

8.3: Hybrid Atomic Orbitals

Learning Objectives

- Explain the concept of atomic orbital hybridization
- Determine the hybrid orbitals associated with various molecular geometries

Thinking in terms of overlapping atomic orbitals is one way for us to explain how chemical bonds form in diatomic molecules. However, to understand how molecules with more than two atoms form stable bonds, we require a more detailed model. As an example, let us consider the water molecule, in which we have one oxygen atom bonding to two hydrogen atoms. Oxygen has the electron configuration $1s^2 2s^2 2p^4$, with two unpaired electrons (one in each of the two $2p$ orbitals). Valence bond theory would predict that the two O–H bonds form from the overlap of these two $2p$ orbitals with the $1s$ orbitals of the hydrogen atoms. If this were the case, the bond angle would be 90° , as shown in Figure 8.3.1, because p orbitals are perpendicular to each other. Experimental evidence shows that the bond angle is 104.5° , not 90° . The prediction of the valence bond theory model does not match the real-world observations of a water molecule; a different model is needed.

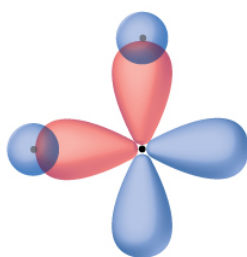


Figure 8.3.1: The hypothetical overlap of two of the $2p$ orbitals on an oxygen atom (red) with the $1s$ orbitals of two hydrogen atoms (blue) would produce a bond angle of 90° . This is not consistent with experimental evidence.¹

Two peanut-shaped orbitals lie perpendicular to one another. They overlap with spherical orbitals to the left and top of the diagram.

Quantum-mechanical calculations suggest why the observed bond angles in H_2O differ from those predicted by the overlap of the $1s$ orbital of the hydrogen atoms with the $2p$ orbitals of the oxygen atom. The mathematical expression known as the wave function, ψ , contains information about each orbital and the wavelike properties of electrons in an isolated atom. When atoms are bound together in a molecule, the wave functions combine to produce new mathematical descriptions that have different shapes. This process of combining the wave functions for atomic orbitals is called hybridization and is mathematically accomplished by the *linear combination of atomic orbitals*, LCAO, (a technique that we will encounter again later). The new orbitals that result are called hybrid orbitals. The valence orbitals in an *isolated* oxygen atom are a $2s$ orbital and three $2p$ orbitals. The valence orbitals in an oxygen atom in a water molecule differ; they consist of four equivalent hybrid orbitals that point approximately toward the corners of a tetrahedron (Figure 8.3.2). Consequently, the overlap of the O and H orbitals should result in a tetrahedral bond angle (109.5°). The observed angle of 104.5° is experimental evidence for which quantum-mechanical calculations give a useful explanation: Valence bond theory must include a hybridization component to give accurate predictions.

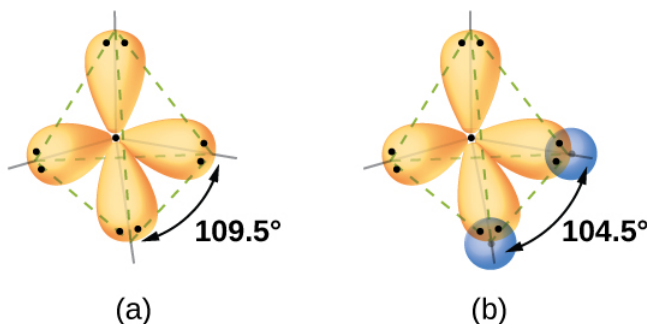


Figure 8.3.2: (a) A water molecule has four regions of electron density, so VSEPR theory predicts a tetrahedral arrangement of hybrid orbitals. (b) Two of the hybrid orbitals on oxygen contain lone pairs, and the other two overlap with the $1s$ orbitals of hydrogen atoms to form the O–H bonds in H_2O . This description is more consistent with the experimental structure.

Two diagrams are shown and labeled “a” and “b.” Diagram a shows two peanut-shaped orbitals lying in a tetrahedral arrangement around the letter “O.” Diagram b shows the same two orbitals, but they now overlap to the top and to the left with two spherical orbitals, each labeled “H.” A pair of electrons occupies each lobe of the peanut-shaped orbitals.

The following ideas are important in understanding hybridization:

1. Hybrid orbitals do not exist in isolated atoms. They are formed only in covalently bonded atoms.
2. Hybrid orbitals have shapes and orientations that are very different from those of the atomic orbitals in isolated atoms.
3. A set of hybrid orbitals is generated by combining atomic orbitals. The number of hybrid orbitals in a set is equal to the number of atomic orbitals that were combined to produce the set.
4. All orbitals in a set of hybrid orbitals are equivalent in shape and energy.
5. The type of hybrid orbitals formed in a bonded atom depends on its electron-pair geometry as predicted by the VSEPR theory.
6. Hybrid orbitals overlap to form σ bonds. Unhybridized orbitals overlap to form π bonds.

In the following sections, we shall discuss the common types of hybrid orbitals.

8.3.1: sp Hybridization

The beryllium atom in a gaseous BeCl_2 molecule is an example of a central atom with no lone pairs of electrons in a linear arrangement of three atoms. There are two regions of valence electron density in the BeCl_2 molecule that correspond to the two covalent Be–Cl bonds. To accommodate these two electron domains, two of the Be atom's four valence orbitals will mix to yield two hybrid orbitals. This hybridization process involves mixing of the valence s orbital with one of the valence p orbitals to yield two equivalent sp hybrid orbitals that are oriented in a linear geometry (Figure 8.3.3). In this figure, the set of sp orbitals appears similar in shape to the original p orbital, but there is an important difference. The number of atomic orbitals combined always equals the number of hybrid orbitals formed. The p orbital is one orbital that can hold up to two electrons. The sp set is two equivalent orbitals that point 180° from each other. The two electrons that were originally in the s orbital are now distributed to the two sp orbitals, which are half filled. In gaseous BeCl_2 , these half-filled hybrid orbitals will overlap with orbitals from the chlorine atoms to form two identical σ bonds.

