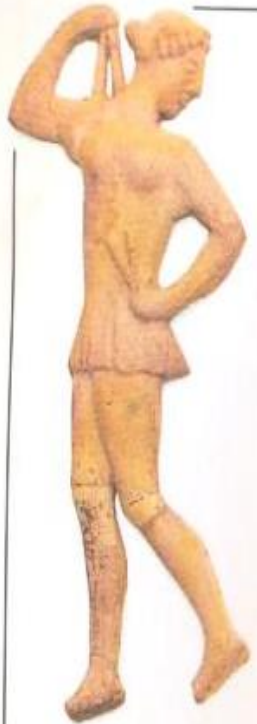


# Ancient Greek Toys and Games

Greek Week

# Ancient Greek Toys and Games



## DANCING GIRL

This slave girl, wearing a short, pleated skirt, is dancing while playing the castanets. She is probably an entertainer at a party.

## Fun and games

RICH GREEKS, ESPECIALLY THOSE who lived in towns, had plenty of leisure time to spend talking, giving dinner parties, visiting the gymnasium, and playing all kinds of games. Music was particularly important. Greeks sang songs at births, weddings, and funerals. They had love songs, battle songs, drinking songs, and songs of thanksgiving to the gods to celebrate the harvest. There were also many musical instruments: stringed instruments like the harp, the lyre, and the kithara (a kind of lyre), and wind instruments like the syrinx, or pan pipes, made of reeds of different lengths. Unfortunately, almost no written music has survived from ancient Greece.



## CLASH OF CYMBALS

This pair of bronze cymbals is inscribed with their owner's name, Oata. Musical instruments like this have survived very rarely, although they can often be seen on vase paintings.

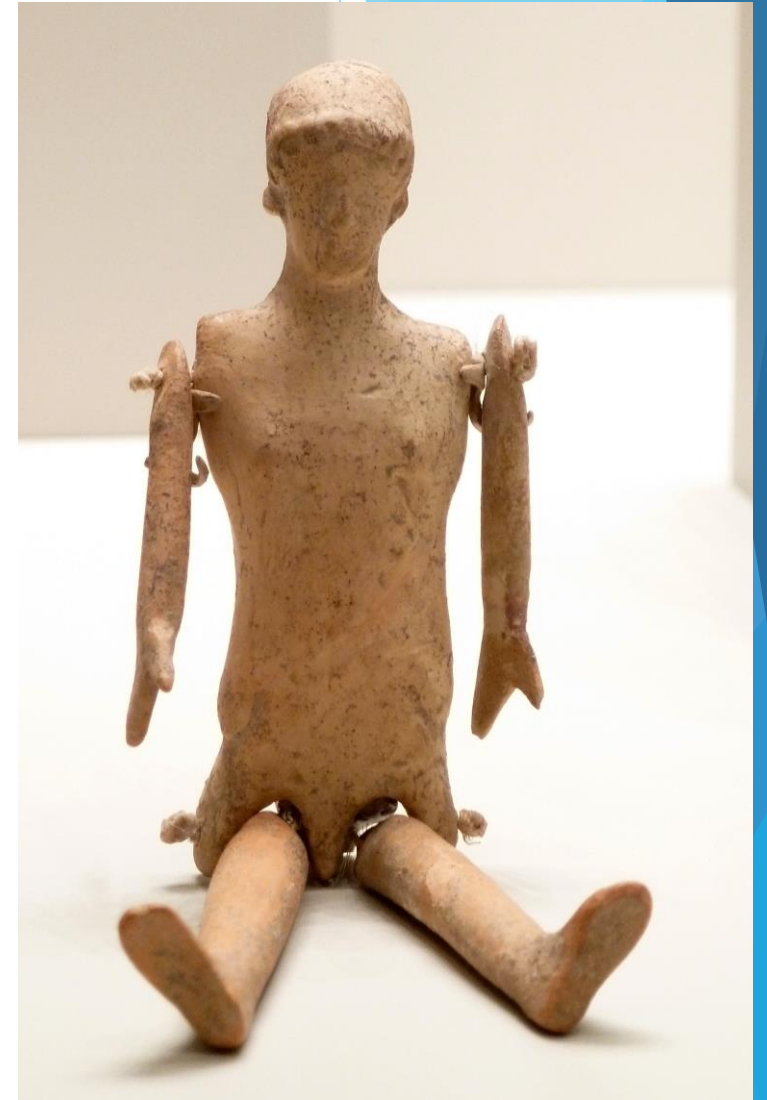
## Ancient Greek Toys and Games

Many of the toys that Greek children enjoyed were similar to toys of today. They played with rattles, tops, and pull toys. The yo-yo, or something close to it, may have been created in Greece. It was made out of two terra cotta discs and was simply called a disc.



