

# The Palmer Catholic Academy Science Department



*Ad Gloriam Dei et Servitium Omnium*

## A Level Physics Transition Work 2024

Name:.....

# Transition from GCSE to A Level

Moving from GCSE Science to A Level can be a daunting leap. You'll be expected to remember a lot more facts, equations, and definitions, and you will need to learn new maths skills and develop confidence in applying what you already know to unfamiliar situations.

This worksheet aims to give you a head start by helping you:

- to pre-learn some useful knowledge from the first chapters of your A Level course
- understand and practice of some of the maths skills you'll need.

## Retrieval questions

You need to be confident about the definitions of terms that describe measurements and results in A Level Physics.

Research the answers to the questions below

## Practical science key terms

When is a measurement valid?	
When is a result accurate?	
What are precise results?	
What is repeatability?	
What is reproducibility?	
What is the uncertainty of a measurement?	
Define measurement error	
What type of error is caused by results varying around the true value in an unpredictable way?	
What is a systematic error?	
What does zero error mean?	
Which variable is changed or selected by the investigator?	
What is a dependent variable?	
Define a fair test	
What are control variables?	

## Matter and radiation

What is an atom made up of?	
Define a <i>nucleon</i>	

What are the absolute charges of protons, neutrons, and electrons?	
What are the relative charges of protons, neutrons, and electrons?	
What is the mass, in kilograms, of a proton, a neutron, and an electron?	
What are the relative masses of protons, neutrons, and electrons?	
What is the atomic number of an element?	
Define an isotope	
Write what A, Z and X stand for in isotope notation ( ${}^A_ZX$ )?	
Which term is used for each type of nucleus?	
How do you calculate specific charge?	
What is the specific charge of a proton and an electron?	
Name the force that holds nuclei together	
What is the range of the strong nuclear force?	
Name the three kinds of radiation	
What particle is released in alpha radiation?	
Write the symbol of an alpha particle	
What particle is released in beta radiation?	
Write the symbol for a beta particle	
Define <i>gamma radiation</i>	
What particles make up everything in the universe?	
Name the antimatter particles for electrons, protons, neutrons, and neutrinos	
What happens when corresponding matter and antimatter particles meet?	
List the seven main parts of the electromagnetic spectrum from longest wavelength to shortest	
Write the equation for calculating the wavelength of electromagnetic radiation	
Define a <i>photon</i>	
What is the speed of light?	
Write the equation for calculating photon energy	
Name the four fundamental interactions	

# Maths skills

## 1 Measurements

### 1.1 Base and derived SI units

Units are defined so that, for example, every scientist who measures a mass in kilograms uses the same size for the kilogram and gets the same value for the mass. Scientific measurement depends on standard units – most are *Système International* (SI) units. Every measurement must give the unit to have any meaning. You should know the correct unit for physical quantities.

#### Base units

Physical quantity	Unit	Symbol
length	metre	m
mass	kilogram	kg
time	second	s

Physical quantity	Unit	Symbol
electric current	ampere	A
temperature difference	Kelvin	K
amount of substance	mole	mol

#### Derived units

Example:

$$\text{speed} = \frac{\text{distance travelled}}{\text{time taken}}$$

If a car travels 2 metres in 2 seconds:

$$\text{speed} = \frac{2 \text{ metres}}{2 \text{ seconds}} = 1 \frac{\text{m}}{\text{s}} = 1 \text{ m/s}$$

This defines the SI unit of speed to be 1 metre per second (m/s), or  $1 \text{ m s}^{-1}$  ( $\text{s}^{-1} = \frac{1}{\text{s}}$ ).

#### Practice questions

1 Complete this table by filling in the missing units and symbols.

Physical quantity	Equation used to derive unit	Unit	Symbol and name (if there is one)
frequency	period <sup>-1</sup>	s <sup>-1</sup>	Hz, hertz
volume	length <sup>3</sup>		–
density	mass ÷ volume		–
acceleration	velocity ÷ time		–
force	mass × acceleration		
work and energy	force × distance		

## 1.2 Significant figures

When you use a calculator to work out a numerical answer, you know that this often results in a large number of decimal places and, in most cases, the final few digits are 'not significant'. It is important to record your data and your answers to calculations to a reasonable number of significant figures. Too many and your answer is claiming an accuracy that it does not have, too few and you are not showing the precision and care required in scientific analysis.

