
Supplementary information

Spontaneous charging affects the motion of sliding drops

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Spontaneous charging affects the motion of sliding drops

Xiaomei Li¹, Pravash Bista¹, Amy Z. Stetten¹, Henning Bonart^{1,2}, Maximilian T. Schür², Steffen Hardt², Francisco Bodziony³, Holger Marschall³, Alexander Saal¹, Xu Deng⁴, Rüdiger Berger¹, Stefan A.L. Weber^{1,5*}, Hans-Jürgen Butt^{1*}

¹ Max Planck Institute for Polymer Research, Ackermannweg 10, 55128 Mainz, Germany

² Institute for Nano- and Microfluidics, Technische Universität Darmstadt, Alarich-Weiss-Straße 10, 64287 Darmstadt, Germany

³ Computational Multiphase Flows, Technische Universität Darmstadt, Alarich-Weiss-Straße 10, 64287 Darmstadt, Germany

⁴ Institute of Fundamental and Frontier Sciences, University of Electronic Science and Technology of China, Chengdu, China.

⁵ Institute of Physics, Johannes Gutenberg University, Staudingerweg 7, 55128 Mainz, Germany.

Email address of corresponding authors:

Hans-Jürgen Butt: butt@mpip-mainz.mpg.de

Stefan A.L. Weber: webers@mpip-mainz.mpg.de

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SI 1. Viscous dissipation due to hydrodynamic flow in the drop

The total viscous force of a sliding drop is commonly split in two components. One comes from the viscous dissipation in the bulk, F_b , the other is concentrated at the wedge, F_w . An upper limit for bulk viscous dissipation can be estimated by replacing a drop with its real 3D shape by drop with vertical side having a base area of $\pi lw/2$ and a height H . We assume that the bottom area of the drop is stationary (no slip) and that the top area at height H is sliding with $2U$. Twice the velocity to ensure that the center moves with U . Then, the bulk viscous force is:

$$F_b \approx \eta \frac{\pi lw}{2H} U \quad (S1)$$

This is more an upper limit. Le Grand, Daerr & Limat use $F_v = \eta UV^{1/3}$ ¹. Kim, Lee & Kang apply $F_v = \eta \pi r_d^2 U / H$ ². Here, V is the volume of the drop and r_d is the radius of the contact area of a drop, which, for simplicity, is assumed to have a circular contact radius.

In addition to bulk viscous dissipation, there is viscous dissipation in the wedge region²⁻¹⁰. Since we observe the shape of drops with a camera at a resolution of $\approx 10 \mu\text{m}$, we detect macroscopic contact angles $\Theta_a(U)$ and $\Theta_r(U)$. Viscous dissipation in the wedge happens at a shorter length scale and manifests itself in an increase of $\Theta_a(U)$ and a decrease of $\Theta_r(U)$. Therefore, it has been already included in Eq. (1).

SI 2. Experimental setup and image analysis

The experimental setup is shown in Figure S1. To extract L , $\Theta_a(L)$, $\Theta_r(L)$, and w from the videos, we used and adapted the freely available drop shape analysis from MATLAB (DSaFM) originally developed by Andersen & Taboryski¹¹ (for details see¹²). In a first step, images without a drop and the images with complete drops are identified. The images without a drop are used to extract the tilt angle. The images with a complete drop were corrected by subtracting the background and then rotating into a horizontal drop. Then the contour, front edge position and rear edge position of the drops were detected with sub-pixel precision. By the distance between rear edge and front edge, we calculated the length of the drop from side view and the width of the drop from front view. Afterwards, the image was divided into the front half and the rear half of the drop to further analyse the advancing and receding contact angles and the respective velocity. The velocities of both sides were calculated by the rear and front edge point moving distance in each frame, and we use the average value of the velocities of both sides as the final drop velocity. Dynamic contact angles were determined by applying a 4th order polynomial fit to the counter of drop in each image. To get the height of drops, we employ a free software named “Tracker” (<https://github.com/OpenSourcePhysics/tracker>). By defining the distance between the above drop edges and the highest point of the drop as the drop height, then setting the highest point of a drop as the tracking point, we got the real-time height of drops. All measurements were conducted at a temperature of $20 \pm 1^\circ\text{C}$ and a humidity of 15-30%.

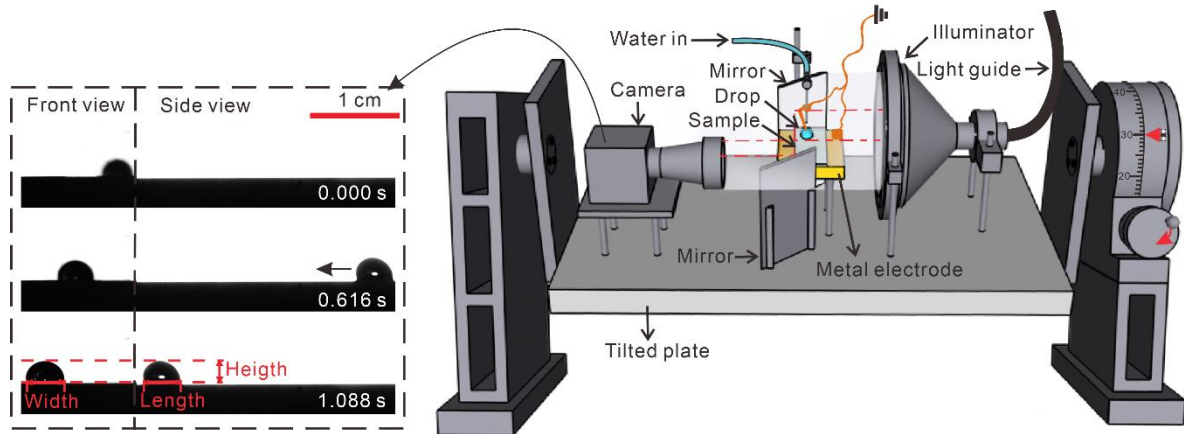


Figure S1. Experimental setup. Water drops were automatically placed from a grounded syringe needle which was connected to a peristaltic pump onto the top of the tilted plate at fixed time intervals of 1.3 s. They contacted a grounded electrode and then started to move down the plate. The slide length and time were set to zero when drops detached from the electrode. At this point they unavoidably already had a velocity U_0 . Sliding drops were imaged with a camera in side and front view by using two parallel mirrors. From side-view images, the positions of the front and rear contact lines, drop velocity, dynamic advancing Θ_a , receding contact angles Θ_r and the length of the drops were determined. For details about data processing, we refer to¹².

SI 3. Static advancing and receding contact angles

Table S1. Receding Θ_r^0 and advancing contact angles Θ_a^0 and contact angle hysteresis, $\Delta\Theta = \Theta_a^0 - \Theta_r^0$ for the hydrophobic samples studied.

Coating	Substrates	Name of surfaces	Θ_r^0 (°)	Θ_a^0 (°)	$\Delta\Theta$ (°)
PFOTS	Si	PFOTS-on-Si	87 ± 2	117 ± 2	30
	1 mm SiO ₂	PFOTS-on-1mm-SiO ₂	85 ± 3	115 ± 2	30
	5 mm SiO ₂	PFOTS-on-5mm-SiO ₂	86 ± 3	116 ± 3	30
Polystyrene (20 nm)	Gold	PS-on-gold	80 ± 1	97 ± 1	17
	1 mm SiO ₂	PS-on-1mm-SiO ₂	77 ± 2	93 ± 1	16
	5 mm SiO ₂	PS-on-5mm-SiO ₂	78 ± 2	95 ± 1	17
Teflon AF 1600 (60 nm)	Gold	Teflon-on-gold	109 ± 3	122 ± 2	13
	1 mm SiO ₂	Teflon-on-1mm-SiO ₂	110 ± 2	122 ± 1	12
	5 mm SiO ₂	Teflon-on-5mm-SiO ₂	110 ± 1	121 ± 1	11
PDMS brushes	Si	PDMS-on-Si	88 ± 1	105 ± 1	17
	1 mm SiO ₂	PDMS-on-1mm-SiO ₂	86 ± 2	105 ± 1	19
	5 mm SiO ₂	PDMS-on-5mm-SiO ₂	87 ± 1	102 ± 1	15
Perfluoro-decanethiols	Gold	Thiols-on-gold	95 ± 2	115 ± 3	20

SI 4. Scanning force microscope imaging

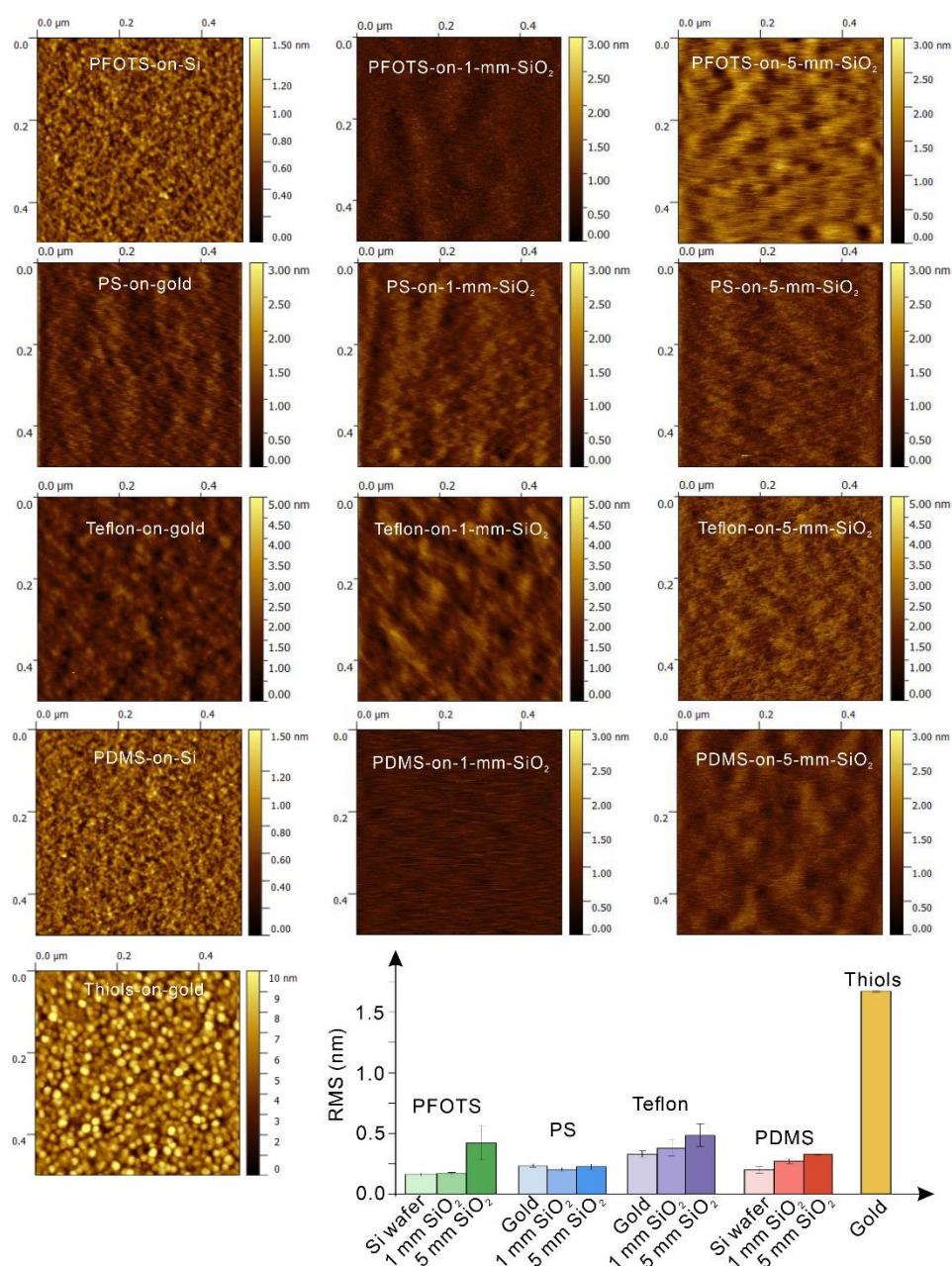


Figure S2. SFM tapping mode images of all hydrophobic surfaces. Note: The RMS errors come from three measurements on different positions and different samples.

SI 5. The relative permittivity of the surfaces

To check how the polymer coating on the substrate affects the permittivity, we measured the capacitance (C) of a 1 mm SiO_2 substrate and 1 mm SiO_2 with 20 nm PS, 200 nm PS and 60 nm Teflon AF in a defined area (A) of 0.0005 m^2 and 0.001 m^2 (figure S3 A). We measured two samples for each surface and 10 different positions on the samples to obtain the average capacitance of each sample at 1 kHz with 1 V amplitude. By equation of $\epsilon_s = \frac{Cd}{A\epsilon_0}$ (d is the substrate thickness; $\epsilon_0 = 8.85 \times 10^{-12} \text{ F/m}$ is the vacuum permittivity), we calculated the relative permittivity of the surfaces. From figure S3 B, we infer that the measured permittivity of 1 mm SiO_2 with PS and Teflon AF coating is the same as the one without coating, within the uncertainty given by the error bars. That was 3.7 ± 0.2 , which is also similar to the value reported by the supplier. Thus, the polymer films have no influence on the overall capacitance is, however, not surprising, since the thickness of the coating is at least by a factor of 5000 lower than the substrate thickness.

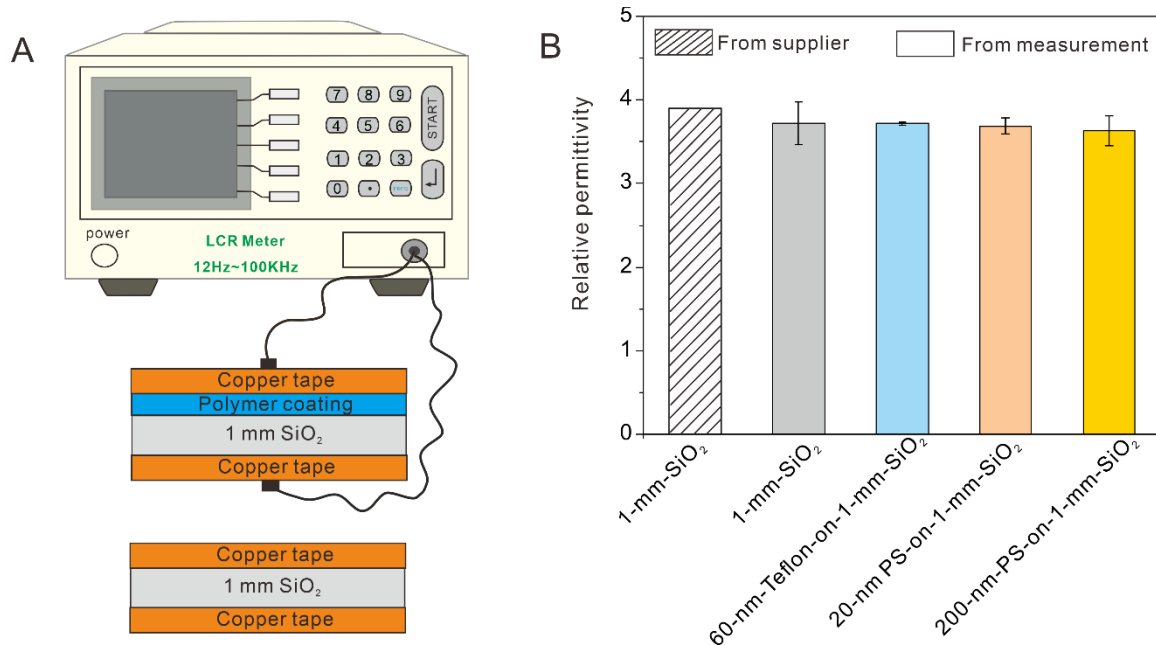


Figure S3. Relative permittivity of the surfaces. (A) Schematic of the method to measure the capacitance of the substrates. (B) The relative permittivity of 1 mm SiO_2 and 1 mm SiO_2 with coatings of 20 nm PS, 200 nm PS and 60 nm Teflon AF.

