Your Comments

The concept of polarization is confusing. How does it specifically look like in the real world?

What does this have to do with those polarized lenses on sunglasses?

Why the intensity will become the half when an unpolarized EM wave passes a polarizer?

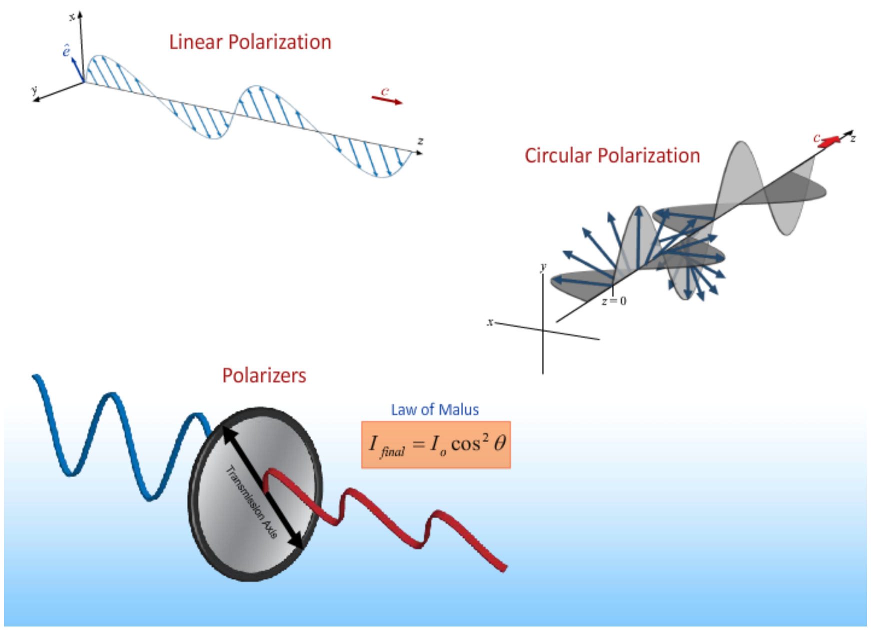
Please do more examples with the quarter-wave plate! Esp. how it changes intensity and how changing the distance affects the polarization!

I wish I knew what was going on in this class (time spent on prelecture = 00:29)

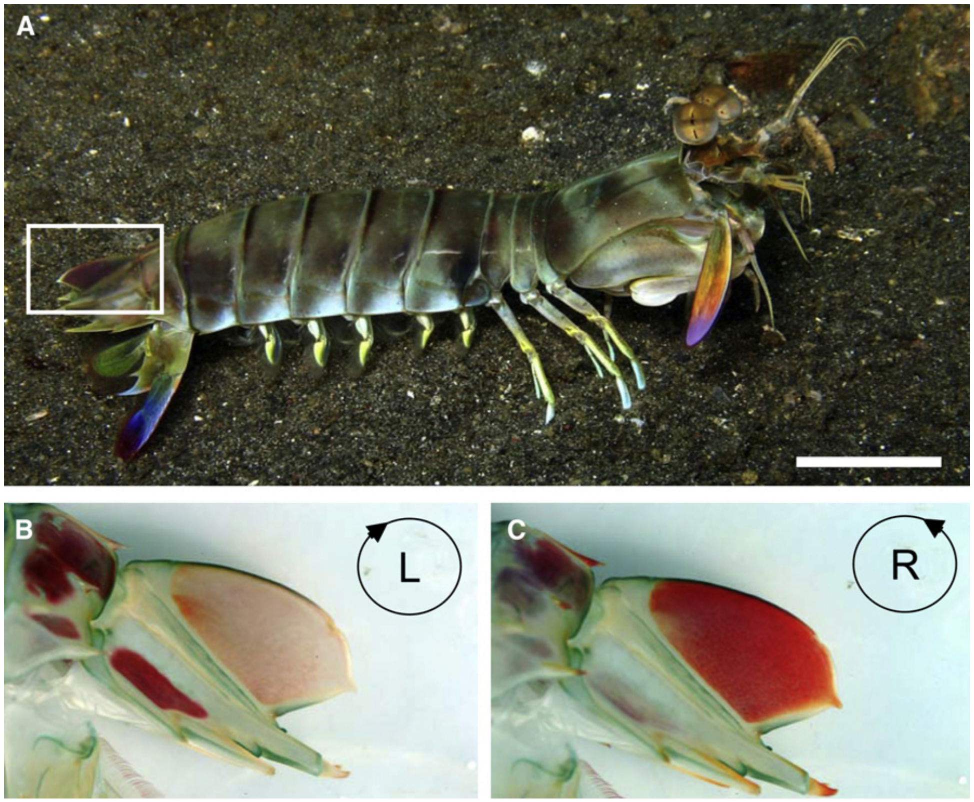
If the speed of light is constant, how does the birefringent vary the speed of the different components of the EM wave? $v = c/n$ where $n = 1$ in vacuum

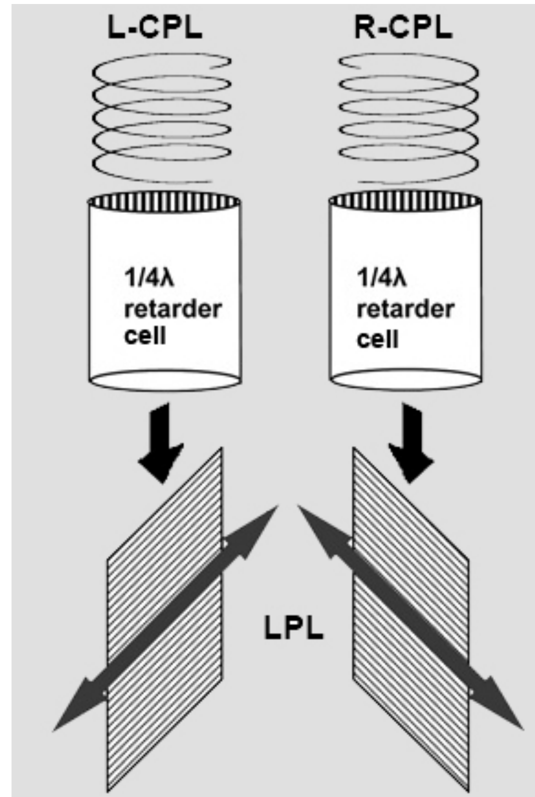
THIS STUFF IS COOL AS HELL AND I COMPLETELY UNDERSTAND IT I LOVE PHYSICS. POLARIZATION IS SO CoOL. ALSO - LAW OF MALUS IS PROBABLY THE BEST NAME A LAW COULD HAVE. IF I WERE A LAW I'D BE JEALOUS

Physics 212
Lecture 24



The Mantis Shrimp

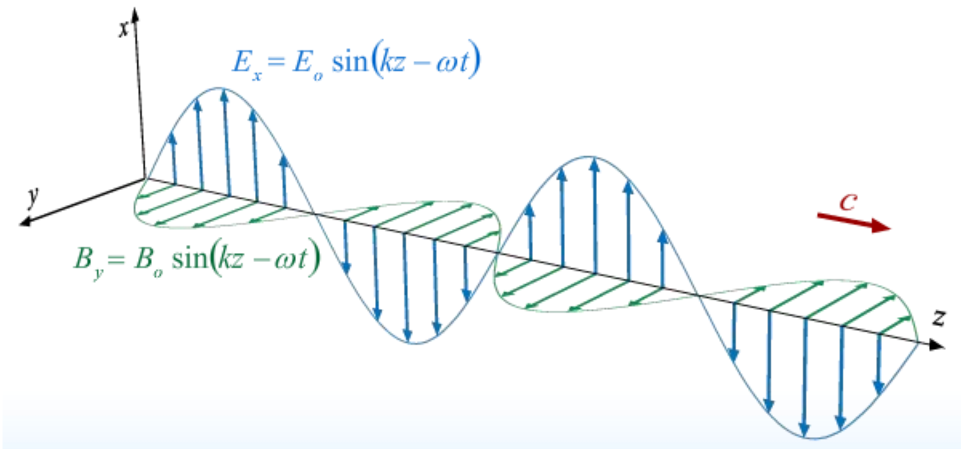




- Circularly polarized light (CPL)is very rare in nature.
- The Mantis shrimp has structures on its tail that converts the reflected ambient light to CPL.
- Structures in its eye can perceive CPL by converting it into LPL--the receptors are sensitive to LPL.
- The production and detection of CPL may be useful for “stealth” communication between Mantis shrimp.

Linearly Polarized Light

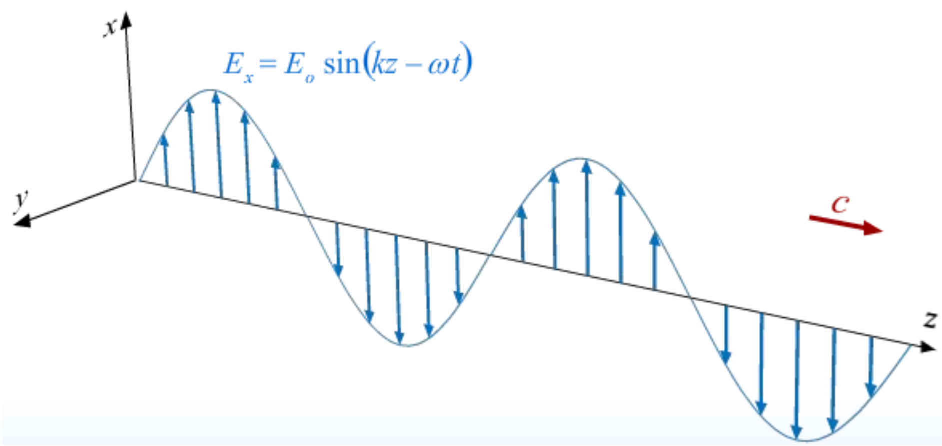
So far we have considered plane waves that look like this:



$$\omega = kc$$
$$E_o = cB_o$$
$$c = \frac{1}{\sqrt{\mu_o \varepsilon_o}}$$

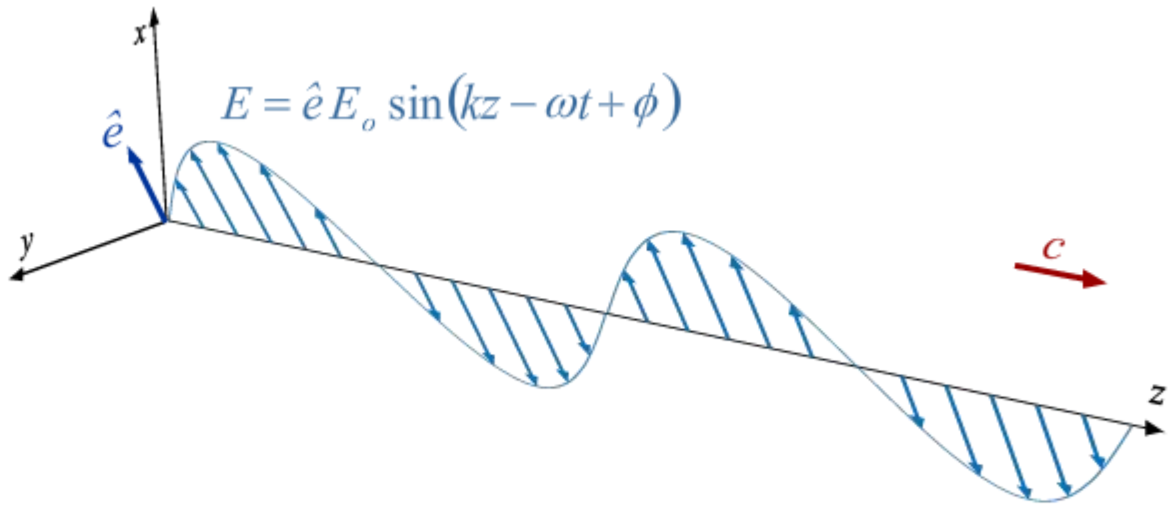
From now on just draw E and remember that B is still there:

