

QUICK REVIEW

Quick Review — Significant Figures and Measurement Uncertainty — Calculus-Based

Refresh the most important ideas, formulas, and problem-solving strategies for Significant Figures and Measurement Uncertainty in just a few minutes.

 TIME 5–10 minutes	 BEST FOR A rapid refresh	 FINISH WITH Key ideas refreshed
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After this quick review, you'll be able to...

quickly recall the essential concepts, formulas, and problem-solving strategies needed to move forward with confidence.

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

Work through the four stages in order. Write directly in the spaces provided, check your work in the Quick Answers section, and finish by choosing the next resource that matches your confidence.

Choose how you want to review: work through this guide, follow the online review, or watch the video review.

[Start the Review Online →](#)

[Watch the Video Review →](#)

YOU WILL NEED

Pencil or pen • Calculator if needed • Approximately 5–10 minutes

FR-02 • COURSE ALIGNMENT

Course Alignment

This Physics Sensei Topic Review is an independent learning resource. Use it to reinforce key concepts, prepare for homework, or review before a quiz or exam.

Related Unit Review: If you need to review the complete unit material, review [Units and Measurements here →](#)

RESOURCE: Physics Sensei Topic Review
TOPIC ID: MEC-U01-T02
TOPIC: Significant Figures and Measurement
Uncertainty
PARENT UNIT: MEC-U01 — Units and Measurements
COURSE LEVEL: Calculus-Based College Physics

BEST USED

- ✓ After learning the topic
- ✓ Before starting homework
- ✓ Before a quiz or exam

FR-03 • YOUR REVIEW PLAN

Your Review Plan

Complete these four stages to quickly refresh the essential ideas and confirm you're ready to continue.

4 stages • Approximately 5–10 minutes

1 Quick Recall Refresh what you already know.	2 Essential Idea Review the most important concept.
3 Confidence Check Confirm you're ready to move on.	4 Next Step Continue your learning.

PRINTING TIP

For student copies, print double-sided and keep the Quick Answers section after the student activities so learners attempt each activity before checking their work.

FR-04 • STAGE 1 OF 4

Quick Recall

Let's quickly refresh what you already know. This short recall activity will bring the most important ideas back to mind before you review them.

QUICK RECALL

Recall Activity

A measured quantity is $x = 2.00 \pm 0.02$ m and $y = x^2$. Why should the uncertainty in y depend on the sensitivity of y to changes in x ?

Ready to refresh the essentials?

Great! Now review the most important idea you'll want to remember.

Review the Essential Idea →

FR-05 • STAGE 2 OF 4

Essential Idea

Take one last look at the most important concept from this topic. If you remember this idea, the rest will come back much more easily.

ESSENTIAL IDEA**Uncertainty Propagation Tracks Sensitivity**

Significant figures summarize reporting precision, but uncertainty propagation provides a stronger quantitative basis for deciding how many digits a derived result deserves.

For a function of measured variables, small input uncertainties produce output uncertainty according to how rapidly the function changes with each variable.

$$\text{For } y = f(x), \Delta y \approx |dy/dx| \Delta x$$

EXAMPLE If $y = x^2$ near $x = 2.00$ m, a small uncertainty in x is amplified by the local slope of the square function.

SENSEI NOTE Differentiate first, then evaluate the sensitivity at the measured value; do not treat significant figures as a substitute for propagation.

Ready to check your memory?

You've refreshed the essential idea. Now see how much you remember before moving on.

Start the Confidence Check →

FR-06 • STAGE 3 OF 4

Confidence Check

You've refreshed the essential idea. Now answer this quick confidence check to confirm you're ready to move on.

CONFIDENCE CHECK

Propagate One-Variable Uncertainty

Use the local derivative to estimate the uncertainty.

For $y = x^2$ with $x = 3.00 \pm 0.02$, estimate Δy .

Ready for your next step?

Great work! You've refreshed the essential idea. Now choose the resource that best matches what you'd like to do next.

Choose Your Next Step →

QUICK ANSWERS • CHECK AFTER ATTEMPTING

Quick Answers and Explanations

Use these concise answers to check your recall and confidence—not only your final response.

QUICK RECALL**Recall Activity**

The output changes more when the function has a larger local slope, so the same input uncertainty can produce different output uncertainties at different x values.

WHY IT WORKS Uncertainty propagation is governed by local sensitivity, which the derivative measures.

CONFIDENCE CHECK**CONFIDENCE CHECK****Propagate One-Variable Uncertainty**

At $x = 3.00$, the local slope magnitude is 6.00, so $\Delta y \approx 0.12$. Report $y \approx 9.00 \pm 0.12$.

WHY IT WORKS The derivative converts a small input interval into the corresponding first-order output interval.

READINESS GUIDE

1 correct: You're ready to continue. • 0 correct: Revisit the Essential Idea or choose more practice.

FR-07 • STAGE 4 OF 4

Next Step: Continue Learning

Great work! You've completed this quick review. Choose the next resource that best matches how confident you feel.

? I'm Still Unsure Review the essential idea again. Review Again →	🎯 I Need More Practice Continue with additional practice for this topic. Go to Practice →	✓ I'm Ready Continue to the next recommended resource. Continue →
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RECOMMENDED LINKS

Review this topic again →

Find additional practice →

Choose another type of physics help →

Continue reviewing with these companion resources.

Start the Review Online →

Watch the Video Review →

PHYSICS HELP THAT MAKES SENSE

A Physics Sensei review never ends at the last question. It always guides you toward the next useful step.

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