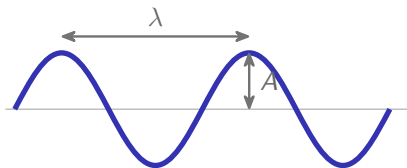


Waves

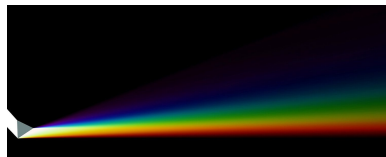
IGCSE Physics ■ Topic 3

IGCSE Physics



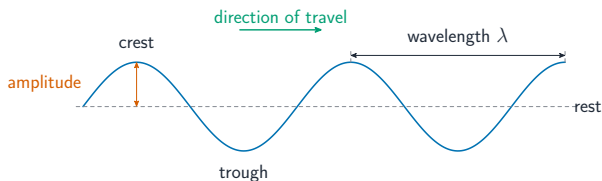
What we will cover

- 1 Wave properties
- 2 Reflection & refraction
- 3 Lenses & dispersion
- 4 Electromagnetic spectrum
- 5 Sound
- 6 Recap





Describing a wave



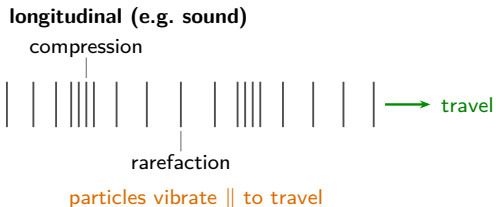
A **wave** carries **energy**, not **matter**.

$$v = f\lambda.$$

Sound: $v = 340 \text{ m/s}$, $f = 170 \text{ Hz}$

$$\lambda = \frac{340}{170} = 2.0 \text{ m}$$

Two types; three behaviours



transverse $\perp$, longitudinal $\parallel$

- **transverse** – particles $\perp$ travel (light, water)
- **longitudinal** – particles $\parallel$ travel (sound)

All waves **reflect**, **refract** and **diffract**. Speed $v = f\lambda$.

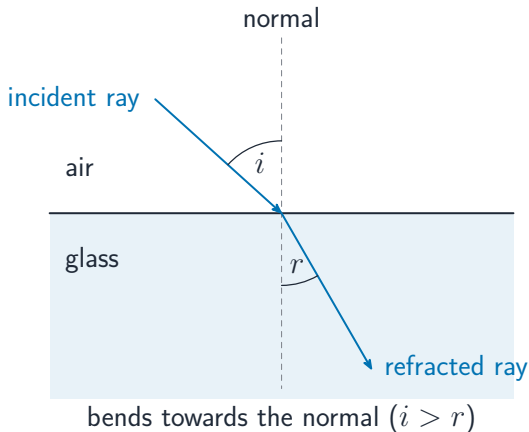


Reflection

- angle of incidence = angle of reflection, from the **normal**
- the incident ray, reflected ray and normal lie in one plane

The **normal** is the line at 90° to the surface at the point of incidence.

Refraction



Light bends as it changes speed.

Refractive index :

$$n = \frac{\sin i}{\sin r}$$

$$i = 60^\circ, r = 35^\circ$$

$$n = \frac{0.87}{0.57} = 1.5$$

The words a refraction question uses

The two angles

The angle of incidence is measured in the first material, the **angle of refraction** in the second – both from the *normal*.

Which way it bends

Into a denser material: slower, and bent *towards* the normal. Out into a less dense one: faster, and bent away.

Wave speed

The frequency never changes; it is the **wave speed** and the wavelength that do – and $v = f\lambda$ ties them together.

Propagation

Refraction is a change in the direction of **propagation**, caused entirely by the change in speed.

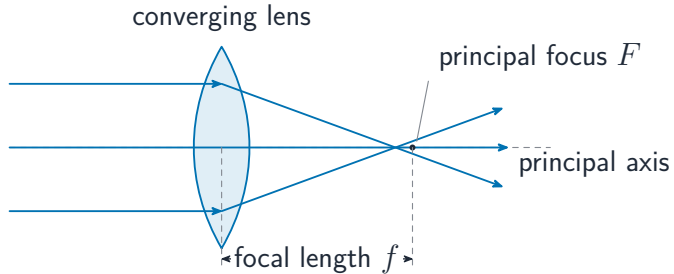
Always measure from the normal, never from the surface. Half the lost marks in this topic are that one habit.

Total internal reflection

Light going from a denser medium towards a less dense one: if the angle of incidence is greater than the **critical angle** , it reflects entirely. Optical fibres use this to carry signals.

$$\sin c = \frac{1}{n}$$

Lenses and dispersion



converging lens : rays to the focus

Violet bends most, red least: red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo, violet.

