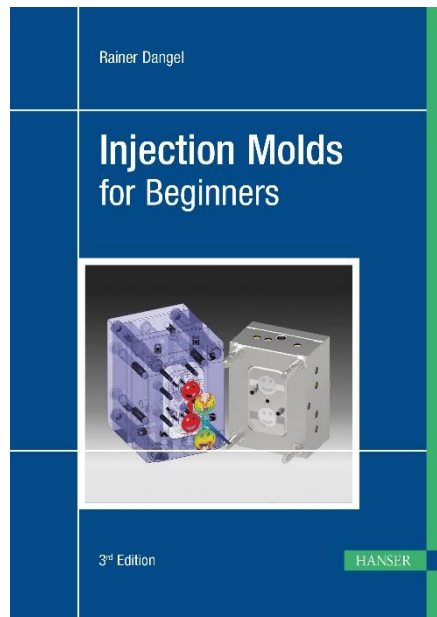


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## Sample Pages

### Injection Molds for Beginners

Rainer Dangel

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# Preface to the Third Edition

First of all, I would like to thank my readers warmly. The success of this work has shown that its creation was a valuable exercise. The extensive feedback I have received over the years has been consistently positive. The English edition, like the German edition, was well received and it was a pleasure to see it being sold around the world. Also in China and India, it is used in companies and training institutions. The popularity of the book is also the reason that the book has, since the second edition, been printed in color, and that the third edition appears now.

Of course, I was asked several times how a mold maker came up with the idea to write such a book. How does he find the time and where does the comprehensive knowledge come from?

The motivation to write a book can be manifold. My motivation was to write a small manual for the distribution of machining centers for mold making. The sales department of my employer at the time should understand what mold making is, what it does, which components are to be manufactured and from which materials the individual components are made. At first, I wanted to use existing documents and publications. But I came to realize that there was nothing suitable at this level for beginners or newcomers. Then the only thing left was to create something of my own.

After completing the small manual, they were all gone after a few days. Not only the sales department but also other interested parties tried to get hold of one. So, what could be more obvious than making a large work from this book? Especially since, as already mentioned, there was nothing comparable on the market. At first, time constraints meant that the project ran more and more behind schedule. Then a long, serious illness gave me the time that I then used. Over 2500 hours of work and about 40 tool designs and revisions of designs had to be accomplished. Including all corrections, this project took considerably more than half a year.

In order to make the new, larger book understandable for everyone, the idea came to me to always use the same plastic part as the basic concept. It should be as simple as possible and concentrate on the essentials. This gave me the possibility to build up the level of difficulty of the plastic part stepwise, and to explain the there-

by-arising changes simply. That is to say, the central thread throughout the whole book should be uncomplicated and understandable.

About 45 active years in mold making, including more than 23 years as an independent entrepreneur and now as a project manager, consultant, and lecturer, have given me the necessary knowledge and experience. My education as a mold maker began in the summer of 1976. I went through the entire technological change from the hand-operated milling machine to NC technology to today's 5-axis simultaneous machining. The first mold designs were made with India ink on the drawing board, moving on via a simple 2-D CAD program, to the full 3-D CAD system in 1995.

The change over the decades was not only in the technology of the production of the injection molds, but also in the necessary shift from a handicraft business to an industrial company. Today the customers of the mold maker are almost exclusively industrial companies. Certifications, creation of processes, Industry 4.0, environmental protection, and sustainability are keywords that have occupied the mold making industry in recent years.

When I wrote and illustrated the first and second editions, I did not have a simulation program for evaluating plastic parts. The information in the book was therefore based on my experience. Today I have this kind of simulation program and I was able to confirm all the information I had written in the books with real simulations. The theme of simulation is also the main optimization part of this third edition.

I hope you enjoy reading this book and look forward to your feedback.

Rainer Dangel, July 2023

# Foreword to the First Edition

German die and mold making is a brand with global significance. The reasons for this are diverse, but the industry's secrets to success can certainly be attributed to smart design with a great deal of know-how, top performance production engineering and quality related criteria. One major aim of this book is to disseminate this philosophy to a wider, English-speaking readership.

Rapid implementation of innovations through close information exchange between all parties is planned for the future. Injection molds today already play a key role in modern production engineering in the manufacturing industry.

Visions of the future such as the “smart factory” in the context of injection molding now offer the chance to raise the energy and resource efficiency of the production process to a new level with intelligent management and network flexibility. But the basis for this is a solid knowledge of the basics of engineering and manufacturing processes in mold making. The above-mentioned topics can only be implemented based on this knowledge and wealth of experience. And this is exactly where this technical book from Rainer Dangel comes in. What is required for bringing a product into shape?

In the book the author didactically as well as technically breaks new ground in the field of technical literature for injection mold making. In a very clear way, he combines theory with practice, always focusing on the following questions: “What is this product relevant for? What needs to be solved technically for which product specifications?” And, regarding the method of the manufacturing implementation: “How and with what can I fulfil the product requirement within the scope of the design and also the manufacturing process?” Through Mr. Dangel's technical expertise which he established and developed over many years, it quickly becomes clear when studying the book that the practical implementation of the described has great significance. Basic knowledge and solutions are holistically considered. Advantages and disadvantages are presented and discussed. The wealth of 35 years of experience, beginning with training as a tool maker to the master craftsman's diploma then to owning a private company flows through this technical book.



“Injection Molds for Beginners”, the title of this book, hits the bull’s eye and old hands who think it is no challenge to them might be taught a lesson!

Prof. Dr.-Ing. Thomas Seul

Vice rector for Research and Transfer at the Schmalkalden University of Applied Sciences and President of the Association of German Tool and Mold Makers (VDWF).

# The Author

Rainer Dangel began his education as a mold maker from 1976 to 1980. Even as a young, skilled worker, he recognized the possibilities to make a difference in this technically ambitious profession. The foundation of his career was completed with the master craftsman's diploma in mechanics at the age of 23.

His self-employment began in 1987. The initially small CNC milling shop for mold components developed over the course of a few years into a modern, technically high-quality specialist company for the production of injection molds for a wide variety of requirements. The first 3-D CAD CAM system was installed in 1995 and used successfully. All production possibilities of a modern mold making shop were now part of the offer.



Rainer Dangel has made it his task to actively practice and constantly develop and perfect the mold making process. In 2006, the company founded its own plastic injection molding shop in order to expand the process chain to the finished plastic part. With certification according to DIN EN ISO 9001:2008 in 2008, his company was able to serve different industries. Among other things, plastic parts for the automotive industry could be tested and approved according to the VDA (VDA = Association of German Automobile Manufacturers). In the generally economically difficult year 2010, he closed his mold making shop.

Subsequently, Rainer Dangel was for several years the team leader of the Technology Center at Gebr. Heller Maschinenfabrik GmbH in Nürtingen, Germany, and was responsible for customer support in mold and tool making.

Today Rainer Dangel is again active in the field of mold making, as a consultant. He works in two main areas: project management from part development to mold design through tool making to the start of production of plastic parts; and training

and special education in mold making in general, and in the machining, milling in particular.

The author's passion is milling; he is proficient in all types of processing up to the programming and milling of 5-axis simultaneous processing.



# Acknowledgments

I would like to express a heartfelt thank you to my colleagues at the Association of German Tool and Mold Makers (VDWF) for the support during the development of this book. Special thanks to Prof. Dr.-Ing. Thomas Seul, President of the VDWF, for the foreword.



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Finally, I would like to thank the Translation Management department at Meusburger Georg GmbH & Co. KG, Wolfurt, Austria, for their expert translation of my original German text into English. Achieving a high-quality translation of a specialist technical book is no trivial task, and for this the professional support of Meusburger is most warmly acknowledged.

