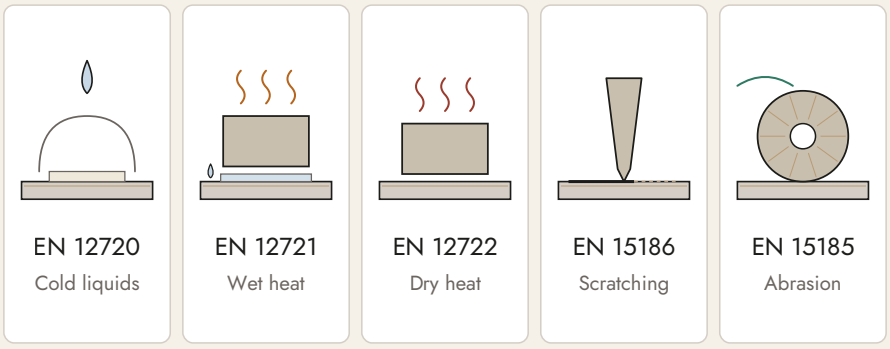
Tabletop *surface performance* tests

The five European tests for a table surface (cold liquids, wet heat, dry heat, scratching, abrasion), how to read a grade and what to ask a finisher for.

AT A GLANCE

Test	Standard (status read 6 Nov 2026)	What is done to the surface	Reported as	You must state
Cold liquids	BS EN 12720:2009+A1:2013, current, under review	Soaked disc under a glass dish; 16 to 24 hours rest; cleaned and examined.	Rating 5 (no change) to 1 (strong change)	The liquids and exposure times. The standard leaves both to the specification.
Wet heat	BS EN 12721:2009+A1:2013, current, under review	Heated aluminium block on a wetted cloth for 20 minutes; same rest.	Rating 5 to 1	The test temperature or temperatures.
Dry heat	BS EN 12722:2009+A1:2013, current, under review	As wet heat, without the wet cloth.	Rating 5 to 1	The test temperature or temperatures.
Scratching	BS EN 15186:2024, current; replaces 2012	Method A, linear: measurable scratches. Method B, circular: first visible marks.	As each method's clause sets out	Method A or B. A is not for HPL or melamine-faced board.
Abrasion	BS EN 15185:2023, current; replaces 2011	Abrasive wheels wear the surface to an initial wear point.	An initial wear point	Scope: foils, laminates, melamine-faced boards, lacquers.
Not covered		Light and UV, weathering, impact, burns, long-term cleaning, any liquid you do not name.		Separate evidence where it matters.

Summaries from public previews and a FIRA report; the standards were not read in full. None sets a pass level.



The five tests as pictures, with the standard number for each. Schematic and not to scale. Original drawing by Make Bespoke Studio.

READING A GRADE

5 no change. 4 slight, seen only when light reflects off the surface. 3 moderate, visible from several angles. 2 significant, clear from all angles. 1 strong, surface damaged. Higher is better. Descriptions are paraphrased from a FIRA report; check them in the standards.

BEFORE YOU RELY ON A TEST REPORT

- The panel is the product: same substrate, finish system, coats, sheen and cure as the approved sample.
- The edition of each standard is stated. BS EN 15185:2023 and BS EN 15186:2024 replaced the 2011 and 2012 editions.
- The liquids, exposure times, temperatures and scratching method are stated. EN 12720 leaves the liquids and periods to the specification.
- Ratings are given for each liquid and temperature, with failed areas marked: read the lines, not the headline.
- The laboratory is named and its accreditation scope covers these tests. Ask who rated the panel.

SPECIFICATION WORDING

TABLE TOP: TEST EVIDENCE

Before production the finisher is to supply a report from [a named laboratory, accredited for these methods] on a panel of the same substrate finished identically to approved sample [S-nn] (same system, coats, sheen and cure), stating the edition of each standard, with ratings for: cold liquids, BS EN 12720:2009+A1:2013, with [coffee, tea, red wine, ethanol 48 and 96 per cent, cold oil, cold fat] for [1 hour; 24 hours for oil and fat]; wet heat, BS EN 12721:2009+A1:2013, at [55 and 70] degrees C; dry heat, BS EN 12722:2009+A1:2013, at [85 and 100] degrees C; scratching, BS EN 15186:2024, method [A / B]; and, for a foil, laminate, melamine-faced board or lacquer, abrasion, BS EN 15185:2023. Required: not worse than rating [ ] for each liquid and temperature [allowance, if any:]. If not met: [re-finish and re-test / alternative proposed for approval].

BAR TOP OR COUNTER

Bar top finish [system] to approved sample [S-nn]. The cold liquid test is to include [spirits (ethanol 48 and 96 per cent), citrus juice, red wine, coffee] and the venue's cleaning product [name] for [exposure], results not worse than [ ]. Wet and dry heat at [ ] degrees C, results not worse than [ ]. The care instructions used for the tests go in the operation and maintenance pack.

OUTDOOR OR OTHER SURFACE OUTSIDE THE FIVE TESTS

The five tests do not cover weathering or light. For [outdoor table top] the finisher is to supply [exterior performance evidence for the exact finish] and the care and re-finishing interval [ ].

TERMS USED

Descriptive numerical rating code

The scale of 5 to 1 that EN 12720, 12721 and 12722 use to describe how visible the mark is after a test, from no change (5) to strong change (1). The wording of each grade is in the standard.

Initial wear point (IP)

In EN 15185, the point at which wear first shows through the finish. How it is judged differs for foils and laminates, pigmented lacquers and transparent lacquers.

STANDARDS AND SOURCES

- BS EN 12720, 12721 and 12722, each 2009+A1:2013: cold liquids, wet heat, dry heat. BSI Knowledge, read 6 Nov 2026: each current, under review. Scope and public previews read; rating, period and temperature tables not read.
- BS EN 15186:2024: scratching. Current; replaces 2012 (withdrawn 22 March 2024). Scope and contents read.
- BS EN 15185:2023: abrasion. Current from 31 January 2024; the 2011 edition withdrawn the same day. Scope and contents read.
- PD CEN/TR 17292:2018 and a FIRA International report (May 2021): precision data (known from a FIRA news item; not read); the report on an oil-finished panel, read for methods, rating wording and layout, names FIRA Standard 6250:2018, not read.

Full guide: https://makebespoke.com/trade/technical/tabletop-surface-performance-tests. Make Bespoke Studio coordinates manufacture through its partner workshops. Figures are guidance only and your specification governs; some may be superseded, so contact the studio to verify.