How to Perform Quadratic Regression on a TI-84 Calculator Easily

Authored by
stats writer

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Understanding the Fundamentals of Quadratic Regression

In the realm of **statistical modeling**, **quadratic regression** serves as a sophisticated analytical tool designed to identify the mathematical relationship between a **dependent variable** and an **independent variable** when that relationship is non-linear. Unlike simple **linear regression**, which assumes a constant rate of change represented by a straight line, quadratic regression accounts for data that follows a parabola. This method is particularly effective when the data points demonstrate a "U" or an inverted "U" shape, indicating that the response variable increases or decreases to a certain point before reversing its trajectory.

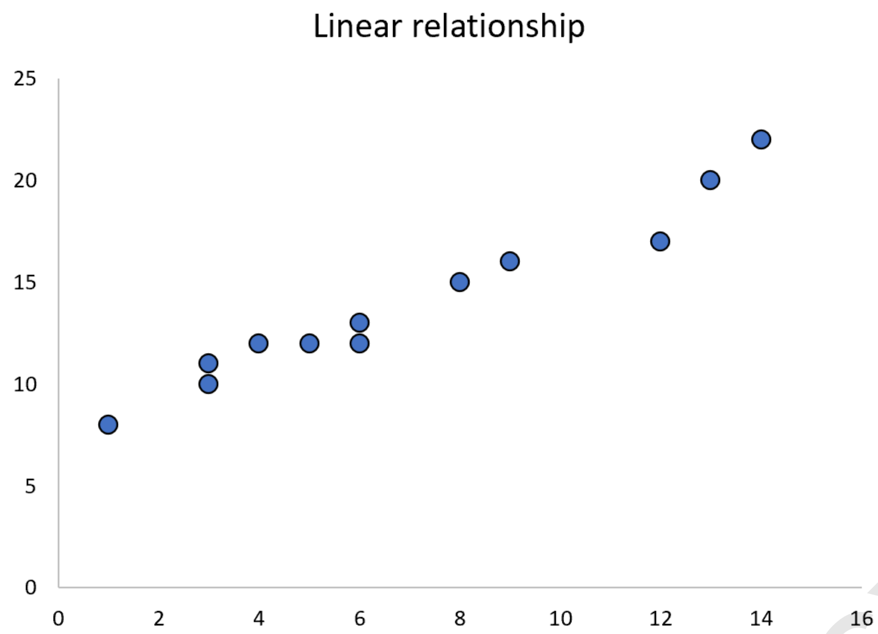
The mathematical foundation of this method relies on the quadratic function, which is generally expressed as $y = ax^2 + bx + c$. In this equation, **y** represents the predicted value, **x** is the explanatory variable, and **a**, **b**, and **c** are **regression coefficients** that define the shape and position of the curve. The coefficient **a** is especially critical, as it determines the direction of the opening of the parabola and the degree of its curvature. If **a** is positive, the curve opens upward; if negative, it opens downward.

Performing these calculations manually can be incredibly labor-intensive, involving complex **matrix algebra** and **least squares** estimations. However, the TI-84 calculator provides a streamlined, user-friendly interface to execute these operations with high precision. By leveraging the built-in **computational algorithms** of the TI-84, researchers and students can quickly transform raw data into a functional **predictive model**, allowing for deeper insights into the underlying patterns of the dataset.

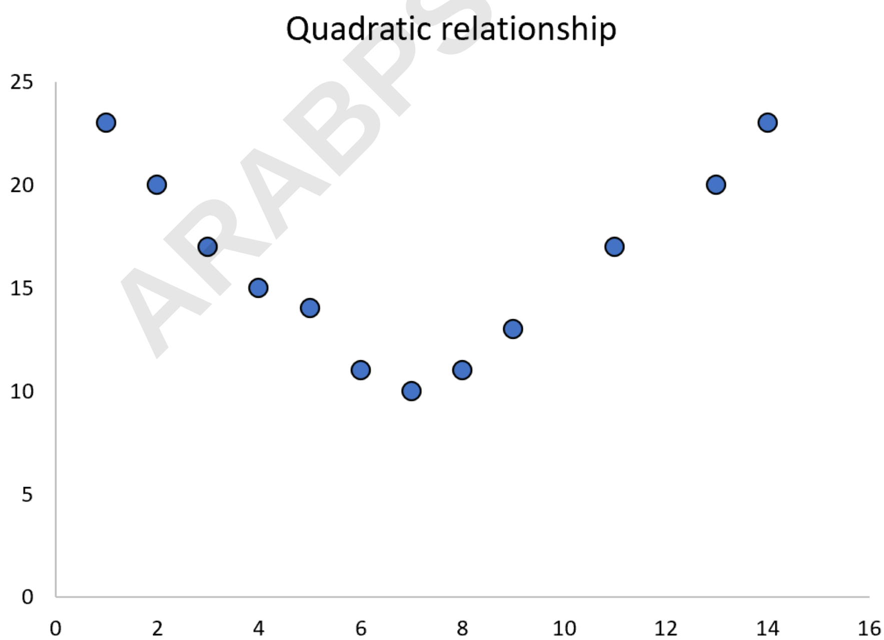
Distinguishing Between Linear and Quadratic Relationships