Lenses: the words, and the two kinds of image

principal focus

where rays parallel to the axis converge after passing through the lens

focal length

the distance from the lens to the principal focus

a real image

the rays **really meet** – it can be caught on a screen, and it is inverted

a virtual image

formed when the object is **closer than the focal length**; the rays only appear to come from it, so no screen will show it

a magnifying glass

a converging lens used exactly that way – upright, enlarged, virtual

a diverging lens

always gives a virtual, upright, diminished image

“Can it be caught on a screen?” is the whole test. Real yes, virtual no – and that single question also settles whether the image is inverted.

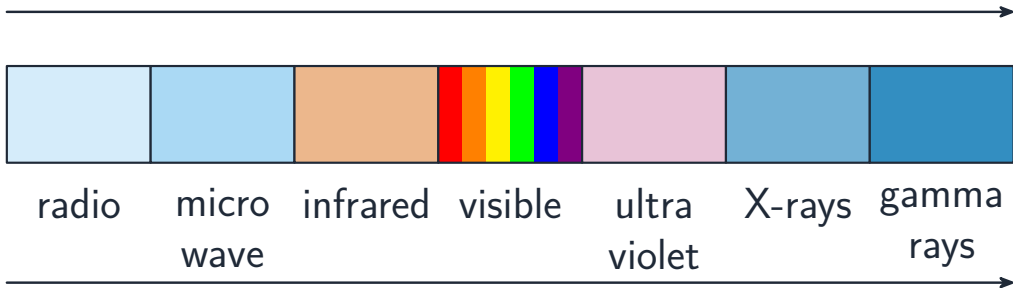


The electromagnetic spectrum

All travel at 3.0×10^8 m/s in a vacuum.

Radio → gamma: frequency & energy **rise**, wavelength **falls**.

wavelength gets shorter



The spectrum: one use and one danger each

radio waves	broadcasting and communications – little known danger at normal intensity
microwaves	mobile phones, satellite TV, cooking – heating of body cells
infrared	remote controls, thermal imaging, grills – skin burns
visible light	seeing, optical fibres, photography
ultraviolet	sterilising water, checking bank notes – skin cancer and eye damage
X-rays X and gamma	medical and security scans; sterilising equipment and treating cancer – cell damage and mutation

All travel at the same speed in a vacuum. Frequency rises left to right, and so does the danger – which is not a coincidence: higher frequency means more energy per photon.

Two more words the spectrum needs

Gamma rays

Gamma rays : shortest wavelength, highest energy. Used for sterilising equipment and treating cancer – and they can cause mutation of cells.

Monochromatic

Light of a single frequency – one pure colour – is **monochromatic** . A laser is; a filament lamp is not.

One family

All of it travels at the same speed in a vacuum; only the wavelength and frequency change along the spectrum.

Order the spectrum by wavelength once and the uses and dangers follow: shorter wavelength, higher energy, greater hazard.

Digital and analogue signals

Radio waves and microwaves carry information as signals, and a signal is either **analogue** or **digital** .

- a **higher rate** of data transmission;
- a **greater range**: a weak digital signal can be **regenerated** back to a clean 1/0 exactly, because only two levels have to be told apart.

Why modern communication is digital

an analogue signal

varies continuously, so any added noise becomes part of the signal permanently

a digital signal

only two levels, high and low

reason one

digital signals can be **regenerated**: the receiver only has to decide high or low, so noise is **removed** at every repeater

reason two

more information can be sent per second along the same cable or channel

and

digital data can be processed, stored and encrypted by computer without further conversion

Those two reasons are what the exam asks for by name. “It is more modern” earns nothing.

Sound

Sound is a **longitudinal** wave of **compressions** and **rarefactions** .

- needs a **medium** – not a vacuum
- we hear 20 to 20 000 Hz

Echo: 85 m wall, 0.50 s

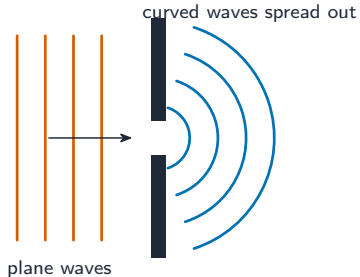
$$v = \frac{2 \times 85}{0.50} = 340 \text{ m/s}$$

