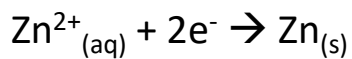


# How is potential measured?

Imagine if you suspended a piece of zinc in a solution of zinc ions.

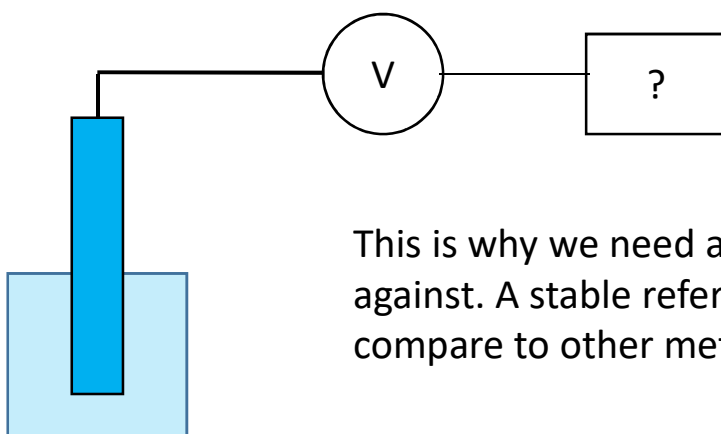
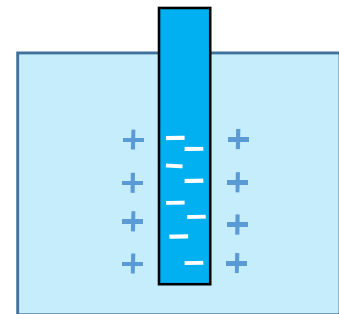
Can it gain or lose electrons, such as in this half equation?



Why? Or why not?

How would you measure what potential it is at?

A voltmeter allows the minimum possible current to flow through it, to determine the voltage between two points. A potential on a single electrode can't be measured, because current can't flow.



This is why we need a reference potential to measure against. A stable reference electrode allows us to compare to other metals and their solutions.