

Electronic Supplementary Information

Cu-mediated Nitrogen-Atom Transfer via C≡N Bond Cleavage

Lixin Liu, Jianyu Dong, Yaxing Zhang, Yongbo Zhou,* and Shuang-Feng Yin*

State Key Laboratory of Chemo/Biosensing and Chemometrics, College of Chemistry and

Chemical Engineering, Hunan University, Changsha 410082, China

E-mail: zhouyb@hnu.edu.cn; sf_yin@hnu.edu.cn

Content

I. General information	2
II. Typical experimental procedure for the synthesis of aryl nitriles	2
III. Optimization of reaction conditions	2
IV. Reactions of 4-Bromobenzaldehyde and 4-Iodobenzaldehyde with acetonitrile	4
V. Investigation on the reaction mechanism	4
VI. ¹H and ¹³C NMR spectra data of the products.....	8
VII. References.....	13
VIII. Copies of ¹H and ¹³C NMR charts of the products.....	14

I. General information

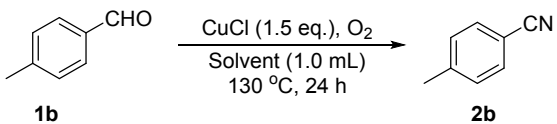
Except where otherwise noted, all reactions were carried out in 25 mL sealed Schlenk tubes under anhydrous conditions and O₂ atmosphere, and monitored by GC and/or GC-MS. All solvents were dried and distilled before use according to the standard methods. Column chromatography was performed using Silica Gel 60 (particle size 300-400 μ m). The ¹H and ¹³C NMR spectra were recorded on a 400 MHz spectrometer (400 MHz for ¹H and 100 MHz for ¹³C NMR spectroscopy). CDCl₃ or DMSO-*d*₆ was used as the solvent. Chemical shifts for ¹H NMR are referred to internal Me₄Si (0 ppm) and reported as follows: chemical shift (δ ppm), multiplicity, integration and coupling constant (Hz). Data for ¹³C NMR are reported in ppm relative to the center line of a triplet at 77.0 ppm for chloroform-*d*. GC-MS results were recorded on GC-MS QP2010, and GC analysis was performed on GC 2010 plus. The electron ionization (EI) method was used as the ionization method for the HRMS measurement, and the mass analyzer type is TOF for EI.

II. Typical experimental procedure for the synthesis of aryl nitriles

An oven-dried 25 mL Schlenk tube, which was equipped with a magnetic stir bar and charged with CuCl (29.7 mg, 0.3 mmol), was evacuated and backfilled with oxygen three times. Then, CH₃CN (0.67 mL), DMAc (0.33 mL), and 4-methoxybenzaldehyde **1a** (27.2 mg, 0.2 mmol) were added. The reaction mixture was stirred at 130 °C for 24 h and monitored by GC or GC-MS. After completion of the reaction, the resulting solution was cooled to room temperature, and washed with saturated NH₄Cl solution (10.0 mL). The product was extracted with CHCl₃ (5.0 mL $\times$ 3), filtered and dried over anhydrous Na₂SO₄ and concentrated in vacuo. The crude product was purified by column chromatography on silica gel with ethyl acetate / petroleum ether (1 / 10) to afford white solid 4-methoxybenzonitrile **2a** in 83% yield (22.1 mg).

III. Optimization of reaction conditions

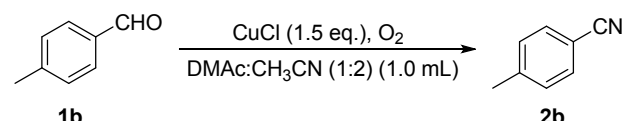
Table S1. Optimization of solvent^a

		
Entry	Solvent	Yield % ^b
1	CH ₃ CN	40
2	DMAc	None
3	DMAc:CH ₃ CN (4:1)	Trace
4	DMAc:CH ₃ CN (2:1)	29
5	DMAc:CH ₃ CN (1:1)	86
6	DMAc:CH ₃ CN (1:2)	90
7	DMAc:CH ₃ CN (1:3)	80
8	DMAc:CH ₃ CN (1:9)	56
9	DMSO:CH ₃ CN (1:2)	14
10	NMP:CH ₃ CN (1:2)	18
11 ^c	DMAc:CH ₃ CN (1:2)	None
12 ^d	DMAc:CH ₃ CN (1:2)	Trace

^aReaction conditions: **1b** (24.0 mg, 0.2 mmol), CuCl (29.7 mg, 0.3 mmol), solvent (1.0 mL), 130 °C, 24 h.

^bGC yield. ^cunder N₂. ^dunder air.