# Contents

<b>Preface to the Third Edition</b> .....	<b>V</b>
<b>Foreword to the First Edition</b> .....	<b>VII</b>
<b>The Author</b> .....	<b>IX</b>
<b>Acknowledgments</b> .....	<b>XI</b>
<b>How to Use This Book</b> .....	<b>XXI</b>
<b>1 Introduction</b> .....	<b>1</b>
<b>2 Mold Types</b> .....	<b>3</b>
2.1 Simple Open/Close Mold .....	3
2.1.1 Classic Structure of an Open/Close Mold .....	6
2.1.2 Guiding Elements .....	7
2.1.3 Backing Plate .....	10
2.2 Molds with Moving Elements .....	12
2.2.1 Undercut .....	12
2.2.2 Slide .....	13
2.2.3 Slide Operation .....	14
2.2.4 Latch, Clip Lock .....	15
2.2.5 Inclined Ejector .....	16
2.2.6 Forced Demolding .....	17
2.2.7 Mold Size .....	18
2.3 Mold for Threads .....	19
2.3.1 External Threads .....	20
2.3.2 Internal Threads .....	23
2.3.3 Drive Types for De-spindling .....	24
2.3.3.1 Hydraulic Unscrewing Unit .....	24

2.3.3.2	Gear Rack .....	25
2.3.3.3	High-Helix Lead Screw .....	26
2.3.3.4	Multi-cavity Molds .....	28
2.4	Multi-component Injection Molds .....	28
2.4.1	Material Pairings .....	29
2.4.2	Mold Technology .....	29
2.4.2.1	Shifting Technology .....	29
2.4.2.2	Rotary Table Technology .....	32
2.4.2.3	Sealing Slide Technology .....	35
2.4.2.4	Further Technologies .....	35
2.5	Stack Mold .....	35
2.5.1	Material Combinations .....	36
2.5.2	Hot Runner .....	37
2.5.3	Opening and Closing .....	38
2.5.4	Toggle Lever .....	40
2.5.5	Ejection .....	41
2.5.6	General Information on the Stack Mold .....	41
2.6	Further Literature .....	42
<b>3</b>	<b>Preparation .....</b>	<b>43</b>
3.1	CAD System .....	43
3.2	Data Transfer, Procedure, and Processing .....	44
3.2.1	Data Transfer .....	45
3.2.2	Formats .....	45
3.2.2.1	IGES .....	45
3.2.2.2	STEP .....	46
3.2.2.3	STL .....	46
3.2.3	Data Size .....	47
3.2.4	Shrinkage .....	48
3.2.4.1	Shrinkage (Physical Process) .....	48
3.2.4.2	Influencing Variables .....	49
3.2.5	Calculation and Impact .....	50
3.2.5.1	Free Shrinkage, Constrained Shrinkage .....	53
3.2.5.2	Warping .....	56
3.3	Specifications .....	60
3.3.1	Location of the Component inside the Injection Mold .....	60
3.3.1.1	Demolding Direction .....	61
3.3.2	Number of Cavities .....	64
3.3.3	Arrangement of Cavities .....	66

3.4	Material Selection for Injection Molds .....	71
3.5	Mold Size .....	75
3.6	Plate Thickness .....	79
3.7	Demolding .....	80
3.7.1	Basic Principle of Demolding .....	80
3.7.2	Draft Angles .....	80
3.7.2.1	Definition .....	81
3.7.2.2	Effect on the Opening of the Mold .....	82
3.7.2.3	Draft Angle in the Split Line Face .....	83
3.7.2.4	Demolding Problems and Solutions .....	85
3.8	Split Line Face .....	89
3.8.1	Plain Split Line Face .....	89
3.8.2	Contour-Forming Split Line Face .....	90
3.8.3	Jumping Split Line Face .....	90
3.8.4	Wear Plates in the Split .....	92
3.8.5	Visible Split Line .....	94
3.9	Injection .....	95
3.9.1	Injection and Feed Point .....	95
3.9.2	Simulation .....	97
3.9.3	Sprue System, Sprue Type .....	103
3.9.3.1	Cold Runner .....	104
3.9.3.2	Hot Runner .....	104
3.9.4	Runner .....	105
3.9.5	Sprue on the Part .....	107
3.9.6	Tunnel Gate .....	108
3.9.7	Film Gate .....	113
3.9.8	Diaphragm Gate .....	114
3.9.9	Hot Runner Single Nozzle .....	116
3.9.10	Hot Runner Distributor .....	118
3.9.11	Hot Runner Distribution System with Needle Valve .....	120
3.9.11.1	Integral Hinge .....	124
3.9.12	Three-Plate Mold .....	125
3.9.13	Tunnel Gate Inserts .....	128
3.10	Ventilation .....	129
3.10.1	General Information about Ventilation .....	129
3.10.2	Ventilation via Components .....	132
3.10.3	Geometric Design of Ventilation .....	134
3.11	Further Literature .....	136

<b>4</b>	<b>Components</b>	<b>137</b>
4.1	Mold Inserts/Mold Cores	137
4.1.1	Mold Inserts	137
4.1.2	Mold Cores	142
4.2	Slides	146
4.2.1	Application Areas of Slides	146
4.2.2	Design of a Slide	148
4.2.2.1	Mold Contour	149
4.2.2.2	Split Line on Slide	150
4.2.2.3	Slide Body and Guiding	153
4.2.2.4	Operation of Slides	155
4.2.2.5	Locking in the End Position	159
4.2.2.6	Cooling in Slide	163
4.2.3	Further Slide Concepts	164
4.2.3.1	Slide in Slide	165
4.2.3.2	“Backpack” Slide	167
4.3	Ejectors	169
4.3.1	Types of Ejectors	171
4.3.2	Ejectors as Auxiliary Tools	176
4.3.3	Inclined Ejectors	178
4.3.4	Stripper Plate	180
4.3.5	Two-Stage Ejectors	181
4.3.6	Collapsible Cores	184
4.3.7	Forced Demolding	185
4.4	Cooling System	185
4.4.1	Cooling Type and Auxiliary Equipment	188
4.4.1.1	Drilled Cooling	190
4.4.1.2	Redirection of Cooling Circuits	192
4.4.1.3	Copper Cores	197
4.4.1.4	Heating Cartridges	198
4.4.1.5	Connection of circuits	198
4.4.2	Connection and Sealing of Cooling Holes	199
4.5	Components and Marking	201
4.6	Surface	203
4.6.1	Rough Surface	204
4.6.2	EDM	205
4.6.3	Graining	207
4.6.4	Laser Texturing	208
4.6.5	Polishing	209

4.7	Systematic Design Approach .....	210
4.7.1	Strategy .....	210
4.7.2	Standard Parts .....	213
4.7.3	Manufactured Parts .....	214
4.8	Further Literature .....	216
<b>5</b>	<b>Assembly .....</b>	<b>217</b>
5.1	Systematic Assembly .....	217
5.2	Spotting .....	222
5.3	Connection of Components .....	224
5.4	Check the Cooling for Leaks .....	227
5.5	Further Literature .....	229
<b>6</b>	<b>Further Knowledge .....</b>	<b>231</b>
6.1	Process Chain in Mold Making .....	231
6.2	Procurement Process in Mold Making .....	233
6.2.1	Administration .....	233
6.2.2	Preparation .....	235
6.2.3	Production .....	236
6.2.4	Sampling (Trial) – Optimization .....	237
6.3	Quality Assurance .....	239
6.4	Fits and Play in the Mold: What Must Fit? .....	241
6.5	Heat Treatment .....	245
6.5.1	Annealing .....	246
6.5.2	Hardening .....	247
6.5.3	Nitriding .....	249
6.6	Coatings .....	251
6.7	Changes: What Is to Be Considered? .....	252
6.8	Further Literature .....	254
<b>7</b>	<b>The Finished Mold .....</b>	<b>255</b>
7.1	Mold Validation .....	255
7.1.1	Clamping and Connecting the Media .....	255
7.1.2	Filling of the Mold .....	258
7.1.2.1	Balancing Cavities .....	260
7.1.2.2	Optimizing the Parameters .....	262
7.1.2.3	Influence on the Injection Process .....	263

7.1.3	Parameters during Injection	264
7.1.4	Forces Acting in the Mold during the Injection Process	265
7.1.5	Initial Sample Inspection Report	266
7.2	Labels on the Mold	267
7.3	Further Literature	268
<b>8</b>	<b>Maintenance and Repair</b>	<b>269</b>
8.1	Maintenance Schedule	269
8.2	Welding	270
8.2.1	Tungsten Inert Gas Welding (TIG)	270
8.2.2	Laser Beam Welding	271
8.3	Component Replacement	272
8.4	Further Literature	273
<b>9</b>	<b>Manufacturing Technologies</b>	<b>275</b>
9.1	Milling	275
9.1.1	3-Axis Milling	277
9.1.2	4- and 5-Axis Milling	279
9.1.2.1	4-Axis Milling	279
9.1.2.2	5-Axis Milling	280
9.1.2.3	3+2-Axis Milling	281
9.1.2.4	Simultaneous 5-Axis Milling	282
9.1.3	CAM Programming	284
9.2	EDM	288
9.2.1	Sinker EDM	289
9.2.2	Wire EDM	291
9.3	Grinding/Profile Grinding	292
9.4	Drilling/Deep Hole Drilling	293
9.5	Turning	295
9.6	New Technologies	296
9.6.1	LaserCUSING®/Laser Sintering	296
9.6.2	Vacuum Soldering	297
9.7	Polishing	298
9.8	Further Literature	299