Before initiating the technical steps on a calculator, it is vital to understand when to apply **quadratic regression** over other forms of **regression analysis**. In many real-world scenarios, variables do not interact in a strictly linear fashion. For instance, the relationship between a person's age and their physical strength, or the relationship between a car's speed and its fuel efficiency, often follows a **curvilinear path**. Recognizing these patterns is the first step toward accurate data analysis.

When two variables have a linear relationship, we can often use **linear regression** to quantify their relationship. This model assumes that for every unit increase in the independent variable, there is a consistent, fixed change in the dependent variable. Visually, this is represented by a line of best fit that passes through the center of the **data clusters**. However, applying a linear model to quadratic data would result in significant **residual errors** and an inaccurate representation of the trend.



However, when two variables have a quadratic relationship, we can instead use **quadratic regression** to quantify their relationship. This approach is superior for datasets where the rate of change is not constant. By fitting a **polynomial of the second degree**, the model can capture the "peak" or "valley" of the data, providing a much higher degree of **accuracy** in both description and **forecasting**. This tutorial explains how to perform quadratic regression on a TI-84 Calculator, ensuring you can navigate these complex statistical tasks with ease.



Practical Application: A Study on Hours Worked and Happiness

To illustrate the power of this **statistical method**, let us consider a practical example involving **social science research**. Suppose we are interested in understanding the relationship between the number of hours an individual works per week and their self-reported **happiness levels**. Intuitively, one might assume that working too few hours leads to financial stress, while working too many hours leads to burnout. This suggests a **non-linear relationship** where happiness peaks at a moderate amount of work.

In this hypothetical study, we have collected data on the number of hours worked per week and the reported happiness level (on a scale of 0-100) for 11 different people. The **independent variable** (x) is the hours worked, and the **dependent variable** (y) is the happiness score. To determine the most effective **mathematical model**, we will use the computational capabilities of the TI-84 to find the **curve of best fit**.

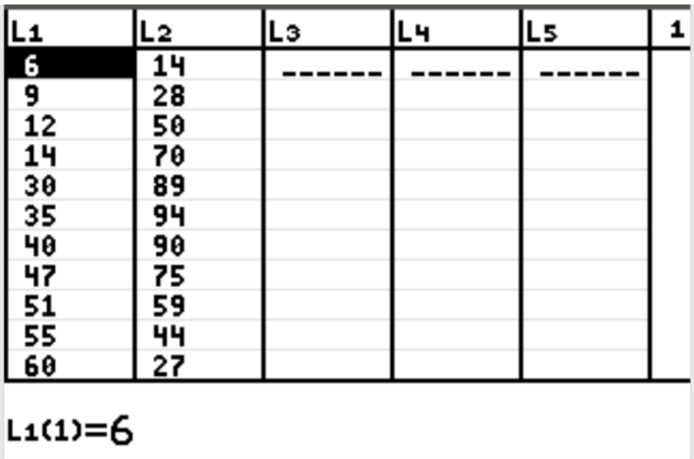
Hours	Happiness
6	14
9	28
12	50
14	70
30	89
35	94
40	90
47	75
51	59
55	44
60	27

By following the subsequent steps, you will learn how to input this data, visualize it through a **scatterplot**, and calculate the **regression equation**. This process is essential for anyone engaged in **quantitative research** or advanced **mathematics**, as it provides a structured methodology for interpreting complex behavioral data through the lens of **quadratic modeling**.

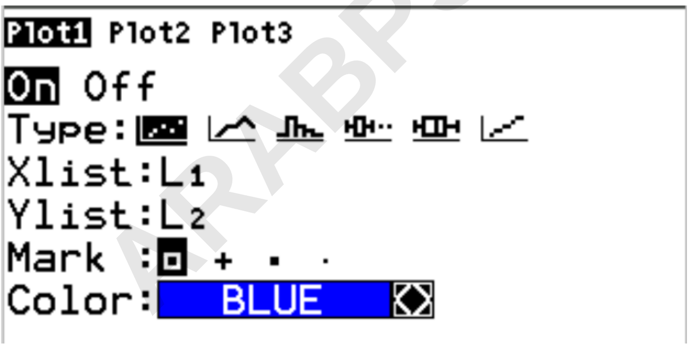
Step 1: Data Entry and Exploratory Visualization

Before we can use **quadratic regression**, we need to make sure that the relationship between the **explanatory variable** (hours) and **response variable** (happiness) is actually quadratic. This preliminary phase is known as **exploratory data analysis**. Visualization allows the researcher to detect **outliers**, observe the general shape of the data, and confirm that a second-degree polynomial is the appropriate choice for the model.

