

## UNITS OF MEASUREMENT IN PETROLEUM GEOSCIENCE: TOWARDS THE ELIMINATION OF AMBIGUITY

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The petroleum industry, for historical reasons, has been landed with a mixture of US, British, and SI (metric based) units. The resulting confusion has been compounded by incorrect use of symbols, and use of several different non-standard symbols for the same unit. Errors and ambiguity arising are at best vexatious to the reader, at worst can result in serious, expensive, and conceivably dangerous consequences. Petroleum scientists, to be worthy of the name, should aim to eliminate ambiguity by using standard symbols and abbreviations, where possible in the SI system. The extraction of large amounts of data from various sources for use in computer modelling, makes precision, clarity, and elimination of errors that result from lack of adherence to internationally understood abbreviations and symbols increasingly important.

Clarity is important in all reports, but particularly so in publications. A geoscience paper should be intelligible not only to the in-group of the writer's company or speciality, but to as broad a spectrum of scientists as possible, including others such as economists and administrators, who may be interested in aspects of the data presented.

**Table 1: Correct and incorrect symbols for common SI units**

UNIT	SYMBOL	
	CORRECT	INCORRECT
metre(s)	m	ms, Ms, M, m., Mt.
kilometre(s)	km	km., kms, Km, Km.
gram(s)	g	gm, g., gms, gs
kilogram(s)	kg	Kg, kg., kgs, etc
seconds	s, sec	Sec., s., secs
cubic metres	m <sup>3</sup>	cu.m, cm, CM etc
cubic centimetres	cm <sup>3</sup>	cc, c.c., ccm, cu.cm.
tonne	t	T, t., tn