A n Introduction to Chemistry is intended for use in beginning chemistry courses that have no chemistry prerequisite. It was written for students who want to prepare themselves for general college chemistry, for students seeking to satisfy a science requirement for graduation, and for students in health-related or other programs that require a one-semester introduction to general chemistry. No matter what your students’ goals are, this book will help them to learn the basics of chemistry.

I have been teaching introductory chemistry courses for over 30 years, and for much of that time, I considered writing my own text. One reason was that the existing textbooks struck me as disjointed. They read more like a list of skills to master than like a coherent story of the nature of chemistry. I thought it should be possible to organize the fundamentals of chemistry so that each would flow smoothly into the next, but it wasn’t until I made some changes in my course that I began to take the prospect of writing a new textbook seriously.

The first change I tried in the classroom was to move the description of unit conversions from the beginning of the course to the middle. I decided that one of the main reasons why the course felt disjointed to me was that I kept jumping back and forth between the description of the basic concepts of chemistry and the explanation of unit conversions. Postponing the mathematics of chemistry enabled me to focus exclusively on chemistry in the first part of the course. Moreover, as a result of this change, my students develop far stronger computational skills than I was able to give them before. (The reasons for this are described below.) While I recommend this change, I know it is not an option in all courses. Therefore, I designed this text so that unit conversions can be either introduced at the start of the course or postponed (as I prefer) until later.

The second change I made was to put more emphasis on developing my students’ ability to visualize the particle nature of matter. Students too often view chemistry as a set of rules for manipulating numbers, symbols, and abbreviations, never really connecting these rules to a physical reality. They can balance equations and do chemical calculations, but they cannot answer questions about what is happening on the particle level when an acid reacts with a base. Thus, whenever appropriate, I enhance the standard topics covered in introductory chemistry with corresponding descriptions of events from the particles’ “point of view.”

The final factor that led to the creation of this text and its supplements is that I learned to create computer-based tools myself, and it occurred to me that a package whose text and computer-based ancillaries were all produced by the same person would offer real benefits. The Web-based tools that accompany this text include animations, glossary quizzes for each chapter, tutorials to consolidate and enhance important skills, and Web pages that provide extra information. Because I have created both the tools and the text, I think you will find that they fit together seamlessly.

Read on for a more detailed discussion of how these changes have been incorporated into An Introduction to Chemistry and its supplements. Each innovation has been developed with the ultimate goal of making it easier for you to give your students a coherent understanding of chemistry, a positive attitude toward chemistry (and toward
you and your course), and a solid foundation on which to build, should they decide to continue their chemistry studies.

Flexible Order of Math-Related Topics

*Do you spend a lot of time in the first week or two of your course teaching unit conversions and significant figures? If so, do many students lose interest or even drop the course because they find the math-related topics boring and perhaps intimidating?*

The single most beneficial change I have made in my prep-chem course has been to shift the coverage of unit conversions from the beginning to the middle of the semester. As detailed below, this book can be used to support either that approach or a more traditional one. Delaying coverage of unit conversions enables me to describe elements, compounds, and chemical reactions earlier than usual, and, I believe, to give my students a much better understanding of what chemistry really is. Students emerge from the first lectures with a better attitude toward the course and with more confidence in their abilities—which, in my experience, has translated into significantly lower drop rates. One of the most important by-products of this change, in my assessment, is that my students end up *better* equipped with math-related skills than would otherwise be the case (see “More Emphasis on Math-Related Topics” below). Immediately after I teach them a technique for making unit conversions, they begin using it in mole calculations. Thus, instead of learning the technique at the start of the course, and then largely forgetting it, and then trying to relearn it in haste, the students learn it well and then immediately consolidate their knowledge.

Because not everyone will choose to restructure their course in this way, I organized this book to allow two approaches to teaching unit conversions. Chapter 8, which covers unit conversions comprehensively, can be used either in its current position or early in the course.

- An instructor who wishes to teach unit conversions in detail early in the course can cover Chapter 8 immediately after Chapter 1. Chapter 8 is written so that students can read it without confusion before reading Chapters 2 through 7.
- An instructor who, like myself, wishes to delay the discussion of unit conversions can cover the chapters in their current order. Chapter 8 is located so that it teaches unit conversions immediately before the students need the technique for mole calculations.

