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Standard Test Method for Pilling Resistance and Other Related Surface Changes of Textile Fabrics: Random Tumble Pilling Tester¹

This standard is issued under the fixed designation D3512/D3512M; 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.

1. Scope

1.1 This test method covers the resistance to the formation of pills and other related surface changes on textile fabrics using the random tumble pilling tester. The procedure is generally applicable to all types of woven and knitted apparel fabrics.

NOTE 1—For other test methods for the pilling resistance of textiles, refer to Test Methods [D3511](#), [D3514](#), and [D4970](#).

1.2 Some fabrics that have been treated with a silicone resin may not be satisfactorily tested by this procedure because the silicone resin may transfer onto the cork liners in the test chamber and cause erroneous results.

1.3 The values stated in either SI units or inch-pound units are to be regarded separately as standard. 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 non-conformance with the standard.

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:*²

[D123 Terminology Relating to Textiles](#)

[D1776 Practice for Conditioning and Testing Textiles](#)

[D3511 Test Method for Pilling Resistance and Other Related Surface Changes of Textile Fabrics: Brush Pilling Tester](#)

[D3514 Test Method for Pilling Resistance and Other Related Surface Changes of Textile Fabrics: Elastomeric Pad](#)

[D4850 Terminology Relating to Fabrics and Fabric Test Methods](#)

[D4970 Test Method for Pilling Resistance and Other Related Surface Changes of Textile Fabrics: Martindale Tester](#)

[F104 Classification System for Nonmetallic Gasket Materials](#)

2.2 *ASTM Adjuncts:*

12-435120-00 Set of 5 Photographic Standards for Random Tumble Pilling Test³

3. Terminology

3.1 For all terminology related to D13.59, Fabric Test Methods, General, see Terminology [D4850](#).

3.1.1 The following terms are relevant to this standard: fuzz, pilling resistance, pills.

3.2 For all other terminology related to textiles, see Terminology [D123](#).

4. Summary of Test Method

4.1 Pilling and other changes in surface appearance, such as fuzzing, that occur in normal wear are simulated on a laboratory testing machine. Pills are caused to form on fabric by a random rubbing action produced by tumbling specimens in a cylindrical test chamber lined with a mildly abrasive material. To form pills with appearance and structure that resemble those produced in actual wear, small amounts of short-length gray cotton fiber are added to each test chamber with the specimens. The degree of fabric pilling is evaluated by comparison of the tested specimens with visual standards that may be actual fabrics, or photographs of fabrics, showing a range of pilling resistance. The observed resistance to pilling is reported using an arbitrary rating scale.

5. Significance and Use

5.1 *Acceptance Testing*—This method of testing fabrics for resistance to pilling is not recommended for acceptance testing. If it is used for acceptance testing, it should be used with caution because the between-laboratory precision is poor. In some cases the purchaser and the supplier may have to test a

¹ This test method is under the jurisdiction of ASTM Committee D13 on Textiles and is the direct responsibility of Subcommittee D13.60 on Fabric Test Methods, Specific.

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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. ADJD3512.

commercial shipment of one or more specific materials by the best available test method, even though the test method is not recommended for acceptance testing.

5.1.1 If there are differences or practical significance between reported test results for two laboratories (or more), comparative tests should be performed to determine if there is a statistical bias between them, using competent statistical assistance. As a minimum, the test samples should be used that are as homogeneous as possible, drawn from the material from which the disparate test results were obtained, and randomly assigned in equal numbers to each laboratory for testing. Other materials with established test values may be used for this purpose. The test results from the two laboratories should be compared using a statistical test for unpaired data, at a probability level chosen prior to the testing series. If a bias is found, either its cause must be found and corrected, or future test results must be adjusted in consideration of the known bias.

5.2 The pilling of textile fabrics is a very complex property because it is affected by many factors which may include type of fiber or blends, fiber dimensions, yarn and fabric construction, fabric finishing treatments and refurbishing method. Testing before refurbishing may be advisable. The pilling resistance of a specific fabric in actual wear varies more with general conditions of use and individual wearers than in replicate fabric specimens subjected to controlled laboratory tests. This experience should be borne in mind when adopting levels of acceptability for any series of standards.

