



# A GUIDE TO Temperature Measurement

# Contents

2-3	Introduction
4	Temperature
4-5	Temperature Scales
6	International Practical Temperature Scale
6-7	Temperature Measurement
7-14	Thermocouples
15-20	Platinum Resistance Thermometers
21-23	Thermistors



# Temperature affects almost every process imaginable, yet it's difficult to measure accurately and reliably. Until now.

Given the variables surrounding temperature measurement, it is little surprise that accuracy and reliability have been a persistent problem. As world leader, Cropico understand what it takes to reliably gain the most accurate and precise measurements possible.

Calibration laboratories and industries worldwide rely on our expertise and equipment. Great praise indeed.

This handbook offers an overview on the subject of 'Best temperature measurement practice,' explaining common causes of

errors and how best to avoid them.

Also included are useful tables of wire and cable characteristics, temperature coefficients and various formula to ensure you make the best choice when selecting measurement equipment and measurement techniques.

We hope you find the booklet a valuable addition to your toolkit.



## TEMPERATURE

Temperature can be defined as the amount of hotness or coldness of a body or environment. It can however, be more accurately described as molecular motion and energy flow, and can be measured in a number of ways i.e. the expansion of a liquid as seen in liquid in glass thermometers, or the change in resistance of a material such as copper or platinum.

### Heat

Heat is internal energy that flows from a system at a higher temperature to a system at a lower temperature. Two bodies at the same temperature are said to be in thermal equilibrium. If a body at a higher temperature comes into contact with a body at lower temperature, heat will flow from the higher temperature to the lower one. If an ice cube is placed in a warm drink the heat from the drink will flow into the ice cube and melt it. The ice cube does not transfer its coldness to the drink, but of course the overall effect is for the drink to become slightly cooler.

## TEMPERATURE SCALES

There are three temperature scales in common use today. They are Fahrenheit, Celsius, and Kelvin.

### Fahrenheit

Daniel Gabriel Fahrenheit (1686-1736) was the German physicist who invented the alcohol thermometer in 1709 and the mercury

thermometer in 1714. In 1724, he introduced the temperature scale that bears his name - Fahrenheit Scale. Fahrenheit temperature scale is a scale based on 32 for the freezing point of water and 212 for the boiling point of water. The interval between the two being divided into 180 parts.

### Celsius

The Celsius temperature scale is also referred to as the "centigrade" scale. Centigrade means "consisting of or divided into 100 degrees". The Celsius scale, invented by Swedish Astronomer Anders Celsius (1701-1744), has 100 degrees between the freezing point (0 °C) and boiling point (100 °C) of pure water at sea level air pressure. The term "Celsius" was adopted in 1948 by an international conference on weights and measures.

Celsius devised the centigrade scale or "Celsius scale" of temperature in 1742.

Until the 1970s the Fahrenheit temperature scale was in general common use in English-speaking countries; the Celsius, or centigrade, scale was employed in most other countries and for scientific purposes worldwide. Since that time, however, most English-speaking countries have officially adopted the Celsius scale

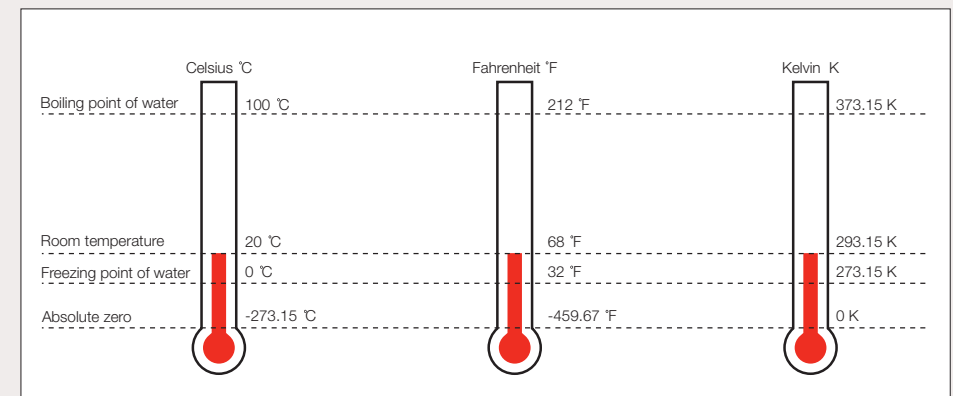
### Kelvin

Kelvin temperature scale is the base unit of thermodynamic temperature measurement in the International System (SI) of measurement. It is defined as 1/ 273.16 of the triple point (equilibrium among the solid, liquid, and gaseous

phases) of pure water. The kelvin (symbol K without the degree sign ) is also the fundamental unit of the Kelvin scale, an absolute temperature scale named after the British physicist William Thomson, Baron Kelvin. Such a scale has as its zero point, absolute zero, the theoretical temperature at which the molecules of a substance have the lowest energy. Many physical laws and formulas can be expressed

more simply when an absolute temperature scale is used; accordingly, the Kelvin scale has been adopted as the international standard for scientific temperature measurement. The Kelvin scale is related to the Celsius scale. The difference between the freezing and boiling points of water is 100 degrees in each, so that the Kelvin has the same magnitude as the degree Celsius.

Known Temperature				Required Temperature	Formulae
Celsius	°C	to	°F	Fahrenheit	$^{\circ}\text{F} = (1.8 \times ^{\circ}\text{C}) + 32$
Celsius	°C	to	K	Felvin	$\text{K} = ^{\circ}\text{C} + 273.15$
Fahrenheit	°F	to	°C	Celsius	$^{\circ}\text{C} = (^{\circ}\text{F} - 32)/1.8$
Fahrenheit	°F	to	K	Kelvin	$\text{K} = ^{\circ}\text{F} + 459.67/1.8$
Kelvin	°K	to	°C	Celsius	$^{\circ}\text{C} = \text{K} - 273.15$
Kelvin	°K	to	°F	Fahrenheit	$^{\circ}\text{F} = (1.8 \times \text{K}) - 459.67$







which must be added to the measurement uncertainty is  $\pm 0.5^{\circ}\text{C}$ . If the ambient rises to  $25^{\circ}\text{C}$  then the error that must be added is  $\pm[0.5^{\circ}\text{C} + (5 \times 0.1^{\circ}\text{C})] = 0.5 + 0.5 = \pm 1.0^{\circ}\text{C}$ . So you can see for a measurement of  $200^{\circ}\text{C}$  the measurement uncertainty can increase five times if made at an ambient temperature of  $25^{\circ}\text{C}$  instead of  $20^{\circ}\text{C}$ . One final uncertainty that has to be added is the uncertainty of the thermocouples themselves,

and the chart below gives the different types with their characteristics.

Thermocouples are good general purpose sensors, cheap to buy, capable of measuring over a very wide temperature range and can be small in size. There are a number of different thermocouple types available and the following table will assist in choosing the most appropriate type for your application.

### Commonly Used Thermocouple Wire

ANSI Code	Alloy Combination		International IEC 584-3 Colour Coding Thermocouple	Temperature Range	Emf over temperature range	Limits of error* standard grade
	+ Lead	- Lead				
J	Iron (magnetic) Fe	Constantan Copper Nickel Cu-Ni		0 to $750^{\circ}\text{C}$	-8.095mV to +69.553mV	$2.2^{\circ}\text{C}$ or 0.75%
K	Nickel-Chromium Ni-Cr	Nickel-Aluminium Ni-Al (magnetic)		-200 to $+1250^{\circ}\text{C}$	-6.458mV to +54.886mV	$2.2^{\circ}\text{C}$ or 0.75% above $0^{\circ}\text{C}$ $2.2^{\circ}\text{C}$ or 2.0% below $0^{\circ}\text{C}$
T	Copper Cu	Constantan Copper-Nickel Cu-Ni		-200 to $+350^{\circ}\text{C}$	-6.528mV to +20.872mV	$2.2^{\circ}\text{C}$ or 0.75% above $0^{\circ}\text{C}$ $1.0^{\circ}\text{C}$ or 1.5% below $0^{\circ}\text{C}$
E	Chromel Nickel-Chromium Ni-Cr	Constantan Copper-Nickel Cu-Ni		-200 to $+900^{\circ}\text{C}$	-9.835mV to 76.373mV	$1.7^{\circ}\text{C}$ or 0.5% above $0^{\circ}\text{C}$ $1.7^{\circ}\text{C}$ or 1.0% below $0^{\circ}\text{C}$
N	Nicrosil Ni-Cr-Si	Nisil Ni-Si-Mg		-270 to $+1300^{\circ}\text{C}$	-4.345mV to 47.513mV	$2.2^{\circ}\text{C}$ or 0.75% above $0^{\circ}\text{C}$ $2.2^{\circ}\text{C}$ or 1.0% below $0^{\circ}\text{C}$
R	Platinum 13% Rhodium	Platinum Pt		0 to $1450^{\circ}\text{C}$	-0.226 to 21.101	$1.5^{\circ}\text{C}$ or 0.25%
S	Platinum 10% Rhodium Pt10%Rh	Platinum Pt		0 to $1450^{\circ}\text{C}$	-0.236 to 18.693	$1.5^{\circ}\text{C}$ or 0.25%
B	Platinum 30% Rhodium Pt30%Rh/Pt 6%Rh	Platinum 6% Rhodium Pt5Rh	N/A	0 to $1700^{\circ}\text{C}$	0 to 13.820	$0.5^{\circ}\text{C}$ over $800^{\circ}\text{C}$

### Type K - Chromel-Alumel.

The best known and dominant thermocouple belonging to the chromium-nickel aluminium group is type K. It is low cost and available in a wide variety of probe shapes and sizes. Its temperature range is extended ( $-200^{\circ}\text{C}$  up to  $1200^{\circ}\text{C}$  range) depending on probe construction. Its emf /temperature curve is reasonably linear and its sensitivity is approximately  $41 \text{ microvolt}/^{\circ}\text{C}$ .

### Type E - Chromel-Constantan

Due to its high sensitivity ( $68 \text{ microvolt}/^{\circ}\text{C}$ ), Chromel-Constantan is mainly used in the cryogenic (low temperature) range ( $-200^{\circ}\text{C}$  up to  $+900^{\circ}\text{C}$ ). The fact that it is non magnetic could be a further advantage in some special applications.

### Type N - Nicros-Nisil

This thermocouple has very good thermoelectric stability, superior to other base metal thermocouples, and has excellent resistance to high temperature oxidation. The Nicrosil-Nisil thermocouple is ideally suited for accurate measurements in air up to  $1200^{\circ}\text{C}$ . In vacuum or controlled atmosphere, it can withstand temperatures in excess of  $1200^{\circ}\text{C}$ . Its sensitivity of  $39 \text{ microvolts}/^{\circ}\text{C}$  at  $900^{\circ}\text{C}$  is slightly lower than type K ( $41 \text{ microvolts}/^{\circ}\text{C}$ ). Interchangeability tolerances are the same as for type K. The type N thermocouple was designed to be an improved type K and is gaining in popularity.

### Type J (Iron / Constantan)

Limited range ( $-40$  to  $+750^{\circ}\text{C}$ ) makes type J less

popular than type K. The main application is with old equipment that cannot accept 'modern' thermocouples. J types should not be used above  $760^{\circ}\text{C}$  as an abrupt magnetic transformation will cause permanent decalibration. The sensitivity rises to  $55 \text{ microvolts}/^{\circ}\text{C}$ .

### Type T - Copper-Constantan

This thermocouple is used less frequently. Its temperature range is limited to  $-200^{\circ}\text{C}$  up to  $+350^{\circ}\text{C}$ . It is, however, very useful in food, environmental and refrigeration applications. Tolerance class is superior to other base metal types and close tolerance versions are readily obtainable. The emf/temperature curve is quite nonlinear, especially around  $0^{\circ}\text{C}$ , and sensitivity is  $42 \text{ microvolts}/^{\circ}\text{C}$ .

Thermocouple types B, R and S are all 'noble' metal thermocouples and exhibit similar characteristics. They are the most stable of all thermocouples, but due to their low sensitivity (approx  $10 \text{ microvolts}/^{\circ}\text{C}$ ), they are usually only used for high temperature measurement ( $>300^{\circ}\text{C}$ ).

### B - Platinum 30% Rhodium - Platinum 6% Rhodium

Type B allows measurements up to  $1800^{\circ}\text{C}$ . It is a very stable thermocouple but less sensitive in the lower range. Output is negligible at room temperature giving the same output at  $0^{\circ}\text{C}$  and  $40^{\circ}\text{C}$  thus making them unusable at low temperature. The revised temperature table for type B only states the accuracy for temperatures above  $800^{\circ}\text{C}$ . Historically these thermocouples



have been the basis of high temperature sensing in spite of their high cost and their low thermoelectric power. Until the launch of the Nicrosil-Nisil thermocouples, type N, they remained the sole option for good thermoelectric stability.

**Type S - Platinum 10% Rhodium – Platinum**

Suitable for high temperature measurements up to 1600°C, the low sensitivity (approx 10microvolts/°C) and high cost makes them

unsuitable for general purpose use. They are normally used in oxidising atmosphere up to 1600°C. Their sensitivity is between 6 and 12 microvolts/°C.

**Type R – Platinum 13% Rhodium – Platinum**

Similar version to type S, suited for high temperature measurements up to 1600°C, but again with low sensitivity approx 10microvolts/°C making them unsuitable for general purpose use.

**International Thermocouple Colour Codes**

ANSI Code	Int. IEC 584-3 Colour Coding	British to BS 1843	German to DIN 43710	US Canadian ASTM E-230	Japanese to JIS C1610-1981	French to NFC 42-324
J						
K						
T						
E						
N			No Standard		No Standard	No Standard
R				No Standard		
S				No Standard		

**Thermocouple Extension Cable**

Thermocouples may be used to monitor the temperature of processes where it is necessary to have the temperature controllers or monitors a relatively long distance from the process. Thermocouples will operate over this long distance without additional errors, even if the temperature along the thermocouple cable run is not constant over its length, or is varying. Thermocouple extension wire has the same characteristics as thermocouple wire, but will usually have a lower temperature range than the thermocouple; this is due to its insulation material. The extension cable is designated with the letter X i.e. extension cable for type J thermocouple would be designated JX.

