

Supporting Information

Ball-Milled Co-N-C Nanocomposite for Benzylic C-H Bond Oxidation: a Facile, Practical and Recyclable Catalyst under Neat Conditions and Atmospheric Pressure Oxygen

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1. Materials and characterization methods

$\text{Co}(\text{NO}_3)_2 \cdot 6\text{H}_2\text{O}$ and melamine were purchased from Sinopharm Chemical Reagent Co. Ltd., and other chemicals were purchased from Aladdin Chemical Reagent Co. Ltd. All of the chemicals were in analytical grade and used as received without further purification. The morphology of the samples and energy dispersive spectromete (EDS) mapping were examined by scanning electron microscopy (SEM, Hitachi S-4800) and transmission electron microscopy (TEM, Philips Tecnai 12). The crystal structures of the synthesized materials were analyzed by X-ray diffraction (XRD, Bruker D8, $\text{Cu K}\alpha$) within a 2θ range of 5° - 90° and the scanning rate was $5^\circ/\text{min}$. Nitrogen adsorption-desorption isotherms and pore size distribution were characterized with a Micrometrics ASAP2020 analyzer at 77 K. X-ray photoelectron spectroscopy (XPS) measurements were carried out on Kratos AXIS Ultra spectrometer with a source gun of $\text{Al K}\alpha$ and spot size of 400 μm . FT-IR spectrum was measured on a Thermo Scientific Nicolet iN10 MX FT-IR Microscope. The scanning scope is $500\sim 4000\text{ cm}^{-1}$. The catalytic activity was determined by gas chromatography (GC, Beijing Beifen-Ruili Analytic Instrument (Group) Co., Ltd. SP-3420A) with a SE-54 capillary column and a FID detector. The structure of each product were verified by a Bruker 400 MHz nuclear magnetic resonance spectrometer with deuterated chloroform as solvent and TMS as the internal reference.

2. Preparation and characterization of catalyst

2.1 Catalyst preparation

Preparation of Co-N-C-8:

$\text{Co}(\text{NO}_3)_2 \cdot 6\text{H}_2\text{O}$ (1.83 g) and melamine (3.00 g) were added into a 100 mL zirconia grinding jar equipped with zirconia milling beads. The powder mixture was subjected to continuous mechanochemical reaction in a planetary ball mill with a rotational speed of 580 rpm at room temperature for 6h. After milling, a grey-green solid was obtained, which was then ground into powder. Noted as Co-N-C-8.

Preparation of g-C₃N₄-Co-8: Melamine was used as raw material to prepare g-C₃N₄ by direct calcination at 550 °C according to a reported method,^[s1] and g-C₃N₄ was obtained as a yellow solid. The g-C₃N₄-Co-8 was then prepared by a facile impregnation-roasting method: A mixture of $\text{Co}(\text{NO}_3)_2 \cdot 6\text{H}_2\text{O}$ (0.42 g) and g-C₃N₄ (1.00 g) were added into 50 mL ethanol, and the suspension was stirred at 60 °C for 8 h to remove the solvent; the residue was then dried at 60 °C under reduced pressure for another 12 h. After that, a yellow solid was obtained, and was then ground into powder. Note it as g-C₃N₄-Co-8.

Preparation of Co-N-C-550-8:

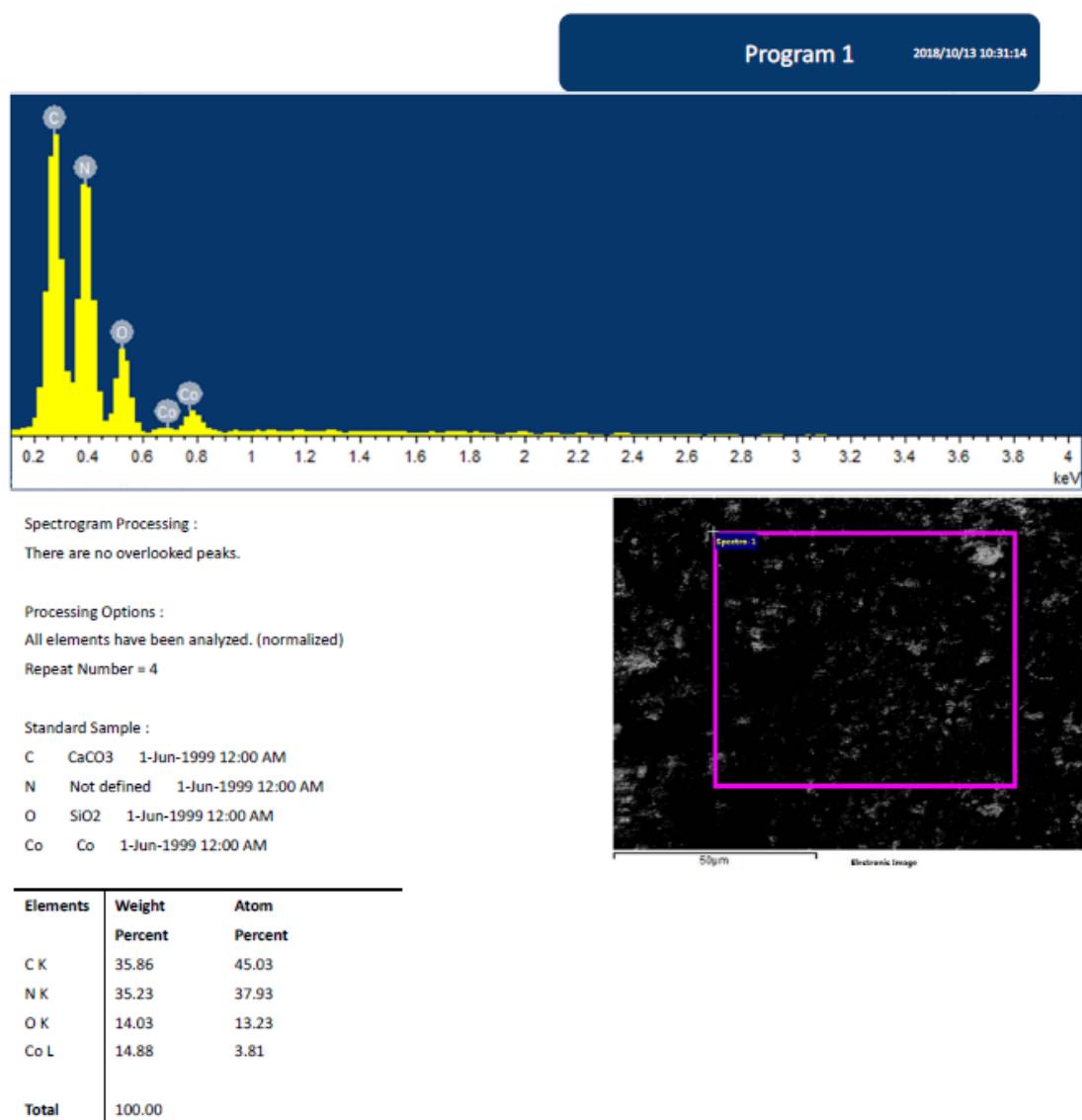
In a typical procedure, the sample, Co-N-C-8, prepared by ball-milling method from $\text{Co}(\text{NO}_3)_2 \cdot 6\text{H}_2\text{O}$ and melamine, was heated to 550 °C for 4 h at a rate of 2 °C/min under N₂ atmosphere to obtain the final Co-N-C-550-8 composite.

2.2 Activation of catalyst

Co-N-C-8 (3.00 g) was put into a 100 mL flask which equipped with a thermometer and O₂ gas inlet. The powder stirred at 60 °C with continuous O₂ gas flow (*ca.* 2 mL/min) for 5 h. After heating, a deep brown powder was obtained.

2.3 Characterization of the Co-N-C nanocomposite

Scheme S1. EDS spectrum and report for Co-N-C-8 nanocomposite



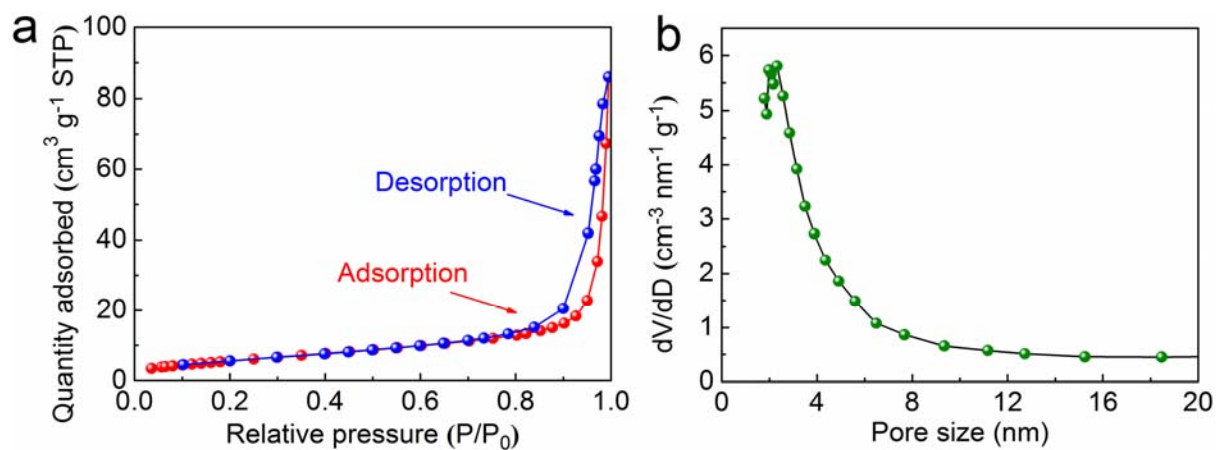


Figure S1. N₂ adsorption–desorption isotherms and the corresponding pore-size distribution curves of Co-N-C-8

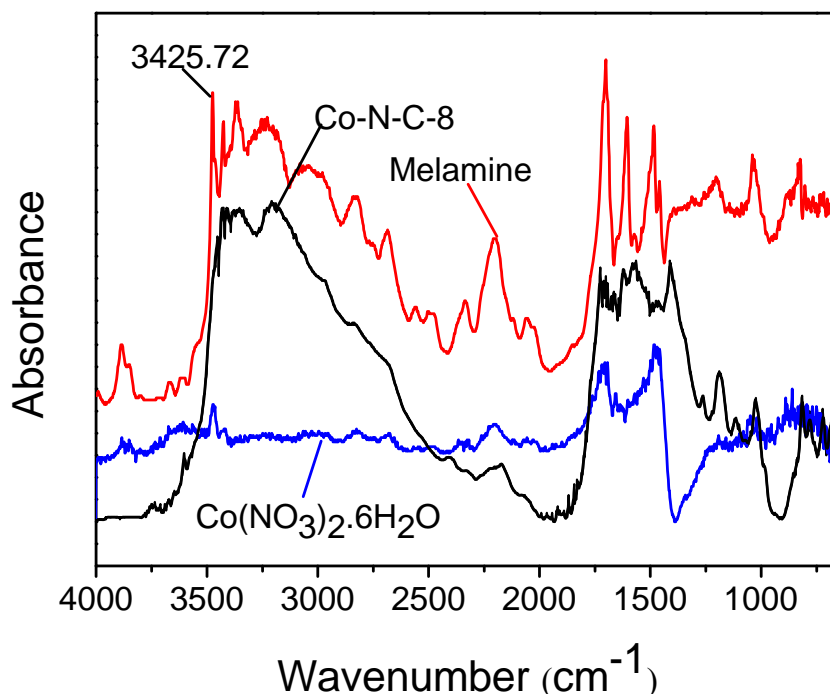


Figure S2. FT-IR spectrum of Co-N-C-8 and raw materials

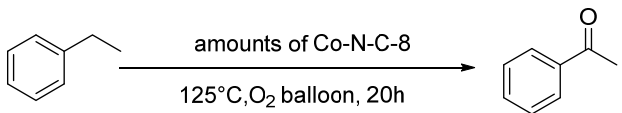
3. Experimental section

3.1 Co-N-C catalyzed ethylbenzene oxidation

The catalytic oxidation of ethylbenzene were carried out in a 35 mL Schlenk tube. Initially, 32.3 mg of Co-N-C-8 catalyst were added into the tube. After filled with pure oxygen, ethylbenzene (1.0 mL, 8.2 mmol) was injected into the tube. Conveniently, cold finger was equipped and an oxygen balloon was connected on the branch pipe to provide oxidant. The reaction mixture was stirred under 125 °C for 20 h. After the reaction, ether (5 mL) was added to dilute the reaction mixture, and the solid catalyst was recovered by filtration. The filtrate was then analyzed directly by gas chromatography.

3.2 Condition optimization for the selective oxidation of ethylbenzene (1a)

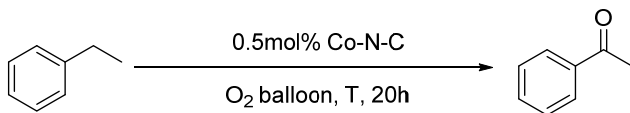
Table S1. Screening catalyst loading for the selective oxidation of ethylbenzene^a

			
Entry	Catalyst Content	Conversion ^b	Selectivity ^b
1	0.3 mol%	90%	94%
2	0.5 mol%	93%	96%
3	1 mol%	86%	89%

^a Reaction conditions: catalyst (Co-N-C-n) (0.3-1) mol%, ethylbenzene 8.2 mmol, O₂ balloon 125 °C, 20 h. ^b

Conversion and Selectivity were determined by GC.

Table S2. Screening temperature for the selective oxidation of ethylbenzene^a

			
Entry	Temperature/°C	Conversion ^b	Selectivity ^b
1	105	68%	98%
2	110	71%	97%
3	115	74%	94%
4	120	83%	95%
5	125	93%	96%
6	130	84%	88%

^a Reaction conditions: catalyst (Co-N-C-n) 0.5 mol%, ethylbenzene 8.2 mmol, O₂ balloon, 20 h. ^b Conversion and

Selectivity were determined by GC.

Table S3. Screening pressure of oxygen for the selective oxidation of ethylbenzene^a

Entry	Pressure of oxygen	Conversion ^b	Selectivity ^b
1	1 atm	93%	96%
2	21 atm	81%	80%
3	42 atm	91%	73%

^a Reaction conditions: catalyst (Co-N-C-n) 0.5 mol%, ethylbenzene 8.2 mmol, 125°C, 20 h. ^b Conversion and Selectivity were determined by GC.

Table S4. Screening the ratio of melamine to cobalt.

Entry	Catalyst ratio ($m_{\text{melamine}} : m_{\text{Co}}$)	Conv. (%)	Sel. (%)	Yield (%) ^b
1	4:1	92	90	83
2	5:1	93	93	86
3	6:1	84	92	77
4	7:1	86	94	81
5	8:1	93	96	89
6	9:1	72	96	69
7	10:1	66	95	63
8	11:1	58	98	57
9	12:1	72	96	69
10	13:1	59	96	57

^a Reaction conditions: catalyst (Co-N-C-n) 0.5 mol%, ethylbenzene 8.2 mmol, O₂ balloon 125°C, 20 h. ^b Yields were determined by GC.

3.3 Kinetic study for the catalytic oxidative of ethylbenzene

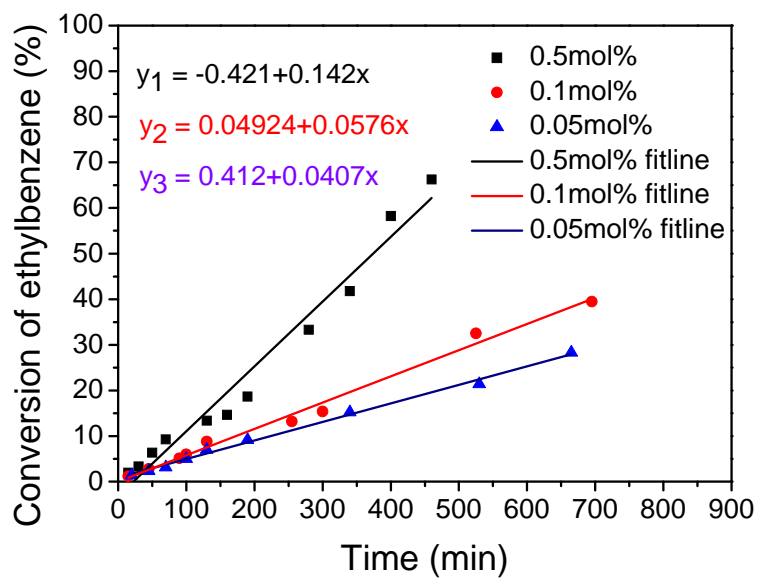


Figure S3. Kinetic study for the catalytic oxidative of ethylbenzene.

