## **Supporting Information**

# **Towards an object-oriented design of active hydrogen evolution catalysts on single-atom alloys**

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#### **Note S1: Theoretical methods**

**Genetic algorithm and encoding**. Genetic-algorithm-based (GA) global optimization method can assist in catalyst design using crossover and mutation (see Fig. 1 in main text), the potential catalytic materials that close to the criteria are gradually found after continuous iteration in this process. Herein, we independently completed the construction of the whole automated workflow. Specifically, we compiled the GA process according to the genetic principle, and customize some advanced functions, such as doping operator. Some underlying functions in the python packages Pymatgen<sup>1</sup> and ASE<sup>2</sup> were used. Additionally, Portable Batch System (PBS) as the queuing system is integrated into our workflow to fulfill job submission and scheduling. Notably, encoding the surface structure is one of the key step for the algorithm. For 9 host metals, we use numbers 1 to 9 to represent them, respectively. {1: 'Ag', 2: 'Al', 3: 'Au', 4: 'Cu', 5: 'Ir', 6: 'Ni', 7: 'Pd', 8: 'Pt', 9: 'Rh'}. Likewise, for 29 guest metals, we use numbers 1 to 29 to represent them, respectively. {1: 'Al', 2: 'Si', 3: 'Ti', 4: 'V', 5: 'Cr', 6: 'Mn', 7: 'Fe', 8: 'Co', 9: 'Ni', 10: 'Cu', 11: 'Zn', 12: 'Ga', 13: 'Ge', 14: 'As', 15: 'Mo', 16: 'Ru', 17: 'Rh', 18: 'Pd', 19: 'Ag', 20: 'In', 21: 'Sn', 22: 'Sb', 23: 'W', 24: 'Re', 25: 'Os', 26: 'Ir', 27: 'Pt', 28: 'Au', 29: 'Pb'}. A specific structure can be mapped to a structural-generepresented string. For example, Pd-Fe-Au configuration indicates the Pd host metal with Fe and Au single atom that replace two Pd atoms of surface, its encoding is expressed as [7, 7, 16], and the next crossover and mutation operations are applied to the coding. In addition, the fitness function determines the convergence speed of GA and whether it can find the optimal solution, which is defined as follows:

$$
fitness(x)=1/|E_x-E_0|
$$
 (S1)

where  $E_x$  and  $E_\theta$  represent the individual adsorption energy of hydrogen and the target adsorption energy of hydrogen, respectively. In this work, GA used by us had a population size of 10 with 20 generations. The crossover employed two single points with the probability of crossover being 0.8, indicating 80% of the strings were picked up randomly in a given generation for crossover. Mutation probability was kept at 0.2.

**Computational details.** All the DFT calculations were performed with the Perdew–Burke–Ernzerhof (PBE) functional using the VASP code<sup>3-4</sup>. The projectaugmented wave (PAW) method was applied to represent the core-valence electron interaction. The valence electronic states were expanded in plane wave basis sets with energy cutoff at 400 eV. The fcc $(111)$  surfaces most exposed by nine host metal  $(Ag)$ , Al, Au, Cu, Ir, Ni, Pd, Pt and Rh) were modeled as a  $p(3\times3)$  periodic slab with four layers for the adsorption of hydrogen, The bottom two layers are fixed, and all other atoms are fully relaxed.  $3\times3\times1$  k-point mesh was used for these surface slabs. For the bulk structure, 5×5×5 k-point mesh was used. All the vacuum between slabs is 10 Å. The force threshold for the optimization was  $0.05$  eV/Å. In this work, the hydrogen adsorption energy  $(E_H)$  was calculated by using the following equation:

$$
E_H = E(H/SAAs) - E(SAAs) - 1/2E(H_2)
$$
\n
$$
(S2)
$$

where *E*(*H/SAAs*) is the total energy of the interacting H/SAAs system, *E*(*SAAs*) and  $E(H_2)$  are the total energies of the gas-phase  $H_2$  molecule and the SAAs. With this definition, a more negative value of adsorption energy suggests the stronger adsorption.

