

Mathematics in Ancient Egypt

1 Getting Started



The ancient Egyptian civilization in North Africa began around 3150 B.C. with the union of Upper and Lower Egypt under the first pharaoh. The rule of the pharaohs ended in 31 B.C. when the Romans conquered Egypt and made it a province.

The ancient Egyptians' achievements included a system of mathematics, glass technology, medicine, literature, irrigation and agricultural techniques, and art. Their mastery of surveying, quarrying, and construction techniques allowed them to build pyramids, temples, and obelisks.

Essential Question How is mathematical knowledge that was originally discovered by the ancient Egyptians used today?

Sample: To multiply two whole numbers, the ancient Egyptians repeatedly multiplied by 2. The “doubling lists” used to multiply 53 by 85 are shown. The lists stop when the last number in the first list is greater than the first number in the second list.

| | |
|------|------|
| • 1 | 53 |
| • 2 | 106 |
| • 4 | 212 |
| • 8 | 424 |
| • 16 | 848 |
| • 32 | 1696 |
| • 64 | 3392 |

Because $85 = 1 + 4 + 16 + 64$,
 $85 \cdot 53 = 53 + 212 + 848 + 3392 = 4505$.



Ancient Papyrus



Ancient Egyptian Numbers

The Blue Sphinx

