CHAPTER 22

Electric Fields

22-1 THE ELECTRIC FIELD

Learning Objectives

After reading this module, you should be able to . . .

22.01 Identify that at every point in the space surrounding a charged particle, the particle sets up an electric field $\vec{E}$, which is a vector quantity and thus has both magnitude and direction.

22.02 Identify how an electric field $\vec{E}$ can be used to explain how a charged particle can exert an electrostatic force $\vec{F}$ on a second charged particle even though there is no contact between the particles.

22.03 Explain how a small positive test charge is used (in principle) to measure the electric field at any given point.

22.04 Explain electric field lines, including where they originate and terminate and what their spacing represents.

Key Ideas

- A charged particle sets up an electric field (a vector quantity) in the surrounding space. If a second charged particle is located in that space, an electrostatic force acts on it due to the magnitude and direction of the field at its location.
- The electric field $\vec{E}$ at any point is defined in terms of the electrostatic force $\vec{F}$ that would be exerted on a positive test charge q_0 placed there:

$$\vec{E} = \frac{\vec{F}}{q_0}.$$

- Electric field lines help us visualize the direction and magnitude of electric fields. The electric field vector at any point is tangent to the field line through that point. The density of field lines in that region is proportional to the magnitude of the electric field there. Thus, closer field lines represent a stronger field.
- Electric field lines originate on positive charges and terminate on negative charges. So, a field line extending from a positive charge must end on a negative charge.

What Is Physics?

Figure 22-1 shows two positively charged particles. From the preceding chapter we know that an electrostatic force acts on particle 1 due to the presence of particle 2. We also know the force direction and, given some data, we can calculate the force magnitude. However, here is a leftover nagging question. How does particle 1 "know" of the presence of particle 2? That is, since the particles do not touch, how can particle 2 push on particle 1—how can there be such an *action at a distance*?

One purpose of physics is to record observations about our world, such as the magnitude and direction of the push on particle 1. Another purpose is to provide an explanation of what is recorded. Our purpose in this chapter is to provide such an explanation to this nagging question about electric force at a distance.

The explanation that we shall examine here is this: Particle 2 sets up an **electric field** at all points in the surrounding space, even if the space is a vacuum. If we place particle 1 at any point in that space, particle 1 knows of the presence of particle 2 because it is affected by the electric field particle 2 has already set up at that point. Thus, particle 2 pushes on particle 1 not by touching it as you would push on a coffee mug by making contact. Instead, particle 2 pushes by means of the electric field it has set up.

Figure 22-1 How does charged particle 2 push on charged particle 1 when they have no contact?

Our goals in this chapter are to (1) define electric field, (2) discuss how to calculate it for various arrangements of charged particles and objects, and (3) discuss how an electric field can affect a charged particle (as in making it move).

The Electric Field

A lot of different fields are used in science and engineering. For example, a *temperature field* for an auditorium is the distribution of temperatures we would find by measuring the temperature at many points within the auditorium. Similarly, we could define a *pressure field* in a swimming pool. Such fields are examples of *scalar fields* because temperature and pressure are scalar quantities, having only magnitudes and not directions.

In contrast, an electric field is a *vector field* because it is responsible for conveying the information for a force, which involves both magnitude and direction. This field consists of a distribution of electric field vectors $\vec{E}$, one for each point in the space around a charged object. In principle, we can define $\vec{E}$ at some point near the charged object, such as point P in Fig. 22-2*a*, with this procedure: At P, we place a particle with a small positive charge q_0, called a *test charge* because we use it to test the field. (We want the charge to be small so that it does not disturb the object's charge distribution.) We then measure the electrostatic force $\vec{F}$ that acts on the test charge. The electric field at that point is then

$$\vec{E} = \frac{\vec{F}}{q_0} \quad \text{(electric field).} \tag{22-1}$$

Because the test charge is positive, the two vectors in Eq. 22-1 are in the same direction, so the direction of $\vec{E}$ is the direction we measure for $\vec{F}$. The magnitude of $\vec{E}$ at point P is F/q_0. As shown in Fig. 22-2*b*, we always represent an electric field with an arrow with its tail anchored on the point where the measurement is made. (This may sound trivial, but drawing the vectors any other way usually results in errors. Also, another common error is to mix up the terms *force* and *field* because they both start with the letter f. Electric force is a push or pull. Electric field is an abstract property set up by a charged object.) From Eq. 22-1, we see that the SI unit for the electric field is the newton per coulomb (N/C).

We can shift the test charge around to various other points, to measure the electric fields there, so that we can figure out the distribution of the electric field set up by the charged object. That field exists independent of the test charge. It is something that a charged object sets up in the surrounding space (even vacuum), independent of whether we happen to come along to measure it.

For the next several modules, we determine the field around charged particles and various charged objects. First, however, let's examine a way of visualizing electric fields.

Electric Field Lines

Look at the space in the room around you. Can you visualize a field of vectors throughout that space—vectors with different magnitudes and directions? As impossible as that seems, Michael Faraday, who introduced the idea of electric fields in the 19th century, found a way. He envisioned lines, now called **electric field lines**, in the space around any given charged particle or object.

Figure 22-3 gives an example in which a sphere is uniformly covered with negative charge. If we place a positive test charge at any point near the sphere (Fig. 22-3*a*), we find that an electrostatic force pulls on it toward the center of the sphere. Thus at every point around the sphere, an electric field vector points radially inward toward the sphere. We can represent this electric field with

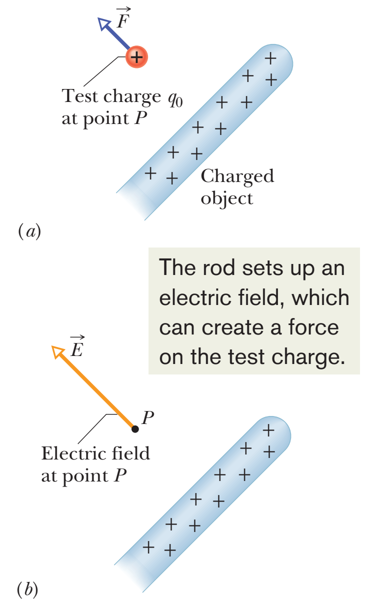


Figure 22-2 (*a*) A positive test charge q_0 placed at point P near a charged object. An electrostatic force $\vec{F}$ acts on the test charge. (*b*) The electric field $\vec{E}$ at point P produced by the charged object.

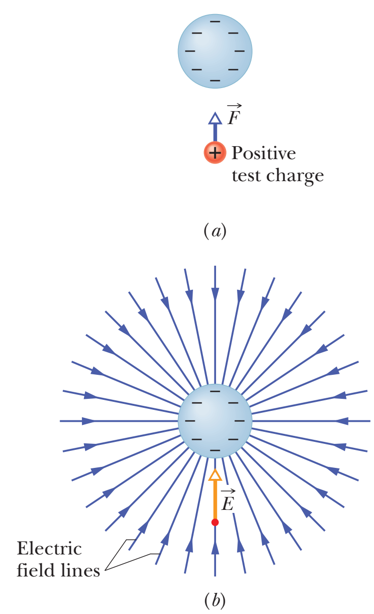


Figure 22-3 (*a*) The electrostatic force $\vec{F}$ acting on a positive test charge near a sphere of uniform negative charge. (*b*) The electric field vector $\vec{E}$ at the location of the test charge, and the electric field lines in the space near the sphere. The field lines extend *toward* the negatively charged sphere. (They originate on distant positive charges.)

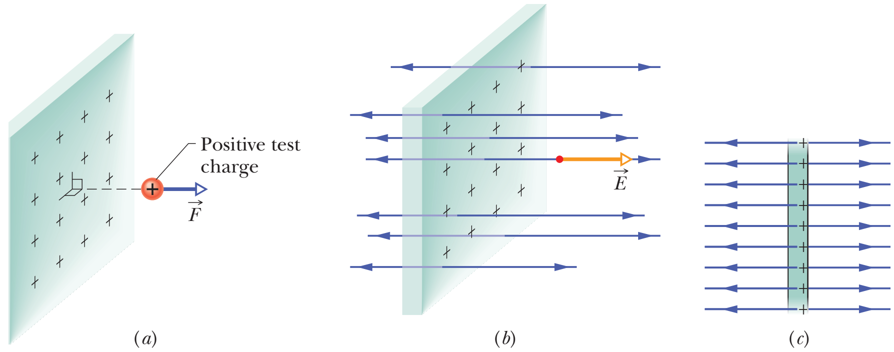


Figure 22-4 (*a*) The force on a positive test charge near a very large, nonconducting sheet with uniform positive charge on one side. (*b*) The electric field vector $\vec{E}$ at the test charge's location, and the nearby electric field lines, extending away from the sheet. (*c*) Side view.

electric field lines as in Fig. 22-3*b*. At any point, such as the one shown, the direction of the field line through the point matches the direction of the electric vector at that point.

The rules for drawing electric fields lines are these: (1) At any point, the electric field vector must be tangent to the electric field line through that point and in the same direction. (This is easy to see in Fig. 22-3 where the lines are straight, but we'll see some curved lines soon.) (2) In a plane perpendicular to the field lines, the relative density of the lines represents the relative magnitude of the field there, with greater density for greater magnitude.

If the sphere in Fig. 22-3 were uniformly covered with positive charge, the electric field vectors at all points around it would be radially outward and thus so would the electric field lines. So, we have the following rule:

Electric field lines extend away from positive charge (where they originate) and toward negative charge (where they terminate).

In Fig. 22-3*b*, they originate on distant positive charges that are not shown.

For another example, Fig. 22-4*a* shows part of an infinitely large, nonconducting *sheet* (or plane) with a uniform distribution of positive charge on one side. If we place a positive test charge at any point near the sheet (on either side), we find that the electrostatic force on the particle is outward and perpendicular to the sheet. The perpendicular orientation is reasonable because any force component that is, say, upward is balanced out by an equal component that is downward. That leaves only outward, and thus the electric field vectors and the electric field lines must also be outward and perpendicular to the sheet, as shown in Figs. 22-4*b* and *c*.

Because the charge on the sheet is uniform, the field vectors and the field lines are also. Such a field is a *uniform electric field*, meaning that the electric field has the same magnitude and direction at every point within the field. (This is a lot easier to work with than a *nonuniform field*, where there is variation from point to point.) Of course, there is no such thing as an infinitely large sheet. That is just a way of saying that we are measuring the field at points close to the sheet relative to the size of the sheet and that we are not near an edge.

Figure 22-5 shows the field lines for two particles with equal positive charges. Now the field lines are curved, but the rules still hold: (1) the electric field vector at any given point must be tangent to the field line at that point and in the same direction, as shown for one vector, and (2) a closer spacing means a larger field magnitude. To imagine the full three-dimensional pattern of field lines around the particles, mentally rotate the pattern in Fig. 22-5 around the *axis of symmetry*, which is a vertical line through both particles.

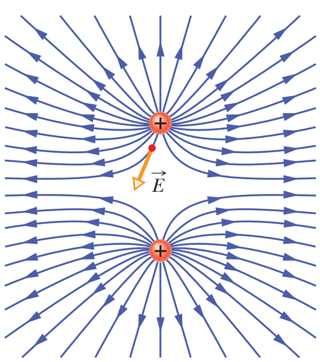


Figure 22-5 Field lines for two particles with equal positive charge. Doesn't the pattern itself suggest that the particles repel each other?

