

A Convenient New Method for the Bromination of Deactivated Aromatic Compounds

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Received 9 June 1999

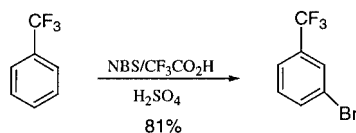
Abstract: Treatment of deactivated aromatic compounds with *N*-bromosuccinimide in trifluoroacetic acid solvent in the presence of sulfuric acid gave the corresponding monobromoaromatic compounds in good to excellent yields.

Key words: bromination, aromatic compounds

Bromoaromatics are highly useful synthetic intermediates, but ring bromination of strongly deactivated aromatics continues to pose synthetic problems. Among the reported methods for the bromination of deactivated aromatic compounds, many suffer from the use of hazardous reagents or harsh reaction conditions.^{1,2} Thus, reagents which utilize *N*-bromosuccinimide (NBS) or the analogous 1,3-dibromo-5,5-dimethylhydantoin (DBDMH) as the source of electrophilic bromine have emerged as being among the most useful for carrying out such difficult reactions.³⁻⁷

The first significant report was that of Lambert,⁴ who, in a limited study, used NBS in an aqueous H₂SO₄ medium to brominate nitrobenzene. In a much more thorough and useful investigation, Eguchi used DBDMH with CH₃SO₃H, CF₃SO₃H, or H₂SO₄ in CH₂Cl₂ or CHCl₃ as solvent to successfully brominate a number of electron-deficient aromatics, including nitrobenzene, methyl benzoate and trifluoromethylbenzene.⁵ However, more highly deactivated aromatics than these, such as *m*-dinitrobenzene, could not be brominated under such conditions. Schlosser, with a specific interest in brominating the highly unreactive 1,3-bis(trifluoromethyl)benzene, found that DBDMH in concentrated H₂SO₄ or CF₃SO₃H (without CH₂Cl₂ solvent) did that job nicely.⁶

Though all the reported methods based on NBS or DBDMH work well for the active and moderately deactivated aromatic compounds, they can not be applied to very strongly deactivated aromatic compounds, such as 1,3-dinitrobenzene. Our goal was to find bromination conditions that would be *generally* useful for deactivated benzenes, but most specifically, would be useful for brominating trifluoromethyl-substituted benzenes without giving rise to significant hydrolysis.



At this time we wish to report that use of trifluoroacetic acid (TFA) as solvent, with NBS and catalytic H₂SO₄ as the active source of electrophilic bromine, seems to be an ideal medium for bromination of deactivated aromatic compounds. For example, treatment of trifluoromethylbenzene with 1.5 equivalents of NBS in the presence of H₂SO₄ in TFA at room temperature gave *m*-bromo(trifluoromethyl)benzene in good yield, with the efficiency of the reaction being dependent upon the concentration of sulfuric acid, as shown in Table 1. Without sulfuric acid the reaction does not occur, but if the ratio (V/V) of H₂SO₄ to TFA gets too high, (i.e., 0.4), hydrolysis of the trifluoromethyl group begins to be observed (Entry 4 of Table 1). Maintaining a ratio of 0.3 allows a good conversion, with little, if any, benzoic acid being formed.

Table 1 Effect of the ratio of H₂SO₄ to TFA (v/v) on the bromination of (trifluoromethyl)benzene at 26 °C.

H ₂ SO ₄ /TFA(v/v)	Time(h)	Yield (%) ^a
0	48	0
0.2	48	62
0.3	48	81
0.4	38	91 ^b

^a by ¹⁹F NMR; ^b Benzoic acid was detected by ¹H NMR

Brominations of other deactivated aromatics were found to proceed with similar success, with the results being given in Table 2. Even the very strongly deactivated aromatic compound, 1,3-dinitrobenzene, which was not able to be brominated under Eguchi conditions,⁵ when subjected to our reaction conditions at slightly higher temperature (45 °C) for 48 h, gave the 5-brominated product in moderate (45%) yield.⁸ As expected, relatively reactive aromatic compounds such as benzene reacted very rapidly with NBS/TFA/H₂SO₄ at room temperature. The reaction was complete in 2 h, giving bromobenzene in high yield (91%).

