

# Backyard Archeology

Is your kid interested in *Indy*? Taken with *Tomb Raider*? This activity is a great way to stretch your child's imagination and creativity and build up those all-important critical thinking skills by bringing the fascinating world of archeology right into your own backyard. All you need are some everyday household items and some outdoor space!



## What You Need:

- Trowel
- Whisk brush
- Strainer
- 4 wooden dowels
- Twine
- Notebook
- Assortment of everyday household items (see below for examples)

## What You Do:

1. Begin by gathering an assortment of everyday household items or small parts of them—the broken handle of a cup, a button from a coat, the cap from a plastic water bottle, etc. For older kids it's best to choose items that are difficult to identify without their context, such as the spring from a pen, or the spool from a dental floss container.
2. In your yard, bury the items at varying depths in a plot of dirt about 2-3 feet square. Dry, sandy soil is best, as moist soil can make filtering the items through the strainer difficult.
3. Mark off the boundaries of the area in which the items were buried using wooden dowels and string.
4. Plot the "dig site" with your child in a notebook before beginning the "excavation" so that she will have a place to record her findings.
5. Equip your budding archaeologist with a notebook—and clothes that can take a little dirt!—then invite her to begin digging for "artifacts". Use the trowel to gently scrape away layers of dirt, which can then be sifted through for relics using the strainer. Use the whisk brush or toothbrush to gently clean away dirt from small objects. Once an artifact is found, it can be recorded in the child's notebook: object description, where it was found, and at what depth etc...Encourage her to be creative with her descriptions! Where does she think this particular artifact came from? What could it possibly be used for?
6. Once your child has found all of the items, spend some time with her guessing what the items were used for. Objects taken out of their usual context may be foreign and captivating to children, who often come up with an entirely different purpose for them. Pretend you're looking back from sometime in the future and ask your child: What do you think this item was used for? Why would it have been important to this society? Chances are that you'll be impressed by their boundless creativity!

This is a great activity to try during the summer or fall when the weather is perfect for spending time outside!