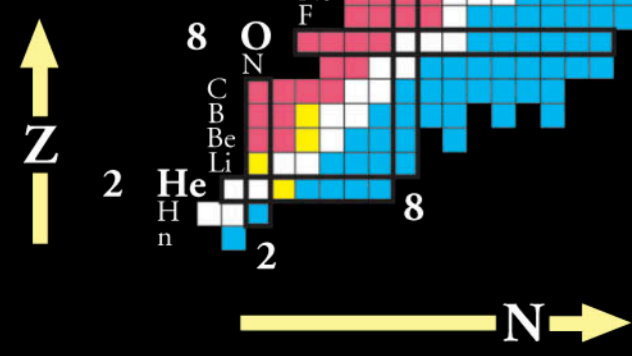


Chart of the Nuclides

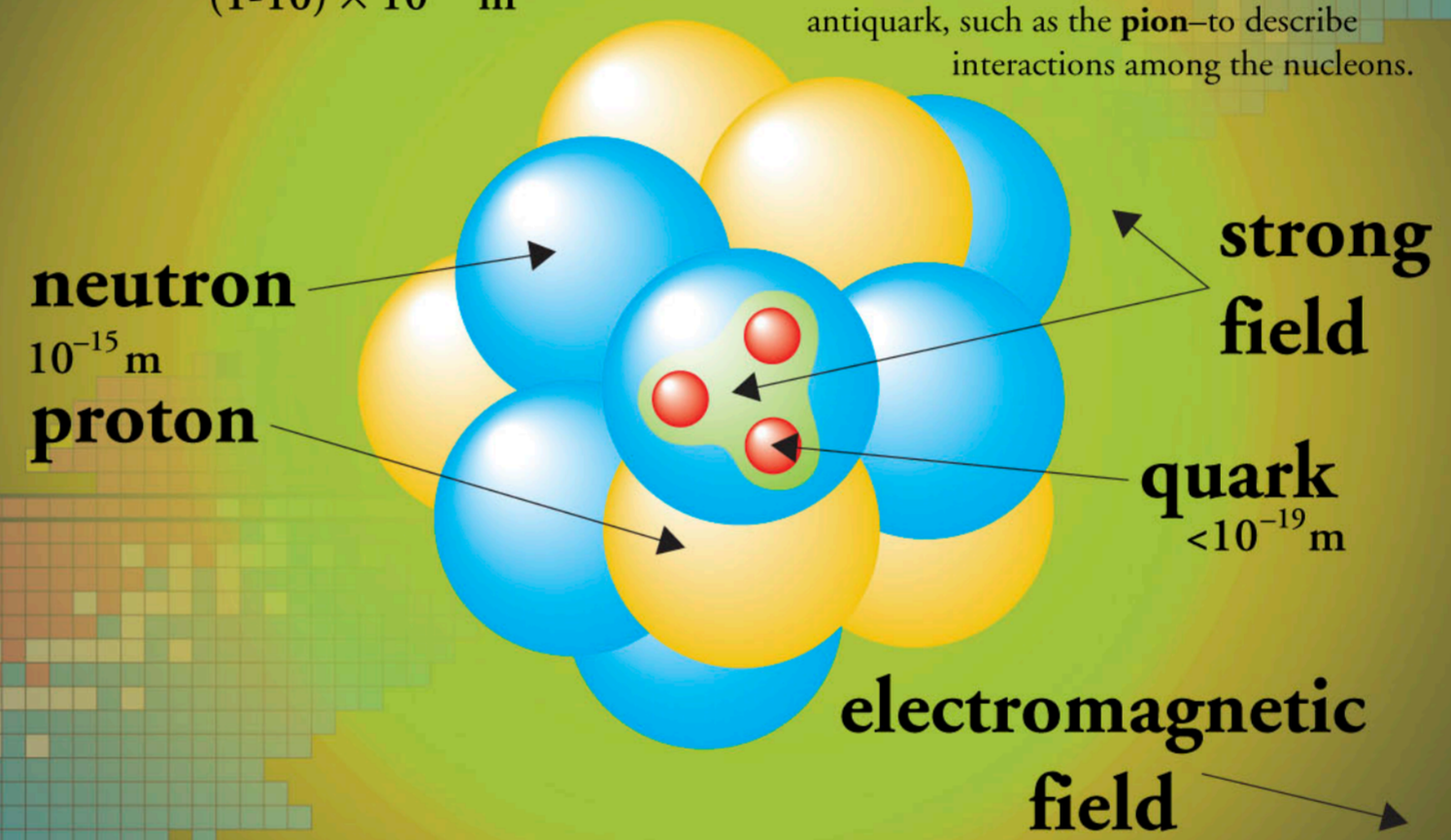
The Chart of the Nuclides presents in graphic form all known nuclei with atomic number, Z, and neutron number, N. Each nuclide is represented by a box colored according to its predominant decay mode. **Magic numbers** (N or Z = 2, 8, 20, 28, 50, 82 and 126) are indicated by a rectangle on the chart. They correspond to major closed shells and show regions of greater nuclear binding energy.



- Color Key**
- Stable
 - Spontaneous fission
 - Alpha particle emission
 - Beta minus emission
 - Beta plus emission or electron capture

The Nucleus

(1-10) × 10⁻¹⁵ m



At the center of the atom is a nucleus formed from **nucleons**—protons and neutrons. Each nucleon is made from three **quarks** held together by their strong interactions, which are mediated by gluons. In turn, the nucleus is held together by the **strong** interactions between the gluon and quark constituents of neighboring nucleons. Nuclear physicists often use the exchange of mesons—particles which consist of a quark and an antiquark, such as the **pion**—to describe interactions among the nucleons.

In an atom, **electrons** range around the nucleus at distances typically up to 10,000 times the nuclear diameter. If the electron cloud were shown to scale, this chart would cover a small town.