Table S2. Optimization of temperature and time^a

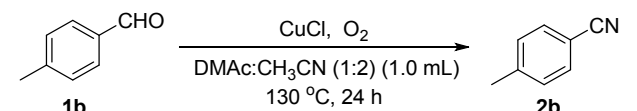


Entry	T/°C	t/h	Yield % ^b
1	100	24	Trace
2	120	24	40
3	130	24	90
4	140	24	91
5	130	12	32
6	130	16	54
7	130	20	70
8	130	28	92

^aReaction conditions: **1b** (24.0 mg, 0.2 mmol), CuCl (29.7 mg, 0.3 mmol), solvent (1.0 mL), 130 °C, 24 h.

^bGC yield.

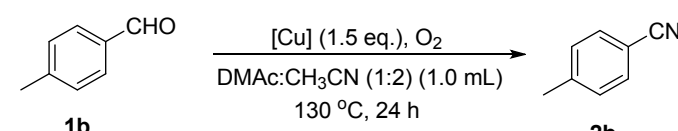
Table S3. Optimization of copper loading^a



Entry	CuCl (eq.)	Yield % ^b
1	0.2	Trace
2	1.0	57
3	1.1	68
4	1.2	79
5	1.3	82
6	1.4	87
7	1.5	90
8	2.0	91

^a Reaction conditions: **1b** (24.0 mg, 0.2 mmol), solvent (1.0 mL), 130 °C, 24 h. ^bGC yield.

Table S4. Optimization of Cu salts^a

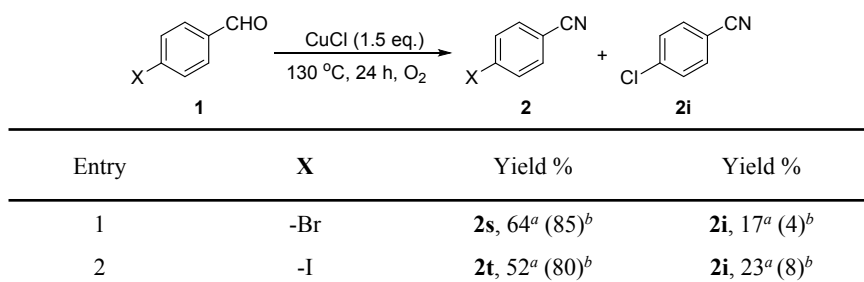


Entry	[Cu]	Yield % ^b
1	Cu	None
2	CuCl	90

3	CuBr	38
4	CuI	None
5	Cu ₂ O	None
6	CuSCN	None
7	[Cu(CH ₃ CN)] ₄ PF ₆	None
8	CuCl ₂	10
9	CuBr ₂	5.1
10	Cu(OAc) ₂	15
11	Cu(NO ₃) ₂ ·3H ₂ O	13
12	CuSO ₄	None
13	Cu(OH) ₂	Trace
14	Cu(OH) ₂ CO ₃	None
15	CuO	None

^aReaction conditions: **1b** (24.0 mg, 0.2 mmol), [Cu] (0.3 mmol), 130 °C, 24 h. ^bGC yield.

IV. Reactions of 4-Bromobenzaldehyde and 4-Iodobenzaldehyde with acetonitrile



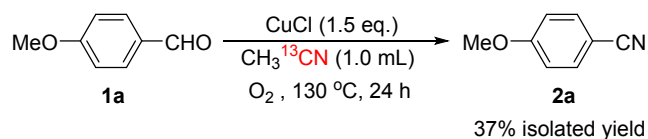
^aConditions A: aldehyde **1** (0.2 mmol), CuCl (0.3 mmol), CH₃CN (0.67 mL), DMAc (0.33 mL) in 25 mL tube under O₂, 130 °C, 24 h, GC yields. ^bConditions B: aldehyde **1** (0.2 mmol), benzonitrile (0.3 mmol), CH₃CN (1.0 mL), GC yields.

V. Investigation on the reaction mechanism

1. ¹³C Labeled CH₃CN and 4-methoxybenzaldehyde Test

Acetonitrile-1-¹³C (99 atom%, ¹³C, cat. No. 485160) were purchased from Aldrich, Anisaldehyde-[7-¹³C] (98% atom%, ¹³C, cat. No. A673202) were purchased from TRG, the isotope reagents were used without further purification.

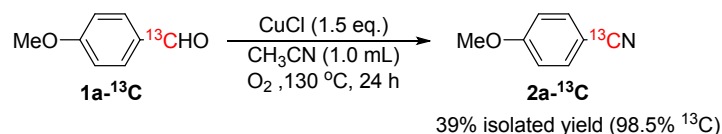
(1)



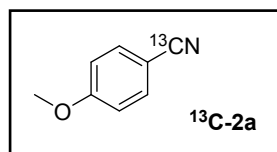
An oven-dried 25 mL Schlenk tube, which was equipped with a magnetic stir bar and charged with CuCl (29.7 mg, 0.3 mmol), was evacuated and backfilled with oxygen three times. Then, CH₃¹³CN (1.0 mL) and 4-methoxybenzaldehyde **1a** (27.2 mg, 0.2 mmol) were added. The reaction mixture was stirred at 130 °C

for 24 h and monitored by GC or GC-MS. After completion of the reaction, the resulting solution was cooled to room temperature, and washed with saturated NH_4Cl solution (10.0 mL). The product was extracted with CHCl_3 (5.0 mL $\times$ 3), filtered and dried over anhydrous Na_2SO_4 and concentrated in vacuo. The crude product was purified by column chromatography on silica gel with ethyl acetate/petroleum ether (1 / 10) to afford white solid 4-methoxybenzonitrile **2a** in 37% yield (9.8 mg).

