



Standard Guide for Preparation of Metallographic Specimens¹

This standard is issued under the fixed designation E3; 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 U.S. Department of Defense.

1. Scope

1.1 The primary objective of metallographic examinations is to reveal the constituents and structure of metals and their alloys by means of a light optical or scanning electron microscope. In special cases, the objective of the examination may require the development of less detail than in other cases but, under nearly all conditions, the proper selection and preparation of the specimen is of major importance. Because of the diversity in available equipment and the wide variety of problems encountered, the following text presents for the guidance of the metallographer only those practices which experience has shown are generally satisfactory; it cannot and does not describe the variations in technique required to solve individual specimen preparation problems.

NOTE 1—For a more extensive description of various metallographic techniques, refer to Samuels, L. E., *Metallographic Polishing by Mechanical Methods*, American Society for Metals (ASM) Metals Park, OH, 3rd Ed., 1982; Petzow, G., *Metallographic Etching*, ASM, 1978; and VanderVoort, G., *Metallography: Principles and Practice*, McGraw Hill, NY, 2nd Ed., 1999.

1.2 *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:

- A90/A90M Test Method for Weight [Mass] of Coating on Iron and Steel Articles with Zinc or Zinc-Alloy Coatings²
- E7 Terminology Relating to Metallography
- E45 Test Methods for Determining the Inclusion Content of Steel

¹ This guide is under the jurisdiction of ASTM Committee E04 on Metallography and is the direct responsibility of Subcommittee E04.01 on Specimen Preparation. Current edition approved May 1, 2011. Published June 2011. Originally approved in 1921. Last previous edition approved in 2007 as E3–01(2007)^{ε1}. DOI: 10.1520/E0003-11.

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.

- E768 Guide for Preparing and Evaluating Specimens for Automatic Inclusion Assessment of Steel
- E1077 Test Methods for Estimating the Depth of Decarburization of Steel Specimens
- E1122 Practice for Obtaining JK Inclusion Ratings Using Automatic Image Analysis (Withdrawn 2006)³
- E1245 Practice for Determining the Inclusion or Second-Phase Constituent Content of Metals by Automatic Image Analysis
- E1268 Practice for Assessing the Degree of Banding or Orientation of Microstructures
- E1558 Guide for Electrolytic Polishing of Metallographic Specimens
- E1920 Guide for Metallographic Preparation of Thermal Sprayed Coatings

3. Terminology

3.1 Definitions:

3.1.1 For definitions used in this practice, refer to Terminology E7.

3.2 Definitions of Terms Specific to This Standard:

3.2.1 *castable mount*—a metallographic mount generally made from a two component castable plastic. One component is the resin and the other hardener. Both components can be liquid or one liquid and a powder. Castable mounts generally do not require heat and pressure to cure.

3.2.2 *compression mount*—a metallographic mount made using plastic that requires both heat and pressure for curing.

3.2.3 *planar grinding*—is the first grinding step in a preparation procedure used to bring all specimens into the same plane of polish. It is unique to semi or fully automatic preparation equipment that utilize specimen holders.

3.2.4 *rigid grinding disc*—a non-fabric support surface, such as a composite of metal/ceramic or metal/polymer charged with an abrasive (usually 6 to 15μm diamond particles), and used as the fine grinding operation in a metallographic preparation procedure.

³ The last approved version of this historical standard is referenced on www.astm.org.