CHAPTER 23

Gauss' Law

23-1 ELECTRIC FLUX

Learning Objectives

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

23.01 Identify that Gauss' law relates the electric field at points on a closed surface (real or imaginary, said to be a Gaussian surface) to the net charge enclosed by that surface.

23.02 Identify that the amount of electric field piercing a surface (not skimming along the surface) is the electric flux Φ through the surface.

23.03 Identify that an area vector for a flat surface is a vector that is perpendicular to the surface and that has a magnitude equal to the area of the surface.

23.04 Identify that any surface can be divided into area elements (patch elements) that are each small enough and flat enough for an area vector $d\vec{A}$ to be assigned to it, with the vector perpendicular to the element and having a magnitude equal to the area of the element.

23.05 Calculate the flux Φ through a surface by integrating the dot product of the electric field vector $\vec{E}$ and the area vector $d\vec{A}$ (for patch elements) over the surface, in magnitude-angle notation and unit-vector notation.

23.06 For a closed surface, explain the algebraic signs associated with inward flux and outward flux.

23.07 Calculate the *net* flux Φ through a *closed* surface, algebraic sign included, by integrating the dot product of the electric field vector $\vec{E}$ and the area vector $d\vec{A}$ (for patch elements) over the full surface.

23.08 Determine whether a closed surface can be broken up into parts (such as the sides of a cube) to simplify the integration that yields the net flux through the surface.

Key Ideas

- The electric flux Φ through a surface is the amount of electric field that pierces the surface.
- The area vector $d\vec{A}$ for an area element (patch element) on a surface is a vector that is perpendicular to the element and has a magnitude equal to the area dA of the element.
- The electric flux $d\Phi$ through a patch element with area vector $d\vec{A}$ is given by a dot product:

$$d\Phi = \vec{E} \cdot d\vec{A}.$$

- The total flux through a surface is given by

$$\Phi = \int \vec{E} \cdot d\vec{A} \quad \text{(total flux)},$$

where the integration is carried out over the surface.

- The net flux through a closed surface (which is used in Gauss' law) is given by

$$\Phi = \oint \vec{E} \cdot d\vec{A} \quad \text{(net flux)},$$

where the integration is carried out over the entire surface.

What Is Physics?

In the preceding chapter we found the electric field at points near extended charged objects, such as rods. Our technique was labor-intensive: We split the charge distribution up into charge elements dq, found the field $d\vec{E}$ due to an element, and resolved the vector into components. Then we determined whether the components from all the elements would end up canceling or adding. Finally we summed the adding components by integrating over all the elements, with several changes in notation along the way.

One of the primary goals of physics is to find simple ways of solving such labor-intensive problems. One of the main tools in reaching this goal is the use of symmetry. In this chapter we discuss a beautiful relationship between charge and

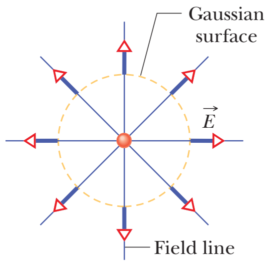


Figure 23-1 Electric field vectors and field lines pierce an imaginary, spherical Gaussian surface that encloses a particle with charge $+Q$.

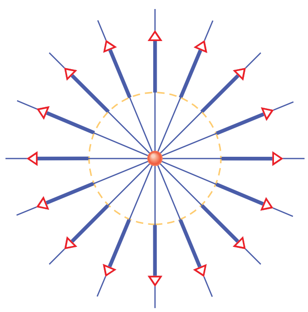


Figure 23-2 Now the enclosed particle has charge $+2Q$.

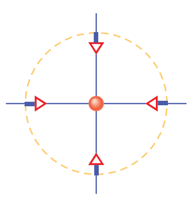


Figure 23-3 Can you tell what the enclosed charge is now?

electric field that allows us, in certain symmetric situations, to find the electric field of an extended charged object with a few lines of algebra. The relationship is called **Gauss' law,** which was developed by German mathematician and physicist Carl Friedrich Gauss (1777–1855).

Let's first take a quick look at some simple examples that give the spirit of Gauss' law. Figure 23-1 shows a particle with charge $+Q$ that is surrounded by an imaginary concentric sphere. At points on the sphere (said to be a *Gaussian surface*), the electric field vectors have a moderate magnitude (given by $E = kQ/r^2$) and point radially away from the particle (because it is positively charged). The electric field lines are also outward and have a moderate density (which, recall, is related to the field magnitude). We say that the field vectors and the field lines *pierce* the surface.

Figure 23-2 is similar except that the enclosed particle has charge $+2Q$. Because the enclosed charge is now twice as much, the magnitude of the field vectors piercing outward through the (same) Gaussian surface is twice as much as in Fig. 23-1, and the density of the field lines is also twice as much. That sentence, in a nutshell, is Gauss' law.

> Guass' law relates the electric field at points on a (closed) Gaussian surface to the net charge enclosed by that surface.

Let's check this with a third example with a particle that is also enclosed by the same spherical Gaussian surface (a *Gaussian sphere*, if you like, or even the catchy *G-sphere*) as shown in Fig. 23-3. What is the amount and sign of the enclosed charge? Well, from the inward piercing we see immediately that the charge must be negative. From the fact that the density of field lines is half that of Fig. 23-1, we also see that the charge must be $0.5Q$. (Using Gauss' law is like being able to tell what is inside a gift box by looking at the wrapping paper on the box.)

The problems in this chapter are of two types. Sometimes we know the charge and we use Gauss' law to find the field at some point. Sometimes we know the field on a Gaussian surface and we use Gauss' law to find the charge enclosed by the surface. However, we cannot do all this by simply comparing the density of field lines in a drawing as we just did. We need a quantitative way of determining how much electric field pierces a surface. That measure is called the electric flux.

Electric Flux

Flat Surface, Uniform Field. We begin with a flat surface with area A in a uniform electric field $\vec{E}$. Figure 23-4*a* shows one of the electric field vectors $\vec{E}$ piercing a small square patch with area ΔA (where Δ indicates "small"). Actually, only the x component (with magnitude $E_x = E\cos\theta$ in Fig. 23-4*b*) pierces the patch. The y component merely skims along the surface (no piercing in that) and does not come into play in Gauss' law. The *amount* of electric field piercing the patch is defined to be the **electric flux $\Delta\Phi$** through it:

$$\Delta\Phi = (E\cos\theta)\,\Delta A.$$

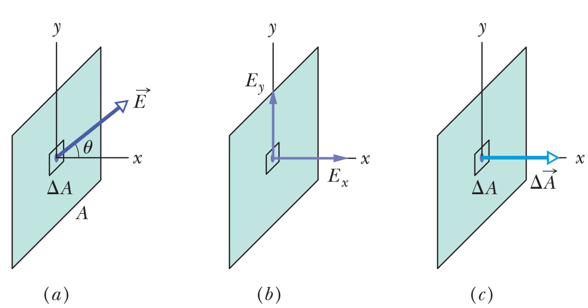


Figure 23-4 (*a*) An electric field vector pierces a small square patch on a flat surface. (*b*) Only the x component actually pierces the patch; the y component skims across it. (*c*) The area vector of the patch is perpendicular to the patch, with a magnitude equal to the patch's area.

There is another way to write the right side of this statement so that we have only the piercing component of $\vec{E}$. We define an area vector $\Delta\vec{A}$ that is perpendicular to the patch and that has a magnitude equal to the area ΔA of the patch (Fig. 23-4*c*). Then we can write

$$\Delta\Phi = \vec{E}\cdot\Delta\vec{A},$$

and the dot product automatically gives us the component of $\vec{E}$ that is parallel to $\Delta\vec{A}$ and thus piercing the patch.

To find the total flux Φ through the surface in Fig. 23-4, we sum the flux through every patch on the surface:

$$\Phi = \sum \vec{E}\cdot\Delta\vec{A}. \tag{23-1}$$

However, because we do not want to sum hundreds (or more) flux values, we transform the summation into an integral by shrinking the patches from small squares with area ΔA to *patch elements* (or *area elements*) with area dA. The total flux is then

$$\Phi = \int \vec{E}\cdot d\vec{A} \quad \text{(total flux)}. \tag{23-2}$$

Now we can find the total flux by integrating the dot product over the full surface.

Dot Product. We can evaluate the dot product inside the integral by writing the two vectors in unit-vector notation. For example, in Fig. 23-4, $d\vec{A} = dA\hat{\mathrm{i}}$ and $\vec{E}$ might be, say, $(4\hat{\mathrm{i}} + 4\hat{\mathrm{j}})$ N/C. Instead, we can evaluate the dot product in magnitude-angle notation: $E \cos\theta\, dA$. When the electric field is uniform and the surface is flat, the product $E\cos\theta$ is a constant and comes outside the integral. The remaining $\int dA$ is just an instruction to sum the areas of all the patch elements to get the total area, but we already know that the total area is A. So the total flux in this simple situation is

$$\Phi = (E\cos\theta)A \quad \text{(uniform field, flat surface)}. \tag{23-3}$$

Closed Surface. To use Gauss' law to relate flux and charge, we need a closed surface. Let's use the closed surface in Fig. 23-5 that sits in a nonuniform electric field. (Don't worry. The homework problems involve less complex surfaces.) As before, we first consider the flux through small square patches. However, now we are interested in not only the piercing components of the field but also on whether the piercing is inward or outward (just as we did with Figs. 23-1 through 23-3).

Directions. To keep track of the piercing direction, we again use an area vector $\Delta\vec{A}$ that is perpendicular to a patch, but now we always draw it pointing outward from the surface (*away from the interior*). Then if a field vector pierces outward, it and the area vector are in the same direction, the angle is $\theta = 0$, and $\cos\theta = 1$. Thus, the dot product $\vec{E}\cdot\Delta\vec{A}$ is positive and so is the flux. Conversely, if a field vector pierces inward, the angle is $\theta = 180°$ and $\cos\theta = -1$. Thus, the dot product is negative and so is the flux. If a field vector skims the surface (no piercing), the dot product is zero (because $\cos 90° = 0$) and so is the flux. Figure 23-5 gives some general examples and here is a summary:

An inward piercing field is negative flux. An outward piercing field is positive flux. A skimming field is zero flux.