<b>10 Practical Guidelines</b> .....	<b>301</b>
10.1 Design Check List .....	303
10.2 Design Color Chart .....	304
10.3 Sequential Function Chart .....	305
10.4 Maintenance Schedule .....	306
10.5 Formulas and Calculations .....	307
<b>Index</b> .....	<b>309</b>



# 1

## Introduction

“Where do all these plastic parts actually come from? Who makes them and how are these plastic components even manufactured?” These are questions that hardly anyone asks. “What are those little curls on or in the plastic part, what are they for? Then there is a small spot that looks as if something was cut or torn.” These are all characteristics that are visible on each part and arise in the manufacturing of plastic parts. For this manufacturing technique, besides an injection molding machine and plastic granulates, an injection mold is needed.

Review your day and think about how many plastic parts you held in your hand, and then you can imagine that firstly there is an incredible number of injection molds and secondly the diversity of injection molds there must be in a variety of industries, applications, or life situations.



For each plastic part which is manufactured there is the corresponding injection mold. There are at least as many injection molds as different plastic parts, worldwide. Nevertheless every injection mold is unique and there is an unimaginable number which increases every day.

Or to put it in a different way, imagine yourself in the kitchen, bathroom, office, or sitting in the car. Now imagine all of the plastic parts gone. What remains? Not much is left that is not made of plastic.

In concrete terms: Let's start early in the morning. Before even getting up you hit the alarm button. You already have had the first contact with a plastic part. It continues when you brush your teeth. Today's toothbrushes are, although this is not easily recognizable, manufactured with very complex and complicated injection molds. The conventional toothbrushes with automatically inserted brushes are the simpler version. However, for manufacturing an electrical toothbrush, two different plastics are injected one after another in the injection mold in a very complicated procedure in order to make the rotating brushes in the small brush enclosure.

Hair dryers, coffee machines, tea kettles, refrigerators, stoves, and ovens are just a few consumer goods used in daily life. Opening the door of your car, you again have

contact with plastic parts. Without injection molds, the interior of a car is unimaginable. Seats, steering wheel, switches, buttons, handles, levers, blinds, instruments, covering, trays and so on, a countless number of injection molds are used for the manufacturing of a vehicle.

Plastics surround us in the immediate vicinity of our workplace, whether it is in the workshop, in the office or in school. It doesn't matter what you hold in your hand or use, again it's plastic parts. A computer, a keyboard, whether it is on the machine or on the desk. Everywhere there are things made of plastic, in different colors, contours, shapes, and degrees of hardness—from hard and stable printer housings to the soft and flexible protective covers for the mobile phone.

Last but not least, a child's room! Almost all children's toy boxes are full of toys made from plastic: toy blocks, board game figurines, racetracks, puppets, game consoles, etc. Plastic parts, no matter what we do or where we are, accompany us the whole day. Plastic parts are everywhere, and without them a normal life would be inconceivable.

The list goes on and on. Everyone goes through their day, consciously or unconsciously in contact with plastic parts, but no one thinks about their origin, even though there is a huge worldwide industry behind them. Not only are there manufacturers of injection molds all over the world but also large corporations that manufacture the machines for the production of the plastic parts and very large chemical companies that constantly develop and produce new plastics for different applications. Millions of people are at home in this inconspicuous world.

Through the constant development of ever improving high-quality plastics the application possibilities continue to increase. Sheet metal parts made of steel or aluminum are gradually replaced by plastic parts. Brackets made of metal used for fixing cables, fuel lines, containers, or the like in a car's engine compartment are replaced today by high-strength plastic parts.

Further evidence that this development will certainly continue is the progress in the production of bioplastics. To put it simply, for bioplastics, the petroleum used normally as raw material is replaced by biologically derived material. These oils are extracted from renewable raw materials and are also biodegradable. So far there have only been a few applications that were often only explored by scientific facilities. The whole thing is still in the stages of development. However, if only from the sustainability point of view, bioplastic is predicted to have a bright and important future.

The most significant advantage of plastic parts is that after manufacturing or the injection process a ready-to-use piece comes out of the injection molding machine. The manufacturing time for such a component is only a few seconds. This also has an impact on the much lower cost per piece. But now we come back to the contents of this book—the success of this whole process depends on a high-quality injection mold.

# 2

## Mold Types

### ■ 2.1 Simple Open/Close Mold

The open/close mold got its name from its easy movement and function when the injection mold for machining of the plastic parts is clamped onto an injection molding machine. The injection mold or the injection molding machine opens and closes without any further necessary movement taking place in the injection mold.

The entire motion sequence is called an injection cycle or just cycle. It begins with a closing of the injection mold. When it is closed, a liquid, hot plastic mass is injected into the injection mold under pressure. Now a certain amount of time must pass before the liquid plastic has cooled and solidified and the plastic part in the injection mold reaches a certain stability. The injection mold opens and the finished, still-warm plastic parts are ejected from the injection mold. When all of the movements are finished, the process starts again. For the outside observer, the machine opens and closes again and again.

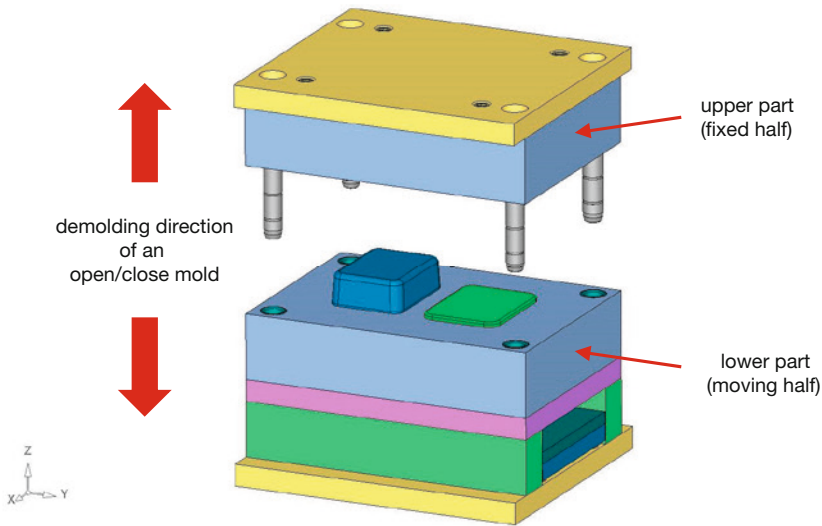


In using the term “liquid plastic”, one is referring to plasticized plastic. Plastic pellets are heated and plasticized, which means they become soft and capable of flowing. In this consistency, the plastic can be injected into the injection mold. Depending on the type and kind of plastic pellets, this vary from being highly viscous to having a water-like viscosity.

The direction in which the injection mold or the injection molding machine opens and closes is called the main demolding direction. All movements of the injection molding machine, the injection molds and the moving parts in the injection mold run in this axial direction. Depending on the component there can be additional demolding directions. This is described in Section 2.2.

The open/close mold is the simplest of all injection molds. As a result it is often the cheapest. Already in the planning and designing of plastic parts, efforts are made so that the plastic piece can be produced with this type of injection mold.

Figure 2.1 shows the demolding direction of a simple open/close mold. Both upper part (fixed half) and lower part (moving half) open and close in an axial direction. The plastic part has been designed for being produced with this specific mold in such a way that when opening the mold on the injection molding machine it is not damaged or destroyed.

