



What's The Point?

When people apply their knowledge to solve practical problems, that's **technology**. Tools help people adapt to their natural and cultural surroundings. Tools are a big part of technology.

It's Not What You Find

The tool drawn here is a Hardin Barbed spear point. Kentucky's nomadic hunter-gatherers made points like this between 8000 and 6000 years ago. These points tipped spears that hunters launched using an *atlatl* or spearthrower.

Finding an ancient tool is exciting. Some people see a beautiful object to display in a case, make into a necklace, trade, or sell for cash. But archaeologists see more. To them, finding an ancient tool is just the beginning. It unlocks a world of information.

It's What You Find Out... **About Objects**

Notice the spear point's shape. Deep corner notches form the stem (its base). The much longer blade has barbs that extend down from the shoulder. This is the point's **style**. Because point styles changed over time, style provides clues to a point's **age**.

Making a spear point isn't easy. The knapper must understand a rock's properties, understand the basic principles of physics, and know how to use the proper knapping tools. Notching a point is particularly hard to do. Making a point and notching it successfully are testimony to a flintknapper's **talent** and **skill**.

Patterns of flake scars on a spear point's surface reflect a knapper's manufacturing **technique**. Were the flakes removed with a hard stone or with softer antler?

By applying pressure or by hitting the point?

Use dulls a spear point's edges. Scratches and pits on the edges provide clues to how the tool was used: slicing, chopping, scraping. They also indicate the kind of material (meat, wood, bone) on which the tool was used. Use also leaves behind broken tool edges. Resharpener makes the edges as good as new, but it often changes the tool's shape.

The kind of **material** (the type of rock) from which a point is made reflects the ideals of what a group considers "beautiful." It also provides insights into ancient economies and lifestyles. Flintknappers in farming villages traveled short distances to a good local rock **source**. They got prized rocks from distant sources through **trade**. Distance was no problem for nomadic peoples, however. Their **mobility** meant they always traveled far.

A flintknapper elevates his or her **craft** to an **art** when material, technique, talent, and skill combine to produce an object of beauty, precision, and function.

It's What You Find Out... About People

Imagine how much more we could learn if we could link a Hardin Barbed spear point (or any artifact) to all the other artifacts people left behind at the sites where they once lived.

That's why leaving artifacts in place is so important. That's why preserving and protecting archaeological sites is so important, too. Stewardship of our cultural heritage doesn't mean saving objects. It means saving the places that hold information about our rich, fascinating past.

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- David Hurst Thomas



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