

# Spotlight on Weights & Measures

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## When is “cash” Really Cash?

**Question:** Can a retail service station charge me a “fee” for the use of a credit card or an ATM and what kinds of fees are allowed under California laws?

**Answer:** The state of California considers an “automatic teller machine” card or an ATM card to be a “cash” instrument and the customer purchasing fuel or any other commodity should be given the “cash” price when using an ATM card. Because the retailer may be charged a service fee from the bank that issued the ATM card, regulators have allowed the retailers to pass on those fees to their customers as long as the customer is made aware of this prior to the purchase of any product.

Credit card purchases are treated differently in that they are not considered “cash” transaction. The State of California currently prohibits retailers from charging higher prices for any credit purchase or charging any fee based on the sole use of a credit card. What you typically see at gasoline stations is the posting of gasoline prices which are considered their regular prices and then post the “discount prices” if “cash” is used in to purchase the fuel. This can be interpreted as a round about way of charging a higher price for credit purchases or is it really a discount for the use of cash? The answer is in the eye of the beholder.

As technologies grow, new challenges present themselves. As a consumer you should be aware that some banks issue ATM cards that can also be used as a credit card. If you use this type of card at a gasoline dispenser you need to be sure you are getting the correct price for your purchase choice. Make sure that the dispenser allows you to make the selection of whether you will use the cash or credit feature of your card.

**Question:** How much can I expect to receive from a local recycler if I turn in 100 regular soda cans?

**Answer:** Prices vary from recycler to recycler but all recyclers are required to post their prices in a conspicuous location at the place of redemption. In today’s prices a pound of aluminum is around \$1.56. It takes around 32 of the 12 fluid ounce cans to make up a pound of aluminum. You can verify this when you next purchase a 12 pack of Coke or Pepsi. Take a look at your receipt and you should be charged \$0.60 for the redemption value. If you sell 100 soda cans, that should earn you about \$4.90.

If on the other hand you take the option of selling your cans back to the recycler based on the number of cans you should get \$0.05 per every can or \$5.00 per 100 cans. Be an informed consumer and make sure that you get all the money that you are owed. Know ahead of time approximately how much weight in cans or bottles you have. Remember 32 regular soda cans weight just under one pound.

Keep an eye on the scale and make sure the attendant has it placed in a convenient location that allows you to view the scales readings. If they prohibit you from viewing the scale, this is considered a violation under California law. The State of California requires users of commercial scales to place the scale in a position that is readily visible for consumers to view and verify to discourage fraud. For more information on recycling, visit the official website of California’s Department of Conservation at: [www.conservation.ca.gov/dor/Pages/Index.aspx](http://www.conservation.ca.gov/dor/Pages/Index.aspx)

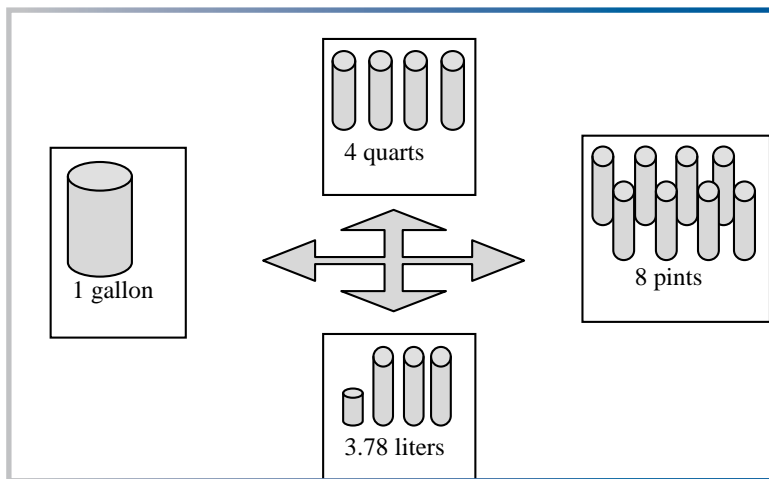


# How Much Is a Gallon?

We all have purchased a gallon of milk at one time or another and most of us have a good sense of the volume of a gallon of milk is but how much is a gallon exactly? In terms of volume, a gallon of water is defined as 231 cubic inches at 60° Fahrenheit at one atmospheric pressure. As the temperature shifts to a higher or lower degree the volume of that gallon of water also changes at a measurable rate. The standard volume of some products are measured in extreme temperature ranges so we must take other factors in to account in determining the net volume. A product such as “liquid propane” is sold at retail service stations throughout the county and it boils at - 42.0° Celsius or - 43.6° Fahrenheit and must be kept under high pressures in order to keep it in its liquid state. When determining the volumetric value of a propane gallon, Weights and Measures inspectors have to take in to account not only the temperature of the propane but also the pressure has to be taken in to account along with temperature corrections back to 60° Fahrenheit between the delivery meter and the testing equipment.

The gallon is the unit of volume that we are all accustomed to here in the United States but remembering the gallon equivalents in pints, quarts or liters is not easy. Take a look at the following diagram to see how good your recollection is.

So when is a gallon a gallon? In the field of Weights and Measures it depends on the product its associated temperatures and the pressures that the product is under.



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