# CHAPTER OVERVIEW

## 5: The Harmonic Oscillator and the Rigid Rotor

- **The harmonic oscillator is common:** It appears in many everyday examples: Pendulums, springs, electronics (such as the RLC circuit), standing waves on a string, etc. It's trivial to set up demonstrations of these phenomena, and we see them constantly.
- **The harmonic oscillator is intuitive:** We can picture the forces on systems such as pendulum or a plucked string. This makes it simple to study in the classroom. In contrast, there are many "everyday" examples that are not intuitive.
- **The harmonic oscillator is mathematically simple:** Math is part of physics. In studying simple harmonic motion, students can immediately use the formulas that describe its motion. These formulas are understandable: for example, the equation for frequency shows the intuitive result that increasing spring stiffness increases frequency.



Thumbnail: The rigid rotor model for a diatomic molecule. (CC BY-SA 3.0 Unported; Mysterioso via Wikipedia)