

Name:

The transition from GCSE to A-Level Physics

Welcome to A-Level Physics!

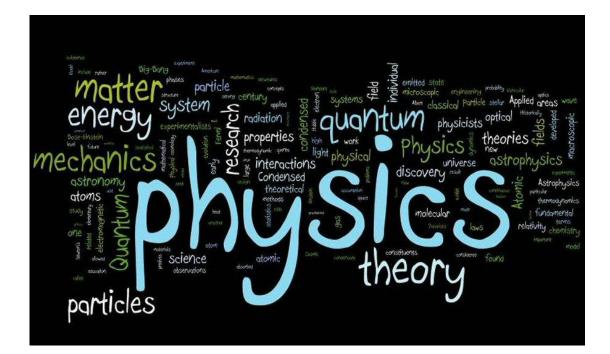
What you will be studying during your Physics lessons in Year 12 at Raynes Park High School is no secret. We follow the AQA Physics 7408 specification; there is nothing to stop you from going to AQA's website, looking at the Physics specification document and over the summer teaching yourself everything in the whole two-year course before you start in September!

However, I have a few more realistic tasks for you, to prepare you for the transition from GCSE to A-Level Physics, which can seem like 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 booklet aims to give you a head start by helping you to :

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

Complete the tasks and practice questions before the start of term, and bring the completed booklet to your first Physics lesson.





Retrieval questions

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

Learn the answers to the questions below then cover the answers column with a piece of paper and write as many answers as you can. Check and repeat.

Practical science key terms

| When is a measurement valid? | when it measures what it is supposed to be measuring |
|--|--|
| When is a result accurate? | when it is close to the true value |
| What are precise results? | when repeat measurements are consistent/agree closely with each other |
| What is repeatability? | how precise repeated measurements are when they are taken by the <i>same</i> person, using the <i>same</i> equipment, under the <i>same</i> conditions |
| What is reproducibility? | how precise repeated measurements are when they are taken by <i>different</i> people, using <i>different</i> equipment |
| What is the uncertainty of a measurement? | the interval within which the true value is expected to lie |
| Define measurement error | the difference between a measured value and the true value |
| What type of error is caused by results varying around the true value in an unpredictable way? | random error |
| What is a systematic error? | a consistent difference between the measured values and true values |
| What does zero error mean? | a measuring instrument gives a false reading when the true value should be zero |
| Which variable is changed or selected by the investigator? | independent variable |
| What is a dependent variable? | a variable that is measured every time the independent variable is changed |
| Define a fair test | a test in which only the independent variable is allowed to affect the dependent variable |
| What are control variables? | variables that should be kept constant to avoid them affecting the dependent variable |
| | |



Matter and radiation

Learn the answers to the questions below then cover the answers column with a piece of paper and write as many answers as you can. Check and repeat.

| | 1 |
|---|--|
| What is an atom made up of? | a positively charged nucleus containing protons and neutrons, |
| | surrounded by electrons |
| Define a <i>nucleon</i> | a proton or a neutron in the nucleus |
| What are the absolute charges of protons, | $+ 1.60 \times 10^{-19}$, 0, and $- 1.60 \times 10^{-19}$ coulombs (C) respectively |
| neutrons, and electrons? | |
| What are the relative charges of protons, | 1, 0, and – 1 respectively (charge relative to proton) |
| neutrons, and electrons? | |
| What is the mass, in kilograms, of a proton, a | 1.67×10^{-27} , 1.67×10^{-27} , and 9.11×10^{-31} kg respectively |
| neutron, and an electron? | |
| What are the relative masses of protons, | 1, 1, and 0.0005 respectively (mass relative to proton) |
| neutrons, and electrons? | |
| What is the atomic number of an element? | the number of protons |
| Define an isotope | isotopes are atoms with the same number of protons and |
| | different numbers of neutrons |
| Write what A, Z and X stand for in isotope | A: the number of nucleons (protons + neutrons) |
| notation $\begin{pmatrix} A \\ Z \end{pmatrix}$? | Z: the number of protons |
| | X: the chemical symbol |
| Which term is used for each type of nucleus? | nuclide |
| How do you calculate specific charge? | charge divided by mass (for a charged particle) |
| What is the specific charge of a proton and an | 9.58×10^7 and 1.76×10^{11} C kg ⁻¹ respectively |
| electron? | |
| Name the force that holds nuclei together | strong nuclear force |
| What is the range of the strong nuclear force? | from 0.5 to 3–4 femtometres (fm) |
| Name the three kinds of radiation | alpha, beta, and gamma |
| What particle is released in alpha radiation? | an alpha particle, which comprises two protons and two neutrons |
| Write the symbol of an alpha particle | $\frac{4}{2}\alpha$ |
| What particle is released in beta radiation? | a fast-moving electron (a beta particle) |
| Write the symbol for a beta particle | ⁰ β |
| Define gamma radiation | electromagnetic radiation emitted by an unstable nucleus |
| What particles make up everything in the | matter and antimatter |
| universe? | |
| Name the antimatter particles for electrons, | positron, antiproton, antineutron, and antineutrino respectively |
| protons, neutrons, and neutrinos | |
| What happens when corresponding matter and | they annihilate (destroy each other) |
| antimatter particles meet? | |
| List the seven main parts of the electromagnetic | radio waves, microwaves, infrared, visible, ultraviolet, X-rays, |
| spectrum from longest wavelength to shortest | gamma rays |
| Write the equation for calculating the | speed of light (c) |
| wavelength of electromagnetic radiation | wavelength $(\lambda) = \frac{\text{speed of light}(c)}{\text{frequency}(f)}$ |
| Define a <i>photon</i> | a packet of electromagnetic waves |
| What is the speed of light? | 3.00×10 ⁸ m s ⁻¹ |
| Write the equation for calculating photon energy | photon energy (E) = Planck constant (h) × frequency (f) |
| Name the four fundamental interactions | gravity, electromagnetic, weak nuclear, strong nuclear |
| | grandy, stockonnagnous, moak national, strong national |



