

Roman armour and weapons

We know about Roman armour and weapons from Roman pictures and statues, and from finds by modern archaeologists.

A Roman soldier wore armour made from strips of iron and leather (*lorica segmentata* in Latin). On his head was a metal helmet (*galea*). He carried a rectangular shield, curved so it protected his body (*scutum*). The shield was made of wood and leather.

The soldier's main weapons were a short sword for stabbing (*gladius*) and a long spear called a javelin for throwing (*pilum*). The javelin had a sharp iron point, and a thin, bendy shaft. When it hit an enemy's shield, the point stuck in, but the shaft bent. This made it difficult to pull out. The long spear shaft got in the way, so the enemy had to throw away his shield.

Roman soldiers kept fit by running, marching and practice-fighting. They could march 20 miles/30 km a day wearing armour. They could swim or cross rivers in boats, build bridges, and smash their way into forts. Each man carried his weapons and shield, some food and camping equipment (such as spare clothes, cooking pot and an axe or spade).

Roman soldiers almost always obeyed orders. They usually fought in lines, marching forward with their shields facing the enemy. If they were being fired at from above (with arrows or rocks) the men would lift their shields over their heads for protection. They looked like a tortoise, so they called this formation the *testudo* (Latin for tortoise).

1. Name two materials used to make Roman armour.
2. What is a *testudo* ?
3. Match up these Latin words with the correct meaning:

scutum	javelin
galea	short sword
gladius	helmet
pilum	shield

4. How far could a Roman soldier walk in a day?
5. How did they keep fit?
6. What kind of shaft did a *pilum* have?
7. Why was it like this?
8. What is the Latin word for sandals?
9. Why was a Roman shield curved?
10. In what formation did the soldiers fight?

