

# Modern Surface Technology

*Edited by*

*Friedrich-Wilhelm Bach, Andreas Laarmann,  
and Thomas Wenz*

*Translated from German by*

*C. Benjamin Nakhosteen*



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*Edited by*  
*Fr.-W. Bach, A. Laarmann,*  
*T. Wenz*

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## Preface

Technological developments in aerospace and other high-technology fields give rise to constantly increasing demands on part surfaces. Generally, surfaces that, e.g., withstand tribological loads, or show special properties in thermal and electrical conductivity or optical behaviour, require utilisation of coating processes.

This book presents industrially implemented coating processes in the fields of build-up welding and brazing, plasma, arc, and flame spraying, sol-gel technology as well as the thin-film technologies, chemical vapour deposition and physical vapour deposition. Particular emphasis is placed on the combination of process and materials technology in terms of producing coatings that meet all necessary requirements.

Alongside industrially relevant coating processes, newly developed technologies on the verge of industrial implementation are presented. Examples are processes for diamond synthesis, cold gas spraying or the processing of nano-sized particles.

The aim of this book is to enable engineers and technicians working in development, design, and manufacturing to be able to estimate the potential of protective surface coatings and the associated processes in their fields of activity. The intention is that coating technologies serve as an integral part of development, design, and manufacturing.

*The Editors*  
May 2006





## Contents

Preface V

List of Contributors XVII

<b>1</b>	<b>Selecting Surface-treatment Technologies</b>	<b>1</b>
	<i>W. Tillmann, E. Vogli</i>	
1.1	Introduction	1
1.2	Requirements on Part Surfaces	1
1.3	Selecting Coating and Surface Technologies	4
1.4	Processes for Surface Modification and Coating	5
1.5	Economic Assessment of Surface-treatment Technologies	9
1.6	Summary and Conclusions	9
	References	10
<b>2</b>	<b>Stainless Austenitic Steel – Surface Hardening for Increased Wear Resistance</b>	<b>11</b>
	<i>M. Wagner</i>	
2.1	Introduction	11
2.2	Fundamentals	11
2.2.1	Heat Treatment	11
2.2.1.1	Surface-hardening Processes	12
2.2.2	Stainless Steels	13
2.2.2.1	Classification of Stainless Steels	14
2.2.2.2	Stainless Austenitic Steels	15
2.3	Technologies for Surface Hardening of Austenitic Stainless Steels	19
2.3.1	Kolsterising	19
2.3.1.1	Influence on Microstructure	20
2.3.1.2	Influence on Chemical Composition	21
2.3.1.3	Influence on Mechanical Properties	21
2.3.1.4	Wear Resistance	21
2.3.1.5	Influence on Corrosion Resistance	23

2.3.2	Kolsterising plus PVD Coating	24
2.3.2.1	Coating Adhesion	25
2.3.2.2	Wear Resistance	26
2.3.2.3	Fatigue Strength	26
2.4	Applications	28
2.4.1	Application Limitations	28
2.5	Outlook	29
	References	29
<b>3</b>	<b>Fundamentals of Thin-film Technology</b>	<b>31</b>
	<i>M. Nicolaus, M. Schäpers</i>	
3.1	Introduction	31
3.2	Classification of Thin-film Coating Processes	31
3.3	General Aspects of Gas-phase Coating Processes	32
3.3.1	PVD – Physical Vapour Deposition	32
3.3.1.1	Evaporation	32
3.3.1.2	Sputtering	33
3.3.1.3	Ion Plating	35
3.3.2	CVD – Chemical Vapour Deposition	35
3.4	Plasma Properties	36
3.4.1	Low-pressure Plasma	37
3.5	Coating Configuration	38
3.5.1	Coating Structure	38
3.6	Electrodeposition and Electroless Plating Processes	39
3.6.1	Introduction	39
3.6.2	Fundamental Terms	40
3.6.2.1	Electrolyte	40
3.6.2.2	Electrodes, Electrode Reactions, Electrode Potential	40
3.6.2.3	Electrolysis and Faraday's Laws	42
3.6.2.4	Overpotential	44
3.6.3	Electroless Plating	44
3.6.4	Electrodeposition of Metal	45
3.6.5	Electrodeposition of Metal from Non-aqueous Solvents	47
3.6.6	Summary and Outlook	49
	References	50
<b>4</b>	<b>Innovations in PVD Technology for High-performance Applications</b>	<b>51</b>
	<i>K. Bobzin, E. Lugscheider, M. Maes, P. Immich</i>	
4.1	Introduction	51
4.2	Market Situation	52
4.3	Application Examples	53
4.3.1	Tool Coatings for Cutting	54
4.3.2	Tool Coatings for Forming	55
4.3.3	Coatings for Plastic Parts	57

