

Harold's High School Physics Cheat Sheet

25 September 2025

The 7 Base Units of Measure




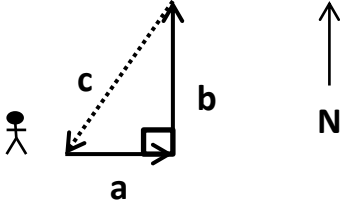

Quantity Name	Symbol (Value)	Metric Units (SI)	Imperial Units (English)
1. Length / Distance	w, x, y, z	meter (m)	foot (ft)
2. Mass	m	kilogram (kg)	slug (or lb)
3. Time	t	second (s)	
4. Temperature	T	Kelvin (K) Celsius ($^{\circ}C$)	Fahrenheit ($^{\circ}F$)
5. Electrical Current	i	Ampere (A)	
6. Amount of Substance	M, χ	mole (mol)	$1 \text{ mol} \approx 6.02214076 \times 10^{23}$
7. Luminous Intensity	lv	Candela (cd)	
Note: The 7 base units are mutually independent from each other. All other units of measurement can be derived from them.			

Derived Units of Measure

Quantity Name	Symbol (Value)	Metric Units (SI)	Imperial Units (English)
Length / Displacement	d, l, h, r, s	meter (m)	foot (ft)
Area	A, SA		
Volume	V	liter (l)	fluid ounce (fl)
Velocity / Speed	v, s		
Acceleration	a, g		
Impulse	I		
Linear Momentum	p		
Force	F	Newton (N)	pound (lb)
Energy / Work / Heat	$E, W,$ K or $KE,$ $U_g, U_s, U_E,$ Q	Joule (J)	calorie (cal)
Power	P	Watt (W)	horsepower (hp)


Constants and Conversions

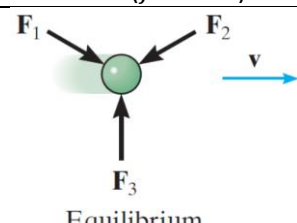
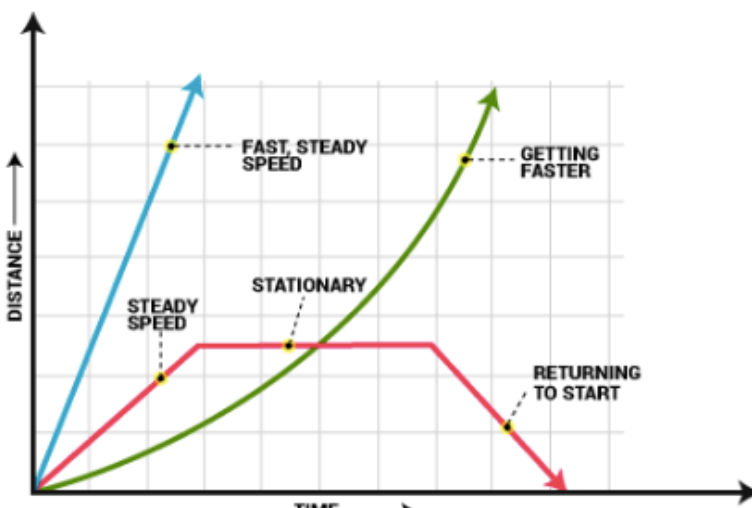
Constant Name	Symbol	Metric Units (SI)	Imperial Units (English)
Length	x	1.0 m	39.37 in 3.281 ft
		2.54 cm	1.0 in
		30.48 cm	1.0 ft
		1.61 km	1.0 mi
		1.0 km	0.621 mi
		1 km = 1,000 m	1 mi = 5,280 ft = 1,760 yd
Mass	m	1.0 kg	2.205 lb
		0.454 kg	1.0 lb
		1.0 g	0.035 oz
		14.594 kg	1 slug
		(standard gravity)	1 slug = 32.174 lb
Time	t	1 yr = 365.24 d 1 d = 24 h	1 h = 60 min 1 min = 60 s
Acceleration			
Earth's Gravity	g	$-9.81 \frac{m}{s^2}$	$-32.2 \frac{ft}{s^2}$
Moon's Gravity (16.6% of Earth's)	g_m	$-1.625 \frac{m}{s^2}$	$-5.35 \frac{ft}{s^2}$
Temperature	T	0 °C	32 °F
		100 °C	212 °F
		-17.8 °C	0 °F
		37.8 °C	100 °F
Force	F	1.00 N	0.225 lb
		4.45 N	1.00 lb
Volume	V	3.785 L	1.0 gallon
		1.0 L	1.057 quarts 0.264 gallons

