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Standard Test Method for Equal Arm Balances[1]

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INTRODUCTION

This test method is designed to test balances whose lever-arm ratio is substantially equal to unity. Although largely superseded by new technologies, equal-arm balances retain a special niche for very high precision weighing of larger samples (usually greater than 1 kg) as well as objects with large buoyancy (such as gas bottles). Balances of this type can range from simple instruments of moderate precision (1:10 000) to extremely high precision devices with precision of 1:10 000 000 or better. A number of accessory devices may be included for assisting in the weighing process. These devices may contribute to errors as well as can the basic lever mechanism. This method is designed to test the entire instrument including the accessories.

1. Scope

1.1 This test method can be used for testing equal-arm balances of any capacity and sensitivity. The testing procedure should enable the user to characterize his instrument sufficiently to determine whether or not it is suitable for the purpose for which it is to be used.

1.2 The characteristics to be examined include:

1.2.1 Sensitivity at all loads,

1.2.2 Lever arm ratio,

1.2.3 Damping ratio (for instruments without accessory dampers),

1.2.4 Period of oscillation,

1.2.5 Precision, and

1.2.6 Linearity and calibration of accessory devices that provide on-scale indication of weight.

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

2. Referenced Documents

2.1 *ASTM Standards:*

E 617 Specification for Laboratory Weights and Precision Mass Standards[2]

3. Terminology

3.1 *Definitions of Terms Specific to This Standard:*

3.1.1 *capacity*—maximum load recommended by the manufacturer. Usually, the capacity refers to the maximum load on each pan simultaneously.

3.1.2 *readability*—value of the smallest unit of weight which can be read. This may include the estimation of some fraction of a scale division or, in the case of a digital display, will represent the minimum value of the least significant digit.

3.1.3 *sensitivity*—smallest value of weight which will cause a change of indication which can be determined by the user. This may be independent of the readability because of the choice of the reading device used. For example, a magnifying glass may be used in conjunction with a reading scale to observe a sensitivity not readily determined without the magnifying glass.

3.1.4 *precision*—repeatability of the balance indication with the same load under essentially the same conditions. The more closely the measurements are grouped, the smaller the index of precision will be. The precision should be measured under environmental conditions that represent the conditions under which the balance is normally used.

3.1.5 *accuracy*—degree of agreement of the measurement with the true value of the magnitude of the quantity measured.

3.1.6 *linearity*—characteristic of a direct reading device. If a device is linear, calibration at 2 points (for example, 0 and full-scale) calibrates the device (for example, 2 points determine a straight line); if a device is nonlinear, additional points are needed (perhaps a great many).

3.1.7 *standard weight*—any weight whose mass is given. Since weights are not always available with documented corrections, weights defined by class (see Specification E 617) may be used if the class has sufficiently small tolerance limits and there is an understanding that errors perceived as being instrumental could be attributed to incorrectly adjusted weights.

[1] This test method is under the jurisdiction of ASTM Committee E41 on Laboratory Apparatus and is the direct responsibility of Subcommittee E41.06 on Weighing Devices.

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[2] *Annual Book of ASTM Standards*, Vol 14.02.

3.1.8 *off-center errors*—differences in indicated weight when a sample is shifted to various positions on the weighing area of the weighing pan. No separate test is described.

3.1.9 *full-scale calibration of an accessory device*—indicated reading at equilibrium of an accessory device when a standard weight equal to the full-scale range of the device isplaced on the sample pan. Usually, some means is provided by the manufacturer to adjust the full-scale to match the weight of the standard.

4. Summary of Test Method

4.1 Throughout this test method, the instrument is to be used in the manner for which it is intended by the manufacturer. All measurements are made with weights whose values are sufficiently well known for the purpose of the user. The nominal value of the weights used will be determined by the capacity and rated sensitivity of the balance as well as by the resolution and range of the accessory reading devices.

5. Significance and Use

5.1 This test method should enable the user of the balance to interpret data determined thereon in terms of accuracy and precision. It should be helpful in using a particular instrument to best advantage. Weaknesses as well as strengths should become apparent. It is not the intention of this test method to compare similar instruments of different manufacture but rather to assist in choosing an instrument which will meet the needs of the user.