4.3.4	Coatings for Machine Elements	58
4.3.5	Part Coating for High-temperature Applications	60
4.4	Summary	61
	References	62
<b>5</b>	<b>Development and Status Quo of Thermal CVD Hard-material Coating</b>	<b>65</b>
	<i>A. Szabo</i>	
5.1	Introduction	65
5.2	Early CVD Hard-material Coating	66
5.3	Fundamentals of Deposition Processes	66
5.3.1	Chemical Mechanism	66
5.3.2	Interdisciplinary Fundamentals	67
5.3.3	CVD System and Reaction-chamber Techniques	67
5.4	Combination Coatings	70
5.5	Material and Coating Properties	73
5.5.1	Physical Properties of Coating Materials	74
5.5.2	Comparison of Coating Combinations	74
5.5.2.1	Classic TiC-TiN	74
5.5.2.2	Balanced TiN-TiC	74
5.5.3	Effects of Thermal Expansion	75
5.5.4	Effects of Hardness	77
5.6	Performance of Hard-material Coatings – Applications	77
5.6.1	Wear Resistance	79
5.6.2	Heat Treatment and Dimensional Accuracy	79
5.7	CVD Coating at Lower Temperatures	80
5.7.1	Moderate-temperature CVD, MTCVD	80
5.7.2	Plasma-activated CVD, PACVD	82
5.8	Summary and Conclusions	82
	References	83
<b>6</b>	<b>Hot-filament CVD Diamond Thin Films</b>	<b>87</b>
	<i>O. Lemmer, R. Cremer, D. Breidt, M. Frank, J. Müller</i>	
6.1	Introduction	87
6.2	Differences of Diamond Tools	88
6.3	Substrate Pre-treatment	88
6.4	Production of CVD Diamond	89
6.5	Hot-filament Process	90
6.6	Controlling CVD Diamond Properties	92
6.7	Industrial Deposition of CVD Diamond	93
6.8	Post-treatment of CVD Diamond	93
6.9	Applications for Diamond-coated Tools	94
6.10	Summary and Conclusions	99
	References	100

<b>7</b>	<b>An Introduction to Electrodeposition and Electroless Plating Processes</b>	<b>101</b>
	<i>W. Olberding</i>	
7.1	Introduction	101
7.2	Fundamentals of Electrodeposition (Considering Nickel Deposition as Example)	101
7.2.1	Structure of Electroplated Nickel Coatings	104
7.2.2	Deposition Mechanism	105
7.2.3	Current-density Distribution	106
7.2.4	Electroless Plating of Nickel	107
7.3	Overview of System Technologies	109
7.3.1	Barrel Plating	109
7.3.2	Rack Plating	111
7.3.3	Continuous Plating	112
7.3.4	Brush Plating	114
7.3.5	Tank Plating	114
7.4	Overview of Individual Process Steps in Electroplating	114
7.4.1	Degreasing	114
7.4.2	Activating or Pickling	115
7.4.3	Carryover	115
7.4.4	Coating Passivating Materials such as Stainless Steel and Aluminium	116
7.4.5	Summary of Pre-treatment	116
7.5	Microstructuring and Electroforming	116
7.6	Summary	117
	References	118
<b>8</b>	<b>Fundamentals of Thermal Spraying, Flame and Arc Spraying</b>	<b>119</b>
	<i>Z. Babiak, T. Wenz, L. Engl</i>	
8.1	Introduction	119
8.2	Fundamentals of Thermal Spraying	119
8.2.1	Structure of Thermal Spray Coatings	121
8.2.2	Adhesion of Thermal Spray Coatings	122
8.3	Flame Spraying	123
8.3.1	Flame Spraying Process	123
8.3.2	Materials and Applications	125
8.4	Arc Spraying	127
8.4.1	Arc Spraying Process	127
8.4.2	Special Arc Spraying Processes	131
8.4.3	Materials and Applications	131
8.5	Summary and Conclusions	134
	References	134

