

MUSEUM OF LONDON

Archaeology activity pack

Primary KS2 Stone Age to Iron Age



How does archaeology help us understand what life was like in prehistory?

This series of activities looks at how archaeologists record and interpret objects to inform our understanding about life in the past.

Pupils will:

- use clues to sort artefacts into categories
- consider how and why an archaeologist records accurately where things are found
- use images of artefacts to think about how groups of objects can give us information about the past
- suggest reasons why some of our activities leave traces when others do not
- consolidate prior learning about Stone Age hunter-gatherers
- understand that there were people living here before London existed.

Activity 1 Sort it!
Identifying different flint tools

Activity 2 The archaeological jigsaw
What can we learn from a group of objects?

Activity 3 Case study: Three Ways Wharf
Hunter-gatherers in Uxbridge

Activity 4 Leaving traces
Make a Stone Age tool

Activity 5 Dig it!
Archaeological dig record and
field journal worksheets

Activity 1

Sort it! Identifying different flint tools

Introduction

Begin by showing your pupils a selection of brushes; a toothbrush, a dustpan and brush, a hairbrush, a paintbrush and a floor brush.

Ask pupils:

What do all these objects have in common?

What is each one is used for?

Although all the objects are brushes, they are all used to perform different tasks. When an archaeologist examines flint artefacts, they can tell which task each flint was used for, even though all the objects are made from the same material.

When a site is excavated, a team of archaeologists work out what each object was used for so that they can understand what people were doing there in the past. They do this by organising the objects into groups; arrowheads, tools for cutting and tools for scraping animal hides for example.

Prehistoric people were experts at creating tools from flint by a process called **flint knapping**. They could work fast and make lots of different tools using just one original piece of flint. Sometimes they even recycled old tools, and made new smaller tools from them.

Flint was used for all sorts of different purposes, because it was hard and sharp.

Flint is the most common material to survive from prehistory. Can anyone guess why?

Activity

Provide each group with a set of mystery flint cards and sorting sheets. Their task is to work together as archaeology detectives to find out which tool is which.



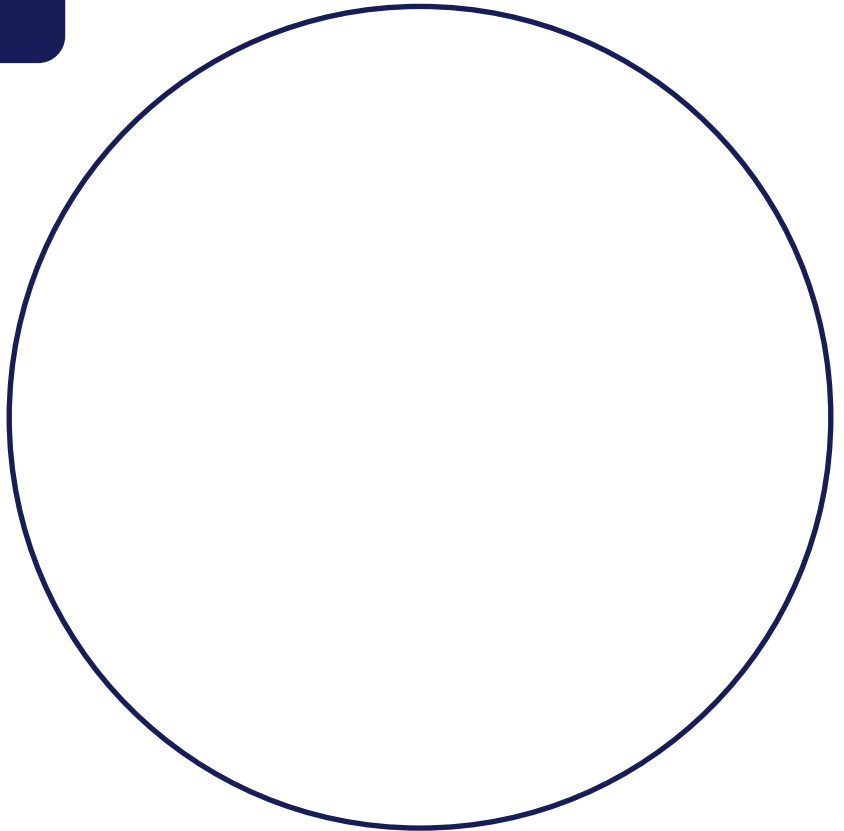
f



core

Can you find me?

