

Can I interpret the numbers on a calculator display?

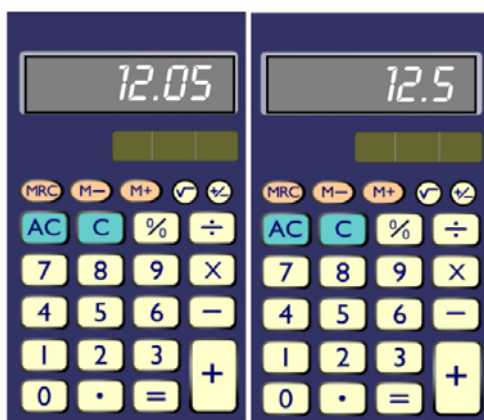
Teaching guidance

Key vocabulary

calculator, display, key, operation key, enter, decimal point, digit
approximately, estimate, round up, round down
pound, pence, metre, centimetre, litre, millilitre, kilogram, gram

Models and images

Use a projected calculator to show how you solve a question and discuss the interpretation of the display.



Display a range of numbers to discuss how to read them and understand their relative values.

Explore what they could represent in different contexts, for example, money or measures.

52	25.00	52.00
0.250	0.025	250.00
0.205	250	0.25

Teaching tips

- Teach children how to interpret the displayed numbers, for example:
 - large numbers as there are no gaps to help them read these correctly;
 - numbers with digits after the decimal point.
- Give children opportunities to discuss the numbers appearing on their calculator screen. For example:
 - ‘How many different contexts can you provide for 5.6?’
 - ‘My question was about lengths in metres, what does the display tell me?’
- Build opportunities to use calculators into daily mental and oral work and ensure that opportunities to use calculators are presented regularly, in mathematics lessons and across the curriculum, so that children are accustomed to deciding when and when not to use them as a resource
- Make sure that children estimate the answer to a problem before using a calculator. They should then check that the answer they have obtained is sensible, rereading the problem they are answering before deciding how to interpret the answer on the calculator display.
- Promote checking strategies consistently, so that they become ‘second nature’ for the children. Strategies you might use include:
 - appointing a ‘checker’ when children are working in groups;
 - using a projected calculator to model checking strategies;
 - asking questions such as:
 - ‘The answer to 32×27 was given as 288. How do you know this is incorrect? What would an approximate answer be?’
 - ‘An answer was given as $14.7 \times 2.3 = 338.1$. What error do you think has been made? How do you know the answer is incorrect? What would an approximate answer be?’
- Further guidance on the use of calculators in the teaching and learning of mathematics can be found within the Primary Framework area of www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/nationalstrategies