

Create your own mini dig!

This activity can be started now, but then ideally should be left alone for at least 8 weeks.

Most of us haven't visited an actual archaeology excavation site, but some of us may have seen artefacts up close in a museum—or even found things locally when we have been out walking.

Archaeology can take all sorts of shapes and sizes! Some artefacts may be worth a lot of money, or help explain about a certain point in history. Other artefacts may seem cool to us, but actually at one time may have been just some rubbish or broken pottery to someone in the past.

We can make our own mini excavation pit—and experiment with different types of things that in 100 years people may dig up in our gardens and parks! I wonder what they will think of our artefacts.

This activity was inspired by BBC Hands on History Activities— <https://www.bbc.co.uk/history/handsonhistory/archaeology.shtml>

Please only use items from your own house, or those you have permission to use.

JOHN MUIR DISCOVER AWARD Summer Holiday Family Challenge



Part 1: Prep the pit!

Resources and materials:

- Medium to large container (min size 40cm x 40cm x 40cm)
- Enough soil to fill the container. You can use peat free compost or soil from your garden
- At least 4 different artefacts -2 from each category: (you could choose more if you want!):

ORGANIC (things that were once living) (e.g. a leaf, an apple core, a piece of paper)

INORGANIC (things that we never living) (e.g. piece of pottery, a coin, litter)

- Paper— artefact recording sheet at the end of this document
- Pencil
- Ruler

How to:

After selecting your 4 artefacts to bury, examine each one separately. You need to complete the Pre Burial section on the Artefact Recording Sheet— this requires describing the each artefact, taking some measurements and even doing a quick sketch of what it looks like now!

Moving on to your container, put an amount of soil in the container which reaches about 10cm high. Bury 2 of the artefacts in this layer.

Add more soil in and bury one more artefact in this layer.

Add a final layer of soil and bury the last remaining artefact—make sure all the artefacts are all fully covered up.

The best place to leave your container would be outside in your garden or outside your front/back door. Don't worry about the rain— all land gets rained on! And it would be best to leave it for at least 8 week! Maybe check back in October half term at the latest.



You can use a container similar to this Trug.



Artefacts that you want to bury should be a mixture of ORGANIC (like this pieces of carrot and paper) and INORGANIC (like these coins and pin badges)

Part 2. Get Digging..... (8 weeks later)

Resources and materials:

- Excavation pit (your container with buried artefacts)
- Paper—or the remaining parts of your artefact sheets
- Tarpaulin or newspaper
- A smaller tray—to put your finds in (something like a plastic seeds tray or even a n aluminium foil tray)
- Another container to put excavated soil in
- Small trowel or other digging tool
- Gloves to wear when digging
- Old toothbrush
- Pencil and ruler
- Optional:
 - Sieve

How to:

Place your homemade excavation pit on the tarp or newspaper.

Place your tray for Finds on another piece of tarp or newspaper.

Start excavating your container. Do this in layers rather than in holes. Using your trowel or other tool, remove each layer 5cm deep at a time. This is how archaeologists excavate sites—in layers.

If you have a sieve, use it to filter the soil you are digging out—just in case you miss any hidden finds!

When you discover an artefact, very carefully clear the soil from around it— careful not to damage it! Then place it in the Finds tray.

For some of your artefacts, you may be able to use an old toothbrush to clean them . However only do this if you know you won't damage the Find..

For each artefact, finish the artefact recording sheet.

Once you have completed your dig, analyse your recording sheets. Compare the details of the artefacts before they were buried and after you have found them. How have they changed? Is there a difference with the organic and non-organics finds?





Artefact Recording Sheet

Before Burial:

Date of Burial:

What is the artefact made from:

Is your artefact in one piece?

What colour is the artefact?

What time period is your artefact from?

How long is your artefact?

Describe how the artefact feels when you hold it:

What was/is your artefact used for?

Do you think your artefact will survive being buried for 8 weeks?

Why do you think this?

Draw your artefact:



Artefact Recording Sheet

After Burial:

Date of discovery:

What is the artefact made from:

Is your artefact in one piece?

What colour is the artefact?

How long is your artefact?

Describe how the artefact feels when you hold it:

Draw your artefact:

Are there any differences between the artefact now and between how you described it before burial?

Do you think your artefact would change again in your buried it for a year?