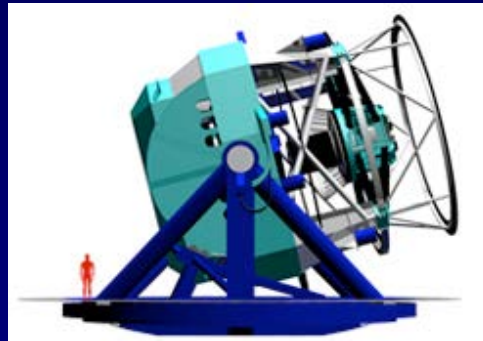
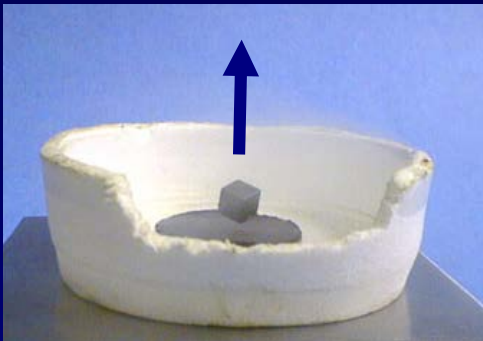


# Lecture 20:

## Solids - Metals, Insulators, and Semiconductors



# Today

## Electron energy bands in Solids

States in atoms with many electrons –  
filled according to the Pauli exclusion principle

Why do some solids conduct – others do not – others are intermediate

Metals, Insulators and Semiconductors

Understood in terms of Energy Bands and the Exclusion Principle

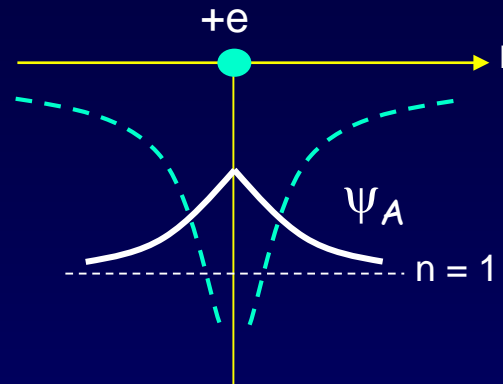
## Superconductivity

Electrical conduction with zero resistance!

All the electrons in a metal cooperate to form a single quantum state

# Electron states in a crystal (1)

Again start with a simple atomic state:



Bring  $N$  atoms together to form a 1-d crystal (a periodic lattice).

$N$  atomic states  $\rightarrow$   $N$  crystal states.

What do these crystal states look like?

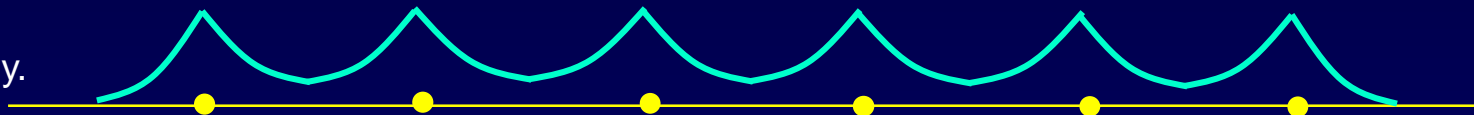
Like molecular bonding, the total wave function is (approximately) just a superposition of 1-atom orbitals.



# Electron states in a crystal (2)

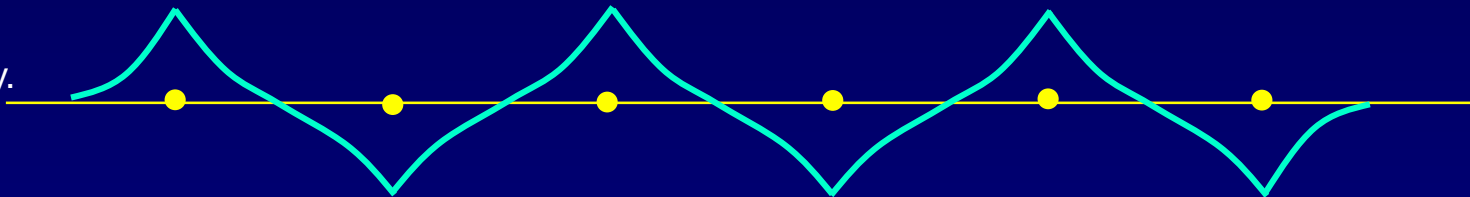
The lowest energy combination is just the sum of the atomic states.  
This is a generalization of the 2-atom bonding state.

No nodes!  
Lowest energy.

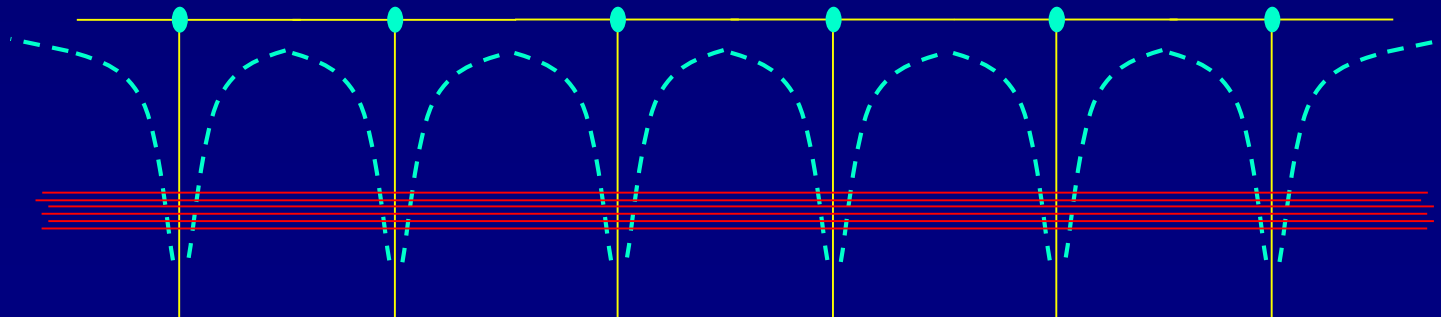


The highest energy state is the one where every adjacent pair of atoms has a minus sign:

N-1 nodes!  
Highest energy.

