

Water Absorption Spectrum

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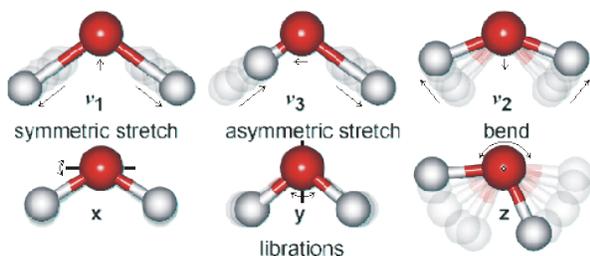
Water and global warming

Water is the main absorber of the sunlight in the atmosphere. The 13 million million tons of water in the atmosphere (~0.33% by weight) is responsible for about 70% of all atmospheric absorption of radiation, mainly in the infrared region where water shows strong absorption. It contributes significantly to the greenhouse effect ensuring a warm habitable planet, but operates a negative feedback effect, due to cloud formation reflecting the sunlight away, to attenuate global warming. The water content of the atmosphere varies about 100-fold between the hot and humid tropics and the cold and dry polar ice deserts.

Absorption spectra of gaseous, liquid and solid water

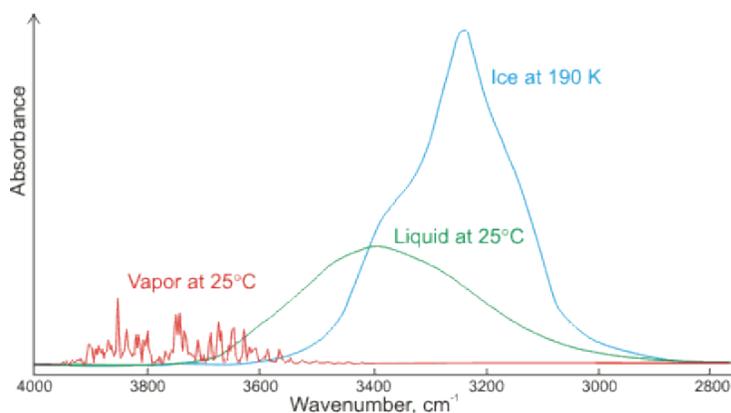
The water absorption spectrum is very complex. Water's vapor spectroscopy has been recently reviewed [348]. The water molecule may vibrate in a number of ways. In the gas state, the vibrations [607] involve combinations of symmetric stretch (ν_1), asymmetric stretch (ν_3) and bending (ν_2) of the covalent bonds with absorption intensity (H_2^{16}O) $\nu_1; \nu_2; \nu_3 = 0.07; 1.47; 1.00$ [8]. The stretch vibrations of HDO refer to the single bond vibrations, not the combined movements of both bonds. Gas phase rotations [1701] are complex and are combined with these vibrations. Rotations in the liquid phase are totally dominated by hydrogen bonding. The lowest *ortho-para* transitions are given elsewhere.

| Main vibrations of water isotopologues [607, 1728] | | | |
|--|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| Gas | ν_1, cm^{-1} | ν_2, cm^{-1} | ν_3, cm^{-1} |
| H_2^{16}O | 3657.1 | 1594.7 | 3755.9 |
| H_2^{17}O | 3653.1 | 1591.3 | 3748.3 |
| H_2^{18}O | 3649.7 | 1588.3 | 3741.6 |
| HD^{16}O | 2723.7 | 1403.5 | 3707.5 |
| HD^{17}O | | 1399.7 | |
| HD^{18}O | 2709.3 | 1396.3 | 3696.3 |
| D_2^{16}O | 2671.6 | 1178.4 | 2787.7 |
| D_2^{17}O | | 1174.0 | |
| D_2^{18}O | 2660.8 | 1170.2 | 2767.5 |
| HT^{16}O | 2299.8 | 1332.5 | 3716.6 |
| T_2^{16}O | 2237.2 | 995.4 | 2366.6 |



Shown opposite are the main vibrations occurring in water. The movements are animated using the cursor. The dipole moments change in the direction of the movement of the oxygen atoms as shown by the arrows. As the H-atoms are light, the vibrations have large amplitudes.

