

Acid Rain* Lab – Go!

Theory:

Water is able to absorb a large variety of chemicals, leading us to call it the “universal solvent”. In this lab we will be looking at how water absorbs CO_2 gas. We will be observing the pH level of the water sample as CO_2 is absorbed, forming carbonic acid and lowering the overall pH level. This lab will point the way to other gases being absorbed and similarly being converted to acidic compounds.

Purpose:

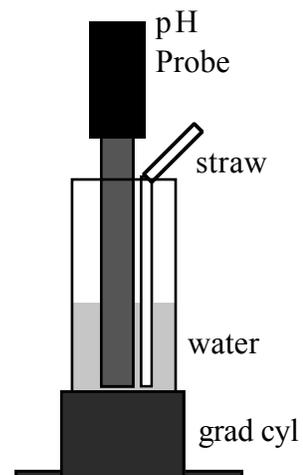
Study the absorption of CO_2 by water.

Equipment:

pH Sensor, Go! Link, Macintosh or PC Computer, 50-ml grad cylinder, distilled water (bottled water can be used), straw

Procedure:

1. Plug the pH Sensor into your Go! Link. Connect the Go! Link to your computer then launch Logger Lite software. When the software gets launched successfully, it should have set up a graph of pH vs. time.
2. Under **Experiment**, choose **Data Collection**. Set the length for data collection to 4 minutes. A rate of 1 sample per second is good. Click [Done] to set this collection scheme.
3. Put 10 ml of distilled water at room temperature in the graduated cylinder. Put a similar amount of water in a test tube and place in an ice water bath. Prepare another test tube but place it in a hot water bath.
4. Rinse the bulb of your pH Sensor with distilled water to remove the keeper solution. This liquid has pH 4, so you would be introducing an acidic compound that would interfere with the experiment.
5. Insert the pH Sensor in the room temperature water. Also insert the straw so that it is fully below the water line. Begin collecting pH readings. After about 30 seconds, begin blowing gently through the straw, bubbling into the water. Note changes in the pH readings. Keep blowing gently for one or two minutes. Then let things settle out for the last minute of data collection.
6. Once data collection is completed, press the Autoscale icon. This scales the graph so your data fills it completely. Go to Analysis questions 1 and 2. Then return to the next step of this procedure.



7. On the menu bar, click on the file cabinet icon to Store Latest Run. This will leave the previous data on the graph and allow a second run to be plotted over the top for easy comparison.
 8. Rinse the bulb of your pH Sensor with distilled water, then repeat steps 5 & 6 for the water that was stored in the ice water bath. Complete Analysis question 3. Then go to the next step of this procedure.
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9. Store that latest run as before. Rinse the bulb of your pH Sensor with distilled water, then repeat steps 5 & 6 for the water that was stored in the hot water bath. Complete Analysis question 4.

Analysis:

1. What was the pH reading of your distilled water? Does this reading indicate the water is acidic, basic or neutral?
2. Describe the graph generated as you blew air through the water. Note that the CO₂ in your breath was combining with water molecules to form carbonic acid, H₂CO₃. Does the direction of the graph indicate that carbonic acid is being formed?
3. How does the pH change of the cold water compare to the pH change for the room temperature water? What does that indicate about the amount of CO₂ that was absorbed?
4. How does the pH change of the hot water compare to the pH change for the room temperature water? What does that indicate about the amount of CO₂ that was absorbed? Is hot water or cold water better able to absorb CO₂ based on your experimental results?

Extension:

Compare the rate at which the pH changes if you have been resting recently and if you have been exercising. For example, run in place, run around the building or do some jumping jacks immediately before blowing into the straw. What does this say about the amount of CO₂ that you have in your breath?

*This isn't really an Acid Rain Lab. The process of absorbing CO₂ by water and forming carbonic acid means that airborne water is slightly acidic. In a similar manner, SO_x and NO_x are both absorbed forming acidic compounds that contribute to the problem we call acid rain. The more SO_x and NO_x in the air as a result of burning fuels, the more acid rain we generate.

Compare this lab with #22 in the [Chemistry with Vernier](#) lab manual.

For "pure water", we have often used bottled water although tap water can also be used very successfully. Clearest results ensue if the initial water is very slightly basic.