



Designation: **E809–08 (Reapproved 2013) E809 – 21**

Standard Practice for Measuring Photometric Characteristics of Retroreflectors¹

This standard is issued under the fixed designation E809; the number immediately following the designation indicates the year of original adoption or, in the case of revision, the year of last revision. A number in parentheses indicates the year of last reapproval. A superscript epsilon (ϵ) indicates an editorial change since the last revision or reapproval.

1. Scope

1.1 This practice describes the general procedures for instrumental measurement of the photometric characteristics of retroreflective materials and retroreflective devices.

1.2 This practice is a comprehensive guide to the photometry of retroreflectors but does not include geometric terms that are described in Practice **E808**.

1.3 This practice describes the parameters that are required when stating photometric measurements in specific tests and specifications for retroreflectors.

1.4 The values stated in SI units are to be regarded as standard. No other units of measurement are included in this The values given in parentheses after SI units are provided for information only and are not considered standard.

1.5 *This standard does not purport to address all of the safety concerns, if any, associated with its use. It is the responsibility of the user of this standard to establish appropriate ~~safety~~ safety, health, and ~~health~~ environmental practices and determine the applicability of regulatory limitations prior to use.*

1.6 *This international standard was developed in accordance with internationally recognized principles on standardization established in the Decision on Principles for the Development of International Standards, Guides and Recommendations issued by the World Trade Organization Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) Committee.*

2. Referenced Documents

2.1 ASTM Standards:²

[E284 Terminology of Appearance](#)

[E308 Practice for Computing the Colors of Objects by Using the CIE System](#)

[E808 Practice for Describing Retroreflection](#)

2.2 CIE Documents:³

[CIE Publication No. 54.2 Retroreflection—Definition and Measurement](#)

[CIE Publication DS 17.2/E:2009 International Lighting Vocabulary](#)

[CIE Publication No. 69-1987 Methods of Characterizing Illuminance Meters and Luminance Meters](#)

¹ This practice is under the jurisdiction of ASTM Committee **E12** on Color and Appearance and is the direct responsibility of Subcommittee **E12.10** on Retroreflection. Current edition approved Jan. 1, 2013Jan. 1, 2021. Published January 2013February 2021. Originally approved in 1981. Last previous edition approved in 20082013 as **E809–08**:E809–08 (2013). DOI: [10.1520/E0809-08R13](https://doi.org/10.1520/E0809-08R13); [10.1520/E0809-21](https://doi.org/10.1520/E0809-21).

² For referenced ASTM standards, visit the ASTM website, www.astm.org, or contact ASTM Customer Service at service@astm.org. For *Annual Book of ASTM Standards* volume information, refer to the standard's Document Summary page on the ASTM website.

³ Available from the CIE Webshop at <http://www.cie.co.at>. U.S. National Committee of the CIE (International Commission on Illumination) (<http://www.cie-usnc.org>) or the CIE ([cie.co.at](http://www.cie.co.at)) Webshop.

3. Terminology

3.1 Terms and definitions in Terminology E284 and E808 are applicable to this practice. In general, the terminology in this practice agrees with that in CIE Publications DS 17.2/E:2009 and 54.2.

3.2 Definitions of Terms Specific to This Standard:

3.2.1 *annular aperture, n*—the difference between the angular diameters of the external boundary circle and the internal boundary circle.

3.2.2 *circular aperture, n*—the angular diameter of a circular aperture surface.

3.2.3 *goniometer, n*—an instrument for measuring or setting angles.

3.2.4 *photopic receiver, n*—a receiver of radiation with a spectral responsivity which conforms to the $V(\lambda)$ distribution of the CIE Photopic Standard Observer that is specified in Practice E308.

3.2.5 *receiver aperture, n*—angular dimensions from the retroreflector center to the entrance aperture or pupil of the receiver.

3.2.6 *rectangular aperture, n*—the angular height and width of a rectangular aperture surface.

