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If you see this message, it means that we are having trouble downloading external resources on our site. If you're behind a web filter, please make sure the domains no.kastatic.org and no.kasandbox.org are unlocked. The chemical equation describes what happens in a chemical reaction. The equation determines reactants (start-up materials) and products (resultants), participants' formulas, participants' phases (solid, liquid, gas), the direction of chemical reaction and the amount of each substance. The chemical equations are balanced for mass and charge, i.e. the number and type of atoms on the left side of the arrow is the same as the number of types of atoms on the right side of the arrow. The total electrical charge on the left side of the equation is the same as the total charge on the right side of the equation. In the beginning, it is important to first learn to balance equations for the masses. Balancing the chemical equation means establishing a mathematical relationship between the number of reactants and products. The amount is expressed as grams or moles. It takes practice to be able to write balanced equations. There are essentially three steps in the process. 1) Write an unbalanced equation. The chemical formulas of the reactants are listed on the left side of the equation. Products are listed on the right side of the equation. Reactants and products are separated by placing an arrow between them to show the direction of the reaction. Reactions in balance will have arrows facing in both directions. Use one- and two-piece elements to identify items. When writing the symbol of the connection, the cation in the composition (positive charge) is listed before the anion (negative charge). For example, dining salt is written as NaCl, not ClNa. 2) Balance the equation. Apply the Mass Preservation Act to get the same number of atoms of each element on each side of the equation. Tip: Start by balancing an item that appears in only one reaction and product. Once one element is balanced, move on to the balance of the other and the other until all the elements are balanced. Balance chemical formulas by placing the ratios in front of them. Don't add subscripts because it will change formulas. 3) Indicate the state of matter reactants and products. Use (g) for gas. Use (s) for solids. Use (l) for liquids. Use (aq) for species in a solution in water. As a rule, there is no space between the connection and the state of matter. Write the state of matter immediately after formula of the substance it describes. Tin oxide is heated by hydrogen gas to form tin metal and water vapor. Write a balanced equation that describes this reaction. 1) Write an unbalanced equation. SnO_2 and $\text{H}_2 \rightarrow \text{Sn}$ and H_2O Refer to a table of common polyatomic ions and ion compounds if you are having trouble writing chemical formulas of products and reactants 2) Balance the equation. See The Look equation and see which elements are not balanced. In this case, there are two oxygen atoms on the left side of the equation and only one on the right side. Fix this by putting a factor of 2 in front of the water: SnO_2 and $\text{H}_2 \rightarrow \text{Sn}$ and $2\text{H}_2\text{O}$ This brings hydrogen atoms out of balance. Now there are two hydrogen atoms on the left and four hydrogen atoms on the right. To get four hydrogen atoms on the right, add a factor of 2 for hydrogen gas. The ratio is the number that goes before the chemical formula. Remember that coefficients are multipliers, so if we write $2\text{H}_2\text{O}$, it means hydrogen atoms $2 \times 2 = 4$ and oxygen atoms $2 \times 1 = 2$. The SnO_2 and $2\text{H}_2 \rightarrow \text{Sn}$ and $2\text{H}_2\text{O}$ Equation are now balanced. Don't forget to double-check your math! Each side of the equation has 1 Sn atom, 2 atoms O and 4 atoms H. 3) Indicate the physical condition of reactants and products. To do this, you need to be familiar with the properties of different compounds or you need to say what phases for chemicals are in reaction. Solid oxides, hydrogen forms a diatomic gas, the tin is solid, and the term water vapor indicates that water is in the gas phase: SnO_2 (s) 2H_2 (g) $\rightarrow \text{Sn}$ (s) $2\text{H}_2\text{O}$ (g) This is a balanced equation for the reaction. Be sure to check your work! Remember Mass Preservation requires an equation to have the same number of atoms of each element on both sides of the equation. Multiply the coefficient (number ahead) by subscript (number below the element symbol) for each atom. For this equation, both sides of the equation contain: 1 Sn atom 2 O atoms 4 H atoms If you want more practice, review another example of balancing equations or try some sheets. If you think you're ready, try a quiz to see if you can balance the chemical equations. Some chemical reactions include ions, so you need to balance them to charge as well as mass. Learn how to balance the ion equations and redox reactions (reduction of oxidation). Similar steps are involved. If you see this message, it means that we are having trouble downloading external resources on our site. If you're behind a web filter, please make sure the domains no.kastatic.org and no.kasandbox.org are unlocked. The chemical equation tells you what happens during a chemical reaction. A balanced chemical equation has the right amount of reactants and products to meet the Mass Preservation Act. In this article