



## Evaluation of Mechanical Properties by Grain Refining of Low Carbon Steel Under Various Cooling Media

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March 17, 2021

# **Evaluation of mechanical properties by grain refining of low carbon steel under various cooling media**

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**Abstract.** The determination of the property of low carbon steel depends primarily on the cooling medium, recrystallized temperature and critical cooling rate. The higher the cooling temperature, the greater the probability of forming coarse grains of the martensite crystal structure and the lower the cooling rate, the greater the likelihood of forming fine grains of an evenly spaced pearlite and martensite crystal structure. The cooling medium specifically influences the microstructure of the cooling material and the analysis of the microstructure is carried out by adding various cooling mediums, such as ice water, water (at 25<sup>0</sup> C), oil (SAE 15W-30) and boiling water (at 100<sup>0</sup> C). The cooling rate primarily depends on the fluid viscosity. The viscosity is greater, leading to fine grain, and vice versa. The cooling temperature must be lower than the critical cooling rate, because only improvements in the development of fine grains and the hardening of the strain and residual stresses must be altered. The specimen is characterized by various mechanical tests i.e. microstructure inspection, hardness, tensile and impact. to evaluate the properties of the material used in the specific applications.

*Keywords: Heat Treatment, Critical cooling Temperature, cooling medium and Microstructure.*

## **1. Introduction**

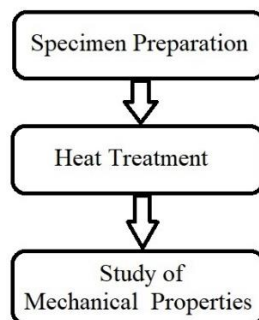
Materials science and engineering (MSE) is an interdisciplinary area of science and engineering that investigates and modifies the composition and structure of materials over time in order to improve their properties through synthesis and processing. The study of a material's structure is one of the most interesting aspects of materials science. Even if the overall composition of a material does not vary, its structure has a significant impact on many of its properties. Steel is the most widely used of all metals. Steel, according to the World Steel Association, is an iron-carbon alloy containing less than 2% carbon and 1% manganese. It also contains some other elements like manganese and silicon and traces of impurities like Sulphur and phosphorus. Steel has a wide range of applications in daily life. Among the goods, steel with outstanding features is the finest. The steel was categorized into low carbon steel, medium carbon steel, high carbon steel on the basis of carbon content.

Low carbon steels (0.002 - 0.25 percent carbon) represent a significant portion of total steel production due to its low cost and versatile properties comparable to that of iron, making them suitable for a wide range of engineering applications. In this type, they are used for vehicles, furniture, refrigerators, tinplate, and roofing. Structural steel has a C content of 0.15 to 0.25 percent and is used for structural purposes such as pillars, channels, and angles in construction. According to studies, the size of the earlier austenite grain plays a role in determining the strength and durability of steels. The strength and toughness of steels improve as the grain size is refined but the mechanism of the process is not entirely clear for martensitic steels. Steel may be strengthened in a variety of ways, including solid solution, dispersion, grain boundary strengthening (grain refinement), dislocation strengthening, and textural strengthening. Grain refinement, characterized as the reduction of the size of grains inside a material, is the only strengthening mechanism that improves strength and ductility. Grains are areas of a material where the atoms are oriented in a specific way.

The findings of this study will be beneficial to the iron and steel industries because they will enable steel producers to produce products with fine grains, high impact strength, and durability. It shows a novel method of reinforcing steel for enhanced service strength. The heat treatment has been used for grain refinement. This work provides a documented procedure for carrying out heat treatment on mild steel. The method is locally adaptable as it can be carried out in any local metallurgical laboratory thereby providing steel makers a very good and easily accessible alternative to altering the microstructural composition of their products. The process is also very economical as it saves time, energy and cost as compared to the conventional diffusional (slow heating) heat treatment.

