

A client is ordered 75 mg of amoxicillin orally.  
125 milligrams in 5 mL of syrup is available.  
How many mL will you administer?

$$125 \text{ mg amox} = 5 \text{ mL}$$

$$75 \text{ mg amox} \times \frac{5 \text{ mL}}{125 \text{ mg amox}} = \boxed{3 \text{ mL}}$$

## Accuracy and Precision

- two related concepts that you must understand when working with measured numbers!

### Accuracy

- how close a measured number is to the CORRECT (or "true") value of what you are measuring
- "Is it right?"
- checked by comparing measurements against a STANDARD (a substance or object with known properties)

### Precision

- how close a SET of measured numbers are to EACH OTHER
- "Can I reproduce this?"
- checked by repeated measurements

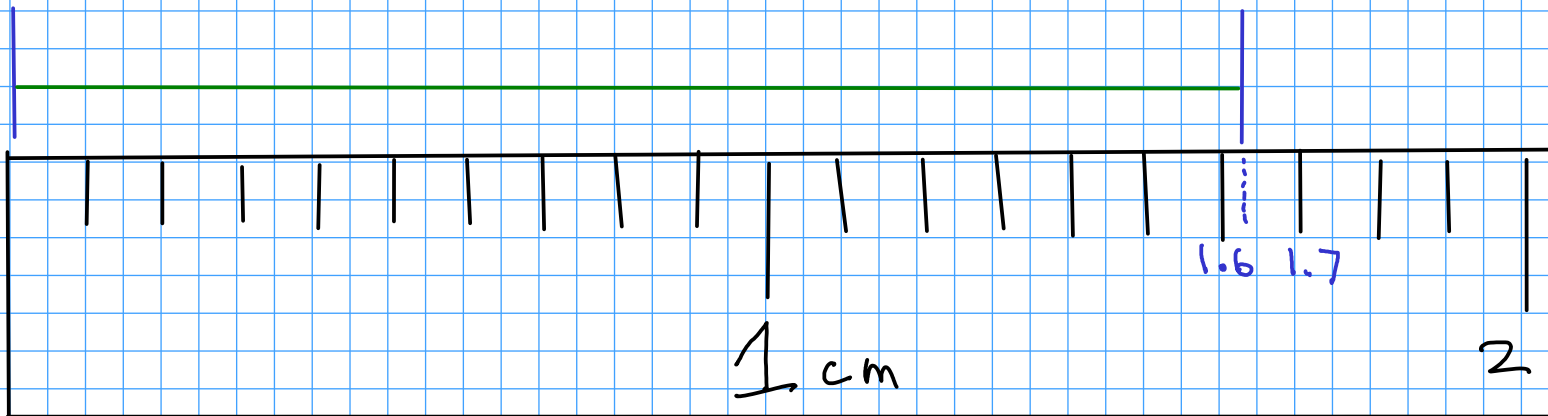
## More on precision

Every measurement contains some amount of ERROR, or some amount of deviation from the true value of what is being measured.

RANDOM ERROR is the variability in a measurement that cannot be traced back to a single cause. Random errors cause measurements to fluctuate around the true value, but can be averaged out given enough measurements.

When reporting measurements, we want to indicate how much random error we think is present. How?

Form:  $X.XX$  cm



How long is the green line?

Write your answer on the sheet, then fold the sheet in half and pass it up to the front!

## Our classroom experiment: Results

After throwing away obvious mistakes in reading the scale, we had:

Value	# students
1.61	1
1.62	3
1.63	4

Overall average

$1.62 \pm 0.01 \text{ cm}$

Certain.  
Little to no  
variation  
expected.  
Same almost  
every time

Uncertain.  
Expected to  
vary by about  
 $\pm 1$

8 total measurements

When reading measurements from a scale, record all CERTAIN digits and one UNCERTAIN (or estimated) digit.

## Significant figures

SIGNIFICANT FIGURES are a way to indicate the amount of uncertainty in a measurement.

The significant figures in a measurement are all of the CERTAIN DIGITS plus one and only one UNCERTAIN (or estimated) DIGIT

Example:

From our classroom experiment,

1.62 cm

We estimated the last digit, It's uncertain

These digits were obtained in all measurements. They are certain

**THIS MEASUREMENT HAS "THREE SIGNIFICANT FIGURES"!**

## Determining significant figures

When you read a measurement that someone has written using the significant figures convention, you can tell how precisely that measurement was made.

$$1.47\text{(3)} \text{ g } \pm 0.001$$

This was measured to the nearest  $\pm 0.001$  g  
The last digit is always **UNCERTAIN** (or estimated)

$$2\text{(1)} \text{ m } \pm 1$$

$$37.2\text{(6)} \text{ kg } \pm 0.01$$

Some other examples

$$3.207\text{(6)} \text{ g } \pm 0.0001 \text{ g}$$

↑ uncertain

$$27.3\text{(1)} \text{ m } \pm 0.1 \text{ m}$$

↑ uncertain

## A small problem

The number ZERO has several uses. It may be a measured number, but it may also be a mere "placeholder" that wasn't measured at all!

So how do we tell a measured zero from a placeholder? There are a few ways:

1: BEGINNING ZEROS: Beginning zeros are NEVER considered significant.

$0.15 \text{ g}$

This zero merely indicates that there is a decimal point coming up!

