College Physics

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ISBN-10 **1938168003**

ISBN-13 **978-1-938168-00-0**

Revision **CP-1-000-DW**

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Table of Contents

Preface . . . 7
1 Introduction: The Nature of Science and Physics . . . 11
Physics: An Introduction . . . 12
Physical Quantities and Units . . . 18
Accuracy, Precision, and Significant Figures . . . 25
Approximation . . . 29
2 Kinematics . . . 35
Displacement . . . 36
Vectors, Scalars, and Coordinate Systems . . . 38
Time, Velocity, and Speed . . . 39
Acceleration . . . 43
Motion Equations for Constant Acceleration in One Dimension . . . 51
Problem-Solving Basics for One-Dimensional Kinematics . . . 60
Falling Objects . . . 62
Graphical Analysis of One-Dimensional Motion . . . 68
3 Two-Dimensional Kinematics . . . 85
Kinematics in Two Dimensions: An Introduction . . . 86
Vector Addition and Subtraction: Graphical Methods . . . 88
Vector Addition and Subtraction: Analytical Methods . . . 95
Projectile Motion . . . 101
Addition of Velocities . . . 107
4 Dynamics: Force and Newton's Laws of Motion . . . 123
Development of Force Concept . . . 124
Newton's First Law of Motion: Inertia . . . 125
Newton's Second Law of Motion: Concept of a System . . . 126
Newton's Third Law of Motion: Symmetry in Forces . . . 132
Normal, Tension, and Other Examples of Forces . . . 134
Problem-Solving Strategies . . . 142
Further Applications of Newton's Laws of Motion . . . 143
Extended Topic: The Four Basic Forces—An Introduction . . . 148
5 Further Applications of Newton's Laws: Friction, Drag, and Elasticity . . . 161
Friction . . . 162
Drag Forces . . . 166
Elasticity: Stress and Strain . . . 170
6 Uniform Circular Motion and Gravitation . . . 185
Rotation Angle and Angular Velocity . . . 186
Centripetal Acceleration . . . 189
Centripetal Force . . . 192
Fictitious Forces and Non-inertial Frames: The Coriolis Force . . . 196
Newton's Universal Law of Gravitation . . . 199
Satellites and Kepler's Laws: An Argument for Simplicity . . . 205
7 Work, Energy, and Energy Resources . . . 219
Work: The Scientific Definition . . . 221
Kinetic Energy and the Work-Energy Theorem . . . 223
Gravitational Potential Energy . . . 227
Conservative Forces and Potential Energy . . . 231
Nonconservative Forces . . . 235
Conservation of Energy . . . 239
Power . . . 242
Work, Energy, and Power in Humans . . . 246
World Energy Use . . . 248
8 Linear Momentum and Collisions . . . 261
Linear Momentum and Force . . . 262
Impulse . . . 264
Conservation of Momentum . . . 266
Elastic Collisions in One Dimension . . . 269
Inelastic Collisions in One Dimension . . . 271
Collisions of Point Masses in Two Dimensions . . . 274
Introduction to Rocket Propulsion . . . 277
9 Statics and Torque . . . 289
The First Condition for Equilibrium . . . 290
The Second Condition for Equilibrium . . . 291
Stability . . . 295
Applications of Statics, Including Problem-Solving Strategies . . . 298
Simple Machines . . . 301
Forces and Torques in Muscles and Joints . . . 304
10 Rotational Motion and Angular Momentum . . . 317
Angular Acceleration . . . 318
Kinematics of Rotational Motion . . . 322
Dynamics of Rotational Motion: Rotational Inertia . . . 326
Rotational Kinetic Energy: Work and Energy Revisited . . . 329

