Ancient Mesopotamian Writing: Cuneiform

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| **What?**• Developed since the Neolithic age, writing evolved from simple pictograms.• Sumerians developed the pictogram system into a system of symbols, called cuneiform. These symbols were made up a series of straight lines, and were easier to write than pictograms.• Originally, every symbol stood for a word. This system was later changed in favour of having every symbol stand for a syllable.**Key Definitions / Terms**• *Pictogram -* pictures that represent ideas, words or concepts.• *Cuneiform -* wedge-shaped. Sumerian writing is described as wedge-shaped due to the triangular wedges which form the symbols.**Historical Significance**• The development of writing came about as a way of keeping track of inventory, but evolved into a way of communicating with other people effectively.• Writing allowed for an easier transfer of ideas and information between people, greatly facilitating the progression of civilisation.**Interesting Facts**• Writing was first developed to keep track of a person's goods for accounting purposes.• Later on, cuneiform was used for such purposes as recording daily events, and writing stories or personal letters. • Sumerian cuneiform was later used by the Akkadians, Assyrians and Babylonians.• The writing system developed by the Sumerians was also the first internationally used writing system - the Persians and Egyptians adapted it. Later on, other civilizations in the Middle East adapted cuneiform as well. • There are over 600 cuneiform symbols. Sample of Sumerian Cuneiform A Clay Tablet with Cuneiform |    |  |

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****  Illustration of how Sumerians wrote using cuneiform

**Links**

**Related Links:**
• [About Cuneiform Writing](http://www.upenn.edu/museum/Games/cuneiform.html)
• [Write Like a Babylonian](http://www.upennmuseum.com/cuneiform.cgi)
• [The Origins of Writing in Mesopotamia](http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/wrtg/hd_wrtg.htm)

**Related Articles:**• [Sumerian Dictionary to Decipher Ancient Texts](http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2002/07/0723_020724_cuneiform.html)• [Sumerian Language](http://www.crystalinks.com/sumerlanguage.html)

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