



Standard Test Methods for Rockwell Hardness of Metallic Materials^{1,2}

This standard is issued under the fixed designation E18; 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 reappraisal. A superscript epsilon (ϵ) indicates an editorial change since the last revision or reappraisal.

This standard has been approved for use by agencies of the U.S. Department of Defense.

1. Scope*

1.1 These test methods cover the determination of the Rockwell hardness and the Rockwell superficial hardness of metallic materials by the Rockwell indentation hardness principle. This standard provides the requirements for Rockwell hardness machines and the procedures for performing Rockwell hardness tests.

1.2 This test method includes requirements for the use of portable Rockwell hardness testing machines that measure Rockwell hardness by the Rockwell hardness test principle and can meet all the requirements of this test method, including the direct and indirect verifications of the testing machine. Portable Rockwell hardness testing machines that cannot meet the direct verification requirements and can only be verified by indirect verification requirements are covered in Test Method **E110**.

1.3 This standard includes additional requirements in the following annexes:

Verification of Rockwell Hardness Testing Machines	Annex A1
Rockwell Hardness Standardizing Machines	Annex A2
Standardization of Rockwell Indenters	Annex A3
Standardization of Rockwell Hardness Test Blocks	Annex A4
Guidelines for Determining the Minimum Thickness of a Test Piece	Annex A5
Hardness Value Corrections When Testing on Convex Cylindrical Surfaces	Annex A6

1.4 This standard includes nonmandatory information in the following appendixes that relates to the Rockwell hardness test.

List of ASTM Standards Giving Hardness Values Corresponding to Tensile Strength	Appendix X1
Examples of Procedures for Determining Rockwell Hardness Uncertainty	Appendix X2

1.5 *Units*—At the time the Rockwell hardness test was developed, the force levels were specified in units of kilograms-force (kgf) and the indenter ball diameters were specified in units of inches (in.). This standard specifies the units of force and length in the International System of Units (SI); that is, force in Newtons (N) and length in millimeters (mm). However, because of the historical

¹ These test methods are under the jurisdiction of ASTM Committee E28 on Mechanical Testing and are the direct responsibility of Subcommittee E28.06 on Indentation Hardness Testing.

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² In this test method, the term Rockwell refers to an internationally recognized type of indentation hardness test as defined in Section 3, and not to the hardness testing equipment of a particular manufacturer.

*A Summary of Changes section appears at the end of this standard

precedent and continued common usage, force values in kgf units and ball diameters in inch units are provided for information and much of the discussion in this standard refers to these units.

1.6 The test principles, testing procedures, and verification procedures are essentially identical for both the Rockwell and Rockwell superficial hardness tests. The significant differences between the two tests are that the test forces are smaller for the Rockwell superficial test than for the Rockwell test. The same type and size indenters may be used for either test, depending on the scale being employed. Accordingly, throughout this standard, the term Rockwell will imply both Rockwell and Rockwell superficial unless stated otherwise.

1.7 *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, health, and environmental practices and determine the applicability of regulatory limitations prior to use.*

1.8 *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:³

- [A370 Test Methods and Definitions for Mechanical Testing of Steel Products](#)
- [A623 Specification for Tin Mill Products, General Requirements](#)
- [A623M Specification for Tin Mill Products, General Requirements \[Metric\]](#)
- [A883 Test Method for Ferrimagnetic Resonance Linewidth and Gyromagnetic Ratio of Nonmetallic Magnetic Materials](#)
- [A956/A956/A956M Test Method for Leeb Hardness Testing of Steel Products](#)
- [A1038 Test Method for Portable Hardness Testing by the Ultrasonic Contact Impedance Method](#)
- [B19 Specification for Cartridge Brass Sheet, Strip, Plate, Bar, and Disks](#)
- [B36/B36M Specification for Brass Plate, Sheet, Strip, and Rolled Bar](#)
- [B96/B96M Specification for Copper-Silicon Alloy Plate, Sheet, Strip, and Rolled Bar for General Purposes and Pressure Vessels](#)
- [B103/B103M Specification for Phosphor Bronze Plate, Sheet, Strip, and Rolled Bar](#)
- [B121/B121M Specification for Leaded Brass Plate, Sheet, Strip, and Rolled Bar](#)
- [B122/B122M Specification for Copper-Nickel-Tin Alloy, Copper-Nickel-Zinc Alloy \(Nickel Silver\), and Copper-Nickel Alloy Plate, Sheet, Strip, and Rolled Bar](#)
- [B130 Specification for Commercial Bronze Strip for Bullet Jackets](#)
- [B134/B134M Specification for Brass Wire](#)
- [B152/B152M Specification for Copper Sheet, Strip, Plate, and Rolled Bar](#)
- [B370 Specification for Copper Sheet and Strip for Building Construction](#)
- [B647 Test Method for Indentation Hardness of Aluminum Alloys by Means of a Webster Hardness Gage](#)
- [E29 Practice for Using Significant Digits in Test Data to Determine Conformance with Specifications](#)
- [E74 Practices for Calibration and Verification for Force-Measuring Instruments](#)
- [E92 Test Methods for Vickers Hardness and Knoop Hardness of Metallic Materials](#)
- [E110 Test Method for Rockwell and Brinell Hardness of Metallic Materials by Portable Hardness Testers](#)
- [E140 Hardness Conversion Tables for Metals Relationship Among Brinell Hardness, Vickers Hardness, Rockwell Hardness, Superficial Hardness, Knoop Hardness, Scleroscope Hardness, and Leeb Hardness](#)
- [E384 Test Method for Microindentation Hardness of Materials](#)
- [E691 Practice for Conducting an Interlaboratory Study to Determine the Precision of a Test Method](#)

2.2 American Bearing Manufacturer Association Standard:

- [ABMA 10-1989 Metal Balls⁴](#)

2.3 ISO Standards:

- [ISO 6508-1 Metallic Materials—Rockwell Hardness Test—Part 1: Test Method \(scales A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, K, N, T\)⁵](#)
- [ISO/IEC 17011 Conformity Assessment—General Requirements for Accreditation Bodies Accrediting Conformity Assessment Bodies⁵](#)
- [ISO/IEC 17025 General Requirements for the Competence of Testing and Calibration Laboratories⁵](#)

³ 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.

