

Making Home Improvements

Objective

In this lesson, you will learn useful words and expressions related to making home improvements. You will learn measurement units and how to express a unit conversion. You will also learn the names for basic housing materials and tools.

Warm-Up

A. Brainstorming

Let's start by making a list of reasons why you may need to visit a home improvement store.

- *I need some tools.* _____
- *Our toilet isn't working.* _____
- *We want new flooring.* _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____



Warm-Up cont.

B. Vocabulary Preview

Match up as many words and meanings as you can.

Check this exercise again before you try the review tasks.

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| _____ 1. install | a) a measurement for the side of a shape or object |
| _____ 2. in stock | b) a dot placed before a number(s) that is less than 1 (e.g, 3.2) |
| _____ 3. renovation | c) available at a store right now |
| _____ 4. decimal | d) to express an approximate amount or size |
| _____ 5. convert | e) to change to something different |
| _____ 6. estimate (<i>verb</i>) | f) to put in a place for use |
| _____ 7. round up | g) to express a number slightly higher (e.g., 4.9 as 5) for simplicity |
| _____ 8. dimension | h) the updating or improvement of a room or building |
| _____ 9. 2-D | i) to find the amount or number |
| _____ 10. calculate | j) a flat shape or surface (two-dimensional) |

Dialogues

Read the dialogues, and practice with a partner.

A. Shopping for Window Fixtures

- A: Excuse me, do you sell window blinds?
- B: Yes. The window fixtures are in aisle 5. Do you need a hand?
- A: Yes, please.
- B: What size is the window you are covering?
- A: I have two windows. They are both 24" x 38"*.
- B: Okay. Here is our selection for that size.
- A: Thank you. Are these easy to install?
- B: Yes, but check the box. You may need a few tools.
- A: Okay. Thanks again.
- B: No problem. Let me know if you need anything else.

***Note**

This means that the window is 24 inches wide by 38 inches high.

You will find out more about measurements on page 4.

Dialogues cont.

B. Shopping for Flooring

- A: Excuse me, do you have a flooring section?
- B: Yes. It's at the back of the store.
What kind of flooring are you interested in?
- A: Carpet, I think.
- B: Okay. Do you need a hand?
- A: I think I'm okay, thanks.
- B: Sure. Let me know if you need anything.
- A: Actually, what is the cost per square foot?
- B: Our carpet ranges from \$5-\$10 per square foot.
- A: Okay. Is installation extra?
- B: Yes. Installation is \$2 per square foot.

C. Shopping for Walls

- A: Excuse me, do you sell paint?
- B: Yes. Do you need interior or exterior paint?
- A: Interior.
- B: Which room are you painting?
- A: The bathroom. What type of paint do you recommend?
- B: We recommend semi-gloss paint for bathrooms.
- A: Thank you. How many cans do I need for 35 square feet?
- B: You will probably need about 1.5 cans.
- A: Okay. I'll buy two. Thanks for your help.
- B: No problem. Let me know if you need any help choosing paint colors.

Common Questions

Listen to your teacher read these common English questions from a home improvement store.

Then recite them together as a class and come up with some possible answers.

- Do you need a hand?
- Can I help you find something?
- What size is *your wall*?
- How big is *your dining room*?
- What type of *flooring* are you interested in?
- Do these come in other *colors*?
- Are there any other *sizes*?
- Is this all you have in stock?
- Is it free delivery?
- What type do you recommend?
- Is it easy to install?

Types of Measurements

Now let's learn some common types of measurements.

A. Length

Length measures *how long* something is. It is measured in units. Depending on the type of measurement you are doing, it may be called by other names, including **width** (*how wide*), **height** (*how high*), and **depth** (*how deep*).

- **Width (W)** measures length horizontally (from side to side). It can also refer to the shorter side of a shape or object.
- **Height (H)** measures length vertically (from top to bottom).
- **Depth (D)** can be measured horizontally if you view the object from the front, or vertically if you view the object from the top.
- **Length (L)** usually refers to the longest side of a shape or object.

You will learn more about when to use these words in Part C.

Common Units

Here are some common units to measure length, from small to large.

Metric

- millimeter (mm)
- centimeter (cm)
- meter (m)

Imperial

- inch (in / ")
- foot (ft /')
- yard (yd)

B. Area

Area is the space inside of a 2-D shape. You would need the area of the walls of a room (*to buy enough paint to cover them*), the floors in your basement (*to buy enough carpet*), or the area of your yard (*to build a deck*).

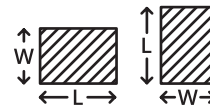
Area is measured in square units, such as square meters (sq m / m²) or square feet (sq ft / ft²).

- We need 5 square meters (5 m²) of flooring.
- Your roof is 3,000 square feet (3,000 sq ft).
- The yard is 10 square meters (10 sq m).

