

Thermometer Guide

Food Thermometers			
Types	Speed	Placement	Usage Consideration
Thermocouple	2 – 5 seconds	1/4" or deeper in the food, as needed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gives fastest reading • Good for measuring temperatures of thick and thin foods • Not designed to remain in food while it's cooking • Check internal temperature of food near the end of cooking time • Can be calibrated • More costly; may be difficult for consumers to find in stores
Thermistor	10 seconds	At least 1/2" deep in the food	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gives fast reading • Can measure temperature in thin and thick foods • Not designed to remain in food while it's cooking • Check internal temperature of food near the end of cooking time • Some models can be calibrated; check manufacturer's instructions • Available in "kitchen" stores
Oven Cord Thermometer	10 seconds	At least 1/2" deep in the food	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can be used in most foods • Can also be used outside the oven • Designed to remain in the food while it is cooking in oven or in covered pot • Base unit sits on stovetop or counter • Cannot be calibrated
Thermometer fork Combination	2 – 10 seconds	At least 1/4" in the thickest part of food	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can be used in most foods • Not designed to remain in food while it's cooking • Sensor in tine of fork must be fully inserted • Check internal temperature of food near the end of cooking time • Cannot be calibrated • Convenient for grilling

Dial Thermometers			
Oven-Safe Bimetal	1 – 2 minutes	2 – 2 1/2" deep in the thickest part of the food	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can be used in roasts, casseroles, and soups • Not appropriate for thin foods • Can remain in food while it's cooking • Heat conduction of metal stem can cause false high reading • Some models can be calibrated' check manufacturer's instructions
Instant-Read, Bimetal	15 – 20 seconds	2 – 2 1/2" deep in the thickest part of the food	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can be used in roasts, casseroles, and soups • Temperature is averaged along probe, from tip to 2 -3" up the stem • Cannot measure thin foods unless inserted sideways • Not designed to remain in food while it's cooking • Use to check the internal temperature of a food at the end of cooking time • Some models can be calibrated; check manufacturer's instructions • Readily available in stores
Other			
Single-Use Temperature Indicators	5 – 10 seconds	Approx. 1/2" deep (follow manufacturer's directions)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Designed to be used only once • Designed for specific temperature ranges • Should only be used with food for which they are intended • Temperature-sensitive material changes color when the desired temperature is reached
Liquid-Filled (glass or metal stem)	1 – 2 minutes	At least 2" deep in the thickest part of the food	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Used in roasts, casseroles, and soups • Can remain in food while it's cooking • Cannot measure thin foods • Some can be calibrated; check manufacturer's instructions • Possible breakage of glass stem while in food • Heat conduction of metal stem can cause false high reading

Source: United States Department of Agriculture 2007