

Preparing for the Physics GRE: Day 6 Making Difficult Problems Easier

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<http://pages.physics.cornell.edu/~dcitron/GREPrep2014.html>

Dimensional Analysis

- Should also emphasize: dimensional analysis can be used to gain physical intuition about problems we haven't seen before

95. A beam of 10^{12} protons per second is incident on a target containing 10^{20} nuclei per square centimeter. At an angle of 10 degrees, there are 10^2 protons per second elastically scattered into a detector that subtends a solid angle of 10^{-4} steradians. What is the differential elastic scattering cross section, in units of square centimeters per steradian?

- (A) 10^{-24}
- (B) 10^{-25}
- (C) 10^{-26}
- (D) 10^{-27}
- (E) 10^{-28}

Dimensional Analysis

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- Just focus on information given in the problem
- Need units of answer to be $\text{cm}^2/\text{steradian}$
- $(10^{20} \text{ cm}^2)^{-1} / 10^{-4} \text{ steradian} = 10^{-16} \text{ cm}^2/\text{steradian}$
- Other two numbers given need to combine to be unitless
- $\Rightarrow (10^2 \text{ proton/sec}) / (10^{12} \text{ proton/sec}) = 10^{-10}$
- Answer must be:

$$10^{-16} \text{ cm}^2/\text{steradian} * 10^{-10} = 10^{-26} \text{ cm}^2/\text{steradian}$$

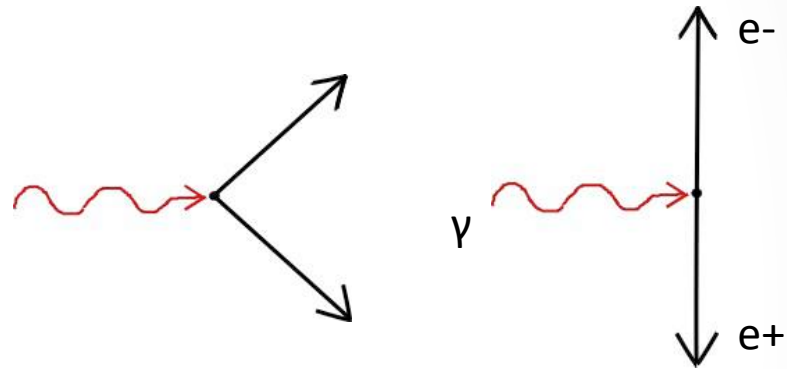
Particle Physics

96. Which of the following reasons explains why a photon cannot decay to an electron and a positron ($\gamma \rightarrow e^+ + e^-$) in free space?
- (A) Linear momentum and energy are not both conserved.
 - (B) Linear momentum and angular momentum are not both conserved.
 - (C) Angular momentum and parity are not both conserved.
 - (D) Parity and strangeness are not both conserved.
 - (E) Charge and lepton number are not both conserved.

Particle Physics

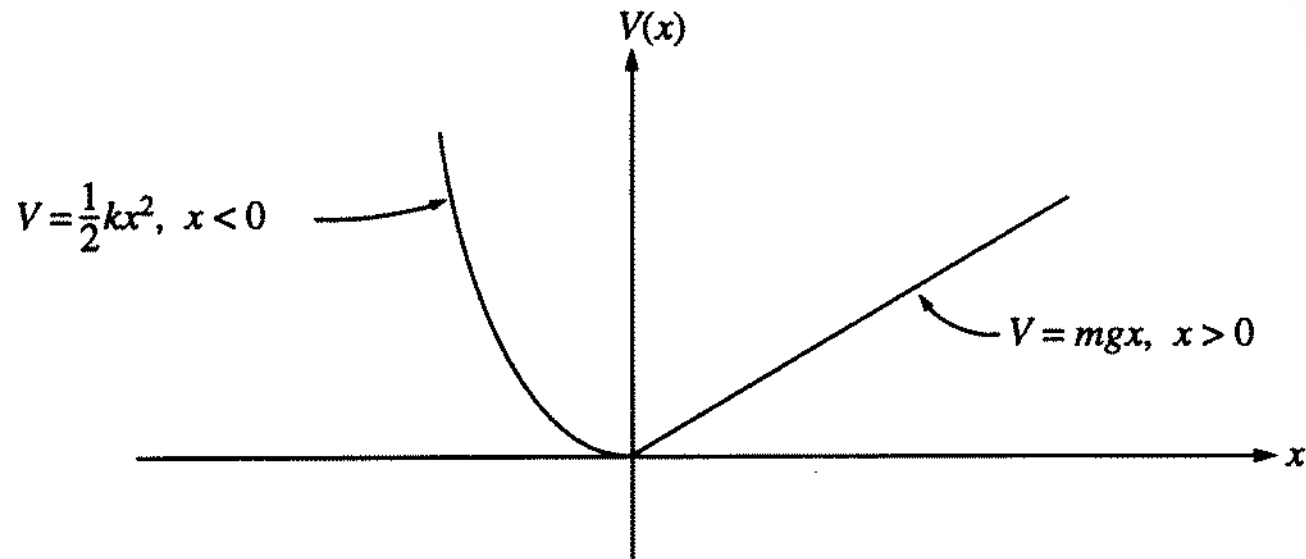
- Visualize this decay in the center of mass frame of the two electrons
- Since the incident photon carries momentum, clearly momentum cannot be conserved
- Can also work out the mathematics to show that linear momentum and energy cannot be simultaneously conserved here
- (B) & (C): What angular momentum?
- (D): Strangeness? There are no quarks here! This is not a weak interaction.
- (E) Both charge and lepton number *are* conserved
- Similarly, can the photoelectric effect occurring for a free electron?

