

HINTS & TIPS

THE pH SCALE

The pH scale has 15 steps ranging from 0 for strong acids, through to 14 for strong alkalis.

Below 7 is acid, above 7 is alkaline.

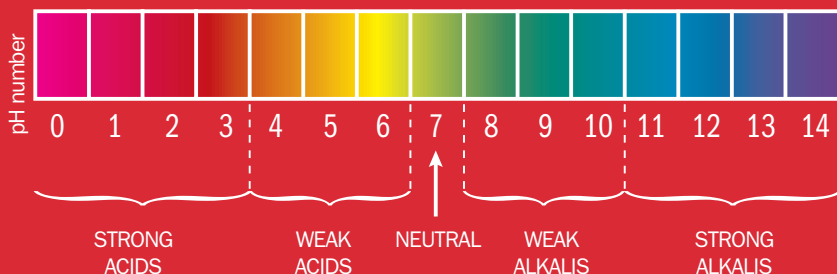
Substances, like pure water, that are neither acids nor alkalis are called 'neutral' and have a pH of 7.

The easiest way to test if a liquid is an acid or an alkali is by using litmus paper. Litmus is a dye obtained from lichens which turns red in the presence of acids and blue in the presence of alkalis.

A better way is to use Universal Indicator; either in solution, or on paper spills known as pH paper. The advantage of Universal Indicator over litmus is that a wide range of colours is produced depending on the strength of the acid or alkali.

The Universal Indicator is actually a mixture of several pH indicators. Each of the individual indicators change colour at a different pH value. In this way, Universal Indicator is capable of displaying a range of colours according to the pH of the test solution. Colours range from red (at pH1, strong acid) through green (neutral) and purple (at pH 13, strong alkali).

Colours produced can be compared to the scale below to determine the pH of the sample.



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