Numbers to 3 significant figures (3 s.f.):

3.62   25.4   271   0.0147   0.245   39400

(notice that the zeros before the figures and after the figures are *not* significant – they just show you how large the number is by the position of the decimal point).

Numbers to 3 significant figures where the zeros *are* significant:

207   4050   1.01 (any zeros between the other significant figures *are* significant).

Standard form numbers with 3 significant figures:

$9.42 \times 10^{-5}$                        $1.56 \times 10^8$

If the value you wanted to write to 3.s.f. was 590, then to show the zero was significant you would have to write:

590 (to 3.s.f.) or  $5.90 \times 10^2$

### **Practice questions**

**2** Give these measurements to 2 significant figures:

**a** 19.47 m

**b** 21.0 s

**c**  $1.673 \times 10^{-27}$  kg

**d** 5 s

**3** Use the equation:

$$\text{resistance} = \frac{\text{potential difference}}{\text{current}}$$

to calculate the resistance of a circuit when the potential difference is 12 V and the current is 1.8 mA. Write your answer in k $\Omega$  to 3 s.f.

### 1.3 Uncertainties

When a physical quantity is measured there will always be a small difference between the measured value and the true value. How important the difference is depends on the size of the measurement and the size of the uncertainty, so it is important to know this information when using data.

There are several possible reasons for uncertainty in measurements, including the difficulty of taking the measurement and the resolution of the measuring instrument (i.e. the size of the scale divisions).

For example, a length of 6.5 m measured with great care using a 10 m tape measure marked in mm would have an uncertainty of 2 mm and would be recorded as  $6.500 \pm 0.002$  m.

It is useful to quote these uncertainties as percentages.

For the above length, for example,

$$\text{percentage uncertainty} = \frac{\text{uncertainty}}{\text{measurement}} \times 100$$

$$\text{percentage uncertainty} = \frac{0.002}{6.500} \times 100\% = 0.03\%. \text{ The measurement is } 6.500 \text{ m} \pm 0.03\%.$$

Values may also be quoted with absolute error rather than percentage uncertainty, for example, if the 6.5 m length is measured with a 5% error,

$$\text{the absolute error} = 5/100 \times 6.5 \text{ m} = \pm 0.325 \text{ m}.$$

#### **Practice questions**

**4** Give these measurements with the uncertainty shown as a percentage (to 1 significant figure):

**a**  $5.7 \pm 0.1$  cm

**b**  $450 \pm 2$  kg

**c**  $10.60 \pm 0.05$  s

**d**  $366\,000 \pm 1000$  J

**5** Give these measurements with the error shown as an absolute value:

**a**  $1200 \text{ W} \pm 10\%$

**b**  $330\,000 \Omega \pm 0.5\%$

**6** Identify the measurement with the smallest percentage error. Show your working.

**A**  $9 \pm 5$  mm

**B**  $26 \pm 5$  mm

**C**  $516 \pm 5$  mm

**D**  $1400 \pm 5$  mm

## 2 Standard form and prefixes

When describing the structure of the Universe you have to use very large numbers. There are billions of galaxies and their average separation is about a million light years (ly). The Big Bang theory says that the Universe began expanding about 14 billion years ago. The Sun formed about 5 billion years ago. These numbers and larger numbers can be expressed in standard form and by using prefixes.

### 2.1 Standard form for large numbers

In standard form, the number is written with one digit in front of the decimal point and multiplied by the appropriate power of 10. For example:

- The diameter of the Earth, for example, is 13 000 km.  
 $13\,000\text{ km} = 1.3 \times 10\,000\text{ km} = 1.3 \times 10^4\text{ km}$ .
- The distance to the Andromeda galaxy is 2 200 000 light years =  $2.2 \times 1\,000\,000\text{ ly} = 2.2 \times 10^6\text{ ly}$ .