22-2 THE ELECTRIC FIELD DUE TO A CHARGED PARTICLE

Learning Objectives

After reading this module, you should be able to . . .

22.05 In a sketch, draw a charged particle, indicate its sign, pick a nearby point, and then draw the electric field vector $\vec{E}$ at that point, with its tail anchored on the point.

22.06 For a given point in the electric field of a charged particle, identify the direction of the field vector $\vec{E}$ when the particle is positively charged and when it is negatively charged.

22.07 For a given point in the electric field of a charged particle, apply the relationship between the field magnitude E, the charge magnitude $|q|$, and the distance r between the point and the particle.

22.08 Identify that the equation given here for the magnitude of an electric field applies only to a particle, not an extended object.

22.09 If more than one electric field is set up at a point, draw each electric field vector and then find the net electric field by adding the individual electric fields as vectors (not as scalars).

Key Ideas

- The magnitude of the electric field $\vec{E}$ set up by a particle with charge q at distance r from the particle is

$$E = \frac{1}{4\pi\varepsilon_0}\frac{|q|}{r^2}.$$

- The electric field vectors set up by a positively charged particle all point directly away from the particle. Those set up by a negatively charged particle all point directly toward the particle.

- If more than one charged particle sets up an electric field at a point, the net electric field is the *vector* sum of the individual electric fields—electric fields obey the superposition principle.

The Electric Field Due to a Point Charge

To find the electric field due to a charged particle (often called a *point charge*), we place a positive test charge at any point near the particle, at distance r. From Coulomb's law (Eq. 21-4), the force on the test charge due to the particle with charge q is

$$\vec{F} = \frac{1}{4\pi\varepsilon_0}\frac{qq_0}{r^2}\,\hat{\mathrm{r}}.$$

As previously, the direction of $\vec{F}$ is directly away from the particle if q is positive (because q_0 is positive) and directly toward it if q is negative. From Eq. 22-1, we can now write the electric field set up by the particle (at the location of the test charge) as

$$\vec{E} = \frac{\vec{F}}{q_0} = \frac{1}{4\pi\varepsilon_0}\frac{q}{r^2}\,\hat{\mathrm{r}} \quad \text{(charged particle).} \tag{22-2}$$

Let's think through the directions again. The direction of $\vec{E}$ matches that of the force on the positive test charge: directly away from the point charge if q is positive and directly toward it if q is negative.

So, if given another charged particle, we can immediately determine the directions of the electric field vectors near it by just looking at the sign of the charge q. We can find the magnitude at any given distance r by converting Eq. 22-2 to a magnitude form:

$$E = \frac{1}{4\pi\varepsilon_0}\frac{|q|}{r^2} \quad \text{(charged particle).} \tag{22-3}$$

We write $|q|$ to avoid the danger of getting a negative E when q is negative, and then thinking the negative sign has something to do with direction. Equation 22-3 gives magnitude E only. We must think about the direction separately.

Figure 22-6 gives a number of electric field vectors at points around a positively charged particle, but be careful. Each vector represents the vector

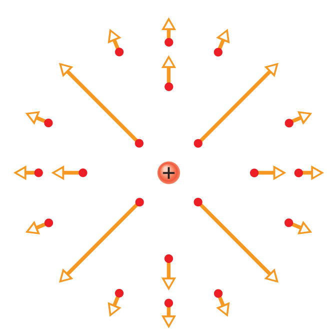


Figure 22-6 The electric field vectors at various points around a positive point charge.

quantity at the point where the tail of the arrow is anchored. The vector is not something that stretches from a "here" to a "there" as with a displacement vector.

In general, if several electric fields are set up at a given point by several charged particles, we can find the net field by placing a positive test particle at the point and then writing out the force acting on it due to each particle, such as $\vec{F}_{01}$ due to particle 1. Forces obey the principle of superposition, so we just add the forces as vectors:

$$\vec{F}_0 = \vec{F}_{01} + \vec{F}_{02} + \cdots + \vec{F}_{0n}.$$

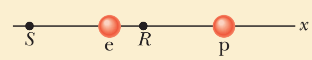
To change over to electric field, we repeatedly use Eq. 22-1 for each of the individual forces:

$$\begin{aligned}\vec{E} &= \frac{\vec{F}_0}{q_0} = \frac{\vec{F}_{01}}{q_0} + \frac{\vec{F}_{02}}{q_0} + \cdots + \frac{\vec{F}_{0n}}{q_0} \\ &= \vec{E}_1 + \vec{E}_2 + \cdots + \vec{E}_n. \end{aligned} \tag{22-4}$$

This tells us that electric fields also obey the principle of superposition. If you want the net electric field at a given point due to several particles, find the electric field due to each particle (such as $\vec{E}_1$ due to particle 1) and then sum the fields as vectors. (As with electrostatic forces, you cannot just willy-nilly add up the magnitudes.) This addition of fields is the subject of many of the homework problems.

Checkpoint 1

The figure here shows a proton p and an electron e on an x axis. What is the direction of the electric field due to the electron at (a) point S and (b) point R? What is the direction of the net electric field at (c) point R and (d) point S?



Sample Problem 22.01 Net electric field due to three charged particles

Figure 22-7a shows three particles with charges $q_1 = +2Q$, $q_2 = -2Q$, and $q_3 = -4Q$, each a distance d from the origin. What net electric field $\vec{E}$ is produced at the origin?

KEY IDEA

Charges q_1, q_2, and q_3 produce electric field vectors $\vec{E}_1$, $\vec{E}_2$, and $\vec{E}_3$, respectively, at the origin, and the net electric field is the vector sum $\vec{E} = \vec{E}_1 + \vec{E}_2 + \vec{E}_3$. To find this sum, we first must find the magnitudes and orientations of the three field vectors.

Magnitudes and directions: To find the magnitude of $\vec{E}_1$, which is due to q_1, we use Eq. 22-3, substituting d for r and $2Q$ for q and obtaining

$$E_1 = \frac{1}{4\pi\varepsilon_0}\frac{2Q}{d^2}.$$

Similarly, we find the magnitudes of $\vec{E}_2$ and $\vec{E}_3$ to be

$$E_2 = \frac{1}{4\pi\varepsilon_0}\frac{2Q}{d^2} \quad \text{and} \quad E_3 = \frac{1}{4\pi\varepsilon_0}\frac{4Q}{d^2}.$$

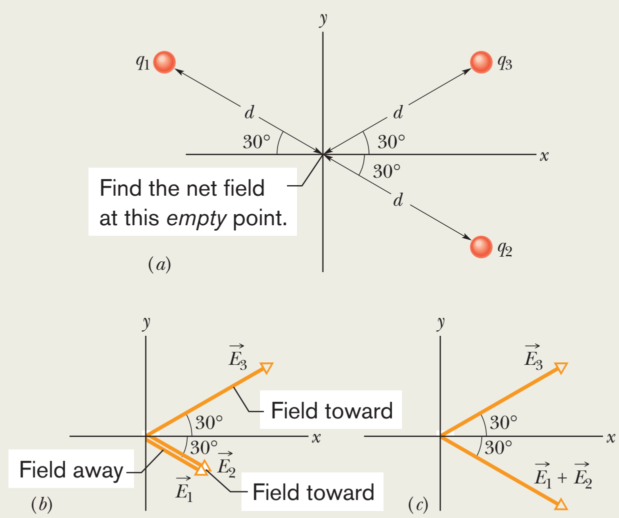


Figure 22-7 (a) Three particles with charges q_1, q_2, and q_3 are at the same distance d from the origin. (b) The electric field vectors $\vec{E}_1$, $\vec{E}_2$, and $\vec{E}_3$, at the origin due to the three particles. (c) The electric field vector $\vec{E}_3$ and the vector sum $\vec{E}_1 + \vec{E}_2$ at the origin.

We next must find the orientations of the three electric field vectors at the origin. Because q_1 is a positive charge, the field vector it produces points directly *away* from it, and because q_2 and q_3 are both negative, the field vectors they produce point directly *toward* each of them. Thus, the three electric fields produced at the origin by the three charged particles are oriented as in Fig. 22-7*b*. (*Caution:* Note that we have placed the tails of the vectors at the point where the fields are to be evaluated; doing so decreases the chance of error. Error becomes very probable if the tails of the field vectors are placed on the particles creating the fields.)

Adding the fields: We can now add the fields vectorially just as we added force vectors in Chapter 21. However, here we can use symmetry to simplify the procedure. From Fig. 22-7*b*, we see that electric fields $\vec{E}_1$ and $\vec{E}_2$ have the same direction. Hence, their vector sum has that direction and has the magnitude

$$E_1 + E_2 = \frac{1}{4\pi\varepsilon_0}\frac{2Q}{d^2} + \frac{1}{4\pi\varepsilon_0}\frac{2Q}{d^2} = \frac{1}{4\pi\varepsilon_0}\frac{4Q}{d^2},$$

which happens to equal the magnitude of field $\vec{E}_3$.

We must now combine two vectors, $\vec{E}_3$ and the vector sum $\vec{E}_1 + \vec{E}_2$, that have the same magnitude and that are oriented symmetrically about the x axis, as shown in Fig. 22-7*c*. From the symmetry of Fig. 22-7*c*, we realize that the equal y components of our two vectors cancel (one is upward and the other is downward) and the equal x components add (both are rightward). Thus, the net electric field $\vec{E}$ at the origin is in the positive direction of the x axis and has the magnitude

$$E = 2E_{3x} = 2E_3 \cos 30^\circ = (2)\frac{1}{4\pi\varepsilon_0}\frac{4Q}{d^2}(0.866) = \frac{6.93Q}{4\pi\varepsilon_0 d^2}. \qquad \text{(Answer)}$$

22-3 THE ELECTRIC FIELD DUE TO A DIPOLE

Learning Objectives

After reading this module, you should be able to . . .

22.10 Draw an electric dipole, identifying the charges (sizes and signs), dipole axis, and direction of the electric dipole moment.

22.11 Identify the direction of the electric field at any given point along the dipole axis, including between the charges.

22.12 Outline how the equation for the electric field due to an electric dipole is derived from the equations for the electric field due to the individual charged particles that form the dipole.

22.13 For a single charged particle and an electric dipole, compare the rate at which the electric field magnitude decreases with increase in distance. That is, identify which drops off faster.

22.14 For an electric dipole, apply the relationship between the magnitude p of the dipole moment, the separation d between the charges, and the magnitude q of either of the charges.

22.15 For any distant point along a dipole axis, apply the relationship between the electric field magnitude E, the distance z from the center of the dipole, and either the dipole moment magnitude p or the product of charge magnitude q and charge separation d.

Key Ideas

- An electric dipole consists of two particles with charges of equal magnitude q but opposite signs, separated by a small distance d.
- The electric dipole moment $\vec{p}$ has magnitude qd and points from the negative charge to the positive charge.
- The magnitude of the electric field set up by an electric dipole at a distant point on the dipole axis (which runs through both particles) can be written in terms of either the product qd or the magnitude p of the dipole moment:

$$E = \frac{1}{2\pi\varepsilon_0}\frac{qd}{z^3} = \frac{1}{2\pi\varepsilon_0}\frac{p}{z^3},$$

where z is the distance between the point and the center of the dipole.

- Because of the $1/z^3$ dependence, the field magnitude of an electric dipole decreases more rapidly with distance than the field magnitude of either of the individual charges forming the dipole, which depends on $1/r^2$.

