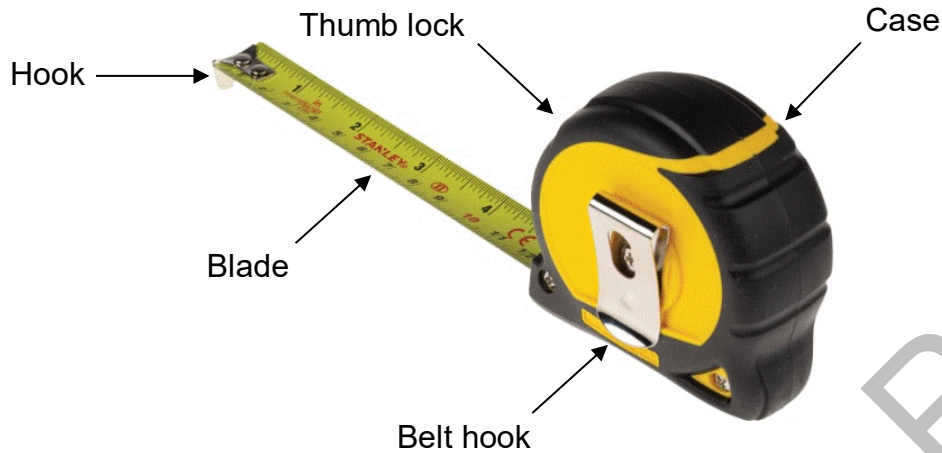




## Tape Measure



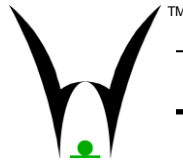
**Measure  
twice cut  
once**

### Function

A tape measure is used to measure size or distance. It has a flexible metal blade that retracts into the case.

### Description

A typical tape measure is made up of a slightly curved flexible metal blade, which retracts with a spring-loaded mechanism into a plastic or metal case. The slightly curved shape of the blade adds some rigidity to the blade when extended. It has a metal tang, or hook, riveted to the end of the blade, which is sometimes magnetic to aid when working alone. If the blade is allowed to retract into the case unrestrained, it can cause the hook to become loose on the blade, this will affect the accuracy when measuring from the hook. For precise accuracy on shorter distances, do not start the measurement from the hook but rather start the measurement further up the blade. There is a mechanism used to lock the blade and stop it retracting back into the case. A flexible carrying strap is sometimes included.

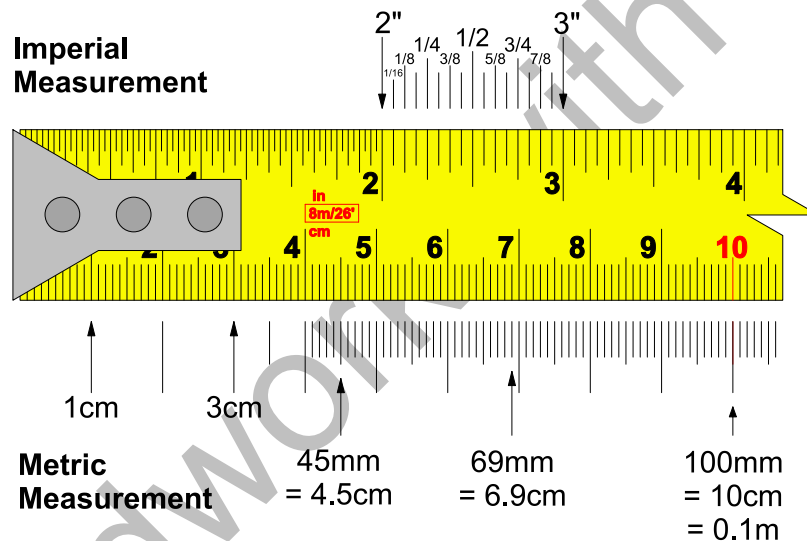


## History

Kat Eschner tells us, the tape measure was originally invented from flat metal used to form hoops in ladies' dresses in the late 1860's, when these dresses started to go out of fashion (Smithsonian Magazine<sup>1</sup>). However, the tape measure was not widely used until after the second world war, when they became more accessible to the average construction worker. According to Chris Marshal, it wasn't until 1963 that Stanley patented the PowerLock system, producing a tape measure similar to what we know today (Woodworker's Journal<sup>2</sup>). Prior to this the folding wooden ruler was extensively used.

## Health & Safety

Take care when retracting the blade into the case; if it is allowed to retract with speed it can cut, if allowed to slide along the finger; I know this from painful experience!



<sup>1</sup> [How Hoop Skirts Led to Tape Measures | Smart News | Smithsonian Magazine](#)

<sup>2</sup> [Stanley's® PowerLock® Celebrates 50 years - Woodworking | Blog | Videos | Plans | How To \(woodworkersjournal.com\)](#)