A Brief Introduction To Fluid Mechanics

A Brief to Fluid Mechanics

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naval architecture and oceanography. *E. Fluid Statics: Understanding Fluids at Equilibrium:* Fluid statics examines fluids at rest, focusing on pressure distribution and buoyancy. This seemingly simple field has far-reaching applications, from designing hydraulic systems to predicting the stability of floating structures. **III. Fluid Dynamics: Fluids in Motion** *A. Fluid Kinematics: Describing Fluid Motion Without Considering Forces:* Fluid kinematics focuses on describing the motion of fluids without regard to the forces causing the motion. Concepts such as velocity fields, streamlines, and vorticity are central to this area. *B. Streamlines and Pathlines: Visualizing Fluid Flow:* Streamlines represent the instantaneous velocity direction at each point in the flow field. Pathlines, on the other hand, trace the path of a fluid p over time. Visualizing these lines aids in comprehending complex flow patterns. C. Conservation of Mass: The Continuity Equation: The continuity equation expresses the principle of mass conservation in fluid flow. It states that the mass flow rate must remain constant along a streamline, implying a relationship between velocity and cross-sectional area. D. The Navier-Stokes Equations: A Mathematical Description of Fluid Motion: The Navier-Stokes equations are a set of partial differential equations that describe the motion of viscous fluids. Their complexity stems from the intricate interplay between inertial, pressure, and viscous forces. Solving these equations analytically is often challenging; numerical methods are often employed. **E. Laminar vs. Turbulent Flow: Characterizing Flow Regimes:** Fluid flow can be classified as either laminar or turbulent. Laminar flow is characterized by smooth, orderly motion with parallel streamlines. Turbulent flow, in contrast, is chaotic and characterized by irregular fluctuations and eddies. **F. Boundary Layers: The Region of Velocity Gradient Near a Surface:** A boundary layer is a thin region near a solid surface where the fluid velocity changes rapidly from zero at the surface (no-slip condition) to the free-stream velocity. The characteristics of this layer are critical in determining drag and heat transfer. G. Reynolds Number: A Dimensionless Parameter Predicting Flow Regime: The Reynolds number is a dimensionless parameter that characterizes the relative importance of inertial and viscous forces in a fluid flow. It helps predict whether a flow will be laminar or turbulent. **IV. Applications of Fluid Mechanics A. Aerodynamics: The Science of Airflow Around Objects:** Aerodynamics applies fluid mechanics principles to the study of airflow around aircraft, automobiles, and other objects. It's crucial for designing efficient and stable vehicles. *B. Hydrodynamics: The Study of Water Flow:* Hydrodynamics focuses on the motion of water, encompassing a wide range of applications from designing efficient ships and submarines to managing water resources. C. Meteorology: Understanding Atmospheric Dynamics: Meteorology relies heavily on fluid mechanics to understand weather patterns, including the formation of clouds, precipitation, and wind systems. D. Biofluid Mechanics: Analyzing Biological Systems Involving Fluids: Biofluid mechanics examines fluid flow in biological systems, such as blood flow in the circulatory system and airflow in the respiratory system. This area has significant implications for medical research and treatment. *E. Chemical Engineering: Process Design and Optimization:* Fluid mechanics is vital in chemical engineering for designing and optimizing chemical processes, including mixing, separation, and transport operations. **F. Hydraulic Engineering: Water Resource Management and Control:** Hydraulic engineering employs fluid mechanics principles for managing water resources, designing dams, irrigation systems, and flood control measures. V. Conclusion: Exploring the Further Reach of Fluid Mechanics A. Advanced Topics: Computational Fluid Dynamics (CFD) and More: Advanced topics in fluid mechanics include computational fluid dynamics (CFD), which utilizes numerical methods to solve complex fluid flow problems, and the study of multiphase flows involving the interaction of multiple fluids. **B. The Ongoing Importance of Fluid Mechanics Research:** Fluid mechanics remains a vibrant and essential field of research, with ongoing efforts focused on understanding turbulence, developing more accurate models, and addressing emerging challenges in various application areas. Its continued relevance stems from its role in technological innovation and solving pressing societal issues.

