How Stable Diffusion imagines a light cone.
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Preliminaries

Important

This script is in development and continuously updated. To download the latest version:

🔗 itp3.info/rt

If you spot mistakes or have suggestions, send me an email:

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Requirements for this course

We assume that students are familiar with the following concepts:

- Classical mechanics (Lagrangian and Hamiltonian formalism …)
- Non-relativistic quantum mechanics (Schrödinger equation …)
- Classical electrodynamics (Maxwell equations …)
- Basics of algebra & linear algebra (groups, linear maps, …)
- Second quantization and path integrals ★

  This is only required for the excursions on quantum gravity!

Literature recommendations

Special relativity

- Schröder: *Spezielle Relativitätstheorie* [1]
  ISBN 978-3-808-55653-5
  Compact, pedagogic, mathematically precise introduction (in German).

General relativity

- Schutz: *A First Course in General Relativity* [2]
  Extensive, pedagogic, mathematically precise introduction.

- Schröder: *Gravitation: Einführung in die Allgemeine Relativitätstheorie* [3]
  ISBN 978-3-817-11874-8
  Compact, pedagogic, mathematically precise introduction (in German).

  Very high level and compact overview with links to quantum gravity.
Quantum gravity

  Extensive, pedagogic introduction with many detailed calculations.
- Rovelli: *Covariant Loop Quantum Gravity: An Elementary Introduction to Quantum Gravity and Spinfoam Theory* [6]
  Compact, pedagogic introduction, omitting some technical details.

This course follows roughly the textbook *Spezielle Relativitätstheorie* by Ulrich Schröder [1] in the first part on special relativity (with admixtures from Schutz [2] and Straumann [7]). The second part on general relativity follows roughly the textbook *Gravitation* by Ulrich Schröder [3] (with admixtures from Schutz [2] and Rovelli [4]). The excursions on quantum gravity at the end draw from Barton Zwiebach’s *A First Course in String Theory* [5] for the primer on bosonic string theory, and Carlo Rovelli’s *Covariant Loop Quantum Gravity* [6] for the sneak peek at loop quantum gravity.

Original literature

  Annalen der Physik, 17, p. 891–921, (1905)
  Foundational paper on Einstein’s special relativity (in German).
  Annalen der Physik, 18, p. 639–641, (1905)
  Einstein’s deduction of the famous mass-energy equivalence (in German).

Goals of this course

The goal of this course is to gain a thorough understanding of relativity, our modern theory of space and time (“spacetime”). This includes both the symmetries and the dynamics of spacetime; the former being described by special relativity, the latter by general relativity. We close with an (optional) excursion into the quantization of gravity, and briefly discuss the two most prominent contenders: string theory and loop quantum gravity.

In particular (★ optional):

*Special relativity*

- Conceptual foundations special relativity
- Galileian and Einsteinian relativity principles
- Lorentz transformations and the principle of invariance
- Kinematical consequences of Lorentz transformations
- Tensor calculus and the metric tensor
- Special relativity in Minkowski space
- Lorentz- and Poincaré group
- Relativistic mechanics
• Lagrange function and principle of least action
• Electrodynamics as a relativistic field theory
• Noether theorem and the energy momentum tensor
• Relativistic quantum mechanics (Klein-Gordon- and Dirac equation)
• Limitations of special relativity

General relativity
• Incompatibility of gravitation and special relativity
• Mathematical toolbox:
  Riemannian manifolds, metric tensor, Levi-Civita connection, curvature, …
• Conceptual framework of general relativity:
  Metric field, general covariance vs. background independence, …
• Classical mechanics in curved spacetime
• Electrodynamics in curved spacetime ★
• Dynamics of general relativity (Einstein field equations)
• Implications of the Einstein field equations:
  Newtonian limit, Gravitational time dilation, Apsidal precession, Light deflection …
• Application: Gravitational waves (linearized Einstein equations)
• Application: Black holes (Schwarzschild solution)
• Application: The standard model of cosmology (FLRW metric, ΛCDM, …)
• Limitations of general relativity:
  Einstein-Hilbert action, quantum field theory, (non-)renormalizability, …

Quantum gravity (excursion)
• The bosonic string ★:
  Quantization, Virasoro algebra, anomalies, Hilbert space, gravitons, tachyons, …
• Concepts of quantum loop gravity ★:
  Discretized gravity, spin networks, vertex amplitude, transition amplitudes, …

Notes on this document
• This document is not an extension of the material covered in the lectures but the script that I use to prepare them.
• Please have a look at the given literature for more comprehensive coverage. References to primary and secondary resources are also given in the text.
• The content of this script is color-coded as follows:
  – Text in black is written to the blackboard.
  – Notes in red should be mentioned in the lecture to prevent misconceptions.
  – Notes in blue can be mentioned/noted in the lecture if there is enough time.
  – Notes in green are hints for the lecturer.
• One page of the script corresponds roughly to one covered panel of the blackboard.

• Enumerated lists are used for more or less rigorous chains of thought:
  1  |  This leads to …
  2  |  this. By the way:
      i |  This leads to …
      ii |  this leads to …
      iii |  this.
  3  |  Let’s proceed …
Key

The following abbreviations and glyphs are used in this document:

- *cf* | confer (“compare”)
- *dof* | degree(s) of freedom
- *eg*  | exempli gratia (“for example”)
- *etc* | et cetera (“and so forth”)
- *et al* | et alii (“and others”)
- *ie*  | id est (“that is”)
- *viz* | videlicet (“namely”)
- *vs*  | versus (“against”)
- *wlog* | without loss of generality
- *wrt* | with respect to
- < | “consider”
- → | “therefore”
- ¡! | “Beware!”
- ≡ | non-obvious equality that may require lengthy, but straightforward calculations
- *⇒* | non-trivial equality that cannot be derived without additional input
- — | “it is easy to show”
- —*⇒* | “it is not easy to show”
- ⇒ | logical implication
- ∧ | logical conjunction
- ∨ | logical disjunction
- □ | repeated expression
- ■ | anonymous reference
- w/o | “without”
- w/  | “with”
- → | internal forward reference (“see below/later”)
- ← | internal backward reference (“see above/before”)
- ↑ | external reference to advanced concepts (“have a look at an advanced textbook on…”)
- ↓ | external reference to basic concepts (“remember your basic course on…”)
- ✨ | reference to previous or upcoming exercises
- * | optional choice/item
- ¶ | implicit or explicit definition of a new technical term (“so called…”)
- ✩ | Aside
- ≡ | Synonymous terms
- := | Definition
Setting the Stage

Terminology

The most important terms in this course and their German correspondence:

- RELATIVITY = Relativitätstheorie
- SPECIAL RELATIVITY = Spezielle Relativitätstheorie (SRT)
- GENERAL RELATIVITY = Allgemeine Relativitätstheorie (ART)

Relation of the theories:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{RELATIVITY} & \quad \{ \text{SPECIAL RELATIVITY} \\
& \quad \text{GENERAL RELATIVITY} \}
\end{align*}
\]

Motivation

RELATIVITY is most arguably the most popular of scientific theories, for it speaks about an entity of every day experience: space and time. This popularity comes with a caveat:

\[\text{The “Mona Lisa perspective”}\]

The popular status of RELATIVITY in physics parallels that of the Mona Lisa in arts: Einstein’s magnum opus inherits an aura of perfection and finality.

\[\text{The “Puzzle Perspective”}\]

RELATIVITY is interesting because it describes some, but not all facets of reality. Its incompatibility with quantum mechanics hints at a reality even stranger than its pieces.

\[!\text{You should not view RELATIVITY as the “Mona Lisa of physics” but as the harbinger of quantum gravity}\]

\[!\text{that, most likely, will come with a reformulation of reality so profound that the “strangeness” of quantum mechanics and RELATIVITY alike will pale in comparison (→ Excursions).}\]

\[1\text{I use the term “quantum gravity” here very loosely and essentially synonymous with “theory of everything”.}\]
Ontology

1. The ontology of physics is the collection of “things that exist” (entities):

\[
\text{Ontology} = \{ \text{Leptons, Hadrons, Higgs, Gauge bosons} \}
\]

Matter: Atoms ...  
Interactions: Photons ...

Standard Model of Particle Physics

2. Physical theories are models that describe how these entities behave.

Examples:

- Classical mechanics describes the dynamics of matter on macroscopic scales.
- Quantum mechanics describes the dynamics of matter on microscopic scales.
- Electrodynamics describes the dynamics of electromagnetic fields on macroscopic scales.

Note that these can be effective (approximate) descriptions that are restricted to finite scales of validity (length, energy, time).

3. What is RELATIVITY a theory of?

i. Two notions of space and time:

- Relational space & time
- Newtonian space & time

ii. Delete all entities from the world:

Nothing!  
Newtonian space & time left!

Question: Which notion describes reality?
Newton’s bucket:

Question: Rotation with respect to what determines the shape of the water surface?

Tentative answer: Rotation with respect to Newtonian space!

Today, Newtonian space & time (sometimes called neo-Newtonian or Galilean spacetime) is not seen as a preferred (“absolute”) coordinate system, with respect to which absolute positions, times and velocities can be measured; it is the entity that is responsible for the absolute notion of acceleration in Newtonian physics (which is also present in relativity). It is “the thing” that determines the reference frames that are inertial.

Space & time (Spacetime) is an independent “thing that exists.”

The correct answer to the bucket experiment in relativity will be: The rotation with respect to the local inertial frame—which is determined by the local gravitational field—determines the shape of the water surface. This field is determined by the large-scale distribution of mass and energy in the universe, i.e., the fixed stars; the (rotating) mass of the earth has a non-zero but tiny effect as well (Frame dragging).

Thus we should extend our ontology:

Extended Ontology = \{ Leptons, Hadrons, Gauge bosons, Higgs, Spacetime \}

The Core Theory [10] (below) is an effective (quantum) field theory that encompasses the standard model and relativity. It describes all entities know to us on our scales—but is expected to fail on the Planck scale (in the “UV limit”). The theory that the Core Theory renormalized to in this UV limit is the famous “Theory of Everything”. This is uncharted territory and we do not know what this theory looks like.

The extended ontology above is known as substantivalism in the philosophy of science, see [11] for a review and [12] for a supportive account of this ontology. Opposing substantivalism is relationalism, which defends the view that spacetime is not an independent entity but an emergent description of relations between entities (The Hole Argument). Relationalism is exemplified by Mach’s principle, which has been historically influential in the development of general relativity (though Einstein later changed his views). In the light of non-trivial solutions (of the Einstein field equations) for “empty” universes in general relativity, and the (now experimentally confirmed) existence of gravitational waves, I take a substantivalist stance in this course.
This extended ontology allows us to answers the question:

**RELATIVITY is the theory of spacetime (on macroscopic scales), just as electrodynamics is the theory of the electromagnetic field.**

¡! Despite these conceptual similarities, there is a fundamental difference between RELATIVITY and electrodynamics (→ below): Whereas electrodynamics describes the dynamics of the electromagnetic field on spacetime, the gravitational field of RELATIVITY does not evolve on spacetime; it is spacetime!

‡ The Core Theory

The ¶ Core Theory \( S_\star \) is the ¶ effective field theory that describes all entities on the energy scales relevant for our everyday life [10]. As typical for a field theory, it is best expressed as a ¶ path integral:

\[
A_\star = \int \mathcal{D}g \mathcal{D}G \mathcal{D}\psi \mathcal{D}\phi \exp \left( \frac{i}{\hbar} S_\star[g, G, \psi, \phi] \right).
\]

What makes this an effective theory is the momentum cutoff \( \Lambda \): The theory describes the dynamics of the fields only up to some finite momentum/energy cutoff \( \Lambda \). In [10] it is argued that \( \Lambda \sim 10^{11} \text{eV} \) is a reasonable cutoff; since this is well below the Planck scale of \( 10^{28} \text{eV} \), \( A_\star \) does not describe the physics on these energy scales (e.g., what happens in black holes or near the Big Bang is not encoded in \( A_\star \)). This reflects the lack of a consistent theory of quantum gravity.

The action \( S_\star \) splits into two parts (plus one additional, technical term that we can safely ignore here):

\[
S_\star[g, G, \psi, \phi] = S_{\text{EH}}[g] + S_{\text{SM}}[g, G, \psi, \phi].
\]

The first part is the famous ¶ Einstein-Hilbert action \( G \) is the gravitational constant) and describes the gravitational field \( g \):

\[
S_{\text{EH}}[g] = \frac{1}{16\pi G} \int d^4x \sqrt{-g} R(g).
\]

We will encounter this action in the second part of this course as it encodes the (source-free) ¶ Einstein field equations; there you will learn what \( R(g) \) is.

The second part is the action of the ¶ standard model of particle physics (coupled to gravity via \( g \)) and describes all the stuff in our world (matter and interactions) except gravity:

\[
S_{\text{SM}}[g, G, \psi, \phi] = \int d^4x \sqrt{-g} \left[ i \bar{\psi} \slashed{D} \psi - \frac{1}{4} G^2 + |D\phi|^2 - V(\phi) + \left( \bar{\psi} Y_i \frac{\partial}{\partial \phi} \psi^i + \text{h.c.} \right) \right].
\]

### Entities
- **Dirac** (Fermion ke&i)
- **Yang-Mills** (Gauge boson ke&i)
- **Klein-Gordon** (Higgs boson ke&i)
- **Higgs potential** (Symmetry breaking)
- **Yukawa coupling** (Fermion masses)
Here “ke&i” stands for kinetic energy and interactions (with gauge bosons). The standard model action $S_{SM}(G, \psi, \phi) = S_{SM}(\eta, G, \psi, \phi)$ on a static, flat spacetime $g = \eta$ is typically discussed in a course on quantum field theory with focus on high energy physics († Section 10.2 of my script on QFT [13]). In this course on relativity, the existence of $S_{SM}$ will leave its (classical) mark on the Einstein field equations in form of the $\sim$ energy-momentum tensor.

Relation to other theories

1 | **Relativity** is similar to other theories in that it is a theory of an entity that makes up reality. However, it is also different in that this very entity makes an appearance in most other theories:

- **Classical mechanics** describes the macr. dynamics of matter on spacetime: $\vec{x}(t)$.
- **Quantum mechanics** describes the micr. dynamics of matter on spacetime: $\Psi(\vec{x}, t)$.
- **Electrodynamics** describes the macr. dynamics of EM fields on spacetime: $E(\vec{x}, t), B(\vec{x}, t)$.

In the light of the extended ontology (where spacetime is an independent entity described by RELATIVITY), it can be useful to reframe the objective of various theories as follows:

- **Classical mechanics** describes the macr. dynamics of matter interacting with a (static) spacetime.
- **Quantum mechanics** describes the micr. dynamics of matter interacting with a (static) spacetime.
- **Electrodynamics** describes the macr. dynamics of EM fields interacting with a (static) spacetime.

Note that this reading is manifest in the background-independent formulation of the Core Theory $S_{\sim}(g, G, \psi, \phi)$ where the metric $g$ and the other fields are treated on the same footing.

→ The properties of spacetime (as posited by RELATIVITY) must be reflected by these theories!

This means that we might have to modify known theories to be consistent with RELATIVITY. These modifications must adhere to the $\sim$ correspondence principle: The “old” (non-relativistic) versions of the theories must be included in the “new” (relativistic) versions as limiting cases.

2 | **Incorporating the tenets of special relativity** leads to …

- **Relativistic mechanics**
- **Relativistic quantum mechanics** (Dirac equation, Klein-Gordon equation)
- **Relativistic electrodynamics** (= classical electrodynamics)

Luckily, classical electrodynamics is already consistent with special relativity and needs no modification. By contrast, both classical mechanics and the quantum mechanics you learned in...
your previous courses must be modified to reflect the symmetries of spacetime posited by special relativity.

Incorporating the tenets of general relativity leads to …

- (Relativistic) Mechanics on curved spacetimes
- (Relativistic) Quantum mechanics on curved spacetimes
- (Relativistic) Electrodynamics on curved spacetimes

In this course, we will discuss the modifications needed for mechanics and electrodynamics to fit the framework of general relativity. We won’t discuss quantum mechanics on curved spacetimes.

¡! Quantum mechanics (describing matter and gauge bosons) on a curved spacetime is not “quantum gravity!” Quantum gravity is a theory where the metric field \( g \) itself is quantized (which we do not know how to do).

**Spoiler**

The gist of relativity can be summarized as follows:

- **Spacetime** ↔ Four dimensional Lorentzian manifold \((M, g)\)
- **Gravitational field** ↔ Metric tensor field \(g\)

This is what is meant by the popular statement that gravity “is not a force” but a geometrical deformation (“curvature”) of spacetime.

and

- **Special relativity** : \( g \) has signature \((1, 3)\) (Lorentz symmetry)
- **General relativity** : \( g \) is a dynamical field (Background independence)

You most likely do not understand these statements at this point. That’s fine! To provide you with the background knowledge to do so is the purpose of this course.

So let’s start …
Part I.

Special Relativity
1. Conceptual Foundations

◊ Concepts
- Events, Observations, Coincidences, Observers, Reference frames, Einstein synchronization, Cartesian coordinates, Inertial frames, Inertial coordinate systems, Coordinate transformations, Laws of nature, Physical models and theories
- Newtonian mechanics, Form-invariance and covariance, Invariance group, Active and passive transformations, Galilei transformations, Galilei group, Galilean principle of relativity
- Maxwell equations, Aether, Michelson Morley experiment, Principle of Special Relativity
- Isotropy, Homogeneity, Affine transformations
- Special Lorentz transformations, Lorentz Boosts, Lorentz group, Lorentz factor, Limiting velocity, Lorentz covariance, Addition of collinear velocities, Finite speed of causality
- Relativity principles, Symmetries of spacetime, Simplicity of nature, Compressibility, Anthropic principle

1.1. Events, frames, laws, and models

A. Einstein writes in his 1905 paper “Zur Elektrodynamik bewegter Körper” [8]:


And in his 1916 review “Die Grundlage der allgemeinen Relativitätstheorie” [14]:


We condense this into the following postulate:
§ Postulate: Invariance of coincidence \[ IC \]

- Observations are coincidences of events local in space and time.
- Coincidences of events are absolute and observer independent.

\[ \ii \text{ Example:} \]

Event \( e_1 \) = (Clock A shows time 11:30)
Event \( e_2 \) = (Detector B detects electron)
Event \( e_3 \) = (Clock C shows time 9:45)

If detector B and clock A are at the same location (spatial coincidence), and clock A shows 11:30 when detector B detects and electron (temporal coincidence), we say that the events \( e_1 \) and \( e_2 \) coincide: \( e_1 \sim e_2 \).

→ Collect all events \( e_i \) that coincide into an equivalence class \( E \):

\[ e_1 \sim e_2 \sim e_3 \sim \ldots \rightarrow E = \{e_1, e_2, e_3, \ldots \} \]

In a slight abuse of nomenclature we call the coincidence class \( E \) also event.

Note that this abuse of nomenclature is also used in everyday life: What makes up an “event” (like a party) is the set of all “little events” (like you meeting your friend) that happen (roughly) at the same location and the same time.

\[ \ii \text{ Assumption:} \]

The set \( E = \{E_1, E_2, \ldots \} \) of all coincidence classes is a complete, observer independent record of reality.

We call the information stored in \( E \) absolute because all observers agree on it.

2 | \[ \ddagger \text{ Observer } \mathcal{O} = \ddagger \text{(Reference) Frame } \mathcal{O} : \]

Goal: Systematic description of physical phenomena in terms of models.

Question: How to systematically observe reality and encode these observations?

:= Experimental setup to collect data about events in space & time:
Assumptions:

- The rods and clocks are conceptual: they do not affect physical experiments.
- All rods and clocks are identical (when brought together, the rods have the same, time-independent length and the clocks tick with the same rate).
- The lattice is “infinitely dense”: there is a clock at every point in space.
- Each clock is assigned a unique position label \( \vec{x} \) and the reference frame label \( O \).

For example, a unique position label \( \vec{x} \) for a clock can be obtained by counting the rods in \( x \)-, \( y \)- and \( z \)-direction that one has to traverse to reach the clock from the origin. The origin \( O \) is, by definition, a “special” clock that is assigned the position label \( \vec{x}_O = \vec{0} \).

† Observers are not sitting at the origin, looking at their wristwatch, and observing the events with binoculars! They are simply collecting and processing the data that is accumulated by the contraption we call a reference frame.

Since we assume that (ideally) there is one clock at every point in space:

\[ \rightarrow \text{For every observer } O \text{ and every coincidence class } E \text{ there is a unique event } e_O \]

\[ E \ni e_O = (\text{Clock with frame label } O \text{ and position label } \vec{x} \text{ shows time } t) \quad (1.1a) \]

\[ \leftrightarrow \quad [E]_O = (t, \vec{x}) \quad (1.1b) \]

for some position label \( \vec{x} \) and clock reading \( t \).

We refer to the event \((t, \vec{x})_O\) as the spacetime coordinates of \( E \) with respect to frame \( O \). A different observer \( O' \) will use its own clocks and therefore other events (“coordinates”) \((t', \vec{x}')_{O'} \in E\) to refer to \( E \).

In the real world, the tracking detectors of particle colliders are reminiscent of this ideal setup: They are comprised of 3D arrangements of semiconductor-based particle detectors that all report to a central computer that then reconstructs the trajectories of scattering products from the combination of all detection events.

3 | Inertial (coordinate) systems:

The setup of a reference frame \( O \) above is incomplete and actually very hard to work with: Without additional constraints on the geometry of the lattice and the correlations of clocks (their “calibration”), the record of events is essentially arbitrary. Let us therefore impose some deterministic “calibration procedure” (the same for all frames) that determines how to lay out the rod lattice and how to synchronize the clocks. This procedure endows our reference frame with a specific coordinate system, a labeling scheme to describe events.

i | Clock calibration: \( (\text{Poincaré-})\text{Einstein synchronization} \)

The conventional synchronization procedure (which is actually in practical use) is (Poincaré-)Einstein synchronization:

\[ t_O \equiv \frac{1}{2} (t_A + \tilde{t}_A) \quad (1.2) \]
You will study this particular procedure and its properties in Problemset 1.

In brief, the procedure goes as follows: Consider a reference clock $O$ and some other clock $A$ you wish to synchronize with $O$.

1. To do so, you send a light signal from $A$ to $O$ and note the time $t_A$ your clock $A$ reads when the signal is emitted.
2. When the signal arrives at $O$, it is immediately reflected back to $A$ together with the reading $t_O$ of clock $O$ at this very moment.
3. When the signal arrives back at your clock $A$ (together with the timestamp $t_A$), you note again the reading of your clock as $t_A$.
4. You are now in the possession of three timestamps: $t_A, t_O, t_A$. The idea of Einstein's synchronization is to postulate the reciprocity of the speed of light: We declare that the speed of the signal from $A$ to $O$ is the same as on its way back from $O$ to $A$ (note that we cannot measure this reciprocity because we would need already synchronized clocks to do so!). Under this assumption, the readings of synchronized clocks must satisfy
$$\Delta t_{A\rightarrow O} = t_O - t_A = t_A - t_O = \Delta t_{O\rightarrow A} \iff t_O = \frac{1}{2} (t_A + t_A),$$
which you can locally check with your data $(t_A, t_O, t_A)$. Note that you do not need to know the distance from $O$ to $A$, nor the numerical value of the speed of light $c$ for this procedure to work!
5. Now if you just powered on your shiny new clock $A$ for the first time, it is very unlikely that the condition Eq. (1.3) will be satisfied:
$$t_O = \frac{1}{2} (t_A + t_A) + \delta t = \frac{1}{2} [(t_A + \delta t) + (t_A + \delta t)].$$
Here $\delta t$ is an offset that you might encounter. But then you can just recalibrate your clock $A$ by $\delta t$ such that the new readings are $t_A + \delta t$ and $t_A + \delta t$.

Repeating this procedure for all clocks of the frame $O$ allows you to establish a synchronization relation between arbitrary pairs of clocks. The fact that (under some reasonable and experimentally verified assumptions) the order in which you synchronize your clocks does not matter (the established relation is an equivalence relation, Problemset 1 and Ref. [15]) makes Einstein synchronization a very useful and peculiar convention [16–18]. However, one can show that it is the only convention that yields a non-trivial equivalence relation of simultaneity that is consistent with the causal structure on $E$ (later) [19].

---

**Lattice calibration:**

The layout of the lattice of rods assigns coordinates $x = (x, y, z)$ to each clock. Depending on the actual shape of the lattice, we will denote events by different position labels. (Note that even with rigid rods connected in the topology of a cubic lattice the geometry is not fixed; for example, you can shear the lattice.) If we assume that space (not spacetime!) is a flat Euclidean space where all the facts of Euclidean geometry hold good (angles of triangles add up $\pi$, the Pythagorean theorem holds, the area of circles is $\pi r^2$, etc.), we can parametrize it without loss of generality by orthonormal Cartesian coordinates. In these coordinates, distances can be calculated by the Pythagorean formula:
Spatial distance between clocks at $\bar{x}$ and $\bar{y}$:

$$d(\bar{x}, \bar{y}) = \sqrt{(x_1 - y_1)^2 + (x_2 - y_2)^2 + (x_3 - y_3)^2}$$  \hspace{1cm} (1.5)

The fact that the coordinates of a point $(x, y, z)$ are distances along paths parallel to the coordinate axes makes the coordinates Cartesian. The fact that Eq. (1.5) holds makes them orthonormal (i.e., the axes are orthogonal and have the same scale, as suggested by the sketch above). Coordinates are an intrinsically mathematical concept, they are “labels” to identify points on a manifold of physical points (or events, if you consider spacetime coordinates). By contrast, distances carry physical significance: You can measure them with light signals or rods. The prevalence of Cartesian coordinates makes it easy to conflate these two concepts (this will become particularly important in general relativity).

Here is a way to check whether your lattice satisfies the OC condition using the clocks of $\mathcal{O}$ (and the assumption of the isotropy of the two-way speed of light):

iii “Inertial Test” (⁂ law of inertia):

Once you have arranged your rods and synchronized your clocks and thereby established a Cartesian coordinate system and a (allegedly) well-defined notion of simultaneity, you can perform the following test and check whether your particular reference frame $\mathcal{O}$ passes it or not:

**IN** Free particles move at constant velocity and in straight lines.

(*Homogeneity of Inertia*)

- It is implied that this statement is true everywhere, anytime, and in all directions.
- Velocities are computed as the time derivative of trajectories in the frame: $\frac{d\bar{x}(t)}{dt}$.
- The property **IN** implies a certain form of homogeneity in space and time (since free particles must move in straight lines anywhere and anytime) and isotropy in space (they must move in straight lines in any direction). Without additional empirical input, this does not automatically imply that every experiment yields the same result anywhere, anytime and in any direction. This more general form of homogeneity and isotropy will be introduced later as **HO** and **IS**. Empirical evidence shows that spacetime indeed is homogeneous **HO** and space isotropic **IS** (in the absence of gravity). With this additional input, the “Inertial Test” to establish **IN** can be simplified to only one particle moving in a straight line at one place for some finite time (which is actually doable). If you presuppose homogeneity **HO** but not isotropy **IS**, you could observe multiple free particles starting at the same point but moving in different (linearly independent) directions.

Frames equipped with a coordinate system defined by **ES** + **OC** which satisfy **IN** are called ¶ inertial coordinate systems.
To distinguish arbitrary frames $\mathcal{O}$ (with arbitrary coordinates) from the special frames (equipped with Cartesian coordinates and synchronized clocks) that passed the inertial test, we label these coordinate systems by $K$, $K'$, $K''$ etc. (if we refer to arbitrary inertial systems) and by $A$, $B$, $C$ etc. (if we refer to specific inertial systems); the set of all inertial systems is denoted $\mathcal{J}$.

**Alternative definitions:**

There seem to be as many definitions of inertial systems as there are texts on **special relativity**. Some are equivalent, some are not. Some more useful, others less so (none are "wrong", though, because definitions cannot be wrong). Some are operational in nature (like the one above), some purely mathematical. Here I only want to point out two ways one can modify the above definition without changing the concept of an inertial system:

- The "inertial test" is crucial to the concept of an inertial frame. It rules out accelerated frames (both linear or rotating). An alternative to throwing test masses in different directions and recording their trajectories is to repeat the ES procedure periodically to test whether the clocks stay in sync. That is, to setup the coordinate system one synchronizes the clocks once (by recalibrating the clocks) and then repeats the procedure periodically to check whether the Einstein-synchronization condition remains valid ($\Delta t = 0$ in our description above). As it will turn out in **general relativity**, your clocks will not stay in sync in frames that do not pass $\text{IN}$ (and vice versa). This is essentially the definition given by Schutz [2].

- Instead of "hiding" the law of inertia in the synchronization of clocks, one can do a somewhat reverse modification and "hide" the synchronization of clocks in (an extension of) the law of inertia: To this end one extends the "inertial test" by a second class of tests/experiments, namely:

  **IN** Two identical particles that are initially adjacent and at rest, and then interact to repel each other, fly apart with the same velocity in opposite directions. (**Isotropy of Inertia**)

  This statement about the isotropy of inertia implies an operational definition of simultaneity that is (empirically) equivalent to ES: You synchronize your clocks such that $\text{IN}$ is satisfied, for example by performing the experiment described by $\text{IN}$ equidistant between two clocks. When the particles reach the clocks, you reset both to $t = 0$. In this synchronization $\text{IN}$ is satisfied by construction; experiments show that clocks synchronized in this way are also synchronized according to ES (and vice versa).

---

### Spacetime diagram

$K$ := Data structure that encodes the collected data of an inertial coordinate system $K$:

- Often we draw only one dimension of space for the sake of simplicity.
Because it will prove useful later, we measure time in units of length by multiplying \( t \) with the speed of light \( c \). The choice of \( c \) is arbitrary at this point.

**Notation:** Two inertial systems \( K \) and \( K' \):

We use the following shorthand notations to refer to the coordinates of events in the spacetime diagrams of \( K \) and \( K' \), respectively:

\[
(t, \tilde{x})_K \equiv (x)_K \equiv x \equiv (t, \tilde{x}) \quad \text{and} \quad (t', \tilde{x}^\prime)_K' \equiv (x^\prime)_K' \equiv x^\prime \equiv (t', \tilde{x}^\prime) \quad (1.6)
\]

When it is clear to which inertial system the coordinates belong we drop the subscripts \( K \) and \( K' \).

**Interlude: Reconstructing spacetime diagrams from \( E \)**

If you are given the set \( E \) of events you can reconstruct the spacetime diagram of an inertial system \( K \) by looking in each coincidence class \( E \in E \) for the clock event \((t, \tilde{x})_K \in E \). You then place \( E \) (or some sub-event you are interested in) graphically at the coordinate \((t, \tilde{x})\) on a sheet of paper. The resulting picture is the spacetime diagram of \( K \). In another inertial system \( K' \) the events are arranged differently because different clock events \((t', \tilde{x}^\prime)_K \in E \) and hence coordinates \((t', \tilde{x}^\prime)\) are used to draw the spacetime diagram. How \((t, \tilde{x})\) and \((t', \tilde{x}^\prime)\) are related is unclear at this point.

---

**Empirical facts:**

The following facts cannot be bootstrapped from logical thinking alone. They are facts about our physical reality that we have strong experimental evidence for.

- **Inertial systems exist** (at least in some approximation).
  
  Examples would be an unaccelerated spaceship floating far away from the solar system or the interior of the international space station (if you do not measure too precisely). In **special relativity** we assume that these systems can be extended to encompass all of spacetime.

- **Constructing inertial systems** (of arbitrary size) is not possible everywhere.

  **General relativity**

  We will find in our discussion of **general relativity** that in a gravitational field the construction of inertial systems is only possible locally. For example: If you extend the ISS inertial system rigidly beyond the ISS itself, at some point you will find the trajectories of free particles to deviate from straight lines due to the inhomogeneity of the gravitational field. We will also see that the synchronization procedure used to calibrate the clocks fails in gravitational fields (you cannot keep your clocks in sync). For our discussion of **special relativity** we ignore this and assume that our inertial systems cover all of spacetime.

**Relations between inertial systems:**

There are three **straightforward** ways to construct a new inertial system \( K' \) from a given one \( K \). They have in common that the two observers do **not** move with respect to one another so that pairs of clocks from \( K \) and \( K' \) spatially coincide for all times (this implies in particular that you can check that these pairs of clock run at the same rate):

1. **Translation in time by** \( s \in \mathbb{R} \) \( \rightarrow \) **1 parameter**

   **Procedure:**
   
   Duplicate all clocks & rods in place. Label the new clocks with \( K' \) and the old position labels. Shift the reading of all clocks by a constant value \(-s\):
   
   \[
   (t', \tilde{x}^\prime)_K' \sim (t, \tilde{x})_K \quad \text{with} \quad t' = t - s \quad \text{and} \quad \tilde{x}^\prime = \tilde{x}. \quad (1.7)
   \]
It is easy to see that this modification does not invalidate $\text{ES}$, $\text{OC}$ or $\text{IN}$. In particular, the Einstein synchronization condition Eq. (1.2) remains valid:

$$t_O = \frac{1}{2} (t_A + \tilde{t}_A) \iff (t_O - s) = \frac{1}{2} [(t_A - s) + (\tilde{t}_A - s)].$$

(1.8)

*How to check from $K$:*
At $(t)_K = 0$ the reading of the origin clock of $K'$ is shifted by $-s \in \mathbb{R}$.

(2) **Translation in space by** $\vec{b} \in \mathbb{R}^3$ ($\rightarrow$ 3 parameters)

*Procedure:*
Duplicate all clocks & rods and translate the whole lattice by $\vec{b}$ (since all clocks are type-identical, you can also simply modify the position labels without moving anything). Label the new clocks with $K'$ and keep their synchronization:

$$(t', \vec{x}')_{K'} \sim (t, \vec{x})_K \quad \text{with} \quad t' = t \quad \text{and} \quad \vec{x}' = \vec{x} - \vec{b}.$$  

(1.9)

If you move the lattice $K'$ in direction $\vec{b}$, the origin clock of $K$ with position label $\vec{x} = \vec{0}$ will spatially coincide with a clock of $K'$ with position label translated in the opposite direction, namely $-\vec{b}$. The same happens for rotations ($\rightarrow$ below) and translations in time ($\leftarrow$ above).

It is easy to see that this modification does not invalidate $\text{ES}$, $\text{OC}$ or $\text{IN}$. In particular, distances can still be computed with Eq. (1.5) since

$$d(\vec{x}, \vec{y}) = d(\vec{x} - \vec{b}, \vec{y} - \vec{b}) \quad \text{for} \quad \vec{b} \in \mathbb{R}^3.$$  

(1.10)

*How to check from $K$:*
At $(t)_K = 0$ the origin of $K'$ is translated by $\vec{b} \in \mathbb{R}^3$ wrt. the origin of $K$.

(3) **Rotation in space by** $R \in \text{SO}(3)$ ($\rightarrow$ 3 parameters)

*Procedure:*
Duplicate all clocks & rods and rotate the whole lattice by the axis and angle defined by the rotation matrix $R$ (since all clocks are type-identical, you can again simply modify the position labels without moving anything). Label the new clocks with $K'$ and keep their synchronization:

$$(t', \vec{x}')_{K'} \sim (t, \vec{x})_K \quad \text{with} \quad t' = t \quad \text{and} \quad \vec{x}' = R^{-1} \vec{x}.$$  

(1.11)

It is easy to see that this modification does not invalidate $\text{ES}$, $\text{OC}$ or $\text{IN}$. In particular, distances can still be computed with Eq. (1.5) since

$$d(\vec{x}, \vec{y}) = d(R^{-1} \vec{x}, R^{-1} \vec{y}) \quad \text{for} \quad R^{-1} \in \text{SO}(3).$$  

(1.12)

*How to check from $K$:*
The spatial axes of $K'$ are rotated by $R \in \text{SO}(3)$ wrt. the spatial axes of $K$.

If you can add spatial reflections to these transformations (including reflections) i.e., $R \in \text{O}(3)$ instead of $R \in \text{SO}(3)$. In our discussions we will omit these and only comment on them where necessary.

The combination of spatial rotations (proper and improper, i.e., including reflections) and spatial translations form the Euclidean group $E(3) = \text{ISO}(3)$.

However, experiments (and everyday experience) tell us that there is a fourth possibility how two inertial systems can be related:

**Empirical fact:**
(4) Uniform linear motion (Boost) by $\vec{v} \in \mathbb{R}^3$ ($\rightarrow$ 3 parameters)

You experience this fact whenever you have a very smooth flight: If you don’t look out the window (and cover your ears) everything behaves just as if the airplane were standing still on the ground; there is no evidence that you move with several hundred kilometers per hour relative to the ground.

*How to check from K:*

The origin of $K'$ moves with constant velocity $(\vec{v})_K = \left( \frac{dx(t)}{dt} \right)_K \in \mathbb{R}^3$.

Note that just from this observation one cannot distinguish between a *pure boost* and a boost combined with a spatial rotation of the axes (because one probes only for the trajectory of a single point). We will → later be more precise about this distinction.

¡! We cannot write down the coordinate transformations for this relation (yet). The fundamental difference to (1)-(3) is that now the clocks of $K'$ move wrt. the clocks of $K$. We cannot interpret this as a simple relabeling of fixed clocks. We cannot even be sure that the $K$- and $K'$-clocks “run at the same rate” (even if they are type-identical) because to check this we would have to compare the reading of a pair of clocks (one in $K$ and one in $K'$) at two consecutive points in time. To do this, however, the two clocks must be at the same place (remember that we can only observe coincidences!). But this is not possible: Since the two frames move uniformly, two clocks can never meet twice! As it will turn out, it is this relation (4) [and its concatenations with (1)-(3)] that harbors the essence of **special relativity**.

**Empirical fact:** The relations (1)-(4) are exhaustive.

With this we mean that whenever you encounter two inertial systems $K$ and $K'$ (i.e., both observers certify that they satisfy our definition of an inertial system, in particular, the “Inertial Test” ![IN](image)), then you will find that the relation between the two is one of the four relations (1)-(4) or a combination of them.

→ The relation of two inertial systems $K$ and $K'$ is given by 10 parameters:

Note that all these relations can be operationally defined and measured within the frame $K$.

¡! The first three sketches can be taken at face value: For example, a translation in time really corresponds to the situation where all clocks are shifted by $s$ an all spatial labels (in particular the axes) remain unaffected. However, for the boost (the last sketch on the right) we do not know (yet) how the coordinates transform (neither time nor space) except that the origin clock of $K'$ follows a trajectory in $K$ with uniform velocity $\vec{v}$. This implies that you should not take the sketch for a boost at face value: For example, we do not know whether the axes remain parallel as suggested by the sketch (spoiler: in general they will not).

iii | Since the transformations (1)-(3) do not change the state of motion of the observer (and can therefore be interpreted as a simple relabeling of the position labels and clock readings), it makes sense to collect all inertial frames $K$ that can be connected in this way into an equivalence class $[K]$ which we call …
**Inertial frame**: Equivalence class \([K]\) of all inertial coordinate systems \(K\) related by spacetime translations and spatial rotations.

Inertial frames \([K]\) therefore correspond to the physical notion of a “state of motion.” Physically, an inertial frame corresponds to the class of all freely moving particles in the universe that are mutually at rest. Given such a “state of motion” (e.g., by declaring one of the particles as reference point), you can then construct various Cartesian coordinate systems (e.g., using said reference particle as your origin) to describe events; these are the inertial systems that make up the equivalence class \([K]\).

**Notation:**
We denote these relations between two inertial systems with the following shorthand notations:

\[
K \overset{R,\vec{v},s,\vec{b}}{\longrightarrow} K', \quad K \overset{K_0}{\longrightarrow} K', \quad K \overset{\vec{v}}{\longrightarrow} K', \quad K \overset{v_x}{\longrightarrow} K' \tag{1.13}
\]

From left to right the relations become increasingly specialized.

These relations are not symmetric (as indicated by the arrow). For example, \(K \overset{v_x}{\longrightarrow} K'\) specifies the situation where the (origin of) system \(K'\) moves with velocity \(v_x\) in \(x\)-direction as measured in system \(K\).

**Coordinate transformations:**
- Two descriptions of the same events:

\[
\varphi(K \rightarrow K') : (t, \vec{x})_K \mapsto (t', \vec{x}')_{K'}
\]

→ Transformation between these descriptions?
Finding the functional form of \( \varphi \) (for the non-trivial case \( \vec{v} \neq 0 \)) will be our main goal and central result of this chapter. However, before we can tackle this problem, we first have to introduce a few more concepts.

### Interlude: Relative information

We called the data in \( \mathcal{E} \) *absolute* because all observers agree on the coincidence of events. However, this data cannot include arbitrary statements, e.g., the event “the particle has velocity \( \vec{v} \)” cannot be part of \( \mathcal{E} \) because we know from experience that different observers in general do not agree on the velocity of an object. However, following Einstein, we postulated that coincidences are all we can ever observe; thus all there is to know must be encoded in \( \mathcal{E} \)!

How is this consistent with the fact that velocities (for example) cannot show up in \( \mathcal{E} \)?

To understand this, it is instructive to think about quantities that can be *derived* from the absolute data in \( \mathcal{E} \) by means of prescribed algorithms. An algorithm \( \mathcal{A} \) is simply a program using data from \( \mathcal{E} \) to compute other data (it can use potentially multiple events \( E_1, E_2, \ldots, E_N \in \mathcal{E} \) to do so). Furthermore, we allow the algorithm to take the label of an inertial system \( K \) as input:

\[
\mathcal{A} : \mathcal{E}^N \times \mathcal{J} \rightarrow \text{Output data}
\]  

(1.14)

As a constraint, we require that the algorithm must not use any (static) labels \( A, B, \ldots \in \mathcal{J} \) of inertial systems. The only reference to a frame it can use is the variable \( K \). This somewhat arbitrary sounding restriction formalizes the notion that there are no inertial systems that are “special”. Since all inertial systems must be treated equal, the algorithm cannot refer to any specific frame. (This → principle of relativity will take the center stage later and turns out to be crucial for the derivation of the transformation \( \varphi \).)

Let us now contrive two algorithms to compute two quantities that are clearly physically relevant but are *not* contained in \( \mathcal{E} \):

- **Example 1: Velocity**

  First think about how you would measure the velocity of a particle in the lab. You would detect the particle at two different (but nearby) locations, measure the time it requires to get from one to the other, and then compute the difference quotient of distance traveled by the time needed. Note that there is no way to measure the velocity at one point in space and time; you always need two points!

  To formalize this, consider two events \( E_1 \) and \( E_2 \) that both contain the sub-event “particle detected”. The algorithm \( \mathcal{V}(E_1, E_2; K) \) computes the (average) velocity between the two events as follows:

  1. Select the event \( (t_1, \vec{x}_1) \in E_1 \).
  2. Select the event \( (t_2, \vec{x}_2) \in E_2 \).
  3. Compute and return the value \( \vec{v} = \frac{\vec{x}_2 - \vec{x}_1}{t_2 - t_1} \).

  It is important that this algorithm can be used *without modifications* by all observers \( K \in \mathcal{J} \). To do so, each observer \( K \) plugs into \( \mathcal{V} \) the two events (which are objective) and its own label \( K \) (since this is the only non-random choice possible).

  But then two *different* observers \( K \) and \( K' \) will pick *different* coordinates \((t_i, \vec{x}_i)\) (measured by different clocks) to compute their value of \( \vec{v} \), which obviously can yield different outcomes (as expected for velocities). Note that for the velocities to be really different it must be \([K'] \neq [K]\), i.e., the two inertial systems must belong to different frames.

- **Example 2: Duration & Simultaneity**

  A very natural question is how much time passed between two events \( E_1 \) and \( E_2 \). The formal prescription how to answer this question is given by the algorithm \( \mathcal{T}(E_1, E_2; K) \):

  1. Select the event \( (t_1, \vec{x}_1) \in E_1 \).
  2. Select the event \( (t_2, \vec{x}_2) \in E_2 \).
3. Compute and return the value $\Delta t = t_2 - t_1$.

For the very same reason as for the velocity algorithm above, the return value of course will depend on the chosen “clock events” $(t_i, \tilde{x}_i)$. And so for the very same reason that velocities can be observer-dependent, time intervals can be as well. Since we define “simultaneity” as the property $\Delta t = 0$, this possibility for observer-dependent results directly transfers to our notion of simultaneity!

Note that we did not make quantitative statements about the outcomes for different observers. We neither showed how velocities depend on the frame nor whether simultaneity really is relative. (It could just be the case that in our world $t_2 - t_1$ always equals $t'_2 - t'_1$ for a fixed event.) This depends on the actual numbers of the coordinates. Such statements therefore require quantitative statements about the relation of $(t, \tilde{x})_K \in E$ and $(t', \tilde{x'})_{K'} \in E$, which we do not know at this point (this is exactly the question for the functional form of the coordinate transformation $\varphi$).

However, what we did show is the possibility that simultaneity is relative, just as we already expect velocities to be! So when we later find the correct transformation $\varphi$ and (surprise!) that indeed simultaneity is not an observer independent fact, you should not be surprised.

**Question:** Can the values of the electric and magnetic fields $\vec{E}$ and $\vec{B}$ be included in $E$? If not, can you think of an algorithm that determines the electric and magnetic fields $\vec{E}$ and $\vec{B}$ using only coincidence data available in $E$? Do you expect the electromagnetic field to be observer-dependent?

7 | Henceforth:

> Unless noted otherwise, all frames will be *inertial* (with Cartesian coordinates).
> → We will (almost exclusively) work with *inertial coordinate systems*.

We use the concept of inertial systems because to describe physics by equations, coordinates are a useful tool. As it turns out, Cartesian coordinates allow for particularly simple equations (at least if space is Euclidean). So our concept of inertial systems as defined above is the most useful one.

8 | Physical Models:

Let us fix a bit of terminology:

- **(Physical) laws** are ontic features of reality (↑ *scientific realism*).
  
  Physical laws can only be *discovered*; they can neither be invented nor modified.

- **(Physical) models** are algorithms used to describe reality.
  
  These algorithms are typically encoded in the language of mathematics.

  Physical models are *invented* and can be *modified*; I will use the terms *model* and *theory* interchangeably.

¡ These definitions are by no means conventional and you will find many variations in the literature. For the following discussion, it is only important that the terms we use have precise meaning.
The validity of models cannot be proven; we can only gradually increase our trust in a model by repeated observations (experiments) – or reject it as invalid by demonstrating that its predictions contradict reality (↑ Karl Popper). Note that models might describe reality only approximately and in specific parameter regimes and still be useful.

You may dismiss this focus on terminology as “philosophical banter.” Conceptual clarity, however, is absolutely crucial for science – in particular for RELATIVITY. Whenever there is confusion in physics, it is often rooted in the conceptual fuzziness of our thinking.

1.2. Galilei’s principle of relativity

Example: Newtonian mechanics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Definition of the model:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• ≪ Closed system of ( N ) massive particles with masses ( m_i ) and positions ( \vec{x}_i ).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• ≪ Force exerted by ( k ) on ( i ):</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[
F_{k \rightarrow i} (\vec{x}_k - \vec{x}_i) = (\vec{x}_k - \vec{x}_i) f_{k 
rightarrow i}(|\vec{x}_k - \vec{x}_i|) \tag{1.15}
\]

It is \( f_{k \rightarrow i} = f_{i 
rightarrow k} \) and therefore \( F_{k 
rightarrow i}(\vec{x}_k - \vec{x}_i) = -F_{i 
rightarrow k}(\vec{x}_i - \vec{x}_k) \).

→ Newtonian equations of motion (in some inertial system \( K \)):

\[
m_i \frac{d^2 \vec{X}_i}{dt^2} = \sum_{k \neq i} \vec{F}_{k \rightarrow i}(\vec{X}_k - \vec{X}_i) \tag{1.16}
\]

We denote with \( \vec{X}_i \equiv \vec{X}_i(t) \) coordinate-valued functions; i.e., \( \vec{x}_i = \vec{X}_i(t) \) determines a spatial point \( \vec{x}_i \) for given \( t \).

Remember: This model fully implements “Newton’s laws of motion”:

1. Lex prima:
   
   A body remains at rest, or in motion at a constant speed in a straight line, unless acted upon by a force.

This is the principle of inertia. It is part of the definition of the concept of a Newtonian force used in Eq. (1.16). Note that it is not a consequence of Eq. (1.16) for \( F_{k \rightarrow i} = 0 \). It rather defines (together with the lex tertia below) the frames and coordinate systems (← inertial systems) in which Eq. (1.16) is valid (recall →).
2. Lex secunda:

When a body is acted upon by a net force, the body’s acceleration multiplied by its mass is equal to the net force.

This is just the functional form of Eq. (1.16) in words.

3. Lex tertia:

If two bodies exert forces on each other, these forces have the same magnitude but opposite directions.

This is guaranteed by the property $F_{k \rightarrow i} = -F_{i \rightarrow k}$ of the forces. Together with the lex secunda this is an expression of momentum conservation. For two particles:

$$m_1 \frac{dv_1}{dt} + m_2 \frac{dv_2}{dt} = \frac{dp_1}{dt} + \frac{dp_2}{dt} = F_{2 \rightarrow 1} + F_{1 \rightarrow 2} = 0 \quad (1.17)$$

This implies in particular that two identical particles ($m_1 = m_2$) that are both at rest at $t = 0$ must obey $v_1(t) = -v_2(t)$ for all times (recall INe).

Application of the model:

As a working hypothesis, let us assume that the model Eq. (1.16) describes the dynamics of massive particles perfectly (from experience we know that there are at least regimes where it is good enough for all practical purposes).

Symmetries of Newtonian mechanics:

To understand the solution space of Eq. (1.16) better, it is instructive to study transformations that map solutions to other solutions.