**Code availability.** The code used to perform this work is available at https://www.catkinas.com/downloads.

#### **Note S2: Experimental methods**

**Chemicals.** Nickel(II) chloride hexahydrate  $(NiCl_2 \cdot 6H_2O)$  and sodium molybdate dihydrate  $(Na_2MoO_4·2H_2O)$  were purchased from Sinopharm Chemical Reagent Co. Ltd. Aluminum nitrate nonahydrate  $(AI(NO<sub>3</sub>)<sub>3</sub>·9H<sub>2</sub>O)$ , gallium nitrate hydrate  $(Ga(NO<sub>3</sub>)<sub>3</sub>·xH<sub>2</sub>O)$  and urea  $(CO(NH<sub>2</sub>)<sub>2</sub>)$  were purchased from Shanghai Aladdin Biochemical Technology Co. Ltd. Indium nitrate hydrate  $(InN<sub>3</sub>O<sub>9</sub>·xH<sub>2</sub>O)$  was purchased from Shanghai Macklin Biochemical Co. Ltd. Ethanol was purchased from Shanghai Titan Scientific Co. Ltd. All reagents were analytical grade and used without any further purification. Deionized (DI) water used in our experiments was supplied by Milli-Q System (Millipore, Billerica, MA).

**The pre-treatment of Ni foam.** Typically, a commercial nickel foam (NF, 1.6-mm thickness, 110 p.p.i., geometric area of 1 cm<sup>2</sup> for performance evaluation) was sonicated with acetone and ethanol for 15 min, respectively. Then, the NF was put into a 3.0 mol L-1 HCl solution for 15 min to clean the surface oxide layer. After that, the NF was washed with water and ethanol for several times and dried in a vacuum oven for the further use.

**The synthesis of NiAl, NiGa and NiIn bimetallic precursors.** The NiAl, NiGa and NiIn precursor were synthesized through a hydrothermal method. In a typical synthesis of NiAl precursor, 1 mmol NiCl<sub>2</sub>·6H<sub>2</sub>O, 1 mmol Al(NO<sub>3</sub>)<sub>3</sub>·9H<sub>2</sub>O and 10 mmol urea were dissolved in a Teflon autoclave containing 20 mL  $H<sub>2</sub>O$  to form a transparent solution. Then one piece of pre-treated NF was immersed into the above solution. After continuous sonicating for 5 min, the autoclave was put into an oven and heated at 160 ℃ for 6 h. After that the autoclave was cooling down to room temperature, the NiAl precursor was taken out and washed with deionized water and ethanol for several times before transferred into the vacuum oven. The synthesis of NiGa and NiIn precursors were similar to the process of NiAl precursor, except the metal nitrate precursors were replaced by  $Ga(NO_3)$ <sub>3</sub>·xH<sub>2</sub>O or  $In(NO_3)$ <sub>3</sub>·xH<sub>2</sub>O. For the Ni<sub>3</sub>Al precursor sample,  $NiCl<sub>2</sub>·6H<sub>2</sub>O$  (1 mmol) and  $Al(NO<sub>3</sub>)<sub>3</sub>·9H<sub>2</sub>O$  (0.33 mmol) were dissolved in H<sub>2</sub>O (20 mL) in a autoclave, and the remainder of the procedure was the same.

**The synthesis of NiAl, NiGa and NiIn bimetallic electrocatalysts.** For the preparation of bimetallic alloys, the above synthesized bimetallic precursors were transferred into a ceramic boat and placed in a tube furnace. The sample was heated to 550 ℃ with a heating rate of 5 ℃ min-1 and kept at 550 ℃ for 2 h under hydrogen gas (40 sccm) before cooling down to room temperature naturally. After that, the synthesized electrocatalysts were ready for electrochemical tests. Notes: The freshly prepared electrocatalysts would be easily oxidized in the air.

**The preparation of NiMo bimetallic electrocatalyst.** The synthesis of NiMo alloy was based on the modified method<sup>5-7</sup>. Typically, a pre-treated NF was immersed into 20 mL of H<sub>2</sub>O containing 1 mmol of NiCl<sub>2</sub>·6H<sub>2</sub>O and 1 mmol Na<sub>2</sub>MoO<sub>4</sub> in a Teflon autoclave. After continuous sonicating for 5 min, the autoclave was put into an oven and heated at 160 ℃ for 6 h. After that the autoclave was cooling down to room temperature, the NiMo alloy precursor was taken out and washed with deionized water and ethanol for several times before drying. Then the NF was transferred into a ceramic boat and placed in a tube furnace. The sample was heated to 550 ℃ with a heating rate of 5 ℃ min-1 and kept at 550 ℃ for 2 h under hydrogen gas (40 sccm) before cooling down to room temperature naturally. Notes: The NiMo-based precursor (*e.g.*, NiMoO4) before H<sub>2</sub> treatment would not be completely reduced with existence of NiMo alloy and  $NiMo<sub>4</sub>$  in the obtained sample, which were coincident to the reported references<sup>5-7</sup>.

