

phase-transfer catalysis

The phenomenon of rate enhancement of a reaction between *chemical species* located in different phases (immiscible liquids or solid and liquid) by addition of a small quantity of an agent (called the ‘phase-transfer *catalyst*’) that extracts one of the reactants, most commonly an anion, across the interface into the other phase so that reaction can proceed. These catalysts are salts of ‘*onium ions*’ (e.g. tetraalkylammonium salts) or agents that complex inorganic cations (e.g. *crown* ethers). The catalyst cation is not consumed in the reaction although an anion exchange does occur.

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