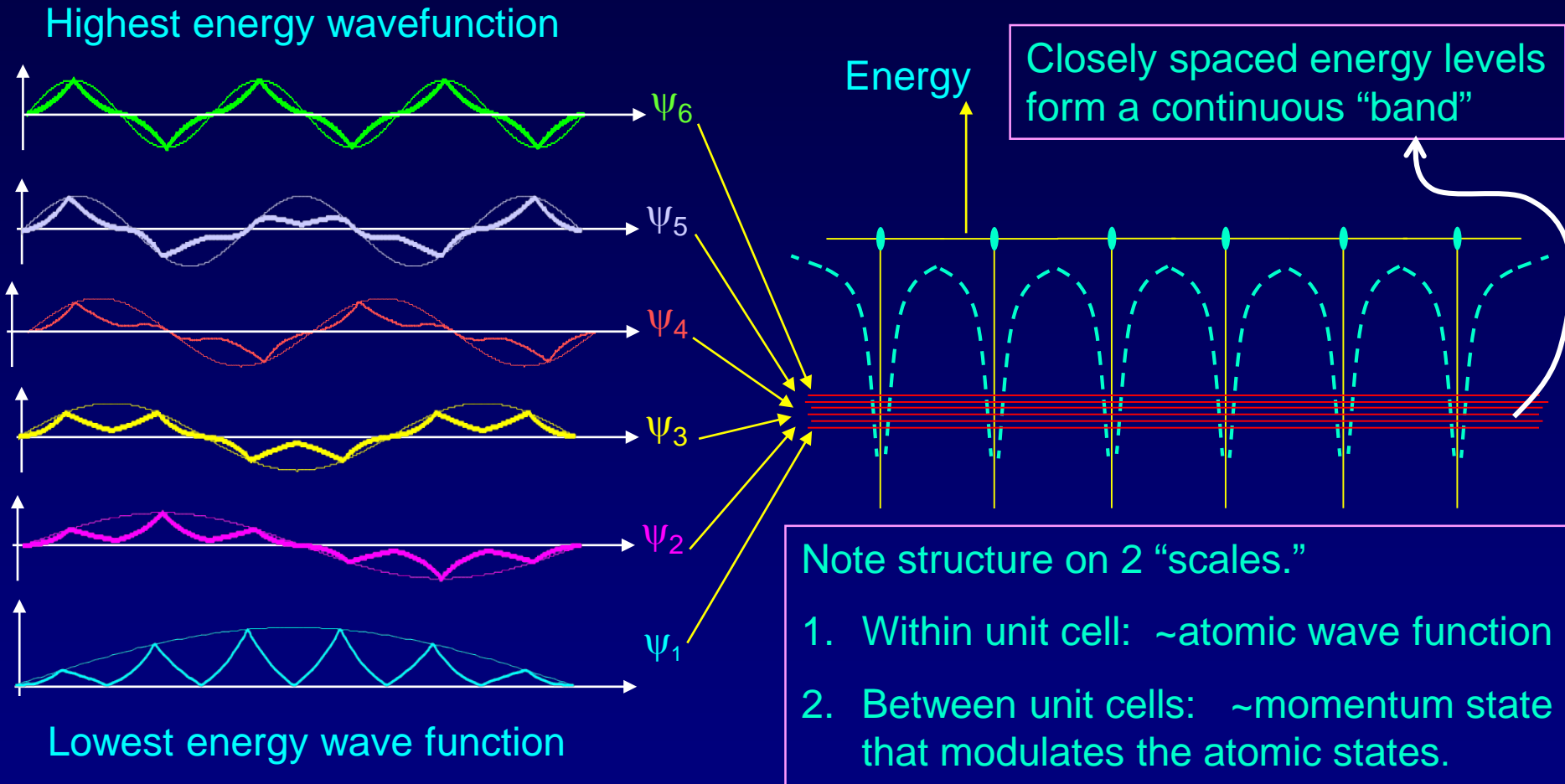


There are N states, with energies lying between these extremes.



# Energy Band Wave Functions

Example with six atoms  $\rightarrow$  six crystal wave functions in each band.

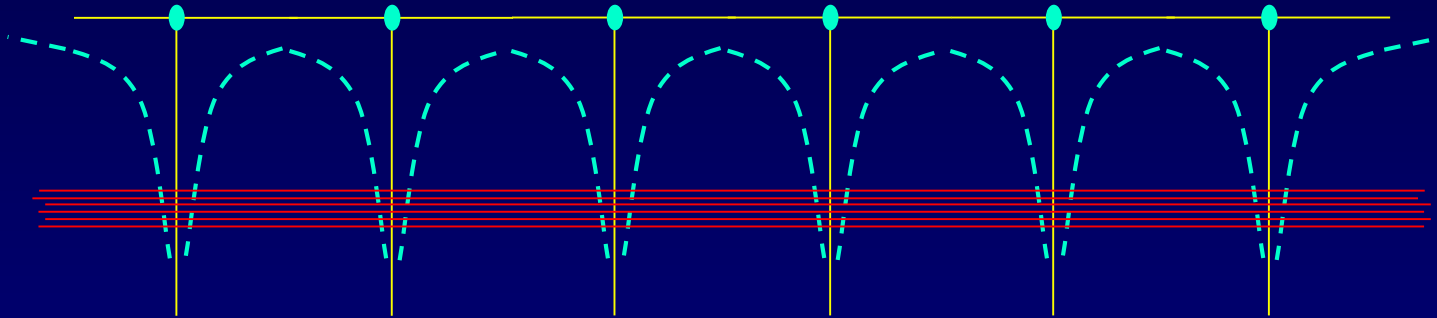


FYI: These states are called “Bloch states” after Felix Bloch who derived the mathematical form in 1929. They can be written as:  $\psi_n(x) = u(x)e^{ik_n x}$  where  $u(x)$  is an atomic-like function and the complex exponential is a “momentum state” with known  $k_n$  (plane wave)

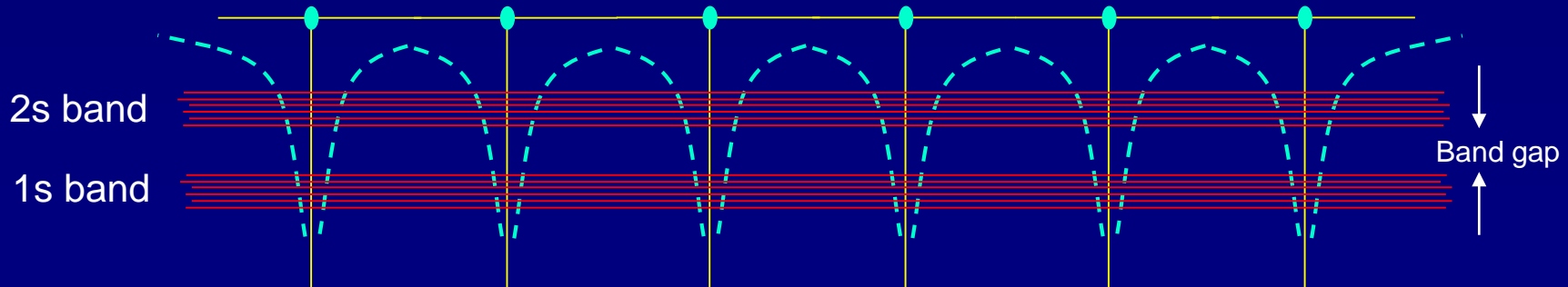
# Energy Bands and Band Gaps

In a crystal the number of atoms,  $N$ , is very large and the states approach a continuum of energies between the lowest and highest  $\rightarrow$  a “band” of energies.

$N$ -atoms each “contribute” one atomic state. They tunnel to their neighbors and form delocalized states –  $N$  per band. With spin, the band can hold  $2N$  electrons. A band has exactly enough states to hold up to 2 electrons per atom (spin up and spin down).



Each 1-atom state leads to an energy band. A crystal has multiple energy bands. **Band gaps** (regions of disallowed energies) lie between the bands.

