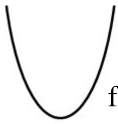
Sketching quadratic graphs

A LEVEL LINKS
Scheme of work: 1b. Quadratic functions – factorising, solving, graphs and the discriminants

Key points

- The graph of the quadratic function $y = ax^2 + bx + c$, where $a \neq 0$, is a curve called a parabola.
- Parabolas have a line of symmetry and a shape as shown.

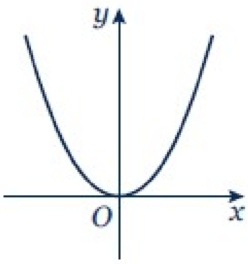

for $a > 0$

for $a < 0$

- To sketch the graph of a function, find the points where the graph intersects the axes.
- To find where the curve intersects the y-axis substitute $x = 0$ into the function.
- To find where the curve intersects the x-axis substitute $y = 0$ into the function.
- At the turning points of a graph the gradient of the curve is 0 and any tangents to the curve at these points are horizontal.
- To find the coordinates of the maximum or minimum point (turning points) of a quadratic curve (parabola) you can use the completed square form of the function.

Examples

Example 1 Sketch the graph of $y = x^2$.

	The graph of $y = x^2$ is a parabola. When $x = 0$, $y = 0$. $a = 1$ which is greater than zero, so the graph has the shape: 

Example 2 Sketch the graph of $y = x^2 - x - 6$.

When $x = 0$, $y = 0^2 - 0 - 6 = -6$ So the graph intersects the y-axis at $(0, -6)$	**1** Find where the graph intersects the y-axis by substituting $x = 0$.
When $y = 0$, $x^2 - x - 6 = 0$	**2** Find where the graph intersects the x-axis by substituting $y = 0$.
$(x + 2)(x - 3) = 0$	**3** Solve the equation by factorising.
$x = -2$ or $x = 3$	**4** Solve $(x + 2) = 0$ and $(x - 3) = 0$.
So, the graph intersects the x-axis at $(-2, 0)$ and $(3, 0)$	**5** $a = 1$ which is greater than zero, so the graph has the shape: 

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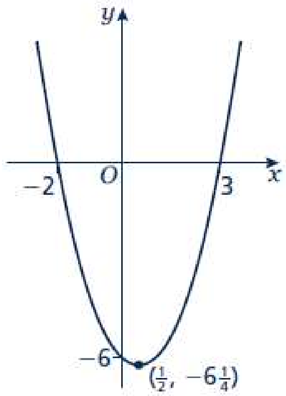
$x^2 - x - 6 = \left(x - \frac{1}{2}\right)^2 - \frac{1}{4} - 6$ $= \left(x - \frac{1}{2}\right)^2 - \frac{25}{4}$	**6** To find the turning point, complete the square.
When $\left(x - \frac{1}{2}\right)^2 = 0$, $x = \frac{1}{2}$ and $y = -\frac{25}{4}$, so the turning point is at the point $\left(\frac{1}{2}, -\frac{25}{4}\right)$ 	**7** The turning point is the minimum value for this expression and occurs when the term in the bracket is equal to zero.

Practice

1 Sketch the graph of $y = -x^2$.

2 Sketch each graph, labelling where the curve crosses the axes.

a $y = (x + 2)(x - 1)$ **b** $y = x(x - 3)$ **c** $y = (x + 1)(x + 5)$

3 Sketch each graph, labelling where the curve crosses the axes.

a $y = x^2 - x - 6$ **b** $y = x^2 - 5x + 4$ **c** $y = x^2 - 4$

d $y = x^2 + 4x$ **e** $y = 9 - x^2$ **f** $y = x^2 + 2x - 3$

4 Sketch the graph of $y = 2x^2 + 5x - 3$, labelling where the curve crosses the axes.

Extend

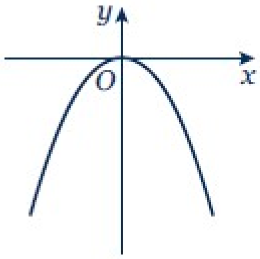
5 Sketch each graph. Label where the curve crosses the axes and write down the coordinates of the turning point.

