

Wilhelm Eduard Weber Biography

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Contents

Wilhelm Eduard Weber Biography.....	1
Contents.....	2
Biography.....	3

Biography

Wilhelm Eduard Weber was a German physicist interested in **magnetism** and **electricity** and noted for contributions that proved crucial to the development of the electromagnetic theory of **light**. Weber was born in Wittenberg, Germany. His father was a theologian and moved the family to Halle, where Weber attended the University of Halle and received his doctorate in physics in 1826. In 1831, he was appointed professor of physics at Göttingen, where he began a close collaboration and friendship with physicist **Carl Friedrich Gauss** who was also interested in electricity and magnetism. With Gauss, Weber worked on terrestrial magnetism and developed several magnetic instruments, including an instrument for measuring small electrical currents called the electrodynamicometer.

Weber's career was temporarily sidetracked in 1837 when Weber joined six of his colleagues at the university to protest against the abrogation of the German constitution by the King of Hanover. Known as the "Göttingen Seven," all the faculty members were dismissed from their positions. Weber remained in Göttingen without an official appointment until 1843, when he was appointed a physics professor in Leipzig. Three years later, Weber published *Electrodynamical Measurements*, in which he modified the central **force** concepts of physics and established an absolute system of electrical units. After returning to his former position at Göttingen in 1848, Weber worked on the ratio between the electrodynamic and electrostatic units of charge that became fundamental to the later development of the electromagnetic theory of light. Weber continued his work in **electrodynamics** and the electrical structure of **matter**. The magnetic unit, the weber, is named after him.

In addition to his work in magnetism and electricity, Weber co-wrote a treatise on walking called the *Mechanics of the Human Walking Tool* with his brother Eduard Friedrich Weber. With another brother, Ernst Heinrich Weber, he published a book on wave **motion**. Weber died in Göttingen at the age of 86.