The Electric Field Due to an Electric Dipole

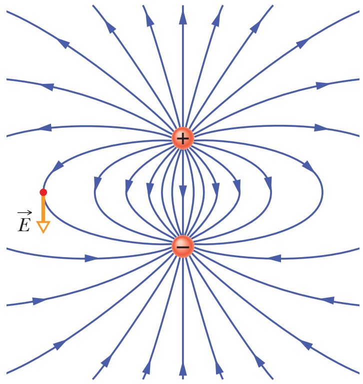


Figure 22-8 The pattern of electric field lines around an electric dipole, with an electric field vector $\vec{E}$ shown at one point (tangent to the field line through that point).

Figure 22-8 shows the pattern of electric field lines for two particles that have the same charge magnitude q but opposite signs, a very common and important arrangement known as an **electric dipole**. The particles are separated by distance d and lie along the *dipole axis*, an axis of symmetry around which you can imagine rotating the pattern in Fig. 22-8. Let's label that axis as a z axis. Here we restrict our interest to the magnitude and direction of the electric field $\vec{E}$ at an arbitrary point P along the dipole axis, at distance z from the dipole's midpoint.

Figure 22-9*a* shows the electric fields set up at P by each particle. The nearer particle with charge $+q$ sets up field $E_{(+)}$ in the positive direction of the z axis (directly away from the particle). The farther particle with charge $-q$ sets up a smaller field $E_{(-)}$ in the negative direction (directly toward the particle). We want the net field at P, as given by Eq. 22-4. However, because the field vectors are along the same axis, let's simply indicate the vector directions with plus and minus signs, as we commonly do with forces along a single axis. Then we can write the magnitude of the net field at P as

$$\begin{aligned} E &= E_{(+)} - E_{(-)} \\ &= \frac{1}{4\pi\varepsilon_0}\frac{q}{r_{(+)}^2} - \frac{1}{4\pi\varepsilon_0}\frac{q}{r_{(-)}^2} \\ &= \frac{q}{4\pi\varepsilon_0(z - \frac{1}{2}d)^2} - \frac{q}{4\pi\varepsilon_0(z + \frac{1}{2}d)^2}. \end{aligned} \tag{22-5}$$

After a little algebra, we can rewrite this equation as

$$E = \frac{q}{4\pi\varepsilon_0 z^2}\left(\frac{1}{\left(1 - \dfrac{d}{2z}\right)^2} - \frac{1}{\left(1 + \dfrac{d}{2z}\right)^2}\right). \tag{22-6}$$

After forming a common denominator and multiplying its terms, we come to

$$E = \frac{q}{4\pi\varepsilon_0 z^2}\frac{2d/z}{\left(1 - \left(\dfrac{d}{2z}\right)^2\right)^2} = \frac{q}{2\pi\varepsilon_0 z^3}\frac{d}{\left(1 - \left(\dfrac{d}{2z}\right)^2\right)^2}. \tag{22-7}$$

We are usually interested in the electrical effect of a dipole only at distances that are large compared with the dimensions of the dipole—that is, at distances such that $z \gg d$. At such large distances, we have $d/2z \ll 1$ in Eq. 22-7. Thus, in our approximation, we can neglect the $d/2z$ term in the denominator, which leaves us with

$$E = \frac{1}{2\pi\varepsilon_0}\frac{qd}{z^3}. \tag{22-8}$$

The product qd, which involves the two intrinsic properties q and d of the dipole, is the magnitude p of a vector quantity known as the **electric dipole moment** $\vec{p}$ of the dipole. (The unit of $\vec{p}$ is the coulomb-meter.) Thus, we can write Eq. 22-8 as

$$E = \frac{1}{2\pi\varepsilon_0}\frac{p}{z^3} \quad \text{(electric dipole).} \tag{22-9}$$

The direction of $\vec{p}$ is taken to be from the negative to the positive end of the dipole, as indicated in Fig. 22-9*b*. We can use the direction of $\vec{p}$ to specify the orientation of a dipole.

Equation 22-9 shows that, if we measure the electric field of a dipole only at distant points, we can never find q and d separately; instead, we can find only their product. The field at distant points would be unchanged if, for example, q

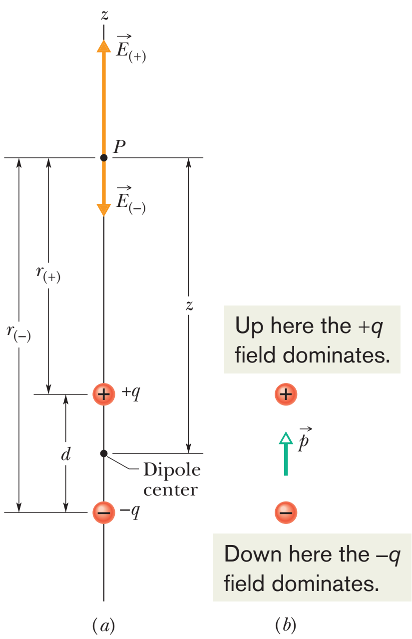


Figure 22-9 (*a*) An electric dipole. The electric field vectors $\vec{E}_{(+)}$ and $\vec{E}_{(-)}$ at point P on the dipole axis result from the dipole's two charges. Point P is at distances $r_{(+)}$ and $r_{(-)}$ from the individual charges that make up the dipole. (*b*) The dipole moment $\vec{p}$ of the dipole points from the negative charge to the positive charge.

were doubled and d simultaneously halved. Although Eq. 22-9 holds only for distant points along the dipole axis, it turns out that E for a dipole varies as $1/r^3$ for *all* distant points, regardless of whether they lie on the dipole axis; here r is the distance between the point in question and the dipole center.

Inspection of Fig. 22-9 and of the field lines in Fig. 22-8 shows that the direction of $\vec{E}$ for distant points on the dipole axis is always the direction of the dipole moment vector $\vec{p}$. This is true whether point P in Fig. 22-9a is on the upper or the lower part of the dipole axis.

Inspection of Eq. 22-9 shows that if you double the distance of a point from a dipole, the electric field at the point drops by a factor of 8. If you double the distance from a single point charge, however (see Eq. 22-3), the electric field drops only by a factor of 4. Thus the electric field of a dipole decreases more rapidly with distance than does the electric field of a single charge. The physical reason for this rapid decrease in electric field for a dipole is that from distant points a dipole looks like two particles that almost—but not quite—coincide. Thus, because they have charges of equal magnitude but opposite signs, their electric fields at distant points almost—but not quite—cancel each other.

Sample Problem 22.02 Electric dipole and atmospheric sprites

Sprites (Fig. 22-10a) are huge flashes that occur far above a large thunderstorm. They were seen for decades by pilots flying at night, but they were so brief and dim that most pilots figured they were just illusions. Then in the 1990s sprites were captured on video. They are still not well understood but are believed to be produced when especially powerful lightning occurs between the ground and storm clouds, particularly when the lightning transfers a huge amount of negative charge $-q$ from the ground to the base of the clouds (Fig. 22-10b).

Just after such a transfer, the ground has a complicated distribution of positive charge. However, we can model the electric field due to the charges in the clouds and the ground by assuming a vertical electric dipole that has charge $-q$ at cloud height h and charge $+q$ at below-ground depth h (Fig. 22-10c). If $q = 200$ C and $h = 6.0$ km, what is the magnitude of the dipole's electric field at altitude $z_1 = 30$ km somewhat above the clouds and altitude $z_2 = 60$ km somewhat above the stratosphere?

KEY IDEA

We can approximate the magnitude E of an electric dipole's electric field on the dipole axis with Eq. 22-8.

Calculations: We write that equation as

$$E = \frac{1}{2\pi\varepsilon_0}\frac{q(2h)}{z^3},$$

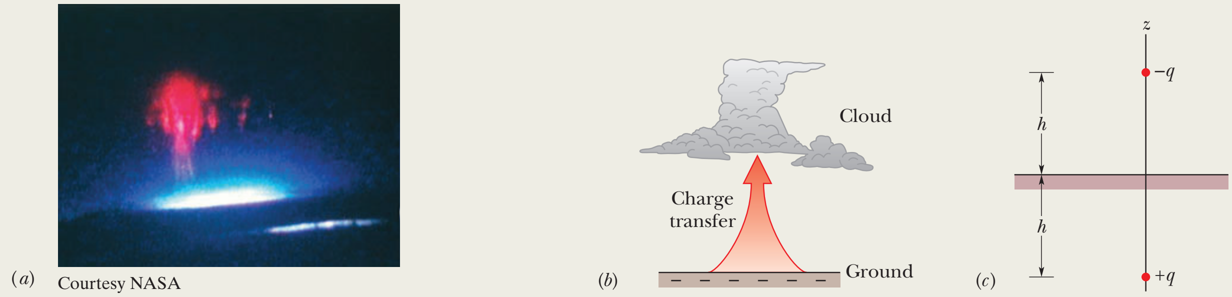
where $2h$ is the separation between $-q$ and $+q$ in Fig. 22-10c. For the electric field at altitude $z_1 = 30$ km, we find

$$E = \frac{1}{2\pi\varepsilon_0}\frac{(200\text{ C})(2)(6.0\times10^3\text{ m})}{(30\times10^3\text{ m})^3}$$
$$= 1.6\times10^3\text{ N/C}. \quad \text{(Answer)}$$

Similarly, for altitude $z_2 = 60$ km, we find

$$E = 2.0\times10^2\text{ N/C}. \quad \text{(Answer)}$$

As we discuss in Module 22-6, when the magnitude of



(a) (b) (c)

Figure 22-10 (a) Photograph of a sprite. (b) Lightning in which a large amount of negative charge is transferred from ground to cloud base. (c) The cloud–ground system modeled as a vertical electric dipole.

an electric field exceeds a certain critical value E_c, the field can pull electrons out of atoms (ionize the atoms), and then the freed electrons can run into other atoms, causing those atoms to emit light. The value of E_c depends on the density of the air in which the electric field exists. At altitude $z_2 = 60$ km the density of the air is so low that $E = 2.0 \times 10^2$ N/C exceeds E_c, and thus light is emitted by the atoms in the air. That light forms sprites. Lower down, just above the clouds at $z_1 = 30$ km, the density of the air is much higher, $E = 1.6 \times 10^3$ N/C does not exceed E_c, and no light is emitted. Hence, sprites occur only far above storm clouds.

22-4 THE ELECTRIC FIELD DUE TO A LINE OF CHARGE

Learning Objectives

After reading this module, you should be able to . . .

22.16 For a uniform distribution of charge, find the linear charge density λ for charge along a line, the surface charge density σ for charge on a surface, and the volume charge density ρ for charge in a volume.

22.17 For charge that is distributed uniformly along a line, find the net electric field at a given point near the line by splitting the distribution up into charge elements dq and then summing (by integration) the electric field vectors $d\vec{E}$ set up at the point by each element.

22.18 Explain how symmetry can be used to simplify the calculation of the electric field at a point near a line of uniformly distributed charge.

Key Ideas

- The equation for the electric field set up by a particle does not apply to an extended object with charge (said to have a continuous charge distribution).
- To find the electric field of an extended object at a point, we first consider the electric field set up by a charge element dq in the object, where the element is small enough for us to apply the equation for a particle. Then we sum, via integration, components of the electric fields $d\vec{E}$ from all the charge elements.
- Because the individual electric fields $d\vec{E}$ have different magnitudes and point in different directions, we first see if symmetry allows us to cancel out any of the components of the fields, to simplify the integration.

