

Catalyst-free transformation of levulinic acid into pyrrolidinones with formic acid

Yawen Wei,^a Chao Wang,^{*a} Xue Jiang,^a Dong Xue,^a Zhao-Tie Liu,^a and Jianliang Xiao^{*a,b}

^a Key Laboratory of Applied Surface and Colloid Chemistry, Ministry of Education, School of Chemistry & Chemical Engineering, Shaanxi Normal University, Xi'an, 710062, China

^b Department of Chemistry, University of Liverpool, Liverpool, L69 7ZD, UK

Contents

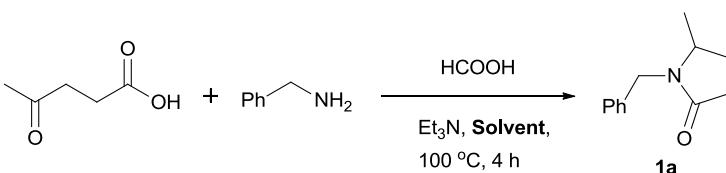
1. General information	S2
2. Effect of different solvents	S2
3. Effect of formic acid/triethylamine ratio on RA of LA in DMSO	S3
4. Deuterium labelling experiments	S3
5. Procedures for RA of LA	S3-S4
6. Analytic data of products	S5-S13
7. References	S13
8. Traces of ¹ H and ¹³ C NMR spectra of products	S14-S46

1. General information

Unless otherwise specified, the chemicals were obtained commercially and used without further purification. NMR spectra were recorded on a Bruker 400 Hz NMR spectrometer with TMS as the internal standard. HRMS data were recorded on a Bruker Apex IV FTMS spectrometer using ESI method and Bruker Maxis with EI method.

2. Effect of different solvents

Table S1 Effect of different solvents on RA of LA with benzylamine^a



Entry	Solvent	Conversion (%) ^b
1	DMSO	89
2	MeOH	NR
3	H ₂ O	NR
4	EtOH	NR
5	<i>i</i> -PrOH	NR
6	<i>n</i> -BuOH	NR
7	DCM	NR
8	DMF	<5
9	THF	9
10	Toluene	NR
11	1,4-dioxane	NR
12	acetone	NR
13	CH ₃ CN	12
14	Sulfolane	24
15	Tetramethylene sulfoxide	63

^a Reaction conditions: LA (1 mmol), amine (2 mmol), HCOOH (5 mmol), Et₃N (1 mmol), Solvent (3 mL), 100 °C. ^b Determined by ¹H NMR with 1,3,5-trimethoxybenzene as internal standard.

3. Effect of formic acid/triethylamine ratio on RA of LA in DMSO

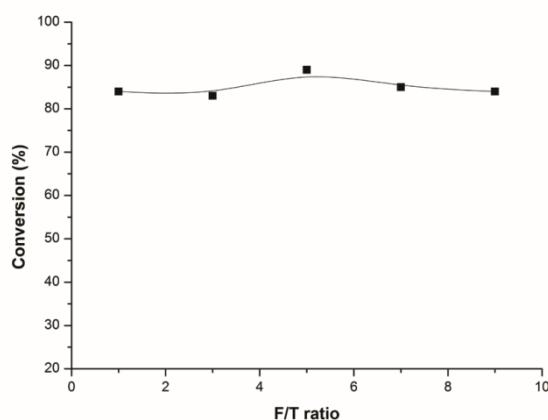
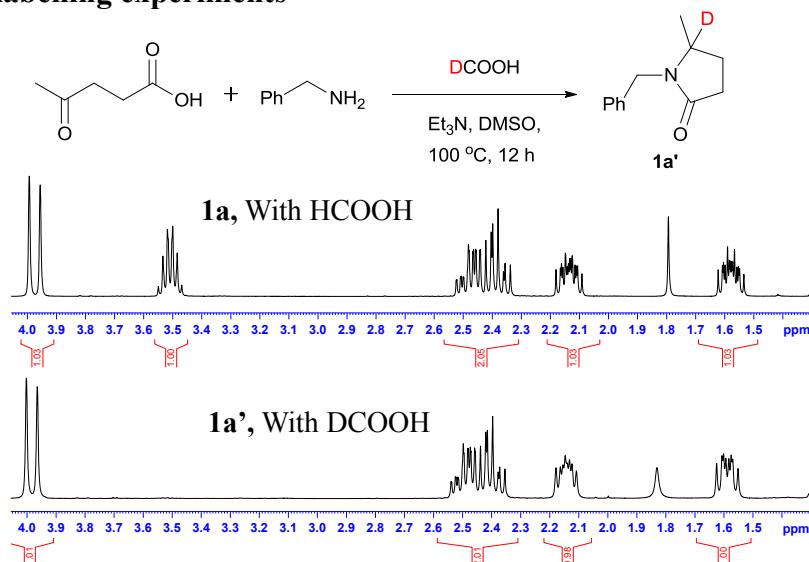


Figure S1 The effect of formic acid/triethylamine (F/T) ratio on RA of LA in DMSO. Reaction conditions: LA (1 mmol), benzylamine (2 mmol), DMSO (3 mL), HCOOH (5 mmol), 100 °C, 4 h. Conversions were determined by ¹H NMR with 1,3,5-trimethoxybenzene as internal standard.

4. Deuterium labelling experiments



Scheme S1 Deuterium labelling experiments for RA of LA with benzylamine. Reaction conditions: LA (1 mmol), benzylamine (2 mmol), DCOOH (5 mmol), Et₃N (1 mmol), DMSO (3 mL), 100 °C, 12 h.

5. Procedures for RA of LA

5.1 Typical procedure for screening reaction conditions

Benzylamine (2 mmol), levulinic acid (1 mmol), and a magnetic stir bar were placed in a pressure tube. To the mixture was injected solvent (3 ml), HCOOH (5 mmol), and NEt₃ (1

mmol). The mixture was bubbled with argon for 15 min, and then stirred at 100 °C for 4 h. After cooling to room temperature, the reaction mixture was basified with saturated NaOH solution and 1,3,5-trimethoxybenzene (0.1 mmol) was added as internal standard. The resulting mixture was extracted with DCM (5 x 3 mL) and the organic layers were washed with brine, and dried over Na₂SO₄. The organic solvent was removed under reduced pressure. The conversion was determined by ¹H NMR of the crude mixture.

