HCR™ RNA-FISH (v3.0) protocol for sample on slide

This protocol has not been validated for all sample types and should only be used as a template.

Technical Support
support@molecularinstruments.com

Safety Data Sheets (SDS)
www.molecularinstruments.com/safety-v3

Patents
www.molecularinstruments.com/patents

Ordering for Multiplex Experiment
Order one HCR™ RNA-FISH (v3.0) kit per target RNA

Example 2-Plex Experiment

- HCR™ RNA-FISH (v3.0) kit for target mRNA1
    - HCR™ Probe (v3.0): target mRNA1 for use with amplifier B1
    - HCR™ Amplifier (v3.0): B1-647
    - HCR™ RNA-FISH Buffers (v3.0): HCR™ Probe Hybridization Buffer (v3.0), HCR™ Probe Wash Buffer (v3.0), HCR™ Amplifier Buffer (v3.0) (for use with all kits)
- HCR™ RNA-FISH (v3.0) kit for target mRNA2
    - HCR™ Probe (v3.0): target mRNA2 for use with amplifier B2
    - HCR™ Amplifier (v3.0): B2-488

Storage conditions

- Store HCR™ Probes (v3.0), HCR™ Amplifiers (v3.0), HCR™ Probe Hybridization Buffer (v3.0), and HCR™ Probe Wash Buffer (v3.0) at -20 °C.
- Store HCR™ Amplifier Buffer (v3.0) at 4 °C.
- On the bench top, keep stock solutions on ice.
- Make sure all solutions are well mixed before use.

Sample preparation

Samples should be prepared in the same manner as for a traditional in situ hybridization, up to the probe hybridization step. This may include permeabilization and protease digestion. Then proceed with the protocol described below.

Multiplexed HCR™ RNA-FISH (v3.0) protocol

Detection stage

1. Pre-warm a humidified chamber to 37 °C.
2. Dry slide by blotting edges on a Kimwipe.
3. Add 200 μL of HCR™ Probe Hybridization Buffer (v3.0) on top of the sample.
   CAUTION: *HCR™ Probe Hybridization Buffer (v3.0) contains formamide, a hazardous material.*
4. Pre-hybridize for 10 min inside the humidified chamber.
5. Prepare probe solution by adding 0.4 pmol of each HCR™ Probe (v3.0) (e.g. 0.4 μL of 1 μM stock) to 100 μL of HCR™ Probe Hybridization Buffer (v3.0) at 37 °C.
   NOTE: *For single-molecule RNA imaging, use higher probe concentration (e.g., 16 nM) to increase probe hybridization yield. If desired, this approach can also be used to increase signal for subcellular quantitative RNA imaging.*
6. Remove the pre-hybridization solution and drain excess buffer on slide by blotting edges on a Kimwipe.
7. Add 50–100 μL of the probe solution on top of the sample.
   NOTE: *Amount of probe solution depends on the size of the coverslip.*
8. Place a coverslip on the sample and incubate overnight (>12 h) in the 37 °C humidified chamber.
9. Immerse slide in HCR™ Probe Wash Buffer (v3.0) at 37 °C to float off coverslip.
   CAUTION: *HCR™ Probe Wash Buffer (v3.0) contains formamide, a hazardous material.*
10. Remove excess probes by incubating slide at 37 °C in:
    (a) 75% of HCR™ Probe Wash Buffer (v3.0) / 25% 5× SSCT for 15 min
    (b) 50% of HCR™ Probe Wash Buffer (v3.0) / 50% 5× SSCT for 15 min
    (c) 25% of HCR™ Probe Wash Buffer (v3.0) / 75% 5× SSCT for 15 min
    (d) 100% 5× SSCT for 15 min

    NOTE: *Wash solutions should be pre-heated to 37 °C before use.*
11. Immerse slide in 5× SSCT for 5 min at room temperature.

Amplification stage

1. Dry slide by blotting edges on a Kimwipe.
2. Add 200 μL of HCR™ Amplifier Buffer (v3.0) on top of the sample and pre-amplify in a humidified chamber for 30 min at room temperature.
   NOTE: *equilibrate HCR™ Amplifier Buffer (v3.0) to room temperature before use.*
3. Separately prepare 6 pmol of hairpin h1 and 6 pmol of hairpin h2 by snap cooling 2 μL of 3 μM stock (heat at 95 °C for 90 seconds and cool to room temperature in a dark drawer for 30 min).
   NOTE: *Hairpins h1 and h2 are provided in hairpin storage buffer ready for snap cooling. h1 and h2 should be snap cooled in separate tubes.*
4. Prepare hairpin solution by adding snap-cooled h1 hairpins and snap-cooled h2 hairpins to 100 μL of HCR™ Amplifier Buffer (v3.0) at room temperature.
5. Remove the pre-amplification solution and drain excess buffer on slide by blotting edges on a Kimwipe.
6. Add 50–100 μL of the hairpin solution on top of the sample.
   NOTE: *Amount of hairpin solution depends on the size of the coverslip.*
7. Place a coverslip on the sample and incubate overnight ($>$12 h) in a dark humidified chamber at room temperature.
   NOTE: *For single-molecule RNA imaging, amplify for a shorter period of time to ensure single-molecule dots are diffraction-limited.*
8. Immerse slide in 5× SSCT at room temperature to float off coverslip.
9. Remove excess hairpins by incubating slide in 5× SSCT at room temperature for:
   (a) 2 × 30 min
   (b) 1 × 5 min
10. Dry slide by blotting edges on a Kimwipe.
11. Add 50–100 μL of antifade mounting reagent on top of the sample.
12. Place a coverslip on top for microscopy.

