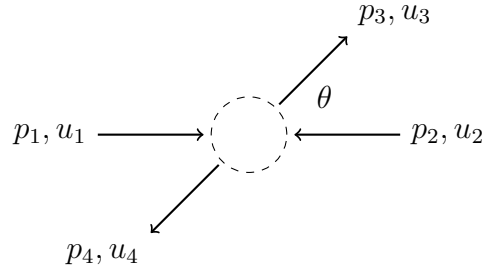


Moller scattering is the result of interactions between electrons. The following diagram represents a collider experiment with colinear electron beams.



Here is the same diagram with momentum and spinor labels.



In center of mass coordinates the momentum vectors are

$$p_1 = \begin{pmatrix} E \\ 0 \\ 0 \\ p \end{pmatrix} \quad p_2 = \begin{pmatrix} E \\ 0 \\ 0 \\ -p \end{pmatrix} \quad p_3 = \begin{pmatrix} E \\ p \sin \theta \cos \phi \\ p \sin \theta \sin \phi \\ p \cos \theta \end{pmatrix} \quad p_4 = \begin{pmatrix} E \\ -p \sin \theta \cos \phi \\ -p \sin \theta \sin \phi \\ -p \cos \theta \end{pmatrix}$$

where $E = \sqrt{p^2 + m^2}$. The spinors are

$$u_{11} = \begin{pmatrix} E + m \\ 0 \\ p \\ 0 \end{pmatrix} \quad u_{21} = \begin{pmatrix} E + m \\ 0 \\ -p \\ 0 \end{pmatrix} \quad u_{31} = \begin{pmatrix} E + m \\ 0 \\ p_3^z \\ p_3^x + ip_3^y \end{pmatrix} \quad u_{41} = \begin{pmatrix} E + m \\ 0 \\ p_4^z \\ p_4^x + ip_4^y \end{pmatrix}$$

$$u_{12} = \begin{pmatrix} 0 \\ E + m \\ 0 \\ -p \end{pmatrix} \quad u_{22} = \begin{pmatrix} 0 \\ E + m \\ 0 \\ p \end{pmatrix} \quad u_{32} = \begin{pmatrix} 0 \\ E + m \\ p_3^x - ip_3^y \\ -p_3^z \end{pmatrix} \quad u_{42} = \begin{pmatrix} 0 \\ E + m \\ p_4^x - ip_4^y \\ -p_4^z \end{pmatrix}$$

The spinors shown above are not individually normalized. Instead, a combined spinor normalization constant $N = (E + m)^4$ will be used.

The following formula computes a probability density $|\mathcal{M}_{abcd}|^2$ for Moller scattering where the subscripts $abcd$ are the spin states of the electrons.

$$|\mathcal{M}_{abcd}|^2 = \frac{e^4}{N} \left| \frac{1}{t} (\bar{u}_{3c} \gamma^\mu u_{1a}) (\bar{u}_{4d} \gamma_\mu u_{2b}) - \frac{1}{u} (\bar{u}_{4d} \gamma^\nu u_{1a}) (\bar{u}_{3c} \gamma_\nu u_{2b}) \right|^2$$

Symbol e is electron charge. Symbols t and u are Mandelstam variables $t = (p_1 - p_3)^2$ and $u = (p_1 - p_4)^2$.

Let

$$a_1 = (\bar{u}_{3c}\gamma^\mu u_{1a})(\bar{u}_{4d}\gamma_\mu u_{2b}) \quad a_2 = (\bar{u}_{4d}\gamma^\nu u_{1a})(\bar{u}_{3c}\gamma_\nu u_{2b})$$

Then

$$\begin{aligned} |\mathcal{M}_{abcd}|^2 &= \frac{e^4}{N} \left| \frac{a_1}{t} - \frac{a_2}{u} \right|^2 \\ &= \frac{e^4}{N} \left(\frac{a_1}{t} - \frac{a_2}{u} \right) \left(\frac{a_1}{t} - \frac{a_2}{u} \right)^* \\ &= \frac{e^4}{N} \left(\frac{a_1 a_1^*}{t^2} - \frac{a_1 a_2^*}{tu} - \frac{a_1^* a_2}{tu} + \frac{a_2 a_2^*}{u^2} \right) \end{aligned}$$

