

This short paper shows how to calculate uncertainty of position and momentum operator.

Hope I can help you learning quantum mechanics.

The wave function  $\psi(x)$  of a free particle in position representation  $x$ :

$$\psi(x)$$

Fourier's theorem states that we can reconstruct  $\psi(x)$  by a superposition of plane waves  $\phi(k)$ :

$$\psi(x) = \frac{1}{\sqrt{2\pi}} \cdot \int_{-\infty}^{\infty} \phi(k) \cdot e^{ikx} dk$$

$\phi(k)$  is the weight of every phase  $e^{ikx}$ , the integration of all weighted phases gives back the original function  $\psi(x)$ .

Fourier's theorem states that we can do the inverse:

$$\phi(k) = \frac{1}{\sqrt{2\pi}} \cdot \int_{-\infty}^{\infty} \psi(x) \cdot e^{-ikx} dx$$

$\psi(x)$  and  $\phi(k)$  are the Fourier transform of each other. Both contain the same information.

A complex valued function is called square integrable if we can integrate it over the whole space:

$$|\psi|^2 = \int_{-\infty}^{\infty} \psi^* \cdot \psi = c < \infty, \quad |\phi|^2 = \int_{-\infty}^{\infty} \phi^* \cdot \phi = d < \infty$$

We write  $|\psi|^2$  and  $|\phi|^2$  as:

$$\langle \psi | \psi \rangle \text{ resp. } \langle \phi | \phi \rangle$$

Fourier states that:

$$\langle \psi(x) | \psi(x) \rangle = \langle \phi(k) | \phi(k) \rangle$$

Note: shifting a function from the right position to the left position within a bra-ket pair always uses complex conjugation.

We can normalize the integral to one:

$$\frac{1}{c} \int_{-\infty}^{\infty} \psi^* \cdot \psi = 1, \quad \frac{1}{d} \int_{-\infty}^{\infty} \phi^* \cdot \phi = 1$$

With this we interpret  $|\psi|^2$  resp.  $|\phi|^2$  as probability densities.

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| <p>The position operator <math>\hat{x}</math> multiplies with the position <math>x</math>:</p> $\hat{x}(\psi(x)) = x \cdot \psi(x)$ <p>In this sense <math>\psi</math> is an eigenfunction of the operator <math>\hat{x}</math> with eigenvalue <math>x</math>.</p> | <p>In position space the momentum operator <math>\hat{p}</math> differentiates with respect to position <math>x</math>:</p> $\hat{p}(\psi) = -i \cdot \frac{\partial}{\partial x} \psi$ <p>As we work with exponential functions the derivative always contains the original function itself. In this sense <math>\Psi</math> is an eigenfunction of the operator <math>\hat{p}</math>. The eigenvalue is part of the exponent of the original function.</p> |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | <p>In momentum space the momentum operator multiplies with the <math>p</math>:</p> $\hat{p}(\phi) = p\phi = \hbar k\phi$                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |

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| <p>The expectation value of the position operator <math>\langle \hat{x} \rangle</math>:</p> $\langle \hat{x} \rangle = \langle \psi   \hat{x} \psi \rangle = \int_{-\infty}^{\infty} \psi^* \cdot x \cdot \psi = \int_{-\infty}^{\infty} x \cdot  \psi ^2$ <p>This is the center of the probability distribution.<br/>Note: <math>x</math> commutes with <math>\psi</math>.</p> | <p>The expectation value of the momentum operator <math>\langle \hat{p} \rangle</math> we get by using Fourier:</p> $\langle \hat{p} \rangle = \langle \psi   \hat{p} \psi \rangle = \langle \phi   \hbar k \phi \rangle = \int_{-\infty}^{\infty} \hbar k \cdot  \phi ^2$ <p>This is the center of the probability distribution.<br/>Note: <math>\hbar</math> and <math>k</math> commute with <math>\phi</math>.</p> |
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We know that the operators  $\hat{x}$  and  $\hat{p}$  are Hermitian so that they can change positions within the brackets.

$$\langle \hat{x}^2 \rangle = \langle \psi | \hat{x}^2 \psi \rangle = \langle \hat{x} \psi | \hat{x} \psi \rangle$$

$$\langle \hat{p}^2 \rangle = \langle \psi | \hat{p}^2 \psi \rangle = \langle \hat{p} \psi | \hat{p} \psi \rangle$$

Cauchy-Schwarz inequality gives:

$$\langle \hat{x} \psi | \hat{x} \psi \rangle \langle \hat{p} \psi | \hat{p} \psi \rangle \geq |\langle \hat{x} \psi | \hat{p} \psi \rangle|^2 = |\langle \psi | \hat{x} \hat{p} \psi \rangle|^2 = |\langle \hat{x} \hat{p} \rangle|^2$$

We split  $\hat{x} \hat{p}$ :

$$\hat{x} \hat{p} = \frac{1}{2} \hat{x} \hat{p} + \frac{1}{2} \hat{p} \hat{x} + \frac{1}{2} \hat{x} \hat{p} - \frac{1}{2} \hat{p} \hat{x}$$

$\frac{1}{2} \hat{x} \hat{p} - \frac{1}{2} \hat{p} \hat{x}$  is known as the commutator  $[\hat{x}, \hat{p}]$ .

$\frac{1}{2} \hat{x} \hat{p} + \frac{1}{2} \hat{p} \hat{x}$  is known as the anticommutator  $\{\hat{x}, \hat{p}\}$ .

We rewrite:

$$\hat{x} \hat{p} = \frac{1}{2} \{\hat{x}, \hat{p}\} + \frac{1}{2} [\hat{x}, \hat{p}]$$

The anticommutator is Hermitian and gives a real expectation value,  $\langle \{\hat{x}, \hat{p}\} \rangle \in \mathbb{R}$ .

The commutator is anti-Hermitian and gives a pure imaginary expectation value,  $\langle [\hat{x}, \hat{p}] \rangle = i \cdot a, a \in \mathbb{R}$ .

We get:

$$|\langle \hat{x} \hat{p} \rangle| = \left| \frac{1}{2} \langle \{\hat{x}, \hat{p}\} \rangle + \frac{1}{2} \langle [\hat{x}, \hat{p}] \rangle \right| \geq \frac{1}{2} |\langle [\hat{x}, \hat{p}] \rangle|$$