

Deriving Drag Force in Python Computable Terms

The goal is to convert the standard quadratic drag formula into terms that can be easily used in a python program, without having to separately update velocity

The drag equation is:

$$F_D = -\frac{1}{2}\rho ACv^2 \quad (1)$$

Where:

F_D is the drag force

ρ is the density of the fluid

A is the cross sectional area

C is the drag coefficient of the object

v is the velocity

Vectorizing:

$$\vec{F}_D = -\frac{1}{2}\rho AC|\vec{v}|^2\hat{v} \quad (2)$$

Substitution:

Knowing that

$$v = \frac{P}{m} \quad (3)$$

Where:

P is the momentum

m is the mass

v is the velocity

$$\vec{F}_D = \frac{1}{2}\rho AC \frac{|\vec{P}|^2}{m} \hat{v} \quad (4)$$

Because momentum and velocity are in the same direction ($\vec{P} = m\vec{v}$)

$$\vec{F}_D = -\frac{1}{2}\rho AC \frac{|\vec{P}|^2}{m} \hat{P} \quad (5)$$

We now have an equation for drag force that we can use without having to calculate velocity and momentum separately.