

1 | Escape Velocity and Gravitational Potential Energy

1.1 | Newton's Universal Gravitation Law

$$\vec{F}_g = -\frac{GM_1M_2}{r^2}\hat{r} \quad (1)$$

where, \vec{F}_g is the force of gravity on M_2 ; M_1 and M_2 are two point masses; G the universal gravitation constant; r the magnitude of the vector \vec{r} from M_1 to M_2 and \hat{r} the unit vector in the \vec{r} direction.

1.2 | Equation for Gravitational Potential Energy

1.2.1 | Needed Definitions

To begin, we need to modify the **Newton's Universal Gravitation Law** to fit the parameters of the scenario. Namely, we need to treat both Earth and our object as point masses, and assign M_1 to be Earth and M_2 to be our object.

Also, it is necessary to define the coordinate system: that our object, M_2 , is defined to be to the left/more negative side of the coordinate compared to the location occupied by the Earth, $M_e = M_1$ (as, per the problem, the "zero" point is set at $r = \infty$.)

With this assumption, we could therefore claim \vec{r} to be pointing from the origin to the **negative** side of the axis, rendering it represented by the value -1 for this system.

Hence, with the necessary variable substitutions as highlighted before, we arrive at the following equation:

$$F_{em}(r) = \frac{GM_eM_2}{r^2} \quad (2)$$

1.2.2 | Deducing Gravitational Potential energy

The general equation for work is as follows:

$$W = F(x)dx \quad (3)$$

In this case, as we will be deducing the total gravitational potential energy as per the setup above, we need to be integrating upon $F_{em}(r)dr$. Hence, the integral is therefore:

$$W = \int \frac{GM_eM_2}{r^2}dr \quad (4)$$

Determining the total gravitation potential energy will therefore involve evaluating the integral:

$$W = \int \frac{GM_eM_2}{r^2}dr \quad (5)$$

$$W = GM_eM_2 \int \frac{1}{r^2}dr \quad (6)$$

$$W = GM_eM_2 \int r^{-2}dr \quad (7)$$

$$W = \frac{-GM_eM_2}{r} \quad (8)$$

1.3 | Escape Velocity

To deduct the escape velocity of the Earth, our object M_2 must do enough work such that the work Earth exerts upon it — **as deducted above** — is canceled out.

1.3.1 | Calculation Setup

Hence, to figure the escape velocity, we must deduct the kinetic energy needed to perform the exact work deducted above in the opposite direction. That,

$$-\frac{1}{2}M_2\vec{V}^2 = \frac{-GM_eM_2}{r} \quad (9)$$

Notably, the negative sign before the kinetic energy equation corresponds to the fact that the work is done in an opposite direction as that done by Earth's gravitational potential energy.

Also, as the object to escape Earth's gravitation is starting at the surface of Earth, $r = R_e$, the radius of the earth.

1.3.2 | Deducing Escape Velocity

The final calculations after substitution is therefore simply a matter of isolating \vec{V} , the velocity vector.

$$-\frac{1}{2}M_2\vec{V}^2 = \frac{-GM_eM_2}{R_e}\vec{V}^2 = 2 * \frac{GM_e}{R_e}\vec{V}^2 = 2 * \frac{GM_e}{R_e} \quad (10)$$