Net Flux. In principle, to find the **net flux** through the surface in Fig. 23-5, we find the flux at every patch and then sum the results (with the algebraic signs included). However, we are not about to do that much work. Instead, we shrink the squares to patch elements with area vectors $d\vec{A}$ and then integrate:

$$\Phi = \oint \vec{E}\cdot d\vec{A} \quad \text{(net flux)}. \tag{23-4}$$

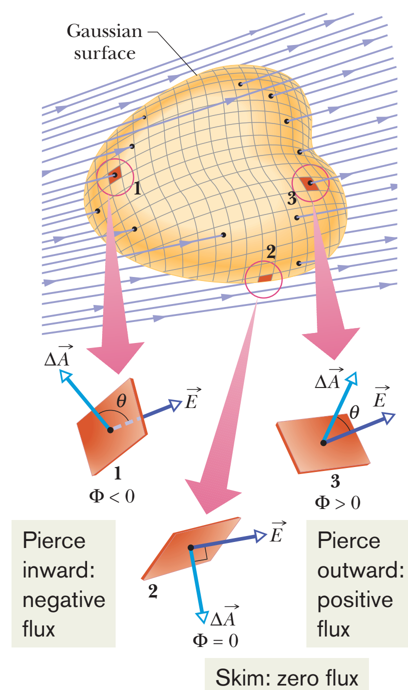
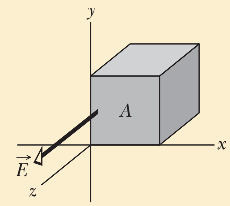


Figure 23-5 A Gaussian surface of arbitrary shape immersed in an electric field. The surface is divided into small squares of area ΔA. The electric field vectors $\vec{E}$ and the area vectors $\Delta\vec{A}$ for three representative squares, marked 1, 2, and 3, are shown.

The loop on the integral sign indicates that we must integrate over the entire closed surface, to get the *net* flux through the surface (as in Fig. 23-5, flux might enter on one side and leave on another side). Keep in mind that we want to determine the net flux through a surface because that is what Gauss' law relates to the charge enclosed by the surface. (The law is coming up next.) Note that flux is a scalar (yes, we talk about field vectors but flux is the *amount* of piercing field, not a vector itself). The SI unit of flux is the newton–square-meter per coulomb ($N \cdot m^2/C$).

Checkpoint 1

The figure here shows a Gaussian cube of face area A immersed in a uniform electric field $\vec{E}$ that has the positive direction of the z axis. In terms of E and A, what is the flux through (a) the front face (which is in the xy plane), (b) the rear face, (c) the top face, and (d) the whole cube?



Sample Problem 23.01 Flux through a closed cylinder, uniform field

Figure 23-6 shows a Gaussian surface in the form of a closed cylinder (a Gaussian cylinder or G-cylinder) of radius R. It lies in a uniform electric field $\vec{E}$ with the cylinder's central axis (along the length of the cylinder) parallel to the field. What is the net flux Φ of the electric field through the cylinder?

KEY IDEAS

We can find the net flux Φ with Eq. 23-4 by integrating the dot product $\vec{E} \cdot d\vec{A}$ over the cylinder's surface. However, we cannot write out functions so that we can do that with one integral. Instead, we need to be a bit clever: We break up the surface into sections with which we can actually evaluate an integral.

Calculations: We break the integral of Eq. 23-4 into three terms: integrals over the left cylinder cap a, the curved cylindrical surface b, and the right cap c:

$$\Phi = \oint \vec{E} \cdot d\vec{A}$$

$$= \int_a \vec{E} \cdot d\vec{A} + \int_b \vec{E} \cdot d\vec{A} + \int_c \vec{E} \cdot d\vec{A}. \tag{23-5}$$

Pick a patch element on the left cap. Its area vector $d\vec{A}$ must be perpendicular to the patch and pointing away from the interior of the cylinder. In Fig. 23-6, that means the angle between it and the field piercing the patch is 180°. Also, note that the electric field through the end cap is uniform and thus E can be pulled out of the integration. So, we can write the flux through the left cap as

$$\int_a \vec{E} \cdot d\vec{A} = \int E(\cos 180°)\, dA = -E \int dA = -EA,$$

where $\int dA$ gives the cap's area A ($= \pi R^2$). Similarly, for the right cap, where $\theta = 0$ for all points,

$$\int_c \vec{E} \cdot d\vec{A} = \int E(\cos 0)\, dA = EA.$$

Finally, for the cylindrical surface, where the angle θ is 90° at all points,

$$\int_b \vec{E} \cdot d\vec{A} = \int E(\cos 90°)\, dA = 0.$$

Substituting these results into Eq. 23-5 leads us to

$$\Phi = -EA + 0 + EA = 0. \qquad \text{(Answer)}$$

The net flux is zero because the field lines that represent the electric field all pass entirely through the Gaussian surface, from the left to the right.

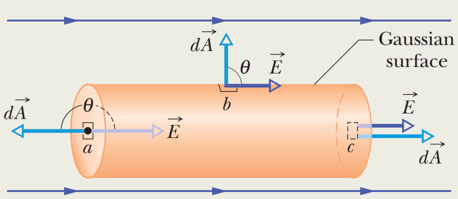


Figure 23-6 A cylindrical Gaussian surface, closed by end caps, is immersed in a uniform electric field. The cylinder axis is parallel to the field direction.

Sample Problem 23.02 Flux through a closed cube, nonuniform field

A *nonuniform* electric field given by $\vec{E} = 3.0x\hat{\mathrm{i}} + 4.0\hat{\mathrm{j}}$ pierces the Gaussian cube shown in Fig. 23-7*a*. (E is in newtons per coulomb and x is in meters.) What is the electric flux through the right face, the left face, and the top face? (We consider the other faces in another sample problem.)

KEY IDEA

We can find the flux Φ through the surface by integrating the scalar product $\vec{E} \cdot d\vec{A}$ over each face.

Right face: An area vector $\vec{A}$ is always perpendicular to its surface and always points away from the interior of a Gaussian surface. Thus, the vector $d\vec{A}$ for any patch element (small section) on the right face of the cube must point in the positive direction of the x axis. An example of such an element is shown in Figs. 23-7*b* and *c*, but we would have an identical vector for any other choice of a patch element on that face. The most convenient way to express the vector is in unit-vector notation,

$$d\vec{A} = dA\hat{\mathrm{i}}.$$

From Eq. 23-4, the flux Φ_r through the right face is then

$$\begin{aligned}\Phi_r &= \int \vec{E} \cdot d\vec{A} = \int (3.0x\hat{\mathrm{i}} + 4.0\hat{\mathrm{j}}) \cdot (dA\hat{\mathrm{i}}) \\ &= \int [(3.0x)(dA)\hat{\mathrm{i}} \cdot \hat{\mathrm{i}} + (4.0)(dA)\hat{\mathrm{j}} \cdot \hat{\mathrm{i}}] \\ &= \int (3.0x\, dA + 0) = 3.0 \int x\, dA.\end{aligned}$$

We are about to integrate over the right face, but we note that x has the same value everywhere on that face—namely, $x = 3.0$ m. This means we can substitute that constant value for x. This can be a confusing argument. Although x is certainly a variable as we move left to right across the figure, because the right face is perpendicular to the x axis, every point on the face has the same x coordinate. (The y and z coordinates do not matter in our integral.) Thus, we have

$$\Phi_r = 3.0 \int (3.0)\, dA = 9.0 \int dA.$$

The integral $\int dA$ merely gives us the area $A = 4.0\ \mathrm{m^2}$ of the right face, so

$$\Phi_r = (9.0\ \mathrm{N/C})(4.0\ \mathrm{m^2}) = 36\ \mathrm{N \cdot m^2/C}. \qquad \text{(Answer)}$$

Left face: We repeat this procedure for the left face. However,

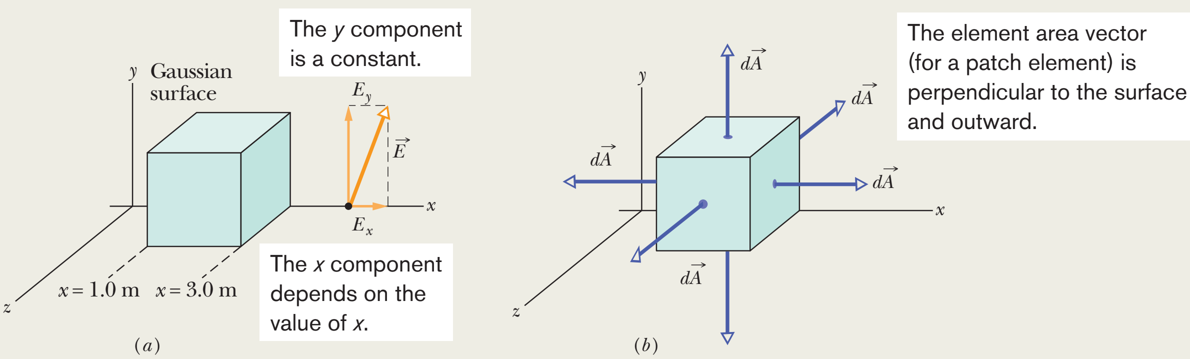
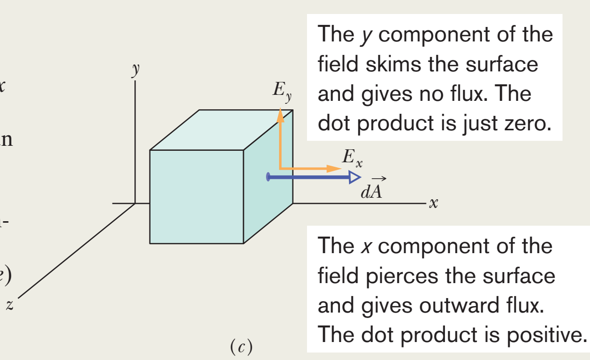


Figure 23-7 (*a*) A Gaussian cube with one edge on the x axis lies within a nonuniform electric field that depends on the value of x. (*b*) Each patch element has an outward vector that is perpendicular to the area. (*c*) Right face: the x component of the field pierces the area and produces positive (outward) flux. The y component does not pierce the area and thus does not produce any flux. (*Figure continues on following page*)



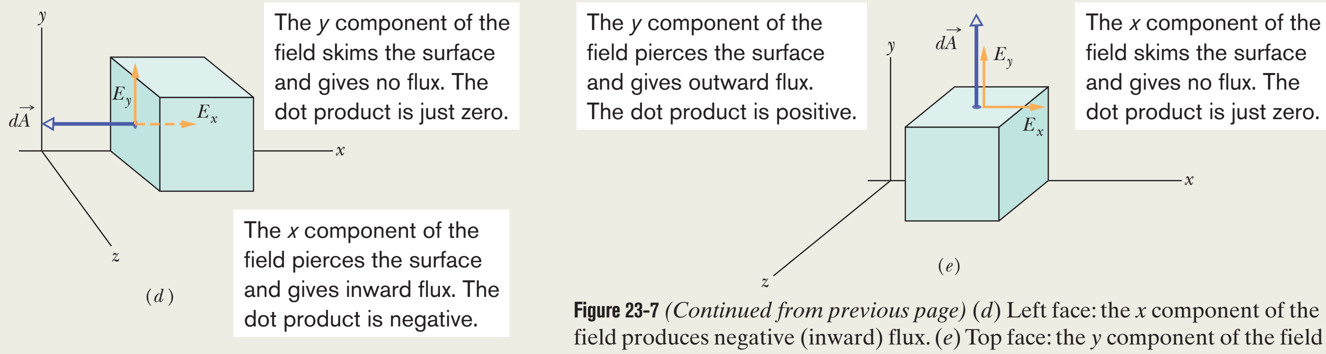


Figure 23-7 *(Continued from previous page)* (*d*) Left face: the x component of the field produces negative (inward) flux. (*e*) Top face: the y component of the field produces positive (outward) flux.

two factors change. (1) The element area vector $d\vec{A}$ points in the negative direction of the x axis, and thus $d\vec{A} = -dA\hat{\text{i}}$ (Fig. 23-7*d*). (2) On the left face, $x = 1.0$ m. With these changes, we find that the flux Φ_l through the left face is

$$\Phi_l = -12\ \text{N}\cdot\text{m}^2/\text{C}. \qquad \text{(Answer)}$$

Top face: Now $d\vec{A}$ points in the positive direction of the y axis, and thus $d\vec{A} = dA\hat{\text{j}}$ (Fig. 23-7*e*). The flux Φ_t is

$$\begin{aligned}\Phi_t &= \int (3.0x\hat{\text{i}} + 4.0\hat{\text{j}})\cdot(dA\hat{\text{j}})\\ &= \int [(3.0x)(dA)\hat{\text{i}}\cdot\hat{\text{j}} + (4.0)(dA)\hat{\text{j}}\cdot\hat{\text{j}}]\\ &= \int (0 + 4.0\,dA) = 4.0\int dA\\ &= 16\ \text{N}\cdot\text{m}^2/\text{C}. \qquad \text{(Answer)}\end{aligned}$$

23-2 GAUSS' LAW

Learning Objectives

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

23.09 Apply Gauss' law to relate the net flux Φ through a closed surface to the net enclosed charge q_{enc}.

23.10 Identify how the algebraic sign of the net enclosed charge corresponds to the direction (inward or outward) of the net flux through a Gaussian surface.