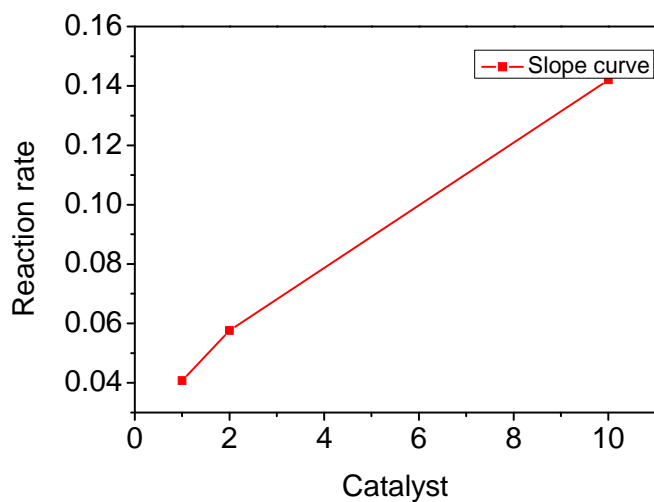
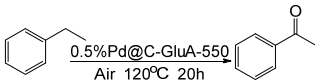
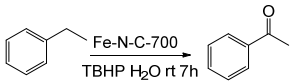
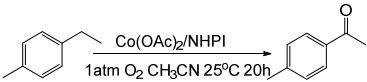
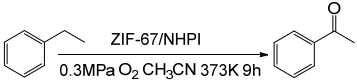
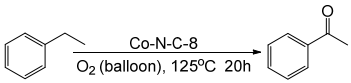


Figure S4 Kinetic curve for catalyst loading and reaction rate (with 0.05 mol% of catalyst as unit 1)

Table S5 TOF data for some literatures and our current work

Entry	Reaction	Con.(%)	Sel.(%)	TOF(h ⁻¹)	Ref.
1		14.2	94	245	S10
2		99	99	25	S11
3		87	47	4	S12
4		71	84	132	S13
5		95	98	9	This work (based on Co)

3.4 The recyclability of the Co-N-C catalyst

Following the procedure described in 3.1, the solid catalyst was recovered by filtration, and washed by ether (5 mL x 3). The collected catalyst was dried under vacuum at 80 °C overnight, and reused for next reaction.

Table S6. Recycling of the Co-N-C-8 catalyst

Entry	Run	Conv. (%)	Sel. (%)	Yield(%) ^b
1	1	93	96	89
2	2	89	96	85
3	3	91	93	85
4	4	90	92	83
5	5	89	93	83

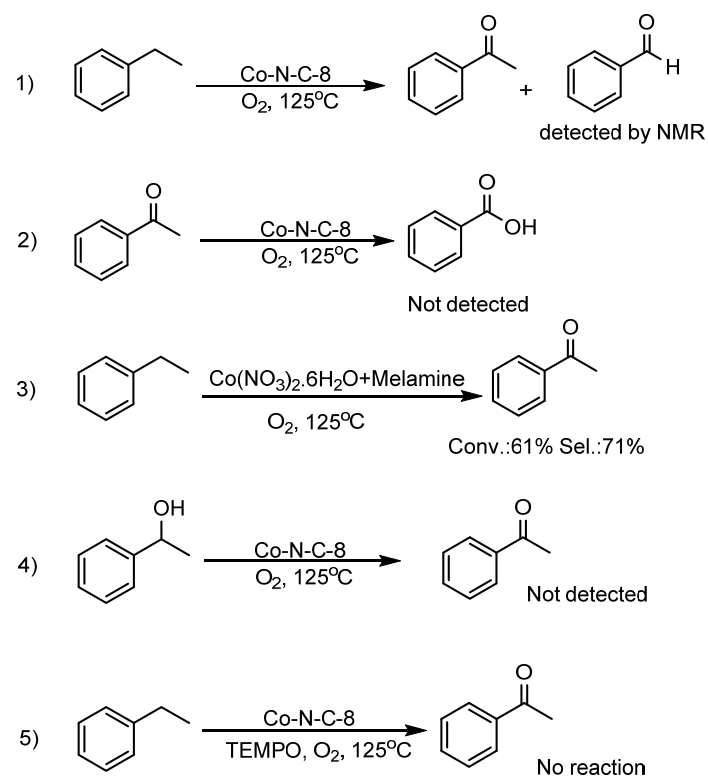
^a Reaction conditions: catalyst (Co-N-C-8, 0.5 mol%) , ethylbenzene 8.2 mmol, O₂ balloon, 125 °C, 20 h.

^b Yields were determined by GC.

4. Mechanism investigation

4.1 Controlled experiments for mechanism investigation.

Scheme S2. Controlled experiments



4.2 GC-MS analysis for reaction mixture

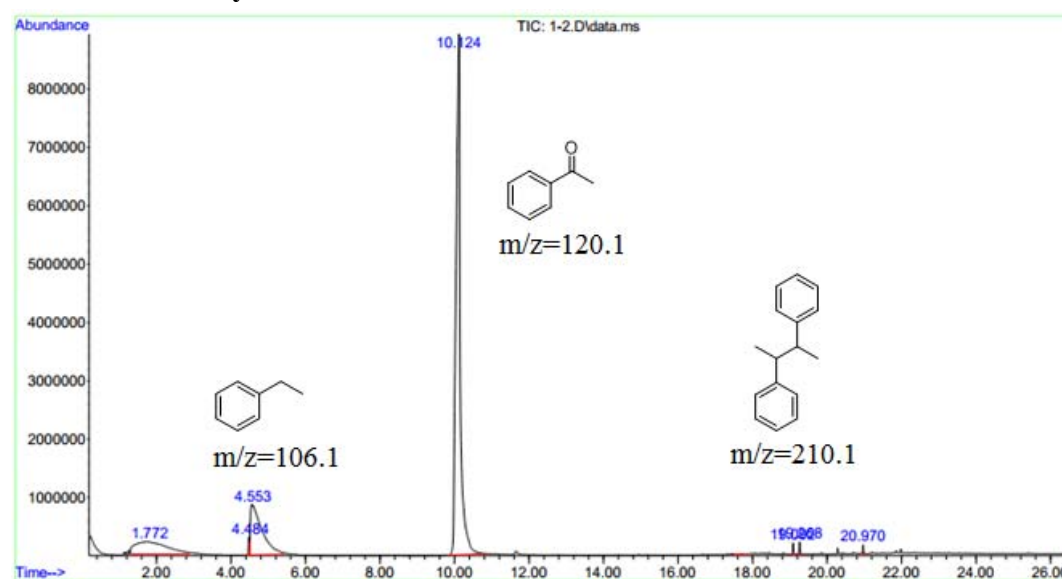
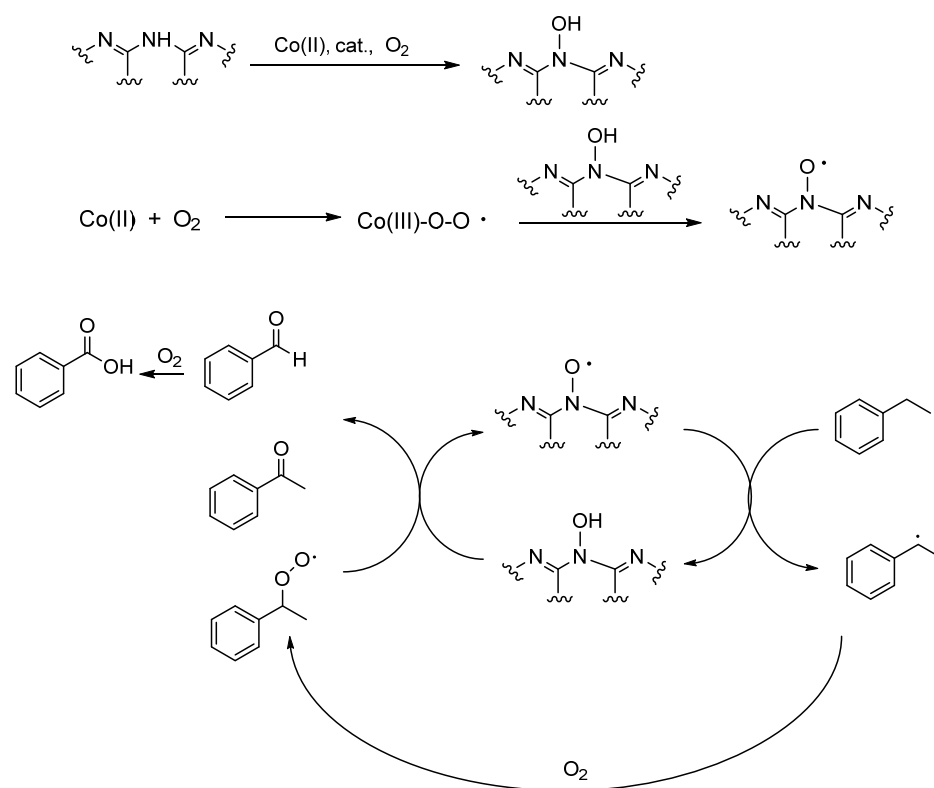


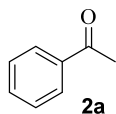
Figure S5. GC-MS analysis result.

4.3 Proposed mechanism based on Ishii-type-like catalytic system

Scheme S3. The plausible mechanism for the catalytic oxidation of ethylbenzene



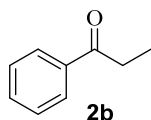
Characterization for compounds



Acetophenone (2a)^{s2}

Colorless liquid, 93% yield, purified by flash chromatography, PE:EA=15:1;

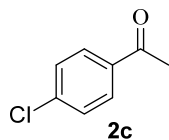
¹H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 7.91 (d, *J* = 8.4 Hz, 2H), 7.51 (t, *J* = 7.2 Hz, 1H), 7.41(t, *J* = 7.2 Hz, 2H), 2.55 (s, 3H); ¹³C NMR (101 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 198.13, 137.11, 132.10, 128.57, 128.30, 26.58.



Propiophenone (2b)^{s2}

Colorless liquid, 83% yield, purified by flash chromatography, PE:EA=15:1;

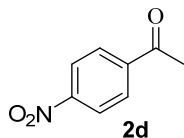
¹H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 7.86 (d, *J* = 7.8 Hz, 2H), 7.44 (t, *J* = 7.3 Hz, 1H), 7.35 (t, *J* = 7.6 Hz, 2H), 2.90 (q, *J* = 7.2 Hz, 2H), 1.13 (t, *J* = 7.2 Hz, 3H); ¹³C NMR (101 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 199.73, 135.91, 131.81, 127.51, 126.93, 30.72, 7.20.



4-chloroacetophenone (2c)^{s3}

Colorless liquid, 71% yield, purified by flash chromatography, PE:EA=15:1;

¹H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 7.86 (d, *J* = 8.4 Hz, 2H), 7.40 (d, *J* = 8.8 Hz, 2H), 2.63 (s, 3H).
¹³C NMR (101 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 196.84, 139.54, 135.44, 129.75, 128.90, 26.56

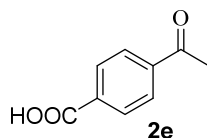


4-nitroacetophenone (2d)^{s3}

Yellow solid, 53% yield, purified by flash chromatography, PE:EA=15:1;

¹H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 8.30 (d, *J* = 8.8 Hz, 2H), 8.10 (d, *J* = 8.8 Hz, 2H), 2.67 (s, 3H). ¹³C NMR (101 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 196.34, 150.41, 141.41, 129.34, 123.89,

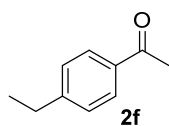
27.01.



4-acetylbenzoic acid (2e)^{s4}

White solid, 48% yield, purified by flash chromatography, PE:EA=1:1;

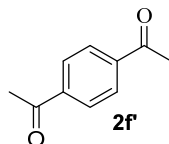
¹H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 7.88 (d, *J* = 8.2 Hz, 2H), 7.27 (d, *J* = 8.3 Hz, 2H), 2.69 (q, *J* = 7.6 Hz, 2H), 2.56 (s, 3H), 1.25 (t, *J* = 7.6 Hz, 3H); ¹³C NMR (101 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 152.56, 143.01, 135.82, 130.38, 128.72, 127.66, 127.28, 126.50, 120.50.



4-ethylacetophenone (2f)^{s5}

Colorless liquid, 63% yield, purified by flash chromatography, PE:EA=15:1;

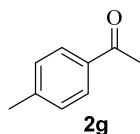
¹H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 7.88 (d, *J* = 8.2 Hz, 2H), 7.27 (d, *J* = 8.3 Hz, 2H), 2.69 (q, *J* = 7.6 Hz, 2H), 2.56 (s, 3H), 1.25 (t, *J* = 7.6 Hz, 3H); ¹³C NMR (101 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 152.56, 143.01, 135.82, 130.38, 128.72, 127.66, 127.28, 126.50, 120.50.



1,4-diacetylbenzene (2f')^{s6}

White solid, 22% yield, purified by flash chromatography, PE:EA=15:1;

¹H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 8.1 (s, 4H), 2.65 (s, 6H). ¹³C NMR (101 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 197.50, 140.20, 128.51, 26.91; ¹³C NMR (101 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 197.82, 150.04, 134.94, 128.56, 128.07, 28.94, 26.51, 15.20.

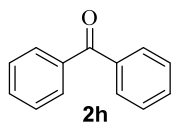


4-methylacetophenone (2g)^{s3}

Colorless liquid, 75% yield, purified by flash chromatography, PE:EA=15:1;

¹H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 2.31 (s, 3H), 2.48 (s, 3H), 7.16 (d, *J* = 8 Hz, 2H), 7.76

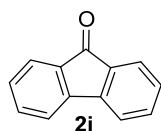
(d, $J = 8$ Hz, 2H); ^{13}C NMR (101 MHz, CDCl_3) δ 21.6 26.5 128.5 129.3 134.8 143.9 197.9



Benzophenone (2h)^{s2}

White solid, 84% yield, purified by flash chromatography, PE:EA=15:1.

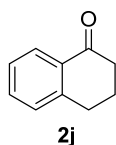
^1H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl_3) δ 7.81 (d, $J = 7.6$ Hz, 4H), 7.59 (t, $J = 7.6$ Hz, 2H), 7.48 (t, $J = 7.6$ Hz, 4H); ^{13}C NMR (101 MHz, CDCl_3) δ 196.72, 137.59, 132.40, 120.04, 128.27.



9-fluorenone (2i)^{s2}

Yellow solid, 81% yield, purified by flash chromatography, PE:EA=15:1;

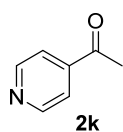
^1H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl_3) δ 7.65 (d, $J = 7.2$ Hz, 2H), 7.45–7.51 (m, 4H), 7.28 (dt, $J = 1.2, 7.2$ Hz, 2H); ^{13}C NMR (101 MHz, CDCl_3) δ 193.95, 144.46, 134.72, 134.18, 129.11, 124.34, 120.34.