Angular Momentum and Its Conservation . . . 336
Collisions of Extended Bodies in Two Dimensions . . . 341
Gyroscopic Effects: Vector Aspects of Angular Momentum . . . 344
11 Fluid Statics . . . 357
What Is a Fluid? . . . 358
Density . . . 359
Pressure . . . 361
Variation of Pressure with Depth in a Fluid . . . 363
Pascal's Principle . . . 366
Gauge Pressure, Absolute Pressure, and Pressure Measurement . . . 368
Archimedes' Principle . . . 371
Cohesion and Adhesion in Liquids: Surface Tension and Capillary Action . . . 377
Pressures in the Body . . . 385
12 Fluid Dynamics and Its Biological and Medical Applications . . . 397
Flow Rate and Its Relation to Velocity . . . 398
Bernoulli's Equation . . . 400
The Most General Applications of Bernoulli's Equation . . . 404
Viscosity and Laminar Flow; Poiseuille's Law . . . 407
The Onset of Turbulence . . . 413
Motion of an Object in a Viscous Fluid . . . 414
Molecular Transport Phenomena: Diffusion, Osmosis, and Related Processes . . . 416
13 Temperature, Kinetic Theory, and the Gas Laws . . . 429
Temperature . . . 430
Thermal Expansion of Solids and Liquids . . . 436
The Ideal Gas Law . . . 442
Kinetic Theory: Atomic and Molecular Explanation of Pressure and Temperature . . . 447
Phase Changes . . . 453
Humidity, Evaporation, and Boiling . . . 458
14 Heat and Heat Transfer Methods . . . 469
Heat . . . 470
Temperature Change and Heat Capacity . . . 472
Phase Change and Latent Heat . . . 476
Heat Transfer Methods . . . 481
Conduction . . . 482
Convection . . . 486
Radiation . . . 490
15 Thermodynamics . . . 505
The First Law of Thermodynamics . . . 506
The First Law of Thermodynamics and Some Simple Processes . . . 510
Introduction to the Second Law of Thermodynamics: Heat Engines and Their Efficiency . . . 517
Carnot's Perfect Heat Engine: The Second Law of Thermodynamics Restated . . . 522
Applications of Thermodynamics: Heat Pumps and Refrigerators . . . 526
Entropy and the Second Law of Thermodynamics: Disorder and the Unavailability of Energy . . . 530
Statistical Interpretation of Entropy and the Second Law of Thermodynamics: The Underlying Explanation . . . 536
16 Oscillatory Motion and Waves . . . 549
Hooke's Law: Stress and Strain Revisited . . . 551
Period and Frequency in Oscillations . . . 555
Simple Harmonic Motion: A Special Periodic Motion . . . 556
The Simple Pendulum . . . 560
Energy and the Simple Harmonic Oscillator . . . 562
Uniform Circular Motion and Simple Harmonic Motion . . . 564
Damped Harmonic Motion . . . 566
Forced Oscillations and Resonance . . . 569
Waves . . . 571
Superposition and Interference . . . 574
Energy in Waves: Intensity . . . 578
17 Physics of Hearing . . . 589
Sound . . . 590
Speed of Sound, Frequency, and Wavelength . . . 592
Sound Intensity and Sound Level . . . 595
Doppler Effect and Sonic Booms . . . 598
Sound Interference and Resonance: Standing Waves in Air Columns . . . 603
Hearing . . . 609
Ultrasound . . . 614
18 Electric Charge and Electric Field . . . 627
Static Electricity and Charge: Conservation of Charge . . . 629
Conductors and Insulators . . . 633
Coulomb's Law . . . 637
Electric Field: Concept of a Field Revisited . . . 638
Electric Field Lines: Multiple Charges . . . 640
Electric Forces in Biology . . . 643
Conductors and Electric Fields in Static Equilibrium . . . 644
Applications of Electrostatics . . . 648

19 Electric Potential and Electric Field . . . 663
Electric Potential Energy: Potential Difference . . . 664
Electric Potential in a Uniform Electric Field . . . 668
Electrical Potential Due to a Point Charge . . . 671
Equipotential Lines . . . 673
Capacitors and Dielectrics . . . 675
Capacitors in Series and Parallel . . . 681
Energy Stored in Capacitors . . . 684
20 Electric Current, Resistance, and Ohm's Law . . . 695
Current . . . 696
Ohm’s Law: Resistance and Simple Circuits . . . 701
Resistance and Resistivity . . . 703
Electric Power and Energy . . . 707
Alternating Current versus Direct Current . . . 710
Electric Hazards and the Human Body . . . 714
Nerve Conduction–Electrocardiograms . . . 717
21 Circuits, Bioelectricity, and DC Instruments . . . 733
Resistors in Series and Parallel . . . 734
Electromotive Force: Terminal Voltage . . . 742
Kirchhoff’s Rules . . . 748
DC Voltmeters and Ammeters . . . 752
Null Measurements . . . 756
DC Circuits Containing Resistors and Capacitors . . . 758
22 Magnetism . . . 773
Magnets . . . 774
Ferromagnets and Electromagnets . . . 776
Magnetic Fields and Magnetic Field Lines . . . 780
Magnetic Field Strength: Force on a Moving Charge in a Magnetic Field . . . 781
Force on a Moving Charge in a Magnetic Field: Examples and Applications . . . 783
The Hall Effect . . . 787
Magnetic Force on a Current-Carrying Conductor . . . 789
Torque on a Current Loop: Motors and Meters . . . 791
Magnetic Fields Produced by Currents: Ampere’s Law . . . 793
Magnetic Force between Two Parallel Conductors . . . 797
More Applications of Magnetism . . . 798
23 Electromagnetic Induction, AC Circuits, and Electrical Technologies . . . 813
Induced Emf and Magnetic Flux . . . 815
Faraday’s Law of Induction: Lenz’s Law . . . 816
Motional Emf . . . 819
Eddy Currents and Magnetic Damping . . . 822
Electric Generators . . . 825
Back Emf . . . 828
Transformers . . . 828
Electrical Safety: Systems and Devices . . . 832
Inductance . . . 836
RL Circuits . . . 839
Reactance, Inductive and Capacitive . . . 841
RLC Series AC Circuits . . . 844
24 Electromagnetic Waves . . . 861
Maxwell’s Equations: Electromagnetic Waves Predicted and Observed . . . 862
Production of Electromagnetic Waves . . . 864
The Electromagnetic Spectrum . . . 866
Energy in Electromagnetic Waves . . . 878
25 Geometric Optics . . . 887
The Ray Aspect of Light . . . 889
The Law of Reflection . . . 889
The Law of Refraction . . . 891
Total Internal Reflection . . . 896
Dispersion: The Rainbow and Prisms . . . 901
Image Formation by Lenses . . . 905
Image Formation by Mirrors . . . 916
26 Vision and Optical Instruments . . . 931
Physics of the Eye . . . 932
Vision Correction . . . 935
Color and Color Vision . . . 938
Microscopes . . . 941
Telescopes . . . 946
Aberrations . . . 949
27 Wave Optics . . . 957
The Wave Aspect of Light: Interference . . . 958
Huygens's Principle: Diffraction . . . 959
Young’s Double Slit Experiment . . . 961
Multiple Slit Diffraction . . . 965

Single Slit Diffraction . . . 969
Limits of Resolution: The Rayleigh Criterion . . . 972
Thin Film Interference . . . 976
Polarization . . . 980
Extended Topic Microscopy Enhanced by the Wave Characteristics of Light . . . 987
28 Special Relativity . . . 999
Einstein's Postulates . . . 1000
Simultaneity And Time Dilation . . . 1002
Length Contraction . . . 1008
Relativistic Addition of Velocities . . . 1011
Relativistic Momentum . . . 1016
Relativistic Energy . . . 1017
29 Introduction to Quantum Physics . . . 1031
Quantization of Energy . . . 1033
The Photoelectric Effect . . . 1035
Photon Energies and the Electromagnetic Spectrum . . . 1037
Photon Momentum . . . 1043
The Particle-Wave Duality . . . 1047
The Wave Nature of Matter . . . 1048
Probability: The Heisenberg Uncertainty Principle . . . 1051
The Particle-Wave Duality Reviewed . . . 1054
30 Atomic Physics . . . 1063
Discovery of the Atom . . . 1064
Discovery of the Parts of the Atom: Electrons and Nuclei . . . 1065
Bohr's Theory of the Hydrogen Atom . . . 1071
X Rays: Atomic Origins and Applications . . . 1077
Applications of Atomic Excitations and De-Excitations . . . 1081
The Wave Nature of Matter Causes Quantization . . . 1088
Patterns in Spectra Reveal More Quantization . . . 1090
Quantum Numbers and Rules . . . 1092
The Pauli Exclusion Principle . . . 1096
31 Radioactivity and Nuclear Physics . . . 1111
Nuclear Radioactivity . . . 1112
Radiation Detection and Detectors . . . 1115
Substructure of the Nucleus . . . 1117
Nuclear Decay and Conservation Laws . . . 1121
Half-Life and Activity . . . 1127
Binding Energy . . . 1132
Tunneling . . . 1136
32 Medical Applications of Nuclear Physics . . . 1147
Medical Imaging and Diagnostics . . . 1149
Biological Effects of Ionizing Radiation . . . 1152
Therapeutic Uses of Ionizing Radiation . . . 1157
Food Irradiation . . . 1159
Fusion . . . 1160
Fission . . . 1165
Nuclear Weapons . . . 1169
33 Particle Physics . . . 1181
The Yukawa Particle and the Heisenberg Uncertainty Principle Revisited . . . 1182
The Four Basic Forces . . . 1183
Accelerators Create Matter from Energy . . . 1185
Particles, Patterns, and Conservation Laws . . . 1188
Quarks: Is That All There Is? . . . 1192
GUTs: The Unification of Forces . . . 1199
34 Frontiers of Physics . . . 1209
Cosmology and Particle Physics . . . 1210
General Relativity and Quantum Gravity . . . 1216
Superstrings . . . 1221
Dark Matter and Closure . . . 1221
Complexity and Chaos . . . 1224
High-temperature Superconductors . . . 1225
Some Questions We Know to Ask . . . 1226
A Atomic Masses . . . 1235
B Selected Radioactive Isotopes . . . 1241
C Useful Information . . . 1245
D Glossary of Key Symbols and Notation . . . 1251
Index . . . 1262

PREFACE

About OpenStax College

OpenStax College is a non-profit organization committed to improving student access to quality learning materials. Our free textbooks are developed and peer-reviewed by educators to ensure they are readable, accurate, and meet the scope and sequence requirements of modern college courses. Unlike traditional textbooks, OpenStax College resources live online and are owned by the community of educators using them. Through our partnerships with companies and foundations committed to reducing costs for students, OpenStax College is working to improve access to higher education for all. OpenStax College is an initiative of Rice University and is made possible through the generous support of several philanthropic foundations.