23.11 Identify that charge outside a Gaussian surface makes no contribution to the *net* flux through the closed surface.

23.12 Derive the expression for the magnitude of the electric field of a charged particle by using Gauss' law.

23.13 Identify that for a charged particle or uniformly charged sphere, Gauss' law is applied with a Gaussian surface that is a concentric sphere.

Key Ideas

- Gauss' law relates the net flux Φ penetrating a closed surface to the net charge q_{enc} enclosed by the surface:

$$\varepsilon_0\Phi = q_{\text{enc}} \quad \text{(Gauss' law)}.$$

- Gauss' law can also be written in terms of the electric field piercing the enclosing Gaussian surface:

$$\varepsilon_0 \oint \vec{E}\cdot d\vec{A} = q_{\text{enc}} \quad \text{(Gauss' law)}.$$

Gauss' Law

Gauss' law relates the net flux Φ of an electric field through a closed surface (a Gaussian surface) to the *net* charge q_{enc} that is *enclosed* by that surface. It tells us that

$$\varepsilon_0\Phi = q_{\text{enc}} \quad \text{(Gauss' law)}. \tag{23-6}$$

By substituting Eq. 23-4, the definition of flux, we can also write Gauss' law as

$$\varepsilon_0 \oint \vec{E} \cdot d\vec{A} = q_{\text{enc}} \quad \text{(Gauss' law).} \tag{23-7}$$

Equations 23-6 and 23-7 hold only when the net charge is located in a vacuum or (what is the same for most practical purposes) in air. In Chapter 25, we modify Gauss' law to include situations in which a material such as mica, oil, or glass is present.

In Eqs. 23-6 and 23-7, the net charge q_{enc} is the algebraic sum of all the *enclosed* positive and negative charges, and it can be positive, negative, or zero. We include the sign, rather than just use the magnitude of the enclosed charge, because the sign tells us something about the net flux through the Gaussian surface: If q_{enc} is positive, the net flux is *outward*; if q_{enc} is negative, the net flux is *inward.*

Charge outside the surface, no matter how large or how close it may be, is not included in the term q_{enc} in Gauss' law. The exact form and location of the charges inside the Gaussian surface are also of no concern; the only things that matter on the right side of Eqs. 23-6 and 23-7 are the magnitude and sign of the net enclosed charge. The quantity $\vec{E}$ on the left side of Eq. 23-7, however, is the electric field resulting from *all* charges, both those inside and those outside the Gaussian surface. This statement may seem to be inconsistent, but keep this in mind: The electric field due to a charge outside the Gaussian surface contributes zero net flux *through* the surface, because as many field lines due to that charge enter the surface as leave it.

Let us apply these ideas to Fig. 23-8, which shows two particles, with charges equal in magnitude but opposite in sign, and the field lines describing the electric fields the particles set up in the surrounding space. Four Gaussian surfaces are also shown, in cross section. Let us consider each in turn.

Surface S_1. The electric field is outward for all points on this surface. Thus, the flux of the electric field through this surface is positive, and so is the net charge within the surface, as Gauss' law requires. (That is, in Eq. 23-6, if Φ is positive, q_{enc} must be also.)

Surface S_2. The electric field is inward for all points on this surface. Thus, the flux of the electric field through this surface is negative and so is the enclosed charge, as Gauss' law requires.

Surface S_3. This surface encloses no charge, and thus $q_{\text{enc}} = 0$. Gauss' law (Eq. 23-6) requires that the net flux of the electric field through this surface be zero. That is reasonable because all the field lines pass entirely through the surface, entering it at the top and leaving at the bottom.

Surface S_4. This surface encloses no *net* charge, because the enclosed positive and negative charges have equal magnitudes. Gauss' law requires that the net flux of the electric field through this surface be zero. That is reasonable because there are as many field lines leaving surface S_4 as entering it.

What would happen if we were to bring an enormous charge Q up close to surface S_4 in Fig. 23-8? The pattern of the field lines would certainly change, but the net flux for each of the four Gaussian surfaces would not change. Thus, the value of Q would not enter Gauss' law in any way, because Q lies outside all four of the Gaussian surfaces that we are considering.

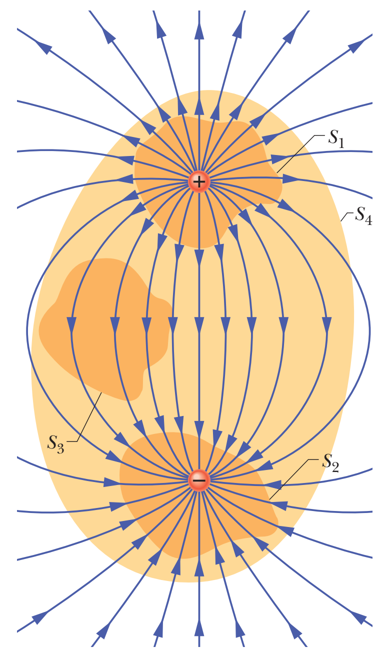
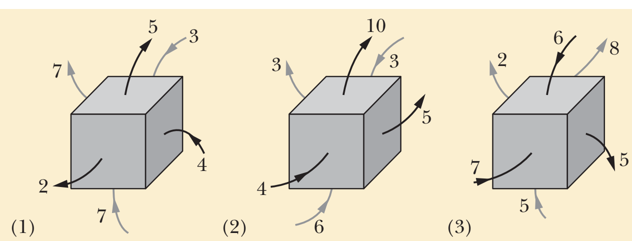


Figure 23-8 Two charges, equal in magnitude but opposite in sign, and the field lines that represent their net electric field. Four Gaussian surfaces are shown in cross section. Surface S_1 encloses the positive charge. Surface S_2 encloses the negative charge. Surface S_3 encloses no charge. Surface S_4 encloses both charges and thus no net charge.

Checkpoint 2

The figure shows three situations in which a Gaussian cube sits in an electric field. The arrows and the values indicate the directions of the field lines and the magnitudes (in $\text{N}\cdot\text{m}^2/\text{C}$) of the flux through the six sides of each cube. (The lighter arrows are for the hidden faces.) In which situation does the cube enclose (a) a positive net charge, (b) a negative net charge, and (c) zero net charge?



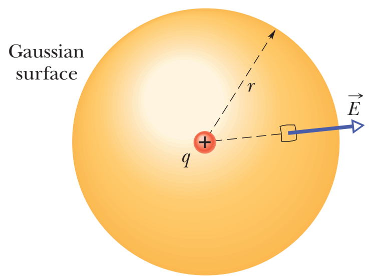


Figure 23-9 A spherical Gaussian surface centered on a particle with charge q.

Gauss' Law and Coulomb's Law

One of the situations in which we can apply Gauss' law is in finding the electric field of a charged particle. That field has spherical symmetry (the field depends on the distance r from the particle but not the direction). So, to make use of that symmetry, we enclose the particle in a Gaussian sphere that is centered on the particle, as shown in Fig. 23-9 for a particle with positive charge q. Then the electric field has the same magnitude E at any point on the sphere (all points are at the same distance r). That feature will simplify the integration.

The drill here is the same as previously. Pick a patch element on the surface and draw its area vector $d\vec{A}$ perpendicular to the patch and directed outward. From the symmetry of the situation, we know that the electric field $\vec{E}$ at the patch is also radially outward and thus at angle $\theta = 0$ with $d\vec{A}$. So, we rewrite Gauss' law as

$$\varepsilon_0 \oint \vec{E} \cdot d\vec{A} = \varepsilon_0 \oint E\, dA = q_{\text{enc}}. \tag{23-8}$$

Here $q_{\text{enc}} = q$. Because the field magnitude E is the same at every patch element, E can be pulled outside the integral:

$$\varepsilon_0 E \oint dA = q. \tag{23-9}$$

The remaining integral is just an instruction to sum all the areas of the patch elements on the sphere, but we already know that the total area is $4\pi r^2$. Substituting this, we have

$$\varepsilon_0 E(4\pi r^2) = q$$

or

$$E = \frac{1}{4\pi\varepsilon_0}\frac{q}{r^2}. \tag{23-10}$$

This is exactly Eq. 22-3, which we found using Coulomb's law.

Checkpoint 3

There is a certain net flux Φ_i through a Gaussian sphere of radius r enclosing an isolated charged particle. Suppose the enclosing Gaussian surface is changed to (a) a larger Gaussian sphere, (b) a Gaussian cube with edge length equal to r, and (c) a Gaussian cube with edge length equal to $2r$. In each case, is the net flux through the new Gaussian surface greater than, less than, or equal to Φ_i?

Sample Problem 23.03 Using Gauss' law to find the electric field

Figure 23-10*a* shows, in cross section, a plastic, spherical shell with uniform charge $Q = -16e$ and radius $R = 10$ cm. A particle with charge $q = +5e$ is at the center. What is the electric field (magnitude and direction) at (a) point P_1 at radial distance $r_1 = 6.00$ cm and (b) point P_2 at radial distance $r_2 = 12.0$ cm?

KEY IDEAS

(1) Because the situation in Fig. 23-10*a* has spherical symmetry, we can apply Gauss' law (Eq. 23-7) to find the electric field at a point if we use a Gaussian surface in the form of a sphere concentric with the particle and shell. (2) To find the electric field at a point, we put that point on a Gaussian surface (so that the $\vec{E}$ we want is the $\vec{E}$ in the dot product inside the integral in Gauss' law). (3) Gauss' law relates the net electric flux through a closed surface to the net enclosed charge. Any external charge is not included.

