

# UNDERWATER ARCHAEOLOGY

## What is Under Water Archaeology?

Underwater archaeology is more difficult than archaeology on land because archaeologists need to know how to dive, breathe under water, maneuver through dark or muddy waters, communicate to their team, and write and record findings while under water. Air tanks also limit the time archaeologists can spend excavating.

This activity simulates an underwater excavation and explores how archaeologists use context and critical thinking while excavating in order to understand the site and to put together stories that artifacts reveal about the site.

## For this activity, you will need:

- A container to act as your archaeological site – this can be a shoe box or a large plastic container.
- Sand or dirt to act as the ocean floor - if you need to get creative, try using common household staples like flour or salt.
- A flashlight – the deeper under water you go, the darker it gets!
- Brushes to serve as excavation tools – remember that artifacts are very delicate and must be treated very carefully!
- Artifacts from a shipwreck – use items from your home as artifacts from a shipwreck, and check out recent articles on the excavation of the HMS Erebus in Canada's north for inspiration!



## To conduct your excavation:

- Each team member is given a task: documenting, holding a flashlight, or being a general excavator.
- The lights are turned off and participants explore their 'shipwrecks' by flashlight and without talking (remember, divers are wearing masks and cannot talk to each other!).
- The team must focus on recording as much as possible and excavating very carefully before they "run out of air" and resurface.
- Participants can "dive" as many times as they need to and can discuss their findings when they resurface.
- Participants then work together back at the lab to discuss their findings and answer questions about the shipwreck:
  - What artifacts have been found? What kind of shipwreck was it? How do all these artifacts work together? What can we conclude?