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Standard Test Method for Flexural Properties of Unreinforced and Reinforced Plastics and Electrical Insulating Materials by Four-Point Bending¹

This standard is issued under the fixed designation D6272; 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.

^{e1} NOTE—Editorially changed Note 1 in April 2008.

1. Scope*

1.1 This test method covers the determination of flexural properties of unreinforced and reinforced plastics, including high-modulus composites and electrical insulating materials in the form of rectangular bars molded directly or cut from sheets, plates, or molded shapes. These test methods are generally applicable to rigid and semirigid materials. However, flexural strength cannot be determined for those materials that do not break or that do not fail in the outer fibers. This test method utilizes a four point loading system applied to a simply supported beam.

1.2 This test method may be used with two procedures:

1.2.1 *Procedure A*, designed principally for materials that break at comparatively small deflections.

1.2.2 *Procedure B*, designed particularly for those materials that undergo large deflections during testing.

1.2.3 Procedure A shall be used for measurement of flexural properties, particularly flexural modulus, unless the material specification states otherwise. Procedure B may be used for measurement of flexural strength.

1.3 Comparative tests may be run according to either procedure, provided that the procedure is found satisfactory for the material being tested.

1.4 The values stated in SI units are to be regarded as the standard. The values provided in parentheses are for information only.

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

NOTE 1—This test method is equivalent to ISO 14125 (Method B).

¹ This test method is under the jurisdiction of ASTM Committee D20 on Plastics and is the direct responsibility of Subcommittee D20.10 on Mechanical Properties.

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2. Referenced Documents

2.1 *ASTM Standards*:²

- D618 Practice for Conditioning Plastics for Testing
- D638 Test Method for Tensile Properties of Plastics
- D790 Test Methods for Flexural Properties of Unreinforced and Reinforced Plastics and Electrical Insulating Materials
- D883 Terminology Relating to Plastics
- D4000 Classification System for Specifying Plastic Materials
- D4066 Classification System for Nylon Injection and Extrusion Materials (PA)
- D5947 Test Methods for Physical Dimensions of Solid Plastics Specimens
- E4 Practices for Force Verification of Testing Machines
- E83 Practice for Verification and Classification of Extensometer Systems
- E691 Practice for Conducting an Interlaboratory Study to Determine the Precision of a Test Method

2.2 *ISO Standard*:³

- ISO 14125 (Method B)

3. Terminology

3.1 *Definitions*:

3.1.1 Definitions of terms applying to these test methods appear in Terminology D883 and Annex A2 of Test Method D638.

4. Summary of Test Method

4.1 A bar of rectangular cross section rests on two supports and is loaded at two points (by means of two loading noses), each an equal distance from the adjacent support point. The distance between the loading noses (the load span) is either one

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

³ Available from American National Standards Institute (ANSI), 25 W. 43rd St., 4th Floor, New York, NY 10036, http://www.ansi.org.

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

third or one half of the support span (see Fig. 1). A support span-to-depth ratio of 16:1 shall be used unless there is reason to suspect that a larger span-to-depth ratio may be required, as may be the case for certain laminated materials (see Section 7 and Note 8 for guidance).

4.2 The specimen is deflected until rupture occurs in the outer fibers or until the maximum fiber strain (see 12.7) of 5 % is reached, whichever occurs first.

5. Significance and Use

5.1 Flexural properties determined by this test method are especially useful for quality control and specification purposes.

5.2 This test method may be more suited for those materials that do not fail within the strain limits imposed by Test Method D790. The major difference between four point and three point bending modes is the location of the maximum bending moment and maximum axial fiber stress. In four point bending the maximum axial fiber stress is uniformly distributed between the loading noses. In three point bending the maximum axial fiber stress is located immediately under the loading nose.

5.3 Flexural properties may vary with specimen depth, temperature, atmospheric conditions, and the difference in rate of straining specified in Procedures A and B.

