



Game Engines



Newtonian Physics in Godot

Dr Bryan Duggan

TU Dublin



bryan.duggan@tudublin.org



[@skooter500](https://twitter.com/skooter500)



<http://bryanduggan.org>

What we will cover

 Coordinate Geometry

 Trigonometry

 Vectors & Simple Movement

 Transforms

 Physics in Godot



Newtonian Physics - Fundamentals



Time

Scalar measured in **seconds (s)**



Distance

Scalar measured in **Meters (m)**

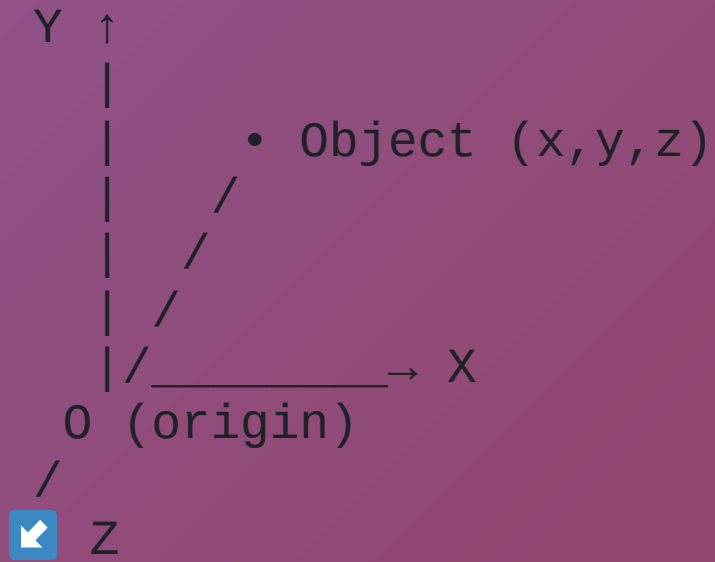


Mass

- Measure of the amount of matter
- Scalar measured in **Kg**
- Unit of matter

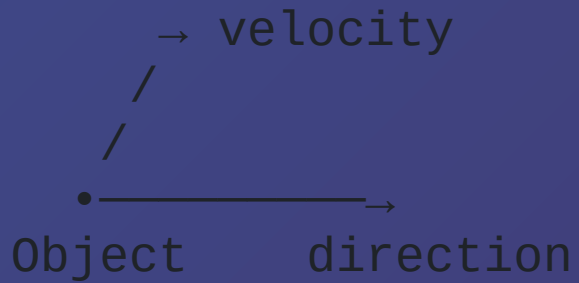
Position & Velocity

Position Vector



- Vector relative to origin
- Centre of mass
- Balance point

Velocity Vector



Formula: $v = \Delta x / \Delta t$

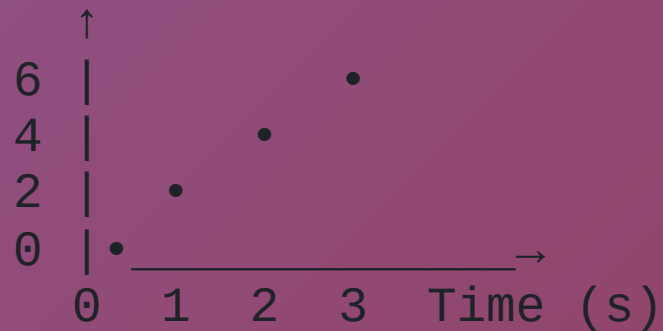
- Has magnitude (speed)
- Has direction
- Measured in **m/s**

⚡ Acceleration

📊 Rate of Change in Velocity

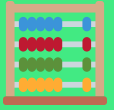
- Measured in m/s^2 or m/s/s
- **Formula:** $a = \Delta v / \Delta t$
- Change in velocity per time interval

Velocity increases over time



🚗 Example

Car accelerating at 2 m/s^2



Velocity, Acceleration & Time

Linear Equation: $y = mx + c$

For constant acceleration:

$$v = at + u$$

- v = final velocity
- a = acceleration
- t = time
- u = initial velocity (at $t = 0$)

Example

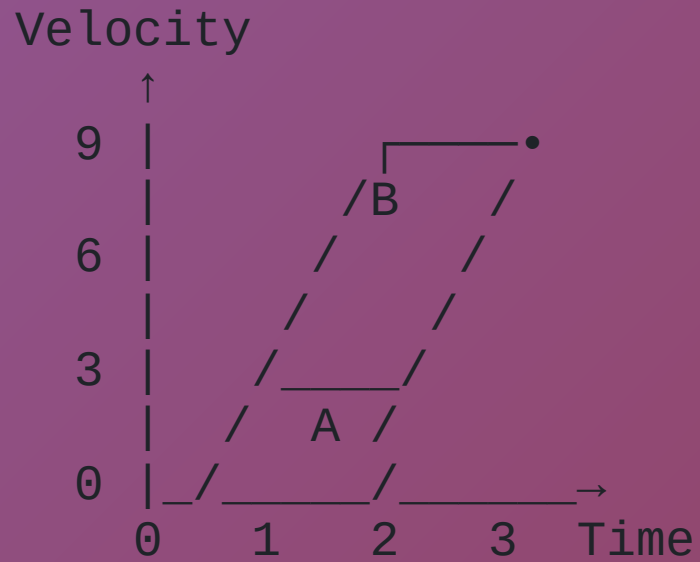
Car starting at **3 m/s**, accelerating at **2 m/s²** for **3 seconds**:

$$v = 2 \times 3 + 3 = 9 \text{ m/s}$$



Distance Calculations

Area Under the Curve



$$\text{Area A} = \Delta t \times u$$

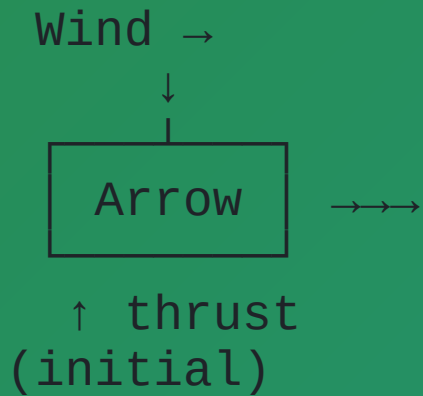
$$\text{Area B} = .5 \times (v - u) \times \Delta t$$

Final Formula

Force

What is Force?

- Can alter speed or direction
- **NOT** motion itself
- Only required for **change**
- No force needed to keep moving



Multiple Forces

⚙️ Calculating Force & Acceleration

$$\mathbf{F = ma}$$

- **F** = Force (Newtons)
- **m** = mass (kg)
- **a** = acceleration (m/s^2)

Example

Boat: **2000 kg**

Acceleration: **1.5 m/s^2**

$$F = 2000 \times 1.5$$

$$= 3000 \text{ N} \img alt="strongman emoji" data-bbox="161 871 186 909"/>$$

Equations Summary

Key Formulas

- $F = Ma$
- $a = \Delta v / \Delta t$
- $v = \Delta x / \Delta t$

Movement

- $\Delta x = v \Delta t$
- $\Delta x = u \Delta t + \frac{1}{2}a \Delta t^2$



Example 1: Moving to Destination

```
var dest = Vector3(20, 5, 20)
var to_dest = dest - global_position

if to_dest.length() > 0.1:
    to_dest = to_dest.normalized()
    var speed = 5.0
    global_position += \
        to_dest * speed * delta
    look_at(dest, Vector3.UP)
```



Better Godot Way

```
# Simple & clean!
look_at(dest, Vector3.UP)
translate(
    Vector3.FORWARD *
    speed * delta
)
```

⚡ Example 2: Physics Integration

```
var acceleration = force / mass
velocity += acceleration * delta
global_position += velocity * delta
force = Vector3.ZERO

if velocity.length() > 0.01:
    look_at(global_position + velocity, Vector3.UP)

velocity *= 0.99 # damping - friction effect
```

🌟 This implements Newton's laws directly in your game!