SI 6. Stability of the surfaces

To quantify the stability of the hydrophobic surfaces, we carried out ellipsometry measurements (Ellipsometer: Nanofilm EP3). We checked the film thickness before and after drops sliding. Since the difference in index of refraction between SiO_2 and the silane layer is quite low, the experiments were done on Si wafers. The natural oxide layers on our wafers were 1.9 ± 0.3 nm thick. After silanation with PFOTS and rinsing with ethanol to remove unbound silane layers, the thickness increased to 2.9 ± 0.5 nm, indicating that the silanes formed a mono- or bilayer, but no multilayer. After 1000 drops had slid on the surface, we did not see the change on thickness.

We also tried X-ray photoelectron spectroscopy (XPS: Kratos AXIS Ultra^{DLD}) measurements before and after exposition to water. We failed to detect any significant difference.

A much more sensitive test are the tilted plane experiments themselves. Thus, we measured drop velocity, $U(L)$, advancing contact angle, $\Theta_a(L)$, and receding contact angle, $\Theta_r(L)$, of 1000 drops sliding on the reference surfaces with a drop interval of 1.3 s; U , Θ_a and Θ_r are the relevant parameters for force calculations. The results show that $U(L)$, $\Theta_a(L)$, and $\Theta_r(L)$ are indistinguishable for the first and all following drops (Figure S4). Thus, all coatings on Si wafers or gold have stable wettability properties even after 1000 water drops.

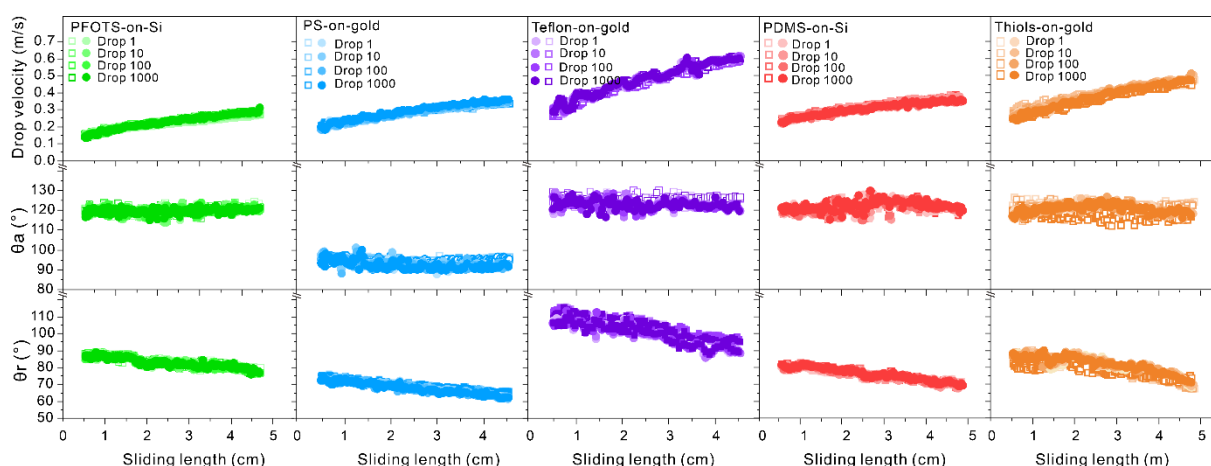


Figure S4. Drop velocities, advancing contact angles (θ_a) and receding contact angles (θ_r) versus slide length of drop 1, 10, 100, and 1000 drops sliding on 50° tilted PFOTS-on Si, PS-on-gold, Teflon-on gold, PDMS-on-Si and thiols-on-gold surfaces. Note: Rectangles and circles represent the repeated measurement on two samples.

We also measured the morphology of samples by AFM in tapping mode before and after 1000 sliding drops (Figure S5). We did not observe changes in morphology. Furthermore, the RMS change of all the surfaces before and after drops sliding were all lower than 1 nm, which further supports our conclusion that the surfaces did not change.

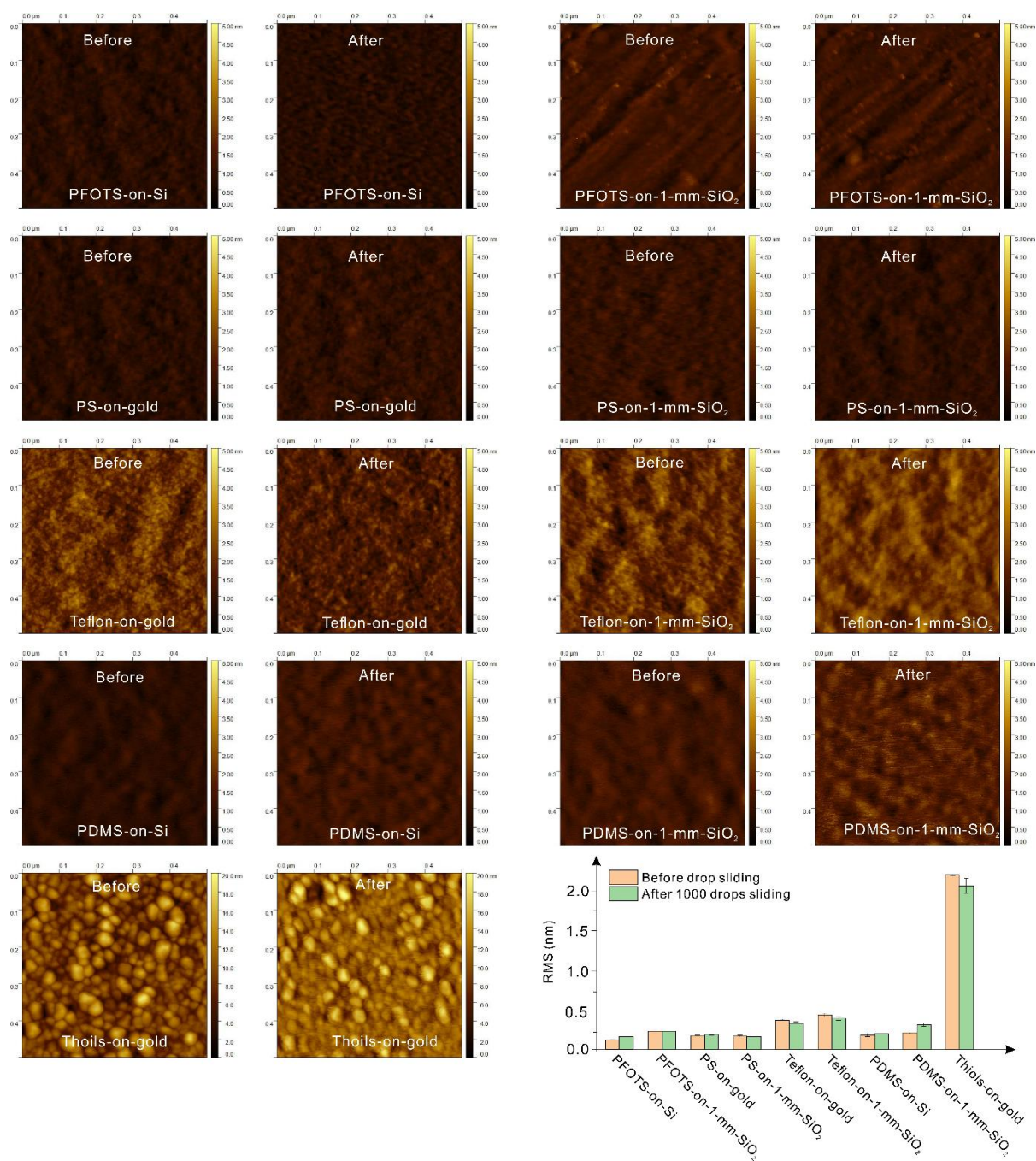


Figure S5. AFM tapping mode images of the drop path on hydrophobic surfaces made on Si wafer, gold, and 1 mm SiO₂ substrates before and after sliding of 1000 drops. In addition, the root-mean-square (RMS) roughness measured on an area of 0.5×0.5 μm² is plotted as a histogram.

SI 7. Drop velocity-versus-slide length for PFOTS-coated surfaces at different tilt angles

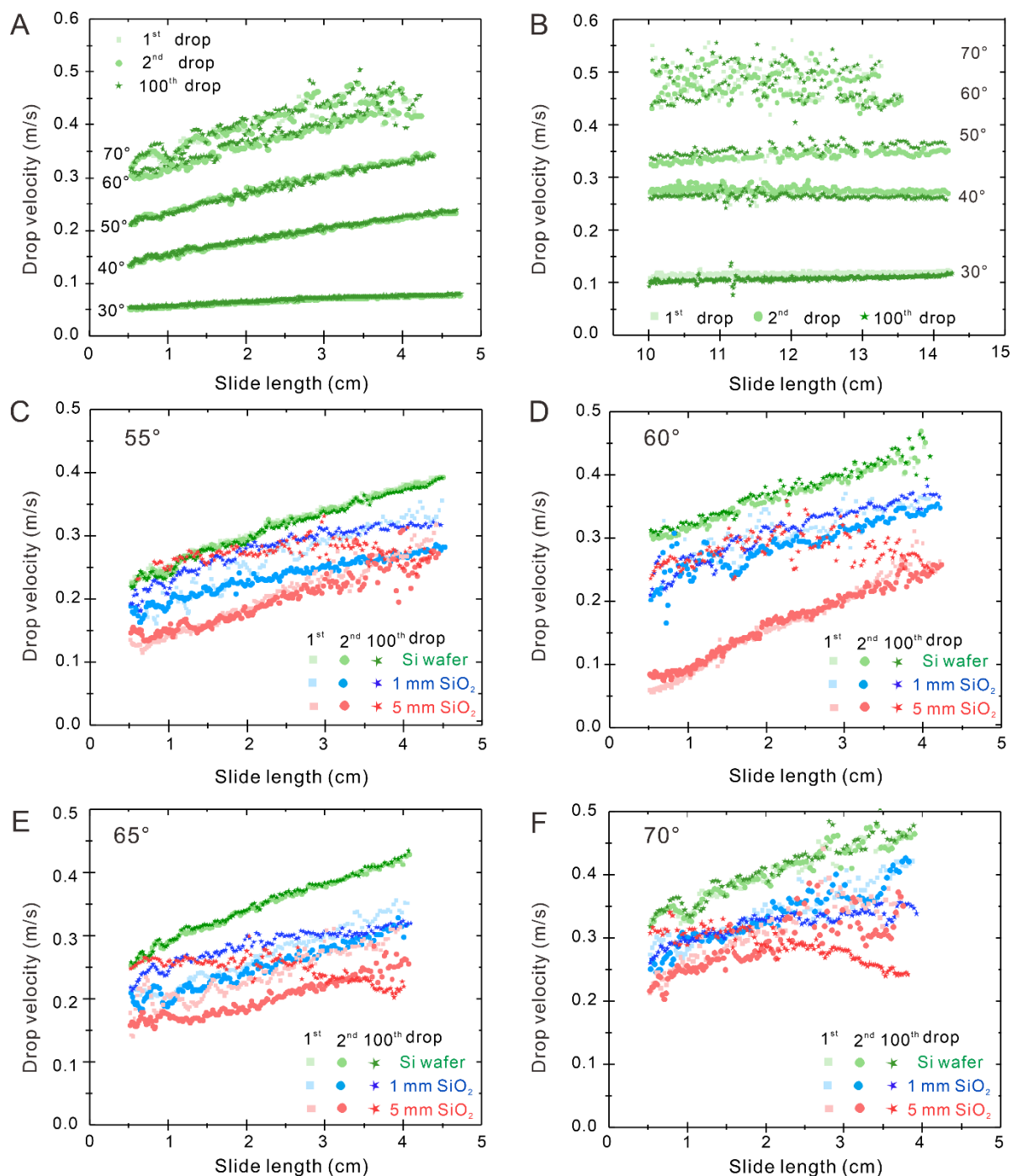


Figure S6. Representative results for drop velocity-versus-slide length for 33 μL water drops on PFOTS-coated samples. Drops sliding on PFOTS-on-Si the first 5 cm (A) and after having already moved 10 cm (B) at different tilt angles. (C-F) Drops on PFOTS on Si wafer (green symbols), 1 mm SiO₂ (blue symbols) and 5 mm SiO₂ (red symbols) deposited at a rate of one drop per 1.3 s measured at 55° (C), 60° (D), 65° (E), and 70° (E) tilt angles. For comparison also the results obtained on Si wafers are plotted as green symbols. Results for drop number 1 (rectangles), 2 (circles), and 100 (stars) are plotted. Note: due to noise, the $U(t)$ curves were either

smoothened before differentiation or the whole curve was fitted by a 1st to 4th order polynomial and the derivative of that polynomial was inserted.

SI 8. Direct numerical diffuse interface simulations of drop motion

Due to the no-slip boundary condition on solid surfaces drops show a rolling component in their motion¹³⁻¹⁹. To quantify the effective mass of the rolling drop, Direct Numerical Simulations (DNS)²⁰ deploying a diffuse interface phase-field method were performed. The effective mass is defined by $m^* = 2E_{kin}/U^2$, where E_{kin} is the kinetic energy of the drop. In our DNS, the interface was treated as a diffuse layer through which the fluid properties vary steeply but continuously. On the mesoscopic scale, the motion of the contact line occurs naturally as diffusion across the interface driven by gradients of the chemical potential. In contrast, the conventional sharp-interface model suffers from a non-integrable stress singularity at the sliding contact line^{21,22}.

The results of simulations for three-dimensional droplets on an inclined wall were obtained with phaseFieldFoam, a diffuse interface phase-field solver developed within the OpenFOAM C++ library for computational continuum physics^{23,24}. The solver has also been enhanced to use a sliding reference-frame technique, to follow the droplet's centre-of-mass, effectively reducing the computational effort.

The following properties of the air-water system were used for the simulations: Water density $\rho = 1000 \text{ kg/m}^3$, water dynamic viscosity $\eta = 10^{-3} \text{ Pas}$, air density $\rho_a = 1 \text{ kg/m}^3$, air dynamic viscosity $\eta_a = 10^{-5} \text{ Pas}$, surface tension of water $\gamma = 0.072 \text{ N/m}$. A no-slip boundary condition is applied at the bottom boundary with free-slip boundary conditions being applied on every other boundary.

