

Total internal reflection is defined as:

The phenomenon which occurs when the light rays travel from a more optically denser medium to a less optically denser medium.

Consider the following situation. A ray of light passes from a medium of water to that of air. Light ray will be refracted at the junction separating the two media. Since it passes from a medium of a higher refractive index to that having a lower refractive index, the refracted light ray bends away from the normal. At a specific angle of incidence, the incident ray of light is refracted in such a way that it passes along the surface of the water. This particular angle of incidence is called the critical angle. Here the angle of refraction is 90 degrees. When the angle of incidence is greater than the critical angle, the incident ray is reflected back to the medium. We call this phenomenon total internal reflection.

