

History of physical education

[Sport & Tourism](#), [Fitness](#)



PREFACE To provide a meaningful background of physical education and sport in modern society it is helpful to have a clear understanding of its role in the past and how it emerged. The purpose of this assignment is to outline the history of physical education since time immemorial. The text begins with the beginning of the humankind engaging in physical activities, showing the history of physical education and sport being a rich tapestry of people, places, events and social forces from early civilization to the present time through transitional periods.

INTRODUCTION

The ground of education as a whole is going through remarkable challenges to serve the needs of the individual and the society, and this trend is reflected in physical education also. The history of physical education goes back to the earliest times, if we think of it in the simple terms of fitness and has existed since human society in one form or other. Since early history, even before the dawn of civilization and culture, physical exercise has been a very important aspect of human existence and it was not so long ago that it was called “physical culture” or “physical training”.

THE PALEOLITHIC PERIOD Primitive humans began life in the “Stone Age.” What can they be called? Paleolithic people, Stone agers, primitive humans or cave men. They were hunters and gatherers. They hunted wild game and fished; they gathered veggies, berries and nuts. Primitive humans depended entirely on nature for food. Primitive men moved according to their satisfaction, needs and necessity. They needed to be fit to be able to go through their journey to hunt for food and water. Being nomads and hunters, they were people who had to be persistently hunting and gathering food for survival.

Their trips regularly lasted for one-to-two days for food or water and were meant for regular physical activity to be produced. When they successfully hunted, they would travel many miles and miles to celebrate with family and friends. Physical activities were not organized by them. The necessity for survival which is the protection against hostile environment and wild beasts, and sometimes the engagement in murder to insure their protection, motivated these men to keep themselves physically fit and strong enough compared to stronger forces of nature. In those days there were no machines to help people in their work.

That is why they had to depend exclusively upon their physical powers and physical skill. They considered their body to be their prize possession, so their primary concern was to maintain and protect their body. The order of the day was the survival of the most fit. Their sociable nature was inborn and drew only by mating and propagation that gave them the desire to dance and play, which were not being organized. Men lived in such a state for thousands of years. There was neither any organization nor system. Most of their acts were learnt by the young generations by the competence of imitation rather than instruction.

This lifestyle created many physical activities and a high level fitness which defined human life. **THE NEOLITHIC TRANSITION** Neolithic people lived during the “ New Stone Age”, from 9000 to 8000 B. C. This was the transitional period in which pre- historic societies began to control their surroundings and form civilization. The two most significant developments were the domestication of animals and farming. Their society was different from

Paleolithic culture because they lived in established communities, domesticated animals and cultivated crops.

As they improved their society they developed skills like spinning, weaving and building. They also made tombs and religious items. Men and women gave up hunting gathering as the only sources of living and learnt to produce their own food. Agriculture and the raise of cattle were discovered and increased to a productive economy. Many villages were built generally located next to rivers. Then came the creation of the plow, so the difficult tasks being done by the animals and other agricultural development brought the beginning of a less active lifestyle.

Social organization became more complex in the first villages, and then towns. Different kind of chiefs appeared and gave rise to a political system. There was class system whereby society was divided into rich and poor. A specialization of work took place. Apart from peasants and cattle farmers, new economical activities such as craftsmanship (fabric, pottery) were born. This era in history symbolizes the beginning of a more sedentary lifestyle, as man began to lessen some hardships of life while simultaneously decreasing daily physical activity.

ANCIENT CIVILIZATIONS (2500-250 B. C.) (i) China In China, the participation of regular physical activity was encouraged by the philosophical teachings. There were no such words in the Chinese vocabulary entirely corresponding to the Western terms of " sport" and " physical education". Such physical exercises as wrestling, swordplay, archery, charioteering and horse-racing were all incorporated in the military training and therefore came under the

general term of " wuyi," or " martial arts. " Kung Fu gymnastics was developed to keep the body in good and working condition.

