section 1

What is sound?

as you read

What You'll Learn

- **Identify** the characteristics of sound waves.
- **Explain** how sound travels.
- **Describe** the Doppler effect.

Why It's Important

Sound gives important information about the world around you.

Review Vocabulary
frequency: number of wavelengths that pass a given point in one second, measured in hertz (Hz)

New Vocabulary
- loudness
- pitch
- echo
- Doppler effect

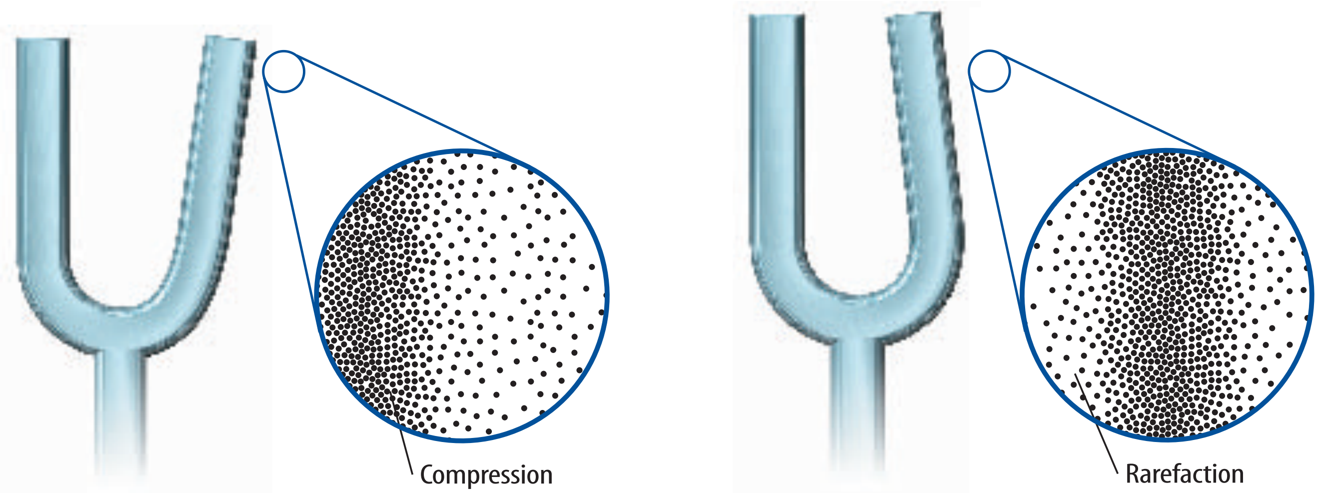
Sound and Vibration

Think of all the sounds you've heard since you awoke this morning. Did you hear your alarm clock blaring, car horns honking, or locker doors slamming? Every sound has something in common with every other sound. Each is produced by something that vibrates.

Sound Waves How does an object that is vibrating produce sound? When you speak, the vocal cords in your throat vibrate. These vibrations cause other people to hear your voice. The vibrations produce sound waves that travel to their ears. The other person's ears interpret these sound waves.

A wave carries energy from one place to another without transferring matter. An object that is vibrating in air, such as your vocal cords, produces a sound wave. The vibrating object causes air molecules to move back and forth. As these air molecules collide with those nearby, they cause other air molecules to move back and forth. In this way, energy is transferred from one place to another. A sound wave is a compressional wave, like the wave moving through the coiled spring toy in **Figure 1.** In a compressional wave, particles in the material move back and forth along the direction the wave is moving. In a sound wave, air molecules move back and forth along the direction the sound wave is moving.

Figure 1 When the coils of a coiled spring toy are squeezed together, a compressional wave moves along the spring. The coils move back and forth as the compressional wave moves past them.



When the tuning fork vibrates outward, it forces molecules in the air next to it closer together, creating a region of compression.

When the tuning fork moves back, the molecules in the air next to it spread farther apart, creating a region of rarefaction.

Making Sound Waves When an object vibrates, it exerts a force on the surrounding air. For example, as the end of the tuning fork moves outward into the air, it pushes the molecules in the air together, as shown on the left in **Figure 2.** As a result, a region where the molecules are closer together, or more dense, is created. This region of higher density is called a compression. When the end of the tuning fork moves back, it creates a region of lower density called a rarefaction, as shown on the right in **Figure 2.** As the tuning fork continues to vibrate, a series of compressions and rarefactions is formed. The compressions and rarefactions move away from the tuning fork as molecules in these regions collide with other nearby molecules.