Galilei transformations:

We define the following coordinate transformation:

$$G : \mathbb{R}^4 \rightarrow \mathbb{R}^4 : \begin{cases} t' = t + s \\ \bar{x}' = R \bar{x} + \bar{v}t + \bar{b} \end{cases} \quad (1.18)$$

A Galilei transformation $G$ is characterized by 10 real parameters:

- $s \in \mathbb{R}$: Time translation (1 parameter)
- $\bar{b} \in \mathbb{R}^3$: Space translation (3 parameters)
- $\bar{v} \in \mathbb{R}^3$: Boost (3 parameters)
- $R \in SO(3)$: Spatial rotation (3 parameters; rotation axis: 2, rotation angle: 1)
The set of all transformations forms (the matrix representation of) a group:

$$\mathcal{G}_+ = \{ G(R, \vec{v}, s, \vec{b}) \} \quad \text{proper orthochronous Galilei group} \quad (1.19)$$

with group multiplication

$$G_3 = G_1 \cdot G_2 = G(R_1 R_2, R_1 \vec{v}_2 + \vec{v}_1, s_1 + s_2, R_1 \vec{b}_2 + \vec{v}_1 s_2 + \vec{b}_1) \quad (1.20)$$

You derive this multiplication in Problem 1 and show that the group axioms are indeed satisfied.

As a special case, the multiplication yields the rule for addition of velocities in Newtonian mechanics:

$$G(1, \vec{v}_1, 0, \vec{0}) \cdot G(1, \vec{v}_2, 0, \vec{0}) = G(1, \vec{v}_1 + \vec{v}_2, 0, \vec{0}) \quad (1.21)$$

The full Galilei group is generated by the proper orthochronous transformations together with space and time inversion:

$$\mathcal{G} = \{ \mathcal{G}_+ \cup \{ P, T \} \} \quad \text{Galilei group} \quad (1.22a)$$

- $P : (t, \vec{x}) \mapsto (t, -\vec{x})$ space inversion (parity) \quad (1.22b)
- $T : (t, \vec{x}) \mapsto (-t, \vec{x})$ time inversion \quad (1.22c)

**Galilei covariance & Form-invariance:**

Details: Problem 1

$\ll$ Coordinate transformation Eq. (1.18)

We express the total differential and the trajectory in the new coordinates:

$$\frac{d}{dt} = \frac{dt'}{dt} \frac{d}{dt'} = \frac{d}{dt'} \quad (1.23)$$

and

$$\ddot{X}_i(t') = R \ddot{X}_i(t) + \vec{v}t + \vec{b} = R \ddot{X}_i(t' - s) + \vec{v}(t' - s) + \vec{b} \quad (1.24a)$$

$$\Leftrightarrow \quad \ddot{X}_i(t) = R^{-1} \left[ \ddot{X}_i'(t') - \vec{v}(t' - s) - \vec{b} \right] \quad (1.24b)$$

Thus the left-hand side of the Newtonian equation of motion Eq. (1.16) reads in new coordinates:

$$m_i \frac{d^2 \ddot{X}_i(t)}{dt^2} = m_i \frac{d^2 \ddot{X}_i(t')}{dt'^2} R^{-1} \left[ \ddot{X}_i'(t') - \vec{v}(t' - s) - \vec{b} \right] = R^{-1} m_i \frac{d^2 \ddot{X}_i'(t')}{dt'^2} \quad (1.25)$$

Note that the quantity $m_i \frac{d^2}{dt^2} \ddot{X}_i(t)$ is not invariant; it transforms with an $R^{-1} \in \text{SO}(3)$.

And the right-hand side:

$$\sum_{k \neq i} \dddot{E}_k(t) - \dddot{X}_k(t) = R^{-1} \sum_{k \neq i} \dddot{E}_k(t') - \dddot{X}_k(t') \quad (1.26a)$$
Here we used the form of the force Eq. (1.15), that
\[ E^X_k(t) - E^X_i(t) = R^{-1} [ \bar{X}^X_k(t') - \bar{X}^X_i(t') ] \]
and
\[ |X^X_k(t) - X^X_i(t)| = | \bar{X}^X_k(t') - \bar{X}^X_i(t') | \]
because of \( R \in SO(3) \).

Note that the force on the right-hand side is not invariant either; luckily, it transforms with the same \( R^{-1} \in SO(3) \); it “co-varies” with the left-hand side!

In conclusion, Newton’s equation of motion Eq. (1.16) reads in the new coordinates:

\[
R^{-1} m_i \frac{d^2 X^X_i(t')}{dt'^2} = R^{-1} \sum_{k \neq i} \bar{F}^X_{k \rightarrow i} (\bar{X}^X_k(t') - \bar{X}^X_i(t')) \quad \text{(1.27a)}
\]

\[
\times R \quad m_i \frac{d^2 X^X_i(t')}{dt'^2} = \sum_{k \neq i} \bar{F}^X_{k \rightarrow i} (\bar{X}^X_k(t') - \bar{X}^X_i(t')) \quad \text{(1.27b)}
\]

(You can easily check that this holds for \( P \) and \( T \) as well.)

\[ \text{Newton’s EOMs Eq. (1.16) are form-invariant under Galilei transformations.} \]
Or: \[ \text{Newton’s EOMs Eq. (1.16) are Galilei-covariant.} \]

\[ \textbf{Interlude: Nomenclature} \]

Let \( X \) be some group of coordinate transformations (here: \( X = \mathcal{G} \) the Galilei group).

• A quantity is called \( X \)-invariant if it does not change under the coordinate transformation. Such quantities are called \( X \)-scalars.

  An example is the mass \( m \) in Eq. (1.16) (which is also constant).

• A quantity is called \( X \)-covariant if it transforms under some given representation of the \( X \)-group. If this representation is the trivial one (i.e., the quantity does not change at all) this particular \( X \)-covariant quantity is then also an \( X \)-scalar.

  An example of a Galilei-covariant (but not invariant) quantity is the force \( \bar{F}^X_{k \rightarrow i} \) which transforms under a representation of \( \mathcal{G} \).

• An equation is called \( X \)-covariant if the quantity on the left-hand side and on the right-hand side are \( X \)-covariant (under the same \( X \)-representation).

  An example is Newton’s lex secunda Eq. (1.16) where \( m_i \frac{d^2 x^X_i(t)}{dt^2} \) transforms in the same (non-trivial) representation as \( \bar{F}^X_{k \rightarrow i} \).

• \( X \)-covariant equations have the feature that a \( X \)-transformation leaves them form-invariant, i.e., they “look the same” after \( X \)-transformations because their left- and right-hand side vary in the same way (they “co-vary”). Note that the quantities in a form-invariant equation do not have to be invariant.

  An example is again Eq. (1.16) as we just showed. Note that \( x^X_i(t') \) and \( \bar{x}^X_i(t) \) are \textit{different} vectors such that the two sides of the equation as not invariant (but covariant).
c | Active symmetries:

There is something additional and particularly useful to be learned from the coordinate transformation above. We showed:

\[
\text{If } \vec{X}_i(t) \text{ satisfies } m_i \frac{d^2 \vec{X}_i(t)}{dt^2} = \sum_{k \neq i} \vec{F}_{k \to i}(\vec{X}_k(t) - \vec{X}_i(t)) \quad (1.28a) \\
\text{then } \vec{X}_i'(t') \text{ satisfies } m_i \frac{d^2 \vec{X}_i'(t')}{dt'^2} = \sum_{k \neq i} \vec{F}_{k \to i}(\vec{X}_k(t') - \vec{X}_i(t'))
\]

But \(t'\) in the lower statement is just a dummy variable that can be renamed to whatever we want:

\[
\text{If } \vec{X}_i(t) \text{ satisfies } m_i \frac{d^2 \vec{X}_i(t)}{dt^2} = \sum_{k \neq i} \vec{F}_{k \to i}(\vec{X}_k(t) - \vec{X}_i(t)) \quad (1.29a) \\
\text{then } \vec{X}_i(t) \text{ satisfies } m_i \frac{d^2 \vec{X}_i(t)}{dt^2} = \sum_{k \neq i} \vec{F}_{k \to i}(\vec{X}_k(t) - \vec{X}_i(t)) 
\]

Use colors to highlight the changes.

\(\vec{X}_i'(t) = R \vec{X}_i(t - s) + \vec{v}(t - s) + \vec{b}\) is a new solution of Eq. (1.16)!

Note that for \(s = 0\) it is \(\vec{X}_i'(0) = R \vec{X}_i(0) + \vec{b}\) and \(\vec{X}_i(0) = R \vec{X}_i(0) + \vec{v}\), i.e., the solution \(\vec{X}_i'(t)\) satisfies different initial conditions.

\(\rightarrow\) We say:

The Galilei group \(G\) is an \(\sim\) invariance group or an (active) symmetry of Eq. (1.16).

Interlude: Active and passive transformations

It is important to understand the conceptual difference between the two last points:

- In the previous step we took a specific trajectory (solution of Newton’s equation) and expressed it in different coordinates. We then found that the differential equation obeyed by the same physical trajectory in these new coordinates “looks the same” as in the old coordinates. We called this peculiar feature of the differential equation “Galilei-covariance” or “form-invariance”. This type of a transformation is called passive because we keep the physics the same and only change our description of it.

- In the last step, we have shown that there is a dual interpretation to this: If a differential equation is form-invariant under a coordinate transformation, then we can exploit this fact to construct new solutions from given solutions (in the same coordinate system!). This type of transformation is called active because we keep the coordinate frame fixed and actually change the physics. You can therefore think of active transformations/symmetries as “algorithms” to construct new solutions of a differential equation (a quite useful feature since solving differential equations is often tedious).
Remember:

The law of inertia holds (by definition) in all inertial systems.

→ The “inertial test” cannot be used to distinguish inertial systems.

This is a tautological statement because we define inertial systems in this way!

Empirical fact:

Every mechanical experiment (not just the “inertial test”) yields the same result in all inertial systems.

This is not a tautology but an empirically tested feature of reality.

This motivates the following postulate (first given by Galileo Galilei):

§ Postulate: Galilei’s principle of Relativity

No mechanical experiment can distinguish between inertial systems.

If this would not be the case you could distinguish between different inertial systems by checking which formula you have to use to describe your observations. Imagine a rotating (non-inertial) frame where you have to use a modified version of Newton’s EOMs (that include additional terms for the Coriolis force) to describe your observations.

Note that “the same form” actually means that the models are functionally equivalent (have the same solution space). Functional equivalence is equivalent to the possibility to formulate the model (= equation of motion) in the same form.

Under the assumption (!) that Newtonian physics (in particular Eq. (1.16)) describes mechanical phenomena faithfully, this implies:

Newton’s equations of motion have the same form in all inertial systems.
This statement is not equivalent to GR or GR' as it relies on an independent empirical claim (namely the validity of Newton’s equation as a model of mechanical phenomena).

We can now combine this claim with our (purely mathematical!) finding concerning the invariance group of Newton’s equations:

\[ \psi(K \rightarrow K') = G(R^{-1}, -\vec{v}, -\vec{s}, -\vec{b}) \in G \]

Recall that rotating the coordinate axes by \( R \) makes the coordinates of fixed events rotate in the opposite direction \( R^{-1} \); the same is true for the other transformations.

Since this is a course on relativity, we should be skeptical (like Einstein) and ask:

Is this true?

1.3. Einstein’s principle of special relativity

Mathematical fact:

The Maxwell equations of electrodynamics are not Galilei-covariant.

Proof: Problemset 1

Here for your (and my) convenience the Maxwell equations in vacuum (in cgs units):

\[ \nabla \cdot \mathbf{E} = 0 \]
\[ \nabla \cdot \mathbf{B} = 0 \]
\[ \nabla \times \mathbf{E} = -\frac{1}{c} \partial_t \mathbf{B} \]
\[ \nabla \times \mathbf{B} = \frac{1}{c} \partial_t \mathbf{E} \]

“Handwavy explanation” for the absence of Galilei symmetry:

The Maxwell equations imply the wave equation for both fields:

\[ \left( \nabla^2 - \frac{1}{c^2} \partial_t^2 \right) X = 0 \quad \text{for } X \in \{ \mathbf{E}, \mathbf{B} \}. \]
Here the speed of light $c$ plays the role of the phase and group velocity of the waves; i.e., all light signals propagate with $c$. Form-invariance under some coordinate transformation $\varphi$ implies that the same light signal propagates with the same velocity $c$ in all coordinate systems related by $\varphi$. This is clearly incompatible with the Galilean law for adding velocities (according to which a signal with velocity $u'_x$ in frame $K'$ propagates with velocity $u_x = u'_x + v_x$ in frame $K$ if $K \xrightarrow{v} K'$).

$\textbf{12}$ | The simplest escape from our predicament:

$\textit{Maybe there is no relativity principle for electrodynamics?}$

$\textbf{Reasoning:}$ If we cling to the validity of Newtonian mechanics and Galilean relativity $\text{GR}$, we are forced to assume $\varphi = G$ as the transformation between inertial systems. Since the Maxwell equations are not form-invariant under these transformations, they look differently in different inertial systems. So there must be a (class of) designated inertial coordinate systems $[K_0]$ in which the Maxwell equations in the specific form Eq. (1.30) you’ve learned in your electrodynamics course are valid.

$\rightarrow [K_0] = \text{Frame in which the “luminiferous aether” is at rest (?)}$

$\textbf{13}$ | Michelson Morley experiment (plots from [20, 21]):

$\rightarrow \text{The speed of light is the same in all directions.}$

$\rightarrow \text{There is no “luminiferous aether” } [K_0]$. (Or it is pulled along by earth – which contradicts the observed $\uparrow$ aberration of light.)

$\rightarrow \text{The speed of light } c \text{ cannot be fixed wrt. some designated reference frame } [K_0]$. 

$\rightarrow \text{No experimental evidence that the Maxwell equations do not hold in all inertial systems.}$

$\rightarrow \text{Relativity principle for electrodynamics?!}$

$\textbf{Historical note:}$

A. Einstein writes in a letter to F. G. Davenport (see Ref. [22]):

$[\ldots]$ In my own development Michelson’s result has not had a considerable influence. I even do not remember if I knew of it at all when I wrote my first paper on the subject (1905). The explanation is that I was, for general reasons, firmly convinced how this could be reconciled with our knowledge of electro-dynamics. One can therefore understand why in my personal struggle Michelson’s experiment played no role or at least no decisive role.

$\rightarrow \text{The Michelson Morley experiment did not kickstart special relativity.}$

$\textbf{Modern Michelson-Morley like tests of the isotropy of the speed of light achieve much higher precision than the original experiment.} \text{ The authors of Refs. [23, 24], for example, report an upper bound of } \Delta c / c \sim 10^{-17} \text{ on potential anisotropies of the speed of light by rotating optical resonators.}$

$\textbf{14}$ | Two observations:

$1 \text{ No evidence that there is no relativity principle for electrodynamics.}$
(2) Why does Galilean relativity \( \text{GR} \) treat mechanics differently anyway?

Put differently: Why should mechanics, a branch of physics artificially created by human society, be different from any other branch of physics? This is not impossible, of course, but it certainly lacks simplicity! (To Galilei’s defence: At his time “mechanics” was more or less identical to “physics.”)

\[ \rightarrow \text{A. Einstein writes in §2 of Ref. [8] as his first postulate:} \]

1. Die Gesetze, nach denen sich die Zustände der physikalischen Systeme ändern, sind unabhängig davon, auf welches von zwei relativ zueinander in gleichförmiger Translationsbewegung befindlichen Koordinatensystemen diese Zustandsänderungen bezogen werden.

We reformulate this into the following postulate:

§ Postulate: (Einstein’s principle of) Special Relativity \( \text{SR} \).

No mechanical experiment can distinguish between inertial systems.

\[ \text{Note the difference to Galilean relativity } \text{GR} \text{ according to which no experiment governed by classical mechanics can distinguish between inertial systems. Einstein simply extended this idea to all of physics – no special treatment for mechanics!} \]

¡! There are various names used in the literature to refer to \( \text{SR} \). Here we call it the principle of special relativity, where the “special” refers to its restriction on inertial systems – as compared to the principle of general relativity in \( \text{general relativity} \) that refers to all frames (\( \rightarrow \) later). To emphasize its difference to Galilean relativity \( \text{GR} \), some authors call \( \text{SR} \) the universal principle of relativity, where “universal” refers to its applicability on all laws of nature (not just the realm of classical mechanics).

15 \[ \text{But now that there are more contenders (mechanics, electrodynamics, quantum mechanics) all of which must be invariant under the same transformation } \varphi, \text{ we have to open the quest for } \varphi \text{ again:} \]

What is \( \varphi \)?

The differently colored/shaped trajectories symbolize phenomena of mechanics (red), electrodynamics (blue), and quantum mechanics (green). According to \( \text{SR} \), all of them must be form-invariant under a common coordinate transformation \( \varphi \).

¡! To reiterate: This is not a question about symmetry properties of equations or models! It is an experimentally testable fact about reality. There is only one correct \( \varphi \) and it is just as real as the three-dimensionality of space.
1.4. Transformations consistent with the relativity principle

Since this is a theory lecture, so we cannot do experiments. Let us therefore weaken the question slightly:

What is most general form of \( \varphi \) consistent with reasonable assumptions about reality?

§ Assumptions

- **SR** Special Relativity: There is no distinguished inertial system.
- **IS** Isotropy: There is no distinguished direction in space.
- **HO** Homogeneity: There is no distinguished place in space or point in time.
- **CO** Continuity: \( \varphi \) is a continuous function (in the origin).

Something is “distinguished” if there exists an experiment that can be used to identify it unambiguously.

This derivation follows Straumann [7] with input from Schröder [1] and Pal [25].

Detailed calculations: \( \blacklozenge \) Problemset 2

1 | Setup:

\(< \) Two inertial systems \( K \overset{R, \vec{v}, s, \vec{b}}{\longrightarrow} K' \).

\(< \) Event \( E \in \mathcal{E} \) with coordinates \( x \equiv (t, \vec{x})_K \in E \) and \( x' \equiv (t', \vec{x}')_K' \in E \):

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{We are interested in the transformation } \varphi & \equiv \varphi_{R, \vec{v}, s, \vec{b}} \text{ with } \\
\quad x' &= \varphi(x).
\end{align*}
\]

Note that **SR** forbids us to use the inertial system labels \( K \) or \( K' \) in the definition of \( \varphi \)!

2 | Affine structure:

Our first goal is to show that \( \varphi \) must be an affine map.

\(< i \) Event \( \tilde{E} \in \mathcal{E} \) with coordinates \( \tilde{x} = x + a \) in \( K \) for some shift \( a \in \mathbb{R}^4 \).

\(< ii \) Homogeneity **HO** →

\[
\varphi(x + a) - \varphi(x) \overset{1}{=} a'(\varphi, a)
\]
a′(ϕ, a): Shift in $K'$ independent of x (this reflects homogeneity in space and time)

Imagine the right-hand side $a′(ϕ, a)$ where not independent of x. Then there would be an interval (say, a rod of spatial extend $d$) that has the same length $d$ in $K$ no matter where it is located, but variable length $d(ϕ, d, x)$ in $K'$ as a function of $x$. The observer in $K'$ can then use this “magic rod” to pinpoint absolute positions in space (the same argument works in time, then with a clock instead of a rod).

iii | For $x = 0$: $a′(ϕ, a) = ϕ(a) - ϕ(0) →$

\[ ϕ(x + a) = ϕ(x) + ϕ(a) - ϕ(0) . \] (1.34)

iv | Let $Ψ(x) := ϕ(x) - ϕ(0)$ →

\[ Ψ(x + a) = Ψ(x) + Ψ(a) \quad \text{and} \quad Ψ(0) = 0 . \] (1.35)

This would be satisfied if $Ψ$ were linear! But we do not know this yet …

v | Claim: $Ψ(x)$ continuous at $x = 0$ (follows from CO) ⇒ $Ψ$ is linear.

a | Eq. (1.35) → $Ψ(nx) = n Ψ(x)$ for $n ∈ N$ (show by induction!)

b | Eq. (1.35) → $Ψ(−x) = −Ψ(x)$ (use $Ψ(0) = 0$) → $Ψ(nx) = n Ψ(x)$ for $n ∈ Z$

c | \begin{align*}
&\text{Rational number } r = \frac{m}{n}, m, n ∈ Z \rightarrow \\
&r Ψ(x) = \frac{m}{n} Ψ(x) = \frac{1}{n} Ψ(mx) = \frac{1}{n} Ψ(nrx) = \frac{n}{n} Ψ(rx) = Ψ(rx) .
\end{align*} (1.36)

\[ \Psi(x) \text{ continuous at } x = 0 \xrightarrow{\text{Eq. (1.35)}} \Psi(x) \text{ continuous everywhere.} \]

Show this using the definition of continuity, i.e., $\lim_{x→0} Ψ(x) = Ψ(0)!$

d | \[ r Ψ(x) = Ψ(rx) \text{ for } r ∈ Q \xrightarrow{Ψ \text{ continuous}} r Ψ(x) = Ψ(rx) \text{ for } r ∈ R \]

Remember that real numbers are defined in terms of (equivalence classes of) limits of rational numbers, i.e., $Q$ is dense in $R$.

e | In conclusion:

\[ Ψ(x + a) = Ψ(x) + Ψ(a) \quad \text{and} \quad Ψ(rx) = r Ψ(x) \] (1.37)

→ $Ψ$ is linear.

\[ ϕ(x) = \Lambda x + a \] (1.38)

with $\Lambda = Λ(R, v, s, b)$ a $4 \times 4$ matrix and $a = a(R, v, s, b)$ a 4-dimensional vector.

vi | If $Ψ$ is linear, $ϕ(x) = Ψ(x) + ϕ(0)$ is affine:

\[ ϕ(x) = Λ x + a \] (1.38)

3 | The spacetime translation $a$ is simply $a = (−s, −b)$ [recall Eqs. (1.7) and (1.9)].

→ $\Lambda$ Homogeneous transformations ($a = 0$) in the following:

\[ x′ = ϕ(x) = Λ x . \] (1.39)
4 | We already know from our discussion of inertial systems [recall Eq. (1.11)]:

Rotation group SO(3) must be part of the transformations ϕ with representation

\[ x' = \Lambda R^{-1} x \quad \text{with} \quad \Lambda_R := \begin{pmatrix} 1 & 0 \\ 0 & R \end{pmatrix} \quad \text{where} \quad R \in \text{SO}(3). \] (1.40)

This is just a fancy way to rewrite Eq. (1.11).

5 | **Pure boost** \( K \xrightarrow{1, \vec{v}, 0, 0} K' \):

i | \( \xi(t)_K = 0 \rightarrow \vec{x}' = \mathcal{M} \vec{x} \) for an invertible matrix \( \mathcal{M} \in \mathbb{R}^{3\times3} \). This is the most general transformation for the position labels of the \( K \) and \( K' \)-clocks at \( t = 0 \). Note that we make no statements on the times \( t' \) displayed by the \( K' \)-clocks at \( t = 0 \).

\[ \mathcal{M} = R_1 DR_2 = R_1 DR_1^T R = MR \] (1.41)

with \( R \in \text{O}(3) \) and \( M^T = M \).

This follows from the \( \dagger \) singular value decomposition of real matrices with \( R_1, R_2 \in \text{O}(3) \) and \( D \) a diagonal matrix.

ii | With spatial rotations Eq. (1.40) we can always transform the \( K \)-coordinates by \( \vec{x} \mapsto R^{-1} \vec{x} \) such that \( \vec{x}' = \mathcal{M} \vec{x} = M \vec{x} \) at \( t = 0 \)

**Pure boost** \( K \xrightarrow{1, \vec{v}, 0, 0} K' \):

\[ \vec{x}' = \Lambda_{\vec{v}} x \quad \Leftrightarrow \quad \begin{cases} t' = a(\vec{v}) t + \vec{b}(\vec{v}) \cdot \vec{x} \\ \vec{x}' = M(\vec{v}) \vec{x} + \vec{c}(\vec{v}) t \end{cases} \] (1.42)

- \( a \): \( \vec{v} \)-dependent scalar
- \( \vec{b}, \vec{c} \): \( \vec{v} \)-dependent vectors
- \( M^T = M \): \( \vec{v} \)-dependent \( 3 \times 3 \)-matrix

**Pure boosts** are therefore characterized by a symmetric transformation of the spatial coordinates at \( t = 0 \) in \( K \). Geometrically, this implies that there are three (orthogonal) lines through the origin of \( K \) which are mapped onto themselves under the boost (spanned by the eigenvectors of \( M(\vec{v}) \)). The only other possibility is that there is a single invariant line, which then coincides with the rotation axis of a spatial rotation mixed into the boost. The pure boosts are therefore those boosts without any rotation mixed in.

→ We focus on pure boosts in the remainder of this derivation:
Our characterization of a pure boost does not imply that at $t = 0$ the axes of the two systems $K$ and $K'$ align (as suggested by the sketch and naïvely expected). If this were the case, the eigenbasis of $M(v)$ would be given by the basis vectors $\hat{e}_i$ in $K$. Since we do not know the form of $M(v)$ yet, we cannot make this assumption! So do not take this sketch literally, it only illustrates symbolically the situation of a pure boost in an arbitrary direction.