Boost from lab frame (left) to center of mass frame (right)



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Classical Mechanics - 1



93. A particle of mass m moves in the potential shown above. The period of the motion when the particle has energy E is
- (A) $\sqrt{k/m}$
 - (B) $2\pi\sqrt{m/k}$
 - (C) $2\sqrt{2E/mg^2}$
 - (D) $\pi\sqrt{m/k} + 2\sqrt{2E/mg^2}$
 - (E) $2\pi\sqrt{m/k} + 4\sqrt{2E/mg^2}$

Classical Mechanics - 1

- Strangely-shaped well is half harmonic, half linear

- Find the period of a harmonic well $\omega = \sqrt{k/m}$, $T = \frac{2\pi}{\omega} = 2\pi \sqrt{m/k}$

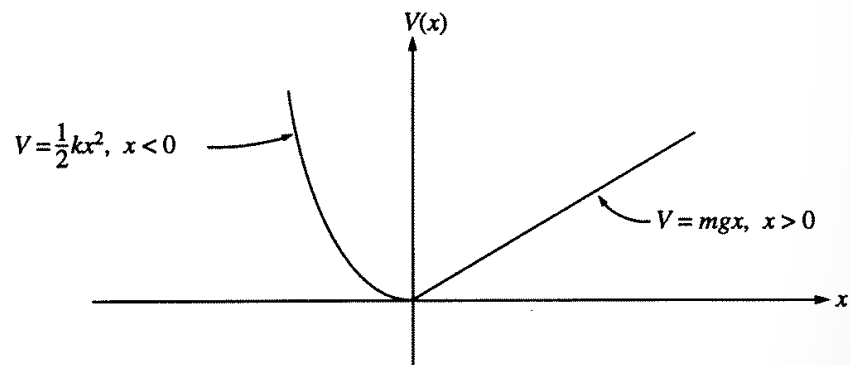
- Find the period of a linear well $x_{max} = E/mg$

$$-x_{max} = -\frac{1}{2}g\left(\frac{T}{4}\right)^2 \Rightarrow T/4 = \sqrt{2E/mg^2}$$

- Each half of the well contributes

$T/2$ to the total period

- $T_{total} = T_{linear}/2 + T_{harmonic}/2$



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Classical Mechanics - 2

92. A particle of mass m moves in a one-dimensional potential $V(x) = -ax^2 + bx^4$, where a and b are positive constants. The angular frequency of small oscillations about the minima of the potential is equal to

- (A) $\pi(a/2b)^{1/2}$
- (B) $\pi(a/m)^{1/2}$
- (C) $(a/mb)^{1/2}$
- (D) $2(a/m)^{1/2}$
- (E) $(a/2m)^{1/2}$

Classical Mechanics - 2

- Sketch a picture of the potential:
- Imagine a small amplitude oscillation about one of the two minima:

- Find the minima

$$\frac{\partial V}{\partial x} = -2ax + 4bx^3 = 0 \Rightarrow x^* = \pm \sqrt{a/2b}$$

- Add a small perturbation

$$x^* \rightarrow x^* + \epsilon(t)$$

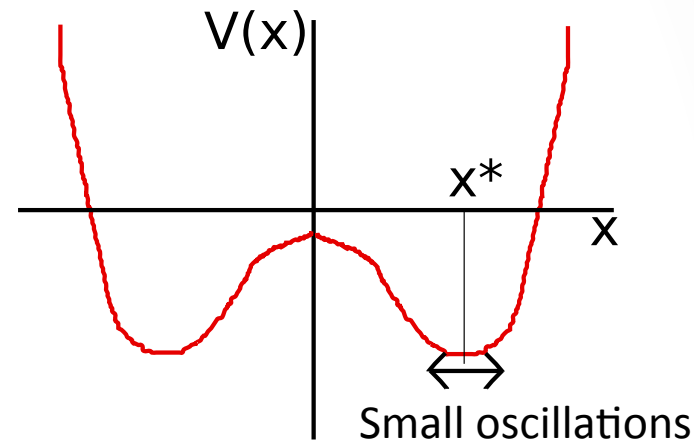
- Obtain equation of motion

$$m \ddot{(x^* + \epsilon)} = 2a(x^* + \epsilon) - 4b(x^* + \epsilon)^3$$

$$m \ddot{\epsilon} = 2ax^* - 4b(x^*)^3 + 2a\epsilon - 4b \cdot 3(x^*)^2 \epsilon$$

- Extract frequency

$$m \ddot{\epsilon} = -4a\epsilon \Rightarrow \omega = 2 \sqrt{a/m}$$



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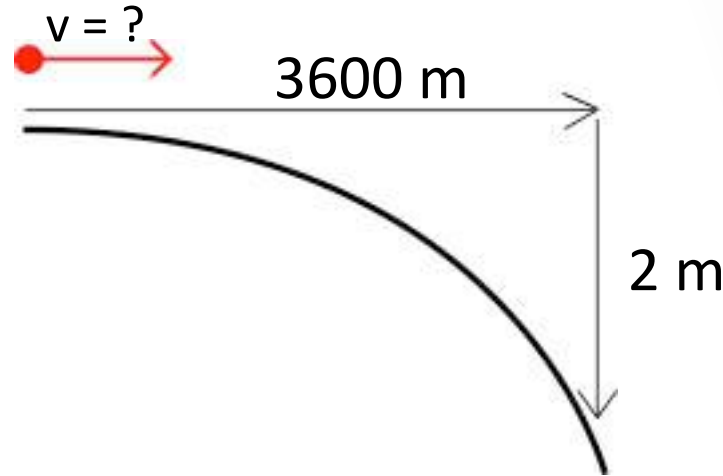
- (A) $\pi(a/2b)^{1/2}$
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- (C) $(a/mb)^{1/2}$
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Classical Mechanics - 3