Like other waves, a sound wave can be described by its wavelength and frequency. The wavelength of a sound wave is shown in **Figure 3.** The frequency of a sound wave is the number of compressions or rarefactions that pass by a given point in one second. An object that vibrates faster forms a sound wave with a higher frequency.

Figure 2 A tuning fork makes a sound wave as the ends of the fork vibrate in the air.
Explain *why a sound wave cannot travel in a vacuum.*

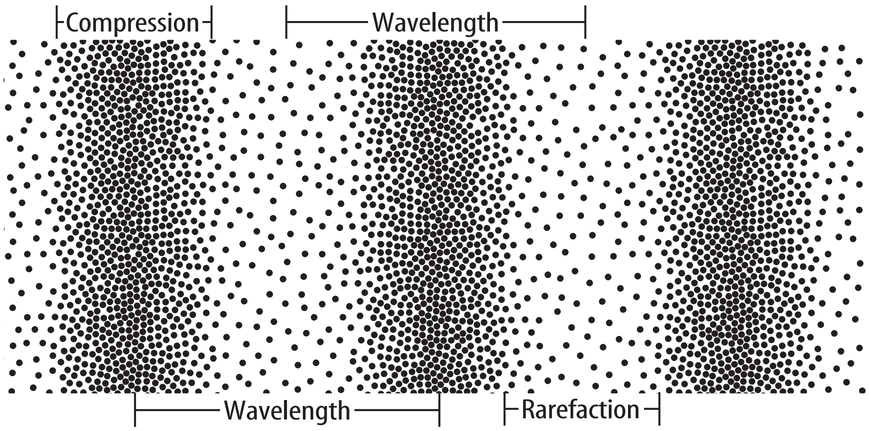


Figure 3 Wavelength is the distance from one compression to another or one rarefaction to another.

Mini LAB

Comparing and Contrasting Sounds

Procedure

1. Strike a **block of wood** with a **spoon** and listen carefully to the sound. Then press the block of wood to your ear and strike it with the spoon again. Listen carefully to the sound.
2. Tie the middle of a length of **cotton string** to a metal spoon. Strike the spoon on something to hear it ring. Now press the ends of the string against your ears and repeat the experiment. What do you hear?

Analysis

1. Did you hear sounds transmitted through wood and through string? Describe the sounds.
2. Compare and contrast the sounds in wood and in air.

Try at Home

The Speed of Sound

Sound waves can travel through other materials besides air. In fact, sound waves travel in the same way through different materials as they do in air, although they might travel at different speeds. As a sound wave travels through a material, the particles in the material collide with each other. In a solid, molecules are closer together than in liquids or gases, so collisions between molecules occur more rapidly than in liquids or gases. The speed of sound is usually fastest in solids, where molecules are closest together, and slowest in gases, where molecules are farthest apart. **Table 1** shows the speed of sound through different materials.

The Speed of Sound and Temperature The temperature of the material that sound waves are traveling through also affects the speed of sound. As a substance heats up, its molecules move faster, so they collide more frequently. The more frequent the collisions are, the faster the speed of sound is in the material. For example, the speed of sound in air at 0°C is 331 m/s; at 20°C, it is 343 m/s.

Amplitude and Loudness

What's the difference between loud sounds and quiet sounds? When you play a song at high volume and low volume, you hear the same instruments and voices, but something is different. The difference is that loud sound waves generally carry more energy than soft sound waves do.

Loudness is the human perception of how much energy a sound wave carries. Not all sound waves with the same energy are as loud. Humans hear sounds with frequencies between 3,000 Hz and 4,000 Hz as being louder than other sound waves with the same energy.

