



Standard Test Methods for Measuring Adhesion by Tape Test¹

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

1. Scope

1.1 These test methods cover procedures for assessing the adhesion of coating films to metallic substrates by applying and removing pressure-sensitive tape over cuts made in the film.

1.2 Test Method A is primarily intended for use at job sites while Test Method B is more suitable for use in the laboratory. Also, Test Method B is not considered suitable for films thicker than 5 mils (125 μ m).

NOTE 1—Subject to agreement between the purchaser and the seller, Test Method B can be used for thicker films if wider spaced cuts are employed.

1.3 These test methods are used to establish whether the adhesion of a coating to a substrate is at a generally adequate level. They do not distinguish between higher levels of adhesion for which more sophisticated methods of measurement are required.

NOTE 2—It should be recognized that differences in adherability of the coating surface can affect the results obtained with coatings having the same inherent adhesion.

1.4 In multicoat systems adhesion failure may occur between coats so that the adhesion of the coating system to the substrate is not determined.

1.5 The values stated in inch-pound units are to be regarded as the standard. The values given in parentheses are for information only.

1.6 *This standard does not purport to address the safety concerns, if any, 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:

D 609 Practice for Preparation of Cold-Rolled Steel Panels for Testing Paint, Varnish, Conversion Coatings, and Related Coating Products²

D 823 Practice for Producing Films of Uniform Thickness

¹ These test methods are under the jurisdiction of ASTM Committee D-1 on Paint and Related Coatings, Materials, and Applications and are the direct responsibility of Subcommittee D01.23 on Physical Properties of Applied Paint Films.

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² *Annual Book of ASTM Standards*, Vol 06.01.

- of Paint, Varnish, and Related Products on Test Panels²
- D 1000 Test Methods For Pressure-Sensitive Adhesive-Coated Tapes Used for Electrical and Electronic Applications³
- D 1730 Practices for Preparation of Aluminum and Aluminum-Alloy Surfaces for Painting⁴
- D 2092 Guide for Preparation of Zinc-Coated (Galvanized) Steel Surfaces for Painting⁵
- D 2197 Test Methods for Adhesion of Organic Coatings by Scrape Adhesion²
- D 2370 Test Method for Tensile Properties of Organic Coatings²
- D 3330 Test Method for Peel Adhesion of Pressure-Sensitive Tape of 180° Angle⁶
- D 3924 Specification for Standard Environment for Conditioning and Testing Paint, Varnish, Lacquers, and Related Materials²
- D 4060 Test Method for Abrasion Resistance of Organic Coatings by the Taber Abraser²

3. Summary of Test Methods

3.1 *Test Method A*—An X-cut is made in the film to the substrate, pressure-sensitive tape is applied over the cut and then removed, and adhesion is assessed qualitatively on the 0 to 5 scale.

3.2 *Test Method B*—A lattice pattern with either six or eleven cuts in each direction is made in the film to the substrate, pressure-sensitive tape is applied over the lattice and then removed, and adhesion is evaluated by comparison with descriptions and illustrations.

4. Significance and Use

4.1 If a coating is to fulfill its function of protecting or decorating a substrate, it must adhere to it for the expected service life. Because the substrate and its surface preparation (or lack of it) has a drastic effect on the adhesion of coatings, a method of evaluation adhesion of a coating to different substrates or surface treatments, or of different coatings to the same substrate and treatment, is of considerable usefulness in the industry.

³ *Annual Book of ASTM Standards*, Vol 10.01.

⁴ *Annual Book of ASTM Standards*, Vol 02.05.

⁵ *Annual Book of ASTM Standards*, Vol 06.02.

⁶ *Annual Book of ASTM Standards*, Vol 15.09.

4.2 The limitations of all adhesion methods and the specific limitation of this test method to lower levels of adhesion (see 1.3) should be recognized before using it. The intra- and inter-laboratory precision of this test method is similar to other widely-accepted tests for coated substrates (for example, Test Method D 2370 and Test Method D 4060), but this is partly the result of it being insensitive to all but large differences in adhesion. The limited scale of 0 to 5 was selected deliberately to avoid a false impression of being sensitive.

TEST METHOD A—X-CUT TAPE TEST

5. Apparatus and Materials

5.1 *Cutting Tool*—Sharp razor blade, scalpel, knife or other cutting devices. It is of particular importance that the cutting edges be in good condition.

5.2 *Cutting Guide*—Steel or other hard metal straightedge to ensure straight cuts.

5.3 *Tape*—One-inch (25-mm) wide semitransparent pressure-sensitive tape with an adhesion strength agreed upon by the supplier and the user is needed⁷. Because of the variability in adhesion strength from batch-to-batch and with time, it is essential that tape from the same batch be used when tests are to be run in different laboratories. If this is not possible the test method should be used only for ranking a series of test coatings.

