

The Charge

Christopher Hunt, Luiz Medina, Hannah Dempsey

According to Coloumb's Law, the electrostatic field \vec{E} due to a charge q at the origin is given by:

$$\vec{E} = \frac{q}{4\pi\epsilon_0} \frac{\vec{r}}{|\vec{r}|^3}$$

Get ready:

First we verify that $\frac{\vec{r}}{|\vec{r}|^3} = \frac{1}{r^2}\hat{r}$, where r is the radius in spherical coordinates. The general vector equation for a sphere in spherical coordinates is:

$$\vec{r} = r\hat{r}$$

Substituting that in to the equation $\frac{\vec{r}}{|\vec{r}|^3}$ we get:

$$\frac{r}{r^3}\hat{r} \rightarrow \frac{1}{r^2}\hat{r}$$

Set:

Next we find the flux of the vector field \vec{E} through the surface S , where S is the outward oriented sphere of radius $a > 0$ centered at the origin, including units. The flux of a vector field through some surface can be expressed as $\int_S \vec{E} \cdot d\vec{A}$. The electrostatic field \vec{E} has units $\frac{N}{C}$ and the surface differential of the sphere has units m^2 , taking the integral of the dot product of these two values will then give us units of:

$$\frac{Nm^2}{C}$$

Now we find the flux through the surface. Begin by finding the surface differential of the sphere:

$$r = a \rightarrow dr = 0 \quad \vec{r} = a\hat{r} \rightarrow d\vec{r} = a d\theta\hat{\theta} + a \sin(\theta) d\phi\hat{\phi}$$

Hold $d\phi$ constant:

$$d\vec{r}_1 = a d\theta\hat{\theta}$$

Hold $d\theta$ constant:

$$d\vec{r}_2 = a \sin(\theta) d\phi\hat{\phi}$$

Take the cross product of these two vectors to find $d\vec{A}$:

$$d\vec{A} = d\vec{r}_1 \times d\vec{r}_2 = a^2 \sin(\theta) d\theta d\phi \hat{r}$$

Now use $\int_S \vec{E} \cdot d\vec{A}$ to find the flux:

$$\begin{aligned} \int_S \vec{E} \cdot d\vec{A} &\rightarrow \int_0^{2\pi} \int_0^\pi \left(\frac{q}{4\pi\epsilon_0} \cdot \frac{1}{a^2} \hat{r} \right) \bullet \left(a^2 \sin(\theta) d\theta d\phi \hat{r} \right) \\ \frac{q}{4\pi\epsilon_0} \int_0^{2\pi} \int_0^\pi \sin(\theta) d\theta d\phi &= \frac{q}{4\pi\epsilon_0} \int_0^{2\pi} (-\cos(\theta)|_0^\pi) = \frac{q}{4\pi\epsilon_0} \int_0^{2\pi} 2 d\phi = \frac{q}{2\pi\epsilon_0} (\phi|_0^{2\pi}) = \frac{q}{\epsilon_0} \end{aligned}$$

The flux through a sphere of radius $a > 0$ is:

$$\frac{q}{\epsilon_0} \frac{Nm^2}{C}$$

Go:

This flux integral shows that for any constant point charge, the flux through a sphere of any radius, $r > 0$, with the charge at the center will be the value of the charge inversely proportional to the absolute dielectric permittivity of classical vacuum.

$$\Phi = \oint_S \vec{E} \cdot d\vec{A} = \frac{q}{\epsilon_0} \frac{Nm^2}{C}$$