

Measurement at a Glance

What Is Measurement?

Measurement tells us the size, weight, or amount of something. We can measure in standard units, such as inches and pounds, using tools like rulers and scales. We can also measure using non-standard units, such as figuring out the length of a stick by lining up paper clips on the floor next to it.

Why Is Learning About Measurement Important?

People measure things every day: For example, “How far is the walk to school? How much flour do I need to make a cake?” Some areas of math and science use measurement to solve problems. Knowing standard

units and how they are related helps us communicate about the things we measure.



The butterfly is smaller than the leaf. The leaf is wider than the stick.

What Do Children Need to Know About Measurement?

- **What to measure and why:** To know if a toy will fit inside a box, we measure the length, width, and height, but not the weight.
- **What kind of units to use:** Children need to know whether big units, like their hands, or small units, like Legos, are more useful to measure a given object and to use the same unit to complete a single measurement (for example, they can't use hands and Legos at the same time).
- **How to measure:** Children need to know how to use measurement units and tools to get an accurate answer. For example, when measuring a toy, they must line up the tool with the edge of the toy and make sure there are no gaps or overlapping parts.
- **Sometimes measurements are not exact:** Help children understand this by drawing attention to approximate measurements: “Your shoe is about 5-½ inches long.”

How Can We Help Children Learn Measurement?

Talk About Measurement Throughout the Day

- Use words that describe and compare the size of objects: smaller, bigger, longer, taller, shorter, heavier, lighter, wider, narrower
- Talk about dimensions of measurement: length, height, width, area, volume
- Talk about units of measurement: inches, centimeters, seconds, minutes, pounds

Ideas for Exploring Measurement During:

Centers/Small Groups

Measuring Myself: Draw a picture of a body part and find objects that are longer or shorter than that body part.

Math Moments

Count Steps to Measure Distance:

Count how many steps it takes to walk to a new location. Compare the number of steps taken and think about why different people took different numbers of steps.

How Can We Support Learning About Measurement at Home?

Encourage families to:

- **Cook together:** Ask children to compare the size and amount of ingredients and practice using measuring cups or spoons. Talk about the importance of measuring carefully.
- **Make comparisons:** Talk about the size of different objects during everyday routines (“Whose shoes are bigger?”) and reading time (“Which animal weighs more?”).
- **Practice measurement:** Use household items, like pennies or pencils, to measure and compare the size of objects at home. Then measure the same object in different ways (“How many pennies long is the stick? How many quarters long? Why are these numbers different?”).