

In an **exothermic process**, the bonds in the product molecules are stronger (on average) than those in the reactant molecules. The net result is that the quantity of energy $\Delta(\text{PE})$ is transferred to the surroundings as heat when reactants are converted to products.

For an **endothermic process**, energy flows into the system from the surroundings as heat to increase the potential energy of the system. In an endothermic process, the products have higher potential energy (weaker bonds on average) than the reactants.

From:

http://college.cengage.com/chemistry/zumdahl/chemistry/7e/resources/answers_for_review/ch06_for_review.pdf