

Reliable Romans: shield



This mini version of a shield carried by a soldier of the Roman army is straightforward to make from a few craft materials.

To make the mini shield, you will need: an A4 sheet of thin card in red (or colour a sheet of A4 white card with a red felt tip pen or red paint), a strip of thin card (approximately 29 x 3cm), a polystyrene ball half (or a piece of gold or silver tissue paper formed into a ball and flattened on one side to make a semi-circle), gold paint or gold glitter, PVA glue or glue dots, and sticky tape. Optional: scissors, a pencil and a ruler.

Instructions:

1. Take the A4 sheet of thin card. If it is not already red, colour in with a red felt tip pen or red paint. If necessary, leave to dry.
2. Paint gold or cover with glue and glitter the polystyrene ball half, or scrunch up a piece of gold or silver tissue paper into a ball and flatten on one side. If using paint or glue/glitter on the polystyrene half, leave to dry.
3. With gold paint or glue, draw a thin line or border around the outside of the sheet of card (shield). If using glue, sprinkle on gold glitter and leave to dry. Gently shake off the excess glitter.
4. Now glue the polystyrene or tissue semi-circle onto the middle of the A4 sheet of red card (shield).
This is the shield boss and was usually made of metal. Its original purpose was to deflect sword blows from the centre of the shield.
5. With a strip of thin card (approximately 29 x 3cm), attach to the back of the A4 card using sticky tape at each end in order to create a handle to hold the shield by.
6. Your shield is now complete! It is a much smaller version of a shield that would have been carried by a soldier in the Roman army. Imagine you're a soldier practicing sword skills with your fellow soldiers, and use the shield to protect yourself from their sword blows.

Fun facts: The shape and size of the shield used by soldiers in the Roman army changed over time, and often depended on the role of the soldier carrying it. Oval, circular and rectangular shields were used throughout Roman history. The one we've made today was inspired by the large rectangular (and semi-cylindrical) *scutum* shield used from the 1st century onwards.