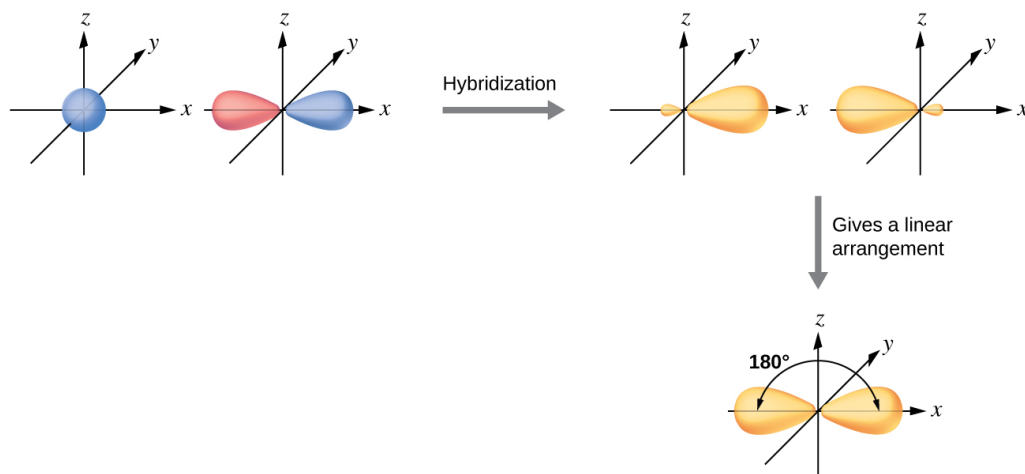


Figure 8.3.3: Hybridization of an s orbital (blue) and a p orbital (red) of the same atom produces two sp hybrid orbitals (yellow). Each hybrid orbital is oriented primarily in just one direction. Note that each sp orbital contains one lobe that is significantly larger than the other. The set of two sp orbitals are oriented at 180° , which is consistent with the geometry for two domains.

A series of three diagrams connected by a right-facing arrow that is labeled, “Hybridization,” and a downward-facing arrow labeled, “Gives a linear arrangement,” are shown. The first diagram shows a blue spherical orbital and a red, peanut-shaped orbital, each placed on an X, Y, Z axis system. The second diagram shows the same two orbitals, but they are now purple and have one enlarged lobe and one smaller lobe. Each lies along the x-axis in the drawing. The third diagram shows the same two orbitals, but their smaller lobes now overlap along the x-axis while their larger lobes are located at and labeled as “ 180° ” from one another.

We illustrate the electronic differences in an isolated Be atom and in the bonded Be atom in the orbital energy-level diagram in Figure 8.3.4. These diagrams represent each orbital by a horizontal line (indicating its energy) and each electron by an arrow. Energy increases toward the top of the diagram. We use one upward arrow to indicate one electron in an orbital and two arrows (up and down) to indicate two electrons of opposite spin.

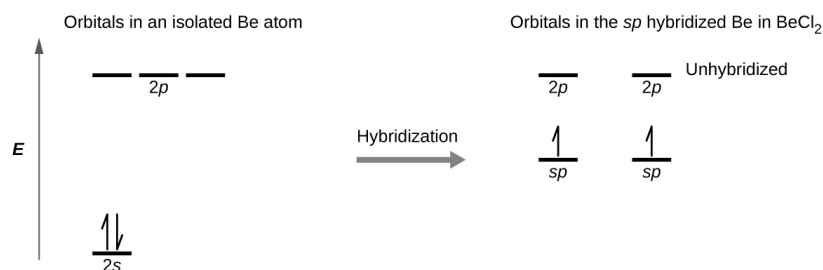


Figure 8.3.4: This orbital energy-level diagram shows the sp hybridized orbitals on Be in the linear BeCl_2 molecule. Each of the two sp hybrid orbitals holds one electron and is thus half filled and available for bonding via overlap with a Cl $3p$ orbital.

A diagram is shown in two parts, connected by a right facing arrow labeled, "Hybridization." The left diagram shows an up-facing arrow labeled, "E." To the lower right of the arrow is a short, horizontal line labeled, "2 s," that has two vertical half-arrows facing up and down on it. To the upper right of the arrow are a series of three short, horizontal lines labeled, "2 p." Above these two sets of lines is the phrase, "Orbitals in an isolated B e atom." The right side of the diagram shows two short, horizontal lines placed halfway up the space and each labeled, "s p." An upward-facing half arrow is drawn vertically on each line. Above these lines are two other short, horizontal lines, each labeled, "2 p." Above these two sets of lines is the phrase, "Orbitals in the s p hybridized B e in B e C l subscript 2."

When atomic orbitals hybridize, the valence electrons occupy the newly created orbitals. The Be atom had two valence electrons, so each of the sp orbitals gets one of these electrons. Each of these electrons pairs up with the unpaired electron on a chlorine atom when a hybrid orbital and a chlorine orbital overlap during the formation of the Be–Cl bonds. Any central atom surrounded by just two regions of valence electron density in a molecule will exhibit sp hybridization. Other examples include the mercury atom in the linear HgCl_2 molecule, the zinc atom in $\text{Zn}(\text{CH}_3)_2$, which contains a linear C–Zn–C arrangement, and the carbon atoms in HCCH and CO_2 .