Calculations: To find the field at point P_1, we construct a Gaussian sphere with P_1 on its surface and thus with a radius of r_1. Because the charge enclosed by the Gaussian sphere is positive, the electric flux through the surface must be positive and thus outward. So, the electric field $\vec{E}$ pierces the surface outward and, because of the spherical symmetry, must be *radially* outward, as drawn in Fig. 23-10*b*. That figure does not include the plastic shell because the shell is not enclosed by the Gaussian sphere.

Consider a patch element on the sphere at P_1. Its area vector $d\vec{A}$ is radially outward (it must always be outward from a Gaussian surface). Thus the angle θ between $\vec{E}$ and $d\vec{A}$ is zero. We can now rewrite the left side of Eq. 23-7 (Gauss' law) as

$$\varepsilon_0 \oint \vec{E} \cdot d\vec{A} = \varepsilon_0 \oint E \cos 0\, dA = \varepsilon_0 \oint E\, dA = \varepsilon_0 E \oint dA,$$

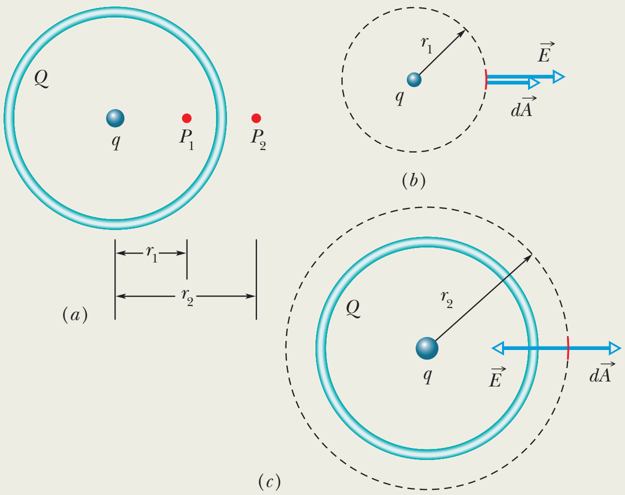


Figure 23-10 (*a*) A charged plastic spherical shell encloses a charged particle. (*b*) To find the electric field at P_1, arrange for the point to be on a Gaussian sphere. The electric field pierces outward. The area vector for the patch element is outward. (*c*) P_2 is on a Gaussian sphere, $\vec{E}$ is inward, and $d\vec{A}$ is still outward.

where in the last step we pull the field magnitude E out of the integral because it is the same at all points on the Gaussian sphere and thus is a constant. The remaining integral is simply an instruction for us to sum the areas of all the patch elements on the sphere, but we already know that the surface area of a sphere is $4\pi r^2$. Substituting these results, Eq. 23-7 for Gauss' law gives us

$$\varepsilon_0 E 4\pi r^2 = q_{\text{enc}}.$$

The only charge enclosed by the Gaussian surface through P_1 is that of the particle. Solving for E and substituting $q_{\text{enc}} = 5e$ and $r = r_1 = 6.00 \times 10^{-2}$ m, we find that the magnitude of the electric field at P_1 is

$$\begin{aligned} E &= \frac{q_{\text{enc}}}{4\pi\varepsilon_0 r^2} \\ &= \frac{5(1.60 \times 10^{-19}\,\text{C})}{4\pi(8.85 \times 10^{-12}\,\text{C}^2/\text{N}\cdot\text{m}^2)(0.0600\,\text{m})^2} \\ &= 2.00 \times 10^{-6}\,\text{N/C}. \qquad \text{(Answer)} \end{aligned}$$

To find the electric field at P_2, we follow the same procedure by constructing a Gaussian sphere with P_2 on its surface. This time, however, the net charge enclosed by the sphere is $q_{\text{enc}} = q + Q = 5e + (-16e) = -11e$. Because the net charge is negative, the electric field vectors on the sphere's surface pierce inward (Fig. 23-10*c*), the angle θ between $\vec{E}$ and $d\vec{A}$ is 180°, and the dot product is $E\,(\cos 180°)\,dA = -E\,dA$. Now solving Gauss' law for E and substituting $r = r_2 = 12.00 \times 10^{-2}$ m and the new q_{enc}, we find

$$\begin{aligned} E &= \frac{-q_{\text{enc}}}{4\pi\varepsilon_0 r^2} \\ &= \frac{-[-11(1.60 \times 10^{-19}\,\text{C})]}{4\pi(8.85 \times 10^{-12}\,\text{C}^2/\text{N}\cdot\text{m}^2)(0.120\,\text{m})^2} \\ &= 1.10 \times 10^{-6}\,\text{N/C}. \qquad \text{(Answer)} \end{aligned}$$

Note how different the calculations would have been if we had put P_1 or P_2 on the surface of a Gaussian cube instead of mimicking the spherical symmetry with a Gaussian sphere. Then angle θ and magnitude E would have varied considerably over the surface of the cube and evaluation of the integral in Gauss' law would have been difficult.

Sample Problem 23.04 Using Gauss' law to find the enclosed charge

What is the net charge enclosed by the Gaussian cube of Sample Problem 23.02?

KEY IDEA

The net charge enclosed by a (real or mathematical) closed surface is related to the total electric flux through the surface by Gauss' law as given by Eq. 23-6 ($\varepsilon_0\Phi = q_{\text{enc}}$).

Flux: To use Eq. 23-6, we need to know the flux through all six faces of the cube. We already know the flux through the right face ($\Phi_r = 36\ \text{N}\cdot\text{m}^2/\text{C}$), the left face ($\Phi_l = -12\ \text{N}\cdot\text{m}^2/\text{C}$), and the top face ($\Phi_t = 16\ \text{N}\cdot\text{m}^2/\text{C}$).

For the bottom face, our calculation is just like that for the top face *except* that the element area vector $d\vec{A}$ is now directed downward along the y axis (recall, it must be *outward* from the Gaussian enclosure). Thus, we have $d\vec{A} = -dA\hat{\text{j}}$, and we find

$$\Phi_b = -16\ \text{N}\cdot\text{m}^2/\text{C}.$$

For the front face we have $d\vec{A} = dA\hat{\text{k}}$, and for the back face, $d\vec{A} = -dA\hat{\text{k}}$. When we take the dot product of the given electric field $\vec{E} = 3.0x\hat{\text{i}} + 4.0\hat{\text{j}}$ with either of these expressions for $d\vec{A}$, we get 0 and thus there is no flux through those faces. We can now find the total flux through the six sides of the cube:

$$\begin{aligned} \Phi &= (36 - 12 + 16 - 16 + 0 + 0)\ \text{N}\cdot\text{m}^2/\text{C} \\ &= 24\ \text{N}\cdot\text{m}^2/\text{C}. \end{aligned}$$

Enclosed charge: Next, we use Gauss' law to find the charge q_{enc} enclosed by the cube:

$$\begin{aligned} q_{\text{enc}} &= \varepsilon_0\Phi = (8.85 \times 10^{-12}\ \text{C}^2/\text{N}\cdot\text{m}^2)(24\ \text{N}\cdot\text{m}^2/\text{C}) \\ &= 2.1 \times 10^{-10}\ \text{C}. \qquad \text{(Answer)} \end{aligned}$$

Thus, the cube encloses a *net* positive charge.

23-3 A CHARGED ISOLATED CONDUCTOR

Learning Objectives

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

23.14 Apply the relationship between surface charge density σ and the area over which the charge is uniformly spread.

23.15 Identify that if excess charge (positive or negative) is placed on an isolated conductor, that charge moves to the surface and none is in the interior.

23.16 Identify the value of the electric field inside an isolated conductor.

23.17 For a conductor with a cavity that contains a charged object, determine the charge on the cavity wall and on the external surface.

23.18 Explain how Gauss' law is used to find the electric field magnitude E near an isolated conducting surface with a uniform surface charge density σ.

23.19 For a uniformly charged conducting surface, apply the relationship between the charge density σ and the electric field magnitude E at points near the conductor, and identify the direction of the field vectors.

Key Ideas

- An excess charge on an isolated conductor is located entirely on the outer surface of the conductor.
- The internal electric field of a charged, isolated conductor is zero, and the external field (at nearby points) is perpendicular to the surface and has a magnitude that depends on the surface charge density σ:

$$E = \frac{\sigma}{\varepsilon_0}.$$

A Charged Isolated Conductor

Gauss' law permits us to prove an important theorem about conductors:

> If an excess charge is placed on an isolated conductor, that amount of charge will move entirely to the surface of the conductor. None of the excess charge will be found within the body of the conductor.

This might seem reasonable, considering that charges with the same sign repel one another. You might imagine that, by moving to the surface, the added charges are getting as far away from one another as they can. We turn to Gauss' law for verification of this speculation.

Figure 23-11*a* shows, in cross section, an isolated lump of copper hanging from an insulating thread and having an excess charge q. We place a Gaussian surface just inside the actual surface of the conductor.

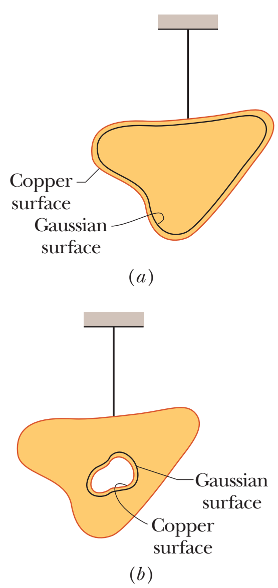


Figure 23-11 (*a*) A lump of copper with a charge q hangs from an insulating thread. A Gaussian surface is placed within the metal, just inside the actual surface. (*b*) The lump of copper now has a cavity within it. A Gaussian surface lies within the metal, close to the cavity surface.

The electric field inside this conductor must be zero. If this were not so, the field would exert forces on the conduction (free) electrons, which are always present in a conductor, and thus current would always exist within a conductor. (That is, charge would flow from place to place within the conductor.) Of course, there is no such perpetual current in an isolated conductor, and so the internal electric field is zero.

(An internal electric field *does* appear as a conductor is being charged. However, the added charge quickly distributes itself in such a way that the net internal electric field—the vector sum of the electric fields due to all the charges, both inside and outside—is zero. The movement of charge then ceases, because the net force on each charge is zero; the charges are then in *electrostatic equilibrium.*)

If $\vec{E}$ is zero everywhere inside our copper conductor, it must be zero for all points on the Gaussian surface because that surface, though close to the surface of the conductor, is definitely inside the conductor. This means that the flux through the Gaussian surface must be zero. Gauss' law then tells us that the net charge inside the Gaussian surface must also be zero. Then because the excess charge is not inside the Gaussian surface, it must be outside that surface, which means it must lie on the actual surface of the conductor.

An Isolated Conductor with a Cavity

Figure 23-11*b* shows the same hanging conductor, but now with a cavity that is totally within the conductor. It is perhaps reasonable to suppose that when we scoop out the electrically neutral material to form the cavity, we do not change the distribution of charge or the pattern of the electric field that exists in Fig. 23-11*a*. Again, we must turn to Gauss' law for a quantitative proof.

