

Foundation Mathematics for the Physical Sciences

This tutorial-style textbook develops the basic mathematical tools needed by first- and second-year undergraduates to solve problems in the physical sciences. Students gain hands-on experience through hundreds of worked examples, end-of-section exercises, self-test questions and homework problems.

Each chapter includes a summary of the main results, definitions and formulae. Over 270 worked examples show how to put the tools into practice. Around 170 self-test questions in the footnotes and 300 end-of-section exercises give students an instant check of their understanding. More than 450 end-of-chapter problems allow students to put what they have just learned into practice.

Hints and outline answers to the odd-numbered problems are given at the end of each chapter. Complete solutions to these problems can be found in the accompanying *Student Solution Manual*. Fully worked solutions to all the problems, password-protected for instructors, are available at www.cambridge.org/foundation.

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Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-19273-6 - Foundation Mathematics for the Physical Sciences
K. F. Riley and M. P. Hobson
Frontmatter
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CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

University Printing House, Cambridge CB2 8BS, United Kingdom

Cambridge University Press is part of the University of Cambridge.

It furthers the University's mission by disseminating knowledge in the pursuit of education, learning and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9780521192736

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First published 2011

Reprinted 2014

Printed in the United Kingdom by TJ International Ltd, Padstow, Cornwall

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloguing in Publication data

Riley, K. F. (Kenneth Franklin), 1936–

Foundation mathematics for the physical sciences : a tutorial guide / K. F. Riley, M. P. Hobson.

p. cm.

Includes index.

ISBN 978-0-521-19273-6

1. Mathematics. I. Hobson, M. P. (Michael Paul), 1967– II. Title.

QA37.3.R56 2011

510 – dc22 2010041510

ISBN 978-0-521-19273-6 Hardback

Additional resources for this publication: www.cambridge.org/foundation

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Contents

<i>Preface</i>	<i>page xi</i>
1 Arithmetic and geometry	1
1.1 Powers	1
1.2 Exponential and logarithmic functions	7
1.3 Physical dimensions	15
1.4 The binomial expansion	20
1.5 Trigonometric identities	24
1.6 Inequalities	32
Summary	40
Problems	42
Hints and answers	49
2 Preliminary algebra	52
2.1 Polynomials and polynomial equations	53
2.2 Coordinate geometry	64
2.3 Partial fractions	74
2.4 Some particular methods of proof	84
Summary	91
Problems	93
Hints and answers	99
3 Differential calculus	102
3.1 Differentiation	102
3.2 Leibnitz’s theorem	112
3.3 Special points of a function	114
3.4 Curvature of a function	116
3.5 Theorems of differentiation	120
3.6 Graphs	124
Summary	133
Problems	134
Hints and answers	138

4	Integral calculus	141
4.1	Integration	141
4.2	Integration methods	146
4.3	Integration by parts	152
4.4	Reduction formulae	155
4.5	Infinite and improper integrals	156
4.6	Integration in plane polar coordinates	159
4.7	Integral inequalities	160
4.8	Applications of integration	161
	Summary	168
	Problems	170
	Hints and answers	173
5	Complex numbers and hyperbolic functions	174
5.1	The need for complex numbers	174
5.2	Manipulation of complex numbers	176
5.3	Polar representation of complex numbers	185
5.4	De Moivre's theorem	189
5.5	Complex logarithms and complex powers	194
5.6	Applications to differentiation and integration	196
5.7	Hyperbolic functions	197
	Summary	205
	Problems	206
	Hints and answers	211
6	Series and limits	213
6.1	Series	213
6.2	Summation of series	215
6.3	Convergence of infinite series	224
6.4	Operations with series	232
6.5	Power series	233
6.6	Taylor series	238
6.7	Evaluation of limits	244
	Summary	248
	Problems	250
	Hints and answers	257
7	Partial differentiation	259
7.1	Definition of the partial derivative	259
7.2	The total differential and total derivative	261
7.3	Exact and inexact differentials	264
7.4	Useful theorems of partial differentiation	266

