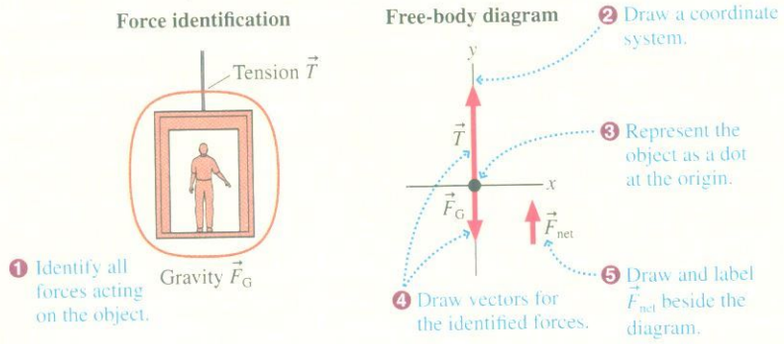
EXAMPLE 5.4 An elevator accelerates upward

An elevator, suspended by a cable, speeds up as it moves upward from the ground floor. Identify the forces and draw a free-body diagram of the elevator.

MODEL Model the elevator as a particle.

VISUALIZE

FIGURE 5.20 Free-body diagram of an elevator accelerating upward.



ASSESS The coordinate axes, with a vertical y-axis, are the ones we would use in a pictorial representation of the motion. The elevator is accelerating upward, so $\vec{F}_{net}$ must point upward. For this to be true, the magnitude of $\vec{T}$ must be larger than the magnitude of $\vec{F}_G$. The diagram has been drawn accordingly.

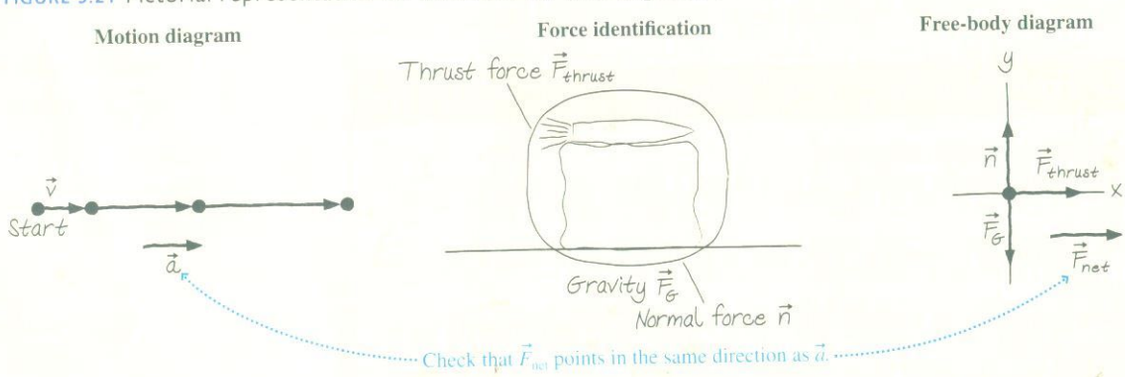
EXAMPLE 5.5 An ice block shoots across a frozen lake

Bobby straps a small model rocket to a block of ice and shoots it across the smooth surface of a frozen lake. Friction is negligible. Draw a pictorial representation of the block of ice.

MODEL Model the block of ice as a particle. The pictorial representation consists of a motion diagram to determine $\vec{a}$, a force-identification picture, and a free-body diagram. The statement of the situation implies that friction is negligible.

VISUALIZE

FIGURE 5.21 Pictorial representation for a block of ice shooting across a frictionless frozen lake.



ASSESS The motion diagram tells us that the acceleration is in the positive x-direction. According to the rules of vector addition, this can be true only if the upward-pointing $\vec{n}$ and the downward-pointing $\vec{F}_G$ are equal in magnitude and thus cancel each other. The vectors have been drawn accordingly, and this leaves the net force vector pointing toward the right, in agreement with $\vec{a}$ from the motion diagram.