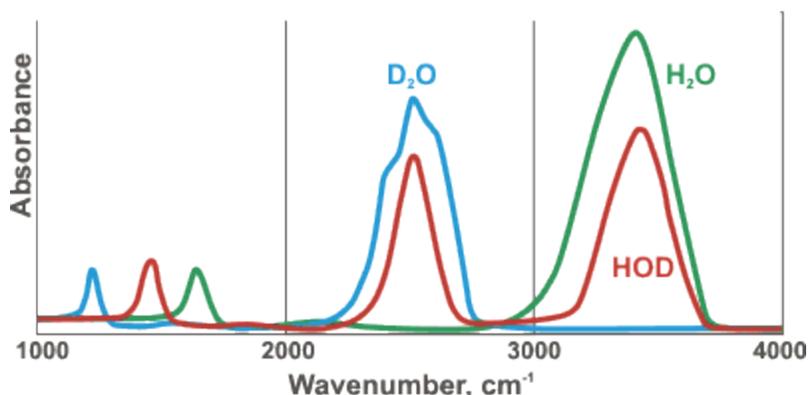
The water molecule has a very small moment of inertia on rotation which gives rise to rich combined vibrational-rotational spectra in the vapor containing tens of thousands to millions of absorption lines. In the liquid, rotations tend to be restricted by hydrogen bonds, giving the librations. Also, spectral lines are broader causing overlap of many of the absorption peaks.



Opposite is shown a comparison of the gas, liquid and solid spectra of the same amount of H_2O [1392]. On mousing over the Figure, the high (HDL) and low (LDL) density liquid water forms are shown [1738].^j The main stretching band in liquid water is shifted to a lower frequency (ν_3 , 3490 cm^{-1} and ν_1 , 3280 cm^{-1} [8]) and the bending frequency increased (ν_2 , 1644 cm^{-1} [942]) by hydrogen bonding. As seen, increased strength of hydrogen bonding typically shifts the stretch vibration to lower frequencies (red-shift) with greatly increased intensity in the infrared (but not Raman) due to the increased dipoles. Blue-shifting hydrogen bonds are described elsewhere. [[Back to Top](#) ▲]

The vibrational spectra of liquid water

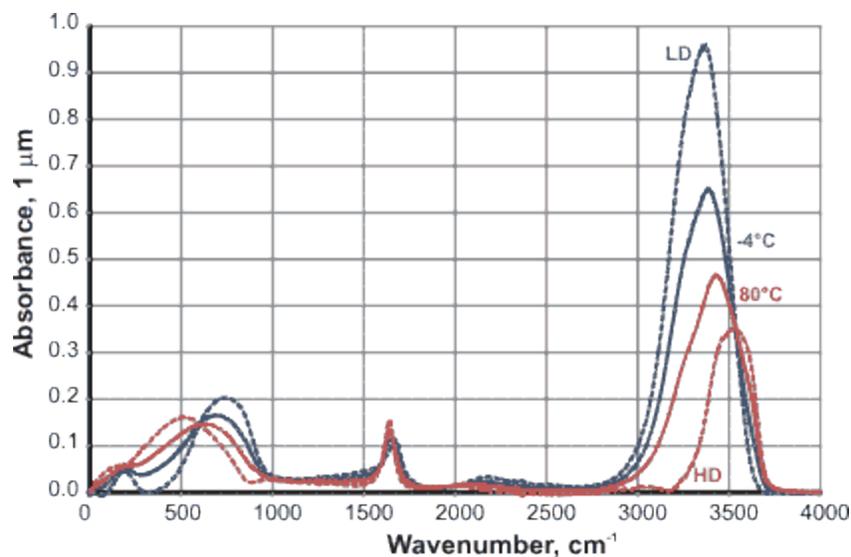
| Main vibrations of liquid ordinary and heavy water | | | | | |
|--|-------------------------------------|--|-------------------------------------|--|------------------------------------|
| Vibration(s) [942] | liquid H_2O (25 °C) | | liquid D_2O (25 °C) | | liquid T_2O [1848] |
| | ν , cm^{-1} | E_0 , $\text{M}^{-1} \text{cm}^{-1}$ | ν , cm^{-1} | E_0 , $\text{M}_1^{-1} \text{cm}^{-1}$ | ν , cm^{-1} |
| ν_2 | 1643.5 | 21.65 | 1209.4 | 17.10 | 1024 |
| combination of ν_2 + libration | 2127.5 | 3.46 | 1555.0 | 1.88 | |
| ν_1 , ν_3 , and overtone of ν_2 | 3404.0 ^e | 100.61 | 2504.0 | 69.68 | 2200 |



