

Chapter N5: Statics

Physics I

College of the Atlantic

N5.1: Forces from Motion

This chapter explores further the idea that if we know how an object moves we can figure out stuff about the forces acting on that object.

N5.2: Introduction to Statics

Specifically, in this chapter we will consider objects at rest. Since such objects aren't moving, we know that $\vec{a} = 0$. By Newton's second law, the next *external* force acting on an object at rest must be zero.

$$\vec{F}_1 + \vec{F}_2 + \vec{F}_3 \cdots = 0. \quad (1)$$

Examples:

1. A 3kg object hangs from a string.
2. A 50 kg box rests on an inclined plane as shown. Find the normal force and the frictional force acting on the box if $\theta = 37$ degrees.

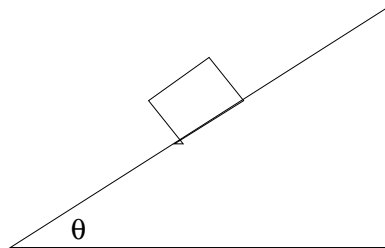


Figure 1:

N5.3 Statics Problems Involving Torque

Recall that the torque τ about a point O acting on an object is given by:

$$\vec{\tau} = \vec{r} \times \vec{F}, \quad (2)$$

where \vec{F} is the force acting on the object and \vec{r} is a vector that point from O to the point where the force acts on the object. Often the best way to think about this equation is:

$$\tau = r_{\perp} F = r F_{\perp}, \quad (3)$$

where the subscript \perp denotes the perpendicular part of a vector.

Example:

What is the torque about O exerted by the weight of the rod shown below? The rod has a mass of 70 kg and is 2 meters long.



In statics problems, the total external torque on the object must also be zero. (If it wasn't zero, the object would be rotationally accelerating.) Thus,

$$\vec{\tau}_1 + \vec{\tau}_2 + \vec{\tau}_3 + \dots = 0 . \tag{4}$$

Note that the above equation doesn't say anything about the point O about which we compute the torque. This is because O doesn't matter. If the object isn't rotating, its torque about *any* point is zero. Thus, we are free to choose any convenient point for O .

Equations (1) and (4) apply to any object at rest. These two equations can be used together to solve many, many different sorts of problems.

Example:

A uniform plank rests on two supports as shown. What are the magnitudes of the normal forces that each support exerts on the plank? The mass of the plank is 125 kg and it is 3 meters long.