8.3.2: sp^2 Hybridization

The valence orbitals of a central atom surrounded by three regions of electron density consist of a set of three sp^2 hybrid orbitals and one unhybridized p orbital. This arrangement results from sp^2 hybridization, the mixing of one s orbital and two p orbitals to produce three identical hybrid orbitals oriented in a trigonal planar geometry (Figure 8.3.5).

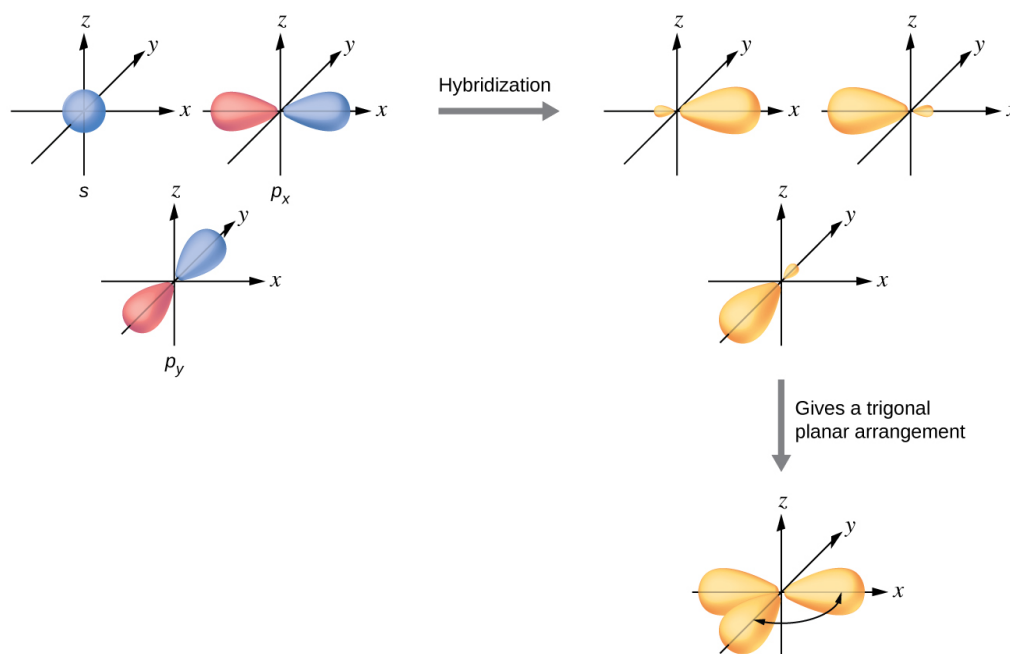


Figure 8.3.5: The hybridization of an s orbital (blue) and two p orbitals (red) produces three equivalent sp^2 hybridized orbitals (yellow) oriented at 120° with respect to each other. The remaining unhybridized p orbital is not shown here, but is located along the z axis.

A series of three diagrams connected by a right-facing arrow that is labeled, “Hybridization,” and a downward-facing arrow labeled, “Gives a trigonal planar arrangement,” are shown. The first diagram shows a blue spherical orbital and two red, peanut-shaped orbitals, each placed on an X, Y, Z axis system. The two red orbitals are located on the x and z axes, respectively. The second diagram shows the same three orbitals, but they are now purple and have one enlarged lobe and one smaller lobe. Each lies in a different axis in the drawing. The third diagram shows the same three orbitals, but their smaller lobes now overlap while their larger lobes are located at and labeled as “ 120° ” from one another.

Although quantum mechanics yields the “plump” orbital lobes as depicted in Figure 8.3.5, sometimes for clarity these orbitals are drawn thinner and without the minor lobes, as in Figure 8.3.6, to avoid obscuring other features of a given illustration. We will use these “thinner” representations whenever the true view is too crowded to easily visualize.

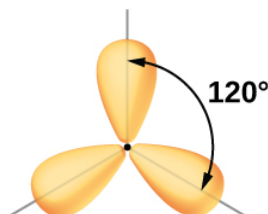


Figure 8.3.6: This alternate way of drawing the trigonal planar sp^2 hybrid orbitals is sometimes used in more crowded figures. Three balloon-like orbitals are shown, and connect together near their narrower ends in one plane. The angle between a pair of lobes is labeled, “ 120° degrees.”

The observed structure of the borane molecule, BH_3 , suggests sp^2 hybridization for boron in this compound. The molecule is trigonal planar, and the boron atom is involved in three bonds to hydrogen atoms (Figure 8.3.7).

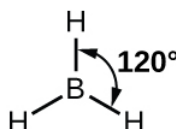


Figure 8.3.7: BH_3 is an electron-deficient molecule with a trigonal planar structure.

A boron atom is shown connected to three hydrogen atoms, which are arranged around it like a pyramid. The angle from one line connecting the boron atom to a hydrogen atom to another line connecting the boron atom to a hydrogen atom is labeled, “ 120° degrees.”

We can illustrate the comparison of orbitals and electron distribution in an isolated boron atom and in the bonded atom in BH_3 as shown in the orbital energy level diagram in Figure 8.3.8. We redistribute the three valence electrons of the boron atom in the three

sp^2 hybrid orbitals, and each boron electron pairs with a hydrogen electron when B–H bonds form.

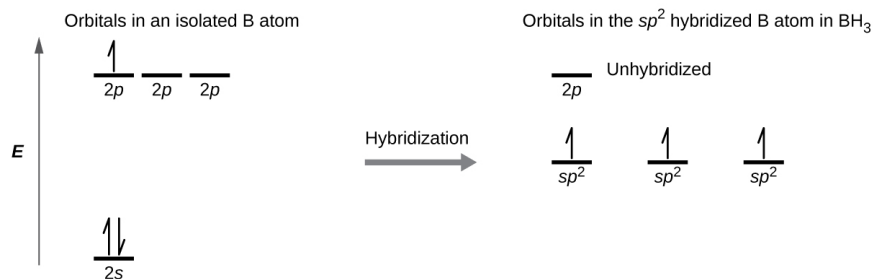


Figure 8.3.8: In an isolated B atom, there are one 2s and three 2p valence orbitals. When boron is in a molecule with three regions of electron density, three of the orbitals hybridize and create a set of three sp^2 orbitals and one unhybridized 2p orbital. The three half-filled hybrid orbitals each overlap with an orbital from a hydrogen atom to form three σ bonds in BH_3 .

A diagram is shown in two parts, connected by a right facing arrow labeled, “Hybridization.” The left diagram shows an up-facing arrow labeled “E.” To the lower right of the arrow is a short, horizontal line labeled, “2 s,” that has two vertical half-arrows facing up and down on it. To the upper right of the arrow are a series of three short, horizontal lines labeled, “2 p.” Above both sets of these lines is the phrase, “Orbitals in an isolated B atom.” One of the lines has a vertical, up-facing arrow drawn on it. The right side of the diagram shows three short, horizontal lines placed halfway up the space and each labeled, “s p superscript 2.” An upward-facing half arrow is drawn vertically on each line. Above these lines is one other short, horizontal line, labeled, “2 p.” Above both sets of lines is the phrase, “Orbitals in the s p superscript 2 hybridized B atom in B H subscript 3.”

Any central atom surrounded by three regions of electron density will exhibit sp^2 hybridization. This includes molecules with a lone pair on the central atom, such as $ClNO$ (Figure 8.3.9), or molecules with two single bonds and a double bond connected to the central atom, as in formaldehyde, CH_2O , and ethene, H_2CCH_2 .

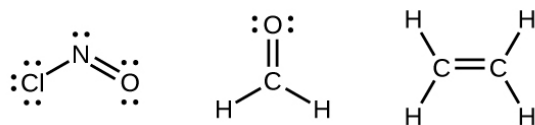


Figure 8.3.9: The central atom(s) in each of the structures shown contain three regions of electron density and are sp^2 hybridized. As we know from the discussion of VSEPR theory, a region of electron density contains all of the electrons that point in one direction. A lone pair, an unpaired electron, a single bond, or a multiple bond would each count as one region of electron density.

Three Lewis structures are shown. The left-hand structure shows a chlorine atom surrounded by three lone pairs of electrons single bonded to a nitrogen atom with one lone pair of electrons and double bonded to an oxygen atom with two lone pairs of electrons. The middle structure shows a carbon atom single bonded to two hydrogen atoms and double bonded to an oxygen atom that has two lone pairs of electrons. The right-hand structure shows two carbon atoms, double bonded to one another and each single bonded to two hydrogen atoms.

8.3.3: sp^3 Hybridization

The valence orbitals of an atom surrounded by a tetrahedral arrangement of bonding pairs and lone pairs consist of a set of four sp^3 hybrid orbitals. The hybrids result from the mixing of one s orbital and all three p orbitals that produces four identical sp^3 hybrid orbitals (Figure 8.3.10). Each of these hybrid orbitals points toward a different corner of a tetrahedron.