we'll talk about what the chemical equation is, how to balance chemical equations, and give you a few examples to help in your practice of balancing chemical equations. What is the chemical equation? Simply put, the chemical equation tells you what happens in a chemical reaction. Here's what the chemical equation looks like: Fe and $\text{O}_2 \rightarrow \text{Fe}_2\text{O}_3$ on the left side of the equation are reactants. These are the materials that you start with a chemical reaction. On the right equations are products. Products are substances that are made as a result of Reaction. In order for the chemical reaction to be correct, it must satisfy what is called the Law of Mass Preservation, which states that the mass cannot be created or destroyed during a chemical reaction. This means that each side of the chemical equation must have the same amount of mass because the amount of mass cannot be changed. If your chemical equation has different masses on the left and right side of the equation, you need to balance the chemical equation. How to balance chemical equations - Explanation and example of balancing chemical equations means that you write the chemical equation correctly, so there is the same amount of mass on each side of the arrow. In this section we explain how to balance the chemical equation using the example of real life, the chemical equation that occurs when iron rusts: Fe and $\text{O}_2 \rightarrow \text{Fe}_2\text{O}_3$ #1: Identify products and reactants The first step in balancing the chemical equation is to identify your reagents and your products. Remember that your reactants are on the left side of your equation. The products are on the right side. For this equation, our reactants are Fe and O_2 . Our products are Fe_2 and O_3 . #2: Write the number of atoms next, you need to determine how many atoms of each element are present on each side of the equation. You can do this by looking at signs or odds. If there is no subscript or coefficient present, then you just have one atom of something. Fe and $\text{O}_2 \rightarrow \text{Fe}_2\text{O}_3$ On the reaction side, we have one iron atom and two oxygen atoms. On the side of the product, we have two iron atoms and three oxygen atoms. When you write the number of products, you can see that the equation is not balanced because there are different amounts of each atom on the reaction side and product side. This means that we need to add coefficients to make this equation balanced. #3: Add odds Earlier I mentioned that there are two ways to tell how many atoms a particular element exists in the chemical equation: looking at the signing and looking at the odds. When you balance the chemical equation, you change the odds. You never change signings. The coefficient is a whole number multiplier. To balance the chemical equation, you add these whole number multipliers (ratios) to make sure that there are the same number of atoms on each side of the arrow. Here's what's important to keep in mind about the odds: they apply to every part of the product. Take, for example, the chemical equation for water: H_2O . If you've added a coefficient to make it $2\text{H}_2\text{O}$, then the odds are multiples for all the items present. So $2\text{H}_2\text{O}$ means you have four hydrogen atoms and two oxygen atoms. You don't just multiply by the first element present. Thus, in our chemical equation (Fe and $\text{O}_2 \rightarrow \text{Fe}_2\text{O}_3$), any coefficient you add to a product must be reactive. Let's see how to balance this chemical equation. On the product side, we have two two iron and three oxygen atoms. Let's disarm the iron first. When you first look at this chemical equation you would think that something like this works: 2Fe and $\text{O}_2 \rightarrow \text{Fe}_2\text{O}_3$ Although this balances iron atoms (leaving two on each side), oxygen is still unbalanced. That means we have to keep looking. Taking iron first, we know that we will work with a multiple of two, since there are two iron atoms present on the side of the product. Knowing that using two as a coefficient won't work, let's try the next multiple of two: four. 4Fe and $\text{O}_2 \rightarrow 2\text{Fe}_2\text{O}_3$, which creates a balance for iron by having four atoms on each side of the equation. Oxygen is not quite balanced yet, but on the side of the product we have six oxygen atoms. Six of them are multiples of two, so we can work with this on the reactant side where there are two oxygen atoms. This means that we can write our balanced chemical equation this way: 4Fe and $3\text{O}_2 \rightarrow 2\text{Fe}_2\text{O}_3$ Great sources of balancing chemical equations Practice there are many places where you can do balancing chemical equations practice online. Here are a few places with practice problems that you can use: Balancing chemical equations: Key takeaway balancing chemical equations seems complicated, but it's really not that hard! Your main goal when balancing chemical equations is to make sure that there are the same number of reactants and products on each side of the chemical arrow equation. What's next? Writing research work for the school but not sure what to write? Our guide to research topics has over 100 themes in ten categories, so you can be sure to find the perfect theme for you. Want to know the fastest and easiest ways to convert between Fahrenheit and Celsius? We've got your back! 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