

[article](#)[discussion](#)[edit this page](#)[history](#)

Help build the future of Wikipedia and its sister projects!

[\[Hide\]](#) [\[Help us with translations!\]](#)[Read a letter](#) from Jimmy Wales and Michael Snow.

## Pica (unit of measure)

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

*This page is for the unit of measure. For other uses of the word Pica, see Pica.*

A **pica** (pronounced /ˈpaɪkə/) is a **typographic unit** of measure corresponding to 1/72nd of its respective foot, and therefore to 1/6th of an **inch**. The pica contains 12 **point** units of measure.

The pica originated around 1785, when Françoise "L'éclat" Ambrose **Didot** (1730–1804) refined the typographic measures system created by **Pierre Simon Fournier le Jeune** (1712–1768). He replaced the traditional measures of **cicéro**, Petit-Roman, and Gros-Text with “ten-point”, “twelve-point”, et cetera.

To date, in printing these three pica measures are used:

- The **French pica** of 12 Didot points (also called **cicéro**) generally is: 12 × 0.376 = **4.512mm** (**0.177in.**)
- The American pica measure of 0.013837ft. (1/72.27ft.). Thus, a pica is 0.166044in. (4.2175mm)
- The contemporary **computer pica** is 1/72nd of the Anglo-Saxon compromise foot of 1959, i.e. **4.233mm or 0.166in.** Notably, **Adobe** PostScript promoted the pica unit of measure that is the standard in contemporary printing, as in home computers and printers.

Usually, pica measurements are represented with an upper-case "P" with an upper-right-to-lower-left virgule (slash) starting in the upper right portion of the "P" and ending at the lower left of the upright portion of the "P"; essentially drawing a virgule ( / ) through a "P". (P)<sup>[*citation needed*]</sup> Likewise, points are represented with number of points before a lower-case "p", for example, 5p represents “5 points”, and 6P2p represents “6 picas and 2 points”, and 1P1 represents “13 points”, which is converted to a mixed fraction of 1 pica and 1 point.<sup>[*citation needed*]</sup>

Publishing applications such as **Adobe InDesign** and **QuarkXPress** represent pica measurements with whole-number picas left of a lower-case "p", followed by the points-number, for example: 5p6, represents 5 picas and 6 points, or 5½ picas.

**Cascading Style Sheets** defined by **w3c** use "pc" for the abbreviation for pica. Also

pt: points -- the points used by CSS2 are equal to 1/72<sup>nd</sup> of an inch.

pc: picas -- 1 pica is equal to 12 points.

[1]

Note that these definitions are different from a **typewriter**'s pica setting, which denotes a type size of ten characters per horizontal inch.

### References

[\[edit\]](#)

- Bringhurst, Robert (1999). The Elements of Typographic Style, *second edition*. H&M Publishers., pp. 294–295
- Pasko, W W (1894). American Dictionary of Printing and Bookmaking. H. Lockwood., p. 436

### See also

[\[edit\]](#)

- Point (typography)**



**WIKIPEDIA**  
The Free Encyclopedia

navigation

- [Main page](#)
- [Contents](#)
- [Featured content](#)
- [Current events](#)
- [Random article](#)

search

interaction

- [About Wikipedia](#)
- [Community portal](#)
- [Recent changes](#)
- [Contact Wikipedia](#)
- [Donate to Wikipedia](#)
- [Help](#)

toolbox

- [What links here](#)
- [Related changes](#)
- [Upload file](#)
- [Special pages](#)
- [Printable version](#)
- [Permanent link](#)
- [Cite this page](#)

languages

- [Nederlands](#)
- [Português](#)