**Characterizations.** The crystal structure of the samples was examined by X-ray diffraction (XRD, D/max2550V). Scanning transmission electron microscopy (STEM) characterization was performed using ThermoFisher Talos F200X. High angle annular dark field (HAADF)-STEM images were recorded using a convergence semi angle of 11 mrad, and inner- and outer collection angles of 59 and 200 mrad, respectively. Energy dispersive X-ray spectroscopy (EDS) was carried out using 4 in-column Super-X detectors.

**Electrochemical measurements.** The NiAl, Ni3Al, NiGa, NiIn and NiMo on the NF were directly used as the working electrodes for electrochemical tests. All electrochemical studies were performed using an electrochemical station (CHI 760E) in a three-electrode compartment with modified Ni foam as the working electrode, a Ag/AgCl/3.5 M KCl electrode as the reference electrode and a graphite rod as the counter electrode. The Ag/AgCl/3.5 M KCl reference electrode was calibrated with respect to RHE. The calibration was performed in the high-purity  $H_2$  saturated electrolyte with Pt mesh as the working electrode and counter electrode. CVs were run at a scan rate of  $1 \text{ mV s}^{-1}$ , and the average of the two potentials at which the current crossed zero was taken to be the thermodynamic potential for the hydrogen electrode

reactions (1.001 V in the 1.0 M KOH, Fig. S4). The electrocatalytic activities towards HER were examined by polarization curves with a scan rate of 2 mV  $s^{-1}$  in H<sub>2</sub>-saturated 1.0 M KOH solution at ambient temperature. All potentials were referenced to reversible hydrogen electrode (RHE) by following calculations:  $E_{RHE} = E_{Ag/AgCl} + 1.001$ V. All LSV curves were corrected with *iR*-compensation (90%) while the equivalent series resistance (Rs) can be obtained through the *iR*-compensation test before the test. For the stability tests, a Ni foam decorated with NiMo-based electrocatalyst was used as working electrode and the chronopotentiometric curve was conducted at the constant current density of 10 mA cm-2 with 90% *iR*-compensation.

### **Note S3: Considering the coverage effect**



**Fig. S1** Schematic diagram of volcanic curve considering the coverage effect or not. Point A and B indicate the best point of activity in each case.

#### **Note S4: Elements of research**

1																	18
Н	2											13	14	15	16	17	He
Li	Be	Doped element			Host element				B	с	N	O	F	<b>Ne</b>			
Na	Mg	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	Al	Si	P	S	Cl	Ar
К	Ca	Sc	Τi	V	Cr	Mn	Fe	Co	Νi	Cu	Zn	Ga	Ge	As	Se	Br	Kr
Rb	Sr	Υ	Zr	<b>Nb</b>	Mo	Tc	<b>Ru</b>	<b>Rh</b>	Pd	Ag	Cd	In	Sn	Sb	Te		Xe
Cs	Ba	La	Hf	Ta	W	<b>Re</b>	Os	Ir.	Pt	Au	Hg	TI	Pb	Bi	Po	At	Rn
Fr	Ra	Ac	Rf	Db	Sg	<b>Bh</b>	Hs	Mt	Ds	Rg	Cn	Nh	FI	Mc	Lv	Ts	Og

**Fig. S2** Elements considered in this screening. Shading of element represents its inclusion in this screening study.

**Note S5: A simple discussion the efficiency of the proposed optimization strategy compared to the pure exhaustive DFT calculations**

In this work we try to figure out an important catalytic issue: What kind of singleatom alloys are more suitable for HER? The difficulty is, however, that the sample search space is too large to be explored exhaustively and the expert knowledge of structure-composition-activity remains far from sufficient. For example, with respect to the situation of ternary SAAs (a local site consists of one host metal and two guest metals), the search space could form ~8000 possibilities with a combination of 9 hostmetals and 29/29 different guest metals (9\*29\*29=7569), leading to a great obstacle in screening promising catalyst with resorting to DFT calculations (see Fig. S3).



