

## Experimental Synthetic Organic Chemistry

The following is an outline to the lecture describing my approach to experimental synthetic chemistry. The opinions presented in writing and orally are not necessarily shared by my colleagues or the community as a whole.

### I. Philosophy

#### A. Productivity

1. Number of reactions per day:  $\geq 2$
2. Progress: daily
3. Solutions: weekly

#### B. Free time

1. Set up another reaction
2. Clean glassware
3. Complete miscellaneous menial chores
4. Read

#### C. Caution vs. Speed

1. Cut corners when appropriate
2. Know what corners have been cut
3. Slow down when necessary

### II. Planning the Experiment:

#### A. Multiple/Parallel reactions.

1. Unrelated reactions: overlap (juggle) when possible.
2. Related reactions: run in parallel.

#### B. Scale

1. TLC: 50-100  $\mu\text{g}$
2. Small Preparative: 0.5-10 mg
3. Preparative: 10 mg - 1.0 g
4. Macroscale: >1.0 g

#### C. Scale-up

- A.  $\leq 3$ -5 fold
- B. Avoid large scale preps -- even literature preps -- on first attempt.

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**Rule 1: Never change the reaction conditions substantially on an important scale-up.**

- Assume that a change in conditions will cause complete failure of the reaction. Ascertain whether the quantity of substrate is expendable.

**Rule 2: Minimize scale within reason.**

- Microscale is faster (*vide infra*) and consumes less material.
- Microscale allows you to work at the front of the synthesis longer.

**Rule 3: You're not making progress if you're not working at the front of the synthesis.**

- Bringing up starting materials is *not* making progress.
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### III. Starting the Reaction

#### A. Vessel

1. Round-bottom pipettes w/ stir flea: 50  $\mu$ g -  $\geq$ 2.0 mg.
2. Kimble vials w/ stir flea: up to  $\geq$  1 g
  - a. (Kimble Science Products; 1-609-794-5561)
  - b. 2 mL; part # 150852
  - c. 5 mL; part # 150855
  - d. 10 mL; part # 1508510
3. Round-bottom flasks: only when necessary.
4. covers
  - a. RB pipettes/Kimble vials: septa or NMR caps.
  - b. Flasks: septa or gas adapter.
  - c. Sealed tube reactions:
  - d. Kimble vials w/NMR cap.
  - e. RB flask w/gas adapter.
  - f. Sealed NMR tube or 1/4" tubing.
  - g. "bomb" w/ Teflon joint.

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**Rule 4: Septa are moisture and oxygen permeable and are consumed by many corrosive chemicals.**

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## B. Inert atmosphere

1. None, N<sub>2</sub>, Ar
2. Dynamic vs. static
3. Closed or open system

(Caution: use shields when running a reaction in a closed vessel.)

## C. Sample/Reagent Purity:

1. Valuable Substrates: caution is advised
2. Inexpensive/easy preps: "purified prior to use" is overkill at times.
3. shortpath distillation w/ airgun is fast.
4. filtering through alumina plug.
5. Synthetic intermediates: always purify ("Garbage in, garbage out.")

## D. Solvent Drying:

1. Ethers: Na/benzophenone.
2. LAH is not great and CaH<sub>2</sub> stinks
3. Dry molecular sieves
4. Hydrocarbons: Na/benzophenone/tetraglyme.
5. P<sub>2</sub>O<sub>5</sub>

## E. Measuring Samples/Reagents:

1. Solids:
  - a. >5 mg directly on balance.
  - b. <5 mg (or when high precision is necessary) by stock solution.  
(Using 10 mg and discarding 90 mg of a commercially available reagent is *not* very wasteful.)
- c. Liquids/solutions:
  1.  $\mu$ L pipettes: 2-150  $\mu$ L
  2. *Costly*  $\mu$ L syringes: 5-100  $\mu$ L
  3. Gas-tight syringes: 100  $\mu$ L-20 mL
  4. Disposable (sort of) syringes: 100  $\mu$ L-50 mL
  5. Dropping funnels
  6. Motor driven syringes

## IV. Monitoring the Reaction

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### **Rule 5: *Always* monitor reactions from start to finish.**

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#### A. Which reactions:

1. new/untested reactions
2. Reactions you personally have done before
3. Literature procedures
4. Formation of transiently stable reactive intermediates!
5. i.e. *all* reactions

#### B. When:

1. Before last reagent is added.
2. Immediately after last reagent is added.
3. No later than 2 minutes after start.
4. Every time the total reaction time triples.
5. Right before you work up the reaction.
6. Immediately after workup/before purification.

#### C. How:

1. Through a low gauge needle, gas adapter or T-joint.
2. Through opened joint under positive nitrogen flow.
3. Via quenched aliquots.

