

Measuring Artifacts

Adapted from lesson plan from George Schneider, B.A., M.A. (Anthropology), Elementary Teacher submitted to the SAA website

Time: 45-90 minutes

SC Education Standards:

- Science: 1.S.1A.5; 2.S.1A.5; 3.S.1A.5; 4.S.1A.5; 5.S.1A.5; 6.S.1A.5; 7.S.1A.5; 8.S.1A.5
- Math: 1.MDA.1, 1.MDA.2; 2.MDA.1-4; 4.MDA.1, 4.MDA.2; 5.MDA.1

Materials Needed:

- Tapes
- Rulers
- Calipers in the English and Metric systems
- String
- Paper
- Pencils
- Artifacts (items you bring in or pictures of artifacts) – these items can include pieces (potsherds) of broken pottery (like a flower pot), a newly made arrowhead (projectile point) from a rock shop, etc.

This activity is designed help students learn how to measure and record using both the English and Metric systems.

Introduction:

Archaeology uses several techniques in the process of conducting research. Knowing how to accurately measure an artifact aids in a precise account of the data collected preserving the data for future scholars.

Activity Steps:

1. Hold up the artifacts to be measured and ask “How do archaeologists measure artifacts? Then state that “Today we are going to find out.”
2. Discuss with the students that after a survey or an excavation it is time to measure the artifacts and record them.
3. Model for the students how to measure artifacts of different shapes and sizes by using tapes, rulers, calipers, and string.
4. Put the students in pairs and have the students switch back and forth between measuring and recording.

For homework you can ask the students to measure and record 3-4 artifacts at home.

More advanced students may be given the option to draw the artifacts to scale.