# **Supporting Information**

# Homocoupling of Hetroaryl/Aryl/Alkyl Grignard Reagents: I2-

## Promoted, or Ni- or Pd- or Cu- or Nano-Fe-based salt catalyzed

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#### 1. General

All reagents were purchased from commercial sources and used without further purification, unless otherwise indicated. Deuterated solvents were purchased from Aldrich. Solvents were distilled over Na, or NaH, or CaH, respectively before use. Phenylmagnesium bromide (1.0 mol/mL in THF), p-tolylmagnesium bromide (1.0 mol/mL in THF), 4-anisylmagnesium bromide (1.0 mol/mL in THF), 3-fluorophenylmagnesium bromide (1.0 mol/mL in THF), 4fluorophenylmagnesium bromide (1.0 mol/mL in THF), phenylmagnesium chloride (1.0 mol/mL in THF), and p-tolylmagnesium chloride (1.0 mol/mL in THF) were also purchased from Sigma-Aldrich. o-tolylmagnesium bromide (1.0 mol/mL in THF), m-tolylmagnesium bromide (1.0 mol/mL in THF), 2-thienylmagnesium bromide (1.0 mol/mL in THF), and *m*-tolylmagnesium chloride (2.0 mol/mL in THF) were purchased from Energy Chemical. 2-pyridinemagnesium bromide (1.0 mol/mL in THF) and 3-pyridinemagnesium bromide (1.0 mol/mL in THF) were prepared according to the general procedure by us. Column chromatography was performed on silica gel (200-300 mesh) with petroleum ether (solvent A)/ethyl acetate (solvent B) gradients, unless otherwise specified. All yields were referred to isolated yields (average of two runs) of compounds. The known compounds were partly characterized by melting points (for solid samples), <sup>1</sup>H NMR, and compared to authentic samples or the literature data. Melting points were measured with a RD-II digital melting point apparatus and are uncorrected. <sup>1</sup>H NMR data were acquired at 300 K on a Bruker Advance 600 MHz spectrometer or Avarian Inova 500 MHz spectrometer using CDCl<sub>3</sub> as solvent. Chemical shifts are reported in ppm from tetramethylsilane with the solvent resonance as the internal standard ( $CDCl_3 = 7.26$ ). Spectra are reported as follows: chemical shift ( $\delta$  = ppm), multiplicity (s = singlet, d = doublet, t = triplet, q = quartet, m = multiplet), coupling constants (Hz), integration, and assignment.

### 2. Optimization of reaction conditions for other four reaction systems

#### 2.1 Optimization of reaction conditions for $Pd(OAc)_2$

In the study on the  $Pd(OAc)_2$ -catalyzed homo-coupling reaction using phenyl magnesium bromide as a model substrate under N<sub>2</sub> atmosphere, the exploration of several frequently-used anhydrous solvents in cross-coupling reactions such as toluene, THF, ethyl ether and CH<sub>2</sub>Cl<sub>2</sub> revealed that toluene was appropriate because of higher boiling point (Table 1, entry 7 *vs.* 2-5). Toluene provided lower yield at 25 °C (Table 1, entry 1 *vs.* 2-4). 75% yield was obtained when the temperature was increased to 100 °C (Table 1, entry 7). Several oxidants were then screened. It was found that inexpensive LiClO<sub>4</sub> was excellent oxidant for the homocoupling, giving biphenyl in 98% yield (Table 1, entry 8 *vs.* 9 and 10). Thus, in the presence of 10 mol% Pd(OAc)<sub>2</sub> and 1.0 equiv. of LiClO<sub>4</sub>, the homo-coupling was highly efficient in toluene at 100 °C for 15 h.