<b>9</b>	<b>Spray Materials</b>	<b>137</b>
	<i>J. Beczkowiak</i>	
9.1	Introduction	137
9.2	Spray Material Properties Determined by Production Issues	137
9.2.1	Powder-production Processes	138
9.3	Material Selection for Coating Applications	142
9.3.1	Materials for Wear Protection	143
9.3.2	Materials for Corrosion Protection	143
9.3.3	Materials for Biotechnology	144
9.3.4	Materials for Special Applications	144
<b>10</b>	<b>High-velocity Oxygen Fuel Flame Spraying</b>	<b>145</b>
	<i>O. Brandt</i>	
10.1	Introduction	145
10.2	Characteristics	146
10.2.1	HVOF Gun	146
10.2.2	Fuel Gases and Process Parameters	147
10.2.3	Spray Materials	148
10.3	Technical Considerations	150
10.4	Applications	151
10.5	Process Monitoring and Control	153
10.6	Development Trends	155
10.6.1	Application Technology	155
10.6.2	Coating Materials	155
10.6.3	Process Technology	156
10.6.4	Techniques and Methods	156
10.7	Summary	156
	References	157
<b>11</b>	<b>Triplex II – Development of an Economical High-performance Plasma Spray System for Highest-quality Demands even under Challenging Production Conditions</b>	<b>159</b>
	<i>H. Zimmermann, H.-M. Höhle</i>	
11.1	Introduction	159
11.2	Fundamentals of Plasma Spraying	161
11.3	Standard Plasma Gun Design	164
11.4	Development of the High-performance Three-cathode Plasma Gun Triplex	168
11.5	Triplex II – A New Era in Plasma Spraying Technology	171
11.6	Positive Feedback from Industry	174
11.6.1	Chromium Oxide Coating of Anilox Rollers for Printing Industry	174
11.6.2	Abradable Coatings	175
11.6.3	Thermal-barrier Coatings	177
11.6.4	Further Applications	178

11.7	Summary	178
	References	178
<b>12</b>	<b>System Technology, Gas Supply, and Potential Applications for Cold Gas Spraying</b>	<b>179</b>
	<i>W. Krömmel, P. Heinrich</i>	
12.1	Introduction	179
12.2	System Design	179
12.2.1	Pressure Tank and Nozzle	179
12.2.2	Control Unit	180
12.2.3	Touch Screen	181
12.2.3.1	Main Mask Parameters	182
12.2.4	Gas Heater LINSPRAY®	183
12.2.5	Gas Supply for Cold Gas Spraying	184
12.2.6	Helium Recovery	185
12.3	Applications	186
12.4	Summary	188
	References	189
<b>13</b>	<b>Diagnostics in Thermal Spraying Processes</b>	<b>191</b>
	<i>J. Prehm, K. Hartz</i>	
13.1	Introduction	191
13.2	Classification of Diagnostic Methods	191
13.3	Methods for Particle Diagnostics	191
13.3.1	Laser Doppler Anemometry (LDA)	191
13.3.2	Phase Doppler Anemometry (PDA)	194
13.3.3	Laser Two-focus Method (L2F)	195
13.3.4	Particle Image Velocimetry (PIV)	195
13.3.5	In-flight Particle Diagnostics	197
13.4	Methods for Plasma and Hot Gas Diagnostics	198
13.4.1	Enthalpy Probe Diagnostics	198
13.5	Methods for Online Process Control	199
13.5.1	Particle-flux Imaging (PFI)	200
13.6	Summary and Conclusions	202
	References	202
<b>14</b>	<b>Sol-gel Coating Processes</b>	<b>205</b>
	<i>M. Kursawe, V. Hilarius, G. Pfaff, R. Anselmann</i>	
14.1	Introduction	205
14.1.1	Background and Origin of Sol-gel Chemistry	205
14.1.2	Material Fabrication by Means of Sol-gel Techniques	206
14.2	Sol-gel Coating Formation for SiO <sub>2</sub>	207
14.2.1	Coatings with SiO <sub>2</sub> Sol from Salts of Silicic Acid	207
14.2.2	Coatings with SiO <sub>2</sub> Sol from Si Alkoxides	208
14.3	Application Examples	210

- 14.3.1 Translating an Idea into a Product: Development of an Anti-reflection Coating for Glass 210
- 14.3.2 Application of Wet Chemical Coating Techniques for a Common Product Type: Pearlescent Pigments 214
  - 14.3.2.1 Gloss and Colour 214
  - 14.3.2.2 Production of Pearlescent Pigments with Interference Colours 215
- 14.3.3 Effect Pigments on SiO<sub>2</sub> Flakes 217
- 14.3.4 Coating of SiO<sub>2</sub> Spheres for Cosmetic Formulations 219
- 14.4 Conclusions 219
- References 220
  
