

Atomic and nuclear physics

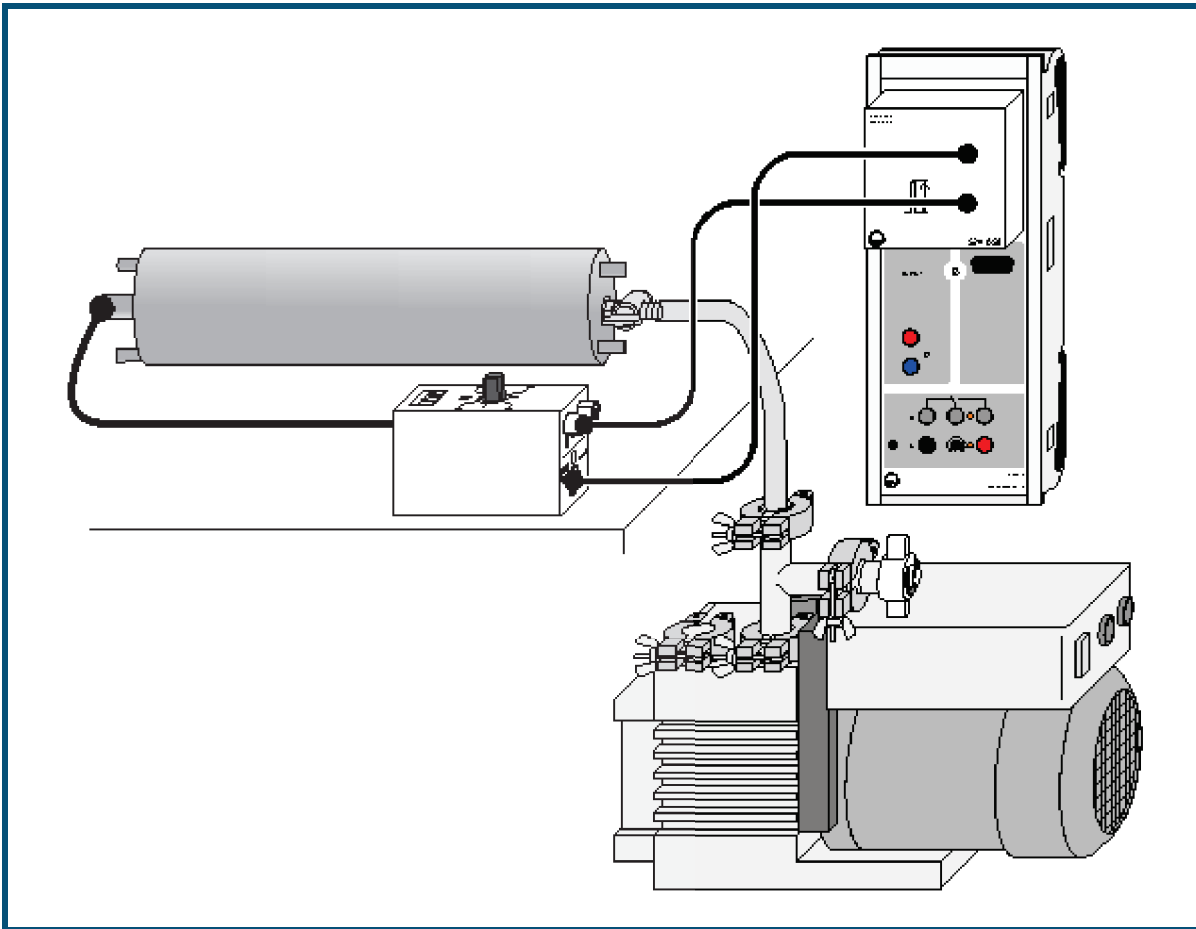
Nuclear physics
 α spectroscopy


Determining the energy loss
of α radiation in aluminum
and in gold

Description from CASSY Lab 2

For loading examples and settings,
please use the CASSY Lab 2 help.

