

$$x^2 + y^2 = 1.$$

EXAMPLE 6

(a) The standard equation for the circle of radius 2 centered at (3, 4) is

$$(x-3)^2 + (y-4)^2 = 2^2 = 4.$$

(b) The circle

$$(x-1)^2 + (y+5)^2 = 3$$

has $h = 1$, $k = -5$, and $a = \sqrt{3}$. The center is the point $(h, k) = (1, -5)$ and the radius is $a = \sqrt{3}$. ■

If an equation for a circle is not in standard form, we can find the circle's center and radius by first converting the equation to standard form. The algebraic technique for doing so is *completing the square* (see Appendix 9).

EXAMPLE 7 Finding a Circle's Center and Radius

Find the center and radius of the circle

$$x^2 + y^2 + 4x - 6y - 3 = 0.$$

Solution We convert the equation to standard form by completing the squares in x and y:

$$x^2 + y^2 + 4x - 6y - 3 = 0$$

Start with the given equation.

$$(x^2 + 4x \quad) + (y^2 - 6y \quad) = 3$$

Gather terms. Move the constant to the right-hand side.

$$\left(x^2 + 4x + \left(\frac{4}{2}\right)^2\right) + \left(y^2 - 6y + \left(\frac{-6}{2}\right)^2\right) = 3 + \left(\frac{4}{2}\right)^2 + \left(\frac{-6}{2}\right)^2$$

Add the square of half the coefficient of x to each side of the equation. Do the same for y. The parenthetical expressions on the left-hand side are now perfect squares.

$$(x^2 + 4x + 4) + (y^2 - 6y + 9) = 3 + 4 + 9$$

$$(x+2)^2 + (y-3)^2 = 16$$

Write each quadratic as a squared linear expression.

The center is $(-2, 3)$ and the radius is $a = 4$. ■

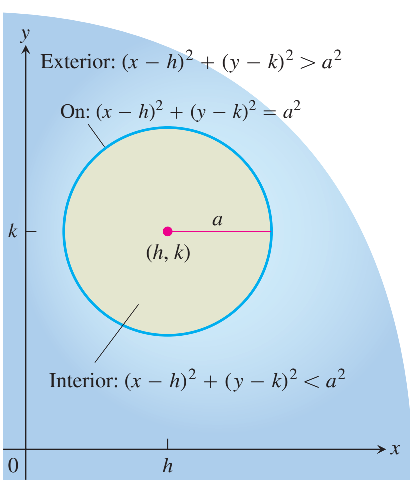

FIGURE 1.18 The interior and exterior of the circle $(x-h)^2 + (y-k)^2 = a^2$.

The points (x, y) satisfying the inequality

$$(x-h)^2 + (y-k)^2 < a^2$$

make up the **interior** region of the circle with center (h, k) and radius a (Figure 1.18). The circle's **exterior** consists of the points (x, y) satisfying

$$(x-h)^2 + (y-k)^2 > a^2.$$

Parabolas

The geometric definition and properties of general parabolas are reviewed in Section 10.1. Here we look at parabolas arising as the graphs of equations of the form $y = ax^2 + bx + c$.

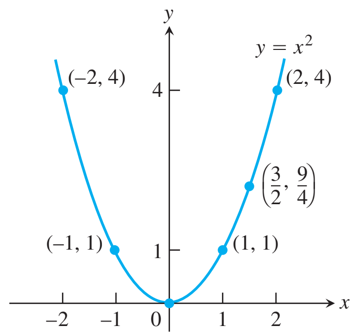

FIGURE 1.19 The parabola $y = x^2$ (Example 8).

