



AS Level Physics

Chapter 2 – Mechanics

2.10.1 Collisions and Explosions

Notes

MOMENTUM AND COLLISIONS

Momentum:

The momentum of an object is the product of its mass and velocity.

$$p = m \times v$$

where:

p = Momentum measured in $kg\ ms^{-1}$.

m = mass measured in kg .

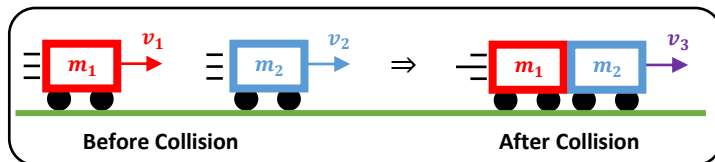
v = velocity measured in ms^{-1} .

Momentum is a vector and therefore has both magnitude and direction. This means momentum to the right can be considered positive and momentum to the left can be negative.

THE PRINCIPLE OF CONSERVATION OF MOMENTUM

“The total momentum is conserved in collisions provided there are no external forces (e.g. friction)”

This means that in a collision total momentum before the collision is equal to the total momentum after the collision.



Total momentum before collision = Total momentum after collision

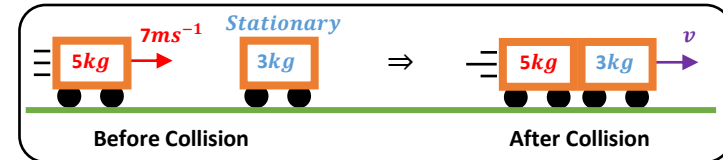
$$m_1v_1 + m_2v_2 = (m_1 + m_2)v_3$$



MOMENTUM AND COLLISIONS

Worked Example 1:

A $5kg$ mass travelling at $7\ ms^{-1}$ collides with a stationary $3kg$ mass and sticks to it. Calculate the velocity just after impact.



Answer:

Total momentum before = Total momentum after

$$m_1v_1 + m_2v_2 = (m_1 + m_2)v_3$$

$$(5kg \times 7ms^{-1}) + (3kg \times 0ms^{-1}) = (5kg + 3kg)v$$

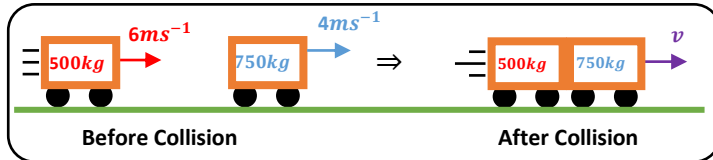
$$35 = 8v$$

$$v = 4.4ms^{-1} \text{ to the right}$$

MOMENTUM AND COLLISIONS

Worked Example 2:

A car with a mass 500 kg travels at a speed of 6ms^{-1} . It collides and joins with a 750 kg car travelling at 4ms^{-1} . Calculate the velocity of the cars just after the impact.



Answer:

Total momentum before = Total momentum after

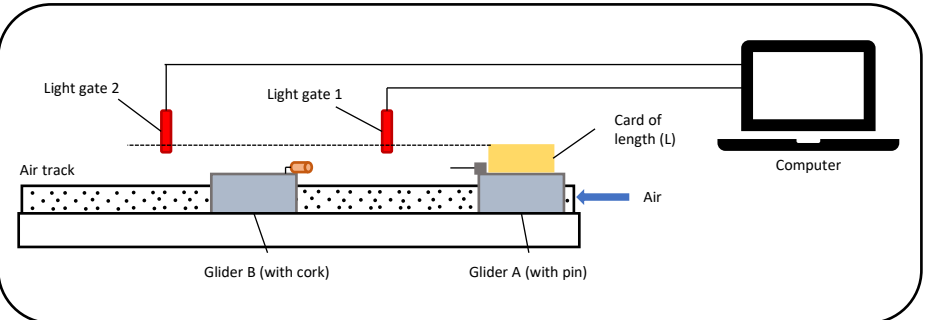
$$m_1v_1 + m_2v_2 = (m_1 + m_2)v_3$$

$$(500\text{kg} \times 6\text{ms}^{-1}) + (750\text{kg} \times 4\text{ms}^{-1}) = (500\text{kg} + 750\text{kg})v$$