7.5	The chain rule	267
7.6	Change of variables	268
7.7	Taylor's theorem for many-variable functions	270
7.8	Stationary values of two-variable functions	272
7.9	Stationary values under constraints	276
7.10	Envelopes	282
7.11	Thermodynamic relations	285
7.12	Differentiation of integrals	288
	Summary	290
	Problems	292
	Hints and answers	299
8	Multiple integrals	301
8.1	Double integrals	301
8.2	Applications of multiple integrals	305
8.3	Change of variables in multiple integrals	315
	Summary	324
	Problems	325
	Hints and answers	329
9	Vector algebra	331
9.1	Scalars and vectors	331
9.2	Addition, subtraction and multiplication of vectors	332
9.3	Basis vectors, components and magnitudes	336
9.4	Multiplication of two vectors	339
9.5	Triple products	346
9.6	Equations of lines, planes and spheres	348
9.7	Using vectors to find distances	353
9.8	Reciprocal vectors	357
	Summary	359
	Problems	361
	Hints and answers	368
10	Matrices and vector spaces	369
10.1	Vector spaces	370
10.2	Linear operators	374
10.3	Matrices	376
10.4	Basic matrix algebra	377
10.5	The transpose and conjugates of a matrix	383
10.6	The trace of a matrix	385

10.7	The determinant of a matrix	386
10.8	The inverse of a matrix	392
10.9	The rank of a matrix	395
10.10	Simultaneous linear equations	397
10.11	Special types of square matrix	408
10.12	Eigenvectors and eigenvalues	412
10.13	Determination of eigenvalues and eigenvectors	418
10.14	Change of basis and similarity transformations	421
10.15	Diagonalisation of matrices	424
10.16	Quadratic and Hermitian forms	427
10.17	The summation convention	432
	Summary	433
	Problems	437
	Hints and answers	445

11 Vector calculus 448

11.1	Differentiation of vectors	448
11.2	Integration of vectors	453
11.3	Vector functions of several arguments	454
11.4	Surfaces	455
11.5	Scalar and vector fields	458
11.6	Vector operators	458
11.7	Vector operator formulae	465
11.8	Cylindrical and spherical polar coordinates	469
11.9	General curvilinear coordinates	476
	Summary	482
	Problems	483
	Hints and answers	490

12 Line, surface and volume integrals 491

12.1	Line integrals	491
12.2	Connectivity of regions	497
12.3	Green's theorem in a plane	498
12.4	Conservative fields and potentials	502
12.5	Surface integrals	504
12.6	Volume integrals	511
12.7	Integral forms for grad, div and curl	513
12.8	Divergence theorem and related theorems	517
12.9	Stokes' theorem and related theorems	523
	Summary	527
	Problems	528
	Hints and answers	534

13	Laplace transforms	536
13.1	Laplace transforms	537
13.2	The Dirac δ -function and Heaviside step function	541
13.3	Laplace transforms of derivatives and integrals	544
13.4	Other properties of Laplace transforms	546
	Summary	549
	Problems	550
	Hints and answers	552
14	Ordinary differential equations	554
14.1	General form of solution	555
14.2	First-degree first-order equations	557
14.3	Higher degree first-order equations	565
14.4	Higher order linear ODEs	569
14.5	Linear equations with constant coefficients	572
14.6	Linear recurrence relations	579
	Summary	585
	Problems	587
	Hints and answers	595
15	Elementary probability	597
15.1	Venn diagrams	597
15.2	Probability	602
15.3	Permutations and combinations	612
15.4	Random variables and distributions	618
15.5	Properties of distributions	623
15.6	Functions of random variables	628
15.7	Important discrete distributions	632
15.8	Important continuous distributions	643
15.9	Joint distributions	655
	Summary	661
	Problems	664
	Hints and answers	670
A	The base for natural logarithms	673
B	Sinusoidal definitions	676
C	Leibnitz's theorem	679

Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-19273-6 - Foundation Mathematics for the Physical Sciences
K. F. Riley and M. P. Hobson
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

Contents

D	Summation convention	681
E	Physical constants	684
F	Footnote answers	685
	<i>Index</i>	706

Preface

Since *Mathematical Methods for Physics and Engineering* by Riley, Hobson and Bence (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), hereafter denoted by *MMPE*, was first published, the range of material it covers has increased with each subsequent edition (2002 and 2006). Most of the additions have been in the form of introductory material covering polynomial equations, partial fractions, binomial expansions, coordinate geometry and a variety of basic methods of proof, though the third edition of *MMPE* also extended the range, but not the general level, of the areas to which the methods developed in the book could be applied. Recent feedback suggests that still further adjustments would be beneficial. In so far as content is concerned, the inclusion of some additional introductory material such as powers, logarithms, the sinusoidal and exponential functions, inequalities and the handling of physical dimensions, would make the starting level of the book better match that of some of its readers.

To incorporate these changes, and others aimed at increasing the user-friendliness of the text, into the current third edition of *MMPE* would inevitably produce a text that would be too ponderous for many students, to say nothing of the problems the physical production and transportation of such a large volume would entail.

