Fischer esterification is the esterification of a carboxylic acid by heating it with an alcohol in the presence of a strong acid as the catalyst.

eg:

\[
\text{CH}_3\text{CO}_2\text{H} + \text{CH}_3\text{OH} \xrightarrow{\text{conc. } \text{H}_2\text{SO}_4, \Delta} \text{CH}_3\text{CO}_2\text{CH}_3 + \text{H}_2\text{O}
\]

The overall reaction is reversible; to drive the reaction to completion, it is necessary to exploit Le Châteliers principle, which can be done either by continuously removing the water formed from the system or by using a large excess of the alcohol.

Mechanism:

Contributors

- Gamini Gunawardena from the OChemPal site (Utah Valley University)