ASSIGNING OXIDATION NUMBERS

1. The oxidation number (ON) for any element is zero.

2. For monatomic ions, the ON is equal to the charge on the ion.

3. Fluorine always has an ON = -1 in compounds.

4. The ON for oxygen is -2 in compounds, except in peroxides, when it is -1, or bound to fluoride, when it is +2.

5. Other halogens have ONs = -1 except when bound to oxygen or another halogen higher in the column.

6. The ON for hydrogen is +1, except when bound to a metal, when it is -1.

7. Alkali metals always have an ON = +1.

8. Polyatomic ions all have specific total charges that will be the sum of the oxidation number of all individual atoms. (eg $\text{SO}_4^{2-}$ will always have a -2 total charge with the O each being -2 and therefore the S requiring an ON of +6)

9. To get ONs for other elements, use the PRIORITY RULE: The sum of the oxidation numbers MUST ALWAYS equal the charge on the compound or ion.