- 15 Hot-dip Coating 221**  
*W. Bleck, D. Beste*
  - 15.1 Mechanisms of Corrosion Protection 221
  - 15.2 Phase Diagrams Fe-Zn, Fe-Al, Al-Zn, and Fe-Al-Zn 224
  - 15.3 Metal Coatings 227
  - 15.4 Systems Technology 229
  - 15.4.1 Design of Hot-dip-coating Systems 229
  - 15.4.2 Reacting Agents in Molten Zinc 231
  - 15.4.3 Surface Post-treatment 233
  - 15.5 Quality Control 234
  - 15.5.1 Testing Mechanical Properties 234
  - 15.5.2 Testing Corrosion Properties 234
  - 15.6 Summary and Conclusions 236
  - References 237
  
- 16 Build-up Brazed Wear-protection Coatings 239**  
*H. Krappitz*
  - 16.1 Introduction 239
  - 16.2 Brazing and Soldering 239
    - 16.2.1 Fundamentals 239
    - 16.2.2 Repair Brazing 241
    - 16.2.3 Coating by Build-up Brazing of Sintered Hard Metals 242
    - 16.2.4 Brazing of Ceramics 244
    - 16.2.5 Brazing of Hard-material Particles 246
  - 16.3 BrazeCoat Technology 248
    - 16.3.1 Coating with Mats of Filler Metal and Hard Material (BrazeCoat M) 248
    - 16.3.2 Coating with Suspensions of Filler Metal and Hard Material (BrazeCoat S) 250
  - 16.4 Summary 252
  - References 252

<b>17</b>	<b>Applications of Coating Processes in Brazing Technology</b>	<b>253</b>
	<i>K. Möhwald, U. Holländer, A. Laarmann</i>	
17.1	Introduction	253
17.2	Brazing Filler-metal Application by Thermal Spraying	254
17.3	Electroplating and Electroless Plating Methods for Brazing Filler-metal Application	257
17.4	Brazing Filler-metal Application by PVD	259
17.5	Summary and Conclusions	261
	References	262
<b>18</b>	<b>Surface Protection by Means of Build-up Welding</b>	<b>263</b>
	<i>A. Gebert, B. Bouajfi</i>	
18.1	Introduction	263
18.2	Process Variants	264
18.3	Characterisation of Build-up Welded Coatings	265
18.4	Build-up Welding Techniques	268
18.4.1	Distinguishing Features	268
18.4.2	Shop Welding (Manual Arc Welding, Gas Flame)	270
18.4.3	Processes with Protective Slag	271
18.4.3.1	Electroslag Build-up Welding (RES – Resistance Electroslag)	271
18.4.3.2	Submerged Arc Build-up Welding	271
18.4.4	Inert-gas-shielded Arc Welding	273
18.4.4.1	Tungsten Inert Gas Build-up Welding (TIG Process)	273
18.4.4.2	Gas-shielded Metal Arc Welding	274
18.4.4.3	Plasma-transferred Arc Process (PTA)	276
18.4.4.4	Plasma MIG Process	279
18.4.5	Resistance Roll Seam Technique	280
18.4.6	Laser Cladding	281
18.5	Coating Materials for Build-up Welding	283
18.5.1	Materials for Corrosion Protection	283
18.5.1.1	Corrosion-resistant Iron-based Materials	284
18.5.1.2	Nickel Alloys	285
18.5.2	Materials for Wear Protection	285
18.5.2.1	Nickel Hard Alloys	287
18.5.2.2	Iron Hard Alloys	288
18.5.2.3	Cobalt Hard Alloys	292
18.5.2.4	Aluminium Pseudo-alloys	294
18.6	Summary and Conclusions	295
	References	296
<b>19</b>	<b>Non-destructive Testing and Assessment of Coatings</b>	<b>297</b>
	<i>W. Reimche, R. Duhm</i>	
19.1	Introduction	297
19.2	Coatings	297
19.2.1	Processes	297



19.2.2	Coating Properties	298
19.2.3	Test Planning	299
19.3	Thickness-measurement Techniques	299
19.3.1	Geometric Measurement of Parts	302
19.3.2	Differential Weight Analysis Before and After Coating	302
19.3.3	Coating-thickness Measurements Based on Magnetic Pull-off	302
19.3.4	Coating-thickness Measurements Based on Acoustic Principles	303
19.3.5	Coating-thickness Measurements with Magnetic-induction Techniques	305
19.3.6	Coating-thickness Measurements with Eddy-current Techniques	306
19.3.7	Coating-thickness Measurement by Means of X-ray Fluorescent Analysis	309
19.3.8	Coating-thickness Analysis by Means of Beta-backscatter Technique	310
19.4	Internal Stresses in Coatings	311
19.4.1	Roentgenographic Assessment of Internal Stresses – X-ray Diffractometry	311
19.5	Detecting Coating Defects	312
19.5.1	Detection of Open Defects in Coatings – Dye-penetration Test	313
19.5.2	Detection of Laminar Separation/Coating Delamination – Ultrasonic Testing	313
19.5.3	Detection of Laminar Separation/Coating Delamination – Lock-in Thermography	315
19.5.4	Detection of Internal Coating Defects – Eddy-current Testing	317
19.5.5	Assessment of Coating Adhesion by Means of Electromagnetic Testing	318
19.6	Summary and Conclusions	319
	References	320

