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Raven Hill Discovery Center is a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt corporation.

Mission: Raven Hill provides a place that enhances hands-on and lifelong learning for all ages by connecting science, history & the arts.

Cubits

Today, we use rulers to measure objects. Historically, body parts were used to measure things. Because everyone is a little different in size, the measurements weren't always exact, but they were close enough for most situations. In fact, we still use a measurement that is a body part—the foot. A foot today is now a “standardized” unit of measurement. Other old measurements included the cubit (distance from elbow to tip of finger or about 18” on an adult), the uncia (distance between two joints on a finger or about 1”) and the hand (width of hand or about 3 ½”) which is still used to measure horses—a “sixteen hand horse”. Below, is a photo of a gilded wood cubit and a folding cubit found in an Egyptian tomb.

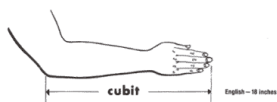
Find some tape to use. Masking tape works best, but scotch or duct tape will work too or even the sticky part of a Post-it note. Measure how long your kitchen table is in **your** cubits. Start with your elbow at the edge of the table. Put a little piece of tape at the tip of your finger. Now put your elbow on the piece of tape and put another little piece of tape at the tip of your finger. Repeat until you get to the other end of the table. Count the cubits. Have a parent measure the table using their cubit. Talk about why the numbers are different.

Explanation: your cubits are shorter than an adult's, so it takes more of them to measure the same length. Measure the length of your couch in cubits. Find something else to measure in your cubits. My table measures almost 3 “Cheri” cubits!

Try some other units of measurements. For example, measure the width of the TV in paper plates or dollar bills. Measure the height of the counter in spoons or the width of the refrigerator in cereal boxes. Use your imagination, but always use and reuse your pieces of tape to keep track of each unit, so you can easily count the total. Pick up all the pieces of tape and put it in the trash, when you are all done measuring.



1 Find tape or post-it



2 Cubit=elbow to finger-tip



3 My cubit & post-it



4 My table measures 3 cubits



5 real cubits from tomb

Have fun and always clean up, when you are done.