



Standard Test Method for Compressive Strength of Cylindrical Concrete Specimens¹

This standard is issued under the fixed designation C 39/C 39M; 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 compressive strength of cylindrical concrete specimens such as molded cylinders and drilled cores. It is limited to concrete having a unit weight in excess of 50 lb/ft³ [800 kg/m³].

1.2 The values stated in either inch-pound or SI units are to be regarded separately as standard. The SI units are shown in brackets. The values stated in each system may not be exact equivalents; therefore, each system shall be used independently of the other. Combining values from the two systems may result in nonconformance with the standard.

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

1.4 The text of this standard references notes which provide explanatory material. These notes shall not be considered as requirements of the standard.

2. Referenced Documents

2.1 ASTM Standards:

- C 31 Practice for Making and Curing Concrete Test Specimens in the Field²
- C 42 Test Method for Obtaining and Testing Drilled Cores and Sawed Beams of Concrete²
- C 192 Practice for Making and Curing Concrete Test Specimens in the Laboratory²
- C 617 Practice for Capping Cylindrical Concrete Specimens²
- C 670 Practice for Preparing Precision and Bias Statements for Test Methods for Construction Materials²
- C 873 Test Method for Compressive Strength of Concrete Cylinders Cast in Place in Cylindrical Molds²
- C 1077 Practice for Laboratories Testing Concrete and Concrete Aggregates for Use in Construction and Criteria for Laboratory Evaluation²
- C 1231 Practice for Use of Unbonded Caps in Determina-

tion of Compressive Strength of Hardened Concrete Cylinders²

E 4 Practices for Force Verification of Testing Machines³

E 74 Practice for Calibration of Force-Measuring Instruments for Verifying the Load Indication of Testing Machines³

Manual of Aggregate and Concrete Testing²

2.2 *American Concrete Institute:*

CP-16 Concrete Laboratory Testing Technician, Grade I⁴

3. Summary of Test Method

3.1 This test method consists of applying a compressive axial load to molded cylinders or cores at a rate which is within a prescribed range until failure occurs. The compressive strength of the specimen is calculated by dividing the maximum load attained during the test by the cross-sectional area of the specimen.

4. Significance and Use

4.1 Care must be exercised in the interpretation of the significance of compressive strength determinations by this test method since strength is not a fundamental or intrinsic property of concrete made from given materials. Values obtained will depend on the size and shape of the specimen, batching, mixing procedures, the methods of sampling, molding, and fabrication and the age, temperature, and moisture conditions during curing.

4.2 This test method is used to determine compressive strength of cylindrical specimens prepared and cured in accordance with Practices C 31, C 192, C 617 and C 1231 and Test Methods C 42 and C 873.

4.3 The results of this test method are used as a basis for quality control of concrete proportioning, mixing, and placing operations; determination of compliance with specifications; control for evaluating effectiveness of admixtures and similar uses.

4.4 The individual who tests concrete cylinders for acceptance testing shall have demonstrated a knowledge and ability to perform the test procedure equivalent to the minimum guidelines for certification of Concrete Laboratory Technician, Level I, in accordance with ACI CP-16.

¹ This test method is under the jurisdiction of ASTM Committee C-9 on Concrete and Concrete Aggregates and is the direct responsibility of Subcommittee C09.61 on Testing Concrete for Strength.

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² *Annual Book of ASTM Standards*, Vol 04.02.

³ *Annual Book of ASTM Standards*, Vol 03.01.

⁴ Available from American Concrete Institute, P.O. Box 9094, Farmington Hills, MI 48333-9094.

NOTE 1—The testing laboratory performing this test method should be evaluated in accordance with Practice C 1077.

$$E_p = 100(A - B)/B$$

5. Apparatus

5.1 *Testing Machine*—The testing machine shall be of a type having sufficient capacity and capable of providing the rates of loading prescribed in 7.5.

5.1.1 Verification of calibration of the testing machines in accordance with Practices E 4 is required under the following conditions:

5.1.1.1 After an elapsed interval since the previous verification of 18 months maximum, but preferably after an interval of 12 months,

5.1.1.2 On original installation or relocation of the machine,

5.1.1.3 Immediately after making repairs or adjustments that affect the operation of the force applying system of the machine or the values displayed on the load indicating system, except for zero adjustments that compensate for the mass of bearing blocks, or specimen, or both, or

5.1.1.4 Whenever there is reason to doubt the accuracy of the results, without regard to the time interval since the last verification.

