

Here we shall give a direct verification that the Green function

$$G_{\pm}(\mathbf{x}, \mathbf{x}') = \frac{e^{\pm ik|\mathbf{x}-\mathbf{x}'|}}{|\mathbf{x}-\mathbf{x}'|} \quad (1)$$

satisfies the inhomogeneous Helmholtz equation with delta source:

$$(\nabla^2 + k^2) G_{\pm}(\mathbf{x}, \mathbf{x}') = -4\pi\delta(\mathbf{x}-\mathbf{x}') \quad (2)$$

Let

$$\mathbf{r} = \mathbf{x} - \mathbf{x}' \quad (3)$$

then (1) can be written as

$$G_{\pm}(\mathbf{r}) = \frac{e^{\pm ikr}}{r} \quad (4)$$

When $r > 0$, with the spherical representation of ∇^2 , it's straightforward to verify that

$$(\nabla^2 + k^2) G_{\pm}(\mathbf{r}) = \frac{1}{r} \frac{d^2}{dr^2} (rG_{\pm}) + k^2 G_{\pm} = 0 \quad \text{for } r > 0 \quad (5)$$

Now consider the integration of both sides of (2) over the volume of an infinitesimal ball of radius ϵ . The RHS gives

$$\int_{r < \epsilon} -4\pi\delta(\mathbf{r}) d^3x = -4\pi \quad (6)$$

and the LHS produces a sum of two integrals

$$\int_{r < \epsilon} (\nabla^2 + k^2) G_{\pm} d^3x = \underbrace{\int_{r < \epsilon} \nabla \cdot (\nabla G_{\pm}) d^3x}_{I_1} + \underbrace{\int_{r < \epsilon} k^2 G_{\pm} d^3x}_{I_2} \quad (7)$$

By divergence theorem,

$$I_1 = 4\pi\epsilon^2 \cdot \left. \frac{\partial G_{\pm}}{\partial r} \right|_{r=\epsilon} = 4\pi\epsilon^2 \left(\pm ik \frac{e^{\pm ike}}{\epsilon} - \frac{e^{\pm ike}}{\epsilon^2} \right) \quad (8)$$

and

$$\begin{aligned} I_2 &= 4\pi \int_0^{\epsilon} k^2 G_{\pm} r^2 dr = 4\pi k^2 \int_0^{\epsilon} r e^{\pm ikr} dr \\ &= 4\pi k^2 \left(\frac{1}{\pm ik} r e^{\pm ikr} \Big|_0^{\epsilon} - \frac{1}{\pm ik} \int_0^{\epsilon} e^{\pm ikr} dr \right) \\ &= 4\pi k^2 \left(\frac{1}{\pm ik} r e^{\pm ikr} \Big|_0^{\epsilon} - \left(\frac{1}{\pm ik} \right)^2 e^{\pm ikr} \Big|_0^{\epsilon} \right) \end{aligned} \quad (9)$$

When we take the limit $\epsilon \rightarrow 0$, we see (7) is indeed approaching -4π . Thus by definition of δ function, that is, $(\nabla^2 + k^2) G_{\pm}(\mathbf{r}) = 0$ when $r > 0$ but its integration over the infinitesimal ball containing $r = 0$ is -4π , (1) is a solution of (2).