

# Leonardo da Vinci

1452 - 1519



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Leonardo da Vinci was a skilled painter, sculptor, engineer, architect, and inventor. Two of his most famous paintings—[The Last Supper](#) and the [Mona Lisa](#)—are considered by many art historians to be priceless. Although Leonardo studied to be an artist, he also became interested in [anatomy](#), [optics](#), and botany, or the study of plants. He used what he learned from his studies to invent new things. Today Leonardo is remembered as one of the most important figures of the [Renaissance](#).

Leonardo was born on his father's family estate in Vinci, near Florence, Italy, in 1452. Educated on the estate, young Leonardo studied reading, writing, and Latin. At an early age he showed a talent for art. In 1460 Leonardo moved to Florence with his father.

At the age of 15, Leonardo became an apprentice to the famous artist Andrea del Verrocchio. An apprentice is someone who learns a trade from a more skilled person. An apprenticeship usually lasts only for a set period of time. As an apprentice, Leonardo learned painting and sculpture as well as how to design and build simple machines. At this time, Leonardo also began to study anatomy.

In 1472 Leonardo worked with Verrocchio on the painting [The Baptism of Christ](#). In that same year, he was accepted into the painters' guild in Florence. A guild was a group of artists or craftworkers from a particular field, such as painting or weaving. Being accepted into the painters' guild meant that Leonardo was now a professional artist. Even so, he studied and worked with Verrocchio for five more years. Then from about 1478 to 1482, Leonardo



[Last Supper](#)



[Mona Lisa](#)



[Anatomy](#)



[Optics](#)



[Renaissance](#)



[The Baptism of Christ](#)

had his own art studio in Florence. He was already showing his skill as a great artist and was chosen for many important public projects. One of these projects, a painting for a church altar, is known as [The Adoration of the Magi](#).



[The Adoration of the Magi](#)

Around 1482 Leonardo was hired to work as the court artist for the duke of Milan. Leonardo also entertained the duke with his skill as a musician. In Milan Leonardo used his talents as an artist and a scientist equally. In addition to creating works of art, he designed weapons, forts, canal systems, and a moving stage for festivals. He kept records of his many works of art, designs, inventions, and scientific studies in [notebooks](#). His records show that he began working on *The Last Supper* around 1495. He finished the famous painting in 1498.



[Notebooks](#)

Leonardo left Milan in 1499 and traveled from city to city doing work for other leaders. Then, in 1500, he returned to Florence. Three years later, the government in Florence hired Leonardo and Michelangelo to decorate the walls of a new hall for the city council. While working on this project, he also painted the well-known portrait known as the *Mona Lisa* in 1504.

In 1506 Leonardo returned to Milan and worked for King Louis XII of France. He continued his scientific studies but did very little painting. In 1512 he traveled to Rome. While other artists in Rome worked on large public projects, Leonardo was asked to do only a few jobs for the [Medici family](#).



[Medici Family](#)

In 1516 Leonardo was invited by French king Francis I to live and work in France. His job title there was "First Painter, Architect, and Mechanic of the King." King Francis I greatly admired his work and considered Leonardo a special guest. In

France Leonardo had a lot of freedom. He finished some of his earlier paintings and spent much time editing his notebooks. He also worked on essays about painting and anatomy.

Leonardo da Vinci died in 1519. In his will he left all his notebooks and many of his paintings to his friend and favorite student, Francesco Melzi. To another friend and student, Salai, Leonardo left other paintings, including the *Mona Lisa*.

