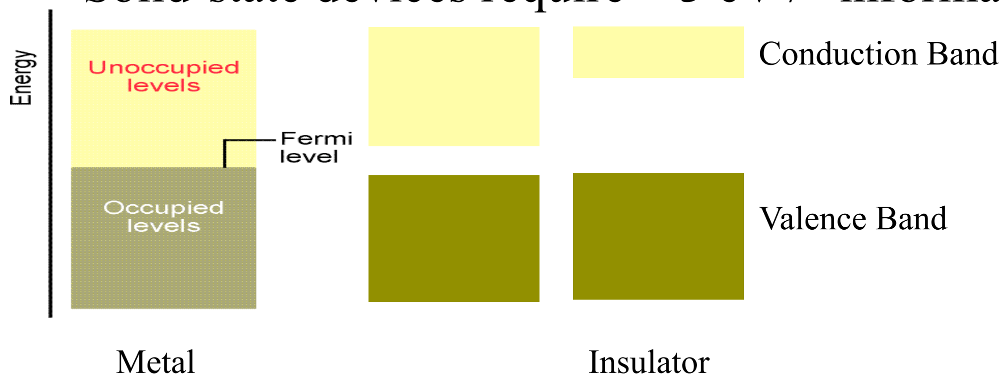
Chap. 11 – Semiconductor Diodes

Semiconductor diodes provide the best resolution for energy measurements, silicon based devices are generally used for charged-particles, germanium for photons.

- Scintillators require ~ 100 eV / "information carrier" .. Photoelectrons in this case
- Gas counters require ~ 35 eV / "information carrier" .. Ion-pair
- Solid-state devices require ~ 3 eV / "information carrier" .. Electron/hole pair



A semiconductor is an insulator with a small band gap, ~ 1eV for silicon. Generally want smallest band gap ***but*** thermal excitation across the gap provides a leakage current. N.B. the actual band gap depends on the direction relative to the lattice (Si and Ge do not crystallize in cubic lattices) and decreases slowly with temperature.

The ratio of 'w' to band gap is approximately constant for a wide range of materials – division of excitation energy between e/h pair and phonons, etc. is ~ constant.

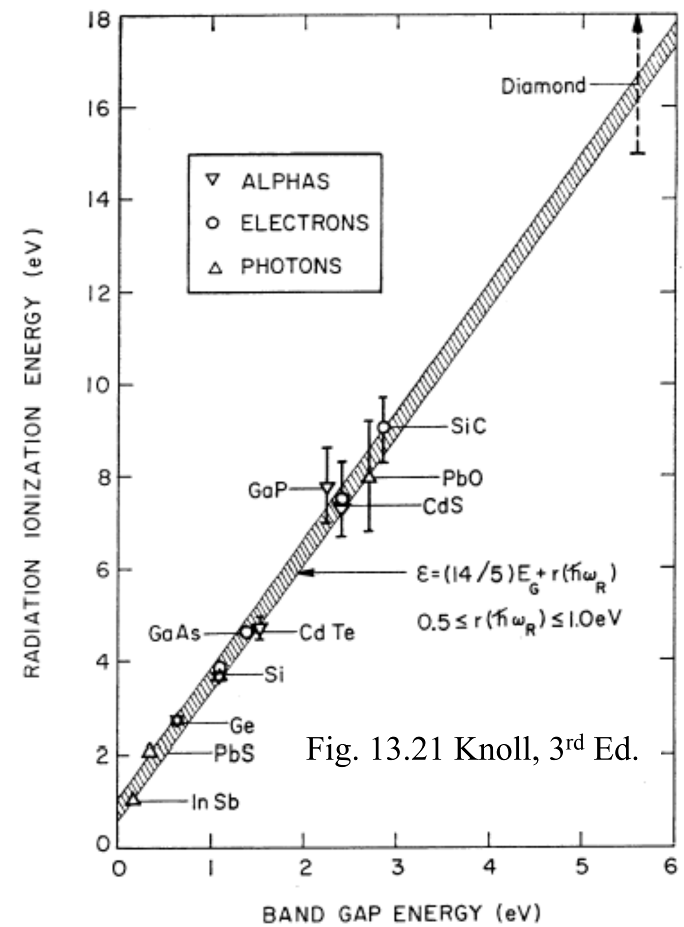


Fig. 13.21 Knoll, 3rd Ed.

