

# Oxidation number (O.N.)

The charge the atom would have in a molecule (or an ionic compound) if electrons were completely transferred.

1. Free elements (uncombined state) have an oxidation number of zero.

Na, Be, K, Pb, 
$$H_2$$
,  $O_2$ ,  $P_4$ ,  $S_8 = 0$ 

2. In monatomic ions, the oxidation number is equal to the charge on the ion.

Li+, Li = +1; Fe<sup>3+</sup>, Fe = +3; O<sup>2-</sup>, O = 
$$-2$$

3. The oxidation number of oxygen is usually -2. In  $H_2O_2$  and  $O_2^{2-}$  it is -1.

# Rules for Assigning an Oxidation Number (O.N.)

#### **General rules**

- 1. For an atom in its elemental form (Na, O2, Cl2, etc.): O.N. = 0
- 2. For a monoatomic ion: O.N. = ion charge
- 3. The sum of O.N. values for the atoms in a compound equals zero. The sum of O.N. values for the atoms in a polyatomic ion equals the ion's charge.

#### Rules for specific atoms or periodic table groups

1. For Group 1A(1): O.N. = +1 in all compounds

2. For Group 2A(2): O.N. = +2 in all compounds

3. For hydrogen: O.N. = +1 in combination with nonmetals

4. For fluorine: O.N. = -1 in combination with metals and boron

5. For oxygen: O.N. = -1 in peroxides

O.N. = -2 in all other compounds(except with F)

6. For Group 7A(17): O.N. = -1 in combination with metals, nonmetals

(except O), and other halogens lower in the group

- 4. The oxidation number of hydrogen is +1 except when it is bonded to metals in binary compounds. In these cases, its oxidation number is -1. e.g. NaH
- 5. Group IA metals are +1, IIA metals are +2 and fluorine is always -1.
- 6. The sum of the oxidation numbers of all the atoms in a molecule or ion is equal to the charge on the molecule or ion.

Oxidation numbers of all the elements in HCO<sub>3</sub>-?

$$HCO_3^ O = -2$$
  $H = +1$ 
 $3x(-2) + 1 + ? = -1$ 
 $C = +4$ 



Oxidation numbers of all the elements in the following?

$$F = -1$$
 $7x(-1) + ? = 0$ 
 $I = +7$ 

IF<sub>7</sub>

NaIO<sub>3</sub>  
Na = +1 O = -2  
$$3x(-2) + 1 + ? = 0$$
  
I = +5

$$K_2Cr_2O_7$$
 $O = -2$   $K = +1$ 
 $7x(-2) + 2x(+1) + 2x(?) = 0$ 
 $Cr = +6$ 

# **Oxidation Numbers**

..... in salts = ionic charge

**Examples:** 

# Procedure to determine O.N. in covalent molecules

Move bonding electrons to the electron negative partner and count the fictive charge:

borane:

Methane:

$$\begin{array}{cccc}
H & \longrightarrow & H & \longrightarrow & +1 \\
C & \longrightarrow & -1 \\
\end{array}$$

#### **Sample Problem**

#### **Determining the Oxidation Number of an Element**

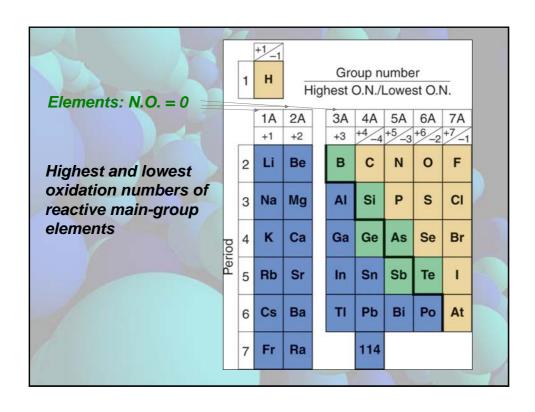
**PROBLEM:** Determine the oxidation number (O.N.) of each element in these compounds:

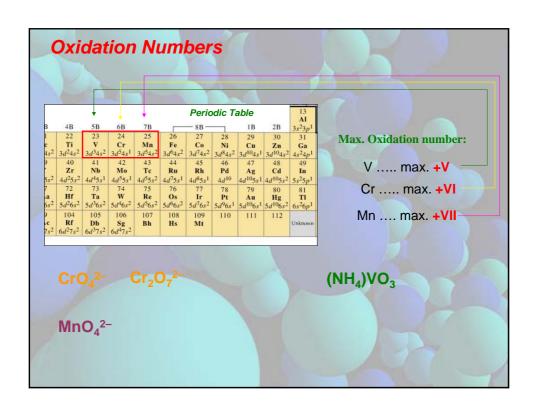
(a) zinc chloride (b) sulfur trioxide (c) nitric acid

