



MATH AND SCIENCE @ WORK

AP* PHYSICS Student Edition



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SPACE SHUTTLE ROLL MANEUVER

Background

Since its conception in 1981, NASA has used the space shuttle for human transport, the construction of the International Space Station (ISS), and to research the effects of space on the human body. One of the keys to the success of the Space Shuttle Program is the Space Shuttle Mission Control Center (MCC). The Space Shuttle MCC at NASA Johnson Space Center uses some of the most sophisticated technology and communication equipment in the world to monitor and control the space shuttle flights.

Within the Space Shuttle MCC, teams of highly qualified engineers, scientists, doctors, and technicians, known as flight controllers, monitor the systems and activities aboard the space shuttle. They work together as a powerful team, spending many hours performing critical simulations as they prepare to support preflight, ascent, flight, and reentry of the space shuttle and the crew. The flight controllers provide the knowledge and expertise needed to support normal operations and any unexpected events.

One of the flight controllers in the Space Shuttle MCC is the Guidance, Navigation, and Control (GNC) officer. To understand the roles of the GNC officer, one must first understand the basics of the GNC system. Guidance equipment (gyroscopes and accelerometers) and software first compute the location of the vehicle and the orientation required to satisfy mission requirements. Navigation software then tracks the vehicle's actual location and orientation, allowing the flight controllers to use hardware to transport the space shuttle to the required location and orientation. The primary responsibility of the GNC officer is to ensure the hardware and software that perform these functions are working correctly. This control portion of the process consists of two modes: automatic and manual. In the automatic mode, the primary avionics software system allows the onboard computers to control the guidance and navigation of the space shuttle. In the manual mode the crew uses data from the GNC displays and hand controls for the guidance and navigation. The GNC officer ensures that the GNC system has the accuracy and capacity necessary to control the space shuttle in both modes and that it is being utilized correctly.

Once the space shuttle is in orbit, the Reaction Control System (RCS) is used for attitude control. Attitude is the orientation the space shuttle has relative to a frame of reference. The RCS jets control the attitude of the shuttle by affecting rotation around all three axes. Three terms, pitch, yaw, and roll, are used to describe the space shuttle's attitude. Moving the nose up and down is referred to as "pitch," moving the nose left and right is referred to as "yaw," and rotating the nose clockwise or counterclockwise is referred to as "roll" (Figure 1).

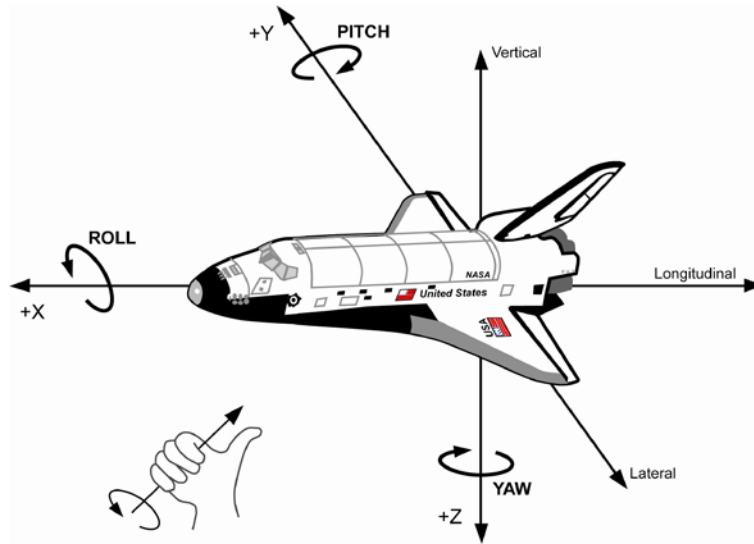


Figure 1: Diagram of the X, Y, and Z body axes of the space shuttle. Rotation about the X-axis is called Roll, about the Y-axis is called Pitch, and about the Z-axis is called Yaw. The direction of the rotation follows the right hand rule, which states that the thumb of the right hand would be aligned with the positive axis and the direction of the rotation is positive in the direction of the fingers when curling around the axis. The arrows show positive rotation.