### 2.2 Prefixes for large numbers

Prefixes are used with SI units (see Topic 1.1) when the value is very large or very small. They can be used instead of writing the number in standard form. For example:

- A kilowatt (1 kW) is a thousand watts, that is 1000 W or  $10^3\text{ W}$ .
- A megawatt (1 MW) is a million watts, that is 1 000 000 W or  $10^6\text{ W}$ .
- A gigawatt (1 GW) is a billion watts, that is 1 000 000 000 W or  $10^9\text{ W}$ .

Prefix	Symbol	Value
kilo	k	$10^3$
mega	M	$10^6$

Prefix	Symbol	Value
giga	G	$10^9$
tera	T	$10^{12}$

For example, Gansu Wind Farm in China has an output of  $6.8 \times 10^9\text{ W}$ . This can be written as 6800 MW or 6.8 GW.

### Practice questions

- 1 Give these measurements in standard form:
  - a 1350 W
  - b 130 000 Pa
  - c  $696 \times 10^6\text{ s}$
  - d  $0.176 \times 10^{12}\text{ C kg}^{-1}$
- 2 The latent heat of vaporisation of water is 2 260 000 J/kg. Write this in:
  - a J/g
  - b kJ/kg
  - c MJ/kg

### 2.3 Standard form and prefixes for small numbers

At the other end of the scale, the diameter of an atom is about a tenth of a billionth of a metre. The particles that make up an atomic nucleus are much smaller. These measurements are represented using negative powers of ten and more prefixes. For example:

- The charge on an electron =  $1.6 \times 10^{-19}$  C.
- The mass of a neutron =  $0.01675 \times 10^{-25}$  kg =  $1.675 \times 10^{-27}$  kg (the decimal point has moved 2 places to the right).
- There are a billion nanometres in a metre, that is  $1\,000\,000\,000$  nm = 1 m.
- There are a million micrometres in a metre, that is  $1\,000\,000$   $\mu$ m = 1 m.

Prefix	Symbol	Value
centi	c	$10^{-2}$
milli	m	$10^{-3}$
micro	$\mu$	$10^{-6}$

Prefix	Symbol	Value
nano	n	$10^{-9}$
pico	p	$10^{-12}$
femto	f	$10^{-15}$

#### Practice questions

3 Give these measurements in standard form:

a  $0.0025$  m

b  $160 \times 10^{-17}$  m

c  $0.01 \times 10^{-6}$  J

d  $0.005 \times 10^6$  m

e  $0.00062 \times 10^3$  N

4 Write the measurements for question 3a, c, and d above using suitable prefixes.

5 Write the following measurements using suitable prefixes.

a a microwave wavelength =  $0.009$  m

b a wavelength of infrared =  $1 \times 10^{-5}$  m

c a wavelength of blue light =  $4.7 \times 10^{-7}$  m



## 2.4 Powers of ten

When multiplying powers of ten, you must *add* the indices.

So  $100 \times 1000 = 100\,000$  is the same as  $10^2 \times 10^3 = 10^{2+3} = 10^5$

When dividing powers of ten, you must *subtract* the indices.

So  $\frac{100}{1000} = \frac{1}{10} = 10^{-1}$  is the same as  $\frac{10^2}{10^3} = 10^{2-3} = 10^{-1}$

But you can only do this when the numbers with the indices are the same.

So  $10^2 \times 2^3 = 100 \times 8 = 800$

And you can't do this when adding or subtracting.

$10^2 + 10^3 = 100 + 1000 = 1100$

$10^2 - 10^3 = 100 - 1000 = -900$

**Remember:** You can only add and subtract the indices when you are multiplying or dividing the numbers, not adding or subtracting them.