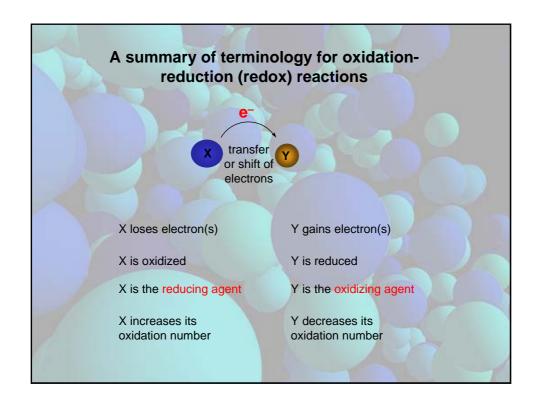
PLAN: The O.N.s of the ions in a polyatomic ion add up to the charge of the ion and the O.N.s of the ions in the compound add up to zero.

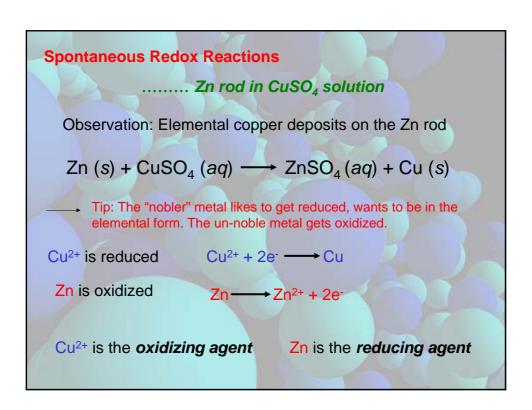
#### **SOLUTION:**

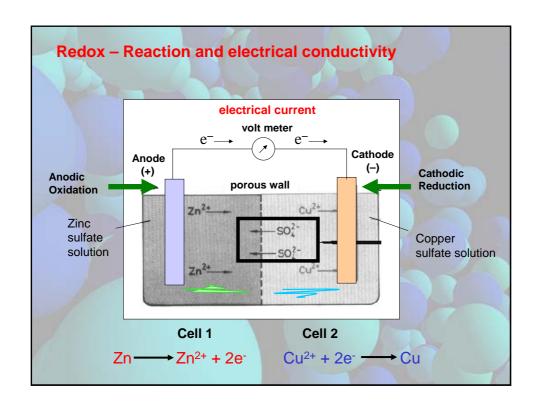
- (a) ZnCl<sub>2</sub>. The O.N. for zinc is +2 and that for chloride is -1.
- (b) SO<sub>3</sub>. Each oxygen is an oxide with an O.N. of -2. Therefore the O.N. of sulfur must be +6.
- (c) HNO<sub>3</sub>. H has an O.N. of +1 and each oxygen is -2. Therefore the N must have an O.N. of +5.

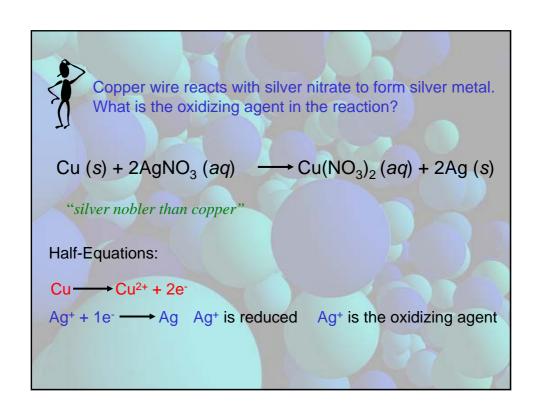












### Sample Problem

#### **Recognizing Oxidizing and Reducing Agents**

The O.N. of C increases; it is oxidized; it is the reducing agent.

The O.N. of Pb decreases; it is reduced; it is the oxidizing agent.

The O.N. of H increases; it is oxidized; it is the reducing agent.

The O.N. of O decreases; it is reduced; it is the oxidizing agent.