Table 1 Speed of Sound Through Different Materials

Material	Speed (m/s)
Air	343
Water	1,483
Steel	5,940
Glass	5,640

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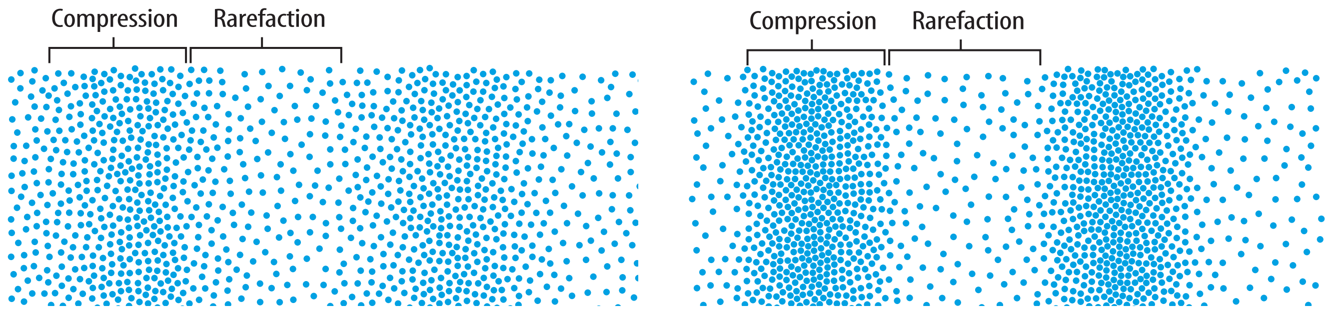


This sound wave has a lower amplitude.

This sound wave has a higher amplitude. Particles in the material are more compressed in the compressions and more spread out in the rarefactions.

Amplitude and Energy The amount of energy a wave carries depends on its amplitude. For a compressional wave such as a sound wave, the amplitude is related to how spread out the molecules or particles are in the compressions and rarefactions, as **Figure 4** shows. The higher the amplitude of the wave is, the more compressed the particles in the compression are and the more spread out they are in the rarefactions. More energy had to be transferred by the vibrating object that created the wave to force the particles closer together or spread them farther apart. Sound waves with greater amplitude carry more energy and sound louder. Sound waves with smaller amplitude carry less energy and sound quieter.

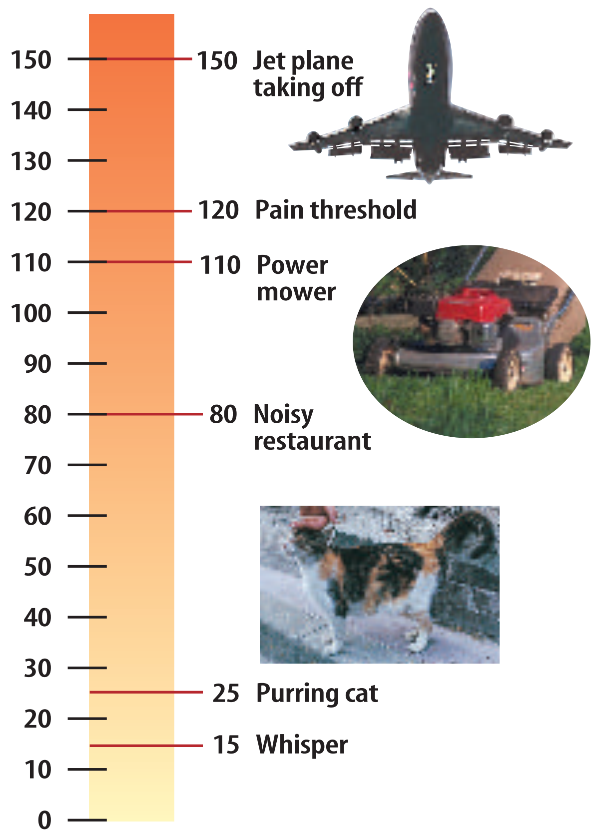
Figure 4 The amplitude of a sound wave depends on how spread out the particles are in the compressions and rarefactions of the wave.

Reading Check ***What determines the loudness of different sounds?***

The Decibel Scale Perhaps an adult has said to you, "Turn down your music, it's too loud! You're going to lose your hearing!" Although the perception of loudness varies from person to person, the energy carried by sound waves can be described by a scale called the decibel (dB) scale. **Figure 5** shows the decibel scale. An increase in the loudness of a sound of 10 dB means that the energy carried by the sound has increased ten times, but an increase of 20 dB means that the sound carries 100 times more energy.

Hearing damage begins to occur at sound levels of about 85 dB. The amount of damage depends on the frequencies of the sound and the length of time a person is exposed to the sound. Some music concerts produce sound levels as high as 120 dB. The energy carried by these sound waves is about 30 billion times greater than the energy carried by sound waves that are made by whispering.

