

[lex9] Electric dipole field

Given the dipole term in the multipole expansion of the electric potential $\Phi(\mathbf{x})$, derive the following expression for the electric dipole field $\mathbf{E}(\mathbf{x})$:

$$\Phi(\mathbf{x}) = \frac{1}{4\pi\epsilon_0} \frac{\mathbf{p} \cdot \hat{\mathbf{r}}}{r^2}, \quad \Rightarrow \quad \mathbf{E}(\mathbf{x}) = \frac{1}{4\pi\epsilon_0} \frac{3\hat{\mathbf{r}}(\mathbf{p} \cdot \hat{\mathbf{r}}) - \mathbf{p}}{r^3},$$

where \mathbf{p} is the electric dipole moment and $\hat{\mathbf{r}} = \mathbf{x}/r$ the unit vector pointing from the dipole (assumed localized) to the field point.

(a) Work out the solution by hand.

(b) Work out the solution in a Mathematica notebook. A vector is `List`. Its magnitude is `Norm`. The dot product is `Dot`, The gradient is `Grad`.

(c) What is the relative orientation of \mathbf{E} and \mathbf{p} (i) if $\hat{\mathbf{r}}$ and \mathbf{p} are parallel, (ii) if $\hat{\mathbf{r}}$ and \mathbf{p} are perpendicular, (iii) if $\hat{\mathbf{r}}$ and \mathbf{p} are antiparallel.

Solution: