



The joust

Knights needed to practice, even when there were no battles to fight! The best way to do that was to compete in games. A day of games was called a tournament. The most exciting event at the tournament was the joust.

Ready, set, joust!

Two knights mounted their horses. They raced toward each other at full speed. They each held a 12-foot (3.7 m) lance, or pole, and tried to knock each other off with it.

BARRIER

The knights charged from either side of a wooden barrier. This was safer for the horses.

CHEERING CROWDS

Crowds cheered for their favorite knights to win the contest.

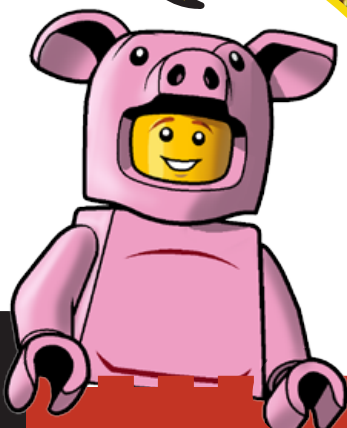
STANDS

Huge stands were built especially for tournaments.

DANGER!

The knights weren't supposed to kill each other, but sometimes they did!

Peasants like to joust, too. But we do it on piggyback! Climb on!



WINNER

The winner was often allowed to take the loser's horse, as well as his other belongings!

Hey, evil knight loser. I have defeated you. Now I can take your horse, your weapons, and your evil helmet . . .

That's fine, take it all . . . except for the helmet. I LOVE my evil helmet . . .





Castle defense

Build it!

Can you build a castle that's superhard to attack?

The enemy is on the way! Raise the drawbridge! Now no one can get inside. Steep walls are hard to climb, especially with arrows zinging through the arrow slits!

ROUND TOWERS

Early castles had square towers, but attackers could ram the corners. Round ones were sturdier.

BATTLEMENTS

Archers could hide behind tall, teethlike bricks or fire through gaps.

ARROW SLITS

Very thin windows were hard to fire into from the outside but easy to fire out of from the inside.

WALLS

Supertough castle walls were 6 to 16 feet (1.8 to 4.9 m) thick.

Stinky water

Many castles were surrounded by ditches filled with water, called moats. A moat made it tough to get close to the castle. Worse, the bathroom waste from the castle was tipped right into the moat. Yuck!

DRAWBRIDGE

Some castles could raise up parts of their bridges so that they couldn't be crossed in raids.

It's a plan, but some of these sieges go on for months, even years. You're going to need a snack with that.

We could always just sit and wait until they run out of food and surrender. Plus, I can't attack without a coffee.



Into battle

Imagine going into battle head to foot in a suit of metal! Armor kept knights safe from arrows. But it was very heavy. A typical suit of armor weighed as much as a seven-year-old child!

Move it!

Armor looks tricky to move in—doesn't it? But old stories tell how knights could actually turn cartwheels and leap onto horses while in armor!

Quick! The castle is under attack! Knights, to your posts!

Oops, I knew I'd forgotten something important.

It will take me an hour to get out of this armor and get to the bathroom!

Phew. That's a full knight's work already. And just because I had a wee problem.

Iron man

Sometimes a knight wore chain mail. This was made of thousands of iron rings. It looked like a knitted sweater, but made of metal instead of wool.

RINGS

A single suit of chain mail could include 200,000 rings!

HELMETS

A knight could see only forward. He had to watch his back!

Build it!

Make a suit of armor for your bravest, boldest knight!