5.3 Pills vary appreciably in size and appearance and depend on the presence of lint and degree of color contrast. These factors are not evaluated when pilling is rated solely on the number of pills. The development of pills may be accompanied by other surface phenomena such as loss of cover, color change, or the development of fuzz. Since the overall acceptability of a specific fabric is dependent on both the characteristics of the pills and the other factors affecting surface appearance, it is suggested that fabrics tested in the laboratory be evaluated subjectively with regard to their acceptability and not rated solely on the number of pills developed. A series of standards, based on graduated degrees of surface change of the fabric type being tested, may be set up to provide a basis for subjective ratings. The visual standards are most advantageous when the laboratory test specimens correlate closely in appearance with worn fabrics and show a similar ratio of pills to fuzz. Counting the pills and weighing their number with respect to their size and contrast, as a combined measure of pilling resistance, is not recommended because of the excessive time required for counting, sizing, and calculating.

5.4 The degree of fabric pilling is evaluated by comparing the tested specimens with visual standards, which may be actual fabrics or photographs of fabrics, showing a range of pilling resistance. The observed resistance to pilling is reported on an arbitrary scale ranging from 5 (no pilling) to 1 (very severe pilling).

5.5 This test method is applicable to a wide variety of woven and knitted fabrics that vary in pilling propensity as a result of variations in fiber, yarn and fabric structure, and finish.

6. Apparatus and Materials

6.1 *Random Tumble Pilling Tester*⁴(Fig. 1):

6.1.1 *Cork Cylinder Liners*, about 146 mm [5.75 in.] wide by 452 mm [17.81 in] long cut from 1.5-mm [.063-in.] thick flat sheets of Type P2117A material conforming to Classification System F104, Appendix X1. The original surface of the liner, produced by slicing the material, should be used without any further treatment such as sanding. Store liners in original packaging in a cool, dry place.

6.1.2 *Air Injection Device* to give 14-21 kPa [2-3 psi] air pressure in each test chamber, either included in new testers or a modification to older testers.

⁴ Apparatus and accessories are commercially available.



FIG. 1 Random Tumble Pilling Tester

6.2 *Adhesive*⁴, white all-purpose, for sealing edges of specimens (see 7.1).

6.3 *Plastic Bottle*, with dispensing spout and cap, for use with diluted adhesive.

6.4 *Vacuum Cleaner*, home canister type, to clean specimens after testing.

6.5 *Cotton Sliver*,⁵4301 tex [approximately 73 Grain Count], U.S. upland cotton with a micronaire range of 3.8-4.2 with a minimum staple length range of 1.08-1.10 in. (or 35/32 in., no metric conversion) measured by USDA High Volume Instrument Classification.

6.6 *Apparatus for Fabric Evaluation*—Facilities for illumination (cool white fluorescent tube) and simultaneous viewing of test specimen and fabric or photograph rating standards. Apparatus and options for visual evaluation are listed in **Table 1**.

6.7 *Standard In-House Pilling Test Fabric*, having an established pilling resistance rating for checking machine performance. No universal standard fabric is available. Each test facility must decide on an appropriate fabric.

6.8 Rating Standards:

6.8.1 *Fabric*—A series of tested specimens of a specific fabric type which shows degree of pilling or other distortion, or both, for each type of fabric to be tested. Store the fabric rating standards and handle them under conditions that will preserve their original form and appearance.

6.8.2 *Photographic*—A set of five photographs, 105-mm square [4.13 in.], numbered 1 to 5 illustrating varying degrees of pilling from “very severe pilling” to “no pilling” such as Adjunct D3512.³The photos should have a dull matte finish and be of the same size as the tested specimen.

6.8.3 *Digital Imaging or Rating System*, or both.

6.9 *Facilities for Laundering Samples*—If needed.

6.10 *Facilities for Dry Cleaning Samples*—If needed.

7. Hazardous Materials

7.1 Adhesives used in this test method may be hazardous. Refer to the manufacturer’s material safety data sheets for information on use, handling, storage, and disposal of these products.

⁵ Cotton dyed to a medium gray shade before carding using a colorfast reactive black dye and standard reactive dyeing procedure. Cotton sliver is available commercially.

