

electric field is directed radially outward from a positive charge and radially inward toward a negative charge.

The electric field due to a group of point charges can be obtained by using the superposition principle. That is, the total electric field at some point equals the vector sum of the electric fields of all the charges:

$$\mathbf{E} = k_e \sum_i \frac{q_i}{r_i^2} \hat{\mathbf{r}}_i \quad (23.5)$$

The electric field at some point of a continuous charge distribution is

$$\mathbf{E} = k_e \int \frac{dq}{r^2} \hat{\mathbf{r}} \quad (23.6)$$

where dq is the charge on one element of the charge distribution and r is the distance from the element to the point in question.

Electric field lines describe an electric field in any region of space. The number of lines per unit area through a surface perpendicular to the lines is proportional to the magnitude of \mathbf{E} in that region.

A charged particle of mass m and charge q moving in an electric field \mathbf{E} has an acceleration

$$\mathbf{a} = \frac{q\mathbf{E}}{m} \quad (23.7)$$

Problem-Solving Hints

Finding the Electric Field

- **Units:** In calculations using the Coulomb constant $k_e (= 1/4\pi\epsilon_0)$, charges must be expressed in coulombs and distances in meters.
- **Calculating the electric field of point charges:** To find the total electric field at a given point, first calculate the electric field at the point due to each individual charge. The resultant field at the point is the vector sum of the fields due to the individual charges.
- **Continuous charge distributions:** When you are confronted with problems that involve a continuous distribution of charge, the vector sums for evaluating the total electric field at some point must be replaced by vector integrals. Divide the charge distribution into infinitesimal pieces, and calculate the vector sum by integrating over the entire charge distribution. You should review Examples 23.7 through 23.9.
- **Symmetry:** With both distributions of point charges and continuous charge distributions, take advantage of any symmetry in the system to simplify your calculations.

QUESTIONS

1. Sparks are often observed (or heard) on a dry day when clothes are removed in the dark. Explain.
2. Explain from an atomic viewpoint why charge is usually transferred by electrons.
3. A balloon is negatively charged by rubbing and then clings to a wall. Does this mean that the wall is positively charged? Why does the balloon eventually fall?
4. A light, uncharged metallic sphere suspended from a thread is attracted to a charged rubber rod. After touching the rod, the sphere is repelled by the rod. Explain.