

Appendix 2: Skeleton Recording Prompt Sheet

EXCAVATION:

- Define outline of grave. Once done, DO NOT kneel within the grave;
- Aim to excavate, record, and lift in shortest time possible: the longer a skeleton is exposed, the more the bone is liable to damage;
- Begin to expose skeleton logically, from HEAD down and SPINE out (see diagram to right→);
- Use small tools, preferably wooden or plastic;
- Bones of torso, including pelvis, may be very fragile;
- Remember with vertebrae, even with the best cleaning, each individual bone will have a spine extending down into the ground (see diagram→)
- Consider bulk sampling hands/feet for smaller bones;
- With crania, lift all pieces of bone possible, retain dislodged soil, and take a broad soil sample, in order to retrieve all dental remains in particular;
- Measure juvenile long bones before excavation if they appear fragile;
- Bag-up as per 'Bagging Recommendations' as detailed on back of on-site recording sheet. Prepare and label all required bags prior to lifting. Remember to pierce the bags. Keep soil samples separate to bones.

RECORDING:

- Include site name, excavation no., skeleton no.;
- Record nature of grave, no matter how 'simple';
- Shade in bones present. This is not meant to be extremely detailed, rather it is an immediate indicator of survival;
- Record burial position, such as those indicated in diagrams to right. Most burials tend to be supine and extended;
- Record orientation, for example, 'west/east, head to west', and record which way the face is facing;
- Sketch the burial AND include adjacent features and/or skeletons;
- Provide a detailed written description of burial, particularly noting locations of arms and hands, legs, and if anything is unusual. This would include skeleton appearing quite compact (suggestive of wrapping/binding). Any indication of coffin? Note positions of legs. Are knees and/or ankles close together?
- Are there any grave goods or other grave finds?
- In addition to the plan, DO NOT forget to photograph the skeleton, at least from the vertical. Take additional shots as required, digital records allow this;
- Record ANYTHING you think might be unusual. As with the photographs, *it is better to have it and not need it, than need it and not have it*;
- Sign and date the recording sheet.

Burial Positions

Arm Positions

For numbering, recording, and packing human remains in ROI, please refer to the National Museum of Ireland – Advice Notes for Excavators 2020