

Source: [KBPhysicsMasterIndex](#)

1 | Nuclear Physics

First of all, recall [KBhPHYS201CoulombsLaw](#). Given the force between two particles is $\frac{kQ^2}{R^2}$, we could hand-wavily calculate the *work* between two particles if we know how much they travel near/far from each other. Through this, we could show that nuclear forces (through nuclear distance, proton=>electron) are much larger than that of the chemical forces (atom/atom, electron=>electron).

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Remember: $A_{nucl} = \frac{1}{10^{10}} A_{atom}$

1.1 | Radioactivity

Radiation is the emission of waves — lights, heat, etc. etc. We call something “radioactive” if it emits ionizing radiation: that it has enough energy to liberate an electron from an atom.

1.1.1 | Geiger Counter

#inserthowgeigercountersowrk

Because of the fact that Geiger counters require time to discharge, there is a certain rate called “dead time” during which Geiger counters simply sit and do nothing. As such, we have to account for this lossy “deadtime” of Geiger counters by relating the two values with the following equation

$T = \frac{M}{1-(M/L)}$, where M is the measured rate of radiation and L is the “dead time” — the upper limit of the Geiger counter in question.

1.1.2 | Radio Charge Types

- α : positively charged + relatively massive (low $\frac{q}{m}$)
- β : negatively charged + relatively high charge (high $\frac{q}{m}$)
- γ : neutral

This could be seen by how these three types of charge curve into a magnetic field.



Figure 1: Different charges in a magnetic field

Why? Apply right hand rule 1.5.

1.1.3 | Creating a ray

“Split a nucleus, somehow”

Alpha Decay:



During alpha decay, a massive nucleolus spits out a Helium-resulting part of itself to get rid of 2 protons and 2 neutrons. So, formally...



Gamma Decay

Instead of splitting part of the nucleus, gamma decay spits an electrically excited (so... chemistry, charged, energy level, that stuff) atom into a normal, non-excited atom and also emits a photon.

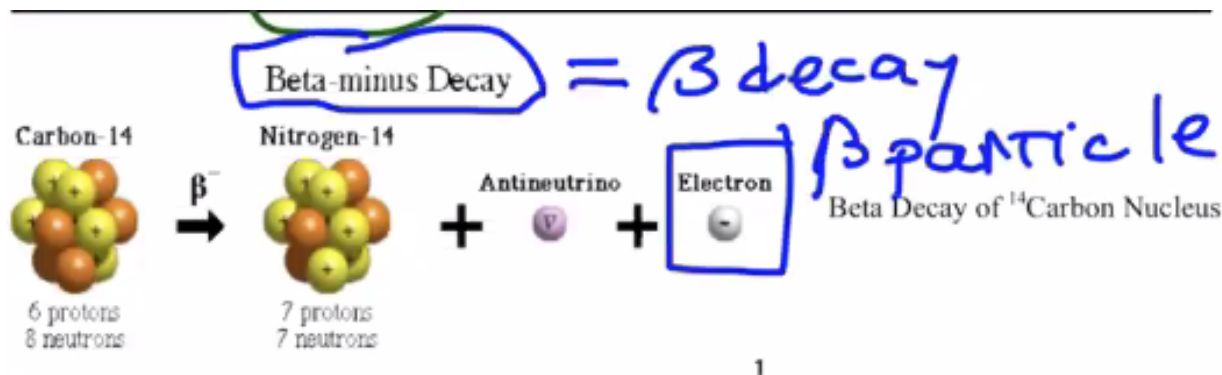


And now, the most confusing one...

Beta Decay There's two types of beta decay: "beta-minus" decay and "beta-plus" decay. When folks talk about just "beta-decay", they are talking about beta-minus decay.

An element decays from the parent element into a different nucleus.

Beta minus decay



In this case, the nucleus gained a proton and lost a neutron.

