

Dear parent or guardian: This is a summary of the key ideas your child is learning in mathematics. You can use this summary as background as you support your child's work. Some suggestions for simple activities you can do with your child are also included.

4 The Metre

What is a Metre?

A metre is a standard metric unit for length. 1 metre (m) is 100 centimetres (cm), but students in Grade 1 have not yet learned about centimetres. The metre will be the first metric unit students meet.

At this stage, students should learn simply that the metre is a handy, long unit for measuring long (or tall) things.

Students will relate a metre to familiar lengths, for example, the length of an actual metre stick in the classroom, the distance of most doorknobs from the floor, or the height of a typical two-year-old child.

How Big is a Metre?

To get a sense of the size of a metre, it is helpful to relate one metre to known non-standard units.

For example,



One metre is about 50 linking cubes long.



One metre is exactly 10 orange counting rods long.



One metre is about 35 small paper clips long.



One metre is about as long as 50 nickels in a row.

Using a Metre as a Benchmark

When students have a sense of about how long a metre is, they can start thinking about other long measurements in terms of a metre; for example, they can think about whether a bicycle is about 2 metres long or about 4 metres long.

Helping Your Child

Use the word “metre” with your child when appropriate to describe everyday heights or distances. For example, you could point out that a particular room is about 3 m long or that a particular small tree is about 4 m tall.

Take opportunities to engage your child’s curiosity. For example, you could say, “I wonder how many pencils (or forks, or hammers) it would take to make a metre.” Encourage children to wonder about the length of many items inside and outside the home.

Notes

Students in Grade 1 are not asked to write the word metre or to use the symbol m.

It is too early to explain to students how metres relate to centimetres, since students have not learned about centimetres yet, but they can explore how metres relate to other length units they are familiar with, such as footsteps or arm lengths.

Definitions

benchmark: a number (or a unit) that is familiar and comfortable for the user

metre (m): a unit of measure for length; 1 m is about as long as the distance from a doorknob to the floor

non-standard unit: a unit that can vary in size, e.g., a pencil or a footprint

standard unit: a unit with an agreed-upon size, e.g., a metre or a centimetre