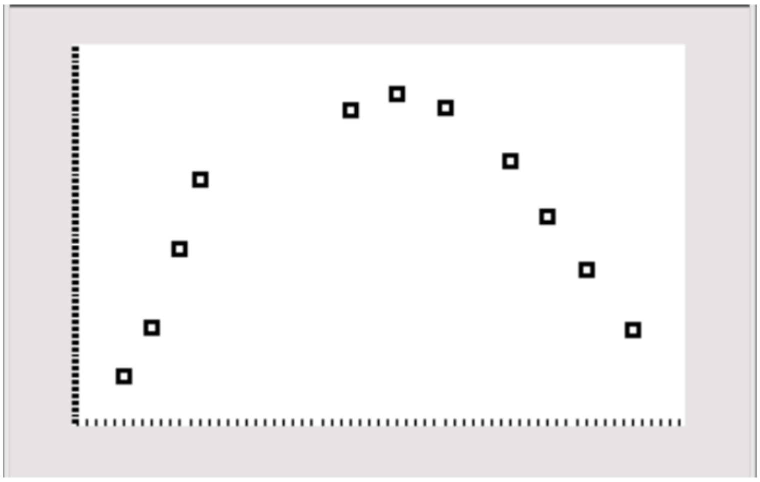
First, we will input the data values for both the explanatory and the response variable into the calculator's **list memory**. Press the button and then select the **EDIT** option. This will open the **spreadsheet interface** of the TI-84. Enter the following values for the explanatory variable (hours worked) in column **L1** and the values for the response variable (happiness) in column **L2**. Ensure that each pair of data points corresponds correctly across the rows to maintain **data integrity**.



Next, we must configure the calculator to display these points. Press and then press to access the **Stat Plot** menu. Highlight **Plot1** and press . Within this menu, ensure the plot is toggled to "On" and that the **Type** is set to the first icon, which represents a scatterplot. Confirm that **L1** and **L2** are selected for **Xlist** and **Ylist**, respectively. This step connects the raw data lists to the **graphing engine**.



To view the graph, the **viewing window** must be adjusted to fit the range of the data. Instead of manual adjustment, press and then select **9:ZoomStat**. This feature automatically optimizes the axes based on the values in your lists. This will automatically produce the following scatterplot, providing a clear visual representation of the **distribution** of the data points.

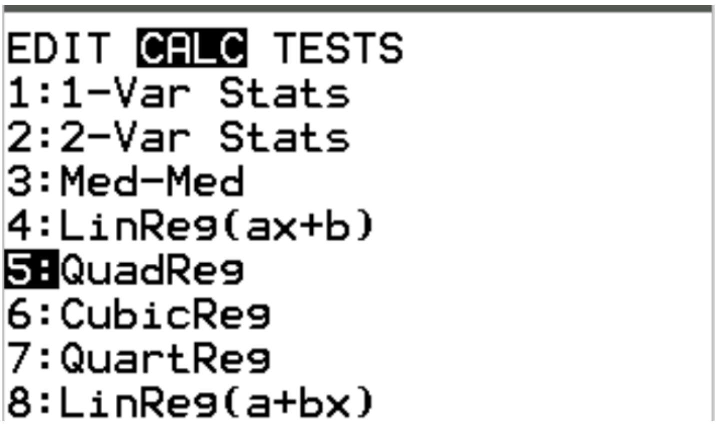


This upside-down "U" shape in the scatterplot indicates that there is a **quadratic relationship** between hours worked and happiness, which means we should use quadratic regression to quantify this relationship. The presence of a clear **vertex** (peak) confirms that a linear model would be insufficient and that a **parabolic function** is the most accurate way to represent the trend.

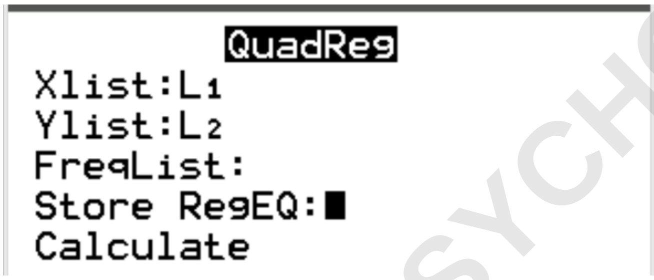
Step 2: Executing the Quadratic Regression Algorithm

Once the **quadratic nature** of the data is confirmed through visualization, the next phase is to compute the specific **coefficients** of the regression equation. This process involves the calculator performing a series of **matrix transformations** to minimize the sum of the squares of the **vertical deviations** between each data point and the resulting curve. This is known as the **least squares method** for polynomial regression.

