

Overall HW statistic: Average 71.7, Median 80.5

Edwin: In general I spot 4 major problems:

- 1. Not finishing the assignment / not reading the direction.**
- 2. Some people are not yet familiar with delta function (taking derivative of $1/r$, divergence, etc.)**
- 3. MANY are not comfortable with taking path integral to get V from E .**
- 4. A few people do spherical integrals in cartesian coordinate.**

Q1. NONUNIFORM SURFACE CHARGE (out of 10 points: ave 7, median 7) – Ch2 – Coulomb's

We typically consider cases in class where charge is distributed completely uniformly, but it's not always that way - let's consider an insulating sphere (radius R) with surface charge density $\sigma = \sigma_0 \sin^2(\theta) \cos^2(\phi)$.

- Find the total charge on this sphere.
- Describe briefly in words and pictures what this charge distribution "looks like".
- Then, briefly but clearly, describe a *procedure* to find $E(x,0,0)$ (for $x > R$)?

Note: you do not need to come up with a final closed-form answer! We just want a discussion, with formulas, of how you would proceed. Get as far as you reasonably can, but stop when the going gets too nasty, and discuss what you would do next if you really *needed* to know this E field in, say, a laboratory/experimental situation.

This problem was given in the Gauss' Law section to see if they knew when they could use Gauss' Law (which you can't in this situation). About 40% of students used Gauss' Law for part (c). Students still struggled with setting up "dA" and "curly R". In part (a) several students still want to write $Q = \sigma * A$, not recognizing that you have to do an integral. This is also a good problem for connecting the physics to vector calculus. What does it mean to do an integral at one point in space $(x,0,0)$? Several students wanted to set E_y and E_z equal to zero because at $(x,0,0)$ $y=z=0$. However, $E_y=E_z=0$ because of this charge distribution, not because of the point of evaluation. Note that the problem as-worded does not indicate whether σ is + or -.

Q2. DIVERGENCE AND CURL (out of 15 points: ave 11, median 12) Ch2 – voltage and Ch1 - divergence

Consider an electric field $\mathbf{E} = c \frac{\vec{\mathbf{r}}}{r^2}$ (Please note the numerator is not $\hat{\mathbf{r}}$: this is NOT the usual E field from a point charge at the origin, which would give $c' \frac{\vec{\mathbf{r}}}{r^3}$, right?!)

a) - Calculate the divergence *and* the curl of this \mathbf{E} field.

- Explicitly test your answer for the divergence by using the divergence theorem. (Is there a delta function at the origin like there was for a point charge field, or not?)
- Explicitly test your answer for the curl by using the formula given in Griffiths problem 1.60b, page 56.

b) What are the units of c ? What charge distribution would you need to produce an E field like this? Describe it in words as well as formulas. (Is it physically realizable?)

Many students thought that the units of C would be volts. Many students took this as the E field from a line of charge.

Q3. ALLOWED E FIELDS (out of 10: ave 8, median 9) – Ch2 – voltage

Which of the following two static E-fields is physically *impossible*. Why?

i) $\mathbf{E} = c(2x\hat{\mathbf{i}} - x\hat{\mathbf{j}} + y\hat{\mathbf{k}})$

ii) $\mathbf{E} = c(2x\hat{\mathbf{i}} + z\hat{\mathbf{j}} + y\hat{\mathbf{k}})$

where c is a constant (with appropriate units)

For the one which IS possible, find the potential $V(r)$, using the *origin* as your reference point (i.e. setting $V(0)=0$)

- Check your answer by explicitly computing the gradient of V .

Note: you must select a specific path to integrate along. It doesn't matter which path you choose, since the answer is path-independent, but you can't compute a line integral without having a particular path in mind, so be explicit about that in your solution.

Students still struggle with the mechanics of doing a line integral. For example, they'd say $\int z \, dy = zy$, without noticing that $z=0$ along the segment they were integrating over!

Q4. FINDING VOLTAGE FROM CHARGE DISTRIBUTION - Ch2-voltage

a) (out of 10: ave 8, median 9) Find a formula for the electrostatic potential $V(z)$ everywhere along the symmetry-axis of a charged ring (radius a , centered on the z -axis, with uniform linear charge density λ around the ring) Please use the method of direct integration (Griffiths 2.30, on p. 85) to do this, and set your reference point to be $V(\infty)=0$.
- Sketch $V(z)$.

- How does $V(z)$ behave as $z \rightarrow \infty$? (Don't just say it goes to 0. HOW does it go to zero? Does your answer make physical sense to you? Briefly, explain.)

b) (out of 10: ave 8.4, median 9) Use your result from part a for $V(0,0,z)$ to find the z -component of the E field anywhere along the z -axis.

- What is the Voltage at the origin?

- What is the E field right at the origin?

- Do both of these results (for V , and E , at the origin) make physical sense to you, and are they consistent with each other? Explain briefly!

Many students are not thinking about the integral form for finding voltage as being a "sum over dq 's." Many people set up the integral form for voltage, but then their " λdL " became " λdz " so the integral was difficult. A lot of people miss the point about the consistency between E and V at $z=0$. Only about 20% of students get the correct graph in (a). A common mistake is to draw a sharp peak at $z=0$ or blowing up at $z=0$. Still some issues about expanding for large z .

