

To calculate the work a force does on an object as the object moves through some displacement, we use only the force component along the object's displacement. The force component perpendicular to the displacement does zero work.

From Fig. 7-2, we see that we can write F_x as $F \cos \phi$, where ϕ is the angle between the directions of the displacement \vec{d} and the force \vec{F} . Thus,

$$W = Fd \cos \phi \quad (\text{work done by a constant force}). \quad (7-7)$$

Because the right side of this equation is equivalent to the scalar (dot) product $\vec{F} \cdot \vec{d}$, we can also write

$$W = \vec{F} \cdot \vec{d} \quad (\text{work done by a constant force}), \quad (7-8)$$

where F is the magnitude of \vec{F} . (You may wish to review the discussion of scalar products in Section 3-8.) Equation 7-8 is especially useful for calculating the work when \vec{F} and \vec{d} are given in unit-vector notation.

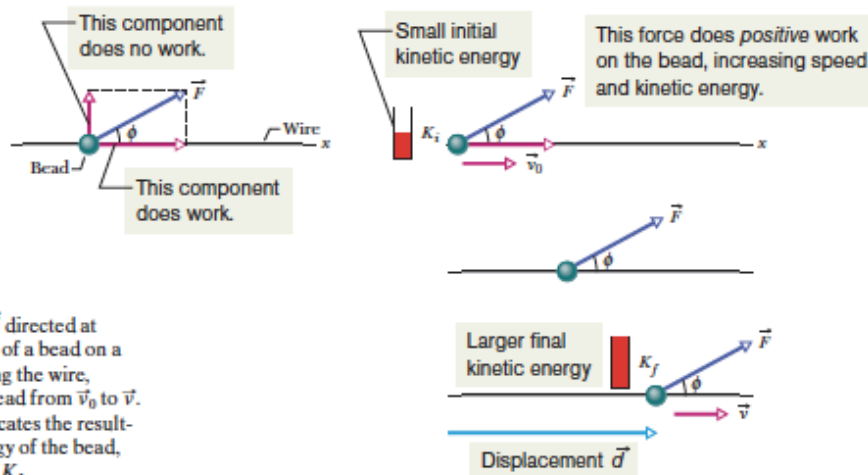


Fig. 7-2 A constant force \vec{F} directed at angle ϕ to the displacement \vec{d} of a bead on a wire accelerates the bead along the wire, changing the velocity of the bead from \vec{v}_0 to \vec{v} . A “kinetic energy gauge” indicates the resulting change in the kinetic energy of the bead, from the value K_i to the value K_f .

