

You  
**Wouldn't**  
Want to...

BE IN THE

# ANCIENT GREEK OLYMPICS



Sweat,  
strength  
and sacred  
games!

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# It's a man's world

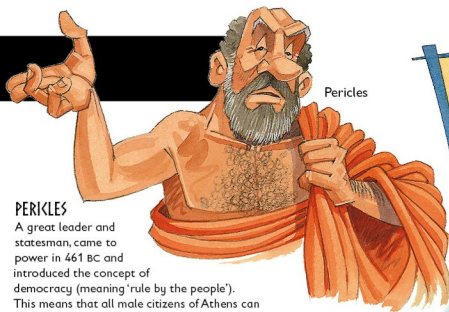


Your father, like many of the villagers outside Athens, works hard on his farm. He wants a better life for his son.



Your mother and sister are under your father's complete control and have duties around the house. Your sister is not allowed to attend school and will never have the same rights as you. Your father chooses whom your sister marries.

Fifth-century Greece is divided into city-states. Athens is the largest and a centre of commerce, culture and learning. On a hill, the Acropolis houses the magnificent official buildings of the city, including the Parthenon. Like most Greek city-states, not all men are treated as equals in Athens. They are divided into those who are allowed to vote, called citizens, and those who are not, often slaves or foreigners. Most people are poor, and only boys from wealthy families receive a proper education. Your father makes you get up early every day to walk to school in the city.



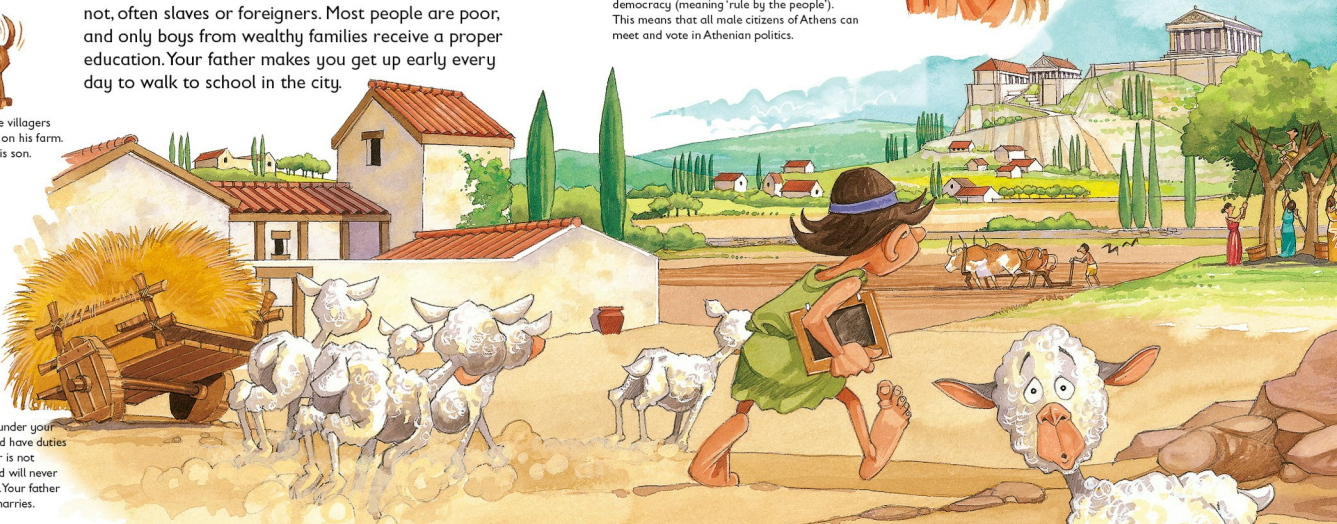
Pericles

## PERICLES

A great leader and statesman, came to power in 461 BC and introduced the concept of democracy (meaning 'rule by the people'). This means that all male citizens of Athens can meet and vote in Athenian politics.