HDO (50 mole % H₂O plus 50 mole % D₂O; ~50% HDO, ~25% H₂O, ~25% D₂O) has maxima at 3415 cm⁻¹, 2495 cm⁻¹, 1850 cm⁻¹ and 1450 cm⁻¹ assigned to OH stretch, OD stretch, ^h combination of ν_2 + libration and HDO bending respectively [786] (see right for comparative spectra). HTO and DTO (50 mole % mixtures as HDO above) have ν_2 bend maxima at 1388 cm⁻¹ and 1130 cm⁻¹ respectively [1848].

Variations in the environment around each liquid water molecule gives rise to considerable line broadening with vibration shifts in a hydrogen-bond-donating water molecule being greater than in a hydrogen-bond accepting molecule but both acting in the same direction [679], and accumulating with the number of hydrogen bonds. The strength of the hydrogen bonding depends on the cooperative/anticooperative nature of the surrounding hydrogen bonds with strongest hydrogen bonds giving the lowest vibrational frequencies [852]. Stretching frequency increases about 360 (at 3.1 Å) -1000 (at 2.6 Å) cm⁻¹Å⁻¹ with increasing O...O distance and about 9 cm⁻¹ degree⁻¹ with increasing O-H...O bend [446]. The absorption intensity of these bands is $\nu_1; \nu_2; \nu_3 = 0.87; 0.33; 1.00$ [8]. In supercooled water, the spectra is shifted to lower frequency with a 70 cm⁻¹ shift of the stretch frequency and 30% increase in its intensity between 298 K and 238 K [1065]. Ultimately a stretch peak at 3120 cm⁻¹ dominates, as it also does in amorphous ice (LDA) [1252]. In hexagonal ice, these bands are shifted further (ν_1 , 3085 cm⁻¹, ν_2 , 1650 cm⁻¹, ν_3 , 3220 cm⁻¹).

In liquid water the molecular stretch vibrations shift to higher frequency, on raising the temperature (as hydrogen bonding weakens, the covalent O-H bonds strengthen causing them to vibrate at higher frequencies) whereas the intermolecular vibrations shift to lower frequencies and the molecular bend vibration peak shifts to lower frequencies and becomes both narrower [696] and stronger. These differences between stretch and bend vibrations are due to the increased importance of intermolecular hydrogen bonding at lower temperatures that tends to reduce intermolecular bending whilst encouraging stretching. Thus in the extreme non-hydrogen bonded state, the 'dangling' O-H bond stretch frequency at surfaces where the water molecule has three hydrogen bonds (two accepting and one donating) is at 3697 cm⁻¹ [1246]. Raising the temperature also lowers the intensity of the stretching bands. This divergent behavior of bending and stretching vibrations allows their contributions to combination bands to be discerned. Thus, combinations of stretching vibrations shift to higher frequency with temperature with this trend reduced when bending vibrations are also combined. As examples, the first overtone combination of symmetric and asymmetric stretching shows a shift from strongly hydrogen-bonded structures (6707 cm⁻¹) to weakly hydrogen bonded structures (7082 cm⁻¹) with increasing temperature [237], and the combination band at about 5200 cm⁻¹ shifts to slightly higher wavenumbers with reduced hydrogen bond strength [282]. The second overtone of the stretching band gives rise to a significant peak in the near-infrared spectrum (λ 970 nm).



Recent work, using attenuated total reflectance (ATR) infrared spectroscopy, shows isosbestic points for both ordinary and heavy liquid water, with respect to temperature. For H₂O these are at around 600, 1600, 1680, & 3550 cm⁻¹ [1738], in agreement with earlier work [530 ,699].⁹ Shown opposite are the ATR spectra of liquid water at -4 °C (blue solid line; 61% LD, 39% HD) and 80 °C (red solid line; 31% LD, 69% HD) and those of the low density (LD, blue dashed line) and high density (HD; red dashed line) forms that make up the liquid water [1738] in a linear combination. Similar conclusions have been gained from Raman spectroscopy where the LD peak is analysed as tetrahedral fully-hydrogen bonded H₂O molecules and the HD peak analysed as molecules with single acceptor and donor hydrogen bonds [1980]. Also, similar conclusions (at different wavenumbers) are drawn for D₂O [1738]. Unsurprisingly, such changes in absorption with temperature extend into the near infrared and visible spectrum [1974]. These conclusions are in qualitative agreement with recent wide-angle X-ray diffraction measurements [1755] and supportive of progressively changing two-phase models such as described here.

