

Technology

The Invention of the Indoor Toilet

Roman public toilets



Water flowed along this channel into a drain.

Down the pan!

The more people there are in the world, the more we need toilets to carry away our waste. Flushing toilets are an essential everyday invention. Imagine life without them...

Ancient toilets

The first simple flushing toilets date from thousands of years ago. The ancient Indian city of Harappa, and the Minoans of ancient Greece, both had indoor toilets 4,000 years ago. They were flushed into underground drains using a jug of water or a flow of water from a stream. The Romans had public toilet blocks with rows of holes to sit over. Water flowed along a channel underneath to wash everything away.

Over 4000 years ago the ancient Indian city of Harappa and others both had:

indoor toilets

outdoor toilets

The Romans had

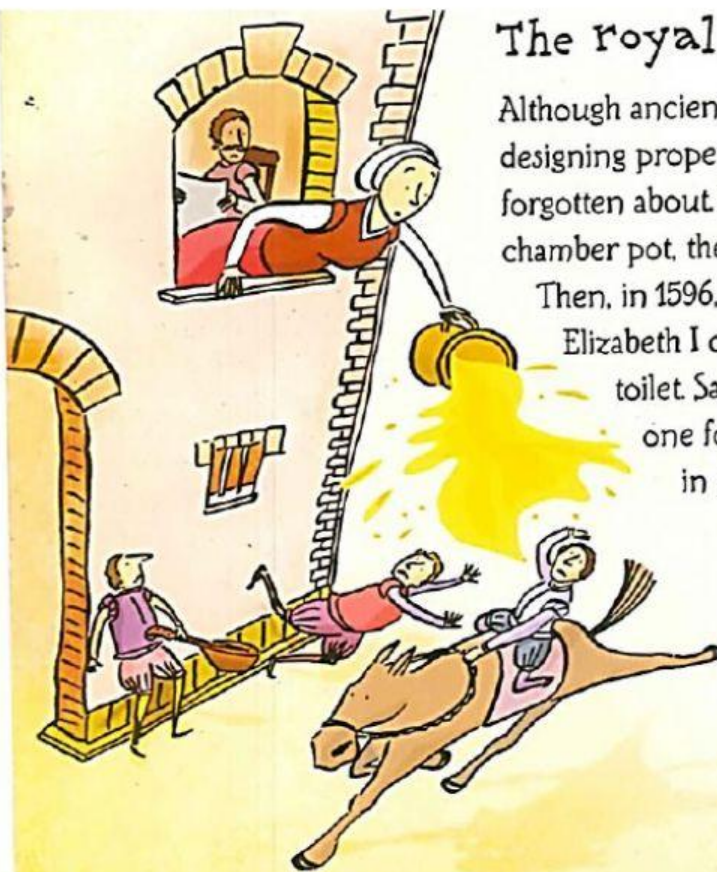
private toilets

public toilets

The royal toilet

Although ancient peoples had gone to the trouble of designing proper toilets, their inventions were gradually forgotten about. In the Middle Ages most people used a chamber pot, then emptied it into the street. Yuck!

Then, in 1596, Sir John Harington, a godson of Queen Elizabeth I of England, created the first modern flushing toilet. Sadly, he only built two – one for himself and one for the Queen. For most people, toilets stayed in the Dark Ages.



John Harington's toilet had a water-filled box or cistern, like a modern toilet.

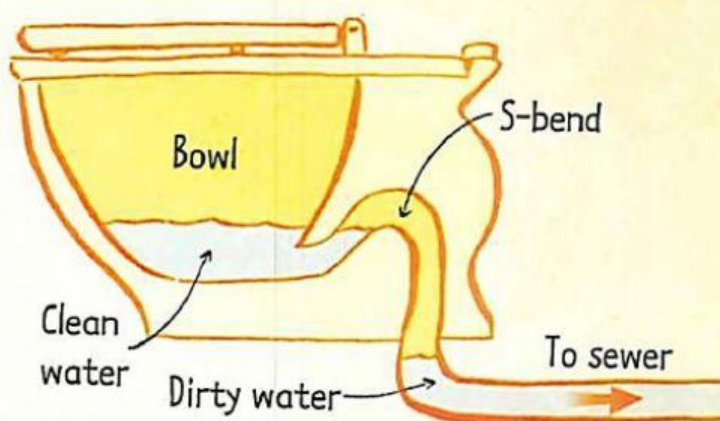


During the middle ages the toilet was made for only the:

peasants

queen

dukes



Why do you think the s-bend was used:

After the toilet is flushed, some water is trapped in the bend and in the bowl, sealing it from the sewer. The S-bend is simply an S-shaped curve in the pipe, or siphon, leading out of the toilet bowl.

Around the bend

After Harington, little happened in toilet history until 1775. Then, English watchmaker Alexander Cummings invented a toilet with a brilliant new feature: the S-bend. Before this, waste fell straight down into a sewage tank or channel – and stinky smells could easily waft back up. The S-bend used a curved pipe to trap some clean water, sealing the toilet off from the smelly sewers beneath.

From then on, toilets took off, and many inventors came up with improved versions – although modern toilets still have the same basic design, with a cistern and an S-bend.

Now you know – what is the s-bend used for:

Toilet paper

People have used all sorts of things as toilet paper – leaves, grass, corn cobs, sponges and newspaper. The first specially made toilet paper was invented in the US in 1857, by Joseph C. Gayetty. It was softened with aloe gel and had Gayetty's name printed on every sheet.

Toilet paper was first sold on a roll in 1880.

Don't forget to flush!



Name a few things people used as toilet paper before toilet paper was invented:

Who invented Toilet Paper?

When was it first sold on a roll?

Please watch the video

Do you think this is a good invention? Why?

Click here:

