

ABSTRACT

A block copolymer (A) comprises: a vinyl alcohol-based polymer block (b); and an ionic polymer block (c) containing a monomer unit with an ionic group forming a salt and a vinyl alcohol-based monomer unit, wherein the ionic group is a carboxylic acid group, a sulfonic acid group, or an ammonium group, the vinyl alcohol-based polymer block (b) has a number-average molecular weight (M_{nb}) from 15,000 to 220,000, the ionic polymer block (c) has a content of the vinyl alcohol-based monomer unit from 5 to 95 mol% based on the total monomer units, the block copolymer (A) has a number-average molecular weight (M_{nA}) from 20,000 to 440,000, and a ratio (M_{nb}/M_{nA}) of the number-average molecular weight (M_{nb}) to the number-average molecular weight (M_{nA}) is from 0.1 to 0.9. Such a block copolymer has high absorbency of water, salt water, and the like while also having gel shape retentivity and water solubility.

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