5.1.2 *Design*—The design of the machine must include the following features:

5.1.2.1 The machine must be power operated and must apply the load continuously rather than intermittently, and without shock. If it has only one loading rate (meeting the requirements of 7.5), it must be provided with a supplemental means for loading at a rate suitable for verification. This supplemental means of loading may be power or hand operated.

NOTE 2—High-strength concrete cylinders rupture more intensely than normal strength cylinders. As a safety precaution, it is recommended that the testing machines should be equipped with protective fragment guards.

5.1.2.2 The space provided for test specimens shall be large enough to accommodate, in a readable position, an elastic calibration device which is of sufficient capacity to cover the potential loading range of the testing machine and which complies with the requirements of Practice E 74.

NOTE 3—The types of elastic calibration devices most generally available and most commonly used for this purpose are the circular proving ring or load cell.

5.1.3 *Accuracy*—The accuracy of the testing machine shall be in accordance with the following provisions:

5.1.3.1 The percentage of error for the loads within the proposed range of use of the testing machine shall not exceed ± 1.0 % of the indicated load.

5.1.3.2 The accuracy of the testing machine shall be verified by applying five test loads in four approximately equal increments in ascending order. The difference between any two successive test loads shall not exceed one third of the difference between the maximum and minimum test loads.

5.1.3.3 The test load as indicated by the testing machine and the applied load computed from the readings of the verification device shall be recorded at each test point. Calculate the error, E , and the percentage of error, E_p , for each point from these data as follows:

$$E = A - B \quad (1)$$

where:

A = load, lbf [kN] indicated by the machine being verified, and

B = applied load, lbf [kN] as determined by the calibrating device.

5.1.3.4 The report on the verification of a testing machine shall state within what loading range it was found to conform to specification requirements rather than reporting a blanket acceptance or rejection. In no case shall the loading range be stated as including loads below the value which is 100 times the smallest change of load estimable on the load-indicating mechanism of the testing machine or loads within that portion of the range below 10 % of the maximum range capacity.

5.1.3.5 In no case shall the loading range be stated as including loads outside the range of loads applied during the verification test.

5.1.3.6 The indicated load of a testing machine shall not be corrected either by calculation or by the use of a calibration diagram to obtain values within the required permissible variation.

5.2 The testing machine shall be equipped with two steel bearing blocks with hardened faces (Note 4), one of which is a spherically seated block that will bear on the upper surface of the specimen, and the other a solid block on which the specimen shall rest. Bearing faces of the blocks shall have a minimum dimension at least 3 % greater than the diameter of the specimen to be tested. Except for the concentric circles described below, the bearing faces shall not depart from a plane by more than 0.001 in. [0.02 mm] in any 6 in. [150 mm] of blocks 6 in. [150 mm] in diameter or larger, or by more than 0.001 in. [0.02 mm] in the diameter of any smaller block; and new blocks shall be manufactured within one half of this tolerance. When the diameter of the bearing face of the spherically seated block exceeds the diameter of the specimen by more than 0.5 in. [13 mm], concentric circles not more than 0.03 in. [0.8 mm] deep and not more than 0.04 in. [1 mm] wide shall be inscribed to facilitate proper centering.

NOTE 4—It is desirable that the bearing faces of blocks used for compression testing of concrete have a Rockwell hardness of not less than 55 HRC.

5.2.1 Bottom bearing blocks shall conform to the following requirements:

5.2.1.1 The bottom bearing block is specified for the purpose of providing a readily machinable surface for maintenance of the specified surface conditions (Note 5). The top and bottom surfaces shall be parallel to each other. If the testing machine is so designed that the platen itself is readily maintained in the specified surface condition, a bottom block is not required. Its least horizontal dimension shall be at least 3 % greater than the diameter of the specimen to be tested. Concentric circles as described in 5.2 are optional on the bottom block.

NOTE 5—The block may be fastened to the platen of the testing machine.

