

Soldier Formation

The actual attack (during a war with another country) consisted of many different groups going at different stages. First out in front of everyone was a group of ten municipals of the youngest and poorest soldiers called the *velites*.

Behind the *velites* were ten groups of 120 men called the *hastati*. They were young soldiers who carried spears in battle. Behind them were the *principles*. They were also 10 groups of men who were well armed with plenty of weapons and a cylindrical shield.

The last people were the *triari*. There was only 5 groups of them. They were 600 very well trained and experienced warriors. This order was called the *quincunx*.

The method of having different sized group going in different waves worked very well against enemies. The *hastati* and *velites* wore out the enemy and then the *principles* killed the remaining people to finish the battle. The *triari* only had to fight if the war was going badly.

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Roman Culture Capsules

THE ROMAN SOLDIER

BY MICHAEL STANTON



The Soldier's Life

In the Roman army, any man between the ages of 17 - 46 could be called to serve. Although they were not required to fight more than 16 or 17 separate campaigns, many people enjoyed the army and stayed in it and became full time professionals.

When a person entered the army, he had to say an oath. In the oath he swore an allegiance to his commander. Later the allegiance was changed to the emperor. Training took place everyday and it was very hard. The soldier practiced swimming, running, jumping, javelin throwing, and fencing. Three times every month the whole army had to go on routine marches for 18 miles and a pace at 4 or 5 miles an hour had to be kept.



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For punishment a soldier was flogged. If a entire legion disobeyed then their food was reduced. If a mutiny was suspected then every ten person in the army were killed. They were lined up and every tenth person was brought to be killed. This was called *decimatio*. We get the English word decimate from it.

Because of the rough terrain, the soldiers had to carry all their equipment on their back. They carried food, tools for digging and building, two heavy wooden stakes for camp fence, cooking pots, and all other personal belongings.

Some of the soldiers did more than just fight. Many were trained to be surveyors, engineers or stonemasons. Some supervised the construction of roads, buildings, and canals. Soldiers had to buy their own food though, which cost about one-third of their wages. Meals consisted of : cheese, beans, and bread or gruel made of wheat or barley. For drink they had water or *posca*, which was a cheap sour wine.

The soldiers had to serve for 25 years before they could be discharged in order to receive a pension. They were given an amount of money or some land to farm.

The Soldier's Uniform

When a person entered the army he received a brand new uniform. Unfortunately, he had to pay for it. It came out of his wages.

Under his armor a soldier wore a tunic made of wool or linen. Under this was a groin-guard made of leather and metal. In cold weather though, the soldier was given woolen cloaks. Woolen trousers were also worn to keep the soldier warm.

A scarf was worn on the soldiers neck to stop the armor from scratching the neck. Vests were worn made of fine chainmail. The soldier wore heavy sandals which were studded with nails. Above the sandals were metal leg protectors over the skins. On their heads they wore helmets made of metal with a side piece to cover the cheek.



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