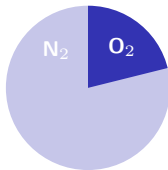


Chemistry of the Environment

IGCSE Chemistry ■ Topic 10

IGCSE Chemistry



What we will cover

- 1 Water: testing & treating
- 2 Fertilisers
- 3 The composition of air
- 4 Air pollutants & their effects
- 5 The greenhouse effect
- 6 Reducing pollution



Water: testing and purity

is water present?

anhydrous cobalt chloride blue→pink; copper sulfate white→blue

is water pure?

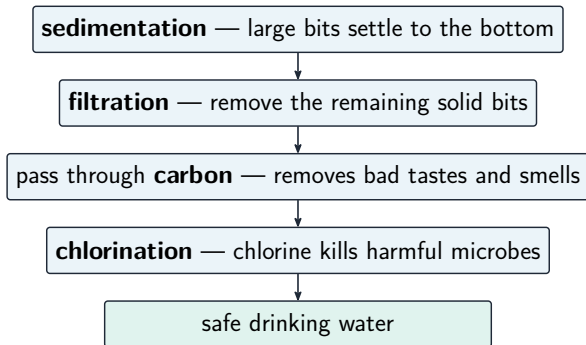
pure water melts at exactly 0°C & boils at 100°C ; impurities change these

Natural water carries dissolved O_2 , minerals, **nitrates & phosphates** (which cause **deoxygenation**), and microbes.



Air pollution harms health and the environment

Treating drinking water



Steps to make water safe:

- **sedimentation & filtration** remove solids
- **carbon** removes tastes & smells
- **chlorination** kills microbes

Fertilisers (NPK) add nitrogen, phosphorus & potassium.

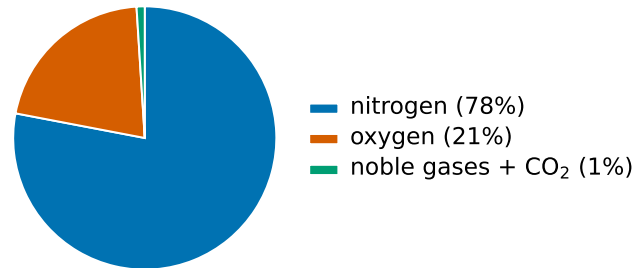


The composition of air

Clean, dry air:

- 78% **nitrogen** (N_2)
- 21% **oxygen** (O_2)
- ~1% noble gases & CO_2

The composition of air, in detail



clean dry air $\approx$ 78% N₂, 21% O₂, 1%
Ar/CO₂/others

Clean, dry air is 78% **nitrogen** (N₂), 21% **oxygen** (O₂), and about 1% noble gases and CO₂.

Air pollutants and their sources

CO₂ – complete **combustion** of carbon fuels (a greenhouse gas)

CO & particulates – **incomplete combustion** of fuels

oxides of nitrogen – hot car engines

sulfur dioxide – burning fuels that contain **sulfur**

Effects of pollutants

CO₂ & **methane** : greenhouse
→ global warming

SO₂ & NO_x: **acid rain**

carbon monoxide: a toxic gas

particulates : breathing problems

The pollutants, their sources and their effects

methane

rotting plants, and waste gases from animal digestion – a strong greenhouse gas

carbon dioxide

burning **fossil fuels** – the main driver of climate change

sulfur dioxide

burning fuels containing sulfur – causes **acid rain**

oxides of nitrogen

formed in a hot car engine from the air's own nitrogen and oxygen

particulates

increase the risk of **respiratory** problems and **cancer**

carbon monoxide

toxic – it binds to haemoglobin in place of oxygen

A **catalytic converter** removes the oxides of nitrogen and carbon monoxide; **flue gas desulfurisation** removes sulfur dioxide at the power station.

The pollutants, and how each is dealt with

Oxides of nitrogen

Cause acid rain, **photochemical smog** and breathing problems. A catalytic converter turns them back into nitrogen.

Sulfur dioxide

Flue gas desulfurisation uses **calcium oxide** to remove it before the gases leave the chimney – or switch to a low-sulfur fuel.

Water pollution

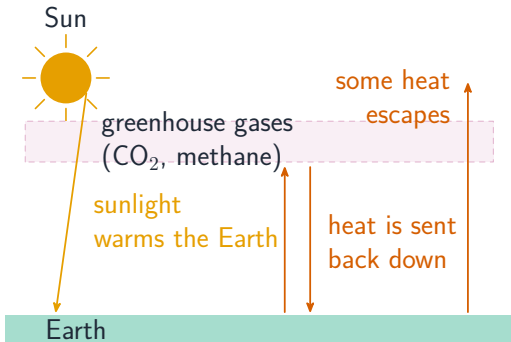
Waste water may carry dissolved oxygen, metal compounds, plastics, **sewage**, harmful **microbes**, and **nitrates** and **phosphates** from fertilisers and detergents.