For initialization, a hemispherical drop with radius $R = 2.5 \text{ mm}$ ($V = 32.7 \text{ }\mu\text{L}$, contact angle of 90°) was placed on a $25 \times 10 \text{ mm}^2$ rectangular domain at $(0.0125, 0) \text{ m}$, on a smooth inclined wall. For various inclination angles, the droplet's barycentre position and velocity have been tracked and its kinetic energy density field has been measured. This allowed to calculate both contributions to the total kinetic energy – the translational and rotational kinetic energies.

The factor m^*/m slightly changed as a function of barycentre velocity (Figure S7). Initially, the so-called sliding acceleration is greater than the rotational one, leading to a slow increase of m^*/m since the main contribution to the total kinetic energy is from the sliding. The change in slope is more pronounced for lower inclination angles since the sliding acceleration is also lower, when compared to larger inclination angles. After some time, the droplet's sliding acceleration starts to decrease but its angular acceleration is still increasing. Therefore, a steeper increase of m^*/m was observed. Since our calculations of the electrostatic force did not depend sensitively on the precise value of m^*/m , we applied the value of 1.05 throughout our analysis.

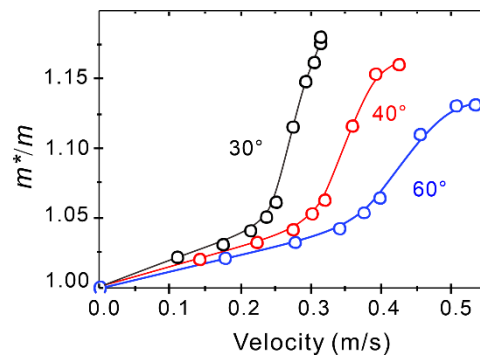


Figure S7. Effective mass m^* divided by real mass m of the drop versus velocity of a $32.7 \mu\text{L}$ water drop with an initial contact angle of 90° at tilt angles of 30° , 40° , and 60° .

SI 9. Aspect ratio of drops

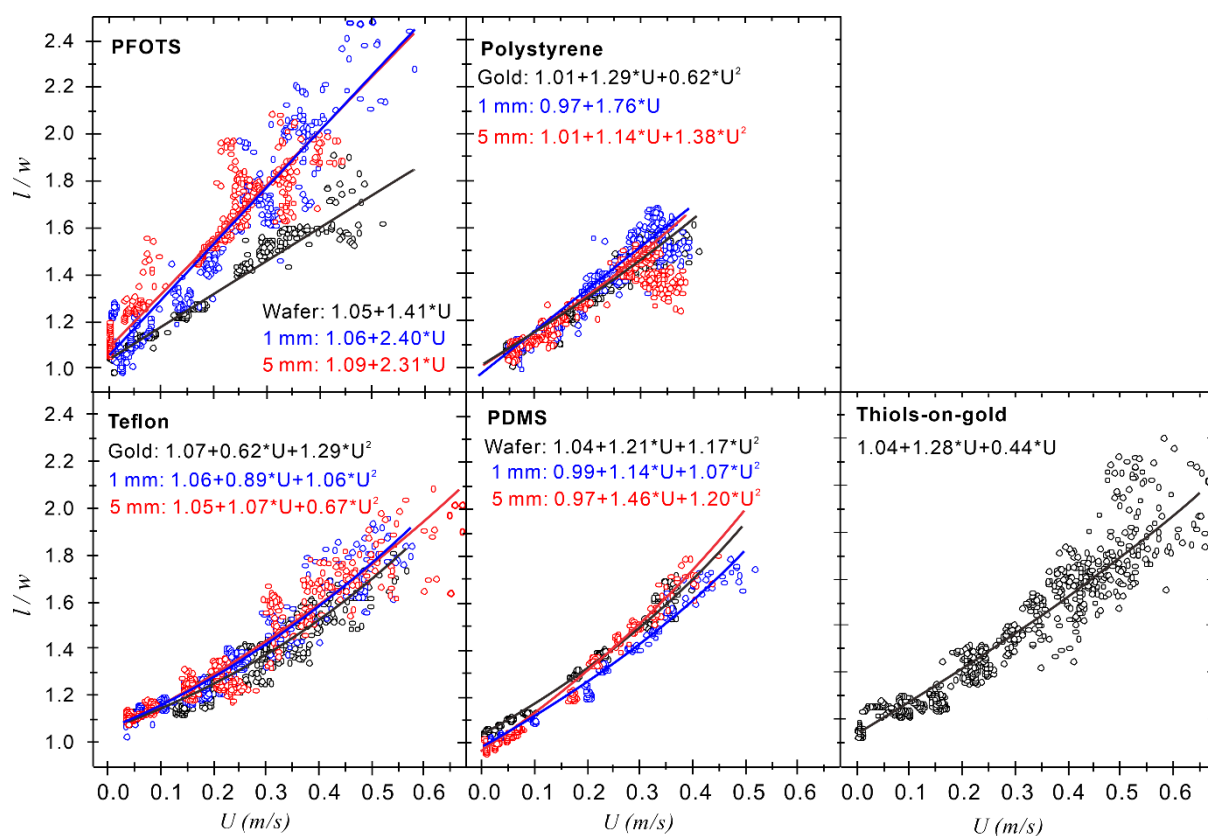


Figure S8. Ratio of length-to-width of the contact area of sliding water drops l/w versus drop velocity U on different surfaces. The corresponding experiments were carried out at different tilt angles to span a large velocity range. The equations give the best fits. In some cases, linear fits were sufficient. In others we used 2nd order polynomial fits.

SI 10. Contribution of capillary and bulk viscous force

Although for the analysis of electrostatic force we do not need to know the origin of the reference force, it is still instructive to see how significantly capillary and bulk viscous forces contribute. Therefore, we inserted the respective drop widths, advancing, and receding contact angles into Eq. (1) with $k = 1$, calculated the capillary force (Figure S9, red symbols) and compared it to measured reference forces (Figure S9, black symbols). Capillary forces, which include wedge viscous forces (see SI1), dominate over bulk hydrodynamic viscous forces calculated with Eq. (S1) (Figure S9, blue symbols).

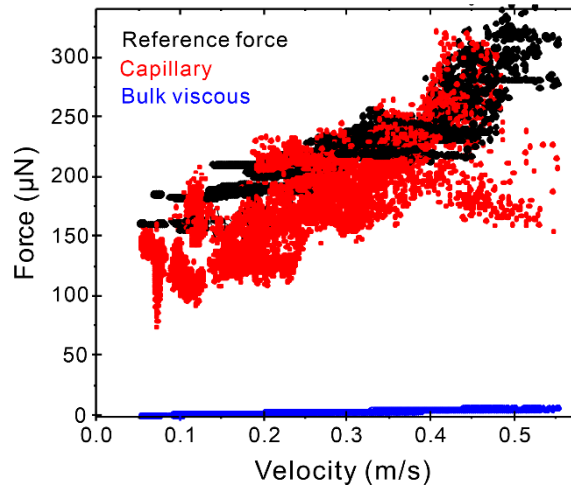


Figure S9. Force acting on 33 μL water drops sliding down PFOTS-on-Si versus velocity. Reference forces were calculated with $mg \sin \alpha - m^* \frac{dU}{dt}$ (black symbols) for the respective 2nd and 10th drop for tilt angles ranging from 30° to 70°. Capillary forces were calculated with Eq. (1) and $k=1$. Bulk viscous forces calculated with Eq. (S1) (blue). Results of three experiments are plotted. To complete the graphs in particular at high velocity we added results obtained from 10-14 cm slide length, where the drops were close to their steady-state velocity.

SI 11. Measured extra force on PFOTS-coated substrates

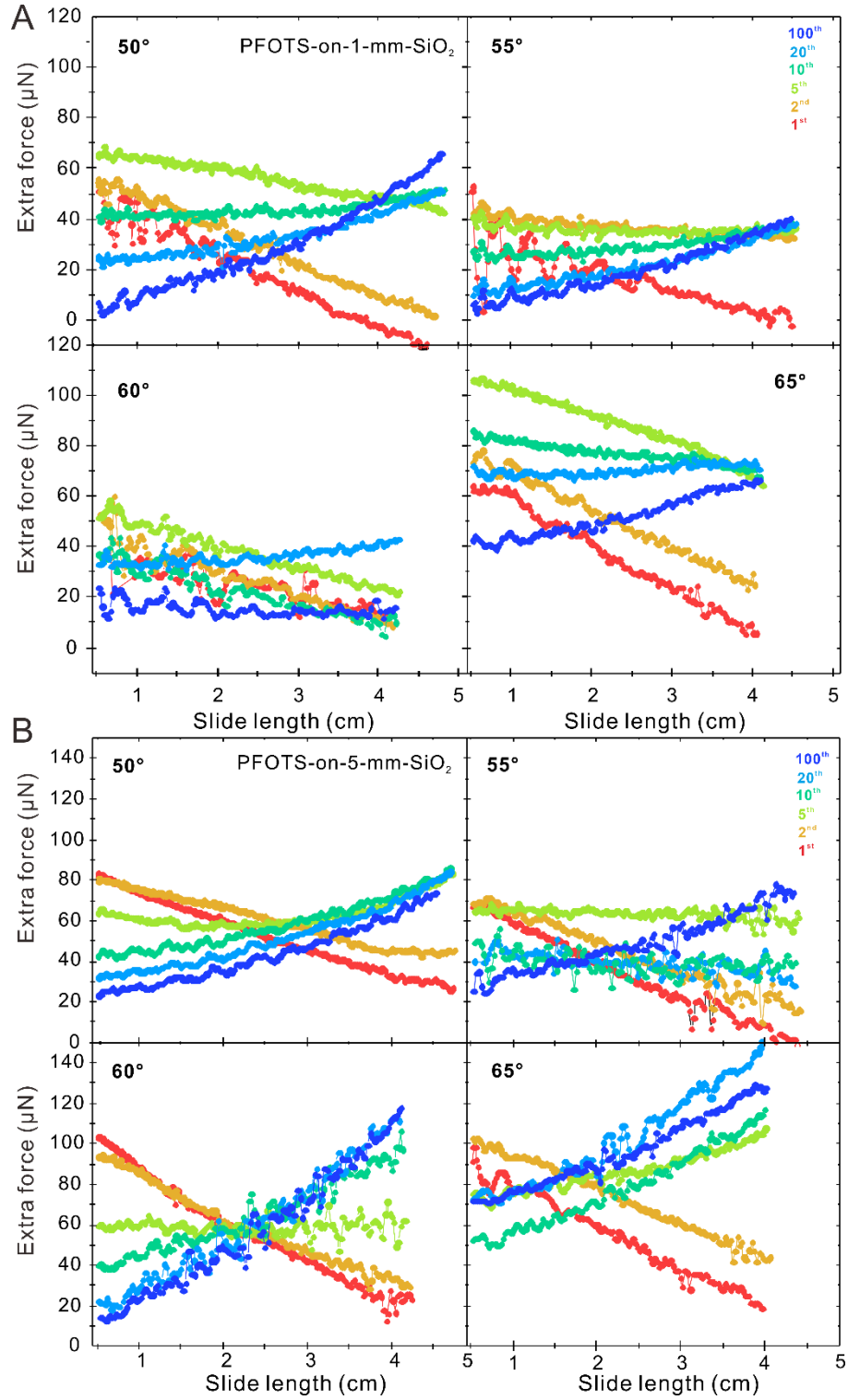


Figure S10. Representative extra force acting on water drops on PFOTS-on-1mm-SiO₂ (A) and PFOTS-on-5mm-SiO₂ (B) measured at different tilt angles. Plotted are results for the 1st, 2nd, 5th, 10th, 20th, 50th and 100th drop. 33 μL drops were deposited at an interval of 1.3 s. Forces were calculated with Eq. (3) with $m^*/m=1.05$ and $F_r(U) = 156\mu N + 218 \frac{\mu N s}{m} U$.

SI 12. Measurement of drop charges

Drop charges were measured with a tilted plate setup at fixed tilt angle of 50° (details in ²⁵). Right after deposition, water drops were discharged by touching a grounded electrode at the beginning of their slide path at $L = 0$. After sliding 4 cm, a second electrode measured the drop discharge current via a variable gain sub femto current amplifier (response time: 0.8 ms, DDPCA-300, FEMTO). To reduce noise, the setup was placed in a Faraday cage. Care was taken that the drop disconnected from the electrode before rolling over the end of the sample into a collection dish. Data was recorded using a National Instruments data acquisition card (NI USB-6366 X-Series) and the accompanying LabVIEW software. 45 μL drops were run successively over the surface. A current spike was recorded when each drop touched the electrode (Figure S11). The drop charge was calculated by integrating the current signal over the first 2 ms. Experiments were carried out at a temperature of $21 \pm 1^\circ\text{C}$ and a relative humidity of 15-30%.

The charge of the first drop in a series Q_1 was the highest (Figure S12). For the following drops, we measured monotonically decreasing charges. After typically 10-50 drops a saturation charge Q_∞ was reached (table S2). Q_1 and Q_∞ depend on the specific sample and varied by 30%-50% from sample to sample. A possible reason for this variation could be the surface quality of a particular batch, lab temperature, or humidity on the day of the experiment. To get a first estimate of the initial surface charge density σ_0 , the decay length λ , and the neutralization time τ , we used the methods and the charging model developed in ²⁵. The uncertainty from the charge measurement propagated to the estimation of drop charging parameters. We refined these parameters by comparing the experimental first and 100th drop force-vs-slide length curves with predictions by Eqs. (S14) and (S21), respectively.

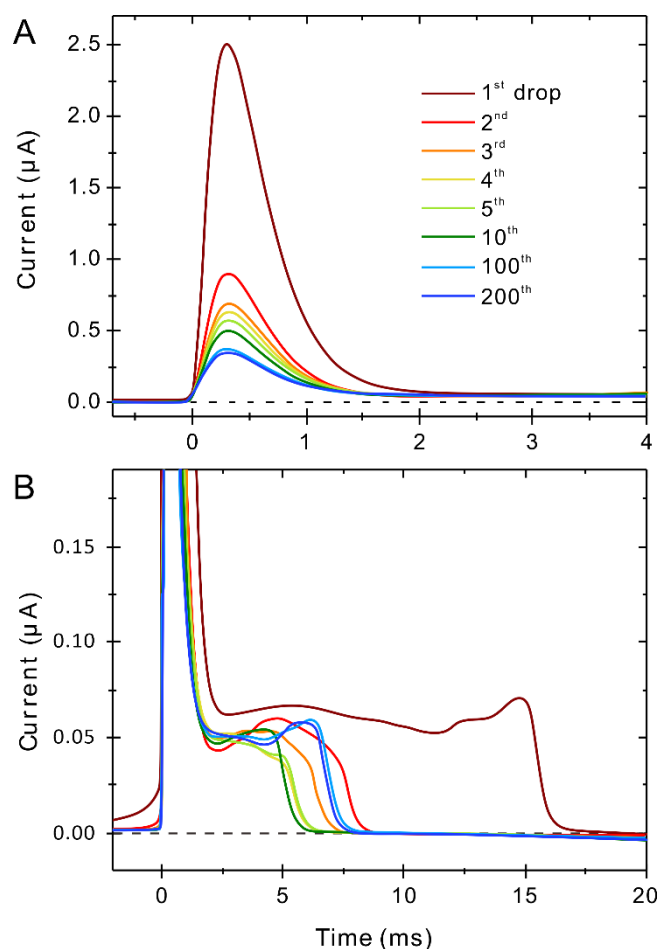


Figure S11. Typical current traces detected for a series of 45 μL water drops on PFOTS-on-1mm- SiO_2 after sliding 4 cm. Currents are plotted at different scales. As the probe electrode touches a sliding drop at $t = 0$, it discharges the accumulated drop charge within 2 ms, causing a positive current peak. This positive peak is due to the flow of electrons towards the positively charged drop, which also implies a negatively charged surface. The total accumulated drop charge was calculated by integrating the initial current peak of 2 ms. While the drop passes the probe electrode, a steady-state current of $\approx 0.05 \mu\text{A}$ is generated (B).