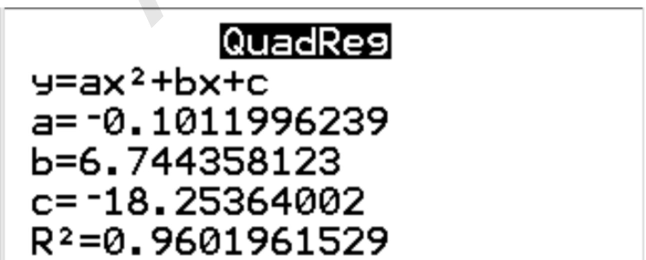
Next, we will perform quadratic regression by navigating back to the statistical menus. Press and then scroll over to the **CALC** tab at the top of the screen. This menu contains various **regression models**. Scroll down to **5: QuadReg** and press . This command instructs the TI-84 to calculate the best-fitting **parabolic equation** for the provided data pairs.



On the setup screen, for **Xlist** and **Ylist**, make sure **L1** and **L2** are selected, as these are the columns we used to input our data. Leave **FreqList** blank unless you have a third list representing the **frequency** of each observation. If you wish to store the resulting equation directly into your graph menu, you can navigate to **Store RegEQ** and select **Y1**. Finally, scroll down to **Calculate** and press .



The following output will automatically appear on your screen, providing the values for **a**, **b**, and **c**. These numerical values are the **parameters** that define the specific curve that minimizes the distance to all data points simultaneously. This output is the core of your **statistical analysis** and will be used to construct the final **predictive equation**.



Step 3: Interpreting the Regression Output and Coefficients

Interpreting the results of the **QuadReg** command requires an understanding of how the **coefficients** translate into a real-world context. From the results displayed on the TI-84, we can see that the estimated **regression equation** is as follows: **happiness = -0.1012(hours)² + 6.7444(hours) - 18.2536**. Each part of this **mathematical model** tells a story about the relationship between labor and emotional well-being.

The negative value of the **a** coefficient (-0.1012) confirms our visual observation that the parabola opens downward, indicating a **maximum point** of happiness. The **b** coefficient (6.7444) and the **c** constant (-18.2536) further define the **slope** at the y-intercept and the vertical shift of the curve. Together, these values allow us to use the equation to find the **predicted happiness** of an individual, given any specific number of hours they work per week.

For example, an individual that works 60 hours per week is predicted to have a happiness level of **22.09**. This is calculated by substituting 60 for "hours" in our equation: **happiness = -0.1012(60)² + 6.7444(60) - 18.2536 = 22.09**. This low score suggests that excessive work hours may correlate with a significant decline in reported happiness, likely due to fatigue or lack of leisure time.

Conversely, an individual that works 30 hours per week is predicted to have a happiness level of **92.99**: **happiness = -0.1012(30)² + 6.7444(30) - 18.2536 = 92.99**. This much higher score suggests that a 30-hour work week is closer to the **optimal balance** for this particular group of subjects. Such **predictive modeling** is invaluable for **organizational psychology** and policy-making.

Evaluating Model Accuracy and R-Squared

Beyond simply generating an equation, a robust **statistical analysis** must also determine how well the model actually fits the observed data. This is achieved through the **coefficient of determination**, commonly known as **r-squared** (r^2). This metric provides a percentage that represents the **goodness-of-fit** of the regression curve. In the context of the TI-84, if r^2 is not visible in your output, you may need to turn on the **Diagnostic** mode via the **Catalog** menu.

We can see that the r-squared for the regression model is **r^2 = 0.9602**. This value is exceptionally high, as it ranges from 0 to 1. An r^2 of 0.9602 means that 96.02% of the **variance** in the response variable (happiness) can be explained by the explanatory variables (hours and hours²). In **social sciences**, an r^2 of this magnitude indicates an extremely strong **correlation** and suggests that the model is highly reliable for making predictions within the range of the studied data.

The remaining 3.98% of the variation is attributed to **residual error** or other factors not included in the model, such as individual personality traits, income, or health. Understanding the coefficient of determination is crucial because it tells the researcher whether the **quadratic model** is a meaningful representation of reality or if the observed pattern is merely a result of **random noise**.

By utilizing the TI-84 for **quadratic regression**, complex data can be distilled into actionable insights. Whether you are analyzing **economic trends**, biological growth patterns, or psychological data, the ability to accurately fit a **quadratic curve** allows for a deeper level of **quantitative reasoning**. This tool transforms raw numbers into a clear narrative, enabling more informed decisions based on **empirical evidence**.