

Electrons in a Weak Periodic Potential

One can gain substantial insight into the structure imposed on the electronic energy levels by a periodic potential, if that potential is very weak. This approach might once have been regarded as an instructive, but academic, exercise. We now know, however, that in many cases this apparently unrealistic assumption gives results surprisingly close to the mark. Modern theoretical and experimental studies of the metals found in groups I, II, III, and IV of the periodic table (i.e., metals whose atomic structure consists of *s* and *p* electrons outside of a closed-shell noble gas configuration) indicate that the conduction electrons can be described as moving in what amounts to an almost constant potential. These elements are often referred to as "nearly free electron" metals, because the starting point for their description is the Sommerfeld free electron gas, modified by the presence of a *weak* periodic potential. In this chapter we shall examine some of the broad general features of band structure from the almost free electron point of view. Applications to particular metals will be examined in Chapter 15.

It is by no means obvious why the conduction bands of these metals should be so free-electron-like. There are two fundamental reasons why the strong interactions of the conduction electrons with each other and with the positive ions can have the net effect of a very weak potential.

1. The electron-ion interaction is strongest at small separations, but the conduction electrons are forbidden (by the Pauli principle) from entering the immediate neighborhood of the ions because this region is already occupied by the core electrons.
2. In the region in which the conduction electrons are allowed, their mobility further diminishes the net potential any single electron experiences, for they can *screen* the fields of positively charged ions, diminishing the total effective potential.

These remarks offer only the barest indication of why the following discussion has extensive practical application. We shall return later to the problem of justifying the nearly free electron approach, taking up point 1 in Chapter 11 and point 2 in Chapter 17.

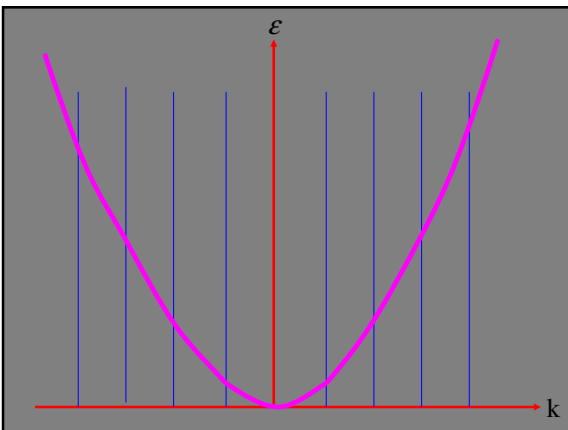
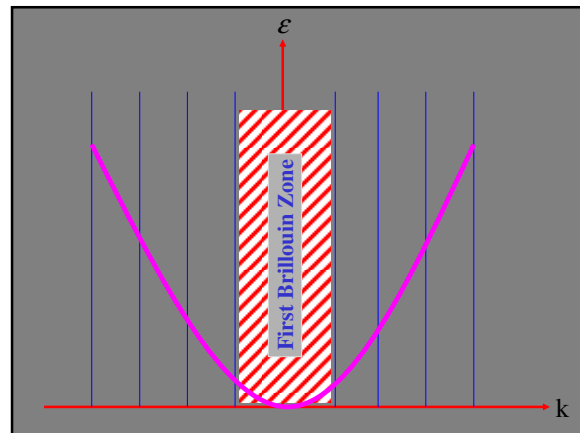
EMPTY LATTICE APPROXIMATION

$$V = 0$$

$$\frac{-\hbar^2}{2m} \frac{\partial^2 \Psi_{0k}(x)}{\partial x^2} = \epsilon_{0k} \Psi_{0k}(x)$$

$$\Psi_{0k}(x) = \frac{1}{\sqrt{L}} e^{ikx}$$

$$\epsilon_{0k} = \frac{\hbar^2 k^2}{2m}$$



NEARLY FREE ELECTRON (NFE) APPROXIMATION

Now we consider the weak periodic potential

$$H \rightarrow H + v$$

v is a weak potential

Weak v means that the kinetic energy is much larger than the potential energy

$$E_1(k) = E_1^0(k) + \langle \Psi_{1,k}^{(0)} | v | \Psi_{1,k}^{(0)} \rangle + \sum_{k',n} \frac{\langle \Psi_{n,k'}^{(0)} | v | \Psi_{1,k}^{(0)} \rangle \langle \Psi_{1,k}^{(0)} | v | \Psi_{n,k'}^{(0)} \rangle}{E_1^0(k) - E_n^0(k')}$$

$$\langle n, k' | v | 1, k \rangle \equiv \langle \Psi_{n,k'}^{(0)} | v | \Psi_{1,k}^{(0)} \rangle = \int \Psi_{n,k'}^{(0)*} v \Psi_{1,k}^{(0)} dx$$

$$\langle 1, k | v | 1, k \rangle \equiv \langle \Psi_{1,k}^{(0)} | v | \Psi_{1,k}^{(0)} \rangle = \frac{1}{L} \int_0^L e^{-ikx} v(x) e^{ikx} dx = \frac{1}{L} \int_0^L v dx$$

Which is independent of k

$$E_1(k) = E_1^0(k) + \langle \Psi_{1,k}^{(0)} | v | \Psi_{1,k}^{(0)} \rangle + \sum_{k',n} \frac{\left| \langle \Psi_{n,k'}^{(0)} | v | \Psi_{1,k}^{(0)} \rangle \right|^2}{E_1^0(k) - E_n^0(k')}$$

Thus this term does not depend on k

$$E_1(k) = E_1^0(k) + \sum_{k',n} \frac{\left| \langle \Psi_{n,k'}^{(0)} | v | \Psi_{1,k}^{(0)} \rangle \right|^2}{E_1^0(k) - E_n^0(k')}$$

