8.9 The Henderson-Hasselbalch Equation

Name: _____ Class: _____ Date: _____ **Total: 12 marks**

KEY WORDS ph pH • buffer • acid • base

Objective

Build the skills to answer exam questions on the **Henderson-Hasselbalch equation**.

You must be able to:

- use $\mathrm{pH} = \mathrm{p}K_a + \log \dfrac{[\mathrm{A}^-]}{[\mathrm{HA}]}$
- find a buffer's pH from the ratio
- find the ratio needed for a target pH

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 equation

$$\mathrm{pH} = \mathrm{p}K_a + \log \frac{[\mathrm{A}^-]}{[\mathrm{HA}]}.$$

It gives a buffer's pH from the base-to-acid ratio.

Equal amounts

When $[\mathrm{A}^-] = [\mathrm{HA}]$, the log term is $\log 1 = 0$, so $\mathrm{pH} = \mathrm{p}K_a$.

A worked pH

A buffer with $\mathrm{p}K_a = 4.7$, $[\mathrm{A}^-] = 0.20$, $[\mathrm{HA}] = 0.10$:

$$\mathrm{pH} = 4.7 + \log \frac{0.20}{0.10} = 4.7 + \log 2 = 4.7 + 0.30 = 5.0.$$

■ **Finding the ratio for a target pH**

Rearrange: $\log \frac{[A^-]}{[HA]} = pH - pK_a$, then take $10^{(pH - pK_a)}$.

2 Practice

Now apply the methods above.

2.1 Write the Henderson-Hasselbalch equation. [1]

2.2 A buffer has $pK_a = 4.7$ with equal acid and base. Find the pH. [1]

2.3 Find the pH of a buffer with $pK_a = 5.0$ and $\frac{[A^-]}{[HA]} = 10$. [2]

3 Exam-style questions

3.1 When $[A^-] = [HA]$, the Henderson-Hasselbalch equation gives pH = [1]

- ☐ **A** 0
- **B** 7
- **C** pK_a
- **D** $pK_a + 1$

3.2 A buffer uses an acid with $pK_a = 4.74$, with $[HA] = 0.30$ M and $[A^-] = 0.15$ M.

(a) Find the ratio $\frac{[A^-]}{[HA]}$. [1]

(b) Find the pH. [3]

3.3 You want a buffer at pH 5.0 using an acid with $pK_a = 4.7$. Find the required ratio $\frac{[A^-]}{[HA]}$. [3]