

27.9: Sample lab report review (Measuring g using a pendulum)

27.9.1: Summary

The authors measured the period of a pendulum to determine g . They measured g to be $(7.65 \pm 0.378)\text{m/s}^2$ which is inconsistent with the accepted value. The authors were incorrect in assuming that the pendulum would undergo simple harmonic motion in the conditions that they used.

27.9.2: Review

The experimental procedure was clearly written and one could mostly reproduce this experiment with the given description.

The authors thought about minimizing uncertainties by measuring the period over several oscillations, although it appears that 20 was perhaps too large, as friction was likely to have an effect. The authors should have taken more care in determining the number of oscillations to use so that the uncertainty in the time is minimized while also keeping the effects of friction negligible. Ultimately, the authors did not specify the uncertainty in the time that they measured.

The authors also claim to have measured the length of the pendulum with a precision of 0.5mm, but did not specify the length of the ruler that they used. I would not expect the measurement to be that precise unless they used a very precise ruler that is longer than 1m. However, the authors made the length of the pendulum as long as possible so as to minimize the uncertainty in the length.

The authors did not describe the mass that was attached at the end of the pendulum, and whether its size would be expected to cause significant air drag.

The authors made a mistake in assuming that a pendulum would undergo simple harmonic motion with an amplitude of 90° , as the small angle approximation used to determine the period does not apply in this case.

The experimental procedure was scientifically sound, other than the choices for the number of oscillations and their amplitude.

27.9.3: Overall rating of the Experiment

Satisfactory - The experiment was well described, but the authors should have paid more attention to their choice of 20 oscillations, and they made a mistake in assuming that their pendulum would exhibit simple harmonic oscillation with a large amplitude.

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