What You’ll Learn
• You will observe the behavior of electric charges and analyze how these charges interact with matter.
• You will examine the forces that act between electric charges.

Why It’s Important
Static electricity enables the operation of devices such as printers and copiers, but it has harmful effects on electronic components and in the form of lightning.

Lightning 
The tiny spark that you experience when you touch a doorknob and the dazzling display of lightning in a storm are both examples of the discharge of static electricity. The charging processes and the means of discharging are vastly different in scale, but they are similar in their fundamental nature.

Think About This
What causes charge to build up in a thundercloud, and how does it discharge in the form of a spectacular lightning bolt?
20.1 Electric Charge

You may have had the experience of rubbing your shoes on a carpet to create a spark when you touched someone. In 1752, Benjamin Franklin set off a flurry of research in the field of electricity when his famous kite experiment showed that lightning is similar to the sparks caused by friction. In his experiment, Franklin flew a kite with a key attached to the string. As a thunderstorm approached, the loose threads of the kite string began to stand up and repel one another, and when Franklin brought his knuckle close to the key, he experienced a spark. Electric effects produced in this way are called static electricity.

In this chapter, you will investigate electrostatics, the study of electric charges that can be collected and held in one place. The effects of electrostatics are observable over a vast scale, from huge displays of lightning to the submicroscopic world of atoms and molecules. Current electricity, which is produced by batteries and generators, will be explored in later chapters.

Objectives
- Demonstrate that charged objects exert forces, both attractive and repulsive.
- Recognize that charging is the separation, not the creation, of electric charges.
- Describe the differences between conductors and insulators.

Vocabulary
- electrostatics
- neutral
- insulator
- conductor
Charged Objects

Have you ever noticed the way that your hair is attracted to the comb when you comb your hair on a dry day or the way that your hair stands on end after it is rubbed with a balloon? Perhaps you also have found that socks sometimes stick together when you take them out of a clothes dryer. If so, you will recognize the attraction of the bits of paper to a plastic ruler demonstrated by the Launch Lab and shown in Figure 20-1. You might have noticed the way the paper pieces jumped up to the ruler as you worked through the Launch Lab. There must be a new, relatively strong force causing this upward acceleration because it is larger than the downward acceleration caused by the gravitational force of Earth.

There are other differences between this new force and gravity. Paper is attracted to a plastic ruler only after the ruler has been rubbed; if you wait a while, the attractive property of the ruler disappears. Gravity, on the other hand, does not require rubbing and does not disappear. The ancient Greeks noticed effects similar to that of the ruler when they rubbed amber. The Greek word for amber is elektron, and today this attractive property is called electric. An object that exhibits electric interaction after rubbing is said to be charged.

Like charges You can explore electric interactions with simple objects, such as transparent tape. Fold over about 5 mm of the end of a strip of tape for a handle, and then stick the remaining 8- to 12-cm-long part of the tape strip on a dry, smooth surface, such as your desktop. Stick a second, similar piece of tape next to the first. Quickly pull both strips off the desk and bring them near each other. A new property causes the strips to repel each other: they are electrically charged. Because they were prepared in the same way, they must have the same type of charge. Thus, you have demonstrated that two objects with the same type of charge repel each other.

You can learn more about this charge by doing some simple experiments. You may have found that the tape is attracted to your hand. Are both sides attracted, or just one? If you wait a while, especially in humid weather, you will find that the electric charge disappears. You can restore it by again sticking the tape to the desk and pulling it off. You also can remove its charge by gently rubbing your fingers down both sides of the tape.

Opposite charges Now, stick one strip of tape on the desk and place the second strip on top of the first. As shown in Figure 20-2a, use the handle of the bottom strip of tape to pull the two off the desk together. Rub them with your fingers until they are no longer attracted to your hand. You now have removed all the electric charge. With one hand on the handle of one strip and the other on the handle of the second strip, quickly pull the two strips apart. You will find that they are now both charged. They once again are attracted to your hands. Do they still repel each other? No, they now attract each other. They are charged, but they are no longer charged alike. They have opposite charges and therefore attract each other.
Is tape the only object that you can charge? Once again, stick one strip of tape to the desk and the second strip on top. Label the bottom strip $B$ and the top strip $T$. Pull the pair off together. Discharge them, then pull them apart. Stick the handle end of each strip to the edge of a table, the bottom of a lamp shade, or some similar object. The two should hang down a short distance apart. Finally, rub a comb or pen on your clothing and bring it near one strip of tape and then the other. You will find that one strip will be attracted to the comb, while the other will be repelled by it, as shown in Figure 20-2b. You now can explore the interactions of charged objects with the strips of tape.

**Experimenting with charge** Try to charge other objects, such as glasses and plastic bags. Rub them with different materials, such as silk, wool, and plastic wrap. If the air is dry, scuff your shoes on carpet and bring your finger near the strips of tape. To test silk or wool, slip a plastic bag over your hand before holding the cloth. After rubbing, take your hand out of the bag and bring both the bag and cloth near the strips of tape. Most charged objects will attract one strip and repel the other. You will never find an object that repels both strips of tape, although you might find some that attract both. For example, your finger will attract both strips. You will explore this effect later in this chapter.

**Types of charge** From your experiments, you can make a list of objects labeled $B$, for bottom, which have the same charge as the tape stuck on the desk. Another list can be made of objects labeled $T$, which have the same charge as the top strip of tape. There are only two lists, because there are only two types of charge. Benjamin Franklin called them positive and negative charges. Using Franklin’s convention, when hard rubber and plastic are rubbed, they become negatively charged. When materials such as glass and wool are rubbed, they become positively charged.

Just as you showed that an uncharged pair of tape strips became oppositely charged, you probably were able to show that if you rubbed plastic with wool, the plastic became negatively charged and the wool positively charged. The two kinds of charges were not created alone, but in pairs. These experiments suggest that matter normally contains both charges, positive and negative. Contact in some way separates the two. To explore this further, you must consider the microscopic picture of matter.

