



## INTERNATIONAL METRIC SYSTEM (SI)

**Please note the following with regard to the legal system of measurement in South Africa:**

The Legal Metrology Act, 2014 (Act 9 of 2014), and the Measuring Units and Measuring Standards Act, 2006 (Act 18 of 2006) prescribe the use of the International Metric System (SI).

The SI was introduced in South Africa on 5 July 1974.

**This is the only legal system of measurement in South Africa.**

The **comma** is the only recognised **decimal** indicator for all numbers, including amounts of (currency) money.

If there are more than three numerals on either side of the decimal indicator, these numerals are divided into groups of three by means of **spaces**, counting from the decimal sign, e.g. 1 725 352,648 901.

Whenever a number is written with the symbol of a unit, a space is left between the number and the symbol.

*Examples:*

150 m and *not* 150m

50 kg and *not* 50kg

37,5 mg and *not* 37.5mg

R2 000,00 and *not* R2,000.00 or R2,000-00

99,9 % and *not* 99.9%

25 °C and *not* 25°C or 25° C

**Method of writing SI units and symbols**

1. Symbols are typed or printed in **upright** letters and are always **lower case** letters, except if the name of the corresponding unit is derived from the **name of a person**, in which case the symbol (or the first letter thereof if it consists of more than one letter) is a capital letter, e.g. metre (m), second (s), but watt (W), hertz (Hz).

These rules apply always, even if the rest of the subject matter is printed in upper case or other letter types as in headings of tables, paragraphs, etc.

*Examples:*

LENGTH IN m            or    *Length in m*  
 FREQUENCY IN Hz    or    *Frequency in Hz*

2. Symbols have no plural, e.g. 1 m, 2 m
3. Note that reference is to *symbols* and not abbreviations, and that symbols are not followed by a fullstop unless they occur at the end of a sentence.
4. When written out in full the name of a unit is written in lower case letters irrespective of whether it is derived from the name of a person or not. Exceptions are if the unit appears at the beginning of a sentence in which case the first letter is a capital letter, and if the whole of the subject matter is printed in capital letters, e.g. LENGTH IN METRES. The exception to this rule is the degree Celsius, where the name Celsius is always written with a capital C.
5. The plural form is used in English but not in Afrikaans, e.g. one metre, two metres in English, but een meter, twee meter in Afrikaans.
6. Dimensions, e.g. mass, volume, height, length, are denoted by italics, i.e. *m/v*, *m/m*, *v/v*.

**The above was taken from the Guide to the use of the SI in South Africa, published by the SABS.**

Note that mass per mass reflected as *m/m* should be in *italics* to distinguish from metre per metre.

If your computer settings don't yet support the above, you can easily adjust these as follows: (*If your access is restricted you will have to log a call to IT to come and adjust your settings*)

From the Start menu:

> Go to Control Panel

>> Region, Additional settings (Region and Language, Additional settings, Numbers)

>>> Numbers

>>>> Decimal symbol: Change this to a comma

>>>> Digit grouping symbol: Click the space bar (it won't show anything in the block)

>>>> Measurement system: Select "metric"

Now select "Apply"

Check that MS Word is set to accept centimetres as follows:

Office 2003

> Go to Tools, Options, General

>> At the bottom is the option for "measurement units" – select "centimeters".

Office 2007/2010/2016

> Under File, go to Options, Advanced

>> Under Display, Show measurements in units of – select "centimeters"

>>> Select OK