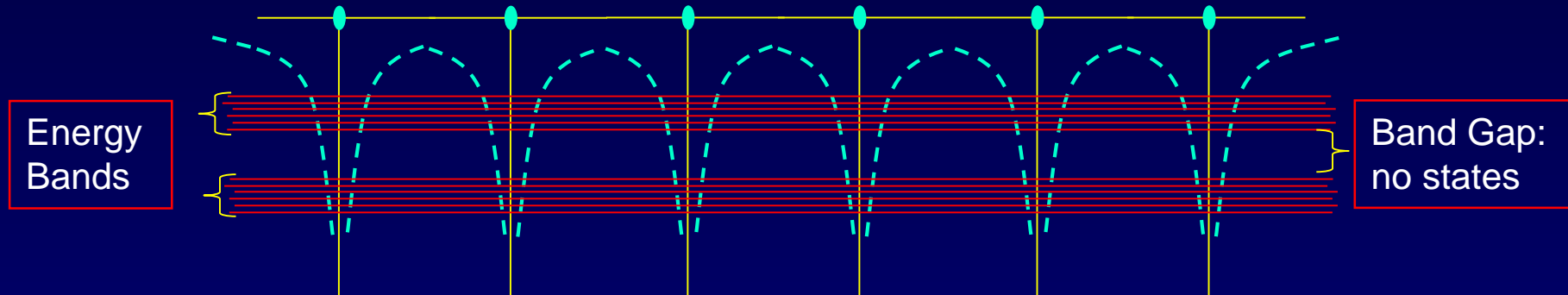




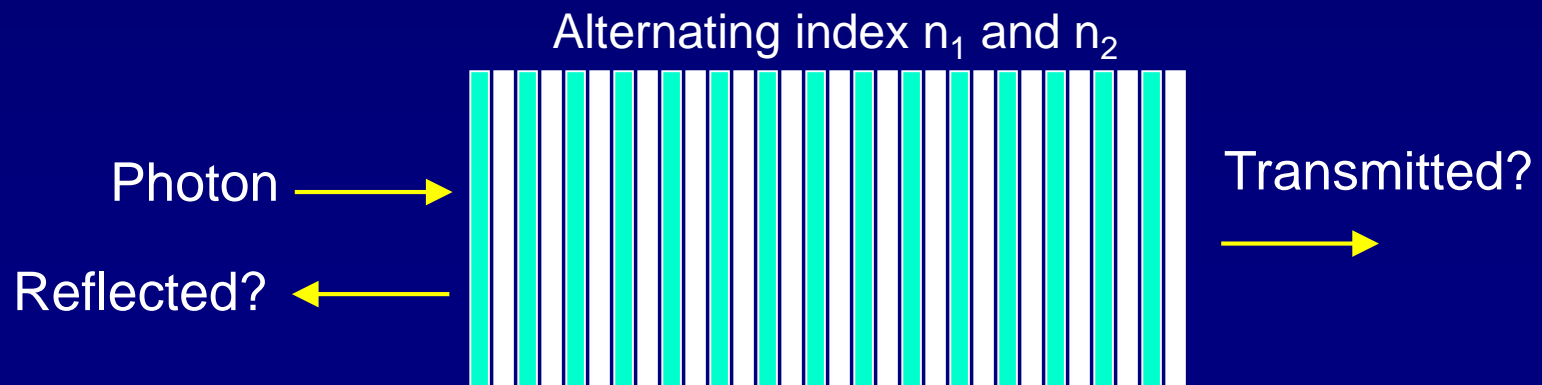


# Bands and Band Gaps Occur for all Types of Waves in Periodic Systems

Electron in a crystal – a periodic array of atoms

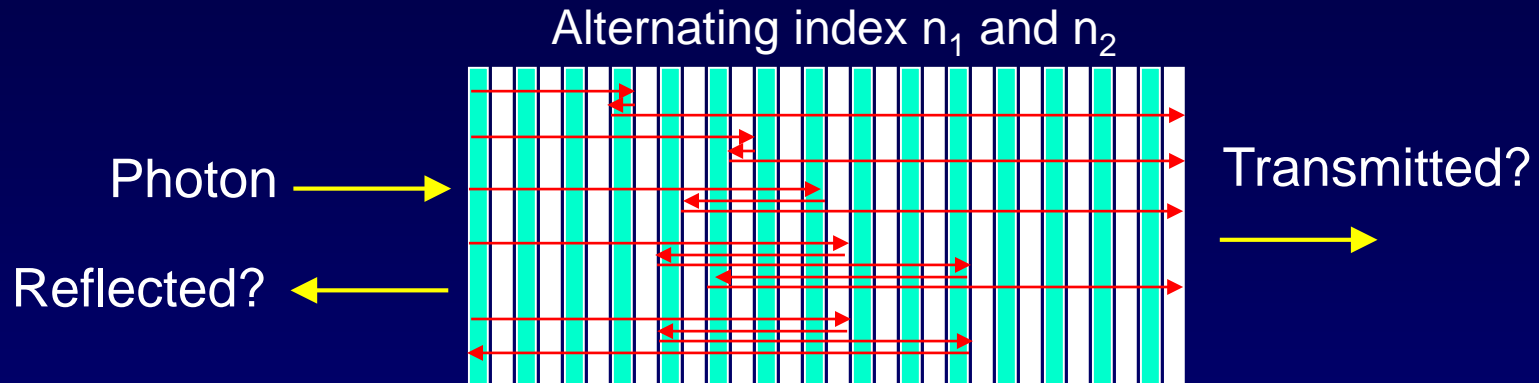


Light propagating through a periodic set of layers with different index of refraction – an interference filter



# Interference Filter

Light propagating through a periodic set of layers with alternating index of refraction.



The behavior of light waves in this material is the same as that of electron waves in a string of square wells.

For certain wavelengths there is complete reflection, because that wavelength cannot exist inside the material.

This is a “**stop band**”.

For other wavelengths there is complete transmission.

This is a “**pass band**”.

# Interference Filter

Conventional (dye) filters absorb unwanted colors.

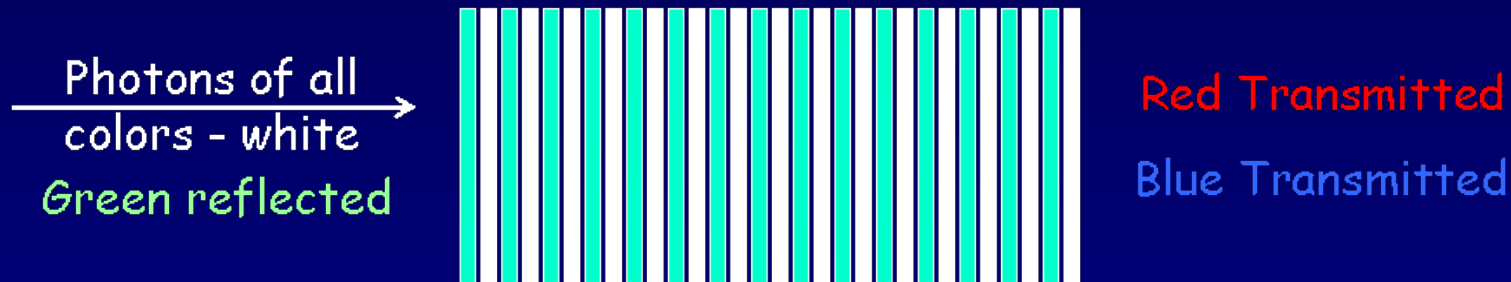
Interference filters do not absorb light (do not get hot) and are used in many applications: TV, photography, astronomy, ...