About This Book

Welcome to *College Physics*, an OpenStax College resource created with several goals in mind: accessibility, affordability, customization, and student engagement—all while encouraging learners toward high levels of learning. Instructors and students alike will find that this textbook offers a strong foundation in introductory physics, with algebra as a prerequisite. It is available for free online and in low-cost print and e-book editions.

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To the Student

This book is written for you. It is based on the teaching and research experience of numerous physicists and influenced by a strong recollection of their own struggles as students. After reading this book, we hope you see that physics is visible everywhere. Applications range from driving a car to launching a rocket, from a skater whirling on ice to a neutron star spinning in space, and from taking your temperature to taking a chest X-ray.

To the Instructor

This text is intended for one-year introductory courses requiring algebra and some trigonometry, but no calculus. OpenStax College provides the essential supplemental resources at http://openstaxcollege.org ; however, we have pared down the number of supplements to keep costs low. College Physics can be easily customized for your course using Connexions (http://cnx.org/content/col11406). Simply select the content most relevant to your curriculum and create a textbook that speaks directly to the needs of your class.

General Approach

College Physics is organized such that topics are introduced conceptually with a steady progression to precise definitions and analytical applications. The analytical aspect (problem solving) is tied back to the conceptual before moving on to another topic. Each introductory chapter, for example, opens with an engaging photograph relevant to the subject of the chapter and interesting applications that are easy for most students to visualize.

Organization, Level, and Content

There is considerable latitude on the part of the instructor regarding the use, organization, level, and content of this book. By choosing the types of problems assigned, the instructor can determine the level of sophistication required of the student.

Concepts and Calculations

The ability to calculate does not guarantee conceptual understanding. In order to unify conceptual, analytical, and calculation skills within the learning process, we have integrated Strategies and Discussions throughout the text.

Modern Perspective

The chapters on modern physics are more complete than many other texts on the market, with an entire chapter devoted to medical applications of nuclear physics and another to particle physics. The final chapter of the text, “Frontiers of Physics,” is devoted to the most exciting endeavors in physics. It ends with a module titled “Some Questions We Know to Ask.”

Supplements

Accompanying the main text are a **Student Solutions Manual and an Instructor Solutions Manual (http://openstaxcollege.org/textbooks/college-physics)** . The Student Solutions Manual provides worked-out solutions to select end-of-module Problems and Exercises. The Instructor Solutions Manual provides worked-out solutions to all Exercises.

Features of OpenStax *College Physics*

The following briefly describes the special features of this text.

Modularity

This textbook is organized on Connexions (http://cnx.org) as a collection of modules that can be rearranged and modified to suit the needs of a particular professor or class. That being said, modules often contain references to content in other modules, as most topics in physics cannot be discussed in isolation.

Learning Objectives

Every module begins with a set of learning objectives. These objectives are designed to guide the instructor in deciding what content to include or assign, and to guide the student with respect to what he or she can expect to learn. After completing the module and end-of-module exercises, students should be able to demonstrate mastery of the learning objectives.

Call-Outs

Key definitions, concepts, and equations are called out with a special design treatment. Call-outs are designed to catch readers' attention, to make it clear that a specific term, concept, or equation is particularly important, and to provide easy reference for a student reviewing content.

Key Terms

Key terms are in bold and are followed by a definition in context. Definitions of key terms are also listed in the Glossary, which appears at the end of the module.

Worked Examples

Worked examples have four distinct parts to promote both analytical and conceptual skills. Worked examples are introduced in words, always using some application that should be of interest. This is followed by a Strategy section that emphasizes the concepts involved and how solving the problem relates to those concepts. This is followed by the mathematical Solution and Discussion.

Many worked examples contain multiple-part problems to help the students learn how to approach normal situations, in which problems tend to have multiple parts. Finally, worked examples employ the techniques of the problem-solving strategies so that students can see how those strategies succeed in practice as well as in theory.

Problem-Solving Strategies

Problem solving strategies are first presented in a special section and subsequently appear at crucial points in the text where students can benefit most from them. Problem-solving strategies have a logical structure that is reinforced in the worked examples and supported in certain places by line drawings that illustrate various steps.

Misconception Alerts

Students come to physics with preconceptions from everyday experiences and from previous courses. Some of these preconceptions are misconceptions, and many are very common among students and the general public. Some are inadvertently picked up through misunderstandings of lectures and texts. The Misconception Alerts feature is designed to point these out and correct them explicitly.

Take-Home Investigations

Take Home Investigations provide the opportunity for students to apply or explore what they have learned with a hands-on activity.

Things Great and Small

In these special topic essays, macroscopic phenomena (such as air pressure) are explained with submicroscopic phenomena (such as atoms bouncing off walls). These essays support the modern perspective by describing aspects of modern physics before they are formally treated in later chapters. Connections are also made between apparently disparate phenomena.

