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# Standard Test Method for Determining the Superplastic Properties of Metallic Sheet Materials<sup>1</sup>

This standard is issued under the fixed designation E2448; 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 ( $\epsilon$ ) indicates an editorial change since the last revision or reapproval.

## 1. Scope

1.1 This test method describes the procedure for determining the superplastic forming properties (SPF) of a metallic sheet material. It includes tests both for the basic SPF properties and also for derived SPF properties. The test for basic properties encompasses effects due to strain hardening or softening.

1.2 This test method covers sheet materials with thicknesses of at least 0.5 mm but not greater than 6 mm. It characterizes the material under a uni-axial tensile stress condition.

NOTE 1—Most industrial applications of superplastic forming involve a multi-axial stress condition in a sheet; however it is more convenient to characterize a material under a uni-axial tensile stress condition. Tests should be performed in different orientations to the rolling direction of the sheet to ascertain initial anisotropy.

1.3 This method has been used successfully between strain rates of  $10^{-5}$  to  $10^{-1}$  per second.

1.4 This method has been used successfully on Aluminum and Titanium alloys. The use of the method with other metals should be verified.

1.5 The values stated in SI units are to be regarded as standard. No other units of measurement are included in this standard.

1.6 *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:*<sup>2</sup>

E4 Practices for Force Verification of Testing Machines

E6 Terminology Relating to Methods of Mechanical Testing

E21 Test Methods for Elevated Temperature Tension Tests of Metallic Materials

E177 Practice for Use of the Terms Precision and Bias in ASTM Test Methods

E646 Test Method for Tensile Strain-Hardening Exponents ( $n$ -Values) of Metallic Sheet Materials

E691 Practice for Conducting an Interlaboratory Study to Determine the Precision of a Test Method

## 3. Terminology

3.1 *Definitions*—Definitions such as gage length ( $L$  and  $L_0$ ), true stress ( $\sigma$ ), true strain ( $\epsilon$ ), normal engineering stress ( $S$ ), and engineering strain ( $e$ ) are defined in Terminology E6. Thus,

$$\epsilon = \ln(L/L_0)$$

$$\sigma = S(1 + e)$$

NOTE 2—Engineering stress  $S$  and strain  $e$  are only valid up to the point of necking or instability of cross section. For superplastic deformation, the coupon undergoes an essentially uniform and constant neck along its length, and  $S$  and  $e$  are assumed in this standard to be valid. However at the junction to the clamp sections of the coupon the cross section reduces from the original value to the final value, over a length of approximately 4 % at each end. Also, there are local small instabilities of cross section over the gauge length. These contribute to an error in the calculated values of  $\epsilon$  and  $\sigma$ . In the absence of currently available extensometers that could operate in the high temperature environment of an SPF test,  $\epsilon$  and  $\sigma$  are to be inferred from crosshead extension and force.

<sup>1</sup> This test method is under the jurisdiction of ASTM Committee E28 on Mechanical Testing and is the direct responsibility of Subcommittee E28.02 on Ductility and Formability.

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<sup>2</sup> 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.

### 3.2 Symbols Specific To This Standard:

$V$  = machine crosshead velocity, the velocity of the traveling member of the test machine to which one of the coupon clamps is attached

$\dot{\epsilon}$  = strain rate, measured as:  $V/[L_0(1 + e)]$

NOTE 3—This is an operational definition of strain rate.

$m$  = strain rate sensitivity, defined as  $(\ln \Delta \sigma)/(\ln \Delta \dot{\epsilon})$ . In practical terms,  $m = \log(\sigma_2/\sigma_1)/\log(\dot{\epsilon}_2/\dot{\epsilon}_1)$  under stated test conditions, see 7.2.1.

NOTE 4—The derived term  $m$  is widely used to describe the SPF properties of a material. It should be used with caution, as it is dependent on strain, strain rate and temperature. Many references in the literature do not identify the strain condition at which the readings were taken, or allow multiple strains to be used in the determination of  $m$ .

NOTE 5—Many superplastic alloys exhibit strain hardening. However the conventional strain hardening exponent  $n$  as defined in Test Method E646 is not valid for superplastic materials as strain hardening in the latter is usually a coefficient of strain, rather than an exponent. The mechanism of strain hardening in superplastic flow is essentially due to grain growth, and although the stress/strain relationship is often linear, it is not universal for all superplastic materials. Consequently there is no simple definition of a strain hardening coefficient and this standard does not define one. Consideration of strain hardening in superplastic deformation is discussed in Ghosh and Hamilton's, "Influences of Material Parameters and Microstructure on Superplastic Forming."<sup>3</sup>

3.2.1 The gage length ( $L$ ) is defined as the instantaneous distance between the shoulders of the coupon during the test.