(2)



An oven-dried 25 mL Schlenk tube, which was equipped with a magnetic stir bar and charged with CuCl (29.7 mg, 0.3 mmol), was evacuated and backfilled with oxygen three times. Then, CH_3CN (1.0 mL) and Anisaldehyde-[7- ^{13}C] (27.4 mg, 0.2 mmol) were added. The reaction mixture was stirred at 130 °C for 24 h and monitored by GC or GC-MS. After completion of the reaction, the resulting solution was cooled to room temperature, and washed with saturated NH_4Cl solution (10.0 mL). The product was extracted with CHCl_3 (5.0 mL $\times$ 3), filtered and dried over anhydrous Na_2SO_4 and concentrated in vacuo. The crude product was purified by column chromatography on silica gel with ethyl acetate / petroleum ether (1 / 10) to afford white solid 4-methoxybenzonitrile **2a- ^{13}C** in 39% yield (10.5 mg).

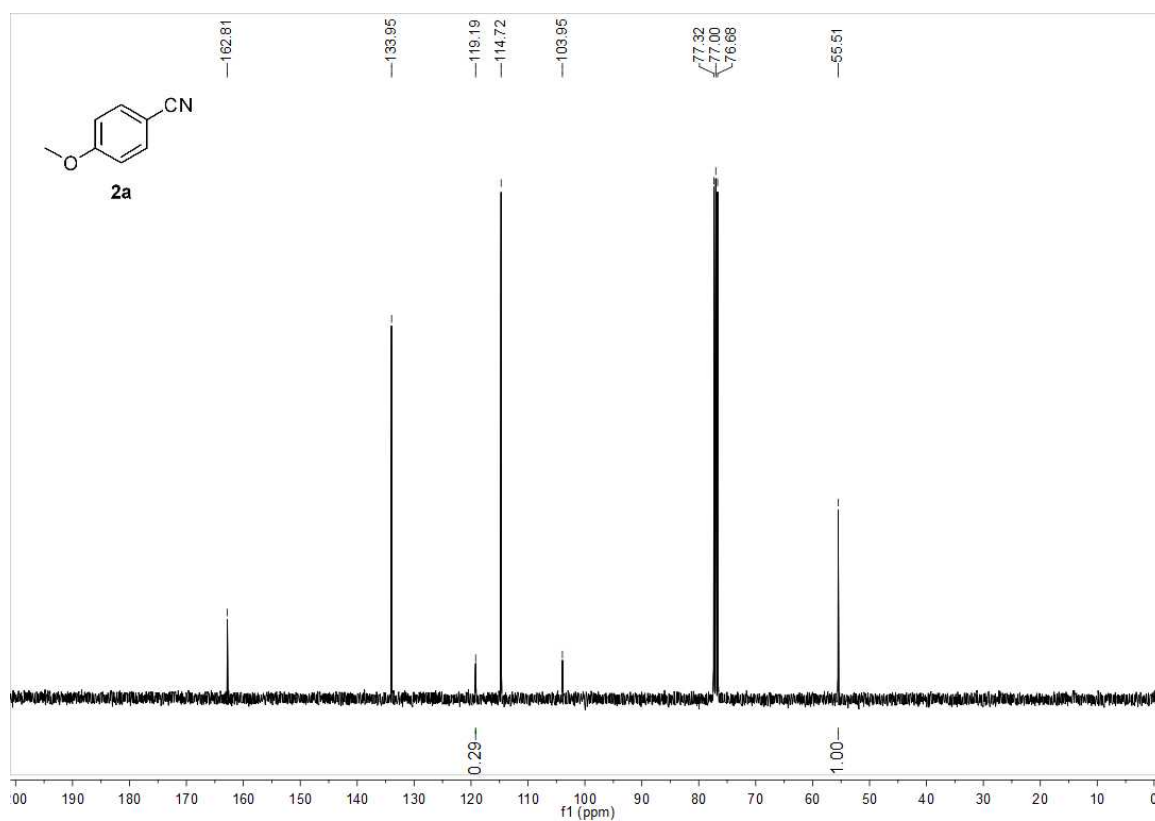


4-Methoxybenzonitrile- ^{13}C (^{13}C -2a): 98.5% of ^{13}C incorporation; **HRMS** (ESI+) exact mass calc'd for $(\text{C}_7^{13}\text{H}_7\text{NO})^+$ ($\text{M}+\text{H}$) $^+$ requires m/z : 134.0571, found m/z : 134.0559.