## Ancient Greek Toys and Games

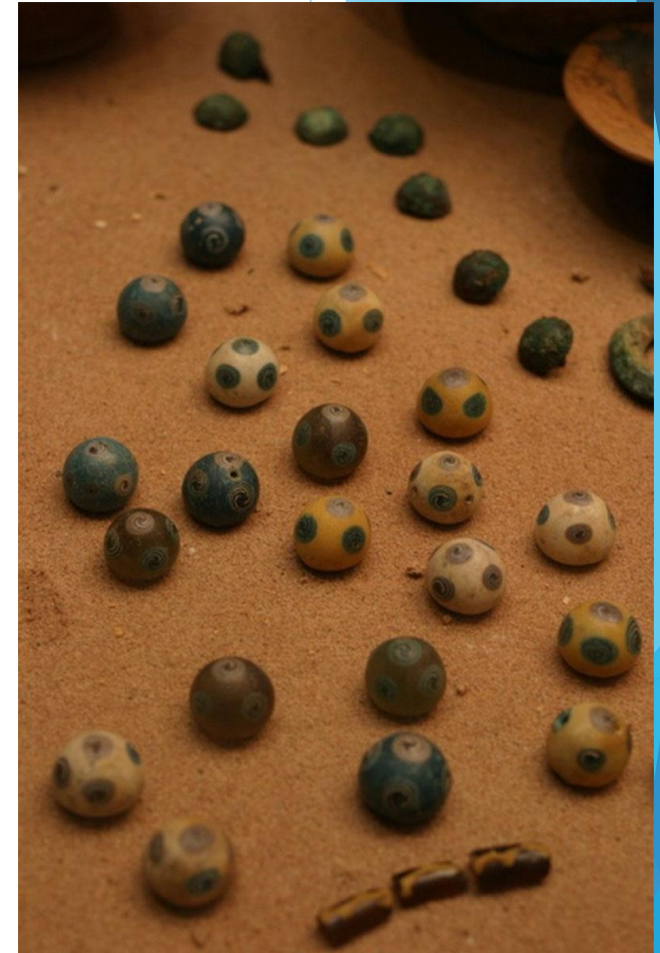
Like today, there were also toys meant just for girls and others meant just for boys. Boys often played with toy chariots, and girls usually played with dolls. Some dolls from ancient Greece even had moving arms and legs! Some dolls were made from ivory and glass, but most were made from terra cotta. Some were even made with human hair! Others were made of rags, clay or wax. Some had holes in the top of their heads for a string.





## Ancient Greek Toys and Games

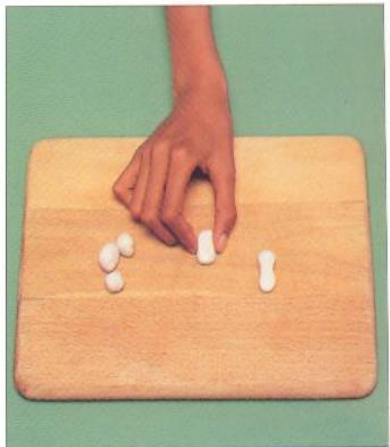
They're not as exciting as video games, but marbles were very popular with Greek children. The earliest marbles were most likely made from chestnuts and acorns. Later, they were made from polished stones.



# Greek knucklebones

The game of knucklebones played in ancient Greece is rather like the more modern game of jacks. It was not a game at all to begin with. The way the bones fell when they were thrown was interpreted to predict the future. The knuckles – little ankle bones of a sheep or cow – were called *astragalos* by the Greeks. Girls tended to play the game of knucklebones, while boys preferred to cast the bones like dice in a game of chance. Each of the four distinctively shaped sides of the bone was given a different numerical value.

