Exercise 1.39

In the year 2013, an estimated amount of 36 billion metric tons (1 metric ton = 1000 kg) of carbon dioxide ($\rm CO_2$) was emitted worldwide due to fossil fuel combustion and cement production. Express this mass of $\rm CO_2$ in grams without exponential notation, using an appropriate metric prefix.

Solution

Use dimensional analysis, starting with the given number.

$$36 \times 10^9 \, \underline{\text{metric tons}} \times \frac{1000 \, \underline{\text{kg}}}{1 \, \underline{\text{metric ton}}} \times \frac{1000 \, \underline{\text{g}}}{1 \, \underline{\text{kg}}} = 36 \times 10^{9+3+3} \, \underline{\text{g}} = 36 \times 10^{15} \, \underline{\text{g}}$$

The metric prefixes are listed on page 18. This is 36 petagrams (36 Pg).