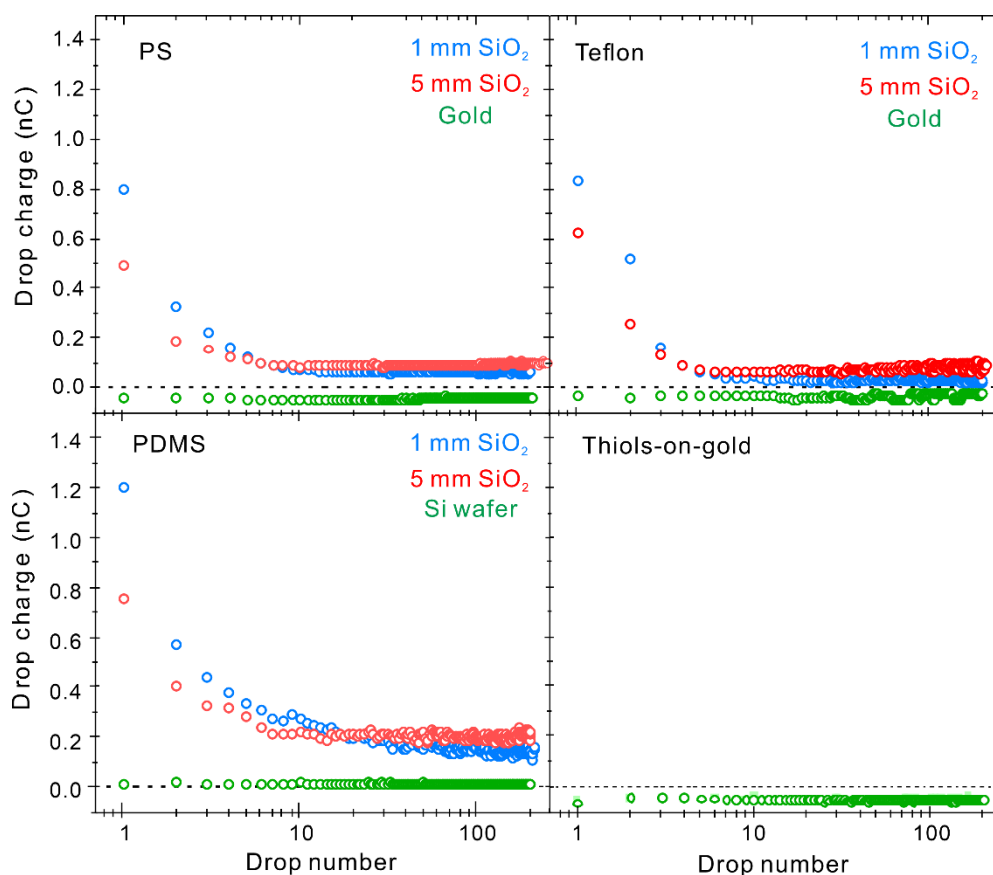


Figure S12. Measured drop charge-versus-drop number on 20 nm polystyrene films, 60 nm Teflon films, PDMS-brushes on different substrates and monolayers of Perfluorodecanethiol on gold. Results were measured at 50° tilt, 1.5 s intervals between deionized water drops of 45 μ L volume after 4 cm slide length.

On all SiO₂ substrates drops gained a positive charge and deposited a negative charge on the surfaces. In contrast, on silicon wafers or gold, drop charges were much lower. Charge separation was highest on PFOTS-coated SiO₂ followed by PDMS and the polymer films. The saturated drop charge, Q_{∞} increased between the 1 mm and 5 mm SiO₂ substrates. This effect was most pronounced on PFOTS. On silicon wafers charging was ≈ 10 times lower. On gold, the drop charge was even negative. The measured charge values agree well with earlier experiments on PFOTS-coated glass slides²⁵ and other hydrophobic surfaces.

Table S2. Mean charge of the first drop and drops in steady state in series with 1.5 s time interval between them. $V = 45 \mu\text{l}$, $\alpha = 50^\circ$, 4 cm slide length, $T = 21 \pm 1^\circ\text{C}$, RH = 15-30%.

Surfaces	Q_1 (nC)	Q_∞ (nC)	τ (s)	λ (cm)	σ_0 ($\mu\text{C}/\text{m}^2$)
PFOTS-on-Si	0.18 ± 0.04	0.09 ± 0.01			
PFOTS-on-1 mm-SiO ₂	1.4 ± 0.2	0.26 ± 0.05	12 ± 5	2 ± 0.01	-20 ± 2
PFOTS-on-5 mm-SiO ₂	1.4 ± 0.09	0.45 ± 0.02	7 ± 5	1.5 ± 0.01	-20 ± 4
PS-on-gold	-0.03 ± 0.01	-0.04 ± 0.01			
PS-on-1 mm-SiO ₂	0.7 ± 0.2	0.05 ± 0.02	30 ± 7	2.5 ± 0.04	-10 ± 3
PS-on-5 mm-SiO ₂	0.5 ± 0.01	0.07 ± 0.02	17 ± 7	2 ± 0.012	-7 ± 2
Teflon-on-gold	-0.03 ± 0.01	-0.02 ± 0.001			
Teflon-on-1 mm-SiO ₂	0.7 ± 0.1	0.03 ± 0.003	70 ± 20	2.8 ± 0.01	-10 ± 3
Teflon-on-5 mm-SiO ₂	0.7 ± 0.04	0.07 ± 0.02	30 ± 15	3 ± 0.01	-7 ± 1
PDMS-on-Si	0.02 ± 0.001	0.02 ± 0.001			
PDMS-1 mm-SiO ₂	1.2 ± 0.5	0.15 ± 0.01	12 ± 9.0	4 ± 0.02	-12 ± 5.6
PDMS-5 mm-SiO ₂	0.6 ± 0.1	0.2 ± 0.02	8 ± 2.1	0.9 ± 0.01	-12 ± 1
Thiols-on-gold	-0.05 ± 0.001	-0.05 ± 0.001			

SI 13. Analytical approximation of the electrostatic force on a drop

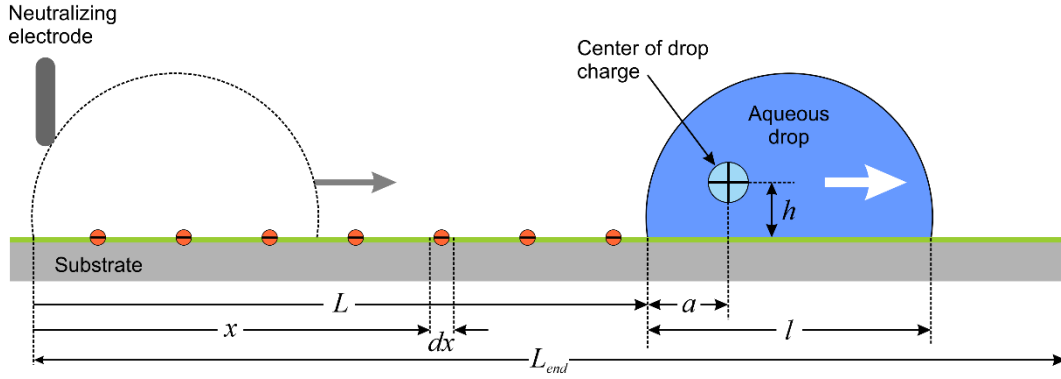


Figure S13. Parameters used to calculate the electrostatic force.

We derive an expression for the force between a drop bearing a charge Q interacting with a stripe of surface charges σ distributed over its track of slide length L . Here, we only consider the direct action of the Coulomb force. Charging may also have an effect on contact angles and thus influence drop motion via Eq. (1). For surface potentials up to 800 V such a change of the dynamic advancing contact angle has already been observed²⁶. We assume the center of charge of the drop to be at a distance a from the rear side and at a height h (Figure S13). To obtain the electrostatic force we consider the electric field generated by a charge deposited at the solid-air interface on top of an infinitely extending solid half space (eq. 2). A surface charge dq at position x generates an electric field with lateral component

$$dE(x, h) = \frac{dq}{2\pi\epsilon_0(\epsilon_S+1)} \frac{L+a-x}{[(L+a-x)^2+h^2]^{3/2}} \quad (S4)$$

This is the field strength at a position $L + a$ along the surface and a height h above the solid surface. Along its path, the drop deposits a certain surface charge density $\sigma(x)$. Since the local charge density may vary in a direction perpendicular to the slide direction, σ is taken to be the mean charge density at position x . The deposited charge can be related to the surface charge density on the free solid surface by $dq = \sigma w dx$, where w is the width of the contact area of the drop. Integrating the Coulomb forces of all infinitesimal charge elements dq gives the total lateral force on the drop:

$$F_e^n(L) = \frac{wQ(L)}{2\pi\epsilon_0(\epsilon_S+1)} \left[\int_0^L \frac{(L+a-x)\sigma(x)}{((L+a-x)^2+h^2)^{3/2}} dx - \int_{L+l}^{L_{end}} \frac{(x-L-a)\sigma'(x)}{((x-L-a)^2+h^2)^{3/2}} dx \right] \quad (S5)$$

Assuming that $h \ll L+a-x$ we get Eq. (5). Here, the sign convention is that a positive force is decelerating the drop. The second term in (S5) takes into account surface charges $\sigma'(x)$ situated ahead of the drop which is different from the charge distribution $\sigma(x)$ behind the drop.

To evaluate Eq. (S5), we need to make an assumption about the surface charge distribution. The simplest case is to assume that the drop only interacts with charges deposited by itself. This is the case for the first drop in a series. We further assume that the surface charge density

is constant and that no charge on the surface and inside the drop is neutralized. Then, the charge of the first drop is $Q_1 = -Lw\sigma_1$, leading to an electrostatic force of

$$F_e^1(L) = -\frac{Lw^2\sigma_1^2}{2\pi\epsilon_0(\epsilon_S+1)} \left[\frac{1}{\sqrt{a^2+h^2}} - \frac{1}{\sqrt{(L+a)^2+h^2}} \right] \quad (S6)$$

We used the superscript “1” to indicate that this is the first drop sliding down an initially neutral surface. σ_1 is the surface charge density deposited by the first drop.

A constant surface charge density is, however, not realistic. More realistic is a charge density that saturates exponentially with slide length²⁵. Again, considering the first drop and assuming that a drop only interacts with charges deposited by itself, the corresponding surface charge density and total charge of the drop can be parametrized as

$$\sigma_1 = \sigma_0 e^{-x/\lambda} \text{ and } Q_1 = -w\lambda\sigma_0(1 - e^{-L/\lambda}) \quad (S7)$$

Here we assumed that a possible neutralization of the surface is very slow compared to the sliding time of the drop. Inserting these two expressions into the first term of Eq. (5) leads to

$$F_e^1(L) = -\frac{w\lambda\sigma_0(1-e^{-L/\lambda})w\sigma_0}{2\pi\epsilon_0(\epsilon_S+1)} \int_0^L \frac{e^{-x/\lambda}}{(L+a-x)^2} dx = -C(1 - e^{-L/\lambda}) \int_0^L \frac{e^{-x/\lambda}}{(L+a-x)^2} dx \quad (S8)$$

The second term in Eq. (5) was not considered because we only take the charge deposited by the drop into account; thus, there is no charge ahead of the drop. Here, the constant $C = w^2\sigma_0^2\lambda/[2\pi\epsilon_0(\epsilon_S+1)]$ summarizes all slide length-independent parameters. Partial integration yields

$$F_e^1(L) = -C(1 - e^{-L/\lambda}) \left\{ \left[-\frac{e^{-x/\lambda}}{L+a-x} \right]_0^L - \frac{1}{\lambda} \int_0^L \frac{e^{-x/\lambda}}{L+a-x} dx \right\} \quad (S9)$$

Substitution with $t = \frac{L+a-x}{\lambda}$ gives

$$F_e^1(L) = C(1 - e^{-L/\lambda}) \left\{ \frac{1}{a} e^{-\frac{L}{\lambda}} - \frac{1}{L+a} - \frac{1}{\lambda} e^{-\frac{L+a}{\lambda}} \int_{(L+a)/\lambda}^{a/\lambda} \frac{e^t}{t} dt \right\} \quad (S10)$$

The integral in Eq. (S10) has the form of the exponential integral function:

$$\text{Ei}(z) = \int_{-\infty}^z \frac{e^t}{t} dt \quad \text{for } z > 0 \quad (S11)$$

With this function, we can calculate the force as

$$F_e^1(L) = C(1 - e^{-L/\lambda}) \left\{ \frac{1}{a} e^{-\frac{L}{\lambda}} - \frac{1}{L+a} - \frac{1}{\lambda} e^{-\frac{L+a}{\lambda}} \left[\text{Ei}\left(\frac{a}{\lambda}\right) - \text{Ei}\left(\frac{L+a}{\lambda}\right) \right] \right\} \quad (S12)$$

To evaluate this expression, the series representation of the exponential integral can be employed,

$$\text{Ei}(z) = 0.5772 + \ln(|z|) + \sum_{n=1}^{\infty} \frac{z^n}{n!n}, \quad (S13)$$

where 0.5772 is the Euler-Mascheroni constant. Using Eq. (S13), we can write

$$F_e^1(L) = \frac{C}{\lambda} (1 - e^{-L/\lambda}) \left\{ \frac{\lambda}{a} e^{-\frac{L}{\lambda}} - \frac{\lambda}{L+a} - e^{-\frac{L+a}{\lambda}} \left[\ln\left(\frac{a}{L+a}\right) + \sum_{k=1}^{\infty} \frac{a^k - (L+a)^k}{\lambda^k k! k} \right] \right\} \quad (\text{S14})$$

For large arguments, convergence of this series can be slow. For example, to reach an accuracy of 5% and 1% at $z = 5$ one needs to take $n = 8$ and 10 terms, respectively. For $z = 10$ the series needs to be considered up to $n = 14$ and 16, respectively. Many modern mathematical programs, such as Wolfram Alpha or IgorPro (Wavemetrics) provide built-in functions for the effective numerical computation of the exponential integral function.

