

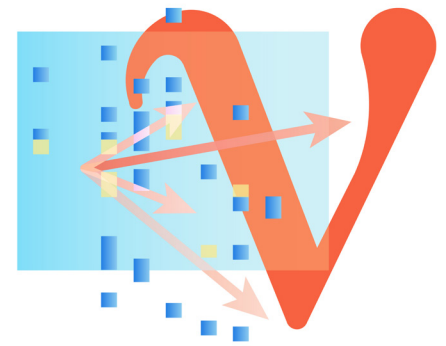
FUNDAMENTAL

Neutrinos are fundamental particles, which means that—like quarks and photons and electrons—they cannot be broken down into any smaller bits.



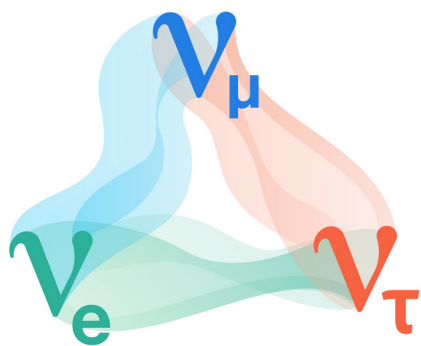
ABUNDANT

Of all particles with mass, neutrinos are the most abundant in nature. They're also some of the least interactive. Roughly a thousand trillion of them pass harmlessly through your body every second.



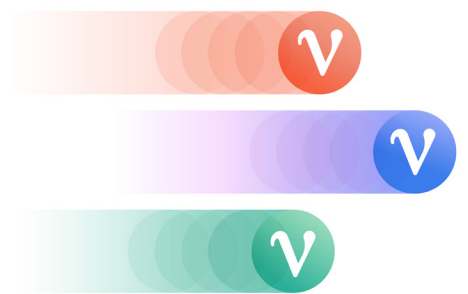
ELUSIVE

Neutrinos are difficult but not impossible to catch. Scientists have developed many different types of particle detectors to study them.



OSCILLATING

Neutrinos come in three types, called flavors. There are electron neutrinos, muon neutrinos and tau neutrinos. One of the strangest aspects of neutrinos is that they don't pick just one flavor and stick to it. They oscillate between all three.



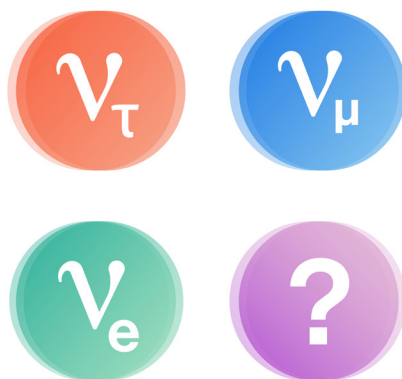
LIGHTWEIGHT

Neutrinos weigh almost nothing, and they travel close to the speed of light. Neutrino masses are so small that so far no experiment has succeeded in measuring them. The masses of other fundamental particles come from the Higgs field, but neutrinos might get their masses another way.



DIVERSE

Neutrinos are created in many processes in nature. They are produced in the nuclear reactions in the sun, particle decays in the Earth, and the explosions of stars. They are also produced by particle accelerators and in nuclear power plants.



MYSTERIOUS

Neutrinos are mysterious. Experiments seem to hint at the possible existence of a fourth type of neutrino: a sterile neutrino, which would interact even more rarely than the others.



VERY MYSTERIOUS

Scientists also wonder if neutrinos are their own antiparticles. If they are, they could have played a role in the early universe, right after the big bang, when matter came to outnumber antimatter just enough to allow us to exist.