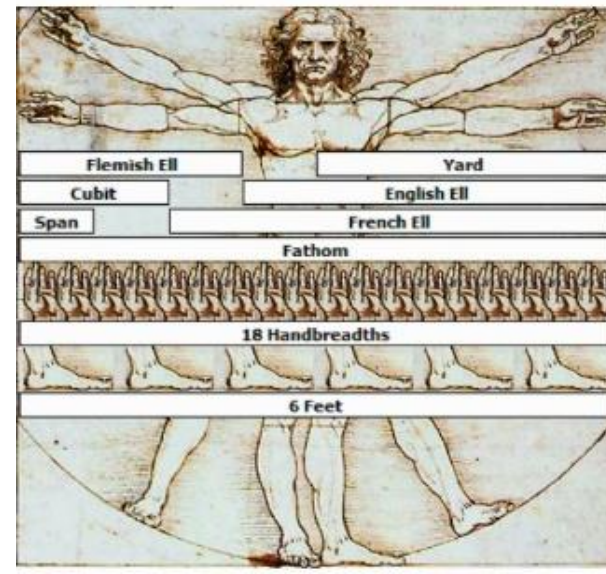
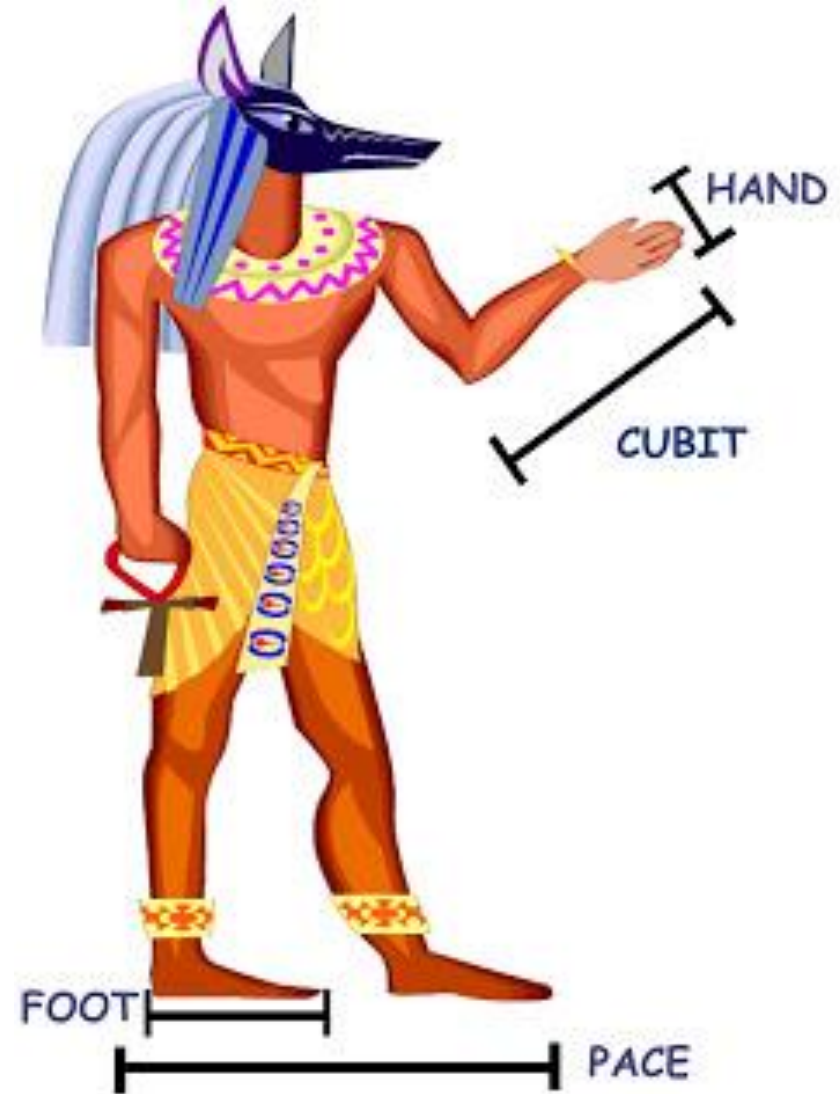


Some Historical Units of Measurement



History of Measurement

- Objects were initially measured for ***convenience***, to ***aid commerce*** and ***prevent fraud***.
- The **Egyptians** among other civilizations **were the first to begin recording measurements** around 3200 BC.
- **Early** measurement units were **based on body parts** or **common objects**.



