How to Measure a Fastener

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J & E Supply & FASTENER CO.

Three measurements identify almost any fastener: how wide, how the threads are spaced, and how long. Two of those work the same for everything — the third depends on what you're holding.

Three numbers find almost any part. They read left to right in every size:

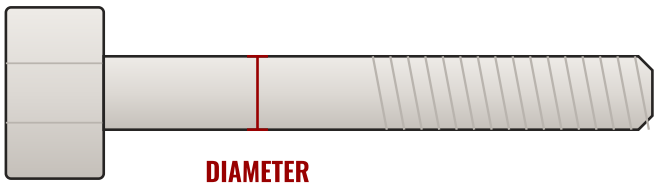
¼″ – **20** × **1½″**

diameter **threads per inch** **length**

Diameter and thread are measured the same way on everything. **Length is the one that trips people up** — it changes with the head. Start with the first two:

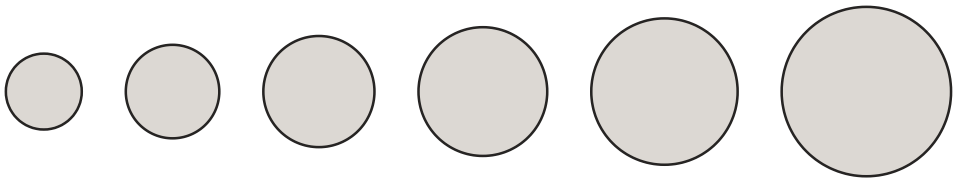
1 Diameter — how wide

Measure straight across the **shank** (the round body). Across the thread tips is close enough for a quick read. It's the first number in a size: the **¼** in "¼–20."



straight across the round body (shank)

Small screws use **gauge numbers** — #6, #8, #10 — and a bigger number means a bigger screw. Above about ¼″, sizes switch to fractions of an inch.



#4	#6	#8	#10	#12	¼″
.112″	.138″	.164″	.190″	.216″	.250″

bigger number = bigger screw → then fractions take over

Gauge sizes drawn to scale against each other.

> **No caliper?** Lay it on a ruler, or stand it next to one you already know. Even "a hair over ¼"" helps us narrow it down.

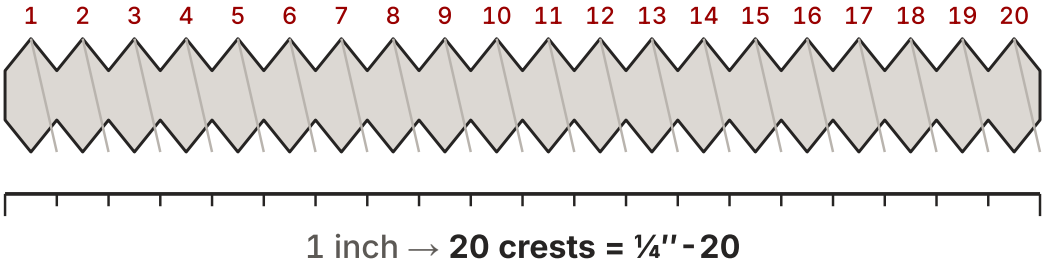
2 Thread pitch — how the threads are spaced

The second number — the **20** in "¼–20" — is **threads per inch**. Hold it to a ruler and count the crests in one inch. More = **fine**; fewer = **coarse**.

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COUNT
the crests



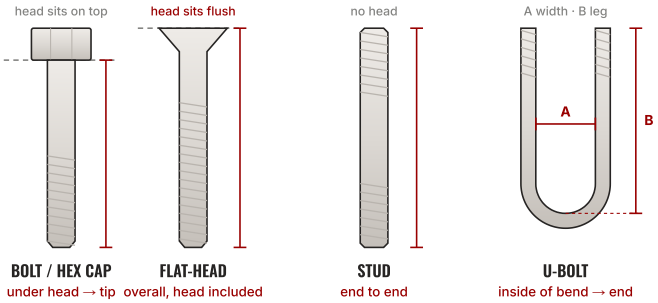
1 inch → **20 crests = ¼″-20**

You don't have to nail it. Each diameter only comes in a few pitches, so once you have the size, the thread pitch & tap-drill chart shows which are possible.

> **Easiest of all:** bring it to either counter and we'll drop it on a thread gauge — an instant, exact read.

3. Length — it depends on your fastener

This is what causes wrong orders. The rule: **measure the part that ends up buried in the work.**



Pick yours for the full method and a bigger diagram:

Bolt / hex cap screw
Hex, round, pan, button — any head that sits on top.

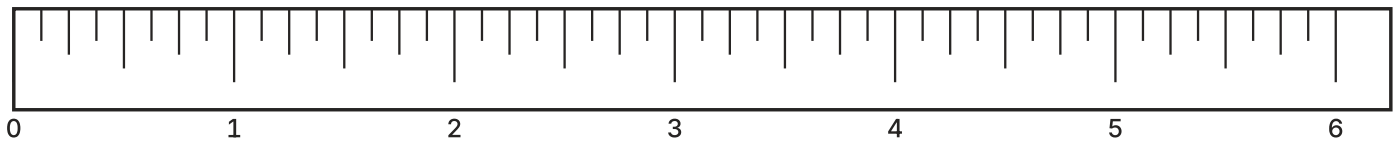
Flat-head (countersunk) screw
Any head that sinks flush into the surface.

Stud / all-thread
No head — threaded rod, double-end, or tap-end.

U-bolt
The U-shaped one — with the pipe-size trap.

Printable inch ruler

No ruler handy? Print this page at **100% scale** (not "fit to page") and the strip below comes out true to size — a quick six inches for measuring at the bench. Check it against a known ruler before you trust a tight measurement.



Printer scaling varies — always sanity-check the printed inch against a real ruler before measuring anything critical.

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