

CURIOSITY AT HOME

PERSONAL MEASURING SYSTEMS

Objects have been measured in various ways throughout history. The earliest measuring devices were parts of the human body and this is a technique still used today. For instance horses are measured in “hands.” One hand equals four inches or ten centimeters. Surveyors and farmers use strides (the length of one step) to measure the ground. One stride is about a yard.

Try this activity to measure things at home based on your own measuring unit.

MATERIALS

- String
- Scissors
- Paper and pencil
- Marker

PROCEDURE

- Choose a part of the body to measure things at home. Some examples are length of your foot, circumference of your head, length of your arm from elbow to wrist, length of your leg from knee to ankle, or any other section of the body you choose. Give your unit of measure a name.
- Cut a piece of string that is exactly the length of the body part you choose.
- Try measuring things around your home using your unit of measure.
- Compare your results with your friends and family. For a particular item, which unit took the most to measure? Were there any units that were larger than the item being measured?
- Divide your string into halves, fourths, eighths and then mark those points on your string with a marker. Measure various items and record the lengths as fractions of units, such as “the book is $4 \frac{1}{2}$ wrists long.”



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