Table 1 Screening of reaction conditions on the homocoupling of PhMgBr with Pd(OAc)2<sup>[a]</sup>

	Entry	Solvent	Oxidant	T (°C)	Yield <sup>[b]</sup> (%)
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1	Toluen e	-	25	31
2	THF	-	25	55
3	Et <sub>2</sub> O	-	25	40
4	$CH_2Cl_2$	-	25	32
5	THF	-	65	68
6	Toluen e	-	65	53
7	Toluen e	-	100	75
8	Toluen e	LiClO <sub>4</sub>	100	98
9	Toluen e	$K_2Cr_2O_7$	100	46
10	Toluen e	Cu(AcO) <sub>2</sub>	100	39
11	THF	LiClO <sub>4</sub>	65	81

<sup>[a]</sup> *Reaction conditions:* phenylmagnesium bromide (0.3 mmol), Pd(OAc)<sub>2</sub> (10 mol%), oxidant (1 equiv.), solvent (2.0 mL), time (15 h), N<sub>2</sub>. <sup>[b]</sup> Isolated yield.

#### 2.2 Optimization of reaction conditions for Ni(OAc)<sub>2</sub>

First, several solvents were examined for the Ni(OAc)<sub>2</sub>·4H<sub>2</sub>O-catalyzed homo-coupling of phenylmagnesium bromide. It was found that CH<sub>2</sub>Cl<sub>2</sub> was a good solvent for the homo-coupling, giving biphenyl in 56% yield at 25 °C in the presence of 10 mol% Ni(OAc)<sub>2</sub>·4H<sub>2</sub>O (Table 2, entry 4 *vs.* 1-3). Several oxidants were then screened and Ag<sub>2</sub>O provided the higher yield (Table 2, entry 7 *vs.* 5-6, 8). Fortunately, 95% yield was obtained when the Ni(OAc)<sub>2</sub> was used (Table 2, entry 9). Table 2 Screening of reaction conditions on the homocoupling of PhMgBr with Ni(OAc)<sub>2</sub><sup>[a]</sup>

Entry	Solvent	Oxidant (equiv.)	Yield <sup>[b]</sup> (%)
1	Toluene	-	30
2	THF	-	15
3	Et <sub>2</sub> O	-	44
4	$CH_2Cl_2$	-	56
5	$CH_2Cl_2$	$LiClO_4(1.0)$	66
6	$CH_2Cl_2$	AgNO <sub>3</sub> (1.0)	73
7	$CH_2Cl_2$	Ag <sub>2</sub> O (1.0)	87
8	$CH_2Cl_2$	$Ag_2SO_4(1.0)$	85
9	$CH_2Cl_2$	Ag <sub>2</sub> O (1.0)	95[c]
10	$CH_2Cl_2$	Ag <sub>2</sub> O (1.2)	95 <sup>[c]</sup>

<sup>[a]</sup> *Reaction conditions:* phenylmagnesium bromide (0.3 mmol), Ni(OAc)<sub>2</sub>·4H<sub>2</sub>O or Ni(OAc)<sub>2</sub> (10 mol%), solvent (1.5 mL), time (18 h), N<sub>2</sub>. <sup>[b]</sup> Isolated yield. <sup>[c]</sup> Ni(OAc)<sub>2</sub> was used.

#### 2.3 Optimization of reaction conditions for CuI

Subsequently, CuI-catalyzed homo-coupling of phenylmagnesium bromide was investigated under air atmosphere. The examination of solvents showed that toluene was suitable for the homo-coupling because of its higher boiling point, giving biphenyl in 79% yield at 100 °C in the presence of 5 mol% CuI (Table 3, entry 6 *vs.* 1-5). Then we tested the influence of the amount of CuI on the yield. When the catalyst loading increased to 15 mol%, 95% yield was obtained (Table 3, entry 8 *vs.* 6 and 7).

Entry	Solvent	CuI (mol%)	T (°C)	Yield <sup>[b]</sup> (%)
1	Toluen e	5	25	42
2	THF	5	25	60
3	Et <sub>2</sub> O	5	25	33
4	$CH_2Cl_2$	5	25	45
5	THF	5	65	63
6	Toluen e	5	100	79
7	Toluen e	10	100	87
8	Toluen e	15	100	95
9	Toluen e	20	100	95

Table 3 Screening of reaction conditions on the homocoupling of PhMgBr with CuI<sup>[a]</sup>

<sup>[a]</sup> *Reaction conditions:* phenylmagnesium bromide (0.3 mmol), CuI, solvent (2 mL), time (15 h), air. <sup>[b]</sup> Isolated vield.