⁴ Available from American Bearing Manufacturers Association (ABMA), 2025 M Street, NW, Suite 800, Washington, DC 20036.

⁵ Available from American National Standards Institute (ANSI), 25 W. 43rd St., 4th Floor, New York, NY 10036, <http://www.ansi.org>.

2.4 Society of Automotive Engineers (SAE) Standard:
 SAE J417 Hardness Tests and Hardness Number Conversions⁶

3. Terminology and Equations

3.1 Definitions:

3.1.1 *calibration*—determination of the values of the significant parameters by comparison with values indicated by a reference instrument or by a set of reference standards.

3.1.2 *standardization*—to bring in conformance to a known standard through verification or calibration.

3.1.3 *verification*—checking or testing to assure conformance with the specification.

3.1.4 *Rockwell hardness test*—an indentation hardness test using a verified machine to force a diamond spheroconical indenter or tungsten carbide (or steel) ball indenter, under specified conditions, into the surface of the material under test, and to measure the difference in depth of the indentation as the force on the indenter is increased from a specified preliminary test force to a specified total test force and then returned to the preliminary test force.

3.1.5 *Rockwell superficial hardness test*—same as the Rockwell hardness test except that smaller preliminary and total test forces are used with a shorter depth scale.

3.1.6 *Rockwell hardness number*—a number derived from the net increase in the depth of indentation as the force on an indenter is increased from a specified preliminary test force to a specified total test force and then returned to the preliminary test force.

3.1.7 *Rockwell hardness machine*—a machine capable of performing a Rockwell hardness test and/or a Rockwell superficial hardness test and displaying the resulting Rockwell hardness number.

3.1.7.1 *Rockwell hardness testing machine*—a Rockwell hardness machine used for general testing purposes.

3.1.7.2 *Rockwell hardness standardizing machine*—a Rockwell hardness machine used for the standardization of Rockwell hardness indenters, and for the standardization of Rockwell hardness test blocks. The standardizing machine differs from a regular Rockwell hardness testing machine by having tighter tolerances on certain parameters.

3.1.7.3 *portable Rockwell hardness testing machine*—a Rockwell hardness testing machine that is designed to be transported, carried, set up, and operated by the users, and that measures Rockwell hardness by the Rockwell indentation hardness test principle.

3.1.7.4 *movable Rockwell hardness testing machine*—a Rockwell hardness testing machine that is designed to be moved to different locations on a moveable frame, table or similar support that is integral to the testing machine (for example, securely fixed to a rolling table), or a Rockwell hardness testing machine that is designed to move into testing position prior to a test, (for example, securely fixed to a moving support arm), and has been previously verified to ensure that such a move will not affect the hardness result.

3.2 Equations:

3.2.1 The *average* \bar{H} of a set of n hardness measurements H_1, H_2, \dots, H_n is calculated as:

$$\bar{H} = \frac{H_1 + H_2 + \dots + H_n}{n} \quad (1)$$

3.2.2 The *error* E in the performance of a Rockwell hardness machine at each hardness level, relative to a standardized scale, is determined as:

$$E = \bar{H} - H_{STD} \quad (2)$$

⁶ Available from Society of Automotive Engineers (SAE), 400 Commonwealth Dr., Warrendale, PA 15096-0001, <http://www.sae.org>.

where:

\bar{H} = average of n hardness measurements H_1, H_2, \dots, H_n made on a standardized test block as part of a performance verification, and

H_{STD} = certified average hardness value of the standardized test block.

3.2.3 The *repeatability* R in the performance of a Rockwell hardness machine at each hardness level, under the particular verification conditions, is estimated by the range of n hardness measurements made on a standardized test block as part of a performance verification, defined as:

$$R = H_{max} - H_{min} \tag{3}$$

where:

H_{max} = highest hardness value, and

H_{min} = lowest hardness value.

4. Significance and Use

4.1 The Rockwell hardness test is an empirical indentation hardness test that can provide useful information about metallic materials. This information may correlate to tensile strength, wear resistance, ductility, and other physical characteristics of metallic materials, and may be useful in quality control and selection of materials.

4.2 Rockwell hardness tests are considered satisfactory for acceptance testing of commercial shipments, and have been used extensively in industry for this purpose.

4.3 Rockwell hardness testing at a specific location on a part may not represent the physical characteristics of the whole part or end product.

4.4 Adherence to this standard test method provides traceability to national Rockwell hardness standards except as stated otherwise.

5. Principles of Test and Apparatus

5.1 *Rockwell Hardness Test Principle*—The general principle of the Rockwell indentation hardness test is illustrated in Fig. 1. The test is divided into three steps of force application and removal.

Step 1—The indenter is brought into contact with the test specimen, and the preliminary test force F_0 is applied. After holding the preliminary test force for a specified dwell time, the baseline depth of indentation is measured.

Step 2—The force on the indenter is increased at a controlled rate by the additional test force F_1 to achieve the total test force F . The total test force is held for a specified dwell time.

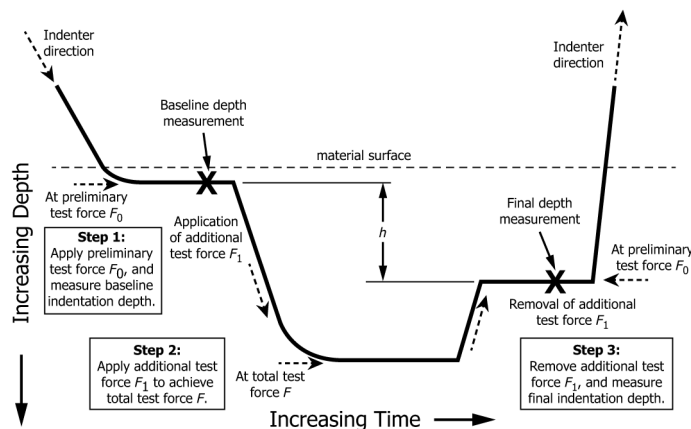


FIG. 1 Rockwell Hardness Test Method (Schematic Diagram)

Step 3—The additional test force is removed, returning to the preliminary test force. After holding the preliminary test force for a specified dwell time, the final depth of indentation is measured. The Rockwell hardness value is derived from the difference h in the final and baseline indentation depths while under the preliminary test force. The preliminary test force is removed and the indenter is removed from the test specimen.