#### D. Thin layer chromatography (TLC):

1. Developing chamber: Kodak Developing Jar
2. Plates: normally silica on glass from Merck
3. Solvent system
  - a. EtOAc/hexane: become familiar with standard pair.
  - b. Use other solvents for
    - i. tight separations
    - ii. very low polarity: Et<sub>2</sub>O/hexane
    - iii. high polarity: methanol or acetone additives
    - iv. amines: 0.5% triethylamine
    - v. acids: 0.5% HOAc

#### 4. Visualization

- a. By sight
- b. UV
- c. "Jones Spray"; CrO<sub>3</sub> (3 g)/H<sub>2</sub>SO<sub>4</sub> (46 mL)/H<sub>2</sub>O (100 mL)

or  $K_2CrO_4$  (1.5 g),  $H_2SO_4$  (15 mL),  $H_2O$  (45 mL)

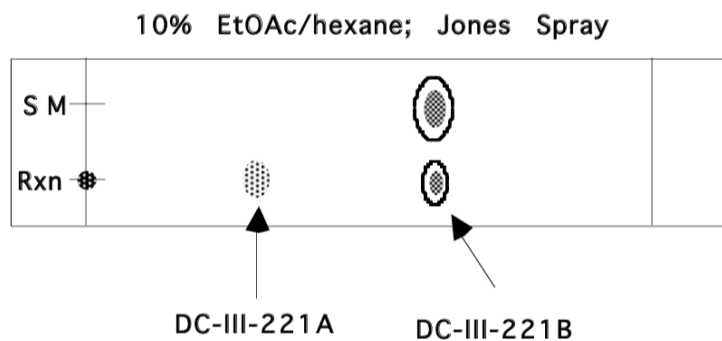
d.  $I_2$ , Vanillin, phosphomolybdic acid

5. Caution:

- a. Warming in capillary
- b. Decomposition on plate

6. Notebook Record:

- a. Full scale drawing with accurate shading
- b. Note solvent system and stain
- c. Note UV with dotted line
- d. Note any color oddities
- e. Purified sample numbers.
- f. Example



E. Other Methods

1. Gas chromatography
2. NMR or other spectroscopy
3. ReactIR

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**Rule 6: Work up a reaction when it is finished.**

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V. The Workup:

- A. Round-bottom flask-scale reactions: tedious, glassware-intensive.
- B. Kimble Vials/round-bottom pipettes.
  1. Add water and shake.
    - a. Eliminate emulsions, suspensions, and gels with centrifuge.

2. Remove organic layer with pipette.
3. Filter directly through plug of Na<sub>2</sub>SO<sub>4</sub> into *tared* pear-shaped flask.
4. Rotavap and pump to dryness (rotavap will not remove all solvent).
5. Clean reaction vessel/stir flea concurrently with step 4.
6. Observe, smell, and weigh sample.

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**Rule 7: Keep track of mass balance throughout purification.**

**Rule 8: Do not let crude reaction products stand on your bench-top or in the freezer unnecessarily.**

**Rule 9: Skip those costly, time consuming, and typically useless crude NMR spectra.**

If the reaction appears to have proceeded smoothly, you will isolate a purified sample. The presence of potentially interesting by-products will be detected by TLC and their structures will only be determined after purification.

A decision on whether to purify should not be based on a crude NMR spectrum.

-Crude NMR spectra *are* meaningful when (1) you know *exactly* what you are looking for, or (2) instability to purification has already been determined or suspected.

-Caution: Rule 9 will be contentious among some advisors.

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VI. Purification:

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**Rule 10: Take every opportunity to purify your products during the developmental stages of a synthesis.**

- Garbage in, garbage out.
- One pot, multiple step sequences as well as multiple-pot reactions without intermediate purification are developed after the initial successes have been achieved using pure materials in a step-wise manner.

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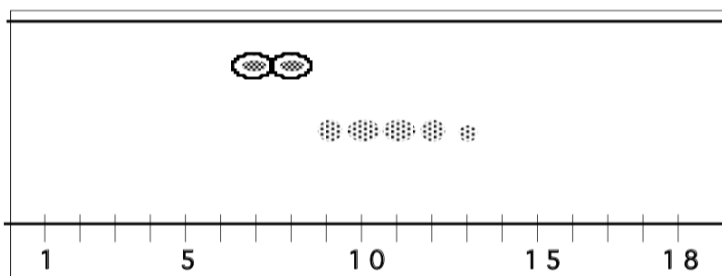
A. Flash Chromatography: W. C. Still *et al.* *J. Org. Chem.* **1978**, *43*, 2923.

1. Scale: 10 mg - >20 g

2. When? Whenever possible.

(Scale ups w/o chromatography come later.)