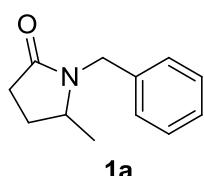
5.2 General procedure for RA of LA with aliphatic amines

Amine (2 mmol), levulinic acid (1 mmol), and a magnetic stir bar were placed in a pressure tube. To the mixture was injected DMSO (3 ml), HCOOH (5 mmol), and NEt₃ (1 mmol). The mixture was bubbled with argon for 15 min, and then stirred at 100 °C for 4 h. After cooling to room temperature, the reaction was basified with saturated NaOH solution and extracted with DCM (5 x 3 mL). The organic layers were washed with brine, and dried over Na₂SO₄. The organic solvent was removed under reduced pressure and the product was purified by flash chromatography using petroleum ether and ethyl acetate with 1% triethylamine as elute. Similar yield was obtained with freshly distilled DMSO and newly purchased reaction tube and stir bar.

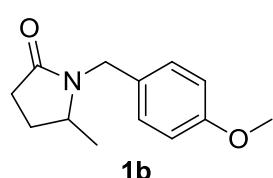
5.3 General procedure for RA of LA with aromatic amines

Amine (1.5 mmol), levulinic acid (1 mmol), and a magnetic stir bar were placed in a pressure tube. To the mixture was injected DMSO (3 ml), HCOOH (2.5 mmol), and NEt₃ (0.5 mmol). The mixture was bubbled with argon for 15 min, and then stirred at 100 °C for 3 h. After cooling to 0 °C, a portion of amine (0.5 mmol), HCOOH (0.8 mmol), and NEt₃ (0.17 mmol) were added and the resulting mixture was stirred at 100 °C for 3 h, which was repeated twice. After cooling to room temperature, the reaction was basified with saturated NaOH solution and extracted with DCM (5 x 3 mL). The organic layers were washed with brine, and dried over Na₂SO₄. The organic solvent was removed under reduced pressure and the product was purified by flash chromatography using petroleum ether and ethyl acetate with 1% triethylamine as elute.

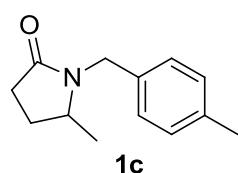
6. Analytic data of products



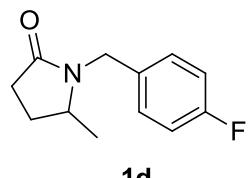
1-Benzyl-5-methylpyrrolidin-2-one **1a:**^[1] 161 mg, 87% yield; yellow oil; ¹H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl₃) δ (ppm): 7.32-7.21 (m, 5H), 4.95 (d, *J* = 15.2 Hz, 1H), 3.97 (d, *J* = 15.2 Hz, 1H), 3.51 (sextet, *J* = 6.2 Hz, 1H), 2.48-2.34 (m, 2H), 2.18-2.11 (m, 1H), 1.61-1.55 (m, 1H), 1.14 (d, *J* = 6.4 Hz, 3H); ¹³C NMR (100 MHz, CDCl₃) δ (ppm): 175.0, 136.8, 128.6, 128.0, 127.4, 52.9, 44.0, 30.3, 26.7, 19.6; HRMS (ESI) for C₁₂H₁₅NO [M+Na]⁺: calc.: 212.1051. Found: 212.1056.



1-(4-Methoxybenzyl)-5-methylpyrrolidin-2-one **1b:**^[1] 194 mg, 89% yield; yellow oil; ¹H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl₃) δ (ppm): 7.13 (d, *J* = 8.4 Hz, 2H), 6.81 (d, *J* = 8.8 Hz, 2H), 4.87 (d, *J* = 14.8 Hz, 1H), 3.99 (d, *J* = 14.8 Hz, 1H), 3.75 (s, 3H), 3.48 (sextet, *J* = 6.2 Hz, 1H), 2.50-2.31 (m, 2H), 2.15-2.06 (m, 1H), 1.59-1.50 (m, 1H), 1.13 (d, *J* = 6.2 Hz, 3H); ¹³C NMR (100 MHz, CDCl₃) δ (ppm): 174.9, 159.0, 129.3, 128.8, 114.0, 55.2, 52.7, 43.3, 30.2, 26.6, 19.6; HRMS (ESI) for C₁₃H₁₇NO₂ [M+Na]⁺: calc.: 242.1157. Found: 242.1164.

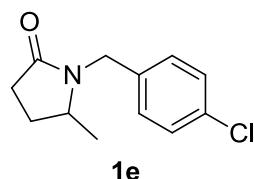


5-Methyl-1-(4-methylbenzyl)pyrrolidin-2-one **1c:** 184 mg, 91% yield; yellow oil; ¹H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl₃) δ (ppm): 7.11 (s, 4H), 4.92 (d, *J* = 14.8 Hz, 1H), 3.92 (d, *J* = 14.8 Hz, 1H), 3.50 (sextet, *J* = 6.4 Hz, 1H), 2.52-2.36 (m, 2H), 2.31 (s, 3H), 2.17-2.08 (m, 1H), 1.61-1.52 (m, 1H), 1.14 (d, *J* = 6.2 Hz, 3H); ¹³C NMR (100 MHz, CDCl₃) δ (ppm): 174.8, 137.0, 133.8, 129.2, 128.0, 52.7, 43.6, 30.3, 26.6, 21.1, 19.6; HRMS (ESI) for C₁₃H₁₇NO [M+Na]⁺: calc.: 226.1208. Found: 226.1207.



