

### Question

From the relations

$$\begin{aligned}\mathbf{e}_r &= \mathbf{i} \sin \theta \cos \phi + \mathbf{j} \sin \theta \sin \phi + \mathbf{k} \cos \theta \\ \mathbf{e}_\phi &= -\mathbf{i} \sin \phi + \mathbf{j} \cos \phi \\ \mathbf{e}_\theta &= \mathbf{i} \cos \theta \cos \phi + \mathbf{j} \cos \theta \sin \phi - \mathbf{k} \sin \theta\end{aligned}$$

verify that  $\mathbf{e}_r, \mathbf{e}_\phi, \mathbf{e}_\theta$ , the basis vectors of spherical polar coordinates, form an orthogonal set, i.e. that they each have unit length and are mutually orthogonal.

### Answer

Showing that the vectors have unit length:

$$\begin{aligned}|\mathbf{e}_r| &= (\sin \theta \cos \phi)^2 + (\sin \theta \sin \phi)^2 + (\cos \theta)^2 \\ &= \sin^2 \theta \cos^2 \phi + \sin^2 \theta \sin^2 \phi + \cos^2 \theta \\ &= \sin^2 \theta (\cos^2 \phi + \sin^2 \phi) + \cos^2 \theta \\ &= \sin^2 \theta + \cos^2 \theta \\ &= 1\end{aligned}$$

$$\begin{aligned}|\mathbf{e}_\phi| &= (\sin \phi)^2 + (\cos \phi)^2 \\ &= 1\end{aligned}$$

$$\begin{aligned}|\mathbf{e}_\theta| &= (\cos \theta \cos \phi)^2 + (\cos \theta \sin \phi)^2 + (\sin \theta)^2 \\ &= \cos^2 \theta \cos^2 \phi + \cos^2 \theta \sin^2 \phi + \sin^2 \theta \\ &= \cos^2 \theta (\cos^2 \phi + \sin^2 \phi) + \sin^2 \theta \\ &= \cos^2 \theta + \sin^2 \theta \\ &= 1\end{aligned}$$

Showing they the vectors are mutually orthogonal:

$$\begin{aligned}\mathbf{e}_r \cdot \mathbf{e}_\phi &= -\sin \theta \cos \phi \sin \phi + \sin \theta \cos \phi \sin \phi \\ &= 0\end{aligned}$$

$$\begin{aligned}\mathbf{e}_r \cdot \mathbf{e}_\theta &= \cos \theta \cos^2 \phi \sin \theta + \sin \theta \sin^2 \phi \cos \theta - \cos \theta \sin \theta \\ &= \cos \theta \sin \theta (\sin^2 \phi + \cos^2 \phi) - \cos \theta \sin \theta \\ &= 0\end{aligned}$$

$$\begin{aligned}\mathbf{e}_\phi \cdot \mathbf{e}_\theta &= -\cos\theta \cos\phi \sin\phi + \cos\phi \cos\phi \sin\phi \\ &= 0\end{aligned}$$