

Locus Sheet Instructions

The purpose of the locus sheet is to unify all that we know about a particular layer or feature. While digging a locus, all relevant information is hand- recorded in the daily diary. Please note that the locus sheet is NOT a field diary (some supervisors might use a locus sheet in the field as a guide to excavation and recording). You are supposed to write a summary of conclusions you reached about a locus. If you wish to elaborate on how you arrived at your conclusions, or give more details, you can do so in your daily diary. Be sure to double check heights!!

We class archaeological loci into six broad categories:

1. Sediment and Debris
2. Floor/Surface/Road
3. Wall / Structure
4. Feature/Structure
5. Pit / Robber Trench / Foundation Trench / Posthole / Well / Cistern
6. Burial

Although these six categories represent six distinct types of processes that have unique characteristics, nonetheless they also have many shared attributes. The locus sheets provide a level of standardization so that even different types of features, can be easily compared with each other across the site. There are five major categories of data: 1) Definition, 2) Identification (Summary and Interpretation), 3) Location and Dimensions, 3) Relationships (stratigraphic analysis with other loci) 4) Physical Properties or Construction & Composition, 5) Documentation.

Fill out as much information as possible in the field. The locus sheets are set up so that the sections **Introduction**, **Location and Dimensions**, and **Physical Properties** can be completed in the field. Generally, the sections **Relationships** and **Documentation** will need to be completed at the base camp over a series of days. Pay special attention to **Relationships**, where important stratigraphic information in the form of later and earlier tangent loci is recorded.

At the end of the day, you must enter certain key data about each locus into a basic data table on the computer. This table is linked by the computer to the locus sheets, so if you change any information on the master index (such as the stratum or definition) the computer will automatically update it on the locus sheets. With the closing of the locus, all the remaining information is typed into the computer. For those doing the data entry, you will see that there is a “home page” with buttons identifying all the relevant tables. You simply click the mouse on the correct button and the table will appear, prompts and convenient buttons are also included to help you with navigation.

NOTE: The locus sheet is an honest statement of your opinions and interpretations. Nothing more. If you are in doubt about a certain point or if there is a disagreement, say so, giving the alternatives and your preference. If you change your opinion about a conclusion, go back to all relevant locus sheets and *add* a comment. There is no need to erase your earlier opinion or rewrite the card.

Definition

This is basically the Title. Put a brief adjective before the locus name. For example do not just say surface or floor but Courtyard Surface, Construction Fill, Destruction Debris, Casemate Wall, City wall, interior room wall, Dog Burial, etc.

Merged with - This is to cancel a locus and merge it into another. Even if you merge a locus, you must still fill in all the relevant details on the locus sheet. *Merge only loci you know are the same.* Often you cannot be certain of this until you get further down. Even so, it is not a good idea to merge and allow your locus to become too extensive. In general, it is better to use “equivalent to” rather than “merge”. If you do merge, make sure you note which is the final locus number. If the locus/wall is simply canceled and not merged into another, just mark ‘canceled’ in the appropriate space.

Finished - Always indicate whether the locus is finished being excavated or not. This may seem trivial, but at the end of the season some loci don’t get done. If another supervisor takes your place the following year, they have no way of knowing whether you finished the locus or whether to open a new locus sheet.

Identification

This is the summary statement of the locus. This information will be foundational for the final publication. Most project locus sheets place this information at the end of the locus sheet. It is placed at the front to convey the importance of this data. All of our locus sheets ask for the same information:

- 1) summary data in regards to its place in the excavation process (e.g. Season, Field, Sq, Supervisor, Date opened/closed.
- 2) A General Description (some locus sheets have some suggestions/prompts). This should be a well thought succinct description containing one to three sentences of the locus.
- 3) The interpretation consisting of Function and Stratigraphy. This can be written together in a narrative. The narrative should discuss what is the function of the locus, its depositional history and/or its formation. If the locus is debris, than you need to define what is the debris.