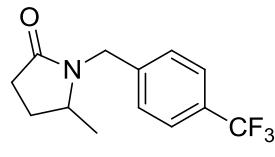
1-(4-Fluorobenzyl)-5-methylpyrrolidin-2-one **1d:**^[3] 185 mg, 89% yield; yellow oil; ¹H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl₃) δ (ppm): 7.22-7.19 (m, 2H), 6.99 (t, *J* = 8.6 Hz, 2H), 4.87 (d, *J* = 15.0 Hz, 1H), 3.98 (d, *J* = 15.0 Hz, 1H), 3.51 (sextet, *J* = 6.2 Hz, 1H), 2.53-2.34 (m, 2H),

2.19-2.10 (m, 1H), 1.64-1.55 (m, 1H), 1.15 (d, $J = 6.2$ Hz, 3H); ^{13}C NMR (100 MHz, CDCl_3) δ (ppm): 175.0, 162.2 (d, $^1J_{\text{C}-\text{F}} = 244.1$ Hz), 132.7 (d, $^4J_{\text{C}-\text{F}} = 3.7$ Hz), 129.6 (d, $^3J_{\text{C}-\text{F}} = 8.0$ Hz), 115.5 (d, $^2J_{\text{C}-\text{F}} = 21.4$ Hz), 53.0, 43.3, 30.2, 26.7, 19.6; HRMS (ESI) for $\text{C}_{12}\text{H}_{14}\text{FNO} [\text{M}+\text{Na}]^+$: calc.: 230.0957. Found: 230.0964.



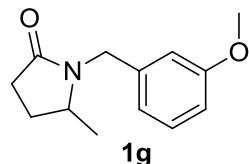
1e

1-(4-Chlorobenzyl)-5-methylpyrrolidin-2-one 1e: 198 mg, 88% yield; yellow oil; ^1H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl_3) δ (ppm): 7.26 (d, $J = 8.2$ Hz, 2H), 7.16 (d, $J = 8.2$ Hz, 2H), 4.84 (d, $J = 15.2$ Hz, 1H), 3.99 (d, $J = 15.2$ Hz, 1H), 3.50 (sextet, $J = 6.4$ Hz, 1H), 2.52-2.33 (m, 2H), 2.19-2.10 (m, 1H), 1.63-1.54 (m, 1H), 1.13 (d, $J = 6.2$ Hz, 3H); ^{13}C NMR (100 MHz, CDCl_3) δ (ppm): 175.1, 135.4, 135.3, 129.3, 128.8, 53.0, 43.4, 30.2, 26.7, 19.6; HRMS (ESI) for $\text{C}_{12}\text{H}_{14}\text{ClNO} [\text{M}+\text{Na}]^+$: calc.: 246.0662. Found: 246.0659.



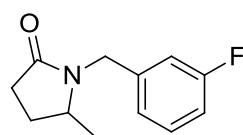
1f

5-Methyl-1-(4-(trifluoromethyl)benzyl)pyrrolidin-2-one 1f: 196 mg, 76% yield; yellow oil; ^1H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl_3) δ (ppm): 7.57 (d, $J = 8.0$ Hz, 2H), 7.35 (d, $J = 8.0$ Hz, 2H), 4.91 (d, $J = 15.2$ Hz, 1H), 4.11 (d, $J = 15.2$ Hz, 1H), 3.52 (sextet, $J = 6.4$ Hz, 1H), 2.54-2.36 (m, 2H), 2.22-2.14 (m, 1H), 1.66-1.57 (m, 1H), 1.15 (d, $J = 6.0$ Hz, 3H); ^{13}C NMR (100 MHz, CDCl_3) δ (ppm): 175.2, 141.1, 129.8 (q, $^2J_{\text{C}-\text{F}} = 32.0$ Hz), 128.2, 125.6 (q, $^3J_{\text{C}-\text{F}} = 3.6$ Hz), 124.1 (q, $^1J_{\text{C}-\text{F}} = 270.4$ Hz), 53.2, 43.7, 30.1, 26.7, 19.7; HRMS (ESI) for $\text{C}_{13}\text{H}_{14}\text{F}_3\text{NO} [\text{M}+\text{Na}]^+$: calc.: 280.0925. Found: 280.0924.



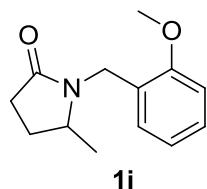
1g

1-(3-Methoxybenzyl)-5-methylpyrrolidin-2-one 1g:^[3] 194 mg, 89% yield; yellow oil; ^1H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl_3) δ (ppm): 7.22 (t, $J = 7.8$ Hz, 1H), 6.81-6.76 (m, 3H), 4.93 (d, $J = 15.2$ Hz, 1H), 3.95 (d, $J = 15.2$ Hz, 1H), 3.78 (s, 3H), 3.54 (sextet, $J = 6.4$ Hz, 1H), 2.54-2.36 (m, 2H), 2.19-2.10 (m, 1H), 1.63-1.54 (m, 1H), 1.16 (d, $J = 6.4$ Hz, 3H); ^{13}C NMR (100 MHz, CDCl_3) δ (ppm): 175.1, 159.9, 138.3, 129.6, 120.3, 113.7, 112.8, 55.2, 53.0, 43.9, 30.2, 26.6, 19.6; HRMS (ESI) for $\text{C}_{13}\text{H}_{17}\text{NO}_2 [\text{M}+\text{Na}]^+$: calc.: 242.1153. Found: 242.1162.



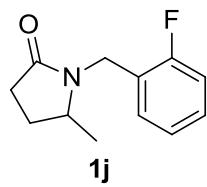
1h

1-(3-Fluorobenzyl)-5-methylpyrrolidin-2-one 1h: 153 mg, 74% yield; yellow oil; ^1H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl_3) δ (ppm): 7.29-7.24 (m, 1H), 7.00 (d, $J = 7.6$ Hz, 1H), 6.96-6.92 (m, 1H), 4.88 (d, $J = 15.2$ Hz, 1H), 4.02 (d, $J = 15.2$ Hz, 1H), 3.54 (sextet, $J = 6.4$ Hz, 1H), 2.54-2.37 (m, 2H), 2.22-2.13 (m, 1H), 1.65-1.56 (m, 1H), 1.15 (d, $J = 6.2$ Hz, 3H); ^{13}C NMR (100 MHz, CDCl_3) δ (ppm): 175.1, 163.0 (d, $^1J_{\text{C}-\text{F}} = 245.0$ Hz), 139.6 (d, $^3J_{\text{C}-\text{F}} = 7.0$ Hz), 130.1 (d, $^3J_{\text{C}-\text{F}} = 8.1$ Hz), 123.4 (d, $^4J_{\text{C}-\text{F}} = 2.8$ Hz), 114.7 (d, $^2J_{\text{C}-\text{F}} = 21.4$ Hz), 114.4 (d, $^2J_{\text{C}-\text{F}} = 21.0$ Hz), 53.1, 43.6 (d, $^4J_{\text{C}-\text{F}} = 4.3$ Hz), 30.1, 26.7, 19.6; HRMS (ESI) for $\text{C}_{12}\text{H}_{14}\text{FNO} [\text{M}+\text{Na}]^+$: calc.: 230.0957. Found: 230.0957.