The slide length-dependent part of Eq. (S14) (Dimensionless force) is plotted in figure S14A. A maximum is observed at $L/\lambda \approx 0.8$. The force decreases with increasing a/λ ; thus, the more the center of charge is shifted towards the rear of the drop, the stronger the electrostatic retardation becomes. This strong dependence on a/λ results from interactions with surface charges in the close vicinity of the drop, for which the analytical model is not realistic. To better quantify these near-field interactions, we have developed the numerical model described in the following section. In terms of the analytical model, a is regarded as a parameter that describes the near-field interactions in an effective manner.

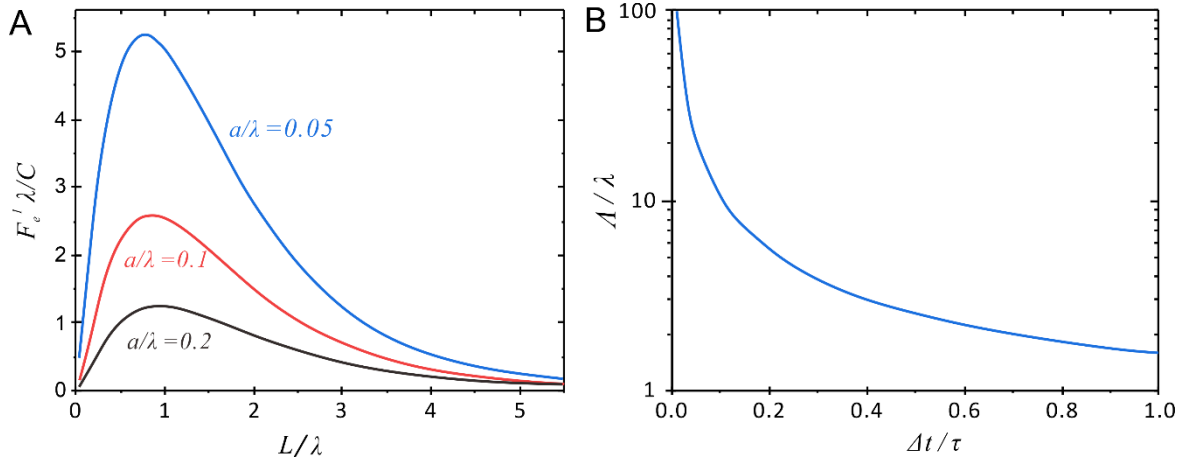


Figure S14. (A) Plot of dimensionless force $F_e^1 \lambda / C$ versus L/λ for $a/\lambda = 0.05, 0.1$ and 0.2 calculated with Eq. S14. (B) Ratio of Λ/λ -versus- $\Delta t/\tau$ calculated with Eq. (S15).

For a succession of drops sliding over the surface at time intervals of Δt , the charge distribution and the drop charge are altered by the presence of surface charges of previous drops. Once deposited, the surface charge is neutralized with a characteristic neutralization time of τ . To calculate the charge distribution for following drops, a recursive approach is required. Thus, a closed analytical description for the electrostatic force on successive drops is difficult. Nevertheless, a relatively simple analytical description is possible for the saturated drop charge distribution after a large number ($n \rightarrow \infty$) of drops. Here, the surface charge density and the drop charge are given by²⁵:

$$\sigma_{\infty}(x) = \sigma_0 e^{-x/\Lambda}, Q_{\infty}(L) = -\sigma_0 \lambda w (1 - e^{-L/\Lambda}) \text{ with } \Lambda = \frac{\lambda}{1 - e^{-\Delta t/\tau}}. \quad (\text{S15})$$

For short time intervals the modified saturation slide length, Λ , is much larger than the initial saturation slide length, λ (Figure S14B). With increasing drop interval time, $\Delta\tau$, Λ decreases and eventually approaches the initial λ for $\Delta t/\tau \gg 1$.

Using these expressions, we calculate the electrostatic force caused by the charges behind the drop in analogy to Eq. (S14):

$$\begin{aligned} F_{eb}^{\infty}(L) &= \frac{C}{\Lambda} (1 - e^{-L/\Lambda}) \left\{ \frac{\Lambda}{a} e^{-\frac{L}{\Lambda}} - \frac{\Lambda}{L+a} - e^{-\frac{L+a}{\Lambda}} \left[Ei\left(\frac{a}{\Lambda}\right) - Ei\left(\frac{L+a}{\Lambda}\right) \right] \right\} \\ &= \frac{C}{\Lambda} (1 - e^{-L/\Lambda}) \left\{ \frac{\Lambda}{a} e^{-\frac{L}{\Lambda}} - \frac{\Lambda}{L+a} - e^{-\frac{L+a}{\Lambda}} \left[\ln\left(\frac{a}{L+a}\right) + \sum_{k=1}^{\infty} \frac{a^k - (L+a)^k}{\Lambda^k k! k} \right] \right\} \end{aligned} \quad (S16)$$

In addition, surface charges ahead of the drop are accelerating the drop. Their contribution is given by

$$\begin{aligned} F_{eb}^{\infty}(L) &= \frac{\sigma_0^2 w^2 \lambda}{2\pi\epsilon_0(\epsilon_S+1)} e^{-\Delta t/\tau} (1 - e^{-L/\lambda}) \int_{L+l}^{L_{end}} \frac{\sigma}{(x-L-a)^2} dx \\ &= C e^{-\Delta t/\tau} (1 - e^{-L/\Lambda}) \int_{L+l}^{L_{end}} \frac{e^{-x/\Lambda}}{(x-L-a)^2} dx. \end{aligned} \quad (S17)$$

The factor $e^{-\Delta t/\tau}$ takes into account that after the time interval Δt the charge left by the previous drop has been partially neutralized.

Partial integration and substitution with $t = -(x - L - a)/\Lambda$ gives

$$F_{eb}^{\infty}(L) = C e^{-\Delta t/\tau} (1 - e^{-L/\lambda}) \left\{ \left[\frac{e^{-x/\Lambda}}{x-L-a} \right]_{L+l}^{L_{end}} + \frac{1}{\Lambda} e^{-\frac{L+a}{\Lambda}} \int_{-(l-a)/\Lambda}^{-(L_{end}-L-a)/\Lambda} \frac{e^t}{t} dt \right\} \quad (S18)$$

Here, the argument of the exponential integral as defined in Eq. (S11) is negative. We therefore have to use the following function

$$Ei(-z) = -E_1(z) = -\int_z^{\infty} \frac{e^{-t}}{t} dt \quad \text{for } z > 0 \quad (S19)$$

Where $E_1(z)$ is defined as

$$E_1(z) = -0.5772 - \ln(|z|) - \sum_{n=1}^{\infty} \frac{(-z)^n}{n! n}$$

Using these definitions, we get:

$$\begin{aligned} F_{eb}^{\infty}(L) &= \frac{C}{\Lambda} e^{-\Delta t/\tau} (1 - e^{-L/\lambda}) \left\{ \frac{\Lambda e^{-L_{end}/\Lambda}}{L_{end}-L-a} - \frac{\Lambda e^{-\frac{L+l}{\Lambda}}}{l-a} - e^{-\frac{L+a}{\Lambda}} \left[E_1\left(\frac{L_{end}-L-a}{\Lambda}\right) - E_1\left(\frac{l-a}{\Lambda}\right) \right] \right\} \\ &= \frac{C}{\Lambda} e^{-\Delta t/\tau} (1 - e^{-L/\lambda}) \left\{ \frac{\Lambda e^{-\frac{L_{end}}{\Lambda}}}{L_{end}-L-a} - \frac{\Lambda e^{-\frac{L+l}{\Lambda}}}{l-a} - e^{-\frac{L+a}{\Lambda}} \left[\ln\left(\frac{l-a}{L_{end}-L-a}\right) + \sum_{k=1}^{\infty} \frac{(L_{end}-L-a)^k - (l-a)^k}{\Lambda^k k! k} \right] \right\} \end{aligned} \quad (S20)$$

The total electrostatic force acting on drop number $n > 50$ is the sum of both contributions:

$$F_e^{\infty}(L) = F_{ea}^{\infty}(L) + F_{eb}^{\infty}(L) \quad \text{for } L < L_{end} - l. \quad (S21)$$

The different contributions to the total force are shown in Figure S15. Interestingly, the accelerating force of the charges ahead of the drop is stronger at the beginning before the

decelerating force of the charges behind the drop start to dominate. At the end of the slide path, there are no more charges ahead and the accelerating force contribution vanishes at $L_{end} - l$, leading to a steep increase in the drop force.

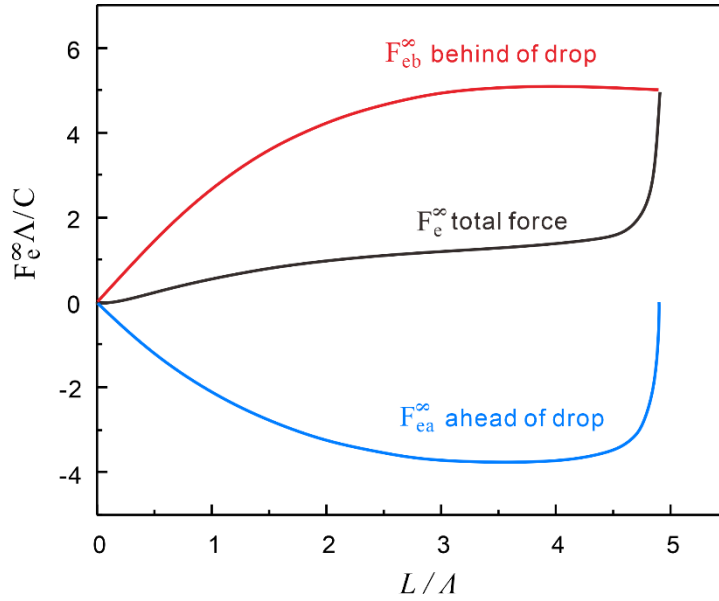


Figure S15. Dimensionless force $F_e^\infty \Lambda / C$ on a drop after a long (>50) succession of drops as a function of slide length normalized with respect to the saturation slide length, L/Λ . The total force acting on the drop (black curve) consists of an accelerating force coming from charges ahead of the drop (blue curve) and a decelerating force from charges behind the drop (red curve). Parameters used in this example: $\Lambda = 4$ cm, $w = 4$ mm, $l = 5$ mm, $a = 2$ mm, $L_{end} = 20$ cm.

SI 14. Numerical computation of the electrostatic force on a drop

One of the assumptions in Eq. (4) was to neglect the presence of the grounded back-electrode. To account, among other things, for the presence of the back electrode, we carried out numerical calculations of the electric field distribution based on Poisson's equation and the electrostatic force. As it turned out, by choosing the position of the center of charge in the drop appropriately we can account for the presence of the back electrode. In figure S16 the two-dimensional simulation domain and the mesh are displayed. The domain includes the substrate, the drop, and the surrounding air.

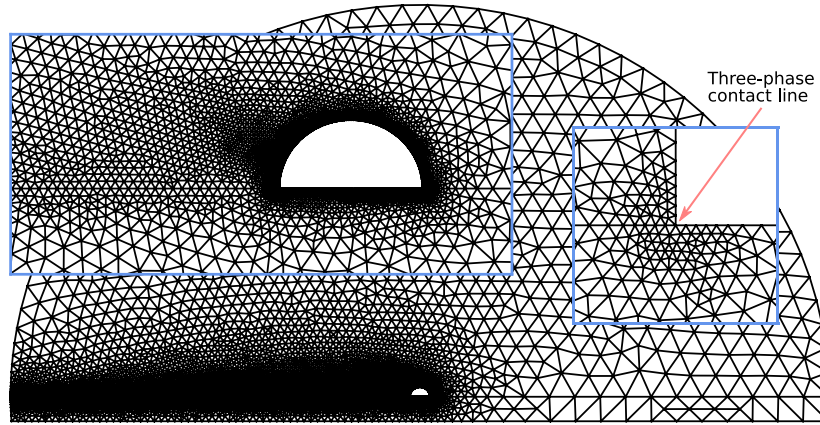


Figure S16. Overview of the simulation domain and the grid including the substrate, the drop, and the surrounding air. The insets display the finer mesh around the drop and the highly refined mesh around the contact line (the physical height shown in the latter inset is 1 μm).

The fundamental equation of electrostatics is Gauss's law. If the media are linear, isotropic, homogeneous and do not carry a space charge we end up with Poisson's equation $\Delta\varphi = 0$ in the surrounding air and in the substrate, with appropriate boundary conditions at the interfaces between different materials.

We assume that the drop is a conductor and can be modelled as a surface with a constant potential φ_{drop} . Even for non-conductive bodies with a dielectric permittivity much higher than their surrounding (such as water) this boundary condition is a good approximation. The value of φ_{drop} cannot be specified directly but is given implicitly by the total charge of the drop Q . Q and φ_{drop} are related by solving Poisson's equation and integrating $\int_{drop} \epsilon_0 \vec{E} \cdot \vec{n} ds$ along the surface of the drop; here ϵ_0 is the vacuum permittivity and $\vec{n}$ and ds are the normal vector and the infinitesimal line element along the drop's surface, respectively. To fix the potential on the drop's surface, we iteratively vary φ_{drop} until the calculated drop charge is equal to the real drop charge.

At the interface between the substrate and air the electric field needs to fulfil the boundary condition $-(\epsilon_s \vec{\nabla} \varphi_s - \vec{\nabla} \varphi_a) \cdot \vec{n} = \frac{\sigma(x)}{\epsilon_0}$, where ϵ_s is the dielectric permittivity of the substrate, $\sigma(x)$ is the surface charge density on the substrate, $\vec{n}$ is the normal vector of the substrate,

and φ_s and φ_a are the electrostatic potentials infinitesimally away from the solid surface inside the substrate and inside air, respectively. To complete the set of boundary conditions, we assume that the surrounding circular boundaries are far away and that the normal component of the electric field vanishes in the far field, $\vec{\nabla}\varphi_{farfield} \cdot \vec{n} = 0$. We further assume that the electrode below the substrate is grounded, $\varphi_{electrode} = 0$. After the electric field fulfilling the equations and the boundary conditions above is obtained, the electrostatic force acting on the drop can be calculated from the integral of the Maxwell stress tensor on the drop's surface $F_e = \frac{\epsilon_0}{2} \int_{drop} \vec{E}^2 \vec{n} \cdot \vec{n}_x ds$, where $\vec{n}_x$ is the normal vector pointing in sliding direction.

We implemented the equations and boundary conditions above in variational form into the open-source software package FEniCS²⁷. The solution was obtained by the common finite-element method. To determine the potential on the drop surface φ_{drop} we solved a tracking-type optimal control problem utilizing *dolfin-adjoint* to automatically compute the gradient²⁸. The finite-element mesh was generated with *Gmsh* (<https://gmsh.info/>). The mesh was systematically refined around the substrate-air interface as well as the drop-air interface with cell sizes as low as 50 μm . In the contact line region the minimal cell size was only 50 nm, see the right inset in figure S16.

