



Oregon Archaeological Society Exploring Careers in Archaeology Fields Professional Archaeologist

What Does an Archaeologist Do?

Archaeologists study the origin, development and behavior of humans. They examine cultures through physical remains and artifacts, and the environment in which people lived through geologic, geographic, and climatic clues. Archaeologists may work in both historic and/or prehistoric sites, differentiated by the presence or absence of written records. Most professional archaeologies are employed by government agencies (federal, state and local), research organizations, academic, and/or consulting organizations.

Education and Experience Required

A minimum of a master's degree in archaeology, anthropology or related field is required for professional archaeological positions. The degree will require specific work in the field and/or in the laboratory.

A Ph.D. may be needed with advanced technical knowledge for leadership positions. Additionally, anthropologists wishing to work internationally may also need a Ph.D. in order to comply with foreign regulations. A Ph.D. may take several years of study beyond a master's degree and require 2-3 years of field research and a doctoral dissertation. The master's degree often allows for a greater range of hiring opportunities, particularly for government positions.

Students engaged in the pursuit of a bachelor's degree should build upon their resumes through participation in internships whenever possible. Many students will also attend archaeological field schools, which teach students how to excavate historical and archaeological sites and how to record and interpret their findings and data. It is important to enroll in a field school as an undergraduate to gain hands on experience and develop an understanding of topics that may be of future professional interest. This will allow a student to tailor their upper level coursework around the topics they are most interested in and build strong networks with professionals actively engaged in research. Volunteer field or laboratory work will also build skills and sharpen one's focus on areas of interest. The importance of building relationships with teachers through class participation and visiting during their office hours cannot be overstressed.

Typically, graduate students will conduct field research during their graduate programs, often working abroad or in community based research.

What Important Skills Are Requested in This Field?

- Analytical Skills – must possess knowledge of scientific methods and data, which are often used in research.

Bureau of Labor and Statistics, Occupational Outlook Handbook, www.bls.gov.

- **Critical Thinking Skills** – must be able to develop hypotheses or draw conclusions from observations, laboratory experiments, and other methods of research.
- **Investigative Skills** – must seek and explore all facts relevant to their research. Must be able to combine various sources of information to try to solve problems and to answer research questions. One must have an interest in working with experts from other disciplines to understand physical and cultural processes that may contribute to an archaeological site.
- **Technical Skills** – may use a variety of sophisticated tools and technologies in their work, including database, statistical, software and GIS tools. Knowledge of surveying instruments, global positioning systems, and specialized equipment like remote sensing instruments increases employability and enjoyment.
- **Communication Skills** – will need to present research and findings to their peers and general audience, including public presentations. For those who choose academic careers in archaeology, teaching skills are also necessary.
- **Writing Skills** – need strong writing skills because they often write reports detailing their research findings and public results in scholarly journals and public interest publications.

What can I expect to be paid?

Based upon the US Bureau of Labor Statistics, Occupational Employment Statistics (2014) the median annual salary for an Archaeologist is \$59,280, the range between \$34,580-93,650.