The PLSS

Source: http://www.ca.blm.gov/cadastral/meridian.html
PLSS – a method of defining parcels by successive subdivision

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Townships 6 by 6 miles
Each section 1 x 1 mile
Measured in chains (66 feet), 80 ch/mile
Easy area estimates before calculators
3ch by 7ch = 21 sq ch
divide by 10 to get acres
= 2.1 acres
Sections may be further subdivided

Typical Section Subdivisions

160 acres

320 acres
Format:
Section, Township, Range, Meridian, County

For Example:

Northeast Quarter of the Northeast Quarter of Section 5 in Township 101, Range 35 W of the Fifth Principal Meridian, Jackson County, Minnesota

   NE 1/4, NE 1/4, S5, T101, R35W, 5th PM, Jackson County, Minnesota