

Quick Reference for
Apothecary and Chemical Weights and Measures
found in the John Snow Archive and Research Companion

Quantities¹

Usually given in Roman numerals:

- **i, ii, iii, iv, v, vi**, etc.
- Sometimes solitary or terminal **i** is replaced by **j**, as in **j, ij, iij**, iv, v, **vj**, etc.²
- **ss** = one half (*L. semis*).³

Domestic equivalent quantities:⁴

- one fluid drachm = one teaspoon.
- one fluid ounce = two tablespoons.

Symbols, Abbreviations, and Equivalents⁵

Weights

Grain	gr(s)		64.799 milligrams
Scruple	ϑ Sc	20 grains	1.296 grams
Drachm (Dram)	ʒ dr(s)	60 grains	3.888 grams
Ounce	℥ oz	480 grains	31.104 grams
Pound	lb	12 ounces	0.373 kilograms

Liquid Measures

Minim	℥		0.0592 millilitres
Drachm (Dram)	f ʒ f dr(s)	60 minims	3.552 millilitres
Ounce	f ℥ f oz	480 minims	28.413 millilitres
Pint	O (<i>octarius</i>)	9600 minims	568.26 millilitres

1. According to M. P. Earles, Snow used apothecary weights and measures in his *Case Books* (1848-58); I assume he did the same in his published writings. See "The Prescription Records," in Richard H. Ellis, ed., *The Case Books of Dr. John Snow* (London: Wellcome Institute for the History of Medicine, 1994): xlviii.

2. Compact Edition of the Oxford English Dictionary, 2 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971): 1:1496.

3. *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, 11 ed. (Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster, Inc., 2003): 1212.

4. Earles, xlviii.

5. Tables adapted from Earles, lii; and *Merriam-Webster's*, 1420, 854. David Zuck located and inserted several symbols.