## 2. Materials and Methods

The procedure of material heat treatment involves heating and guided cooling in order to attain desired mechanical and microstructural properties. To achieve this, the materials were first prepared based on the tests specifications to be carried out before heat treatment. After heat treatment, various tests such as hardness test, tensile tests, Charpy V-notch impact test and microstructural examinations were carried out.



**Figure 1.** Methodology

## 2.1 Specimen preparation

The preparation of the specimen is the experiment's first and most important task. The procedure for preparing the sample involves cutting, machining and labeling. First, the samples were cut into the various test specimen lengths. The next step in material preparation is machining. The specimens were machined to the required dimensions according to the specification for the tests to be carried out. The specimens needed for hardness test and Optical Microscopy had their surfaces planed. Machining was done with the aid of Lathe machine available at Ramaiah Institute of Technology Workshop. Five set of samples were produced for the various tests to be carried out.

## 2.2 Heat treatment

After machining, the sets of specimens were labeled A, B, C, D and E. Set A represents the untreated specimen (as received). Set B shows the specimen that was heated and then quenched in boiling water (at 100°C). Set C depicts a specimen that's been heated and then quenched in water (Room temperature). Set D portrays a specimen that has been heated and then quenched in ice water (0°C). Set E portrays a specimen which has been heat treated and then quenched in oil (SAE).



**Figure 2.** Electric Furnace

**Table 1.** Sets of specimens.

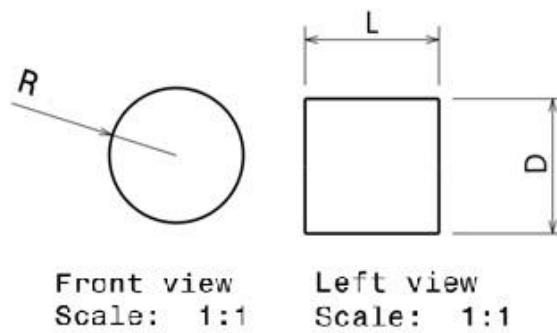
Sample	Set (A)	Set (B)	Set (C)	Set (D)	Set (E)
<b>Heat Treatment</b>	Untreated specimen (as received)	Boiling water quenching (100°C)	Water quenching (Room Temperature)	Ice water quenching (0°C)	Oil quenching (SAE)



**Figure 3.** Test specimens

## 2.3 Mechanical Testing

### 2.3.1 Hardness Testing



**Figure 4.** Dimensions of hardness test specimen.

To assess the hardness of the specimens before and after heat treatment, the Vickers hardness test was performed. The applied load was 10 kgf for 15 seconds during this test. At least three readings were taken for each specimen, and then average value of pyramid indenter diameter was measured.

Using the following equation, the Vickers hardness number was determined.

$$\text{VHN} = 1.8544 \times F/d^2 \text{ (kgf/mm}^2\text{)} \quad (1)$$

**Table 2** Dimensions of hardness test specimen

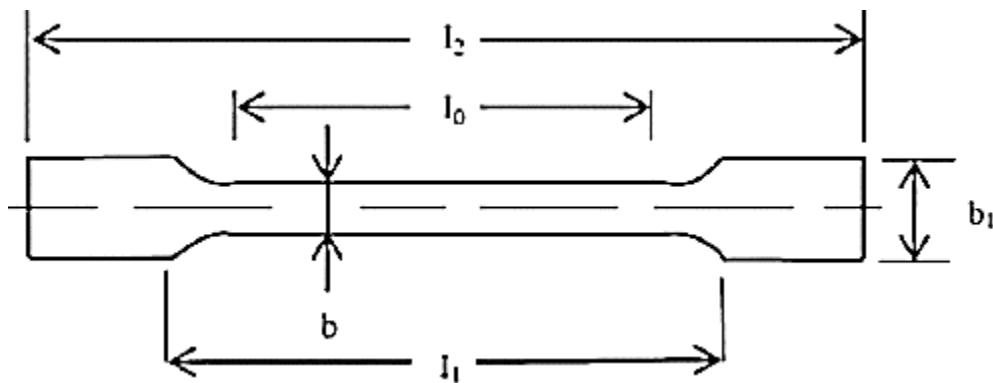
Symbol	Description	Dimension (mm)
R	Radius	75
L	Length	100



**Figure 5.** Vickers hardness testing machine.

### 2.3.2 Tensile Testing

According to ASTM-E8; the dimension of the specimen for a tensile test is as shown in figure below.



