

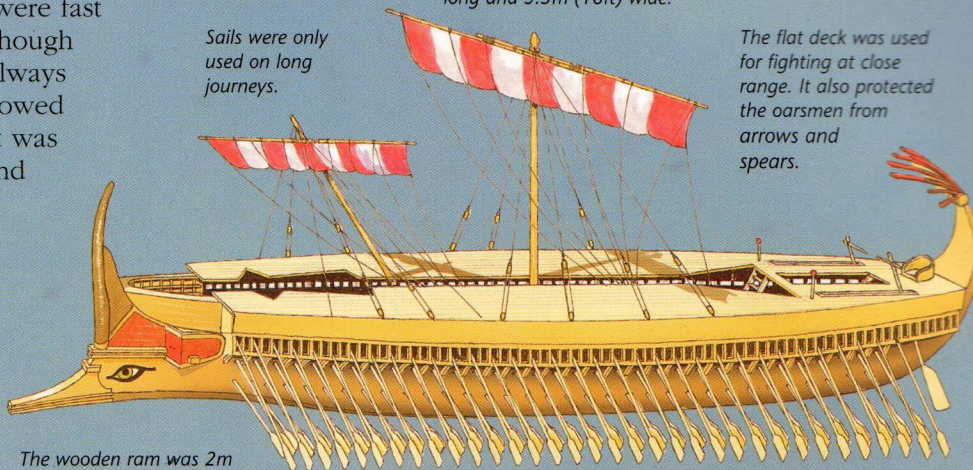
FAST AND FIERCE

Triremes were formidable in battle, because they were fast and easy to steer. Although they had sails, they always put them away and rowed into battle, because it was easier to start, stop and turn. The oarsmen propelled the ship through the water at up to 15km (9 miles) an hour – much faster than it could move under sail.

Triremes were about 37m (120ft) long and 5.5m (18ft) wide.

Sails were only used on long journeys.

The flat deck was used for fighting at close range. It also protected the oarsmen from arrows and spears.



The wooden ram was 2m (6.5ft) long and covered in bronze, to punch holes in enemy ships.

There were three tiers of long oars inside the hull.

Two huge oars at the back were used for steering.

THE CREW

Triremes carried crews of up to 200 men, most of whom were oarsmen. The name trireme came from the Latin for 'three oars', because the men sat on three levels inside the hull. Also on board were naval officers, soldiers, archers and deckhands.



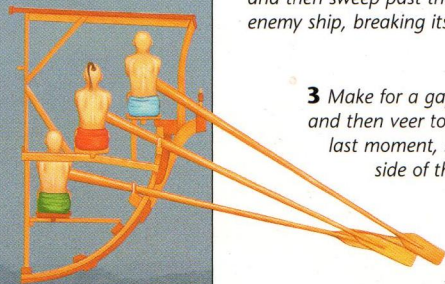
INTERNET LINK

For links to websites where you can see photographs of full-size replicas of Greek triremes, go to www.usborne-quicklinks.com

The upper rowers, called *thranites*, sat in two rows of 31.

The middle rowers were called *zygites*. They sat in two rows of 27.

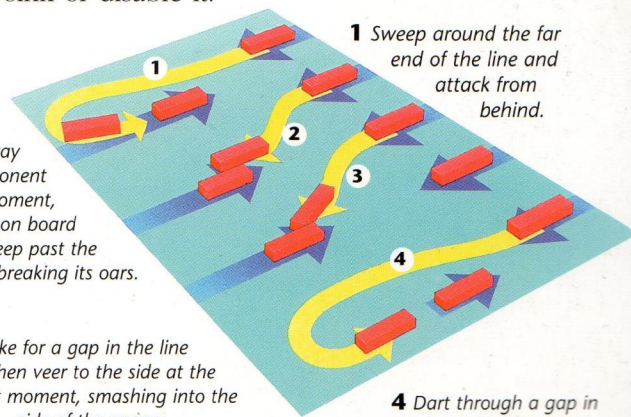
The bottom rowers were called *thalamites*. They also sat in two rows of 27.



BATTLE TACTICS

At the start of battle, enemies often faced each other in two long lines. The main tactic was to attempt to ram an enemy ship and sink or disable it.

The best places to aim for were the back and sides of an enemy ship. Four different ways of doing this are described below.



1 Sweep around the far end of the line and attack from behind.

2 Swerve away from the opponent at the last moment, pull the oars on board and then sweep past the enemy ship, breaking its oars.

3 Make for a gap in the line and then veer to the side at the last moment, smashing into the side of the enemy.

4 Dart through a gap in the line, wheel around and attack the enemy from behind.