

## Potential Energy

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**Reminder:** Potential energy is the energy stored by an object due to its position or condition.

For all forms of potential energy, there is no absolute zero position or condition. Only changes in potential energy are measured. You must assign a reference position (or establish a reference line or zero line) to determine potential energy.

### Gravitational Potential Energy

Gravitational potential energy is the potential energy an object has because of its position above Earth's surface.

$$\Delta E_g = mg\Delta h$$

$\Delta E_g$  -> change in gravitational potential energy (J)

m -> mass (kg)

g -> acceleration due to gravity ( $m/s^2$ )

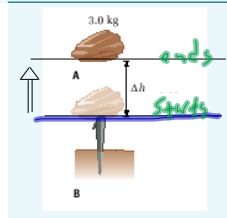
$\Delta h$  -> change in height (m)

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#### MODEL PROBLEM

#### Calculating Gravitational Potential Energy

You are about to drop a 3.0 kg rock onto a tent peg. Calculate the gravitational potential energy of the rock after you lift it to a height of 0.68 m above the tent peg.



reference level ->  $E_g = 0$  J,  $h = 0$  m

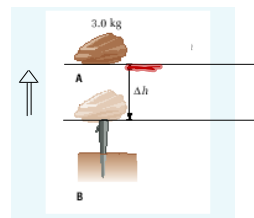
must be stated

$$E_g = mg\Delta h$$

$$E_g = mg(h_f - h_i)$$

$$E_g = (3.0 \text{ kg})(9.80 \text{ m/s}^2)(0.68 \text{ m} - 0 \text{ m})$$

$$E_g = 20 \text{ J}$$

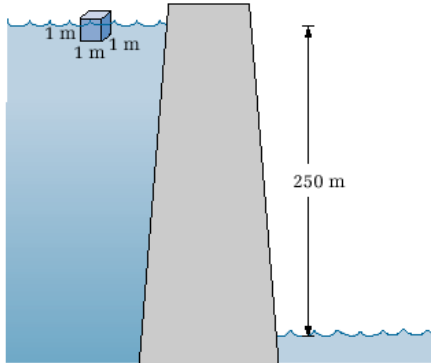


reference level ->  $E_g = 0$  J,  $h = 0$  m



PRACTICE PROBLEMS

27. A framed picture that is to be hung on the wall is lifted vertically through a distance of 2.0 m. If the picture has a mass of 4.45 kg, calculate its gravitational potential energy with respect to the ground.
28. The water level in a reservoir is 250 m above the water in front of the dam. What is the potential energy of each cubic metre of surface water behind the dam? (Take the density of water to be 1.00 kg/L.)
29. How high would you have to raise a 0.300 kg baseball in order to give it 12.0 J of gravitational potential energy?



Work-Gravitational Potential Energy Theorem  
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PRACTICE PROBLEMS

30. A student lifts her 2.20 kg pile of textbooks into her locker from where they rest on the ground. She must do 25.0 J of work in order to lift the books. Calculate the height that the student must lift the books.
31. A 46.0 kg child cycles up a large hill to a point that is a vertical distance of 5.25 m above the starting position. Find
  - (a) the change in the child's gravitational potential energy
  - (b) the amount of work done by the child against gravity
32. A 2.50 kg pendulum is raised vertically 65.2 cm from its rest position. Find the gravitational potential energy of the pendulum.
33. A roller-coaster train lifts its passengers up vertically through a height of 39.4 m from its starting position. Find the change in gravitational potential energy if the mass of the train and its passengers is  $3.90 \times 10^3$  kg.

$$W = \Delta E_g$$

$$W = E_{gf} - E_{gi}$$

$$W = mgh_f - mgh_i$$

$$Fd = mgh_f - mgh_i$$

Elastic Potential Energy  
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Many objects can stretch, compress, bend or change shape in some way. If an object can return to its original condition, it is said to be elastic. Since the object can undergo motion when the force causing the change in condition or state is removed, there must be stored energy due to its condition. This form of stored energy is called elastic potential energy.