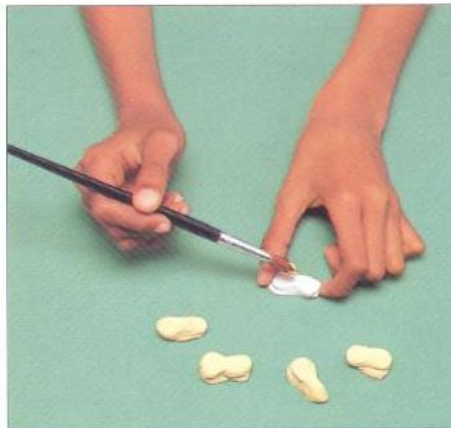




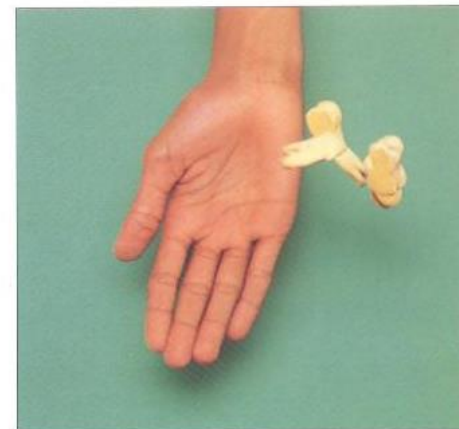
**1** Divide the clay into five small pieces. Then roll each piece into the shape of a ball. Press each ball of clay into a figure-of-eight shape as shown in the picture above.



**2** Use the modelling tool to carve out a ridge in the middle of each figure-of-eight. Then make small dents in the end of each piece with your finger. Leave the five shapes to dry.

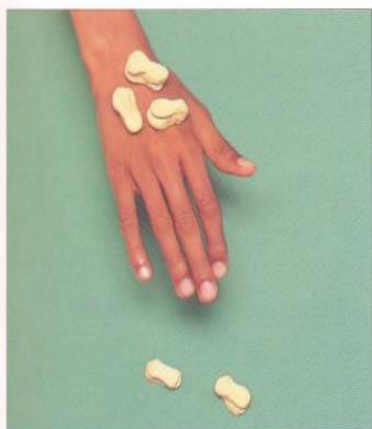


**3** When they are dry, give the pieces two coats of paint. Use cream paint so that the pieces look like bone. When the paint is dry, you and a friend can play with them.

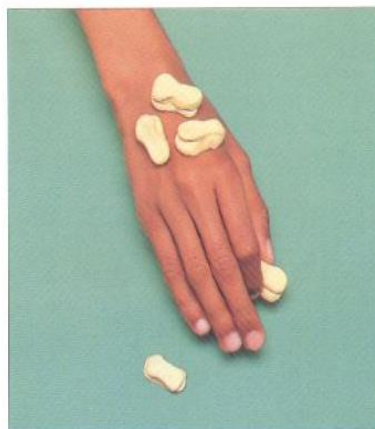


**4** To play knucklebones, gather the five pieces in the palm of one of your hands. Throw all five pieces into the air at once as shown above. Then quickly flip your hand over.

We are going to use plasticine instead!

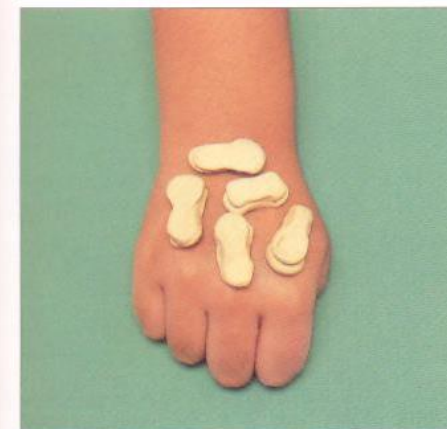


**5** Take turns to try to catch as many of the pieces as you can on the back of your hand. If you or your friend catch them all that person wins the game. If not, the game continues.



**6** If you drop any of the pieces, try to pick them up with the others still on the back of your hand. Throw them with your free hand and try to catch them again.

Knucklebones were made from the ankle bones of animals such as sheep or cows. These small bones were used in different ways, depending on the type of game. The Greeks also used the knucklebones as dice.



**7** The winner is the first person to catch all the knucklebones on the back of their hand. It may take a few goes to get the hang of the game. But remember – practice makes perfect!