

The Main Roman Denominations

One-page cheat sheet from The ABC of Roman Coins

DENOMINATION	METAL	TYPICAL WEIGHT	VALUE AND NOTES	PERIOD
Aes signatum	Bronze	1.5-1.6 kg	Rectangular cast ingot, about 16 x 9 cm; it came before true coins	3rd century BC
Aes grave (as librale)	Cast bronze	About 327 g (one Roman pound)	Cast, not struck; the weight dropped quickly	From about 280 BC
Denarius	Silver	4.5 g (211 BC), 3.9 g (Augustus), 3.4 g (Nero)	10 asses at first, 16 from about 141 BC	211 BC to mid-3rd century AD
Quinarius	Silver	About half a denarius	5 asses at first, 8 asses after 101 BC; struck only from time to time	211 BC to 3rd century AD
Aureus	Gold	8.2 g (Caesar), 7.8 g (Augustus), 7.3 g (Nero), 6.5 g (Caracalla), 5.5 g (Diocletian)	25 denarii, 100 sesterii under Augustus	Until about AD 312
Sesterius	Orichalcum (brass)	25-28 g, 32-34 mm	4 asses, a quarter of a denarius	From 23 BC until the 270s
Dupondius	Orichalcum	Less than the sesterius	2 asses; the emperor wears a radiate crown (from Nero)	From 23 BC to the 3rd century
As	Copper	About 10-11 g	16 asses = 1 denarius	Until Aurelian
Semis and quadrans	Bronze	Small bronzes	Half an as and a quarter of an as	Republic and early empire
Antoninianus	Silver, later billon	About 5 g at the start	Worth 2 denarii, containing about 1.5 denarii of silver; Aurelian's version (AD 274) carries the mark XXI.	From AD 215 to the end of the 3rd century
Argenteus	Silver	About 3.4 g (1/96 of a pound)	Mark XCVI on the reverse	About AD 294 to 310
Nummus (follis)	Copper with a silver wash	About 10 g at the start, then smaller	Diocletian's reform; roughly 4 percent silver	From AD 294
Solidus	Gold	4.5 g (72 to the pound)	About 95 percent gold	From AD 312 to 1092
Semissis and tremissis	Gold	2.2 g and 1.5 g	Half and one third of a solidus	4th to 7th century
Siliqua	Silver	3.4 g (Constantine), later about 2.2 g	One twenty-fourth of a solidus	4th to 7th century

All weights and percentages are averages and indications: ancient coins were made by hand, so every coin differs a little. Bronze coins of the fourth century are often described with size labels AE1 (over 25 mm), AE2 (21 to 25 mm), AE3 (17 to 21 mm) and AE4 (under 17 mm).