

Basic Guidelines for Artifact Photography

Choose a good background

- Pick a neutral, solid color. Gray is the best. Don't use black or white.
- Make sure the background surface is smooth/flat and non-reflective (fabric or paper works well).

Choose appropriate lighting

The best lighting source for objects is one that is evenly distributed (doesn't produce dramatic shadows). It should be bright enough to show detail, but not too bright as to obscure detail.

- Indirect sunlight can be a good evenly distributed source that is also appropriately bright.
- If the image appears washed out or overly bright, reduce the light level or increase the distance between the object and the light source.
- If the image appears too dark, increase the light level or bring the lights closer to the object.
- Reflective objects can be difficult to photograph. A thin fabric such as a white t-shirt in front of the light source can help remove hot spots (diffuse the light).

Strive for good resolution and focus

- Use a stand or tripod for your camera/phone/device if available. This can reduce movement when taking the photo, improving image clarity.
- Use the highest resolution setting on your device or camera.
- Check the focus after shooting. Images that are in focus even when you zoom in are especially useful for examination.
- Try and keep the lens of your device/camera parallel to the surface you are trying to capture to reduce distortion.

Record as much visual information as possible

- Including a ruler or tape measure in the image helps to give a sense of scale.
- Photograph the object from multiple angles (front, back, both sides, top and bottom) if handling doesn't pose a threat to the object.
- For large objects, take overall photos, as well photos of sections.
- Take close-ups if there is a feature that is interesting or of damage that is concerning.