A Brief Introduction to Fluid Mechanics: Understanding the Flow of Everything

Ever watched a river carve its path through a canyon, marveled at the graceful flight of a bird, or even just

enjoyed a refreshing sip of water? Behind these everyday phenomena lies a fascinating and fundamental field of science: fluid mechanics. It's the study of how liquids and gases behave, both at rest and in motion. From the immense forces that shape our planet to the microscopic interactions within our bodies, fluid mechanics is everywhere, quietly orchestrating the world around us.

Think about it. The air you breathe, the blood circulating in your veins, the gasoline powering your car – these are all fluids. Understanding their behavior isn't just an academic pursuit; it's crucial for designing everything from skyscrapers and airplanes to medical devices and weather prediction models. So, if you've ever been curious about why smoke curls upwards, how a dam holds back tons of water, or what makes a sailboat move, you've already dipped your toes into the world of fluid mechanics.

What Exactly is a Fluid? Defining the Unseen Forces

Before we dive deeper, let's get clear on what we mean by "fluid." In physics, a fluid is any substance that deforms continuously when subjected to a shear stress. This might sound a bit technical, but it essentially means that fluids, unlike solids, don't have a fixed shape. If you push on a solid, it might deform a bit, but it will resist and return to its original form. If you push on a fluid, it will keep flowing and changing shape as long as you apply that force.

This fundamental difference is what makes fluids so dynamic and interesting. The two main categories of fluids we study are:

1. **Liquids:** These are relatively incompressible (meaning their volume doesn't change much under pressure) and have a definite volume but take the shape of their container. Think of water, oil, or mercury.
2. **Gases:** These are highly compressible and expand to fill their entire container. Air, helium, and steam are common examples.

Sometimes, you'll also hear about **plasma**, often referred to as the fourth state of matter. While also fluid-like, its unique electrical properties make it a separate, specialized area of study within plasma physics, though it shares many principles with traditional fluid mechanics.

The Two Pillars of Fluid Mechanics: Statics and Dynamics

Fluid mechanics is broadly divided into two main branches, each focusing on a different aspect of fluid behavior:

Fluid Statics: The Study of Fluids at Rest

Fluid statics, or hydrostatics, deals with fluids that are not in motion. It's about understanding the forces and pressures that act on stationary fluids and the objects immersed within them. This might seem simpler than studying moving fluids, but the implications are profound.

One of the most fundamental concepts here is **pressure**. Pressure in a fluid at rest increases with depth. This is why the deeper you dive in the ocean, the more pressure you feel on your ears. This principle is described by Pascal's Law, which states that a pressure change at any point in a confined incompressible fluid is transmitted undiminished throughout the fluid. This is the principle behind hydraulic systems, like the brakes in your car or a hydraulic lift at a mechanic's shop.

Another key concept is **buoyancy**, the upward force exerted by a fluid that opposes the weight of an immersed object. Archimedes' principle explains this: the buoyant force on an object submerged in a fluid is equal to the weight of the fluid displaced by the object. This is why a massive ship made of steel can float (it displaces a volume of water whose weight is greater than the ship's weight), while a small steel ball sinks.

Understanding fluid statics is vital for designing stable structures like dams and bridges, calculating the load-bearing capacity of ships, and even understanding how our own bodies manage pressure differences.

Fluid Dynamics: The Thrill of Fluids in Motion

Fluid dynamics is where things get really exciting. This branch focuses on the behavior of fluids as they move. It's a more complex field because fluid motion can be incredibly intricate, involving concepts like velocity, acceleration, viscosity, and turbulence.

Viscosity is a crucial property in fluid dynamics. It's essentially the fluid's resistance to flow. Think of honey versus water. Honey is much more viscous; it flows slowly because its internal friction is high. Water is less viscous. Viscosity plays a critical role in how fluids interact with surfaces, influencing things like drag on vehicles and the efficiency of pumps.

One of the most important principles in fluid dynamics is **Bernoulli's Principle**. This principle, often expressed as a mathematical equation, relates the pressure, velocity, and height of a moving fluid. In simpler terms, it states that for an inviscid flow, an increase in the speed of the fluid occurs simultaneously with a decrease in pressure or a decrease in the fluid's potential energy. This explains why airplane wings are shaped the way they are (creating lower pressure above the wing, thus lift), how a chimney draws smoke upwards, and even how a perfume atomizer works.