The Area of a Rectangle

$$\text{AREA} = \text{LENGTH} \times \text{WIDTH}$$

When calculating area of a rectangle, we usually refer to the longer side as **length** and the shorter side as **width**.



Types of Measurements cont.

C. Dimensions

Measurements for the main sides of shapes or objects are called **dimensions**. Dimensions aren't always written in the same order. It is a good idea to clarify which side you or someone else means. Here are some ways to describe the dimensions of common objects.

What's that ×?

When we need more than one dimension for an object, we can separate them with an ×, which is read as *by*.

	Shapes / Objects	Examples	Dimensions	Diagram
2-D	basic shapes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> rectangle triangle 	L × W	
	flat objects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> rug fabric 	L × W	
	flat, upright objects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> wall window 	W × H	
3-D	objects that you view from the front	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> bookcase kitchen cabinet couch 	W × H × D	
	objects you view from the top, or objects with a longer side	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> table closed box 	L × W × H	
	open containers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> bathtub swimming pool open box 	L × W × D	

Examples:

- Our bathroom floor is 4' × 8'. (*four feet by eight feet*)
- This bookcase is 32" wide, 60" high, and 18" deep.
- Do you mean the width is 2 meters or the height is 2 meters? (*clarifying*)

Pronunciation Tip

Place emphasis on numbers, measurement units, and dimensions when describing measurements.

Types of Measurements cont.

D. Exact Measurements

When taking measurements for home repairs and renovations, it is important to be exact. Fractions and decimals are used for numbers that are smaller than one. In spoken English, the word *point* is used to express a decimal.

Fraction	Decimal	Words
1/2	0.5	half / a half / one-half
1/3	0.333	a third / one-third
2/3	0.666	two-thirds
1/4	0.25	one-quarter
1 3/4	1.75	one and three-quarters
1/5	0.2	one-fifth
1/8	0.125	one-eighth
1/16	0.0625	one-sixteenth
1/32	0.03125	one-thirty-second

Examples

- The length is 43.4 centimeters. (*forty-three point four*)
- It costs \$4.00 for 1/2 of a square meter. (*half*)
- We're painting two-thirds of the room white.
- I need 1.5 rolls of wallpaper. (*one and a half*)

E. Approximate Measurements

Sometimes we estimate measurements.

You can use *about*, *around*, or *approximately* to estimate a measurement.

- We need **about** three cans of paint.
- The door is **around** 6 feet high.
- The blinds are **approximately** an inch too short.

Unit Conversion

When taking measurements and doing renovations, you may need to convert some units. You can find handy "conversion" tools online. When describing an exact conversion, you can round up to the nearest decimal point.

A. Questions & Answers

How many _____ are in a _____ ?

Look at the conversion. Write a question and an answer.

1. 1 inch = about 25 millimeters

How many millimeters are in an inch?

There are about 25 millimeters in an inch.

2. 1 meter = 100 centimeters

3. 1 yard = 3 feet

4. 5 centimeters = 50 millimeters

5. 50 inches = 127 centimeters

6. 2 meters = around 6.5 feet

B. Converting Units

Look up these conversions using an online conversion tool. Fill in the blanks using approximate equivalents. Round up to the nearest decimal point.

1. 4 meters = _____ feet

2. 33 centimeters = _____ inches

3. 500 yards = _____ feet

4. 525 millimeters = _____ inches

5. 1 meter = _____ feet

Types of Materials

Now let's review some common types of materials at a home improvement store. Look up any words that you don't know.

Material	Types	Clerk's Questions
Flooring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> carpet (soft rug) hardwood laminated (fake wood) linoleum (washable, smooth sheets) tile (clay or concrete squares) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What type of flooring do you have in the living room? Are you thinking of carpet? Do you have a lot of spills?
Window Coverings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> blinds / shutters curtains / drapes / panels (fabric) sheers (curtains that let light in) window shade (pull down) window film (stick on) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do you want wooden or vinyl blinds? Do you already have a curtain rod? Do you need curtain rings/hooks? Do you have a track system installed?
Walls	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> primer (paint that covers old paint or bare walls) plaster (to cover up holes) indoor / outdoor paint accent paint (a different color for one wall or section) wallpaper decal (stickers) poster / picture / mirror shelves trim / molding (wood between wall and floor) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are you using a primer first? How many cans of paint do you need? Have you considered wallpaper? Do you need any shelving? Have you hung wallpaper before?

More Words I Learned at the Home Improvement Store:

Practice

A. Matching

Match the questions and answers, and practice them with a partner.

- | | | | |
|----------|--|----|---|
| _____ 1. | How large is your apartment? | a) | We're deciding between laminate or hardwood. |
| _____ 2. | How many cans of paint will we need? | b) | Sure. Do you want fabric or wooden ones? |
| _____ 3. | What type of flooring are you interested in? | c) | Buy at least two cans to cover 200 square feet. |
| _____ 4. | Can you show me the blinds? | d) | It's just over 1,000 square feet. |
| _____ 5. | What is the length of the kitchen counter? | e) | It's 15 inches long. |

B. Complete the Dialogues

Use logical questions or answers to complete the dialogues. Be sure to use complete sentences. Practice your completed dialogues with a partner.