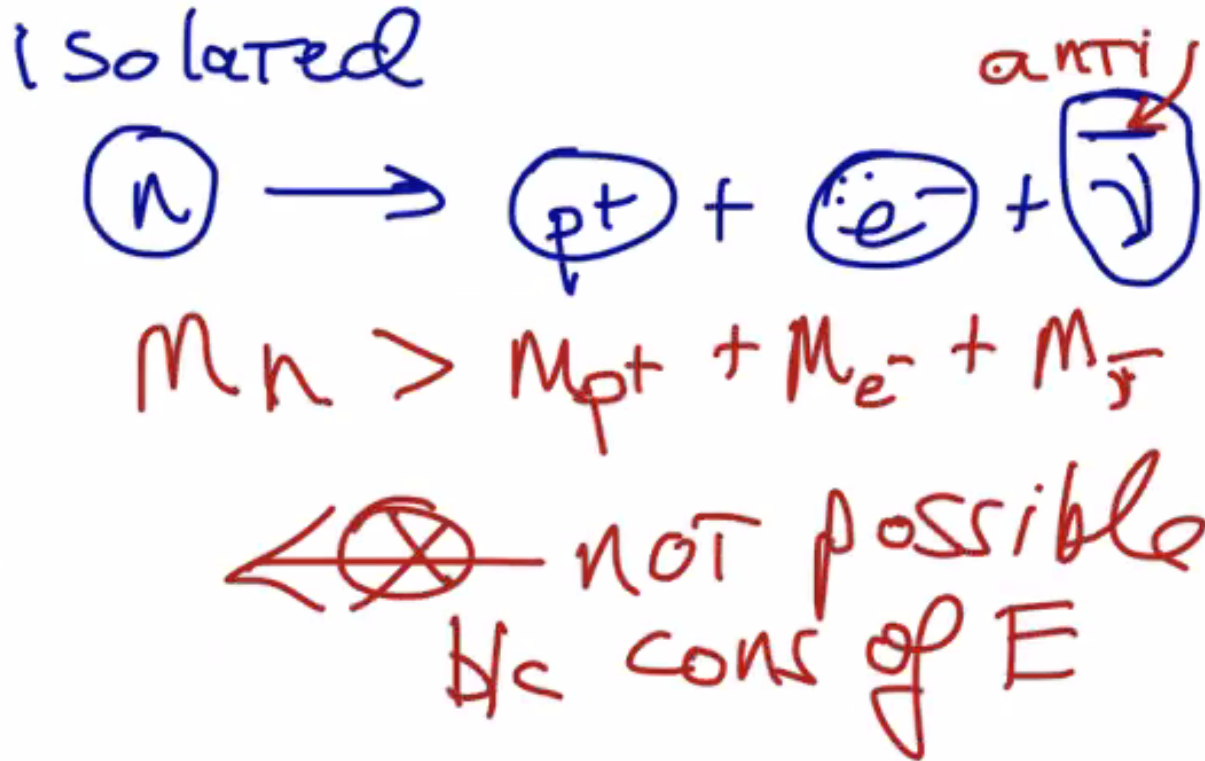
What happened? A neutron in the nucleus turned into a positive proton and a negative electron. The newly-formed electron comes flying out as a "beta-minus" particle. Also, this process creates an "antineutrino", which is a tiny, charge-less element that will become important later.

Beta plus decay

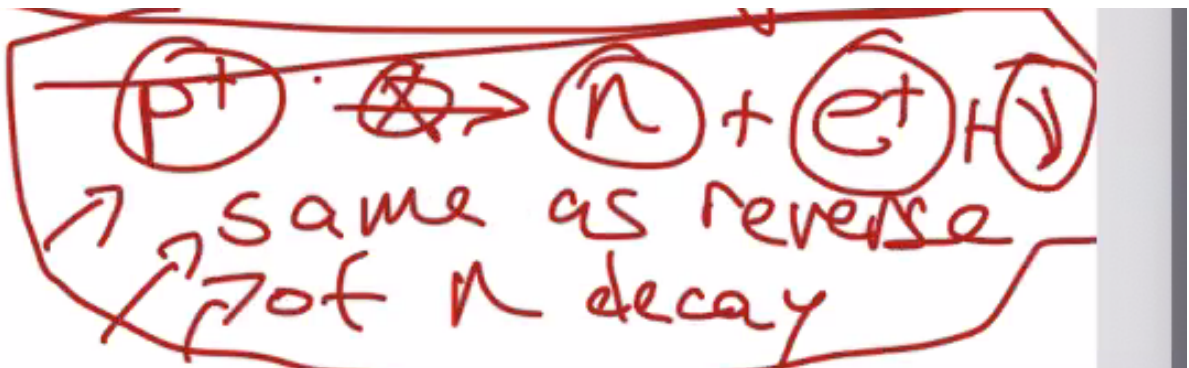


This is the opposite of beta-minus decay. The element takes one of its protons, splits it to a positron (a positive electron, this is antimatter), a neutrino, and a neutron.