5.4 *Rubber Eraser*, on the end of a pencil.

5.5 *Illumination*—A light source is helpful in determining whether the cuts have been made through the film to the substrate.

6. Test Specimens

6.1 When this test method is used in the field, the specimen is the coated structure or article on which the adhesion is to be evaluated.

6.2 For laboratory use apply the materials to be tested to panels of the composition and surface conditions on which it is desired to determine the adhesion.

NOTE 3—Applicable test panel description and surface preparation methods are given in Practice D 609 and Practices D 1730 and D 2092.

NOTE 4—Coatings should be applied in accordance with Practice D 823, or as agreed upon between the purchaser and the seller.

NOTE 5—If desired or specified, the coated test panels may be subjected to a preliminary exposure such as water immersion, salt spray, or high humidity before conducting the tape test. The conditions and time of exposure will be governed by ultimate coating use or shall be agreed upon between the purchaser and seller.

7. Procedure

7.1 Select an area free of blemishes and minor surface imperfections. For tests in the field, ensure that the surface is clean and dry. Extremes in temperature or relative humidity may affect the adhesion of the tape or the coating.

⁷ Permacel 99, manufactured by Permacel, New Brunswick, NJ 08903, and available from various Permacel tape distributors, is reported to be suitable for this purpose. The manufacturer of this tape and the manufacturer of the tape used in the interlaboratory study (see RR: D01-1008), have advised this subcommittee that the properties of these tapes were changed. Users of it should, therefore, check whether current material gives comparable results to previous supplied material.

7.2 Make two cuts in the film each about 1.5 in. (40 mm) long that intersect near their middle with a smaller angle of between 30 and 45°. When making the incisions, use the straightedge and cut through the coating to the substrate in one steady motion.

7.3 Inspect the incisions for reflection of light from the metal substrate to establish that the coating film has been penetrated. If the substrate has not been reached make another X in a different location. Do not attempt to deepen a previous cut as this may affect adhesion along the incision.

7.4 Remove two complete laps of the pressure-sensitive tape from the roll and discard. Remove an additional length at a steady (that is, not jerked) rate and cut a piece about 3 in. (75 mm) long.

7.5 Place the center of the tape at the intersection of the cuts with the tape running in the same direction as the smaller angles. Smooth the tape into place by finger in the area of the incisions and then rub firmly with the eraser on the end of a pencil. The color under the transparent tape is a useful indication of when good contact has been made.

7.6 Within 90 ± 30 s of application, remove the tape by seizing the free end and pulling it off rapidly (not jerked) back upon itself at as close to an angle of 180° as possible.

7.7 Inspect the X-cut area for removal of coating from the substrate or previous coating and rate the adhesion in accordance with the following scale:

5A	No peeling or removal,
4A	Trace peeling or removal along incisions or at their intersection,
3A	Jagged removal along incisions up to 1/16 in. (1.6 mm) on either side,
2A	Jagged removal along most of incisions up to 1/8 in. (3.2 mm) on either side,
1A	Removal from most of the area of the X under the tape, and
0A	Removal beyond the area of the X.

7.8 Repeat the test in two other locations on each test panel. For large structures make sufficient tests to ensure that the adhesion evaluation is representative of the whole surface.

7.9 After making several cuts examine the cutting edge and, if necessary, remove any flat spots or wire-edge by abrading lightly on a fine oil stone before using again. Discard cutting tools that develop nicks or other defects that tear the film.

8. Report

8.1 Report the number of tests, their mean and range, and for coating systems, where the failure occurred that is, between first coat and substrate, between first and second coat, etc.

8.2 For field tests report the structure or article tested, the location and the environmental conditions at the time of testing.

8.3 For test panels report the substrate employed, the type of coating, the method of cure, and the environmental conditions at the time of testing.

8.4 If the adhesion strength of the tape has been determined in accordance with Test Methods D 1000 or D 3330, report the results with the adhesion rating(s). If the adhesion strength of the tape has not been determined, report the specific tape used and its manufacturer.

9. Precision and Bias ⁸

9.1 In an interlaboratory study of this test method in which operators in six laboratories made one adhesion measurement on three panels each of three coatings covering a wide range of adhesion, the within-laboratories standard deviation was found to be 0.33 and the between-laboratories 0.44. Based on these standard deviations, the following criteria should be used for judging the acceptability of results at the 95 % confidence level:

9.1.1 *Repeatability*—Provided adhesion is uniform over a large surface, results obtained by the same operator should be considered suspect if they differ by more than 1 rating unit for two measurements.

9.1.2 *Reproducibility*—Two results, each the mean of triplicates, obtained by different operators should be considered suspect if they differ by more than 1.5 rating units.

