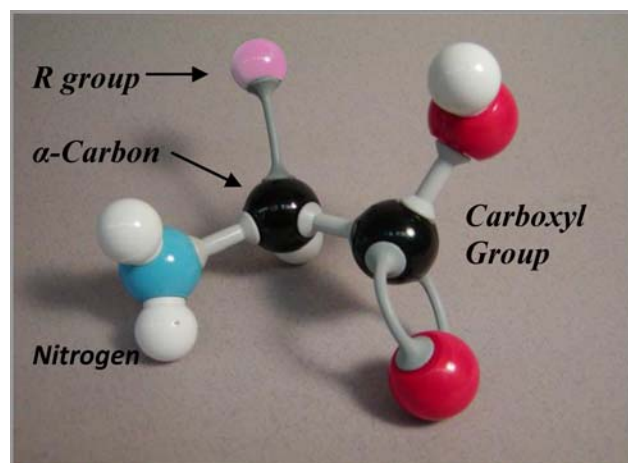
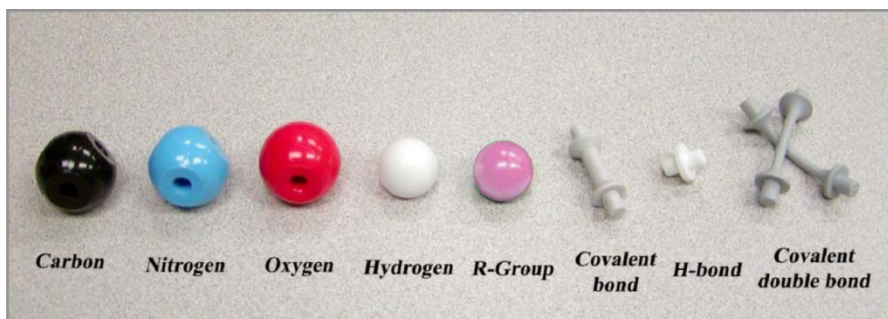


Amino Acids are the Building Blocks of Proteins

The purpose of this activity is to introduce students to the structure of an amino acid displayed in a ball and stick model format. Each atom is represented by a colored sphere; covalent bonds and hydrogen bonds are represented by “sticks”. Students will build an amino acid and identify the atoms and parts of an amino acid. Students will build a dipeptide and identify components of the dipeptide. After this activity, students should be able to recognize an amino acid and identify the atoms. This knowledge is necessary to master specific commands in RasMol.

Molymod® Kit Contents:

- 4 Carbon (black)
- 4 Oxygen (red)
- 2 Nitrogen (blue)
- 2 R-groups (green),
representing sidechains
- 10 Hydrogen (white)
- 6 Covalent bonds-single
(thick, short, gray)
- 6 Covalent bonds-double
(thin, long, gray)
- 10 Hydrogen bonds (short, white)
- 1 Molymod® link remover



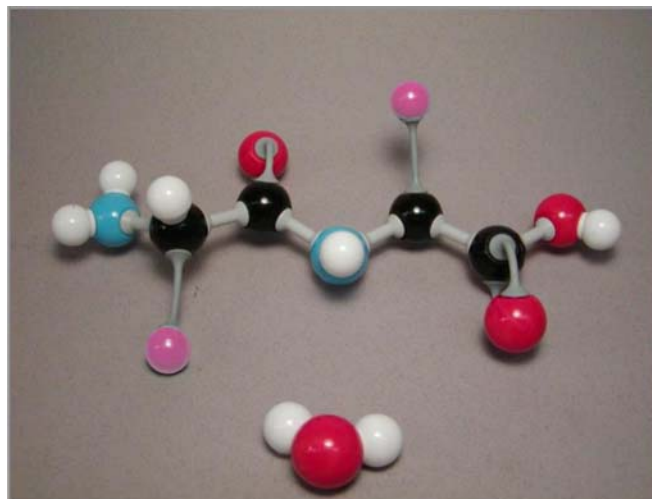
Activity:

1. Construct two separate amino acids using the Molymod® atoms, covalent bonds, and hydrogen bonds.
 - a. Identify the following components:
amino group, carboxyl group, the R-group or sidechain, α -carbon, carboxyl carbon, nitrogen. (see labeled diagram above)

- b. Compare the two amino acids that have been built. Are they identical? How might two amino acids be different? *Amino acids are identical because they share the same “core” structure of $\text{NH}_3\text{-CHR-COOH}$. Amino acids are different because the composition of the “R-group” is different for each of the 20 amino acids. A second way that the amino acid structures may be different is their stereochemistry. The arrangement of atoms around the α -carbon may be “right-handed” or “left-handed” to form a D-amino acid or an L-amino acid. The L-amino acids are the naturally occurring form used to make proteins.*

2. Two amino acids can be chemically linked by a reaction called “condensation” to form a peptide bond linking two amino acids. A chain of amino acids linked by peptide bonds is called a polypeptide. Using the two amino acids built in step 1, create a dipeptide.

- a. What are the products of the condensation reaction? *The products are a dipeptide and a molecule of water.*
- b. Identify the following components of the dipeptide: amino groups, amino terminal end, carboxyl groups, carboxyl terminal end, carbonyl group, peptide bond, R-groups or sidechains, α -carbon, carbonyl carbon.



Teaching Points:

- Amino acids are the building blocks of protein
- Amino acid structure
 - a. Identify atoms: nitrogen, oxygen, carboxyl carbon, α -carbon, oxygen, hydrogen
 - b. Identify groups: amino terminal, carboxyl terminal, R-group or sidechain,
- There are twenty different amino acids
 - a. Amino acids are identical because they share a core structure
 - b. Amino acids are different because they have unique R-groups or sidechains
- Linear chain of amino acids is a polypeptide
- Primary sequence of protein is the linear sequence of amino acids