Seek Behavior

Steering toward target

```
var desired_velocity = \  
    target_pos - global_position  
  
desired_velocity = \  
    desired_velocity.normalized()  
  
desired_velocity *= max_speed  
  
var steering_force = \  
    desired_velocity - velocity  
  
return steering_force
```

```
Target •  
    ↗ desired velocity  
    /  
    /
```

3D Physics in Godot

Topics Covered

- Physics recap
- Equations of motion (movement & rotation)
- Physics Engines
- RigidBody3D
- CollisionShape3D
- Joints
- Raycasting
- Practical examples

Torque

The measure of force applied to produce rotational motion

- $\text{torque} = \text{position} \times \text{force}$
- Torque = position (relative to centre of gravity) crossed with force
- Torque is a vector
- Magnitude = amount of torque
- Direction = axis of rotation

Angular Velocity & Acceleration

Angular Velocity

- Rate at which a body rotates
- Example: Earth rotates at 15 degrees per hour
- Given as a vector

Angular Acceleration

- Rate of change of angular velocity over time
- Measured in radians per second² (rad/s²)
- Denoted by Greek letter α
- Also a vector

Inertia

The property of a body which resists change in its motion

Inertial Tensor

- A matrix describing how mass is distributed around a shape
- Different for different geometric primitives
- You can approximate complex shapes with simple ones
- Will anyone notice the approximation? Usually not!

Equations of Motion for Rotation

- Torque = `position × force`
- Angular acceleration = `torque * (1 / inertial_tensor)`
- Angular velocity = `angular_velocity + angular_acceleration * time`
- Orientation = `orientation + (time/2) * w * orientation`
 - Where w = pure quaternion of the angular velocity

Simple, isn't it! 😄

Two Ways of Adding Force

1. Add force at centre of mass

- Doesn't generate any torque
- Just updates force accumulator
- Movement only

2. Add force at a point on the object

- May generate torque
- Updates force accumulator
- AND updates torque accumulator
- Movement and rotation

⚙️ Physics Engines

🎯 What They Simulate

- ◆ Rigid body dynamics
- 🎯 Collision detection
- 🧶 Soft body dynamics
- 💧 Fluid dynamics
- ⚡ Real-time (speed over accuracy)

🏆 Major Players





- Jolt Physics ★ (Godot 4.x!)
- Bullet (Godot 3.x)
- PhysX (NVIDIA/Unreal)
- Havok (commercial)
- Box2D (2D physics)

Rigidbody3D Properties



Constant

-  Mass
-  Inertial tensor

Changes Over Time

-  Position vector
-  Linear velocity
-  Orientation (quaternion)
-  Angular velocity

Calculated Each Frame

-  Force accumulator
-  Torque accumulator

Rigidbody3D in Godot

Key Properties

```
mass  
linear_velocity  
angular_velocity  
inertia  
gravity_scale
```

Key Methods

```
apply_force(force, pos)  
apply_central_force(force)  
apply_torque(torque)  
apply_impulse(impulse, pos)  
apply_central_impulse(impulse)
```

Rigidbody3D Types

Dynamic



↓ Falls

- Positive mass
- Affected by forces
- Full simulation

Static



Ground

- Zero mass






CollisionShape3D

Works with RigidBody3D

- ✓ Collision detection
- ✓ Trigger areas
- ✓ Raycasting
- ✓ Can differ from visual mesh

Lower resolution = better performance! 🚀

Common Shapes

-  SphereShape3D
-  BoxShape3D
-  CapsuleShape3D
-  CylinderShape3D
-  ConvexPolygon