<b>Subject Index</b>	323
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# 1

## Selecting Surface-treatment Technologies

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### 1.1

#### Introduction

Nowadays, modern production processes require inherent state-of-the-art surface technologies. Furthermore, rising standards of technical products are creating the perception that surface technologies are often the central impetus needed for meeting product specifications. Design engineers thus face two essential tasks: On the one hand, part specifications need to be transformed into properties of materials and surfaces. On the other hand, selected materials technologies have to be integrated in corresponding process chains. Apart from the required part specifications, production costs and ecological aspects are important issues.

Not only production standards but also economic conditions lead to increasing significance of surface technologies. Considering the two substantial domains of surface technology, tribology and corrosion, macroeconomics experts estimate that tribological damage causes a loss of approx. 1% of the German gross national product (GNP). The economic effect of corrosion damage is even higher, approaching approx. 3.5–4.2% of the GNP. Surface technologies therefore have to be considered as one of the key technology fields in production engineering.

Here, one possible method for selecting surface-treatment processes that satisfy existing requirements of specific parts is introduced. In addition, a variety of surface-treatment processes are compared with respect to possible fields of application and characteristics specific to the individual processes.

### 1.2

#### Requirements on Part Surfaces

Systematic selection of suitable surface treatments is always based on acquiring a complete set of requirements on the part surface with respect to intended operating conditions. According to Haefer [3], the surface is responsible for all me-

chanical, thermal, chemical, and electrochemical interactions with the environment. This leads to the main functions that need to be fulfilled by technical surfaces:

- corrosion resistance
- wear resistance
- defined tribological behaviour
- optical behaviour
- decorative behaviour
- matched interface behaviour (e.g. for joining purposes).

In addition, especially highly specialised products may demand specific functions. Parts used in micro-technology for example can require special electro-magnetic properties of surfaces.

Ultimately, requirements on part surfaces are determined by the particular load conditions under which the final product operates. Figure 1.1 illustrates the main kinds of load conditions subdivided into volume and surface loads.

Wear and corrosion are the main stresses that have to be controlled by surface technology in the realm of mechanical engineering. Incorrect materials selection as well as unsuitable or missing protective layers lead to manifold damages, some of which are shown in Figs. 1.2 and 1.3.

In many cases, appropriate surface treatment can either prevent or at least delay such damages. However, adjusting part surface characteristics carefully is essential in order to handle overall operating conditions.

Surface technology focuses on reacting adequately to the specific kinds of load and stress. For this, the materials properties of part surfaces are systematically modified or produced, particularly by means of:

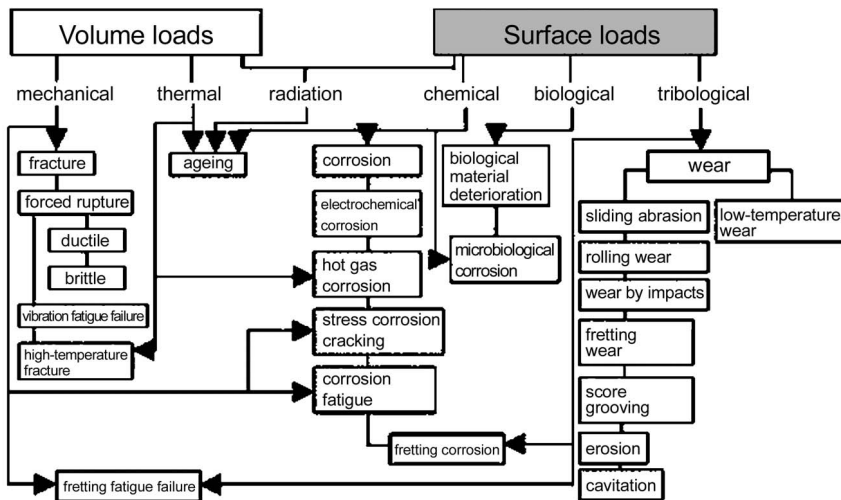


Fig. 1.1 Main volume and surface loads on parts.



