



Standard Test Method for Viscosity of Paints and Related Materials by ISO Flow Cups¹

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1. Scope

1.1 This test method covers the determination of the flow time (viscosity) of Newtonian and near-Newtonian paints, and related coatings and products using ISO capillary flow cups.

NOTE 1—If the liquid is non-Newtonian, that is shear-thinning or thixotropic, Test Methods [D2196](#) should be used.

1.2 The cup-orifice combination (ISO cup with orifice diameter of 3 mm, 4 mm, 5 mm, or 6 mm)² is selected to provide an efflux time with the range of 20 to 100 s and viscosities up to 700 cSt (700 mm²/s). The most commonly used cup is the one with the 4-mm orifice.

1.3 This test method is limited to testing materials for which the breakpoint of the flow from the orifice of the flow cup can be determined with certainty. This point is difficult to determine and reproduce for materials with flow times in excess of 100 s due to slowing-down effects.

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

1.5 *This standard does not purport to address 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 2—The International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) and the International Maritime Organization (IMO) include in their regulations a similar test (ISO 2431) to determine the viscosity of hazardous viscous liquids. The viscosity is then used to place these liquids in a hazard packaging group depending on their viscosity/flashpoint relationship. The U. S. Department of Transportation permits the use of these regulations for transshipment of hazardous material within the U.S. when bound for foreign destinations.

¹ This test method is under the jurisdiction of ASTM Committee [D01](#) on Paint and Related Coatings, Materials, and Applications and is the direct responsibility of Subcommittee [D01.24](#) on Physical Properties of Liquid Paints and Paint Materials.

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² An ISO-type cup with an orifice diameter of 8 mm is available, but it is not listed in ISO 2431 and precision and accuracy are not known.

2. Referenced Documents

2.1 ASTM Standards:³

[D2196](#) Test Methods for Rheological Properties of Non-Newtonian Materials by Rotational (Brookfield type) Viscometer

[D3924](#) Specification for Environment for Conditioning and Testing Paint, Varnish, Lacquer, and Related Materials

[D3925](#) Practice for Sampling Liquid Paints and Related Pigmented Coatings

[E1](#) Specification for ASTM Liquid-in-Glass Thermometers

2.2 ISO Documents:

[ISO 2431](#) Paints and Varnishes: Determination of Flow Time by Use of a Flow Cup⁴

3. Terminology

3.1 Definitions:

3.1.1 *dynamic viscosity, n* —the ratio of the applied shear stress to shear rate.

3.1.1.1 *Discussion*—The SI unit for dynamic viscosity is the pascal second (Pas). The traditional unit is the centipoise (cP); 1 cP = 1 mPas.

3.1.2 *flow time, n* —the elapsed time from the moment when the material under test starts to flow from the orifice of the filled cup to the moment when the flow stream of material first breaks close to the orifice.

3.1.3 *kinematic viscosity, n* —the ratio of the dynamic viscosity to the density of the liquid.

3.1.3.1 *Discussion*—The SI unit for kinematic viscosity is the square metre per second (m²/s). The traditional unit is the centistokes (cSt); 1 cSt = 1 mm²/s.

3.1.4 *near-Newtonian liquid, n* —a liquid in which the variation of viscosity with shear rate is small and the effect on viscosity of mechanical disturbances such as stirring is negligible.

3.1.5 *Newtonian liquid, n* —a liquid in which the viscosity is independent of the shear stress or shear rate. Compare non-Newtonian liquid.

³ 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.

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

3.1.6 *non-Newtonian liquid, n*—a liquid in which the ratio of shear stress to shear rate is not constant.

4. Summary of Test Method

4.1 The ISO flow cup is filled level full with the material under test that has been conditioned at the specified measuring temperature (see 10.2.2) and the time for the material to flow through one of the standard orifices is determined.

5. Significance and Use

5.1 This test method is useful for the determination of package and application viscosities of paints and other coatings. It is limited to Newtonian or near-Newtonian liquids.

5.2 This test method may be used similarly to ISO 2431 in conjunction with flashpoint to determine the hazard grouping of viscous liquids in international regulations.

6. Apparatus

6.1 *ISO Capillary Flow Cups*—ISO cups look like Ford cups, but instead of the non-capillary hole in the bottom of the Ford cup, the ISO cup has a 20-mm capillary and is more like a true capillary viscometer.

