

Acid-Base Indicators

• indicators are used to determine the pH of a solution

indicator = a weak organic acid or base that has different colours for their conjugate acid and base forms

- indicators are often indicated by the symbol HInd (acid form) and In⁻ (base form)
- since an indicator is a weak acid or base, the following equilibrium can be written:

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\begin{array}{c} HIn + H_2O \rightleftharpoons In + H_3O^+ \\ \textbf{yellow} & \textbf{red} \end{array}
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• when an indicator is placed into an acid solution, the excess H_3O^+ causes a shift in the indicator's equilibrium

HIn +
$$H_2O \rightleftharpoons In^{-} + H_3O^{+}$$

yellow red

An indicator will be in its **conjugate acid** (**HIn**) form in **highly acidic solutions**.

• when an indicator is placed into a base solution, the OH⁻ reacts to decrease the [H₃O⁺] and cause a shift in the indicator's equilibrium

$$\begin{array}{c} \text{HIn} + \text{H}_2\text{O} \rightleftharpoons \text{In}^{-} + \text{H}_3\text{O}^{-}\\ \text{yellow} & \text{red} \end{array}$$

An indicator will be in its **conjugate base (In**⁻) form in **highly basic solutions**.

• the colour of an indicator depends on the relative concentrations of the conjugate acid and base forms of the indicator

transition point = indicator is mid-way through its colour change and [HIn] = [In⁻]

• consider the following indicator equilibrium:

$$HIn + H_2O \rightleftharpoons In^- + H_3O^+$$
$$Kin = \frac{[H_3O^+][In^-]}{[HIn]}$$

• at the transition point [HIn] = [In⁻], so

$$\operatorname{Kin} = \underbrace{[H_3O^+][Ipr]}_{[HIn]} = [H_3O^+]$$

• in addition,

$$-\log Kin = -\log [H_3O^+]$$

pKin = pH

At the transition point of any indicator, the following relationships exist:

 $[HIn] = [In⁻] \quad Kin = [H_3O^+] \quad pKin = pH$

• the Ka of an indicator (Kin) can be calculated using the pH range over which the indicator changes colour Using indicator table to calculate the Kin.

ex. What is the Kin for phenolpthalein?



Using indicators to determine the pH of a solution. ex. What is the approximate pH range of a solution that changes methyl red \rightarrow yellow and neutral red \rightarrow red? neutral red

6.8-8.0 red ambu

60 (Solution < 6.8

methyl red.

4.8-6.0

real yellow

Thymol Blue

⇒ appears twice on table

• diprotic acid \Rightarrow colour change each time loses H+ (proton)

thymol blue (Tb) = weak acid (H_2 Tb)

1st ionization: $H_2Tb + H_2O \Rightarrow H_3O^+ + HTb^-$ (red) (yellow)

2nd ionization: $HTb^{-} + H_2O \Rightarrow H_3O^{+} + Tb^{2-}$ (yellow) (blue)

Thymol Blue:	1.2 - 2.8	red - yellow
	8.0 - 9.6	vellow - blue

Universal Indicators

⇒ mix of indicators to get several colour changes

Predicting the colours of indicators at various pH.

ex. A mixture of the indicators methyl orange, phenol red and thymol blue is added to a pH 5.0 and pH 8.0 solution. What is the colour of the mixture at pH 5.0 and 8.0?