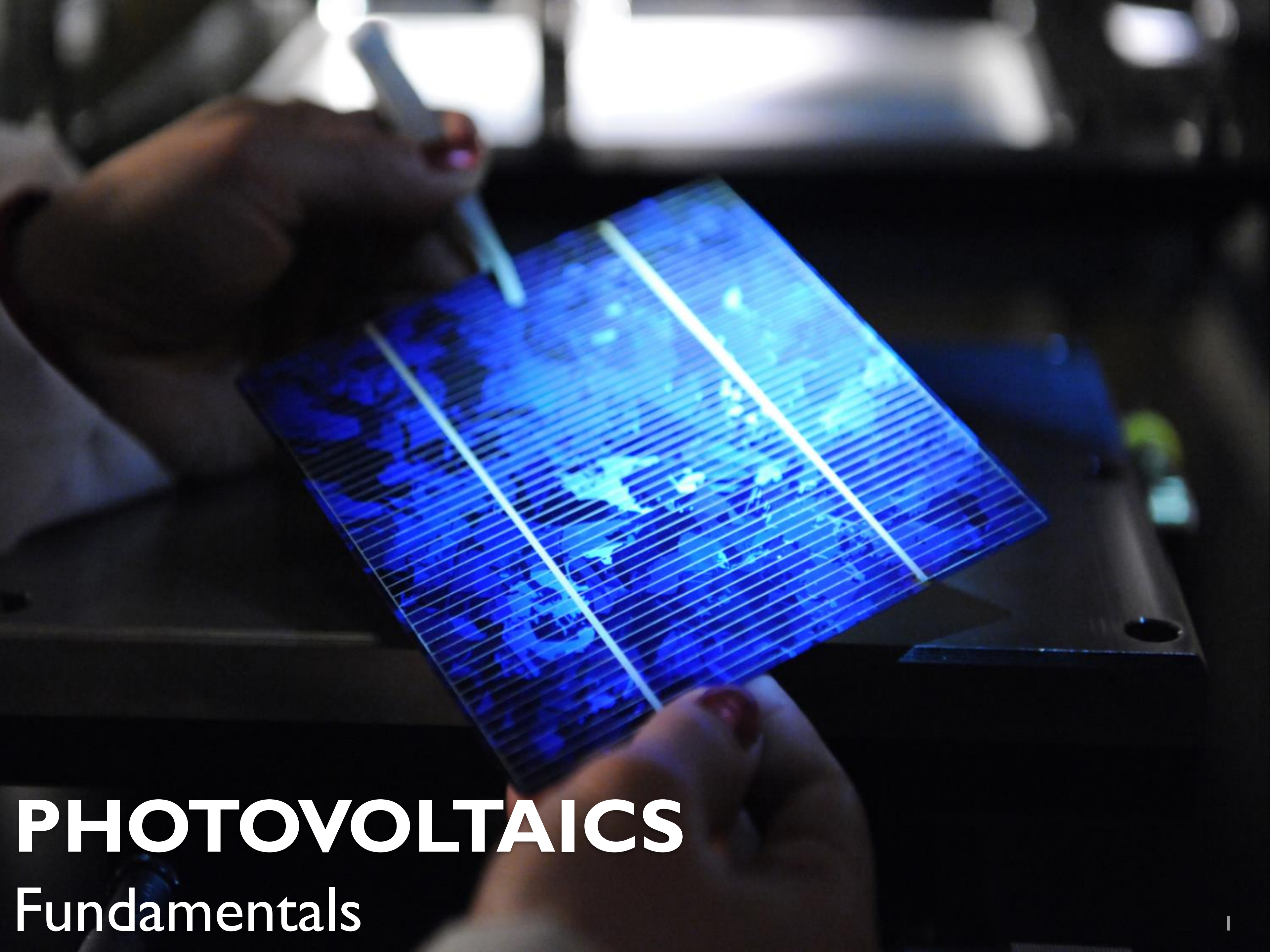


PHOTOVOLTAICS

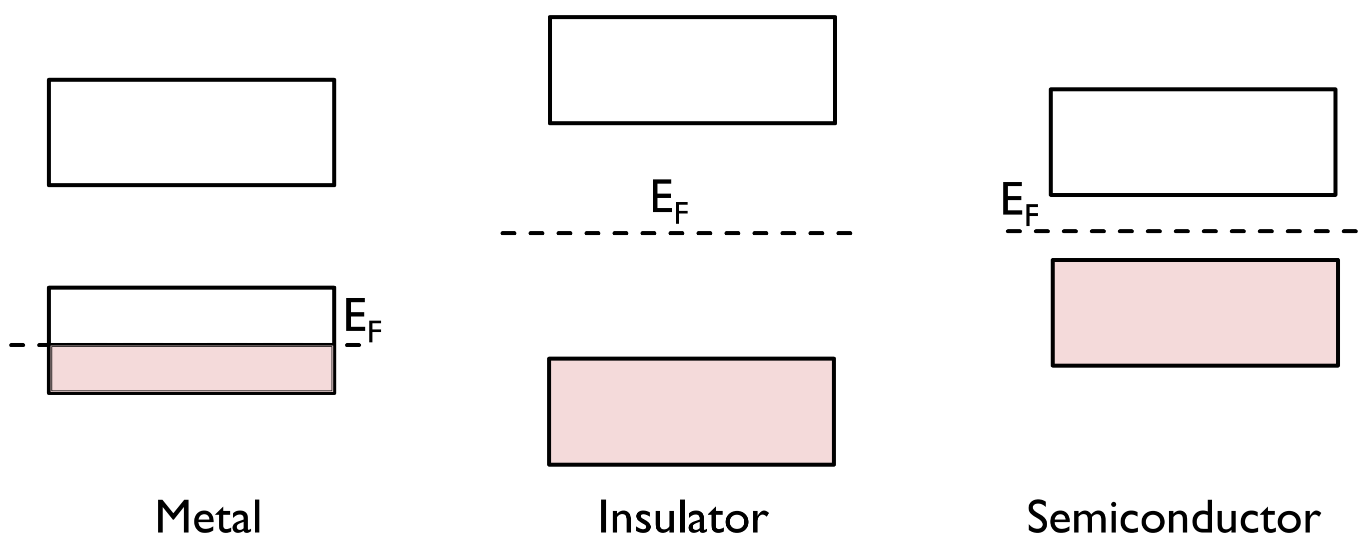
Fundamentals

PV FUNDAMENTALS

- Semiconductor basics
- pn junction
- Solar cell operation
- Design of silicon solar cell

SEMICONDUCTOR BASICS

- Allowed energy bands
- Valence and conduction band
- Fermi level



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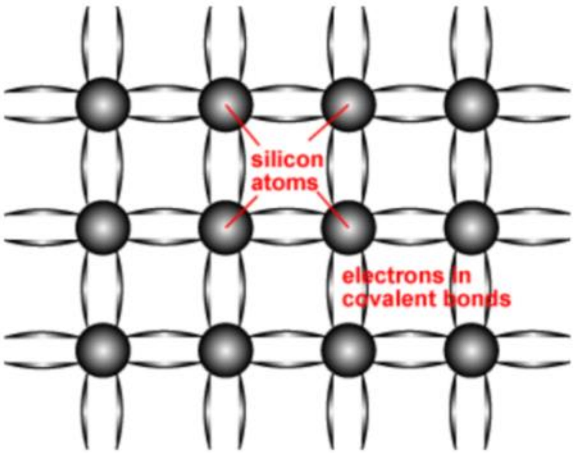
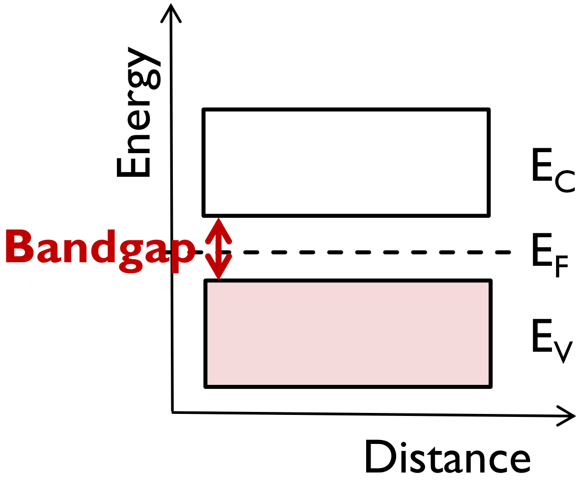
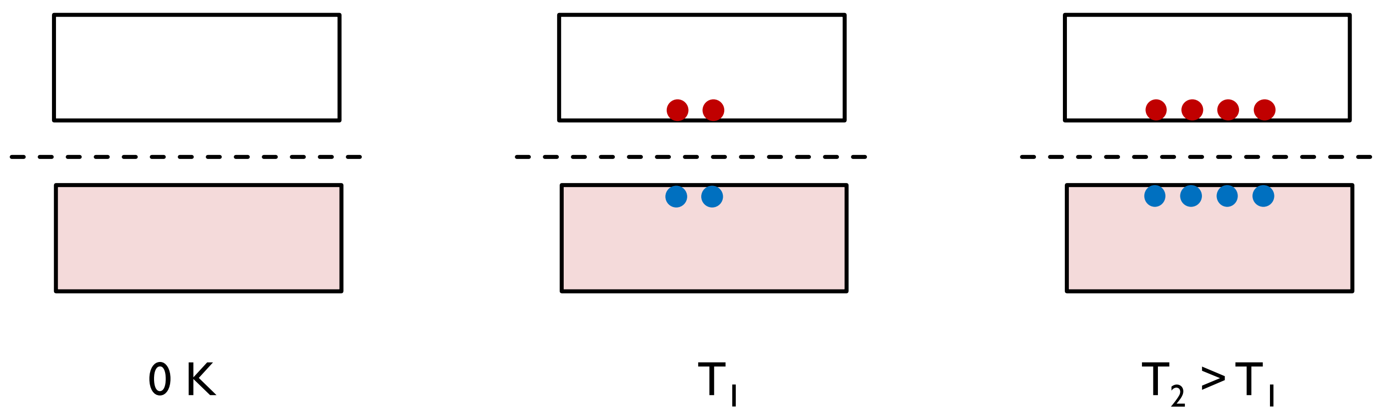




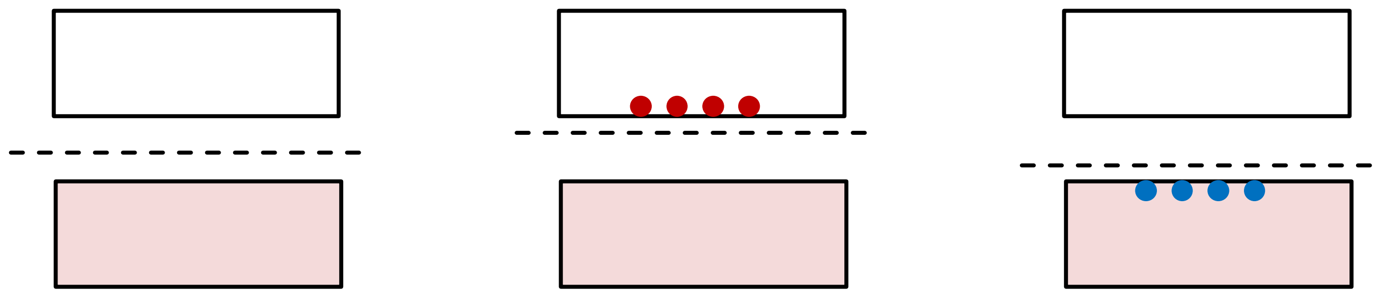
SEMICONDUCTOR BASICS

- Effect of temperature

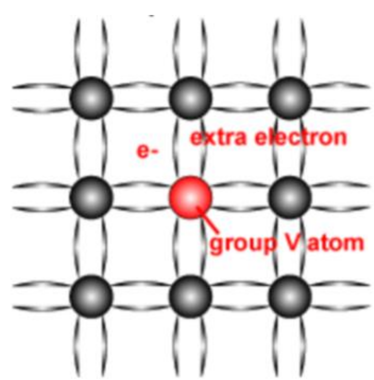


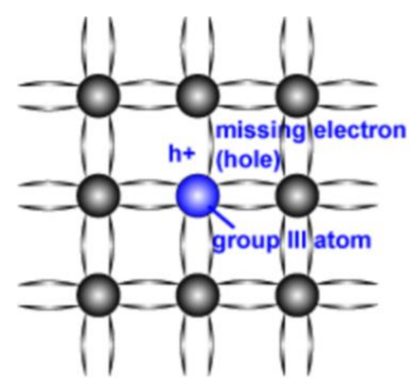
SEMICONDUCTOR BASICS

- Effect of doping



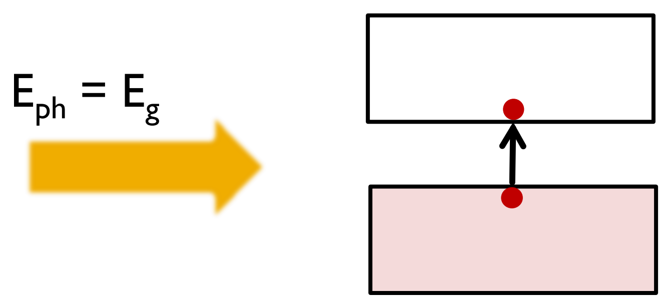
Intrinsic | N-doped | P-doped





SEMICONDUCTOR BASICS

- **Absorption of light** depends on the energy of the photon (wavelength)



$$E = \frac{hc}{\lambda}$$

$$E(eV) = \frac{1.24}{\lambda(\mu m)}$$

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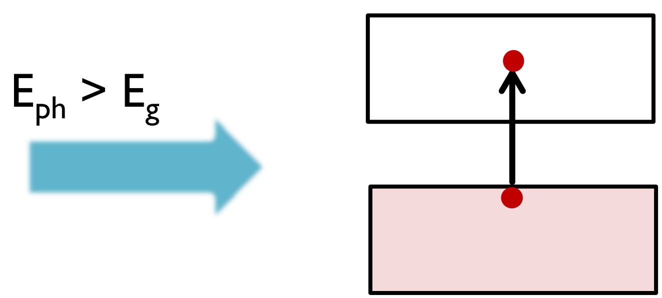

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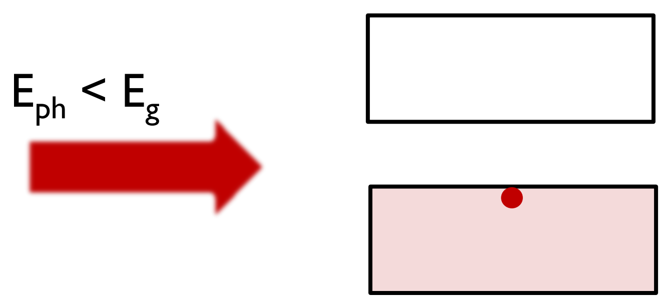

$$E = \frac{hc}{\lambda}$$

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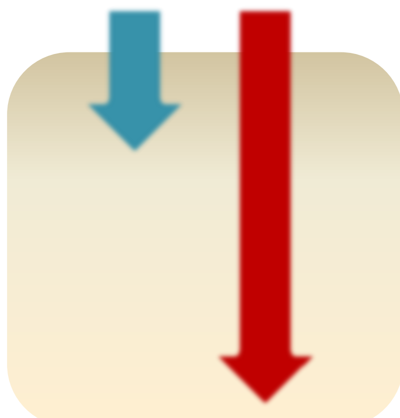
SEMICONDUCTOR BASICS

- **Absorption coefficient** [cm^{-1}]: the distance into the material at which the light drops to about 1/e of its original intensity

$$I = I_o \, e^{-\alpha x}$$



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α is the absorption coefficient typically in cm^{-1}
I_0 is the light intensity at the top surface.