Conservation of mass and **conservation of momentum** are also fundamental to fluid dynamics. The conservation of mass principle, often expressed as the continuity equation, states that mass is neither created nor destroyed. For fluids, this means that if fluid is entering a certain area, it must also be leaving that area or accumulating. The conservation of momentum principle is the application of Newton's second law to fluids, describing how forces affect the fluid's motion.

The study of fluid dynamics also grapples with the concept of **turbulence** – chaotic, unpredictable fluid motion characterized by swirling eddies. While laminar flow is smooth and orderly, turbulence is the norm in many real-world scenarios, from weather patterns to blood flow in arteries. Understanding and predicting turbulence is a major challenge and an active area of research in fluid mechanics.

Key Concepts and Properties in Fluid Mechanics

To truly appreciate fluid mechanics, it's helpful to understand some of its core properties and concepts:

Density: Mass per Unit Volume

Density (ρ) is a fundamental property that tells us how much mass is packed into a given volume. It's calculated as mass (m) divided by volume (V): $\rho = m/V$. Denser fluids, like mercury, will sink in less dense fluids, like water. This property is crucial for buoyancy calculations and understanding how different fluids layer.

Viscosity: The Fluid's "Stickiness"

As mentioned earlier, viscosity (μ) measures a fluid's resistance to shear flow. It's a measure of internal friction. High viscosity fluids are thick and flow slowly, while low viscosity fluids are thin and flow easily. We often distinguish between Newtonian fluids (where viscosity is constant regardless of shear rate, like water) and non-Newtonian fluids (where viscosity changes with shear rate, like ketchup or blood).

Compressibility: How Much Volume Changes

Compressibility describes how much the volume of a fluid changes under pressure. Liquids are generally considered incompressible for most practical applications, while gases are highly compressible. The speed of sound is related to the compressibility of a fluid; at speeds approaching the speed of sound (Mach 1), compressibility effects become significant and require specialized analysis.

Surface Tension: The Skin of the Liquid

Surface tension is an effect where the surface of a liquid acts like a stretched elastic membrane. This arises from the cohesive forces between liquid molecules. It's why water forms droplets, why some insects can walk on water, and why capillary action (the ability of a liquid to flow in narrow spaces against gravity) occurs.

Applications of Fluid Mechanics: Where the Flow Takes Us

The study of fluid mechanics isn't confined to dusty textbooks; its applications are woven into the fabric of modern life and technology:

1. **Aerospace Engineering:** Designing aircraft wings, understanding lift and drag, and optimizing airflow for efficiency and speed.
2. **Civil Engineering:** Designing dams, bridges, pipelines, and understanding water flow in rivers and sewage systems.
3. **Mechanical Engineering:** Designing pumps, turbines, engines, and understanding lubrication and cooling systems.
4. **Biomedical Engineering:** Studying blood flow in the circulatory system, designing artificial organs, and understanding respiration.
5. **Environmental Science:** Predicting weather patterns, understanding ocean currents, and managing pollution dispersal.
6. **Chemical Engineering:** Designing reactors, optimizing mixing processes, and understanding fluid transport in chemical plants.
7. **Everyday Life:** From the simple act of pouring a drink to understanding how a fan cools a room, fluid mechanics is constantly at play.

The Future of Fluid Mechanics: Unlocking New Frontiers

As our world becomes more complex, so too does the importance of fluid mechanics. Researchers are constantly pushing the boundaries, developing more sophisticated computational fluid dynamics (CFD) tools to simulate complex flows, exploring microfluidics for advanced medical diagnostics and drug delivery, and tackling the grand challenges of sustainable energy and climate change. The ongoing quest to understand and harness the power of fluids continues to drive innovation across countless fields.

So, the next time you witness a swirling vortex in your coffee, feel the wind on your face, or see a jet stream painting trails across the sky, take a moment to appreciate the intricate dance of fluid mechanics. It's a fundamental force shaping our universe, and its study offers a captivating glimpse into the hidden workings of the world around us.

