

Example Sheet 1

Values of some physical constants are given in the supplementary notes

1. When a sample of potassium is illuminated with light of wavelength $3 \times 10^{-7} \text{m}$, electrons are emitted with kinetic energy 2.1 eV. When the same sample is illuminated with light of wavelength $5 \times 10^{-7} \text{m}$ it emits electrons with kinetic energy 0.5 eV. Use Einstein's explanation of this *photoelectric effect* to obtain a value for Planck's constant, and find the minimum energy W needed to free an electron from the surface of potassium.

2. The light from a faint star has energy flux $10^{-10} \text{Jm}^{-2}\text{s}^{-1}$. If the wavelength of the light is $5 \times 10^{-7} \text{m}$, estimate the number of photons from this star that enter a human eye in one second.

3. Consider the Bohr model of the Hydrogen atom, taking the electron to be a non-relativistic point particle of mass m travelling with speed v in a circular orbit of radius r around a point-like proton. The inward acceleration v^2/r must be provided by the Coulomb attraction $e^2/4\pi\epsilon_0 r^2$, and the angular momentum is assumed to be quantised: $L = mvr = n\hbar$, with $n = 1, 2, 3, \dots$. Show that the possible energy levels for the electron are

$$E = -\frac{1}{2}mc^2\alpha^2\frac{1}{n^2}$$

where α is the fine structure constant.

(i) Is the result for v consistent with the assumption that the motion of the electron is non-relativistic?

(ii) Suppose that the electron makes a transition from one energy level to another, emitting a photon in the process. What is the smallest possible wavelength for the emitted photon, and how does this compare to the Bohr radius r_1 (corresponding to $n = 1$)?

4. A muon is a particle with the same charge as an electron, but with a mass about 207 times larger. A muon can be captured by a proton to form an atom of muonic hydrogen. How does the radius of the $n = 1$ state orbit compare to that of ordinary hydrogen?

Nuclei of atoms of hydrogen and its isotopes can fuse, releasing energy and creating hydrogen or helium isotope nuclei. The fusion rate is very sensitive to the distance between nuclei, increasing sharply as they get closer. What are the implications for muonic hydrogen fusion?

(If you are interested, you might wish to look into the possibilities and difficulties of so-called muon-catalysed fusion.)

5. The time-independent Schrödinger Equation for a one-dimensional harmonic oscillator is

$$-\frac{\hbar^2}{2m} \frac{d^2\psi}{dx^2} + \frac{1}{2}Kx^2\psi = E\psi$$

where m is the mass and the constant K gives the strength of the restoring force. Verify that there are energy eigenfunctions of the form

$$\psi_0(x) = C_0 e^{-x^2/2\alpha}, \quad \psi_1(x) = C_1 x e^{-x^2/2\alpha}$$

for a certain value of α , to be determined, and find the corresponding energy eigenvalues E_0 and E_1 . Sketch ψ_0 , ψ_1 , and $V(x)$. (C_0 and C_1 are normalisation constants that you need not determine.)

6. For the harmonic oscillator in Example 5, write down the time-dependent Schrödinger Equation satisfied by $\Psi(x, t)$ and give the solution for each of the following initial conditions:

$$(i) \quad \Psi(x, 0) = \psi_0(x), \quad (ii) \quad \Psi(x, 0) = \psi_1(x), \quad (iii) \quad \Psi(x, 0) = \frac{1}{2}(\sqrt{3}\psi_0(x) - i\psi_1(x)).$$

For the solution in case (iii), what is the first time $T > 0$ at which $\Psi(x, T)$ and $\Psi(x, 0)$ correspond to physically equivalent states?

7. A particle of mass m moves freely in one dimension ($V = 0$). Consider the wavefunction

$$\Psi(x, t) = C \gamma(t)^{-1/2} \exp(-x^2/2\gamma(t)),$$

where $\gamma(t)$ is complex-valued and C is a constant. By substituting into the time-dependent Schrödinger equation, find a necessary and sufficient condition on $\gamma(t)$ for $\Psi(x, t)$ to be a solution. Hence determine $\gamma(t)$ if $\gamma(0) = \alpha$, a real positive constant.

Write down and simplify an expression for the probability density for the particle at time t and find a value for the constant C such that $\Psi(x, t)$ is normalised. Comment briefly on the behaviour of the probability density as t increases.

8. Consider a particle in one dimension in a potential $V(x)$ that tends to zero rapidly as $x \rightarrow \pm\infty$.

(i) Let $\psi_1(x)$ and $\psi_2(x)$ be normalisable energy eigenfunctions of the Hamiltonian with the same energy eigenvalue E . By considering $\psi_1 \psi_2' - \psi_2 \psi_1'$, show that ψ_1 and ψ_2 must be proportional to one another. What does this mean, physically?

(ii) Can the wavefunction for a normalised energy eigenstate always be chosen to be real?

(iii) Show that if $\psi(x)$ is any normalised energy eigenstate then $\langle \hat{p} \rangle_\psi = 0$.

9. Write down the time-independent Schrödinger equation for the wavefunction of a particle moving in a potential $V = -U\delta(x)$, where U is a positive constant and $\delta(x)$ is the Dirac delta function. Integrate the equation over the interval $-\epsilon < x < \epsilon$, for a positive constant ϵ , and hence deduce that there is a discontinuity at $x = 0$ in the derivative of $\psi(x)$:

$$\lim_{\epsilon \rightarrow 0} [\psi'(\epsilon) - \psi'(-\epsilon)] = -\frac{2mU}{\hbar^2} \psi(0).$$

By using this condition to relate appropriate solutions for $x > 0$ and $x < 0$, find the unique normalisable eigenstate of the Hamiltonian, and determine its energy eigenvalue.

10. Consider a square well potential with $V(x) = -U$ for $|x| < a$ and $V(x) = 0$ otherwise (U is a positive constant). Show that there are no bound states (normalisable energy eigenfunctions) which satisfy $\psi(-x) = -\psi(x)$ (i.e. which have odd parity) if $a^2 U < (\pi\hbar)^2/8m$.

11. Sketch the potential

$$V(x) = -\frac{\hbar^2}{m} \operatorname{sech}^2 x.$$

Show that the time-independent Schrödinger equation for a particle in this potential can be written

$$A^\dagger A \psi = (\mathcal{E} + 1)\psi$$

where $\mathcal{E} = 2mE/\hbar^2$ and

$$A = \frac{d}{dx} + \tanh x, \quad A^\dagger = -\frac{d}{dx} + \tanh x.$$

Show, by integrating by parts, that for any normalised wavefunction ψ ,

$$\int_{-\infty}^{\infty} \psi^* A^\dagger A \psi dx = \int_{-\infty}^{\infty} (A\psi)^* (A\psi) dx$$

and deduce that the eigenvalues of $A^\dagger A$ are non-negative. Hence show that the ground state (with lowest energy) has $\mathcal{E} \geq -1$. Show that a wavefunction $\psi_0(x)$ is an energy eigenstate with $\mathcal{E} = -1$ iff

$$\frac{d\psi_0}{dx} + \tanh x \psi_0 = 0.$$

Find and sketch $\psi_0(x)$.

12. A double slit experiment with electrons is described at

<http://www.hitachi.com/rd/portal/highlight/quantum/doubleslit/index.html>

Explain why neither a wave model nor a particle model of the electron adequately accounts for the results. Try to think of other simple models that might. (Warning: theorists have been trying since 1926, and every idea to date has problems. The aim of this exercise is for you to appreciate the problems, not to solve them.)

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