3.2.6.1 Discussion—

The orientation of the sides of the rectangular aperture surface should be supplied together with the angular height and width.

3.2.7 *reflected illuminance, E_r, n* —illuminance at the receiver measured on a plane perpendicular to the observation axis.

3.2.7.1 Discussion—

This quantity is used in the calculation of the coefficient of luminous intensity, R_f : $R_f = (I/E_{\perp}) = (E_r d^2)/E_{\perp}$, where d is the distance from the retroreflector to the receptor.

3.2.8 *retroreflector aperture angles, n*—the maximum angular diameter of the pencil of light (see Fig. 1).

3.2.8.1 Discussion—

In practice the illumination arrives at the retroreflector center within a narrow pencil of light surrounding the illumination axis and the light reflected to the photoreceptor is contained within another narrow pencil. The distribution of light within such pencils is the “aperture” function and the maximum angular diameter of the pencil is the “aperture angle.” It is generally assumed that the aperture functions are rotationally symmetrical and even uniform, but this is often false, especially for illumination.

3.2.9 *retroreflector aperture surface, n*—the aperture surface of a retroreflector is given by the retroreflector itself, or by a diaphragm enclosing part of the retroreflector.

3.2.10 *retroreflector element aperture, n*—angular dimension of the aperture surface of a retroreflective element as seen from the receiver’s center.

3.2.10.1 Discussion—

The element aperture quantifies an error source in the setting of the observation angle. This is a critical feature for testing large retroreflective elements or at short distances. When using collimated optics, placing the source and receiver at virtual infinity, the retroreflector element aperture is virtually zero.

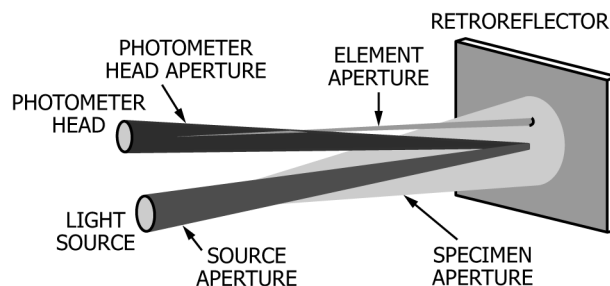


FIG. 1 Illustration of Apertures used in Retroreflection Measurement

3.2.11 *retroreflector (or specimen) aperture, n*—angular dimensions from the source point of reference to the aperture surface of the retroreflector (or specimen).

3.2.11.1 *Discussion*—

As the source and receiver are generally close to each other, distinction is not made between aperture angles seen from the source and receiver. When using collimated optics where the source and receiver are at virtual infinity, the retroreflector aperture is virtually naught. The retroreflector aperture describes the maximum variation of the entrance angle of the aperture surface of the retroreflector.

3.2.12 *source aperture, n*—angular dimensions from the retroreflector center to the exit aperture stop or pupil of the light source.

4. Summary of Practice

4.1 The fundamental procedure described in this practice involves measurements of retroreflection based on the ratio of the retroreflected illuminance at the observation position to the incident illuminance measured perpendicular to the illumination axis at the retroreflector. From these measurements, along with the geometry of test, various photometric quantities applicable to retroreflectors can be determined.

4.2 Also described are methods of comparative testing where unknown specimens are measured relative to an agreed-upon standard retroreflector (a substitution test method).

5. Significance and Use

5.1 This practice describes procedures used to measure photometric quantities that relate to the visual perception of retroreflected light. The most significant usage is in the relation to the nighttime vehicle headlamp, retroreflector, and driver's eye geometry. For this reason the CIE Standard Source A is used to represent a tungsten vehicle headlamp and the receptor has the photopic, $V(\lambda)$, spectral responsivity corresponding to the light adapted human eye. Although the geometry must be specified by the user, it will, in general, correspond to the relation between the vehicle headlamp, the retroreflector, and the vehicle driver's eye position.

