



Designation: E 384 – 99

Standard Test Method for Microindentation Hardness of Materials¹

This standard is issued under the fixed designation E 384; 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 covers determination of the microindentation hardness of materials, the verification of microindentation hardness testing machines, and the calibration of standardized test blocks.

1.2 This test method covers microindentation tests made with Knoop and Vickers indenters under test forces in the range from 1 to 1000 gf (9.8×10^{-3} to 9.8 N).

1.3 This test method includes an analysis of the possible sources of errors that can occur during microindentation testing and how these factors affect the accuracy, repeatability, and reproducibility of test results.

NOTE 1—While Committee E-4 is primarily concerned with metals, the test procedures described are applicable to other materials.

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:

C 1326 Test Method for Knoop Indentation Hardness of Advanced Ceramics²

C 1327 Test Method for Vickers Indentation Hardness of Advanced Ceramics²

E 3 Methods of Preparation of Metallographic Specimens³

E 7 Terminology Relating to Metallography³

E 122 Practice for Choice of Sample Size to Estimate the Average Quality for a Lot or Process⁴

E 140 Test Method for Hardness Conversion Tables for Metals³

E 175 Terminology of Microscopy⁵

E 691 Practice for Conducting an Interlaboratory Study to Determine the Precision of a Test Method⁴

¹ This test method is under the jurisdiction of ASTM Committee E-4 on Metallography and is the direct responsibility of Subcommittee E04.05 on Microhardness.

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² Annual Book of ASTM Standards, Vol 15.01.

³ Annual Book of ASTM Standards, Vol 03.01.

⁴ Annual Book of ASTM Standards, Vol 14.02.

⁵ Annual Book of ASTM Standards, Vol 14.01.

E 766 Practice for Calibrating the Magnification of a Scanning Electron Microscope³

3. Terminology

3.1 *Definitions*—For definitions of terms used in this test method, see Terminology E 7.

3.2 *Definitions of Terms Specific to This Standard:*

3.2.1 *calibrating, v*—determining the values of the significant parameters by comparison with values indicated by a reference instrument or by a set of reference standards.

3.2.2 *Knoop hardness number, HK, n*—an expression of hardness obtained by dividing the force applied to the Knoop indenter by the projected area of the permanent impression made by the indenter.

3.2.3 *Knoop indenter, n*—a rhombic-based pyramidal-shaped diamond indenter with edge angles of $\angle A = 172^\circ 30'$ and $\angle B = 130^\circ 0'$ (see Fig. 1).

3.2.4 *microindentation hardness test, n*—a hardness test using a calibrated machine to force a diamond indenter of specific geometry into the surface of the material being evaluated, in which the test forces range from 1 to 1000 gf (9.8×10^{-3} to 9.8 N), and the indentation diagonal, or diagonals are measured with a light microscope after load removal; for any microindentation hardness test, it is assumed that the indentation does not undergo elastic recovery after force removal.

NOTE 2—Use of the term microhardness should be avoided because it implies that the hardness, rather than the force or the indentation size, is very low.

3.2.5 *verifying, v*—checking or testing the instrument to assure conformance with the specification.

3.2.6 *Vickers hardness number, HV, n*—an expression of hardness obtained by dividing the force applied to a Vickers indenter by the surface area of the permanent impression made by the indenter.

3.2.7 *Vickers indenter, n*—a square-based pyramidal-shaped diamond indenter with face angles of 136° (see Fig. 2).

3.3 *Formulae*—The formulae presented in 3.3.1-3.3.4 for calculating microindentation hardness are based upon an ideal tester. The measured value of the microindentation hardness of a material is subjected to several sources of errors. Based on Eq 1-9, variations in the applied force, geometrical variations between diamond indenters, and human errors in measuring indentation lengths can affect the calculated material hardness. The amount of error each of these parameters has on the