Local Phase - Write down what phase you think the locus belongs to. “Final Stratum” is assigned only at the very last stage.

Borders. Write which features, layers or balks border the locus on all four sides.

Dimension - Give an idea of the size of the locus in sq. m. To calculate, you multiply length by width. Thus, the dimension of a full 5 x 5 m square is 25 sq. m.

Heights or Levels - “Opening Level” is the highest point at the time you opened the locus. “Closing Level” is the lowest point when you closed it. For floors, the levels are always the highest and lowest points on the floor surface. Always take a few levels when on a floor or closing a locus. Floors are usually uneven. Taking several readings avoids contradictions between the locus sheet, the plan and the section. Be sure your lowest basket is not lower than the closing height.

Wall/Structure/Feature

Plan: Linear Curvilinear Rectilinear Circular Semi-circular Oval Apsidal Irregular, horse-shoe shaped,

Adjectives/Qualifiers: rounded squared nearly slightly

Materials: limestone, chert, basalt, nari, mudbrick, soil, arch frags

Masonry

Wall stones:

Fillstones:

Chinking stones:

Bricks:

Mortar: dry-laid, clay, mud, cement, plaster, lime, average thickness

Dressing: unhewn, semi-hewn, dressed, ashlar, bossed

Tooling:

Facing: unfaced, plaster, mud, paint,

Construction

Style: boulder & chink, ashlar fit, header-stretcher, rubble filled, rubble, stacked bricks, tied-in bricks, quoin & Pier, Orthostat

Support: free-standing, buttressed, battered foundation

Length/Width - Give dimensions in tenths of a meter, e. g. if a wall is 60 cm wide, write 0.60 m as the width.

Levels - You want to record the upper and lower levels of a wall at both ends. We recommend taking plenty of heights along its length and record them onto your daily graphic diary. Do not record lower heights until the wall is actually floating.

Floating - When you see the wall is floating, circle “yes” and note the lower height. On the daily graphic diary, use the sign to indicate that the height given is the bottom height of the wall.

Stone type - Note whether they are field stones, roughly hewn, or ashlars. Then note whether limestone (lm), basalt (bt), travertine (tr). In the space next to this indicate whether these are only foundation courses or including the superstructure.

Color and matrix - Give the basic colors (red, pink, brown, gray) and describe the matrix (levigated, coarse, granular, etc.); fill in the average dimensions of the bricks according to Height' Length and Width.

Bonds/Abuts - Note which walls it bonds with (stones are integrated) or abuts to (the end of the wall runs up to another wall but is not integrated into it).

Foundation trench - If there is a foundation trench describe it's width and depth. Also tell us about the character of soil and any contents such pottery, etc.

Nature of destruction - Use only in cases when you can say what resulted in the end of the wall, e. g. a severe fire which destroyed the building. Or perhaps the wall was leveled to make way for a subsequent building set on top of it. Be specific.

Collapse identified - If the mudbrick superstructure of a wall fell, you should be able to see the bricks. Describe the collapse, the angle of the bricks, degree of decay, etc.

Abuted by floors - Note only floors that actually abut the wall. If you are sure the two are contemporary (but the floor has broken away from the wall) you can write it in, but note under "stratigraphic observations and additional details" the circumstances of the floor-wall association. On the other hand, if it seems like the two could go together, or you are not sure, reserve this information for the "stratigraphic observations".

Other related loci/finds - You must note all stratigraphic layers and finds which are associated with the wall.

Rebuilding - Applies in cases where you can see the wall has more than one phase. It originated in one phase or stratum, but was subsequently re-used later on.

Stratigraphic observations and additional details - It is important that you relate the wall to any of the stratigraphy overlying and underlying it. What does it cover or is it covered by? What does it cut or what cuts it?

