

Human Skeleton Recording Prompt Sheet

NB: For unexpected human remains immediate advice must be sought from an appropriate archaeological organisation or the local environmental health officer. A licence for the removal of human remains must be applied for to the Ministry of Justice (Coroners & Burials Division - Tel. 020 3334 6388) and approved as soon as possible before work may continue.

Burial Type	
Coffin Burial	Contained by a box usually of wood, stone or lead
Shroud Burial	Tightly wrapped by a shroud with no evidence for a coffin
Cremation Burial	Burnt and fragmentary remains, sometimes buried in containers
Dumped Remains	Carelessly deposited remains
Charnel	Disarticulated remains deliberately collected together
Examples of 'other' types of burial	
Extended Burial	Buried with straightened back and legs, also referred to as 'Supine'
Prone Burial	An extended burial but face down
Crouched Burial	Buried with the knees bent at an angle greater than 90°
Contracted burial	A crouched burial where the knees are pulled up to the chest
Urned Cremation	Cremated remains buried in a pottery urn

Bone Preservation	
<i>Stain only</i>	Only an organically derived stain defines the former presence of a body
<i>Poor</i>	The bone is present but in a delicate, friable condition which may crumble easily
<i>Moderate</i>	The bone is present and survives to a reasonable state but may break with indelicate handling
<i>Good</i>	The bone is preserved in a good condition and may be easily lifted in tact
<i>Variable</i>	The preservation of the bone is varied. The different levels of preservation should be described and discussed in the free text

General Excavation Procedure of a Burial	
<i>NB: Seek advice and guidance from your Supervisor at each stage</i>	
1	Consider a Pre-ex plan/photo
2	Reduce fill carefully in shallow spits –
3	Spoil may need to be sieved and each spit metal detected
4	Expose the skeleton carefully working from the known to the unknown – leave any artefacts in place until identified/recorded
5	Photo record
6	Plan @ 1:10 and/or record using digital measurements
7	Lift all the skeletal elements in the standard procedure
8	Sample the remaining fill (or even the natural directly below the skeleton)
9	Post-ex photo and plan

Basic Human Skeleton Age Group	
Uncertain	If unsure or the remains are too degraded or sparse to form any opinion.
Neo-natal	Small infant, delicate underdeveloped bones, no fusion of the skull bones, poss. yet to teeth.
Juvenile	Immature frame, unfused or varyingly fused epiphyses and final molars still to erupt. In young children milk teeth may be present, first or second molar may be evident.
Adult	Mature frame, eruption of all permanent molars, fully fused epiphyses and sutures of the skull, with some dental wear.

Example SK label

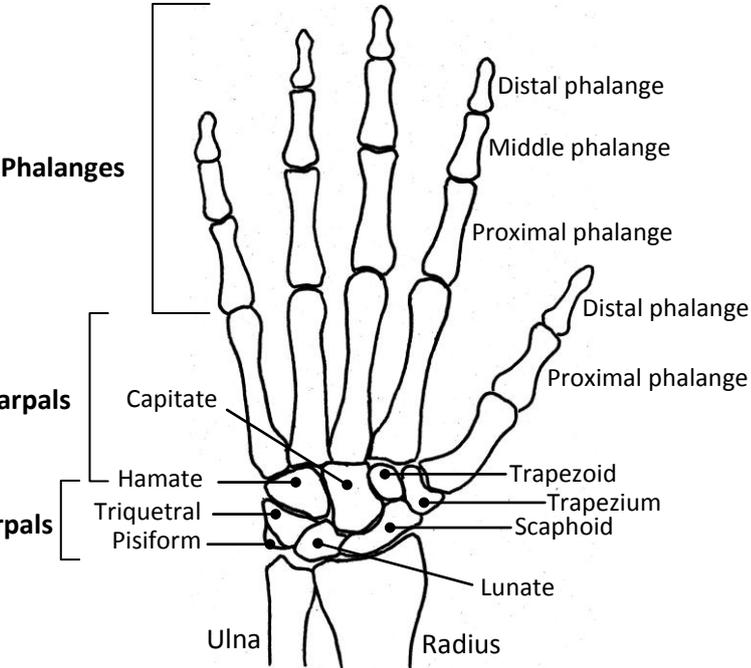
Body Position	
<i>Supine</i>	Lying on the back face up
<i>Prone</i>	Lying on the front, face down
<i>Extended</i>	Lying with straightened back and legs
<i>Flexed</i>	Usually lying on one side with the knees bent
<i>Crouched</i>	Knees bent at an angle greater than 90°
<i>Other</i>	Describe the overall position in the free text