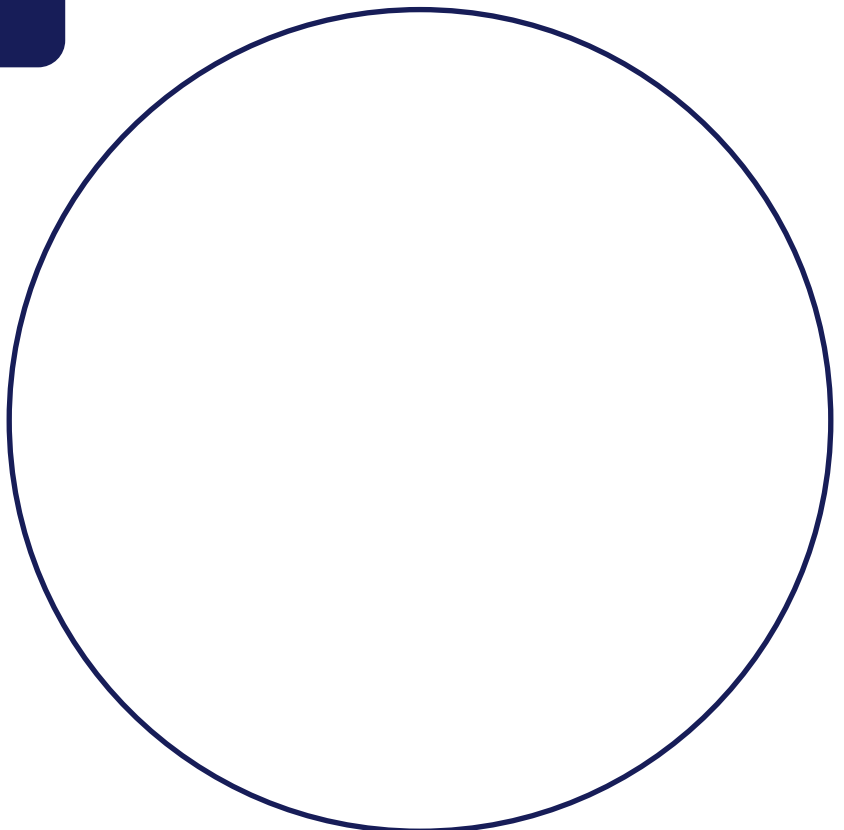
- 🔍 I am the centre of the flint
- 🔍 I am chunky, with ridges and ripples on my surface
- 🔍 Flakes have been knapped from me, can you see where?



blade

Can you find me?

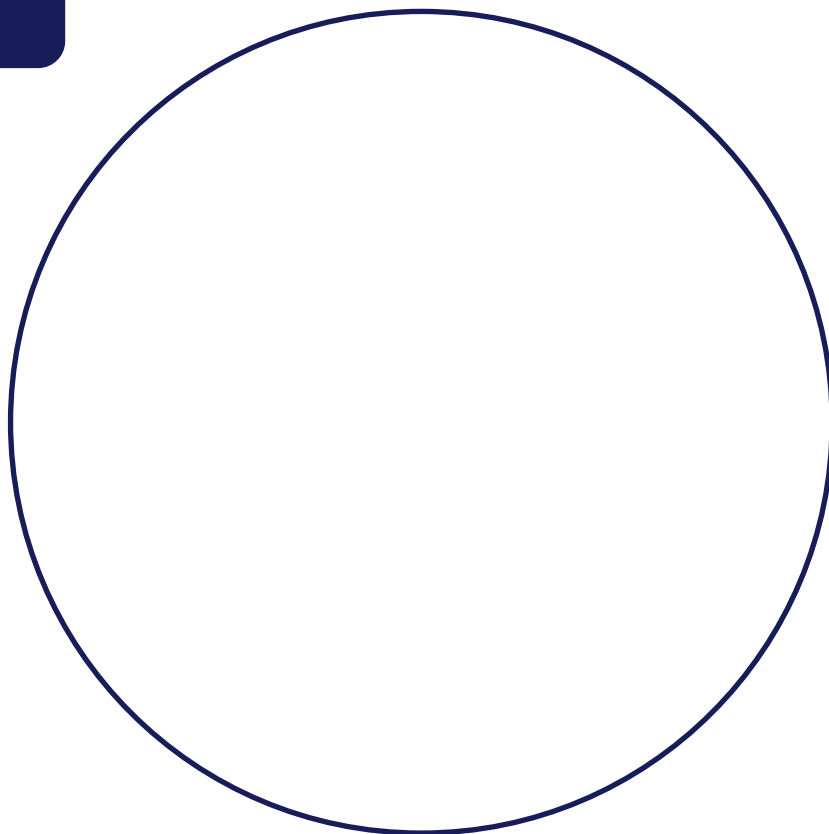
- 🔍 I am longer than I am wide
- 🔍 I was probably used for cutting, so might have one sharp, thin edge