$$6000 = 1200v$$

$$v = 5\text{ms}^{-1} \text{ to the right}$$

EXPERIMENT TO TEST THE CONSERVATION OF MOMENTUM



- 1) Set up the equipment as shown on the above diagram.
- 2) Start by measuring the masses of gliders 1 & 2 using an electronic balance.
- 3) Glider A is pushed towards the stationary Glider B. Using a computer, Glider A's speed (v_1) is calculated when it passes light gate 1 by using the formula below:

$$v_1 = \frac{\text{length of card going through the light-gate}}{\text{time taken for card to pass through the light-gate}} = \frac{L}{t}$$

- Glider A then collides with Glider B, piercing the pin into the cork. This results in the two gliders sticking together.
- The two attached gliders then pass through light-gate 2 and their common speed (v_2) is calculated by the computer.
- Make sure to only record the before and after velocities when the gliders collide and the pin pierces the cork forming one mass.
- Repeat the experiment at least 3 more times.

Result: From the experiment you should see the momentum before the collision is equal to the momentum after the collision.



TYPES OF COLLISIONS

In any collision between two objects:

1) Total momentum is always conserved (as long as no external forces act on the system).

2) Total energy is always conserved.

(This is due to the principle of conservation of energy which states that energy cannot be created nor destroyed, it can only be converted from one form into another).

- **However, kinetic energy (KE) can or cannot be conserved.**
There are two types of collisions:

1. Elastic Collision:

An elastic collision is where kinetic energy (KE) and momentum is conserved.

i.e. total KE before collision = total KE after collision.

2. Inelastic Collision:

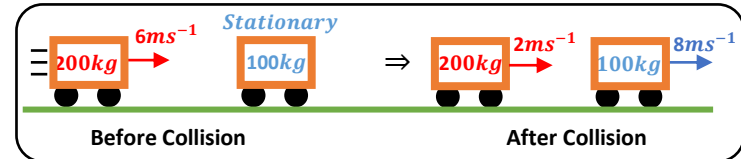
An Inelastic collision is where kinetic energy (KE) is NOT conserved however momentum is conserved.

$$\text{Total KE after collision} < \text{Total KE before collision}$$

TYPES OF COLLISIONS

Elastic Collision Worked Example 1:

A 200kg car travels with a speed of 6ms^{-1} and collides with a stationary 100kg vehicle. Following the collision, the 200kg vehicle moves off at 2ms^{-1} and the 100kg vehicle at 8ms^{-1} . Show the collision is elastic.



Answer:

Momentum:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Before:} \\ m_1v_1 + m_2v_2 \\ (200\text{kg} \times 6\text{ms}^{-1}) + (100\text{kg} \times 0\text{ms}^{-1}) \\ \text{Momentum Before} = 1200\text{kgms}^{-1} \end{aligned}$$

$$\begin{aligned} \text{After:} \\ m_1v_3 + m_2v_4 \\ (200\text{kg} \times 2\text{ms}^{-1}) + (100\text{kg} \times 8\text{ms}^{-1}) \\ \text{Momentum After} = 1200\text{kgms}^{-1} \end{aligned}$$

Momentum has been conserved.

Kinetic Energy:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Before:} \\ E_K \text{ total} = \frac{1}{2}m_1v_1^2 + \frac{1}{2}m_2v_2^2 \\ \left(\frac{1}{2} \times 200\text{kg} \times (6\text{ms}^{-1})^2\right) + \left(\frac{1}{2} \times 100\text{kg} \times (0\text{ms}^{-1})^2\right) \\ E_K \text{ total Before} = 3600\text{J} \end{aligned}$$

$$\begin{aligned} \text{After:} \\ E_K \text{ total} = \frac{1}{2}m_1v_3^2 + \frac{1}{2}m_2v_4^2 \\ \left(\frac{1}{2} \times 200\text{kg} \times (2\text{ms}^{-1})^2\right) + \left(\frac{1}{2} \times 100\text{kg} \times (8\text{ms}^{-1})^2\right) \\ E_K \text{ total After} = 3600\text{J} \end{aligned}$$

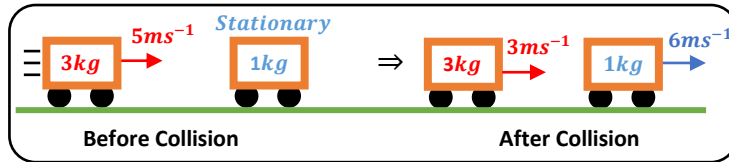
Kinetic Energy has been conserved.

As momentum and kinetic energy are conserved this is an elastic collision.

TYPES OF COLLISIONS

Inelastic Collision Worked Example 1:

A 3kg block is travelling at 5ms^{-1} when it collides with a stationary 1kg trolley. Then, they move off at 3ms^{-1} and 6ms^{-1} respectively. Show that this collision is inelastic.



Answer:

Momentum:

Before:

$$m_1v_1 + m_2v_2 \\ (3\text{kg} \times 5\text{ms}^{-1}) + (1\text{kg} \times 0\text{ms}^{-1}) \\ \text{Momentum Before} = 15\text{kgms}^{-1}$$

After:

$$m_1v_3 + m_2v_4 \\ (3\text{kg} \times 3\text{ms}^{-1}) + (1\text{kg} \times 6\text{ms}^{-1}) \\ \text{Momentum After} = 15\text{kgms}^{-1}$$

Momentum has been conserved.

Kinetic Energy:

Before:

$$E_K \text{ total} = \frac{1}{2}m_1v_1^2 + \frac{1}{2}m_2v_2^2 \\ \left(\frac{1}{2} \times 3\text{kg} \times (5\text{ms}^{-1})^2\right) + \left(\frac{1}{2} \times 1\text{kg} \times (0\text{ms}^{-1})^2\right) \\ E_K \text{ total Before} = 37.5\text{J}$$

After:

$$E_K \text{ total} = \frac{1}{2}m_1v_3^2 + \frac{1}{2}m_2v_4^2 \\ \left(\frac{1}{2} \times 3\text{kg} \times (3\text{ms}^{-1})^2\right) + \left(\frac{1}{2} \times 1\text{kg} \times (6\text{ms}^{-1})^2\right) \\ E_K \text{ total After} = 31.5\text{J}$$

Kinetic Energy has NOT been conserved.

As momentum is conserved and KE is not conserved this is an inelastic collision.

TYPES OF COLLISIONS

Note:

In reality, most collisions are inelastic because some KE is always converted to heat and sound energy on impact.

Perfectly Inelastic

A perfectly inelastic collision is where all the initial energy is transferred to other energy forms (i.e. heat or sound) therefore:

$$KE \text{ after collision} = 0$$



TYPES OF COLLISIONS

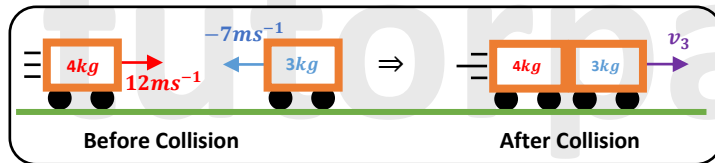
HEAD ON COLLISIONS

Head on collisions occur when objects travel in opposite directions but towards each other. If one objects direction/velocity is POSITIVE, the other objects direction/velocity has to be NEGATIVE.