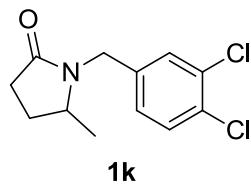
1i

1-(2-Methoxybenzyl)-5-methylpyrrolidin-2-one 1i:^[3] 199 mg, 91% yield; yellow oil; ^1H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl_3) δ (ppm): 7.24-7.17 (m, 2H), 6.91-6.83 (m, 2H), 4.80 (d, $J = 15.2$ Hz, 1H), 4.20 (d, $J = 15.2$ Hz, 1H), 3.81 (s, 3H), 3.53 (sextet, $J = 6.4$ Hz, 1H), 2.47-2.31 (m, 2H), 2.16-2.10 (m, 1H), 1.60-1.54 (m, 1H), 1.16 (d, $J = 6.4$ Hz, 3H); ^{13}C NMR (100 MHz, CDCl_3) δ (ppm): 175.0, 157.3, 129.5, 128.5, 124.9, 120.6, 110.3, 55.3, 53.4, 38.4, 30.3, 26.7, 19.6; HRMS (ESI) for $\text{C}_{13}\text{H}_{17}\text{NO}_2 [\text{M}+\text{Na}]^+$: calc.: 242.1157. Found: 242.1161.



1j

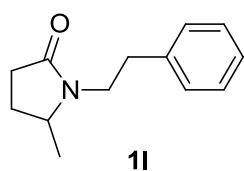
1-(2-Fluorobenzyl)-5-methylpyrrolidin-2-one 1j: 168 mg, 81% yield; yellow oil; ^1H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl_3) δ (ppm): 7.29 (d, $J = 7.6$ Hz, 1H), 7.25-7.21 (m, 1H), 7.08 (t, $J = 7.4$ Hz, 1H), 7.02 (t, $J = 9.2$ Hz, 1H), 4.85 (d, $J = 15.2$ Hz, 1H), 4.20 (d, $J = 15.2$ Hz, 1H), 3.54 (sextet, $J = 6.6$ Hz, 1H), 2.52-2.32 (m, 2H), 2.20-2.11 (m, 1H), 1.64-1.55 (m, 1H), 1.18 (d, $J = 6.2$ Hz, 3H); ^{13}C NMR (100 MHz, CDCl_3) δ (ppm): 175.2, 160.8 (d, $^1J_{\text{C}-\text{F}} = 244.4$ Hz), 130.5 (d, $^6J_{\text{C}-\text{F}} = 4.2$ Hz), 129.2 (d, $^4J_{\text{C}-\text{F}} = 8.1$ Hz), 124.4 (d, $^7J_{\text{C}-\text{F}} = 3.4$ Hz), 123.8 (d, $^3J_{\text{C}-\text{F}} = 14.7$ Hz), 115.3 (d, $^2J_{\text{C}-\text{F}} = 21.7$ Hz), 53.2, 37.2 (d, $^5J_{\text{C}-\text{F}} = 4.3$ Hz), 30.1, 26.7, 19.6; HRMS (ESI) for $\text{C}_{12}\text{H}_{14}\text{FNO} [\text{M}+\text{Na}]^+$: calc.: 230.0957. Found: 230.0958.



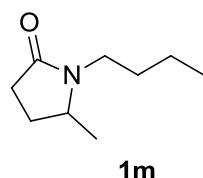
1k

1-(3,4-Dichlorobenzyl)-5-methylpyrrolidin-2-one 1k: 185 mg, 72% yield; yellow oil; ^1H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl_3) δ (ppm): 7.37 (d, $J = 8.4$ Hz, 1H), 7.31 (d, $J = 2.0$ Hz, 1H), 7.07 (dd, $J = 8.0, 2.0$ Hz, 1H), 4.79 (d, $J = 15.6$ Hz, 1H), 4.00 (d, $J = 15.2$ Hz, 1H), 3.52 (sextet, $J = 6.2$ Hz, 1H), 2.53-2.35 (m, 2H), 2.22-2.13 (m, 1H), 1.65-1.56 (m, 1H), 1.15 (d, $J = 6.2$ Hz, 3H);

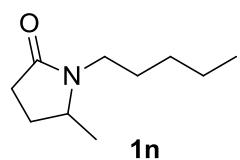
¹³C NMR (100 MHz, CDCl₃) δ (ppm): 175.2, 137.3, 132.7, 131.6, 130.6, 129.8, 127.3, 53.2, 43.1, 30.0, 26.7, 19.7; HRMS (ESI) for C₁₂H₁₃Cl₂NO [M+Na]⁺: calc.: 280.0272. Found: 280.0268.



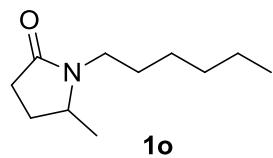
5-Methyl-1-phenethylpyrrolidin-2-one 1l: 175 mg, 86% yield; yellow oil; ¹H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl₃) δ (ppm): 7.30-7.27 (m, 2H), 7.22-7.18 (m, 3H), 3.82 (ddd, *J* = 13.8, 9.2, 6.2 Hz, 1H), 3.52 (sextet, *J* = 6.2 Hz, 1H), 3.14 (ddd, *J* = 14.2, 8.8, 6.2 Hz, 1H), 2.91-2.73 (m, 2H), 2.43-2.24 (m, 1H), 2.16-2.07 (m, 1H), 1.57-1.49 (m, 1H), 1.15 (d, *J* = 6.2 Hz, 3H); ¹³C NMR (100 MHz, CDCl₃) δ (ppm): 174.9, 138.9, 128.7, 128.5, 126.4, 53.9, 41.8, 33.9, 30.2, 26.8, 19.7; HRMS (ESI) for C₁₃H₁₇NO [M+Na]⁺: calc.: 226.1208. Found: 226.1204.



