

Vocabulary for Grades 6-8

Aboriginal people – The original native people of a country.

Absolute dating – Methods used to determine the exact date (in years) of an artifact or site.
Ex: Carbon 14, dendrochronology

Anthropology – The study of all aspects of humankind.

Archaeobotany – The study of plant remains from archaeological sites.

Archeozoology (faunal analysis) – The study of animal bones from archaeological sites.

Artifact – Any object that has been made or modified by a human, for example stone tools, jewelry or pottery.

Biface (hand-axe) – A large flake of stone, which has been worked on both sides to produce a regular shape and sharp edge.

Carbon 14 (C14) - A method of radioactive dating, which is used to date all organic material: wood, charcoal, bones, plants and shells. It can be used to calculate the dates of objects up to 50,000 years old.

Datum – A clearly visible marker on an archaeological site, which is used as a fixed reference point for measuring the exact vertical and horizontal location of everything on the site.

Dendrochronology (tree ring dating) – A method of absolute dating based on the annual growth rings of new wood on trees.

Ecofact – Plant and animal remains on an archaeological site; for example shells and seedpods.

Environmental Archaeology – The study of animals and plants from archaeological sites in order to reconstruct past environments.

Excavation - The removal of soil/earth from an archaeological site in a step-by-step manner in order to recover archaeological information.

Experimental archaeology – Experiments carried out by archaeologists to see how objects may have been made and how activities could have been carried out in the past.

Feature – Evidence of human activities, which cannot be removed. Hearths, post holes and rubbish pits are examples of features.

Flake – The small pieces of rock that are chipped away when a person is making a stone tool.

Flint – A type of rock that breaks in a regular pattern, which makes it good for making stone tools.

Fossil – The remains of plants, animals or early humans preserved in rock.

Geomorphology – The study of how landscapes formed and developed.

Hammerstone – A round stone used as a hammer to knock off flint or other stone when making stone artifacts.

Hearth – A fireplace on an archaeological site.

Historic archaeology – The study of time periods for which written documents and artifacts are available.

Obsidian – The glassy stone produced by volcanoes, which has a very sharp edge.

Ochre – A red mineral which can be ground into powder, often used for decoration.

Paleontology – The study of fossil plants and animals.

Potsherd (sherd) – A fragment or small piece of pottery.

Prehistoric archaeology – The study of human development during the period before writing was known.

Relative dating: Methods used to determine if an artifact or occupation level is older or younger than another without providing an exact age. Ex: Stratigraphy

Stratigraphy – The study of separate layers, or strata, of deposits (for example soils, rocks, buildings), which accumulate over time. Under normal circumstances each layer is older than the one above it.

Typology – The classification of artifacts into groups or types, which are similar in some way.