**A Microscopic View of Charge**

Electric charges exist within atoms. In 1897, J.J. Thomson discovered that all materials contain light, negatively charged particles that he called electrons. Between 1909 and 1911, Ernest Rutherford, a student of Thomson from New Zealand, discovered that the atom has a massive, positively charged nucleus. When the positive charge of the nucleus equals the negative charge of the surrounding electrons, then the atom is neutral.
Chapter 20 Static Electricity

Conductor or Insulator?
It might be tempting to classify an element as solely a conductor or solely an insulator, but the classification can change depending on the form the element takes. For example, carbon in the form of diamond is an insulator, but carbon in the form of graphite can conduct charge. This is because the carbon atoms in diamonds are tightly bonded to four other carbons, while the carbon atoms in graphite form three stronger bonds and a fourth, weaker bond that allows electrons a limited amount of movement. As a result, graphite is a much better conductor than diamond, even though both are simply carbon atoms.

With the addition of energy, the outer electrons can be removed from atoms. An atom missing electrons has an overall positive charge, and consequently, any matter made of these electron-deficient atoms is positively charged. The freed electrons can remain unattached or become attached to other atoms, resulting in negatively charged particles. From a microscopic viewpoint, acquiring charge is a process of transferring electrons.

Separation of charge
If two neutral objects are rubbed together, each can become charged. For instance, when rubber and wool are rubbed together, electrons from atoms on the wool are transferred to the rubber, as shown in Figure 20-3. The extra electrons on the rubber result in a net negative charge. The electrons missing from the wool result in a net positive charge. The combined total charge of the two objects remains the same. Charge is conserved, which is one way of saying that individual charges never are created or destroyed. All that happens is that the positive and negative charges are separated through a transfer of electrons.

Complex processes that affect the tires of a moving car or truck can cause the tires to become charged. Processes inside a thundercloud can cause the cloud bottom to become negatively charged and the cloud top to become positively charged. In both these cases, charge is not created, but separated.

Conductors and Insulators
Hold a plastic rod or comb at its midpoint and rub only one end. You will find that only the rubbed end becomes charged. In other words, the charges that you transferred to the plastic stayed where they were put; they did not move. A material through which a charge will not move easily is called an electric insulator. The strips of tape that you charged earlier in this chapter acted in this way. Glass, dry wood, most plastics, cloth, and dry air are all good insulators.

Suppose that you support a metal rod on an insulator so that it is isolated, or completely surrounded by insulators. If you then touch the charged comb to one end of the metal rod, you will find that the charge spreads very quickly over the entire rod. A material that allows charges to move about easily is called an electric conductor. Electrons carry, or conduct, electric charge through the metal. Metals are good conductors because at least one electron on each atom of the metal can be removed easily. These electrons act as if they no longer belong to any one atom, but to the metal as a whole; consequently, they move freely throughout the piece of metal. Figure 20-4 contrasts how charges behave when they are
placed on a conductor with how they behave on an insulator. Copper and aluminum are both excellent conductors and are used commercially to carry electricity. Plasma, a highly ionized gas, and graphite also are good conductors of electric charge.

**When air becomes a conductor** Air is an insulator; however, under certain conditions, charges move through air as if it were a conductor. The spark that jumps between your finger and a doorknob after you have rubbed your feet on a carpet discharges you. In other words, you have become neutral because the excess charges have left you. Similarly, lightning discharges a thundercloud. In both of these cases, air became a conductor for a brief moment. Recall that conductors must have charges that are free to move. For a spark or lightning to occur, freely moving charged particles must be formed in the normally neutral air. In the case of lightning, excess charges in the cloud and on the ground are great enough to remove electrons from the molecules in the air. The electrons and positively or negatively charged atoms form a plasma, which is a conductor. The discharge of Earth and the thundercloud by means of this conductor forms a luminous arc called lightning. In the case of your finger and the doorknob, the discharge is called a spark.

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**20.1 Section Review**

1. **Charged Objects** After a comb is rubbed on a wool sweater, it is able to pick up small pieces of paper. Why does the comb lose that ability after a few minutes?

2. **Types of Charge** In the experiments described earlier in this section, how could you find out which strip of tape, B or T, is positively charged?

3. **Types of Charge** A pith ball is a small sphere made of a light material, such as plastic foam, often coated with a layer of graphite or aluminum paint. How could you determine whether a pith ball that is suspended from an insulating thread is neutral, is charged positively, or is charged negatively?

4. **Charge Separation** A rubber rod can be charged negatively when it is rubbed with wool. What happens to the charge of the wool? Why?

5. **Conservation of Charge** An apple contains trillions of charged particles. Why don’t two apples repel each other when they are brought together?

6. **Charging a Conductor** Suppose you hang a long metal rod from silk threads so that the rod is isolated. You then touch a charged glass rod to one end of the metal rod. Describe the charges on the metal rod.

7. **Charging by Friction** You can charge a rubber rod negatively by rubbing it with wool. What happens when you rub a copper rod with wool?

8. **Critical Thinking** It once was proposed that electric charge is a type of fluid that flows from objects with an excess of the fluid to objects with a deficit. Why is the current two-charge model better than the single-fluid model?
20.2 Electric Force

Electric forces must be strong because they can easily produce accelerations larger than the acceleration caused by gravity. You also have learned that they can be either repulsive or attractive, while gravitational forces always are attractive. Over the years, many scientists made attempts to measure electric forces. Daniel Bernoulli, best known for his work with fluids, made some crude measurements in 1760. In the 1770s, Henry Cavendish showed that electric forces must obey an inverse square force law, but being extremely shy, he did not publish his work. His manuscripts were discovered over a century later, after all his work had been duplicated by others.

Forces on Charged Bodies

The forces that you observed on tape strips also can be demonstrated by suspending a negatively charged, hard rubber rod so that it turns easily, as shown in Figure 20-5. If you bring another negatively charged rod near the suspended rod, the suspended rod will turn away. The negative charges on the rods repel each other. It is not necessary for the rods to make contact. The force, called the electric force, acts at a distance. If a positively charged glass rod is suspended and a similarly charged glass rod is brought close, the two positively charged rods also will repel each other. If a negatively charged rod is brought near a positively charged rod, however, the two will attract each other, and the suspended rod will turn toward the oppositely charged rod. The results of your tape experiments and these actions of charged rods can be summarized in the following way:

- There are two kinds of electric charges: positive and negative.
- Charges exert forces on other charges at a distance.
- The force is stronger when the charges are closer together.
- Like charges repel; opposite charges attract.