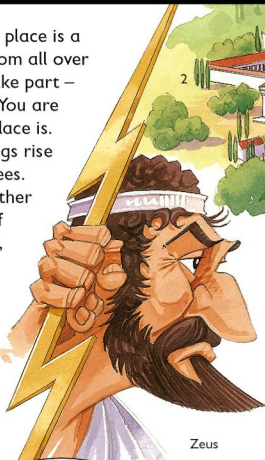
## Handy hint

Don't grow up! After the age of six, your mother stops looking after you. You have to give up your toys and your father takes charge of you.



# Sacrifices to the gods

When you arrive at Olympia, the place is a bustle of activity. Male athletes from all over the Greek world have come to take part – women are not allowed to enter. You are astounded at how beautiful the place is. Temples and other marble buildings rise amongst the olive and cypress trees. The Games will not start for another ten months, so you have plenty of time for training and you will eat, exercise and sleep with the other athletes. Above all, the Games are a religious festival, sacred to the god Zeus. To ensure the gods look favourably upon you, you visit the Temple of Zeus regularly to make offerings.

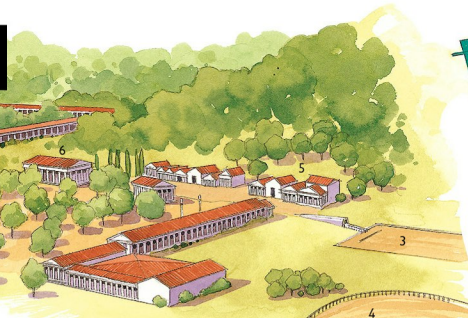


(1) Temple of Zeus; (2) training ground; (3) stadium; (4) hippodrome (for equestrian races); (5) treasuries; (6) Temple of Hera (Zeus's wife)

**ZEUS** is the king of the Greek gods and is believed to carry a thunderbolt to hurt at his enemies. The whole sanctuary at Olympia is sacred to him and the largest temple houses his enormous statue made from ivory and gold.

## UPON YOUR ARRIVAL

At the sanctuary of Olympia, you must register your participation in the upcoming competition. Officials check that you are a Greek by birth and not a foreigner or slave. Non-Greeks are not allowed to take part in the sacred Games.



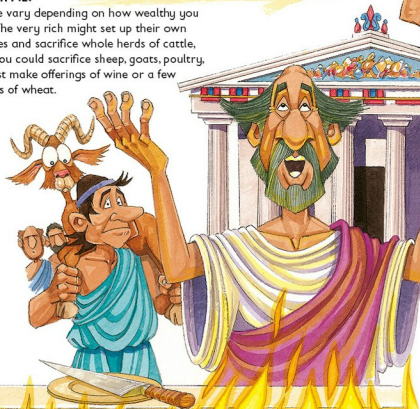
## Handy hint

Try not to make any enemies. You must stay clear of fights and not get injured.



## SACRIFICES

These vary depending on how wealthy you are. The very rich might set up their own shrines and sacrifice whole herds of cattle, but you could sacrifice sheep, goats, poultry, or just make offerings of wine or a few grains of wheat.



## THE FINISHED ARTICLE

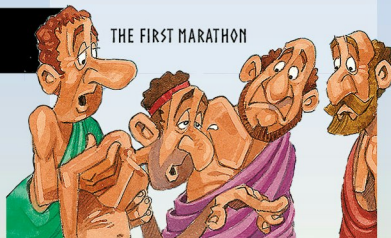
After ten months of sacrifices and healthy living, you are at the peak of your physical prowess and are eager for the Games to begin.

# At the stadium

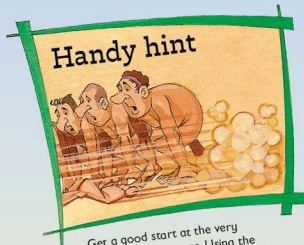
Up to 50,000 spectators gather on the slopes around the stadium. The oldest and most important event at the Games is running. The noise from the crowd is deafening but you must concentrate on the race ahead. An announcer reads out your name and place of birth. You take off your clothes in a small building at the side of the stadium and rub yourself down with olive oil. Everyone competes in the nude as a symbol of purity. There's no need to be embarrassed – women are not allowed to watch the competitions.