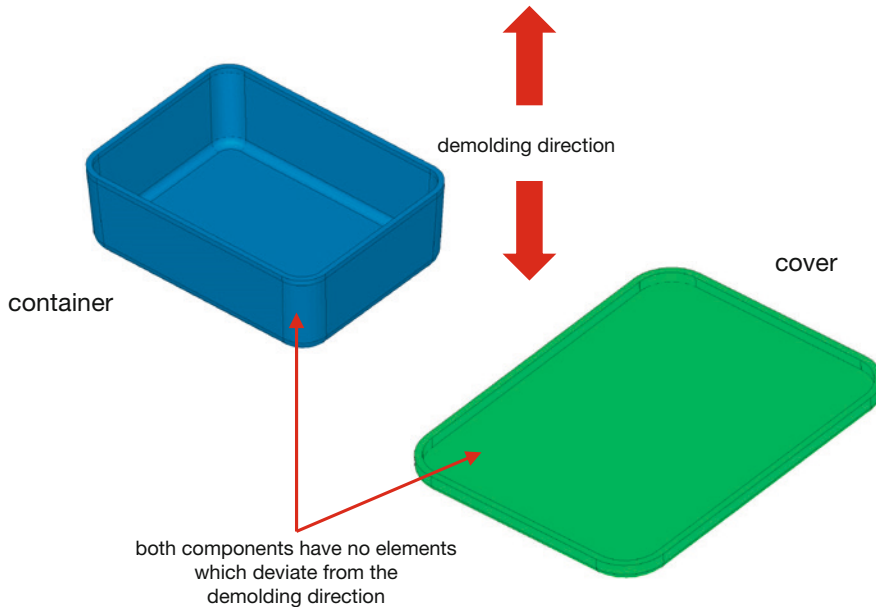


**Figure 2.1** Demolding direction

The plastic parts which are to be produced with such an injection mold have no structural elements which deviate from the main demolding direction. Cup-shaped or flat parts, for example, are manufactured with this type of mold.

A plastic part can have elements such as side openings, latches and clips, laterally protruding edges or pipes. For the demolding of these elements, moving components—called slides or inserts—are designed for the mold. In a secondary demolding direction, these elements called undercuts can be removed from the mold without damage. More on this in Section 2.2.

The previously mentioned “expanding” parts container and cover is shown in Figure 2.2 to illustrate how such plastic parts produced in an open/close mold can look.

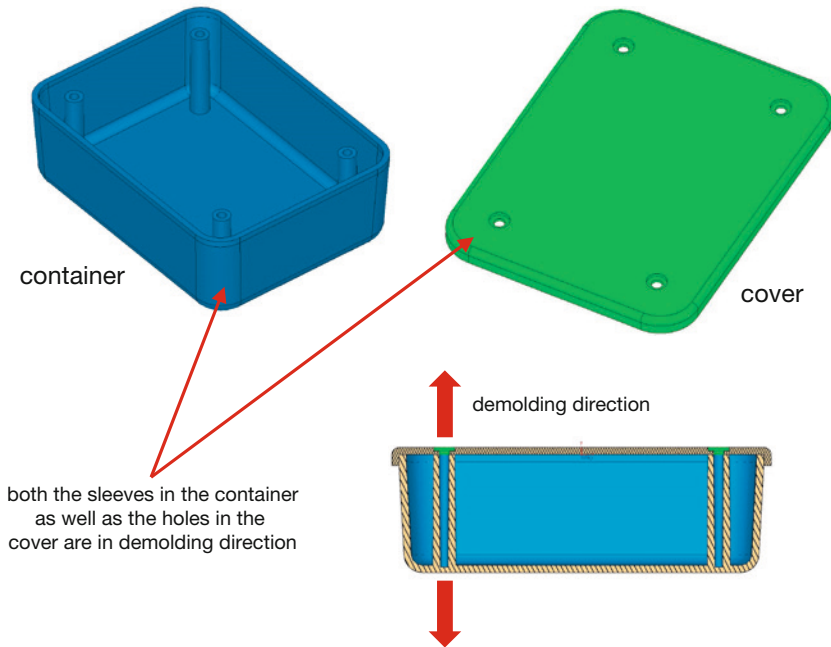


**Figure 2.2** Parts for an open/close mold

Here already is the first addition to container and cover. To connect the two and be able to close the container, a sleeve is introduced in every corner of the container and, aligning to the sleeve, a stepped bore is introduced in the cover. Now you can screw down the cover on the container with four screws.

Both the size of the injection mold as well as the open and close technique do not change despite these additions to the plastic parts. The additional elements are also in the demolding direction.

In Figure 2.3, the additional sleeves in the container and the stepped bores in the cover are shown. The demolding direction remains the same.



**Figure 2.3** Parts for the open/close mold with additional elements

### 2.1.1 Classic Structure of an Open/Close Mold

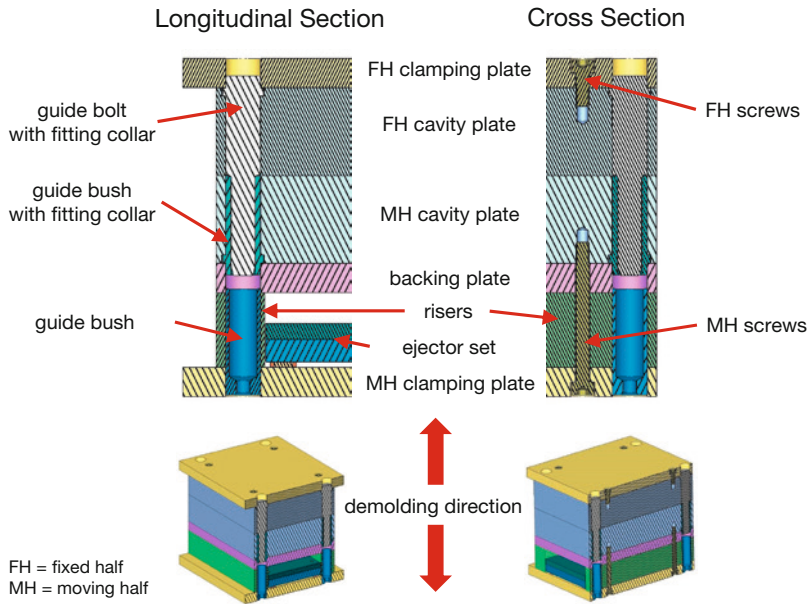
The upper part (fixed half) and the lower part (moving half) are made up of several plates and risers. Via the integrated guides, that is, bolts in the fixed half and the bushes in the moving half, the mold closes precisely.

The **fixed half** consists of the clamping plate and the cavity plate. The guide bolts are installed in the cavity plate. The guide bolts are provided at the back end with a collar, which is embedded in the cavity plate. Against the slip out of the guide bolts the clamping plate is screwed tightly with the cavity plate. The cavity plate is fixed to the mold plate via another fitting diameter at the guide bolt.

The **moving half** of a classic open/close mold is made up of the mold plate, possibly a backing plate, the risers and the lower cavity plate. The ejector set is between the risers. The guide bushes are also provided with a collar here and mounted in the cavity plate. They are secured in the moving half through the risers, which are attached, like the fixed half, via the back fitting diameter of the guide bush. The risers are again installed with the clamping plate and with the additional guide sleeves. Everything is screwed tightly together with long screws from the clamping plate through to the mold plate. This guarantees that all components are aligned and tightly connected. Ejectors are the moving parts in the injection mold that



eject or expel the plastic part after opening the mold. Ejectors are usually round pins which are installed in the ejector set. The small rings mentioned at the beginning which are usually visible on the plastic part are the imprints of these ejectors. In Figure 2.4 several longitudinal and cross sections through an injection mold are represented so that the classic structure of an open/close mold can be seen.



**Figure 2.4** Section through a mold structure



The accuracy of fit in a mold is extremely important. Without precise guiding and fixing of both mold halves they can move radially.