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 | | Physical quantity | Unit | Symbol |
|-------------------|----------|--------|----|-----------------------|--------|--------|
| length | metre | m | е | electric current | ampere | А |
| mass | kilogram | kg | te | emperature difference | Kelvin | К |
| time | second | S | а | amount of substance | mole | mol |

Derived units

Example:

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

If a car travels 2 metres in 2 seconds:

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

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

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 ⁻¹ | S ^{−1} | Hz, hertz |
| volume | length ³ | | - |
| density | mass ÷ volume | | - |
| acceleration | velocity ÷ time | | - |
| force | mass x 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.):

<u>3.62</u> <u>25.4</u> <u>271</u> 0.0<u>147</u> 0.<u>245</u> <u>394</u>00

(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:

<u>207</u> <u>4050</u> <u>1.01</u> (any zeros between the other significant figures *are* significant).

Standard form numbers with 3 significant figures:

9.42×10⁻⁵ 1.56×10⁸

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 5.90×10^2

Practice questions

2 Give these measurements to 2 significant figures:

a 19.47 m

b 21.0 s

c 1.673×10⁻²⁷ kg

d 5 s

3 Use the equation:

resistance = $\frac{\text{potential difference}}{1}$

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 Ω 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 ± 0.002 m.

It is useful to quote these uncertainties as percentages.

For the above length, for example,

percentage uncertaint $y = \frac{\text{uncertaint } y}{\text{measuremen } t} \times 100$

percentage uncertaint $y = \frac{0.002}{6.500} \times 100\% = 0.03\%$. The measurement is 6.500 m ± 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,

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):

 $\textbf{a}~5.7~\pm~0.1~\text{cm}$

 $\boldsymbol{b}~450~\pm~2~kg$

 $c 10.60 \pm 0.05 s$

d 366 000 \pm 1000 J

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

a 1200 W ± 10%

 \boldsymbol{b} 330 000 Ω \pm 0.5%



Identify the measurement with the smallest percentage error. Show your working.
 A 9 ± 5 mm

B 26 ± 5 mm

C 516 ± 5 mm

D 1400 ± 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 km = 1.3 x 10 000 km = 1.3x10⁴ km.
- The distance to the Andromeda galaxy is 2 200 000 light years = 2.2×1000000 ly = 2.2×10^{6} 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 10³ W.
- A megawatt (1 MW) is a million watts, that is 1 000 000 W or 10⁶ W.
- A gigawatt (1 GW) is a billion watts, that is 1 000 000 000 W or 10⁹ W.

| Prefix | Symbol | Value | Prefix | Symbol | Value |
|--------|--------|-----------------|--------|--------|------------------|
| kilo | k | 10 ³ | giga | G | 10 ⁹ |
| mega | М | 10 ⁶ | tera | Т | 10 ¹² |

For example, Gansu Wind Farm in China has an output of 6.8×10^9 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 × 10^6 s

d 0.176 × 10¹² 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 = 1.6×10^{-19} C.
- The mass of a neutron = 0.01675×10^{-25} kg = 1.675×10^{-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 $1000000 \,\mu\text{m} = 1 \,\text{m}$.

| Prefix | Symbol | Value | Prefix | Symbol | Value |
|--------|--------|------------------|--------|--------|--------------------------|
| centi | с | 10 ⁻² | nano | n | 10 ⁻⁹ |
| milli | m | 10 ⁻³ | pico | р | 10 ⁻¹² |
| micro | μ | 10 ⁻⁶ | femto | f | 10 ⁻¹⁵ |