How to Solve Physics Word Problems			
Modified GUESS Method	1. Read	6. Equations	
	2. Diagram	7. Solve	
	3. Givens	8. Substitute	
	4. Observations	9. Double-Check	
	5. Unknowns		
Scenario A marching band cadet marches on a football field. First, he marches 10 yards East, then 40 feet North. What is the shortest distance he must march to return to where he started?			
#	Step	Example	
	1. Carefully read the problem. Translate each word of each sentence into math.	Reread the problem several times to make sure you did not miss anything.	
	2. Draw a diagram . Clearly label everything.		
G	3. Write down the givens as variables with units. What information did they provide? Are any of them extraneous?	$a = 10 \text{ yards East}$ $b = 40 \text{ feet North}$	
	4. Calculate observations or easily derived information. Don't forget unit conversions for consistency.	$10 \text{ yards} \times \left(\frac{3 \text{ feet}}{1 \text{ yard}}\right) = 30 \text{ feet}$	
U	5. Write down the unknowns . What are they asking for?	The shortest distance is a straight line, or the hypotenuse. 'c'. $c = \underline{\hspace{1cm}}? \text{ <units>}$	
E	6. Recall relevant equations and formulas.	Since the path marched is a right triangle, we can use the Pythagorean Theorem: $a^2 + b^2 = c^2$	
S	7. Solve symbolically for the unknown variable. Reduce algebraically to the simplest form. Do not substitute until fully solved.	$a^2 + b^2 = c^2$ $c = \sqrt{c^2} = \sqrt{a^2 + b^2}$	
S	8. Substitute the givens into the solved formula. Use a calculator as needed to calculate the answer.	$a = 30 \text{ feet}$ $b = 40 \text{ feet}$ $c = \sqrt{(30 \text{ feet})^2 + (40 \text{ feet})^2} = 50 \text{ feet}$	
✓✓	9. Double-check your work. Ask yourself if the answer is reasonable and makes sense. Don't forget the units. Box in your answer.	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 10px; display: inline-block;"> The shortest distance the cadet must march is 50 feet. </div>	


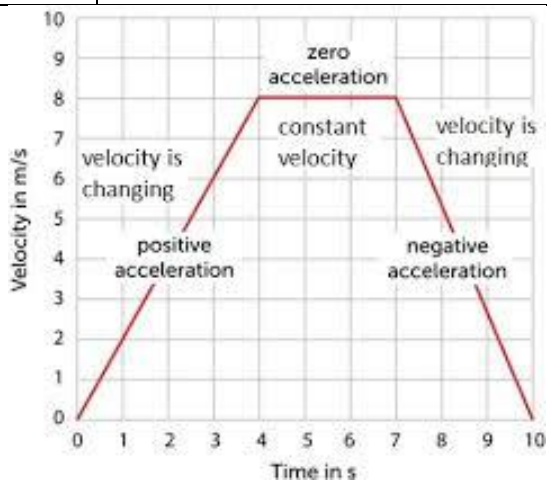
See also: [GUESS Method](#) for problem-solving.

Chapter 1: Let's Move! (Velocity)

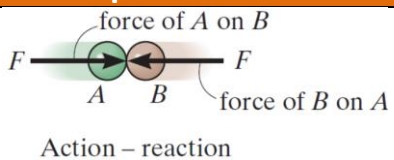
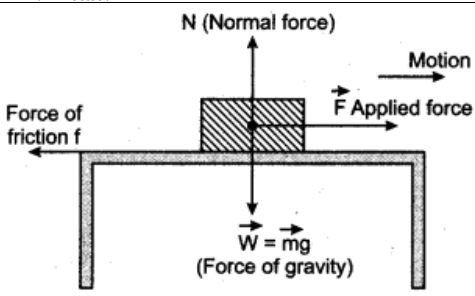
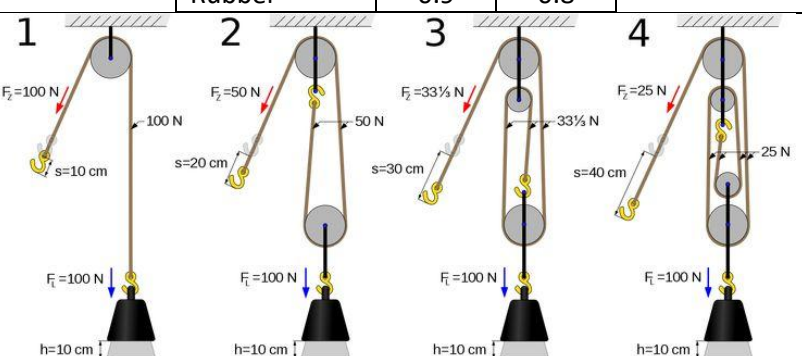
Term	Equation	Description												
Vector Quantity	$\vec{x} = 10 \frac{m}{s} \text{ East}$	A quantity that includes direction. (e.g., magnitude and direction)												
Scalar Quantity	b	A quantity that does not include direction.												
Friction	F_{μ}	A force that resists motion when two bodies are in contact.												
Inertia	I	The tendency of a body to resist changes in its velocity.												
Average Velocity	$v_{ave} = \frac{v_f - v_i}{\Delta t}$	The average of the velocity over a given time interval.												
Instantaneous Velocity	$v = \frac{\Delta x}{\Delta t}$	The velocity at a given instant in time.												
Acceleration	$a = \frac{\Delta v}{\Delta t}$	A change in an object's velocity.												
														