C.A.Klein, J.App. Phys. 39 (1968) 2029

Semiconductors – Charge carriers

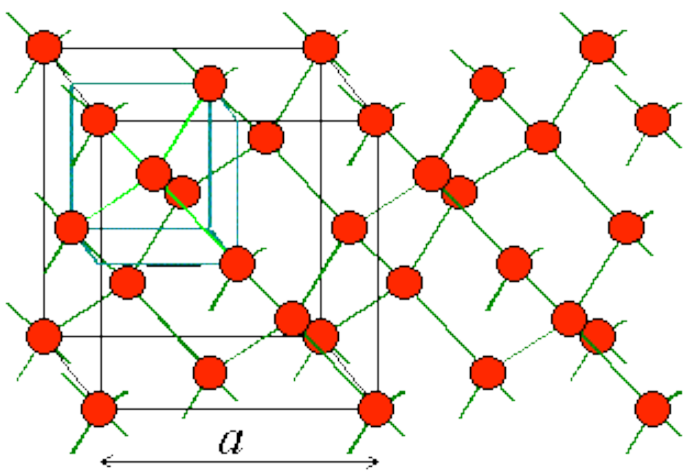
"pure" material, no dopants is called "intrinsic"

The intrinsic carrier density in a semiconductor is low:

$$\rho_e \sim \sqrt{N_V N_C}\, e^{-\varepsilon/2k_BT} \quad k_BT = 0.026\, eV\ @\ 25^\circ C$$

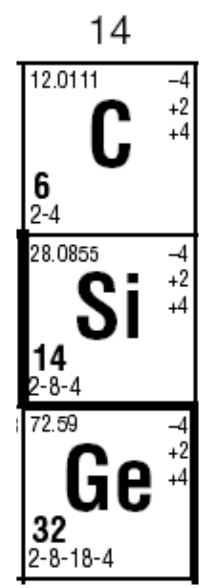
$$\rho_e \sim \sqrt{10^{19}10^{19}}\ e^{-20} \quad \sim 10^9\, cm^{-3}$$

N_v and N_c are the densities of states in the valence and conduction bands. (Only rough estimates given here.)



"diamond lattice"

	Lattice Constant
Carbon	0.356 nm
Silicon	0.543 nm
Germanium	0.565 nm



Semiconductors – Dopants

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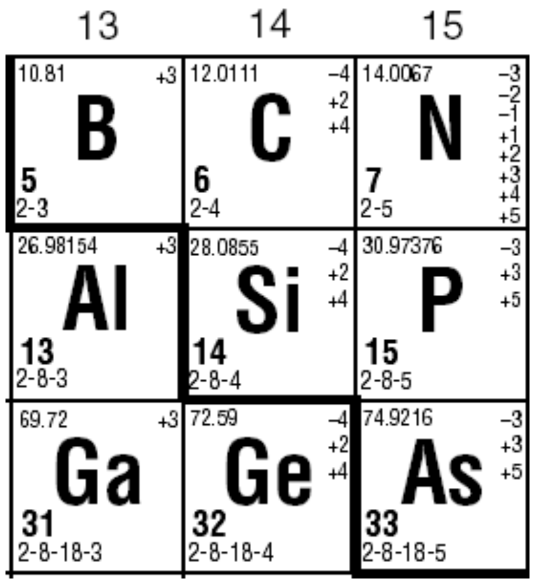
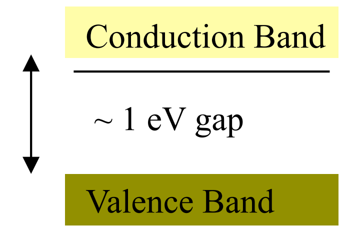


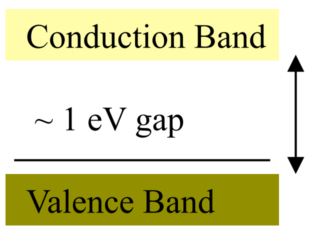
Add atoms from the neighboring groups in the periodic table

- Group 15, Phosphorous, nearly same size, excess electron
- Group 13, Boron, nearly same size, electron deficit