a $y = x^2 - 5x + 6$ **b** $y = -x^2 + 7x - 12$ **c** $y = -x^2 + 4x$

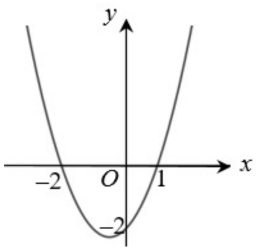
6 Sketch the graph of $y = x^2 + 2x + 1$. Label where the curve crosses the axes and write down the equation of the line of symmetry.

Answers

1



2 **a**



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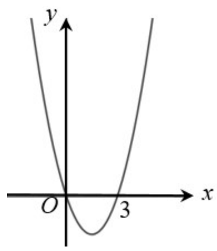

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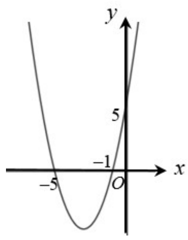
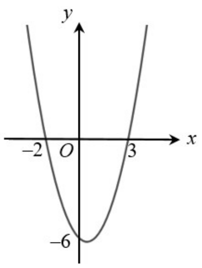


3 **a**



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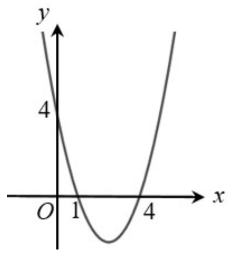

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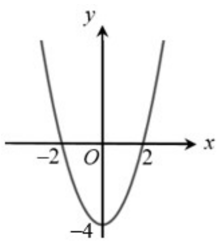

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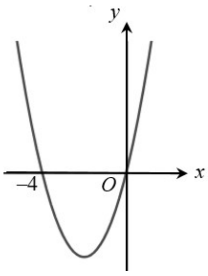

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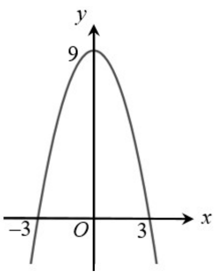

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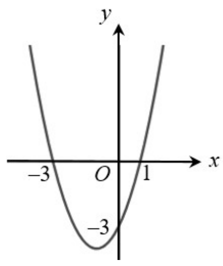

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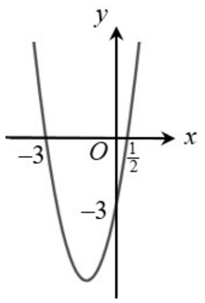
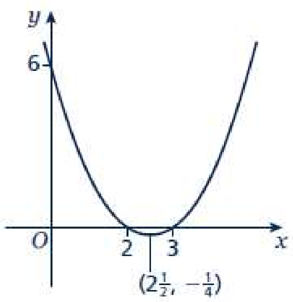


5 **a**



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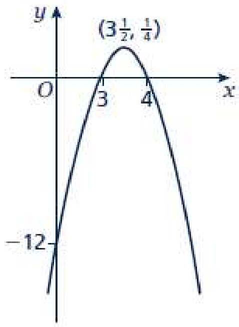

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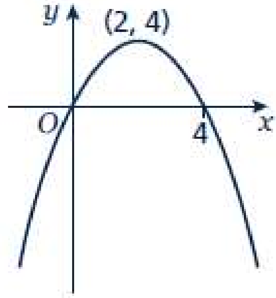

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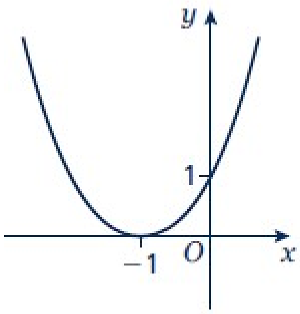

Line of symmetry at $x = -1$.