6 | Isotropy:

Here are two lines of arguments that use isotropy $\text{IS}$ to restrict the form of Eq. (1.42) further:

- **Argument A:**
  
  We claim that isotropy $\text{IS}$ requires the following multiplicative structure for pure boosts and rotations:

  \[
  \Lambda_R \Lambda_\vec{\nu} \Lambda_{R^{-1}} = \Lambda_{\vec{\nu}} \quad \Leftrightarrow \quad \forall x : \Lambda_R \Lambda_\vec{\nu} x = \Lambda_{R^{-1}} \Lambda_{\vec{\nu}} x .
  \]

  (1.43a)

  \[
  \Leftrightarrow \quad \forall x : \Lambda_\vec{\nu} x = \Lambda_{R^{-1}} \Lambda_{\vec{\nu}} (\Lambda_R x) .
  \]

  (1.43b)

  The reasoning goes as follows:

  1. $\Leftarrow$ Left-hand side of Eq. (1.43b):

     $x = (t, \vec{x})$ are the coordinates of some event in $K$ and $\Lambda_\vec{\nu} x$ of the same event in $K'$:

  2. $\Leftarrow$ Right-hand side of Eq. (1.43b):

     We consider $y = (t, \vec{y}) := \Lambda_R x = (t, R \vec{x})$ as an active transformation, i.e., $y$ denotes a different event that is spatially rotated from $x$ by $R$. To state our isotropy claim $\text{IS}$, we now rotate the coordinate system $K''$ in which we want to express this event in the same way. This implies a rotated boost $\Lambda_{\vec{\nu}}$ and a subsequent rotation of the coordinate axes by $R$ via $\Lambda_{R^{-1}}$. (Remember that when rotating the coordinate axes by $R$, the coordinates of an event transform by $\Lambda_{R^{-1}}$.)
3. Spatial isotropy \( IS \) is the property that the event \( x \) as seen from \( K' \) cannot be distinguished from the rotated event \( y \) as seen from the rotated system \( K'' \); this is Eq. (1.43b).

- Now we can use Eq. (1.42) to rewrite Eq. (1.43a) as

\[
\begin{align*}
\tau' & \equiv a(R\vec{v}) \tau + \bar{b}(R\vec{v}) \cdot R\vec{x} \\
R\vec{x}' & \equiv M(R\vec{v}) R\vec{x} + \bar{c}(R\vec{v}) t
\end{align*}
\]  
(1.44a, 1.44b)

- A comparison with Eq. (1.42) (for all \( t \) and \( \vec{x} \) and arbitrary \( \vec{v} \) and \( R \)) leads to constraints on the unknown functions:

- \( a(\vec{v}) \equiv a(R\vec{v}) \to a(\vec{v}) = a_v \) with \( v = |\vec{v}| \)
  
  Functions invariant under arbitrary rotations can only depend on the norm \( |\vec{v}| \).

- \( \bar{b}(\vec{v}) \equiv R^T \bar{b}(R\vec{v}) \to \bar{b}(\vec{v}) = b_v \vec{v} \)
  
  Note that \( \bar{b}(R\vec{v}) \cdot R\vec{x} = [R^T \bar{b}(R\vec{v})] \cdot \vec{x} \). Let \( R_v \) be some rotation with axis \( \vec{v} = \vec{v} / v \) such that \( R_v \vec{v} = \vec{v} / \vec{v} \); then \( \bar{b}(\vec{v}) \equiv R_v^T \bar{b}(\vec{v}) \) and therefore \( \bar{b}(\vec{v}) \propto \vec{v} \) since rotation matrices have only a single eigenvector.

- \( R M(\vec{v}) \equiv M(R\vec{v}) R \to M(\vec{v}) = c_v \mathbb{1} + d_v \vec{v} \vec{v}^T \)
  
  First recall that \( M^T(\vec{v}) = M(\vec{v}) \) such that \( M(\vec{v}) \) can be written as sum of orthogonal projectors (projecting onto its eigenspaces). It is in particular \( R_v M(\vec{v}) R_v^T \equiv M(\vec{v}) \) such that one of the eigenvectors must be \( \vec{v} \propto \vec{v} \). The remaining two eigenvectors are orthogonal to \( \vec{v} \) and can therefore be mapped onto each other by \( R_v \).
  
  Since \( R_v \) commutes with \( M(\vec{v}) \), their eigenvalues must be degenerate such that the two-dimensional subspace orthogonal to \( \vec{v} \) is a degenerate eigenspace. The most general spectral decomposition of \( M(\vec{v}) \) is then the one given above.

- \( R \bar{c}(\vec{v}) \equiv \bar{c}(R\vec{v}) \to \bar{c}(\vec{v}) = e_v \vec{v} \)
  
  This is the same argument as for \( \bar{b}(\vec{v}) \).

**Argument B:**

A shorter (but less rigorous) line of arguments goes as follows:

- To define the unknown functions algebraically, we are only allowed to use the vector \( \vec{v} \) and constant scalars. We cannot use \( \vec{x} \) or \( t \) due to linearity, and any other constant vector (like \( \vec{e}_c = (1, 0, 0)^T \)) would pick out some direction and therefore violate isotropy \( IS \).

- Since the only scalar one can construct from a single vector is its norm, \( |\vec{v}|^2 = \vec{v} \cdot \vec{v} \), it must be \( a(\vec{v}) = a_v \).

- Similarly, since the only vector one can construct from a single vector is a scalar multiplied by the vector itself, it must be \( \bar{b}(\vec{v}) = b_v \vec{v} \) and \( \bar{c}(\vec{v}) = e_v \vec{v} \).

- Lastly, since \( M^T(\vec{v}) = M(\vec{v}) \), we can decompose the matrix into orthogonal projectors: \( M(\vec{v}) = \sum_i \lambda_i(\vec{v}) P_i(\vec{v}) \). The only projectors that can be defined by a single vector are \( P_0 = \vec{v} \vec{v}^T \) and \( P_1 = \mathbb{1} - P_0 = \mathbb{1} - \vec{v} \vec{v}^T \) which leads to the most general form \( M(\vec{v}) = c_v \mathbb{1} + d_v \vec{v} \vec{v}^T \).

Both arguments lead to the same form for pure boosts \( \Lambda_v \) consistent with isotropy \( IS \):

\[
\begin{align*}
t' &= a_v t + b_v (\vec{v} \cdot \vec{x}) \\
\vec{x}' &= c_v \vec{x} + d_v \vec{v} (\vec{v} \cdot \vec{x}) + e_v \vec{v} t
\end{align*}
\]  
(1.45a, 1.45b)

with \( v = |\vec{v}| = |R\vec{v}| \) and \( (R\vec{v} \cdot R\vec{x}) = (\vec{v} \cdot \vec{x}) \).
7 | Trajectory of origin $O'$ of $K'$:
   - In $K'$: $\vec{x}_{O'} = 0$ (This is the operational definition of the origin $O'$.)
   - In $K$: $\vec{x}_{O'} = \vec{v}t$ (This is the operational definition of $\vec{v}$ in $K$).

In Eq. (1.45b):

$$\vec{O} = c_v \vec{v}t + \frac{d_v}{v^2} \vec{v}(\vec{v} \cdot \vec{v})t + e_v \vec{v} t$$

(1.46a)

$$\vec{v} \neq \vec{O} \text{ and } \forall t \Rightarrow 0 = c_v + d_v + e_v$$

(1.46b)

8 | Reciprocity:

i | Inverse transformation $K' \xrightarrow{1,\vec{v}',0,0} K$ from $K'$ to $K$:

$$\Lambda_{\vec{v}'}, \Lambda_{\vec{v}} = 1 \iff \Lambda_{\vec{v}} = \Lambda_{\vec{v}}^{-1}.$$  

(1.47)

Note that $\vec{v}'$ is the velocity of the origin $O$ of $K$ as measured in $K'$.

In general: $\vec{v}' = \vec{V} (\vec{v})$ with unknown function $\vec{V}$.

We assume reciprocity: $\vec{v}' = -\vec{v}$ such that

$$\Lambda_{\vec{v}}^{-1} = \Lambda_{-\vec{v}}.$$  

(1.48)

While this is clearly the most reasonable/intuitive assumption, it is not trivial! Recall that $\vec{v}$ is the speed of the origin $O$ of $K$ measured with the clocks in $K$, whereas $\vec{v}'$ is the speed of the origin $O$ of $K$ measured with different clocks in $K'$. So without additional assumptions we cannot conclude that the results of these measurements yield reciprocal results.

However, the assumption of reciprocity can be rigorously derived from relativity SR, isotropy IS and homogeneity HO, see Ref. [26]. Reciprocity is therefore not an independent assumption.

ii | Inverse transformation in Eq. (1.45):

$$t = a_v t' - b_v (\vec{v} \cdot \vec{x}')$$  

(1.49a)

$$\vec{x} = c_v \vec{x}' + \frac{d_v}{v^2} \vec{v}(\vec{v} \cdot \vec{x}') - e_v \vec{v} t'$$  

(1.49b)

iii | Eq. (1.49) in Eq. (1.45) & Eq. (1.46b) (we suppress the $v$ dependence)

$$c^2 = 1,$$  

(1.50a)

$$a^2 - ebv^2 = 1,$$  

(1.50b)

$$e^2 - ebv^2 = 1,$$  

(1.50c)

$$e(a + e) = 0,$$  

(1.50d)

$$b(a + e) = 0.$$  

(1.50e)

To show this, use $\vec{v}' = (v_x, 0, 0)^T$ with $v_x \neq 0$ and remember that the equations you obtain from plugging Eq. (1.49) into Eq. (1.45) must be valid for all $t'$ and $\vec{x}'$. Use Eq. (1.46b) to replace $c_v + d_v$ by $-e_v$.

We can conclude:

Reciprocity:

i | Inverse transformation $K' \xrightarrow{1,\vec{v}',0,0} K$ from $K'$ to $K$:

$$\Lambda_{\vec{v}'}, \Lambda_{\vec{v}} = 1 \iff \Lambda_{\vec{v}} = \Lambda_{\vec{v}}^{-1}.$$  

(1.47)

Note that $\vec{v}'$ is the velocity of the origin $O$ of $K$ as measured in $K'$.

In general: $\vec{v}' = \vec{V} (\vec{v})$ with unknown function $\vec{V}$.

We assume reciprocity: $\vec{v}' = -\vec{v}$ such that

$$\Lambda_{\vec{v}}^{-1} = \Lambda_{-\vec{v}}.$$  

(1.48)
Collecting results from Eq. (1.50) & Eq. (1.46b):

\[ c = 1, \quad e = -a, \quad d = a - 1, \quad b = \frac{1 - a^2}{a v^2}. \]  

(1.51)

\[ d = a - 1 \] follows from Eq. (1.46b) and the first two equations.

\[ t' = a_v t + \frac{1 - a^2}{v x a_v} x \]  

(1.53a)

\[ x' = a_v x - v x a_v t \]  

(1.53b)

\[ y' = y \]  

(1.53c)

\[ z' = z \]  

(1.53d)

Note that \( v = |v_x| \) with \( v_x \in \mathbb{R} \).

Matrix form:

\[
\begin{pmatrix}
    t' \\
    x' \\
    y' \\
    z'
\end{pmatrix} =
\begin{pmatrix}
    a_v & \frac{1 - a^2}{v x a_v} & 0 \\
    -v x a_v & a_v & 0 \\
    0 & 0 & 1
\end{pmatrix}
\begin{pmatrix}
    t \\
    x \\
    y \\
    z
\end{pmatrix}
\]

(1.54)

In the following, we refer to the upper 2 × 2-block as \( A(v_x) \).

Group structure:

\[
\varphi(K' \xrightarrow{R_2, \overrightarrow{v}_2, \overrightarrow{s}_2, \overrightarrow{h}_2} K'') \circ \varphi(K' \xrightarrow{R_1, \overrightarrow{v}_1, \overrightarrow{s}_1, \overrightarrow{h}_1} K') = \varphi(K' \xrightarrow{R_3, \overrightarrow{v}_3, \overrightarrow{s}_3, \overrightarrow{h}_3} K'')
\]

(1.55)
for some parameters \((R_3, \vec{v}_3, s_3, \vec{b}_3)\) that are a function of \((R_i, \vec{v}_i, s_i, \vec{b}_i)\) for \(i=1,2\).

In words:
The concatenation of a coordinate transformation from \(K\) to \(K'\) and from \(K'\) to \(K''\) must be another coordinate transformation that is parametrized by data that relates the reference systems \(K\) with \(K''\) directly (without referring to \(K'\) in any way).

You may ask why Eq. (1.55) is a constraint on \(\psi\) in the first place. After all, we could just define that

\[
\psi(K \xrightarrow{R_3,\vec{v}_3,s_3,\vec{b}_3} K) := \psi(K' \xrightarrow{R_2,\vec{v}_2,s_2,\vec{b}_2} K') \circ \psi(K \xrightarrow{R_1,\vec{v}_1,s_1,\vec{b}_1} K').
\]  

(1.56)

The problem is that the function defined such generically depends on 8 (!) parameters \(R_1, \vec{v}_1, s_1, \vec{b}_1, R_2, \vec{v}_2, s_2, \vec{b}_2\) – it is a non-trivial functional constraint on \(\psi\) that these can be compressed to four parameters \(R_3, \vec{v}_3, s_3, \vec{b}_3\). This “compression” is mandated by the relativity principle \(\text{SR}\) according to which all inertial systems must be treated equally. In particular, the transformation between two systems \(K\) and \(K''\) can only depend on parameters that can be experimentally determined from within these two systems. (The existence of) a third frame \(K'\) cannot be of relevance for this transformation as this would make \(K'\) special.

Combined with the existence of an inverse transformation (\(\leftarrow\) above):

→ The set of all transformations forms a \(\cdot\) (multiplicative) group.

Note that associativity is implicit since we talk about the concatenation of linear/affine maps.

In particular:

\[
\Lambda_{v_x} \Lambda_{u_x} \overset{!}{=} \Lambda_{w_x} \iff A(v_x)A(u_x) \overset{!}{=} A(w_x)
\]

(1.57)

where \(w_x = W(v_x, u_x)\) has to be determined.

• \(!!\) Using the restricted form of the boost Eq. (1.54) that followed from previous arguments, it follows indeed that the concatenation of two pure boosts \(\text{in the same direction}\) has again the form of a pure boost (in the same direction). For the arguments that follow, this is sufficient.

However, in general, the multiplicative group structure Eq. (1.55) allows for two boosts to concatenate to a \(\text{combination of boosts and rotations}\). As we will see \(\rightarrow\) later, this is indeed what happens: The concatenation of two pure boosts (in different directions) produces a boost with a rotation mixed in (\(\uparrow\) Thomas-Wigner rotation).

• Note that due to Eq. (1.43a) all that follows holds for any pair of \(\text{collinear velocities}\) \(\vec{v}\) and \(\vec{u}\) (there is nothing special about the \(x\)-direction). Indeed, let \(R\) be a rotation that maps \(\vec{v}\) and \(\vec{u}\) to vectors on the \(x\)-axis, \(\vec{v}_x := R\vec{v}\) and \(\vec{u}_x := R\vec{u}\). Then

\[
\Lambda_{\vec{v}} \Lambda_{\vec{u}} \overset{1.43a}{=} \Lambda_{R^{-1}} \Lambda_{\vec{v}_x} \Lambda_{\vec{u}_x} \Lambda_R \overset{!}{=} \Lambda_{R^{-1}} \Lambda_{\vec{w}_x} \Lambda_R \overset{1.43a}{=} \Lambda_{\vec{w}}
\]

(1.58)

where \(\vec{w}\) is again collinear with \(\vec{v}\) and \(\vec{u}\).

→ (use that the diagonal elements of \(A(w_x)\) must be equal)

\[
\forall_{v_x,u_x} : \frac{1-a_v^2}{v_x^2a_v^2} = \frac{1-a_u^2}{u_x^2a_u^2}
\]

(1.59)

→ Universal constant:

\[
\kappa := \frac{a_v^2 - 1}{v_x^2a_v^2} = \text{const}
\]

(1.60)
Note: $[\kappa] = \text{Velocity}^{-2}$

$$a_v = \frac{1}{\sqrt{1 - \kappa v^2}}.$$  \hspace{1cm} (1.61)

We use the positive solution for $a_v$ since $\lim_{v \to 0} A(v) = 1$, i.e., $\lim_{v \to 0} a_v = 1$.

With this we check: $A(v_x)A(u_x) = A(w_x)$ with

$$w_x = W(v_x, u_x) = \frac{v_x + u_x}{1 + u_x v_x \kappa}.$$  \hspace{1cm} (1.62)

Eq. (1.62) becomes important later: it tells us how to add velocities in \textit{special relativity}.

12 | Preliminary result:

Eq. (1.52) & Eq. (1.60) \rightarrow Boost $\Lambda_{\vec{v}}$ in direction $\vec{v}$ with velocity $\vec{v} = v \hat{v}$:

$$t' = a_v \left( t - \kappa (\hat{v} \cdot \hat{x}) \right)$$

$$\vec{x}' = \vec{x} + [a_v - 1] \hat{v} (\hat{v} \cdot \vec{x}) - a_v \vec{v} t$$  \hspace{1cm} (1.63a)

$$a_v = \frac{1}{\sqrt{1 - \kappa v^2}}.$$  \hspace{1cm} (1.63b)

with

This is the most general transformation between two inertial coordinate systems that move with relative velocity $\vec{v}$ (with coinciding axes at $t = 0$) that is consistent with our basic assumptions stated at the beginning of this section: SR, HO, and IS.

The only undetermined parameter left is $\kappa$.

1.5. The Lorentz transformation

The purpose of this section is to select the value for $\kappa$ that describes our reality.

13 | Since $[\kappa] = \text{Velocity}^{-2}$ define formally: $\kappa \equiv 1/v_{\text{max}}^2$.

Why we subscribe the velocity $v_{\text{max}}$ with “max” will become clear below.

14 | Three cases:

- $\kappa = 0 \iff v_{\text{max}} = \infty$:

$$\begin{align*}
A(1.63) \Rightarrow & \begin{cases}
t' = t \\
\vec{x}' = \vec{x} - \vec{v} t
\end{cases} \\
& \textit{Galilei boost}
\end{align*}$$  \hspace{1cm} (1.65a)

\rightarrow Maxwell equations are \textit{not} form-invariant under $\varphi$. 
Maxwell equations cannot be correct and must be modified.

→ Experiment that shows the invalidity of Maxwell equations?

Note that we cannot conclude the validity of classical mechanics from this; Newton’s equations may still require modifications (without spoiling the Galilean symmetry, of course).

• \( \kappa > 0 \iff v_{\text{max}} < \infty \):

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Eq. (1.63)} & \Rightarrow \\
& t' = \gamma \left( t - \frac{\hat{v} \cdot \hat{x}}{v_{\text{max}}} \right) \\
& \hat{x}' = \hat{x} + (\gamma - 1) \hat{v} (\hat{v} \cdot \hat{x}) - \gamma \hat{v} t \\
\end{align*}
\]

(1.66a)

with the Lorentz factor

\[
\gamma_v \equiv \gamma := \frac{1}{\sqrt{1 - \beta^2}} \quad \text{and} \quad \beta := v/v_{\text{max}}.
\]

(1.67)

→ Newton’s equations are not form-invariant under \( \varphi \).

→ Classical mechanics cannot be correct and must be modified.

→ Experiment that shows the invalidity of Newton’s equations?

Similarly, we cannot conclude the validity of electrodynamics from this; Maxwell equations may still require modifications (without spoiling the Lorentz symmetry).

• \( \kappa < 0 \): Physically not relevant. (Problemset 2; we ignore this solution in the following.)

This solution is not self-consistent (see e.g. Ref. [25]) and immediately leads to implications that are not observed in nature.

For example, the rule Eq. (1.62) to compute the velocity \( w_x \) between \( K/K'' \) from the velocities \( v_x \) and \( u_x \) between \( K/K' \) and \( K'/K'' \) reads for \( \kappa < 0 \)

\[
w_x = \frac{v_x + u_x}{1 - u_x v_x |\kappa|}.
\]

(1.68)

Let \( u_x, v_x > 0 \) be positive, i.e., \( K' \) moves in positive \( x \)-direction wrt \( K \) and \( K'' \) moves also in positive \( x \)-direction wrt \( K' \). But for large enough velocities \( u_x v_x > 1/|\kappa| \) we find \( w_x < 0 \) such that \( K'' \) moves in negative \( x \)-direction wrt \( K \).

No such effect has ever been observed; if you do, let us know!

Note that at no point we used or claimed that \( v_{\text{max}} \) is the speed of light!

**Which transformation describes reality:** \( v_{\text{max}} < \infty \) or \( v_{\text{max}} = \infty \)?

15 | Evidence:

• Maximum velocity \( v_{\text{max}} \approx c < \infty \) for electrons (plot from Ref. [27]):
Newton’s equations are clearly invalid for high velocities! See Refs. [27, 28] for more technical details. Note that these results were obtained decades after Einstein published his seminal paper in 1905.

By contrast:

No evidence for the invalidity of Maxwell equations (on the macroscopic level). Electrodynamics, as encoded by the Maxwell equations, is of course not a truly fundamental theory as it is the classical limit of a quantum theory: Quantum electrodynamics (QED). For example, the linearity of the Maxwell equations (= EM waves cannot scatter off each other) is an approximation; in QED photons can (weakly) scatter off each other! This is why I emphasize that Maxwell theory is experimentally valid only on the macroscopic level. Note, however, that QED has the same spacetime symmetry group as electrodynamics, namely Lorentz transformations.

Hence it is reasonable stipulate $v_{\text{max}} < \infty$ and postulate:

The transformations $\varphi$ between inertial systems are given by Lorentz transformations. These transformations must be (part of) the spacetime symmetries of all physical theories.

The last statement is often rephrased as follows:

All (fundamental) theories must be form-invariant (covariant) under Lorentz transformations.

This is just SR all over again: The equations of models that describe reality must “look the same” (more precisely: be functionally equivalent) in all inertial systems. Since the transformations between inertial systems are given by Lorentz transformations (and not Galilean transformations, as historically anticipated), this requires their form-invariance under Lorentz transformations.

→ Special Relativity restricts the structure of all fundamental theories of physics!

This is what is meant by the statement that Special Relativity is a theoretical framework (German: Rahmentheorie) or “meta theory”: It provides a “recipe” (ordering principle) of how to construct consistent theories of physics. The Standard Model of particle physics, for example, is form-invariant under Lorentz transformations, and if you propose an extension thereof (for example to give neutrinos a mass) you better make sure that the terms you write down are also form-invariant under Lorentz transformations (otherwise you will not be taken seriously!). Note,
however, that this perspective prevents an important insight: What we really study is an entity called *spacetime*, and this entity has a property: Lorentz symmetry. Since all our (fundamental) physical theories are formulated *on* spacetime, it should not come as a surprise that the Lorentz symmetry of spacetime shows up all over the place.

17 | Interpretation of $v_{\text{max}}$:

i | Systems $K \xrightarrow{v_x} K'$ and signal with velocity $\frac{dx'}{d\tau} = u'_x$:

![Diagram of spacetime and Lorentz transformations](image)

**Question**: What is the velocity $u_x = \frac{dx}{d\tau}$ of this signal in $K$?

ii | Remember (Group structure!):

$$\varphi(K' \xrightarrow{v_2} K'') \circ \varphi(K \xrightarrow{v_1} K') = \varphi(K \xrightarrow{v_3} K'') \quad \text{with} \quad v_3 = \frac{v_1 + v_2}{1 + \frac{v_1 v_2}{v_{\text{max}}^2}}.$$  

(1.69)

Let $v_1 = v_x$ and $v_2 = u'_x$ so that $v_3 = u_x$ (i.e., the signal is at rest in the origin of $K''$).

You can also derive this by computing the time derivative of the position of the signal in $K$ using a Lorentz transformation; you will do this properly when you derive a more general addition of velocities (Problemset 2).

iii | Addition formula for collinear velocities:

$$u_x = \frac{v_x + u'_x}{1 + \frac{v_x u'_x}{v_{\text{max}}}}.$$  

(1.70)

Because of isotropy, this formula must be true in all directions (not just in $x$-direction) as long as the two velocities to be added are parallel. We still keep the index $x$ to signify that these are not absolute values of velocities.

- Note that for $v_{\text{max}} \to \infty$ we get back the “conventional” (Galilean) additivity of velocities:

$$u_x = (v_x + u'_x) \left[ 1 - \frac{v_x u'_x}{v_{\text{max}}^2} + \ldots \right] \xrightarrow{v_{\text{max}} \to \infty} v_x + u'_x.$$  

(1.71)

From this expansion and the validity of classical mechanics for small velocities (in particular its law for adding velocities), we can also conclude that $v_{\text{max}}$ must be large compared to everyday experience.