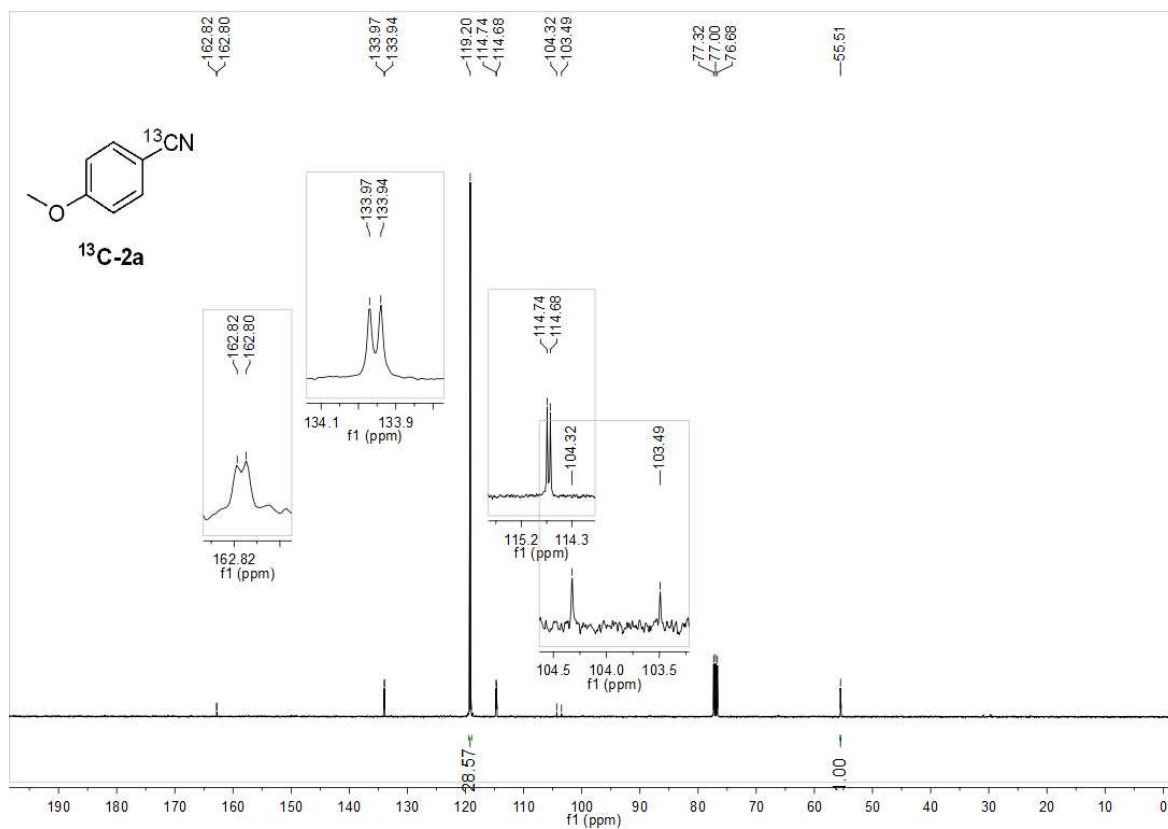
4-Methoxybenzonitrile (2a): Inverse gated decoupling ^{13}C NMR (100 MHz, CDCl_3): δ 55.5 (int. = 1.00), 119.1 ($-\text{C}\equiv\text{N}$, int. = 0.29)

4-Methoxybenzonitrile- ^{13}C (2a- ^{13}C): Inverse gated decoupling ^{13}C NMR (100 MHz, CDCl_3): δ 55.5 (int. = 1.00), 119.2 ($-\text{C}\equiv\text{N}$, int. = 28.57). (^{13}C incorporation: $28.57 / 0.29 = 98.5\%$).¹