$\vec{E}$ Field determines Polarization



Linear Polarization

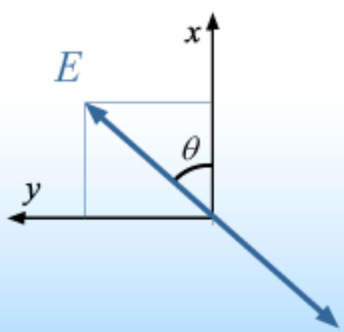
$$E = \hat{e} E_o \sin(kz - \omega t + \phi)$$



$$\omega = kc$$

$$E_o = cB_o$$

$$c = \frac{1}{\sqrt{\mu_o \varepsilon_o}}$$

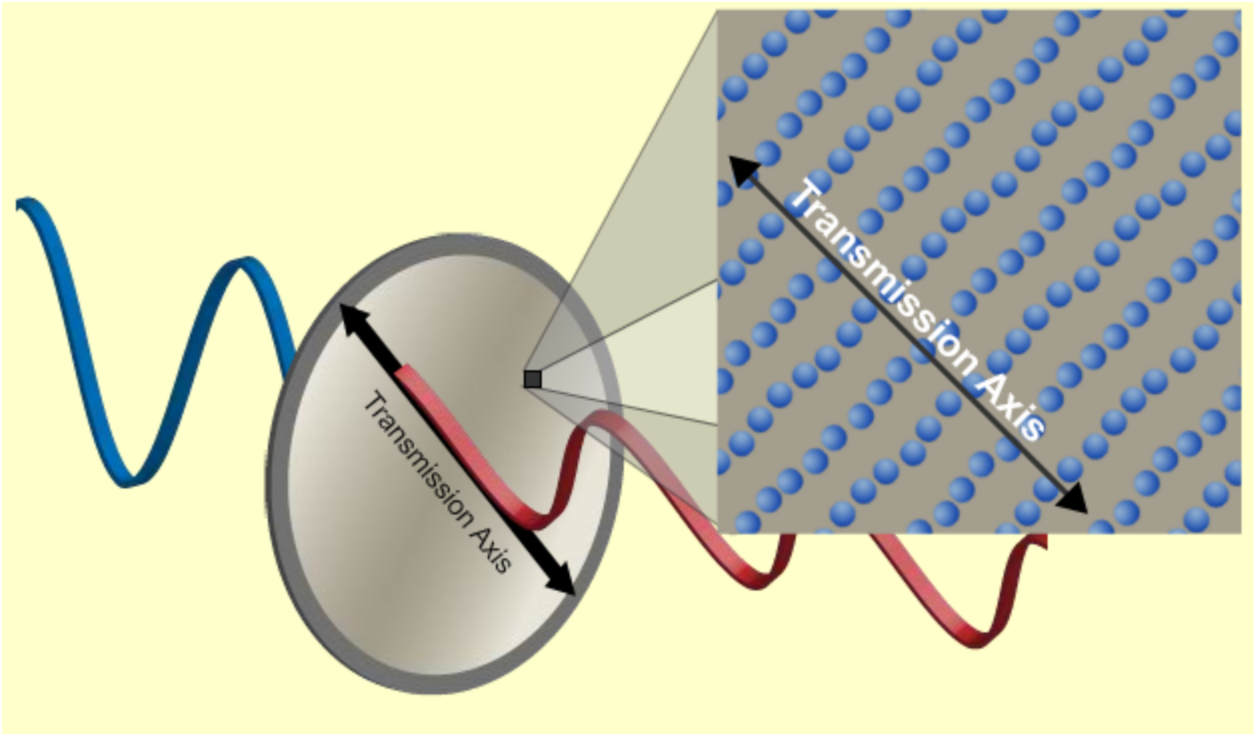


Wave Coming Out of the Screen

$$E_x = E_o \cos\theta \sin(kz - \omega t + \phi)$$

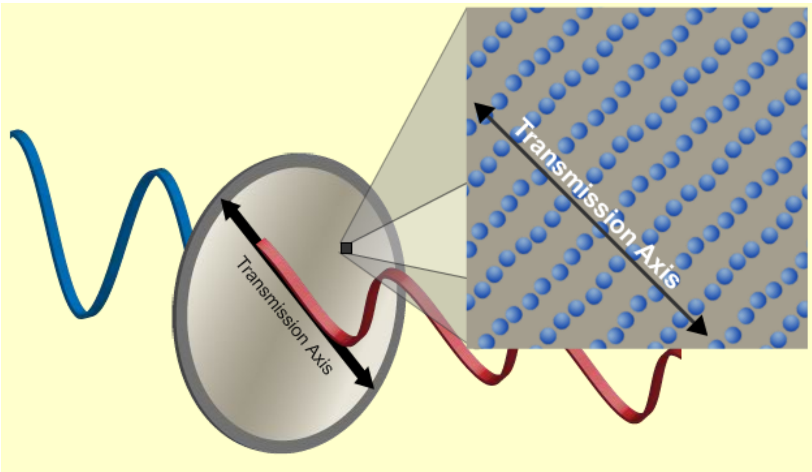
$$E_y = E_o \sin\theta \sin(kz - \omega t + \phi)$$

Polarizer

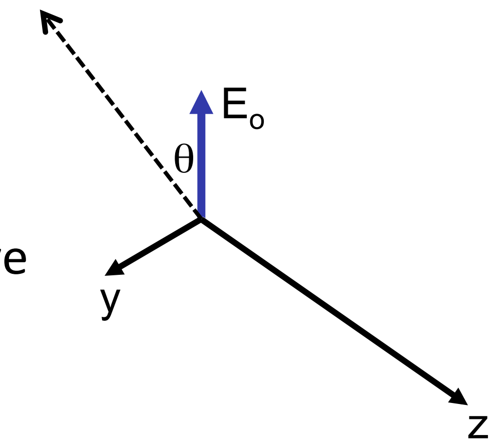


The molecular structure of a polarizer causes the component of the E field perpendicular to the Transmission Axis to be absorbed.

Clicker Question



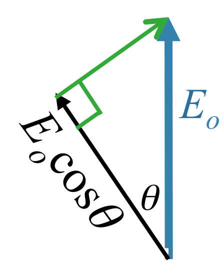
The molecular structure of a polarizer causes the component of the E field perpendicular to the Transmission Axis to be absorbed.



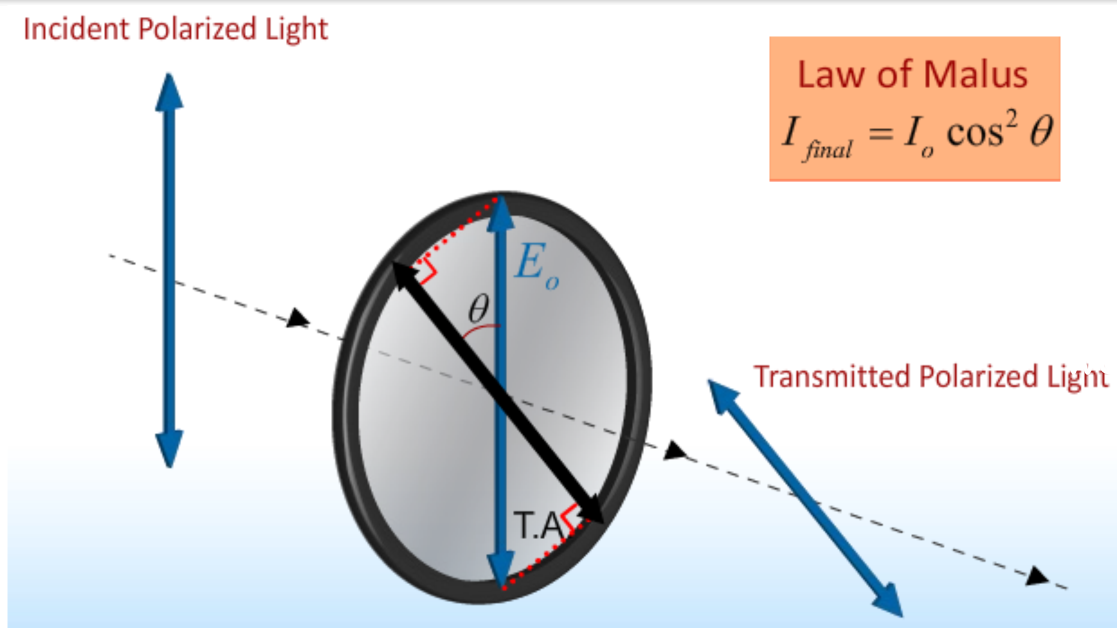
Suppose we have a beam traveling in the $+z-$ direction.
At $t=0$ and $z=0$, the electric field is aligned along the positive $x-$ axis and has a magnitude equal to E_o

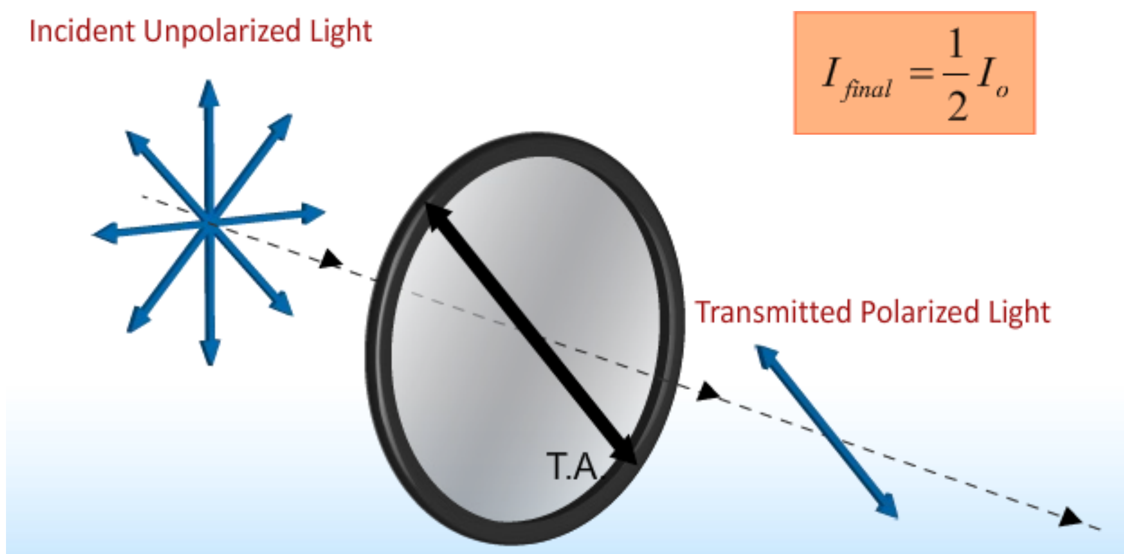
What is the component of E_o along a direction in the $x-y$ plane that makes an angle of θ with respect to the $x-$ axis?

