

Which Is Longer? Measuring Everyday Objects with Paper Squares

Become measurement detectives together: predict which everyday object is longer, check using equal-sized paper squares, then talk about what you found. This short video and printable worksheet explore Year 1 maths through a playful, practical activity.

What it is

Which Is Longer? is a short video and printable worksheet for exploring length: how far an object reaches from one end to the other. Your child compares everyday objects, then measures them using equal-sized paper squares. The challenge is to predict first, measure next and explain what they notice.

The activity connects with the Department for Education's Year 1 maths programme, which includes comparing lengths and beginning to measure and record them. Its guidance describes using non-standard units: everyday measuring units, rather than recognised units such as centimetres. Here, each square provides one equal step along the object. Paper squares are this activity's choice; schools may use other materials.

What happens

The video invites your child to look at everyday objects and predict which is longer, shorter or the same length. A prediction is an idea to check, so there is no need to get it right straight away.

The demonstration shows how to place a row of equal-sized paper squares alongside an object. Start the first square at the object's edge, keep the row straight and let neighbouring squares touch without gaps or overlaps. Count the squares along its length, then measure the next object with the same-sized squares. The worksheet offers a place to record findings. Finish by inviting your child to show or explain how they checked.

What it means for your child

The Department for Education's Year 1 programme includes practical problems about length. This activity offers one way to explore that learning: your child can compare objects, count equal measuring steps and describe what they found. Words such as 'longer', 'shorter' and 'the same length' give them ways to share their observations.

The national curriculum framework also says teaching should take account of children's individual needs, including special educational needs and disabilities, often shortened to SEND, and the needs of children learning English. You can invite your child to point, move objects or use familiar words alongside English. Teaching approaches and timing vary by school; ask their teacher how this activity fits their current learning.

How you can help at home

Try a short detective challenge with two familiar objects, such as a spoon and a pencil. Put their starting ends level and ask, 'Which do you think is longer?' Then offer equal-sized paper squares to check together. Use the same-sized squares for both objects, starting at each object's edge.

Keep it playful: your child might choose the objects while you place squares where they direct you. If handling small pieces is difficult, try larger squares or help with moving them. You can talk in the language your family uses most comfortably, adding the English comparison words as you go. Stop whenever your child has had enough; there is no need to finish the whole worksheet.

Questions parents often ask

Do we need a ruler? This activity uses paper squares. The Department for Education's Year 1 guidance also introduces measuring tools such as rulers; ask your child's teacher what they are using at school.

What if the object ends partway through a square? You could describe it as 'a little more than four squares', for example. There is no need to force a whole-square answer.

What if the prediction was different from the measurement? Say, 'We checked and found something new,' then look together at the starting edge, gaps and overlaps.

Must my child write everything? At home, you can invite them to show, say or draw their findings. Ask their teacher about any school worksheet expectations or helpful adaptations.

Sources

- Department for Education — National curriculum in England: mathematics programmes of study, Year 1 measurement requirements and accompanying guidance. GOV.UK: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-curriculum-in-england-mathematics-programmes-of-study/national-curriculum-in-england-mathematics-programmes-of-study>
- Department for Education — National curriculum in England: framework for key stages 1 to 4, section 4: Inclusion. GOV.UK: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-curriculum-in-england-framework-for-key-stages-1-to-4/the-national-curriculum-in-england-framework-for-key-stages-1-to-4>