SCIENCE FOUNDATIONS

Reading graphs and tables

Difficulty level: Intermediate

Science Foundations

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Overview of the concept

This is how you make sense of a weather chart, a sports table, or a science result, by spotting the pattern in the numbers instead of getting lost in single readings. A weather forecast chart shows at a glance whether the week is warming up or cooling down. A sports fan reading a league table can see which team is climbing and which is slipping. Knowing how to read graphs and tables tells you how to pull the story out of the numbers, and when a single high or low reading is just noise.



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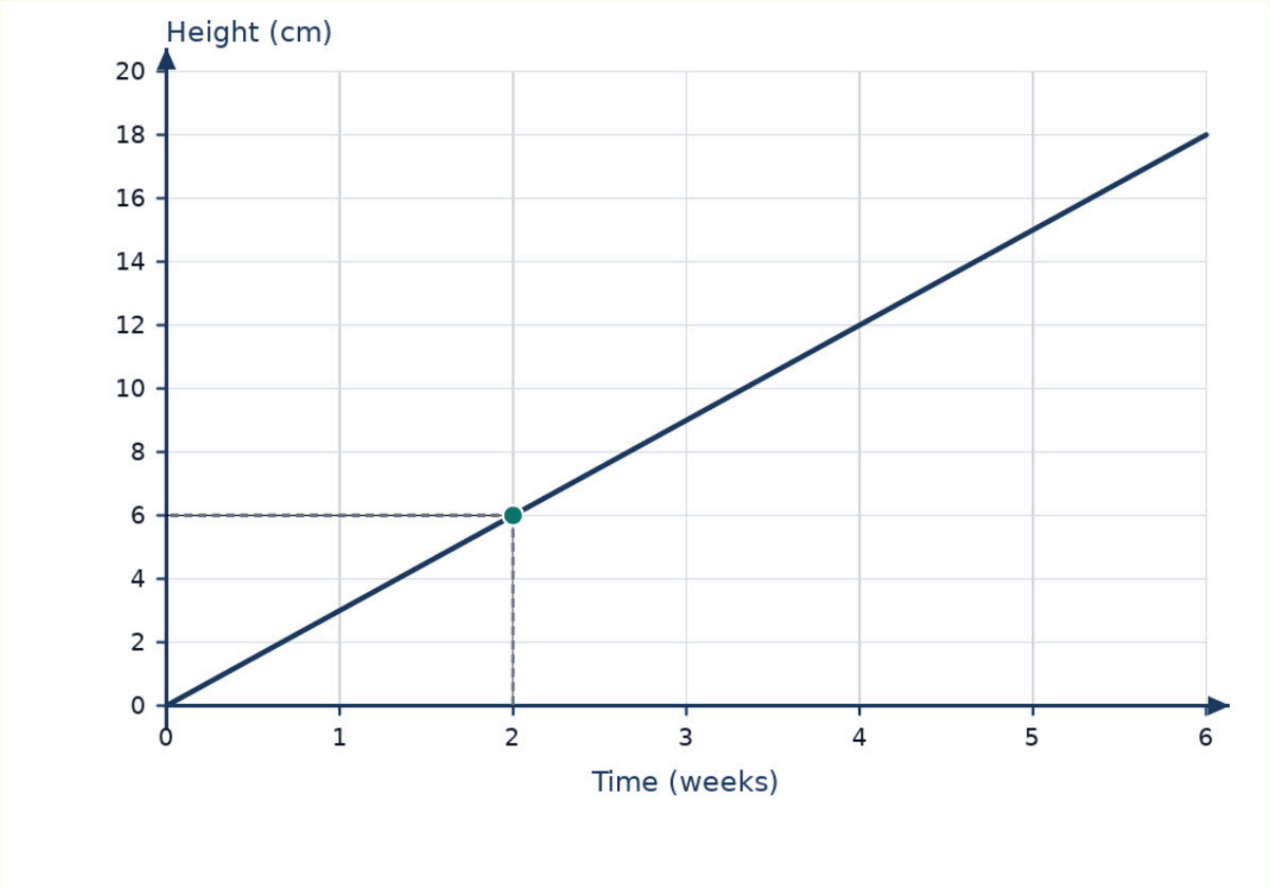
Worked examples

EXAMPLE 1

Q Read a plant height graph: week 2 shows 6 cm.