The expected probability density $\langle |\mathcal{M}|^2 \rangle$ is computed by summing $|\mathcal{M}_{abcd}|^2$ over all spin states and dividing by the number of inbound states. There are four inbound states.

$$\begin{aligned} \langle |\mathcal{M}|^2 \rangle &= \frac{1}{4} \sum_{a=1}^2 \sum_{b=1}^2 \sum_{c=1}^2 \sum_{d=1}^2 |\mathcal{M}_{abcd}|^2 \\ &= \frac{e^4}{4} \sum_{a=1}^2 \sum_{b=1}^2 \sum_{c=1}^2 \sum_{d=1}^2 \frac{1}{N} \left(\frac{a_1 a_1^*}{t^2} - \frac{a_1 a_2^*}{tu} - \frac{a_1^* a_2}{tu} + \frac{a_2 a_2^*}{u^2} \right) \end{aligned}$$

Use the Casimir trick to replace sums over spins with matrix products.

$$\begin{aligned} f_{11} &= \frac{1}{N} \sum_{\text{spins}} a_1 a_1^* = \text{Tr} \left((\not{p}_3 + m) \gamma^\mu (\not{p}_1 + m) \gamma^\nu \right) \text{Tr} \left((\not{p}_4 + m) \gamma_\mu (\not{p}_2 + m) \gamma_\nu \right) \\ f_{12} &= \frac{1}{N} \sum_{\text{spins}} a_1 a_2^* = \text{Tr} \left((\not{p}_3 + m) \gamma^\mu (\not{p}_1 + m) \gamma^\nu (\not{p}_4 + m) \gamma_\mu (\not{p}_2 + m) \gamma_\nu \right) \\ f_{22} &= \frac{1}{N} \sum_{\text{spins}} a_2 a_2^* = \text{Tr} \left((\not{p}_4 + m) \gamma^\mu (\not{p}_1 + m) \gamma^\nu \right) \text{Tr} \left((\not{p}_3 + m) \gamma_\mu (\not{p}_2 + m) \gamma_\nu \right) \end{aligned}$$

Hence

$$\langle |\mathcal{M}|^2 \rangle = \frac{e^4}{4} \left(\frac{f_{11}}{t^2} - \frac{f_{12}}{tu} - \frac{f_{12}^*}{tu} + \frac{f_{22}}{u^2} \right)$$

Run “moller-scattering-1.txt” to verify the Casimir trick.

The following momentum formulas are equivalent to the Casimir trick. (Recall that $a \cdot b = a^\mu g_{\mu\nu} b^\nu$)

$$\begin{aligned} f_{11} &= 32(p_1 \cdot p_2)(p_3 \cdot p_4) + 32(p_1 \cdot p_4)(p_2 \cdot p_3) - 32m^2(p_1 \cdot p_3) - 32m^2(p_2 \cdot p_4) + 64m^4 \\ f_{12} &= -32(p_1 \cdot p_2)(p_3 \cdot p_4) + 16m^2(p_1 \cdot p_2) + 16m^2(p_1 \cdot p_3) + 16m^2(p_1 \cdot p_4) \\ &\quad + 16m^2(p_2 \cdot p_3) + 16m^2(p_2 \cdot p_4) + 16m^2(p_3 \cdot p_4) - 32m^4 \\ f_{22} &= 32(p_1 \cdot p_2)(p_3 \cdot p_4) + 32(p_1 \cdot p_3)(p_2 \cdot p_4) - 32m^2(p_1 \cdot p_4) - 32m^2(p_2 \cdot p_3) + 64m^4 \end{aligned}$$