Neither a strip of tape nor a large rod that is hanging in open air is a very sensitive or convenient way of determining charge. Instead, a device called an electroscope is used. An electroscope consists of a metal knob connected by a metal stem to two thin, lightweight pieces of metal foil, called leaves. Figure 20-6 shows a neutral electroscope. Note that the leaves hang loosely and are enclosed to eliminate stray air currents.
Charging by conduction When a negatively charged rod is touched to the knob of an electroscope, electrons are added to the knob. These charges spread over all the metal surfaces. As shown in Figure 20-7a, the two leaves are charged negatively and repel each other; therefore, they spread apart. The electroscope has been given a net charge. Charging a neutral body by touching it with a charged body is called charging by conduction. The leaves also will spread apart if the electroscope is charged positively. How, then, can you find out whether the electroscope is charged positively or negatively? The type of charge can be determined by observing the leaves when a rod of known charge is brought close to the knob. The leaves will spread farther apart if the rod and the electroscope have the same charge, as shown in Figure 20-7b. The leaves will fall slightly if the electroscope’s charge is opposite that of the rod, as in Figure 20-7c.

Separation of charge on neutral objects Earlier in this chapter, when you brought your finger near either charged strip of tape, the tape was attracted to your finger. Your finger, however, was neutral—it had equal amounts of positive and negative charge. You know that in conductors, charges can move easily, and that in the case of sparks, electric forces can change insulators into conductors. Given this information, you can develop a plausible model for the force that your finger exerted on the strips of tape.

Suppose you move your finger, or any uncharged object, close to a positively charged object. The negative charges in your finger will be attracted to the positively charged object, and the positive charges in your finger will be repelled. Your finger will remain neutral, but the positive and negative charges will be separated. The electric force is stronger for charges that are closer together; therefore, the separation results in an attractive force between your finger and the charged object. The force that a charged ruler exerts on neutral pieces of paper is the result of the same process, the separation of charges.

The negative charges at the bottom of thunderclouds also can cause charge separation in Earth. Positive charges in the ground are attracted to Earth’s surface under the cloud. The forces of the charges in the cloud and those on Earth’s surface can break molecules into positively and negatively charged particles. These charged particles are free to move, and they establish a conducting path from the ground to the cloud. The lightning that you observe occurs when a bolt travels at speeds on the order of 500,000 km/h along the conducting path and discharges the cloud.
Charging by induction

Suppose that two identical, insulated metal spheres are touching, as shown in Figure 20-8a. When a negatively charged rod is brought close to one, as in Figure 20-8b, electrons from the first sphere will be forced onto the sphere farther from the rod and will make it negatively charged. The closer sphere is now positively charged. If the spheres are separated while the rod is nearby, each sphere will have a charge, and the charges will be equal but opposite, as shown in Figure 20-8c. This process of charging an object without touching it is called charging by induction.

A single object can be charged by induction through grounding, which is the process of connecting a body to Earth to eliminate excess charge. Earth is a very large sphere, and it can absorb great amounts of charge without becoming noticeably charged itself. If a charged body is touched to Earth, almost any amount of charge can flow to Earth.

If a negatively charged rod is brought close to the knob of an electroscope, as in Figure 20-9a, electrons are repelled onto the leaves. If the knob is then grounded on the side opposite the charged rod, electrons will be pushed from the electroscope into the ground until the leaves are neutral, as in Figure 20-9b. Removing the ground before the rod leaves the electroscope with a deficit of electrons, and it will be positively charged, as in Figure 20-9c. Grounding also can be used as a source of electrons. If a positive rod is brought near the knob of a grounded electroscope, electrons will be attracted from the ground, and the electroscope will obtain a negative charge. When this process is employed, the charge induced on the electroscope is opposite that of the object used to charge it. Because the rod never touches the electroscope, its charge is not transferred, and it can be used many times to charge objects by induction.
Coulomb’s Law

You have seen that a force acts between two or more charged objects. In your experiments with tape, you found that the force depends on distance. The closer you brought the charged comb to the tape, the stronger the force was. You also found that the more you charged the comb, the stronger the force was. How can you vary the quantity of charge in a controlled way? This problem was solved in 1785 by French physicist Charles Coulomb. The type of apparatus used by Coulomb is shown in Figure 20-10. An insulating rod with small conducting spheres, A and A’, at each end was suspended by a thin wire. A similar sphere, B, was placed in contact with sphere A. When they were touched with a charged object, the charge spread evenly over the two spheres. Because they were the same size, they received equal amounts of charge. The symbol for charge is \( q \). Therefore, the amount of charge on the spheres can be represented by the notation \( q_A \) and \( q_B \).

**Force depends on distance** Coulomb found how the force between the two charged spheres depended on the distance. First, he carefully measured the amount of force needed to twist the suspending wire through a given angle. He then placed equal charges on spheres A and B and varied the distance, \( r \), between them. The force moved A, which twisted the suspending wire. By measuring the deflection of A, Coulomb could calculate the force of repulsion. He showed that the force, \( F \), varied inversely with the square of the distance between the centers of the spheres.

\[
F \propto \frac{1}{r^2}
\]

**Force depends on charge** To investigate the way in which the force depended on the amount of charge, Coulomb had to change the charges on the spheres in a measured way. He first charged spheres A and B equally, as before. Then he selected an uncharged sphere, C, of the same size as sphere B. When C was placed in contact with B, the spheres shared the charge that had been on B alone. Because the two were the same size, B then had only half of its original charge. Therefore, the charge on B was only one-half the charge on A. After Coulomb adjusted the position of B so that the distance, \( r \), between A and B was the same as before, he found that the force between A and B was half of its former value. That is, he found that the force varied directly with the charge of the bodies.

\[
F \propto q_A q_B
\]

After many similar measurements, Coulomb summarized the results in a law now known as **Coulomb’s law**: the magnitude of the force between charge \( q_A \) and charge \( q_B \), separated by a distance \( r \), is proportional to the magnitude of the charges and inversely proportional to the square of the distance between them.

\[
F \propto \frac{q_A q_B}{r^2}
\]

**The unit of charge: the coulomb** The amount of charge that an object has is difficult to measure directly. Coulomb’s experiments, however, showed that the quantity of charge could be related to force. Thus, Coulomb could define a standard quantity of charge in terms of the amount of force that it produces. The SI standard unit of charge is called the **coulomb** (C).
One coulomb is the charge of $6.24 \times 10^{18}$ electrons or protons. A typical lightning bolt can carry 5 C to 25 C of charge. The charge on a single electron is $1.60 \times 10^{-19}$ C. The magnitude of the charge of an electron is called the **elementary charge**. Even small pieces of matter, such as coins, contain up to $10^6$ C of negative charge. This enormous amount of negative charge produces almost no external effects because it is balanced by an equal amount of positive charge. If the charge is unbalanced, even as small a charge as $10^{-9}$ C can result in large forces.