The Electric Field Due to a Line of Charge

So far we have dealt with only charged particles, a single particle or a simple collection of them. We now turn to a much more challenging situation in which a thin (approximately one-dimensional) object such as a rod or ring is charged with a huge number of particles, more than we could ever even count. In the next module, we consider two-dimensional objects, such as a disk with charge spread over a surface. In the next chapter we tackle three-dimensional objects, such as a sphere with charge spread through a volume.

Heads Up. Many students consider this module to be the most difficult in the book for a variety of reasons. There are lots of steps to take, a lot of vector features to keep track of, and after all that, we set up and then solve an integral. The worst part, however, is that the procedure can be different for different arrangements of the charge. Here, as we focus on a particular arrangement (a charged ring), be aware of the general approach, so that you can tackle other arrangements in the homework (such as rods and partial circles).

Figure 22-11 shows a thin ring of radius R with a uniform distribution of positive charge along its circumference. It is made of plastic, which means that the charge is fixed in place. The ring is surrounded by a pattern of electric field lines, but here we restrict our interest to an arbitrary point P on the central axis (the axis through the ring's center and perpendicular to the plane of the ring), at distance z from the center point.

The charge of an extended object is often conveyed in terms of a charge density rather than the total charge. For a line of charge, we use the *linear charge* *density* λ (the charge per unit length), with the SI unit of coulomb per meter. Table 22-1 shows the other charge densities that we shall be using for charged surfaces and volumes.

Table 22-1 Some Measures of Electric Charge

Name	Symbol	SI Unit
Charge	q	C
Linear charge density	λ	C/m
Surface charge density	σ	C/m^2
Volume charge density	ρ	C/m^3

First Big Problem. So far, we have an equation for the electric field of a particle. (We can combine the field of several particles as we did for the electric dipole to generate a special equation, but we are still basically using Eq. 22-3). Now take a look at the ring in Fig. 22-11. That clearly is not a particle and so Eq. 22-3 does not apply. So what do we do?

The answer is to mentally divide the ring into differential elements of charge that are so small that we can treat them as though they *are* particles. Then we *can* apply Eq. 22-3.

Second Big Problem. We now know to apply Eq. 22-3 to each charge element dq (the front d emphasizes that the charge is very small) and can write an expression for its contribution of electric field $d\vec{E}$ (the front d emphasizes that the contribution is very small). However, each such contributed field vector at P is in its own direction. How can we add them to get the net field at P?

The answer is to split the vectors into components and then separately sum one set of components and then the other set. However, first we check to see if one set simply all cancels out. (Canceling out components saves lots of work.)

Third Big Problem. There is a huge number of dq elements in the ring and thus a huge number of $d\vec{E}$ components to add up, even if we can cancel out one set of components. How can we add up more components than we could even count? The answer is to add them by means of integration.

Do It. Let's do all this (but again, be aware of the general procedure, not just the fine details). We arbitrarily pick the charge element shown in Fig. 22-11. Let ds be the arc length of that (or any other) dq element. Then in terms of the linear density λ (the charge per unit length), we have

$$dq = \lambda\, ds. \tag{22-10}$$

An Element's Field. This charge element sets up the differential electric field $d\vec{E}$ at P, at distance r from the element, as shown in Fig. 22-11. (Yes, we are introducing a new symbol that is not given in the problem statement, but soon we shall replace it with "legal symbols.") Next we rewrite the field equation for a particle (Eq. 22-3) in terms of our new symbols dE and dq, but then we replace dq using Eq. 22-10. The field magnitude due to the charge element is

$$dE = \frac{1}{4\pi\varepsilon_0}\frac{dq}{r^2} = \frac{1}{4\pi\varepsilon_0}\frac{\lambda\, ds}{r^2}. \tag{22-11}$$

Notice that the illegal symbol r is the hypotenuse of the right triangle displayed in Fig. 22-11. Thus, we can replace r by rewriting Eq. 22-11 as

$$dE = \frac{1}{4\pi\varepsilon_0}\frac{\lambda\, ds}{(z^2 + R^2)}. \tag{22-12}$$

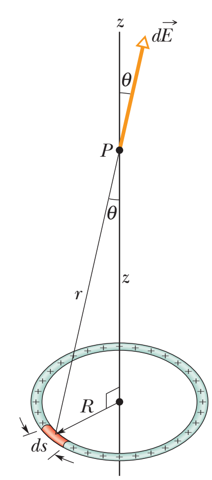


Figure 22-11 A ring of uniform positive charge. A differential element of charge occupies a length ds (greatly exaggerated for clarity). This element sets up an electric field $d\vec{E}$ at point P.

Because every charge element has the same charge and the same distance from point P, Eq. 22-12 gives the field magnitude contributed by each of them. Figure 22-11 also tells us that each contributed $d\vec{E}$ leans at angle θ to the central axis (the z axis) and thus has components perpendicular and parallel to that axis.

Canceling Components. Now comes the neat part, where we eliminate one set of those components. In Fig. 22-11, consider the charge element on the opposite side of the ring. It too contributes the field magnitude dE but the field vector leans at angle θ in the opposite direction from the vector from our first charge

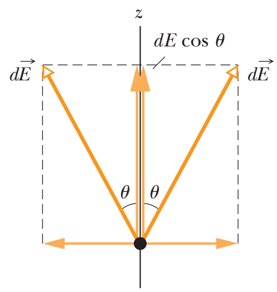


Figure 22-12 The electric fields set up at P by a charge element and its symmetric partner (on the opposite side of the ring). The components perpendicular to the z axis cancel; the parallel components add.

element, as indicated in the side view of Fig. 22-12. Thus the two perpendicular components cancel. All around the ring, this cancelation occurs for every charge element and its *symmetric partner* on the opposite side of the ring. So we can neglect all the perpendicular components.

Adding Components. We have another big win here. All the remaining components are in the positive direction of the z axis, so we can just add them up as scalars. Thus we can already tell the direction of the net electric field at P: directly away from the ring. From Fig. 22-12, we see that the parallel components each have magnitude $dE\cos\theta$, but θ is another illegal symbol. We can replace $\cos\theta$ with legal symbols by again using the right triangle in Fig. 22-11 to write

$$\cos\theta = \frac{z}{r} = \frac{z}{(z^2 + R^2)^{1/2}}. \tag{22-13}$$

Multiplying Eq. 22-12 by Eq. 22-13 gives us the parallel field component from each charge element:

$$dE\cos\theta = \frac{1}{4\pi\varepsilon_0}\frac{z\lambda}{(z^2 + R^2)^{3/2}}\,ds. \tag{22-14}$$

Integrating. Because we must sum a huge number of these components, each small, we set up an integral that moves along the ring, from element to element, from a starting point (call it $s = 0$) through the full circumference ($s = 2\pi R$). Only the quantity s varies as we go through the elements; the other symbols in Eq. 22-14 remain the same, so we move them outside the integral. We find

$$\begin{aligned} E &= \int dE\cos\theta = \frac{z\lambda}{4\pi\varepsilon_0(z^2 + R^2)^{3/2}}\int_0^{2\pi R} ds \\ &= \frac{z\lambda(2\pi R)}{4\pi\varepsilon_0(z^2 + R^2)^{3/2}}. \end{aligned} \tag{22-15}$$

This is a fine answer, but we can also switch to the total charge by using $\lambda = q/(2\pi R)$:

$$E = \frac{qz}{4\pi\varepsilon_0(z^2 + R^2)^{3/2}} \quad \text{(charged ring).} \tag{22-16}$$

If the charge on the ring is negative, instead of positive as we have assumed, the magnitude of the field at P is still given by Eq. 22-16. However, the electric field vector then points toward the ring instead of away from it.

Let us check Eq. 22-16 for a point on the central axis that is so far away that $z \gg R$. For such a point, the expression $z^2 + R^2$ in Eq. 22-16 can be approximated as z^2, and Eq. 22-16 becomes

$$E = \frac{1}{4\pi\varepsilon_0}\frac{q}{z^2} \quad \text{(charged ring at large distance).} \tag{22-17}$$

This is a reasonable result because from a large distance, the ring "looks like" a point charge. If we replace z with r in Eq. 22-17, we indeed do have the magnitude of the electric field due to a point charge, as given by Eq. 22-3.

Let us next check Eq. 22-16 for a point at the center of the ring—that is, for $z = 0$. At that point, Eq. 22-16 tells us that $E = 0$. This is a reasonable result because if we were to place a test charge at the center of the ring, there would be no net electrostatic force acting on it; the force due to any element of the ring would be canceled by the force due to the element on the opposite side of the ring. By Eq. 22-1, if the force at the center of the ring were zero, the electric field there would also have to be zero.

Sample Problem 22.03 Electric field of a charged circular rod

Figure 22-13*a* shows a plastic rod with a uniform charge $-Q$. It is bent in a 120° circular arc of radius r and symmetrically paced across an x axis with the origin at the center of curvature P of the rod. In terms of Q and r, what is the electric field $\vec{E}$ due to the rod at point P?

KEY IDEA

Because the rod has a continuous charge distribution, we must find an expression for the electric fields due to differential elements of the rod and then sum those fields via calculus.

An element: Consider a differential element having arc length ds and located at an angle θ above the x axis (Figs. 22-13*b* and *c*). If we let λ represent the linear charge density of the rod, our element ds has a differential charge of magnitude

$$dq = \lambda\, ds. \tag{22-18}$$

The element's field: Our element produces a differential electric field $d\vec{E}$ at point P, which is a distance r from the element. Treating the element as a point charge, we can rewrite Eq. 22-3 to express the magnitude of $d\vec{E}$ as

$$dE = \frac{1}{4\pi\varepsilon_0}\frac{dq}{r^2} = \frac{1}{4\pi\varepsilon_0}\frac{\lambda\, ds}{r^2}. \tag{22-19}$$

The direction of $d\vec{E}$ is toward ds because charge dq is negative.

Symmetric partner: Our element has a symmetrically located (mirror image) element ds' in the bottom half of the rod. The electric field $d\vec{E}'$ set up at P by ds' also has the magnitude given by Eq. 22-19, but the field vector points toward ds' as shown in Fig. 22-13*d*. If we resolve the electric field vectors of ds and ds' into x and y components as shown in Figs. 22-13*e* and *f*, we see that their y components cancel (because they have equal magnitudes and are in opposite directions). We also see that their x components have equal magnitudes and are in the same direction.