22. The curvature of Mars is such that its surface drops a vertical distance of 2.0 meters for every 3600 meters tangent to the surface. In addition, the gravitational acceleration near its surface is 0.4 times that near the surface of Earth. What is the speed a golf ball would need to orbit Mars near the surface, ignoring the effects of air resistance?
- (A) 0.9 km/s
 - (B) 1.8 km/s
 - (C) 3.6 km/s
 - (D) 4.5 km/s
 - (E) 5.4 km/s

Classical Mechanics - 3

- Imagine a circular orbit using this (very not to scale) image:
- It takes a certain amount of time to fall 2 m under gravity = $0.4g$
- In that same amount of time, the golf ball goes 3600 m
- The rest is just kinematics:



$$\Delta y = \frac{1}{2} \cdot 4g \left(\frac{\Delta x}{v} \right)^2, \quad \Delta x = v \Delta t$$

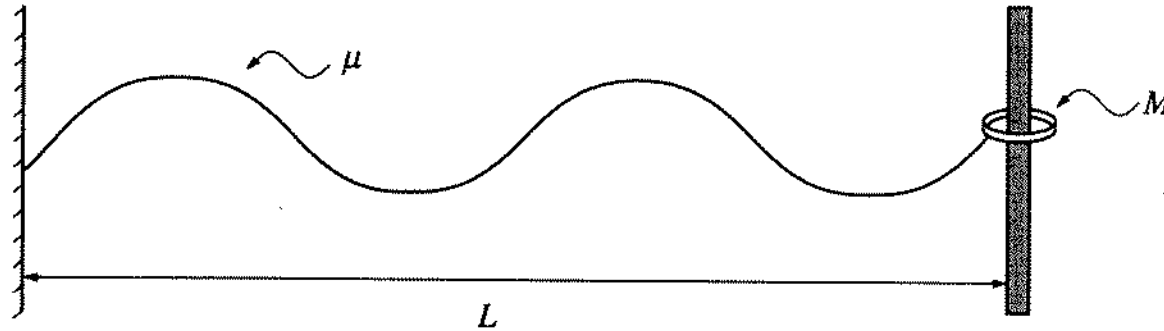
$$\Delta y = \frac{1}{2} \cdot 4g \left(\frac{\Delta x}{v} \right)^2, \quad v^2 = \frac{1}{2} \cdot 4g \frac{\Delta x^2}{\Delta y}$$

$$v^2 = \frac{1}{2} \cdot 4 \frac{(3600)^2}{2}, \quad v = 3600 \text{ m/s}$$

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Waves and Optics - 1



85. Small-amplitude standing waves of wavelength λ occur on a string with tension T , mass per unit length μ , and length L . One end of the string is fixed and the other end is attached to a ring of mass M that slides on a frictionless rod, as shown in the figure above. When gravity is neglected, which of the following conditions correctly determines the wavelength? (You might want to consider the limiting cases $M \rightarrow 0$ and $M \rightarrow \infty$.)

(A) $\mu/M = \frac{2\pi}{\lambda} \cot \frac{2\pi L}{\lambda}$

(B) $\mu/M = \frac{2\pi}{\lambda} \tan \frac{2\pi L}{\lambda}$

(C) $\mu/M = \frac{2\pi}{\lambda} \sin \frac{2\pi L}{\lambda}$

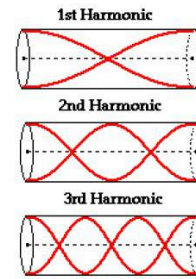
(D) $\lambda = 2L/n, \quad n = 1, 2, 3, \dots$

(E) $\lambda = 2L/(n + \frac{1}{2}), \quad n = 1, 2, 3, \dots$

Waves and Optics - 1

- Treat as standing waves
- Take limits! How does the condition at the boundary change when...
 - $M \rightarrow \infty$: closed boundary
 - $M \rightarrow 0$: open boundary
- So, what wavelengths are and are not allowed in each case?
- $M \rightarrow \infty$
 - Right hand side must go to zero at allowed frequencies
- $M \rightarrow 0$
 - Right hand side must go to ∞ at allowed frequencies