Rulers	When using a ruler that is marked off in 16 th s of an inch, report your answers to a hundredth of an inch.													
Units	$g = -9.81 \frac{m}{s^2}$	You must always list the units after the number. (The units are just as important as the number.)												
Significant Figures	<ol style="list-style-type: none">All non-zero figures (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, & 9) are significant.A zero (0) is significant if it is between two significant digits.A zero (0) is also significant if it is at the end of the number <i>and</i> to the right of the decimal point.													
Using SigFigs	<ol style="list-style-type: none">When adding and subtracting measurements, you must report your answer to the same precision as the <u>least</u> precise number in the problem.When multiplying and dividing measurements, you must report your answer with the same number of significant figures as the measurement that has the <u>fewest</u> significant figures.There is always some error in the last significant figure of a measurement.													
Precision vs. Accuracy	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Precision: The consistency and reproducibility of measurements (e.g., 10 decimal places).Accuracy: How close a measurement is to the <u>true</u> or accepted value.													
Scientific Notation	$14,000,000 = 1.4 \times 10^7 = 1.4E7$	$0.00000014 = 1.4 \times 10^{-7} = 1.4E-7$												
Systematic Errors	<p><i>"Science cannot prove anything."</i></p> <p>There is always a possibility that our experiments are wrong since they contain systematic errors.</p>													
Unit Conversion (Train Track Method)	<p>17 years = <u>?</u> sec</p> <table><tr><td>17 yr</td><td>365.24 days</td><td>24 hours</td><td>60 min</td><td>60 sec</td><td>536,464,512 sec</td></tr><tr><td></td><td>1 yr</td><td>1 day</td><td>1 hour</td><td>1 min</td><td></td></tr></table>		17 yr	365.24 days	24 hours	60 min	60 sec	536,464,512 sec		1 yr	1 day	1 hour	1 min	
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Prefixes		Prefix	Abbreviation	Meaning	Scientific
		giga	G	1,000,000,000	10^9
		mega	M	1,000,000	10^6
		kilo	k	1,000	10^3
		hector	H	100	10^2
		deca	Da	10	10^1
		centi	c	0.01	10^{-2}
		milli	m	0.001	10^{-3}
		micro	μ	0.000001	10^{-6}
		nano	n	0.000000001	10^{-9}
Speed	$s = \frac{\Delta d}{\Delta t}$	Speed (s) is a scalar quantity.			
Velocity	$v = \frac{\Delta x}{\Delta t}$	Velocity (v) is a vector quantity.			
Relative Velocity	$v_{relative} = v_{moving_object} - v_{reference_object}$				
Unit Consistency	Before solving a problem, look at the units and make sure they are consistent. If they are not, convert the inconsistent units before you continue. (ft vs. m)				
Newton's First Law of Motion (Law of Inertia)	An object will remain at rest, or in motion at a constant velocity (v or constant speed in a straight line), unless acted upon by a net external force (F).				
Velocity with Acceleration	<ul style="list-style-type: none">When acceleration and velocity are in the same direction (\Rightarrow), an object's speed increases. (\uparrow)When acceleration and velocity are in opposite directions (\Leftarrow), an object's speed decreases. (\downarrow)				
Velocity Graph					
Slope = Velocity	The slope of a position (x) versus time (t) graph is the velocity (v).				

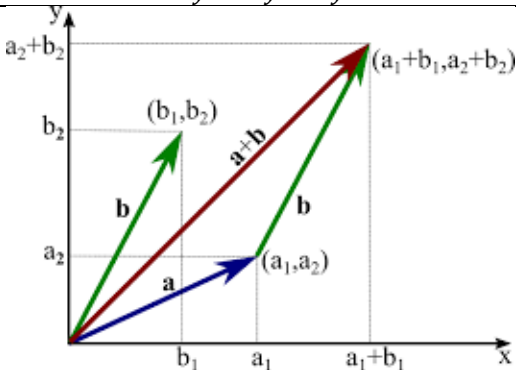
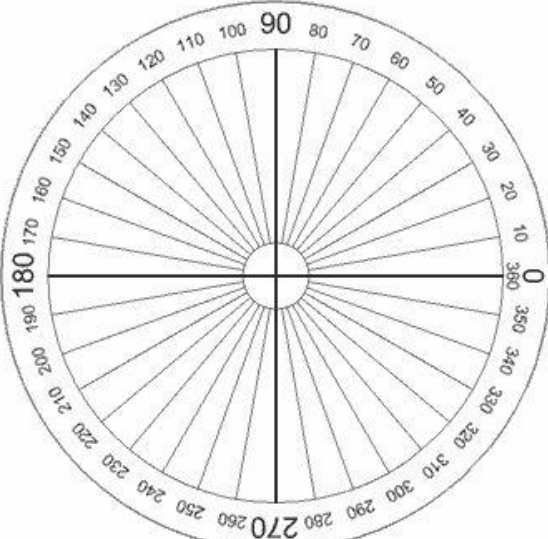
Chapter 2: Force and Acceleration

Term	Equation	Description
Newton's Second Law of Motion (Law of Acceleration)	At any instant of time, the net force on an object is equal to the object's mass multiplied by its acceleration ($F = ma$) or, equivalently, the rate at which the object's momentum changes with time ($\Delta p / \Delta t$).	$\mathbf{F} = m\mathbf{a}$  <p>Accelerated motion</p>
Free Fall	The motion of an object when the only force acting on it is the force due to gravity (F_g).	
Air Resistance	The force with which air resists motion through it.	
Acceleration	$\mathbf{a} = \frac{\Delta \mathbf{v}}{\Delta t}$	A change in an object's velocity.
Acceleration Graph		
Slope = Acceleration	The slope of a velocity (v) versus time (t) graph is the acceleration (a).	
Force	$\mathbf{F} = m\mathbf{a}$	Force (\mathbf{F}) is any interaction that, when unopposed, changes the motion of an object.
Acceleration	$\mathbf{v} = \mathbf{v}_0 + \mathbf{a}t$	$\mathbf{a} = \frac{\Delta \mathbf{v}}{\Delta t} = \frac{\mathbf{v}_f - \mathbf{v}_0}{t}$
Velocity	$\mathbf{v}^2 = \mathbf{v}_0^2 + 2\mathbf{a} \cdot \Delta \mathbf{x}$	Derivation: Solve for t , set $t = t$, then simplify. $\frac{\mathbf{v}_f + \mathbf{v}_0}{2} = \frac{\Delta \mathbf{x}}{t} \text{ and } \mathbf{v}_f = \mathbf{v}_0 + \mathbf{a}t$
Position (Displacement)	$\mathbf{x} = \mathbf{x}_0 + \mathbf{v}_0 t + \frac{1}{2} \mathbf{a} t^2$ $\Delta \mathbf{x} = \mathbf{v}_0 t + \frac{1}{2} \mathbf{a} t^2$	Displacement ($\Delta \mathbf{x}$) is the area underneath a velocity versus time graph.
a is Constant	$\mathbf{J} = \frac{\Delta \mathbf{a}}{\Delta t}$ (Jerk/Jolt)	These equations of motion apply only when the acceleration (\mathbf{a}) is constant.
Gravity	$\mathbf{g} = -9.81 \frac{\text{m}}{\text{s}^2}$ $\mathbf{g} = -32.2 \frac{\text{ft}}{\text{s}^2}$	The acceleration due to gravity (\mathbf{g}) on the surface of the Earth is the same for all objects. It is negative ($-$) since it is directed downwards (\downarrow).
Weight vs. Mass	$\text{weight} = m\mathbf{g}$	Weight is a force. Since $\mathbf{F} = m\mathbf{a}$, and \mathbf{a} on Earth is \mathbf{g} , then $\text{weight} = m\mathbf{g}$.

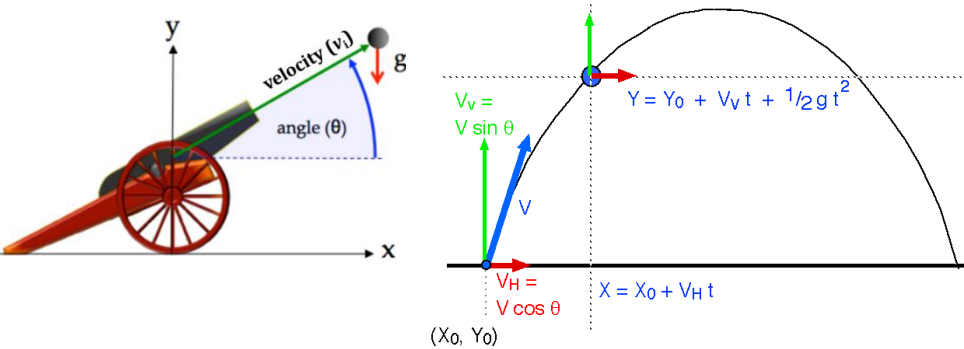
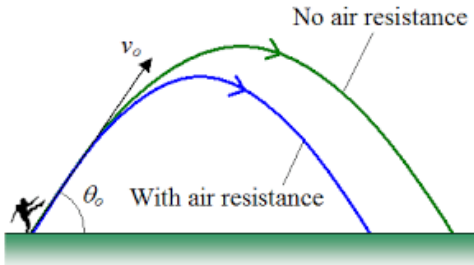
Chapter 3: Friction

Term	Equation	Description																		
Newton's Third Law of Motion (Law of Action and Reaction)	If object A exerts a force on object B, then B will exert an equal but opposite force on A.																			
Static Friction (μ_s)	The frictional force between two surfaces that are <u>stationary</u> relative to each other.																			
Kinetic Friction (μ_k)	The frictional force between two surfaces that are <u>moving</u> relative to each other.																			
Tension (T)	A force transmitted through a rope or similar object (e.g., a thread or chain) when it is pulled.																			
Streamlined Shape	A shape that reduces air resistance.																			
Wind Resistance	The faster an object moves through the air, the stronger the air resistance.																			
Terminal Velocity	The maximum velocity (v_{max}) attained by a falling object.																			
Normal Force (N or F_n)	$F_f = \mu \cdot F_n$																			
Coefficient of Friction (μ)	<p>The coefficient of friction is unitless. It represents a percentage of the normal force that is opposing the applied force.</p> <p>Static friction (μ_s) is generally larger than kinetic friction (μ_k).</p> $0 \leq \mu \leq 1$ <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Material</th><th>Static (μ_s)</th><th>Kinetic (μ_k)</th></tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Zero friction</td><td>0</td><td>0</td></tr> <tr> <td>Ice or grease</td><td>0.15</td><td>0.03</td></tr> <tr> <td>Paper</td><td>0.35</td><td>0.25</td></tr> <tr> <td>Wood</td><td>0.5</td><td>0.4</td></tr> <tr> <td>Rubber</td><td>0.9</td><td>0.8</td></tr> </tbody> </table>	Material	Static (μ_s)	Kinetic (μ_k)	Zero friction	0	0	Ice or grease	0.15	0.03	Paper	0.35	0.25	Wood	0.5	0.4	Rubber	0.9	0.8	
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Block and Tackle (Pully System)																				


