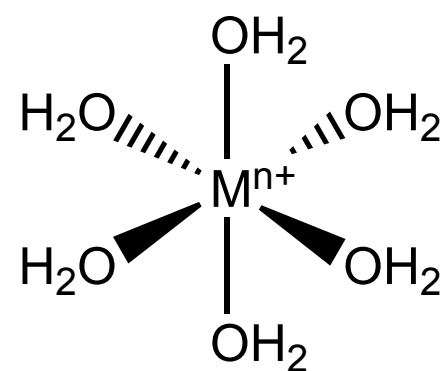


TRANSITION METAL ION COLOURS

Transition metals form coloured compounds and complexes. These colours can vary depending on the charge on the metal ion, and the number and type of groups of atoms (called ligands) attached to the metal ion. In aqueous solutions, the ions form complexes with the colours shown to the right.



HYDRATED TRANSITION METAL ION

Electrons are arranged around the nucleus of the metal atom in orbitals. Transition metals, unlike other metals, have partially filled d orbitals, which can hold up to 10 electrons. When ligands are present, some d orbitals become higher in energy than before, and some become lower. Electrons can then move between these higher and lower d orbitals by absorbing a photon of light. This absorption of light affects the perceived colour of the compound or complex. The wavelength of the light absorbed is affected by the size of the energy gap between the d orbitals, which is in turn affected by the type of ligand and the charge on the metal ion.