Increasing the pressure on water decreases the O····O distances (graphed elsewhere) so increasing the covalent O-H distances and lowering their stretch frequency [804]. Raised pressure also causes a reduction in long, weak or broken bonds and an increase in bent and short, strong hydrogen bonds [804].

The overtone bands of water (~1100 nm - 2500 nm, in a scientific discipline known as AquaPhotomics) have been shown to be good discriminatory, and non-destructive, indicators of changes in aqueous structuring in disease diagnosis and protein conformation and have aided the understanding of the role of water in biological systems [1615a]. A database of such interactions is being built up [1615b], with comparison being made using polar graphs (Aquagrams) [1615c].

The spectra for isotopic variants of water (for example, HDO, D₂O and H₂¹⁸O) are all different; in particular the H-O (~3400 cm⁻¹) and D-O (~2500 cm⁻¹) stretching vibrations are not connected in HDO but the related vibrations in H₂O and D₂O involve both hydrogen atoms.

| Assignment of the IR vibrational absorption spectrum of liquid water* | | | | | |
|---|------------------|-----------------------------|--|------------------|--------------------------------|
| Wavelength | cm ⁻¹ | Assignment | Wavelength** | cm ⁻¹ | Assignment |
| 0.2 mm | 50 | hydrogen bond bend | 1200 nm | 8330 | $av_1 + v_2 + bv_3; a+b=2$ |
| 55 μm | 183.4 | hydrogen bond stretch | 970 nm | 10310 | $av_1 + bv_3; a+b=3$ |
| 25 μm | 395.5 | L ₁ , librations | 836 nm | 11960 | $av_1 + v_2 + bv_3; a+b=3$ |
| 15 μm | 686.3 | L ₂ , librations | 739 nm | 13530 | $av_1 + bv_3; a+b=4$ |
| 6.08 μm | 1645 | v_2 , bend | 660 nm | 15150 | $av_1 + v_2 + bv_3; a+b=4$ |
| 4.65 μm | 2150 | $v_2 + L_2^b$ | 606 nm | 16500 | $av_1 + bv_3; a+b=5$ [526] |
| 3.05 μm | 3277 | v_1 , symmetric stretch | 514 nm | 19460 | $av_1 + bv_3; a+b=6$ [526] |
| 2.87 μm | 3490 | v_3 , asymmetric stretch | 449 nm | 22270 | $av_1 + bv_3; a+b=7$ [1937] |
| 1900 nm | 5260 | $av_1 + v_2 + bv_3; a+b=1$ | 401 nm | 24940 | $av_1 + bv_3; a+b=8$ [1937] |
| 1470 nm | 6800 | $av_1 + bv_3; a+b=2$ | Note that a and b are integers, ≥ 0 . | | |

* Raman peaks are given in [805].

**Wavelength (nm) = $10^7/\text{wavenumber (cm}^{-1}\text{)}$ (nm \sim 3.3 attosecond)

The near-infrared (NIR) bands (at about λ 970-1940 nm) are suited to rapid non-destructive water determination [479], all shifting a few nm to longer wavelength (lower frequency) with strengthening hydrogen bonding due to shifts from high density water (that is, increasing CS) to low density water (that is, increasing ES) [489]. A shoulder at about 3250 cm⁻¹ on the side of the only strongly active Raman peak, and recently described in the IR spectrum at 3220 cm⁻¹ [699], (symmetric O-H stretch, ν_1) of liquid water has been assigned to the collective in-phase symmetric O-H vibrations of strongly tetrahedrally-bonded water patches. The ratio of this to the remaining peak at about 3400 cm⁻¹ has been used to determine the fraction of such water but such comparisons, although commonly used, should be treated with caution, as their absorbencies are unlikely to be identical and other possible vibrations, such as the first bend (ν_2) overtone, will interfere. This remaining peak has been analyzed in many ways (for example, as zero, single, double and triple coordinated hydrogen-bonded water) but most convincingly in terms of three-coordinate (double acceptor single donor, 3400 cm⁻¹; single acceptor double donor, 3535 cm⁻¹) and two-coordinate (single acceptor single donor, 3630 cm⁻¹) hydrogen-bonded water molecules [699]. There is clearly much structural information hidden in the vibrational spectra of water, if only it can be unambiguously interpreted (see methods page). Some success has recently been made using femtosecond mid-infrared nonlinear spectroscopy [189, 190] and the theoretical Raman spectra of water clusters [483]. ▲