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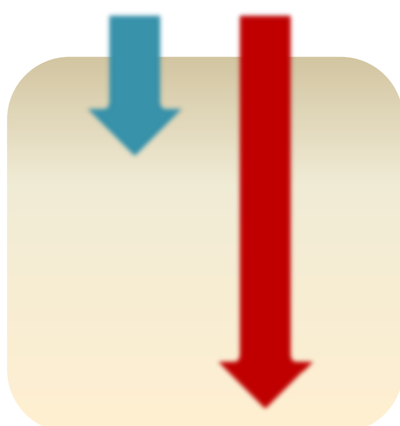

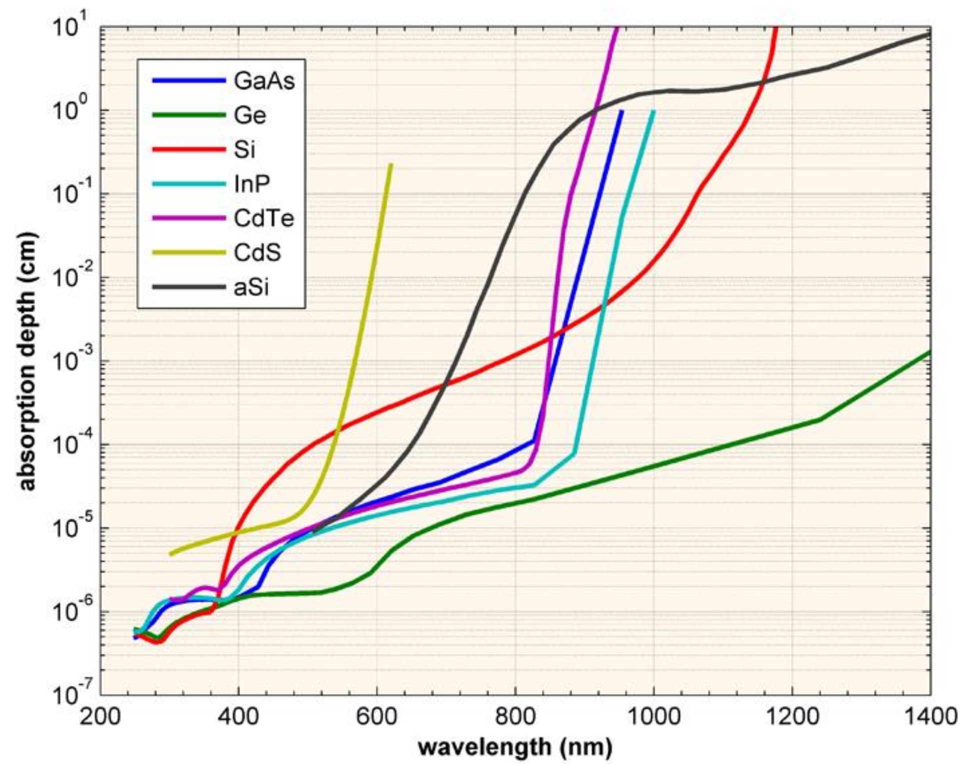

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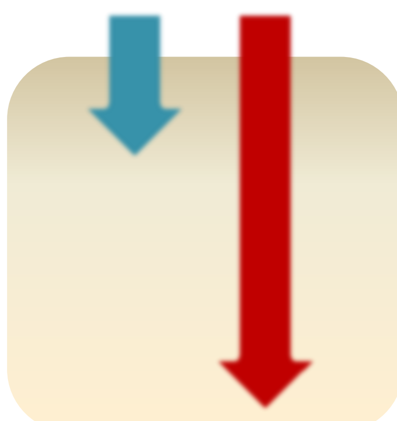
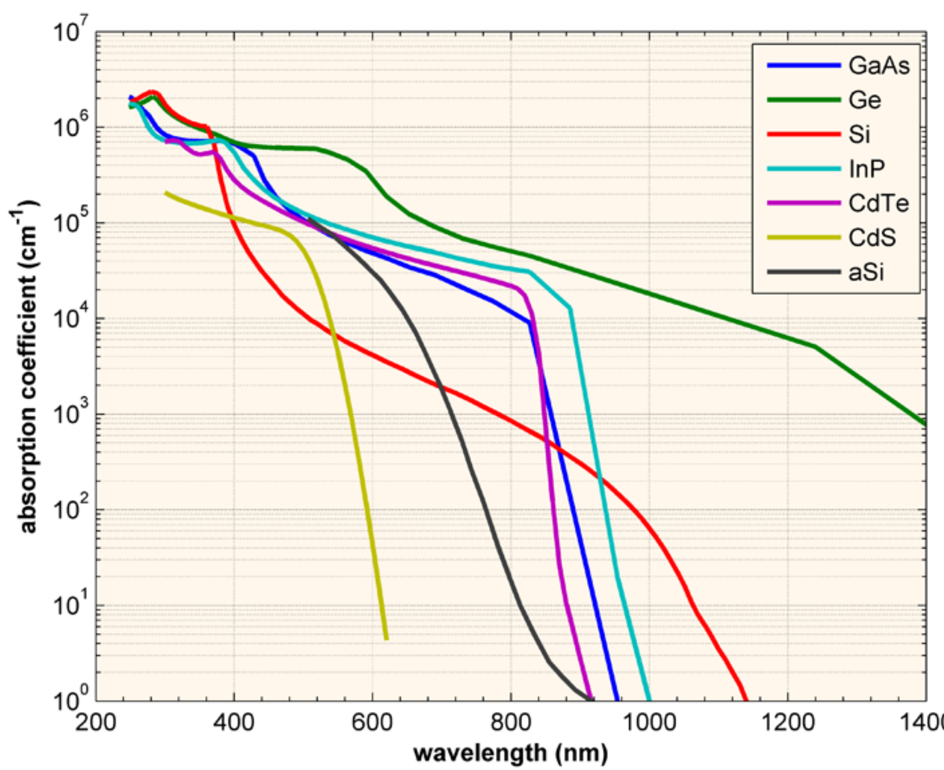




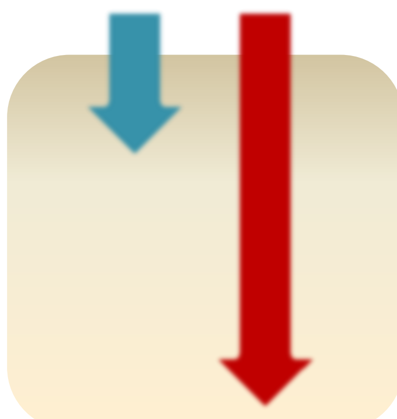
α is the absorption coefficient typically in cm^{-1}

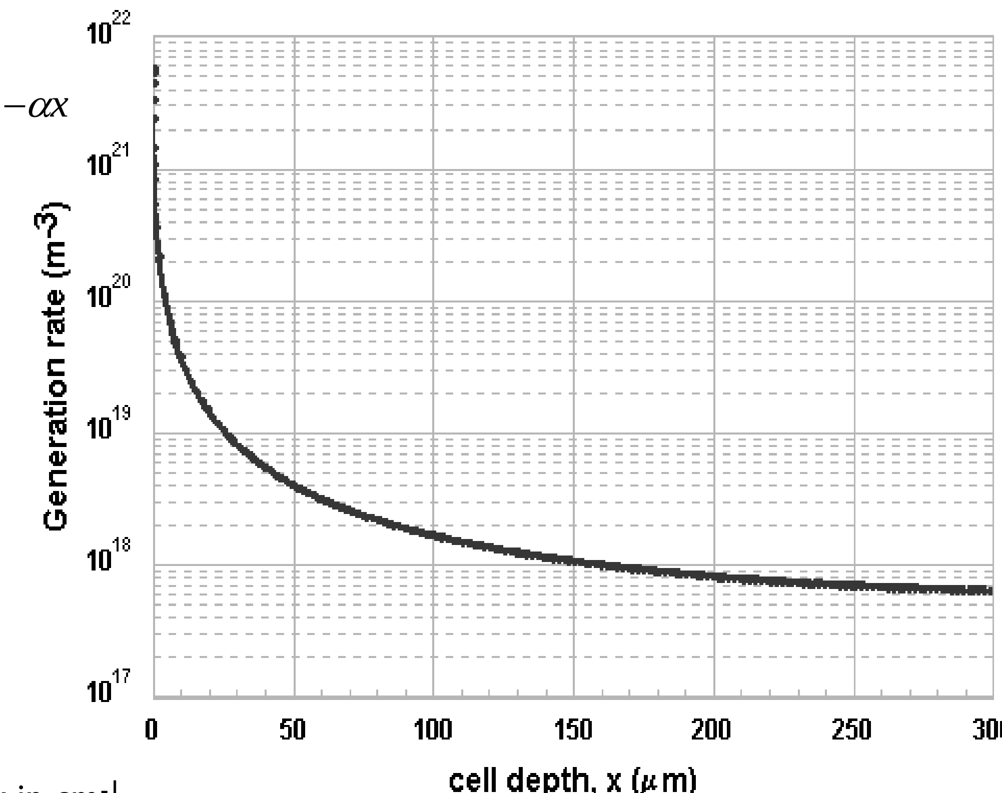
I_0 is the light intensity at the top surface.

PV FUNDAMENTALS

- The **generation rate** gives the number of electrons generated at each point in the device due to the absorption of photons.

$$G = \frac{dI}{dx} = \alpha N_o \, e^{-\alpha x}$$





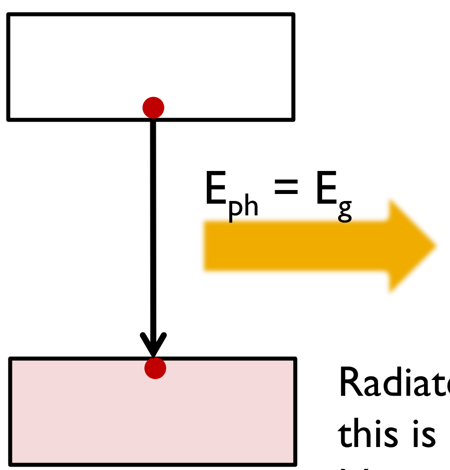
α is the absorption coefficient typically in cm^{-1}

N_0 = photon flux at the surface (photons/unit-area/sec)

PV FUNDAMENTALS

Recombination may occur through…

- Radiative recombination - an electron directly combines with a hole in the conduction band and releases a photon

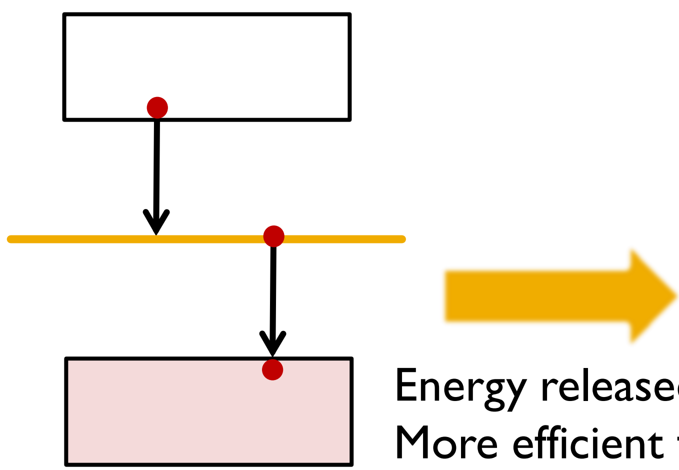


Radiated photon is weakly absorbed;
this is how LEDs work!!
Not very likely for indirect gap semiconductor like Si

SEMICONDUCTOR BASICS

Recombination may occur through…

- Shockley-Read-Hall recombination – 2-step process: an electron is trapped in a defect level

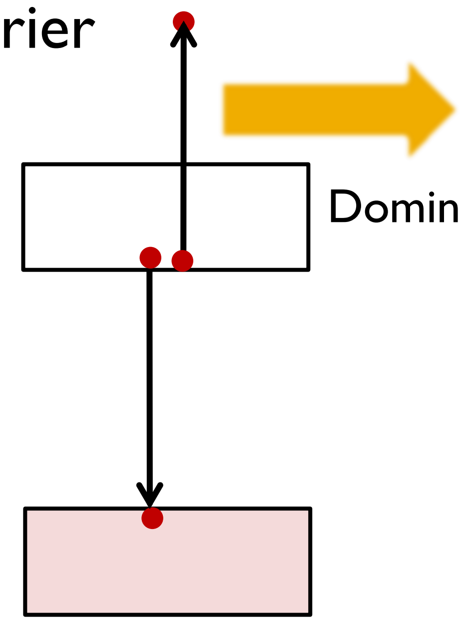


Energy released by photon and/or phonons
More efficient for mid-gap defect levels

SEMICONDUCTOR BASICS

Recombination may occur through…

- Auger recombination – similar to radiative recombination but energy release through a third carrier



Dominant for heavily doped semiconductors

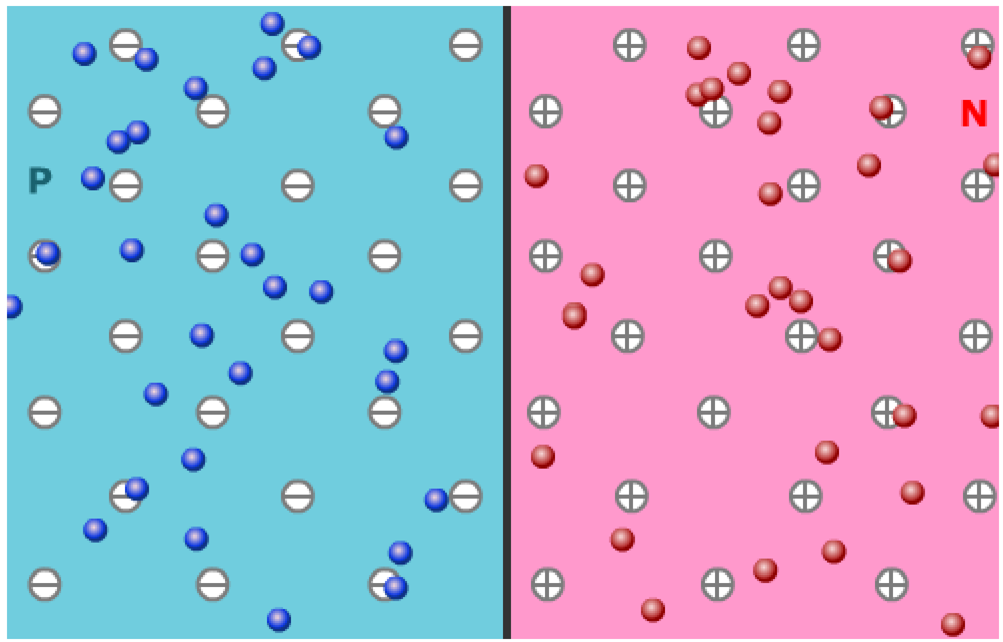
SEMICONDUCTOR BASICS

Recombination is characterized by…

- Recombination rate
- Minority carrier lifetime – how long a carrier is likely to stay around for before recombining
- Diffusion length – average distance a carrier can move from point of generation until it recombines

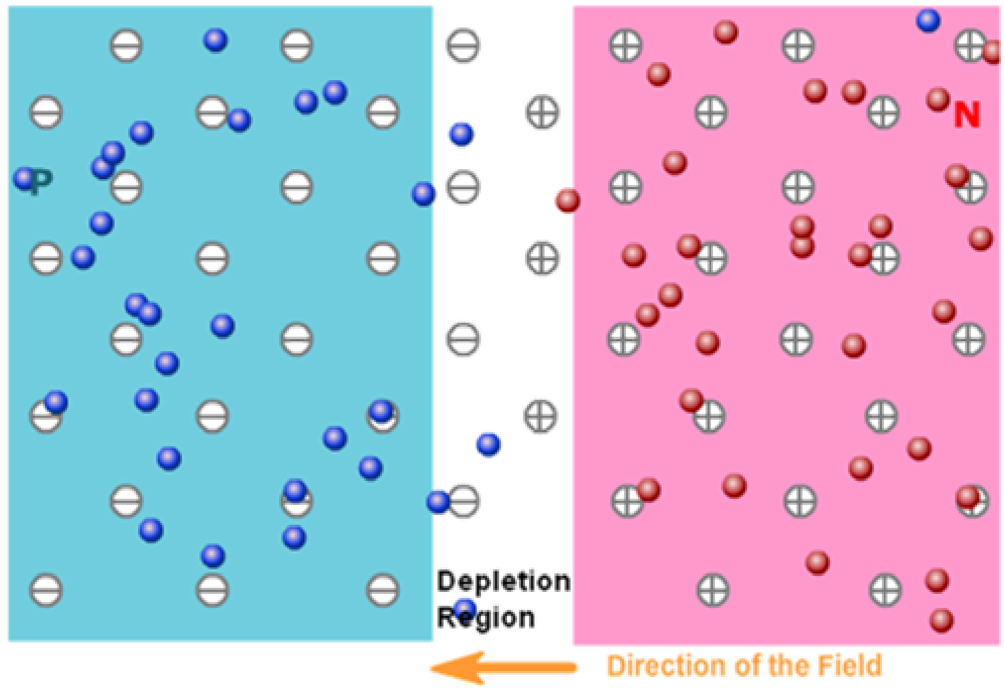
$$\tau = \frac{\Delta n}{R} \qquad L = \sqrt{D\tau}$$