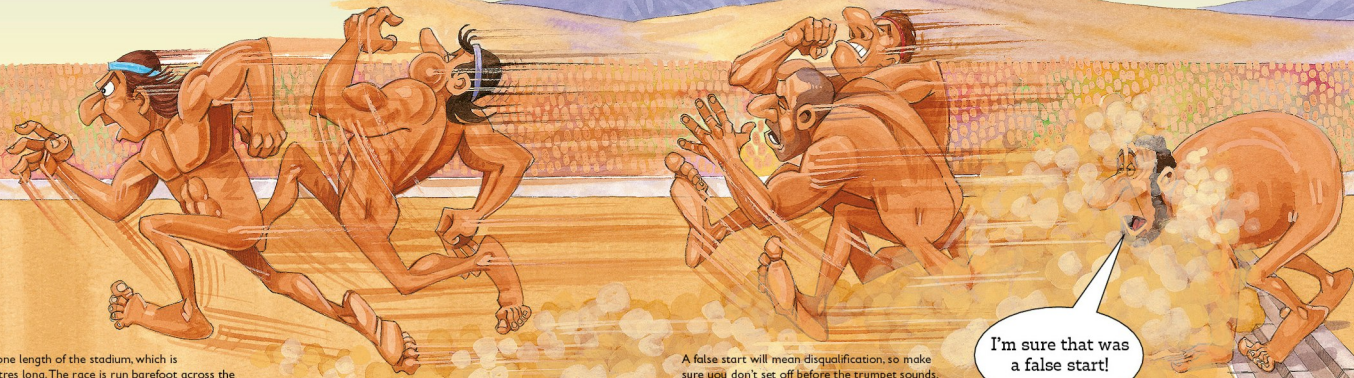
Though your race is run in the nude, there is another race in which the runners have to wear helmets and carry shields. The race is called the hoplitodromos, because Greek soldiers are called 'hoplites'.



In 490 BC, during the Persian Wars, a messenger ran all the way – 42km – from the plains of Marathon to Athens to announce an Athenian victory. (Though there were no long races in the original Games, this event inspired the marathon in the modern Olympics.)



Get a good start at the very beginning of the race. Using the grooves in the starting blocks will give you an advantage.



## RUNNING

You must run one length of the stadium, which is nearly 200 metres long. The race is run barefoot across the sand. It is hard going and you have to be careful not to collide with the other contestants.

A false start will mean disqualification, so make sure you don't set off before the trumpet sounds. Other running events include completing two and six lengths of the track.

Starting blocks

# Practice makes perfect

Athletes at the Games are fine physical specimens, men who have been in training for months. Your technique will have to be spot on if you are going to win. Warm up well and rub oil into your body to make yourself limber. Other athletes pose for the crowd, flexing their muscles, but you must focus. Don't think about them, or your father, watching from the stands. Musicians (flautists) play to help you relax and to entertain the crowd.

Flautists



## RIGHT ON TARGET

There are two elements to being good at the javelin. You must be able to throw a long way, but also accurately.

The long jump does not have a run up. Distance is achieved by carrying weights in each hand called halteres. By swinging your arms forward you gain extra momentum.



Halteres

This is the best throwing arm in all of Greece.



## BOYS' EVENTS

Although the main contests are only open to adults, there are also less serious boys' competitions.

## Handy hint

Get your hair cut short, otherwise it might get in your eyes when you start sweating. Some athletes shave their hair off altogether.

Whoosh!

Practising throwing the javelin

## DEADLY DISCUS

There are several Greek myths involving sporting competitions. In one, a king is killed when his son accidentally hits him on the head with a discus. Aim carefully!