The RCS consists of thirty-eight primary jets that produce 3870 Newtons (870 lbs) of thrust each and six vernier jets that produce 107 Newtons (24 lbs) of thrust each. The smaller thrust of vernier jets allow for greater precision of movement. Fourteen primary and two vernier RCS jets are located in the nose of the vehicle and are called forward RCS jets (Figure 2). Twenty-four primary jets and four vernier jets are found on each of the two Orbital Maneuvering System (OMS) pods, located on both sides of the vertical tail and are called aft RCS jets (Figure 3).

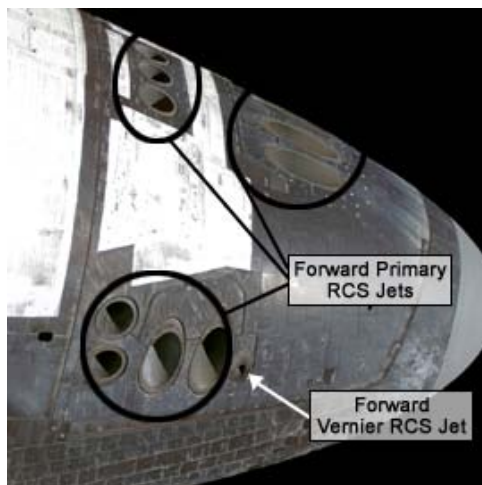


Figure 2: Forward primary and vernier RCS jets located on the nose of the space shuttle.

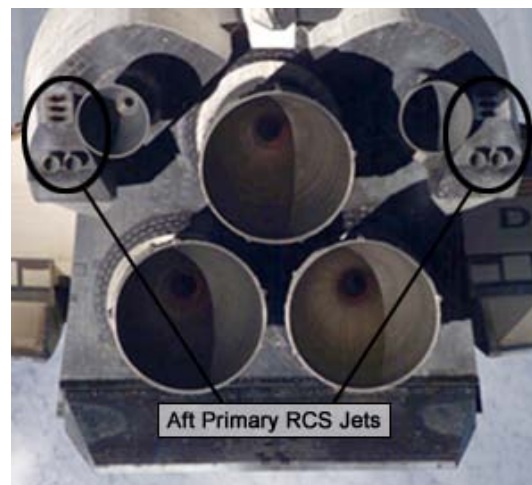


Figure 3: Aft primary RCS jets located on the tail of the space shuttle as part of the OMS pods.

Activities that must be performed by the space shuttle, such as deploying satellites and pointing mapping instruments and telescopes at the Earth and stars, require attitude adjustment. The GNC software and GNC officer control these adjustments by firing different RCS jets to achieve the correct yaw, pitch, and/or roll.

**Problem**

Open the TI-Nspire™ document, *RollManeuver*, read through the problem set-up, and complete the questions in the document.

- A. Determine the magnitude of the impulse produced during the firing of the aft right up primary RCS jet (location shown in Figure 7 and on TI-Nspire page 1.8).
- B. TI-Nspire page 1.8 is a model of the aft right up primary RCS jet firing as seen in Figure 4 (page 1.3). Note that firing the RCS jet results in the blast being directed at a 90 degree angle with the space shuttle. If the moment arm of the jets is 3.25 m (see Figure 7), calculate the magnitude and direction of the torque produced by the RCS firing as if you were sitting on the flight deck looking through the forward cockpit windows. Use the calculator on the next page (TI-Nspire page 1.10).
- C. Determine the magnitude of change in angular momentum that results from firing the jet. Recall that torque equals the rate of change of angular momentum $\left(\tau = \frac{dL}{dt} \right)$.
- D. Explain why the impulse determined in question A does not equal the change in angular momentum calculated in question C.
- E. The RCS jet firing contributes to a roll of the space shuttle. If the mass of the space shuttle on orbit is 107,602 kg, calculate the tangential velocity of the shuttle at the RCS jet location achieved by this firing.
- F. Estimate the rotational inertia of the space shuttle due to the firing of the RCS jet.
- G. Calculate the rotational kinetic energy acquired from the firing of the RCS jet.
- H. Determine the magnitude of potential energy contained in the propellant used to initiate the roll.
- I. Suppose that during the rotation the robotic arm (CanadArm 1) is extended to maximum length perpendicular to the axis of rotation (see Figure 7). Would the angular velocity increase, decrease, or remain the same? Justify your answer.



