

12 Nitrogen and its compounds – Part 1

Name: _____ Class: _____ Date: _____

Vocabulary

Write each word three times.

English	Write it 3 times (English)		
nitrogen	_____	_____	_____
ammonia	_____	_____	_____
lone pair	_____	_____	_____
triple bond	_____	_____	_____
bond energy	_____	_____	_____
non-polar	_____	_____	_____
base	_____	_____	_____
proton	_____	_____	_____
coordinate bond	_____	_____	_____
ammonium ion	_____	_____	_____

Recall

At IGCSE you learned that air is mostly **nitrogen**, and you met **ammonia** (NH_3). Now we explain why nitrogen barely reacts, and why ammonia is a base.

- Nitrogen gas is N_2 – two atoms joined by a strong bond.
- Ammonia has a **lone pair** that makes it a base.

Nothing here is harder than IGCSE – it just adds the reasons.

New ideas

Read these first, then do the Practice.

■ 1 Why nitrogen is unreactive

N₂ makes up most of the air but reacts with very little, for two reasons:

- the atoms are joined by a **triple bond** with a very high **bond energy** – hard to break.
- the molecule is symmetrical and **non-polar**, so nothing attracts other molecules to it.

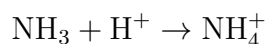
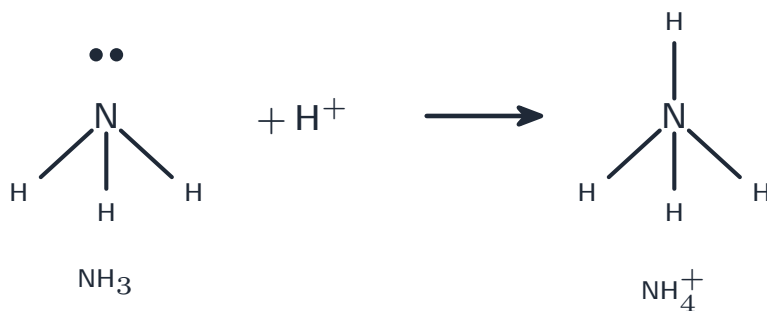
non-polar molecule



triple bond (strong)

■ 2 Ammonia as a base

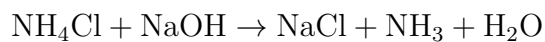
Ammonia is a **base** because the **lone pair** on its nitrogen can accept a **proton** (H⁺):



The new bond is a **coordinate bond** (both electrons came from nitrogen).
The **ammonium ion** NH₄⁺ has four identical N–H bonds.

■ 3 Test for an ammonium salt

Warm an ammonium salt with sodium hydroxide to push out ammonia gas:



The sharp smell, and **damp red litmus turning blue**, confirms an ammonium salt.

Watch out: ammonia is a base because of its lone pair, which accepts an H^+ to form a coordinate bond. Once the ammonium ion has formed, all four N–H bonds are identical – you cannot tell the coordinate one apart.

Practice

Try these in order.

12.1 State the two reasons nitrogen gas is unreactive. [2]

12.2 What feature of ammonia allows it to act as a base? [1]

12.3 Write the equation for ammonia accepting a proton. [1]

12.4 The fourth N–H bond in the ammonium ion is a coordinate bond. Explain what this means. [2]

12.5 Describe the test for an ammonium salt and its result. [2]

12.6 Challenge. Ammonia (NH_3) can act as a base, but the ammonium ion (NH_4^+) cannot. Explain why, in terms of the lone pair. [2]
