

- As a punishment, Hercules was ordered to complete 10 labours set by his cousin, Eurystheus, king of Mycenae
- 1st labour: to kill the Nemean lion – its hide was too tough for arrows to penetrate; he overcame it with his bare hands and used the lion's own claws to cut off the tough hide, which he wore as a cloak
- 2nd labour: to kill the Lernaean Hydra – it had many heads, and each time he cut one off, another two or three grew in its place; helped by his nephew Iolaus, who burned the stumps of the heads to prevent them growing back, he killed the hydra and dipped his arrows in its blood, coating them in poison
- 3rd labour: to capture the Ceryneian hind – this was sacred to Artemis and could run so quickly it took him a year to catch up with it; he shot an arrow through its front feet to slow it down and then overcame the hind and took it back to Mycenae
- 4th labour: to capture the Erymanthian boar – he drove it into a snowdrift and chained it up before taking it back to Mycenae
- 5th labour: to clean the Augean stables – Augeas, king of Elis, promised to give Hercules some of his cattle if he could clean out their stables in a single day; Hercules diverted two rivers, the Alpheus and the Peneus, so that they ran through the stables and washed away all the filth
- 6th labour: the Stymphalian birds – Hercules had to drive these man-eating birds away, which he did by shaking some bronze castanets, given to him by Athene
- 7th labour: the Cretan bull – Hercules had to capture this fire-breathing bull which rampaged all over Crete
- 8th labour: to capture the horses of Diomedes – Hercules chased the horses into the sea, stunned Diomedes with his club, and fed the king to the horses; he then led the horses back to Mycenae
- 9th labour: to capture the girdle of Hippolyta, queen of the Amazons – Hippolyta willingly gave Hercules her girdle, but Hera tricked the other Amazons into thinking that Hercules was trying to kidnap Hippolyta and they attacked; Hercules killed Hippolyta and took her girdle
- 10th labour: to steal the cattle of Geryon – Hercules overcame the guards and then shot the three-headed Geryon with a single arrow before leading off the cattle
- Eurystheus was furious that Hercules had completed the 10 labours so easily, but claimed that two of them did not count: the Lernaean Hydra had been killed with the help of Iolaus, and the Augean stables had been washed by the rivers, not by him! So he set two more labours.
- 11th labour: the apples of the Hesperides – Hercules was warned that he had to kill the dragon that guarded the apples, Ladon, and that he should get Atlas (who held up the sky) to collect the apples; Hercules held the sky while Atlas collected the apples, and then Hercules tricked him into taking the sky back again