

Writing chemical nomenclature and formulae are like driving a car because they both involve understanding and remembering multiple pieces of information before you write out the names and symbols of chemicals.

Naming a chemical depends on whether it is made up of metal, metals and nonmetals, nonmetals and nonmetals or organic (carbon and hydrogen) as each of these have their own set of rules which need to be learned before you can apply them.

When students are new to nomenclature, there are a number of steps to follow and it can seem complicated at first. We go through the steps in class with multiple examples. I recommend a lot of practice and there are all kinds of practice sheets available in their text and online as well as online games that reinforce the naming skills. For students who put in the time and practice diligently, it is really gratifying to see them using names and formulae of chemicals as if it is a second language (which it is in a way).

Also, just like learning to drive a car to go places, once learned, chemical nomenclature is used to complete other tasks like stoichiometry and predicting chemical reactions. If using nomenclature has become automatic, it is so much easier to tackle those problems.

This is an example of the decision-making process need for naming inorganic compounds:

