

Glossary of Archaeological Terms


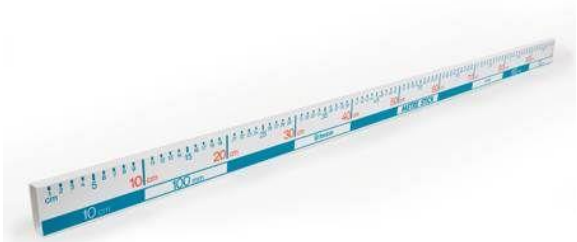


Archaeology	The study of THINGS related to PEOPLE in the PAST
Formation Processes	Processes affecting the way in which archaeological materials came to be buried, and what happened thereafter. Cultural formation processes include the deliberate or accidental activities of humans; natural formation processes refer to natural or environmental events which govern the burial and survival of the archaeological record (3).
Carbon Dating	Radiocarbon dating is a technique that can be used to determine the dates of human remains, animals and plants up to 40,000 years old! (1)
Stratigraphy	The study of the deposition of layers of earth/soil/peat etc., one above the other. The layers should provide a relative chronological sequence, with the earliest at the bottom and the latest at the top.
Micromorphology	Micromorphology is the branch of soil science that is concerned with the description, interpretation and the measurement of components, features and fabrics in soils at a microscopic level (4).
Domestication	For more than 10,000 years, humans have been selectively breeding plants and animals for particular traits. Cattle were among the first animals to be domesticated, and early people used them for traction, meat, milk, and hides (1).
Dental Calculus	Also known as tooth tartar, dental calculus is the only part of your body that fossilises while you are alive. It entraps food and bacteria, and it can be used to reconstruct health and diet (1).
Hunter-Gatherers	A collective term for the members of small-scale nomadic or semi-sedentary societies, whose subsistence is based mainly on hunting game and gathering wild plants and fruits (3).

Taphonomy	The study of processes which have affected organic materials such as bone after death; it also involves the microscopic analysis of tooth-marks or cut marks to assess the effects of butchery or scavenging activities (3).
aDNA	Ancient DNA is DNA isolated from ancient specimens.
Processual Archaeology	An archaeological theory centring around the idea that 'archaeology is a science'. Processual archaeologists emphasize quantitative and scientific methods for collecting material remains and discovering trends in the past.
Post-Processual Archaeology	This is an umbrella term for many different kinds of archaeology, including feminist archaeology, post-colonial archaeology, phenomenology, and more. Post-processual archaeologists believe that processual archaeology does not focus enough on people in the past and is too quick to blame change on external factors, such as the environment.
Post-Colonial Archaeology	Archaeology conducted to critically reassess our biases in understandings of colonial societies and to challenge the legacies of colonial power structures in the present.
Feminist Archaeology	Highlights issues of gender and sex in archaeological interpretation and aims to reassess traditional biases in interpretation which had generally privileged male histories.
Cultural-Historical Archaeology	An archaeological interpretation largely dating to the late 19th and early 20th century which focused on categorising past societies into distinct groups or 'cultures', defined by particular assemblages of material culture.

Archaeological Disciplines

Archaeological Science	Using scientific methods and cutting-edge techniques to study questions about the human past (1).
Zooarchaeology	Looking at animal remains from archaeological sites to help reconstruct human diets as well as the environment.
Osteoarchaeology	The scientific study of human skeletons excavated from archaeological sites. It can tell us about the health, lifestyle, diet, mortality and physique of people in the past. It may also be able to shed light on genetic relationships and movement of people (2).
Museum Studies	Explores the history of museums, as well as the activities they engage in, including curating, preservation, public programming, and education.
Ethnoarchaeology	Helps archaeologists to reconstruct past cultures by studying the material and non-material traditions of modern societies.
Heritage Studies	Helps to preserve and understand cultural heritage through artefacts (tangible heritage) as well as practices, knowledge and skills (intangible heritage).
Geoarchaeology	An area of study that uses the methods and concepts of the earth sciences to examine processes of earth formation, and soil and sediment patterns (3).
Historical Archaeology	The archaeological study of historically documented cultures (3).

Archaeological Tools

Trowel	
Metre Stick	
Shovel	
Spade	

Brush	
Sieve	
Mattock	

References

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3. **Renfrew, C and Bahn, P.** *Archaeology: theories, methods and practice.* London : Thames and Hudson, 1991.
4. **Bullock, P, et al.** *Handbook for soil thin section description.* s.l. : Waine Research, 1985.

Thank you to Isobel Coats and Martha Ground for their contribution