$0.015 \text{ m}$  (1.5 cm)

These zeros are placeholders. They'll disappear if you change the UNITS of this number!

$0.00063 \text{ mm}$

None of these zeros are considered significant

2: END ZEROS are sometimes considered significant. They are significant if

- there is a WRITTEN decimal point in the number
- there is another written indicator that the zero is significant. Usually this is a line drawn over or under the last zero that is significant!

1.50 km  $\pm 0.01$

This zero IS considered significant. There's a written decimal.

1500 m  $\pm 100$  m

These zeros ARE NOT considered significant (no written decimal, and no other indication that the zeros are significant)

1430̄000 g  $\pm 100$  g

These zeros are not significant.

This zero IS significant. It's marked.



How many significant figures are there in each of these measurements?

$$\frac{76.070 \text{ g}}{5} \pm 0.001 \text{ g}$$

$$\frac{85000. \text{ mm}}{5} \pm 1 \text{ mm}$$

$$\frac{0.001030 \text{ kg}}{4} \pm 0.000001 \text{ kg}$$

$$\frac{156.0002 \text{ g}}{7} \pm 0.0001 \text{ g}$$

$$\frac{0.10 \text{ s}}{2} \pm 0.01 \text{ s}$$

$$\frac{17000000 \text{ mg}}{2} \pm 1000000 \text{ mg}$$

$$\frac{120\bar{0}00 \text{ km}}{4} \pm 100 \text{ km}$$

$$\frac{1350 \text{ ms}}{3} \pm 10 \text{ ms}$$

## Calculations with measurements

When you calculate something using measured numbers., you should try to make sure the ANSWER reflects the quality of the data used to make the calculation.

An ANSWER is only as good as the POOREST measurement that went into finding that answer!

$$\begin{array}{r} 14.206 \\ 154.72 \\ + 1.6 \\ + 0.222 \\ \hline 170.748 \end{array}$$

Round so that there's only one uncertain digit in the answer!

How should we report this answer? How much uncertainty is in this answer?

$$\boxed{170.7} \pm 0.1$$

- ✗ If you add an uncertain number to either a certain or an uncertain number, then the result is uncertain!
- ✗ If you add certain numbers together, the result is certain!

For addition and subtraction, round FINAL ANSWERS to the same number of decimal places as the measurement with the fewest decimal places. This will give an answer that indicates the proper amount of uncertainty.

For multiplication and division, round FINAL ANSWERS to the same number of SIGNIFICANT FIGURES as the measurement with the fewest SIGNIFICANT FIGURES!

$$\overset{4}{15.62} \times \overset{3}{0.0667} \times \overset{3}{35.0} = 36.46489$$

How should we report this answer?

36.5

$$\overset{3}{25.4} \times \overset{2}{0.00023} \times \overset{5}{15.201} = 0.088804242$$

How should we report this answer?

0.089

A few more math with significant figures examples:

$$\begin{array}{c}
 5 \quad 2 \quad 4 \\
 15047 \times 11 \times 0.9876 = 163464.5892 \quad \boxed{160000}
 \end{array}$$

~~16~~

Placeholder zeros, even though they aren't SIGNIFICANT, still need to be included, so we know how big the number is!

$$\begin{array}{r}
 147.3 \\
 2432 \\
 0.97 \\
 + 111.6 \\
 \hline
 2691.87 \\
 \boxed{2692}
 \end{array}$$

DENSITY CALCULATION

$$\begin{array}{r}
 14.7068 \text{ g} \\
 \hline
 2.7 \text{ mL} \\
 \hline
 = 5.446962963 \text{ g/mL}
 \end{array}$$

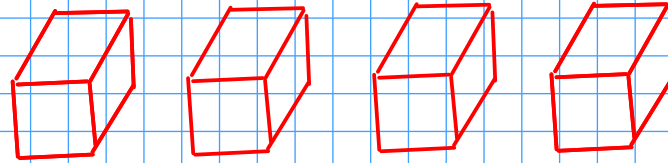
→  $\boxed{5.4 \text{ g/mL}}$

To improve (make more precise) this calculated density, we must improve the poorest measurement. We must use a more precise device to measure the VOLUME (which only has two significant figures in this example)!

## Exact Numbers

- Some numbers do not have any uncertainty. In other words, they weren't measured!

1) Numbers that were determined by COUNTING!



How many blocks are to the left?

exactly 4!

2) Numbers that arise from DEFINITIONS, often involving relationships between units

$$12 \text{ in} = 1 \text{ ft}$$

$$\text{km} = 10^3 \text{ m}$$

\* All metric prefixes are exact!

- Treat exact numbers as if they have INFINITE significant figures!

## Example

You'll need to round the answer to the right number of significant figures!

Convert 4.45 m to in, assuming that 2.54 cm = 1 in<sup>\*</sup>

$$1 \text{ cm} = 10^{-2} \text{ m}$$

$$2.54 \text{ cm} = 1 \text{ in}$$

$$4.45 \text{ m} \times \frac{1 \text{ cm}}{10^{-2} \text{ m}} \times \frac{1 \text{ in}}{2.54 \text{ cm}} = 175.196850 \text{ in}$$

↑  
3 sf                      ∞ sf                      ∞ sf

Report: 175 in ← 3 sig figs!

\*An inch is defined as EXACTLY 2.54 cm!