The Three Gorges Dam is a gravity dam constructed from concrete. Each diagram on this page shows the plan of the dam site.

### Stage 1

- A **cofferdam** is formed on one side of the river by dumping rocks into the water to create an embankment dam.
- Water is pumped out from the enclosure formed between the riverbank and the dam to create a dry pit.
- The pit is excavated to a deep enough level so that all of the river water can be diverted through it during Stage 2 of the construction.
- A concrete cofferdam is constructed along one side of the pit.

### Stage 2

- Two more **rockfill** cofferdams are constructed on the other side of the river, again by dumping rocks in the water, one upstream of the dam location and one downstream.
- These form an enclosure with the river bank and the Stage 1 concrete cofferdam. The enclosure is then pumped dry and excavated, so that the first portion of the main dam can be built within it.
- Meanwhile, the water flows through the deeper channel on the other side of the river formed during Stage 1.

### Stage 3

Two more rockfill cofferdams are constructed to create a final enclosure, which is pumped dry and excavated to complete the construction of the dam across the river.