An alpha (symbol: α) carbon is a carbon atom bonded to a functional group in an organic compound; the carbon atom next to the α carbon is the beta (symbol: β) carbon, and so on (α, β, γ, δ…).

eg:

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{CH}_3 - \text{CH}_2 - \text{CH}_2 - \text{Br} \\
\gamma \quad \beta \quad \alpha
\end{array}
\]

functional group

A compound containing only one functional group may have more than one α carbon.

eg:

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{CH}_3 - \text{C} - \text{CH}_3 \\
\alpha \quad \alpha
\end{array}
\]

functional group

If a compound contains more than one functional group, the terms α-carbon, β-carbon, etc. are meaningful only if the functional group is specified.

eg:

Contributors

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