



Designation: E930 – 18

Standard Test Methods for Estimating the Largest Grain Observed in a Metallographic Section (ALA Grain Size)¹

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This standard has been approved for use by agencies of the U.S. Department of Defense.

INTRODUCTION

Commercial material specifications sometimes include, in size limits for grain structures, the need for identification of the largest grain observed in a sample, often expressed as ALA (as large as) grain size. The methods presented here are for use when the number of large grains is too few for measurement by Test Methods E112. It shall be understood that larger (but unobserved) grains may exist in the local volume sampled.

1. Scope

1.1 These test methods describe simple manual procedures for measuring the size of the largest grain cross-section observed on a metallographically prepared plane section.

1.2 These test methods shall only be valid for microstructures containing outlier coarse grains, where their population is too sparse for grain size determination by Test Methods E112.

1.3 *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, health, and environmental practices and determine the applicability of regulatory limitations prior to use.*

1.4 *This international standard was developed in accordance with internationally recognized principles on standardization established in the Decision on Principles for the Development of International Standards, Guides and Recommendations issued by the World Trade Organization Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) Committee.*

2. Referenced Documents

2.1 *ASTM Standards:*²

E3 Guide for Preparation of Metallographic Specimens

E7 Terminology Relating to Metallography

E112 Test Methods for Determining Average Grain Size

E407 Practice for Microetching Metals and Alloys

E1181 Test Methods for Characterizing Duplex Grain Sizes

2.2 *ASTM Adjuncts:*

ALA Grain Size Visual Aid for Comparison Procedure (One Opaque Print and One Transparency)³

3. Terminology

3.1 *Definitions:*

3.1.1 For definitions of terms used in these test methods, see Terminology E7.

3.2 *Definitions:*

3.2.1 *ALA grain, n*—the largest grain observed in a random scatter of individual coarse grains comprising 5 % or less of the specimen area, where the apparent grain size of the coarse grain(s) differs by 3 or more ASTM grain size numbers from the balance of the microstructure.

3.2.2 *outlier grain, n*—a grain substantially different in size from the predominant grain size in a microstructure; for example, an ALA grain.

4. Significance and Use

4.1 The presence of large grains has been correlated with anomalous mechanical behavior in, for example, crack initiation, crack propagation, and fatigue. Thus there is engineering justification for reporting the ALA grain size.

4.2 These methods shall only be used with the presence of outlier coarse grains, 3 or more ASTM grain size numbers

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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.

³ Available from ASTM International Headquarters. Order Adjunct No. ADJE0930.

larger than the rest of the microstructure and comprising 5 % or less of the specimen area. A typical example is shown in **Annex A1** as **Fig. A1.1**.

4.3 These methods shall not be used for the determination of average grain size, which is treated in Test Methods **E112**. Examples of microstructures that do not qualify for ALA treatment are shown in **Annex A1** as **Fig. A1.2**, **Fig. A1.3**, and **Fig. A1.4**.

4.4 These methods may be applied in the characterization of duplex grain sizes, as instructed in the procedures for Test Methods **E1181**.

5. Sampling

5.1 Sampling shall have been performed according to sampling procedures in Test Method **E112**.

5.2 The generally intended plane of polish is a plane passing through the center of the thickness and exhibiting maximum grain aspect ratio.

5.3 Other polishing planes which may be more useful or predictive in specific products or applications are allowed.

5.4 An unambiguous description of the plane of polish or a reference to a description or drawing of the plane of polish shall be a part of the test report.

5.5 Specimens shall be prepared in accordance with Methods **E3** and Practice **E407**.

6. Procedures

6.1 In **6.2** a comparison procedure is presented with accuracy near to ± 1 ASTM grain size number, for the apparent size of the largest grain. For greater accuracy, a measuring procedure is described in **6.3**. A manual quantitative method, to serve as referee procedure, is described in **6.4**. (The measuring procedure is especially recommended over the comparison procedure when the ALA grain section's shape is substantially different from those shown in **Annex A2**.)

6.2 Comparison Procedure:

6.2.1 Scan the entire microsection at a convenient magnification to locate the larger grains.

6.2.2 Position the largest grain in the middle of the microscope viewing screen, eyepiece, or on a photomicrograph.

6.2.3 Estimate the grain size by comparing the ALA grain to a visual aid that is based on the relationship of area to grain size expressed in **Table 1**. Examples of visual aids are shown in **Annex A2**, with their specifications in **Annex A3**. **Fig. A2.1** may be used only at the magnification specified on the aid.

NOTE 1—The use of Test Methods **E112** comparison plates is not allowed, since few of the grain sections illustrated correspond to the average area for that grain size number.

6.3 *Measuring Procedure* (for greater accuracy than with comparison procedure):

6.3.1 Locate and position the largest grain in a microscope image or in a photomicrograph, as in **6.2.1** and **6.2.2**.

6.3.2 Using a measuring eyepiece, internal reticle, or external scale, as appropriate, measure the maximum caliper diameter and the caliper diameter perpendicular to the maximum caliper diameter.

TABLE 1 Relationship of ALA Grain Area to ALA Micro-Grain Size Number^A

Area, mm ²	Size
2.06	00000 or – 4.0
1.46	–3.5
1.03	0000 or – 3.0
0.703	–2.5
0.516	000 or – 2.0
0.365	–1.5
0.258	00 or – 1.0
0.182	–0.5
0.129	0
0.0912	0.5
0.0645	1.0
0.0456	1.5
0.0323	2.0
0.0228	2.5
0.0161	3.0
0.0114	3.5
0.00807	4.0
0.00570	4.5
0.00403	5.0
0.00285	5.5
0.00202	6.0
0.00143	6.5
0.00101	7.0

^AAdapted from Test Methods **E112**, Table 2.

6.3.3 Multiply the product of these two measurements by 0.785, to obtain the area of an ellipse with axes equal to the caliper diameters at the magnification used.

6.3.4 Divide this area by the square of the magnification used, to obtain the true grain area at 1X.

6.3.5 Compare this area with the grain areas in **Table 1**. Use the nearest area in the table to obtain the ALA grain size number, unless the next smaller or the next larger area is agreed upon between the interested parties.

6.4 Referee Procedure (Image Analysis):

6.4.1 Photograph the largest grain, using the largest magnification that shows the entire grain in the image area. (In case of uncertainty about which of several grain sections is the largest, photograph them all and carry out the following steps for all of the photographs.)

6.4.1.1 Verify that the magnification on the microscope aligns with the magnification selected in the image analysis software.

6.4.1.2 Using the image analysis software, trace the perimeter of the grain. This may be accomplished manually or by automatic detection provided the software has the capability.

6.4.1.3 Verify that the perimeter traced best represents the geometry of the grain and record the area (mm²).

6.4.1.4 Compare the area determined with the area column in **Table 1**. Use the nearest area in the table to report the ALA grain size number, unless the next smaller or the next larger area is agreed upon between the interested parties.

6.4.1.5 If necessary, retain the photomicrograph that includes a reference scale.

6.5 Alternate Referee Procedure (Manual Overlay):

6.5.1 Photograph the largest grain, using the largest magnification that shows the entire grain in the image area. (In case of uncertainty about which of several grain sections is the largest, photograph them all and carry out the following steps for all of the photographs.)