

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 Junior Curators: Tools

 <p style="text-align: center;">Comb (ivory) St. Lawrence Island 1800-100 years old UAM:Arc:1-1927-2182</p>	 <p style="text-align: center;">Spoon (whalebone) St. Lawrence Island 1800-100 years old UAM:Arc:1-1927-1400</p>	 <p style="text-align: center;">Lamp (stone) Kodiak Island UA77-007-001</p>
 <p style="text-align: center;">Combs Huslia, 1992 UA92-003-0025AB</p>	 <p style="text-align: center;">Spoon (metal) Nome, mid-1900s UA2002-001-008</p>	 <p style="text-align: center;">Head lamp Fairbanks, 1950-1960 UA2017-003-0003-1</p>
 <p style="text-align: center;">Net needle (baleen) Iñupiat, ca. 1900-1995 UA2002-001-0094</p>	 <p style="text-align: center;">Knife Michigan, ca. 1900-1961 UAM-EH-0972-0018A</p>	 <p style="text-align: center;">Arrow head (quartz) Dené 6,000-3,000 years old UAM-Arc-0058-0223</p>
 <p style="text-align: center;">Net needle (plastic) Iñupiat, ca. 1957-1995 UA2002-001-0096</p>	 <p style="text-align: center;">Knife Siberian Yup'ik, 1900-1928 UAM-EH-0569-5683</p>	 <p style="text-align: center;">Arrow point (steel) Ahtna, ca. 1920 UAM-EH-0717-0094</p>

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

Note: Images are not to scale.

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 <p style="text-align: center;">Fish hook Yup'ik, ca. 1970 UAM-EH-UA70-053-0123</p>	 <p style="text-align: center;">Bowl (porcelain) 1900s UAM-EH-UA2019-008-0009</p>	 <p style="text-align: center;">Basket (coiled grass) Kuskokwim, pre-1940 UAM-EH-0236-3951</p>
 <p style="text-align: center;">Fish hook (antler) Kobuk River 700-500 years old UAM-Arc-1-1941-0411</p>	 <p style="text-align: center;">Bowl (wood) St. Lawrence Island 1800-100 years old UAM-Arc-1-1932-5897</p>	 <p style="text-align: center;">Basket (coiled grass) Norton Bay 700-500 years old UAM-Arc-1-1949-0582</p>
 <p style="text-align: center;">Harpoon head (ivory) St. Lawrence Island 1200-700 years old UAM-Arc-1-1927-2470</p>	 <p style="text-align: center;">Eye Protection: Snow Goggles (wood) Norton Bay UAM:Arc:1-1949-2699</p>	 <p style="text-align: center;">Adze handle (antler) Kotzebue, 600-400 years old UAM-Arc-1-1947-0626</p>
 <p style="text-align: center;">Harpoon head (ivory) Savoonga, 1944 UAM-EH-0286-4243</p>	 <p style="text-align: center;">Eye Protection: Sunglasses (metal frame) Massachusetts, 1934-1968 UAM:EH:UA93-006-0042AB</p>	 <p style="text-align: center;">Adze (wood) Inuit UAM-EH-UA67-098-0010</p>

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 <p>Snowshoe fragment Wales, 600-400 years old UAM-Arc-UA2020-134-2774</p>	 <p>Ice footwear: Creeper Alaska UAM:EH:UA2006-009-0024</p>	 <p>Snow shovel (whalebone) Point Hope, ca. 1900-1940 UAM:EH:1-1940-0019</p>
 <p>Snowshoes Iñupiat, ca. 1930s UAM-EH-UA2002-015-0001AB</p>	 <p>Ice footwear: Crampons France, 1937 UAM:EH:UA93-006-0046AB</p>	 <p>Shovel (metal, wood) Alaska, ca 1950-1997 UAM:EH:UA2005-009-0025</p>
 <p>Fishing net (whale sinew) Siberian Yup'ik ca. 1700-1927 UAM:EH:1-1927-0689</p>	 <p>Baby carrier (birch bark) Koyukon, pre-1924 UAM:EH:0900-0092</p>	 <p>Fire Drill set (wood) Anaktuvuk Pass, ca. 1969 UAM-EH-UA69-058-0006AC</p>
 <p>Dip net (cotton string) Hän, 1942 UAM:EH:0699-0001</p>	 <p>Baby carrier (birch bark, beads) Tanacross, 1970 UAM:EH:UA70-054-0097</p>	 <p>Fire Drill (wood) Kodiak Island 900-700 years old UAM-Arc-UA2016-051-0029</p>

Note: Images are not to scale.