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Picas and Points Exercises

By [Jacci Howard Bear](#), About.com

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While they may not make you a Pica Professor overnight try these exercises to help you become accustomed to working in picas and points. One involves old fashioned division, multiplication, addition, and subtraction. The second exercise uses your page layout software (it must be a program capable of using picas and points as the measurement system). Enjoy.

Picas and Points Exercise #1

Using paper and pencil do some of these calculations (put that calculator away!).

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1. Divide an 8.5" by 11" piece of paper in even thirds vertically using inches. What is the width of one-third of the page?

2. Divide an 8.5" by 11" piece of paper (51p by 66p) in even thirds vertically using picas. What is the width of one-third of the page?

3. Add 1 inch margins (sides, top, and bottom) to that 8.5" by 11" piece of paper, how much horizontal and

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vertical space remains?
Express it in inches and

in picas.

4. Divide the live page area (paper size minus margins) from Step 3 into three columns of equal size with .167" between columns (That's the default space used by PageMaker when creating column guides). How wide and deep is each column, in inches? How wide and deep is each column, in picas?
5. Calculate how many lines of body type will fit in one of those columns if you use 12 point leading for your type (assume no space between paragraphs).
6. Using the calculations from Step 5, how many lines of body type will fit if you add a 36 point 2-line headline at the top of the column with 6 points of space between the headline and the start of the body copy?

Picas and Points Exercise #2

This exercise requires that your page layout program be able to use picas and points as the measurement system. If you prefer to skip Exercise #1, use the solutions to the calculations found at the end of this page to complete Exercise #2.

1. Using inches as the measurement system (the default in many programs) set up an 8.5" by 11" page with 1 inch margins. Don't use any automatic column or grid setup. Instead, manually place guidelines to define three columns of the width you calculated in Step #4 of Exercise 1 (that should be four guidelines since the guidelines for the margins define the outer edge of the 1st and 3rd columns).
2. Remove the guidelines and change the measurement system and rulers to picas. The margins should be 6 picas (1 inch). Manually place guidelines again to define the three columns from Step #4 of Exercise 1. Which measurement system made it easier for you to manually and precisely place the guidelines where they needed to go? I find it easier to use the picas system. Do you?

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[Solutions to the calculations from Exercise #1 and placement for guidelines in Exercise #2](#)

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