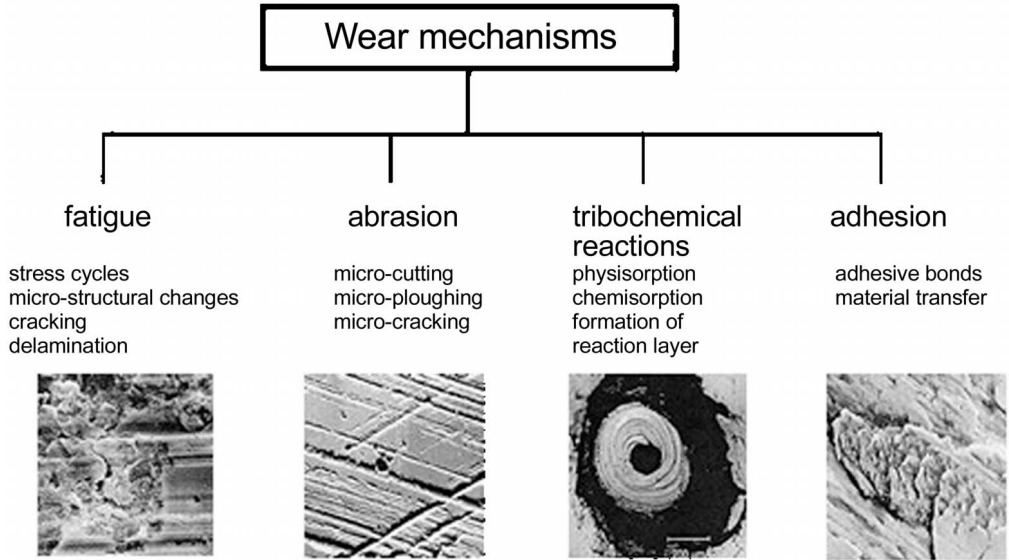


Fig. 1.2 Wear phenomena.

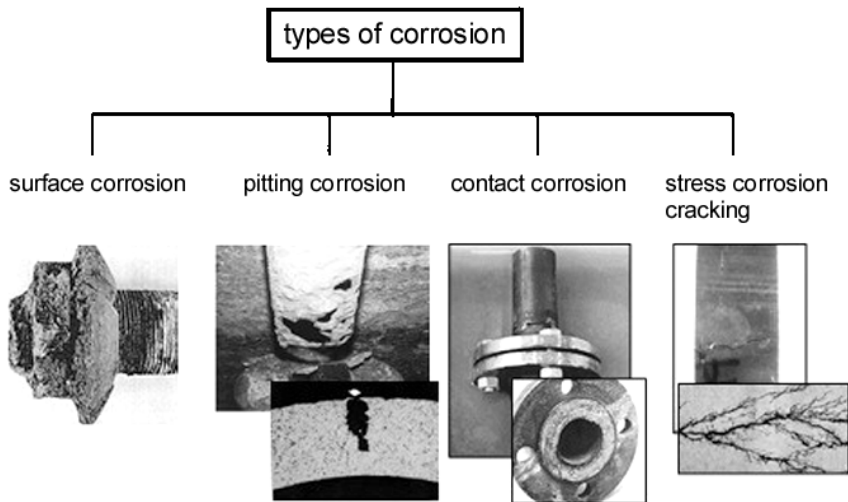


Fig. 1.3 Corrosion phenomena.

- applying a protective coating to the workpiece
- modifying the surface zone of the workpiece.

Typical coating processes are chemical vapour deposition (CVD), physical vapour deposition (PVD), thermal spraying, build-up brazing and welding, as well as cladding and dip coating. Surface-modification processes, on the other hand,

include thermo-chemical diffusion processes, thermal surface hardening, implantation methods, and mechanical surface-hardening processes.

### 1.3 Selecting Coating and Surface Technologies

Designing a suitable surface treatment from a given combination of loads is challenging. Not only is it often difficult to precisely and thoroughly understand the operating conditions of a part, but very large variety of possible materials and materials technological processes have to be considered. Estimates indicate that the number of materials used in materials technology is in the range of 40 000–80 000. Moreover, including surface technologies, about 1000 different processes are used. In contrast, the mean vocabulary of a Central European spans approx. 5000 words. Quite obviously, the process of selecting an appropriate coating or surface treatment requires a systematic approach. The selection process needs to be implemented at an early stage of product development. It is necessary that developers already consider surface requirements during concept phases, directly after taking down customer and market demands. Based on the given operating conditions, four fundamental aspects should be clarified systematically [1, 6]. The following facets and questions need to be considered carefully:

- 1) Function:
  - What are the functional characteristics of the part surface?
  - What kind of requirements exist?
- 2) Purpose:
  - What needs to be maximised?
  - What needs to be minimised?
- 3) Limitations:
  - Which constraints and boundary conditions have to be met? e.g.
    - from a technical point of view
    - from an economic point of view
    - considering design-to-cost concepts
    - considering design for environment concepts
    - considering life-cycle costs
- 4) Options:
  - What options exist?

