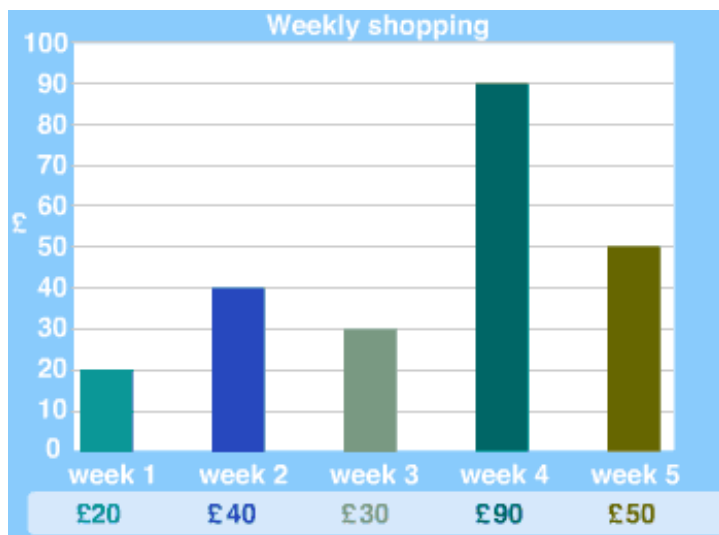


Understanding averages

An average value is a number that is **typical** for a set of figures. The average is the 'middle' value of the numbers. Finding the average helps in calculations and also makes it possible to **compare** sets of numbers.

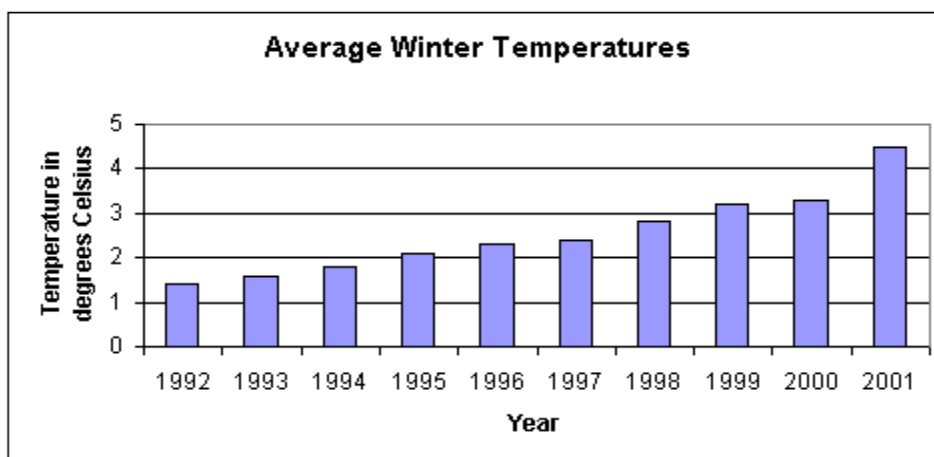
For example, you might spend between £20 and £100 a week on shopping (as shown in the chart below). Finding the average amount you've spent per week will help you plan your spending over a month. The average weekly spend gives you an idea of whether you're spending more or less than you plan to.

There is more than one type of average. The type used most often is the **mean value**. When people talk about the average of something, such as **average price, average wage or average height**, they are usually talking about the **mean** value.



The mean value of the weekly spending shown in the graph is £46. Notice that this amount is roughly in the **middle** of the 5 different amounts shown (left of graph). Also, spending in week 4 was above average. The factsheet 'Calculating the mean' explains more about how to work out mean values.

The mean value can be useful for comparing things. For example, you can find the goal average for a football team by finding the mean value of the goals scored per match. When you compare the goal averages of two teams you are comparing mean values.



Mean values are also helpful for working out weather patterns, as shown in this graph (left).

If the mean winter temperature increases every year it may indicate that global warming is a serious problem.