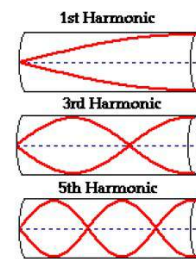
Open at Both Ends



Harmonic	Wavelength λ	Frequency f
1 st	$2L$	f_1
2 nd	L	$2f_1$
3 rd	$2L/3$	$3f_1$

Odd and Even Harmonics

Closed at One End



1 st	$4L$	f_1
3 rd	$4L/3$	$3f_1$
5 th	$4L/5$	$5f_1$

Odd Harmonics

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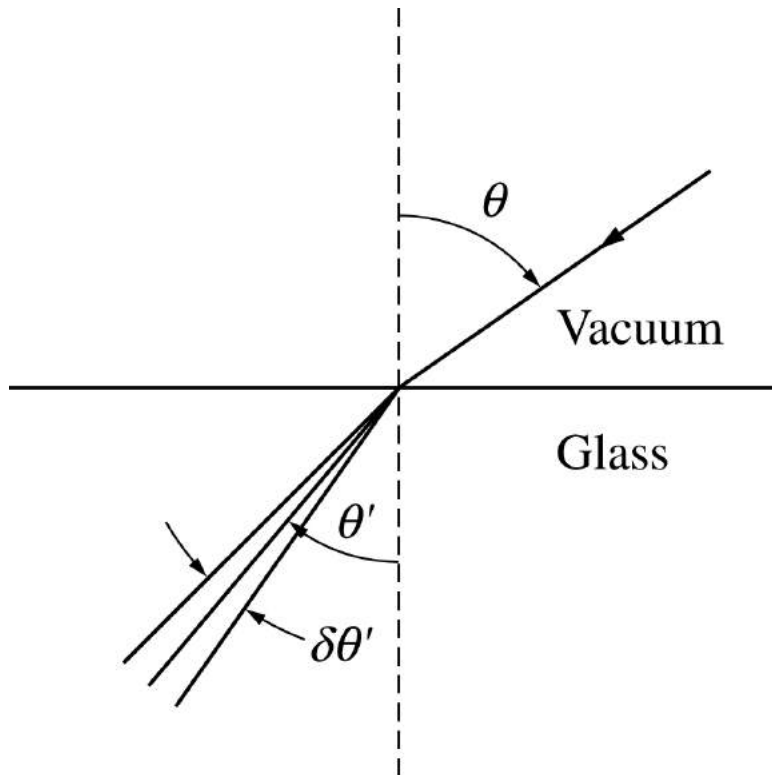
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(D) $\lambda = 2L/n, n = 1, 2, 3, \dots$

(E) $\lambda = 2L/(n + \frac{1}{2}), n = 1, 2, 3, \dots$

Waves and Optics - 2



97. A beam of light has a small wavelength spread $\delta\lambda$ about a central wavelength λ . The beam travels in vacuum until it enters a glass plate at an angle θ relative to the normal to the plate, as shown in the figure above. The index of refraction of the glass is given by $n(\lambda)$. The angular spread $\delta\theta'$ of the refracted beam is given by

(A) $\delta\theta' = \left| \frac{1}{n} \delta\lambda \right|$

(B) $\delta\theta' = \left| \frac{dn(\lambda)}{d\lambda} \delta\lambda \right|$

(C) $\delta\theta' = \left| \frac{1}{\lambda} \frac{d\lambda}{dn} \delta\lambda \right|$

(D) $\delta\theta' = \left| \frac{\sin \theta}{\sin \theta'} \frac{\delta\lambda}{\lambda} \right|$

(E) $\delta\theta' = \left| \frac{\tan \theta'}{n} \frac{dn(\lambda)}{d\lambda} \delta\lambda \right|$

Waves and Optics - 2

- Looking at all the answers, we can think of angular dispersion as being a partial differential

- Start with Snell's law

$$\sin(\theta_i) = n \cdot \sin(\theta_o)$$

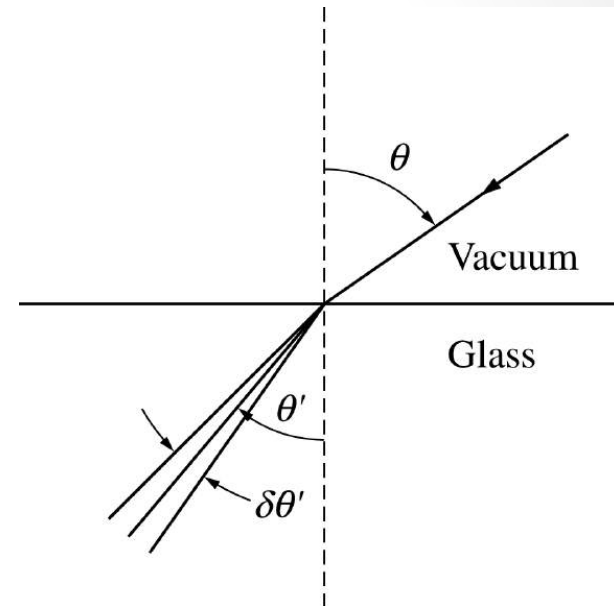
- Think: what variables will depend on the wavelength of light?

$$\sin(\theta_i) = n(\lambda) \cdot \sin(\theta_o(\lambda))$$

$$\frac{\partial}{\partial \lambda} \sin(\theta_i) = \frac{\partial}{\partial \lambda} n(\lambda) \cdot \sin(\theta_o(\lambda))$$

$$0 = \frac{\partial n}{\partial \lambda} \sin(\theta_o(\lambda)) + n \cdot \cos(\theta_o) \frac{\partial \theta_o}{\partial \lambda}$$

- Rearrange to find the answer



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Electromagnetism - 1

In case you were worried about waveguides:

34. A conducting cavity is driven as an electromagnetic resonator. If perfect conductivity is assumed, the transverse and normal field components must obey which of the following conditions at the inner cavity walls?