A) $E_o \sin\theta$ $\boxed{\text{B) } E_o \cos\theta}$ C) 0 D) $E_o/\sin\theta$ E) $E_o/\cos\theta$



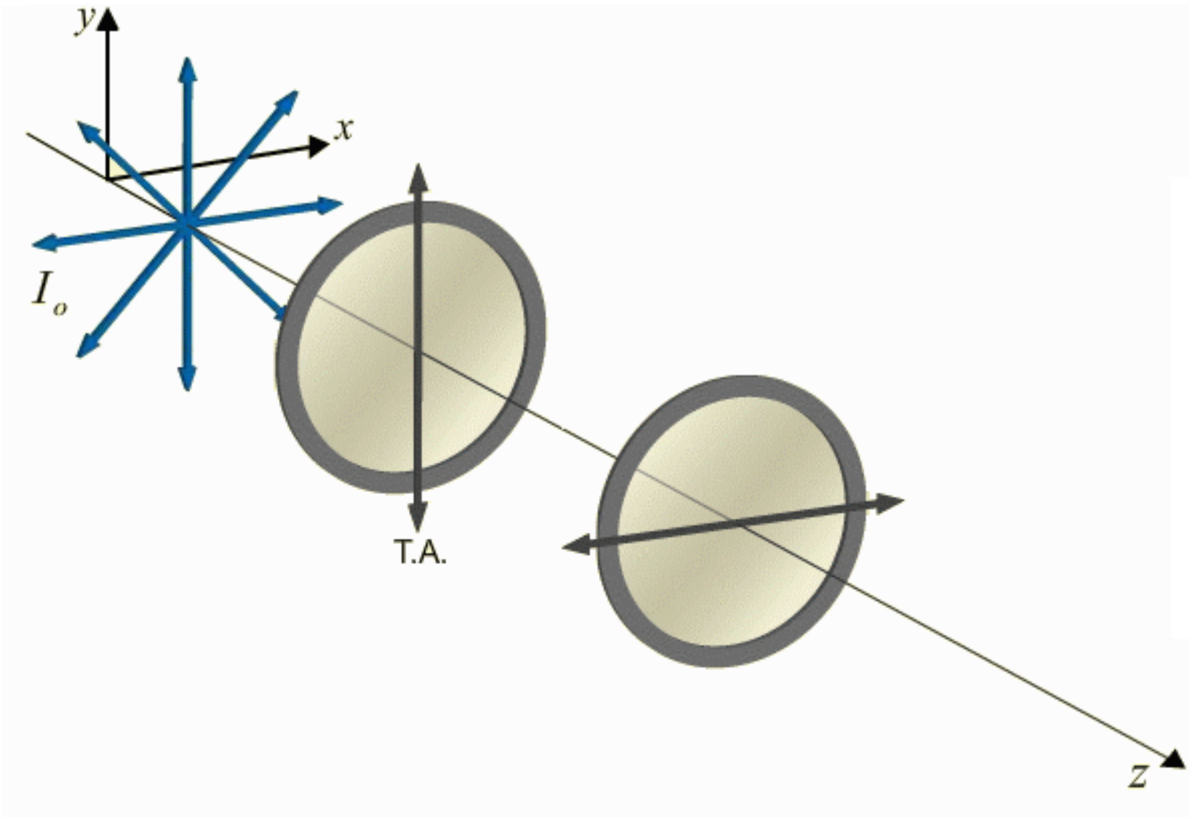
Linear Polarizers



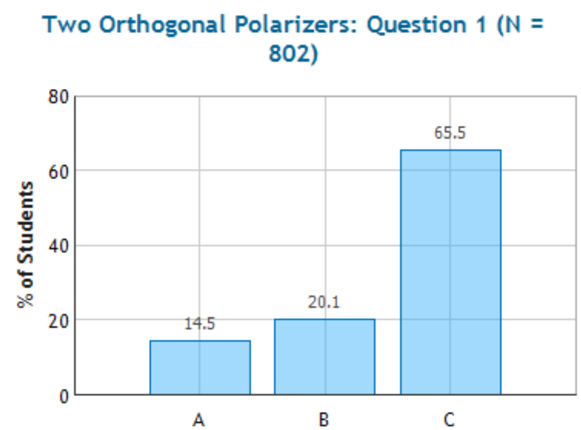


CheckPoint 1a

An unpolarized EM wave is incident on two orthogonal polarizers.



Two Polarizers



What percentage of the intensity gets through both polarizers?

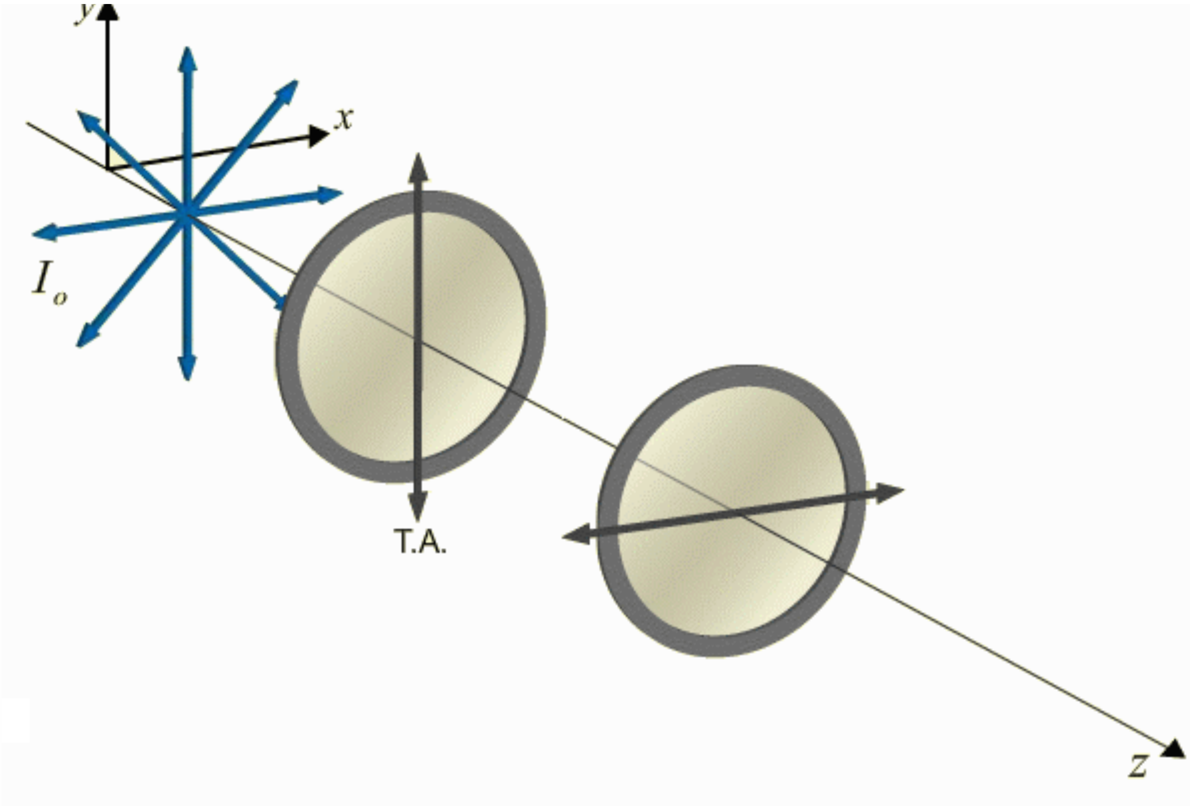
A. 50% ***B.*** 25% ***C.*** 0%

No light will come through. $\cos(90^o) = 0$

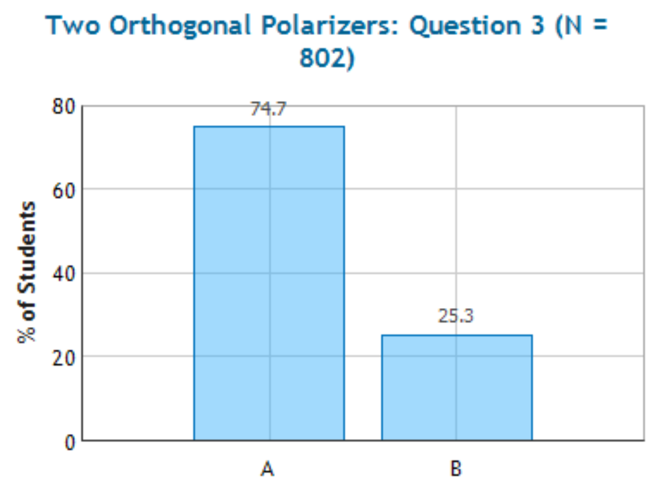
DEMO

CheckPoint 1b

An unpolarized EM wave is incident on two orthogonal polarizers.



Two Polarizers



Is it possible to increase this percentage by inserting another Polarizer between the original two?

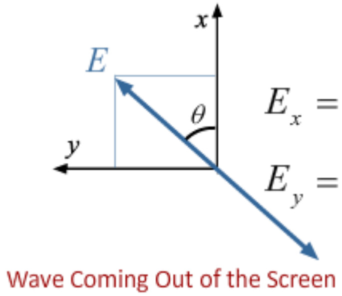
A. Yes ***B.*** No

DEMO

"just like the example in the prelecture, add one at 30 degrees"

Circularly Polarized Light

There is no reason that ϕ has to be the same for E_x and E_y:



$$E_x = E_o \cos\theta \sin(kz - \omega t + \phi_x)$$
$$E_y = E_o \sin\theta \sin(kz - \omega t + \phi_y)$$

Satisfies Wave Equation →

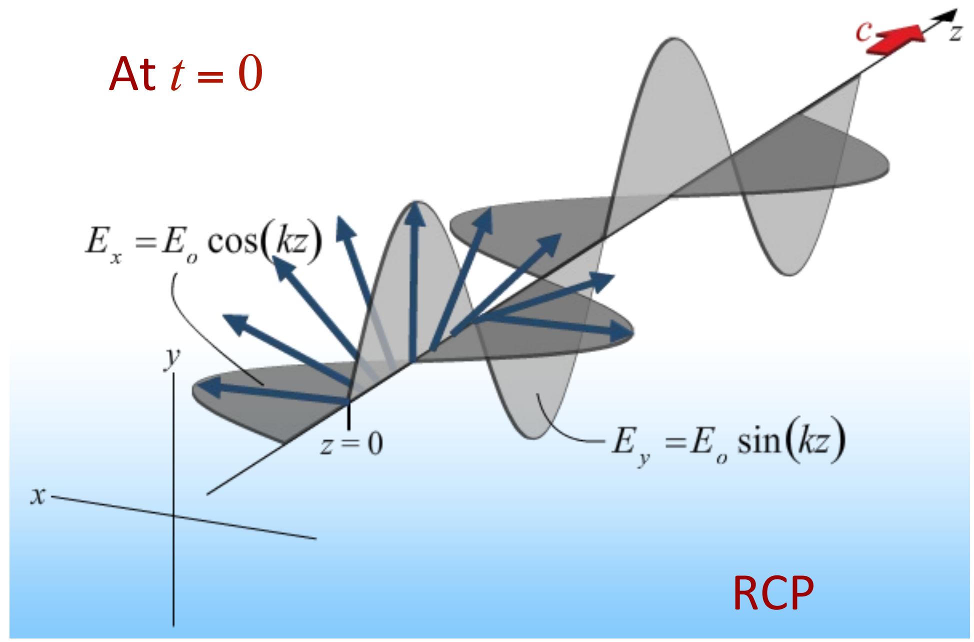
$$\frac{\partial^2 E_x}{\partial z^2} = \mu_o \varepsilon_o \frac{\partial^2 E_x}{\partial t^2}$$
$$\frac{\partial^2 E_y}{\partial z^2} = \mu_o \varepsilon_o \frac{\partial^2 E_y}{\partial t^2}$$

Making ϕ_x different from ϕ_y causes circular or elliptical polarization:

Example:

$$\phi_x - \phi_y = 90^\circ = \frac{\pi}{2}$$
$$\theta = 45^\circ = \pi / 4$$

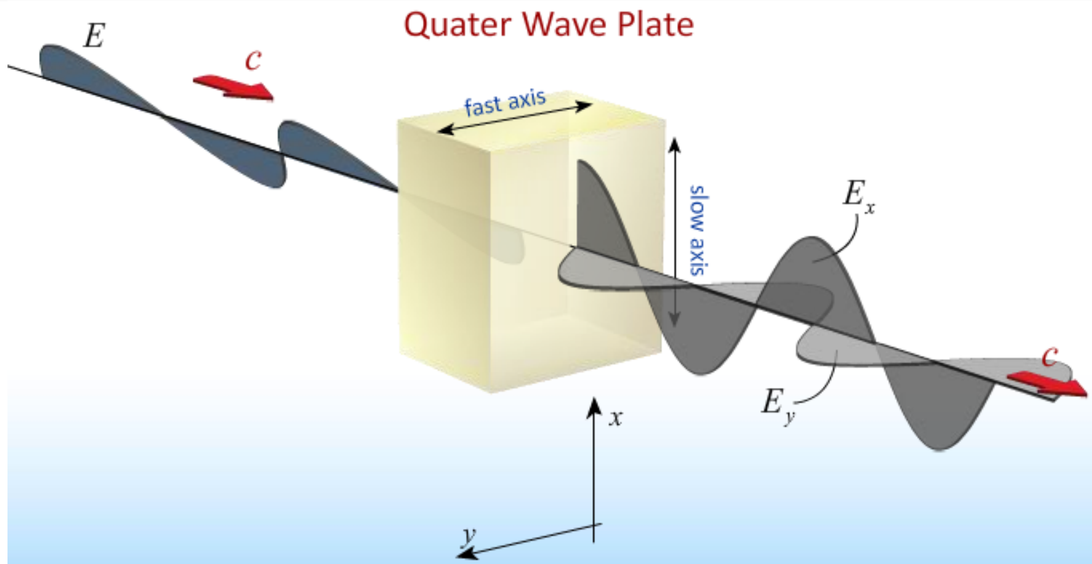
$$E_x = \frac{E_0}{\sqrt{2}} \cos(kz - \omega t)$$
$$E_y = \frac{E_0}{\sqrt{2}} \sin(kz - \omega t)$$