Practice questions

3 Give these measurements in standard form:

a 0.0025 m

- **b** 160 × 10⁻¹⁷ m
- **c** 0.01 × 10⁻⁶ J

d 0.005 × 10⁶ m

- **e** 0.00062 × 10³ N
- 4 Write the measurements for question 3a, c, and d above using suitable prefixes.
 - **a** 0.0025 m

b 160 × 10⁻¹⁷ m

c 0.01 × 10⁻⁶ J

d 0.005 × 10⁶ m

e 0.00062 × 10³ N

5 Write the following measurements using suitable prefixes.

a a microwave wavelength = 0.009 m

b a wavelength of infrared = 1×10^{-5} m

c a wavelength of blue light = 4.7×10^{-7} m

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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 20⁶ + 10⁻³

b 10² – 10⁻²

c 2³ × 10²

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d 10<sup>5</sup> ÷ 10<sup>2</sup>
```

7 The speed of light is 3.0×10^8 m s⁻¹. Use the equation $v = f\lambda$ (where λ is wavelength) to calculate the frequency of:

a ultraviolet, wavelength 3.0×10⁻⁷ m

b radio waves, wavelength 1000 m

```
c X-rays, wavelength 1.0×10<sup>-10</sup> 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 ms ⁻¹ |
|----------------------------------|
| +20 ms ⁻¹ |
| 100 m NE |
| 50 km |
| -5 cm |
| 10 km S 30° W |
| 3 × 10 ⁸ ms⁻¹ upwards |
| 273 °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.

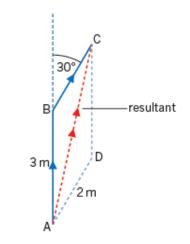
The combined effect of the vectors is called the resultant.

This diagram shows that walking 3 m from A to B and then turning through 30° and walking 2 m to C has the same effect as walking directly from A to C. \overrightarrow{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

3 Two tractors are pulling a log across a field. Tractor 1 is pulling north with force 1 = 5 kN and tractor 2 is pulling east with force 2 = 12 kN. By scale drawing, determine the resultant force.



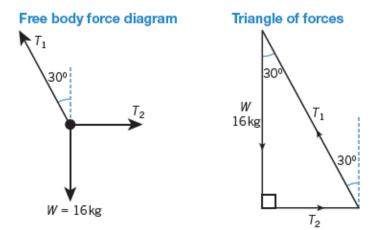


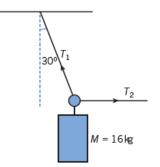
3.3 Free body force diagrams

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.

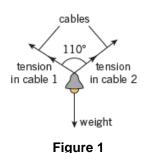




Notice that each force starts from where the previous one ended and they join up to form a triangle with no resultant because the mass is in equilibrium (balanced).

Practice questions

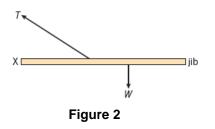
4 Sketch a free body force diagram for the lamp (**Figure 1**, below) and draw a triangle of forces.





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.

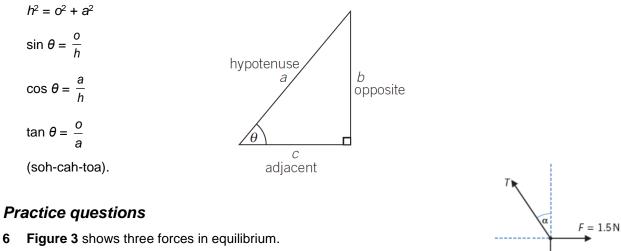
The crane is in equilibrium. Sketch the triangle of forces.



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:



Draw a triangle of forces to find T and α .







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 Rearranging equations

Sometimes you will need to rearrange an equation to calculate the answer to a question. For example, if you want to calculate the resistance R, the equation:

potential difference (V) = current (A) × resistance (Ω) or V = I R

must be rearranged to make R the subject of the equation:

$$R = \frac{V}{I}$$

When you are solving a problem:

- Write down the values you know and the ones you want to calculate.
- you can rearrange the equation first, and then substitute the values or
- substitute the values and then rearrange the equation

4.1 Substitute and rearrange

A student throws a ball vertically upwards at 5 m s⁻¹. When it comes down, she catches it at the same point. Calculate how high it goes.

step 1: Known values are:

- initial velocity $u = 5.0 \text{ m s}^{-1}$
- final velocity *v* = 0 (you know this because as it rises it will slow down, until it comes to a stop, and then it will start falling downwards)
- acceleration a = g = -9.81 m s⁻²
- distance s = ?