NOTE 6—It is assumed no local necking takes place and the cross section of the coupon is constant over the entire gage length. For some materials, cavitation inside the material increases the volume of the gage section as the test progresses, and the true cross-sectional area has to be compensated for any strain. For other materials, the coupon can develop a ribbed or other local texture, and in this case, the minimum cross section has to be measured. During the test there is an increasingly non uniform cross section at each end of the coupon where the gage section transitions to the original width at the clamp section. This effect is small and can usually be ignored.

## 4. Significance and Use

4.1 The determination of the superplastic properties of a metallic sheet material is important for the observation, development and comparison of superplastic materials. It is also necessary to predict the correct forming parameters during an SPF process. SPF tensile testing has peculiar characteristics compared to conventional mechanical testing, which distort the true values of stress, strain, strain hardening, and strain rate at the very large elongations encountered in an SPF pull test, consequently conventional mechanical test methods cannot be used. This test method addresses those characteristics by optimizing the shape of the test coupon and specifying a new test procedure.

4.2 The evaluation of a superplastic material can be divided into two parts. Firstly, the basic superplastic-forming (SPF) properties of the material are measured using the four parameters of stress, temperature, strain, and strain rate. These are obtained using conversions from the raw data of a tensile test. Secondly, derived properties useful to define an SPF material are obtained from the basic properties using specific equations.

## 5. Apparatus

5.1 The accuracy of the testing machine shall be within the permissible variation specified in Practices E4.

5.2 The apparatus shall be calibrated according to appropriate standards or manufacturer instructions.

5.3 No extensometer is used in this test method, and the extension of the test coupon is measured at the machine crosshead. The accuracy of the recorded crosshead position should be better than 0.25 mm. The machine compliance shall be determined before testing coupons, and the amount of compliance subtracted from the crosshead position if it exceeds 1 % of the original gauge length of the coupon. A method of determining compliance would be to mount a 6 mm thick coupon in the clamps without heating, then load the machine to the estimated maximum force of the test and measure the movement of the crosshead. Due to the low loads of these tests (typically 100 N maximum) compliance is likely to be small.

5.4 The tensile test machine shall be computer controlled and capable of varying the crosshead speed in order to maintain a near constant strain rate. Step increases in crosshead speed are allowed, a variation of 1 % from nominal strain rate is permitted.

5.5 The tensile test machine shall be provided with clamps that hold the test coupon at and under the shoulders adjacent to the gage section. The coupon is not to be compressed by the clamps, as this will induce superplastic flow out of the clamp area during the test. Clamp design should follow that shown in Fig. 2.

5.6 The apparatus is provided with a furnace that shall maintain the coupon at a constant temperature throughout the test. Test equipment shall meet the requirements of Test Methods E21 for temperature measuring, calibration, and standardization.

## 6. Procedure

6.1 Test coupons shall be made to the dimensions shown in Fig. 1. The coupon width and gage thickness  $t$  shall be measured and recorded at a minimum of four places in the gage section, to a tolerance of 1 % of reading, or 12  $\mu\text{m}$ , whichever is greater.

<sup>3</sup> Ghosh, A. K., and Hamilton, C. H., "Influences of Material Parameters and Microstructure on Superplastic Forming," *Met Trans A*, Vol 13A, May 1982, pp. 733-742.

