



Designation: D 5478 – 98

Standard Test Methods for Viscosity of Materials by a Falling Needle Viscometer¹

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1. Scope

1.1 These test methods cover the measurement of the viscosity of Newtonian and non-Newtonian liquids. These test methods are applicable to liquids having viscosities in the range from 5×10^{-4} to 10^3 Pa·s (0.5 to 10^6 cP). The shear rate range is dependent upon the needle used and viscosity of the liquid and may vary from 10^{-4} to 10^3 s⁻¹.

1.2 The yield stress of liquids having this property may also be determined.

1.3 These test methods consist of determining liquid viscosities of Newtonian and non-Newtonian fluids (clear or opaque) by measuring the steady-state (constant) or terminal velocities of cylindrical needles as they fall through the test liquid under the influence of gravity. Yield stresses of non-Newtonian liquids may be measured using the same procedure.

1.4 *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:

E 1 Specification for ASTM Thermometers²

3. Terminology

3.1 Definitions:

3.1.1 *dilatant fluid (or shear thickening fluid)*—one in which the apparent viscosity increases with increasing shear rate.

3.1.2 *Newtonian and non-Newtonian fluids*—A Newtonian fluid is one in which the dynamic viscosity does not vary with shear rate but only with the temperature and pressure. A non-Newtonian fluid is one in which the dynamic viscosity varies with shear rate over at least some shear rate range.

3.1.2.1 *Discussion*—This viscosity is sometimes referred to as the “apparent viscosity” since it is not a true property of the

fluid but a variable depending on the shear rate. The viscosity of most non-Newtonian fluids fits a power law expression. A power law fluid is defined by the following equation:

$$\eta_a = K(\dot{\gamma})^{n-1} \quad (1)$$

where:

η_a = apparent viscosity, dyne · s/cm² = P = 100 cP,
 K = fluid consistency, dyne·sⁿ/cm²,
 $\dot{\gamma}$ = shear rate, 1/s, and
 n = flow index, dimensionless.

3.1.3 *pseudoplastic fluid (or shear thinning fluid)*—one in which the apparent viscosity decreases with increasing shear rate.

3.1.4 *viscosity*—The ratio between an applied shear stress to the resulting shear rate (velocity gradient) is defined as the dynamic viscosity. It is a measure of the resistance to flow of a fluid.

3.1.4.1 *Discussion*—In the SI unit system the units of viscosity are Pa·s. One mPa·s is equal to one centipoise (cP).

3.1.5 *yield stress*—Some fluids when subjected to a shear stress behave as deformable solids until a certain critical shear stress is reached after which they behave as fluids. This critical shear stress is called the yield stress or yield value.

3.1.5.1 *Discussion*—Examples of such fluids include many paints and pigment pastes and certain food materials, for example, ketchup.

4. Summary of Test Methods

4.1 Test Method A consists of determining the viscosity of Newtonian liquids.

4.2 Test Method B consists of determining the apparent viscosity and shear rate of pseudoplastic and dilatant fluids in the power law region.

4.3 Test Method C consists of determining the apparent viscosity and shear rate of pseudoplastic and dilatant fluids outside of the power law region.

4.4 Test Method D consists of determining the yield stress of liquids that have such a property.

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 D01.24 on Physical Properties of Liquid Paints and Paint Materials.

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² *Annual Book of ASTM Standards*, Vol 14.03.

5. Significance and Use

5.1 These test methods are applicable for measuring the rheological properties of varnishes and paints. In particular, the low to moderate shear rate measurements provide information related to sag resistance, leveling, etc.

6. Apparatus

6.1 *Viscometer*, falling-needle-type and associated equipment listed as follows:

6.1.1 *Falling Needle Viscometer*^{3,4,5}—A schematic of the falling needle viscometer is shown in Fig. 1. The viscometer consists of a vertical cylindrical test section of diameter D . The liquid specimen is placed in the test section and the specimen's temperature is maintained constant by means of a constant temperature bath that circulates a liquid through another cylindrical container (water jacket) that is coaxial to the test section. A thin hollow cylinder of length L with hemispherical ends and diameter d (the needle) is aligned with the axis of the test section and allowed to fall under the influence of gravity. The needle has a small weight in its forward end that may be varied to change its density. After the needle has attained its constant terminal velocity, this velocity is measured by determining the needle transit time between two circumferential marks a known distance apart on the test section (for opaque liquids this can be done by an automatic sensing device, such as a magnetic sensor, etc.). With a knowledge of the terminal velocity, the liquid and needle densities, the geometric constants of the system (L , D , d), the viscosity of a Newtonian fluid can be calculated from the instrument theory. For a non-Newtonian fluid whose viscosity depends upon the shear rate, a series of needles are dropped. The falling needle is an absolute method of viscosity measurement that does not need any instrument calibration. However, it may be checked through use of known certified viscous fluids such as standard oils.

