

Elements Fact Sheets

89	Ac	Actinium	Greek: aktinos, "ray" (because it glows with a blue light in the dark)
13	Al	Aluminum	Latin: alumen, "alum" (potassium aluminum sulfate)
95	Am	Americium	Named after the American continent, since the element above it in the lanthanide series was named after Europe
51	Sb	Antimony	Greek: anti + monos, "not alone" (because it was never found uncombined with another element); the symbol Sb comes from the Latin name for the mineral antimony sulfide, stibium
18	Ar	Argon	Greek: argos, "idle" (because of its unreactivity)
33	As	Arsenic	Named after the Greek word for the arsenic-containing mineral orpiment, arsenikon; this name was derived from the Arabic word zarnik
85	At	Astatine	Greek: astatos, "unstable"
56	Ba	Barium	Greek: barys, "heavy" (in reference to the high density of some barium minerals)
97	Bk	Berkelium	Named after Berkeley, California, the city where it was first produced
4	Be	Beryllium	Named after the Greek word for the mineral beryl, beryllo
83	Bi	Bismuth	Named after the German word for the bismuth-containing mineral bismuthinite, Bisemutum
107	Bh	Bohrium	Named after the physicist Niels Bohr, one of the founders of quantum theory
5	B	Boron	Arabic: buraq, "borax" (sodium borate)
35	Br	Bromine	Greek: bromos, "stench" (elemental bromine is a reddish-brown liquid with a terrible smell)
48	Cd	Cadmium	Named after the Greek word for the mineral calamine, cadmia. Calamine is a mineral form of zinc carbonate; cadmium was first observed as an impurity in some calamine ores
20	Ca	Calcium	Latin: calx, "lime" (calcium oxide)
98	Cf	Californium	Named after the state and University of California, where it was first produced
6	C	Carbon	Latin: carbo, "charcoal"
58	Ce	Cerium	Named after the asteroid Ceres (which was named after the Roman goddess of agriculture)
55	Cs	Cesium	Latin: caesius, "sky blue" (salts of cesium produce a blue color when heated)
17	Cl	Chlorine	Latin: chloros, "greenish-yellow" (elemental chlorine is a pale, yellow-green gas)
24	Cr	Chromium	Greek: chroma, "color" (because of the wide variety of colorful salts it produces)
27	Co	Cobalt	German: kobold, "goblin" (because of the toxic fumes of arsenic that were produced when silver miners heated the arsenic-containing ore smaltite, mistaking it for silver ore)
29	Cu	Copper	Old English: coper, which in turn (along with the symbol Cu) was derived from the Latin cuprum, "from the island of Cyprus" (the leading supplier of copper in the Mediterranean at the time of the Roman empire)
96	Cm	Curium	Named after Marie and Pierre Curie, the co-discoverers of radioactivity
110	Ds	Darmstadtium	Named after the German city of Darmstadt, where the Laboratory for Heavy Ion Research (GSI, Gesellschaft für Schwerionenforschung) is located, and where the element was first produced
105	Db	Dubnium	Named after the Russian city of Dubna, where the Joint Institute for Nuclear Research is located
66	Dy	Dysprosium	Greek: dysprositos, "hard to get at" (because the first isolation of the element required a tedious separation sequence)
99	Es	Einsteinium	Named after the physicist Albert Einstein
68	Er	Erbium	Named after the Swedish village of Ytterby
63	Eu	Europium	Named after the continent of Europe
100	Fm	Fermium	Named after the physicist Enrico Fermi, the inventor of the first nuclear reactor
9	F	Fluorine	Latin: fluere, "to flow"
87	Fr	Francium	Named after France, the country in which it was first isolated
64	Gd	Gadolinium	Named for the mineral gadolinite, which was in turned named after Johan Gadolin, the Swedish chemist who first investigated it
31	Ga	Gallium	Named after the Latin word for France, Gallia (the country in which it was discovered)
32	Ge	Germanium	Named after the Latin word for Germany, Germania
79	Au	Gold	Anglo-Saxon name for the metal; the symbol Au is from the Latin name, aurum, "shining dawn"
72	Hf	Hafnium	Named after the Latin word for Copenhagen, Hafnia
108	Hs	Hassium	Named after the German state of Hesse, where the Laboratory for Heavy Ion Research (GSI, Gesellschaft für Schwerionenforschung) is located
2	He	Helium	Greek: helios, "Sun" (helium was discovered in an analysis of the light emitted from the Sun's corona during a solar eclipse)
67	Ho	Holmium	Named after the Latin word for Stockholm, Holmia
1	H	Hydrogen	Greek: hydro + genes, "water forming" (this name was given to the element by the French chemist Antoine Lavoisier)
49	In	Indium	Latin: indicum, "indigo" (after the bright violet line of its atomic spectrum)
53	I	Iodine	Greek: iodes, "violet" (elemental iodine forms shiny, purple crystals)
77	Ir	Iridium	Latin: iris, "rainbow" (because of the colorful compounds that it forms)
26	Fe	Iron	Anglo-Saxon: iren; the symbol Fe comes from the Latin name, ferrum
36	Kr	Krypton	Greek: kryptos, "hidden" (since it had been "hidden" in a sample of argon)
57	La	Lanthanum	Greek: lanthanein, "to be hidden" (because the element was discovered "hidden" as an impurity in ores of cerium)
103	Lr	Lawrencium	Named after the physicist Ernest O. Lawrence, inventor of the cyclotron

