

EFFECTIVE ACTION AT LOW-ENERGY
IN QUANTUM ELECTRODYNAMICS

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The derivative expansion of the one-loop effective action in quantum electrodynamics (QED) is considered. The first term in such an expansion is the effective Heisenberg - Euler action for a constant electromagnetic field. An explicit expression for the next term containing two derivatives of the field strength $F_{\mu\nu}$, but exact in the magnitude of the field strength, is obtained. The correction to Schwinger's nonperturbative pair-production rate due to inhomogeneities in the background electric field is calculated.