PN JUNCTION



Imaginary Boundary

PN JUNCTION



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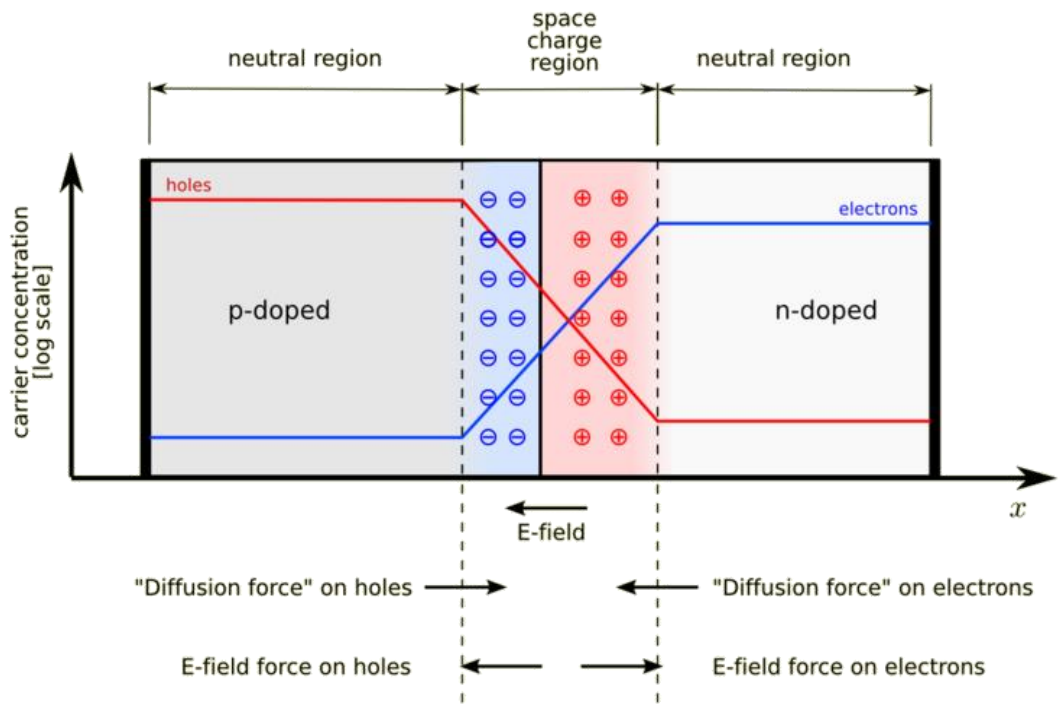
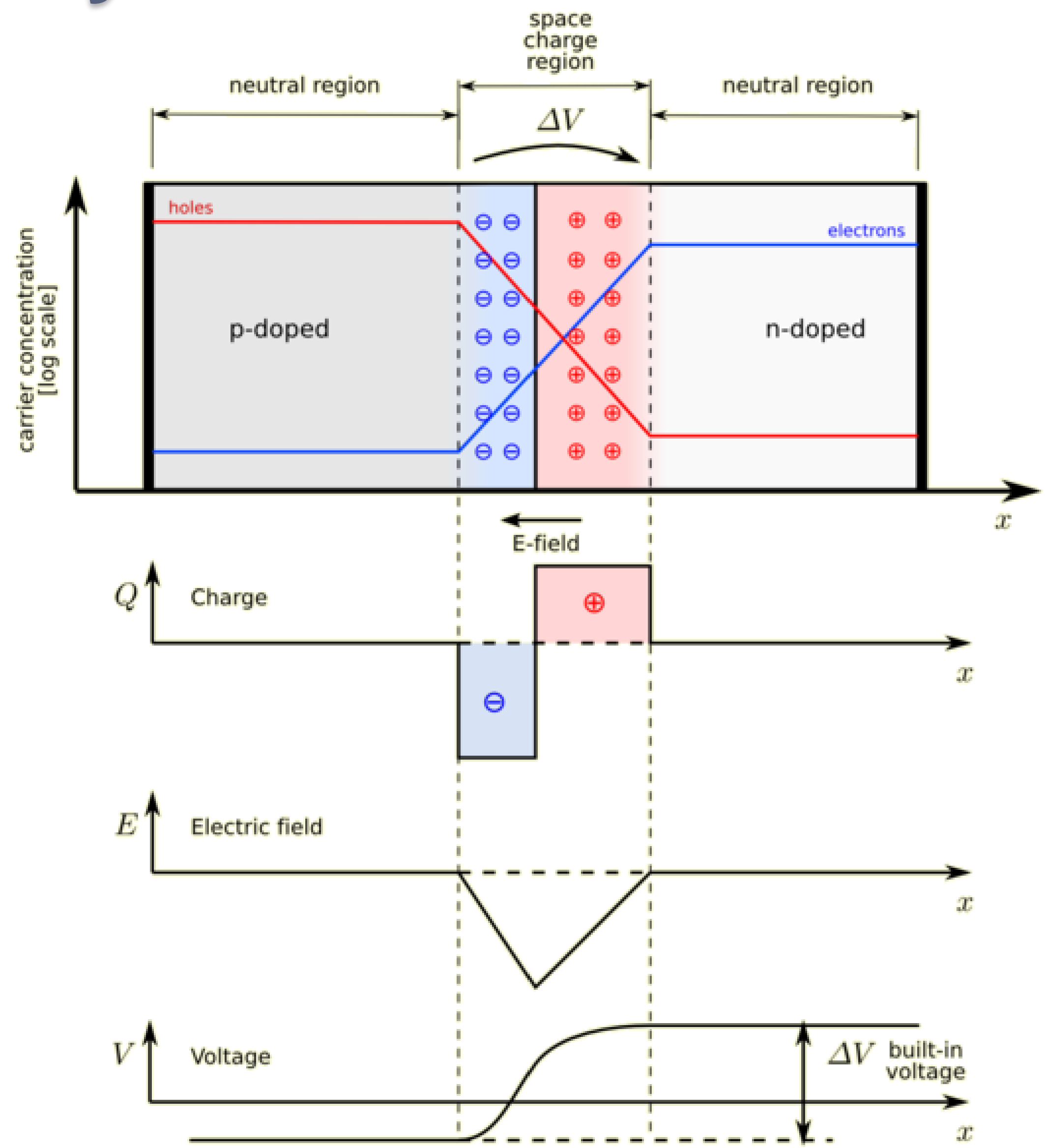


neutral region
space charge region
neutral region
holes
electrons
p-doped
n-doped
carrier concentration [log scale]
x
E-field
"Diffusion force" on holes
"Diffusion force" on electrons
E-field force on holes
E-field force on electrons

PN JUNCTION

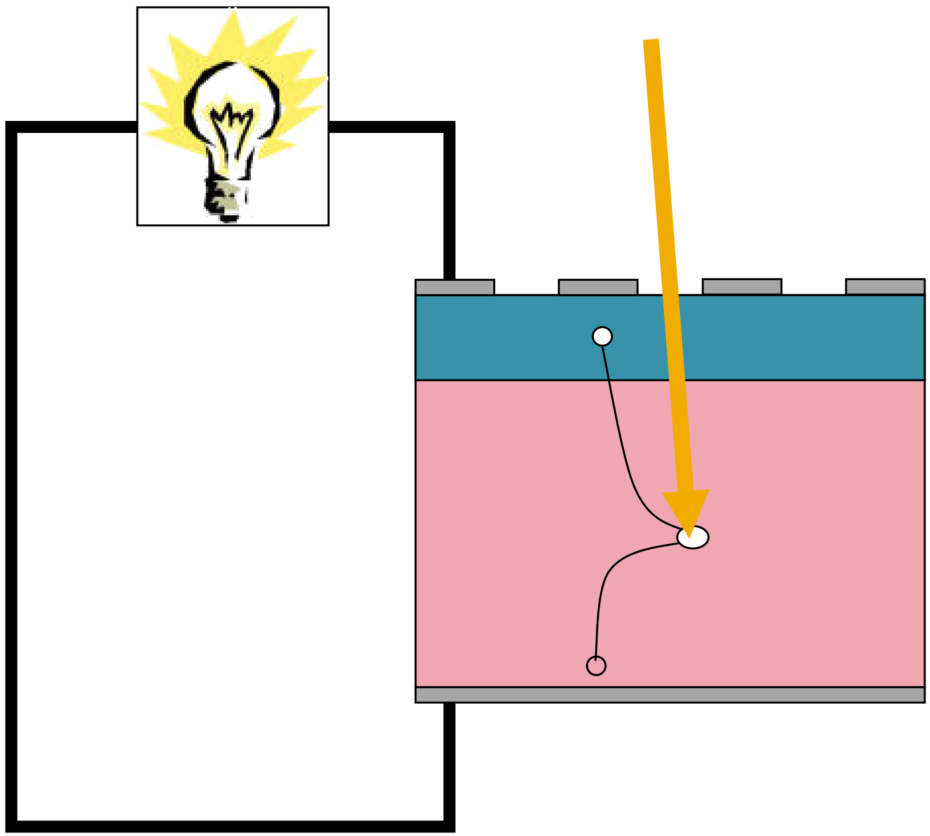

space charge region
neutral region
neutral region
ΔV
holes
electrons
p-doped
n-doped
carrier concentration [log scale]
x
E-field
Q
Charge
x
E
Electric field
x
V
Voltage
ΔV
built-in voltage
x

SOLAR CELL OPERATION

Basic steps:

- the generation of light-generated carriers;
- the collection of the light-generated carries to generate a current;
- the generation of a voltage across the solar cell; and
- the dissipation of power in the load and in parasitic resistances.

SOLAR CELL OPERATION



SOLAR CELL OPERATION

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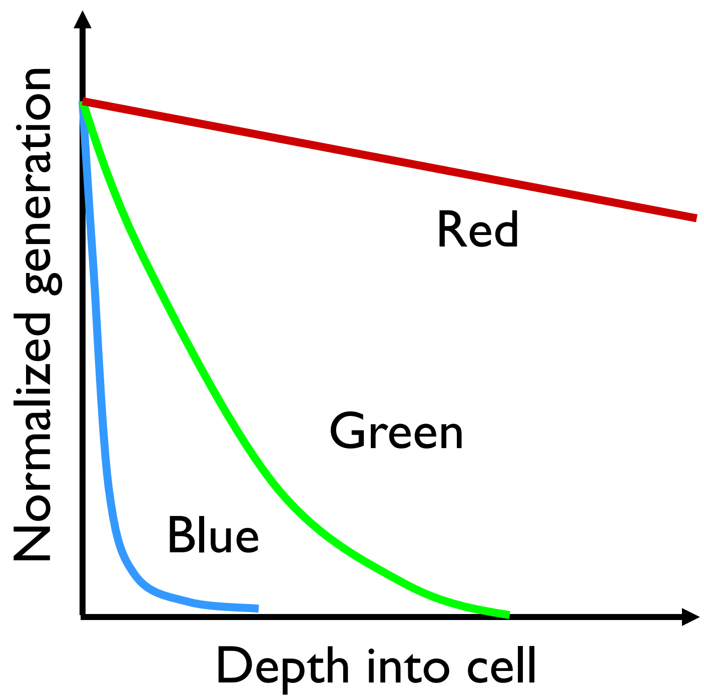

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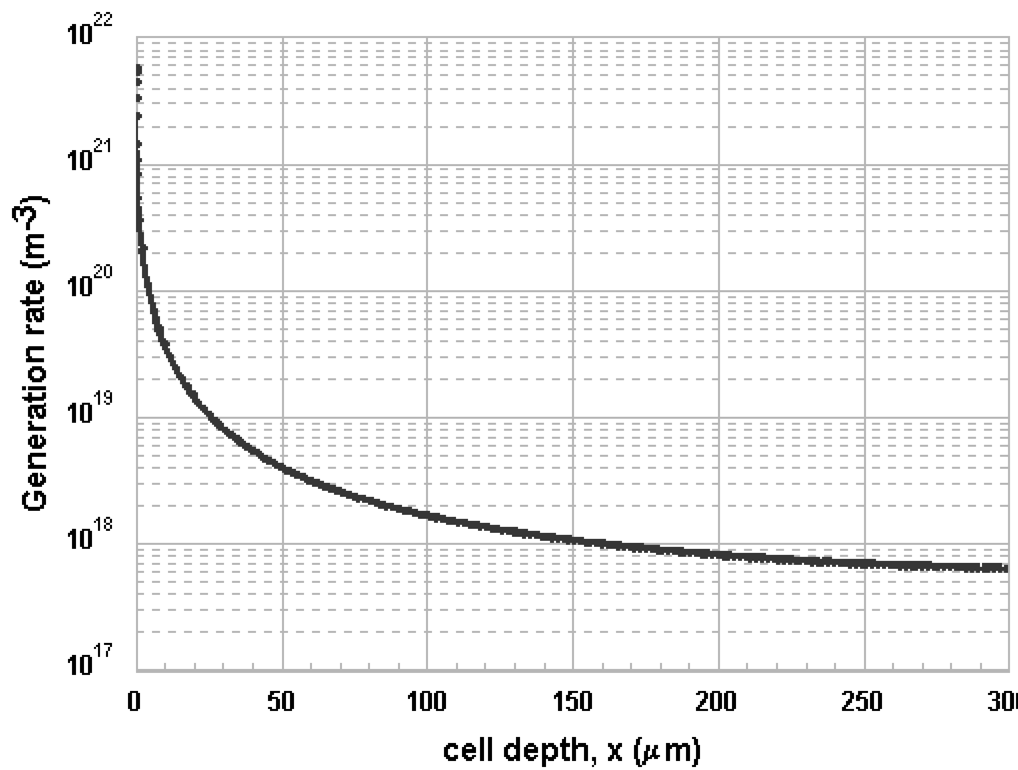