Donor level from P atom below conduction band by ~ 0.05 eV ..
Thermally excite from donor, excess electrons → n-type

$$e^{-0.05/2kT} \sim e^{-1}$$





Acceptor level from B atom above valence band by ~ 0.05 eV ..
Thermally excited from valence band, excess holes → p-type

Control the conductivity by controlling the amount of dopants!
N.B. 2 ppb gives $(2\text{x}10^{-9})$ $(5\text{x}10^{22}/\text{cm}^3)$ = 10^{14} /cm^3 >> 10^9 for Si

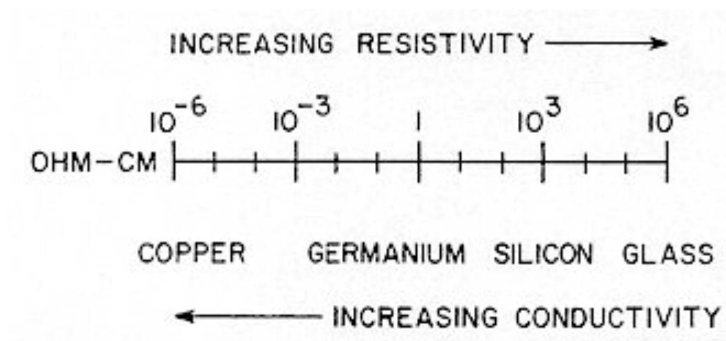
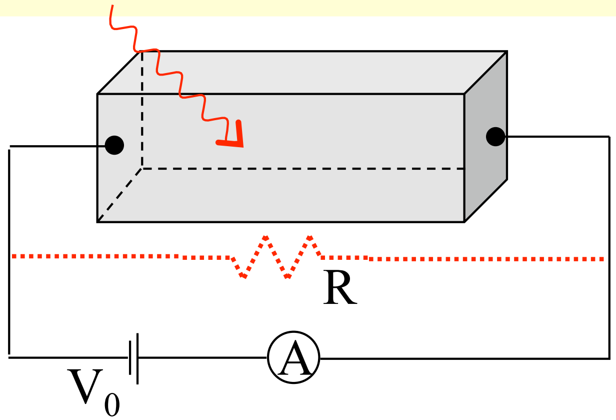


Figure 1. Resistivity of typical conductor, semiconductors, and insulator.

For an n-type material, the electrons carry the current so that the resistivity is:

$$\rho = \frac{1}{q_e N_D \mu_e}$$

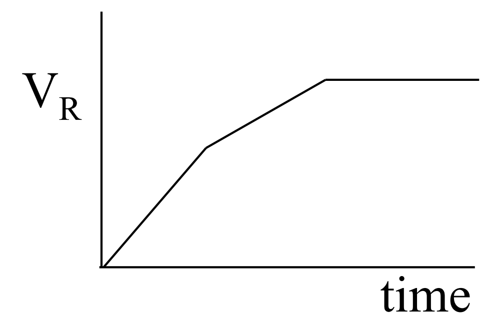
Semiconductor – Ion Chamber?



Imagine constructing a simple block of intrinsic semiconductor and trying to use it as an ion chamber … The block has a length, "L" and a cross sectional area, "A" with a resistivity of ρ = 60k ohm-cm (high quality silicon).

1 MeV energy into material creates ~ $3x10^5$ e/h in ~50 ns … limiting drift velocity ~ 10^7

$$i_{signal} \sim \frac{3x10^5\left(1.6x10^{-19}\right)}{\left(L\,cm/10^7\,cm/s\right)} = \frac{5}{L}10^{-7}\text{ Amps for L in cm}$$