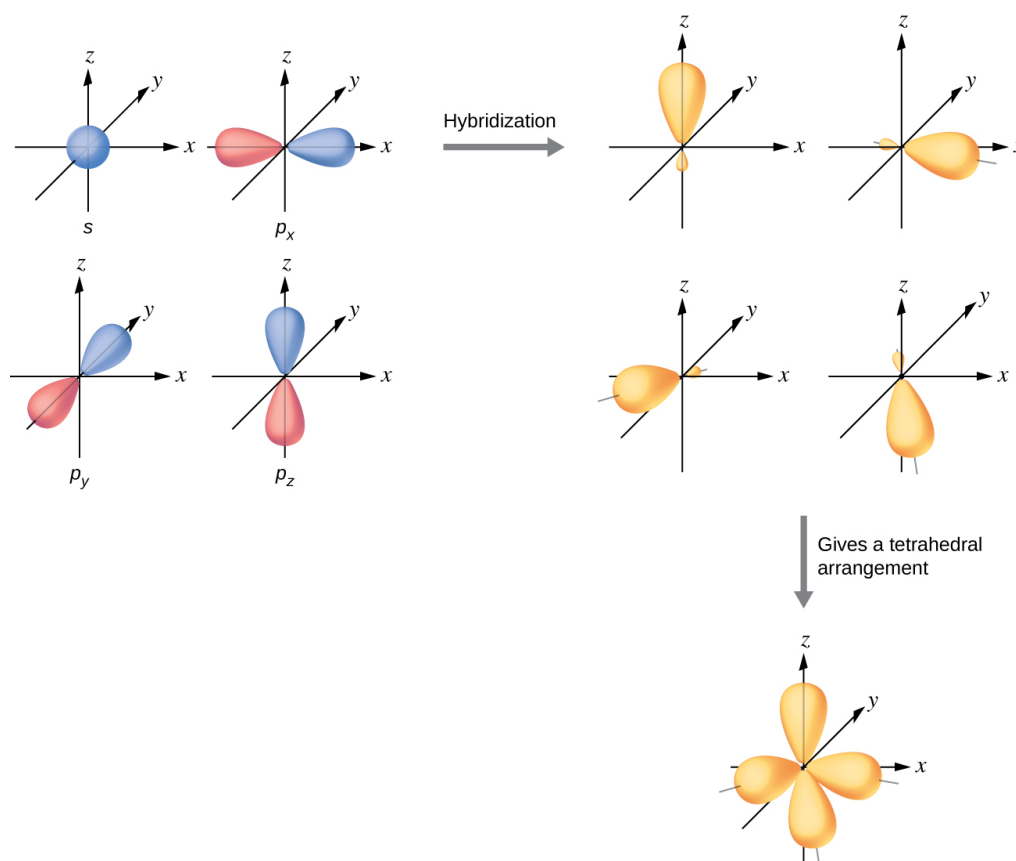


Figure 8.3.10: The hybridization of an s orbital (blue) and three p orbitals (red) produces four equivalent sp^3 hybridized orbitals (yellow) oriented at 109.5° with respect to each other.

A series of three diagrams connected by a right-facing arrow that is labeled, "Hybridization," and a downward-facing arrow labeled, "Gives a tetrahedral arrangement," are shown. The first diagram shows a blue spherical orbital and three red, peanut-shaped orbitals, each placed on an x , y , z axis system. The three red orbitals are located on the x , y and z axes, respectively. The second diagram shows the same four orbitals, but they are now purple and have one enlarged lobe and one smaller lobe. Each lies in a different axis in the drawing. The third diagram shows the same four orbitals, but their smaller lobes now overlap to form a tetrahedral structure.

A molecule of methane, CH_4 , consists of a carbon atom surrounded by four hydrogen atoms at the corners of a tetrahedron. The carbon atom in methane exhibits sp^3 hybridization. We illustrate the orbitals and electron distribution in an isolated carbon atom and in the bonded atom in CH_4 in Figure 8.3.11. The four valence electrons of the carbon atom are distributed equally in the hybrid orbitals, and each carbon electron pairs with a hydrogen electron when the C–H bonds form.

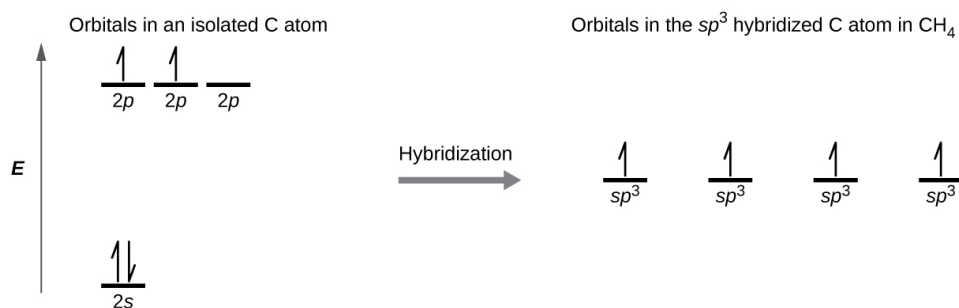


Figure 8.3.11: The four valence atomic orbitals from an isolated carbon atom all hybridize when the carbon bonds in a molecule like CH_4 with four regions of electron density. This creates four equivalent sp^3 hybridized orbitals. Overlap of each of the hybrid orbitals with a hydrogen orbital creates a C–H σ bond.

A diagram is shown in two parts, connected by a right facing arrow labeled, “Hybridization.” The left diagram shows an up-facing arrow labeled “E.” To the lower right of the arrow is a short, horizontal line labeled, “2 s,” that has two vertical half-arrows facing up and down on it. To the upper right of the arrow are a series of three short, horizontal lines labeled, “2 p.” Two of the lines have a vertical, up-facing arrow drawn on them. Above both sets of lines is the phrase, “Orbitals in an isolated C atom.” The right side of the diagram shows four short, horizontal lines placed halfway up the space and each labeled, “s p superscript 3.” An upward-facing half arrow is drawn vertically on each line. Above these lines is the phrase, “Orbitals in the s p superscript 3 hybridized C atom in C H subscript 4.”

In a methane molecule, the 1s orbital of each of the four hydrogen atoms overlaps with one of the four sp^3 orbitals of the carbon atom to form a sigma (σ) bond. This results in the formation of four strong, equivalent covalent bonds between the carbon atom and each of the hydrogen atoms to produce the methane molecule, CH_4 .

The structure of ethane, C_2H_6 , is similar to that of methane in that each carbon in ethane has four neighboring atoms arranged at the corners of a tetrahedron—three hydrogen atoms and one carbon atom (Figure 8.3.10). However, in ethane an sp^3 orbital of one carbon atom overlaps end to end with an sp^3 orbital of a second carbon atom to form a σ bond between the two carbon atoms. Each of the remaining sp^3 hybrid orbitals overlaps with an s orbital of a hydrogen atom to form carbon–hydrogen σ bonds. The structure and overall outline of the bonding orbitals of ethane are shown in Figure 8.3.12 The orientation of the two CH_3 groups is not fixed relative to each other. Experimental evidence shows that rotation around σ bonds occurs easily.