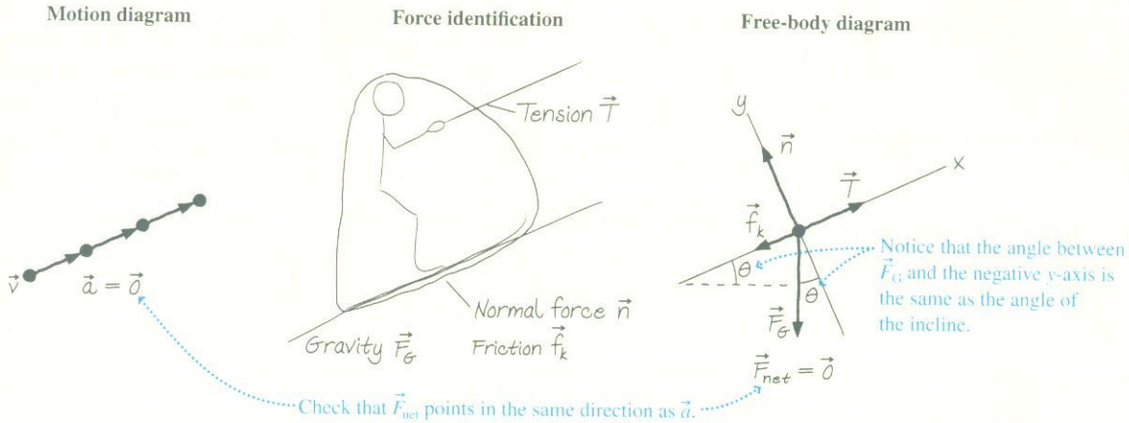
EXAMPLE 5.6 A skier is pulled up a hill

A tow rope pulls a skier up a snow-covered hill at a constant speed. Draw a pictorial representation of the skier.

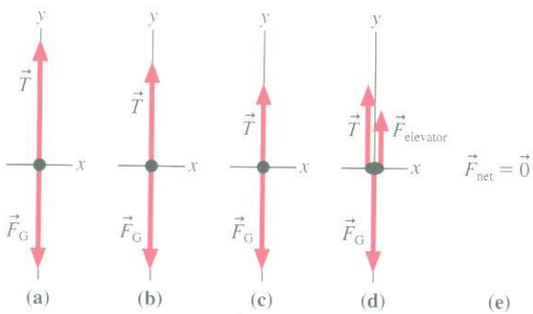
MODEL This is Example 5.2 again with the additional information that the skier is moving at constant speed. The skier will be modeled as a particle in *mechanical equilibrium*. If we were doing a kinematics problem, the pictorial representation would use a tilted coordinate system with the x-axis parallel to the slope, so we use these same tilted coordinate axes for the free-body diagram.

VISUALIZE

FIGURE 5.22 Pictorial representation for a skier being towed at a constant speed.



ASSESS We have shown $\vec{T}$ pulling parallel to the slope and $\vec{f}_k$, which opposes the direction of motion, pointing down the slope. $\vec{n}$ is perpendicular to the surface and thus along the y-axis. Finally, and this is important, the gravitational force $\vec{F}_G$ is *vertically* downward, *not* along the negative y-axis. In fact, you should convince yourself from the geometry that the angle θ between the $\vec{F}_G$ vector and the negative y-axis is the same as the angle θ of the incline above the horizontal. The skier moves in a straight line with constant speed, so $\vec{a} = \vec{0}$ and, from Newton's first law, $\vec{F}_{net} = \vec{0}$. Thus we have drawn the vectors such that the y-component of $\vec{F}_G$ is equal in magnitude to $\vec{n}$. Similarly, $\vec{T}$ must be large enough to match the negative x-components of both $\vec{f}_k$ and $\vec{F}_G$.

Free-body diagrams will be our major tool for the next several chapters. Careful practice with the workbook exercises and homework in this chapter will pay immediate benefits in the next chapter. Indeed, it is not too much to assert that a problem is half solved, or even more, when you complete the free-body diagram.

STOP TO THINK 5.5 An elevator suspended by a cable is moving upward and slowing to a stop. Which free-body diagram is correct?