

Jul 11, 2019

Version 2

Expression and purification of (GST-tagged) (Kai) proteins V.2

 Version 1 is forked from [Expression and purification of \(GST-tagged\) \(Kai\) proteins](#)

 [Journal of Bacteriology](#)

DOI

<https://dx.doi.org/10.17504/protocols.io.48ggztw>

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DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.17504/protocols.io.48ggztw>

External link: <https://doi.org/10.1128/JB.00478-19>

Protocol Citation: Anika Wiegard, Christin Köbler, Katsuaki Oyama, Anja K. Dörrich, Chihiro Azai, Kazuki Terauchi, Annegret Wilde, Ilka Maria Axmann 2019. Expression and purification of (GST-tagged) (Kai) proteins. **protocols.io**
<https://dx.doi.org/10.17504/protocols.io.48ggztw>

Manuscript citation:

Wiegard A, Köbler C, Oyama K, Dörrich AK, Azai C, Terauchi K, Wilde A, Axmann IM, Array. Journal of Bacteriology 202(4). doi: [10.1128/JB.00478-19](https://doi.org/10.1128/JB.00478-19)

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Protocol status: Working

We use this protocol and it's working

Created: July 06, 2019

Last Modified: July 11, 2019

Protocol Integer ID: 25576

Keywords: expression, purification, pGEX, Kai proteins, GST-tag, affinity chromatography, anion exchange chromatography, putative kaic clock protein, putative kaic clock proteins from synechocystis sp, purification of recombinant protein, further purification of the eluted protein, heterologous expression of gst, tagged protein, proteins this protocol, further purification, recombinant protein, eluted protein, protein, using glutathione, biochemical analysis, gst, glutathione



Abstract

This protocol can be used for:

- (i) heterologous expression of GST-tagged proteins from pGEX-6P1 based expression vectors in *E. coli*.
- (ii) purification of recombinant proteins via affinity chromatography using glutathione-agarose or glutathione-sepharose (GST tagged protein can be eluted with glutathione. Alternatively, the tag can be cleaved off by prescission protease)
- (iii) further purification of the eluted protein via anion exchange chromatography

This protocol was modified from

Wiegard A, Dörrich AK, Deinzer HT, Beck C, Wilde A, Holtzendorff J, Axmann IM: Biochemical analysis of three putative KaiC clock proteins from *Synechocystis* sp. PCC 6803 suggests their functional divergence. *Microbiology* 2013, 159, 948-958

Snijder J, Schuller JM, Wiegard A, Lössel, P, Schmelling NM, Axmann IM, Plitzko JM, Förster F, Heck AJR: Structures of the cyanobacterial circadian oscillator frozen in a fully assembled state. *Science* 2017, 355(6330):1181-1184

Guidelines

Note that KaiC from *Synechococcus elongatus* PCC 7942 aggregates in the absence of ATP. Add 1 mM ATP and 5 mM MgCl₂ to all buffers for KaiC purification.

You can purify your recombinant protein with GST-tag or remove the GST-tag during elution.

If you want to retain the GST-tag, skip steps 17-22.

If you want to cleave off the GST-tag, skip steps 23-27.



Materials

MATERIALS

- ✕ BL21 Competent E.coli - 20×0.05 ml **New England Biolabs Catalog #C2530H**
- ✕ Magnesium chloride hexahydrate **Merck MilliporeSigma (Sigma-Aldrich)**
- ✕ Tris(hydroxymethyl)aminomethane **Merck MilliporeSigma (Sigma-Aldrich) Catalog #252859-500G**
- ✕ NaCl
- ✕ Lysozyme **Merck MilliporeSigma (Sigma-Aldrich) Catalog #12671-19-1**
- ✕ Ampicillin sodium salt **Merck MilliporeSigma (Sigma-Aldrich) Catalog #A0166**
- ✕ EDTA
- ✕ 14 Dithiotreitol (DTT) **Carl Roth Catalog #6908.1**
- ✕ Adenosin-5-triphosphate disodium salt (ATP) **Carl Roth Catalog #HN35.1**
- ✕ Quick Start™ Bradford 1x Dye Reagent **Bio-Rad Laboratories Catalog #5000205**
- ✕ pGEX-6P-1 Vector **GE Healthcare Catalog #28954648**
- ✕ IPTG **Carl Roth Catalog #2316.2**
- ✕ L-Glutathione reduced **Catalog #6382.1**
- ✕ MonoQ 5/50GL **GE Healthcare Catalog #17516601**
- ✕ ResourceQ **GE Healthcare Catalog #17117701**