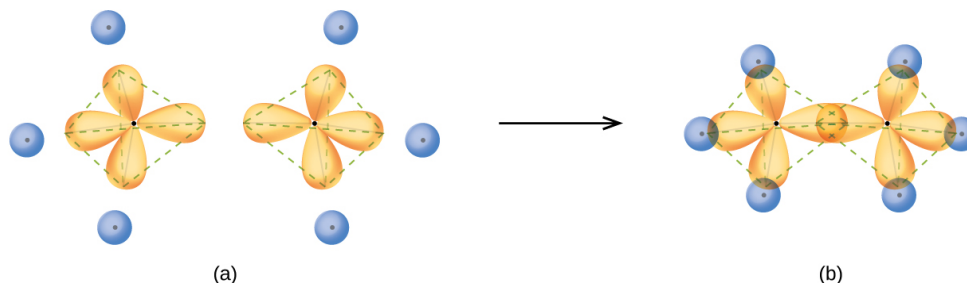


Figure 8.3.12: (a) In the ethane molecule, C_2H_6 , each carbon has four sp^3 orbitals. (b) These four orbitals overlap to form seven σ bonds.

Two diagrams are shown and labeled “a” and “b.” Diagram a shows two carbon atoms, each surrounded by their four s p subscript three hybridized orbitals in a three dimensional arrangement. Each of the orbitals is shown overlapping with a spherical hydrogen atom. Diagram b shows the same general arrangement, but the hydrogen atoms are just represented by an, “H” and their spherical orbitals are not shown.

An sp^3 hybrid orbital can also hold a lone pair of electrons. For example, the nitrogen atom in ammonia is surrounded by three bonding pairs and a lone pair of electrons directed to the four corners of a tetrahedron. The nitrogen atom is sp^3 hybridized with one hybrid orbital occupied by the lone pair.

The molecular structure of water is consistent with a tetrahedral arrangement of two lone pairs and two bonding pairs of electrons. Thus we say that the oxygen atom is sp^3 hybridized, with two of the hybrid orbitals occupied by lone pairs and two by bonding pairs. Since lone pairs occupy more space than bonding pairs, structures that contain lone pairs have bond angles slightly distorted from the ideal. Perfect tetrahedra have angles of 109.5° , but the observed angles in ammonia (107.3°) and water (104.5°) are slightly smaller. Other examples of sp^3 hybridization include CCl_4 , PCl_3 , and NCl_3 .

8.3.4: sp^3d and sp^3d^2 Hybridization

To describe the five bonding orbitals in a trigonal bipyramidal arrangement, we must use five of the valence shell atomic orbitals (the s orbital, the three p orbitals, and one of the d orbitals), which gives five sp^3d hybrid orbitals. With an octahedral arrangement of six hybrid orbitals, we must use six valence shell atomic orbitals (the s orbital, the three p orbitals, and two of the d orbitals in its valence shell), which gives six sp^3d^2 hybrid orbitals. These hybridizations are only possible for atoms that have d orbitals in their valence subshells (that is, not those in the first or second period).

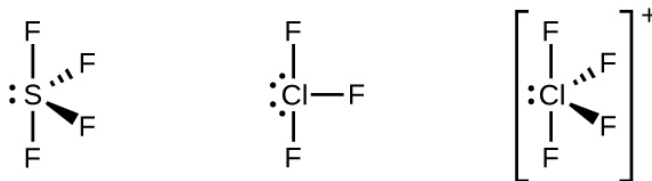


Figure 8.3.13: The three compounds pictured exhibit sp^3d hybridization in the central atom and a trigonal bipyramid form. SF_4 and ClF_4^+ have one lone pair of electrons on the central atom, and ClF_3 has two lone pairs giving it the T-shape shown.

Three Lewis structures are shown along with designations of molecular shape. The left image shows a sulfur atom singly bonded to four fluorine atoms. The sulfur atom has one lone pair of electrons while each fluorine has three. Two fluorine atoms are drawn vertically up and down from the sulfur while the other two are shown going into and out of the page. The second structure shows one chlorine atom singly bonded to three fluorine atoms. The chlorine has two lone pairs of electrons while each fluorine has three. Two fluorine atoms are drawn vertically up and down from the sulfur while the other is shown horizontally. The right structure shows a chlorine atom singly bonded to four fluorine atoms. The chlorine atom has one lone pair of electrons and a superscript plus sign, while each fluorine has three lone pairs of electrons. Two fluorine atoms are drawn vertically up and down from the sulfur while the other two are shown going into and out of the page.

In a molecule of phosphorus pentachloride, PCl_5 , there are five P–Cl bonds (thus five pairs of valence electrons around the phosphorus atom) directed toward the corners of a trigonal bipyramid. We use the $3s$ orbital, the three $3p$ orbitals, and one of the $3d$ orbitals to form the set of five sp^3d hybrid orbitals (Figure 8.3.13) that are involved in the P–Cl bonds. Other atoms that exhibit sp^3d hybridization include the sulfur atom in SF_4 and the chlorine atoms in ClF_3 and in ClF_4^+ . (The electrons on fluorine atoms are omitted for clarity.)

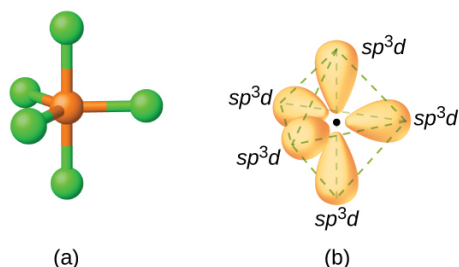


Figure 8.3.14: (a) The five regions of electron density around phosphorus in PCl_5 require five hybrid sp^3d orbitals. (b) These orbitals combine to form a trigonal bipyramidal structure with each large lobe of the hybrid orbital pointing at a vertex. As before, there are also small lobes pointing in the opposite direction for each orbital (not shown for clarity).

Two images are shown and labeled “a” and “b.” Image a depicts a ball-and-stick model in a trigonal bipyramidal arrangement. Image b depicts the hybrid orbitals in the same arrangement and each is labeled, “ s superscript three d .”

