

A Publication of Reliable Methods for the Preparation of Organic Compounds

Working with Hazardous Chemicals

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September 2014: The paragraphs above replace the section "Handling and Disposal of Hazardous Chemicals" in the originally published version of this article. The statements above do not supersede any specific hazard caution notes and safety instructions included in the procedure.

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2-METHYLENECYCLOPROPANECARBOXYLIC ACID ETHYL ESTER



Submitted by Mark E. Scott, Nai-Wen Tseng, and Mark Lautens.^{1a} Checked by Pascal Dubé and John A. Ragan.^{1b}

1. Procedure

A. 2-Bromo-2-methyl-cyclopropanecarboxylic acid ethyl ester (1). A flame-dried, two-necked, 50-mL round-bottomed flask containing a magnetic stirring bar is fitted with septa to prevent exposure to air. Needles are then used for both an argon inlet and gas outlet to a bubbler. To this flask is added $Rh_2(OAc)_4$ (47.4 mg, 0.214 mmol Rh, 0.2 mol%) (Note 1) followed by 2-bromopropene (18.5 mL, 25.2 g, 0.208 mol, 2.18 equiv) (Note 2) by syringe. The argon inlet is removed and ethyl diazoacetate (11.0 mL, 11.1 g, 95.2 mmol, 1.00 equiv) (Note 3) is added by syringe pump over a period of two days (Note 4). Once the addition is complete, the reaction mixture is stirred for an additional 8 h (Note 5). The gas outlet is then removed and one septum is replaced with a one-piece, vacuum-jacketed short path distillation head containing an 18 mm (length) \times 13 mm (OD) Vigreaux column. The excess 2-bromopropene is removed by distillation (760 mmHg, bp 42–45 °C) (Note 6). The reaction flask is cooled to room temperature, vacuum is applied (18-22 mmHg), and the flask is gradually heated in an oil bath to a bath temperature of 80 °C. This distillation

provides 15.3–18.0 g (78–91% yield) of the bromo ester **1** (bp 64–73 $^{\circ}$ C, 18–22 mmHg) as a clear, colorless liquid (Notes 7–9).

B. 2-Methylene-cyclopropanecarboxylic acid, ethyl ester (2). A flamedried, two-necked, 250-mL round-bottomed flask containing a magnetic stirring bar is fitted with a septum and a condenser containing a septum. An argon inlet and gas outlet is introduced through the condenser septa using needles. Under argon atmosphere, sodium hydride (6.10 g, 0.153 mol, 1.77 equiv) (Note 10) and diethyl ether (110 mL) (Note 11) are added. Bromo ester 1 (17.9 g, 0.0864 mol, 1.00 equiv) is then added via cannula using 10 mL of diethyl ether to complete the transfer. The argon inlet needle is removed, leaving the reaction solution vented to a bubbler. The reaction mixture is brought to reflux (oil bath set to 45 °C) before ethanol (1.1 mL, 0.019 mol, 0.22 equiv) (Note 12) is added (CAUTION: addition of the ethanol should be done slowly over the course of several minutes to prevent excessive hydrogen gas evolution). The resulting, light-brown solution is stirred at reflux for 15 h (reaction progress can be monitored by GC-MS, Note 13). The reaction mixture is then cooled and the precipitated tan solid is filtered through a 1 cm pad of Celite[®] in a sintered glass Büchner funnel (8.5 cm ID). The residue is washed with diethyl ether $(2 \times 50 \text{ mL})$ and the resulting yellow filtrate is distilled at 760 mmHg using a 12 cm (length) \times 17 mm OD Vigreaux column and short path distillation apparatus (18 mm $(\text{length}) \times 13 \text{ mm}$ (OD)) to remove the diethyl ether. Vacuum is then applied (13–14 mmHg) and the resulting yellow oil residue is then distilled to afford 7.75 g (71% yield) of 2-methylenecyclopropane carboxylic acid ethyl ester (2) (40-44 °C, 13-14 mmHg) as a clear, colorless liquid. A second distillation (Note 14), necessary to remove a trace impurity, is performed to provide 7.28 g (66% yield) of analytically pure product (Note 15).

2. Notes

1. Rhodium acetate dimer was purchased from Strem Chemicals, Inc. and was used as received.

2. 2-Bromopropene (99%, stabilized with copper) was purchased from Alfa Aesar and was stored at 5 °C until it was used as received.

3. Ethyl diazoacetate ($\leq 15\%$ dichloromethane) was purchased from Aldrich and was stored at 5 °C until it was used as received. ¹H NMR analysis found that the dichloromethane content was 15 mol% = 9 wt%.