TABLE 1 Viewing Apparatus and Options

Apparatus	Specimen Preparation
ASTM Lightbox (Fig. 1) ^A	0.78 rad [45°]
Lightbox ^B	0.78 rad [45°]
Lightbox ^B	flat
Lightbox ^B	critical angle
As determined by the buyer and supplier	

^AThe source of supply of the apparatus known to the committee at this time is Standard Scientific Supply Co., 601 West Market Street, Bethlehem, PA 18018–5208. If you are aware of alternate suppliers, please provide this information to ASTM Headquarters. Your comments will receive careful consideration at a meeting of the responsible technical committee, which you may attend.

^BAvailable commercially.

8. Sampling

8.1 *Primary Sampling Unit*—Consider rolls of fabric or fabric components of fabricated systems to be the primary sampling unit, as applicable.

NOTE 2—An adequate specification or other agreement between the purchaser and the supplier requires taking into account the variability among rolls, bolts, or pieces of fabric and among specimens from a swatch of fabric from a roll, bolt, or piece, or between cartons of garments and among garments within a carton, to provide a sampling plan with a meaningful producer’s risk, consumer’s risk, acceptable quality level, and limiting quality level.

8.2 *Laboratory Sampling Unit*—From each primary sampling unit take one full-width piece of fabric that is 1 m [1 yd] in length along the selvage (machine direction), after first removing a 1 m [1 yd] length. For fabric components of fabricated systems use the entire system.

8.2.1 For acceptance testing of garments, take one garment from each carton (see **Note 2**).

9. Test Specimens: Selection, Number, and Preparation

9.1 Samples may be washed or dry cleaned before cutting the test specimens, using conditions appropriate for the fabric end use or conditions agreed upon by all interested parties.

9.2 Cut specimens in squares 105 mm [4.13 in.] on the bias at an approximate 0.78 rad [45°] angle to the warp (wale) and filling (course) directions.

9.2.1 Take three specimens from each laboratory unit. Take the specimens evenly spaced across the width of the laboratory sample or from three different panels in a garment. Specimens should be staggered in such a manner that no two specimens contain the same yarns. Avoid areas with wrinkles and other distortions. Unless otherwise specified, do not cut specimens nearer the selvage than one tenth the width of the fabric.

9.3 Mark replicate specimens in one corner on the face of the fabric with the appropriate number 1, 2, or 3.

9.4 If loosely woven specimens fray when applying identification markings, cut the specimens with sides parallel to the warp and filling and ravel the sides no more than 5 mm [0.2 in.] on each side, leaving the fringe.

9.5 Seal the edges of all specimens to a width not exceeding 3 mm [0.13 in.] on the face of the fabric with adhesive. Hang the specimens on racks until dry, and in any case for at least 2 h.

NOTE 3—Full-strength adhesive or any dilution down to 1 part adhesive with 1 part water may be used (see 7.1). Pressing the adhesive into the specimen face may be accomplished using the dispensing nozzle in a closed configuration. The rounded end of a glass stirring rod works well, also, but caution should be used to prevent breakage and possible injury from broken glass.

NOTE 4—Although the use of glued or not glued specimens is acceptable, the measurements should not be compared.

10. Preparation of Apparatus

10.1 Fit a cork liner snugly around the inside of a cleaned test chamber with an unused cork surface facing the rotor blades. The side against the chamber may or may not have been used. To eliminate any tendency for the liner to rotate, tape the

outside edge of the liner to the chamber wall at the butt joint with a short piece of 25-mm [1-in.] wide masking tape.

10.1.1 Discard cork liners that have been used for 1 h on each surface.

10.2 After every hour of machine running time, remove the liner and clean the impeller by wiping with a cloth wetted in a solution of detergent and water. Allow the chamber to dry before the next use.

10.3 Check the operation of the pilling tester with one or more standard in-house fabrics of known pilling resistance as follows:

10.3.1 If the equipment is in constant use, check the tester at least once a week; if testing is done infrequently, check the equipment each time it is used. Check, also, when test results appear questionable, or following a change in test equipment such as the use of a new shipment of cork liners.

10.3.2 Surface friction of new cork liners can be checked by any convenient means, such as placing a smooth weight on the cork situated on an inclined plane and timing the slide of the weight when the plane is lifted sufficiently to initiate movement of the weight. Always use the same weight and plane angle. After each test, clean the bottom of the weight by wiping with a cloth wetted in a solution of detergent and water. Wipe dry. Compare data from each shipment to avert problems.

