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Standard Test Method for
Tensile Properties of Polymer Matrix Composite Materials[1]

This standard is issued under the fixed designation D 3039/D 3039M; 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.

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

1. Scope

1.1 This test method determines the in-plane tensile properties of polymer matrix composite materials reinforced by high-modulus fibers. The composite material forms are limited to continuous fiber or discontinuous fiber-reinforced composites in which the laminate is balanced and symmetric with respect to the test direction.

1.2 The values stated in either SI units or inch-pound units are to be regarded separately as standard. Within the text, the inch-pound units are shown in brackets. The values stated in each system are not exact equivalents; therefore, each system must be used independently of the other. Combining values from the two systems may result in nonconformance with the standard.

1.3 *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 and health practices and determine the applicability of regulatory limitations prior to use.*

2. Referenced Documents

2.1 *ASTM Standards:* [2]

D 792 Test Methods for Density and Specific Gravity (Relative Density) of Plastics by Displacement

D 883 Terminology Relating to Plastics

D 2584 Test Method for Ignition Loss of Cured Reinforced Resins

D 2734 Test Methods for Void Content of Reinforced Plastics

D 3171 Test Methods for Constituent Content of Composite Materials

D 3878 Terminology for Composite Materials

D 5229/D 5229M Test Method for Moisture Absorption Properties and Equilibrium Conditioning of Polymer Matrix Composite Materials

E 4 Practices for Force Verification of Testing Machines

E 6 Terminology Relating to Methods of Mechanical Testing

E 83 Practice for Verification and Classification of Extensometer Systems

E 11 Specification for Wire Cloth and Sieves for Testing Purposes

E 122 Practice for Calculating Sample Size to Estimate, With Specified Precision, the Average for a Characteristic of a Lot or Process

E 132 Test Method for Poisson's Ratio at Room Temperature

E 177 Practice for Use of the Terms Precision and Bias in ASTM Test Methods

E 251 Test Methods for Performance Characteristics of Metallic Bonded Resistance Strain Gages

E 456 Terminology Relating to Quality and Statistics

E691Practice for Conducting an Interlaboratory Study to Determine the Precision of a Test Method

E 1012 Practice for Verification of Test Frame and Specimen Alignment Under Tensile and Compressive Axial Force Application

E 1237 Guide for Installing Bonded Resistance Strain Gages

3. Terminology

3.1 *Definitions*—Terminology D 3878 defines terms relating to high-modulus fibers and their composites. Terminology D 883 defines terms relating to plastics. Terminology E 6 defines terms relating to mechanical testing. Terminology E 456 and Practice

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[1] This test method is under the jurisdiction of ASTM Committee D30 on Composite Materials and is the direct responsibility of Subcommittee D30.04 on Lamina and Laminate Test Methods.

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[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.

E 177 define terms relating to statistics. In the event of a conflict between terms, Terminology D 3878 shall have precedence over the other standards.

3.2 *Definitions of Terms Specific to This Standard:*

NOTE—If Note—If the term represents a physical quantity, its analytical dimensions are stated immediately following the term (or letter symbol) in fundamental dimension form, using the following ASTM standard symbology for fundamental dimensions, shown within square brackets: [*M*] for mass, [*L*] for length, [*T*] for time, [Θ] for thermodynamic temperature, and [*nd*] for nondimensional quantities. Use of these symbols is restricted to analytical dimensions when used with square brackets, as the symbols may have other definitions when used without the brackets.

3.2.1 *nominal value, n*—a value, existing in name only, assigned to a measurable property for the purpose of convenient designation. Tolerances may be applied to a nominal value to define an acceptable range for the property.

3.2.2 *transition region, n*—a strain region of a stress-strain or strain-strain curve over which a significant change in the slope of the curve occurs within a small strain range.

3.2.3 *transition strain,* $\epsilon^{transition}$ *[nd], n*—the strain value at the mid range of the transition region between the two essentially linear portions of a bilinear stress-strain or strain-strain curve.

3.2.3.1 *Discussion*—Many filamentary composite materials show essentially bilinear behavior during loading, force application, such as seen in plots of either longitudinal stress versus longitudinal strain or transverse strain versus long longitudinal strain. There are varying physical reasons for the existence of a transition region. Common examples include: matrix cracking under tensile loading force application and ply delamination.

