

# Atoms [The building blocks

## Electron shells

Electrons travel in certain fixed orbits, known as shells. These surround the nucleus like the layers of an onion.

## Electrons

These have a negative electric charge and cancel the proton positive charge, making the atom electrically neutral.

## Protons

These have a positive electric charge.

## Neutrons

These particles have no electric charge.

## A trip inside an atom

The number of protons and the number of electrons in an atom are the same, but the electrons whiz around so fast, it's hard to know where they are! The number of neutrons can vary. This is a beryllium atom. It has four protons. It also has four neutrons and four electrons.

