In the old days, page designers spent a lot of time drawing boxes (to show where photos went). And drawing lines (to show where text went). And drawing more boxes (for graphics, sidebars and logos).

Nowadays, most designers do their drawing on computers. But those old tools of the trade are still handy: pencils (for drawing lines), rulers (for measuring lines), calculators (for estimating the sizes of those lines and boxes), and our old favorite, the proportion wheel (to calculate the dimensions of boxes as they grow larger or smaller).

Even if you're a computer whiz, you should know these tools and terms:

**Pencil:** Yes, your basic pencil (with eraser) is used for drawing dummies. Designers who draw page dummies with pens are just showing off.

**Grease pencil:** These are used for making crop marks on photos. Afterward, these markings can easily be rubbed off with cloth.

**Knife:** In art departments and composing rooms, X-ACTO knives (a brand name) are used for trimming photos, cutting stories and moving items around when pages are assembled — or "pasted up" — before printing.

**Pica pole:** This is the ruler used in newsrooms. It has inches down one side and picas down the other. You can see, for instance, that 6 picas equal one inch; you can also see that it's 42 picas down to that line at the bottom of this page.

**Points, picas, inches:** How newspapers measure things

If you're trying to measure something very short or thin, inches are clumsy and imprecise. So printers use picas and points for precise calibrations. There are 12 points in one pica, 6 picas in one inch — or, in all, 72 points in one inch.

This is a 1-point rule; 72 of these would be one inch thick.

This is a 12-point rule. It's 1 pica thick: 6 of these would be 1 inch thick.

Points, picas and inches are used in different places.

Here's what's usually measured with what:

**Points**
- Thickness of rules
- Type sizes (cutlines, headlines, text, etc.)
- All measurements smaller than a pica

**Picas**
- Lengths of rules
- Widths of text, photos, cutlines, gutters, etc.

**Inches**
- Story lengths
- Depths of photos and ads (though some papers use picas for all photos)

**Proportion wheel:** This handy gizmo is used to calculate proportions. For instance, if a photo is 5 inches wide and 7 inches deep, how deep will it be if you enlarge it to 8 inches wide? Using a proportion wheel can show you instantly.