

Acres and Hectares

What is It?

An acre measures surface area. It's equivalent to 43,560 square feet. There are 640 acres in one square mile. The acre was originally 22 yards by 220 yards, the amount of land that one person could plow in one day with one ox. But there is no standard shape for an acre; it is any shape with that area.

In the metric system, the thing most similar to an acre is a hectare, which is 10,000 square meters, or a square measuring 100 meters x 100 meters. A hectare is about two and a half acres.

Uses

In the U.S., it's common to measure large areas of land in acres. Plots of land for building houses are frequently described as fractions of acres ($\frac{1}{4}$ acres, $\frac{1}{10}$ acre, etc.)

Hectares are rarely used in the U.S., except when comparing to international measures.

A quick internet search will tell you the area of most cities and states in acres or square miles.

Examples



A football field without the end zones is about 48,000 square feet. So an acre is a little less than that – about the same as the area between the two 5-yard lines.



A typical Home Depot store is 130,000 square feet, or about 3 acres.



The area of Rhode Island is 776,957 acres.

Acres

Launch the Discussion

Remind or tell the group why you're covering this topic (it came up at a previous meeting, it's a key to understanding something the group has identified as a priority, etc.) Ask the group:

What's an example of an acre?

Which do you think is closest to an acre? (Read the list and have participants vote, but don't give an answer until they have had a chance to guess.)

- A football field? (a little more than an acre)
- An average Home Depot? (about 3 acres)
- The area of Rhode Island? (776,957 acres)

Fact Sheet

Pass out the Fact Sheet. Review key points. Discuss with the group how it connects to their work.

Activities

Use a tape measure to measure the floor of the room. Calculate the floor's area in square feet. Alternatively, you can come with information about the area of a place everyone knows (like the local high school gym). Then calculate how many 'floors' of that room would make an acre.