arrowhead

Can you find me?

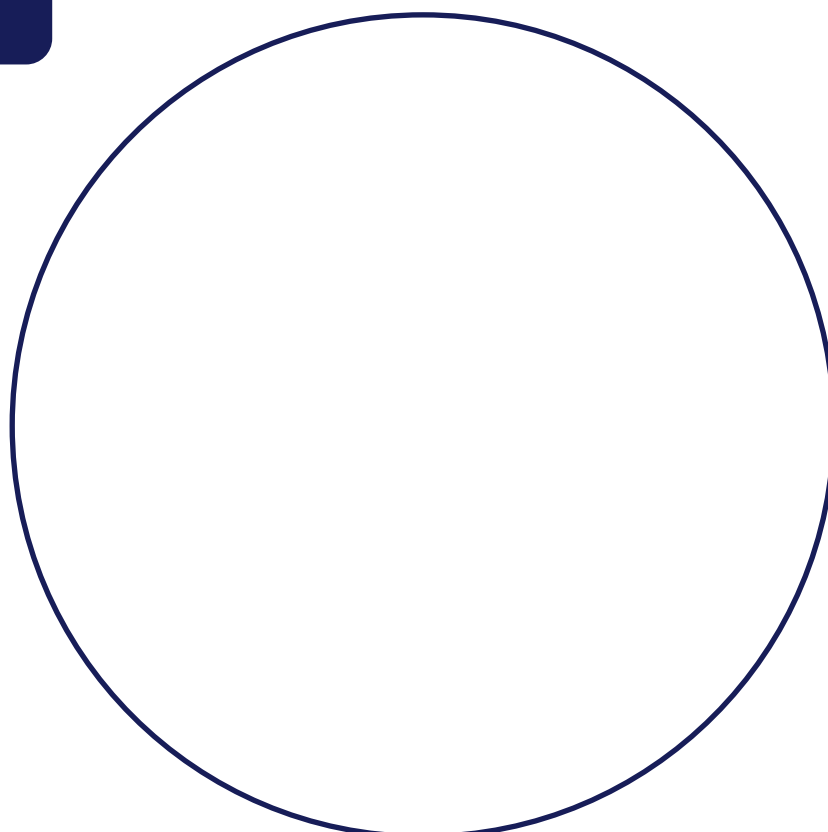
- 🔍 I am small and triangular
- 🔍 I have at least one sharp point



burnt flint

Can you find me?

