

business companion

trading standards law explained

Units of measurement

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This guidance is for England, Scotland and Wales

Metric units

If you are indicating units of weight or volume, only the permitted abbreviations (symbols) can be used. These are shown in the table below.

Metric measurements

Unit of measurement Symbol

metre	m
centimetre	cm
millimetre	mm
square metre	m^2
cubic metre	m^3
litre	l or L
centilitre	cl or cL
millilitre	ml or mL
tonne	t
kilogram	kg
gram	g
milligram	mg

Vulgar fractions are not permitted (unless it relates to a fraction of a pint). For example, 500 g cannot be expressed as $\frac{1}{2}$ kg.

If the word 'net' is used it cannot be abbreviated.

Supplementary imperial units

Imperial units can be shown as well, but they must not be more prominent than the metric indication. The permitted units are shown in the table below.

Imperial measurements	
Unit of measurement	Abbreviation
gallon	gal
quart	qt
pint	pt
fluid ounce	fl oz
pound	lb
ounce	oz

Except where the law and trade practice dictates otherwise, liquids should be marked with a volume (ml or L, for example) and other products by weight (g, kg, etc).

Under the Weights and Measures (Quantity Marking and Abbreviations of Units) Regulations 1987, quantity indications must be easily visible, legible and indelible; they must also be of a minimum height, depending on the pack size.

Trading standards

For more information on the work of trading standards services - and the possible consequences of not abiding by the law - please see '[Trading standards: powers, enforcement and penalties](#)'.

In this update

No major changes.

Last reviewed / updated: July 2022

Key legislation

[Weights and Measures \(Quantity Marking and Abbreviations of Units\) Regulations 1987](#)

[Weights and Measures \(Packaged Goods\) Regulations 2006](#)

[Food Information Regulations 2014](#)

Please note

This information is intended for guidance; only the courts can give an authoritative interpretation of the law.

The guide's 'Key legislation' links often only shows the original version of the legislation, although some

amending legislation is linked to separately where it is directly related to the content of a guide. Information on changes to legislation can be found by following the above links and clicking on the 'More Resources' tab.

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