α -tetralone (2j)^{s2}

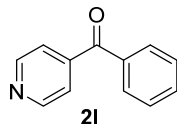
Colorless liquid, 72% yield, purified by flash chromatography, PE:EA=15:1;

^1H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl_3) δ 8.03 (dd, $J = 0.8$ Hz, 7.6 Hz, 1H), 7.46 (td, $J = 1.6$ Hz, 7.6 Hz, 1H), 7.24–7.32 (m, 2H); 2.97 (t, $J = 6$ Hz, 2H), 2.65 (t, $J = 6.4$ Hz, 2H), 2.10–2.17 (m, 2H); ^{13}C NMR (101 MHz, CDCl_3) δ 198.38, 144.52, 133.42, 132.64, 128.61, 127.16, 126.64, 39.19, 29.72, 23.31.



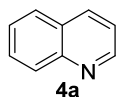
4-acetylpyridine (2k)^{s7}

Colorless liquid, 63% yield, purified by flash chromatography, PE:EA:TEA=15:1:1;
¹H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 8.79 (d, J = 4.0 Hz, 2H), 7.70 (dd, J = 4.0, 8.0Hz, 2H),
2.61 (s, 3H); **¹³C NMR** (101 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 197.3, 150.9, 142.6, 121.2, 26.6.



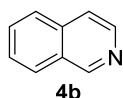
4-benzoylpyridine (21)^{s7}

Light yellow solid, 84% yield, purified by flash chromatography, PE:EA:TEA=15:1:1;
¹H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 8.82 (d, J = 4.0 Hz, 2H), 7.82 (d, J = 8.0 Hz, 2H), 7.65
(t, J = 8.0Hz, 1H), 7.59 (d, J = 4.0 Hz, 2H), 7.52 (t, J = 8.0 Hz, 2H); **¹³C NMR** (101
MHz, CDCl₃) δ 195.1, 150.3, 144.3, 135.8, 133.6, 130.1, 128.7, 122.9.



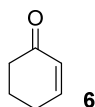
quinoline (4a)^{s8}

Colorless liquid, 84% yield, purified by flash chromatography, PE:EA:TEA=30:1:1;
¹H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 8.89 (dd, J = 4.2, 1.6 Hz, 1H), 8.12 (d, J = 8.5 Hz, 1H),
8.07 (d, J = 8.3 Hz, 1H), 7.75 (d, J = 8.2 Hz, 1H), 7.68 (t, J = 8.4Hz, 1H), 7.54 – 7.44
(t, J = 7.2Hz 1H), 7.32 (t, J = 4, 1H); **¹³C NMR** (101 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 150.39, 148.29,
136.00, 129.45, 129.43, 128.27, 127.79, 126.51, 121.05 .



isoquinoline (4b)^{s9}

Colorless liquid, 83% yield, purified by flash chromatography, PE:EA:TEA=30:1:1;
¹H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 9.26 (s, 1H), 8.53 (d, J = 5.8 Hz, 1H), 7.97 (d, J = 8.2
Hz, 1H), 7.82 (d, J = 8.2 Hz, 1H), 7.71 – 7.56 (m, 3H); **¹³C NMR** (101 MHz, CDCl₃)
 δ 152.56, 143.01, 135.82, 130.38, 128.72, 127.66, 127.28, 126.50, 120.50.



2-Cyclohexen-1-one (6)^{s2}

Colorless liquid, 63% yield, purified by flash chromatography, PE:EA= 40:1;

¹H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 7.01 (dt, J = 10.0, 4.1 Hz, 1H), 6.03 (dt, J = 10.1, 1.8 Hz, 1H), 2.44 (dd, J = 8.7, 4.8 Hz, 1H), 2.40–2.30 (m, 1H), 2.17–1.85 (m, 1H); **¹³C NMR** (101 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 199.77, 150.68, 129.95, 77.33, 77.07, 76.75, 38.13, 25.69, 22.75.

