

ZOOL 10 – ORIGIN OF ELEMENT NAMES

Calvin Hom 6/96

◆ 1	HYDROGEN	H	hydros + gen (Greek = water producing)	28	Nickel	Ni	nickel (German = demon)
2	Helium	He	helios (Greek = sun)	29	Copper	Cu	cuprum (Latin = copper ore)
3	Lithium	Li	lithos (Greek = stone)	30	Zinc	Zn	szinke (German = spike)
4	Beryllium	Be	beryllos (Greek = beryl)	31	Gallium	Ga	Gallia (Latin = France)
5	Boron	B	burah (Persian = borax)	32	Germanium	Ge	Germania (Latin = Germany)
◆ 6	CARBON	C	carbone (Latin & French = charcoal)	33	Arsenic	As	arsenikos (Greek = brave male)
◆ 7	NITROGEN	N	niter + gen (Greek = saltpeter producing)	34	Selenium	Se	Selene (Greek goddess of the moon)
◆ 8	OXYGEN	O	oksys + gen (Greek = acidic producing)	35	Bromine	Br	bromos (Greek = stink)
9	Fluorine	F	fluere (Latin = to flow)	36	Krypton	Kr	kryptos (Greek = hidden)
10	Neon	Ne	neos (Greek = new)	37	Rubidium	Rb	rubidus (Latin = dark red)
11	Sodium	Na	suwwad (Latin = soda plant); Natrium (Latin = alkali)	38	Strontium	Sr	Strontian (a region in Scotland)
12	Magnesium	Mg	Magnesia (a town in ancient Greece)	39	Yttrium	Y	Yttria (a town in Sweden)
13	Aluminum	Al	alumen (Latin = alum)	40	Zirconium	Zr	zerk (Arabic = precious stone)
14	Silicon	Si	silex (Latin = flint, hard stone)	41	Niobium	Nb	Niobe (Greek, daughter of Tantalus)
◆ 15	PHOSPHORUS	P	phos + phero (Greek = light bearing)	42	Molybdenum	Mo	molybdos (Greek = lead)
◆ 16	SULFUR	S	sulpur (Latin = to burn slowly)	43	Technetium	Tc	technetos (Greek = artificial)
17	Chlorine	Cl	khloros (Greek = yellow green)	44	Ruthenium	Ru	Ruthenia (Latin = Russia)
18	Argon	Ar	a + ergon (Greek = no action)	45	Rhodium	Rh	rhodon (Greek = rose-color)
19	Potassium	K	potashen (Dutch = potash); Kalium (German = ash)	46	Palladium	Pd	Pallas (Greek goddess of wisdom)
20	Calcium	Ca	calx (Latin = chalk)	47	Silver	Ag	soelfor (Anglo-Saxon = silver); Argentum (Latin = shining)
21	Scandium	Sc	Scandia (Latin = Scandinavia)	48	Cadmium	Cd	Kadmeia (a region in ancient Greece)
22	Titanium	Ti	Titan (Greek giant)	49	Indium	In	indicum (Latin = indigo)
23	Vanadium	V	Vanadis (Norse goddess of love)	50	Tin	Sn	tina (German = shinny little stick); Stannum (Indo-European = dripping)
24	Chromium	Cr	khroma (Greek = color)	51	Antimony	Sb	anthemonium (Greek = mascara); Stibium (Latin = mark)
25	Manganese	Mn	Magnesia (a town in ancient Greece)	52	Tellurium	Te	Tellus (Latin = Earth)
26	Iron	Fe	iren (Anglo-Saxon = iron); Ferrum (Hebrew or Arabic = iron)	53	Iodine	I	ioeides (Greek = violet-color)
27	Cobalt	Co	kobold (German = evil sprite)	54	Xenon	Xe	xenos + on (Greek = strange gas)