Simulations

Where applicable, students are directed to the interactive PHeT physics simulations developed by the University of Colorado (**http://phet.colorado.edu (http://phet.colorado.edu)**). There they can further explore the physics concepts they have learned about in the module.

Summary

Module summaries are thorough and functional and present all important definitions and equations. Students are able to find the definitions of all terms and symbols as well as their physical relationships. The structure of the summary makes plain the fundamental principles of the module or collection and serves as a useful study guide.

Glossary

At the end of every module or chapter is a glossary containing definitions of all of the key terms in the module or chapter.

End-of-Module Problems

At the end of every chapter is a set of Conceptual Questions and/or skills-based Problems & Exercises. Conceptual Questions challenge students' ability to explain what they have learned conceptually, independent of the mathematical details. Problems & Exercises challenge students to apply both concepts and skills to solve mathematical physics problems. Online, every other problem includes an answer that students can reveal immediately by clicking on a "Show Solution" button. Fully worked solutions to select problems are available in the Student Solutions Manual and the Teacher Solutions Manual.

In addition to traditional skills-based problems, there are three special types of end-of-module problems: Integrated Concept Problems, Unreasonable Results Problems, and Construct Your Own Problems. All of these problems are indicated with a subtitle preceding the problem.

Integrated Concept Problems

In Unreasonable Results Problems, students are challenged not only to apply concepts and skills to solve a problem, but also to analyze the answer with respect to how likely or realistic it really is. These problems contain a premise that produces an unreasonable answer and are designed to further emphasize that properly applied physics must describe nature accurately and is not simply the process of solving equations.

Unreasonable Results

In Unreasonable Results Problems, students are challenged to not only apply concepts and skills to solve a problem, but also to analyze the answer with respect to how likely or realistic it really is. These problems contain a premise that produces an unreasonable answer and are designed to further emphasize that properly applied physics must describe nature accurately and is not simply the process of solving equations.

Construct Your Own Problem

These problems require students to construct the details of a problem, justify their starting assumptions, show specific steps in the problem's solution, and finally discuss the meaning of the result. These types of problems relate well to both conceptual and analytical aspects of physics, emphasizing that physics must describe nature. Often they involve an integration of topics from more than one chapter. Unlike other problems, solutions are not provided since there is no single correct answer. Instructors should feel free to direct students regarding the level and scope of their considerations. Whether the problem is solved and described correctly will depend on initial assumptions.

Appendices

Appendix A: Atomic Masses
Appendix B: Selected Radioactive Isotopes
Appendix C: Useful Information
Appendix D: Glossary of Key Symbols and Notation

Acknowledgements

This text is based on the work completed by Dr. Paul Peter Urone in collaboration with Roger Hinrichs, Kim Dirks, and Manjula Sharma. We would like to thank the authors as well as the numerous professors (a partial list follows) who have contributed their time and energy to review and provide feedback on the manuscript. Their input has been critical in maintaining the pedagogical integrity and accuracy of the text.

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1 INTRODUCTION: THE NATURE OF SCIENCE AND PHYSICS

Figure 1.1 Galaxies are as immense as atoms are small. Yet the same laws of physics describe both, and all the rest of nature—an indication of the underlying unity in the universe. The laws of physics are surprisingly few in number, implying an underlying simplicity to nature's apparent complexity. (credit: NASA, JPL-Caltech, P. Barmby, Harvard-Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics)

Learning Objectives

1.1. Physics: An Introduction
- Explain the difference between a principle and a law.
- Explain the difference between a model and a theory.

1.2. Physical Quantities and Units
- Perform unit conversions both in the SI and English units.
- Explain the most common prefixes in the SI units and be able to write them in scientific notation.

1.3. Accuracy, Precision, and Significant Figures
- Determine the appropriate number of significant figures in both addition and subtraction, as well as multiplication and division calculations.
- Calculate the percent uncertainty of a measurement.

1.4. Approximation
- Make reasonable approximations based on given data.

Introduction to Science and the Realm of Physics, Physical Quantities, and Units

What is your first reaction when you hear the word "physics"? Did you imagine working through difficult equations or memorizing formulas that seem to have no real use in life outside the physics classroom? Many people come to the subject of physics with a bit of fear. But as you begin your exploration of this broad-ranging subject, you may soon come to realize that physics plays a much larger role in your life than you first thought, no matter your life goals or career choice.

For example, take a look at the image above. This image is of the Andromeda Galaxy, which contains billions of individual stars, huge clouds of gas, and dust. Two smaller galaxies are also visible as bright blue spots in the background. At a staggering 2.5 million light years from the Earth, this galaxy is the nearest one to our own galaxy (which is called the Milky Way). The stars and planets that make up Andromeda might seem to be the furthest thing from most people's regular, everyday lives. But Andromeda is a great starting point to think about the forces that hold together the universe. The forces that cause Andromeda to act as it does are the same forces we contend with here on Earth, whether we are planning to send a rocket into space or simply raise the walls for a new home. The same gravity that causes the stars of Andromeda to rotate and revolve also causes water to flow over hydroelectric dams here on Earth. Tonight, take a moment to look up at the stars. The forces out there are the same as the ones here on Earth. Through a study of physics, you may gain a greater understanding of the interconnectedness of everything we can see and know in this universe.

