

The success of Mendeleev's predictions persuaded most chemists to accept his periodic table and earned him credit as the discoverer of the periodic law. Two questions remained, however. (1) Why could most of the elements be arranged in the order of increasing atomic mass but a few could not? (2) What was the reason for chemical periodicity?

Moseley and the Periodic Law

The first question was not answered until more than 40 years after Mendeleev's first periodic table was published. In 1911, the English scientist Henry Moseley, who was working with Ernest Rutherford, examined the spectra of 38 different metals. When analyzing his data, Moseley discovered a previously unrecognized pattern. The elements in the periodic table fit into patterns better when they were arranged in increasing order according to nuclear charge, or the number of protons in the nucleus. Moseley's work led to both the modern definition of atomic number and the recognition that atomic number, not atomic mass, is the basis for the organization of the periodic table.

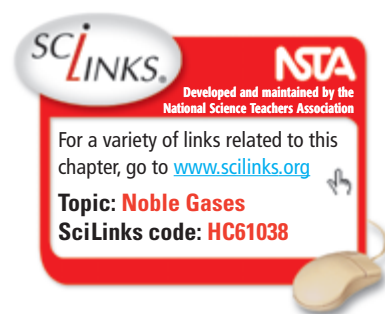
Moseley's discovery was consistent with Mendeleev's ordering of the periodic table by properties rather than strictly by atomic mass. For example, according to Moseley, tellurium, with an atomic number of 52, belongs before iodine, which has an atomic number of 53. Today, Mendeleev's principle of chemical periodicity is correctly stated in what is known as the **periodic law**: *The physical and chemical properties of the elements are periodic functions of their atomic numbers*. In other words, when the elements are arranged in order of increasing atomic number, elements with similar properties appear at regular intervals.

The Modern Periodic Table

The periodic table has undergone extensive change since Mendeleev's time (see **Figure 6** on pages 140–141). Chemists have discovered new elements and, in more recent years, synthesized new ones in the laboratory. Each of the more than 40 new elements, however, can be placed in a group of other elements with similar properties. *The periodic table is an arrangement of the elements in order of their atomic numbers so that elements with similar properties fall in the same column, or group.*

The Noble Gases

Perhaps the most significant addition to the periodic table came with the discovery of the noble gases. In 1894, English physicist John William Strutt (Lord Rayleigh) and Scottish chemist Sir William Ramsay discovered argon, Ar, a gas in the atmosphere that had previously escaped notice because of its total lack of chemical reactivity. Back in 1868,



			2 He
7 N	8 O	9 F	10 Ne
15 P	16 S	17 Cl	18 Ar
33 As	34 Se	35 Br	36 Kr
51 Sb	52 Te	53 I	54 Xe
83 Bi	84 Po	85 At	86 Rn

FIGURE 3 The noble gases, also known as the Group 18 elements, are all rather unreactive. As you will read, the reason for this low reactivity also accounts for the special place occupied by the noble gases in the periodic table.