

Electron transfer reactions · supported focus

International Baccalaureate · IB Diploma · Chemistry · HL

Scope and prerequisites

Supported HL focus. First assessment 2025; current brief acquired; full Chemistry guide not acquired. Remaining guide, assessment and practical requirements retain their recorded holds.

Prerequisites: read the stated quantities and units, use arithmetic and the model conditions below. Each lesson develops its own method before independent transfer.

These are original or explicitly fictional teaching examples, not actual measurements or completed assessed learner investigations.

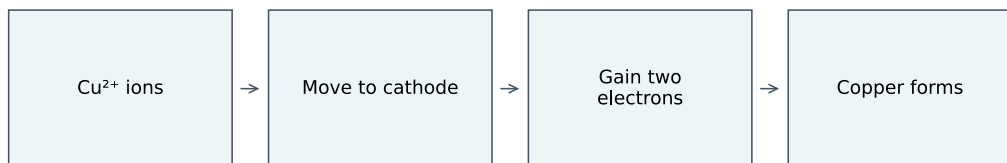
Redox and electrolysis

■ What would explain this observation?

- An aqueous salt solution can produce different electrode products from the molten salt. Water introduces competing species into the system.
- Start with a prediction. State the quantities or features you would compare, then decide what evidence could distinguish two explanations.

■ Build the model

- **Oxidation** is loss of electrons and **reduction** is gain of electrons. In electrolysis, cations move toward the cathode and anions toward the anode. Reduction occurs at the cathode.
- oxidation: Loss of electrons; reduction: Gain of electrons.



■ Choose evidence that can test it

- Predict products using the specified electrolyte and electrode material. In an aqueous solution, hydrogen or oxygen may form because water-related species compete. Molten salts contain only the ions of the salt.
- Use a low-voltage direct-current supply, approved electrodes, and the school risk assessment. Collect gases only by an approved method. Keep chlorine demonstrations teacher-controlled; do not ask students to generate hazardous gases independently.

■ Work from known quantities

- State the known values and their units. Choose the relation because its assumptions fit this case, then rearrange before substitution.
- Known: a copper ion gains two electrons. Half-equation: $\text{Cu}^{2+} + 2\text{e}^- \rightarrow \text{Cu}$. One mole of Cu^{2+} requires two moles of electrons. For 0.050 mol of copper, electron amount = $2 \times 0.050 = 0.100$ mol.

Example:

How many moles of electrons reduce 0.20 mol of Cu^{2+} to copper? Use the same sequence: known quantities → model → relation → substitution → unit and interpretation.

■ Check the conclusion and its limits

- Electrode signs depend on the cell type. In an electrolytic cell the cathode is negative; reduction remains the defining process at a cathode in every cell.
- Return to the original observation. Explain what the result supports, which conditions it assumes, and one way to test a competing explanation.

Warn:

Reduction means loss of electrons. This claim is false: Electrode signs depend on the cell type. In an electrolytic cell the cathode is negative; reduction remains the defining process at a cathode in every cell.

Key:

Redox and electrolysis: Predict products using the specified electrolyte and electrode material. In an aqueous solution, hydrogen or oxygen may form because water-related species compete. Molten salts contain only the ions of the salt.