82	Pb	Lead	Anglo-Saxon name for the metal; the symbol Pb is from the Latin name, plumbum
3	Li	Lithium	Greek: lithos, "stone"
71	Lu	Lutetium	Named after Lutecia, the ancient word for Paris
12	Mg	Magnesium	Named after Magnesia, a district in Thessaly in central Greece
25	Mn	Manganese	Latin: magnes, "magnet" (because it can be made to be ferromagnetic with the right treatment)
109	Mt	Meitnerium	Named after the physicist Lise Meitner, one of the first scientists to recognize that uranium could undergo nuclear fission
101	Md	Mendelevium	Named after the chemist Dimitri Mendeleev, the deviser of the Periodic Table of the Elements
80	Hg	Mercury	Named after the Roman god, Mercury (Hermes in Greek mythology), the swift-moving messenger of the gods; the symbol Hg is from the Latin name, hydragyrum, "liquid silver"
42	Mo	Molybdenum	Greek: molybdos, "lead" (because of its similarity to lead)
60	Nd	Neodymium	Greek: neos + didymos, "new twin" (this name was given when it was realized that the previously identified element "didymium" was actually two elements, which were rechristened as praseodymium and neodymium)
10	Ne	Neon	Greek: neos, "new"
93	Np	Neptunium	Named after the planet Neptune, which follows Uranus in the solar system
28	Ni	Nickel	German: kupfernickel, "Old Nick's copper" (i.e., copper of the devil, or false copper, because it was frequently mistaken for copper)
41	Nb	Niobium	Named after Niobe, a character in Greek mythology, who was the daughter of Tantalus, because of the similarity of niobium to tantalum; also known as "columbium" (Cb) by metallurgists [see page on Discoverers of the Elements]
7	N	Nitrogen	Latin: nitron + genes, "nitre forming" (nitre is potassium nitrate)
102	No	Nobelium	Named after Alfred Nobel, the inventor of dynamite and founder of the Nobel Prize
76	Os	Osmium	Greek: osme, "odor" (because of its nasty smell, which is actually caused by osmium tetroxide)
8	O	Oxygen	Latin: oxy + genes, "acid forming" (this name was given to the element by the French Antoine Lavoisier, because he believed it to be an essential component of all acids, although that has turned out not to be true)
46	Pd	Palladium	Named after the asteroid Pallas, which had been discovered the year that the metal was first isolated
15	P	Phosphorus	Greek: phos + phoros, "light bringing" (because it glows in the dark, and spontaneously burst into flame in air)
78	Pt	Platinum	Spanish: platina, "little silver" (because it was first known to Europeans as an unworkable silver-like metal found alongside gold in some deposits)
94	Pu	Plutonium	Named after the ex-planet Pluto, which follows Neptune in the solar system