It consisted of various stances and movements, patterned by separate foot works and imitations of different kind of animals' fighting styles. (ii) India India has a long recorded history of civilization but physical activity was not encouraged because of the religious teachings over there. The teachings of Buddha restricted most of the sports and games practiced by other early civilizations. However, an exercise programs known as " yoga", same as the Chinese Cong Fu gymnastics, was developed and some other physical activities as well. According to the Hindu priests, Yoga signifies the development of body, mind, and spirit.

The Ancient Indian philosophers recognized thehealthbenefits of Yoga, which consisted of the proper functioning of organs and the whole well-being. There have been many physical activities but were never treated as a part of general education, they were mostly an entry to militarycareer. ANCIENT GREECE: THE HEART OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION & SPORT (2500-200 B. C.) The western civilization began with the Greeks. They were the first one to provide a methodical and philosophical attitude toward education, physical education and sport. It is believed that no other civilization has held fitness in such appreciation as the ancient Greece had.

The admiration for beauty of the body and importance of health and fitness throughout society is one that is beyond compare in history. For the Greeks, the development of the body was equivalently as important as development of the mind. They believed that the physical well-being was crucial for the mental well -being. During that period, the Greek states were frequently at <https://assignbuster.com/history-of-physical-education/>

war with each other. The Fighting abilities were very much associated with physical fitness levels, therefore making it very important for the people to maintain high level of fitness.

Athens and Sparta were the two most famous city-states and dominant force of the Greek civilization. Sparta was already militaristic by 700 B. C. Spartans were derisive of intellectualism. They were generally suspicious and conventional. All that mattered to the Spartans was being a warrior. Athens was the more democratic of the two city-states. Both city-states served the people and their needs although they were very different. Being a potential warrior was all that mattered to the Spartans. Athens was the more democratic of the two city-states. SPARTA

The Spartan system was much more autocratic. Male children were taken at the age of seven to learn the basic military skills while living in barracks. Little emphasis was placed on the arts, sciences, philosophy and literature. Physical activities such as gymnastics, running, jumping, boxing, wrestling and pankration (a brutal combination of boxing and wrestling) were provided to produce powerful warriors. When the children reached the age of fourteen, they were taught group fighting tactics which would allow them to succeed while in the military from the ages of twenty to thirty.

Girls did not live in public military barracks like the boys, but they participated in discuss, gymnastics, horse riding, javelin, swimming, running, and wrestling at separate training grounds. The objective for women's physical education was to enable them to produce healthy and strong potential warriors. At the age of thirty, the men could then marry women who were fit and healthy so that they could make strong babies, therefore

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future warriors. ATHENS For the Athenian -The motto for education was “ a sound mind in a sound body” (mens sana in corpore sano) Athens was quite different compared to the Sparta.

The Athenian culture was a very much more freethinking and democratic society specially noted for its art, literature, philosophy as well as its political system. There were citizens, foreign settlers and slaves but only the citizens were provided with educational opportunities. When compared to Sparta, education was very different in Athens. Women had no physical education compared to Sparta. They put much more emphasis toward intellectual quest. Their objective was similar to Sparta that is preparing male warriors.

Athenian education was a balance between music(including poetry) and gymnastics which enveloped a range of physical activities. Physical education was provided to the students with a series of graded activities at the Palestra, which consisted of an indoor facility for gymnastics, and to an outdoor space for boxing, discus, javelin, running, jumping, pankration, pentathlon and wrestling. Many of these athletic events were part of the four great sport and religious festivals which consisted of the Olympic, Isthmian, Pythian and Nemean Games.

These games started as simple athletic contests dedicated to Greek gods, but the Olympic Games, in particular, over 1000 years, became increasingly complex encompassing events for boys and men in running over different distances, pentathlon, wrestling, races in armour, chariot races, and pankration. As of education more broadly, the clear objectives of physical education in Athens were to educate the mind and the body and to produce a well integrated person. ROMANS The political ambition of Rome

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incorporated physical education into a national program for the preparation of military.