5.4 Before proceeding with this test method, reference should be made to the specification of the material being tested. Any test specimen preparation, conditioning, dimensions, or testing parameters covered in the material specification, or both, shall take precedence over those mentioned in this test method. If there are no material specifications, then these

default conditions apply. Table 1 in Classification D4000 lists the ASTM materials standards that currently exist.

6. Apparatus

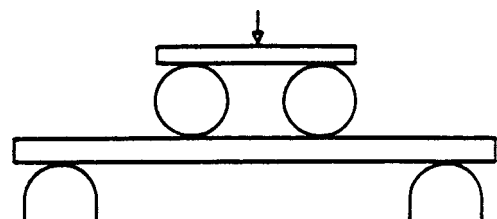
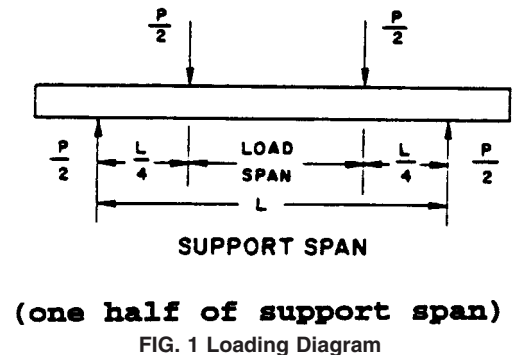
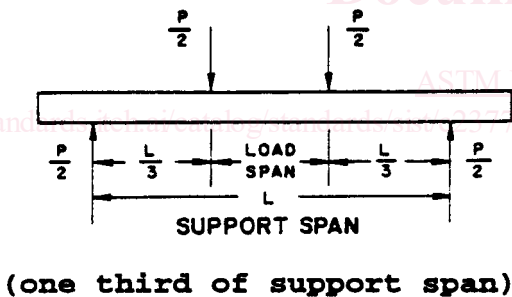
6.1 *Testing Machine*—A properly calibrated testing machine that can be operated at constant rates of crosshead motion over the range indicated, and in which the error in the load measuring system shall not exceed ± 1 % of maximum load expected to be measured. It shall be equipped with a deflection measuring device. The stiffness of the testing machine shall be such that the total elastic deformation of the system does not exceed 1 % of the total deflection of the test specimen during testing, or appropriate corrections shall be made. The load indicating mechanism shall be essentially free from inertial lag at the crosshead rate used. The accuracy of the testing machine shall be verified in accordance with Practices E4.

6.2 *Loading Noses and Supports*—The loading noses and supports shall have cylindrical surfaces. In order to avoid excessive indentation, or failure due to stress concentration directly under the loading noses, the radii of the loading noses and supports shall be 5.0 ± 0.1 mm (0.197 ± 0.004 in.) unless otherwise specified or agreed upon between the interested parties. When other loading noses and supports are used they must comply with the following requirements: they shall be at least 3.2 mm ($1/8$ in.) for all specimens, and for specimens 3.2 mm ($1/8$ in.) or greater in depth, the radius of the supports may be up to 1.6 times the specimen depth. They shall be this large if significant indentation or compressive failure occurs. The arc of the loading noses in contact with the specimen shall be sufficiently large to prevent contact of the specimen with the sides of the noses (see Fig. 2).

NOTE 2—Test data have shown that the loading noses and support dimensions can influence the flexural modulus and flexural strength values. The loading noses dimension has the greater influence. Dimensions of loading noses and supports must be specified for material specifications.

6.3 *Deflection Measuring Device*—A properly calibrated device to measure the deflection of the beam at the common center of the loading span, that meets or exceeds Practice E83, Class C, shall be used. The device shall automatically and continuously record the deflection during the test.

6.4 *Micrometers*—Suitable micrometers for measuring the width and thickness of the test specimen to an incremental discrimination of at least 0.025 mm (0.001 in.) should be used. All width and thickness measurements of rigid and semi-rigid plastics may be measured with a hand micrometer with ratchet. A suitable instrument for measuring the thickness of non-rigid



NOTE 1—Default radii 5.0 mm; see 6.2.
 FIG. 2 Loading Noses and Supports (Example of One Third Support Span)

test specimens shall have: a contact measuring pressure of 25 ± 2.5 kPa (3.6 ± 0.036 psi), a movable circular contact foot 6.35 ± 0.025 mm (0.250 ± 0.001 in.) in diameter and a fixed anvil 6.35 ± 0.025 mm (0.250 ± 0.001 in.) in diameter and being parallel to the contact foot within 0.005 mm (0.0002 in.) over the entire foot area. Flatness of foot and anvil shall conform to the portion of the calibration section of Test Method **D5947**.

7. Test Specimen

7.1 The specimens may be cut from sheets, plates, or molded shapes, or may be molded to the desired finished dimensions. The actual dimensions used in Section 12 (Calculation) shall be measured in accordance with Test Method **D5947**.

NOTE 3—Any necessary polishing of specimens shall be done only in the lengthwise direction of the specimen.

7.2 *Sheet Materials (Except Laminated Thermosetting Materials and Certain Materials Used for Electrical Insulation, Including Vulcanized Fiber and Glass Bonded Mica):*

7.2.1 *Materials 1.6 mm (1/16 in.) or Greater in Thickness—*For flatwise tests, the depth of the specimen shall be the thickness of the material. For edgewise tests, the width of the specimen shall be the thickness of the sheet, and the depth shall not exceed the width (see Notes 5 and 6). For all tests, the support span shall be 16 (tolerance ± 1) times the depth of the beam. Specimen width shall not exceed one fourth of the support span for specimens greater than 3.2 mm (1/8 in.) in depth. Specimens 3.2 mm or less in depth shall be 12.7 mm (1/2 in.) in width. The specimen shall be long enough to allow for overhanging on each end of at least 10 % of the support span, but in no case less than 6.4 mm (1/4 in.) on each end. Overhang shall be sufficient to prevent the specimen from slipping through the supports.

NOTE 4—Whenever possible, the original surface of the sheet shall be unaltered. However, where testing machine limitations make it impossible to follow the above criterion on the unaltered sheet, one or both surfaces shall be machined to provide the desired dimensions, and the location of the specimens with reference to the total depth shall be noted. The value obtained on specimens with machined surfaces may differ from those obtained on specimens with original surfaces. Consequently, any specifications for flexural properties on the thicker sheets must state whether the original surfaces are to be retained or not. When only one surface was machined, it must be stated whether the machined surface was on the tension or compression side of the beam.

NOTE 5—Edgewise tests are not applicable for sheets that are so thin that specimens meeting these requirements cannot be cut. If specimen depth exceeds the width, buckling may occur.

7.2.2 *Materials Less than 1.6 mm (1/16 in.) in Thickness—*The specimen shall be 50.8 mm (2 in.) long by 12.7 mm (1/2 in.) wide, tested flatwise on a 25.4-mm (1-in.) support span.

NOTE 6—Use of the formulas for simple beams cited in these test methods for calculating results presumes that beam width is small in comparison with the support span. Therefore, the formulas do not apply rigorously to these dimensions.

NOTE 7—Where machine sensitivity is such that specimens of these dimensions cannot be measured, wider specimens or shorter support spans, or both, may be used, provided the support span-to-depth ratio is at least 14 to 1. All dimensions must be stated in the report (see also Note 6).

7.3 *Laminated Thermosetting Materials and Sheet and Plate Materials Used for Electrical Insulation, Including Vulcanized Fiber and Glass-Bonded Mica—*For paper-base and fabric-base grades over 25.4 mm (1 in.) in nominal thickness, the specimens shall be machined on both surfaces to a depth of 25.4 mm. For glass-base and nylon-base grades, specimens over 12.7 mm (1/2 in.) in nominal depth shall be machined on both surfaces to a depth of 12.7 mm. The support span-to-depth ratio shall be chosen such that failures occur in the outer fibers of the specimens, due only to the bending moment (see Note 8). Three recommended support span-to-depth ratios are 16, 32, and 40 to 1. When laminated materials exhibit low compressive strength perpendicular to the laminations, they shall be loaded with a large radius loading noses (up to 1.5 times the specimen depth) to prevent premature damage to the outer fibers.

