

# During the time of Epicurus, who could read well enough to study philosophy?

Post by “DaveT” of July 10, 2026 at 5:25 PM

[Kalosyni](#) Thank you for the history of papyrus and writing tools etc. Very interesting. Although the topic of the literate and illiterate probably can't be resolved, I'm curious on your source materials on Epicurus' financial holdings and his income and the bearing they had on copying his work? If I remember DeWitt, in the beginning of his work he said Epicurus' father was an elementary school teacher, a profession that was looked down upon before and after the family was evicted from Samos. I'm thinking he was not wealthy, but I don't know. Also, if I remember DeWitt, he indicated that at the time handbooks were written and disseminated by him, as well as perhaps copied by his students for us to prosyletize new converts. Assuming they were on papyrus, and they were short lessons so to speak, I can understand why they didn't survive.

But the fact that we have so many examples of Cicero, and Plato and Aristotle's work has me puzzled still. I guess I can buy into the hypothesis that the Christians burned the copies, except that they had no real influence in the Roman empire until the end of the 5th century.