A Brief Introduction to Fluid Mechanics Fluid mechanics is a foundational branch of physics and engineering that studies the behavior of liquids and gases in motion and at rest. It provides the essential principles for understanding how fluids flow, exert forces, and interact with their surroundings—knowledge critical to countless technological and natural phenomena. From the gentle flow of a river to the powerful currents within an aircraft engine, fluid mechanics governs processes that shape our environment and drive modern innovation. At its core, fluid mechanics divides into two primary branches: hydrodynamics, which focuses on liquids such as water and oil, and aerodynamics, dedicated to gases like air. These fields explore key concepts such as pressure, viscosity, density, and flow patterns, enabling scientists and engineers to predict and control fluid behavior under various conditions. The study reveals how fluids respond to forces, how they transmit pressure uniformly in enclosed spaces, and how they transition between laminar (smooth) and turbulent (chaotic) flows—each state significantly impacting performance and efficiency. Understanding fluid mechanics is indispensable across a wide range of applications. In civil engineering, it informs the design of dams, bridges, and water supply systems, ensuring structural stability and optimal hydraulic efficiency. Mechanical

engineers rely on fluid dynamics to develop efficient pumps, turbines, and heat exchangers, essential components in power generation and industrial processes. Aerospace engineers apply fluid principles to optimize aircraft and spacecraft aerodynamics, reducing drag and enhancing fuel economy. Even in biomedical contexts, fluid mechanics helps model blood flow through the circulatory system, supporting advancements in medical device design and disease treatment. The benefits of mastering fluid mechanics extend beyond technical applications. It equips professionals with the analytical tools to solve complex real-world problems, from mitigating flood risks to improving ventilation in urban spaces. By revealing the hidden dynamics of fluid motion, it fosters innovation in sustainable technologies such as wind energy systems and efficient irrigation methods. Moreover, fluid mechanics underpins environmental science by explaining atmospheric patterns, ocean currents, and climate dynamics—insights vital for addressing global challenges like climate change and water scarcity. Looking to the future, fluid mechanics continues to evolve alongside emerging technologies. Advances in computational fluid dynamics (CFD) allow for increasingly precise simulations, enabling virtual testing that accelerates design and reduces costs. Integration with artificial intelligence and machine learning opens new frontiers in predictive modeling, optimizing fluid systems in real time. As humanity pursues greener and more efficient solutions, fluid mechanics will remain a cornerstone discipline, driving innovation in renewable energy, transportation, and smart infrastructure. Its enduring relevance underscores its role not just as a scientific field, but as a catalyst for progress across disciplines and industries.

A Brief Introduction to Fluid Mechanics: Understanding the Flow of Matter

Fluid mechanics, a cornerstone of physics and engineering, delves into the fascinating world of fluids – substances that continuously deform under applied shear stress. This branch of science explores the behavior of liquids and gases, both at rest and in motion. From the gentle lapping of ocean waves to the powerful thrust of a rocket engine, fluid mechanics provides the fundamental principles that govern these phenomena. Understanding fluid mechanics is not just an academic pursuit; it's essential for designing everything from aircraft and automobiles to pipelines and medical devices. This article offers a comprehensive yet accessible introduction to this vital field.

What are Fluids?

Before diving into the dynamics of their movement, it's crucial to define what constitutes a fluid. Unlike solids, which possess a definite shape and resist deformation, fluids have no fixed shape and readily adapt to their containers. This characteristic arises from the relatively weak intermolecular forces present in liquids and gases, allowing their constituent particles to move past each other freely. Key properties that define a fluid's behavior include density, viscosity, and compressibility.

Density: Mass Per Unit Volume

Density (ρ), defined as mass (m) per unit volume (V), is a fundamental property. It tells us how "heavy" a substance is for its size. For instance, water is denser than air, meaning a given volume of water contains more mass than the same volume of air. Density plays a significant role in buoyancy and pressure calculations.

Viscosity: Resistance to Flow

Viscosity (μ) is arguably the most defining characteristic of a fluid's motion. It quantifies a fluid's internal resistance to flow or deformation. Imagine trying to stir honey versus water; honey's high viscosity makes it much harder to stir. This resistance arises from the friction between adjacent layers of the fluid as they move

relative to each other. We often distinguish between Newtonian fluids (where viscosity is constant regardless of shear rate, like water) and non-Newtonian fluids (where viscosity changes with shear rate, like ketchup or blood). Understanding viscosity is critical for designing pumps, pipelines, and lubrication systems.

