

Tons and Tonnes

Definition

One ton, also known as a “short ton,” is 2,000 pounds.

One tonne, also known as a “metric tonne” or “metric ton” is 1,000 kg, or 2,204 pounds.

One “long ton” is 2,240 pounds. This term is rarely used in the U.S. except in shipbuilding.

Uses

Tons and tonnes are usually used for very large weights of solid material, like waste going to a landfill, or coal going to a power plant. In the U.S., the word “ton” by itself usually means short tons. People who mean metric tonnes will usually specify that.

Examples

- Ten 200-lb men weigh a ton.
- Three Harley-Davidson V-Rods weigh a ton.
- A cubic yard of concrete weighs about two tons.
- A typical Ford F-150 truck with a driver and a full tank of gas weighs a little less than three tons.



Tons

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:

Has anyone heard of a ton before?

What's an example of something that weighs a ton?

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

- A Harley-Davidson? (A Harley V-Rod is about 1/3 ton.)
- A VW Bug? (1967 model was a little less than a ton. The 2012 model is 1.5 tons)
- A Hummer 2? (Over 3 tons)

Fact Sheet

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

Activities

Using a bathroom scale, weigh a few heavy objects in the room. Then calculate how many of each object would be needed to make a ton.