



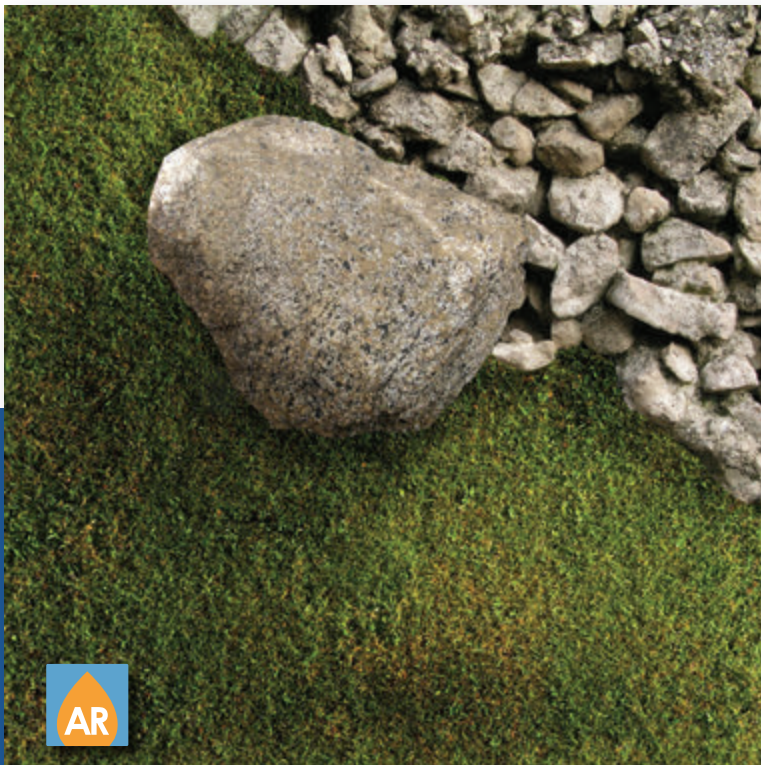
Excavation

Excavation is just another word for digging, and it is what archaeologists do to find what is beneath the ground, which has been left over from the past. When we collect objects (also called artefacts) from underneath us, we hope to find old remains. These remains can be in very good condition, from being preserved in earth for so long. Excavation is both destructive and expensive though, so we are careful to excavate slowly and carefully taking lots of notes, drawings and photos.

Layers

When we dig for artefacts, the further we go, the more layers of earth we uncover. The ground is made up of many layers, which all show different eras of the past. You can often see differences between layers by looking at changes in colour, texture, and what objects are inside. Looking at these difference can help us estimate what year the ground is from. This is called the *context*. Look around you.

What objects can you find which show that you are in a classroom?



How do we dig?

To make sure we don't break things along the way, we have to dig slowly and carefully. We start off by digging a square that measures 1m x 1m. If we find anything interesting in this square, we can choose to expand further out. We take notes along the way, and we also record what we see when we dig by taking photographs, and drawing pictures. Can you imagine how exciting it would be to find an object from the past?!

Tricky Digging

We can guess that the oldest items are in the bottom layer of the ground, and the newest items are in the top layer. Sometimes though, nature (like tree roots, water, worms, and small animals that burrow) will move objects into different layers when they get in its way. This means that we can't always be sure what layer (and year) the objects are from.



A dig at Çatalhöyük, Turkey

Çatalhöyük is a Neolithic settlement around 7500 years old.