

Archimedes Encyclopedia Article

Archimedes

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Archimedes

c. 287-212 B.C.

Greek mathematician and scientist who, by improving on previous methods of exhaustion in squaring the circle, developed the first reliable figure for π . Archimedes is best known for his numerous discoveries, such as the principle of buoyancy; and for his inventions or improvements, including pulley systems and the catapult. He also worked as an astronomer and physicist, conducting studies of the Solar System and of the principles of gravity and equilibrium. A student of Euclid (c. 325-c. 250 B.C.) and Conon (fl. c. 245 B.C.), Archimedes developed the first mathematical exposition of the principle of composite movements, and was able to calculate square roots by approximation. Thus though he is known primarily for his contributions to physics and technology, Archimedes was also considered one of the great mathematical geniuses of antiquity. His work with curved surfaces anticipated calculus by some 2,000 years.