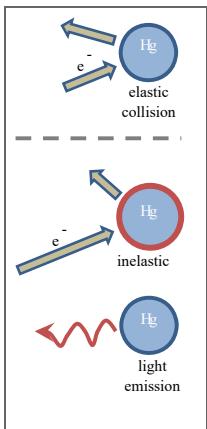


1.5. Linear momentum & collisions



**Conservation of momentum powerful concept
like conservation of energy → can be applied
to many scenarios**



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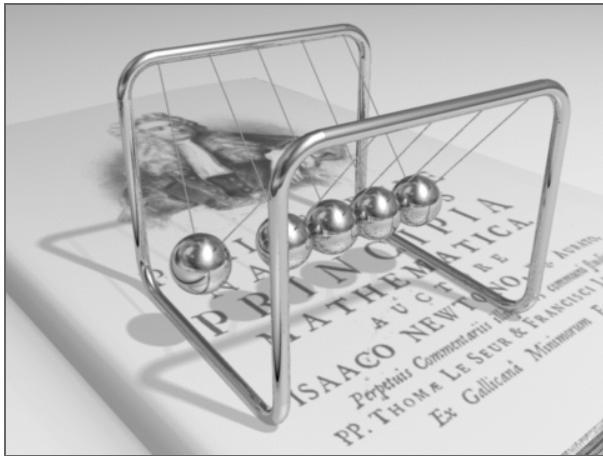
[right] from [wikipedia](#) by E. A. Schiff, [Attribution-Share](#)

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What is Momentum? - Empirical Approach

mi07 - Newton-Wiege

What remains constant before and after the collision?



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What is Momentum? - Empirical Approach (cont')

mi09 - Impulsübertragung Bälle

**What influences the height the ball reaches?
How does this relate to collisions?**

Revisiting Newton's Second Law

At any instant of time, the net force on a body equals its mass times its acceleration or, equivalently, the rate at which its momentum changes with time.

$$\vec{F}_{\text{net}} = m\vec{a} = m \frac{d\vec{v}}{dt}.$$

(Linear) Momentum

- **Momentum** unifies **inertia** (mass) and **motion** (velocity) into a single quantity:

$$\vec{p} = m \cdot \vec{v}$$

- Momentum is a **vector** pointing in the same direction as \vec{v} .
- Units: $\text{kg} \frac{\text{m}}{\text{s}} = \frac{\text{kg} \cdot \text{m}}{\text{s}^2} \text{s} = \text{N} \cdot \text{s}$

Revisiting Newton's Second Law (cont')

At any instant of time, the net force on a body equals its mass times its acceleration or, equivalently, the rate at which its momentum changes with time.

$$\vec{F}_{\text{net}} = m\vec{a} = m \frac{d\vec{v}}{dt} = \frac{d\vec{p}}{dt}.$$

Thus, the **net force acting on an object is equal to the rate of change of its momentum.**

Conservation of Momentum

mi07 - Newton-Wiege

- Net force gives the rate of change of momentum:

$$\vec{F}_{\text{net}} = \frac{d\vec{p}}{dt}$$

- If zero net external force \rightarrow total momentum stays **constant**

$$0 = \frac{d\vec{p}}{dt} \leftrightarrow p = \text{const}$$

- This is the **law of conservation of momentum**
- Applies to any isolated system from colliding carts to galaxies and subatomic particles

Particle Systems & Total Momentum

mi13 - Pendelwagen

- A system with many particles has total momentum

$$\vec{P} = \sum_i m_i \cdot \vec{v}_i$$

- Internal forces cancel in equal and opposite pairs (Newton's third law)
- Therefore internal forces **cannot** change the total momentum
- Only **external forces** can change \vec{P} :

$$\vec{F}_{\text{ext}} = \frac{d\vec{P}}{dt}$$

- Internal interactions may redistribute momentum among particles but leave the total unchanged