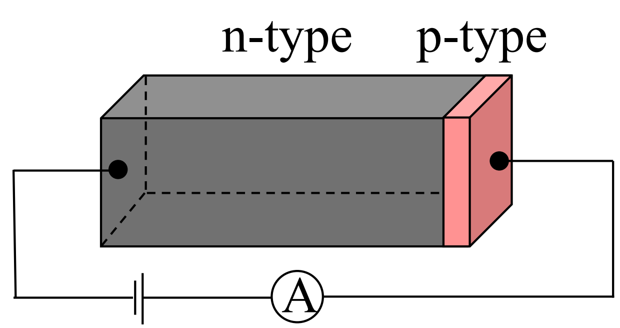


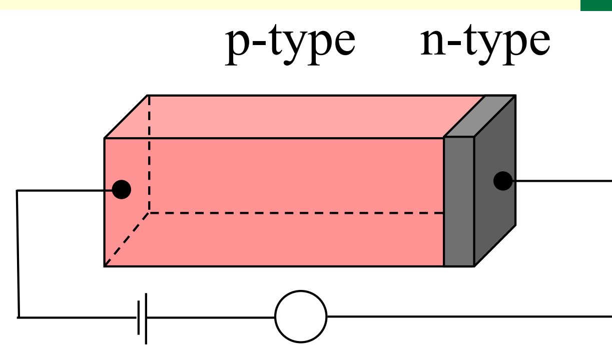
$$I_{Leakage} = \frac{V_0}{R} \quad where \quad R = \rho\frac{L}{A}$$

$$I_{Leakage} = \frac{V_0 A}{\rho L} \rightarrow \frac{60A}{60{,}000L} = \frac{A}{L}10^{-3}\text{ Amps for A/L in cm}$$

Thus, I >> i so we need a trick to kill the leakage current.

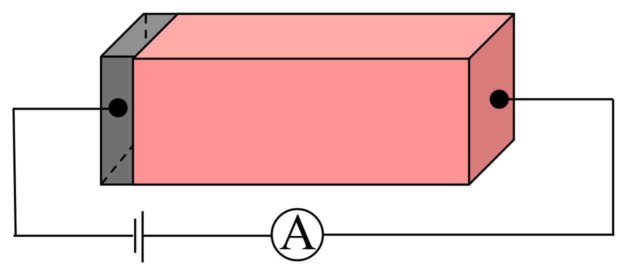
Semiconductor Diodes – 1



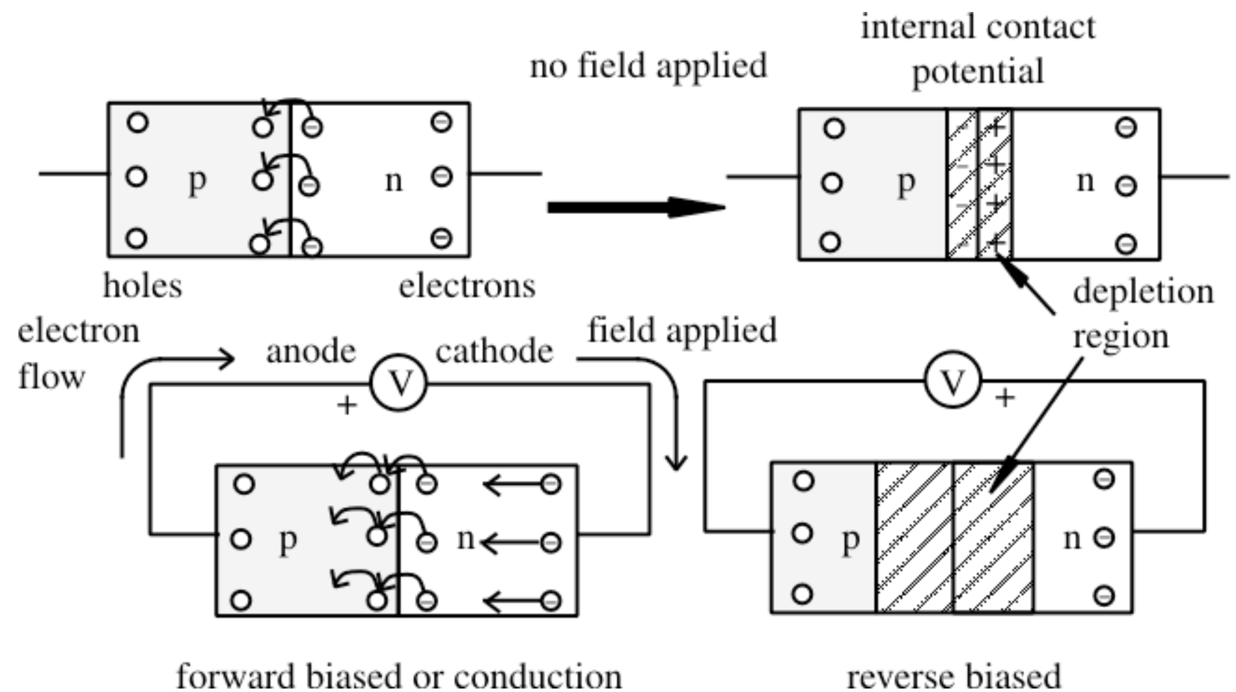


“Forward” bias – normal flow of current

“Reverse” bias – no nominal current



The “type” is determined by the implanted atoms .. Different atoms can be put into a single piece of semiconductor, then an internal field will form due to migration of charges.



