

Some notes on the connection formulas for the WKB approximation:

The “linear potential” part of the Schrödinger equation:

$$-\frac{\hbar^2}{2m} \frac{d^2}{dx^2} \psi(x) + [E + \alpha(x - x_0)]\psi(x) = E\psi(x)$$

where  $x_0$  is the classical turning point and  $\alpha$  is the slope of the potential at that point. Setting  $z = (x - x_0)/L$ , with the length  $L = (\hbar^2/2m\alpha)^{1/3}$ , one obtains

$$-\frac{d^2}{dz^2} u(z) + zu(z) = 0 \quad \text{with} \quad \psi(x) = u(z)$$

Note that the WKB approximation to this equation yields

$$u(z) \propto z^{-1/4} \exp(\pm z^{3/2}/3) \quad \text{for} \quad z \gg 0$$

and

$$u(z) \propto (-z)^{-1/4} \exp(\pm i2(-z)^{3/2}/3) \quad \text{for} \quad z \ll 0$$

The exact solution to this equation is in terms of the Airy functions:

$$u(z) = \begin{Bmatrix} \text{Ai}(z) \\ \text{Bi}(z) \end{Bmatrix}$$

Asymptotic forms of the Airy functions:

$$\text{Ai}(z) \propto \frac{1}{2\sqrt{\pi} \sqrt[4]{z}} \exp(-2z^{3/2}/3) \quad \text{for} \quad |\arg(z)| < \pi \quad \wedge \quad |z| \rightarrow \infty \quad (1)$$

$$\text{Bi}(z) \propto \frac{1}{\sqrt{\pi} \sqrt[4]{z}} \exp(2z^{3/2}/3) \quad \text{for} \quad |\arg(z)| < \pi/3 \quad \wedge \quad |z| \rightarrow \infty \quad (2)$$

and

$$\text{Ai}(-z) \propto \frac{1}{\sqrt{\pi} \sqrt[4]{z}} \sin(2z^{3/2}/3 + \pi/4) \quad \text{for} \quad |\arg(z)| < 2\pi/3 \quad \wedge \quad |z| \rightarrow \infty \quad (3)$$

$$\text{Bi}(-z) \propto \frac{1}{\sqrt{\pi} \sqrt[4]{z}} \cos(2z^{3/2}/3 + \pi/4) \quad \text{for} \quad |\arg(z)| < 2\pi/3 \quad \wedge \quad |z| \rightarrow \infty \quad (4)$$

(1) <http://functions.wolfram.com/Bessel-TypeFunctions/AiryAi/06/02/01/01/0001/>

(2) <http://functions.wolfram.com/Bessel-TypeFunctions/AiryBi/06/02/01/01/0001/>

(3) <http://functions.wolfram.com/Bessel-TypeFunctions/AiryAi/06/02/01/02/0001/>

(4) <http://functions.wolfram.com/Bessel-TypeFunctions/AiryBi/06/02/01/02/0001/>

For a potential with decreasing slope and  $V(x_a) = E$ , define

$$I_A = \frac{1}{\hbar} \int_x^{x_a} dx' \sqrt{2m(V(x') - E)} \quad \text{for } x < x_a \text{ i.e. } V(x) > E$$

and

$$I_a = \frac{1}{\hbar} \int_{x_a}^x dx' \sqrt{2m(E - V(x'))} \quad \text{for } x > x_a \text{ i.e. } V(x) < E$$

Forms of the matching solutions for  $|V(x) - E|^{1/4}\psi(x)$  are then:

$x < x_a$	$x > x_a$
$\exp(-I_A)$ <b>(conv)</b>	$\cos(I_a - \pi/4)$
$\exp(I_A)$ <b>(div)</b>	$\cos(I_a + \pi/4)$
$\exp(-I_A) \mp i \exp(I_A)$	$e^{\mp i\pi/4} e^{\pm i I_a} = \cos(I_a - \pi/4) \pm i \sin(I_a - \pi/4)$
$e^{\pm i\pi/4} (\exp(-I_A) \mp i \exp(I_A))$	$e^{\pm i I_a} = e^{\pm i\pi/4} (\cos(I_a - \pi/4) \pm i \cos(I_a + \pi/4))$

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For a potential with increasing slope and  $V(x_b) = E$ , define

$$I_b = \frac{1}{\hbar} \int_x^{x_b} dx' \sqrt{2m(E - V(x'))} \quad \text{for } x < x_b \text{ i.e. } V(x) < E$$

and

$$I_B = \frac{1}{\hbar} \int_{x_b}^x dx' \sqrt{2m(V(x') - E)} \quad \text{for } x > x_b \text{ i.e. } V(x) > E$$

Forms of the matching solutions for  $|V(x) - E|^{1/4}\psi(x)$  are then:

$x < x_b$	$x > x_b$
$\cos(I_b - \pi/4)$	$\exp(-I_B)$ <b>(conv)</b>
$\cos(I_b + \pi/4)$	$\exp(I_B)$ <b>(div)</b>
$e^{\mp i\pi/4} e^{\pm i I_b} = \cos(I_b - \pi/4) \pm i \sin(I_b - \pi/4)$	$\exp(-I_B) \mp i \exp(I_B)$
$e^{\pm i I_b} = e^{\pm i\pi/4} (\cos(I_b - \pi/4) \pm i \cos(I_b + \pi/4))$	$e^{\pm i\pi/4} (\exp(-I_B) \mp i \exp(I_B))$