

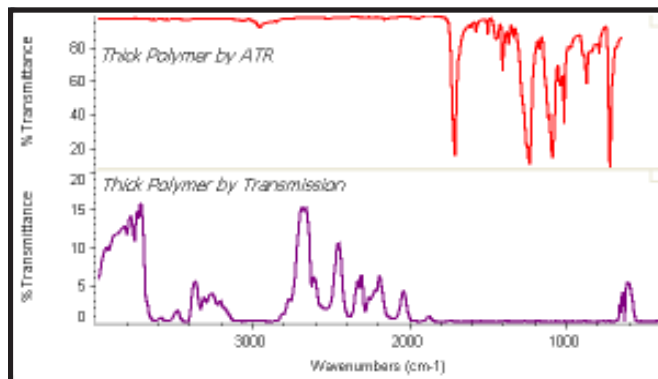
## ATR Theory and Applications

### Introduction

Attenuated Total Reflectance (ATR) is today the most widely used FTIR sampling tool. ATR generally allows qualitative or quantitative analysis of samples with little or no sample preparation which greatly speeds sample analysis. The main benefit of ATR sampling comes from the very thin sampling path length or depth of penetration of the IR beam into the sample. This is in contrast to traditional FTIR sampling by transmission where the sample must be diluted with IR transparent salt, pressed into a pellet or pressed to a thin film, prior to analysis to prevent totally absorbing bands in the infrared spectrum.

A comparison of transmission Vs ATR sampling result for a thick polymer sample is shown in Figure 1 where the sample is too thick for high quality transmission analysis (shown in the lower blue spectrum). In transmission spectroscopy, the IR beam passes through the sample and the effective path length is determined by the thickness of the sample and its orientation to the directional plane of the IR beam. Clearly in the example below the sample is too thick for transmission analysis because most of the IR bands are totally absorbing.

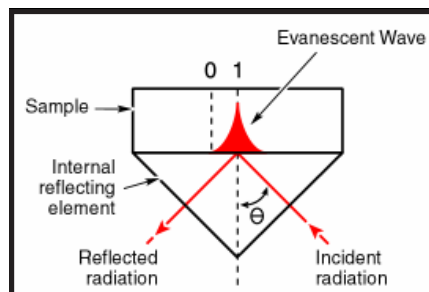
However, simply placing the thick sample on the ATR crystal (MIRacle with diamond crystal) and applying pressure generates a high quality spectral result (upper red spectrum) - identified by library search as a polybutylene terephthalate. The total analysis time for the thick polymer by ATR was less than 1 minute.



**Figure 1.** ATR and Transmission Spectra of a Thick Polymer Sample.

### How ATR Works

With ATR sampling we direct the IR beam into a crystal of relatively higher refractive index. The IR beam reflects from the internal surface of the crystal and creates an evanescent wave which projects orthogonally into the sample in intimate contact with the ATR crystal. Some of the energy of the evanescent wave is absorbed by the sample and the reflected radiation (some now absorbed by the sample) is returned to the detector. This ATR phenomenon is shown graphically for a single reflection ATR in Figure 2.



**Figure 2.** Graphical representation of a single reflection ATR

While the analysis of samples by ATR is easy, it is interesting and useful to be aware of each of the following experimental factors and how they affect the final spectrum:

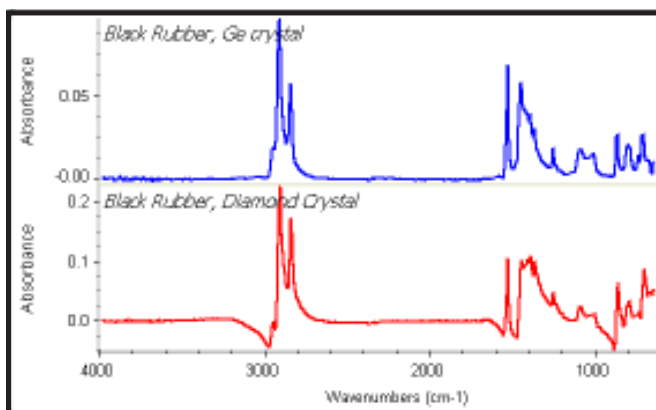
- Refractive indices of the ATR crystal and the sample
- Angle of incidence of the IR beam
- Critical angle
- Depth of penetration
- Wavelength of the IR beam
- Effective path length
- Number of reflections
- Quality of the sample contact with ATR crystal
- ATR crystal characteristics

The **refractive indices of the crystal and sample** govern the basic phenomenon of the ATR sampling technique by virtue of the following equation,

$$\theta_c = \sin^{-1} \left( \frac{n_2}{n_1} \right)$$

where  $n_2$  is the refractive index of the sample,  $n_1$  is the refractive index of the crystal and  $\theta_c$  is the **critical angle**.

