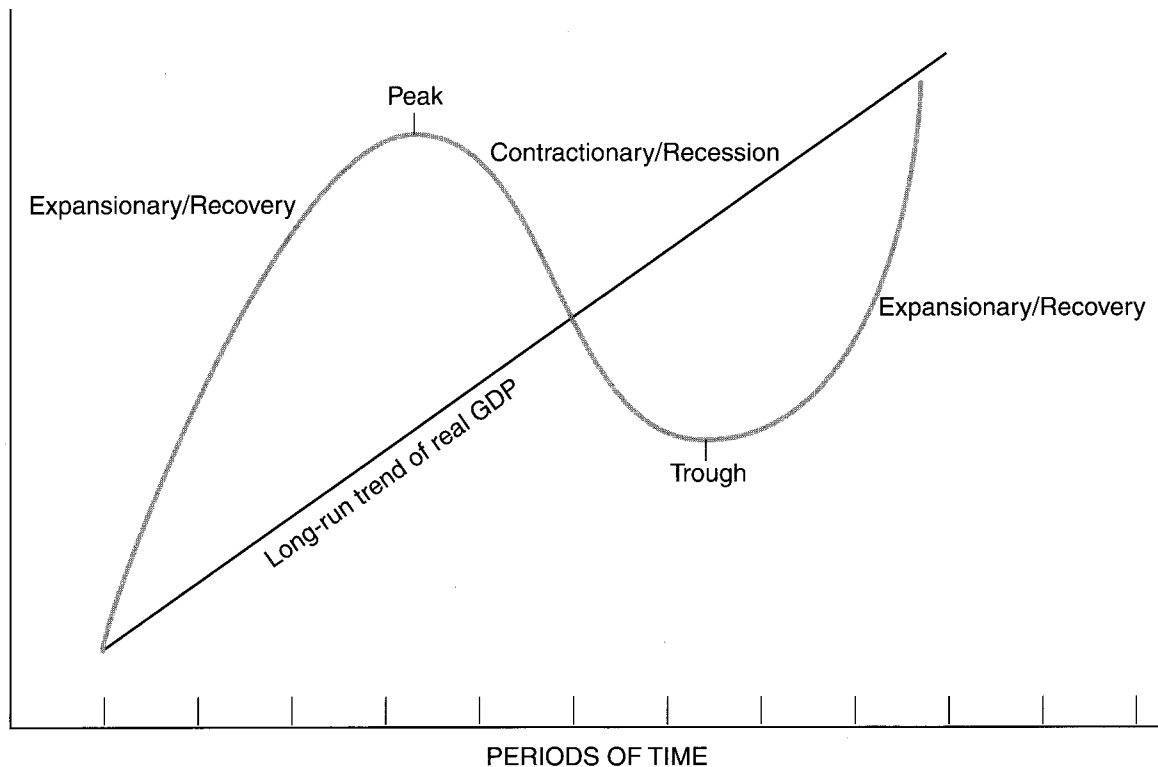


The Business Cycle



Figure 17.1
The Business Cycle



The curved line on Figure 17.1 shows a sample business cycle for an economy. The straight line represents the long-run trend of real GDP.

The business cycle can conveniently be divided into four phases:

1. **Expansionary or recovery phase.** Real output in the economy is increasing and the unemployment rate is declining. As the economic expansion continues, inflation may begin to accelerate.
2. **Peak.** Real output, GDP, is at its highest point of the business cycle.
3. **Contractionary or recession phase.** Real output in the economy is decreasing, and the unemployment rate is rising. As the contraction continues, inflationary pressures subside. If the recession continues long enough, prices may actually start to fall, a situation known as deflation.
4. **Trough.** The lowest point of real GDP reached during the business cycle is known as the trough. If the trough is particularly deep, it may be called a depression. A depression is an economic situation where the level of output falls to especially low levels and unemployment climbs to very high levels relative to the historical average. There is no precise decline in out-

Activity written by David Nelson, Western Washington University, Bellingham, Wash., with revision by Rae Jean B. Goodman, U.S. Naval Academy, Annapolis, Md.

put at which a serious recession becomes a depression. However, most business cycles do not end in a depression. The most recent depression the United States experienced was during the 1930s.

1. Figure 17.2 contains information for the U.S. economy from 1980 through 2001. For each quarter, first identify whether the economy was in an expansionary (E) or a contractionary (C) phase. Go back and pick out the quarters that correspond with a business cycle peak, and mark them with a P. Then find the quarters that correspond with a trough, and mark them with a T. Some of the answers have been provided for you.

Using your answers from Question 1, answer the following questions.

2. How many business cycles did the U.S. economy have between 1980 and 2001? _____
3. In how many quarters was output expanding? _____
4. In how many quarters was output contracting? _____
5. Which expansion looks best to you? Explain.
6. Which contraction looks worst to you? Explain.
7. During quarters in which real GDP fell, what happened to the unemployment rate compared with the previous quarter? Why?
8. Look at the unemployment rate in quarters corresponding to a business cycle peak. Why do you think there was still some unemployment in these quarters?
9. Look at the unemployment rate in quarters corresponding to recoveries. Why do you think the unemployment rate remained high?
10. Based on the years 1980 to 2001, how does the rate of inflation correspond with the business cycle?