Summing: Thus, to find the electric field set up by the rod, we need sum (via integration) only the x components of the differential electric fields set up by all the differential elements of the rod. From Fig. 22-13*f* and Eq. 22-19, we can write

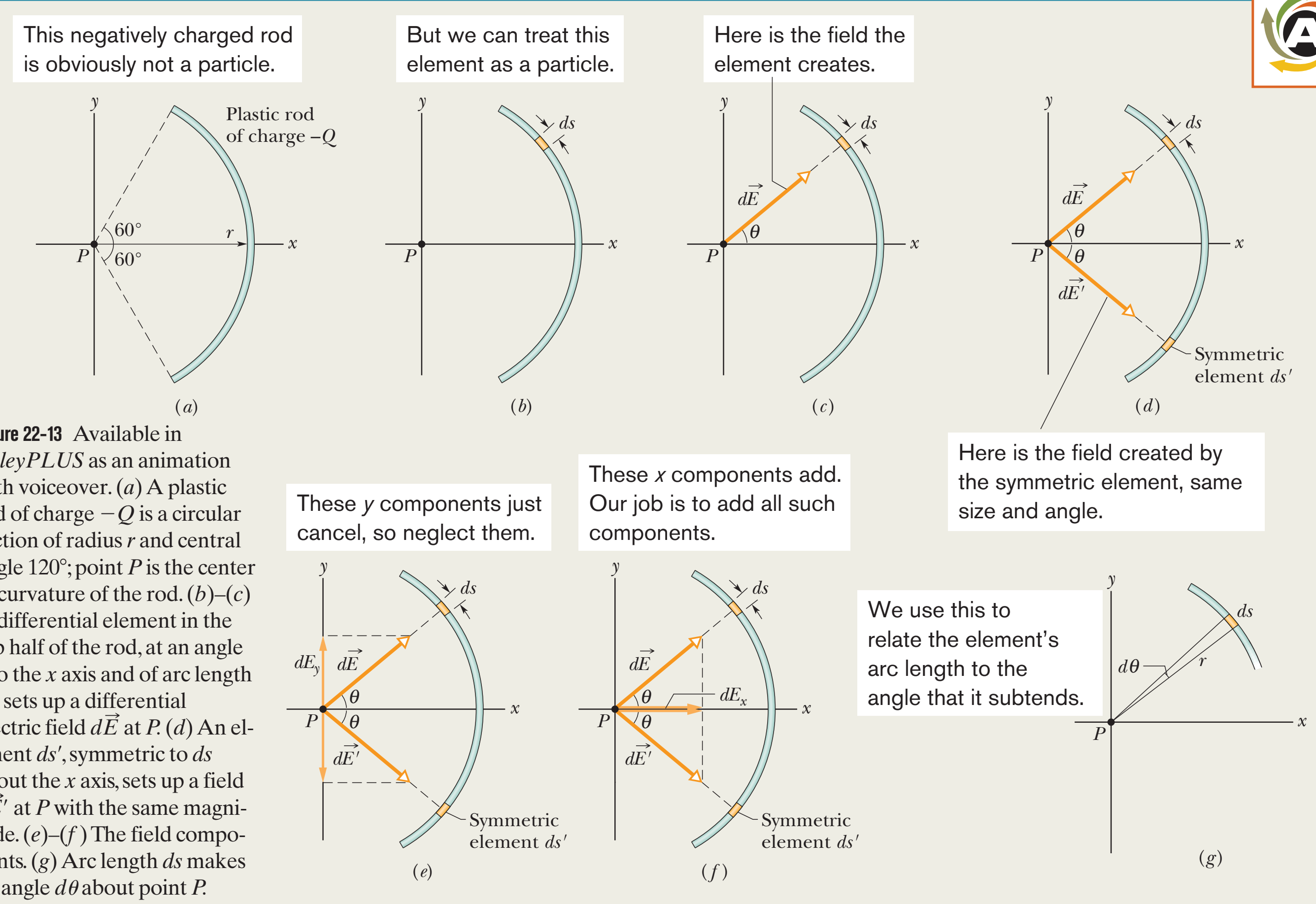


Figure 22-13 Available in *WileyPLUS* as an animation with voiceover. (*a*) A plastic rod of charge $-Q$ is a circular section of radius r and central angle 120°; point P is the center of curvature of the rod. (*b*)–(*c*) A differential element in the top half of the rod, at an angle θ to the x axis and of arc length ds, sets up a differential electric field $d\vec{E}$ at P. (*d*) An element ds', symmetric to ds about the x axis, sets up a field $d\vec{E}'$ at P with the same magnitude. (*e*)–(*f*) The field components. (*g*) Arc length ds makes an angle $d\theta$ about point P.

the component dE_x set up by ds as

$$dE_x = dE\cos\theta = \frac{1}{4\pi\varepsilon_0}\frac{\lambda}{r^2}\cos\theta\, ds. \tag{22-20}$$

Equation 22-20 has two variables, θ and s. Before we can integrate it, we must eliminate one variable. We do so by replacing ds, using the relation

$$ds = r\, d\theta,$$

in which $d\theta$ is the angle at P that includes arc length ds (Fig. 22-13*g*). With this replacement, we can integrate Eq. 22-20 over the angle made by the rod at P, from $\theta = -60°$ to $\theta = 60°$; that will give us the field magnitude at P:

$$\begin{aligned} E &= \int dE_x = \int_{-60°}^{60°} \frac{1}{4\pi\varepsilon_0}\frac{\lambda}{r^2}\cos\theta\, r\, d\theta \\ &= \frac{\lambda}{4\pi\varepsilon_0 r}\int_{-60°}^{60°}\cos\theta\, d\theta = \frac{\lambda}{4\pi\varepsilon_0 r}\Big[\sin\theta\Big]_{-60°}^{60°} \\ &= \frac{\lambda}{4\pi\varepsilon_0 r}[\sin 60° - \sin(-60°)] \\ &= \frac{1.73\lambda}{4\pi\varepsilon_0 r}. \end{aligned} \tag{22-21}$$

(If we had reversed the limits on the integration, we would have gotten the same result but with a minus sign. Since the integration gives only the magnitude of $\vec{E}$, we would then have discarded the minus sign.)

Charge density: To evaluate λ, we note that the full rod subtends an angle of 120° and so is one-third of a full circle. Its arc length is then $2\pi r/3$, and its linear charge density must be

$$\lambda = \frac{\text{charge}}{\text{length}} = \frac{Q}{2\pi r/3} = \frac{0.477Q}{r}.$$

Substituting this into Eq. 22-21 and simplifying give us

$$\begin{aligned} E &= \frac{(1.73)(0.477Q)}{4\pi\varepsilon_0 r^2} \\ &= \frac{0.83Q}{4\pi\varepsilon_0 r^2}. \end{aligned} \qquad \text{(Answer)}$$

The direction of $\vec{E}$ is toward the rod, along the axis of symmetry of the charge distribution. We can write $\vec{E}$ in unit-vector notation as

$$\vec{E} = \frac{0.83Q}{4\pi\varepsilon_0 r^2}\,\hat{\mathrm{i}}.$$

Problem-Solving Tactics A Field Guide for Lines of Charge

Here is a generic guide for finding the electric field $\vec{E}$ produced at a point P by a line of uniform charge, either circular or straight. The general strategy is to pick out an element dq of the charge, find $d\vec{E}$ due to that element, and integrate $d\vec{E}$ over the entire line of charge.

Step 1. If the line of charge is circular, let ds be the arc length of an element of the distribution. If the line is straight, run an x axis along it and let dx be the length of an element. Mark the element on a sketch.

Step 2. Relate the charge dq of the element to the length of the element with either $dq = \lambda\, ds$ or $dq = \lambda\, dx$. Consider dq and λ to be positive, even if the charge is actually negative. (The sign of the charge is used in the next step.)

Step 3. Express the field $d\vec{E}$ produced at P by dq with Eq. 22-3, replacing q in that equation with either $\lambda\, ds$ or $\lambda\, dx$. If the charge on the line is positive, then at P draw a vector $d\vec{E}$ that points directly away from dq. If the charge is negative, draw the vector pointing directly toward dq.

Step 4. Always look for any symmetry in the situation. If P is on an axis of symmetry of the charge distribution, resolve the field $d\vec{E}$ produced by dq into components that are perpendicular and parallel to the axis of symmetry. Then consider a second element dq' that is located symmetrically to dq about the line of symmetry. At P draw the vector $d\vec{E}'$ that this symmetrical element produces and resolve it into components. One of the components produced by dq is a *canceling component;* it is canceled by the corresponding component produced by dq' and needs no further attention. The other component produced by dq is an *adding component;* it adds to the corresponding component produced by dq'. Add the adding components of all the elements via integration.

Step 5. Here are four general types of uniform charge distributions, with strategies for the integral of step 4.

Ring, with point P on (central) axis of symmetry, as in Fig. 22-11. In the expression for dE, replace r^2 with $z^2 + R^2$, as in Eq. 22-12. Express the adding component of $d\vec{E}$ in terms of θ. That introduces $\cos\theta$, but θ is identical for all elements and thus is not a variable. Replace $\cos\theta$ as in Eq. 22-13. Integrate over s, around the circumference of the ring.

Circular arc, with point P at the center of curvature, as in Fig. 22-13. Express the adding component of $d\vec{E}$ in terms of θ. That introduces either $\sin\theta$ or $\cos\theta$. Reduce the resulting two variables s and θ to one, θ, by replacing ds with $r\, d\theta$. Integrate over θ from one end of the arc to the other end.

Straight line, with point P on an extension of the line, as in Fig. 22-14*a*. In the expression for dE, replace r with x. Integrate over x, from end to end of the line of charge.

Straight line, with point P at perpendicular distance y from the line of charge, as in Fig. 22-14*b*. In the expression for dE, replace r with an expression involving x and y. If P is on the perpendicular bisector of the line of charge, find an expression for the adding component of $d\vec{E}$. That will introduce either $\sin\theta$ or $\cos\theta$. Reduce the resulting two variables x and θ to one, x, by replacing the trigonometric function with an expression (its definition) involving x and y. Integrate over x from end to end of the line of charge. If P is not on a line of symmetry, as in Fig. 22-14*c*, set up an integral to sum the components dE_x, and integrate over x to find E_x. Also set up an integral to sum the components dE_y, and integrate over x again to find E_y. Use the components E_x and E_y in the usual way to find the magnitude E and the orientation of $\vec{E}$.

Step 6. One arrangement of the integration limits gives a positive result. The reverse gives the same result with a minus sign; discard the minus sign. If the result is to be stated in terms of the total charge Q of the distribution, replace λ with Q/L, in which L is the length of the distribution.

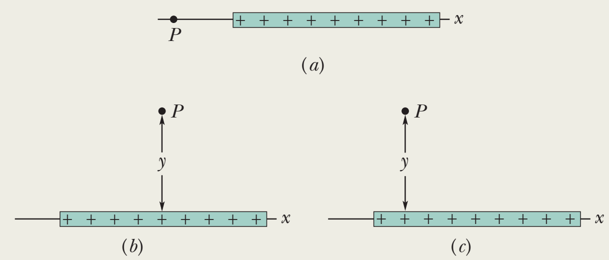
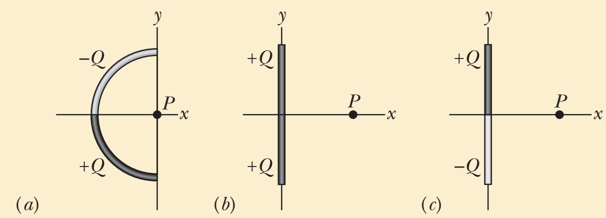


Figure 22-14 (*a*) Point P is on an extension of the line of charge. (*b*) P is on a line of symmetry of the line of charge, at perpendicular distance y from that line. (*c*) Same as (*b*) except that P is not on a line of symmetry.

WILEY PLUS Additional examples, video, and practice available at *WileyPLUS*

Checkpoint 2

The figure here shows three nonconducting rods, one circular and two straight. Each has a uniform charge of magnitude Q along its top half and another along its bottom half. For each rod, what is the direction of the net electric field at point P?



22-5 THE ELECTRIC FIELD DUE TO A CHARGED DISK

Learning Objectives

After reading this module, you should be able to . . .

22.19 Sketch a disk with uniform charge and indicate the direction of the electric field at a point on the central axis if the charge is positive and if it is negative.

22.20 Explain how the equation for the electric field on the central axis of a uniformly charged ring can be used to find the equation for the electric field on the central axis of a uniformly charged disk.

