

Dimensional analysis notes:

Conversion factor: any “ratio” of numbers and units that equal “one”

$12/1 = 1$; when the 12 represents inches and the 1 represents feet

$1/365 = 1$; when the 1 represents a “normal” year and the 365 represents days

Dimensional analysis PLAN OF ATTACK:

- 1- write down what you know (whether it is a measurement or a ratio)
- 2- leave lots of space for work
- 3- write an equal (*or is it “equals”*) sign, a smaller space and then the UNITS of what you WANT TO KNOW
- 4- fill in the middle with conversion factors to cancel the units you don’t want (you will most likely have to consult outside information in a real world problem)
- 5- check the plan using the units before you do the math
- 6- do the math
- 7- convert to proper sig figs
- 8- Make sure your answer is reasonable. CHECK IT (Units and Math)
- 9- Circle the final answer (with UNITS)

Example:

- 1) 35 furlongs per minute to miles per hour

$$\frac{35 \text{ Furlongs}}{1 \text{ minute}} \left(\frac{60 \text{ minutes}}{1 \text{ hour}} \right) \left(\frac{660 \text{ feet}}{1 \text{ furlong}} \right) \left(\frac{1 \text{ mile}}{5,280 \text{ ft}} \right) = \frac{1,386,000}{5,280} = \frac{262.5 \text{ mile}}{\text{hour}}$$

Rounded to 2 sig figs we would have 260 M.P.H.