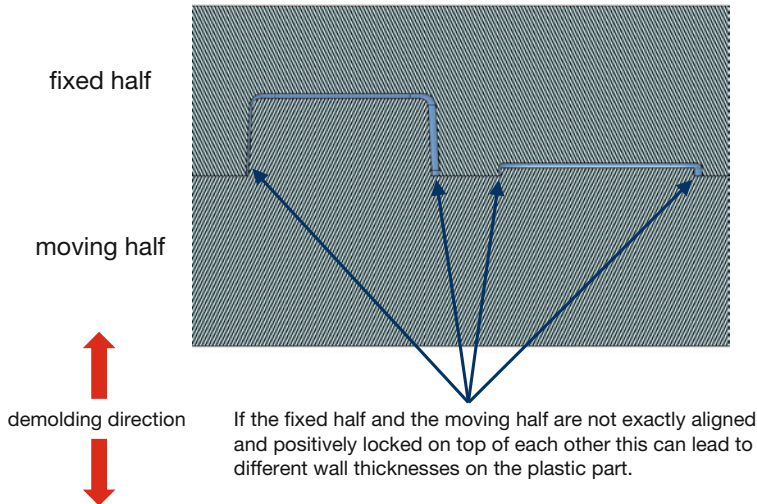
### 2.1.2 Guiding Elements

The guiding elements in an injection mold are very important. They ensure that both mold halves are already centered while closing against each other. Except in special solutions, guide bolts are built into the fixed half and guide bushes are built into the moving half. The tolerances between the cavity plates and the guide bolts and bushes are so small that they are installed with a light press fit.

The fixed half with the guiding bolts fits exactly, free of play, into the guide bushes of the moving half. Only in this way is it guaranteed that both sides fit together on

top of each other precisely and repeatedly. If this were not the case, the mold halves could move radially, which among other things can lead to different wall thicknesses in the plastic parts. This is also called mold offset.

Figure 2.5 shows what can happen when the guiding elements of an injection mold are not exactly aligned.



**Figure 2.5** Mold offset through insufficient guiding



Here are a few comparisons to get an idea of how important the accuracy of the guiding is. The tolerances between the bolt and the plate have to be so accurate that some light strikes are required when installing the bolt in the plate. If the bolt is just 0.006 mm too thick, it will be very difficult to install.

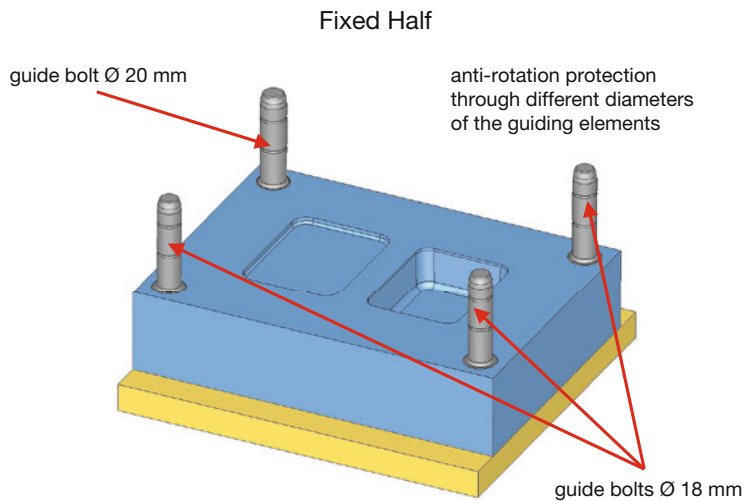
The tolerance between the guiding bolt and the guiding bush is even smaller. The difference between free-of-play movement and getting jammed is a maximum of 0.004 mm in diameter.

If the center distance between the guiding elements of the plates in the upper part and the lower part differs by more than 0.02 mm it is difficult for the mold to close.

### Anti-rotation Protection

Today nearly all injection molds are rectangular. For this reason normally four guiding elements are installed, one in every corner. To prevent a false (rotated) assembly of the fixed half and the moving half, one of the guides is smaller or bigger than the other three.

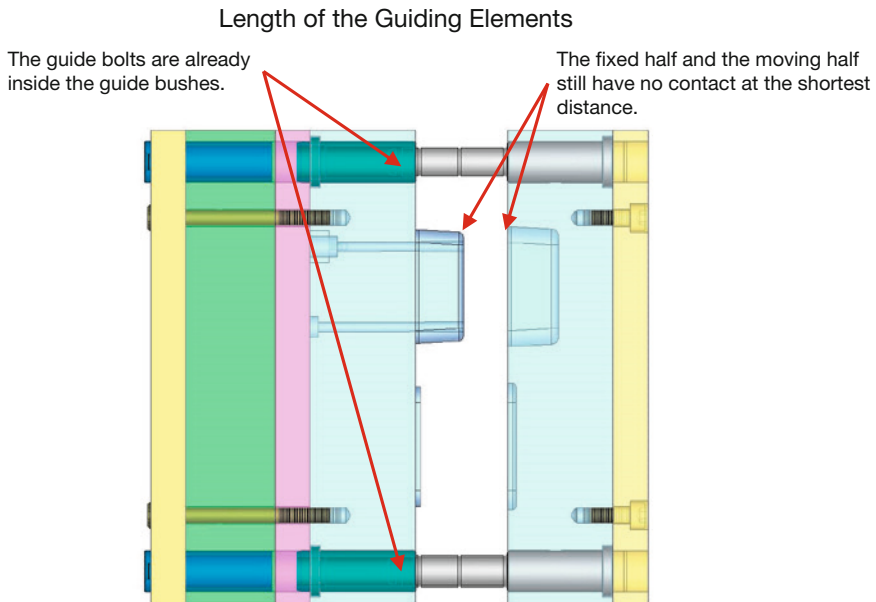
In Figure 2.6 the fixed half of a mold is displayed: three guide bolts with diameter ( $\varnothing$ ) 18 mm and one guide bolt with  $\varnothing$  20 mm. This should prevent a false (rotated) assembly of the fixed half on the moving half.



**Figure 2.6** Anti-rotation protection in mold making

The following is important for the length selection of the guide bolts: Before the mold contours of the two halves approach, the guides must already fit into one another. If the guides are too short, the mold contour could be damaged during the closing action of the mold halves.

In Figure 2.7 it is clearly visible that the guides are already sliding into one another before both sides can have contact.



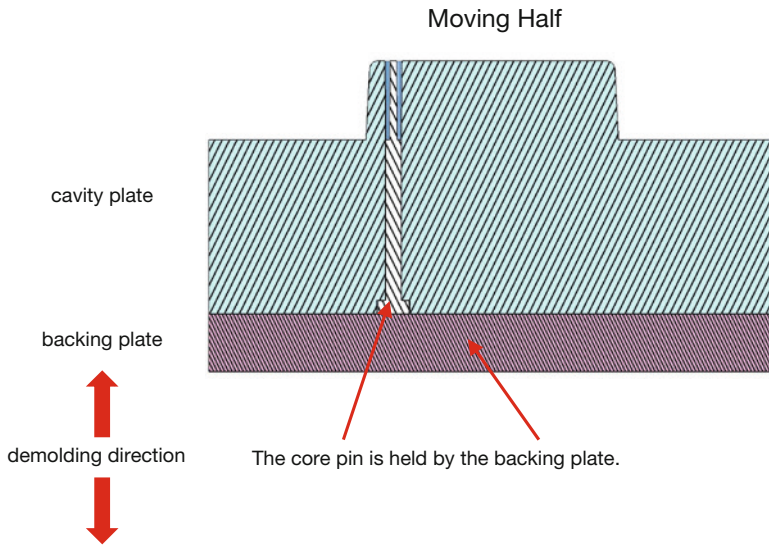
**Figure 2.7** Length selection of guiding elements

### 2.1.3 Backing Plate

These are not used very often in a very simple injection mold. They are installed when a complex cooling, a core pin or additional components that have no space in the cavity plate or pass through the cavity plate and should be held by the backing plate, are required in an injection mold.

In Figure 2.8 a core pin is shown which is installed in the cavity plate and is held by the backing plate.

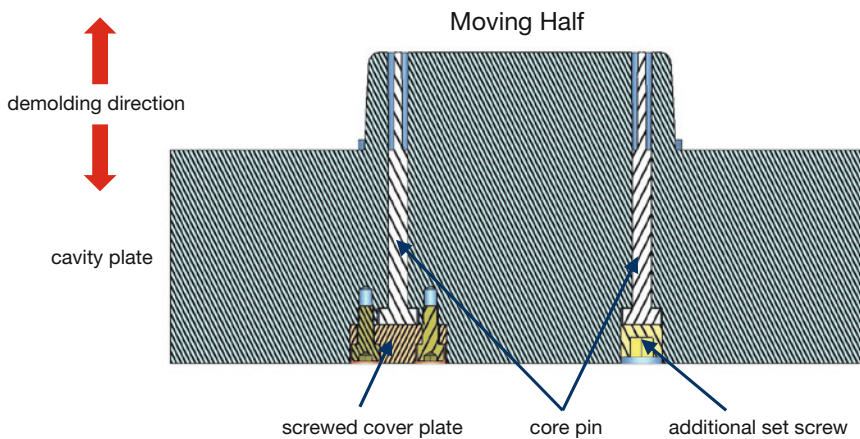
The use of a backing plate has more functions and advantages here. One of the advantages is that the backing plate is installed under the cavity plate and is level. Therefore all the components which are attached to the backing plate are geometrically determined and on the same level. A further advantage is the manufacturing costs. To achieve a similar fixing of such a core pin, an additional installation of another cover from below would be necessary. A possibility here is a small built-in cover plate or a set screw which fixes the core pin.