When we exceed the critical angle, we will observe a purely ATR spectral result. If the critical angle is not met, we will observe a combined ATR and external reflectance result. This occurs if the angle of incidence of the IR beam is too low, if the refractive index of the crystal is too low, if the refractive index of the sample is too high or a combination of these 3 factors. In most cases this problem is not observed, however, a classic example of this is shown in Figure 3. The sample is a carbon filled rubber gasket (high refractive index) run using a single reflection ATR accessory (MIRacle) with Ge and diamond crystals. The upper (blue) spectrum is excellent, using the high refractive index Ge crystal. However, using a diamond crystal with its lower refractive index, we see derivative shaped absorbance bands indicating that we have not satisfied the critical angle requirement.



**Figure 3.** Spectra of Carbon Filled Rubber Gasket Sample Using MIRacle ATR with Ge and diamond Crystals

Another way to correct the spectral artifacts observed (above) in the black rubber sample spectrum would be to increase the angle of incidence in the ATR accessory to a value above the critical angle. Adjustment or selection of the angle of incidence is available in several of the PIKE Technologies ATR accessories.

Further useful consideration for ATR analysis is the **depth of penetration** ( $d_p$ ) of the IR beam into the sample. Technically, this is defined as the distance required for the electric field amplitude to fall to  $e^{-1}$  of its value at the surface and is further defined by:

$$d_p = \frac{\lambda}{2\pi(n_1^2 \sin^2 \theta - n_2^2)^{1/2}}$$

where  $\lambda$  is the wavelength of light and  $\theta$  is the angle of incidence of the IR beam relative to a perpendicular from the surface of the crystal. Typical depth of penetration in ATR ranges from about 0.5 microns up to about 5 microns depending upon these experimental values. As seen in the graphical representation of the ATR phenomenon, the strength of the evanescent wave decays rapidly as we

progress from the surface of the ATR crystal. If we wish to compare the sample absorbance of the ATR measurement with that of a transmission measurement, we need to calculate the volume of the evanescent wave, known as the effective penetration of the IR beam. The effective penetration ( $d_e$ ), is unique for parallel polarization and perpendicular polarization and these are defined by

$$d_{e\perp} = \frac{n_1^2 n_2 \cos \theta}{(n_1^2 - n_2^2)} \cdot \frac{\lambda}{\pi \sqrt{n_1^2 \sin^2 \theta - n_2^2}}$$

$$d_{e\parallel} = \frac{n_1^2 n_2 \cos \theta}{(n_1^2 - n_2^2)} \cdot \frac{2n_1^2 \sin^2 \theta - n_2^2}{(n_1^2 - n_2^2) \sin^2 \theta - n_2^2} \cdot \frac{\lambda}{\pi \sqrt{n_1^2 \sin^2 \theta - n_2^2}}$$

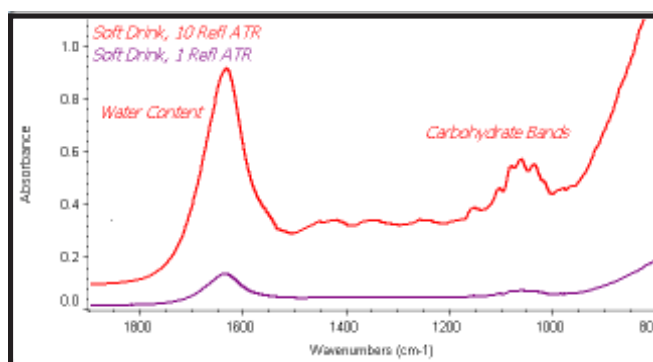
The effective penetration for an unpolarized IR beam is the average of the parallel and perpendicular penetration.

$$d_e = \frac{d_{e\perp} + d_{e\parallel}}{2}$$

Generally, a single reflection ATR is ideal for qualitative analysis, "What is my sample?" When we need to look at minor components of a sample for qualitative or quantitative analysis, then we need to increase the **effective path length** (EPL) by increasing the **number of reflections** ( $N$ ) within the ATR crystal. The effective path length in ATR is derived by the following equation:

$$EPL = N \times d_e$$

An example of the benefit of increased number of reflections is shown in Figure 4 for the spectral data for the analysis of carbohydrate content in a soft drink sample. The upper red spectrum is run using a 10 reflection HATR accessory. The lower blue spectrum is run using a single reflection ATR using an identical scaling factor. Clearly the minor carbohydrate bands are more readily apparent in the multi-reflection ATR accessory.



