

# How they made a Roman Coin

## Step 1 – Prepare a blank coin

First, they would choose the type of metal – gold or silver. A blank coin would then be made by pouring melted metal into moulds, either disc shaped or as a long strip. The strips would then be cut into squares using shears. Finally, the blank coins would be finished by removing any rough bits.

## Step 2 – Manufacture of Coin Dies

A coin die was a stamp used to strike the coin with, this would imprint it with the design. The design would be cut into the die using engraving tools. One die was needed for the 'head' side and another for the 'tails' side.



## Step 3 – Striking the Coin

The heated coin was then placed between the two dies and then laid on an anvil (a block of metal or stone). The die on top would then be hit with a heavy hammer. This is called 'minting' and in the ancient world this was done by hand. Millions of coins were produced this way every year. Old coins were recalled and melted down to make new coins.

## Step 4 – Silver-plating

The use of silver-plate rather than solid silver was cheaper but devalued the coinage. A blank copper alloy coin was dipped into molten silver to give it a wash before being struck. Sometimes mistakes were made and parts of the image would be missing, other times the image would be on the same coin twice.

# Prices in the Roman World

Circa 1AD

## Price of slaves



Female slave	-	2,000-6,000 denarii
Music Girl	-	4,000 denarii
Skilled vineyard worker	-	2,000 denarii
General slave	-	500-1,500 denarii

Edict of maximum prices by the Emperor Diocletian AD 301

## Food

1 modius of wheat	-	100 denarii
1 modius of barley	-	60 denarii
1 sextarius of Falernian wine	-	30 denarii
1 sextarius of olive oil	-	40 denarii
1 sextarius of spiced salt	-	8 denarii
1 modius of salt	-	100 denarii
1 pound of pork	-	12 denarii
1 pound of beef	-	8 denarii
1 Amphora of wine	-	25 denarii



One Modius	=	about 8 litres	(dry measure)
One Sextarius	=	about half a litre	(dry measure)
	=	about one litre	(liquid measure)

## Clothing

One pair of fashionable shoes	-	150 denarii
One pair of woman's boots	-	60 denarii
Wool from Tarentum	-	75 denarii per pound
White Silk	-	2,000 denarii per pound

## What did people earn?

This is a difficult question to answer, but we do have parts of an announcement of a law from Emperor Diocletian (284 to 305AD) which lists some jobs and their wages. It shows that the more skills the worker had, the more they got paid.

Occupation	Daily Rate
Shepherds or farm workers	20-25 denarii plus, board and maintenance, but not bed.
A good linen weaver	40 denarii
Stonemasons, cabinet makers, carpenters, lime burners, mosaic workers, wagon wrights, blacksmiths & shipwrights (river vessels) workers of marble floors, wall mosaic artists	50 denarii
Shipwrights (sea vessels)	60 denarii
Wall painters, plaster model makers	75 denarii
Figure painters	150 denarii

Some people were paid for each item they made. For example, a top goldsmith could earn 2,400 denarii per ounce of gold worked.



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