6. Uses and Applications

6.1 *Coefficient of Retroreflection*—This quantity is used to specify the performance of retroreflective sheeting. It considers the retroreflector as an apparent point source whose retroreflected luminous intensity is dependent on the area of the retroreflective surface involved. It is a useful engineering quantity for determining the photometric performance of such retroreflective surfaces as highway delineators or warning devices. The coefficient of retroreflection may also be used to determine the minimum area of retroreflective sheeting necessary for a desired level of photometric performance.

6.2 *Coefficient of Luminous Intensity*—This term is used to specify the performance of retroreflective devices. It considers the retroreflected luminous intensity as a function of the perpendicular illuminance incident on the device. It is recommended for use in describing performance of RPMs, taillight reflex reflectors and roadway delineators.

6.3 *Coefficient of Line Retroreflection (of a Reflecting Stripe)*—This term may be used to describe the retroreflective performance of long narrow strips of retroreflective materials, when the actual width is not as important as is the reflectivity per unit length.

6.4 *Reflectance Factor (of a Plane Reflecting Surface)*—This is a useful term for comparing surfaces specifically designed for retroreflection to surfaces which are generally considered to be diffuse reflectors. Since almost all natural surfaces tend to retroreflect slightly, materials such as BaSO_4 can have a reflectance factor much higher than one (as much as four) at small observation angles. Such diffuse reflectance standards should be used for calibration only at large observation angles, for example, 45° .

6.5 *Coefficient of Retroreflected Luminance (also called Specific Luminance)*—This term considers the retroreflector as a surface source whose projected area is visible as an area at the observation position. The coefficient of retroreflected luminance relates to the way the effective retroreflective surface is focused on the retina of the human eye and to the visual effect thereby produced. It is recommended for describing the performance of highway signs and striping or large vehicular markings which are commonly viewed as discernible surface areas.

6.6 *Coefficient of Luminous Flux per Unit Solid Angle, R_Φ* —This measurement is used to evaluate retroreflectors on the basis of flux ratios. It is numerically very nearly equal to the coefficient of retroreflected luminance at small entrance angles. It is recommended for use in the design of retroreflectors but not for specification purposes.

7. Requirements When Measuring Retroreflectors

7.1 When describing photometric measurements of retroreflectors, items in paragraphs 7.1.1 – 7.1.11 must be included. Refer to Fig. 2 for a diagram of measurement geometry terminology.

7.1.1 Retroreflective photometric quantity, such as: coefficient of luminous intensity (R_I), coefficient of retroreflected luminance (R_L) (also called specific luminance), coefficient of retroreflection (R_A), coefficient of line retroreflection (R_M), reflectance factor (R_F), or coefficient of luminous flux per unit solid angle (R_Φ).

7.1.1.1 In specifications, a minimum acceptable quantitative value is usually established.

7.1.2 Units in which each quantity is to be measured (for example $\text{cd}\cdot\text{lx}^{-1}\cdot\text{m}^{-2}$).

7.1.3 Observation angle.

7.1.4 Components of the entrance angle, (β_1 and β_2).

7.1.4.1 When both β_1 and β_2 are near zero, care must be taken to prevent specular reflection from entering the photoreceptor.

7.1.4.2 Entrance angle β equals $\cos^{-1}(\cos\beta_1\cos\beta_2)$.

7.1.5 Rotation angle and the datum mark position shall be specified if random rotational orientation of the test specimen is not suitable.

