

Let the downward direction be positive. We begin with  $\sum \mathbf{F} = m\mathbf{a}$ . As shown, the net force is  $\sum \mathbf{F} = m\mathbf{g} - b\mathbf{v}$ ; thus,  $m\mathbf{a} = m\mathbf{g} - b\mathbf{v}$  or  $\mathbf{a} = \mathbf{g} - \frac{b}{m}\mathbf{v}$ . Since  $\mathbf{a} = \frac{d\mathbf{v}}{dt}$ , we have the differential equation representing the object's motion while falling:



We wish to solve for  $\mathbf{v}$  as a function of time. This equation is separable:

$d\mathbf{v} = (\mathbf{g} - \frac{b}{m}\mathbf{v}) dt$ . In order to maintain my sanity, I will now begin ignoring vectors.

This equation then becomes  $\frac{dv}{g - \frac{b}{m}v} = dt$ . We are now ready to integrate; we will choose our limits as  $t=0$  to  $t=t_1$  and  $v=v_0$  to  $v=v(t_1)$ .

This gives  $\int_{v_0}^{v(t_1)} \frac{dv}{g - \frac{b}{m}v} = \int_0^{t_1} dt$ . An antiderivative for the left side is  $-\frac{m}{b} \ln\left(g - \frac{b}{m}v\right)$ ;

for the right side,  $t$ . Therefore, the equation is  $-\frac{m}{b} \ln\left(g - \frac{b}{m}v\right) \Big|_{v_0}^{v(t_1)} = t \Big|_0^{t_1}$ .

Plugging in the limits and subtracting,  $-\frac{m}{b} \left( \ln\left(g - \frac{b}{m}v(t_1)\right) - \ln\left(g - \frac{b}{m}v_0\right) \right) = t_1$ . Logarithm

manipulation rules allow the left side to be written as  $-\frac{m}{b} \ln \frac{g - \frac{b}{m}v(t_1)}{g - \frac{b}{m}v_0}$ . Now we can solve for

$v(t_1)$ : multiply both sides by  $-\frac{b}{m}$ , giving  $\ln \frac{g - \frac{b}{m}v(t_1)}{g - \frac{b}{m}v_0} = -\frac{b}{m}t_1$ .

Then we raise  $e$  to the power of both sides to give  $\frac{g - \frac{b}{m}v(t_1)}{g - \frac{b}{m}v_0} = e^{-\frac{b}{m}t_1}$ ; multiplying through by the left side's denominator leaves  $g - \frac{b}{m}v(t_1) = e^{-\frac{b}{m}t_1} (g - \frac{b}{m}v_0)$ , and then it's trivial to rearrange things to get  $\frac{m}{b} \left( g - e^{-\frac{b}{m}t_1} (g - \frac{b}{m}v_0) \right) = v(t_1)$ .

Frequently we assume  $v_0 = 0$ . If so, then  $v(t_1) = \frac{m}{b}g \left( 1 - e^{-\frac{b}{m}t_1} \right)$ . The general shape of this graph is shown below, where the horizontal asymptote represents the terminal velocity  $v_T = \frac{m}{b}g$ .