Semiconductor Diodes – 2

Diffuse "donor" into bulk p-type material gives concentration profile

bulk p-type dopant concentration

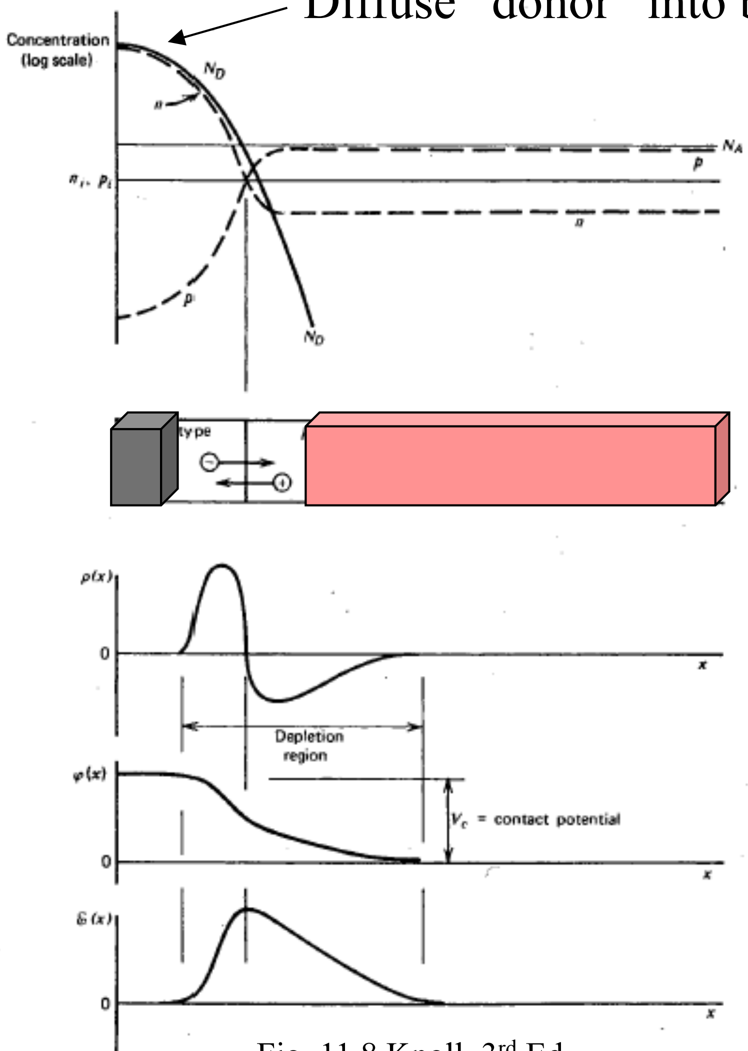


Fig. 11.8 Knoll, 3rd Ed.

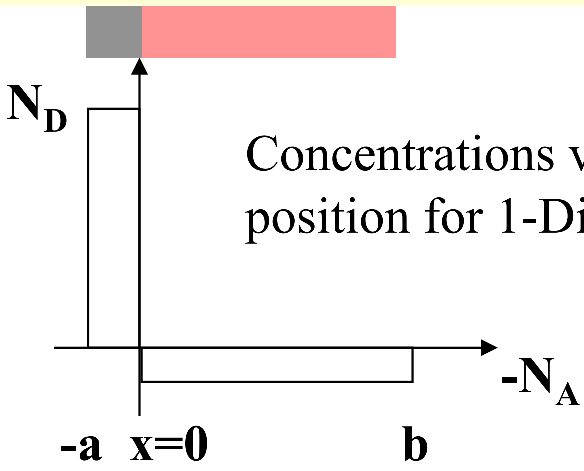
Charge density: Migration of the charge across the boundary causes a charge separation and a "depletion region"

Which creates an internal electric potential, $\phi(x)$ with a potential difference of ~ 1V

and an electric field (lines of force originate on positive ions and terminate on the negative ions)

The depleted region has a very low concentration of mobile charge carriers and a very high resistivity – this is a very good region to measure/collect ionization.