5.1.1 There are two general classifications of the Rockwell test: the Rockwell hardness test and the Rockwell superficial hardness test. The significant difference between the two test classifications is in the test forces that are used. For the Rockwell hardness test, the preliminary test force is 10 kgf (98 N) and the total test forces are 60 kgf (589 N), 100 kgf (981 N), and 150 kgf (1471 N). For the Rockwell superficial hardness test, the preliminary test force is 3 kgf (29 N) and the total test forces are 15 kgf (147 N), 30 kgf (294 N), and 45 kgf (441 N).

5.1.2 Indenters for the Rockwell hardness test include a diamond spheroconical indenter and tungsten carbide ball indenters of specified diameters.

5.1.2.1 Steel indenter balls may be used only for testing thin sheet tin mill products specified in Specifications **A623** and **A623M** using the HR15T and HR30T scales with a diamond spot anvil. Testing of this product may give significantly differing results using a tungsten carbide ball as compared to historical test data using a steel ball.

NOTE 1—Previous editions of this standard have stated that the steel ball was the standard type of Rockwell indenter ball. The tungsten carbide ball is considered the standard type of Rockwell indenter ball. The use of tungsten carbide balls provide an improvement to the Rockwell hardness test because of the tendency of steel balls to flatten with use, which results in an erroneously elevated hardness value. The user is cautioned that Rockwell hardness tests comparing the use of steel and tungsten carbide balls have been shown to give different results. For example, depending on the material tested and its hardness level, Rockwell B scale tests using a tungsten carbide ball indenter have given results approximately one Rockwell point lower than when a steel ball indenter is used.

5.1.3 The Rockwell hardness scales are defined by the combinations of indenter and test forces that may be used. The standard Rockwell hardness scales and typical applications of the scales are given in **Tables 1 and 2**. Rockwell hardness values shall be determined and reported in accordance with one of these standard scales.

5.2 *Calculation of the Rockwell Hardness Number*—During a Rockwell test, the force on the indenter is increased from a preliminary test force to a total test force, and then returned to the preliminary test force. The difference in the two indentation depth measurements, while under the preliminary test force, is measured as h (see **Fig. 1**).

5.2.1 The unit measurement for h is mm. From the value of h , the Rockwell hardness number is derived. The Rockwell hardness number is calculated as:

5.2.1.1 For scales using a diamond spheroconical indenter (see **Tables 1 and 2**):

$$\text{Rockwell Hardness} = 100 - \frac{h}{0.002} \quad (4)$$

TABLE 1 Rockwell Hardness Scales

Scale Symbol	Indenter	Total Test Force, kgf	Dial Figures	Typical Applications of Scales
B	1/16-in. (1.588-mm) ball	100	red	Copper alloys, soft steels, aluminum alloys, malleable iron, etc.
C	diamond	150	black	
A	diamond	60	black	Cemented carbides, thin steel, and shallow case-hardened steel.
D	diamond	100	black	
E	1/8-in. (3.175-mm) ball	100	red	Thin steel and medium case hardened steel, and pearlitic malleable iron.
F	1/16-in. (1.588-mm) ball	60	red	
G	1/16-in. (1.588-mm) ball	150	red	Cast iron, aluminum and magnesium alloys, bearing metals.
H	1/8-in. (3.175-mm) ball	60	red	
K	1/8-in. (3.175-mm) ball	150	red	Annealed copper alloys, thin soft sheet metals.
L	1/4-in. (6.350-mm) ball	60	red	
M	1/4-in. (6.350-mm) ball	100	red	Malleable irons, copper-nickel-zinc and cupro-nickel alloys. Upper limit G92 to avoid possible flattening of ball.
P	1/4-in. (6.350-mm) ball	150	red	
R	1/2-in. (12.70-mm) ball	60	red	Aluminum, zinc, lead.
S	1/2-in. (12.70-mm) ball	100	red	
V	1/2-in. (12.70-mm) ball	150	red	
				Bearing metals and other very soft or thin materials. Use smallest ball and heaviest load that does not give anvil effect.

TABLE 2 Rockwell Superficial Hardness Scales

Total Test Force, kgf (N)	Scale Symbols				
	N Scale, Diamond Indenter	T Scale, 1/16-in. (1.588-mm) Ball	W Scale, 1/8-in. (3.175-mm) Ball	X Scale, 1/4-in. (6.350-mm) Ball	Y Scale, 1/2-in. (12.70-mm) Ball
15 (147)	15N	15T	15W	15X	15Y
30 (294)	30N	30T	30W	30X	30Y
45 (441)	45N	45T	45W	45X	45Y

$$\text{Rockwell Superficial Hardness} = 100 - \frac{h}{0.001} \quad (5)$$

where h is in mm.

5.2.1.2 For scales using a ball indenter (see [Tables 1 and 2](#)):

$$\text{Rockwell Hardness} = 130 - \frac{h}{0.002} \quad (6)$$

$$\text{Rockwell Superficial Hardness} = 100 - \frac{h}{0.001} \quad (7)$$

where h is in mm.

5.2.2 The Rockwell hardness number is an arbitrary number, which, by method of calculation, results in a higher number for harder material.

5.2.3 Rockwell hardness values shall not be designated by a number alone because it is necessary to indicate which indenter and forces have been employed in making the test (see [Tables 1 and 2](#)). Rockwell hardness numbers shall be quoted with a scale symbol representing the indenter and forces used. The hardness number is followed by the symbol HR and the scale designation. When a ball indenter is used, the scale designation is followed by the letter “W” to indicate the use of a tungsten carbide ball or the letter “S” to indicate the use of a steel ball (see [5.1.2.1](#)).

5.2.3.1 *Examples:*

64 HRC = Rockwell hardness number of 64 on Rockwell C scale

81 HR30N = Rockwell superficial hardness number of 81 on the Rockwell 30N scale

72 HRBW = Rockwell hardness number of 72 on the Rockwell B scale using a tungsten carbide ball indenter

5.2.4 A reported Rockwell hardness number or the average value of Rockwell hardness measurements shall be rounded in accordance with [Practice E29](#) with a resolution no greater than the resolution of the hardness value display of the testing machine. Typically, the resolution of a Rockwell hardness number should not be greater than 0.1 Rockwell units.

