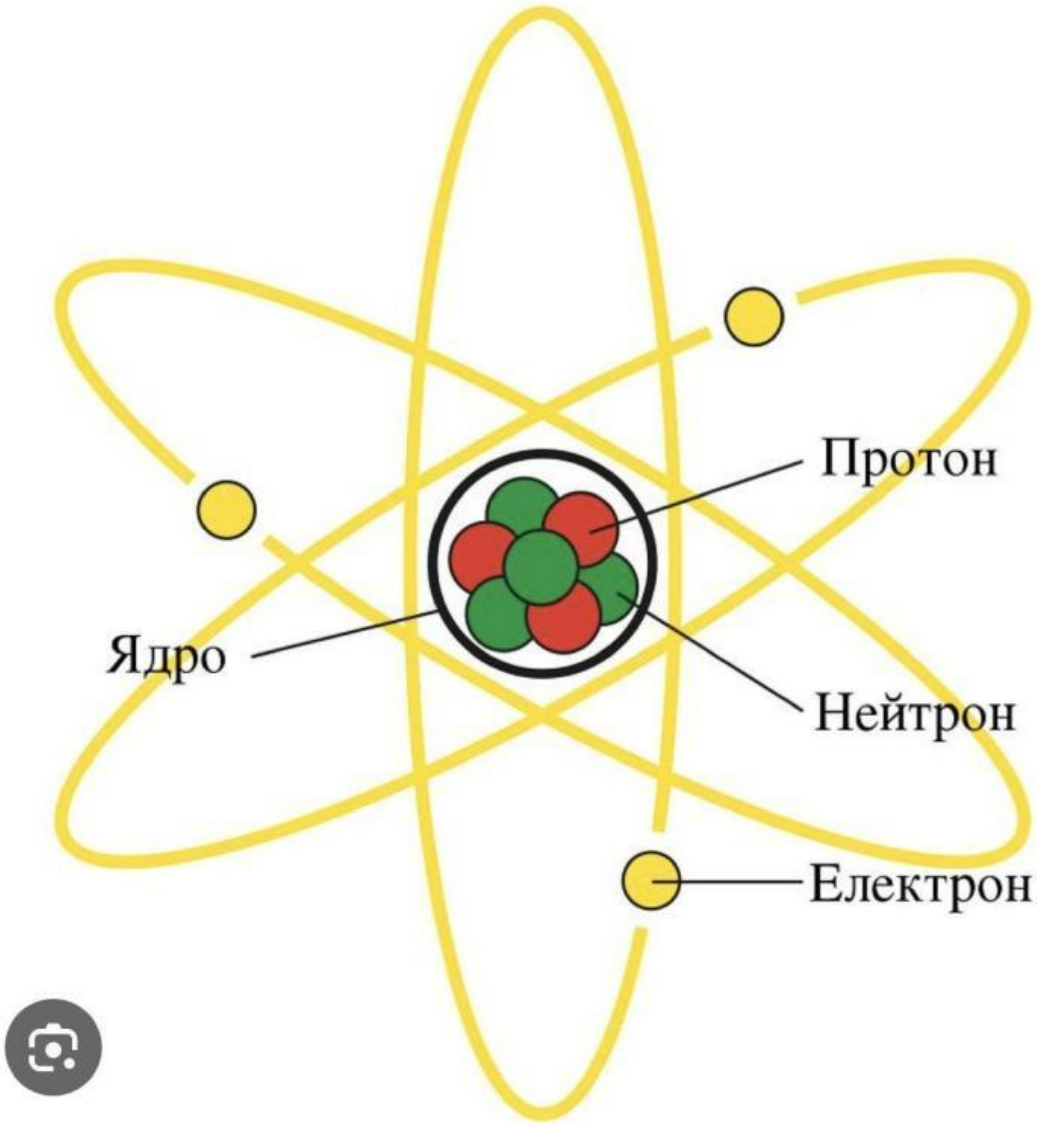
WHAT IS ATOM?



An _____ is the smallest unit of matter that retains the properties of an element. Atoms are the building blocks of all substances, whether solid,_____, or gas. Here's a breakdown of what an atom is:

Basic Structure of an _____

An atom consists of three main types of _____ particles:

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1. _____:
   - Positively charged particles found in the nucleus (center) of the atom.
   - The _____ of protons defines the atomic number of an element and determines which element it is. For example, carbon always has 6 protons.
2. _____:
   - Neutral (no charge) particles also located in the nucleus.
   - _____ help stabilize the nucleus, especially when there are multiple protons, since like charges repel each other.
3. _____
   - Negatively charged particles that move around the nucleus in regions called electron shells or orbitals.
   - Electrons are much ____than protons and neutrons and are responsible for chemical bonding and reactions between atoms.

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