

Hexabromoacetone and ethyl tribromoacetate: a highly efficient reagent for bromination of alcohol

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Abstract

A new and efficient method for the bromination of alcohols utilizing $\text{Br}_3\text{CCOCBr}_3/\text{PPh}_3$ and $\text{Br}_3\text{CCO}_2\text{Et}/\text{PPh}_3$ is described. Various alcohols can be converted smoothly into their corresponding alkyl bromides in high yields under mild conditions with short reaction times. Based upon ^1H NMR studies using competitive reactions between selected brominating agents and Cl_3CCN , $\text{Br}_3\text{CCOCBr}_3$ displays the highest reactivity approximately nine times that of CBr_4 .

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The transformation of alkyl halides into valuable end products is often utilized in organic syntheses.¹ Alkyl chlorides are often used since they are easily prepared using readily available reagents such as SOCl_2 , PCl_3 or combined systems of PPh_3 with CCl_4 , $\text{Cl}_3\text{CCOCCl}_3$, Cl_3CCN or $\text{Cl}_3\text{CCONH}_2$.² However, alkyl chlorides are less reactive than alkyl bromides or iodides.³ Thus, an efficient and practical protocol for the preparation of alkyl bromides would be valuable. There are relatively few conditions for the conversion of alcohols into bromides. Previous examples include highly toxic reagents such as HBr gas and Br_2 or coupling reagents like $\text{CBr}_4/\text{PPh}_3$, Br_2/PPh_3 and Br_2PPh_3 but HBr is always a by-product and high temperatures are often required.⁴

Recently, we have examined the reactivity of various reagents for the chlorination of alcohols and carboxylic acids to give the corresponding alkyl and acyl chlorides.⁵ The results clearly showed that the reagents possessing strong electron-withdrawing groups such as $\text{Cl}_3\text{CCOCCl}_3$ and Cl_3CCN showed the highest reactivity. We have now

extended this idea for bromination and have examined $\text{Br}_3\text{CCOCBr}_3$ and $\text{Br}_3\text{CCO}_2\text{Et}$. Although $\text{Br}_3\text{CCOCBr}_3$ was prepared in 1969, only two reports involving the synthesis of bioactive compounds have been addressed.⁶ The preparation and the use of $\text{Br}_3\text{CCO}_2\text{Et}$ for the preparation of amides has also been described.⁷ Nonetheless, these two reagents have never been reported as reagents for bromination of alcohols. Herein, we wish to report the use of $\text{Br}_3\text{CCOCBr}_3/\text{PPh}_3$ and $\text{Br}_3\text{CCO}_2\text{Et}/\text{PPh}_3$ for the efficient and practical conversion of alcohols into the corresponding alkyl bromides and a relative reactivity study.

Conditions were optimized for the conversion of 2-phenylethanol into 2-phenylethyl bromide (Table 1).

Using a ratio of alcohol:brominating agent: PPh_3 of 1:1.5:1.5 equiv, the desired product was obtained in low to moderate yields in the case of BrCCl_3 and $\text{Br}_3\text{CCO}_2\text{H}$ (entries 2 and 3). However, CBr_4 , $\text{Br}_3\text{CCO}_2\text{Et}$ and $\text{Br}_3\text{CCOCBr}_3$ afforded the bromide in excellent yields (entries 4, 7 and 10). Interestingly, decreasing the amount of $\text{Br}_3\text{CCO}_2\text{Et}$ and $\text{Br}_3\text{CCOCBr}_3$ from 1.5 to 1 and 0.3 equiv, respectively, still provided the desired bromide in quantitative yields (entries 8, 9 and 11–14). Moreover, a short reaction time (15 min) also gave the alkyl bromide in excellent yields (entries 8 and 13).

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Table 1

Effect of the types of brominating agent, ratio of brominating agent and PPh₃ and reaction time on the conversion of 2-phenylethanol into 2-phenylethyl bromide

$\text{Ph-CH}_2\text{-CH}_2\text{-OH} \xrightarrow[\text{CH}_2\text{Cl}_2, \text{ RT, 30 min}]{\text{PPh}_3 (1.5 \text{ eq}), \text{ Brominating agent}} \text{Ph-CH}_2\text{-CH}_2\text{-Br}$ 0.25 mmol			
Entry	Brominating agent		Yield ^a (%)
	Type	Amount (equiv)	
1	None	—	0
2	BrCCl ₃	1.5	21 ^b
3	Br ₃ CCO ₂ H	1.5	42
4	CBr ₄	1.5	96
5		1.0	90
6		0.5	42
7	Br ₃ CCO ₂ Et	1.5	95
8		1.0	96, 98 ^c
9		0.5	78
10	Br ₃ CCOCBr ₃	1.5	98
11		1.0	99
12		0.5	99
13		0.3	99, 98 ^c
14		0.25	74

^a Determined by ¹H NMR.

^b 2-Phenylethyl chloride was also obtained in 40% yield.

^c Reaction time was 15 min.

This optimized reaction conditions were utilized in a study on the scope of bromination of various primary, secondary and tertiary alcohols (Table 2).