Worked Example 1:

A 4kg object moves at 12ms^{-1} and collides head-on with a 3kg object travelling at 7ms^{-1} . After the collision, they both move off together.

- Calculate the velocity of the objects immediately after they collide.
- Find out if the collision is elastic or inelastic.



TYPES OF COLLISIONS

Answer:

Momentum:

Momentum is conserved therefore:

Total momentum before = Total momentum after

$$m_1v_1 + m_2v_2 = (m_1 + m_2)v_3$$

$$(4\text{kg} \times 12\text{ms}^{-1}) + (3\text{kg} \times -7\text{ms}^{-1}) = (4\text{kg} + 3\text{kg})v$$

$$48 - 21 = 7v$$

$$7v = 27$$

$$v_3 = 3.86\text{ms}^{-1} \text{ to the right}$$

Kinetic Energy:

Before:

$$E_K \text{ total} = \frac{1}{2}m_1v_1^2 + \frac{1}{2}m_2v_2^2$$
$$\left(\frac{1}{2} \times 4\text{kg} \times (12\text{ms}^{-1})^2\right) + \left(\frac{1}{2} \times 3\text{kg} \times (-7\text{ms}^{-1})^2\right)$$
$$E_K \text{ total Before} = 361.5\text{J}$$

After:

$$E_K \text{ total} = \frac{1}{2}(m_1+m_2)v_3^2$$
$$\left(\frac{1}{2} \times 7\text{kg} \times (3.86\text{ms}^{-1})^2\right)$$
$$E_K \text{ total After} = 52.1\text{J}$$

Kinetic Energy has NOT been conserved **therefore this is an inelastic collision.**

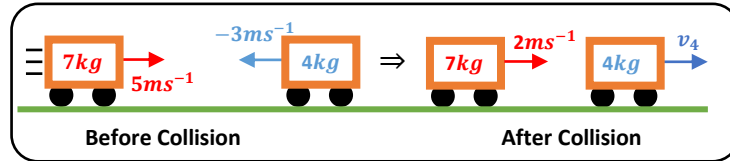


TYPES OF COLLISIONS

HEAD ON COLLISIONS

Worked Example 2:

Two objects collide as shown:



- Calculate the velocity at which the 4kg object moves immediately after impact
- Find out if the collision is elastic or inelastic

Answer:

Momentum:

Momentum is conserved therefore:

$$\text{Total momentum before} = \text{Total momentum after}$$

$$m_1v_1 + m_2v_2 = m_3v_3 + m_4v_4$$

$$(7\text{kg} \times 5\text{ms}^{-1}) + (4\text{kg} \times -3\text{ms}^{-1}) = (7\text{kg} \times 2\text{ms}^{-1}) + (4\text{kg} \times v_4)$$

$$23 - 14 = 4v_4$$

$$4v_4 = 9$$

$$v_4 = 2.25\text{ms}^{-1} \text{ to the right}$$

TYPES OF COLLISIONS

HEAD ON COLLISIONS

Worked Example 2:

Solution: Continued

Kinetic Energy:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Before:} \\ E_K \text{ total} &= \frac{1}{2}m_1v_1^2 + \frac{1}{2}m_2v_2^2 \\ &= \left(\frac{1}{2} \times 7\text{kg} \times (5\text{ms}^{-1})^2\right) + \left(\frac{1}{2} \times 4\text{kg} \times (-3\text{ms}^{-1})^2\right) \\ E_K \text{ total Before} &= 105.5\text{J} \end{aligned}$$

$$\begin{aligned} \text{After:} \\ E_K \text{ total} &= \frac{1}{2}m_1v_3^2 + \frac{1}{2}m_2v_4^2 \\ &= \left(\frac{1}{2} \times 7\text{kg} \times (2\text{ms}^{-1})^2\right) + \left(\frac{1}{2} \times 4\text{kg} \times (2.25\text{ms}^{-1})^2\right) \\ E_K \text{ total After} &= 24.13\text{J} \end{aligned}$$

