

$$I_{sphere} = \iiint_{sphere} dm s^2$$

I use s as the variable instead of r to remind you that the distance from the origin (r) is different than the distance to the axis of rotation, which we'll say is the z -axis ($s = r \sin \theta$). As usual, we obtain the infinitesimal mass dm of a tiny volume element by multiplying the uniform density ρ by the infinitesimal volume dV . Then,

$$\begin{aligned} I_{sphere} &= \iiint_{sphere} s^2 \rho dV \\ &= \iiint_{sphere} r^2 \sin^2 \theta \rho dV \end{aligned}$$

Here's where knowledge of calculus III comes in handy. The easiest way to integrate over a spherically symmetric volume is to use spherical coordinates r, θ, ϕ instead of the usual cartesian coordinates x, y, z . The rectangular volume element $dx dy dz$ then becomes the spherical volume element $r^2 \sin \theta dr d\theta d\phi$.

$$\begin{aligned} I_{sphere} &= \int_0^{2\pi} \int_0^\pi \int_0^R r^2 \sin^2 \theta \rho (r^2 \sin \theta dr d\theta d\phi) \\ &= 2\pi \rho \int_0^\pi \int_0^R r^4 \sin^3 \theta dr d\theta \\ &= \frac{2\pi \rho}{5} R^5 \int_0^\pi \sin^3 \theta d\theta \\ &= \frac{2\pi \rho}{5} R^5 \frac{4}{3} \end{aligned}$$

But that still doesn't look like the result we're supposed to get. That's because we still have the density ρ in there. Let's get rid of it by using $\rho = M / (\frac{4}{3}\pi R^3)$.

$$\begin{aligned} I_{sphere} &= \frac{2}{5} \frac{4}{3} \frac{3}{4} MR^2 \\ &= \frac{2}{5} MR^2 \end{aligned}$$