



Section 1: What is a Chemical Reaction

- I can describe and give examples of physical and chemical changes.
- I can identify reactants and products.
- I can explain what happens to molecules in chemical reactions using chemical equations.

Student Reading

What is a chemical reaction?

There are many common examples of chemical reactions. For instance, chemical reactions happen when baking cookies and in your digestive system when you eat the cookies. Rusting iron and burning gasoline in a car engine are chemical reactions. Adding baking soda to vinegar also causes a chemical reaction. In a chemical reaction, the molecules in the reactants interact to form new substances. A chemical reaction causes a *chemical* change. Other processes, like dissolving or a change of state, cause a *physical* change in which no new substance is formed.



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Another chemical reaction that you have seen many times is a burning candle.

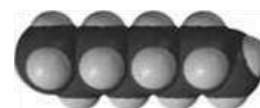


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When a candle burns, molecules in the wax react with oxygen in the air. This reaction, called combustion, releases energy in the form of the heat and light of the flame. The reaction also produces something else which is not as obvious – carbon dioxide and water vapor.

A closer look at a burning candle

The wax in the candle is made of long molecules called *paraffin*. These paraffin molecules are made up of only carbon atoms and hydrogen atoms bonded together.

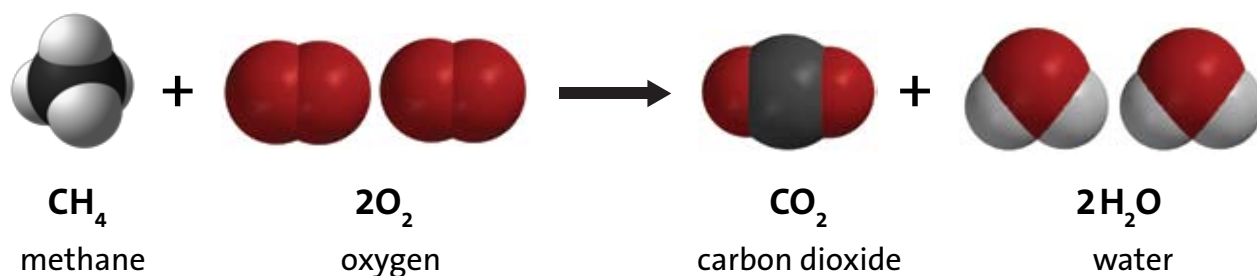


Molecules made of only carbon and hydrogen are called *hydrocarbons*. The simplest hydrocarbon (methane) can be used as a model to show how the wax or any other hydrocarbon burns.



The chemical formula for methane is CH_4 . This means that methane is made up of one carbon atom and 4 hydrogen atoms.

This is the chemical equation for the reaction of methane and oxygen.



The reactants

The methane and oxygen on the left side of the equation are called the *reactants*. Each molecule of oxygen gas is made up of two oxygen atoms bonded together.



It can be confusing that oxygen the atom, and oxygen the molecule, are both called “oxygen”. When we talk about the oxygen in the air, it is always the molecule of oxygen which is two oxygen atoms bonded together, or O_2 . The reason why there is a “2” in front of the O_2 shows that there are two molecules of O_2 .

The products

The carbon dioxide and water on the right side of the equation are called the products. The chemical formula for carbon dioxide is CO_2 . This means that carbon dioxide is made up of one carbon atom and 2 oxygen atoms.



The other product is two molecules of water. Each molecule of water is made up of two hydrogen atoms bonded to one oxygen atom or H_2O .



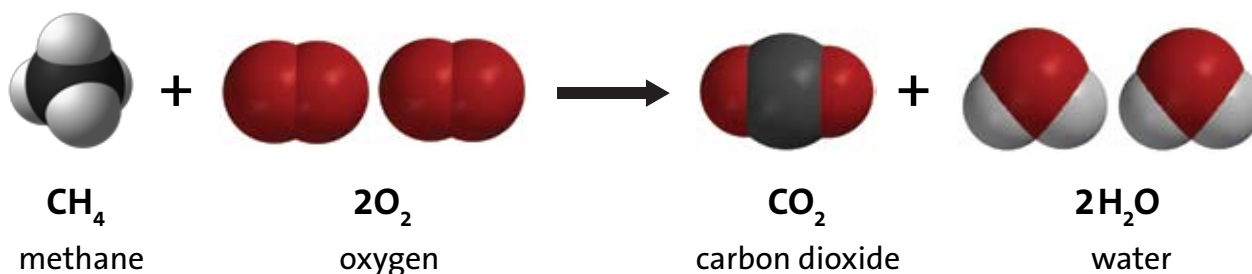
The reason why there is a “2” in front of the H_2O shows that there are two molecules of H_2O .