- (A) $E_n = 0, B_n = 0$
- (B) $E_n = 0, B_t = 0$
- (C) $E_t = 0, B_t = 0$
- (D) $E_t = 0, B_n = 0$
- (E) None of the above

Electromagnetism - 1

- Recall Maxwell's equations :

$$1. \oiint \vec{E} \cdot \hat{n} dS = Q_f$$

$$2. \oiint \vec{B} \cdot \hat{n} dS = 0$$

$$3. \oint \vec{E} \cdot d\vec{\ell} = -\frac{d}{dt} \iint \vec{B} \cdot \hat{n} dA$$

$$4. \oint \vec{B} \cdot d\vec{\ell} = I_f + \frac{1}{c^2} \iint \frac{\partial}{\partial t} \vec{E} \cdot \hat{n} dA$$

- Draw a small Amperian loop containing the interface
 - Using Faraday's law (#3), as the loop becomes very small the flux vanishes, we find that the tangential electric field must be continuous at the boundary

$$\vec{E}_{out} \cdot \vec{l} - \vec{E}_{in} \cdot \vec{l} = 0 \Rightarrow E_{out}^{\parallel} - E_{in}^{\parallel} = 0$$

- Draw a small Gaussian pillbox containing the interface
 - Applying (#2), we find that the perpendicular magnetic field must be continuous across the boundary

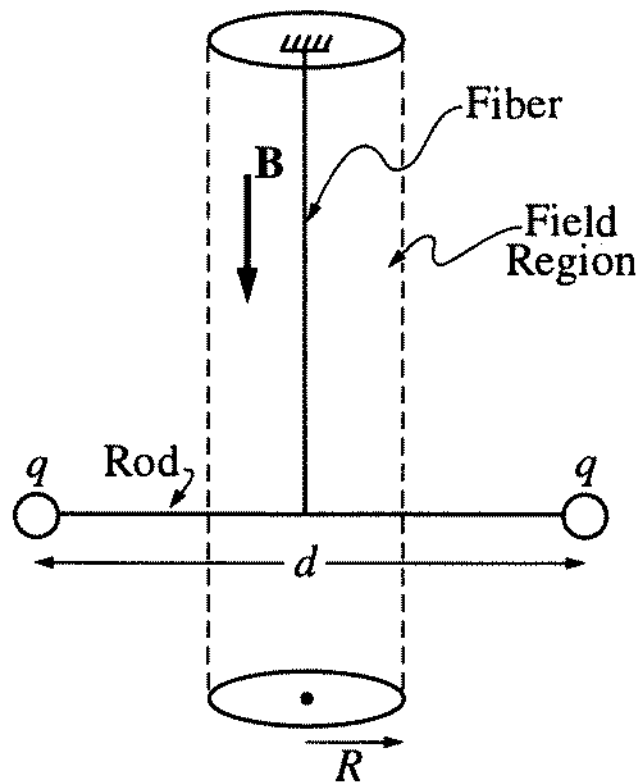
$$\vec{B}_{out} \cdot \hat{n} - \vec{B}_{in} \cdot \hat{n} = 0 \Rightarrow B_{out}^{\perp} - B_{in}^{\perp} = 0$$

Electromagnetism - 1

- Returning to the problem, we can remember that electromagnetic waves are shielded by conductors, so we set E and B to 0 on the inside.
 - We can now obtain a rule for the boundary condition at the cavity wall
 - In general, even in the presence of sources, we can use all four of Maxwell's equations to obtain four possible boundary conditions:
34. A conducting cavity is driven as an electromagnetic resonator. If perfect conductivity is assumed, the transverse and normal field components must obey which of the following conditions at the inner cavity walls?
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 - (B) $E_n = 0, B_t = 0$
 - (C) $E_t = 0, B_t = 0$
 - (D) $E_t = 0, B_n = 0$
 - (E) None of the above

$$\begin{array}{ll} 1. \quad \epsilon_{out} E_{out}^{\perp} - \epsilon_{in} E_{in}^{\perp} = \sigma_f & 2. \quad B_{out}^{\perp} - B_{in}^{\perp} = 0 \\ 3. \quad E_{out}^{\parallel} - E_{in}^{\parallel} = 0 & 4. \quad \frac{1}{\mu_{out}} B_{out}^{\parallel} - \frac{1}{\mu_{in}} B_{in}^{\parallel} = \vec{K}_f \cdot \hat{n} \end{array}$$

Electromagnetism - 2



87. Two small pith balls, each carrying a charge q , are attached to the ends of a light rod of length d , which is suspended from the ceiling by a thin torsion-free fiber, as shown in the figure above. There is a uniform magnetic field \mathbf{B} , pointing straight down, in the cylindrical region of radius R around the fiber. The system is initially at rest. If the magnetic field is turned off, which of the following describes what happens to the system?

- (A) It rotates with angular momentum qBR^2 .
- (B) It rotates with angular momentum $\frac{1}{4}qBd^2$.
- (C) It rotates with angular momentum $\frac{1}{2}qBRd$.
- (D) It does not rotate because to do so would violate conservation of angular momentum.
- (E) It does not move because magnetic forces do no work.

