# Qualitative Analysis: Anions & Cations

## Testing for Negative ions (anions)

### Testing for presence of a carbonate

Add any dilute acid and observe effervescence.
Bubble gas through limewater to test for $CO_2$ – will turn limewater cloudy

$2HCl + Na_2CO_3 \rightarrow 2NaCl + H_2O + CO_2$

Fizzing due to $CO_2$ would be observed if a carbonate was present

### Testing for presence of a sulfate

$Ba^{2+}(aq) + SO_4^{2-}(aq) \rightarrow BaSO_4(s)$.

**Acidified** $BaCl_2$ solution is used as a reagent to test for sulfate ions

If **barium chloride** is added to a solution that contains sulphate ions a **white precipitate** forms

Other anions should give a negative result which is no precipitate forming

The acid is needed to react with carbonate impurities that are often found in salts which would form a white barium carbonate precipitate and so give a false result

Sulfuric acid cannot be used to acidify the mixture because it contains sulphate ions which would form a precipitate

### Testing for halide ions with silver nitrate.

This reaction is used as a test to identify which halide ion is present. The test solution is made acidic with **nitric acid,** and then **silver nitrate solution** is added dropwise.

The role of nitric acid is to react with any carbonates present to prevent formation of the precipitate $Ag_2CO_3$. This would mask the desired observations

$2 HNO_3 + Na_2CO_3 \rightarrow 2 NaNO_3 + H_2O + CO_2$

Fluorides produce no precipitate
Chlorides produce a **white** precipitate
$Ag^+(aq) + Cl^-(aq) \rightarrow AgCl(s)$
Bromides produce a **cream** precipitate
$Ag^+(aq) + Br^-(aq) \rightarrow AgBr(s)$
Iodides produce a **pale yellow** precipitate
$Ag^+(aq) + I^-(aq) \rightarrow AgI(s)$

Hydrochloric acid cannot be used to acidify the mixture because it contains chloride ions which would form a precipitate

The silver halide precipitates can be treated with ammonia solution to help differentiate between them if the colours look similar:

**Silver chloride** dissolves in **dilute ammonia** to form a complex ion
$AgCl(s) + 2NH_3(aq) \rightarrow [Ag(NH_3)_2]^+(aq) + Cl^-(aq)$
Colourless solution
**Silver bromide** dissolves in **concentrated ammonia** to form a complex ion
$AgBr(s) + 2NH_3(aq) \rightarrow [Ag(NH_3)_2]^+(aq) + Br^-(aq)$
Colourless solution
**Silver iodide** does not react with ammonia – it is too insoluble.

The sequence of tests required is carbonate, sulfate then halide. (This will prevent false results of as both $BaCO_3$ and $Ag_2SO_4$ are insoluble.)

## Testing for positive ions (cations)

Test for ammonium ion $NH_4^+$, by reacting with warm NaOH(aq) forming $NH_3$ gas

Ammonia gas can be identified by its pungent smell or by turning red litmus paper blue

**Precipitation Reactions with sodium hydroxide and ammonia**

The bases $OH^-$ and ammonia when in limited amounts form the same hydroxide precipitates.

These reactions are classed as precipitation reactions

$[Cu(H_2O)_6]^{2+}_{(aq)} + 2OH^-_{(aq)} \rightarrow Cu(H_2O)_4(OH)_{2\,(s)} + 2H_2O_{(l)}$
Blue solution → blue ppt

$Cu^{2+}_{(aq)} + 2OH^-_{(aq)} \rightarrow Cu(OH)_{2\,(s)}$
Blue solution → blue ppt

$[Mn(H_2O)_6]^{2+}_{(aq)} + 2OH^-_{(aq)} \rightarrow Mn(H_2O)_4(OH)_{2\,(s)} + 2H_2O_{(l)}$
Very pale pink solution → Pale brown ppt

$Mn^{2+}_{(aq)} + 2OH^-_{(aq)} \rightarrow Mn(OH)_{2\,(s)}$
Very pale pink solution → Pale brown ppt

$[Fe(H_2O)_6]^{2+}_{(aq)} + 2OH^-_{(aq)} \rightarrow Fe(H_2O)_4(OH)_{2\,(s)} + 2H_2O_{(l)}$
green solution → green ppt

$Fe^{2+}_{(aq)} + 2OH^-_{(aq)} \rightarrow Fe(OH)_{2\,(s)}$
green solution → green ppt

$[Fe(H_2O)_6]^{3+}_{(aq)} + 3OH^-_{(aq)} \rightarrow Fe(H_2O)_3(OH)_{3\,(s)} + 3H_2O_{(l)}$
Yellow/brown solution → brown ppt

$Fe^{3+}_{(aq)} + 3OH^-_{(aq)} \rightarrow Fe(OH)_{3\,(s)}$
Yellow/brown solution → brown ppt

$[Cr(H_2O)_6]^{3+}_{(aq)} + 3OH^-_{(aq)} \rightarrow Cr(H_2O)_3(OH)_{3\,(s)} + 3H_2O_{(l)}$
green solution → green ppt

$Cr^{3+}_{(aq)} + 3OH^-_{(aq)} \rightarrow Cr(OH)_{3\,(s)}$
green solution → green ppt

With ammonia when added in limited amounts the same hydroxide precipitates form. The ammonia acts as a base, removes a proton from the aqueous complex and becomes the ammonium ion

$$[Mn(H_2O)_6]^{2+}_{(aq)} + 2NH_{3\,(aq)} \rightarrow Mn(H_2O)_4(OH)_{2\,(s)} + 2NH_4^+_{(aq)}$$

$$[Fe(H_2O)_6]^{3+}_{(aq)} + 3NH_{3\,(aq)} \rightarrow Fe(H_2O)_3(OH)_{3\,(s)} + 3NH_4^+_{(aq)}$$

**Reaction with excess $OH^-$**

With excess NaOH, the Cr hydroxide dissolves.
Cr becomes $[Cr(OH)_6]^{3-}$ (aq) green solution

•This hydroxide is classed as **amphoteric** because it can react with alkali to give a solution and react with acid to form the aqueous salt

$Cr(H_2O)_3(OH)_{3\,(s)} + 3OH^-_{(aq)} \rightarrow [Cr(OH)_6]^{3-}_{(aq)} + 3H_2O_{(l)}$

$Cr(H_2O)_3(OH)_{3\,(s)} + 3H^+_{(aq)} \rightarrow [Cr(H_2O)_6]^{3+}_{(aq)}$

**Reaction with excess $NH_3$**

With **excess $NH_3$ ligand exchange** reactions occur with Cu and Cr, and their hydroxide precipitates dissolve in excess ammonia

The ligands $NH_3$ and $H_2O$ are similar in size and are uncharged. Ligand exchange occurs without change of co-ordination number for Cr

Cr becomes $[Cr(NH_3)_6]^{3+}$ purple solution

This substitution may, however, be incomplete as in the case with Cu

Cu becomes $[Cu(NH_3)_4(H_2O)_2]^{2+}$ deep blue solution

$$Cr(OH)_3(H_2O)_{3(s)} + 6NH_{3\,(aq)} \rightarrow [Cr(NH_3)_6]^{3+}_{(aq)} + 3H_2O_{(l)} + 3OH^-_{(aq)}$$

$$Cu(OH)_2(H_2O)_{4(s)} + 4NH_{3\,(aq)} \rightarrow [Cu(NH_3)_4(H_2O)_2]^{2+}_{(aq)} + 2H_2O_{(l)} + 2OH^-_{(aq)}$$