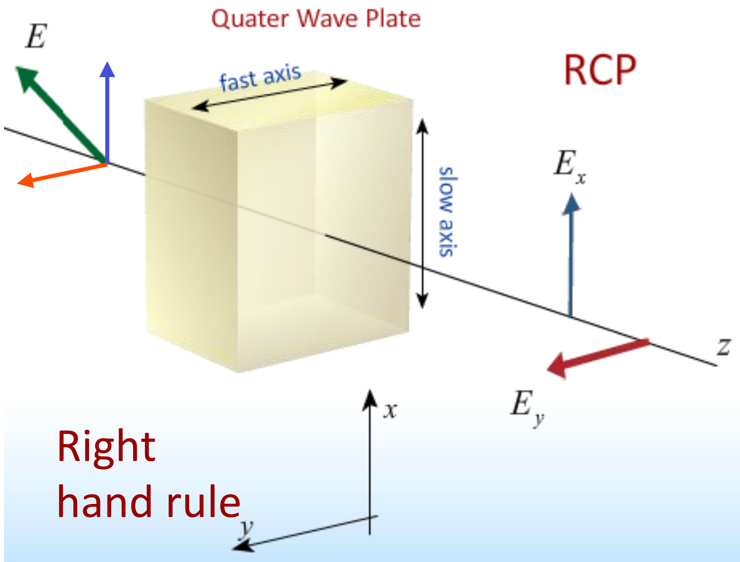


Quarter Waveplates

Q: How do we change the relative phase between E_x and E_y?

A: Birefringence





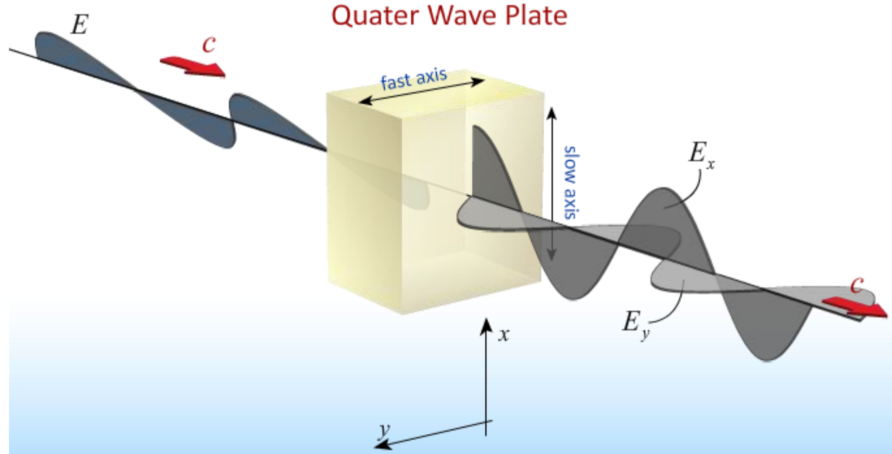
By picking the right thickness we can change the relative phase by exactly 90^o.

This changes linear to circular polarization and is called a *quarter wave plate*

Intensity does not change!

"talk something about intensity"

NOTE: No Intensity is lost passing through the QWP !



BEFORE QWP:

$$E = E_o \sin(kz - \omega t)\left[\frac{\hat{i} + \hat{j}}{\sqrt{2}}\right] \longrightarrow I = c\varepsilon_o \langle E^2 \rangle = c\varepsilon_o \langle E_x^2 + E_y^2 \rangle$$

$$= c\varepsilon_o \left(\frac{E_o^2}{2} + \frac{E_o^2}{2}\right)\langle \sin^2(kz - \omega t)\rangle = c\varepsilon_o E_o^2 \frac{1}{2}$$

AFTER QWP:

$$E = \frac{E_o}{\sqrt{2}}\left[\hat{i}\cos(kz - \omega t) + \hat{j}\sin(kz - \omega t)\right] \longrightarrow I = c\varepsilon_o \langle E^2 \rangle = c\varepsilon_o \langle E_x^2 + E_y^2 \rangle$$

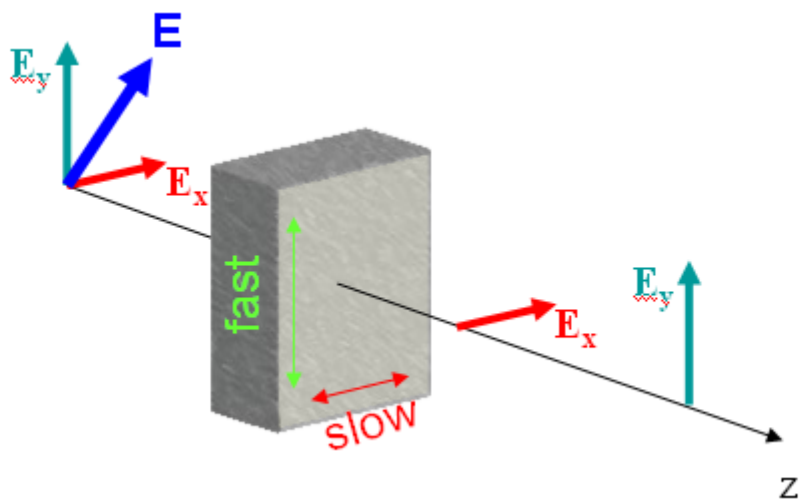
$$= c\varepsilon_o \frac{E_o^2}{2}\langle \cos^2(kz - \omega t) + \sin^2(kz - \omega t)\rangle$$

$$= c\varepsilon_o \frac{E_o^2}{2}\langle 1 \rangle = c\varepsilon_o \frac{E_o^2}{2}$$

THE SAME!

Right or Left?

"red fox"
got it?



Right circularly polarized

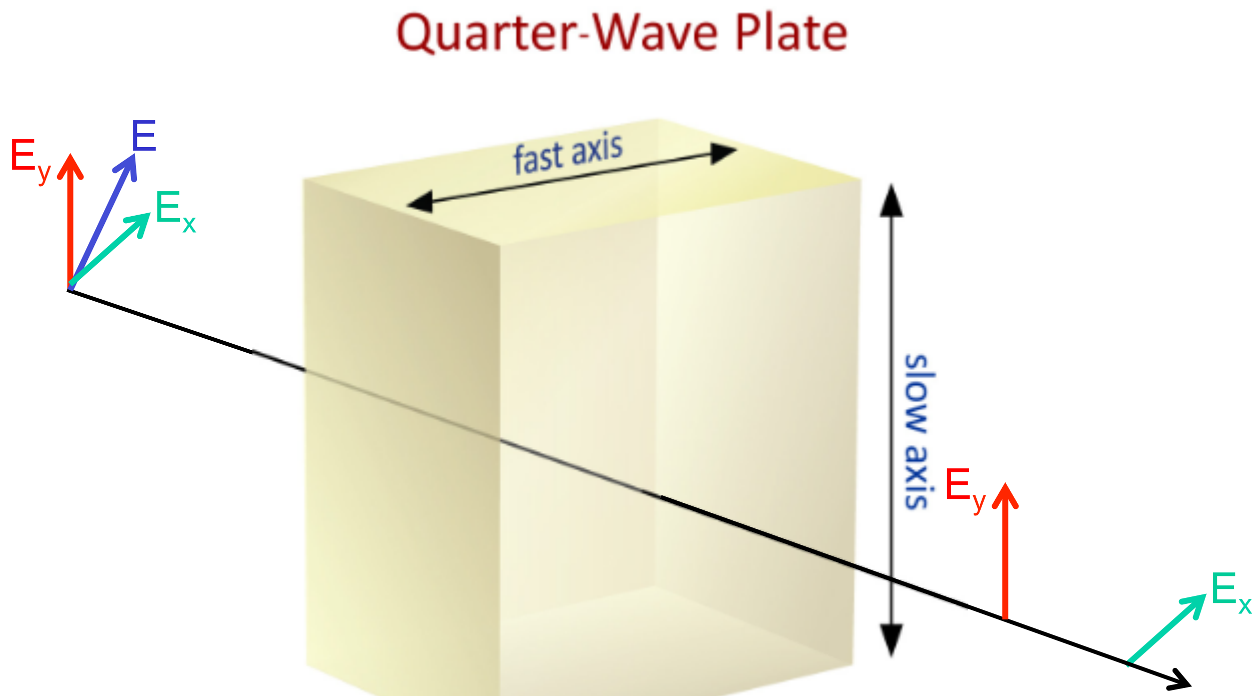
Do right hand rule

Fingers along slow direction

Cross into fast direction

If thumb points in direction of propagation: RCP

Right or Left Circularly Polarized



A linearly polarized EM wave is incident on a quarter-wave plate as shown above. The resulting wave is

A) Right Circularly Polarized

B) Left Circularly Polarized

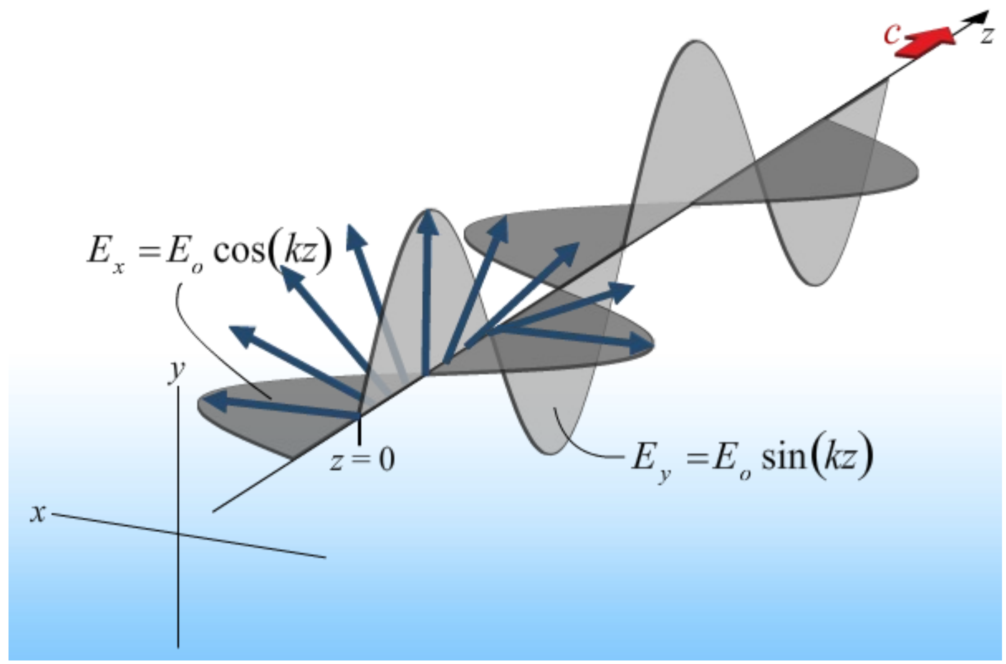
C) Linearly Polarized

Curve fingers from slow to fast, thumb must be direction of propagation.

Circular Light on Linear Polarizer

Q: What happens when circularly polarized light is put through a polarizer along the y (or x) axis ?

