

Intermediate Microeconomics

Chapter 1 *Introduction*

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What is microeconomics?

- Economics = the study of how people and societies deal with scarcity
- Microeconomics = the branch of economics focusing on the economic behavior of individual decision-making units *and* how these individual decisions fit together

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The three questions in (micro)economics

1. What to produce?

- opportunity cost = what is given up in order to obtain something

2. How to produce it?

- allocation of resources

3. Who gets the output?

- centrally planned economies vs. market system

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Economic analysis

- Models = a simplified description of some aspect of the economy
 - used to answer specific questions based on some simplifying assumptions
- Two types of analysis/statements:
 - normative = descriptive statements (cause and effect)
 - positive = value judgments

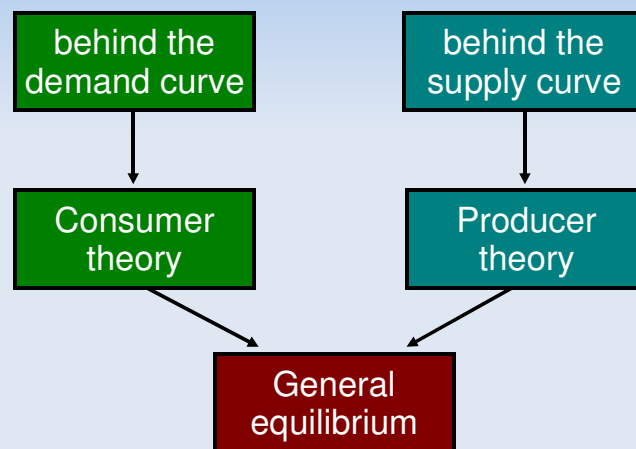
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Microeconomic foundations

- How consumers choose what to consume
- How firms choose how much to produce
- How firms choose the amount of labor and capital to use
- How do these actions coincide to bring about a market outcome

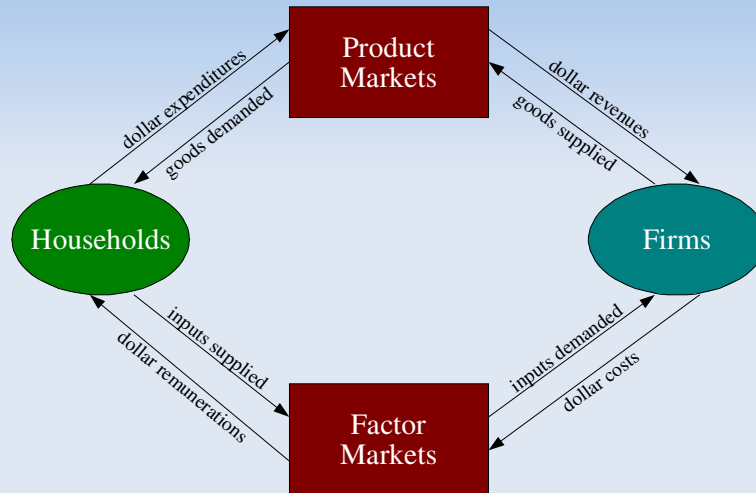
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Microeconomic foundations



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Circular flow of the economy



Circular flow of the economy

- Markets regulate the flows between the two sectors
- Simplifying assumptions:
 - ignores within-sector transactions (firm-firm or household-household)
 - ignores government (provision of law, taxes, public goods, etc.)

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Supply and demand model

- What guarantees that the activities of the two sectors are coordinated?
- In a centrally planned economy, a central planner would try to adjust quantity produced and/or price so as to reach a consensus
- In a decentralized (market) economy, this is achieved by the interaction of supply and demand

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Demand

- Factors influencing demand:
 - tastes
 - price – inversely related (*law of demand*)
 - income – positively (*normal good*) or negatively (*inferior good*)
 - prices of related goods – positively (*complements*) or negatively (*substitutes*)

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Demand schedule vs. Quantity demanded

- Demand schedule = the relationship between market price and quantity demanded at a given time, all other things equal (*ceteris paribus*)
- Changes in factors:
 - price – *movement along the curve*
 - any other factor – *shift in the curve*

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Supply

- Factors influencing supply:
 - technology
 - price – positively (*law of supply*)
 - price of inputs – negatively

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Supply schedule vs. Quantity supplied

- Supply schedule = the relationship between market price and quantity supplied at a given time, all other things equal (*ceteris paribus*)
- Changes in factors:
 - price – *movement along the curve*
 - any other factor – *shift in the curve*

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Equilibrium

- Equilibrium = a state that persists because nobody has any incentive to change their behavior
- In the supply and demand model, equilibrium is achieved when quantity supplied (Q^s) = quantity demanded (Q^d):
 - if $Q^s > Q^d$ (*excess supply*), then price falls
 - if $Q^s < Q^d$ (*excess demand*), then price rises

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The market for inputs

- The supply and demand model can be applied to the market for inputs as well
- In this case:
 - demand comes from firms
 - supply comes from households
 - price = wages, rents, etc.
- The equilibrium is coordinated by “prices”

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The role of prices

- Prices have three major roles:
 - (1) convey information – signal changes in the market factors, inducing the corresponding changes in behavior
 - (2) ration scarce resources – more scarce resources cost more, hence quantity demanded is lower
 - (3) determine incomes – who gets what is produced

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Part 1: Consumer theory

- Preferences
- Utility functions
- Budget constraints
- Optimal choice
- Demand

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Part 2: Producer theory

- Technology
- Production functions
- Cost curves
- Profit maximization
- Supply

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Part 3: General equilibrium

- Pareto efficiency
- An exchange economy
- A production economy
- Production and consumption in general equilibrium
- The fundamental theorems of welfare economics

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Part 4: Market failure

- Market power:
 - ♦ monopoly
 - ♦ monopolistic competition
 - ♦ oligopoly
 - ♦ strategic behavior among firms
- Missing markets:
 - ♦ public goods
 - ♦ externalities

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