

A selection of hopefully useful formulae

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The inspiration (and some of the L^AT_EX!) for this document comes from the [NRL Plasma Formulary](#), excellently curated by Joseph Huba. Generally, I add to this document when I find myself repeatedly looking up something that I probably should have memorized. C'est la vie!



“The miracle of the appropriateness of the language of mathematics for the formulation of the laws of physics is a wonderful gift which we neither understand nor deserve. We should be grateful for it and hope that it will remain valid in future research and that it will extend, for better or for worse, to our pleasure, even though perhaps also to our bafflement, to wide branches of learning.”

— Eugene Wigner (1960)



Other Sources of Useful Data

NRL Plasma Formulary <http://www.nrl.navy.mil/ppd/content/nrl-plasma-formulary>
Fundamental physical constants from NIST <http://physics.nist.gov/cuu/Constants/>
Zombeck's *Handbook of Space Astronomy & Astrophysics* ... <http://ads.harvard.edu/books/hsaa/>
Wolfram Alpha (just type a question or equation) <http://www.wolframalpha.com/>

1 Mathematics

1.1 On the Art of Approximation

You may be used to solving problems that have exact solutions. At some point, however, we run out of those, and we must rely increasingly on approximation/assumption...

It's an **art** to figure out $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{what to simplify} \\ \text{what to neglect} \\ \text{what to flat-out ignore} \end{array} \right.$

Hopefully, by seeing it done in graduate-level courses, you'll start to get a feel for doing it yourself. It takes a while...

= the "exact equality" will often give way to
 \approx "is approximately equal to," or sometimes even
 \sim "very roughly equal to" (within an order of magnitude!?)
 \propto and sometimes we just care about which quantities are
"proportional to" one another, ignoring normalizing constants.

1.2 Trigonometric Identities

$$\sin(\alpha \pm \beta) = \sin \alpha \cos \beta \pm \cos \alpha \sin \beta$$

$$\cos(\alpha \pm \beta) = \cos \alpha \cos \beta \mp \sin \alpha \sin \beta$$

$$\sin 2\theta = 2 \sin \theta \cos \theta \quad , \quad \cos 2\theta = \cos^2 \theta - \sin^2 \theta = 2 \cos^2 \theta - 1 \quad , \quad \tan 2\theta = \frac{2 \tan \theta}{1 - \tan^2 \theta}$$

Undoing the inverse...

$$\sin(\cos^{-1} x) = \cos(\sin^{-1} x) = \sqrt{1 - x^2}$$

$$\sin(\tan^{-1} x) = \frac{x}{\sqrt{1 + x^2}} \quad , \quad \cos(\tan^{-1} x) = \frac{1}{\sqrt{1 + x^2}}$$

$$\tan(\sin^{-1} x) = \frac{x}{\sqrt{1 - x^2}} \quad , \quad \tan(\cos^{-1} x) = \frac{\sqrt{1 - x^2}}{x}$$

1.3 Vector Identities

Notation: f, g , are scalars; \mathbf{A}, \mathbf{B} , etc., are vectors.

$$(1) \mathbf{A} \cdot \mathbf{B} \times \mathbf{C} = \mathbf{A} \times \mathbf{B} \cdot \mathbf{C} = \mathbf{B} \cdot \mathbf{C} \times \mathbf{A} = \mathbf{B} \times \mathbf{C} \cdot \mathbf{A} = \mathbf{C} \cdot \mathbf{A} \times \mathbf{B} = \mathbf{C} \times \mathbf{A} \cdot \mathbf{B}$$

$$(2) \mathbf{A} \times (\mathbf{B} \times \mathbf{C}) = (\mathbf{C} \times \mathbf{B}) \times \mathbf{A} = (\mathbf{A} \cdot \mathbf{C})\mathbf{B} - (\mathbf{A} \cdot \mathbf{B})\mathbf{C}$$

$$(3) \mathbf{A} \times (\mathbf{B} \times \mathbf{C}) + \mathbf{B} \times (\mathbf{C} \times \mathbf{A}) + \mathbf{C} \times (\mathbf{A} \times \mathbf{B}) = 0$$

$$(4) (\mathbf{A} \times \mathbf{B}) \cdot (\mathbf{C} \times \mathbf{D}) = (\mathbf{A} \cdot \mathbf{C})(\mathbf{B} \cdot \mathbf{D}) - (\mathbf{A} \cdot \mathbf{D})(\mathbf{B} \cdot \mathbf{C})$$

$$(5) (\mathbf{A} \times \mathbf{B}) \times (\mathbf{C} \times \mathbf{D}) = (\mathbf{A} \times \mathbf{B} \cdot \mathbf{D})\mathbf{C} - (\mathbf{A} \times \mathbf{B} \cdot \mathbf{C})\mathbf{D}$$