Momentum Conservation for an Isolated System

- Summary: If the net external force is zero:

$$\vec{F}_{\text{ext}} = 0 \rightarrow \frac{d\vec{P}}{dt} = 0 \rightarrow \vec{P} = \text{constant}$$

Law of Conservation of Linear Momentum:

Total momentum of an isolated system remains constant when no external forces act

Momentum Conservation in Collisions

mi06 - Ballistisches Pendel

- Collisions involve very large **internal forces** acting for a **very short time**
- During this interval internal forces dominate and external forces are negligible → system can be treated as **isolated**
- Momentum remains **conserved** even if kinetic energy is changed into deformation, sound, or heat

$$\vec{P}_{\text{before}} = \vec{P}_{\text{after}}$$

$$\sum_i m_i \cdot \vec{v}_{i,\text{before}} = \sum_i m_i \cdot \vec{v}_{i,\text{after}}$$

Lost in translation:

Disclaimer

- *Momentum* [en] → *Impuls* [de]
- *Impulse* [en] → *Kraftstoß* [de]

Impulse: Idea & Dropping an Egg

- Stopping an object means changing its momentum.
- Floor vs gentle catch → **same momentum change**, but different stopping time length.
- Short time interval → large force → egg breaks.
- Longer time interval → smaller force.
- Impulse is the same; only the **force–time profile** differs.

Defining Impulse

- Force acting over time produces **impulse**

$$\vec{J} = \int_{t_1}^{t_2} \vec{F}_{\text{net}} dt$$

- Impulse is the **area under the force–time curve**
- For a **constant force**, this reduces to

$$J = F_{\text{net}} \Delta t$$

- Larger $\Delta t \rightarrow$ smaller average force for the same momentum change.

Impulse–Momentum Theorem

- From Newton's second law:

$$\vec{J} = \int_{t_1}^{t_2} \vec{F}_{\text{net}} dt = \int_{t_1}^{t_2} \frac{d\vec{p}}{dt} dt = \Delta \vec{p}$$

- **Impulse equals change in momentum.**
- Holds even when forces are large, brief, or time-dependent.
- During short impacts, other forces (e.g., gravity) are negligible.

Momentum Exchange & Newton's Third Law

mi09 - Impulsübertragung Bälle

- Interaction forces satisfy

$$\vec{F}_{AB} = -\vec{F}_{BA}$$

- Integrating over the interaction time gives
equal and opposite impulses:

$$\vec{J}_{AB} = -\vec{J}_{BA}$$

- Impulse gives momentum change:

$$\Delta \vec{p}_A = \vec{J}_{BA}, \quad \Delta \vec{p}_B = \vec{J}_{AB}$$

- Therefore

$$\Delta \vec{p}_A = -\Delta \vec{p}_B$$

- One object's momentum gain equals the other's loss → **total momentum is conserved.**

Key Points So Far

- Momentum describes motion with inertia:
 $\vec{p} = m\vec{v}$.
- Only **external forces** change total momentum; internal forces cancel.
- Zero net external force \rightarrow **momentum conservation**.
- Impulse links force and time: $\vec{J} = \Delta\vec{p}$.
- Interaction forces are equal and opposite \rightarrow momentum is exchanged but total momentum stays constant.
- Short, intense interactions (collisions) are well described by impulse; longer stopping time reduces the average force.

Collisions: Momentum & Energy

mi06 - Ballistisches Pendel

- Short interaction → external forces negligible
→ isolated system.
- **Momentum is always conserved:**

$$\vec{p}_1 + \vec{p}_2 = \vec{p}'_1 + \vec{p}'_2$$

- Collision type depends on **kinetic energy**:
 - Stays the same → elastic
 - Partly converted (heat, sound, deformation) → inelastic

Elastic Collision: Setup & Conservation

mi01 - Elastischer Stoß

- Two masses on a line: initial velocities $v_1, v_2 \rightarrow$ final velocities v'_1, v'_2 .
- **Momentum conserved:**

$$m_1 v_1 + m_2 v_2 = m_1 v'_1 + m_2 v'_2$$

- **Kinetic energy conserved:**

$$\frac{1}{2} m_1 v_1^2 + \frac{1}{2} m_2 v_2^2 = \frac{1}{2} m_1 {v'_1}^2 + \frac{1}{2} m_2 {v'_2}^2$$

- These two conditions fully determine v'_1 and v'_2
.

