

MS.5.2 How to lay out physics calculations - method 2

When answering calculation questions, it is important to lay out the calculation in a certain way to show how you arrive at the answer.



Consider the following worked example:

Worked example

Question: A runner runs at a speed of 1.5 m/s for a time of 1800 s. What distance do they cover?

$$\begin{array}{lcl}
 \text{speed} = \frac{\text{distance}}{\text{time}} & \leftarrow & \text{Formula} \\
 1.5 = \frac{\text{distance}}{1800} & \leftarrow & \text{Insert values} \\
 \therefore \text{distance} = 1.5 \times 1800 & \leftarrow & \text{Fine tune (rearrange if needed)} \\
 = \underline{2700 \text{ m}} & \leftarrow & \text{Answer}
 \end{array}$$

This symbol means 'therefore'

Note: Don't forget to include a unit for your answer.

We can use the acronym **FIFA** to help with remembering the steps required.

1) *Answer the following question, laying out your calculation in the same way as the example (above):*

Question: A person stands on one foot. The area of their foot is $1.5 \times 10^{-3} \text{ m}^2$. What is their weight (force), if the pressure under the foot is 53 000 Pa?

$$\begin{array}{lcl}
 \text{pressure} = \frac{\text{force}}{\text{area}} & \leftarrow & \text{Formula} \\
 \boxed{} = \frac{\boxed{}}{\boxed{}} & \leftarrow & \text{Insert values} \\
 \therefore \boxed{} = \boxed{} \times \boxed{} & \leftarrow & \text{Fine tune (rearrange)} \\
 = \underline{} & \leftarrow & \text{Answer}
 \end{array}$$

Note: Don't forget to include a unit for your answer.

2)  Answer the following question, laying out your calculation in the same way as the worked example (above):

Question: A car with a mass of 1200 kg is travelling at a velocity of 10 m/s. What momentum does it have? (momentum = mass $\times$ velocity)

F

I

F

A

Note: this step is not needed

3)  Answer the following question, laying out your calculation in the same way as the worked example (above):

Question: A current of 1.5 A flows through a resistor with a resistance of 200 Ω . What is the potential difference across the resistor?

(resistance = $\frac{\text{potential difference}}{\text{current}}$)

F

I

F

A

4)  Answer the following question, laying out your calculation in the same way as the worked example (above):

Question: An electric cooker with a power rating of 3000 W is switched on. How long (time) is it switched on for if it transfers 540 000 J of energy?

(power = $\frac{\text{energy}}{\text{time}}$) (Note: please look at worksheet MS.2 if you need help with rearranging)