$$(6) \nabla(fg) = \nabla(gf) = f\nabla g + g\nabla f$$

$$(7) \nabla \cdot (f\mathbf{A}) = f\nabla \cdot \mathbf{A} + \mathbf{A} \cdot \nabla f$$

$$(8) \nabla \times (f\mathbf{A}) = f\nabla \times \mathbf{A} + \nabla f \times \mathbf{A}$$

$$(9) \nabla \cdot (\mathbf{A} \times \mathbf{B}) = \mathbf{B} \cdot \nabla \times \mathbf{A} - \mathbf{A} \cdot \nabla \times \mathbf{B}$$

$$(10) \nabla \times (\mathbf{A} \times \mathbf{B}) = \mathbf{A}(\nabla \cdot \mathbf{B}) - \mathbf{B}(\nabla \cdot \mathbf{A}) + (\mathbf{B} \cdot \nabla)\mathbf{A} - (\mathbf{A} \cdot \nabla)\mathbf{B}$$

$$(11) \mathbf{A} \times (\nabla \times \mathbf{B}) = (\nabla \mathbf{B}) \cdot \mathbf{A} - (\mathbf{A} \cdot \nabla)\mathbf{B}$$

$$(12) \nabla(\mathbf{A} \cdot \mathbf{B}) = \mathbf{A} \times (\nabla \times \mathbf{B}) + \mathbf{B} \times (\nabla \times \mathbf{A}) + (\mathbf{A} \cdot \nabla)\mathbf{B} + (\mathbf{B} \cdot \nabla)\mathbf{A}$$

$$(13) \nabla^2 f = \nabla \cdot \nabla f$$

$$(14) \nabla^2 \mathbf{A} = \nabla(\nabla \cdot \mathbf{A}) - \nabla \times \nabla \times \mathbf{A}$$

$$(15) \nabla \times \nabla f = 0$$

$$(16) \nabla \cdot \nabla \times \mathbf{A} = 0$$

Also, if vectors \mathbf{A} & \mathbf{B} depend on time t , then

$$\frac{\partial}{\partial t}(\mathbf{A} \cdot \mathbf{B}) = \mathbf{A} \cdot \frac{\partial \mathbf{B}}{\partial t} + \frac{\partial \mathbf{A}}{\partial t} \cdot \mathbf{B} \quad \frac{\partial}{\partial t}(\mathbf{A} \times \mathbf{B}) = \mathbf{A} \times \frac{\partial \mathbf{B}}{\partial t} + \frac{\partial \mathbf{A}}{\partial t} \times \mathbf{B}$$

1.4 Coordinate Systems

Conversions between Cartesian and Cylindrical (sometimes ρ or ϖ are used for r)

$$\begin{aligned}x &= r \cos \phi & r &= \sqrt{x^2 + y^2} \\y &= r \sin \phi & \phi &= \tan^{-1}(y/x) \\z &= z & z &= z\end{aligned}$$

Conversions between Cartesian and Spherical

$$\begin{aligned}x &= r \cos \phi \sin \theta & r &= \sqrt{x^2 + y^2 + z^2} \\y &= r \sin \phi \sin \theta & \theta &= \cos^{-1}(z/r) \\z &= r \cos \theta & \phi &= \tan^{-1}(y/x)\end{aligned}$$

Vector & Differential Operators in CARTESIAN Coordinates

$$\mathbf{A} \cdot \mathbf{B} = A_x B_x + A_y B_y + A_z B_z$$

$$\mathbf{A} \times \mathbf{B} = \mathbf{e}_x(A_y B_z - A_z B_y) + \mathbf{e}_y(A_z B_x - A_x B_z) + \mathbf{e}_z(A_x B_y - A_y B_x)$$

$$\nabla f = \mathbf{e}_x \frac{\partial f}{\partial x} + \mathbf{e}_y \frac{\partial f}{\partial y} + \mathbf{e}_z \frac{\partial f}{\partial z}, \quad \nabla \cdot \mathbf{F} = \frac{\partial F_x}{\partial x} + \frac{\partial F_y}{\partial y} + \frac{\partial F_z}{\partial z}$$

$$\nabla \times \mathbf{F} = \mathbf{e}_x \left(\frac{\partial F_z}{\partial y} - \frac{\partial F_y}{\partial z} \right) + \mathbf{e}_y \left(\frac{\partial F_x}{\partial z} - \frac{\partial F_z}{\partial x} \right) + \mathbf{e}_z \left(\frac{\partial F_y}{\partial x} - \frac{\partial F_x}{\partial y} \right)$$

$$\text{Volume element} \quad dV = dx dy dz$$

Vector & Differential Operators in CYLINDRICAL Coordinates (r, ϕ, z)

Divergence

$$\nabla \cdot \mathbf{A} = \frac{1}{r} \frac{\partial}{\partial r}(r A_r) + \frac{1}{r} \frac{\partial A_\phi}{\partial \phi} + \frac{\partial A_z}{\partial z}$$

