

Quantum Mechanics
from the context of the course
PHY 471: Quantum Mechanics

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	"If you are not confused by quantum mechanics then you haven't really understood it." -Niels Bohr	

0.1 The SI System

In physics it's often important to have precisely defined units for the purposes of making very accurate measurements or simply having a coherent unit system. It's possible to derive all necessary units from five measurements of **length, mass, time, current, and temperature**. The standard SI units for these properties are listed below:

Type	Unit	Definition
Length	Meter(m)	Length of distance light in a vacuum travels in $\frac{1}{299792458}$ seconds
Mass	Kilogram(kg)	Defined by fixing the Planck's constant $h = 6.62607015 \times 10^{-34} kg \cdot m^2 s^{-1}$
Time	Second(s)	Defined by fixing the ground-state hyperfine transition frequency of the caesium-133 atom, to be $9192631770 s^{-1}$
Current	Ampere(A)	Defined by fixing the charge of an electron as $1.602176634 \times 10^{-19} A \cdot s$
Temperature	Kelvin(K)	Defined by fixing the value of the Boltzmann constant k to $1.380649 \times 10^{-23} kg \cdot m^2 s^{-2} K^{-1}$

Common prefixes are listed below:

Prefix	Symbol	Definition
mega	M	10^6
kilo	k	10^3
milli	m	10^{-3}
micro	μ	10^{-6}
nano	n	10^{-9}
pico	p	10^{-12}
femto	f	10^{-15}

Additionally, the following are defined constants:

Symbol	Definition
\hbar	$\hbar = \frac{h}{2\pi} \approx 1.0546 \times 10^{-34} kg \cdot m^2 s^{-1}$

0.2 What's Wrong with Classical Mechanics?

Very small things behave very differently than anything big. The models in classical physics fail to describe them. When we look at things on the small scale they don't behave in a way that can be explained without inventing new math. This is what quantum mechanics hopes to explain. The classic example of this is the double slit experiment with electrons. Classically, waves traveling through a double slit will interfere with each other producing a wavy interference pattern. Again classically, fire individual particles through a double slit experiment would not be expected to produce an interference pattern. However, running this experiment with electrons produces an interference pattern. Somehow individual electrons are interfering with themselves. This would hint at the idea that electrons are waves. However if you add detectors to determine if the electron when through both slits, it will only ever pass through one and the interference is destroyed. Simply by observing the path of electrons we fundamentally changed how they behave.

Chapter 1

Stern-Gerlach Experiments

Definition 1.0.1. Recall from classical mechanics that **Classical Magnetic Moment** is defined using the following formula given some angular momentum \mathbf{L}

$$\mu = \frac{q}{2m}\mathbf{L}$$
$$\mathbf{L} = r m v$$

where r is radius, m is mass of particle, v is tangential velocity, q is charge, \mathbf{L} is the angular momentum, and μ is the magnetic moment.

It is reasonable to expect that some classical physics also applies in quantum as classical physics must emerge from quantum physics.

Definition 1.0.2. Electron, Protons, and Neutrons all have an **intrinsic angular momentum** called **spin** denoted \mathbf{S} .

Definition 1.0.3. Electrons, Protons, and Neutrons also have an **intrinsic magnetic moment** defined by

$$\mu = g \frac{q}{2m}\mathbf{S}$$

where g is the dimensionless gyroscopic ratio or g -factor with the following values:

Electron: $g_e = 2.00231930436256$

Proton: $g_p = 5.5856946893$

Neutron: $g_n = -3.82608545$

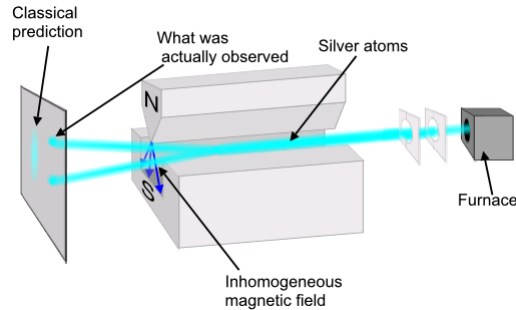


Figure 1.1: Diagram of the Stern-Gerlach experiment

The first Stern-Gerlach experiment seeks to measure the magnetic moment of the valence electron. A silver atom has 47 electrons and 47 protons. The magnetic moments depends on the inverse of mass, so we can neglect heavy protons and neutrons. Silver has an electron configuration of $1s^2 2s^2 2p^6 3s^2 3p^6 4s^2 3d^{10} 4p^6 4d^{10} 5s^1$, so the only electron that contributes to the magnetic moment is the valence electron $5s^1$. Knowing this we expect the magnetic moment of the silver atom to be

$$\mu = -g_e \frac{e}{2m_e}\mathbf{S}$$

Following the laws of electromagnetism the force in the z direction is

$$F_z = -g_e \frac{e}{2m_e} S_z \frac{\partial B_z}{\partial z}$$

The deflection of the beam is therefore a measurement of the spin of the valence electron of the silver atoms in the z-direction. Classically, we would expect the magnetic moment to be aligned in random directive and to observe a continuous range of deflection. Instead we observe two distinct magnetic moments. The magnitudes of these deflections are consistent with the spins of

$$S_z = \pm \frac{\hbar}{2}$$

This is called **quantization** of the electron's spin angular momentum component. The factor $\frac{1}{2}$ in the equation is why we refer to electrons as having **spin-1/2**.