NOTE 2—When the Rockwell hardness test is used for the acceptance testing of commercial products and materials, the user should take into account the potential measurement differences between hardness testing machines allowed by this standard (see [Section 10](#), Precision and Bias). Because of the allowable ranges in the tolerances for the repeatability and error of a testing machine, as specified in the verification requirements of [Annex A1](#), one testing machine may have a test result that is one or more hardness points different than another testing machine, yet both machines can be within verification tolerances (see [Table A1.3](#)). Commonly for acceptance testing, Rockwell hardness values are rounded to whole numbers following [Practice E29](#). Users are encouraged to address rounding practices with regards to acceptance testing within their quality management system, and make any special requirements known during contract review.

5.3 *Rockwell Testing Machine*—The Rockwell testing machine shall make Rockwell hardness determinations by applying the test forces and measuring the depth of indentation in accordance with the Rockwell hardness test principle.

5.3.1 See the Equipment Manufacturer’s Instruction Manual for a description of the machine’s characteristics, limitations, and respective operating procedures.

5.3.2 The Rockwell testing machine shall automatically convert the depth measurements to a Rockwell hardness number and indicate the hardness number and Rockwell scale by an electronic device or by a mechanical indicator.

5.4 *Indenters*—The standard Rockwell indenters are either diamond spheroconical indenters or tungsten carbide balls of 1.588 mm ($\frac{1}{16}$ in.), 3.175 mm ($\frac{1}{8}$ in.), 6.350 mm ($\frac{1}{4}$ in.), or 12.70 mm ($\frac{1}{2}$ in.) in diameter. Indenters shall meet the requirements defined in [Annex A3](#). Steel ball indenters may be used in certain circumstances (see [5.1.2.1](#)).

5.4.1 Dust, dirt, or other foreign materials shall not be allowed to accumulate on the indenter, as this will affect the test results.

NOTE 3—Indenters certified to revision [E18E18-07-07](#) or later meet the requirements of this standard.

5.5 *Specimen Support*—A specimen support or “anvil” shall be used that is suitable for supporting the specimen to be tested. The seating and supporting surfaces of all anvils shall be clean and smooth and shall be free from pits, deep scratches, and foreign material. Damage to the anvil may occur from testing too thin material or accidental contact of the anvil by the indenter. If the anvil is damaged from any cause, it shall be repaired or replaced. Anvils showing the least visibly perceptible damage may give inaccurate results, particularly on thin material.

5.5.1 Common specimen support anvils should have a minimum hardness of 58 HRC. Some specialty support anvils require a lower material hardness.

5.5.2 Flat pieces should be tested on a flat anvil that has a smooth, flat bearing surface whose plane is perpendicular to the axis of the indenter.

5.5.3 Small diameter cylindrical pieces shall be tested with a hard V-grooved anvil with the axis of the V-groove directly under the indenter, or on hard, parallel, twin cylinders properly positioned and clamped in their base. These types of specimen supports shall support the specimen with the apex of the cylinder directly under the indenter.

5.5.4 For thin materials or specimens that are not perfectly flat, an anvil having an elevated, flat “spot” 3 mm ($\frac{1}{8}$ in.) to 12.5 mm ($\frac{1}{2}$ in.) in diameter should be used. This spot shall be polished smooth and flat. Very soft material should not be tested on the “spot” anvil because the applied force may cause the penetration of the anvil into the under side of the specimen regardless of its thickness.

5.5.5 When testing thin sheet metal with a ball indenter, it is recommended that a diamond spot anvil be used. The highly polished diamond surface shall have a diameter between 4.0 mm ([0.157 in.](#)) and 7.0 mm ([0.2875 in.](#)) and be centered within 0.5 mm (0.02 in.) of the test point.

5.5.5.1 CAUTION: A diamond spot anvil should only be used with a maximum total test force of 45 kgf (441 N) and a ball indenter. This recommendation should be followed except when directed otherwise by material specification.

5.5.6 Special anvils or fixtures, including clamping fixtures, may be required for testing pieces or parts that cannot be supported by standard anvils. Auxiliary support may be used for testing long pieces with so much overhang that the piece is not firmly seated by the preliminary force.

5.6 *Verification*—Rockwell testing machines shall be verified periodically in accordance with [Annex A1](#).

5.7 *Test Blocks*—Test blocks meeting the requirements of [Annex A4](#) shall be used to verify the testing machine in accordance with [Annex A1](#).

NOTE 4—Test blocks certified to revision E18-07 or later meet the requirements of this standard.

NOTE 5—It is recognized that appropriate standardized test blocks are not available for all geometric shapes, or materials, or both.

5.8 *Use of Portable Rockwell Hardness Testing Machines:*

5.8.1 A fixed-location Rockwell hardness testing machine may not be capable of testing certain samples because of the sample size or weight, sample location, accessibility of the test point or other requirements. In these circumstances, the use of a portable Rockwell hardness testing machine is an acceptable method to test these samples. This method allows the use of a portable Rockwell hardness testing machine as follows.

5.8.1.1 The portable Rockwell hardness testing machine shall meet the requirements of this method, including the test principle, apparatus, indenters, applied forces, test procedures and the direct and indirect verifications of the testing machine (except as indicated in **Table A1.1**). Test Method **E110** covers portable Rockwell hardness testing machines that cannot be directly verified or cannot pass direct verification but meet the other requirements of this method.

5.8.1.2 A portable Rockwell hardness testing machine shall be used only when testing circumstances make it impractical to use a fixed-location Rockwell hardness testing machine. In such cases, it is recommended that an agreement or understanding be made between all parties involved (for example, testing service and customer) that a portable Rockwell hardness testing machine will be used instead of a fixed-location Rockwell hardness testing machine (see **5.8.1**.)

5.8.1.3 The portable Rockwell hardness testing machine shall measure hardness by the Rockwell hardness test principle (see **5.1**). Portable hardness testing machines or instruments that measure hardness by other means or procedures different than the Rockwell hardness test principle, such as those defined in Test Methods **A883**, **A956A956/A956M**, **A1038** or **B647**, produce converted Rockwell hardness values and do not comply with this method.