Early Introduction to Chemical Reactions

*Are you ever frustrated that it takes so long to get to describing interesting chemical changes?*

Most prep-chem texts don’t describe chemical reactions until midway through the text or even later, thereby reinforcing students’ expectations that chemistry will be boring and irrelevant. In this text, chemical reactions are described in Chapters 4 through 6.
More Emphasis on Math-Related Topics

Do you ever wish that you could cover unit conversions in more detail but resist doing so because it would further postpone the introduction of the description of elements, compounds, and chemical changes?

Although I postpone the math-related topics in my prep-chem courses, I think that they are extremely important. Therefore, I have devoted three full chapters to them. Chapter 8 teaches an organized approach to making unit conversions, Chapter 9 describes chemical calculations and chemical formulas, and Chapter 10 covers chemical calculations and chemical equations.

More Logical Sequence of Topics

In many texts, Chapter 1 or 2 asks the reader to classify substances as elements, compounds, or mixtures and to classify changes as chemical or physical. Do you find it difficult to describe compounds before your students have a clear understanding of atoms and elements? Do you find it hard to describe chemical changes before your students know about chemical bonds and chemical compounds?

In the first week of class, I used to ask my students to classify substances as elements, compounds, or mixtures. That required me to introduce the concept of element long before any significant discussion of atoms and to describe compounds without first presenting a clear depiction of elements. I was equally uncomfortable asking them to classify changes as chemical or physical changes before they had any clear definition of chemical bonds. Now I move smoothly from the kinetic molecular theory to a description of atoms and elements (Chapter 2). This flows into a description of chemical bonds and chemical compounds (Chapter 3), which in turn forms the basis for an understanding of the nature of solutions and the processes of chemical changes (Chapters 4, 5, and 6). The introductory discussions that felt so disjointed to me in the past now seem to follow a logical progression—a story, really—that flows from simple to more complex.

Emphasis on the Development of Visualization Skills

Do you ever worry that your students can write balanced chemical equations but do not have a clear mental image of the events that occur during a chemical reaction?

I think it is extremely important for students to develop the ability to visualize the models that chemists use for describing the structure and behavior of matter. I want them to be able to connect a chemical equation to a visual image of what is happening in the reaction. Throughout the text, I emphasize the development of a mental image of the structure of matter and the changes it undergoes. I start with a more comprehensive description of the kinetic molecular theory than is found in most other books, and I build on that description in the sections on elements, compounds, and chemical changes. To help the student visualize structures and processes, I provide the colorful and detailed illustrations that are prominent in the book. Moreover, the book’s Web site provides animations based on key illustrations.
Identification of Skills to Review

When your students have trouble with a task, do you ever think that it’s because they have not completely mastered some of the lessons presented in earlier chapters?

The Review Skills section at the beginning of each chapter lists skills from earlier chapters that will be needed in the present chapter. The students can test their mastery of each skill by working the problems in the Review Questions section at the end of each chapter.

Instructors who wish to teach chapters in a different order than the one in the book can use these sections to identify topics that may require supplementation. The Instructor’s Manual contains a list of various possible chapter orders, with suggested detours to ensure that the students always have the skills they need.

Sample Study Sheets

Are the best-organized students in your class often the most successful? Do you ever wish that the text you were using helped students get more organized?

In an introductory chemistry course, it really pays to be organized. This text helps students get organized by providing Sample Study Sheets for many of the tasks they will be expected to do on exams. Each study sheet describes how to recognize a specific kind of task (“Tip-off”) and breaks the task down into general steps. Each Study Sheet is accompanied by at least one example.

Extensive Lists of Learning Objectives

Do your students ever complain that they do not know what they are supposed to be able to do after studying a chapter in the text?

The learning objectives listed at the end of each chapter are more comprehensive than the objectives in other texts. They list all the key skills taught within the chapter, thus helping students to focus on the most critical material. Objective references in the margins of the chapter denote the paragraphs that pertain to each objective, so that a student who has trouble with a particular objective can easily find the relevant text discussion. Many of the end-of-chapter problems are similarly referenced, so that students can see how each objective might be covered on an exam.