In Mandelstam variables $s = (p_1 + p_2)^2$, $t = (p_1 - p_3)^2$, and $u = (p_1 - p_4)^2$ the formulas are

$$\begin{aligned} f_{11} &= 8s^2 + 8u^2 - 64sm^2 - 64um^2 + 192m^4 \\ f_{12} &= -8s^2 + 64sm^2 - 96m^4 \\ f_{22} &= 8s^2 + 8t^2 - 64sm^2 - 64tm^2 + 192m^4 \end{aligned}$$

High energy approximation

When $E \gg m$ a useful approximation is to set $m = 0$ and obtain

$$\begin{aligned}f_{11} &= 8s^2 + 8u^2 \\f_{12} &= -8s^2 \\f_{22} &= 8s^2 + 8t^2\end{aligned}$$

For $m = 0$ the Mandelstam variables are

$$\begin{aligned}s &= 4E^2 \\t &= -2E^2(1 - \cos \theta) = -4E^2 \sin^2(\theta/2) \\u &= -2E^2(1 + \cos \theta) = -4E^2 \cos^2(\theta/2)\end{aligned}$$

The corresponding expected probability density is

$$\begin{aligned}\langle |\mathcal{M}|^2 \rangle &= \frac{e^4}{4} \left(\frac{8s^2 + 8u^2}{t^2} + \frac{16s^2}{tu} + \frac{8s^2 + 8t^2}{u^2} \right) \\&= 2e^4 \left(\frac{s^2 + u^2}{t^2} + \frac{2s^2}{tu} + \frac{s^2 + t^2}{u^2} \right) \\&= 2e^4 \left(\frac{1 + \cos^4(\theta/2)}{\sin^4(\theta/2)} + \frac{8}{\sin^2 \theta} + \frac{1 + \sin^4(\theta/2)}{\cos^4(\theta/2)} \right) \\&= \frac{4e^4 (3 + \cos^2 \theta)^2}{\sin^4 \theta}\end{aligned}$$

Run “moller-scattering-2.txt” to verify the formulas on this page.

Cross section

The differential cross section is

$$\frac{d\sigma}{d\Omega} = \frac{\langle |\mathcal{M}|^2 \rangle}{64\pi^2 s} = \frac{e^4}{64\pi^2 E^2} \frac{(3 + \cos^2 \theta)^2}{\sin^4 \theta}$$

Substituting $e^2 = 4\pi\alpha$ yields

$$\frac{d\sigma}{d\Omega} = \frac{\alpha^2}{4E^2} \frac{(3 + \cos^2 \theta)^2}{\sin^4 \theta}$$

We can integrate $d\sigma$ to obtain a normalized probability density in spherical coordinates. Recall that

$$d\Omega = \sin \theta d\theta d\phi$$

Hence

$$d\sigma = \frac{\alpha^2}{4E^2} \frac{(3 + \cos^2 \theta)^2}{\sin^4 \theta} \sin \theta d\theta d\phi$$

Let $I(\xi)$ be the following definite integral.

$$\begin{aligned}
I(\xi) &= \frac{4E^2}{2\pi\alpha^2} \int_0^{2\pi} \int_a^\xi d\sigma \\
&= \int_a^\xi \frac{(3 + \cos^2 \theta)^2}{\sin^4 \theta} \sin \theta d\theta \\
&= \left(-\cos \theta - \frac{8 \cos \theta}{\sin^2 \theta} \right) \Big|_a^\xi \\
&= \cos a + \frac{8 \cos a}{\sin^2 a} - \cos \xi - \frac{8 \cos \xi}{\sin^2 \xi}, \quad a \leq \xi \leq \pi - a
\end{aligned}$$

Angular support is limited to $a > 0$ because $I(0)$ and $I(\pi)$ are undefined.

