



The average weight system controls the weight or measure of most pre-packed goods including loaves of bread weighing more than 300g regardless of whether they are pre-packed (wrapped) or not. Loaves over 300g must weigh 400g or a multiple of 400g. These are known as “prescribed quantities”.

Controls are mainly applied at the point of production with strict tolerances to ensure that the average weight of a batch of loaves is at least 400g, 800g, 1.2kg, etc.

A small baker is one who does not have a fully automatic baking plant.

What are the requirements of the law?

Each type of loaf (over 300g) may be baked to an average weight. Some loaves can be heavier than the “prescribed weight” and some can be slightly lighter. **It is the finished weight of the loaf that counts.** It is acceptable to make all the loaves in a batch weigh over the “prescribed weight”.

For average weight a small baker must comply with three important rules:

1. The average weight of one type of loaf (from one baking batch) must not be under the “prescribed weight” i.e. 400g, 800g, etc.
2. No more than 1 in 40 loaves from a batch may weigh below 388g for a 400g loaf and 785g for an 800g loaf.
3. **No** loaves are allowed to weigh less than 376g for a 400g loaf or under 770g for an 800g loaf.

To show compliance with these rules checks have to be carried out using suitable equipment and records of these checks must be made and kept.

What do small bakers need to do to comply?

- Safe dough weights should be used to allow for baking variations and moisture loss during baking and whilst the loaves are cooling or on display. The actual weight of dough pieces can be established by experiment. Once these have been determined it is a good idea to display a chart of the dough-piece weights near to the place of weighing.
- For each type of finished loaf (from the same batch) a certain number should be weighed on suitable equipment. The following is recommended:

Number of loaves in batch	Minimum number to be weighed
1-50	3
51-99	5
100-199	7
Over 200	11

The average weight can then be calculated – add the weights together and divide by the number of loaves weighed. If the average weight is more than the “prescribed weight” (e.g. 400g, 800g, etc.) the batch passes the first test.

What do small bakers need to do to comply? (continued)...

If the average weight is less than the "prescribed quantity" the whole batch should be weighed. Short weight loaves should be removed to make the average weight correct.

Suitable equipment includes:

- Digital scales which have a Weights and Measures stamp or EC verification mark and scale divisions of no more than 2g.
- Analogue scales which have a Weights and Measures stamp or EC verification mark and scale divisions of no more than 5g.
- Counter scales and weights which have a Weights and Measures stamp and a maximum capacity of 3kg.
- If any of the loaves weighed are less than 388g for a 400g loaf or 785g for a 800g loaf the whole batch should be weighed. If more than 1 in 40 are less than these lower weights they must be removed from the batch. If any loaves are found to weigh below 376g (400g loaf) or 770g (800g loaf) they must be removed. These are illegal loaves.

Please remember that the important weights apply to cold bread. If bread is weighed when it is not cold appropriate allowances must be made for further weight loss.

Normally it is necessary to keep records of weight checks which are made but small bakers can apply to us for an exemption from keeping records. Please contact us at the address or telephone number shown below for more information about applying for an exemption notice.

Small bakers who do not hold a current exemption notice must keep records of the weight checks made. The records should show the individual weights of loaves checked and should include notes of any corrective action taken.

Further information

The National Association of Master Bakers have published a Code of Practical Guidance for Small Bakers. Copies of this can be obtained for a nominal charge from The National Association of Master Bakers, 21 Baldock Street, Ware, Hertfordshire SG12 9DH, telephone 01920 468061.

This leaflet is a brief summary of the law relating to average weight and small bakers. It is not an authoritative document on the law and is only intended for guidance. For further details or clarification please contact the Trading Standards Service.



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This information can be made available
in other languages and formats.

For further information please contact
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