
Quantities and units —
Part 11:
Characteristic numbers

Grandeurs et unités —

Partie 11: Nombres caractéristiques



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Foreword

ISO (the International Organization for Standardization) is a worldwide federation of national standards bodies (ISO member bodies). The work of preparing International Standards is normally carried out through ISO technical committees. Each member body interested in a subject for which a technical committee has been established has the right to be represented on that committee. International organizations, governmental and non-governmental, in liaison with ISO, also take part in the work. ISO collaborates closely with the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC) on all matters of electrotechnical standardization.

The procedures used to develop this document and those intended for its further maintenance are described in the ISO/IEC Directives, Part 1. In particular the different approval criteria needed for the different types of ISO documents should be noted. This document was drafted in accordance with the editorial rules of the ISO/IEC Directives, Part 2 (see www.iso.org/directives).

Attention is drawn to the possibility that some of the elements of this document may be the subject of patent rights. ISO shall not be held responsible for identifying any or all such patent rights. Details of any patent rights identified during the development of the document will be in the Introduction and/or on the ISO list of patent declarations received (see www.iso.org/patents).

Any trade name used in this document is information given for the convenience of users and does not constitute an endorsement.

For an explanation of the voluntary nature of standards, the meaning of ISO specific terms and expressions related to conformity assessment, as well as information about ISO's adherence to the World Trade Organization (WTO) principles in the Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) see: www.iso.org/iso/foreword.html.

This document was prepared by Technical Committee ISO/TC 12, *Quantities and units*, in collaboration with Technical Committee IEC/TC 25, *Quantities and units*.

This second edition cancels and replaces the first edition (ISO 80000-11:2008), which has been technically revised.

The main changes compared to the previous edition are as follows:

- the table giving the quantities and units has been simplified;
- all items have been revised in terms of the layout of the definitions, and a worded definition has been added to each item;
- the number of items has been increased from 25 to 108 (concerns all Clauses);
- item 11-9.2 (Landau-Ginzburg number) has been transferred in this document from ISO 80000-12:2009 (revised as ISO 80000-12:2019).

A list of all parts in the ISO 80000 and IEC 80000 series can be found on the ISO and IEC websites.

Any feedback or questions on this document should be directed to the user's national standards body. A complete listing of these bodies can be found at www.iso.org/members.html.

Introduction

Characteristic numbers are physical quantities of unit one, although commonly and erroneously called “dimensionless” quantities. They are used in the studies of natural and technical processes, and (can) present information about the behaviour of the process, or reveal similarities between different processes.

Characteristic numbers often are described as ratios of forces in equilibrium; in some cases, however, they are ratios of energy or work, although noted as forces in the literature; sometimes they are the ratio of characteristic times.

Characteristic numbers can be defined by the same equation but carry different names if they are concerned with different kinds of processes.

Characteristic numbers can be expressed as products or fractions of other characteristic numbers if these are valid for the same kind of process. So, the clauses in this document are arranged according to some groups of processes.

As the amount of characteristic numbers is tremendous, and their use in technology and science is not uniform, only a small amount of them is given in this document, where their inclusion depends on their common use. Besides, a restriction is made on the kind of processes, which are given by the Clause headings. Nevertheless, several characteristic numbers are found in different representations of the same physical information, e.g. multiplied by a numerical factor, as the square, the square root, or the inverse of another representation. Only one of these have been included, the other ones are declared as deprecated or are mentioned in the remarks column.

Quantities and units —

Part 11: Characteristic numbers

1 Scope

This document gives names, symbols and definitions for characteristic numbers used in the description of transport and transfer phenomena.

2 Normative references

There are no normative references in this document.

3 Terms and definitions

Names, symbols and definitions for characteristic numbers are given in Clauses 4 to 9.

ISO and IEC maintain terminological databases for use in standardization at the following addresses:

- ISO Online browsing platform: available at <https://www.iso.org/obp>
- IEC Electropedia: available at <http://www.electropedia.org/>

4 Momentum transfer

[Table 1](#) gives the names, symbols and definitions of characteristic numbers used to characterize processes in which momentum transfer plays a predominant role. The transfer of momentum (ISO 80000-4) basically occurs during a collision of 2 bodies, and is governed by the law of momentum conservation. Energy dissipation can occur. In a more generalized meaning momentum transfer occurs during the interaction of 2 subsystems moving with velocity v relative to each other. Typically, one of the subsystems is solid and possibly rigid, with a characteristic length, which can be a length, width, radius, etc. of a solid object, often the effective length is given by the ratio of a body's volume to the area of its surface.

The other subsystem is a fluid, in general liquid or gaseous, with the following properties amongst others:

- mass density ρ (ISO 80000-4);
- dynamic viscosity η (ISO 80000-4);
- kinematic viscosity $\nu = \eta / \rho$ (ISO 80000-4), or
- pressure drop Δp (ISO 80000-4).

The field of science is mainly fluid dynamics (mechanics). Characteristic numbers of this kind allow the comparison of objects of different sizes. They also can give some estimation about the change of laminar flow to turbulent flow.