

Metric Prefixes

Prefix	Symbol	Power of Ten
exa-	E	10^{18}
peta-	P	10^{15}
→ tera-	T	10^{12}
→ giga-	G	10^9
→ mega-	M	10^6
→ kilo-	k	10^3
hecto-	h	10^2
deca-	da	10^1
deci-	d	10^{-1}
→ centi-	c	10^{-2}
→ milli-	m	10^{-3}
→ micro-	μ	10^{-6}
→ nano-	n	10^{-9}
pico-	p	10^{-12}
femto-	f	10^{-15}
atto-	a	10^{-18}

Understanding the meanings of commonly used metric prefixes is essential for understanding the physics we're going to be covering in this course. For this reason, you are required to memorize the metric prefixes which are marked with arrows in the table above and understand how to use them. They will be tested on Midterm Exam I and may be used in subsequent exams.

In physics, metric prefixes always refer to powers of 10. Note that this is not true, for example, in the computer industry, where, 1 kbyte = 1024 bytes.