3.3 *Symbols:*

3.3.1*A*Symbols:

A—minimum cross-sectional area of a coupon.

3.3.2*B*$_y$ — *percent* —*percent bending for a uniaxial coupon of rectangular cross section about y*axis of the specimen (about the narrow direction).

3.3.3*B*$_z$ — *percent* —*percent bending for a uniaxial coupon of rectangular cross section about z*axis of the specimen (about the wide direction).

3.3.4*CV*

CV—coefficient of variation statistic of a sample population for a given property (in percent).

3.3.5*E*

E—modulus of elasticity in the test direction.

3.3.6*F*^{tu}—*ultimate tensile strength in the test direction.*

3.3.7*F*^{su}—*ultimate shear strength in the test direction.*

3.3.8*h*—*coupon thickness.*

3.3.9*L*$_g$— *extensometer gage length.*

3.3.10*L*$_{min}$— *minimum required bonded tab length.*

3.3.11*n*

L$_g$—extensometer gage length.

L$_{min}$—minimum required bonded tab length.

n—number of coupons per sample population.

3.3.12*P*—load carried by test coupon.

3.3.13*P*^{f}— load carried by test coupon at failure.

3.3.14*P*^{max}— maximum load carried by test coupon before failure.

3.3.15*s*$_{n-1}$

P—force carried by test coupon.

P^f—force carried by test coupon at failure.

P^{max}—maximum force carried by test coupon before failure.

s$_{n-1}$—standard deviation statistic of a sample population for a given property.

3.3.16*w*

w—coupon width.

3.3.17*x*$_i$— *test* —*test result for an individual coupon from the sample population for a given property.*

3.3.18 $\bar{x}$—*mean or average (estimate of mean) of a sample population for a given property.*

3.3.19δ

δ—extensional displacement.

3.3.20ε

ε—general symbol for strain, whether normal strain or shear strain.

3.3.21ε

ε—indicated normal strain from strain transducer or extensometer.

3.3.22σ

σ—normal stress.

~~3.3.23 v~~
v—Poisson's ratio.

4. Summary of Test Method

4.1 A thin flat strip of material having a constant rectangular cross section is mounted in the grips of a mechanical testing machine and monotonically loaded in tension while recording ~~load.~~ the force. The ultimate strength of the material can be determined from the maximum ~~load~~force carried before failure. If the coupon strain is monitored with strain or displacement transducers then the stress-strain response of the material can be determined, from which the ultimate tensile strain, tensile modulus of elasticity, Poisson's ratio, and transition strain can be derived.

5. Significance and Use

5.1 This test method is designed to produce tensile property data for material specifications, research and development, quality assurance, and structural design and analysis. Factors that influence the tensile response and should therefore be reported include the following: material, methods of material preparation and lay-up, specimen stacking sequence, specimen preparation, specimen conditioning, environment of testing, specimen alignment and gripping, speed of testing, time at temperature, void content, and volume percent reinforcement. Properties, in the test direction, which may be obtained from this test method include the following:

5.1.1 Ultimate tensile strength,

5.1.2 Ultimate tensile strain,

5.1.3 Tensile chord modulus of elasticity,

5.1.4 Poisson's ratio, and

5.1.5 Transition strain.

6. Interferences

6.1 *Material and Specimen Preparation*— Poor material fabrication practices, lack of control of fiber alignment, and damage induced by improper coupon machining are known causes of high material data scatter in composites.

6.2 *Gripping*—A high percentage of grip-induced failures, especially when combined with high material data scatter, is an indicator of specimen gripping problems. Specimen gripping methods are discussed further in 7.2.4, 8.2, and 11.5.

6.3 *System Alignment*—Excessive bending will cause premature failure, as well as highly inaccurate modulus of elasticity determination. Every effort should be made to eliminate excess bending from the test system. Bending may occur as a result of misaligned grips or from specimens themselves if improperly installed in the grips or out-of-tolerance caused by poor specimen preparation. If there is any doubt as to the alignment inherent in a given test machine, then the alignment should be checked as discussed in 7.2.5.