**Figure 2.8** The backing plate fixes and holds the core pin

Both alternatives cause higher production costs. If they are used several times in a mold, it makes sense to install a backing plate.

In Figure 2.9 two possible alternatives for the fixing of core pins are shown.



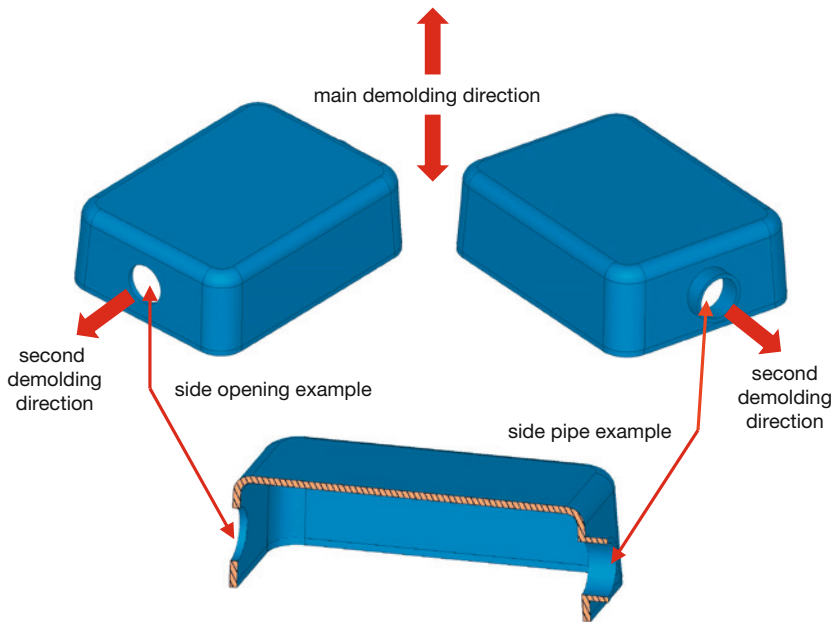
**Figure 2.9** Alternatives for fixing

Further additional and basic designs, functions, elements and components of an injection mold are discussed individually in the following sections of this book.

## ■ 2.2 Molds with Moving Elements

Almost everything that makes an injection mold complicated and expensive originates from the geometry of the subsequent plastic parts. Therefore attention should already be paid in the planning and design of this plastic part that everything that should later contain the plastic part is also to be realized in the injection mold. This is often a big challenge in the development, that is, the design of plastic parts. When design and technology meet, sometimes one has to compromise.

### 2.2.1 Undercut



**Figure 2.10** Additional demolding directions

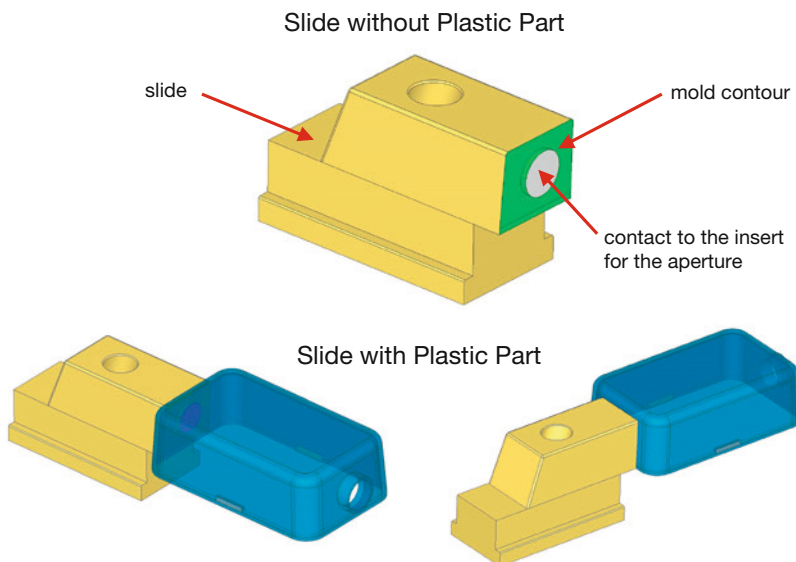
The next level of difficulty in plastic parts is elements which cannot be demolded in the main demolding direction like in an open/close mold. These elements, which are troublesome during demolding, are called undercuts. They need to be released or demolded in an additional demolding direction. For this purpose moveable components, such as slides, core pins, ejectors for inclined ejection units or inserts, are used in the injection mold. They support the plastic piece so that it can be better demolded and ejected.

In Figure 2.10 two possible elements, a side bore hole and a side pipe, are seen on our component. Both elements are an undercut on the plastic part and must be released via the second demolding direction. Only this way can the plastic parts be ejected from the mold without damage. For these two examples slides are used to do this.

### 2.2.2 Slide

When implementing these side openings the open/close mold becomes a mold with slides. Slides are moving components inside the injection mold. One or more parts of the mold contour are incorporated into these slides. The slide itself moves away from the plastic part during or after the opening of the mold in an additional demolding direction. Through this movement the undercuts are released before the plastic part is ejected from the injection mold. The required path is calculated and defined in advance. It must be large enough so that the plastic piece drops out of or can be removed from the injection mold without damage after the ejection.

In Figure 2.11 the slide for demolding the side opening on our container is shown. In the front area of the slide a part of the mold contour of the plastic part is incorporated. The round surface in front has contact with the fixed insert when the mold is closed and is injected. During injection, this contact prevents that the plastic covers this spot and thus forms the bore holes in the plastic part. In technical language, this contact point is also called an aperture.



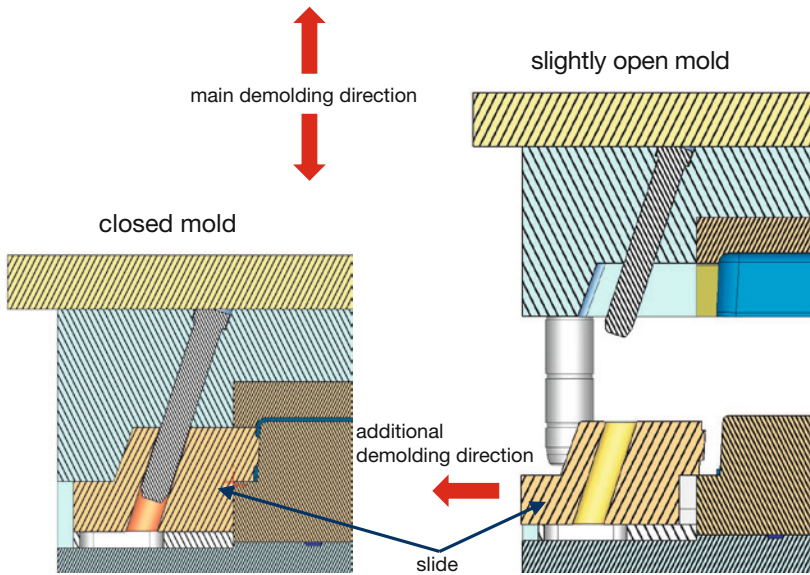
**Figure 2.11** Slide with and without plastic part



### 2.2.3 Slide Operation

To move this slide there are two possibilities. The first possibility is that the slide is connected with a hydraulic cylinder which is in turn screwed tightly to the injection mold. The slide is moved via this cylinder. For this solution the cylinder covers a clearly defined distance. It is bought and installed as a standard part. Find out more in Section 4.2. The second option is the forced control through an inclined pin. The pin is installed with a defined inclination on the fixed half of the injection mold. The front part of the inclined pin submerges in the moving slide. When the mold opens in the main demolding direction, through the resulting movement this inclined pin moves the slide in an additional demolding direction. There are additional details in Section 4.2.