In liquid water and ice the infrared and Raman spectra are far more complex than the vapor due to vibrational overtones and combinations with librations (restricted rotations; that is, rocking motions). These librations are due to the restrictions imposed by hydrogen bonding (minor L₁ band 395.5 cm⁻¹; major L₂ band 686.3 cm⁻¹; both for liquid water at 0 °C, the absorbance of L₁ increasing with increasing temperature whereas L₂ absorbance decreases but broadens with reduced wavenumber with increasing temperature [177]). Ice has a sharper major band at 819 cm⁻¹ (-10 °C) with a very minor band at about 510 cm⁻¹ [1219]. The librations depend on the moments of inertia such that the

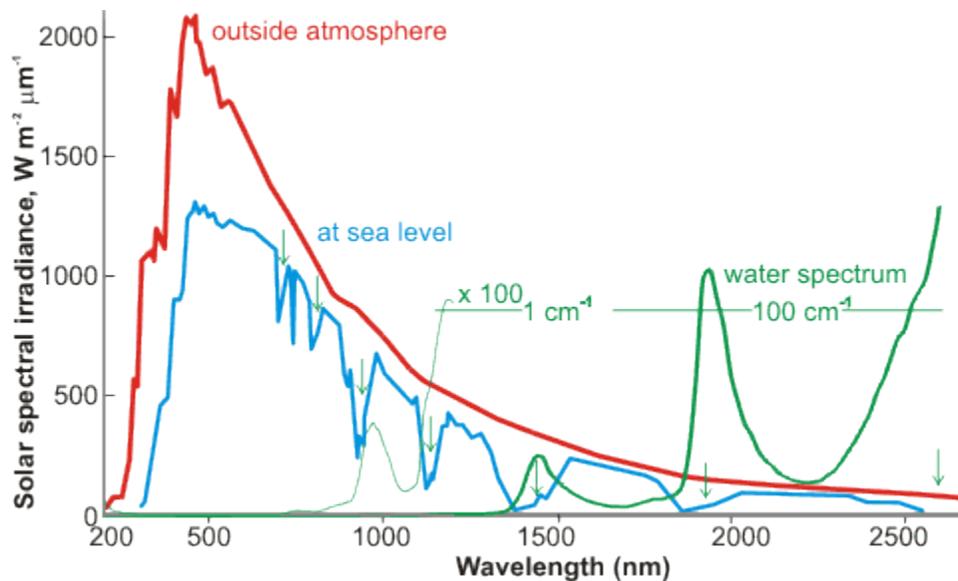
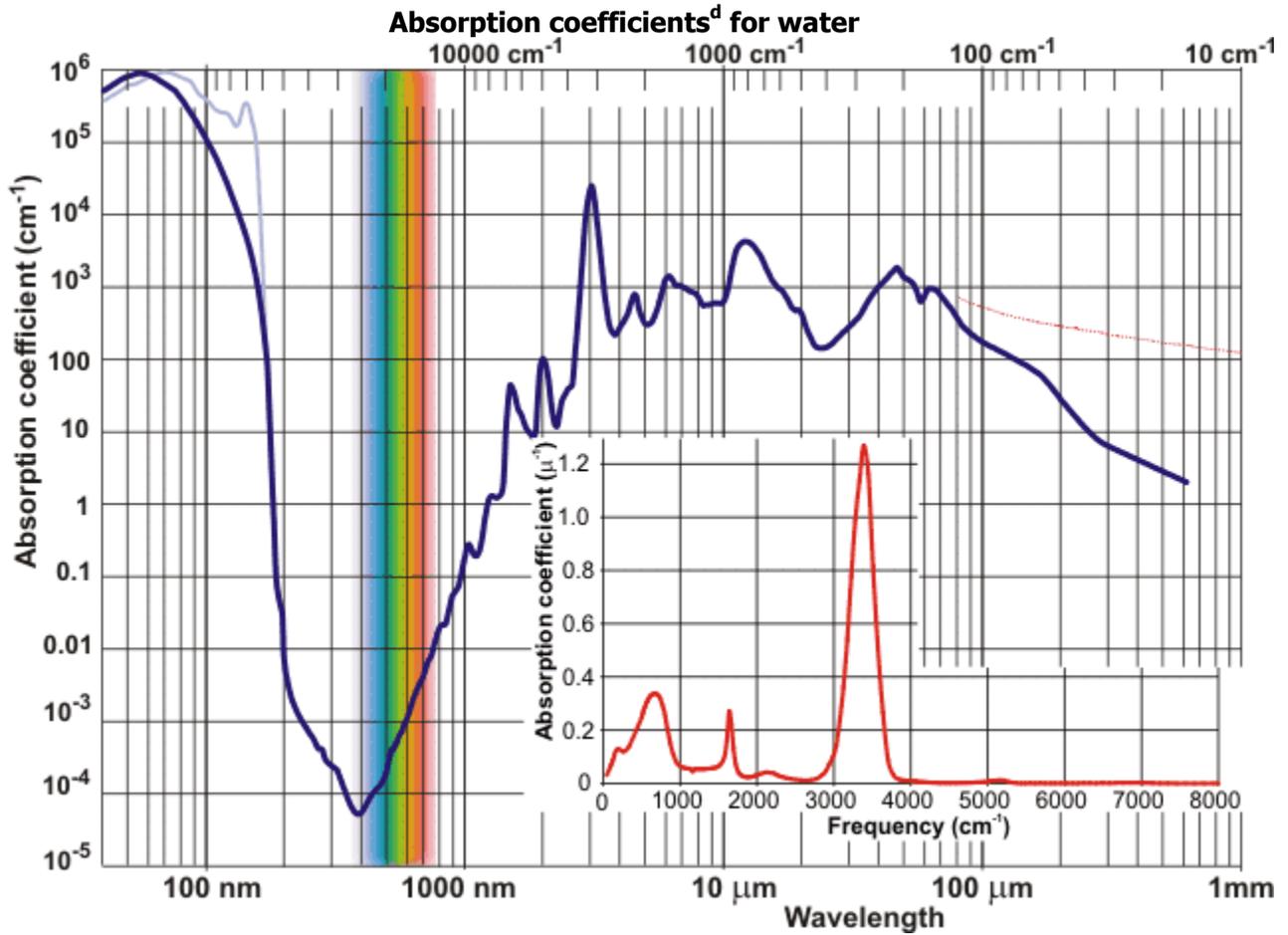
almost doubling of the moments of inertia of D₂O, relative to H₂O, reduces the frequencies by about a factor of $\sqrt{2}$. Cluster vibrations such as translational vibrations involve combinations of hydrogen bond O-H \cdots O stretching and bending at around 200 cm⁻¹ (6THz) [240] (S or connectivity band, 183.4 cm⁻¹ (5.5 THz); at 0 °C, the hydrogen bond stretch absorbance increasing with decreasing temperature [819]^a; with a major sharp band at 215 cm⁻¹ (6.4 THz) and a minor sharp band at 155 cm⁻¹(4.6 THz) in ice Ih at -10 °C [1219]. These involve hydrogen-bonded network movements along linear or near-linear hydrogen bondsⁱ and show relatively small differences between H₂O and D₂O, due to their slightly different masses [1004]. These vibrations around 5 THz (165 cm⁻¹) overlap with the longitudinal acoustic (LA) phonon modes (i.e. hydrogen bond network vibrations in the direction of propagation). The Raman spectrum also involves an overlapping band involving the reorienting of the molecular dipoles around the hydrogen bonds [1384]. Some report bending vibrations of the hydrogen bonds also occur, due to out of alignment translations relative to the hydrogen bonds (B band \sim 40 - 60 cm⁻¹ (1.2-1.8 THz); at 0 °C, the absorbance increasing with temperature [608]) [1004]. It seems likely that this 60 cm⁻¹ peak is strongly localized within a local cluster and not connected with the more extensive hydrogen-bonded network [1549].^f These vibrations around 1 THz (33 cm⁻¹) overlap with the transverse acoustic (TA) phonon modes (i.e. hydrogen bond network vibrations perpendicular to the direction of propagation). Also in liquid water there is a small but significant combination band (IR and Raman) of the bending (ν_2) and libration modes at 2125 cm⁻¹ (2270 cm⁻¹ in ice Ih; the 'association band').^b

