

# ENERGY OF A TOSSED BALL

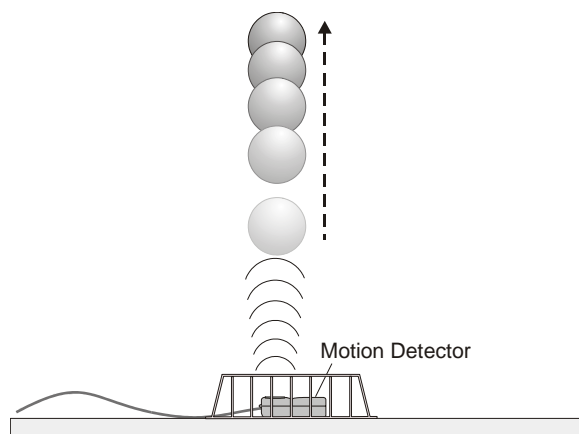
## LAB MECH 15. COMP

From *Physics with Computers*, Vernier Software & Technology, 2003.

### INTRODUCTION

When a juggler tosses a bean ball straight upward, the ball slows down until it reaches the top of its path and then speeds up on its way back down. In terms of energy, when the ball is released it has kinetic energy,  $KE$ . As it rises during its free-fall phase it slows down, loses kinetic energy, and gains gravitational potential energy,  $PE$ . As it starts down, still in free fall, the stored gravitational potential energy is converted back into kinetic energy as the object falls.

If there is no work done by frictional forces, the total energy will remain constant. In this experiment, we will see if this works out for the toss of a ball.



In this experiment, we will study these energy changes using a Motion Detector.

### PURPOSE

The purpose of this experiment is to measure the kinetic and potential energies of a ball moving vertically undergoing free fall due to gravity and to study changes in these energies and the total energy during the free-fall.

### MATERIALS

Computer  
Vernier computer interface  
Logger *Pro*  
Vernier Motion Detector


Volleyball, basketball, or other similar,  
fairly heavy ball  
Wire basket

## PRELIMINARY QUESTIONS

For each question, consider the free-fall portion of the motion of a ball tossed straight upward, starting just as the ball is released to just before it is caught. Assume that there is very little air resistance.

1. What form or forms of energy does the ball have while momentarily at rest at the top of the path?
2. What form or forms of energy does the ball have while in motion near the bottom of the path?
3. Sketch a graph of velocity vs. time for the ball.
4. Sketch a graph of kinetic energy vs. time for the ball.
5. Sketch a graph of potential energy vs. time for the ball.
6. If there are no frictional forces acting on the ball, how is the change in the ball's potential energy related to the change in kinetic energy?

## PROCEDURE


1. Measure and record the mass of the ball you plan to use in this experiment.
2. Connect the Motion Detector to the DIG/SONIC 1 channel of the interface. Place the Motion Detector on the floor and protect it by placing a wire basket over it.
3. Open the file "16 Energy of a Tossed Ball" from the *Physics with Computers* folder.
4. Hold the ball directly above and about 0.5 m from the Motion Detector. In this step, you will toss the ball straight upward above the Motion Detector and let it fall back toward the Motion Detector. Have your partner click  to begin data collection. Toss the ball straight up after you hear the Motion Detector begin to click. Use two hands. Be sure to pull your hands away from the ball after it starts moving so they are not picked up by the Motion Detector. Throw the ball so it reaches maximum height of about 1.0 m to 1.5 m above the Motion Detector. Catch and hold the ball when it has fallen to about 0.5 m above the Motion Detector. Verify that the position vs. time graph corresponding to the free-fall motion is parabolic in shape, without spikes or flat regions, before you continue. This step may require some practice. If necessary, repeat the toss, until you get a good graph. When you have good data on the screen, proceed to the Analysis section.

## DATA TABLE


Mass of the ball	(kg)	
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Position	Time (s)	Height (m)	Velocity (m/s)	PE (J)	KE (J)	TE (J)
After release						
Between release and top						
Top of path						
Between top and catch						
Before catch						

## ANALYSIS

- Click on the Examine button, , and move the mouse across the position or velocity graphs of the motion of the ball to answer these questions.
  - Identify the portion of each graph where the ball had just left your hands and was in free fall. Determine the height and velocity of the ball at this time. Enter your values in your Data Table.
  - Identify the point on each graph where the ball was at the top of its path. Determine the time, height, and velocity of the ball at this point. Enter your values in your Data Table.
  - Find a time where the ball was moving downward, but a short time before it was caught. Measure and record the height and velocity of the ball at that time.
  - Choose two or more points, approximately halfway in time between the three measured so far, determining the height and velocity and enter these values in your Data Table.
  - For each of the five points in your data table, calculate the Potential Energy (PE), Kinetic Energy (KE), and Total Energy (TE). Use the position of the Motion Detector as the zero of your gravitational potential energy.
- How well does this part of the experiment show conservation of energy? Explain.
- Logger *Pro* can graph the ball's kinetic energy according to  $KE = \frac{1}{2}mv^2$  if you supply the ball's mass. To do this, choose Column Options ► Kinetic Energy from the Data menu. Click the Column Definition tab. You will see a dialog box containing an approximate formula for calculating the *KE* of the ball. Edit the formula to reflect the mass of the ball and click .
- Logger *Pro* can also calculate the ball's potential energy according to  $PE = mgh$ . Here *m* is the mass of the ball, *g* the free-fall acceleration, and *h* is the vertical height of the ball measured from the position of the Motion Detector. As before, you will need to supply the mass of the ball. To do this, choose Column Options ► Potential Energy from the Data menu. Click the Column Definition tab. You will see a dialog box containing an approximate

formula for calculating the  $PE$  of the ball. Edit the formula to reflect the mass of the ball and click .

5. Go to the next page by clicking on the Next Page button, .
6. Inspect your kinetic energy vs. time graph for the toss of the ball. Explain its shape.
7. Inspect your potential energy vs. time graph for the free-fall flight of the ball. Explain its shape.
8. Record the two energy graphs by printing or sketching.
9. Compare your energy graphs predictions (from the Preliminary Questions) to the real data for the ball toss.
10. Logger *Pro* will also calculate Total Energy, the sum of  $KE$  and  $PE$ , for plotting. Record the graph by printing or sketching.
11. What do you conclude from this graph about the total energy of the ball as it moved up and down in free fall? Does the total energy remain constant? Should the total energy remain constant? Why? If it does not, what sources of extra energy are there or where could the missing energy have gone?

### **EXTENSIONS**

1. What would change in this experiment if you used a very light ball, like a beach ball?
2. What would happen to your experimental results if you entered the wrong mass for the ball in this experiment?
3. Try a similar experiment using a bouncing ball. You should mount the Motion Detector high and pointed downward so it can follow the ball through several bounces.