

Reaction Mechanisms

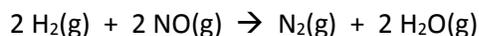
A mechanism represents the sequence of bond-making and bond-breaking steps that occur during the conversion of reactants to products.

- Must be determined by experiment
- Must agree with overall stoichiometry
- The slowest step is the rate determining step
- Must agree with the experimentally determined rate law (determine the slowest step, add slowest step to all steps that occur before it)
- Reaction intermediate – product in one step but consumed in another
- Catalyst – goes in as a reactant, comes out as a product

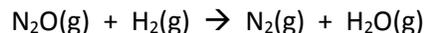
ELEMENTARY STEP	MOLECULARITY	RATE EXPRESSION
$A \rightarrow \text{products}$	unimolecular	$\text{rate} = k[A]$
$A + B \rightarrow \text{products}$	bimolecular	$\text{rate} = k[A][B]$
$A + A \rightarrow \text{products}$	bimolecular	$\text{rate} = k[A]^2$
$2 A + B \rightarrow \text{products}^*$	termolecular*	$\text{rate} = k[A]^2[B]$

Stoichiometry (coefficients) may be used to predict rate expressions for elementary steps only, but not for overall reactions.

1. Nitrogen oxide is reduced by hydrogen to give water and nitrogen,

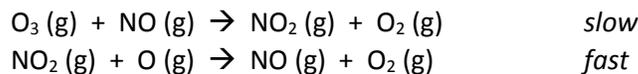


and one possible mechanism to account for this reaction is

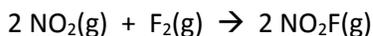


What is the molecularity for each step? Show that the sum of these elementary steps yields the overall reaction.

2. One mechanism for the destruction of ozone in the upper atmosphere is

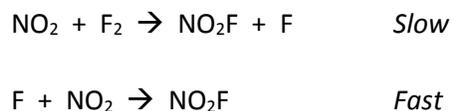


- What is the overall balanced equation for the reaction?
 - Which species is a catalyst?
 - Which species is an intermediate?
3. The balanced equation for the reaction of the gases of nitrogen dioxide and fluorine is



The experimentally determined rate law is $\text{Rate} = k [\text{NO}_2] [\text{F}_2]$

A suggested mechanism for the reaction is



Is this an acceptable mechanism? Explain your reasoning.

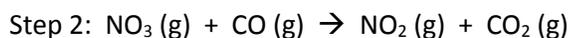
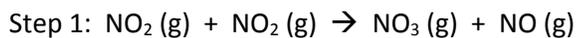
4. Consider the reaction between nitrogen dioxide and carbon monoxide:



The rate law for this reaction is known to be:

$$\text{Rate} = k[\text{NO}_2]^2$$

The following mechanism is proposed.



Which step is the rate-determining step? Justify your answer.