- A historically influential experiment that (in hindsight) can be explained by the relativistic addition of velocities Eq. (1.70) is the Fizeau experiment [29, 30] (see also Fresnel drag coefficient). The Fizeau experiment was one of the crucial hints that led Einstein to *special relativity*. 
iv | \[ 0 \leq v_x, u'_x \leq v_{\text{max}} : (\vec{v}_x := v_x / v_{\text{max}} \text{ so that } 0 \leq \vec{v}_x, \vec{u}_x \leq 1) \]

\[ u_x = \max \{ \frac{v_x + u'_x}{1 + \vec{v}_x \vec{u}_x} \} \leq v_{\text{max}} \quad (1.72) \]

Here we used that \( a + b \leq 1 + ab \) for numbers \( 0 \leq a, b \leq 1 \).

→ “Addition” of velocities Eq. (1.70) never exceeds \( v_{\text{max}} \).

→ \( v_{\text{max}} \) plays the role of a maximum velocity.

v | \[ \ll Signal \text{ with maximum velocity in } K': u'_x = v_{\text{max}} : \]

\[ u_x = \max \{ \frac{v_{\text{max}} + v_x}{1 + \frac{v_{\text{max}} v_x}{v_{\text{max}}^2}} \} = \max \{ \frac{v_{\text{max}} + v_x}{v_{\text{max}} + v_x} \} = v_{\text{max}} \quad (1.73) \]

Note that the result is completely independent of the velocity \( v_x \) of \( K' \)!

→ Whatever moves with the maximum velocity \( v_{\text{max}} \) does so in all inertial systems!

Please appreciate how counterintuitive this effect is from the perspective of everyday experience!

But also notice that we didn’t have to postulate it: The relativity principle \( \text{ [SR]} \) together with the existence of a (finite) maximum velocity is sufficient.

If you think about it: Assuming a maximum velocity (in the absence of a preferred reference frame) automatically invalidates the simple Galilean law of additive velocities. So it is actually not surprising at all that the maximum velocity must be independent of the reference system.
Experiments (in particular: the validity of Maxwell equations) show:

\[ v_{\text{max}} = c = 299,792,458 \text{ m s}^{-1} \]  

(1.74)

Note that since 1983 the value of \( c \) in the international system of units (SI) is exact by definition.

A. Einstein incorporated this insight in §2 of Ref. [8] as his second postulate:

2. Jeder Lichtstrahl bewegt sich im “ruhenden” Koordinatensystem mit der bestimmten Geschwindigkeit \( V \), unabhängig davon, ob dieser Lichtstrahl von einem ruhenden oder bewegten Körper emittiert ist.

Note that at the time it was conventional to denote the speed of light with a capital \( V \). The convention switched to our now standard lower-case \( c \) just a few years later. For more historical background:

🔗 https://math.ucr.edu/home/baez/physics/Relativity/SpeedOfLight/c.html

We can condense this into:

§ Postulate: Constancy of the speed of light \( \text{SL} \)

The speed of light is independent of the inertial system in which it is measured.

Comments:

• If you take the validity of the Maxwell equations for granted, then \( v_{\text{max}} = c < \infty \) (and thereby \( \text{SL} \)) follows immediately from the relativity principle \( \text{SR} \) because then the Maxwell equations must be valid in all inertial systems. But you’ve learned in your course on electrodynamics that the wavelike solutions of these equations always propagate with group velocity \( c \) in vacuum. This is only possible if the speed of light plays the role of the limiting velocity: \( v_{\text{max}} = c \).

Einstein acknowledges as much at the beginning of Ref. [9]. However, \( \text{SL} \) is empirically weaker than claiming the validity of Maxwell’s equations (after all, there could be alternative equations that also predict the velocity \( c \) of wavelike solutions). At the time when Einstein formulated \( \text{SL} \) in [8], he also worked on the photoelectric effect (another of his \( \text{annus mirabilis} \) papers [31]). The postulation of “quanta of light” is the foundation of quantum mechanics, but cannot be explained by Maxwell’s equations. It is therefore reasonable to assume that Einstein didn’t want to rely on the validity of this specific theory when formulating his \( \text{SPECIAL RELATIVITY} \). He therefore opted for the empirically weaker (but still sufficient) assumption \( \text{SL} \).

• If you derive the transformation \( \phi \) using both postulates \( \text{SR} \) and \( \text{SL} \) the derivation is shorter (see e.g. [1] or [2]); one then of course doesn’t find the Galilei transformations as an option. Note, however, that the relativity principle \( \text{SR} \) is a reasonable and intuitive starting point that doesn’t need much convincing (after all, we witness the relativity of Newtonian mechanics in our everyday life). By contrast, the speed of light postulate \( \text{SL} \) clashes directly with our everyday experience (how velocities add up, that is). Through our elaborate derivation we learned how much is already implied by the simple, reasonable assumption of relativity. We
only had to check whether there is any evidence of a finite maximum velocity \( v_{\text{max}} \). The counterintuitive feature that this velocity is the same viewed from all inertial systems was then a necessary conclusion from our derivation.

† Note: Finite speed of causality (Locality)

Another insight from our SR-based derivation of the Lorentz transformation is that the formulation of the speed-of-light postulate \( SL \) is conceptually misleading:

- The constant \( v_{\text{max}} \) and its role as a maximum velocity followed without referring to light (or electrodynamics) in any way!
  
  Put bluntly: special relativity is not about the “strange behavior” of light!

- The relevant speed for special relativity is the speed of causality: How fast can information travel, i.e., one event affect another. \( v_{\text{max}} \) is the maximum speed of causal interactions, irrespective of the mediator of these interactions.
  
  In our world, the fastest and most salient information carrier just happens to be the electromagnetic field (“light”). For example, to synchronize our clocks with light signals, it wasn’t the light \( \text{per se} \) we were interested in; we just used it as carrier of information to correlate the clocks.

- Given the relativity principle SR and our derivation in Section 1.4, we showed that there are only two possibilities: (1) There is no upper bound on velocities (Galilean symmetry) or (2) there is such an upper bound \( v_{\text{max}} \) (Lorentz symmetry). In the latter case, every signal that propagates with \( v_{\text{max}} \) in some frame automatically does so in all inertial systems. (Which immediately leads to the counterintuitive conclusion, akin to \( SL \), that there are signals the velocity of which does not depend on the velocity of the observer.)

- We could replace \( SL \) therefore by the (empirically weaker) postulate that there are no instantaneous actions at a distance (this is essentially a statement about locality). This modified postulate implies the existence of a maximal velocity \( v_{\text{max}} < \infty \) which, in turn, selects the Lorentz transformation as the correct symmetry. That \( v_{\text{max}} = c \) is then a fact to be discovered by experiments.

- It turns out that everything with vanishing rest mass travels at this maximum speed \( v_{\text{max}} = c \). Since photons are the only elementary particles that are massless and can be easily detected, we just happen to refer to this maximum velocity as “speed of light.”

For example: Without Higgs symmetry breaking, the \( W^{\pm} \) and Z bosons of the weak interaction are massless and would propagated with light velocity, just as the photon (the weak interactions would then be no longer “weak”). For a long time it was believed that neutrinos are massless as well, and therefore would also propagate with the speed of light (today we know that they have a very tiny mass).

19 | Special Lorentz transformations = Lorentz boosts:

Now that everything is settled, let us write down our final result in their conventional form.

¡! These are not the most general (homogeneous) Lorentz transformations since we omit rotations, parity and time inversion. We will discuss the structure of the full homogeneous Lorentz group and its inhomogeneous generalization (→ Poincaré group) later. To discuss the “fancy” phenomena of special relativity, the transformations below are sufficient.
i | Boost in arbitrary directions ($\vec{v} = v \hat{v}$ with $\hat{v} = \vec{v} / |\vec{v}|$):

$$\Lambda(K \rightarrow K') : \begin{cases} ct' = \gamma \left( ct - \beta \vec{x} \cdot \hat{v} \right) \\
\vec{x}' = \vec{x} + (\gamma - 1)(\vec{x} \cdot \hat{v}) \cdot \hat{v} - \gamma v t \end{cases}$$  \hspace{1cm} (1.75)

(Since we now settled on Lorentz transformation for $\varphi$, we write $\varphi = \Lambda$ henceforth.)

with $\beta \equiv v / c$ and the Lorentz factor

$$\gamma_v \equiv \gamma = \frac{1}{\sqrt{1 - v^2 / c^2}} = \frac{1}{\sqrt{1 - \beta^2}}.$$  \hspace{1cm} (1.76)

ii | Special case: Boost in $x$-direction ($\vec{v} = v_x \hat{x}$):

$$\Lambda(K \rightarrow K') : \begin{cases} ct' = \gamma \left( ct - \frac{v_x}{c} x \right) \\
x' = \gamma (x - v_x t) \\
y' = y \\
z' = z \end{cases}$$  \hspace{1cm} (1.77)

20 | State of affairs:

Now that we know the spacetime symmetry $\varphi$ of reality, we have quite a to-do list:

- We will have to modify Newton's equations to replace their Galilean by a Lorentz symmetry, without changing their predictions for small velocities $v \ll c$ ($\downarrow$ correspondence principle).
  → Relativistic mechanics

- We can keep the Maxwell equations in their current form $\otimes$.
  Note that we still have to check that they are really Lorentz covariant ($\otimes$ Problemset ?)!
  In the end we will come up with a neat notation that allows us to rewrite (not modify!) the Maxwell equations in a compact form to make their Lorentz symmetry apparent.

- Similar to classical mechanics, we will have to replace the Schrödinger equation in quantum mechanics by a modified version with Lorentz symmetry.
  → Relativistic quantum mechanics (Klein-Gordon and Dirac equation)

But before we do all the heavy work:

Simple implications of this transformation? ($\rightarrow$ below and next lectures)

With “simple” we refer to implications that follow without imposing a model-specific dynamics ($\Rightarrow$ equation of motion). We will refer to these implications as kinematic because they follow from fundamental constraints on the degrees of freedom of all relativistic theories.
1.6. Invariant intervals and the causal partial order of events

1) Trajectory of a light signal in $x$-direction in $K$:

$$x(t) = ct, \quad y = 0, \quad z = 0$$  (1.78)

Trajectory of the same signal in $K'$ with $K \xrightarrow{\text{v}} K'$:

$$x'(t') = ct', \quad y' = 0, \quad z' = 0$$  (1.79)

This follows from our previous discussion: signals propagating with $c = v_{\text{max}}$ do so in all inertial systems!

You can also simply calculate this using the Lorentz boost Eq. (1.77):

$$ct' = \gamma (ct - \frac{v}{c}ct)$$  (1.80a)

and

$$x' = \gamma (ct - v_y t) = ct'.$$  (1.80b)

$$\rightarrow$$

$$(ct)^2 - x^2 = 0 = (ct')^2 - (x')^2$$ is a frame-independent quantity.  (1.81)

Note that the separate summands $[(ct)^2$ etc.] are not frame-independent!

This finding motivates the definition of the ...

2) Spacetime interval:

Details: Problemset 2

Two events $E_1 \equiv (t_1, \vec{x}_1)_K$ and $E_2 \equiv (t_2, \vec{x}_2)_K$ with temporal and spatial separation

$$(\Delta t)_K := t_1 - t_2 \quad \text{and} \quad (\Delta \vec{x})_K := \vec{x}_1 - \vec{x}_2.$$  (1.82)

Then the spacetime interval between $E_1$ and $E_2$ is denoted $(\Delta s)^2 \equiv \Delta s^2$ and defined as

$$(\Delta s)^2 := (c\Delta t)_K^2 - (\Delta \vec{x})_K^2.$$  (1.83)

We omit the subscript $K$ from $\Delta s$ because it is frame-independent (next).

In our example above it was $\Delta t = t - 0$ and $\Delta \vec{x} = (x - 0, 0 - 0, 0 - 0)$, i.e., we considered the interval between the event in the origin $x_O = (0, 0)$ and the events along the trajectory $(ct, x(t), 0, 0)$ of the light signal.
3 | The importance of $\Delta s^2$ stems from the following fact:

The spacetime interval $\Delta s^2$ is independent of the frame in which it is calculated.

This means that given two events, all observers agree on the numerical value of the interval $\Delta s^2$ between these two events.

Proof: Use Eq. (1.75) to calculate (Details: → Problemset 2)

\[
\begin{align*}
(c\ell)^2 &= \left[ \gamma (c\ell - \beta \vec{x} \cdot \hat{v}) \right]^2 \\
(\vec{x}^\prime)^2 &= \left[ \vec{x} + (\gamma - 1)(\vec{x} \cdot \hat{v}) \cdot \hat{v} - \gamma \vec{v}t \right]^2 \\
\Rightarrow (c\ell)^2 - (\vec{x}^\prime)^2 &= (c\ell)^2 - (\vec{x})^2 + \ldots = 0 
\end{align*}
\]

Note that we do not have to do the computation for two events and an interval $\Delta t$ and $\Delta \vec{x}$ since the special Lorentz transformations are linear.

This proves the invariance under special Lorentz transformations (→ Lorentz boosts). It is easy to see that the invariance is also valid for inhomogeneous shifts in time and space (these drop out in the intervals $\Delta t$ etc.) and spatial rotations $\Lambda_R$ [since $(\Delta \vec{x})^2$ is clearly invariant under rotations]. We will come back to this when we discuss the structure of the Lorentz group in more detail (→ later).

4 | Two events $E_1$ and $E_2$ are in one of three possible (frame-independent) relations:

\[
\begin{align*}
\Delta s^2 &= \begin{cases} 
> 0 & E_1 \text{ and } E_2 \text{ are } \bullet \text{ time-like separated} \\
= 0 & E_1 \text{ and } E_2 \text{ are } \bullet \text{ light-like separated} \\
< 0 & E_1 \text{ and } E_2 \text{ are } \bullet \text{ space-like separated}
\end{cases}
\end{align*}
\]

Note that $\Delta s^2$ can be negative so that $\Delta s^2$ should be read as a symbol rather than defining an imaginary number $\Delta s$. For the special case of time-like intervals, however, $\Delta s^2$ indeed defines a real number $\Delta s = \sqrt{\Delta s^2}$ which we will later relate to the time measured by moving clocks (the so called proper time).

All events that are light-like separated from an event $E$ (wlog in the origin) satisfy

\[
\Delta s^2 = 0 \iff (c\ell)^2 = (\vec{x})^2 \iff |c\ell| = |
\vec{x}|
\]

which determines the $\bullet$ light cone of $E$:
Here we show the light cone of an event $E$ in a space time with two spatial dimensions $x$ and $y$. The light cone in our $3 + 1$ dimensional space time is a higher-dimensional generalization which obeys the same equations.

- Time-like events satisfy $\Delta s^2 > 0 \iff |ct| > |\vec{x}|$ which characterizes the (disconnected) interior of the light cone. The manifold with $ct > |\vec{x}| \geq 0$ is called the future light cone (of $E$) whereas the events with $-ct > |\vec{x}| \geq 0$ make up the past light cone (of $E$).

- Space-like events satisfy $\Delta s^2 < 0 \iff |ct| < |\vec{x}|$ which characterizes the (connected) spacetime volume outside the light cone.

5. Causality:

The importance of the threefold classification of spacetime intervals stems from the following observations.

i. Actions of (homogeneous) Lorentz transformations:

Since $\Delta s^2$ is invariant under Lorentz transformations, the manifold of events characterized by a specific value $\Delta s^2 = \pm C$ ($C > 0$) must be mapped onto itself under these transformations: Events on these hyperbolic manifolds cannot leave their manifolds under Lorentz transformations.

Invariant hyperbolae:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{time-like:} & \quad \Delta s^2 = C > 0 \quad \Rightarrow \quad ct = \pm \sqrt{C + |\vec{x}|^2} \\
\text{light-like:} & \quad \Delta s^2 = C = 0 \quad \Rightarrow \quad ct = \pm |\vec{x}| \\
\text{space-like:} & \quad \Delta s^2 = -C < 0 \quad \Rightarrow \quad ct = \pm \sqrt{|\vec{x}|^2 - C}
\end{align*}
\]
This picture leads immediately to two conclusions:

ii | Two distinct events $E_1 \equiv (t_1, \vec{x}_1)_K$ and $E_2 \equiv (t_2, \vec{x}_2)_K$ with coordinates in $K$:

- If $\Delta s^2 \geq 0$ (= time-like or light-like), then
  
  either $\forall_K : (t_1)_K > (t_2)_K$ or $\forall_K : (t_1)_K < (t_2)_K$.

  This means that for time-like or light-like separated events all observers agree on their temporal ordering! Note that they do not necessarily agree on the time $(t_1)_K - (t_2)_K$ elapsed between the two events.

  Proof: Assume $(t_1)_A < (t_2)_A$ and $(t_1)_B > (t_2)_B$ for two inertial systems $A$ and $B$. Because of the continuity of Lorentz transformations there must exist a frame $C$ with $(t_1)_C = (t_2)_C$. But in this frame $(\Delta s)^2_C = - (\Delta \vec{x})_C^2 \geq 0$ such that $(\vec{x}_1)_C = (\vec{x}_2)_C$ and therefore $E_1 = E_2$ (which contradicts our assumption that the two events are distinct).

  Proof by picture!

- If $\Delta s^2 < 0$ (= space-like), then

  $\exists_A, B : (t_1)_A > (t_2)_A$ and $(t_1)_B < (t_2)_B$.

  This means that for space-like separated events there are always observers who see $E_1$ happening before $E_2$ while other observers see $E_1$ happening after $E_2$. The temporal order of space-like separated events is therefore observer-dependent!

  Proof: Problemset ?

  Proof by picture!

iii | Conventional relation of time order and causality:

$E_1$ can causally affect $E_2 \Rightarrow E_1$ happens before $E_2$.

Since causality should be an objective, observer-independent fact, and we just showed that only time- and light-like separated events have an observer-independent temporal order, it is reasonable to define the following …

… (strict) partial order $<$ on the set $E$ of events:

$E_1 < E_2 \iff \Delta s^2 \geq 0$ and $t_1 < t_2$ : “$E_1$ can affect $E_2$”

$E_1 > E_2 \iff \Delta s^2 \geq 0$ and $t_1 > t_2$ : “$E_2$ can affect $E_1$”
This is a partial order because for $\Delta s^2 < 0$ there is no relation between $E_1$ and $E_2$ (we denote this by $E_1 \nL E_2$).

To be a partial order, one has to show irreflexivity (which is trivial since $t < t$ is not true) and transitivity. To show transitivity, show that $\Delta s^2_{1,2} \geq 0$ and $\Delta s^2_{2,3} \geq 0$ together with $t_2 > t_1$ and $t_3 > t_2$ implies $\Delta s^2_{1,3} \geq 0$ and $t_3 > t_1$ (use the triangle inequality).

This definition of causality is consistent with our previous findings that no signal can travel faster than the speed of light $c$:

- $E \prec E_1$: There exists a signal trajectory $\bar{x}(t)$ with $\left| \frac{d \bar{x}(t)}{dt} \right| \leq c$ connecting the two events (blue in the sketch).
- $E \nL E_3$: Any trajectory $\bar{x}(t)$ connecting the two events (red in the sketch) has some segment with $\left| \frac{d \bar{x}(t)}{dt} \right| > c$ (yellow in the sketch). Since this is physically impossible, there is no signal of any kind that can mediate causal influence from $E$ to $E_3$ (and vice versa).

This follows from an application of (a generalization of) the mean value theorem.

Since the causal structure $(\mathcal{E}, \prec)$ is observer independent:

There is no relativity of causality in special relativity!

If one observer states that $E_1$ can causally affect $E_2$, then all observers will agree on this statement.

Fun fact:

If one starts from the causal structure $(\mathcal{E}, \prec)$ and derives the group of causality-preserving automorphisms $\Phi$,

$$E_1 \prec E_2 \iff \Phi(E_1) \prec \Phi(E_2),$$

(1.92)

one again finds the homogeneous Lorentz transformations (boosts & rotations) that we constructed above (plus space-inversion, spacetime dilations and translations), see Ref. [32] for more details. Most interestingly, for the proof neither a continuity assumption on $\Phi$ nor a topology on $\mathcal{E}$ is required; all this follows (at least in $2 + 1$ spacetime dimensions and more) from the partial order $\prec$. 

This follows from an application of (a generalization of) the mean value theorem.
1.7. ‡ Relativity, compressibility, and the anthropic principle

The statements in this section are not specific to Einstein’s relativity principle \( \text{SR} \).

1 | Relativity principles …

- … are statements about (the existence of) symmetries of spacetime.
- … imply the versatility of models to predict events from many viewpoints.
- … are statements about an \textit{a priori} unnecessary simplicity of nature.

2 | Imagine a world \textit{without any} relativity principle:

\textit{The equations (models) that capture physical laws faithfully are different from frame to frame.}

→ Your brain must learn arbitrary many different models adapted to all possible reference frames to anticipate the future in all situations.

→ Biologically impossible (your brain capacity is finite, building models is expensive)

3 | Example: Catching balls:

Notice that most reference frames that we naturally encounter are (approximately) inertial only in \( x \) and \( y \) direction (the axes that are locally parallel to earth’s surface) and constantly accelerated in \( z \) direction (the axis perpendicular to earth’s surface; the acceleration is \( g \approx 9.81 \text{ m/s}^2 \)). The non-relativistic symmetries that relate these frames are a \textit{subgroup} of the full Galilei group (excluding rotations around the \( x \) and \( y \) axes as well as “large” translations). Our brain contains only models for these frames (equipped with Cartesian coordinates). Have you ever tried throwing or catching a ball in frames with acceleration in \( x \) or \( y \) directions (like a centrifuge)?

‡ YouTube Video: The artificial gravity lab (Tom Scott)

Note that it is not impossible to train specific models for other frames to which the relativity principle of our everyday experience does not apply (after some practice you can throw and catch balls in a centrifuge of constant angular velocity). But this is just one additional model and even this is not implemented in our brains by default!

4 | Relativity principle

→ Descriptions of natural phenomena are highly \textit{compressible}.

→ Only few models (equations) are necessary to anticipate the future.

5 | Anthropic principle:

\textit{Question}: Why are there spacetime symmetries / relativity principles in the first place?

\textit{Answer}: Because if there were none, evolution would most likely be impossible, hence we would be unable to ask the question.
Note that evolution relies on the somewhat reliable proliferation of information over time. This seems only possible if the individuals carrying this information survive. Surviving in environments with life-threatening phenomena (thunderstorms, predators, ...) relies on its (approximate) predictability by (approximate) models that are learned evolutionary and/or by experience.

For this argument to work some form of “ensemble interpretation” of reality is required (e.g. multiverses) [33].
2. Kinematic Consequences

In this chapter we study implications of the special Lorentz transformations Eq. (1.75) and Eq. (1.77) that follow without imposing a model-specific dynamics (= equations of motion). We refer to these implications as kinematic because they follow from fundamental constraints on the degrees of freedom of all relativistic theories. The phenomena we will encounter are therefore features of spacetime itself – and not of some entities that live on/in (or couple to) spacetime.

¡! The phenomena we will encounter are not “illusions” (in the sense that we “see” things differently than they “really are”). Remember that we precisely defined what we mean by observers/reference frames; in particular, we emphasized that we do not “look” at anything, we measure events in a systematic way, using a well-defined structure called inertial system. All phenomena we will encounter are derived from and to be understood in this operational, physically meaningful context.

2.1. Length contraction and the Relativity of Simultaneity

1 | In inertial systems \( A \xrightarrow{u_x} A' \) with rod on \( x' \)-axis and at rest in \( A' \):

Remember that \( A \xrightarrow{u_x} A' \) denotes a boost in \( x \)-direction with \( v_x \) (as measured in \( A \)) where the spatial axes of both \( A \) and \( A' \) coincide at \( t = 0 \):

![Diagram of inertial systems](image)

In such situations, we refer to \( A' \) as the rest frame of the rod and \( A \) as the lab frame (some call \( A \) the stationary frame). In the following, coordinates of events in the inertial system \( A' \) are marked by primes.

2 | First, we have to define what we mean by the “length” of an object:

“Length” is an intrinsically non-local concept. It is not something you can measure or define at a single point in space. Consequently, there are no “length-events” in \( \mathcal{E} \). Thus we need an algorithm (= operational definition) of what we mean by “length”.

\(< \) Two event types:

\[
\{e_L\} = \{\text{Left end of rod detected}\}\quad (2.1a)
\]

\[
\{e_R\} = \{\text{Right end of rod detected}\}\quad (2.1b)
\]

Think of an event type as a set (equivalence class) of all elementary events that you deem type-identical (but not token-identical). In the example given here, there will be many events \( e_L \) in
spacetime that signify “Left end of rod detected” (if there is one rod, there will be one such event for each time $t$); these are different events of the same type $\{e_L\}$.

One could even declare that the event type $\{e_L\}$ is what we refer to as “the left end of the rod.”

→ Algorithm LENGTH to compute “Length of Rod” in system $K$ at time $t$:

**LENGTH**:

*Input*: Coincidences $E$, Inertial system label $K$, Time $t$  
*Output*: Length $l_K$ of rod at time $t$ as measured in $K$

1. Find (unique) event $L \in E$ with $\{e_L\} \in L$ and $(t, \vec{l})_K \in L$.
2. Find (unique) event $R \in E$ with $\{e_R\} \in R$ and $(t, \vec{r})_K \in R$.
3. Return $l_K := |\vec{l} - \vec{r}|$.

