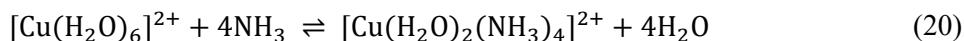


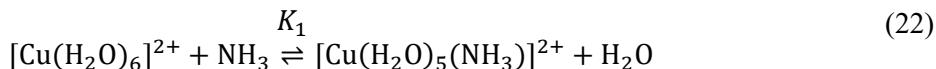
❖ Trends in Stepwise Constants

The values of stepwise equilibrium constants for the formation of a particular metal-complex decrease successively in most of the cases i.e. $K_1 > K_2 > K_3 > K_4 > K_5 > \dots > K_n$. This regular decrease in the values of stepwise formation constants may be attributed to the decrease in the number of coordinated H_2O ligands that are available for the replacement by the attacking ligands. Besides, the continuous decline in the values of successive stepwise stability constant values may also be attributed to the decreasing ability of metal ions with a progressive intake of ligands, Coulombic factors and steric hindrance. Consider the following ligand displacement reaction:



$$\beta_4 = \frac{[[\text{Cu}(\text{H}_2\text{O})_2(\text{NH}_3)_4]^{2+}][\text{H}_2\text{O}]^4}{[[\text{Cu}(\text{H}_2\text{O})_6]^{2+}][\text{NH}_3]^4} \quad (21)$$

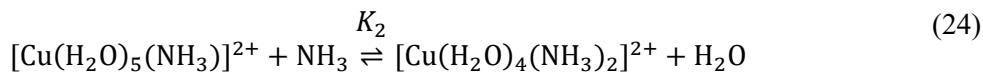
The overall process can be supposed to take place through the following steps:



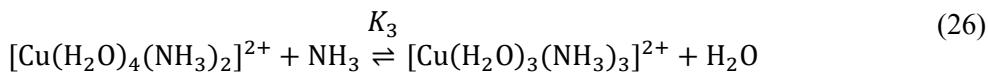
$$K_1 = \frac{[[\text{Cu}(\text{H}_2\text{O})_5(\text{NH}_3)]^{2+}][\text{H}_2\text{O}]}{[[\text{Cu}(\text{H}_2\text{O})_6]^{2+}][\text{NH}_3]} \quad (23)$$

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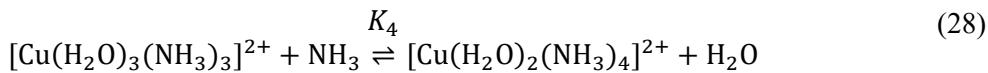
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$$K_2 = \frac{[[\text{Cu}(\text{H}_2\text{O})_4(\text{NH}_3)_2]^{2+}][\text{H}_2\text{O}]}{[[\text{Cu}(\text{H}_2\text{O})_5(\text{NH}_3)]^{2+}][\text{NH}_3]} \quad (25)$$



$$K_3 = \frac{[[\text{Cu}(\text{H}_2\text{O})_3(\text{NH}_3)_3]^{2+}][\text{H}_2\text{O}]}{[[\text{Cu}(\text{H}_2\text{O})_4(\text{NH}_3)_2]^{2+}][\text{NH}_3]} \quad (27)$$



$$K_4 = \frac{[[\text{Cu}(\text{H}_2\text{O})_2(\text{NH}_3)_4]^{2+}][\text{H}_2\text{O}]}{[[\text{Cu}(\text{H}_2\text{O})_3(\text{NH}_3)_3]^{2+}][\text{NH}_3]} \quad (29)$$

It has been observed that log K values for K_1 , K_2 , K_3 and K_4 are 4.3, 3.6, 3.0 and 2.3, respectively. This regular decrease in stepwise stability constants can be attributed to the decreasing site availability for the attack of the incoming ligand.