SOLAR CELL OPERATION

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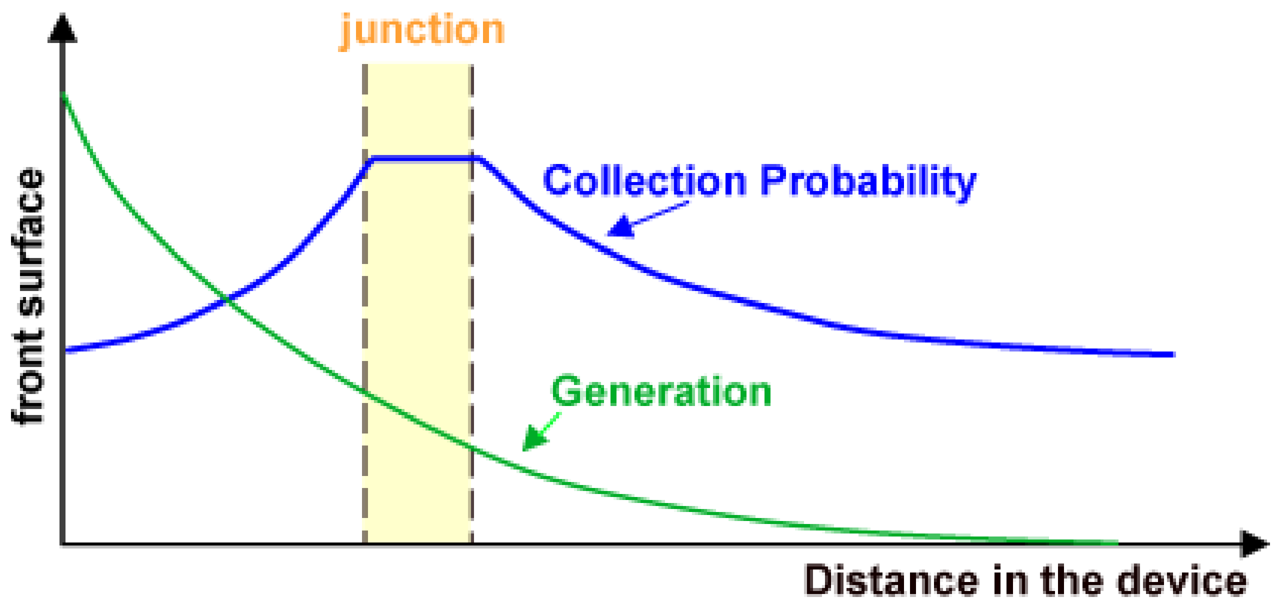

SOLAR CELL OPERATION

Basic steps:

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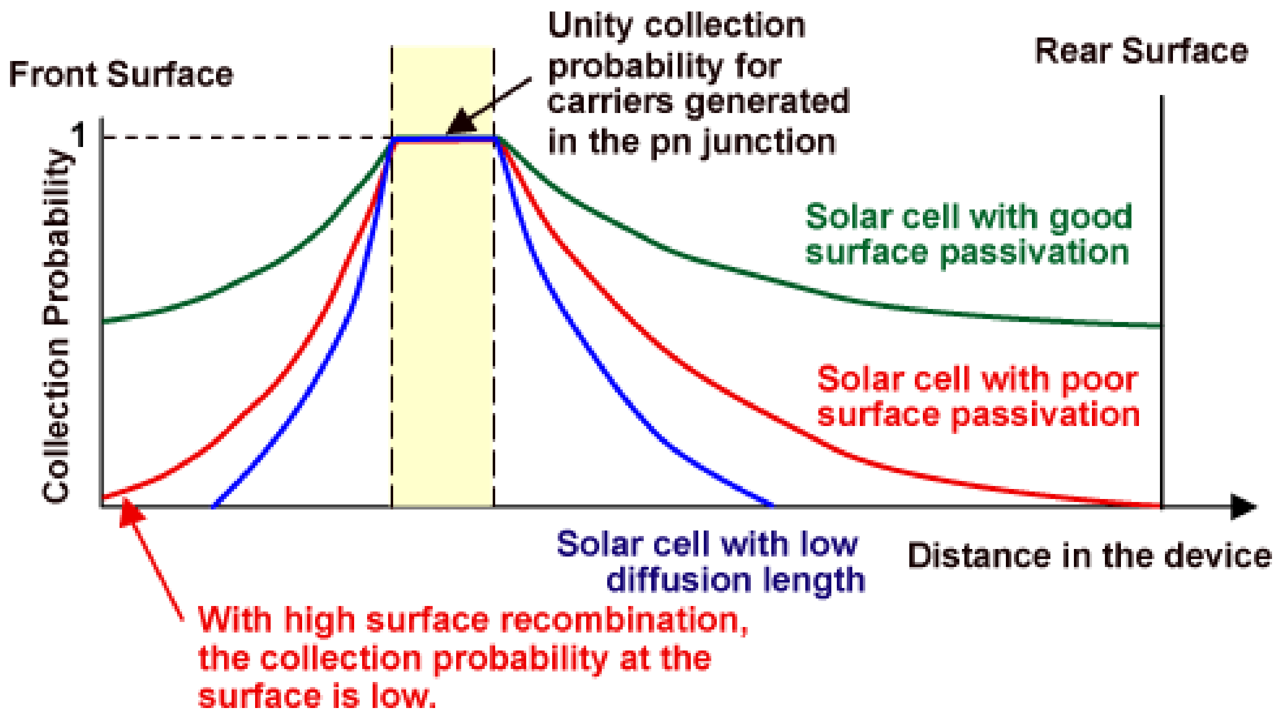


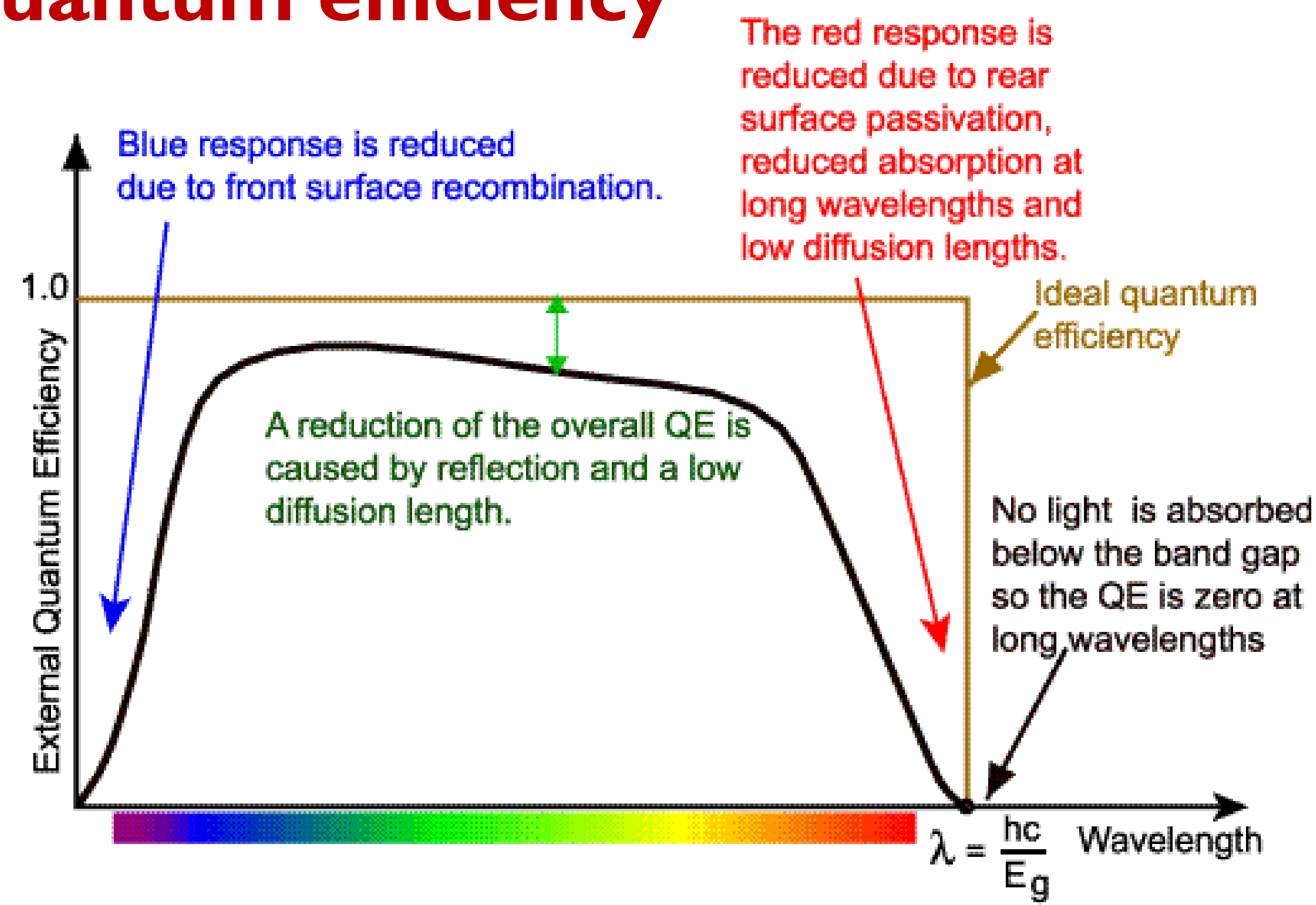
Solar cell operation

Quantum efficiency

Ratio of the number of carriers collected to the number of photons of a given energy incident

Solar cell operation

Quantum efficiency

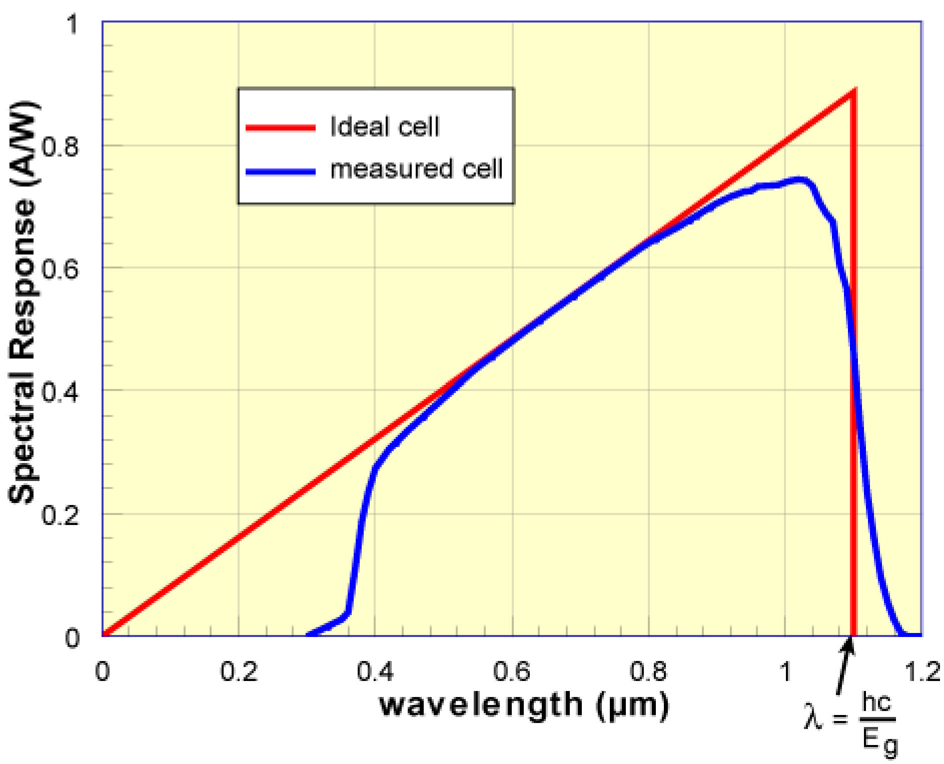


External quantum efficiency includes the effect of optical losses, e.g. reflection on the surface, ...

SOLAR CELL OPERATION

Spectral response

Ratio of the **current** generated by the solar cell to the **power** incident on the solar cell



Spectral Response (SR) is measured

Quantum Efficiency (QE) is calculated from SR:

$$SR = \frac{q\lambda}{hc} QE$$

SOLAR CELL OPERATION

Solar cell parameters

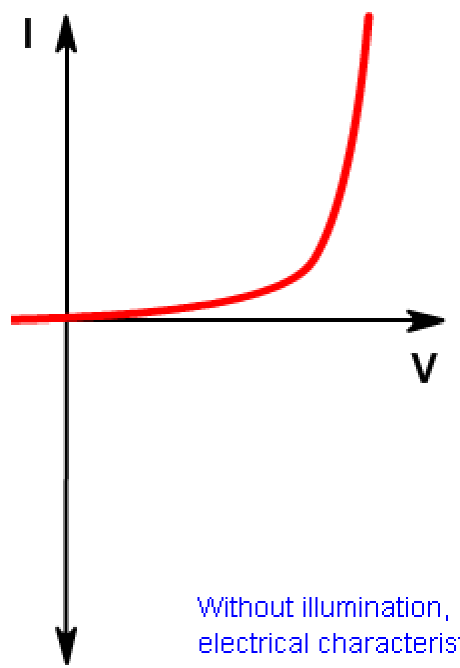
IV characteristic

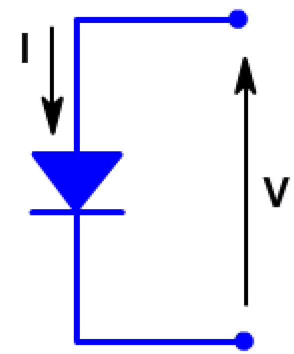
= diode + light generated current

SOLAR CELL OPERATION

Solar cell parameters

IV characteristic



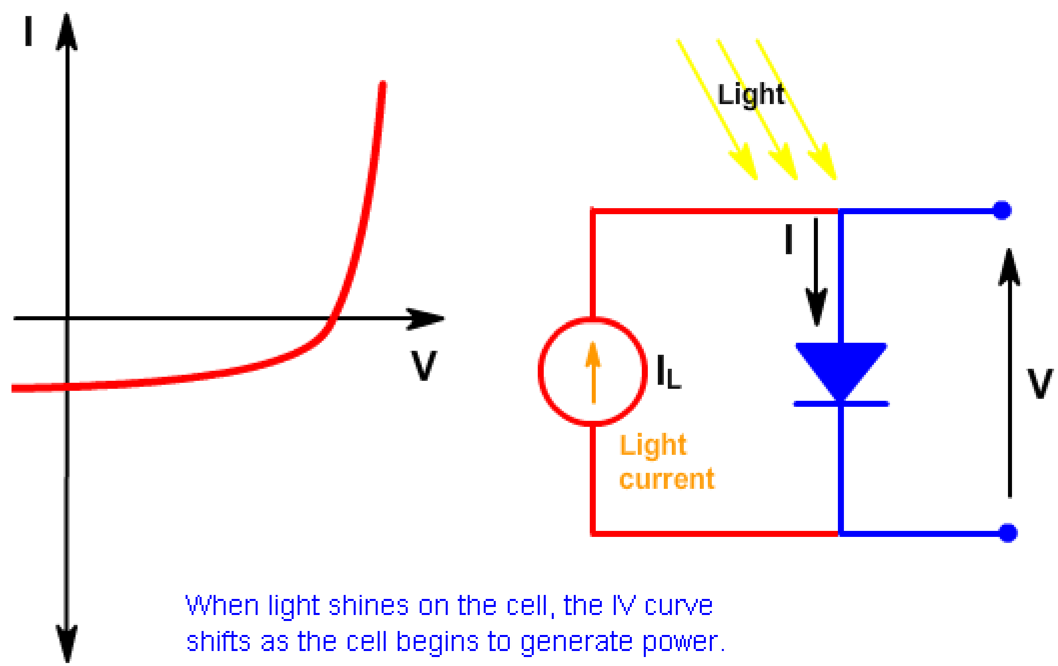


Without illumination, a solar cell has the same electrical characteristics as a large diode.

SOLAR CELL OPERATION

Solar cell parameters

IV characteristic

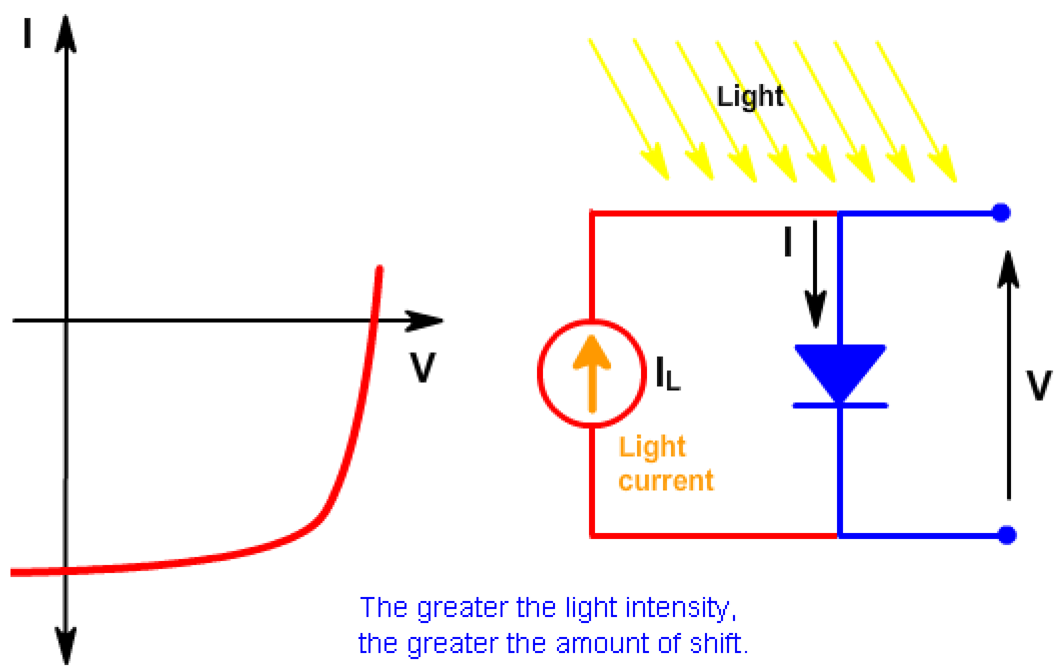


When light shines on the cell, the IV curve shifts as the cell begins to generate power.