55	Cesium	Cs	caesius (Latin = blue grey)
56	Barium	Ba	barys (Greek = heavy)
57	Lanthanum	La	lanthano (Greek = to hide)
58	Cerium	Ce	Ceres (Roman goddess of the harvest)
59	Praseodymium	Pr	praseios + didymos (Greek = leek-green twin)
60	Neodymium	Nd	neos + didymos (Greek = new twin)
61	Promethium	Pm	Prometheus (Greek titan who brought fire)
62	Samarium	Sm	Samaria (a town in ancient Israel) or V.E. Samarskii (Russian engineer)
63	Europium	Eu	Europe
64	Gadolinium	Gd	Johan Gadolin (Finnish chemist)
65	Terbium	Tb	Terbia (a town in Sweden)
66	Dysprosium	Dy	dysprositos (Greek = difficult to attain)
67	Holmium	Ho	Holmia (Swedish = Stockholm)
68	Erbium	Er	Erbia (a town in Sweden)
69	Thulium	Tm	Thule (Swedish = Scandinavia)
70	Ytterbium	Yb	Ytterby (a town in Sweden)
71	Lutetium	Lu	Lutetia (Latin = Paris)
72	Hafnium	Hf	Hafnia (Latin = Copenhagen)
73	Tantalum	Ta	Tantalus (Greek king condemned to Hades)
74	Tungsten	W	tung + sten (Swedish = heavy stone); Wolfram (German = wolf dirt)
75	Rhenium	Re	Rhenus (Latin = Rhine River)
76	Osmium	Os	osme (Greek = odor)
77	Iridium	Ir	iris (Greek = rainbow)
78	Platinum	Pt	plata (Spanish = silver)
79	Gold	Au	gold (Anglo-Saxon = yellow); Aurum (Sanskrit = yellow)
80	Mercury	Hg	Mercury (Roman messenger of the gods); Hydrargyrum (Greek = water silver)
81	Thallium	Tl	thallus (Latin = green sprout)
82	Lead	Pb	lead (Celtic = ?); Plumbum (Latin = lead)

83	Bismuth	Bi	wiese + muten (German = field + mining claim)
84	Polonium	Po	Polonia (Latin = Poland)
85	Astatine	At	a + statos (Greek = not lasting)
86	Radon	Rn	radius + on (Latin = ray gas)
87	Francium	Fr	France
88	Radium	Ra	radius (Latin = ray)
89	Actinium	Ac	aktinos (Greek = ray)
90	Thorium	Th	Thor (Norse god of thunder)
91	Protactinium	Pa	protos (Greek = prior, first)
92	Uranium	U	Uranus (Greek god of the heavens)
93	Neptunium	Np	Neptune (Greek god of the sea)
94	Plutonium	Pu	Pluto (Roman god of the underworld)
95	Americium	Am	America
96	Curium	Cm	Marie & Pierre Curie (French chemists)
97	Berkelium	Bk	Berkeley
98	Californium	Cf	California
99	Einsteinium	Es	Albert Einstein (German-American physicist)
100	Fermium	Fm	Enrico Fermi (Italian-American physicist)
101	Mendelevium	Md	Dimitri Mendeleev (Russian chemist)
102	Nobelium	No	Alfred Nobel (Swedish chemist-engineer)
103	Lawrencium	Lr	Ernest Lawrence (American physicist)
104	Unnilquadium	Unq	un + nil + quad (Latin = element 104)
	Rutherfordium	Rf	Ernest Rutherford (New Zealand physicist)
	Kurtchatovium	Ku	Igor Kurtchatov (Russian physicist)
105	Unnilpentium	Unp	un + nil + pent (Latin = element 105)
	Hahnium	Ha	Otto Hahn (German chemist)
	Nielsbohrium	Ns	Niels Bohr (Danish physicist)

NOTES & SOURCES

Notes: Elements occurring naturally in humans are listed in bold type.
 ♦ indicates element comprises 1% or more of the human body by weight.

Costello, R.B., ed. 1993. The American Heritage College Dictionary, 3rd ed.

Ringnes, V. 1989. Origin of the names of chemical elements. Journal of Chemical Education 66(9):731-738.