Collision Signals

```
# Connect these signals for collision detection

func _on_body_entered(body):
    print("💣 Started touching: ", body.name)
    # Apply damage, play sound, etc.

func _on_body_exited(body):
    print("👋 Stopped touching: ", body.name)
    # Clean up, stop effects, etc.
```



Area3D for Triggers

```
func _on_area_entered(area):
    print("🚪 Entered trigger zone!")
    # Open door, spawn enemies, save checkpoint
```



Creating RigidBody in Code

```
func create_brick(pos: Vector3,  
                  scale_vec: Vector3 = Vector3.ONE):  
    # Create RigidBody as root  
    var rigid_body = RigidBody3D.new()  
    rigid_body.position = pos  
    rigid_body.mass = 1.0  
    add_child(rigid_body)  
  
    # Add visual mesh as child  
    var mesh_instance = MeshInstance3D.new()  
    mesh_instance.mesh = BoxMesh.new()  
    mesh_instance.scale = scale_vec  
    rigid_body.add_child(mesh_instance)  
  
    # Add collision shape as child  
    var collision = CollisionShape3D.new()  
    collision.shape = BoxShape3D.new()  
    rigid_body.add_child(collision)  
  
    return rigid_body
```



Creating Cylinders (Wheels)

```
func create_wheel(  
    pos: Vector3,  
    diameter: float,  
    width: float  
):  
    # RigidBody as root  
    var rigid_body = RigidBody3D.new()  
    rigid_body.position = pos  
    add_child(rigid_body)  
  
    # Mesh as child  
    var mesh_instance = MeshInstance3D.new()  
    var cylinder_mesh = CylinderMesh.new()  
    cylinder_mesh.height = width  
    cylinder_mesh.top_radius = diameter / 2  
    cylinder_mesh.bottom_radius = diameter / 2  
    mesh_instance.mesh = cylinder_mesh  
    mesh_instance.rotation_degrees = \  
        Vector3(0, 0, 90)  
    rigid_body.add_child(mesh_instance)  
  
    return rigid_body
```

Joints in Godot

Nodes that constrain RigidBody3D movement relative to each other

PinJoint3D

Point-to-point connection

HingeJoint3D

Rotation around axis

SliderJoint3D

Movement along axis

Generic6DOF

Configure everything!

All joints have `node_a`, `node_b`, and `breaking` threshold



HingeJoint3D - Doors & Wheels

```
var hinge = HingeJoint3D.new()
add_child(hinge)

hinge.node_a = wheel.get_path()
hinge.node_b = chassis.get_path()

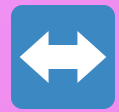
# Optional: add motor
hinge.set_flag(
    HingeJoint3D.FLAG_ENABLE_MOTOR,
    true
)
hinge.set_param(
    HingeJoint3D.PARAM_MOTOR_TARGET_VELOCITY,
    10.0
)
```



Perfect For:

Wheel

Door



SliderJoint3D - Linear Motion

```
var slider = SliderJoint3D.new()  
add_child(slider)  
  
slider.node_a = piston.get_path()  
slider.node_b = cylinder.get_path()  
  
# Set movement limits  
slider.set_param(  
    SliderJoint3D.PARAM_LINEAR_LIMIT_UPPER,  
    5.0  
)  
slider.set_param(  
    SliderJoint3D.PARAM_LINEAR_LIMIT_LOWER,  
    -5.0  
)
```



Piston Example





PinJoint3D - Chains & Ropes

```
var pin = PinJoint3D.new()  
add_child(pin)  
  
pin.node_a = object_a.get_path()  
pin.node_b = object_b.get_path()  
  
# Add damping for stability  
pin.set_param(  
    PinJoint3D.PARAM_BIAS,  
    0.3  
)  
pin.set_param(  
    PinJoint3D.PARAM_DAMPING,  
    1.0  
)
```



Use Cases






Generic6DOFJoint3D

Most Flexible Joint - Configure Everything!