SOLAR CELL OPERATION

Solar cell parameters

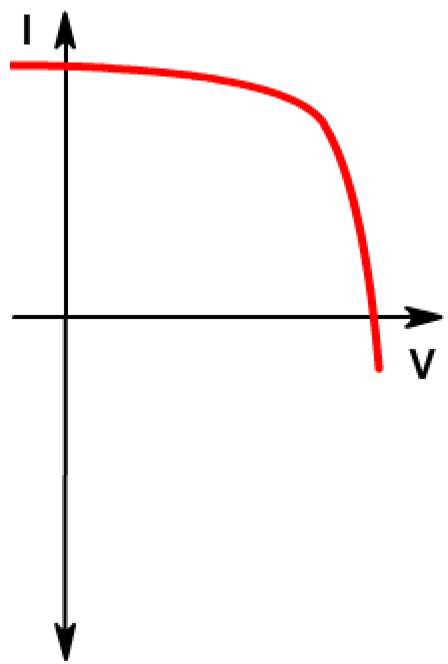
IV characteristic

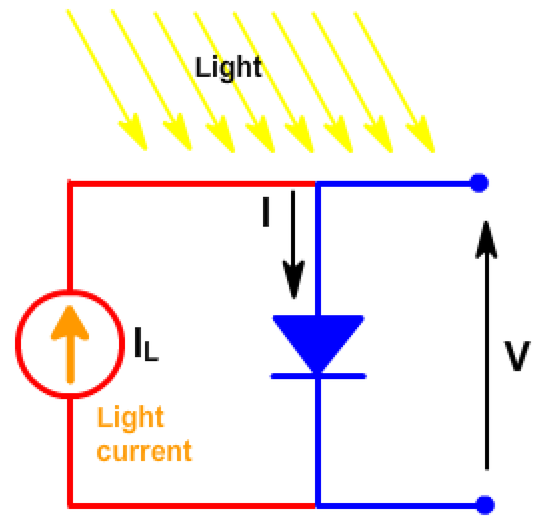


SOLAR CELL OPERATION

Solar cell parameters

IV characteristic



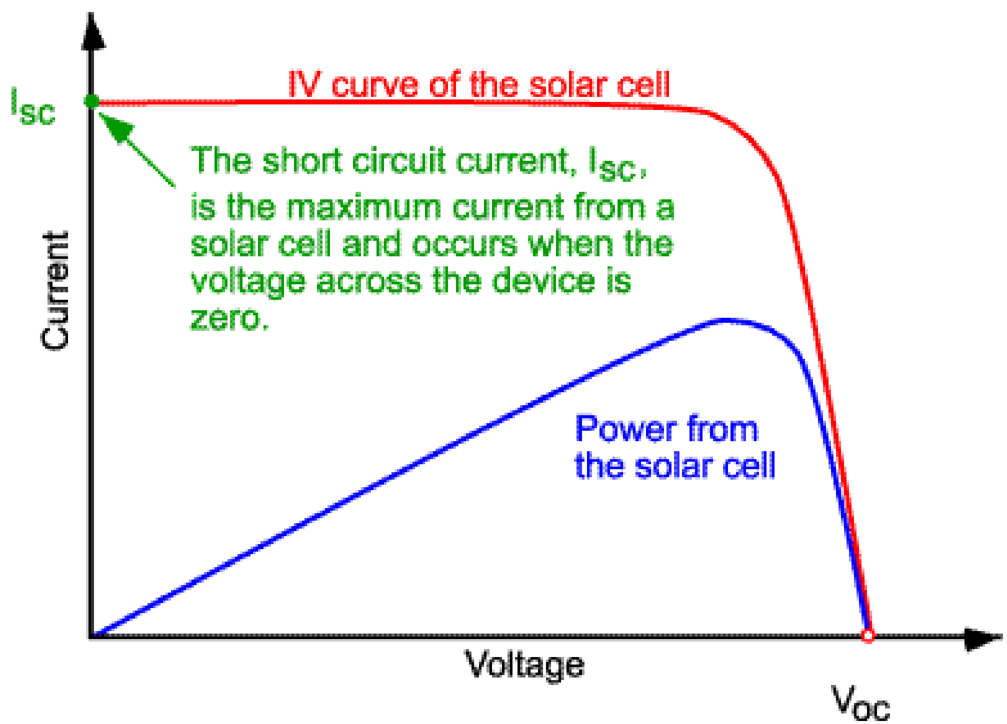


$$I = I_L - I_0 \left[\exp\left(\frac{qV}{nkT} \right) - 1 \right]$$

SOLAR CELL OPERATION

Solar cell parameters

IV characteristic: Short Circuit Current (I_{sc})



SOLAR CELL OPERATION

Solar cell parameters

IV characteristic: Short Circuit Current (I_{sc})

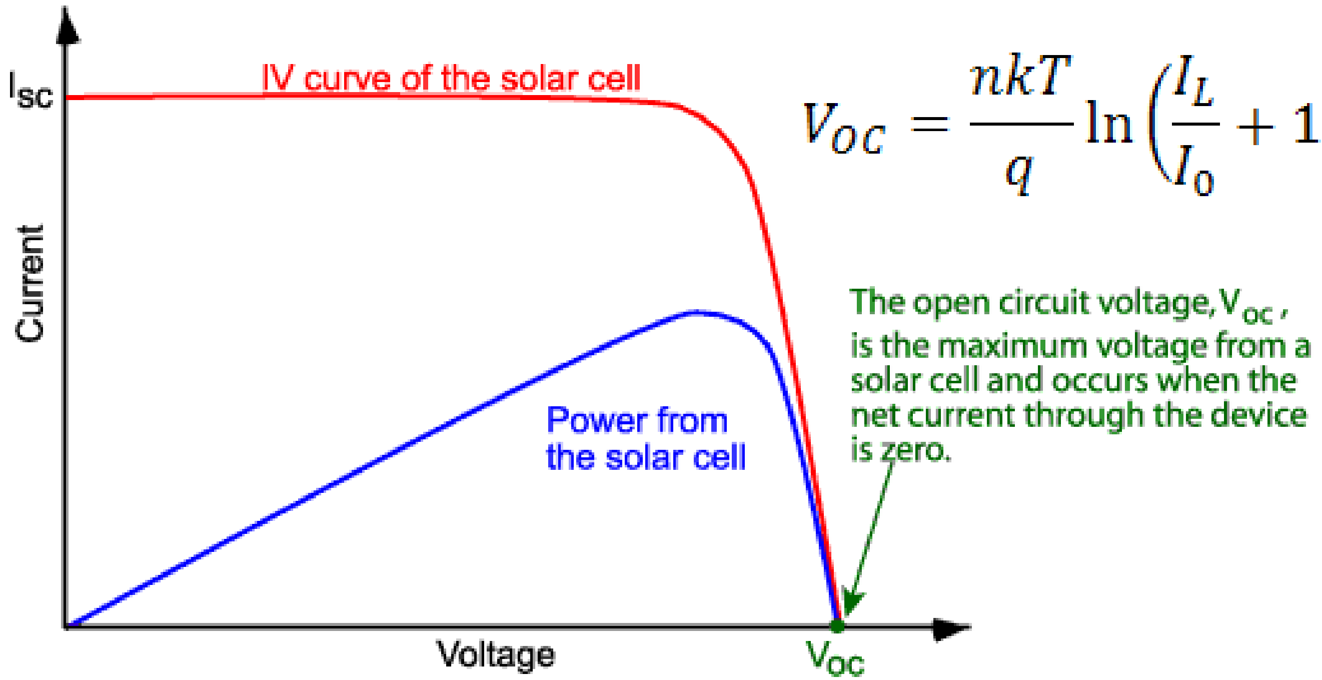
- Area of the solar cell (common to use J_{sc} in mA/cm^2)
- Incident flux (i.e. number of photons)
- Spectrum incident light
- Optical properties of the solar cell
- Collection probability, e.g. diffusion length

$$J_{SC} = qG\left(L_n + L_p\right)$$

SOLAR CELL OPERATION

Solar cell parameters

IV characteristic: Open circuit voltage (V_{oc})



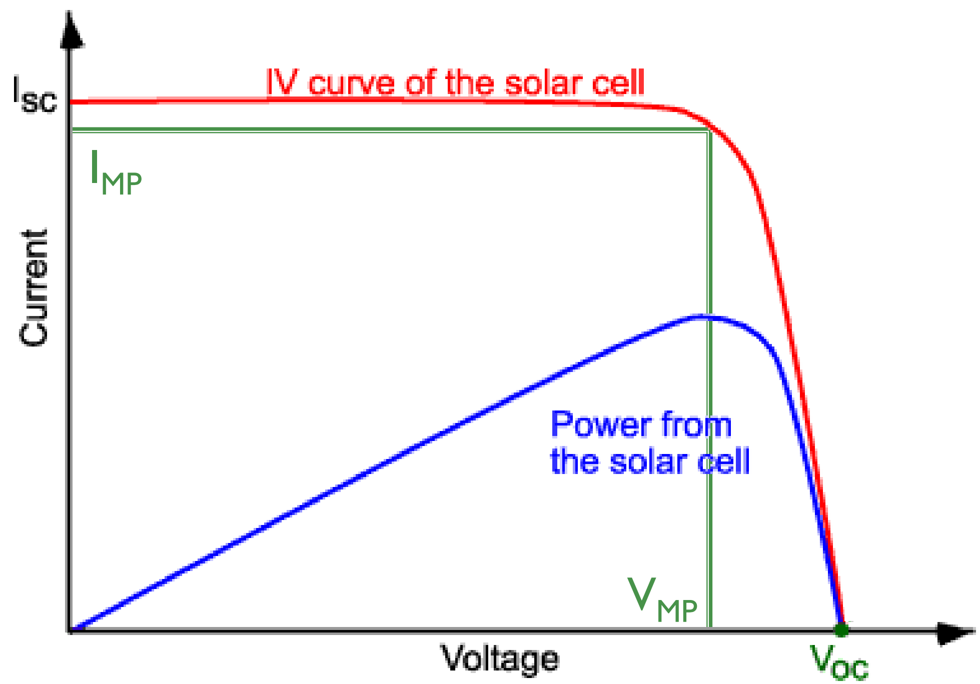
$$V_{OC} = \frac{nkT}{q} \ln\left(\frac{I_L}{I_0} + 1\right)$$

V_{oc} depends strongly on the recombination

SOLAR CELL OPERATION

Solar cell parameters

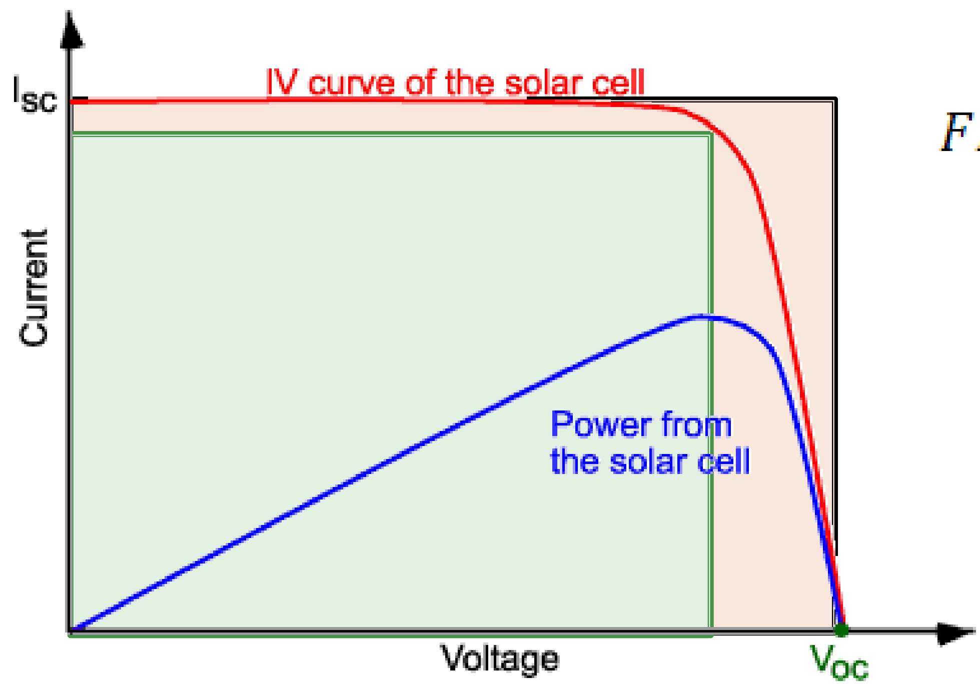
IV characteristic: Maximum power



SOLAR CELL OPERATION

Solar cell parameters

IV characteristic: Fill factor (FF)



$$FF = \frac{V_{MP} I_{MP}}{V_{OC} I_{SC}}$$

SOLAR CELL OPERATION

Solar cell parameters

Efficiency (η) is the fraction of incident power which is converted to electricity

$$P_{max} = V_{OC} I_{SC} FF$$

$$\eta = \frac{V_{OC} I_{SC} FF}{P_{in}}$$

SOLAR CELL OPERATION

Solar cell parameters

Resistive effects

- Characteristic resistance
- Parasitic resistance

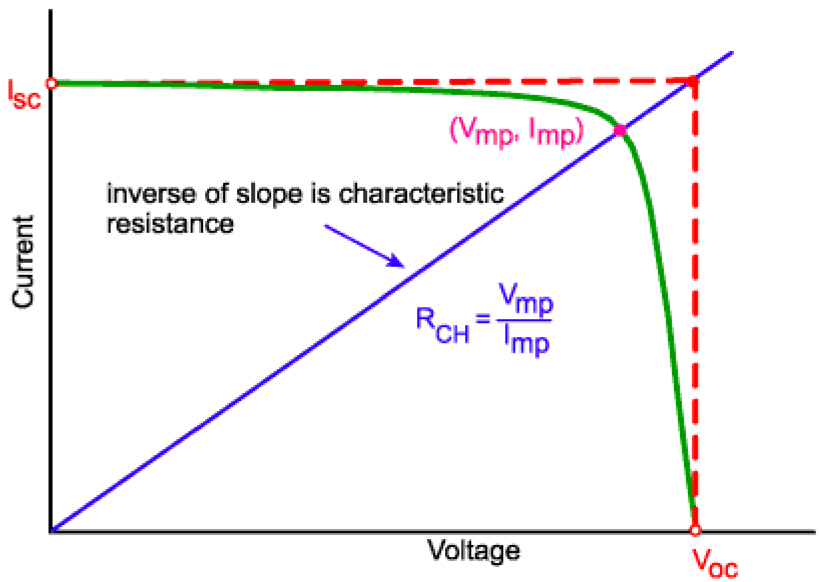
SOLAR CELL OPERATION

Solar cell parameters

Resistive effects

- Characteristic resistance

Maximum power transfer is $R_{LOAD} = R_{CH}$



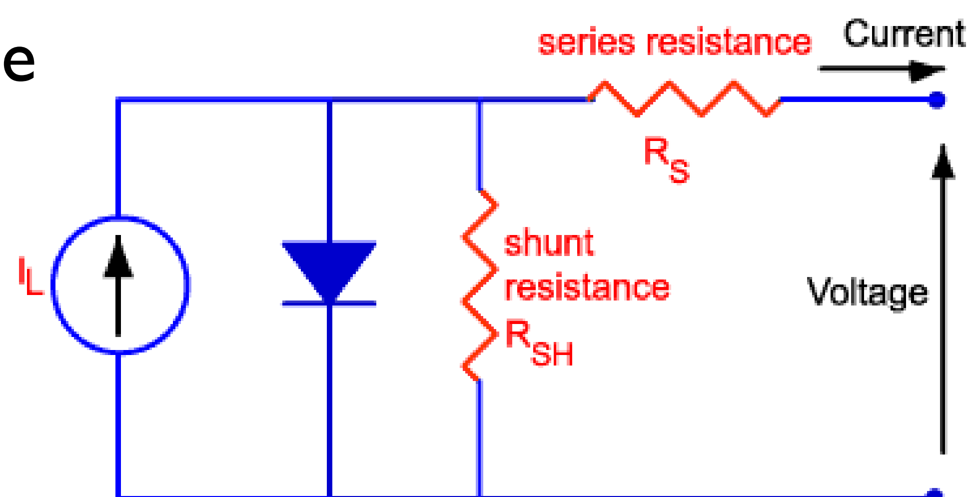
$$R_{CH} = \frac{V_{MP}}{I_{MP}} = \frac{V_{OC}}{I_{SC}}$$

