In the main city of Greece, Athens, there were different types of education for boys and girls.

Most boys went to school from the age of seven. Boys in Athens were expected to grow into responsible citizens of the city-state, so it was important for them to learn how to read, write, and work with numbers. They were also taught to sing and play musical instruments, especially the lyre, and had physical education lessons, teaching them to be strong and brave.

Teachers, who were always men, set examples for boys to follow. Poetry, speeches, and long passages from plays were memorized. Students had tests to find out how much they remembered. School rooms were often in teachers' homes. Boys were taken there by slaves who worked for their families. They stayed with them to make sure they did their work.
Parents had to pay for boys' education. Rich families could afford school until their sons were eighteen years old. These boys went from elementary school to schools where they studied philosophy or public speaking. Boys from poorer families only went for three or four years, and were given only a basic education.

Girls in Athens rarely went to school. Most stayed at home where their mothers taught them women's duties, such as preparing food, weaving wool, and making clothes. It trained them for married life, when they would have to look after their own homes.

Girls may have learned a little reading and writing, but this was not considered important for them.

**How Do We Know?**

Evidence of education comes from many sources. Greek poets and playwrights wrote about it. For example, in his play called Clouds, Aristophanes (c. 455-386 BCE) compared old methods of education with ones that came into fashion in the 400s BCE. In the old system, emphasis was placed on physical education and music, whereas the new system made reading, writing, and number work more important. We can also learn about Greek education from objects. Pictures painted on vases show teachers and students; writing pens and tablets have survived; and there are numerous examples of actual writing — proof that people were educated.