**Figure 6.** Dimensions for tensile testing specimen

**Table 3.** Tensile test specimen specification

Symbol	Description	Dimension (mm)
$I_0$	Gauge length	75
$I_1$	Grip distance	100
$I_2$	Overall length	300
$b$	Minor Diameter	12.5
$b_1$	Major Diameter	20

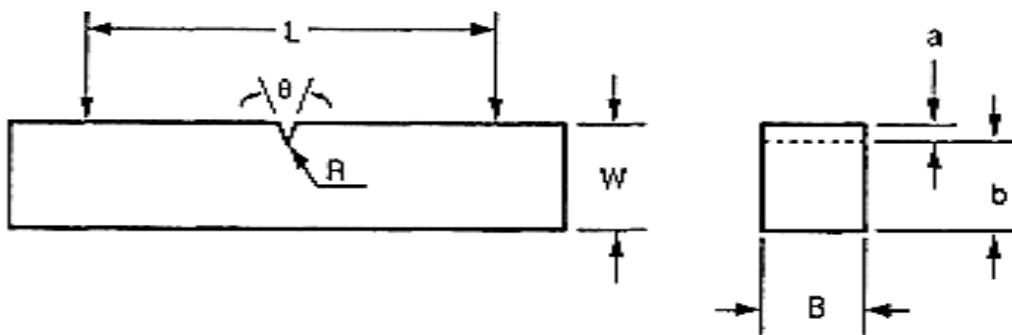
The universal Testing machine was used to perform the tensile test. Mechanical properties such as tensile strength, yield strength, ductility, and modulus of elasticity were calculated after the specimens were removed before they collapsed. The specimens were tensile tested before and after heat treatment.



**Figure 7.** Universal Testing Machine

### 2.3.3 Impact Testing

The samples were tested using the standard Charpy V-notch Impact test bar. According to ASTM A370, ISO148 and EN 10045-1, the standard specimen size for Charpy impact testing are 10 mm by 10 mm by 75 mm with 45° angular groove at the middle with a depth of 2 mm.



**Figure 8.** Dimensions of impact test specimen.

**Table 4.** Dimensions of impact test specimen

Symbol	Description	Dimension (mm)
L	Length	55
$\theta$	Groove Angle	45°
W=B	Width	10
b	Depth Below Groove	8
a	Groove Depth	2

The procedure involved supporting the sample between two bars and breaking it by the action of a swinging pendulum. From the amount of swing of the pendulum, the energy dissipated in breaking the sample is obtained electronically. The test was conducted twice on each sample and the mean of the impact energy was calculated from the results of the two tests.



**Figure 9.** Impact testing machine used

#### **2.4 Sample Preparation for Metallographic Examination.**

Sample preparation is the primary stage involved in metallographic examination processes. This includes grinding, polishing, etching before final examination under the metallurgical microscope.



### 2.4.1 Grinding and Polishing



**Figure 10.** Process of grinding and polishing

Grinding is used to build a perfectly flat and smooth surface. SiC papers of various grades were mounted on the grinding machine in the following order: 220, 320, 400, and 600, i.e. from coarse to fine. To remove the grits and prevent overheating, the grinding was performed under running water. The samples were rotated 90 degrees as they progressed from one grit size to the next. This is done to mitigate the scratching effect of the earlier grit size grinding. A universal polishing machine was used to finish the polishing process.

A polishing cloth (selvyt cloth) was mounted on the polisher for the initial polishing stage, which was swamped with a one micron SiC solution, followed by the final polishing stage, which was swamped with a 0.5 micron SiC solution until a mirror-like surface was obtained, then washed and dried.

