

Feynman and Hibbs problem 4-1

<https://www2.oberlin.edu/physics/dstyler/FeynmanHibbs/>

Show that for a single particle moving in three dimensions in a potential energy  $V(\mathbf{x}, t)$  the Schrodinger equation is

$$\frac{\partial \psi(\mathbf{x}, t)}{\partial t} = -\frac{i}{\hbar} \left( -\frac{\hbar^2}{2m} \nabla^2 \psi(\mathbf{x}, t) + V(\mathbf{x}, t) \psi(\mathbf{x}, t) \right)$$

This is the Lagrangian.

$$L(\dot{\mathbf{x}}, \mathbf{x}) = \frac{m}{2} \dot{\mathbf{x}}^2 - V(\mathbf{x}, t) \quad (1)$$

Extend equation (4.3) from one dimension to three dimensions.

$$\psi(\mathbf{x}, t + \epsilon) = \frac{1}{A} \int_{\mathbb{R}^3} \exp \left( \frac{i\epsilon}{\hbar} L \left( \frac{\mathbf{x} - \mathbf{y}}{\epsilon}, \frac{\mathbf{x} + \mathbf{y}}{2} \right) \right) \psi(\mathbf{y}, t) dy_1 dy_2 dy_3$$

where

$$\int_{\mathbb{R}^3} \equiv \int_{-\infty}^{\infty} \int_{-\infty}^{\infty} \int_{-\infty}^{\infty}$$

From (1) we have

$$L \left( \frac{\mathbf{x} - \mathbf{y}}{\epsilon}, \frac{\mathbf{x} + \mathbf{y}}{2} \right) = \frac{m}{2\epsilon^2} (\mathbf{x} - \mathbf{y})^2 - V \left( \frac{\mathbf{x} + \mathbf{y}}{2}, t \right)$$

Hence

$$\begin{aligned} \psi(\mathbf{x}, t + \epsilon) = \frac{1}{A} \int_{\mathbb{R}^3} \exp \left( \frac{im}{2\hbar\epsilon} (\mathbf{x} - \mathbf{y})^2 - \frac{i\epsilon}{\hbar} V \left( \frac{\mathbf{x} + \mathbf{y}}{2}, t \right) \right) \\ \times \psi(\mathbf{y}, t) dy_1 dy_2 dy_3 \end{aligned}$$

Let

$$\mathbf{y} = \mathbf{x} + \boldsymbol{\eta}$$

Then

$$(\mathbf{x} - \mathbf{y})^2 = \boldsymbol{\eta}^2, \quad \frac{\mathbf{x} + \mathbf{y}}{2} = \mathbf{x} + \frac{1}{2}\boldsymbol{\eta}, \quad dy_1 dy_2 dy_3 = d\eta_1 d\eta_2 d\eta_3$$

Hence

$$\psi(\mathbf{x}, t + \epsilon) = \frac{1}{A} \int_{\mathbb{R}^3} \exp \left( \frac{im}{2\hbar\epsilon} \boldsymbol{\eta}^2 - \frac{i\epsilon}{\hbar} V \left( \mathbf{x} + \frac{1}{2} \boldsymbol{\eta}, t \right) \right) \times \psi(\mathbf{x} + \boldsymbol{\eta}, t) d\eta_1 d\eta_2 d\eta_3$$

Factor the exponential.

$$\psi(\mathbf{x}, t + \epsilon) = \frac{1}{A} \int_{\mathbb{R}^3} \exp \left( \frac{im}{2\hbar\epsilon} \boldsymbol{\eta}^2 \right) \exp \left( -\frac{i\epsilon}{\hbar} V \left( \mathbf{x} + \frac{1}{2} \boldsymbol{\eta}, t \right) \right) \times \psi(\mathbf{x} + \boldsymbol{\eta}, t) d\eta_1 d\eta_2 d\eta_3 \quad (2)$$

