

Operations with Significant Figures

* Always try to round off at the end of a calculation.

1. Addition/Subtraction

(round to the least accurate place value)

$$\text{e.g. } 2.2 \text{ m} + 6.35 \text{ m} = 8.55 = 8.6 \text{ m}$$

The sum cannot be more accurate than the least accurate measurement involved (smallest amount of decimals).

2. Multiplication/Division / *Exponents.*

The answer carries the least number of significant digits used in the calculation.

$$\text{e.g. } 41.25 \text{ m} \times 6.43 \text{ m} = 265.2375 \text{ m}^2 = 265 \text{ m}^2$$

(4)

(3)

(3)

The only “exact” quantities are numbers that are obtained by counting or by definition.

i.e. # days in week 1 dozen = 12 units

$$100 \text{ cm} = 1 \text{ m}$$

$$1 \text{ mole} = 6.022 \times 10^{23}$$

Example:

$$\begin{aligned} 12.0 - 37.888 + 61 \\ = 35.112 \\ \approx 35 \end{aligned}$$

Example:

$$\begin{aligned} 75 / 0.0005 &= 150\,000 \\ &\approx 200\,000 \approx 2 \times 10^5 \end{aligned}$$