

3.12 Properties of Photons

Name: _____ Class: _____ Date: _____

Total: 13 marks**KEY WORDS** photons • solution

Objective

Build the skills to answer exam questions on the **properties of photons** – energy, frequency, and wavelength.

You must be able to:

- use $E = h\nu$ and $c = \lambda\nu$
- convert between energy, frequency, and wavelength
- find the energy of a photon or a mole of photons

1 Key knowledge and worked examples

Study these first. Each one shows the method for a question type used later – follow the steps and you can do the Practice and Exam-style questions yourself.

■ The photon equations

$$E = h\nu, \quad c = \lambda\nu, \quad E = \frac{hc}{\lambda},$$

with $h = 6.63 \times 10^{-34}$ J s and $c = 3.00 \times 10^8$ m s⁻¹.

■ Frequency from wavelength

For $\lambda = 500$ nm = 5.00×10^{-7} m:

$$\nu = \frac{c}{\lambda} = \frac{3.00 \times 10^8}{5.00 \times 10^{-7}} = 6.00 \times 10^{14} \text{ Hz.}$$

■ Energy of one photon

$$E = h\nu = (6.63 \times 10^{-34})(6.00 \times 10^{14}) = 3.98 \times 10^{-19} \text{ J.}$$

■ Energy per mole

Multiply by Avogadro's number: $E_{\text{mol}} = E \times 6.022 \times 10^{23}$. Here $\approx 2.4 \times 10^5$ J/mol = 240 kJ/mol.

2 Practice

Now apply the methods above.

2.1 Write the equation linking a photon's energy and frequency. [1]

2.2 Find the frequency of light with $\lambda = 6.00 \times 10^{-7}$ m. [2]

2.3 Find the energy of a photon of frequency 5.0×10^{14} Hz. [2]

3 Exam-style questions

3.1 The energy of a photon is [1]

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A inversely proportional to frequency

B proportional to frequency

C independent of frequency

D proportional to wavelength

3.2 A laser emits light of wavelength 650 nm.

(a) Convert to metres and find the frequency. [3]

(b) Find the energy of one photon. [2]

3.3 Explain why UV photons are more damaging to skin than visible photons, in terms of photon energy. [2]

Solutions

Each answer shows the steps, then the **result**.

2.1

- $E = h\nu$

2.2

- $\nu = \frac{3.00 \times 10^8}{6.00 \times 10^{-7}} = 5.00 \times 10^{14} \text{ Hz}$

2.3

- $E = (6.63 \times 10^{-34})(5.0 \times 10^{14}) = 3.3 \times 10^{-19} \text{ J}$

3.1 B

- $E = h\nu$, proportional to frequency

3.2

(a)

- $650 \text{ nm} = 6.50 \times 10^{-7} \text{ m}; \nu = \frac{3.00 \times 10^8}{6.50 \times 10^{-7}} = 4.62 \times 10^{14} \text{ Hz}$

(b)

- $E = h\nu = (6.63 \times 10^{-34})(4.62 \times 10^{14}) = 3.06 \times 10^{-19} \text{ J}$

3.3

- UV light has a shorter wavelength and higher frequency, so by $E = h\nu$ each UV photon carries more energy – enough to break bonds/damage molecules that visible photons cannot