How to Read a Measuring Tape

The Inch

Inches are clearly marked on a measuring tape. They are shown as whole numbers (1, 2, 3, 4, etc.). They are marked on a tape as the longest lines. In the example below, the 5 and 6 inch marks are labelled.

Half an Inch – 1/2"

The second longest line is the 1/2 (one-half) inch mark. It is one half of the way between two whole numbers. One-half of the way between 1 inch and 2 inches is 1 and 1/2 inches (one and one-half inches or 1 1/2").

Fourths of an Inch – 1/4"

Within an inch, there are two lines that are fourths, or quarters. There are only two of these: 1/4 and 3/4. The 1/4 falls between the whole number and the 1/2-inch mark. The 3/4 falls between the 1/2 and the whole number.

Eighths of an Inch – 1/8"

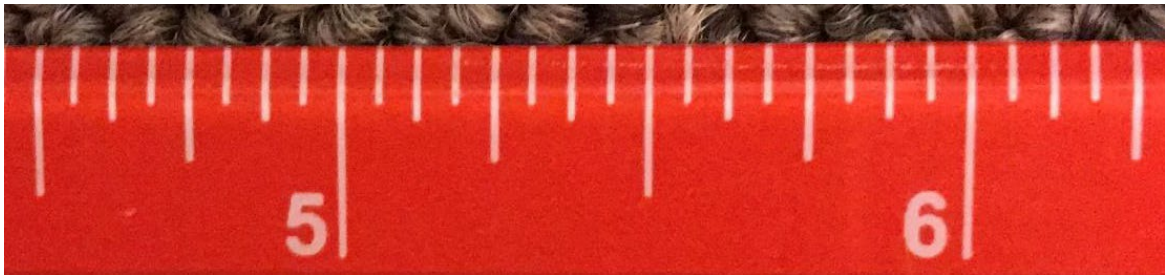
Look at the tape measure again. The lines that are a little shorter than 1/4 are called 8ths. There are four of these: 1/8, 3/8, 5/8, and 7/8.

Sixteenths of an Inch – 1/16"

The shortest lines are called 16ths.They are shorter than the 1/8 of an inch measure. There are eight of these: 1/16, 3/16, 5/16, 7/16, 9/16, 11/16, 13/16 and 15/16.

Note on 32nds of an Inch

Some tape measures even have 32nds of an inch. If present, these lines would then be the very smallest.



This Employment Ontario program is funded in part by the Government of Canada and the Government of Ontario.

Learning Activity – Tape Measure

1. Use your tape measure to measure the lines below. Mark your answer on each line.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

What Else is on a Tape Measure?

Every foot and every 16" increment is marked on a tape measure. The kind of marking varies from tape measure to tape measure. It may be a coloured box, triangle, or coloured number. Why? The markings are there because construction workers use these marks when they are spacing studs in a wall or when they are putting in floor or roof joists. For walls that are load bearing, studs and joists are placed every 16 inches. For walls that are not load-bearing, they are placed every 24". Having every 16" and 24" clearly marked on a tape measure helps builders to measure correctly and faster.

Still Having Problems Reading a Tape Measure?

If you find that you are having problems reading a tape measure, look for one that clearly marks the fractions of an inch. They aren't as common, but they are available. Learning the names of these markings comes with time and practice. Use your tape measure every day. Carry it with you. Measure random items for practice.

HORTICULTURAL TRADES ASSOCIATION landscape ontario.com Green for Life! | APPRENTICESHIP Horticultural Technician Landscape Horticulturist
Canada
EMPLOYMENT ONTARIO
Ontario

This Employment Ontario program is funded in part by the Government of Canada and the Government of Ontario.

Learning Activity – Measuring Items

1. With your tape measure, measure five items or spaces that you would find inside a room. Write the items and the measurements in the spaces below.

   a) _____

   b) _____

   c) _____

   d) _____

   e) _____

2. Go outside and measure five items or spaces with your tape measure. Write the items and the measurements in the spaces below.

   a) _____

   b) _____

   c) _____

   d) _____

   e) _____

This Employment Ontario program is funded in part by the Government of Canada and the Government of Ontario.