3. Column size: see reference
  - a. Increase length or diameter for improved resolution.
4. Solvent:
  - a.  $0.30 - 0.35 R_f$ ; no lower than 0.25.
  - b. determine while following reaction.
  - c. Bad guesses can be costly.
5. Packing:
  - a. Under pressure.
  - b. Do not release pressure rapidly until hot solvent is eluted.
6. Sample loading:
  - a. Place narrow band of a solution at top of column
    - \*not suspension or sludge
  - b. Rinse walls and elute several times
  - c. Add solvent without disturbing the surface.
  - d. Save a small sample of the crude product
    - i. compare to the eluent (50 mg)
    - ii. crude NMR analysis (1.0 mg; vide infra).
7. Elution:
  - a. 2.0" / min (pre-set at packing stage)
  - b. Keep eluting until all of the materials are off of the column.
  - c. Changing solvent to elute polar fractions requires proper  $R_f$  determination in advance.
8. Monitoring elution by TLC:
  - a. TLC plate on its side
  - b. Pipette, not capillary
  - c. Example



d. If purity is critical, check beginning and end of tail:

Fr 9	—	•••••	
Fr 13	—	•••••	
Fr 9	—	•••••	
Fr 13	—	•••••	

9. Sample collection: No mixed fractions when characterization is critical.

10. Cleanup:

- Balance delayed cleanup versus premature disposal of silica.
- If possible, clean up column/test tubes during solvent removal.

B. Pipette Flash Chromatography:

- Scale: 0.5 - 10 mg.
- 1.5" flash column in a 5" pipette.
- Solvent: set  $R_f$  at 0.3 and then cut EtOAc concentration by 2.
- Elute with a pipette bulb and monitor as above.

C. Preparative TLC:

- Harsher than flash chromatography.
- Can be useful for compounds that "streak".

D. Recrystallization:

- Scale: 100 mg - 1 ton.
- Highest possible purity.
- A reflux condenser eliminates mixed solvent composition drift.

E. Distillation

- Prep GC: <500 mg
- Bulb-to-Bulb: 100 mg - 5 g
- Fractional/Short Path:  $\geq 1.0$  gm
- Note: Volatile compounds are not easily handled on microscale.
- Partial Vacuum:
  - aspirator: uncontrollable pressures.
  - Manostat: *J. Chem. Educ.* **1989**, 66, 181.
  - Vane Pump



## VII. Characterization/Purity Determination:

### A. $^1\text{H}$ NMR spectroscopy

1. Requires <1.0 mg.
2. Don't use high field spectrometers unnecessarily.

### B. $^{13}\text{C}$ NMR spectroscopy:

1. Excellent purity check
2. Needs  $\geq 10$  mg. (Can be deferred to a scale-up.)

### C. Heteronuclear NMR spectroscopy: $^2\text{H}$ , $^{11}\text{B}$ , $^{19}\text{F}$ others

### D. IR spectroscopy:

1. Most under utilized physical measurement
2. Renaissance due to in situ IR spectroscopy
3. 15 min determination of functional groups

### E. Mass Spectrometry:

1. Highly dependent on users interpretive skills
2. High resolution MS may no longer substitute for elemental analysis.

### F. Elemental Analysis:

1. Destructive, costly, painful method of indirectly checking purity.
2. Inferior to  $^{13}\text{C}$  NMR for most instances
3. Minimal use in modern day organic chemistry  
(although central to organometallic chemistry still.)
4. Still required by some stubborn, knuckle-headed editors/referees.

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### **Rule 11: Make sure you collect the analytical data necessary to humor thesis committee members, advisors, and journal editors.**

•Your primary concern in the early stages is to determine how well the reaction worked and if the final product is pure. Be careful to stay focussed on the problem rather than spend all of your time collecting analytical data on compounds that may never appear in print.

•Missing data can be collected on a second or third preparation of the compound if necessary, but be sure to get it!

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VII. Notebook Documentation:

A. Detailed experimental includes:

1. Reagent/substrate physical properties: MW's, densities.
2. Weights and or volumes of reagents/substrate.
3. JACS-style experimental.
4. Weight and color of crude product.
5. Annotated TLC data including:
  - a. picture of TLC plate (see above).
  - b. correlation of pure isolated fractions with spots.
6. Details of purification.
7. Purified weight and percent yield.
8. Reference to spectra for each compound isolated.

B. Literature procedures include:

1. All of the above.
2. Literature reference.

C. Repeated procedure includes

1. Reference to previously detailed experimental (notebook/pg number).
2. Changes to procedure.
3. TLC data and spectra numbers

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**Rule 12: Keep a notebook that can be accessed by a third party.**

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D. Sample Storage and Disposal

1. Consult the authorities on proper waste disposal.
2. All compounds should be labelled with a clear indication of date, structure, notebook page, and name of investigator.

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**Rule 13. No compounds should be stored in the refrigerator or freezer without proper labelling.**

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E. Avoid long term storage in expensive flasks with ground glass joints.