

CAREER OF THE WEEK: Archaeologist

What does an archaeologist do?

An archaeologist is a detective of the past. Instead of solving crimes, they investigate how people lived thousands (or even millions) of years ago. Here's what they do:

- Dig up evidence: They excavate sites where ancient people once lived, like ruins or burial grounds.
- Study artefacts: They analyse objects such as tools, pottery, jewellery, weapons, or even rubbish to understand daily life.
- Examine structures: They look at old buildings, temples, or roads to work out how societies were organised.
- Look at human remains: Sometimes they study skeletons or fossils to learn about health, diet, or rituals.
- Use science and technology: They don't just dig — they also use satellites, drones, 3D scanners, and chemistry tests to uncover hidden details.
- Tell the story: Archaeologists piece together all this evidence to explain how people lived, what they believed, and why civilisations rose or fell.



What can I expect to earn as an archaeologist?

Archaeologists don't usually make huge salaries — it's a field more driven by passion than pay. Many archaeologists also start with short-term contracts and fieldwork jobs before moving into more stable roles. A lot depends on where you work (commercial archaeology firms, museums, universities, heritage organisations like Historic England or the National Trust) and how specialised you are. Starting salaries for a field archaeologist or technician are usually around £22,000–£25,000 a year. An experienced archaeologist, a project officer or site supervisor, typically earns around £27,000–£35,000. A senior/project manager can earn between £40,000 and £50,000+, and a university lecturer or researcher usually earns between £35,000 and £55,000+.

What subjects should I study to become an archaeologist?

Universities don't usually require specific subjects to study archaeology. Subjects that could be beneficial though include, history, geography, sociology, biology, chemistry, art, or design and technology.

How can I start my career as an archaeologist?

Most archaeologists have completed a degree in archaeology, or a related subject (Tip: ensure the course is accredited by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists). You can visit the UCAS website (<https://www.ucas.com/>) to find details of undergraduate degree courses. Some archaeologists also hold a postgraduate qualification, specialising in a particular field of work. It's a good idea to gain work experience by volunteering with an archaeological organisation. Many will operate fieldwork programmes that you can join.

It is also possible to complete an apprenticeship, such as the archaeological technician advanced apprenticeship, to become an archaeologist.

To research local education and training opportunities that could lead to a career as an archaeologist, visit our partner website www.logonmoveon.co.uk

Other useful websites to find out more about a career as an archaeologist:

Chartered Institute for Archaeologists <https://www.archaeologists.net/careers/kit>

Council for British Archaeology, Pathways into Archaeology <https://www.archaeologyuk.org/get-involved/pathways-into-archaeology.html>

Council for British Archaeology, Volunteering <https://www.archaeologyuk.org/get-involved/volunteering.html>

University Archaeology UK <https://universityarchaeology.co.uk/>

Royal Archaeological Institute <https://www.royalarchinst.org/>

National Careers Service, Archaeologist <https://nationalcareers.service.gov.uk/job-profiles/archaeologist>

Prospects, Archaeologist <https://www.prospects.ac.uk/job-profiles/archaeologist>