Examples: Red, Green, Blue (RGB) → Yellow, Cyan, Magenta

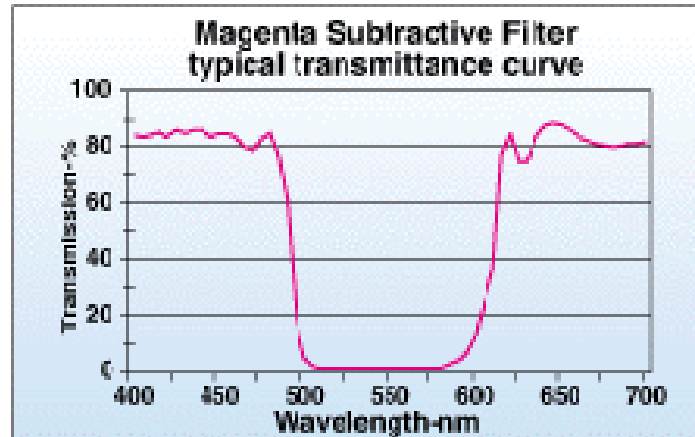
What is magenta?

Answer: Magenta = Red + Blue (no Green)

A magenta filter must have a stop band in the green, but pass red and blue:



Demonstration with a commercial interference filter





# Electrical Conductivity Distinguishes Materials

The ability to conduct electricity varies enormously between different types of solids.

Resistivity  $\rho$  is defined by:  $J = \frac{I}{A} = \sigma E$

for conductors

$$\sigma = \frac{ne^2\tau}{m} \quad \rho \equiv \frac{1}{\sigma} = \frac{m}{ne^2\tau}$$

where  $J$  = current density and  $E$  = applied electric field.

Resistivity depends on the scattering time for electrons.

Resistivity depends on the number of free electrons.

Example properties at room temperature:

Material	Resistivity ( $\Omega\cdot\text{m}$ )	Carrier Density ( $\text{cm}^{-3}$ )	Type
Cu	$2 \times 10^{-8}$	$10^{23}$	conductor
Doped Si	$2 \times 10^{-3}$	$10^{17}$	extrinsic semiconductor
Si	$3 \times 10^3$	$10^{10}$	intrinsic semiconductor
Diamond	$2 \times 10^{16}$	small	insulator

# Why Some Solids Conduct Current and Others Don't

Conductors, semiconductors, and insulators:

Their description is provided in terms of:

- Energy Bands for electrons in solids
- The Pauli exclusion principle

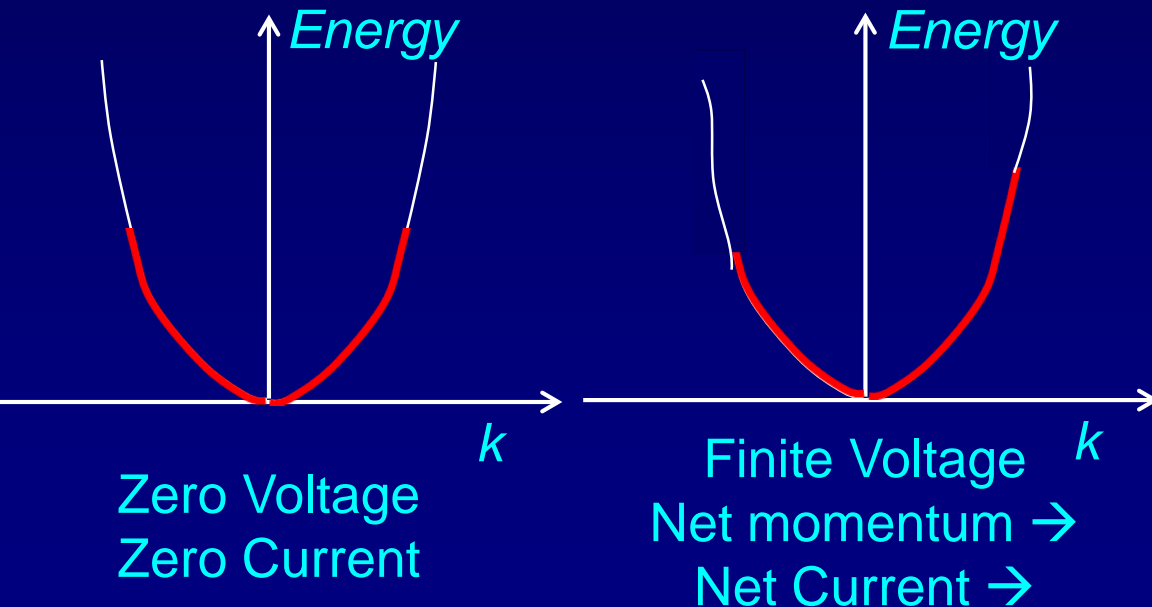
In order for a material to conduct electricity, it must be possible to get the electrons moving (*i.e.*, give them some energy).



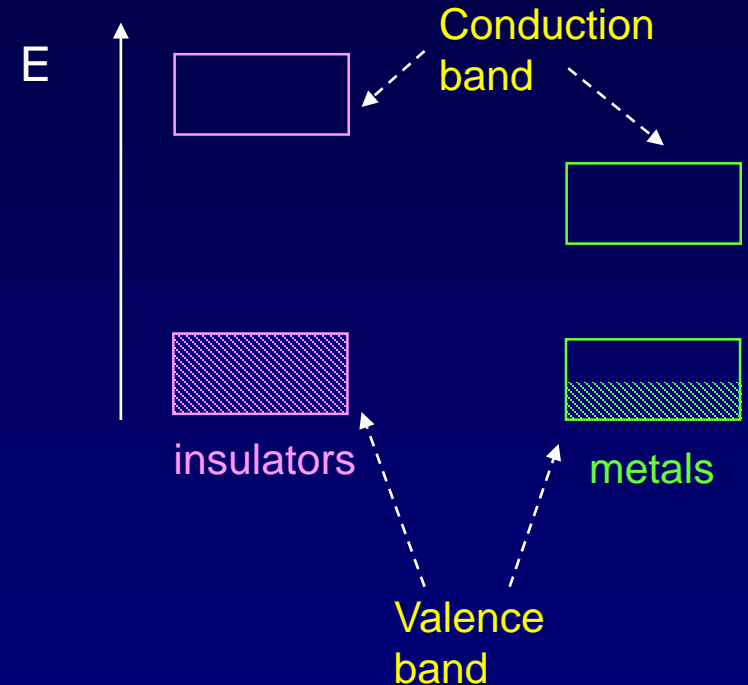
# Insulators, Semiconductors and Metals

Energy bands and the gaps between them determine the conductivity and other properties of solids.

In order to conduct, an electron must have an available state at a slightly higher energy.  
Low energy momentum state excitation



Insulators can't do this



Insulators

Have a full "valence band" and a large energy gap (a few eV). Higher energy states are not available to a small E-field.





# Insulators, Semiconductors and Metals

Energy bands and the gaps between them determine the conductivity and other properties of solids.

## Insulators

Have a full valence band and a large energy gap (a few eV). Higher energy states are not available.

