

Molecules with Silly or Unusual Names

By Paul May

Reviewed by Tim Harrison, Bristol, UK

Molecules with Silly or Unusual Names shows that chemists do have a sense of humour, even though it may be a little 'schoolboyish' at times. Based on a website of the same name (www.chm.bris.ac.uk/sillymolecules/sillymols.htm), the book – as its name suggests – is a collection of the strangest, silliest and even rudest names for real molecules, minerals, enzymes and genes.

Granted, the reader may need a good understanding of English to see the funny side of some of the names, and some of the amusement does rely on puns. Some names, such as windowpane, DAMN, gardenin, moronic acid and megaphone, can be enjoyed by all, but be warned – others can be downright naughty.

If you do decide that young minds can cope, there's plenty of slightly tamer stuff to make them snigger, such as SnOT, BARF, uranate and burpalite. They may also like the anthropomorphic Nanopotian molecules, named after the Lilliputians in *Gulliver's Travels*. With Nanokids as their basis, variants include Nanochef, Nanotoddler and NanoBalletDancer.

As an improvement on the website, the book is divided into chapters covering molecules, minerals, proteins, enzymes and genes, and there's also a game to play based on the silly names, which could double as a

learning exercise. Though the website does allow the user to view the three-dimensional structures of the molecules provided that the appropriate software is installed, the book contains even more information than is available online.

While this book may be more appropriate in the science department coffee room than the lower school library, it's certainly a fun volume to dip into.

Details

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