The sulfur atom in sulfur hexafluoride, SF_6 , exhibits sp^3d^2 hybridization. A molecule of sulfur hexafluoride has six bonding pairs of electrons connecting six fluorine atoms to a single sulfur atom. There are no lone pairs of electrons on the central atom. To bond six fluorine atoms, the $3s$ orbital, the three $3p$ orbitals, and two of the $3d$ orbitals form six equivalent sp^3d^2 hybrid orbitals, each directed toward a different corner of an octahedron. Other atoms that exhibit sp^3d^2 hybridization include the phosphorus atom in PCl_6^- , the iodine atom in the interhalogens IF_6^+ , IF_5 , ICl_4^- , IF_4^- and the xenon atom in XeF_4 .

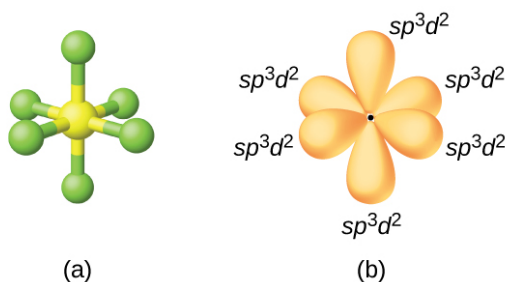


Figure 8.3.15: (a) Sulfur hexafluoride, SF_6 , has an octahedral structure that requires sp^3d^2 hybridization. (b) The six sp^3d^2 orbitals form an octahedral structure around sulfur. Again, the minor lobe of each orbital is not shown for clarity.

Two images are shown and labeled “a” and “b.” Image a depicts a ball-and-stick model in an octahedral arrangement. Image b depicts the hybrid orbitals in the same arrangement and each is labeled, “s p superscript three d superscript two.”

8.3.5: Assignment of Hybrid Orbitals to Central Atoms

The hybridization of an atom is determined based on the number of regions of electron density that surround it. The geometrical arrangements characteristic of the various sets of hybrid orbitals are shown in Figure 8.3.16. These arrangements are identical to those of the electron-pair geometries predicted by VSEPR theory. VSEPR theory predicts the shapes of molecules, and hybrid orbital theory provides an explanation for how those shapes are formed. To find the hybridization of a central atom, we can use the following guidelines:

1. Determine the Lewis structure of the molecule.
2. Determine the number of regions of electron density around an atom using VSEPR theory, in which single bonds, multiple bonds, radicals, and lone pairs each count as one region.
3. Assign the set of hybridized orbitals from Figure 8.3.16 that corresponds to this geometry.


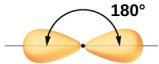

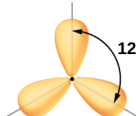
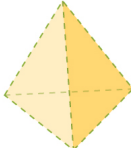
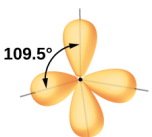

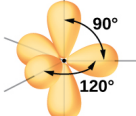

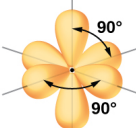
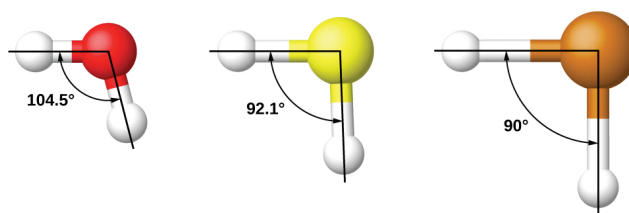
Regions of Electron Density	Arrangement		Hybridization	
2		linear	sp	
3		trigonal planar	sp^2	
4		tetrahedral	sp^3	
5		trigonal bipyramidal	sp^3d	
6		octahedral	sp^3d^2	

Figure 8.3.16: The shapes of hybridized orbital sets are consistent with the electron-pair geometries. For example, an atom surrounded by three regions of electron density is sp^2 hybridized, and the three sp^2 orbitals are arranged in a trigonal planar fashion. A table is shown that is composed of five columns and six rows. The header row contains the phrases, "Regions of electron density," "Arrangement," (which has two columns below it), and "Hybridization," (which has two columns below it). The first column contains the numbers "2," "3," "4," "5," and "6." The second column contains images of a line, a triangle, a three sided pyramid, a trigonal bipyramid, and an eight-faced octahedron. The third column contains the terms, "Linear," "Trigonal planar," "Tetrahedral," "Trigonal bipyramidal," and "Octahedral." The fourth column contains the terms " sp ," " sp^2 ," " sp^3 ," " sp^3d ," and " sp^3d^2 ." The last column contains drawings of the molecules beginning with a peanut-shaped structure marked with an angle of "180 degrees." The second structure is made up of three equal-sized, rounded structures connected at one point with an angle of "120 degrees," while the third structure is a three-dimensional arrangement of four equal-sized, rounded structures labeled as "109.5 degrees." The fourth structure is made up of five equal-sized, rounded structures connected at "120 and 90 degrees," while the fifth structure has six equal-sized, rounded structures connected at "90 degrees."

It is important to remember that hybridization was devised to rationalize experimentally observed molecular geometries, not the other way around.

The model works well for molecules containing small central atoms, in which the valence electron pairs are close together in space. However, for larger central atoms, the valence-shell electron pairs are farther from the nucleus, and there are fewer repulsions. Their compounds exhibit structures that are often not consistent with VSEPR theory, and hybridized orbitals are not necessary to explain the observed data.



Three Lewis structures are shown. The left structure shows an oxygen atom with two lone pairs of electrons single bonded to two hydrogen atoms. The middle structure is made up of a sulfur atom with two lone pairs of electrons single bonded to two hydrogen atoms. The right structure is made up of a tellurium atom with two lone pairs of electrons single bonded to two hydrogen atoms. From left to right, the bond angles of each molecule decrease.

