


# Chapter 1

# Overview of Friction Stir Welding (FSW) Technology

**Romdhane Ben Khalifa**

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9171-9584>

*National Engineering School of Gabes, University of Gabes, Tunisia*

## **ABSTRACT**

*The solid-state joining process, known as Friction Stir Welding (FSW), has revolutionized material joining operations for aluminum and magnesium alloys across various industries. The paper explains FSW as a process that differs from traditional fusion welding because it utilizes a rotating tool to generate frictional heat, rather than melting the base materials for interface joining. The process produces strong welds with excellent mechanical properties, minimal distortion, and fine-grained microstructure, making FSW ideal for aerospace, automotive, and marine applications. The paper explains the basic operation of FSW through a detailed analysis of tool design, process parameters, and joint preparation methods that produce optimal weld quality.*

## **INTRODUCTION**

Friction stir welding is a solid-state joining process that avoids melting the base materials altogether. It provides the technique with a significant advantage over traditional fusion welding methods, particularly with materials that were previously notoriously difficult to weld, such as high-strength aluminum and magnesium alloys (Raval & Judal, 2020). The technique relies on frictional heat generated by a rotating tool, which softens the materials at the joint interface, allowing them to interlock

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mechanically and form a strong weld (Jain et al., 2018). Although patented nearly three decades ago, its intensive research and application started gaining momentum during the 2000s, primarily for aluminum alloy structures (Chernykh et al., 2022). A process has been defined around a cylindrical or profiled tool with a shoulder and pin that rotates and plunges into joining surfaces (Tsarkov et al., 2019). It moves along the joint line, plasticizing the material using frictional heat and mechanical deformation (Suri et al., 2016). Under tremendous pressure, the softened material is forged together, producing a solid-phase bond that exhibits superior mechanical properties compared to fusion welds principally due to the absence of cast microstructure plus a remarkable reduction of the heat-affected zone (Balasubramanian et al., 2020). Friction stir welding is characterized by minimal distortion, no porosity, and a fine-grained microstructure in the weld zone; these features have made it widely used in various industries, including aerospace, automotive, and marine sectors (Thomas & Nicholas, 1997). Process parameters are said to determine whether a welded joint is successful or not (Yuvaraj & Senthilkumar, 2014). Some of these factors include the rotational speed of the tool, welding speed, axial force, and the geometry of the tool. These need proper optimization to get the required mechanical and metallurgical properties (Fahmy et al., 2020). Tool design innovations and process control have continuously expanded the range of applicability for this technology, encompassing an increasingly diverse collection of materials and joint configurations.

This paper provides an in-depth analysis of friction stir welding (FSW) by examining its fundamental principles, process parameters, machinery, tooling requirements, and material and joint configuration compatibility (figure 1). This paper highlights the distinct advantages of FSW over traditional fusion welding processes, as it welds materials without melting them, resulting in superior mechanical properties and reduced distortion. The manuscript follows a structured format to discuss FSW in detail, beginning with historical background and fundamental mechanisms before moving to process basics, equipment, tooling requirements, and material and joint preparation. The paper continues with discussions about welding operations and the effects of process parameters on weld quality, as well as the health, safety, and environmental advantages of FSW. The paper examines industrial applications through case studies demonstrating FSW viability across aerospace, automotive, and shipbuilding sectors. The paper concludes by discussing ongoing research directions and future outlooks, as additional development seems essential to extend FSW applications to new materials and advanced manufacturing methods.

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