

# Coulomb law

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## The problem:

Two identical rods (length  $L$ ) are placed on the  $\hat{x}$  axis. The distance between the rods is  $L$ . The rods are charged uniformly, and the total charge on each rod is  $Q$ . Find the force on the right rod.

## The solution:

The charge density on each rod is

$$\lambda = \frac{Q}{L} \quad (1)$$

$$dq = \lambda dl \quad (2)$$

We can sum the Coulomb forces between the charges on the left rod and the right rod.

$$\sum \vec{F} = k \sum_i \Delta q_i \sum_j \Delta q_j \frac{(\vec{r}_j - \vec{r}_i)}{(\vec{r}_j - \vec{r}_i)^3} \quad (3)$$

The index  $i$  iterates the charges (positioned at  $\vec{r}_i$ ) on the left rod. The index  $j$  iterates the charges (positioned at  $\vec{r}_j$ ) on the right rod. The quantity  $\vec{r}_j - \vec{r}_i$  gives the distance and the direction between 2 summed charges.

Integrating:

$$F_x = k \int_0^L \lambda dl_1 \int_{2L}^{3L} \lambda dl_2 \frac{1}{(l_2 - l_1)^2} \quad (4)$$

$$= k\lambda^2 \int_0^L dl_1 \int_{2L}^{3L} \frac{dl_2}{(l_2 - l_1)^2} \quad (5)$$

$$= k\lambda^2 \int_0^L dl_1 \left[ \frac{1}{l_1 - l_2} \right]_{2L}^{3L} \quad (6)$$

$$= k\lambda^2 \int_0^L \left[ \frac{1}{l_1 - 3L} - \frac{1}{l_1 - 2L} \right] dl_1 \quad (7)$$

$$= k\lambda^2 \left[ \ln |l_1 - 3L|_0^L - \ln |l_1 - 2L|_0^L \right] \quad (8)$$

$$= k\lambda^2 \ln \frac{4}{3} \quad (9)$$

$$= k \frac{Q^2}{L^2} \ln \frac{4}{3} \quad (10)$$