

PHYS11 CH:2 How to Measure Motion

Distance, Displacement, Speed, and Velocity

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Outline

- 1 Introduction
- 2 Relative Motion, Distance, and Displacement
- 3 Speed and Velocity
- 4 Summary

The Mystery

How do you know something is moving?

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Everything is in motion. Your heart pumps blood. Atoms vibrate. Earth orbits the Sun.

How do you know something is moving?

Everything is in motion. Your heart pumps blood. Atoms vibrate. Earth orbits the Sun.

But motion is always relative to something.

What Is Kinematics?

The Study of Motion

Kinematics is the study of motion without considering its causes.

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Real-World Examples

- Tennis ball flying across court
- Spacecraft orbiting Mars
- Your walk to class

Learning Objectives

By the end of this section, you will be able to:

- **2.1:** Describe motion in different reference frames

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- **2.1:** Describe motion in different reference frames
- **2.1:** Define distance and displacement, and distinguish between the two
- **2.1:** Solve problems involving distance and displacement

2.1 The Reference Frame Problem



Figure: Are clouds a useful reference frame for airplane passengers?

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Reference frame: The coordinate system from which positions are described.

2.1 Galileo's Revelation



Galileo Galilei (1564-1642)

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Thought experiment: Person in windowless ship on calm sea.

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Galileo Galilei (1564-1642)

Thought experiment: Person in windowless ship on calm sea.
Can they tell if the ship is moving?

2.1 Galileo's Conclusion

Universal Truth

Only by comparing to each other can observers describe relative motion.

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Person on ship: "Shore is moving past me."

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Universal Truth

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Person on ship: "Shore is moving past me."

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The Paradox

Both are correct! Description depends on the reference frame.

2.1 Two Ways to Measure Motion

Distance

Total length of the path traveled. (Scalar)

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Displacement

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Key Difference

Civilian: "I drove 100 km today."

Physicist: "But your displacement was 0 - you ended where you started."

2.1 Visualizing Distance vs. Displacement

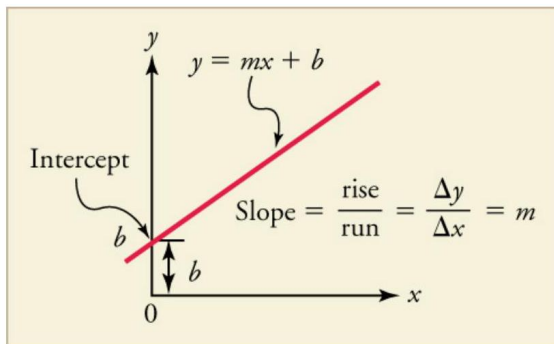


Figure: Short line is displacement. Curved path is distance.

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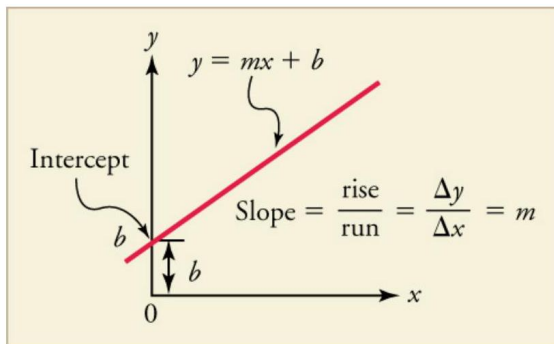


Figure: Short line is displacement. Curved path is distance.

Distance \geq Displacement (always!)