Dismantled/Plans/Sections - Give the date that you dismantled the wall. This will then close the locus. Write down on which top plans drawn by Masha the wall appears, and on which section drawings

D. Special Finds

A special finds form will be filled out back at the kibbutz, but you must make sure to register the initial information at the time you box the find in the field. You need to note the area, the basket number (= Reg. No.), locus, height, and stratum. Give the object

directly to Dena in the office after lunch. Every special find or object gets its own basket number, even if there are many objects together (such as beads or loom weights).

Locus sheet

For floors be sure to note the following:

1. *Type* (beaten earth, plaster, flagstone, cobble, composite, series of floors, etc.)
2. *Method of construction* (how was the floor laid or constructed)
3. *Kind* (inside a building or outside in a courtyard)
4. *Thickness* (especially if a series of floors in succession, give us an idea of its total thickness or build-up)
5. *Present condition* (horizontal, sagging, sloping, broken, patchy, resurfaced, etc.)
6. *Extent* (fully preserved, patchy, % of the area). Indicate on the daily top plan.
7. *Features to which it relates* (wall, installation, cut by, sealed by, covers, seals, etc.)
Indicate on the daily top plan. Note its present condition (it does not quite reach wall x; floor clearly meets wall y) before hypothesizing as to whether the two are contemporary (e. g. the floor does not actually meet the wall; yet, the two appear to be contemporary.)
8. *Color* (white, yellow, pink, etc.)
9. *Texture* (coarse, fine, porous, compacted, laminated, etc.)
10. *Size estimate* (clay, sand, gravel, pebble, cobble, boulders, flagstones)
11. *Inclusions* (ash, bones, pottery, charcoal, limestone chips, shell, stones, etc.).
12. *Amount of inclusions and their distribution* (random, even, concentrated in such and such an area).
13. *Special characteristics* that might help identify the same surface in another square or area (e.g. pink plaster, burnt flagstones covered with pink clay)
14. Of all these categories, probably the most important is the floor's extent and which features it actually relates to. Whether it *attaches* to a wall or is *cut* by it is crucial.

For features (i. e. architectural components):

1. *Inferred function* (fire pit, trash pit, bin, oven, etc.)
2. *Shape* (round, oval, bell-shaped, cylindrical, shallow, deep, etc.)
3. *Size in tenths of a meter* (e. g. 8 cm = 0.08 m; 80 cm = 0.8 m)
4. *Material* (brick, stone, plaster, wood, etc.)
5. *Treatment* (field stones, hewn, ashlar, painted, plastered, etc.)
6. *Method of construction* (number of rows and courses; made with or without mortar; and if so, which type of mortar; evidence of repair or rebuild)
7. *Evidence of use* (fire, water erosion, character of sediment, wear, tool marks, etc.)
8. *Preserved height* and what may have destroyed it from a later phase.
9. *Lean*. Whether upright or leaning, which direction, and approximate degree.
10. *Special features* that might help identify the same kind of construction in another square or area.
11. *Relationship to other loci* (seals/sealed by, covers/covered by, cut/cut by, built up against, set into, dug into/from, surface it relates to, etc.)

12. *Nature of contents* in a pit or installation. Collect a sample for analysis if deemed necessary.
13. *Stratification within a pit or installation*. Don't assign locus numbers unless it is absolutely necessary. (We want to avoid too many locus numbers!) Draw a scaled section profile and describe the layers verbally as Layer/Horizon A, B, C, etc.)

