

hypothesis revealed the following observations.

1. Cathode rays were deflected by a magnetic field in the same manner as a wire carrying electric current, which was known to have a negative charge (see **Figure 5**).
2. The rays were deflected away from a negatively charged object.

These observations led to the hypothesis that the particles that compose cathode rays are negatively charged. This hypothesis was strongly supported by a series of experiments carried out in 1897 by the English physicist Joseph John Thomson. In one investigation, he was able to measure the ratio of the charge of cathode-ray particles to their mass. He found that this ratio was always the same, regardless of the metal used to make the cathode or the nature of the gas inside the cathode-ray tube. Thomson concluded that all cathode rays are composed of identical negatively charged particles, which were named electrons.

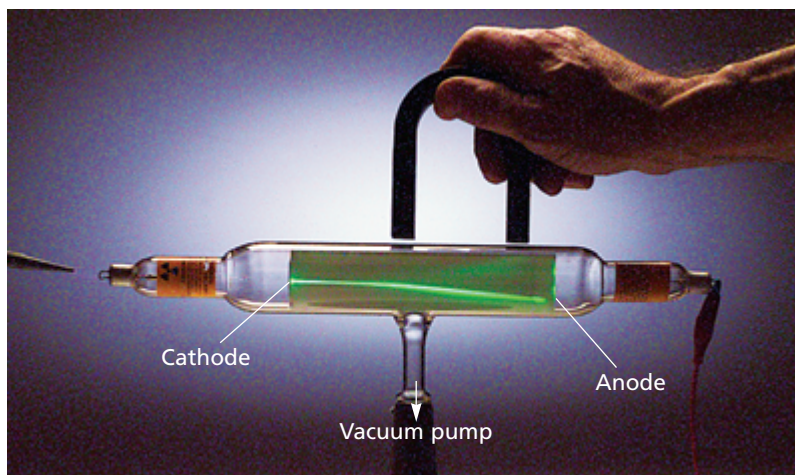


FIGURE 5 A magnet near the cathode-ray tube causes the beam to be deflected. The deflection indicates that the particles in the beam have a negative charge.

Charge and Mass of the Electron



Thomson's experiment revealed that the electron has a very large charge-to-mass ratio. Because cathode rays have identical properties regardless of the element used to produce them, it was concluded that electrons are present in atoms of all elements. Thus, cathode-ray experiments provided evidence that atoms are divisible and that one of the atom's basic constituents is the negatively charged electron. In 1909, experiments conducted by the American physicist Robert A. Millikan measured the charge of the electron. Scientists used this information and the charge-to-mass ratio of the electron to determine that the mass of the electron is about one two-thousandth the mass of the simplest type of hydrogen atom, which is the smallest atom known. More-accurate experiments conducted since then indicate that the electron has a mass of 9.109×10^{-31} kg, or 1/1837 the mass of the simplest type of hydrogen atom.

Based on what was learned about electrons, two other inferences were made about atomic structure.

1. Because atoms are electrically neutral, they must contain a positive charge to balance the negative electrons.
2. Because electrons have so much less mass than atoms, atoms must contain other particles that account for most of their mass.

Thomson proposed a model for the atom that is called the *plum pudding model* (after the English dessert). He believed that the negative electrons were spread evenly throughout the positive charge of the rest of the atom. This arrangement is similar to that of seeds in a watermelon: the seeds are spread throughout the fruit but do not contribute much to the overall mass. However, shortly thereafter, new experiments disproved this model.

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