NUCLEAR CHEMISTRY

Name	
Date	 _ Period

Working with Half-Life

When radioactive materials decay they release high speed particles that bang into other unstable radioactive atoms, hastening their decay. As the process proceeds, the amount of radioactive material decreases. This causes the number of high speed emissions to decrease. The fewer emissions there are, the slower the decay process becomes. As a result, large samples of radioactive material decay at a faster rate than small samples. In fact, as the sample size decreases, the rate of decay slows in such a way that the amount of time it takes for half the sample to decay is constant regardless of the sample size. In other words, it takes 500 g of uranium the same amount of time to decay into 250 g of uranium as it does for 2 g of uranium to decay into 1 g of uranium. The amount of time it takes for a radioactive sample to decay to half its original mass is called the half-life.

Sample Problem

Step 1: Look up the half life in Table N, the table of Selected Radioisotopes

How much ⁴²K will be left in a 320 g sample after 62 h?

The easiest way to solve half life problems is to set up a table.



Following this procedure it is possible to determine the final mass, the time elapsed, the fraction of the original sample, or the number of half lives elapsed.



Answer the questions below using data from *Table N*, the table of *Selected Radioisotopes*.

1. How long will it take for 30 g of ²²²Rn to decay to 7.5 g?

2. How many grams of ¹⁶N will be left from a 16 g sample after 21.6 s?

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- 3. How many half lives will it take for 50 g of 99 Tc to decay to 6.25 g?
- 4. What fraction of a sample of 32 P will be left after 42.9 d?
- 5. How long will it take for a 28 g sample of 226 Ra to decay to 3.5 g?
- 6. How long will it take for 50% of a sample of 131 I to decay?
- 7. After 9.8×10^{10} y, how many grams will be left from a 256 g sample of ²³²Th?
- 8. How long will it take for 500 g of 90 Sr to decay to 125 g?
- 9. What fraction of a sample of ${}^{3}H$ will be left after 36.78 y?