Here, $\{e_L\} \in L$ is shorthand for $\{e_L\} \cap L \neq \emptyset$. In words: the coincidence class $L$ contains an event of the type “Left end of rod detected”.

Note that we define “length” as the spatial distance between the two ends of the rod at the same time $t$ (as measured by the clocks in $K$). I hope you agree that this is what one typically means by “length.”
We now apply this algorithm twice, in the lab frame $A$ and the rest frame $A'$:

i | **Rest frame $A'$:**

**Proper length** $\equiv$ **Rest length**: Length of rod in $A'$:

$$l_0 := \text{LENGTH}(E, t'_0; A') = |\vec{l}_0 - \vec{r}_0| = |l'_0 - r'_0|$$

(2.2)

with simultaneous clock events $(t'_0, \vec{l}_0)_{A'} \in L_0$ and $(t'_0, \vec{r}_0)_{A'} \in R_0$.

The time $t'_0$ that we choose is irrelevant since the rod is (by definition) at rest in $A'$. Since the rod lies on the $x'$-axis, it is $\vec{l}_0 = (l'_0, 0, 0)$ and $\vec{r}_0 = (r'_0, 0, 0)$.

The subscript “0” in $L_0$ indicates that this is a specific event (coincidence class) we selected in $A'$ to compute the length of the rod. It does not mean “as seen from the rest frame $A''$” or anything like that. Remember that coincidence classes in $E$ are objective information!

ii | **Lab frame $A$:**

Length of moving rod in $A$:

$$l := \text{LENGTH}(E, t; A) = |\vec{l} - \vec{r}|$$

(2.3)

with simultaneous clock events $(t_l, \vec{l}_A) \in L$ and $(t_r, \vec{r}_A) \in R$ with $t_l = t_r = t$.

The time $t$ that we choose might be irrelevant as well, but we do not know this yet.

There is no reason to assume that the events $L_0/R_0$ chosen in $A'$ to measure the length of the rod are identical to the events $L/R$ used in $A$: $L_0 \neq L$ and $R_0 \neq R$ in general.

4 | How does $l_0$ relate to $l$?

i | In Section 1.5 we did a lot of hard work to compute the transformation $\varphi$ which transforms the coordinates of an event in one inertial system into the coordinates of the same event in another inertial system. We identified the transformation as the Lorentz transformation:

$$\Lambda(A \xrightarrow{\psi} A') : [E]_A = (t, \vec{x}) \mapsto \Lambda_{\psi} x = x' = (t', \vec{x}') = [E]_{A'}$$

(2.4)

ii | So let us use this tool [namely Eq. (1.77)] to obtain the coordinates of the events $L$ and $R$ (used for the length measurement in $A$) in the rest frame $A'$ of the rod:

$$[L]_{A'} = \begin{pmatrix} c t'_l = \gamma (ct_l - \frac{u_x}{c^2}l_x) \\ l'_x = \gamma(l_x - u_x t_l) \\ l'_y = l_y \\ l'_z = l_z \end{pmatrix}$$

and

$$[R]_{A'} = \begin{pmatrix} c t'_r = \gamma (ct_r - \frac{u_x}{c^2}r_x) \\ r'_x = \gamma(r_x - u_x t_r) \\ r'_y = r_y \\ r'_z = r_z \end{pmatrix}$$

(2.5)

Here we use $\vec{l} = (l_x, l_y, l_z)$ and $\vec{r} = (r_x, r_y, r_z)$. Since we declared that the rod is fixed on the $x'$-axis of $A'$, and $\{e_L\} \in L$ and $\{e_R\} \in R$, it must be $l'_x = l'_z = r'_y = r'_z = 0$, and therefore $\vec{l}' = (l_x, 0, 0)$ and $\vec{r}' = (r_x, 0, 0)$. That is, the rod is not rotated by the boost and always lies on the $x$-axis of $A$ as well. In particular: $l = |\vec{l} - \vec{r}| = |l_x - r_x|$.

→ Two immediate conclusions:
**a** | In $A'$ the two events $L$ and $R$ are *no longer simultaneous*:

$$t_L = t_R \text{ in } A \quad \text{but} \quad t'_L \neq t'_R \text{ in } A' \quad (\text{since } l_x \neq r_x).$$

\[2.6\]  

→ The simultaneity of events is *observer-dependent*.

This ambiguity of simultaneity can be graphically illustrated in a spacetime diagram (for details on how to draw the $(t', x')$-axes in $A$: ☞ Problemset 2):

- As a side note, this calculation implies that not only is it generally *not* true that $L_0 = L$ and $R_0 = R$, it is actually *impossible* (at least for both pairs).

- In the sketch above, the “interior of rod”-events are painted gray. One is tempted to ask: Which “line” of these events is the rod? The counterintuitive answer is that this depends on the observer: For $A$-observers, horizontal lines of gray events make up “the rod”, whereas for the $A'$-observer tilted lines are “the rod”. It is actually more reasonable to think of the complete area of gray events as “the rod”, just as the event type $\{v_x \neq 0\}$ is “the left edge” of the rod. This suggests that our intuitive concept of the instantaneous existence of extended objects – which feels so natural to us – is, to some extent, misleading.

**b** | In $A'$ the coordinate distance is different:

$$|l'_x - r'_x| = t'_j = t_r \quad y |l_x - r_x| \quad v_x \neq 0 \quad \neq |l_x - r_x| = l$$

\[2.7\]  

\[!\] The time-dependence cancels so that the expressions are time-independent.

At this point, it is a bit premature to identify the left-hand side as the rest length $l_0$ of the rod because these are spatial coordinates of events that are not simultaneous! (Remember that the length of any object in any frame is defined as the coordinate distance of simultaneous events.)

However, since $A'$ is (by definition) the *rest frame* of the rod, the position labels of the $A'$-clocks adjacent to the ends of the rod are the same for all events:

$$\begin{align*}
&l'_x \ (e_{xL} \in L) \quad l'_0 \\
r'_x \ (e_{xR} \in R) \quad r'_0
\end{align*} \quad \Rightarrow \quad |l'_x - r'_x| = |l'_0 - r'_0| = l_0$$

\[2.8\]
**Length contraction** $\equiv$ **Lorentz contraction:**

A rod of rest length $l_0$ is shorter if measured from an inertial system in relative motion:

$$l = l_0 \sqrt{1 - \frac{v^2}{c^2}} < l_0 \quad (2.9)$$

- Due to isotropy, this result is true for any length of extended objects in the direction of the boost. A rod along the $y'$-axis, for example, is contracted according to Eq. (2.9) for a boost in $y$-direction, but not for a boost in $x$-direction.
- The rod is just a proxy for any physical object; the Lorentz contraction therefore affects all physical objects in the same way. The contraction is not a dynamical feature of the object itself (like a force that compresses the atomic lattice) but an intrinsic property of space(time).
- Note that we say above “if measured from …” and not “as viewed from ….” This distinction is important: If you ask how you would visually perceive extended objects flying by (or how they look on a picture taken by a camera) you have to factor in that the photons bouncing of the object at different points take different times to reach your eye (our the camera sensor). If you do the math (Problem set 3), this additional optical effect leads to the surprising result that 3D objects actually do not look “squeezed” but rotated. This implies in particular that a moving sphere still looks like a sphere and not like an ellipse (Penrose-Terrell effect [34, 35], see also Ref. [36]).

You can experience this effect (among others) in the educational game “A Slower Speed of Light,” which has been developed by the MIT Game Lab for educational purposes, and can be downloaded here for Windows, Mac, and Linux (Problem set 3):

**Download “A Slower Speed of Light”**

You should always keep in mind, however, that this “looking” is not what we refer to as observing in relativity; the latter has been defined operationally as a measurement procedure at the beginning of this course.

### 2.2. Time dilation

| 1 | $\leftarrow$ Inertial systems $A \overset{v_x}{\longrightarrow} A'$ and a clock $\bar{x}'$ at rest in $A'$:

$$\begin{align*}
\left( t_0, \bar{x}_0 \right)_A & \rightarrow \left( t_0', \bar{x}_0' \right)_{A'} \quad (t_0, \bar{x}_0)_A \in E_0 \quad (2.10a) \\
\left( t_1, \bar{x}_1 \right)_A & \rightarrow \left( t_1', \bar{x}_1' \right)_{A'} \quad (t_1, \bar{x}_1)_A \in E_1 \quad (2.10b)
\end{align*}$$

| 2 | $\leftarrow$ Two events:

- $A'$-Clock $\bar{x}'$ meets $A$-clock $\bar{x}_0$: $(t_0', \bar{x}_0')_{A'} \sim (t_0, \bar{x}_0)_A \in E_0$
- $A'$-Clock $\bar{x}'$ meets $A$-clock $\bar{x}_1$: $(t_1', \bar{x}_1')_{A'} \sim (t_1, \bar{x}_1)_A \in E_1$
The two events $E_0$ and $E_1$ relate three different clocks: The single $A'$-clock $\bar{x}'$ and two different $A$-clocks $\bar{x}_0$ and $\bar{x}_1$.

As for length, the concept of “duration” cannot be defined locally in spacetime. We therefore need an operational definition (algorithm) of “duration”:

**DURATION:**

+ **Input:** Two events $E_0$ and $E_1$, Inertial system label $K$
+ **Output:** Time interval $\Delta t_K$ between events as measured in $K$

1. Find (unique) clock event $(t_0, \bar{x}_0)_K \in E_0$.
2. Find (unique) clock event $(t_1, \bar{x}_1)_K \in E_1$.
3. Return $\Delta t_K := t_1 - t_0$.

Hopefully you agree that this is a reasonable definition of the duration (or time interval) between two events.

We can now apply this algorithm to determine the time elapsed between $E_0$ and $E_1$:

In $A'$: $\Delta t' = \text{DURATION}(E_0, E_1; A') = t_1' - t_0'$ Measured by a single clock! (2.11a)

In $A$: $\Delta t = \text{DURATION}(E_0, E_1; A) = t_1 - t_0$ Measured by two clocks! (2.11b)

How does $\Delta t$ relate to $\Delta t'$?

1. Since $(t_0', \bar{x}')_{A'} \sim (t_0, \bar{x}_0)_A$ and $(t_1', \bar{x}')_{A'} \sim (t_1, \bar{x}_1)_A$, we can use the Lorentz transformation to translate between the coordinates:

   Inverse of Eq. (1.77)

   Remember that $\Lambda^{-1}_0 = \Lambda_0$ because of reciprocity; the inverse Lorentz transformation can then be obtained by substituting $v_x \mapsto -v_x$:

   \[
   [E_0]_A = \begin{cases} 
   c t_0 = \gamma \left( c t_0' + \frac{v_x}{c} x' \right) \\
   x_0 = \gamma (x' + v_x t_0')
   \end{cases} \quad \text{and} \quad
   [E_1]_A = \begin{cases} 
   c t_1 = \gamma \left( c t_1' + \frac{v_x}{c} x' \right) \\
   x_1 = \gamma (x' + v_x t_1')
   \end{cases}
   \]

   (2.12)

   We omit the other two coordinates since they are invariant anyway; the transformation of the spatial coordinate is also not necessary for the following derivation.

2. Subtracting the equations for the time coordinate of both events yields:

   \[
   c (t_1 - t_0) = \gamma c (t_1' - t_0')
   \]

   (2.13)

   Note that in the inverse Lorentz transformation Eq. (2.12) the position coordinate in $A'$ is $x'$ for both events because the same $A'$-clock takes part in both coincidences.

3. **Time dilation:**

   $\to$ The moving clocks in $A'$ run slower than the stationary clocks in $A$:

   \[
   \Delta t = \frac{\Delta t_0}{\sqrt{1 - \frac{v^2}{c^2}}} \quad v \neq 0
   \]

   (2.14)

   We renamed $\Delta t' = \Delta t_0$ to emphasize the analogy to the proper length $l_0$:

   $\Delta t_0$: Proper time elapsed in $A'$ between $E_0$ and $E_1$

   $\Delta t$: Time elapsed in $A$ between $E_0$ and $E_1$
• The characteristic feature of the proper time $\Delta t_0$ between two (time-like separated) events $E_0$ and $E_1$ is that it can be measured by a single inertial clock that takes part in both events. All other time intervals must be measured by subtracting the reading of two different clocks. Eq. (2.14) tells you that these time intervals are always longer than the proper time $\Delta t_0$.

• Due to isotropy, our result above is true for boosts in any direction. Note that in the derivation above, we did not impose any special constraints on the positions of the clocks (except that they coincide pairwise at $E_0$ and $E_1$). In particular, we did not assume (despite the sketch suggesting this) that the clocks are located on the $x/x'$-axis. All clocks in $A'$ are slowed down in the same way, irrespective of their location!

• This result does not contradict our assumption that all clocks are type-identical (= run with the same rate if put next to each other at rest) because the two events needed to compare the tick rate of moving clocks necessarily describe coincidences between different pairs of clocks.

6 | Relativity principle:

Because of the relativity principle SR time dilation must be completely symmetrical: The $A'$-clocks run slower compared to the $A$-clocks, and the $A$-clocks run slower compared to the $A'$ clocks. That this is indeed the case (without being a clock “paradox”) is best illustrated in a symmetric spacetime diagram:

![Spacetime Diagram](image)

The existence of the “median frame” $A''$ between $A \rightarrow A'$ can be easily shown with the addition for collinear velocities Eq. (1.70). This symmetric form of a spacetime diagram is sometimes called Loedel diagram [37] and makes the symmetry between inertial frames manifest; in particular, the units on the axes of $A$ and $A'$ are identical (they are not identical to the units of $A''$, tough). In this symmetric form, the $t'$-axis is orthogonal to the $x$-axis and the $t$-axis to the $x'$-axis. Note that because of the relativistic addition of velocities, it is $A' \rightarrow \v{v}{x} \rightarrow A'$ and $A'' \rightarrow \v{v}{x} \rightarrow A'$ with $\v{v}{x} = v_x \frac{\v{v}{x}}{1 + \v{v}{x}^2}$ and $\tan(\varphi) = \frac{v_x}{c}$ (Problemset 3). Only in the non-relativistic limit $v_x/c \rightarrow 0$ one finds $\v{v}{x} = \frac{v_x}{c}$ as naively expected.

Note that due to the relativity of simultaneity, the two observers use different pairs of clock-events to decide which of the two origin clocks runs slower:

• For $A$ the two clock events $D$ and $C$ are simultaneous such that one has to conclude that the (blue) $A'$-clock runs slower than the (red) $A$-clock.
By contrast, for the observer $A'$ the two events $D$ and $\tilde{C}$ are simultaneous such that one has to conclude that the (red) $A$-clock runs slower than the (blue) $A'$-clock.

It is evident from the diagram that there is no disagreement about coincidences of events (or readings of clocks). It is just the observer-dependent concept of simultaneity that leads to the seemingly “paradoxical” reciprocity of time dilation.

### Experiments:

- **Muon decay [38]:**
  
  Muons quickly decay into electrons (and neutrinos):
  \[
  \mu^- \rightarrow e^- + \nu_\mu + \bar{\nu}_e .
  \]  
  (2.15)

  This decay can be readily observed in storage rings of particle colliders like CERN. The lifetime of muons at rest (measured by clocks in an inertial laboratory frame) is $\tau_0^{\mu} \approx 2.1948(10) \mu$s. However, the lifetime of muons in flight (close to the speed of light) is measured to be $\tau_\mu \approx 64.368(29) \mu$s, i.e., much longer! If one carefully takes into account the speed of the muons and additional experimental imperfections, this result fits Eq. (2.14) with deviations of only $\sim 0.1 \%$ [38].

  **Notes:**
  
  - In the rest frame of the flying muons one would measure the usual lifetime $\tau_0^{\mu} \approx 2.1948(10) \mu$s. However, in this frame, the laboratory is Lorentz contracted such that the muon reaches exactly the same point in space where it decays in this “shorter” lifetime. Note how time-dilation and Lorentz contraction provide different explanations for the same experimental observation.
  
  - One can also use different particle species to study time dilation, for example pions (a sort of meson, i.e., a hadron with one quark and one antiquark) [39].

- **Hafele-Keating experiment [40, 41]:**

  In 1971, J.C. Hafele and R. E. Keating took four Cesium atomic clocks along commerical jet flights around the globe twice: once eastward and once westward. Compared to a reference clock on the ground, the clocks on the eastward flight lost on average $\sim 59$ ns (= they ran slower) and the clocks on the westward flight gained $\sim 273$ ns (= they ran faster). To understand this qualitatively, note that the reference clock on the ground is rotating (together with earth) and therefore is not an inertial clock. Therefore imagine an (approximately) inertial reference system flying along earth around the sun, and from this system look down on the north pole; earth is now slowly rotating beneath you. From this inertial system, the eastward flight has higher velocity than the reference clock, which, in turn, has higher velocity than the westward flight. Thus you find that the eastward clock runs slower than the reference clock which runs slower than the westward clock (this is also true if the clocks are accelerated,→ below). These theoretical considerations are explained in [40].

### 2.3. Addition of velocities

Details: [Problemset 2]

1. Particle moving with $\vec{u}' = \frac{d\vec{x}'}{dt'}$ in system $K'$ and inertial system $K$ with $K \rightarrow K'$:
2 | Velocity \( \vec{u} \) in \( K \):

\[
\vec{u} = \frac{d\vec{x}}{dt} = \vec{v} \oplus \vec{u}' = \vec{v} + \frac{1}{1 + \frac{\vec{v} \cdot \vec{u}'}{c^2}} \left[ \vec{v} + \frac{\vec{u}'}{\gamma v} + \frac{\gamma v}{c^2(1 + \gamma v)} (\vec{u}' \cdot \vec{v}) \vec{v} \right]
\] (2.16)

**Proof:** Use Eq. (1.75) (\( \uparrow \) Problemset 2).

\[\uparrow\] The relativistic addition of velocities \( \oplus \) is in general not commutative \( (\vec{v} \oplus \vec{u} \neq \vec{u} \oplus \vec{v}) \) nor associative \( (\vec{v} \oplus (\vec{u} \oplus \vec{w}) \neq (\vec{v} \oplus \vec{u}) \oplus \vec{w}) \). As you can easily see from Eq. (2.16), it is also not linear: \( \vec{v} \oplus (\lambda \vec{u}) = \lambda (\vec{v} \oplus \vec{u}) \). Be careful: There are different notations (in particular: orderings) used in the literature.

3 | \( \uparrow \) Non-relativistic limit \((c \to \infty \Rightarrow v \to 1)\):

\[
\lim_{c \to \infty} \vec{v} \oplus \vec{u}' = \lim_{c \to \infty} \vec{u}' \oplus \vec{v} = \vec{v} + \vec{u}'
\] (2.17)

\( \to \) Galilean addition of velocities

4 | Special case: \( \vec{v} = (v_x, 0, 0) \):

\[
u_x = \frac{v_x + u'_x}{1 + \frac{v_x u'_x}{c^2}}, \quad u_y = \frac{u'_y / \gamma v}{1 + \frac{v_x u'_x}{c^2}}, \quad u_z = \frac{u'_z / \gamma v}{1 + \frac{v_x u'_x}{c^2}}.
\] (2.18)

\[\uparrow\] Note that also the transverse components of \( \vec{u}' \) are modified, but in a different way than the collinear component \( u'_x \). For \( \vec{u}' = (u'_x, 0, 0) \) we get our previous result for collinear velocities Eq. (1.70) back.

5 | Thomas-Wigner rotation [42, 43]:

Remember that for **collinear** addition of velocities the concatenation of two boosts yields another boost: \( \Lambda_{\vec{u}} \Lambda_{\vec{v}} = \Lambda_{\vec{u} \oplus \vec{v}} \) [recall Eq. (1.57)].

As a straightforward (but tedious) calculation using two general boosts Eq. (1.75) shows, this is **not** true in general: \( \Lambda_{\vec{u}} \Lambda_{\vec{v}} \neq \Lambda_{\vec{u} \oplus \vec{v}} \) with \( \vec{u} = \vec{u} \oplus \vec{v} \). Rather one finds

\[
\Lambda_{\vec{u}} \Lambda_{\vec{v}} = \Lambda_{\vec{u} \oplus \vec{v}} \Lambda_{R(\vec{u}, \vec{v})}
\] (2.19)

with the **Thomas-Wigner rotation** \( R(\vec{u}, \vec{v}) \in SO(3) \) (we omit the explicit form of \( R(\vec{u}, \vec{v}) \) here).

This is not in contradiction with our general addition for velocities above because there we were only interested in the velocity of a moving particle (which you can identify with the origin of its rest frame \( K'' \)); we completely ignored the axes of \( K'' \). The Thomas-Wigner rotation tells you that the concatenation of two **pure** boosts is **not** a pure boost in general.
2.4. Proper time and the twin “paradox”

1 | Time-like trajectory $\mathcal{P} \subseteq \mathcal{E}$ of a spaceship with departure $D \in \mathcal{P}$ and arrival $A \in \mathcal{P}$.
   Coordinate parametrization $\bar{x}(t)$ of $\mathcal{P}$ in system $K$ with
   \[
   \text{departure } [D]_K = (t_D, \bar{x}_D) \quad \text{and} \quad \text{arrival } [A]_K = (t_A, \bar{x}_A). \tag{2.20}
   \]

Formally, $\mathcal{P}$ is a set of coincidence classes parametrized in $K$ by the clock events $(t, \bar{x}(t))_K$:
   \[
   \mathcal{P} = \{ (t, \bar{x}(t))_K | t \in [t_D, t_A] \} \subseteq \mathcal{E}. \tag{2.21}
   \]

This suggests the formal notation $[\mathcal{P}]_K = (t, \bar{x}(t))$.

2 | Thought experiment:
   The spaceship takes a clock along and resets it to $\tau_D = \tau(t_D)$ at departure $D$.
   What is the reading $\tau_A = \tau(t_A)$ of the clock at arrival $A$?
   We assume that the clock in the spaceship is type-identical to the clocks used for inertial observers.

3 | Idea:
   Approximate the trajectory by a polygon of $N$ segments $i = 1, \ldots, N$ separated by time steps $t_i$
   (with $t_0 := t_D$ and $t_N := t_A$):
   \[
   \Delta t_i := t_{i-1} - t_i \quad \text{and} \quad \Delta \bar{x}_i := \bar{x}(t_{i-1}) - \bar{x}(t_i)
   \]

For each segment, there is an inertial frame $K'$ with a $t'$-axis that follows the spacetime segment
(because all segments are time-like!). This is the instantaneous rest frame of the
spaceship where the clock in the spaceship and the origin clock of $K'$ are at the same place and
at rest relative to each other. Since the clocks are type-identical, the time $\Delta \tau_i$ accumulated
by the spaceship clock on this segment is identical to the time $\Delta t_i'$ elapsed for the origin.
clock of $K'$ on this segment: $\Delta t_i = \Delta t'_i$. This time is equal to the spacetime interval $(\Delta s'_i)^2 = (c\Delta t'_i)^2 - 0$ because the origin clock is at rest in $K'$ (so that $\Delta \vec{x}'_i = \vec{0}$). But remember that the spacetime interval $(\Delta s'_i)^2$ is Lorentz invariant so that we can calculate the same number in any inertial system: $(\Delta s'_i)^2 = (\Delta s_i)^2 = (c\Delta t_i)^2 - (\Delta \vec{x}_i)^2$.

In summary, on the $i$th interval, the spaceship clock accumulates the time

$$\Delta t_i = \frac{\Delta s_i}{c} := \frac{\sqrt{\Delta s_i^2}}{c} = \frac{\sqrt{(c\Delta t_i)^2 - (\Delta \vec{x}_i)^2}}{c} = \Delta t_i \sqrt{1 - \frac{(\Delta \vec{x}_i/c)^2}{c^2}}$$  \hspace{1cm} (2.22)

The above chain of arguments provided us with a physical interpretation for the Lorentz invariant spacetime interval $(\Delta s)^2 > 0$ of time-like separated events: It measures (up to a factor of $c$) the time accumulated by an inertial (= unaccelerated) clock that takes part in both events.

Continuum limit $N \to \infty$ $(v(t) := |\vec{v}(t)| = |\dot{\vec{x}}(t)|)$:

$$d\tau = \frac{ds}{c} = dt \sqrt{1 - \frac{\dot{x}(t)^2}{c^2}} \iff \frac{dt}{d\tau} = \gamma_v(t)$$  \hspace{1cm} (2.23)

Note that this is just an infinitesimal version of the time-dilation formula Eq. (2.14) with $\Delta t \to dt$ and $\Delta t_0 \to d\tau$.

