

Metre Matter A Metric Measurement Activity

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Find a long piece of string or yarn. Put one end of the string at point M on the picture frame and start laying the string along the edge of the frame so that it goes through the points marked 1, 2, 3, and so on. Keep on doing this until the string has gone all around the frame two times. Now cut off this part of the string.

The distance around this frame is 50 centimetres. Since your piece of string was wrapped twice around the frame, it is

100 centimetres or 1 metre

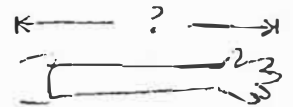
long.

You can now use your piece of string to measure many things.

Are you taller than a metre?



Is your waist smaller than a metre?



Is your arm longer than a metre?

Look at one of the rulers below.
How many of these rulers laid end to end would you need to get something as long as your metre string?

Answer: 5 rulers

Look around you...

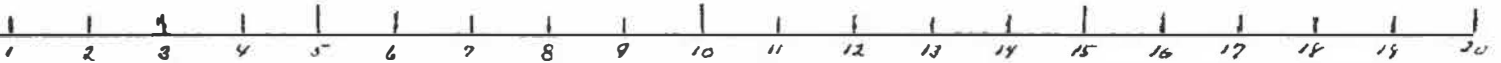
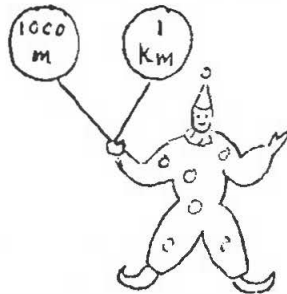
Can you find something that is about one metre high?



Can you find something that is close to one metre wide?



If 1000 pieces of string just like yours were placed end to end in a straight line, the giant piece of string would be 1000 metres long. 1 kilometre or 1 km is another name for 1000 metres. Kilometres are used to measure long distances.



If someone asks you how tall you are, you probably say something like "4 feet" or maybe "48 inches". We usually talk about some number of inches, feet, yards or miles when we measure how long, how tall, or how wide an object is, or how far away it is. These units of length are part of what is called the customary system of measurement.

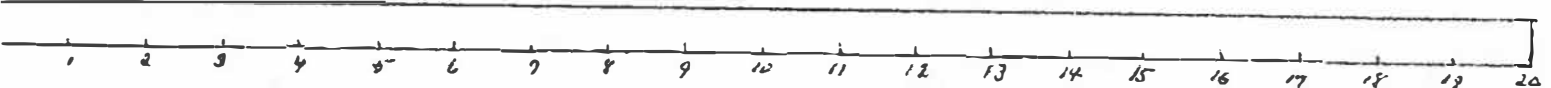
Almost every country in the world except the United States uses another system of measurement called the metric system. Because we have to trade with other countries and because the metric system is a simple system to use, we will probably soon be measuring only in metric units in this country. Scientists and doctors already use the metric system.

There is a picture of a metric ruler at the top of this page. The little marks on the ruler are all the same distance apart:



This distance, $\overline{\hspace{1cm}}$, is one centimetre. 1 cm also means one centimetre. We use a metric ruler just like we use a regular ruler. To measure how long something is, we line up one end of it with the 0 end of the ruler.

This key



is about 5 centimetres long.

Do you think your pencil is longer than 15 centimetres? How would you find out?



That's right, you would measure it on a metric ruler and see.



About how many centimetres long is your little finger?

Find something in your house that you think is about 20 centimetres long. Measure it and see if you were close.



A popsicle stick is about 1 centimetre wide. This may help you to picture how long a centimetre is when you don't have a metric ruler with you.

Find a nickel. Use the ruler at the top of this page to measure how many centimetres wide it is.



Do you agree that the nickel is about 2 centimetres wide?

What if we wanted to measure the length of your bedroom? If we measured how many centimetres long it is, we would get a very big number. Instead of using centimetres, we can use another metric unit of length called a metre. One metre is 100 centimetres long. A metre is a little longer than a yard. 1 m means one metre.

