

Louisiana PASS

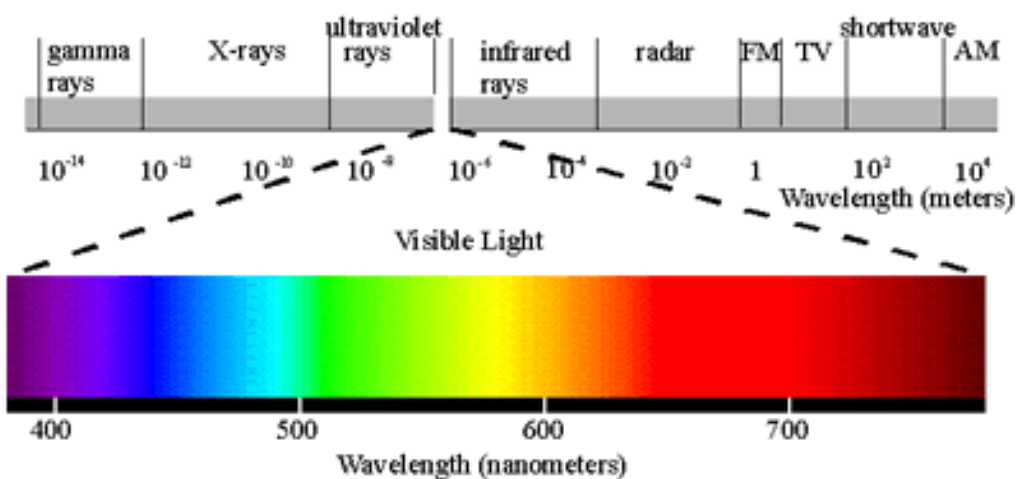

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photo courtesy of The Joy of Visual Perception: A Web book <http://www.yorku.ca/eye>

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Electromagnetic Spectrum

The term “electromagnetic spectrum” sounds complicated, but you probably know more than you think you know. *Electromagnetic spectrum* is a scientific name for the different types of radiation. For example, radio waves, light from a laser, and even heat from a flame all have a place in the electromagnetic spectrum.

What is radiation? Radiation is energy that travels and spreads out as it goes. It travels in a wave-like pattern at the speed of light. There are all kinds of radiation in the electromagnetic spectrum: microwaves, ultraviolet rays, x-rays, radio waves, and gamma-rays are just a few.

These different types of radiation play an important part in our daily lives. You probably use your microwave to cook food every day. Did you know that astronomers use microwaves to learn about galaxies? Your doctor uses x-rays to look at your bones. Hot gases in the universe emit, or give off, X-rays.

As you probably know, some types of radiation are dangerous. For example, the sun produces ultraviolet rays that can burn your skin. And of course, nuclear radiation, such as the kind released in an atomic blast, can be lethal. However, other types of radiation are essential. Where would you be without light to see at night, heat for warmth, and microwave pizza for a snack?

The next time you're out in the sun, remember the electromagnetic spectrum, and don't forget your sunscreen either!

