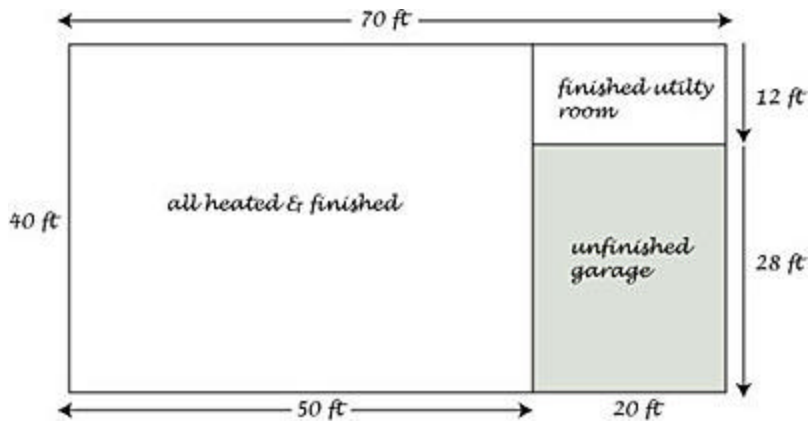




## How to Measure and Calculate Residential Square Footage

From Janet Wickell, Your Guide to Home Buying / Selling.

Make a Sketch of the Home



Make a Sketch of the Home's Perimeter

© Janet Wickell

### Getting it Down on Paper

Inaccurately reported square footage is the subject of numerous complaints made each year to state real estate commissions. A small percentage of cases involve willful misrepresentation (knowingly giving incorrect information), but a larger number of complaints occur simply because agents and sellers don't know how to measure a home's square footage.

If your state real estate commission has not established square footage guidelines, the following recommendations for North Carolina agents might be of help, because they are based on widely accepted standards.

*People who follow standard guidelines and document their measuring procedures are better equipped to defend their calculations if a complain is filed.*

### Measure the House

1. Starting at an exterior corner, measure the length of all walls. Round measurements to the nearest inch.
2. Make a sketch of the home's perimeter, recording all dimensions.
3. If you must measure some areas from inside, add six inches for an exterior wall and four inches for an interior wall.

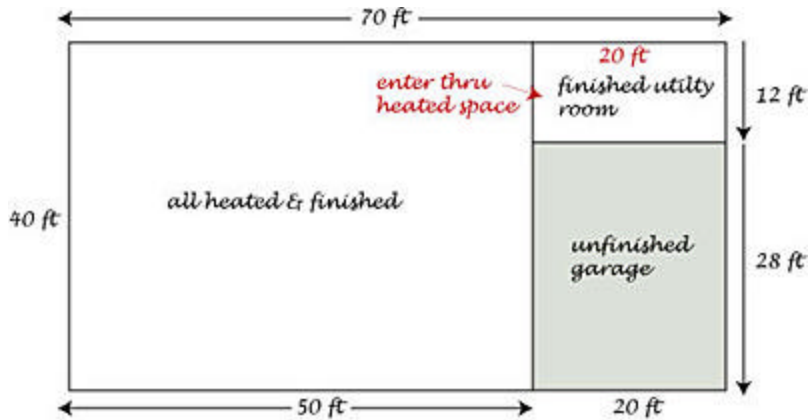
### Determine Finished Living Areas

- Must be space intended for human occupancy.
- Must be heated by a conventional, permanent heating system.
- Must have walls, floors and ceilings of materials generally accepted for interior construction.
- Must be directly accessible from another finished area. That means a finished room accessed through any unfinished space cannot be

counted as finished square feet.

Mark all unfinished areas on your sketch.

### Measuring Guidelines for Special Circumstances



Mark Up Your Sketch with Helpful Information  
© Janet Wickell

### Rooms With Sloped Ceilings

Such as the loft found in an A-Frame home. If you measure room dimensions where the sloped walls meet the floor, you are including space that isn't truly usable.

Include only the portion of the room where ceiling height is at least five feet. To be included at all, a minimum of one half of the finished area of the room must have ceilings at least seven feet high.

### Bay Windows

The area occupied by a bay window may be counted if it has a floor, a ceiling height of at least seven feet, and meets other criteria for living area.

### Furnace Room

If the furnace, water heater, or other similar item is located in a small closet within the living area, it should be included in the total square footage.

### Hallways & Closets

These areas are counted if they are a functional part of the living space.