1-Butyl-5-methylpyrrolidin-2-one 1m: 134 mg, 86% yield; Yellow oil; ¹H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl₃) δ (ppm): 3.64 (sextet, *J* = 6.2 Hz, 1H), 3.53 (ddd, *J* = 13.8, 9.0, 7.0 Hz, 1H), 2.86 (ddd, *J* = 13.8, 8.6, 5.2 Hz, 1H), 2.40-2.23 (m, 2H), 2.17-2.08 (m, 1H), 1.56-1.34 (m, 3H), 1.30-1.20 (m, 2H), 1.15 (d, *J* = 6.2 Hz, 3H), 0.87 (t, *J* = 7.2 Hz, 3H); ¹³C NMR (100 MHz, CDCl₃) δ (ppm): 174.9, 53.6, 40.0, 30.2, 29.5, 26.8, 20.2, 19.7, 13.7; HRMS (ESI) for C₉H₁₇NO [M+Na]⁺: calc.: 178.1208. Found: 178.1203.

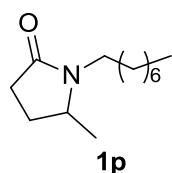


5-Methyl-1-pentylpyrrolidin-2-one 1n: 152 mg, 90% yield; yellow oil; ¹H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl₃) δ (ppm): 3.68 (sextet, *J* = 6.2 Hz, 1H), 3.56 (ddd, *J* = 13.8, 9.0, 7.0 Hz, 1H), 2.90 (ddd, *J* = 13.8, 8.8, 5.2 Hz, 1H), 2.46-2.29 (m, 2H), 2.21-2.12 (m, 1H), 1.60-1.38 (m, 3H), 1.34-1.21 (m, 4H), 1.18 (d, *J* = 6.4 Hz, 3H), 0.86 (t, *J* = 7.0 Hz, 3H); ¹³C NMR (100 MHz, CDCl₃) δ (ppm): 174.8, 53.4, 40.1, 30.3, 29.1, 27.0, 26.8, 22.3, 19.7, 13.9; HRMS (ESI) for C₁₀H₁₉NO [M+Na]⁺: calc.: 192.1364. Found: 192.1361.

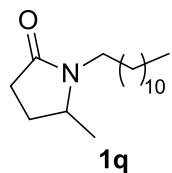


1-Hexyl-5-methylpyrrolidin-2-one 1o:^[3] 170 mg, 93% yield; yellow oil; ¹H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl₃) δ (ppm): 3.65 (sextet, *J* = 6.4 Hz, 1H), 3.55 (ddd, *J* = 13.8, 9.0, 7.0 Hz, 1H), 2.88 (ddd, *J* = 13.8, 9.0, 5.0 Hz, 1H), 2.41-2.24 (m, 2H), 2.19-2.10 (m, 1H), 1.58-1.37 (m,

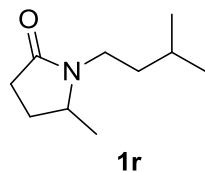
3H), 1.25 (s, 6H), 1.17 (d, $J = 6.4$ Hz, 3H), 0.84 (t, $J = 6.4$ Hz, 3H); ^{13}C NMR (100 MHz, CDCl_3) δ (ppm): 174.8, 53.5, 40.2, 31.5, 30.3, 27.4, 26.8, 26.6, 22.5, 19.7, 13.9; HRMS (ESI) for $\text{C}_{11}\text{H}_{21}\text{NO} [\text{M}+\text{N a}]^+$: calc.: 206.1521. Found: 206.1517.



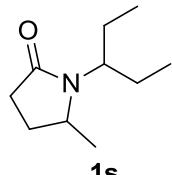
1-Octyl-5-methylpyrrolidin-2-one 1p:^[3] 197 mg, 93% yield; yellow oil; ^1H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl_3) δ (ppm): 3.66 (sextet, $J = 6.2$ Hz, 1H), 3.55 (ddd, $J = 13.8, 9.0, 7.0$ Hz, 1H), 2.88 (ddd, $J = 13.8, 9.0, 5.0$ Hz, 1H), 2.44-2.27 (m, 2H), 2.20-2.11 (m, 1H), 1.59-1.46 (m, 2H), 1.44-1.36 (m, 1H), 1.26-1.24 (m, 10H), 1.18 (d, $J = 6.2$ Hz, 3H), 0.86-0.83 (m, 3H); ^{13}C NMR (100 MHz, CDCl_3) δ (ppm): 174.6, 53.2, 40.0, 31.7, 30.3, 29.3, 29.1, 27.4, 27.0, 26.8, 22.6, 19.7, 14.0; HRMS (ESI) for $\text{C}_{13}\text{H}_{25}\text{NO} [\text{M}+\text{Na}]^+$: calc.: 234.1834. Found: 234.1838.



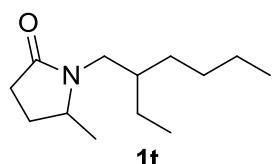
1-Dodecyl-5-methylpyrrolidin-2-one 1q:^[3] 234 mg; 88% yield; yellow oil; ^1H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl_3) δ (ppm): 3.67 (sextet, $J = 6.4$ Hz, 1H), 3.56 (ddd, $J = 13.8, 9.2, 7.0$ Hz, 1H), 2.89 (ddd, $J = 13.8, 9.0, 5.0$ Hz, 1H), 2.43-2.26 (m, 2H), 2.20-2.11 (m, 1H), 1.59-1.48 (m, 2H), 1.45-1.39 (m, 1H), 1.21 (s, 18H), 1.18 (d, $J = 6.2$ Hz, 3H), 0.88-0.84 (m, 3H); ^{13}C NMR (100 MHz, CDCl_3) δ (ppm): 174.8, 53.4, 40.2, 31.9, 30.3, 29.59, 29.58, 29.54, 29.51, 29.31, 29.29, 27.4, 27.0, 26.9, 22.6, 19.7, 14.0; HRMS (ESI) for $\text{C}_{17}\text{H}_{33}\text{NO} [\text{M}+\text{Na}]^+$: calc.: 290.2460. Found: 290.2465.