Semiconductor Diodes – Depletion Depth



Concentrations versus position for 1-Dimension

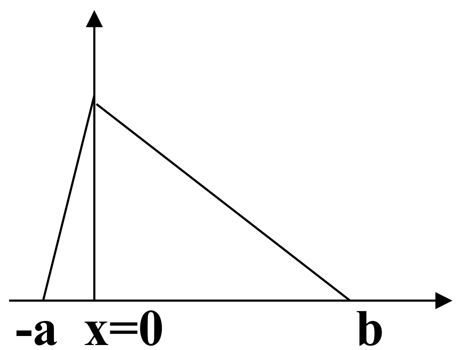
Charge neutrality gives: $a*N_D=b*N_A$ (1)

Depletion depth, d = a+b

One Dimensional Poisson Equation in two regions:

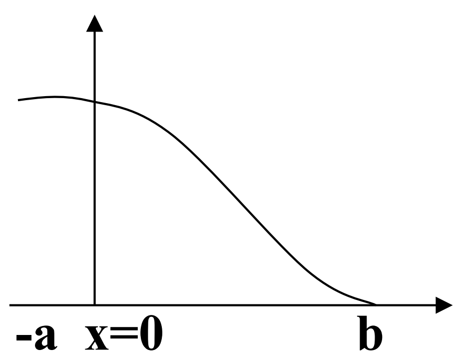
$$\frac{d^2\phi}{dx^2} = \frac{-\rho(x)}{\varepsilon} = \begin{cases} \dfrac{-q_e N_D}{\varepsilon} & a < x \le 0 \\ \dfrac{+q_e N_A}{\varepsilon} & 0 < x \le b \end{cases}$$

Boundary Conditions:
$E(x=-a) = 0 \;\&\; E(x=b) = 0$



$$-E(x) = \frac{d\phi}{dx} = \begin{cases} \dfrac{-q_e N_D}{\varepsilon}(x+a) & a < x \le 0 \\ \dfrac{+q_e N_A}{\varepsilon}(x-b) & 0 < x \le b \end{cases}$$

Boundary Conditions:
$\phi(x=-a) = V \;\&\; \phi(x=b) = 0$



$$\phi(x) = \begin{cases} \dfrac{-q_e N_D}{2\varepsilon}(x+a)^2 + V & a < x \le 0 \\ \dfrac{+q_e N_A}{2\varepsilon}(x-b)^2 & 0 < x \le b \end{cases}$$

Match at $x = 0$:

$$\frac{-q_e N_D}{2\varepsilon} a^2 + V = \frac{+q_e N_A}{2\varepsilon} b^2 \quad (2)$$

Depletion depth: combine (1) & (2) $(a+b)*b = 2\varepsilon V / q_e N_A$

Generally b > a .. $d = b \sim (2\varepsilon V / q_e N_A)^{1/2}$

Semiconductor Diodes – 3

Some properties of the junction:

$$d \sim \sqrt{\frac{2\varepsilon V}{q_e N_A}} \qquad \& \qquad \rho = \frac{1}{q_e N_D \mu_e}$$

$$d \sim \sqrt{2\varepsilon V \rho \mu} \qquad \& \qquad C = \frac{\varepsilon A}{d}$$