Step 2: Equation: (final velocity)² - (initial velocity)² = 2 × acceleration × distance or $v^2 - u^2 = 2 \times g \times s$ Substituting: (0)² - (5.0 m s⁻¹)² = 2 × -9.81 m s⁻² × s 0 - 25 = 2 × -9.81 × s **Step 3:** Rearranging: -19.62 s = -25 s = $\frac{-25}{-19.62}$ = 1.27 m = 1.3 m (2 s.f.)

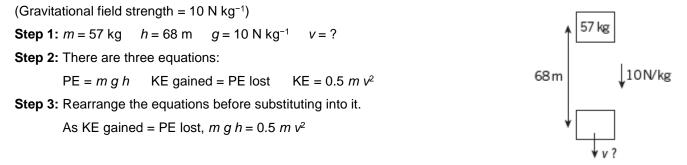
Practice questions

1 The potential difference across a resistor is 12 V and the current through it is 0.25 A. Calculate its resistance.

2 Red light has a wavelength of 650 nm. Calculate its frequency. Write your answer in standard form. (Speed of light = 3.0×10^8 m s⁻¹)

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.





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

Calculate the specific latent heat of fusion for water from this data:
 4.03×10⁴ J of energy melted 120 g of ice.
 Use the equation:

thermal energy for a change in state (J) = mass (kg) × specific latent heat (J kg⁻¹) Give your answer in J kg⁻¹ in standard form.

5 Work done, power, and efficiency

5.1 Work done

Work is done when energy is transferred. Work is done when a force makes something move. If work is done *by* an object its energy decreases and if work is done *on* an object its energy increases.

work done = energy transferred = force × distance

Work and energy are measured in joules (J) and are scalar quantities (see Topic 3.1).

Practice question

1 Calculate the work done when the resultant force on a car is 22 kN and it travels 2.0 km.



2 Calculate the distance travelled when 62.5 kJ of work is done applying a force of 500 N to an object.

5.2 Power

Power is the rate of work done.

It is measured in watts (W) where 1 watt = 1 joule per second.

 $power = \frac{energy \ transferre \ d}{time \ taken} \ or \ power = \frac{work \ done}{time \ taken}$

 $P = \Delta W / \Delta t$ Δ is the symbol 'delta' and is used to mean a 'change in'

Look at this worked example, which uses the equation for potential energy gained.

A motor lifts a mass *m* of 12 kg through a height Δh of 25 m in 6.0 s.

Gravitational potential energy gained:

 $\Delta PE = mg\Delta h = (12 \text{ kg}) \times (9.81 \text{ m s}^{-2}) \times (25 \text{ m}) = 2943 \text{ J}$

Power =
$$\frac{2943 \text{ J}}{6.0 \text{ s}}$$
 = 490 W (2 s.f.)

Practice questions

3 Calculate the power of a crane motor that lifts a weight of 260 000 N through 25 m in 48 s.

4 A motor rated at 8.0 kW lifts a 2500 N load 15 m in 5.0 s. Calculate the output power.

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5.3 Efficiency

Whenever work is done, energy is transferred and some energy is transferred to other forms, for example, heat or sound. The efficiency is a measure of how much of the energy is transferred usefully.

Efficiency is a ratio and is given as a decimal fraction between 0 (all the energy is wasted) and 1 (all the energy is usefully transferred) or as a percentage between 0 and 100%. It is not possible for anything to be 100% efficient: some energy is always lost to the surroundings.

 $\mathsf{Efficiency} = \frac{\mathsf{useful energy output}}{\mathsf{total energy input}} \text{ or Efficiency} = \frac{\mathsf{useful power output}}{\mathsf{total power input}}$

(multiply by 100% for a percentage)

Look at this worked example.

A thermal power station uses 11 600 kWh of energy from fuel to generate electricity. A total of 4500 kWh of energy is output as electricity. Calculate the percentage of energy 'wasted' (dissipated in heating the surroundings).

You must calculate the energy wasted using the value for useful energy output:

percentage energy wasted = $\frac{(11600 - 4500)}{11600} \times 100 = 61.2\% = 61\% (2 \text{ s.f.})$

Practice questions

- 5 Calculate the percentage efficiency of a motor that does 8400 J of work to lift a load. The electrical energy supplied is 11 200 J.
- 6 An 850 W microwave oven has a power consumption of 1.2 kW. Calculate the efficiency, as a percentage.
- 7 Use your answer to question 4 above to calculate the percentage efficiency of the motor. (The motor, rated at 8.0 kW, lifts a 2500 N load 15 m in 5.0 s.)
- 8 Determine the time it takes for a 92% efficient 55 W electric motor take to lift a 15 N weight 2.5 m.