Six Degrees of Freedom:

- 3 Linear (X, Y, Z movement)
- 3 Angular (X, Y, Z rotation)

Each axis can be:

-  Locked
-  Free
-  Limited
-  Motorized
-  Spring-damped

Use when other joints don't fit your needs! 

Raycasting

Laser-precise collision detection! 

Raycasting in Godot

What is it?

A **ray** from origin to target

Returns collision information:

-  Hit position
-  Hit object
-  Surface normal
-  Distance

Very efficient! Hundreds per frame 

Visualization

Camera 

|

Ray



Raycasting Code

```
var space_state = get_world_3d().direct_space_state
var query = PhysicsRayQueryParameters3D.create(origin, target)
var result = space_state.intersect_ray(query)

if result:
    print("🎯 Hit: ", result.collider.name)
    print("📍 Position: ", result.position)
    print("📐 Normal: ", result.normal)

    # Spawn effect at hit point
    spawn_explosion(result.position)
```

💡 **Use cases:** Line of sight, shooting, object placement, mouse picking!



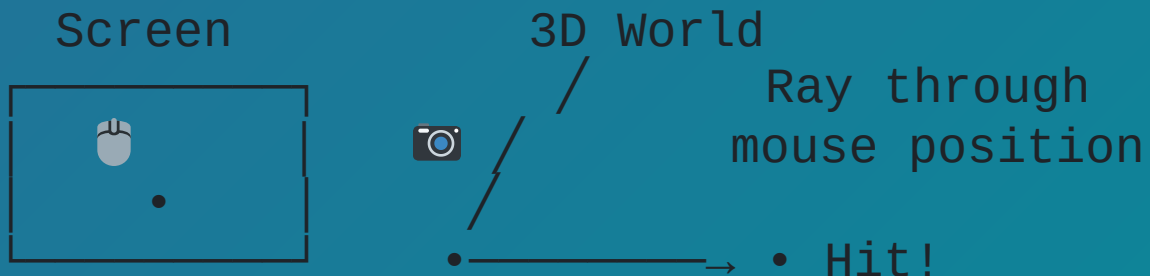
Raycasting from Camera

```
var camera = get_viewport().get_camera_3d()
var mouse_pos = get_viewport().get_mouse_position()

# Get ray from camera through mouse position
var from = camera.project_ray_origin(mouse_pos)
var to = from + camera.project_ray_normal(mouse_pos) * 1000

var space_state = get_world_3d().direct_space_state
var query = PhysicsRayQueryParameters3D.create(from, to)
var result = space_state.intersect_ray(query)

if result:
    spawn_object(result.position) # Click to place!
```





Gravity Gun





Half-Life 2's iconic physics manipulator!

Gravity Gun Concept

The Idea

Players directly manipulate physics objects

Use them as:

-  Projectiles
-  Shields
-  Puzzle solutions
-  Tools

Famous Examples

- **Half-Life 2** (original!)
- Portal



Gravity Gun - Algorithm

1 Check for Input (mouse click)

2 If Nothing Picked Up:

- Raycast from camera → If hit valid object → pick it up!

3 If Something Held:

- Calculate hold position (in front of camera)
- Calculate velocity toward hold position
- Apply velocity to object's Rigidbody3D

4 On Release:

- Drop the object (set `picked_up = null`)



Gravity Gun - Pseudocode

```
if mouse_clicked:  
    if picked_up == null:
```

```
        Raycast from camera  
        if hit_object and not world:  
            picked_up = hit_object
```

```
    else:
```

```
        hold_pos = camera + forward * dist  
        direction = hold_pos - picked_pos  
        velocity = direction * power  
        velocity = clamp(velocity, max_vel)  
        picked_up.linear_velocity = velocity
```

```
else:  
    picked_up = null # Drop it!
```