$$E = \Delta V / \Delta x \quad \rightarrow \quad E_{max} = \frac{2V}{d}$$

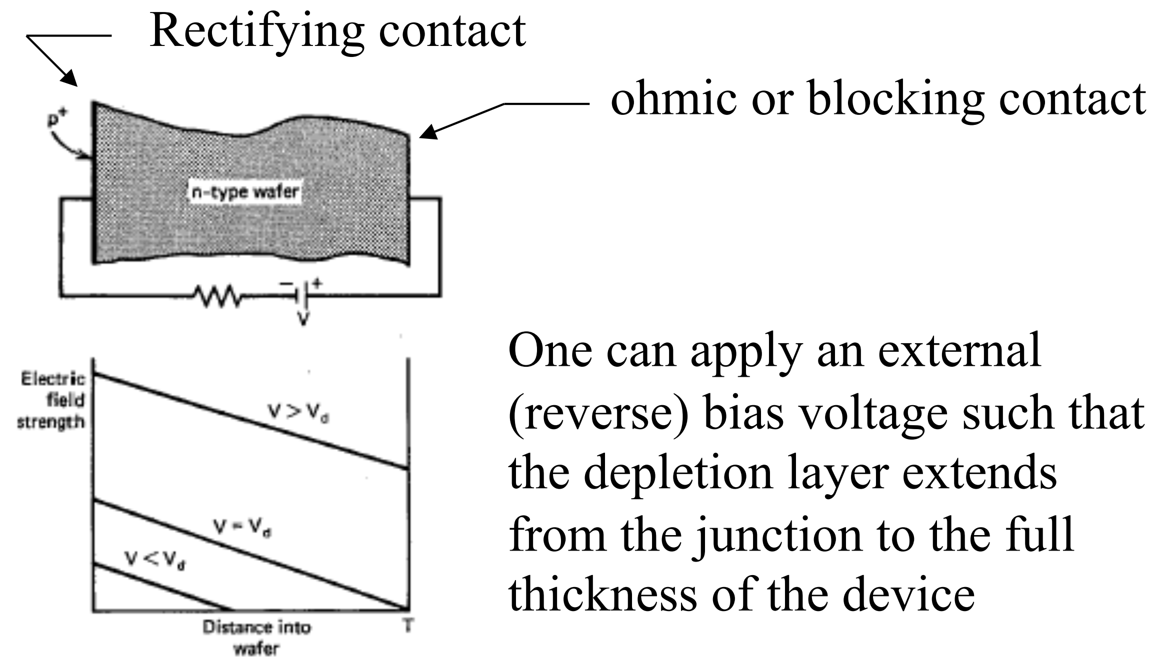
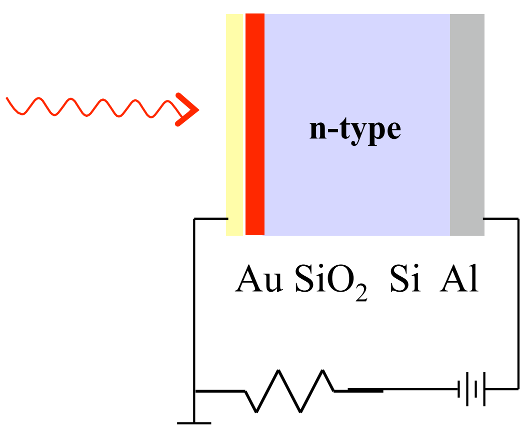
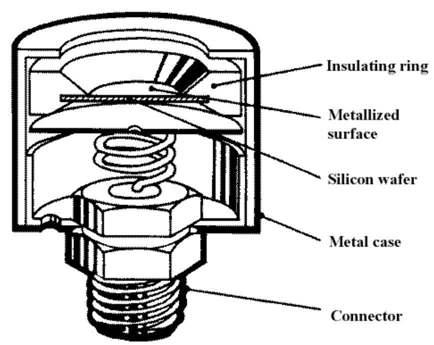


Fig. 11.12 Knoll, 3rd Ed.

One can apply an external (reverse) bias voltage such that the depletion layer extends from the junction to the full thickness of the device

