

# Rutherford scattering 1

Find the scattering cross section for the Coulomb potential

$$V(r) = -\frac{Ze^2}{4\pi\epsilon_0 r}$$

Start with the Born approximation for scattering amplitude  $f(\mathbf{p})$  where  $\mathbf{p}$  is momentum transfer.

$$f(\mathbf{p}) = \frac{m}{2\pi\hbar^2} \int \exp\left(\frac{i\mathbf{p} \cdot \mathbf{r}}{\hbar}\right) V(\mathbf{r}) d\mathbf{r}$$

Convert to polar coordinates where  $p = |\mathbf{p}|$ .

$$f(\mathbf{p}) = \frac{m}{2\pi\hbar^2} \int_0^\infty \int_0^\pi \int_0^{2\pi} \exp\left(\frac{ipr \cos \theta}{\hbar}\right) V(r, \theta, \phi) r^2 \sin \theta dr d\theta d\phi$$

Substitute the Coulomb potential

$$V(r, \theta, \phi) = -\frac{Ze^2}{4\pi\epsilon_0 r}$$

to obtain

$$f(\mathbf{p}) = -\frac{mZe^2}{8\pi^2\epsilon_0\hbar^2} \int_0^\infty \int_0^\pi \int_0^{2\pi} \exp\left(\frac{ipr \cos \theta}{\hbar}\right) r \sin \theta dr d\theta d\phi$$

Integrate over  $\phi$  (multiply by  $2\pi$ ).

$$f(\mathbf{p}) = -\frac{mZe^2}{4\pi\epsilon_0\hbar^2} \int_0^\infty \int_0^\pi \exp\left(\frac{ipr \cos \theta}{\hbar}\right) r \sin \theta dr d\theta$$

Transform the integral over  $\theta$  into an integral over  $y$  where  $y = \cos \theta$  and  $dy = -\sin \theta d\theta$ . The minus sign in  $dy$  is canceled by interchanging integration limits  $\cos 0 = 1$  and  $\cos \pi = -1$ .

$$f(\mathbf{p}) = -\frac{mZe^2}{4\pi\epsilon_0\hbar^2} \int_0^\infty \int_{-1}^1 \exp\left(\frac{ipry}{\hbar}\right) r dr dy$$

Solve the integral over  $y$  and note that  $r$  in the integrand cancels.

$$f(\mathbf{p}) = -\frac{mZe^2}{4\pi\epsilon_0\hbar^2} \int_0^\infty \frac{\hbar}{ip} \left[ \exp\left(\frac{ipr}{\hbar}\right) - \exp\left(-\frac{ipr}{\hbar}\right) \right] dr$$

Solve the integral over  $r$ .

$$f(\mathbf{p}) = -\frac{mZe^2}{4\pi\epsilon_0\hbar^2} \frac{\hbar}{ip} \left[ \frac{\hbar}{ip} \exp\left(\frac{ipr}{\hbar}\right) + \frac{\hbar}{ip} \exp\left(-\frac{ipr}{\hbar}\right) \right]_{r=0}^{r=\infty}$$

The exponentials fail to converge at the upper limit. The workaround is to go back and multiply the integrand by  $\exp(-\epsilon r) \approx 1$ .

$$f(\mathbf{p}) = -\frac{mZe^2}{4\pi\epsilon_0\hbar^2} \int_0^\infty \frac{\hbar}{ip} \left[ \exp\left(\frac{ipr}{\hbar} - \epsilon r\right) - \exp\left(-\frac{ipr}{\hbar} - \epsilon r\right) \right] dr$$

Solve the modified integral.

$$f(\mathbf{p}) = -\frac{mZe^2}{4\pi\epsilon_0\hbar^2} \frac{\hbar}{ip} \left[ \frac{1}{ip/\hbar - \epsilon} \exp\left(\frac{ipr}{\hbar} - \epsilon r\right) + \frac{1}{ip/\hbar + \epsilon} \exp\left(-\frac{ipr}{\hbar} - \epsilon r\right) \right]_{r=0}^{r=\infty}$$

Evaluate the limits. Now the exponentials vanish at the upper limit.

$$f(\mathbf{p}) = -\frac{mZe^2}{4\pi\epsilon_0\hbar^2} \frac{\hbar}{ip} \left( -\frac{1}{ip/\hbar - \epsilon} - \frac{1}{ip/\hbar + \epsilon} \right) = -\frac{mZe^2}{4\pi\epsilon_0\hbar^2} \frac{2}{(p/\hbar)^2 + \epsilon^2} \quad (1)$$

Set  $\epsilon = 0$  to obtain

$$f(\mathbf{p}) = -\frac{mZe^2}{2\pi\epsilon_0 p^2}$$

Note that  $\mathbf{p}$  is momentum transfer such that

$$p^2 = |\mathbf{p}|^2 = 4mE(1 - \cos \theta)$$

Hence

$$f(\theta) = -\frac{Ze^2}{8\pi\epsilon_0 E(1 - \cos \theta)}$$

Substitute  $e^2 = 4\pi\epsilon_0\alpha\hbar c$ .

$$f(\theta) = -\frac{Z\alpha\hbar c}{2E(1 - \cos \theta)}$$

Calculate the cross section.

$$\frac{d\sigma}{d\Omega} = |f(\theta)|^2 = \frac{Z^2\alpha^2(\hbar c)^2}{4E^2(1 - \cos \theta)^2} \quad (2)$$

Note that

$$(1 - \cos \theta)^2 = 4\sin^4(\theta/2)$$

Hence equation (2) is equivalent to

$$\frac{d\sigma}{d\Omega} = \frac{Z^2\alpha^2(\hbar c)^2}{16E^2\sin^4(\theta/2)} \quad (3)$$