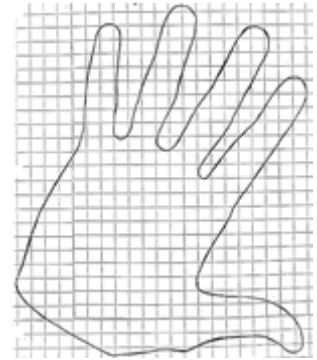




# Approaches to Area

By Bernard Bagnall

Were you brought up with the whole idea that area could best be taught by drawing around the hand and seeing how many squares you covered? You counted these up and so you had the area of your hand - or was it? Upon reflection it may have been the area of the shadow of your hand. So why not pose the question to the youngsters in your care? How can we find the area of a hand? What does it mean?



I've done this in the past and we ended up either making a kind of glove out of paper and much sellotape or we used an old glove. The glove was then cut so that it would lie flat and just in one thickness only. Then we considered the counting of squares!

I was visiting a school one day when they daringly wrapped up a child - leaving breathing spaces - in newspaper and sellotape. Then they very carefully cut that away and counted the area so as to get some idea of the surface area of the child involved. Maybe this gives you some ideas.

I certainly have found it beneficial to talk about it as 'surface area' right from the start. Children seemed to get on with that idea more easily than just referring to it all as 'area'. Working with some children in this way led to them coming up with the idea that the orange peel showed the surface area of the orange; I guess it'll be true for many other fruits!