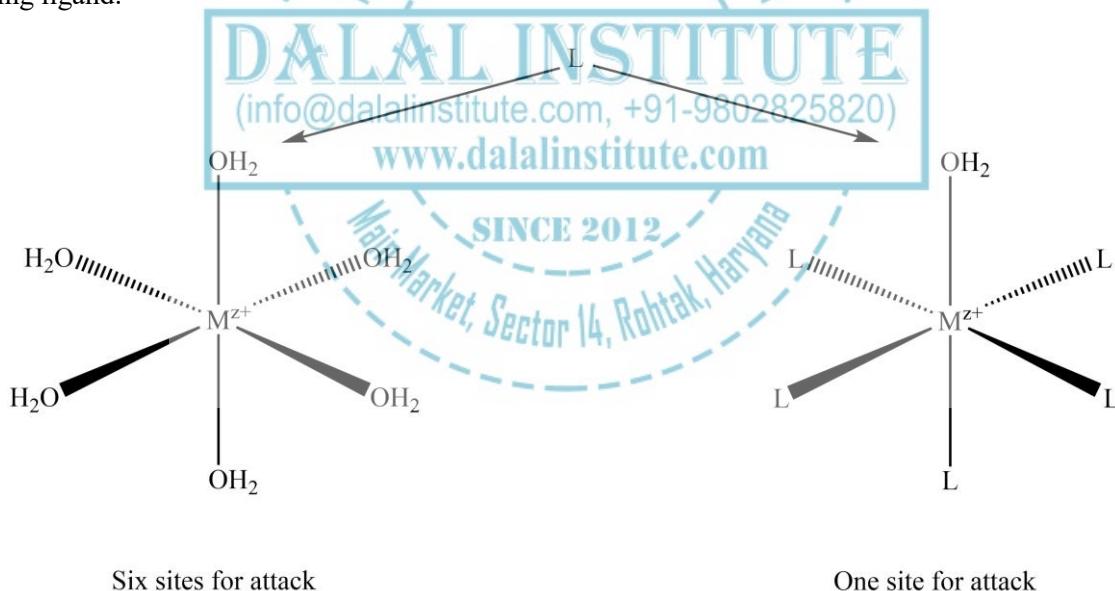
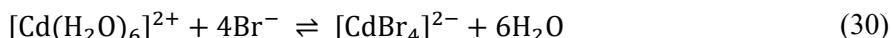


Figure 1. Decreasing availability in of coordinated water molecules to get replaced in first to the last step in octahedral complexes.

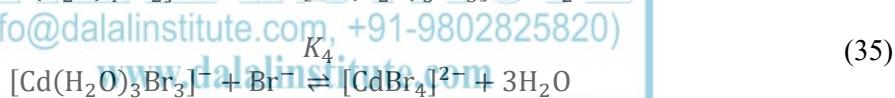
In the first step, NH_3 can attack all the six-coordination sites while in the last step the number of coordination sites available for the attack is reduced to three. Hence, stepwise constant, as well as the ease of formation of the complexes, also decreases as we move from first to the last step of ligand displacement.

Now although the decreasing trend in stepwise constants is pretty much common in most of the complex formation processes, still some exceptions do exist in which it is found that $K_{n+1} > K_n$. This weird behavior in stepwise equilibrium constants may be explained in terms of some unusual structural deviations and variations in the electronic structure of the metal center. The deviations in electronic configurations cause the change in crystal field stabilization energy (CFSE), and therefore, also affect the overall stability of the metal complex i.e. complex with a large magnitude of CFSE will be more stable and, consequently, will have higher value of the stepwise formation constants. Consider the following ligand displacement reaction:



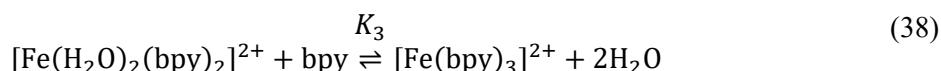
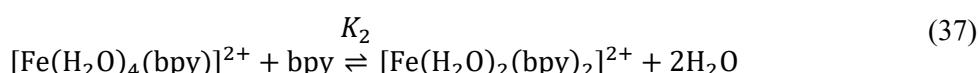
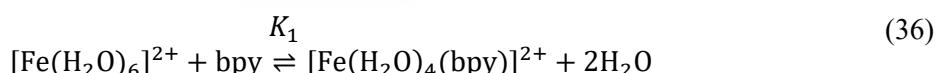
$$\beta_4 = \frac{[[\text{CdBr}_4]^{2-}][\text{H}_2\text{O}]^6}{[[\text{Cd}(\text{H}_2\text{O})_6]^{2+}][\text{Br}^-]^4} \quad (31)$$

The overall process can be supposed to take place through the following steps:



It has been observed that $\log K$ values follows the order $K_1 > K_2 > K_3 < K_4$, instead of $K_1 > K_2 > K_3 > K_4$. This unusually high value of K_4 is because the last step is actually pretty much favored by the release of three aquo ligands and some simultaneous structural and electronic changes.

Similarly, consider the formation of $[\text{Fe}(\text{bpy})_3]^{2+}$ complex:



It has been observed that $\log K$ values follow the order $K_1 > K_2 < K_3$, instead of $K_1 > K_2 > K_3$. This unusually high value of K_3 is because the complexes formed during first two steps are high spin due to weak H_2O ligands with a CFSE of $-0.4\Delta_0$ ($t_{2g}^4 e_g^2$), while the last complex $[\text{Fe}(\text{bpy})_3]^{2+}$ is low spin with a CFSE value of $-2.4\Delta_0$ ($t_{2g}^6 e_g^0$). Hence, large crystal field stabilization in the last step makes K_3 even greater than K_2 .

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