22.21 For a point on the central axis of a uniformly charged disk, apply the relationship between the surface charge density σ, the disk radius R, and the distance z to that point.

Key Idea

- On the central axis through a uniformly charged disk,

$$E = \frac{\sigma}{2\varepsilon_0}\left(1 - \frac{z}{\sqrt{z^2 + R^2}}\right)$$

gives the electric field magnitude. Here z is the distance along the axis from the center of the disk, R is the radius of the disk, and σ is the surface charge density.

The Electric Field Due to a Charged Disk

Now we switch from a line of charge to a surface of charge by examining the electric field of a circular plastic disk, with a radius R and a uniform surface charge density σ (charge per unit area, Table 22-1) on its top surface. The disk sets up a

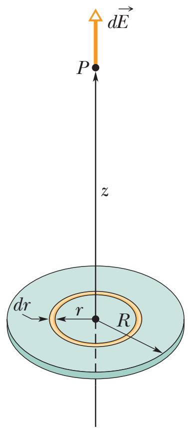


Figure 22-15 A disk of radius R and uniform positive charge. The ring shown has radius r and radial width dr. It sets up a differential electric field $d\vec{E}$ at point P on its central axis.

pattern of electric field lines around it, but here we restrict our attention to the electric field at an arbitrary point P on the central axis, at distance z from the center of the disk, as indicated in Fig. 22-15.

We could proceed as in the preceding module but set up a two-dimensional integral to include all of the field contributions from the two-dimensional distribution of charge on the top surface. However, we can save a lot of work with a neat shortcut using our earlier work with the field on the central axis of a thin ring.

We superimpose a ring on the disk as shown in Fig. 22-15, at an arbitrary radius $r \leq R$. The ring is so thin that we can treat the charge on it as a charge element dq. To find its small contribution dE to the electric field at point P, we rewrite Eq. 22-16 in terms of the ring's charge dq and radius r:

$$dE = \frac{dq\, z}{4\pi\varepsilon_0(z^2 + r^2)^{3/2}}. \tag{22-22}$$

The ring's field points in the positive direction of the z axis.

To find the total field at P, we are going to integrate Eq. 22-22 from the center of the disk at $r = 0$ out to the rim at $r = R$ so that we sum all the dE contributions (by sweeping our arbitrary ring over the entire disk surface). However, that means we want to integrate with respect to a variable radius r of the ring.

We get dr into the expression by substituting for dq in Eq. 22-22. Because the ring is so thin, call its thickness dr. Then its surface area dA is the product of its circumference $2\pi r$ and thickness dr. So, in terms of the surface charge density σ, we have

$$dq = \sigma\, dA = \sigma(2\pi r\, dr). \tag{22-23}$$

After substituting this into Eq. 22-22 and simplifying slightly, we can sum all the dE contributions with

$$E = \int dE = \frac{\sigma z}{4\varepsilon_0}\int_0^R (z^2 + r^2)^{-3/2}(2r)\, dr, \tag{22-24}$$

where we have pulled the constants (including z) out of the integral. To solve this integral, we cast it in the form $\int X^m\, dX$ by setting $X = (z^2 + r^2)$, $m = -\frac{3}{2}$, and $dX = (2r)\, dr$. For the recast integral we have

$$\int X^m\, dX = \frac{X^{m+1}}{m+1},$$

and so Eq. 22-24 becomes

$$E = \frac{\sigma z}{4\varepsilon_0}\left[\frac{(z^2 + r^2)^{-1/2}}{-\frac{1}{2}}\right]_0^R. \tag{22-25}$$

Taking the limits in Eq. 22-25 and rearranging, we find

$$E = \frac{\sigma}{2\varepsilon_0}\left(1 - \frac{z}{\sqrt{z^2 + R^2}}\right) \quad \text{(charged disk)} \tag{22-26}$$

as the magnitude of the electric field produced by a flat, circular, charged disk at points on its central axis. (In carrying out the integration, we assumed that $z \geq 0$.)

If we let $R \to \infty$ while keeping z finite, the second term in the parentheses in Eq. 22-26 approaches zero, and this equation reduces to

$$E = \frac{\sigma}{2\varepsilon_0} \quad \text{(infinite sheet)}. \tag{22-27}$$

This is the electric field produced by an infinite sheet of uniform charge located on one side of a nonconductor such as plastic. The electric field lines for such a situation are shown in Fig. 22-4.

We also get Eq. 22-27 if we let $z \to 0$ in Eq. 22-26 while keeping R finite. This shows that at points very close to the disk, the electric field set up by the disk is the same as if the disk were infinite in extent.

22-6 A POINT CHARGE IN AN ELECTRIC FIELD

Learning Objectives

After reading this module, you should be able to . . .

22.22 For a charged particle placed in an external electric field (a field due to other charged objects), apply the relationship between the electric field $\vec{E}$ at that point, the particle's charge q, and the electrostatic force $\vec{F}$ that acts on the particle, and identify the relative directions of the force and the field when the particle is positively charged and negatively charged.

22.23 Explain Millikan's procedure of measuring the elementary charge.

22.24 Explain the general mechanism of ink-jet printing.

Key Ideas

- If a particle with charge q is placed in an external electric field $\vec{E}$, an electrostatic force $\vec{F}$ acts on the particle:

$$\vec{F} = q\vec{E}.$$

- If charge q is positive, the force vector is in the same direction as the field vector. If charge q is negative, the force vector is in the opposite direction (the minus sign in the equation reverses the force vector from the field vector).

A Point Charge in an Electric Field

In the preceding four modules we worked at the first of our two tasks: given a charge distribution, to find the electric field it produces in the surrounding space. Here we begin the second task: to determine what happens to a charged particle when it is in an electric field set up by other stationary or slowly moving charges.

What happens is that an electrostatic force acts on the particle, as given by

$$\vec{F} = q\vec{E}, \tag{22-28}$$

in which q is the charge of the particle (including its sign) and $\vec{E}$ is the electric field that other charges have produced at the location of the particle. (The field is *not* the field set up by the particle itself; to distinguish the two fields, the field acting on the particle in Eq. 22-28 is often called the *external field*. A charged particle or object is not affected by its own electric field.) Equation 22-28 tells us

> The electrostatic force $\vec{F}$ acting on a charged particle located in an external electric field $\vec{E}$ has the direction of $\vec{E}$ if the charge q of the particle is positive and has the opposite direction if q is negative.

Measuring the Elementary Charge

Equation 22-28 played a role in the measurement of the elementary charge e by American physicist Robert A. Millikan in 1910–1913. Figure 22-16 is a representation of his apparatus. When tiny oil drops are sprayed into chamber A, some of them become charged, either positively or negatively, in the process. Consider a drop that drifts downward through the small hole in plate P_1 and into chamber C. Let us assume that this drop has a negative charge q.

If switch S in Fig. 22-16 is open as shown, battery B has no electrical effect on chamber C. If the switch is closed (the connection between chamber C and the positive terminal of the battery is then complete), the battery causes an excess positive charge on conducting plate P_1 and an excess negative charge on conducting plate P_2. The charged plates set up a downward-directed electric field $\vec{E}$ in chamber C. According to Eq. 22-28, this field exerts an electrostatic force on any charged drop that happens to be in the chamber and affects its motion. In particular, our negatively charged drop will tend to drift upward.

By timing the motion of oil drops with the switch opened and with it closed and thus determining the effect of the charge q, Millikan discovered that the

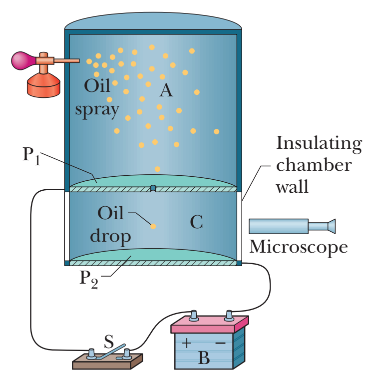


Figure 22-16 The Millikan oil-drop apparatus for measuring the elementary charge e. When a charged oil drop drifted into chamber C through the hole in plate P_1, its motion could be controlled by closing and opening switch S and thereby setting up or eliminating an electric field in chamber C. The microscope was used to view the drop, to permit timing of its motion.

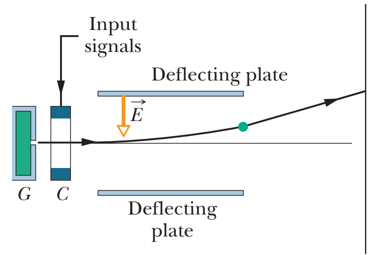


Figure 22-17 Ink-jet printer. Drops shot from generator G receive a charge in charging unit C. An input signal from a computer controls the charge and thus the effect of field $\vec{E}$ on where the drop lands on the paper.

values of q were always given by

$$q = ne, \qquad \text{for } n = 0, \pm 1, \pm 2, \pm 3, \ldots, \tag{22-29}$$

in which e turned out to be the fundamental constant we call the *elementary charge,* 1.60×10^{-19} C. Millikan's experiment is convincing proof that charge is quantized, and he earned the 1923 Nobel Prize in physics in part for this work. Modern measurements of the elementary charge rely on a variety of interlocking experiments, all more precise than the pioneering experiment of Millikan.

Ink-Jet Printing

The need for high-quality, high-speed printing has caused a search for an alternative to impact printing, such as occurs in a standard typewriter. Building up letters by squirting tiny drops of ink at the paper is one such alternative.

Figure 22-17 shows a negatively charged drop moving between two conducting deflecting plates, between which a uniform, downward-directed electric field $\vec{E}$ has been set up. The drop is deflected upward according to Eq. 22-28 and then strikes the paper at a position that is determined by the magnitudes of $\vec{E}$ and the charge q of the drop.

In practice, E is held constant and the position of the drop is determined by the charge q delivered to the drop in the charging unit, through which the drop must pass before entering the deflecting system. The charging unit, in turn, is activated by electronic signals that encode the material to be printed.

Electrical Breakdown and Sparking

If the magnitude of an electric field in air exceeds a certain critical value E_c, the air undergoes *electrical breakdown,* a process whereby the field removes electrons from the atoms in the air. The air then begins to conduct electric current because the freed electrons are propelled into motion by the field. As they move, they collide with any atoms in their path, causing those atoms to emit light. We can see the paths, commonly called sparks, taken by the freed electrons because of that emitted light. Figure 22-18 shows sparks above charged metal wires where the electric fields due to the wires cause electrical breakdown of the air.

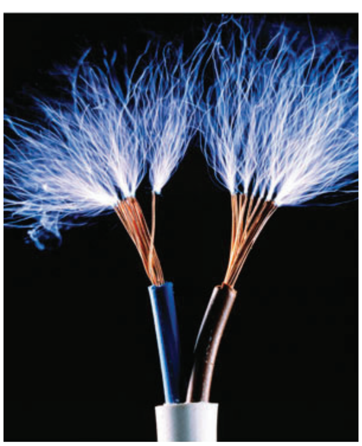
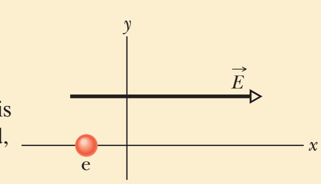


Figure 22-18 The metal wires are so charged that the electric fields they produce in the surrounding space cause the air there to undergo electrical breakdown.

Checkpoint 3

(a) In the figure, what is the direction of the electrostatic force on the electron due to the external electric field shown? (b) In which direction will the electron accelerate if it is moving parallel to the y axis before it encounters the external field? (c) If, instead, the electron is initially moving rightward, will its speed increase, decrease, or remain constant?