This systematic approach basically represents the general framework of the requirement catalogue concluded from the set of loads and stresses. Subsequently, individual materials and surface technologies need to be analysed and assessed against this background. This search and evaluation should be performed in an equally systematic approach. Figure 1.4 illustrates an example of a systematic analysis sheet. Here, individual coating materials and processes can be rated with respect to selected properties, prerequisites, and restrictions. The listed se-

material /process	prerequisites / restrictions	feasible	rating
coating			
wear properties			
hardness / strength			
corrosion resistance			
impact resistance			
coating thickness			
adhesion			
cohesion			
porosity			
residual stresses			
structure / property correlations			
process			
shape of part			
dimensions of part			
deposition rate			
coating process temperature			
strength reducing process characteristics			
costs			
environmental issues			

**Fig. 1.4** Example of a rating matrix for evaluating coating materials and/or processes against the background of a desired property catalogue.

lection of properties within the rating matrix as well as the corresponding prerequisites and restrictions originate from the formerly compiled catalogue of requirements.

The approach presented here describes a workable method of correlating a catalogue of requirements with appropriate surface technologies. Certainly, the quality of results is determined and limited by the requirement catalogue developed in phase one. Furthermore, this methodology requires comprehensive knowledge of available materials and processes, a frequently limiting factor due to the already mentioned manifold process varieties and materials.

## 1.4

### Processes for Surface Modification and Coating

Giving a detailed overview of the different surface modification and coating processes would go far beyond the scope of this chapter. Therefore, a general summary of the most important process classes is presented, along with their indi-

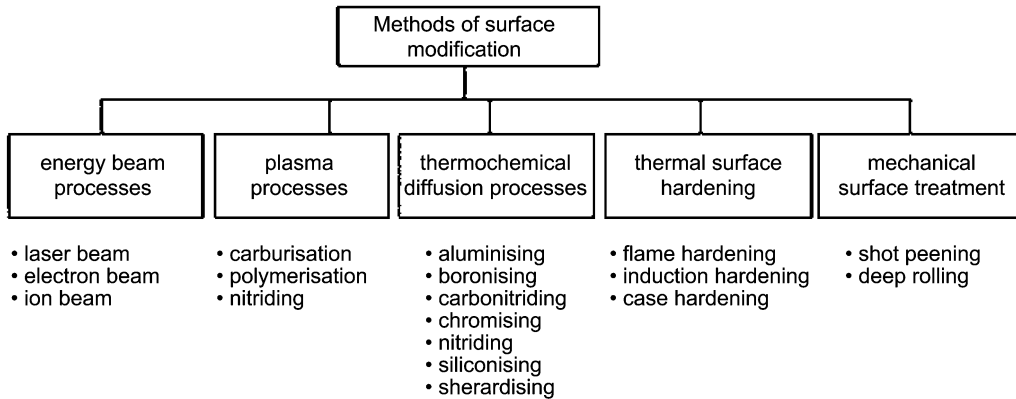


Fig. 1.5 Classification of surface-modification processes.

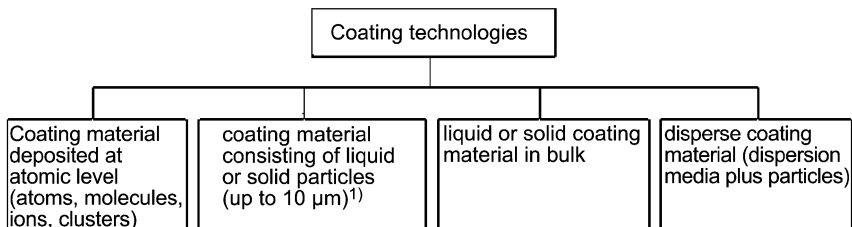


Fig. 1.6 Classification of coating technologies.

vidual assets and drawbacks. Figure 1.5 shows the systematic classification of surface-modification processes.

Selected process technologies are presented in Table 1.1, including basic advantages and disadvantages [5].

Unlike surface-modification processes, coating involves covering the surface of a workpiece with a well-bonded layer of shapeless material. A possible classification of coating technologies is given in Fig. 1.6.

Bond strength to the substrate material primarily determines the quality of a coating. This macroscopic property is controlled by:

- materials combination
- type of interface zone
- microstructure and process conditions
- substrate type and pre-treatment.