Where do the products come from?

The atoms in the products come from the atoms in the reactants. In a chemical reaction, the reactants interact with each other, bonds between atoms in the reactants are broken, and the atoms rearrange and form new bonds to make the products.

Counting the atoms in the reactants and products

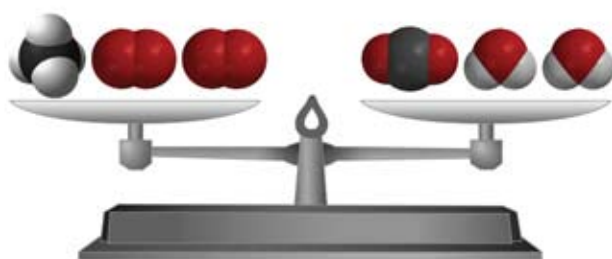
To understand a chemical reaction, you need to check that the equation for the reaction is *balanced*. This means that the same type and number of atoms are in the reactants as are in the products. To do this, you need to be able to count the atoms on both sides.



Look again at the equation for methane reacting with oxygen. You see a big number (coefficient) in front of some of the molecules and a little number (subscript) after an atom in some of the molecules. The coefficient tells how many of a particular type of *molecule* there are. The subscript tells how many of a certain type of *atom* are in a molecule. So if there is a coefficient in front of the molecule and a subscript after an atom, you need to multiply the coefficient times the subscript to get the number of atoms.

Example: In the products of the reaction there are $2\text{H}_2\text{O}$. The coefficient means that there are two molecules of water. The subscript means that each water molecule has 2 hydrogen atoms. Since each water molecule has 2 hydrogen atoms and there are two water molecules, there must be 4 (2×2) hydrogen atoms.

If you look closely at the equation, you can see that there is 1 carbon atom in the reactants and 1 carbon atom in the products. There are 4 hydrogen atoms in the reactants and 4 hydrogen atoms in the products. There are 4 oxygen atoms in the reactants and 4 oxygen atoms in the products. This equation is balanced.

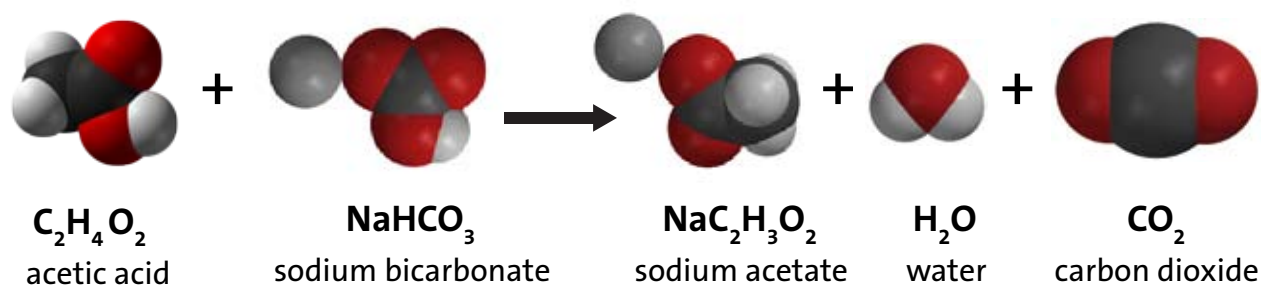


Another way of saying that an equation is balanced is that “mass is conserved”. This means that the atoms in the reactants end up in the products and that no new atoms are created and no atoms are destroyed.

Changing the amount of products

If you want to change the amount of products formed in a chemical reaction, you need to change the amount of reactants. This makes sense because atoms from the reactants need to interact to form the products.

An example is the popular reaction between vinegar (acetic acid) and baking soda (sodium bicarbonate).



When you do this reaction, one of the most noticeable products, which you see on the right side of the equation, is carbon dioxide gas (CO₂). If you wanted to produce more CO₂, you could use more baking soda because there would be more baking soda to react with the vinegar to produce more carbon dioxide. In general, using more of one or more reactants will result in more of one or more products. Using less of one or more reactants will result in less of one or more products. But this principle has limits. If you wanted to make a lot of carbon dioxide, you couldn't just keep adding more and more baking soda to the same amount of vinegar. This might work for a while, as long as there was enough vinegar, but eventually there would be no atoms left of vinegar to react with the extra baking soda so no more carbon dioxide would be produced.



