

# Module 5: Impulse and Momentum


## Topic 3 Content: Conservation of Momentum

### Introduction

#### Conservation of Momentum

- Conservation of Momentum
- Example 1
- Momentum
- Example 2
- Equal and Opposite Forces
- Example 3
- Velocity
- Is Mechanical Energy Conse...
- Calculating Results of Explo...

#### Introduction



Click the tabs in the interactivity to learn about Conservation of Momentum.

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## Module 5: Impulse and Momentum

### Topic 3 Content: Conservation of Momentum

#### Conservation of Momentum

The screenshot shows a digital learning interface with a black header bar containing the text "Conservation of Momentum". Below the header is a white content area. On the left side of the content area, there is a vertical list of orange buttons with white text: "Conservation of Momentum", "Example 1", "Momentum", "Example 2", "Equal and Opposite Forces", "Example 3", "Velocity", "Is Mechanical Energy Conse...", and "Calculating Results of Explo...". To the right of this list is a white box with a black border titled "Conservation of Momentum". Inside this box, there is a table comparing "Before:" and "After:" states. The "Before:" column contains  $p_{\text{total}} = 0$  and  $p_1 + p_2 = 0$ . The "After:" column contains  $p_{\text{total}} = 0$ ,  $p_1 + p_2 = 0$ , and  $p_1 = -p_2$ . Below the table, the text "Momentum is conserved. ALWAYS" is displayed.

Since the objects involved in an explosion have equal and opposite momentums, and since momentum is a vector, the momentums cancel out. Two objects start at rest and neither is moving so the total momentum is zero. After the explosion, the objects have equal and opposite momentum, so again the total momentum is zero.

This is one example of conservation of momentum.

Conservation of momentum is even more powerful than conservation of energy, since energy takes multiple forms and can sometimes be hard to track. But momentum is always mass times velocity, and momentum is conserved in all interactions without exception.

In calculations of conservation of momentum, you will always be dealing with two objects at a time. In order to keep track of each object's mass, velocity and momentum, you will use subscripts to identify the properties of each object.  $p_1$  will be the momentum of object one and  $p_2$  will be the momentum of object two, and so on."

## Module 5: Impulse and Momentum

### Topic 3 Content: Conservation of Momentum

#### Example 1

### Conservation of Momentum

Conservation of Momentum

Example 1

Momentum

Example 2

Equal and Opposite Forces

Example 3

Velocity

Is Mechanical Energy Conse...

Calculating Results of Explo...

Example 1

$$m_1 = 50 \text{ kg}$$
$$m_2 = 1 \text{ kg}$$
$$v_2 = 15 \text{ m/s left}$$
$$v_1 = ?$$

You had a mass of 50 kg, or 110 lb, and your shoe had a mass of 1 kg. If you threw your shoe with a velocity of 15 m/s to the left, what would your velocity be after throwing the shoe?

**You had a mass of 50 kg, or 110 lb., and your shoe had a mass of 1 kg. If you threw your shoe with a velocity of 15 m/s to the left, what would your velocity be after throwing the shoe?**

Let's again take a look at the situation of being stuck on the frozen, frictionless pond. Let's say you had a mass of fifty kilograms, or one hundred ten pounds, and your shoe had a mass of one kilogram. If you threw your shoe with a velocity of 15 m/s to the left, what would your velocity be after throwing the shoe?

The subscript one will refer to you and the subscript two will refer to the shoe.

## Module 5: Impulse and Momentum

### Topic 3 Content: Conservation of Momentum

#### Momentum

### Conservation of Momentum

Conservation of Momentum

Example 1

Momentum

Example 2

Equal and Opposite Forces

Example 3

Velocity

Is Mechanical Energy Conse...

Calculating Results of Explo...

Momentum

Shoe:  
 $p = mv$   
 $p = (1)(15) = 15 \text{ kg m/s left}$

You:  
 $p = -15 \text{ kg m/s right}$   
 $p = mv$   
 $v = p/m$   
 $v = 1/150$   
 $v = 0.3 \text{ m/s}$

**Shoe:**

$$p = mv$$

$$p = (1)(15) = 15 \text{ kg m/s left}$$

**You:**

$$p = -15 \text{ kg m/s right}$$

$$p = mv$$

$$v = p/m$$

$$v = 1/150$$

$$v = 0.3 \text{ m/s}$$

Let's calculate the momentum of the shoe. Momentum is mass times velocity, so the shoe would have one times fifteen or fifteen kilogram meters per second of momentum to the left. Since equal but opposite impulses are exerted on the shoe and you, you will have a momentum equal to fifteen kilogram meters per second to the right. Your mass is fifty kilograms, therefore you can calculate your velocity since you know your mass and momentum. Fifteen kilogram meters per second divided by fifty kilograms is zero point three meters per second.

## Module 5: Impulse and Momentum

### Topic 3 Content: Conservation of Momentum

#### Example 2

### Conservation of Momentum

- Conservation of Momentum
- Example 1
- Momentum
- Example 2
- Equal and Opposite Forces
- Example 3
- Velocity
- Is Mechanical Energy Conse...
- Calculating Results of Explo...

#### Example 2

$$p_1 = -p_2$$
$$m_1 v_1 = -m_2 v_2$$
$$(3)(v_1) = -(0.25)(350)$$
$$v_1 = -2.92 \text{ m/s}$$

A 3 kg rifle fires a 0.025 kg bullet at a velocity of 350 m/s. What is the recoil speed of the gun?