Compressibility: How Volume Changes Under Pressure

Compressibility refers to a fluid's tendency to change its volume when subjected to external pressure. Gases are generally highly compressible, meaning their volume can be significantly reduced by increasing pressure. Liquids, on the other hand, are often treated as incompressible for many engineering applications, as their volume changes very little under typical pressure variations. This property is particularly important in high-speed gas dynamics and situations involving significant pressure gradients.

Fluid Statics: Fluids at Rest

Fluid statics, also known as hydrostatics, deals with fluids that are not in motion. Even when a fluid is stationary, it exerts forces and pressures. The principles of fluid statics are fundamental to understanding phenomena like buoyancy and the design of dams and reservoirs.

Pressure: Force Per Unit Area

Pressure (P) is defined as the force (F) exerted per unit area (A). In a fluid at rest, pressure acts equally in all directions. A key principle is Pascal's Law, which states that a pressure change applied to an enclosed fluid is transmitted undiminished to every portion of the fluid and to the walls of the containing vessel. This principle forms the basis of hydraulic systems, like those found in car brakes and construction equipment.

Buoyancy and Archimedes' Principle

One of the most celebrated concepts in fluid statics is buoyancy, the upward force exerted by a fluid that opposes the weight of an immersed object. Archimedes' Principle states that the buoyant force on an object submerged in a fluid is equal to the weight of the fluid displaced by the object. This principle explains why ships float, why balloons rise, and why an object feels lighter when submerged in water. The interplay between the object's weight and the buoyant force determines whether it sinks, floats, or remains suspended.

Fluid Dynamics: Fluids in Motion

Fluid dynamics is a more complex and dynamic field, focusing on the behavior of fluids in motion. It involves understanding concepts such as flow rate, velocity, and the forces that cause and resist fluid motion. This area is crucial for analyzing everything from blood flow in arteries to the aerodynamic forces acting on an airplane wing.

Continuity Equation: Conservation of Mass

The continuity equation is a fundamental principle derived from the conservation of mass. For an incompressible fluid flowing through a pipe, it states that the product of the cross-sectional area and the fluid velocity remains constant along the flow path. In simpler terms, if the area of a pipe narrows, the fluid must speed up to maintain the same flow rate. This concept is intuitive and observable in everyday phenomena, like water flowing faster from a garden hose when you partially cover the nozzle.

Bernoulli's Principle: Energy Conservation in Fluids

Bernoulli's principle, a cornerstone of fluid dynamics, describes the relationship between pressure, velocity, and elevation in a moving fluid. It's essentially an application of the conservation of energy for fluids. The principle states that for an inviscid flow, an increase in the speed of the fluid occurs simultaneously with a decrease in pressure or a decrease in the fluid's potential energy. This principle explains how airplane wings generate lift: the air flowing over the curved upper surface travels faster than the air flowing under the flatter lower surface, resulting in lower pressure above the wing and thus an upward force. It also has implications in understanding venturi meters and atomizers.

Reynolds Number: Laminar vs. Turbulent Flow

When analyzing fluid motion, a critical dimensionless parameter is the Reynolds number (Re). It represents the ratio of inertial forces to viscous forces within the fluid. The Reynolds number helps predict the flow regime. At low Reynolds numbers, flow tends to be smooth and orderly, known as laminar flow. At high Reynolds numbers, the flow becomes chaotic and irregular, characterized by swirling eddies and mixing, which is called turbulent flow. The transition from laminar to turbulent flow is a complex phenomenon with significant engineering implications, affecting drag, heat transfer, and mixing efficiency. Understanding the Reynolds number is vital in designing efficient systems where flow characteristics are paramount.

Key Applications of Fluid Mechanics

The principles of fluid mechanics are not confined to theoretical discussions; they have profound practical implications across a vast array of disciplines:

Aerospace Engineering

From the design of aircraft wings that generate lift to the analysis of rocket propulsion, fluid mechanics is indispensable in aerospace. Understanding airflow over surfaces is crucial for minimizing drag and maximizing efficiency. Computational Fluid Dynamics (CFD) is a powerful tool used extensively in this field to simulate and analyze complex airflow patterns.

Civil Engineering

Fluid mechanics plays a vital role in the design of bridges, dams, and water supply systems. Engineers use its principles to calculate forces exerted by water on structures, to design efficient drainage systems, and to model river flow and flood dynamics.