STEP MATERIALS

- ✕ Terrific-Broth-Medium **Carl Roth Catalog #X972.2**
- ✕ Protino® Glutathione Agarose 4B **Macherey-Nagal Catalog # 745500.10**
- ✕ Glutathione sepharose 4B **GE Healthcare**
- ✕ PreScission Protease **GE Healthcare Catalog #27084301**
- ✕ Benzonase **Merck Millipore (EMD Millipore) Catalog #101654**



Protocol materials

✕ IPTG **Carl Roth Catalog #2316.2**

✕ ResourceQ **GE Healthcare Catalog #17117701**

✕ Terrific-Broth-Medium **Carl Roth Catalog #X972.2**

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✕ NaCl

✕ Adenosin-5-triphosphate disodium salt (ATP) **Carl Roth Catalog #HN35.1**

✕ BL21 Competent E.coli - 20×0.05 ml **New England Biolabs Catalog #C2530H**

✕ L-Glutathione reduced **Catalog #6382.1**

✕ Lysozyme **Merck MilliporeSigma (Sigma-Aldrich) Catalog #12671-19-1**

✕ 14 Dithiotreitol (DTT) **Carl Roth Catalog #6908.1**

heterologous protein expression in E.coli

- 1 transformation:
 - transform *E.coli* expression cells (e.g. *E. coli* BL21) with your pGEX-6P1 based expression plasmid
- 2 pre-culture:
 - inoculate 100 ml terrific broth medium containing 100 µg ampicillin ml⁻¹ with resulting transformants
 - incubate over night at 37 °C and 200-250 r.p.m.

 Terrific-Broth-Medium **Carl Roth Catalog #X972.2**

- 3 expression culture:
 - inoculate 1 l terrific broth medium containing 100 µg ampicillin ml⁻¹ with the pre-culture
 - incubate at 37 °C and 200-250 r.p.m.

Note: use erlenmeyer flasks with a volume of at least 2 l to ensure sufficient aeration.
- 4 induction of protein expression:

For KaiC proteins:

- grow cells without induction at 37 °C for approx. 72 hours

Note: the promotor is leaky and will allow low protein expression and production of soluble protein, even without induction. Contrary to this, induction of kaiC expression leads to protein aggregation in inclusion bodies.

For KaiA and KaiB proteins:

- grow cells for 3 hours at 37 °C
- add IPTG to a final concentration of 1 mM and
- continue incubation at 37 °C and 200-250 r.p.m. over night

cell harvest

- 5
 - spin down cells for 10 min at 4°C and 4000g
 - discard supernatant and keep cells on ice.

 00:10:00 centrifugation

cell disruption

- 6 enzymatic lysis by lysozyme:



- resuspend cells in 15 ml ice-cold extraction buffer [50 mM Tris/HCl (pH8), 150 mM NaCl, 0.5 mM EDTA, 1 mM DTT (*only for KaiC proteins: 5 mM MgCl₂, 1 mM ATP*)]. For this resuspend pellet thoroughly in 5 ml buffer using a paint brush or pasteur pipette. Then add the remaining 10 ml buffer and mix well without creating foam
- add a spatula tip's worth of lysozyme (or add lysozyme stock solution to a final concentration of 1mg lysozyme ml⁻¹)
- add 125 U benzonase
- incubate on ice for 30 min. Optional: mix every 5 min or place on a magnetic stirrer

Note: you can skip enzymatic lysis step and perform longer sonication instead

 00:30:00 incubation on ice

 Benzonase **Merck Millipore (EMD Millipore) Catalog #101654**

7 sonication:

- sonicate the cell suspension for 6 min on ice using e.g. a Bandelin sonopuls homogenizer and the following parameters:

Note: During sonication, the temperature of the cell suspension should be kept below 15 °C

Note: if you did not perform enzymatic lysis as described before, use alternative prolonged sonication conditions (e.g. alternation of 10 sec pulse and 10 sec pause for 25 minutes with 30 % output)

tip	KE76
cycle	3 (0.3 sec active cycle, 0.7 sec passive cycle)
output	60 %

 00:06:00 sonication

8 clarification of the lysate:

- centrifuge the resulting lysate for 20 min at 4 °C and 23000 g to remove insolubles
- Keep the resulting supernatant (= soluble proteins) on ice

Note: Many conical centrifugation tubes cannot withstand centrifugation of 23000g. If you want to use them, you can reduce centrifugal force, while increasing centrifugation time.