According to Coulomb’s law, the magnitude of the force on charge $q_A$ caused by charge $q_B$ a distance $r$ away can be written as follows.

$$ F = \frac{K q_A q_B}{r^2} $$

When the charges are measured in coulombs, the distance in meters, and the force in newtons, the constant, $K$, is $9.0 \times 10^9$ N·m²/C².

The Coulomb’s law equation gives the magnitude of the force that charge $q_A$ exerts on $q_B$ and also the force that $q_B$ exerts on $q_A$. These two forces are equal in magnitude but opposite in direction. You can observe this example of Newton’s third law of motion in action when you bring two strips of tape with like charges together. Each exerts forces on the other. If you bring a charged comb near either strip of tape, the strip, with its small mass, moves readily. The acceleration of the comb and you is, of course, much less because of the much greater mass.

The electric force, like all other forces, is a vector quantity. Force vectors need both a magnitude and a direction. However, the Coulomb’s law equation above gives only the magnitude of the force. To determine the direction, you need to draw a diagram and interpret charge relations carefully. If two positively charged objects, A and B, are brought near, the forces they exert on each other are repulsive, as shown in **Figure 20-11a**. If, instead, B is negatively charged, the forces are attractive, as shown in **Figure 20-11b**.

**Problem-Solving Strategies**

*Use these steps to find the magnitude and direction of the force between charges.*

1. Sketch the system showing all distances and angles to scale.
2. Diagram the vectors of the system.
3. Use Coulomb’s law to find the magnitude of the force.
4. Use your diagram along with trigonometric relations to find the direction of the force.
5. Perform all algebraic operations on both the numbers and the units. Make sure that the units match the variables in question.
6. Consider the magnitude of your answer. Is it reasonable?
**Coulomb’s Law in Two Dimensions** Sphere A, with a charge of \(+6.0 \ \text{\mu C}\), is located near another charged sphere, B. Sphere B has a charge of \(-3.0 \ \text{\mu C}\) and is located 4.0 cm to the right of A.

a. What is the force of sphere B on sphere A?

b. A third sphere, C, with a \(+1.5-\text{\mu C}\) charge, is added to the configuration. If it is located 3.0 cm directly beneath A, what is the new net force on sphere A?

1. **Analyze and Sketch the Problem**
   - Establish coordinate axes and sketch the spheres.
   - Show and label the distances between the spheres.
   - Diagram and label the force vectors.

   **Known:**
   
   \[ q_A = 6.0 \ \text{\mu C}, \quad r_{AB} = 4.0 \text{ cm}, \quad q_B = -3.0 \ \text{\mu C}, \quad r_{AC} = 3.0 \text{ cm}, \quad q_C = +1.5 \ \text{\mu C} \]

   **Unknown:**
   
   \[ F_{B \text{ on } A} = ?, \quad F_{C \text{ on } A} = ?, \quad F_{\text{net}} = ? \]

2. **Solve for the Unknown**

   a. Find the force of sphere B on sphere A.
      
      \[
      F_{B \text{ on } A} = K \frac{q_A q_B}{r_{AB}^2} = (9.0 \times 10^9 \text{ N} \cdot \text{m}^2/\text{C}^2) \frac{(6.0 \times 10^{-6} \text{ C})(3.0 \times 10^{-6} \text{ C})}{(4.0 \times 10^{-2} \text{ m})^2} = 1.0 \times 10^2 \text{ N} \]
      
      Because spheres A and B have unlike charges, the force of B on A is to the right.

   b. Find the force of sphere C on sphere A.
      
      \[
      F_{C \text{ on } A} = K \frac{q_A q_C}{r_{AC}^2} = (9.0 \times 10^9 \text{ N} \cdot \text{m}^2/\text{C}^2) \frac{(6.0 \times 10^{-6} \text{ C})(1.5 \times 10^{-6} \text{ C})}{(3.0 \times 10^{-2} \text{ m})^2} = 9.0 \times 10^1 \text{ N} \]
      
      Spheres A and C have like charges, which repel. The force of C on A is upward.

      Find the vector sum of \( F_{B \text{ on } A} \) and \( F_{C \text{ on } A} \) to find \( F_{\text{net}} \) on sphere A.
      
      \[
      F_{\text{net}} = \sqrt{F_{B \text{ on } A}^2 + F_{C \text{ on } A}^2} = \sqrt{(1.0 \times 10^2 \text{ N})^2 + (9.0 \times 10^1 \text{ N})^2} = 130 \text{ N} \]
      
      \[
      \tan \theta = \frac{F_{C \text{ on } A}}{F_{B \text{ on } A}} = \tan^{-1} \left( \frac{F_{C \text{ on } A}}{F_{B \text{ on } A}} \right) = \tan^{-1} \left( \frac{9.0 \times 10^1 \text{ N}}{1.0 \times 10^2 \text{ N}} \right) = 42^\circ \]
      
      \[
      F_{\text{net}} = 130 \text{ N, 42° above the x-axis} \]

3. **Evaluate the Answer**

   - Are the units correct? \((\text{N} \cdot \text{m}^2/\text{C}^2)(\text{C})(\text{C})/\text{m}^2 = \text{N}\). The units work out to be newtons.
   - Does the direction make sense? Like charges repel; unlike charges attract.
   - Is the magnitude realistic? The magnitude of the net force is in agreement with the magnitudes of the component forces.
As shown in the figure on the right, two spheres of equal mass, \( m \), and equal positive charge, \( q \), are a distance, \( r \), apart.