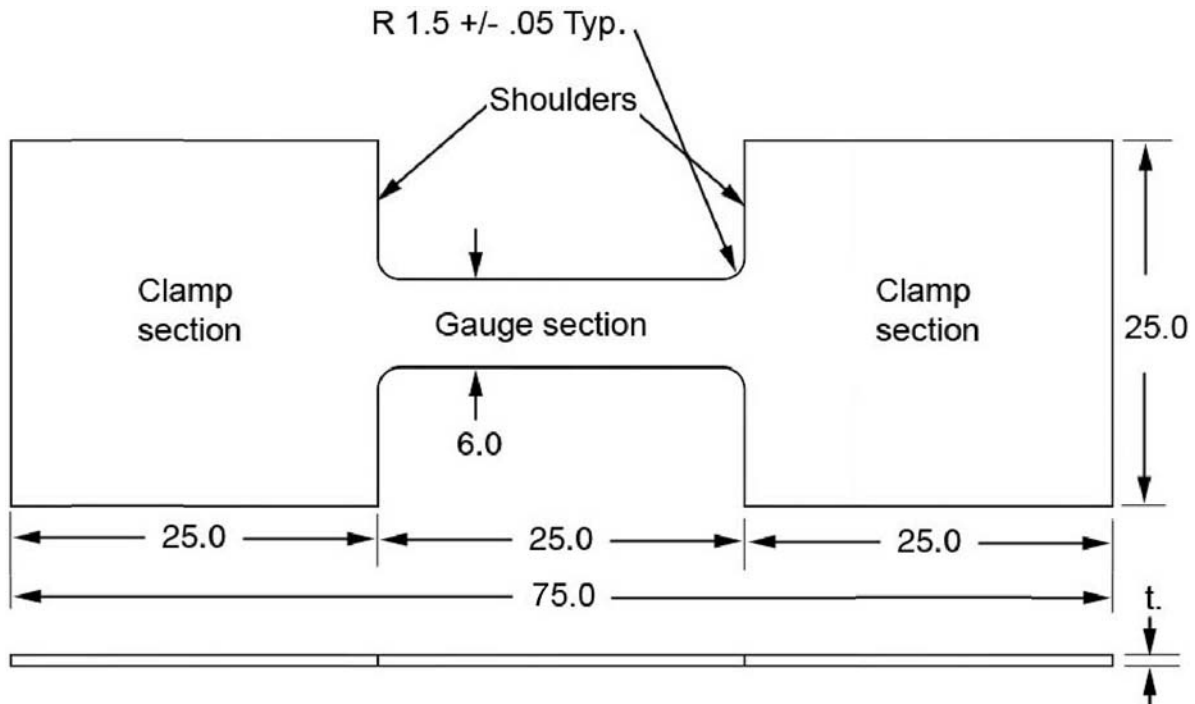


FIG. 1 Dimensions of Test Coupon

Dimensions in mm. Tolerance  $\pm 0.25$  mm except where noted.

6.2 If material oxidation affects the superplastic behavior of the material, the furnace can be flooded with argon or other inert gas to reduce the effects of oxidation.

6.3 Before starting the test, the specimen is brought up to the desired temperature and stabilized. The coupon is loaded into the clamps. During the heat up of the coupon, it is important to minimize external stress from the machine to the coupon. Many test machines incorporate a “protect specimen” or “load control” option during the heating phase to accommodate the thermal expansion of the coupon/grip assembly inside the furnace and to prevent buckling of the coupon. This control option ensures “almost” zero loading on the test specimen during heating through the movement of the cross-head beam.

6.4 Ideally the test should not commence until the coupon has reached thermal equilibrium. This will be reached when the cross-head beam ceases to move under the “protect specimen” control, indicating that no more thermal expansion is taking place. However this time can be long enough to allow grain growth in the coupon, which distorts the superplastic properties being evaluated. Therefore the time taken for the thermocouples to come within tolerance can be used instead if grain growth is considered significant. The cross-head extension shall then be “zeroed.” At this point, any movement of the crosshead is assumed to be the same as the moving clamp on the coupon, and is equivalent to the extension of the coupon.

6.5 Loading shall start as soon as the coolest thermocouple reaches the minimum specified temperature range to minimize the effect of grain growth on SPF properties. For the duration of the test, defined as the time from initiation of loading until the termination of test or fracture, the allowed tolerance between indicated and nominal test temperature is  $\pm 3^\circ\text{C}$  up to  $700^\circ\text{C}$  and  $\pm 6^\circ\text{C}$  above  $700^\circ\text{C}$ .

NOTE 7—As the clamp extension rod is pulled out of the furnace, it cools and contracts, thereby altering the distance between crosshead and clamp. This error in reading is small compared to the coupon length  $L$  and can be ignored for most testing.

6.6 The machine crosshead velocity is increased according to the equation  $V = \dot{\epsilon} [L_0(1 + e)]$  to an accuracy of  $\pm 1\%$  to maintain a constant true strain rate until a predetermined strain value is reached or until fracture. (If early fracture occurs at the interface between clamp and gauge section, then the material is unlikely to be superplastic).

6.7 Force and crosshead extension shall be recorded at least twice per second to an accuracy of  $\pm 1\%$  of the recorded value.

6.8 At the conclusion of the test, a measurement of height, width and thickness should be taken in the clamp area to measure any superplastic flow in that section; this value shall be recorded.