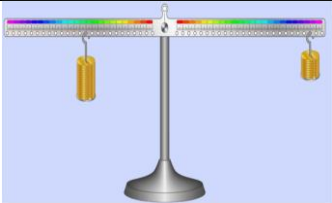

Chapter 4: Two-Dimensional Vectors

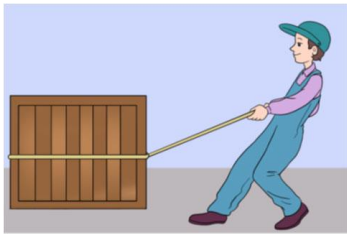
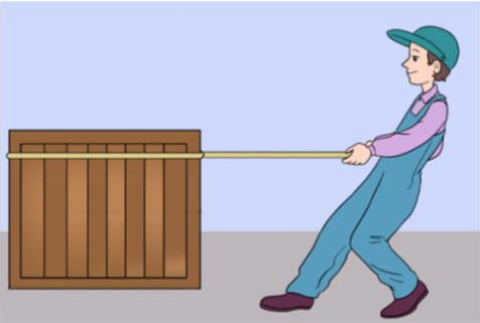

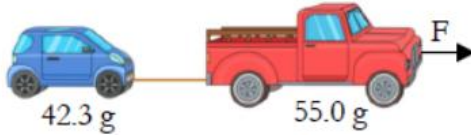


Term	Equation	Description
Vector Anatomy		<p>An arrow is used to represent a two-dimensional vector. The length of the arrow is the magnitude (a scalar quantity). And the counterclockwise angle from the positive x-axis is the direction.</p> <p>A 3D arrow symbols: \odot out of page (+), \otimes into the page (-).</p>
Vectors "Float"		Arrows representing vectors can be moved freely, as long as their length and direction are not changed.
Hypotenuse		The longest side of a right triangle.
Vertical Component	$A_y = A \cdot \sin(\theta)$	
Horizontal Component	$A_x = A \cdot \cos(\theta)$	
Angle	$\theta = \tan^{-1}\left(\frac{A_y}{A_x}\right)$	
Magnitude	$ A = \sqrt{A_x^2 + A_y^2}$ $a^2 + b^2 = c^2$	
Vector Addition	<p>When adding vectors A and B to get vector C:</p> $C_x = A_x + B_x$ $C_y = A_y + B_y$	
		
Angles in Degrees		

Chapter 5: Two-Dimensional Motion

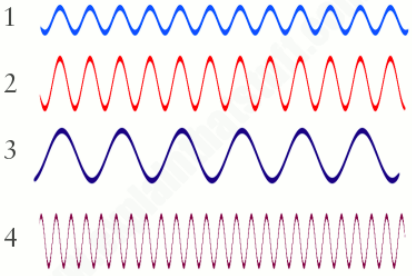
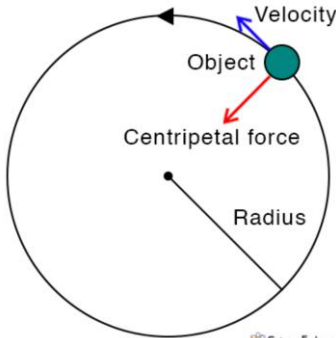
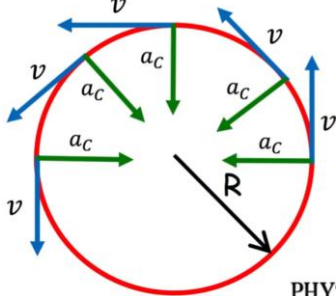
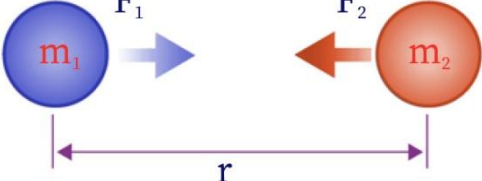
Term	Equation	Description
Projectile	An object that has an initial velocity (v_0) but experiences only the force of gravity (g).	
Parabolic Motion	Motion along a parabolic path, which is exhibited by projectiles.	
Dimensions	Two-dimensional (2D) situations can often be analyzed as two one-dimensional (2x 1D) situations. Time (t) spans all dimensions.	
Orthogonal	In two-dimensional (2D) motion, perpendicular (\perp) components of the motion operate independently.	
Graph Orientation	The way we define the angle makes motion up (\uparrow) and motion to the right (\rightarrow) (or to the east) positive (+). These are the best definitions to use with our one-dimensional (1D) motion equations.	
Projectile Motion		
	Horizontal (x-axis)	Vertical (y-axis)
Position Equations	$x(t) = x_0 + v_x t + \frac{1}{2} a_x t^2$	$y(t) = y_0 + v_y t - \frac{1}{2} g t^2$
Velocity Equations	$v_x = v \cos(\theta)$	$v_y = v \sin(\theta)$
Range Equations	$\text{range} = x_{\max} = \frac{v^2 \cdot \sin(2\theta)}{g}$	$\text{height} = y_{\max} = y\left(\frac{t_{\max}}{2}\right)$
Air Resistance	Assume no air/wind resistance (drag). (If we factor in air/wind resistance, then differential calculus is needed.)	

