

Grade 12 Physics

SPH4U

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Contents

1 Unit 1A	3
1.1 Review of Describing and Graphing Motion	3
1.1.1 Position: \vec{d}	3
1.1.2 displacement: $\Delta\vec{d}$	3
1.1.3 Velocity: \vec{v}	3
1.1.4 Acceleration: \vec{a}	3
1.1.5 Graphing motion	3
1.2 Equations of Motion	5
1.2.1 Format requirements for answering Motion questionss	5
1.3 Adding and Subtracting 2-Dimensional Vectors	6
1.3.1 Vector addition and subtraction key words	6
1.3.2 Steps for solving a vector problem	6
1.3.3 Another question type	6
1.4 Frame of Reference	7
1.4.1 1 Dimension Frame of Reference	7
1.5 Relative Velocities in Two Dimensions	9
1.5.1 Recall	9
1.5.2 Definition	9
1.6 F.O.R in 2-D	10
1.7 Review of Netwon's Laws of Montion	11
1.7.1 Netwon's First Laws	11
1.7.2 Newton's second Law	11
1.7.3 Newton's Third Law	11
1.7.4 Free Body Diagrams (FBD)	12
1.7.5 Application of Newton's second Law	12
1.8 Review of Projectile Motion	13
1.8.1 basic	13
1.8.2 Special formula	13
1.8.3 An example question	14
1.9 Friction	15
1.9.1 Kinetic Friction	15
1.9.2 Static Friction	15
1.9.3 Remainder	15
1.10 Tension, compression and Pulleys	17
1.10.1 Tention: T	17
1.10.2 Compression: C	17
1.11 Inclined plane with Friction	18
1.11.1 How to determine the direction that the system will likely to accelerate	18
1.11.2 Example template	18

2 Unit 1B	19
2.1 Proportionality	19
2.2 Fictitious Forces and Apparent Weight	21
2.2.1 Compare Inertial and non-inertial F.O.R	21
2.2.2 Fictitious Forces	21
2.2.3 Apparent Weight	21
2.2.4 Some of the formulas	21
2.3 Lecture 2.5	22
2.3.1 Uniform Circular Motion	22
2.3.2 Centripetal acceleration	22
2.3.3 Formulas	22
2.4 Motion of a car on Banked Turn	23
2.4.1 Forces	23
2.4.2 Critical Speed	23
2.5 Universal Gravitation, Gravitational field	24
2.5.1 Force of Gravity	24
2.5.2 Gravational Fields	24
2.5.3 Differences between strength of gravity and acceleration	24
2.6 Satellites	26
2.6.1 Netwon's Cannon	26
2.6.2 Geosynchronous	26
2.6.3 Formulas related to satellite	26
2.7 Rotating Frame of Reference	28
2.7.1 Little problem	28
2.7.2 Perceived Acceleration in a Rotating Frame of Reference	29
3 Unit 2: Energy and Momentum	31
3.1 Real Gravational Potential Energy	31
3.1.1 Definitions	31

Chapter 3

Unit 2: Energy and Momentum

3.1 Real Gravational Potential Energy

3.1.1 Definitions

In earlier time in this unit, we studied a formula for Gravational Potential Energy

$$E_g = mgh \quad (3.1)$$

In fact, there are few problems with our old formula:

1. It assumes that g is constat (it change as the distance above the Earth's surface changes)
2. the formula uses a reference location which we define. This is not an absolute location, where E_g is 0

So, let's derive for the new equation of Gravational Potential Energy

Consider a satellite of mass m_s at a large distance r from the centre of planet Eart (mass M_e)