All the primary and secondary, alkyl and cyclic alcohols studied were converted into the corresponding alkyl bromides in high to excellent yields using Br₃CCO₂Et or Br₃CCOCBr₃ (entries 1–11). An olefinic by-product was detected as a minor component from 1:5.60 to 1:7.25 (entries 10 and 11). The formation of an olefinic by-product in a ratio of 1:1.40 was previously observed in the chlorination of cyclooctanol using Cl₃CCONH₂/PPh₃.^{2c}

Table 2

Bromination of alcohols

$\text{ROH} \xrightarrow[\text{CH}_2\text{Cl}_2, \text{ RT, 15 min}]{\text{PPh}_3 (1.5 \text{ eq}), \text{ Brominating agent}} \text{RBr}$ 0.25 mmol				
Entry	Alcohol	Brominating agent ^a	Yield ^b (%)	
			RBr	Olefin
1	1-Octanol	Br ₃ CCOCBr ₃	97	—
2		Br ₃ CCO ₂ Et	Quant	—
3	Phenylmethanol	Br ₃ CCO ₂ Et	98	—
4	2-Phenylethanol	Br ₃ CCOCBr ₃	98, 83 ^{c,d}	—
5		Br ₃ CCO ₂ Et	98, 82 ^{c,d}	—
6	(–)-Nopol	Br ₃ CCO ₂ Et	78 ^{c,d}	—
7	(±)-2-Octanol	Br ₃ CCOCBr ₃	Quant	—
8		Br ₃ CCO ₂ Et	97	—
9	(±)-1-Phenylethanol	Br ₃ CCO ₂ Et	98	—
10	Cyclooctanol	Br ₃ CCOCBr ₃	84	15
11		Br ₃ CCO ₂ Et	87	12
12	1-Adamantanol	Br ₃ CCOCBr ₃	42 ^{c,d}	—
13		Br ₃ CCO ₂ Et	48 ^{c,d}	—
14	2-Phenyl-2-propanol	Br ₃ CCOCBr ₃	67	30
15		Br ₃ CCO ₂ Et	42	48

^a 0.3 equiv Br₃CCOCBr₃ was used; 1 equiv Br₃CCO₂Et was used.

^b Determined by ¹H NMR.

^c Isolated product.

^d 3 mmol of ROH was used.

The present results indicate that bromide is a more reactive nucleophile than chloride to generate the corresponding cyclic halides via S_N2 displacement. Tertiary alcohols gave the corresponding alkyl bromides in poorer yields (entries 12–15). This implies that the reaction may take place via two competing pathways, substitution versus elimination. Br₃CCOCBr₃ was a more efficient brominating agent than Br₃CCO₂Et for tertiary alcohols (entries 14 and 15).

The reactivity of various reagents in the bromination of alcohols to bromides was also investigated using a competitive reaction between Cl₃CCN and various brominating agents towards 2-phenylethanol (Table 3).⁸

Table 3

Comparative reactivity study of brominating agents

$\text{Ph-CH}_2\text{-CH}_2\text{-OH} \xrightarrow[\text{CH}_2\text{Cl}_2, \text{ RT, 15 min}]{\text{PPh}_3 (1.5 \text{ eq}), \text{ Cl}_3\text{CCN} (0.75 \text{ eq}), \text{ Brominating agent} (0.75 \text{ eq})} \text{Ph-CH}_2\text{-CH}_2\text{-Br} + \text{Ph-CH}_2\text{-CH}_2\text{-Cl}$					
Entry	Brominating agent	Yield ^a (%)		Ratio of Br/Cl	Reactivity ^b
		Br	Cl		
1	None	0	76	—	—
2	CBr ₄	32	65	0.49	1
3	Br ₃ CCO ₂ Et	40	60	0.67	1.37
4	Br ₃ CCONEt ₂	47	52	0.90	1.84
5	Br ₃ CCOCBr ₃	80	18	4.44	9.06

^a Determined by ¹H NMR.

^b Based on CBr₄.

In the absence of brominating agent, 2-phenylethyl chloride was obtained in high yield (entry 1). $\text{Br}_3\text{CCO}_2\text{Et}$ displayed reactivity close to those of CBr_4 and $\text{Br}_3\text{CCONEt}_2$ (entries 2 and 3). Intriguingly, $\text{Br}_3\text{CCOCBr}_3$, bearing a strong electron-withdrawing group, significantly displayed the highest reactivity (entry 5). The highest reactivity was associated with the strongest electron-withdrawing groups, just as was observed for chlorination.⁵

In summary, we have disclosed an efficient method for the preparation of alkyl bromides from alcohols using $\text{Br}_3\text{CCOCBr}_3/\text{PPh}_3$ or $\text{Br}_3\text{CCO}_2\text{Et}/\text{PPh}_3$.

A typical procedure for the preparation of an alkyl bromide: To a stirred solution of alcohol (0.25 mmol) and PPh_3 (0.375 mmol) in dry CH_2Cl_2 (0.5 mL) was added $\text{Br}_3\text{CCO}_2\text{Et}$ (0.25 mmol) or $\text{Br}_3\text{CCOCBr}_3$ (0.075 mmol) at rt (30 °C) under a N_2 atmosphere. After 15 min, the reaction was quenched with cold water and the presence of the corresponding product in the crude mixture was determined by ^1H NMR analysis utilizing toluene as an internal standard or alternatively was isolated by purification through silica gel column chromatography.

A reactivity study: To a stirred solution of alcohol (0.25 mmol) and a mixture of brominating agent (0.188 mmol) and Cl_3CCN (0.188 mmol) in dry CH_2Cl_2 (0.5 mL) was added PPh_3 (0.375 mmol) at rt (30 °C) under a N_2 atmosphere. After 15 min, the amount of the corresponding products in the crude mixture was determined by ^1H NMR analysis using toluene as an internal standard.

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- The reactivity of the brominating agents was assessed by the ratio of the yields of 2-phenylethyl bromide and 2-phenylethyl chloride obtained.