**The Sun King and Baths (1)**  
In Louis’s day, people thought a good, thick, grimy layer of filth would keep you healthy and strong! They believed water spread diseases by penetrating the pores of the skin and then infecting the bloodstream. Most people didn’t bathe more than once a year. The wealthy did change thier linen throughout the day because they believed that the linen wicked away sweat and dirt, but they still stunk. To combat the smells, the men and ladies in Louis's court would douse themselves with perfumes and powders.  
  
Ironically, Louis was so clean that he was almost fussy about it. He often bathed in a big Turkish bath in his palace at Versailles. When not in his bath, he rubbed spirits or alcohol on his skin (perfume gave him headaches), which acted as a disinfectant. And, as if that were not enough, he changed his undies three times a day! All of this cleanliness must have paid off, because Louis lived to the ripe old age of seventy-seven and was king for seventy-two years, longer than any other French monarch in history.

**Toilet Talk (2)**

Versailles apparently did have one or a handful of this newish contraption, but basically you used one of the nearly 300 "close stools" (a furniture seat that contained a chamber pot) at the palace. Some of these were placed in rooms or antechambers of their own, others were brought to you in your own room by servants, and taken away when you were finished. Of course, visitors to Versailles might also bring their own favorite pot from home. Commentators noted the stench at Versailles.

The some 300 close stools weren't remotely enough. The population at Court was *20,000*  (9,000 soldiers who lived in the town, 5,000 servants who lived in palace annexes and, at the palace itself, at least 2,000 nobles and 4,000 more servants.) The behavioral standards even of aristocrats then strike us as low and dog-like. During Louis XIV's reign the Duchess of Orleans wrote in her diary "There is one dirty thing at Court I shall never get used to: the people stationed in the galleries in front of our rooms urinate into all the corners."

**Toilet Talk 2 (3)**

A Swiss visitor, Siegfried Giedion, said of the French of Louis XIV's time that "the most elementary sense for cleanliness was lacking." Louis XIV himself was known to go to the bathroom in his coach while traveling-- even if there were female passengers. The Duc de Saint-Simon wrote of one of the Court ladies at Versailles, the Princesse d'Harcourt, "leaving a dreadful trail behind her that made the servants...wish her to the devil."  
And other memoirs and diaries give similar accounts of courtiers using the walls of the Hall of Mirrors, corners of staircases, in fact any part of the building where they were unobserved by the King. The custom at Fontainebleau was to wait until dusk and then make for a lawn outside. Here lords, ladies and the Swiss Guard would assemble, each trying to ignore the other and get on with his or her business. The pretty walks became unwalkable.

**Women in Louis’s Day (4)**

In Louis’s day, both women and men wore a heavy white makeup consisting of mercury, lead, egg whites, and vinegar.  Unfortunately, this beauty concoction was poisonous and caused ugly scars and blemishes. To hide the scars, it became fashionable for men and women to wear patches cut into shapes of stars, moons, and diamonds.

It must be remembered that while ladies had lots of layers under their gowns-- chemises, petticoats, hoops, stockings, garters—underwear were still unknown. Panties were only invented in the late 19th century. Since virtually all Western women, up until the 1920's, wore floor-length skirts and dresses, what was the point? "Ladies were accustomed to relieving themselves discreetly almost anywhere...it was a matter of standing astride some sort of gutter and gazing dreamily about for a minute or so."

**Living in the Palace (5)**  
On May 6, 1682 Versailles became habitable and Louis and his court moved from Paris to Versailles. The city would become the large city of Versailles and the palace would be the largest building in Europe. French kings continued to beautify it long after Louis XIV's death and it remained the center of power until 1789. There were roughly one thousand lords and ladies, five thousand servants, and nine thousand soldiers living there when it was first occupied. The most beautiful ladies were chosen to live in court, as were the extremely clever or witty. Everyday Versailles’s halls were filled with ceremonies and splendor, all centered on Louis. The entertainment provided not only entertainment and allowed nobles to waste their money on gambling and staying in fashion, but distracted them from schemes against the king   
  
**Strange Versailles Rules (6)**

There were thousands of little rules that had to be followed while in court. One must scratch at a door with a finger instead of knocking, bow when the king’s food came by, and speak in formal French—rather than informal French—when the king was in the room. These rules made courtiers nervous and self-conscious about themselves rather than thinking about ways to gain more power. Yet Versailles remained the height of fashion and it was the only place one could move up socially or politically. Banishment from the palace was, to some, a fate worse than death.

