



THE LAPLACE'S EQUATION: PREMIER UNIVERSITY

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← The Laplace's equation in 2-D is:

$$\frac{\partial^2 u}{\partial x^2} + \frac{\partial^2 u}{\partial y^2} = 0 \quad \text{and in 3-D is:}$$

$$\frac{\partial^2 u}{\partial x^2} + \frac{\partial^2 u}{\partial y^2} + \frac{\partial^2 u}{\partial z^2} = 0$$

which are also called steady-state heat equations as because it is exactly the two or three-dimensional respective ~~equa~~ equation of heat conduction when $\frac{\partial u}{\partial t} = 0$. (that is, when u is constant with time).

← but, Laplace's equation ~~is~~ occurs in many other contexts; for example, in potential theory, a function satisfying Laplace's equation is called harmonic function. In this context, one usually sees a vector-related notation $\nabla^2 u$ for $\frac{\partial^2 u}{\partial x^2} + \frac{\partial^2 u}{\partial y^2}$ in 2-D or $\frac{\partial^2 u}{\partial x^2} + \frac{\partial^2 u}{\partial y^2} + \frac{\partial^2 u}{\partial z^2}$ in 3-D where $\nabla^2 u$ is read as; "del squared u " and ∇^2 is called the Laplacian operator; and in this

notation, the Laplace's equation becomes ^(P-1)

$$\nabla^2 u = 0$$

Two (following) types of problems commonly arise involving Laplace's equation in 2-D or 3-D:

(1) A Dirichlet Problem: it consists of finding a function satisfying $\nabla^2 u = 0$ in a given region, assuming specified values $u = f$ on the boundary of the region. For example, in 3-D we might want to satisfy $\nabla^2 u = 0$ inside a sphere, with $u(x, y, z) = f(x, y, z)$ given on the surface of the sphere.

(2) A Neumann Problem: it consists of finding a function satisfying $\nabla^2 u = 0$ with given normal derivative $\frac{\partial u}{\partial n} = g$ on the boundary.

Note: (a) Dirichlet problem has unique solutions, with certain assumption on the region and data function f .

(b) Neumann problems have solutions uniquely specified with an arbitrary added constant.



Poisson's Equation:


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• Poisson's equation has the form: $\nabla^2 u = f$ where f is given. when f is zero, Poisson's equation reduces to Laplace's equation.

Notations:

Equations	Coordinate	Standard	Subscript
Equations	Coordinates	Standard Form	Subscript form
Wave Eqn.	1-D	$\frac{\partial^2 y}{\partial t^2} = a^2 \frac{\partial^2 y}{\partial x^2}$	$y_{tt} = a^2 y_{xx}$
Heat Eqn.	1-D	$\frac{\partial u}{\partial t} = a^2 \frac{\partial^2 u}{\partial x^2}$	$u_t = a^2 u_{xx}$
Laplace's	2-D	$\frac{\partial^2 u}{\partial x^2} + \frac{\partial^2 u}{\partial y^2} = 0$	$u_{xx} + u_{yy} = 0$
Laplace's	3-D	$\frac{\partial^2 u}{\partial x^2} + \frac{\partial^2 u}{\partial y^2} + \frac{\partial^2 u}{\partial z^2} = 0$	$u_{xx} + u_{yy} + u_{zz} = 0$
Laplace's	Cylindrical	$\frac{1}{r} \frac{\partial}{\partial r} \left(r \frac{\partial u}{\partial r} \right) + \frac{1}{r^2} \frac{\partial^2 u}{\partial \theta^2} + \frac{\partial^2 u}{\partial z^2} = 0$	$\frac{1}{r} (r u_r)_r + \frac{1}{r^2} u_{\theta\theta} + u_{zz} = 0$

Eqn.	coordinates	Standard form	Subscript form
placed	Spherical	$\frac{1}{r^2} \frac{\partial^2}{\partial r^2} (ru) +$ $\frac{1}{r^2 \sin^2 \phi} \frac{\partial^2 u}{\partial \theta^2}$ $+ \frac{1}{r^2 \sin \phi} \frac{\partial}{\partial \phi} \left[\frac{\partial u}{\partial \phi} \sin \phi \right]$ $\times \left[\frac{\partial}{\partial \phi} \left\{ \frac{\partial u}{\partial \phi} \sin \phi \right\} \right]$ $= 0$	$\frac{1}{r^2} (ru)_{rr}$ $+ \frac{1}{r^2 \sin^2 \phi} u_{\theta\theta}$ $+ \frac{1}{r^2 \sin \phi} \left[u_{\phi} \sin \phi \right]$ $= 0$ <div style="text-align: right;">  </div>