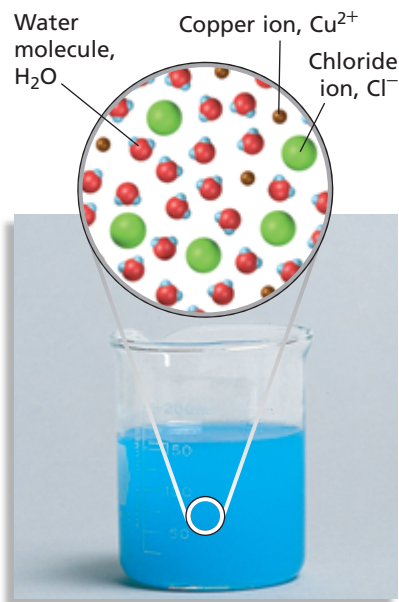


(a)



(b)

FIGURE 2 The solute in a solution can be a solid, liquid, or gas. (a) The ethanol-water solution is made from a liquid solute in a liquid solvent. (b) The copper(II) chloride-water solution is made from a solid solute in a liquid solvent. Note that the composition of each solution is uniform.

gone. Such a mixture is called a solution. A **solution** is a *homogeneous mixture of two or more substances in a single phase*. In a solution, atoms, molecules, or ions are thoroughly mixed, resulting in a mixture that has the same composition and properties throughout.

Components of Solutions

In the simplest type of solution, such as a sugar-water solution, the particles of one substance are randomly mixed with the particles of another substance. The *dissolving medium in a solution is called the **solvent**, and the substance dissolved in a solution is called the **solute***. The solute is generally designated as that component of a solution that is of lesser quantity. In the ethanol-water solution shown in **Figure 2**, ethanol is the solute and water is the solvent. Occasionally, these terms have little meaning. For example, in a 50%-50% solution of ethanol and water, it would be difficult, and in fact unnecessary, to say which is the solvent and which is the solute.

In a solution, the dissolved solute particles are so small that they cannot be seen. They remain mixed with the solvent indefinitely, so long as the existing conditions remain unchanged. If the solutions in **Figure 2** are poured through filter paper, both the solute and the solvent will pass through the paper. The solute-particle dimensions are those of atoms, molecules, and ions—which range from about 0.01 to 1 nm in diameter.

Types of Solutions

Solutions may exist as gases, liquids, or solids. Some possible solute-solvent combinations of gases, liquids, and solids in solutions are summarized in **Table 1**. In each example, one component is designated as the solvent and one as the solute.

Many alloys, such as brass (made from zinc and copper) and sterling silver (made from silver and copper), are solid solutions in which the atoms of two or more metals are uniformly mixed. By properly choosing the proportions of each metal in the alloy, many desirable properties can be obtained. For example, alloys can have higher strength and

TABLE 1 Some Solute-Solvent Combinations for Solutions

Solute state	Solvent state	Example
Gas	gas	oxygen in nitrogen
Gas	liquid	carbon dioxide in water
Liquid	liquid	alcohol in water
Liquid	solid	mercury in silver and tin (dental amalgam)
Solid	liquid	sugar in water
Solid	solid	copper in nickel (Monel™ alloy)