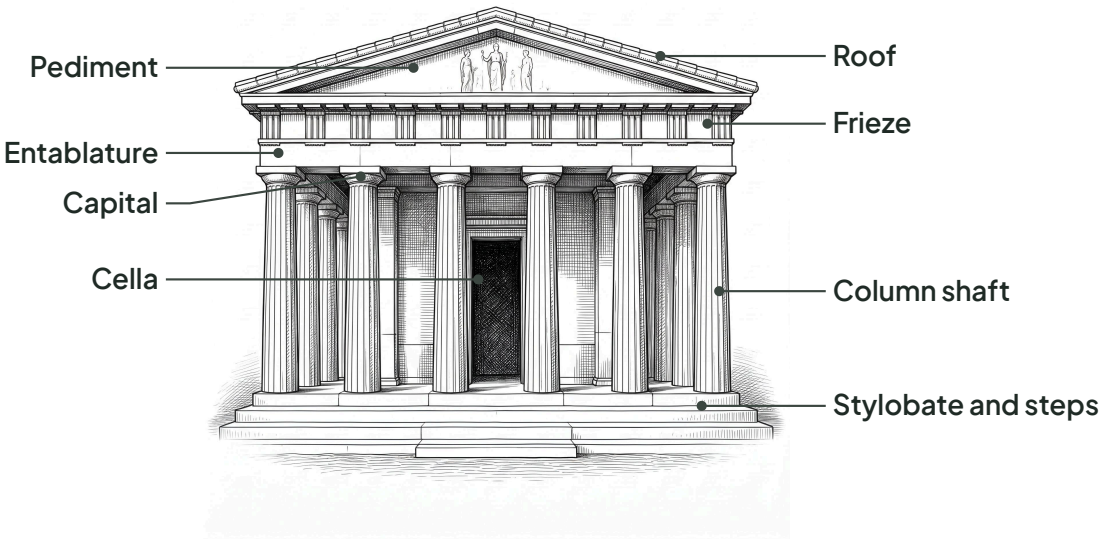
PARTS OF A GREEK TEMPLE

Greeks built a temple as a home for a god's statue, not as a place for crowds to gather; people worshiped at an altar outside. Most temples followed the same plan: a stone platform with steps, rows of columns, a beam and a band of decoration on top, and a sloping roof. Builders used three styles of columns, called orders.



Pediment The low triangle at each end of the roof, often filled with statues of gods and heroes.

Frieze A band of carved and painted decoration running around the building above the columns.

Entablature Everything resting on top of the columns: the plain beam, the frieze and the jutting top edge.

Capital The top of a column, shaped differently in each order.

Column shaft The tall body of a column, usually carved with grooves called flutes.

Stylobate and steps The stone platform and steps the temple stands on; the stylobate is the top step.

Roof A sloping wooden frame covered with clay or marble tiles.

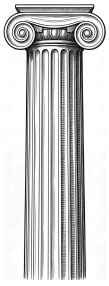
Cella The inner room that held the statue of the god.

◆ THE ORDERS ◆



Doric

Capital: Plain: a round cushion with a flat square slab on top
Base: No base; the column stands right on the stylobate
Shaft: Thick and sturdy, about 20 shallow flutes meeting at sharp edges
When: The oldest order, used most in mainland Greece and the western colonies from the 600s BC
Example: The Parthenon, Athens (447-432 BC)



Ionic

Capital: Two spiral scrolls curling down at the sides
Base: Has a base of stone rings
Shaft: Thinner, usually 24 flutes separated by flat strips
When: Began in Ionia and the Aegean islands in the 500s BC; also built in Athens
Example: The Erechtheion, on the Acropolis of Athens (about 421-406 BC)



Corinthian

Capital: Tall and bell-shaped, covered in curling acanthus leaves with small scrolls
Base: Has a base
Shaft: The most slender, usually 24 flutes
When: The newest: invented in the late 400s BC, used outside buildings from the 300s BC and loved by the Romans
Example: The Monument of Lysicrates, Athens (334 BC)