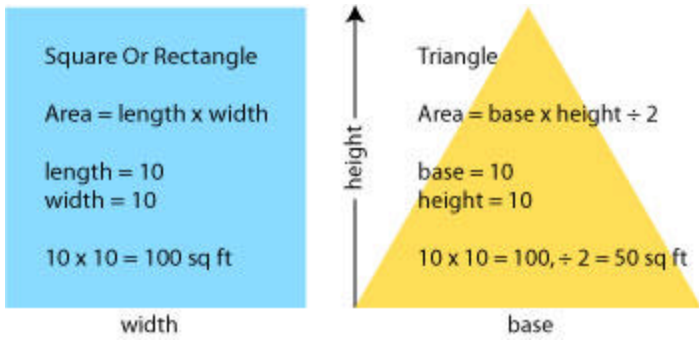
### Stairs

In general, if the opening for the stairway is larger than its length and width, you must deduct the excess open space from the upper level's square footage.

### Open Foyer & Other Open Space

Do not include open space as part of the square footage for an upper level. This may seem obvious, but you'd be surprised how many agents forget to deduct it.

Using Your Measurements to Calculate Square Footage



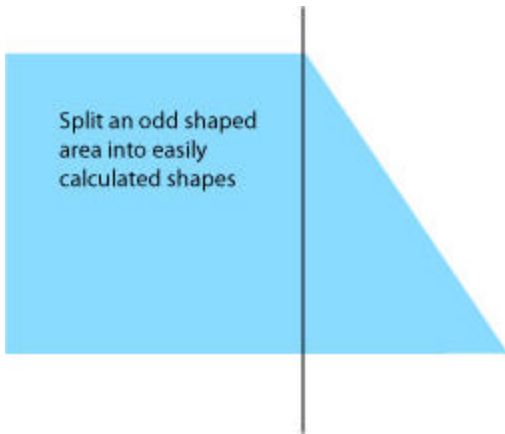
Most calculations will involve squares, rectangles and triangles.  
 © Janet Wickell

### Squares and Rectangles

Multiply length times width to find the number of square feet in a square or rectangular room. Remember to calculate unfinished areas and deduct them from the total.

To calculate the area of a triangle, multiply its base length by its height and divide that figure by two.

### Calculating Combination Shapes

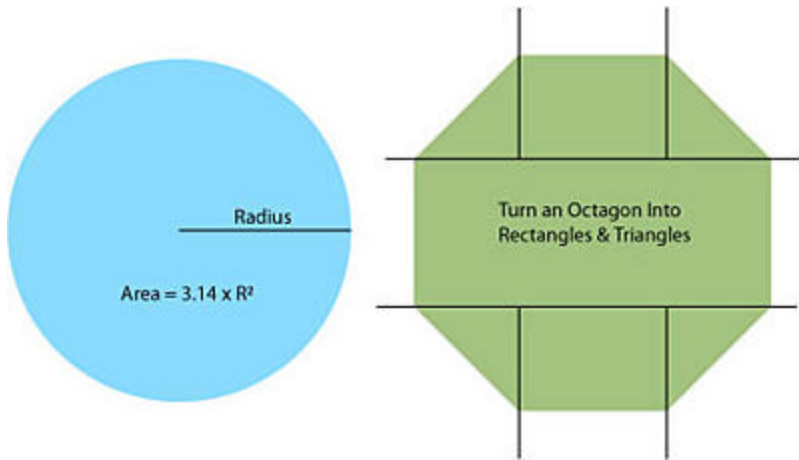


Split irregular shapes into easy-to-calculate areas.  
 © Janet Wickell

The dimensions of nearly any house or room can be split into multiple shapes to make calculations easier. The area above can be split into a square and a triangle.

Take additional measurements of important segments if you notice that odd shapes are emerging as you sketch the house.

### Calculating Circular Shapes and Octagons



Circles and octagons are easy to calculate.  
© Janet Wickell

Some houses have bay windows or circular areas that jut out from the house.

- The area of a circle is determined by squaring its radius and multiplying that figure by 3.14.
- Calculate the area of an octagon by splitting it into a rectangle and triangles.

### **Double-Check Your Figures**

Take a close look at your sketch before you leave the house. Should your diagram show shorter portions of walls in order to calculate the areas of subdivided shapes? Is there anything else you should document?

### **Buyer Agent Duties**

You aren't expected to measure the home, but state real estate commissions do expect you to ask for confirmation if the stated size appears to be wrong. If you have doubts, get clarification of square footage before your client makes an offer.

### **All Agents & For Sale by Owner Sellers**

Once you are accustomed to doing it, measuring square footage isn't difficult at all. Don't rely on information from tax agencies, appraisers, other agents, or even blueprints. Measure the residence yourself and keep supporting documents to show how you determined its total square footage.