6. Apparatus

6.1 *Standard Weights*—Individual or summations of weights equal to approximately ¼ , ½ , ¾ and the total capacity.

6.2 *Tare Weights*—Weights of the same denominations as the standard weights but not necessarily calibrated.

6.3 *Calibrating Weights*—Balances equipped with accessory devices such as sliding beam weights, chainweights, optical scales or electrical transducers require small standard weights equal to the full-scale reading as well as smaller weights suitable for calibrating intermediate points between the zero and full-scale points of the devices. Summations of small standards can be used for this purpose.

6.4 *Stop Watch*:

6.5 A room-temperature thermometer with a resolution of at least 1°C.

7. Preparation of Apparatus

7.1 Place the instrument in the location at which it is to be tested. If electrically operated, plug in the line cord to the type of socket recommended by the manufacturer.

7.2 Place the standard weights near (or within) the instrument.

7.3 Place the thermometer on the bench in position so that it may be read without being touched.

7.4 Make sure that the instrument and test weights are clean.

7.5 Allow the instrument and weights to sit undisturbed sufficiently long to reach temperature equilibrium with the surrounding area. In the case of a large, high precision instrument in a controlled environment, it may be necessary to allow 24 h for such equilibrium.

7.6 Read the manufacturers instructions carefully. During each step of the test procedure, the instrument should be used in the manner recommended by the manufacturer.

8. Procedure

8.1 *Sensitivity*—The sensitivity can be measured at a number of different loads from zero to the capacity to provide a sensitivity versus load curve, or, it can be measured at the load of particular interest. This test applies to balances which have a null position indicator. Balances which are direct reading in the on-scale range must be calibrated according to 8.8.4, 8.8.5, 8.8.6 or 8.8.7.

8.1.1 Place nominally equal weights on each pan for the selected load.

8.1.2 Observe the indication. If necessary, place small weights on the appropriate sample pan to obtain an indication near zero.

8.1.3 Place a small weight on the left pan sufficient to change the indication about ½ scale of the on-scale range. Record the indication as d_1.

8.1.4 Remove the small weight and place it on the right pan and record the new indication as d_2 (remember that for indicator scales graduated either side of center zero, indications to the left are recorded as negative values).

8.1.5 Compute the sensitivity as follows:

$$S = 2 \times W/(d_1 - d_2) \tag{1}$$

where:

S = sensitivity in mass units/scale division, and
W = mass of small test weight.

Example: d_1 = 5.5 div.
d_2 = −5.3 div.
W = 10 mg
$S = 2 \times 10/(5.5 - (-5.3)) = 1.85$ mg/div.

8.2 *Sensitivity as a Function of Load*—Balance designs vary but in the case of high precision balances, the manufacturer usually tries to provide a nearly level sensitivity at all loads. This is accomplished by the position of the plane determined by the terminal pivots in relation to the central pivot. If this plane is lower than the central pivot, the sensitivity will decrease with increasing load. Conversely, if the plane is higher than the central pivot, the sensitivity will increase with increasing load and can reach a state of instability if the center of gravity goes above the center pivot. Placing all of the pivots in the same plane provides a nearly level sensitivity limited by the elastic properties of the weighbeam. To measure the relationship of sensitivity to load, repeat 8.1 at various loads from zero to the capacity and plot sensitivity as a function of load.

8.3 *Lever Arm Ratio*—Equal arm balances are not usually used as direct-reading instruments. Rather, they are used as comparators using standard weights for reference. For precision measurements such as weight calibration, the measuring technique eliminates errors due to the inequality of armlengths. For relative measurements such as quantitative chemical analysis, if the inequality is considered to be in a constant ratio, the results of a number of weighings on the same balance will have a common multiplier (L_1/L_2) and the resulting computations representing, perhaps, fractional components of a compound will be mathematically correct. If there is a need to determine an absolute mass value from a single direct measurement, the lever ratio must be determined.