SOLUTION

Read the title and axes: weeks on the x-axis, height in cm on the y-axis.

Find week 2 on the x-axis, go up to the point, then across to the y-axis.

Read the height value where the point meets the y-axis.

The result is 6 cm at week 2.

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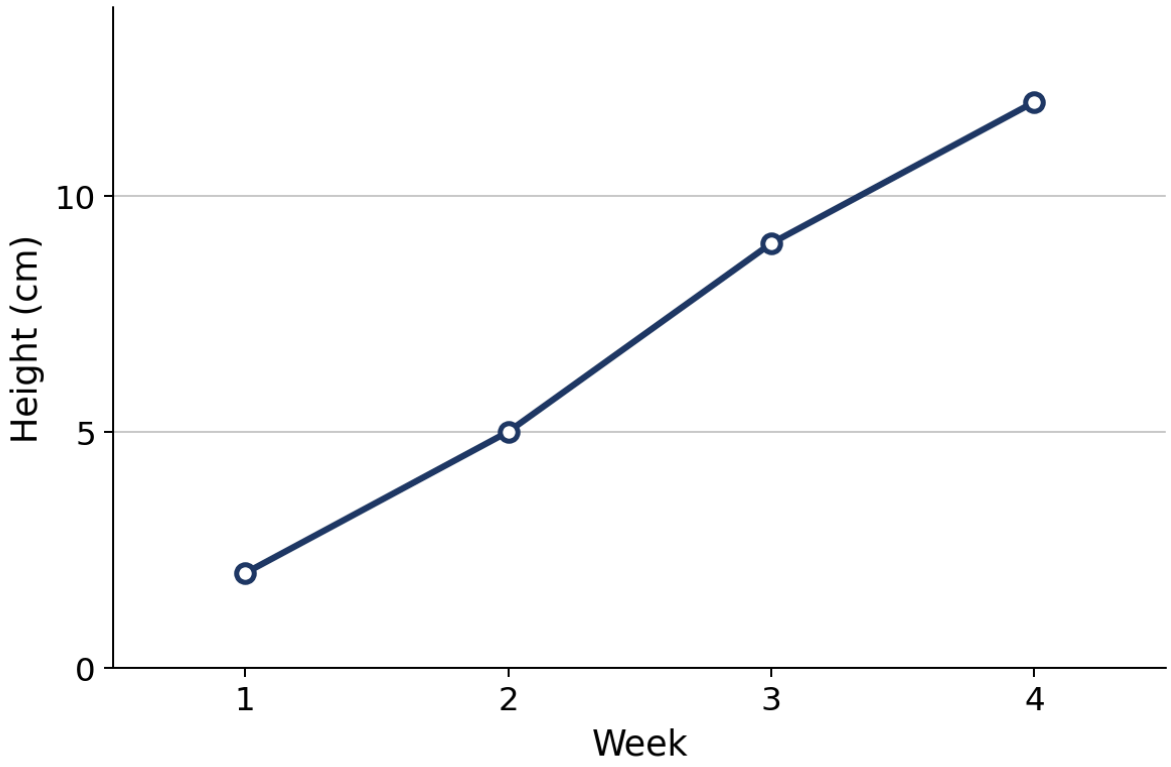
EXAMPLE 2

Q Describe the trend: heights 2 cm, 5 cm, 9 cm, 12 cm.



SOLUTION

List the heights in week order.

Check each step: each value is larger than the one before.

Name the trend: steady rise over time

The result is height rises steadily over time.

