

Measure Up!

Measuring carefully and using the right tools can make cooking much easier. Your meals will turn out better, too!

Don't guess or "eyeball" measurements

If you are new to cooking or if you are using a new recipe. Even if you're an experienced cook, never estimate measurements when you're baking. Baking is a science and not measuring correctly can make your baked goods not turn out.

Use the right tools

Coffee cups, tea cups, and the spoons you eat with are not good for measuring when you are cooking or baking. These items are not consistent in size or volume and can cause you to add too much or too little of an ingredient. Use actual measuring cups and measuring spoons. A well-stocked kitchen will have a liquid measuring cup, a set of dry measuring cups, and a set of measuring spoons.

Use the tool that lets you make the fewest measurements possible

For example, if you try to measure 2 cups of flour with a $\frac{1}{4}$ -cup scoop, you will have to measure out 8 scoops. You can easily lose track of how many scoops you have added! Use a 1-cup scoop, so that you have to measure out only 2 scoops.

Know basic equivalents

These can help you easily convert measurements on containers in the grocery store to the amounts you need for a recipe. For example, if your recipe calls for 2 cups of milk, you will know you need to buy at least a 1-pint carton of milk at the grocery store.

1 Tablespoon = 3 teaspoons

4 Tablespoons = $\frac{1}{4}$ cup = 2 fluid ounces

5 Tablespoons + 1 teaspoon = $\frac{1}{3}$ cup

8 Tablespoons = $\frac{1}{2}$ cup = 4 fluid ounces

16 Tablespoons = 1 cup = 8 fluid ounces

2 cups = 1 pint = 16 fluid ounces

4 cups = 1 quart = 32 fluid ounces

8 cups = 2 quarts = $\frac{1}{2}$ gallon = 64 ounces

4 quarts = 1 gallon = 128 ounces

For measuring solid stick butter or margarine

$\frac{1}{2}$ stick = $\frac{1}{4}$ cup

1 stick = $\frac{1}{2}$ cup

2 sticks = 1 cup



Measuring Dry or Solid Ingredients

To measure large amounts of dry or solid ingredients, like flour or butter, use dry measuring cups. To measure smaller amounts, use measuring spoons. When purchasing your dry measuring cups and spoons, choose cups with the measurements molded or engraved onto them, so that you can still read the measurements if the ink wears off over time.

Use a measuring cup that is exactly the size you need

Most sets of dry measuring cups will include $\frac{1}{4}$ -cup, $\frac{1}{3}$ -cup, $\frac{1}{2}$ -cup, and 1-cup sizes. Some sets will also include $\frac{1}{8}$ -cup and $\frac{2}{3}$ -cup sizes.

Fill the measuring cup all the way to the top

Here are tips for different types of ingredients:

- For most dry ingredients, like sugar or rice: use the measuring cup to scoop the ingredient out of the container, or pour from the container into the measuring cup.
- For flour: hold the measuring cup over the container of flour or over the sink. Use a large spoon to scoop flour out of the container and into the measuring cup until the cup is overflowing. Do not pack the flour into the cup. Use the flat side of a knife (not the sharp side) to run over the top of the cup, scraping off the extra flour.
- For dense, semi-solid ingredients like softened butter, margarine, or peanut butter: use a spoon to scoop the ingredient from the container. Use the spoon to press the ingredient into the cup to prevent air pockets. Continue to add and press until the measuring cup is full.
- For brown sugar: use a spoon to scoop the brown sugar from the container. Use the spoon to press the brown sugar into the measuring cup. If your recipe calls for “lightly packed” brown sugar, press lightly. If it calls for “packed” or “firmly packed” brown sugar, press harder until all the air spaces are filled. When the cup is turned over, the brown sugar should come out in the shape of the measuring cup.

Level the ingredients with the top edge of the measuring cup

Run the flat edge of a knife across the top of the cup to scrape off any excess ingredient. Do this over the original container or over the sink, to make cleanup easier.

Measuring Liquid Ingredients

You can measure tablespoons and teaspoons of liquids with the same measuring spoons you use for dry ingredients. But measuring larger amounts of liquids is not the same as measuring dry or solid ingredients. To measure liquids correctly and get them out of the cup easily, use a liquid measuring cup with a pouring spout.

Choose clear measuring cups so that you can easily see the level of the liquid inside.



Choose measuring cups with large, easy-to-read markings to show the measurements. If possible, choose cups with the measurements molded or etched onto the cup, so that you can still read the measurements if the ink wears off over time.

Place the measuring cup flat on the countertop or table so the liquid inside will be level and you will get an accurate measurement. When reading the measurement, keep your face at eye level with the cup. Looking at it from above will cause you to get an incorrect measurement.

Use a spoon or a rubber spatula to get thick liquids, like molasses, out of the cup.

The contents of this document are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the official position of or endorsement by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