Chapter Glossaries and Glossary Quizzes

Do you wish your text did more to help students learn the language of chemistry?

Learning the language of science is an important goal of the courses for which this textbook is designed. Most books have a glossary at the back, but I suspect that students rarely refer to it. In addition to the glossary at the back of the book, this text also has a list of new terms at the end of each chapter, where it can serve as a chapter review. Glossary quizzes for each chapter can be found on the book’s Web site.
More Real-World Examples

*Do your students feel that what they read in their textbook is too far removed from the real world?*

This text is full of real-world examples, both in the chapter narrative and in the problems. For example, after introducing the idea of limiting reactants, Section 10.2 explains why chemists design procedures for chemical reactions in such a way that some substances are limiting and others are in excess. Chapter 9 problems mention vitamins, cold medicines, throat lozenges, antacids, gemstones, asphalt roofing, fireworks, stain and rust removers, dental polishing agents, metal extraction from natural ores, explosives, mouthwashes, Alar on apples, nicotine, pesticides, heart drugs, Agent Orange, thalidomide, and more. The chemical reactions used in problems often represent actual industrial processes. Several of the Special Topics scattered throughout the book describe the achievements of “green chemistry.”

Key Ideas Questions

*Have you ever wondered whether the chapter reviews in many textbooks are useful to students?*

After the Review Questions section at the end of the each chapter is a section titled Key Ideas. Students are given a list of numbers, words, and phrases that they use to fill in the blanks in a series of statements that follows the list. The statements summarize the most important ideas from the chapter—that is, they add up to a chapter review. Because this review is a game of sorts, the students get more actively involved and more interested in recalling key ideas than they do when reading a chapter summary.

Acknowledgments

Writing a textbook is a much bigger project than I ever imagined it would be, and to bring such a project this far requires many people, all of whom deserve my heartfelt thanks. The biggest thank you goes to my family. My loving and beautiful wife Elizabeth has not only done much more than her share of the tasks necessary to keep our home running smoothly, she has also kept our home a happy one. Her patience and generosity have allowed me to “disappear” to work on the project with a minimum of guilt. My kids (Meagan, Benjamin, and Claire) have had to do without their dad all too often, but they have always been understanding. I want to give a special thanks to my adult daughter Meagan, to my brother Bruce, and to my mother C. Joan Ninneman. They each provided a sympathetic ear when the project got me down, and they were constant sources of good advice. I’m a truly lucky man to have been blessed with such a family.

Next on my list of those to thank are my saintly developmental editors, Sue Ewing and Moira Lerner Nelson. Sue was there at the beginning, not only helping to convert the original book that existed only in my head into a realistic text, but also giving me support and advice at every step of the way. Moira took over at the midpoint of the process, and her suggestions have led to extensive improvements in the organization and language of the text. Moira, like Sue before her, has been a caring friend as well as a constant source of good ideas. It has been a great pleasure to see the book get better and better in response to the advice of these two professionals.

Another person who contributed significantly, though indirectly, to the writing of this text was Rodney Oka, my colleague and friend at Monterey Peninsula College. Rod shouldered many of the chemistry department tasks that I was just too busy to do, and he allowed me to continue to teach the same introductory courses long after he would have preferred to switch with me. (I’m sure he would rather get cash, but I
thought a strong thank you in print would be more lasting.)

Next, I want to thank Ron Rinehart, another of my colleagues, and Adam Carroll for checking the solutions for all of the problems in the text. Their attention to detail was much appreciated. Last, but certainly not least, I want to thank the many people who have reviewed the text at every stage in the process. They have been my main contact with the community of chemistry instructors, and, in that capacity, have given me both invaluable advice on many aspects of the work and encouragement to see the project through to the end. I want to give special thanks to Phil Reedy of Delta College and Walter Dean of Lawrence Technological University. They have been reviewing the manuscript from the beginning, and I hope they will see something of themselves between these covers. I also want to thank Donald Wink of the University of Illinois at Chicago, who, until he decided to write a competing text of his own, did his best to keep me honest.