Now we are going to use an approximation for the exponential of  $V$ . From the identity  $\exp(i\theta) = \cos(\theta) + i \sin(\theta)$  we have

$$\exp \left( -\frac{i\epsilon}{\hbar} V \left( \mathbf{x} + \frac{1}{2} \boldsymbol{\eta}, t \right) \right) = \cos \left( -\frac{\epsilon}{\hbar} V \left( \mathbf{x} + \frac{1}{2} \boldsymbol{\eta}, t \right) \right) + i \sin \left( -\frac{\epsilon}{\hbar} V \left( \mathbf{x} + \frac{1}{2} \boldsymbol{\eta}, t \right) \right)$$

For small  $\epsilon$  we have the approximation

$$\exp \left( -\frac{i\epsilon}{\hbar} V \left( \mathbf{x} + \frac{1}{2} \boldsymbol{\eta}, t \right) \right) \approx 1 - \frac{i\epsilon}{\hbar} V \left( \mathbf{x} + \frac{1}{2} \boldsymbol{\eta}, t \right)$$

The authors write that the  $\boldsymbol{\eta}$  term can be dropped “because the error is of higher order than  $\epsilon$ .” Hence

$$\exp \left( -\frac{i\epsilon}{\hbar} V \left( \mathbf{x} + \frac{1}{2} \boldsymbol{\eta}, t \right) \right) \approx 1 - \frac{i\epsilon}{\hbar} V \left( \mathbf{x}, t \right) \quad (3)$$

Substituting (3) into (2) yields

$$\psi(\mathbf{x}, t + \epsilon) = \frac{1}{A} \int_{\mathbb{R}^3} \exp \left( \frac{im}{2\hbar\epsilon} \boldsymbol{\eta}^2 \right) \left( 1 - \frac{i\epsilon}{\hbar} V \left( \mathbf{x}, t \right) \right) \times \psi(\mathbf{x} + \boldsymbol{\eta}, t) d\eta_1 d\eta_2 d\eta_3 \quad (4)$$

Next we will use the following Taylor series approximations.

$$\begin{aligned} \psi(\mathbf{x}, t + \epsilon) &\approx \psi(\mathbf{x}, t) + \epsilon \frac{\partial \psi}{\partial t} \\ \psi(\mathbf{x} + \boldsymbol{\eta}, t) &\approx \psi(\mathbf{x}, t) + \boldsymbol{\eta} \cdot \nabla \psi + \frac{1}{2} \boldsymbol{\eta} \cdot \nabla (\boldsymbol{\eta} \cdot \nabla \psi) \end{aligned} \quad (5)$$

Note: In component notation

$$\boldsymbol{\eta} \cdot \nabla \psi = \eta_1 \frac{\partial \psi}{\partial x_1} + \eta_2 \frac{\partial \psi}{\partial x_2} + \eta_3 \frac{\partial \psi}{\partial x_3}$$

and

$$\begin{aligned} \boldsymbol{\eta} \cdot \nabla (\boldsymbol{\eta} \cdot \nabla \psi) &= \eta_1^2 \frac{\partial^2 \psi}{\partial x_1^2} + \eta_2^2 \frac{\partial^2 \psi}{\partial x_2^2} + \eta_3^2 \frac{\partial^2 \psi}{\partial x_3^2} \\ &\quad + 2\eta_1 \eta_2 \frac{\partial^2 \psi}{\partial x_1 \partial x_2} + 2\eta_1 \eta_3 \frac{\partial^2 \psi}{\partial x_1 \partial x_3} + 2\eta_2 \eta_3 \frac{\partial^2 \psi}{\partial x_2 \partial x_3} \end{aligned}$$

Substitute the approximations (5) into (4).

$$\begin{aligned} \psi(\mathbf{x}, t) + \epsilon \frac{\partial \psi}{\partial t} &= \frac{1}{A} \int_{\mathbb{R}^3} \exp\left(\frac{im}{2\hbar\epsilon} \boldsymbol{\eta}^2\right) \left(1 - \frac{i\epsilon}{\hbar} V(\mathbf{x}, t)\right) \\ &\quad \times \left(\psi(\mathbf{x}, t) + \boldsymbol{\eta} \cdot \nabla \psi + \frac{1}{2} \boldsymbol{\eta} \cdot \nabla (\boldsymbol{\eta} \cdot \nabla \psi)\right) d\eta_1 d\eta_2 d\eta_3 \quad (6) \end{aligned}$$