2.1 The Round Trip

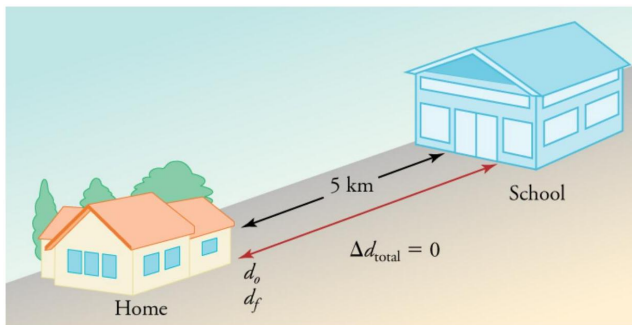


Figure: Drive to school (5 km) and back home (5 km)

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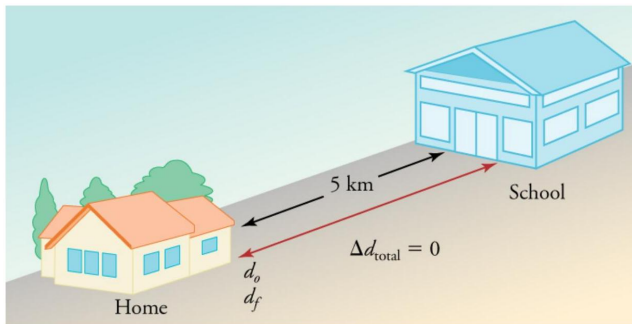


Figure: Drive to school (5 km) and back home (5 km)

Distance: 10 km

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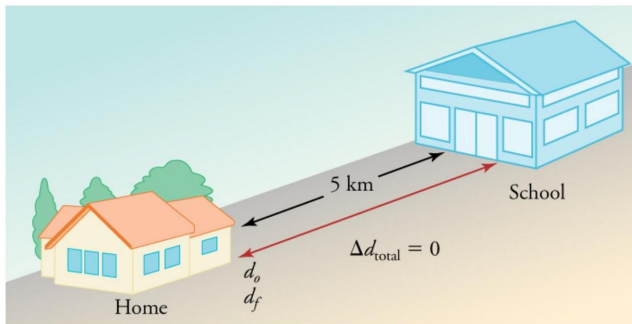


Figure: Drive to school (5 km) and back home (5 km)

Distance: 10 km

Displacement: 0 km (start and end at same position)

2.1 Scalars vs. Vectors

Scalar

Magnitude only

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Examples:

- Distance
- Speed
- Time
- Temperature
- Mass

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Magnitude AND direction

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Examples:

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Vector

Magnitude AND direction

Examples:

- Displacement
- Velocity
- Force
- Acceleration

2.1 Displacement Equation

Calculating Displacement

$$\Delta d = d_f - d_0$$

Change in position equals final position minus initial position.

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Symbols:

- Δ (delta) = change in
- d_0 = initial position
- d_f = final position

2.1 Choosing Your Axis

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Smart Choices

Choose origin and direction to make calculations easiest.

- Often: starting position = 0
- Often: forward/right = positive

Attempt: The Cyclist

The Challenge (3 min, silent)

A cyclist rides 3 km west and then turns around and rides 2 km east.

Find:

- (a) Displacement
- (b) Distance traveled
- (c) Magnitude of displacement

Hint: Choose your positive direction first. Work silently.

Compare: The Cyclist

Turn and talk (2 min):

- 1 Which direction did you choose as positive?
- 2 What was your displacement value?
- 3 Did you get a negative displacement? What does that mean?
- 4 How is distance different from displacement?

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Name wheel: One pair share your approach.

Reveal: The Cyclist Solution

Self-correct in a different color:

Setup: Choose east = positive, west = negative

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(a) Displacement:

$$\Delta \mathbf{d} = \mathbf{d}_f - \mathbf{d}_0 = -1 \text{ km}$$

(or 1 km west)

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(b) Distance traveled:

$$\text{Distance} = 3 \text{ km} + 2 \text{ km} = 5 \text{ km}$$

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$$\text{Distance} = 3 \text{ km} + 2 \text{ km} = 5 \text{ km}$$