Section 2: Evidence of Chemical Reactions

- I can describe four pieces of evidence that can determine if a chemical reaction has occurred.
- I can identify reactants and products.
- I can explain what happens to molecules in chemical reactions using chemical equations.



EVIDENCE OF A CHEMICAL REACTION

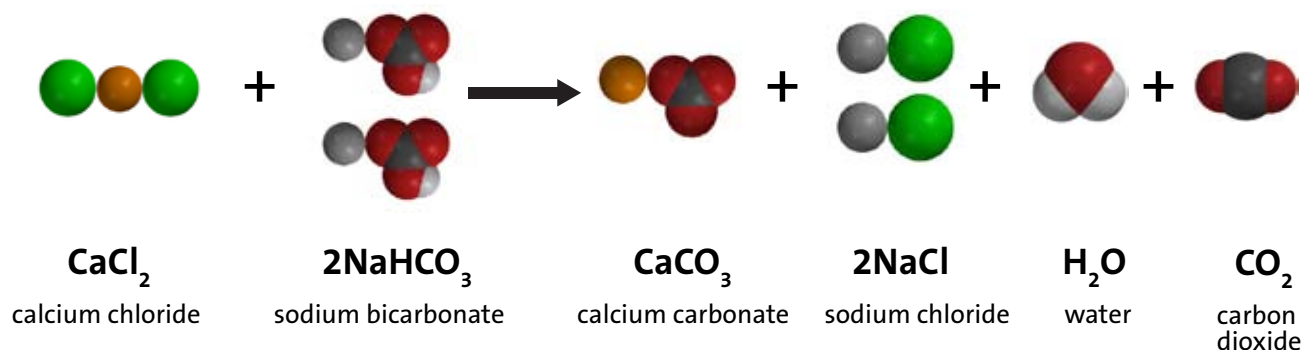
Production of a gas

The gas produced from mixing vinegar with baking soda is evidence that a chemical reaction has taken place. Since the gas was produced from mixing a solid (baking soda) and a liquid (vinegar), the gas is a new substance formed by the reaction.

Formation of a precipitate

Another clue that a chemical reaction has taken place is a solid is formed when two solutions are mixed. When this happens, the solid is called a precipitate. The precipitate does not dissolve in the solutions. One example of solutions that form a precipitate are calcium chloride solution and sodium bicarbonate solution.

When these solutions are combined, a precipitate called calcium carbonate is produced. Calcium carbonate is the main ingredient in chalk and sea shells, and does not easily dissolve.



Color change

When two substances are mixed and a color change results, this color change can also be evidence that a chemical reaction has taken place. The atoms that make up a molecule and the structure of the molecules determines how light interacts with them to give them their color. A color change can mean that new molecules have been formed in a chemical reaction with different structures that produce different colors.

Temperature change

Another clue that a chemical reaction has occurred is a change in temperature of the reaction mixture. You can read more about the change in temperature in a chemical reaction under Chemical reactions and energy below.



Section 3: Rates of Chemical Reactions

- I can describe conditions that affect the rate of chemical reactions.
- I can identify ways that substances typically react.
- I can identify reactants and products.
- I can explain what happens to molecules in chemical reactions using chemical equations.