Figure 17.2

The U.S. Economy from 1980

Year	Real GDP in 1996 Dollars (billions)	% Change From Previous Quarter	Civilian Unemployment Rate	Inflation Rate (CPI)	Phase of Business Cycle
1980q1	4,958.9	0.33	6.30	3.91	
1980q2	4,857.8	-2.04	7.32	3.67	
1980q3	4,850.3	-0.15	7.68	1.83	
1980q4	4,936.6	1.78	7.40	2.64	
1981q1	5,032.5	1.94	7.43	2.65	
1981q2	4,997.3	-0.70	7.40	2.32	
1981q3	5,056.8	1.19	7.42	2.82	
1981q4	4,997.1	-1.18	8.24	1.44	
1982q1	4,914.3	-1.66	8.84	0.82	
1982q2	4,935.5	0.43	9.43	1.52	
1982q3	4,912.1	-0.47	9.94	1.88	
1982q4	4,915.6	0.07	10.68	0.24	
1983q1	4,972.4	1.16	10.39	-0.07	
1983q2	5,089.8	2.36	10.10	1.26	
1983q3	5,180.4	1.78	9.36	1.18	
1983q4	5,286.8	2.05	8.54	0.90	
1984q1	5,402.3	2.18	7.87	1.12	E
1984q2	5,493.8	1.69	7.48	1.08	E
1984q3	5,541.3	0.86	7.45	1.10	E
1984q4	5,583.1	0.75	7.28	0.73	E
1985q1	5,629.7	0.83	7.28	0.63	E
1985q2	5,673.8	0.78	7.29	1.23	E
1985q3	5,758.6	1.49	7.21	0.71	E
1985q4	5,806.0	0.82	7.05	0.89	E
1986q1	5,858.9	0.91	7.02	0.21	E
1986q2	5,883.3	0.42	7.18	-0.21	E
1986q3	5,937.9	0.93	6.99	0.73	E
1986q4	5,969.5	0.53	6.83	0.55	E
1987q1	6,013.3	0.73	6.62	1.12	E



Figure 17.2 (continued)

Year	Real GDP in 1996 Dollars (billions)	% Change From Previous Quarter	Civilian Unemployment Rate	Inflation Rate (CPI)	Phase of Business Cycle
1987q2	6,077.2	1.06	6.28	1.31	E
1987q3	6,128.1	0.84	6.01	1.15	E
1987q4	6,234.4	1.73	5.87	0.84	E
1988q1	6,275.9	0.67	5.73	0.61	E
1988q2	6,349.8	1.18	5.49	1.26	E
1988q3	6,382.3	0.51	5.49	1.33	E
1988q4	6,465.2	1.30	5.35	1.04	
1989q1	6,543.8	1.22	5.22	1.11	
1989q2	6,579.4	0.54	5.24	1.64	
1989q3	6,610.6	0.47	5.28	0.81	
1989q4	6,633.5	0.35	5.37	0.96	
1990q1	6,716.3	1.25	5.30	1.72	
1990q2	6,731.7	0.23	5.34	1.02	
1990q3	6,719.4	-0.18	5.69	1.73	
1990q4	6,664.2	-0.82	6.11	1.62	
1991q1	6,631.4	-0.49	6.57	0.82	
1991q2	6,668.5	0.56	6.82	0.59	
1991q3	6,684.9	0.25	6.85	0.79	
1991q4	6,720.9	0.54	7.10	0.76	E
1992q1	6,783.3	0.93	7.38	0.70	E
1992q2	6,846.8	0.94	7.60	0.82	E
1992q3	6,899.7	0.77	7.63	0.79	E
1992q4	6,990.6	1.32	7.41	0.71	E
1993q1	6,988.7	-0.03	7.15	0.85	C
1993q2	7,031.2	0.61	7.07	0.77	E
1993q3	7,062.0	0.44	6.80	0.39	E
1993q4	7,168.7	1.51	6.62	0.69	E
1994q1	7,229.4	0.85	6.56	0.64	E
1994q2	7,330.2	1.39	6.17	0.64	E
1994q3	7,370.2	0.55	6.00	0.88	E

✱ Figure 17.2 (continued)

Year	Real GDP in 1996 Dollars (billions)	% Change From Previous Quarter	Civilian Unemployment Rate	Inflation Rate (CPI)	Phase of Business Cycle
1994q4	7,461.1	1.23	5.62	0.47	E
1995q1	7,488.7	0.37	5.48	0.82	E
1995q2	7,503.3	0.19	5.68	0.88	E
1995q3	7,561.4	0.77	5.66	0.44	E
1995q4	7,621.9	0.80	5.57	0.48	E
1996q1	7,676.4	0.72	5.55	0.91	E
1996q2	7,802.9	1.65	5.47	0.99	E
1996q3	7,841.9	0.50	5.26	0.53	E
1996q4	7,931.3	1.14	5.31	0.72	E
1997q1	8,016.4	1.07	5.23	0.67	E
1997q2	8,131.9	1.44	4.98	0.40	E
1997q3	8,216.6	1.04	4.86	0.40	E
1997q4	8,272.9	0.69	4.68	0.39	E
1998q1	8,396.3	1.49	4.64	0.27	E
1998q2	8,442.9	0.56	4.42	0.54	E
1998q3	8,528.5	1.01	4.53	0.39	E
1998q4	8,667.9	1.63	4.43	0.35	E
1999q1	8,733.5	0.76	4.26	0.39	E
1999q2	8,771.2	0.43	4.26	0.97	E
1999q3	8,871.5	1.14	4.25	0.62	E
1999q4	9,049.9	2.01	4.10	0.62	E
2000q1	9,102.5	0.58	4.02	0.99	E
2000q2	9,229.4	1.39	4.00	1.06	E
2000q3	9,260.1	0.33	4.06	0.80	E
2000q4	9,303.9	0.47	3.97	0.54	E
2001q1	9,334.5	0.33	4.19	0.96	E
2001q2	9,341.7	0.08	4.47	1.04	E