**Thermocouple Compensating Cable**

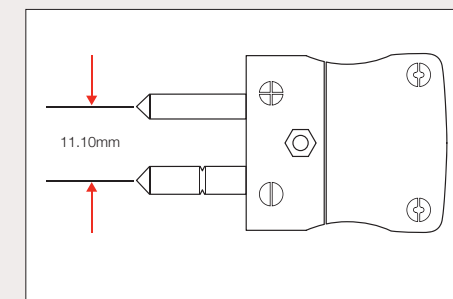
Thermocouple compensating cable has very similar characteristics to thermocouple cable over a relatively small temperature range based around the ambient temperatures. It is constructed of a different alloy to the thermocouple and designated with a C i.e. Compensating cable for type K thermocouple is designated KC.

**Choosing a Thermocouple**

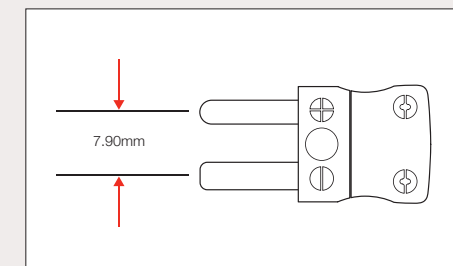
Thermocouples are available either as bare wire 'bead' thermocouples which offer low cost and fast response times, or built into probes. A wide variety of probes are available, suitable for different measuring applications (industrial, scientific, food temperature, medical research etc). One word of warning: when selecting

probes take care to ensure they have the correct type of connector. The two common types of connector are 'standard' with round pins and 'miniature' with flat pins; this causes some confusion as 'miniature' connectors are more popular than 'standard' types. When choosing a thermocouple, consideration should be given to the thermocouple type, insulation and probe construction. All of these will have an effect on the measurable temperature range, accuracy and reliability of the readings, listed.

**Commonly Used Thermocouple Plugs**



Standard thermocouple plug

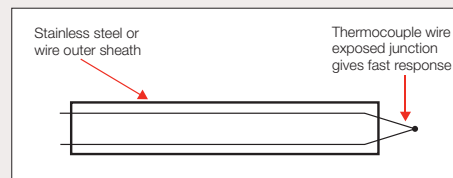
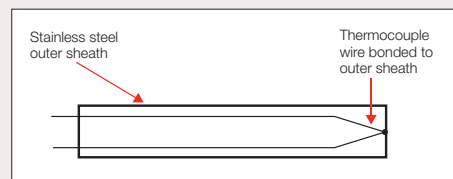
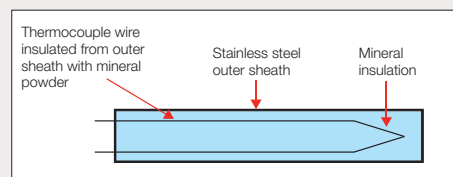


Miniature thermocouple plug



### Common Thermocouple Construction

Thermocouples are usually constructed from thin wire which gives them a small thermal mass and correspondingly a quick reaction to temperature changes. They are constructed in many different configurations and shapes to suit the application but generally three basic construction types are used. The outer sheath can be stainless steel or Inconel which will withstand high temperatures and corrosive environments. Mineral insulation is often used to ensure high insulation resistance to the outer sheath. The exposed junction construction gives a fast response, but is more susceptible to physical damage or contamination by the process being measured.



### Calibration of Thermocouples

Thermocouples and thermocouple wires are manufactured to give standards that specify the emf generated at specific temperatures. Thermocouple made from the same batch of wire will match each other much closer than the specified standard, but they may be on the edge of the standard's specification. To achieve greater degrees of measurement accuracy, it is beneficial to calibrate the thermocouples by measuring their emf at different temperature points. These temperatures would normally be selected as the critical temperatures of the process they were to monitor. Some measuring instruments have the ability to accept these calibration points and use them to achieve greater measurement accuracy.

Thermocouple calibration can also be compromised due to molecular contamination of the junction formed by the two wires; this can be due to temperature extremes annealing the wire or by cold working the wire, which can be caused by excessive handling, pulling through conduits or excessive vibration etc. This condition is potentially quite serious as the thermocouple appears to be operating correctly but is, in effect, giving measurement errors which can be quite high. Regular checking of the thermocouples and the measuring instrumentation is recommended.

