

# Keplerian systems in velocity space

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We all know that in real space a bound Keplerian system traces an ellipse, but what would it trace in velocity space?

The change in the velocity over a given time  $\Delta t$  is:

$$\Delta v = a\Delta t = \frac{GM}{r^2}\Delta t. \quad (1)$$

Since we conserve angular momentum, the change in the orbital angle for a given time  $\Delta t$  is:

$$\left(\frac{\Delta\theta}{\Delta t}\right)r^2 = h = \text{const}. \quad (2)$$

Combining eq.(2) with eq.(1):

$$\Delta v = \frac{GM}{h}\Delta\theta. \quad (3)$$

For a given change in the orbital angle, the change in the velocity is always the same and it is in the radial direction. This means that we add to the velocity a vector which is constant in magnitude but rotates. This addition of vectors traces out a circle whose radius is  $GM/h$ .