6.1.2 *Thermometer*—A thermometric device calibrated to 0.1°C whose accuracy, precision, and sensitivity are equal to or better than the ASTM thermometer described in Specification E 1.

6.1.3 *Circulating Liquid Bath*, capable of maintaining the test specimen temperature to $\pm 0.1^{\circ}\text{C}$.

³ Park, N. A., and Irvine, T. F., Jr., "Measurements of Rheological Fluid Properties with the Falling Needle Viscometer," *Review of Scientific Instruments*, Vol 59, 1988, pp. 2051–2058.

⁴ Park, N. A., and Irvine, T. F., Jr., "The Falling Needle Viscometer, A New Technique for Viscosity Measurements," *American Laboratory*, Vol 20, November 1988, pp. 57–63.

⁵ "The sole source of supply of the falling needle viscometer known to the committee at this time is Stony Brook Scientific, Ltd., P.O. Box 147, 914 Filmore Rd., Norristown, PA 19403. 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." This instrument may be interfaced with a computer for data collection and analysis. A computer program is available for data analysis for instruments that are not interfaced.

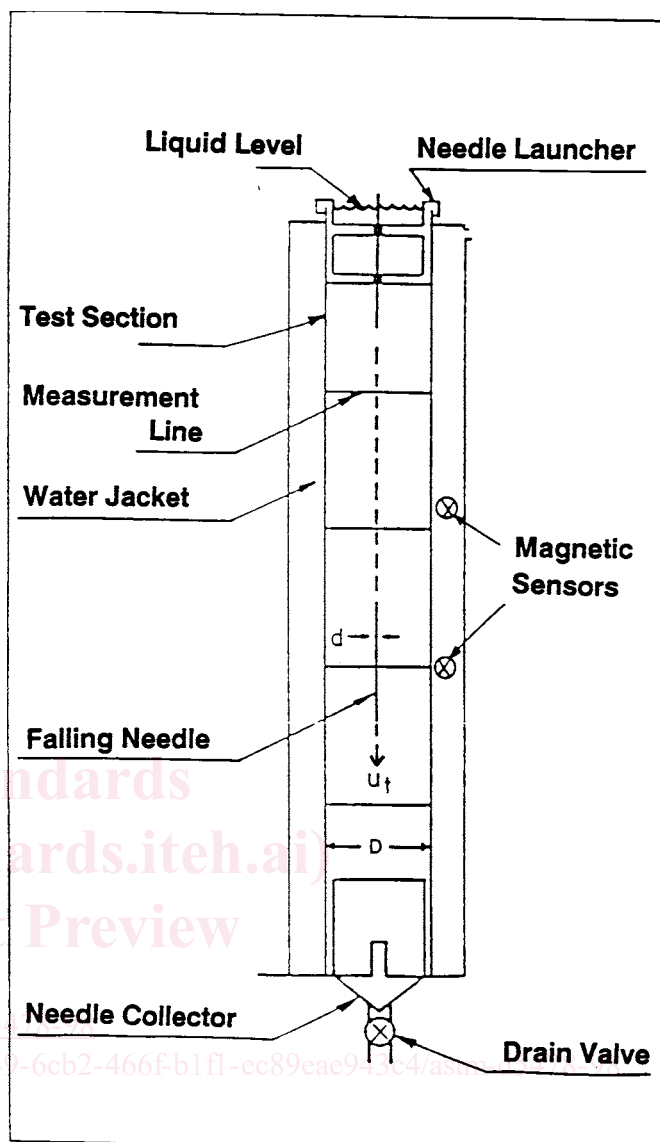


FIG. 1 Schematic of Falling Needle Viscometer

6.1.4 *Stopwatch or Electronic Device*, capable of measuring to ± 0.01 s or an automatic sensing device with the same accuracy.

7. Preparation of Specimen

7.1 After opening the specimen container, mix the fluid gently with a glass rod for 5 min.

7.2 Pour the specimen carefully into the test section so as to minimize the formation of air bubbles. If available, a syringe is useful for this purpose.

7.3 Remix the specimen in the test container using the needle retriever rod by pushing it up and down four times at a velocity of approximately 4 cm/s.