The Cubit



The cubit is the measure from your elbow to the tip of your middle finger when your arm is extended.

The cubit was the measurement used by the Egyptians to build the pyramids.



The Palm

The palm is the *width* of your four fingers when they are placed together.

A large, reddish-brown limestone statue of a reclining sphinx, likely from the Late Period of ancient Egypt, displayed in a museum setting. The sphinx is shown in a relaxed, lying-down position, with its head turned slightly to the right. The surface of the stone is weathered and shows some signs of age. The statue is mounted on a dark, rectangular base.

The fathom was used by sailors to measure the depth of water so that boats would not run aground.

The Hand-span

The hand-span is the measure from the tip of your pinky to the tip of your thumb when your hand is stretched out.



Hand-span was used to measure the height of horses.

People **still describe horses** as being so many hands high.



The Pace

The pace is the measure of distance from one step to another. This unit was used by the Roman army to judge speed.

The **term** is **still used** frequently during various types of **foot races**.



© Ferrell Jenkins 2008.

The Foot

A measurement equal to the length of an individual's foot.



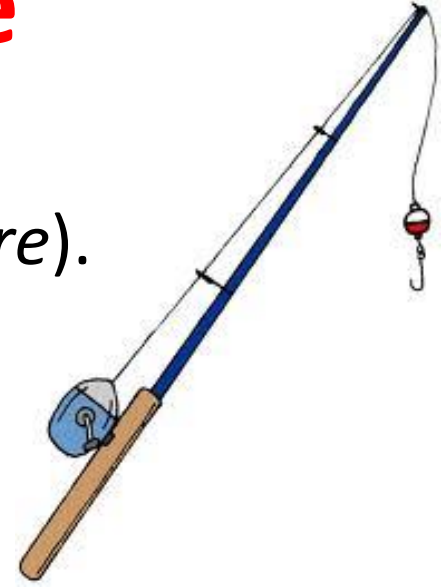
Feet are different...

In the 12th century, King **Henry I** of England defined a standard for this measurement:

his foot was **12 inches long**.

The Girth or Girdle

The girth/girdle was the measurement around one's stomach (your *belt measure*).



Girth was used to measure fishing line.

The **term** (not unit) is **still used by US Post Office** and refers to package dimensions.



The Yard

The origin of the measure is uncertain.

The word *yard* comes from the Old English *gyrd*, meaning a rod or measure.



In the 12th century, King **Henry I** of England defined the yard as the **distance from his nose to the thumb of his out-stretched arm**.

Today it is 36 inches.



The Acre

The acre (“field” in Saxon) was a **unit of area** equal to the size of a field that a farmer could plow in a single day.



French word for acre means “day” and the German word means “morning” or “day’s work”.

The Grain

At least since antiquity, grains of wheat or barley were used by Mediterranean traders to define **units of mass**.



Presently, the grain is commonly used to measure the **mass of bullets** and propellants as well as to **weigh arrows** in archery.

The Stone

The 1772 edition of the Encyclopædia Britannica defines:
“A stone of beef, in London, is the quantity of eight pounds; in Hertfordshire, twelve pounds; in Scotland sixteen pounds”

The Carat

unit of
mass



1 Carob Seed = 1 Carat

45.52 carat **Hope Diamond**, worth a quarter of a billion dollars, is on display at the Smithsonian Institution National Museum of Natural History in Washington, D.C.



Carob bean seeds have been used throughout history to measure jewelry, because it was believed that there was little variance in their mass distribution (which is not true).



1,109-carat **Lesedi La Rona** diamond, largest discovered in 100 years.