### 2.4.2 Etching.

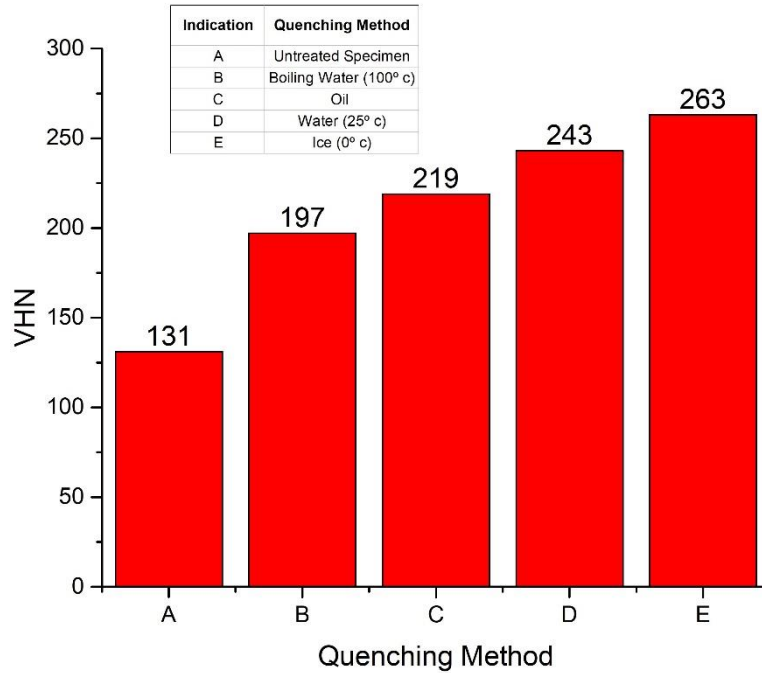
Etching was then used to expose the lines distinguishing the polished surface's boundaries. Etching is a targeted strike on grain boundaries, which are a high-energy, high-dislocation-density field. The reflective surface was etched with a 2percent NITAL solution (2 percent Nitric Acid and 98 percent Ethyl Alcohol). The sample was then washed, dried, and analyzed under a 400X magnification optical microscope, with images captured.



**Figure 11.** Application of Etchant.

### 3. Results and discussions

#### 3.1 Hardness Test



**Figure 12:** Results of hardness test

The test results are as shown in the Figure 12. From the above figure, we can conclude that as the heat-treatment temperature decreases, Vickers hardness number increases. The Vickers hardness number obtained for untreated specimen is found to be 131VHN. The Vickers hardness number obtained for specimen heat treated with Boiling water is found to be 197.1 VHN. The Vickers hardness number obtained for specimen heat treated with water at room temperature is found to be 243.8 VHN. The Vickers hardness number obtained for specimen heat treated with Ice water is found to be 263.4 VHN. The Vickers hardness number obtained for specimen heat treated with Oil is found to be 219 VHN.