7.1.6 Test distance or minimum test distance.

7.1.7 Test specimen size and shape.

7.1.8 Photoreceptor angular aperture.

7.1.9 Source angular aperture.

7.1.10 Retroreflector center.

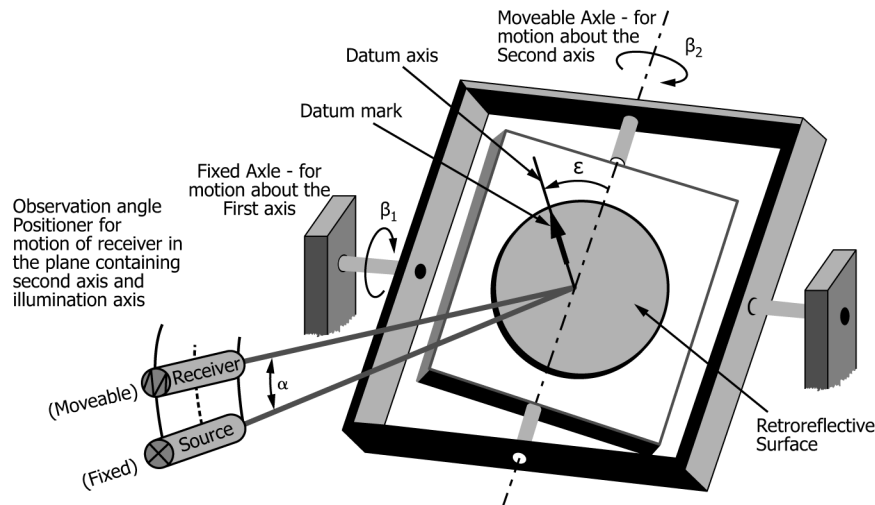


FIG. 2 View of Test Geometer for Measuring Retroreflection

7.1.11 Retroreflector axis. The retroreflector axis is usually perpendicular to the surface of retroreflective sheeting. In such complex devices as automobile or bicycle reflectors, the retroreflector axis and retroreflector center may be defined with respect to the illumination direction.

8. Apparatus

8.1 *General*—The apparatus shall consist of a photoreceptor, a light projector source, a specimen goniometer, an observer goniometer, (sometimes known as the observation angle positioner), and a photometric range.

8.1.1 Aperture angles are a very important consideration when measuring retroreflectors as Fig. 1 illustrates. See Table 1 for recommendations for maximum angular aperture of optical elements. See 9.1 on selection of angular apertures.

8.2 *Photoreceptor*—The photoreceptor shall be equipped as follows:

8.2.1 *Photopic Filter*—The photoreceptor shall be equipped with a light filter such that the spectral responsivity of the receptor should match the $V(\lambda)$ response of the CIE Standard photopic observer with an f_1' tolerance no greater than 3 %. Spectral correction filters to the $V(\lambda)$ function may be used provided that they are determined on material which has been previously measured by spectroradiometric means and closely corresponds in their spectral coefficient of retroreflection to the specimen under test. See Annex A1 for uncertainty tests and compensation.

8.2.2 *Photoreceptor Stability and Linearity*—The stability and linearity of the photometric scale reading must be within 1 % over the range of values to be measured (see Annex A2). The responsivity and range of the photoreceptor should be sufficient such that readings of the projector light source and the retroreflector under test will have a resolution of at least 1 part in 50.

8.2.3 *Photoreceptor Angular Aperture*—The photoreceptor must be equipped with a means to limit the angular collection of retroreflective luminous flux. This may be accomplished with an objective lens and field aperture or with light baffling. The field of view shall be limited such that the effect of stray light is negligible. The field of view should be limited to the smallest aperture that includes the entire test specimen or the illuminated area when testing horizontal coating materials. When an objective lens is used, it shall be capable of focusing at the test distance. Angular apertures for the photoreceptor are specified in degrees subtended at the specimen. The responsivity across the aperture shall be uniform.

8.3 *Light Projector Source*—The light source shall be a projector type capable of uniformly illuminating the specimen with appropriate reflector and lenses to provide illumination on the test sample with a spectral power distribution conforming to the 1931 CIE Standard Illuminant Source A (a tungsten filament lamp operated at a correlated color temperature of ~~2856°K~~ 2856 K \pm ~~20K~~ 20 K, see Practice E308). The normal illuminance on the sample shall be uniform within 5 % of the average normal illuminance over the area of the retroreflector at the test distance. The light projector shall be equipped with an adjustable iris diaphragm or a selection of fixed apertures. The intensity of light shall be regulated and shall not vary more than 1 % for the duration of the test.