**Fig. S3** A schematic diagram of genetic algorithm aided DFT calculations forsearching the potential catalysts.

For the binary-SAA case, we performed one round of GA evolution for searching the target combinations, which consists of 20 generations with a population size of 10 configurations for each generation (total 200 sampling), and finally obtained 112 distinct binary SAAs. Thereinto, 70 candidate SAA catalysts were identified from these 112 DFT calculations (62.5% search success rate), as shown in Fig. S4a. However, the pure exhaustive DFT calculations including total 261 sampling (9\*29) must be performed to determine the candidate binary SAA catalysts, leading to an extremely low screening efficiency. Moreover, the greater obstacle appears in the location of ternary SAAs, in which total 7569 sampling (9\*29\*29) should be verified by the exhaustive DFT calculations (see Fig. S4b). With our method, there are 1447 distinct ternary SAAs after 10 rounds of GA-DFT (total 2000 sampling), and 752 near-optimal surfaces out of these 1447 SAA catalysts were identified (52% search success rate). Overall, for a huge sample space, the proposed optimization strategy can search for catalysts more efficiently in comparison with the pure exhaustive method.



**Fig. S4** A comparison between GA-DFT and exhaustive method for (a) binary and (b) ternary SAA catalysts.

#### **Note S6: Calculating mixing energies**

The mixing energies explain the thermodynamic requirements for the formation of SAA, in which a guest atom exchanges with a host atom, as shown in Fig. S5.



**Fig.** S5 Schematic diagram of the mixing energy calculation.  $E(A_{m-1}B)$  and  $E(A_m)$  are the total energies of surface of binary SAA and pure metal A, while *Eatom*(*A*) and *Eatom*(*B*) are the average energies of atom A and B relative to their bulk phase, respectively. The mixing energies reflect thermodynamic requirements for the formation of SAAs.

#### **Note S7: Potential binary SAAs**

Note that we have chosen surfaces whose energies are inside the range of -0.57 eV to -0.17 eV, the over-binding surfaces are more likely to perform well than underbinding surfaces due to the coverage effect. Our workflow identified 70 possible active surfaces, as shown in Table S1.

**Table S1.** List of 70 possible active surfaces for HER. All of the surfaces whose H adsorption energies are inside the range of  $(-0.57, -0.17)$  eV. H-G<sub>1</sub> represents the host metal with single guest atom. Note that, 46 highlighted rows indicate *Emix* are less than zero, thereinto, 6 potential binary SAA catalysts are marked with dark green based on their cost-effective host metals (Ni and Cu).

$H-G_1$	$E_{\rm H}$ (eV)	$E_{mix}$ (eV)	$H-G1$	$E_{\rm H}$ (eV)	$E_{mix}$ (eV)
$Pt-Ti$	$-0.512$	$-2.887$	$Ir-Cr$	$-0.518$	$-0.281$
Pd-Sb	$-0.558$	$-2652$	$Pd-Mo$	$-0.508$	$-0.267$
$Pd-Ga$	$-0.380$	$-2.308$	Ni-Fe	$-0.475$	$-0.237$
$Pt-A1$	$-0.417$	$-2,306$	$Ir-As$	$-0.253$	$-0.194$



#### **Note S8: The catalytic performance of NiMo compared to the Pt**

We evaluated the loading amount of NiMo catalyst via weighing 6 pieces of NiMo electrodes before and after fabrication, which indicates the final loading amount is  $~6$ mg cm<sup>-2</sup>. For comparison, commercial Pt/C powder (5 wt%, Alfa Aesar) were dropped onto the Ni foam substrate with the same loading amount of 6 mg cm-2 . As shown in Fig. S6, the NiMo catalyst exhibits lower current density than the Pt/C control in the low overpotential range; however, when the potential increases, the NiMo catalyst delivers higher current density than the Pt/C control, which is consistent with the previous work<sup>6</sup>.



**Fig. S6** LSV curves of NiMo, Pt/C and blank Ni foam, respectively. The loading amount of NiMo and Pt/C is  $\sim$ 6 mg cm<sup>-2</sup>. All the data were obtained with the scan rate of 2 mV s<sup>-1</sup>.

# **Note S9: A comparison between Ni-based bimetallic alloy and Nibased single atom alloy**

To demonstrate the Ni/Mo atomic distribution, we conducted additional HAADF-STEM image of NiMo alloy (Fig. S7), which also suggests the overlaps of Mo and Ni elements over the sample.



**Fig. S7** Typical HAADF-STEM image of NiMo alloy sample and corresponding elemental maps of Mo, Ni, and O, respectively.