Determining the energy loss of α radiation in aluminum and in gold



 can also be carried out with [Pocket-CASSY](#)

Safety note

When handling radioactive preparations, in addition to the radiation protection regulations, state-specific requirements and the regulations of the educational authorities are also to be observed, e.g. in the Federal Republic of Germany at the very least the radiation protection regulations (StrlSchV - Strahlenschutzverordnung) and the directives on safety during school lessons. This applies even in cases where the preparation used in this experiment in itself does not require the nomination of a trained radiation officer.

Since the used preparations produce ionizing radiation, the following safety rules must nevertheless be kept to:

- Prevent access to the preparations by **unauthorized persons**.
- Before using the preparations make sure that they are **intact**.
- For the purpose of **shielding**, keep the preparations in their safety container.
- To ensure **minimum exposure time** and **minimum activity**, take the preparations out of the safety container only as long as is necessary for carrying out the experiment.
- To ensure **maximum distance**, hold the preparations only at the upper end of the metal holder.

Experiment description

The energy loss of α radiation in an aluminum or gold foil is determined as a function of the α energy.

Equipment list

1	Sensor-CASSY	524 010 or 524 013
1	CASSY Lab 2	524 220
1	MCA box	524 058
1	Am-241 preparation	559 825
1	Ra-226 preparation	559 435
1	Alpha spectroscopy chamber	559 565


1	Gold and aluminum foil in holder	559 521
1	Semiconductor detector	559 921
1	Discriminator preamplifier	559 931
1	Multicore cable, 6-pole, 1.5 m	501 16
1	HF cable, 1 m	501 02
1	HF cable, 0.25 m	501 01
1	Rotary-vane vacuum pump	378 73
1	T-piece DN 16 KF	378 005
1	Centering ring DN 10/16 KF	from 378 040ET2
1	Air inlet valve DN 10 KF	378 771
1	Set of centering rings DN 16 KF	378 045ET2
2	Clamping rings DN 10/16 KF	378 050
1	Small flange DN 16 KF with hose nozzle	378 031
1	Vacuum tubing, 8/18 mm dia.	667 186
1	PC with Windows XP/Vista/7	

Experiment setup (see drawing)

The preparation and the corresponding film on the detector are mounted in the spectroscopy chamber. The detector is connected to the discriminator-preamplifier via the short BNC cable. The discriminator-preamplifier is connected to the MCA box. The pump is connected to the spectroscopy chamber.

Carrying out the experiment

■ Load settings

- Mount the [Ra-226](#) preparation in the spectroscopy chamber
- Evacuate the chamber
- Record the spectrum with , and set the gain so that the spectrum is well displayed
- Use the outer lines of the spectrum for the [energy calibration](#). When doing this, take account of the [covering](#) (literature value minus 1100 keV)
- Aerate the chamber, place the gold film (2 µm thick) onto the detector, and carefully evacuate the chamber
- Record the spectrum with the gold film
- Aerate the chamber. Be careful when doing this otherwise the gold foil can be destroyed by the pressure difference or swirling dust particles.
- Mount the aluminum film (8 µm thick), carefully evacuate the chamber, record spectrum
- Carefully aerate the chamber, mount the [Am-241](#) preparation and repeat the measurement for the gold and the aluminum film without changing the energy calibration

Evaluation

From each of the spectra the energy of the lines is determined. The energy loss per path length in aluminum and gold is plotted as a function of the energy and compared with the results from the Bethe-Bloch formula.

Remarks

Due to the cover of the preparations, there is a strong offset in energy when the energy calibration is made with values taken from the literature. The measured spectrum starts only at an energy of 1-2 MeV. Particles with lower energy are stopped before reaching the detector.

During the measurement, the vacuum pump can run either continuously or the valve of the spectroscopy chamber can be closed after a few minutes of evacuation and the pump can be switched off. The rubber tubing must be vented through the inlet valve (378 771) to prevent oil from the vacuum pump creeping back into the vacuum.