I want all of the reviewers in the following list to know that I greatly appreciate their contributions:

Elaine Alfonsetti, Broome Community College;
Nicholas Alteri, Community College of Rhode Island;
Joe Asire, Cuesta College;
Caroline Ayers, East Carolina University;
M.R. Barranger-Mathys, Mercyhurst College;
Cheryl Baxa, Pine Manor College;
Bill Bornhorst, Grossmont College;
Tom Carey, Berkshire Community College;
Marcus Cicerone, Brigham Young University;
Juan Pablo Claude, University of Alabama at Birmingham;
Michael Clay, College of San Mateo;
Denisha Dawson, Diablo Valley College;
Walter Dean, Lawrence Technological University;
Patrick Desrochers, University of Central Arkansas;
Howard Dewald, Ohio University;
Jim Diamond, Linfield College;
David Dollimore, University of Toledo;
Celia A. Domser, Mohawk Valley Community;
Tim Donnelly, University of California, Davis;
Elizabeth Dorland, Mesa Community College;
Jimmie G. Edwards, University of Toledo;
Amina El-Ashmawy, Collin County Community College;
Naomi Eliezer, Oakland University;
Roger Frampton, Tidewater Community College;
Donna Friedman, St. Louis Community College;
Galen George, Santa Rosa Junior College;
Steve Glueckert, University of Southern Indiana;
Kevin Gratton, Johnson Community College;
Ann Gull, St. Joseph’s College;
Greg Guzewich, Midge Hall, Clark State Community College;
James Hardcastle, Texas Women’s University;
Blaine Harrison, West Valley College;
David Henderson, Trinity College;
Jeffrey Hurlbut, Metropolitan State College;
Jo Ann Jansing, Indiana University Southeast;
Craig Johnson, Carlow College;
James Johnson, Sinclair Community College;
Sharon Kapica, County College of Morris;
Roy Kennedy, Massachusetts Bay Community College;
Gary Kinsel, University of Texas Arlington;
Leslie N. Kinsland, University of Southern Louisiana;
Deborah Koeck, Southwest Texas State University;
Kurtis J. Koll, Cameron University;
Christopher Landry, University of Vermont;
Joseph Lechner, Mount Vernon Nazarene College;
Robley Light, Florida State University;
John Long, Henderson State University;
Jerome Maas, Oakton Community College;
Art Maret, University of Central Florida;
Jeffrey A. Mathys;
Evan Millam; University of Southern Indiana;
Ken Miller, Milwaukee Area Technical College;
Barbara Mowery, Thomas Nelson Community College;
Kathy Nabona, Austin Community College;
Ann Nalley, Cameron University;
Andrea Nolan, Miami University Middletown;
Rod Oka, Monterey Peninsula College (class tester);
Joyce Overly, Gaston College;
Maria Pacheco, Buffalo State College;
Brenda N. Peirson; Amy Phelps, University of Northern Iowa;
Morgan Ponder, Samford University;
Matiur Rahman, Austin Community College;
Pat Rogers, U.C. Irvine;
Phil Reedy, Delta College;
Ruth Russo, Whitman College;
Lowell Shank, Western Kentucky University;
Ike Shibley, Penn State Berks;
Trudie Jo Slapar Wagner, Vincennes University;
Dennis Stevens, University of Nevada- Las Vegas;
Jim Swartz, Thomas More College;
Sue Thornton, Montgomery College;
Philip Verhalen, Panola College;
Gabriela C. Weaver, University of Colorado, Denver;
William Wilk, CSU Dominguez Hills;
Dr. Linda A. Wilson, Middle Tennessee State University;
Donald Wink, University of Chicago;
James Wood, University of Nebraska at Omaha;
Jesse Yeh, South Plains College;
Linda Zarzana, American River College;
David Zellmer, California State University, Fresno;

If you have any questions about the text that you would like to ask me, I'd be happy to have the opportunity to answer them. Feel free to send me email at bishopmark@comcast.net. I hope that your teaching experience using this book (or any other text) will be a satisfying and pleasurable one.

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