Electromagnetism - 2

- Electromagnetic fields do carry angular momentum: turning off the magnetic field will cause the apparatus to rotate
- Which Maxwell equations help us here?

$$1. \oint \vec{E} \cdot \hat{n} dS = Q_f$$

$$2. \oint \vec{B} \cdot \hat{n} dS = 0$$

$$3. \oint \vec{E} \cdot d\vec{\ell} = -\frac{d}{dt} \iint \vec{B} \cdot \hat{n} dA$$

$$4. \oint \vec{B} \cdot d\vec{\ell} = I_f + \frac{1}{c^2} \iint \frac{\partial}{\partial t} \vec{E} \cdot \hat{n} dA$$

- Faraday's law: a changing magnetic flux through an area enclosed by a loop induces an electric field around that loop
- The magnetic fields are not doing work: it is the field induced by the changing magnetic field that does work on the charges

Electromagnetism - 2

- Loop is a circle with radius $d/2$, total flux is $B\pi R^2$
- Evaluate integrals on both sides: $E\pi d = -\frac{d}{dt}(B\pi R^2)$
- A change in angular momentum implies an applied torque, which comes from the induced electric field

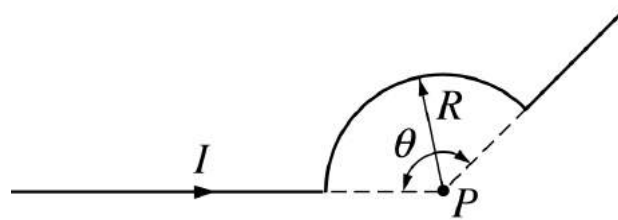
$$\Delta L = \int \tau dt = \int 2qE(d/2)dt = \int qEddt$$

- Using the expression for the electric field in terms of change of flux:

$$\Delta L = \int -\frac{d}{dt}(qBR^2)dt = qBR^2$$

- We can also solve by taking limits, without any integrals:
 - How should ΔL change as $R \rightarrow 0$?
 - How should ΔL change as $d \rightarrow \infty$?

Electromagnetism - 3



88. A segment of wire is bent into an arc of radius R and subtended angle θ , as shown in the figure above. Point P is at the center of the circular segment. The wire carries current I . What is the magnitude of the magnetic field at P ?

(A) 0

(B) $\frac{\mu_0 I \theta}{(2\pi)^2 R}$

(C) $\frac{\mu_0 I \theta}{4\pi R}$

(D) $\frac{\mu_0 I \theta}{4\pi R^2}$

(E) $\frac{\mu_0 I}{2\theta R^2}$

Electromagnetism - 3

- The net magnetic field should be some fraction of the magnetic field at the center of a loop of current with radius R

- Take limits: the answer should scale with θ

- Dimensional analysis:

$$[\mu I/R] = \text{Tm}^2/(\text{Am})\text{A/m} = \text{T} = [\text{B}]$$

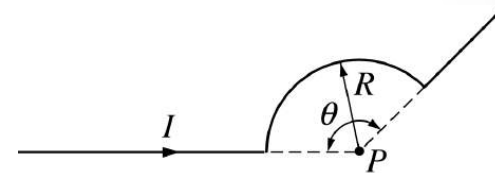
- Leaves a choice between (B) and (C)

- To solve exactly:

- Recall expression for magnetic field at center of a loop

$$B = \frac{\mu_0 I}{2R}$$

- Use Biot-Savart Law (last resort!)



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(B) $\frac{\mu_0 I \theta}{(2\pi)^2 R}$

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(D) $\frac{\mu_0 I \theta}{4\pi R^2}$

(E) $\frac{\mu_0 I}{2\theta R^2}$

$$\vec{B} = \frac{\mu_0}{4\pi} \int \frac{Id\ell \times \hat{r}}{r^2} = \frac{\mu_0 I}{4\pi R} \int_0^\theta \hat{z} d\theta'$$

Quantum Mechanics - 1

98. A particle of mass m is acted on by a harmonic force with potential energy function $V(x) = m\omega^2 x^2/2$ (a one-dimensional simple harmonic oscillator). If there is a wall at $x = 0$ so that $V = \infty$ for $x < 0$, then the energy levels are equal to

(A) $0, \hbar\omega, 2\hbar\omega, \dots$

(B) $0, \frac{\hbar\omega}{2}, \hbar\omega, \dots$

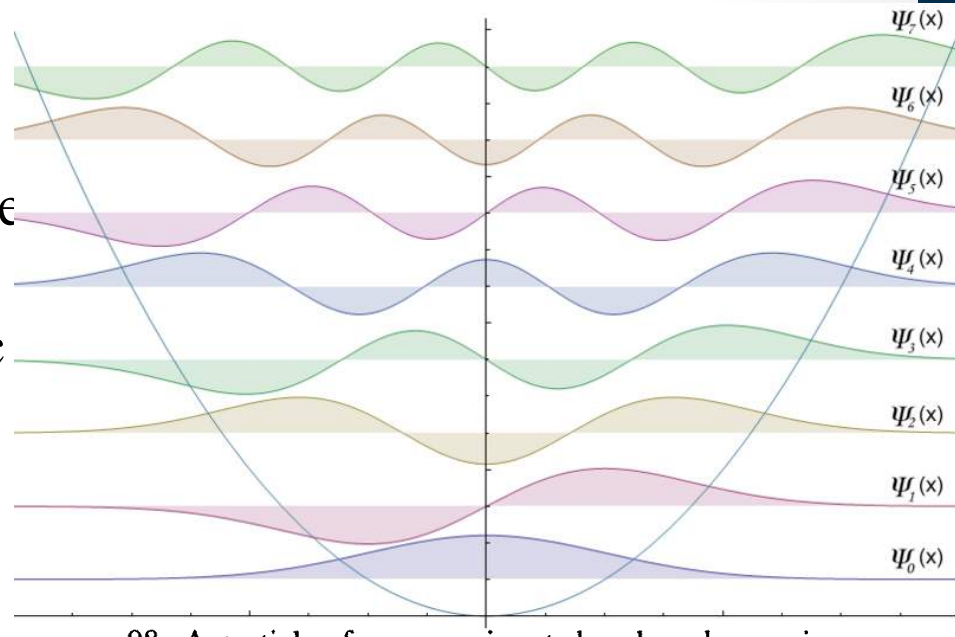
(C) $\frac{\hbar\omega}{2}, \frac{3\hbar\omega}{2}, \frac{5\hbar\omega}{2}, \dots$

