

Suppose you have a definite function $f(x)$ in mind and you already know its Fourier transform, i.e. you know how to do the integral

$$\tilde{f}(k) = \frac{1}{\sqrt{2\pi}} \int_{-\infty}^{\infty} e^{-ikx} f(x) dx \quad (1)$$

Find the Fourier transform of the shifted function $f(x - x_0)$.

Solution Make the substitution $y = x - x_0$, $dy = dx$:

$$\tilde{f}_{x_0}(k) = \frac{1}{\sqrt{2\pi}} \int_{-\infty}^{\infty} e^{-ikx} f(x - x_0) dx \quad (2)$$

$$= \frac{1}{\sqrt{2\pi}} \int_{-\infty}^{\infty} e^{-ik(y+x_0)} f(y) dy \quad (3)$$

$$= e^{-ikx_0} \left(\frac{1}{\sqrt{2\pi}} \int_{-\infty}^{\infty} e^{-iky} f(y) dy \right) \quad (4)$$

$$= e^{-ikx_0} \tilde{f}(k) \quad (5)$$

Notice that the shift in the original function just resulted in an extra phase factor multiplying the Fourier transform.