5.2.1.2 Final centering must be made with reference to the upper spherical block. When the lower bearing block is used to

assist in centering the specimen, the center of the concentric rings, when provided, or the center of the block itself must be directly below the center of the spherical head. Provision shall be made on the platen of the machine to assure such a position.

5.2.1.3 The bottom bearing block shall be at least 1 in. [25 mm] thick when new, and at least 0.9 in. [22.5 mm] thick after any resurfacing operations.

5.2.2 The spherically seated bearing block shall conform to the following requirements:

5.2.2.1 The maximum diameter of the bearing face of the suspended spherically seated block shall not exceed the values given below:

Diameter of Test Specimens, in. [mm]	Maximum Diameter of Bearing Face, in. [mm]
2 [50]	4 [105]
3 [75]	5 [130]
4 [100]	6.5 [165]
6 [150]	10 [255]
8 [200]	11 [280]

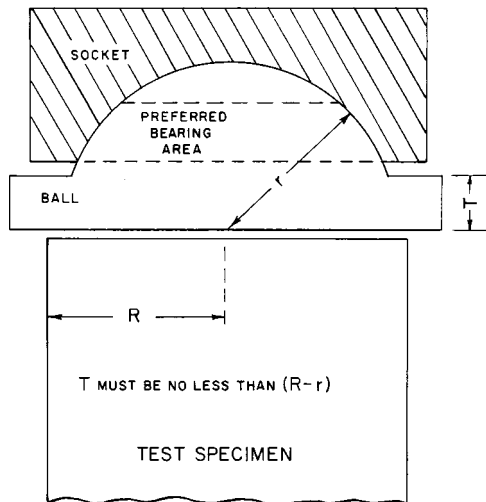
NOTE 6—Square bearing faces are permissible, provided the diameter of the largest possible inscribed circle does not exceed the above diameter.

5.2.2.2 The center of the sphere shall coincide with the surface of the bearing face within a tolerance of $\pm 5\%$ of the radius of the sphere. The diameter of the sphere shall be at least 75 % of the diameter of the specimen to be tested.

5.2.2.3 The ball and the socket must be so designed by the manufacturer that the steel in the contact area does not permanently deform under repeated use, with loads up to 12 000 psi [85 MPa] on the test specimen.

NOTE 7—The preferred contact area is in the form of a ring (described as preferred “bearing” area) as shown on Fig. 1.

5.2.2.4 The curved surfaces of the socket and of the spherical portion shall be kept clean and shall be lubricated with a petroleum-type oil such as conventional motor oil, not with a pressure type grease. After contacting the specimen and application of small initial load, further tilting of the spherically seated block is not intended and is undesirable.



NOTE 1—Provision shall be made for holding the ball in the socket and for holding the entire unit in the testing machine.

FIG. 1 Schematic Sketch of a Typical Spherical Bearing Block

5.2.2.5 If the radius of the sphere is smaller than the radius of the largest specimen to be tested, the portion of the bearing face extending beyond the sphere shall have a thickness not less than the difference between the radius of the sphere and radius of the specimen. The least dimension of the bearing face shall be at least as great as the diameter of the sphere (see Fig. 1).

5.2.2.6 The movable portion of the bearing block shall be held closely in the spherical seat, but the design shall be such that the bearing face can be rotated freely and tilted at least 4° in any direction.

5.3 Load Indication:

5.3.1 If the load of a compression machine used in concrete testing is registered on a dial, the dial shall be provided with a graduated scale that is readable to at least the nearest 0.1 % of the full scale load (Note 8). The dial shall be readable within 1 % of the indicated load at any given load level within the loading range. In no case shall the loading range of a dial be considered to include loads below the value that is 100 times the smallest change of load that can be read on the scale. The scale shall be provided with a graduation line equal to zero and so numbered. The dial pointer shall be of sufficient length to reach the graduation marks; the width of the end of the pointer shall not exceed the clear distance between the smallest graduations. Each dial shall be equipped with a zero adjustment located outside the dialcase and easily accessible from the front of the machine while observing the zero mark and dial pointer. Each dial shall be equipped with a suitable device that at all times until reset, will indicate to within 1 % accuracy the maximum load applied to the specimen.