8.3.1 The current of the projection lamp must be adjusted to provide a correlated color temperature of ~~2856°K~~ 2856 K. An adjustment procedure is described in Annex A3. Such adjustment often requires lowering the power from the nominal value since many projector lamps are designed to operate at correlated color temperatures greater than ~~2856°K~~ 2856 K.

8.3.2 The size and shape of the projector exit aperture and the angle this aperture subtends at the test specimen must be specified. The radiance across the aperture shall be uniform.

8.4 *Specimen Goniometer (Test Specimen Holder)*—This goniometer shall be capable of movements in three axes and sufficiently large to support the test specimen in the prescribed geometric arrangement. The motions of the axis shall be in accordance with

TABLE 1 Optical Element Angular Apertures^A

Standard apertures	0.05°	0.1°	0.167°	0.333°
Angular aperture of an individual retroreflective element, °	0.01° max	0.02° max	0.04° max	0.08° max

^A Optical element angular aperture maximum requirements apply to all non-collimating instruments.

Practice **E808**. For most materials, the tolerance of setting the angles β_1 and β_2 should be less than 0.1° . The rotation angle ε tolerance should be less than $\pm 0.2^\circ$. The setting tolerance refers to the goniometer mechanism alone. The goniometer must be set in accordance with **11.1.4**.

8.5 Observer Goniometer—This goniometer is used to accurately set the separation of the projector (light source) and photoreceptor. This setting determines the observation angle. This is sometimes referred to as an observation angle positioner (OAP). The positioning tolerance of the photoreceptor with respect to the light source should be held to 1 % of the angular aperture of the photoreceptor. For example, at 10m, a standard aperture of 0.1° would be equal to $\pm 0.001^\circ$ or 0.17 mm separation.

8.6 Photometric Range—The photometric range provides the dark work area for testing retroreflectors. To minimize the effect of stray light, the background behind the test specimen shall be flat black. Light baffles shall be located, as necessary, between the projector and the test specimen. Goniometer parts, exposed range walls, ceiling, and floor not baffled and exposed to the light beam shall be painted flat black.

9. Selection of Photometric Range Parameters

9.1 Selection of Angular Apertures:

9.1.1 Standard Circular Apertures—The following uniform circular apertures are considered standard.

9.1.1.1 0.05° (3 arc min) for both light source and photoreceptor.

9.1.1.2 0.1° (6 arc min) for both light source and photoreceptor.

9.1.1.3 0.167° (10 arc min) for both light source and photoreceptor.

9.1.1.4 0.333° (20 arc min) for both light source and photoreceptor.

9.1.1.5 For all standard circular apertures, the tolerances are $\pm 8\%$.

9.1.2 Discussion—With standard circular aperture, the defined observation angle is based on the center to center separation of the apertures. <https://standards.iteh.ai/catalog/standards/sist/a232c0f3-d401-4ad8-88af-b7264ad94db7/astm-e809-21>

9.1.3 Commonly used standard circular apertures are:

9.1.3.1 0.05° (3 arc min) for observation angles of 0.1° .

9.1.3.2 0.1° (6 arc min) for observation angles from 0.2° to 0.5° .

9.1.3.3 0.167° (10 arc min) for 0.33° spectral measurements.

9.1.3.4 0.333° (20 arc min) for 1.0° observation angles and larger.

9.1.4 In theory, retroreflection is defined with apertures that are infinitely small. Measurements using the standard angular apertures in **9.1.1** will not always be equal to measurements using much smaller apertures. The standard apertures give sufficient sensitivity for practical measurement and ensure reproducibility between laboratories providing the same standard aperture pairs are used.

