

Types of Electric Current

There are two types of electric current:

1. Alternating Current (AC):
 - current periodically reverses direction in which it is flowing. (Electric outlets are AC.)
2. Direct Current (DC):
 - current flows continuously in the same direction. (Cells and batteries are DC.)

Conventional Current vs. Electron Flow

Conventional current is defined as the flow of current from a positive terminal to a negative terminal. In reality, electrons (negative charges) flow from the negative terminal to the positive terminal. Therefore, electron flow is the opposite direction of conventional current.

This problem stems from the early 1800's when scientists thought electricity was the flow of a fluid from a positively charged object to a negatively charged object, where there was less fluid. Benjamin Franklin called this electric current. However, the electron was not discovered until about 100 years later. By then, the "convention" was already in place.

We can think of current as the flow of positive or negative charges, but it is really electrons flowing in the circuit.