The potential is periodic $\Rightarrow v(x+R) = v(x)$

$$v(x) = \sum_g v_g e^{igx}$$

$$E_1(k) = E_1^0(k) + \langle \Psi_{1,k}^{(0)} | v | \Psi_{1,k}^{(0)} \rangle + \sum_{k',n} \frac{\left| \langle \Psi_{n,k'}^{(0)} | v | \Psi_{1,k}^{(0)} \rangle \right|^2}{E_1^0(k) - E_n^0(k')}$$

Now let us go through the third term

$$v(x) = \sum_g v_g e^{igx}$$

$$\langle n, k' | v | 1, k \rangle = \langle \Psi_{n,k'}^{(0)} | v | \Psi_{1,k}^{(0)} \rangle = \int \Psi_{n,k'}^{(0)*} v \Psi_{1,k}^{(0)} dx =$$

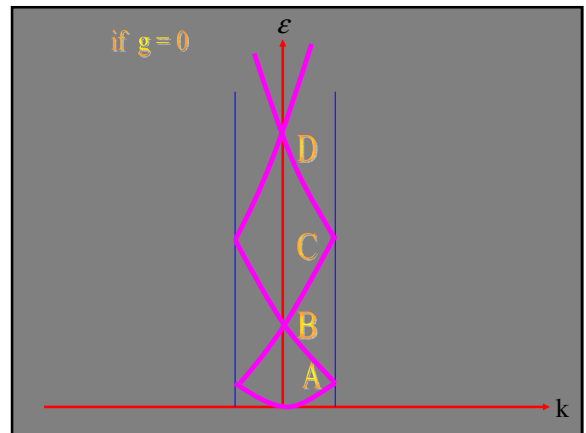
$$= \frac{1}{L} \sum_g v_g \int_0^L e^{-ik'x} e^{igx} e^{ikx} dx = \frac{1}{L} \sum_g v_g \int_0^L e^{-ik'x} e^{i(k+g)x} dx$$

$$k = \frac{2\pi}{L} n, \quad k' = \frac{2\pi}{L} n' \quad \frac{1}{L} \int_0^L e^{-ik'x} e^{i(k+g)x} dx = \delta_{k', k+g}$$

$$\langle n, k' | v | 1, k \rangle = v_g \quad \text{if} \quad k' = k + g$$

$$E_1(k) = E_1^0(k) + \langle \Psi_{1,k}^{(0)} | v | \Psi_{1,k}^{(0)} \rangle + \sum_{k',n} \frac{\left| \langle \Psi_{n,k'}^{(0)} | v | \Psi_{1,k}^{(0)} \rangle \right|^2}{E_1^0(k) - E_n^0(k')}$$

$$E_1(k) = E_1^0(k) + \sum_{g,n} \frac{v_g^2}{E_1^0(k) - E_n^0(k+g)}$$



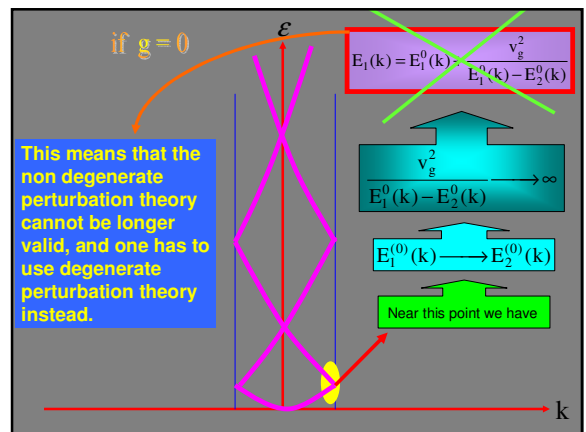
$$E_1(k) = E_1^0(k) + \sum_{g,n} \frac{v_g^2}{E_1^0(k) - E_n^0(k+g)}$$

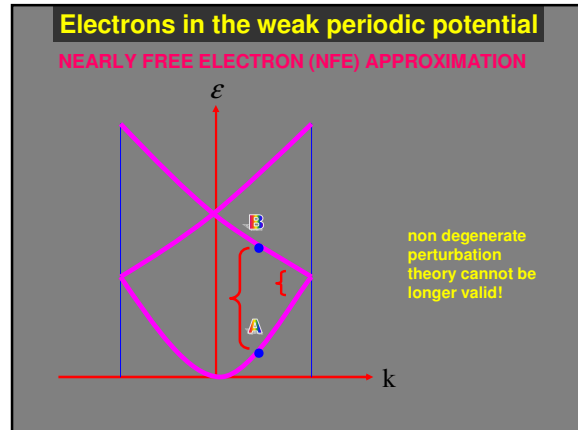
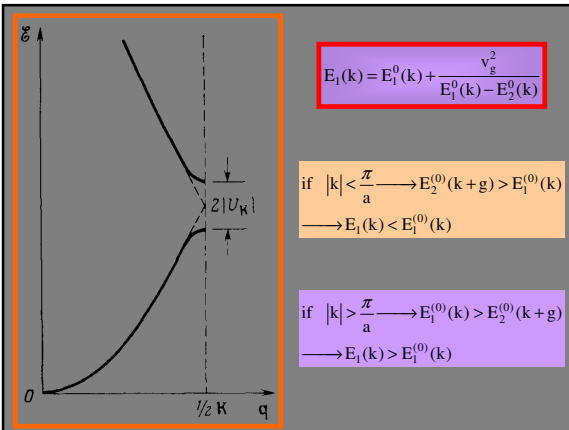
if $g=0$

$$E_1(k) = E_1^0(k) + \sum_n \frac{v_g^2}{E_1^0(k) - E_n^0(k)}$$

We can use a good approximation ignore the interactions of C and D and ... bands with the A band. If we only consider the nearest B band, then:

$$E_1(k) = E_1^0(k) + \frac{v_g^2}{E_1^0(k) - E_2^0(k)}$$





$H\psi = \epsilon\psi$

$-\frac{\hbar^2}{2m} \nabla^2 + U(\mathbf{r})$

$U(\mathbf{r} + \mathbf{R}) = U(\mathbf{r})$

Translation Lattice Vector

Now suppose we are dealing with one dimensional problem

$-\frac{\hbar^2}{2m} \frac{d^2\psi}{dx^2} + U(x)\psi = \epsilon\psi$

$n(\mathbf{r} + \mathbf{R}) = n(\mathbf{r})$

$U(x) = \sum_G U_G e^{iGx}$

$\left(-\frac{\hbar^2}{2m} \frac{d^2}{dx^2} + \sum_G U_G e^{iGx}\right) \psi = \epsilon\psi$