Since $(\Delta s)^2 = (\Delta s')^2$ is Lorentz invariant:

$$K \xrightarrow{\Delta} K': \quad dt \sqrt{1 - \frac{\dot{x}(t)^2}{c^2}} = \frac{ds}{c} = \frac{ds'}{c'} = dt' \sqrt{1 - \frac{\dot{x}'(t')^2}{c'^2}}$$  \hspace{1cm} (2.24)

You can check this also explicitly using the Lorentz transformation Eq. (1.75).
iii | → \( \Delta \tau[\mathcal{P}] \) Proper time accumulated by the spaceship clock along the trajectory \( \mathcal{P} \):

\[
\Delta \tau[\mathcal{P}] = \lim_{N \to \infty} \sum_{i=1}^{N} \Delta \tau_i = \int_{\mathcal{P}} \frac{ds}{c} = \int_{t_D}^{t_A} dt \sqrt{1 - \frac{\dot{x}(t)^2}{c^2}} = \sqrt{1 - \frac{\dot{x}(t)^2}{c^2}} \int_{t_D}^{t_A} dt
\]

(2.25)

- As constructed, the proper time \( \Delta \tau[\mathcal{P}] \) of a time-like trajectory \( \mathcal{P} \), parametrized by \( \mathbf{x}(t) \) for \( t \in [t_0, t_f] \), is the time elapsed by a clock that follows this trajectory in spacetime.
- \( \Delta \tau[\mathcal{P}] \) is valid for accelerated clocks.
- In general, special relativity can described the physics of accelerated objects as long as the description of the process is given in an inertial coordinate system (as is the case here).
- The right-most expression in Eq. (2.25) yields the same result in all inertial systems \( K \) [recall Eq. (2.24)]. This is why \( \tau[\mathcal{P}] \) is a function of the event trajectory \( \mathcal{P} \) and not its coordinate parametrization \( \mathbf{x}(t) \). This is important: It tells us that all inertial observers will agree on the reading of the spaceship clock \( \tau_A \) at arrival \( A \) (although their parametrization \( \mathbf{x}(t) \) may look different).
- Note that since \( \mathbf{x}(t) \) is assumed to be time-like, it is \( \forall t \colon |\dot{x}(t)| < c \) such that the radicand is always non-negative.
- \( \tau[\mathcal{P}] \) is a functional of the trajectory \( \mathcal{P} \); this is why we use square-brackets.

4 | Which trajectory \( \mathcal{P}^* \) between the two events \( D \) and \( A \) maximizes the proper time \( \Delta \tau ? \)

i | \( D \) and \( A \) are time-like separated \( \Rightarrow \) \( \exists \) Inertial system \( K' = K(D, A) \) with

\[
[D]_{K'} = (t'_D = 0, \mathbf{x}'_D = \bar{0}) \quad \text{and} \quad [A]_{K'} = (t'_A, \mathbf{x}'_A = \bar{0})
\]

That is, without loss of generality, we can Lorentz transform into an inertial system where the two events happen at the same location (and by translations we can assume that this location is the origin \( \bar{0} \) and that the coordinate time is \( t'_D = 0 \) at \( D \)). We label the time and space coordinate in \( K' \) by \( t' \) and \( \mathbf{x}' \). Because of the relativity principle \( SR \), \( K' \) is as good as any system to describe events.

ii | Time of an arbitrary path \( \mathcal{P} \ni D, A \) with \( [\mathcal{P}]_{K'} = (t', \mathbf{x}'(t')) \):

\[
\Delta \tau[\mathcal{P}] = \int_{t'_D}^{t'_A} dt' \sqrt{1 - \left( \frac{\dot{x}'(t')^2}{c^2} \right)} \leq \int_{t'_D}^{t'_A} dt' = t'_A - t'_D = \Delta \tau[\mathcal{P}^*]
\]

(2.27)
Here $P^*$ is the trajectory between $D$ and $A$ that is parametrized by the constant function $\vec{x}(t') = 0$ in $K'$. In other inertial systems, this trajectory will not be constant; however, it is inertial, i.e., $P^*$ is described by a trajectory between $D$ and $A$ with uniform velocity.

Check this by applying a Lorentz transformation to the coordinates $(t', \vec{0})_{K'}$.

→ Clocks that travel along the inertial trajectory $P^*$ between $D$ and $A$ collect the largest proper time $\tau^* = \Delta \tau[P^*]$.

Collecting the “largest time” means that the these clocks run the fastest.

5 | It is important to let this result sink in:

Let $K'$ be the rest frame of earth (which is located in the origin $0$) and consider two twins of age $\tau_D$:

- Twin $S$ departs with a spaceship at $D$, flies away from earth, turns around and returns to earth at $A$. Twin $S$ therefore follows a trajectory similar to $P_2$ in the sketches above.
- Twin $E$ stays on Earth. He follows the inertial trajectory $P^*$ in the sketches above.

We just proved above:

$$\langle \text{Age of Twin S at A} \rangle = \Delta \tau[P_2] + \tau_D < \Delta \tau[P^*] + \tau_D = \langle \text{Age of Twin E at A} \rangle$$

This is the famous Twin “paradox”: Twin $S$ aged less than Twin $E$.

6 | Why there is no paradox:

- If you don’t see why the above result should be paradoxical:
  Good! Move along. Nothing to see here! 😊
- Why one could conclude that the above result is paradoxical (= logically inconsistent):
  - From the view of Twin $E$, Twin $S$ speeds around quickly, thus time-dilation tells him that Twin $S$ should age slower. And indeed, when Twin $S$ returns, he actually didn’t age as much.
  - Now, you conclude, due to the relativity principle $SR$, we could also take the perspective of Twin $S$ (i.e., our system of reference is now attached to the spaceship). Then Twin $S$ would conclude that time-dilation makes Twin $E$ (who now, together with earth, speeds around quickly) age more slowly. But this does not match up with the above result that, when both twins meet again at $A$, Twin $S$ is the younger one! Paradox!

The resolution is quite straightforward:

The invocation of the relativity principle $SR$ in the last point is not admissible! Remember that $SR$ only makes claims about the equivalence of inertial systems. Now have a look at the trajectory $P_2$ of the spaceship again: it is clearly accelerated and cannot be inertial. And that there is at least a period where the spaceship (and Twin $S$) is accelerating is a necessity for Twin $S$ to return to Twin $E$ (at least in flat spacetimes, but not so in curved ones [44])! This implies that the reunion of both twins at $A$ requires at least one of them to not stay in an inertial system. This breaks the symmetry between the two twins and explains why the result can be (and is) asymmetric.

- ❗ For historical (and anthropocentric) reasons, the “twin paradox” is called a “paradox.” We stick to this term because we have to – and not because it is appropriate name. The term “paradox” suggests an intrinsic inconsistency of relativity. As we explained above: This is not the case. All “paradoxes” in relativity are a consequence of unjustified, seemingly “intuitive” reasoning. The root cause is almost always an inappropriate, vague notion of “absolute simultaneity” that cannot be operationalized.
An overview on different geometric approaches to rationalize the phenomenon can be found in Ref. [45].

Below are two widely used spacetime diagrams of an idealized version where Twin S changes inertial systems only once from $S_D$ to $S_A$ halfway through the journey at $R$. You can think of this as an instantaneous acceleration at the kink. Note, however, that the acceleration itself is dynamically irrelevant for the arguments; it is only important that the inertial frames in which Twin S departs and returns are not the same:

- In the left diagram the *slices of simultaneity* in the two systems $S_D$ and $S_A$ are drawn. As predicted by time-dilation (and mandated by SR), Twin S observes the clocks of Twin E to run *slower* during his “inertial periods”, i.e., while he stays in a single inertial system. However, the moment Twin S “jumps” from $S_D$ to $S_A$ at $R$, his notion of simultaneity changes instantaneously: In $S_D$, $R$ and $R_D$ are simultaneous; in $S_A$, however, $R$ and $R_A$ are simultaneous. Due to this jump, the record of Twin S contains now a temporal gap for events on earth (highlighted interval). It is this “missing” time interval that overcompensates the slower running clocks on earth (as observed from $S_D$ and $S_A$) and makes Twin S conclude that Twin E ages faster (in agreement with the actual outcome of the experiment).

If you wonder what happened to the (missing) observations of events in the triangle $R_A R R_D$: there is a nice explanation in Schutz [2]. (The bottom line is that Twin S constructs a bad coordinate system by stopping the recording of events in system $S_D$ when he reaches $R$.)

- In the right diagram, we draw *light signals* (“pings”) of an earth-bound clock next to Twin E sent to Twin S. Twin S receives these signals and measures their period. This idealizes how Twin S sees (not observes!) the clocks ticking on earth (and, by proxy, how fast Twin E ages). It is important to understand the difference between this “seeing” and our operational definition of *observing* (using the contraption called an ← inertial system, as used in the left diagram). As demonstrated by the diagram, Twin S first sees the clock on earth ticking *slower*; but when he turns around at $R$, the clocks on earth (apparently) speed up significantly. In the end, this speedup overcompensates for the slowdown during the first part of the journey so that Twin S again arrives at the (correct) conclusion that Twin E ages faster. Note that the speedup of the earth-bound clock seen by Twin S during the second half of his journey does not contradict time-dilation.
because *seeing* is not *observing*. This is similar to the ↑ Penrose-Terrell effect in that a genuine relativistic effect (here: time-dilation) is distorted by an additional “imaging effect” due to the finite speed of light.

- In our careful derivation above, we not only showed that Twin S ages less than Twin E; we also showed that this conclusion is *independent* of the inertial observer! Thus we know that there will be *no dispute* about the different ages between different inertial observers.

- The Hafele-Keating experiment [40,41] and the muon decay experiments [38], mentioned previously in the context of time-dilation, are experimental confirmations of the twin “paradox.” So our theoretical prediction above (that Twin S ages less than Twin E) is experimentally confirmed. End of discussion.

- Our derivation of the accumulated proper time along trajectories in spacetime is both mathematically sound and experimentally confirmed. This qualifies *special relativity* as a successfull theory of physics. *Operationally* there is nothing to complain about: the theory does its job to produce quantitative predictions of real phenomena. So why do so many people (physicists included) – despite the various efforts to visualize the phenomenon – have this nagging feeling of dissatisfaction that they cannot get rid of? The reason, so I would argue, is the human brain and its proclivity to inject concepts of absolute simultaneity into its model building. This qualifies the historical overemphasis of the twin “paradox” as a *meta problem*: The question to study is not how to “solve” the twin “paradox” (as we showed above, there is nothing to solve); the question to study is why so many people thought (and still think) that there is a problem in the first place. This *meta problem* is an actual problem to study; but it falls into the domain of cognitive science, and not physics!

**Two lessons to be learned from this:**

You can live longer than your inertial-system-dwelling peers by changing inertial systems (= accelerating) at least once.

The mere fact that our universe *really* allows for this (at least in theory) makes it much more interesting than its boring alternative: a Galilean universe.

and

Phenomena like length contraction and the twin “paradox” are physically *real*. Their “paradoxical” flavor is a phenomenon of human cognition, not physics.

This is why we put “paradox” always in quotes in the context of relativity.
3. Mathematical Tools I: Tensor Calculus

In this chapter we introduce tensor calculus (↑ Ricci calculus) for general coordinate transformations \( \varphi \) (which will be useful both in special relativity and general relativity). The coordinate transformations \( \varphi \) relevant for special relativity are Lorentz transformations (and therefore linear) which simplifies expressions often significantly (→ Chapter 4). However, this special feature of coordinate transformations in special relativity is not crucial for the discussions in this chapter.

Goal: Construct Lorentz covariant (form invariant) equations (for mechanics, electrodynamics, quantum mechanics)

Question: How to do this systematically?

Note that (we suspect that) Maxwell equations are Lorentz covariant. Clearly this is not obvious and requires some work to prove; we say that the Lorentz covariance is not manifest: it is there, but it is hard to see. Conversely, without additional tools that make Lorentz covariance more obvious, it is borderline impossible to construct Lorentz covariant equations from scratch (which we must do for mechanics and quantum mechanics!).

We are therefore looking for a “toolkit” that provides us with elementary “building blocks” and a set of rules that can be used to construct Lorentz covariant equations. This toolbox is known as tensor calculus or ↑ Ricci calculus; the “building blocks” are tensor fields and the rules for their combination are given by index contractions, covariant derivatives, etc. The rules are such that the expressions (equations) you can build with tensor fields are guaranteed to be Lorentz covariant. This implies in particular that if you can rewrite any given set of equations (like the Maxwell equations) in terms of these rules, you automatically show that the equations were Lorentz covariant all along. We then say that the Lorentz covariance is manifest: one glance at the equation is enough to check it.

Later, in general relativity, our goal will be to construct equations that are invariant under arbitrary (differentiable) coordinate transformations (not just global Lorentz transformations). Luckily, the formalism we introduce in this chapter is powerful enough to allow for the construction of such → general covariant equations as well. This is why we keep the formalism in this chapter as general as possible, and specialize it to special relativity in the next Chapter 4. The discussion below is therefore already a preparation for general relativity; it is based on Schröder [1] and complemented by Carroll [46].

3.1. Manifolds, charts and coordinate transformations

1 | \( D \)-dimensional Manifold

= Topological space that locally “looks like” \( D \)-dimensional Euclidean space \( \mathbb{R}^D \):
In relativity, the manifold of interest is the set of coincidence classes $\mathcal{E}$; it makes up the $D = 4$-dimensional manifold we call spacetime.

A space that “locally looks like $\mathbb{R}^D$” is formalized as a topological space that is locally homeomorphic to Euclidean space $\mathbb{R}^D$. The structure defined in this way is then called a topological manifold.

### Differentiable Manifolds:

We want to formalize this idea and introduce additional structure to the manifold so that we can differentiate functions on it:

#### i. Coordinate system / Chart $(U, u)$:

\[
\begin{align*}
  u : & \quad U \subseteq M \to u(U) \subseteq \mathbb{R}^D \\
  u^{-1} : & \quad u(U) \subseteq \mathbb{R}^D \to U \subseteq M
\end{align*}
\]

$U \subseteq M$: open subset of $M$; $u$ and $u^{-1}$ are continuous and $u \circ u^{-1} = 1$.

$U = M$ is allowed. This is the situation we assumed so far in special relativity:

Our inertial coordinate systems cover all of spacetime $M = \mathcal{E}$.

#### ii. Two charts $(U, v)$ and $(V, v)$ and let $U \cap V \neq 0$:

\[
\begin{align*}
  \varphi : & \quad v \circ u^{-1} : u(U \cap V) \to v(U \cap V) \\
  \varphi^{-1} : & \quad u \circ v^{-1} : v(U \cap V) \to u(U \cap V)
\end{align*}
\]

$\varphi$: Coordinate transformation / Transition map

$U = M = V$ and $U \cap V = M$ is allowed. This is the situation we assume so far in special relativity where $(U = \mathcal{E}, u)$ and $(V = \mathcal{E}, v)$ correspond to the coordinate systems of two different inertial systems. The coordinate transformation $\varphi$ would then be a Lorentz transformation (defined on $U \cap V = \mathcal{E}$).

#### iii. Atlas := Family of charts $(U_i, u_i)_{i \in I}$ such that $M = \bigcup_{i \in I} U_i$

This definition of an atlas formalizes the notion of an atlas in real life (of the book variety): It contains many charts that, taken together, cover the complete manifold (typically earth). The different charts (on different pages of the book) all overlap on their edges such that you can draw any route on earth without gaps.

All $\varphi, \varphi^{-1}$ differentiable $\to M$: Differentiable Manifold
• $\varphi$ and $\varphi^{-1}$ are maps from $\mathbb{R}^D$ to itself. It is therefore clear what “differentiable” means.

• In mathematics one is of course more precise about the degree of differentiability of the transition functions, and subsequently assigns this degree to the manifold. For example, if all coordinate transformations are infinitely often differentiable (= smooth), the manifold is called a smooth manifold. We are sloppy in this regard: For us all functions are differentiable as often as we need them to be.

In relativity we will only be concerned with differentiable manifolds.

3.2. Scalars

4. Scalar (field) := Function $\phi : M \rightarrow \mathbb{R}/\mathbb{C}$

• If $\phi$ maps to $\mathbb{R}/\mathbb{C}$, we call $\phi$ a real (complex) scalar field.

• $\text{!} \phi$ is a geometric object because it only depends on the manifold itself. It does not rely on charts/coordinates and does not depend on a particular set of charts you might choose to parametrize the manifold. The notion of a mathematical object to be “geometric in nature” or “independent of the choice of coordinates” is absolutely crucial for the understanding of general relativity. The reason why these “geometric objects” are so important for physics is the following insight that took physicists (including Einstein) a long time to fully comprehend and implement mathematically:

Coordinates (charts) do not represent physical entities.
They are (useful) “mathematical auxiliary structures.”

• One reason why it is so hard for us to grasp and implement the “physical irrelevance” of coordinates is, so I believe, that the first (and often only) coordinates we encounter in school are Cartesian coordinates. They are particularly intuitive because they are simply the distances of a point to some coordinate axes. Distances are a geometric property and physically relevant
(you can measure them with rods); they are not the invention of mathematicians. This makes students draw the (wrong) conclusion that coordinates in general have intrinsic physical meaning. The problem is that coordinates are inventions of mathematicians; they do not share the ontological status of physical quantities like lengths etc. To undo this misconception is key to understand general relativity (→ much later).

• Since both \( M \) and \( \mathbb{R}/\mathbb{C} \) are topological spaces, it makes sense to ask whether (or require that) \( \phi \) is continuous. It does not make sense to ask whether \( \phi \) is differentiable (and what is derivative is) because, in general, \( M \) does neither come with a notion of “distance” between two points in \( M \) nor can you add or subtract points (\( M \) does not have to be a metric space and/or a linear space). So an expression like \( \partial_x \Phi(p) \) does not make sense (→ below)!

We just declared that coordinates are “not physical.” The problem is that without coordinates it is really hard (at least for physicists) to do actual calculations with the geometric objects we are interested in (for example: compute derivatives). In addition, comparing theoretical predictions with experimental observations typically requires some sort of coordinate representation. Our inertial systems, for example, are elaborate measurement devices that produce a specific coordinate representation of the observed events.

This is why we always assume in the following that we have one (or more) charts that allow us to parametrize a (part of the) manifold, and then express the geometric quantities as functions of these coordinates. This means for the scalar field:

< Two overlapping charts \( u \) and \( v \):

\[
\Phi(x) := \phi(u^{-1}(x)) \quad x \in u(U \cap V) \tag{3.3a}
\]

\[
\hat{\Phi}(\tilde{x}) := \phi(v^{-1}(\tilde{x})) \quad \tilde{x} \in v(U \cap V) \tag{3.3b}
\]

\( \Phi \) and \( \hat{\Phi} \) are functions on (subsets of) \( \mathbb{R}^D \); in contrast to \( \phi \) which is a function on the manifold \( M \). In an abuse of notation, some authors do not make this distinction and write \( \phi \) and \( \hat{\phi} \) instead.

\[
\hat{\Phi}(\tilde{x}) = \Phi(x) \quad \text{for} \quad \tilde{x} = \varphi(x) \quad \text{with} \quad \varphi = v \circ u^{-1} . \tag{3.4}
\]

Note that \( \hat{\Phi}(\tilde{x}) \overset{\text{def}}{=} \phi(p) \overset{\text{def}}{=} \Phi(x) \) with \( u^{-1}(x) = p = v^{-1}(\tilde{x}) \).

• In relativity we typically work in a particular chart (coordinate system). Thus we write our fields as functions of coordinates (and not points on the manifold); e.g., when working with scalars, we typically work with \( \Phi \) (and not \( \phi \)).

• ! The special transformation of a field Eq. (3.4) (given as function of coordinates) tells us that it actually encodes a geometric, chart-independent function \( \phi \) (given as function of points on the manifold). This idea will be prevalent throughout this chapter and is the basis of our modern formulation of relativity: We work with functions that depend on specific coordinates (and therefore change when we transition to another chart); however, these functions satisfy certain transformation laws [like Eq. (3.4)] that guarantee that they actually encode geometric, chart-independent objects (which is what physics is about).

• As a function of coordinates, scalar fields are those fields the values of which do not change under coordinate transformations. A typical example would be the temperature as a function of position: When you move your coordinate system, the temperature of a particular point in space still is the same (only your coordinates of this particular point have changed!). This is exactly what Eq. (3.4) demands.
Note that being a scalar (field) does not simply mean “being a number.” The $z$-component of the electric field strength $E_z(x)$, for example, assigns a number to every point $x$; however, it does not transform like Eq. (3.4) under coordinate transformations. (Do you see why? What happens to $E_z$ if you rotate your coordinate system?)

- In the literature, you will find the notation $\hat{\Phi} = \Phi$ to characterize scalars. This does not mean $\Phi(x) = \Phi(y)$ for all $x, y \in \mathbb{R}^D$ (which characterizes form-invariance or functional equivalence), but rather $\hat{\Phi}(\tilde{x}) = \Phi(\tilde{x})$ (which characterizes scalar fields). Note that with $x = \varphi^{-1}(\tilde{x})$ it follows $\hat{\Phi}(\tilde{x}) = \Phi(\varphi^{-1}(\tilde{x}))$ such that the function $\hat{\Phi}$ is typically not functionally equivalent to $\Phi$. This ambiguity is the price we have to pay if we want to express geometric objects in terms of coordinates.

- Since $\Phi : \mathbb{R}^D \to \mathbb{R}$, it is well-defined what “differentiability” of $\Phi$ means. So expressions like $\frac{\partial \Phi(x)}{\partial x}$ make sense now (if $\Phi$ is differentiable). One then defines that $\phi$ is differentiable on $\mathcal{M}$ iff $\Phi$ is differentiable for all charts of an atlas of $\mathcal{M}$.

### 3.3. Covariant and contravariant vector fields

Are scalar fields the only geometric objects that can be defined on a manifold? The answer is no, there are many more! And these objects are not just toys for mathematicians: they are necessary to represent physical quantities like the electromagnetic field. Unfortunately, the definition of these quantities is not so straightforward as for scalars. We will not be mathematically precise in our discussion; however, it is important to understand the conceptual ideas:

- The tangent space $T_p \mathcal{M}$ at $p \in \mathcal{M}$ is the mathematical formalization of the intuitive concept of the plane $\mathbb{R}^2$ that you can attach tangentially at any point $p$ of a two-dimensional manifold. The problem with this picture is that it only works if you embed the manifold $\mathcal{M}$ into a higher-dimensional Euclidean space. Mathematically, such an approach is not satisfying because it presupposes additional structure to characterize the manifold (which, as it turns out, is not needed). Physically, the approach is also problematic: The manifold we are interested in is all of spacetime $\mathcal{E}$. But $\mathcal{E}$ is all there is, it is (to the best of our knowledge) not embedded into anything. It is therefore crucial that we can work with manifolds “stand alone”, without assuming any embedding into a higher-dimensional space. The price we have to pay is that tangent vectors must be defined, rather abstractly, as directional derivative operators.
• There is a different tangent space $T_p M$ at every point $p \in M$; these vector spaces all have the same dimension $D$ (like the manifold) and are therefore all isomorphic. However, without additional structure, there is no natural connection (isomorphism) between these different vector spaces at different points. The disjoint union of all tangent spaces is called the **tangent bundle** $TM$.

• Mathematically, the vectors in the tangent space can be defined as equivalence classes of smooth curves through $p$ with the same derivative (with respect to their parametrization) at $p$. This equivalence class corresponds to a particular directional derivative that one can apply to smooth functions on the manifold at $p$. We do not need this abstract “bootstrapping procedure” for $T_p M$ in the following.

$\langle$ Chart $(U, u)$ with coordinates $x = (x^0, x^1, \ldots, x^D)$ $\rangle$

$\Rightarrow$ *Coordinate basis* $\left\{ \partial_i \equiv \frac{\partial}{\partial x^i} \right\}$ for $T_p M$

Recall that partial derivatives are special kinds of directional derivatives (namely in the direction where you keep all but one coordinate fixed). You can therefore think of $\partial_i$ as the tangent vector at $p \in M$ that points into the $x^i$-direction mapped by $u^{-1}$ onto the manifold.
7 | Since $T_p M$ is a vector space for each point $p$ of the manifold $M$, we can define fields on $M$ that assign to each point $p$ a tangent vector:

**Vector field**: $A(p) = \sum_{i=1}^{D} A^i(x) \partial_i$ with $x = u(p)$

At every point $p \in M$ the vector field yields a tangent vector $A(p) = \sum_{i} A^i(u(p)) \partial_i \in T_p M$.

8 | **Coordinate transformation** $\bar{x} = \varphi(x) \Leftrightarrow x = \varphi^{-1}(\bar{x})$

→ Chain rule:

$$\frac{\partial}{\partial x^i} = \sum_{k=1}^{D} \frac{\partial x^k}{\partial \bar{x}^i} \frac{\partial}{\partial x^k} \quad (3.5)$$

→ For $x = u(p)$ and $\bar{x} = v(p)$ this is a *basis change* on the tangent space $T_p M$ from one coordinate basis $\{\partial_i\}$ to another coordinate basis $\{\bar{\partial}_i\}$ via the (invertible) matrix $\frac{\partial x^k}{\partial \bar{x}^i}$.

9 | **Vector field** $A$ and expand it in different coordinate bases:

$$\sum_{i} A^i(x) \partial_i = A(p) = \sum_{i} \bar{A}^i(\bar{x}) \bar{\partial}_i \quad (3.6)$$

with $x = u(p)$ and $\bar{x} = v(p)$.