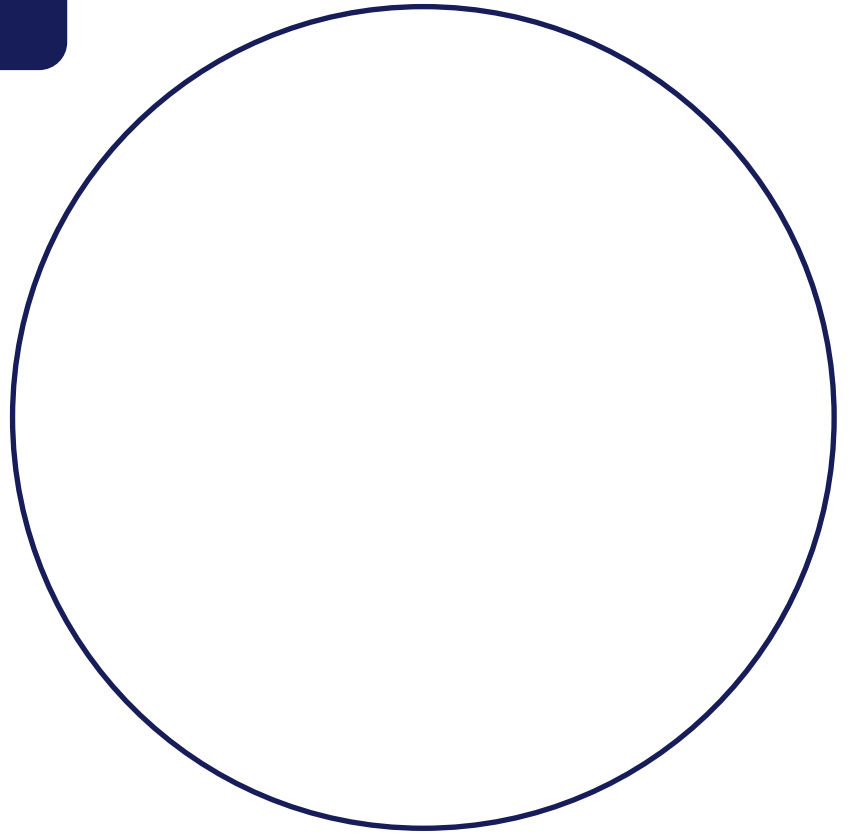
- 🔍 I am white
- 🔍 I am covered in cracks



scraper

Can you find me?

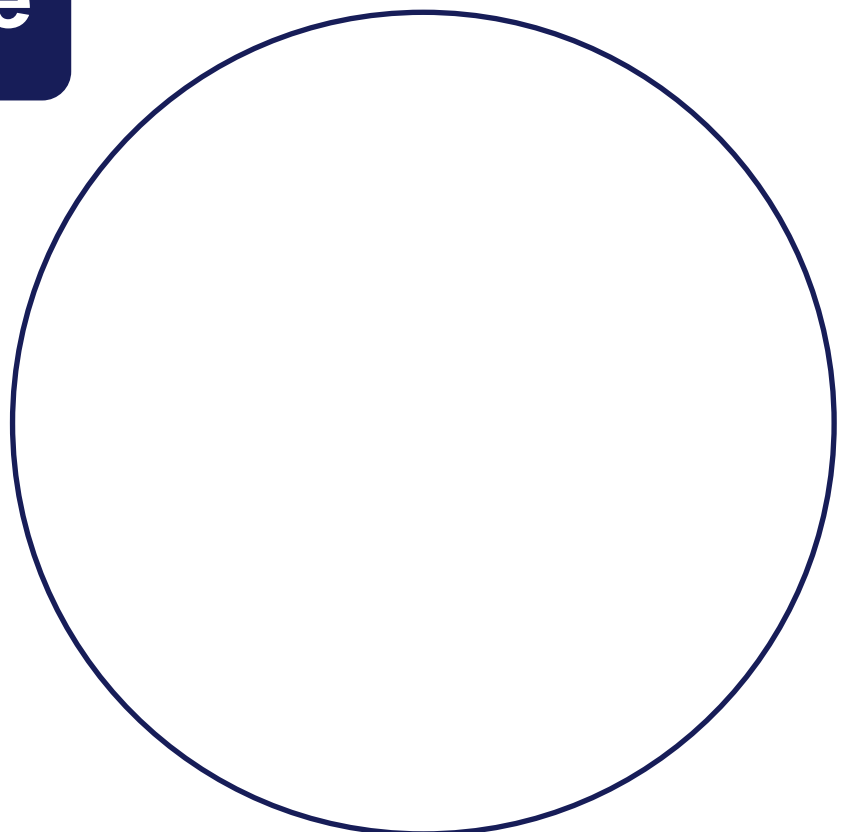
- 🔍 I am used to scrape animal skins so have one rounded edge
- 🔍 I am thicker than a blade or an arrowhead



hammerstone

Can you find me?

