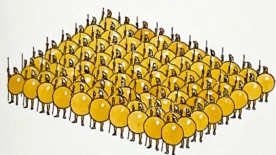


BATTLE FORMATIONS

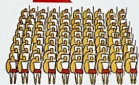
Greek hoplite soldiers fought in a formation called a phalanx, which consisted of a long block of soldiers (see page 179). For a phalanx to be effective, it was important for the men to stay in line and move as a unit. Flute music was sometimes used to keep them in step with each other and keep the phalanx in line.



A phalanx was usually 8 rows deep, but it could be more or less than that.

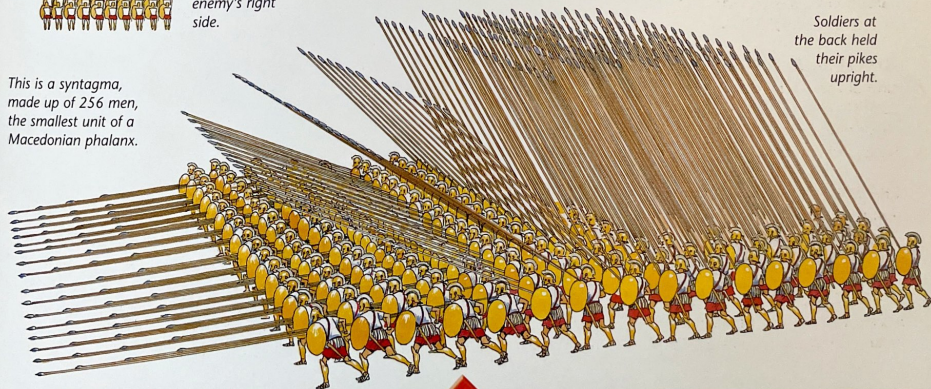
Each hoplite was partly protected by his own shield and partly by the shield of the man to his right. This left the man at the right-hand end of the line partly exposed. In a battle, a general would often try to attack the enemy's right wing, as this was the most vulnerable to attack.

Enemy phalanx



This phalanx is aiming for the enemy's right side.

This is a syntagma, made up of 256 men, the smallest unit of a Macedonian phalanx.

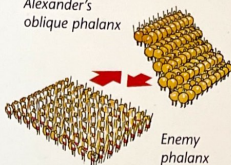


Soldiers at the back held their pikes upright.

ALEXANDER'S PHALANX

Alexander the Great often used the phalanx in an oblique formation, shown below, as a way of attacking his enemy's weaker right side, while keeping the right side of his own phalanx protected.

Alexander's oblique phalanx



THE MACEDONIAN PHALANX

The phalanx worked very well, but it was vulnerable if heavy pressure was put on a single point. The Macedonians strengthened the design of the phalanx by using a very long pike, called a sarissa, and a two-handed spear. When the phalanx was charging, the pikes of the first four or five rows of men extended beyond the front line. The rest of the phalanx held their pikes in the air to break the impact of enemy missiles.

The Macedonian syntagma (shown below) had 16 rows, with 16 men in each row.

BATTLE POSITIONS

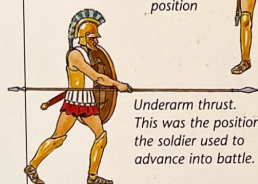
Here are some of the different positions the hoplites used.



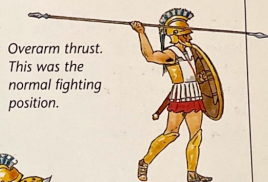
Hoplite soldier at ease



On-guard position



Underarm thrust. This was the position the soldier used to advance into battle.



Overarm thrust. This was the normal fighting position.



Defensive position. This was the position the Spartans used to face the Persians at the Battle of Plataea.