

Revision and Warm-up exercises

These problems are designed to reactivate your mathematical skills after a relaxing summer break. They are not designed to be easy! Each one has some twist that is designed to catch you out if you merely manipulate symbols without thinking.

Differential Calculus: After taking a previous version of this course, a student claimed that the expression

$$y(x) = \frac{1}{\omega \sin \omega L} \left\{ \int_0^x f(t) \sin \omega(x-L) \sin \omega t \, dt + \int_x^L f(t) \sin \omega x \sin \omega(t-L) \, dt \right\}$$

is the solution to the problem: “Find $y(x)$ obeying the differential equation

$$\frac{d^2 y}{dx^2} + \omega^2 y = f(x)$$

on the interval $[0, L]$ and satisfying the boundary conditions $y(0) = 0 = y(L)$.” First examine her solution to see if it obeys the boundary conditions. Then, by differentiating her solution twice with respect to x and substituting the result into the differential equation, investigate whether her solution is correct.

A second student claimed that if $K(x)$ and $f(x)$ are smooth functions with $K(0) = 1$, and we set

$$F(x) = \int_0^x K(x-y)f(y) \, dy,$$

then

$$F'(x) = \int_0^x K(x-y)f'(y) \, dy.$$

(Here the “prime” denotes differentiation with respect to x or y , as appropriate.) Was he correct? If so, explain why the answer is right. If he was wrong, find the correct formula.

Integral Calculus: Let $\mu > \lambda > 0$ be real numbers. Sketch (by hand) a graph of the function

$$F(t) = \frac{e^{-\lambda t} - e^{-\mu t}}{t}, \quad 0 < t < \infty.$$

Now a student wishes to evaluate the integral

$$I(\lambda, \mu) = \int_0^\infty \frac{e^{-\lambda t} - e^{-\mu t}}{t} \, dt.$$

He breaks it up as

$$I(\lambda, \mu) = \int_0^\infty \frac{e^{-\lambda t}}{t} \, dt - \int_0^\infty \frac{e^{-\mu t}}{t} \, dt.$$

In the first integral he makes the substitution $x = \lambda t$. In the second he sets $x = \mu t$. He ends up with

$$I(\lambda, \mu) = \int_0^\infty \frac{e^{-x}}{x} dx - \int_0^\infty \frac{e^{-x}}{x} dx.$$

As the two integrals are identical, he concludes that $I(\lambda, \mu) = 0$. From your sketch of the function being integrated, you know that he has gone wrong somewhere. Locate the error in his method, and make the small but crucial modification that leads to the correct answer. Confirm your result by using Feynman's trick of first computing the easy integral for $\partial I / \partial \mu$, and then integrating the result with respect to μ .

Now use a similar method to evaluate

$$I = \int_0^\infty \ln \left\{ \frac{a + be^{-px}}{a + be^{-qx}} \right\} \frac{dx}{x},$$

where you may assume that a, b, p, q are positive real numbers.

Trigonometric functions: Imagine that when solving one-dimensional quantum mechanics scattering problem you find a wavefunction $\psi(x) = \sin(kx + \delta)$ where you know that the phase shift δ is a smooth (infinitely differentiable) function of k that obeys the equation

$$\cot(ka + \delta) - \cot ka = \lambda.$$

Solving formally for $\delta(k)$, you write

$$\delta(k) = -ka + \cot^{-1}(\lambda + \cot ka).$$

First assume that $\lambda = 0$ and draw the graph of $\delta(k)$ versus k . Now consider effect the on your graph of a nonzero and positive λ . If λ is fairly large compared to unity, sketch *by hand* the graph of the function $\delta(k)$. Label the points on the k axis where ka is a multiple of π , so I can see their relation to the places where $\delta(k)$ has wiggles.

The point of this problem is to understand what the graph looks like without using a computer or graphing calculator. (Indeed programs such as *Mathematica*TM fail to plot this function correctly.) Your solution should therefore include the reasoning that lead to your curve.

Partial Derivatives: Suppose that you know a wavefunction $\psi(x, t)$ obeying the time-dependent Schrödinger equation

$$i\hbar \frac{\partial \psi}{\partial t} = -\frac{\hbar^2}{2m} \frac{\partial^2 \psi}{\partial x^2} + V(x)\psi.$$

Now start running at velocity $-U$. Seen from your moving frame the potential is moving, so the wavefunction must obey the Schrödinger equation

$$i\hbar \frac{\partial \tilde{\psi}}{\partial t} = -\frac{\hbar^2}{2m} \frac{\partial^2 \tilde{\psi}}{\partial x^2} + V(x - Ut)\tilde{\psi}.$$

How is $\tilde{\psi}$ related to ψ ? To find out, make a change of variables

$$\begin{aligned} z &= x - Ut, \\ \tau &= t, \end{aligned}$$

and use the chain rule for partial derivatives to express

$$\left(\frac{\partial \tilde{\psi}}{\partial t}\right)_x, \left(\frac{\partial \tilde{\psi}}{\partial x}\right)_t, \quad \text{in terms of} \quad \left(\frac{\partial \tilde{\psi}}{\partial \tau}\right)_z, \left(\frac{\partial \tilde{\psi}}{\partial z}\right)_\tau.$$

Use these relations to find the equation obeyed by $\tilde{\psi}$ as a function of z and τ . Show how you can modify the original $\psi(x, t)$ in order to obtain a solution $\tilde{\psi}(z, \tau)$ to this new equation. Restore x and t , and conclude that the solution to the equation with the moving potential is

$$\tilde{\psi}(x, t) = e^{imUx/\hbar - i\frac{1}{2}mU^2t/\hbar} \psi(x - Ut, t).$$

Verify this by substituting $\tilde{\psi}(x, t)$ into the moving-potential Schrödinger equation. This $\tilde{\psi}(x, t)$ must be how the original wavefunction appears when seen from the moving frame. Conclude that Schrödinger wavefunctions do not transform as scalars under Galilean transformations.

Matrix Algebra: The linear operator T is represented by an $N \times N$ matrix, where $N > 1$. T obeys the equation

$$(T - \lambda I)^p = 0,$$

with $p = N$, but does not obey this equation for any integer $p < N$. Here λ is a real number and I is the identity operator.

- i) Show that if T possesses an eigenvector, the corresponding eigenvalue must be λ . Deduce that T *cannot* be diagonalized.
- ii) Show that there exists a vector \mathbf{e}_1 such that $(T - \lambda I)^N \mathbf{e}_1 = 0$, but no lesser power of $(T - \lambda I)$ kills \mathbf{e}_1 .
- iii) Define $\mathbf{e}_2 = (T - \lambda I)\mathbf{e}_1$, $\mathbf{e}_3 = (T - \lambda I)^2\mathbf{e}_1$, etc. up to \mathbf{e}_N . Show that the vectors $\mathbf{e}_1, \dots, \mathbf{e}_N$ are linearly independent.
- iv) Use $\mathbf{e}_1, \dots, \mathbf{e}_N$ as a basis for your vector space. Taking

$$\mathbf{e}_1 = \begin{pmatrix} 0 \\ \vdots \\ 0 \\ 1 \end{pmatrix}, \quad \mathbf{e}_2 = \begin{pmatrix} 0 \\ \vdots \\ 1 \\ 0 \end{pmatrix}, \quad \dots, \quad \mathbf{e}_N = \begin{pmatrix} 1 \\ 0 \\ \vdots \\ 0 \end{pmatrix},$$

write out the matrix representing T in the \mathbf{e}_i basis.