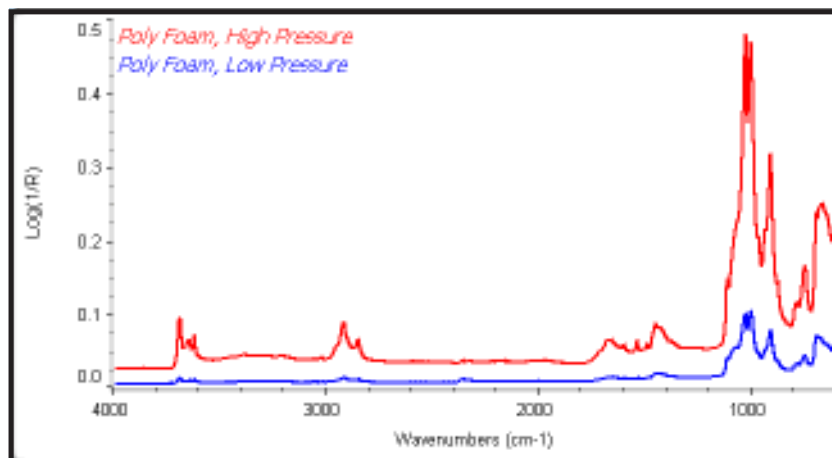
**Figure 4.** Single reflection (lower blue spectrum) Vs multi-reflection (upper red) HATR spectra for a soft drink sample

For your convenience we have calculated theoretical values of depth of penetration, effective penetration, and effective path length for typical combinations of crystal materials, angles of incidence, and number of reflections shown in Table 1. With the thin penetration of the evanescent wave into the sample, it is obvious that intimate contact of

ATR		ZnSe, Diamond			AMTIR			Ge		
$n_2 = 1.5$ $\lambda = 1000\text{cm}^{-1}$		$n_1 = 2.4$ $\theta = 38.7$			$n_1 = 2.5$ $\theta = 36.9$			$n_1 = 4.0$ $\theta = 22.0$		
$\theta$	$N$	$d_p$	$d_e$	EPL	$d_p$	$d_e$	EPL	$d_p$	$d_e$	EPL
45	1	2.00	1.01	1.01	1.7	0.81	0.81	0.66	0.22	0.22
45	3	2.00	1.01	3.03	1.7	0.81	2.42	0.66	0.22	0.65
45	10	2.00	1.01	10.1	1.7	0.81	8.07	0.66	0.22	2.16
30	1	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	1.2	0.84	0.84
30	3	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	1.2	0.84	2.53
30	10	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	1.2	0.84	8.42
60	1	1.11	0.27	0.27	1.02	0.25	0.25	0.51	0.096	0.096
60	3	1.11	0.27	0.83	1.02	0.25	0.74	0.51	0.096	0.29
60	10	1.11	0.27	2.77	1.02	0.25	2.45	0.51	0.096	0.96

**Table 1.** Depth of penetration and effective penetration for typical ATR crystal materials and number of ATR reflections.

the sample be made onto the surface of the ATR crystal. For liquid or pliable samples, **quality of sample contact with the ATR crystal** is generally not a problem. For rigid, irregular shaped or porous samples, high pressure sufficient to deform the sample will increase the



**Figure 5.** Effect of pressure upon quality of ATR spectra shown for a foam sample

extent of sample contact and thereby increase sample absorbance. This is shown in Figure 5 in the spectral data collected for a porous foam polymer using a MIRacle ATR with an AMTIR crystal. The lower blue spectrum was collected with low pressure applied to the foam sample, whereas the upper red spectrum is produced with high pressure. The ATR absorbance using high pressure is about 10 times greater than with low pressure – all other sampling factors are identical. For rigid, crystalline, or hard, irregular surface samples we recommend a single reflection Diamond MIRacle ATR because it is relatively easy to

pH range for acid or caustic samples. No individual crystal type will solve all applications, so PIKE Technologies offer a very broad range of choices for ATR. Table 2 will give you some guidelines for selection of your ATR crystal. Factors for selection of crystal type include water solubility, pH range, and hardness.

### Summary

ATR is a leading FTIR sampling tool due to its ease-of-use and speed of analysis. ATR typically eliminates sample preparation - saving considerable analysis time. Further optimization of the accessory can be made for sample form number of reflections within the crystal, angle of incidence of the IR beam within the crystal and amount of pressure applied to solid samples. Selection of the best ATR crystal and accessory further enhances FTIR sampling success.

PIKE Technologies offer a complete line of ATR accessories to accommodate routine as well as advanced FTIR sampling requirements.

	$n_1$	$d_p$ , for $n_2 = 1.5$ $\lambda = 1000\text{ cm}^{-1}$ @ 45 deg	Water Solubility, g/100g	pH Range	Hardness, Kg/mm <sup>2</sup>
AMTIR	2.5	1.46	Insoluble	1 - 9	170
Diamond	2.4	1.66	Insoluble	1 - 14	5,700
Germanium	4.0	0.65	Insoluble	1 - 14	550
KRS-5	2.4	1.73	0.05	5 - 8	40
Silicon	3.4	0.84	Insoluble	1 - 12	1,150
ZnS	2.2	2.35	Insoluble	5 - 9	240
ZnSe	2.4	1.66	Insoluble	5 - 9	120

**Table 2.** ATR Crystal Properties. Choice of multiple crystal plates expands the range of applications for ATR.