Think now about all of the technological devices that you use on a regular basis. Computers, smart phones, GPS systems, MP3 players, and satellite radio might come to mind. Next, think about the most exciting modern technologies that you have heard about in the news, such as trains that levitate above tracks, "invisibility cloaks" that bend light around them, and microscopic robots that fight cancer cells in our bodies. All of these groundbreaking advancements, commonplace or unbelievable, rely on the principles of physics. Aside from playing a significant role in technology, professionals such as engineers, pilots, physicians, physical therapists, electricians, and computer programmers apply physics concepts in their daily work. For example, a pilot must understand how wind forces affect a flight path and a physical therapist must understand how the muscles in the body experience forces as they move and bend. As you will learn in this text, physics principles are propelling new, exciting technologies, and these principles are applied in a wide range of careers.

In this text, you will begin to explore the history of the formal study of physics, beginning with natural philosophy and the ancient Greeks, and leading up through a review of Sir Isaac Newton and the laws of physics that bear his name. You will also be introduced to the standards scientists use when they study physical quantities and the interrelated system of measurements most of the scientific community uses to communicate in a single

mathematical language. Finally, you will study the limits of our ability to be accurate and precise, and the reasons scientists go to painstaking lengths to be as clear as possible regarding their own limitations.

1.1 Physics: An Introduction

Figure 1.2 The flight formations of migratory birds such as Canada geese are governed by the laws of physics. (credit: David Merrett)

The physical universe is enormously complex in its detail. Every day, each of us observes a great variety of objects and phenomena. Over the centuries, the curiosity of the human race has led us collectively to explore and catalog a tremendous wealth of information. From the flight of birds to the colors of flowers, from lightning to gravity, from quarks to clusters of galaxies, from the flow of time to the mystery of the creation of the universe, we have asked questions and assembled huge arrays of facts. In the face of all these details, we have discovered that a surprisingly small and unified set of physical laws can explain what we observe. As humans, we make generalizations and seek order. We have found that nature is remarkably cooperative—it exhibits the *underlying order and simplicity* we so value.

It is the underlying order of nature that makes science in general, and physics in particular, so enjoyable to study. For example, what do a bag of chips and a car battery have in common? Both contain energy that can be converted to other forms. The law of conservation of energy (which says that energy can change form but is never lost) ties together such topics as food calories, batteries, heat, light, and watch springs. Understanding this law makes it easier to learn about the various forms energy takes and how they relate to one another. Apparently unrelated topics are connected through broadly applicable physical laws, permitting an understanding beyond just the memorization of lists of facts.

The unifying aspect of physical laws and the basic simplicity of nature form the underlying themes of this text. In learning to apply these laws, you will, of course, study the most important topics in physics. More importantly, you will gain analytical abilities that will enable you to apply these laws far beyond the scope of what can be included in a single book. These analytical skills will help you to excel academically, and they will also help you to think critically in any professional career you choose to pursue. This module discusses the realm of physics (to define what physics is), some applications of physics (to illustrate its relevance to other disciplines), and more precisely what constitutes a physical law (to illuminate the importance of experimentation to theory).

Science and the Realm of Physics

Science consists of the theories and laws that are the general truths of nature as well as the body of knowledge they encompass. Scientists are continually trying to expand this body of knowledge and to perfect the expression of the laws that describe it. **Physics** is concerned with describing the interactions of energy, matter, space, and time, and it is especially interested in what fundamental mechanisms underlie every phenomenon. The concern for describing the basic phenomena in nature essentially defines the *realm of physics*.

Physics aims to describe the function of everything around us, from the movement of tiny charged particles to the motion of people, cars, and spaceships. In fact, almost everything around you can be described quite accurately by the laws of physics. Consider a smart phone (**Figure 1.3**). Physics describes how electricity interacts with the various circuits inside the device. This knowledge helps engineers select the appropriate materials and circuit layout when building the smart phone. Next, consider a GPS system. Physics describes the relationship between the speed of an object, the distance over which it travels, and the time it takes to travel that distance. When you use a GPS device in a vehicle, it utilizes these physics equations to determine the travel time from one location to another.