$\left(-\frac{\hbar^2}{2m} \frac{d^2}{dx^2} + \sum_G U_G e^{iGx}\right) \psi = \epsilon\psi$

$\psi(x) = \sum_k C(k) e^{ikx}$

$\psi(x) = \sum_k C(k) e^{ikx} = \sum_G C(k_0 + G) e^{i(k_0 + G)x} = \sum_G C(k_0 - G) e^{i(k_0 - G)x}$

$-\frac{\hbar^2}{2m} \frac{d^2\psi}{dx^2} = -\frac{\hbar^2}{2m} \frac{d^2}{dx^2} \sum_k C(k) e^{ikx} = \frac{\hbar^2}{2m} \sum_k C(k) k^2 e^{ikx}$

$U(x)\psi(x) = \sum_G U_G e^{iGx} \sum_k C(k) e^{ikx} = \sum_{k,G} U_G C(k) e^{i(k+G)x}$

$k \rightarrow k - G$

$U(x)\psi(x) = \sum_{k,G} U_G C(k - G) e^{ikx}$

$\frac{\hbar^2}{2m} \sum_k C(k) k^2 e^{ikx} + \sum_{k,G} U_G C(k - G) e^{ikx} = \epsilon \sum_k C(k) e^{ikx}$

$\frac{\hbar^2}{2m} \sum_k C(k) k^2 e^{ikx} + \sum_{k,G} U_G C(k) e^{ikx} = \epsilon \sum_k C(k) e^{ikx}$

Now we multiply both sides of the above equation by $e^{-ik'x}$ and then take integrals of both sides

$\frac{1}{L} \int_0^L dx e^{-ik'x} e^{ikx} = \delta_{kk'}$

$\frac{1}{L} \int_0^L dx e^{-ik'x} e^{ikx} = \frac{1}{L} \left[\frac{1}{i(k-k')} (e^{i(k-k')x} - 1) \right]_{k=k'} = \delta_{kk'}$

$k = \frac{2\pi}{L} n, \quad k' = \frac{2\pi}{L} n'$

$e^{i(k-k')x} = e^{i(\frac{2\pi}{L} n - \frac{2\pi}{L} n')L} = e^{i2\pi(n-n')} = 1$

$$\frac{\hbar^2}{2m} C(k') k'^2 + \sum_G U_G C(k' - G) = \varepsilon C(k')$$

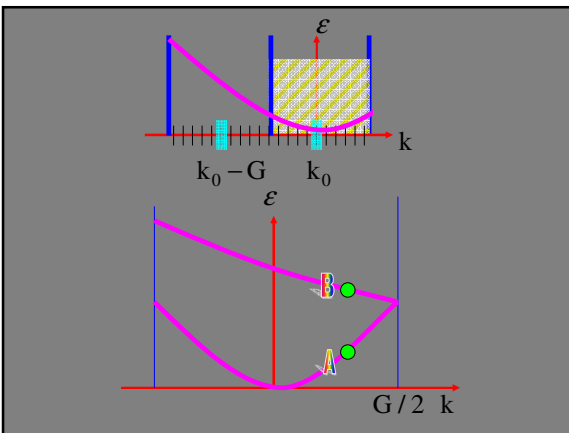
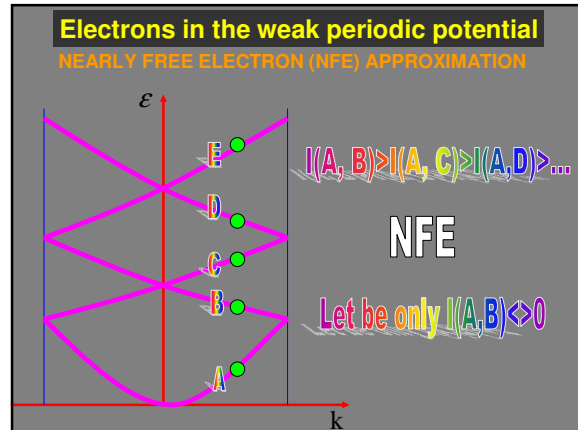
$$k' \rightarrow k$$

$$\frac{\hbar^2}{2m} C(k) k^2 + \sum_G U_G C(k - G) = \varepsilon C(k)$$

$$\left(\frac{\hbar^2}{2m} k^2 - \varepsilon \right) C(k) + \sum_G U_G C(k - G) = 0$$

$$\frac{\hbar^2}{2m} k^2 = \lambda_k$$

$$(\lambda_k - \varepsilon) C(k) + \sum_G U_G C(k - G) = 0$$



$$(\lambda_k - \varepsilon) C(k) + \sum_G U_G C(k - G) = 0$$

$$\begin{cases} (\lambda_k - \varepsilon) C(k) + U_G C(k - G) = 0 & k=k \\ (\lambda_{k-G} - \varepsilon) C(k - G) + U_{-G} C(k) = 0 & k=k-G \end{cases}$$

$$U_G = U_{-G} = U$$

$$\begin{cases} (\lambda_k - \varepsilon) C(k) + U C(k - G) = 0 & k=k \\ (\lambda_{k-G} - \varepsilon) C(k - G) + U C(k) = 0 & k=k-G \end{cases}$$

$$\begin{vmatrix} \lambda_k - \varepsilon & U \\ U & \lambda_{k-G} - \varepsilon \end{vmatrix} = 0$$

$$\begin{vmatrix} \lambda_k - \varepsilon & U \\ U & \lambda_{k-G} - \varepsilon \end{vmatrix} = 0$$