9.2 Selection of Observation Distance—The observation distance and illumination distance must be specified in testing retroreflectors. They are limited by angular aperture requirements, the requirement to test a minimum sample area, for example 0.01 m^2 in the case of retroreflective sheeting or the desire to test an entire retroreflector at once. The observation distance and the illumination distance should not differ by more than 20 mm (for a 15 meter illumination distance) so as to not introduce errors in the observation angle over the test specimen. The tolerance on the setting of the observation and illumination distances should be $\pm 0.05\%$.

10. Test Specimen

10.1 The test specimen shall consist of one entire retroreflector. A large retroreflector may be tested by summing the values obtained from segments of the device.

10.2 When testing retroreflective sheeting, it is recommended that the test area be between 0.01 and 0.1 m². This may be accomplished, for example, by selecting a single square test specimen 0.2 m on each side or by averaging the measurements over several representative pieces totaling between 0.01 and 0.1 m² in area.

11. Calibration

11.1 The following components required in this practice must be calibrated prior to use.

11.1.1 *Projector Source*—The source must be calibrated to a correlated color temperature of $2856\text{K} \pm 20\text{K}$ and closely duplicate the spectral power distribution of CIE Standard Illuminant Source A. A method of calibration is described in [Annex A3](#) based on tristimulus colorimetry. Spectroradiometric methods of calibration are also suitable.

11.1.2 *Photoreceptor Spectral Responsivity*—The photoreceptor spectral responsivity must be verified in terms of the spectral power distributions measured in this practice. A procedure for verification of spectral responsivity is described in [Annex A1](#). Errors in the photopic fit of the receptor are direct systematic errors in the test result. Determination of the error f_1' should be followed from CIE Publication 69. The f_1' should be no greater than 3 %.

11.1.3 *Photoreceptor Linearity*—The procedures in this practice require the measurement of both incident and reflected light levels which may be several orders of magnitude different in value. To ensure accuracy, the photoreceptor and readout system must be linear or appropriate corrections for nonlinearity must be applied. [Annex A2](#) describes a method for verification of photoreceptor linearity.

11.1.4 *Goniometer Calibration*—The goniometer shall be calibrated at the 0° entrance angle position. All measurements shall be made relative to this point and shall be checked each time the goniometer or light projector is moved. If measurements are to be made at extreme angles of 75° to near 90°, it is recommended that the goniometer be calibrated in the same 75° to 90° range of entrance angle for greatest accuracy.

11.1.4.1 Calibration of the goniometer at the 0° entrance angle position may be accomplished by several means. One example is by substituting an approximately 200 mm (8 in.) square high quality plane mirror in place of the sample. A 200 mm cross, centered on the surface of the mirror can be made with photographic black tape. A 400 mm square piece of white construction paper, with a small (5 mm) hole in the center, can be centered over the light projector exit aperture. By observing the white paper, the goniometer can be adjusted so that the shadow of the cross is reflected directly on the exit aperture of the projector. This position of the goniometer is the 0° entrance angle.

12. Test Procedure

12.1 The geometry used to determine the photometric performance of retroreflectors shall be in accordance with Practice [E808](#). There are several methods that can be used in determining this performance. These are the ratio method, the substitution method, the direct luminous intensity method, and the direct luminance method.

12.2 *The Ratio Method*—In this method, use the same instrument with the same apertures and field of acceptance to measure the reflected illuminance (E_r) and the normal illuminance (E_{\perp}). Therefore, the photoreceptor need not be calibrated, and the uncalibrated meter readings of E_r and E_{\perp} are referred to as m_1 and m_2 , respectively. Do not use different instruments to measure E_r and E_{\perp} .

12.3 *Procedure A*—Ratio Method.

12.3.1 *General*—Select the smallest available field aperture large enough to include both the entire retroreflector as seen from the photoreceptor, and the source as viewed from the retroreflector, for measurement of M_1 and m_2 . Measure the normal illuminance at the face of the sample by substituting the photoreceptor for the sample. Place the photoreceptor entrance aperture where the test specimen is mounted and record m_2 . (Alternatively the light source may be substituted for the test specimen at the test distance