

The Roman army

The growth of the Roman Empire was due, in large part, to the success of the Roman army. The Roman army was incredibly well-trained and organised and relied on the complete obedience of its soldiers.

The Roman army was made up of two different types of soldiers - **legionaries** and **auxiliaries**.



Legionaries were strong and healthy Roman citizens, above the age of 17. They were well-trained and more highly paid than the auxiliaries. Legionaries agreed to fight for the army for 25 years and, in return, were rewarded with a plot of land to call their own after they left the army.

Auxiliaries were not Roman citizens and were paid less than half of a legionary's salary. They were used to complete the less important and most dangerous jobs, such as defending forts and heading into battle first.

A **legion** was made up of around 5000 legionaries and was commanded by a **legate**. Each legion was further divided into smaller groups of around 80 legionaries, called **centuries** and led by a **centurion**. Centurions carried a short stick which identified him as the leader of his century and could also be used to beat any disobedient legionaries! There were also **artillery** soldiers, who used bows and arrows or were in charge of catapults,

firing heavy objects at enemies and **cavalry** soldiers, who rode into battle on horses.



Roman legionaries used their three weapons - a sword, spear and dagger - to fight with but also used their shields, known as a **scutum**, to fight with, as well as to defend themselves.

Roman soldiers went into battle in tight formations, each using their scutum to protect themselves and those around them. This was known as **testudo** - the Latin word meaning tortoise!