- ![The vector field $A$ is a geometric object, just as the scalar field $\phi$ was. That it does not depend on the chosen chart is the statement of this equation.
- You learned this (with different notation and without the $x/p$-dependency) in your first course on linear algebra: Given a vector space $V$, a vector $\vec{v} \in V$, and a basis $\{\vec{e}_i\}$ with $V = \text{span} \{\vec{e}_i\}$, you can encode the vector in a basis-dependent set of numbers $v_i$ called components via linear combination: $\vec{v} = \sum_i v_i \vec{e}_i$. The same vector can be encoded by different components $v'_i$ in a different basis $\{\vec{e}'_i\}$: $\vec{v} = \sum_i v'_i \vec{e}'_i$. In our terminology, the vector $\vec{v}$ is a “geometric object” that does not depend on your choice of basis; only its components do. In this context, the gist of the story is that $\vec{v}$ represents something physical (like the velocity of a particle). The components $v_i$ do so only indirectly because they depend on your choice of the basis $\{\vec{e}_i\}$. And this choice does not bear any physical meaning.

Eq. (3.6) $\rightarrow$

$$A = \sum_{i} A^i(x) \partial_i = \sum_{i} \bar{A}^i(\bar{x}) \bar{\partial}_i \quad (3.6)$$

$$\Rightarrow \quad A = \sum_{i} A^i(x) \partial_i = \sum_{i} \bar{A}^i(\bar{x}) \bar{\partial}_i \quad (3.7)$$
This motivates the following definition (we replace $x \leftrightarrow \tilde{x}$ and the indices $i \leftrightarrow k$):

\begin{equation}
\text{Contravariant vector field } \{A^i(x)\} \iff \tilde{A}^i(\tilde{x}) = \sum_{k=1}^{D} \frac{\partial \tilde{x}^i}{\partial x^k} A^k(x)
\end{equation}

(3.8)

Contravariant vector (field) $\rightarrow$ Superscript indices!

This is a convention which relates syntax and semantics and is at the heart of tensor calculus. The idea is that whenever you are given a collection of fields $A^i(x)$, you immediately know that they transform like Eq. (3.8) under coordinate transformations. (Unfortunately, there are exceptions to this rule, e.g., the \rightarrow Christoffel symbols.)

- $\uparrow$ Not every $D$-tuple of fields transforms as Eq. (3.8). To deserve the name “contravariant vector (field),” (and superscript indices) one has to check this transformation law explicitly!
- The rationale of Eq. (3.8) is the same as that of Eq. (3.4): Whenever we find a family of fields that transform under coordinate transformations as Eq. (3.8), we immediately know that together they encode a geometric, chart-independent object on the manifold that can be used to describe a physical quantity.

11 | (Counter)Examples:

- $\uparrow$ Only linear coordinate transformations: $\tilde{x} = \varphi(x) = \Lambda x$

$\uparrow$ Coordinate functions $X^i(x) := x^i$ as fields:

\begin{equation}
\frac{\tilde{X}^i(\tilde{x})}{\tilde{x}^i} = \sum_{k=1}^{D} \Lambda^i_k X^k(x) = \sum_{k=1}^{D} \frac{\partial \tilde{x}^i}{\partial x^k} X^k(x)
\end{equation}

(3.9)

$\rightarrow$ Coordinate functions are contravariant vectors for linear transition maps.

This is useful in special relativity because there we only consider global Lorentz transformations (which are linear).

- $\uparrow$ $D$ scalar fields $\Phi^i(x)$ ($i = 1, \ldots, D$):

For general $\tilde{x} = \varphi(x)$: $\tilde{\Phi}^i(\tilde{x}) = \Phi^i(x) \neq \sum_{k=1}^{D} \frac{\partial \tilde{x}^i}{\partial x^k} \Phi^k(x)$

(3.10)

$\rightarrow \{\Phi^i(x)\}$ are not components of a contravariant vector field.

- You see: not every collection of $D$ fields is a vector!
- $\uparrow$ $\delta^i_k$ is the Kronecker symbol: $\delta^i_k = 1$ for $i = k$ and $\delta^i_k = 0$ for $i \neq k$. The notation $\delta_{ik}$ is not used in tensor calculus $\rightarrow$ later.

12 | Reminder: $\uparrow$ Dual spaces
i | Remember: Linear algebra

Consider the vector space \( V = \mathbb{R}^D \) and a column vector \( \vec{v} = (v_1, \ldots, v_D)^T \in V \) (a 1 \( \times \) \( D \)-matrix). Let \( \vec{u}^T = (u_1, \ldots, u_D) \) be a row vector (a \( D \times 1 \)-matrix). We can then perform a matrix multiplication between the vectors and interpret it as a linear map \( \vec{u}^T \) acting on the vector \( \vec{v} \) and producing a number:

\[
\vec{u}^T : \vec{v} \in V \mapsto \vec{u}^T \cdot \vec{v} = (u_1 \ldots u_D) \begin{pmatrix} v_1 \\ \vdots \\ v_D \end{pmatrix} = \sum_i w_i v_i \in \mathbb{R}.
\] (3.11)

In mathematical parlance \( \vec{u}^T \) is a linear functional on the vector space \( V \). All linear functionals of this form make up another vector space \( V^* \) called the dual space of \( V \). You can think of \( V^* \) as the vector space of all \( D \)-dimensional row vectors and \( V \) as the vector space of all \( D \)-dimensional column vectors. The elements of the dual space are referred to as \( \dagger \) covectors.

ii | Remember: Quantum mechanics

In quantum mechanics, the state of a physical system is described by state vectors in some Hilbert space \( \mathcal{H} \) (which is a special kind of vector space). Vectors in this space are written as \( \dagger \) kets: \( |\Psi\rangle \in \mathcal{H} \). You can produce a \( \dagger \) bra \( \langle \Psi | = |\Psi\rangle^\dagger \) by applying the complex transpose operator. As in the example above, the bra \( \langle \Psi | \) is a covector from the dual space \( \mathcal{H}^* \); indeed, it acts as a linear functional on state vectors via the inner product of the Hilbert space:

\[
\langle \Psi | \Phi \rangle := \langle \Psi | \Phi \rangle \in \mathbb{C}.
\] (3.12)

This is the gist of the famous \( \dagger \) Dirac bra-ket notation.

iii | Hopefully these examples convinced you that the dual space is just as important and useful as the vector space itself.

\( \rightarrow \) Dual space of the tangent space \( T_pM \)?

Given a coordinate basis \( \{ \partial_i \} \in T_pM \) of a vector space, there is a standard way to define a basis of the dual space \( T^*_pM \):

\( \dagger \) Dual basis \( \{ dx^i \} \) with

\[
dx^i(\partial_j) := \delta^i_j = \frac{\partial x^i}{\partial x^j}
\] (3.13)

\( \rightarrow \) \( \{ dx^i \} \) is a basis of the \( \dagger \) Cotangent space \( T^*_pM \)

\( T^*_pM \) is the dual space of \( T_pM \); it is common to write \( T^*_pM \) and not \( (T_pM)^* \).

13 | Since \( T^*_pM \) is just another vector space for each point \( p \) of the manifold \( M \), we can again define fields on \( M \) that map into this space:

\( \dagger \) Covector field: \( B(p) = \sum_{i=1}^D B_i(x) \, dx^i \) with \( x = u(p) \)

14 | Just like the coordinate basis, the dual coordinate basis depends on the chart and changes under coordinate transformations:

\( \left \langle \right \rangle \) Coordinate transformation \( \tilde{x} = \varphi(x) \):

\[
d\tilde{x}^i = \sum_{k=1}^D \frac{\partial \tilde{x}^i}{\partial x^k} \, dx^k
\] (3.14)
• Check that this is the correct transformation for the dual coordinate basis:

\[
d\tilde{x}^i(\partial_j) = \left[ \sum_k \frac{\partial \tilde{x}^i}{\partial x^k} \, dx^k \right] \left( \sum_l \frac{\partial x^l}{\partial \tilde{x}^j} \, \partial_l \right) = \sum_{k,l} \frac{\partial \tilde{x}^i}{\partial x^k} \frac{\partial x^l}{\partial \tilde{x}^j} \, d\tilde{x}^k(\partial_l) = \sum_k \frac{\partial \tilde{x}^i}{\partial x^k} \, \partial_k = \delta_j^i \quad \odot \tag{3.15}\]

• You might recognize Eq. (3.14): This is simply the rule to compute the total differential of the function \( \tilde{x} = \varphi(x) \). This is no coincidence and explains why we use the differential notation \( dx^i \) for the dual vectors: The objects \( dx^i \) that we physicists like to illustrate as “infinitesimal shifts” in \( x^i \) are actually linear functionals (↑ 1-forms).

Now we can play the same game on \( T^*_p M \) as before on \( T_p M \):

\(<\) Covector field \( B \) and expand it in different dual coordinate bases:

\[
\sum_i B_i(x) \, dx^i = B(p) = \sum_i \tilde{B}_i(\tilde{x}) \, d\tilde{x}^i \quad \tag{3.16}
\]

with \( x = u(p) \) and \( \tilde{x} = v(p) \).

\<\) The covector field \( B \) is another geometric object, just as the vector field \( A \) was. That it does not depend on the chosen chart is the statement of this equation.

Eq. (3.16) \( \Rightarrow \)

\[
B = \sum_i B_i(x) \, dx^i = \sum_i \tilde{B}_i(\tilde{x}) \, d\tilde{x}^i \quad \overset{\text{Eq. (3.14)}}{=} \sum_k \left[ \sum_{i,l} \frac{\partial \tilde{x}^i}{\partial x^k} \tilde{B}_i(\tilde{x}) \right] \, dx^k \quad \tag{3.17}
\]

This motivates the following definition (we replace \( x \leftrightarrow \tilde{x} \) and the indices \( i \leftrightarrow k \)):

\<\) \( D \)-tuple \( \{ B_i(x) \} \) of fields (in some chart with coordinates \( x \)):

\[
\bullet\text{ Covariant vector field } \{ B_i(x) \} : \Leftrightarrow \tilde{B}_i(\tilde{x}) = \sum_{k=1}^D \frac{\partial x^k}{\partial \tilde{x}^i} \, B_k(x) \quad \tag{3.18}
\]

\textbf{Covariant vector (field) \( \rightarrow \) Subscript indices!}

The rationale of Eq. (3.18) is the same as that of Eq. (3.8): Whenever we find a family of fields that transform under coordinate transformations as Eq. (3.18), we immediately know that together they encode a geometric, chart-independent object on the manifold that can be used to describe a physical quantity. To indicate that this object is a\textit{ covariant} vector field, we use \textit{subscript} indices.

\<\) Example:

First, let us introduce an even shorter notation for partial derivatives: \( \Phi_{,i} \equiv \partial_i \Phi \)

Following our index convention, the lower index in these expressions is only warranted if the field transforms as a covariant vector field according to Eq. (3.18). Let us check this:

\[
\tilde{\Phi}_{,i}(\tilde{x}) = \tilde{\partial}_i \Phi(\tilde{x}) \overset{\text{Eq. (3.4)}}{=} \sum_{k=1}^D \frac{\partial x^k}{\partial \tilde{x}^i} \, \partial \Phi(x) = \sum_{k=1}^D \frac{\partial x^k}{\partial \tilde{x}^i} \, \Phi_{,k}(x) \quad \tag{3.19}
\]
The gradient of a scalar is a covariant vector field.

18 What happens if we apply a covector field on a vector field at each point \( p \in M \)?

\[
\phi(p) := B(p)A(p) = \sum_{i,j} B_i(x)A^j(x) \frac{dx^i(\partial_j)}{\delta_j} = \sum_i A^i(x)B_i(x) =: \Phi(x)
\] (3.20)

→ \( \Phi(x) \) must be a scalar!

This is a good point to introduce a new (and very convenient) notation:

\*\* Einstein sum convention:

\[
\sum_{i=1}^{D} A^i(x)B_i(x) \equiv A^i(x)B_i(x) = A^i(x)B_i(x)
\] (3.21)

The Einstein sum convention or Einstein summation is a syntactic convention according to which a sum is automatically implied (but not written) whenever two indices show up twice in an expression and one is up (contravariant) and one down (covariant). Note that such indices are “dummy indices” in the sense that you can rename them to whatever you want (as long as you do not use the same letter for other indices already!). The sum over one co- and one contravariant index is called a contraction.

With this new notation it is straightforward to check that \( \Phi \) transforms according to Eq. (3.4) by using the transformations Eq. (3.8) and Eq. (3.18):

\[
\tilde{\Phi}(\tilde{x}) = \tilde{A}^i(\tilde{x})\tilde{B}_i(\tilde{x}) = \left[ \frac{\partial \tilde{x}^i}{\partial x^k} A^k(x) \right] \left[ \frac{\partial x^l}{\partial \tilde{x}^j} B_l(x) \right] = \frac{\partial \tilde{x}^i}{\partial x^k} \frac{\partial x^l}{\partial \tilde{x}^j} A^k(x)B_l(x) = A^i(x)B_i(x) = \Phi(x)
\] (3.22a) 

\[
= \frac{\partial \tilde{x}^i}{\partial x^k} \frac{\partial x^l}{\partial \tilde{x}^j} A^k(x)B_l(x) = A^i(x)B_i(x) = \Phi(x)
\] (3.22b)

The intermediate expression contains three sums over the colored indices (which we don’t write)!

→ The contraction of a contra- and a covariant vector field yields a scalar field.

3.4. Higher-rank tensors

You learned in your linear algebra course that two vector spaces \( V \) and \( W \) can be used to construct a new vector space \( V \otimes W \) called the \( \oplus \) tensor product. This allows us to generalize the notion of contra- and covariant vector fields to tensor fields, all of which are geometric, chart-independent objects defined on the manifold that are needed to describe physical quantities:

19 An \( \oplus \) (absolute) \( (p, q) \)-tensor (field) \( T \) of rank \( r = p + q \)

\[
T^{i_1i_2...i_p}_{j_1j_2...j_q} \equiv T^{i_1i_2...i_p}_{j_1j_2...j_q}(x) \quad \text{or} \quad T^I_J \equiv T^I_J(x), \quad (3.23)
\]

with \( \oplus \) multi-indices \( I = (i_1...i_p) \) and \( J = (j_1...j_q) \),
transforms like the tensor product of \( p \) contravariant and \( q \) covariant vector fields:

\[
\tilde{T}^{i_1 \ldots i_p}_{j_1 \ldots j_q}(\tilde{x}) = \left[ \frac{\partial \tilde{x}^{i_1}}{\partial x^{m_1}} \ldots \frac{\partial \tilde{x}^{i_p}}{\partial x^{m_p}} \right] \left[ \frac{\partial x^{n_1}}{\partial \tilde{x}^{j_1}} \ldots \frac{\partial x^{n_q}}{\partial \tilde{x}^{j_q}} \right] T^{m_1 \ldots m_p}_{n_1 \ldots n_q}(x)
\]

(3.24)

There are \( r = p + q \) sums in this transformation rule (Einstein summation!).

- \( \uparrow \) It is important that we do not write contra- and covariant indices above each other like so: \( T^i_j \) (at least not with additional knowledge about the tensor). This will become important below.

- Henceforth we always encode tensor fields by their chart-dependent components. The actual tensor field is of course chart-independent and maps each point \( p \in M \) to an element of the tensor product

\[
T_p M \otimes \cdots \otimes T_p M \otimes T^*_p M \otimes \cdots \otimes T^*_p M
\]

(3.25)

like so

\[
T(p) = \sum_{I,J} T^{i_1 \ldots i_p}_{j_1 \ldots j_q}(x) \partial_i \otimes \cdots \otimes \partial_i \otimes dx^{i_1} \otimes \cdots \otimes dx^{i_q}
\]

(3.26)

- Note that while tensors (more precisely: tensor components) are indicated by upper and lower indices (corresponding to their rank), not every object that is conventionally written with upper and lower indices does encode a tensor. For example, the transformation matrices \( \frac{\partial x^{i'}}{\partial x^m} \), which describe a basis change on \( T^*_p M \), do not encode a tensor field.

20 | Examples:

- Scalar \( \Phi(x) \) \( \rightarrow \) (0, 0)-tensor
- Contravariant vector \( A^i(x) \) \( \rightarrow \) (1, 0)-tensor
- Covariant vector \( B_i(x) \) \( \rightarrow \) (0, 1)-tensor
- Tensor product \( T^i_j(x) := A^i(x)B_j(x) \) \( \rightarrow \) (1, 1)-tensor (Check this!)

21 | Properties:

- Equality:

\[
A = B \iff \forall_{i_1 \ldots i_p} \forall_{j_1 \ldots j_q} : A^{i_1 \ldots i_p}_{j_1 \ldots j_q} = B^{i_1 \ldots i_p}_{j_1 \ldots j_q}
\]

(3.27)

- Symmetry:

\[
T \text{ (anti-)symmetric in } k \text{ and } l \iff T^{\ldots k \ldots l \ldots} = (-) T^{\ldots l \ldots k \ldots}
\]

(3.28)

Every contra- or covariant rank-2 tensor can be decomposed into a sum of symmetric and antisymmetric tensors:

\[
T_{ij} = \frac{1}{2}(T_{ij} + T_{ji}) + \frac{1}{2}(T_{ij} - T_{ji}) = T_{(ij)} + T_{[ij]}
\]

(3.29)
22 | Constructing tensors:

New tensors can be constructed from known tensors as follows (Proofs: ⇨ Problemset 4):

- **Sum of** \((p, q)\)-tensors \(A\) and \(B\) **yields** \((p, q)\)-tensor \(C\):

  \[
  C^{i_1 \ldots i_p j_1 \ldots j_q} := A^{i_1 \ldots i_p j_1 \ldots j_q} + B^{i_1 \ldots i_p j_1 \ldots j_q}
  \]
  \[
  \text{or } C^I_J := A^I_J + B^I_J
  \]

  (3.30a)

  (3.30b)

- **Product of** \((p, q)\)-tensor \(A\) and scalar \(\Phi\) **yields** \((p, q)\)-tensor \(C\):

  \[
  C^I_J := \Phi A^I_J
  \]

  (3.31)

- **Tensor product of** \((p, q)\)-tensor \(A\) and \((r, s)\)-tensor \(B\) **yields** \((p + r, q + s)\)-tensor \(C\):

  \[
  C^{IK JL} := A^{I J} B^{K L}
  \]

  (3.32)

- **Contractions:**

  Summing over a pair of contra- and covariant indices yields a tensor of rank \((p_1, q_1)\):

  \[
  A^{i_1 \ldots i_p j_1 \ldots j_q} := A^{i_1 \ldots k \ldots i_p j_1 \ldots k \ldots j_q}
  \]

  (3.33)

  The \(^*\) indicates that the index summed over on the right side is missing in the list.

  **Proof:** ⇨ Problemset 4

  A special case of a contraction (in combination with a tensor product) is the scalar obtained from a contra- and a covariant vector field above:

  \[
  \Phi = C^I_i = A^I B_i .
  \]

  (3.34)

- **Quotient theorem:**

  \[
  \overrightarrow{AB} = C \text{ tensor for all tensors } B \implies A \text{ is tensor}
  \]

  (3.35)

Here, \(\overrightarrow{AB}\) denotes (potentially multiple) contractions between indices of \(A\) and \(B\) (but not within \(A\) and \(B\)).

- As an example, rewrite an arbitrary contravariant vector \(A^I\) as \(A^I = \delta^I_j A^j\) with Kronecker symbol \(\delta^I_j\). The above theorem then implies that \(\delta^I_j\) transforms as a \((1, 1)\)-tensor (verify this using the definition!). Hence we actually should write \(\delta^I_j\) instead of \(\delta^I_j\). However, because the Kronecker symbol is symmetric in its indices, this simplified notation is allowed (⇨ later).

- Special case:

  \[
  A_{ik} B^k = C_i \text{ covector for all vectors } B^k \implies A_{ik} \text{ is } (0, 2)\text{-tensor}
  \]

  (3.36)

  **Proof:** ⇨ Problemset 4
Relative tensor are a generalization of the (absolute) tensors defined above. This generalization is useful because most of the rules for computing with tensors discussed so far carry over to relative tensors.

A \textit{relative tensor} of weight \( w \in \mathbb{Z} \) picks up an additional power \( w \) of the \textit{Jacobian determinant} under coordinate transformations:

\[
\tilde{R}^I_J(\tilde{x}) = \det \left( \frac{\partial x^I}{\partial \tilde{x}^J} \right) \frac{\partial x^N}{\partial \tilde{x}^M} R^M_N(x) \quad \text{with weight } w \in \mathbb{Z}
\]  

(3.37)

and Jacobian determinant

\[
\det \left( \frac{\partial x}{\partial \tilde{x}} \right) := \sum_{\sigma \in S_D} (-1)^\sigma \prod_{i=1}^D \frac{\partial x^i}{\partial \tilde{x}^{\sigma_j}}.
\]  

(3.38)

Here \( S_D \) is the group of permutations \( \sigma \) on \( D \) elements.

Since \( \tilde{x} = \psi(x) \) is invertible, \( x = \psi^{-1}(\tilde{x}) \), it is \( \frac{\partial \tilde{x}}{\partial x} = \left( \frac{\partial x}{\partial \tilde{x}} \right)^{-1} \) and therefore \( \det \left( \frac{\partial \tilde{x}}{\partial x} \right) = \det \left( \frac{\partial x}{\partial \tilde{x}} \right)^{-1} \).

\textbf{Examples:}

- \textit{(Absolute) tensors} \( \equiv \) Relative tensors of weight \( w = 0 \)
- \textit{Volume form}: Relative tensor of weight \( w = -1 \):

\[
d^D\tilde{x} = d^Dx \ \det \left( \frac{\partial \tilde{x}}{\partial x} \right) = d^Dx \ \det \left( \frac{\partial x}{\partial \tilde{x}} \right)^{-1}
\]  

(3.39)

Remember the rule for integration by substitution with multiple variables!

- \textit{Tensor density} \( \mathcal{L}(x) \) \( \equiv \) Relative tensor of weight \( w = +1 \) \( \rightarrow \)

\[
S = \int d^Dx \ \mathcal{L}(x) = \int d^D\tilde{x} \ \mathcal{L}(\tilde{x})
\]  

(3.40)

In this example, we assume that \( \mathcal{L}(x) \) is a \textit{scalar} tensor density such that its integral is a (absolute) \textit{scalar} quantity.

In \textit{relativistic field theories} (like electrodynamics), the \textit{Lagrangian density} \( \mathcal{L}(x) \) is a scalar tensor density such that the \( \uparrow \text{ action} \) \( S \) becomes a scalar.

- Let \( i_1, i_2, \ldots, i_D \in \{1, 2, \ldots, D\} \) and define the \textit{Levi-Civita symbol} as

\[
\varepsilon^I \equiv \varepsilon^{i_1i_2\ldots i_D} := \begin{cases} +1 & \text{I even permutation of } 1, 2, \ldots, D \\ -1 & \text{I odd permutation of } 1, 2, \ldots, D \\ 0 & \text{(at least) two indices equal} \end{cases}
\]  

(3.41)

An even (odd) permutation of \( 1, 2, \ldots, D \) is constructed by an even (odd) number of \textit{transpositions} (= exchanges of only two indices).
$$\varepsilon^I = \varepsilon^I = \det \left( \frac{\partial x^I}{\partial \tilde{x}} \right)^{+1} \frac{\partial \tilde{x}^I}{\partial x^J} \varepsilon^J$$  \hspace{1cm} (3.42)$$

$\varepsilon^I = \varepsilon^{i_1 i_2 \cdots i_D}$ is a $(D,0)$-tensor density

- $\varepsilon^I = \varepsilon^I$ is true by definition: $\varepsilon$ is a symbol defined by Eq. (3.41); this definition is independent of the coordinate system. In Eq. (3.42) we compare this trivial transformation with that of a (relative) tensor and conclude that it is equivalent to the statement that $\varepsilon^I$ transforms as a $(D,0)$-tensor density with weight $w = +1$. This knowledge is helpful in tensor calculus to construct covariant expressions that contain Levi-Civita symbols (→ below).

- To show this, note that the Levi-Civita symbol can be used to compute determinants:

$$\det \left( \frac{\partial \tilde{x}}{\partial x} \right) = \sum_{\sigma \in S_D} (-1)^\sigma \prod_{i=1}^D \frac{\partial \tilde{x}^i}{\partial x^{\sigma_i}} = \frac{\partial \tilde{x}^1}{\partial x^{i_1}} \cdots \frac{\partial \tilde{x}^D}{\partial x^{i_D}} \varepsilon^{i_1 \cdots i_D}.  \hspace{1cm} (3.43)$$

Details: ☞ Problemset 4
4. Formulation on Minkowski Space
5. Relativistic Mechanics
6. Relativistic Field Theories I: Electrodynamics
7. Relativistic Field Theories II: Relativistic Quantum Mechanics
Part II.

General Relativity
Part III.

Excursions
Bibliography


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