SOLAR CELL OPERATION

Solar cell parameters

Resistive effects

- Characteristic resistance
- Parasitic resistance
  - Series resistance
  - Shunt resistance



SOLAR CELL OPERATION

Solar cell parameters

Resistive effects

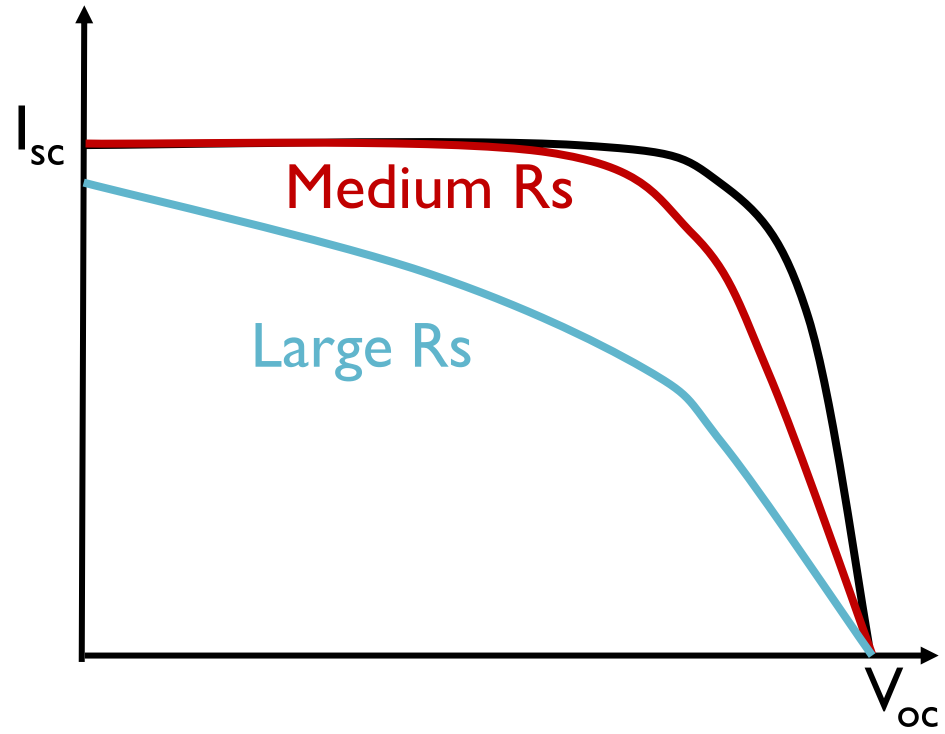
- Characteristic resistance
- Parasitic resistance
  - Series resistance
  - Shunt resistance

$$I = I_L - I_0 \exp\left[\frac{q(V - IR_S)}{nkT}\right] - \frac{V + IR_S}{R_{SH}}$$

SOLAR CELL OPERATION

Effect of the series resistance

$$FF' = FF(1 - r_S) \qquad \text{with} \quad r_S = \frac{R_S}{R_{CH}}$$

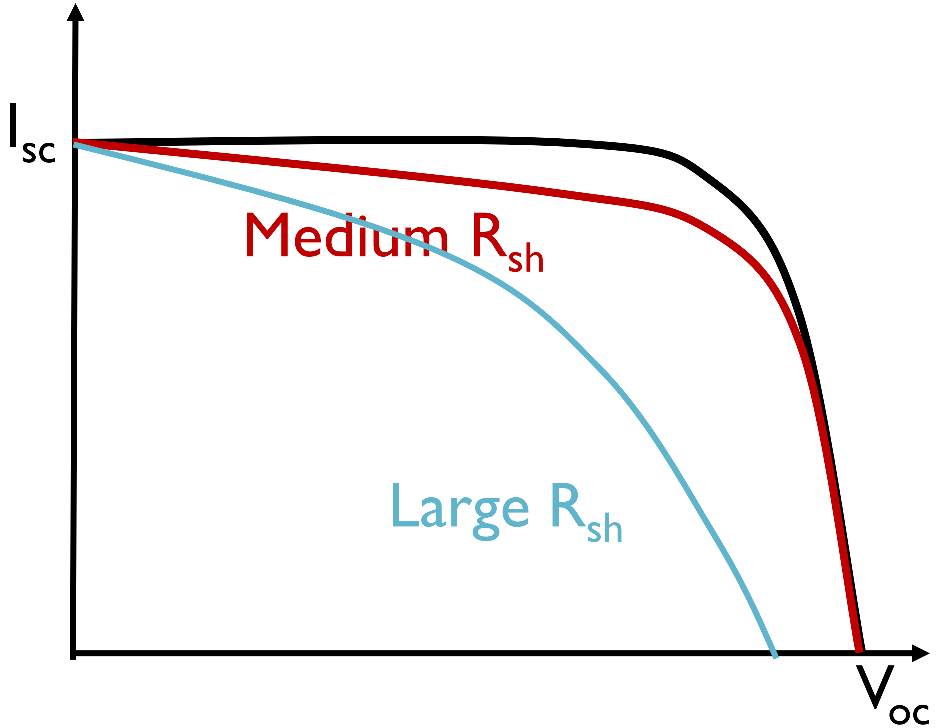


Slope of the I-V curve near V_{oc} gives indication about R_s

SOLAR CELL OPERATION

Effect of the shunt resistance

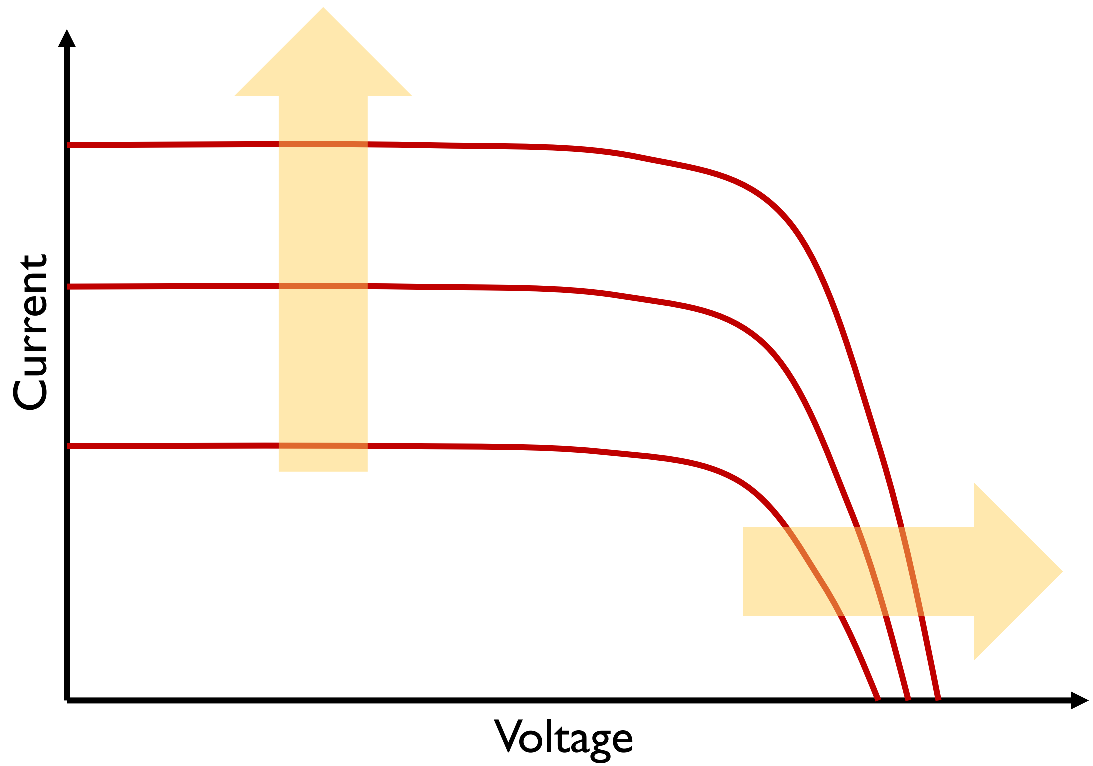
$$FF_{SH} = FF_0\left(1 - \frac{1}{r_{SH}}\right) \quad \text{with} \quad r_{SH} = \frac{R_{SH}}{R_{CH}}$$



Slope of the I-V curve near Isc gives indication about Rsh

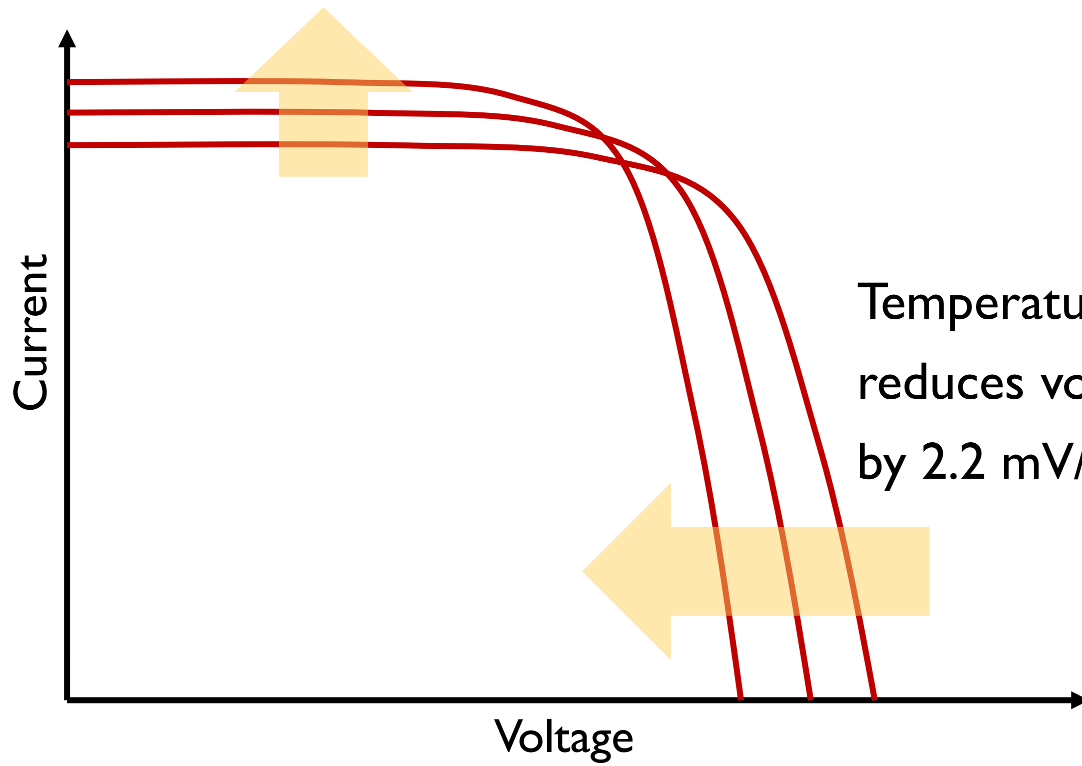
SOLAR CELL OPERATION

Effect of irradiation



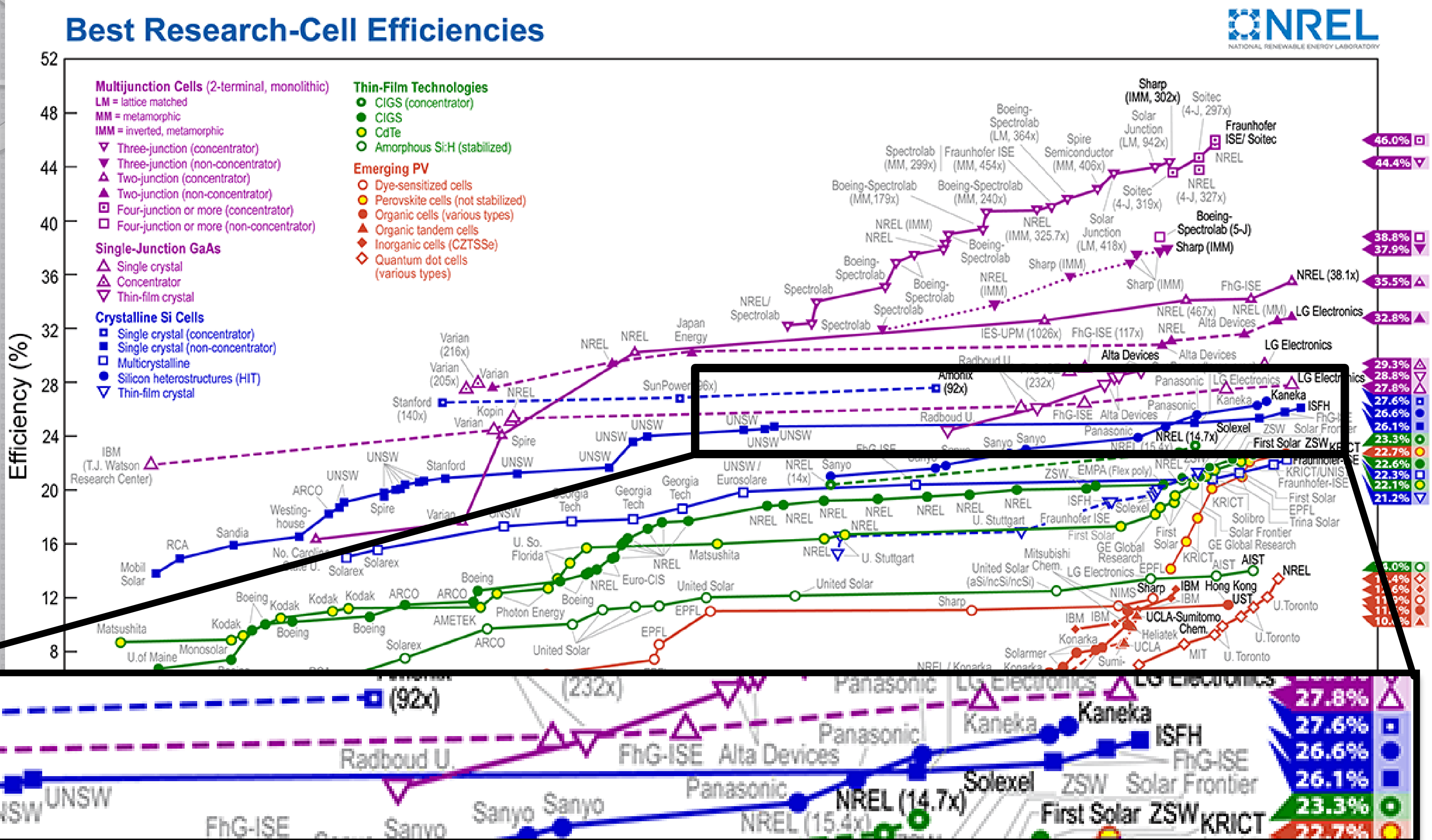
SOLAR CELL OPERATION

Effect of temperature



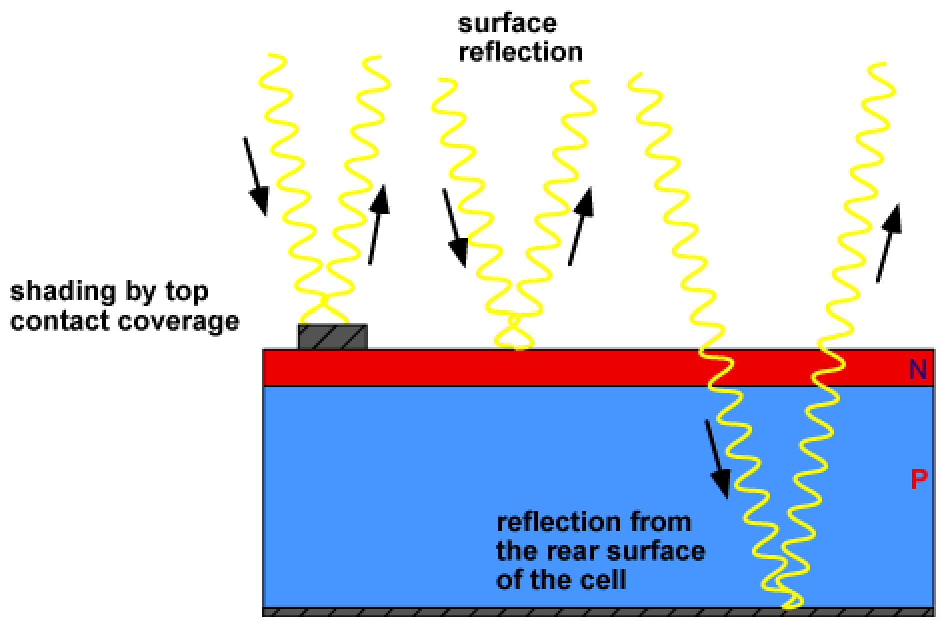
Temperature increase reduces voltage by 2.2 mV/°C

