

**mechanism (of a reaction)**

A detailed description of the process leading from the reactants to the products of a reaction, including a characterization as complete as possible of the composition, structure, energy and other properties of *reaction intermediates*, products and *transition states*. An acceptable mechanism of a specified reaction (and there may be a number of such alternative mechanisms not excluded by the evidence) must be consistent with the reaction stoichiometry, the *rate law* and with all other available experimental data, such as the stereochemical course of the reaction. Inferences concerning the electronic motions which dynamically interconvert successive species along the *reaction path* (as represented by curved arrows, for example) are often included in the description of a mechanism.

It should be noted that for many reactions all this information is not available and the suggested mechanism is based on incomplete experimental data. It is not appropriate to use the term mechanism to describe a statement of the probable sequence in a set of stepwise reactions. That should be referred to as a reaction sequence, and not a mechanism.

See also *Gibbs energy diagram*.

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