Gradient

$$(\nabla f)_r = \frac{\partial f}{\partial r}; \quad (\nabla f)_\phi = \frac{1}{r} \frac{\partial f}{\partial \phi}; \quad (\nabla f)_z = \frac{\partial f}{\partial z}$$

Curl

$$(\nabla \times \mathbf{A})_r = \frac{1}{r} \frac{\partial A_z}{\partial \phi} - \frac{\partial A_\phi}{\partial z}$$

$$(\nabla \times \mathbf{A})_\phi = \frac{\partial A_r}{\partial z} - \frac{\partial A_z}{\partial r}$$

$$(\nabla \times \mathbf{A})_z = \frac{1}{r} \frac{\partial}{\partial r}(rA_\phi) - \frac{1}{r} \frac{\partial A_r}{\partial \phi}$$

Laplacian

$$\nabla^2 f = \frac{1}{r} \frac{\partial}{\partial r} \left(r \frac{\partial f}{\partial r} \right) + \frac{1}{r^2} \frac{\partial^2 f}{\partial \phi^2} + \frac{\partial^2 f}{\partial z^2}$$

Laplacian of a vector

$$(\nabla^2 \mathbf{A})_r = \nabla^2 A_r - \frac{2}{r^2} \frac{\partial A_\phi}{\partial \phi} - \frac{A_r}{r^2}$$

$$(\nabla^2 \mathbf{A})_\phi = \nabla^2 A_\phi + \frac{2}{r^2} \frac{\partial A_r}{\partial \phi} - \frac{A_\phi}{r^2}$$

$$(\nabla^2 \mathbf{A})_z = \nabla^2 A_z$$

Components of $(\mathbf{A} \cdot \nabla) \mathbf{B}$

$$(\mathbf{A} \cdot \nabla \mathbf{B})_r = A_r \frac{\partial B_r}{\partial r} + \frac{A_\phi}{r} \frac{\partial B_r}{\partial \phi} + A_z \frac{\partial B_r}{\partial z} - \frac{A_\phi B_\phi}{r}$$

$$(\mathbf{A} \cdot \nabla \mathbf{B})_\phi = A_r \frac{\partial B_\phi}{\partial r} + \frac{A_\phi}{r} \frac{\partial B_\phi}{\partial \phi} + A_z \frac{\partial B_\phi}{\partial z} + \frac{A_\phi B_r}{r}$$

$$(\mathbf{A} \cdot \nabla \mathbf{B})_z = A_r \frac{\partial B_z}{\partial r} + \frac{A_\phi}{r} \frac{\partial B_z}{\partial \phi} + A_z \frac{\partial B_z}{\partial z}$$

Divergence of a tensor

$$(\nabla \cdot \tau)_r = \frac{1}{r} \frac{\partial}{\partial r}(rT_{rr}) + \frac{1}{r} \frac{\partial T_{\phi r}}{\partial \phi} + \frac{\partial T_{zr}}{\partial z} - \frac{T_{\phi\phi}}{r}$$

$$(\nabla \cdot \tau)_\phi = \frac{1}{r} \frac{\partial}{\partial r}(rT_{r\phi}) + \frac{1}{r} \frac{\partial T_{\phi\phi}}{\partial \phi} + \frac{\partial T_{z\phi}}{\partial z} + \frac{T_{\phi r}}{r}$$

$$(\nabla \cdot \tau)_z = \frac{1}{r} \frac{\partial}{\partial r}(rT_{rz}) + \frac{1}{r} \frac{\partial T_{\phi z}}{\partial \phi} + \frac{\partial T_{zz}}{\partial z}$$

$$\text{Volume element} \quad dV = r dr d\phi dz$$

Vector & Differential Operators in SPHERICAL Coordinates (r, θ, ϕ)

Divergence

$$\nabla \cdot \mathbf{A} = \frac{1}{r^2} \frac{\partial}{\partial r}(r^2 A_r) + \frac{1}{r \sin \theta} \frac{\partial}{\partial \theta}(\sin \theta A_\theta) + \frac{1}{r \sin \theta} \frac{\partial A_\phi}{\partial \phi}$$

Gradient

$$(\nabla f)_r = \frac{\partial f}{\partial r}; \quad (\nabla f)_\theta = \frac{1}{r} \frac{\partial f}{\partial \theta}; \quad (\nabla f)_\phi = \frac{1}{r \sin \theta} \frac{\partial f}{\partial \phi}$$

Curl

$$(\nabla \times \mathbf{A})_r = \frac{1}{r \sin \theta} \frac{\partial}{\partial \theta} (\sin \theta A_\phi) - \frac{1}{r \sin \theta} \frac{\partial A_\theta}{\partial \phi}$$

$$(\nabla \times \mathbf{A})_\theta = \frac{1}{r \sin \theta} \frac{\partial A_r}{\partial \phi} - \frac{1}{r} \frac{\partial}{\partial r} (r A_\phi)$$

$$(\nabla \times \mathbf{A})_\phi = \frac{1}{r} \frac{\partial}{\partial r} (r A_\theta) - \frac{1}{r} \frac{\partial A_r}{\partial \theta}$$