We draw a Gaussian surface surrounding the cavity, close to its surface but inside the conducting body. Because $\vec{E} = 0$ inside the conductor, there can be no flux through this new Gaussian surface. Therefore, from Gauss' law, that surface can enclose no net charge. We conclude that there is no net charge on the cavity walls; all the excess charge remains on the outer surface of the conductor, as in Fig. 23-11*a*.

The Conductor Removed

Suppose that, by some magic, the excess charges could be "frozen" into position on the conductor's surface, perhaps by embedding them in a thin plastic coating, and suppose that then the conductor could be removed completely. This is equivalent to enlarging the cavity of Fig. 23-11*b* until it consumes the entire conductor, leaving only the charges. The electric field would not change at all; it would remain zero inside the thin shell of charge and would remain unchanged for all external points. This shows us that the electric field is set up by the charges and not by the conductor. The conductor simply provides an initial pathway for the charges to take up their positions.

The External Electric Field

You have seen that the excess charge on an isolated conductor moves entirely to the conductor's surface. However, unless the conductor is spherical, the charge does not distribute itself uniformly. Put another way, the surface charge density σ (charge per unit area) varies over the surface of any nonspherical conductor. Generally, this variation makes the determination of the electric field set up by the surface charges very difficult.

However, the electric field just outside the surface of a conductor is easy to determine using Gauss' law. To do this, we consider a section of the surface that is small enough to permit us to neglect any curvature and thus to take the section to be flat. We then imagine a tiny cylindrical Gaussian surface to be partially embedded in the section as shown in Fig. 23-12: One end cap is fully inside the conductor, the other is fully outside, and the cylinder is perpendicular to the conductor's surface.

The electric field $\vec{E}$ at and just outside the conductor's surface must also be perpendicular to that surface. If it were not, then it would have a component along the conductor's surface that would exert forces on the surface charges, causing them to move. However, such motion would violate our implicit assumption that we are dealing with electrostatic equilibrium. Therefore, $\vec{E}$ is perpendicular to the conductor's surface.

We now sum the flux through the Gaussian surface. There is no flux through the internal end cap, because the electric field within the conductor is zero. There is no flux through the curved surface of the cylinder, because internally (in the conductor) there is no electric field and externally the electric field is parallel to the curved portion of the Gaussian surface. The only flux through the Gaussian surface is that through the external end cap, where $\vec{E}$ is perpendicular to the plane of the cap. We assume that the cap area A is small enough that the field magnitude E is constant over the cap. Then the flux through the cap is EA, and that is the net flux Φ through the Gaussian surface.

The charge q_{enc} enclosed by the Gaussian surface lies on the conductor's surface in an area A. (Think of the cylinder as a cookie cutter.) If σ is the charge per unit area, then q_{enc} is equal to σA. When we substitute σA for q_{enc} and EA for Φ,

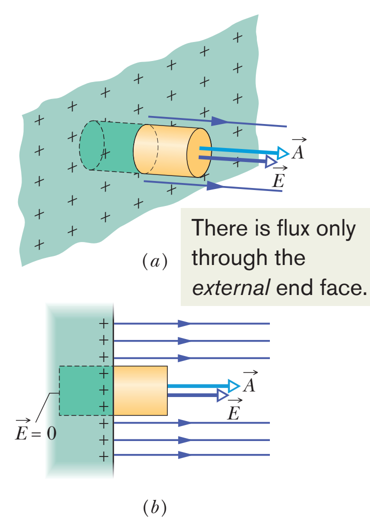


Figure 23-12 (*a*) Perspective view and (*b*) side view of a tiny portion of a large, isolated conductor with excess positive charge on its surface. A (closed) cylindrical Gaussian surface, embedded perpendicularly in the conductor, encloses some of the charge. Electric field lines pierce the external end cap of the cylinder, but not the internal end cap. The external end cap has area A and area vector $\vec{A}$.

Gauss' law (Eq. 23-6) becomes

$$\varepsilon_0 EA = \sigma A,$$

from which we find

$$E = \frac{\sigma}{\varepsilon_0} \quad \text{(conducting surface).} \tag{23-11}$$

Thus, the magnitude of the electric field just outside a conductor is proportional to the surface charge density on the conductor. The sign of the charge gives us the direction of the field. If the charge on the conductor is positive, the electric field is directed away from the conductor as in Fig. 23-12. It is directed toward the conductor if the charge is negative.

The field lines in Fig. 23-12 must terminate on negative charges somewhere in the environment. If we bring those charges near the conductor, the charge density at any given location on the conductor's surface changes, and so does the magnitude of the electric field. However, the relation between σ and E is still given by Eq. 23-11.

Sample Problem 23.05 Spherical metal shell, electric field and enclosed charge

Figure 23-13a shows a cross section of a spherical metal shell of inner radius R. A particle with a charge of $-5.0\ \mu\text{C}$ is located at a distance $R/2$ from the center of the shell. If the shell is electrically neutral, what are the (induced) charges on its inner and outer surfaces? Are those charges uniformly distributed? What is the field pattern inside and outside the shell?

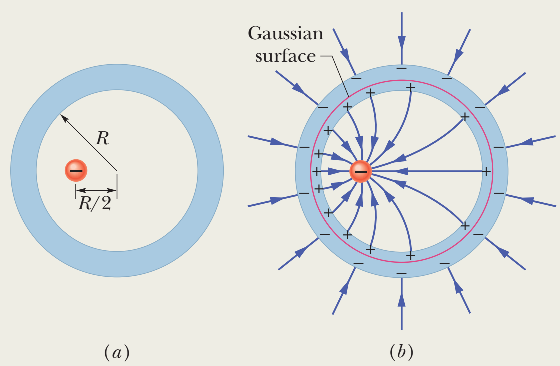


Figure 23-13 (a) A negatively charged particle is located within a spherical metal shell that is electrically neutral. (b) As a result, positive charge is nonuniformly distributed on the inner wall of the shell, and an equal amount of negative charge is uniformly distributed on the outer wall.

KEY IDEAS

Figure 23-13b shows a cross section of a spherical Gaussian surface within the metal, just outside the inner wall of the shell. The electric field must be zero inside the metal (and thus on the Gaussian surface inside the metal). This means that the electric flux through the Gaussian surface must also be zero. Gauss' law then tells us that the *net* charge enclosed by the Gaussian surface must be zero.

Reasoning: With a particle of charge $-5.0\ \mu\text{C}$ within the shell, a charge of $+5.0\ \mu\text{C}$ must lie on the inner wall of the shell in order that the net enclosed charge be zero. If the particle were centered, this positive charge would be uniformly distributed along the inner wall. However, since the particle is off-center, the distribution of positive charge is skewed, as suggested by Fig. 23-13b, because the positive charge tends to collect on the section of the inner wall nearest the (negative) particle.

Because the shell is electrically neutral, its inner wall can have a charge of $+5.0\ \mu\text{C}$ only if electrons, with a total charge of $-5.0\ \mu\text{C}$, leave the inner wall and move to the outer wall. There they spread out uniformly, as is also suggested by Fig. 23-13b. This distribution of negative charge is uniform because the shell is spherical and because the skewed distribution of positive charge on the inner wall cannot produce an electric field in the shell to affect the distribution of charge on the outer wall. Furthermore, these negative charges repel one another.

The field lines inside and outside the shell are shown approximately in Fig. 23-13b. All the field lines intersect the shell and the particle perpendicularly. Inside the shell the pattern of field lines is skewed because of the skew of the positive charge distribution. Outside the shell the pattern is the same as if the particle were centered and the shell were missing. In fact, this would be true no matter where inside the shell the particle happened to be located.

23-4 APPLYING GAUSS' LAW: CYLINDRICAL SYMMETRY

Learning Objectives

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

23.20 Explain how Gauss' law is used to derive the electric field magnitude outside a line of charge or a cylindrical surface (such as a plastic rod) with a uniform linear charge density λ.

23.21 Apply the relationship between linear charge density λ on a cylindrical surface and the electric field magnitude E at radial distance r from the central axis.

23.22 Explain how Gauss' law can be used to find the electric field magnitude *inside* a cylindrical nonconducting surface (such as a plastic rod) with a uniform volume charge density ρ.

Key Idea

- The electric field at a point near an infinite line of charge (or charged rod) with uniform linear charge density λ is perpendicular to the line and has magnitude

$$E = \frac{\lambda}{2\pi\varepsilon_0 r} \quad \text{(line of charge)},$$

where r is the perpendicular distance from the line to the point.

Applying Gauss' Law: Cylindrical Symmetry

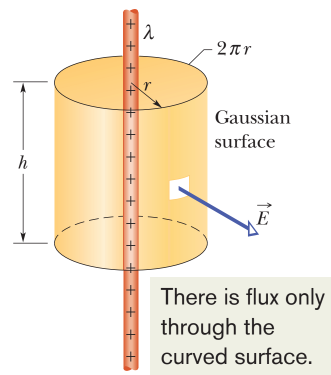


Figure 23-14 A Gaussian surface in the form of a closed cylinder surrounds a section of a very long, uniformly charged, cylindrical plastic rod.

Figure 23-14 shows a section of an infinitely long cylindrical plastic rod with a uniform charge density λ. We want to find an expression for the electric field magnitude E at radius r from the central axis of the rod, outside the rod. We could do that using the approach of Chapter 22 (charge element dq, field vector $d\vec{E}$, etc.). However, Gauss' law gives a much faster and easier (and prettier) approach.

The charge distribution and the field have cylindrical symmetry. To find the field at radius r, we enclose a section of the rod with a concentric Gaussian cylinder of radius r and height h. (If you want the field at a certain point, put a Gaussian surface through that point.) We can now apply Gauss' law to relate the charge enclosed by the cylinder and the net flux through the cylinder's surface.

First note that because of the symmetry, the electric field at any point must be radially outward (the charge is positive). That means that at any point on the end caps, the field only skims the surface and does not pierce it. So, the flux through each end cap is zero.

To find the flux through the cylinder's curved surface, first note that for any patch element on the surface, the area vector $d\vec{A}$ is radially outward (away from the interior of the Gaussian surface) and thus in the same direction as the field piercing the patch. The dot product in Gauss' law is then simply $E\,dA \cos 0 = E\,dA$, and we can pull E out of the integral. The remaining integral is just the instruction to sum the areas of all patch elements on the cylinder's curved surface, but we already know that the total area is the product of the cylinder's height h and circumference $2\pi r$. The net flux through the cylinder is then

$$\Phi = EA\cos\theta = E(2\pi rh)\cos 0 = E(2\pi rh).$$

On the other side of Gauss's law we have the charge q_{enc} enclosed by the cylinder. Because the linear charge density (charge per unit length, remember) is uniform, the enclosed charge is λh. Thus, Gauss' law,

$$\varepsilon_0 \Phi = q_{enc},$$

reduces to

$$\varepsilon_0 E(2\pi rh) = \lambda h,$$

yielding

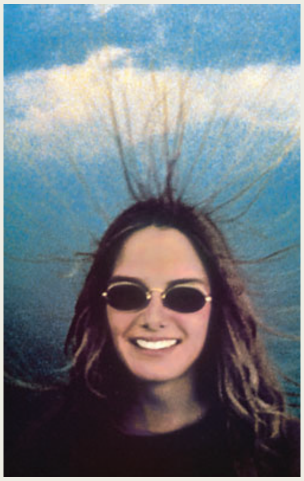
$$E = \frac{\lambda}{2\pi\varepsilon_0 r} \quad \text{(line of charge)}. \tag{23-12}$$

This is the electric field due to an infinitely long, straight line of charge, at a point that is a radial distance r from the line. The direction of $\vec{E}$ is radially outward from the line of charge if the charge is positive, and radially inward if it is negative. Equation 23-12 also approximates the field of a *finite* line of charge at points that are not too near the ends (compared with the distance from the line).