#	Person A (Question)	Person B (Answer)
1	Can I help you find something?	
2		It's about 180 square feet.
3		We're thinking about carpet.
4	How many rolls do you need?	
5	How big are your windows?	

C. Correct the Errors

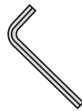



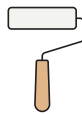
You will find one common error in each of the following questions. Correct the errors in your notebook. Then try asking your partner these questions.


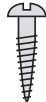


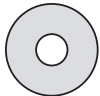

- | | |
|--|-----------------------------------|
| 1. How length is your hallway? | 4. Is it free to installation? |
| 2. How many centimeters in one inch? | 5. Is this all you have on stock? |
| 3. How much is the carpet per squares? | 6. How width is your counter? |

Tools

A. Reference

Here are the English words for some common tools you need for making home improvements.

Tool	Item	Use
Allen key / wrench		loosen or tighten bolts
bolt		create a joint or hold something together with the help of a nut
drill		drill a hole in something
hammer		hammer a nail into a piece of wood
level		balance a picture
nail		hold two pieces of wood together
nut		thread onto a bolt to clamp something together
paint roller		cover a large surface with paint

Tool	Item	Use
pliers		cut a piece of wire
sandpaper		soften a rough surface
saw		cut a piece of wood into two pieces
screw		put a piece of furniture together
screwdriver		put in or take out a screw
tape measure		find out the length of something
washer		prevent the loosening of a nut
wrench		loosen a very tight bolt

Tools cont.

B. Pair Practice

Now work in pairs and take turns asking each other questions.

Example:

Q: What do you need an Allen key for?

A: I need to loosen a bolt.

C. Borrowing Tools

Now walk around your classroom. Imagine your classmates are your neighbors. Ask your neighbors if you can borrow a variety of tools for a variety of home improvement projects. Tell your neighbor why you need each tool. Review the example dialogues for ideas.

Example 1:

A: Can I borrow your **drill**?

B: Of course. What do you need it for?

A: I need **to mount my TV on the wall**.

Example 2:

A: Do you have a **level** I could borrow?

B: I'm sorry, I don't.

A: Thanks anyway.

B: You could ask _____ . He/she might have a **level**.
(name)

Review

Task 1

TAKING MEASUREMENTS

Use a tape measure. Write down the measurements for the objects in the chart below. Ask your teacher whether you should use metric or imperial units.

#	Find the measurements for...	Measurement(s)
1	the height of a wall in your classroom	
2	the depth of a printer, scanner, or photocopier	
3	the width and height of a window in your classroom (or school)	
4	the area of your classroom's floor	

Task 2

MAKING CONVERSIONS

Use a conversion tool. Convert your measurements in Task 1 to any other logical unit of measurement (e.g., centimeters to inches).

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

Review cont.

Task 3

TOOL KIT

It's useful to learn the names for basic tools in English. These will come in handy when following instructions.

A. Matching

What tools do I need? Match the home improvement project to the required tool(s). More than one answer may be possible.

- | | | |
|-------|--|-----------------|
| _____ | 1. I want to hang a picture. | a) screwdriver |
| _____ | 2. It's taking too long to paint this room. | b) hammer |
| _____ | 3. I need to find out the length of my desk. | c) paint roller |
| _____ | 4. I need to tighten these chairs. | d) sandpaper |
| _____ | 5. I have to cut this piece of wood. | e) wrench |
| _____ | 6. I want to hang my calendar on the wall. | f) drill |
| _____ | 7. I need to make a hole in the wall for this screw. | g) Allen key |
| _____ | 8. This shelf isn't straight. | h) pliers |
| _____ | 9. I need to take out these screws. | i) level |
| _____ | 10. I need to cut this wire. | j) nail |
| _____ | 11. I need to smooth the plaster on the wall. | k) screw |
| _____ | 12. I need to fasten these pieces of wood together. | l) tape measure |
| | | m) saw |

B. Fixing Up My Home

Now have a chat with your teacher. Tell your teacher some projects you need to do around your home. Explain what tools and materials you will need. Do you need to take any measurements? Estimate the sizes of the materials you will need.




Learner Reflection

MAKING HOME IMPROVEMENTS

Add check marks (✓) to show what you've learned in this lesson.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Can I...	Yes (very well) 	Yes (with help) 	Not yet 
understand and use vocabulary from this lesson (tools, materials, measurements)?			
ask a clerk questions about house fixtures and home improvements?			
give exact measurements (width, height, depth, length, and area)?			
give approximate measurements?			
use a conversion tool for metric and imperial measurements?			
ask to borrow tools?			
explain what I want and need to do to fix up my home?			

My Notes