

Unit rates and best buys

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Purpose

Compare prices using a common unit. Interpret the best buy in terms of cost, quantity needed and waste.

Vocabulary

Unit rate: amount per one unit. Unit price: cost for one item or unit of mass. Comparable: measured on the same basis. Budget: maximum available spending.

Why the method works

Dividing cost by quantity gives a unit price because equal quantities carry equal shares of the price. £3 for 6 items is £0.50 per item. For mass, convert to the same unit first. The lowest unit price need not give the lowest bill for a small purchase.

Method and checking

Choose a common unit and label it. Divide each cost by its quantity, compare unrounded results, then consider the amount actually needed. Multiply back to check.

Common errors and next attempt

If quantity is divided by price, read the resulting units aloud. If g and kg are mixed, convert first. Recheck 500 g for £2.20 as £4.40/kg. Separate lowest unit price from lowest total spend.