Let C be the normalization constant $C = I(\pi - a)$. Then the cumulative distribution function $F(\theta)$ is

$$F(\theta) = C^{-1}I(\theta), \quad a \leq \theta \leq \pi - a$$

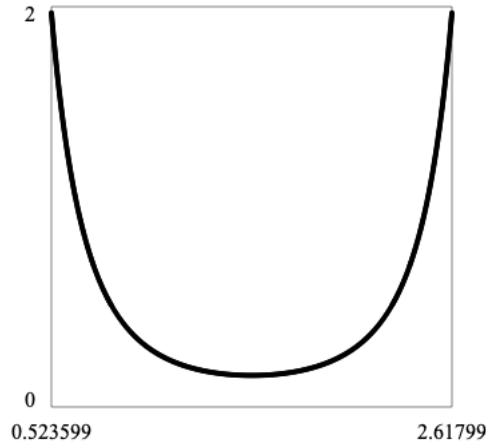
The probability of observing scattering events in the interval θ_1 to θ_2 can now be computed.

$$P(\theta_1 \leq \theta \leq \theta_2) = F(\theta_2) - F(\theta_1)$$

Probability density function $f(\theta)$ is the derivative of $F(\theta)$.

$$f(\theta) = \frac{dF(\theta)}{d\theta} = C^{-1} \frac{dI(\theta)}{d\theta} = C^{-1} \frac{(3 + \cos^2 \theta)^2}{\sin^3 \theta}$$

Run “moller-scattering-3.txt” to draw a graph of $f(\theta)$ for $a = \pi/6 = 30^\circ$.



The following table shows the probability distribution for 30° bins ($a = \pi/6 = 30^\circ$).

θ_1	θ_2	$P(\theta_1 \leq \theta \leq \theta_2)$
0°	30°	—
30°	60°	0.40
60°	90°	0.10
90°	120°	0.10
120°	150°	0.40
150°	180°	—

Eigenmath code

Here are a few notes about how the scripts work.

In component notation, the trace operators of the Casimir trick become sums over a repeated index, in this case α .

$$\begin{aligned} f_{11} &= \left((\not{p}_3 + m)^\alpha{}_\beta \gamma^{\mu\beta}{}_\rho (\not{p}_1 + m)^\rho{}_\sigma \gamma^{\nu\sigma}{}_\alpha \right) \left((\not{p}_4 + m)^\alpha{}_\beta \gamma_\mu{}^\beta{}_\rho (\not{p}_2 + m)^\rho{}_\sigma \gamma_\nu{}^\sigma{}_\alpha \right) \\ f_{12} &= (\not{p}_3 + m)^\alpha{}_\beta \gamma^{\mu\beta}{}_\rho (\not{p}_1 + m)^\rho{}_\sigma \gamma^{\nu\sigma}{}_\tau (\not{p}_4 + m)^\tau{}_\delta \gamma_\mu{}^\delta{}_\eta (\not{p}_2 + m)^\eta{}_\xi \gamma_\nu{}^\xi{}_\alpha \\ f_{22} &= \left((\not{p}_4 + m)^\alpha{}_\beta \gamma^{\mu\beta}{}_\rho (\not{p}_1 + m)^\rho{}_\sigma \gamma^{\nu\sigma}{}_\alpha \right) \left((\not{p}_3 + m)^\alpha{}_\beta \gamma_\mu{}^\beta{}_\rho (\not{p}_2 + m)^\rho{}_\sigma \gamma_\nu{}^\sigma{}_\alpha \right) \end{aligned}$$

To convert the above formulas to Eigenmath code, the γ tensors need to be transposed so that repeated indices are adjacent to each other. Also, multiply γ^μ by the metric tensor to lower the index.

$$\begin{aligned} \gamma^{\beta\mu}{}_\rho &\rightarrow \text{gammaT} = \text{transpose}(\text{gamma}) \\ \gamma^\beta{}_{\mu\rho} &\rightarrow \text{gammaL} = \text{transpose}(\text{dot}(\text{gmunu}, \text{gamma})) \end{aligned}$$

Define the following 4×4 matrices.

