

# Balancing Chemical Equations

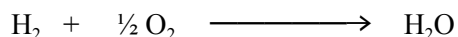
07 - 08

Chemical equations of a reaction illustrate what is made (product) when certain ingredients (reactants) are combined. Like a cooking recipe, where a certain amount of ingredients are required to produce a set amount of food, chemical reactions require a certain of reactants to get desired quantity of product. The relationship of reactants to product is shown through a chemical equation.

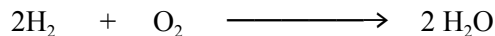
To be useful, the chemical equations must account for each atom used to make a product. Therefore a balanced chemical equation has an equal number of specific atoms on both sides of the equation.

For example: 
$$\text{H}_2 + \text{O}_2 \longrightarrow \text{H}_2\text{O}$$

In order for this reaction for the formation of water from its elements to be balanced, the number of hydrogen and oxygen atoms on the reactants side must equal the number of hydrogen and oxygen atoms on the product side. In the equation, there is one more H atom on the reactants side than the products side. To make the number of atoms equal, a  $\frac{1}{2}$  is put in front of the  $\text{O}_2$  to get the balanced equation.



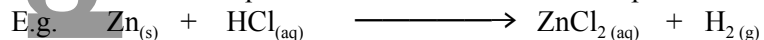
The  $\frac{1}{2}$  in front of  $\text{O}_2$  is a coefficient which shows how many units of  $\text{O}_2$  are required in the reaction. Note: It is also to put 2 in front of  $\text{H}_2$  and  $\text{H}_2\text{O}$  instead of a  $\frac{1}{2}$  in front of  $\text{O}_2$  to achieve the balanced equation.



## Rules

Balancing equations is a bit of an art but there are a few guidelines that can help.

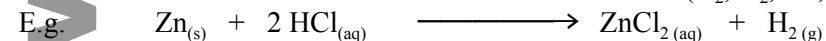
1. Write the equation with the reactant units or pieces on the left and the product units on the right.



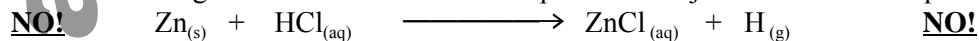
2. Balance the atoms that only occur in one molecule on each side by choosing your appropriate coefficient.

3. Balance atoms, one kind at a time, don't jump all over the place.

4. Balance atoms which are in their elemental form last ( $\text{O}_2$ ,  $\text{H}_2$ , Cu,  $\text{P}_4$ , etc.)

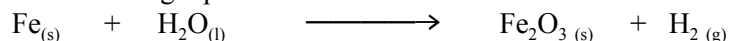


5. Never change what the reactants and the products are just to balance an equation.



6. Always check to make sure that the number of every kind of atom is the same on both sides of the equation.

**Example:** Balance the following equation:



Check atom

Fe  
H  
O

Left side

Right side

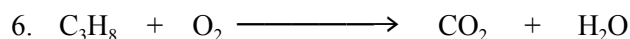
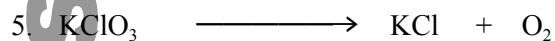
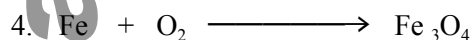
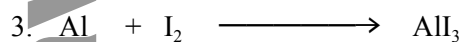
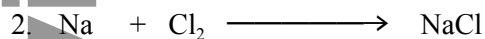
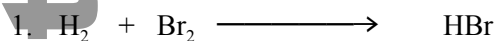
Thus, a balanced chemical equation must represent the facts. Three factors must be considered in writing a balanced equation:

- 1) the equation must represent the facts.
- 2) the equation must include the symbols and formulas of all the elements and compounds that are used as reactants and formed as products.
- 3) Law of Conservation of Mass and Energy must be satisfied.

Useful symbols used in writing equations:

+	Used to separate reactants from products
→	yields or "to produce"
⇌	A reversible reaction
(s), (l), (g)	Indicates state of matter or phases
(aq)	Indicates solution in water, the solvent is water
(g)	Indicates a gas is released in a reaction
Δ	Indicates heat supplied or released, exothermic, or an endothermic reaction
Pt, MnO <sub>2</sub>	Material over an arrow means a catalyst
↓	Indicates that a precipitate has formed

**Practice Exercises:** Balance the following equations:



Remember:

- 1) balance the metals first
- 2) balance the polyatomic ions second
- 3) next balance the nonmetals except oxygen and hydrogen
- 4) balance the oxygen and hydrogen last!