

FULL REVIEW

Full Review — Vector Components and Unit Vectors — Foundational

Review the essential ideas, relationships, and problem-solving tools for Vector Components and Unit Vectors.

 TIME 45–60 minutes	 BEST FOR A complete topic review	 FINISH WITH A readiness check
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After this full review, you'll be able to...

recall the essential ideas, apply them to representative problems, and determine what to study next.

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

Work through the stages in order. Write directly in the spaces provided, check your work in the Solutions section, and finish by choosing the next resource that matches your confidence.

Choose how you want to review: work through this guide, follow the online review, or watch the video review.

[Start the Review Online →](#)

[Watch the Video Review →](#)

YOU WILL NEED

Pencil or pen • Calculator if needed • Approximately 45–60 minutes

FR-02 • COURSE ALIGNMENT

Course Alignment

This Physics Sensei Topic Review is an independent learning resource. Use it to reinforce key concepts, prepare for homework, or review before a quiz or exam.

Related Unit Review: If you need to review the complete unit material, review [Vectors and Components here →](#)

RESOURCE: Physics Sensei Topic Review
TOPIC ID: MEC-U02-T01
TOPIC: Vector Components and Unit Vectors
PARENT UNIT: MEC-U02 — Vectors and Components
COURSE LEVEL: Foundational

BEST USED

- ✓ After learning the topic
- ✓ Before starting homework
- ✓ Before a quiz or exam

FR-03 • YOUR REVIEW PLAN

Your Review Plan

Complete these six stages in order. Each stage builds on the previous one and prepares you for the final readiness check.

6 stages • Approximately 45–60 minutes

1 Warm-Up Check Activate prior knowledge.	2 Core Concepts Review the essential ideas.	3 Guided Practice Apply what you learned.
4 Confidence Check Confirm your understanding.	5 Summary Review the key ideas.	6 Next Step Continue your learning.

PRINTING TIP

For student copies, print double-sided and keep the Solutions section after the student activities so learners attempt each activity before checking their work.

FR-04 • STAGE 1 OF 6

Warm-Up Check

Before you begin, take a moment to see what you already remember. Do not worry about getting everything right. This is only a starting point.

ACTIVITY 1**Recall Activity 1**

Recall the axis meaning before calculating.

For a vector pointing down and right, what are the signs of its x- and y-components?

ACTIVITY 2**Recall Activity 2**

Identify the most common setup mistake.

If the angle is measured from +x, which component uses cosine?

FR-04 • WARM-UP CHECK CONTINUED

ACTIVITY 3

Recall Activity 3

Write the unit-vector form.

Express a vector with components $A_x = 3$ and $A_y = -4$ using $\hat{i}$ and $\hat{j}$.

Ready to strengthen your understanding?

You've refreshed what you already know. Next, reinforce the essential concepts that will help you solve problems with confidence.

Continue to Core Concepts →

FR-05 • STAGE 2 OF 6

Core Concepts

Let's rebuild the key ideas one step at a time. Focus on understanding the relationships before worrying about solving problems.

KEY CONCEPT 1**Components from Geometry**

Resolve a vector by projecting it onto coordinate axes. The component values may be positive or negative depending on direction.

$$A_x = A \cos(\theta); A_y = A \sin(\theta)$$

EXAMPLE $A = 15$ at 40° gives $A_x = 11.5$ and $A_y = 9.64$.

SENSEI NOTE Sketch the vector first so the component signs are obvious.

KEY CONCEPT 2**Reconstructing Magnitude and Direction**

Components can be recombined to recover the vector magnitude and direction.

$$A = \sqrt{A_x^2 + A_y^2}; \tan(\theta) = A_y/A_x$$

EXAMPLE Components (3,4) give magnitude 5 and direction about 53° above +x.

SENSEI NOTE Use the quadrant when interpreting an inverse tangent.

FR-05 • CORE CONCEPTS CONTINUED

KEY CONCEPT 3

Unit Vectors

Unit vectors separate direction from component size.

$$\mathbf{A} = A_x \hat{i} + A_y \hat{j}$$

EXAMPLE (-4,2) becomes $-4 \hat{i} + 2 \hat{j}$.

SENSEI NOTE A unit vector has magnitude 1; the component coefficient carries the physical units.

Ready to apply these ideas?

You've reinforced the essential concepts. Now put them into practice by working through guided examples and building your problem-solving confidence.

[Continue to Guided Practice →](#)

FR-06 • STAGE 3 OF 6

Guided Practice

Now it's time to apply what you've reviewed. Work through each activity in order. The examples become gradually more challenging, and each prepares you for the final readiness check.

PRACTICE 1**Worked Example**

Resolve a 25-m displacement at 37° above +x into components.

$$D_x = 25 \cos 37^\circ = 20.0 \text{ m}; D_y = 25 \sin 37^\circ = 15.0 \text{ m}.$$

FR-06 • GUIDED PRACTICE CONTINUED

PRACTICE 2

Guided Problem

For $A = -8\hat{i} + 6\hat{j}$, find magnitude and identify the quadrant.