A strong atomic bond in the contact zone is most favourable, provided that internal stresses within the coating are not too high and no long-term degradation occurs within the coating/substrate composite. Coating process and material combinations determine whether mechanical, chemical, or electrostatic bonds prevail, or whether diffusion occurs. Thus, preparation of the workpiece is a

**Table 1.1** Selected process technologies for surface modification.

<b>Advantages</b>	<b>Process technologies</b>	<b>Disadvantages</b>
+ inexpensive + selective treatment possible + depth 1–10 mm	<b>Hardening</b> by means of induction flame laser, electron beam TIG (tungsten-inert gas)	– limited to steel, Co, 3–0.6% – distortion possible
+ applicable to many types of steel + well-controlled coating properties	<b>Carburisation</b> • diffusion of C (up to 0.8%) into surface including hardening • variety of different C-carriers	– distortion – cooling cracks
+ less distortion of surface compared to hardening and carburisation	<b>Carbonitriding</b> • compare above, additional nitrogen • low-temperature process	– slow process
+ less distortion of surface + high elevated temperature hardness	<b>Nitriding</b> • N-diffusion, formation of surface nitrides	– slow process
+ good resistance against adhesive wear + allows oxidising for corrosion protection + high hardness	<b>Nitrocarburising</b> – cf. nitriding	– modifies thin surface zone
	<b>Boronising</b> • boron diffusion for boride formation • also applicable for Co-, N-, Ti-alloys	– distortion (high process temperatures) – brittle – low corrosion resistance
+ inexpensive	<b>Sherardising</b> • Zn-diffusion with subsequent chromatising	– no wear protection
+ good corrosion protection + less vibration fatigue + increased resistance against stress-corrosion cracking and corrosion fatigue	<b>Shot peening</b> for plastic deformation of workpiece surface	– modifies thin surface zone – low increase in hardness
see above	<b>Deep rolling</b> comparable with shot peening	– expensive
+ can create high surface hardness values + good wear and corrosion protection	<b>Plating, metallising</b> (e.g. Cr, V, Nb, Si-containing diffusion coatings) large variety of processes	– high process temperatures (distortion)

crucial factor in obtaining good coating adhesion. Apart from removing contamination, pre-treatments activate the substrate surface and therefore substantially influence the bond between coating and substrate. Typical mechanisms of surface activating are:

- creating defects in the substrate
- increasing surface energy
- removing oxide layers.

Table 1.2 summarises different coating technologies in common use and includes important process characteristics [4, 6].

**Table 1.2** Selected coating technologies.

Advantages	Technologies	Disadvantages
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ high hardness values</li> <li>+ good corrosion resistance</li> <li>+ reduces friction in contact with steel</li> </ul>	<p><b>Electrochemical deposition</b> (e.g. Cr) up to 0.5 mm coating thickness</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– coating of complex geometries is difficult</li> <li>– danger of hydrogen embrittlement</li> <li>– environmental problems</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ low-temperature process</li> <li>+ very high corrosion protection</li> <li>+ suitable for most metal substrates and many non-conducting materials</li> <li>+ uniform coating thickness even on complex geometries</li> </ul>	<p><b>Chemical (electroless) deposition</b> from electrolyte solution (e.g. NiB, NiP)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– expensive</li> <li>– additional heat treatment necessary</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ very high hardness values</li> <li>+ good adhesion</li> </ul>	<p><b>CVD, chemical vapour deposition</b> chemical vapour deposition at high temperatures</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– distortion</li> <li>– coating of sharp-edged geometries is difficult</li> <li>– disposal of aggressive gaseous waste</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ dense coatings with high adhesion</li> <li>+ low coating process temperature</li> <li>+ allows deposition of pure elements, compounds and alloys</li> </ul>	<p><b>PVD, physical vapour deposition</b> – evaporation – cathode sputtering</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– low growth rate of coating</li> <li>– expensive vacuum process</li> <li>– restrictions in terms of part geometry</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ large variety of materials</li> <li>+ good adhesion</li> <li>+ properties well controllable by choice of materials and process</li> </ul>	<p><b>Thermal spray processes</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– residual porosity</li> <li>– deposition efficiency of coating process (overspray)</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ very high adhesion</li> <li>+ large parts coatable</li> <li>+ inexpensive</li> </ul>	<p><b>Build-up welding</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– coating materials limited</li> <li>– impact on substrate material</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>+ very high adhesion</li> <li>+ coating of complex geometries</li> </ul>	<p><b>Build-up brazing</b> powdery hard material and brazing filler metal with binding agent protective gas process</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– coating materials limited</li> </ul>