

## Standard units of measure.

Our standard (English) measurement system has developed from average measures of the adult male extremities. Most of these dimensions have been standardized by edicts of kings throughout history. Why do we call a short measuring device a ruler??!

**Inch:** The width of an average adult male's (AAM) thumb is one inch. Each digit of the AAM index finger is one inch, so an average index finger is a 3-inch measure.

**Palm\*:** Three inches. The distance across an AAM hand, without the thumb.

**Hand\*:** Four inches. The distance across the hand with the thumb adjacent (flat).

**Span\*:** The distance across an extended hand from thumb-tip to extended pinky-tip. Standardized at 9 inches.

**Foot:** Duh! Standardized at 12 inches after the Norman invasion of 1066.

**Cubit\*:** Mentioned in the Bible. The distance from an AAM elbow to middle finger-tip. Standardized at 18 inches. One Cubit = 1½ feet or ½ yard or 2 spans. Obsolete now, but might be handy if you ever need to build an Ark.

**Yard:** The distance from an AAM nose to extended fingertip. Standardized at 3 feet or 36 inches. Also equal to two cubits or four spans.

**Fathom\*:** Two yards. About the height of an adult male. About the length of a stride.

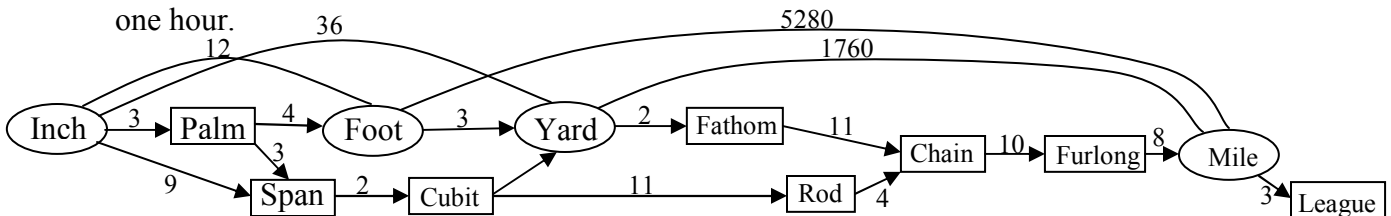
**Rod\*:** A measurement used in surveying. Standardized at 16½ feet. Also equals 11 cubits.

**Chain\*:** Again, a surveying measure, the length of the surveyor's chain. Equal to 66 feet, or 11 fathoms, or 4 rods.

**Furlong\*:** The distance an ox can plow a furrow. Ten chains or 1/8 mile.

**Mile:** Comes from the Roman Legion's marching standard of one thousand paces ("Mille Pacum"). Two steps (One pace) was a little more than 5 feet when marching. So a mile is 1000 paces, or 5280 feet, or 1760 yards, or 80 chains, or 8 furlongs.

**League\*:** Three miles. That's the approximate distance a Roman soldier would march in one hour.



\*Rarely used today.