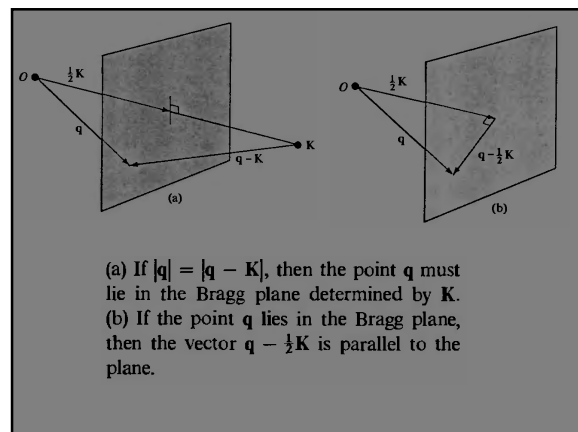
$$\varepsilon = \frac{\lambda_k + \lambda_{k-G}}{2} \pm \sqrt{\left(\frac{\lambda_k - \lambda_{k-G}}{2} \right)^2 + U^2}$$

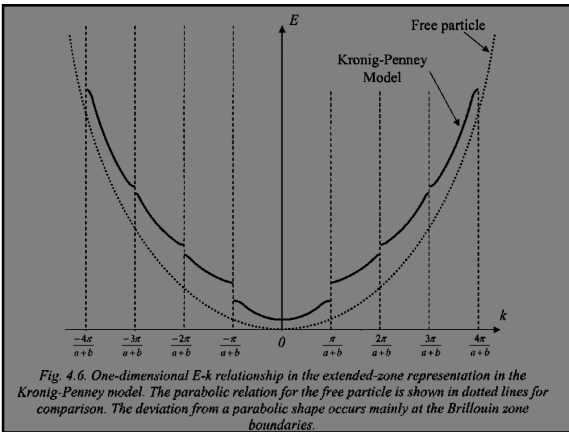
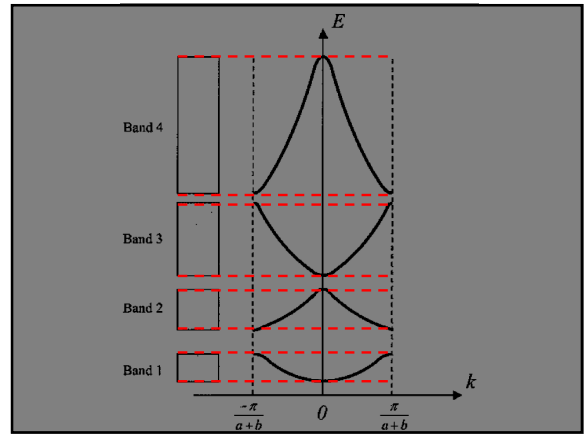
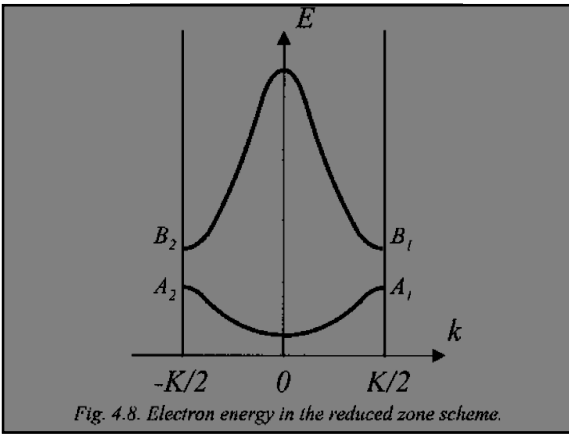
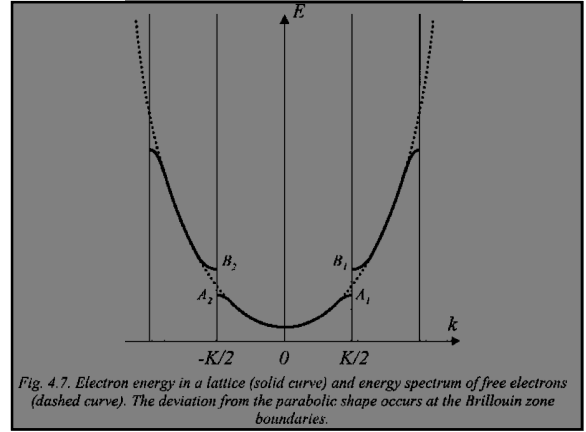
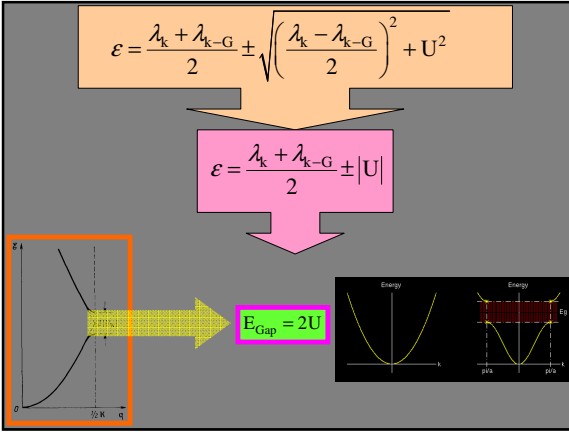
At the edge of the 1BZ: $K = G/2$

$$\lambda_k = \lambda_{k-G}$$

$$\lambda_k = \frac{\hbar^2 k^2}{2m} = \frac{\hbar^2 (G/2)^2}{2m}$$

$$\lambda_{k-G} = \frac{\hbar^2 (G/2 - G)^2}{2m} = \frac{\hbar^2 (-G/2)^2}{2m} = \frac{\hbar^2 (G/2)^2}{2m}$$