## Semiconductors

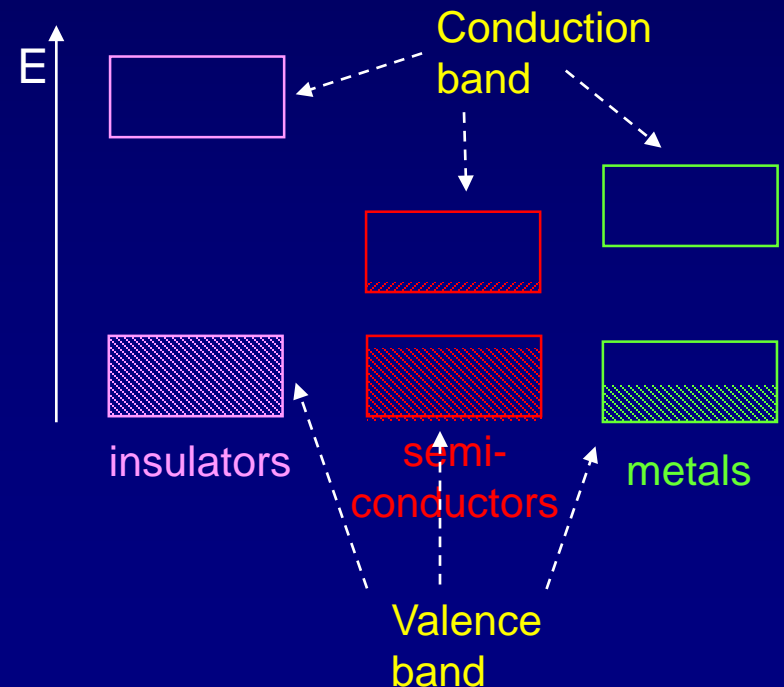
Are insulators at  $T = 0$ .  
Have a small energy gap ( $\sim 1$  eV) between valence and conduction bands. Higher energy states become available (due to  $kT$ ) as  $T$  increases. They can be doped.

## Metals

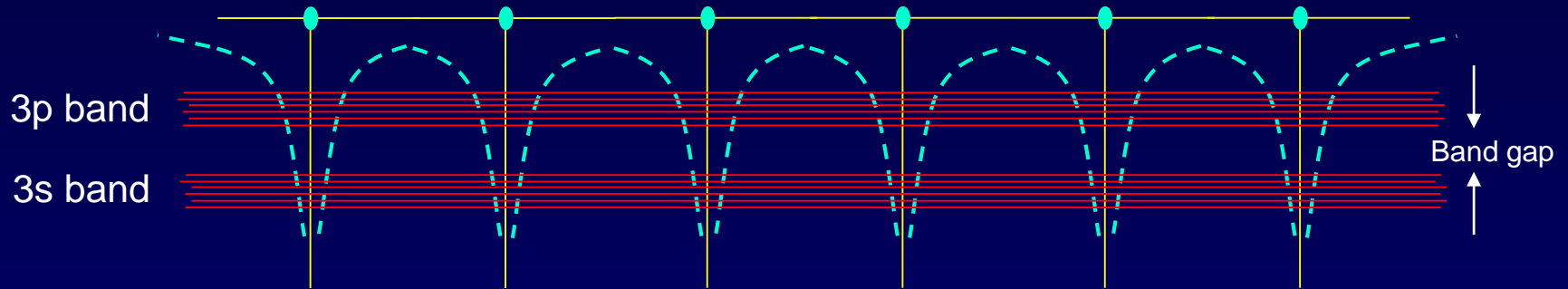
Have a partly filled band. Higher energy states are available, even at  $T = 0$ .

In order to conduct, an electron must have an available state at a slightly higher energy.

Low energy momentum state excitation



# Act 1

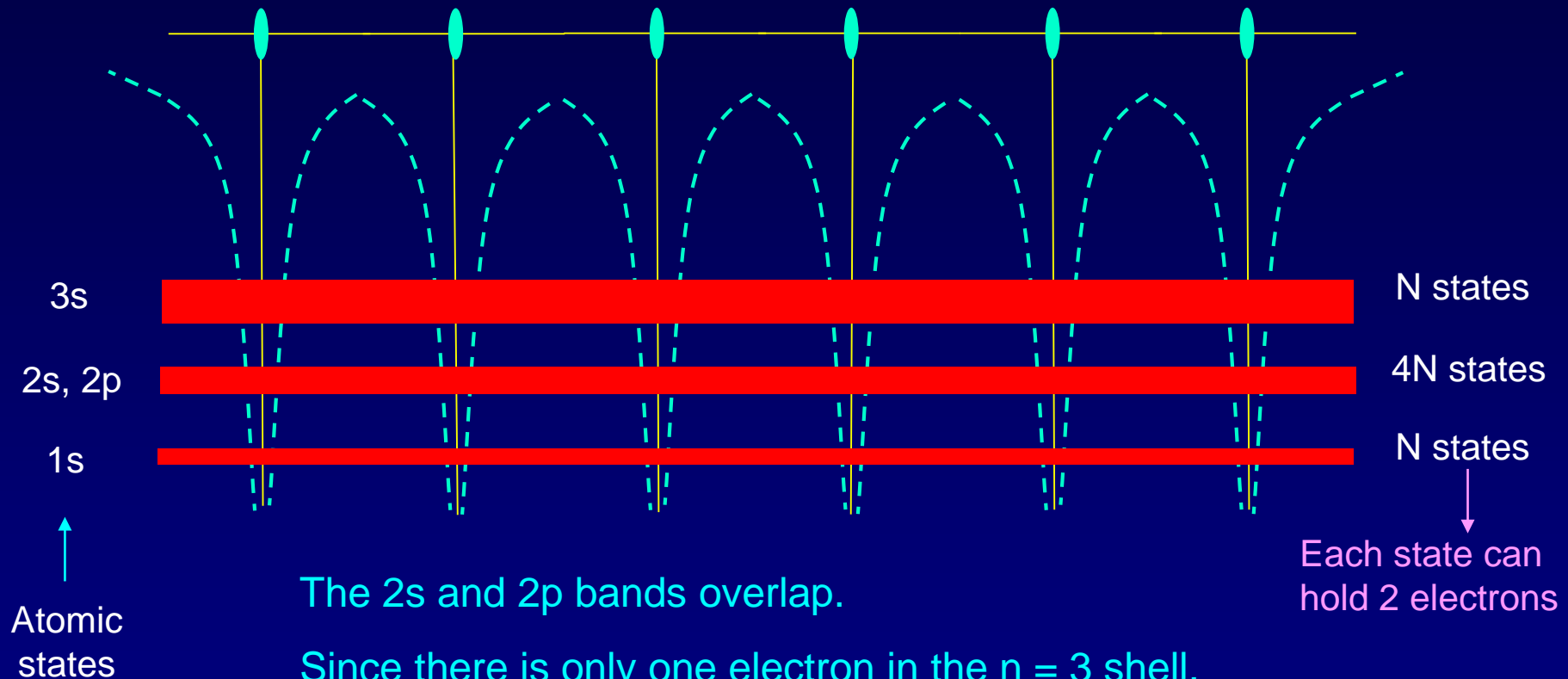


Consider a crystalline solid in which each atom contributes some electrons to the 3s band. Which situation can produce a conductor.

- a. Each atom contributes one 3s electron.
- b. Each atom contributes two 3s electrons.
- c. Each atom contributes three 3s electrons.

# Conductivity of Metals

Sodium:  $Z = 11$  ( $1s^2 2s^2 2p^6 3s^1$ )



The 2s and 2p bands overlap.

