



How Tall Am I?

In this activity, educators measure their height using nonstandard units of measurement. The purpose of this activity is for educators to experience how young children learn about concepts of measurement by using non-standard units of measurement.

Key Concepts

- Measure lengths using nonstandard units
- Estimating lengths



Materials and Setup

- Non-stretchy string, ribbon, or twine
- Scissors
- Paper and pencil



15–30 minutes



Partners or small groups



In-person or virtual professional learning

Activity Instructions

This activity is best done in pairs, allowing each person to help the other with the measurements. However, if someone prefers not to be touched, the activity can easily be adapted for independent investigation.

1. Cut a piece of string equal to your height.
2. Estimate how many times you think your string will wrap around your head.
3. Wrap your string around your head to measure how many loops around your head the string makes. Write your measurement on a piece of paper. Then repeat two more times, recording each of your measurements. Notice if or how your measurement changes each time.
4. Discuss with your partner. Did you get the exact same measurement each time you used the distance around your head to measure your height? Why or why not?



5. Use other body parts and the string to measure your height. Make estimates before each measurement.
- How many feet long is your height?
 - How many legs long is your height?
 - How many arms long is your height?
 - How many hands long is your height?
 - How many wingspans (fingertip to fingertip) long is your height?
6. OPTIONAL: Record your measurements in a table (see Table 1) and compare your measurements to those of other participants. Notice any patterns in the measurements collected. For example, an average human height is about three times as long as the distance around one's head.

Table 1

Question	Estimate	Measurement
How many heads long is your height?		
How many feet long is your height?		
How many legs long is your height?		
How many forearms long is your height?		
How many arms long is your height?		
How many hands long is your height?		
How many wingspans long is your height?		



Reflect and Discuss

Reflect on and discuss these questions with a partner or in a small group.

1. What strategies did you use when measuring? Which strategies were quickest? Which strategies gave you the most accurate measurement?
2. What did you notice about your estimations? Were they close to your measurements? What strategies did you use to make your estimations?
3. How is measuring using a nonstandard unit of measurement (for example, the string) different from measuring using a standard unit of measurement (for example, a tape measure)?

Activities for Children

For activities that support children's learning about measurement, explore the books below and related activities.

- **0 to 3 years:** [*Up to My Knees*](#) (*!Hasta las rodillas!* in Spanish) by Grace Lin and the activity [As Tall As I Am](#) (*Tan alto como yo* in Spanish).
- **3 to 5 years:** [*Leaves to My Knees*](#) (*Hojas hasta las rodillas* in Spanish) by Ellen Mayer and the activity [Tall as a Leaf Pile, Tall as My Knee](#) (*Alto como una pila de hojas, alta como mi rodilla* in Spanish)
- **6 to 8 years:** [*Super Sand Castle Saturday*](#) (*Sábado de súper castillos* in Spanish) by Stuart J. Murphy and the activity [Building Castles](#) (*Construyendo castillos* in Spanish).