 00:20:00 centrifugation

affinity purification

9 equilibration of glutathione resin:

- swirl stock solution of glutathione agarose 4B or glutathione sepharose 4B gently

- transfer 1 ml in a 50 ml conical centrifugation tube
- Add 5-10 ml extraction buffer
- centrifuge for 4 min at 1500 g and 4 °C using a swing out rotor
- discard supernatant carefully.

 00:04:00 centrifugation

 Protino® Glutathione Agarose 4B **Macherey-Nagel Catalog # 745500.10**

 Glutathione sepharose 4B **GE Healthcare**

- 10 protein binding:
- add soluble proteins from step 8 to glutathione resin
 - rotate overhead for at least 20 min at RT (use e.g. an intelli mixer and program F1 at 5 r.p.m).

Note: incubation can be extended up to 3 hours.

 00:20:00 incubation at RT

- 11
- spin down glutathione resin for 4 min at 1500 g and 4 °C using a swing out rotor
 - discard supernatant carefully.

 00:04:00 centrifugation

- 12 washing step 1:
- add 45 ml ice cold extraction buffer
 - mix thoroughly
 - centrifuge for 4 min at 1500 g and 4 °C using a swing out rotor
 - discard supernatant carefully.

 00:04:00 centrifugation

- 13 washing step 2:
- add 45 ml ice cold extraction buffer
 - mix thoroughly
 - centrifuge for 4 min at 1500 g and 4 °C using a swing out rotor
 - discard supernatant carefully.

 00:04:00 centrifugation

- 14 washing step 3:
- add 45 ml ice cold extraction buffer
 - mix thoroughly
 - centrifuge for 4 min at 1500 g and 4 °C using a swing out rotor
 - discard supernatant carefully.

00:04:00 centrifugation

- 15 washing step 4:
- add 45 ml ice cold extraction buffer
 - mix thoroughly
 - centrifuge for 4 min at 1500 g and 4 °C using a swing out rotor
 - discard supernatant carefully.

00:04:00 centrifugation

- 16
- use 1 ml ice cold prescission buffer [50 mM Tris/HCl (pH8), 150 mM NaCl, 1 mM EDTA, 1 mM DTT (*only for KaiC proteins: 5 mM MgCl₂, 1 mM ATP*)] to transfer pelleted resin to a 2 ml reaction tube
 - centrifuge for 4 min at 1500 g and 4 °C
 - discard supernatant using a pipette
 - repeat this step until all of glutathione resin is transferred to the reaction tube.

Note: if you want to elute the GST-fused protein later (without cleavage by prescission protease), you can use extraction buffer instead of prescission buffer.

00:04:00 centrifugation

option 1: elution of the untagged protein (part of affinity purification)

- 17 overnight cleavage:
- mix glutathione resin with 500 µl ice cold prescission buffer
 - add 12.5 µl prescission protease
 - incubate overnight at 4 °C under constant rotation of the tube (use e.g. an intelli mixer and program F4 at 5 r.p.m).

Note: This section describes elution of the untagged protein via cleavage by prescission protease. If you want to elute the recombinant GST-tagged protein (without removal of the tag), skip these steps and move on to step 23 instead.

00:04:00 centrifugation

 PreScission Protease **GE Healthcare Catalog #27084301**

- 18 elution 1:
- spin down glutathione resin for 4 min at 1500 g and 4 °C
 - transfer the supernatant to a fresh tube (=eluate 1).

Note: This section describes elution of the untagged protein via cleavage by prescission protease. If you want to elute the recombinant GST-tagged protein (without removal of the tag), skip these steps and move on to step 23 instead.

 00:04:00 centrifugation

19 elution 2:

- spin down glutathione resin for 4 min at 1500 g and 4 °C
- transfer the supernatant to a fresh tube (=eluate 2).

Note: This section describes elution of the untagged protein via cleavage by prescission protease. If you want to elute the recombinant GST-tagged protein (without removal of the tag), skip these steps and move on to step 23 instead.

 00:04:00 centrifugation

20 elution 3:

- spin down glutathione resin for 4 min at 1500 g and 4 °C
- transfer the supernatant to a fresh tube (=eluate 3).

Note: This section describes elution of the untagged protein via cleavage by prescission protease. If you want to elute the recombinant GST-tagged protein (without removal of the tag), skip these steps and move on to step 24 instead.

