

Archaeology Summer Camp



Lesson 1: What is archaeology?

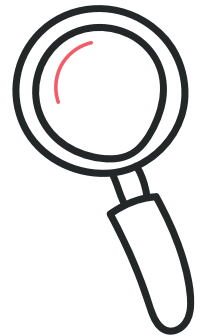
Archaeology is the study of objects and sites made by humans in order to understand how people lived in the past.

A person who studies and works in archaeology is called an archaeologist.

► What do archaeologists do?

Archaeologists look for things that past humans have left behind and examine them in order to figure out how humans in different cultures used to live back then.

Being an archaeologist can be a challenge because as they are trying to figure out how people lived in the past, they cannot talk to these people anymore, and so they have to figure this out on their own, studying every object and site they find. The things they find like pots, arrowheads, jewelry, baskets, and sometimes even human and animal remains, are like clues and different pieces to a big puzzle they are trying to solve. Because of this, archaeologists are like detectives trying to solve a mystery. Besides digging up things that humans have left behind, archaeologists have other duties and can work in many other ways. They work hard to protect the sites they study and the items they find, and they find ways to preserve them. They can also work at museums and write papers or do presentations to teach people about the things they have discovered. For archaeologists, it is important to take care of the objects that humans have left behind because it is a way of respecting them and learning from them even after they have been gone, and it is their duty to teach the public to respect them and value them as well.



► Where do archaeologists work?

Archaeologists can work in different areas like out in the field, caves, underwater or at old ruin sites. These are areas where people have found remains from past cultures like pottery or arrowheads and sometimes even old structures. Because many years have passed since then, most of these objects have already been buried by layers of soil, dirt, and other types of natural materials. Archaeologists will prepare the area and dig deep in the ground in order to find these objects and study them. These areas are referred to as **excavation sites**. Different tools are used to create these excavation sites and excavation projects can take years to end.



Activity: Create your own at-home dig!

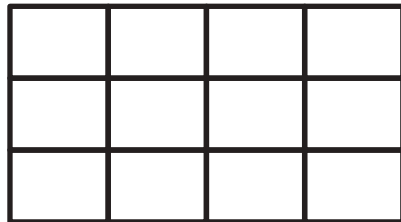
Recreate your own mock excavation site to practice finding objects just like an archaeologist!

Materials

- Big plastic bin, rectangular container, or sand box. This will depend on the size you want your mock excavation site to be. It can also be a small area in your backyard.
- String
- Tape
- Sand/dirt (can be from your backyard) Can also find at hardware department stores. Moonsand also works if you are doing a smaller dig.
- Paint brushes (the ones used to paint walls)
- Trowel or small shovel
- Small items that can be used as the objects participant will be digging out. Although archaeologists would find things like pottery, it is hard to find these things at home. Use toys or other items just to practice how to excavate.
- Paper and pencil
- Ruler

Set Up (parent or guardian):

- Fill up the plastic bin or container you are using with sand.
- Scatter the small items you chose throughout the plastic bin and bury them in the sand.
- Create a grid on top of the sand using the string: Cut pieces of string long enough to tape or tie from end to end of the bin on all sides. Cut enough pieces to recreate the image below on the bin. The amount and size of the strings will depend on the size and shape of your bin or container. Use the ruler to make sure you have the same distance between each string.



Steps (participant):

- Start off by sketching the grid on a paper. Try to make it as identical as possible.
- Using the paint brush and trowel carefully start moving the sand around in different areas looking for the objects. If you come across an object do not dig it up. Carefully use the brush to dust off the sand from the top the object but leave it where you found it.

For archaeologists, the location of each artifact is really important!

- As you find the different objects, add them to your sketch.

You can use the grid as a guide to record the exact location of each object on the paper.

Take It A Step Further!

When selecting what objects to use, try choosing objects that have some sort of relation. Examples: art supplies, a color scheme, holidays etc.

After the participant finds all of the objects and sketched them, ask them questions about their findings; shape, color, location and how they relate to each other. The idea is for them to study each object found and make conclusions about the site. What could have been happening at that location? What do these objects tell us about the site? What do they tell us about the people that left them behind?