Lenses



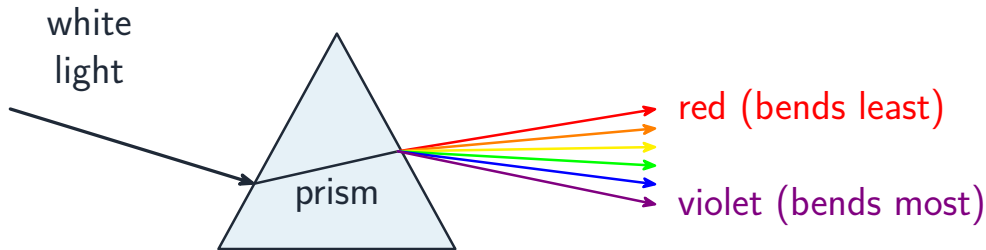
Held away from the eye, a converging lens forms a real image – here the houses behind it appear upside down

Wave behaviour



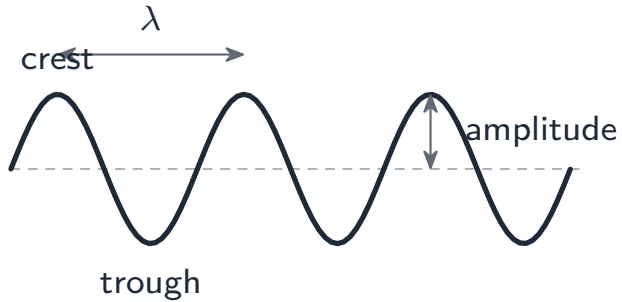
Plane waves passing through a narrow gap spread out into curved waves – diffraction is strongest when the gap is about one wavelength wide

Dispersion



A prism refracts violet light most and red light least, so white light spreads into a spectrum

Describing a wave, continued



The parts of a wave: wavelength, amplitude, crest and trough

The words a wave question uses

wavefront

a line joining points on a wave that **move together** – for example, the top of one ripple

wavelength λ

the distance between two **neighbouring wavefronts** – one full wave

amplitude

the **largest** distance a point moves from its rest position

frequency f

waves passing a point per second, in hertz

period T

the time for one wave to pass – $T = 1/f$

the wave equation

$$v = f\lambda$$

Amplitude is measured from the **rest position**, not from trough to crest. Half the mistakes on this topic are that factor of two.

Sound , continued



A microphone converts sound vibrations in air into an electrical signal

Loudness, pitch, and ultrasound

loudness

a **larger amplitude** makes a louder sound

pitch

a **higher frequency** makes a higher pitch – so a dolphin's click is high-pitched, not loud

human hearing

roughly 20 Hz to 20 000 Hz

ultrasound

sound **above** 20 000 Hz – too high for humans to hear

its uses rely on reflection

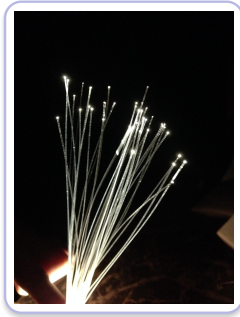
sonar measures depth; medical scanning images a fetus; industry finds cracks

the calculation

the pulse travels **there and back**, so the distance is $\frac{1}{2} vt$

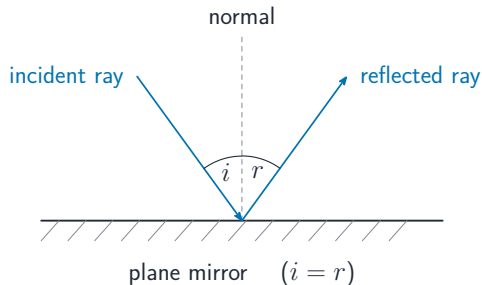
An echo at 85 m returning in 0.50 s gives $v = 2(85)/0.50 = 340$ m/s; a sonar pulse back in 0.10 s at 1500 m/s gives a depth of 75 m. **Halve or double – but never forget the factor of two.**

Refraction, continued



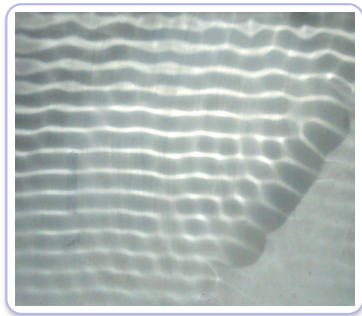
Total internal reflection keeps light bouncing along each fibre until it shines out at the tip

Reflection, continued



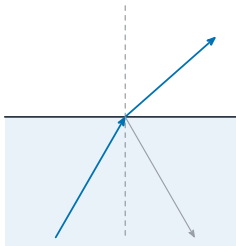
At a plane mirror the angle of incidence i equals the angle of reflection r , both measured from the normal

Wave behaviour, continued

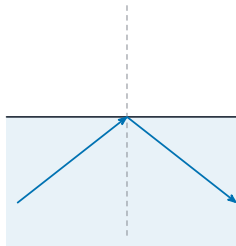


Two dippers in a ripple tank make circular water waves that overlap – a quick way to study how waves behave

Refraction, continued (2)



