

An Abbreviated Sumerian Metrology

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The late 4th millennium Sumerian (~3300-3000 B.C.E.) scribes had 12 metrological systems to deal with. Here is a sample, which indicates that base 60 might contribute to a helpful standardizing of the accounting necessary to keep commerce running smoothly.

Lengths:

- 1 finger (~17mm.)
- 1 double-hand = 10 fingers (~17 cm.)
- 1 cubit = 3 double-hands (~.5 m.) The **cubit** was the **standard length**.
- 1 seed-cubit = 2 cubits
- 1 reed = 3 seed-cubits
- 1 rod = 2 reeds = 12 cubits

Area and Volume:

- 1 area sar = 1 rod squared (~36 m^2 .)
- 1 volume sar = (1 area sar) X (1 cubit) (~ 18 m^2 .)

Capacity:

- 1 sila (~ 1 liter)
- 1 ban = 10 sila
- 1 bariga = 6 ban = 60 sila
- 1 lidga = 4 bariga = 240 sila (~ 240 liters)

Brick Measure:

- 1 brick sar = 720 bricks
- The size of an unbaked small brick was 15 X 10 X 5 fingers
- The number of bricks in a volume sar was
- (in sexagesimal) 1,26,24 bricks = (in decimal) 5,184 bricks
- = 7; 12 brick sar (sexagesimal)