Copies of ^{13}C NMR charts of 2a

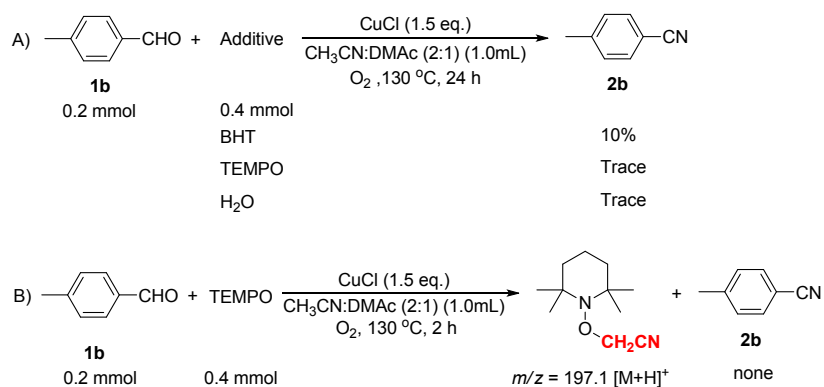


Copies of ^{13}C NMR charts of ^{13}C -2a

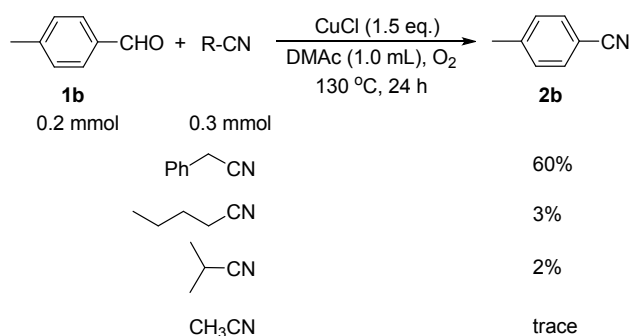


2. Control experiments

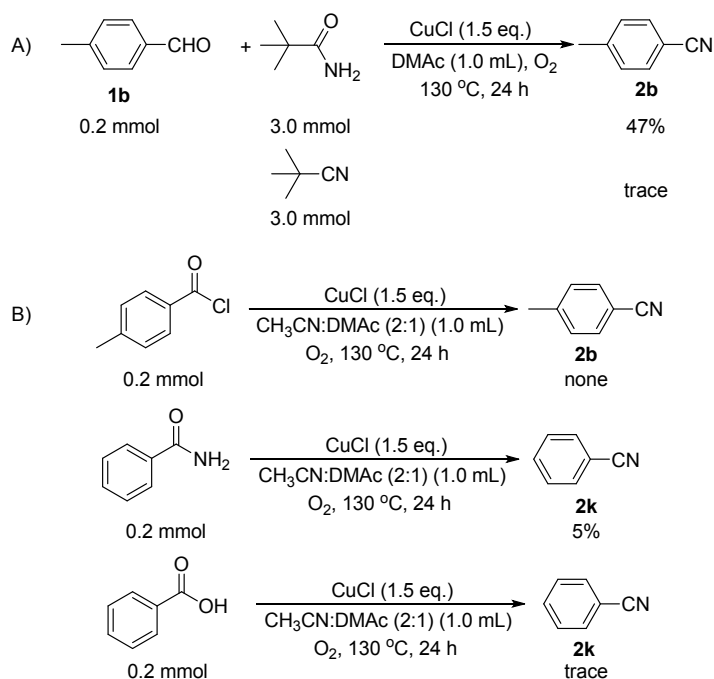
(1) The free-radical experiments



(2) Reactivities of nitriles

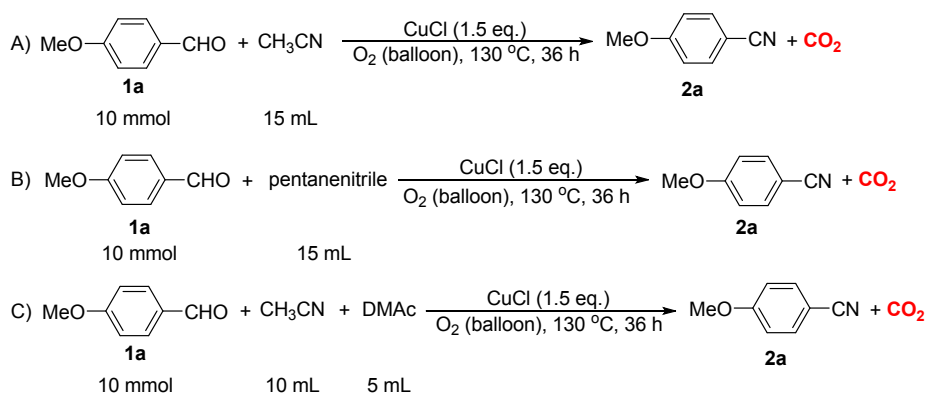


(3) Reactivities of other substrates



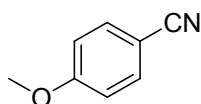
3. The capture of CO₂

The reactions were carried out under standard conditions with a large scale. After completion of the reactions, the reaction systems were contacted with lime-water, they became muddy immediately.



VI. ¹H and ¹³C NMR spectra data of the products

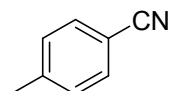
4-Methoxybenzonitrile (2a)²



White solid. ¹H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl₃): δ 7.58 (d, J = 9.0 Hz, 2H), 6.95 (d, J = 8.9 Hz, 2H), 3.86 (s, 3H).

¹³C NMR (100 MHz, CDCl₃): δ 162.8, 133.9, 119.1, 114.7, 103.9, 55.5.

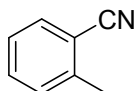
4-Methylbenzonitrile (2b)²



Yellow liquid. ¹H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl₃): δ 7.54 (d, J = 8.1 Hz, 2H), 7.27 (d, J = 6.8 Hz, 2H), 2.42 (s, 3H).