**A Day in the Life of the Sun King (7)**

At Versailles, the king’s day were planned out to the smallest detail. He ate meals surrounded by courtiers. The ceremonies of dressing and undressing were held at eight am and midnight—where privileged nobles stood behind a balustrade and held the king’s robes—and, as a Catholic, Louis attended church each day at noon. The church was also became a major location for gossip. After mass, Louis would spend time with his mistress until two and then go hunting. Even when he grew older and couldn’t ride a horse any more, he was carried in a chair.

**The Rooms and Gardens (8)**  
The Grand Apartments of the King and Queen, which are most well-known for the Hall of Mirrors, designed by Mansart, was built in the 1670s. The Apartments was were Louis meant to put his most prominent display of power, namely art, so as to impress visitors. The Chapel and Opera were, however, built later, guided by Louis XV.  
The queen’s bedroom was the main room of her apartment. The queen’s room was connected to the king’s by the hall of mirrors. The queen’s children were born in her room, with the greatest courtiers in Versailles present. This way the child could not be switched at birth.  
At night three thousand candles lit Versailles. The palace was made from marble, coated in gold leaf, frothing with chandeliers, and adorned with frescos on almost every ceiling. Carpets and tapestries lining the halls took months to make. Thousands of pieces of art were bought, painted and sculpted, with many of the mythological sculptures fashioned after Louis’s mistresses.  
  
**The Gardens of Versailles (9)**  
As a refuge, Louis built the grand trinon out in the gardens. In the garden, four hundred workers were constantly at work, replanting flowers—such as tulips, which could be transplanted three times a day so as to be the appropriate color for the occasion.

There were as many as fourteen hundred fountains in the gardens. Of course they couldn’t all be supplied water, so the fountains would be turned on when the king arrived and off when he left.  
Because of the water, the air around Versailles was often unhealthy. It bred mosquitoes and one August everyone at court, except Louis, got sick. Another problem was the lack of chamber pots and water to clean them, so most guests improvised, using stairways, corners, and the garden.

**Louis, Himself (10)**

When Louis came to the throne at the age of five he was under Cardinal Mazarine, living the luxuries at Palace Roual. But while in the palace he was forced to live in bare, cramped quarters with clothes that didn’t fit him. Ever since then he had intended to build a palace away from the one in Paris.At age twenty-one he ruled France himself.   
[Louis XIV](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Louis_XIV_of_France)towered over his subjects at an amazing six feet, ten inches. Unfortunately, he was only five feet, four inches when naked. To compensate for his short stature, he wore a twelve-inch-high wig and six-inch red heels. But this was one look that no one could copy. Louis decreed that only the king could wear red heels.

**The Birth of Versailles (11)**

Louis XIV attended a party at the Boule vie cont, which belonged to his minister of finance Nicolas Fouquet. While Louis was originally impressed by its splendor, these feelings quickly turned to jealousy and anger. He had heard rumors that Fouquet had been embezzling funds from the government and now he was certain they were true. Fouquet was dealt with harshly and Louis began his plans for Versailles, despite pleas for him to attend the Louvre. The same men who built Fouquet’s palace were hired for Versailles: Louis le voa the architect, Char le Brou the artist, Andre le Not the landscape designer. Versailles, which was originally a small town and the location of Louis XIII’s hunting lodge, is twelve miles outside of Paris. It was a marshland filled with woods and game, but it was without much water, soil, or beauty. The choice of location may be from Louis’s fond memories he had of visiting the area as a child.

**The Building of the Palace of Versailles (12)**

The soil of the town of Versailles was made of unstable sand, which the advisors claimed would never hold a building as large as Versailles. Not to mention there would never be enough water for the fountains. Yet work began in 1661 and the king continued to work on it for another fifty years as well as spend half of his yearly income on it every year. Over 36.000 men were needed to build the palace. Workers died everyday from malaria and other hazards. Louis’s indifference towards the rate at which is workers were dying is often taken as showing his lack of connection with the people.