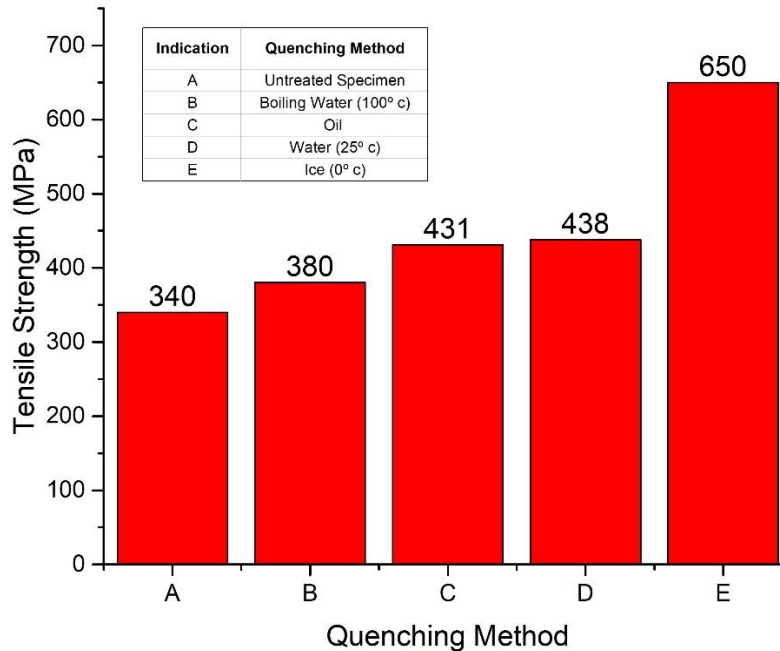
**Table 5.** Hardness test results

Heat treat method	Values
Untreated Specimen	131
Boiling Water	197.1
Water @25° C	243.8
Ice Water	263.4
Oil	219

The Vickers hardness number obtained for untreated specimen is found to be 131 VHN. For the specimen which was heat-treated with boiling water, after performing Vickers hardness test it was found to be 197.1 VHN which is 50.55% more than that of the untreated specimen. For the

specimen which was heat-treated with water, after performing Vickers hardness test it was found to be 243.8 VHN which is 85.49% more than that of the untreated specimen. For the specimen which was heat-treated with ice water, after performing Vickers hardness test it was found to be 263.4 VHN which is 100.68% more than that of the untreated specimen. For the specimen which was heat-treated with oil, after performing Vickers hardness test it was found to be 219 VHN which is 67.17% more than that of the untreated specimen

### 3.2 Tensile Strength



**Figure 13.** Tensile test results

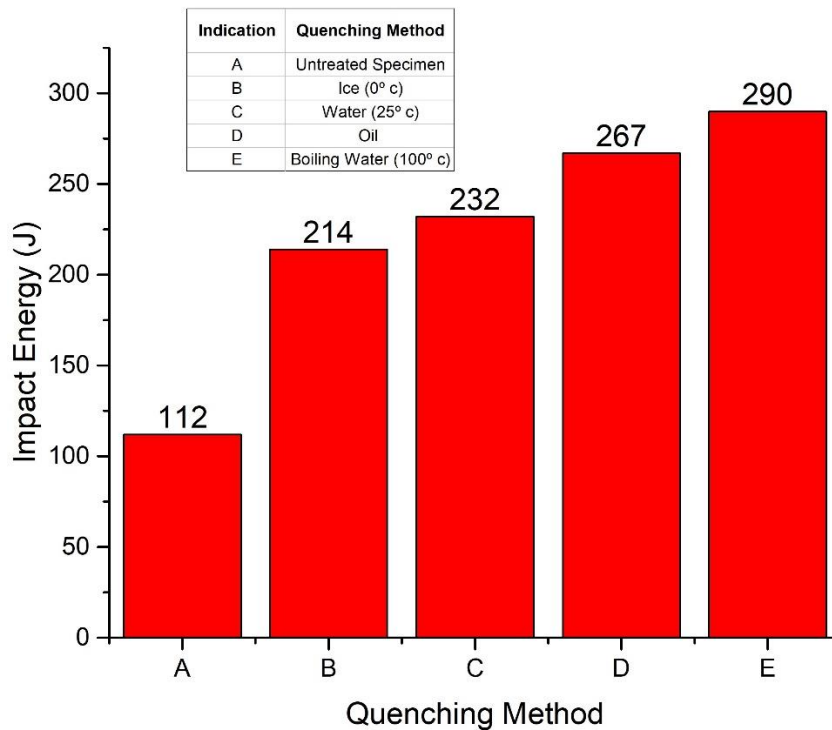
The test results are as shown in the graph. From the graph can conclude that as the heat-treatment temperature decreases Ultimate tensile strength increases. The Ultimate tensile stress obtained for untreated specimen is found to be 340 MPa. The Ultimate tensile stress obtained for specimen heat treated with boiling water is found to be 380 MPa. The Ultimate tensile stress obtained for specimen heat treated with water at room temperature is found to be 438 MPa. The Ultimate tensile stress obtained for specimen heat treated with Ice water is found to be 650 MPa. The Ultimate tensile stress obtained for specimen heat treated with Oil is found to be 431Mpa. For the specimen which was heat-treated with boiling water, after performing Ultimate tensile test it was found to be 380 MPa which is 11.76% more than that of the untreated specimen. For the specimen which was heat-treated with water, after performing Ultimate tensile test it was found to be 438 MPa which is 28.82% more than that of the untreated specimen. For the specimen which was heat-treated with ice water, after performing Ultimate tensile test it was found to be 650 MPa which is 91.17% more than that of the untreated specimen. For the specimen which was heat-treated with oil, after performing Ultimate tensile test it was found to be 431 MPa which is 26.76% more than that of the untreated specimen.