Figure 5 The loudness of sound is measured on the decibel scale.



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Frequency and Pitch

The **pitch** of a sound is how high or low it sounds. For example, a piccolo produces a high-pitched sound or tone, and a tuba makes a low-pitched sound. Pitch corresponds to the frequency of the sound. The higher the pitch is, the higher the frequency is. A sound wave with a frequency of 440 Hz, for example, has a higher pitch than a sound wave with a frequency of 220 Hz.

The human ear can detect sound waves with frequencies between about 20 Hz and 20,000 Hz. However, some animals can detect even higher and lower frequencies. For example, dogs can hear frequencies up to almost 50,000 Hz. Dolphins and bats can hear frequencies as high as 150,000 Hz, and whales can hear frequencies higher than those heard by humans.

Recall that frequency and wavelength are related. If two sound waves are traveling at the same speed, the wave with the shorter wavelength has a higher frequency. If the wavelength is shorter, then more compressions and rarefactions will go past a given point every second than for a wave with a longer wavelength, as shown in **Figure 6.** Sound waves with a higher pitch have shorter wavelengths than those with a lower pitch.

The Human Voice When you make a sound, you exhale past your vocal cords, causing them to vibrate. The length and thickness of your vocal cords help determine the pitch of your voice. Shorter, thinner vocal cords vibrate at higher frequencies than longer or thicker ones. This explains why children, whose vocal cords are still growing, have higher voices than adults. Muscles in the throat can stretch the vocal cords tighter, letting people vary their pitch within a limited range.

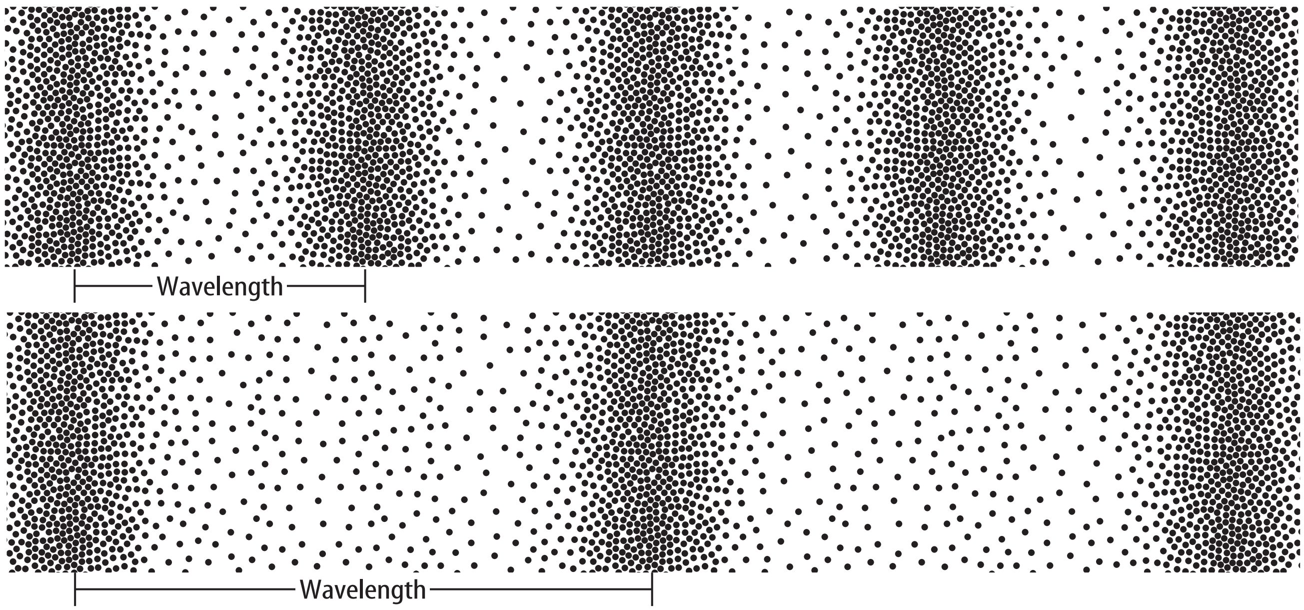

Figure 6 The upper sound wave has a shorter wavelength than the lower wave. If these two sound waves are traveling at the same speed, the upper sound wave has a higher frequency than the lower one. For this wave, more compressions and rarefactions will go past a point every second than for the lower wave.
Identify *the wave that has a higher pitch.*

Figure 7 Sonar uses reflected sound waves to determine the location and shape of an object.

