contact angle

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

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