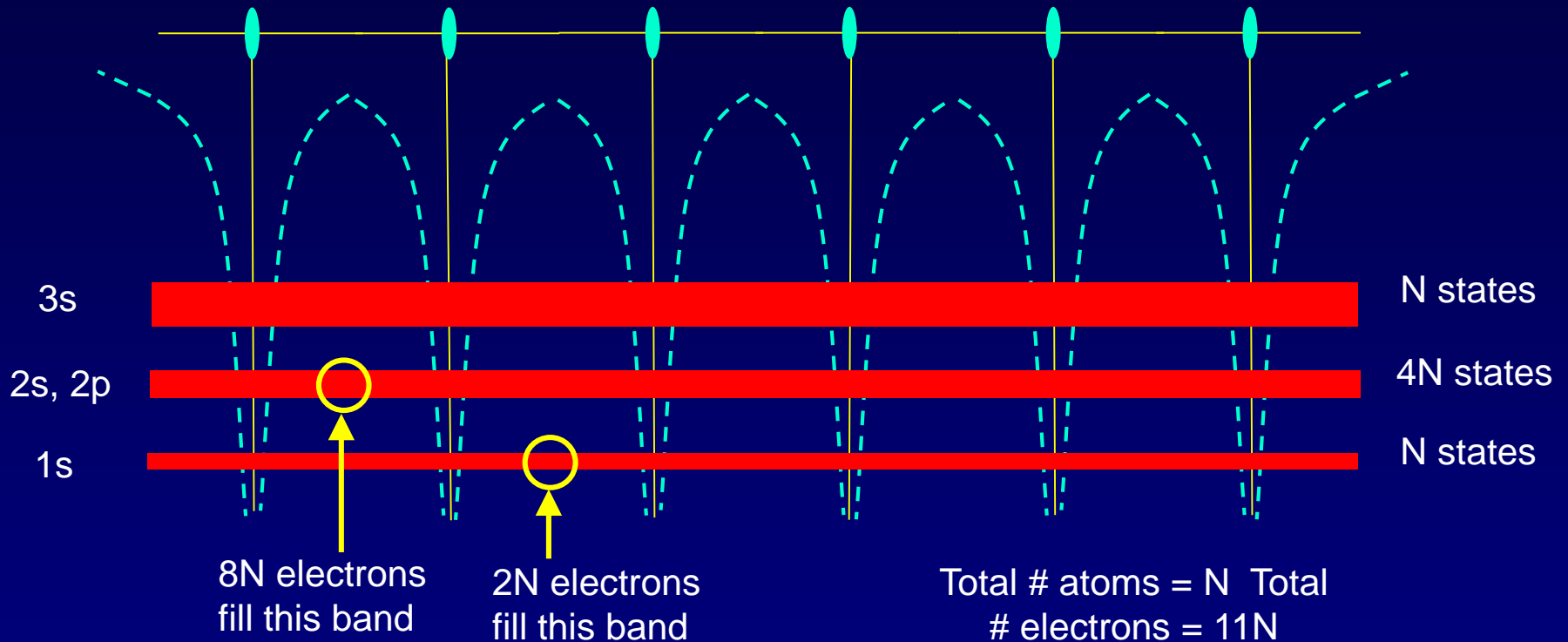
Since there is only one electron in the  $n = 3$  shell, we don't need to consider the 3p or 3d bands, which partially overlap the 3s band.

Fill the bands with  $11N$  electrons.

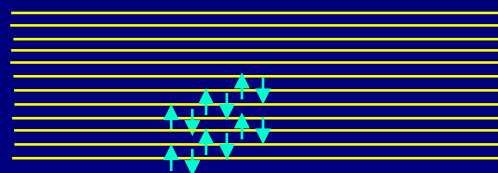


# Conductivity of Metals

Sodium:  $Z = 11$  ( $1s^2 2s^2 2p^6 3s^1$ )



The 3s band is only half filled (N states and N electrons)

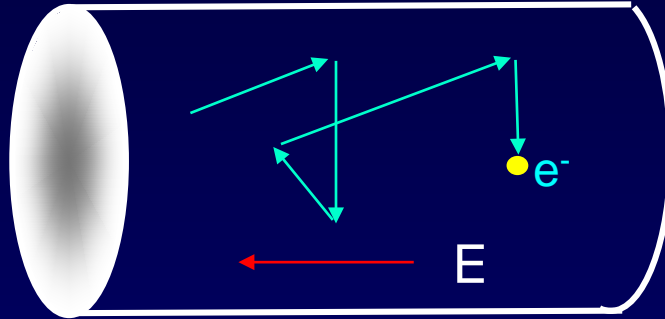


These electrons are easily promoted to higher states. Na is a good conductor.

Partially filled band → good conductor

# Semi-classical Picture of Conduction

Wire with  
cross section  $A$



$n$  = # free electrons/volume  
 $\tau$  = time between scattering events  
 $J$  = current density =  $I/A$   
 $F$  = force =  $-eE$   
 $a$  = acceleration =  $F/m$

$$J = nev_{\text{drift}}$$

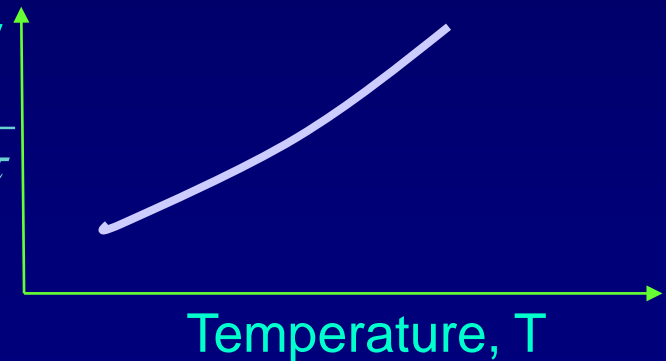
$$v_{\text{drift}} = a\tau = \frac{F}{m}\tau = \frac{eE}{m}\tau$$

$$J = \frac{ne^2\tau}{m}E = \sigma E, \text{ where}$$

$$\sigma \equiv \frac{ne^2\tau}{m} = \text{conductivity}$$

$$\text{Resistivity} \quad \rho = \frac{1}{\sigma} = \frac{m}{ne^2\tau}$$

Metal: scattering time gets shorter  
with increasing  $T$

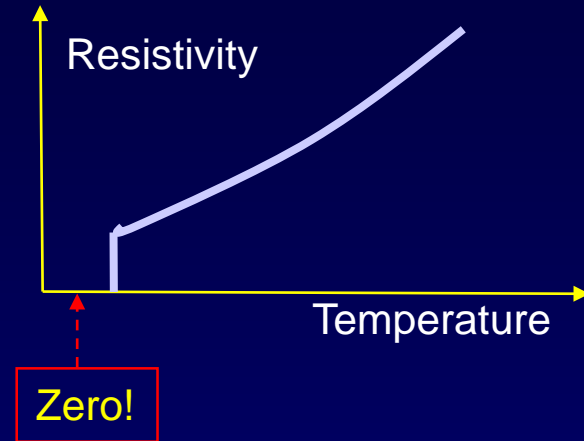


A more accurate description  
requires that we treat the electron  
as a quantum mechanical object.

# Superconductivity

1911: Kamerlingh-Onnes discovered that some metals at low temperature become perfect conductors. The resistance was lower than could be measured (still true today!).

1933: Meissner discovered that superconductors expel a magnetic field. They can be levitated by the magnetic repulsion.

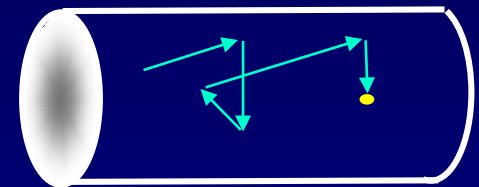


The physics in a (small) nutshell:

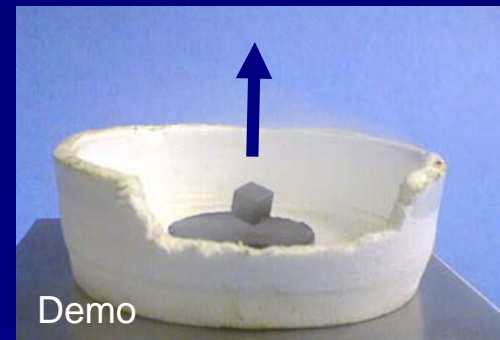
At low temperatures, the electrons in superconductors bind into pairs that have zero spin – the pairs are “composite bosons.” They love being in the same state and they condense into it.

