

Hieroglyphics

Egyptian writing is called hieroglyphics – a system that used pictures to represent different objects, sounds, actions and ideas. Some pictures stood for whole words.

What does hieroglyph mean?

'Hieroglyph' combines two Greek words:

- 1 Hieros, which means holy.
- 2 Glyph, which means writing.

So, hieroglyph means holy writing. A hieroglyph is a character or letter used in hieroglyphics. There were more than 700 hieroglyphs.

How to read hieroglyphs

You need to look closely to work out which way to read hieroglyphs. For example, look at the faces of the animals. If an animal hieroglyph faces right, you read right to left. If it faces left, you read left to right (like we do in English). Sometimes, hieroglyphs can be read from top to bottom.



Did you know?

- Ancient Egyptians used no punctuation, such as full stops, commas or question marks.
- One hieroglyph can stand for a whole word or sound – a picture of an eye could mean the word 'eye' or the letter 'I'.
- They were no vowels in Egyptian hieroglyphics, only consonants.
- Most ancient Egyptians could not read or write.