Echoes

Sound reflects off of hard surfaces, just like a water wave bounces off the side of a bath tub. A reflected sound wave is called an **echo.** If the distance between you and a reflecting surface is great enough, you might hear the echo of your voice. This is because it might take a few seconds for the sound to travel to the reflecting surface and back to your ears.

Sonar systems use sound waves to map objects underwater, as shown in **Figure 7.** The amount of time it takes an echo to return depends on how far away the reflecting surface is. By measuring the length of time between emitting a pulse of sound and hearing its echo off the ocean floor, the distance to the ocean floor can be measured. Using this method, sonar can map the ocean floor and other undersea features. Sonar also can be used to detect submarines, schools of fish, and other objects.

Reading Check *How do sonar systems measure distance?*

Science Online

Topic: Sonar

Visit booko.msscience.com for Web links to information about how sonar is used to detect objects underwater.

Activity List and explain how several underwater discoveries were made using sonar.

INTEGRATE Life Science

Echolocation Some animals use a method called echolocation to navigate and hunt. Bats, for example, emit high-pitched squeaks and listen for the echoes. The type of echo it hears helps the bat determine exactly where an insect is, as shown in **Figure 8.** Dolphins also use a form of echolocation. Their high-pitched clicks bounce off of objects in the ocean, allowing them to navigate in the same way.

People with visual impairments also use echolocation. For example, they can interpret echoes to estimate the size and shape of a room by using their ears.

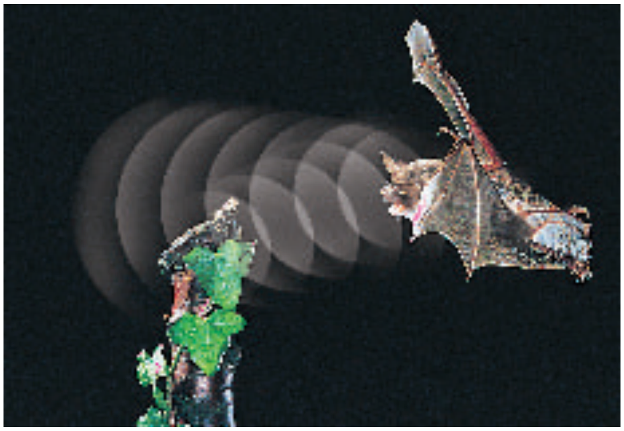

Figure 8 Bats use echolocation to hunt.
Explain *why this is a good technique for hunting at night.*

LAB

Observe and Measure Reflection of Sound

Real-World Question

Like all waves, sound waves can be reflected. When sound waves strike a surface, in what direction does the reflected sound wave travel? In this activity, you'll focus sound waves using cardboard tubes to help answer this question. How are the angles made by incoming and reflected sound waves related?

Goals

- **Observe** reflection of sound waves.
- **Measure** the angles incoming and reflected sound waves make with a surface.

Materials

20-cm to 30-cm-long cardboard tubes (2)
watch that ticks audibly
protractor

Safety Precautions

Procedure

1. Work in groups of three. Each person should listen to the watch—first without a tube and then through a tube. The person who hears the watch most easily is the listener.
2. One person should hold one tube at an angle with one end above a table. Hold the watch at the other end of the tube.
3. The listener should hold the second tube at an angle, with one end near his or her ear and the other end near the end of the first tube that is just above the table. The tubes should be in the same vertical plane.
4. Move the first tube until the watch sounds loudest. The listener might need to cover the other ear to block out background noises.
5. The third person should measure the angle that each tube makes with the table.

Conclude and Apply

1. **Compare** the angles the incoming and reflected waves make with the table.
2. The normal is a line at 90 degrees to the table at the point where reflection occurs. Determine the angles the incoming and reflected waves make with the normal.
3. The law of reflection states that the angles the incoming and reflected waves make with the normal are equal. Do sound waves obey the law of reflection?

Communicating Your Data

Make a scientific illustration to show how the experiment was done. Describe your results using the illustration.

Timothy Fuller