Therefore, similar to the Greeks, sports, games and physical recreation were meant to prepare boys and young men for military service. Physical education for the Romans was about athletics, which was entertainment above all. All Roman citizens between the ages of 17 and 60 had to be fit for the military service, so it was very important for all the citizens to maintain good physical condition and be prepared. Military training consisted of activities such as running, marching, jumping, and discus and javelin throwing. The fitness levels of the general Roman population declined as individuals became attracted to wealth and entertainment.

People were forced to fight to the death, and oftentimes fed to lions. Women were not as marginalized in Rome as they were in Greek city-states. Some sporting events were organized for young women such as swimming, dancing, and light exercise was common, especially among the privileged classes. THE DARK (476-1000) AND MIDDLE AGES (900-1400) The Middle Ages saw the fall of the Roman Empire which was conquered by Barbarians from Northern Europe, whereby the lavish lifestyles of the Romans had resulted in the complete decay of the society's fitness level.

There was the rise of Christianity, and the Christian's influence brought about a denial of physical activity for anything other than manual labor. They viewed physical play as immoral, so they halted the Olympic Games in 394. The barbarians from Northern Europe were similar to the primitive humans. Their way of life consisted of hunting and gathering food, so physical activity and fitness were fundamentals for survival. Thus, despite the downfall of the

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Roman Empire, fitness experienced a revival during the Dark and Middle ages because survival during these challenging times required it. THE RENAISSANCE (1400-1600)

During the Renaissance, a renewed appreciation for human life evolved creating an environment which was ready for the widespread development of physical education; revival of ancient Greek ideals throughout Europe. There were many people which included the religious leader; Martin Luther, the philosopher; John Locke, physical educators; Vittorino da Feltra, John Comenius, and Richard Mulcaster carried on that high fitness levels improved intellectual learning. But in the 1600s people believed that if it did not have any specific purpose than just a waste of time. PHYSICAL EDUCATION AS FROM THE 1700S

There was a big change in physical education during the 1700's which can be mostly accredited to three people: Jean Jacques Rousseau, Johan Simon, and Guts Muths. Rousseau was the first person to promote education for the people and he also concluded play as being educational and stressed the importance of physical education to the development of a strong body. In the mid 1700s, Johan Simon became the first physical education teacher and stressed on the fact that physical education should be taught along with reading and writing. Simon believed physical education should include a lot of physical effort.

Guts Muths developed a series of gymnastic apparatuses and believed that very important social skills are developed through physical education. These people of that time and the things they did began to pave the road to where we are today. In 19th-century, the first indoor gymnasium was built in <https://assignbuster.com/history-of-physical-education/>

Germany and some countries such as Europe, Sweden and Germany developed systems of gymnastics that were adopted internationally. A gymnasium was also built in Finland where exercise was for the first time seen as a way to achieve physical treatment. In connection to exercise, students started to study anatomy and physiology.

Denmark was among the first countries to require physical education in schools. By the 1820s, some American schools offered gymnasium and physical education. The physical education included the development and care of the body, and training in hygiene, callisthenic exercises, gymnastics, and the performance and management of athletic games. CONCLUSION Physical education has a cultural heritage and background which started at the dawn of civilization. Primitive human beings had to be very active and physically to survive. Farming began in its primitive form and made people have more physical activity from only working in the fields.

People fitness levels changed here and they also began seeing a more sedentary lifestyle. Ancient Greek culture depended upon preparing its young men for war. Training for battle was not an option, but a prerequisite. Ancient physical education programs concentrated exclusively on activities that trained soldiers. The significance of physical education no longer concentrates solely on training soldiers for battle and ancient athletes for victories but for the wholesome development of a person. It began in ancient Greece and made its way around the world. REFERENCES S. E. Smith. (). What was the Neolithic Period?. Available: <http://www.isegeek.com/what-was-the-neolithic-period.htm>. Last accessed: 30th Oct 2012. Charles A. Bucher. (1983). Historical foundations of physical education and sport. In: <https://assignbuster.com/history-of-physical-education/>

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