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By measuring length you can answer questions such as the following:

How wide is this window?



How long is the balance beam?



A ruler is a tool to measure length.

Most rulers measure inches on one edge and centimeters on the other edge.



A ruler is 12 inches (or 1 foot) long. It is about $30\frac{1}{2}$ centimeters long.

Here are some other measuring tools.

tape measures



yardstick and meterstick



The meterstick is a little longer.

odometer



An odometer measures the distance a car has traveled in miles or kilometers.

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There are two different systems of measuring length.

People in the United States use the U.S. standard system to measure most lengths, using inches, feet, yards, and miles. Only two other countries in the world—Liberia and Burma—use this measurement system.

1 inch

length of a paper clip



1 foot = 12 inches

height of a notebook



1 yard = 3 feet = 36 inches

length of a baseball bat



People from most other countries around the world use the metric system for measuring lengths, using millimeters, centimeters, meters, and kilometers.

1 centimeter

width of a crayon



A centimeter is smaller than an inch. It takes about $2\frac{1}{2}$ centimeters to make an inch.

1 meter = 100 centimeters

height of a door knob
from the floor

A meter is a little longer than a yard.



Can you find some other things that are about the length of an inch, a foot, a yard, a centimeter, or a meter?