84	Po	Polonium	Named for Marie Curie's native country of Poland
19	K	Potassium	Named after the English word for the mineral potassium carbonate, potash (which is found in high concentrations in wood ashes); the symbol K comes from the Latin name, kalium
59	Pr	Praseodymium	Greek: prasios + didymos, "green twin" (this name was given when it was realized that the previously identified element "didymium" was actually two elements, which were rechristened as praseodymium and neodymium)
61	Pm	Promethium	Named after the Greek god Prometheus, who stole fire from the gods and gave it to mankind
91	Pa	Protactinium	Greek: proto + actinium, "parent of actinium" (because it undergoes radioactive decay to produce actinium)
88	Ra	Radium	Latin: radius, "ray" (because of its ability to glow in the dark with a faint blue light)
86	Rn	Radon	Variation of the name of radium
75	Re	Rhenium	Named after the Latin word for the Rhine River, Rhenus
45	Rh	Rhodium	Greek: rhodon, "rose" (because of its red-colored salts)
111	Rs	Roentgenium	Named after the physicist Wilhelm Röntgen, the discoverer of X-rays
37	Rb	Rubidium	Latin: rubidius, "deep red (ruby)"
44	Ru	Ruthenium	Named after the Latin word for Russia, Ruthenia
104	Rf	Rutherfordium	Named after the physicist Ernest Rutherford, discoverer of the atomic nucleus, and a pioneer in the study of nuclear physics
62	Sm	Samarium	Named after the mineral samarskite, from which it was first obtained
21	Sc	Scandium	Named after the Latin word for Scandinavia, Scandia
106	Sg	Seaborgium	Named after the chemist Glenn T. Seaborg, who discovered/synthesized a number of transuranium elements
34	Se	Selenium	Greek: selene, "Moon" (since tellurium had been named for the Earth)
14	Si	Silicon	Latin: silicis, "flint"
47	Ag	Silver	Anglo-Saxon: siolfur; the symbol Ag comes from the Latin name, argentum
11	Na	Sodium	English: soda, a term found in many compounds of sodium; the symbol Na comes from the Latin name, natrium
38	Sr	Strontium	Named after Strontian, a town in Scotland where the mineral strontianite was discovered, from which strontium was first isolated
16	S	Sulfur	Derived either from Sanskrit: sulvere, Latin: sulfurium, or Arabic: sufra
73	Ta	Tantalum	Named after Tantalus, a character in Greek mythology, and father of Niobe
43	Tc	Technetium	Greek: technetos, "artificial" (because it was the first element to be produced artificially)
52	Te	Tellurium	Greek: tellus, "Earth"
65	Tb	Terbium	Named after the Swedish village of Ytterby
81	Tl	Thallium	Latin: thallos, "green twig" (after the bright green lines of its atomic spectrum)
90	Th	Thorium	Named after Thor, the Norse god of thunder
69	Tm	Thulium	Named after the ancient word for Scandinavia, Thule