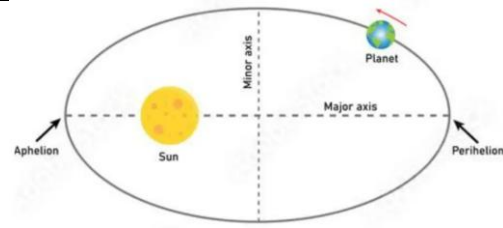
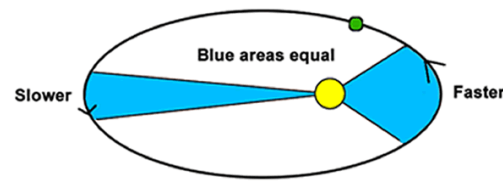
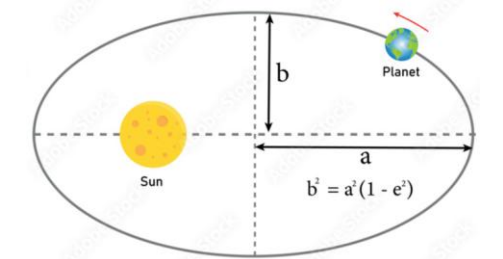
Chapter 6: Newton's Second Law and Two-Dimensional Motion

Term	Equation	Description
Translational Equilibrium	The state in which the net force (\mathbf{F}) acting on an object is equal to zero (0).	
Static Translational Equilibrium	The state in which an object is in translational equilibrium and is not moving ($\mathbf{v} = 0$).	
Dynamic Translational Equilibrium	The state in which an object is in translational equilibrium and is moving ($\mathbf{v} \neq 0$).	
Accelerometer	A device that measures acceleration (\mathbf{a}).	
Axis of Rotation	An imaginary line around which all points of a rotating body move in circles.	
Lever Arm	The distance between the axis of rotation and the force used to produce rotational motion.	
Rotational Equilibrium	Force (\mathbf{F}) causes changes in translational motion, while torque ($\boldsymbol{\tau}$) causes changes in rotational motion.	
Tension	Tension (\mathbf{T}) is a force.	
Gravity Components	On an incline whose angle (θ) is defined relative to the horizontal, the component of the force due to gravity:	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parallel to the incline is $m\mathbf{g} \cdot \sin(\theta)$. Perpendicular to the incline is $m\mathbf{g} \cdot \cos(\theta)$. 	
	$F_x = m\mathbf{g} \cdot \sin(\theta)$	$F_y = m\mathbf{g} \cdot \cos(\theta)$
Coefficient of Friction	$\mu = \frac{\sin(\theta)}{\cos(\theta)} = \tan(\theta)$	
Torque	$\tau = F_{\perp} \cdot r$	
Rigid Bodies	$\sum \mathbf{F} = \sum m\mathbf{a} = 0$	$\sum \boldsymbol{\tau} = \sum F\mathbf{r} = 0$
		
		

Chapter 7: Uniform Circular Motion and Gravity

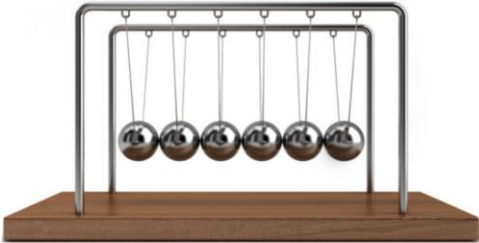
Term	Equation	Description
Centripetal Force	A force directed to the center of a circle.	
Period (T)	The time it takes to complete one full cycle.	
Frequency (f)	The number of cycles that can be completed every second.	
Gravity (g)	The acceleration of the attractive force that exists between all physical objects that have mass.	
Satellite	A body that orbits another body.	
Frequency	$f = \frac{1}{T}$ Units: Hertz (Hz)	 www.explainthatstuff.com
Speed	$v = \frac{2\pi r}{T}$ Units: $\frac{m}{s}$	
Centripetal Force	$F_c = \frac{mv^2}{r}$ Units: Newtons (N)	
Centripetal Acceleration	$a_c = \frac{v^2}{r}$ Units: $\frac{m}{s^2}$	
Gravitational Force	$F_g = \frac{Gm_1m_2}{r^2}$	
Gravitational Constant (G)	$G = 6.67 \times 10^{-11} \frac{Nm^2}{kg^2}$	

