

The Palaeolithic Age

The **Palaeolithic Age**, or Old Stone Age, is the earliest known period of human history. It began approximately 2.5 million years ago and came to an end around 10,000 BC, making it by far the longest chapter in the human story.

During this vast stretch of time, early humans — and their ancestors — lived as **hunter-gatherers**. They had no farms, no settlements and no written language. Survival depended entirely on finding food by hunting wild animals and foraging for plants, seeds, berries and roots. Groups were small and constantly on the move, following seasonal food sources across the land.

Shelter was found in natural spaces such as caves and rocky overhangs, or constructed from branches, animal hides and mammoth bones. Clothing was made from the skins of hunted animals.

The Palaeolithic period is named after its most significant technology — **stone tools**. Early humans crafted these by a process called **knapping**, striking flint or other hard rocks to produce sharp cutting edges. Over time, tools became more refined and varied, including hand axes, blades and spear points.

The discovery and control of **fire** was transformative. It provided heat, light, protection and the ability to cook, which improved nutrition and helped communities to thrive.

Remarkable cave paintings found in France and Spain give us a fascinating glimpse into Palaeolithic life.



Questions

1. What is the English translation of "Palaeolithic"?
2. Approximately when did the Palaeolithic Age begin?
3. When did it end?
4. What does it mean to be a hunter-gatherer?
5. Why were Palaeolithic people always on the move?
6. Name two types of natural shelter used during the Palaeolithic Age.
7. What is "knapping"?
8. Name two types of stone tool made during this period.
9. Give two ways in which the control of fire helped early humans.
10. The article says cave paintings give us "a fascinating glimpse into Palaeolithic life." What kinds of things do you think these paintings might show, and why would that be useful to historians?

