

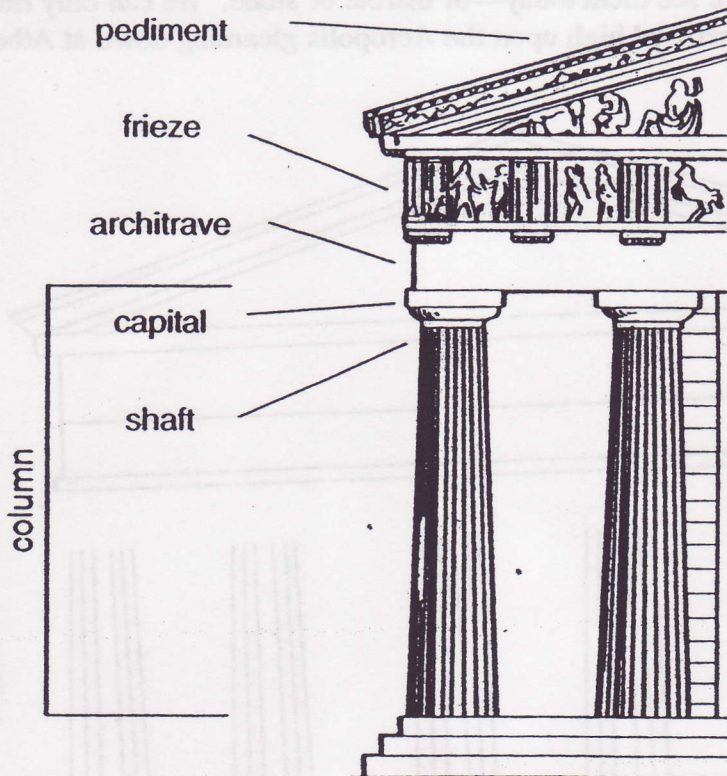
Greek Architecture

Ancient Greeks believed that their gods had needs similar to those of mortals. One of these was a place to call home when not on Mount Olympus. Therefore, the Greeks built elaborate temples as homes for their gods. The basic design for the temples was based on the royal halls of the palaces built during the Mycenaean-Period. As time went on, temples became larger and more decorative. Many temples or parts of temples have survived the ages and tell us a great deal about Greek architecture.

Early temples had a simple design with square or rectangular floors, ceilings, and doorways. In the front of the temple was a row of columns or pillars that formed a front porch. In time, pillars were also added to the back of the temple. Eventually, many temples had pillars around all four sides. These columns or pillars hold up the top structure of the building all the way around the four sides which consists of three main decorated and sculpted areas. The first area is a band called the architrave, which was usually painted with a design.

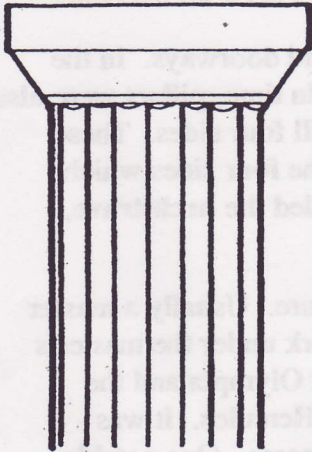
The frieze is the band above the architrave and was decorated with relief sculpture. Usually a master sculptor would design the frieze while skilled craftsmen would carry out the work under the master's supervision. Two of the most famous Greek friezes are in the temple of Zeus at Olympia and the Temple to Athena, the Parthenon. The one at Olympia depicts the 12 labors of Hercules. It was common for temples to show figures of gods or heroes in religious or mythical poses. One notable exception is the Parthenon, where the sculptor chose to depict everyday people in Athens. This frieze depicts a festival procession of people accompanying a robe to clothe the statue of Athena. Some people are on horseback and others are walking. Some are even kneeling to tie up their sandals. This frieze gives us today a "snapshot" of what life was like in Athens hundreds of years ago.

The frieze is the triangular roof called the pediment. This section of the temple was often highly decorated with relief sculpture as well.