For layers (fill, debris, sediment):

1. *Type* (brick debris, ash layer, deliberate fill such as in MB ramparts, sediment layer composed of what, etc.)
2. *Function* (leveling, terracing, foundation, construction for, floor make-up, etc.)
3. *Estimate of overall thickness of the layer*. Does this thickness vary from one end of the square to the other?
4. *Color of matrix* (light gray, dark brown, pink, etc.)
5. *Texture of matrix* (coarse, fine, porous, compacted, loose, laminated, graded, etc.)
6. *Size of particles* (clay, silt, sand, gravel, pebble, cobble, boulder)
7. *Inclusions* (ash, bones, pottery, charcoal, brick, limestone chips, plaster, shell, stones, etc.)
8. *Character of the inclusions* (a thin ash line, lens, layer of sherds, etc.)
9. *Orientation of the layer* (tipped slightly/severely - give estimated degree of slope and from which to which direction, etc.)
10. Do not assign locus numbers to soil layers unnecessarily. You want to give a new locus number to a obvious destruction layer, but you don't want to assign a locus number to a lens within a layer. You can include the details about the lens in your locus sheet description, i. e. "the moderately compacted layer of pink mudbrick debris includes thin lenses of dark gray ash ca. 0.05 m thick by 0.40 m long."
11. As with the wall cards, indicating relationships to other layers or features is very important to note. (Which other loci does it relate, seal/sealed by, cover/covered by, cut/cut by, set into, run up to the N, S, E, W face of locus x, etc.)

TEL GEZER

Below are categories which should be discussed as part of your locus and wall cards. Some appear on the sheet itself, e. g. "matrix" in the locus sheet. Others are not mentioned and are included here.

Wall Card

1. *The number of rows* (side by side) and courses (vertical) of the wall, and it's measurements given in tenths of a meter (e. g. 80 cm = 0.80 m)
2. *Type of stone* (field stone, roughly hewn, ashlar, etc.)
3. *Kind of stone* (basalt, limestone, travertine, etc.)
4. *Special treatment* (dressed, bossed, plastered, etc.)
5. *Function* (What is its inferred function? Is it a terrace wall, building wall, etc.)

6. *Method of construction* (include whether built with or without mortar, etc.)
7. *Present condition* (well-preserved, partly/heavily damaged, sloping, sagging, etc.)
8. *Relationship to other loci*. Probably the most important to include. (Which loci does the wall cut or is it cut by? Which floor or other feature does the wall abut, bond with, or attach to, etc.) Clearly indicate these relationships on the graphic diary. Use arrows or verbal notes to indicate abutment, bonding, cutting, etc.)
9. *Special finds* from the brick superstructure or stone foundations.
10. *Special characteristics* that may help identify it in another square or area.

Introduction

Date: date when excavation of the feature began.

Excavation Method: select, by circling, all excavation methods that are applicable. If sieved, also circle yes.

WALL LOCUS: Walls, and architectural features in general, are particularly important features on an archaeological site. Care must be taken in their excavation. If a wall clearly has multiple architectural phases, these must be excavated in separate loci. If a wall has multiple courses of the same phase, these should be excavated in separate pottery buckets. The sediment between wall courses should always be sieved. Seek the advise of the site stratigrapher.

PIT LOCUS: In excavating a feature like a pit, we are excavating not, of course, the actual pit (which is a negative), but the fill inside of the pit. Most pits will have much variation in the fill; generally this can be recorded by changing pottery buckets. Seek the advise of the site stratigrapher.

Location and Dimensions

Location of Locus in Operation: indicate in general terms the location of the feature in the operation; e.g., in the northwest quadrant; running along the east balk; etc.

Locus Immediately Above this Locus: indicate the locus number of the feature immediately above this feature.

Dimensions (indicate NxS, ExW): indicate the largest measurements of the feature NxS and ExW.

Top Levels: these are the absolute elevations in meters above sea level. If more elevations were taken, record them on the reverse.

Bottom Levels: these are the absolute elevations in meters above sea level. If more elevations were taken, record them on the reverse. It is highly desirable that the bottom elevations be taken in the same places in the operation as the top elevations.

Profiles: a very approximate drawing of the profile of the feature. Indicate the orientation of profile (e.g., WxE, NWxSE).

