

Simplest solutions for Laplace's Equation

These solutions really comprise the cases where only one (distance) variable of the problem is involved.

(Cartesian):

Suppose V depends only upon x . Then:

$$\nabla^2 V = 0 \Rightarrow V = a + bx$$

Then fit the boundary conditions:

$$@ x_1 : V = V_1 \Rightarrow V_1 = a + bx_1$$

$$@ x_2 : V = V_2 \Rightarrow V_2 = a + bx_2$$

These are easily solved to give:

$$a = -\frac{V_1 x_2 - V_2 x_1}{x_1 - x_2} : b = -\frac{V_2 - V_1}{x_1 - x_2}$$

For example: the parallel plate capacitor, at $x=0$, $V=0$ and at $x=d$, $V=V$:

$$a = 0 : b = \frac{V}{d} \Rightarrow V(x) = 0 + \frac{V}{d} x$$

(cylindrical)

Suppose V depends only upon s . Then:

$$\nabla^2 V = 0 \Rightarrow \frac{1}{s} \frac{\partial}{\partial s} \left(s \frac{\partial V}{\partial s} \right) = 0 \Rightarrow \frac{d}{ds} \left(s \frac{dV}{ds} \right) = 0 \Rightarrow s \frac{dV}{ds} = a_1 \Rightarrow \frac{dV}{ds} = \frac{a_1}{s} \Rightarrow V(s) - V(s_0) = a_1 \ln \left[\frac{s}{s_0} \right]$$

$$\Rightarrow V(s) = V(s_0) + \ln \left[\frac{s}{s_0} \right]^{a_1}$$

$$@ s_0 : V = V_0 \Rightarrow \text{No new info}$$

$$@ s_1 : V = V_1 \Rightarrow V_1 = V_0 + a_1 \ln \left[\frac{s_1}{s_0} \right] \Rightarrow a_1 = \frac{V_1 - V_0}{\ln \left[\frac{s_1}{s_0} \right]} \Rightarrow V = V_0 + \left[\frac{V_1 - V_0}{\ln \left[\frac{s_1}{s_0} \right]} \right] \ln \left[\frac{s}{s_0} \right]$$

For example: the coaxial cable: at $s=a$, $V=0$ and at $s=b$, $V=V$

$$V = \left[\frac{V}{\ln \left[\frac{b}{a} \right]} \right] \ln \left[\frac{s}{a} \right]$$

(spherical)

Suppose V depends only upon r . Then:

$$\bar{\nabla}^2 V = \frac{1}{r^2} \frac{\partial}{\partial r} \left(r^2 \frac{\partial V}{\partial r} \right)$$

$$\frac{d}{dr} \left(r^2 \frac{dV}{dr} \right) = 0 \Rightarrow r^2 \frac{dV}{dr} = a \Rightarrow \frac{dV}{dr} = \frac{a}{r^2} \Rightarrow V(r) = V(r_1) - a \left[\frac{1}{r} - \frac{1}{r_1} \right] \Rightarrow a = -\frac{V_b - V_a}{\left[\frac{1}{b} - \frac{1}{a} \right]}$$

$$\Rightarrow V(r) = V_a + \frac{V_b - V_a}{\left[\frac{1}{b} - \frac{1}{a} \right]} \left[\frac{1}{r} - \frac{1}{r_1} \right]$$

For example: the concentric spheres: at $r=a$, $V=V_1$ and at $r=b$, $V=-V_1$:

$$V(r) = V_1 - \frac{2V_1}{\left[\frac{1}{b} - \frac{1}{a} \right]} \left[\frac{1}{r} - \frac{1}{a} \right].$$