



Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Student Exploration: Electron Configuration

**Vocabulary:** atomic number, atomic radius, Aufbau principle, chemical family, diagonal rule, electron configuration, Hund's rule, orbital, Pauli exclusion principle, period, shell, spin, subshell

### Prior Knowledge Questions (Do these BEFORE using the Gizmo.)

1. Elvis Perkins, a rather shy fellow, is getting on the bus shown at right. Which seat do you think he will probably sit in? Mark this seat with an "E."
2. Marta Warren gets on the bus after Elvis. She is tired after a long day at work. Where do you think she will sit? Mark this seat with an "M."
3. In your experience, do strangers getting on a bus like to sit with other people if there is an empty seat available? \_\_\_\_\_



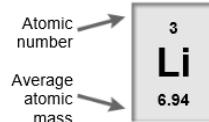
### Gizmo Warm-up

Just like passengers getting on a bus, electrons orbit the nuclei of atoms in particular patterns. You will discover these patterns (and how electrons sometimes act like passengers boarding a bus) with the *Electron Configuration* Gizmo.

To begin, check that **Lithium** is selected on the PERIODIC TABLE tab.

1. The **atomic number** is equal to the number of protons in an atom.

How many protons are in a lithium atom? \_\_\_\_\_



2. A neutral atom has the same number of electrons and protons.

How many electrons are in a neutral lithium atom? \_\_\_\_\_

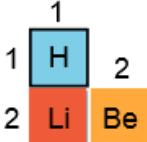
3	4	5	6	7	8	
Sc	Ti	V	Cr	Mn	Fe	C
Y	Zr	Nb	Mo	Tc	Ru	P
La	Hf	Ta	W	Re	Os	I

3. Select the ELECTRON CONFIGURATION tab, and check that **Energy** is selected. Click twice in the **1s** box at lower left and once in the **2s** box. Observe the atom model at right.

A. What do you see? \_\_\_\_\_

B. Click **Check**. Is this **electron configuration** correct? \_\_\_\_\_



<b>Activity A:</b> <b>Small atoms</b>	<b>Get the Gizmo ready:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>On the PERIODIC TABLE tab, select <b>H</b> (hydrogen).</li> <li>Select the ELECTRON CONFIGURATION tab.</li> <li>Click <b>Reset</b>.</li> </ul>	
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**Introduction:** Electrons are arranged in **orbitals**, **subshells**, and **shells**. These levels of organization are shown by the boxes of the Gizmo. Each box represents an orbital. The subshells are labeled with letters (*s*, *p*, *d*, and *f*) and the shells are labeled with numbers.

**Question: How are electrons arranged in elements with atomic numbers 1 through 10?**

1. Arrange: The **Aufbau principle** states that electrons occupy the lowest-energy orbital. When **Energy** is selected, the orbitals are arranged from lowest-energy at the bottom to highest-energy at the top. Click once in the **1s** box to add an electron to the only orbital in the *s* subshell of the first shell.

Click **Check**. What is the electron configuration of hydrogen? \_\_\_\_\_

2. Arrange: Click **Next element** to select helium. Add another electron to the **1s** orbital. The arrows represent the **spin** of the electron. What do you notice about the arrows?  
\_\_\_\_\_

The **Pauli exclusion principle** states that electrons sharing an orbital have opposite spins.

3. Check your work: Click **Check**. What is the electron configuration of helium? \_\_\_\_\_
4. Arrange: Click **Next element** and create electron configurations for lithium, beryllium, and boron. Click **Check** to check your work, and then list each configuration below:

Lithium: \_\_\_\_\_      Beryllium: \_\_\_\_\_      Boron: \_\_\_\_\_

5. Arrange: Click **Next element** to select carbon. Add a second electron to the first **2p** orbital.

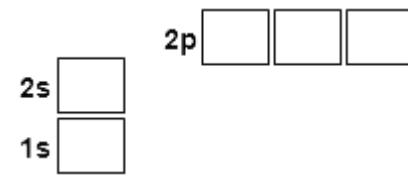
Click **Check**. What feedback is given? \_\_\_\_\_

6. Rearrange: **Hund's rule** states that electrons will occupy an empty orbital when it is available in that subshell. Rearrange the electrons within the **2p** subshell and click **Check**.

