
LAB 7. CONSERVATION OF MOMENTUM

Introduction

We only have two setups for this lab, because it requires not one, but two motion sensors.

Supplies

Rail, two carts, two motion detector setups, extra cart mass

Data Collection

Preliminary setup

1. Set up motion detectors with their computers. Set the detectors to take 40 readings per second.
2. Position the two motion detectors at each end of the track, facing each other.
3. Level the track.
4. Measure and record the masses of both carts and the auxiliary mass.
5. Decide which direction on the track is positive.

Magnetic bumper collisions

1. Place the two carts on the track, magnetic bumper ends facing each other.
2. If any collision is so violent that the carts actually touch or one of the carts derails, discard the run and repeat under gentler conditions.

Even bump tap

1. Position one cart near the center of the track and the other near an end.
2. Start data collection with both motion sensors.
3. Give a quick push to the cart near the end of the track toward the other cart.
4. When the second cart has moved away from the collision site, stop data collection.
5. View the velocity-time graphs of both detectors. Determine and record the carts' speeds immediately before and immediately after the collision. Assign the signs to properly convey the directions. Record the masses and velocities.
6. Repeat for another collision.

Light bump tap

1. Attach the auxiliary mass to the cart in the center of the track.
2. Repeat the procedure above for two collisions with the lighter cart striking the heavy cart.

Heavy bump tap

Repeat the above procedure but with the heavy cart striking the lighter cart, for a total of two collisions.

Uneven head-on

Set both carts moving toward each other to collide in the middle.

Even head-on

1. Remove the auxiliary mass.

2. Set both carts moving toward each other to collide in the middle.

Velcro collisions

1. Set both carts on the track so that their Velcro bumpers face each other.
2. When the carts collide, the carts should cling together. If they do not, or if either cart derails, repeat the collision under gentler circumstances.

Specific collisions

Carry out the same collisions described above for the magnetic bumpers, but with the Velcro bumpers.

Data Processing

1. For each collision, calculate the momentum mv of each cart immediately before and after the collision. Add the (vector) momentum of the two carts together to find the total momentum before and after the collision.
2. For each collision, calculate the kinetic energy of each cart before and after the collision. Add the kinetic energies of the two carts together to find the total kinetic energy before and after the collision.
3. For each magnetic bumper collision, calculate the relative speed of the two carts before and after the collision.

Lab Report

The report should contain the following parts. Each part must be easy to find and to interpret.

Data

Show the raw data.

Results

Make three tables of results:

1. Before and after momentum of the individual carts and their total (six values per collision).
2. Before and after kinetic energy of the individual carts and their total (six values per collision).
3. Before and after relative speeds for the magnetic bumper collisions (two values per collision).

Discussion

Was total momentum conserved in any of the collisions? Which ones? Is this theoretically expected? Explain.

Was total kinetic energy conserved in any of the collisions? Which ones? Is this theoretically expected? Explain.

Classify each collision as elastic, inelastic, or totally inelastic. Justify your classifications.

Were some collisions closer to elastic than others? Which ones? Explain why this happened.