Moving from Paper Clips to Rulers: Why Your Year 2 Child is Learning to Measure with Standard Units

Key points

- Your child has been measuring with everyday objects like paper clips and counting cubes – this has taught them how to compare lengths and sizes.
- Now they're learning to use a ruler and centimetres (a standard unit) so that any two people can measure the same object and get the same answer.
- A common tricky moment is lining up the zero mark at the start of an object – many rulers have space before the zero, and this confusion is completely normal.
- Learning to read the marks on a ruler accurately takes practice, and small mistakes now are just part of learning this skill properly.
- Measuring skills in Year 2 build towards solving practical maths problems later and help your child understand how measurements work in everyday life.

Things to try at home

- Measure things around the house together – a toy, a spoon, a book – and say the number of centimetres out loud, even if you're not quite sure.
- Find two or three objects, guess which is longer before measuring, then check together with the ruler; celebrate being close.
- Practise lining up the zero line on the ruler with the very start of an object, and point to where the zero is – it helps to say 'start at zero'.
- Draw lines of different lengths on paper and measure them together, saying what the numbers mean – 'this line reaches the 5 mark, so it's 5 centimetres'.
- Measure the same thing a few times or on different days and notice that you get the same answer – this shows what the numbers really mean.

Find out more

- Your child's Year 2 teacher or school's maths lead – they can show you what your child has been learning and what to focus on at home.
- National Curriculum for Mathematics (Key Stage 1) on GOV.UK – the official guidance on what children should be learning in maths.
- Your school's home-learning pages or resources – many schools share simple measuring activities parents can try.