Boson condensate can flow without scattering, it's a charged “superfluid.”

Meanwhile a gap (not a band gap) opens up and there are no single-electron states left to accelerate and experience scattering. → Zero Resistance!



This does not happen in a superconductor.







# Applications of Superconductivity

To date, applications have mostly been specialized. In particular, it is much cheaper to operate high field (high current) electromagnets if the wire is superconducting.

Superconducting Quantum Interference Devices (SQUIDs) are also used to make very sensitive magnetic field measurements (e.g., to make part in  $10^{12}$  measurements of magnetic susceptibility).

<http://rich.phekda.org/squid/technical/part4.html>



MRI



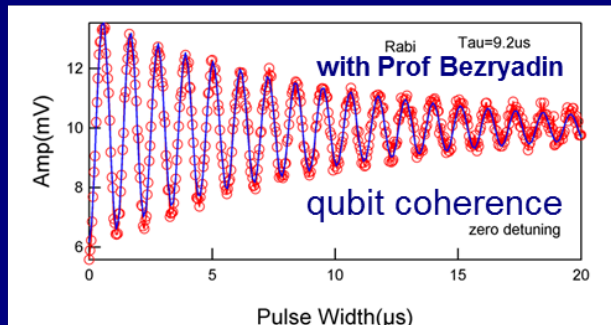
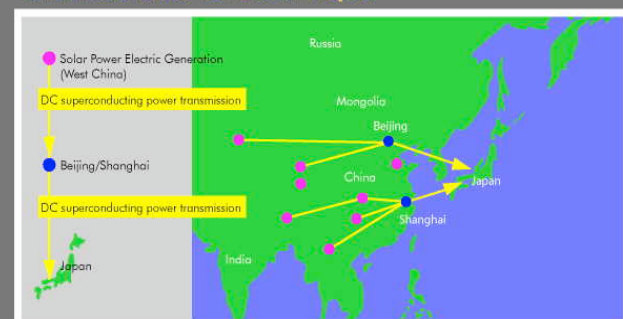
LHC accelerator



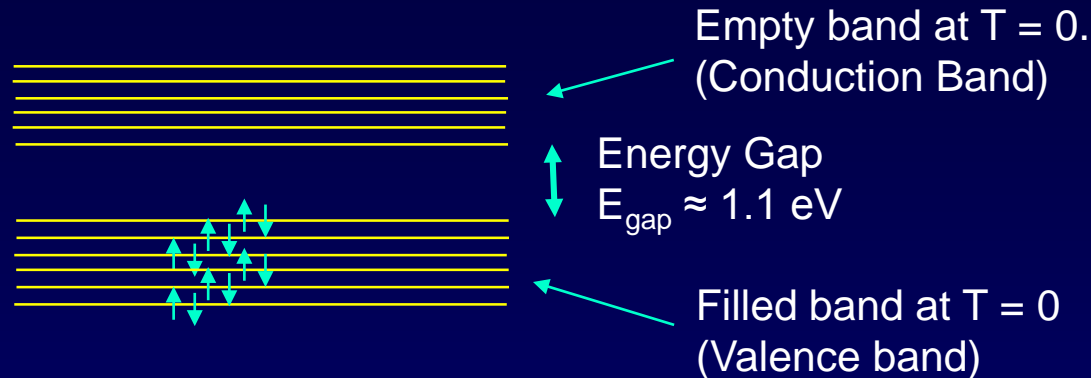
The holy grail of SC technology is electrical power distribution (7% is lost in the power grid). This is one reason  $\text{HiT}_c$  superconductors are important, but it's not yet competitive.

<http://www.nano-opt.jp/en/superconductor.html>

China-based Power Generation Project



# Semiconductors



The electrons in a filled band cannot contribute to conduction, because with reasonable  $E$  fields they cannot be promoted to a higher kinetic energy. Therefore, at  $T = 0$ , pure semiconductors are actually insulators.

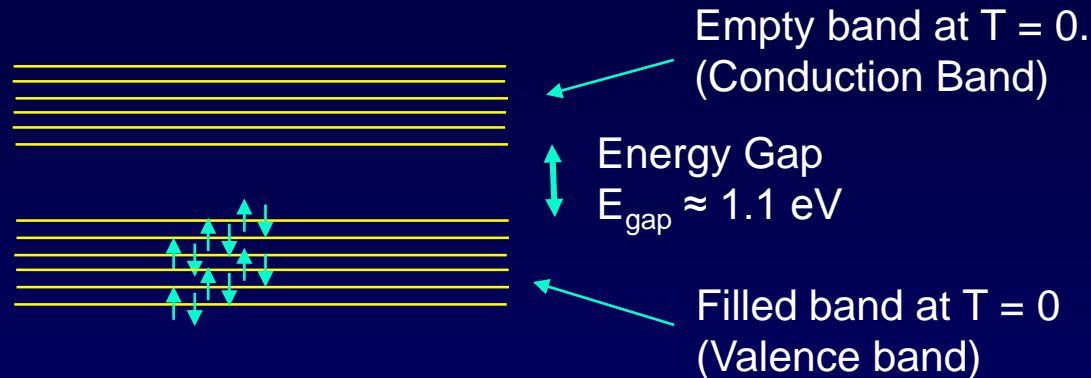
# Act 2

Consider electrons in a semiconductor, e.g., silicon. In a perfect crystal at  $T = 0$  the valence bands are filled and the conduction bands are empty  $\rightarrow$  no conduction. Which of the following could be done to make the material conductive?

- a. heat the material
- b. shine light on it
- c. add foreign atoms that change the number of electrons

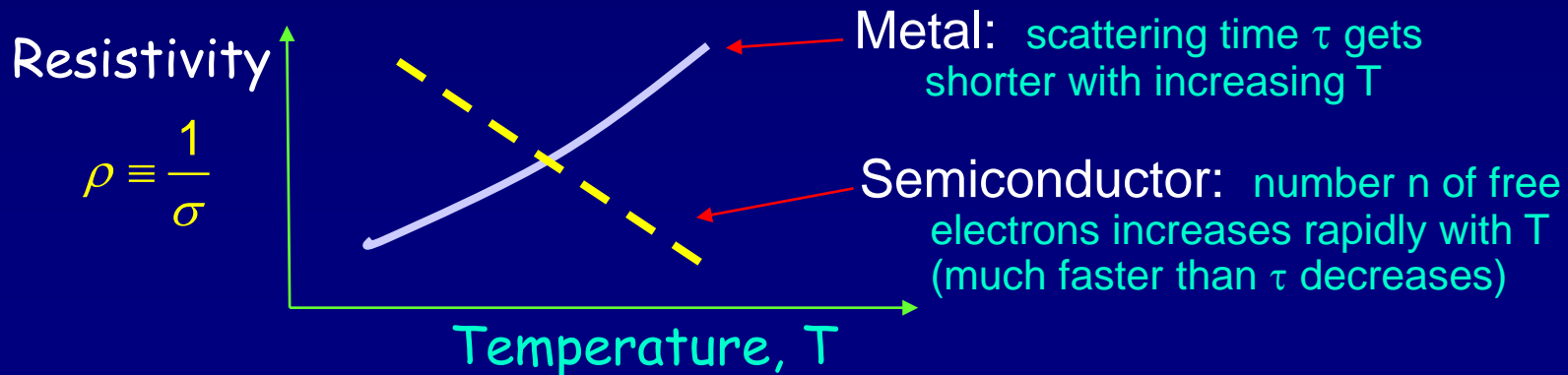


# Semiconductors



The electrons in a filled band cannot contribute to conduction, because with reasonable  $E$  fields they cannot be promoted to a higher kinetic energy. Therefore, at  $T = 0$ , pure semiconductors are actually insulators.