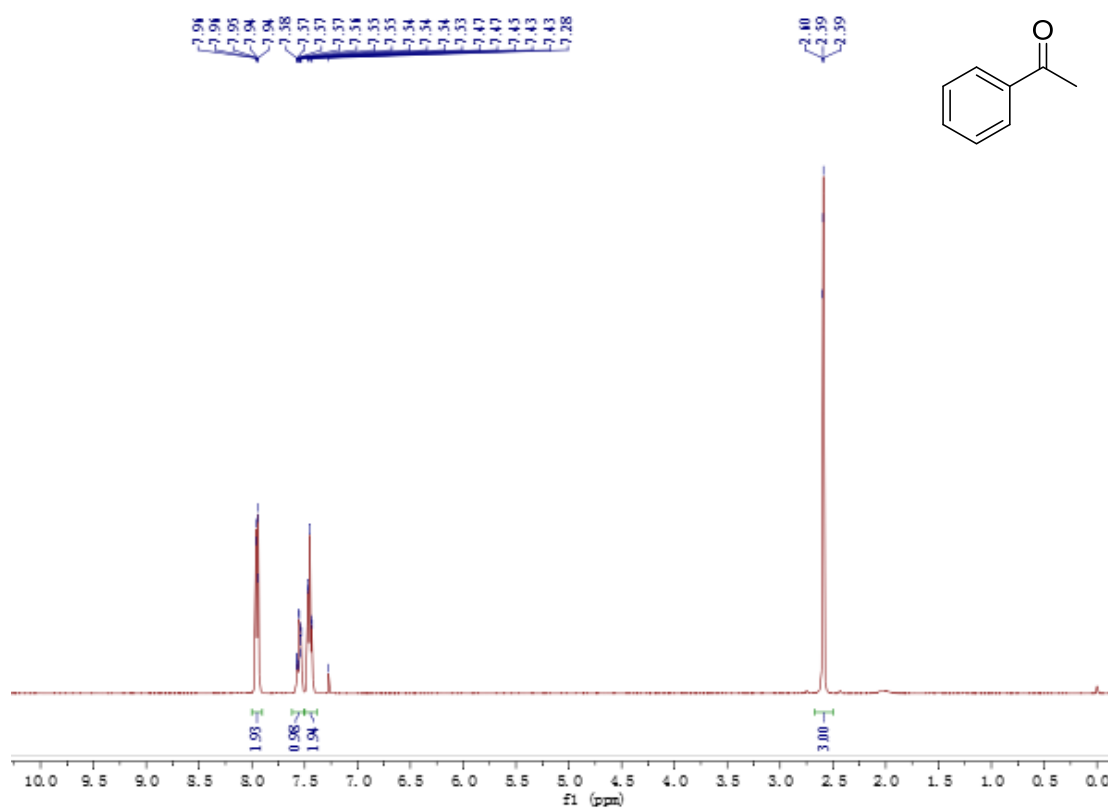
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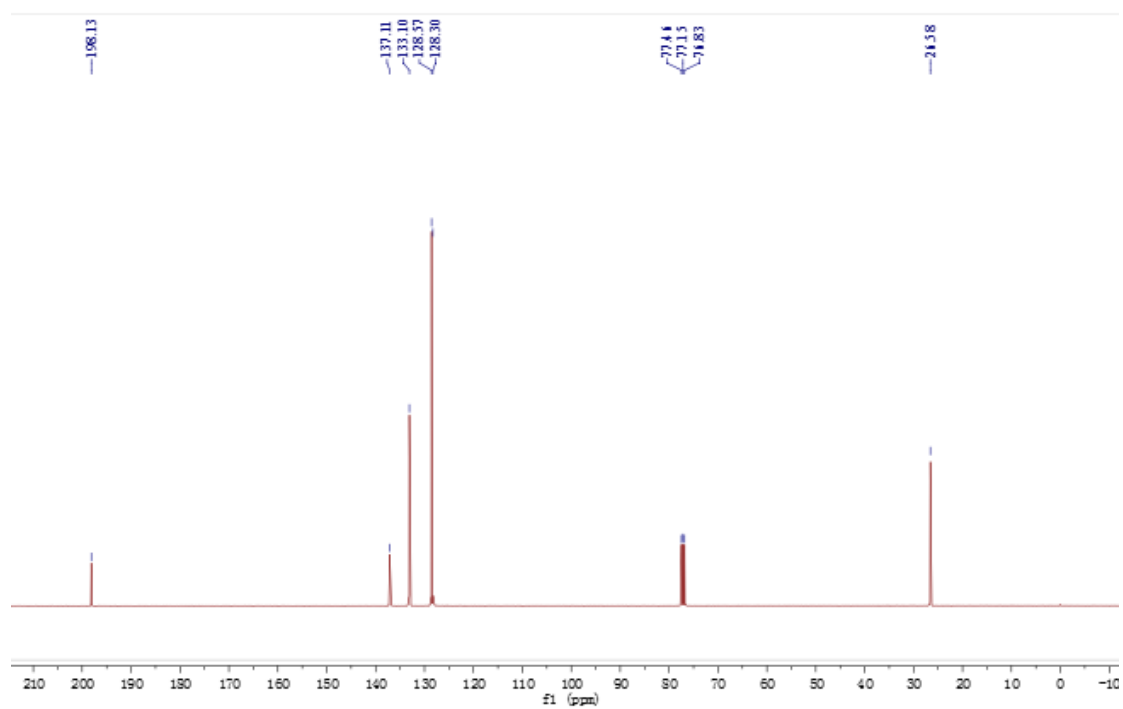
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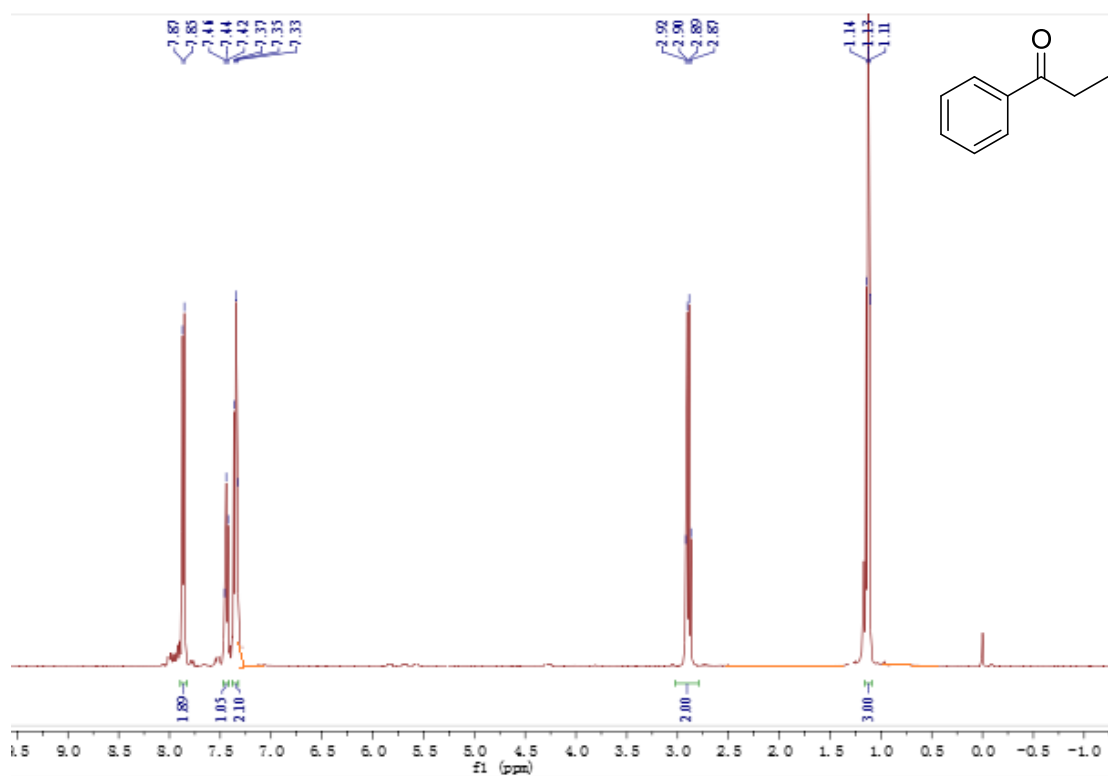
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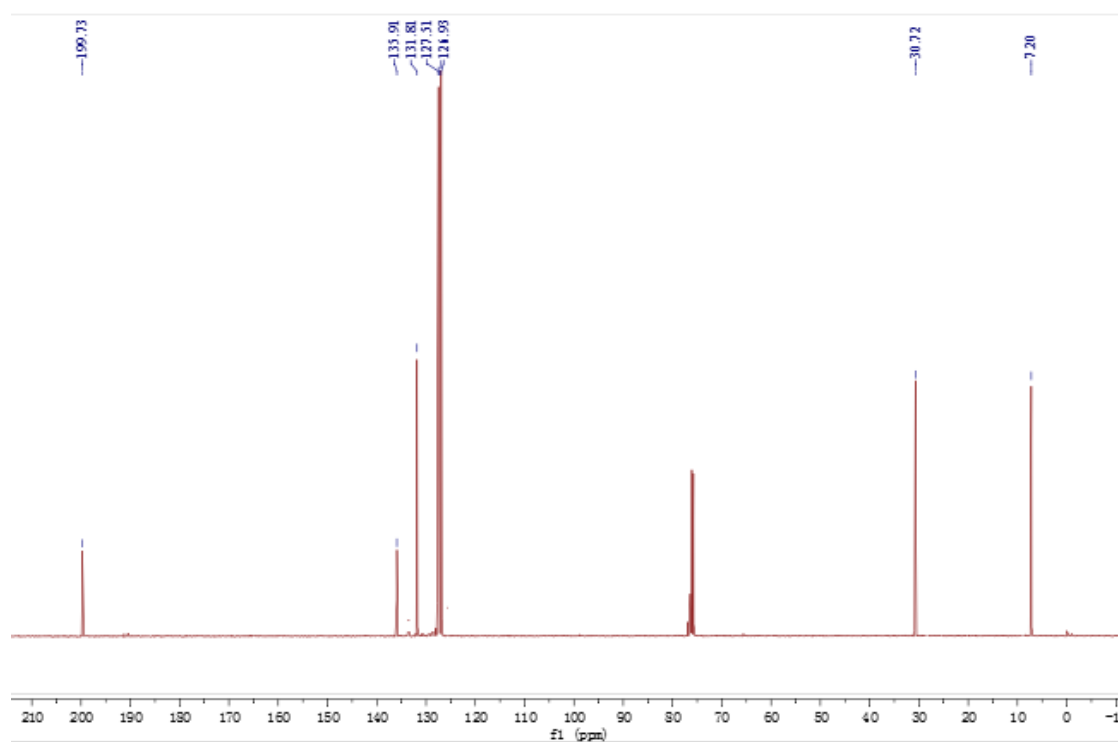
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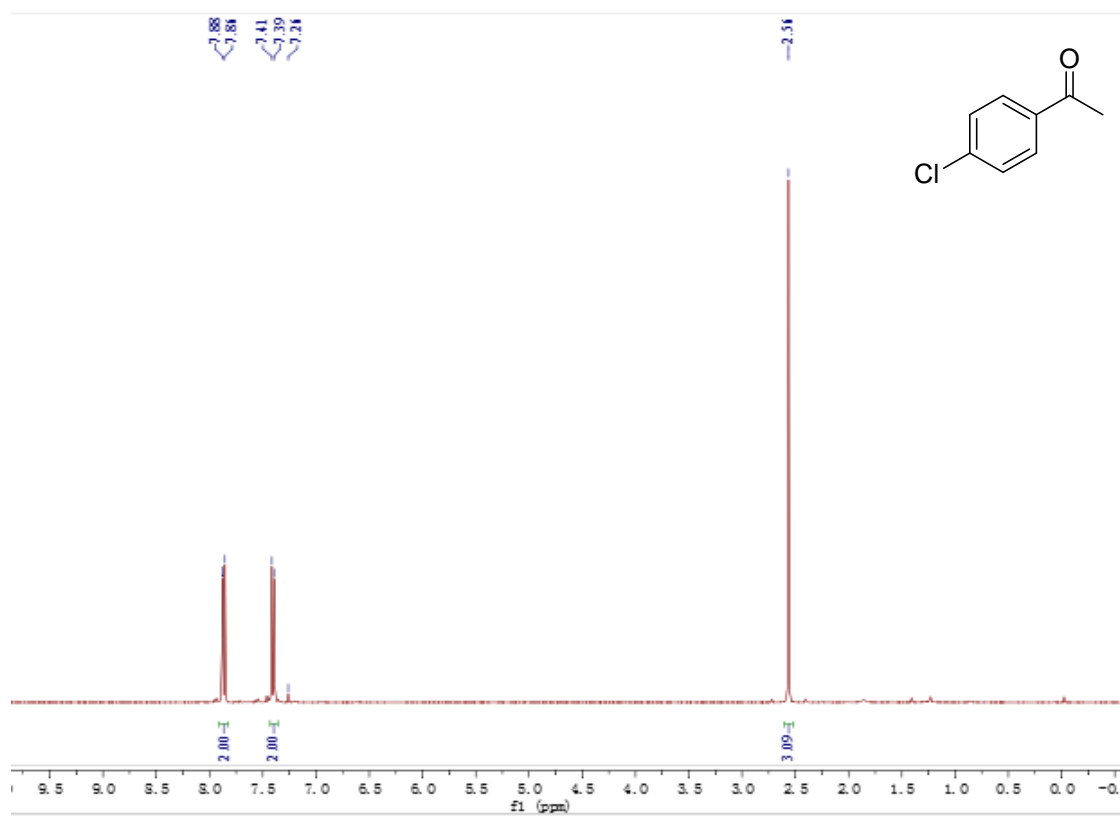
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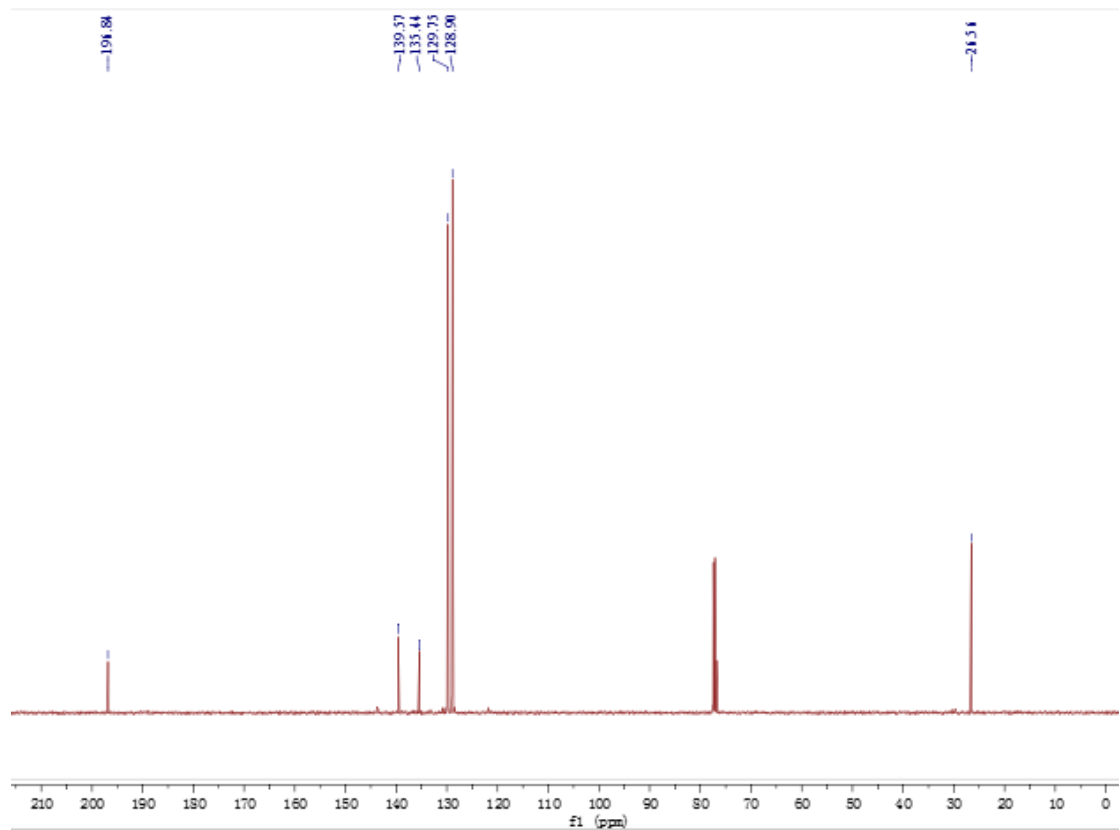
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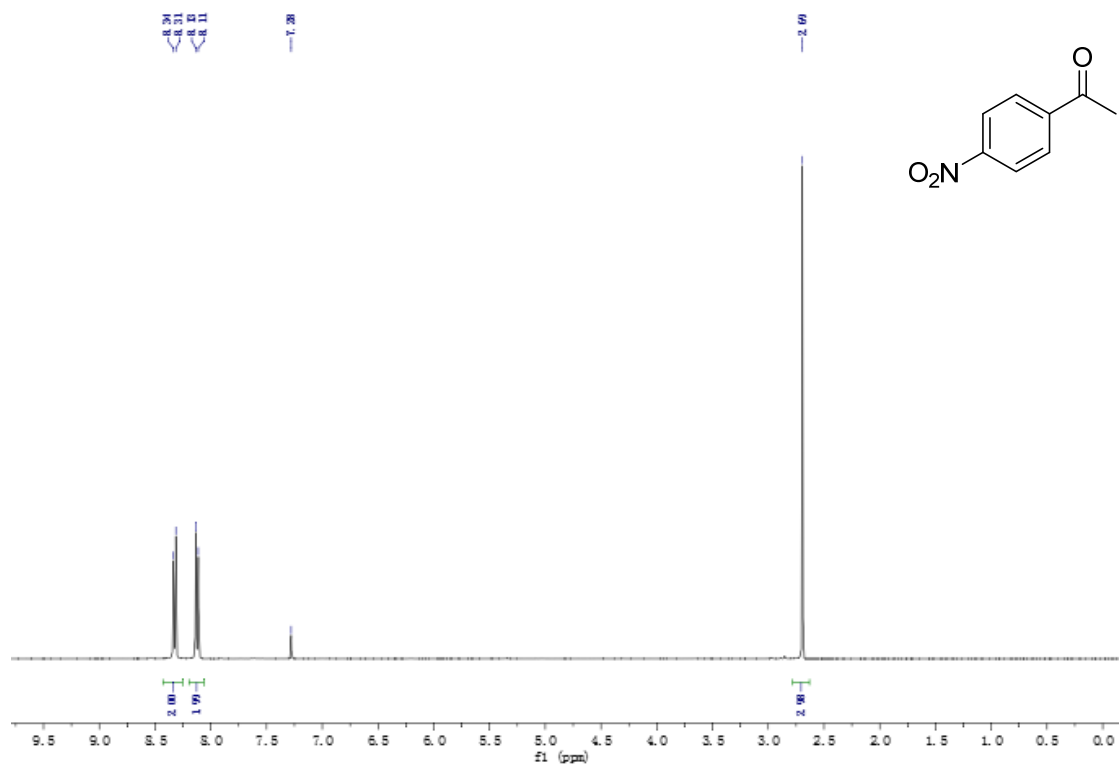
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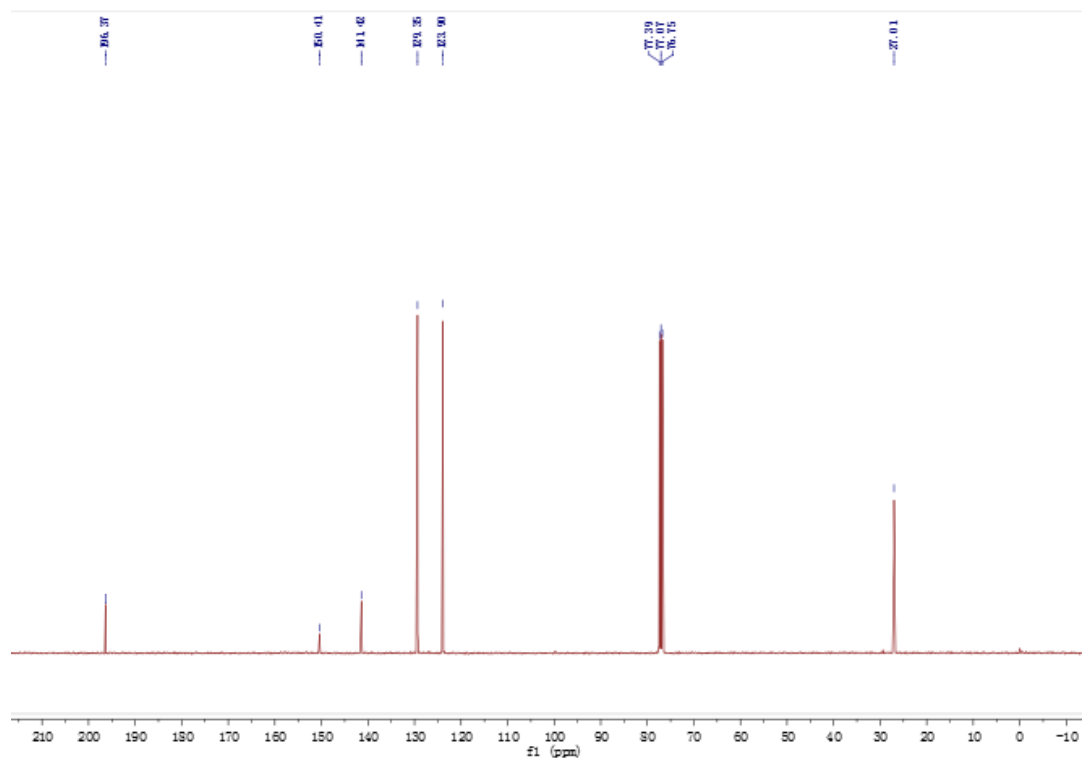
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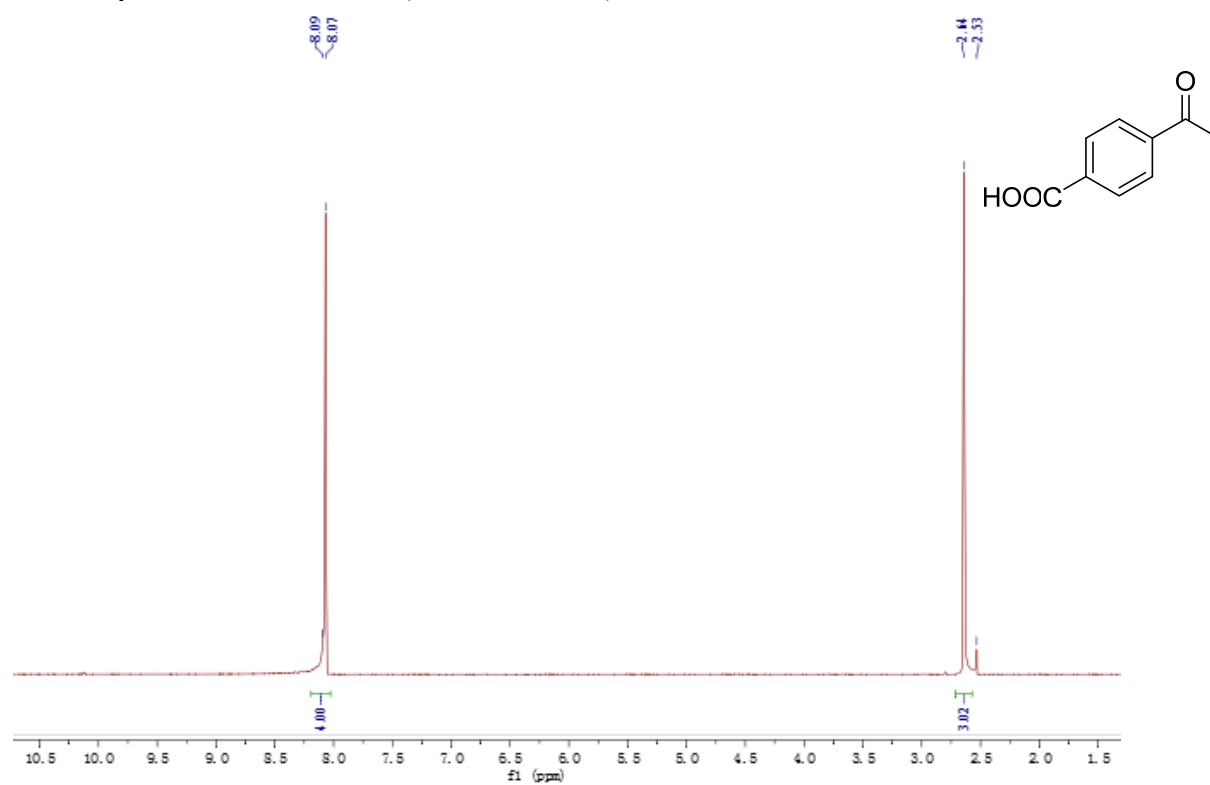
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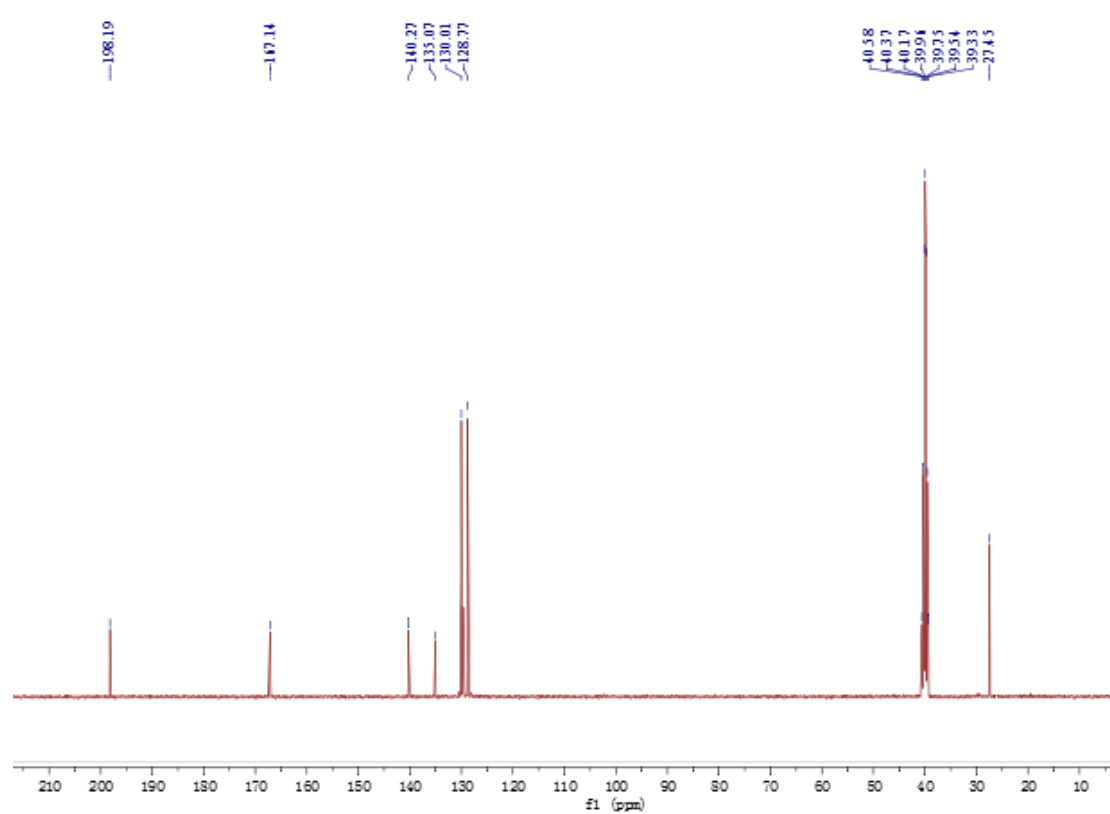
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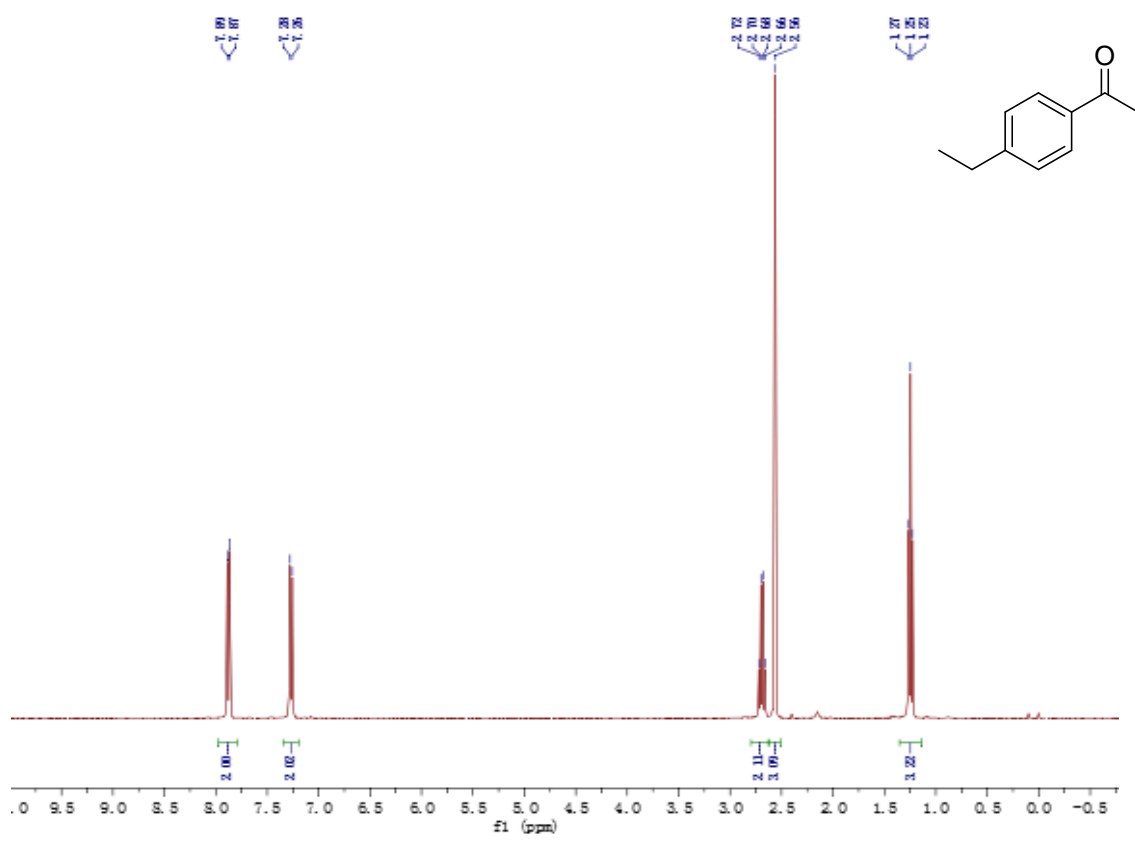
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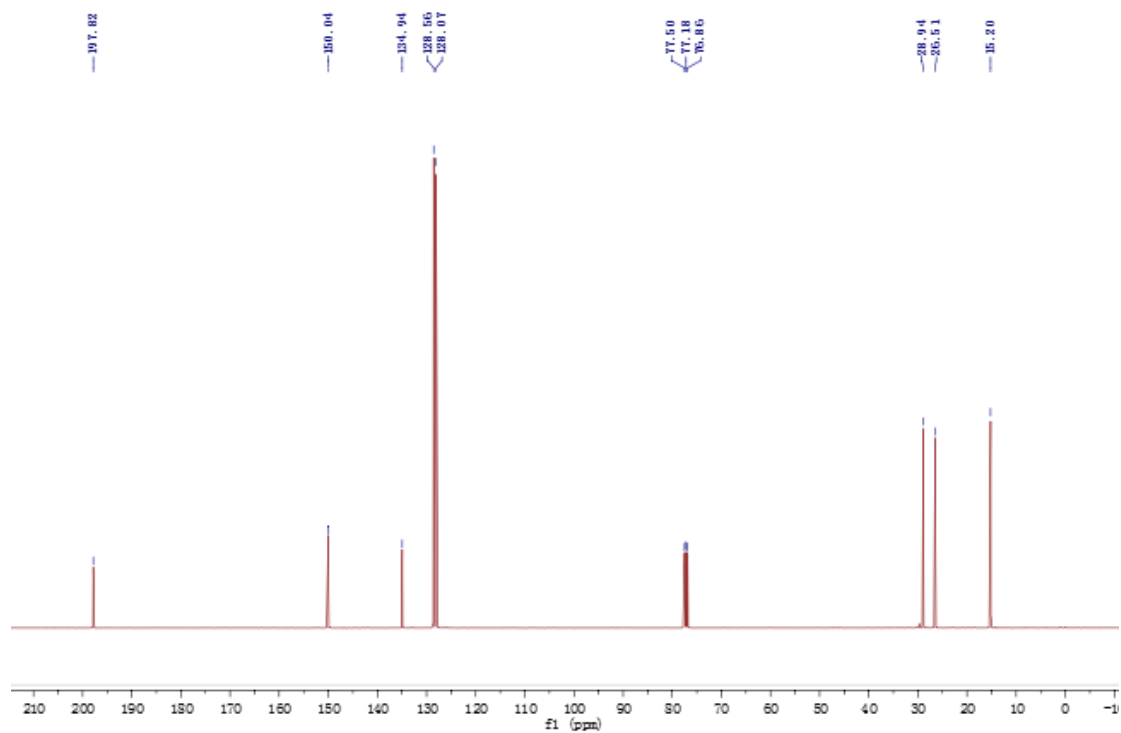
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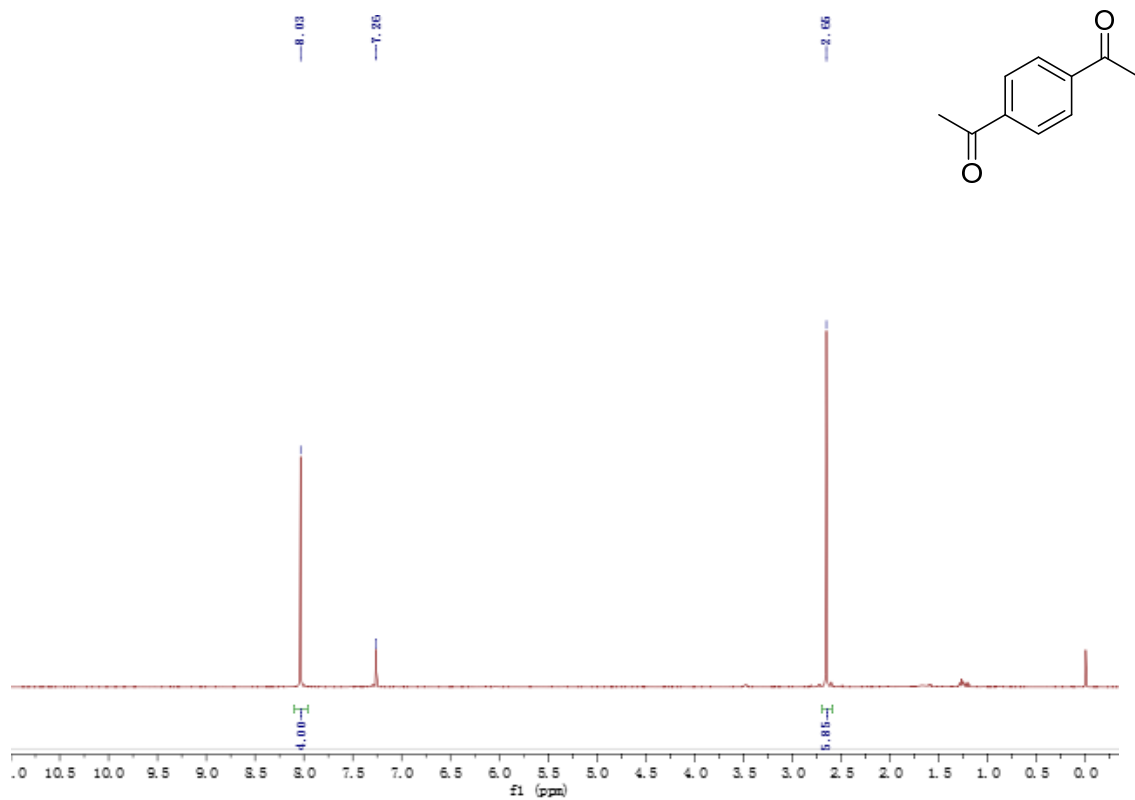
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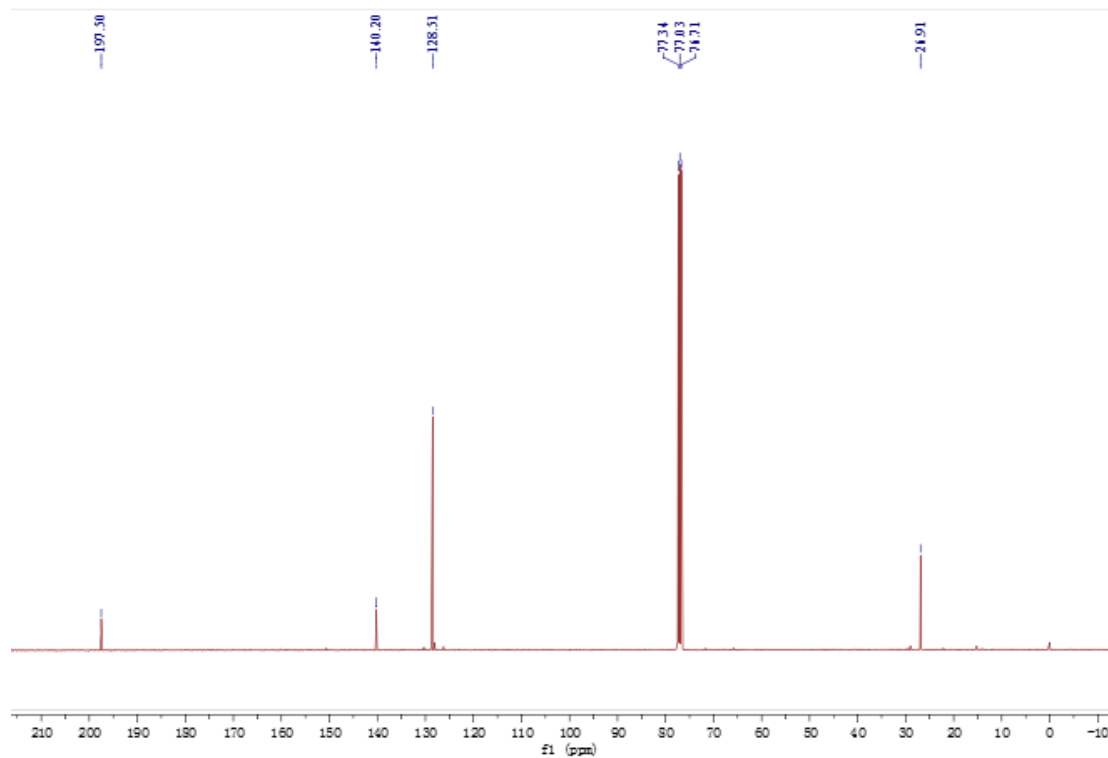
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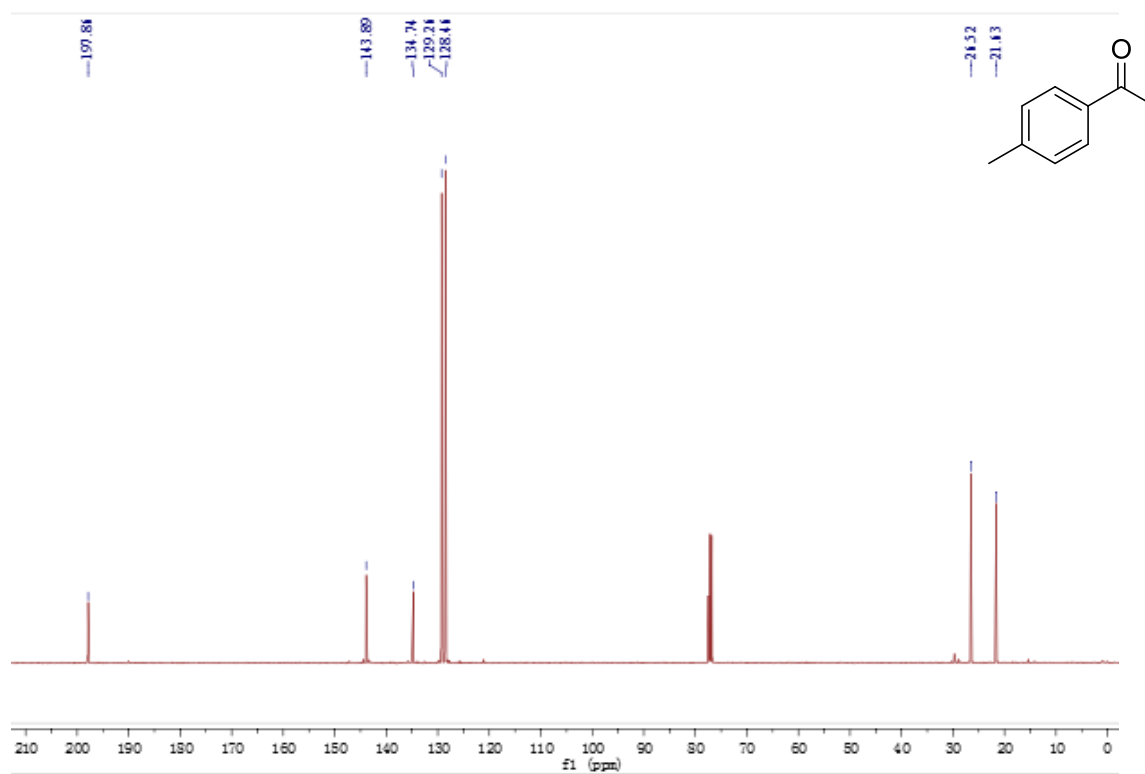
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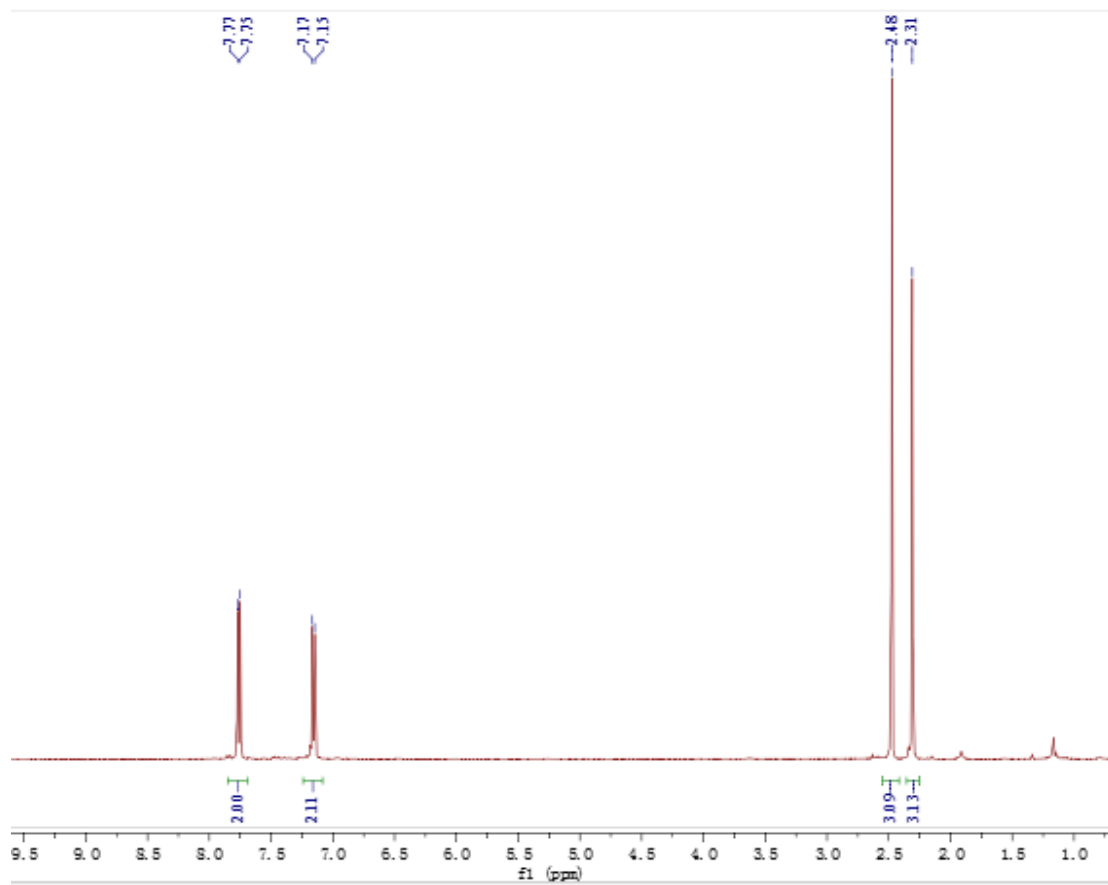
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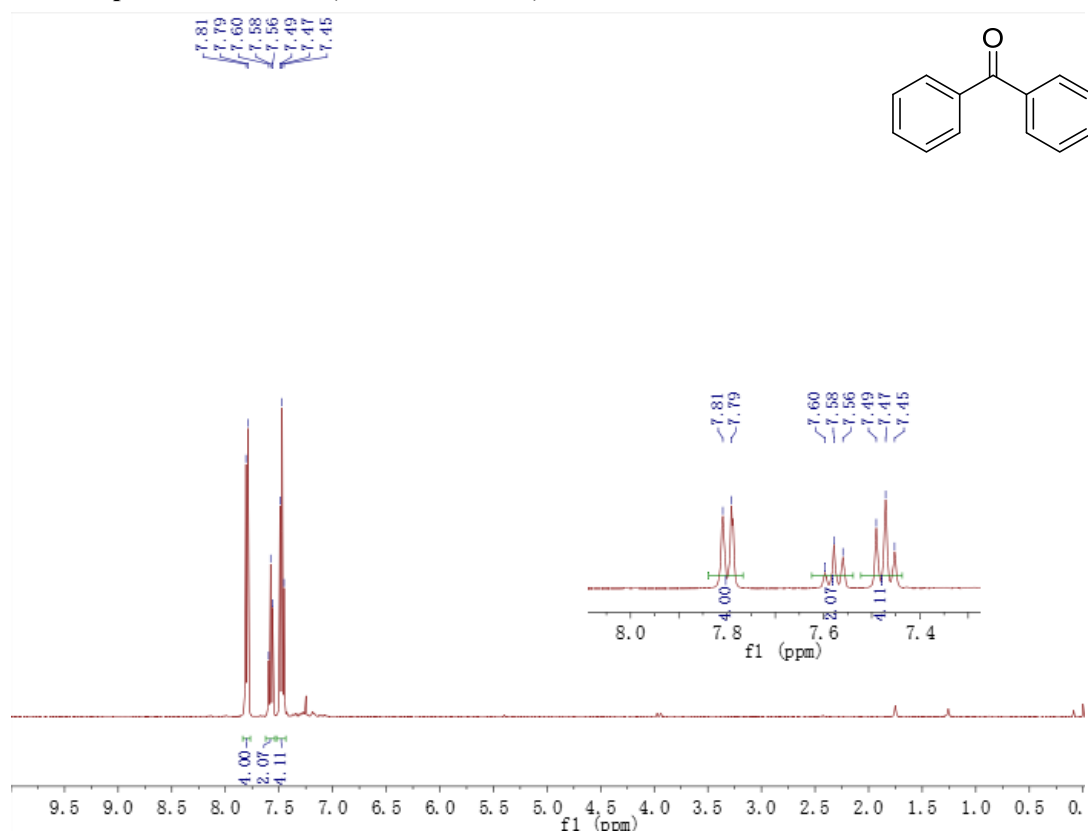
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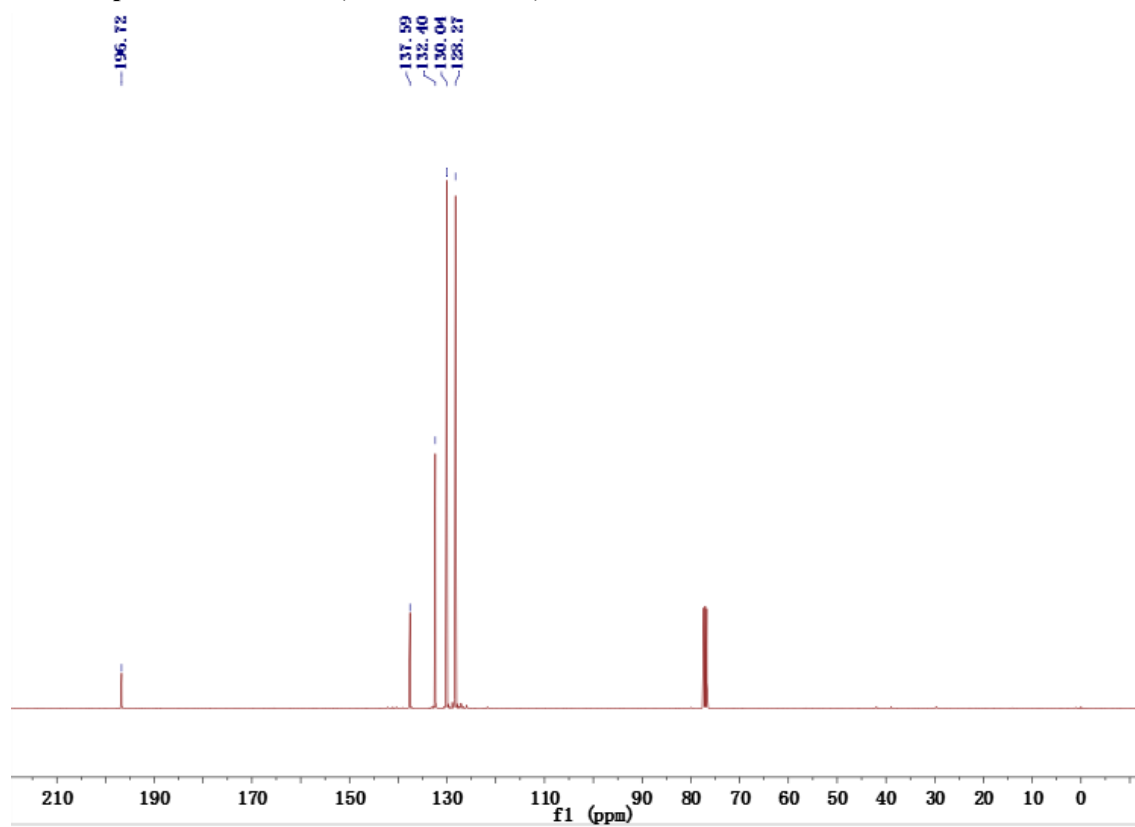
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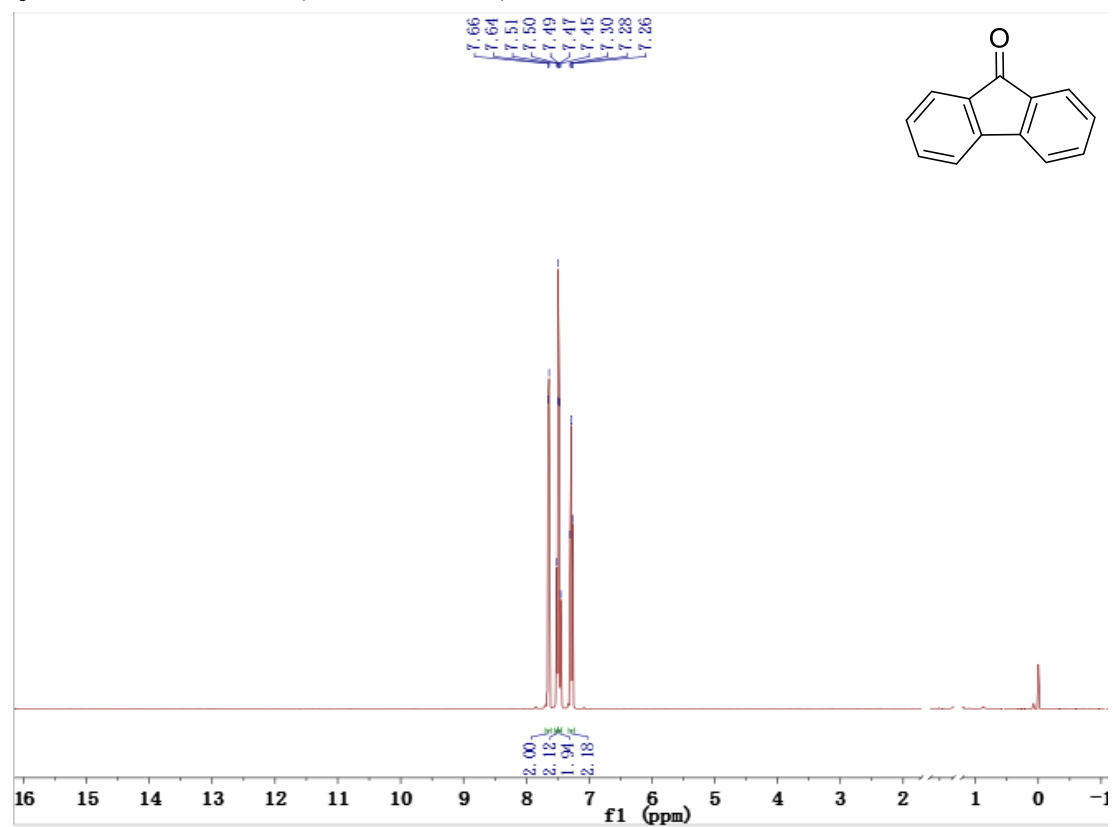
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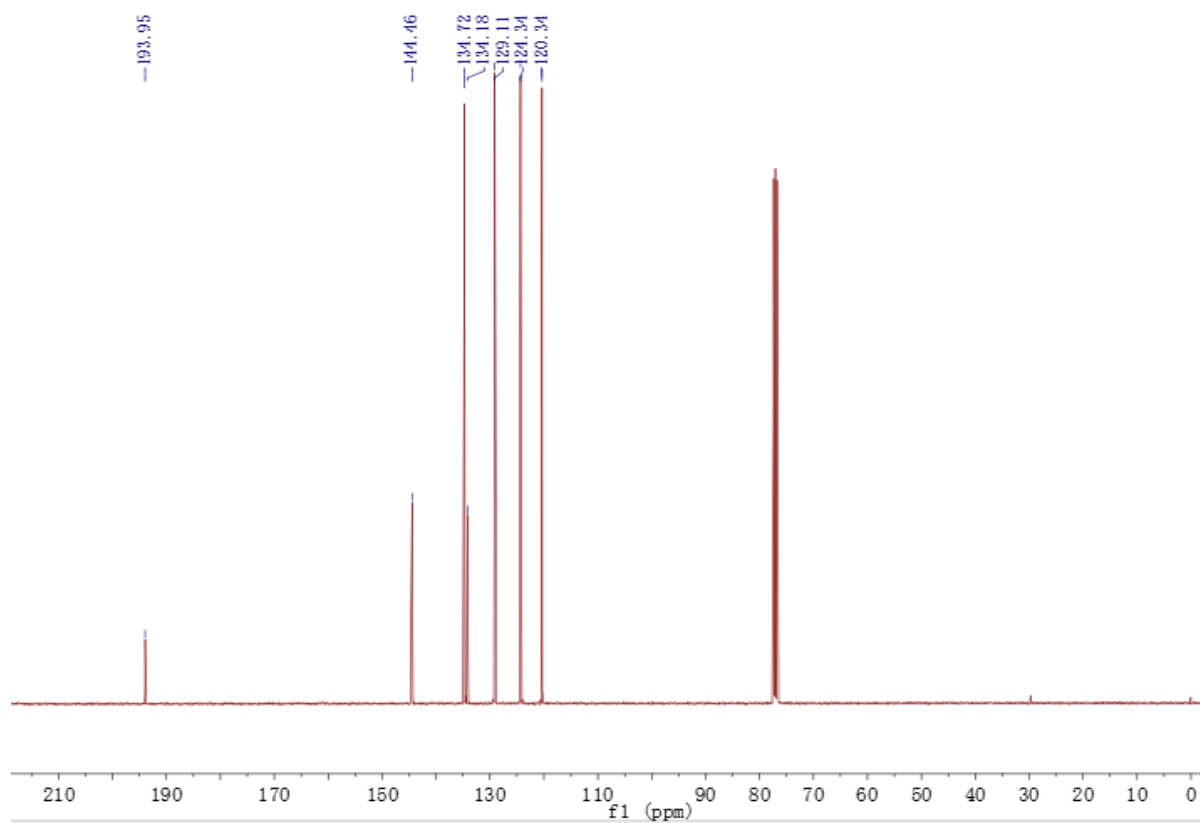
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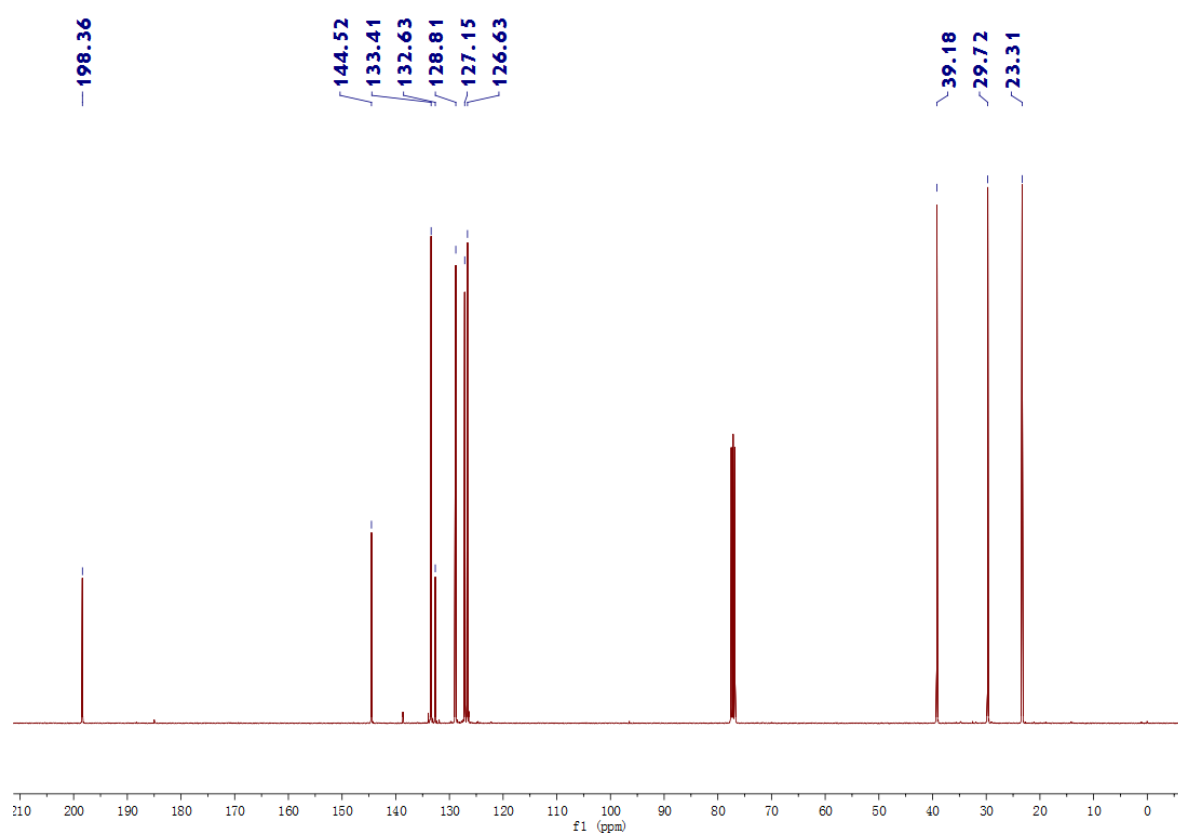
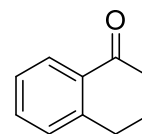
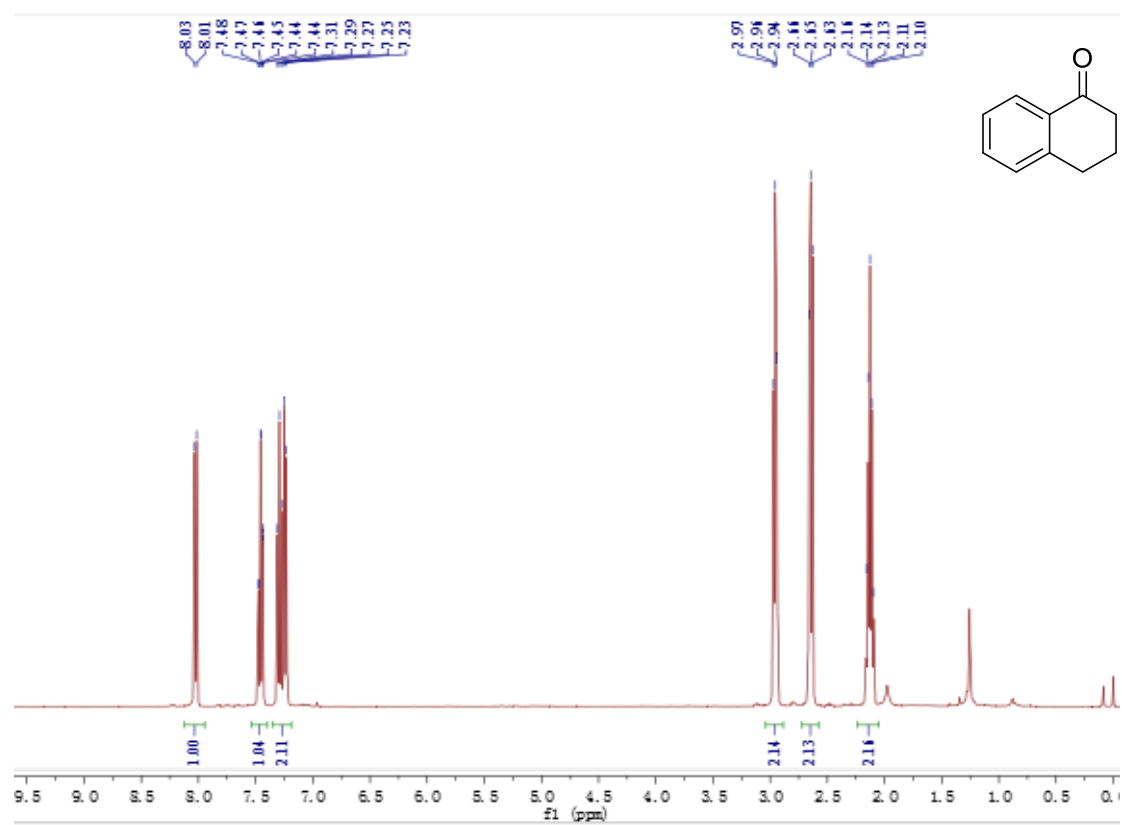
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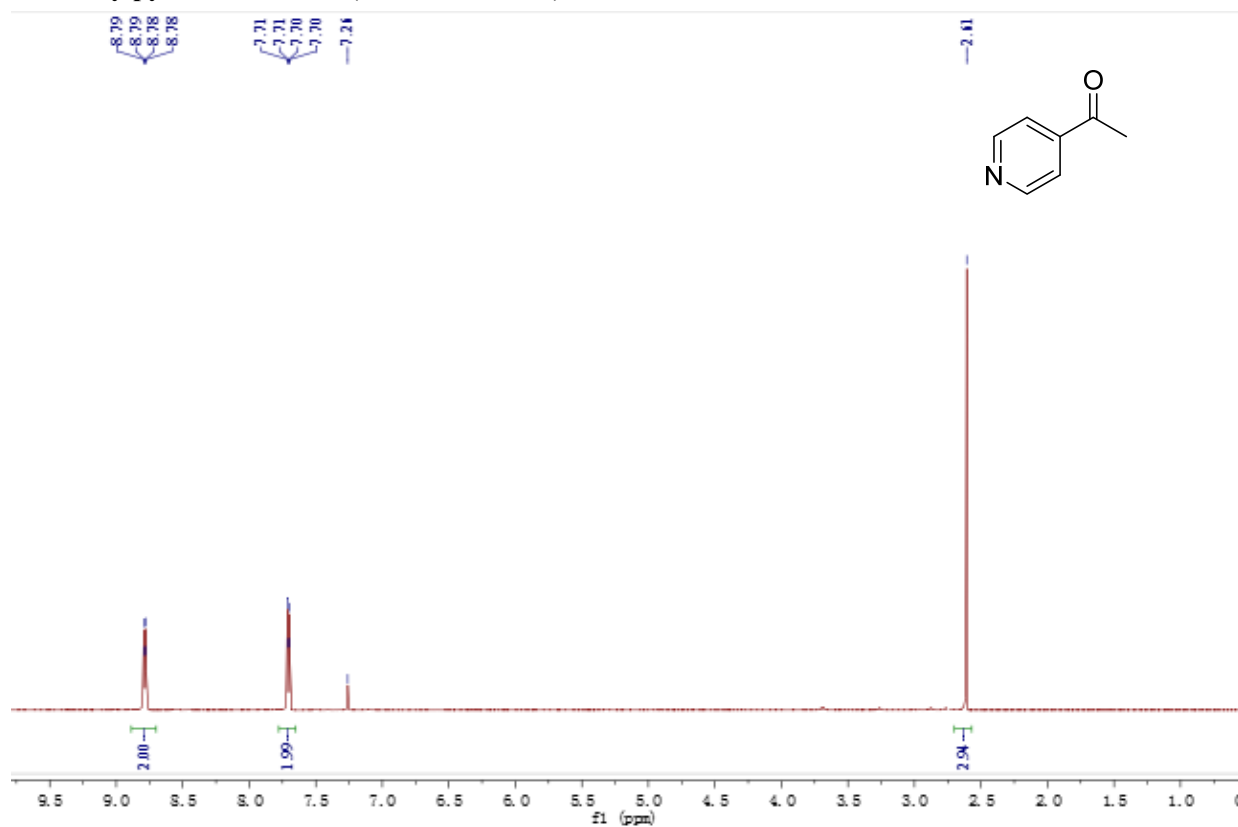
2j 9-fluorenone ^{13}C NMR(101 MHz, CDCl_3)



