

AP PHYSICS C CLASS 11: UNIVERSAL GRAVITATION

Directions: Each of the questions or incomplete statements below is followed by five suggested answers or completions. Select the one that is best in each case and place the letter of your choice in the corresponding box on the student answer sheet.

Note: To simplify calculations, you may use $g = 10\text{ m/s}^2$ in all problems.

1. A 70 kg astronaut floats at a distance of 10 m from a 50 000 kg spacecraft. What is the force of attraction between the astronaut and spacecraft?
(A) $2.4 \times 10^{-6}\text{ N}$
(B) $2.4 \times 10^{-5}\text{ N}$
(C) Zero; there is no gravity in space.
(D) $2.4 \times 10^5\text{ N}$
(E) $2.4 \times 10^6\text{ N}$

2. A proposed “space elevator” can lift a 1000 kg payload to an orbit of 150 km above the Earth’s surface. The radius of the Earth is $6.4 \times 10^6\text{ m}$, and the Earth’s mass is $6.0 \times 10^{24}\text{ kg}$. What is the gravitational potential energy of the payload when it reaches orbit?
(A) $1.0 \times 10^3\text{ J}$
(B) $2.7 \times 10^6\text{ J}$
(C) $6.1 \times 10^{10}\text{ J}$
(D) $2.7 \times 10^{12}\text{ J}$
(E) $1.0 \times 10^{15}\text{ J}$

3. The mass of a planet is 1/4 that of Earth and its radius is half of Earth’s radius. The acceleration due to gravity on this planet is most nearly
(A) 2 m/s^2
(B) 4 m/s^2
(C) 5 m/s^2
(D) 10 m/s^2
(E) 20 m/s^2

4. When climbing from sea level to the top of Mount Everest, a hiker changes elevation by 8848 m. By what percentage will the gravitational field of the Earth change during the climb? (The Earth’s mass is $6.0 \times 10^{24}\text{ kg}$, and its radius is $6.4 \times 10^6\text{ m}$.)
(A) It will increase by approximately 0.3 %.
(B) It will decrease by approximately 0.3 %.
(C) It will increase by approximately 12 %.
(D) It will decrease by approximately 12 %.
(E) The gravitational field strength will not change.
6. A satellite orbits the Earth at a distance that is four times the radius of the Earth. If the acceleration due to gravity near the surface of the Earth is g , the acceleration of the satellite is most nearly
(A) zero
(B) $\frac{g}{2}$
(C) $\frac{g}{4}$
(D) $\frac{g}{8}$
(E) $\frac{g}{16}$

7. Two planets of mass M and $9M$ are in the same solar system. The radius of the planet of mass M is R . In order for the acceleration due to gravity to be the same for each planet, the radius of the planet of mass $9M$ would have to be
(A) $\frac{R}{2}$
(B) R
(C) $2R$
(D) $3R$
(E) $9R$
- Questions 8–9
- Two moons of mass m and $2m$ orbit a planet of mass M at the same radius R and speed v toward each other, as shown. The moons collide and stick together without destroying either moon.
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8. The total momentum of the moons after the collision is
(A) mv
(B) $2mv$
(C) $3mv$
(D) $6mv$
(E) zero

9. The velocity of the two masses after the collision above is
(A) v counterclockwise
(B) $v/2$ counterclockwise
(C) $v/2$ clockwise
(D) $v/3$ counterclockwise
(E) $v/3$ clockwise
5. Four planets, A through D, orbit the same star. The relative masses and distances from the star for each planet are shown in the table. For example, Planet A has twice the mass of Planet B, and Planet D has three times the orbital radius of Planet A. Which planet has the highest gravitational attraction to the star?
- | Planet | Relative mass | Relative distance |
|--------|---------------|-------------------|
| A | $2m$ | r |
| B | m | $0.1r$ |
| C | $0.5m$ | $2r$ |
| D | $4m$ | $3r$ |
- (A) Planet A

(B) Planet B

(C) Planet C

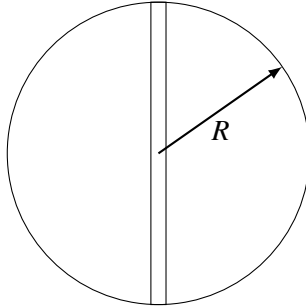
(D) Planet D

(E) All have the same gravitational attraction to the star.

