

Shoebox Dig Photos

Photos by Harris Hartsfield and Elizabeth Gilgan



Shoebox dig supplies

These include translucent plastic and cardboard shoeboxes, sand, soil, spoons, and discard containers for earth (plastic silverware boxes).



A simple dig has two or three horizontal layers

Left: three simple horizontal layers form the shoe box stratigraphy. Right: compressing soil firmly makes for a more authentic digging experience and helps keep fine elements from sifting downward.



A more complex dig for older grades

The cross section of three layers shows a pit dug by the inhabitants of the middle layer that has been filled in by the later soil of the top layer. The pit reaches the bottom layer.



The middle layer exposed

Left: The archaeologist has removed the top layer of soil to expose the middle layer and the sides of the pit dug into it. A small section of the bottom layer is exposed at the bottom of the pit.

Right: Top view of the middle layer. The small section of the bottom layer is visible in the middle. Next the archaeologist will remove all the dark soil.



Telling a story

The finds in this layer are purposefully arranged to tell a story (shared after excavation is done). Related artifacts tell a story when viewed together in the same context, but not if they are dug out separately as isolated "treasures." Stories inspire curiosity in students of all ages and validate careful digging.