

# How Old Was Epicurus When He Died?

Post by “Eikadistes” of August 28, 2024 at 9:12 AM

I'm an Epicurean, not a mathematician, so I'm not confident with my numbers.

Even so, the dates and ages that Diogenes Laërtius presents do not add up (according to my calculations).

*If Epicurus was born in the early months of 341 BCE, then his 72<sup>nd</sup> birthday would have landed in the early months of 269 BCE (the 3<sup>rd</sup> year of the 127<sup>th</sup> Olympiad) and **not** 270 BCE (the 2<sup>nd</sup> year of the of 127<sup>th</sup> Olympiad). Therefore, it must either be the case that (a) Epicurus died when he was 71 (and *not* 72) during the archonship of *Sosistratus*, or else (b) he died in 269 BCE during the archonship of *Pytharatus*. Otherwise, Epicurus would have to have been born in the 2<sup>nd</sup> year of the 109th Olympiad (early 342 BCE) during the archonship of *Pythodotus* (and *not* the 3<sup>rd</sup> year [342-341 BCE] during the archonship of *Sosigenes*). **Either way**, Diogenes' propositions that Epicurus (1) was born in the “*third year of the 109th Olympiad [342-341 BCE] during the archonship of Sosigenes*”, that (2) he died “*in the second year of the 127th Olympiad, in the archonship of Pytharatus [271-270 BCE]*” and that (3) he died “*at the age of seventy-two*” cannot all be true. Diogenes is either mistaking the dates, or Epicurus' age.*

Given the clarity of the archonships that Diogenes presents, which is supported by other authors, I suppose that Diogenes made an error: **Epicurus died when he was 71 (not 72).**