7.4 *Molding Materials (Thermoplastics and Thermosets)—*The recommended specimen for molding materials is 127 by 12.7 by 3.2 mm (5 by 1/2 by 1/8 in.) tested flatwise on a support span, resulting in a support span-to-depth ratio of 16 (tolerance + 4 or - 2). Thicker specimens should be avoided if they exhibit significant shrink marks or bubbles when molded.

7.5 *High-Strength Reinforced Composites, Including Highly Orthotropic Laminates—*The support span-to-depth ratio shall be chosen such that failures occur in the outer fibers of the specimens, due only to the bending moment (Note 8). Three recommended support span-to-depth ratios are 16:1, 32:1, and 40:1. However, for some highly anisotropic composites, shear deformation can significantly influence modulus measurements, even at span-to-depth ratios as high as 40:1. Hence, for these materials, an increase in span-to-depth ratio to 60:1 is recommended to eliminate shear effects when modulus data are required. It should also be noted that the flexural modulus of highly anisotropic laminates is a strong function of ply-stacking sequence and will not necessarily correlate with tensile modulus, that is not stacking-sequence dependent.

NOTE 8—As a general rule, support span-to-depth ratios of 16 to 1 are satisfactory when the ratio of the tensile strength to shear strength is less than 8 to 1, but the support span-to-depth ratio must be increased for composite laminates having relatively low shear strength in the plane of the laminate and relatively high tensile strength parallel to the support span.

8. Number of Test Specimens

8.1 At least five specimens shall be tested for each sample in the case of isotropic materials or molded specimens.

8.2 For each sample of anisotropic material in sheet form, at least five specimens shall be tested for each of the following conditions. Recommended conditions are flatwise and edgewise tests on specimens cut in lengthwise and crosswise directions of the sheet. For the purposes of this test, “lengthwise” shall designate the principal axis of anisotropy and shall be interpreted to mean the direction of the sheet known to be stronger in flexure. “Crosswise” shall be the sheet direction known to be the weaker in flexure and shall be at 90° to the lengthwise direction.

9. Conditioning

9.1 *Conditioning*—Condition the test specimens at $23 \pm 2^\circ\text{C}$ ($73.4 \pm 3.6^\circ\text{F}$) and $50 \pm 5\%$ relative humidity for not less than 40 h prior to test in accordance with Procedure A of Practice **D618**, unless otherwise specified by contract or the relevant ASTM material specification. Reference pre-test conditioning, to settle disagreements, shall apply tolerances of $\pm 1^\circ\text{C}$ (1.8°F) and $\pm 2\%$ relative humidity.

9.2 *Test Conditions*—Conduct the tests at $23 \pm 2^\circ\text{C}$ ($73.4 \pm 3.6^\circ\text{F}$) and $50 \pm 5\%$ relative humidity, unless otherwise specified by contract or the relevant ASTM material specification. Reference testing conditions, to settle disagreements, shall apply tolerances of $\pm 1^\circ\text{C}$ (1.8°F) and $\pm 2\%$ relative humidity.

10. Procedure

10.1 Procedure A:

10.1.1 Use an untested specimen for each measurement. Measure the width and depth of the specimen to the nearest 0.03 mm (0.001 in.) at the center of the support span. For specimens less than 2.54 mm (0.100 in.) in depth, measure the depth to the nearest 0.003 mm (0.0005 in.). These measurements shall be made in accordance with Test Method **D5947**.

10.1.2 Determine the support span to be used as described in Section 7 and set the support span to within 1% of the determined value.