This value was then used to accurately determine the number of moles of reagent added to the reaction [(Molar ratio)×(MW ratio) = $(0.85/0.15)\times(156.14/84.93) = 10.4 = 0.91/0.09$]. The density for ethyl diazoacetate (d = 1.085) was used for determining the mass of the starting material.

4. A KD Scientific (model 100) syringe pump was used to deliver the ethyl diazoacetate over a period of two days at approximately 0.20 mL/hour.

5. The submitters stirred the reaction mixture for 3 hours after complete addition. In principle this additional time is unnecessary.

6. Approximately 8.8 g of 2-bromopropene containing approximately 14% by mass of dichloromethane (by ¹H NMR) could be recycled from this reaction. Periodic cooling using a dry ice/acetone bath should also be used in order to prevent evaporation of the 2-bromopropene mixture in the receiving flask.

7. GC analysis (see Note 13 for method) revealed that the product mixture was >98% pure (trans:cis ratios ranged from 1.5–2.0:1. $t_{\rm R}$ (trans), 4.04 min; $t_{\rm R}$ (cis), 4.56 min). The product exhibited the following physicochemical properties: IR (film) cm⁻¹: 2980, 1725, 1378, 1267, 1184, 1147, 1088, 1056, 854; ¹H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl₃) δ : 1.11 (dd, 1 H cis, *J* = 8.7, 6.0 Hz), 1.17 (t, 3 H trans, *J* = 7.5 Hz), 1.19 (t, 3 H cis, *J* = 7.5 Hz), 1.31 (t, 1 H trans, *J* = 6.6 Hz), 1.47 (dd, 1 H trans, *J* = 9.6, 6.7 Hz), 1.59–1.70 (m, 2 H cis), 1.72 (s, 3 H cis), 1.74 (s, 3 H trans), 2.18 (dd, 1 H trans, *J* = 9.5, 7.0 Hz), 4.04 (q, 2 H trans, *J* = 7.1 Hz), 4.09 (dq, 2 H cis, *J* = 7.1, 1.3 Hz); ¹³C NMR (100 MHz, CDCl₃) δ : 14.0, 14.1, 22.6, 23.6, 24.0, 28.4, 29.3, 30.5, 32.7, 32.9, 60.7, 60.8, 168.8, 169.8. Anal. Calcd for C₇H₁₁O₂Br: C, 40.60; H, 5.35. Found: C, 40.39; H, 5.44.

8. In this case, the isomers refer to the relationship between the bromine and ester moieties. ROESY analysis of the mixture in benzene– d_6 was used to determine the configuration for both isomers.

9. The checkers found that it was important to maintain sufficient vacuum during the distillation (ca. 15 mmHg) to keep the temperature near the 40-44 °C cited in the procedure in order to avoid decomposition of the product.

10. Sodium hydride (60% in mineral oil) was purchased from Aldrich and used as received.

11. The checkers used BHT-stabilized, anhydrous diethyl ether purchased from JT Baker, which was used as received. The submitters used diethyl ether distilled from Na/benzophenone immediately prior to use.

12. The checkers used ethanol purchased from Pharmco-AAPER (200 proof, ACS grade), which was used as received. The submitters used ethanol that was distilled from magnesium/iodine and was kept over 4Å molecular sieves under argon until used.

13. GC/MS analysis was performed on an HP 6890 Series GC coupled with an Agilent 5973 mass spectrometer with an HP-1 column (0.2 mm x 12 m, 0.33 μ m film thickness). A mass spec (EI) detector was utilized with a 1 min solvent delay. Injection size was 1 μ L. Inlet was in split mode, with an injection temperature of 250 °C, flow rate (He) of 1.0 mL/min, and a column gradient from 50 °C for 30 seconds, then ramp at a rate of 10 °C/min to 275 °C and hold for 1 min. Samples for GC analysis were prepared by removing a 10 μ L aliquot from the reaction and diluting to 1 mL with acetonitrile.

14. The second distillation may not be necessary depending on the intended use for the product.

15. GC analysis (see Note 13 for method) revealed that the product was >98% pure ($t_{\rm R}$, 2.19 min) and exhibited the following physicochemical properties: IR (film) cm⁻¹: 2982, 1732, 1446, 1370, 1333, 1296, 1262, 1177, 1110, 1050, 906, 720; ¹H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl₃) δ : 1.16 (t, 3 H, J = 7.0 Hz), 1.50–1.55 (m, 1 H), 1.69–1.72 (m, 1 H), 2.13–2.16 (m, 1 H), 4.04 (q, 2 H, J = 7.0 Hz), 5.40–5.42 (m, 2 H); ¹³C NMR (100 MHz, CDCl₃) δ : 11.1, 13.9, 17.8, 60.4, 104.2, 130.1, 171.7; Anal. Calcd. for C₇H₁₀O₂: C, 66.65; H, 7.99. Found: C, 66.49; H, 7.69.

