

FIGURE 2 (a) An atom of carbon, C, and an atom of oxygen, O, can combine chemically to form a molecule of carbon monoxide, CO. The mass of the CO molecule is equal to the mass of the C atom plus the mass of the O atom. (b) The reverse holds true in a reaction in which a CO molecule is broken down into its elements.

idea is illustrated in **Figure 2** for the formation of carbon monoxide from carbon and oxygen.

The law of definite proportions, on the other hand, results from the fact that a given chemical compound is always composed of the same combination of atoms (see **Figure 3**). As for the law of multiple proportions, in the case of the carbon oxides, the 2-to-1 ratio of oxygen masses results because carbon dioxide always contains twice as many atoms of oxygen (per atom of carbon) as does carbon monoxide. This can also be seen in **Figure 3**.

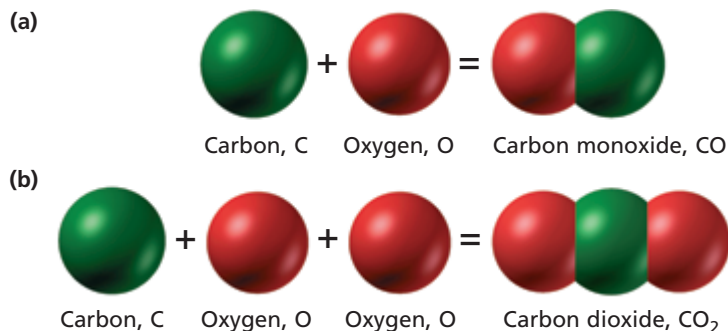


FIGURE 3 (a) CO molecules are always composed of one C atom and one O atom. (b) CO₂ molecules are always composed of one C atom and two O atoms. Note that a molecule of carbon dioxide contains twice as many oxygen atoms as does a molecule of carbon monoxide.

Modern Atomic Theory

By relating atoms to the measurable property of mass, Dalton turned Democritus's *idea* into a *scientific theory* that could be tested by experiment. But not all aspects of Dalton's atomic theory have proven to be correct. For example, today we know that atoms are divisible into even smaller particles (although the law of conservation of mass still holds true for chemical reactions). And, as you will see in Section 3, we know that a given element can have atoms with different masses. Atomic theory has not been discarded, however. Instead, it has been modified to explain the new observations. The important concepts that (1) all matter is composed of atoms and that (2) atoms of any one element differ in properties from atoms of another element remain unchanged.