5.8.2 *Daily Verification of portable hardness testing machines*—Portable hardness testing machines are susceptible to damage when they are transported or carried from one test site to another. Therefore, in addition to complying with the daily verification requirements specified in **7.1** and **Annex A1**, a daily verification shall be performed at each test worksite where the hardness tests are to be made just prior to making the hardness tests. The verification shall be performed with the portable hardness testing machine oriented as closely as practical to the position that it will be used. It is recommended that the daily verification be repeated occasionally during testing and after testing is completed.

5.8.3 Additional reporting requirements when using a portable Rockwell hardness testing machine are given in **9.2**.

5.8.4 Portable hardness testing machines by the nature of their application may induce errors that could influence the test results. To understand the differences in results expected between portable and fixed-location Rockwell hardness testing machines, the user should compare the results of the precision and bias studies given in Section **10** and in Test Method **E110**.

6. Test Piece

6.1 For best results, both the test surface and the bottom surface of the test piece should be smooth, even and free from oxide scale, foreign matter, and lubricants. An exception is made for certain materials such as reactive metals that may adhere to the indenter. In such situations, a suitable lubricant such as kerosene may be used. The use of a lubricant shall be defined on the test report.

6.2 Preparation shall be carried out in such a way that any alteration of the surface hardness of the test surface (for example, due to heat or cold-working) is minimized.

6.3 The thickness of the test piece or of the layer under test should be as defined in tables and presented graphically in **Annex A5**. These tables were determined from studies on strips of carbon steel and have proven to give reliable results. For all other materials, it is recommended that the thickness should exceed 10 times the depth of indentation. In general, no deformation should be visible on the back of the test piece after the test, although not all such marking is indicative of a bad test.

6.3.1 Special consideration should be made when testing parts that exhibit hardness gradients; for example, parts that were case-hardened by processes such as carburizing, carbonitriding, nitriding, induction, etc. The minimum thickness guidelines given in **Annex A5** only apply to materials of uniform hardness, and should not be used to determine the appropriate scale for measuring parts with hardness gradients. The selection of an appropriate Rockwell scale for parts with hardness gradients should be made by special agreement.

NOTE 6—A table listing the minimum effective case depth needed for different Rockwell scales is given in SAE J417.

6.4 When testing on convex cylindrical surfaces, the result may not accurately indicate the true Rockwell hardness; therefore, the corrections given in **Annex A6** shall be applied. For diameters between those given in the tables, correction factors may be derived by linear interpolation. Tests performed on diameters smaller than those given in **Annex A6** are not acceptable. Corrections for tests on spherical and concave surfaces should be the subject of special agreement. Additional requirements are specified in **9.4** and **9.5** when reporting corrected hardness values.

NOTE 7—A table of correction values to be applied to test results made on spherical surfaces is given in ISO 6508-1.

6.5 When testing small diameter specimens, the accuracy of the test will be seriously affected by alignment between the indenter and the test piece, by surface finish, and by the straightness of the cylinder.

7. Test Procedure

7.1 A daily verification of the testing machine shall be performed in accordance with A1.5 prior to making hardness tests. Hardness measurements shall be made only on the calibrated surface of the test block.

7.1.1 The results of a daily verification shall comply with the current values specified in Table A1.3 regardless of any maximum error *E* value marked on the test block (see Note 8).

NOTE 8—Different editions of this method have revised some maximum error *E* values given in Table A1.3. Consequently, the maximum error *E* values marked on older standardized test blocks may not reflect the current values.

7.2 Rockwell hardness tests should be carried out at ambient temperature within the limits of $\pm 10\text{ }^\circ\text{C}$ to $35\text{ }^\circ\text{C}$ ($50\text{ }^\circ\text{F}$ to $95\text{ }^\circ\text{F}$). Users of the Rockwell hardness test are cautioned that the temperature of the test material and the temperature of the hardness tester may affect test results. Consequently, users should ensure that the test temperature does not adversely affect the hardness measurement.

7.3 The test piece shall be supported rigidly so that displacement of the test surface is minimized (see 5.5).

7.4 *Test Cycle*—This standard specifies the Rockwell test cycle by stating recommendations or requirements for five separate parts of the cycle. These parts are illustrated for a Rockwell C scale test in Fig. 2, and defined as follows:

(1) *Contact Velocity*, v_A —The velocity of the indenter at the point of contact with the test material.

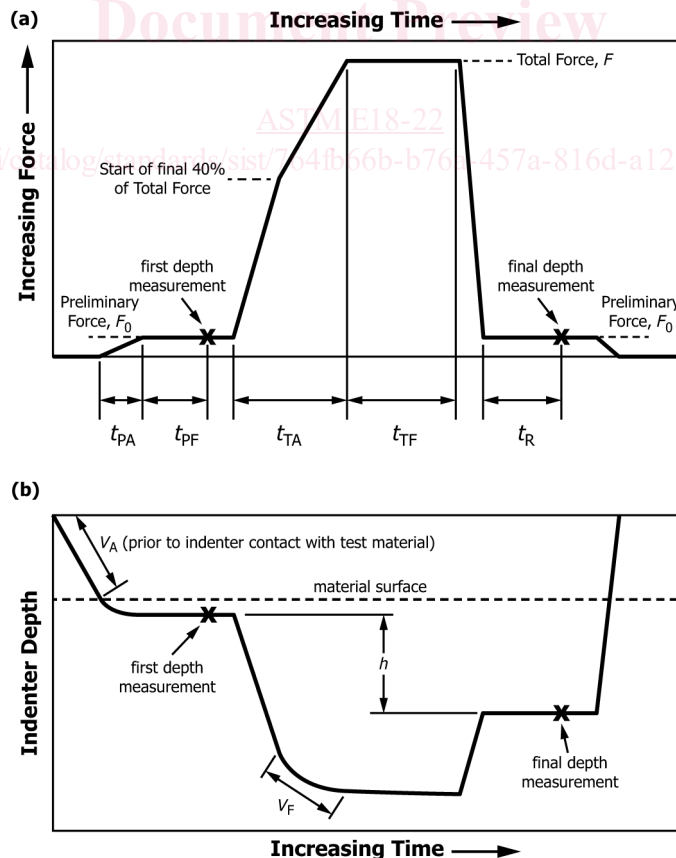


FIG. 2 Schematic of Force-Time Plot (a) and Indenter Depth-Time Plot (b) of an HRC Test Illustrating the Test Cycle Parts

(2) *Preliminary Force Dwell Time, t_{PF}* —The dwell time beginning when the preliminary force is fully applied and ending when the first baseline depth of indentation is measured, (also see 7.4.1.3).

