



WOODLAND
TRUST

How to estimate the age of an oak

Ancient trees are trees of great age – over 300 years for an oak tree

Ancient oaks may show some of these characteristics:

- far fatter than usual with a very wide trunk
- a squat or dumpy appearance
- gnarled
- showing signs of decay
- hollow inside
- gnarled roots above ground
- may look in poor shape to the untrained eye (but in reality are probably very healthy for great age)

You will need:

- a soft 'ribbon type' 6m tape measure
or
- a piece of string or rope
or
- be prepared to use your arms
or
- some friends to help you

Here is how you do it:

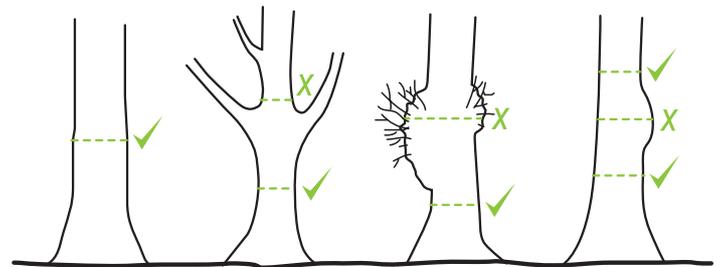
Measure the tree at approximately 1.5m from the ground.

NB If the tree is very bulbous, then at a point where the tree reverts to its usual 'waist' size.

Mark your start point by noting the place you start or by leaning a branch against the tree as a marker or by asking a companion to mark the place with their fingers.

The ready reckoner on the reverse will work out the approximate age of an oak for you.

Other tree species will be different as they grow at different rates, don't live so long (except for yews) and reach different sizes. They can be considered 'ancient' at a much younger age than oaks.



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Oak leaves: moorhen.demon.co.uk

Oak bud: Pete Holmes

Oak tree illustration: Reproduced from an original drawing by John White, Forest Research © Crown Copyright 2007. 3212 03/07

Ready Reckoner for estimating the age of an oak tree

Girth of tree in feet and inches	Girth of tree in metres and centimetres	Equals Estimated age in years	Historical connections
6ft 2ins	1m 85cm	75	1930, George V Amy Johnson's solo flight to Australia
6ft 7ins	1m 98cm	80	1926, George V Year of the General Strike
8ft 3ins	2m 48cm	103	1903, Edward VII First manned flight by the Wright Brothers
10ft 4ins	3m 10cm	138	1868, Victoria Thomas Edison patented his 1st invention, an electric voice machine
12ft 4ins	3m 70cm	181	1825, George IV Stockton to Darlington Railway opens (1st in the world)
14ft 5ins	4m 33cm	232	1815, George III British victory over Napoleon at the Battle of Waterloo
16ft 6ins	4m 95cm	291	1715, George I First Jacobite rebellion in Scotland
18ft 7ins	5m 58cm	358	1638, Charles I Last year of the English Civil War
20ft 8ins	6m 20cm	433	1573, Elizabeth I The first maps in England were made by Christopher Saxton
22ft 8ins	6m 80cm	515	1491, Henry VII The future King, Henry VIII born at Greenwich
24ft 9ins	7m 43cm	606	1400, Henry IV Rebellion in Wales under Owain Glyndwr
26ft 9ins	8m 03cm	704	1302, Edward I Dante is exiled from Florence
28ft 10ins	8m 65cm	810	1196, Richard I According to legend, Prince Madog of Gwynedd reached North America
30ft 11ins	9m 28cm	924	1082, William the Conqueror Completion of Rochester Cathedral
32ft 11ins	9m.88cm	1046	960, Edgar Mieczyslaw I becomes first ruler of Poland

NB These estimates are based on measurements by John White on oaks growing in open conditions in the south-east of England. Ages will vary for trees growing in different conditions and in other parts of the UK.