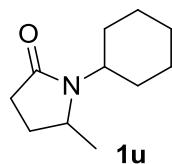
1-Isopentyl-5-methylpyrrolidin-2-one 1r: 137 mg, 77% yield; yellow oil; ^1H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl_3) δ (ppm): 3.70-3.56 (m, 2H), 2.89 (ddd, $J = 14.2, 9.2, 5.2$ Hz, 1H), 2.43-2.25 (m, 2H), 2.19-2.10 (m, 1H), 1.59-1.48 (m, 2H), 1.42-1.27 (m, 1H), 1.18 (d, $J = 6.2$ Hz, 3H), 0.90 (d, $J = 6.6$ Hz, 3H); ^{13}C NMR (100 MHz, CDCl_3) δ (ppm): 174.6, 53.2, 38.4, 36.1, 30.3, 26.8, 26.1, 22.6, 22.2, 19.7; HRMS (ESI) for $\text{C}_{10}\text{H}_{19}\text{NO} [\text{M}+\text{Na}]^+$: calc.: 192.1364. Found: 192.1356.



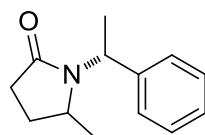
5-Methyl-1-(pentan-3-yl)pyrrolidin-2-one 1s: 148 mg, 87% yield; yellow oil; ^1H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl_3) δ (ppm): 3.72-3.57 (m, 2H), 2.51-2.42 (m, 1H), 2.33-2.25 (m, 1H), 2.19-2.10 (m, 1H), 1.69-1.48 (m, 5H), 1.22 (d, $J = 6.4$ Hz, 3H), 0.89 (t, $J = 7.4$ Hz, 3H), 0.82 (t, $J = 7.4$ Hz, 3H); ^{13}C NMR (100 MHz, CDCl_3) δ (ppm): 175.6, 56.6, 53.3, 30.4, 27.7, 27.2, 24.6, 21.8, 11.42, 11.37; HRMS (ESI) for $\text{C}_{10}\text{H}_{19}\text{NO} [\text{M}+\text{Na}]^+$: calc.: 192.1364. Found: 192.1360.



1-(2-Ethylhexyl)-5-methylpyrrolidin-2-one 1t: mixture of isomers; 193 mg, 91% yield; yellow oil; ^1H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl_3) δ (ppm): 3.59 (sextet, $J = 6.4$ Hz, 1H), 3.52-3.43 (m, 1H), 2.77-2.70 (m, 1H), 2.39-2.23 (m, 2H), 2.16-2.07 (m, 1H), 1.56-1.47 (m, 2H), 1.32-1.16 (m, 6H), 1.13 (d, $J = 6.2$ Hz, 3H), 0.86-0.77 (m, 3H); ^{13}C NMR (100 MHz, CDCl_3) δ (ppm): 174.8, 174.7, 52.2, 51.9, 43.4, 43.2, 36.9, 36.6, 30.7, 30.4, 30.2, 28.9, 28.4, 26.71, 26.68, 24.2, 23.5, 23.0, 19.41, 19.36, 13.9, 10.9, 10.2; HRMS (ESI) for $\text{C}_{13}\text{H}_{25}\text{NO} [\text{M}+\text{Na}]^+$: calc.: 234.1834. Found: 234.1830.

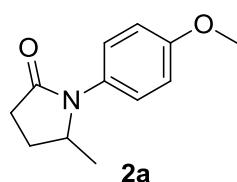


1-Cyclohexyl-5-methylpyrrolidin-2-one 1u: 162 mg, 85% yield; yellow oil; ^1H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl_3) δ (ppm): 3.80-3.65 (m, 2H), 2.49-2.41 (m, 1H), 2.30-2.22 (m, 1H), 2.16-2.06 (m, 1H), 1.82-1.69 (m, 3H), 1.67-1.42 (m, 5H), 1.39-1.25 (m, 2H), 1.22 (d, $J = 6.2$ Hz, 3H), 1.16-1.04 (m, 1H); ^{13}C NMR (100 MHz, CDCl_3) δ (ppm): 174.5, 53.0, 52.6, 31.8, 30.3, 30.1, 27.5, 26.0, 25.9, 25.6, 22.3; HRMS (ESI) for $\text{C}_{11}\text{H}_{19}\text{NO} [\text{M}+\text{Na}]^+$: calc.: 204.1364. Found: 204.1359.

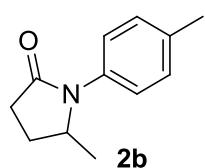


1v

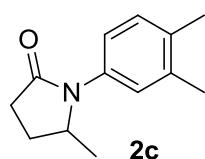
5-Methyl-1-(phenylethyl)pyrrolidin-2-one 1v: mixture of isomers; 178 mg, 88% yield; yellow oil; ^1H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl_3) δ (ppm): 7.38-7.22 (m, 12.5H), 5.47-5.38 (m, 2.5H), 3.85-3.78 (m, 1H), 3.41-3.33 (m, 1.5H), 2.55-2.46 (m, 2.6H), 2.38-2.29 (m, 3H), 2.19-2.10 (m, 1H), 2.08-1.98 (m, 1.5H), 1.64-1.60 (m, 8H), 1.57-1.49 (m, 2.5H), 1.14 (d, $J = 6.2$ Hz, 4.5H), 0.76 (d, $J = 6.2$ Hz, 3H); ^{13}C NMR (100 MHz, CDCl_3) δ (ppm): 175.0, 174.9, 142.2, 139.8, 128.4, 128.2, 127.4, 127.1, 127.0, 52.8, 52.6, 50.2, 49.1, 30.3, 30.2, 27.5, 27.4, 22.2, 21.4, 18.3, 16.1; HRMS (ESI) for $\text{C}_{13}\text{H}_{17}\text{NO} [\text{M}+\text{Na}]^+$: calc.: 226.1208. Found: 226.1205.



