

## **Potential energy**

Objects gain potential energy when forces act on them or within them. For example, when a spring is squashed, the repulsive forces between its atoms try to return it to its natural length. We say that the squashed spring stores elastic potential energy.

A boulder at the top of a cliff has potential energy because of the force of gravity acting on it. If the boulder falls from the cliff its gravitational potential energy is converted into kinetic energy as it falls.