The Perkin reaction is an organic reaction developed by William Henry Perkin that is used to make cinnamic acids. It gives an α,β-unsaturated aromatic acid by the aldol condensation of an aromatic aldehyde and an acid anhydride, in the presence of an alkali salt of the acid. The alkali salt acts as a base catalyst, and other bases can be used instead.

\[
\text{Ar}^\text{+} + \text{R}^\text{+} + \text{Ar}^\text{+} \xrightarrow{\text{base}} \text{Ar}^\text{+} + \text{R}^\text{+} + \text{HOAc}
\]

Several reviews have been written.

### Reaction mechanism

The above mechanism is not universally accepted, as several other versions exist, including decarboxylation without acetic group transfer.

### Applications

- One notable application for the Perkin reaction is in the laboratory synthesis of the phytoestrogenic stilbene resveratrol (c.f. Fo-ti).