- 🔍 I am round and heavy
- 🔍 I am rough
- 🔍 I might be flint but I might be a different kind of stone





scraper



core



burnt flint



hammerstone



arrowhead



blade

Activity 2

The archaeological jigsaw

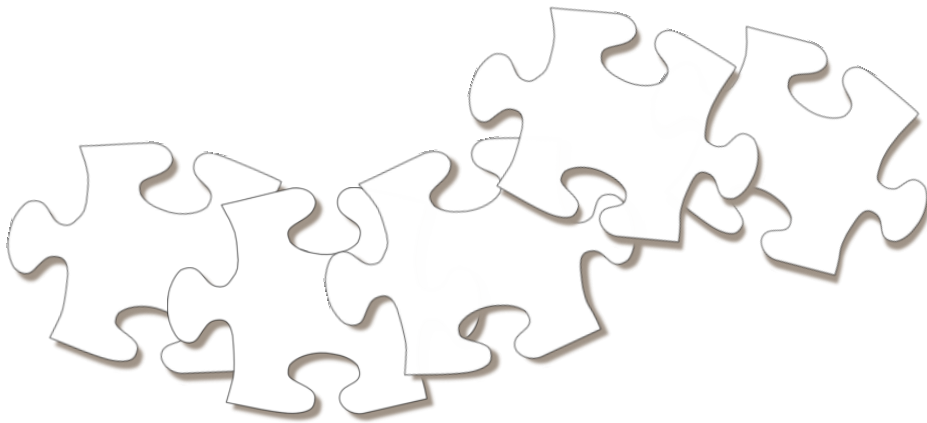
What can we learn from a group of objects?

Provide the pupils with a single piece of a jigsaw (one that they haven't seen).

Ask them to think about:

- what they can tell from their piece
- what questions they would like to ask to find out more.

Provide extra pieces to each group and repeat the activity. Ask the class to share information with each other to suggest what picture might be on the jigsaw.



Activity

Archaeologists piece together clues to form a picture about what life was like in the past. Flint is one of the most common materials that survives from prehistory. Ask pupils to consider what materials may also have been used but didn't survive.

Ask pupils to draw a picture of themselves in the clothes they are wearing including any objects they have with them, for example a pencil case.

From the drawing make a list of all the things that might survive 5000 years into the future (skeleton, plastic buttons, metal zips).

Ask pupils:

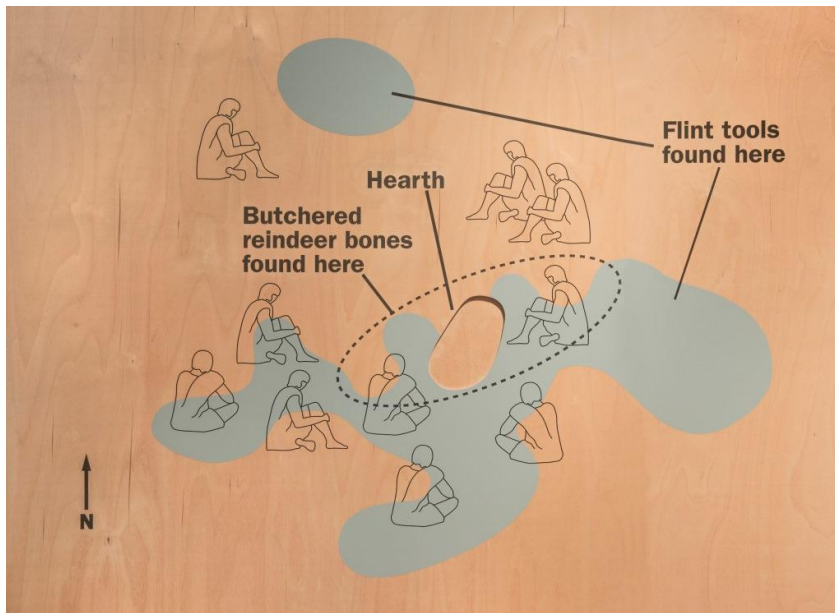
**What would a person in the future learn about us
from the things we leave behind?**

Activity 3

Case study: Three Ways Wharf Hunter-gatherers in Uxbridge

Until around 6500 BC Britain was connected to the rest of Europe via a large expanse of land known as Doggerland. Groups of hunter-gatherers moved in and out of Britain following animals and setting up seasonal camps.