Expand the right-hand side.

$$\psi(\mathbf{x}, t) + \epsilon \frac{\partial \psi}{\partial t} = \frac{\psi(\mathbf{x}, t)}{A} \int_{\mathbb{R}^3} \exp\left(\frac{im}{2\hbar\epsilon} \boldsymbol{\eta}^2\right) d\eta_1 d\eta_2 d\eta_3 \quad (7)$$

$$+ \frac{1}{A} \int_{\mathbb{R}^3} \exp\left(\frac{im}{2\hbar\epsilon} \boldsymbol{\eta}^2\right) \boldsymbol{\eta} \cdot \nabla \psi d\eta_1 d\eta_2 d\eta_3 \quad (8)$$

$$+ \frac{1}{2A} \int_{\mathbb{R}^3} \exp\left(\frac{im}{2\hbar\epsilon} \boldsymbol{\eta}^2\right) \boldsymbol{\eta} \cdot \nabla (\boldsymbol{\eta} \cdot \nabla \psi) d\eta_1 d\eta_2 d\eta_3 \quad (9)$$

$$- \frac{i\epsilon}{A\hbar} V(\mathbf{x}, t) \psi(\mathbf{x}, t) \int_{\mathbb{R}^3} \exp\left(\frac{im}{2\hbar\epsilon} \boldsymbol{\eta}^2\right) d\eta_1 d\eta_2 d\eta_3 \quad (10)$$

$$- \frac{i\epsilon}{A\hbar} V(\mathbf{x}, t) \int_{\mathbb{R}^3} \exp\left(\frac{im}{2\hbar\epsilon} \boldsymbol{\eta}^2\right) \boldsymbol{\eta} \cdot \nabla \psi d\eta_1 d\eta_2 d\eta_3 \quad (11)$$

$$- \frac{i\epsilon}{2A\hbar} V(\mathbf{x}, t) \int_{\mathbb{R}^3} \exp\left(\frac{im}{2\hbar\epsilon} \boldsymbol{\eta}^2\right) \boldsymbol{\eta} \cdot \nabla (\boldsymbol{\eta} \cdot \nabla \psi) d\eta_1 d\eta_2 d\eta_3 \quad (12)$$

To solve the above integrals, we will use the following formulas provided by

the authors.

$$\int_{-\infty}^{\infty} \exp\left(\frac{imx^2}{2\hbar\epsilon}\right) dx = \left(\frac{2\pi i\hbar\epsilon}{m}\right)^{1/2} \quad (13)$$

$$\int_{-\infty}^{\infty} \exp\left(\frac{imx^2}{2\hbar\epsilon}\right) x dx = 0 \quad (14)$$

$$\int_{-\infty}^{\infty} \exp\left(\frac{imx^2}{2\hbar\epsilon}\right) x^2 dx = \frac{i\hbar\epsilon}{m} \left(\frac{2\pi i\hbar\epsilon}{m}\right)^{1/2} \quad (15)$$

Rewrite the integral in (7) and (10) in component notation.

$$\begin{aligned} \int_{\mathbb{R}^3} \exp\left(\frac{im}{2\hbar\epsilon} \boldsymbol{\eta}^2\right) d\eta_1 d\eta_2 d\eta_3 \\ = \int_{\mathbb{R}^3} \exp\left(\frac{im\eta_1^2}{2\hbar\epsilon}\right) \exp\left(\frac{im\eta_2^2}{2\hbar\epsilon}\right) \exp\left(\frac{im\eta_3^2}{2\hbar\epsilon}\right) d\eta_1 d\eta_2 d\eta_3 \end{aligned}$$

Then by equation (13)

$$\int_{\mathbb{R}^3} \exp\left(\frac{im}{2\hbar\epsilon} \boldsymbol{\eta}^2\right) d\eta_1 d\eta_2 d\eta_3 = \left(\frac{2\pi i\hbar\epsilon}{m}\right)^{3/2} \quad (16)$$

