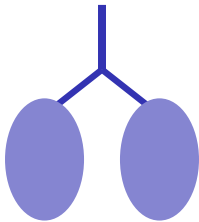


Gas Exchange in Humans

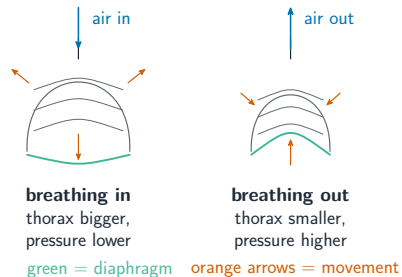
IGCSE Biology ■ Topic 11

IGCSE Biology



What we will cover

- 1 A good gas-exchange surface
- 2 The breathing system
- 3 The alveolus
- 4 How you breathe
- 5 Inspired vs expired air
- 6 Exercise & clean airways



how you breathe



A good gas-exchange surface

large **surface area**

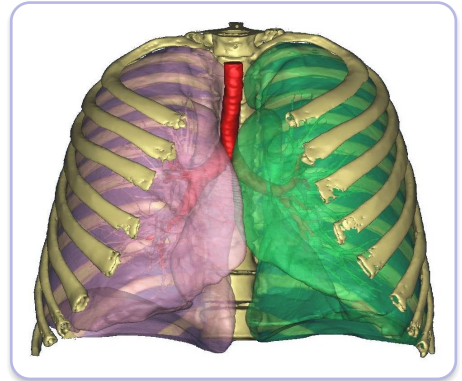
thin – a short distance

good **blood supply**

good **ventilation**

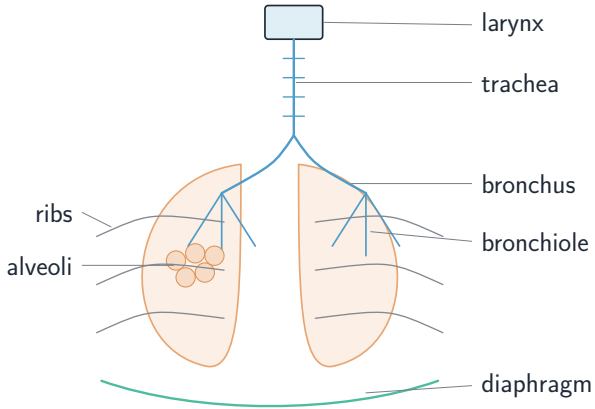
Gas exchange : O_2 in, CO_2 out, by **diffusion** .

A steep concentration difference keeps it fast.



Gas exchange needs a large surface area

The breathing system



The air path:

trachea



bronchi



bronchioles



alveoli

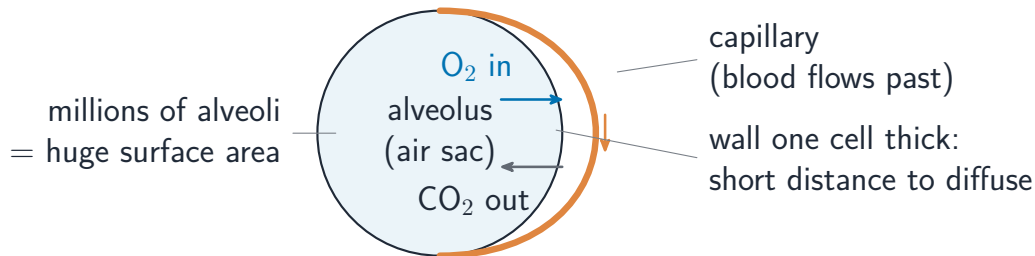
The **ribs** , **intercostal muscles**
& **diaphragm** move the air.

The alveolus

Millions of **alveoli** are perfect surfaces:

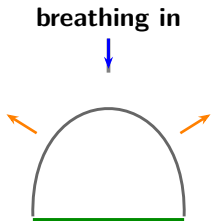
- huge surface area
- wall one cell thick
- wrapped in **capillaries**

O₂ diffuses in; CO₂ diffuses out.





How you breathe



breathing in
thorax bigger,
pressure lower

green = diaphragm



breathing out
thorax smaller,
pressure higher

orange = rib movement

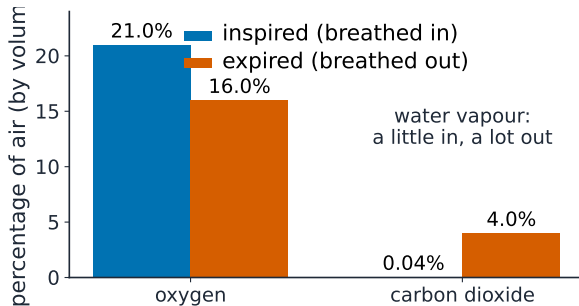
Breathing in : intercostals & diaphragm **contract** → **thorax** bigger → pressure drops → air in.
Breathing out is the reverse.