Elastic Collision: Key Result

- Combining momentum & energy conservation yields a simple relation:

$$v_1 + v'_1 = v_2 + v'_2$$

- Equivalent form:

$$v_1 - v_2 = -(v'_1 - v'_2)$$

- Interpretation:

Relative speed of approach = relative speed of separation (direction reversed).

Inelastic Collisions: Basics

mi02 - Unelastischer Stoß

- **Momentum conserved**, but **kinetic energy decreases**:

$$K' < K$$

- Energy is transformed into heat, sound, deformation, internal energy.
- Momentum conservation:

$$m_1 v_1 + m_2 v_2 = m_1 v'_1 + m_2 v'_2$$

- Collision outcomes depend on how much kinetic energy is lost.

Perfectly Inelastic Collision

- Objects **stick together** → move with common final velocity v' .
- From momentum conservation:

$$v' = \frac{m_1 v_1 + m_2 v_2}{m_1 + m_2}$$

- Final kinetic energy:

$$K' = \frac{1}{2} (m_1 + m_2) v'^2$$

- Energy loss:

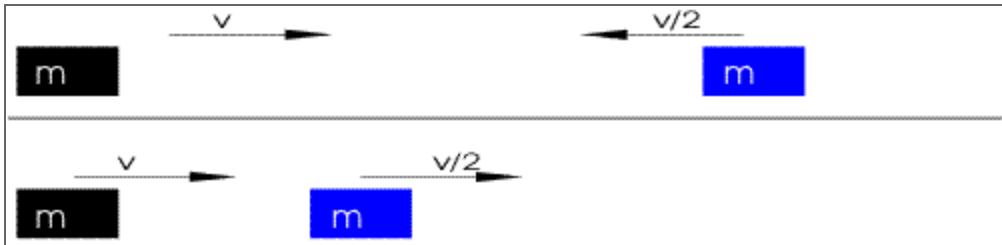
$$\Delta K = -\frac{1}{2} \frac{m_1 m_2}{m_1 + m_2} (v_1 - v_2)^2$$

Seeing is believing (1):



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Seeing is believing (2):



from [wikipedia](#), ***Attribution 2.5 Generic Deed***

Seeing is believing (3):

2m

m

*from [wikipedia](#), **Attribution 2.5 Generic Deed***

Seeing is believing (4):



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Elastic vs. Inelastic Collisions

Property	Elastic Collision	Inelastic Collision
Momentum conserved?	Yes	Yes
Kinetic energy conserved?	Yes	No
Energy loss to heat/sound/deformation?	No	Yes
Special case	–	Perfectly inelastic: objects stick together
Typical examples	Billiard balls	Clay balls, car crashes

Collisions in Higher Dimensions

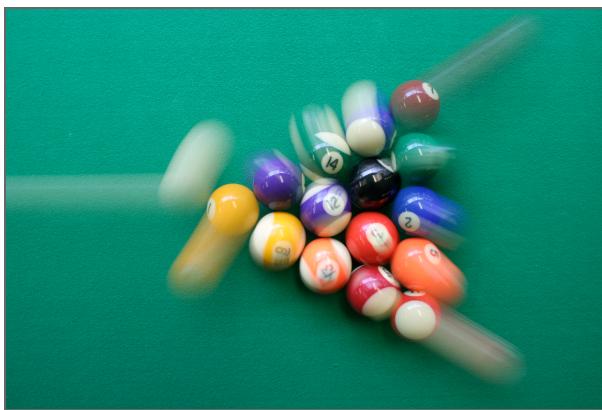
sim 2D collision

- Momentum is a **vector** $\vec{p}_{\text{before}} = \vec{p}_{\text{after}} \Rightarrow$
conservation applied component-wise, e.g.
for 2D:

$$\begin{cases} m_1 v_{1,x} + m_2 v_{2,x} = m_1 v'_{1,x} + m_2 v'_{2,x} \\ m_1 v_{1,y} + m_2 v_{2,y} = m_1 v'_{1,y} + m_2 v'_{2,y} \end{cases}$$

