From Stone to Iron

Prehistory in Britain started c750,000 BC, when several species of humans arrived from Europe. Prehistory is divided into three main periods, the Stone Age, Bronze Age and Iron Age. Each period is named after the main material used to make tools at that time.

Stone Age			Bronze Age	Iron Age
Palaeolithic c750,000–c10,000 BC Duration: 740,000 years	**Mesolithic** c10,000–c4000 BC Duration: 6000 years	**Neolithic** c4000–c2500 BC Duration: 1500 years	c2500–c800 BC Duration: 1700 years	c800 BC–AD 43 Duration: 843 years

Stone Age

Tools and weapons – Tools were made from stone, wood and bone. They were used for digging, hunting and chopping.

Everyday life – Stone Age people were hunter-gatherers. They followed and killed animals and gathered seasonal food. They made clothes from animal skins and created cave art.

Settlements – People lived in temporary shelters or caves in the Palaeolithic. People lived in more permanent settlements in the Neolithic.



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Beliefs – People built monuments, including stone circles, henges and earthworks. Historians believe that they used these monuments for gatherings and worship.

End of the Stone Age – The Beaker folk arrived from Europe and brought their knowledge of metalworking to Britain.

Bronze Age

Tools and weapons – Metal tools made from bronze were sharper, stronger and more efficient than stone tools. Bronze tools were owned by the wealthy.

Everyday life – The Beaker folk brought their knowledge of metalworking and pottery making to Britain. Bronze tools made farming more efficient, so there was more food and the population grew.

Settlements – People lived in permanent settlements, in roundhouses. They used walls and fences to protect their homes.



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Beliefs – People were buried with objects, including Bell Beaker pottery, to use in the afterlife. They threw weapons and objects into rivers as offerings to the gods.

End of the Bronze Age – People stopped using metal during a time called the Bronze Age collapse.

Iron Age

Tools and weapons – Iron tools and weapons were sharp and strong. Everyone could own iron tools and weapons, not just the wealthy.

Everyday life – Iron tools made farming more efficient and iron weapons were available to everyone. Tribes attacked each other to steal their land, food and possessions. People created art, music and poetry.

Settlements – People lived in hillforts surrounded by ditches and fences to stop attacks from enemy tribes. They lived in roundhouses and farmed the land outside.



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Beliefs – Priests called druids led worship. Humans were sacrificed as offerings to the gods. People threw votive offerings into rivers and lakes. People buried hoards of precious objects

End of the Iron Age – The Romans invaded and conquered Britain in AD 43. They created written records, so this event ended prehistory in Britain.

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