The problem parameters include the drop shape and size, contact angle, slide length, charge distribution, substrate thickness, and dielectric permittivity of the solid. Here, we consider a fixed, circular-arc shaped drop with contact angles $\Theta_a = \Theta_r = 90^\circ$ and diameter $w = 4$ mm on a substrate with $\epsilon_s = 3.9$. The charge density behind the drop is supposed to be homogenous and constant at $\sigma = 5 \mu\text{C}/\text{m}^2$. There is no surface charge ahead of the drop. The resulting electrostatic force is plotted versus the sliding length L in figure S17 (symbols) for different substrate thicknesses. The electrostatic force scales linearly with slide length. With decreasing thickness of the substrate, the screening influence of the electrode becomes stronger, which results in lower overall electrostatic forces acting on the drop.

In figure S17 we also compare electrostatic forces calculated with the analytical model (black lines, Eq. S5) with the numerically calculated forces (symbols). The analytical model and the simulations predict the same linear scaling of the force with the slide length. As long as h is small the influence of h on the resulting force is negligible (lines, Figure S17); therefore, we set $h=0$. Furthermore, it turned out that, by shifting the effective drop charge away from the drop's center to different horizontal positions a , the analytical model can fit the simulations. Thus, phenomenologically we can take the presence of a back-electrode into account by choosing the right value of a . One reason for this could be that for a vanishing substrate thickness the charge on the drop surface is symmetrically distributed (which results in a vanishing horizontal force on the drop, compare the smaller forces for thinner substrates in Figure S17), whereas for larger thicknesses the charges on the substrate induce significant charges at the rear end of the drop. In addition, our simulations show that a large fraction of the charges is located in the utmost vicinity of the contact line.

In summary, the numerical calculations confirm the validity and scaling of Eq. (4). Good agreement was achieved when the center of charge of the drop was placed directly on the surface ($h = 0$). The choice of the parameter a is dictated by the thickness of the substrate. We find that for 1 mm and 5 mm thick substrates, setting $a = 2$ mm and $a = 0.8$ mm, respectively, can mimic the shielding effect of the back electrode.

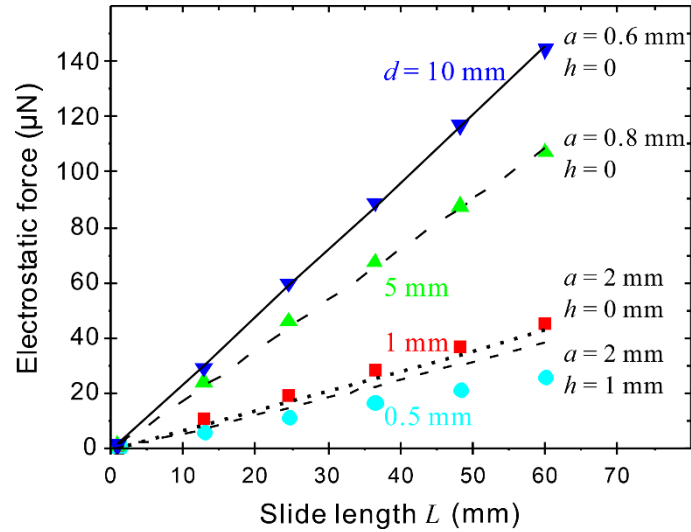


Figure S17. Electrostatic force on a drop calculated from the solution of Poisson's equation (symbols) and the analytical model for different positions of the effective point charge (eq. S6, lines) as well as slide lengths L and substrate thicknesses d . Here we assumed a constant charge density for the deposited charge of $\sigma_1 = 5 \mu\text{C}/\text{m}^2$ behind the drop.

SI 15. Drop velocity profiles on conducting and high-permittivity substrates of PS, Teflon, PDMS, and thiol-coated surfaces

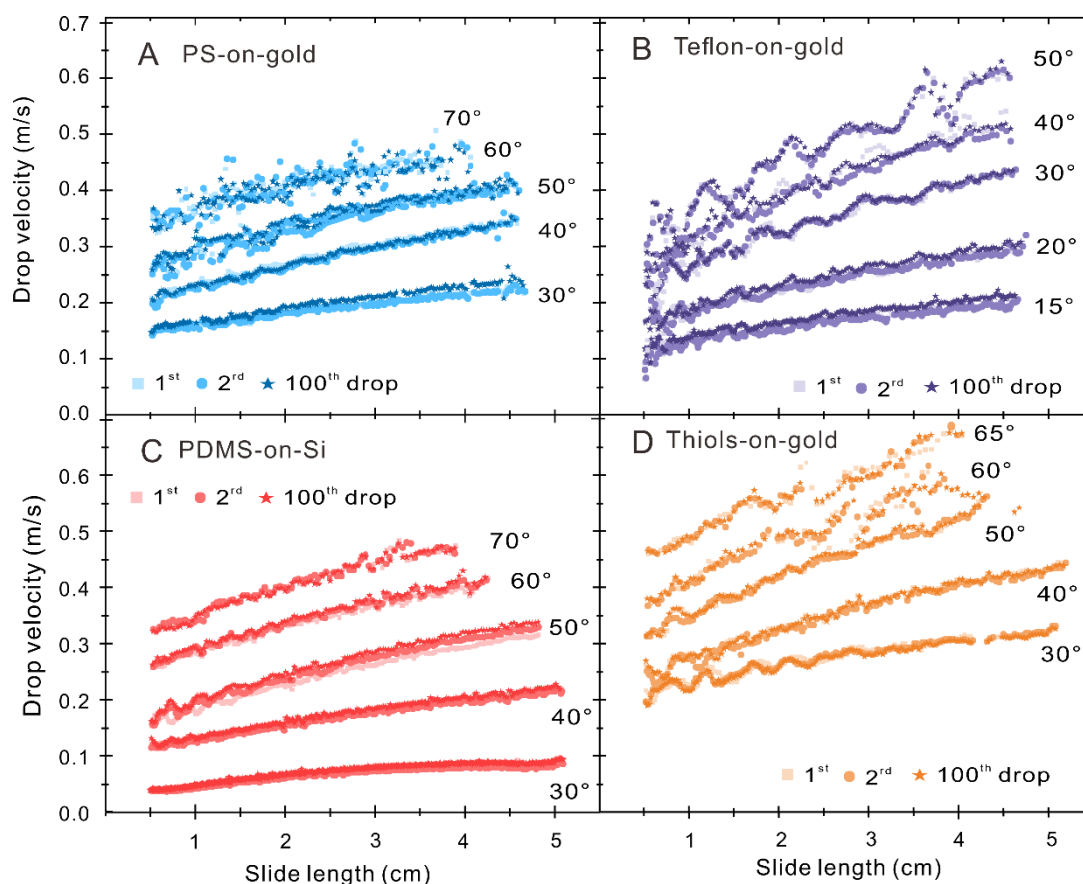
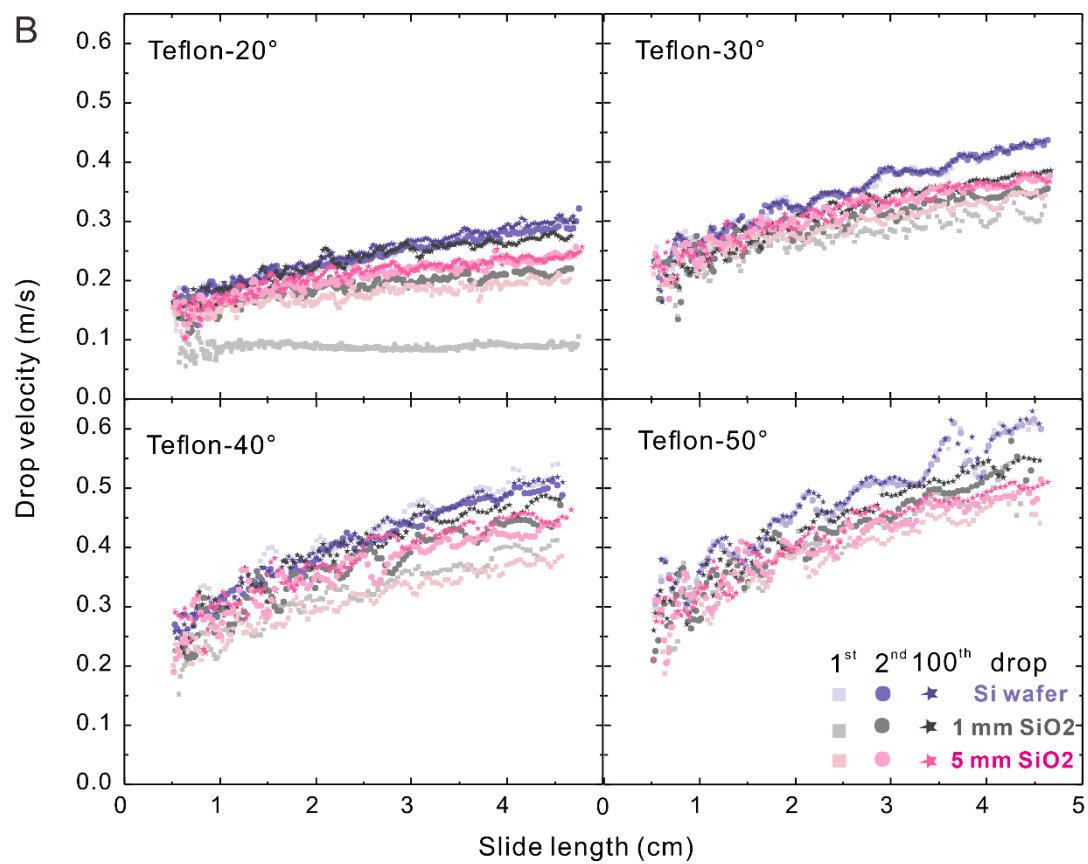
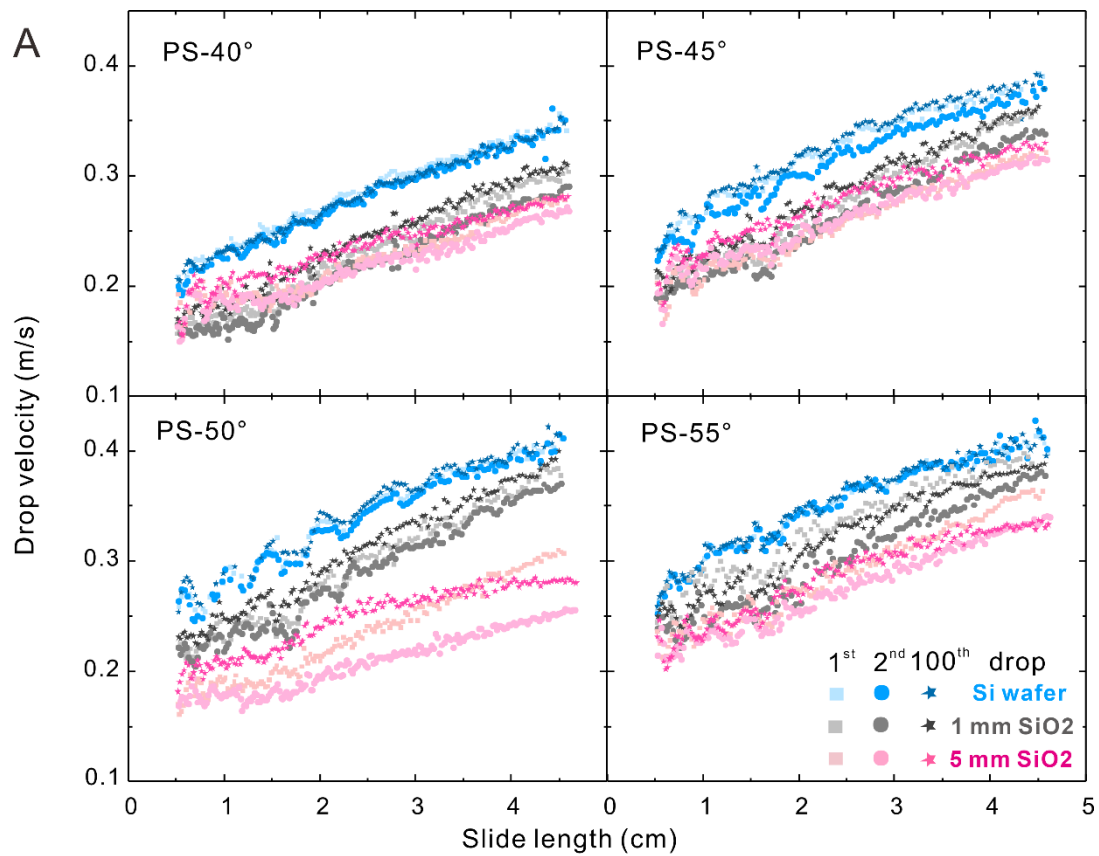


Figure S18. Representative results for drop velocity-versus-slide length measured at different tilt angles. (A) 20 nm PS films on gold, (B) 60 nm thick Teflon films on gold, (C) PDMS on silicon wafers, and (D) Perfluorodecanethiol on gold. Results for drop number 1 (rectangle), 2 (circle), and 100 (star) are plotted. The lower tilt angle was given by the requirement that drops slide at all; at lower tilt angles the drops did not move. The maximal tilt angle was given by the requirement of having a stable steady state shape of the drop. At higher tilt angles and thus higher velocities the drop shape analysis started to fail.