Rewrite the integral in (8) and (11) in component notation.

$$\begin{aligned} \int_{\mathbb{R}^3} \exp\left(\frac{im}{2\hbar\epsilon} \boldsymbol{\eta}^2\right) \boldsymbol{\eta} \cdot \nabla \psi d\eta_1 d\eta_2 d\eta_3 \\ = \int_{\mathbb{R}^3} \exp\left(\frac{im\eta_1^2}{2\hbar\epsilon}\right) \exp\left(\frac{im\eta_2^2}{2\hbar\epsilon}\right) \exp\left(\frac{im\eta_3^2}{2\hbar\epsilon}\right) \eta_1 \frac{\partial \psi}{\partial x_1} d\eta_1 d\eta_2 d\eta_3 \\ + \int_{\mathbb{R}^3} \exp\left(\frac{im\eta_1^2}{2\hbar\epsilon}\right) \exp\left(\frac{im\eta_2^2}{2\hbar\epsilon}\right) \exp\left(\frac{im\eta_3^2}{2\hbar\epsilon}\right) \eta_2 \frac{\partial \psi}{\partial x_2} d\eta_1 d\eta_2 d\eta_3 \\ + \int_{\mathbb{R}^3} \exp\left(\frac{im\eta_1^2}{2\hbar\epsilon}\right) \exp\left(\frac{im\eta_2^2}{2\hbar\epsilon}\right) \exp\left(\frac{im\eta_3^2}{2\hbar\epsilon}\right) \eta_3 \frac{\partial \psi}{\partial x_3} d\eta_1 d\eta_2 d\eta_3 \end{aligned}$$

Then by equation (14)

$$\int_{\mathbb{R}^3} \exp\left(\frac{im}{2\hbar\epsilon} \boldsymbol{\eta}^2\right) \boldsymbol{\eta} \cdot \nabla \psi d\eta_1 d\eta_2 d\eta_3 = 0 \quad (17)$$

Rewrite the integral in (9) and (12) in component notation.

$$\begin{aligned}
& \int_{\mathbb{R}^3} \exp\left(\frac{im}{2\hbar\epsilon} \boldsymbol{\eta}^2\right) \boldsymbol{\eta} \cdot \nabla (\boldsymbol{\eta} \cdot \nabla \psi) d\eta_1 d\eta_2 d\eta_3 \\
&= \int_{\mathbb{R}^3} \exp\left(\frac{im\eta_1^2}{2\hbar\epsilon}\right) \exp\left(\frac{im\eta_2^2}{2\hbar\epsilon}\right) \exp\left(\frac{im\eta_3^2}{2\hbar\epsilon}\right) \eta_1^2 \frac{\partial^2 \psi}{\partial x_1^2} d\eta_1 d\eta_2 d\eta_3 \\
&\quad + \int_{\mathbb{R}^3} \exp\left(\frac{im\eta_1^2}{2\hbar\epsilon}\right) \exp\left(\frac{im\eta_2^2}{2\hbar\epsilon}\right) \exp\left(\frac{im\eta_3^2}{2\hbar\epsilon}\right) \eta_2^2 \frac{\partial^2 \psi}{\partial x_2^2} d\eta_1 d\eta_2 d\eta_3 \\
&\quad + \int_{\mathbb{R}^3} \exp\left(\frac{im\eta_1^2}{2\hbar\epsilon}\right) \exp\left(\frac{im\eta_2^2}{2\hbar\epsilon}\right) \exp\left(\frac{im\eta_3^2}{2\hbar\epsilon}\right) \eta_3^2 \frac{\partial^2 \psi}{\partial x_3^2} d\eta_1 d\eta_2 d\eta_3 \\
&\quad + \int_{\mathbb{R}^3} \exp\left(\frac{im\eta_1^2}{2\hbar\epsilon}\right) \exp\left(\frac{im\eta_2^2}{2\hbar\epsilon}\right) \exp\left(\frac{im\eta_3^2}{2\hbar\epsilon}\right) 2\eta_1 \eta_2 \frac{\partial^2 \psi}{\partial x_1 \partial x_2} d\eta_1 d\eta_2 d\eta_3 \\
&\quad + \int_{\mathbb{R}^3} \exp\left(\frac{im\eta_1^2}{2\hbar\epsilon}\right) \exp\left(\frac{im\eta_2^2}{2\hbar\epsilon}\right) \exp\left(\frac{im\eta_3^2}{2\hbar\epsilon}\right) 2\eta_1 \eta_3 \frac{\partial^2 \psi}{\partial x_1 \partial x_3} d\eta_1 d\eta_2 d\eta_3 \\
&\quad + \int_{\mathbb{R}^3} \exp\left(\frac{im\eta_1^2}{2\hbar\epsilon}\right) \exp\left(\frac{im\eta_2^2}{2\hbar\epsilon}\right) \exp\left(\frac{im\eta_3^2}{2\hbar\epsilon}\right) 2\eta_2 \eta_3 \frac{\partial^2 \psi}{\partial x_2 \partial x_3} d\eta_1 d\eta_2 d\eta_3
\end{aligned}$$

