Galileo Galilei was educated at the Camaldolese Monastery at Vallombrosa. In 1581 he was sent by his father to enrol for a medical degree at the University of Pisa. Galileo never seems to have taken medical studies seriously, attending courses on his real interests which were in mathematics and natural philosophy. He left Pisa in 1585 without completing his medical degree and began teaching mathematics in Florence and later at Siena. During the summer of 1586 he taught at Vallombrosa, and in this year he wrote his first scientific book The little balance (La Balancitta) which described Archimedes' method of finding the specific gravities of substances using a balance.

He was influenced by the lectures of [Girolamo Borro](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Girolamo_Borro) and Francesco Buonamici of Florence. In 1581, when he was studying medicine, he noticed a swinging [chandelier](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chandelier), which air currents shifted about to swing in larger and smaller arcs. To him, it seemed, by comparison with his heartbeat, that the chandelier took the same amount of time to swing back and forth, no matter how far it was swinging. When he returned home, he set up two [pendulums](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pendulum) of equal length and swung one with a large sweep and the other with a small sweep and found that they kept time together. It was not until the work of [Christiaan Huygens](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christiaan_Huygens), almost one hundred years later, that the [tautochrone](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tautochrone_curve) nature of a swinging pendulum was used to create an accurate timepiece. Up to this point, Galileo had deliberately been kept away from mathematics, since a physician earned a higher income than a mathematician. However, after accidentally attending a lecture on geometry, he talked his reluctant father into letting him study mathematics and [natural philosophy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Natural_philosophy) instead of medicine.