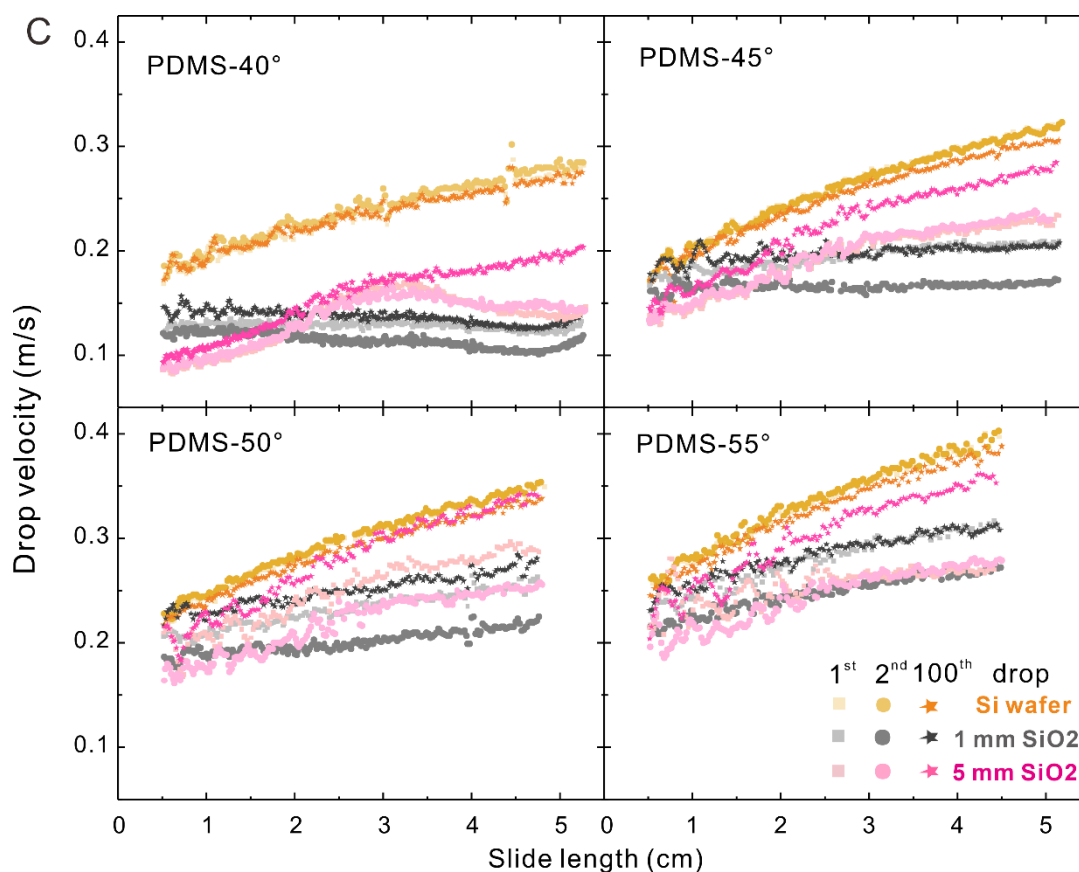


Figure S19. Representative results for drop velocity-versus-slide length measured at different tilt angles. (A) 20 nm PS films, (B) 60 nm thick Teflon films, and (C) PDMS on 1 mm SiO₂ (blue symbols) and 5 mm SiO₂ (red symbols). For comparison also the results obtained on Si wafers (A) or gold (B, C) are plotted as black symbols. Results for drop number 1 (rectangle), 2 (circle), and 100 (star) are plotted.

SI 16. Reference forces for PS, Teflon, PDMS, and thiol-coated surfaces

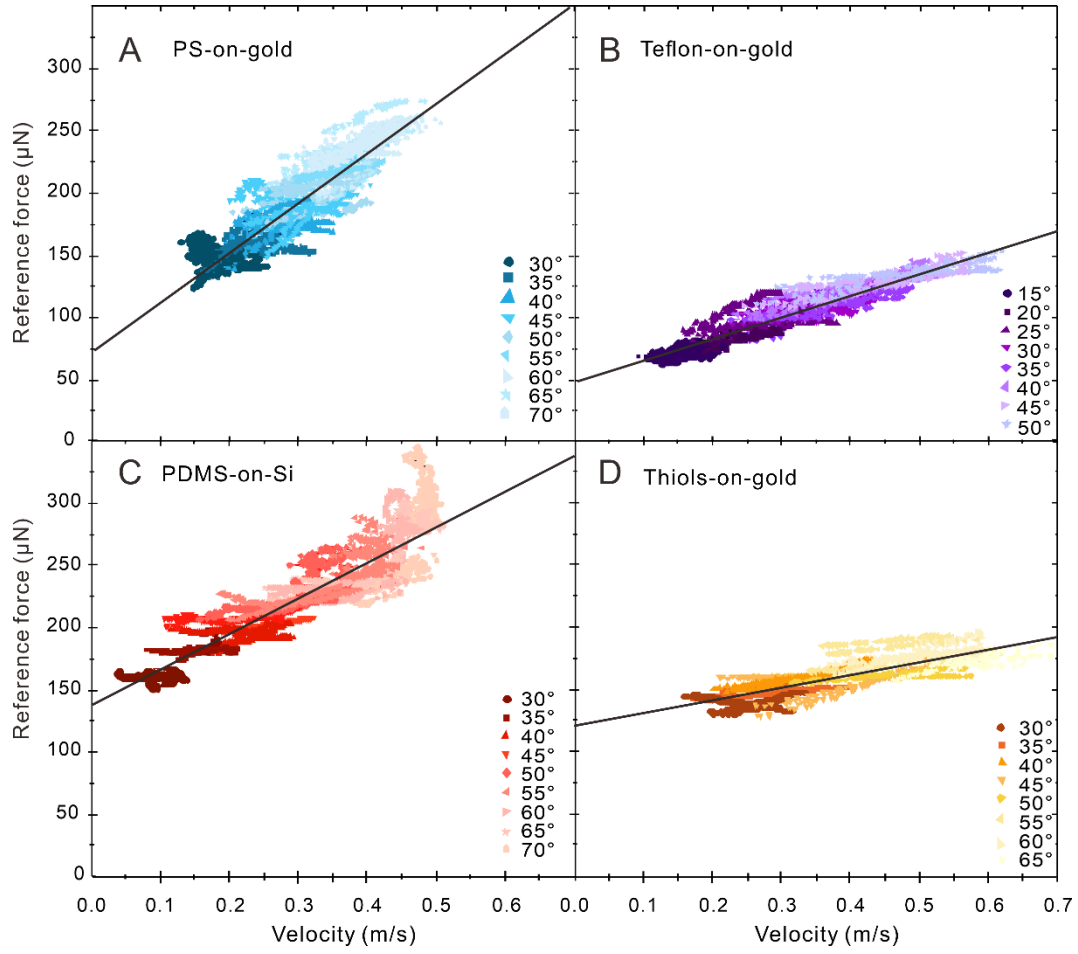


Figure S20. Reference forces measured on different substrates and the linear fit (black lines) derived from velocities up to 0.4 m/s. (A) PS-on-gold fitted by $F_r = 74 \mu\text{N} + 398 \frac{\mu\text{Ns}}{\text{m}} \cdot U$, (B) Teflon-on-gold fitted with $F_r = 48 \mu\text{N} + 175 \frac{\mu\text{Ns}}{\text{m}} \cdot U$, (C) PDMS-on-Si fitted by $F_r = 141 \mu\text{N} + 269 \frac{\mu\text{Ns}}{\text{m}} \cdot U$, and (D) thiols-on-gold fitted with $F_r = 120 \mu\text{N} + 103 \frac{\mu\text{Ns}}{\text{m}} \cdot U$. The water drops of 33 μL volume were deposited at 1.3 s intervals. The results were obtained from the respective 2nd and 10th drop for tilt angles of between 15 and 70°. To complete the graph in particular at high velocity we added results obtained from 10-14 cm slide length, where the drops had reached or were close to their steady state velocity.

SI 17. Measured extra forces of drops on PS, Teflon, and PDMS-coated surfaces

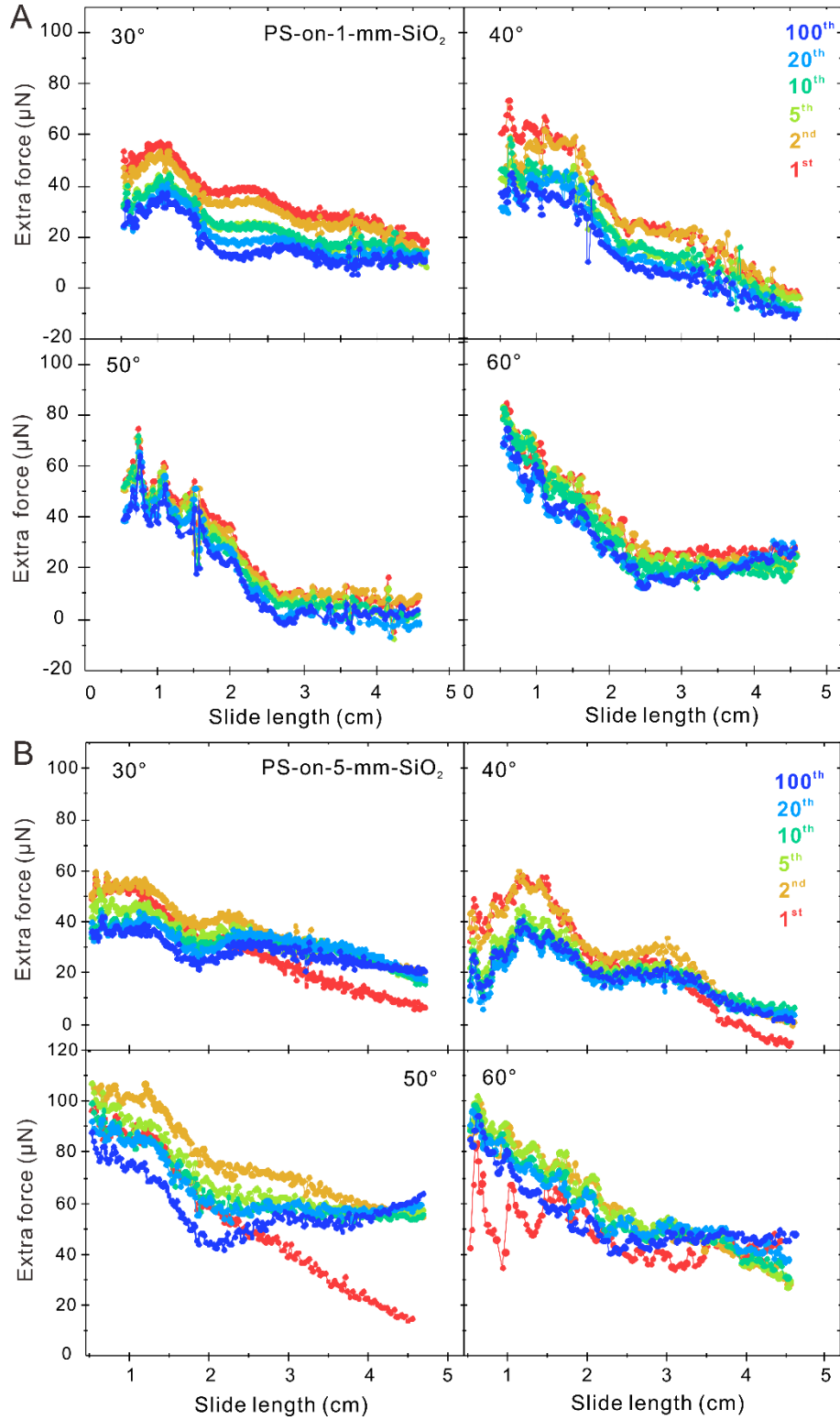


Figure S21. (A) Examples for extra forces acting on water drops sliding down PS-on-1-mm-SiO₂ and (B) PS-on-5-mm-SiO₂ for different tilt angles. Plotted are results for the 1st, 2nd, 5th, 10th, 20th, and the 100th drop. 33 μL drops were deposited at an interval of 1.3 s. Force were calculated with Eq. (3) using $m^*/m=1.05$ and $F_r = 74 \mu\text{N} + 398 \frac{\mu\text{Ns}}{m} \cdot U$.

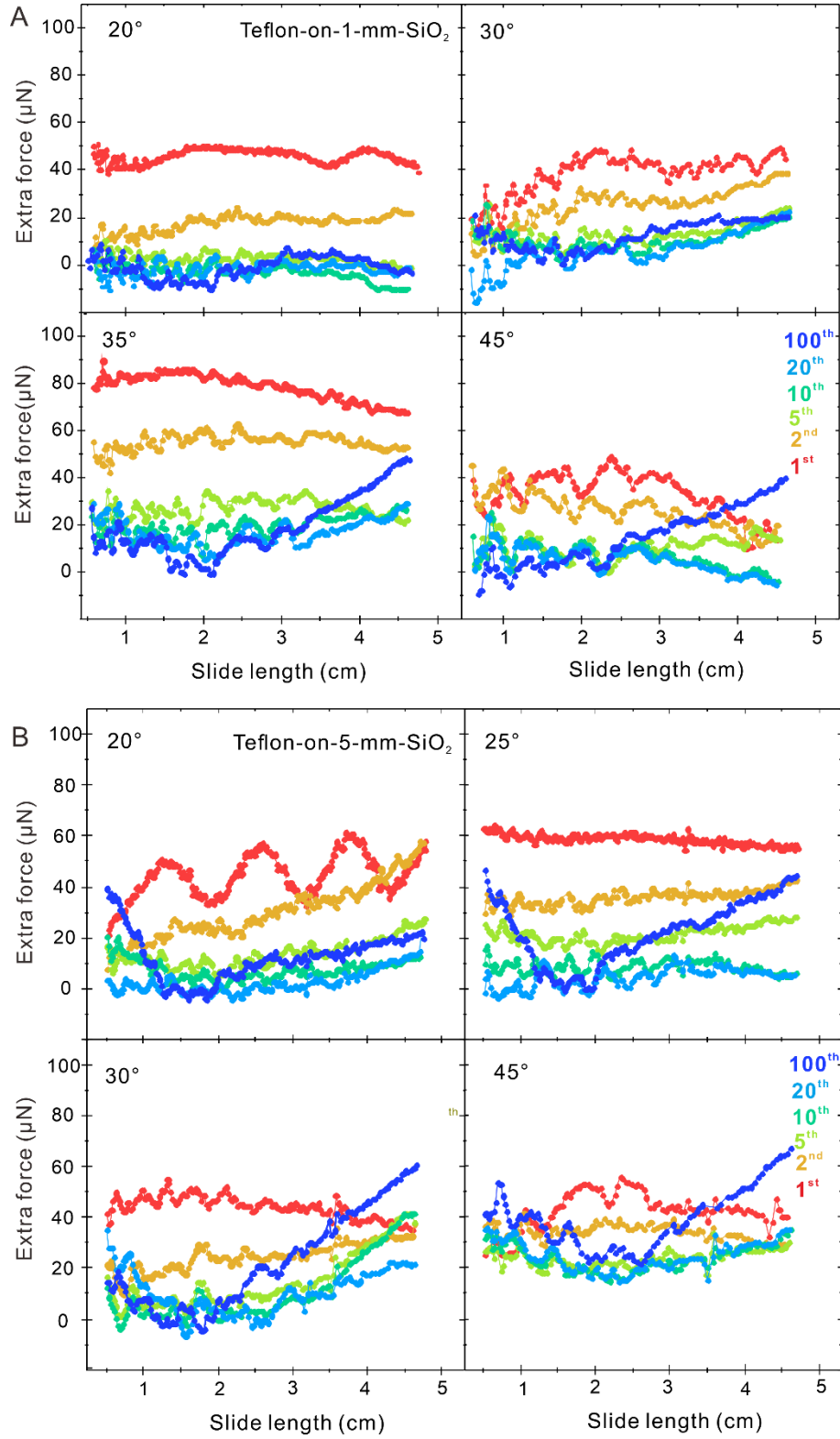


Figure S22. (A) Examples for extra forces acting on water drops sliding down Teflon-on-1-mm-SiO₂ and (B) Teflon-on-5-mm-SiO₂. For different tilt angles. Plotted are results for the 1st, 2nd, 5th, 10th, 20th, and the 100th drop. 33 μ L drops were deposited at an interval of 1.3 s. Force were calculated with Eq. (3) using $m^*/m=1.05$ and $F_r = 48 \mu\text{N} + 175 \frac{\mu\text{Ns}}{m} \cdot U$.