Definition 1.0.4. quantization of a property or material is an effect that constrains the property or material to a discrete set of values.

1.0.1 Additional Stern-Gerlach Experiments

As we alluded to in the introduction the act of observing a quantum property may effect how the system behaves. By stacking multiple Stern-Gerlach experiments back to back we can observe that spin in the x direction and spin in the z direction are incompatible observables. To simplify the diagrams we will use the following simplified schematic:

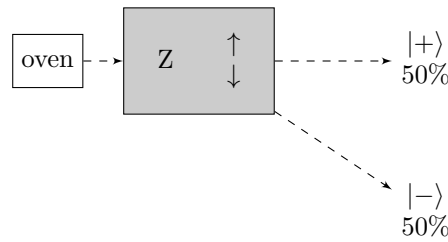


Figure 1.2: Simple schematic of the Stern-Gerlach experiment

Here we represent spin-up states with $|+\rangle$ and spin-down states with $|-\rangle$. More specifically, if a particle has a spin z-component S_z . In this first example 50% of the particles are measured with spin-up and 50% of the particles are measured with spin-down. Now consider the following diagram:

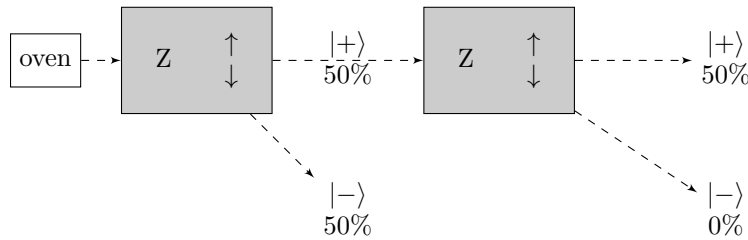


Figure 1.3: This setup measures along the z-axis twice.

As expected, after the first measurement all the remaining particles are spin-z.

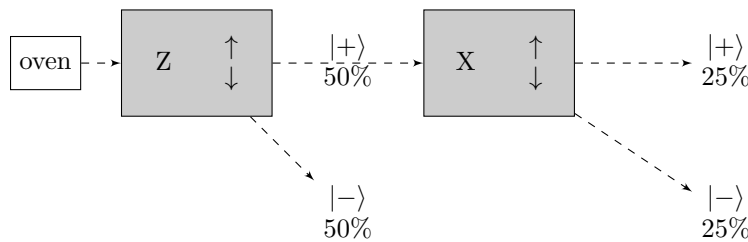


Figure 1.4: This setup measures along the z-axis followed by the x-axis.

If we instead measure along the x axis the result is random and half of the particles are measured to have spin-up or spin-down in the x direction.

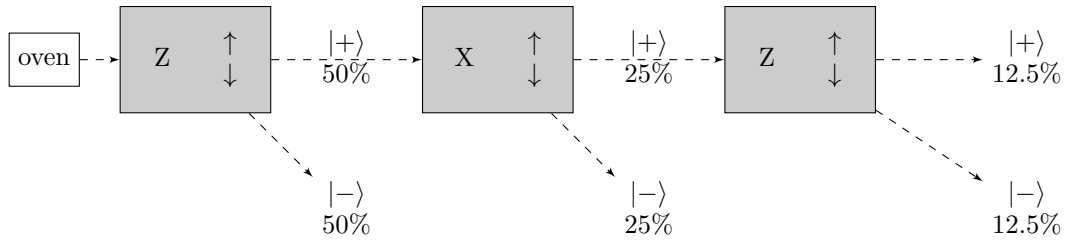


Figure 1.5: This demonstrates that Spin-z and Spin-x are incompatible observables.

After measuring in the x-direction, if we again measure in the z-direction the atoms "forget" about the earlier measurement and we observe a random spin in the z direction. Measuring the spin in the x direction destroyed the measured spin in the z direction.

Definition 1.0.5. Incompatible observables are two properties that cannot be simultaneously measured.

Definition 1.0.6. Compatible observables are two properties that can be simultaneously measured.

1.1 Quantum State Vectors