Silicon Surface Barrier Device





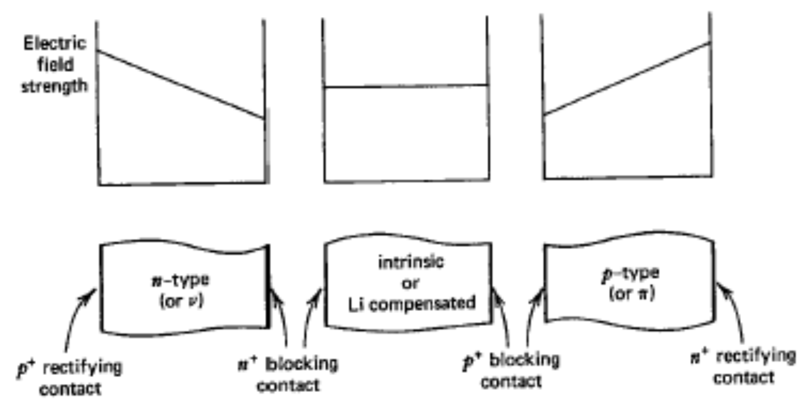
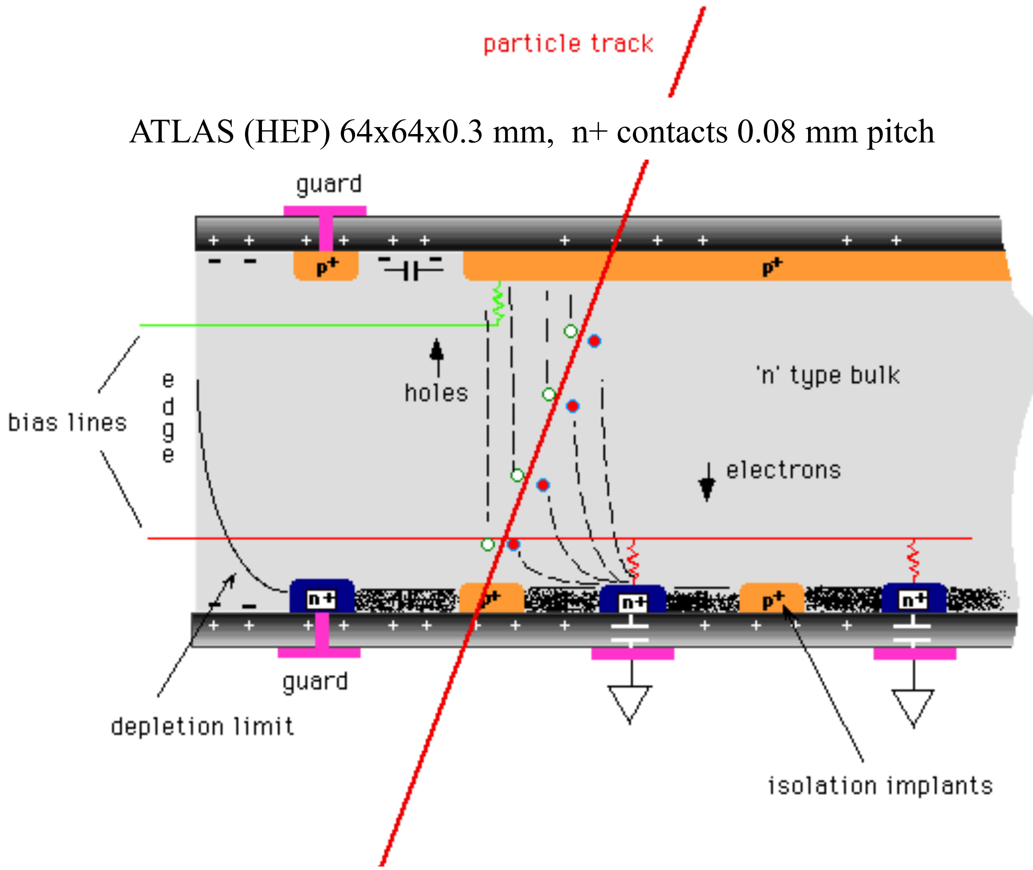
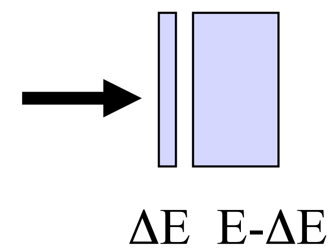


Fig. 11.13 Knoll, 3rd Ed.

Semiconductor Diodes



Silicon layers are thin, typically 0.3mm but up 5mm are produced. (dictated by the semiconductor chip industry).



Silicon Detector "telescopes" combine a thin device with a thick device to identify charged particles.

$$\frac{dE}{dx} = C_1 \frac{MZ^2}{E} \ln\left(C_2 \frac{E}{M}\right)$$

$$\Delta E = \Delta x\left(\frac{dE}{dx}\right) \propto \frac{MZ^2}{E} \quad \rightarrow \quad \Delta E \propto \frac{1}{E}$$

Punch-through
Software cut