

Describe the layout
and furniture of
atypical athenian
house essay sample



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In a typical Athenian Kleros (property) you would find a solid foundation of stone at the bottom of the walls. Above this there are the walls, which are made out of sun-baked clay bricks, they were not made in kilns like nowadays. The frames of windows and doors were made from wood. Some roofs were flat and others were covered in sun-baked clay tiles it just depended on the weather or personal preference. The walls of the houses were plastered (or stucco was used) just like we do now, but sometimes the outside was done too. The floors were hard, beaten earth, or flagged with stone slabs or tiles.

In Athens the weather was mild most of the year and in summer it was extremely hot and very dusty. There were only a few windows in the houses too exclude the heat and the dust, the windows didn't contain glass because they didn't have the technology to make it flat enough. Sometimes there were earthquakes. There were two methods that the Athenians used to prevent damage of properties when an earthquake struck. The first method was to build very solidly with special fastenings between the stone blocks, this method was used for public buildings i. e. Temples and law-courts. The second method was to use light materials and build only one story high, this method was used for normal houses.

Each house was built round a courtyard, which usually contained a well in the middle, if it didn't the slaves had to go and fetch fresh water from the nearest fountain or public spring. This blocked out the glare of the sun and the dust from the narrow streets outside, which helped the women when they were working outside. The house looked inward on itself so as to exclude noise from the busy streets outside. There was no front door,

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instead there was a long covered passageway leading in from the street. This narrowed towards a main door, this would have been a large wooden door with metal hinges; there was then a second door, which was just a few feet further in. This offered privacy and protection for the family and especially for the women when the man of the house was away on business because nobody could enter without being seen or heard.

Inside all rooms opened to the courtyard and some connected with each other. The first rooms that you would come to as you entered were the men's quarters or the Andron, as seen on page 5, diagram (a). This contained a large dining-room, a master guest room and some guest rooms. The walls of the rooms were often decorated with paintings of gardens and trees and the floors were decorated with mosaics, most represented mythological scenes framed in complicated borders. For decoration flowers were hung on the walls as well as long streamers of vine and ivy. If the owner was rich enough to have a room set aside as a bathroom, there would be a drain linking up with a drain from the Andron, and one from the latrine (usually placed in the courtyard), discharging into a common drain in the street, but it was not very often that people had enough money to do this. Some houses had large stone terracotta baths in their bathrooms, shaped rather like the font in a church today. As there was no drainage there were special officials whose job it was to keep the city clean or sometimes the slaves did it.

The women's quarters or Gynaikon were usually nearer the back of the house so that the man of the house could tell if she was trying to sneak out.

In the women's quarters you would find a bedroom for them and a room for <https://assignbuster.com/describe-the-layout-and-furniture-of-atypical-athenian-house-essay-sample/>

spinning and weaving materials and clothes. Near to the Gynaikon there would be the children's quarters and the slaves quarters, several store rooms and perhaps a kitchen. There was an Exedra where they could sit in the summer; they could reach various upstairs bedrooms by the stairs in the Exedra. In each bedroom there would be a chair or bench, a jug and basin, a chest and perhaps a polished metal mirror. There were no wardrobes, in fact there were very few cupboards in the house, instead there were plenty of chests, boxes and hooks to store things in or on.

The only fireplace was in the kitchen, if you had a kitchen, which was used for cooking with. Otherwise in winter a moveable Brazier was used for heating when necessary.

Occasionally their furniture was made from bronze, but mostly from wood because there was plenty of wood in the countryside i. e. Maple, Beech, Willow, Citron, Oak Cedar, etc.

The Greek chair (Klismos) as seen on page 4, diagram (a), with its curving back was very light, comfortable and elegant. The seat consisted of long interlacing thongs on which the cushions were placed. The thongs are long thin strips of leather.

The couch was called a Kline, as seen on page 4, diagram (b), it was used for sleeping on and reclining on during meals. The Greek couch often had a headboard and a low footboard, which looked like a modern bed. The mattress was placed on a frame of cords similar to that seen on the Klismos.

To us the rooms would look bare and empty because there wasn't much furniture in them. They looked after their furniture very carefully and only brought it out on special occasions such as dinner parties. There were two reasons for this, firstly there was a lot of dust from the roads because they weren't paved like nowadays and secondly every piece of furniture was hand made by the slaves so there was never a piece that was the same as another, they were unique.

Most of the furniture was dual purpose and some pieces stacked together. At dinner parties they laid down on couches round the table using their arms to prop them up. The tables only had three legs so that they could stand on any surface.

The lamps used were small round containers with an opening in the middle for pouring the oil, a spout at one end for the wick and a handle at the other end.