Kepler's Laws (of planetary motion)	<p>1. Orbits: All planets move in elliptical orbits, with the sun at one focal point.</p> $\frac{x^2}{a^2} + \frac{y^2}{b^2} = 1$	
	<p>2. Areas: A line that connects a planet to the sun sweeps out equal areas in equal time intervals.</p> $A_1 = A_2$	
	<p>3. Periods: The square of a planet's period is proportional to the cube of its orbit's semi-major axis.</p> $T^2 \propto a^3$	

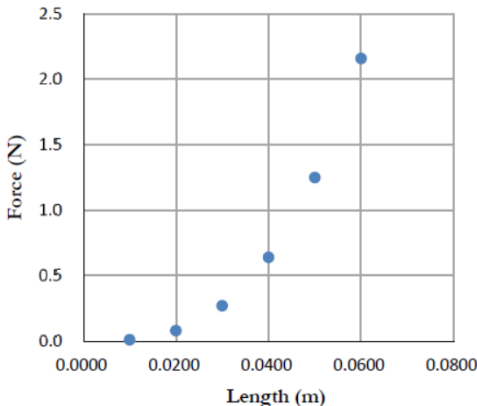
Chapter 8: Energy

Term	Equation	Description
Energy	E	The ability to do work.
Work	$W = Fd$	The magnitude of an object's displacement times the parallel component of the applied force.
	$W = F_{\parallel} \cdot \Delta x$	When a body does work, it loses energy. When a body is worked on, it gains energy.
Potential Energy (PE)	$PE = mgh$	Energy that is stored but not currently doing work.
		Potential energy is relative , so it must be defined relative to a reference point.
Kinetic Energy (KE)	$KE = \frac{1}{2}mv^2$	Energy in the form of motion.
Total Energy (TE)	$TE = PE + KE + W_f = \text{constant}$ $E = U_g + K + W_f + Q = \text{constant}$	
The First Law of Thermodynamics	Energy (E) cannot be created or destroyed. It can only change forms.	
Power	$P = \frac{\Delta W}{\Delta t}$ $P = Fv$	The amount of energy converted or transferred per unit time.
Units	E	Joules (J) ($kg \cdot m^2/s^2$)
	W	
	PE	
	KE	
	TE	
	P	Watt (W) (J/s)

Chapter 9: Momentum and Its Conservation

Term	Equation	Description
Momentum		
Law of Momentum Conservation		
Elastic Collision		
Inelastic Collision		
Law of Angular Momentum Conservation		
		

Chapter 10: Periodic Motion

Term	Equation	Description														
Periodic Motion																
Hooke's Law																
Amplitude																
Simple Harmonic Motion																
Damped Harmonic Motion																
		 <table><caption>Data points from the Force vs. Length graph</caption><thead><tr><th>Length (m)</th><th>Force (N)</th></tr></thead><tbody><tr><td>0.0100</td><td>0.05</td></tr><tr><td>0.0200</td><td>0.10</td></tr><tr><td>0.0300</td><td>0.25</td></tr><tr><td>0.0400</td><td>0.65</td></tr><tr><td>0.0500</td><td>1.25</td></tr><tr><td>0.0600</td><td>2.15</td></tr></tbody></table>	Length (m)	Force (N)	0.0100	0.05	0.0200	0.10	0.0300	0.25	0.0400	0.65	0.0500	1.25	0.0600	2.15
Length (m)	Force (N)															
0.0100	0.05															
0.0200	0.10															
0.0300	0.25															
0.0400	0.65															
0.0500	1.25															
0.0600	2.15															

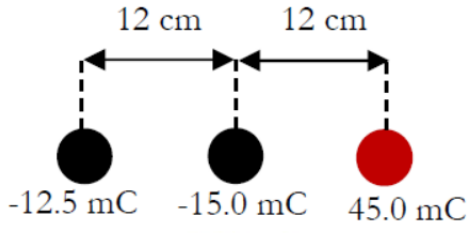
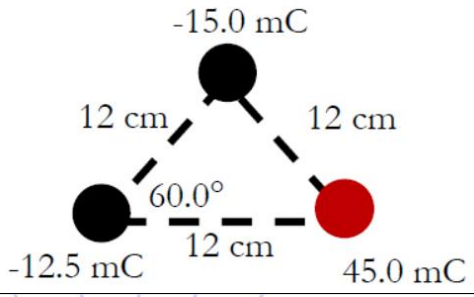
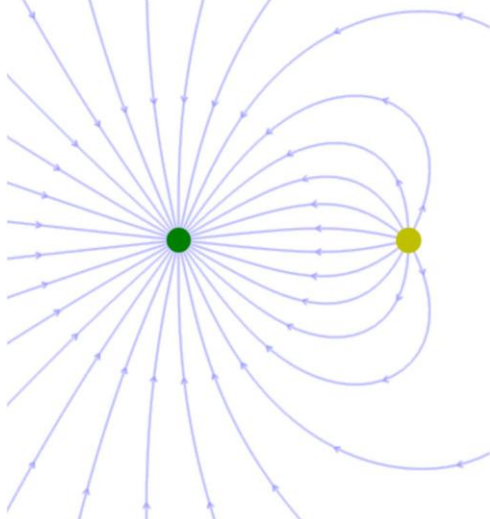
Chapter 11: Sound and Light