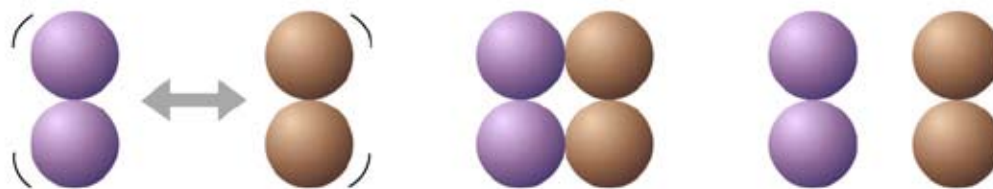


RATE OF A CHEMICAL REACTION

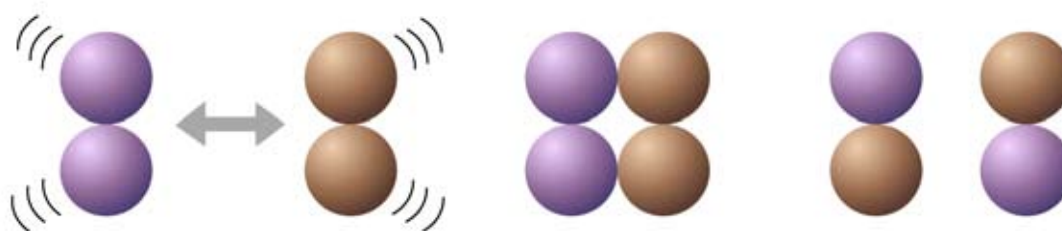
Increasing the temperature increases the rate of the reaction

The rate of a chemical reaction is a measure of how fast the reactants are changed into products. This can be increased by increasing the temperature of the reactants.

For reactant molecules to react, they need to contact other reactant molecules with enough energy for atoms or groups of atoms to come apart and recombine to make the products. If they do not have enough energy, most reactant molecules just bounce off and do not react.



But if the reactants are heated, the average kinetic energy of the molecules increases. This means that more molecules are moving faster and hitting each other with more energy. If more molecules hit each other with enough energy to react, then the rate of the reaction increases.



A catalyst can increase the rate of the reaction

Another way to increase the rate of the reaction is by adding a substance that helps bring the reactants together so they can react. A substance which helps speed up a chemical reaction in this way but does not become a product of the reaction is called a *catalyst*.

A common catalyst in the cells of living organisms is called *catalase*. During normal cell processes, living things produce hydrogen peroxide in their cells. But hydrogen peroxide is a poison so the cells need a way to break it down very quickly. Catalase helps break down hydrogen peroxide at a very fast rate. Catalase and many other catalysts in living things, are large complex molecules. Reactants attach to specific parts of the catalyst which helps the reactants to come apart or bond together. A single molecule of catalase can catalyze the breakdown of millions of hydrogen peroxide molecules every second.

Section 4: Energy in Chemical Reactions

- I can compare and contrast amounts of energy produced in chemical reactions.
- I can identify endothermic and exothermic reactions.
- I can identify reactants and products.
- I can explain what happens to molecules in chemical reactions using chemical equations.

Substances react chemically in characteristic ways

If you tested different substances with a particular liquid to see how the substances react, each would react in its own characteristic way. And each substance that reacted would react the same way each time it was tested with the same liquid. Substances react in characteristic ways because every substance is different. Each one is made up of certain atoms bonded in a particular way that makes it different from any other substance. When it reacts with another substance, certain atoms or groups of atoms unbond, rearrange, and rebond in their own way.

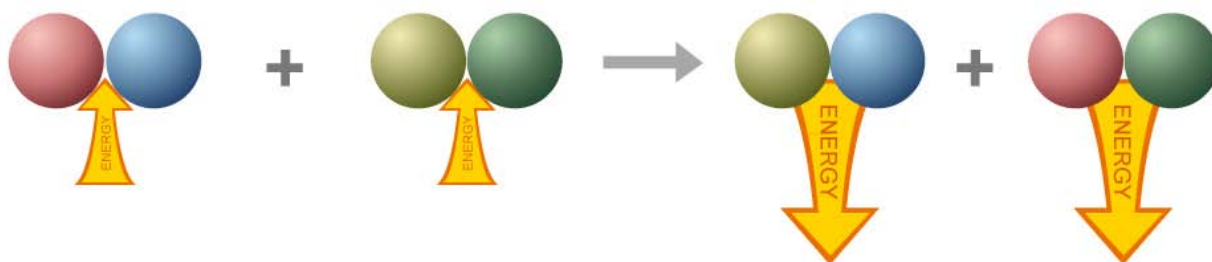


Chemical reactions and energy

Chemical reactions involve breaking bonds in the reactants and making new bonds in the products. It takes energy to break bonds in the reactants. Energy is released when new bonds are formed in the products. The using and releasing of energy in a chemical reaction can help explain why the temperature of some reactions goes up (exothermic) and the temperature of other reactions goes down (endothermic).

Exothermic

If a reaction is exothermic, that means that it takes less energy to break the bonds of the reactants than is released when the bonds in the products are formed. Overall, the temperature increases.



Endothermic

If a reaction is endothermic, it takes more energy to break the bonds in the reactants than is released when the products are formed. Overall, the temperature decreases.