(c) Magnitude of displacement:

$$|\Delta \mathbf{d}| = 1 \text{ km}$$

2.1 The Mars Probe Disaster

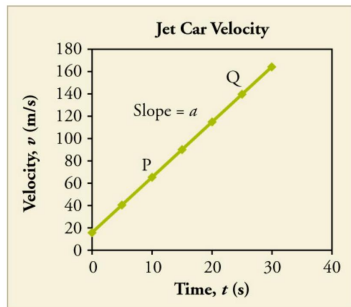


Figure: Mars Climate Orbiter, 1998

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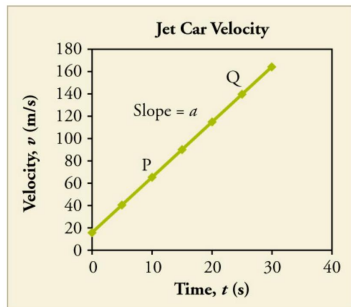


Figure: Mars Climate Orbiter, 1998

Cost: \$125 million

Mistake: Calculations in English units, not SI units

Result: Probe crashed into Mars atmosphere

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- **2.2:** Relate displacement and average velocity

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The Rate of Motion

Speed is the rate at which an object changes its location. (Scalar)

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The Mental Model

Speed is your odometer. It tells you how fast, but not where you're going.

2.2 Average Speed

Universal Law: Rate of Motion

$$v_{\text{avg}} = \frac{\text{distance}}{\text{time}}$$

Average speed equals total distance divided by total time.

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Rearranged:

$$\text{distance} = v_{\text{avg}} \times \text{time}$$

$$\text{time} = \frac{\text{distance}}{v_{\text{avg}}}$$

2.2 Average vs. Instantaneous Speed

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Example: Car travels 150 km in 3.2 hours

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Instantaneous speed: Speed at a specific instant

Real-World

Your car's speedometer shows instantaneous speed, not average.

2.2 Round Trip Speed Problem

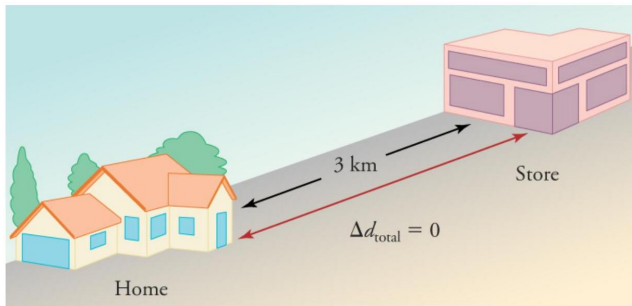


Figure: 30-minute round trip, 6 km total

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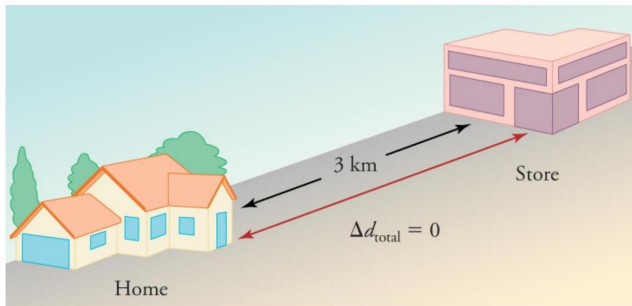


Figure: 30-minute round trip, 6 km total

Average speed: $\frac{6 \text{ km}}{0.5 \text{ h}} = 12 \text{ km/h}$

Displacement: 0 km (round trip)

Attempt: The Marble

The Challenge (3 min, silent)

A marble rolls 5.2 m in 1.8 s.

Find: The marble's average speed

Work silently. Show your units.

Compare: The Marble

Turn and talk (2 min):

- 1 What formula did you use?
- 2 What did you divide?
- 3 What units did you get?
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Name wheel: One pair share your answer and reasoning.

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Self-correct in a different color:

Given:

- Distance = 5.2 m
- Time = 1.8 s

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Substitute:

$$v_{\text{avg}} = \frac{5.2 \text{ m}}{1.8 \text{ s}} = 2.9 \text{ m/s}$$

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Check: About 3 m/s - speed of brisk walk. Reasonable!

