**contact angle**

When a liquid does not spread on a substrate (usually a solid), a contact angle ($\theta$) is formed which is defined as the angle between two of the interfaces at the three-phase line of contact. It must always be stated which interfaces are used to define $\theta$. It is often necessary to distinguish between the 'advancing contact angle' ($\theta_a$), the 'receding contact angle' ($\theta_r$) and the 'equilibrium contact angle' ($\theta_e$). When $\theta_r \neq \theta_a$ the system is said to exhibit contact angle hysteresis.

**Source:**

PAC, 1972, 31, 577 (Manual of Symbols and Terminology for Physicochemical Quantities and Units, Appendix II: Definitions, Terminology and Symbols in Colloid and Surface Chemistry) on page 598