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Microstructural characterization is usually achieved by allowing some form of probe to interact with a carefully prepared specimen. The most commonly used probes are visible light, X-ray radiation, a high-energy electron beam, or a sharp, flexible needle. These four types of probe form the basis for optical microscopy, X-ray diffraction, electron microscopy, and scanning probe microscopy.

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io an introduction to the expertise involved in assessing the microstructure of engineering materials and to the experimental met