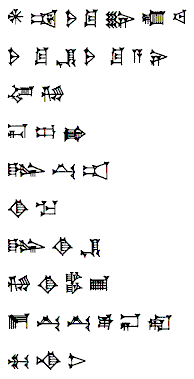
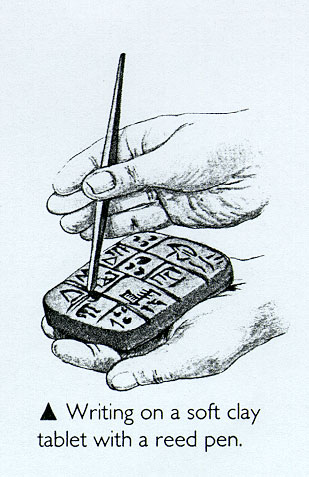
Ancient Mesopotamian Writing: Cuneiform

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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 |  |  |

**[](http://www.markville.ss.yrdsb.edu.on.ca/projects/classof2008/chong2/zheng/developmentofwriting.htm)**

****  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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The History Channel - A&E Television. Encyclopedia - Cuneiform. 14 Sep. 2006 <<http://www.history.com/encyclopedia.do?articleId=206894>>.