



# TRAVERSING A DUCT TO DETERMINE AVERAGE AIR VELOCITY OR VOLUME

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APPLICATION NOTE TSI-106 (US)

The following techniques can be used to measure air flow inside ducts, using a velocity probe or pitot-static tube. When using a pitot-static tube, the individual velocities must be calculated for each pressure reading, then averaged together. Averaging pressure with a pitot tube and then converting into velocity will give an incorrect result, especially if many readings are more than  $\pm 25\%$  from the average pressure. Remember that for a pitot tube, velocity is proportional to the square root of pressure.

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## Where to Take the Measurement

In order to make air velocity measurements in a duct, it is best to measure at least 7.5 duct diameters downstream and at least 3 duct diameters upstream from any turns or flow obstructions. It is possible to do a traverse as little as 2 duct diameters downstream and 1 duct diameter upstream from obstructions, but measurement accuracy will be impaired. When measuring rectangular ducts, use this formula to find the equivalent diameter of the duct when calculating how much distance is 7.5 diameters downstream and 3 diameters upstream:

$$\text{Equivalent Diameter} = \text{sq root of } 4HV / \text{Pi}$$

Where:

H = horizontal duct dimension

V = vertical duct dimension

Pi = 3.14

It is also possible to take a single reading to measure air velocity or air volume flow in a duct, measuring in the center of the duct and multiplying the reading by 0.9 to correct for the higher velocity at the center of the duct. If conditions are very good an accuracy of  $\pm 5$  or  $\pm 10$  percent may be obtained this way. However, this method is not reliable and should only be used where small duct size or other conditions do not permit a full traverse.



## Traversing a Round Duct

Using the log-Tchebycheff method, the duct is divided into concentric circles, each containing equal area. An equal number of readings is taken from each circular area, thus obtaining the best average. Commonly, three concentric circles (6 measuring points per diameter) are used for ducts of 10-inch diameter and smaller. Four or five concentric circles (8 or 10 measuring points per diameter) are used for ducts larger than 10-inch diameter.

The preferred method is to drill 3 holes in the duct at 60° angles from each other as shown in figure 1 below. Three traverses are taken across the duct, averaging the velocities obtained at each measuring point. Then the average velocity is multiplied by the duct area to get the flow rate. (A different method uses 2 holes at 90° from each other, decreasing the number of traverses with the probe by one.)

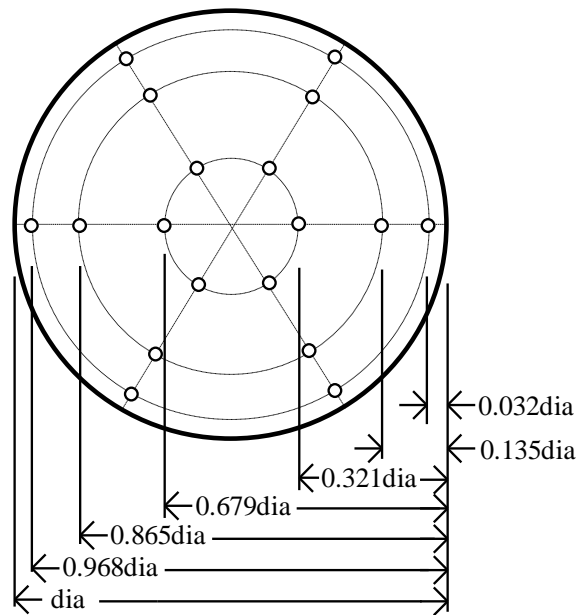


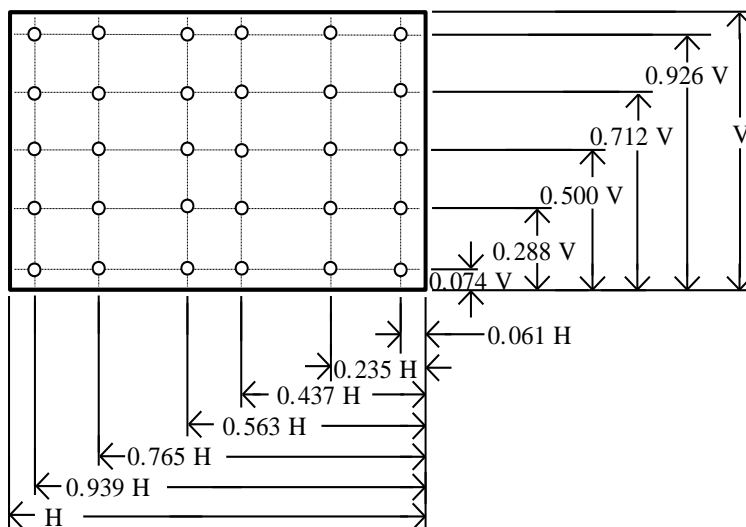
Figure 1: Location of measuring points when traversing a round duct using log-Tchebycheff method

| #of Measuring Points Per Diameter | Position Relative to Inner Wall                                      |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| 6                                 | 0.032, 0.135, 0.321, 0.679, 0.865, 0.968                             |
| 8                                 | 0.021, 0.117, 0.184, 0.345, 0.655, 0.816, 0.883, 0.979               |
| 10                                | 0.019, 0.077, 0.153, 0.217, 0.361, 0.639, 0.783, 0.847, 0.923, 0.981 |

Before taking the measurement, multiply the numbers in the table times the duct diameter to get insertion depth for the probe. (**Do not** forget to use the inside dimension of the duct if it is lined with insulation.)

## Traversing a Square Duct

Using the log-Tchebycheff method, the duct is divided into rectangular areas, which are further adjusted in size to account for effects of the duct wall on the air flow. A minimum of 25 points must be measured in order to get a good average. The number of data points to be taken along each side of the duct depends on how wide that side of the duct is. For duct sides less than 30 inches, 5 traversal points must be taken along that side. For duct sides of 30 to 36 inches, 6 points must be taken. For duct sides greater than 36 inches, 7 points must be taken. Multiply the numbers in the table times the duct dimension to get insertion depth for the probe.



**Figure 2: Location of measuring points for traversing a rectangular duct using log-Tchebycheff method**

For this duct, a 30-36" horizontal dimension requires 6 points (or 6 traverse lines). For this duct, a vertical dimension less than 30" requires 5 points (or 5 traverse lines).

| # of Points or Traverse Lines per Side | Position Relative to Inner Wall                 |
|--|---|
| 5                                      | 0.074, 0.288, 0.500, 0.712, 0.926               |
| 6                                      | 0.061, 0.235, 0.437, 0.563, 0.765, 0.939        |
| 7                                      | 0.053, 0.203, 0.366, 0.500, 0.634, 0.797, 0.947 |

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For further information, refer to the 2017 ASHRAE® Fundamentals Handbook or to ASHRAE® Standard 111.



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