(D) $\frac{3\hbar\omega}{2}, \frac{7\hbar\omega}{2}, \frac{11\hbar\omega}{2}, \dots$

(E) $0, \frac{3\hbar\omega}{2}, \frac{5\hbar\omega}{2}, \dots$

Quantum Mechanics - 1

- (This is a common question)
- Know what the solutions to the Schrodinger equation look like for the quantum harmonic oscillator
- How does placing an infinite potential boundary at $x=0$ change what solutions are allowed?
 - What is the probability of a particle being found in a region with infinite potential?



98. A particle of mass m is acted on by a harmonic force with potential energy function $V(x) = m\omega^2 x^2/2$ (a one-dimensional simple harmonic oscillator). If there is a wall at $x = 0$ so that $V = \infty$ for $x < 0$, then the energy levels are equal to

- (A) $0, \hbar\omega, 2\hbar\omega, \dots$
- (B) $0, \frac{\hbar\omega}{2}, \hbar\omega, \dots$
- (C) $\frac{\hbar\omega}{2}, \frac{3\hbar\omega}{2}, \frac{5\hbar\omega}{2}, \dots$
- (D) $\frac{3\hbar\omega}{2}, \frac{7\hbar\omega}{2}, \frac{11\hbar\omega}{2}, \dots$
- (E) $0, \frac{3\hbar\omega}{2}, \frac{5\hbar\omega}{2}, \dots$

Quantum Mechanics - 2

93. The solution to the Schrödinger equation for the ground state of hydrogen is

$$\psi_0 = \frac{1}{\sqrt{\pi a_0^3}} e^{-r/a_0},$$

where a_0 is the Bohr radius and r is the distance from the origin. Which of the following is the most probable value for r ?

- (A) 0
- (B) $a_0/2$
- (C) a_0
- (D) $2a_0$
- (E) ∞

Quantum Mechanics - 2

- Recall how spherical wave functions are normalized:

$$1 = \int_0^\infty |\psi_0|^2 r^2 dr d\Omega$$

- So we can write the marginal probability of finding the particle at radius r (inside a tiny window of dr):

$$\frac{dP}{dr} = 4\pi |\psi_0|^2 r^2 = \frac{4r^2}{a_0^3} e^{-2r/a_0}$$

- So all we need to do is maximize this expression!

$$0 = \frac{4}{a_0^3} \left(2r e^{-2r/a_0} - 2r^2/a_0 e^{-2r/a_0} \right), \quad r_{\max} = a_0$$

- (Can also recall historical definition of Bohr radius)

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- (A) 0
- (B) $a_0/2$
- (C) a_0
- (D) $2a_0$
- (E) ∞

Quantum Mechanics - 3

90. The spacing of the rotational energy levels for the hydrogen molecule H_2 is most nearly

- (A) 10^{-9} eV
- (B) 10^{-3} eV
- (C) 10 eV
- (D) 10 MeV
- (E) 100 MeV

Quantum Mechanics - 3

- The rotational kinetic energy operator: $L^2/2I$
- Moment of inertia: $I = 2mr^2$
 - m is atomic weight of $H_2 \approx 10^{-27} \text{ kg}$
 - r is Bohr radius: $.5 \cdot 10^{-10} \text{ m}$
- L^2 operator eigenvalues: $\hbar^2 l(l+1)$
 - So the difference between the $l=0$ and $l=1$ states is about \hbar^2
- Altogether, the energy levels are around:
- $10^{-68}/10^{-27}/10^{-19} = 10^{-22} \text{ J} = 10^{-3} \text{ eV}$
- (Important to know the conversion between eV and J very quickly: $1 \text{ eV} = 10^{-19} \text{ J}$)

90. The spacing of the rotational energy levels for the hydrogen molecule H_2 is most nearly

- (A) 10^{-9} eV
- (B) 10^{-3} eV
- (C) 10 eV
- (D) 10 MeV
- (E) 100 MeV

Special Relativity - 1

80. A tube of water is traveling at $\frac{1}{2} c$ relative to the lab frame when a beam of light traveling in the same direction as the tube enters it. What is the speed of light in the water relative to the lab frame? (The index of refraction of water is $\frac{4}{3}$.)

- (A) $\frac{1}{2} c$
- (B) $\frac{2}{3} c$
- (C) $\frac{5}{6} c$
- (D) $\frac{10}{11} c$
- (E) c

Special Relativity - 1

- In the moving frame of the tube, the light is only moving $c/n = 3/4c < c$, so let's just treat this like an ordinary velocity addition problem ($c = 1$):

$$v' = \frac{u+v}{1+uv}$$

- u is the velocity of the tube with respect to the lab frame
- v is the velocity of light within the tube
- Since u and v have the same sign in the lab frame, they have the same sign when using this formula (they would have opposite sign if the tube were moving in opposite direction of light)

80. A tube of water is traveling at $1/2 c$ relative to the lab frame when a beam of light traveling in the same direction as the tube enters it. What is the speed of light in the water relative to the lab frame? (The index of refraction of water is $4/3$.)