### PLATINUM RESISTANCE THERMOMETERS

This type of measuring sensor is much more accurate than thermocouples but they have a more limited temperature range, a higher thermal mass and are more expensive. These resistance thermometers have a linear and repeatable resistance against temperature. The two common types in use are Pt100 which has a resistance of 100Ω at 0°C and Pt25 which has a resistance of 25Ω at 0°C. Platinum is used because it has a very stable temperature coefficient and, being a noble metal, is not very susceptible to contamination.

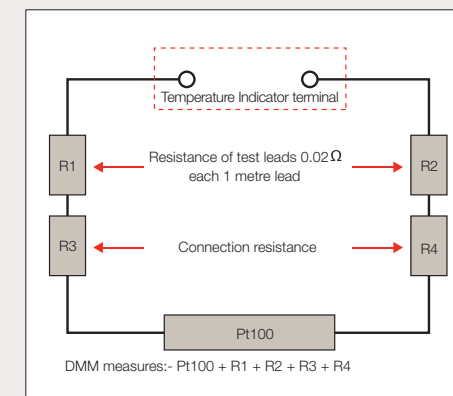
Pt100 (IPRT) is the most commonly used and has a temperature coefficient of  $\alpha = 0.00385$  (European standard) which corresponds to an average resistance change, over the temperature range 0 to 100°C of 0.385Ω per °C. Both the absolute resistance value and the change in resistance per °C are both relatively small and give rise to measurement problems, especially when the resistance of the connection leads are taken into consideration.

There are other standards also in use The US standard for pt100 has an alpha of 0.00392.

### Two-Wire Measurements

When measuring the resistance of a Pt100 a test current is forced through the component and the test meter measures the voltage at its terminals. The meter then calculates and

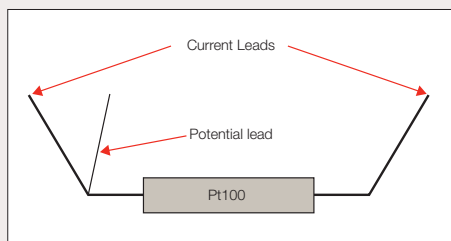
displays the resulting resistance and is known as a two-wire measurement. It should be noted that the meter measures the voltage at its terminals and not across the component. As a result of this, the voltage drop across the connection leads is also included in the resistance calculation. Good quality test leads will have a resistance of approximately 0.02 ohm per meter. In addition to the resistance of the leads, the resistance of the lead connection will also be included in the measurement and this can be as high as or even higher in value than the leads themselves. The two-wire measurement is not recommended.



### Three-Wire Measurement

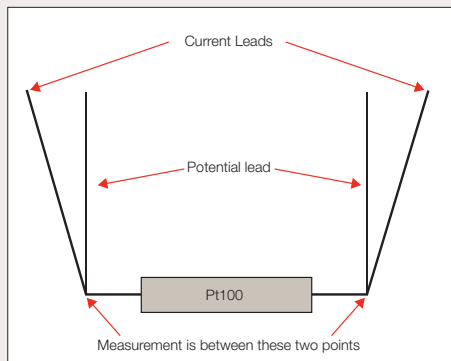
A three-wire connection is quite common in industrial applications and will eliminate most of the effect of the lead resistance on the measured value. Care must be taken to ensure that all three wires are of equal resistance but this is almost impossible to

achieve in practice. The three-wire method will not deliver the same degree of accuracy as a true four-wire system but is better than two wires.



#### Four-Wire Measurements

This is the most accurate measurement configuration. Two-wires are used to pass a constant current through the Pt100 and the volt drop across the unit is then measured. The impedance of the voltage measurement circuit is high and as a consequence only a very small current flows in the potential circuit, which for practical purposes can be ignored. The result is that the measurement lead resistance can also be ignored.



Two-wire sensors will also have large errors due to lead and connection resistance adding to the measured resistance value.

Three-wire sensors are better than two wires but will still give additional errors due to imbalance of lead resistances.

Four-wire sensors are recommended for accurate and repeatable measurements and the lead resistance can be ignored.

#### Measurement Errors

When measuring PRTs the measurement current used by most temperature indicators is either DC or low frequency AC. If AC is used, then care in selecting a non inductive sensor is essential as the measurement will be the impedance of the sensor rather than its true DC resistance. There may also be some differences in the temperature measurement between sensors from different manufacturers, as their construction technique may differ, resulting in slightly different impedance values. This AC measurement does, however, eliminate any thermal emf errors that may arise.

When DC current measurement is employed, the true resistance value is measured and used to calculate the corresponding temperature. In this instance impedance errors are not a problem, but errors due to thermal emf must be considered. The best method of countering any thermal emf is to measure the sensor resistances with current flowing in one direction, then reverse

the current and taking a second measurement. The average of these two measurements is the true resistance without any thermal emf. This is often called the switched DC method and is selectable on the Cropico thermometers.