**A 3 kg rifle fires a 0.025 kg bullet at a velocity of 350 m/s. What is the recoil speed of the gun?**

Let's look at another example. A three kilogram rifle fires a zero point zero two five kilogram bullet at a velocity of three hundred fifty meters per second. What is the recoil speed of the gun?

You know that the momentum of the bullet will be equal and opposite the momentum of the gun, so you can write  $m_1 v_1 = -m_2 v_2$ .

Substituting both masses and the velocity of the bullet, you can solve for the velocity of the rifle.

You see that the rifle has a recoil speed of negative two point nine two meters per second. The negative tells us that it is going in the opposite direction as the bullet.

## Module 5: Impulse and Momentum

### Topic 3 Content: Conservation of Momentum

#### Equal and Opposite Forces

The screenshot shows a digital learning interface with a dark header titled "Conservation of Momentum". On the left side, there is a vertical list of orange buttons: "Conservation of Momentum", "Example 1", "Momentum", "Example 2", "Equal and Opposite Forces", "Example 3", "Velocity", "Is Mechanical Energy Conse...", and "Calculating Results of Explo...". The "Equal and Opposite Forces" button is currently selected, and its content is displayed in a white box on the right side of the interface. This box contains the text "Equal and Opposite Forces" followed by the equations  $F = ?$ ,  $t = ?$ , and  $Ft = Ft$ .

$$F = ?$$

$$t = ?$$

$$Ft = Ft$$

Notice that in these calculations you don't have to actually know the force or the time of the interaction. Since you know that they must be equal and opposite forces and that the time of interaction is the same for both objects, you know that the impulse must be the same, so you can focus entirely on the momentum of each object.

## Module 5: Impulse and Momentum


### Topic 3 Content: Conservation of Momentum

#### Example 3

### Conservation of Momentum

- Conservation of Momentum
- Example 1
- Momentum
- Example 2
- Equal and Opposite Forces
- Example 3
- Velocity
- Is Mechanical Energy Conse...
- Calculating Results of Explo...

#### Example 3



Bob, who has a mass of 65 kg is standing still on a 3 kg skateboard. If bob jumps off the skateboard at a speed of 0.75 m/s to the right, what is the resulting speed of the skateboard?

Bob, who has a mass of 65 kg is standing still on a 3 kg skateboard. If bob jumps off the skateboard at a speed of 0.75 m/s to the right, what is the resulting speed of the skateboard?

Bob, who has a mass of sixty five kilograms is standing still on a three kilogram skateboard. If bob jumps off the skateboard at a speed of zero point seven five meters per second to the right, what is the resulting speed of the skateboard?

## Module 5: Impulse and Momentum

### Topic 3 Content: Conservation of Momentum

#### Velocity

### Conservation of Momentum

- Conservation of Momentum
- Example 1
- Momentum
- Example 2
- Equal and Opposite Forces
- Example 3
- Velocity
- Is Mechanical Energy Conse...
- Calculating Results of Explo...

#### Velocity

$$p_{\text{before}} = 0$$
$$p_1 = -p_2$$
$$m_1 v_1 = -m_2 v_2$$
$$(65)(0.75) = -(3.0)(v_2)$$
$$v_2 = -16.25 \text{ m/s}$$

Since both Bob and the skateboard start at rest, the initial momentum is zero. After Bob jumps, his momentum to the right will equal the skateboard's momentum to the left. You write the equation  $m_1 v_1 = -m_2 v_2$ .

Substituting Bob's mass, Bob's velocity and the skateboard's mass, you solve and see that the skateboard's velocity will be negative sixteen point two five meters per second, which means sixteen point two five meters per second to the left.



## Module 5: Impulse and Momentum

### Topic 3 Content: Conservation of Momentum

#### Is Mechanical Energy Conserved?

The screenshot shows a digital learning interface with a dark header titled "Conservation of Momentum". On the left side, there is a vertical list of orange buttons: "Conservation of Momentum", "Example 1", "Momentum", "Example 2", "Equal and Opposite Forces", "Example 3", "Velocity", "Is Mechanical Energy Conse...", and "Calculating Results of Explo...". The main content area on the right is titled "Is Mechanical Energy Conserved?" and contains a text box with the following text:

Before:  
Bob and skateboard at rest.  $KE = 0$

After:  
Bob and skateboard moving.  $KE \neq 0$

Mechanical Energy is NOT conserved in explosions

Is mechanical energy conserved in an explosion?

If you look at the energy before the explosion, you see that both Bob and the skateboard are at rest, so they have no kinetic energy. After the explosion, both Bob and the skateboard have significant kinetic energy, since both are moving. This is clearly not a situation in which energy is conserved.

Energy is conserved, even when mechanical energy is not. Where does the mechanical energy come from? Chemical energy inside Bob's body is used by Bob to do work on the skateboard. The work done on the skateboard is transformed into kinetic energy.

## Module 5: Impulse and Momentum

### Topic 3 Content: Conservation of Momentum

#### Calculating Results of Explosions

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Explosions

Momentum is conserved.  
Total Momentum Before = 0  
Total Momentum After = 0

Momentum of first object equal to negative momentum of second object.

$$p_1 = -p_2$$

Mechanical energy is not conserved.

You can see that conservation of momentum makes it easy to calculate the results of explosions. Since both objects start with zero momentum, the momentum must add up to zero after the explosion. This means that the momentum of the first object will be the negative of the momentum of the other object. You use the equation  $m_1 v_1 = -m_2 v_2$  to solve problems involving explosions. It is also important to note that mechanical energy is not conserved in an explosion.