Sample Problem 22.04 Motion of a charged particle in an electric field

Figure 22-19 shows the deflecting plates of an ink-jet printer, with superimposed coordinate axes. An ink drop with a mass m of 1.3×10^{-10} kg and a negative charge of magnitude $Q = 1.5 \times 10^{-13}$ C enters the region between the plates, initially moving along the x axis with speed $v_x = 18$ m/s. The length L of each plate is 1.6 cm. The plates are charged and thus produce an electric field at all points between them. Assume that field $\vec{E}$ is downward directed, is uniform, and has a magnitude of 1.4×10^6 N/C. What is the vertical deflection of the drop at the far edge of the plates? (The gravitational force on the drop is small relative to the electrostatic force acting on the drop and can be neglected.)

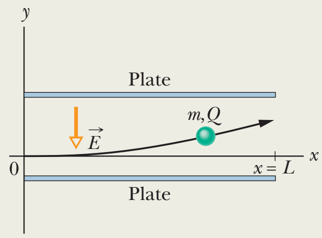


Figure 22-19 An ink drop of mass m and charge magnitude Q is deflected in the electric field of an ink-jet printer.

KEY IDEA

The drop is negatively charged and the electric field is directed *downward.* From Eq. 22-28, a constant electrostatic force of magnitude QE acts *upward* on the charged drop. Thus, as the drop travels parallel to the x axis at constant speed v_x, it accelerates upward with some constant acceleration a_y.

Calculations: Applying Newton's second law ($F = ma$) for components along the y axis, we find that

$$a_y = \frac{F}{m} = \frac{QE}{m}. \tag{22-30}$$

Let t represent the time required for the drop to pass through the region between the plates. During t the vertical and horizontal displacements of the drop are

$$y = \tfrac{1}{2}a_y t^2 \quad \text{and} \quad L = v_x t, \tag{22-31}$$

respectively. Eliminating t between these two equations and substituting Eq. 22-30 for a_y, we find

$$\begin{aligned} y &= \frac{QEL^2}{2mv_x^2} \\ &= \frac{(1.5 \times 10^{-13}\ \text{C})(1.4 \times 10^6\ \text{N/C})(1.6 \times 10^{-2}\ \text{m})^2}{(2)(1.3 \times 10^{-10}\ \text{kg})(18\ \text{m/s})^2} \\ &= 6.4 \times 10^{-4}\ \text{m} \\ &= 0.64\ \text{mm}. \end{aligned} \qquad \text{(Answer)}$$

WILEY PLUS Additional examples, video, and practice available at *WileyPLUS*

22-7 A DIPOLE IN AN ELECTRIC FIELD

Learning Objectives

After reading this module, you should be able to . . .

22.25 On a sketch of an electric dipole in an external electric field, indicate the direction of the field, the direction of the dipole moment, the direction of the electrostatic forces on the two ends of the dipole, and the direction in which those forces tend to rotate the dipole, and identify the value of the net force on the dipole.

22.26 Calculate the torque on an electric dipole in an external electric field by evaluating a cross product of the dipole moment vector and the electric field vector, in magnitude-angle notation and unit-vector notation.

22.27 For an electric dipole in an external electric field, relate the potential energy of the dipole to the work done by a torque as the dipole rotates in the electric field.

22.28 For an electric dipole in an external electric field, calculate the potential energy by taking a dot product of the dipole moment vector and the electric field vector, in magnitude-angle notation and unit-vector notation.

22.29 For an electric dipole in an external electric field, identify the angles for the minimum and maximum potential energies and the angles for the minimum and maximum torque magnitudes.

Key Ideas

- The torque on an electric dipole of dipole moment $\vec{p}$ when placed in an external electric field $\vec{E}$ is given by a cross product:

$$\vec{\tau} = \vec{p} \times \vec{E}.$$

- A potential energy U is associated with the orientation of the dipole moment in the field, as given by a dot product:

$$U = -\vec{p} \cdot \vec{E}.$$

- If the dipole orientation changes, the work done by the electric field is

$$W = -\Delta U.$$

If the change in orientation is due to an external agent, the work done by the agent is $W_a = -W$.

A Dipole in an Electric Field

We have defined the electric dipole moment $\vec{p}$ of an electric dipole to be a vector that points from the negative to the positive end of the dipole. As you will see, the behavior of a dipole in a uniform external electric field $\vec{E}$ can be described completely in terms of the two vectors $\vec{E}$ and $\vec{p}$, with no need of any details about the dipole's structure.

A molecule of water (H_2O) is an electric dipole; Fig. 22-20 shows why. There the black dots represent the oxygen nucleus (having eight protons) and the two hydrogen nuclei (having one proton each). The colored enclosed areas represent the regions in which electrons can be located around the nuclei.

In a water molecule, the two hydrogen atoms and the oxygen atom do not lie on a straight line but form an angle of about 105°, as shown in Fig. 22-20. As a result, the molecule has a definite "oxygen side" and "hydrogen side." Moreover, the 10 electrons of the molecule tend to remain closer to the oxygen nucleus than to the hydrogen nuclei. This makes the oxygen side of the molecule slightly more negative than the hydrogen side and creates an electric dipole moment $\vec{p}$ that points along the symmetry axis of the molecule as shown. If the water molecule is placed in an external electric field, it behaves as would be expected of the more abstract electric dipole of Fig. 22-9.

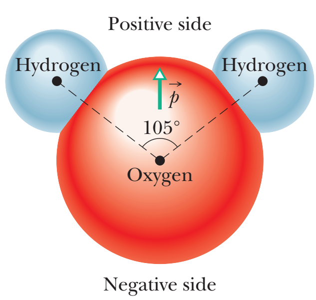


Figure 22-20 A molecule of H_2O, showing the three nuclei (represented by dots) and the regions in which the electrons can be located. The electric dipole moment $\vec{p}$ points from the (negative) oxygen side to the (positive) hydrogen side of the molecule.

To examine this behavior, we now consider such an abstract dipole in a uniform external electric field $\vec{E}$, as shown in Fig. 22-21*a*. We assume that the dipole is a rigid structure that consists of two centers of opposite charge, each of magnitude q, separated by a distance d. The dipole moment $\vec{p}$ makes an angle θ with field $\vec{E}$.

Electrostatic forces act on the charged ends of the dipole. Because the electric field is uniform, those forces act in opposite directions (as shown in Fig. 22-21*a*) and with the same magnitude $F = qE$. Thus, *because the field is uniform,* the net force on the dipole from the field is zero and the center of mass of the dipole does not move. However, the forces on the charged ends do produce a net torque $\vec{\tau}$ on the dipole about its center of mass. The center of mass lies on the line connecting the charged ends, at some distance x from one end and thus a distance $d - x$ from the other end. From Eq. 10-39 ($\tau = rF \sin \phi$), we can write the magnitude of the net torque $\vec{\tau}$ as

$$\tau = Fx \sin \theta + F(d - x) \sin \theta = Fd \sin \theta. \tag{22-32}$$

We can also write the magnitude of $\vec{\tau}$ in terms of the magnitudes of the electric field E and the dipole moment $p = qd$. To do so, we substitute qE for F and p/q for d in Eq. 22-32, finding that the magnitude of $\vec{\tau}$ is

$$\tau = pE \sin \theta. \tag{22-33}$$

We can generalize this equation to vector form as

$$\vec{\tau} = \vec{p} \times \vec{E} \quad \text{(torque on a dipole)}. \tag{22-34}$$

Vectors $\vec{p}$ and $\vec{E}$ are shown in Fig. 22-21*b*. The torque acting on a dipole tends to rotate $\vec{p}$ (hence the dipole) into the direction of field $\vec{E}$, thereby reducing θ. In Fig. 22-21, such rotation is clockwise. As we discussed in Chapter 10, we can represent a torque that gives rise to a clockwise rotation by including a minus sign with the magnitude of the torque. With that notation, the torque of Fig. 22-21 is

$$\tau = -pE \sin \theta. \tag{22-35}$$

Potential Energy of an Electric Dipole

Potential energy can be associated with the orientation of an electric dipole in an electric field. The dipole has its least potential energy when it is in its equilibrium orientation, which is when its moment $\vec{p}$ is lined up with the field $\vec{E}$ (then $\vec{\tau} = \vec{p} \times \vec{E} = 0$). It has greater potential energy in all other orientations. Thus the dipole is like a pendulum, which has *its* least gravitational potential energy in *its* equilibrium orientation—at its lowest point. To rotate the dipole or the pendulum to any other orientation requires work by some external agent.

In any situation involving potential energy, we are free to define the zero-potential-energy configuration in an arbitrary way because only differences in potential energy have physical meaning. The expression for the potential energy of an electric dipole in an external electric field is simplest if we choose the potential energy to be zero when the angle θ in Fig. 22-21 is 90°. We then can find the potential energy U of the dipole at any other value of θ with Eq. 8-1 ($\Delta U = -W$) by calculating the work W done by the field on the dipole when the dipole is rotated to that value of θ from 90°. With the aid of Eq. 10-53 ($W = \int \tau \, d\theta$) and Eq. 22-35, we find that the potential energy U at any angle θ is

$$U = -W = -\int_{90°}^{\theta} \tau \, d\theta = \int_{90°}^{\theta} pE \sin\theta \, d\theta. \tag{22-36}$$

Evaluating the integral leads to

$$U = -pE\cos\theta. \tag{22-37}$$

We can generalize this equation to vector form as

$$U = -\vec{p}\cdot\vec{E} \quad \text{(potential energy of a dipole).} \tag{22-38}$$

Equations 22-37 and 22-38 show us that the potential energy of the dipole is least ($U = -pE$) when $\theta = 0$ ($\vec{p}$ and $\vec{E}$ are in the same direction); the potential energy is greatest ($U = pE$) when $\theta = 180°$ ($\vec{p}$ and $\vec{E}$ are in opposite directions).

When a dipole rotates from an initial orientation θ_i to another orientation θ_f, the work W done on the dipole by the electric field is

$$W = -\Delta U = -(U_f - U_i), \tag{22-39}$$

where U_f and U_i are calculated with Eq. 22-38. If the change in orientation is caused by an applied torque (commonly said to be due to an external agent), then the work W_a done on the dipole by the applied torque is the negative of the work done on the dipole by the field; that is,

$$W_a = -W = (U_f - U_i). \tag{22-40}$$

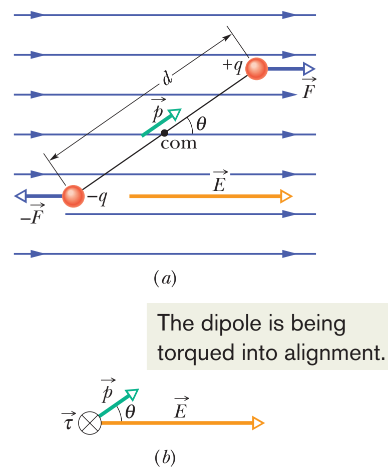


Figure 22-21 (*a*) An electric dipole in a uniform external electric field $\vec{E}$. Two centers of equal but opposite charge are separated by distance d. The line between them represents their rigid connection. (*b*) Field $\vec{E}$ causes a torque $\vec{\tau}$ on the dipole. The direction of $\vec{\tau}$ is into the page, as represented by the symbol ⊗.