Figure 1.3 The Apple “iPhone” is a common smart phone with a GPS function. Physics describes the way that electricity flows through the circuits of this device. Engineers use their knowledge of physics to construct an iPhone with features that consumers will enjoy. One specific feature of an iPhone is the GPS function. GPS uses physics equations to determine the driving time between two locations on a map. (credit: @gletham GIS, Social, Mobile Tech Images)

Applications of Physics

You need not be a scientist to use physics. On the contrary, knowledge of physics is useful in everyday situations as well as in nonscientific professions. It can help you understand how microwave ovens work, why metals should not be put into them, and why they might affect pacemakers. (See **Figure 1.4** and **Figure 1.5**.) Physics allows you to understand the hazards of radiation and rationally evaluate these hazards more easily. Physics also explains the reason why a black car radiator helps remove heat in a car engine, and it explains why a white roof helps keep the inside of a house cool. Similarly, the operation of a car’s ignition system as well as the transmission of electrical signals through our body’s nervous system are much easier to understand when you think about them in terms of basic physics.

Physics is the foundation of many important disciplines and contributes directly to others. Chemistry, for example—since it deals with the interactions of atoms and molecules—is rooted in atomic and molecular physics. Most branches of engineering are applied physics. In architecture, physics is at the heart of structural stability, and is involved in the acoustics, heating, lighting, and cooling of buildings. Parts of geology rely heavily on physics, such as radioactive dating of rocks, earthquake analysis, and heat transfer in the Earth. Some disciplines, such as biophysics and geophysics, are hybrids of physics and other disciplines.

Physics has many applications in the biological sciences. On the microscopic level, it helps describe the properties of cell walls and cell membranes (**Figure 1.6** and **Figure 1.7**). On the macroscopic level, it can explain the heat, work, and power associated with the human body. Physics is involved in medical diagnostics, such as x-rays, magnetic resonance imaging (MRI), and ultrasonic blood flow measurements. Medical therapy sometimes directly involves physics; for example, cancer radiotherapy uses ionizing radiation. Physics can also explain sensory phenomena, such as how musical instruments make sound, how the eye detects color, and how lasers can transmit information.

It is not necessary to formally study all applications of physics. What is most useful is knowledge of the basic laws of physics and a skill in the analytical methods for applying them. The study of physics also can improve your problem-solving skills. Furthermore, physics has retained the most basic aspects of science, so it is used by all of the sciences, and the study of physics makes other sciences easier to understand.

Figure 1.4 The laws of physics help us understand how common appliances work. For example, the laws of physics can help explain how microwave ovens heat up food, and they also help us understand why it is dangerous to place metal objects in a microwave oven. (credit: MoneyBlogNewz)

Figure 1.5 These two applications of physics have more in common than meets the eye. Microwave ovens use electromagnetic waves to heat food. Magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) also uses electromagnetic waves to yield an image of the brain, from which the exact location of tumors can be determined. (credit: Rashmi Chawla, Daniel Smith, and Paul E. Marik)

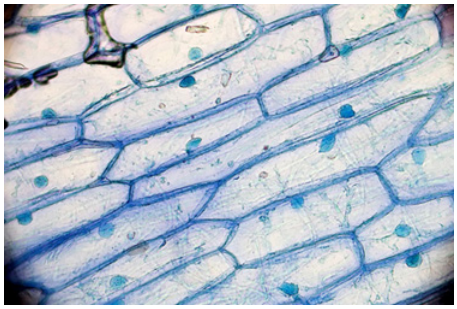

Figure 1.6 Physics, chemistry, and biology help describe the properties of cell walls in plant cells, such as the onion cells seen here. (credit: Umberto Salvagnin)

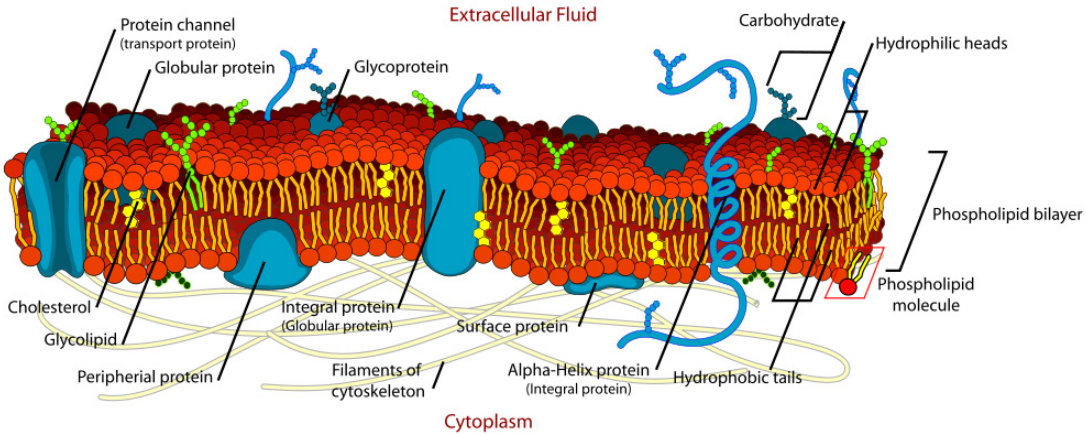

Figure 1.7 An artist's rendition of the the structure of a cell membrane. Membranes form the boundaries of animal cells and are complex in structure and function. Many of the most fundamental properties of life, such as the firing of nerve cells, are related to membranes. The disciplines of biology, chemistry, and physics all help us understand the membranes of animal cells. (credit: Mariana Ruiz)