50	Sn	Tin	Anglo-Saxon word for the metal; the symbol Sn comes from the Latin name, stannum
22	Ti	Titanium	Named after the Titans of Greek mythology
74	W	Tungsten	Swedish: tung sten, "heavy stone" (because of the elements high density); the symbol W comes from the German name, wolfram ("wolf dirt," so named because of its presence as an impurity in the mining of tin)
112	Uub	Ununbium	Temporary, systematic name (element 112)
114	Uuq	Ununquadium	Temporary, systematic name (element 114)
92	U	Uranium	Named after the planet Uranus, which had been discovered a few years before the element
23	V	Vanadium	Named after Vanadis (Freya in Norse mythology), the Scandinavian goddess of beauty, because of the variety of colored salts it forms
54	Xe	Xenon	Greek: xenos, "stranger" (because at the time, it did not form compounds with other elements)
70	Yb	Ytterbium	Named after the Swedish village of Ytterby
39	Y	Yttrium	Named after the Swedish village of Ytterby
30	Zn	Zinc	German: zink, which may in turn have originated from the Persian word for stone, sing
40	Zr	Zirconium	Arabic: zargun, "gold colored"

Elements known by their ancient names (or variations):

Carbon
Copper
Gold
Iron
Lead
Silicon
Silver
Sulfur
Tin
Zinc

Elements named after other elements:

Molybdenum — molybdos, "lead"
Platinum — "little silver"
Protactinium — "parent of actinium"
Radon — variation on radium

Elements named after colors:

Cesium: Latin: caesius, "sky blue"
Chlorine: Latin: chloros, "greenish-yellow"
Chromium: Greek: chroma, "color"
Indium: Latin: indicum, "indigo"
Iodine: Greek: iodes, "violet"
Iridium: Latin: iris, "rainbow"
Praseodymium: Greek: prasios + didymos, "green twin"
Rhodium: Greek: rhodon, "rose"
Rubidium: Latin: rubidius, "deep red (ruby)"
Thallium: Latin: thallos, "green twig"
Zirconium: Arabic: zargun, "gold colored"

Elements named after minerals:

Aluminum: Latin: alumen, "alum" (potassium aluminum sulfate)
Arsenic: Greek: arsenikon, "orpiment"
Beryllium: Greek: beryllo, "beryl"
Bismuth: German: Bisemutum, bismuthinite"
Boron: Arabic: buraq, "borax" (sodium borate)
Cadmium: Greek: cadmia, "calamine"
Calcium: Latin: calx, "lime" (calcium oxide)
Gadolinium: gadolinite
Lithium: Greek: lithos, "stone"
Potassium: English: potash, potassium carbonate
Samarium: samarskite
Sodium: English: soda, a term found in many compounds of sodium

Elements named after astronomical objects:

Planets:

Neptunium — Neptune

Plutonium: the dwarf planet Pluto

Tellurium: the Earth

Uranium: Uranus

Asteroids

Cerium: Ceres

Palladium: Pallas

Helium (the Sun)

Selenium (the Moon)

Elements named after continents:

Americium

Europium

Elements named after countries, states, or other geographical features:

Californium: state (and University) of California

Francium: France

Gallium: Latin word for France, Gallia

Germanium: Latin word for Germany, Germania

Hassium: German state of Hesse, where the GSI is located

Magnesium: named after Magnesia, a district in Thessaly in central Greece

Polonium: named for Marie Curie's native country of Poland

Rhenium: named after the Latin word for the Rhine River, Rhenus

Ruthenium: named after the Latin word for Russia, Ruthenia

Scandium: named after the Latin word for Scandinavia, Scandia

Thulium: named after the ancient word for Scandinavia, Thule

Elements named after cities:

Berkelium: Berkeley, California, home of the University of California, where a number of synthetic elements have been produced

Darmstadtium: Darmstadt, Germany, home of the Laboratory for Heavy Ion Research (GSI, Gesellschaft für Schwerionenforschung) where a number of synthetic elements have been produced

Dubnium: Dubna, Russia, home of the Joint Institute for Nuclear Research (JINR, Объединённый институт ядерных исследований, ОИЯИ), where a number of synthetic elements have been produced

Erbium, Terbium, Ytterbium, Yttrium: all named after the Swedish village of Ytterby (near Vaxholm), where these elements were first isolated (as well as Holmium, Scandium, and Tantalum)