### Practice questions

6 Calculate the following values – read the questions very carefully!

a  $20^6 + 10^{-3}$

b  $10^2 - 10^{-2}$

c  $2^3 \times 10^2$

d  $10^5 \div 10^2$

7 The speed of light is  $3.0 \times 10^8 \text{ m s}^{-1}$ . Use the equation  $v = f\lambda$  (where  $\lambda$  is wavelength) to calculate the frequency of:

a ultraviolet, wavelength  $3.0 \times 10^{-7} \text{ m}$

b radio waves, wavelength 1000 m

c X-rays, wavelength  $1.0 \times 10^{-10} \text{ m}$ .

## 3 Resolving vectors

### 3.1 Vectors and scalars

**Vectors** have a magnitude (size) and a direction. Directions can be given as points of the compass, angles or words such as forwards, left or right. For example, 30 mph east and 50 km/h north-west are velocities.

**Scalars** have a magnitude, but no direction. For example, 10 m/s is a speed.

#### *Practice questions*

- 1 State whether each of these terms is a vector quantity or a scalar quantity: density, temperature, electrical resistance, energy, field strength, force, friction, frequency, mass, momentum, power, voltage, volume, weight, work done.
  
- 2 For the following data, state whether each is a vector or a scalar:  $3 \text{ ms}^{-1}$ ,  $+20 \text{ ms}^{-1}$ , 100 m NE, 50 km,  $-5 \text{ cm}$ , 10 km S  $30^\circ$  W,  $3 \times 10^8 \text{ ms}^{-1}$  upwards,  $273^\circ\text{C}$ , 50 kg, 3 A.

### 3.2 Drawing vectors

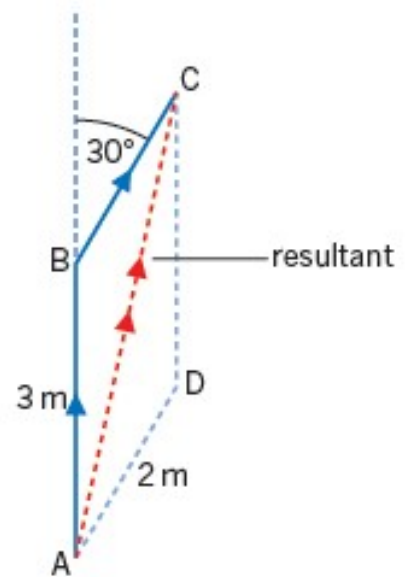
Vectors are shown on drawings by a straight arrow. The arrow starts from the point where the vector is acting and shows its direction. The length of the vector represents the magnitude.

When you add vectors, for example two velocities or three forces, you must take the direction into account.

The combined effect of the vectors is called the resultant.

This diagram shows that walking 3 m from A to B and then turning through  $30^\circ$  and walking 2 m to C has the same effect as walking directly from A to C. AC is the resultant vector, denoted by the double arrowhead.

A careful drawing of a scale diagram allows us to measure these. Notice that if the vectors are combined by drawing them in the opposite order, AD and DC, these are the other two sides of the parallelogram and give the same resultant.



#### Practice question

- Two tractors are pulling a log across a field. Tractor 1 is pulling north with force  $F_1 = 5 \text{ kN}$  and tractor 2 is pulling east with force  $F_2 = 12 \text{ kN}$ . By scale drawing, determine the resultant force.

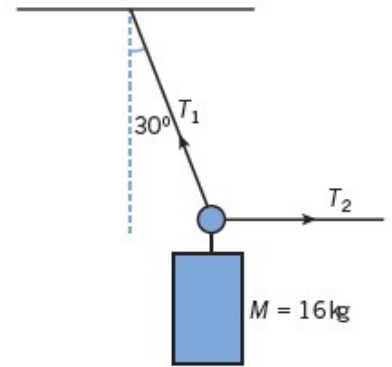
### 3.3 Free body force diagrams

To combine forces, you can draw a similar diagram to the one above, where the lengths of the sides represent the magnitude of the force (e.g., 30 N and 20 N). The third side of the triangle shows us the magnitude and direction of the resultant force.

