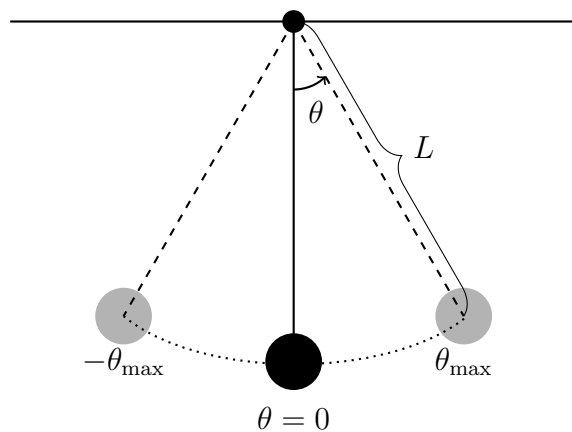


# Approximating the Period of a Pendulum

## AP Calculus BC: Taylor Series Project

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## 1 Inputs

- $L$ : Length of pendulum (meters)
- $\theta_{\max}$ : Maximum angular displacement (radians)

## 2 Period of a Pendulum

$$T = 2\pi \sqrt{\frac{L}{g}} \int_0^{\frac{\pi}{2}} \frac{1}{\sqrt{1 - k^2 \sin^2 \theta}} d\theta$$

where  $k = \sin\left(\frac{\theta_{\max}}{2}\right)$  (a constant).

### 3 Series Expansion

Let  $u = k^2 \sin^2 \theta$ , and the integrand becomes:

$$f(u) = \frac{1}{\sqrt{1-u}} = (1-u)^{-\frac{1}{2}}$$

which is in the form of a binomial series  $(1+x)^k = \sum_{n=0}^{\infty} \binom{k}{n} x^n$ .

Since we have not yet covered binomial series in class, we will instead use the Maclaurin series expansion for  $(1-u)^{-1/2}$  around  $u = 0$ . First, we find the general form of the  $n$ th derivative:

$$\begin{aligned} f^{(0)}(u) &= (1-u)^{-\frac{1}{2}} & \rightarrow f^{(0)}(0) &= \frac{1}{2^0} \\ f^{(1)}(u) &= -\frac{1}{2}(1-u)^{-\frac{3}{2}} & \rightarrow f^{(1)}(0) &= -\frac{1}{2^1} \\ f^{(2)}(u) &= \frac{1 \cdot 3}{2^2}(1-u)^{-\frac{5}{2}} & \rightarrow f^{(2)}(0) &= \frac{1 \cdot 3}{2^2} \\ f^{(3)}(u) &= -\frac{1 \cdot 3 \cdot 5}{2^3}(1-u)^{-\frac{7}{2}} & \rightarrow f^{(3)}(0) &= \underbrace{-}_{\text{alternating}} \frac{\overbrace{1 \cdot 3 \cdot 5}^{\text{odd-only factorial}}}{2^3} \\ f^{(n)}(u) &= \frac{(2n-1)!!}{2^n} (-1)^n \end{aligned}$$

Plugging in to the Maclaurin series formula  $f(x) = \sum_{n=0}^{\infty} \frac{f^{(n)}(0)}{n!} x^n$ , we get:

$$\frac{1}{\sqrt{1-u}} = \sum_{n=0}^{\infty} \frac{(-1)^n (2n-1)!!}{2^n n!} u^n$$

Since  $2^n n!$  is equivalent to multiplying by 2 for every term in the factorial, we can rewrite the series as the following, after substituting  $u = k^2 \sin^2 \theta = (k \sin \theta)^2$ :

$$\sum_{n=0}^{\infty} \frac{(-1)^n (2n-1)!!}{(2n)!!} (k \sin \theta)^{2n}$$

Keep in mind that for  $n = 0$ ,  $(2(0) - 1)!! = (-1)!! = 1$  by convention. <sup>1</sup>

