

# Water Molecule Bonds

## 1. The Water Molecule (H<sub>2</sub>O)

A water molecule consists of two hydrogen atoms and one oxygen atom. This molecule is not linear; instead, it forms a V-shape or a bent shape due to the presence of two lone pairs of electrons on the oxygen atom. The bond angle between the hydrogen-oxygen-hydrogen atoms is approximately 104.5 degrees.

Water is a polar molecule. This means that the molecule has a positive charge on one side (where the hydrogen atoms are located) and a negative charge on the other side (where the oxygen atom is). This occurs because oxygen is more electronegative than hydrogen, pulling the electrons closer and creating a partial negative charge on the oxygen and a partial positive charge on the hydrogens.

## 2. Types of Bonds in a Water Molecule

There are two types of bonds in a water molecule: covalent bonds and hydrogen bonds.

**Covalent bonds:** These are the bonds that hold the hydrogen atoms to the oxygen atom within a single water molecule. Each of the two hydrogen atoms shares a pair of electrons with the oxygen atom, forming a covalent bond.

**Hydrogen bonds:** These are the bonds between different water molecules. The partially positive hydrogen atom of one water molecule is attracted to the partially negative oxygen atom of another water molecule, forming a hydrogen bond. Hydrogen bonding is responsible for many of water's unique properties, such as its relatively high boiling point and its ability to dissolve many substances.

## 3. Water-Related Ions

Water can participate in reactions that produce ions. The two most common of these are the hydronium ion (H<sub>3</sub>O<sup>+</sup>) and the hydroxide ion (OH<sup>-</sup>).

**Hydronium ion (H<sub>3</sub>O<sup>+</sup>):** In the presence of an acid, a water molecule can gain a proton (H<sup>+</sup>) to become a hydronium ion. This is often simplified in equations as  $\text{H}_2\text{O} + \text{H}^+ \rightarrow \text{H}_3\text{O}^+$ .

**Hydroxide ion (OH<sup>-</sup>):** In the presence of a base, a water molecule can lose a proton to become a hydroxide ion. This can be represented as  $\text{H}_2\text{O} \rightarrow \text{H}^+ + \text{OH}^-$ .

Water can also **self-ionize**, a process in which two water molecules produce a hydronium ion and a hydroxide ion:  $2\text{H}_2\text{O} \rightarrow \text{H}_3\text{O}^+ + \text{OH}^-$ . This is a **reversible reaction**, and in pure water at room temperature, the concentrations of hydronium ions and hydroxide ions are both  $1.0 \times 10^{-7} \text{ M}$ , giving water a neutral pH of 7.

## Alternative Bonds

**Ionic bonds** are formed when atoms exchange electrons. This usually happens between a metal and a non-metal. One atom (the metal) donates one or more electrons to the other atom (the non-metal). This creates ions: the metal becomes a positively charged cation, and the non-metal becomes a negatively charged anion. The attraction between these oppositely charged ions forms an ionic bond.

**Ionic bonds** are formed when atoms exchange electrons. This usually happens between a metal and a non-metal. One atom (the metal) donates one or more electrons to the other atom (the non-metal). This creates ions: the metal becomes a positively charged cation, and the non-metal becomes a negatively charged anion. The attraction between these oppositely charged ions forms an ionic bond.

**Metallic bonds** are found in metals. In these bonds, the metal atoms contribute their valence electrons to form a 'sea' of de-localized electrons. These free electrons move around the positively charged metal cations, holding the metal atoms together and contributing to the metal's electrical conductivity, malleability, and ductility.

When a voltage is applied to a water fuel cell capacitor, the stainless steel electrodes can inject electrons into the water. This can influence the water molecules and any ions or other compounds that may be dissolved in the water.

The addition of these extra electrons to the water can disrupt the balance of charges in the water molecules and can induce ionization, breaking the covalent bonds in the water molecule, causing it to split into **hydrogen** ( $\text{H}_2$ ) and **oxygen** ( $\text{O}_2$ ) gases, a process known as electrolysis.

The injected electrons from the stainless steel would be more likely to interact with the **hydronium** ( $\text{H}_3\text{O}^+$ ) and **hydroxide** ( $\text{OH}^-$ ) ions present in water.

These ions have a charge and are, therefore, more likely to interact with the excess or lack of electrons. In particular, the **hydroxide ions** ( $\text{OH}^-$ ) might attract the injected electrons, possibly leading to the formation of **hydrogen gas** ( $\text{H}_2$ ) and **oxygen ions** ( $\text{O}_2^-$ ) which could then pick up protons from **hydronium ions** ( $\text{H}_3\text{O}^+$ ) to form water again.

This process would not involve ionic or metallic bonding directly but instead involves a kind of redox (reduction-oxidation) reaction, where electrons are transferred from one species to another.

Revision #6

Created 12 February 2023 02:08:10 by Chris Bake

Updated 14 February 2025 22:12:17 by Chris Bake