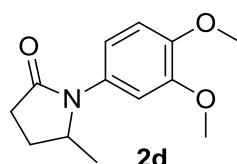
1-(4-Methoxyphenyl)-5-methylpyrrolidin-2-one 2a:^[1] 143 mg, 70% yield; white solid; mp. = 59~60 °C; ¹H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl₃) δ (ppm): 7.22 (d, *J* = 8.9 Hz, 2H), 6.91 (d, *J* = 8.9 Hz, 2H), 4.17 (sextet, *J* = 6.4 Hz, 1H), 3.79 (s, 3H), 2.64-2.47 (m, 2H), 2.40-2.31 (m, 1H), 1.77-1.72 (m, 1H), 1.17 (d, *J* = 6.0 Hz, 3H); ¹³C NMR (100 MHz, CDCl₃) δ (ppm) 174.3, 157.7, 130.4, 126.1, 114.4, 56.1, 55.4, 31.1, 26.8, 20.3; HRMS (ESI) for C₁₂H₁₅NO₂ [M+Na]⁺: calc.: 228.1000. Found: 228.1005.



5-methyl-1-p-tolylpyrrolidin-2-one 2b:^[1] 83 mg, 44% yield; white solid; mp. = 75~76 °C; ¹H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl₃) δ (ppm): 7.23 (d, *J* = 8.4 Hz, 2H), 7.18 (d, *J* = 8.4 Hz, 2H), 4.24 (sextet, *J* = 6.0 Hz, 1H), 2.66-2.48 (m, 2H), 2.40-2.34 (m, 4H), 1.78-1.71 (m, 1H), 1.19 (d, *J* = 6.0 Hz, 3H); ¹³C NMR (100 MHz, CDCl₃) δ (ppm): 174.2, 135.6, 135.0, 129.6, 124.2, 55.8, 31.3, 26.8, 21.0, 20.2; HRMS (ESI) for C₁₂H₁₅NO [M+Na]⁺: calc.: 212.1051. Found: 212.1052.

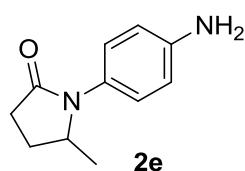


1-(3, 4-Dimethylphenyl)-5-methylpyrrolidin-2-one 2c: 153 mg, 75% yield; white solid; mp. = 85~87 °C; ¹H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl₃) δ (ppm): 7.14-7.11 (m, 2H), 7.02 (dd, *J* = 8.0, 2.0 Hz, 1H), 4.21 (td, *J* = 7.2, 6.0 Hz, 1H), 2.65-2.47 (m, 2H), 2.39-2.32 (m, 1H), 2.26 (s, 3H), 2.23(s, 3H), 1.77-1.68 (m, 1H), 1.18 (d, *J* = 6.4 Hz, 3H); ¹³C NMR (100 MHz, CDCl₃) δ (ppm): 174.2, 137.3, 135.2, 134.5, 130.1, 125.9, 121.9, 55.9, 31.3, 26.9, 20.3, 19.9, 19.3; HRMS (ESI) for C₁₃H₁₇NO [M+Na]⁺: calc.: 226.1208. Found: 226.1212.

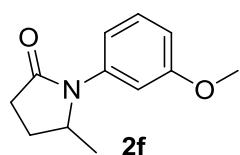


1-(3,4-Dimethoxyphenyl)-5-methylpyrrolidin-2-one 2d: 167 mg, 71% yield; yellow oil; ¹H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl₃) δ (ppm): 6.97 (d, *J* = 2.2 Hz, 1H), 6.86 (d, *J* = 8.6 Hz, 1H), 6.77 (dd, *J* = 8.6, 2.4 Hz, 1H), 4.18 (sextet, *J* = 6.2 Hz, 1H), 3.87 (s, 3H), 3.86 (s, 3H), 2.65-2.48 (m, 2H), 2.40-2.31 (m, 1H), 1.78-1.69 (m, 1H), 1.18 (d, *J* = 6.2 Hz, 3H); ¹³C NMR (100 MHz,

CDCl_3) δ (ppm): 174.3, 149.2, 147.3, 130.8, 116.7, 111.2, 109.0, 56.2, 56.0, 55.9, 31.2, 26.8, 20.3; HRMS (ESI) for $\text{C}_{13}\text{H}_{17}\text{NO}_3$ $[\text{M}+\text{Na}]^+$: calc.: 258.1106. Found: 258.1102.



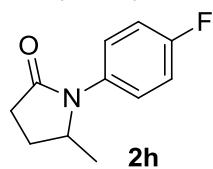
1-(4-Aminophenyl)-5-methylpyrrolidin-2-one 2e: 104 mg, 55% yield; grayish purple solid; mp. = 112~113 °C; ^1H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl_3) δ (ppm): 7.04 (d, J = 8.6 Hz, 2H), 6.66 (d, J = 8.6 Hz, 2H), 4.10 (sextet, J = 6.2 Hz, 1H), 3.69 (brs, 2H), 2.61-2.44 (m, 2H), 2.36-2.28 (m, 1H), 1.74-1.65 (m, 1H), 1.14 (d, J = 6.2 Hz, 3H); ^{13}C NMR (100 MHz, CDCl_3) δ (ppm): 174.3, 144.9, 128.5, 126.3, 115.5, 56.3, 31.1, 26.9, 20.3; HRMS (ESI) for $\text{C}_{11}\text{H}_{14}\text{N}_2\text{O}$ $[\text{M}+\text{Na}]^+$: calc.: 213.1004. Found: 213.0999.



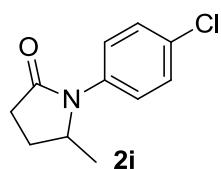
1-(3-Methoxyphenyl)-5-methylpyrrolidin-2-one 2f: 53 mg, 26% yield; yellow oil; ^1H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl_3) δ (ppm): 7.28 (d, J = 8.0 Hz, 1H), 7.03-7.02 (m, 1H), 6.93 (d, J = 8.6 Hz, 1H), 6.75 (dd, J = 8.2, 2.4 Hz, 1H), 4.27 (sextet, J = 6.4 Hz, 1H), 3.80 (s, 3H), 2.67-2.48 (m, 2H), 2.40-2.31 (m, 1H), 1.78-1.70 (m, 1H), 1.21 (d, J = 6.2 Hz, 3H); ^{13}C NMR (100 MHz, CDCl_3) δ (ppm): 174.2, 160.1, 138.8, 129.6, 116.0, 111.3, 110.1, 55.7, 55.3, 31.4, 26.7, 20.1; HRMS (ESI) for $\text{C}_{12}\text{H}_{15}\text{NO}_2$ $[\text{M}+\text{Na}]^+$: calc.: 228.1000. Found: 228.1005.