(3) *Additional Force Application Time, t_{TA}* —The time for applying the additional force to obtain the full total force.

(4) *Total Force Dwell Time, t_{TF}* —The dwell time while the total force is fully applied.

(5) *Dwell Time for Elastic Recovery, t_R* —The dwell time at the preliminary force level, beginning when the additional force is fully removed, and ending when the second and final depth of indentation is measured.

7.4.1 The standard Rockwell test cycle is specified in Table 3. The test cycle used for Rockwell hardness tests shall be in accordance with these test cycle values and tolerances (see Note 9), with the following exceptions.

7.4.1.1 *Precautions for Materials Having Excessive Time-Dependent Plasticity (Indentation Creep)*—In the case of materials exhibiting excessive plastic flow after application of the total test force, special considerations may be necessary since the indenter will continue to penetrate. When materials require the use of a longer total force dwell time than for the standard test cycle stated in Table 3, this should be specified in the product specification. In these cases, the actual extended total force dwell time used shall be recorded and reported after the test results (for example, 65 HRFW, 10 s).

7.4.1.2 There are testing conditions that may require that the indenter contact velocity exceed the recommended maximum stated in Table 3. The user should ensure that the higher contact velocity does not cause a shock or overload which would affect the hardness result. It is recommended that comparison tests be made on the same test material using a test cycle within the requirements stated in Table 3.

7.4.1.3 For testing machines that take 1 s or longer to apply the preliminary force t_{PA} , the preliminary force dwell time value t_{PF} shall be adjusted before comparing the parameter with the tolerances of Table 3 by adding to it one half of t_{PA} as $\frac{t_{PA}}{2} + t_{PF}$. For testing machines that apply the preliminary force t_{PA} in 1 s or less, this adjustment to the preliminary force dwell time value t_{PF} is optional.

NOTE 9—It is recommended that the test cycle to be used with the hardness machine match, as closely as possible, the test cycle used for the indirect verification of the hardness machine. Varying the values of the testing cycle parameters within the tolerances of Table 3 can produce different hardness results.

7.5 *Test Procedure*—There are many designs of Rockwell hardness machines, requiring various levels of operator control. Some hardness machines can perform the Rockwell hardness test procedure automatically with almost no operator influence, while other machines require the operator to control most of the test procedure.

7.5.1 Bring the indenter into contact with the test surface in a direction perpendicular to the surface and, if possible, at a velocity within the recommended maximum contact velocity v_A .

7.5.2 Apply the preliminary test force F_0 of 10 kgf (98 N) for the Rockwell hardness test or 3 kgf (29 N) for the Rockwell superficial hardness test.

7.5.3 Maintain the preliminary force for the specified preliminary force dwell time t_{PF} .

TABLE 3 Test Cycle Tolerances

Test Cycle Parameter	Tolerance
Indenter contact velocity, v_A (recommended)	≤2.5 mm/s
Dwell time for preliminary force, t_{PF} (when the time to apply the preliminary force $t_{PA} \geq 1$ s, then calculate this parameter as $\frac{t_{PA}}{2} + t_{PF}$)	0.1 to 4.0 s
Dwell time for preliminary force, t_{PF} (when the time to apply the preliminary force $t_{PA} < 1$ s, then calculate this parameter as $\frac{t_{PA}}{2} + t_{PF}$)	0.1 s to 4.0 s
Time for application of additional force, t_{TA}	1.0 to 8.0 s
Time for application of additional force, t_{TA}	1.0 s to 8.0 s
Dwell time for total force, t_{TF}	2.0 to 6.0 s
Dwell time for total force, t_{TF}	2.0 s to 6.0 s
Dwell time for elastic recovery, t_R	0.2 to 5.0 s
Dwell time for elastic recovery, t_R	0.2 s to 5.0 s

7.5.4 At the end of the preliminary force dwell time t_{PF} , immediately establish the reference position of the baseline depth of indentation (see manufacturer’s Instruction Manual).

7.5.5 Increase the force by the value of the additional test force F_1 needed to obtain the required total test force F for a given hardness scale (see [Tables 1 and 2](#)). The additional force F_1 shall be applied in a controlled manner within the specified application time range t_{TA} .

7.5.6 Maintain the total force F for the specified total force dwell time t_{TF} .

7.5.7 Remove the additional test force F_1 while maintaining the preliminary test force F_0 .

7.5.8 Maintain the preliminary test force F_0 for an appropriate time to allow elastic recovery in the test material and the stretch of the frame to be factored out.

7.5.9 At the end of the dwell time for elastic recovery, immediately establish the final depth of indentation (see manufacturer’s Instruction Manual). The testing machine shall calculate the difference between the final and baseline depth measurements and indicate the resulting Rockwell hardness value. The Rockwell hardness number is derived from the differential increase in depth of indentation as defined in [Eq 4](#), [Eq 5](#), [Eq 6](#), and [Eq 7](#).

7.6 Throughout the test, the apparatus shall be protected from shock or vibration that could affect the hardness measurement result.

7.7 After each change, or removal and replacement, of the indenter or the anvil, at least two preliminary indentations shall be made to ensure that the indenter and anvil are seated properly. The results of the preliminary indentations shall be disregarded.

7.8 After each change of a test force or removal and replacement of the indenter or the anvil, it is strongly recommended that the operation of the machine be checked in accordance with the daily verification method specified in [Annex A1](#).

7.9 *Indentation Spacing*—The hardness of the material immediately surrounding a previously made indentation will usually increase due to the induced residual stress and work-hardening caused by the indentation process. If a new indentation is made in this affected material, the measured hardness value will likely be higher than the true hardness of the material as a whole. Also, if an indentation is made too close to the edge of the material or very close to a previously made indentation, there may be insufficient material to constrain the deformation zone surrounding the indentation. This can result in an apparent lowering of the hardness value. Both of these circumstances can be avoided by allowing appropriate spacing between indentations and from the edge of the material.

7.9.1 The distance between the centers of two adjacent indentations shall be at least three times the diameter d of the indentation (see [Fig. 3](#)).

