

Take A Deep Breath

WANT to get to know somebody better? Well, not just some body... your body. There are lots of things you know about yourself—how tall you are, what colour eyes you have, how far apart you can stretch your hands. Those are all parts of yourself that you can see. But what about the parts you can't see? Your lungs, for instance. How much air can they hold? Here's a way to find out.

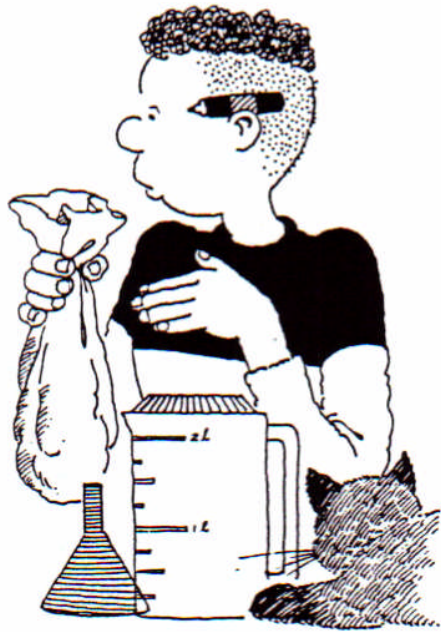
Try Your Lungs on for Size

You'll need:

a big plastic bag (such as a kitchen garbage bag)
a marker that will write on the bag
a funnel
a container (such as a pitcher) marked off in litres (quarts)

1. Bunch together the opening of the bag to make a mouthpiece, the way you would with a paper bag you were planning to blow up and burst. Make the mouth opening wide so you can breathe into the bag with your mouth open.
2. Squeeze the bag to get the air out.
3. Hold the bag away from your mouth and take two normal slow breaths.
4. On the next breath, breathe in as much air as you can, then bring the plastic bag to your mouth.

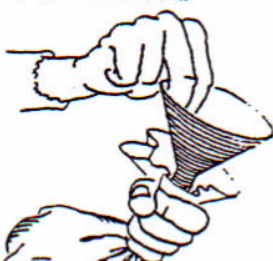
5. Pinch your nose and breathe out hard in one breath into the bag. Keep your mouth open—don't purse your lips as though you were blowing. Continue pushing the air out until you feel as though every last drop of air is squeezed from your lungs. (Hint: It helps to bend forward as you breathe out.)



6. Close the bag tightly and hold it while you take it away from your mouth.
7. Slide your hand down the neck of the bag until the bag is completely expanded. Mark the bag at the point where you're holding it, in case your grip slips.

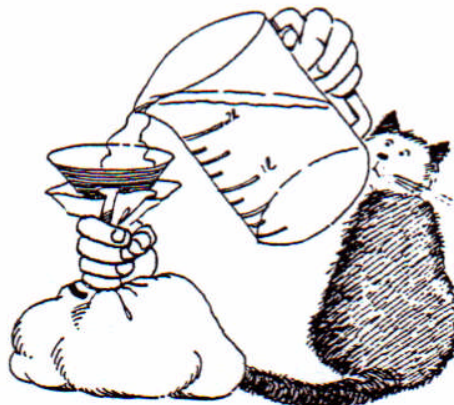


8. Push the neck of the funnel into the mouth of the bag, still keeping a firm hold on the bag so it doesn't move. Don't worry about the air escaping—you don't need it.



9. Using the marked container, carefully pour water into the bag until it's as fully expanded with water as it was with air. The bag will get quite heavy, so you may want to rest it on something as you fill it.

This will give you an approximate idea of your lung capacity.



The average 137 cm (4 foot 6 inch) tall boy has a lung capacity of approximately 2 L (2 quarts). The average 152 cm (5 foot) tall girl has a lung capacity of about 2.7 L (3 quarts). Compare your lung