In our study, trifluoroacetic acid was found to be the most effective solvent of those examined, better than CH₂Cl₂, CH₃CO₂H, or H₂O, and it was the only one of this group

of solvents which allowed bromination of the least reactive substrates. Whereas Schlosser found pure H_2SO_4 to be an effective solvent for bromination of *m*-bis (trifluoromethyl)benzene,⁶ we found that use of such conditions for the more hydrolytically-reactive (trifluoromethyl)benzene led to considerable hydrolysis of the trifluoromethyl group.

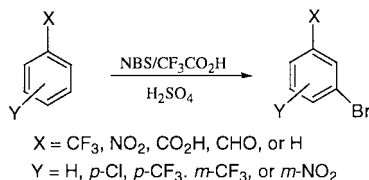


Table 2 Reactions of aromatic compounds with NBS/TFA/ H_2SO_4 ^a

Substrate	$\text{H}_2\text{SO}_4/\text{TFA}$ (v/v)	t (hr)	Yield (%) ^b	bp, °C, (lit)
<i>m</i> -(CF ₃) ₂ C ₆ H ₄	0.4	51	84	152-153 (153-154) ⁶
<i>p</i> -(CF ₃) ₂ C ₆ H ₄	0.1	48	62 ^c	153-155 (161-162) ²
<i>p</i> -ClC ₆ H ₄ CF ₃	0.2	44	86	100-102/55mm (190-191) ²
<i>m</i> -(NO ₂) ₂ C ₆ H ₄	0.4	48	45 ^d	mp, 74-75 (75-76) ⁸
C ₆ H ₅ CF ₃	0.3	48	81	150-152 (151-153) ⁵
C ₆ H ₅ NO ₂	0.1	24	88	mp, 53-55 (53-54) ⁵
C ₆ H ₅ CO ₂ H	0.2	44	78	mp, 154-156 (155) ⁹
C ₆ H ₅ CHO	0.2	42	84	120-123/40mm (233-236) ⁹
C ₆ H ₆	0.1	2	91	155-156 (156) ⁹

^a at 25 °C; ^b isolated yields, with conversion of starting material, >90%; purity of products, >98%; ^c 2,4-dibromo-1,4-bis-(trifluoromethyl)-benzene was formed in 5% yield; ^d reaction run at 45 °C.

The mechanism of the reaction was not investigated. However, it is likely that the active brominating agent is either the protonated NBS or $\text{CF}_3\text{CO}_2\text{Br}$.

In conclusion, a mild and efficient general procedure for bromination of aromatics has been developed which because of its experimental simplicity, its selectivity, and its ability to be applied to highly deactivated substrates, should find wide application.

General Experimental Procedure:

Into a 250 mL round-bottomed flask, equipped with overhead stirrer, was placed 50 mL trifluoroacetic acid, 100 mmol aromatic compound, and an appropriate amount of sulfuric acid (98%). The mixture was stirred vigorously, and 150 mmol of NBS was added in portions over an 8 hour period. After the appropriate reaction time (reaction monitored by ¹⁹F NMR or ¹H NMR), the mixture was poured into 200 mL of ice water, the organic layer separated, and the aqueous layer extracted with CH_2Cl_2 (20 mL x 3). The combined organic layers were washed with brine and dried over CaCl_2 . After the CH_2Cl_2 was evaporated, distillation or recrystallization gave the desired product with the yields given in Tables 1 and 2.

Acknowledgement

Support of this research in part by Specialty Coating Systems, Inc., Indianapolis, IN, is acknowledged with thanks.

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Article Identifier:

1437-2096,E;1999,0,08,1245,1246,ftx,en;S08199ST.pdf