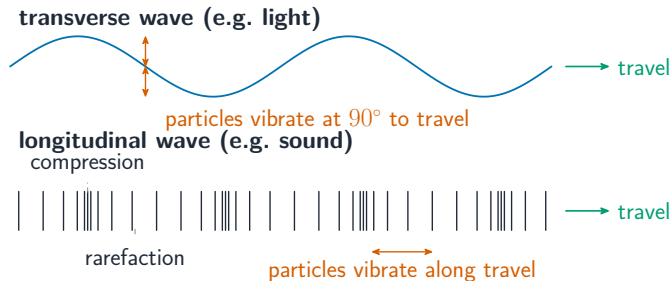
angle $<$ critical:
light refracts out



angle $>$ critical:
total internal reflection

Below the critical angle the light refracts out; above it the light is totally internally reflected

Two types of wave



In a transverse wave the particles vibrate across the travel direction; in a longitudinal wave they vibrate along it, making compressions and rarefactions

Seeing refraction: the glass-block experiment

- 1 stand a rectangular glass block on paper; shine a narrow ray from a **ray box** into it
- 2 mark the ray going in and the ray coming out; remove the block; join the marks to draw the ray inside
- 3 draw the normal where the ray enters; measure i and r with a protractor
- 4 repeat with a semicircular block or a prism

Entering glass the ray bends **towards** the normal; leaving it, **away** from the normal.

Waves on a rope (shake one end) and on a long spring (push one end) show the same wave motion as the ripple tank. The top of a wave is the crest, also called the **peak**.

Describing an image, and correcting sight

Three pairs of words

- **enlarged** / **diminished** (or same size)
- **upright** / **inverted**
- **real** / **virtual**

The **principal axis** is the line through the centre of the lens at right angles to it; the principal focus lies on it. Object far beyond F : diminished, inverted, real (a camera). Object inside F : enlarged, upright, virtual (a magnifying glass).

Correcting sight

- **short-sightedness** : distant things blurred; the eye focuses **in front of** the **retina** ; a **diverging** lens spreads the rays first
- **long-sightedness** : near things blurred; the eye focuses **behind** the retina; a **converging** lens brings the rays together first

Satellites, and measuring the speed of sound

Communication with satellites

- **artificial satellites** are reached mainly by **microwaves**, which pass through the atmosphere
- some satellite phones use satellites in **low orbit**
- other satellite phones and direct broadcast TV use **geostationary orbit** : the satellite stays above one point on the Earth
- sound can travel as an analogue or a digital signal

Speed of sound in air

- 1 two students a measured distance apart (say 500 m)
- 2 one bangs two blocks together
- 3 the other starts a stopwatch on **seeing** the blocks hit and stops it on **hearing** the bang
- 4 $\text{speed} = \text{distance} \div \text{time}$; repeat and average

Echo method: clap a known distance from a wall, time the echo, remember the sound goes there and back.

Exam tips

- Learn $v = f\lambda$ and be ready to rearrange it. Measure all angles of incidence, reflection and refraction from the **normal** (the line at 90° to the surface), never from the surface itself.
- **Transverse** waves vibrate across the direction of travel (light, water); **longitudinal** waves vibrate along it (sound). Sound needs a **medium**, so it cannot cross a vacuum; light can.
- **Total internal reflection** happens only when light travels from a denser material to a less dense one *and* the angle inside is bigger than the **critical angle**.
- Know the **electromagnetic spectrum** in order – radio, microwave, infrared, visible, ultraviolet, X-ray, gamma. All travel at the same speed in a vacuum; frequency and energy rise from radio to gamma.
- Going into a denser material (air $\rightarrow$ glass) light slows down and bends *towards* the normal; leaving it (glass $\rightarrow$ air) light speeds up and bends *away*.



Topic 3 – key takeaways

1

Wave equation

$v = f\lambda$; transverse vs longitudinal

2

Light

reflection $i = r$, refraction $n = \sin i / \sin r$

3

TIR

above the critical angle; optical fibres

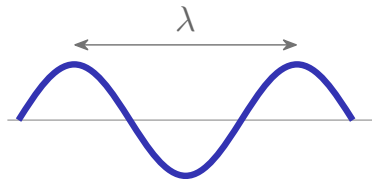
4

Spectrum

radio $\rightarrow$ gamma: energy rises

Check yourself

- 1 A wave: $f = 50 \text{ Hz}$, $\lambda = 4 \text{ m}$ – find v .
- 2 Is sound transverse or longitudinal?
- 3 What happens above the critical angle?
- 4 Which travels faster in air: light or sound?



Answers 1. $v = f\lambda = 200 \text{ m/s}$ 2. longitudinal 3. total internal reflection 4. light