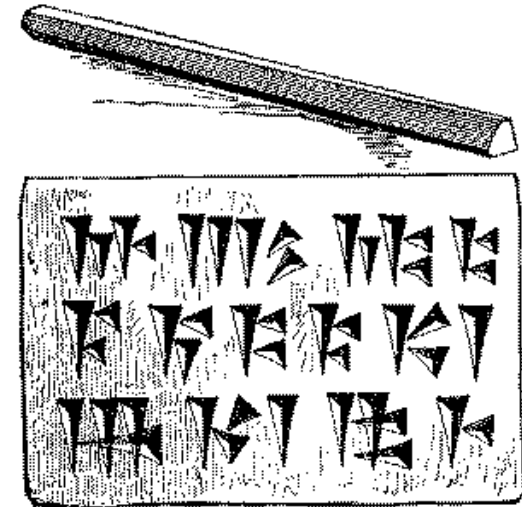The Babylonians number system was done using a stylus which they dug into a clay tablet. Like the Egyptians, the Babylonians used two ones to represent two, three ones for three, and so on, up to nine. However, they tended to arrange the symbols into neat piles.

Once they got to ten, there were too many symbols, so they turned the stylus on its side to make a different symbol. Eleven was ten and one, twelve was ten and one and one, twenty was ten and ten, just like the Egyptians.

However, something strange happened at sixty. The symbol for sixty seems to be exactly the same as that for one. Sixty one is sixty and one, which therefore looks like one and one, and so on. Surely this is very confusing !

01/10	𒁹	𒈫	𒐈	𒐘	𒐊	𒐋	𒐌	𒐍	𒐎	𒌋
11/20	𒌋𒁹	𒌋𒈫	𒌋𒐈	𒌋𒐘	𒌋𒐊	𒌋𒐋	𒌋𒐌	𒌋𒐍	𒌋𒐎	𒎙
21/30	𒎙𒁹	𒎙𒈫	𒎙𒐈	𒎙𒐘	𒎙𒐊	𒎙𒐋	𒎙𒐌	𒎙𒐍	𒎙𒐎	𒌍
31/40	𒌍𒁹	𒌍𒈫	𒌍𒐈	𒌍𒐘	𒌍𒐊	𒌍𒐋	𒌍𒐌	𒌍𒐍	𒌍𒐎	𒐏
41/50	𒐏𒁹	𒐏𒈫	𒐏𒐈	𒐏𒐘	𒐏𒐊	𒐏𒐋	𒐏𒐌	𒐏𒐍	𒐏𒐎	𒐐
51/60	𒐐𒁹	𒐐𒈫	𒐐𒐈	𒐐𒐘	𒐐𒐊	𒐐𒐋	𒐐𒐌	𒐐𒐍	�0𒐎	𒁹
61/70	𒁹 𒁹	𒁹 𒈫	𒁹 𒐈	𒁹 𒐘	𒁹 𒐊	𒁹 𒐋	𒁹 𒐌	𒁹 𒐍	𒁹 𒐎	𒁹 𒌋

A positional number system is one where the numbers are arranged in columns. We use a positional system, and our columns represent powers of ten. So the right hand column is units, the next is tens, the next is hundreds, and so on. The Babylonians had the same system, but they used powers of sixty rather than ten. So the left-hand column were units, the second, multiples of 60, the third, multiplies of 3600, and so on. They needed to distinguish one plus one or two, from one times sixty plus one meaning sixty one. Both these have two symbols for one. But the representation of two has the two ones touching, while the representation for sixty one has a gap between them.

x 3600	x 60	Units	Value
		Y	One
		YY	Two
		◁	Ten
		◁ Y	Eleven
		◁◁	Twenty
	Y		Sixty

x 3600	x 60	Units	Value
	Y	Y	Sixty one
	Y	YY	Sixty two
	Y	◁	Seventy
	Y	◁ Y	Seventy one
	YY		One hundred twenty
	YY	Y	One hundred twenty one

x 3600	x 60	Units	Value
	◁		Six hundred
	◁	Y	Six hundred and one
	◁	◁	Six hundred and ten
	◁ Y		Six hundred and sixty
Y			Three thousand six hundred
YY			Seven thousand two hundred

1. Write down the two following Babylonian numbers in English :

| | ◁◁◁ YYY | ◁◁◁ YY |

| YY | ◁ YYY | ◁ |

2. Write down the following numbers in the Babylonian number system :

Your age / One hundred / One thousand / One hundred thousand / One million.

3. The Babylonians have given their base 60 to us. Could you explain this sentence giving two precise examples ? Could you find all the factors* the number sixty has ? What about ten ?