NOTE 8—Readability is considered to be 0.02 in. [0.5 mm] along the arc described by the end of the pointer. Also, one half of a scale interval is readable with reasonable certainty when the spacing on the load indicating mechanism is between 0.04 in. [1 mm] and 0.06 in. [2 mm]. When the spacing is between 0.06 and 0.12 in. [2 and 3 mm], one third of a scale interval is readable with reasonable certainty. When the spacing is 0.12 in. [3 mm] or more, one fourth of a scale interval is readable with reasonable certainty.

5.3.2 If the testing machine load is indicated in digital form, the numerical display must be large enough to be easily read. The numerical increment must be equal to or less than 0.10 % of the full scale load of a given loading range. In no case shall the verified loading range include loads less than the minimum numerical increment multiplied by 100. The accuracy of the indicated load must be within 1.0 % for any value displayed within the verified loading range. Provision must be made for adjusting to indicate true zero at zero load. There shall be provided a maximum load indicator that at all times until reset will indicate within 1 % system accuracy the maximum load applied to the specimen.

6. Specimens

6.1 Specimens shall not be tested if any individual diameter of a cylinder differs from any other diameter of the same cylinder by more than 2 %.

NOTE 9—This may occur when single use molds are damaged or deformed during shipment, when flexible single use molds are deformed during molding or when a core drill deflects or shifts during drilling.

6.2 Neither end of compressive test specimens when tested

shall depart from perpendicularity to the axis by more than 0.5° (approximately equivalent to 0.12 in 12 in. [3 in 300 mm]). The ends of compression test specimens that are not plane within 0.002 in. [0.050 mm] shall be sawed or ground to meet that tolerance, or capped in accordance with either Practice C 617 or Practice C 1231. The diameter used for calculating the cross-sectional area of the test specimen shall be determined to the nearest 0.01 in. [0.25 mm] by averaging two diameters measured at right angles to each other at about midheight of the specimen.

6.3 The number of individual cylinders measured for determination of average diameter may be reduced to one for each ten specimens or three specimens per day, whichever is greater, if all cylinders are known to have been made from a single lot of reusable or single-use molds which consistently produce specimens with average diameters within a range of 0.02 in. [0.5 mm]. When the average diameters do not fall within the range of 0.02 in. [0.5 mm] or when the cylinders are not made from a single lot of molds, each cylinder tested must be measured and the value used in calculation of the unit compressive strength of that specimen. When the diameters are measured at the reduced frequency, the cross-sectional areas of all cylinders tested on that day shall be computed from the average of the diameters of the three or more cylinders representing the group tested that day.

6.4 The length shall be measured to the nearest 0.05 *D* when the length to diameter ratio is less than 1.8, or more than 2.2, or when the volume of the cylinder is determined from measured dimensions.

7. Procedure

7.1 Compression tests of moist-cured specimens shall be made as soon as practicable after removal from moist storage.

7.2 Test specimens shall be kept moist by any convenient method during the period between removal from moist storage and testing. They shall be tested in the moist condition.

7.3 All test specimens for a given test age shall be broken within the permissible time tolerances prescribed as follows:

Test Age	Permissible Tolerance
24 h	± 0.5 h or 2.1 %
3 days	2 h or 2.8 %
7 days	6 h or 3.6 %
28 days	20 h or 3.0 %
90 days	2 days 2.2 %

7.4 *Placing the Specimen*—Place the plain (lower) bearing block, with its hardened face up, on the table or platen of the testing machine directly under the spherically seated (upper) bearing block. Wipe clean the bearing faces of the upper and lower bearing blocks and of the test specimen and place the test specimen on the lower bearing block. Carefully align the axis of the specimen with the center of thrust of the spherically seated block.

7.4.1 *Zero Verification and Block Seating*—Prior to testing the specimen, verify that the load indicator is set to zero. In cases where the indicator is not properly set to zero, adjust the indicator (Note 10). As the spherically seated block is brought to bear on the specimen, rotate its movable portion gently by hand so that uniform seating is obtained.

NOTE 10—The technique used to verify and adjust load indicator to zero will vary depending on the machine manufacturer. Consult your owner's manual or compression machine calibrator for the proper technique.

7.5 *Rate of Loading*—Apply the load continuously and without shock.

