

What Was Life For Ancient Viking Children?

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Like most children of the ancient world, Viking children did not have much time to enjoy their childhood. Work, learning, duties and responsibility started at very early age and there was not much time for playing games, but this does not mean it was boring to be a Viking child. It was simply different than it is today.



At an age of 10, ancient Viking children were considered adults and were expected to follow in their parents' footsteps and learn necessary skills to perform their mother's or father's job.



In ancient Norse times, the roles for boys and girls were quite clear. It was most common that boys worked on farms and girls did housework.

Viking children at the age of 10 were considered adults and they were required to learn the jobs and tasks that their parents did. The boys mainly worked on farms and the girls worked inside like their mothers.

Viking boys were expected to learn how to take care of themselves. This meant they must not only be good farmers, but also skilled warriors.

In order to learning farming, young boys were either working with their father, sent to a family relative or a respected male in the ancient Viking society. There, the boys learned how to plant, farm, raise livestock and trade.



Ancient Viking children had to learn many things at an early age. Image credit: Thor News

They were also taught to fight using spears, swords and axes. Some Viking boys, especially those of the richer families, learnt to read and write the **rune characters** which were the Viking alphabet. Any Viking who could read and write was treated as a respected member of the Viking community.

Fighting was part of life, and just like many boys today, Viking boys also enjoyed a good fight. This was an excellent opportunity to improve one's fighting skills and some hoped they could one day become great Viking warriors. A Viking boy caught fighting was not punished by his parents, unless he cause serious harm to his opponent.

The young Viking girl's life was mostly focused on house duties. A Viking girl learned from her mother and grandmother how to keep run the household properly.

The girls were taught to cook, clean, prepare meals, make yarn and weave and sew. Girls were also taught farm work and tending animals as it was their duty to run a farm when the men were away.



Stronger girls were also trained in the art of war. Image credit: Thor News

Strong girls were taught sword fighting and there were a few female Viking warriors. Archaeologists have discovered artefacts depicting Viking women carrying spears, swords, shields, and wearing helmets, are found on textiles and brooches, and depicted as metallic figurines, to name a few. Archaeological discoveries reveal the importance of the Valkyries. In Norse mythology, the Valkyries were the choosers of the slain. The Valkyries were females riding on horses armed with helmets and spears. They would decide who would die in battle and drift over the battleground to find their prey.

In old Norse times, there were no formal schools for children. Viking children could learn by listening to stories told by the elders or by practicing various tasks. How much you learned depended on your own curiosity to gain knowledge in certain areas. A Vikings child's learning was gained through real living, being a part of the community from a young age and growing through their natural roles in it.

Viking boys and girls were married away very early. Life was an experience. There was no real such thing as a formal school environment. Stories might have been told by older Vikings, lessons learned in passing, and trades would be learned by time and effort, but not in a typical school environment. Involvement in the Viking society was crucial.

Viking Children

Life for a Viking child would be a lesson in how to do many things. Farming, crafts, trading and much more were a common part of Viking life, and all lessons that a Viking child would need to learn to become part of the ancient Norse society. Viking children were expected to help out from a very young age; they would not have an education as such, or not go to a school. Instead a Viking child would learn everything they needed from their parents, their siblings and the rest of the settlement community.

Of course in ancient Norse times, the gender roles for boys and girls were quite clear, and this would of course affect what their time would be focused on.

Viking boys

Even from a young age a Viking boy would have to learn how to take care of himself, both in a job role and also from a physical role. Vikings were farmers that just happened to also love fighting, and Viking boys would have to become good at both quickly.

Working with their fathers, either as a helper to a craftsman, or as a farm hand to a farmer, the Viking boys would pick up skills and trades from their fathers and their extended families. Uncles, grandfathers, and older brothers would all help keeping the young Viking boys in line and busy.



When they were learning a trade, a Viking boy would likely get into play fights. In old Norse times, fighting was a part of life, a part many Viking enjoyed and just as boys, will be boys. Viking boys were not different, and if caught fighting they wouldn't be scolded unless they caused serious harm to another.



Viking girls

Viking girls would follow advice and guidance from their mothers of course, learning how to live in their world and masters the necessary skills required from them. The Viking girls would often shadow their mother, helping where necessary and learning along the way.

Cooking was a skill that would be essential to master, making Viking broth, brewing ale and even making cheese from goat or cow milk. Spinning weaving and clothes making were important too, sewing and making clothes, repairing old ones, and ensuring there was enough wool to keep their family warm in the cold winter months.



Education for the Viking children

In Viking times, there was no real such thing as a formal school environment. Stories might have been told by older Vikings, lessons learned in passing, and trades would be learned by time and effort, but not in a typical school environment.

All of a Vikings child learning would be through real living, being a part of the community from a young age and growing through their natural roles in it.

Typical skills learned by a Viking child

Life could be varied for a Viking child, and they would often need to learn many skills. Below are some common skills that Viking children would learn.

- How to farm
- How to cook
- How to start a fire
- How to light and refill oil lamps
- How to row and steer a boat
- Horse riding
- House building
- Animal care
- How to handle weapons



Facts about Viking Food



What Types of Food Did the Vikings Eat?

- Oats, rye and barley were made into bread or porridge - split peas were often added to the mixture.
- Goat meat, horse meat and beef were all commonly eaten - often in stews.
- The Vikings hunted to provide venison (the meat from a deer), wild boar, reindeer, hare and wildfowl.
- Honey was used as a sweetener.
- Honey was also used to make mead, a strong alcoholic drink.
- Beer was made from barley and wine was made from berries and fruits.
- Animals were often slaughtered and their meat smoked or dried to preserve it and provide the Vikings with food during the winter. Fishes were either salted and dried or pickled.
- The most common vegetables in a Vikings diet were cabbages and peas.
- The Vikings also picked cherries, apples and plums in the summer months.
- Onions, garlic and dill were added to stews to give them more flavour.

How Did the Vikings Prepare and Eat Their Food?

- Food was often prepared around a hearth located in the centre of the main living space, although some Viking dwellings had separate kitchen areas.
- Huge iron cauldrons were used to cook meat and make stews.
- Some animals and birds were roasted on spits.
- The Vikings used bowls and plates made of wood or pottery.
- They didn't use forks. Instead they used their fingers and sharp knives to position and cut their meals into bite-size mouthfuls.
- Viking families usually ate twice a day.