Est. Amount of Soil Removed (buckets or wheelbarrows): use the following values:

Less than 1 Bucket	3-5 Wheelbarrows	More than 20
1-3 Buckets	More than 5	Wheelbarrows
3-5 Buckets (= 1 Wheel Barrow)	Wheelbarrows	NA
1-3 Wheelbarrows	More than 10	
	Wheelbarrows	

Locus Immediately Below this Locus: indicate the locus number of the feature immediately below this feature.

Length of Wall: indicate the length of the wall as it is preserved in this operation. Often the wall will extend into other operations. Note this below under **Relationships**.

Width of Wall: indicate the width of the wall as it is preserved in this operation. Often the wall will extend into other operations. Note this below under **Relationships**. If you are excavating the full extent of the wall and it extends into another operation(s), this should be noted under **Relationships**.

Height of the Wall: indicate the height of the wall as it is preserved in this operation. If of varying height, note tallest and shortest measurements. Indicate on the top plan where these spots are on the wall.

Top Levels: these are the absolute elevations in meters above sea level. If more elevations were taken, record them on the reverse. When excavating wall courses in separate pottery buckets, take elevations along the top of each wall course. Note these elevations (and the appropriate pottery bucket numbers) in the notebook and on the back of the locus sheet.

Bottom Levels: these are the absolute elevations in meters above sea level. If more elevations were taken, record them on the reverse. It is highly desirable that the bottom elevations be taken in the same places in the operation as the top elevations.

Physical Properties

Matrix Compaction: select one of the options by circling it. Soft indicates that pulling a trowel across the deposit produces a handful or more of sediment. Loose indicates that a trowel can easily be stuck down into a deposit.

Matrix Type: select one of the options by circling it. Use the soil texture classes chart provided for each operation. These classes indicate particle size. There are three main sizes of particles: sand (largest), silt, and clay (smallest). You will almost never find on an archaeological site a deposit of pure sand, silt or clay. Most archaeological sediments are some blend of these three. Loam represents an equal blend of the three. Most of the archaeological sediments at Hac¹musalar are very clayey, owing to the high percentage of decayed mud brick in the deposits.

Matrix Color: use the Munsell soil color charts. Use a fresh sample of the deposit; examine the sample under filtered light.

Inclusion Size and Types: inclusions are all material in the sediment deposit above the size of sand particles. At Hac¹musalar, these inclusions are mainly stone and mortar. This part of the locus sheet is an attempt to elicit a breakdown of the percentage of soil (sediment) in the matrix as compared to the percentage of inclusions. We are interested in the percentages of inclusions by size. These sizes are graded accordingly:

1. boulder: requires two hands to pick it up
2. cobble: can be picked up with one hand
3. pebble: self-explanatory
4. granule: smaller than a pebble, but larger than a grain of sand.

The percentages that you give should reflect percentages of the deposit as a whole. Thus, by adding the percentages of all the inclusions, and then adding that sum to the percentage of soil (sediment), you should total 100.

Describe Inclusion Distribution within the Locus: the main distinction here is whether or not the distribution of the inclusions through the deposit is uniform.

Formation: select one of the options by circling it.

Describe Deposit/Formation of the Locus: describe here in more detail how you think that the deposit was formed.

WALLS

Type of Material: indicate the nature of the construction material in the wall.

Describe Bonding Agent: most late walls at Hac¹musalar have mud as their bonding agent. If there is no bonding agent, simply indicate "NA."

Number of Rows Wide: indicate the number of rows wide of construction material.

Number of Courses High: indicate the pottery bucket number for each course.

Repairs, Rebuilds and State of Preservation: it is here that you indicate whether or not the wall has multiple phases, and which phase this locus represents.

Describe the Manner of Construction (mortared, dry laid, etc.), Treatment of the Material (hewn, dressed, etc.) and any Special Features (plastered, thresholds, etc): describe here in more detail how the feature was constructed. With walls, we are especially concerned about the degree of preparation of the construction material.