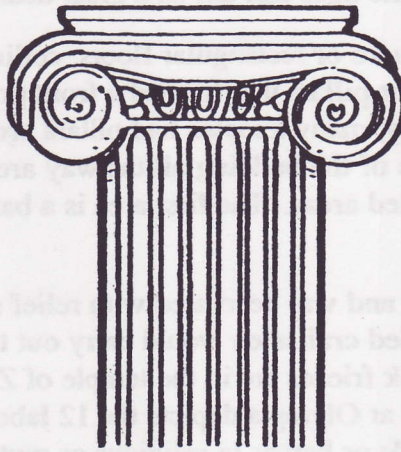


Greek Architecture (cont.)

The three main types of Greek architecture are based on the style of the pillars or columns. They are Doric, Ionic, and Corinthian. The top of the column, or the capital, can be sculpted in one of these three ways. The Doric style is simple and uncomplicated with straight lines. The Ionic style shows a pattern with two large ram horns protruding on the sides. The Corinthian style is more ornate with complicated carvings showing leaves and flowers. A Corinthian column is much like the columns found in Egyptian temples made to look like lotus blossoms and papyrus. The shaft, or main part of a column, has shallow vertical grooves called fluting. In some instances a mixture of styles was used.



Doric

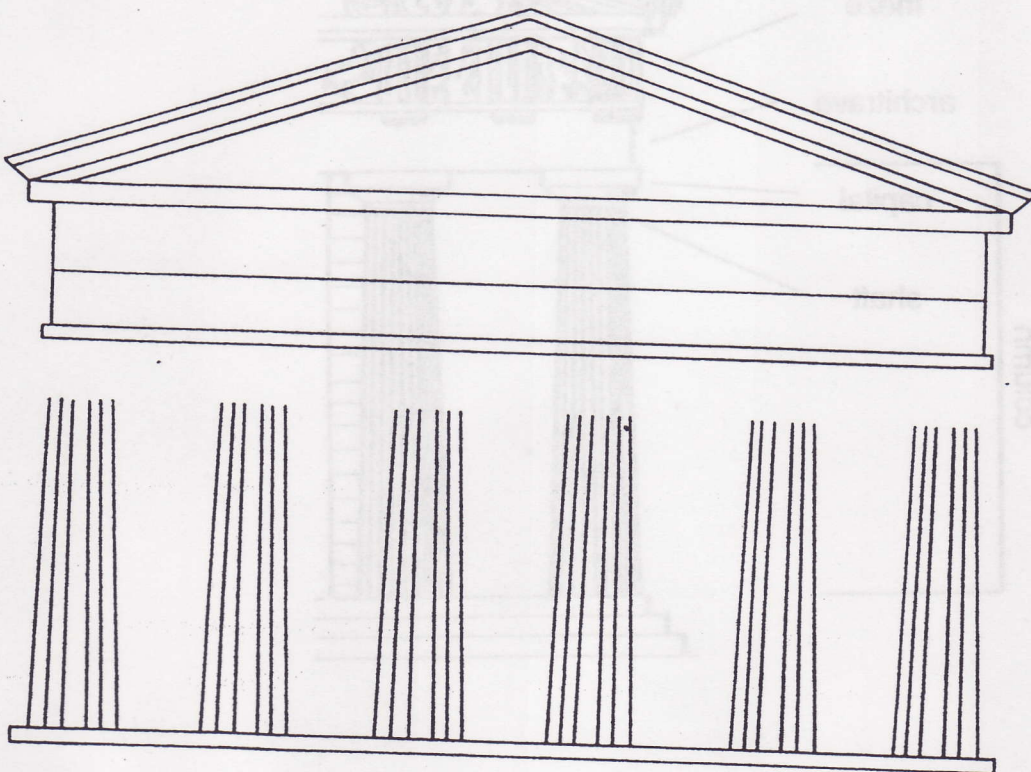


Ionic



Corinthian

Unlike their simple mud-brick homes, the Greeks liked to build their temples to the gods and other religious or governmental buildings in marble and limestone. Fortunately, there was a plentiful supply of marble available in Greece and on the local islands. What is not commonly known is the fact that the Greeks liked to paint their temples in bright colors. Red and blue were the most dominant colors, and gold and green were also often used. These colors have not survived over time, so we generally think of the Greek temples as we see them today—of marble or stone. We can only imagine these fantastic works of architecture perched high upon the Acropolis gleaming down at Athens in their original colored splendor.



Create a Greek Temple