To obtain the best measurement results, the resistance of the Pt100 sensor must be measured with a high degree of accuracy. A temperature change of 1°C will correspond to a resistance change of 0.385Ω so to obtain a measuring accuracy of 0.01°C(10mK) the resistance must be measured to ±0.0385Ω. Example: for a temperature of 100°C the resistance value will be 138.5Ω. To measure this with an accuracy of ±0.01°C, this resistance value must be measured to ±0.0385Ω, which is equal to ±0.028%. If a current of 1mA is used as the measuring current to measure 138.5Ω (100°C), then a voltage of 138.5mV will need to be measured to ±138.5μV, and to measure the temperature change of 0.01°C, a change of 3.85μV must be measured. So you can see a small error in the voltage sensing measurement will give large temperature measurement errors. Cropico's long history of high accuracy low resistance measurement ensures that its range of thermometers offer the highest possible accuracy typically ±10mK.

#### Self Heating

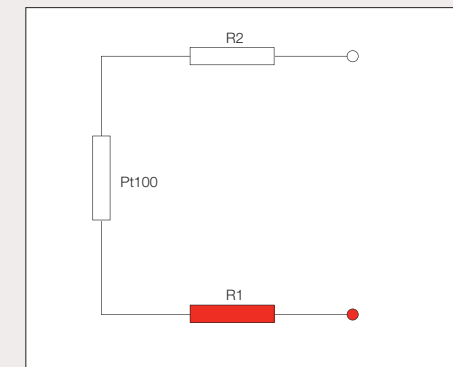
To measure the resistance of the temperature detector, a current must be passed through the device, typically a current 1mA to 5mA is used. A source current of 1mA flowing through the 100Ω resistance will generate 100μW of heat. If the

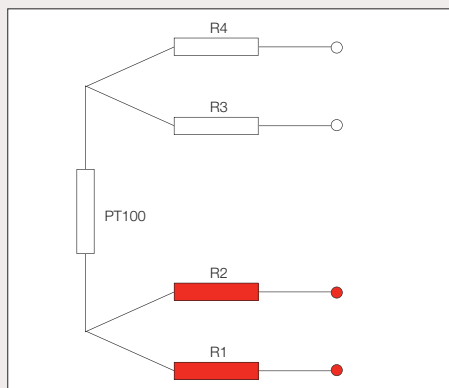
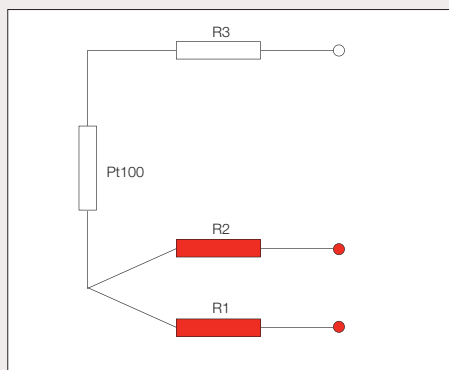
sensor element is unable to dissipate this heat it will indicate an artificially high temperature. This effect can be minimised by using a large sensor element, by ensuring it is in good thermal contact with its measurement environment, and allowing sufficient time for the temperature to stabilise. An alternative is to use a short measurement pulse of current thus minimising the heating effect. The Cropico thermometers may be configured to measure with either a continuous or a short current pulse ensuring that the best possible measurement is made.

#### Colour Codes for Pt100

Two, three and four-wire extension leads as per IEC 60751

Note: In practice the industrial grade sensor will have current and potential leads R1,R2 and R3,R4 connected at the same point on the sensor and therefore interchangeable when connecting to the measuring device.





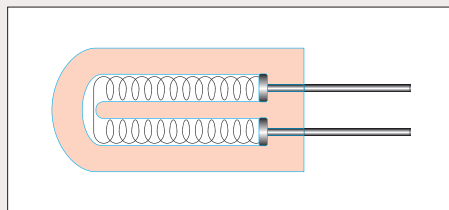
### Stability

Whilst Platinum detectors are very stable over time, the design and manufacturing process can adversely affect these properties. During manufacture the detectors need to be heat treated to homogenize the crystal structure and remove any oxides that may have formed. The sensor needs to be supported in a stress-free manner and the finished assembly handled without causing any impact shocks or vibration.

Cycling the sensor between a high and low temperature will also increase errors. A typical drift rate for a Pt100 detector is 0.05°C per year. A high quality detector will exhibit lower drift of approx. 0.005°C to 0.01°C providing the detector is not mechanically stressed and the temperature range is limited. Consult the detector manufacturer for full specification.

### Response Time

The Pt100 detectors are normally constructed by bifilar winding the platinum wire onto a small bobbin



Although the detector assemblies can be quite small in size they still have a thermal mass which takes time to warm up and reach thermal equilibrium, and consequently they have a longer response time than thermocouples. The detectors are usually housed in a stainless steel sheath which again increases the response time. When measuring temperatures, the immersion depth is also important as heat will be conducted up the stem of the sensor giving rise to errors. The manufacturer should be consulted regarding the minimum immersion depth.

