



**International
Standard**

ISO 16281

**Rolling bearings — Methods for
calculating the modified reference
rating life for universally loaded
rolling bearings**

*Roulements — Méthodes de calcul de la durée nominale de
référence corrigée pour les roulements chargés universellement*

**First edition
2025-01**

**Corrected version
2025-08**

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Published in Switzerland

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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 document 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).

ISO draws attention to the possibility that the implementation of this document may involve the use of (a) patent(s). ISO takes no position concerning the evidence, validity or applicability of any claimed patent rights in respect thereof. As of the date of publication of this document, ISO had not received notice of (a) patent(s) which may be required to implement this document. However, implementers are cautioned that this may not represent the latest information, which may be obtained from the patent database available at www.iso.org/patents. ISO shall not be held responsible for identifying any or all such patent rights.

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 4, *Rolling bearings*, Subcommittee SC 8, *Load ratings and life*.

This first edition of ISO 16281 cancels and replaces the first edition of ISO/TS 16281:2008, which has been technically revised. It also incorporates the Technical Corrigendum ISO/TS 16281:2008/Cor 1:2009.

The main changes are as follows:

- the coordinate system used in drawings and derivation of formulae has been changed to a right-handed coordinate system;
- the calculation of load distribution of cylindrical and tapered bearings has been described in greater detail and provisions for the calculation of load distribution and rating life of spherical roller bearings have been added;
- additional formulae have been given for the calculation of load distribution of hybrid bearings;
- reference geometries and the description of static equilibrium calculation for different bearing types have been moved to an informative annex.

This document is intended to be used in conjunction with ISO 281.

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.

This corrected version of ISO/TS 16281:2025 incorporates the following corrections:

- symbol "*d*" was changed to "*a*" in Clause 4 and a domain was included for each symbol "*a*" to distinguish them;
- the introductory text before Formula (16) was modified and Formula (16) was corrected.

Introduction

Since publication of the first edition of ISO 281:1990, additional knowledge has been gained regarding the influence on bearing life of contamination, lubrication, internal stresses from mounting, stresses from hardening, fatigue load limit of the material etc. It is therefore now possible to consider factors that have influence on bearing life in a more complete way in the life calculation.

ISO 281 provides a method to put into practice this new knowledge in a consistent way when the modified rating life of a bearing is calculated. However, the calculation method given in ISO 281 cannot consider the influence on life of tilted or misaligned bearings and the influence on life of bearing clearance during operation. ISO/TS 16281:2008 already describes an advanced calculation method, which makes it possible to consider these influences, and in addition provides the most accurate method for estimating the influence of contamination and other factors.

In addition to the content of ISO/TS 16281:2008, this document also addresses the analysis of hybrid bearings with rolling elements made of silicon nitride.

The primary purpose of this document is to provide a unified and manufacturer-independent advanced calculation method that allows for the consideration of actual operating conditions, thus enabling the end user to compare different bearing solutions on the same calculation basis. It is also intended to serve as a manufacturer-independent neutral basis for certification purposes, e.g. as required per IEC 61400-4^[1] for bearings in wind turbine gearboxes.

This document is intended to be used for computer programs and together with ISO 281 covers the information needed for life calculations. For accurate life calculations under the operating conditions specified above, this document or advanced computer calculations should be used for determining the dynamic equivalent reference load under different loading conditions.

This document is not intended to supersede other advanced bearing analysis methods that are currently used in the design process as the primary tool for bearing design and selection.

Rolling bearings — Methods for calculating the modified reference rating life for universally loaded rolling bearings

1 Scope

This document defines the calculation of the modified reference rating life taking into consideration lubrication, contamination, and fatigue load limit of the bearing material, as well as tilting or misalignment, operating clearance of the bearing and internal load distribution on rolling elements. The calculation method provided in this document covers influencing parameters additional to those described in ISO 281.

The general directions and limitations given in ISO 281 apply to this document. The calculation methods pertain to the fatigue life of the bearings. Other mechanisms of failure, like wear or microspalling (gray-staining), lie outside the scope of this document.

This document applies to single- and multi-row radial and thrust ball bearings, subjected to radial and axial load and with radial clearance and tilt taken into account. It also applies to single- and multi-row radial and thrust roller bearings, subjected to radial and axial load and with radial clearance, edge stress and tilt taken into account. References to methods for the analysis of the internal load distribution under general load are given.

The calculation of load distribution and basic reference rating life is also applicable to hybrid bearings, using the dynamic load ratings per ISO 20056-1^[2]. The calculation of the modified reference rating life is not applicable to hybrid bearings.

2 Normative references

The following documents are referred to in the text in such a way that some or all of their content constitutes requirements of this document. For dated references, only the edition cited applies. For undated references, the latest edition of the referenced document (including any amendments) applies.

ISO 281:2007, *Rolling bearings — Dynamic load ratings and rating life*

ISO 5593, *Rolling bearings — Vocabulary*

ISO 15241, *Rolling bearings — Symbols for physical quantities*

3 Terms and definitions

For the purposes of this document, the terms and definitions given in ISO 281, ISO 5593 and the following apply.

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

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

3.1

basic reference rating life

rating life associated with 90 % reliability for rolling bearings manufactured with commonly used high quality material, of good manufacturing quality, under consideration of actual load distribution in the bearing