AP PHYSICS C CLASS 11: UNIVERSAL GRAVITATION
SECTION II
3 Questions

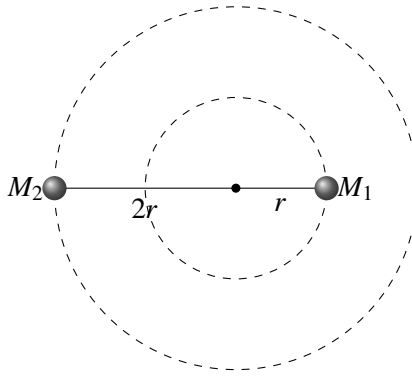
Directions: Answer all questions. The parts within a question may not have equal weight. All final numerical answers should include appropriate units. Credit depends on the quality of your solutions and explanations, so you should show your work. Credit also depends on demonstrating that you know which physical principles would be appropriate to apply in a particular situation. Therefore, you should clearly indicate which part of a question your work is for.

10. A planet of mass M , radius R , and uniform density has a small tunnel drilled through the center of the planet, as shown below. When the mass is inside the tunnel, it experiences a force of $F = (GmM/R^3)r$, whereas when the mass is outside of the planet, it experiences a gravitational force of $F = GmM/r^2$.



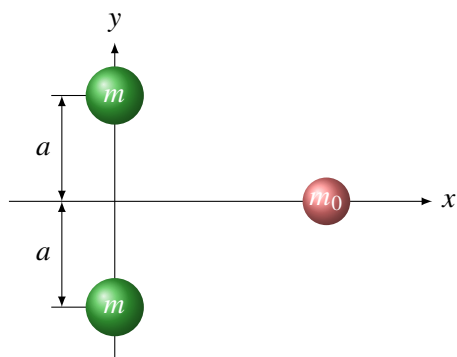
- (a) Setting the potential energy of the mass to be zero at the planet's center, calculate the mass's potential energy as a function of distance from the center of the planet $U(r)$, for values $r < R$. Sketch this potential function.
- (b) If the mass is dropped from R from the center of the planet, how long will it take until it returns to its original position?
- (c) If the mass is dropped from $R/2$ from the center of the planet, will it require more, or less, or the same amount of time to return to its original position compared to if it was dropped from R ?
- (d) If the mass is dropped from $2R$ from the center of the planet, will it require more, or less, or the same amount of time to return to its original position compared to if it was dropped from R ?

11. Two stars of unequal mass orbit each other about their common center of mass as shown. The star of mass M_1 orbits in a circle of radius r , and the star of mass M_2 orbits in a circle of radius $2r$.



- (a) Determine the ratio of masses M_1/M_2 .
- (b) Determine the ratio of the acceleration a_1 of M_1 to the acceleration a_2 of M_2 .
- (c) Determine the ratio of the period T_1 of M_1 to the period T_2 of M_2 .

12. Two point particles of mass m are on the y axis at $y = a$ and $y = -a$, as shown in the figure below.



- Derive the expression for the gravitational force exerted by these two particles on a third particle of mass m_0 located on the x axis at a distance x away from the origin.
- What is the gravitational field \vec{g} on the x -axis due to the two particles?
- Show that g_x (the x component of \vec{g}) due to the two particles on the y axis is approximately $-\frac{2Gm}{x^2}$ when x is much greater than a .
- Show that the maximum value of $|g_x|$ occurs at the point $x = \frac{\pm a}{\sqrt{2}}$.