

Velocity and acceleration in Spherical Polar Coordinates

The position vector \vec{r} in spherical polar coordinate is given by $\vec{r} = x\hat{i} + y\hat{j} + z\hat{k}$ where

$$x = r \sin\theta \cos\phi$$

$$y = r \sin\theta \sin\phi$$

$$z = r \cos\theta$$

$$\therefore \vec{r} = r \sin\theta \cos\phi \hat{i} + r \sin\theta \sin\phi \hat{j} + r \cos\theta \hat{k} \quad \rightarrow \textcircled{1}$$

The unit vectors \hat{e}_r , \hat{e}_θ and \hat{e}_ϕ along r , θ and ϕ are

$$\hat{e}_r = \frac{\frac{\partial \vec{r}}{\partial r}}{\left| \frac{\partial \vec{r}}{\partial r} \right|} = \sin\theta \cos\phi \hat{i} + \sin\theta \sin\phi \hat{j} + \hat{k} \cos\theta$$

$$\text{as } \left| \frac{\partial \vec{r}}{\partial r} \right| = \sqrt{\sin^2\theta \cos^2\phi + \sin^2\theta \sin^2\phi + \cos^2\theta} \\ = \underline{\underline{1}}$$

$$\begin{aligned}\hat{e}_\theta &= \frac{\frac{\partial \vec{r}}{\partial \theta}}{\left| \frac{\partial \vec{r}}{\partial \theta} \right|} = \frac{r \cos \theta \cos \phi \hat{i} + r \cos \theta \sin \phi \hat{j} - r \sin \theta \hat{k}}{\sqrt{r^2 (\cos^2 \theta \cos^2 \phi + \cos^2 \theta \sin^2 \phi + \sin^2 \theta)}} \\ &= \cos \theta \cos \phi \hat{i} + \cos \theta \sin \phi \hat{j} - \sin \theta \hat{k}\end{aligned}$$

$$\begin{aligned}\hat{e}_\phi &= \frac{\frac{\partial \vec{r}}{\partial \phi}}{\left| \frac{\partial \vec{r}}{\partial \phi} \right|} = \frac{-r \sin \theta \sin \phi \hat{i} + r \sin \theta \cos \phi \hat{j}}{\sqrt{r^2 \sin^2 \theta (\sin^2 \phi + \cos^2 \phi)}} \\ &= -\sin \theta \sin \phi \hat{i} + \sin \theta \cos \phi \hat{j}\end{aligned}$$

Using value of \hat{e}_r , in equation (1) we get

$$\boxed{\vec{r} = r \hat{e}_r} \quad \longrightarrow (2)$$

So the velocity is given by

$$\begin{aligned}\vec{v} &= \frac{d\vec{r}}{dt} = \frac{d}{dt}(r \hat{e}_r) \\ &= \frac{dr}{dt} \hat{e}_r + r \frac{d}{dt}(\hat{e}_r)\end{aligned}$$

$$\vec{v} = \dot{r} \hat{e}_r + r \frac{d}{dt}(\hat{e}_r) \quad \longrightarrow (3)$$

$$\text{Now } \frac{d}{dt}(\hat{e}_r) = \frac{d}{dt}(\sin\theta\cos\phi\hat{i} + \sin\theta\sin\phi\hat{j} + \hat{k}\cos\theta)$$

$$= \dot{\cos\theta}\cos\phi\hat{i} - \sin\theta\sin\phi\dot{\phi}\hat{i} + \dot{\cos\theta}\sin\phi\hat{j} + \sin\theta\cos\phi\dot{\phi}\hat{j} + \dot{k}(-\sin\theta)\hat{i}$$

$$= \dot{\theta}[\cos\theta\cos\phi\hat{i} + \cos\theta\sin\phi\hat{j} - \sin\theta\hat{k}] + \dot{\phi}[\sin\theta\cos\phi\hat{j} - \sin\theta\sin\phi\hat{i}]$$

$$\frac{d}{dt}(\hat{e}_r) = \dot{\theta}\hat{e}_\theta + \dot{\phi}\sin\theta\hat{e}_\phi \rightarrow (4)$$