Space Shuttle Schematic

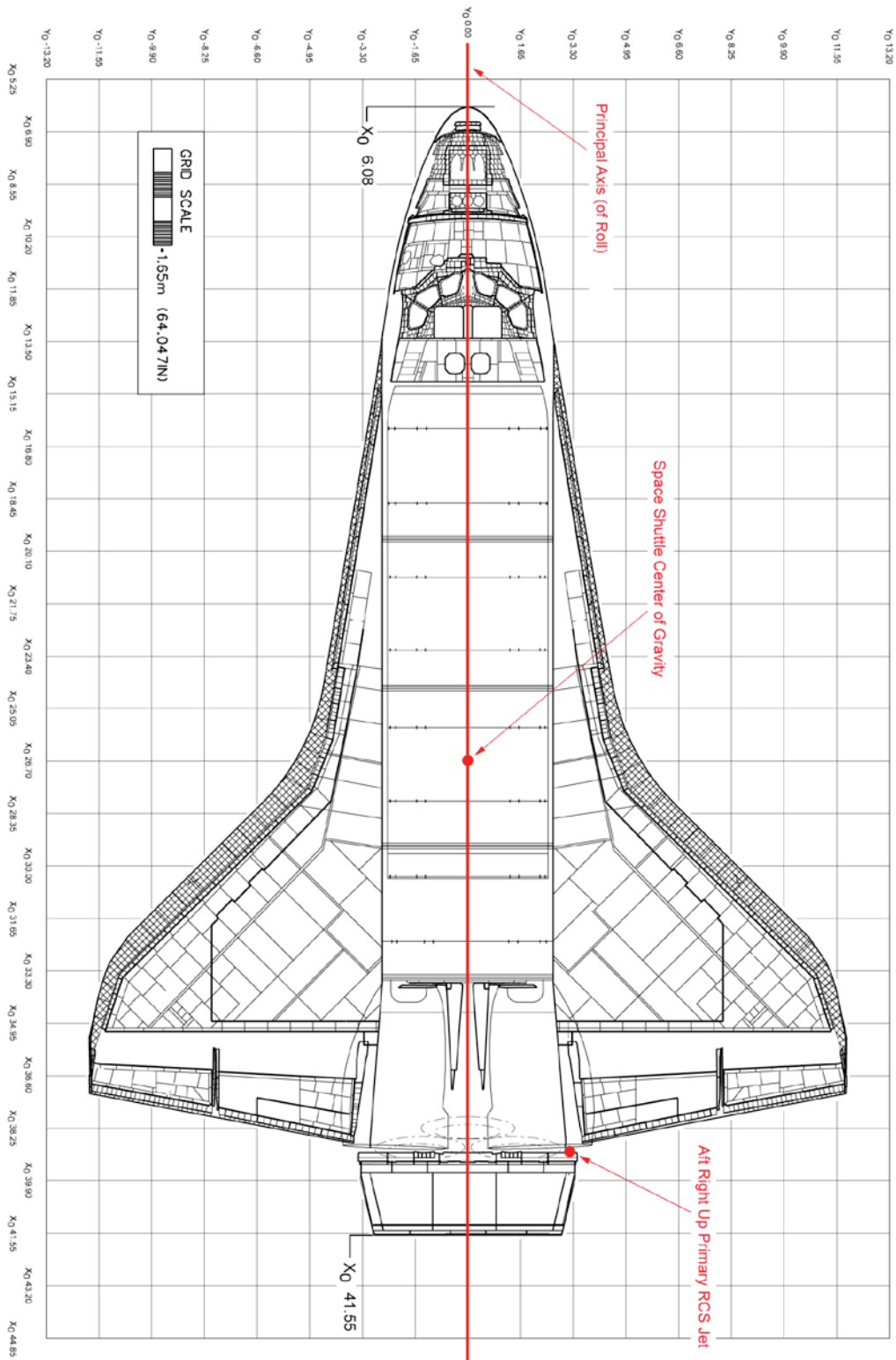


Figure 7: Space Shuttle Schematic. The origin of the graph is located at the highest part of the space shuttle system when it is on the launch pad, which is at the top of the External Tank.