Laplacian

$$\nabla^2 f = \frac{1}{r^2} \frac{\partial}{\partial r} \left(r^2 \frac{\partial f}{\partial r} \right) + \frac{1}{r^2 \sin \theta} \frac{\partial}{\partial \theta} \left(\sin \theta \frac{\partial f}{\partial \theta} \right) + \frac{1}{r^2 \sin^2 \theta} \frac{\partial^2 f}{\partial \phi^2}$$

Laplacian of a vector

$$(\nabla^2 \mathbf{A})_r = \nabla^2 A_r - \frac{2A_r}{r^2} - \frac{2}{r^2} \frac{\partial A_\theta}{\partial \theta} - \frac{2 \cot \theta A_\theta}{r^2} - \frac{2}{r^2 \sin \theta} \frac{\partial A_\phi}{\partial \phi}$$

$$(\nabla^2 \mathbf{A})_\theta = \nabla^2 A_\theta + \frac{2}{r^2} \frac{\partial A_r}{\partial \theta} - \frac{A_\theta}{r^2 \sin^2 \theta} - \frac{2 \cos \theta}{r^2 \sin^2 \theta} \frac{\partial A_\phi}{\partial \phi}$$

$$(\nabla^2 \mathbf{A})_\phi = \nabla^2 A_\phi - \frac{A_\phi}{r^2 \sin^2 \theta} + \frac{2}{r^2 \sin \theta} \frac{\partial A_r}{\partial \phi} + \frac{2 \cos \theta}{r^2 \sin^2 \theta} \frac{\partial A_\theta}{\partial \phi}$$

Components of $(\mathbf{A} \cdot \nabla) \mathbf{B}$

$$(\mathbf{A} \cdot \nabla \mathbf{B})_r = A_r \frac{\partial B_r}{\partial r} + \frac{A_\theta}{r} \frac{\partial B_r}{\partial \theta} + \frac{A_\phi}{r \sin \theta} \frac{\partial B_r}{\partial \phi} - \frac{A_\theta B_\theta + A_\phi B_\phi}{r}$$

$$(\mathbf{A} \cdot \nabla \mathbf{B})_\theta = A_r \frac{\partial B_\theta}{\partial r} + \frac{A_\theta}{r} \frac{\partial B_\theta}{\partial \theta} + \frac{A_\phi}{r \sin \theta} \frac{\partial B_\theta}{\partial \phi} + \frac{A_\theta B_r}{r} - \frac{\cot \theta A_\phi B_\phi}{r}$$

$$(\mathbf{A} \cdot \nabla \mathbf{B})_\phi = A_r \frac{\partial B_\phi}{\partial r} + \frac{A_\theta}{r} \frac{\partial B_\phi}{\partial \theta} + \frac{A_\phi}{r \sin \theta} \frac{\partial B_\phi}{\partial \phi} + \frac{A_\phi B_r}{r} + \frac{\cot \theta A_\phi B_\theta}{r}$$

Divergence of a tensor

$$(\nabla \cdot \tau)_r = \frac{1}{r^2} \frac{\partial}{\partial r} (r^2 T_{rr}) + \frac{1}{r \sin \theta} \frac{\partial}{\partial \theta} (\sin \theta T_{\theta r}) + \frac{1}{r \sin \theta} \frac{\partial T_{\phi r}}{\partial \phi} - \frac{T_{\theta\theta} + T_{\phi\phi}}{r}$$

$$(\nabla \cdot \tau)_\theta = \frac{1}{r^2} \frac{\partial}{\partial r} (r^2 T_{r\theta}) + \frac{1}{r \sin \theta} \frac{\partial}{\partial \theta} (\sin \theta T_{\theta\theta}) + \frac{1}{r \sin \theta} \frac{\partial T_{\phi\theta}}{\partial \phi} + \frac{T_{\theta r}}{r} - \frac{\cot \theta T_{\phi\phi}}{r}$$

$$(\nabla \cdot \tau)_\phi = \frac{1}{r^2} \frac{\partial}{\partial r} (r^2 T_{r\phi}) + \frac{1}{r \sin \theta} \frac{\partial}{\partial \theta} (\sin \theta T_{\theta\phi}) + \frac{1}{r \sin \theta} \frac{\partial T_{\phi\phi}}{\partial \phi} + \frac{T_{\phi r}}{r} + \frac{\cot \theta T_{\phi\theta}}{r}$$

$$\text{Volume element} \quad dV = r^2 \sin \theta \, dr \, d\theta \, d\phi$$

1.5 Special Functions & Series Expansions

Binomial Series

$$\text{For } |x| \ll 1, \quad (1+x)^\alpha = 1 + \alpha x + \frac{\alpha(\alpha-1)}{2!}x^2 + \dots$$