## 4 Simplifying the Integral

Substitute the above Maclaurin series into the integral:

$$\int_0^{\frac{\pi}{2}} \frac{1}{\sqrt{1 - k^2 \sin^2 \theta}} d\theta = \int_0^{\frac{\pi}{2}} \sum_{n=0}^{\infty} \left[ \frac{(-1)^n (2n-1)!!}{(2n)!!} (k \sin \theta)^{2n} \right] d\theta$$

Take constant (non- $\theta$ ) terms out of the integral, since they are independent of  $\theta$ :

$$= \sum_{n=0}^{\infty} \left[ \frac{(-1)^n (2n-1)!!}{(2n)!!} k^{2n} \int_0^{\frac{\pi}{2}} \sin^{2n} \theta d\theta \right]$$

We evaluate the first three terms of the series to get a sense of the pattern:

$$1 - \frac{1}{2}k^2 \int_0^{\frac{\pi}{2}} \sin^2 \theta d\theta + \frac{3}{8}k^4 \int_0^{\frac{\pi}{2}} \sin^4 \theta d\theta + \dots$$

Find the values of the definite integrals using half-angle identities:

$$\int_0^{\frac{\pi}{2}} \left( \frac{1}{2} - \frac{1}{2} \cos(2\theta) \right) d\theta = \left[ \frac{\theta}{2} - \frac{1}{4} \sin(2\theta) \right]_0^{\frac{\pi}{2}} = \frac{\pi}{4}$$

$$\int_0^{\frac{\pi}{2}} \sin^4 \theta d\theta = \left[ \frac{\theta}{4} - \frac{1}{4} \sin(2\theta) + \frac{\theta}{8} + \frac{1}{32} \sin(4\theta) \right]_0^{\frac{\pi}{2}} = \frac{\pi}{8} + \frac{\pi}{16} = \frac{3\pi}{16}$$

The resulting terms are:

$$1 - \frac{1}{2}k^2 \left( \frac{\pi}{4} \right) + \frac{3}{8}k^4 \left( \frac{3\pi}{16} \right) + \dots$$

The process is tedious, but we see that each integral is in the form of Wallis integrals, defined by the sequence  $W_n = \int_0^{\frac{\pi}{2}} \sin^n \theta d\theta$ . Evaluating each

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<sup>1</sup><https://mathworld.wolfram.com/DoubleFactorial.html>

definite integral gives some multiple of  $\frac{\pi}{2}$ , and the antiderivative of all the recursive cosines from the half-angle identities all vanish, since  $\sin(2n \cdot \frac{\pi}{2}) = \sin(n\pi) = 0$ . Through integration by parts and recursive substitution of  $I$ , the value of even Wallis integrals are known to be:

$$W_{2n} = \frac{(2n-1)!!}{(2n)!!} \cdot \frac{\pi}{2}$$

After substituting in the value of the Wallis integrals, we can now express the general (approximate) formula for the period of a pendulum using the integrated Maclaurin series:

$$\begin{aligned} T &= 2\pi \sqrt{\frac{L}{g}} \sum_{n=0}^{\infty} \left[ \frac{(-1)^n (2n-1)!!}{(2n)!!} k^{2n} \cdot W_{2n} \right] \\ &= 2\pi \sqrt{\frac{L}{g}} \sum_{n=0}^{\infty} \left[ \frac{(-1)^n (2n-1)!!}{(2n)!!} k^{2n} \cdot \frac{(2n-1)!!}{(2n)!!} \cdot \frac{\pi}{2} \right] \\ &= 2\pi \cdot \frac{\pi}{2} \sqrt{\frac{L}{g}} \sum_{n=0}^{\infty} \left[ (-1)^n k^{2n} \left( \frac{(2n-1)!!}{(2n)!!} \right)^2 \right] \\ &= \pi \sqrt{\frac{L}{g}} \sum_{n=0}^{\infty} \left[ (-1)^n \sin^{2n} \left( \frac{\theta_{\max}}{2} \right) \left( \frac{(2n-1)!!}{(2n)!!} \right)^2 \right] \end{aligned}$$