1. Derive an expression for the charge, \( q \), that must be on each sphere so that the spheres are in equilibrium; that is, so that the attractive and repulsive forces between them are balanced.

2. If the distance between the spheres is doubled, how will that affect the expression for the value of \( q \) that you determined in the previous problem? Explain.

3. If the mass of each sphere is 1.50 kg, determine the charge on each sphere needed to maintain the equilibrium.

As you use the Coulomb’s law equation, keep in mind that Coulomb’s law is valid only for point charges or uniform spherical charge distributions. That is, a charged sphere may be treated as if all the charge were located at its center if the charge is spread evenly across its entire surface or throughout its volume. If a sphere is a conductor and another charge is brought near it, the charges on the sphere will be attracted or repelled, and the charge no longer will act as if it were at the sphere’s center. Therefore, it is important to consider how large and how far apart two charged spheres are before applying Coulomb’s law. The problems in this textbook assume that charged spheres are small enough and far enough apart to be considered point charges unless otherwise noted. When shapes such as long wires or flat plates are considered, Coulomb’s law must be modified to account for the nonpoint charge distributions.

**Application of Electrostatic Forces**

There are many applications of electric forces on particles. For example, these forces can collect soot in smokestacks, thereby reducing air pollution, as shown in Figure 20-12. Tiny paint droplets, charged by
induction, can be used to paint automobiles and other objects very uniformly. Photocopy machines use static electricity to place black toner on a page so that a precise reproduction of the original document is made. In other instances, applications are concerned with the control of static charge. For example, static charge can ruin film if it attracts dust, and electronic equipment can be damaged by the discharge of static charge. In these cases, applications are designed to avoid the buildup of static charge and to safely eliminate any charge that does build up.

20.2 Section Review

14. **Force and Charge** How are electric force and charge related? Describe the force when the charges are like charges and the force when the charges are opposite charges.

15. **Force and Distance** How are electric force and distance related? How would the force change if the distance between two charges were tripled?

16. **Electroscopes** When an electroscope is charged, the leaves rise to a certain angle and remain at that angle. Why do they not rise farther?

17. **Charging an Electroscope** Explain how to charge an electroscope positively using
   - a. a positive rod.
   - b. a negative rod.

18. **Attraction of Neutral Objects** What two properties explain why a neutral object is attracted to both positively and negatively charged objects?

19. **Charging by Induction** In an electroscope being charged by induction, what happens when the charging rod is moved away before the ground is removed from the knob?

20. **Electric Forces** Two charged spheres are held a distance, r, apart. One sphere has a charge of $+3\mu C$, and the other sphere has a charge of $+9\mu C$. Compare the force of the $+3\mu C$ sphere on the $+9\mu C$ sphere with the force of the $+9\mu C$ sphere on the $+3\mu C$ sphere.

21. **Critical Thinking** Suppose that you are testing Coulomb’s law using a small, positively charged plastic sphere and a large, positively charged metal sphere. According to Coulomb’s law, the force depends on $1/r^2$, where $r$ is the distance between the centers of the spheres. As the spheres get close together, the force is smaller than expected from Coulomb’s law. Explain.
Charged Objects

In this chapter, you observed and studied phenomena that result from the separation of electric charges. You learned that hard rubber and plastic tend to become negatively charged when they are rubbed, while glass and wool tend to become positively charged. But what happens if two objects that tend to become negatively charged are rubbed together? Will electrons be transferred? If so, which material will gain electrons, and which will lose them? In this physics lab, you will design a procedure to further your investigations of positive and negative charges.

**QUESTION**

How can you test materials for their ability to hold positive and negative charges?

**Objectives**

- **Observe** that different materials tend to become positively or negatively charged.
- **Compare and contrast** the ability of materials to acquire and hold positive and negative charges.
- **Interpret data** to order a list of materials from strongest tendency to be negatively charged to strongest tendency to be positively charged.

**Materials**

- 15-cm plastic ruler
- thread
- ring stand with ring
- masking tape
- materials to be charged, such as rubber rods, plastic rods, glass rods, PVC pipe, copper pipe, steel pipe, pencils, pens, wool, silk, plastic wrap, plastic sandwich bags, waxed paper, and aluminum foil

**Safety Precautions**

**Procedure**

1. Use the lab photo as a guide to suspend a 15-cm plastic ruler. It is advisable to wash the ruler in soapy water, then rinse and dry it thoroughly before each use, especially if it is a humid day. The thread should be attached at the midpoint of the ruler with two or three wraps of masking tape between the thread and ruler.

2. Use the following situations as a reference for types of charges a material can have: 1) a plastic ruler rubbed with wool gives the plastic ruler an excess negative charge and the wool an excess positive charge, and 2) a plastic ruler rubbed with plastic wrap gives the plastic ruler an excess positive charge and the plastic wrap an excess negative charge.
Data Table

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Material 1</th>
<th>Material 2</th>
<th>Charge on Ruler (+, −, 0)</th>
<th>Observation of Ruler’s Movements</th>
<th>Charge on Material 1 (+, −, 0)</th>
<th>Charge on Material 2 (+, −, 0)</th>
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</table>

3. Design a procedure to test which objects tend to become negatively charged and which tend to become positively charged. Try various combinations of materials and record your observations in the data table.

4. Develop a test to see if an object is neutral. Remember that a charged ruler may be attracted to a neutral object if it induces a separation of charge in the neutral object.

5. Be sure to check with your teacher and have your procedure approved before you proceed with your lab.

Conclude and Apply

1. Explain what is meant by the phrases excess charge and charge imbalance when referring to static electricity.

2. Does excess charge remain on a material or does it dissipate over time?

3. Could you complete this physics lab using a metal rod in place of the suspended plastic ruler? Explain.

4. Clear plastic wrap seals containers of food. Why does plastic wrap cling to itself after it is pulled from its container?

Going Further

Review the information in your textbook about electroscopes. Redesign the lab using an electro- scope, rather than a suspended ruler, to test for the type of charge on an object.

Real-World Physics

Trucks often have a rubber strap or a chain that drags along the road. Why are they used?

