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The classic study of linear partial differential equations centered around the three basic types of equations: elliptic, parabolic, and hyperbolic. From physical considerations for the potential, heat, and wave equations, one was able to determine suitable boundary value problems for each category of equation or system of equations.

However, when an equation or system did not fit into one of the three types, little was known or done concerning the determination of proper boundary value problems. In the 1930s, J. Hadamard, O. Sjostrand, and others began the study of equations of *composite type* in two dimensions. These are equations that have characteristics of both elliptic and hyperbolic (or parabolic) type. For example, if one considers a first-order system of three or more equations, then the system will be of composite type if at least one of the roots of the characteristic equation is real and at