For example, we have discussed the H–O–H bond angle in H_2O , 104.5° , which is more consistent with sp^3 hybrid orbitals (109.5°) on the central atom than with $2p$ orbitals (90°). Sulfur is in the same group as oxygen, and H_2S has a similar Lewis structure. However, it has a much smaller bond angle (92.1°), which indicates much less hybridization on sulfur than oxygen. Continuing down the group, tellurium is even larger than sulfur, and for H_2Te , the observed bond angle (90°) is consistent with overlap of the $5p$ orbitals, without invoking hybridization. We invoke hybridization where it is necessary to explain the observed structures.

✓ Example 8.3.1: Assigning Hybridization

Ammonium sulfate is important as a fertilizer. What is the hybridization of the sulfur atom in the sulfate ion, SO_4^{2-} ?

Solution

The Lewis structure of sulfate shows there are four regions of electron density.

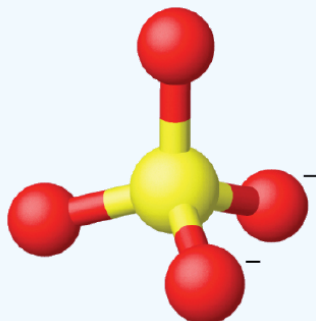
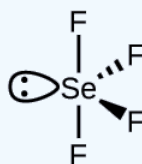


Figure 8.3.16).

A structure is shown in which a sulfur atom is bonded to four oxygen atoms in a tetrahedral arrangement. Two of the oxygen atoms have a negative charge.

? Exercise 8.3.1

What is the hybridization of the selenium atom in SeF_4 ?



A Lewis structure is shown in which four fluorine atoms are each attached to one sulfur atom. Two of the attached fluorine atoms are vertically attached up and down, while two are attached into and out of the page to the right. The sulfur also has one lone pair of electrons attached to the left of the structure.

Answer

The selenium atom is sp^3d hybridized.

✓ Example 8.3.2: Assigning Hybridization

Urea, $\text{NH}_2\text{C}(\text{O})\text{NH}_2$, is sometimes used as a source of nitrogen in fertilizers. What is the hybridization of each nitrogen and carbon atom in urea?

Solution

The Lewis structure of urea is

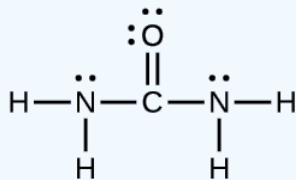


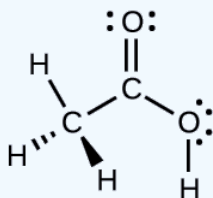
Figure 8.3.16). This is the hybridization of the nitrogen atoms in urea.

A Lewis structure is shown in which a carbon atom is double bonded to an oxygen atom that has two lone pairs of electrons. The carbon atom forms single bonds to two nitrogen atoms. Each nitrogen is single bonded to two hydrogen atoms, and each nitrogen atoms has one lone pair of electrons.

The carbon atom is surrounded by three regions of electron density, positioned in a trigonal planar arrangement. The hybridization in a trigonal planar electron pair geometry is sp^2 (Figure 8.3.16), which is the hybridization of the carbon atom in urea.

? Exercise 8.3.1

Acetic acid, $\text{H}_3\text{CC}(\text{O})\text{OH}$, is the molecule that gives vinegar its odor and sour taste. What is the hybridization of the two carbon atoms in acetic acid?



A Lewis structure is shown in which a carbon atom is double bonded to an oxygen atom that has two lone pairs of electrons and single bonded to another oxygen atom that is single bonded to a hydrogen atom. This second oxygen atom has two lone pairs of electrons. The carbon is also single bonded to a carbon atom that is single bonded to three hydrogen atoms.

Answer

H_3C , sp^3 ; $\text{C}(\text{O})\text{OH}$, sp^2

Summary

We can use hybrid orbitals, which are mathematical combinations of some or all of the valence atomic orbitals, to describe the electron density around covalently bonded atoms. These hybrid orbitals either form sigma (σ) bonds directed toward other atoms of the molecule or contain lone pairs of electrons. We can determine the type of hybridization around a central atom from the geometry of the regions of electron density about it. Two such regions imply sp hybridization; three, sp^2 hybridization; four, sp^3 hybridization; five, sp^3d hybridization; and six, sp^3d^2 hybridization. Pi (π) bonds are formed from unhybridized atomic orbitals (p or d orbitals).

8.3.5.1: Footnotes

- Note that orbitals may sometimes be drawn in an elongated “balloon” shape rather than in a more realistic “plump” shape in order to make the geometry easier to visualize.

8.3.5.2: Glossary

hybrid orbital

orbital created by combining atomic orbitals on a central atom

hybridization

model that describes the changes in the atomic orbitals of an atom when it forms a covalent compound

 sp hybrid orbital

one of a set of two orbitals with a linear arrangement that results from combining one s and one p orbital

 sp^2 hybrid orbital

one of a set of three orbitals with a trigonal planar arrangement that results from combining one s and two p orbitals

 sp^3 hybrid orbital

one of a set of four orbitals with a tetrahedral arrangement that results from combining one s and three p orbitals

 sp^3d hybrid orbital

one of a set of five orbitals with a trigonal bipyramidal arrangement that results from combining one s , three p , and one d orbital

 sp^3d^2 hybrid orbital

one of a set of six orbitals with an octahedral arrangement that results from combining one s , three p , and two d orbitals

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