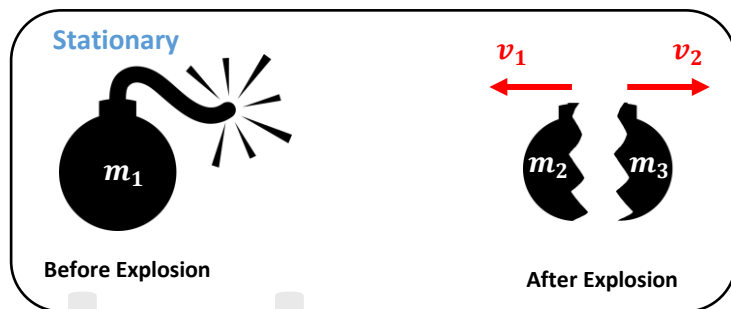
KE is not conserved therefore it is an inelastic collision.



EXPLOSIONS

In an explosion the objects fragments travel in opposite directions away from each other. If one fragments direction/velocity is POSITIVE, the other fragments direction/velocity has to be NEGATIVE.

In all explosions momentum is conserved



Total momentum before = total momentum after

$$m_1 v_1 = m_2 v_2 + m_3 v_3$$

$$0 = m_2(-v_2) + m_3 v_3$$

$$0 = -m_2 v_2 + m_3 v_3$$

Total momentum before is 0 because the bomb is stationary

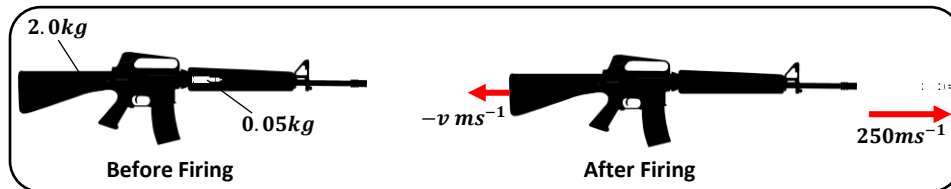
EXPLOSIONS

Worked Example 1:

A 5kg gun fires a 0.1kg bullet at $80ms^{-1}$.

After shooting the bullet, the gun recoils.

Calculate the gun's recoil speed.



Answer:

Total momentum before = Total momentum after

$$0 = (0.05kg \times 250ms^{-1}) + (2.0kg \times -v ms^{-1})$$

$$v = \frac{12.5}{2.0}$$

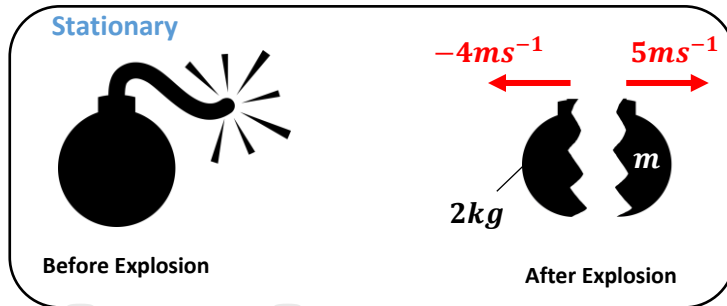
$$v = 6.25ms^{-1}$$



EXPLOSIONS

Worked Example 2:

A bomb initially at rest explodes into two fragments. One fragment with mass of 2kg moves off with a speed of 4ms^{-1} . The other fragment moves off in the opposite direction with a speed of 5ms^{-1} . Calculate the mass of this fragment.



Answer:

Total momentum before = Total momentum after

$$m_1v_1 = m_2v_2 + m_3v_3$$

$$0 = (2\text{kg} \times -4\text{ms}^{-1}) + (m \times \text{ms}^{-1})$$

$$5m = 8$$

$$m = 1.6\text{kg}$$

Please see '**2.10.2 Collisions and Explosions Worked Examples**' pack for exam style questions.



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