#### 2.4 Optimization of reaction conditions for nano-Fe<sub>3</sub>O<sub>4</sub>

The investigation was conducted using nano-Fe<sub>3</sub>O<sub>4</sub> as a catalyst and the results are summarized in Table 4. Toluene was still found to be a good solvent for the homo-coupling, giving biphenyl in 65% yield in the presence of 10 mol% nano-sized Fe<sub>3</sub>O<sub>4</sub> at 100 °C (Table 4, entry 7 vs. 1-6). Then the effect of oxidants was tested. 84 % yield was obtained when AgNO<sub>3</sub> was used as an oxidant (Table 4, entry 10 vs. 8-9 and 11-12). Moreover, 93% yield was provided when 1.2 equiv. of AgNO<sub>3</sub> was adopted (Table 4, entry 13).

Table 4 Screening of reaction conditions on the homoo	coupling of PhMgBr with nano-Fe <sub>3</sub> O <sub>4</sub> [a]
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Entry	Solvent	Oxidant (equiv.)	T (°C)	Yield <sup>[b]</sup> (%)
1	Toluen	_	25	29
1	e		25	2)
2	THF	-	25	28
3	Et <sub>2</sub> O	-	25	Trace
4	$CH_2Cl_2$	-	25	8
5	Toluen	-	60	44

	e			
6	Toluen		80	50
	e	-	80	50
7	Toluen		100	65
/	e	-	100	05
0	Toluen	L(C(0, (1, 0)))	100	0
0	e	$LiCiO_4(1.0)$	100	9
0	Toluen	$C_{11}C_{11}(1,0)$	100	71
7	e	$CuCl_2(1.0)$	100	/1
10	Toluen	$\Delta_{\sigma} NO(1.0)$	100	84
10	e	Agi(03 (1.0)	100	04
11	Toluen	$A \sigma_2 O(1,0)$	100	73
11	e	Mg <sub>2</sub> O (1.0)	100	75
12	Toluen	$A_{3}SO_{1}(1,0)$	100	67
12	e	1162004 (1.0)	100	07
13	Toluen	AgNO <sub>3</sub> (1.2)	100	93
	e			,,,
14	Toluen	$A\sigma NO_{2}(1.5)$	100	91
11	e	1.51(03(1.5)	100	<i>)</i> 1

<sup>[a]</sup> *Reaction conditions:* phenylmagnesium bromide (0.3 mmol), nano-sized Fe<sub>3</sub>O<sub>4</sub> (10 mol%), solvent (2 mL), time (20 h), N<sub>2</sub>. <sup>[b]</sup> Isolated yield.

#### 3. Proposed mechanism

#### 3.1 A proposed mechanism for the CuI-catalyzed homocoupling

A proposed mechanism is depicted in Figure 1 for the CuI-catalyzed reaction. A low-valent copper species is first generated through reduction by the Grignard reagent which is also a strong reducing agent in the catalytic cycle. The oxidative addition of molecular oxygen to a low-valent copper species **A** then forms a peroxo-copper (II) intermediate **B**, which is the key step for this catalytic cycle. Subsequently, it reacts with two equivalents of RMgX to give intermediate **C** and XMgOOMgX. At last, the intermediate **C** undergoes rapid reductive elimination to provide the homocoupling product R–R and release the low-valent copper species **A**.



#### 3.2 A proposed mechanism for the nano-Fe-catalyzed homocoupling

According to the reported literatures concerning iron salts catalysis, a possible mechanism is proposed as follows (Figure 2): iron species ( $[Fe]^n$ ) can be first rapidly reduced in situ into an iron species **A** by the Grignard reagent. Then this species **A** reacts with Grignard reagent to generate an iron intermediate **B** in the presence of AgNO<sub>3</sub>. This intermediate **B** could then give the homocoupling product **C** by reductive elimination and release the activated iron species ( $[Fe]^n$ ).



