



HOW TO SOLVE DRUG CALCULATIONS

- Identify what type of drug calculation and as a first step, use common sense to estimate a rough answer. In many cases, drawing a picture that visually represents the problem is often a helpful strategy.
- Remember that a formula often used for working out how many tablets to take or for a drug taken orally or injected is:

$$\text{VOLUME REQUIRED} = \frac{\text{STRENGTH REQUIRED (SR)}}{\text{STOCK STRENGTH (SS)}} \times \frac{\text{VOLUME OF STOCK}}{1}$$

TIP: An easy way to remember this formula is
SUNRISE (SR)
SUNSET (SS)

- Remember that a formula often used to work out the number of drops per minute delivered by an intravenous infusion is:

$$\text{Drip Rate (DPM)} = \frac{\text{VOLUME (mL)} \times \text{DROPS/mL}}{\text{TIME (h)} \times 60}$$

NOTE: DPM stands for *drops per minute*

- Remember that for intravenous infusion, sometimes you are asked to calculate volume, time, or rate, and the following formulae can be useful:

$$\text{VOLUME (mL)} = \text{RATE (mL/h)} \times \text{TIME (h)}$$

$$\text{RATE} = \frac{\text{VOLUME (mL)}}{\text{TIME (h)}}$$

$$\text{TIME} = \frac{\text{VOLUME (mL)}}{\text{RATE (mL/h)}}$$

- After applying the formula (if relevant), or calculating an exact answer using common sense, go back and check: is your final answer close to your initial estimate? If not, why not?

EXAMPLE 1: DRUG MADE UP FROM STOCK SOLUTION

This example illustrates how to work out injections or orally taken drugs made up from stock solution – for example, working out how many mLs to inject when the drug is in a stock solution.

QUESTION: A patient is ordered 70 mg of pethidine. Find the volume required if the stock solution contains 10g of pethidine per 200mL.

TO SOLVE: We'll be using this formula:

$$\text{VOLUME REQUIRED} = \frac{\text{STRENGTH REQUIRED (SR)}}{\text{STOCK STRENGTH (SS)}} \times \frac{\text{VOLUME OF STOCK}}{1}$$

- Note down the strength of medication the patient needs and the stock strength:
Strength Required is 70 mg, **Stock Strength** is 10g in 200 mL

At this point our rough answer is – More than 1 mL and a lot less than 200mL

- Since you need units to be the same, convert 10 g to mg by multiplying by 1000.
 e.g. $1000\text{mg} \times 10 = 10,000\text{mg}$ ($10,000\text{mg} = 10\text{g}$)
- Now put the values into the above for.
 Note that 70mg (what the patient needs) is a very small part of 10,000mg – so expect your answer in mL to be much less than 200mL.

$$\text{VOLUME REQUIRED} = \frac{70}{10000} \times \frac{200}{1} \text{ mL} = \frac{14000}{10000} = \frac{14}{10} \text{ mL} = 1.4\text{mL}$$

ANSWER: Based on the above, your answer = 1.4mL

VISUAL REPRESENTATION

10,000mg
PETHIDINE

200mL
solution

CONVERSION TIP:

$\times 1,000$
 g $\longleftrightarrow$ mg
 $\div 1,000$

Study Guide For Drug Calculations

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