9.2 Bias cannot be established for these test methods.

TEST METHOD B—CROSS-CUT TAPE TEST

10. Apparatus and Materials

10.1 *Cutting Tool*—Sharp razor blade, scalpel, knife or other cutting device having a cutting edge angle between 15 and 30° that will make either a single cut or several cuts at once⁹. It is of particular importance that the cutting edge or edges be in good condition.

10.2 *Cutting Guide*—If cuts are made manually (as opposed to a mechanical apparatus) a steel or other hard metal straight-edge or template to ensure straight cuts.

10.3 *Rule*—Tempered steel rule graduated in 0.5 mm for measuring individual cuts.

10.4 *Tape*, as described in 5.3.

10.5 *Rubber Eraser*, on the end of a pencil.

10.6 *Illumination*, as described in 5.5.

10.7 *Magnifying Glass*—An illuminated magnifier to be used while making individual cuts and examining the test area.

11. Test Specimens

11.1 Test specimens shall be as described in Section 6. It should be noted, however, that multitip cutters provide good results only on test areas sufficiently plane¹⁰ that all cutting edges contact the substrate to the same degree. Check for flatness with a straight edge such as that of the tempered steel rule (10.3).

12. Procedure

12.1 Where required or when agreed upon, subject the specimens to a preliminary test before conducting the tape test (see Note 3). After drying or testing the coating, conduct the

tape test at room temperature as defined in Specification D 3924, unless D 3924 standard temperature is required or agreed.

12.2 Select an area free of blemishes and minor surface imperfections, place on a firm base, and under the illuminated magnifier, make parallel cuts as follows:

12.2.1 For coatings having a dry film thickness up to and including 2.0 mils (50 μm) space the cuts 1 mm apart and make eleven cuts unless otherwise agreed upon.

12.2.2 For coatings having a dry film thickness between 2.0 mils (50 μm) and 5 mils (125 μm), space the cuts 2 mm apart and make six cuts. For films thicker than 5 mils use Test Method A.¹¹

12.2.3 Make all cuts about ¾ in. (20 mm) long. Cut through the film to the substrate in one steady motion using just sufficient pressure on the cutting tool to have the cutting edge reach the substrate. When making successive single cuts with the aid of a guide, place the guide on the uncut area.

12.3 After making the required cuts brush the film lightly with a soft brush or tissue to remove any detached flakes or ribbons of coatings.

12.4 Examine the cutting edge and, if necessary, remove any flat spots or wire-edge by abrading lightly on a fine oil stone. Make the additional number of cuts at 90° to and centered on the original cuts.

12.5 Brush the area as before and inspect the incisions for reflection of light from the substrate. If the metal has not been reached make another grid in a different location.

12.6 Remove two complete laps of tape and discard. Remove an additional length at a steady (that is, not jerked) rate and cut a piece about 3 in. (75 mm) long.

12.7 Place the center of the tape over the grid and in the area of the grid smooth into place by a finger. To ensure good contact with the film rub the tape firmly with the eraser on the end of a pencil. The color under the tape is a useful indication of when good contact has been made.

12.8 Within 90 ± 30 s of application, remove the tape by seizing the free end and rapidly (not jerked) back upon itself at as close to an angle of 180° as possible.

12.9 Inspect the grid area for removal of coating from the substrate or from a previous coating using the illuminated magnifier. Rate the adhesion in accordance with the following scale illustrated in Fig. 1:

- 5B The edges of the cuts are completely smooth; none of the squares of the lattice is detached.
- 4B Small flakes of the coating are detached at intersections; less than 5 % of the area is affected.
- 3B Small flakes of the coating are detached along edges and at intersections of cuts. The area affected is 5 to 15 % of the lattice.
- 2B The coating has flaked along the edges and on parts of the squares. The area affected is 15 to 35 % of the lattice.
- 1B The coating has flaked along the edges of cuts in large ribbons and whole squares have detached. The area affected is 35 to 65 % of the lattice.
- 0B Flaking and detachment worse than Grade 1.

⁸ Supporting data are available from ASTM Headquarters. Request RR: D01-1008.

⁹ Multiblade cutters are available from a few sources that specialize in testing equipment for the paint industry. One supplier that has assisted in the refinement of these methods and of Test Methods D 2197 is given in footnote 10.

¹⁰ The sole source of supply of the multitip cutter for coated pipe surfaces known to the committee at this time is Paul N. Gardner Co., 316 NE First St., Pompano Beach, FL 33060. If you are aware of alternative suppliers, please provide this information to ASTM Headquarters. Your comments will receive careful consideration at a meeting of the responsible technical committee,¹ which you may attend.

¹¹ Test Method B has been used successfully by some people on coatings greater than 5 mils (0.13 mm) by spacing the cuts 5 mm apart. However, the precision values given in 14.1 do not apply as they are based on coatings less than 5 mm (0.13 mm) in thickness.