Hafnium: Copenhagen (Hafnia), Denmark

Holmium: Stockholm (Holmia), Sweden

Lutetium: Paris (Lutecia), France

Strontium: Strontian, Scotland

Elements named after characters from mythology:

Mercury: Mercury, the Roman messenger of the gods (Hermes in Greek mythology)

Niobium: Niobe, a character in Greek mythology, who was the daughter of Tantalus

Promethium: Prometheus, a Greek god who stole fire from the gods and gave it to mankind

Tantalum: Tantalus, a character in Greek mythology, and father of Niobe

Thorium: Thor, the Norse god of thunder

Titanium: the Titans of Greek mythology

Vanadium: Vanadis (Freya in Norse mythology), the Scandinavian goddess of beauty

Elements named after scientists:

Bohrium: Niels Bohr, one of the founders of quantum theory

Curium: Marie and Pierre Curie, the co-discoverers of radioactivity

Einsteinium: Albert Einstein

Fermium: Enrico Fermi, the inventor of the first nuclear reactor

Lawrencium: Ernest O. Lawrence, inventor of the cyclotron

Meitnerium: Lise Meitner, one of the first scientists to recognize that uranium could undergo nuclear fission

Mendelevium: Dimitri Mendeleev, the deviser of the Periodic Table of the Elements

Nobelium: Alfred Nobel, the inventor of dynamite and founder of the Nobel Prize

Roentgenium: Wilhelm Röntgen, the discoverer of X-rays

Rutherfordium: Ernest Rutherford, discoverer of the atomic nucleus, and a pioneer in the study of nuclear physics

Seaborgium: Glenn T. Seaborg, who discovered/synthesized a number of transuranium elements

Most of the rest of the names of the elements are derived from various chemical or physical properties:

Actinium: Greek: aktinos, "ray" (because it glows with a blue light in the dark)

Antimony: Greek: anti + monos, "not alone" (because it was never found uncombined with another element)

Argon: Greek: argos, "idle" (because of its unreactivity)

Astatine: Greek: astatos, "unstable" (because it is)

Barium: Greek: barys, "heavy" (in reference to the high density of some barium minerals)

Bromine: Greek: bromos, "stench" (elemental bromine has a terrible smell)

Cobalt: German: kobold, "goblin" (because of the toxic fumes of arsenic that were produced when silver miners heated the arsenic-containing ore smaltite, mistaking it for silver ore)

Dysprosium: Greek: dysprositos, "hard to get at" (because the first isolation of the element required a tedious separation sequence)

Fluorine: Latin: fluere, "to flow"

Hydrogen" Greek: hydro + genes, "water forming"

Krypton: Greek: kryptos, "hidden" (since it had been "hidden" in a sample of argon)

Lanthanum: Greek: lanthanein, "to be hidden" (because the element was discovered "hidden" as an impurity in ores of cerium)

Manganese: Latin: magnes, "magnet" (because it can be made to be ferromagnetic with the right treatment)

Neodymium: Greek: neos + didymos, "new twin"

Neon" Greek: neos, "new"

Nickel: German: kupfernickel, "Old Nick's copper" (i.e., copper of the devil, or false copper, because it was frequently mistaken for copper)

Nitrogen: Latin: nitron + genes, "nitre [potassium nitrate] forming"

Osmium: Greek: osme, "odor" (because of its nasty smell, which is actually caused by osmium tetroxide)

Oxygen: Latin: oxy + genes, "acid forming"

Phosphorus: Greek: phos + phoros, "light bringing" (because it glows in the dark, and spontaneously burst into flame in air)

Radium: Latin: radius, "ray" (because of its ability to glow in the dark with a faint blue light)

Technetium: Greek: technetos, "artificial"

Tungsten: Swedish: tung sten, "heavy stone" (because of the elements high density)

Xenon: Greek: xenos, "stranger" (because at the time, it did not form compounds with other elements)