

## Activity 3 (Archaeology)



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Learning and Outreach Role supported by



### Mini 'Dig' Box

Suitable for ages 5 plus with some adult help.

#### You will need

##### For the making

Seed tray or shoe box  
Soil and/or sand  
Fossils or shells and stones  
Some old or interesting coins/pottery  
Food bones (I saved some chicken ones)  
Little old fashioned toys  
(soldiers/marbles/dominoes)

##### For the excavating

Trowel or a variety of spoons  
Wooden tools (lolly sticks, cocktail sticks etc)  
A clean paint brush  
Extra boxes/containers (one for excavating soil into, one for sieving into and one for putting finds in)  
Sieve

This sheet will show you **how to create** a mini archaeological dig AND **how to excavate** one using the tools and skills employed by real archaeologists!

We will build up layers of sand and soil to replicate the **stratigraphy** of a dig site; this is the analysis of the order and position of layers of archaeological remains and is a bit like a cake. Yum!

By placing relevant artefacts on each layer for discovery, we can think about what objects are made of, how they change when they are under soil and what they can tell us about the time that they come from. **The deeper you dig the further back in history you go!**



**Layer 1** - (Bottom of tray or box) Place sand and stones (to simulate 'bedrock') and some fossils if you have them, shells would work too. This is the earliest/most historic layer. Cover with soil. Each soil layer should be about 1-2cm deep; you just need a very thin sand layer, like the icing in the cake above.

**Tip** - Use a water spray bottle to dampen each layer as you go, this makes the layers more defined and easier to excavate.



**Layer 2** - Sand and broken pottery, this can represent human history c1000 to 100 years ago. Consider using one object broken into pieces that can be reconstructed at the end. An old terracotta garden pot would work – you could even draw on Pictish symbols or Roman patterns, just take care with jaggy edges!



**Layer 3** – Sand layer plus some old toys (marbles/toy soldiers/dominoes) and some coins with suitable dates on them. Cover with soil.



**Layer 4** - Sand and bones, in this layer, if you can include a fast food sauce sachet or napkin alongside, you can explore how these evidence what the bones may be and where/when they are from. Cover with soil.



**Top Layer** – Your tray or box should now be pretty much full and quite heavy - top off with some leaf litter and moss. If you are using a cardboard box be careful that the base doesn't get soggy and fall out!

#### **OTHER IDEAS**

- Bury small stones with letters or words on them which spell out a word or phrase to put together once you've found them all
- Bury a variety of rubbish – apple cores, crusts in foil, plastic sweetie wrappers, paper tickets etc. – and leave for 2-3 weeks. What can you see when you dig them up? How have things degraded (or not)? What information can you still read?
- Use plastecine and stones to build the footprint or a castle or settlement in the base of your box. Once buried you can sew cress to see how what's below the surface affects what grows on top. These are called cropmarks.
- If you have lots of coins why not bury them? Who can find the oldest or the one from furthest away?! Great if you are doing competitive digging!



#### **TO EXCAVATE:**

Using the trowel or spoons, carefully remove the soil in your box layer by layer – you should be able to see definite layers. The soil that you have removed should be sieved through to make sure that you haven't missed any little pieces.

Clean up any finds with your paintbrush and collect them in a clean container.

Perhaps you could write labels and create your own museum display of archaeology?

We would love to see!

#elginmuseumfromhome