If the rod has a uniform volume charge density ρ, we could use a similar procedure to find the electric field magnitude *inside* the rod. We would just shrink the Gaussian cylinder shown in Fig. 23-14 until it is inside the rod. The charge q_{enc} enclosed by the cylinder would then be proportional to the volume of the rod enclosed by the cylinder because the charge density is uniform.

Sample Problem 23.06 Gauss' law and an upward streamer in a lightning storm

Upward streamer in a lightning storm. The woman in Fig. 23-15 was standing on a lookout platform high in the Sequoia National Park when a large storm cloud moved overhead. Some of the conduction electrons in her body were driven into the ground by the cloud's negatively charged base (Fig. 23-16*a*), leaving her positively charged. You can tell she was highly charged because her hair strands repelled one another and extended away from her along the electric field lines produced by the charge on her.



Courtesy NOAA

Figure 23-15 This woman has become positively charged by an overhead storm cloud.

Lightning did not strike the woman, but she was in extreme danger because that electric field was on the verge of causing electrical breakdown in the surrounding air. Such a breakdown would have occurred along a path extending away from her in what is called an *upward streamer.* An upward streamer is dangerous because the resulting ionization of molecules in the air suddenly frees a tremendous number of electrons from those molecules. Had the woman in Fig. 23-15 developed an upward streamer, the free electrons in the air would have moved to neutralize her (Fig. 23-16*b*), producing a large, perhaps fatal, charge flow through her body. That charge flow is dangerous because it could have interfered with or even stopped her breathing (which is obviously necessary for oxygen) and the steady beat of her heart (which is obviously necessary for the blood flow that carries the oxygen). The charge flow could also have caused burns.

Let's model her body as a narrow vertical cylinder of height $L = 1.8$ m and radius $R = 0.10$ m (Fig. 23-16*c*). Assume that charge Q was uniformly distributed along the cylinder and that electrical breakdown would have occurred if the electric field magnitude along her body had exceeded the critical value $E_c = 2.4$ MN/C. What value of Q would have put the air along her body on the verge of breakdown?

KEY IDEA

Because $R \ll L$, we can approximate the charge distribution as a long line of charge. Further, because we assume that the charge is uniformly distributed along this line, we can approximate the magnitude of the electric field along the side of her body with Eq. 23-12 ($E = \lambda/2\pi\varepsilon_0 r$).

Calculations: Substituting the critical value E_c for E, the cylinder radius R for radial distance r, and the ratio Q/L for linear charge density λ, we have

$$E_c = \frac{Q/L}{2\pi\varepsilon_0 R},$$

or

$$Q = 2\pi\varepsilon_0 RLE_c.$$

Substituting given data then gives us

$$\begin{aligned} Q &= (2\pi)(8.85 \times 10^{-12}\ \mathrm{C^2/N\cdot m^2})(0.10\ \mathrm{m}) \\ &\quad \times (1.8\ \mathrm{m})(2.4 \times 10^6\ \mathrm{N/C}) \\ &= 2.402 \times 10^{-5}\ \mathrm{C} \approx 24\ \mu\mathrm{C}. \qquad \text{(Answer)} \end{aligned}$$

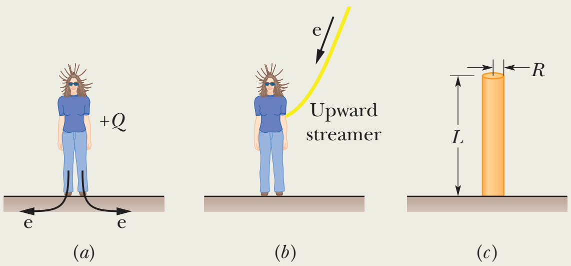


Figure 23-16 (*a*) Some of the conduction electrons in the woman's body are driven into the ground, leaving her positively charged. (*b*) An upward streamer develops if the air undergoes electrical breakdown, which provides a path for electrons freed from molecules in the air to move to the woman. (*c*) A cylinder represents the woman.

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

23-5 APPLYING GAUSS' LAW: PLANAR SYMMETRY

Learning Objectives

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

23.23 Apply Gauss' law to derive the electric field magnitude E near a large, flat, nonconducting surface with a uniform surface charge density σ.

23.24 For points near a large, flat *nonconducting* surface with a uniform charge density σ, apply the relationship between the charge density and the electric field magnitude E and also specify the direction of the field.

23.25 For points near two large, flat, parallel, *conducting* surfaces with a uniform charge density σ, apply the relationship between the charge density and the electric field magnitude E and also specify the direction of the field.

Key Ideas

- The electric field due to an infinite nonconducting sheet with uniform surface charge density σ is perpendicular to the plane of the sheet and has magnitude

$$E = \frac{\sigma}{2\varepsilon_0} \quad \text{(nonconducting sheet of charge).}$$

- The external electric field just outside the surface of an isolated charged conductor with surface charge density σ is perpendicular to the surface and has magnitude

$$E = \frac{\sigma}{\varepsilon_0} \quad \text{(external, charged conductor).}$$

Inside the conductor, the electric field is zero.

Applying Gauss' Law: Planar Symmetry

Nonconducting Sheet

Figure 23-17 shows a portion of a thin, infinite, nonconducting sheet with a uniform (positive) surface charge density σ. A sheet of thin plastic wrap, uniformly charged on one side, can serve as a simple model. Let us find the electric field $\vec{E}$ a distance r in front of the sheet.

A useful Gaussian surface is a closed cylinder with end caps of area A, arranged to pierce the sheet perpendicularly as shown. From symmetry, $\vec{E}$ must be perpendicular to the sheet and hence to the end caps. Furthermore, since the charge is positive, $\vec{E}$ is directed *away* from the sheet, and thus the electric field lines pierce the two Gaussian end caps in an outward direction. Because the field lines do not pierce the curved surface, there is no flux through this portion of the Gaussian surface. Thus $\vec{E} \cdot d\vec{A}$ is simply $E\,dA$; then Gauss' law,

$$\varepsilon_0 \oint \vec{E} \cdot d\vec{A} = q_{\text{enc}},$$

becomes

$$\varepsilon_0(EA + EA) = \sigma A,$$

where σA is the charge enclosed by the Gaussian surface. This gives

$$E = \frac{\sigma}{2\varepsilon_0} \quad \text{(sheet of charge).} \tag{23-13}$$

Since we are considering an infinite sheet with uniform charge density, this result holds for any point at a finite distance from the sheet. Equation 23-13 agrees with Eq. 22-27, which we found by integration of electric field components.

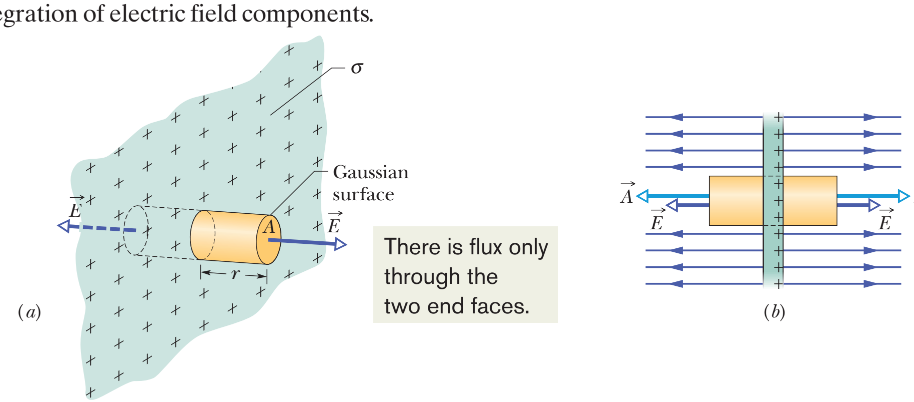


Figure 23-17 (*a*) Perspective view and (*b*) side view of a portion of a very large, thin plastic sheet, uniformly charged on one side to surface charge density σ. A closed cylindrical Gaussian surface passes through the sheet and is perpendicular to it.

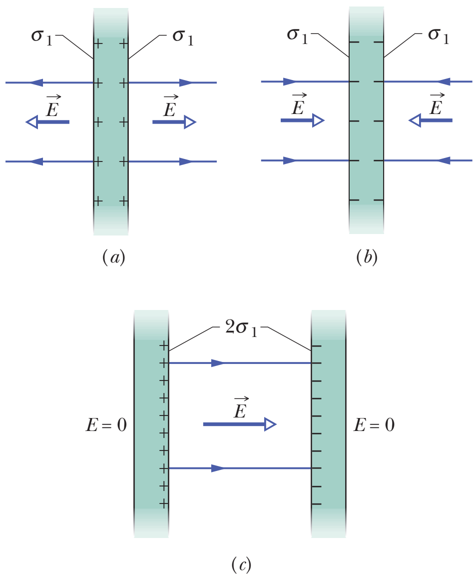


Figure 23-18 (*a*) A thin, very large conducting plate with excess positive charge. (*b*) An identical plate with excess negative charge. (*c*) The two plates arranged so they are parallel and close.

Two Conducting Plates

Figure 23-18*a* shows a cross section of a thin, infinite conducting plate with excess positive charge. From Module 23-3 we know that this excess charge lies on the surface of the plate. Since the plate is thin and very large, we can assume that essentially all the excess charge is on the two large faces of the plate.

If there is no external electric field to force the positive charge into some particular distribution, it will spread out on the two faces with a uniform surface charge density of magnitude σ_1. From Eq. 23-11 we know that just outside the plate this charge sets up an electric field of magnitude $E = \sigma_1/\varepsilon_0$. Because the excess charge is positive, the field is directed away from the plate.

Figure 23-18*b* shows an identical plate with excess negative charge having the same magnitude of surface charge density σ_1. The only difference is that now the electric field is directed toward the plate.

Suppose we arrange for the plates of Figs. 23-18*a* and *b* to be close to each other and parallel (Fig. 23-18*c*). Since the plates are conductors, when we bring them into this arrangement, the excess charge on one plate attracts the excess charge on the other plate, and all the excess charge moves onto the inner faces of the plates as in Fig. 23-18*c*. With twice as much charge now on each inner face, the new surface charge density (call it σ) on each inner face is twice σ_1. Thus, the electric field at any point between the plates has the magnitude

$$E = \frac{2\sigma_1}{\varepsilon_0} = \frac{\sigma}{\varepsilon_0}. \tag{23-14}$$

This field is directed away from the positively charged plate and toward the negatively charged plate. Since no excess charge is left on the outer faces, the electric field to the left and right of the plates is zero.