- For **elastic** collisions, add energy condition
(one equation only because scalar):

$$K_{\text{before}} = K_{\text{after}}$$



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Center of Mass (CM): Definition

- CM = mass-weighted average position of all particles:

$$\vec{r}_{\text{CM}} = \frac{1}{M} \sum_i m_i \vec{r}_i, \quad M = \sum_i m_i$$

- Component form (2D/3D):

$$x_{\text{CM}} = \frac{1}{M} \sum_i m_i x_i, \quad y_{\text{CM}} = \frac{1}{M} \sum_i m_i y_i, \quad z_{\text{CM}} =$$

- For continuous bodies:

$$\vec{r}_{\text{CM}} = \frac{1}{M} \int \vec{r} dm$$

- CM can lie **outside** the physical object.



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Center of Mass (CM): Implications

mk27 - Wurfschnitzel

- Total momentum:

$$\vec{P} = \sum_i p_i = \sum_i m_i \vec{v}_i = M \vec{v}_{\text{CM}}$$

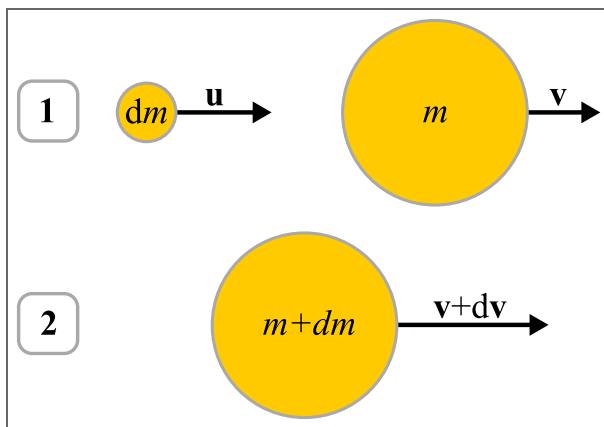
- CM acceleration obeys:

$$\frac{d\vec{P}}{dt} = M \vec{a}_{\text{CM}} = \vec{F}_{\text{ext}}$$

- Internal forces cancel → **only external forces** affect CM motion.
- The system **translates like a single particle of mass M** located at the CM.

Variable Mass Systems: Core Idea

- In some systems, mass **changes over time** (rockets, leaking carts, accreting snowballs).
- During a small interval dt , the system may **lose or gain a small mass dm** .
- To apply momentum conservation, we must include the momentum carried by this exchanged mass.
- Treat **system + exchanged mass** as an isolated system → total momentum is conserved at each step.



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Momentum Conservation for Rocket

- In a short time dt , rocket mass changes by $dm < 0$, velocity by dv .
- Momentum conservation for rocket + exhaust (u is exhaust speed):

$$m dv = -u dm$$

- Divide by dt :

$$m \frac{dv}{dt} = u \left(-\frac{dm}{dt} \right)$$

- Mass ejection rate $R = -\frac{dm}{dt} > 0 \rightarrow \text{thrust}$

$$F_{\text{thrust}} = uR, \quad m \frac{dv}{dt} = F_{\text{thrust}}$$

Tsiolkovsky Rocket Equation

mi10 - Raketenschuss

- Integrate the differential relation:

$$m \, dv = -u \, dm$$

- For constant exhaust speed u :

$$v = v_0 + u \ln\left(\frac{m_0}{m}\right)$$

- Key insight: **velocity gain grows with exhaust speed and mass ratio.**

Bye

mi18 - Raketenauto



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