Testing purity

Pure water melts at exactly 0°C and boils at exactly 100°C – so the **melting point** and boiling point are the test.

Name the pollutant, its source, its effect and the control. Four parts, and most questions here ask for two of them.

The greenhouse effect



greenhouse gases trap some of the Earth's heat, so less escapes to space and the Earth warms up

Greenhouse gases let sunlight in but **absorb** the heat the Earth gives off.

Less heat escapes to space, so the Earth warms – driving **climate change**.

Photosynthesis

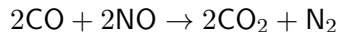
Photosynthesis is the opposite of combustion – it removes carbon dioxide from the air.

Plants use light energy and **chlorophyll** to turn carbon dioxide and water into **glucose** and oxygen:

Reducing pollution



- climate: trees, less fossil fuel, **renewable energy**
- acid rain: **catalytic converters** , low-sulfur fuels



Slowing climate change, and what water contains

plant trees

photosynthesis removes carbon dioxide from the air

farm fewer animals

less methane from digestion, and less land cleared

burn fewer fossil fuels

the largest single lever

renewable energy

and hydrogen, where the hydrogen is made cleanly

dissolved oxygen

lets **aquatic life** – fish and plants – breathe

in the water too

metal compounds and nitrates from farming, and **plastics**, some of which harm aquatic life

Distilled water is used in experiments because tap water's dissolved salts would react. That is why the test uses it, not because it is cleaner.

Fertilisers

N

nitrogen

leaf and stem
growth

P

phosphorus

strong roots

K

potassium

flowers and fruit

NPK fertilisers contain all three - ammonium salts and nitrates supply the nitrogen

NPK fertilisers supply the three elements plants need most: nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium

Testing for water

is water **present**? - a colour change



cobalt(II) chloride: **blue**



copper(II) sulfate: **white**

both use the **anhydrous** (dry) solid

is it **pure**? - fixed points

melts at exactly 0°C

boils at exactly 100°C

any dissolved substance
changes these values

Colour-change tests show water is present; fixed melting and boiling points show it is pure

Exam tips

- Two tests show water is *present* (cobalt(II) chloride blue → pink; copper(II) sulfate white → blue), but only fixed melting and boiling points (0 °C and 100 °C) show it is *pure*.
- Clean, dry air is about **78% nitrogen**, **21% oxygen** and 1% other gases (mostly noble gases and carbon dioxide).
- Match each pollutant to its source and effect: **carbon monoxide** (incomplete combustion; toxic); **sulfur dioxide** and **oxides of nitrogen** (acid rain); **carbon dioxide** and **methane** (greenhouse gases → global warming).
- Greenhouse gases let sunlight through but absorb the heat the warm Earth gives off and send some back down, so the Earth warms up.



Worked example – stopping rust

Iron rusts but zinc-coated iron does not, even when the coating is scratched. Explain.

- Rusting needs **both** oxygen and water.
- A coat of paint or plastic works only as a **barrier** – scratch it and rust starts.
- Zinc is **more reactive** than iron, so it loses electrons in preference.
- The zinc corrodes instead $\Rightarrow$ **sacrificial protection**, which still works when scratched.

Barrier methods fail once broken; **sacrificial protection** does not, because the more reactive metal is **oxidised instead**. Galvanising does both at once.

Topic 10 – key takeaways

1

Water

settle, filter, carbon, chlorinate

2

Air

78% N₂, 21% O₂, ~1% other

3

Pollutants

CO₂/CH₄ warm; SO₂/NO_x acid
rain

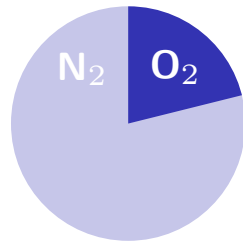
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Greenhouse

traps the heat the Earth gives off

Check yourself

- 1 What step in water treatment kills microbes?
- 2 What are the two main gases in clean air?
- 3 Which two pollutants cause acid rain?
- 4 Why does the greenhouse effect warm the Earth?



Answers 1. chlorination 2. nitrogen & oxygen 3. sulfur dioxide & oxides of nitrogen
4. it traps heat the Earth radiates