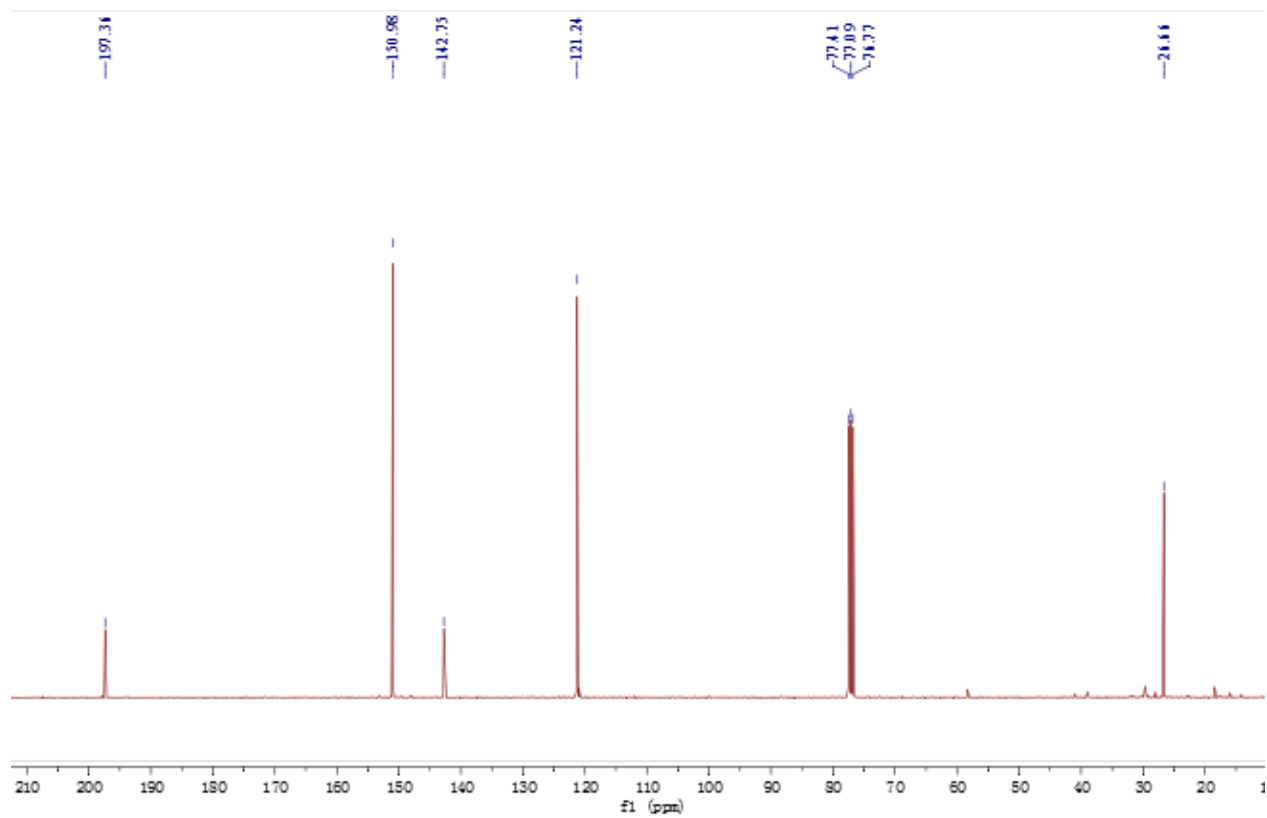
2k α -Tetralone ^1H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl_3)



