



Archaeology

Scouts BSA · STEM

Name

Started

Completed

Archaeologists are detectives of the past, using clues left in the ground to learn how people lived long ago. This badge teaches you how sites are found, dated, and protected. You might even get to help with a real dig.

Requirements

Every official requirement, in plain language. Check the official wording when you sign off (scouting.org/merit-badges/archaeology/). Tips and examples are ideas, not extra requirements.

- ☐ **1** Explain what archaeology is and how it compares with and connects to fields like anthropology, geology, paleontology, and history; explain how it differs from collecting artifacts or hunting for treasure

Tip: Make a quick web of fields that connect to archaeology, like history, geology, and biology, and note how each helps.

- ☐ **2** Describe each step of the archaeological process: finding a site, background research and research design, survey and fieldwork, identifying and examining artifacts, interpretation, preservation, and sharing results

Tip: Draw the steps as a simple flow chart, from finding a site to sharing results.

Example: Draw the process as a flow chart: research old maps and records, survey the land, test with small pits, excavate in a grid, record every layer and find, clean and catalog in the lab, analyze, and publish or share with the public.

- ☐ **3** Describe two or more ways archaeologists figure out how old sites, structures, or artifacts are, and explain absolute versus relative dating

Tip: Compare how scientists use layers of soil and lab tests to tell how old something is. A layered cake or sandwich makes a fun model.

Example: Explain two dating methods: relative dating, where deeper soil layers are usually older, and radiocarbon dating, which measures carbon in once-living things like charcoal or bone. A layered sandwich with a coin pressed into one layer makes a good demo.

- ☐ **4** Learn about five archaeological sites in total, some in the U.S. and some in other countries

Tip: Choose a mix of sites that interest you, such as ancient cities or local historic places. A map with pins helps you share them.

Example: A mix could be Mesa Verde in Colorado, Cahokia Mounds in Illinois, Jamestown in Virginia, Pompeii in Italy, and Machu Picchu in Peru. For each, note who lived there, when, and one discovery that changed what we know.

- ☐ **4a** For every site: show it on a map, explain how archaeologists found out about it, describe what it revealed about the past, how that answers archaeologists' questions and matters today, and compare the sites' relative ages

- ☐ **4b** Give a short presentation on one of your sites to a Cub Scout pack, your troop, your class, or another group

5 Laws and organizations that protect sites

Tips for this section: Look up the laws that protect sites on public land and an organization that works to preserve them.

- ☐ **5a** Learn which federal laws and international agreements protect archaeological sites, and find out whether your state, county, or town has rules for archaeological or historic sites

- ☐ **5b** Name a local, national, or international organization that helps protect archaeological sites

6 Protecting the past

Tips for this section: If you ever find an artifact, leave it where it is, take a photo, note the location, and tell the landowner or a park ranger.

Example for this section: If you find an arrowhead on a hike, the right move is to leave it in place, photograph it with something for scale, note the location, and report it to the land manager or ranger. Explain why moving it destroys the clues around it.

- ☐ **6a** Explain why archaeological sites need protecting

- ☐ **6b** Explain what to do if you think you've found an artifact

- ☐ **6c** Describe ways you can help protect the past

7 Artifacts up close: Choose 1 of 3

Tips for this section: A trash study is surprisingly fun. Look at what your family throws away in a week and think about what it says about how you live.

Example for this section: For a trash study, list everything your household throws away for one week, trash and recycling alike, sorted into categories with counts. Then write what a future archaeologist would guess about your family: what you ate, how many people live there, and what you value.

- ☐ **7a** Visit a museum to see how artifacts help tell history, then discuss what you found with your counselor

- ☐ **7b** Show your counselor an important family artifact or heirloom and discuss its history

- ☐ **7c** List everything your family throws away for one week, then discuss with your counselor what archaeologists 1,000 years from now might learn about your family from it

- ☐ **8** Research a group who lived in your area over 100 years ago: their housing, clothing, arts and crafts, tools, trade, rituals and religion, diet, and relations with nearby groups; describe what their site might contain and how they shaped your community

Tip: Ask your local historical society or library who lived in your area over 100 years ago and what they left behind.

Example: Research a group that lived in your county over 100 years ago, such as a native nation, farming settlers, or railroad workers. Look for old maps, census records, or museum collections, and describe their homes, work, and food.

- ☐ **9** Explore archaeology-related careers; research one (training, education, costs, outlook, pay, duties, advancement) by library or web search, interview, or worksite visit with parent or guardian permission, then discuss your findings and its appeal with your counselor

Tip: Look into careers like field archaeologist, museum curator, or lab specialist, and what training each takes.

10 Hands-on archaeology project: Choose 1 of 2

Tips for this section: Ask your counselor about public digs near you. If there isn't one, ask whether a qualified archaeologist could set up a simulated dig for you to work.

Example for this section: On a simulated dig set up by a qualified archaeologist, string a grid and dig one square at a time with a trowel and paintbrush. Map and record each find before you remove it, just like a real field crew, then explain what the finds and their layers tell you.

- ☐ **10a** With permission from a parent or guardian and your counselor, help a qualified archaeologist on a project for at least 8 hours, following all site safety directions; describe what you did, what you learned, and the steps of archaeological inquiry

- ☐ **10b** With counselor approval, work a simulated dig designed by a qualified archaeologist: analyze its artifacts and features using the steps of inquiry, document how they relate in space, explain how time and environment affect interpretation, and tell how you'd share results

11 Supervised exhibit or experiment: Choose 1 of 2

Tips for this section: Museums and historical societies often welcome young volunteers. Always work under a trained adult's supervision.

- ☐ **11a** Under a qualified archaeologist's or instructor's supervision, help get an archaeology exhibit ready for display at a school, museum, visitor center, or other public place

- ☐ **11b** Under a qualified archaeologist's or instructor's supervision, use experimental archaeology methods to rebuild an object or practice a skill from the past, and write a short report on the experiment and its results