Nevertheless, we acknowledge that we haven't provided direct evidence for characterization of single atom alloy (SAA); we in fact fabricated Ni-based bimetallic alloy, instead of Ni-based single atom alloy, and demonstrated the homogeneous distribution of the guest elements. Specifically, in the previous version, we systematically characterized the NiMo-based bimetallic alloys, and illustrated that the catalyst, serving as the homogeneously dispersed alloy which contains SAA motif, would be a superior HER catalyst. To further verify this concept, we now synthesized NiAl-based bimetallic alloy with different molar ratios. In Fig. S8, the Ni<sub>3</sub>Al electrocatalyst exhibits higher activities in both low and high overpotential regions than those of other NiAl samples with higher Al content (e.g., NiAl, NiAl<sub>3</sub> and NiAl<sub>5</sub>), which indicates that maximizing the dispersion of Al atom in the bimetallic alloy can obtain more active sites for better HER performance. In Figs. S9-S11, we collected HAADF- $STEM$  images of  $Ni<sub>3</sub>Al$  sample at different magnification, and demonstrated the homogenous dispersion of Ni and Al elements in the EDS maps. In addition, the molar ratio of Ni:Al of Ni<sub>3</sub>Al sample was determined to be 3:1 in the EDS result (Fig. S12); as the atomic configuration of  $Ni<sub>3</sub>Al-allow shows in Fig. S13, it corresponds to the$ existence of active  $Ni<sub>2</sub>Al<sub>1</sub>$  fcc-site, which is the basic motif of NiAl SAA.

Moreover, we performed the theoretical studies to compare the activities between highly dispersed NiAl-alloys and single atom NiAl-alloys (see Fig. S13). First, we considered the H adsorption energy  $(E_H)$  on the fcc-hollow site of Ni(111) with only one-, two- or three-Al doped, forming the  $Ni<sub>2</sub>Al<sub>1</sub>$ ,  $Ni<sub>1</sub>Al<sub>2</sub>$  and Al<sub>3</sub> local site, respectively, as shown in Fig. S13a-S13c. It reveals that the introduction of more Al atoms into the fcc-hollow site would significantly weaken the H adsorption. Notably,  $E_H$  on the Al<sub>1</sub>Ni<sub>2</sub> site is -0.43 eV (see Fig. S13a), which is inside the range of the target search space  $[-0.57, -0.17]$  eV. In contrast, the  $Ni<sub>1</sub>Al<sub>2</sub>$  and  $Al<sub>3</sub>$  site results in excessively weak  $E_H$  and precludes their high activity for HER (-0.14/0.10 eV, respectively; see Figs. S13b and S13c). Therefore, a higher HER performance could be expected by

constructing NiAl SAA catalyst. Second, we also investigated the  $E_H$  on other atomically dispersed NiAl alloys, i.e., 25%, 50% and 75% Al are doped into the Ni bulk (see Fig.  $S13d-S13g$ ), corresponding to Ni<sub>3</sub>Al-, NiAl- and NiAl<sub>3</sub>-alloy, respectively. In the same vein, the  $E_H$  becomes more positive as the number of doped Al atoms increases, ranking in the order of 25% Al (-0.41 eV) < 50% Al (-0.40 eV, 0.00 eV) < 75% Al (0.37 eV). Remarkably, on the local Ni2Al<sup>1</sup> site of either SAA or NiAl-alloys (Ni<sub>3</sub>Al, NiAl), the  $E_H$  are basically the same (see Fig. S13a, S13d, S13e) and within the active region of  $[-0.57, -0.17]$  eV, indicating that the local  $Ni<sub>2</sub>Al<sub>1</sub>$  site largely determines the H adsorption strength, although there are excess Al atoms in the bulk phase for the Ni3Al- and NiAl-alloys. Thus, these results reveal that, for the NiAl alloys or SAA, **the single-Al-atom fcc site (Ni2-Al1) is the key to realize the high-performance for HER.** Overall, these theoretical insights are consistent with the experiment results above; the HER activity can be improved by suitably reducing the Al load, which essentially increases the dispersion of Al on the surfaces (and thus the number of  $Ni<sub>2</sub>Al<sub>1</sub>$ site), and thus confirms the rationality of our method for material screening. Our ongoing work is to further control the atom dispersion and construct real single atom alloy catalyst, to extremely boost electrocatalytic hydrogen evolution reaction.



