

The Stone Age

Prehistoric cultural stage, or level of human development, characterized by the creation and use of stone tools.

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Throughout the Paleolithic, man was a food gatherer, depending for his subsistence on hunting wild animals and birds, fishing, and collecting wild fruits, nuts, and berries. The artifactual record of this exceedingly long interval is very incomplete; it can be studied from such imperishable objects of now-extinct cultures as were made of flint, stone, bone, and antler. These alone have withstood the ravages of time, and, together with the remains of contemporary animals hunted by our prehistoric forerunners, they are all that scholars have to guide them in attempting to reconstruct human activity throughout this vast interval--approximately 98 percent of the time span since the appearance of the first true hominid stock...

New Stone Age. The term *neolithic* is used, especially in archaeology and anthropology, to designate a stage of cultural evolution or technological development characterized by the use of stone tools, the existence of settled villages largely dependent on domesticated plants and animals, and the presence of such crafts as pottery and weaving. The time period and cultural content indicated by the term varies with the geographic location of the culture considered and with the particular criteria used by the individual scientist. The domestication of plants and animals usually distinguishes Neolithic culture from earlier Paleolithic or Mesolithic hunting, fishing, and food-gathering cultures..... the domestication of plants and animals was probably begun by the Neolithic Natufian peoples, leading to the establishment of settled villages based on the cultivation of cereals, including wheat, barley, and millet, and the raising of cattle, sheep, goats, and pigs. In the Tigris and Euphrates river valleys, the Neolithic culture of the Middle East developed into the urban civilizations of the Bronze Age by 3500 B.C. Between 6000 B.C. and 2000 B.C. ... The term *Neolithic* has also been used in anthropology to designate cultures of more contemporary primitive, independent farming communities.