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Speed Plus Direction

Velocity is the vector version of speed. It includes both magnitude (how fast) and direction (which way).

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Bold vs. italics:

- **v** = velocity (vector, includes direction)
- *v* = speed (scalar, magnitude only)

2.2 Average Velocity

Universal Law: Rate of Displacement

$$\mathbf{v}_{\text{avg}} = \frac{\Delta \mathbf{d}}{\Delta t} = \frac{\mathbf{d}_f - \mathbf{d}_0}{t_f - t_0}$$

Average velocity equals displacement divided by time interval.

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The Paradox

Round trip: Speed = 12 km/h, but velocity = 0 km/h!
(Displacement is zero)

2.2 Speed vs. Velocity

Speed (Scalar)

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- Always positive
- Example: 50 km/h

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- Can be negative
- Example: 50 km/h north

Civilian View vs. Reality

Civilian: "Speed and velocity are the same thing."

Physicist: "Speed is how fast. Velocity is how fast AND which way."

Attempt: The Student

The Challenge (3 min, silent)

A student has a displacement of 304 m north in 180 s.

Find: The student's average velocity

Remember: velocity needs direction! Work silently.

Compare: The Student

Turn and talk (2 min):

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- 2 Did you include direction in your answer?
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- 1 What formula did you use?
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Name wheel: One pair share your complete answer with direction.

Reveal: The Student Solution

Self-correct in a different color:

Given:

- Displacement = 304 m north
- Time = 180 s

Reveal: The Student Solution

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- Displacement = 304 m north
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Equation:

$$\mathbf{v_{avg}} = \frac{\Delta \mathbf{d}}{\Delta t}$$

Substitute:

$$\mathbf{v_{avg}} = \frac{304 \text{ m}}{180 \text{ s}} = 1.7 \text{ m/s north}$$

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$$\mathbf{v_{avg} = \frac{\Delta d}{\Delta t}}$$

Substitute:

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Note: 2 sig figs from time (180 s)

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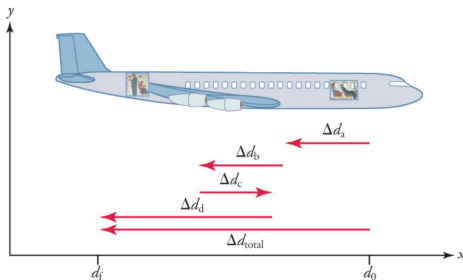


Figure: Airplane passenger velocity at different segments

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Average velocity: Over a time interval

Instantaneous velocity: At a specific instant in time

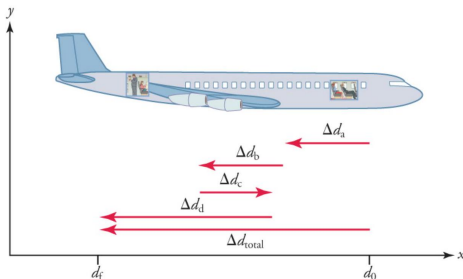


Figure: Airplane passenger velocity at different segments

If velocity is constant, instantaneous = average.

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- 5 Average speed = distance / time

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The Revelations

- 1 Motion is relative - depends on reference frame
- 2 Distance (scalar) vs. displacement (vector)
- 3 Speed (scalar) vs. velocity (vector)
- 4 Displacement = final position - initial position
- 5 Average speed = distance / time
- 6 Average velocity = displacement / time

Key Equations

$$\Delta \mathbf{d} = \mathbf{d}_f - \mathbf{d}_0 \quad (1)$$

$$v_{\text{avg}} = \frac{\text{distance}}{\text{time}} \quad (2)$$

$$\mathbf{v}_{\text{avg}} = \frac{\Delta \mathbf{d}}{\Delta t} = \frac{\mathbf{d}_f - \mathbf{d}_0}{t_f - t_0} \quad (3)$$

Remember:

- Bold = vector (includes direction)
- Italic = scalar (magnitude only)

Complete the assigned problems
posted on the LMS