

9.5 Free Energy and Equilibrium

Name: _____ Class: _____ Date: _____

Total: 10 marks

Objective

Build the skills to answer exam questions on **free energy and equilibrium**.

You must be able to:

- use $\Delta G^\circ = -RT \ln K$
- relate the sign of ΔG° to whether $K > 1$ or $K < 1$
- reason about the connection

1 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 link

$$\Delta G^\circ = -RT \ln K,$$

with $R = 8.314 \text{ J mol}^{-1}\text{K}^{-1}$ and T in kelvin. Free energy and the equilibrium constant carry the same information.

■ Sign and K

- $\Delta G^\circ < 0 \Rightarrow K > 1$ (products favored);
- $\Delta G^\circ > 0 \Rightarrow K < 1$ (reactants favored);
- $\Delta G^\circ = 0 \Rightarrow K = 1$.

■ A worked value

If $K = 100$ at 298 K: $\Delta G^\circ = -(8.314)(298) \ln(100) = -(8.314)(298)(4.605) = -11\,400 \text{ J} = -11.4 \text{ kJ}$.

■ Reading the connection

A large positive ΔG° means a very small K (little product). The more negative ΔG° , the larger K and the further the equilibrium lies toward products.

2 Practice

Now apply the methods above.

2.1 Write the equation linking ΔG° and K . [1]

2.2 If $\Delta G^\circ < 0$, is K greater or less than 1? [1]

2.3 If $\Delta G^\circ = 0$, what is K ? [1]

3 Exam-style questions

3.1 A reaction with $K < 1$ has ΔG° that is [1]

- **A** negative
 - **B** positive
 - **C** zero
 - **D** equal to K
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3.2 A reaction has $K = 1 \times 10^{-3}$ at 298 K.

(a) State the sign of ΔG° . [1]

(b) Calculate ΔG° (use $R = 8.314$, $\ln(10^{-3}) = -6.9$). [3]

3.3 Explain why a more negative ΔG° corresponds to a larger equilibrium constant. [2]

Solutions

2.1 $\Delta G^\circ = -RT \ln K$.

2.2 Greater than 1.

2.3 $K = 1$.

3.1 **B** — positive.

3.2 (a) Positive. (b) $\Delta G^\circ = -(8.314)(298)(-6.9) = +17\,100 \text{ J} \approx +17 \text{ kJ}$.

3.3 $\Delta G^\circ = -RT \ln K$: a more negative ΔG° requires a larger $\ln K$, hence a larger K — the equilibrium lies further toward products.