At Three Ways Wharf in Uxbridge, archaeologists found and meticulously recorded every scrap of flint and animal bone. Their findings revealed that the site had been used as a camp in the late Ice Age (10,000 – 9500 BC) and then again, centuries later when the weather was much warmer (8500 – 8000 BC).



Their finds included antlers, animal bones and scatters of flint. The scatter pattern created by the flint suggests that a group of people sat together, around a hearth, over a number of days.

How can they tell?

The archaeologists discovered flint cores, from which smaller pieces of flint called microliths would have been knapped to create blades and arrow tips. They were able to match the microliths to the cores to show the scatter created by individuals. Burnt shards of flint tell us that the group were sat around the fire during this activity in a semicircle. Animal bones tell us which animals were being hunted, and flint scrapers (used to prepare animal skins) help us to understand the other activities that may have been going on in the camp.

Evidence of later activity at Uxbridge indicates that a community of up to 20 people would have gathered around the hearth during the late winter or early spring. People would probably have drawn on a rich tradition of oral storytelling and beliefs about hunting magic. Tasks including making tools and working hides were probably allocated on the basis of age, skill and kinship.

Activity

Using the case study as inspiration, ask pupils to imagine they are a reporter writing an article or presenting a news item direct from an archaeological dig.

As part of their article/news report ask pupils to:

- talk about the process of unearthing the objects
- explain which objects have been found and their significance
- suggests reasons why archaeologists look at all the objects discovered at a site as a group so the reader/listener understands what can be learnt by looking at site level archaeology
- consider which materials survive and which don't
- use prior knowledge to draw conclusions about the hunter-gatherer lifestyle.

Activity 4

Leaving traces

Make a Stone Age tool

The hunter-gatherer groups that set up camp at Three Ways Wharf in Uxbridge sat around the fire when they made their tools. Archaeologists learnt about their lives by looking at the traces they left behind.

Share the case study about Three Ways Wharf and think about all the different artefacts found at the site. Explain to the children that they are going to be groups of hunter-gatherers preparing their tools for a hunt. Split the class into smaller groups, each sat around a large sheet of paper. Mark out a grid of coordinates on the paper and draw or create a pretend fire in the middle.

Provide each child with a bar of soap and some cutting tools (table knives or tools for modelling clay). Try to use a range of different coloured soaps so that the children can identify their shavings on the grid.



When the children have finished, look at the different coloured shavings. Record the different colours on a grid so that the children can see the scatter pattern for each individual who sat around the fire.

Display your soap flakes, cores and scrapers as part of your class prehistory museum display.



Health and safety

Please be aware that this activity may not be suitable for children with allergies or skin conditions. Please consult your school's own health and safety policy before conducting this activity.

Activity 5

Dig it!

Archaeological dig record sheet and field journal

There are a range of ways to recreate a mini archaeological dig; try using sand trays, a paddling pool or an unused patch of land in the school garden. Use trowels and brushes to find artefacts and carefully record on a grid where each object was found.

Use the archaeological dig record sheet and archaeology field journal to record and analyse finds.





Archaeological dig record sheet

Dig carefully to find prehistoric artefacts. Record the position of each find on your grid and place each artefact in a plastic bag. Label each bag with the grid reference of where it was found.

	A	B	C	D
1				
2				
3				
4				

Archaeologist's name:

Date of dig:



Archaeology field journal

Use this sheet to record your observations and ideas about the artefacts you have found.

Description (colour, shape, patterns, texture):

Materials (what is it made from?):

What do you think it was used for? Who do you think made it?

How old do you think it is? Why?

What questions would you ask to find out more about this object?

Use this space to draw a picture of your artefact

A large, empty rectangular box with a black border, intended for drawing a picture of the artefact.

Look closely using a magnifying glass and draw the details you can see

A large, empty rectangular box with a black border, intended for drawing details of the artefact using a magnifying glass.

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