

Mathematics and Building Guitars

You can't build a guitar without using mathematics. Basic math skills are a necessity if you are planning to attend R-V. We use rulers, measuring down to $1/64^{\text{th}}$'s of an inch, and calipers, which measure in thousandths. Don't worry; we'll help you learn to read them. But you have to be able to deal with the numbers once you've got them.

You will be required to take a math assessment test on the first week of class. The following is a sample of a lutherie math test. If you cannot pass this math assessment, you will have a difficult time being successful at Roberto-Venn and in lutherie in general.

1. Your electric guitar fingerboard measures $1-5/8$ " wide at the nut. You have to draw a centerline. What is one half of $1-5/8$ "?
2. Your acoustic fingerboard will be made of ebony, with wood binding on each edge. Each piece of the binding is $1/16$ " thick. If the completed fingerboard is $1-3/4$ " at the nut end, and $2-5/16$ " at the body end, how wide will the ebony center section be at the nut end and at the body end? (Provide both answers)
3. The back of your acoustic guitar is $20-5/8$ " long. You have to divide it into five equal spaces, so that you can locate the back braces. How wide is each space?
4. You are routing the pocket for your neck pickup. It needs to be $3/4$ " deep. After three passes with the router, you measure the depth at $9/16$ ". How much further do you need to go?

The previous examples have dealt with fractions. We also use our calipers, to measure numbers as small as one-thousandth of an inch (.001). The following chart will give you some decimal equivalents.

$1/2$.500
$1/4$.250
$1/8$.125
$1/16$.062
$1/32$.031

