

Tools Through the Ages

Play a game to explore a variety of tools from the museum's collections!

Materials Needed: Printable Tools Through the Ages cards, scissors. *Optional:* Cardstock or thin cardboard, glue.

Prepare Your Cards: Print the game cards. To make them sturdier, glue on cardstock or thin cardboard. Cut out the cards (36 total) along the solid lines.

Hint: For the memory game, print on cardstock or glue your cards onto colored paper so the pictures are not visible from the back.

How To Play:

Matching Game: Lay the cards face up and spread them out. Match tools that are alike, or are used for the same tasks. Look at the shape of each object and use what you know about everyday tools to make matches. Which tools do you think are the most interesting?

Go on a scavenger hunt for similar tools in your home. How many can you find? How do you use these tools? Are there some tools you don't have at home? Why not?

Compare tools: How are they alike? How are they different? What materials are they made of? How big are they? Researchers compare tools from the museum's collections to learn about the people who used them. How could the tools we use give clues about us?

Memory Game: When you are familiar with the different tools, arrange the cards face down. Take turns flipping over two cards at a time. If they match, the player takes the pair and goes again. If they don't match, the player turns them face down again. The game continues until all pairs have been collected. The player with the most pairs is the winner.

To adapt for younger children, play with fewer pairs.



Tools in the Museum's Collections

The Museum of the North collects, cares for, and exhibits many tools, from prehistory to contemporary times. If they were collected or excavated from archaeological sites, they are usually part of the archaeology collections; if they were donated by the people who owned or inherited them, they are part of the ethnology and history collections. Together these collections help us learn how people have used tools throughout time!

The ethnology and history collections include tools that are just a few years old up to several centuries old, such as a Russian ship's compass from 1809. Some of the most common tools are knives (nearly 400), fishing tools (nearly 300), and arrows (over 200).

Right: Ship's compass, Russia, 1809, UA74-014-0005.



Image: Sam Coffman.

The archaeology collections include tools from as far back as 14,500 years ago! Some of the most common tools are *utilized flakes*; small pieces of stone left behind from making other rock tools, then often used as cutting tools. Ancient tools are made from a variety of materials. Bone and stone are common, but other materials include jade, obsidian, and mammoth ivory!

Museum Detective Work

Museum archaeologists, ethnologists, and historians do detective work to figure out how old tools are and how they were used.

How do you know what the tool was used for?

Ethnology & History: By looking at it and comparing it to other tools; reading written descriptions of tools; and talking to people who used the tool or are knowledgeable about the culture and time period.

Archaeology: By talking to experts; observing the shape, parts, materials, etc. of the tool; comparing it to other tools; and looking at where, when, and who used it. Many objects in the archaeology collections remain unidentified, as we don't have enough clues to determine how they were used.

How do you know how old the tool is?

Ethnology: It depends! If it was manufactured, it may have a serial number we can look up. If we know the name of the person who made it, we can find out when that person was alive. We can look up historical records to find when that kind of tool was made or used. If we know when the tool was found or collected, we know it is at least older than that date.

Archaeology: Through examining where and when the object was found, comparing it to other tools, consulting written records, or using carbon dating.



UAMN Virtual Early Explorers: Tools

Tools Through the Ages Cards: Print and cut out along the solid lines.



Comb (ivory)
St. Lawrence Island
1800-100 years old
UAM:Arc:1-1927-2182



Spoon (whalebone)
St. Lawrence Island
1800-100 years old
UAM:Arc:1-1927-1400



Lamp (stone)
Kodiak Island
UA77-007-001



Combs
Huslia, 1992
UA92-003-0025AB



Spoon (metal)
Nome, mid-1900s
UA2002-001-008



Head lamp
Fairbanks, 1950-1960
UA2017-003-0003-1



Net needle (baleen)
Iñupiat, ca. 1900-1995
UA2002-001-0094



Knife
Michigan, ca. 1900-1961
UAM-EH-0972-0018A



Arrow head (quartz)
Dené
6,000-3,000 years old
UAM-Arc-0058-0223



Net needle (plastic)
Iñupiat, ca. 1957-1995
UA2002-001-0096



Knife
Siberian Yup'ik, 1900-1928
UAM-EH-0569-5683



Arrow point (steel)
Ahtna, ca. 1920
UAM-EH-0717-0094

Note: Images are not to scale.

UAMN Virtual Early Explorers: Tools

Tools Through the Ages Cards: Print and cut out along the solid lines.



Fish hook
Yup'ik, ca. 1970
UAM-EH-UA70-053-0123



Bowl (porcelain)
1900s
UAM-EH-UA2019-008-0009



Basket (coiled grass)
Kuskokwim, pre-1940
UAM-EH-0236-3951



Fish hook (antler)
Kobuk River
700-500 years old
UAM-Arc-1-1941-0411



Bowl (wood)
St. Lawrence Island
1800-100 years old
UAM-Arc-1-1932-5897



Basket (coiled grass)
Norton Bay
700-500 years old
UAM-Arc-1-1949-0582



Harpoon head (ivory)
St. Lawrence Island
1200-700 years old
UAM-Arc-1-1927-2470



Eye Protection:
Snow Goggles (wood)
Norton Bay
UAM-Arc:1-1949-2699



Adze handle (antler)
Kotzebue, 600-400 years old
UAM-Arc-1-1947-0626



Harpoon head (ivory)
Savoonga, 1944
UAM-EH-0286-4243



Eye Protection:
Sunglasses (metal frame)
Massachusetts, 1934-1968
UAM-EH-UA93-006-0042AB



Adze (wood)
Inuit
UAM-EH-UA67-098-0010

Note: Images are not to scale.

UAMN Virtual Early Explorers: Tools

Tools Through the Ages Cards: Print and cut out along the solid lines.



Snowshoe fragment
Wales, 600-400 years old
UAM-Arc-UA2020-134-2774



Ice footwear: Creeper
Alaska
UAM:EH:UA2006-009-0024



Snow shovel
(whalebone)
Point Hope, ca. 1900-1940
UAM:EH:1-1940-0019



Snowshoes
Iñupiat, ca. 1930s
UAM-EH-UA2002-015-0001AB



Ice footwear: Crampons
France, 1937
UAM:EH:UA93-006-0046AB



Shovel (metal, wood)
Alaska, ca 1950-1997
UAM:EH:UA2005-009-0025



Fishing net (whale sinew)
Siberian Yup'ik
ca. 1700-1927
UAM:EH:1-1927-0689



Baby carrier (birch bark)
Koyukon, pre-1924
UAM:EH:0900-0092



Fire Drill set (wood)
Anaktuvuk Pass, ca. 1969
UAM-EH-UA69-058-0006AC



Dip net (cotton string)
Hän, 1942
UAM:EH:0699-0001



Baby carrier
(birch bark, beads)
Tanacross, 1970
UAM:EH:UA70-054-0097



Fire Drill (wood)
Kodiak Island
900-700 years old
UAM-Arc-UA2016-051-0029

Note: Images are not to scale.