

**polyelectrolyte**

A macromolecular substance which, on dissolving in water or another ionizing solvent, dissociates to give *polyions* (polycations or polyanions) — multiply charged ions — together with an equivalent amount of ions of small charge and opposite sign. Polyelectrolytes dissociating into polycations and polyanions, with no ions of small charge, are also conceivable. A polyelectrolyte can be a polyacid, a polybase, a polysalt or a polyampholyte.

1972, 31, 607; see also 1996, 68, 2304