7.5.1 For testing machines of the screw type, the moving head shall travel at a rate of approximately 0.05 in. [1 mm]/min when the machine is running idle. For hydraulically operated machines, the load shall be applied at a rate of movement (platen to crosshead measurement) corresponding to a loading rate on the specimen within the range of 20 to 50 psi/s [0.15 to 0.35 MPa/s]. The designated rate of movement shall be maintained at least during the latter half of the anticipated loading phase of the testing cycle.

7.5.2 During the application of the first half of the anticipated loading phase a higher rate of loading shall be permitted.

7.5.3 Make no adjustment in the rate of movement of the platen at any time while a specimen is yielding rapidly immediately before failure.

7.6 Apply the load until the specimen fails, and record the maximum load carried by the specimen during the test. Note the type of failure and the appearance of the concrete.

8. Calculation

8.1 Calculate the compressive strength of the specimen by dividing the maximum load carried by the specimen during the test by the average cross-sectional area determined as described in Section 6 and express the result to the nearest 10 psi [0.1 MPa].

8.2 If the specimen length to diameter ratio is less than 1.8, correct the result obtained in 8.1 by multiplying by the appropriate correction factor shown in the following table:

L/D:	1.75	1.50	1.25	1.00
Factor:	0.98	0.96	0.93	0.87 (Note 11)

NOTE 11—These correction factors apply to lightweight concrete weighing between 100 and 120 lb/ft³ [1600 and 1920 kg/m³] and to normal weight concrete. They are applicable to concrete dry or soaked at the time of loading. Values not given in the table shall be determined by interpolation. The correction factors are applicable for nominal concrete strengths from 2000 to 6000 psi [15 to 45 MPa].

9. Report

9.1 Report the following information:

9.1.1 Identification number,

9.1.2 Diameter (and length, if outside the range of 1.8*D* to 2.2*D*), in inches [millimetres],

9.1.3 Cross-sectional area, in square inches [square millimetres],

9.1.4 Maximum load, in pounds-force [kilonewtons],

9.1.5 Compressive strength calculated to the nearest 10 psi [0.1 MPa],

9.1.6 Type of fracture, if other than the usual cone (see Fig. 2),

9.1.7 Defects in either specimen or caps, and,

9.1.8 Age of specimen.

10. Precision and Bias

10.1 *Precision*—The single operator precision of tests of individual 6 by 12 in. [150 by 300 mm] cylinders made from

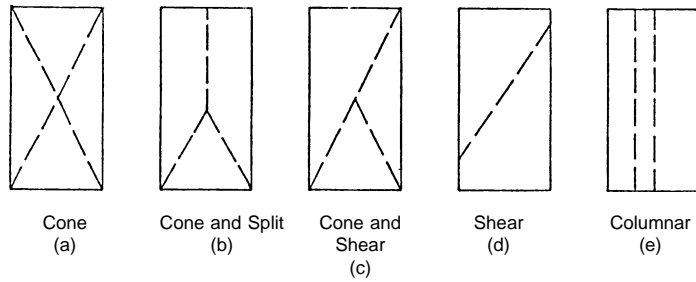


FIG. 2 Sketches of Types of Fracture

a well-mixed sample of concrete is given for cylinders made in a laboratory environment and under normal field conditions (see 10.1.1).

	Coefficient of Variation ^A	Acceptable Range of ^A	
		2 results	3 results
Single operator			
Laboratory conditions	2.37 %	6.6 %	7.8 %
Field conditions	2.87 %	8.0 %	9.5 %

^A These numbers represent respectively the (1s) and (d2s) limits as described in Practice C 670.

10.1.1 The values given are applicable to 6 by 12 in. [150 by 300 mm] cylinders with compressive strength between 2000 and 8000 psi [15 to 55 MPa]. They are derived from CCRL concrete reference sample data for laboratory conditions and a

collection of 1265 test reports from 225 commercial testing laboratories in 1978.⁵

NOTE 12—Subcommittee C09.03 will re-examine recent CCRL Concrete Reference Sample Program data and field test data to see if these values are representative of current practice and if they can be extended to cover a wider range of strengths and specimen sizes.

10.2 *Bias*—Since there is no accepted reference material, no statement on bias is being made.

11. Keywords

⁵ Research report RR:C09-1006 is on file at ASTM Headquarters.

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