Electrochemical Cells: An Electrolytic Cell

T. Greenbowe, University of Oregon

Model 5: Diagram of an electrolytic cell and some physical constants

Electrical current is measured in amperes (A)
1 A = 1 Coul/second 1 A·sec = 1 Coul
1 Coulomb (C) is the charge on $6.2415 \times 10^{18} \, e^-$
1 $e^-$ has a charge of $-1.602 \times 10^{-19} \, C$
1 Faraday is the charge on 1 mole of $e^-$
1 F = 96,485C/mole $e^-$

$E_{\text{cell}} = E_{\text{red (cathode)}}^\circ - E_{\text{red (anode)}}^\circ$

$\Delta G = -nF \, E \quad n = \text{moles of } e^-$

$\quad - \quad +$

An electrolytic cell will cause a nonspontaneous chemical reaction to occur. A diagram of an electrolytic cell is shown above.

Consider an electrolytic cell consisting of two copper electrodes in 1.0M CuSO$_4$. Each electrode is connected to an end of a battery. The battery is a power source and pushes electrons out the negative terminal and pulls electrons into the positive terminal.

URL: http://media.pearsoncmg.com/bc/bc_0media_chem/chem_sim/electrolysis_fc1_gm_11-26-12/main.html
Go to the Experiment section of the computer simulation. Use the computer simulation to set-up a Cu-Cu electrochemical electrolysis cell. Use the computer simulation to help you diagram the components of your cell.

a. Which copper metal electrode is the more active metal? Explain how you decided.

b. Write the net ionic equation for the cell reaction. Calculate $E_{\text{cell}}^\circ$. Is this reaction spontaneous?

c. Write the half-reaction occurring at the copper electrode connected to the negative end of the battery.

d. Write the half-reaction occurring at the copper electrode connected to the positive end of the battery.

e. Indicate on the diagram i.) the cathode, ii.) the anode, iii.) the direction of electron flow in this cell, iv) what hops on or hops off at each electrode (click-on the magnifying glass symbol while your simulation is running), v.) which electrode gains mass, which loses mass.

f. Calculate the mass of copper deposited when 8.00 Amps are forced into the cathode for 15.0 minutes.
Model 6: Diagram of an electrolytic cell and some standard reduction potentials.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chemical Reaction</th>
<th>Standard Reduction Potential (E°&lt;sub&gt;V&lt;/sub&gt;)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Au&lt;sup&gt;3+&lt;/sup&gt;(aq) + 3e&lt;sup&gt;-&lt;/sup&gt; -&gt; Au(s)</td>
<td>+1.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ag&lt;sup&gt;+&lt;/sup&gt;(aq) + e&lt;sup&gt;-&lt;/sup&gt; -&gt; Ag(s)</td>
<td>+0.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cu&lt;sup&gt;2+&lt;/sup&gt;(aq) + 2e&lt;sup&gt;-&lt;/sup&gt; -&gt; Cu(s)</td>
<td>+0.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fe&lt;sup&gt;2+&lt;/sup&gt;(aq) + 2e&lt;sup&gt;-&lt;/sup&gt; -&gt; Fe(s)</td>
<td>-0.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zn&lt;sup&gt;2+&lt;/sup&gt;(aq) + 2e&lt;sup&gt;-&lt;/sup&gt; -&gt; Zn(s)</td>
<td>-0.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Al&lt;sup&gt;3+&lt;/sup&gt;(aq) + 3e&lt;sup&gt;-&lt;/sup&gt; -&gt; Al(s)</td>
<td>-1.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mg&lt;sup&gt;2+&lt;/sup&gt;(aq) + 2e&lt;sup&gt;-&lt;/sup&gt; -&gt; Mg(s)</td>
<td>-2.37</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. A _____________metal electrode and a copper spoon are placed in 1.00 M aqueous zinc nitrate solution. The electrodes are connected to a battery capable of passing a current of 8.00 amperes. The goal is to plate zinc metal on the copper spoon. Go to the Experiment section of the Electrolysis Computer Simulation and set up an electrolysis cell designed to deposit zinc metal onto copper. Use the computer simulation to help you diagram the components of your cell (above) and to help answer the following questions.

a. Write the chemical reaction representing copper metal reacting with 1.00 M zinc nitrate to produce zinc metal and copper(II) nitrate. Calculate E°<sub>cell</sub> for this reaction. Is this reaction spontaneous or nonspontaneous?

b. Write the half-reaction occurring at the spoon electrode.

c. In order to plate zinc metal onto the spoon, which terminal of the battery (positive or negative end) will you connect the spoon? Indicate this on the diagram. Explain.

d. In order to plate zinc onto the spoon, the other electrode should be what type of metal? Which terminal of the battery (positive or negative end) will you connect this electrode? Put this information on your diagram. Write the half-reaction occurring at this metal electrode.

e. Run your computer simulation and use it to diagram your electrolysis cell. Indicate on the diagram above i.) the cathode, ii.) the anode, iii.) the direction of electron flow in this cell, iv) what hops on or hops off at each electrode (click-on the magnifying glass symbol), v.) which electrode gains mass, which loses mass.

f. Calculate the mass of zinc deposited when 8.00 Amps are forced into the cathode for 15.0 minutes. Compare this mass to the mass you calculated in 1f. Compare these moles to the moles you calculated in 1f. Comment?