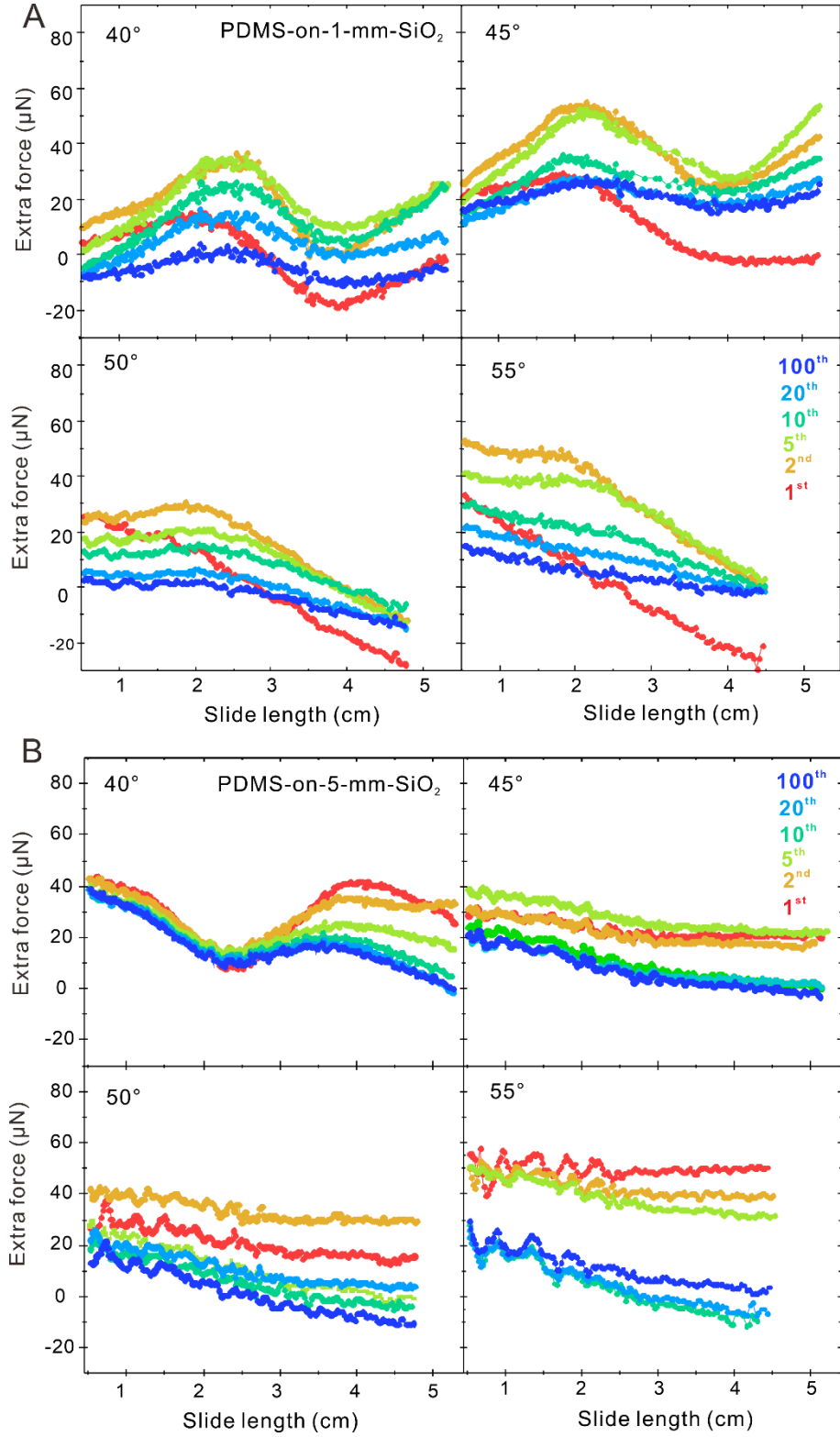


Figure S23. (A) Examples for extra forces acting on water drops sliding down PDMS-on-1-mm-SiO₂ and (B) PDMS-on-5-mm-SiO₂ for different tilt angles. Plotted are results for the 1st, 2nd, 5th, 10th, 20th, and the 100th drop. 33 μL drops were deposited at intervals of 1.3 s. Force were calculated with Eq. (3) using $m^*/m=1.05$ and $F_r = 141 \mu\text{N} + 269 \frac{\mu\text{Ns}}{m} \cdot U$.

SI 18. Measured extra forces of drops of aqueous NaCl solutions and ethylene glycol

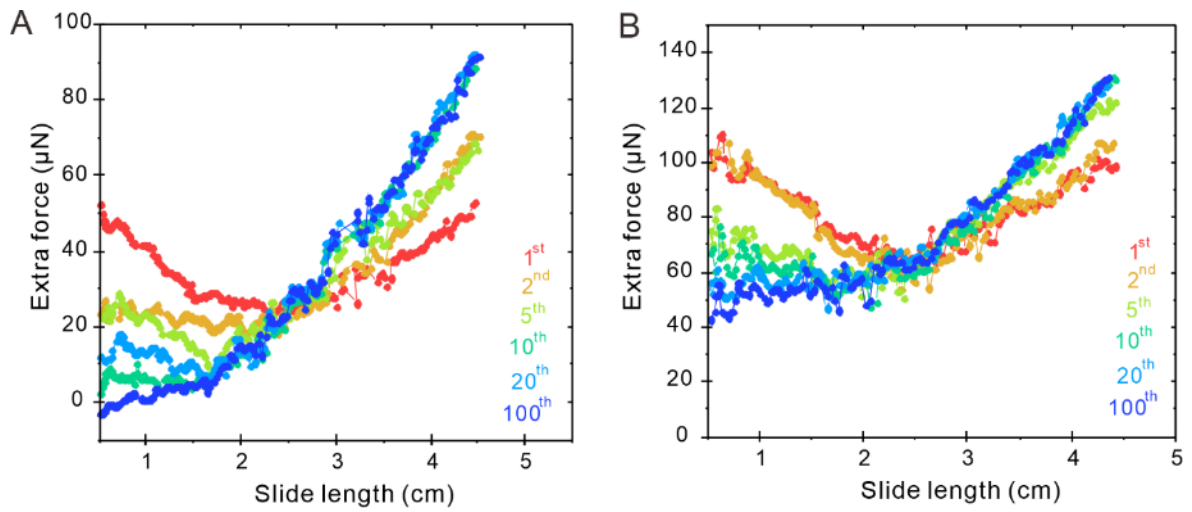


Figure S24. (A) Examples for extra forces acting on water drops containing 0.1 mM NaCl and (B) 1 M NaCl sliding down PFOTS-on-1-mm-SiO₂ at 65° tilt. Plotted are results for the 1st, 2nd, 5th, 10th, 20th, and the 100th drop. 33 μL drops were deposited at an interval of 1.3 s. Force were calculated with Eq. (3) using $m^*/m=1.05$ and $F_r = 225 \mu\text{N} + 89 \frac{\mu\text{Ns}}{m} \cdot U$ for 0.1 mM and $F_r = 151 \mu\text{N} + 178 \frac{\mu\text{Ns}}{m} \cdot U$ for 1 M NaCl.

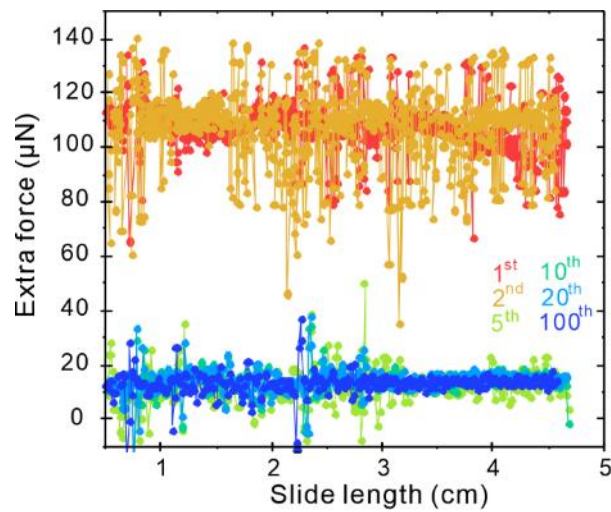


Figure S25. Examples for extra forces acting on drops of ethylene glycol sliding down Teflon-on-1-mm-SiO₂ at 55° tilt. Plotted are results for the 1st, 2nd, 5th, 10th, 20th and the 100th drop. 18.5 μL drops were deposited at an interval of 1.5 s. Force were calculated with Eq. (3) neglecting the acceleration term because the drops reached a steady state velocity even after 0.5 cm. The drops were exposed to air at $\approx 30\%$ relative humidity and may have adsorbed water for the air.

SI 19: Video of water drops impacting on Teflon-coated surfaces

20 μL water drops falling 2.5 cm and impacting on Teflon-on-gold, Teflon-on-1-mm-SiO₂ and Teflon-on-5-mm-SiO₂. The impact velocity was $U=0.70$ m/s leading to a Weber number of $We = \rho U^2 d / \gamma = 23$, where $d=3.4$ mm is the drop diameter. In the first experiment the surfaces were held horizontally. In the second experiment they were tilted by 10°.

SI 20: The influence of polymer film thickness on drop mobility

To check how the thickness of the polymer film influences drop mobility, we measured drop velocities on PS-on-gold and PS-on-1-mm SiO₂ surfaces with film thicknesses of 20 nm and 200 nm, Teflon-on-gold surfaces and Teflon-on-1-mm SiO₂ surfaces with thickness of 60 nm and 400 nm (Figure S26). On high-permittivity substrates, the drop velocities for drop 1, 10 and 100 were almost the same independent on film thickness. Thus, the polymer film thickness has no effect on the drop mobility for PS and Teflon. On SiO₂ substrates, the dependence of drop velocity with drop number was more pronounced for thin polymer films than for thicker ones. AFM image showed that thick polymer films had a higher roughness than the thin films (Figure S27). Thus, in accordance with Helseth's report²⁹, we suspect that this slight change is caused by surface roughness.

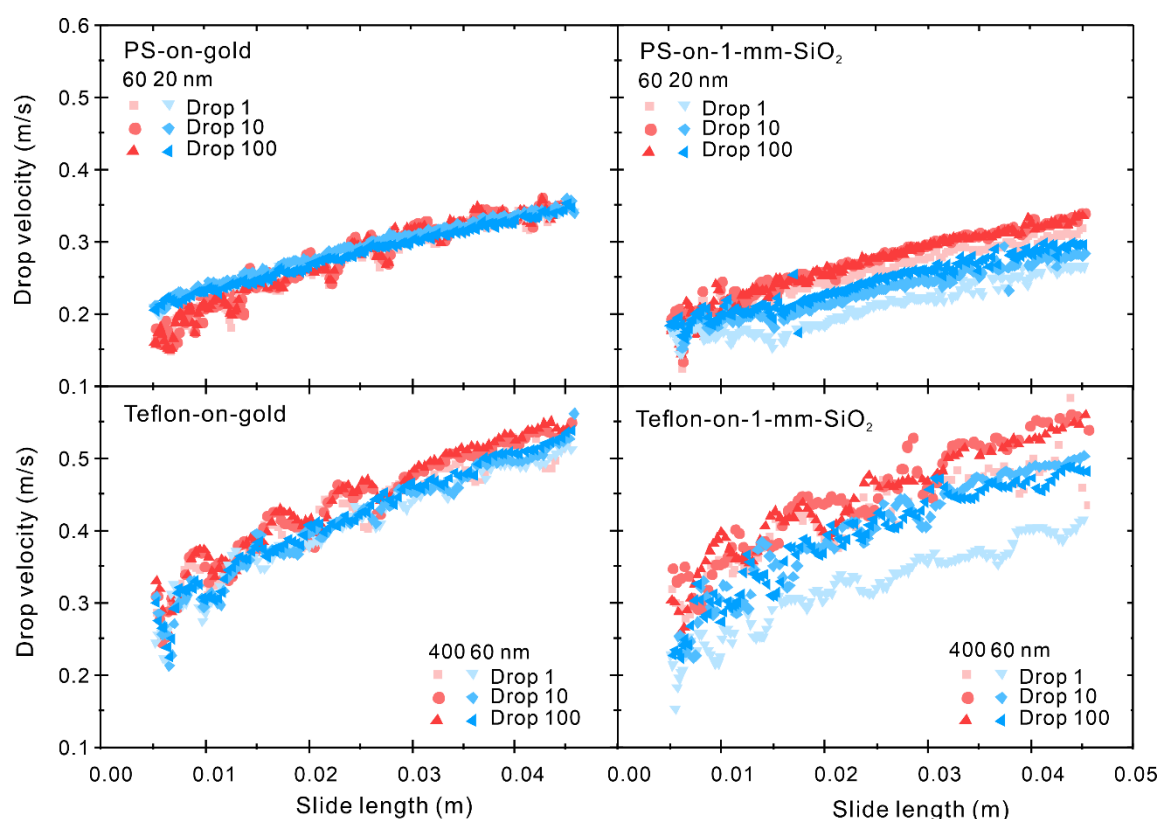


Figure S26. Drop velocity-vs-slide length on PS and Teflon surfaces with different substrates and film thickness.

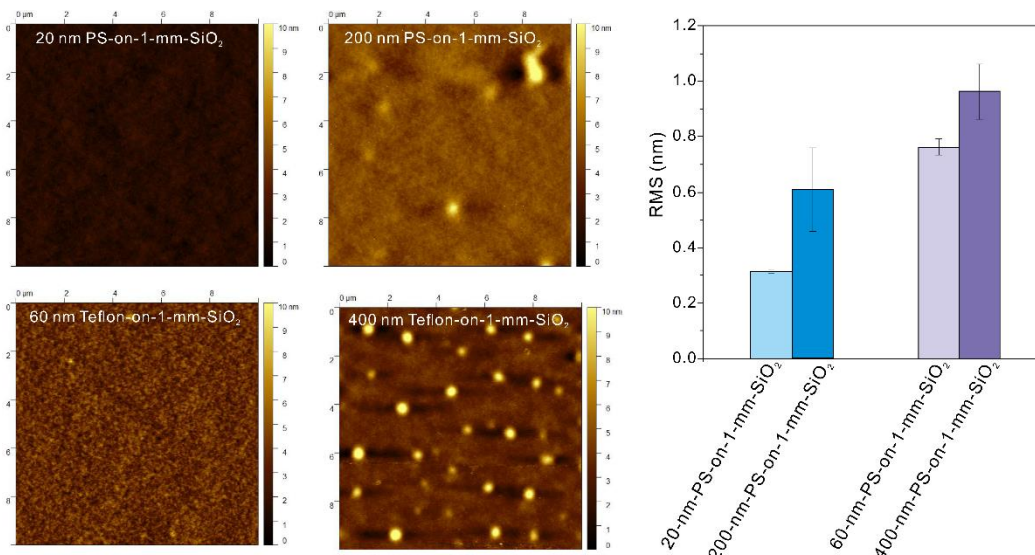


Figure S27. Morphology and RMS of PS films and Teflon films with different thicknesses on 1 mm SiO₂ on an area of 10×10 μm² scale.

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