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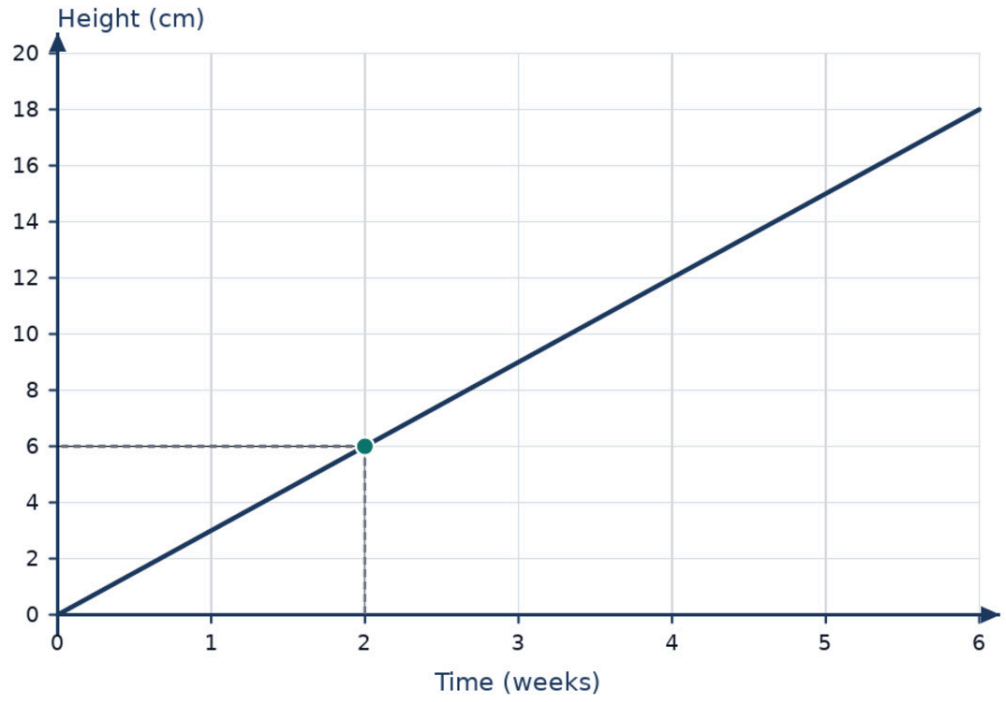
Practice questions

1 A bean plant's height is graphed. What is the height at week 4?



A 12 cm

B 6 cm

C 18 cm

D 9 cm

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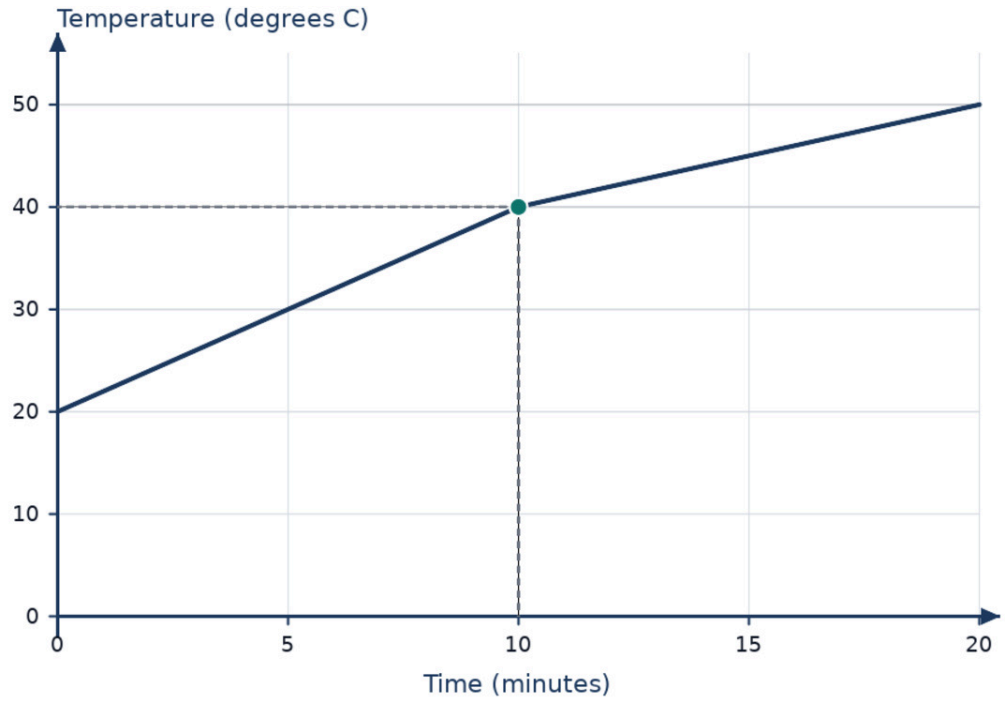
2 **Water heating is graphed. Between which times does the temperature rise fastest?**



A 0 to 10 minutes

B 10 to 20 minutes

C 5 to 15 minutes

D The rise is the same throughout

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3 A plant's heights over four weeks are 3 cm, 6 cm, 10 cm, 15 cm. Describe the trend.

