

Summary: Characteristics of prehistoric periods.

Paleo-Indian (circa 10,000 B.C. to 8,000 B.C.)

- Colder climate with associated vegetation, including spruce and fir trees.
- People organize in small, nomadic bands
- Lifestyle focuses on hunting of large mammals, many of which are now extinct, including the mastodon, saber-toothed tiger, giant beaver, and giant short-faced bear.
- Major hunting weapon is a wooden spear shaft tipped with a medium- to fine-chipped stone point.

Archaic (circa 8,000 B.C. to 500 B.C.)

- Gradual warming of climate. Environment becomes more similar to present.
- People make transition from nomadic to semi-sedentary living as group size increases from family bands. Seasonal aggregations of multiple bands occur.
- Hunting of smaller species, including white-tail deer, using spear and atlatl or spear thrower. Spear points include side-notched, corner-notched, and stemmed varieties of medium-to-large size.
- Gathering of wild foods, including nuts and berries, and fishing complement hunting.
- Regional trade and exchange networks appear. Toward the end of the period earthen mounds and ceramic pottery occur.

Woodland Period (circa 500 B.C. to A.D. 1000)

- Large permanent villages develop.
- Hunting continues, with corn agriculture becoming increasingly important.
- Tribal organization arises based on multiple families or clans.
- Burial mounds become common.
- Pottery appears in many forms, functions, and decorative treatments.
- Toward the latter end of this period, the bow and arrow appears as indicated by very small chipped stone projectile points.
- Fortified villages and arrow points embedded in human skeletons reveal a tendency to warfare among native groups.

Mississippian Period (circa A.D. 1000 to 1550)

- Large temple mounds denoting ceremonial sites appear along with extensive villages.
- Multi-level societies called chiefdoms replace tribal organizations in many areas.
- Warfare increases.
- A wide variety of pottery occurs, characteristically including crushed shell as a tempering agent.
- Agriculture incorporating corn, beans, and squash become the dietary mainstay, although hunting, gathering, and fishing continue.
- Intensive regional and interregional trade is ongoing in both raw materials and finished products.