Figure 2.12 displays the closed mold on the left and the slightly open mold on the right. On the slightly open mold the inclined pin has moved the slide in an additional demolding direction to the end position.



**Figure 2.12** Closed and slightly open mold



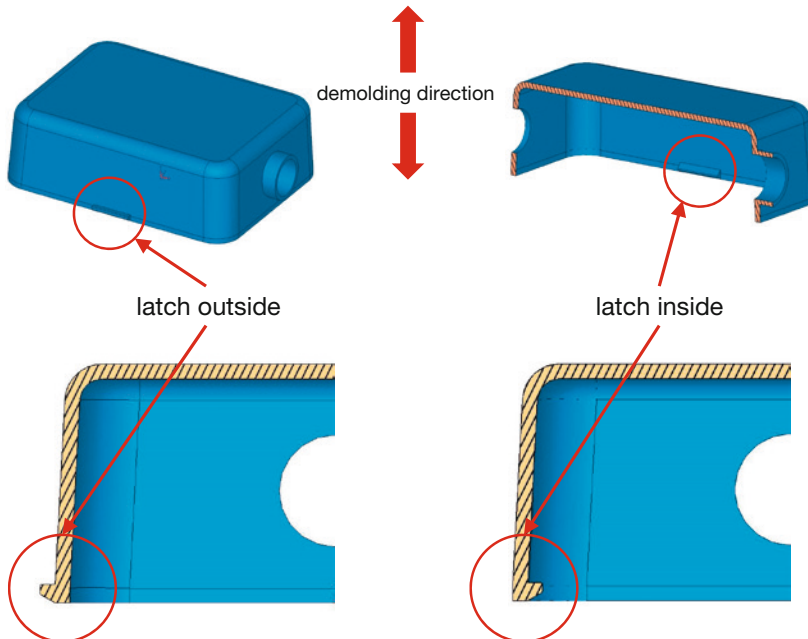
### 2.2.4 Latch, Clip Lock

Even a very small and harmless looking clip or catch can have a major impact on the design and on the cost of an injection mold.

The simplest application is a clip for snapping the cover onto the container. Clips or catches are also used to connect several plastic parts or to fix them together in an entire assembly group. The assembly of plastic parts has to be done very fast today and if possible automated. The use of such clip connections on plastic parts has, among others, the advantage that they can be quickly and easily installed without further hand tools.

For the size, type, complexity and also for the costs of an injection mold, it can be very important if the clip is attached outside or inside of the plastic part. This should be considered during the planning of the plastic part. If the clip or latch is outside of the component, it is in the demolding direction and thus there is no undercut. Consequently, it is demoldable without further action.

Figure 2.13 shows both variations of a latch, inside and outside. The outer latch is open above, thus enabling a problem-free demolding. The inner latch is not open in the demolding direction. It will be damaged or even torn away during ejection. Consequently, one must think of how to prevent this.



**Figure 2.13** Outside and inside latch

# Index

## Symbols

2.5-axis milling 277  
2-C mold 28  
2D drawings 43  
3+2-axis milling 281  
3-axis milling 278  
3-C or 4-C mold 29  
3D data 43  
3D design 43  
4-axis milling 279  
5-axis machining center 276  
5-axis milling 280  
5-axis simultaneous hobbing 282  
5-axis simultaneous milling 282

## A

abrasive plastics 73  
adapter nozzle 118  
additional centering 94  
additional demolding directions 3  
additional molding directions 13  
air valve 86  
aluminum 71  
annealing 246  
aperture 13  
arrangement 70

arrangement of cavities 66  
assembly 217, 220  
auxiliary ejector 112  
auxiliary rib 111

## B

backing plate 6, 10  
“backpack” slide 167  
baffle 189, 193  
balancing cavities 260  
ball-actuated puller 127  
ball catch 162  
beryllium copper 146, 197  
bioplastics 2  
blade ejector 133, 172  
blank 29, 200  
blockings 147  
bore pattern, corrections 144

## C

cable 224  
CAD  
– program 43  
– system 43  
CAD/CAM system 43, 213  
CAD data 284  
CAD model 284  
CAD system 284

CAM programming 284  
catch 162  
cavity plate 6  
cavity pressure 77  
CE certification mark 235  
central clamping 67  
central ejector 177  
change core 144  
changes on an injection mold 252  
check lists 301  
clamping claws 256  
clamping plate 6, 33  
claws 88  
clip lock 15  
closing force 67, 77  
cloud 45  
CNC program 275  
coatings 251  
cold runner 104  
cold runner distributor 105  
cold runner distributor cross section 106  
cold slug 109  
collapsible core 23, 184  
color chart 301  
complexity of the plastic part 65  
confirmation of order 234  
connect circuits 198  
connection 69

connectors of components 224  
 constrained shrinkage 53  
 continuous production 73  
 contour changes 143  
 contoured ejector 175  
 contour-forming split line  
   face 90  
 controlled needle 120  
 converting 45  
 cool core 143  
 cooling 140, 188  
   – check for leaks 227  
 cooling circuits 188  
 cooling circuits, redirect 192  
 cooling connectors 226  
 cooling hole, sealing 141  
 cooling in slide 163  
 cooling system 185  
 cooling time 262  
 copper 205, 289  
 copper alloy 143  
 copper cores 197  
 core pins 10, 12  
   – fixing 11  
 core pullers 256  
 corner warping 59  
 costs 15, 18, 65, 117, 119  
   – determine 253  
 cotter 76  
 cotter surface 160  
 cup-shaped plastic parts 4  
 cycle 30  
 cycle determined 70  
 cycle time 262  
 cylinders 155

## D

data  
   – amount 44  
 data size 43, 47  
 data transfer 44

date stamp 202  
 dead-end recess 110  
 dead spots 118  
 deep hole drills 294  
 deflection elements 198  
 delay 166  
 demolding 12, 80  
 demolding direction 4, 61  
   – additional 3, 13  
   – main 3, 12, 169  
   – second 13  
   – secondary 4  
 demolding problems 85  
 design 43  
 design discussion 235  
 design elements 43  
 de-spindling 23, 24  
 diaphragm gate 114  
 dielectric 288  
 DIN 912 138  
 DIN 16742 53  
 DIN 66217 277, 279  
 direct injection 68  
 displaced air 129  
 distributor 118  
 dome 62, 81  
 dosing 259  
 draft angle in the split 83  
 draft angles 80  
 drilled cooling 190  
 drilling 293  
 durability 137  
 DXF 45

## E

economic calculation 65, 119  
 edge length 19  
 EDM 87, 205  
 EDM scale 94  
 ejection unit 257  
 ejector as tool 176

ejector base plate 170  
 ejector bolts 255  
 ejector cover plate 170  
 ejector for inclined surface 12  
 ejector guiding 128  
 ejector imprints 85  
 ejector pins with ball heads 126  
 ejectors 16, 62, 85, 169  
 ejector set 6, 16, 170  
 electrode 205  
 end position 14, 94, 161  
 end-position locking 162  
 end-position locking security 159, 179  
 energy efficiency 257  
 engineer's blue 222  
 entrapped air 97  
 error quota 239  
 etched pattern 94  
 etching process 207  
 external thread 19, 20

## F

feeder 37  
 feed point 95, 130  
 feed point location 96  
 fiber glass 49  
 fillers 49  
 filling simulation 97  
 filling study 122, 259  
 film gate 113  
 final assembly 236  
 finishing processing 282  
 finish milling 281  
 fit 219  
   – accuracy 242  
 fits 241  
 fitting 199  
 fixed half 4, 6  
 fixing of core pins 11  
 flat plastic parts 4  
 flow line 97, 121

forced control 14, 21, 155  
 forced demolding 17, 185  
 forced removal 17  
 forces in mold 265  
 formulas and calculations 302  
 free shrinkage 53  
 ftp server 45

## G

gate. *See* feed point  
 gear 35, 39  
 gear rack 23, 25, 28  
 gear wheel 25, 26  
 glass beads 49  
 graining 207  
 graphite 205, 289  
 grease 154  
 grease pockets 154  
 grinding 292  
 guide bushes 6  
 guide nut 25, 26  
 guides 7  
 guide shoe 38, 40  
 guide thread 25  
 guiding 153  
 guiding bolts 7  
 guiding bolts, length selection 9  
 guiding in injection mold 153

