

Dating Methods

When dating archaeological sites, several methods can be used - e.g. typology, stratigraphy, Radiocarbon dating and dendrochronology.

Typology

Prehistoric time is divided traditionally into three periods, named after the materials used in tool manufacture – stone, bronze and iron (the Stone, Bronze and Iron Ages). Within the different periods, a certain degree of development will often take place in the design and use of tools and jewellery. On the bases of these changes it is possible to establish a 'typology' of the individual objects and their relative age. By using typology, a reasonably certain date for each item can thus be established.

Stratigraphy

Stratigraphy is an archaeological method whereby the age between e.g. two Viking Age graves established on top of each other can be determined. Here the grave situated at the top is the youngest grave – and this grave will have been dug into the older underlying grave.

Radiocarbon dating

All living organisms accumulate the radioactive isotope ^{14}C as long as they live. When they die, the accumulation stops. As ^{14}C is radioactive, the amount present in the organism diminishes in time. By measuring the content of ^{14}C in the organic remains, the amount of time passed since the death of the organism can be calculated.