

4.9 Oxidation-Reduction (Redox) Reactions

Name: _____ Class: _____ Date: _____

Total: 12 marks

KEY WORDS oxidation • oxidation numbers • reduction • redox

Objective

Build the skills to answer exam questions on **oxidation-reduction (redox) reactions**.

You must be able to:

- assign **oxidation numbers**
- identify what is **oxidized** (loses electrons) and **reduced** (gains electrons)
- name the **oxidizing** and **reducing agents**

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.

■ Oxidation numbers

Assign each atom an oxidation number: free element = 0; a monatomic ion = its charge; O usually -2 ; H usually $+1$; the sum equals the overall charge.

■ OIL RIG

Oxidation Is Loss of electrons; **Reduction Is Gain**. Oxidation raises the oxidation number; reduction lowers it.

■ A worked redox

$\text{Zn} + \text{Cu}^{2+} \rightarrow \text{Zn}^{2+} + \text{Cu}$: Zn goes $0 \rightarrow +2$ (**oxidized**, loses e^-); Cu goes $+2 \rightarrow 0$ (**reduced**, gains e^-).

■ Agents

The **reducing agent** is the species that is oxidized (it gives electrons away); the **oxidizing agent** is the species that is reduced (it takes electrons). Here Zn is the reducing agent, Cu^{2+} the oxidizing agent.

2 Practice

Now apply the methods above.

2.1 State the oxidation number of an element in its free (uncombined) form. [1]

2.2 Find the oxidation number of S in SO_4^{2-} (O is -2). [2]

2.3 In $\text{Mg} \rightarrow \text{Mg}^{2+} + 2e^-$, is Mg oxidized or reduced? [1]

3 Exam-style questions

3.1 Oxidation is defined as the [1]

- ☐ **A** gain of electrons
B loss of electrons
C gain of protons
D loss of protons

3.2 Consider $\text{Fe} + \text{Cu}^{2+} \rightarrow \text{Fe}^{2+} + \text{Cu}$.

(a) State the oxidation number change for Fe and for Cu. [2]

(b) Identify which is oxidized and which is reduced. [2]

3.3 For $\text{Zn} + 2\text{HCl} \rightarrow \text{ZnCl}_2 + \text{H}_2$, identify the oxidizing agent and the reducing agent. [3]