By equations (13) and (15)

$$\begin{aligned}
& \int_{\mathbb{R}^3} \exp\left(\frac{im\eta_1^2}{2\hbar\epsilon}\right) \exp\left(\frac{im\eta_2^2}{2\hbar\epsilon}\right) \exp\left(\frac{im\eta_3^2}{2\hbar\epsilon}\right) \eta_1^2 \frac{\partial^2 \psi}{\partial x_1^2} d\eta_1 d\eta_2 d\eta_3 \\
&= \frac{i\hbar\epsilon}{m} \left(\frac{2\pi i\hbar\epsilon}{m}\right)^{3/2} \frac{\partial^2 \psi}{\partial x_1^2} \\
& \int_{\mathbb{R}^3} \exp\left(\frac{im\eta_1^2}{2\hbar\epsilon}\right) \exp\left(\frac{im\eta_2^2}{2\hbar\epsilon}\right) \exp\left(\frac{im\eta_3^2}{2\hbar\epsilon}\right) \eta_2^2 \frac{\partial^2 \psi}{\partial x_2^2} d\eta_1 d\eta_2 d\eta_3 \\
&= \frac{i\hbar\epsilon}{m} \left(\frac{2\pi i\hbar\epsilon}{m}\right)^{3/2} \frac{\partial^2 \psi}{\partial x_2^2} \\
& \int_{\mathbb{R}^3} \exp\left(\frac{im\eta_1^2}{2\hbar\epsilon}\right) \exp\left(\frac{im\eta_2^2}{2\hbar\epsilon}\right) \exp\left(\frac{im\eta_3^2}{2\hbar\epsilon}\right) \eta_3^2 \frac{\partial^2 \psi}{\partial x_3^2} d\eta_1 d\eta_2 d\eta_3 \\
&= \frac{i\hbar\epsilon}{m} \left(\frac{2\pi i\hbar\epsilon}{m}\right)^{3/2} \frac{\partial^2 \psi}{\partial x_3^2}
\end{aligned}$$

By equation (14)

$$\begin{aligned} \int_{\mathbb{R}^3} \exp\left(\frac{im\eta_1^2}{2\hbar\epsilon}\right) \exp\left(\frac{im\eta_2^2}{2\hbar\epsilon}\right) \exp\left(\frac{im\eta_3^2}{2\hbar\epsilon}\right) 2\eta_1\eta_2 \frac{\partial^2\psi}{\partial x_1\partial x_2} d\eta_1 d\eta_2 d\eta_3 &= 0 \\ \int_{\mathbb{R}^3} \exp\left(\frac{im\eta_1^2}{2\hbar\epsilon}\right) \exp\left(\frac{im\eta_2^2}{2\hbar\epsilon}\right) \exp\left(\frac{im\eta_3^2}{2\hbar\epsilon}\right) 2\eta_1\eta_3 \frac{\partial^2\psi}{\partial x_1\partial x_3} d\eta_1 d\eta_2 d\eta_3 &= 0 \\ \int_{\mathbb{R}^3} \exp\left(\frac{im\eta_1^2}{2\hbar\epsilon}\right) \exp\left(\frac{im\eta_2^2}{2\hbar\epsilon}\right) \exp\left(\frac{im\eta_3^2}{2\hbar\epsilon}\right) 2\eta_2\eta_3 \frac{\partial^2\psi}{\partial x_2\partial x_3} d\eta_1 d\eta_2 d\eta_3 &= 0 \end{aligned}$$

