



# Principles of Chemistry

By Michael Munowitz

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## Principles of Chemistry By Michael Munowitz

**"Can Munowitz write or what!" exclaimed one advance reviewer of this extraordinary new text.**

Read a few pages, and you'll see what all the excitement is about. Intended primarily for college freshmen, this exceptionally lucid, carefully paced, elegantly designed, well-illustrated volume will appeal to curious readers of any age who want to know more about the innermost workings of the "central science." In the words of another advance reviewer, the Munowitz book "reveals the beauty of chemistry in an unusual, graceful, narrative style. Compared with standard textbooks, it is poetic." This book is unusual in several respects. Perhaps the most obvious, at first glance, is the distinctive pattern of white and gray stripes that appear when you view its pages edge-on. The striped pattern is a superficial manifestation of a novel's internal structure. Unlike a standard chemistry textbook, in which each chapter is fragmented into a hodgepodge of disparate parts--text, boxed features, worked exercises, solved and unsolved problems, in-chapter and end-of-chapter summaries, miscellaneous decorative elements-- each chapter in *Principles of Chemistry* has a much simpler organization: an uninterrupted narrative core (white pages), followed by a Review and Guide to Problems section (gray pages). In short: principles first, then practice. The tutorial, problem-solving sections at the ends of the chapters amount, in effect, to a built-in study guide, thus obviating the need for a separate volume of this type. In addition, the long run of predominantly white pages at the back of the book consists, for the most part, of an unusually complete set of appendices devoted to such important matters as nomenclature, mathematics, assorted tables, and a glossary. Taken just by themselves, then, the white pages that constitute the first, narrative parts of the book's 21 chapters add up to a fairly modest-sized book-within-a-book-- at least by comparison with other texts for the introductory general chemistry course. And what a book it is! As the reviewers' comments quoted elsewhere attest, the novel intrachapter organization of the Munowitz text contributes to another of this book's distinctive features: its remarkably coherent "story line." The main driving force here, though, is the extraordinary power and clarity of the author's writing by far the most remarked-upon special attribute of this book. Just crack it open anywhere and start reading, and you'll see what all the fuss is about.

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## Editorial Review

### Review

Can Munowitz write or what! His hortatory, grab-'em-by-the-scruff-of-the-neck-and-don't-let-go-until-they-get-it style is great! It moves along and is not boring. Here is an author with enthusiasm and a point of view. The problems are even interesting I worked some out myself just for the fun of it. -- *John J. Alexander, University of Cincinnati*

I particularly like the author's very careful and detailed discussions of the physical mechanisms behind the various equations that he presents. I know of no introductory textbook in which this is done as well. -- *Colin MacKay, Haverford College*

If I wanted a student to learn the material on his or her own, I'd hand them Munowitz. -- *Robert Cave, Harvey Mudd College*

Relegating the 'gritty practicality' to the review and problems section at the end of the chapter makes possible a more focused and seamless introduction to the concepts, which makes possible more engaging writing. The extended summary allows repetition and recapitulation of the concepts, which I think may enhance retention of the material. Clustering the problems and using an engaging 'dialogue' to introduce and relate them helps the students see a scientist's thinking modeled. -- *Michael Fuson, Denison University*

The text reveals the beauty of chemistry in an unusual, graceful narrative style. Compared to standard textbooks, it is poetic.... The presentation of problems is unusual and particularly attractive.... By postponing instruction on problems until the end of the chapter, Munowitz avoids interruptions in the compelling narrative and invites undivided attention to the problems when they are addressed. The concise power of Munowitz's writing is most evident in the Introduction, which tells what chemistry is better than any other text I know. -- *Henry Griffin, University of Michigan*

This is an amazing book. It's not just beautifully written or perfectly accurate or entrancing to read, although it is all that. What is more important is that it practices what it describes, namely the scientific search for truth. Munowitz's attention to the exact meanings of individual words mirrors a similar scrupulousness with respect to the macroscopic structure--the book. The effect is as captivating as a suspense novel. I have simply never come across a chemistry text so well written . . . It is well known that most incoming freshmen who intend to major in science change their minds in the first year, probably because of the massive tedium of introductory curricula. Many manage to pass only by rote memorization of words that have no meaning for them--mass, force, energy, etc. This book has the capacity to change that. -- *Edward T. Samulski, University of North Carolina*

[The Munowitz text] takes a principles-driven approach that displays the unity and coherence of the physical sciences by emphasizing the relationship between microscopic structure and macroscopic properties. The author writes with a crisp, direct, no nonsense, yet polished style. The analogies are appropriate, the imagery vivid, and the science accurate.... The book represents a paradigm shift and promises to be the text for the next millennium. -- *James Harrison, Michigan State University*

### About the Author

Michael Munowitz is currently a full-time science writer. A graduate of Yale College (summa cum laude, with distinction in chemistry), he obtained his Ph.D. in chemical physics from Harvard University and did

postdoctoral work at the University of Leiden and the University of California, Berkeley. He has published more than 50 research papers in a variety of fields, including solid-state and two-dimensional NMR, computational chemistry, and waveguide design, and is the author of the book *Coherence and NMR*.

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#### **Kelly Thompson:**

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