

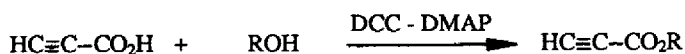
IMPROVED PREPARATION OF ALIPHATIC PROPENOIC ESTERS

L. BALAS, B. JOUSSEAUME* and B. LANGWOST

Laboratoire de Chimie Organique et Organométallique (associé au CNRS),
Université Bordeaux I, 351, cours de la Libération, 33405 - TALENCE (France)

Summary. An improved procedure of esterification of propenoic acid, based on the N,N'-dicyclohexylcarbodiimide 4-dimethylaminopyridine condensation, is presented, which gives good results with primary, secondary, allylic and homoallylic alcohols. Reactions conditions are mild. Some limitations are given.

Propenoic esters are compounds of interest, bearing a very reactive triple bond and being involved in various transformations such as coupling reactions, cycloadditions, ionic or radical additions, and important synthetic schemes (see for examples (1-9)). Although many methods of preparation have been described up to now, esterification of propenoic acid remains still difficult. Satisfactory yields could be obtained by treating propenoic acid with a large excess of the required alcohol in the presence of a stoichiometric amount of sulfuric acid or an excess of boron trifluoride (8,11). These methods could only be applied in the case of costless or acid insensitive alcohols. The use of propenoic acid chloride (2) seemed limited because of its instability (it must be stored at -78°C to prevent its decomposition) and its somewhat hazardous preparation (12). Another route involving diethyl azodicarboxylate and triphenylphosphine has been recently described (10). It gave a moderate yield of allyl propenoate. We report here a very convenient preparation of aliphatic propenoic esters, based on the well known N,N'-dicyclohexylcarbodiimide (DCC) 4-dimethylaminopyridine (DMAP) condensation (13-15). It only required a stoichiometric amount of alcohol, left unchanged acid-sensitive materials and gave esters in good yield, without any isomerisation of unsaturated substrates.



With tertiary alcohols, like in other DCC - based methods (16), yields were very low, whereas with aliphatic, benzylic, secondary, allylic, homoallylic alcohols or diols, satisfactory results were obtained. In order to get good yields, we found that DMAP and DCC had to be added to the mixture of propenoic acid and alcohol because some polymerisation occurred when the acid and DMAP were directly mixed together and that a low addition temperature had to be used to minimize polymerization risks of the unstable anhydride intermediate (10).

Esterification of propenoic acid

To a solution of propenoic acid (3.52g, 44 mmol) and alcohol (40 mmol) (20 mmol for a diol) in dry diethylether (20 ml) at -20°C under nitrogen was added dropwise a solution of DCC (9.27g, 45 mmol), DMAP (0.36g, 3 mmol) in 100 ml of dry diethylether. The cooling bath was then removed and the mixture stirred for 10h at room temperature. The mixture was filtered, washed with a cooled solution of N HCl (2 x 50 ml) and a saturated solution of sodium chloride (2 x 50 ml). Evaporation of the dried solution gave a residue which was chromatographed on a silica gel column using a petroleum ether/diethylether (93 / 7) solution as eluent. When 2-propen-1-ol was used, the ester was purified by distillation (Eb₂₅ 56°C. Lit (10) :Eb₇₆₀ 133-134°C)

Table : Propynoic esters

Alcohol	Yield (%) ^(a)	¹ H-NMR (CCl ₄ , (ppm))
1-Octanol	68	0.80-1.8 (m,15H) ; 2.85 (s,1H) ; 4.12 (t,2H)
1,4-Butanediol	66	1.65-1.9 (m,4H) ; 2.82 (s,2H) ; 4.15 (m,4H)
Benzyl alcohol	52	2.85 (s,1H) ; 5.0 (s,2H) ; 7.15 (s,5H) ⁽¹⁹⁾
α -Methylbenzyl alcohol	76	1.50 (d,2H) ; 2.80 (s,1H) ; 5.85 (q,1H) ; 7.20 (s,5H)
3,5-Hexadien-1-ol	72	2.30 (q,2H) ; 2.75 (s,1H) ; 4.05 (t,2H) ; 4.80-6.45 (m,4H)
2-Propen-1-ol	75	2.90 (s,1H) ; 4.60 (d,2H) ; 5.10-6.30 (m,3H) ⁽¹⁰⁾
3-Phenyl-2-propen-1-ol	71	2.90 (s,1H) ; 4.65 (d,2H) ; 5.80-6.70 (m, 2H) ; 7.20 (s,5H) ⁽²⁰⁾
t-Butanol	0 ⁽¹⁸⁾	
1-Methyl-1-phenyl ethanol	0	

(a) Satisfactory microanalyses obtained : C \pm 0.40, H \pm 0.31

References and notes

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