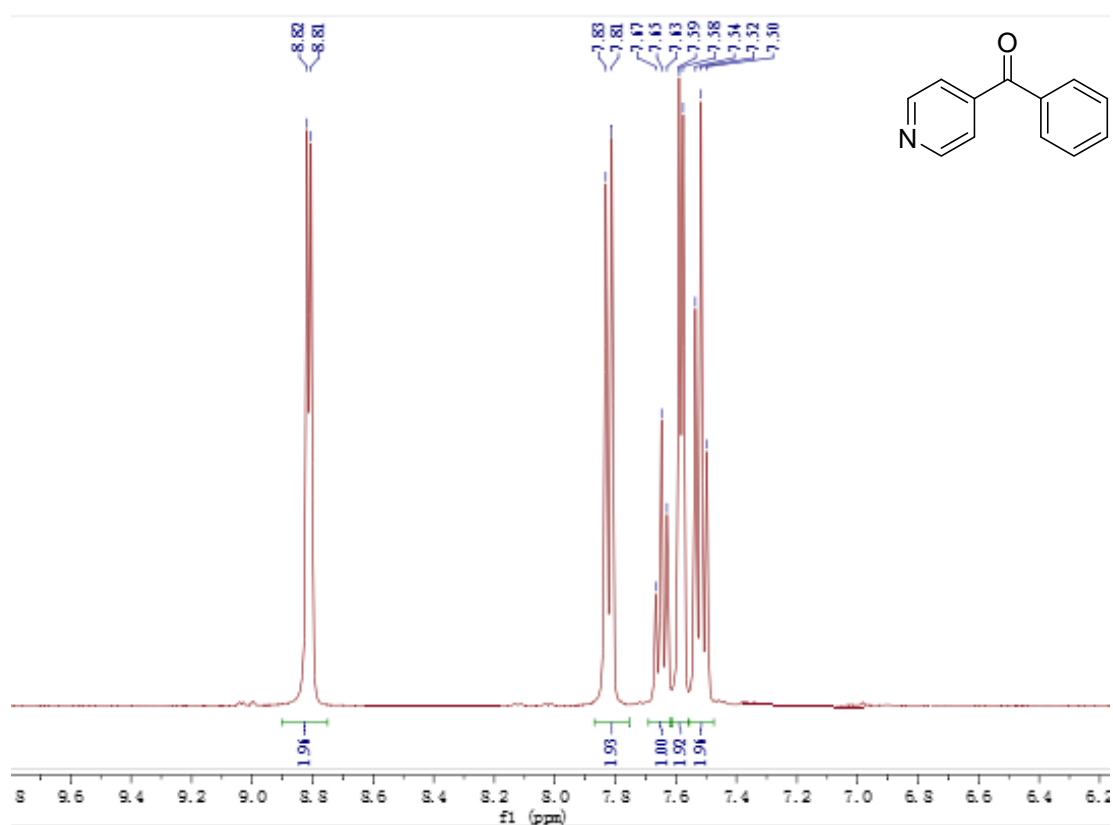
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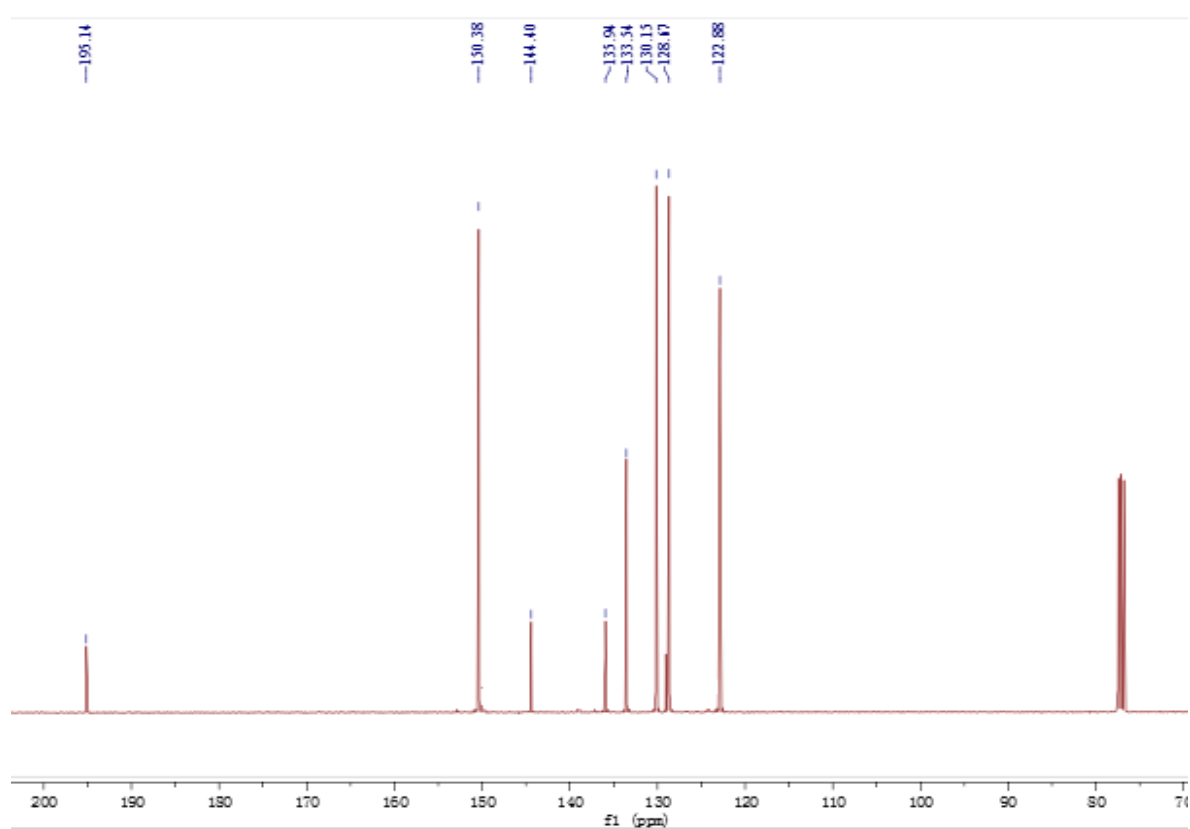
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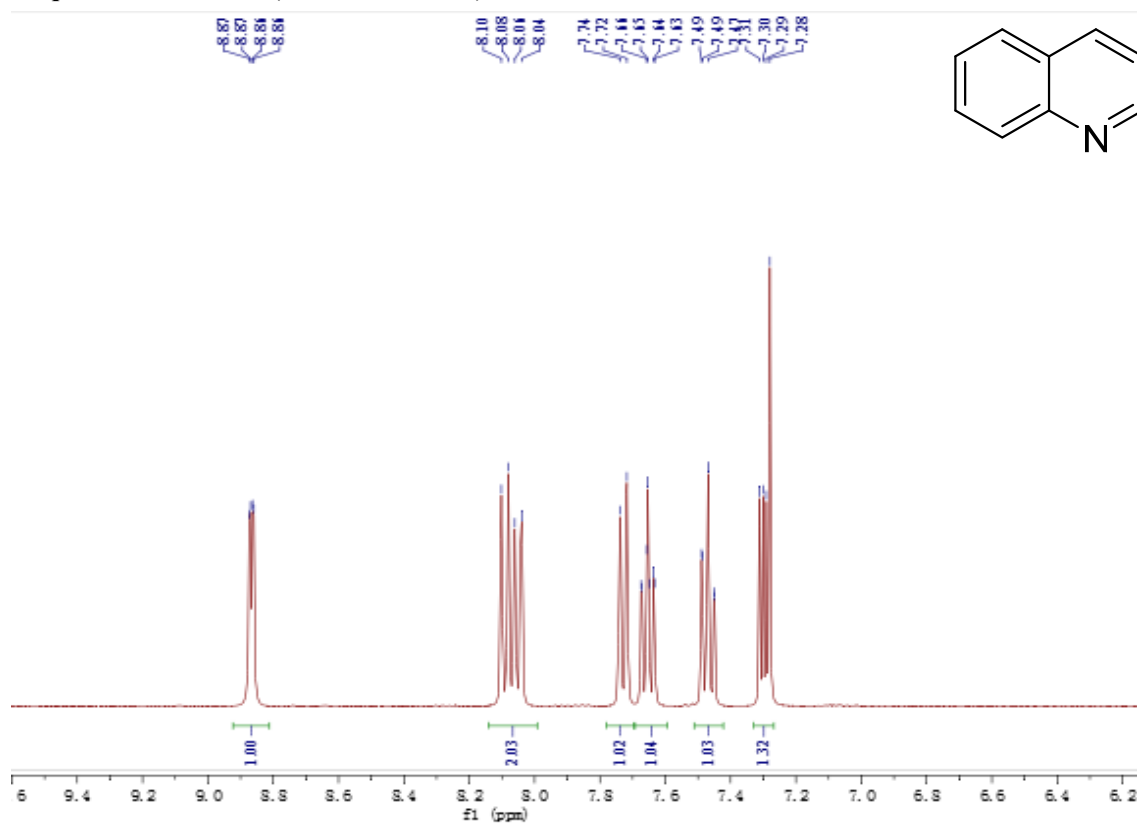
2m 4-benzoylpyridine ^1H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl_3)