Fig. S8 LSV curves of Ni<sub>3</sub>Al bimetallic alloy samples and NiAl, NiAl<sub>3</sub> and NiAl<sub>5</sub> controls, respectively.



**Fig. S9** HAADF-STEM image of Ni3Al sample and corresponding elemental maps of Al and Ni.



Fig. S10 HAADF-STEM image of Ni<sub>3</sub>Al sample and corresponding elemental maps of Al and Ni.



Fig. S11 HAADF-STEM image of Ni<sub>3</sub>Al sample and corresponding elemental maps of Al and Ni.



Fig. S12 EDS spectra of Ni<sub>3</sub>Al catalyst, which indicates the molar ratio of Ni:Al is 3:1 in the sample.



**Fig. S13** Hydrogen adsorption structures of different atomically dispersed NiAl alloys with the H adsorption energy  $(E_H)$  given. (a-c) correspond to one-, two- and three-Al doped into the surface of Ni(111), respectively, while (d-g) are the NiAl-alloys with (d) 25% Al, (e, f) 5% Al, (g) 75% Al, respectively. White, blue and pink balls indicate H, Ni and Al, respectively.

**Note S10: HER performance evaluation of Ni-based category**



**Fig. S14** The calibration of Ag/AgCl/3.5 M KCl reference electrode with respect to RHE. In the 1.0 M KOH,  $E_{RHE} = E_{Ag/AgCl} + 1.001$  V.



**Fig. S15** (a) The LSV curves of NiMo bimetallic electrocatalyst and (b) corresponding derived Tafel slope plots, which were collected for three independent tests.



**Fig. S16** (a) The LSV curves of NiAl bimetallic electrocatalyst and (b) corresponding derived Tafel slope plots, which were collected for three independent tests.



**Fig. S17** (a) The LSV curves of Ni3Al bimetallic electrocatalyst and (b) corresponding derived Tafel slope plots, which were collected for three independent tests.



**Fig. S18** (a) The LSV curves of NiGa bimetallic electrocatalyst and (b) corresponding derived Tafel slope plots, which were collected for three independent tests.



**Fig. S19** (a) The LSV curves of NiIn bimetallic electrocatalyst and (b) corresponding derived Tafel slope plots, which were collected for three independent tests.



**Fig. S20** The LSV curves of bare Ni foam collected for three independent tests.

**Table S2.** The summarized HER performances of synthesized Ni-based bimetallic electrocatalysts, showing the Tafel slopes in the different overpotential regions and the overpotentials to achieve 10, 50, 100 and 200 mA cm-2 .

	$\eta_{10}$	$\eta_{50}$	$\eta_{100}$	$\eta_{200}$	Tafel slope <sub>1</sub>	Tafel slope <sub>2</sub>
<b>Electrocatalysts</b>	(mV)	(mV)	(mV)	(mV)	$(mV$ dec <sup>-1</sup> )	$(mV$ dec <sup>-1</sup> )
bare Ni foam	$-332.23 \pm 2.05$	$-416.19 \pm 3.46$	$-453.31 \pm 3.55$	$-495.03 \pm 3.25$		
Ni <sub>3</sub> Al	$-197.22 \pm 0.58$	$-265.69 \pm 7.17$	$-293.98 \pm 11.04$	$-321.72 \pm 16.82$	$142.26 \pm 17.78$	$95.25 \pm 9.72$
<b>NiAl</b>	$-210.69 \pm 5.80$	$-279.52 \pm 4.84$	$-304.83 \pm 5.72$	$-330.61 \pm 6.01$	$181.89 \pm 24.91$	$93.18 \pm 4.10$
NiGa	$-182.76 \pm 1.33$	$-245.15 \pm 2.62$	$-270.26 \pm 1.47$	$-292.59 \pm 4.18$	$179.60 \pm 31.32$	$87.23 \pm 1.93$
NiIn	$-156.78 \pm 5.75$	$-221.26 \pm 6.08$	$-260.12 \pm 3.90$	$-309.87 \pm 2.78$	$208.94 \pm 77.10$	$98.89 \pm 1.74$
NiMo	$-52.32 \pm 1.12$	$-109.14 \pm 3.22$	$-148.54 \pm 2.99$	$-200.06 \pm 6.69$	$37.84 \pm 3.39$	$102.05 \pm 1.16$

**Notes:**  $\eta_{10}$ ,  $\eta_{50}$ ,  $\eta_{100}$  and  $\eta_{200}$  mean the overpotentials to achieve the current densities of 10, 50, 100 and 200 mA cm<sup>-2</sup>, respectively; Tafel slope<sub>1</sub> and Tafel slope<sub>2</sub> mean the values calculated in the low and high potential regions, respectively.