Models, Theories, and Laws; The Role of Experimentation

The laws of nature are concise descriptions of the universe around us; they are human statements of the underlying laws or rules that all natural processes follow. Such laws are intrinsic to the universe; humans did not create them and so cannot change them. We can only discover and understand them. Their discovery is a very human endeavor, with all the elements of mystery, imagination, struggle, triumph, and disappointment inherent in any creative effort. (See **Figure 1.8** and **Figure 1.9**.) The cornerstone of discovering natural laws is observation; science must describe the universe as it is, not as we may imagine it to be.

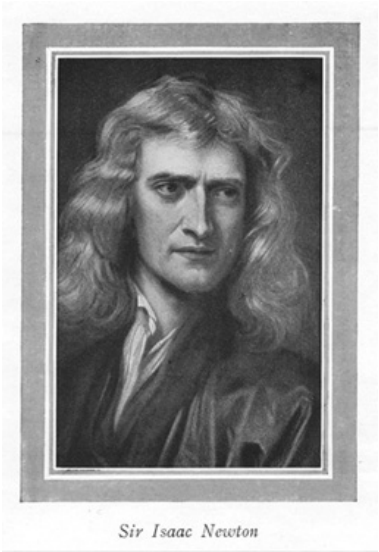

Figure 1.8 **Isaac Newton** (1642–1727) was very reluctant to publish his revolutionary work and had to be convinced to do so. In his later years, he stepped down from his academic post and became exchequer of the Royal Mint. He took this post seriously, inventing reeding (or creating ridges) on the edge of coins to prevent unscrupulous people from trimming the silver off of them before using them as currency. (credit: Arthur Shuster and Arthur E. Shipley: *Britain's Heritage of Science*. London, 1917.)

Figure 1.9 **Marie Curie** (1867–1934) sacrificed monetary assets to help finance her early research and damaged her physical well-being with radiation exposure. She is the only person to win Nobel prizes in both physics and chemistry. One of her daughters also won a Nobel Prize. (credit: Wikimedia Commons)

We all are curious to some extent. We look around, make generalizations, and try to understand what we see—for example, we look up and wonder whether one type of cloud signals an oncoming storm. As we become serious about exploring nature, we become more organized and formal in collecting and analyzing data. We attempt greater precision, perform controlled experiments (if we can), and write down ideas about how the data may be organized and unified. We then formulate models, theories, and laws based on the data we have collected and analyzed to generalize and communicate the results of these experiments.

A **model** is a representation of something that is often too difficult (or impossible) to display directly. While a model is justified with experimental proof, it is only accurate under limited situations. An example is the planetary model of the atom in which electrons are pictured as orbiting the nucleus, analogous to the way planets orbit the Sun. (See **Figure 1.10**.) We cannot observe electron orbits directly, but the mental image helps explain the observations we can make, such as the emission of light from hot gases (atomic spectra). Physicists use models for a variety of purposes. For example, models can help physicists analyze a scenario and perform a calculation, or they can be used to represent a situation in the form of a computer simulation. A **theory** is an explanation for patterns in nature that is supported by scientific evidence and verified multiple times by various groups of researchers. Some theories include models to help visualize phenomena, whereas others do not. Newton's theory of gravity, for example, does not require a model or mental image, because we can observe the objects directly with our own senses. The kinetic theory of gases, on the other hand, is a model in which a gas is viewed as being composed of atoms and molecules. Atoms and molecules are too small to be observed directly with our senses—thus, we picture them mentally to understand what our instruments tell us about the behavior of gases.

A **law** uses concise language to describe a generalized pattern in nature that is supported by scientific evidence and repeated experiments. Often, a law can be expressed in the form of a single mathematical equation. Laws and theories are similar in that they are both scientific statements that result from a tested hypothesis and are supported by scientific evidence. However, the designation *law* is reserved for a concise and very general statement that describes phenomena in nature, such as the law that energy is conserved during any process, or Newton's second law of motion, which relates force, mass, and acceleration by the simple equation $\mathbf{F} = m\mathbf{a}$. A theory, in contrast, is a less concise statement of observed phenomena. For example, the Theory of Evolution and the Theory of Relativity cannot be expressed concisely enough to be considered a law. The biggest difference between a law and a theory is that a theory is much more complex and dynamic. A law describes a single action, whereas a theory explains an entire group of related phenomena. And, whereas a law is a postulate that forms the foundation of the scientific method, a theory is the end result of that process.

Less broadly applicable statements are usually called principles (such as Pascal's principle, which is applicable only in fluids), but the distinction between laws and principles often is not carefully made.

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