



## The Archaeology Lab

Ever wonder what we do with the artifacts we find?

Contrary to what you think, archaeologists spend most of our time in the laboratory, not covered in dirt. Our labs are where we get a closer look at what we found in our excavations.

Our collections are like libraries full of objects. All with stories to tell: Who owned these artifacts, what sort of toys did they have, what kind of life did they have?

Now that we've finished in the field, our artifacts need to be cleaned, sorted, catalogued, stabilized, and made ready for curation in our facility.

**\*Try this at home with your Mini excavation dig!**

### Step one: Washing

- Just in from the field, artifacts are washed with water to remove dirt. Artifacts are brushed clean with a toothbrush and left to dry. Some materials are too delicate and are not washed (organic and metal artifacts).

### Step two: Cataloging

- Artifacts are sorted into basic groups such as pottery, lithics, bone, etc.
- Identify any differences.
- Important artifacts are described individually and counted.
- Each artifact has a unique number that tells the site, feature, and level it was found. (remember our grid system?)
- See below a system for cataloging your artifacts

### Step three: Conservation

- Each artifact is placed into archival baggies with a identification tag with all location information

### Step four: What's next?

- Artifacts help us write our excavation reports, our exhibits, and programs for kids
- **For fun: Create a museum display from the artifacts in your mini excavation activity**
  - **Think about: what the artifacts tell you, how old are the artifacts, what people may have done with those artifacts**

Artifact type	Count
Pottery	
Stone tools	
Debitage	
Fiber	
Shell	
Bone	
Metal	
Other _____	

Choose one artifact and draw or trace it on the back of this form. Then fill out the information below for the artifact.

Item	Weight	Condition	Initials

Excavators \_\_\_\_\_

Site \_\_\_\_\_ Unit \_\_\_\_\_