A contribution to the Raman scattering of water at 50 cm⁻¹ (1.5 THz) has been attributed to the low-frequency vibrations of oxygen-oxygen bonds at the vertices of pentagonal dodecahedral structures [165] or simply O \cdots O \cdots O bending motions [901]. Such low-frequency features (centered around 60 cm⁻¹, 1.8 THz) are also observed in the spectra of dense non-associated liquids, such as the noble gases, and may be attributed to non-bonded 'cage effects' where translations are frustrated [448]. This same effect, however, may also operate within hydrogen bonded 'cage effects' consistent with the 60 cm⁻¹ absorption band [900]. Further confirmation of the hydrogen-bonding source for this absorption comes from the use of an intense source of far infrared radiation showing temperature dependent peaks at a number of wavelengths in the 40-90 cm⁻¹ (1.2-2.7 THz) range [656]. The infrared spectrum runs into the β -relaxation band (\sim 0.2 THz; due to rattling of molecules in a cage of surrounding molecules) and absorption due to microwave radiation at longer wavelengths. This interacts with the water dipole, moving the molecules backwards and forwards and so stretching and bending the hydrogen bonds, which generates heat. If the radiation is at too high a frequency ($>$ 1000 GHz, $\lambda <$ 0.3 mm), the molecules do not have time to react to the electromagnetic field changes and no heat is generated. If the radiation is at lower frequencies ($<$ 1 GHz, $\lambda >$ 30 cm), the molecules react to the electromagnetic field changes but so slowly that effectively no heat is generated. Pure water is almost totally transparent to such low frequency radiation. The maximum absorption varies to higher frequencies at higher temperatures when the weaker hydrogen bonding allows a quicker response to changes in the field [136]. Microwave ovens typically use radiation at 2.450 GHz (λ 12.24 cm). More details on the response of water to microwave radiation are available on another page.

Anions may be classified as kosmotropes or chaotropes according to how the effect the water's stretch vibrations; ionic kosmotropes (for example, F⁻) causing broadening and movement to lower wavenumbers whereas chaotropes (for example, I⁻) causing narrowing and movement to higher wavenumbers [758]. Primarily this seems due to water's ability to hydrogen bond to the anions. The vibrational spectra of H₃O₂⁻ and H₅O₂⁺ are described on another page.

The reported structuring absorption of sound by water is not generally accepted. [[Back to Top](#) 

The visible and UV spectra of liquid water



Water is almost perfectly transparent to 'visible' light, a property which is made good use of by photosynthesis and allowing production of both biomass and oxygen. However, some absorption is

achieved by atmospheric water (see right, which shows seven absorption bands). Water is very slightly blue in color [131]^c as overtone and combination vibrational absorption bands (albeit far less intense, see above [130]) extend through the red part of the visible spectrum with a small peak at 739 nm and shoulder at 836 nm, plus a smaller fourth overtone of the $\nu_1:\nu_3$ stretch at 606 nm, and very small fifth overtone (at 514 nm) and combined overtone (at 660 nm) bands.

These overtone and combination vibrational bands increase and sharpen somewhat with increasing temperature [268] in line with the expectation from the two state water model. This absorption spectrum of water (red light absorbs 100 times more than blue light), together with the five-times greater scattering of blue light over red light, contributes to the blue color of lake, river and ocean waters. Colloidal silica may contribute to the outstanding blue color of certain, often hydrothermal, pools and lakes [372]. Ice is also blue [159] for similar reasons but liquid D₂O does not absorb in the red region (as the absorption band is shifted into the infrared) and is blue solely because of the light scattering effect [159].

Although the absorptions of water's overtone bands within the visible spectrum are quite small ($\sim 0.3\text{-}0.01\text{ m}^{-1}$), they are sufficient to create spectral niches amongst photosynthetic organisms; thus directing water ecology and evolution [1281].