7.9.2 The distance from the center of any indentation to an edge of the test piece shall be at least two and a half times the diameter of the indentation (see [Fig. 3](#)).

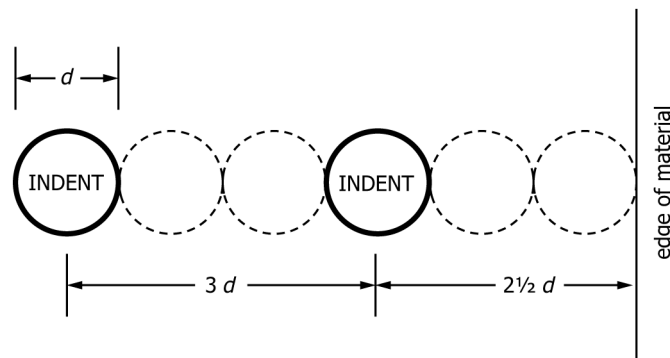


FIG. 3 Schematic of Minimum Indentation Spacing

8. Conversion to Other Hardness Scales or Tensile Strength Values

8.1 There is no general method of accurately converting the Rockwell hardness numbers on one scale to Rockwell hardness numbers on another scale, or to other types of hardness numbers, or to tensile strength values. Such conversions are, at best, approximations and, therefore, should be avoided except for special cases where a reliable basis for the approximate conversion has been obtained by comparison tests. Additional requirements are specified in 9.3 and 9.5 when reporting converted hardness values.

NOTE 10—The Standard Hardness Conversion Tables for Metals, E140, give approximate conversion values for specific materials such as steel, austenitic stainless steel, nickel and high-nickel alloys, cartridge brass, copper alloys, and alloyed white cast irons. The Rockwell hardness data in the conversion tables of E140 was determined using steel ball indenters.

NOTE 11—ASTM standards giving approximate hardness-tensile strength relationships are listed in Appendix X1.

9. Report

9.1 The test report shall include the following information:

9.1.1 The Rockwell hardness number. All reports of Rockwell hardness numbers shall indicate the scale used. The reported number shall be rounded in accordance with Practice E29 (see 5.2.4 and Note 2),

9.1.2 The total force dwell time, if outside the specified standard test cycle tolerances (see Table 3), and

9.1.3 The ambient temperature at the time of test, if outside the limits of 10 to 35 °C (50 to 95 °F), unless it has been shown not to affect the measurement result.

9.2 *Reporting Portable Testing Machine Hardness Values*—When using a portable Rockwell hardness testing machine, the measured hardness number shall be reported in accordance with 9.1, and appended with a /P to indicate that it was determined by portable Rockwell hardness testing machine. For example:

40 HRC/P = Rockwell hardness number of 40 on the Rockwell C scale.

72 HRBW/P = Rockwell hardness number of 72 on the Rockwell B scale with a tungsten carbide ball indenter.

<https://standards.iteh.ai/catalog/standards/sist/764fb66b-b76a-457a-816d-a12fa17bc6d1/astm-e18-22>

9.3 *Reporting Converted Hardness Values*—When reporting hardness values that have been converted from one type of hardness test or hardness scale to another type of hardness test or hardness scale, the original measurement number and test scale shall also be reported (see E140).

9.3.1 A common historical practice is to report the converted hardness value followed by the measured hardness value given in parentheses. For example: 353 HBW (38 HRC), where 353 HBW is the converted hardness value and 38 HRC is the original measurement value.

9.3.2 Other formats for reporting converted hardness values, such as data tables, may be used, however, the original measurement number and test scale shall also be reported and clearly identified.

9.4 *Reporting Curvature Corrected Hardness Values*—When reporting Rockwell hardness test values that have been corrected for testing on cylindrical or spherical surfaces (see 6.4), the following information shall be indicated in the test report or documented in the test lab/customer contract or agreement:

–the test values are corrected due to testing on a curved surface,

–the source of correction value, if other than the correction tables given in Annex A6 for convex cylindrical surfaces.

9.5 Since all converted or curvature-corrected hardness values are considered approximate, the reported hardness values shall be rounded in accordance with the Rounding Method of Practice E29 and should have no more significant digits than is given for the data in the applicable conversion or correction table.

10. Precision and Bias^{7,8}

10.1 *Precision*—A Rockwell hardness precision and bias study was conducted in 2000 in accordance with Practice E691. Tests were performed in the following six Rockwell scales: HRA, HRC, HRBS, HR30N, HR30TS, and HRES. The tests in the HRBS, HR30TS and HRES scales were made using steel ball indenters. A total of 18 Rockwell scale hardness test blocks of the type readily available were used for this study. Test blocks at three different hardness levels (high, medium, and low) in each scale were tested three times each. The results from the first study are filed under ASTM Research Report RR:E28-1021.^{7,8}

10.2 Starting with version E18-05, this standard changed from the use of steel balls to carbide balls for all scales that use a ball indenter. Due to this change, a second study was conducted in 2006. The second study was performed in accordance with Practice E691 and was identical to the initial study except it was limited to the HRBW, HR30TW, and HREW scales, all of which use carbide ball indenters. The results from that study are filed under ASTM Research Report RR:E28-1022.

10.3 A total of 14 different labs participated in the two studies. Eight participated in the first study and nine in the second study. Three labs participated in both studies. The labs chosen to participate in this study were a combination of commercial testing labs (6), in-house labs (5) and test block manufacturer’s calibration labs (3). Each lab was instructed to test each block in three specific locations around the surface of the blocks. All testing was to be done according to ASTM E18-05.

10.4 The results given in Table 4 may be useful in interpreting measurement differences. It is a combination of the two studies. The diamond scales, HRC, HRA, and HR30N are from the first study and the ball scales, HRBW, HREW, and HR30TW are from the second study. This combination reflects the testing that is being done currently.

10.5 The value of r_{PB} indicates the typical amount of variation that can be expected between test results obtained for the same material by the same operator using the same hardness tester on the same day. When comparing two test results made under these conditions, a measurement difference of less than the r_{PB} value for that Rockwell scale is an indication that the results may be equivalent.

10.6 The value of R_{PB} indicates the typical amount of variation that can be expected between test results obtained for the same material by different operators using different hardness testers on different days. When comparing two test results made under these conditions, a measurement difference of less than the R_{PB} value for that Rockwell scale is an indication that the results may be equivalent.

