

9.1 Electric current

Name: _____ Class: _____ Date: _____

Total: 25 marks

KEY WORDS charge carrier 载流子 • number density 数密度 • electric current 电流
 • elementary charge 基本电荷 • conventional current 常规电流

Objective

Build the skills to answer exam questions on **electric current** — charge carriers, $Q = It$, and the $I = Anvq$ equation.

You must be able to:

- explain current as a flow of **charge carriers** and that charge is **quantised**
- use $Q = It$
- use $I = Anvq$ to find **drift velocity**

1 Worked examples

Study these first. Each one shows the method for a question type used later — follow the steps and you can do the Practice and Exam-style questions yourself.

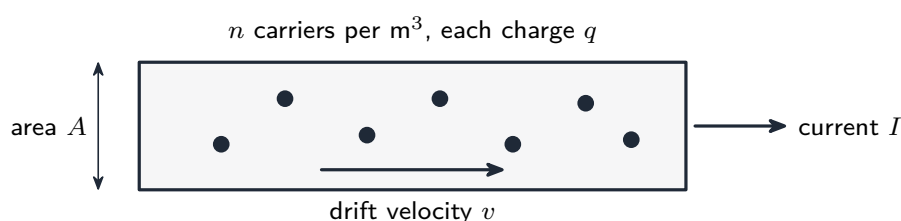
■ Current and charge

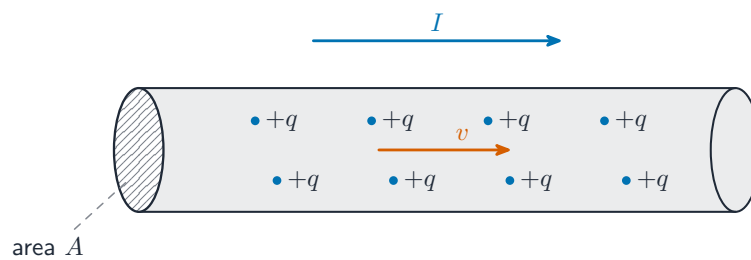
A current is a **flow of charge carriers**. Charge is **quantised**: every free charge is a multiple of $e = 1.60 \times 10^{-19}$ C. **Conventional current** flows opposite to the electrons in a wire.

$$I = \frac{Q}{t}, \quad Q = It \quad (\text{unit A} = \text{C s}^{-1}).$$

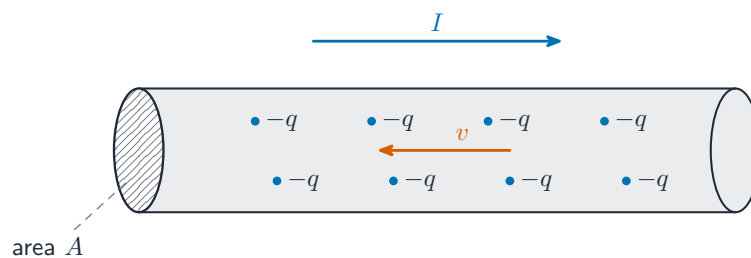
Worked example. 0.50 A for 2.0 min: $Q = It = 0.50 \times 120 = 60$ C; electrons $N = Q/e = 60/(1.6 \times 10^{-19}) \approx 3.8 \times 10^{20}$.

■ The drift-velocity equation





(a) positive carriers drift with I



(b) electrons drift against I

Charge carriers drift through a conductor

$$I = Anvq,$$

where A = area, n = number density of carriers, v = drift velocity, q = charge per carrier. Rearrange for the drift velocity: $v = \frac{I}{Anq}$.

2 Practice

Now apply the methods above.

2.1 State what an **electric current** is.

[1]

2.2 A current of 0.50 A flows for 2.0 minutes. Find the **charge** that passes.

[2]

2.3 State the value of the **elementary charge** e . [1]

2.4 State the direction of **conventional current** relative to the flow of electrons in a wire. [1]

3 Exam-style questions

3.1 A current of 3.0 A flows for 10 s. The charge that passes is: [1]

A	B
C	D

A 0.30 C

B 3.0 C

C 30 C

D 300 C

3.2 Calculate the number of electrons in a charge of 60 C. ($e = 1.60 \times 10^{-19}$ C.) [2]

3.3 A copper wire of cross-sectional area 1.0×10^{-6} m² carries a current of 5.0 A. Copper has $n = 8.5 \times 10^{28}$ free electrons per m³. Calculate the **drift velocity**. ($e = 1.6 \times 10^{-19}$ C.) [3]

3.4 State what is meant by “charge is **quantised**”. [1]

3.5 A cylindrical copper wire P has length 0.32 m and resistance $4.4 \text{ m}\Omega$. The current in it is 0.75 A. The wire contains 3.1×10^{22} free electrons in total. The resistivity of copper is $1.8 \times 10^{-8} \Omega \text{ m}$ and the elementary charge is $1.6 \times 10^{-19} \text{ C}$.

- (a) **Calculate** the potential difference between the ends of the wire. [2]

- (b) **Show that** the cross-sectional area of the wire is about $1.3 \times 10^{-6} \text{ m}^2$. [2]

- (c) **Show that** the number density of free electrons in the copper is about $7.4 \times 10^{28} \text{ m}^{-3}$. [2]

- (d) **Determine** the average drift speed of the electrons, and comment on its size. [3]

(e) A second wire Q is made from the **same volume** of copper, but drawn out so that it is longer and thinner than P. **State and explain** how the resistance of Q compares with that of P. [4]