Hence

$$\begin{aligned} \int_{\mathbb{R}^3} \exp\left(\frac{im}{2\hbar\epsilon}\boldsymbol{\eta}^2\right) \boldsymbol{\eta} \cdot \nabla(\boldsymbol{\eta} \cdot \nabla\psi) d\eta_1 d\eta_2 d\eta_3 \\ = \frac{i\hbar\epsilon}{m} \left(\frac{2\pi i\hbar\epsilon}{m}\right)^{3/2} \left(\frac{\partial^2}{\partial x_1^2} + \frac{\partial^2}{\partial x_2^2} + \frac{\partial^2}{\partial x_3^2}\right) \psi(\mathbf{x}, t) \end{aligned} \quad (18)$$

Substitute the solved integrals into (6) to obtain

$$\begin{aligned} \psi(\mathbf{x}, t) + \epsilon \frac{\partial\psi}{\partial t} \\ = \frac{1}{A} \left(\frac{2\pi i\hbar\epsilon}{m}\right)^{3/2} \psi(\mathbf{x}, t) & \quad \text{from (7) and (16)} \\ + \frac{i\hbar\epsilon}{2Am} \left(\frac{2\pi i\hbar\epsilon}{m}\right)^{3/2} \nabla^2\psi(\mathbf{x}, t) & \quad \text{from (9) and (18)} \\ - \frac{i\epsilon}{A\hbar} \left(\frac{2\pi i\hbar\epsilon}{m}\right)^{3/2} V(\mathbf{x}, t)\psi(\mathbf{x}, t) & \quad \text{from (10) and (16)} \\ + \frac{\epsilon^2}{2Am} \left(\frac{2\pi i\hbar\epsilon}{m}\right)^{3/2} V(\mathbf{x}, t)\nabla^2\psi(\mathbf{x}, t) & \quad \text{from (12) and (18)} \end{aligned}$$

In the limit as  $\epsilon \rightarrow 0$  we have

$$\psi(\mathbf{x}, t) = \frac{1}{A} \left(\frac{2\pi i\hbar\epsilon}{m}\right)^{3/2} \psi(\mathbf{x}, t)$$

Hence

$$A = \left(\frac{2\pi i\hbar\epsilon}{m}\right)^{3/2}$$

Cancel  $A$  and drop the order  $\epsilon^2$  term.

$$\psi(\mathbf{x}, t) + \epsilon \frac{\partial \psi}{\partial t} = \psi(\mathbf{x}, t) + \frac{i\hbar\epsilon}{2m} \nabla^2 \psi(\mathbf{x}, t) - \frac{i\epsilon}{\hbar} V(\mathbf{x}, t) \psi(\mathbf{x}, t)$$

The  $\psi(\mathbf{x}, t)$  terms cancel.

$$\epsilon \frac{\partial \psi}{\partial t} = \frac{i\hbar\epsilon}{2m} \nabla^2 \psi(\mathbf{x}, t) - \frac{i\epsilon}{\hbar} V(\mathbf{x}, t) \psi(\mathbf{x}, t)$$

Divide through by  $\epsilon$ .

$$\frac{\partial \psi}{\partial t} = \frac{i\hbar}{2m} \nabla^2 \psi(\mathbf{x}, t) - \frac{i}{\hbar} V(\mathbf{x}, t) \psi(\mathbf{x}, t)$$