A) $I = 0$
B) $I = \frac{1}{2} I_0$
C) $I = I_0$



$$I = \varepsilon_0 c \langle E^2 \rangle$$

$$= \varepsilon_0 c \langle E_x^2 + \cancel{E_y^2} \rangle$$

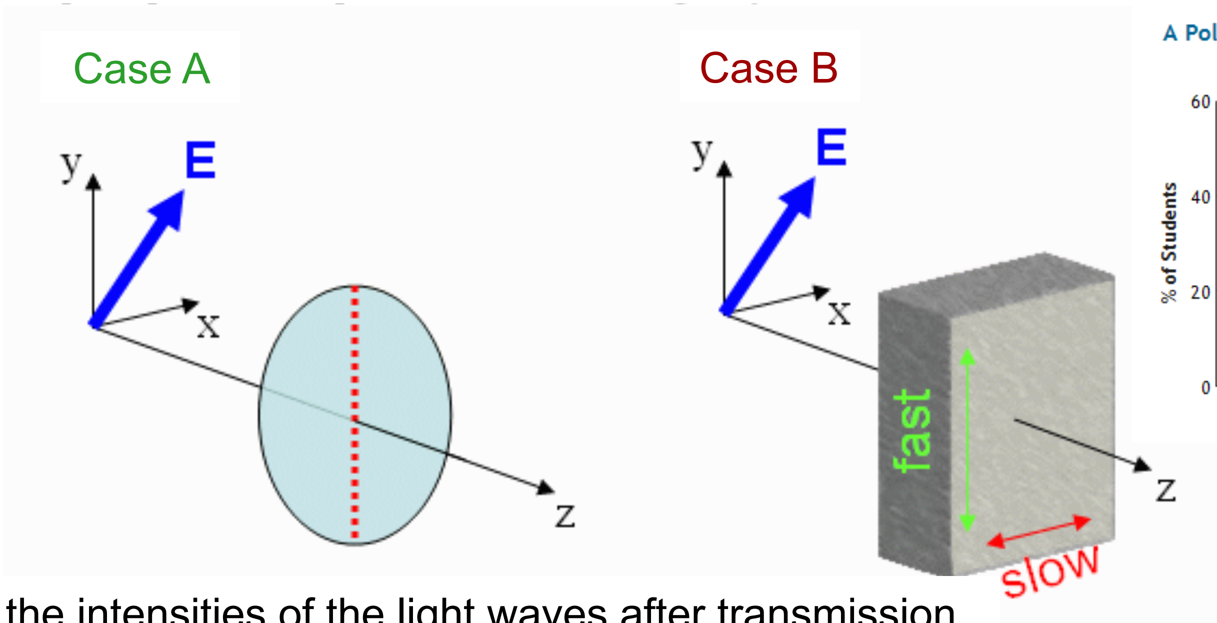
$$= \varepsilon_0 c \frac{E_0^2}{2} \underbrace{\langle \cos^2(kz - \omega t) \rangle}_{1/2}$$

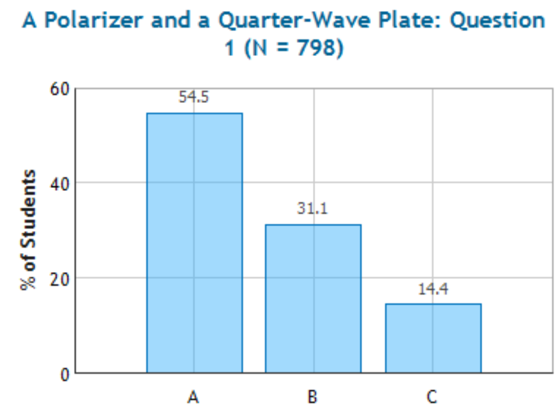
$$= \frac{1}{2} \cdot \frac{1}{2} \varepsilon_0 c E_0^2$$

Half of before

CheckPoint 2a

Identical linearly polarized light at 45° from the y-axis and propagating along the z axis is incident on two different objects. In Case A the light intercepts a linear polarizer with polarization along the y-axis In Case B, the light intercepts a quarter wave plate with fast axis along the y-axis.





Compare the intensities of the light waves after transmission.

A. $I_A < I_B$ **B.** $I_A = I_B$ **C.** $I_A > I_B$

Case A:

E_x is absorbed

$$I_A = I_0 \cos^2(45^o)$$

$$I_A = \tfrac{1}{2} I_0$$

Case B:

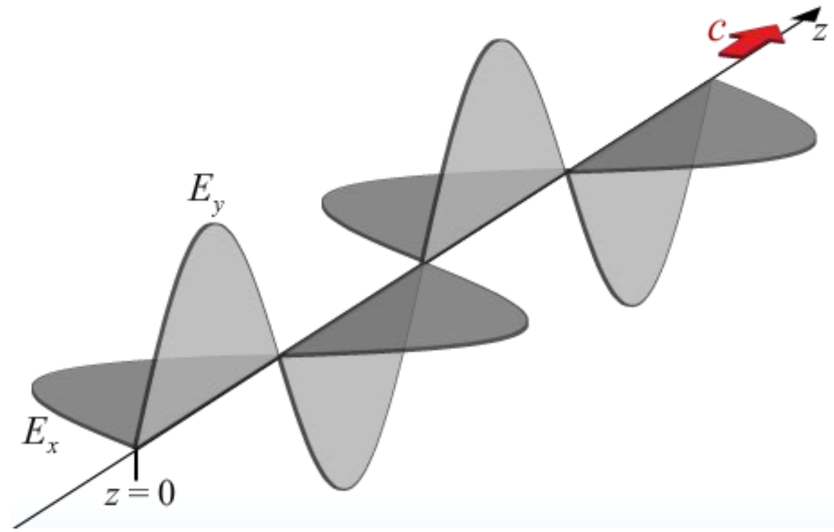
(E_x, E_y) phase changed

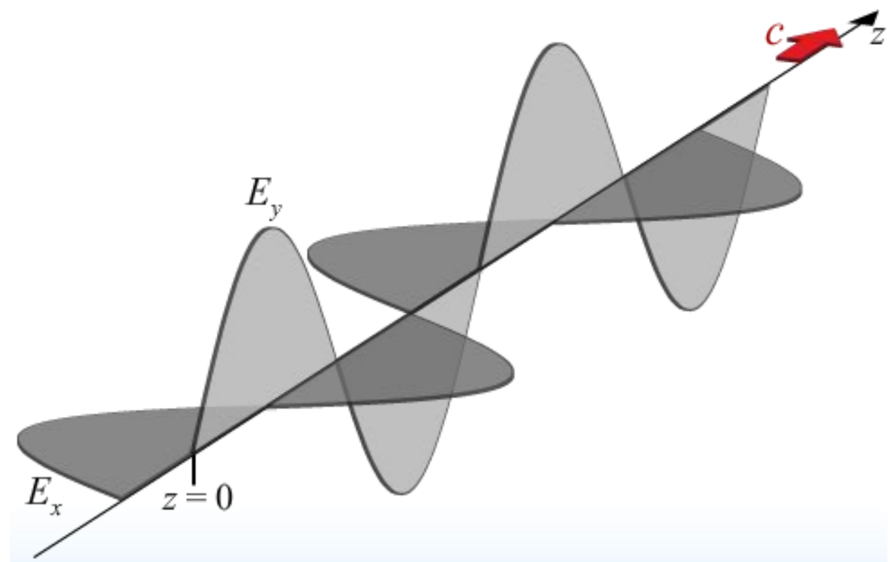
$$I_B = I_0$$

Intensity:

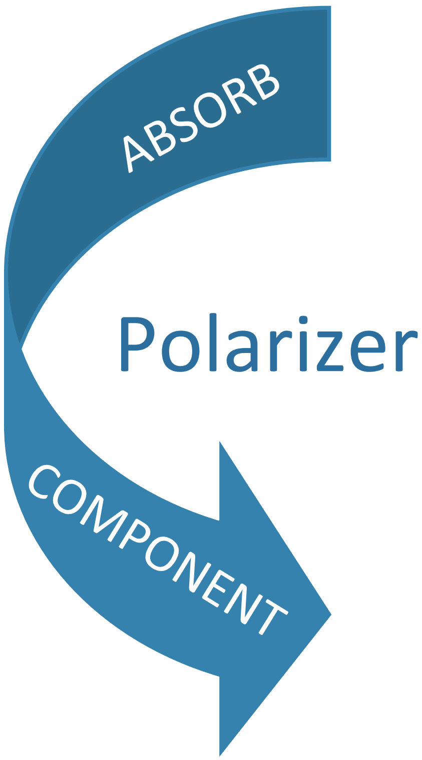
$$I = \varepsilon_0 c \left[\left\langle E_x^2 \right\rangle + \left\langle E_y^2 \right\rangle \right]$$

Both E_x and E_y are still there, so intensity is the same

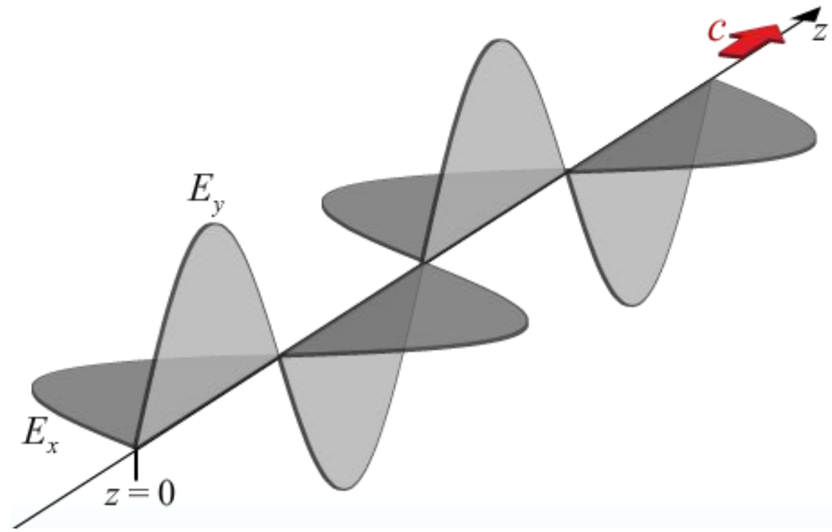


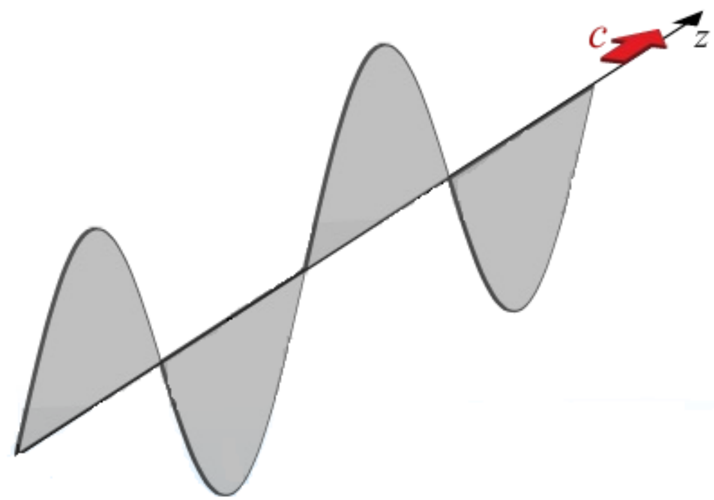


$$I = \varepsilon_0 c\left[\cancel{\langle E_x^2\rangle} + \langle E_y^2\rangle\right]$$