Because the charges moved when we brought the plates close to each other, the charge distribution of the two-plate system is not merely the sum of the charge distributions of the individual plates.

One reason why we discuss seemingly unrealistic situations, such as the field set up by an infinite sheet of charge, is that analyses for "infinite" situations yield good approximations to many real-world problems. Thus, Eq. 23-13 holds well for a finite nonconducting sheet as long as we are dealing with points close to the sheet and not too near its edges. Equation 23-14 holds well for a pair of finite conducting plates as long as we consider points that are not too close to their edges. The trouble with the edges is that near an edge we can no longer use planar symmetry to find expressions for the fields. In fact, the field lines there are curved (said to be an *edge effect* or *fringing*), and the fields can be very difficult to express algebraically.

Sample Problem 23.07 Electric field near two parallel nonconducting sheets with charge

Figure 23-19*a* shows portions of two large, parallel, nonconducting sheets, each with a fixed uniform charge on one side. The magnitudes of the surface charge densities are $\sigma_{(+)} = 6.8\ \mu\text{C/m}^2$ for the positively charged sheet and $\sigma_{(-)} = 4.3\ \mu\text{C/m}^2$ for the negatively charged sheet.

Find the electric field $\vec{E}$ (a) to the left of the sheets, (b) between the sheets, and (c) to the right of the sheets.

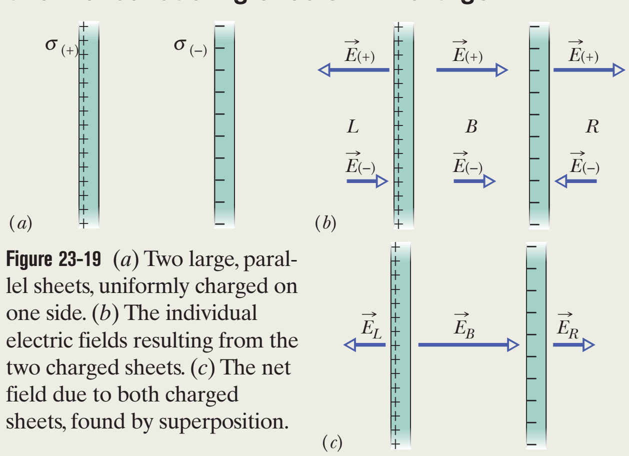


Figure 23-19 (*a*) Two large, parallel sheets, uniformly charged on one side. (*b*) The individual electric fields resulting from the two charged sheets. (*c*) The net field due to both charged sheets, found by superposition.

KEY IDEA

With the charges fixed in place (they are on nonconductors), we can find the electric field of the sheets in Fig. 23-19*a* by (1) finding the field of each sheet as if that sheet were isolated and (2) algebraically adding the fields of the isolated sheets via the superposition principle. (We can add the fields algebraically because they are parallel to each other.)

Calculations: At any point, the electric field $\vec{E}_{(+)}$ due to the positive sheet is directed *away* from the sheet and, from Eq. 23-13, has the magnitude

$$E_{(+)} = \frac{\sigma_{(+)}}{2\varepsilon_0} = \frac{6.8 \times 10^{-6}\ \text{C/m}^2}{(2)(8.85 \times 10^{-12}\ \text{C}^2/\text{N}\cdot\text{m}^2)}$$
$$= 3.84 \times 10^5\ \text{N/C}.$$

Similarly, at any point, the electric field $\vec{E}_{(-)}$ due to the negative sheet is directed *toward* that sheet and has the magnitude

$$E_{(-)} = \frac{\sigma_{(-)}}{2\varepsilon_0} = \frac{4.3 \times 10^{-6}\ \text{C/m}^2}{(2)(8.85 \times 10^{-12}\ \text{C}^2/\text{N}\cdot\text{m}^2)}$$
$$= 2.43 \times 10^5\ \text{N/C}.$$

Figure 23-19*b* shows the fields set up by the sheets to the left of the sheets (L), between them (B), and to their right (R).

The resultant fields in these three regions follow from the superposition principle. To the left, the field magnitude is

$$\begin{aligned} E_L &= E_{(+)} - E_{(-)} \\ &= 3.84 \times 10^5\ \text{N/C} - 2.43 \times 10^5\ \text{N/C} \\ &= 1.4 \times 10^5\ \text{N/C}. \qquad \text{(Answer)} \end{aligned}$$

Because $E_{(+)}$ is larger than $E_{(-)}$, the net electric field $\vec{E}_L$ in this region is directed to the left, as Fig. 23-19*c* shows. To the right of the sheets, the net electric field has the same magnitude but is directed to the right, as Fig. 23-19*c* shows.

Between the sheets, the two fields add and we have

$$\begin{aligned} E_B &= E_{(+)} + E_{(-)} \\ &= 3.84 \times 10^5\ \text{N/C} + 2.43 \times 10^5\ \text{N/C} \\ &= 6.3 \times 10^5\ \text{N/C}. \qquad \text{(Answer)} \end{aligned}$$

The electric field $\vec{E}_B$ is directed to the right.

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

23-6 APPLYING GAUSS' LAW: SPHERICAL SYMMETRY

Learning Objectives

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

23.26 Identify that a shell of uniform charge attracts or repels a charged particle that is outside the shell as if all the shell's charge is concentrated at the center of the shell.

23.27 Identify that if a charged particle is enclosed by a shell of uniform charge, there is no electrostatic force on the particle from the shell.

23.28 For a point outside a spherical shell with uniform charge, apply the relationship between the electric field magnitude E, the charge q on the shell, and the distance r from the shell's center.

23.29 Identify the magnitude of the electric field for points enclosed by a spherical shell with uniform charge.

23.30 For a uniform spherical charge distribution (a uniform ball of charge), determine the magnitude and direction of the electric field at interior and exterior points.

Key Ideas

- Outside a spherical shell of uniform charge q, the electric field due to the shell is radial (inward or outward, depending on the sign of the charge) and has the magnitude

$$E = \frac{1}{4\pi\varepsilon_0}\frac{q}{r^2} \quad \text{(outside spherical shell)},$$

where r is the distance to the point of measurement from the center of the shell. The field is the same as though all of the charge is concentrated as a particle at the center of the shell.

- Inside the shell, the field due to the shell is zero.
- Inside a sphere with a uniform volume charge density, the field is radial and has the magnitude

$$E = \frac{1}{4\pi\varepsilon_0}\frac{q}{R^3}r \quad \text{(inside sphere of charge)},$$

where q is the total charge, R is the sphere's radius, and r is the radial distance from the center of the sphere to the point of measurement.

Applying Gauss' Law: Spherical Symmetry

Here we use Gauss' law to prove the two shell theorems presented without proof in Module 21-1:

> A shell of uniform charge attracts or repels a charged particle that is outside the shell as if all the shell's charge were concentrated at the center of the shell.

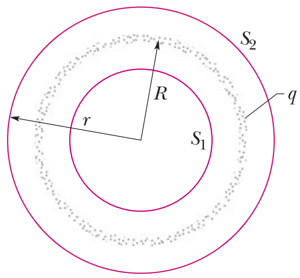


Figure 23-20 A thin, uniformly charged, spherical shell with total charge q, in cross section. Two Gaussian surfaces S_1 and S_2 are also shown in cross section. Surface S_2 encloses the shell, and S_1 encloses only the empty interior of the shell.

Figure 23-20 shows a charged spherical shell of total charge q and radius R and two concentric spherical Gaussian surfaces, S_1 and S_2. If we followed the procedure of Module 23-2 as we applied Gauss' law to surface S_2, for which $r \geq R$, we would find that

$$E = \frac{1}{4\pi\varepsilon_0}\frac{q}{r^2} \quad \text{(spherical shell, field at } r \geq R\text{).} \tag{23-15}$$

This field is the same as one set up by a particle with charge q at the center of the shell of charge. Thus, the force produced by a shell of charge q on a charged particle placed outside the shell is the same as if all the shell's charge is concentrated as a particle at the shell's center. This proves the first shell theorem.

Applying Gauss' law to surface S_1, for which $r < R$, leads directly to

$$E = 0 \quad \text{(spherical shell, field at } r < R\text{),} \tag{23-16}$$

because this Gaussian surface encloses no charge. Thus, if a charged particle were enclosed by the shell, the shell would exert no net electrostatic force on the particle. This proves the second shell theorem.

> If a charged particle is located inside a shell of uniform charge, there is no electrostatic force on the particle from the shell.

Any spherically symmetric charge distribution, such as that of Fig. 23-21, can be constructed with a nest of concentric spherical shells. For purposes of applying the two shell theorems, the volume charge density ρ should have a single value for each shell but need not be the same from shell to shell. Thus, for the charge distribution as a whole, ρ can vary, but only with r, the radial distance from the center. We can then examine the effect of the charge distribution "shell by shell."

In Fig. 23-21*a*, the entire charge lies within a Gaussian surface with $r > R$. The charge produces an electric field on the Gaussian surface as if the charge were that of a particle located at the center, and Eq. 23-15 holds.

Figure 23-21*b* shows a Gaussian surface with $r < R$. To find the electric field at points on this Gaussian surface, we separately consider the charge inside it and the charge outside it. From Eq. 23-16, the outside charge does not set up a field on the Gaussian surface. From Eq. 23-15, the inside charge sets up a field as though it is concentrated at the center. Letting q' represent that enclosed charge, we can then rewrite Eq. 23-15 as

$$E = \frac{1}{4\pi\varepsilon_0}\frac{q'}{r^2} \quad \text{(spherical distribution, field at } r \leq R\text{).} \tag{23-17}$$

If the full charge q enclosed within radius R is uniform, then q' enclosed within radius r in Fig. 23-21*b* is proportional to q:

$$\frac{\begin{pmatrix}\text{charge enclosed by}\\ \text{sphere of radius } r\end{pmatrix}}{\begin{pmatrix}\text{volume enclosed by}\\ \text{sphere of radius } r\end{pmatrix}} = \frac{\text{full charge}}{\text{full volume}}$$

or

$$\frac{q'}{\frac{4}{3}\pi r^3} = \frac{q}{\frac{4}{3}\pi R^3}. \tag{23-18}$$

This gives us

$$q' = q\frac{r^3}{R^3}. \tag{23-19}$$

Substituting this into Eq. 23-17 yields

$$E = \left(\frac{q}{4\pi\varepsilon_0 R^3}\right)r \quad \text{(uniform charge, field at } r \leq R\text{).} \tag{23-20}$$

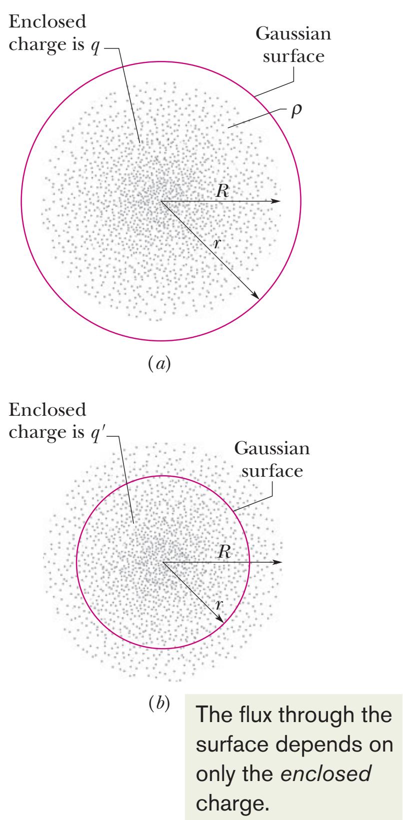
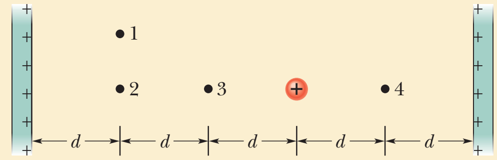


Figure 23-21 The dots represent a spherically symmetric distribution of charge of radius R, whose volume charge density ρ is a function only of distance from the center. The charged object is not a conductor, and therefore the charge is assumed to be fixed in position. A concentric spherical Gaussian surface with $r > R$ is shown in (*a*). A similar Gaussian surface with $r < R$ is shown in (*b*).