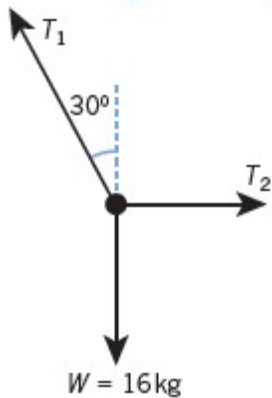
When solving problems, start by drawing a free body force diagram. The object is a small dot and the forces are shown as arrows that start on the dot and are drawn in the direction of the force. They don't have to be to scale, but it helps if the larger forces are shown to be larger.

Look at this example.

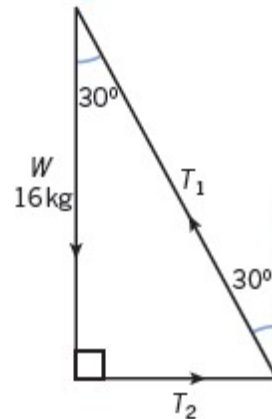
A 16 kg mass is suspended from a hook in the ceiling and pulled to one side with a rope, as shown on the right. Sketch a free body force diagram for the mass and draw a triangle of forces.



Free body force diagram



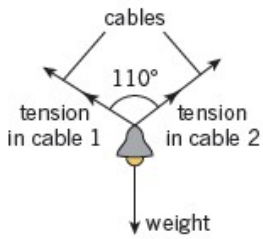
Triangle of forces



Notice that each force starts from where the previous one ended and they join up to form a triangle with no resultant because the mass is in equilibrium (balanced).

**Practice questions**

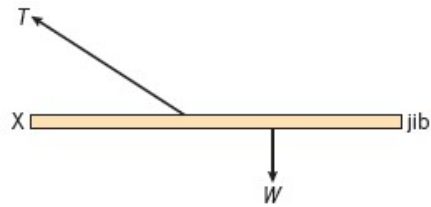
4 Sketch a free body force diagram for the lamp (**Figure 1**, below) and draw a triangle of forces.



**Figure 1**

5 There are three forces on the jib of a tower crane (**Figure 2**, below). The tension in the cable  $T$ , the weight  $W$ , and a third force  $P$  acting at  $X$ .

The crane is in equilibrium. Sketch the triangle of forces.



**Figure 2**

### 3.4 Calculating resultants

When two forces are acting at right angles, the resultant can be calculated using Pythagoras's theorem and the trig functions: sine, cosine, and tangent.

For a right-angled triangle as shown:

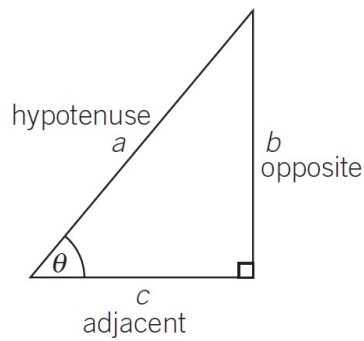
$$h^2 = o^2 + a^2$$

$$\sin \theta = \frac{o}{h}$$

$$\cos \theta = \frac{a}{h}$$

$$\tan \theta = \frac{o}{a}$$

(soh-cah-toa).



### Practice questions

6 **Figure 3** shows three forces in equilibrium.

Draw a triangle of forces to find  $T$  and  $\alpha$ .

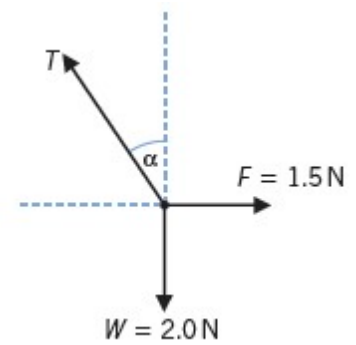


Figure 3

7 Find the resultant force for the following pairs of forces at right angles to each other:

a 3.0 N and 4.0 N

b 5.0 N and 12.0 N



## 4.2 Rearrange and substitute

A 57 kg block falls from a height of 68 m. By considering the energy transferred, calculate its speed when it reaches the ground.