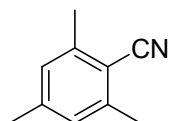
¹³C NMR (100 MHz, CDCl₃): δ 143.6, 132.0, 129.7, 119.1, 109.2, 21.8.

2-Methylbenzonitrile (2c)²



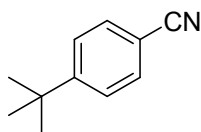
White liquid. ¹H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl₃): δ 7.61 (d, J = 7.8 Hz, 1H), 7.49 (t, J = 7.6 Hz, 1H), 7.33–7.27 (m, 2H), 2.56 (s, 3H). ¹³C NMR (100 MHz, CDCl₃): δ 141.9, 132.6, 132.4, 130.1, 126.1, 118.1, 112.7, 20.4.

2,4,6-Trimethylbenzonitrile (2d)²



White solid. ¹H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl₃): δ 6.93 (s, 2H), 2.48 (s, 6H), 2.32 (s, 3H). ¹³C NMR (100 MHz, CDCl₃): δ 142.7, 141.9, 128.1, 117.6, 110.2, 21.5, 20.6.

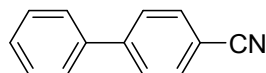
4-(*tert*-Butyl)benzonitrile (2e)²



Yellow liquid. ¹H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl₃): δ 7.59 (d, J = 8.4 Hz, 2H), 7.48 (d, J = 8.4 Hz, 2H), 1.32 (s, 9H).

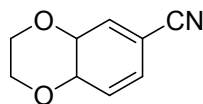
¹³C NMR (100 MHz, CDCl₃): δ 156.5, 131.9, 126.1, 119.1, 109.2, 35.2, 30.9.

4-Phenylbenzonitrile (2f)³



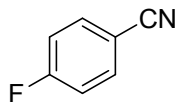
White solid. ¹H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl₃): δ 7.72 (d, J = 8.4 Hz, 2H), 7.68 (d, J = 8.4 Hz, 2H), 7.59 (d, J = 7.2 Hz, 2H), 7.50–7.41 (m, 3H). ¹³C NMR (100 MHz, CDCl₃): δ 145.5, 139.0, 132.5, 129.0, 128.5, 127.6, 127.1, 118.8, 110.8.

2,3-Dihydro-1,4-benzodioxine-6-carbonitrile (2g)⁴



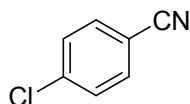
White solid. ^1H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl_3): δ 7.15–7.12 (m, 2H), 6.91 (d, $J = 8.4$ Hz, 1H), 4.32–4.27 (m, 4H). ^{13}C NMR (100 MHz, CDCl_3): δ 147.6, 143.7, 125.9, 121.2, 118.8, 118.2, 104.4, 64.5, 64.0.

4-Fluorobenzonitrile (2h)²



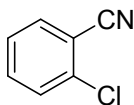
Yellow solid. ^1H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl_3): δ 7.70–7.65 (m, 2H), 7.20–7.14 (m, 2H). ^{13}C NMR (100 MHz, CDCl_3): δ 165.0 (d, $J_{\text{C-F}} = 256.7$ Hz), 134.6 (d, $J_{\text{C-F}} = 9.3$ Hz), 118.0, 116.8 (d, $J_{\text{C-F}} = 22.7$ Hz), 108.5 (d, $J_{\text{C-F}} = 3.7$ Hz).

4-Chlorobenzonitrile (2i)²



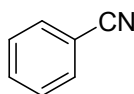
White solid. ^1H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl_3): δ 7.60 (d, $J = 8.5$ Hz, 2H), 7.46 (d, $J = 8.5$ Hz, 2H). ^{13}C NMR (100 MHz, CDCl_3): δ 139.5, 133.3, 129.6, 117.9, 110.7.

2-Chlorobenzonitrile (2j)⁵



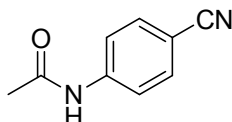
White solid. ^1H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl_3): δ 7.68 (dd, $J = 7.8, 1.3$ Hz, 1H), 7.57–7.50 (m, 2H), 7.39–7.35 (m, 1H). ^{13}C NMR (100 MHz, CDCl_3): δ 136.8, 133.9, 133.8, 130.0, 127.1, 115.9, 113.3.

Benzonitrile (2k)²

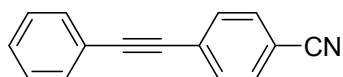


Colorless liquid. ^1H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl_3): δ 7.65–7.58 (m, 3H), 7.47 (t, $J = 7.7$ Hz, 2H). ^{13}C NMR (100 MHz, CDCl_3): δ 132.7, 132.0, 129.0, 118.7, 112.3.