10.1.3 Measure the span accurately to the nearest 0.1 mm (0.004 in.) for spans less than 63 mm (2.5 in.) and to the nearest 0.3 mm (0.012 in.) for spans greater than or equal to 63 mm (2.5 in.). Use the measured span for all calculations. See **Annex A2** for information on the determination of and setting of the span.

10.1.4 Calculate the rate of crosshead motion as follows, and set the machine as near as possible to that calculated rate for a load span of one third of the support span:

$$R = 0.185ZL^2/d \quad (1)$$

For a load span of one half of the support span:

$$R = 0.167ZL^2/d \quad (2)$$

where:

- R = rate of crosshead motion, mm (in.)/min,
- L = support span, mm (in.),
- d = depth of beam, mm (in.), and
- Z = rate of straining of the outer fibers, mm/mm (in./in.) min. Z shall equal 0.01.

In no case shall the actual crosshead rate differ from Eq 1 or Eq 2, by more than $\pm 10\%$.

10.1.5 Align the loading noses and supports so that the axes of the cylindrical surfaces are parallel and the load span is either one third or one half of the support span. This parallelism may be checked by means of a plate containing parallel grooves into which the loading noses and supports will fit when properly aligned. Center the specimen on the supports, with the long axis of the specimen perpendicular to the loading noses and supports. The loading nose assembly shall be of the type which will not rotate.

10.1.6 Apply the load to the specimen at the specified crosshead rate, and take simultaneous load-deflection data.

Measure deflection by a device under the specimen in contact with it at the common center of the spans, the device being mounted stationary relative to the specimen supports. Do not use the movement of the loading noses relative to the supports. Make appropriate corrections for indentation in the specimens and deflections in the weighing system of the machine. Load-deflection curves may be plotted to determine the flexural yield strength, secant or tangent modulus of elasticity, and the total work measured by the area under the load-deflection curve.

10.1.7 If no break has occurred in a specimen by the time the maximum strain in the outer fibers has reached 0.05 mm/mm (in./in.), discontinue the test (Notes 9 and 10). The deflection at which this strain occurs may be calculated by letting r equal 0.05 mm/mm (in./in.) as follows for a load span of one third of the support span:

$$D = 0.21rL^2/d \quad (3)$$

For a load span of one half of the support span:

$$D = 0.23rL^2/d \quad (4)$$

where:

- D = midspan deflection, mm (in.),
- r = strain, mm/mm (in./in.),
- L = support span, mm (in.), and
- d = depth of beam, mm (in.).

NOTE 9—For some materials the increase in strain rate provided under Procedure B may induce the specimen to yield or rupture, or both, within the required 5% strain limit.

NOTE 10—Beyond 5% strain, these test methods are not applicable, and some other property might be measured (for example, Test Method **D638** may be considered).

10.2 Procedure B:

10.2.1 Use an untested specimen for each measurement.

10.2.2 Test conditions shall be identical to those described in 10.1, except that the rate of straining of the outer fibers shall be 0.10 mm/mm (in./in.)/min.

10.2.3 If no break has occurred in the specimen by the time the maximum strain in the outer fibers has reached 0.05 mm/mm (in./in.), discontinue the test (Note 10).

11. Retests

11.1 Values for properties at rupture shall not be calculated for any specimen that breaks at some obvious, fortuitous flaw, unless such flaws constitute a variable being studied. Retests shall be made for any specimen on which values are not calculated.

12. Calculation

NOTE 11—In determination of the calculated value of some of the properties listed in this section it is necessary to determine if the toe compensation (see **Annex A1**) adjustment must be made. This toe compensation correction shall be made only when it has been shown that the toe region of the curve is due to the takeup of slack, alignment, or seating of the specimen and not an authentic material response.

12.1 *Maximum Fiber Stress*—When a beam is loaded in flexure at two central points and supported at two outer points, the maximum stress in the outer fibers occurs between the two central loading points that define the load span (see Fig. 2).