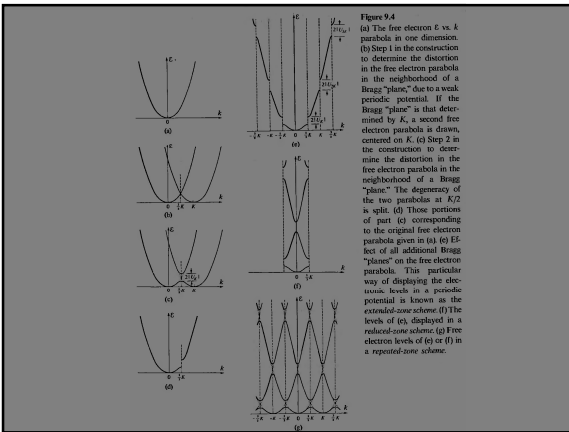




ENERGY BANDS IN ONE DIMENSION

We can illustrate these general conclusions in one dimension, where twofold degeneracy is the most that can ever occur. In the absence of any interaction the electronic energy levels are just a parabola in k (Figure 9.4a). To leading order in the weak one-dimensional periodic potential this curve remains correct except near Bragg "planes" (which are points in one dimension). When q is near a Bragg "plane" corresponding to the reciprocal lattice vector K (i.e., the point $\frac{1}{2}K$) the corrected energy levels are determined by drawing another free electron parabola centered around K (Figure 9.4b), noting that the degeneracy at the point of intersection is split by $2|U_K|$ in such a way that both curves have zero slope at that point, and redrawing Figure 9.4b to get Figure 9.4c. The original free electron curve is therefore modified as in Figure 9.4d. When all Bragg planes and their associated Fourier components are included, we end up with a set of curves such as those shown in Figure 9.4e. This particular way of depicting the energy levels is known as the *extended-zone scheme*.

If we insist on specifying all the levels by a wave vector k in the first Brillouin zone, then we must translate the pieces of Figure 9.4e, through reciprocal lattice vectors, into the first Brillouin zone. The result is shown in Figure 9.4f. The representation is that of the *reduced-zone scheme* (see page 142).



$$\psi(x) = \sum_k C(k) e^{ikx}$$

IF we again keep only two terms due to the NFE approximation, then:

$$\psi(x) = C(k) e^{ikx} + C(k-G) e^{i(k-G)x}$$

We now prove that $C(k) = +C(k-G)$ or $-C(k-G)$ at the edge of the 1BZ:

$$(\lambda_k - \epsilon) C(k) + U C(k-G) = 0$$

$$\frac{C(k-G)}{C(k)} = \frac{\epsilon - \lambda_k}{U} = \frac{\lambda_k \pm U - \lambda_k}{U} = \pm 1$$

We had shown that

$$\epsilon = \frac{\lambda_k + \lambda_{k-G}}{2} \pm |U|$$

$$\lambda_k = \lambda_{k-G}$$

$$\psi(x) = C(k) e^{ikx} + C(k-G) e^{i(k-G)x}$$

$$= C(k) (e^{ikx} \pm e^{-ikx}) = C(k) (e^{iG/2x} \pm e^{-iG/2x})$$

$$\psi(x) \propto \begin{cases} \cos(G/2x) \\ \sin(G/2x) \end{cases} \quad G = \frac{2\pi}{a}$$

$$\psi(x) \propto \begin{cases} \cos(\pi/Lx) \longrightarrow \psi^+ \\ \sin(\pi/Lx) \longrightarrow \psi^- \end{cases}$$

Since these two coefficients are the dominant ones in the plane-wave expansion (9.1), it follows that if $U_k > 0$, then

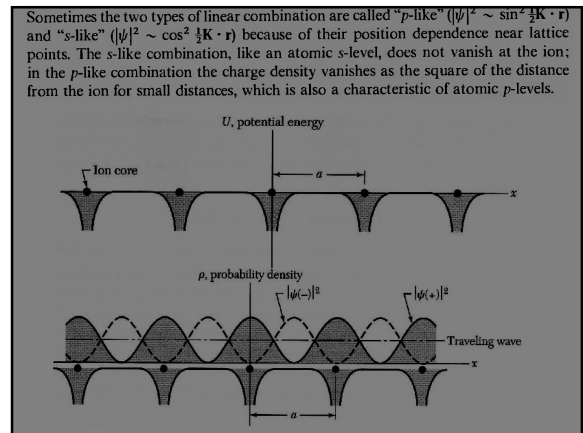
$$|\psi(\mathbf{r})|^2 \propto (\cos \frac{1}{2} \mathbf{K} \cdot \mathbf{r})^2, \quad \epsilon = \epsilon_q^0 + |U_k|$$

$$|\psi(\mathbf{r})|^2 \propto (\sin \frac{1}{2} \mathbf{K} \cdot \mathbf{r})^2, \quad \epsilon = \epsilon_q^0 - |U_k|$$

while if $U_k < 0$, then

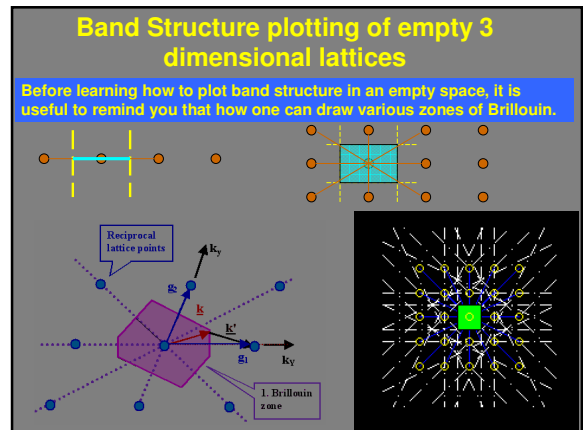
$$|\psi(\mathbf{r})|^2 \propto (\sin \frac{1}{2} \mathbf{K} \cdot \mathbf{r})^2, \quad \epsilon = \epsilon_q^0 + |U_k|$$

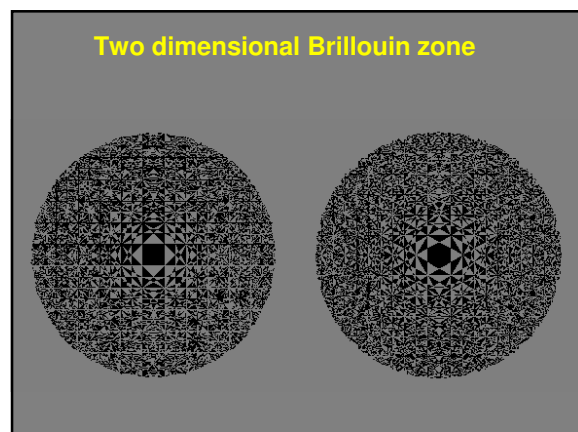
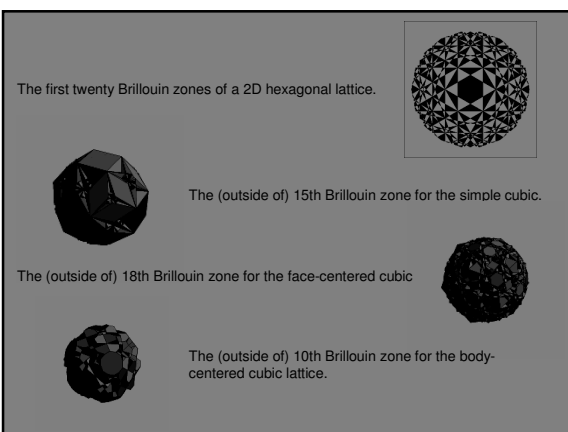
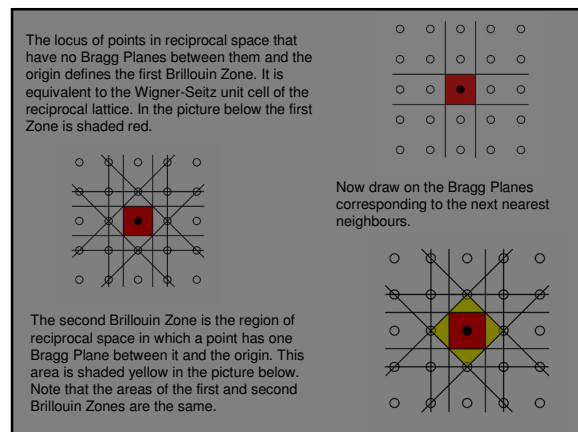
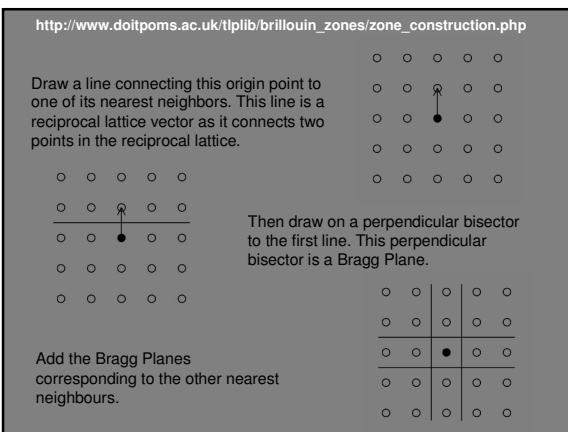
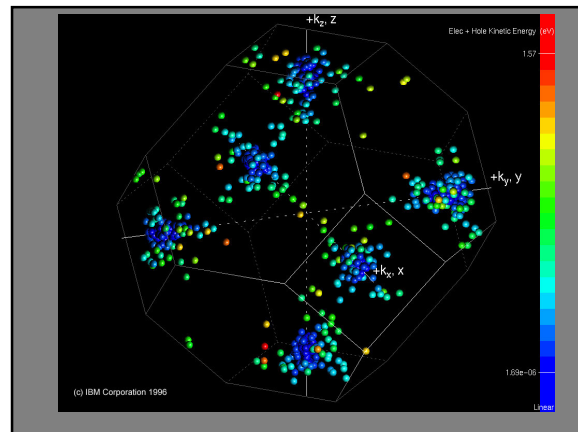
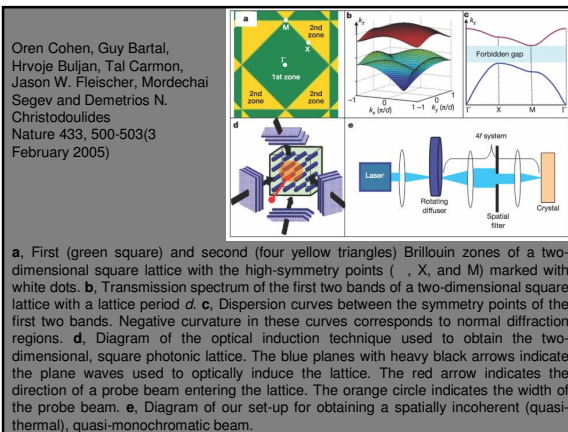
$$|\psi(\mathbf{r})|^2 \propto (\cos \frac{1}{2} \mathbf{K} \cdot \mathbf{r})^2, \quad \epsilon = \epsilon_q^0 - |U_k|$$

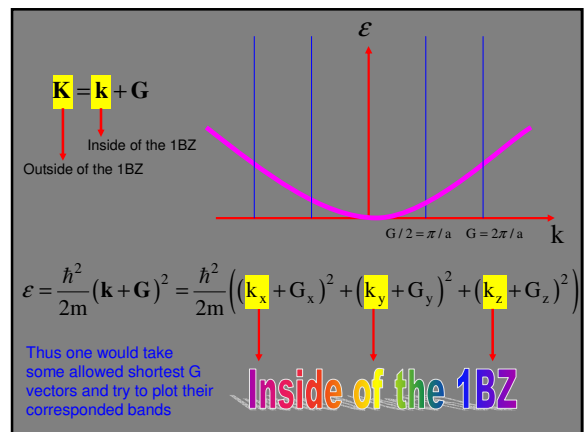
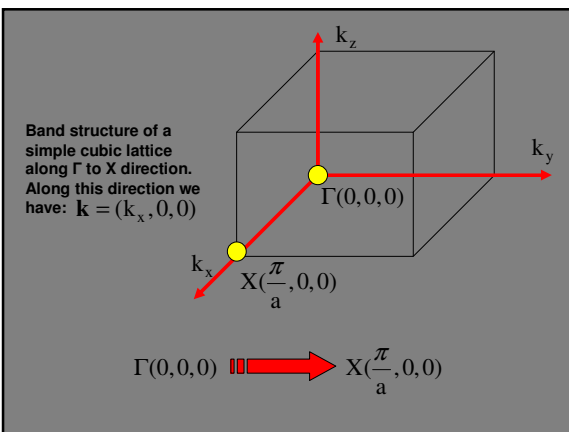
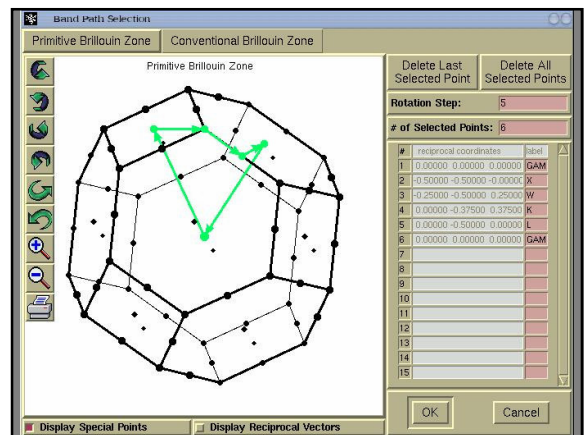
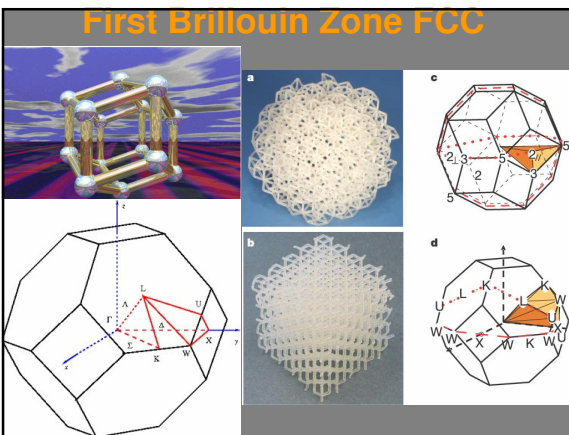
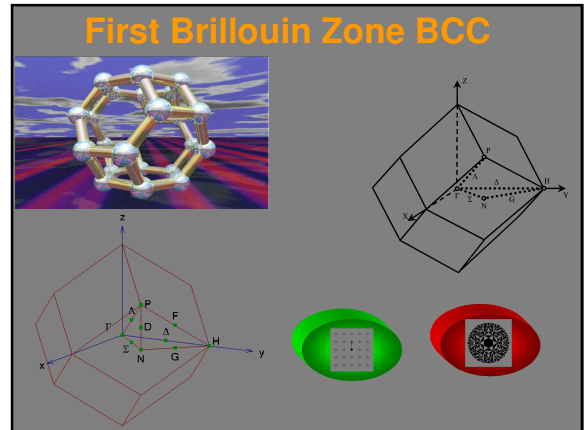


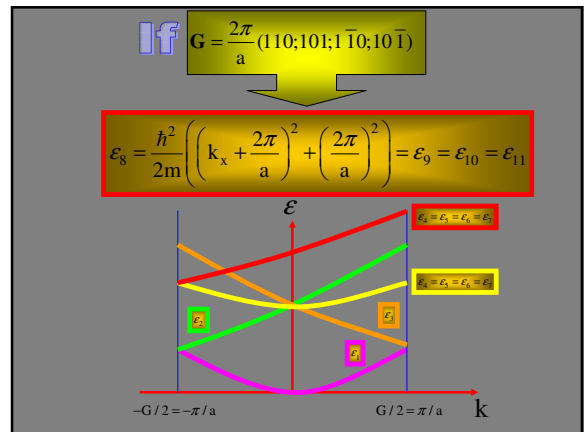
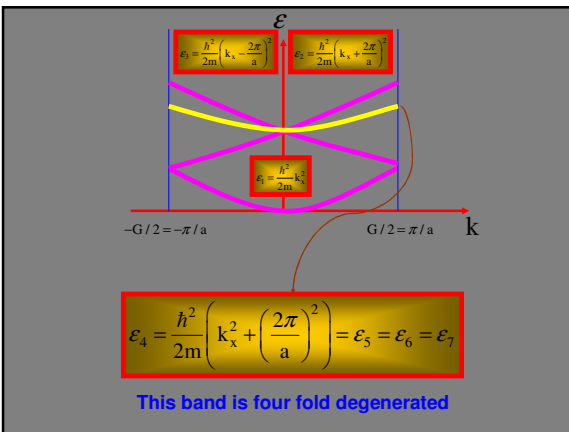
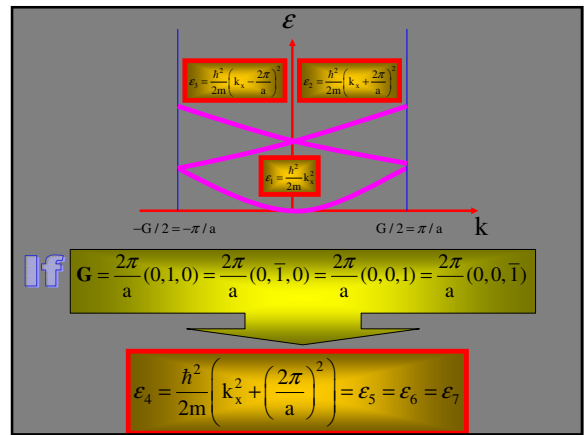
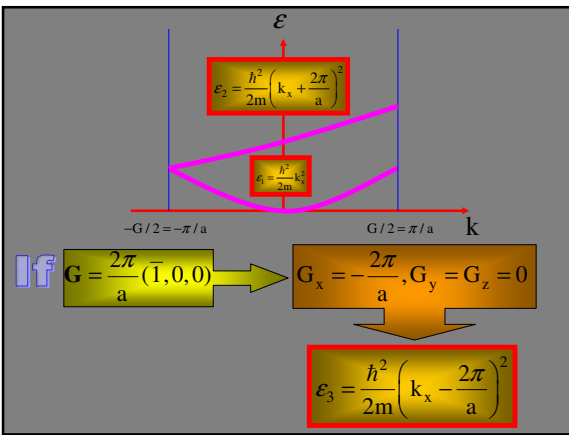
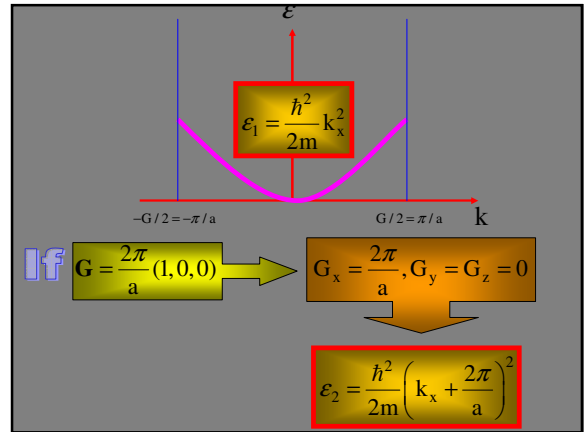
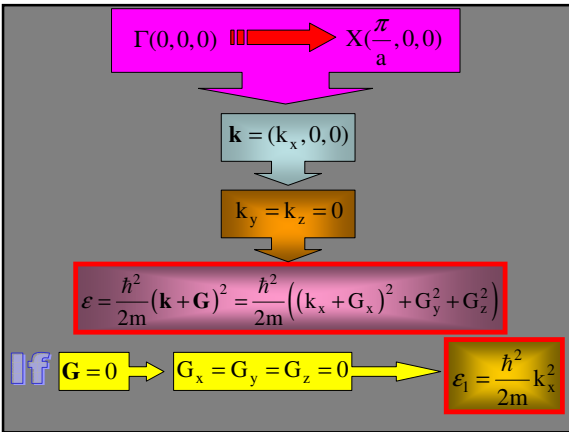
Okay. In the NFE model we find that the band structure behaves similar to the free electron approximation far from the edge of the Brillouin zone. Indeed the band structure of the NFE approximation deviates from free electron model only in the adjacent of the edge of the Brillouin zone.

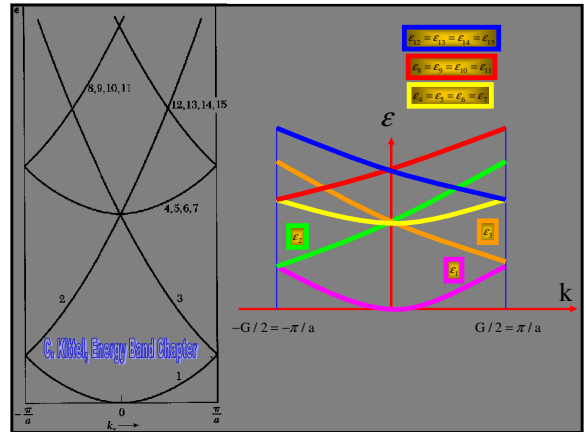
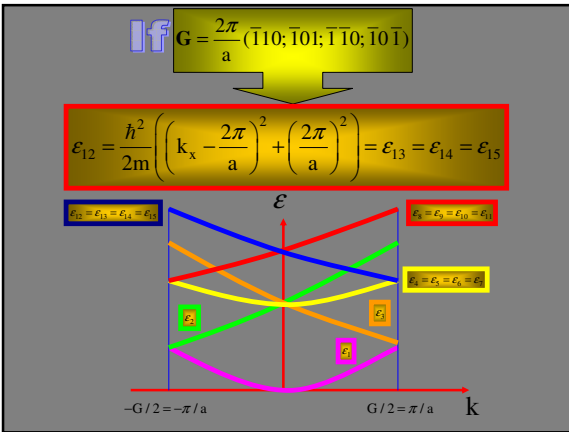
Therefore, it is important to learn how one can plot the band structure of an empty three dimensional lattice.











PRACTICE

Find the band structure of an empty simple cubic (SC) along (111) direction

