

How do scientists learn about early humans?

Archaeologists work at places called digs. They uncover *artifacts*: tools, jewelry, or other things made by people. Archaeologists also dig up bones—the bones of ancient humans and of animals that lived with them. Some of these bones have become *fossils*, meaning they have survived over time because they were preserved in stone. By studying bones and artifacts, scientists learn about the culture, or way of life of early humans.



In the early 1970s, archaeologists in East Africa found the footprints of humanlike beings, called *Australopithecus*. Humans and other creatures that walk upright, such as *Australopithecus*, are called *hominids*. These footprints were made about 3.5 million years ago.

Because these early beings walked upright, they could travel long distances more easily than four-footed ones. They could also use their free arms to carry food, tools and children.

Vocabulary- use the text to define the following terms:

Artifact:

Fossil:

Hominids:

What advances did hominids make during the Stone Age?

Humans made important advances during a period called the *Stone Age*, when people used tools made of stone. At this time, they also began to use fire and learned to speak.

Scientists divide the *Stone Age* into two parts. The *Paleolithic Age*, or *Old Stone Age*, began about 2.5 mln years ago and lasted until about 8000 B.C. The *Neolithic Age*, or *New Stone Age*, went from about 8000 B.C to around 3000 B.C.

Much of the *Old Stone Age* overlapped the *Ice Age*, when the earth was colder than it is now. Huge sheets of ice-glaciers- covered much of the land. About 10 000 years ago, the earth's temperature increased. The ice sheets grew smaller. People began to roam wider stretches of land.

In East Africa, archeologists found a hominid fossil they named *Homo habilis*. It means 'man of skill'. The fossil was given this name because the site also held tools made of rock. *Homo habilis* lived about 2.5 million years ago.

About 1.6 million years ago, another kind of hominid lived. This one was *Homo erectus*. *Homo erectus* began to use tools for special purposes. That is when technology began. *Homo erectus* dug for food in the ground, cut meat from animal bones, and scraped animal skins. *Homo erectus* also used fire and may have had spoken language.

Vocabulary- use the text to define the following terms:

Stone Age:

Ice Age:

Homo habilis:

Homo erectus:

Technology:

Who were Neanderthals?

Many scientists believe that *Homo erectus* eventually developed into humans, *Homo sapiens*.

Scientists once thought that *Neanderthals* were ancestors of modern humans but no longer do. These hominids appeared 200 000 years ago. They lived in caves or built shelters of wood or animal skins. At one time, they were thought to be rough and wild people. Now scientists think that they may have held religious beliefs. These people found ways to survive the freezing cold of the *Ice Age*. About 30 000 years ago, though, the *Neanderthals* strangely disappeared.

About 10 000 years before these people vanished, the *Homo sapiens* appeared. Their bodies were just like those of modern people. Scientists think that those people worked together in planning large-scale hunts of animals. they may have also had more skill at speaking than did the *Neanderthals*. Because of these skills, the *Homo sapiens* were better at finding food. That may explain why *Homo sapiens* survived and *Neanderthals* did not.

Neanderthals:

Homo sapiens:

Match the hominid species with the features

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|-----------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1. Australopithecines | Built shelters of wood and skins |
| | Used complex language |
| 2. Homo habilis | Developed religious beliefs |
| | First to use fire |
| 3. Homo erectus | First to use spoken language |
| | First to walk upright |
| 4. Neanderthals | First toolmaker |
| | Physically identical to us |
| 5. Homo sapiens | Planned complicated hunts |
| | First to use technology |