To find out more about static charge, visit the Web site: physicspp.com

Analyze

1. Observe and Infer As you brought charged materials together, could you detect a force between the charged materials? Describe this force.

2. Formulate Models Make a drawing of the charge distribution on the two materials for one of your trials. Use this drawing to explain why the materials acted the way they did during your experiments with them.

3. Draw Conclusions Which materials hold an excess charge? Which materials do not hold a charge very well?

4. Draw Conclusions Which materials tend to become negatively charged? Which tend to become positively charged?

5. Interpret Data Use your data table to list the relative tendencies of materials to be positively or negatively charged.
Most objects on Earth do not build up substantial static-electric charges because a layer of moisture clings to surfaces, allowing charges to migrate to or from the ground. As you learned in this chapter, Earth can absorb almost any amount of charge. However, there is no moisture in space, and Earth is far away. Charged particles ejected from the Sun, or in the ionosphere, strike and cling to spacecraft, charging their surfaces to thousands of volts.

**Plasma and Charging**

In Chapter 13, you learned that plasma consists of free electrons and positive ions. Orbiting spacecraft are surrounded by a thin cloud of this plasma. The electrons in plasma can move far more easily than more massive positive ions. Thus, spacecraft surfaces tend to attract electrons and develop a negative charge. This negative charge eventually attracts some heavy positive ions, which strike the spacecraft and can damage its surface.

On the International Space Station, an additional difficulty stems from the array of solar panels that convert energy from the Sun into electricity. When the arrays are powering the space station, the voltage on the surface of the craft tends to be close to the voltage of the solar array. As a result, it is possible that an electric arc could form between the space station and the plasma that surrounds it.

**Consequences of an Arc**

Arcs are extremely hot and carry a great deal of current. They can prematurely ignite retro-rockets or explosive bolts and interfere with the operation of the spacecraft’s electronic equipment. The solar panels are particularly susceptible to arc damage. In addition to damage to the spacecraft’s components, there is a remote chance that the buildup of charge might endanger astronauts on space walks.

To discharge the potential difference and protect craft and crew, the space station’s skin must be connected by a conductor, called a plasma contactor, to the plasma cloud surrounding it. The connection begins on board the station, where a stream of xenon gas from a tank in the Plasma Contactor Unit (PCU) is ionized by an electric current. This ionization takes place in the cathode assembly. The ionized xenon, now in the plasma state, passes out of the craft through the cathode assembly. It is this stream of conductive plasma that connects the craft to the surrounding plasma cloud, thereby reducing the potential difference to safe levels.

**Future Applications**

Future spacecraft might integrate the plasma contactor into the propulsion system. For example, the Variable Specific Impulse Magnetoplasma Rocket (VASIMR) could use the plasma exhaust that it produces to provide an electric connection between the spacecraft and the surrounding plasma. Scientists think that this type of rocket could be used in the future to travel between planets.

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**Going Further**

1. **Apply** What is the purpose of a plasma contactor? How is it similar to using your finger to ground an electroscope?

2. **Research** How could scientists assess the charge on the surface of the International Space Station?
## 20.1 Electric Charge

**Vocabulary**
- electrostatics (p. 541)
- neutral (p. 543)
- insulator (p. 544)
- conductor (p. 544)

**Key Concepts**
- There are two kinds of electric charge, positive and negative. Interactions of these charges explain the attraction and repulsion that you observed in the strips of tape.
- Electric charge is not created or destroyed; it is conserved. Charging is the separation, not creation, of electric charges.
- Objects can be charged by the transfer of electrons. An area with excess electrons has a net negative charge; an area with a deficit of electrons has a net positive charge.
- Charges added to one part of an insulator remain on that part. Insulators include glass, dry wood, plastics, and dry air.
- Charges added to a conductor quickly spread over the surface of the object. In general, examples of conductors include graphite, metals, and matter in the plasma state.
- Under certain conditions, charges can move through a substance that is ordinarily an insulator. Lightning moving through air is one example.

## 20.2 Electric Force

**Vocabulary**
- electroscope (p. 546)
- charging by conduction (p. 547)
- charging by induction (p. 548)
- grounding (p. 548)
- Coulomb's law (p. 549)
- coulomb (p. 549)
- elementary charge (p. 550)

**Key Concepts**
- When an electroscope is charged, electric forces cause its thin metal leaves to spread apart.
- An object can be charged by conduction by touching it with a charged object.
- A charged object will induce a separation of charges within a neutral conductor. This process will result in an attractive force between the charged object and the neutral conductor.
- To charge a conductor by induction, a charged object is first brought near it, causing a separation of charges. Then, the conductor to be charged is separated, trapping opposite charges on the two halves.
- Grounding is the removal of excess charge by touching an object to Earth. Grounding can be used in the process of charging an electroscope by induction.
- Coulomb's law states that the force between two charged particles varies directly with the product of their charges and inversely with the square of the distance between them.

\[ F = \frac{Kq_1q_2}{r^2} \]

To determine the direction of the force, remember the following rule: like charges repel; unlike charges attract.
- The SI unit of charge is the coulomb. One coulomb (C) is the magnitude of the charge of \(6.24 \times 10^{18}\) electrons or protons. The elementary charge, the charge of a proton or electron, is \(1.60 \times 10^{-19}\) C.
22. Complete the concept map below using the following terms: conduction, distance, elementary charge.

Mastering Concepts

23. If you comb your hair on a dry day, the comb can become positively charged. Can your hair remain neutral? Explain. (20.1)

24. List some insulators and conductors. (20.1)

25. What property makes metal a good conductor and rubber a good insulator? (20.1)

26. Laundry Why do socks taken from a clothes dryer sometimes cling to other clothes? (20.2)

27. Compact Discs If you wipe a compact disc with a clean cloth, why does the CD then attract dust? (20.2)

28. Coins The combined charge of all electrons in a nickel is hundreds of thousands of coulombs. Does this imply anything about the net charge on the coin? Explain. (20.2)

29. How does the distance between two charges impact the force between them? If the distance is decreased while the charges remain the same, what happens to the force? (20.2)

30. Explain how to charge a conductor negatively if you have only a positively charged rod. (20.2)

Applying Concepts

31. How does the charge of an electron differ from the charge of a proton? How are they similar?

32. Using a charged rod and an electroscope, how can you find whether or not an object is a conductor?

33. A charged rod is brought near a pile of tiny plastic spheres. Some of the spheres are attracted to the rod, but as soon as they touch the rod, they are flung off in different directions. Explain.