Magnitude = 10; $x < 0$ and $y > 0$, so quadrant II.

PRACTICE 3

Independent Problem

A 50-N force has $F_x = 30$ N and points above +x. Find F_y and write the unit-vector form.

$F_y = \sqrt{(50^2 - 30^2)} = 40$ N; $F = 30\hat{i} + 40\hat{j}$ N.

Ready to check your understanding?

You've practiced the essential skills with guidance. Now solve a few short problems on your own and confirm you're ready to move forward.

Continue to Confidence Check →

FR-07 • STAGE 4 OF 6

Confidence Check

You've rebuilt the key ideas and practiced them with guidance. Now try these short questions on your own to check your understanding before moving on.

QUICK CHECK 1

Component Calculation

Calculate both components.

$A = 18$ at 30° below $+x$. Find A_x and A_y .

QUICK CHECK 2

Magnitude from Components

Use the Pythagorean relation.

$A = 7\hat{i} - 24\hat{j}$. Find its magnitude.

FR-07 • CONFIDENCE CHECK CONTINUED

QUICK CHECK 3

Unit-Vector Form

Translate ordered components.

Write components $(-5, -2)$ in unit-vector notation.

HOW DID IT GO?

I answered ____ of 3 questions correctly.

Use the Solutions section to check your reasoning, then take one final look at the essential ideas.

You've checked your understanding.

Take one final look at the essential ideas before deciding what to do next.

Continue to Summary →

FR-08 • STAGE 5 OF 6

Summary

Before moving on, take one final look at the most important ideas from this review.

KEY TAKEAWAY 1**Resolve**

Project the vector onto the coordinate axes and assign signs from direction.

KEY TAKEAWAY 2**Reconstruct**

Use the component squares for magnitude and the component ratio plus quadrant for direction.

KEY TAKEAWAY 3**Represent**

Write the vector as a sum of scalar components multiplying unit vectors.

MY ONE-SENTENCE SUMMARY

In my own words, the most important idea is:

Ready for your next step?

You've reviewed the essential ideas one last time. Now choose the resource that best matches how confident you feel.

Continue to Next Step →

ANSWER KEY • CHECK AFTER ATTEMPTING

Solutions and Explanations

Use these solutions to check your reasoning—not only your final answer. Replace each placeholder with a concise answer and the essential explanation.

WARM-UP • ACTIVITY 1

Recall Activity 1

x positive, y negative.

WHY IT WORKS The direction alone determines the signs.

WARM-UP • ACTIVITY 2

Recall Activity 2

The x-component uses cosine.

WHY IT WORKS The x-component is adjacent to an angle measured from +x.

WARM-UP • ACTIVITY 3

Recall Activity 3

$A = 3 \hat{i} - 4 \hat{j}$.

WHY IT WORKS Unit vectors carry the direction; the numbers are scalar components.

SOLUTIONS • GUIDED PRACTICE

PRACTICE 1**Worked Example**

$$D_x = 25 \cos 37^\circ = 20.0 \text{ m}; D_y = 25 \sin 37^\circ = 15.0 \text{ m}.$$

WHY IT WORKS The result follows from the component equations, magnitude relation, and unit-vector basis representation.

PRACTICE 2**Guided Problem**

Magnitude = 10; $x < 0$ and $y > 0$, so quadrant II.

WHY IT WORKS The result follows from the component equations, magnitude relation, and unit-vector basis representation.

PRACTICE 3**Independent Problem**

$$F_y = \sqrt{(50^2 - 30^2)} = 40 \text{ N}; F = 30 \hat{i} + 40 \hat{j} \text{ N}.$$

WHY IT WORKS The result follows from the component equations, magnitude relation, and unit-vector basis representation.

SOLUTIONS • CONFIDENCE CHECK

QUICK CHECK 1

Component Calculation

$$A_x = 15.6, A_y = -9.0.$$

WHY IT WORKS The stated component or basis rule gives the result directly.

QUICK CHECK 2

Magnitude from Components

25.

WHY IT WORKS The stated component or basis rule gives the result directly.

QUICK CHECK 3

Unit-Vector Form

$$-5 \hat{i} - 2 \hat{j}.$$

WHY IT WORKS The stated component or basis rule gives the result directly.

READINESS GUIDE

3 correct: You're ready to continue. • 2 correct: Review the missed idea, then continue. • 0–1 correct: Revisit Core Concepts or choose more practice.

FR-09 • STAGE 6 OF 6

Next Step: Continue Learning

Great work! You've completed this review. Choose the next resource that best matches how confident you feel.

 I'm Still Unsure Review the key ideas and examples again. Review Again →	 I Need More Practice Continue with additional practice for this topic. Go to Practice →	 I'm Ready Continue to the next recommended resource. Continue →
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RECOMMENDED LINKS

[Review this topic again →](#)[Find additional practice →](#)[Choose another type of physics help →](#)

Continue reviewing with these companion resources.

[Start the Review Online →](#)[Watch the Video Review →](#)

PHYSICS HELP THAT MAKES SENSE

A Physics Sensei review never ends at the last question. It always guides you toward the next useful step.

PhysicsSensei.com