using values of \hat{e}_θ and \hat{e}_ϕ

so using eqn (4) eqn (3) we get

$$\vec{v} = \dot{r}\hat{e}_r + r(\dot{\theta}\hat{e}_\theta + \dot{\phi}\sin\theta\hat{e}_\phi)$$

$$\boxed{\vec{v} = \dot{r}\hat{e}_r + r\dot{\theta}\hat{e}_\theta + r\sin\theta\dot{\phi}\hat{e}_\phi} \rightarrow (5)$$

which is the expression for velocity of Particle in spherical Polar Coordinates

Expression for Acceleration

The acceleration is given by

$$\vec{a} = \frac{d\vec{v}}{dt}$$

$$= \frac{d}{dt} \left[\dot{r} \hat{e}_r + r \dot{\theta} \hat{e}_\theta + r \sin \theta \dot{\phi} \hat{e}_\phi \right]$$

$$\vec{a} = \frac{d}{dt} (\dot{r} \hat{e}_r) + \frac{d}{dt} (r \dot{\theta} \hat{e}_\theta) + \frac{d}{dt} (r \sin \theta \dot{\phi} \hat{e}_\phi)$$

$$\begin{aligned} \vec{a} = & \ddot{r} \hat{e}_r + \dot{r} \frac{d}{dt} (\hat{e}_r) + r \ddot{\theta} \hat{e}_\theta + r \dot{\theta} \frac{d}{dt} (\hat{e}_\theta) + \\ & \dot{r} \dot{\theta} \hat{e}_\theta + \dot{r} \sin \theta \dot{\phi} \hat{e}_\phi + r \cos \theta \dot{\theta} \dot{\phi} \hat{e}_\phi + \\ & r \sin \theta \dot{\phi} \frac{d}{dt} (\hat{e}_\phi) + r \sin \theta \hat{e}_\phi \ddot{\phi} \end{aligned}$$

→ (6)

$$\text{Now } \frac{d}{dt} (\hat{e}_\theta) = \frac{d}{dt} (\cos \theta \cos \phi \hat{i} + \cos \theta \sin \phi \hat{j} - \hat{k} \sin \theta)$$

$$= -\dot{\theta} \sin \theta \cos \phi \hat{i} - \cos \theta \sin \phi \dot{\phi} \hat{i} - \dot{\theta} \sin \theta \sin \phi \hat{j} + \dot{\phi} \cos \theta \cos \phi \hat{j} - \hat{k} \cos \theta \dot{\theta}$$

or

$$\begin{aligned}\frac{d}{dt}(\hat{e}_\theta) &= -\dot{\theta} [\sin\theta \cos\phi \hat{i} + \sin\theta \sin\phi \hat{j} + \cos\theta \\ &\quad + \dot{\phi} \cos\theta (-\sin\phi \hat{i} + \cos\phi \hat{j}) \\ &= -\dot{\theta} \hat{e}_r + \dot{\phi} \cos\theta \hat{e}_\phi \longrightarrow (7)\end{aligned}$$

(Using values of \hat{e}_r and \hat{e}_ϕ)

Also

$$\begin{aligned}\frac{d}{dt}(\hat{e}_\phi) &= \frac{d}{dt}(-\sin\phi \hat{i} + \cos\phi \hat{j}) \\ &= -\cos\phi \dot{\phi} \hat{i} - \sin\phi \dot{\phi} \hat{j} \longrightarrow (8)\end{aligned}$$

So using the values of $\frac{d}{dt}(\hat{e}_r)$, $\frac{d}{dt}(\hat{e}_\theta)$ and $\frac{d}{dt}(\hat{e}_\phi)$ in eqn (6) we get

$$\begin{aligned}\vec{a} &= \ddot{r} \hat{e}_r + \dot{r}(\dot{\theta} \hat{e}_\theta + \dot{\phi} \sin\theta \hat{e}_\phi) + r\ddot{\theta} \hat{e}_\theta + \\ &\quad \dot{r}\ddot{\theta} \hat{e}_\theta + r\dot{\theta}(-\dot{\theta} \hat{e}_r + \dot{\phi} \cos\theta \hat{e}_\phi) + \\ &\quad \dot{r} \sin\theta \dot{\phi} \hat{e}_\phi + \cancel{r \cos\theta \dot{\phi} \hat{e}_\phi} + r \cos\theta \dot{\phi} \dot{\phi} \hat{e}_\phi + \\ &\quad r \sin\theta \dot{\phi}(-\cos\phi \dot{\phi} \hat{i} - \sin\phi \dot{\phi} \hat{j}) + \\ &\quad r \sin\theta \dot{\phi} \ddot{\phi}\end{aligned}$$

$$\begin{aligned}\vec{a} = & \ddot{r}\hat{e}_r + \dot{r}\ddot{\theta}\hat{e}_\theta + \dot{r}\dot{\phi}\sin\theta\hat{e}_\phi + r\ddot{\theta}\hat{e}_\theta + \\ & \dot{r}\ddot{\theta}\hat{e}_\theta - r\dot{\theta}^2\hat{e}_r + r\dot{\theta}\dot{\phi}\cos\theta\hat{e}_\phi + \\ & \dot{r}\sin\theta\dot{\phi}\hat{e}_\phi + r\cos\theta\ddot{\phi}\hat{e}_\phi + r\sin\theta\hat{e}_\phi\ddot{\phi} \\ & - r\sin\theta\dot{\phi}^2(\cos\phi\hat{i} + \sin\phi\hat{j})\end{aligned}$$

$$\boxed{\cos\phi\hat{i} + \sin\phi\hat{j} = \sin\theta\hat{e}_r + \cos\theta\hat{e}_\theta}$$

$$\begin{aligned}\vec{a} = & \ddot{r}\hat{e}_r + \dot{r}\ddot{\theta}\hat{e}_\theta + \dot{r}\dot{\phi}\sin\theta\hat{e}_\phi + r\ddot{\theta}\hat{e}_\theta + \\ & \dot{r}\ddot{\theta}\hat{e}_\theta - r\dot{\theta}^2\hat{e}_r + r\dot{\theta}\dot{\phi}\cos\theta\hat{e}_\phi + \\ & \dot{r}\sin\theta\dot{\phi}\hat{e}_\phi + r\cos\theta\ddot{\phi}\hat{e}_\phi + r\sin\theta\hat{e}_\phi\ddot{\phi} \\ & - r\sin\theta\dot{\phi}^2(\sin\theta\hat{e}_r + \cos\theta\hat{e}_\theta)\end{aligned}$$

$$\begin{aligned}\vec{a} = & \ddot{r}\hat{e}_r + \dot{r}\ddot{\theta}\hat{e}_\theta + \dot{r}\dot{\phi}\sin\theta\hat{e}_\phi + r\ddot{\theta}\hat{e}_\theta + \\ & \dot{r}\ddot{\theta}\hat{e}_\theta - r\dot{\theta}^2\hat{e}_r + r\dot{\theta}\dot{\phi}\cos\theta\hat{e}_\phi + \\ & \dot{r}\sin\theta\dot{\phi}\hat{e}_\phi + r\cos\theta\ddot{\phi}\hat{e}_\phi + r\sin\theta\hat{e}_\phi\ddot{\phi} \\ & - r\sin^2\theta\dot{\phi}^2\hat{e}_r - r\sin\theta\cos\theta\dot{\phi}^2\hat{e}_\theta\end{aligned}$$

$$\vec{a} = (\ddot{r} - r\dot{\theta}^2 - \dot{\phi}^2 r \sin^2 \theta) \hat{e}_r + (\ddot{r}\dot{\theta} + 2\dot{r}\ddot{\theta} - r\sin\theta\cos\theta\dot{\phi}^2) \hat{e}_\theta + (r\sin\theta\ddot{\phi} + 2\dot{r}\dot{\phi}\sin\theta + 2r\cos\theta\dot{\phi}\dot{\theta}) \hat{e}_\phi$$

which is the expression for acceleration of a particle in spherical polar coordinates. \rightarrow (9)