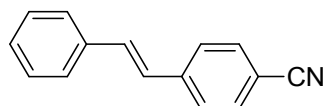
N-(4-cyanophenyl)acetamide (2l)^{1b}



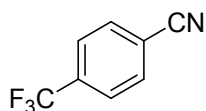
White solid. ^1H NMR (400 MHz, $\text{DMSO}-d_6$): δ 10.38 (s, 1H), 7.74 (s, 4H), 2.08 (s, 3H). ^{13}C NMR (100 MHz, $\text{DMSO}-d_6$): δ 169.1, 143.4, 133.2, 119.1, 118.9, 104.6, 24.2.

4-(Phenylethynyl)benzonitrile (2m)⁶

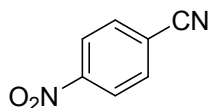
White solid. ¹H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl₃): δ 7.64 (d, J = 8.3 Hz, 2H), 7.60 (d, J = 8.4 Hz, 2H), 7.55-7.53 (m, 2H), 7.39–7.36 (m, 3H). ¹³C NMR (100 MHz, CDCl₃): δ 132.0, 132.0, 131.7, 129.1, 128.4, 128.2, 122.1, 118.5, 111.4, 93.7, 87.6.

(E)-4-styrylbenzonitrile (2n)⁷

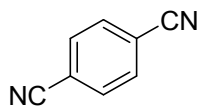
White solid. ¹H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl₃): δ 7.64 (d, J = 8.4 Hz, 2H), 7.59 (d, J = 8.4 Hz, 2H), 7.54 (d, J = 7.4 Hz, 2H), 7.39 (t, J = 7.5 Hz, 2H), 7.32 (t, J = 7.3 Hz, 1H), 7.22 (d, J = 16.3 Hz, 1H), 7.09 (d, J = 16.3 Hz, 1H). ¹³C NMR (100 MHz, CDCl₃): δ 141.8, 136.2, 132.4, 132.3, 128.8, 128.6, 126.8, 126.8, 126.6, 119.0, 110.5.

4-(Trifluoromethyl)benzonitrile (2o)⁵

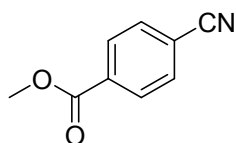
White solid. ¹H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl₃): δ 7.81 (d, J = 8.3 Hz, 2H), 7.76 (d, J = 8.4 Hz, 2H). ¹³C NMR (100 MHz, CDCl₃): δ 134.5 (d, J_{C-F} = 33.3 Hz), 132.6, 126.1 (q, J_{C-F} = 3.7 Hz), 123.0 (d, J_{C-F} = 272.9 Hz), 117.4, 116.0.

4-Nitrobenzonitrile (2p)²

White solid. ¹H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl₃): δ 8.36 (d, J = 8.8 Hz, 2H), 7.89 (d, J = 8.8 Hz, 2H). ¹³C NMR (100 MHz, CDCl₃): δ 133.4, 130.4, 124.2, 118.3, 116.7.

Terephthalonitrile (2q)²

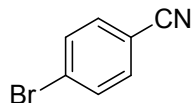
White solid. ¹H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl₃): δ 7.80 (s, 4H). ¹³C NMR (100 MHz, CDCl₃): δ 132.7, 116.9, 116.7.

Methyl 4-cyanobenzoate (2r)³

White solid. ¹H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl₃): δ 8.13 (d, J = 8.1 Hz, 2H), 7.74 (d, J = 8.2 Hz, 2H), 3.95 (s, 3H).

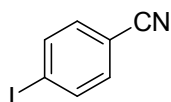
^{13}C NMR (100 MHz, CDCl_3): δ 165.3, 133.8, 132.1, 129.9, 117.8, 116.2, 52.6.

4-bromobenzonitrile (2s)²



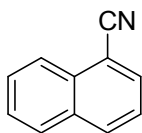
White solid. ^1H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl_3): δ 7.64 (d, J = 8.4 Hz, 2H), 7.53 (d, J = 8.4 Hz, 2H). ^{13}C NMR (100 MHz, CDCl_3): δ 133.3, 132.6, 128.0, 118.0, 111.2.

4-Iodobenzonitrile (2t)²



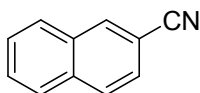
White solid. ^1H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl_3): δ 7.85 (d, J = 8.3 Hz, 2H), 7.37 (d, J = 8.3 Hz, 2H). ^{13}C NMR (100 MHz, CDCl_3): δ 138.4, 133.1, 118.2, 111.7, 100.3.

1-Naphthonitrile (2u)³



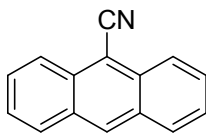
Colorless liquid. ^1H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl_3): δ 8.24 (d, J = 8.3 Hz, 1H), 8.08 (d, J = 8.3 Hz, 1H), 7.92 (dd, J = 7.4, 5.2 Hz, 2H), 7.70 (t, J = 7.2 Hz, 1H), 7.62 (t, J = 7.4 Hz, 1H), 7.53 (t, J = 7.8 Hz, 1H). ^{13}C NMR (100 MHz, CDCl_3): δ 133.2, 132.8, 132.6, 132.3, 128.6, 128.5, 127.5, 125.1, 124.8, 117.8, 110.1.