EXAMPLE 8 The Parabola $y = x^2$

Consider the equation $y = x^2$. Some points whose coordinates satisfy this equation are $(0, 0)$, $(1, 1)$, $\left(\frac{3}{2}, \frac{9}{4}\right)$, $(-1, 1)$, $(2, 4)$, and $(-2, 4)$. These points (and all others satisfying the equation) make up a smooth curve called a parabola (Figure 1.19). ■

The graph of an equation of the form

$$y = ax^2$$

is a **parabola** whose **axis** (axis of symmetry) is the y-axis. The parabola's **vertex** (point where the parabola and axis cross) lies at the origin. The parabola opens upward if $a > 0$ and downward if $a < 0$. The larger the value of $|a|$, the narrower the parabola (Figure 1.20).

Generally, the graph of $y = ax^2 + bx + c$ is a shifted and scaled version of the parabola $y = x^2$. We discuss shifting and scaling of graphs in more detail in Section 1.5.

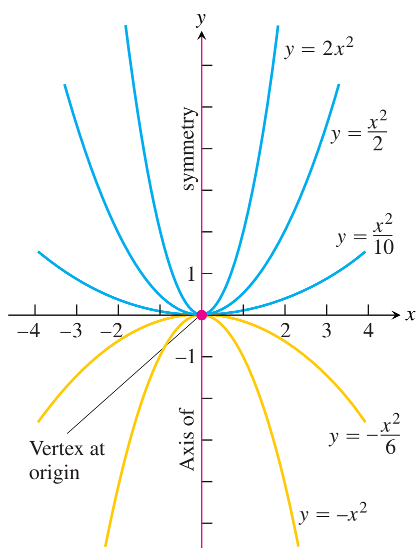

FIGURE 1.20 Besides determining the direction in which the parabola $y = ax^2$ opens, the number a is a scaling factor. The parabola widens as a approaches zero and narrows as $|a|$ becomes large.

The Graph of $y = ax^2 + bx + c, \quad a \neq 0$

The graph of the equation $y = ax^2 + bx + c$, $a \neq 0$, is a parabola. The parabola opens upward if $a > 0$ and downward if $a < 0$. The **axis** is the line

$$x = -\frac{b}{2a}. \tag{2}$$

The **vertex** of the parabola is the point where the axis and parabola intersect. Its x-coordinate is $x = -b/2a$; its y-coordinate is found by substituting $x = -b/2a$ in the parabola's equation.

Notice that if $a = 0$, then we have $y = bx + c$ which is an equation for a line. The axis, given by Equation (2), can be found by completing the square or by using a technique we study in Section 4.1.

EXAMPLE 9 Graphing a Parabola

Graph the equation $y = -\frac{1}{2}x^2 - x + 4$.

You Try It

Solution Comparing the equation with $y = ax^2 + bx + c$ we see that

$$a = -\frac{1}{2}, \qquad b = -1, \qquad c = 4.$$

Since $a < 0$, the parabola opens downward. From Equation (2) the axis is the vertical line

$$x = -\frac{b}{2a} = -\frac{(-1)}{2(-1/2)} = -1.$$

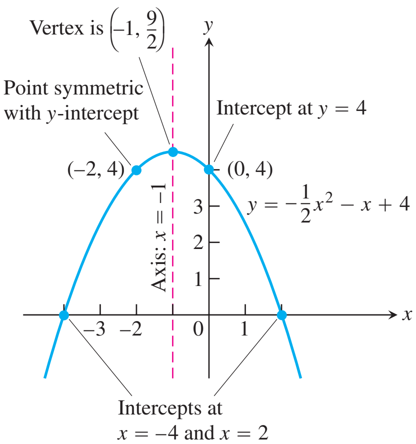

FIGURE 1.21 The parabola in Example 9.

When $x = -1$, we have

$$y = -\frac{1}{2}(-1)^2 - (-1) + 4 = \frac{9}{2}.$$

The vertex is $(-1, 9/2)$.

The x-intercepts are where $y = 0$:

$$\begin{aligned} -\frac{1}{2}x^2 - x + 4 &= 0 \\ x^2 + 2x - 8 &= 0 \\ (x - 2)(x + 4) &= 0 \\ x = 2, \qquad x &= -4 \end{aligned}$$

We plot some points, sketch the axis, and use the direction of opening to complete the graph in Figure 1.21. ■