

ROMAN MEASURING ACTIVITIES

Do you ever wonder where we get our measurements from? Many of the words we use to describe units of measurement come from the original Roman or Latin words. Find out how the Romans measured distance, that thanks to them we have standard units, and make a foot ruler so you can measure like a Roman.

Many of the words we use to describe units of measurement come from original Roman or Latin words, so in the case of measuring distance we have miles, feet and inches.

MILES

The Romans built lots of roads, so they measured long distances in miles, just as we do today, however a Roman mile is actually shorter than a modern mile. It was measured in marching paces, or strides. 1000 paces in Latin is *millie passus*, which in English became “**mile**”. (Specifically 2 steps marching = 1 pace (The length of a pace was taken from the heel of the back foot to the place the heel was set down on the second step.) As they marched, they counted to 1000 and knew they had covered the distance of one mile.



ACTIVITY- maybe next time you do the daily mile you could count your paces, just like a human pedometer!

FEET & INCHES

Shorter distances were measured in feet, so called because they actually used their feet, measuring heel to toe.

ACTIVITY: Try it out in the classroom or playground – choose some objects to measure like goal posts, or walls. Remember to record your findings, perhaps use a tally chart and then create a graph or pictogram with the answers.

You could also make a roman foot ruler using the instructions on the next page, and use it to measure.

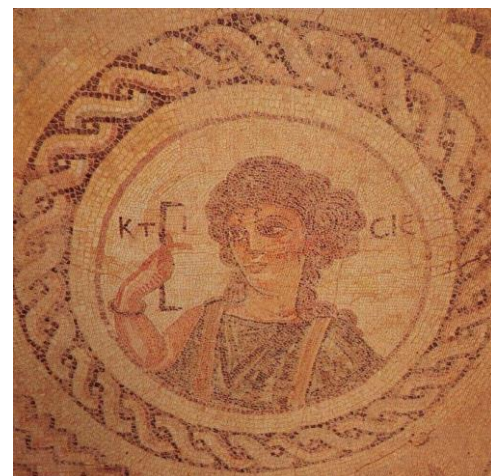
Compare your findings in the class and discuss how accurate you think this was- were some of the answers different? Well of course this is because everyone's feet are slightly different lengths. So this isn't very accurate, especially over longer distances.

STANDARDISATION

The Romans built a lot of roads and structures, they were great engineers so their measurements to be the same. They decided on a standardised unit of length- they still used a foot to measure it, but it was the Emperors foot!

They even made a copper tool called a foot ruler.

The rulers were divided into smaller equal sections called **uncia** (The roman word meaning 1/12.) In modern day measurements there are 12 inches in one foot.



This Roman mosaic shows Ktisis, the spirit of creation, holding a Roman foot ruler.

HOW TO MAKE A ROMAN FOOT RULER

- Take a piece of card and place it on the floor. Using a pencil draw a round the outline of your foot- get a friend to help you if it's easier.
- Cut out around the outline of your foot.
- Measure the longest part of your foot ruler and divide this number by 12 to work out how big each section will be. Now divide the card into 12 equal sections using a ruler.
- You may want to colour each section differently and number it with Roman numerals.
- Once you are finished you can use it to measure like a Roman!



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