6.4 *Edge Effects in Angle Ply Laminates*—Premature failure and lower stiffnesses are observed as a result of edge softening in laminates containing off-axis plies. Because of this, the strength and modulus for angle ply laminates can be drastically underestimated. For quasi-isotropic laminates containing significant 0° plies, the effect is not as significant.

7. Apparatus

7.1 *Micrometers*—A micrometer with a 4- to 5-mm [0.16- to 0.20-in] nominal diameter double-ball interface shall be used to measure the thickness of the specimen. A micrometer with a flat anvil interface shall be used to measure the width of the specimen. The accuracy of the instruments shall be suitable for reading to within 1 % of the sample width and thickness. For typical specimen geometries, an instrument with an accuracy of ±2.5 μm [±0.0001 in.] is adequate for thickness measurement, while an instrument with an accuracy of ±25 μm [±0.001 in.] is adequate for width measurement.

7.2 *Testing Machine*—The testing machine shall be in conformance with Practices E 4 and shall satisfy the following requirements:

7.2.1 *Testing Machine Heads*—The testing machine shall have both an essentially stationary head and a movable head.

7.2.2 *Drive Mechanism*—The testing machine drive mechanism shall be capable of imparting to the movable head a controlled velocity with respect to the stationary head. The velocity of the movable head shall be capable of being regulated as specified in 11.3.

7.2.3 *~~Load~~Force Indicator*—The testing machine ~~load-sensing~~force-sensing device shall be capable of indicating the total ~~load~~force being carried by the test specimen. This device shall be essentially free from inertia lag at the specified rate of testing and shall indicate the ~~load~~force with an accuracy over the ~~load~~force range(s) of interest of within ±1 % of the indicated value. The ~~load~~force range(s) of interest may be fairly low for modulus evaluation, much higher for strength evaluation, or both, as required.

NOTE 1—Obtaining precision ~~load~~force data over a large range of interest in the same test, such as when both elastic modulus and ultimate ~~load~~force are being determined, place extreme requirements on the load cell and its calibration. For some equipment, a special calibration may be required. For some combinations of material and load cell, simultaneous precision measurement of both elastic modulus and ultimate strength may not be possible and measurement of modulus and strength may have to be performed in separate tests using a different load cell range for each test.

7.2.4 *Grips*—Each head of the testing machine shall carry one grip for holding the test specimen so that the direction of ~~load~~force applied to the specimen is coincident with the longitudinal axis of the specimen. The grips shall apply sufficient lateral

pressure to prevent slippage between the grip face and the coupon. If tabs are used the grips should be long enough that they overhang the beveled portion of the tab by approximately 10 to 15 mm [0.5 in.]. It is highly desirable to use grips that are rotationally self-aligning to minimize bending stresses in the coupon.

NOTE 2—Grip surfaces that are lightly serrated, approximately 1 serration/mm [25 serrations/in.], have been found satisfactory for use in wedge-action grips when kept clean and sharp; coarse serrations may produce grip-induced failures in untabbed coupons. Smooth gripping surfaces have been used successfully with either hydraulic grips or an emery cloth interface, or both.

7.2.5 *System Alignment*—Poor system alignment can be a major contributor to premature failure, to elastic property data scatter, or both. Practice E 1012 describes bending evaluation guidelines and describes potential sources of misalignment during tensile testing. In addition to Practice E 1012, the degree of bending in a tensile system can also be evaluated using the following related procedure. Specimen bending is considered separately in 11.6.1.

7.2.5.1 A rectangular alignment coupon, preferably similar in size and stiffness to the test specimen of interest, is instrumented with a minimum of three longitudinal strain gages of similar type, two on the front face across the width and one on the back face of the specimen, as shown in Fig. 1. Any difference in indicated strain between these gages during loading provides a measure of the amount of bending in the thickness plane (B_y) and width plane (B_z) of the coupon. The strain gage location should normally be located in the middle of the coupon gage section (if modulus determination is a concern), near a grip (if premature grip failures are a problem), or any combination of these areas.