(Gravitational field strength =  $10 \text{ N kg}^{-1}$ )

**Step 1:**  $m = 57 \text{ kg}$     $h = 68 \text{ m}$     $g = 10 \text{ N kg}^{-1}$     $v = ?$

**Step 2:** There are three equations:

$$\text{PE} = m g h \quad \text{KE gained} = \text{PE lost} \quad \text{KE} = 0.5 m v^2$$

**Step 3:** Rearrange the equations before substituting into it.

$$\text{As KE gained} = \text{PE lost}, m g h = 0.5 m v^2$$

You want to find  $v$ . Divide both sides of the equation by  $0.5 m$ :

$$\frac{mgh}{0.5m} = \frac{0.5mv^2}{0.5m}$$

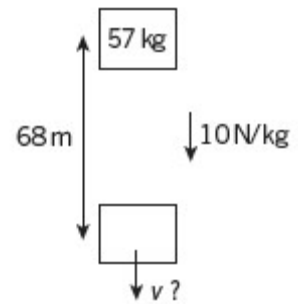
$$2 g h = v^2$$

To get  $v$ , take the square root of both sides:  $v = \sqrt{2gh}$

**Step 4:** Substitute into the equation:

$$v = \sqrt{2 \times 10 \times 68}$$

$$v = \sqrt{1360} = 37 \text{ m s}^{-1}$$



### Practice question

**3** Calculate the specific latent heat of fusion for water from this data:

$4.03 \times 10^4 \text{ J}$  of energy melted  $120 \text{ g}$  of ice.

Use the equation:

$$\text{thermal energy for a change in state (J)} = \text{mass (kg)} \times \text{specific latent heat (J kg}^{-1}\text{)}$$

Give your answer in  $\text{J kg}^{-1}$  in standard form.









# Research Task

<p>Your Task</p>	<p>You will be researching the most important experiment to occur in Physics. This task will help you prepare for the “Practical Endorsement” part of the course by developing research skills and highlighting the importance of practical work to Physics.</p> <p>You should aim to write between 750-1250 words for at least two of the experiments. Your answers must not exceed 1250 words</p>
<p>Your starting point</p>	<p>Consider one of the following experiments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Galileo’s falling objects.</li> <li>• Joule’s equivalence of heat</li> <li>• Rutherford’s alpha scattering</li> <li>• Young’s Slit Experiment</li> <li>• Millikan’s oil drop</li> <li>• Fizeau-Foucault speed of light</li> <li>• Herschel Experiment</li> <li>• Or any other appropriate physics experiments</li> </ul> <p>Research the experiment and write a short description that addresses the following points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What were they trying to show?</li> <li>• What was the background or existing theory?</li> <li>• What variables did they investigate (what did they change, what did they measure?)</li> <li>• What instruments did they use? Did they have to construct any themselves?</li> <li>• How did they carry out the experiment?</li> <li>• How did they use the data? (Did they produce a graph? Did they calculate a constant?)</li> <li>• What mathematical relationships/equations/methods did they use?</li> <li>• What problems, if any, did they encounter?</li> <li>• What was their conclusion? Did it match their prediction?</li> <li>• Did it lead to any further discoveries?</li> </ul>
<p>How your work will be assessed</p>	<p><b>Grade A/B</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Very detailed description of the method, variables, data processing, and mathematics will be given</li> <li>• Description will clearly include the intention of the experiment and compare this to the final conclusion.</li> <li>• Description will show a good understanding of the importance and impact of the experiment on wider Physics</li> </ul> <p><b>Grade C/D</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Description will have some detail and include an understanding of the variables measured and the conclusion made</li> <li>• A good attempt to explain the methods, maths or interpretation of data will be made.</li> <li>• Wording will clearly be the students own with little direct quoting from sources.</li> </ul> <p><b>Grade E</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Description will be basic.</li> <li>• Little or no understanding of the principles behind the experiment or its conclusions</li> <li>• Information will be present as given in the researched source with little or no attempt to describe or explain in your own words</li> </ul>