Exponential Functions

$$e^x = 1 + x + \frac{x^2}{2!} + \frac{x^3}{3!} + \frac{x^4}{4!} + \dots$$

Full-width at half-maximum (FWHM):

$$\text{For } y = \exp\left[-\frac{x^2}{2\sigma^2}\right] = \exp\left[-\left(\frac{x}{V_{1/e}}\right)^2\right], \quad \text{the FWHM} = V_{1/e}2\sqrt{\ln 2} \approx 1.66511V_{1/e}.$$

Dirac Delta Function

$$\int_{-\infty}^{+\infty} dx f(x) \delta(x-a) = f(a)$$

$$\delta[g(x)] = \sum_i \frac{\delta(x-x_i)}{|g'(x_i)|} \quad \text{where } x_i \text{ are the roots of } g(x).$$

$$\text{One of several limiting forms: } \delta(x) = \frac{1}{\pi} \lim_{\epsilon \rightarrow 0} \left(\frac{\epsilon}{x^2 + \epsilon^2} \right)$$

Error Function

$$\text{erf}(x) = \frac{2}{\sqrt{\pi}} \int_0^x dt e^{-t^2}$$

$$\text{erfc}(x) = \frac{2}{\sqrt{\pi}} \int_x^\infty dt e^{-t^2} = 1 - \text{erf}(x)$$

For small arguments ($x \ll 1$),

$$\text{erf}(x) \approx \frac{2}{\sqrt{\pi}} \left(x - \frac{x^3}{3} + \frac{x^5}{10} - \frac{x^7}{42} + \dots \right)$$

For large arguments ($x \gg 1$),

$$\text{erf}(x) \approx 1 - \frac{e^{-x^2}}{\sqrt{\pi}} \left(\frac{1}{x} - \frac{1}{2x^3} + \frac{3}{4x^5} - \frac{15}{8x^7} + \dots \right)$$

Modified Bessel Functions

For small arguments ($z \rightarrow 0$) and fixed n indices,

$$I_n(z) \approx \frac{(z/2)^n}{\Gamma(n+1)} \quad I_0(z) \approx 1 + \frac{z^2}{4} + \frac{z^4}{64} + \dots$$

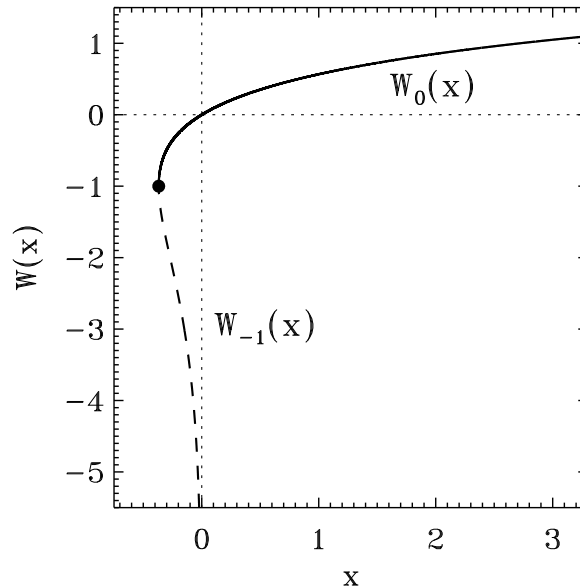
$$K_n(z) \approx \frac{\Gamma(n)}{2(z/2)^n} \quad K_0(z) \approx -\ln z$$

Lambert W Function

The Lambert W function is defined as the multivalued inverse of the function xe^x . Equivalently, the multiple branches of W are the multiple roots of the equation

$$W(z)e^{W(z)} = z ,$$

where z is in general complex. There are an infinite number of solution branches, labeled by convention by an integer subscript: $W_k(z)$, for $k = 0, \pm 1, \pm 2, \dots$. If z is a real number x , the only two branches that take on real values are $W_0(x)$ and $W_{-1}(x)$. These branches are shown in the accompanying plot.



Numerous formulae for the differentiation, integration, and series expansion of W are given by [Corless et al. \(1996\)](#) and [Valluri et al. \(2000\)](#). One useful result is given here. Near the branch cut point at $x = -1/e$, $W_0 = W_{-1} = -1$, and the two real branches can be approximated to lowest order by

$$\begin{aligned} W_0(x) &\approx -1 + \sqrt{2 + 2ex} \\ W_{-1}(x) &\approx -1 - \sqrt{2 + 2ex} . \end{aligned}$$

A useful way for expressing the solutions to a standard family of transcendental equations in terms of the Lambert W function is to note that the equation

$$\ln(A + Bx) + Cx = \ln D ,$$

where A , B , C , and D do not depend on x , has the exact solution

$$x = \frac{1}{C} W \left[\frac{CD}{B} \exp \left(\frac{AC}{B} \right) \right] - \frac{A}{B} .$$

The choice of solution branch usually depends on physical arguments or boundary conditions.