Pt100 detector can also be constructed on a flat substrate this reduces the size and can be more suitable for some applications.

**Table of Accuracies for Pt100 (a=0.00385)**

Temperature (°C)	Tolerances					
	Class A IEC 60751 (1995)		Class B IEC 60751 (1995)		1/10 DIN DIN 43760	
	(±°C)	(± ohms)	(±°C)	(± ohms)	(±°C)	(± ohms)
-200	0,55	0,24	1,3	0,56	0.13	0.06
-100	0,35	0,14	0,8	0,32	0.08	0.03
0	0,15	0,06	0,3	0,12	0.03	0.01
100	0,35	0,13	0,8	0,30	0.08	0.03
200	0,55	0,20	1,3	0,48	0.13	0.05
300	0,75	0,27	1,8	0,64	-	-
400	0,95	0,33	2,3	0,79	-	-
500	1,15	0,38	2,8	0,93	-	-
600	1,35	0,43	3,3	1,06	-	-
650	1,45	0,46	3,6	1,13	-	-
700	-	-	3,8	1,17	-	-
800	-	-	4,3	1,28	-	-
850	-	-	4,6	1,34	-	-

### Measurement Errors

The main sources of measurement errors are:-

- The use of two-wire sensors
- The use of three-wire sensors
- Thermal emf in non switch DC measurement systems
- Inductive sensors in AC measurement systems
- Self heating of the sensor due to the measurement current flowing through the detector winding
- Insufficient stabilisation time

The measurement errors can be minimised and eliminated by choosing one of the Cropico range of precision thermometers. The accuracy can be

further improved by sensor calibration and the Callendar van Dusen coefficients produced from this calibration entered into the Cropico thermometer thus modifying the standard calibration curve to fit the detector characteristics. Whilst the platinum thermometer is one of the most linear temperature detectors it is still necessary to linearise the measured signal. According to the IEC standard IEC751 the non linearity can be expressed as

$$R_t = R_0[1 + At + Bt^2 + C(t - 100)t^3]$$

Where C is only applicable when  $t = \leq 0^\circ\text{C}$ . The standard coefficients for A, B, and C are stated in

the IEC standard but may also be calculated for each individual sensor by measuring its resistance values against set temperature standards.

### The Callendar van Dusen Method

Calendar van Dusen method for determining these coefficients is commonly used and based on measuring four known temperatures.

$R_0$  at  $T_0 = 0^\circ\text{C}$  the triple point of water

$R_{100}$  at  $t_{100} = 100^\circ\text{C}$  The boiling point of water

$R_h$  at  $t_h$  =high temperature (e.g. the freezing point of zinc  $419.53^\circ\text{C}$ )

$R_l$  at  $t_l$  = a low temperature (e.g. the boiling point of oxygen  $-182.96^\circ\text{C}$ )

The Callendar van Dusen coefficients will be calculated for you by the laboratory calibrating your sensor and so it is not necessary to describe the calculations here.

### Pt25 SPRT

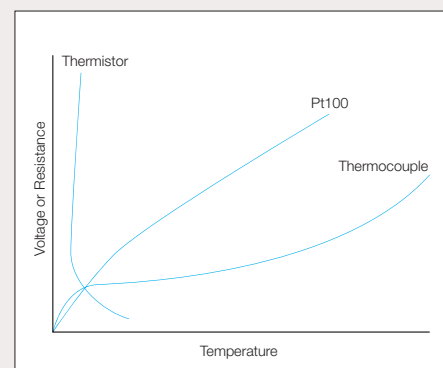
For the highest accuracy, special glass-sheathed standard PRTs, usually of 25 ohms at  $0^\circ\text{C}$ , are calibrated at the fixed points of the International Temperature Scale 1990 (pg 24). ITS-90 specifies equations to relate the resistance to temperature and, using these, uncertainties can be achieved of  $0.001^\circ\text{C}$  or better. Standard PRTs can be used from temperatures as low as  $-259^\circ\text{C}$  up to  $660^\circ\text{C}$ , or even,  $962^\circ\text{C}$ , with some increase in uncertainty and of loss of reproducibility.

The Cropico range of precision temperature indicators are able to measure with both Pt100 and Pt25 PRT sensors.