Buffer recipe

5× SSCT	For 40 mL of solution
5× sodium chloride sodium citrate (SSC)	10 mL of 20× SSC
0.1% Tween 20	400 μL of 10% Tween 20
	Fill up to 40 mL with ultrapure H_2O

S1 HCR™ Technology Citation Notes

For citation, please select from the list below as appropriate for your application:

- **HCR™ RNA-ISH**
  HCR™ RNA in situ hybridization (RNA-ISH) offers unmatched performance, robustness, and versatility imaging RNA targets in diverse organisms and sample types (Choi et al., 2010, Choi et al., 2014, Choi et al., 2018):
  - **HCR™ RNA-FISH**
    HCR™ RNA-FISH enables 10-plex, quantitative, high-resolution RNA fluorescence in situ hybridization (RNA-FISH) with automatic background suppression throughout the protocol for dramatically enhanced performance (signal-to-background, quantitative precision, single-molecule fidelity) and ease-of-use (no probe set optimization for new targets and organisms).
  - **Enzymatic HCR™ RNA-CISH/RNA-FISH**
    Enzymatic HCR™ RNA-ISH integrates enzymatic signal amplification to enable extreme-sensitivity RNA imaging using either chromogenic or fluorescent staining (RNA-CISH/RNA-FISH). In tissue sections, entirely protease-free workflows preserve sample morphology and maintain protein target integrity, enabling seamless compatibility with existing immunohistochemistry (IHC)/immunofluorescence (IF) assays. HCR™ RNA-CISH offers the convenience of brightfield microscopy and the option of archival staining.

- **10-Plex HCR™ Spectral Imaging**
  HCR™ RNA-FISH/IF enables quantitative high-resolution imaging of 10 RNA and/or protein targets with 1-step HCR™ signal amplification for all targets simultaneously. The method is suitable even for whole-mounts and delicate samples as it requires no repeated staining, imaging, registration, or stripping (Schulte et al., 2024).

- **HCR™ RNA-FISH/IF**
  HCR™ RNA-FISH/IF enables a unified approach to multiplex, quantitative, high-resolution RNA fluorescence in situ hybridization (RNA-FISH) and protein immunofluorescence (IF), with quantitative 1-step enzyme-free signal amplification performed for all RNA and protein targets simultaneously (Schwarzkopf et al., 2021).

- **HCR™ IF**
  HCR™ IF enables multiplex, quantitative, high-resolution protein immunofluorescence (IF) in highly autofluorescent samples (e.g., FFPE brain tissue sections) (Schwarzkopf et al., 2021).

- **Subcellular Quantitative RNA and Protein Imaging**
  HCR™ RNA-FISH enables analog relative quantitation of RNA and/or protein targets with subcellular resolution in the anatomical context of thick autofluorescent samples (e.g., whole-mount vertebrate embryos) (Trivedi et al., 2018, Choi et al., 2018, Schwarzkopf et al., 2021).

- **Single-Molecule Quantitative RNA Imaging**
  HCR™ RNA-FISH enables digital RNA absolute quantitation with single-molecule resolution in the anatomical context of thick autofluorescent samples (e.g., 0.5 mm adult mouse brain sections) (Shah et al., 2016, Choi et al., 2018).

- **Read-Out/Read-In Analysis Framework**
  The read-out/read-in analysis framework enables bidirectional quantitative discovery in an anatomical context (Trivedi et al., 2018).

- **Protocols in Diverse Sample Types**
  Protocols for HCR™ RNA-FISH and/or IF in diverse sample types are adapted from the zoo paper (Choi et al., 2016):
    - bacteria in suspension
    - FFPE human tissue sections
    - generic sample in solution
    - generic sample on a slide
    - mammalian cells on a slide
    - mammalian cells in suspension
    - whole-mount chicken embryos
    - whole-mount fruit fly embryos
    - whole-mount mouse embryos
    - whole-mount nematode larvae
    - whole-mount sea urchin embryos
    - whole-mount zebrafish embryos and larvae
- **HCR™ RNA Flow Cytometry**
  HCR™ RNA Flow Cytometry enables analog RNA relative quantitation for high-throughput expression profiling of mammalian cells and bacteria without the need to engineer reporter lines (Choi et al., 2018).
- **HCR™ Northern Blots**
  HCR™ Northern Blots enable simultaneous quantification of RNA target size and abundance with automatic background suppression throughout the protocol (Schwarzkopf & Pierce, 2016).
- **HCR™ Amplifiers**
  HCR™ Amplifiers enable multiplex, quantitative, 1-step, isothermal, enzyme-free signal amplification in diverse technological settings (Dirks & Pierce, 2004).