1.6 Derivatives and Integrals

Definite Integrals of Gaussians

$$\begin{aligned}\int_0^\infty dx e^{-(x/\sigma)^2} &= \frac{\sigma\sqrt{\pi}}{2} \\ \int_0^\infty dx x e^{-(x/\sigma)^2} &= \frac{\sigma^2}{2} \\ \int_0^\infty dx x^2 e^{-(x/\sigma)^2} &= \frac{\sigma^3\sqrt{\pi}}{4} \\ \int_0^\infty dx x^3 e^{-(x/\sigma)^2} &= \frac{\sigma^4}{2} \\ \int_0^\infty dx x^4 e^{-(x/\sigma)^2} &= \frac{3\sigma^5\sqrt{\pi}}{8} \\ \int_0^\infty dx x^5 e^{-(x/\sigma)^2} &= \sigma^6 \\ \int_0^\infty dx x^6 e^{-(x/\sigma)^2} &= \frac{15\sigma^7\sqrt{\pi}}{16} \\ \int_0^\infty dx x^n e^{-(x/\sigma)^2} &= \frac{\sigma^{n+1}}{2} \Gamma\left(\frac{n+1}{2}\right)\end{aligned}$$

1.7 Differential Equations

For a 1st order linear equation of the form

$$\frac{dy}{dx} + P(x)y(x) = Q(x)$$

use an *Integrating Factor*

$$\mu(x) = \exp\left[\int^x P(x') dx'\right]$$

and the solution is

$$y(x) = \frac{1}{\mu(x)} \left[\int^x Q(x')\mu(x') dx' + C \right].$$

2 Physics

Metric Prefixes

Multiple	Prefix	Symbol	Multiple	Prefix	Symbol
10^{-1}	deci	d	10	deca	da
10^{-2}	centi	c	10^2	hecto	h
10^{-3}	milli	m	10^3	kilo	k
10^{-6}	micro	μ	10^6	mega	M
10^{-9}	nano	n	10^9	giga	G
10^{-12}	pico	p	10^{12}	tera	T
10^{-15}	femto	f	10^{15}	peta	P
10^{-18}	atto	a	10^{18}	exa	E
10^{-21}	zepto	z	10^{21}	zetta	Z
10^{-24}	yocto	y	10^{24}	yotta	Y

Physical Constants (SI)

Speed of light in vacuum	$c = 2.99792458 \times 10^8 \text{ m s}^{-1}$
Newton's gravitation constant ..	$G = 6.67384 \times 10^{-11} \text{ N m}^2 \text{ kg}^{-2}$
Boltzmann's ideal gas constant .	$k_B = 1.3806488 \times 10^{-23} \text{ J K}^{-1}$
Stefan-Boltzmann constant	$\sigma = 5.670373 \times 10^{-8} \text{ W m}^{-2} \text{ K}^{-4}$
Radiation pressure constant	$a = 4\sigma/c = 7.5657314 \times 10^{-16} \text{ J m}^{-3} \text{ K}^{-4}$
Planck's constant	$h = 2\pi\hbar = 6.62606957 \times 10^{-34} \text{ J s}$
Permittivity of free space	$\epsilon_0 = 8.8542 \times 10^{-12} \text{ C}^2 \text{ N}^{-1} \text{ m}^{-2}$
Permeability of free space	$\mu_0 = 4\pi \times 10^{-7} \text{ N s}^2 \text{ C}^{-2}$
Energy associated with 1 eV ...	$E_{\text{eV}} = 1.602176565 \times 10^{-19} \text{ J}$

Atomic Constants (SI)

Electron charge	$e = 1.602176565 \times 10^{-19} \text{ C}$
Electron mass	$m_e = 9.10938291 \times 10^{-31} \text{ kg}$
Proton mass	$m_p = 1.672621777 \times 10^{-27} \text{ kg} \approx 1836 m_e$
Neutron mass	$m_n = 1.674927351 \times 10^{-27} \text{ kg} \approx 1839 m_e$
Atomic mass unit	$1 \text{ u} = m(^{12}\text{C})/12 = 1.660538921 \times 10^{-27} \text{ kg}$
Bohr radius	$a_0 = \hbar^2/(m_e e^2) = 5.2917721092 \times 10^{-11} \text{ m}$
Classical electron radius	$r_e = e^2/(\hbar c) = 2.8179403267 \times 10^{-15} \text{ m}$
Thomson cross section	$\sigma_T = (8\pi/3)r_e^2 = 6.652458734 \times 10^{-29} \text{ m}^2$

Astronomical Constants (SI)

