

# Deriving Electric Field from Electric Potential for a Spherical Shell

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## 1 Statement of part of the question that I am having trouble with

Use the integral (3.32) to determine the potential  $V(\vec{x})$  both inside and outside a uniformly charged spherical shell, with total charge  $Q$  and radius  $R$ . From  $V(\vec{x})$  calculate the electric field. Note while  $V(r)$  is continuous,  $E(\vec{r})$  is not due to the charge on the surface.

## 2 Relevant Equations

Integral 3.32:  $V(\vec{x}) = \frac{1}{4\pi\epsilon_0} \int \frac{\sigma(\vec{x}')}{|\vec{x}-\vec{x}'|} d^2x'$

## 3 My work thus far/My question

Ok, so I set up my original integral in spherical coordinates as  $\frac{\sigma}{4\pi\epsilon_0} \int_0^{2\pi} \int_0^\pi \frac{R^2}{r} \sin\theta d\theta d\phi$

Where  $R$  is the radius of the sphere. After integrating I get  $\frac{\sigma R^2}{\epsilon_0 r}$  as the expression of the electric potential. The problem is that when I take the negative gradient in spherical coordinates in order to try to get the radial component of the electric field, I get  $\frac{\sigma R^2}{\epsilon_0 r^2} \hat{r}$  without any indication that there is a discontinuity at the surface. However, I know that from Gauss's Law, the field HAS TO BE discontinuous since there is no charge within the shell. My problem is I am not understanding why my approach is not indicating any discontinuity anywhere.

I also would like to point out that in googling this problem, I came across an approach that already assumes the Electric Field is known and uses  $V(\vec{x}) = \int \vec{E} \cdot d\vec{l}$  to show that while the field is discontinuous, the potential is continuous. While this further elaborated to me why V is continuous and I know the theoretical reason as to why this discontinuity over a charged surface exists (I have read and reread that section in my text a dozen times now). I am just trying to figure out how to see that in this problem.