

Lecture Outline

On the Shoulders of Giants: Inertia

- I. Newton's First Law
 - a. History of the First Law

Isaac Newton described the motion of objects with three laws. He compiled information from many different sources in the process of developing these laws.

 - A precursor to Newton's first law is found in the work of the Persian thinker, Abu 'Alī ibn Sīnā (whose historical context will be examined later in the lesson):
 1. Formulation from the Islamic Golden Age (translated): No [object] begins to move or comes to rest of itself.¹
 2. Newton's First Law (translated): Every [object] persists in its state of being at rest or of moving uniformly straight forward, except insofar as it is compelled to change its state by force impressed.²
 - b. Modern Statement of the First Law

[In an inertial frame] an object at rest remains at rest and an object in motion at a constant velocity remains in motion at a constant velocity unless acted upon by a force.

 - Expand on: velocity (the case of an object at rest is simply the zero-velocity case)
 - Highlight that forces are not needed to sustain motion (only to change it), as this is a common misconception.
 - c. Possible Examples (can be generated by students or given by instructor):
 - Reiterate demonstration
 - A water bottle in a car slowing to a stop
 - Hitting a ketchup bottle to get the last bit
- II. Mass
 - a. Define and connect to inertia (mass as a measure of inertia)
 - b. Provide Example:
 - Flick two balls of the same size, but different mass, along the same surface and observe which resists motion to a greater extent
- III. [If Time Allows] Net Force
 - a. The force referenced in the law of inertia is the net force or the sum of all forces.
 - b. Provide Example
 - Desk sitting on the floor (normal force, gravity, and horizontal motion of a student pushing the desk)
 - c. Free Body Diagrams
 - Introduce free body diagrams using the example given above. Identify the net force.
 - Introduce an example in which the net force is not the same as one of the individual forces.

Sources:

Khan Academy, <<https://www.khanacademy.org/science/physics/forces-newtons-laws/newtons-laws-of-motion/a/what-is-newtons-first-law>> (Accessed 18 June 2020).

The Physics Classroom, <<https://www.physicsclassroom.com/class/newtllaws/Lesson-1/Inertia-and-Mass>>, (Accessed 18 June 2020).

¹ E. Hecht, *Phys. Teach* 53, 80 (2015): <https://doi.org/10.1119/1.4905802>.

² I. Newton edited by I.B. Cohen and A. Whitman, *Principia Mathematica* (University of California Press, Berkeley, 1999).