The first peak in the far UV of gaseous water (166.5 nm [902], shown light blue in the spectrum above) is due to excitation from the occupied p_z^2 -type molecular $1b_1$ orbital (interactive orbitals are available, COW only [Plug-in, ActiveX]). Absorption of UV close-by (~ 125 nm), excites the $3a_1$ orbital leading to dissociation into OH + H (photodissociation; higher energy absorption produces charged fragments [1299]). Such dissociation can also be achieved by consecutive absorption of two 266 nm photons [589]. Absorption of two higher energy photons, at 200 nm, gives rise to a hydrated electron by $\text{H}_2\text{O} + h\nu \rightarrow \text{H}_2\text{O}^+ + e^-_{\text{aq}}$ [1057]. Inelastic x-ray scattering studies find this far UV peak to be absent in liquid water [355], where the major peak is at about 56 nm. [[Back to Top](#) ▲]

Footnotes

^a Dielectric studies showed an opposite effect with the absorbance at around 200 cm^{-1} increasing with increasing temperature to about $30\text{ }^\circ\text{C}$ before reducing with increasing temperature due to hydrogen bond breakage [608]. The discrepancy may be due to additional relaxation processes detected by these dielectric studies in addition to the hydrogen bond stretching detected by infrared spectroscopy [819]. The Raman absorption at 180 cm^{-1} has been proposed to be used to monitor tetrahedrally hydrogen bonded water molecules ('bound' water) [1963]. [[Back](#)]

^b This band may be due to third overtone of the libration band, with the second overtone introducing asymmetry into the bend (ν_2) vibration [699b]. The dependence of this band on hydrogen bonding makes it sensitive to changes in liquid and solution structuring, although this importance is seemingly often overlooked. [[Back](#)]

^c The sky is blue due to molecular light scattering, with neither tiny air-borne particles nor its small and variable content of gaseous water having significant effect [710]. [[Back](#)]

^d This curve(s) has been generated using data for liquid and frozen water to give a continuous curve showing the main features. For exact data please consult the original references [130]. The absorption coefficient $\mu_{\text{a}}(\lambda)$, with units of cm^{-1} , at a particular wavelength (λ) is given by the equation

$$\frac{I}{I_0} = e^{-\mu_{\text{a}}(\lambda)l}$$

where I is the transmitted intensity of the light, I_0 is the incident intensity of the light

and l is the path length (cm). The absorbance (A , in optical density units) is defined by the equation

$A = -\text{Log}_{10} \left(\frac{I}{I_0} \right)$. The transmittance (T) of a sample is defined by $T = \left(\frac{I}{I_0} \right)$. The molar extinction coefficient $\epsilon_{(\lambda)}$, with units liters mole⁻¹ cm⁻¹, is defined by the equation $A = \epsilon_{(\lambda)} c l$ where c is the molar concentration (= 55.345 M for liquid water at 25 °C) and l is the path length (cm).

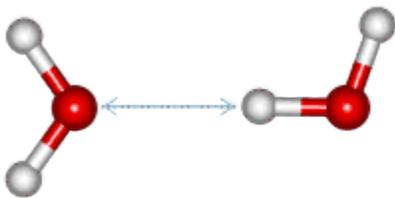
Comparison of these definitions shows that $A = \frac{\mu_a l}{2.303}$ and $\epsilon_{(\lambda)} = \frac{\mu_a(\lambda)}{2.303 c}$ (note that $\log_e(10) \approx 2.303$). [Back]

^e This band in the Raman spectrum has been clearly separated into three peaks at ~3210, 3450 and 3650 cm⁻¹ [1310]. The two dominant components at 3210 and 3450 cm⁻¹ were assigned to ice-like (for example ES) and disordered (for example CS) [1310]. [Back]

^f This assignment, for 40 cm⁻¹ in the far infrared, is disputed as being caused by collective vibrations, with no temperature dependence found between 10 °C-70 °C [1676]. [Back]

^g The presence of isosbestic points have been disputed [526], but has also been found by Raman spectroscopy of optically levitated supercooled micron-sized water droplets between -34.6 °C and 46.0 °C at about 3340 cm⁻¹ [1909] and between -25 °C and 25.0 °C at 3330 cm⁻¹ using a confocal micro-Raman system in a backscattering geometry [1980] . [Back]

^h The peak at 2495 cm⁻¹ can be used to quantify moderate HDO contents. [Back]



ⁱ The peak at about 200 cm⁻¹ (~6 THz) involves molecular translational vibrations involving the hydrogen bond (but not the O-H covalent bond), such as shown right [1992]. [Back]

^j Liquid water can be considered as a mixture of high (HDL) and low (LDL) density liquid water forms. [Back]

Source:<http://www1.lsbu.ac.uk/water/vibrat.html>