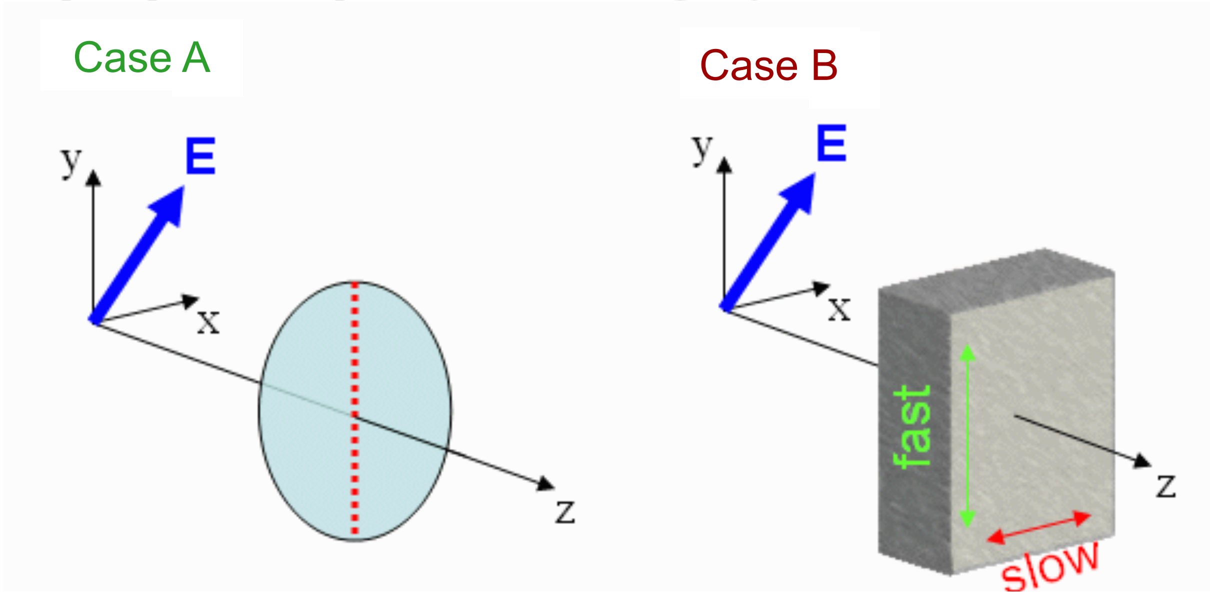
E_x is missing, so intensity is lower





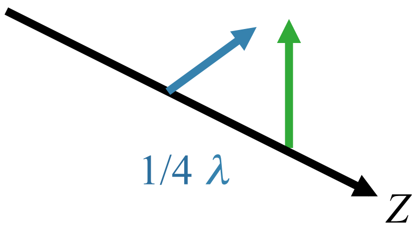
Identical linearly polarized light at 45° from the y-axis and propagating along the z axis is incident on two different objects. In Case A the light intercepts a linear polarizer with polarization along the y-axis In Case B, the light intercepts a quarter wave plate with vast axis along the y-axis.

the light intercepts a quarter wave plate with fast axis along the y-axis

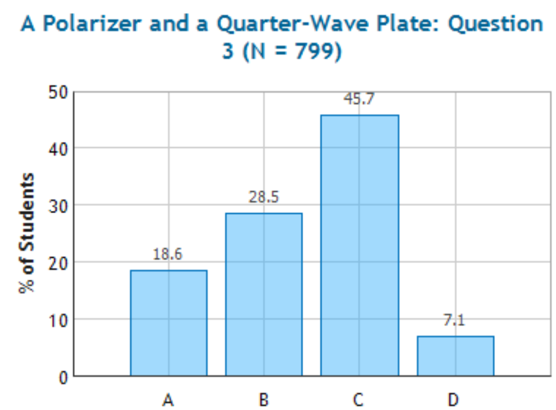


What is the polarization of the light wave in Case B after it passes through the quarter wave plate?.

A. linearly polarized
B. left circularly polarized
C. right circularly polarized
D. undefined



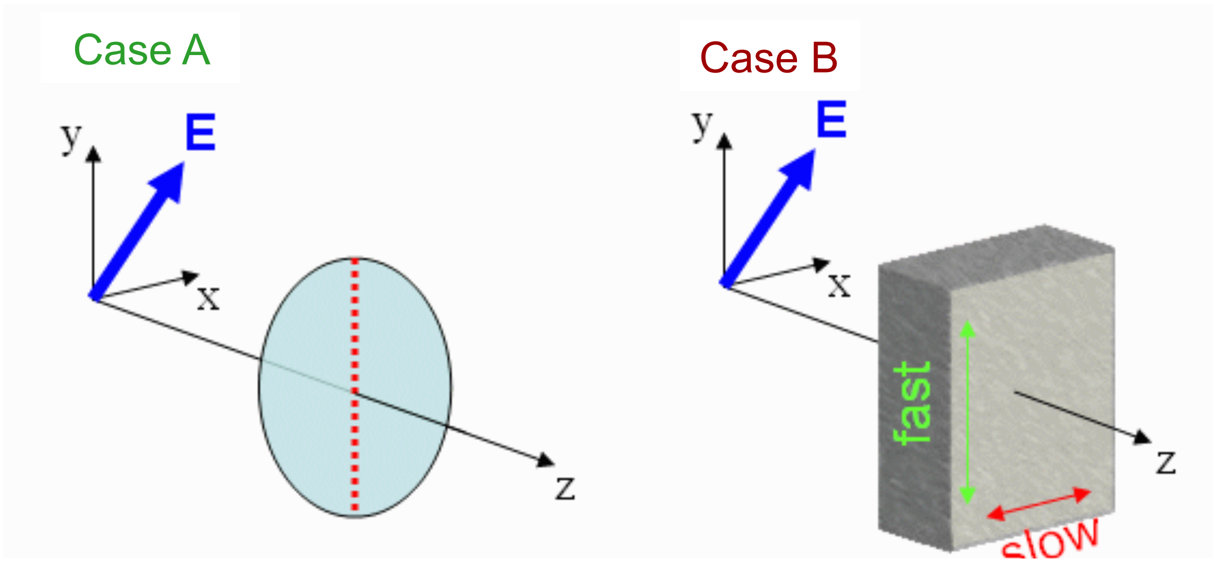
RCP



Curl fingers from slow to fast, thumb should point in direction of propagation

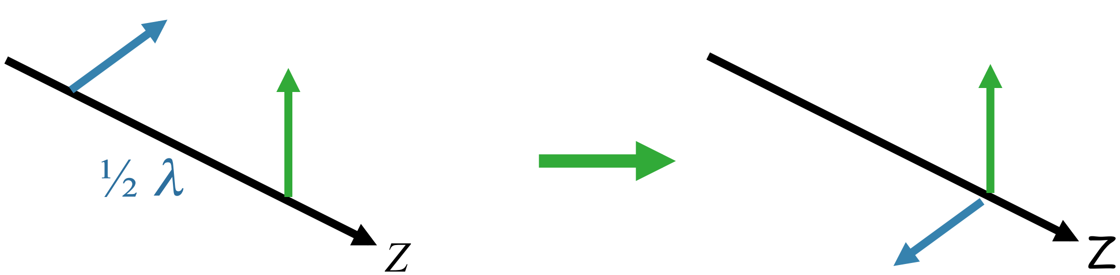
CheckPoint 2c

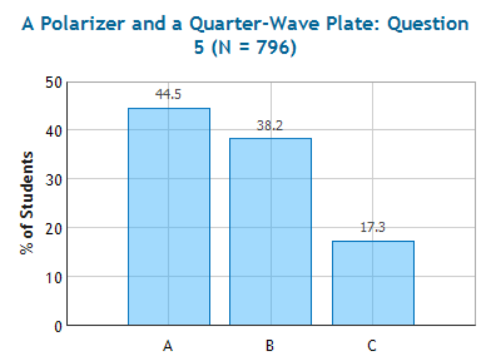
Identical linearly polarized light at 45° from the y-axis and propagating along the z axis is incident on two different objects. In Case A the light intercepts a linear polarizer with polarization along the y-axis In Case B, the light intercepts a quarter wave plate with vast axis along the y-axis.



If the thickness of the quarter-wave plate in Case B is doubled, what is the polarization of the wave after passing through the wave plate?

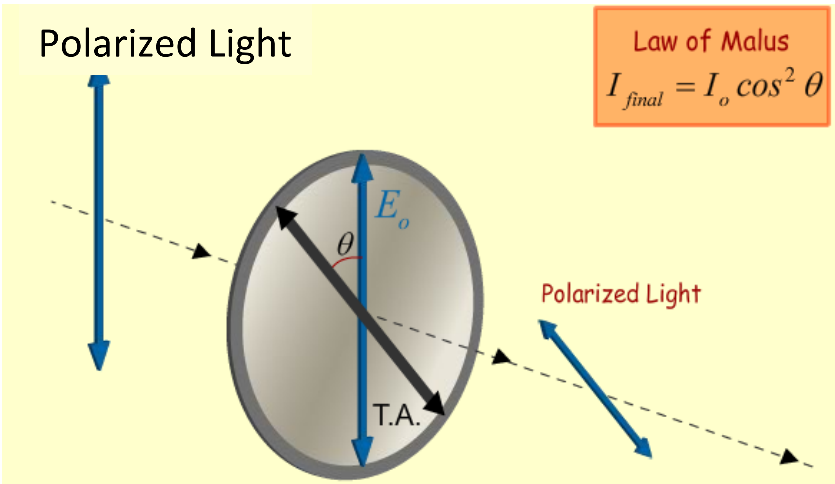
A. linearly polarized ***B.*** circularly polarized ***C.*** undefined

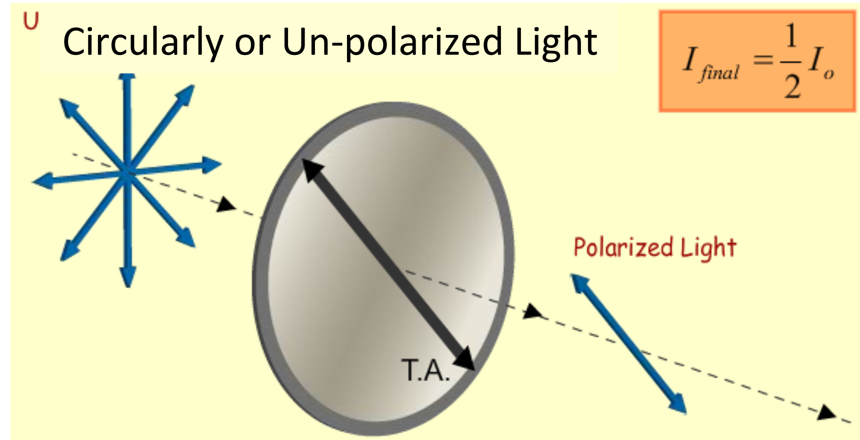




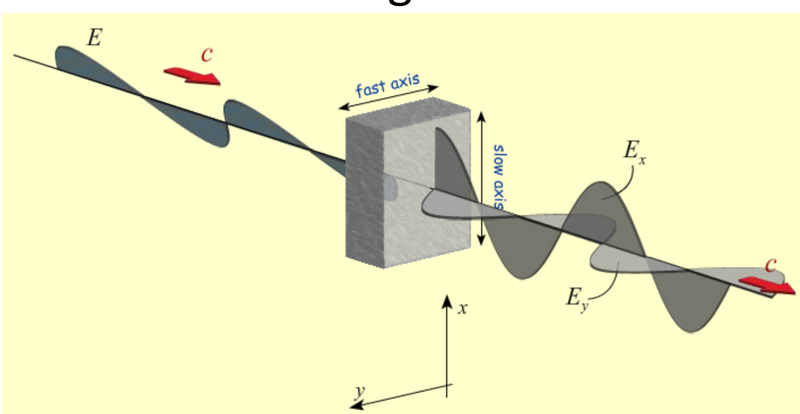
Executive Summary:

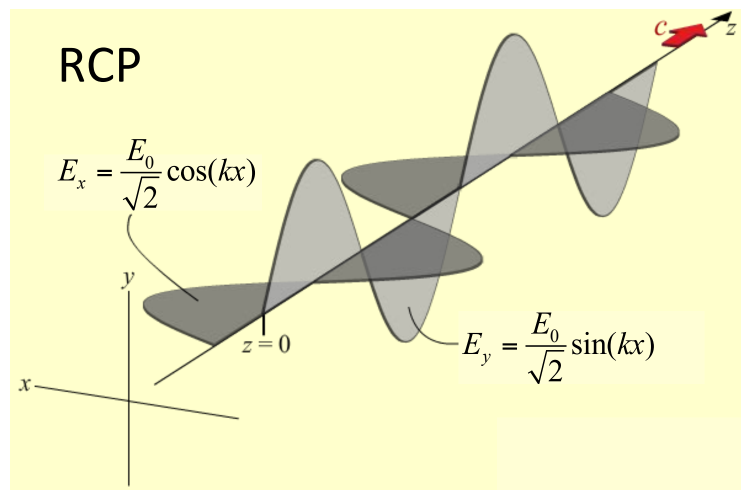
Polarizers & QW Plates:



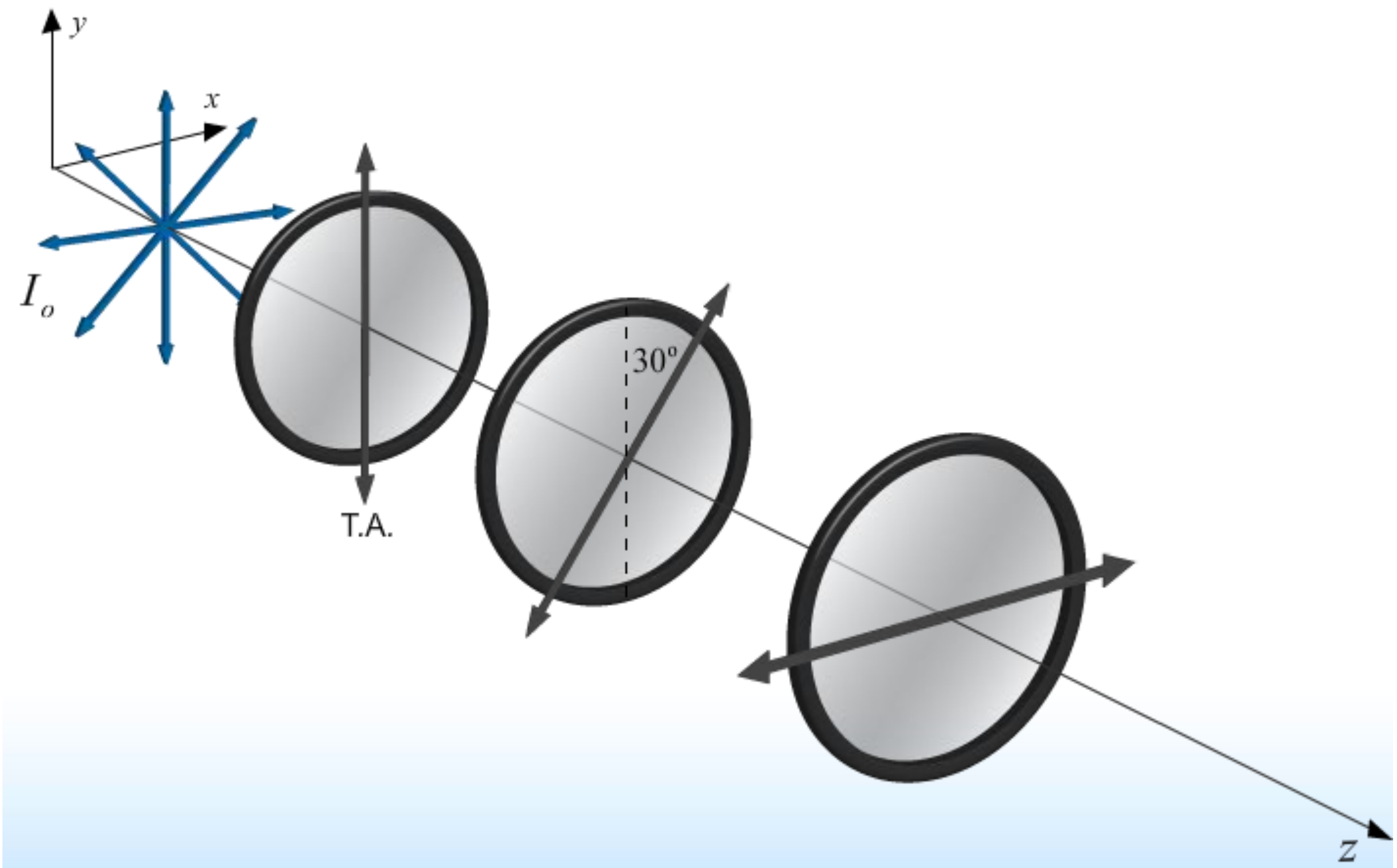


Birefringence





Demo

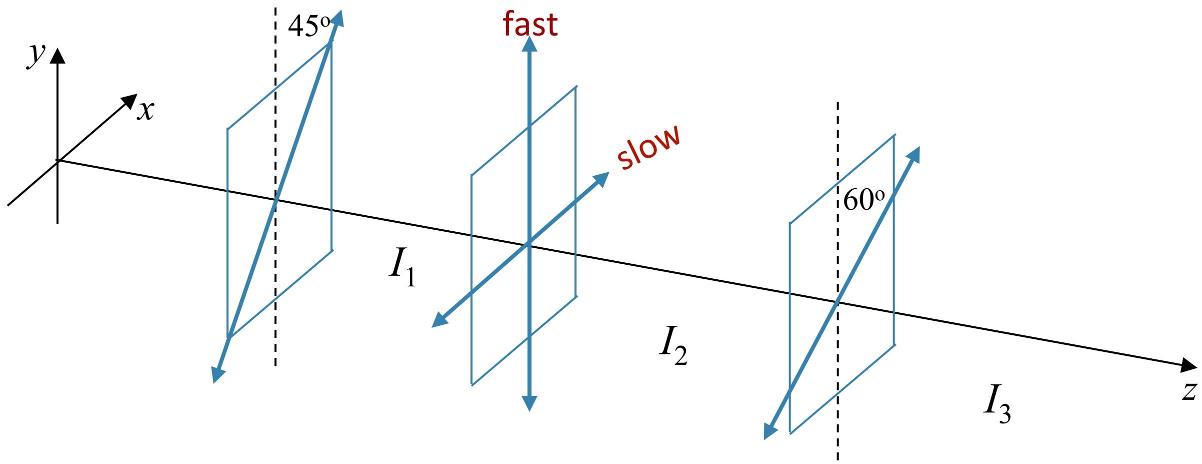


What else can we put in there to change the polarization?

Calculation

Light is incident on two linear polarizers and a quarter wave plate (QWP) as shown.

What is the intensity I_3 in terms of I_1?



Conceptual Analysis

Linear Polarizers: absorbs E field component perpendicular to TA

Quarter Wave Plates: Shifts phase of E field components in fast-slow directions

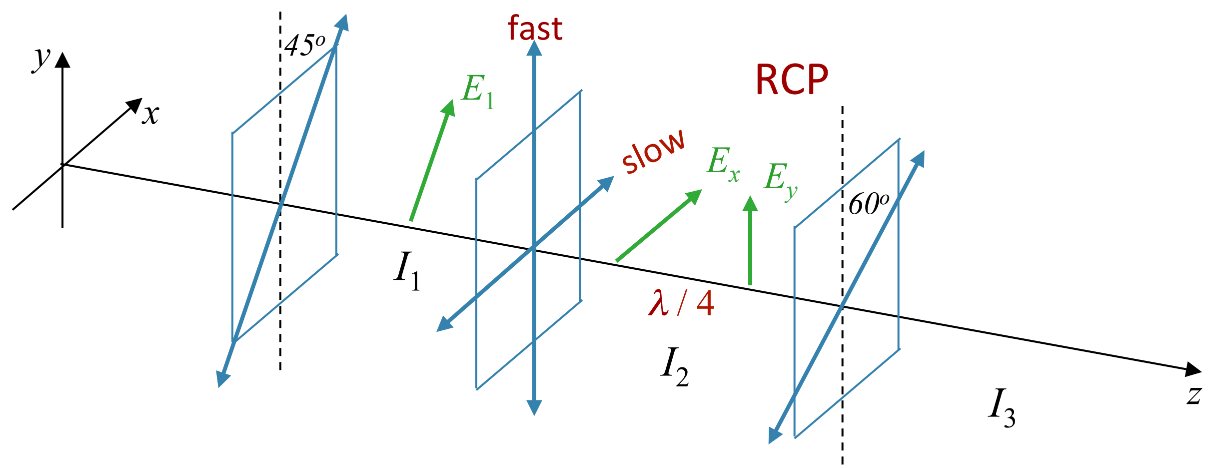
Strategic Analysis

Determine state of polarization and intensity reduction after each object

Multiply individual intensity reductions to get final reduction.

Calculation

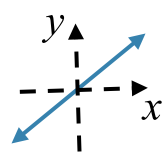
Light is incident on two linear polarizers and a quarter wave plate (QWP) as shown.

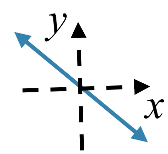


What is the polarization of the light after the QWP?

A) LCP

B) RCP

C) 

D) 

E) un-polarized

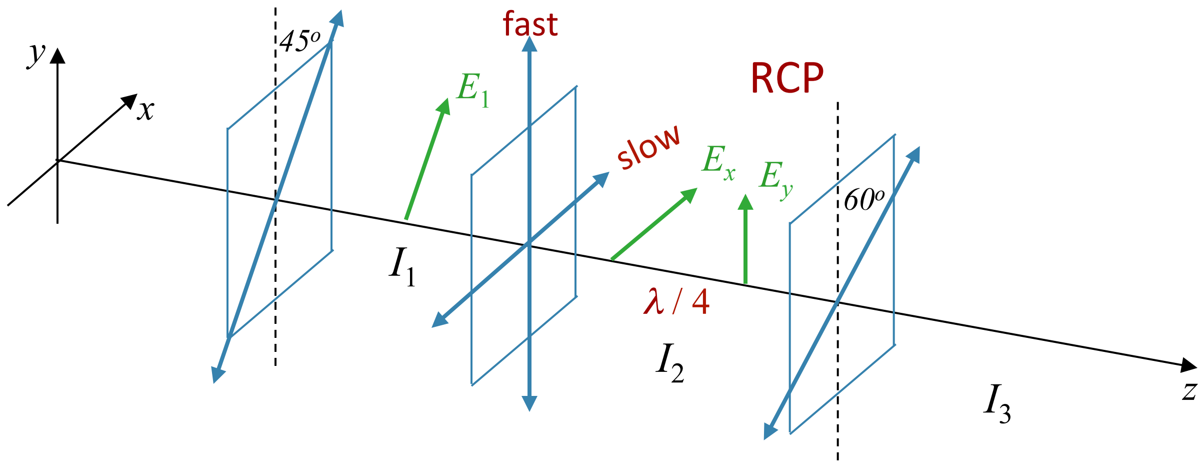
Light incident on QWP is linearly polarized at 45° to fast axis → Light will be circularly polarized after QWP

LCP or RCP? Easiest way: Right Hand Rule:

Curl fingers of RH back to front
Thumb points in dir of propagation
if right hand polarized. → RCP

Calculation

Light is incident on two linear polarizers and a quarter wave plate (QWP) as shown.



What is the intensity I_2 of the light after the QWP?

$\boxed{\text{A) } I_2 = I_1}$ B) $I_2 = \frac{1}{2} I_1$ C) $I_2 = \frac{1}{4} I_1$

Before:

$$E_x = \frac{E_1}{\sqrt{2}} \sin(kz - \omega t)$$

$$E_y = \frac{E_1}{\sqrt{2}} \sin(kz - \omega t)$$

No absorption: Just a phase change!

$$I = \varepsilon_0 c \left[\langle E_x^2 \rangle + \langle E_y^2 \rangle \right]$$

Same before & after!

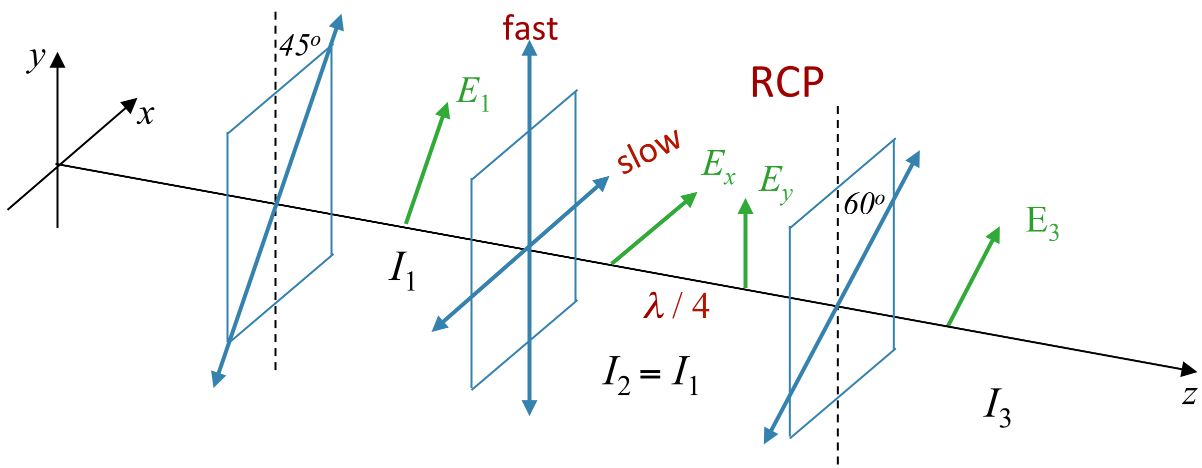
After:

$$E_x = \frac{E_1}{\sqrt{2}} \cos(kz - \omega t)$$

$$E_y = \frac{E_1}{\sqrt{2}} \sin(kz - \omega t)$$

Calculation

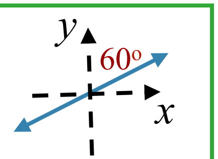
Light is incident on two linear polarizers and a quarter wave plate (QWP) as shown.