Safety and Waste Disposal Information

All hazardous materials should be handled and disposed of in accordance with "Prudent Practices in the Laboratory"; National Academy Press; Washington, DC, 1995.

3. Discussion

Previous methods to prepare this versatile methylenecyclopropane building block have been reported in low yields via the cyclopropanation of either 2-bromopropene (copper-catalyzed)² or ethyl buta-2,3-dienoate (Simmons-Smith cyclopropanation).³ A subsequent report for the preparation of this methylenecyclopropylcarboxylic acid ethyl ester was reported in much higher yields using a rhodium diacetate catalyst.⁴ Although this latter report was higher yielding, yields for this process were sometimes variable due to the volatility of the product and intermediates. This approach removes any unnecessary manipulation steps, thereby preventing possible loss due to evaporation while still obtaining high chemical yields of the product. In addition, this modified method allows for the reuse of approximately one third of the unused starting material, making this method highly cost efficient.

The resulting 2-methylenecyclopropanecarboxylic acid ethyl ester has been extensively used for the preparation of model compounds for the study of the hypoglycemic activity of methylenecyclopropylglycine,^{4,5} and for the synthesis of a variety of antiviral nucleoside analogues.⁶ In addition, the methylenecyclopropanecarboxylic acid ethyl ester has also been shown to be a useful reagent for the synthesis of functionalized polymers containing a highly strained cyclopropane moiety in the polymer backbone.⁷ A summary of these applications, as well as additional synthetic transformations⁸ from either the ester or its derivatives, are detailed below.



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Appendix Chemical Abstracts Nomenclature; (Registry Number)

Rhodium acetate dimer: Rhodium, tetrakis[μ-(acetato-κO:κO')]di-, (Rh-Rh); (15956-28-2)
2-Bromopropene: 1-Propene, 2-bromo-; (557-93-7)
Ethyl diazoacetate: Acetic acid, 2-diazo-, ethyl ester; (623-73-4)
Sodium hydride; (7646-69-7)
Cyclopropanecarboxylic acid, 2-bromo-2-methyl-, ethyl ester; (89892-99-9)
Cyclopropanecarboxylic acid, 2-methylene-, ethyl ester; (18941-94-1)



Mark Scott was born in Simcoe, Ontario, Canada. He received his Bachelor's degree (Honours) in Engineering Chemistry and later his M.Sc.Eng. in Chemical Engineering from Queen's University under the supervision of Profs. Scott Parent and Ralph Whitney. Following his Master's, he received his Ph.D. in Mark Lautens' research group at the University of Toronto where he studied Lewis acid-mediated ring expansions of methylenecyclopropanes. He has been the recipient of NSERC Postgraduate (M.Sc.Eng. and Ph.D.) Scholarships. He is currently an NSERC postdoctoral fellow at Princeton University under Prof. David MacMillan.



Nai-Wen Tseng was born in Taipei, Taiwan in 1979. He received a Bachelor of Science degree in Chemistry at the National Tsing Hua University in 2001 where he conducted his undergraduate research under Prof. Hsing-Jang Liu. He is currently pursuing his Ph.D. degree under the guidance of Prof. Mark Lautens at the University of Toronto. His research is focused on the development of new rhodium-catalyzed addition/cyclization reactions.



Pascal Dubé was born in 1978 in St-Pacôme, Québec, Canada. He received a B.Sc. degree in pharmaceutical chemistry in 2000 from Université de Sherbrooke. As part of a Co-Op program he did internships at Merck Frosst Inc. and Pfizer. He then received a Ph.D. from Université de Sherbrooke in 2005 under the guidance of Professor Claude Spino. His doctoral research involved the development of a synthetic route to quassinoids featuring the Diels-Alder cycloaddition of transmissible dienes. After a postdoctoral fellowship with Professor F. Dean Toste at UC Berkeley he joined the Pfizer Chemical Research and Development group in 2006.





