

# Greek Men

In Ancient Greece, men ran the government. The men spent a great deal of their time away from home. When not involved in politics, the men spent time in the fields, overseeing or working the crops, sailing, hunting, in trade or manufacturing.

For fun, in addition to drinking parties, the men enjoyed wrestling, horseback riding, and [the famous Olympic Games](#). When the men entertained their male friends, at the popular drinking parties, their wives and daughters were not allowed to attend.

Men cut their hair short and, unless they were soldiers, wore beards. Barber shops first became popular in ancient Greece. They were an important part of the social life of many ancient Greek males. In the barber shop, the men exchanged political and sports news, philosophy, and gossip!

# Greek Women

With the exception of women in ancient Sparta, Greek women had very limited freedom outside the home. If they had their husband's permission, they could attend weddings, funerals, some religious festivals, and visit female neighbors for brief periods of time. But without their husband's permission, they could do none of these things. They could not leave the house, not even go to a temple to honor their gods, without their husband's permission.

In their home, however, Greek women were in charge! Their job was to run the house, make the clothes, and bear children. Most Greek women did not do housework themselves. Most Greek households had [slaves](#). Female slaves cooked, cleaned, and worked in the fields. Male slaves watched the door, to make sure no one came in when the man of the house was away, except for female neighbors, and acted as tutors to the young male children.

Wives and daughters were not allowed to watch the [Olympic Games](#) as the participants in the games did not wear clothes. Chariot racing was the only game women could win, and only if they owned the horse. If that horse won, they received the prize.

# Children in Ancient Greece

## **GREEK BABIES:**

The ancient Greeks considered their children to be "youths" until they reached the age of 30! When a child was born to ancient Greek family, the father carried his child in a ritual dance around the household. Friends and relatives sent gifts. The family decorated the doorway of their home with a wreath of olives (for a boy) or a wreath of wool (for a girl).

### **GREEK GIRLS:**

In Athens, as in most Greek city-states, with the exception of Sparta, girls stayed at home until they were married. Like their mother, they could attend certain festivals, funerals, and visit neighbors for brief periods of time. Their job was to help their mother, and to help in the fields, if necessary.

### **GREEK BOYS:**

In most Greek city-states, when young, the boys stayed at home, helping in the fields, sailing, and fishing. At age 6 or 7, they went to school.

## **Greek Houses**

Greek houses, in the 6th and 5th century BCE, were made up of two or three rooms, built around an open air courtyard, built of stone, wood, or clay bricks. Larger homes might also have a kitchen, a room for bathing, a men's dining room, and perhaps a woman's sitting area.

Although the Greek women were allowed to leave their homes for only short periods of time, they could enjoy the open air, in the privacy of their courtyard. Much of ancient Greek family life centered around the courtyard.

The ancient Greeks loved stories and fables. One favorite family activity was to gather in the courtyard to hear these stories, told by the mother or father. In their courtyard, Greek women might relax, chat, and sew.

Most meals were enjoyed in the courtyard. Greek cooking equipment was small and light and could easily be set up there.

On bright, sunny days, the women probably sheltered under a covered area of their courtyard, as the ancient Greeks believed a pale complexion was a sign of beauty.

## **Greek Food**

The soil was not very fertile along the coastline. The ancient Greeks used systems of irrigation and crop rotation to help solve that problem.

All over Greece, the people grew olives, grapes, and figs. They kept goats, for milk and cheese. In the plains, where the soil was more rich, they also grew wheat to make bread. Fish, seafood, and home-made wine were very popular food items.

In some of the larger Greek city-states, meat could be purchased in cook shops. Meat was rarely eaten, and was used mostly for religious sacrifices.

## Ancient Greek Clothing

**Greek clothing was very simple.** Men and women wore linen in the summer and wool in the winter. The ancient Greeks could buy cloth and clothes in the *agora*, the marketplace, but that was expensive.

Most families made their own clothes, which were simple tunics and warm cloaks, made of linen or wool, dyed a bright color, or bleached white.

Clothes were made by the mother, her daughters, and female slaves. They were often decorated to represent the city-state in which they lived.

The first real hat, the broad - brimmed *petasos*, was invented by the ancient Greeks! It was worn only for traveling. A chin strap held it on, so when it was not needed as protection from the weather, it could hang down ones back.

Now and then, they might buy jewelry from a traveling peddler, hairpins, rings, and earrings, but only the rich could afford much jewelry.

Both men and women used perfume made by boiling flowers and herbs.

# ABOUT DAILY LIFE

Daily life in ancient Greece was very different for men and women. Men had much more freedom. Women led very sheltered lives, devoted to the home and the family.

The Greeks had small families. Boys were more valued because they would become the next citizens of the city-state. Girls could not become citizens. They left home at age 14 or 15 to get married.

Until the age of about 7, boys and girls were brought up at home. Children played with yo-yos, spinning tops, and hoops. Boys were expected to go to school at age 7. The purpose of education was to create good citizens to take part in running the government. Girls remained at home, learning from their mothers, until they married.

Most people lived in one- or two-story houses built around a courtyard. The mud-brick and plaster houses had gently sloping roofs covered with clay tiles. Larger houses had a small kitchen, a room for bathing, a men's dining room, and a women's sitting area. Women and children lived separately from the men in larger homes.

A typical meal included bread, fish, goat cheese, and vegetables such as lentils, leeks, and onions. For dessert, Greeks loved almonds, figs, apples, grapes, and pomegranates. On special occasions, they ate meat cooked in olive oil and garlic. Wine mixed with water was the Greeks' favorite drink.

Men, women, and children wore simple rectangular woolen or linen tunics called chitons. A woolen outer cloth called a himation was then wrapped around the body like a cloak. Adults and children went barefoot indoors and wore leather sandals when outdoors. Both men and women wore hats to prevent a suntan. Pale skin was a sign of true beauty. Greeks bathed regularly and rubbed olive oil onto their skin to keep it soft. Beauty and cleanliness were very important.

Storytelling and music were also important in the daily lives of the ancient Greeks. The Greeks also believed that dance improved both physical and emotional health.