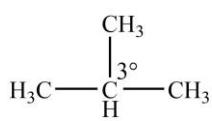


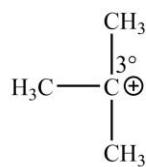
## ❖ Applications of NMR Spectroscopy in the Detection of Carbocations

Carbocations are the typical example of how the study of reaction intermediates is carried out. Two of the most popular and efficient experimental techniques to analyze the properties and structure of carbocationic species are  $^{13}\text{C}$  and PMR (proton magnetic resonance) spectroscopy. The notable work in carbocation chemistry was carried out by George A. Olah, an American chemist who was also awarded the Nobel prize (1994) for the same.

Olah discovered that the NMR spectra of organic precursors in super-acid solutions were indicating relatively stable carbocations. He found that the chemical shifts ( $^{13}\text{C}$  NMR) of carbocations are much downfield than their parent compounds. For instance, the chemical shift for tertiary carbon in tert-butyl carbocation is at 330 ppm whereas the corresponding carbon in isobutane absorbs at 25.2 only. This can be explained in terms of reduced electron density at the carbon center in the carbonium ion.



$\delta = 25.2 \text{ ppm}$



$\delta = 330 \text{ ppm}$

$^{13}\text{C}$  NMR in  $\text{SO}_2\text{ClF-SbF}_5$  Solution

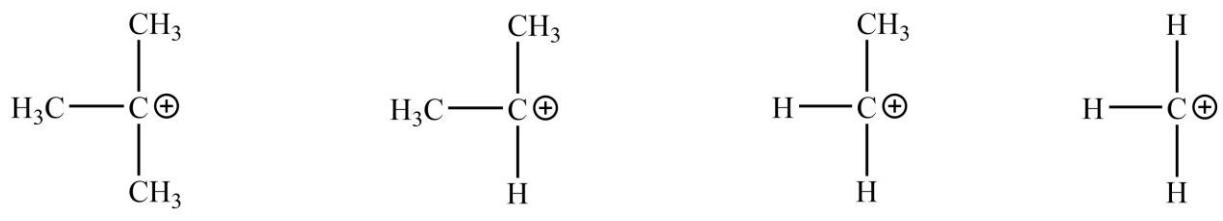
The argument is also supported by other studies such as the NMR spectrum of substituted benzylic carbocations. More precisely, as the electron-withdrawing group becomes stronger at *p*-position in benzylic carbocation, the NMR peaks of cationic carbon shift towards the more down-field region.

Table 1. Benzylic carbocations' peaks in  $^{13}\text{C}$  NMR spectra.

Substituents	$\delta(\text{ppm})$
<i>p</i> -OCH <sub>3</sub>	219
<i>p</i> -CH <sub>3</sub>	243
<i>p</i> -H	255
<i>p</i> -CF <sub>3</sub>	269

Now from Table 1, we might conclude that all electron-donating groups (like alky substituents) at carbonium center should behave in the opposite manner and should decrease the chemical shifts. Nevertheless, it is found that though the electron-donating alkyl groups directly attached to carbonium centers raise their stability, but little to no effect was found upon the chemical shift.

For instance, when  $\text{CS}_2$  was taken as the reference standard, the chemical shift ( $^{13}\text{C}$  NMR) of secondary carbon in isopropyl carbonium ion appears at  $-125 \delta$  whereas the tertiary carbon in tert-butyl carbocation shows the peak at  $-125 \delta$ . All this suggests that the replacement of hydrogen by methyl has actually supported the withdrawal rather than the donation.

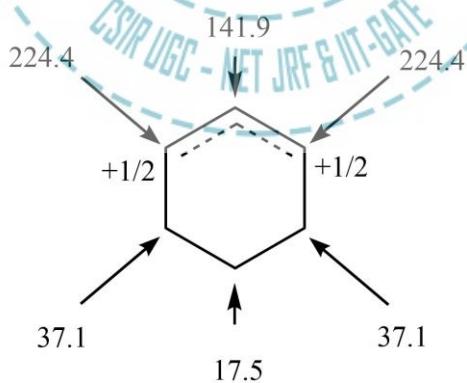


Tertiary  
Carbocation (3°)      Secondary  
Carbocation (2°)      Primary  
Carbocation (1°)      Methyl  
Carbocation

Figure 3. Some typical carbocations.

Furthermore, the molecular orbital theory also proves theoretically that the charges at  $2^\circ$  in isopropyl cation and  $3^\circ$  carbons in tert-butyl carbocations are +0.611 and +0.692, respectively.

Furthermore, the simplest arenium ion produced by the protonation of benzene ring strongly acidic solution can also be detected and studied by employing NMR spectroscopy. The chemical shifts for the o- and p-carbons (w.r.t protonation's site) in the  $^{13}\text{C}$  NMR of arenium ion show very strong downfield movement which can be rationalized in terms of reduced electron density at the same.



A typical allylic cation with  $^{13}\text{CNMR}$  spectrum

It is also worthy to note down from the Figure given above that the similar magnitudes of chemical shifts on the right and left side of carbocation suggest a plane of symmetry in the same.

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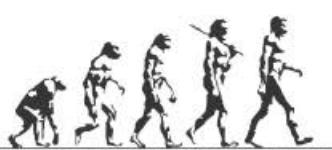
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# A TEXTBOOK OF ORGANIC CHEMISTRY

**Volume I**

**MANDEEP DALAL**



*First Edition*

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**Mandeep Dalal**

(M.Sc, Ph.D, CSIR UGC – NET JRF, IIT-GATE)  
Founder & Educator, Dalal Institute  
E-Mail: [dr.mandeep.dalal@gmail.com](mailto:dr.mandeep.dalal@gmail.com)  
[www.mandeepdalal.com](http://www.mandeepdalal.com)

Mandeep Dalal is an Indian research scholar who is primarily working in the field of Science and Philosophy. He received his Ph.D in Chemistry from Maharshi Dayanand University, Rohtak, in 2018. He is also the Founder of "Dalal Institute" (India's best coaching centre for academic and competitive chemistry exams), the organization that is committed to revolutionize the field of school-level and higher education in Chemistry across the globe. He has published more than 40 research papers in various international scientific journals, including mostly from Elsevier (USA), IOP (UK), and Springer (Netherlands).

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