Solution 1.26

A relation for the air drag exerted on a car is to be obtained in terms of on the drag coefficient, the air density, the car velocity, and the frontal area of the car.

Analysis The drag force depends on a dimensionless drag coefficient, the air density, the car velocity, and the frontal area. Also, the unit of force F is newton N, which is equivalent to kg·m/s^2. Therefore, the independent quantities should be arranged such that we end up with the unit kg·m/s^2 for the drag force. Putting the given information into perspective, we have

$$F_D \text{ [kg·m/s}^2\text{]} \leftrightarrow C_{\text{Drag}} \text{ [], } A_{\text{front}} \text{ [m}^2\text{], } \rho \text{ [kg/m}^3\text{], and } V \text{ [m/s]}$$

It is obvious that the only way to end up with the unit "kg·m/s^2" for drag force is to multiply mass with the square of the velocity and the fontal area, with the drag coefficient serving as the constant of proportionality. Therefore, the desired relation is

$$F_D = C_{\text{Drag}} \rho A_{\text{front}} V^2$$

Discussion Note that this approach is not sensitive to dimensionless quantities, and thus a strong reasoning is required.