



2. (12 points, suggested time 25 minutes)

This problem explores how the relative masses of two blocks affect the acceleration of the blocks. Block A, of mass m_A , rests on a horizontal tabletop. There is negligible friction between block A and the tabletop. Block B, of mass m_B , hangs from a light string that runs over a pulley and attaches to block A, as shown above. The pulley has negligible mass and spins with negligible friction about its axle. The blocks are released from rest.

(a)

- i. Suppose the mass of block A is much greater than the mass of block B. Estimate the magnitude of the acceleration of the blocks after release.

Briefly explain your reasoning without deriving or using equations.

- ii. Now suppose the mass of block A is much less than the mass of block B. Estimate the magnitude of the acceleration of the blocks after release.

Briefly explain your reasoning without deriving or using equations.

- (b) Now suppose neither block's mass is much greater than the other, but that they are not necessarily equal. The dots below represent block A and block B, as indicated by the labels. On each dot, draw and label the forces (not components) exerted on that block after release. Represent each force by a distinct arrow starting on, and pointing away from, the dot.



Block A



Block B

(c) Derive an equation for the acceleration of the blocks after release in terms of m_A , m_B , and physical constants, as appropriate. If you need to draw anything other than what you have shown in part (b) to assist in your solution, use the space below. Do NOT add anything to the figure in part (b).

(d) Consider the scenario from part (a)(ii), where the mass of block A is much less than the mass of block B. Does your equation for the acceleration of the blocks from part (c) agree with your reasoning in part (a)(ii) ?

Yes No

Briefly explain your reasoning by addressing why, according to your equation, the acceleration becomes (or approaches) a certain value when m_A is much less than m_B .

(e) While the blocks are accelerating, the tension in the vertical portion of the string is T_1 . Next, the pulley of negligible mass is replaced with a second pulley whose mass is not negligible. When the blocks are accelerating in this scenario, the tension in the vertical portion of the string is T_2 . How do the two tensions compare to each other?

$T_2 > T_1$ $T_2 = T_1$ $T_2 < T_1$

Briefly explain your reasoning.