Checkpoint 4

The figure shows two large, parallel, nonconducting sheets with identical (positive) uniform surface charge densities, and a sphere with a uniform (positive) volume charge density. Rank the four numbered points according to the magnitude of the net electric field there, greatest first.



Review & Summary

Gauss' Law *Gauss' law* and Coulomb's law are different ways of describing the relation between charge and electric field in static situations. Gauss' law is

$$\varepsilon_0 \Phi = q_{enc} \quad \text{(Gauss' law)}, \tag{23-6}$$

in which q_{enc} is the net charge inside an imaginary closed surface (a *Gaussian surface*) and Φ is the net *flux* of the electric field through the surface:

$$\Phi = \oint \vec{E} \cdot d\vec{A} \quad \text{(electric flux through a Gaussian surface)}. \tag{23-4}$$

Coulomb's law can be derived from Gauss' law.

Applications of Gauss' Law Using Gauss' law and, in some cases, symmetry arguments, we can derive several important results in electrostatic situations. Among these are:

1. An excess charge on an isolated *conductor* is located entirely on the outer surface of the conductor.
2. The external electric field near the *surface of a charged conductor* is perpendicular to the surface and has a magnitude that depends on the surface charge density σ:
$$E = \frac{\sigma}{\varepsilon_0} \quad \text{(conducting surface)}. \tag{23-11}$$
Within the conductor, $E = 0$.
3. The electric field at any point due to an infinite *line of charge* with uniform linear charge density λ is perpendicular to the line of charge and has magnitude
$$E = \frac{\lambda}{2\pi\varepsilon_0 r} \quad \text{(line of charge)}, \tag{23-12}$$
where r is the perpendicular distance from the line of charge to the point.
4. The electric field due to an *infinite nonconducting sheet* with uniform surface charge density σ is perpendicular to the plane of the sheet and has magnitude
$$E = \frac{\sigma}{2\varepsilon_0} \quad \text{(sheet of charge)}. \tag{23-13}$$
5. The electric field *outside a spherical shell of charge* with radius R and total charge q is directed radially and has magnitude
$$E = \frac{1}{4\pi\varepsilon_0}\frac{q}{r^2} \quad \text{(spherical shell, for } r \geq R). \tag{23-15}$$
Here r is the distance from the center of the shell to the point at which E is measured. (The charge behaves, for external points, as if it were all located at the center of the sphere.) The field *inside* a uniform spherical shell of charge is exactly zero:
$$E = 0 \quad \text{(spherical shell, for } r < R). \tag{23-16}$$
6. The electric field *inside a uniform sphere of charge* is directed radially and has magnitude
$$E = \left(\frac{q}{4\pi\varepsilon_0 R^3}\right) r. \tag{23-20}$$

Questions

1 A surface has the area vector $\vec{A} = (2\hat{i} + 3\hat{j})\ \text{m}^2$. What is the flux of a uniform electric field through the area if the field is (a) $\vec{E} = 4\hat{i}$ N/C and (b) $\vec{E} = 4\hat{k}$ N/C?

2 Figure 23-22 shows, in cross section, three solid cylinders, each of length L and uniform charge Q. Concentric with each cylinder is a cylindrical Gaussian surface, with all three surfaces having the same radius. Rank the Gaussian surfaces according to the electric field at any point on the surface, greatest first.

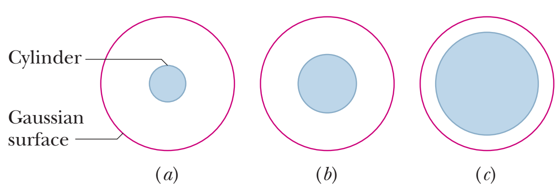


Figure 23-22 Question 2.

3 Figure 23-23 shows, in cross section, a central metal ball, two spherical metal shells, and three spherical Gaussian surfaces of radii R, $2R$, and $3R$, all with the same center. The uniform charges on the three objects are: ball, Q; smaller shell, $3Q$; larger shell, $5Q$. Rank the Gaussian surfaces according to the magnitude of the electric field at any point on the surface, greatest first.

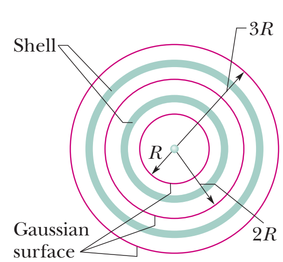


Figure 23-23 Question 3.

4 Figure 23-24 shows, in cross section, two Gaussian spheres and two Gaussian cubes that are centered on a positively charged particle. (a) Rank the net flux through the four Gaussian surfaces, greatest first. (b) Rank the magnitudes of the electric fields on the surfaces, greatest first, and indicate whether the magnitudes are uniform or variable along each surface.

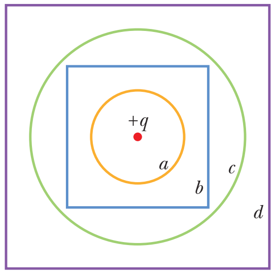


Figure 23-24 Question 4.

5 In Fig. 23-25, an electron is released between two infinite nonconducting sheets that are horizontal and have uniform surface charge densities $\sigma_{(+)}$ and $\sigma_{(-)}$, as indicated. The electron is subjected to the following three situations involving surface charge densities and sheet separations. Rank the magnitudes of the electron's acceleration, greatest first.

Situation	$\sigma_{(+)}$	$\sigma_{(-)}$	Separation
1	$+4\sigma$	-4σ	d
2	$+7\sigma$	$-\sigma$	$4d$
3	$+3\sigma$	-5σ	$9d$

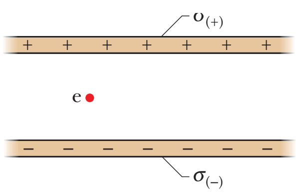


Figure 23-25 Question 5.

6 Three infinite nonconducting sheets, with uniform positive surface charge densities σ, 2σ, and 3σ, are arranged to be parallel like the two sheets in Fig. 23-19*a*. What is their order, from left to right, if the electric field $\vec{E}$ produced by the arrangement has magnitude $E = 0$ in one region and $E = 2\sigma/\varepsilon_0$ in another region?

7 Figure 23-26 shows four situations in which four very long rods extend into and out of the page (we see only their cross sections). The value below each cross section gives that particular rod's uniform charge density in microcoulombs per meter. The rods are separated by either d or $2d$ as drawn, and a central point is shown midway between the inner rods. Rank the situations according to the magnitude of the net electric field at that central point, greatest first.

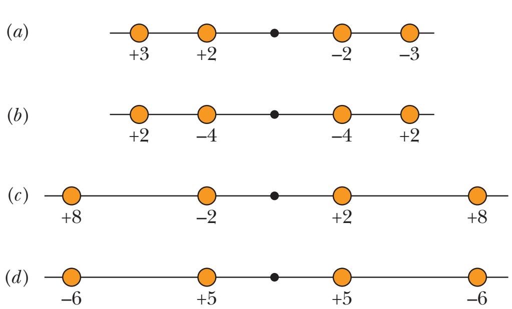


Figure 23-26 Question 7.

8 Figure 23-27 shows four solid spheres, each with charge Q uniformly distributed through its volume. (a) Rank the spheres according to their volume charge density, greatest first. The figure also shows a point P for each sphere, all at the same distance from the center of the sphere. (b) Rank the spheres according to the magnitude of the electric field they produce at point P, greatest first.

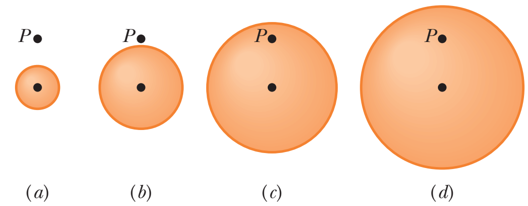


Figure 23-27 Question 8.

9 A small charged ball lies within the hollow of a metallic spherical shell of radius R. For three situations, the net charges on the ball and shell, respectively, are (1) $+4q$, 0; (2) $-6q$, $+10q$; (3) $+16q$, $-12q$. Rank the situations according to the charge on (a) the inner surface of the shell and (b) the outer surface, most positive first.

10 Rank the situations of Question 9 according to the magnitude of the electric field (a) halfway through the shell and (b) at a point $2R$ from the center of the shell, greatest first.

11 Figure 23-28 shows a section of three long charged cylinders centered on the same axis. Central cylinder A has a uniform charge $q_A = +3q_0$. What uniform charges q_B and q_C should be on cylinders B and C so that (if possible) the net electric field is zero at (a) point 1, (b) point 2, and (c) point 3?

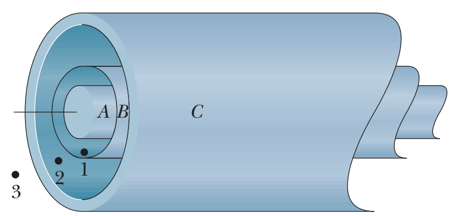


Figure 23-28 Question 11.

12 Figure 23-29 shows four Gaussian surfaces consisting of identical cylindrical midsections but different end caps. The surfaces are in a uniform electric field $\vec{E}$ that is directed parallel to the central axis of each cylindrical midsection. The end caps have these shapes: S_1, convex hemispheres; S_2, concave hemispheres; S_3, cones; S_4, flat disks. Rank the surfaces according to (a) the net electric flux through them and (b) the electric flux through the top end caps, greatest first.

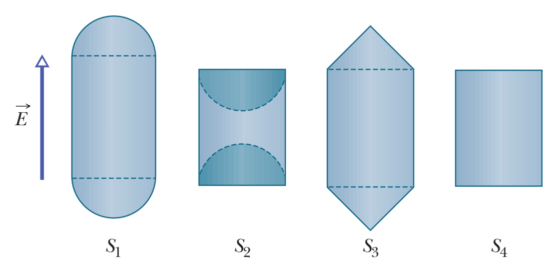


Figure 23-29 Question 12.