

# Abacus history and use essay sample

[Countries](#), [China](#)



The abacus, often called the earliest calculating machine in the world, has a long history. The earliest mention of the abacus can be dated back to the Eastern Han Dynasty, where it was mentioned in a book by Xu Yue in about 190 A. D. There was a time when numbers were not written. As larger numbers become needed past the amount on a human hand, various natural goods become items in the counting process.

The history and evolution of the abacus is a long one and is often divided into three time periods including Ancient Times, Middle Ages, and Modern Times. The abacus that we see today appeared around 1200 AD in China called the suan-pan. The abacus was also called the Nepohualtzitzin in the Aztec culture around 900 to 1000 AD. In the Aztec culture the counters were often made from kernels of Maize and then threaded through strings that were then mounted to a wood frame.

The process for making an abacus is relatively easy and it is a quick way to give answers to mathematical problems. The size of an abacus has ranged with the largest measuring 26 centimeters by 306 centimeters with 117 rods. The beads on the abacus can vary from round to rhombus in shape.

Traditionally there are 2 beads above the horizontal bar and five below. Newer and simplified versions have been seen with one bead above and four to five below the horizontal bar. Even in today's world of technology the abacus is still used in many cultures such as China. Tests have shown that performing math problems such as addition and subtraction on an abacus are faster than an electronic calculator.

Today's college student is use to computers and calculators that automatically give us an answer, provided that we put in the right information. While working with an Abacus you can't help but think what the inventors of the Abacus and those who used in everyday processes would think of our modern technology. It defiantly would be interesting to go back to the time of the Abacus knowing about the technology of today.

#### Sources

<http://www.ee.ryerson.ca:8080/~elf/abacus/history.html>

<http://www.chinavista.com/experience/abacus/abacus.html>