10.7 Any judgments based on 10.5 and 10.6 would have an approximately 95 % probability of being correct.

TABLE 4 Results of the Precision and Bias Study

Test Block	Average Hardness	S_r	S_R	r_{PB}	R_{PB}
Data from 2000 study					
62.8 HRA	62.50	0.164	0.538	0.459	1.506
73.1 HRA	73.04	0.138	0.358	0.387	1.002
83.9 HRA	84.54	0.085	0.468	0.238	1.309
25.0 HRC	24.99	0.335	0.440	0.937	1.232
45.0 HRC	45.35	0.156	0.259	0.438	0.725
65.0 HRC	65.78	0.153	0.389	0.427	1.089
45.9 HR30N	46.75	0.299	2.489	0.837	6.969
64.0 HR30N	64.74	0.248	0.651	0.694	1.822
81.9 HR30N	82.52	0.195	0.499	0.547	1.396
Data from 2006 study					
40 HRBW	43.90	0.492	0.668	1.378	1.871
60 HRBW	61.77	0.663	0.697	1.855	1.953
95 HRBW	91.09	0.250	0.292	0.701	0.817
62 HREW	64.07	0.346	0.675	0.970	1.890
81 HREW	81.61	0.232	0.406	0.649	1.136
100 HREW	96.22	0.177	0.322	0.497	0.901
22 HR30TW	18.33	0.702	0.901	1.965	2.522
56 HR30TW	58.0	0.476	0.517	1.333	1.447
79 HR30TW	81.0	0.610	0.851	1.709	2.382

⁷ Supporting data have been filed at ASTM International Headquarters and may be obtained by requesting Research Report RR:E28-1021.

⁸ Supporting data have been filed at ASTM International Headquarters and may be obtained by requesting Research Report RR:E28-1022.

10.8 This precision and bias study was conducted on a selected number of the most commonly used Rockwell scales. For Rockwell scales not listed, the r_{PB} and R_{PB} values may be estimated using the conversion tables of E140 to determine a corresponding increment of hardness for the scale of interest at the hardness level of interest. The user is cautioned that estimating the r_{PB} and R_{PB} values in this way, decreases the probability of them being correct.

10.9 Although the precision values given in Table 4 provide guidance on interpreting differences in Rockwell hardness measurement results, a complete evaluation of measurement uncertainty will provide a more definitive interpretation of the results for the specific testing conditions.

10.10 The data generally indicated reasonable precision except for the 45.9 HR30N scale. In that scale the SR and R_{PB} values are very high compared to all of the other scales. An examination of the raw data revealed that one lab's results were much higher than the others, significantly affecting the overall results in that scale. The results from all of the other scales seem to be reasonable.

10.11 *Bias*—There are no recognized standards by which to fully estimate the bias of this test method.

11. Keywords

11.1 hardness; mechanical test; metals; Rockwell

ANNEXES

(Mandatory Information)

A1. VERIFICATION OF ROCKWELL HARDNESS TESTING MACHINES

A1.1 Scope

ASTM E18-22

A1.1.1 Annex A1 specifies three types of procedures for verifying Rockwell hardness testing machines: *direct verification*, *indirect verification*, and *daily verification*.

A1.1.2 Direct verification is a process for verifying that critical components of the hardness testing machine are within allowable tolerances by directly measuring the test forces, depth measuring system, machine hysteresis, and testing cycle.

A1.1.3 Indirect verification is a process for periodically verifying the performance of the testing machine by means of standardized test blocks and indenters.

A1.1.4 The daily verification is a process for monitoring the performance of the testing machine between indirect verifications by means of standardized test blocks.

A1.1.5 Adherence to this standard and annex provides traceability to national standards, except as stated otherwise.

A1.2 General Requirements

A1.2.1 The testing machine shall be verified at specific instances and at periodic intervals as specified in **Table A1.1**, and when circumstances occur that may affect the performance of the testing machine.

A1.2.2 The temperature at the verification site shall be measured with an instrument having an accuracy of at least ± 2.0 °C or ± 3.6 °F. It is recommended that the temperature be monitored throughout the verification period, and significant temperature variations be recorded and reported. The temperature at the verification site does not need to be measured for a daily verification or when qualifying additional user's indenters in accordance with **A1.4.10**.

A1.2.3 All instruments used to make measurements required by this Annex shall be calibrated traceable to national standards when a system of traceability exists, except as noted otherwise.

A1.2.4 Direct verification of newly manufactured or rebuilt testing machines shall be performed at the place of manufacture, rebuild or repair. Direct verification may also be performed at the location of use.

A1.2.5 Indirect verification of the testing machine shall be performed at the location where it will be used.

NOTE A1.1—It is recommended that the calibration agency that is used to conduct the verifications of Rockwell hardness testing machines be accredited to the requirements of ISO 17025 (or an equivalent) by an accrediting body recognized by the International Laboratory Accreditation Cooperation (ILAC) as operating to the requirements of ISO/IEC 17011.

A1.3 Direct Verification

A1.3.1 A direct verification of the testing machine shall be performed at specific instances in accordance with **Table A1.1**. The test forces, depth-measuring system, machine hysteresis, and testing cycle shall be verified as follows.

NOTE A1.2—Direct verification is a useful tool for determining the sources of error in a Rockwell hardness testing machine. It is recommended that testing

TABLE A1.1 Verification Schedule for a Rockwell Testing Machine

Verification Procedure	Schedule
Direct verification	When a testing machine is new, or when adjustments, modifications or repairs are made that could affect the application of the test forces, the depth measuring system, or the machine hysteresis. When a testing machine fails an indirect verification (see A1.4.9.4).
Indirect verification	Recommended every 12 months, or more often if needed. Shall be no longer than every 18 months. When a testing machine is installed or moved, [only a partial indirect verification is performed by following the procedure given in A1.4.7 for verifying the as-found condition]. Indirect verification is not required after moving a portable or movable Rockwell hardness testing machine (see 3.1.7.3 , 3.1.7.4 , and 5.8). Following a direct verification. To qualify an indenter that was not verified in the last indirect verification, (only a partial indirect verification is performed, see A1.4.10).
Daily verification	Required each day that hardness tests are to be made. Recommended whenever the indenter, anvil, or test force is changed.