6.1.1 *Dimensions*—The dimensions of the ISO flow cup and the tolerances allowed in manufacture shall be as given in Fig. 1. The most critical tolerance is the internal diameter of the jet of the cup, because the flow time is inversely proportional to the fourth power of this dimension. The jet of the cup shall be made of stainless steel or sintered carbide unless otherwise specified, and the body of the cup shall be made of a material that is corrosion resistant and is not affected by the products to be tested.

6.1.2 *Construction*—The dimensions not specified, such as wall thickness, shall be such that no distortion of the cup can occur in use. The external shape shown in Fig. 1 is recommended, but may be modified for convenience of use, or manufacture, provided that the protruding jet of the cup is protected from accidental damage as far as possible by an external protective sleeve. Such a protective sleeve shall not be immediately adjacent to the jet, so as to prevent a capillary action when the material under test flows out.

6.1.3 *Finish*—The interior surfaces of the cups, including the orifice, shall be smooth and free of turning marks, crevices, ledges and burrs that may cause random flow, or trap sample or cleaning material. The standard of finish required is equivalent to a maximum roughness of not more than 0.5 μm (see Note 3).

NOTE 3—Roughness defined as the arithmetical mean deviation R_a from the mean line of the profile.

6.2 *Thermometer*, accurate to 0.2°C (0.4°F) and graduated at 0.1°C (0.2°F) intervals. Saybolt viscosity thermometer conforming to requirements for thermometer 17C and 17F (10 to 27°C) (60 to 80°F) as prescribed in Specification E1 is required. In addition, temperature measuring devices such as non-mercury liquid-in-glass thermometers, thermocouples, or platinum resistance thermometers that provide equivalent or better accuracy and precision, that cover the temperature range for thermometer 17C and 17F, may be used.

6.3 *Stand*, suitable for holding the flow cup and provided with leveling screws.

6.4 *Spirit Level*, preferably of the circular type.

6.5 *Flat Glass Plate or Straight-Edge Scraper*.

6.6 *Stopwatch*, or other suitable timing-device with scale divisions of 0.5 s or finer and accurate to within 0.2 % when tested over a 60-min period.

6.7 *Temperature-Controlled Room or Enclosure*, capable of maintaining the cup and sample at a recommended, constant temperature.

7. Reagents and Materials

7.1 Certified kinematic viscosity standards.⁵

8. Sampling

8.1 Sample material in accordance with Practice D3925.

8.2 Before testing, it is advisable to strain the sample through an appropriate sieve into a clean dry container. This is mandatory for referee purposes. Mix the material thoroughly while at the same time avoiding, as far as possible, loss of solvent by evaporation.

NOTE 4—150 mL of strained material is sufficient for one test.

9. Calibration

9.1 Dimensionally similar cups will give, with Newtonian liquids, such as a standard oil, similar flow times, provided that the temperature of testing is precisely the same. The use of such liquids to calibrate cups provides a useful means of initially checking that dimensionally similar cups are within the accepted tolerances of performance and also for checking from time to time whether any wear or damage has taken place sufficient to bring a cup outside the accepted tolerances.

9.2 For calibration of any particular cup, use a standard oil⁵ of known kinematic viscosity and draw a graph of kinematic viscosity versus temperature from the data given by the supplier for the oil.

9.3 Using the relevant procedure described in Section 1010, determine the flow time of the oil at a known temperature within the range 20 to 30°C (68 to 80°F), measured to the nearest 0.1°C.

9.3.1 Record this flow time, which should be in the range 30 to 100 s and preferably near the midpoint of this range, to an accuracy of 0.2 s.

9.4 From the prepared graph, read the kinematic viscosity at the test temperature.

9.4.1 Using the appropriate calibration graph of Fig. 2, Fig. 3, Fig. 4 or Fig. 5, read the flow time corresponding to this kinematic viscosity.

9.5 If the two values of flow time obtained do not differ by more than 3 %, the cup may be deemed satisfactory for use.

9.6 For reference purposes, a correction factor corresponding to the flow time deviation from that obtained using the oil may be applied.

⁵ Standards, available from the Cannon Instrument Company, P.O. Box 16, State College, PA 16801 have been found suitable for this purpose.