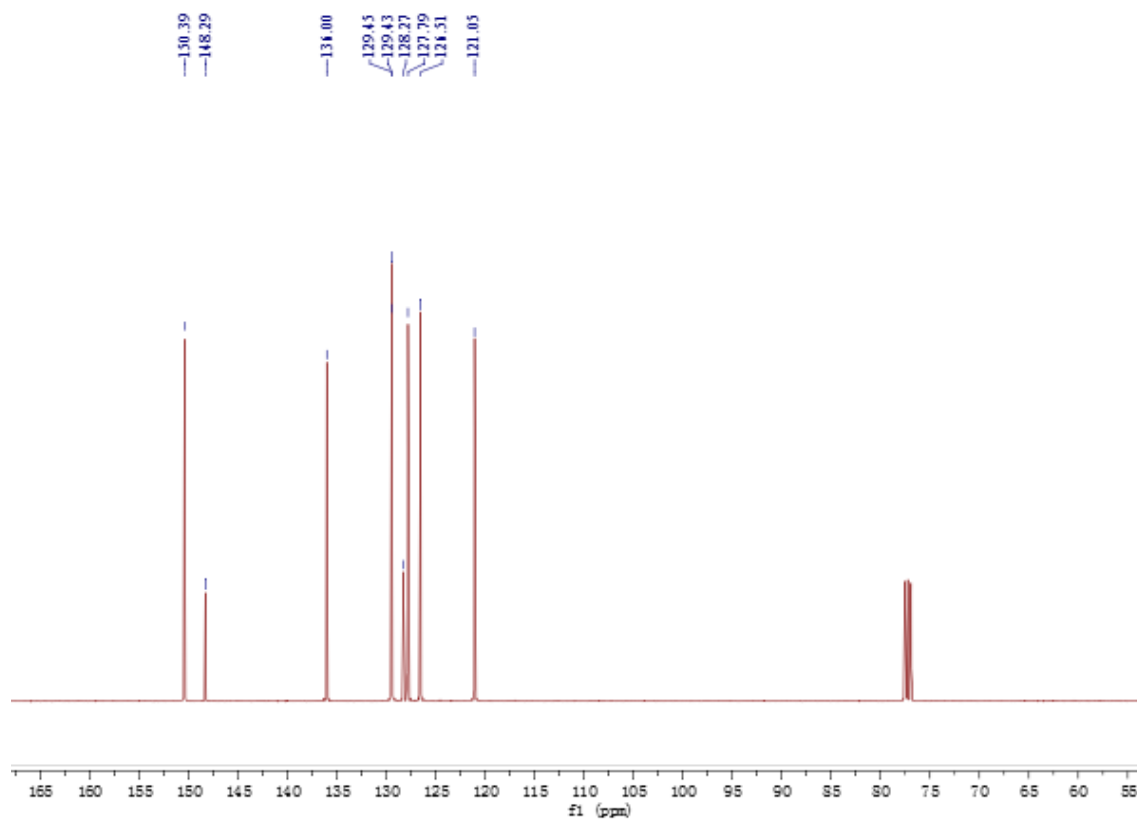
2m 4-benzoylpyridine ^{13}C NMR (101 MHz, CDCl_3)