DESIGN OF Si SOLAR CELL



DESIGN OF Si SOLAR CELL

Optical losses - light which could have generated an electron-hole pair, but does not, because the light is reflected from the front surface, or because it is not absorbed in the solar cell.



DESIGN OF Si SOLAR CELL

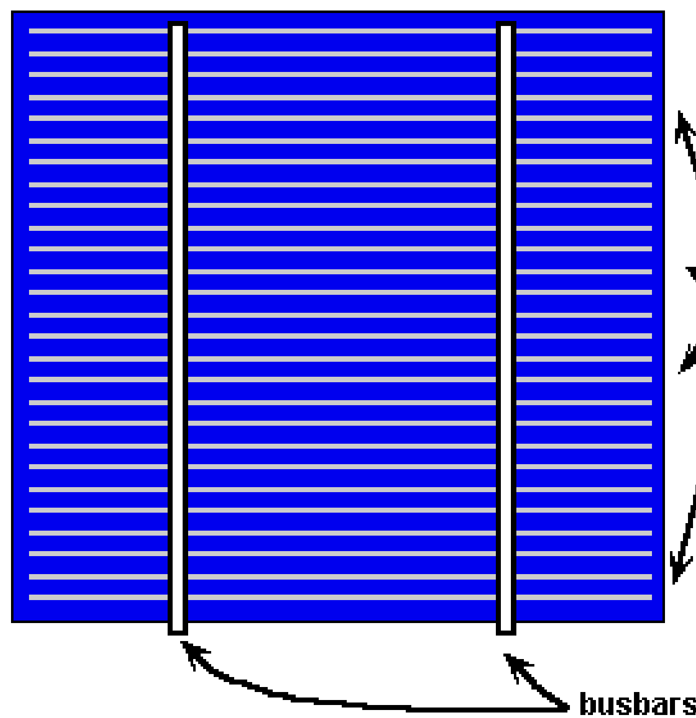
Optical losses - light which could have generated an electron-hole pair, but does not, because the light is reflected from the front surface, or because it is not absorbed in the solar cell.

- Top contact shading
- Top surface reflection
- Not enought optical path for photon absorption

DESIGN OF Si SOLAR CELL

Optical losses

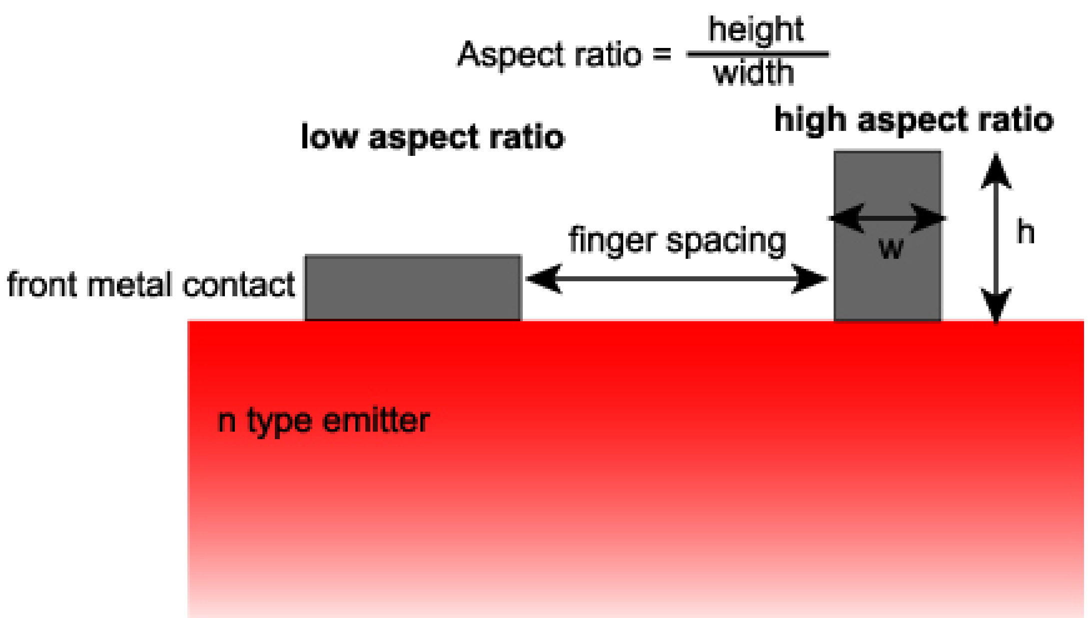
Reduce **shading** from top contacts



DESIGN OF Si SOLAR CELL

Optical losses

Reduce **shading** from top contacts

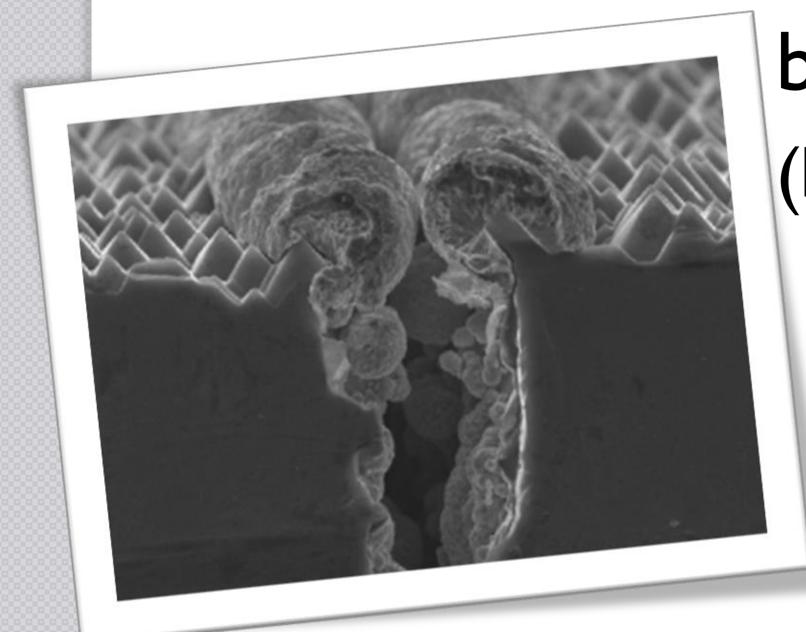


DESIGN OF Si SOLAR CELL

Optical losses

Reduce **shading** from top contacts

- May increase series resistance
- Other emitter contact concepts becoming fashionable (burried or back contacts)



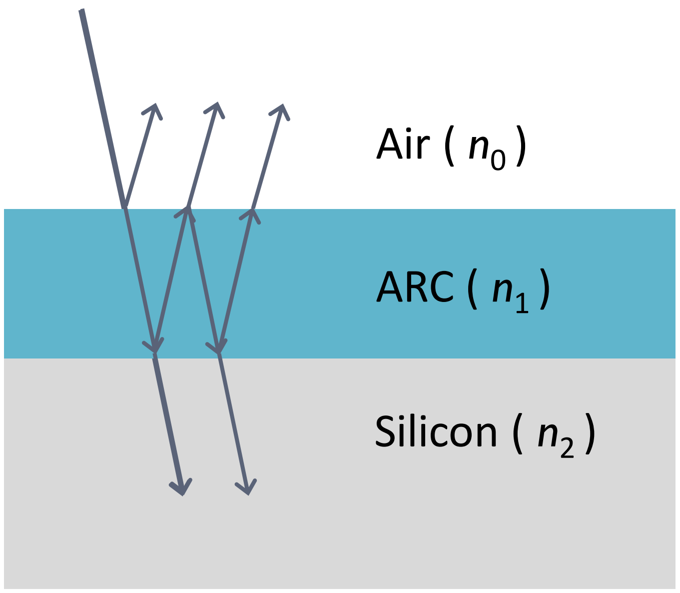
DESIGN OF Si SOLAR CELL

Optical losses

Anti-reflective coating

$$n_1\, d = \frac{\lambda}{4}$$

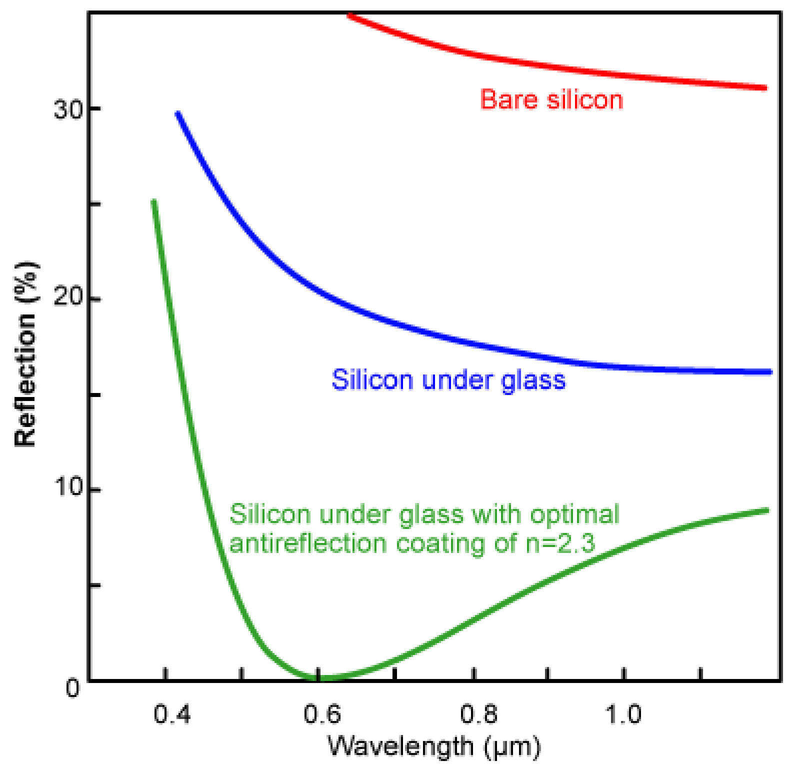
$$R = \left(\frac{n_1^2 - n_0\, n_2}{n_1^2 + n_0\, n_2} \right)^2$$



DESIGN OF Si SOLAR CELL

Optical losses

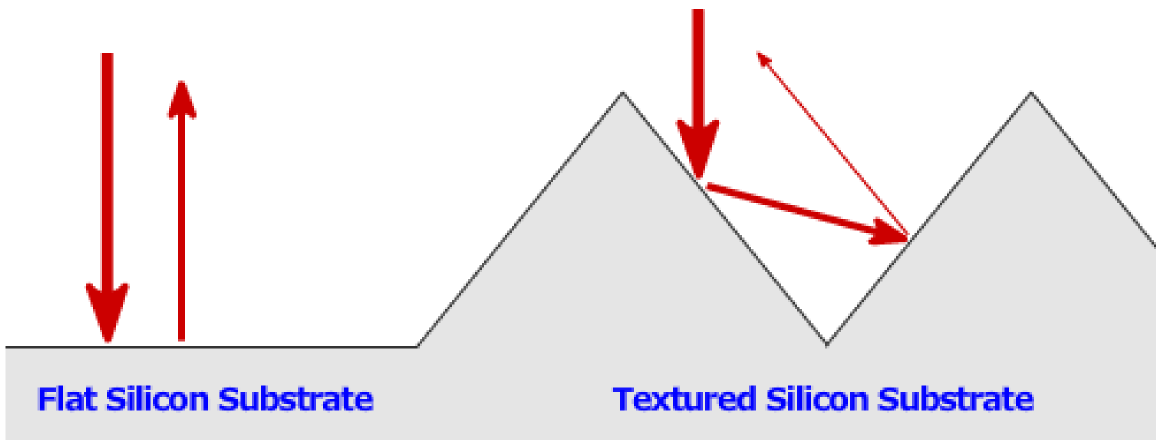
Anti-reflective coating



DESIGN OF Si SOLAR CELL

Optical losses

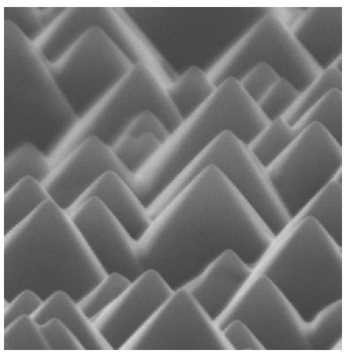
Surface **texturing**



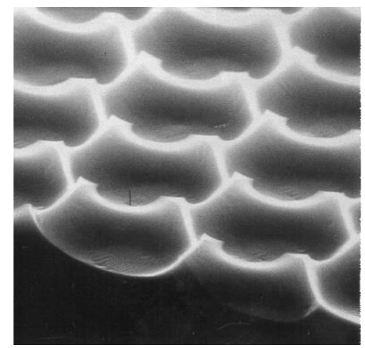
DESIGN OF Si SOLAR CELL

Optical losses

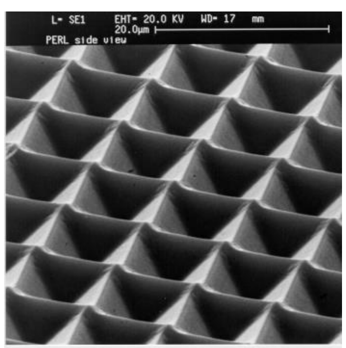
Surface **texturing**



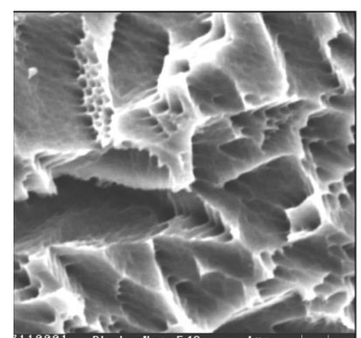
Single crystal:
Random pyramids, by etching