34. Lightning Lightning usually occurs when a negative charge in a cloud is transported to Earth. If Earth is neutral, what provides the attractive force that pulls the electrons toward Earth?

35. Explain what happens to the leaves of a positively charged electroscope when rods with the following charges are brought close to, but not touching, the electroscope.
   a. positive
   b. negative

36. As shown in Figure 20-13, Coulomb’s law and Newton’s law of universal gravitation appear to be similar. In what ways are the electric and gravitational forces similar? How are they different?

37. The constant, $K$, in Coulomb’s equation is much larger than the constant, $G$, in the universal gravitation equation. Of what significance is this?

38. The text describes Coulomb’s method for charging two spheres, $A$ and $B$, so that the charge on $B$ was exactly half the charge on $A$. Suggest a way that Coulomb could have placed a charge on sphere $B$ that was exactly one-third the charge on sphere $A$.

39. Coulomb measured the deflection of sphere $A$ when spheres $A$ and $B$ had equal charges and were a distance, $r$, apart. He then made the charge on $B$ one-third the charge on $A$. How far apart would the two spheres then have had to be for $A$ to have had the same deflection that it had before?

40. Two charged bodies exert a force of 0.145 N on each other. If they are moved so that they are one-fourth as far apart, what force is exerted?

41. Electric forces between charges are enormous in comparison to gravitational forces. Yet, we normally do not sense electric forces between us and our surroundings, while we do sense gravitational interactions with Earth. Explain.
Mastering Problems

20.2 Electric Force

42. Two charges, \( q_A \) and \( q_B \), are separated by a distance, \( r \), and exert a force, \( F \), on each other. Analyze Coulomb's law and identify what new force would exist under the following conditions.
   a. \( q_A \) is doubled
   b. \( q_A \) and \( q_B \) are cut in half
   c. \( r \) is tripled
   d. \( r \) is cut in half
   e. \( q_A \) is tripled and \( r \) is doubled

43. Lightning A strong lightning bolt transfers about 25 C to Earth. How many electrons are transferred?

44. Atoms Two electrons in an atom are separated by 1.5\( \times 10^{-10} \) m, the typical size of an atom. What is the electric force between them?

45. A positive and a negative charge, each of magnitude 2.5\( \times 10^{-5} \) C, are separated by a distance of 15 cm. Find the force on each of the particles.

46. A force of 2.4\( \times 10^2 \) N exists between a positive charge of 8.0\( \times 10^{-5} \) C and a positive charge of 3.0\( \times 10^{-5} \) C. What distance separates the charges?

47. Two identical positive charges exert a repulsive force of 6.4\( \times 10^{-9} \) N when separated by a distance of 3.8\( \times 10^{-10} \) m. Calculate the charge of each.

48. A positive charge of 3.0 \( \mu \)C is pulled on by two negative charges. As shown in Figure 20-14, one negative charge, \(-2.0 \mu C\), is 0.050 m to the west, and the other, \(-4.0 \mu C\), is 0.030 m to the east. What total force is exerted on the positive charge?

49. Figure 20-15 shows two positively charged spheres, one with three times the charge of the other. The spheres are 16 cm apart, and the force between them is 0.28 N. What are the charges on the two spheres?

50. Charge in a Coin How many coulombs of charge are on the electrons in a nickel? Use the following method to find the answer.
   a. Find the number of atoms in a nickel. A nickel has a mass of about 5 g. A nickel is 75 percent Cu and 25 percent Ni, so each mole of the coin’s atoms will have a mass of about 62 g.
   b. Find the number of electrons in the coin. On average, each atom has 28.75 electrons.
   c. Find the coulombs on the electrons.

51. Three particles are placed in a line. The left particle has a charge of \(-55 \mu C\), the middle one has a charge of \(+45 \mu C\), and the right one has a charge of \(-78 \mu C\). The middle particle is 72 cm from each of the others, as shown in Figure 20-16.
   a. Find the net force on the middle particle.
   b. Find the net force on the right particle.

Mixed Review

52. A small metal sphere with charge 1.2\( \times 10^{-5} \) C is touched to an identical neutral sphere and then placed 0.15 m from the second sphere. What is the electric force between the two spheres?

53. Atoms What is the electric force between an electron and a proton placed 5.3\( \times 10^{-11} \) m apart, the approximate radius of a hydrogen atom?

54. A small sphere of charge 2.4 \( \mu \)C experiences a force of 0.36 N when a second sphere of unknown charge is placed 5.5 cm from it. What is the charge of the second sphere?

55. Two identically charged spheres placed 12 cm apart have an electric force of 0.28 N. What is the charge of each sphere?

56. In an experiment using Coulomb’s apparatus, a sphere with a charge of 3.6\( \times 10^{-8} \) C is 1.4 cm from a second sphere of unknown charge. The force between the spheres is 2.7\( \times 10^{-2} \) N. What is the charge of the second sphere?

57. The force between a proton and an electron is 3.5\( \times 10^{-10} \) N. What is the distance between these two particles?
Thinking Critically

58. Apply Concepts Calculate the ratio of the electric force to the gravitational force between the electron and the proton in a hydrogen atom.

59. Analyze and Conclude Sphere A, with a charge of \( +64 \ \mu C \), is positioned at the origin. A second sphere, B, with a charge of \( -16 \ \mu C \), is placed at \( +1.00 \ \text{m} \) on the x-axis.
   a. Where must a third sphere, C, of charge \( +12 \ \mu C \) be placed so there is no net force on it?
   b. If the third sphere had a charge of \( +6 \ \mu C \), where should it be placed?
   c. If the third sphere had a charge of \( -12 \ \mu C \), where should it be placed?

