Definition of the average

Add up all the entries on the list, then divide the sum by the number of entries.

**Example.** If the list is 1, 2, 4, 4, 6, then the average is

\[
\frac{1 + 2 + 4 + 4 + 6}{5} = \frac{17}{5} = 3.4.
\]

Zeros count. For the list 1, 2, 4, 4, 6, 0, the average is

\[
\frac{1 + 2 + 4 + 4 + 6 + 0}{6} = \frac{17}{6} = 2.83.
\]

**Value and units.** The examples illustrate some simple but useful facts.

a) The average need not be one of the entries on the list. The average need not be a whole number, even if all the entries on the list are whole numbers. (So don’t round it to a whole number. The decimals are fine.)

b) The value of the average is somewhere in between the smallest and largest values on the list. Exactly where will depend on the list.

c) The average has the same units as the entries on the list. For example if you’re dealing with money and the list is $1, $2, $4, $4, and $6, then the average is $3.40. If the entries were in square feet, the average would be in square feet. And so on.

**Related algebra**