

An Introduction to Geoarchaeology: List of Key Terms

*Key terms used are defined below. Each of these terms is in **bold and red** font in the teaching presentation, so follow along on this sheet to help your understanding.*

- **Archaeology** – the study of past human activity
- **Artefact** – an object of interest to the study of past human activity
- **Ash** – volcanic material transported by air and smaller than 2 mm across
- **Blocks/bombs** – volcanic material transported by air and larger than 64 mm across (blocks have sharp edges, bombs have round edges)
- **Cast** (preservation method) – the filling of an imprint or cavity left by an object with a hardening material (often plaster is used)
- **Excavation** – the directed uncovering (digging) of a site in order to expose archaeological remains
- **Geoarchaeology** – the study of earth science materials (soils/sediments, landscapes) relating to past human activity
- **Geography** – the study of Earth's landforms and people, and the interactions between them
- **Interdisciplinary** – a field or study that integrates the approaches/perspectives of two or more disciplines
- **Lapilli** – volcanic material transport by air and between 2-64 mm across
- **Lava** – melted rock that is on the surface of the Earth (by erupting out of a volcano)
- **Magma** – melted rock that is underneath the Earth
- **Pyroclastic flow** – fast (up to 700 km/h or 450 mph) moving cloud of gas and rock that travels down the slopes of a volcano
- **Shield volcano** – shallow sloped volcano made up of magma with low viscosity and gas content that is generally darker in colour; non-explosive
- **Site** (archaeology) – an area of an archaeological investigation containing possible evidence of past human activity
- **Stratigraphy** – the (mostly vertical) layering of soil/sediment deposits and the study of these layers
- **Stratovolcano** – steeply sloped volcano made up of magma with high viscosity and gas content that is generally lighter in colour; explosive
- **Viscosity** – the thickness (or stickiness) of a fluid; fluids with low viscosity are runny (e.g. water) and those with high viscosity are sticky (e.g. honey)