8.3.1 Observe the rest point with empty weigh pans.

8.3.2 Place approximately equal weights on each pan whose value is near the capacity of the balance.

8.3.3 Observe the new rest point.

8.3.4 Transpose the weights to the opposite pans and observe the rest point.

8.3.5 Measure the sensitivity at this load from 8.1.

8.3.6 Compute the lever ratio as follows:

$$r_L = \frac{M}{M + S_1(d - (d_1 + d_2)/2)} \quad (2)$$

where:

r_L = lever ratio,
S_1 = sensitivity in (mass units)/(scale division),
d = rest point of empty pans in 8.3.1 (scale divisions),
d_1 = rest point from 8.3.3,
d_2 = rest point from 8.3.4, and
M = mass of test weights (the value on *each* pan).

Example: =
M = 100 g (on each pan)
S_1 = 1.85 mg/div. = 0.00185 g/div.
d = + 1.5 div.
d_1 = + 8.5 div.
d_2 = −2.5 div.

$$r_L = \frac{100}{100 + 0.00185(1.5 - (8.5 - 2.5)/2)}$$

r_L = 1.0000278.

8.3.7 A ratio greater than 1 indicates that the left lever is longer and if a sample is placed on the left pan and standard weights on the right, the "true'' weight is:

$$W_T = W_I/r_L \quad (3)$$

where:

W_I = indicated weight.

8.4 *Damping Ratio*—An undamped balance will oscillate around a rest point with decreasing amplitude of oscillation due to air damping on the weight pans and to friction in the bearing system. The ratio of the amplitude of one oscillation to that of the next may be a measure of several characteristics of the balance. Since these cannot easily be separated, this measurement is not especially useful since pivot conditions can be better measured as part of a measurement of precision. In the case of a damped balance, this measurement may be useful insofar as it may be used to characterize the effectiveness of the damping mechanism. Useful damping is that which produces a steady reading in one or two oscillations. Since the damping ratio is usually a function of the load, damper mechanisms are usually set at some compromise value or are adjusted so that they may be optimized for a given load. Release the beam and observe consecutive indications in the same direction. Compute the damping ratio r_D as follows:

$$r_D = d_1/d_2 \quad (4)$$

where:

d_1 = first turning point, and
d_2 = second turning point in the same direction.

8.5 *Period of Oscillation*—The time required to make one full oscillation is an indicator of the time required to make a measurement either for a damped or undamped balance. The period is a function of the magnitude of the moving mass and of the sensitivity of the balance. For a given arm length, balances of high sensitivity have longer periods.

8.5.1 For the convenience of the user, high sensitivity balances may have means for magnifying the indication thus allowing the sensitivity to be lowered and the period shortened. However, such an approach must be used with care since such magnification means smaller angles of deflection are measured and the balance becomes more sensitive to the tilting which might occur on a bench or floor of insufficient rigidity.

8.5.2 Place weights of equal value on the pans at or near the load of interest. Release the beam and start the stop watch as the direction of the indicator changes. Count several turning points and stop the watch after *n* periods of oscillation. Calculate the period, *p*:

$$p = t/n \quad (5)$$

where:

t = total elapsed time, and
n = number of turning points.

8.6 *Precision*—The term 'precision' in weighing usually means repeatability. In quantitative terms, it refers to expected uncertainty of a single reading. The usual method for determining the precision is to compare the results of a series of measurements by some statistical treatment and to compute some value which gives the user an estimate of the potential uncertainty of a single reading. A common technique is to compute the standard deviation (s) of a series of observations. The larger the number of observations the better; but 10 is usually enough. Assuming a normal distribution of data, 3s will represent with a high degree of certainty the maximum anticipated error of a single measurement. One convenient measurement model is a series of double substitutions.

8.6.1 Place a weight, '*A*', considered to be the standard, on the left pan and a tare weight of the same nominal value on the right pan. Observe the balance indication (A_1).

8.6.2 Remove the standard from the left pan and place a test weight '*B*' on the left pan. The tare weight remains on the right pan. Observe the balance indication (B_1).

8.6.3 Add a small weight (S) to the left pan chosen so that the change in indication will be approximately equal to the difference between the indications A_1 and B_1. Observe the indication with this weight on the left pan B_2.

8.6.4 Leaving the weight S in place, remove the weight '*B*' from the pan and replace weight '*A*'. Observe the indication (A_2).

8.6.5 Compute the difference between weights '*A*' and '*B*'.

$$D_1 = S \times \frac{(A_1 - B_1 - B_2 + A_2)}{2 \times (B_2 - B_1)} \quad (6)$$