# **Balancing Redox Equations**

Oxalic acid H<sub>2</sub>C<sub>2</sub>O<sub>4</sub> is oxidised by the permanganate ion MnO<sub>4</sub> in acidic solution. During the reaction Mn<sup>2+</sup> and CO<sub>2</sub> is formed.

$$MnO_4^-$$
 (aq) +  $H_2C_2O_4$  (aq) -----  $Mn^{2+}$  (aq) +  $CO_2$  (g)

Calculate the oxidation numbers:

4<sup>th</sup> step: Multiply the equations to have the same number of electrons on each side. Simplify and add the equations.

Reduction: 
$$MnO_4^- + 5e^- + 8H^+ \longrightarrow Mn^{2+} + 4 H_2O \mid x 2$$

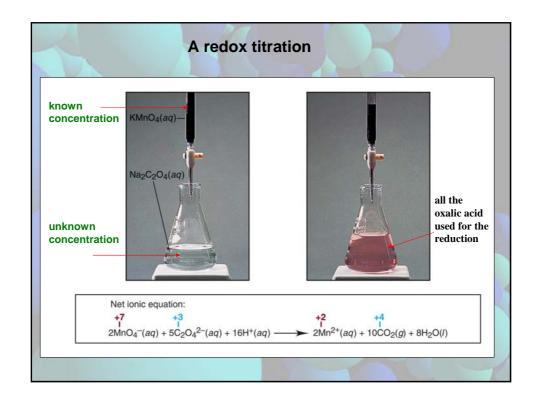
Oxidation: 
$$H_2C_2O_4$$
  $\longrightarrow$   $2CO_2$  +  $2e^-$  +  $2H^+$   $x = 5$ 

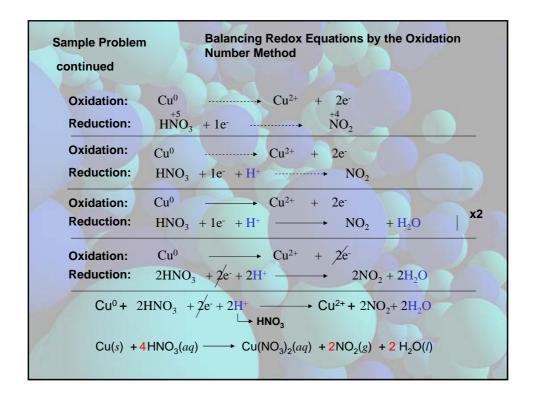
Reduction: 
$$2\text{MnO}_4^- + 10^{-} + 16\text{H}^+ \longrightarrow 2\text{Mn}^{2+} + 8\text{H}_2\text{O}$$

Oxidation: 
$$5H_2C_2O_4 \longrightarrow 10CO_2 + 10e^- + 10H^+$$

$$\text{Redox:} \quad 2 \; \text{MnO}_4^- \; + \; 5 \text{H}_2 \text{C}_2 \text{O}_4 \; + \; 6 \text{H}^+ \quad \longrightarrow \quad 2 \text{Mn}^{2+} \; + \; 10 \text{CO}_2 \; + \; 8 \text{H}_2 \text{O}$$

Remember: in alkaline solutions you have to balance with OH-.





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Reduction: MnO_4^- + 3e^- - \cdots + MnO_2 Charge: -4 \rightarrow 0
Oxidation: Br \rightarrow BrO_3^- + 6e^- Charge: -1 \rightarrow -7

Reduction: MnO_4^- + 3e^- - \cdots + MnO_2^- + 4OH^-
Oxidation: Br + 6OH^- - \cdots + BrO_3^- + 6e^-

Reduction: MnO_4^- + 3e^- + 2H_2O - \cdots + MnO_2^- + 4OH^-
Oxidation: Br + 6OH^- - \cdots + BrO_3^- + 6e^- + 3H_2O
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Reduction: 
$$MnO_4$$
 +3e + 2H<sub>2</sub>O  $\longrightarrow$   $MnO_2$  + 4OH | x2

Oxidation:  $Br + 6OH - \longrightarrow$   $BrO_3$  +6e + 3H<sub>2</sub>O

Reduction:  $2MnO_4$  +6e +  $AH_2O \longrightarrow$   $2MnO_2$  +  $AOH -$ 

Oxidation:  $Br + 6OH - \longrightarrow$   $BrO_3$  +6e + 3 $H_2O$ 
 $2MnO_4$  (aq) +  $Br$ (aq) +  $H_2O$ (l)  $\longrightarrow$   $2MnO_2$ (s) +  $BrO_3$  (aq) +  $2OH$  (aq)

