

TABLE 2 SI Prefixes

Prefix	Unit abbreviation	Exponential factor	Meaning	Example
tera	T	10^{12}	1 000 000 000 000	1 terameter (Tm) = 1×10^{12} m
giga	G	10^9	1 000 000 000	1 gigameter (Gm) = 1×10^9 m
mega	M	10^6	1 000 000	1 megameter (Mm) = 1×10^6 m
kilo	k	10^3	1000	1 kilometer (km) = 1000 m
hecto	h	10^2	100	1 hectometer (hm) = 100 m
deka	da	10^1	10	1 dekameter (dam) = 10 m
		10^0	1	1 meter (m)
deci	d	10^{-1}	1/10	1 decimeter (dm) = 0.1 m
centi	c	10^{-2}	1/100	1 centimeter (cm) = 0.01 m
milli	m	10^{-3}	1/1000	1 millimeter (mm) = 0.001 m
micro	μ	10^{-6}	1/1 000 000	1 micrometer (μ m) = 1×10^{-6} m
nano	n	10^{-9}	1/1 000 000 000	1 nanometer (nm) = 1×10^{-9} m
pico	p	10^{-12}	1/1 000 000 000 000	1 picometer (pm) = 1×10^{-12} m
femto	f	10^{-15}	1/1 000 000 000 000 000	1 femtometer (fm) = 1×10^{-15} m
atto	a	10^{-18}	1/1 000 000 000 000 000 000	1 attometer (am) = 1×10^{-18} m

The mass of a typical textbook is about 1 kg. The gram, g, which is 1/1000 of a kilogram, is more useful for measuring masses of small objects, such as flasks and beakers. For even smaller objects, such as tiny quantities of chemicals, the milligram, mg, is often used. One milligram is 1/1000 of a gram, or 1/1 000 000 of a kilogram.

Mass is often confused with weight because people often express the weight of an object in grams. Mass is determined by comparing the mass of an object with a set of standard masses that are part of the balance. **Weight** is a measure of the gravitational pull on matter. Unlike weight, mass does not depend on gravity. Mass is measured on instruments such as a balance, and weight is typically measured on a spring scale. Taking weight measurements involves reading the amount that an object pulls down on a spring. As the force of Earth's gravity on an object increases, the object's weight increases. The weight of an object on the moon is about one-sixth of its weight on Earth.

Length

The SI standard unit for length is the meter. A distance of 1 m is about the width of an average doorway. To express longer distances, the kilometer, km, is used. One kilometer equals 1000 m. Road signs in the United States sometimes show distances in kilometers as well as miles. The kilometer is the unit used to express highway distances in most other countries of the world. To express shorter distances, the centimeter

CROSS-DISCIPLINARY

Some Handy Comparisons of Units

To become comfortable with units in the SI system, try relating some common measurements to your experience.

A meter stick is a little longer than a yardstick. A millimeter is about the diameter of a paper clip wire, and a centimeter is a little more than the width of a paper clip.

One gram is about the mass of a paper clip. A kilogram is about 2.2 pounds (think of two pounds plus one stick of butter). And there are about five milliliters in a teaspoon.