### **Note S11: Potential ternary SAAs**

Likewise, our workflow identified 752 possible active surfaces, as shown in Table S3.

**Table S3.** List of 752 possible active surfaces for HER. All of the surfaces whose H adsorption energies are inside the range of  $(-0.57, -0.17)$  eV. H-G<sub>1</sub>-G<sub>2</sub> represents the host metal with two guest atoms. Note that, 504 highlighted rows indicate *Emix* are less than zero, thereinto, 142 potential binary SAA catalysts are marked with dark green based on their cost-effective host metals (Al, Ni and Cu).

$H-G_1-G_2$	$E_{\rm H}$ (eV)	$E_{mix}$ (eV)	$H-G_1-G_2$	$E_{H}$ (eV)	$E_{mix}$ (eV)
Pt Ti Pb	$-0.367$	$-4.171$	Pd Fe Pd	$-0.502$	$-0.458$
Pd Zn Ti	$-0.171$	$-3.968$	Rh Ag W	$-0.438$	$-0.456$
Pd Ti Zn	$-0.172$	$-3.967$	Ir As Re	$-0.304$	$-0.455$
Rh Si Al	$-0.265$	$-3.890$	Ir Mo Re	$-0.518$	$-0.450$
Pt Si Al	$-0.503$	$-3.770$	Ni Ni Au	$-0.262$	$-0.440$
Rh Ge Al	$-0.244$	$-3.720$	Pd W Pd	$-0.456$	$-0.438$
Rh In Al	$-0.269$	$-3.573$	Ir Re Mn	$-0.525$	$-0.436$
Rh Ti Pb	$-0.292$	$-3.558$	Ni Cu Pd	$-0.314$	$-0.433$
Pt Ge Al	$-0.443$	$-3.526$	Pd Cu Mo	$-0.384$	$-0.429$
Pt Al Zn	$-0.504$	$-3.400$	Ni W Pb	$-0.495$	$-0.423$
Pt Zn Al	$-0.505$	$-3.400$	Ir Pt Rh	$-0.475$	$-0.420$
Ir Si Ti	$-0.503$	$-3.321$	Pt Cu Fe	$-0.440$	$-0.406$
Pt Ga Si	$-0.492$	$-3.166$	Pd Co Au	$-0.274$	$-0.406$
Rh V Al	$-0.407$	$-3.143$	Ni Au Co	$-0.208$	$-0.402$
Pt Al Mn	$-0.524$	$-3.141$	Ni Co Au	$-0.209$	$-0.401$
Pt Mn Al	$-0.523$	$-3.141$	Rh Au Rh	$-0.367$	$-0.401$
Rh Zn Ti	$-0.412$	$-3.138$	Ir W Re	$-0.488$	$-0.400$
Rh Ti Zn	$-0.412$	$-3.138$	Cu Cu Pt	$-0.394$	$-0.400$
Pd Au Ti	$-0.272$	$-3.134$	Ni Cr Zn	$-0.428$	$-0.399$
Rh Zn Al	$-0.254$	$-3.003$	Ir W Cu	$-0.506$	$-0.390$
Pd Sn Ag	$-0.479$	$-2.924$	Al W Au	$-0.323$	$-0.389$
Pt Ti W	$-0.409$	$-2.923$	Rh Pt Ir	$-0.425$	$-0.388$
Pt Ti Pd	$-0.531$	$-2.908$	Al Au W	$-0.327$	$-0.387$
Pt Cu Ti	$-0.479$	$-2.908$	Al Mo Re	$-0.262$	$-0.385$
Pd Ag Ti	$-0.303$	$-2.863$	Al Mo Cu	$-0.210$	$-0.385$
Ir Al_Si	$-0.508$	$-2.839$	Ir Zn Ag	$-0.429$	$-0.385$
Rh Zn Si	$-0.239$	$-2.825$	Rh Au Re	$-0.310$	$-0.380$
Pd Cu Sb	$-0.503$	$-2.806$	Rh Re Au	$-0.310$	$-0.379$
Pd Cu Ti	$-0.433$	$-2.764$	Ir Cr Pd	$-0.550$	$-0.377$



















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