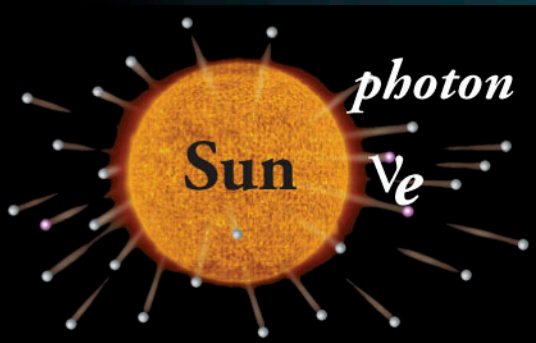
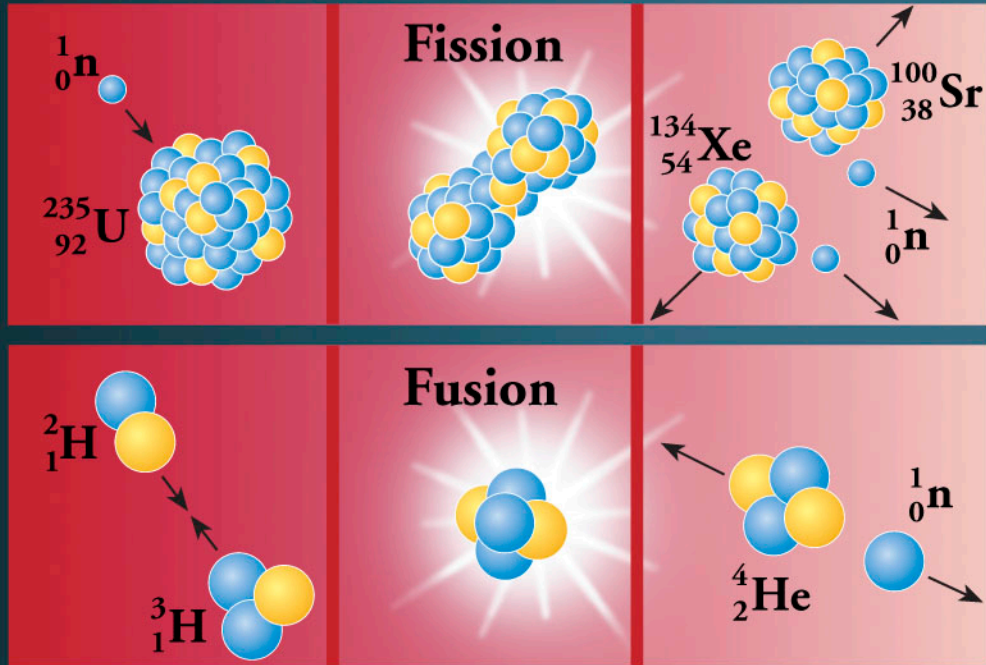


Nuclear Energy

Nuclear reactions release energy when the total mass of the products is less than the sum of the masses of the initial nuclei. The “lost mass” appears as kinetic energy of the products ($E = mc^2$). In fission, a massive nucleus splits into two major fragments that usually eject one or more neutrons. In fusion, low mass nuclei combine to form a more massive nucleus plus one or more ejected particles—neutrons, protons, photons, or alpha particles.



In the early stages of stellar evolution of our sun and other stars, hydrogen fuses to form helium, releasing energy in the form of photons (light) and neutrinos. During the later stages of stellar evolution, more massive nuclei up to and beyond uranium are synthesized by fusion. By measuring the number of neutrinos that come from the Sun, scientists recently have demonstrated that neutrinos must have a mass greater than zero.