

GC Troubleshooting Guide

Your guide to solving common problems and staying productive



Checking the Basics

Solving a number of problems made fairly simple and often overlooked components of the GC system in analysis. Many of these items are common to the daily operation of the GC and are often taken for granted (but don't forget it!). The areas and items to check include:

- Check pressure, carrier gas storage (flow velocity and flow rate) (check with inert vacuum purge)
- Temperature (column, reactor, detector and sample tray)
- System elements (injector, detector, flow, detector, detector and range, mass range, etc.)
- Gas lines and traps (check flow, leaks and expiration)
- Injector consumables (needle, liners, O-rings and ferrules)
- Sample integrity (contamination, degradation, solvent and storage)
- Samples handling (solvents, leaks, needle changes, and cleanliness)
- Data system, settings and connections

Condensation Test

Use the test chamber (injector or carrier gas condensation systems are included) (e.g. great peaks or ghost loading)

1. Leave the GC between 40 to 50 °C for 30 or more hours
2. Run a blank analysis (i.e. run the GC) but with the system using the normal temperature conditions and instrument settings
3. Collect the chromatogram for the blank run
4. Immediately repeat the blank run (stop the flow and a completed) (do not allow more than 5 minutes to elapse before starting the second blank run)
5. Collect the chromatogram for the second blank run and compare it to the first chromatogram.
6. If the first chromatogram contains a large amount of peaks and loading instability, the morning carrier gas line or the carrier gas is contaminated.
7. If both chromatograms contain few peaks or little loading (PFI, the carrier gas and morning carrier gas flow are relatively clean)

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Ghost Peaks or Loading



Problem	Cause	Solution
Ghost peaks	Contaminated carrier gas	Check carrier gas purity and replace if necessary
Ghost peaks	Contaminated sample	Check sample integrity and replace if necessary
Ghost peaks	Contaminated injector	Check injector cleanliness and replace if necessary
Ghost peaks	Contaminated detector	Check detector cleanliness and replace if necessary
Ghost peaks	Contaminated column	Check column integrity and replace if necessary

Excessive Baseline Noise



Problem	Cause	Solution
Excessive baseline noise	Contaminated carrier gas	Check carrier gas purity and replace if necessary
Excessive baseline noise	Contaminated sample	Check sample integrity and replace if necessary
Excessive baseline noise	Contaminated injector	Check injector cleanliness and replace if necessary
Excessive baseline noise	Contaminated detector	Check detector cleanliness and replace if necessary
Excessive baseline noise	Contaminated column	Check column integrity and replace if necessary

Baseline Instability or Disturbance



Problem	Cause	Solution
Baseline instability or disturbance	Contaminated carrier gas	Check carrier gas purity and replace if necessary
Baseline instability or disturbance	Contaminated sample	Check sample integrity and replace if necessary
Baseline instability or disturbance	Contaminated injector	Check injector cleanliness and replace if necessary
Baseline instability or disturbance	Contaminated detector	Check detector cleanliness and replace if necessary
Baseline instability or disturbance	Contaminated column	Check column integrity and replace if necessary

Missing Peaks



Problem	Cause	Solution
Missing peaks	Contaminated carrier gas	Check carrier gas purity and replace if necessary
Missing peaks	Contaminated sample	Check sample integrity and replace if necessary
Missing peaks	Contaminated injector	Check injector cleanliness and replace if necessary
Missing peaks	Contaminated detector	Check detector cleanliness and replace if necessary
Missing peaks	Contaminated column	Check column integrity and replace if necessary

Tailing Peaks



Problem	Cause	Solution
Tailing peaks	Contaminated carrier gas	Check carrier gas purity and replace if necessary
Tailing peaks	Contaminated sample	Check sample integrity and replace if necessary
Tailing peaks	Contaminated injector	Check injector cleanliness and replace if necessary
Tailing peaks	Contaminated detector	Check detector cleanliness and replace if necessary
Tailing peaks	Contaminated column	Check column integrity and replace if necessary

Split Peaks



Problem	Cause	Solution
Split peaks	Contaminated carrier gas	Check carrier gas purity and replace if necessary
Split peaks	Contaminated sample	Check sample integrity and replace if necessary
Split peaks	Contaminated injector	Check injector cleanliness and replace if necessary
Split peaks	Contaminated detector	Check detector cleanliness and replace if necessary
Split peaks	Contaminated column	Check column integrity and replace if necessary

Resolution Time Shift



Problem	Cause	Solution
Resolution time shift	Contaminated carrier gas	Check carrier gas purity and replace if necessary
Resolution time shift	Contaminated sample	Check sample integrity and replace if necessary
Resolution time shift	Contaminated injector	Check injector cleanliness and replace if necessary
Resolution time shift	Contaminated detector	Check detector cleanliness and replace if necessary
Resolution time shift	Contaminated column	Check column integrity and replace if necessary

Change in Peak Size



Problem	Cause	Solution
Change in peak size	Contaminated carrier gas	Check carrier gas purity and replace if necessary
Change in peak size	Contaminated sample	Check sample integrity and replace if necessary
Change in peak size	Contaminated injector	Check injector cleanliness and replace if necessary
Change in peak size	Contaminated detector	Check detector cleanliness and replace if necessary
Change in peak size	Contaminated column	Check column integrity and replace if necessary

Loss of Resolution



Problem	Cause	Solution
Loss of resolution	Contaminated carrier gas	Check carrier gas purity and replace if necessary
Loss of resolution	Contaminated sample	Check sample integrity and replace if necessary
Loss of resolution	Contaminated injector	Check injector cleanliness and replace if necessary
Loss of resolution	Contaminated detector	Check detector cleanliness and replace if necessary
Loss of resolution	Contaminated column	Check column integrity and replace if necessary

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