Is the configuration correct now? \_\_\_\_\_

Show the correct configuration in the boxes at right:

(Activity A continued on next page)



### Activity A (continued from previous page)

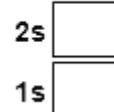
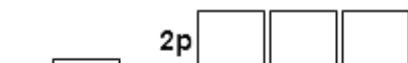
7. Compare: How are the electrons in the **2p** subshell similar to passengers getting on a bus?

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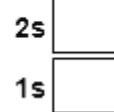
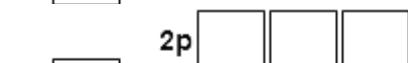
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8. Practice: In the spaces below, write and illustrate electron configurations for the next four elements: nitrogen, oxygen, fluorine, and neon. When you are finished, use the Gizmo to check your work. Correct any improper configurations.

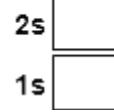
Nitrogen configuration: \_\_\_\_\_



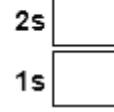
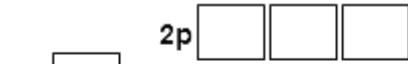
Oxygen configuration: \_\_\_\_\_



Fluorine configuration: \_\_\_\_\_



Neon configuration: \_\_\_\_\_



9. Apply: Atoms are most stable when their outermost shell is full. If their outermost shell is not full, atoms tend to gain, lose, or share electrons until the shell fills up. While doing this, atoms react and form chemical bonds with other atoms.

Based on this, what can you infer about the reactivity of helium and neon? \_\_\_\_\_

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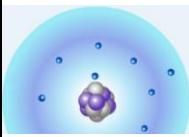
10. Think and discuss: Select the PERIODIC TABLE tab, and look at the second row, or **period**, of the table. How does this row reflect the subshells of the second shell?

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<b>Activity B:</b> <b>Atomic radii</b>	<p><u>Get the Gizmo ready:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>On the PERIODIC TABLE tab, select <b>Na</b> (sodium).</li> <li>Select the ELECTRON CONFIGURATION tab.</li> </ul>	
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**Question: How do the radii of atoms change across a period of the periodic table?**

- Predict: Positively charged protons in the nucleus of an atom are attracted to negatively charged electrons.

How do you think the **atomic radii** will change as electrons are added to a shell?

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- Arrange: Create a proper electron configuration for sodium. After clicking **Check**, note the **Electron configuration** and the **Atomic radius** now listed at right.

Sodium electron configuration: \_\_\_\_\_ Atomic radius: \_\_\_\_\_

- Compare: Click **Next element**, and then add an electron to the magnesium atom. Click check, and record the electron configuration and atomic radius below.

Magnesium electron configuration: \_\_\_\_\_ Atomic radius: \_\_\_\_\_

- Gather data: Create electron configurations for the next six elements. Record the electron configuration and atomic radius of each. (Note: The symbol for picometer is *pm*.)

Element	Number of electrons	Electron configuration	Atomic radius (pm)
Aluminum			
Silicon			
Phosphorus			
Sulfur			
Chlorine			
Argon			

- Analyze: How does the atomic radius change across a period of the periodic table?
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**(Activity B continued on next page)**



### Activity B (continued from previous page)

6. Interpret: Select the ATOMIC RADIUS tab. What do you notice? \_\_\_\_\_

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7. Predict: On the ATOMIC RADIUS tab click **Clear**. Select the PERIODIC TABLE tab. Elements in the same column of the periodic table are called **chemical families**, or groups.

How do you think the size of atoms will change from top to bottom within a chemical family?

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8. Test: Hydrogen, lithium, and sodium are all in the same chemical family. Use the Gizmo to find the atomic radius of each, and list them below.

Hydrogen radius: \_\_\_\_\_      Lithium radius: \_\_\_\_\_      Sodium radius: \_\_\_\_\_

9. Analyze: How does the atomic radius change as you go from the top to the bottom of a chemical family? \_\_\_\_\_

10. Challenge: Think about the factors that control atomic radius and the patterns you've seen.

- A. Why does the atomic radius decrease as electrons are added to a shell? \_\_\_\_\_

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- B. Why does the atomic radius increase as you go from the top to the bottom of a chemical family? \_\_\_\_\_

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11. Think and discuss: Compare the electron configurations of hydrogen, lithium, and sodium. Why do you think these elements are grouped in the same family?