Q4, CALCULATING VOLTAGE FROM E FIELD – Ch2 - voltage

Last week, we investigated the electric field outside an infinite line that runs along the z-axis,

$$\vec{E} = \frac{2\lambda}{4\pi\epsilon_0} \frac{\vec{s}}{s^2}.$$

a) ([Ave 7.4](#), [median 8 on a and b](#)) This field may look similar to Q2 above, but it is *not* the same - how is it different?

- Find the potential $V(s)$ for points a distance "s" away from the z-axis.

(Note: you will have to be very careful to compute a difference of potentials between two points, or something similar, to avoid integrals which are infinite! You'll discuss this in part b)

- Check your answer by explicitly taking the gradient of V to make sure it gives you \vec{E} .

b) Briefly discuss the question of "reference point": where did you set $V=0$? Can you use $s=\infty$, or $s=0$, as the reference point, $V(s)=0$, here?

- How would your answer change if I told you that I wanted you to set $V=0$ at a distance $s=3$ meters away from the z-axis?

- Why is there trouble with setting $V(\infty)=0$? (our usual choice), or $V(0)=0$ (often our second choice).

c) ([Ave 8](#), [median 10](#)) A typical Colorado lightning bolt might transfer a few Coulombs of charge in a stroke. Although lightning is clearly not remotely "electrostatic", let's pretend it is - consider a brief period during the stroke, and assume all the charges are fairly uniformly distributed in a long thin line. If you see the lightning stroke, and then a few seconds later hear the thunder, make a *very rough* estimate of the resulting voltage difference across a distance the size of your heart. (For you to think about - why is this not worrisome?)

What's the model? I am thinking of a lightning strike as looking rather like a long uniform line of charge... You've done the "physics" of this in the previous parts! (But e.g., you need a numerical estimate for λ . How long might that lightning bolt be? For estimation problems, don't worry about the small details, you can be off by 3, or even 10, I just don't want you off by factors of 1000's!)

Students often plugged away at the problem without asking why you couldn't set $V(\infty)=0$; they could do the problem but not interpret it. So Many people argue that $s=\text{infinity}$ is not a good reference point because the line charge extends to infinity, thus creating a singularity; however, the line charge extends in z, not s.

Q5. SCREENED POTENTIAL – ch2 - potential

Consider the “screened Coulomb potential” of a point charge of charge q that arises, e.g.

in plasma physics: $V(\mathbf{r}) = \frac{q}{4\pi\epsilon_0} \frac{e^{-r/\lambda}}{r}$, where λ is a constant (called the screening length).

a) (Ave 4, median 5 out of 5) Determine the E-field $\mathbf{E}(\mathbf{r})$ associated with this potential.

b) (Ave 6.2, median 7.5) Find the charge distribution $\rho(\mathbf{r})$ that produces this potential.

(Think carefully about what happens at the origin!)

- Sketch this function $\rho(\mathbf{r})$ in a manner that clearly describes its characteristics (i.e. what's the best way of representing this three-dimensional charge distribution? Use it, and explain what you're plotting).

c) (Ave 3.5, median 3.5 out of 5) Show by explicit calculation over $\rho(\mathbf{r})$ that the net charge represented by this distribution is zero (!) (If you don't get zero, think again about what happens at $r=0$)

- Verify this result using the integral form of Gauss' law (i.e. integrate your electric flux over a *very large* spherical surface. By Gauss, that should tell you $Q(\text{enclosed})$)

This one is clearly very hard (because there is a subtle trick at the origin, where a delta function appears!). Almost every student required instructor help in discovering the delta function. Students did not make a lot of effort to physically interpret their answer. The problem could be reworded to explicitly ask what the system “looks like” near the origin. It may also be worthwhile to tell or ask what is “screened” about this potential. Many students forget to use the correct direction when calculating \mathbf{E} .

Extra credit (worth half of any of the above, but *won't* count off if you don't do it)

It is possible to separate normal seeds from discolored ones (or foreign objects) by means of a device that operates as follows. The seeds drop one by one between a pair of photocells. If the color is wrong, a needle deposits a small charge on the seed. The seeds then fall between a pair of electrically charged plates that deflect the undesired ones into a separate bin. (One such machine can sort about 2 metric tons per 24 hour day!)

Setup: If 100 seeds fall per sec, over what distance must they fall if they are to be spaced vertically by 20 mm when they pass between the photocells? (Neglect air resistance.)

Then: Assume the seeds are about 1 gram, and acquire a charge of 1nC (that's nano, $1\text{E}-9$), the deflecting plates are parallel and 1cm apart, and the potential difference between them is 10,000 volts. How far should the plates extend below the charging needle if the charged seeds must deflect by 45 mm after leaving the plates? (Assume the charging needle and the top of the deflecting plates are close to the photocell.)

Phys 3310, HW #4, Due in class Wed Feb 6.

Very few people did this. Most have the right approach but are off by a large amount. Some get a number which does not make physical sense.