For these reasons, we present under the current title, *Foundation Mathematics for the Physical Sciences*, an alternative edition of *MMPE*, one that focuses on the earlier part of a putative extended third edition. It omits those topics that truly are ‘methods’ and concentrates on the ‘mathematical tools’ that are used in more advanced texts to build up those methods. The emphasis is very much on developing the basic mathematical concepts that a physical scientist needs, before he or she can narrow their focus onto methods that are particularly appropriate to their chosen field.

One aspect that has remained constant throughout the three editions of *MMPE* is the general style of presentation of a topic – a qualitative introduction, physically based wherever possible, followed by a more formal presentation or proof, and finished with one or two full-worked examples. This format has been well received by reviewers, and there is no reason to depart from its basic structure.

In terms of style, many physical science students appear to be more comfortable with presentations that contain significant amounts of explanation or comment in words, rather than with a series of mathematical equations the last line of which implies ‘job done’. We have made changes that move the text in this direction. As is explained below, we also feel that if some of the advantages of small-group face-to-face teaching could be reflected in the written text, many students would find it beneficial.

In keeping with the intention of presenting a more ‘gentle’ introduction to university-level mathematics for the physical sciences, we have made use of a modest number of appendices. These contain the more formal mathematical developments associated with

Preface

the material introduced in the early chapters, and, in particular, with that discussed in the introductory chapter on arithmetic and geometry. They can be studied at the points in the main text where references are made to them, or deferred until a greater mathematical fluency has been acquired.

As indicated above, one of the advantages of an oral approach to teaching, apparent to some extent in the lecture situation, and certainly in what are usually known as tutorials,¹ is the opportunity to follow the exposition of any particular point with an immediate short, but probing, question that helps to establish whether or not the student has grasped that point. This facility is not normally available when instruction is through a written medium, without having available at least the equipment necessary to access the contents of a storage disc.

In this book we have tried to go some way towards remedying this by making a non-standard use of footnotes. Some footnotes are used in traditional ways, to add a comment or a pertinent but not essential piece of additional information, to clarify a point by restating it in slightly different terms, or to make reference to another part of the text or an external source. However, about half of the more than 300 footnotes in *this* book contain a question for the reader to answer or an instruction for them to follow; neither will call for a lengthy response, but in both cases an understanding of the associated material in the text will be required. This parallels the sort of follow-up a student might have to supply orally in a small-group tutorial, after a particular aspect of their written work has been discussed.

Naturally, students should attempt to respond to footnote questions using the skills and knowledge they have acquired, re-reading the relevant text if necessary, but if they are unsure of their answer, or wish to feel the satisfaction of having their correct response confirmed, they can consult the specimen answers given in Appendix F. Equally, footnotes in the form of observations will have served their purpose when students are consistently able to say to themselves ‘I didn’t need that comment – I had already spotted and checked that particular point’.

There are two further features of the present volume that did not appear in *MMPE*. The first of these is that a small set of exercises has been included at the end of each section. The questions posed are straightforward and designed to test whether the student has understood the concepts and procedures described in that section. The questions are not intended as ‘drill exercises’, with repeated use of the same procedure on marginally different sets of data; each concept is examined only once or twice within the set. There are, nevertheless, a total of more than 300 such exercises. The more demanding questions, and in particular those requiring the synthesis of several ideas from a chapter, are those that appear under the heading of ‘Problems’ at the end of that chapter; there are more than 450 of these.

The second new feature is the inclusion at the end of each chapter, just before the problems begin, of a summary of the main results of that chapter. For some areas, this takes the form of a tabulation of the various case types that may arise in the context of the chapter; this should help the student to see the parallels between situations which in the main text are presented as a consecutive series of often quite lengthy pieces of mathematical development. It should be said that in such a summary it is not possible to

¹ But in Cambridge are called ‘supervisions’!

Preface

state every detailed condition attached to each result, and the reader should consider the summaries as reminders and formulae providers, rather than as teaching text; that is the job of the main text and its footnotes. Fortunately, in this volume, occasions on which subtle conditions have to be imposed upon a result are rare.

Finally, we note, for the record, that the format and numbering of the problems associated with the various chapters have not been changed significantly from those in *MMPE*, though naturally only problems related to included topics are retained. This means that abbreviated solutions to all odd-numbered problems can be found in this text. Fully worked solutions to the same problems are available in the companion volume *Student Solution Manual for Foundation Mathematics for the Physical Sciences*; most of them, except for those in the first chapter, can also be found in the *Student Solution Manual for MMPE*.

Fully worked solutions to all problems, both odd- and even-numbered, are available to accredited instructors on the password-protected website www.cambridge.org/foundation. Instructors wishing to have access to the website should contact solutions@cambridge.org for registration details.