Solar mass	$M_\odot = 1.989 \times 10^{30} \text{ kg}$
Solar radius	$R_\odot = 6.963 \times 10^8 \text{ m}$
Solar luminosity	$L_\odot = 3.83 \times 10^{26} \text{ J s}^{-1}$
Solar effective temperature	$T_{\text{eff}} = 5770 \text{ K}$
Solar surface gravity	$g_\odot = 273.79 \text{ m s}^{-2} \quad \log g_\odot (\text{cgs}) = 4.4374$
Earth's mass	$M_\oplus = 5.9736 \times 10^{24} \text{ kg} \approx 3 \times 10^{-6} M_\odot$
Earth's radius	$R_\oplus = 6371 \text{ km}$
Astronomical unit	$1 \text{ AU} = 1.495978707 \times 10^{11} \text{ m} \approx 215 R_\odot$
Parsec	$1 \text{ pc} = 3.085677 \times 10^{16} \text{ m} = 3.2616 \text{ light years}$

Physical Constants (cgs)

Speed of light in vacuum	$c = 2.99792458 \times 10^{10} \text{ cm s}^{-1}$
Newton's gravitation constant ..	$G = 6.67384 \times 10^{-8} \text{ cm}^3 \text{ g}^{-1} \text{ s}^{-2}$
Boltzmann's ideal gas constant .	$k_B = 1.3806488 \times 10^{-16} \text{ erg K}^{-1}$
Stefan-Boltzmann constant	$\sigma = 5.670373 \times 10^{-5} \text{ erg cm}^{-2} \text{ s}^{-1} \text{ K}^{-4}$
Radiation pressure constant	$a = 4\sigma/c = 7.5657314 \times 10^{-15} \text{ erg cm}^{-3} \text{ K}^{-4}$
Planck's constant	$h = 2\pi\hbar = 6.62606957 \times 10^{-27} \text{ erg s}$
Energy associated with 1 eV ...	$E_{\text{eV}} = 1.602176565 \times 10^{-12} \text{ erg}$

Atomic Constants (cgs)

Electron charge	$e = 4.803243 \times 10^{-10} \text{ esu}$
Electron mass	$m_e = 9.10938291 \times 10^{-28} \text{ g}$
Proton mass	$m_p = 1.672621777 \times 10^{-24} \text{ g} \approx 1836 m_e$
Neutron mass	$m_n = 1.674927351 \times 10^{-24} \text{ g} \approx 1839 m_e$
Atomic mass unit	$1 \text{ u} = m(^{12}\text{C})/12 = 1.660538921 \times 10^{-24} \text{ g}$
Bohr radius	$a_0 = \hbar^2/(m_e e^2) = 5.2917721092 \times 10^{-9} \text{ cm}$
Classical electron radius	$r_e = e^2/(\hbar c) = 2.8179403267 \times 10^{-13} \text{ cm}$
Thomson cross section	$\sigma_T = (8\pi/3)r_e^2 = 6.652458734 \times 10^{-25} \text{ cm}^2$

Astronomical Constants (cgs)

Solar mass	$M_\odot = 1.989 \times 10^{33} \text{ g}$
Solar radius	$R_\odot = 6.963 \times 10^{10} \text{ cm}$
Solar luminosity	$L_\odot = 3.83 \times 10^{33} \text{ erg s}^{-1}$
Solar effective temperature	$T_{\text{eff}} = 5770 \text{ K}$
Solar surface gravity	$g_\odot = 2.7379 \times 10^4 \text{ cm s}^{-2} \quad \log g_\odot = 4.4374$
Earth's mass	$M_\oplus = 5.9736 \times 10^{27} \text{ g} \approx 3 \times 10^{-3} M_J \approx 3 \times 10^{-6} M_\odot$
Earth's radius	$R_\oplus = 6.371 \times 10^8 \text{ cm}$
Jupiter's mass	$M_J = 1.8986 \times 10^{30} \text{ g} \approx 320 M_\oplus \approx 10^{-3} M_\odot$
Jupiter's radius	$R_J = 6.9911 \times 10^9 \text{ cm}$
Astronomical unit	$1 \text{ AU} = 1.495978707 \times 10^{13} \text{ cm} \approx 215 R_\odot$
Parsec	$1 \text{ pc} = 3.085677 \times 10^{18} \text{ cm} = 3.2616 \text{ light years}$
Convenient mass loss unit	$1 M_\odot \text{ yr}^{-1} = 6.3029 \times 10^{25} \text{ g s}^{-1}$

Converting between SI and Gaussian Units

In the table below, $\{3\} = 2.99792458$ (exactly)