6.9 To determine the basic SPF properties, a constant true strain rate test as described above is employed.

6.10 To determine the derived “ $m$ ” value, a step test can be employed, in which the true strain rate is periodically stepped to 20% above nominal, then back to nominal, starting at a true strain of 0.15 and stepping up and down every 0.1 strain.

## 7. Analysis

7.1 *Basic SPF Properties*—Force and extension measurements from the test machine are converted to true stress  $\sigma [ = S(1 + e)]$  and true strain  $\epsilon [ = \ln(L/L_0)]$ . The basic SPF properties of a material at a specified strain rate and temperature shall

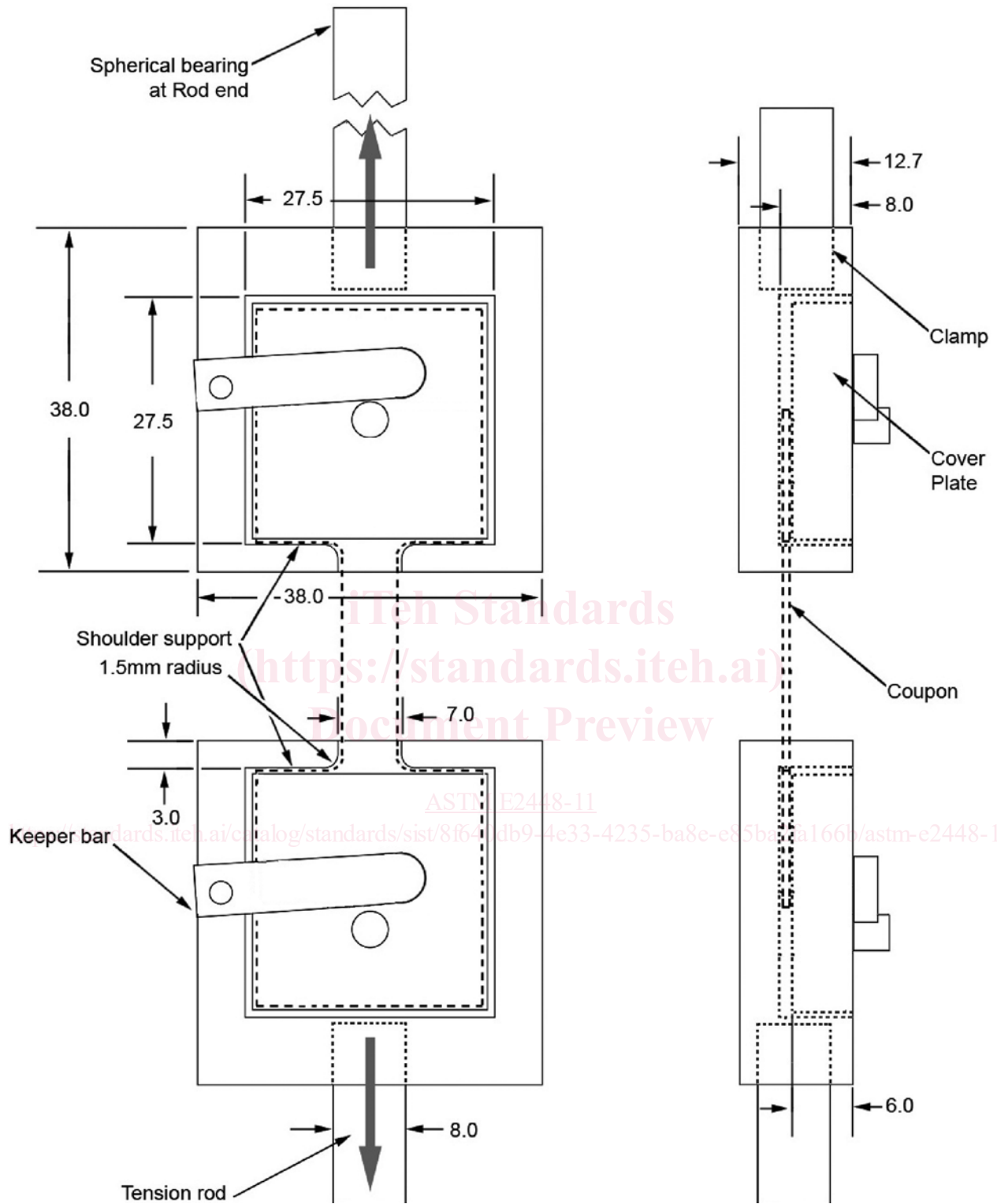


FIG. 2 Test Coupon Grip Configuration