Gravity Gun - Setup

```
extends Node3D

var picked_up = null
var hold_distance = 5.0
var power_factor = 10.0
var max_velocity = 20.0

func _process(delta):
    if Input.is_action_pressed("shoot"):
        if picked_up == null:
            raycast_and_pickup()
        else:
            hold_object()
    else:
        picked_up = null # Release
```



Raycast & Pickup

```
func raycast_and_pickup():
    var camera = get_viewport().get_camera_3d()
    var from = camera.global_position
    var to = from + camera.global_transform.basis.z * -100

    var space_state = get_world_3d().direct_space_state
    var query = PhysicsRayQueryParameters3D.create(from, to)
    var result = space_state.intersect_ray(query)

    if result:
        var hit_object = result.collider
        # Only pick up RigidBody3D objects
        if hit_object is RigidBody3D and hit_object.name != "Ground":
            picked_up = hit_object
            print("📦 Picked up: ", hit_object.name)
```



Hold Object

```
func hold_object():
    var camera = get_viewport().get_camera_3d()

    # Calculate position in front of camera
    var hold_pos = camera.global_position + \
        camera.global_transform.basis.z * -hold_distance

    # Calculate velocity to move object to hold position
    var to_hold_pos = hold_pos - picked_up.global_position
    to_hold_pos *= power_factor

    # Clamp to maximum velocity
    if to_hold_pos.length() > max_velocity:
        to_hold_pos = to_hold_pos.normalized() * max_velocity

    # Apply the velocity
    picked_up.linear_velocity = to_hold_pos
```



Physics Integration in Code

```
# Newtonian Physics (Linear Motion)
var acceleration = force / mass
velocity += acceleration * delta
position += velocity * delta
velocity *= 0.99 # damping/friction

# Hamiltonian Physics (Rotational Motion)
var angular_acceleration = torque / inertia
angular_velocity += angular_acceleration * delta
# Godot handles quaternion rotation automatically!

# Reset force accumulators
force = Vector3.ZERO
torque = Vector3.ZERO
```

⚡ **Godot's physics engine does this for you automatically!**

Advanced Integration

Explicit Euler (Current)

What we've been using:

```
Simple & fast  
One step per frame
```

Good for most games! 

Runge-Kutta (RK4)

More accurate:

```
4 samples per timestep  
t = 0, 0.25, 0.5, 0.75  
Final value at t = 1
```

Better stability 



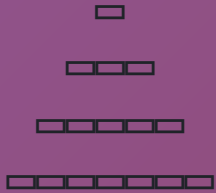
Lab Exercises

Time to practice! 💪



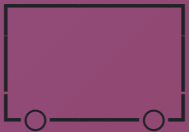
Lab Exercises

1 Tower Builder



- Stack blocks
- Destroy mechanic
- Make it fun!

2 Simple Car



Recap - What We Learned

Core Concepts

- ✓ Newtonian physics
- ✓ Forces & acceleration
- ✓ Velocity & position
- ✓ Torque & rotation
- ✓ Angular motion

Godot Tools

- ✓ RigidBody3D
- ✓ CollisionShape3D
- ✓ Joints (all types!)
- ✓ Raycasting
- ✓ Physics integration

Quick Reference

Key Formulas

$$F = ma$$

$$v = v_0 + at$$

$$x = x_0 + v_0 t + \frac{1}{2}at^2$$

$$\tau = r \times F$$

Joint Types

-  PinJoint3D → chains
-  HingeJoint3D → doors/wheels
-  SliderJoint3D → pistons
-  Generic6DOF → custom



Resources & Links



Official Docs



Godot Physics

docs.godotengine.org/physics



RigidBody3D

docs.godotengine.org/rigidbody3d



Joints

docs.godotengine.org/joints



Learning Resources



GDQuest

gdquest.com



Godot Tutorials

godottutorials.com

Questions?

Thanks for your attention!

Now go build something awesome! 