## THERMISTORS

Thermistors are also a temperature sensitive resistance device and are more sensitive to temperature change than the thermocouple or Pt100. They are generally composed of semiconductor materials and are available with either positive temperature coefficient PTC (resistance increases with temperature) or negative temperature coefficient NTC (resistance decreases with temperature). The NTC types are the more commonly used and the resistance change per  $^\circ\text{C}$  can be as large as several percent making them very good at detecting small changes in temperature, particularly when it is the change in temperature that we are interested in and not the absolute temperature value. NTC thermistors vary in their resistance values from a few ohms to 100kohms. This value is for a temperature at  $25^\circ\text{C}$ . The thermistor is a two-wire device but unlike PRTs the lead resistance is small in comparison with the detector resistance which is typically  $1\text{k}\Omega$  to  $100\text{k}\Omega$  and we, therefore, do not need to worry about the lead resistance introducing errors. As with PRTs we must ensure that the measuring current is kept low to avoid the effect of self heating.

### Comparison of the different temperature detector types



### Thermistor Terminology

**Standard reference temperature** is the thermistor body temperature at which nominal zero-power resistance is specified, usually  $25^\circ\text{C}$ .

**Zero-power resistance** is the DC resistance value of a thermistor measured at a specified temperature with a power dissipation by the thermistor low enough that any further decrease in power will result in not more than 0.1 percent (or 1/10 of the specified measurement tolerance, whichever is smaller) change in resistance.

**Resistance ratio characteristic** identifies the ratio of the zero-power resistance of a thermistor measured at  $25^\circ\text{C}$  to that resistance measured at  $125^\circ\text{C}$ .

**Zero-power temperature coefficient** of resistance is the ratio at a specified temperature (T), of the rate of change of zero-power resistance with temperature to the zero-power resistance of the thermistor.

**NTC thermistor** is one in which the zero-power resistance decreases with an increase in temperature.

**PTC thermistor** is one in which the zero-power resistance increases with an increase in temperature.

**Maximum operating temperature** is the maximum body temperature at which the thermistor will operate for an extended period of time with acceptable stability of its characteristics. This temperature is the result of internal or external heating, or both, and should not exceed the maximum value specified.

**Maximum power rating** of a thermistor is the maximum power which a thermistor will dissipate for an extended period of time with acceptable stability of its characteristics.

**Dissipation constant** is the ratio, (in milliwatts per  $^\circ\text{C}$ ) at a specified ambient temperature, of a change in power dissipation in a thermistor to the resultant body temperature change.

**Thermal time constant** of a thermistor is the time required for a thermistor to change 63.2 percent of the total difference between its initial and final body temperature when subjected to a step function

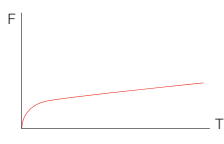
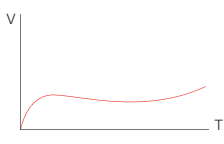
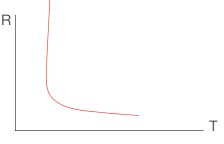
**Resistance-temperature characteristic** of a thermistor is the relationship between the zero-power resistance of a thermistor and its body temperature.

**Temperature-wattage** characteristic of a thermistor is the relationship at a specified ambient temperature between the thermistor temperature and the applied steady state wattage.

**Current-time characteristic** of a thermistor is the relationship at a specified ambient temperature between the current through a thermistor and time, upon application or interruption of voltage to it.

**Stability of a thermistor** is the ability of a thermistor to retain specified characteristics after being subjected to designated environmental or electrical test conditions.

### Sensor Comparison chart

	RTD	Thermocouple	Thermistor
			
Temperature range	-260 to 850°C	-270 to 1800°C	-80 to 150°C (typical)
Sensor Cost	Moderate	Low	Low
System Cost	Moderate	High	Moderate
Stability	Best	Low	Moderate
Sensitivity	Moderate	Low	Best
Linearity	Best	Moderate	Poor
Specify for:	General purpose sensing Highest accuracy Temperature averaging	Highest temperatures	Best sensitivity Narrow ranges (e.g. medical) Point sensing
Advantages	Most Stable Most accurate More Linear than thermocouples	Self Powered Rugged Inexpensive Wide temperature range	High output Fast response
Disadvantages	Expensive Current source required Small ΔR Low absolute resistance	Non linear Low voltage Reference junction required Least stable & Least sensitive	Non linear Limited temperature range Current source required Self heating & Fragile

### SI Unit Prefixes

Factor	Name	Symbol
10 <sup>15</sup>	peta	P
10 <sup>12</sup>	tera	T
10 <sup>9</sup>	Giga	G
10 <sup>6</sup>	Mega	M
10 <sup>3</sup>	Kilo	k
10 <sup>2</sup>	Hector	h
10 <sup>1</sup>	deka	da
10 <sup>-1</sup>	deci	d
10 <sup>-2</sup>	centi	c
10 <sup>-3</sup>	milli	m
10 <sup>-6</sup>	micro	μ
10 <sup>-9</sup>	nano	n
10 <sup>-12</sup>	pico	p
10 <sup>-15</sup>	femto	f