**Table 6.** Tensile strength of different specimens

Heat treat method	Values (MPa)
Untreated Specimen	340
Boiling Water	380
Water @25° C	438
Ice Water	650
Oil	431

The test results are as shown in the graph. From the graph can conclude that as the heat treatment temperature increases Impact energy increases The Impact energy obtained for untreated specimen is found to be 112 J. The Impact energy obtained for specimen heat treated with Boiling water is found to be 290 J. The Impact energy obtained for specimen heat treated with water at room temperature is found to be 232 J. The Impact energy obtained for specimen heat treated with Ice water is found to be 214 J. The Impact energy obtained for specimen heat treated with Oil is found to be 267 J.

### 3.3 Impact Test



**Figure 14.** Results of Impact test

**Table 7.** Impact energy of different specimens

<b>Heat treat method</b>	<b>Values (J)</b>
Untreated Specimen	112
Boiling Water	290
Water @25° C	232
Ice Water	214
Oil	267

The Impact Energy obtained for untreated specimen is found to be 112 J. For the specimen which was heat-treated with boiling water, after performing Impact Energy test it was found to be 290 J which is 158.79% more than that of the untreated specimen. For the specimen which was heat-treated with water, after performing Impact Energy test it was found to be 232 J which is 107.14% more than that of the untreated specimen. For the specimen which was heat-treated with ice water, after performing Impact Energy test it was found to be 214 J which is 91.14% more than that of the untreated specimen. For the specimen which was heat-treated with oil, after performing Impact Energy test it was found to be 267 J which is 138.4% more than that of the untreated specimen.

## **Conclusions**

- Ice water, more than any other quenching medium, induces the formation of martensite phase, according to microstructure analysis. In comparison to other quenching media, ice water yields a higher value in a hardness test. Because of its higher cooling rate, ice water enhances mechanical properties. Hardness, yield strength, and tensile strength are all boosted by ice water.
- The aim of heat treatments on metals and alloys is to validate the microstructure and obtain the desired mechanical properties in terms of ductility, hardness, durability, and strength. The microstructure of materials has a strong influence on these properties. Since different cooling rates result in different phases during a treatment process, phase transitions must be carefully monitored.
- The ductility, hardness, durability, and strength values vary depending on the phase. Everything is organized in a logical fashion. We would see how alloying elements and cooling rates influence the microstructure, as well as how the microstructure of a specimen affects the hardness values, using this experiment.
- The hardness of an alloy increases as the rate of composition of the alloying material or cooling rate increases. As a result, we discovered that if we can control the structure, we can use heat treatment methods to obtain the desired mechanical properties. From the results of hardness test, we can clearly conclude that heat treating the specimen followed by ice water quenching would give more hardness which is the desirable property.
- From the results of ultimate tensile test, we can clearly conclude that heat treating the specimen followed by ice water quenching would give more tensile strength which is the desirable property.

- From the results of impact energy test, we can clearly conclude that heat treating the specimen followed by boiling water quenching would give more stiffness which is the desirable property.
- Depending on the type of application, one can choose the medium for the heat treatment of the specimen which would give the desirable properties.

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