7.2.5.2 When evaluating system alignment, it is advisable to perform the alignment check with the same coupon inserted in each of the four possible installation permutations (described relative to the initial position): initial (top-front facing observer), rotated back to front only (top back facing observer), rotated end for end only (bottom front facing observer), and rotated both front to back and end to end (bottom back facing observer). These four data sets provide an indication of whether the bending is due to the system itself or to tolerance in the alignment check coupon or gaging.

7.2.5.3 The zero strain point may be taken either before gripping or after gripping. The strain response of the alignment coupon is subsequently monitored during the gripping process, the tensile loading process, or both. Eq 1-3 use these indicated strains to calculate the ratio of the percentage of bending strain to average extensional strain for each bending plane of the alignment coupon and the total percent bending, B_{total}. Plotting percent bending versus axial average strain is useful in understanding trends in the bending behavior of the system.

7.2.5.4 Problems with failures during gripping would be reason to examine bending strains during the gripping process in the location near the grip. Concern over modulus data scatter would be reason to evaluate bending strains over the modulus evaluation ~~load~~force range for the typical transducer location. Excessive failures near the grips would be reason to evaluate bending strains near the grip at high loading levels. While the maximum advisable amount of system misalignment is material and location dependent, good testing practice is generally able to limit percent bending to a range of 3 to 5 % at moderate strain levels (>1000 $\mu\epsilon$). A system showing excessive bending for the given application should be readjusted or modified.

$$B_y = \frac{\epsilon_{ave} - \epsilon_3}{\epsilon_{ave}} \times 100 \tag{1}$$

$$B_z = \frac{4/3\,(\epsilon_2 - \epsilon_1)}{\epsilon_{ave}} \times 100 \tag{2}$$
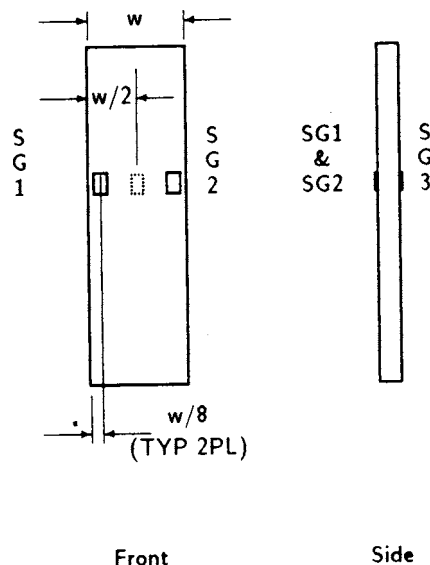
FIG. 1 Gage Locations for System Alignment Check Coupon

where:

B_y	=	percent bending about system y axis (about the narrow plane), as calculated by Eq 1, %;
B_z	=	percent bending about system z axis (about the wide plane), as calculated by Eq 2, %;
ϵ_1, ϵ_2, and ϵ_3	=	indicated longitudinal strains displayed by Gages 1, 2, and 3, respectively, of Fig. 1, µε; and
ϵ_{ave}	=	((|ε~~$_1$~~$_{((\epsilon_1}$ |+~~+~~|ε~~$_{+ \epsilon_2}$~~|)/2 + |ε~~$_{)/2 + \epsilon_3}$~~|)/2~~)/2~~

The total bending component is:

$$B_{total} = |B_y| + |B_z| \tag{3}$$

NOTE 3—Experimental error may be introduced by sources such as poor system alignment, specimen preparation and strain gage precision and calibration. These sources of error may result in an average calculated strain (ϵ_{ave}) of 0, causing B_y and B_z (Eq 1 and Eq 1) to approach infinity as the average calculated strain is the denominator. To minimize the potential for this occurrence during system alignment evaluation, it is recommended that force be applied to the alignment coupon until all three strain gages measure positive strain of no less than 500 µε with an ϵ_{ave} of no less than 1000 µε. If these conditions can not be met, the test configuration should be adjusted prior to performing further system alignment evaluation.

7.3 *Strain-Indicating Device*—~~Load-strain~~—Force-strain data, if required, shall be determined by means of either a strain transducer or an extensometer. Attachment of the strain-indicating device to the coupon shall not cause damage to the specimen surface. If Poisson's ratio is to be determined, the specimen shall be instrumented to measure strain in both longitudinal and lateral directions. If the modulus of elasticity is to be determined, the longitudinal strain should be simultaneously measured on opposite faces of the specimen to allow for a correction as a result of any bending of the specimen (see 11.6 for further guidance).