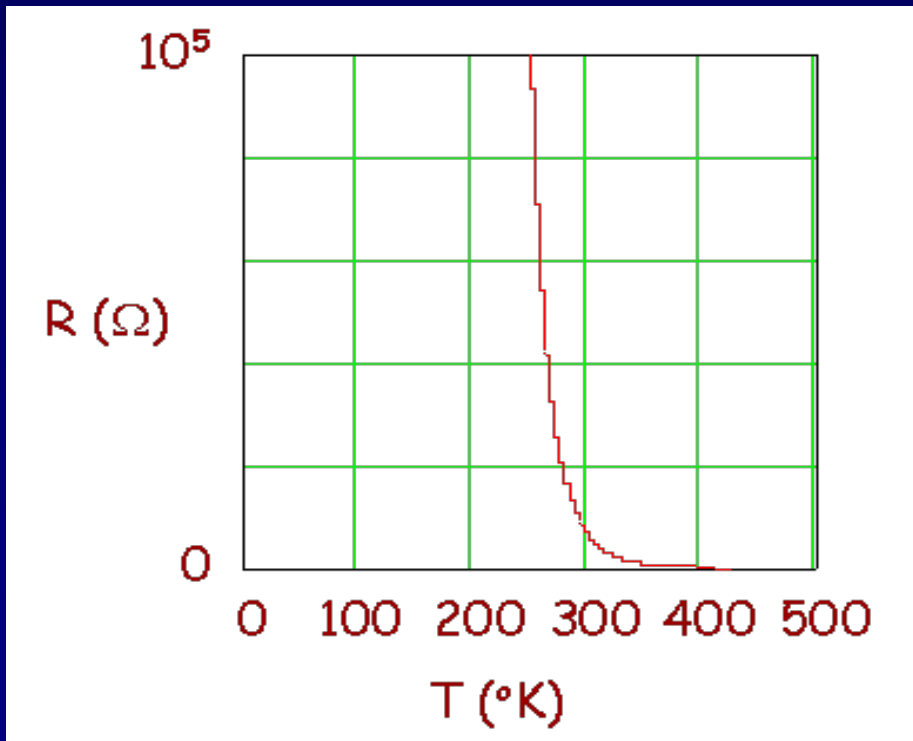
At higher temperatures, however, some electrons can be thermally promoted into the conduction band.



This graph only shows trends. A semiconductor has much higher resistance than a metal.

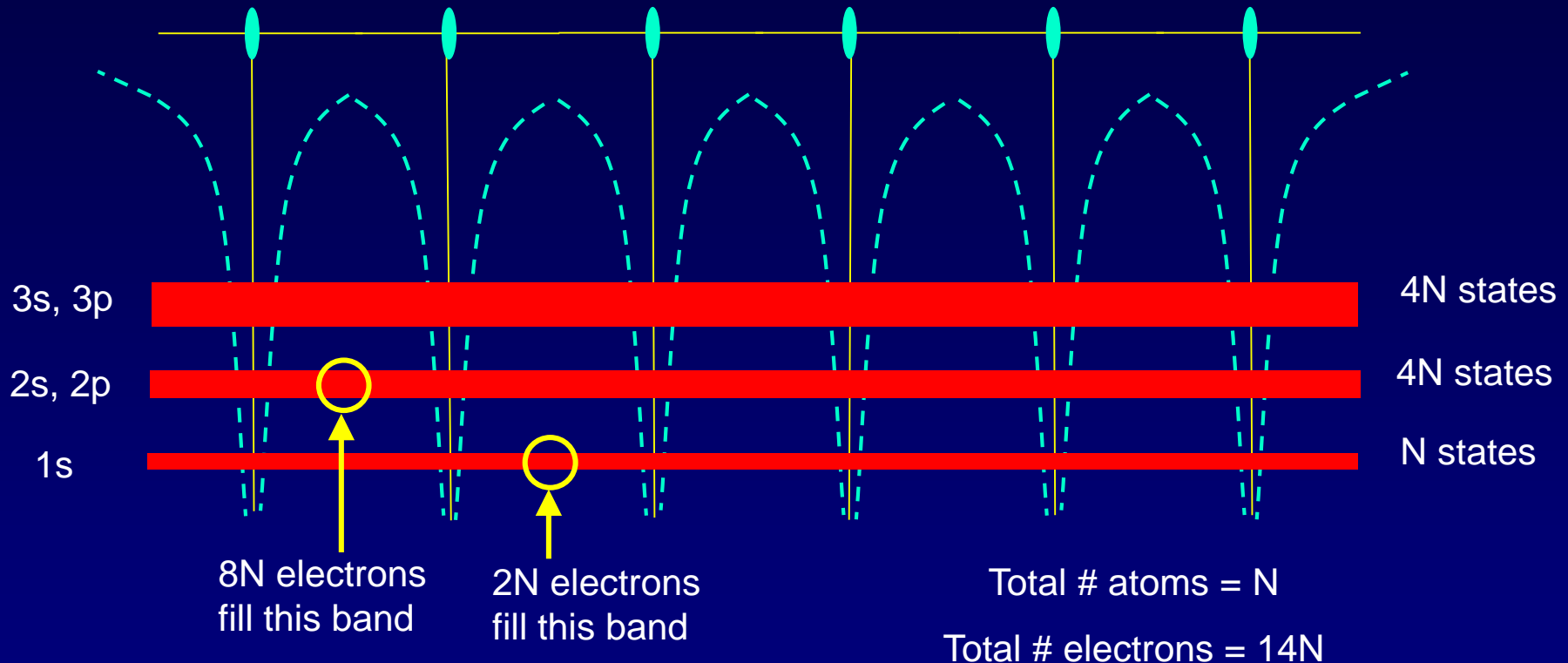
# Digital Thermometers

Digital thermometers use a **thermistor**, a semiconductor device that takes advantage of the exponential temperature dependence of a semiconductor's resistance. As the temperature increases, the resistance of the material drops markedly and can be used to determine the temperature.

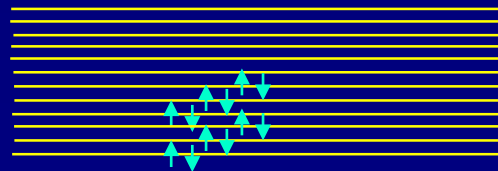


# Semiconductors: How about Silicon?

Silicon:  $Z = 14$  ( $1s^2 2s^2 2p^6 3s^2 3p^2$ )



The 3s/3p band is only half filled (4N states and 4N electrons)



Why isn't Silicon a metallic conductor, like sodium?

# Summary of Today's Lecture

Energy Bands

Conductivity in metals

Insulators

- filled bands don't conduct

Superconductivity

- pairs of electrons “condense” into composite bosons

Semiconductors