Describe Deposit/Formation of the Locus: describe here in more detail how you think that the deposit was formed. With any feature such as a pit, which cuts down into earlier layers, we are especially concerned with whether or not there was an edge or lining to the mouth of the feature. Note here also whether or not the walls of the feature were lined (e.g., with plaster, mud, etc.).

Describe Deposit/Formation (its manner of construction) of the Locus: describe here in more detail how you think that the surface was formed. With surfaces, we are especially concerned about the presence of bedding layers.

Relationships

Combined with Loci: list here any other loci in the operation that were determined (later, upon reflection) to represent the same feature as this locus.

Equals Loci in Other Operations: if the feature extended to a balk, and if that operation has been excavated, you will need to determine the equivalent locus number in that operation by consulting the notebook, daily top plans and locus sheets of that operation.

Loci Sealing this Locus: complete this only if the feature was sealed (i.e., covered by a floor, wall, or some other architectural feature). If not, simply indicate "NA."

Later Tangent Loci: these are all loci that touch and are later in date than this locus.

Earlier Tangent Loci: these are all loci that touch and are earlier in date than this locus.

Touches Balks (list operations): give the 4 digit operation number (e.g. D4d8).

Describe Relation of Locus to Surround Features (buildings, walls, floors, etc.);

Provide a Mini Matrix: if the sediment deposit touched any architectural feature (e.g., a wall or floor), this needs to be indicated. Make sure to include the name of the building (e.g., Central Building, church), if applicable. Provide a very abbreviated Harris matrix showing relationships immediately later and earlier.

WALLS

Combined with Loci: list here any other loci in the operation that were determined (later, upon reflection) to represent the same feature as this locus.

Equals Loci in Other Operations: if the feature extended to a balk, and if that operation has been excavated, you will need to determine the equivalent locus number in that operation by consulting the notebook, daily top plans and locus sheets of that operation.

Loci Sealing this Locus: complete this only if the wall was sealed (i.e., covered by a floor, another wall, or some other architectural feature). If not, simply indicate "NA."

Later Tangent Loci: these are all loci that touch and are later in date than this locus. Since a wall may be preserved to a substantial height, there may occur many later tangent loci.

Earlier Tangent Loci: these are all loci that touch and are earlier in date than this locus. The earliest tangent locus is a critical piece of information.

Touches Balks (list operations): give the 4 digit operation number (e.g. D4d8).

Latest Associated Surface: the supervisor may need to consult earlier excavation seasons to answer this question. If there are no associated surfaces, simply put "NA."

All Associated Surfaces: the supervisor may need to consult earlier excavation seasons to insure that all surfaces have been recorded here. If there are no associated surfaces, simply put "NA."

Associated Foundation or Robber Trench Loci: excavators should constantly be exploring the lower edges of walls for foundation trenches.

Describe Relation of Wall to Surround Features (buildings, other walls, floors, etc.); Provide a Mini Matrix: if the wall is part of a building, note which part of the building this locus represents. Note the name of the building (e.g., Central Building, church), if applicable. Provide a very abbreviated Harris matrix showing relationships immediately later and earlier.

Loci From Which the Feature was Cut: this is one of the most important questions concerning an intrusive feature such as a pit. It is very important to know the stratigraphic layer from which the pit was cut. Note especially if the layer from which the pit was cut is a floor, road or working surface.

Describe Relation of Locus to Surround Features (buildings, walls, floors, etc.); Provide a Mini Matrix: if the pit touched any architectural feature (e.g., a wall or floor), this needs to be indicated. Make sure to include the name of the building (e.g., Central Building, church), if applicable. Provide a very abbreviated Harris matrix showing relationships immediately later and earlier.

Documentation

Beginning Diary Day and Page: note the date and page number in the diary when the excavation of the feature began.

Ending Diary Day and Page: note the date and page number in the diary when the excavation of the feature ended.

Top Plan Numbers: list the daily top plan numbers that show the feature.

Section Numbers: if the feature is recorded on any section drawing, indicate the section number.