7.3.1 *Bonded Resistance Strain Gage Selection*—Strain gage selection is a compromise based on the type of material. An active gage length of 6 mm [0.25 in.] is recommended for most materials. Active gage lengths should not be less than 3 mm [0.125 in.].[3] Gage calibration certification shall comply with Test Methods E 251. When testing woven fabric laminates, gage selection should consider the use of an active gage length that is at least as great as the characteristic repeating unit of the weave. Some guidelines on the use of strain gages on composites follow. A general reference on the subject is Tuttle and Brinson.[4]

7.3.1.1 Surface preparation of fiber-reinforced composites in accordance with Practice E 1237 can penetrate the matrix material and cause damage to the reinforcing fibers resulting in improper coupon failures. Reinforcing fibers should not be exposed or damaged during the surface preparation process. The strain gage manufacturer should be consulted regarding surface preparation guidelines and recommended bonding agents for composites pending the development of a set of standard practices for strain gage installation surface preparation of fiber-reinforced composite materials.

7.3.1.2 Consideration should be given to the selection of gages having larger resistances to reduce heating effects on low-conductivity materials. Resistances of 350 Ω or higher are preferred. Additional consideration should be given to the use of the minimum possible gage excitation voltage consistent with the desired accuracy (1 to 2 V is recommended) to reduce further the power consumed by the gage. Heating of the coupon by the gage may affect the performance of the material directly, or it may affect the indicated strain as a result of a difference between the gage temperature compensation factor and the coefficient of thermal expansion of the coupon material.

7.3.1.3 Consideration of some form of temperature compensation is recommended, even when testing at standard laboratory atmosphere. Temperature compensation is required when testing in nonambient temperature environments.

7.3.1.4 Consideration should be given to the transverse sensitivity of the selected strain gage. The strain gage manufacturer should be consulted for recommendations on transverse sensitivity corrections and effects on composites. This is particularly important for a transversely mounted gage used to determine Poisson's ratio, as discussed in ~~Note 11~~Note 13.

7.3.2 *Extensometers*—For most purposes, the extensometer gage length should be in the range of 10 to 50 mm [0.5 to 2.0 in.]. Extensometers shall satisfy, at a minimum, Practice E 83, Class B-1 requirements for the strain range of interest and shall be calibrated over that strain range in accordance with Practice E 83. For extremely stiff materials, or for measurement of transverse strains, the fixed error allowed by Class B-1 extensometers may be significant, in which case Class A extensometers should be considered. The extensometer shall be essentially free of inertia lag at the specified speed of testing, and the weight of the extensometer should not induce bending strains greater than those allowed in 6.3.

NOTE ~~3—It~~ 4—It is generally less difficult to perform strain calibration on extensometers of longer gage length as less precision in displacement is required of the extensometer calibration device.

7.4 *Conditioning Chamber*—When conditioning materials at nonlaboratory environments, a temperature/vaporlevel-controlled environmental conditioning chamber is required that shall be capable of maintaining the required temperature to within ±3°C [±5°F] and the required relative vapor level to within ±3 %. Chamber conditions shall be monitored either on an automated continuous basis or on a manual basis at regular intervals.

7.5 *Environmental Test Chamber*—An environmental test chamber is required for test environments other than ambient testing laboratory conditions. This chamber shall be capable of maintaining the gage section of the test specimen at the required test environment during the mechanical test.

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[3] A typical gage would have a 0.25-in. active gage length, 350-Ω resistance, a strain rating of 3 % or better, and the appropriate environmental resistance and thermal coefficient.

[4] Tuttle, M. E. and Brinson, H. F., "Resistance-Foil Strain-Gage Technology as Applied to Composite Materials," *Experimental Mechanics*, Vol 24, No. 1, March 1984; pp. 54–65; errata noted in Vol 26, No. 2, June 1986, pp. 153–154.