Wait... But *how*?



Beta-minus decay makes sense, because it would be energetically favorable as a neutron is *slightly* more massive and hence will lose some of the mass during beta-minus decay. But, during beta-plus decay, the reactants are less massive than the product (!) — so thermally it won't really work out.



So, in order to actually create beta-plus decay, you have to shove the protons, antimatter, etc. together really fast with some kinetic energy. Or, this could happen spontaneously as long as the mass of the daughter atom is smaller than the mass of the parent (as in... as long as mass of daughter + mass of anti electron + mass of neutrino < mass of parent, this should work.)

To make sense of this, stop thinking that atoms' masses could be deduced by just counting the number of neutrons+protons.

Electron capture



In this case, you will gain one neutron by simply capturing an electron out of thin air (the electron cloud) and merge it with a proton to form a neutron and an antineutrino.

So, together...



Positron Capture

This basically does not happen; it basically should work in a similar manner as does electron capture but the opposite.



You will need lots of pressure to squish two positive things together (Electrons + Protons) to fuse.

1.1.4 | Absorbtion of Radioactivity



The effect of absorbing material depends on its thickness, the type of radiation, and the energy of the radiation.

For radiation of a given type and energy, changing the thickness of the absorber results in the curve shown at left.



As the thickness of the absorber increases, the relative intensity of radiation exponentially, asymptotically decreases.

This is similar to the equatino of a discharging capacitor; namely $e^{\left(\frac{-time}{\tau}\right)}$

Instead of a smooth curve, we will decay by 2. We wil use it like a half life calculation:

$int = 0.5^{\frac{t}{T}}$, where T is the thickness required to absorb 50%, and t the thickness of the material. int should be the relative intensity of the material — a percentage ($0 \leq R \leq 1$) that represents how much of the original, unhindered charge is disturbed.

$$\text{Relative Intensity} = 0.5^{(t/T)}$$

This is very much like a "half-life" calculation, where T (material has decayed), and t = actual passage of time

$$\text{Remaining Material} = 0.5^{(t/T)}$$

So when applied to absorption, for consistency, we sh

Relative intensity + half life problem 3:

3)

$$\frac{100}{R} = \frac{1}{2} \cdot \left(\frac{1}{2}\right)^{\frac{1}{T}}$$

$$\frac{80}{R} = \frac{1}{2} \cdot \frac{1.7}{T}$$

$R = \text{rate w/ no absorption}$

Simult eq

$T = 2.17 \text{ cm}$

Source

1 cm

0.7 cm

DETECTOR → 80

100

$$\frac{80}{100} = \frac{1}{2} \cdot \frac{0.7}{T}$$

1.1.5 | Stopping Rays

α , β , and γ rays are strong in that order — alpha rays could be stopped with less insulation than beta than gamma. HOWEVER, this is given that they all have the same *energy*. Different rays of the same energy would apply like this, but otherwise the energy matters especially for betas.

1.1.6 | Atomic Stability

Please remember: most nuclei are stable!! Basically everyday things does not give you any meaningful amount of radiation.



For relatively low protoned atoms, ($p < 30$), stable nuclei is when $N \approx p$. For larger atoms, $N \approx < 1.5P$.

Vocab! Nucleon: neutron + proton.

The standard deviation of N counts is the \sqrt{N} if there is a uniformly random distribution.

1.2 | Fission and Fusion

Changes though **fission** (one nucleus become two pieces, probably due to the parent absorbing a neutron, a.k.a. more equal parts of alpha decay) or **fusion** (two nuclei joining together to form one)

Due to conservation of energy, not every fission/fusion releases energy. If fission of $A \Rightarrow B + C$ releases energy, fusion of $B + C \Rightarrow A$ will not.

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You could think of the energy released as part of fission as the potential energy of a system.

The bottom row of “mass number” is nucleons w.r.t. the most common isotope

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Iron is a terrible way of getting some energy out of an atom because it has the lowest ever potential energy

Nuclear processes usually end up with Iron; like...

- If you are on the “blue”/“left” region, you release energy by fusing into iron (add stuff up until you get to stable iron.)
- If you are on the “yellow”/“right” region, you release energy by fissioning into iron (split until you get to iron)