- (A) $1/2 c$
- (B) $2/3 c$
- (C) $5/6 c$
- (D) $10/11 c$
- (E) c

Special Relativity - 2

49. The infinite xy -plane is a nonconducting surface, with surface charge density σ , as measured by an observer at rest on the surface. A second observer moves with velocity $v \hat{\mathbf{x}}$ relative to the surface, at height h above it. Which of the following expressions gives the electric field measured by this second observer?

(A) $\frac{\sigma}{2\epsilon_0} \hat{\mathbf{z}}$

(B) $\frac{\sigma}{2\epsilon_0} \sqrt{1 - v^2/c^2} \hat{\mathbf{z}}$

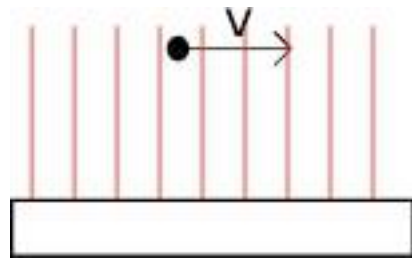
(C) $\frac{\sigma}{2\epsilon_0 \sqrt{1 - v^2/c^2}} \hat{\mathbf{z}}$

(D) $\frac{\sigma}{2\epsilon_0} \left(\sqrt{1 - v^2/c^2} \hat{\mathbf{z}} + v/c \hat{\mathbf{x}} \right)$

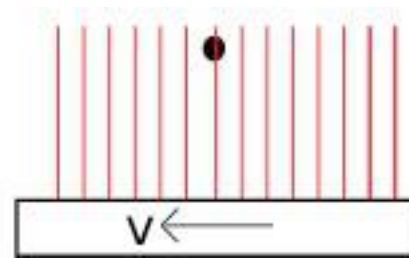
(E) $\frac{\sigma}{2\epsilon_0} \left(\sqrt{1 - v^2/c^2} \hat{\mathbf{z}} - v/c \hat{\mathbf{y}} \right)$

Special Relativity - 2

- Imagine drawing the electric field lines in the lab frame as being spaced evenly apart
- Now imagine boosting to the moving observer's frame
- Now the charged plane appears to be moving at $-v$
- How do the distances between the evenly spaced electric field lines change in the moving frame?
 - Lengths contract, so field lines are *denser* and the electric field must appear *stronger* to the moving observer
 - Effectively, the observer observes the presence of more charge in a given amount of time if the plane is moving than if the plane is stationary



Lab frame



Observer's Frame

Special Relativity - 2

- The answer must reflect a stronger field
- Also, no symmetry breaking: the field is not bent in the y or x directions

- Can also remember how electromagnetic fields Lorentz transform under a boost in the x direction:

$$E'_x = E_x$$

$$B'_x = B_x$$

$$E'_y = \gamma(E_y - \beta B_z) \quad B'_y = \gamma(B_y + \beta E_z)$$

$$E'_z = \gamma(E_z + \beta B_y) \quad B'_z = \gamma(B_z - \beta E_y)$$

49. The infinite xy-plane is a nonconducting surface, with surface charge density σ , as measured by an observer at rest on the surface. A second observer moves with velocity $v \hat{x}$ relative to the surface, at height h above it. Which of the following expressions gives the electric field measured by this second observer?

(A) $\frac{\sigma}{2\epsilon_0} \hat{z}$

(B) $\frac{\sigma}{2\epsilon_0} \sqrt{1 - v^2/c^2} \hat{z}$

(C) $\frac{\sigma}{2\epsilon_0 \sqrt{1 - v^2/c^2}} \hat{z}$

(D) $\frac{\sigma}{2\epsilon_0} \left(\sqrt{1 - v^2/c^2} \hat{z} + v/c \hat{x} \right)$

(E) $\frac{\sigma}{2\epsilon_0} \left(\sqrt{1 - v^2/c^2} \hat{z} - v/c \hat{y} \right)$

Statistical Mechanics

16. The mean free path for the molecules of a gas is approximately given by $\frac{1}{\eta\sigma}$, where η is the number density and σ is the collision cross section. The mean free path for air molecules at room conditions is approximately
- (A) 10^{-4} m
 - (B) 10^{-7} m
 - (C) 10^{-10} m
 - (D) 10^{-13} m
 - (E) 10^{-16} m

Statistical Mechanics

- Really this is a problem of knowing your length scales:
 - 10^{-9} - 10^{-10} m is the size of an atom
 - 10^{-3} m is a millimeter, 10^{-5} m is the width of a human hair
 - So plausibly, what is the likeliest given answer?
- Can also solve this knowing the number density of air, and estimating the collision cross section as atomic cross sectional area:

$[\eta] = \text{atoms/volume}$

$$\eta = \frac{n}{V} = \frac{P}{RT} = \frac{1 \text{ atm}}{\left(8 \cdot 10^{-5} \frac{\text{m}^3 \cdot \text{atm}}{\text{Mol} \cdot \text{K}}\right) 300 \text{ K}} \frac{6 \cdot 10^{23} \text{ atom}}{1 \text{ Mol}} \approx 10^{25} \frac{\text{atom}}{\text{m}^3}$$

$$\sigma \approx (10^{-9})^2 \text{ m}^2 \quad \frac{1}{\eta \sigma} \approx 10^{-25} \cdot 10^{18} \text{ m} = 10^{-7} \text{ m}$$