- **A** The height rises steadily over time
- **B** The height stays level, with no change
- **C** The height falls steadily over time
- **D** The height rises, then falls

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4 A plant's heights over four weeks are 8 cm, 8 cm, 8 cm, 8 cm. Describe the trend.

- **A** The height stays level, with no change
- **B** The height rises steadily over time
- **C** The height falls steadily over time
- **D** The height rises, then falls

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5 In a distance against time graph, which variable is the independent variable?

- **A** Time
- **B** Distance
- **C** Speed
- **D** Height

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6 In a temperature against time graph, which variable is the dependent variable?

- **A** Temperature
- **B** Time
- **C** Pressure
- **D** Volume

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7

You open a new graph. What is the first thing you should read?

A The title

B The y-axis

C The last point

D The legend

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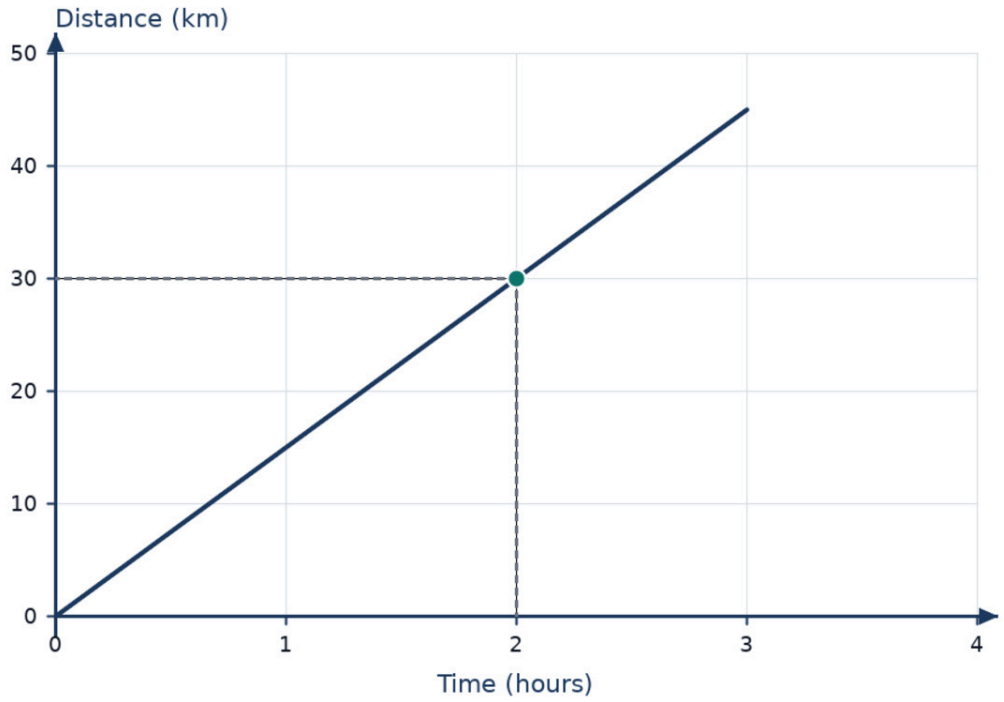
8 A cyclist's distance is graphed against time. What is the cyclist's speed?



A 15 km/h

B 45 km/h

C 10 km/h

D 30 km/h

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9

A temperature graph over a day rises in the morning, then falls in the afternoon. What does that mean?

- A It warms up, then cools down
- B No change
- C It falls steadily
- D It rises steadily

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10

Three readings are taken at 0 s, 10 s, and 20 s. What is the step between readings?

- A 10 s
- B 20 s
- C 5 s
- D 0 s

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ANSWER KEY

1. 12 cm

2. 0 to 10 minutes

3. The height rises steadily over time

4. The height stays level, with no change

5. Time

6. Temperature

7. The title

8. 15 km/h

9. It warms up, then cools down

10. 10 s

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