Mechanical Engineering

The design of pumps, turbines, pipelines, and internal combustion engines heavily relies on fluid mechanics. Understanding how fluids behave under pressure and how to manage their flow is essential for efficient and safe operation of these systems.

Biomedical Engineering

The study of blood flow in the circulatory system, airflow in the lungs, and the design of artificial organs all involve fluid mechanics. Analyzing blood flow patterns can help diagnose and treat cardiovascular diseases. Understanding respiratory mechanics is crucial for developing ventilators and other respiratory support devices.

Environmental Engineering

Fluid mechanics principles are used to model pollutant dispersion in air and water, design wastewater treatment systems, and understand atmospheric and oceanic circulation patterns. Managing and protecting our environment often hinges on a deep understanding of fluid behavior.

Conclusion: A Fluid World of Possibilities

Fluid mechanics is a vast and dynamic field that continues to evolve with advancements in theory and computational tools. From the everyday experience of pouring a drink to the cutting-edge research in aerospace and medicine, the principles of fluid mechanics are omnipresent. By understanding the fundamental properties of fluids and the laws that govern their behavior, we unlock a world of possibilities for innovation, problem-solving, and a deeper appreciation of the natural world around us. Whether you're a student, an engineer, or simply a curious observer, a brief introduction to fluid mechanics reveals a fascinating and essential aspect of our universe.

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Digital literacy naturally develops through regular interaction with digital resources. Learning how to evaluate sources, manage information, and use reading tools responsibly is now a vital skill. Engaging with **A Brief Introduction To Fluid Mechanics** in digital form helps users build these competencies through practical experience.

Perhaps the most meaningful change lies in how digital access influences attitudes toward learning. When information is easy to obtain, curiosity feels encouraged rather than inconvenient. Readers are more willing to explore new topics, revisit familiar ideas, and continue learning over time.

This mindset supports lifelong learning. Education becomes an ongoing process shaped by evolving interests and challenges. Having **A Brief Introduction To Fluid Mechanics** available digitally ensures that learning remains flexible and adaptable throughout different stages of life.

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Questions & Answers About a brief introduction to fluid mechanics

No	Question	Answer
1	What exactly is 'fluid mechanics' and why should I care?	Fluid mechanics is the study of how fluids (liquids and gases) behave, both at rest (statics) and in motion (dynamics). You should care because it explains everything from how airplanes fly and rivers flow to how our blood circulates and how weather patterns form!
2	What's the difference between a liquid and a gas in fluid mechanics?	The key difference lies in compressibility and volume. Liquids are virtually incompressible and maintain a fixed volume, while gases are highly compressible and expand to fill their container. This affects how we analyze their behavior.
3	I keep hearing about 'viscosity'. What is it and does it really matter?	Viscosity is a fluid's resistance to flow, like its 'thickness'. Honey is very viscous, while water is not. It absolutely matters, as it influences friction, drag on objects, and how easily fluids can be pumped.
4	What's the most fundamental principle in fluid mechanics?	The conservation of mass, momentum, and energy are fundamental. For example, Bernoulli's principle, derived from conservation of energy, explains how pressure changes with fluid speed – crucial for understanding lift on wings.
5	Can you give me a real-world example of fluid statics in action?	Sure! The pressure exerted by water in a dam is a classic example of fluid statics. The deeper you go, the greater the pressure, which engineers must account for when designing structures.
6	What are some exciting applications of fluid dynamics?	Fluid dynamics is behind designing efficient aircraft and car aerodynamics, predicting weather and climate, understanding ocean currents, developing medical devices like artificial hearts, and even designing roller coasters!
7	Is there a simple way to think about fluid 'flow rate'?	Flow rate is simply the volume of fluid that passes a point per unit of time. Think of it like how quickly water is filling a bucket from a hose. It's a key measurement in many fluid systems.
8	What's a 'boundary layer' and why is it important?	A boundary layer is a thin layer of fluid near a solid surface where the fluid's velocity changes from zero at the surface to its free-stream velocity. It's critical for understanding friction drag and heat transfer.

9	Where can I learn more about fluid mechanics if I'm intrigued?	Many universities offer introductory courses, and there are excellent online resources like Khan Academy, Coursera, and YouTube channels dedicated to physics and engineering. Textbooks are also a great starting point.

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