

## How Did the Elements Get Their Names?

The periodic table lists all the elements ever discovered. It hasn't always been as large as it is now, but has been added to for over a hundred years. As new elements were found they were named by their discoverer. But where did they get the names?

It's easy to figure out where some of the names come from. Several elements are named for the places they were discovered, like Europium or Californium. Other elements are named for places you may not know, like Thulium, named for an island in Norway, or Yttrium, named for an area in Sweden. Argon is named for an ancient Greek city. Hafnium is from the Latin word for Copenhagen.

Sometimes discoverers name new elements in honor of famous scientists. Einsteinium and Curium are named for 2 of the most famous scientists of the 20th century. Mendeleevium was named for the author of the original periodic table, Dmitri Mendeleev.

Metals known in ancient times use symbols from their Latin names. Iron(Fe) was called ferrum, gold(Au) was known as aurum, silver(Ag) was called argentum, and sodium(Na) was years ago named natrium.

Some element names are more unusual. Several use Latin, Greek or even Swedish words to describe them. Silicon means "flint" in Latin. Zinc is German for "metal". Iodine is Greek for "rust colored". Tungsten is Swedish, meaning "heavy stone". Bromine, from a Greek word for "stench" was named for its foul odor.

Perhaps the most unusual are the superstitious names for cobalt and nickel. "Kobold" in German is a goblin said to haunt underground mines, and nickel comes from a word meaning "copper demon".

Some names are from Greek mythology- Helios, the sun god, inspired helium's name. From Titan, father of Helios, comes titanium. The moon goddess Selene, was inspiration for selenium. Palladium got its name from an asteroid, Pallas.

As more elements are discovered, more imagination will be used to come up with new and original names, from languages around the world. Maybe someday, new elements will be discovered on other planets, and can will bear uncommon names like xenon, named for the Greek word for "alien".

After reading the passage, answer these questions:

1. According to the article, elements are sometimes named for
  - a. the seasons of the year.
  - b. the characters in movies.
  - c. children of their discoverers.
  - d. the places they were discovered.
2. A Greek word meaning stench is the origin of the name of which element?
  - a. beryllium.
  - b. bromine.
  - c. selenium.
  - d. sodium.
3. Which element was named after a German goblin?
  - a. titanium.
  - b. germanium.
  - c. cobalt.
  - d. curium.
4. From which language does the name for zinc come?
  - a. Latin
  - b. Greek
  - c. German
  - d. Swedish
5. The element thulium gets its name from
  - a. Greek mythology.
  - b. an island.
  - c. its latin root.
  - d. superstition.
6. Who designed the first periodic table?
  - a. Einstein.
  - b. Marie Curie.
  - c. Mendeleev.
  - d. Helios.
7. Which symbol on the periodic table represents gold?
  - a. Ag
  - b. Au
  - c. Fe
  - d. Go
8. An asteroid inspired the name of
  - a. selenium.
  - b. palladium.
  - c. bromine.
  - d. thulium.

Fe

Na

Au

Cu

Xe

He

## ANSWER KEY

**A MILLION ROSES:**

1. B
2. A
3. B
4. D
5. B
6. C
7. D
8. B

**DEATH OF A STAR:**

1. C
2. A
3. D
4. A
5. B
6. B
7. A

**EDIBLE PLASTIC:**

1. B
2. C
3. A
4. C
5. D
6. B

**FLOATING TRAINS:**

1. B
2. A
3. D
4. B
5. A
6. C
7. B

**HOVERCRAFT:**

1. C
2. A
3. D
4. B
5. A
6. B
7. C

**HOW DO ROLLER COASTERS WORK?:**

1. D
2. C
3. C
4. A
5. B
6. D

**HOW DID THE ELEMENTS GET THEIR NAMES?:**

1. D
2. B
3. C
4. C
5. B
6. C
7. B
8. B

**HOW DOES A TV WORK?:**

1. C
2. C
3. A
4. D
5. C
6. A
7. B

**LASERS AT WORK:**

1. C
2. A
3. B
4. B
5. C
6. A
7. D

**MEASURING UP:**

1. A
2. C
3. D
4. B
5. A
6. A
7. D