Physical quantity	Symbol	Amount in SI/mks	= Amount in Gaussian/cgs
Force	\mathbf{F}	1 newton (N)	$= 10^5$ dyne
Pressure	P	1 pascal (Pa)	$= 10$ dyne $\text{cm}^{-2} = 10$ erg cm^{-3}
Energy	E	1 joule (J)	$= 10^7$ erg
Power, Luminosity	L	1 watt (W) $= 1$ J s^{-1}	$= 10^7$ erg s^{-1}
Energy flux	\mathbf{F}	1 W m^{-2}	$= 10^3$ erg $\text{s}^{-1} \text{cm}^{-2}$
Charge	q	1 coulomb (C)	$= \{3\} \times 10^9$ statcoul
Charge density	ρ_c	1 C m^{-3}	$= \{3\} \times 10^3$ statcoul cm^{-3}
Current	I	1 ampere (A)	$= \{3\} \times 10^9$ statamp
Current density	\mathbf{J}	1 A m^{-2}	$= \{3\} \times 10^5$ statamp cm^{-2}
Electric potential	V	1 volt (V)	$= 10^{-2}/\{3\}$ statvolt
Electric field	\mathbf{E}	1 V m^{-1}	$= 10^{-4}/\{3\}$ statvolt cm^{-1}
Magnetic induction	\mathbf{B}	1 tesla (T)	$= 10^4$ gauss (G)
Magnetic flux	Φ	1 weber (Wb) $= 1$ T m^2	$= 10^8$ maxwells (Mx) $= 10^8$ G cm^2

For a general way to convert equations from one system to another, see the [NRL Plasma Formulary](#) or [Weibel \(1968\)](#). If only magnetic quantities are present (i.e., no charges or electric fields), it's often sufficient to just replace μ_0 by 4π .

Specific Examples:

Expressions in SI

$$\mu_0 \epsilon_0 = \frac{1}{c^2}$$

$$\mathbf{F} = q (\mathbf{E} + \mathbf{v} \times \mathbf{B})$$

$$|\mathbf{E}| = \frac{1}{4\pi\epsilon_0} \frac{q}{r^2}$$

$$\nabla \cdot \mathbf{E} = \frac{\rho_e}{\epsilon_0}, \quad \nabla \times \mathbf{E} = \frac{\partial \mathbf{B}}{\partial t}$$

$$\nabla \times \mathbf{B} = \mu_0 \left\{ \mathbf{J} + \epsilon_0 \frac{\partial \mathbf{E}}{\partial t} \right\}$$

$$U = \frac{\epsilon_0 |\mathbf{E}|^2}{2} + \frac{|\mathbf{B}|^2}{2\mu_0}, \quad \mathbf{S} = \frac{1}{\mu_0} (\mathbf{E} \times \mathbf{B})$$

$$V_A = \frac{B}{\sqrt{\mu_0 \rho}}, \quad P_{\text{mag}} = \frac{B^2}{2\mu_0}$$

Expressions in Gaussian

μ_0 and ϵ_0 not used

$$\mathbf{F} = q \left(\mathbf{E} + \frac{\mathbf{v}}{c} \times \mathbf{B} \right)$$

$$|\mathbf{E}| = \frac{q}{r^2}$$

$$\nabla \cdot \mathbf{E} = 4\pi\rho_c, \quad \nabla \times \mathbf{E} = -\frac{1}{c} \frac{\partial \mathbf{B}}{\partial t}$$

$$\nabla \times \mathbf{B} = \frac{4\pi\mathbf{J}}{c} + \frac{1}{c} \frac{\partial \mathbf{E}}{\partial t}$$

$$U = \frac{|\mathbf{E}|^2}{8\pi} + \frac{|\mathbf{B}|^2}{8\pi}, \quad \mathbf{S} = \frac{c}{4\pi} (\mathbf{E} \times \mathbf{B})$$

$$V_A = \frac{B}{\sqrt{4\pi\rho}}, \quad P_{\text{mag}} = \frac{B^2}{8\pi}$$

Plasma Physics

The Langmuir plasma frequency of species j (Gaussian units) is defined as

$$\omega_{pj}^2 \equiv \frac{4\pi q_j^2 n_j}{m_j} .$$

For protons,

$$\frac{\omega_{pp}}{c} = \frac{\Omega_p}{V_A} .$$

For a pure proton-electron plasma,

$$\frac{\omega_{pp}^2}{\Omega_p} = \frac{\omega_{pe}^2}{|\Omega_e|}$$

Example Unit Conversions

Energy flux: To go from erg/cm²/s to W/m², divide by 10³... i.e.,

$$10^5 \text{ erg cm}^{-2} \text{ s}^{-1} = 100 \text{ W m}^{-2}$$

$$10^6 \text{ erg cm}^{-2} \text{ s}^{-1} = 1,000 \text{ W m}^{-2}$$

$$10^7 \text{ erg cm}^{-2} \text{ s}^{-1} = 10,000 \text{ W m}^{-2}$$

$$10^8 \text{ erg cm}^{-2} \text{ s}^{-1} = 100,000 \text{ W m}^{-2}$$

Solar physics:

$$1 \text{ flare} \approx 10^{33} \text{ erg.}$$

$$1 \text{ microflare} \approx 10^{27} \text{ erg.}$$

$$1 \text{ nanoflare} \approx 10^{24} \text{ erg.}$$