 00:04:00 centrifugation

21 elution 4:

- spin down glutathione resin for 4 min at 1500 g and 4 °C
- transfer the supernatant to a fresh tube (=eluate 4).

Note: This section describes elution of the untagged protein via cleavage by prescission protease. If you want to elute the recombinant GST-tagged protein (without removal of the tag), skip these steps and move on to step 23 instead.

 00:04:00 centrifugation

22 elution 5:

- spin down glutathione resin for 4 min at 1500 g and 4 °C
- transfer the supernatant to a fresh tube (=eluate 5).

Note: This section describes elution of the untagged protein via cleavage by prescission protease. If you want to elute the recombinant GST-tagged protein (without removal of the tag), skip these steps and move on to step 23 instead.

 00:04:00 centrifugation**option 2: elution of the GST-tagged protein (part of affinity purification)**

23 elution 1:

- freshly prepare glutathione solution [weight 40 mM reduced L-glutathione and 50 mM Tris, dissolve in water and adjust to pH 8 with NaOH (**important!**); only for KaiC: add 5 mM MgCl₂, 1 mM ATP]
- add 1 ml glutathione solution
- incubate for 5 min at RT under constant rotation of the tube (use e.g. an intelli mixer and program F4 at 5 r.p.m)
- spin down glutathione resin for 4 min at 1500 g and 4 °C
- transfer the supernatant to a fresh tube (=eluate 1).

Note: This section describes the elution of the GST-tagged protein. If you removed the GST-tag by cleavage with prescission (steps 17-22), you have to skip these steps.

Please move on to step 28 instead.

 00:05:00 incubation

 00:04:00 centrifugation

24 elution 2:

- Add 500 µl glutathione solution
- incubate for 5 min at RT under constant rotation of the tube (use e.g. an intelli mixer and program F4 at 5 r.p.m)
- spin down glutathione resin for 4 min at 1500 g and 4 °C
- transfer the supernatant to a fresh tube (=eluate 2).

Note: This section describes the elution of the GST-tagged protein. If you removed the GST-tag by cleavage with prescission (steps 17-22), you have to skip these steps.

Please move on to step 28 instead.

 00:05:00 incubation

 00:04:00 centrifugation

25 elution 3:

- add 500 µl glutathione solution and incubate for 5 min at RT under constant rotation of the tube (use e.g. an intelli mixer and program F4 at 5 r.p.m)
- spin down glutathione resin for 4 min at 1500 g and 4 °C
- transfer the supernatant to a fresh tube (=eluate 3).

Note: This section describes the elution of the GST-tagged protein. If you removed the GST-tag by cleavage with prescission (steps 17-22), you have to skip these steps.

Please move on to step 28 instead.

 00:05:00 incubation

 00:04:00 centrifugation

26 elution 4:

- add 500 µl glutathione solution and incubate for 5 min at RT under constant rotation of the tube (use e.g. an intelli mixer and program F4 at 5 r.p.m)
- spin down glutathione resin for 4 min at 1500 g and 4 °C
- transfer the supernatant to a fresh tube (=eluate 4).

Note: This section describes the elution of the GST-tagged protein. If you removed the GST-tag by cleavage with prescission (steps 17-22), you have to skip these steps. Please move on to step 28 instead.

 00:05:00 incubation

 00:04:00 centrifugation

27 elution 5:

- add 500 µl glutathione solution and incubate for 5 min at RT under constant rotation of the tube (use e.g. an intelli mixer and program F4 at 5 r.p.m)
- spin down glutathione resin for 4 min at 1500 g and 4 °C
- transfer the supernatant to a fresh tube (=eluate 5).

Note: This section describes the elution of the GST-tagged protein. If you removed the GST-tag by cleavage with prescission (steps 17-22), you have to skip these steps. Please move on to step 28 instead.

 00:05:00 incubation

 00:04:00 centrifugation

affinity purification

28 qualitative analysis of elutate fractions:

- for each fraction, mix 80 µl of Bradford solution with 5-20 µl of your fraction in a well of a 96 well plate
- a colour change to blue indicates sucessfull elution of proteins
- keep those fractions.

Note: You can further control quality of the protein by separation via SDS-PAGE.

29 buffer exchange:

- mix all eluate fractions of sufficient protein quality
- transfer them to a disposable centrifugal concentrator
- concentrate protein by centrifugation
- add your desired buffer and concentrate again
- repeat this step until the buffer is completely exchanged

Note: choose the molecular cut-off of the concentrator and centrifugal force according to the manufacturer's instructions.

