

# Fundamentals of Adhesion

There are differences in adhesives. Selecting the proper adhesives for a nameplate, label or membrane switch application requires consideration of environmental, surface, appearance and performance requirements. Our purpose is to cover some of the principles of adhesion.

Surface contact is fundamental to adhesive performance. To maximize adhesive contact on a surface:

- It must be dry and free of contaminants.
- Firm pressure must be applied to increase the flow and contact of the adhesive with the substrate.
- Time and temperature will increase the surface contact and adhesion values.

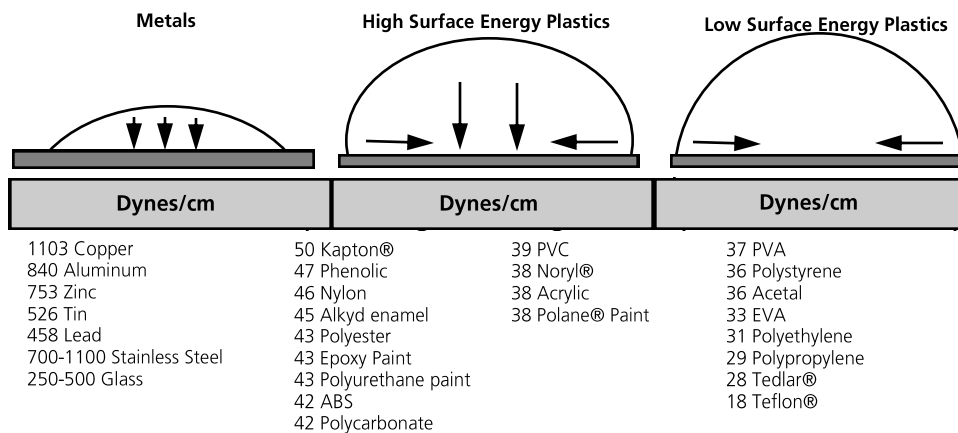
Adhesion is the molecular force of attraction between unlike materials. The strength of attraction is determined by the surface energy of the material. The higher the surface energy, the greater the molecular attraction. The lower the surface energy, the weaker the attractive forces.

Greater molecular attraction results in increased contact between an adhesive and substrate. In other words, on a high surface energy material, the adhesive can flow ("or wet-out") to assure a stronger bond.

Consider an automobile that has not been waxed for a long time. When water contacts the surface it spreads in large puddles. The unwaxed car surface exhibits high surface energy—the molecular attraction allows the water to flow.

In comparison, water beads up into small spheres on a freshly

## Surface Energy Chart



\*These values are provided as a guide. Modifications in formulations can substantially alter surface energies. Kapton®, Tedlar® and Teflon® are registered trademarks of Dupont. Noryl® is a registered trademark of General Electric. Polane® is a registered trademark of the Sherwin-Williams Company.

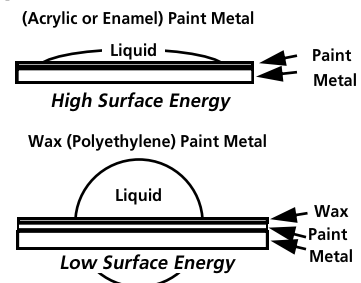
waxed car. It is an example of low surface energy—the liquid (or adhesive) does not flow out.

Surface energy is measured by dynes per centimeter. The dyne level is the actual reading of the critical surface tension.

Modified acrylic and synthetic adhesives with better flow (or "wet-out") characteristics have been developed to adhere to low surface energy substrates. The Surface Energy Chart below compares the relative surface energy of commonly used substrates.

3M's firm acrylic adhesives such as #200, #200MP and #600 families will not readily adhere to substrates categorized as having "low surface energy." However, 3M's #300, #320, and #350 modified acrylics, or #700 synthetic rubber adhesives have been designed to adhere to low surface energy plastics, and should be considered for those applications.

## Wet-ability Principle



This illustration demonstrates the effect of surface energy on adhesive interfacial contact. High surface energy materials draw the adhesive closer for high bond strength.