## H

hard components 30  
 hardening 137, 247  
 hard-soft 29  
 heat exchange 186  
 heating cartridges 198  
 heat pipes 196  
 heat treatment 245  
   – types 246  
 high-helix lead screw 23, 26, 28

high-helix nut 26  
 high-helix thread drive 27  
 holding pressure 49, 57, 258  
 hoses 224  
 hot runner 37, 104  
 hot runner distribution system with needle valve 120  
 hot runner distributor 118  
 hot runner single nozzle 116  
 hot runner with needle valve 32  
 hydraulic connectors 226  
 hydraulic cylinder 14, 25, 158, 167  
 hydraulic unscrewing unit 24

## I

IGES 45  
 impact wall 110  
 inclined contour ejectors 219  
 inclined ejector 16, 169, 175, 178  
 inclined pin 14, 21, 155, 166  
 inclined pin/cotter surface relationship 157  
 inclined pin, mechanical 156  
 initial sample 267  
 initial sample inspection report 237  
 initial sample report 266  
 injection burr 260  
 injection cycle 3  
 injection mould 1  
 injection moulding machine 1  
 injection pressure 49, 77  
 inserts 12, 137  
 installation 215

  – from inside to outside 215  
 installation height 255  
 installation height, higher 42  
 integral hinge 121, 124  
 integral joint 124  
 internal mold pressure 265  
 internal thread 19, 23

## J

jet 110  
 jumping split line face 90

## L

label on mold 267  
 laser beam welding 271  
 LaserCUSING 296  
 laser sintering 296  
 laser texture 208  
 latch 15  
 leachate 73  
 lifting bridge 256  
 limit switch 224  
 locating ring 255  
 locks 94, 266  
 longitudinal direction 52  
 loose fits 241  
 lubrication 154

## M

machine base 38, 40  
 machine size 65, 75  
 machine sprue bush 37  
 main demolding direction 3, 83, 169  
 maintenance  
   – ongoing 269  
   – predictive 270

maintenance schedule 269, 302  
 male connector 224  
 manifold 118  
 manufactured parts 214  
 manufacturing costs 10  
 manufacturing technologies 275  
 marking 201  
 marking type 202  
 material accumulation 70  
 material pairings 29  
 material selection 48  
 material selection for injection mold 71  
 measuring pressure 227  
 melting temperature 118  
 melt temperature 263  
 microstructure, changes 246  
 milestone 236  
 milled profile 87  
 milled structure 204  
 milling 87, 275  
 milling direction 87  
 milling head 281  
 milling machine 277  
 milling paths 286  
 mirror polishing 299  
 mission statement 239  
 mold contour 13, 149  
 mold core in slides 148  
 mold cores 23, 142  
 mold documentation 235  
 mold for thread 19  
 mold halves 8  
 molding shrinkage 50  
 mold insert  
   – divide 137  
   – edge 139  
 mold inserts 137  
 mold locking device 256  
 mold offset 8  
 mold plan 257

mold related dimensions 53  
 mold size 18, 19, 75  
 mold split 89  
 mold temperature 49, 98, 263  
 mold types 3  
 mold with moveable elements 12, 23  
 mold with rotary plate 32  
 mold with slides 13  
 motion sequence 3, 40, 257  
 moveable components 12  
 moving half 4, 6  
 multi-cavity mold 28, 69  
 multi-component injection molds 28, 35

## N

NC data 43  
 neutral data format 44  
 nitriding 249  
 non-mold related dimensions 53  
 nozzle radius 255  
 number of cavities 64, 75

## O

oblong hole 166  
 offset split 94  
 open/close mold 3  
 opening and closing 38  
 optimizing of parameters 262  
 order 234  
 O-ring seal 140, 218, 228  
 output quality 64, 66, 71  
 over injection 67

## P

parameter 257  
 pilot drill 294  
 plastic granulates 1  
 plastic parts 1  
 plastic suitable design 61, 80  
 plate thickness 79  
 pocket bottom 218  
 polishing 87, 209, 298  
 post processor 287  
 post shrinkage 50  
 practical guidelines 301  
 precision 94, 241  
 press fits 241  
 process chain 231  
 procurement process 233  
 production costs 11  
 production cycle, typical 258  
 profile grinding 293  
 projected surface 160  
 pulling ejector 169  
 push back pin 176  
 push-in connection 199  
 pushing ejector 170

## Q

quality assurance 239  
 quick connect couplers 199, 226

## R

ramp 151, 242  
 recycling 96  
 release 238  
 repairs 272  
 replacement parts 270  
 residual cooling time 264  
 resulting movement 14, 16

ribs 62, 81, 133  
 right hand principle 279  
 ring gate 115  
 risers 6  
 rotary plate 33  
 rotary table technology 32  
 roughing 281  
 rough surface 204  
 runner 69, 97, 105, 126

## S

sample mold 71, 137  
 screw 258  
 screw cap 20  
 screw coupling 20  
 screwed-in core 146  
 screwing movement 23, 24  
 screws 6  
 seal 33  
 sealing plug 199  
 sealing point 259  
 sealing slide 35  
 self-locking effect 138  
 semi-finished parts 33  
 sequential function chart 301  
 serial mold 137  
 server 45  
 service life 71  
 set screw 10  
 shear forces 147  
 shifting technology 29  
 shrinkage 48, 61, 97  
 side opening 13  
 silicone 50  
 simulation 56, 96, 97  
 simulation program 56  
 sinker EDM 289  
 sink marks 146  
 sleeve ejector 131, 173  
 slide 12, 21, 76, 91, 146  
 – split line 150

slide body 153  
 slide design 148  
 slide guide 22, 220  
 slide in slide 165  
 slide lock technology 35  
 slide operation 14, 155  
 slide width 155  
 sliding guides 38  
 smallest draft angle 81  
 soft components 29, 34  
 soft material 29  
 spacing rollers 80  
 specifications 60  
 spindle drive 27  
 spiral core 195  
 split 89, 222  
 split edges on insert 93  
 split line  
 – visible 94  
 split line face  
 – contour-forming 90  
 – jumping 90  
 – plain 89  
 split line faces, two 35  
 split line on slide 150  
 split line surface 22  
 spotting 222  
 spotting edge 223  
 spring ejector 175  
 spring in slide 161  
 sprue 67, 69, 96  
 sprue ejector 177  
 sprue length 128  
 sprue line 96  
 sprue on the part 107  
 sprue picker 96, 125  
 sprue system 103  
 sprue type 103  
 stack mold 35, 65  
 stainless steel 74  
 standard parts 213  
 standards 240  
 STEP 44, 46  
 STL 46  
 stress whitening 85

stripper plate 180, 185  
 surface 63, 87, 94, 203  
 surface grinding 293  
 surface modelling software 45

## T

talc 49  
 technical specification 235  
 temperature balance 117, 119, 185, 263  
 temperature balance of the mold 49  
 temperature of the liquid plastic 49  
 tempering temperature 247  
 T-guiding 153  
 thermal sensor 224  
 thread halves 20  
 three plate mold 125  
 TIG welding 270  
 tilting rotary table 283  
 TiN coating 251  
 toggle lever 40  
 tolerances 7, 53  
 transfer point 37  
 transport bridge 225  
 transverse direction 52  
 transverse hole 140  
 triangular facets 47  
 tunnel gate 96, 108  
 tunnel gate inserts 128  
 tunnel in the fixed half 108, 109  
 turning 295  
 two-component injection mold 28  
 two-stage ejector 181  
 two units 30

**U**

undercut 12, 16, 20  
unscrewing movement 23  
unscrewing unit 28  
USB memory stick 238  
USB stick 45

**V**

vacuum 82, 86, 88, 139  
vacuum hardening 247  
vacuum soldering 297  
validation 231, 255

VDI 3400 205, 289  
ventilation 129, 139, 150, 176, 263  
ventilation channel 132  
ventilation insert 134  
ventilation in the split 135  
ventilation on ejector 135  
ventilation via components 132  
Vickers hardness 250  
visible face 63  
visible split line 94  
vision 239  
visual inspection 227  
volumetric filling 259

**W**

wall thickness 8, 49, 58  
warping 56, 97  
wear 272  
wear plates 92, 222  
welding 270  
weld penetration 270  
whip gate 128  
wire EDM 288, 291  
without damage 62  
wrong side 87