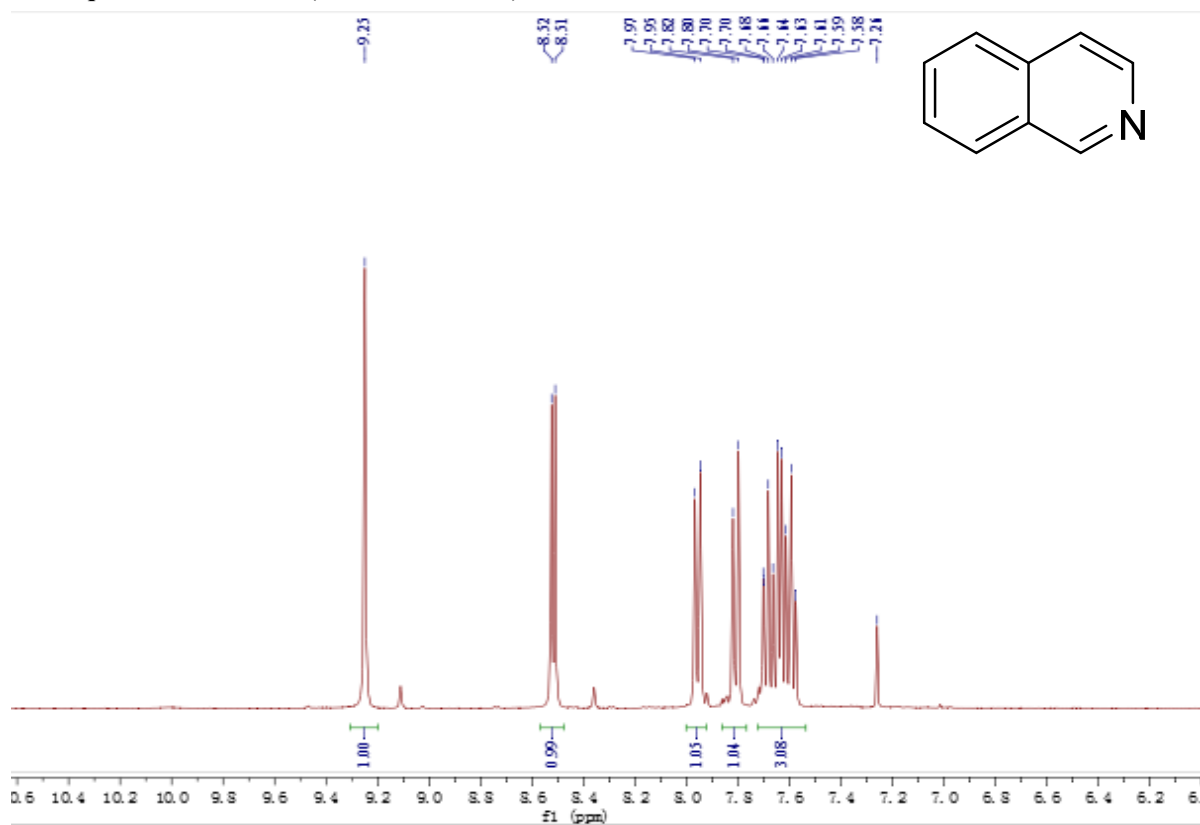
3c quinoline ^1H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl_3)



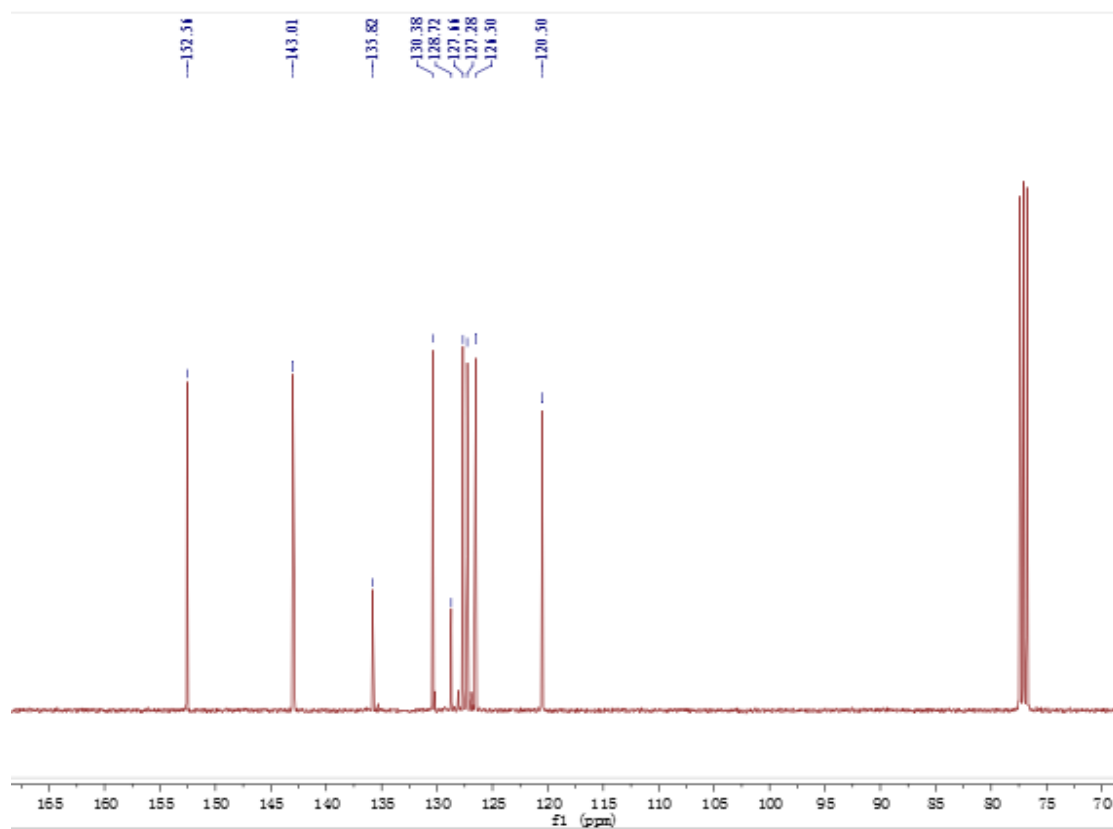
3c quinoline ^{13}C NMR (101 MHz, CDCl_3)



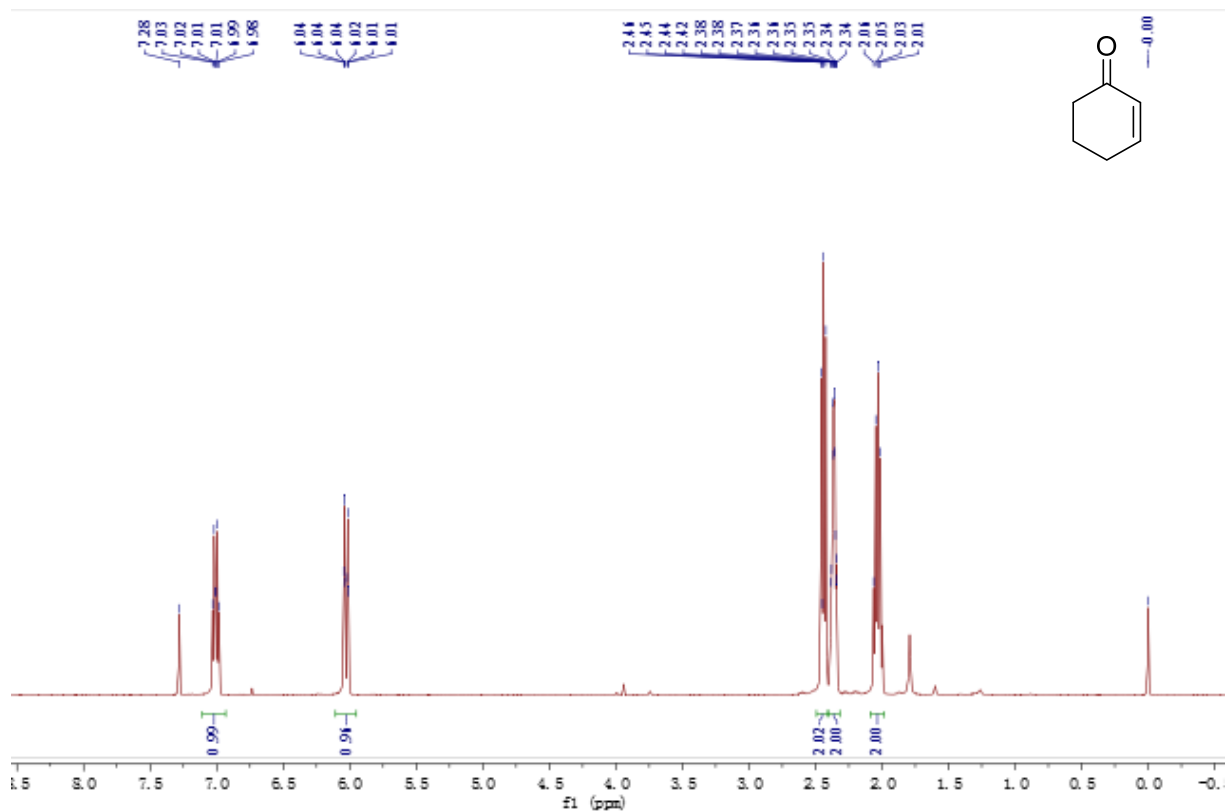
3d isoquinoline ^1H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl_3)



3d isoquinoline ^{13}C NMR (101 MHz, CDCl_3)



4b 2-Cyclohexen-1-one ^1H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl_3)



4b 2-Cyclohexen-1-one ^{13}C NMR (101 MHz, CDCl_3)