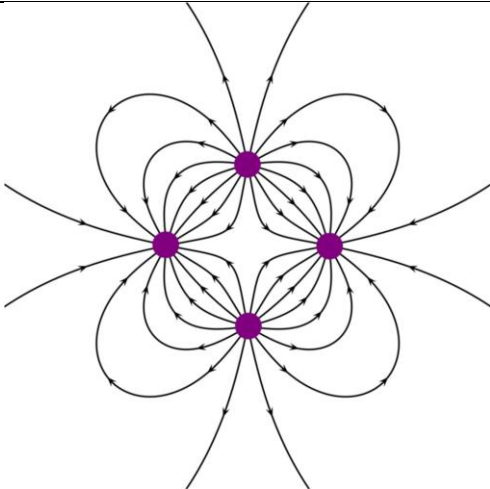
Term	Equation	Description
Oscillations		
Transverse Wave		
Wavelength		
Longitudinal Wave		
Doppler Effect		
Sonic Waves		
Ultrasonic Waves		
Infrasonic Waves		
Timbre		
Wave-Particle Duality		

Chapter 12: Optics

Term	Equation	Description	
Law of Reflection			
Virtual Image			
Real Image			
Refraction			
Spherical Aberration			
Chromatic Aberration			
		Medium	Index of Refraction
		air	1.0003
		water	1.333
		ethanol	1.361
		ice	1.309
		glass, crown	1.52
		glass, flint	1.66
		fused quartz	1.458
		diamond	2.419

Chapter 13: The Electrostatic Force



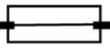


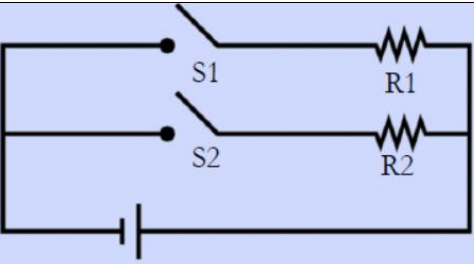
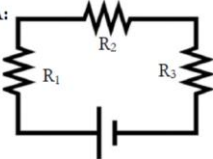
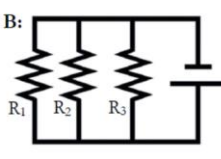
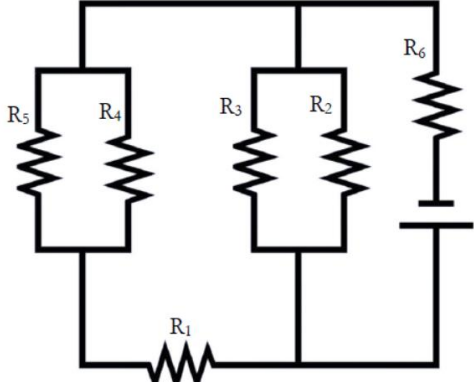
Term	Equation	Description
Electrostatic Force		
Triboelectric Charging		
Charging by Conduction		
Charging by Induction		
Conductor		
Insulator		
		
		
		

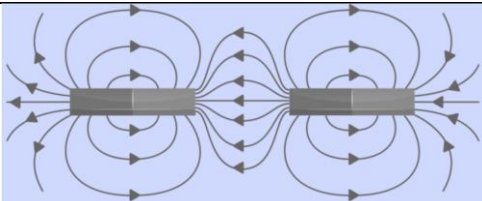
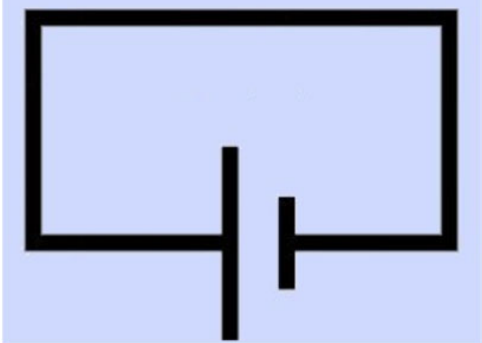
Chapter 14: Electricity Has Potential!

[illegible]

Chapter 15: Electric Circuits

Term	Equation	Description
Drift Velocity		
Resistor		
Battery (Voltage source)		
Fuse		
Capacitor		
Switch		
		
		<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around;"> <div style="text-align: center;"> <p>A:</p>  </div> <div style="text-align: center;"> <p>B:</p>  </div> </div>
		

Chapter 16: Magnetism

Term	Equation	Description
Basic Law of Magnetism		
Magnetic Permeability (μ)		
Right-Hand Rule		
Diamagnetic Substance		
Paramagnetic Substance		
Ferromagnetic Substance		
Faraday's Law of Magnetic Induction		
Electromotive Force		
Alternating Current		
Direct Current		
Rectifier		
Inverter		
Lenz's Law		
		
		

Sources

These chapters and content are from the textbook:

- Dr. Jay L. Wile (2023). [Discovering Design with Physics](#), 1st Edition.