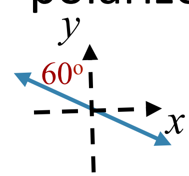


What is the polarization of the light after the 60° polarizer?

A) LCP

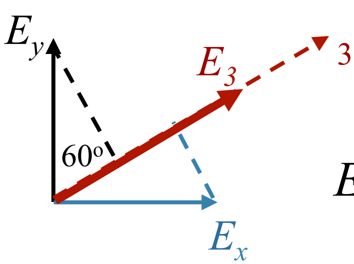
B) RCP

C) 

D) 

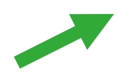
E) un-polarized

Absorption: only passes components of E parallel to TA $(\theta = 60^o)$



$$E_3 = E_x \sin\theta + E_y \cos\theta$$

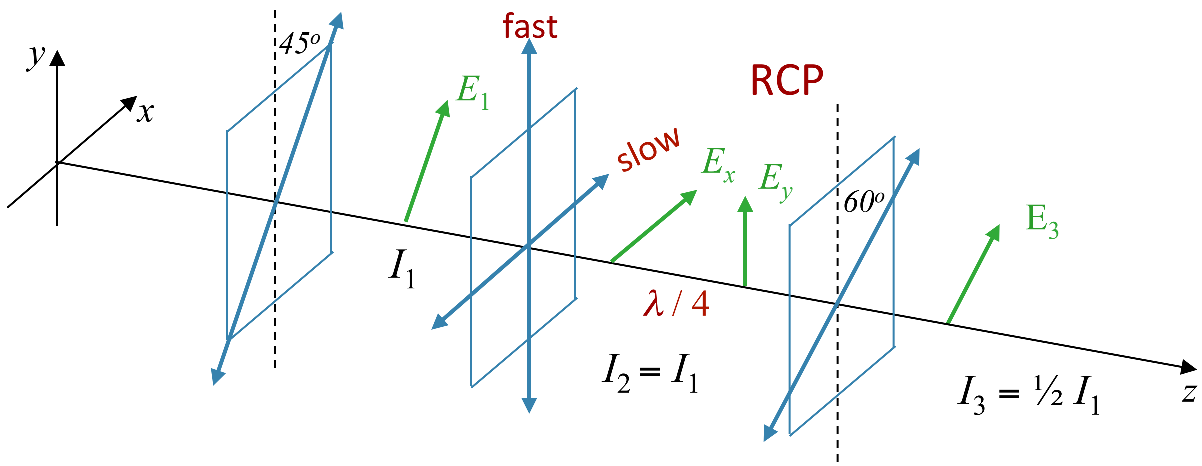
$$E_3 = \frac{E_1}{\sqrt{2}}\left(\cos(kz - \omega t)\sin\theta + \sin(kz - \omega t)\cos\theta\right)$$



$$E_3 = \frac{E_1}{\sqrt{2}}\left(\sin(kz - \omega t + \theta)\right)$$

Calculation

Light is incident on two linear polarizers and a quarter wave plate (QWP) as shown.

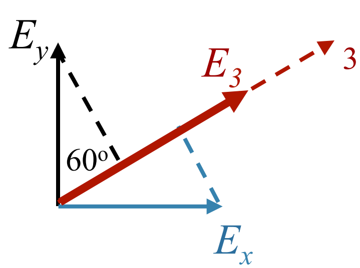


What is the intensity I_3 of the light after the 60^o polarizer?

A) $I_3 = I_1$

B) $I_3 = \frac{1}{2} I_1$

C) $I_3 = \frac{1}{4} I_1$

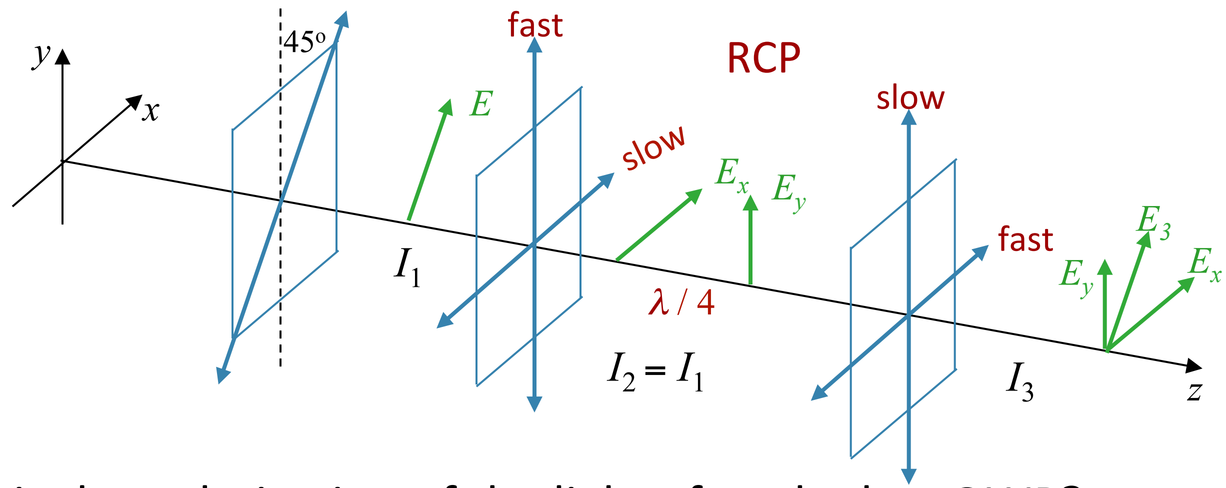


$$E_3 = \frac{E_1}{\sqrt{2}} \qquad I \propto E^2 \quad \Rightarrow \quad I_3 = \frac{1}{2} I_1$$

NOTE: This does not depend on θ !

Follow-Up 1

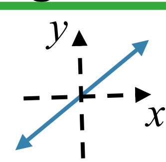
Replace the 60^o polarizer with another QWP as shown.

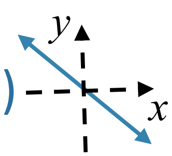


What is the polarization of the light after the last QWP?

A) LCP

B) RCP

C) 

D) 

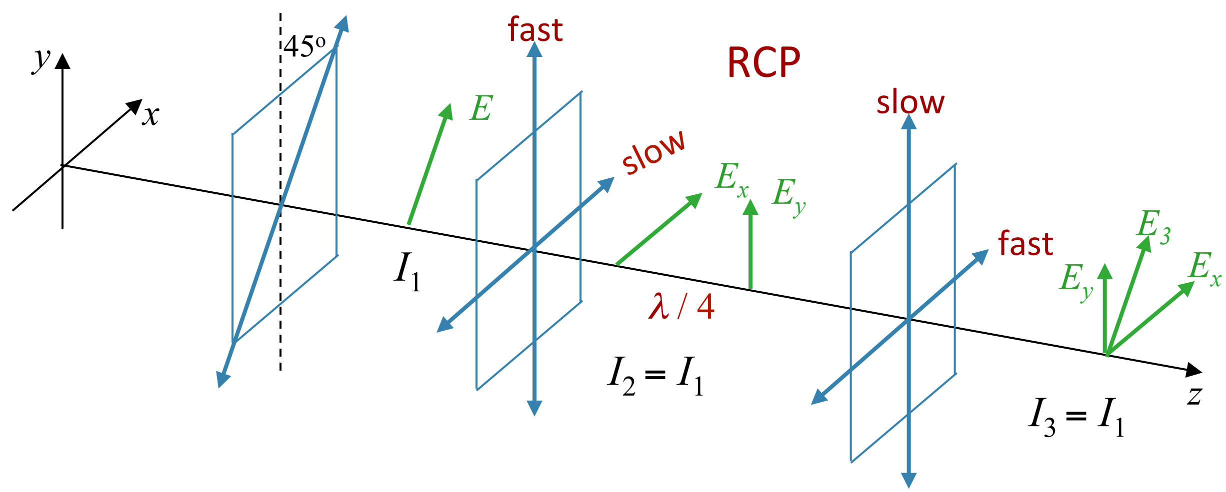
E) un-polarized

Easiest way:
E_{fast} is $\lambda / 4$ ahead of E_{slow}

Brings E_x and E_y back in phase!

Follow-Up 2

Replace the 60^o polarizer with another QWP as shown.



What is the intensity I_3 of the light after the last QWP?

A) I_1 B) $\frac{1}{2} I_1$ C) $\frac{1}{4} I_1$

No absorption: Just a phase change!

Before:

$$E_x = \frac{E_1}{\sqrt{2}} \cos(kz - \omega t)$$

$$E_y = \frac{E_1}{\sqrt{2}} \sin(kz - \omega t)$$

Intensity $= < E^2 >$

$$I_{before} = \frac{E_1^2}{2} \longleftrightarrow I_{after} = \frac{E_1^2}{2}$$

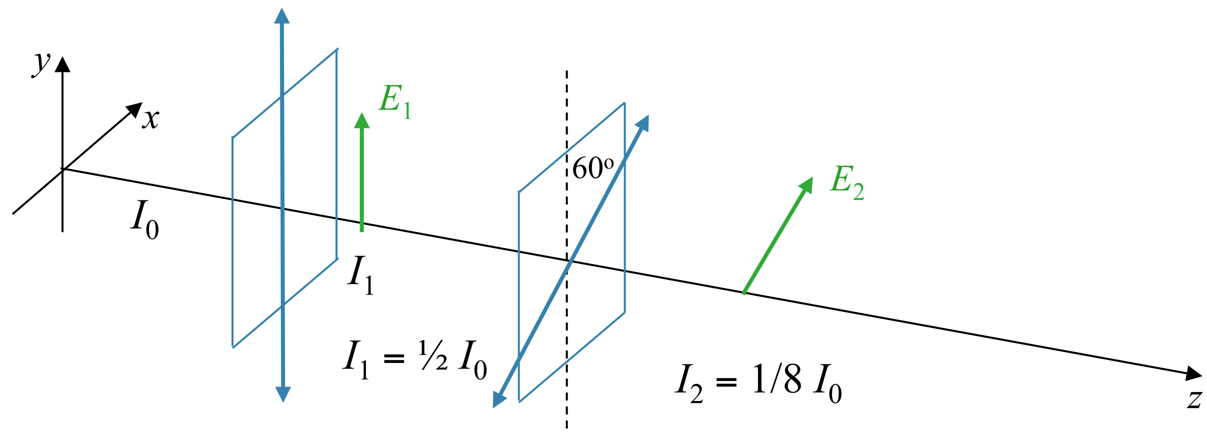
After:

$$E_x = \frac{E_1}{\sqrt{2}} \cos(kz - \omega t)$$

$$E_y = \frac{E_1}{\sqrt{2}} \cos(kz - \omega t)$$

Follow-Up 3

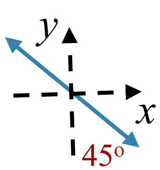
Consider light incident on two linear polarizers as shown. Suppose $I_2 = 1/8\ I_0$



What is the possible polarization of the input light?

A) LCP

B)



C) un-polarized

D) all of above

E) none of above

After first polarizer: LP along y–axis with intensity I_1

After second polarizer: LP at 60^o wrt y–axis

Intensity: $I_2 = I_1\cos^2(60^o) = ¼\ I_1$

$I_2 = 1/8\ I_0 \Rightarrow I_1 = ½\ I_0$

Question is: What kind of light loses ½ of its intensity after passing through vertical polarizer?

Answer: Everything except LP at θ other than 45^o