For Kai proteins you can use the following buffers (depending on the desired application):

KaiA	20 mM Tris/HCl (pH 8), 150 mM NaCl, 0.5 mM EDTA (optional 5 mM MgCl ₂ , 1 mM ATP)
KaiB	20 mM Tris/HCl (pH 8), 150 mM NaCl, 0.5 mM EDTA (optional 5 mM MgCl ₂ , 1 mM ATP)
KaiC	20 mM Tris/HCl (pH 8), 150 mM NaCl, 0.5 mM EDTA, 5 mM



		MgC I ₂ , 1mM ATP
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Note: It is important to remove glutathione by sufficient buffer exchange. If you eluted the protein in prescission buffer and want to further purify it via anion exchange chromatography, buffer exchange is not necessary. You can control homogeneity of your protein by separation via SDS-PAGE. If it is sufficient for your application, you can stop the protocol here. If it is not sufficient for your application, you have to further purify your protein via anion exchange chromatography (steps 30-35)

anion exchange chromatography

30 set-up of your liquid chromatography system:

- connect 10 ml sample loop to your system
- connect a MonoQ column (1 ml) or ResourceQ column (1 ml) to your system
- exchange ethanol in capillaries and sample loop by water
- wash the column with at least 10 column volumes degassed MilliQ (*do not use higher flowrates than 1 ml/ml*)
- connect the following buffers as eluant A and eluent B:

eluent	buffer composition
A	50 mM Tris/HCl (pH8), 1 mM EDTA, 1 mM DTT <i>only for KaiC proteins: 5 mM MgCl₂, 1 mM ATP</i>
B	50 mM Tris/HCl (pH8), 1 M NaCl, 1 mM EDTA, 1 mM DTT <i>only for KaiC proteins: 5 mM MgCl₂, 1 mM ATP</i>

31 equilibration of the column:

- equilibrate the column with at least 10 column volumes buffer A

Note: Do not use higher flowrates than 1 ml/min. It is better to equilibrate at lower flow rates overnight.

32 optional:

- if you want to test your set-up you can run the following program without injecting a sample
- monitor absorption at 280 nm

	column volume	flowrate	eluent	action	fractions
	10	1 ml/min	100 % A	autozero	no



2	1 ml/min	100 % A		no
20	1 ml/min	gradient from 100 % A to 100 % B		no
5	1 ml/min	100 % B		no
5	1 ml/min	100 A		no

Note: If your instrument can measure two wavelengths in parallel, monitor absorption at 280 and 220 nm

33 protein purification:

- dilute your protein in 10 ml eluent A and apply it to the sample loop (*injection valve must be set to load position*)
- run the following program
- monitor absorption at 280 nm
- collect fractions of 0.5 ml or 1 ml.

	column volume	flowrate	eluent	action	fractions
	10	1 ml/min	100 % A	autozero inject position	0.5-1ml
	2	1 ml/min	100 % A	load position	0.5-1ml
	20	1 ml/min	gradient from 100 % A to 100 % B		0.5-1ml
	5	1 ml/min	100 % B		0.5-1ml
	5	1 ml/min	100 % A		0.5-1ml

Note: If your instrument can measure two wavelengths in parallel, monitor absorption at 280 and 220 nm

34 qualitative analysis of eluate fractions:

- choose fractions of interest based on the absorption at 280 nm
- mix 5-20 µl of each fraction of interest with 80 µl of Bradford solution in a well of a 96 well plate
- a colour change to blue indicates that you successfully eluted proteins
- keep those fractions
- control homogeneity and size of your eluted protein by separation via SDS-PAGE.

- 35 buffer exchange:
- concentrate your protein by centrifugation
 - add your desired buffer
 - concentrate again
 - repeat this step until buffer is completely exchanged

Note: choose the molecular cut-off of the concentrator and centrifugal force according to the manufacturer's instructions.

For Kai proteins you can use the following buffers (depending on your desired application):

KaiA	20 mM Tris/HCl (pH 8), 150 mM NaCl, 0.5 mM EDTA (optional 5 mM MgCl ₂ , 1 mM ATP)
KaiB	20 mM Tris/HCl (pH 8), 150 mM NaCl, 0.5 mM EDTA (optional 5 mM MgCl ₂ , 1 mM ATP)
KaiC	20 mM



		Tris/ HCl (pH 8), 150 mM NaCl , 0.5 mM EDT A, 5 mM MgC l ₂ , 1mM ATP
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