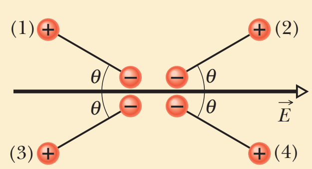
Microwave Cooking

Food can be warmed and cooked in a microwave oven if the food contains water because water molecules are electric dipoles. When you turn on the oven, the microwave source sets up a rapidly oscillating electric field $\vec{E}$ within the oven and thus also within the food. From Eq. 22-34, we see that any electric field $\vec{E}$ produces a torque on an electric dipole moment $\vec{p}$ to align $\vec{p}$ with $\vec{E}$. Because the oven's $\vec{E}$ oscillates, the water molecules continuously flip-flop in a frustrated attempt to align with $\vec{E}$.

Energy is transferred from the electric field to the thermal energy of the water (and thus of the food) where three water molecules happened to have bonded together to form a group. The flip-flop breaks some of the bonds. When the molecules reform the bonds, energy is transferred to the random motion of the group and then to the surrounding molecules. Soon, the thermal energy of the water is enough to cook the food.

Checkpoint 4

The figure shows four orientations of an electric dipole in an external electric field. Rank the orientations according to (a) the magnitude of the torque on the dipole and (b) the potential energy of the dipole, greatest first.



Sample Problem 22.05 Torque and energy of an electric dipole in an electric field

A neutral water molecule (H_2O) in its vapor state has an electric dipole moment of magnitude 6.2×10^{-30} C·m.

(a) How far apart are the molecule's centers of positive and negative charge?

KEY IDEA

A molecule's dipole moment depends on the magnitude q of the molecule's positive or negative charge and the charge separation d.

Calculations: There are 10 electrons and 10 protons in a neutral water molecule; so the magnitude of its dipole moment is

$$p = qd = (10e)(d),$$

in which d is the separation we are seeking and e is the elementary charge. Thus,

$$d = \frac{p}{10e} = \frac{6.2 \times 10^{-30}\ \text{C}\cdot\text{m}}{(10)(1.60 \times 10^{-19}\ \text{C})} = 3.9 \times 10^{-12}\ \text{m} = 3.9\ \text{pm}. \qquad \text{(Answer)}$$

This distance is not only small, but it is also actually smaller than the radius of a hydrogen atom.

(b) If the molecule is placed in an electric field of 1.5×10^4 N/C, what maximum torque can the field exert on it? (Such a field can easily be set up in the laboratory.)

KEY IDEA

The torque on a dipole is maximum when the angle θ between $\vec{p}$ and $\vec{E}$ is 90°.

Calculation: Substituting $\theta = 90°$ in Eq. 22-33 yields

$$\begin{aligned}\tau &= pE \sin\theta \\ &= (6.2 \times 10^{-30}\ \text{C}\cdot\text{m})(1.5 \times 10^4\ \text{N/C})(\sin 90°) \\ &= 9.3 \times 10^{-26}\ \text{N}\cdot\text{m}. \qquad \text{(Answer)}\end{aligned}$$

(c) How much work must an *external agent* do to rotate this molecule by 180° in this field, starting from its fully aligned position, for which $\theta = 0$?

KEY IDEA

The work done by an external agent (by means of a torque applied to the molecule) is equal to the change in the molecule's potential energy due to the change in orientation.

Calculation: From Eq. 22-40, we find

$$\begin{aligned}W_a &= U_{180°} - U_0 \\ &= (-pE\cos 180°) - (-pE\cos 0) \\ &= 2pE = (2)(6.2 \times 10^{-30}\ \text{C}\cdot\text{m})(1.5 \times 10^4\ \text{N/C}) \\ &= 1.9 \times 10^{-25}\ \text{J}. \qquad \text{(Answer)}\end{aligned}$$

WILEY PLUS Additional examples, video, and practice available at *WileyPLUS*

Review & Summary

Electric Field To explain the electrostatic force between two charges, we assume that each charge sets up an electric field in the space around it. The force acting on each charge is then due to the electric field set up at its location by the other charge.

Definition of Electric Field The *electric field* $\vec{E}$ at any point is defined in terms of the electrostatic force $\vec{F}$ that would be exerted on a positive test charge q_0 placed there:

$$\vec{E} = \frac{\vec{F}}{q_0}. \qquad (22\text{-}1)$$

Electric Field Lines *Electric field lines* provide a means for visualizing the direction and magnitude of electric fields. The electric field vector at any point is tangent to a field line through that point. The density of field lines in any region is proportional to the magnitude of the electric field in that region. Field lines originate on positive charges and terminate on negative charges.

Field Due to a Point Charge The magnitude of the electric field $\vec{E}$ set up by a point charge q at a distance r from the charge is

$$E = \frac{1}{4\pi\varepsilon_0}\frac{|q|}{r^2}. \qquad (22\text{-}3)$$

The direction of $\vec{E}$ is away from the point charge if the charge is positive and toward it if the charge is negative.

Field Due to an Electric Dipole An *electric dipole* consists of two particles with charges of equal magnitude q but opposite sign, separated by a small distance d. Their **electric dipole moment** $\vec{p}$ has magnitude qd and points from the negative charge to the positive charge. The magnitude of the electric field set up by the dipole at a distant point on the dipole axis (which runs through both charges) is

$$E = \frac{1}{2\pi\varepsilon_0}\frac{p}{z^3}, \qquad (22\text{-}9)$$

where z is the distance between the point and the center of the dipole.

Field Due to a Continuous Charge Distribution The electric field due to a *continuous charge distribution* is found by treating charge elements as point charges and then summing, via integration, the electric field vectors produced by all the charge elements to find the net vector.

Field Due to a Charged Disk The electric field magnitude at a point on the central axis through a uniformly charged disk is given by

$$E = \frac{\sigma}{2\varepsilon_0}\left(1 - \frac{z}{\sqrt{z^2 + R^2}}\right), \tag{22-26}$$

where z is the distance along the axis from the center of the disk, R is the radius of the disk, and σ is the surface charge density.

Force on a Point Charge in an Electric Field When a point charge q is placed in an external electric field $\vec{E}$, the electrostatic force $\vec{F}$ that acts on the point charge is

$$\vec{F} = q\vec{E}. \tag{22-28}$$

Force $\vec{F}$ has the same direction as $\vec{E}$ if q is positive and the opposite direction if q is negative.

Dipole in an Electric Field When an electric dipole of dipole moment $\vec{p}$ is placed in an electric field $\vec{E}$, the field exerts a torque $\vec{\tau}$ on the dipole:

$$\vec{\tau} = \vec{p} \times \vec{E}. \tag{22-34}$$

The dipole has a potential energy U associated with its orientation in the field:

$$U = -\vec{p} \cdot \vec{E}. \tag{22-38}$$

This potential energy is defined to be zero when $\vec{p}$ is perpendicular to $\vec{E}$; it is least ($U = -pE$) when $\vec{p}$ is aligned with $\vec{E}$ and greatest ($U = pE$) when $\vec{p}$ is directed opposite $\vec{E}$.

Questions

1 Figure 22-22 shows three arrangements of electric field lines. In each arrangement, a proton is released from rest at point A and is then accelerated through point B by the electric field. Points A and B have equal separations in the three arrangements. Rank the arrangements according to the linear momentum of the proton at point B, greatest first.

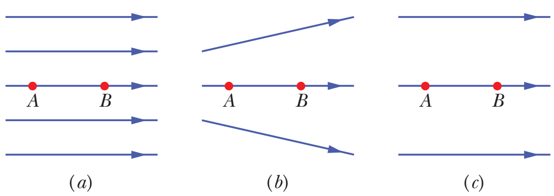


Figure 22-22 Question 1.

2 Figure 22-23 shows two square arrays of charged particles. The squares, which are centered on point P, are misaligned. The particles are separated by either d or $d/2$ along the perimeters of the squares. What are the magnitude and direction of the net electric field at P?

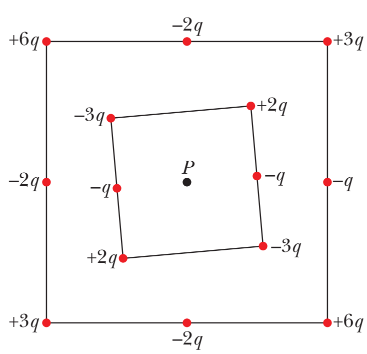


Figure 22-23 Question 2.

3 In Fig. 22-24, two particles of charge $-q$ are arranged symmetrically about the y axis; each produces an electric field at point P on that axis. (a) Are the magnitudes of the fields at P equal? (b) Is each electric field directed toward or away from the charge producing it? (c) Is the magnitude of the net electric field at P equal to the sum of the magnitudes E of the two field vectors (is it equal to $2E$)? (d) Do the x components of those two field vectors add or cancel? (e) Do their y components add or cancel? (f) Is the direction of the net field at P that of the canceling components or the adding components? (g) What is the direction of the net field?

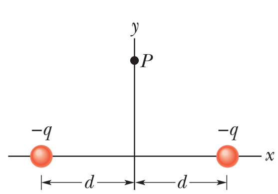


Figure 22-24 Question 3.

4 Figure 22-25 shows four situations in which four charged particles are evenly spaced to the left and right of a central point. The charge values are indicated. Rank the situations according to the magnitude of the net electric field at the central point, greatest first.

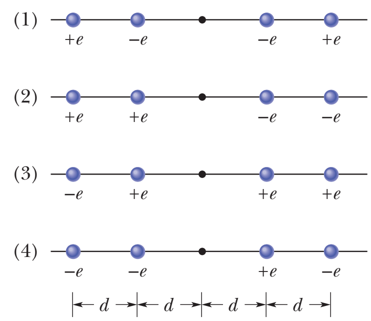


Figure 22-25 Question 4.

5 Figure 22-26 shows two charged particles fixed in place on an axis. (a) Where on the axis (other than at an infinite distance) is there a point at which their net electric field is zero: between the charges, to their left, or to their right? (b) Is there a point of zero net electric field anywhere *off* the axis (other than at an infinite distance)?

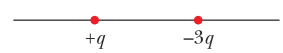


Figure 22-26 Question 5.

6 In Fig. 22-27, two identical circular nonconducting rings are centered on the same line with their planes perpendicular to the line. Each ring has charge that is uniformly distributed along its circumference. The rings each produce electric fields at points along the line. For three situations, the charges on rings A and B are, respectively, (1) q_0 and q_0, (2) $-q_0$ and $-q_0$, and (3) $-q_0$ and q_0. Rank the situations according to the magnitude of the net electric field at (a) point P_1 midway between the rings, (b) point P_2 at the center of ring B, and (c) point P_3 to the right of ring B, greatest first.

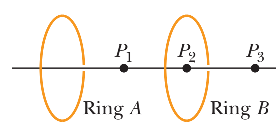


Figure 22-27 Question 6.

7 The potential energies associated with four orientations of an electric dipole in an electric field are (1) $-5U_0$, (2) $-7U_0$, (3) $3U_0$, and (4) $5U_0$, where U_0 is positive. Rank the orientations according to (a) the angle between the electric dipole moment $\vec{p}$ and the electric field $\vec{E}$ and (b) the magnitude of the torque on the electric dipole, greatest first.

8 (a) In Checkpoint 4, if the dipole rotates from orientation 1 to orientation 2, is the work done on the dipole by the field positive, negative, or zero? (b) If, instead, the dipole rotates from orientation 1 to orientation 4, is the work done by the field more than, less than, or the same as in (a)?