11. Conditioning

11.1 Bring the test specimens and cork liners to moisture equilibrium for testing in the standard atmosphere for testing textiles as directed in Practice [D1776](#) or, if applicable, in the specified atmosphere in which the testing is to be performed.

12. Procedure

12.1 Make all tests in the standard atmosphere for testing textiles.

12.2 Place three specimens, all from the same sample, and about 25 mg of 6-mm [0.2-in.] gray-dyed cotton fiber into the test chamber.

NOTE 5—If there is not sufficient material to provide three standard-size specimens, run with the available number of specimens rather than adding a specimen from another fabric, since there may be a strong interaction between fabrics which will create misleading results. Tests run with one or two specimens, while not strictly comparable with standard tests, are considered more indicative than tests that include more than one fabric type.

NOTE 6—The mass of a 6-mm long section of 4301 tex sliver is about 25 mg.

12.3 Place the cover on the chamber, and set the timer for a running time of 30 min.

NOTE 7—Depending on the nature of the material under test, running times of other than 30 min may be more appropriate for evaluating the pilling tendencies of fabrics; for example, 10-min intervals up to 30 min may be more indicative for certain knit or soft-woven fabrics.

12.4 Turn the motor switch to “ON,” push the “START” button, and start the airflow.

NOTE 8—The use of air injection with all fabrics, woven or knitted, has been found to significantly reduce the likelihood that a specimen will wedge around the impeller or against the wall of the chamber.

12.5 In the course of the run, check each test chamber at frequent intervals. If a specimen wedges around the impeller without tumbling or lies inert on the bottom or side of the chamber, shut off the air, stop the machine, remove the face plate, and free the specimen. Record on the data sheet any hang-ups or other abnormal behavior of the specimens.

12.6 When a specimen wedges around the impeller during a run, stop the test, and clean the impeller blade as directed in [10.2](#).

12.7 After each time run (see [Note 7](#)), remove each specimen and clean off the excess cotton fiber that is not actually entangled in pills using the vacuum cleaner. Firmly grasp the specimen by a corner and allow the vacuum suction to draw the specimen inside. Repeat, holding an adjacent corner. Vacuum all specimens in this manner. Vacuum-clean the test chamber. Clean around the shaft of the impeller using a sharp instrument, such as a pick needle, to remove trapped detritus.

12.8 Evaluate the specimens subjectively as directed in [Section 13](#).

12.9 Repeat [12.3 – 12.8](#) for each additional run time for a total of x min (see [Note 7](#)). Add another 25 mg (see [Note 6](#)) of 6-mm [0.2-in.] gray-dyed cotton fiber into the chamber for each additional run time.

12.10 Testing fabrics with silicone or other fugitive finishes may contaminate the cork liner and consequently alter pilling results (see [1.2](#)). To cope with this problem in the laboratory, make a subsequent test using the used liner surface (on which the silicone-treated fabric was tested) with a standard in-house fabric of known pilling history. If the liner being checked has been contaminated, the pilling level on the standard rating fabric will be different than historical results obtained when testing as in [10.3](#). Both results should be reported. Similar effects may be produced by other “fugitive” finishes, check the liner after tests on materials with “unknown” finishes.

13. Evaluation

13.1 Place each specimen on the double-faced tape in the viewing cabinet (see [Fig. 2](#)).

13.1.1 Using the viewing apparatus and option selected from [Table 1](#) and either suitable fabric or photographic standards ([6.7](#)), subjectively rate the appearance of the face (as indicated by the markings and after the respective tumbling times) of each specimen, using the following scale ([Note 8](#)):

- 5—no pilling
- 4—slight pilling
- 3—moderate pilling
- 2—severe pilling
- 1—very severe pilling

13.1.1.1 When the appearance of a test specimen falls between that of two rating standards, assign the half value, for example, 3.5 or 2.5.

NOTE 9—The ASTM Adjunct [ADJD3512](#), the apparatus and option selected from [Table 1](#), and a minimum of two graders for rating specimens shall be used in referee situations.

13.1.2 A digital imaging or rating system may be used as agreed upon by the purchaser and supplier.