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**Activity C:**  
**The diagonal rule**

Get the Gizmo ready:

- On the PERIODIC TABLE tab, select Ar (argon).
- Select the ELECTRON CONFIGURATION tab.
- Turn on **Show number of electrons**.

1s	↑↓		
2s	↑↓	↑↓	
3s	↑↓	↑↓	↑
4s		↑↓	
2p	↑↓	↑	
3p	↑↓	↑	
4p			

**Question: How are the electron configurations of elements beyond argon determined?**

1. Arrange: Create the correct electron configuration for argon. Then, click **Next element** to get to potassium (K). Click once in the first **3d** orbital, and then click **Check**.

What feedback is given? \_\_\_\_\_

2. Rearrange: The 4s subshell is a lower-energy subshell than 3d, so it is filled first. Remove the electron from the **3d** orbital and place it in the **4s** orbital. Click **Check**. (Note: For simplicity, all but the outer shell electrons will disappear on the **Bohr Model**.)

Is this configuration correct? \_\_\_\_\_ What is the configuration? \_\_\_\_\_

3. Arrange: Click **Next element** and add an electron for calcium. Click **Check**.

What is the electron configuration for calcium? \_\_\_\_\_

4. Arrange: Click **Next element** and add an electron for scandium. Try different orbitals until you find the right one. What is the configuration for scandium? \_\_\_\_\_

5. Observe: Scandium is the first element to contain electrons in the *d* subshell. How many orbitals does the *d* subshell have, and how many electrons can fit in the *d* subshell?

\_\_\_\_\_

6. Infer: Select the PERIODIC TABLE tab. The middle section of the table contains ten groups that make up the transition metals. Why do you think this section is ten columns wide?

\_\_\_\_\_

7. Observe: Select the ELECTRON CONFIGURATION tab. Make sure the subshells are ordered by **Energy**, which will arrange them from lowest to highest energy, bottom to top.

Based on what you see, in what order do you think subshells will be filled? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

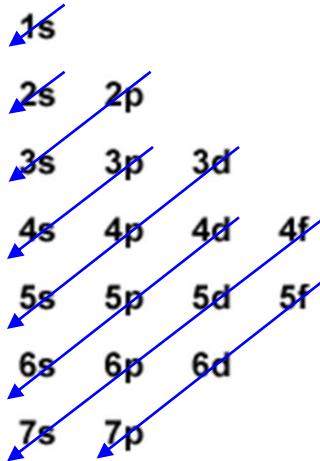
**(Activity C continued on next page)**



### Activity C (continued from previous page)

8. Make a rule: Next to **Subshells ordered by**, select **Number**. The **diagonal rule** at right shows which subshell will be filled next. To follow the rule, move down along an arrow until you reach the end of the arrow. Then move to the start of the next arrow to the right.

- A. Which subshell is filled after  $4p$ ? \_\_\_\_\_
- B. Which subshell is filled after  $6s$ ? \_\_\_\_\_
- C. Which subshell is filled after  $5d$ ? \_\_\_\_\_



9. Practice: Determine the electron configurations of the following elements. Use the Gizmo to check your work. (Note: In some cases, the diagonal rule doesn't work perfectly. If you submit a theoretically correct configuration, the Gizmo will give you the actual configuration.)

Element	Atomic number	Electron configuration
Cobalt (Co)	27	_____
Germanium (Ge)	32	_____
Neodymium (Nd)	60	_____
		_____
Gold (Au)	79	_____
		_____

10. Infer: Select the PERIODIC TABLE tab. Earlier you saw that the transition metals represent the filling of the  $d$  subshells. Now locate the purple lanthanides and actinides on the bottom rows of the periodic table.

- A. How many elements are in the lanthanides series? \_\_\_\_\_
- B. Which subshell is represented by the lanthanides series? \_\_\_\_\_
- C. Which subshell is represented by the actinides series? \_\_\_\_\_
- D. In general, how does the shape of the periodic table relate to electron configuration?

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