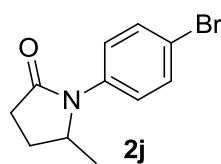
5-Methyl-1-phenylpyrrolidin-2-one 2g:^[1] 59 mg, 34% yield; white solid; mp. = 49~50 °C; ^1H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl_3) δ (ppm): 7.37-7.34 (m, 4H), 7.20-7.18 (m, 1H), 4.28 (sextet, J = 6.4 Hz, 1H), 2.67-2.48 (m, 2H), 2.40-2.31 (m, 1H), 1.78-1.72 (m, 1H), 1.19 (d, J = 6.0 Hz, 3H); ^{13}C NMR (100 MHz, CDCl_3) δ (ppm): 174.2, 137.6, 129.0, 125.7, 124.0, 55.6, 31.3, 26.8, 20.2; HRMS (ESI) for $\text{C}_{11}\text{H}_{13}\text{NO}$ $[\text{M}+\text{Na}]^+$: calc.: 198.0895. Found: 198.0894.



1-(4-Fluorophenyl)-5-methylpyrrolidin-2-one 2h:^[1] 54 mg, 28% yield; white solid; mp. = 74~75 °C; ^1H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl_3) δ (ppm): 7.33-7.30 (m, 2H), 7.10-7.06 (m, 2H), 4.23 (sextet, J = 6.4 Hz, 1H), 2.67-2.49 (m, 2H), 2.42-2.33 (m, 1H), 1.80-1.73 (m, 1H), 1.19 (d, J = 6.0 Hz, 3H); ^{13}C NMR (100 MHz, CDCl_3) δ (ppm): 174.2, 160.4 (d, $^1J_{\text{C}-\text{F}} = 243.8$ Hz), 133.6 (d, $^4J_{\text{C}-\text{F}} = 3.0$ Hz), 126.0 (d, $^3J_{\text{C}-\text{F}} = 8.1$ Hz), 115.8 (d, $^2J_{\text{C}-\text{F}} = 22.4$ Hz), 55.8, 31.1, 26.8, 20.1; HRMS (ESI) for $\text{C}_{11}\text{H}_{12}\text{FNO}$ $[\text{M}+\text{Na}]^+$: calc.: 216.0800. Found: 216.0802.



1-(4-Chlorophenyl)-5-methylpyrrolidin-2-one 2i:^[2] 27 mg, 13% yield; yellow oil; ¹H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl₃) δ (ppm): 7.33 (s, 4H), 4.26 (sextet, *J* = 6.4 Hz, 1H), 2.67-2.47 (m, 2H), 2.40-2.31 (m, 1H), 1.79-1.74 (m, 1H), 1.19 (d, *J* = 6.2 Hz, 3H); ¹³C NMR (100 MHz, CDCl₃) δ (ppm): 174.2, 136.2, 130.9, 129.0, 124.9, 55.4, 31.2, 26.6, 20.0; HRMS (ESI) for C₁₁H₁₂ClNO [M+Na]⁺: calc.: 232.0505. Found: 232.0511.



1-(4-Bromophenyl)-5-methylpyrrolidin-2-one 2j: 21 mg, 8% yield; yellow oil; ¹H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl₃) δ (ppm): 7.49 (d, *J* = 8.8 Hz, 1H), 7.28 (d, *J* = 8.8 Hz, 1H), 4.27 (sextet, *J* = 6.4 Hz, 1H), 2.67-2.47 (m, 2H), 2.40-2.32 (m, 1H), 1.79-1.74 (m, 1H), 1.20 (d, *J* = 6.0 Hz, 3H); ¹³C NMR (100 MHz, CDCl₃) δ (ppm): 174.1, 136.7, 132.0, 125.2, 118.6, 55.3, 31.2, 26.6, 20.0; HRMS (ESI) for C₁₁H₁₂BrNO [M+Na]⁺: calc.: 276.0000. Found: 276.0006.



5-Methyl-1-(4-(trifluoromethoxy)phenyl)pyrrolidin-2-one 2k: 67 mg, 23% yield; yellow oil; ¹H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl₃) δ (ppm): 7.42 (d, *J* = 9.2 Hz, 2H), 7.22 (d, *J* = 8.8 Hz, 2H), 4.28 (sextet, *J* = 6.4 Hz, 1H), 2.68-2.48 (m, 2H), 2.41-2.32 (m, 1H), 1.80-1.75 (m, 1H), 1.21 (d, *J* = 6.0 Hz, 3H); ¹³C NMR (100 MHz, CDCl₃) δ (ppm): 174.2, 146.3, 136.2, 124.9, 121.5, 120.4 (q, *J*_{C-F} = 255.6 Hz), 55.5, 31.2, 26.6, 20.0; HRMS (ESI) for C₁₂H₁₃F₃NO₂ [M+Na]⁺: calc.: 282.0718. Found: 282.0727.

7. References

1. Yao-Bing Huang, Jian-Jun Dai, Xiao-Jian Deng, Yan-Chao Qu, Qing-Xiang Guo, and Yao Fu, *Chemsuschem* **2011**, *4*, 1578-1581.
2. Xian-Long Du, Lin He, She Zhao, Yong-Mei Liu, Yong Cao, He-Yong He, and Kang-Nian Fan, *Angew. Chem. Int. Ed.* **2011**, *50*, 7815-7818.
3. Ya-Wen Wei, Chao Wang, Xue Jiang, Jia Li, Dong Xue, and Jian-Liang Xiao, *Chem. Commun.* **2013**, *49*, 5408-5410.

8. Traces of ^1H and ^{13}C NMR spectra of products