Figure 2. A proposed mechanism for the nano-Fe-catalyzed homocoupling

#### 4. General reaction procedure

#### 4.1 General procedure for homocoupling of Grignard reagents mediated by I2

To a tube equipped with a magnetic stir bar were added  $I_2$  (61.0 mg, 0.8 equiv.) and 0.3 mmol of phenylmagnesium bromide in turn. Subsequently, the solvent (toluene, 2.0 mL) was added under N<sub>2</sub> atmosphere. The reaction system was then heated to 110 °C and stirred for certain time. At last, the reaction mixture was purified by silica gel column chromatography with petroleum ether or petroleum ether/EtOAc to afford the desired coupling product.

#### 4.2 General procedure for homocoupling of Grignard reagents catalyzed by Pd(OAc)<sub>2</sub>

To a tube equipped with a magnetic stir bar were added  $Pd(OAc)_2$  (6.7 mg, 10 mol%), 1.0 equiv. of LiClO<sub>4</sub> (32.0 mg, 0.3 mmol) and 0.3 mmol of phenylmagnesium bromide in turn. Subsequently, the solvent (toluene, 2.0 mL) was added under N<sub>2</sub> atmosphere. The reaction system was then heated to 100 °C and stirred for certain time. At last, the reaction mixture was purified by silica gel column chromatography with petroleum ether or petroleum ether/EtOAc to afford the desired coupling product.

#### 4.3 General procedure for homocoupling of Grignard reagents catalyzed by Ni(OAc)<sub>2</sub>

To a tube equipped with a magnetic stir bar were added Ni(OAc)<sub>2</sub> (5.4 mg, 10 mol%), 1.0 equiv. of Ag<sub>2</sub>O (37.2 mg, 0.3 mmol) and 0.3 mmol of phenylmagnesium bromide in turn. Subsequently, the solvent (CH<sub>2</sub>Cl<sub>2</sub>, 1.5 mL) was added under N<sub>2</sub> atmosphere. The reaction system reacted at room temperature and stirred for certain time. At last, the reaction mixture was purified by silica gel column chromatography with petroleum ether or petroleum ether/EtOAc to afford the desired coupling product.

#### 4.4 General procedure for homocoupling of Grignard reagents catalyzed by CuI

To a tube equipped with a magnetic stir bar were added CuI (8.6 mg, 15 mol%) and 0.3 mmol of phenylmagnesium bromide in turn. Subsequently, the solvent (toluene, 2.0 mL) was added under air atmosphere. The reaction system was then heated to 100 °C and stirred for certain time. At last, the reaction mixture was purified by silica gel column chromatography with petroleum ether or petroleum ether/EtOAc to afford the desired coupling product.

#### 4.5 General procedure for homocoupling of Grignard reagents catalyzed by nano-Fe<sub>3</sub> $O_4$

To a tube equipped with a magnetic stir bar were added nano-Fe<sub>3</sub>O<sub>4</sub> (6.9 mg, 10 mol%), 1.2 equiv. of AgNO<sub>3</sub> (61.4 mg, 0.3 mmol) and 0.3 mmol of phenylmagnesium bromide in turn. Subsequently, the solvent (toluene, 2.0 mL) was added under N2 atmosphere. The reaction system was then heated to 100 °C and stirred for certain time. At last, the reaction mixture was purified by silica gel column chromatography with petroleum ether or petroleum ether/EtOAc to afford the desired coupling product.

#### 5. Characterization data for homocoupling products



 $R_f = 0.6$  (Petroleum ether); White solid; M.p. = 65-66 °C<sup>[2]</sup>; <sup>1</sup>H NMR (600 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>):  $\delta =$ 7.36-7.39 (m, 2H), 7.46-7.48 (m, 4H), 7.62-7.64 (m, 4H) ppm.