60. Three charged spheres are located at the positions shown in Figure 20-17. Find the total force on sphere B.

   ![Figure 20-17](image)

   The two pith balls in Figure 20-18 each have a mass of 1.0 g and an equal charge. One pith ball is suspended by an insulating thread. The other is brought to 3.0 cm from the suspended ball. The suspended ball is now hanging with the thread forming an angle of 30.0° with the vertical. The ball is in equilibrium with \( F_E \), \( F_g \), and \( F_T \). Calculate each of the following.
   a. \( F_g \) on the suspended ball
   b. \( F_E \)
   c. the charge on the balls

   ![Figure 20-18](image)

62. Two charges, \( q_A \) and \( q_B \), are at rest near a positive test charge, \( q_T \), of 7.2 \( \mu C \). The first charge, \( q_A \), is a positive charge of 3.6 \( \mu C \) located 2.5 cm away from \( q_T \) at 35°; \( q_B \) is a negative charge of \( -6.6 \ \mu C \) located 6.8 cm away at 125°.
   a. Determine the magnitude of each of the forces acting on \( q_T \).
   b. Sketch a force diagram.
   c. Graphically determine the resultant force acting on \( q_T \).

Writing in Physics

63. History of Science Research several devices that were used in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries to study static electricity. Examples that you might consider include the Leyden jar and the Wimshurst machine. Discuss how they were constructed and how they worked.

64. In Chapter 13, you learned that forces exist between water molecules that cause water to be denser as a liquid between 0°C and 4°C than as a solid at 0°C. These forces are electrostatic in nature. Research electrostatic intermolecular forces, such as van der Waals forces and dipole-dipole forces, and describe their effects on matter.

Cumulative Review

65. Explain how a pendulum can be used to determine the acceleration of gravity. (Chapter 14)

66. A submarine that is moving 12.0 m/s sends a sonar ping of frequency 1.50 \( \times 10^3 \) Hz toward a seamount that is directly in front of the submarine. It receives the echo 1.800 s later. (Chapter 15)
   a. How far is the submarine from the seamount?
   b. What is the frequency of the sonar wave that strikes the seamount?
   c. What is the frequency of the echo received by the submarine?

67. Security Mirror A security mirror is used to produce an image that is three-fourths the size of an object and is located 12.0 cm behind the mirror. What is the focal length of the mirror? (Chapter 17)

68. A 2.00-cm-tall object is located 20.0 cm away from a diverging lens with a focal length of 24.0 cm. What are the image position, height, and orientation? Is this a real or a virtual image? (Chapter 18)

69. Spectrometer A spectrometer contains a grating of 11,500 slits/cm. Find the angle at which light of wavelength 527 nm has a first-order bright band. (Chapter 19)
Multiple Choice

1. How many electrons have been removed from a positively charged electroscope if it has a net charge of \(7.5 \times 10^{-11}\) C?
   - \(7.5 \times 10^{-11}\) electrons
   - \(2.1 \times 10^{-9}\) electrons
   - \(1.2 \times 10^8\) electrons
   - \(4.7 \times 10^8\) electrons

2. The force exerted on a particle with a charge of \(5.0 \times 10^{-9}\) C by a second particle that is 4 cm away is \(8.4 \times 10^{-5}\) N. What is the charge of the second particle?
   - \(4.2 \times 10^{-13}\) C
   - \(3.0 \times 10^{-9}\) C
   - \(2.0 \times 10^{-9}\) C
   - \(6.0 \times 10^{-5}\) C

3. Three charges, A, B, and C, are located in a line, as shown below. What is the net force on charge B?
   - \(78\) N toward A
   - \(130\) N toward A
   - \(78\) N toward C
   - \(210\) N toward C
   - \(+8.5 \times 10^{-6}\) C
   - \(+3.1 \times 10^{-6}\) C
   - \(+6.4 \times 10^{-6}\) C
   - \(4.2\) cm
   - \(2.9\) cm

4. What is the charge on an electroscope that has an excess of \(4.8 \times 10^{10}\) electrons?
   - \(3.3 \times 10^{-30}\) C
   - \(7.7 \times 10^{-9}\) C
   - \(4.8 \times 10^{-10}\) C
   - \(4.8 \times 10^{10}\) C

5. Two charged bodies exert a force of 86 N on each other. If they are moved so that they are six times farther apart, what is the new force that they will exert on each other?
   - \(2.4\) N
   - \(86\) N
   - \(14\) N
   - \(5.2 \times 10^2\) N

6. Two equally charged bodies exert a force of 90 N on each other. If one of the bodies is exchanged for a body of the same size, but three times as much charge, what is the new force that they will exert on each other?
   - \(10\) N
   - \(2.7 \times 10^2\) N
   - \(30\) N
   - \(8.1 \times 10^2\) N

7. An alpha particle has a mass of \(6.68 \times 10^{-27}\) kg and a charge of \(3.2 \times 10^{-19}\) C. What is the ratio of the electrostatic force to the gravitational force between two alpha particles?
   - \(1\)
   - \(2.3 \times 10^{15}\)
   - \(4.8 \times 10^{7}\)
   - \(3.1 \times 10^{35}\)

8. Charging a neutral body by touching it with a charged body is called charging by ________.
   - conduction
   - grounding
   - induction
   - discharging

9. Macy rubs a balloon with wool, giving the balloon a charge of \(-8.9 \times 10^{-14}\) C. What is the force between the balloon and a metal sphere that is charged to 25 C and is 2 km away?
   - \(8.9 \times 10^{-15}\) N
   - \(2.2 \times 10^{-12}\) N
   - \(5.0 \times 10^{-9}\) N
   - \(5.6 \times 10^4\) N

Extended Answer

10. According to the diagram, what is the net force exerted by charges A and B on charge C? In your answer, include a diagram showing the force vectors \(F_A\) on C, \(F_B\) on C, and \(F_{net}\).

\[\begin{align*}
F_A & = \text{variable force} \\
F_B & = \text{variable force} \\
F_{net} & = \text{variable force}
\end{align*}\]

\[\begin{align*}
0.30 & \text{ m} \\
-2.0 \mu C & \\
-4.0 \mu C & \\
0.40 & \\
-0.30 & \\
-2.0 \mu C & \\
\end{align*}\]

Test-Taking TIP

Check to make sure you are answering the question that each problem is posing. Read the questions and answer choices very carefully. Remember that doing most of the problems and getting them right is always preferable to doing all of the problems and getting a lot of them wrong.