40168THD SK: 12 L.ARM 1/6	KR 25.6.2011
FRONT	BACK

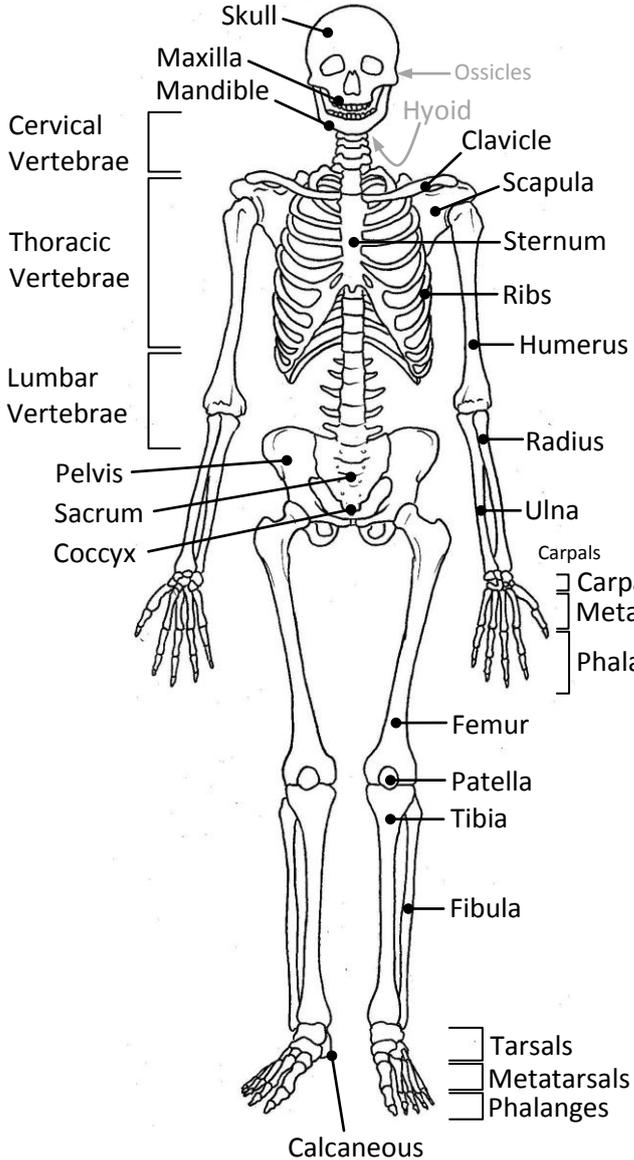
The 7 Skeletal Divisions for Lifting (minimal divisions)	
Skull	All the bones forming the skull, maxilla, mandible and all teeth.
Left Arm	Includes the Humerus, Radius, Ulna and all of the bones forming the left hand.
Right Arm	Includes the Humerus, Radius, Ulna and all of the bones forming the right hand.
Torso	Includes the largest number of elements – the Pelvis, Sacrum and Coccyx, all vertebrae, all ribs of both sides and the clavicles.
Left Leg	Includes the Femur, Patella, Tibia, Fibula and all of the bones forming the left foot.
Right Leg	Includes the Femur, Patella, Tibia, Fibula and all of the bones forming the left foot.
Other	Includes small bone elements of uncertain anatomical origin but which are currently thought to be from this particular individual

Trends in Sexual Dimorphism		
Skeletal component	Adult Male	Adult Female
Pelvis Bones	Narrower & longer with a narrow sciatic notch and sub-pubic angle	Low & bowl-shaped with a wide sciatic notch and sub-pubic angle
	<i>NB: The sciatic notch of a female is more like the notch shape formed from thumb to index finger whilst for a male it is more like the notch between the index to middle finger</i>	
	Sacrum smaller and more curved	Sacrum larger and straighter
Skull	Robust with large muscle attachments	Gracile and smoother
	Squarer chin	Rounded chin
	Marked muscle lines	Less prominent muscle lines
	Receding forehead	More vertical forehead
	Rounded orbital margins	More angular orbital margins
	Larger brow ridges	Poorly developed or absent brow ridges
	Prominent muscle attachment at the back of the skull (occipital protuberance)	Occipital protuberance poorly developed
Overall Skeleton	Maybe of a larger, more robust stature with more pronounced muscle attachments and muscle scarring	Maybe of a more gracile build, with less pronounced muscle attachments and muscle scarring

SIMPLIFIED HUMAN HAND



SIMPLIFIED ADULT SKELETON



SIMPLIFIED HUMAN FOOT