Step B ¹³C

Step A ¹H GAINS_SAMPLE_REFERENCE: 120477-25-2 GAINS_USER_ID: dubep GAINS_INSTRUMENT: unityb GAINS_EXPERIMENT_ITME: 02/01/2008 14:03:37 GAINS_END_TIME: 02/01/2008 14:04:39 Filename: 120477-26-2_h1.fid unityb: 080201 Br Pulse Sequence: s2pul Pulse Sequence: s2pu) Solvent: cdc13 Ambient temperature UHITYplus-400 Pulse S50UENCE Pulse 45.0 degrees Acq. time 2.410 sec Width 6793.3 Hz 16 repetitions OBSERVE H1, 339.9506330 MHz OBATA PROCESSING Line broadening 0.1 Hz FT size 32768 Total time 1 minute OEt ö 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 ppm -----17.81 35.28 5.889.13 5.9426.95 5.00

	DATAS	SAMPLE	REFERENCE					
	JATKO.	_amirer_	KETCKENG1+	120477-20	5-2			Filenamo: 120477-26-2_h1.ftd
								unityb: 080201
TNDEX	Larourus							
1	FREQUENCY	PPM	HEIGHT	INDEX	FREQUENCY		HEIGHT	
	1544.983		4.2	36	470.480		51.8	
2	1642.908		4.5	37	467.159	1.168	32.0	
3	1637.927		12.1	38		1.159	28.8	
1	1635.852		11.9	39	460.104		47.8	
5		4.078	12.5	40	453.464		9.9	
5	1528.382		20.1	41	447.239		11.3	
	1625.052		2.9	42	141.748		9.2	
8	1623.817		5.2	43	438.938	1.097	9.1	
9	1620.912		39.0					
10		4.046	3.0					
11	1613.855		41.8					
12		4.017	15.3					
13		2.199	12.9					
14	872.633		14.4		Br	1		
15	870.143		15.3		- \	1		
16		2.159	14.8		\sim	/		
17		1.749	151.2					
18		1.721	89.3			1	0298:383	
19		1.699	3.9		4	~	OEt	
20		1.689	5.3			M		
21		1.672	11.1			11		
22		1.568	6.5			10		
23	560.558		12.2			0		
24	651.428	1.629	8.8					
25	645.202		9.8					
26	638.592	1.597	5.4					
27	595.815	1.490	10.9					
28	589.175	1.473	13.7					
29	586.270	1.466	11.4					
30		1.450	13.5					
31	530.242		17.9					
32	523.502	1.309	27.5					
33	516.962		14.4					
31	477.850		27.3					
35	474.630	1.187	45.9					

Step A ¹H peak peaking







	GAINS_	SAMPLE_F	REFERENCE= :	120477-22	В			Filename: 120477-228_h1.fid unityb: 080130		
INDEX 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 112 134 15 6 7 8 9 10 112 134 15 17 18 19 20 22 24 22 24 22 24 22 24 22 24 25 25 26 27 8 9 10 112 134 15 20 20 20 20 20 20 20 20 20 20	FREQUENCY 2167.491 2165.001 2162.926 2160.851 1627.552 1620.436 1613.441 1605.971 883.008 879.273 865.728 865.162 865.162 865.162 865.4372 855.287 652.297 652.297 652.100 669.194 664.629 664.256 868.439 868.459 867.988 868.459 868.459 868.459 867.988 857.988 857.988 857.988 857.988 857.988 857.988 857.988 857.988 857.988 857.988 857.988 857.988 857.988 857.988 857.988 857.988 857.988 857.988 857.988 857.958 857.958 857.958 857.958	$\begin{array}{r} 5.419\\ 5.408\\ 5.408\\ 4.052\\ 4.053\\ 4.052\\ 4.052\\ 2.198\\ 2.198\\ 2.175\\ 2.170\\ 2.170\\ 2.170\\ 2.153\\ 2.153\\ 2.153\\ 2.153\\ 2.148\\ 2.142\\ 2.131\\ 1.723\\ 1.718\\ 1.7123\\ 1.718\\ 1.7123\\ 1.708\\ 1.708\\ 1.708\\ 1.695\\ \end{array}$	$\begin{array}{c} 71.4\\ 2.4\\ 2.54\\ 3.1\\ 2.2\\ 6.3\\ 9.1\\ 10.3\\ 11.0\\ 12.6\\ 10.5\\ 10.6\\ 10.5\\ 10.6\\ 10.5\\ 10.6\\ 10.5\\ 10.6\\ 10.5\\ 10.6\\ 10.6\\ 10.2\\ 12.7\\ 10.8\\ 12.2\\ 13.4\\ 16.4\\ \end{array}$	43	FREQUENCY 507.435 603.286 800.795 463.839 456.784 450.974 443.503	1.519 1.508 1.502 1.497 1.177 1.160 1.142 1.128	HEIGHT 11.8 6.6 10.5 7.0 78.9 151.2 85.3 2.4 2.7	J OEt		
29 30 31 32 33 34 35	675.499 673.009 621.331 616.226 616.151 612.001 605.926	1.683 1.553 1.546 1.541 1.530	13.4 8.0 8.0 13.1 9.2 12.2 22.2							

Step B¹H PP