



EduTrend Contents

W4C · HISTORY & ARCHAEOLOGY · PRIMARY

Mini Dig

Excavate, record and interpret a layered site

Ages 8–11

Level: Developing

60 minutes

Groups of 4 · up to 30

Activity 02

Inside: activity at a glance · step-by-step session plan · facilitator notes · 3 pupil worksheets · assessment checklist

ACTIVITY 02 · AT A GLANCE

Mini Dig

Groups excavate dig boxes with layers of sand, soil and gravel containing buried finds. Working like archaeologists, pupils dig layer by layer, record each find on a grid and use the layers to work out which objects are older.

Learning outcomes

By the end of the session pupils can:

- excavate carefully, one layer at a time;
- record the position and layer of each find on a grid plan;
- use the principle that lower layers are usually older to put finds in order;
- suggest what the finds tell us about the people who left them.

KEY WORDS

archaeology · excavation · layer · stratigraphy · artefact · find · grid · record · context

CURRICULUM LINKS

History: how we find out about the past from sources. Science: rocks and soils. Maths: coordinates. C3 Framework, Dimension 3: gathering sources.

1

QUESTION

What do we want to know?

2

FIND

Gather sources

3

OBSERVE

Look closely

4

INFER

What does it suggest?

5

CHECK

Compare sources

6

EXPLAIN

Tell the story

Materials (per group)

- Dig box: a plastic tub or crate with 3 layers (gravel, soil, sand), each with 3–4 buried finds
- String and pegs or tape to make a 4 × 4 grid over the box
- Spoons, paintbrushes, lolly sticks, trays, sieves
- Small labelled bags or pots for finds
- Gloves, aprons
- Worksheets 1, 2 and 3

Before the session

- Make one dig box per group. Put “older” finds (clay pot pieces, a stone tool shape) in the bottom layer and “newer” finds (a plastic button, a modern coin) at the top.
- Photograph each layer as you build it so you have an answer key.
- Fix a string grid over each box and label columns A–D and rows 1–4.
- Cover tables and prepare a hand-washing station.

SAFETY

Use clean play sand and bagged compost. Gloves on; wash hands afterwards. No glass: use sanded clay pieces.

ACTIVITY 02 · SESSION PLAN

Step by step

Insist on slow, careful digging. The recording matters more than the number of finds.

Time	What happens	Say or ask
0–10 min Hook	Show a photo of a real excavation. Ask why archaeologists dig slowly and draw everything.	<i>"What would we lose if we just dug a hole?"</i>
10–20 min Roles	Assign digger, recorder, bagger and photographer. Model brushing and recording one find.	<i>"How will we know exactly where it came from?"</i>
20–40 min Excavate	Groups remove the top layer, record finds by grid square and layer, then continue to layers 2 and 3.	<i>"Which layer are you in now? How can you tell?"</i>
40–50 min Interpret	Groups line up finds from deepest to shallowest and decide which are oldest.	<i>"Why is the bottom layer usually the oldest?"</i>
50–60 min Report	Groups share one story about the site and complete Worksheet 3.	<i>"What can't the finds tell us?"</i>

CHALLENGE CARD (print or copy onto the board)

Excavate your site layer by layer, record where every find came from, and use the layers to explain which objects are oldest.

ACTIVITY 02 · FACILITATOR NOTES

The history in brief

Layers of soil and rubbish build up over time, so in an undisturbed site the lowest layer is usually the oldest. This idea is called stratigraphy. An object's exact position, or context, is as important as the object itself: once it is dug up, its context is lost unless it has been recorded.

Archaeologists use grids so that every find can be plotted on a plan. Finds are bagged and labelled with their grid square and layer. Real sites can be disturbed by animals, pits or building work, so archaeologists look for evidence of disturbance before deciding what is older.

Common ideas to listen for

- "Archaeologists dig for treasure." They look for evidence of everyday life; a broken pot can be more useful than gold.
- "Deeper always means older." Pits and burrows can move objects; the layers must be undisturbed.
- "Archaeology is about dinosaurs." That is palaeontology; archaeology studies people.

Adapting the activity

Support

Use a box with two layers and three finds, with a pre-drawn grid showing the squares.

Stretch

Add a "pit" cut through the layers containing a modern object, and ask pupils to spot and explain the disturbance.

WORKSHEET 1

Finds register

Name: _____

Class: _____ Date: _____

Record every find before it goes into a bag.

Finds

Find no.	Grid square	Layer	Description	Material
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				
6				
7				
8				

WORKSHEET 2

Site plan

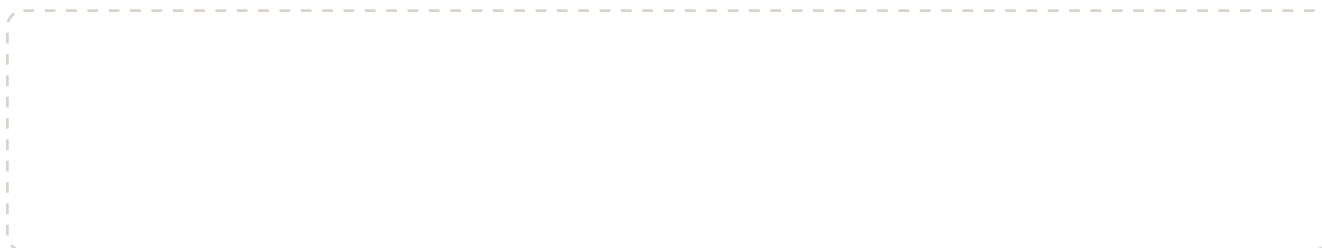
Draw the grid and mark where each find was found.

Plan of the dig box



Label columns A–D and rows 1–4. Write the find number in the right square.

Layers seen from the side



Draw and label the three layers.

WORKSHEET 3

What the site tells us

Use your finds and layers as evidence.

Oldest to newest

List your finds from oldest to newest.

Our story of the site

Who might have used this place, and what did they do there?

Something we cannot know

FOR THE TEACHER

Assessment checklist

Use during the session. One sheet covers up to eight pupils; copy as needed.

Pupil	Excavates and records carefully	Uses layers to order finds	Makes a reasoned interpretation

Suggested codes: W = working towards · E = expected · G = greater depth

ABOUT THIS ACTIVITY

Mini Dig is a sample activity from the EduTrend Contents W4C History & Archaeology programme (primary, level: developing). Every activity in the programme follows the same format: a practical challenge, a clear session plan, facilitator notes and ready-to-print worksheets, so that teachers, club leaders and parents can run it without extra preparation.

Full 15-, 20- and 32-week programmes are available from EduStore at edutrend.org.

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