2-Naphthonitrile (2v)³



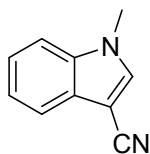
White solid. ^1H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl_3): δ 8.21 (s, 1H), 7.89 (t, J = 8.4 Hz, 3H), 7.66-7.58 (m, 3H). ^{13}C NMR (100 MHz, CDCl_3): δ 134.5, 134.0, 132.1, 129.1, 128.9, 128.3, 127.9, 127.5, 126.2, 119.1, 109.2.

Anthracene-9-carbonitrile (2w)³



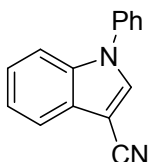
Yellow-green solid. ^1H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl_3): δ 8.67 (s, 1H), 8.42 (d, J = 8.7 Hz, 2H), 8.07 (d, J = 8.5 Hz, 2H), 7.73-7.69 (m, 2H), 7.60-7.56 (m, 2H). ^{13}C NMR (100 MHz, CDCl_3): δ 133.3, 132.7, 130.6, 128.9, 126.3, 125.2, 117.2, 105.4.

1-Methyl-1H-indole-3-carbonitrile (2x)⁸



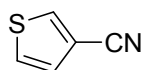
Yellow liquid. ^1H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl_3): δ 7.74 (d, $J = 7.9$ Hz, 1H), 7.53 (s, 1H), 7.39–7.27 (m, 3H), 3.83 (s, 3H). ^{13}C NMR (100 MHz, CDCl_3): δ 135.9, 135.5, 127.6, 123.7, 122.0, 119.7, 115.9, 110.2, 85.2, 33.5.

1-Phenyl-1H-indole-3-carbonitrile (2y)⁸



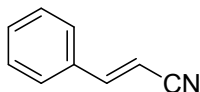
White solid. ^1H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl_3): δ 7.84–7.82 (m, 1H), 7.81 (s, 1H), 7.60–7.56 (m, 2H), 7.53–7.47 (m, 4H), 7.37–7.32 (m, 2H). ^{13}C NMR (100 MHz, CDCl_3): δ 137.7, 135.5, 134.6, 130.0, 128.3, 127.9, 124.8, 124.5, 122.7, 120.0, 115.5, 111.5, 88.0.

Thiophene-3-carbonitrile (2z)⁹



Pale yellow liquid. ^1H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl_3): δ 7.94 (dd, $J = 3.0, 1.0$ Hz, 1H), 7.43 (dd, $J = 5.1, 3.0$ Hz, 1H), 7.30 (dd, $J = 5.1, 1.0$ Hz, 1H). ^{13}C NMR (100 MHz, CDCl_3): δ 135.3, 128.6, 127.2, 115.0, 110.6.

Cinnamonitrile (2za)²



Yellow liquid. ^1H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl_3): δ 7.46–7.38 (m, 6H), 5.89 (d, $J = 16.7$ Hz, 1H). ^{13}C NMR (100 MHz, CDCl_3): δ 150.5, 133.4, 131.1, 129.0, 127.2, 118.1, 96.2.

VII. References

1. (a) J. Kim, S. Chang, *J. Am. Chem. Soc.* **2010**, *132*, 10272; (b) G. Zhang, X. Ren, J. Chen, M. Hu, J. Cheng, *Org. Lett.* **2011**, *13*, 5004; (c) S. Ding, N. Jiao, *J. Am. Chem. Soc.* **2011**, *133*, 12374.
2. B. Xu, Q. Jiang, A. Zhao, J. Jia, Q. Liu, W. Luo, C. Guo, *Chem. Commun.* **2015**, *51*, 11264.
3. Y. Luo, Q. Wen, Z. Wu, J. Jin, P. Lu, Y. Wang, *Tetrahedron* **2013**, *69*, 8400.
4. K. E. Torraca, S. I. Kuwabe, S. L. Buchwald, *J. Am. Chem. Soc.* **2000**, *122*, 12907.
5. J. Zhang, Z. Wang, Y. Wang, C. Wan, X. Zheng, Z. Wang, *Green Chem.* **2009**, *11*, 1973.
6. H. Kima, P. H. Leea, *Adv. Synth. Catal.* **2009**, *351*, 2827.
7. A. R. Siamaki, A. E. R. S. Khder, V. Abdelsayed, M. S. El-Shall, B. F. Gupton, *J. Catal.* **2011**, *279*, 1.
8. G. Yan, C. Kuang, Y. Zhang, J. Wang, *Org. Lett.* **2010**, *12*, 1052.
9. Z. Zhang, L. S. Liebeskind, *Org. Lett.* **2006**, *8*, 4331.

VIII. Copies of ^1H and ^{13}C NMR charts of the products

