

What's it worth?

If you wanted to buy an amphora of fish sauce at the forum you would need to know about the value of Roman coins. Their value changed during the time of the Roman empire. The value of the coins given here are for the early part of the Roman empire.

4 asses = 1 sestertius 4 sestertii = 1 denarius 25 denarii = 1 aureus

1. How many asses are worth a denarius? 
2. How many sestertii are worth an aureus? 
3. How many asses are worth an aureus? 
4. If you bought something for two asses and paid with a sestertius, how much change would you get? 
5. If you bought something for three sestertii with a denarius, what change could you expect? 
6. If you saved up 532 asses and took them to the bank to change them what coins would you expect to be given? 
7. In AD301 you would have to pay the following daily wages to workers building your villa:

50 denarii to a stone mason, 75 denarii to the wall painter and 60 denarii to the mosaic worker.

If you employed two stonemasons, three wall painters and four mosaic workers for five days how much would it cost you? Show your working out here.



8. A scribe was paid 25 denarii for a hundred lines of best quality handwriting and 20 denarii for handwriting of a slightly lower quality. Have a look through your exercise books and assess the value of your work in denarii.
9. An egg cost one denarius in AD301. What does an egg cost today in our money? How much is a loaf of bread and other items of food worth compared to an egg? Work out their value in denarii and other coins.



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Age range

- Years 3/4 (SP4/5) up to question 8.
- Years 5/6 (SP6/7) all the questions.

Resources

A copy of the worksheet.

Using the worksheet

You may like to begin by telling the students about fish sauce. It was called liquamen or garum and is made from the entrails of anchovies, sprats, mullet or tunny fish. They are salted, herbs are added and the mixture is left to ferment for some time before the liquid, which forms the sauce, is drawn off.

When making Roman meals today (see activity **16A**) soy sauce may be used instead.

Then challenge the students to work in Roman currency and let them work through the questions.

Younger students

The students may need more help as they progress through the questions.

Outcomes

The students can:

- Make calculations in Roman currency.

Older students

In question 9 the students can extend their work and work out the value of other items besides food items by comparing their price with the price of an egg.

Outcomes

The students can:

- Make calculations in Roman currency.

Answers

1. 16.
2. 100.
3. 400.
4. 2 asses.
5. 1 sestertius or 4 asses.
6. 1 aureus, 1 sestertius, 2 denarii.
7. 2,825 denarii.
8. Will vary according to the student.