8. Sampling and Test Specimens

8.1 *Sampling*—Test at least five specimens per test condition unless valid results can be gained through the use of fewer specimens, such as in the case of a designed experiment. For statistically significant data, the procedures outlined in Practice E 122 should be consulted. Report the method of sampling.

NOTE 4—If 5—If specimens are to undergo environmental conditioning to equilibrium, and are of such type or geometry that the weight change of the material cannot be properly measured by weighing the specimen itself (such as a tabbed mechanical coupon), then use another traveler coupon of the same nominal thickness and appropriate size (but without tabs) to determine when equilibrium has been reached for the specimens being conditioned.

8.2 *Geometry*—Design of mechanical test coupons, especially those using end tabs, remains to a large extent an art rather than a science, with no industry consensus on how to approach the engineering of the gripping interface. Each major composite testing laboratory has developed gripping methods for the specific material systems and environments commonly encountered within that laboratory. Comparison of these methods shows them to differ widely, making it extremely difficult to recommend a universally useful approach or set of approaches. Because of this difficulty, definition of the geometry of the test coupon is broken down into the following three levels, which are discussed further in each appropriate section:

Purpose	Degree of Geometry Definition
8.2.1 *General Requirements*	Mandatory Shape and Tolerances
8.2.2 *Specific Recommendations*	Nonmandatory Suggested Dimensions
8.2.3 *Detailed Examples*	Nonmandatory Typical Practices

8.2.1 *General Requirements*:

8.2.1.1 *Shape, Dimensions, and Tolerances*— The complete list of requirements for specimen shape, dimensions, and tolerances is shown in Table 1.

8.2.1.2 *Use of Tabs*—Tabs are not required. The key factor in the selection of specimen tolerances and gripping methods is the successful introduction of load force into the specimen and the prevention of premature failure as a result of a significant discontinuity. Therefore, determine the need to use tabs, and specification of the major tab design parameters, by the end result: acceptable failure mode and location. If acceptable failure modes occur with reasonable frequency, then there is no reason to change a given gripping method (see 11.10). method.

8.2.2 *Specific Recommendations*:

8.2.2.1 *Width, Thickness, and Length*—Select the specimen width and thickness to promote failure in the gage section and assure that the specimen contains a sufficient number of fibers in the cross section to be statistically representative of the bulk material. The specimen length should normally be substantially longer than the minimum requirement to minimize bending stresses caused by minor grip eccentricities. Keep the gage section as far from the grips as reasonably possible and provide a significant amount of material under stress and therefore produce a more statistically significant result. The minimum requirements for specimen design shown in Table 1 are by themselves insufficient to create a properly dimensioned and toleranced coupon drawing. Therefore, recommendations on other important dimensions are provided for typical material configurations in Table 2. These geometries have been found by a number of testing laboratories to produce acceptable failure modes on a wide variety of material systems, but use of them does not guarantee success for every existing or future material system.

8.2.2.2 *Gripping/Use of Tabs*—There are many material configurations, such as multidirectional laminates, fabric-based materials, or randomly reinforced sheet-molding compounds, which can be successfully tested without tabs. However, tabs are strongly recommended when testing unidirectional materials (or strongly unidirectionally dominated laminates) to failure in the fiber direction. Tabs may also be required when testing unidirectional materials in the matrix direction to prevent gripping damage.

8.2.2.3 *Tab Geometry*—Recommendations on important dimensions are provided for typical material configurations in Table 2. These dimensions have been found by a number of testing laboratories to produce acceptable failure modes on a wide variety of

TABLE 1 Tensile Specimen Geometry Requirements

Parameter	Requirement
Coupon Requirements:	
shape	constant rectangular cross-section
minimum length	gripping + 2 times width + gage length
specimen width	as needed[A]
specimen width tolerance	±1 % of width
specimen thickness	as needed
specimen thickness tolerance	±4 % of thickness
specimen flatness	flat with light finger pressure
Tab Requirements (if used):	
tab material	as needed
fiber orientation (composite tabs)	as needed
tab thickness	as needed
tab thickness variation between tabs	±1 % tab thickness
tab bevel angle	5 to 90°, inclusive
tab step at bevel to specimen	feathered without damaging specimen

[A] See 8.2.2 or Table 2 for recommendations.