 $R_f = 0.6$  (Petroleum ether); colorless liquid; <sup>1</sup>H

NMR (600 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>): *δ* = 7.24-7.25 (m, 4H), 7.19-7.22 (m, 2H), 7.09 (d, *J* = 7.2 Hz, 2H), 2.04 (s, 6H) ppm.



 $R_f = 0.6$  (Petroleum ether); colorless liquid; <sup>1</sup>H NMR (600 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>):  $\delta = 7.37$  (d, J = 13.8 Hz, 4H), 7.31 (t, J = 10.8 Hz, 2H), 7.14 (d, J = 11.4 Hz, 2H), 2.41 (s, 6H) ppm.



 $R_f = 0.6$  (Petroleum ether); White solid, M.p. = 118-119 °C<sup>[2]</sup>;  $R_f = 0.6$  (Petroleum ether); <sup>1</sup>H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>):  $\delta = 7.47$  (dd, J = 4.8, 1.2 Hz, 4H), 7.22 (d, J = 7.6 Hz, 4H), 2.38 (s, 6H).



 $R_f = 0.3$  (Petroleum ether/AcOEt = 30/1 v/v); light yellow solid; M.p. = 174-175 °C<sup>[2]</sup>; <sup>1</sup>H NMR (600 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>):  $\delta = 7.45-7.48$  (m, 4H), 6.93-6.96 (m 4H), 3.83 (s, 6H) ppm.



 $R_f = 0.6$  (Petroleum ether); light yellow solid; M.p. = 64-66 °C<sup>[2]</sup>; <sup>1</sup>H NMR (600 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>):  $\delta$  = 7.46-7.48 (m, 4H), 7.11 (t, *J* = 8.4 Hz, 4H) ppm.



 $R_f = 0.6$  (Petroleum ether); colorless liquid; <sup>1</sup>H NMR (600 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>):  $\delta = 7.37$  (td, J = 6.0, 1.8 Hz, 2H), 7.33 (dd, J = 5.4, 1.2 Hz, 2H), 7.24 (dt, J = 6.0, 1.8 Hz, 2H), 7.04-7.07 (m, 2H) ppm.



 $R_f = 0.6$  (Petroleum ether); colorless liquid; <sup>1</sup>H NMR (600 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>):  $\delta = 7.28$  (t, J = 7.2 Hz, 4H), 7.19 (t, J = 7.2 Hz, 6H), 2.92 (s, 4H) ppm.

 $R_f = 0.6$  (Petroleum ether); colorless liquid; <sup>1</sup>H NMR (600 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>):  $\delta = 7.20$  (dd, J = 4.2, 1.2 Hz, 2H), 7.17 (dd, J = 3.0, 0.6 Hz, 2H), 7.00 (dd, J = 3.6, 1.8 Hz, 2H) ppm.



 $R_f = 0.4$  (Petroleum ether/AcOEt = 20/1 v/v); white solid; M.p. = 67-68 °C<sup>[2]</sup>; <sup>1</sup>H NMR (600 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>):  $\delta = 7.71-7.73$  (m, 4H), 7.51-7.54 (m, 4H) ppm.



 $R_f = 0.4$  (Petroleum ether/AcOEt = 20/1 v/v); white solid; M.p. = 72-74 °C;<sup>[5]</sup> <sup>1</sup>H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>):  $\delta = 8.68$  (d, J = 4.4 Hz, 2H), 8.38 (d, J = 8.0 Hz, 2H), 7.79 (td, J = 6.0, 1.6 Hz, 2H), 7.29-7.32 (m, 2H) ppm.



White solid; M.p. = 86-88 °C;  $R_f = 0.5$  (Petroleum ether); <sup>1</sup>H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>):  $\delta = 7.32 - 7.36$  (m, 2H), 7.36-7.39 (m, 4H), 7.53-7.56 (m, 4H) ppm.

### 6. Reference

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# 7. Spectra











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3.951 3.923