Inspired vs expired air

Expired air has **less** O_2 (21%→16%), **more** CO_2 (0.04%→4%) & more water vapour.

Limewater turns cloudy faster with expired air – it has more CO_2 .

Inspired vs expired air, in detail



expired air: $\downarrow$ O₂, $\uparrow$ CO₂, $\uparrow$ water vapour (vs inspired)

Expired air has **less** O₂ (21%→16%), **more** CO₂ (0.04%→4%) & more water vapour.

Exercise and clean airways

exercise

more CO₂ in blood → brain
→ faster, deeper breathing

clean airways

goblet cells make **mucus** ;
ciliated cells sweep it up

How the airways stay clean

the problem

inhaled air carries dust, **particles** and **pathogens**

goblet cells

secrete **mucus**, which traps them

ciliated cells

tiny hairs that **sweep the mucus** and its trapped dirt **up to the throat**, where it is swallowed

cartilage

rings holding the trachea and bronchi open, so they cannot collapse

inhaling

intercostal muscles and diaphragm contract, the chest volume rises, pressure falls, and air moves in

exhaling

they relax, volume falls, pressure rises, and air moves out

Smoking paralyzes the cilia, so mucus is not cleared – which is why a smoker coughs and why infections settle in the chest.

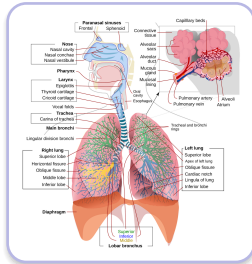
Worked example – breathing at rest and in exercise

At rest a person takes 12 breaths per minute of 500 cm^3 . In exercise it becomes 20 breaths of 900 cm^3 . Find each minute volume.

- Minute volume = rate $\times$ depth.
- rest: $12 \times 500 = 6000\text{ cm}^3/\text{min} = 6\text{ dm}^3$
- exercise:
 $20 \times 900 = 18\,000\text{ cm}^3/\text{min} = 18\text{ dm}^3$
- **three times** as much air each minute

Both the **rate** and the **depth** increase. Muscles need more oxygen and produce more carbon dioxide, and it is the rising CO_2 the body detects.

The breathing system, continued



The lungs sit in the chest behind the **ribs** , on the sheet of muscle called the **diaphragm** , with the **intercostal muscles** between the ribs. Air passes the **larynx** – the voice box at the top of the windpipe – then the **bronchi** , one tube to each lung.

Exam tips

- A gas exchange surface is large, thin, with a good blood supply and good ventilation.
- Air path: larynx → trachea → bronchi → bronchioles → alveoli.
- Breathing in: external intercostal muscles and diaphragm contract → thorax bigger → pressure lower → air in. Breathing out is the opposite.
- Expired air has **less** oxygen, **more** carbon dioxide and **more** water vapour. Limewater tests for carbon dioxide.
- Exercise → more carbon dioxide in the blood → brain → faster, deeper breathing.



Worked example – inspired vs expired air

Expired air has more CO₂ and water vapour, and is warmer. Explain each.

- Body cells **respire**, making CO₂; blood carries it to the alveoli and it **diffuses out**.
- So expired CO₂ ($\approx 4\%$) > inspired ($\approx 0.04\%$).
- The alveoli are **moist**; water **evaporates** from that film into the air.
- The air is warmed to **body temperature** inside the lungs.
- Oxygen falls ($21\% \rightarrow 16\%$) – but **not to zero**: only some diffuses out.

Expired air still holds plenty of oxygen – that is exactly why **rescue breathing works**. Nitrogen is unchanged; the body does not use it.

Topic 11 – key takeaways

1

Surface

large, thin, blood supply,
ventilation

2

Alveoli

millions; one-cell wall; capillaries

3

Breathing

contract → bigger thorax → air
in

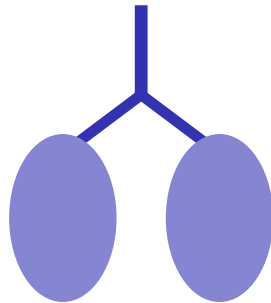
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Expired air

less O₂, more CO₂ & water

Check yourself

- 1 Name two features of a good gas-exchange surface.
- 2 Where does gas exchange happen in the lungs?
- 3 What happens to the diaphragm when you breathe in?
- 4 Which gas is higher in expired air?



Answers 1. e.g. large surface area & thin 2. the alveoli 3. it contracts and flattens
4. carbon dioxide