$$\begin{aligned} (\not{p}_1 + m) &\rightarrow \text{X1} = \text{pslash1} + m \text{ I} \\ (\not{p}_2 + m) &\rightarrow \text{X2} = \text{pslash2} + m \text{ I} \\ (\not{p}_3 + m) &\rightarrow \text{X3} = \text{pslash3} + m \text{ I} \\ (\not{p}_4 + m) &\rightarrow \text{X4} = \text{pslash4} + m \text{ I} \end{aligned}$$

Then for f_{11} we have the following Eigenmath code. The contract function sums over α .

$$\begin{aligned} (\not{p}_3 + m)^\alpha{}_\beta \gamma^{\mu\beta}{}_\rho (\not{p}_1 + m)^\rho{}_\sigma \gamma^{\nu\sigma}{}_\alpha &\rightarrow \text{T1} = \text{contract}(\text{dot}(\text{X3}, \text{gammaT}, \text{X1}, \text{gammaT}), 1, 4) \\ (\not{p}_4 + m)^\alpha{}_\beta \gamma_\mu{}^\beta{}_\rho (\not{p}_2 + m)^\rho{}_\sigma \gamma_\nu{}^\sigma{}_\alpha &\rightarrow \text{T2} = \text{contract}(\text{dot}(\text{X4}, \text{gammaL}, \text{X2}, \text{gammaL}), 1, 4) \end{aligned}$$

Next, multiply then sum over repeated indices. The dot function sums over ν then the contract function sums over μ . The transpose makes the ν indices adjacent as required by the dot function.

$$f_{11} = \text{Tr}(\cdots \gamma^\mu \cdots \gamma^\nu) \text{Tr}(\cdots \gamma_\mu \cdots \gamma_\nu) \rightarrow \text{contract}(\text{dot}(\text{T1}, \text{transpose}(\text{T2})))$$

Follow suit for f_{22} .

$$\begin{aligned} (\not{p}_4 + m)^\alpha{}_\beta \gamma^{\mu\beta}{}_\rho (\not{p}_1 + m)^\rho{}_\sigma \gamma^{\nu\sigma}{}_\alpha &\rightarrow \text{T1} = \text{contract}(\text{dot}(\text{X4}, \text{gammaT}, \text{X1}, \text{gammaT}), 1, 4) \\ (\not{p}_3 + m)^\alpha{}_\beta \gamma_\mu{}^\beta{}_\rho (\not{p}_2 + m)^\rho{}_\sigma \gamma_\nu{}^\sigma{}_\alpha &\rightarrow \text{T2} = \text{contract}(\text{dot}(\text{X3}, \text{gammaL}, \text{X2}, \text{gammaL}), 1, 4) \end{aligned}$$

Then

$$f_{22} = \text{Tr}(\cdots \gamma^\mu \cdots \gamma^\nu) \text{Tr}(\cdots \gamma_\mu \cdots \gamma_\nu) \rightarrow \text{contract}(\text{dot}(\text{T1}, \text{transpose}(\text{T2})))$$

The calculation of f_{12} begins with

$$\begin{aligned} (\not{p}_3 + m)^\alpha{}_\beta \gamma^{\mu\beta}{}_\rho (\not{p}_1 + m)^\rho{}_\sigma \gamma^{\nu\sigma}{}_\tau (\not{p}_4 + m)^\tau{}_\delta \gamma_\mu{}^\delta{}_\eta (\not{p}_2 + m)^\eta{}_\xi \gamma_\nu{}^\xi{}_\alpha \\ \rightarrow \text{T} = \text{contract}(\text{dot}(\text{X3}, \text{gammaT}, \text{X1}, \text{gammaT}, \text{X4}, \text{gammaL}, \text{X2}, \text{gammaL}), 1, 6) \end{aligned}$$

Then sum over repeated indices μ and ν .

$$f_{12} = \text{Tr}(\cdots \gamma^\mu \cdots \gamma^\nu \cdots \gamma_\mu \cdots \gamma_\nu) \rightarrow \text{contract}(\text{contract}(\text{T}, 1, 3))$$