Multi crystal:
texturing by photolithography



Single crystal:
Inverted pyramids, by etching

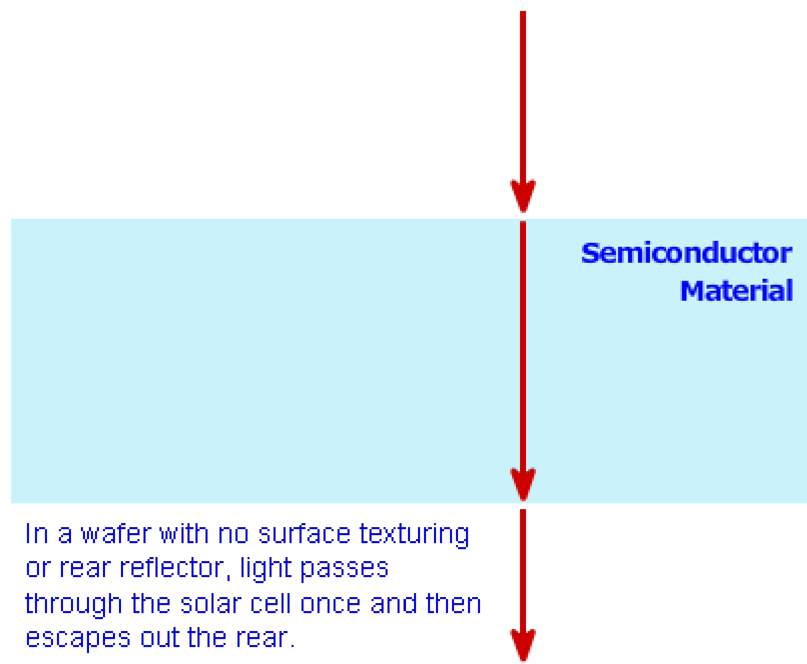


Multi crystal:
texturing by macroporous silicon

DESIGN OF Si SOLAR CELL

Optical losses

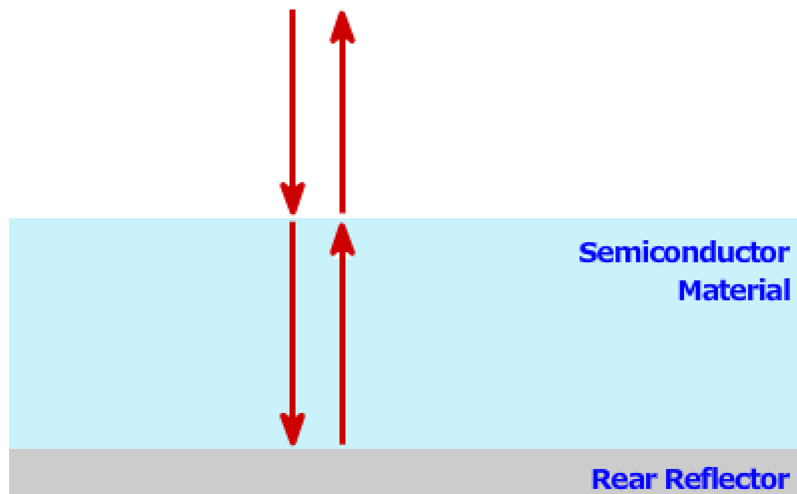
Light **trapping**: increase optical length



DESIGN OF Si SOLAR CELL

Optical losses

Light **trapping**: increase optical length

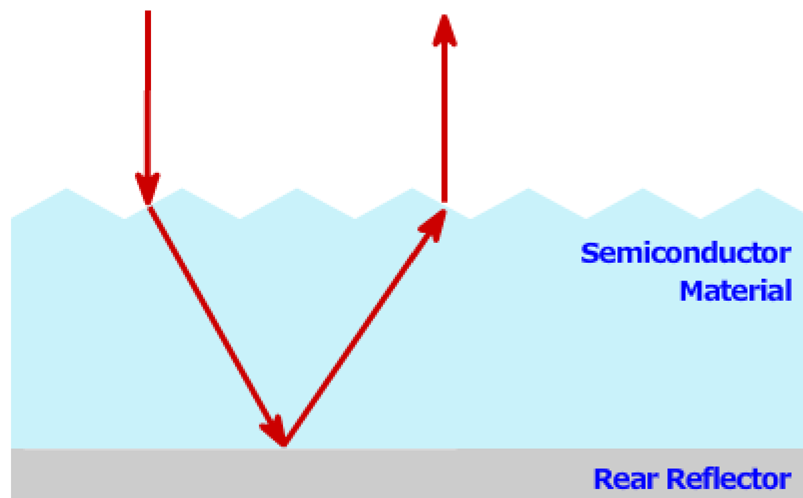


When a rear reflectors is added, the optical path length is twice the physical device thickness.

DESIGN OF Si SOLAR CELL

Optical losses

Light **trapping**: increase optical length



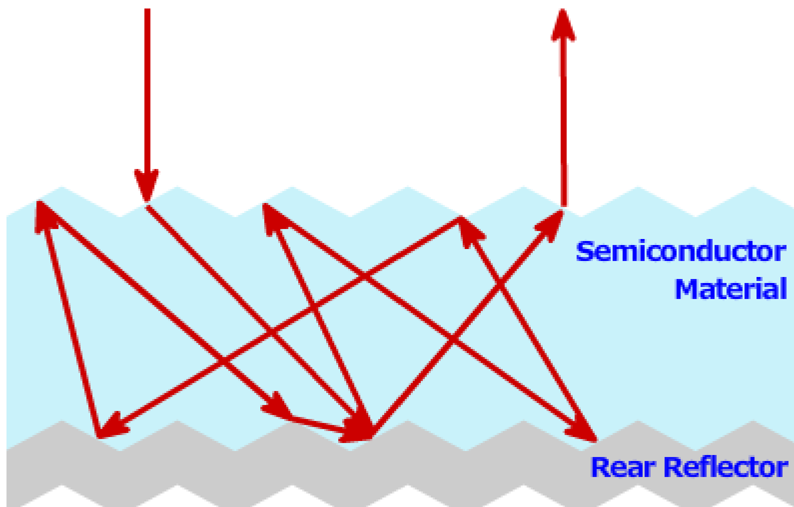
Surface texturing increases the path length but light escapes after two passes through the solar cell.

Snell's law of refraction: $n_1 \sin \theta_1 = n_2 \sin \theta_2$

DESIGN OF Si SOLAR CELL

Optical losses

Light **trapping**: increase optical length



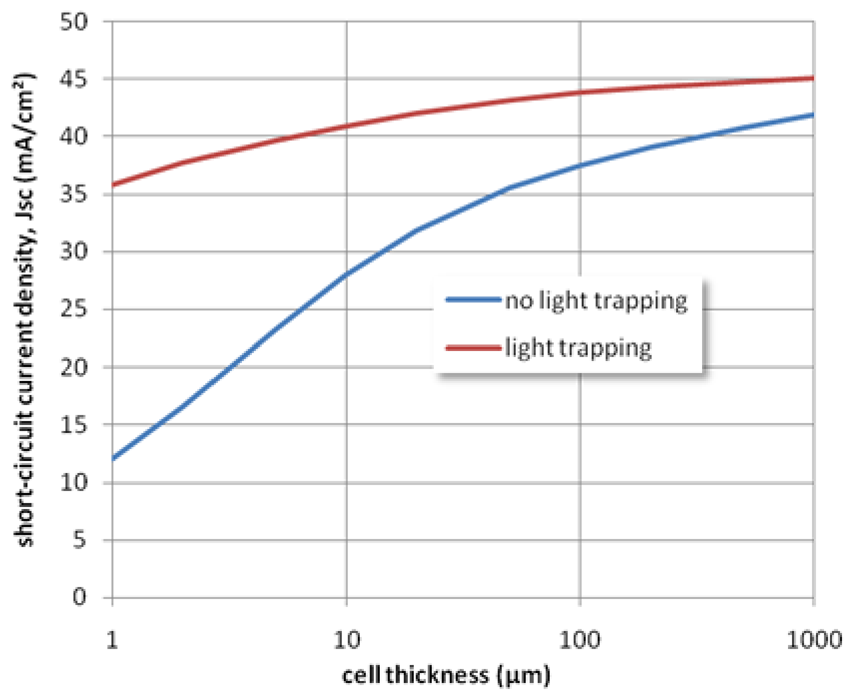
Front and rear surface texturing can trap light for multiple passes due to total internal reflection.

Snell's law of refraction: $n_1 \sin\theta_1 = n_2 \sin\theta_2$

DESIGN OF Si SOLAR CELL

Optical losses

Light **trapping**: increase optical length



Snell's law of refraction: $n_1 \sin\theta_1 = n_2 \sin\theta_2$

DESIGN OF Si SOLAR CELL

Optical losses

In summary:

- Reduce front contact coverage
- Anti-reflective coating
- Surface texturing
- Light trapping

DESIGN OF Si SOLAR CELL

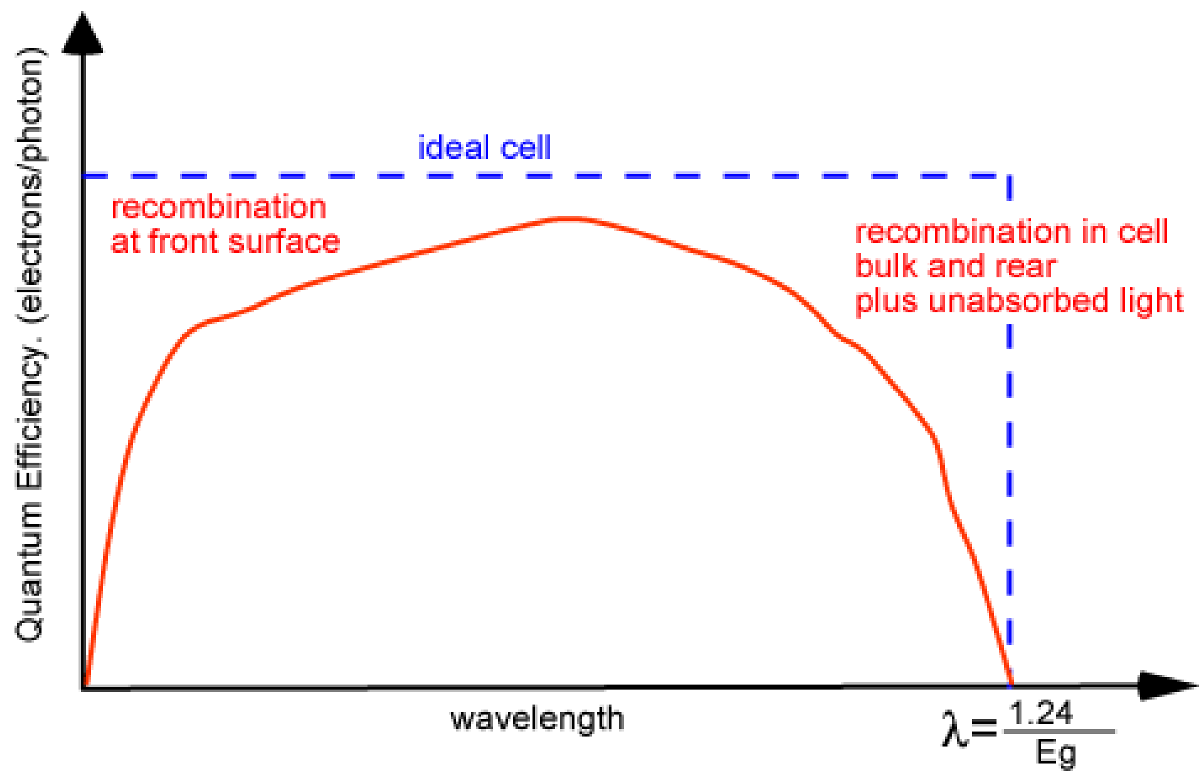
Recombination losses

Optimal conditions:

- the carrier must be generated within a diffusion length of the junction;
- the carrier must be generated closer to the junction than to *hazardous* recombination sites (unpassivated surface, grain boundary,…)

DESIGN OF Si SOLAR CELL

Recombination losses

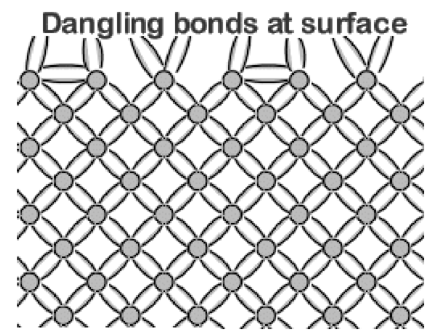


Design of silicon solar cells

Recombination losses:

Surface **passivation**

- Reducing the number of dangling bonds by growing a SiO_2 or SiN thin film on the surface
  (also for anti-reflection coating;
  notice that it is an electric insulator)

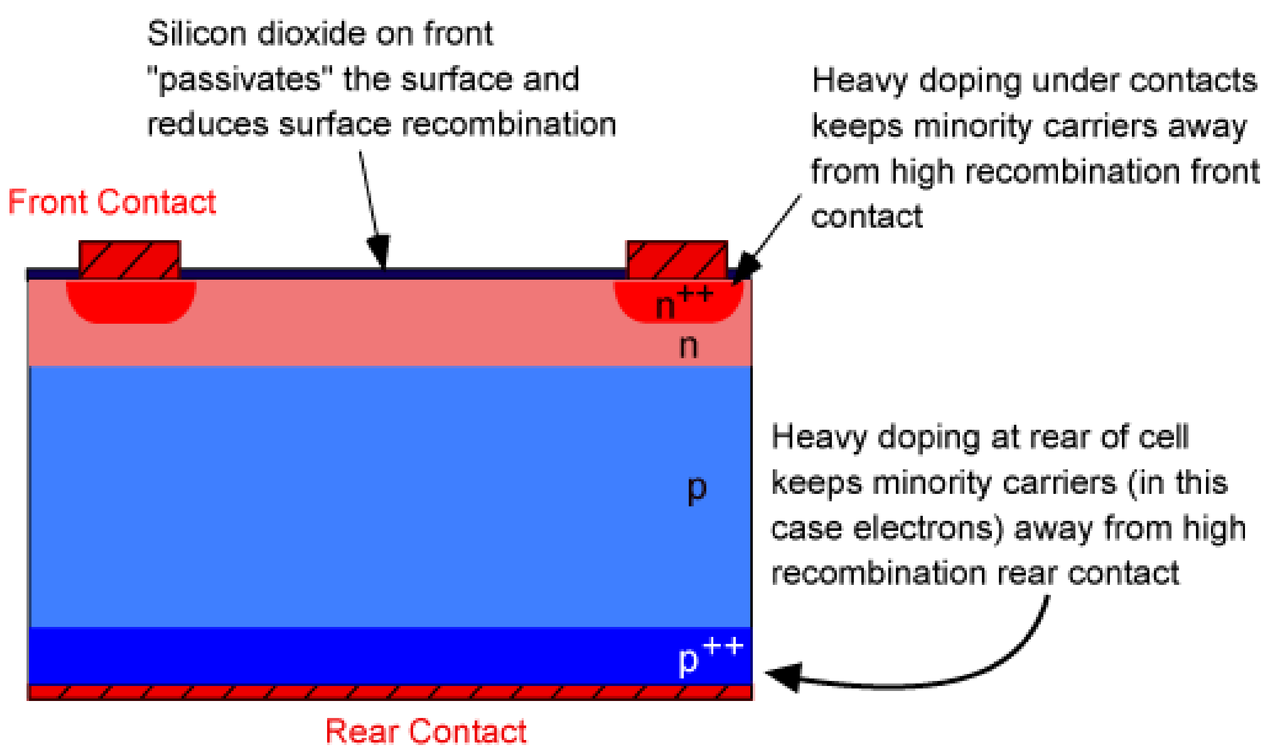


- Increasing doping, creating a repelling field
  (decreases diffusion length thus not suitable for charge collection region; useful closer to contacts, e.g. Back Surface Field - BSF)

Design of silicon solar cells

Recombination losses:

Surface **passivation**



Next class…

- How to make a practical photovoltaic module
- Other (non-silicon) technologies

And check http://pvcdrom.pveducation.org/