

23. A positive charge q is a distance $r - d$ from P , another positive charge q is a distance r from P , and a negative charge $-q$ is a distance $r + d$ from P . Sum the individual electric potentials created at P to find the total:

$$V = \frac{q}{4\pi\epsilon_0} \left[\frac{1}{r-d} + \frac{1}{r} - \frac{1}{r+d} \right] .$$

We use the binomial theorem to approximate $1/(r-d)$ for r much larger than d :

$$\frac{1}{r-d} = (r-d)^{-1} \approx (r)^{-1} - (r)^{-2}(-d) = \frac{1}{r} + \frac{d}{r^2} .$$

Similarly,

$$\frac{1}{r+d} \approx \frac{1}{r} - \frac{d}{r^2} .$$

Only the first two terms of each expansion were retained. Thus,

$$V \approx \frac{q}{4\pi\epsilon_0} \left[\frac{1}{r} + \frac{d}{r^2} + \frac{1}{r} - \frac{1}{r} + \frac{d}{r^2} \right] = \frac{q}{4\pi\epsilon_0} \left[\frac{1}{r} + \frac{2d}{r^2} \right] = \frac{q}{4\pi\epsilon_0 r} \left[1 + \frac{2d}{r} \right] .$$